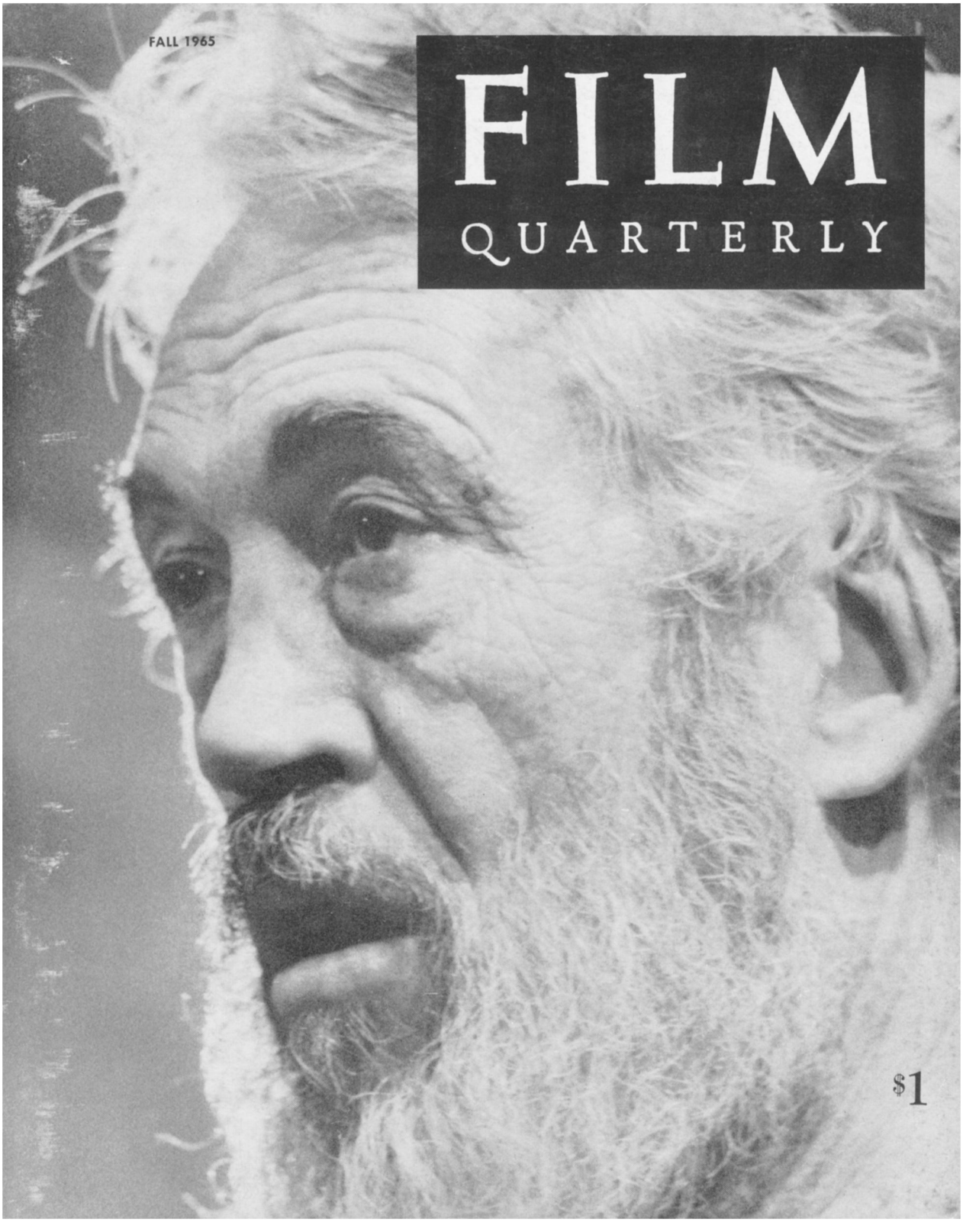
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FILM
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VOL. XIX, NO. 1 FALL, 1965

COVER: John Huston as Noah—photographed by Gideon Bachmann.

Editor's Notebook

REVIEWS OF SHORT FILMS

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It bears noting that short films at present, except those sponsored for one ulterior purpose or another, are economically altruistic activities—exactly like most writing or painting or music or drama. Even unusually popular short films take years to earn back their costs in 16mm distribution; and 35mm distribution (this is not generally realized) is even less profitable because theaters are accustomed to being supplied shorts at charges far less than 16mm rentals. Television showings are, in short, the only source of substantial revenues for independent film-makers, and these, besides being very chancy, are likely to recoup costs only in cases where production is on a shoestring.

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This is a situation, in brief, where the customary patterns of commerce must give way to patterns similar to those through which museums, universities, and other institutions circulate works of art. In this process the nationwide network of film societies can play an important role; but what is needed above all is some new kind of machinery for low-cost circulation of prints, so that short films can begin to find an audience again, and enter into our cultural life on more than a haphazard basis. It would be well if one of the great new engines of institutionalized Culture, about which we usually hear giant budget figures but little else, saw fit to undertake this necessary work.

In the meantime, we shall try to bring to attention some of the valuable short films which so largely go unnoticed.

FILM-MAKER DIRECTORY

Amos Vogel, Director of the New York Film Festival, is compiling a master list of independent American feature film directors and producers, which will be made available to other festivals in hopes of augmenting participation. Names and brief information should be sent to Lincoln Center, New York, N. Y., 10023.

CONTRIBUTORS

EARL BODIEN studies the independent film scene from San Francisco. KIRK BOND is a film critic and historian who has written for *Film Culture, Film Comment,* and the *N.Y. Film Bulletin.* WILLIAM JOHNSON is an Englishman who has followed Hollywood (and other) movies in London, Paris (5 years), and now New York. PAULINE KAEL now writes for *Life, Holiday, Vogue,* etc. DONALD RICHIE lives in Tokyo, and has observed Kurosawa's activities closely for many years. JOHN SEELYE teaches English at the University of California, Davis. YALE UDOFF has written for *Film Comment* and this journal.

SCENARIO

—from the Latin of Gaius Petronius

Out there
sea and air
opposed, spar off together,

while here
a slender river
laughs along the pastures.

There
a sailor wails
above a sunken hulk;

here
where river deepens
shepherds wash their sheep.

There
Death's huge hiatus
opens to destroy us;

here
reclining Ceres
celebrates the scythe.

There
closed in by water
throats burn dry with thirst;

here
abundant kisses
press the liar's lips.

While
Ulysses, starved and weary,
steers against the waves,

on land
Penelope serenely
sits and weaves.

Translated by Lee Hatfield

GIDEON BACHMANN

How I Make Films: An Interview with John Huston

Meeting John Huston in Rome, where he was shooting *The Bible*, turned out to be easier than meeting any other director I had ever interviewed. The day after I moved into a new apartment in Rome, people began calling me on the phone and asking for Huston. It turned out that I had accidentally moved into the apartment that he had vacated when he went to Egypt to shoot exteriors. I called up the studio and said I had some messages for Mr. Huston. He invited me out to the set to watch him shoot the sequence of Noah's Ark.

The De Laurentiis studios are the biggest in Europe today, and they are brand new. When I got there, I found myself in the center of a circus—a typical travelling circus with caravans and cage carts, with animal noises and smells all around, and with a whole stationary zoo that had been constructed near the studios to supply the 200 land animals and 1,000 birds that were participating in the shooting of the ark sequence. The ark itself was inescapable—it wasn't just there once, but five times, in various sizes and in various stages of completion. Huston—who had less time than Noah—needed five arks to shoot the various stages of development of the vessel and in order to be able to shoot interiors or exteriors at will in any kind of weather.

Our actual meeting took place at the enclosure of the hippopotamus. Huston himself plays Noah in this sequence, and he was busy trying to convince the hippo to follow the requirements of the script. For an entire morning, while the cameras turned, the lights blazed, and Huston in his sackcloth costume endlessly repeated his biblical words, the animal refused to cooperate. Finally, in exasperation, Huston said to me: Let's give the poor beast a rest. What was it that you wanted to talk to me about?

And so right there, among the giraffes and the peacocks, the lions and the Himalayan goats, I asked Huston how he made films.

BACHMANN: *I think this is one of those rare times when I can start an interview [for radio use also] without any introductions. You're the kind of person who creates around him not only the normal fame as a director of the kind of films everybody has seen, but also a kind of personal aura, a sort of romantic halo, which means that you are as known as your work, and I don't have to go into a lot of explicatory remarks. And in any case, all I am interested in at this time, is how you make films.*

HUSTON: I wish you had a better reason for omitting the introductions. On the other hand I am really happy that you go straight to the heart of the matter. This also corresponds to my method of working—it never seems to me that my films start with much preparation. In fact, I often get the feeling that my films make themselves. By this I don't mean that I don't take part in the production process, but very often I couldn't tell you exactly how ideas start to crystallize. For example, I never start off by saying "I'm going to make a specific film," but some idea, some novel, some play suggests itself—very often it's something I read 25 or 30 years ago, or when I was a child, and have played around with in my thoughts for a long time. That was the case with pictures like *Moby Dick*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, and several others. Suddenly, surprisingly, I discover that I am actually making it. There's a film that I am going to make after I finish *The Bible* that has the same background: *The Man Who Would Be King*, the Kipling story. The first script on this film was written about ten years ago, but it was based on my reading of the story at age 12 or

15, and my impressions of it, that have remained with me. Most of the time my pictures begin with this kind of inbred idea, something that lives in me from long ago. Sometimes it's more erratic, though, someone has a picture they want you to make and if you think it's good enough to take a shot at, you step in as a sort of surgeon or practitioner. The only safe thing I can say is that there are no rules.

How does the script get written? Do you do it alone? And how long does it take you?

Again, there are no rules. I've written scripts and made pictures out of them in two weeks. At other times I've worked a year and a half just on a script. *The Maltese Falcon* was done in a very short time, because it was based on a very fine book and there was very little for me to invent. It was a matter of sticking to the ideas of the book, of making a film out of a book. On *Treasure of Sierra Madre,* I wrote the script in about 3-4 months, but I had had quite a long time to think about it before. The actual making of the film didn't take very long, but I had had the idea of making it since before the war. It was the first film I made after the war.

You wrote that one alone, and got an Oscar for writing it. But don't you sometimes write together with other people? Or, when other people write for you, do you take a very active part or do you leave them pretty much alone?

When I do not write alone—and of course you must remember that I began my film career as a writer, not as a director—I work very closely with the writer. Almost always I share in the writing. The writer will do a scene and then I'll work it over, or I'll write a scene and then the other writer will make adjustments later. Often we trade scenes back and forth until we're both satisfied.

You don't like to work with more than one other writer?

Not really. But sometimes other people make additions. For example, the writer of a play or a book on which I am basing a film. Tennessee Williams, for example, came and worked with Anthony Vay and myself on the script for *Night of the Iguana.* He didn't come there to write, but once he was there he did do some writing, and actually he did some rather important writing for the film. But such cases are the exception.

Could you put into words some principles you employ in order to put ideas into film form? Do you feel there are any rules a writer for the cinema must follow?

Each idea calls for a different treatment, really. I am not aware of any ready formula, except the obvious one that films fall into a certain number of scenes, and that you have to pay attention to certain limitations that have to do with time, according to subject. Depending on what you are writing about, you have to decide the time balance between words and action. It seems to me, for example, that the word contains as much action as a purely visual scene, and that dialogue should have as much action in it as physical motion. The sense of activity that your audience gets is derived equally from what they see and from what they hear. The fascination, the attention of the man who looks at what you have put together, must be for the thoughts as much as for the happenings in your film. In fact, when I write I can't really separate the words from the actions. The final action—the combined activity of the film, the sum of the words and the visuals—is really going on only in the mind of the beholder. So in writing I have to convey a sense of overall progression with all the means at my command: words and images and sounds and everything else that makes film.

This brings up one of the basic questions about films that adapt literary works: in a book there are many things that you can't see or hear, but which in reading you translate directly into your own, interior images and feelings. Emotions that are created in you neither through dialogue nor action. How do you get these into film? The monologues from Moby Dick, *for example?*

Well, first of all, I try to beware of literal transfers to film of what a writer has created initially for a different form. Instead I try to penetrate first to the basic idea of the book or the play, and then work with those ideas in cinematic terms. For example, to see what Mel-

ville wanted to say in the dialogues, what emotions he wanted to convey. I always thought *Moby Dick* was a great blasphemy. Here was a man who shook his fist at God. The thematic line in *Moby Dick* seemed to me, always—to have been: who's to judge when the judge himself is dragged before the bar? Who's to condemn, but he, Ahab! This was, to me, the point at which I tried to aim the whole picture, because I think that's what Melville was essentially concerned with, and this is, at the same time, the point that makes *Moby Dick* so extremely timely in our age. And if I may be allowed the side-observation: I don't think any of the critics who wrote about the film ever mentioned this.

I suppose you are speaking about the problem of taking personal responsibility in an age where the group has largely attempted to make decisions for the individual. This is an interpretation of Melville; or perhaps I should say ONE interpretation of Melville and so in the attempt to understand the basic idea of a work (in order to translate those ideas into film) you are really doing more than that: you add your own interpretation, you don't just put into images what the original author wanted to say.

I don't think we can avoid interpretation. Even just pointing a camera at a certain reality means an interpretation of that reality. By the same token, I don't *seek* to interpret, to put my own stamp on the material. I try to be as faithful to the original material as I can. This applies equally to Melville as it applies to the Bible, for example. In fact, it's the fascination that I feel for the original that makes me want to make it into a film.

What about original material, where you are not adapting a play or a book? Are there any ideas of yours, basic ideas, which you try to express in your work? Do you feel that there is a continuity in your work in terms of a consistent ideology? In short, do you feel you are trying to say something coherent to mankind?

There probably is. I am not consciously aware of anything. But even the choice of material indicates a preference, a turn of mind. You could draw a portrait of a mind through that mind's preferences.

Well, let me do that for a minute, and see if what I see as a unifying idea in your work is indeed a coherent feeling on your part. I see that in your films there is always a man pitched against odds, an individual who seeks to retain a sense of his own individuality in the face of a culture that surrounds and tends to submerge him. I would call the style of your films the style of the frontier, or what the frontier has come to symbolize in American culture: a sense of rebellion against being put into a system, into a form of life and into a mode of thinking rigidly decided by others.

Yes, I think there is something there. I do come from a frontier background. My people were that. And I always feel constrained in the presence of too many rules, severe rules; they distress me. I like the sense of freedom. I don't particularly seek that ultimate freedom of the anarchist, but I'm impatient of rules that result from prejudice.

In any case, you believe that at the basis of every film of yours there is a basic idea, whether an idea of yours or one of another author. But how do you proceed to put that idea into film form? In writing, what do you do first, for example?

I don't envisage the whole thing at the beginning. I go a little bit at a time, always asking myself whether I am on the track of the basic thought. Within that, I try to make each scene as good as I can. This applies both to the writing and to the directing—to the whole process of preparation and production, in fact —which are only extensions of the process of writing. It's hard to break down into details.

Do you mean to say that you do not write the whole script in the beginning?

Oh yes, oh sure. I am speaking about the making of the film. I try to make it in sequence as much as possible, to develop the making of the film along with the development of the story within the film. I try, for example, to give my actors a sense of development not only within the troupe, but also a sense of development within the story of the film. And I improvise if necessary. This is not a luxury; when one shoots

as much on location as I do, improvisation is a necessity. Everything that happens in the process of making the film can contribute to the development of that film's story. But of course one always tries to remain within the bounds of the controllable as much as one can, to stay within the bounds of the script. But one must be open to take advantage of the terrain, of the things that the setting can give you.

Do you write your scripts with the idea of change and improvisation already in mind?

Improvisation is used more today than it used to be. Partly this is caused by a new, less rigid approach to film-making, and also partly by the decentralization of the production process. Actors have become producers, they have commitments of conflicting sorts, and it is no longer possible to prepare a script in great detail in a major studio set-up, and then call in your contract actors, whose time you control completely, and make the film in exact accordance to plan. It has simply become essential today to be more flexible, to adjust to new conditions, both practical and aesthetic.

Do you see this as a positive or a negative development?

It has certainly helped some directors to come into their own, people who could never have succeeded under the old, less independent system. Some French and Italian directors—Fellini in the vanguard—have found it possible to tell much more subjective stories, often their own, in a valid cinematographic way. Like *8½* for example.

What is the technical process of your script-writing?

Usually I write in longhand first, and then dictate a later version. I use a standard script form: action on the left and dialogue on the right. When it's finished it's mimeographed and distributed to the pople who need to see it. I often change again later. Sometimes I finish the final version on the set itself, or change again something I've written as a final version the day before. Mostly these changes come to me when I hear the words first spoken by an actor. It's always different once it comes out of a living person's mouth. By this I do not mean that I try to adjust to an actor's personality—I try to do that as little as possible. When I write, I don't have in mind an actor, but a character. I don't conceive this character with a specific star in my mind. I guess what I am trying to do with this constant changing, is to try to put to work more than my own imagination, or at least allow my imagination the liberty of play, the liberty of coming out of its cage—which is me, my body, when I am alone and writing—and in this way it begins to live and to flower and gives me better service than when I put it to work abstractly, alone, in a room with paper and pencil, without the living presence of the material. Then, when the character has been born out of this extended imagination, I have to look for someone to play the role, and this someone isn't always necessarily the person who I thought could play it originally, because often it no longer is the same character. In fact, I've often—at least, sometimes—delayed the making of a film because I couldn't find anybody to play the new and adjusted character that I had finally arrived at construing. Although in my experience you usually find someone; there are enough good actors if you are willing to wait a little.

Is it possible for you to tell how much of your writing comes from inside you, at the start, and how much is written in adjustment to a situation or to hearing your words spoken? And do you also adjust to location, for example? I mean, when you write about Sodom, do you write for Vesuvius, for the landscape where you decided to shoot those sequences?

It's the same thing as trying to interpret Melville. You write for an ideal. Then when you make the film, you try to live up to that ideal. Casting, locating, shooting: you try to stick to what you start with. Sometimes there are problems when the material changes in my hands, sometimes I have even miscast my own films. But generally these adjustment problems can be overcome. I've been pretty lucky that way. In fact, I can usually do pretty much exactly what I set out to do. I've been lucky.

Is that what gives you this tremendous peace that you seem to have on the set? I have watched

perhaps a hundred directors shooting, and nobody is as calm. And you have this kooky set: this silly ark with all these animals, peacocks flying among the long necks of giraffes, hippos who refuse to act the scenes written for them, a hundred breakdowns a day with technical things caused by the animals, and you just stride through the whole thing in your Noah costume, feeding the giraffes, smiling and taking it easy . . .

I am astonished myself. And I marvel at the patience of everybody, especially the animals, who are among the best actors I've ever worked with . . .

All typecast, too . . . But, is that an answer?

In a way, yes. You see, in working with actors, I try to direct as little as possible. The more one directs, the more there is a tendency to monotony. If one is telling each person what to do, one ends up with a host of little replicas of oneself. So, when I start a scene, I always let the actor show me for the start how he imagines the scene himself. This applies not only to actors; as I tried to indicate before, I try to let the whole thing work on me, show me. The actors, the set, the location, the sounds, all help to show me what the correct movement could be. So what I said about the animals wasn't only a joke. Because, you see, the animals have one great advantage as actors: they know exactly what they want to do, no self-doubts, no hesitations. If you watch them, quite extraordinary opportunities present themselves. but you must see them. Here in the Noah's Ark sequence of *The Bible* this has happened a number of times. Animals do remarkable things. The hippo opened his mouth and let me pet him inside.

Is that when you wrote the line, which you say to Noah's wife at that point: "There is no evil in him, wife. Do not fear him!"

Exactly. And very fine actors are as much themselves as animals are. I would rather have someone whose personality lends itself to the role than a good actor who can simulate the illusion of being the character. I do not like to see the mechanics of acting. The best you can get, of course, is when the personality lends itself exquisitely to the part and when that personality has the added attribute of being technically a fine actor so he can control his performance. That is the ideal.

What do you consider to be the attributes of a fine actor?

The shading he can give a line, his timing, his control, his knowledge of the camera, his relationship to the camera—of course, I'm talking about film acting.

What should an actor's relationship to the camera be?

He must have an awareness of the size of his gesture, his motion, in relation to the size that his image will be on the screen. It isn't absolutely an essential quality, but it is very useful. I don't mean that I tell him the focal length of the lens I'm using and expect him to adapt himself accordingly, but a good actor has an almost instinctual awareness of these things. When an actor comes from the stage, he usually has to make adjustments of this kind. He doesn't need to project, he doesn't need to make his voice heard over a distance. He can speak very quietly. He can be more economical in every way before the camera than he could be on stage. And he can work with the small details of his face.

Does a good actor, one with all the best technical attributes, make a star?

Oh, no. One doesn't have much to do with the other. Of course, the star must know how to act, and a good actor can become a star, but what a star really is, is hard to describe. There are many fine and beautiful actors who would never be stars. I don't think that's a lack in their personalities, because it's beyond that—something very mysterious happens. Some personalities seem to take on another dimension on the screen. They become bigger than life. When that happens, there is a star. Some stars are not good actors, but a lot of good actors aren't stars.

Can you recognize this star quality when you meet a person, or do you have to see the person on the screen first?

I recognize it more or less. For instance, I had Marilyn Monroe in her first real film role

[in *The Asphalt Jungle*] and I can't claim to have had any notion of where she was headed, but I could feel that she was going to be good in this film and I chose her over a number of others. But still I didn't dream of the places she would go.

How did you meet her?

She was brought in by an agent in Hollywood.

Did you have one of those ideal characters ready in mind when you saw her?

Yes, and she was it. I guess it was an interesting moment, but I didn't know it at the time.

How do you—even more or less—recognize the star quality?

In certain instances, it stands out all over the individual, just as it stands out in certain horses now and then. You look at an animal and you know it is top class. It's the same with certain persons—with an Ava Gardner, with a Humphrey Bogart, with a Katherine Hepburn. There's no mistaking that quality when you see it any more than there is a chance of mistaking the looks of a great horse in the paddock. It's hard to put in other words, and it varies from person to person.

In any case, you are speaking of something that isn't just a flamboyance of bearing?

On the contrary. Flamboyance is something that people assume when they feel a lack of structure in their own characters. But this, too, is not invariably the case. I've known some flamboyant people who were extraordinary too. Flamboyance is all right when it is a natural expression of something that is really that person. It's like every other characteristic that a person has: it's good only if it's real. I don't like it if people put on false surfaces, and I think by now I can tell when they do. And it always works against my choosing a certain person to play in a film.

Let's see if we can follow your film-making method through logically and go on to a description of the process of turning the script into film.

Actually I don't separate the elements of film-making in such an abstract manner. For example, the directing of a film, to me, is simply an extension of the process of writing. It's the process of rendering the thing you have written. You're still writing when you're directing. Of course you're not composing words, but a gesture, the way you make somebody raise his eyes or shake his head is also writing for films. Nor can I answer precisely what the relative importance, to me, of the various aspects of film-making is, I mean, whether I pay more attention to writing, directing, editing, or what-have-you. The most important element to me is always the idea that I'm trying to express, and everything technical is only a method to make the idea into clear form. I'm always working on the idea: whether I am writing, directing, choosing music or cutting. Everything must revert back to the idea; when it gets away from the idea it becomes a labyrinth of rococo. Occasionally one tends to forget the idea, but I have always had reason to regret this whenever it happened. Sometimes you fall in love with a shot, for example. Maybe it is a tour de force as a shot. This is one of the great dangers of directing: to let the camera take over. Audiences very often do not understand this danger, and it is not unusual that camerawork is appreciated in cases where it really has no business in the film, simply because it is decorative or in itself exhibitionistic. I would say that there are maybe half a dozen directors who really know their camera—how to move their camera. It's a pity that critics often do not appreciate this. On the other hand I think it's OK that audiences should not be aware of this. In fact, when the camera is in motion, in the best-directed scenes, the audiences should not be aware of what the camera is doing. They should be following the action and the road of the idea so closely, that they shouldn't be aware of what's going on technically.

Am I right in assuming, then, that you do not share the modern view that the form of a film can be as important as its content? I take it, from what you say, that you are interested more in what is being said than in how it is being said.

When you become aware of *how* things are being said, you get separated from the idea. This doesn't mean that an original rendering

isn't to be sought after, but that rendering must be so close to the idea itself that you aren't aware of it.

If the optimum is to stay close to the original idea without imposing one's individuality upon it, then the old Thalberg-Ince system of having a script written by one man and then farming it out to another to shoot, wouldn't appear to be so bad.

That's carrying a principle to an extreme. Let's be sure to have enough regard for *style.* I am not saying that the director who is carrying onto film the idea created by another man should obliterate his individuality. After all, there are many ways—as many as there are people—to do any one thing, including the direction of a film. One sticks to an idea within one's own ability and with the means that are native to oneself, and not through employing means that are so commonplace that anybody could use them. What goes for film also goes for literature, for any form of art; the originality of Joyce is in no way to be divorced from what he was saying. There's no separation between style and subject matter, between style and intention, between style and—again—the idea. I do not mean to indicate, in anything I say, that the work of a man shouldn't bear witness to the personality of that man, beyond the fact that he expresses a specific idea in that work. It's the combination of his personality and the idea he expresses which creates his style.

How do you define style?

As the adaption of the word or the action to the idea. I remember when I was a kid this question of style puzzled me. I didn't know what they meant by the style of a certain writer. One day Plato's *Apology* fell into my hands. It was an accident, but it was an eye-opener for me as far as style was concerned. I understood that the words of Socrates were in keeping with the monumentality of his conceptions.

Do you adjust your style to what you consider the intelligence level of your public to be? In other words, if you made a film today about Socrates in the style of Socrates (if I may oversimplify for a moment), this style itself would stand between the ideas you are trying to express and the person in some small town who might see your film.

I don't adjust to what they call the level of the audience. The mentality of an audience is something I consider as quite extraordinary. Audiences can feel and think with a celerity and a unison perhaps beyond the power of its most intelligent members. They laugh instantly if something is funny, and in other ways, too, they react in the most extraordinarily perceptive way. So I think it's nonsense to listen to producers who tell you "they won't understand you." When I make a picture I go under the assumption that if I like something, there are enough people like me who will like it too, to make it worth doing.

Does that mean that to make something worthwhile it must be accepted by a major number of other people?

Yes, there's that requirement.

I mean, beyond the financial requirement that films be sold.

Well, you can't go beyond that.

I mean in terms of your own personal satisfaction. Is it very important to you that your films be seen by many people, and understood by many people?

I don't make pictures for myself. And I do believe that if I like a film, others will like it too. I make films with the intention that they be seen. I make a picture for others. It's not just a personal satisfaction that I'm seeking. On the other hand I don't try to imagine the reactions or to figure out, ahead of time, the minds of others. It's hard enough for me to understand my own mind and to understand myself. I couldn't possibly speculate on what fifty million people might like or not like. I can only hope that among those fifty million there are enough who resemble me in taste.

Do you think that a film is better if more people like it?

Sometimes. But this is quite a question that you've asked me there. We're getting into quite an abstract area. Films are not always immediately popular. Sometimes films acquire popularity slowly over the years, as has happened with some of mine. For example *The*

Red Badge of Courage. And also *Beat the Devil*, which was a complete bust when it came out, and now it has a sort of cult following. Over the years these two pictures have probably had bigger audiences than *Moulin Rouge*, which was immediately successful.

Let's get back to the film-making process. You've assembled, changed, and rewritten your script and chosen your actors. Do you give them the script to read before they come on the set?

Yes, of course. They read the script before they ever get any instructions from me. Sometimes they then like to talk about the role before they appear on the set in make-up. But I try to tell them as little as possible, because I want to see what they can give me. There's always time later to give them what I've thought about. In the beginning I want them not to be influenced by my predeterminations, because that would close up their individual creativity, it would eliminate their ability to give me something new, something I might not have thought of myself. The best illustration of this is the story of my first film, the first one I directed. I made drawings. I wanted to be very sure. I was uncertain of myself as far as the camera was concerned and I wanted to be sure not to fumble, not to get lost in the mechanical aspects of the film. So I made drawings of every set-up, but didn't show the drawings to anyone. I discovered that about 50% of the time the actors themselves automatically fell into the drawings, and about 25% of the time I had to pull them into the drawings, which were, in fact, set-up designs. But another 25% of the time they did something better than I had thought of myself.

That means you work through the actor's intellectual comprehension of your material?

Of course, and I benefit from this comprehension very often. In fact, even before Stanislawski I think actors always functioned this way. The only reason it became such a fad, was that so many young people were marching out onto the screen without any preparation, so suddenly the emphasis shifted strongly towards preparation and it was made into something of a religion; I mean "the method" and the Actor's Studio, etc. And of course many good actors came out of that school. Personally I don't prefer conscious actors, or actors with that particular training, nor do I reject them, because I believe that every good actor prepares, maybe not always so consciously.

Do you let them rehearse a lot on the set?

It depends on the scene. I don't let them rehearse too much, as a rule, but some scenes call for more rehearsal than others.

What kind of instructions are you likely to give an actor?

Anything that will give him a sense of security. In the initial conversations, I may talk about the idea of the role, what its relation to the whole picture is, the background of the character. Some actors like to talk a lot. It helps them.

Do you, yourself, like to talk a lot?

Not very much. But I find it my job to do anything I can to help the actor, to make him feel at ease, to give him a sense of independence, of importance, if you will. I'll do anything for this, even talk. But I always keep hoping that it will be the actor who will show me, rather than the other way around.

What then do you tell them, in precise terms, when they get on the set? Do you tell them where to stand . . .

Not even that. I let them stand where they please. Sometimes they wait to be told, and I always try to get them to take the reins themselves. I say, let's rehearse the scene, you show me. Mostly they do this of their own accord. I'd say four out of five times the actors—especially if they are very good actors—take over right away. I don't have to say a word. If they are talented and intelligent they expect to be let alone. For example, working with George Scott, I seldom even gave a clue of direction, and he did exactly what I wanted without any of us ever saying a word, practically. Only accasionally I would have to ask him to move a bit to the left or the right. His approach to the scene would be so real and true that I couldn't add anything, except those mechanical camera directions. Not all actors are that good, and some you have to work a lot with. Sometimes very good actors need a lot of direction, too, but

if they are gifted and intelligent one is on the same wavelength anyway and one can talk in a kind of code. They catch immediately what you want, and they fit right in. They catch what you want, use it, and it comes back to you stronger, better than you gave it to them, because they have digested it and are using their talents to put it into reality. Sometimes I have directed people in ways which disappointed me, and have later discovered, that when I left them alone to do what they wanted, it came out better. I suppose it's because a good actor knows what he can do well and how, and through this self-knowledge he can produce something I couldn't abstractly imagine. Sometimes I shoot a scene both ways: mine and his, and often—like for example with Clark Gable—I found that his version was better on the screen.

Do you consider the actor raw material for your manipulation or an alive organism that you must adjust to? Does he retain his personality in what you make him do or is he only a means to your end?

He's a means to my end only insofar as he retains his personality.

You try not to impose yourself on him at all?

I try not to. He must be a very bad actor for me to try to do this. And, by the way, on the part of the director there is as much work in concealing bad performances as there is in developing good ones.

What else, besides controlling the actors, does your job of directing include? How much control do you exercise over the camera, the light, the sets, the other mechanics?

Lighting is almost completely up to the cameraman, who of course must be in complete sympathy with the director. The set-up is something else. There you're telling the story, the composition will appear on the screen, also the movement of the camera. The variety of material to be included in the shot, and its displacement, those are things I try to control. Again, when I decide about these things, I go by the rules that are imposed upon me by the central idea, by what I'm trying to say, and how I've decided to say it. And I choose set-ups and camera angles that will tell my story as quickly and as strongly and as surely as possible.

Do you have the precise set-up in mind when you write the script?

No. I write first, then seek the set-up that demonstrates. And I find that if the set-up is chosen well, I hardly ever have to change a line for a set-up or a set-up for a line. The fact that I write the words first, doesn't mean the words have precedence. I find that dialogue and camera set-up are not at war. I don't seek a set-up to carry a certain word; I seek a certain word and a certain set-up to carry a certain idea. Sometimes one single word is enough for this, or even complete silence, if the image is right.

Do you think the less words spoken in a film, the better a film it is?

Depends on the film. Some films depend on words. Take *Night of the Iguana.* Take the spoken words out of that, and you won't have very much.

Is that only because that particular script was based on a play? Or do you feel that scripts that are very word-oriented could also be read as literature like a play can?

I don't think you can make rules. In the case of *Iguana* the words were important because they carried Tennessee Williams' thoughts. But I think a good screenplay could be read as literature, too. It simply depends on the particular material.

You are not taking sides, then, in the perennial controversy over what's more important in film, the word or the image?

I don't see that they are in conflict. Depending on what is being said, they complement each other in the hands of a good craftsman.

Well, there's a difference in impact, of course. I'm thinking of the aesthetic problems of the intake of stimuli by a man sitting in a dark hall. If you put words and images on the same level, certain problems arise. Sitting there in the dark, his ears can be unbusy for some length of time, so you can introduce silences on the sound track. But there's got to be something on the screen to see *all the time.*

The problem of the attention of the audience to the screen has occupied me quite a lot. Be-

cause of the dark tunnel in which he sits, the spectator in a film has nothing else to fix his attention onto, only that oblong of light which is the screen. This causes a whole different *time factor* to operate in his process of perception, than in other forms of spectacle, like plays. Two or three seconds of delay in a scene in a film can immediately cause a dull and laborious effect, and the viewer can begin to behold himself, rather than the screen. He shifts in his seat and coughs and scratches and feels his internal organs at work. So you must work to this different time factor when directing a film. Film isn't like most arts, where you can stop watching for a while—you can put a book aside, stop watching a wall with pictures while taking a cup of coffee—but in film all the viewer can do is watch, watch constantly, and the filmmaker has to fill him the screen all the time. It's a requirement of film-making that the viewer's attention be held all the time. It's a requirement, unfortunately, that's not often lived up to. I only know of very few instances in my own experience of film-going where this requirement was constantly being met. On the other hand, making films where something is constantly happening, also imposes greater demands on the viewer than is the case in any other medium. But there are many things inherent in the medium that work for you; the whole immediacy of the experience, and the subjectivity of the emotions that can derive from a good film. The ideal film, it seems to me, is when it's as though the projector were behind the beholder's eyes, and he throws onto the screen that which he *wants* to see. Films are usually very good for their first two or three minutes. The audience is completely taken outside of itself. They are not aware of themselves. And then comes that awful moment, when they become self-aware once more. It's the film that allows this to happen, of course. I think that one of the problems of the people who make films is that they have not realized that most of the devices of film are inherent in the physiology of man. I mean, all the things we have laboriously learned to do with film, were already part of the daily physiological and psychological experience of man before film was invented, and if we only knew how to make a bridge between these natural experiences and that which we put on the screens, we would be able to eliminate those dead moments, those dull and laborious times, when the human being begins to feel the distance between his real experience and that which is suggested to him *via* the screen. Let me make an experiment, maybe you will understand better what I mean. Move your eyes, quickly, from an object on one side of this room to an object on the other side. In a film you would use the cut. Watch! There—you did exactly what I expected: in moving your head from one side of the room to the other, you briefly closed your eyes. Try it again, in the other direction. There! You see, you do it automatically. Once you know the distance between the two objects, you blink instinctively. That's a cut. If you were to pan, like we could do with the camera or as you could do with your eyes, from one side to the other, passing all the objects on the way, and then back again, it would become tedious beyond endurance. This does it for you. In the same way, almost all the devices of film have a physiological counterpart. It's a matter of learning—again—to use it.

And you can look at most other filmic devices with this point of view. Take the dissolve. Your thoughts are changing. There's that moment of impingement of thoughts and images where you are aware of your surroundings, or perhaps looking at something else, ouside your direct field of vision. Thoughts change while the things you see intermingle. And take the fade-out: that corresponds to sleep. It's an opportunity to rest, to change completely. Exactly as we use it in film.

I'm particularly intrigued by what you said about the time factor. Film is the only graphic medium in which the intake period, the time it takes to receive the stimulus, on the part of the spectator, is controlled not by that spectator, but by the maker of the film. You control how long he looks. In fact, it has always seemed to me that this possibility of controlling the time element is much more important, is a more basic

aesthetic element in film, than the fact that it moves. Movement is simply one of the functions of time. Film is the only art form in which you can manipulate time. In fact, I would say one could make a film in which nothing moved, which would be composed entirely of stills, but which would still be entirely "filmic" because it controls the psychological experience of time in an art-ificial way. Sometimes I wonder how many film-makers are aware of the power they possess through this capacity to change man's concepts of time.

Most film makers are aware of the time element in the sense that they are worried about the lagging attention of the viewer. That means they are aware of the problem of time manipulation, but not consciously. They know they've got to speed up a scene, for example. They don't know why—they don't know what they're doing. But then I don't necessarily believe that complete consciousness makes better artists.

What other elements of film-making do you try to control as part of the creative process?

One of the most important elements is to control the producer. Artistically, I am most concerned with controlling the color. Some films would suffer from being in color. Color, like camera acrobatics, can be a distraction unless it's functional in the film. But both are important, black-and-white and color film. Artists have pigments, but they continue to draw. Certain subjects are better in one and others in the other medium. I would never have made *Freud* in color. There was a certain projection of a unilateral thought, the development of a logic. Color would only have distracted. I wanted the audience to follow the logic that was as real as a detective's pursuit of a criminal, without distraction by visual elements. And by the same token, I would never have made *Moulin Rouge* in black-and-white. And in *Moby Dick* I tried to combine both by inventing a technique of printing both types of film together.

Do you always try to experiment with new ideas? Do you feel that there is a continuity, in this sense, in your work?

As far as I can say, talking about myself, I think there is a certain uniformity in my work from the beginning up till now. And the one thing I always try to experiment with, is accepting suggestions from the people who work with me. I don't like to dictate, I like to receive stimuli from all: not only the cameraman and the actors, but the grips and the script girl, or the animal trainers as in the case of *The Bible*. I try to create an atmosphere on the set where everyone feels they can participate. I guess this is as much as I can say in terms of having a basic theory of directing: letting the material have complete freedom, and imposing myself only where necessary. That's what I meant when I was guilty of that original cliché by remarking that I let my films make themselves.

How do you finish your films?

I shoot very economically, sometimes not enough, even. I shoot as if I were editing in the camera. Then there's usually only one way to cut the film. I look at the rushes every day, again allowing for my collaborators' views in chosing the final takes to use. Then, when the film is cut, I choose the music with the idea that it has to have a dramatic purpose. I hate decorative music. I want the music to help tell the story, illustrate the idea, not just to emphasize the images. That means that it must have a certain autonomy. And there should be economy.

Would you say that your principle of making films, and your principle of using the various elements, like music, for example, is this economy?

Everything must serve the idea—I must say this again and again. The means used to convey the idea should be the simplest and the most direct and clear. I don't believe in overdressing anything. Just what is required. No extra words, no extra images, no extra music. But it seems to me that this is a universal principle of art. To say as much as possible with a minimum of means. And to be always clear about what you are trying to say. That means, of course, that you must know what you are trying to say. So I guess my first principle is to understand myself, and then to find the simplest way to make others understand it, too.

[Recorded in Rome, January 23, 1965]

DONALD RICHIE

Red Beard

This analysis of Kurosawa's latest film is an abridged chapter from Richie's extraordinarily comprehensive and detailed book,* THE FILMS OF AKIRA KUROSAWA, *which will be published in early November. This volume, which is very likely the best ever written about a film director, presents sensitive and sensible studies of the entire Kurosawa canon; it is luxuriously printed, with duotone offset illustrations, in a 10″ by 10″ format. ($11.00.) Orders can be sent to the University of California Press, Berkeley 94720 or placed through any bookstore.

"After finishing *Sanjuro,*" Kurosawa has said, "I started looking around for something else to do and quite by accident picked up *Red Beard* by Shugoro Yamamoto [the author of the original of *Sanjuro.*] At first I thought that this would make a good script for Horikawa but as I wrote I got so interested that I knew that I would have to direct it myself.

"I had something special in mind when I made this film because I wanted to make something that my audience would *want* to see it, something so magnificent that people would just have to see it. To do this we all worked harder than ever, tried to overlook no detail, were willing to undergo any hardship. It was really hard work and I got sick twice. Mifune and Kayama each got sick once. . . ."

STORY

At the end of the Tokugawa period a young man, Yuzo Kayama (Yasumoto), returns to Edo after several years study at the Dutch medical schools in Nagasaki. Told to make a formal call at the Koishikawa Public Clinic and pay his respects to its head, Toshiro Mifune (Kyojo Niidé, commonly called Red Beard), he learns that he is to stay there and work as an intern. Since he had hoped to be attached to the court medical staff and had certainly never considered working in a public clinic, the news is a great shock. He refuses, purposely breaks the hospital rules, will not wear a uniform, and further trespasses by lounging around the small pavilion where a beautiful but insane patient (Kyoko Kagawa) is kept.

Her servant (Reiko Dan) accuses him of having (like a fellow-intern, Tatsuyoshi Ehara) a less than medical interest in her. Kayama refutes this, saying that he would like to treat such a case, that indeed he knows much more about medicine than Red Beard himself.

Reiko: Then why not help the other patients.
Kayama: Any doctor can help *them.*

Having thus revealed his high opinion of himself, he goes on to imply that, indeed, he is not interested in women as women. "I don't believe in them," he says, referring to his fiancée who ran off with another man while he was in Nagasaki.

Nonetheless, when he is alone drinking in his room and the escaped mad girl appears, he allows himself to be seduced. She tells him her story, that she is not really insane, that she was sexually abused when she was young. And all the time she is skillfully preparing to murder him just as she did three other young men. In the midst of their embraces she has pressed her fingers against an artery in his neck causing him to faint, has already taken out her long, sharp hair-pin, when Red Beard comes in.

Mifune and Kayama at the gate.

Later Red Beard says:

She just grazed your neck, you'll be well in a day or two, but if I'd come in any later, you'd be dead. . . . She was just born that way. I suppose you heard all about her childhood. Well, lots of other girls have had experiences like that. It's nothing.

This singularly hard-boiled observation impresses Kayama, particularly since his own gullibility has ended in what he chooses to see as his humiliation. Impressed, he begins to take an interest in the hospital. It is certainly different from what the court would be. It is overcrowded, under-staffed, and the poor are everywhere. It is just as Ehara described it at the beginning of the film:

It's terrible . . . The patients are all slum people, they're full of fleas—they even smell bad. Being here makes you wonder why you ever wanted to become a doctor.

Among the poor is one old man (Kamatari Fujiwara) who is dying and Kayama is called in to watch over him. He is familiar with death only from medical books and watching the real thing is a horrifying experience. Afterwards he complains to another intern (Yoshio Tsuchiya):

Red Beard said I should watch carefully, that a man's last moments are very solemn. Solemn! I call it horrible. Did you think that that awful death was solemn?

Tsuchiya: The pain, the loneliness of death frighten me too, but Dr. Niidé, he looks at it differently. He looks into their hearts as well as their bodies . . . I want to be like him someday.

The implication is that Mifune sees beyond the horror. More (as is seen in a scene following), he negates it. The dead man's daughter (Akemi Negishi) appears. She has had a very hard life, including bearing three children by her mother's lover. She wants, at least, to be assured that her father died peacefully.

Akemi: He wasn't in pain when he died, was he?

Mifune: Oh, no. He died quite peacefully.

Kayama: . . . ! (Startled, surprised at this lie.)

Akemi: It had to be that way, it just had to be! If not . . . if not, then life would be just too unendurable.

But Kayama knows that he did indeed die in pain. Life then is unendurable?

Perhaps it need not be. This is suggested by another death. A very good, almost saintly man Tsutomo Yamazaki (Sahachi) dies and his past is uncovered. He loved a girl (Miyuki Kuwano) but apparently lost her during an earthquake. Later he accidentally meets her again and discovers that she left him because:

> We were too happy together. We were so happy, I became afraid. A girl like me didn't deserve it. I felt I'd be punished if it lasted. Then the earthquake came. I was right. It was a punishment; I'd had my whole life's share of happiness.

This very Japanese reasoning (the unendurability of living is called just punishment) and her death convince him that it is only by living for others that one can live at all. He and Red Beard, an unknown wheelwright and a famous doctor, have both discovered the same thing. With a splendid subbornness, both men act as though good really existed in this world—they create it.

All of this has its effect on Kayama. He puts on his uniform finally and goes around with the doctor on his calls. One of them is at the whorehouse district. There they find a twelve-year-old, Terumi Niki (Otoyo), who is being beaten because she will not "entertain" the callers.

After a spirited fight with the bouncers, Mifune takes her back to the clinic. She is very ill, physically, but—more seriously—she is spiritually near death. He tells Kayama that he is to cure her, that she is his first patient. And here occurs the intermission—after the first two hours of this three-hour-film.

CHARACTERIZATION

Like the hero of *Sanshiro Sugata,* like the detective in *Stray Dog,* and the shoe manufacturer in *High and Low,* the young doctor learns: *Red Beard* too is the story of an education. Kayama learns that medical theory (illusion) is different from a man dying (reality); that—as the picture later reveals—what he had always though himself (upright, honest, hard-working) must now be reconciled with what he finds himself to also be (arrogant, selfish, insincere); and, the most important, that evil itself is the most humanly common thing in this world; that *good* is uncommon.

And, indeed, at first it seems very much like the hell that Kurosawa characters (in *Rashomon,* in *The Lower Depths,* in *High and Low*) are always talking about. The hospital stinks, they don't have enough food, they are not given good kimono, they are all sick, they will all die.

Yet, as the film progresses, we (along with Kayama) discover that this is all illusion. It is so horrible that indeed it "makes you wonder why you ever wanted to become a doctor." But the point is that you *are* a doctor. You are responsible both to and for these people.

Mifune (seen through the eyes and opinions of the fellow-intern) seems a monster and acts like one. When introduced to him, Kayama is met with a fanatical stare and an insulting silence. Good-hearted liberal Kayama hates him on sight.

Yet Kayama is doubly fooled. The arrogant Mifune is revealed as a truly good man and Kayama comes to realize that he himself is, in his own words, "despicable."

Kayama does not begin to understand that the good need not be apparent until Mifune prevents the mad girl from murdering him. He cries then and his tears are mainly those of self-pity. He really begins to understand what this is all about only when he is put in a position much like that of Mifune himself, when he must save the girl.

The second part of the film begins with a series of very short scenes showing him caring for her and her progressive recovery. At one point she refuses to take her medicine, keeps hitting the spoon with her hand. Mifune comes in and says that he will try. His patience is supernal. She takes her medicine.

Kayama stares at this. He has just learned something: that patience and fortitude are invincible. The girl has learned something too. She speaks for the first time and says:

> *Girl:* Why didn't he slap me?
>
> *Kayama:* For not taking your medicine? But, there *are* kind people in this world. You've just never met any before.

Girl: You can't fool me. Mother told me . . . she said to watch out for people and never trust anyone. And she was right.

Kayama: No, no. He's not like that. You know he isn't. Isn't that why you took your medicine? He wants to cure you.

Girl: You too?

Kayama: Of course, me too.

Girl: (Suddenly hitting the bowl from which he has been trying to feed her, knocking it across the room, and breaking it.) Even now?

Kayama: (Begins to cry, picking up the pieces of the bowl.) You poor thing. You're really a nice girl. . . .

Like all of the "villains" in Kurosawa's films, she is "bad" only because she is afraid. Kindness, sympathy, understanding really terrify us. Prepared for the worst, armed with mistrust and suspicion, we can do nothing against disinterested good—except to try and belittle or destroy it. She will be so bad that Kayama will have to strike her—and therefore prove that he is not kind at all and that she was right in the first place. Only thus can she keep her world together.

The following morning she has disappeared. He finds her begging. After she had collected enough, she goes and buys something in a shop. He calls her name, she turns and drops it, breaking it—it was a bowl.

Kayama: And that was to replace what you broke? But why? Did I scold you for it? Did I? Did you think I did? If you did, I apologize. I am sorry. I am very sorry.

The bulwarks of pride and fear cannot stand this assault. This further understanding breaks her. She kneels in the dust and, for the first time, cries like the child that she is.

When someone breaks down and weeps in a Kurosawa picture (the girl in *Stray Dog*, Mifune in the uncut version of *The Bad Sleep Well*) recovery is in sight. But here complications enter. Kayama himself becomes ill. One of the reasons was that he sat up so much with her, but the real reason is that he is suddenly told how he happened to be placed in the clinic at all. (This is a plot point: his father was worried about him after he was jilted, talked with Mifune about it, and it was Mifune who suggested that hard work here would help.) Kayama is stunned and then, in light of these new facts, must look at his own actions.

Kayama: I'm no good at all. I'm selfish . . . I blamed [my fiancée] and yet it was I who almost let that mad girl kill me. I was vain of being a doctor just back from Nagasaki, I was too good for this clinic. I hated you, even despised you. I'm despicable . . . I'm conceited . . .I'm insincere. . . .

Mifune: You're tired.

One can appreciate the parallel. The girl breaks down; Kayama breaks down. Both admit being less than perfect—she in her "evil," he in his "good." Both finally admit to being human.

There is a further parallel. Kayama becomes very ill and it is now the girl who must nurse him. This is shown in a short series of very affecting scenes much like those which opened the second part of the picture. After recovering he goes off to see his mother (Kinuyo Tanaka) and she notices a change at once:

You don't really seem to have been ill . . . you just look a little leaner. You look like a man who's just had a bath.

He has indeed had a bath; he has had a baptism.

Back at the clinic the girl has been distracted from her love for Kayama (and her jealousy of his fiancée's younger sister to whom he will eventually become married) by the sudden appearance of a little boy (Yoshitaka Zushi). He has been stealing from the rice-kettle and she refuses to catch him when she has the chance. This earns her the enmity of the kitchen-help until they and Kayama overhear a scene where the girl tells the little boy to stop stealing, that she will bring him the left-over rice every day. He has brought some candy to reward her for not giving him away and she refuses to take it. He wants to know why—because it was stolen? But then when he stole the rice she didn't say anything. Her answer does credit to Kayama's influence:

Stealing rice and stealing candy are two different things. You must not steal. It is better to be a beggar than a thief.

Much, much better, particularly if stealing is equated with the life of fearing, and begging with the life of trusting. It is very like the philosophy that opens and closes *Yojimbo*—that a long life living on gruel in the country is better than a short life of living it up in the city.

Observing the parallels in this film (from Red Beard to Kayama to the girl to the boy) one sees that Kurosawa is, in effect, constructing a chain of good. The idea is a novel one. All of us believe in a chain of evil and are firmly convinced that bad begets bad. (Indeed, one Kurosawa film, *The Bad Sleep Well,* has shown us just that.) In *Red Beard,* however, the director is offering the proposition (startling, even alarming) that good also begets good.

One can see what Kurosawa has had the bravery to do in this film. He is suggesting that, like the hospital, the world in which we live may indeed be a hell but that good, after all, is just as infectious as evil. To consider such a proposition, in a cynical age (and modern Japan is as cynical as anywhere), seems almost shameful. But this is why Kurosawa has made the movie.

Let us at once invoke the spirit of Dr. Kildare since he persists in hovering over this film. Let us also call upon John Wayne to fill out the Mifune role as "Big Red." This will be useful in demonstrating what the film is *not.* And this is necessary because this picture is the most open to misinterpretation of all Kurosawa's works.

It has already had more than its share. The director has been accused of making the most contrived tear-jerker since *One Wonderful Sunday;* it has been said that Kurosawa's famed humanism has been revealed as a weltering bathos into which even Ben Casey or *The Interns* would think twice before stepping.

Kurosawa's dilemma is rather similar to that of Dickens. Laconic realist though he is, he believes in the good; but the good is very difficult to dramatize. Difficult as it is, however, Dickens manages admirably in at least several novels. So does Griffith, a very Dickensian creator. In their best work, they affirm by refusing to sentimentalize—and that is also what Kurosawa does in this picture.

Mifune is a brother to the doctor in *Drunken Angel:* the one railing against ignorance and the hospital; the other, against poverty and the sump. They are men possessed. The difference from the suave, knowledgable Dr. Kildare with his crochety bedside-manner is apparent. The latter cannot afford to hate illness; he makes his living from it. Red Beard's hate of disease is one of the reasons that he is in a public clinic—the lowest of medical positions. He does more than merely devote himself to the good; he devotes himself to a fight against bad.

This is why the picture is not sentimental. To simply feel for, sympathize with, weep over—this is sentimental because it is so ridiculously disproportionate to what is needed. But to gird the loins and go out and do battle, to hate so entirely that good is the result: this is something else.

And this then is the kind of man that Kayama will also become. Like Watanabe in *Ikiru,* the boy is given something to do, something to fling himself into, in which to find personal salvation. This kind of goodness has nothing weak nor even appealing about it. And it is the opposite of "being good," in the sense of obeying, or doing the expected, or even the rational. This is one of the most difficult of all lessons to learn: that the surface "good" is spurious. Kayama finally comes to understand. At the end of the film he is going to be married and has told the girl that he is going to stay on at the clinic. Mifune is furious because this means that the boy will refuse the chance to become the Shogun's doctor at the court. But Kayama has seen what the good really consists of. He is therefore "bad" and refuses to obey Mifune, just as at the beginning he refused to obey. But now he has come full circle and his reasons are entirely different.

This paradox is at the heart of many of Kurosawa's films. Sugata jumps into the pond and deaf to the seductions of the "proper way of behaving," of niceness, he stays there; the detective searching for his pistol is told that he is "crazy," and is upsetting the police department by his unreasonableness; the seven samurai in their efforts to build an army to hold off the bandits are not "nice" at all to the farmers; the hero of *Ikiru* is downright cruel (if you want to look at it that way) to his superiors in the local government. For this reason the Kurosawa hero (as in *The Bad Sleep Well*) must learn to be

"bad" in order that he can become "good." He must unlearn what the world considers good in order to learn what he himself knows to be so.

We have travelled far from the world of *The Interns*—we are, in fact, very near that no-man's land that Camus speaks of so persuasively. In *Red Beard* Kurosawa presents us with a mass of evidence, such a richness, such a complication, and such a challenge, that indeed one's initial reaction is *not* to believe.

That odd corollary that "good makes good," for example. It is dazzling only if we allow ourselves a like liberty of thought. But we who live in hell are so conditioned that we would much rather laugh than weep—for that seems the only alternative. If one prefers this, then the film may be called sentimental, but of course to do so is to miss its point—and through what Kurosawa considers moral cowardice. Red Beard rages that his poor are also poor in spirit—they want to die; Kurosawa rages that we are equally poor—that we desperately want to retreat before this vision of the personal "good" because of the responsibilities and hard work that an acceptance would insist upon. In this film he gambles—just as Dickens and Dostoevsky gamble. Using the commonest forms of compassion (that for a sick girl, a dying child, a dedicated doctor), he will force us into recognition that compassion is not enough. The film is both compassionate and hard-boiled—because Kurosawa's concern, like Red Beard's, is the opposite of indulgent. The film can carry its extraordinary weight of sentiment(including a happy ending) because it can carry us so far beyond the confines of our daily hells. The stake in Kurosawa's game is *us*—and he does everything he can to make us accept. One has a fleeting reminiscence of the girl in *One Wonderful Sunday* turning to the audience and pleading for, demanding acceptance. This 1965 picture is much more profound, personal, persuasive than the 1946 one, but the morality is the same. And so is the conclusion—if you accept yourself you are saved. Have courage enough to allow that you are moved, allow yourself respite from cynicism, from hate. Allow yourself to believe in yourself.

Niki and Zushi.

TREATMENT

If you are to believe in yourself you must have the most incisive of insights, the clearest of visions. You must be entirely realistic about yourself and about the world you live in. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that all Kurosawa's films are strengthened by an abiding interest in the way things are, the way places look, the way people act, and why this film is his most realistic.

Not only is the look of the picture actual—a kind of meticulously detailed Tokugawa-period newsreel—but its structure is purposely amorphous, full of incident and detail, lacking in anything that one would usually call form. Indeed, as the précis indicates, the plot is as complicated as anything in Dickens, but there is no over-riding form. The film, to be sure, is vaguely cyclic. The first scene, the last scene before the intermission, and the last scene in the film all take place at the main gate of the hospital. But it would be quite impossible to schematize the plot and find any kind of imposed structure. Rather, as in the novels of Dickens, the film discloses through characterization and parallels of action. We have already discussed some of these. Let us look at a single simple example: the clinic uniform and the girl's kimono.

All the interns, the head doctor himself, wear a uniform. Kayama refuses. This becomes for him a symbol. Yet this refusal only gets him into trouble. During the operation scene he is advised to wear it lest he dirty his own clothes; he refuses and presumably gets his clothes very

dirty indeed. The real reason that the mad girl picks him is because he does not wear a uniform, and therefore she "trusts" him. That uniform and commitment are the same is indicated by a scene which occurs directly after he has finally decided to wear the uniform. He steps outside the hospital and is at once stopped by a woman with a sick child. She recognizes the uniform and rushes up to him. His reaction is surprise and a rueful aside as he looks at the uniform: ". . . helping people?" It is as though he recognizes that he has now identified himself, has let himself in for frantic mothers and sick children for the rest of his life.

The young girl's offense in the whore-house is aggravated in that she rips up the kimono put on her to entice customers, and that is the ostensible reason she is being beaten. The sister of Kayama's fiancée, to reward her for looking after the young doctor when he was ill, remakes one of her kimono (we saw her wearing it herself in an earlier scene) and gives it to the girl. Jealous of her obvious interest in Kayama, the child throws it in the mud. Later, however, when the whore-house madame returns to claim her, the first thing she does is to run and get the now-cleaned kimono and show it to her saying that she is well cared for, look, she even has a nice kimono now, and that she will not return.

The parallel is obvious (much less so on the screen, separated as these uniform and kimono scenes are, and they are more subtle than I am here making them appear): the girl also commits herself. Both she and Kayama agree, in a way, to be what they are. They identify themselves.

This is, of course, what so many Kurosawa pictures are about: self-identification. The crisis occurs when the character finally agrees to define himself in his own eyes. Watanabe is not just a useless civil servant, he is a useful human being; the hero of *The Bad Sleep Well* is not an avenger, he is a good friend and husband; the actor in *The Lower Depths* is not a drunken sot, he is a good man who is going to find peace. He must predicate his present upon his past, upon what he has always been without recognizing it, and he must then act as he chooses.

If this is true, it might explain Kurosawa's singular interest in the past in this film. For the first time he becomes interested in what his people *were* and, unprecedentedly, he allows scenes which *explain* past actions. Consequently (except for the first one, which is very brief) his flash-backs in this picture are full, conventional looks into the past and not the literal flashes he has used (in all of his films except *Rashomon*) until now.

These are real narrative flash-backs. For example, segments of Tsutomu Yamazaki's story are conventionally cut into his telling it.

He and the girl meet when she gives him an umbrella to keep off the snow. (They meet on an immense set with full buildings, constructed in three dimensions, with real perspectives—all on the screen for just one minute.) Later, they meet by a field; again, they meet in Asakusa during a fair (hundreds of extras, a double-level set, seen on the screen for one minute); and, for the last time—a full ten-minute flash-back—in his room.

These are all scenes of explanation. If they were cut from the film they would not damage the continuity. What one would miss, however, would be an attitude which is new to Kurosawa —a new nostalgia for the past. Something like it was seen in the flash-backs in *Ikiru* but there the emphasis was upon the pain that remembering can cause. In *Red Beard*, we feel an almost Mizoguchi-like longing for the past.

Take the extraordinary elegiac beauty of the scenes where they part at Asakusa. It is on a bridge, she is carrying a crying child on her back; the situation is painful for both of them. Kurosawa has chosen to shoot from very far away, using a long-distance lens. The result is that the close-ups appear two-dimensional. They are like something from an old romance, some illustrated cautionary tale. The man and woman seem very near each other, and yet, as they move, we see that they are separated. The lovely images comment upon the sweetness of the past, its impossibility of recapture. As the wife turns and begins her descent to the other side of the bridge, the child turns and looks at this man it

has never seen and we suddenly realize that we too will never see these people again. Nostalgia strikes—and it is almost impossible to suggest how Kurosawa creates this pang. It is partly the fantastic beauty of the shot, partly the silence, and partly that these scenes are not necessary to the picture. They do not forward plot, and so we are allowed the exquisite pleasure of a very strong but quite irrelevant sensation.

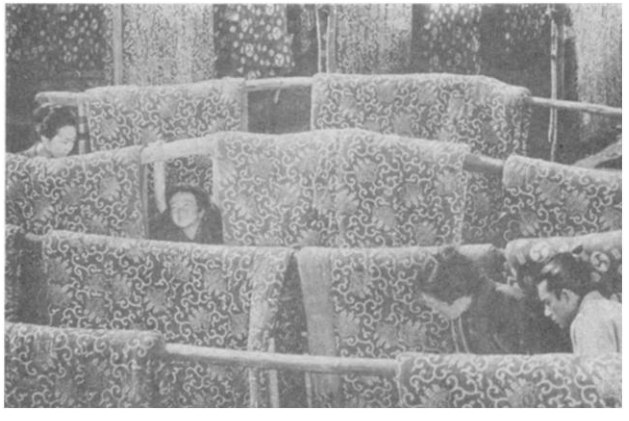
Sound is one of the senses (along with smell and taste) through which nostalgia is most strongly apprehended, perhaps because it is not often specific. When we see something reminiscent of the past, we "recognize" it; when we hear it, seldom; when we taste it, rarely. Kurosawa uses this fact brilliantly during these flashback scenes.

He and she meet at a fair and he has bought a small basket of herbs to which a wind-bell is attached. At the beginning of the sequence Yamazaki turns and sees her and at the same time a breeze starts up. The hundreds of little bells at the herb-selling pavilion begin shrilling, an unearthly, sweet, and summer sound. Later, when he is leaving them by the bridge, the lonely tinkle of the single bell is heard. Still later, when she comes to see him, the basket is hanging just outside the door. We see its shadow and hear the sound of the bell as the wind teases it. After Yamazaki is dead, Kayama leaves his house. It is early morning. Suddenly he hears the sound of a tiny wind-bell. He turns and there, at the very end, far away, in front of one of the other houses, is a bell—just like the one we saw. He stops, remembering.

This is very like those aural ostinati that Kurosawa has long been fond of using in his films. One of the most spectacular is at the end of the picture. The little boy is dying and suddenly we hear the strangest of sounds—it is a long-drawn out, silvery echo; it is the name of the little boy, being called from an enormous distance. Everyone is startled because it sounds so entirely supernatural. Kayama goes to investigate and comes back to explain that the kitchen help are shouting down the well, there being a folk belief that all wells lead to the bottom of the earth and that the departing soul may be called back. We cut to the well itself and watch the weeping women gathered around it, shouting. There is an irrational beauty about the scene, and a hint of magic which is communicated through this odd, haunting sound, this rising and falling, this ostinato which is heard over the close-up of the dying child.

Other ostinati are also used. When the old man is dying, his eyes are open, his mouth is moving, and from his throat comes a rasping, straining, recurrent grunt, a blood-curdling sound. Kurosawa has placed the camera rather low so that the moving, gasping mouth of the old man is always down at the corners of the frame. The sound is out of all proportion to the movement and, hence, our eyes—just as unwilling as those of Kayama—are drawn time and again to this moving mouth, which is precisely where we (and Kayama) do not want to look.

Sound, indeed, is perhaps more important in this film than in any of the director's others. For the first time he uses a stereophonic, four-directional system, which is spectacularly heard under the credits. During these the music pauses from time and time and we hear in the background the distant sounds of Edo, the call of a child or the cry of a fish-peddler, the slight rustle of wind in branches. We are presented from the first with this double level of sound. The upper (and louder) carries music and dialogue and effects. The lower (and softer) envelops the images in an extraordinarily complicated web of whispers and distant noises. The second level is, realistic as it sounds, rigorously controlled and contributes enormously to the feel-



ing of realism which this film exudes. When the girl's fever rages and Kayama presses his hand against her forehead, we hear far in the distance the wooden clappers traditionally used to warn against fire.

The dialogue is also punctuated with music, in the secco-recitatif manner used in many of the later pictures. The mad girl's recounting of her childhood is filled with pauses. In these we hear not only the minute sounds of the aged hospital building settling and creaking but also, as a part of this almost silent background, three very low alto flutes which always sound the same obsessive figure between the pauses.

One of the happiest uses of music in all Kurosawa occurs when the girl is tending Kayama. There has been a series of very short scenes (like those in the traveling scenes of *They Who Step on the Tiger's Tail,* Mifune trying to sleep in *Sanjuro,* etc.) showing her taking care of him and the last one of these has the following continuity:

Kayama is delirious, perspiring. Hands place a wet cloth on his forehead. He opens his eyes. The girl bends down. They look at each other. She is afraid and moves away. Wipe to Kayama asleep. Hands take off the cloth. Tenderly she bends down and pushes his wet hair back into place. He opens his eyes. She stops. He closes his eyes. The hands return. Wipe to Kayama asleep, close-up. He opens his eyes, alarmed. Cut back to show him watching her. She is wiping the floor in what seems at first the old, obsessive way that she had. Then he sees that the movement is different. She is really only wiping the floor, she is well. He closes his eyes. She stands up and begins wiping the window sills. He watches but when she turns toward him closes his eyes so that she thinks him asleep. She opens the window. It is snowing. She reaches out and takes a double-handful of snow. Dissolve to her putting the snow into the water-bucket from which she moistens the towel for his forehead. She puts the cool towel on his forehead. He opens his eyes. They look at each other and then, slowly, he smiles. She stands up, half afraid, half pleased. She moves to the window and then, for the first time, she smiles. Cut to him, drowsy, almost asleep. She is sitting by the table, also almost asleep. Propped on one arm she is looking at one of his medical books. But her head drops again and again and he smiles at this. She nods. He smiles but his lids are heavy. Finally, her head slips to the table. With a smile still on his lips Kayama too falls asleep.

The extraordinary beauty of this sequence is not easily described. It is entirely pantomime with only sound (the noise of water, the small sound of snow, the music) to support it. It is also the heart of the film, and what is so lovely is this growth of mutual feeling which we are witnessing, the dedicated care of the little girl, the loving playfulness of Kayama pretending to be asleep, the innocent trust of both. Again, one thinks of Dickens.

Much of the hushed beauty of this scene is contributed by the music. It begins when she opens the window and sees the snow, and it is a paraphrase of Haydn—the second movement of the *Surprise* Symphony. It is so transmuted that it is not recognizable at once, but the innocence and serenity of the original are quite apparent. It continues and supports the rest of the scene, ending only after both have fallen asleep. It is much more right for this scene than words can make apparent, and even its slightly old-fashioned, four-square air is apposite.

This is also true of the other music in the picture. The Brahms-like (*First Symphony,* last movement) major "theme" of the film is so right that it is almost impossible to imagine any other music. We first hear it during the titles, coming in strong all celli and glowing horns, under the name of the director; it appears again during one of Red Beard's scenes and we come to associate it with him. During the intermission (this five-minute break is a part of the film—the projector is left running, and the sound-track carries a full elaboration of the theme) and at the end (three minutes of music after the end title) the theme again appears, building—after the conclusion of the picture—into a really joyous Brahmsian finale with celli pizzicatti, purling woodwinds, divided strings, and horn calls.

It is quite impossible to think of this picture without thinking of music. To describe the look of it one should speak of something burnished and glowing, like the body of a fine cello. If a single adjective were used I should think it would be: "mellow."

PRODUCTION

This mellowness is contained within the look of the film itself. It has a patina, the way certain of Mizoguchi's films have a patina. This is the result of a like care for realistic detail. Kurosawa's efforts to achieve this are already legend in Japan. The main set was really an entire

town with back alleys and side-streets (some of which were never filmed) which was so large that shots of just the roofs fill the whole wide screen during the credit titles.

All of the material used for the town was about as old as it is supposed to look. The tiled roofs were taken from buildings more than a century old; all of the lumber was from the oldest available farmhouses; costumes and props were all "aged" for months before their appearance; the bedding (made in Tokugawa-period patterns) was really slept in for up to half a year before shooting. Making the main gate, which so figures in the film, occupied almost everyone. The wood was more than a hundred years old and both staff and director kept adding touches to make it look still older.

Kurosawa used this magnificent set in a very telling way. The main street is seen for just one minute and its destruction was incorporated into the earthquake scenes; the scenes with the bridge are likewise short; so are those in the elaborately constructed paddy. By constricting three-fourths of the picture to interiors, and by using this magnificent set only several times, he brought a kind of life to the entire film which a single set—no matter its grandeur—could not. The *Red Beard* set is really real in part because it is so little emphasized.

This town is inhabited as well but we are rarely *shown* the people. Instead, when the characters leave the hospital or look out of the windows, there they are. When the girl goes to beg on the bridge she does so against a fully realistic background of Tokugawa Japan. Vendors pass, fishermen fold their nets, a samurai stalks, a lady shops, and we sense them but do not *see* them because Kurosawa is focusing all of our attention upon the girl and upon Kayama. This is very much like Mizoguchi.

Another Mizoguchi-like quality is Kurosawa's showing the impact that time has on his characters. Of all of the many production difficulties of *Red Beard* this demonstration of the effect of time was the most difficult to achieve. Kurosawa insisted that everyone change just half a year's worth, the time span of the story; but the film was almost two years before the camera. Kayama is a very young actor, very impressionable; he himself was rapidly changing, and not necessarily in the same directions as the hero. Further, due to illness, bad weather, financial problems, only the sections about the young girl were shot in chronological order. Kayama had to keep track of his presumed spiritual development at the same time that he was coping with his own. "It was simply back-breaking and if I had known what it was to be like I don't think I would have believed in myself enough to undertake it. But . . . it wasn't I who did it, you know. It was him. He made me do it. Somehow or other, I must have had it in me. At any rate, he got it out. I was astonished when I saw the fine cut of the picture. There I was, grow-

ing and changing, just like life itself."

The like development of the little girl caused Kurosawa much concern. "Terumi is really a very timid little girl, that's what she really is," Kurosawa has said. "I watched her every day on the set turning more and more into the character she was playing. I began to fear that even off the set she would go right on acting like her. Then one day when we were about half done I saw her playing around with some of the stage-hands on the lot. She was playing just like an ordinary little girl and I was quite relieved."

Many of her scenes caused difficulties. Kurosawa had decided that the character was probably epileptic and that therefore the white of her eyes ought to shine, somehow. When she is first seen, she is kneeling in a darkened room and only her eyes are illuminated. "We tried everything. During these scenes we were doing well if we averaged a shot a day. Finally I had a little hole bored in the wall she was facing and put a light-man on the other side. He was holding a kind of flash-light torch that we invented and finally I got the light in her eyes."

Other difficulties concerned the dying of Yamazaki. "If he were going to die in a Western bed, that would be different and I could group people around him properly. But he was dying flat on his back on *tatami* and there seemed to be no way to get him lighted as I wanted and at the same time to compose the listeners around him." Devising the sequence as it appears on the screen took weeks of experiment.

"I finally decided that half of the problem was that he talked too much and that I had apparently conceived something with lots of silence in it. So I took away about two-thirds of his dialogue. That helped some." What helped the rest was discovering a place from which face, mouth, eyes, and listeners were all visible. In the finished scenes the camera appears to hover over the dying man, almost in full close-up. Actually, the camera was far way, flung onto a girder in the roof of the studio, shooting the scene with a 500 mm. lens.

Most of the picture was made using such extreme long-distance lenses. (The bridge scenes with Yamazaki and his wife were shot with a 750 mm. lens.) "The actors liked this fine, it got the camera far away from them, but that isn't why I did it this time. I did it because I wanted to get that crowded, two-dimensional, slightly smoky effect that only a long-distance lens can gave you."

In addition to long-distance lenses Kurosawa again used his multiple-camera technique but limited it to only several scenes. During the big scene with Awemi Negishi he used five cameras running simultaneously. For the majority of the scenes he used two. And for many crucial scenes he contented himself with one. "Shooting this film was a different kind of experience for me," he has said. "*Seven Samurai* took a very long time to make too but for this film I wanted something even more dramatic and, well, active. There were lots of times when I had to control my own feelings and where I just sat and waited for something to happen." This something (in particular, nuances in the acting of Terumi Niki and Kayama) was something which he felt only the single camera could capture.

The single camera equipped with a long-distance lens has certainly contributed to the look of the picture but Kurosawa sees this look as different from what most critics, including myself, have seen. "There is a lot of talk about the look of this film and everyone is always telling me about its *sabi*. [*Sabi* is taken from the verb "to rust," and it implies what we mean when we say "patina," except that in Japanese there is an unavoidable connotation of the musty, the slightly old-fashioned.] It doesn't have *sabi* at all. It has freshness, vitality." In order to create this Kurosawa used a new highly sensitive film, which was also given special development, and a new kind of light which made his set even more blinding than it usually is.

Like Dr. Mifune with his medicine, Kurosawa behaved with patience and fortitude to get what he wanted. What he wanted is indicated by what he did the first day of shooting. "I gathered everyone, cast and staff together, and I played them the last movement of Beethoven's *Ninth*—the 'An die Freude' part, you know. I told them that this was the way that the audience was supposed to feel when it walked

out of the theater and it was up to them to create this feeling."

I wonder what would happen at, say, the MGM lot, if a director did this? What happened at the Toho lot was that everyone listened to Beethoven attentively, bought the record—Kurosawa favors the old Weingartner but will listen to the Bruno Walter—and came to work determined to do just what the director wanted.

(About the theme music, incidentally, Kurosawa disagrees: "No, you are wrong. It is not Brahms' *First.* It isn't Brahms at all. It is Beethoven—it is probably the *Ninth.* At least that is what I told Sato [the composer] I wanted and so that is probably what he tried to get. When he hears what he is supposed to do he just sighs and shakes his head and goes away and comes back with it after a while. The Haydn was all my idea and I wish we'd used Haydn himself. The reason is that I put the sequence together and decided to start the music right where she opens the window and sees the snow and then continue it all through the scenes with Kayama and end it when they both fall asleep. That part of the score wasn't finished and so I put on a recording of the Haydn, the second movement, and played it along with the film to see what the effect was. Well, the effect was just fine but what really surprised me was that I had cut the sequence so that it came to an end precisely at the end of the Haydn. I must have heard that recording—it was the old Furtwängler one—so often that somewhere in the back of my head some kind of clock kept count. The Haydn and my sequence were not a second off. Things like that happen to me all the time.")

After *Red Beard* had opened, was still playing to packed houses (it may well turn out to be the director's most financially successful film), and was proving to be indeed just the kind of picture that people want to see, something "so magnificent that people would just have to see it," I told Kurosawa that I sensed that he had come to some sort of conclusion, some sort of resting place. He had pushed his style to what appeared to be its ultimate. At the same time he had continued and, it would seem, completed the theme which has been his throughout his entire film career. In *Red Beard* he had vindicated his humanism and his compassion, he had shown that only after the negative (evil) has been fully experienced can the positive, the good, joy itself, be seen as the power it still remains; that this wisdom was offered in a film filled with true sentiment, with the fact that in all of our glory, in all of our foolishness, we are—after all—human; further, that evil itself is merely human, after all, and that the good then lies in our realizing this and acting upon it.

Kurosawa listened to all of this patiently but when I was about to launch into examples, gently interrupted me with: "Well, I don't know much about all of that—there might be something in it. I don't know. What I do know is that every picture I've done has come out of something that has happened to me, has happened to me personally. A friend of mine had a son kidnapped and that kind of barbarism upset me so that I made *High and Low.* Take gangsters, for example. They are stupid and they are dangerous, and I know it. So I make up Sanjuro and he goes around and defends innocent people. Look at our government. I don't think in any other country there is so thick a wall separating people from government officials and agencies. I go and make a film about it and they say I'm a Communist. But that isn't the point. The point is that something happens to me and I don't like it and I make a film. Look at *Red Beard.* I want people to come and see it because I want to show them Yasumoto [the young doctor] and I want them to remember him and I want them to try to be like him.

"But about something having ended . . . some sort of conclusion. Yes, I feel that myself very strongly. A cycle of some kind has concluded. Right now I am very tired and I need a rest badly. From now on I guess I'll be making a different kind of film. I don't know what it will be like. But I know the themes will be different and I guess I'll do it in a different manner. Right now I'm going to rest for half a year and then wait and see."

KIRK BOND

The World of Carl Dreyer

The recent cycle of Carl Dreyer films at the Museum of Modern Art in New York showed us a Dreyer that we had no idea of, and it showed us that all in all Carl Dreyer is one of the very greatest of film-makers—that he ranks with Grifith, with Eisenstein, with Murnau, with whomever one wants to name among the moderns. We were not exactly wrong in our previous conception of his work, but lacking so much of his best work we had perforce to judge him shallowly. Once one does see the whole body of the work (and the cycle gave us all but one film) it is clear how much the latter part depends on the first part, how difficult if not impossible it is to assess his later films without knowing the earlier films. One might go further. All or nearly all of the later films are in one way or another symbolic, and we can even say that the key to them lies in the early work.

The problem at the outset in writing about Dreyer's work is the dilemma of having to choose between starting with a general analysis without the films to go by, or starting with the films themselves without having the analytical background to throw light as we go along. I have chosen to compromise and say a few general words and then plunge into the films.

I divide the films, perhaps arbitrarily, into two main groups. In the first group I put his five earliest films: *The President, Leaves From Satan's Book, The Parson's Widow, Love One Another,* and *Once Upon a Time.* In the second group are most of the rest: *Michael, The Master of the House, The Bride of Glomdale, Vampyr, Day of Wrath,* and *Ordet.* This leaves two in neither group: *Joan of Arc* and *Two People.* The first I put in a special class for reasons I shall go into later; the second we did not see in the cycle and so I must pass it by.

The compelling point in this division is that in the best of the films of the first group—and *only* in those—can we see Dreyer as a finished artist, a master serenely working in complete command of his medium. All the rest—and this applies to *Joan* as well—are at least technically weakened by some ultimate lack of creative stylistic quality. Small wonder we felt Dreyer was cold! We did not know what he could do. We knew him as a struggling master, hampered somehow by what we did not know. We did not dream that he could be magnificent, luxuriant, sardonic, lyrical.

But then, when he had ceased to be the assured master he became something else, and it would be a bold critic who would say which was better. Each of the later films (except *Glomdale,* which is the one really weak Dreyer film) is a film with less or with uncertain style, but it is a film of symbolism. The idea takes precedence, and perhaps *malgré lui* Dreyer found himself using less than perfect forms to express the idea he had in mind. Deliberately or by the hand of fate something was sacrificed to get the idea out. Perhaps it could not have been otherwise.

If we had only three early films—*The President, Love One Another,* and *Once Upon a Time*—just these three—I would gladly say that Dreyer was a great master. And even in these, one extraordinary thing comes out. Dreyer is the most modern of all silent directors. He is a bridge between the silent Golden Age of which he was a part and the present day of which, of course, he is also a part. And I mean a bridge creatively, not just chronologically. For a moment in *The President* (1920) we see a new experimental film made yesterday. In his next films he seems to be straining at the leash, trying to push film art far ahead of his contemporaries, advanced though they themselves might be.

And in his symbolic films time disappears and we are already in the world of Bergman, of Resnais. Discovering Dreyer is like discovering La Tour, Herman Melville, El Greco. We

THE PRESIDENT

thought we knew him, the rather cold, rather narrow, though admittedly intense master—the creator of *Joan of Arc,* the familiar milestone of film history. Then we find we did not know him at all. We find that he is a great silent master for reasons we had not imagined, and more amazingly we find that he is in a unique sense a modern director; that while the work of others lives as great art Dreyer's work lives as the work of today. He is a contemporary, and what he has to say might be said by film-makers today.

With these few words we may go into the films themselves. I cannot think of more than two or three first films that compare with *The President.* Perhaps none quite equals it in maturity and finished style. *Strike* is more ebullient, *Citizen Kane* is more ambitious, but neither has the polish of *The President. Pather Panchali* comes closest possibly. But I still think Dreyer's film has the edge.

The story is not remarkable. It is essentially a typical nineteenth-century melodrama. A judge (with the official title of "President"—of the court) has an illegitimate daughter who is put on trial for killing her infant child. She is condemned to death, and the President first helps her to escape from prison and marry the man she loves and then kills himself. What matters is what Dreyer does with this material.

Here at a single stroke Dreyer creates a new filmic world like no other we have ever known. He owes much, obviously, to Griffith. There is the Griffith cutting, the Griffith imagery, the Griffith handling of people. But Griffith is only a beginning.

The most immediately apparent, most obvious quality that one sees at a first viewing is the amazing decor and the use Dreyer makes of it. According to Neergaard he was on this film his own set designer. The result is close to the decor of *Joan,* but because it is in the literal sense more realistic it finally seems even more effective. In *Joan* it becomes an end in itself. In *The President* it is an element in the overall pattern and it speaks as a part of the drama.

There are the bare white walls, walls broken by decorative objects, solid, isolated like gems in a case. And these objects may form ornate patterns themselves on the white walls. At one point an old servant sits tranquilly sipping tea while four medium-sized spoons, bowls outward, form a sort of spiked crown around his head. At another point a sofa stands against a wall on which a number of small medallions or miniatures—forty or fifty of them—form an intricate pattern.

There are the bare wooden floors, gleaming like polished ivory. There is a simple kitchen scene of white walls, white steps, bare floors—it might come out of the work of a Sienese master. There is a Griffith-like scene of the couple on a small wooden bridge in a landscape. But the combination of the bright white boards of the bridge and the surrounding shrubbery give us again the haunting semi-abstract quality of all this Dreyer decor.

Another word for it is "pure." Almost from the start of the cycle this word above all kept ringing in my ears. I felt Dreyer was a *pure* artist in a sense I could hardly define. Blake might make an inept comparison; the two artists are after all very different. The pure artist is apt to run himself into the ground of inanity, too, but Dreyer assuredly never does that. He preserves with his purity of form and idea a humanity on the one hand and a depth on the other.

Still on the visual side two outstanding bits in the film must be mentioned. Toward the end of the film, when the President and his daughter are travelling by different routes to an appointed meeting-place suddenly there is a shot, practically in silhouette, of a giant signal-tower and the signal arm lifting or falling, then a quick shot of a train viaduct with a carriage racing underneath. We could be watching a new experimental film.

More dazzling is the sequence of the torch-light procession. It must be one of the great visual moments in all film history. On a completely dark screen two tiny bits of light appear, at the two sides of the screen. They grow, and as they grow we see two groups of people moving toward us bearing torches. The images grow larger and we see that they are advancing toward the camera down two streets that meet at the center before us. The groups merge, now covering most of the screen, and then there is a series of other shots of people with torches, moving one way then another like grass moved by the wind. Finally the people reach a central square and toss their torches into a single flaming pile.

It has the effect of the torches in the religious procession in *El Dorado*, but if L'Herbier is more delicate, Dreyer is more overwhelming. The scene is close, at the least, to Lang's tremendous shot of the burning hall of the Huns in *Kriemhild's Revenge*.

I have the feeling in this film especially of something more than real, of something that never was on land or sea. It is not fantasy in the conventional sense. It is reality, but reality filtered through some strange glass that makes the simplest scene at once human and natural and yet unearthly.

And at one point at least Dreyer breaks completely with reality and introduces fantasy so pure, so transcendent that it leaves me gasping. In one of several flashbacks the daughter is about to be thrown out by her employer because of having the child. There is no business of preparations for leaving—she must go immediately. At the door she pauses and looks back longingly. The camera pans over to a corner of the room in which there is absolutely nothing but bare walls and, in the very corner on the floor, two shoes neatly placed side by side. Then the camera pans back, the employer roughly shakes her head, and the girl goes forlornly out the door. In its exquisite symbolism it makes me think of some recent Polish experimental films.

Dreyer's next two films do not seem to me at all comparable to this. We have known *Satan's Book* for years. It still seems inordinately heavy and stiff, though of course showing the same feeling for stylized decor. Presumably with Griffith in mind he wanted to make his own *Intolerance*. At any rate the idea of a phases-of-history film was very much in the air at the time. Murnau was making *Satanas*, May *Veritas Vincit*, and Tourneur *Woman*. But this does not explain why Dreyer chose such a poor story as the illogical idea of Marie Corelli (which Griffith found he could do little with years later) or why he wound up with such a weak production. Even the "modern" or Finnish story, which some people like, strikes me as decidedly inferior. We accept the film as Dreyer, but it is hard to be enthusiastic about it.

The Parson's Widow presents other problems.

Personally I do not find much in it. To me it is no more than a pleasant, minor Swedish film with little to mark it as Dreyer. But it seems to be one of the hits of the cycle. I grant that it tells an appealing story of the old lady and the young couple who came to feel contrite about their scorn of the old lady, and the old actress Hildur Carlberg is effective in a strong part, but these things do not seem to me to make a really good film, and certainly no masterpiece.

The one important thing in the film is the theme itself, and I can best explain that when I come to the symbolic films. It is more or less the theme that dominates Dreyer's later films, but here still simply a dramatic theme, not a symbolic theme, and so of little importance in this elementary form.

With *Love One Another* we are back in the world of the master. It is very different from *The President.* It is on a broader scale, with politics, religion, and history all playing parts. It does not have the special decor of *The President*—it is on a much more realistic plane. But by the same token it leads us in another direction. It reminds us of Pabst, and then as we watch it suddenly seems to take us to the Russians. And still it is Dreyer. No one else could have made it.

Again the story is not exactly original, though it is a better story than that of *The President.* It is a complicated story of ghetto Jews in old Russia somewhere around 1900. A provincial Jewish girl flees to St. Petersburg and joins the revolutionary movement. She is found out and forced to return to her village. Here there is a pogrom and she is rescued by her lover who has come from St. Petersburg.

The resemblance to the Pabst of *Jeanne Ney,* the Pabst of trains and great cities and surging crowds, is evident. Even more striking is the resemblance to the great Russian films which, like Pabst's, were yet to come.

Still no doubt thinking of Griffith, Dreyer here cuts with an abandon that goes beyond the occasional bravura sequence of a *La Roue* with its train ride. Dreyer's cutting is for long stretches veritable *montage*—in the old sense. This is particularly true, of course, of the pogrom. One could almost be watching Pudovkin.

THE PARSON'S WIDOW

And what Dreyer cuts in this brilliant style is as peculiarly Russian as the cutting itself. The priests with their ikons look forward to *Potemkin* and may indeed have influenced Eisenstein. Someone dies on a street corner, the same anonymous figure of so many Russian films. There is actually a shot of a woman in a rocking chair—an image we would have said was exclusively Russian.

In the scenes of the revolutionary group the feeling is still stronger. The shabby room, the intense faces, the general air of idealistic yet practical devotion, the one girl with the lean, serious face—all this is Russian film, years before it had come to flower.

But here there is something a Russian film would not have—something solely Dreyer. As they begin drawing lots to see who will have the honor of throwing the first bomb, a young man with a poet's face stands up and volunteers.

The others press around him admiringly, and then—with a sidelong glance at Griffith we might say—the girl comes up to him at the edge of the screen, takes his head in her hands, bends it down, and kisses him on the forehead. This is the purity of Dreyer, that serenity that has no equal on the screen.

There is also Dreyer in the wonderful drawn-out scene of the spy at the party. It is largely a matter of bold closeups of two people: the girl's brother who recognizes the spy from the past and the spy who realizes he is recognized. It is done with glances so beautifully modulated and refined we hold our breath.

And in a very different direction there is the scene of the spy dressed as a monk coming to the curious hillside hovel of another villager. Here is a touch of the fantasy of *The President* and also a touch of the mysticism of Dovzhenko. One merges into the other. The scene is literally realistic, but with Dreyer it is never easy. Dreyer does not underline his ideas. He does not tell us what he is doing. That is for us to find out. We may guess wrong, but even there the very terms seem inadequate. It is not a matter of right or wrong, he may say. You see, and that is enough.

By now Dreyer had made four films, two brilliantly successful, one nice but slight, one ambitious but stiff. Returning from Germany where he had shot *Love One Another,* fully in command of his medium (if he had in some slight degree not been before), he began a film which may very well be his masterpiece, which at the very least is certainly enormously fascinating, and which at the same time is the great mystery of his career—*Once Upon a Time.*

According to the Museum of Modern Art a print of this film was recently discovered by the Danish Film Museum. As shown in the Museum cycle it is in what the Museum calls "fragmentary form." But this hardly begins to describe the curious print actually screened at the Museum.

What we saw runs about fifty minutes and is divided roughly into three parts: an opening coherent section in which a Prince courts a neighboring Princess, is rebuffed, then returns disguised as a tinker; a closing coherent section in which the Prince and Princess, both poorly dressed, live in the forest making pottery; and a middle section which is a confused jumble including two and even three takes of the same scene. Some of the middle section can be called cut, but more of it seems to be simply raw footage that had never been edited.

This is not all. The film is taken from Holger Drachmann's play of the same title. When we go back to the play we find that the two more or less finished sections of the film correspond roughly to the first two-thirds of the play. What is missing in this part is the scene in which the Princess, having permitted the tinker to visit her, is discovered by her father the King, and both Prince and Princess are turned out of the palace.

So far so good. But the play then goes on to have the Princess return to the palace and work as a kitchen maid, the Prince to come and reveal himself in his true identity, and so all to end happily with a proper wedding. Bits of this occur in the middle section of the film, along with other bits that do not readily find a place in the play at all.

The strange and haunting thing about it is that the two coherent sections of the film are superb, but the confused middle section, with one notable exception, is not especially distinguished.

The film opened in Copenhagen in October, 1922, and in Stockholm several weeks later. I have checked the latter opening, and there was nothing unusual about it. It played the usual one week, received conventional praise—"a pleasure to recommend this charming fairy tale for old and young"—and was presumably of customary feature length. If Dreyer did indeed direct the whole film, how on earth could a print such as this is come into existence? But for that matter there remains the baffling puzzle of how *any* film print could combine large cut sections, beautifully made, and raw footage, for the most part of inferior quality. Perhaps further research in Denmark will clarify these problems.

But all this says nothing about the film. I have given the story, and yet I have not given

the story. Everything about this film is fantastic, incredible. The one thing it most certainly is *not* is a "simple fairy tale." It is at once a legend on the grand scale of *The Nibelungen,* a whimsical, tongue-in-cheek comedy in the Lubitsch manner (which was still then in the course of development), and a story so close to the Griffith of *Isn't Life Wonderful* (two full years later) that we feel Griffith must have seen the film. At one extreme there is a scene that has all of the stately epic beauty of the Italian *Odyssey,* at the other extreme there are shots that could come right out of *The Virgin Spring.* It is, even in its present small, dismantled form, a veritable history of film, and to anyone with a feeling for creative film it is an overpowering experience.

It has the Dreyer decor in its early part to perfection. I like particularly the little scene of the missing parrot. The parrot is a variegated element, colorful and feathery. But first we see the empty bird-stand, a hard, rigid thing of absolutely straight lines, and then we see the parrot wandering up some steps, steps clear and straight as in any abstract painting.

A sort of variation on the decor is the scene of the Prince's serenade, a wonderful sequence in which the Prince sits in a great barge playing a small harp. At one point the barge goes by the camera while in the background in the water is a line of rocks. This is the scene that goes back to *The Odyssey,* with the latter's echoes of an epic past.

Yet mostly the early part is really rather rococo in general feeling and style. The period is late eighteenth-century and the tone is one of civilized banter. Voltaire might have written it. Still Voltaire would hardly have put in the marvellous scene of Clara Pontoppidan as the Princess bargaining with the disguised Prince for the magic teakettle. She had already given him a kiss for the magic rattle—now she is ready to give him another kiss for the kettle. No? What then? Oh! So she goes off in a huff with her head in the air, and all the pretty serving-maids go off in a huff with their heads in the air, and then only a few moments later the Princess steals out alone with a key for the tinker.

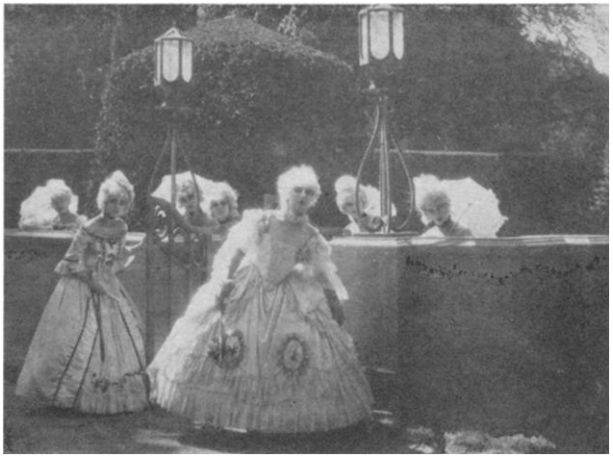
ONCE UPON A TIME

The teakettle brings us back to the soaring epic imagery of the film. For the Prince obtains the rattle and the kettle from an ugly old man in the forest who disappears in thin air when the Prince would question him. Here is Alberic of *The Nibelungen* and perhaps more. The scene recalls not only Lang but the Dovzhenko of *Zvenigora.*

And as part of the forest milieu we have the tremendous shot of the great forest, the huge trees, the sunlight pouring through them as in Sucksdorff, and down in the corner the Princess coming along a diagonal of road toward the camera. The old trick of one small displaced figure against the main composition comes off brilliantly and shows again Dreyer's protean quality.

But the long forest section proper is more Griffith than anyone else, and is, I suspect, the key to the whole film. The Prince and the Princess live in a clearing where they are busy making pots. The bulk of the section deals in fact with the trip the Princess makes with a wheelbarrow full of pottery ostensibly to sell (in the play she takes the pottery to the city). She comes across some vagabonds who try to seize her. She escapes but the pots have been broken. She piles the remains in the barrow and wheels it back home.

She has barely returned when foresters come hunting for the Prince, who has killed a bear. He hides, they go away, and the Prince and Princess embrace at what is for this print the end of the film.



The resemblance to the loss of the potatoes in *Isn't Life Wonderful* is striking. And the ending of this section certainly seems to have much the same value as the ending of Griffith's film: though the pottery or potatoes are gone we have each other.

But there is another point which is peculiar to Dreyer. All this later material, the forest milieu in general, is not eighteenth-century, but medieval. The Prince has a crossbow, and there are in fact no signs of any settlement. Dreyer has plucked his characters out of the over-civilized age of reason and set them down in the dawn period of a culture.

So—if we consider only these sections of the film we have—the film is to a point symbolic. First there is the high comedy of the rococo world, then the visual grandeur of the forest (and the sea if we count the serenade interlude), then the simplicity of the Middle Ages. We go backward in time to find a new life, a new world.

But at this rate we are on the verge of the later Dreyer, the Dreyer of the symbolic films, the Dreyer who is, in film after film, talking about a new life, as are, I believe, Bergman, Antonioni, and Resnais.

Of course, if, after all, Dreyer really shot his film closely adhering to the Drachmann play and wound up with a typical fairy-tale ending (the Prince marrying the Princess with due ceremony), then there isn't much to my theory about this film. But I find it hard to believe that this film, with its marvellous material, its great scenes that can compare with the best in film history, did not represent to Dreyer more than a pretty fairy story. It just does not seem natural for an artist to pour so much strength into a minor potboiler.

Finally I must emphasize the anachronistic aspect of *Once Upon a Time*. Here there is the beautiful, graceful blending of recoco and medieval. In *Joan of Arc* there are the Sam Browne belts and the trench helmets in the fifteenth century. Again in *Michael* there is a curious blend of the contemporary world of short skirts and wrist watches and the *fin-de-siecle* world of ateliers and carriages. In *Vampyr* the vampire dresses in the seventeenth-century way while the story is modern. Period authenticity means nothing to Dreyer. He is a poet, and it suits him at times to mix historical ages and show his characters *sub specie aeternitatis*.

With *Michael* we come to the first of the symbolic films. And it seems essential to consider at the outset the main theme as I have followed it through the various films.

This theme I call the Death of the Master. It is in fact a retelling of the story of The Golden Bough: the story of the death of the god. The Master, like the god, grows old, impotent, and dies, to be succeeded by a new, young master who continues the life and work of the race. In some of Dreyer's films the Master is killed, just as the god is killed, to make way for the new. In others he dies more or less naturally.

The whole story exists in one form in *The Parson's Widow*, though as I have said in this film the story is realistic, not symbolic. Still the elements are all there. The young couple—the young man who is forced to marry the aged lady in order to become the new parson, and his sweetheart—rather cold-bloodedly band together against the old lady, and the young man plots to kill her. The plot misfires and it is the girl who is injured. The old lady then gives in to the love of the couple and obligingly dies voluntarily, leaving the couple contrite but free.

Michael, like *Love One Another*, was shot in Germany. On the surface it is a film made from a novel by Herman Bang, a film about an old artist and a young artist with a good deal of nineteenth-century fustian in it. It is a story that calls out for aspidistras and smoking jackets. Finally the old man dies and the ungrateful young man, even as the old man dies, is in the arms of his mistress. Supposedly based on the life of Rodin, the story verges on *kitsch*.

Nor does it seem a particularly interesting film, visually speaking. Some seem to feel it has "German" qualities. I know something of the qualities of the films of the German Golden Age, and I must say I see little of them here. The sets are rather conventional, the lighting mildly interesting—until you think of the great lighting in so many German films. The film jogs

along a bit stiffly, never downright bad, but never very good. It seldom if ever, either in imagery or cutting, reminds us of Dreyer, and only at the end can we say that it has a bit of good work in the sequence of the Master's friend coming to tell the young artist of the Master's death.

But seen symbolically *Michael* is something else again. Its very first title is "In the house of the master." With this we see the old-world atelier of the Master, its walls covered with canvases in the mid-nineteenth century fashion. We see the ancient major-domo with his antique livery and his flowing beard. Then, as the film progresses, we see the counterpoint of the noble old artist and his model and protegé who chafes at the protection and at the subordinate role that is required of him. We see the young man living in the present day (1924), we see him declare his independence. Then at the end the Master dies, with no one beside him but an old friend and the old servant, and the young man hears the news in the arms of his mistress. Briefly the young man stirs uneasily, but the girl soothes him, and he sinks back in her arms.

Here in effect is the couple of *The Parson's Widow*. The young man has not literally tried to kill the old man, but in a subtler sense he has done so, with the aid and comfort of the girl. And whereas we may find the last scene slightly absurd as realistic drama, from the symbolic point of view it is very moving. The young man, still not without affection for the old man, has a twinge of conscience. The old life—the life against which he rebelled—still has meaning for him, and he looks back a little guiltily.

But the girl pulls him back to his present reality. And the point is that this reality *is* the new world, the real world. The old world, the world of the Master and all that he represents, is now a false world, a world that would crush the young artist and prevent him from living a normal life. The girl, with the clairvoyance of women, sees this as the artist does not, and it is she who finally persuades him of the wisdom of accepting the "new" life.

For his next film Dreyer returned to Denmark and made *The Master of the House*, as it is called generally in English. This title is unfortunate, since the proper translation is *Thou Shalt Honor Thy Wife*. That is, the immediate suggestion of the Master in the former title is not present in the original title. And the film does not conform very closely to the theme of the Master.

MICHAEL

It is a curious, rather moving film that follows a theme dear to the hearts of nineteenth-century writers from Dickens on—the theme of the revoltingly harsh creature who in the end reforms and becomes a human being. Beautifully acted, beautifully photographed, beautifully salted with homely little touches of everyday life in a simple, middle-class apartment, it is delightful without being coy, warm without being suffo-

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

cating. I do wonder, though, whether it is much of a film. The great bulk of it takes place in the small apartment, and it has a certain theatrical quality about it. It is more recognizably Dreyer than *Michael.* Its cool rooms with all sorts of odds and ends on the walls are not too far from the rooms of *The President.* But it is not *The President* by any means. It is essentially realistic, and its filmic style is correct but literal.

But even if we cannot say it is definitely in the pattern of the Master theme, it will bear examination. We still have the Master—a rather oldish and difficult *pater familias*—and we still have a sort of conspiracy against him. The conspiracy, indeed, succeeds brilliantly, and though the man lives the original Master disappears. Is it too fanciful to see in this a variant of the theme? We might at least keep it in mind.

Dreyer followed this film with one made in Norway, *The Bride of Glomdale.* It has a few nice landscapes, but on the whole it is a weak film, presumably shot to order, a heavy-handed Romeo and Juliet sort of thing that is none the better for having some very obvious Griffith cutting injected into the *Way Down East* climax on the river.

After this came France and *Joan of Arc.* But since I see *Joan* as different from all other Dreyers I shall postpone discussion of that and go directly to *Vampyr.*

To say that *Vampyr* is the most confusing of the Dreyer films would be an understatement. It might well be the most confusing of all films. So I want to give a fairly detailed summary of it.

THE BRIDE OF GLOMDALE

As the story opens a young man with fishing equipment arrives toward evening at a tiny country inn by a river. He takes a room and after he has retired an old man in a dressing gown comes in, puts down a package, says "She must not die!" and leaves. Unnerved by this the young man goes outside and walks around the neighborhood. He finds a dilapidated house where he meets a strange, fierce man who seems to be a doctor of some sort, sees an even stranger old woman in an antique costume, and watches some shadows dancing on a wall with nothing to cast them. There is also a fellow with a wooden leg in a semimilitary costume with a gun. The young man presently comes to a chateau just as the man in the dressing gown—the master of the chateau—is killed, apparently by the man with the gun.

The master of the chateau leaves two daughters, one seriously ill from some dreadful trouble. The young man stays in the chateau to help the daughters. Gradually it becomes clear that the sick daughter is suffering from attacks by a vampire who is in fact the old lady in the old house. It also becomes clear that the doctor is actually her assistant. The doctor persuades the young man to give his blood for blood the ill daughter has lost, and while the young man is resting the doctor gets the other daughter out of the chateau and imprisoned in the old house. Presently the young man rouses, he and an old servant go into the graveyard and drive a spike through the heart of the vampire, and the young man rescues the captive daughter. With the real death of the vampire the ill daughter rises up in bed as though a great weight had been lifted from her. The man with the gun falls down a flight of steps and dies; the doctor dies also, suffocating horribly in a nearby flour mill. And the young man and the rescued daughter walk through a wood and emerge as the sunlight is beginning to flood the scene.

This is the main outline. It does not include the "vision" of the burial of a man seen by the young man as he sits on a bench in the garden, or the episode of the dead coachman, or the repeated scenes of the young man reading a

book about vampires through which the audience is kept informed about some of the aspects of the film.

It is, of course, a famous if not very familiar film. My own feelings toward it are mixed. I like it—perhaps I should say I am fascinated by it, which is not necessarily the same thing. But I do not feel it is really a major film. It is—as is not very commonly realized—made up of two parts. It has on the one hand a succession of magnificent visual passages in a style virtually unique. But then after these purple passages it turns to a style that is hardly more than commonplace.

And I do not feel that it is an ordinary instance of alternating high and low key work. The two elements are too different, the change from exciting visual imagery to rather routine imagery is too great.

In any event I do not feel that even the purple passages are wholly satisfactory. One may ask, I think, what has Dreyer done with them? They seem to me to be fine things in themselves, but not parts of a creative whole. In other words Dreyer has with them shown what can be done in a new way on the screen, but he has not actually done it. His imagery remains the experimental work of the studio, not the work of a finished film.

It may be said that the film is such that the good imagery together with the ordinary imagery gives the whole film an atmospheric quality that succeeds, unusual though it may be. I can only say that it does not seem so to me. To me the two parts do not fuse, and I am left with a sense of contrivance, of something artificial.

Indeed the film seems to me a sort of Castle of Otranto on a grander scale. I would not place it with *Nosferatu* or the two classic versions of *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Epstein and Watson and Webber). And it does not help that I seem to see a number of bits thrown in for effect, as though the film could not stand on its own feet.

Still, who can resist the appeal of the great things that Dreyer has poured into it? The

VAMPYR

shadows, the high shot of the vampire on the floor of the great barnlike structure with the dislocated wheels in the air like mobiles, the haunting scenes on a spectral-like lawn, the killing of the vampire, even the merely bizarre scenes of the doctor with his Mark Twain cigar. The film may come apart as a film, but in its ruins there are flashes of lightning.

As for symbolism it obviously follows the theme of the Master to a degree. There is, of course, the actual master of the chateau, but he is a relatively subordinate character. The story revolves around the evil and ancient vampire, her death, and the release and promise of new life for the three young people involved. In this film it is made clear that the vampire was in her lifetime a cruel, evil person, so that to this extent the story departs from the pattern. But the film is close enough: the Master, a pernicious influence, is killed, and a new life begins.

Eleven years went by before Dreyer made another film. Then, in the midst of war, came *Day of Wrath,* a film that went back to the

DAY OF WRATH

period and even the story of *The Parson's Widow*. It is, unfortunately, generally referred to as a story of religious persecution and witchcraft, which may well lead people to expect something along the line of Christensen's *Hexen*. But it is essentially a personal drama, with the larger issues forming background rather than foreground.

It is indeed almost a new version of *The Parson's Widow*, albeit with great changes of detail and approach. It is somber not light, and much of the story is new, but still there is the basic situation of the old Master and the young couple, one of them married to the Master.

As a film its most interesting aspect is its use of the same brilliant style, involving bold lighting and (for the hard, precise Dreyer) a revolutionary soft photography, which we also find in *Vampyr*. But here it is considerably toned down. On the other hand the film as a whole is unified, and so succeeds as a whole better than *Vampyr*.

But it has the faults of its period. Coming in the long theatrical stretch between two creative periods it is good by the standard of its time, less good by the standards of the silent age or the present age. It lacks the old silent brio that, however transformed, is still present in *Vampyr*, and it comes too soon to have the deeper quality of later films.

It is still, however, most interesting from the symbolic point of view. The girl has married a much older man and when his grown son returns from a visit she is attracted to him. She reaches the point of wishing her husband dead. Then, when the husband does die naturally the wife is accused of his murder. The son promises to stand by the girl, not knowing, however, that she has also been accused of witchcraft. When this does come out the son recoils in horror and turns against the girl like everyone else. And at this desertion by the world the girl proclaims that she is indeed guilty as they say.

The story lacks the ingredient of the new life. The world is dark at the end of the film. Does it perhaps mirror Dreyer's own doubts in a time when the real world was dark and the immediate future threatening? However this may be, the earlier part of the film clearly follows the pattern. There is indeed just enough ambiguity about the reality of witchcraft to lend further point to the matter of the girl's wishing her husband dead. And symbolically this fills out the pattern on this score.

Soon after *Day of Wrath* came the one film we have not seen—*Two People*. Regretfully I must pass it by.

Then after another decade came *Ordet*. It is not an easy film. In some ways it can be criticized as a rather unsuccessful film. But I suppose that on the whole, with all its superficially literal quality and its very leisurely pace, it is the finest of Dreyer's symbolic films after *Joan*. And, after all, here is Dreyer, the Dreyer who long before had anticipated the ideas and even the style of the new filmic age, making a film himself in this new age he had at least helped to bring about. It would be only fitting that he produce a remarkable work.

Stylistically it is the old Dreyer of *The Master of the House*, firm, clear, matter-of-fact, rather than the mystical impressionist of *Vampyr* and *Day of Wrath*. In its concentration on the interiors of the farm house it takes us back to the interiors of *The Master of the House*. It has a few of the old decor tricks, but not many. The shots are long, and the life of what is mostly one long day is given in full, careful detail. But it is not dull. It is a fascinating film, one which sticks in the mind, from the haunting voice of Johannes to the innumerable little bits of daily life that flow about the main events. Slow perhaps, it is still definitely creative.

But above all is its symbolism. I do not know Kaj Munk's play. I gather it is an earnest religious drama. But Dreyer's film is far more than religious. Here is a sort of culmination of the thread of symbolic truth that Dreyer had been following ever since *Michael*, a generation earlier. Not that Dreyer is particularly clear about it. But he has said more here, and he seems to have reached more definite conclusions.

The film deals essentially with one family in a rural district. There are the old grandfather, his three sons of widely varying ages, and the wife and two daughters of the eldest son.

Johannes, the second son, has lost his mind and is a harmless but trying fellow who—at times at least—thinks he is Christ. He preaches to no one in the open fields and calls on anyone who will listen to repent for not believing in him.

The film in fact revolves around Johannes, the madman, even though he may sometimes be subordinated to other action. The rest of the play is the workaday world—much the same contrast we get in *Through a Glass Darkly,* it might be noticed. The people go about their routine tasks, hold their discussions on life, as they have always done, and Johannes drifts through this familiar society like a lost soul, calling out in a plaintive, almost a chanting voice for the lost world to turn to him and be saved.

The wife is about to have a baby. While she is confined Johannes wanders into the bedroom, staggers, and falls against the bed. The others put him in his room and return to their more urgent work. Presently the wife dies in childbirth, and no one gives much thought to Johannes.

The funeral is held, and as the services are about to begin Johannes appears—in his right mind. Still, however, Johannes feels that there is a lack of faith, and now one of the small daughters tells her uncle—there had always been a special bond between them—that she is sure he can call her mother back to life. And this is what he does.

So the Christ figure appears and performs a miracle. But this is not really the point. There have been many Christ figures who have worked miracles. Not always physical ones, but certainly spiritual ones, such as those in *The Passing of the Third Floor Back.* If this were the whole film we should be disappointed. But it is not.

The point of this shining story is that it is not Johannes the mad man who performs the miracle, but Johannes the *sane* man. He is *not* Christ or anything like it. He is simply an intelligent, sensitive human being who feels the harshness of the world.

And now we can see the function of the miracle in perspective. Johannes the madman is not really Christ and since he is not his whole Christ-like performance is only just that, a performance. It has no meaning. Anyone can think he is Christ. Of course Johannes is utterly sincere, but this does not change things. He can do nothing good or sensible except in small ways, and certainly he cannot work miracles.

But the strong, vigorous man he becomes can work miracles! In other words the Master—this time a sort of god in truth though only an imaginary one—dies and in his place is a man who in his first vital act performs a real miracle.

And there is perhaps another point. If, as I think he does, Dreyer has in mind the world of today, the idea of the miracle is—symbolically—very reasonable. If we are in a state as bad as we often think, we *need* a miracle. Nothing less will do to remedy matters. So Dreyer says it will occur. The Master—old here in spirit if not in years—will die and be succeeded by someone young and capable who will perform the miracle.

I do not think that fantastic. I think we must listen to Dreyer. We too must believe in his hope and his miracle. For then it may happen.

I would like to make one more point about *Ordet.* It sheds a good deal of light on Bergman's most baffling film, *The Magician.* It can hardly be a coincidence that the Magician obtains *his* miracle—not by his own effort, to be sure—*after* he has put aside his beard, the beard which presents a false Christ-like solemnity deliberately even as Johannes does innocently. I don't suppose we would be justified in going too far with this parallel, but seen in this light I think *The Magician* is easier to follow.

And now what of *Joan?* I have called it a symbolic film but put it in a class by itself. It is, of course, Dreyer's most famous film, indeed one of the world's most celebrated films. Still I have said that it is not wholly satisfactory. I have indicated that it does not compare with the best films of his early period. All this calls for explanation.

In style it is certainly impressive. Much more than any of the three preceding films it has a firm style, and a style that is indubitably Dreyer. Here Dreyer has gathered together the decor,

ORDET

the imagery, the cutting, the serene purity of his early masterpieces and has produced a splendid symphony that remains unequaled, unapproached. Small wonder it has had since its first appearance a great reputation.

But I question whether this is all. We speak of the style of the film, but in reality there are *three* styles. For the first third or more of the film there is almost nothing but the trial itself. We see, over and over, close-ups and medium shots and a few long shots, and there is little to be called real imagery. The emphasis is almost entirely upon the people, and the continuity becomes a simple matter of turning from one shot to another without much structural organization.

Then as the scene shifts to the outdoors the style becomes more varied, more creative, more fluid. Finally with the actual burning the film suddenly breaks into a dazzling crescendo of shots that goes on until the end.

I feel that the early section, noble and in ways moving as it is, lacks real warmth. It is a series of tableaux rather than a film. And I feel too that there is a certain remoteness in these portraits of a suffering girl, many evil men, and a few good but helpless men. They go through the motions of the play, but they do not live. They do not avoid even a certain banality in the stereotyped gestures and expressions that are used.

The middle portion is much better, but even here I feel a stiffness. Everything seems all too carefully calculated. It is well done, but it does not soar. The purity has become all too pure, and we look in vain for a creative flash.

Then, with Joan already at the stake, the film at last comes to life. The flames go up, the crowd moves, and the soldiers take steps to control the crowd. The camera darts about, catching things like the flails hurled down from a tower, the crowd pours by with the old vigor of *Love One Another,* the cannon is wheeled into place, we are watching a different film. In this last reel or so the Master is once more really at work, and this last part of *Joan* belongs with the early great films.

But why is *Joan* down here at the end, all by itself? It seems clear that the symbolism of the film is at least distantly related to the main theme of the Master. It is the Passion story, and of course there is the death and the gain for the world. Dreyer might well be pardoned for stretching his theme to take in the old story of Joan of Arc.

Yet I wonder. Dreyer specifically emphasizes the *passion* of Joan—in virtually every shot of her, her eyes are filled with tears. She is a far cry from the Shavian heroine of *St. Joan,* much less the brilliant, headstrong girl I see as the historical Joan.

I cannot help feeling that this is a personal confession. After the debacle of *Once Upon a Time,* after the surely less than satisfactory *Michael* and *The Master of the House,* after the unfortunate *Glomdale,* it would not seem unfitting. It is not something to dwell on. But we can make our own impersonal comment. It would be irony of the purest hue if that film which was a cry from the depths against the world were blandly, eagerly accepted by that same world as a "great work of art."

WILLIAM JOHNSON

Hollywood 1965

Looking back, Hollywood in its heyday seems a closed world, secure in its virtues and its vices. Working almost entirely within sound stages and lots, with stables of writers, directors, actors, it would fashion those blends of expertise and cant, verve and naiveté, which threatened to split any perceptive movie-lover in two.

Today, it is Hollywood that has burst apart. Physically, a Hollywood production may be made in almost any part of the world. Its director and most of its cast may not be American, though its backing and producer will be; its appeal is still hopefully international, though audience tastes everywhere have grown fickle.

On the surface at least, Hollywood has ranged far from home in content too. A baseball player bargains with a prostitute in *Ship of Fools;* cowardice is preached by the hero of *The Americanization of Emily* and practiced by the hero of *Lord Jim;* a psychotic keeps a girl prisoner in *The Collector;* a middle-aged man is tempted by a bare-breasted prostitute in *The Pawnbroker.* Even that carefree vehicle of joy, the musical, has seen unprecedented rigors: *My Fair Lady* retains many Shavian barbs, *The Sound of Music* has Nazis. It all seems a far cry from the day when a salty thriller like *The Big Sleep* ended up with a nonsensical plot because Hollywood wouldn't be seen dead with Chandler's nymphomaniacal killer; or when the big traumatic event in Blanche Dubois' past had to be omitted from the movie of *A Streetcar Named Desire* because it involved homosexuality.

But one cannot measure what the ads call the "boldness" of a movie by its mere inclusion of situations that formerly were taboo. The panicky way in which homosexuality is flung into *Advise and Consent*—fleeting views of a frenetic gay bar, avowals of shame and horror—hardly makes this movie more mature or honest than *Streetcar.* These episodes are, ironically, far less "bold" or "startling" than the innocent scene in Griffith's *Dream Street* (1921) where the two brothers kiss each other on the lips. Indeed, the unselfconscious approach to sex in pre-Code Hollywood movies makes many present-day movies look priggish.

Hollywood—like commercial cinemas everywhere—has rarely if ever been intentionally bolder than the majority of its audience. With the passing of time, it is true, some old taboos have lost their explosive force; Hollywood has been able to advance safely into former minefields. On the other hand, a few new taboos have been created—like the guying of racial types. In results, Hollywood *looks* generally bolder today than 20 years ago; but closer scrutiny is needed to determine if it is really bolder in intention.

The true boldness of a film depends less on the subject matter than on the way it is handled. Comedies have sometimes been allowed to carry bolder ideas than serious films because laughter both softens and disguises any unpalatable taste. The most "shocking" way to treat a taboo is casually.* But casualness has never been a dominant trait of serious Hollywood films.

In making these qualifications about Hollywood "boldness" I am no doubt stressing the obvious. But they apply with equal force to other criteria which are often taken at face value. The star system, hokum, happy endings, the avoidance of realism—these and other attri-

**The Amorous Adventures of Moll Flanders,* which trades on the allure of "boldness," omits everything Defoe wrote about Moll's unwitting marriage to her brother. *Tom Jones* makes fun of the possibility—but not actuality—of incest between Tom and his mother. By contrast, the Belgian film *Si le vent te fait peur* treats a brother's desire for his sister with the quiet romanticism of a normal love story—and it was booed both at Cannes and at New York's Cinema-16.

butes of Hollywood have changed during the past two decades both more and less than is apparent. It is as misleading to assume that they survive with all their former tenacity as to believe that they are dead.

What I propose to do in the rest of this article is to examine these attributes in some detail with reference both to Hollywood films of the past and to some major Hollywood productions of 1965; and then, in the light of these findings, suggest how Hollywood's achievement has or has not changed.

The spirit of Hollywood Present is at a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* the spirit of Hollywood Past. For one thing, it lacks the strength of fecundity. Like André Gide, who said that the best French poet was "Victor Hugo, alas!" a critic asked to choose the best national cinema of the thirties and forties might well reply, "Hollywood, alas!" Hollywood's cornucopia poured forth many sour or insipid fruits, but it had the magic of a cornucopia all the same. What's more, that magic has grown with the years. Movies of the thirties and forties have acquired a patina of nostalgia and even of exotic charm that no present-day movie can possess—as yet. It should not mislead one into applying a double standard to past and present movies.

This double standard often comes into play when hokum is involved. Audiences today are particularly sensitive to hokum in new movies. After all, intellectual survival in our complex society depends on not being too gullible. The mental strain of perpetual skepticism accounts in part, I think, for the rise of Camp. By declaring certain old movies enjoyable *because* they are hokum one obtains a license to relax.

Yet even in the past, Hollywood hokum was more than a flea market of glittering absurdities —of Bogart snapping "Play it again, Sam!" or Bette Davis crying "I still love the man I killed!" At its best, the hokum could fuse into a grand manner comparable to the romantic *élan* of films like Vigo's *L'Atalante* and Donskoi's *Gorki* trilogy. Griffith is an outstanding example. The sheer sentimentality and melodrama of his films are often the very means by which he detaches the action from literalism and makes it portray the fragility of life. Welles, though more sophiscated, belongs to the same tradition. One may dislike the romantic approach—just as one may dislike the antiromantic approach of Godard—but these are matters of temperament, not criticism.

In the past some Hollywood films managed to convey serious ideas entirely through the medium of hokum. John Farrow's *The Night Has a Thousand Eyes* (1948) is a brisk thriller with supernatural overtones; yet it shows how a man with an innate gift—in this case, Edward G. Robinson's ability to glimpse the future—is driven to use that gift at whatever cost to himself. This film evokes the creative urge far more authentically than any serious Hollywood biography of a painter or composer.

In the sixtys, the creative urge is embodied not in a clairvoyant but in the pool shark of Rossen's *The Hustler.* The rising tide of realism has diluted the old hokum. Very occasionally, the hokum may be almost completely washed away—but this is rare, because risky. More often there is a half-and-half mixture that fails to jell: the movie can be neither enjoyed as hokum nor respected as realism.

The most instructive examples of the failure to blend hokum with realism are provided by two superficially similar films of 1965: *The Train* and *Von Ryan's Express.* In the former, Frankenheimer's initial desire to comment on human values in wartime loses out against his fascination with railroad derring-do, which drives the film too deep into hokum. In the latter, Robson starts out with a pleasantly far-fetched adventure but tries to lend it significance with scenes of phony realism: Frank Sinatra's shooting of the Italian girl and his own death at the end. Here is evidence of a new tendency in Hollywood films: what might be called reverse hokum.

A more complex case is presented by *The Pawnbroker.* This concerns a Harlem pawnbroker called Sol Nazerman, a Jew whose entire family was killed by the Nazis during World War II and who has since deadened himself to

all emotion. Events suddenly force him to remember the past, and in the end his emotions are brought violently back to life.

Consider the notorious scene in which the Harlem prostitute, in order to help her boyfriend, the assistant, entices Nazerman by baring her breasts—a sight which touches off the memory of seeing his naked wife about to be raped by a Nazi. Because the Legion of Decency objected to this scene, and cited it as the reason for their "Condemned" rating, anyone who dislikes censorship is tempted to spring to its defense. Yet the Legion is not far from the truth in calling the scene "unnecessary." The prostitute's stripping is performed with an artificial emphasis (perhaps caused by embarrassment?) that suggests a burlesque show rather than a concentrated appeal to one man's sexual urge. It fails to make a convincing trigger for the brutally realistic memory of Nazerman's wife. The episode comes across as two gratuitous shock effects rather than a unified experience.

In the book, the prostitute does indeed try to entice Nazerman, but she removes no clothing; and Nazerman's memory of the rape occurs at a different time. Of course, no original—whether Wallant or Shakespeare—should be considered sacrosanct; but in making these changes the scriptwriters gained in economy and effect at the cost of dramatic integrity.

Some of their other changes are excellent. In the book, Nazerman's concentration camp memories come in the form of dreams; in the film, they are quick-cut stabs of vision in Nazerman's waking life. The script also eliminates many of Wallant's rather synthetic minor characters, and tones down his fevered symbolism of the pawnshop as a microcosm of Suffering Humanity.

Indeed, there is a continual concern to particularize the diffuse and abstract elements in Wallant's book. The most striking example occurs near the end, after Nazerman's assistant is shot. In the book, Nazerman's outburst of emotion is directed toward his nephew, a young art student whom he asks to be his new assistant. The film omits this and focuses Nazerman's emotion on the dead Puerto Rican. His mental anguish is given physical expression in a scene (not in the book) where he impales his hand on his paper spike; and the film ends with Nazerman staggering away through the Harlem streets.

THE PAWNBROKER

Some viewers, interpreting the spiked hand as a reference to the Crucifixion, might argue that the scriptwriters have replaced Wallant's symbolism with some of their own. I think this argument would be mistaken. Though the assistant's name is Jesus (in both book and film), and Nazerman might be regarded as the "father" who shares in the "son's" passion, the allegory cannot be traced very far through the rest of the film.

A more pertinent objection is that the film's ending obscures the positive side of Nazerman's grief. We have it on Lumet's own authority (*Films & Filming*, October, 1964) that the ending is meant to be upbeat, since Nazerman has now reëstablished contact with other people. But the film can only show Nazerman's anguish, which it does with shattering force: Rod Steiger, completing a magnificent performance, brings out all the darkness behind Nazerman's mask in a series of soundless sobs, almost terrifying in their misery. One's final impression is of Nazerman as a man doomed to suffer.

Now, if the scriptwriters had remained faithful to the book I would almost certainly be accusing them of hokum, of tacking on an unprepared happy ending. If their ending were sim-

ply a not-quite-successful attempt to translate the book into convincing filmic terms I would hate to carp at it. But there is evidence in the film of reverse hokum at work—a desire to outdo the book in shock effects without being really shocking.

In the book, for example, Nazerman's pawnshop is a front for a Mafia operator. In the film, the operator becomes a Negro. Well, it's refreshing to find a contemporary American film recognizing the fact that not all Negroes are as upright as Sidney Poitier, just as not all whites are as upright as Charlton Heston; but the film proceeds to spoil the effect by fudging. After his encounter with the prostitute, Nazerman tells the operator that he doesn't want to be paid in profits from the brothel. The film's operator then launches into a bitterly eloquent speech to the effect that *all* profits made in Harlem come from filth and degradation, so Nazerman's scruples are absurd. This piece of social consciousness makes little sense except as an assurance that the film-makers aren't prejudiced against Negroes.

The same kind of fudging distorts the role of the Negro prostitute. In the book, she is dimwitted and insecure, a mere plaything of the pawnbroker's assistant. In the film, she appears healthy and attractive, and enjoys a secure relationship with her man. Thus glamorized, she undermines the operator's thesis that Harlem in general and the brothel in particular are degrading.

Fudging is a time-honored Hollywood device which often blends indistinguishably into hokum. It is seen most clearly when a film pretends to be hard-hitting but shrinks from really facing the issues it raises. An unwarranted happy ending is perhaps the crudest example—so crude, indeed, that one can often mentally lop it off without affecting the film as a whole. Thus the abrupt optimistic ending of *The Lost Weekend* (1945) is much less offensive than the more subtly rigged ending of *Ace in the Hole* (1951), which gives the comforting impression that no one manipulates people without at least being sorry for it.

When Billy Wilder made those films, few other directors were probing so far into unpleasant human behavior, fudging or no fudging. Today the proportion of "serious" Hollywood films has increased, and fudging has increased with it. *Advise and Consent* is an object lesson in the art of dodging issues: the conflict of liberals and conservatives, the "revelations" of political shadiness and horse-trading behind the scenes, all these are ingeniously neutralized to suggest that politicians at their worst have hearts of gold.

Preminger's film, despite fashionable touches like homosexuality, belongs to the older Hollywood school of film-making. But fudging can be found at full strength amid the tart modernity of a film like Arthur Hiller's *The Americanization of Emily* (1964). This starts out by presenting the case against heroics in wartime, and does so with some sharpness and wit. When a naval commander decides that the first dead man in the D-Day landings must be a sailor, he assigns the cowardly hero to film the landings. Driven at gunpoint, our man accidentally becomes the first to land on the Normandy beaches, and is publicized as a hero. He is now in a strong position to strike a blow against heroics. With breathtaking sophistry, his girlfriend argues that to tell the truth would be to pillory himself—to make himself a *real* hero and thus betray his beliefs. To compound this shifty dénouement, it also appears that the naval commander was in nervous shock when making his "first dead man a sailor" plans. There is the comfortable implication that, with military commanders in their right minds, nobody at all need die in action.

Fudging in Hollywood movies has traditionally been bound up with the star system. Hitchcock might toy with the idea of having the husband in *Suspicion* turn out to be the murderer after all—but with Cary Grant playing the role, he couldn't expect the idea to be taken seriously. Nowadays it may seem that things have changed. After all, Burt Lancaster was a Nazi war criminal in *Judgment at Nuremberg;* David Niven was a pathetic molester of women in *Separate Tables;* and Rex Harrison played a

would-be wife-killer in *Midnight Lace* without forfeiting his title to the lead in *My Fair Lady*.

But the demands of the star system remain almost unchanged in ordinary entertainment movies. And, unfortunately, the demands of the star system also continue to make themselves felt in supposedly serious movies—even though the concept of a role fit for a star has broadened. Pauline Kael, in her review of *Hud* (*FQ*, Summer, 1964) has shown how the glamor of what purports to be an unattractive role makes it suitable for a star like Paul Newman, who in turn makes the role even more glamorous.

True, the star system no longer operates with the imperious force of a decade or two ago. It's possible for a major Hollywood film to be made without any player in the star category: such films are *The Pawnbroker* and *The Collector*. Yet in some ways the star system has ramified further than in the past. For one thing there is the curious predilection for guest stars and vignettes. These are almost always disastrous. The most egregious example in recent years is George Stevens' *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), in which the successive appearances of Shelley Winters, John Wayne, Sidney Poitier, and so on bring us far closer to Grauman's than to Galilee.

Another development of the past decade or so is the international cast. Hollywood films have always featured such notable foreigners as Marlene Dietrich, Ingrid Bergman, Charles Boyer, Peter Lorre, Bela Lugosi, George Sanders. But usually, like exotic herbs in cooking, the foreignness of these actors was carefully subordinated to the needs of the plot. To be foreign was to have a simple primary flavor—suave, sinister, or sexy.

Today every other Hollywood film seems to be a goulash of nationalities. Accents and acting styles clash against real or impeccably reconstructed backgrounds. Once again, the effect may add to the entertainment value of certain films—though it must usually do so by the dubious method of self-parody. If one has to see a routine spectacle like *Genghis Khan*, then it's undoubtedly more amusing to see it with Mongols who are Egyptian, Irish, French and American, and Chinese who are English. But multinational casts can be a menace to any film that wishes to be taken seriously. Even a film with a justifiably multinational cast, like *Lord Jim*, hits false notes when it tries to pass off Dahlia Lavi as half Oriental.*

One long-established Hollywood formula may encompass both international cast and vignette performances: this is the "cross-section of humanity" film. There is an intrinsic fascination in seeing people of widely different backgrounds thrown together, and numerous Hollywood films from *Grand Hotel* to *The Night of the Iguana* have enhanced their appeal with a skillful use of the formula.

Stanley Kramer's *Ship of Fools*, is the most successful cross-section film I've seen in years. This may seem like a backhanded compliment, for I must add at once that I cannot possibly accept the film on its obvious level of seriousness, as Kramer (and Katherine Anne Porter†) presumably meant it to be accepted.

The time is 1933, and a German liner is sailing from Mexico to Germany with a varied assortment of passengers and crew, including a high-strung society woman, a Texan who is an unsuccessful baseball pro, a fiery young painter, and his spirited fiancée, an intense young ship's doctor with a weak heart, a jovial Nazi, a cheerful German Jew, a woman deported from Caribbean dictatorship for trying to help the peons, and a dwarf, who serves as a kind of chorus, addressing the audience directly at the beginning and end.

Obviously the film is to some extent an orgy of hindsights and noble attitudinizing. There's the facile thrill of the German Jew's remark that

*I am not implying that Hollwood is alone in this trend. Other film industries, notably Italy's, are as cavalier as Hollywood in their casting, and I see no more justification for Richard Harris appearing in *Red Desert* than in *Major Dundee*. The Italian practice of dubbing, however, muffles the effects of such casting—or at least diverts our irritation to another target.

†I could not finish reading the lengthy and portentous novel. From what little I did read, it appeared that Kramer retained the basic situations.

SHIP OF FOOLS

the Nazis' anti-Semitism doesn't unduly worry him because "There are a million of us—and they can't kill a million Jews." When the Texan tells the society woman that he doesn't understand why the Germans are getting so worked up over the Jews, she retorts: "You were so busy lynching Negroes you didn't have time for Jews." This line elicited a round of applause from the audience when I saw the film, and of course it's very satisfying to see someone else's prejudices slapped so neatly. The trouble is that *Ship of Fools* directs its broadsides almost exclusively at "someone else." While purporting to hold a mirror up to us spectators, it too often flatters us instead.

Fortunately, the serious import of *Ship of Fools* is not all of this nature. It roams over various problems of life and love, youth and age, in a manner which is not profound but not equivocal, either. Moreover, unlike most of Kramer's serious films, *Ship of Fools* has other, and considerable, merits—above all, that it proves to be a well-designed vehicle for its many players. The confrontations of Vivien Leigh and Lee Marvin, Simone Signoret and Oskar Werner, Jose Ferrer and Heinz Ruehmann, George Segal and Jose Greco, among others, are fascinating on the level of pure personality, especially as they take place on more or less plausible, more or less contemporary terms, and not in the domain of historical tushery to which such oddly assorted encounters are usually confined.

Much of the film's success stems from its kinship with the old Hollywood type of star vehicle—a kinship that Kramer does not try to disguise. The setting throughout is resolutely studio-made, with no misguided attempt to confer naturalism by tacking on location shots. The lighting, too, has a high-key, hygienic quality reminiscent of so many Hollywood films of the thirties.

Technically, *Ship of Fools* is the most interesting film Kramer has made. This again can only be a backhanded compliment, when one recalls the ragged eclecticism of *On the Beach*, the stilted zooms and dolly shots of *Judgment at Nuremberg*, and the lumbering messiness of *Mad World*. But *Ship of Fools*, despite weaknesses, has a coherent style which joins the look of the Hollywood thirties to new-wave methods of the sixties, bypassing most of the realistic conventions of the fifties and after.

Realism, in the sense of linking people and events to real locations, was of course a commonplace in Hollywood during the silent era. Production crews had not yet grown so large as to make location shooting a daunting project. Perhaps because of the strong links between a new, young industry and the world outside, even entirely studio-made films could be nourished by a strong sense of contact. This is true even of a film so full of *chinoiserie* as *Broken Blossoms* (1919), whose strength is due to Griffith's secure grasp of the difference in tempo and quality between lives of brutality and gentleness: these characteristics are contrasted in such vivid actions and details that the credibility of the men who embody them is of minor importance.

During the thirties, with film-making complicated by the factory system and the needs of sound recording, studio production became the norm. In one way, spoken dialogue imposed a certain psychological realism on the movies, making it more difficult for them to follow the wilder flights of silent comedies and melodramas. Yet in another way, dialogue made it easier for movies to depart from realism with-

out obviously appearing to do so.* Hollywood retreated into a world of its own which was not only larger but usually swifter than life. The so-called realistic films of the thirties and forties—the Warner social dramas, crime thrillers, and so on—moved at an exhilarating but quite artificial pace: sequences were kept brief and linked by rapid fades, and lapses of time were whipped by in frenetic montages.

Then, in the late forties, Hollywood began to open up again. *Dark Passage* (1947) gave a featured role to San Francisco; *Naked City* (1948) made a star of New York. Not many movies went as far as these two; but more and more second-unit location photography took the place of brief stock shots. The advent of the wide-screen systems in 1953 accelerated the change by throwing more emphasis on the backgrounds, which might as well be expansive scenery as expensive sets.

But real settings do not automatically create realism. It isn't enough to tack a few location scenes onto a studio-made drama and hope that they will color the whole movie. Like an ostrich with its head in the sand, the movie won't blend into the scenery but simply calls attention to its rump. Nor is it enough to shoot dramatic scenes in real settings without shaping a relationship—in purpose, mood, and tempo—between the settings and the drama.

Recently I saw an illuminating double bill of revivals: Stevens' *A Place in the Sun* (1951) and Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954). The former is rooted in the studio tradition: its few location scenes are quite anonymous, and in the climactic rowboat sequence the lake scenery is obviously back-projected. Yet not only does the film remain as forceful today as ever, but in many places it has a surprisingly contemporary freshness, with a use of close-ups, camera movement, and cutting that anticipates Truffaut. By contrast, *On the Waterfront*, whose devotion to urban sights and sounds gave a striking impression of freshness a decade ago, today seems strident and gimmicky. We have followed too many movie characters down too many real streets to be impressed by the technique alone. We now pay much more attention to what the characters are saying and how they say it; and when an inarticulate dock worker starts to speak eloquently, the implausibility is merely heightened by a documentary setting.

From the fifties through today Hollywood has been trying in various ways to come to terms with its new-found reality. There have even been continual attempts to incorporate "real life" into the artifice of musicals and comedies. It's interesting to compare *An American in Paris* (1951), filmed entirely in the studio, with *Funny Face* (1956) and *Gigi* (1959), both of which use some Parisian locations. The latter do come off—just—but only because they present their location scenes with artifice.* And though not all the flatulence of the supposedly comic *Hallelujah Trail* can be blamed on Ultra Panovision, its attempt to emulate the visual stateliness of *Cheyenne Autumn* does not help matters. *Cat Ballou,* which is able to take its scenery or leave it alone, fares immeasurably better.

While it would be unfair to condemn films like *The Blackboard Jungle, The Desperate Hours,* or *Middle of the Night* for lacking the exuberant speed of *They Made Me a Criminal* or *The Big Sleep,* it is certainly fair to point out that the amount of realism they provide instead—social, psychological, or whatever—is inadequate to fill the gap. Most serious Hollywood films of the fifties and sixties claim to do a lot more, they try to do a little more, and they achieve no more than their predecessors of the thirties and forties. A notable example is *Lord Jim.*

*The simplest examples of this pseudorealism are Hollywood clichés, which are more often verbal than visual—"I've loved you from the first moment I saw you," "Keep your hands raised and turn around slowly," etc.

**Funny Face* uses a split screen for the shots of Fred Astaire, Audrey Hepburn and Kay Thompson dancing in various parts of Paris, and artificial color effects for Hepburn's fashion-photograph series. *Gigi* uses what Cocteau, referring to his *Orphée,* called "creative geography": we see Louis Jourdan moving in a single dance step between locations miles apart.

One doesn't see the earlier Hollywood choosing to make a film of Conrad's novel in the first place. If they *had* chosen it, there would have been no nonsense about the producer or director reading it 52 times in his desire to preserve the spirit of the original. The result would have been terrible Conrad, but possibly entertaining adventure. Brooks' film is not only poor Conrad but poor adventure as well.

The basic trouble is that Brooks, for all his rereading of the novel, keeps homing in on the old Hollywood clichés. He misses nearly all the details that could have brought the film to life. The most glaring example is the *Patna* incident itself. As Conrad describes it, there is a thump as the ship collides with some unknown obstruction. Then all is silence; and the decision of the crew to abandon the ship is made and executed in this eerie silence. I don't know at which reading of the novel Brooks decided to embellish the incident with a storm, but I'd be willing to bet on the first. The result, instead of heightening the tension, takes us into the never-never land of *The Guns of Navarone.*

Brooks' error is not in changing the book but in changing it for the worse: Conrad's silence would have been far more convincing, far more gripping. Oddly enough, at the end of the film Brooks makes the same error in reverse. In the book, Jim's girl storms at him when he insists on offering his own life in atonement for having caused the death of the Chief's son. In the film, the girl displays noble resignation while ironing what appears to be one of Jim's shirts—just like the long-suffering Alison in *Look Back in Anger.* Hollywood conventions are doubtless behind the change: for if Jim's girl accepts his death, there's nothing to spoil our satisfaction in this final atonement for the *Patna.* But in trying to lend plausibility to the change with the girl's ironing—a touch of naturalism endorsed, as it were, by a new-wave film—Brooks only exposes its oddity.

In writing the dialogue Brooks had a free hand, since what little there is in Conrad is unspeakable. Unfortunately, like so much in the film, the dialogue follows the line of least resistance—that of facile effects. There are continual "accidental" references to the *Patna* incident—remarks such as "like a sinking ship." There are pseudo-clever lines such as the merchant Schlumberger's "You are dying to die." Most egregious of all is Jim's reflective comment to the girl that "Patusan is *Patna*—with 'us' in it" —an umpteenth-reading discovery that might pass as a footnote in a doctoral thesis but in Jim's mouth is grotesquely hokey.

The biggest over-all failure of *Lord Jim* is in its style—or rather its two styles, since it alternates chiefly between vintage Hollywood romantic hokum and vintage Hollywood spectacle hokum. At the beginning Brooks makes perfunctory use of Conrad's narrative frame, as Marlow's voice accompanies a dull montage of Jim's early years. Then the film shifts gear, moving into the present tense. After the *Patna* incident and the court of inquiry, the film shifts gear again, going into a more leisurely montage sequence to skim over the series of different jobs that Jim took before going to Patusan. And so the film goes on, never gaining enough momentum to involve us deeply in Jim's career. In the book, the sustained use of the narrative frame, the transposing of episodes in time to heighten suspense, the reiterated sense of mystery about Jim's motives, and the fluid, polysyllabic rhythms of Conrad's prose all work together to spin a web of tension from start to finish.

Of course it isn't easy to express these things in concrete sights and sounds—but after those 52 readings one can expect something better than a mismatched series of episodes. In fact, Brooks does show signs of understanding the kind of translation required. In a few scenes the action and tempo do correspond to the tension of Conrad's style. These include the complex maneuvers by which Jim is rescued from the so-called General's stronghold in the guise of a corpse, and the casually exotic grace of the native women folding the funerary shrouds for their dead. Moreover, Brooks is quite right to go into greater detail than does Conrad for the attack on the stronghold—though the idea of using this to contrast Jim's sense of organization with his failure of nerve is better than the heavy-

handed execution. Brooks is also justified in compressing Conrad's two tryants into the single role of the General; but he ruins this economy by then enlarging the role to suit Eli Wallach, who gives one of his enjoyably villainous but quite distracting characterizations.

Lord Jim fails because it relies so heavily on the old conventions—"star" performances, carefully dosed local color, montage sequences, synthetic dialogue. All these work toward smothering the spirit of the story. The unfathomable depths of Jim's character are flattened to a blank surface (ruffled now and then by Peter O'Toole's patented expression of neurotic whimsy), and the interrelationship of courage and cowardice is reduced to a paradox as banal as that of Rossen's *They Came to Cordura* (1959). Even so, *Lord Jim* will suffer more than it deserves by seeming hopelessly old-fashioned; it happens not to use any of the techniques that have been in vogue in many European films, and increasingly in American films, since the late fifties.

These techniques usually impart at least a surface vigor and vividness. They break away from apparent order in the composing of scenes and editing of sequences. Thus camera movements may be dissociated from the immediate needs of the action (and may be executed by such means as a helicopter or the human hand); movement may be complicated by optical means (zooming or "freezing"); the leisurely punctuation of fades and dissolves is abandoned in favor of tense cuts; and the cutting itself may be ultrarapid or elliptical.*

Generally these new-wave techniques are used in conjunction with location shooting, creating an effect of supercharged realism which can be particularly suitable for thrillers, suspense dramas, and similar films. Zooming and shock cutting enlivened Wise's *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1959); elliptical cutting and some free camera work in New York locations made Dmytryk's *Mirage* (1965) absorbing despite its muddled plot; and the systematic use of lengthy dolly shots, apparently influenced by *Last Year at Marienbad,* helped to imbue Maury Dexter's low-budget *The Day Mars Invaded Earth* (1962) with chilling power.

LORD JIM

In fact, new-wave techniques have cropped up in a surprising variety of Hollywood films, including romantic comedies (the slow- and speeded-motion scenes of the two girls romping through the New York streets in *The World of Henry Orient,* 1961) and musicals (the elliptical cutting during the "Confidence" and "Doh-Re-Mi" numbers in *The Sound of Music,* 1965). The question is whether these techniques have been accompanied by significant change in the attitudes and themes of Hollywood films—whether, in other words, they have been adopted as gimmicks or as serious means of expression.

The surface vividness imparted by new-wave techniques may be very superficial indeed. Even a thriller cannot automatically profit from them: in Blake Edwards' *Experiment in Terror* (1962) the misjudgment of what constitutes suspense is merely emphasized by the indiscriminate use of shock cutting, "free" camera work, and helicopter shooting.

Among serious films, there is one which stands or falls on its thoroughgoing use of new-

*For convenience' sake I refer to these techniques as "new-wave." However, many of them also originated in television, which is more impromptu in its methods than the movies, and these have been carried over to the big screen by such former TV directors as Lumet, Mulligan, and Frankenheimer. One can find isolated examples of most new-wave techniques in earlier Hollywood movies: ultrarapid cutting, with scenes lasting less than a second, in Cukor's *David Copperfield* (1935); "free" camera movements in Browning's *Dracula* (1931), and so on. But the extended use of such techniques in Hollywood films dates back only a few years.

wave techniques—*The Pawnbroker*. This indeed is supercharged realism: Lumet bombards us with raw sensations from Nazerman's interlinked past and present. The film opens with a sequence entirely in slow motion—Nazerman's memory of a happy family picnic in the country, brought to a menacing close with the arrival of Nazi soldiers on motorbikes. To my mind the slow motion is perfectly successful. Not only does it convey the dreamlike quality of a memory, with its lingering over details, but it suggests the artificial aura which a happy memory can assume in unhappy times, transmuting it into a lost Eden.

From this point on it is unhappy memories that keep irrupting into Nazerman's mind. The earlier ones are introduced in brief flashes lasting only a fraction of a second; as the flashes recur they become progressively longer, until the import of the memory is made clear. Here again the technique is successful, and the impact of the flashes is heightened by the contrasting naturalism of past and present. Nazerman's present surroundings are somber—the streets of Harlem and a well-constructed pawnshop set—while the concentration camp of his memories is designed and photographed with stark pallor. The visual clash between past and present is sustained by a fine sense of timing in both direction and editing, so that artifice and realism fuse into a remarkable cinematic unity.

Later, however, this unity begins to show cracks. The location scenes between Nazerman and the woman welfare worker who tries to draw him out of himself have the stilted, stagy quality of the opening exterior scenes in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (where fidelity to O'Neill's dialogue offered some excuse for it). Then, at the climax of the film, when the assistant races to the pawnshop and is accidentally shot, Lumet unwisely tries to give his images the jagged authenticity of a *cinéma-vérité* film. There is an extended sequence with a hand-held camera, shots of what appear to be unprompted passers-by collecting around the assistant's body, and the final scene of Nazerman staggering away amid people who are presumably unaware that he is a movie character. It is the technique just as much as the script changes that obscures Lumet's upbeat intentions. The calculated naturalism shows us not a man who has begun to live again but only a man who has been dealt a second and gratuitous blow.

If my criticism of *The Pawnbroker* seems unduly rigorous, that is only because the film aims so high. It is undoubtedly one of the most exciting American films of recent years. Compared to *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*—with which it has much in common—*The Pawnbroker* has a more interesting and rewarding subject; but in its execution it falls short of the aptness and discipline of Resnais' film. As with *On the Waterfront*, I believe that the passage of ten years will make *The Pawnbroker* seem strident and gimmicky. But it is genuinely trying to do something new and serious; not, like *Lord Jim*, just pretending.

Ship of Fools on the other hand, succeeds by virtue of its execution: it cannot—or at least, should not—be taken seriously. The new-wave techniques are used sparingly but deftly: elliptical cuts from one character to another which help to increase the tension as the film reaches its climax, or a sudden, rapid close-up panning shot for a moment of emotion. Indeed, the sense of timing, and the general economy with which the many threads of the film are kept interweaving, are remarkable when one considers that Kramer's previous film was the inordinately long and leaden-footed *Mad World*. The achievement of *Ship of Fools*—minor but still praiseworthy—is not to try and imitate the successful hokum film of the thirties and forties but to recreate it in contemporary terms.

Another film of 1965 also blends the old Hollywood with the new, but in a different way and to an entirely different purpose. This is *The Collector*.

To my mind, the theme of Fowles' novel has a hypnotic force which overrides both the implausibility and overt symbolism of its plot: I am literally fascinated by the clash between

THE COLLECTOR

the liveliness of Miranda Grey and the deadliness of Freddie Clegg. I can think of only one other theme of similar hypnotic force (and similar implausibility) which has been used in a recent movie, and that is the Pygmalion legend.

As far as the plot outline is concerned there are no concessions. As in the book, Freddie Clegg (Terence Stamp) is a bank clerk who has won a lot of money on the football pools. He sets out systematically to capture an attractive art student (Samantha Eggar), whom he then keeps prisoner in a lonely country house. He persistently tries to make her love him, while she persistently tries to escape. In the end she dies of pneumonia, and he sets out to capture another girl, determined to avoid his previous "mistakes."

At first sight the film does appear to be making other concessions, typical of the "hard-hitting" film that is all buttermilk inside. Gone is Miranda's instinctive sympathy with left-wing causes, and her identification of Freddie with the mass of people who neither know nor really care about the quality of life. Yet it would have been difficult to incorporate such ideas in the film without giving them the false emphasis of a "message"—like the outburst of the Negro mobster in *The Pawnbroker.*

Here Wyler, as well as the indestructibility of the theme, must be given credit. He seems to have taken great care not to make his film more melodramatic—and hence, ultimately, less disturbing—than the book. I can recall only one lapse. When Miranda, in one escape attempt, swipes at Freddie's head with a shovel she does it so violently that one is surprised to find him still alive, let alone able to intercept her. Yet the ensuing struggle between them, with blood streaming down Freddie's face, crystallizes more sharply than the book Miranda's revulsion against violence even as a last resort.

Nor does Wyler make Freddie a conventional monster—and here the credit must be shared with Terence Stamp, who continually reminds us that this sinister youth is both human and pathetic. When he first brings Miranda, chloroformed, to the cellar which is to be her prison, there is an extraordinary close-up of her unconscious face as Freddie's hand delicately draws aside a strand of hair that is caught between her lips.

This scene marks the beginning of a strange ambiguity that underlines the film. Amid the atmosphere of tension and horror, many scenes evoke the conventions of a typical Hollywood romance. When Freddie first allows Miranda out of the cellar to take a breath of fresh air,

there is a close-up of her as she tosses her hair back over her shoulder, like countless screen heroines embarking on a country idyl with their hero. When a neighbor unexpectedly calls on Freddie, Miranda is about to take a bath; although bound and gagged, she manages to turn on a faucet so that water eventually spills down the stairs and is spotted by the neighbor. Freddie then "admits" to the neighbor that he has a girlfriend in the house and that she, being unable to turn the faucet off, was too ashamed to reveal her presence. For a moment there is a poignant suggestion of Freddie as the normal youth he pretends to be but is worlds apart from. Thus the ads speak truer than it may seem when they describe the film as "almost a love story." In the same sense that Kafka's novels are "almost comedies," *The Collector* reveals the nightmare that lies only a few points off normality, the narrowness of the abyss that separates warm human contact from obsession and mania.

The idea of paralleling an ordinary love story may account for the fact—which some viewers find odd—that the film was made in color. Visually, indeed, the film not only parallels but subtly parodies the typical Hollywood romance. I am not sure how intentional this is, but it is remarkably effective. The book lays continual stress on Freddie's bad taste, particularly as expressed in the furnishings and decorations of the country house and Miranda's cellar. The decor has that artificial and unlived-in look which one associates with the interiors of films like *The Pleasure Seekers* and *All the Fine Young Cannibals.* Any real location scenes inevitably clash with such interiors, and so they do in *The Collector*—but to excellent effect, heightening the oppressiveness of Miranda's prison. Consciously or not, Wyler has given free rein to the old Hollywood vices, transforming them gloriously into virtues.

Despite this apotheosis, I did not save *The Collector* till last in order to force an upbeat ending for this survey of Hollywood in 1965. The success of this film may be more complete than that of any of the others I've examined; but even if that success is entirely intentional, it is of too special a nature to suggest a trend. Moreover, the film betrays an uncomfortably cold meticulousness in its making. This is most evident in the well-conceived but stilted opening scenes in which Freddie, a predatory silhouette in the foreground, follows Miranda in his panel truck as she walks through Hampstead; but it is perceptible throughout the film. If *The Pawnbroker* is destined to seem strident and gimmicky in ten years' time, I suspect that *The Collector* will by then seem flat.

Even without claiming the support of posterity, it is hard to see anything much that is really new in Hollywood 1965. Consider the allowances that have to be made in praising even the best of these films and the fact that the four films I've examined in detail are all adapted from novels. One can also complain about the length and heaviness of recent Hollywood films, which fail to combine lightness of touch with richness of texture as do such European films as Risi's *The Easy Life,* Malle's *The Fire Within,* Truffaut's *The Soft Skin,* or Schlesinger's *Darling*—or, more to the point, as do some vintage Hollywood films.

To document the mediocrity of Hollywood 1965 one doesn't have to compare it with a *Broken Blossoms* or *Magnificent Ambersons;* a modest production like Archie Mayo's *The Black Legion* (1936) will do the job very well. This was one of Warner Brothers' many "social dramas," and Mayo was one of the many sound but not outstanding directors of the time. Nevertheless, this particular drama—about the xenophobic terrorist societies that were formed in certain industrial cities during the Depression—is realistic in a surprisingly modern manner. The casual factory atmosphere; the mordant scenes of the terrorist recruit (Bogart) as he proudly hefts his new revolver; his uneasy recital of the society's bloodcurdling oath; the final, appalled close-ups of the recruit and his wife as he is sentenced to life imprisonment—all these should make us hesitate to greet films like *The Pawnbroker* with cries of "New!" and "Truthful!" and "Harder-hitting!"

But it's also possible to defend—or at least excuse—Hollywood 1965. After all, *The Black*

Legion was just one of more than 500 Hollywood films made in 1936. If it happened to prove unpopular, neither Warner Brothers nor Hollywood as a whole ran a fatal risk. There was a large and faithful moviegoing public, and plenty of other, far blander films coming out to appease them. With annual production down to one-third of the 1936 total, Hollywood films today cannot so easily ride on each other's trailers. The independent producer—a phenomenon as rare as television in the thirties, and as familiar today—takes a far more crucial risk than an established company with each film he produces.

And some specific charges against Hollywood 1965 can be turned inside-out. If it's a weakness to adapt a novel, then we must also reprove Truffaut for *Jules and Jim,* Malle for *The Fire Within,* Wicki for *The Bridge* and so on. *The Pawnbroker* and *The Collector,* despite their faults, succeed in illuminating as well as illustrating their originals.

Should we expect Hollywood films to be like European films? The question is ambiguous. To answer No may mean that Hollywood should stick to the types of films in which it has traditionally been superior—musicals, westerns, thrillers, and so forth. But this attitude is at least ten years out of date. The American musical of today is quite different from the self-contained creations of Hollywood's heyday. It may be in decline; it may be undergoing a transformation into something just as successful; but at present it is not automatically superior. When filmmakers in other countries, no longer overawed by the Hollywood musical, decide to make one on their own terms, the result can be as good as *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg.*

Though there is much in European films to explain why the best of them (which are what we chiefly see) tend to set critical standards in America, there is also much in them which is overrated. And in any case no national cinema of note has been anything but indigenous; despite its crossing of boundaries, the film is an art requiring solid national roots.

Hollywood has yet to establish what its own terms are in the mid-sixties. It is still muddled with memories of imperial glory. But also, amid the broken columns of that empire, buildings in new styles are taking shape. It's encouraging that Wyler, after such tedious disasters as *Ben-Hur,* was willing and able to tackle the subdued intensity of *The Collector;* that Kramer, after the excesses of *Mad World,* could attain as much control as he did in *Ship of Fools;* and that Lumet, after fumbling the tense solemnity of *Fail-Safe,* should risk the even tenser solemnity of *The Pawnbroker,* instead of falling back on another safe adaptation like *Long Day's Journey.* It's encouraging, in short, that Hollywood 1965 is able to spring pleasant surprises.

Film Reviews

RED DESERT

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni. Script: Antonioni and Tonino Guerra. Photography: Carlo di Palma. Music: Giovanni Fusco. Producer: Antonio Cervi.

A new Antonioni, like a new Godard, or Bergman, or Kurosawa, or Welles or Resnais, has the critics running for cover, scrambling (although in the very best of taste) for positions. In their initial reviews they try on attitudes and points of view like hats in the springtime—all the while hoping their editors will allow them a second guess after reading what their colleagues wrote.

They get very little help from Antonioni himself. If the Beatles come off well in their press conferences (always a good sight more modest than their interviewers, and much more sensible), then Antonioni comes off badly. Joe von Sternberg and Ford are known to be tight-lipped but that might be better than the stuff usually served out by Antonioni. Brendan Gill is right to complain about his "explanation" of the new film's title—he almost called it *Blue and Green* but decided that was "too closely related to the color idea," so called it *Red Desert* instead.

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That's a lot of help.

The case for his latest film is made by faltering critics who assume after the earlier trilogy that there must be more there than meets the eye. They end up sounding like each other, and it is difficult to tell their ideas, never mind their prose style, apart. Quarterlies do series on the film, but at the end we are not much closer to it than at the beginning. Certainly no closer than when we saw it, although a lot of nice details may have been filled in.

The case against *Red Desert* is made most pungently by Brendan Gill. After suggesting that Antonioni has for years been engaged in working out the Yeats maxim that man cannot know the truth but can embody it, he goes on to complain that Antonioni has not been working this idea out in dramatic terms, and to suggest that he is impatient with the need to do so. This, Gill thinks, turns Aristotle upside down—by emphasizing the paralysis of his characters, Antonioni is purporting that "character is non-action" instead of the Aristotelian "action is character."

You would think it might take more to dispose of a film-maker than quote Aristotle at him, and possibly Gill could do more in more words—the *New Yorker* has always been rather mean about film review space. But anyone who dares a film which is not Aristotelian in some fairly brazen way, whether comedy or drama, is still going to have to brave the better critics' wrath, from Pauline Kael all the way down. This is because critics become good by learning about drama (especially American critics), its ways and means, its richness and its apparently endless possibilities for variety and texture. The film-maker who does not dramatize then seems to them to be either incompetent, lazy, or rude; certainly irresponsible in some way or other—either in his obligation to his audience, or at the least to his backers.

These critics get my grudging respect almost the same way defenders of patriotism or God as the Supreme Being do. It must be grand to believe in something like that. People who are not patriotic or religious always run the risk of thinking they are missing something.

But some film-makers, Antonioni among them, are trying to make *pictures* not *dramatic movies*. This has two sides to it. Firstly they do not set up a strong line of dramatic narrative developing out of their characters, because the idea did not come to them that way, and they do not see the need to move an idea so far away from its source as to give it a form that has more respect for dramatic tradition than it has relevance to what they take to be the real situation. Gill complains that Antonioni sweeps action away (including plot) "in favor of a revelation of some underlying passionate but immobile sensibility that he sees as truly us." This works for lyric poetry, he thinks, but can it work for "*moving* pictures?" It is hard to know here whether Gill and Antonioni are disagreeing about the way things are, or simply disagreeing about art. Life must be considered not only mixed up with the failure of its Victorian institutions, but also with the irrelevance of drama to the job of chronicling it. People are more introspective and secret than Aristotle hoped, or, possibly, than Gill can bear. This disqualifies them as characters for drama, maybe, but you can't get rid of them so easily. There is some nagging quality to them that some film-makers cannot ignore, any more than can hundreds of painters, poets, novelists, playwrights, sociologists, politicians, criminologists, churchmen, psychiatrists and Daughters of the American Revolution.

Gill has the narrow view of what movies can do—much narrower than life.

Far more useful than the other interviews and reviews is a conversation Antonioni had with Godard and others in Venice last year (translated in the Spring 1965 *Movie* behind adulation to such stalwarts as Richard Brooks, Hitchcock, and Losey), but even here there are many dark places—vague references to why he wished Giuliana to be played in a static manner, and a reluctance to pursue the philosophical implications of the metaphysical premises of the picture. If you can read through the conceits (of Antonioni and his questioners) you find something like the following:

In the trilogy he was concerned with an

analysis of the emotions, worked out through the relationships between individuals (his characters), rather than a strictly narrative development. In *Red Desert* he is more concerned with the individual in relation to his surroundings. This leads to a different approach to story.

He is not wishing to argue against the modern industrial environment, and in fact finds it beautiful (lines of trees and landscapes are passé—can't hold a candle to chimney stacks belching smoke against the sky). Thus he does not argue that the environment produces the neuroses he studies in Giuliana. She is shown as feeling a gulf between herself and the rhythm which is imposed upon her. The film examines her attempts to reconstruct herself to meet the demands put upon her. Since she is prone to neuroses this happens to be manifested in a specific environment. (He doesn't explain why she is neurotic, here, or in the film). The physical environment consists of people but equally important of things—of fog, boats in canals pushing through the trees, of factories and colors, sounds and tastes.

He considers that the needs and interests of men and women are changing, and film must seek to represent these changes. (He thinks Godard is successful at this). Thus he tries to approach Giuliana through the objects which impinge upon her (he establishes the object first, then introduces the character and examines her mood, and ties the mood and the object together in one way or another). By use of soft focus, or selective focus (one plane rather than another) he tries to trace Giuliana's neurotic state. Thus, he concludes, this is a departure from realism, since realism depends upon sharp focus in depth. (He apparently means the G. E. Moore kind of commonsense reality—dammit this really is my thumb I see in front of me and no one, Kant, Locke, Berkeley or Hume, is going to talk me out of it). Beyond this, he talks of his use of color but his claims should be examined by someone else—e.g., that the dialogue is able to be sparser than in black and white; the redness of the shack by the canal prepares an audience for the dialogue about sexual stimulants, and so on. He does not explain or apologize for the change in color in Richard Harris' room from white walls before the seduction to pink after it.

He believes that the new society of cybernetics, automation, and robotry is going to outdistance most people. Thus Giuliana is intelligent enough to be aware of this and yet neurotic enough to panic. He considers the Richard Harris character to be out of her own world, a romantic, so that when he takes advantage of her, she is being betrayed by her own world. This is an odd remark. Harris just seemed to be a boor —what was wrong with him was that he was not romantic enough. But Antonioni seems to believe that one of the husband's friends, an engineer, would not have slept with her while she was disturbed. It may take one to like one, but that is not what Antonioni seems to think he is saying.

But whatever—this all seems straightforward enough, and not very much of the explication should be needed after seeing the film. I enjoyed his use of color and concluded that Antonioni had remained a realist in this film—meaning by reality the environment experienced by people. He makes us feel his characters' environment, thus we are put into the environment of our own sense memory. If you like action this isn't going to be enough for you, and if you like to know in advance, or at least by the end of the picture, that the protagonists are worthy of you then the film will bore and antagonize you. If on the other hand it seems all right for a film-maker to presume some foreknowledge in an audience about his characters (or his approach to character in general) and, further, if it is enough for a film-maker to explore the emotionality of an environment, then the film will work as picture and sound if not as drama and narrative. In fact the central situation is trite, banal, and familiar. It becomes interesting only because Antonioni finds ways to involve us in his own investigation. He says he is not very affected by modern trends in writing, but this is misleading if you forget that modern writers are influenced by the new movies. What he is investigating is the ability of the movies to register an emotional state with a minimum of ex-

plication and a maximum of that kind of information which people usually have in private. Thus the realization by the Richard Harris character that Giuliana had not been in an accident but had tried to take her life is seen as an invasion of privacy, or at least a penetration of secrecy which had not been attempted by her husband. In itself this is a penny-dreadful cliché, but it is not developed for melodrama. It is used to demonstrate the further privacy the would-be lover is himself unable to penetrate, and which, effectively, seals Giuliana off from all society. Thus she can function better (if automatically) with her husband than with anyone else. There she knows what is expected. Beyond that she is lost. This could have been represented in narrative drama, but the writers who have tried to do so (Dostoevsky, Kafka, and so on) spend no less time on environment than Antonioni and accomplish no more than he does. In addition Antonioni has fair success in avoiding the solipsism of most American experimenters and generating genuine knowledge of private experience. Psychiatry is not meant to be fun, and perhaps Antonioni is answering his critics who have said he is making alienation desirable by casting such a prosperous and lovely Monica Vitti in his roles, for here she is plump and subdued.

—COLIN YOUNG

CAT BALLOU

Cat Ballou is the kind of movie which publicity handouts and all too often even reviews describe as zany romps and frolics, the performers as mad-cap, piquant, and beguiling.

Cat Ballou is a big success, and it's so much better than a lot of movies around, that relatively speaking, it deserves it. But it's uneven, lumpy, coy, and obvious, a self-consciously cute movie with so many things thrown into it—many of them over and over again—and with so little consistency or sureness of attitude that I was reminded of an architect friend telling me about the prosperous business man and his wife who came to see him about building a hundred-thousand-dollar house. "You can do anything you want," they told him, "so long as it doesn't have any style."

It's a Western about a girl train-robber, Cat Ballou (Jane Fonda), a sweet young cattle rustler (Michael Callan), his buddy who is whimsically called his uncle (Dwayne Hickman), a lovable old drunken wreck of a gunfighter (Lee Marvin), a darling Indian (Tom Nardini), and assorted killings, robberies, an attempted hanging, etc., mixed with wisecracks, an intermittent ballad, and reminiscences of *Along Came Jones, Destry Rides Again, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers,* etc. Somehow it's all supposed to go together. The producer Harold Hecht puts it this way: "It's a delightful spoof, a rib, of the classic Western-type characterizations and situations. The film abounds in satire and the hilarious, yet contains great heart. You're moved even as you're laughing. We have everything going for us in the story—lusty, brawling action, fights and gunplay; romance, music, beautiful scenery and wonderful antic comedy à la Mack Sennett. Let me tell you, there's never a dull moment. Something's always happening."

Something's always happening all right, too much is happening, but Hecht is mistaken in thinking there's never a dull moment.

There are some nice things: Nat King Cole singing "They'll Never Make Her Cry"; and an almost brilliant sick joke—or as it used to be called, a bit of graveyard humor—when Marvin mistakes funeral candles for a birthday celebration; and occasional good lines. But mainly it is full of sort-of-funny and trying-to-be-funny *ideas;* and a movie is not just ideas. They need to be realized and sustained, they need to be part of a total idea—which is to say a movie needs a *style.* In stage comedy it is timing that separates the first- from the second-rater; in film comedy even the greatest performers, the best scripts may seem second-rate if the director and editor fail in deftness and speed—if they do not give the movie the *rhythm* of comedy. They must have the supreme discretion to know when a gesture or a repeated bit of business intensifies the humor or destroys it. It is this sureness of touch which is style.

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Director Elliot Silverstein and his associates want satire *and* "great heart"; they want to "have everything going" for them. But heavy forced humor and unrealized comic possibilities are not transformed by calling the result a "spoof"—or to strain it even further, a "happening"—any more than speeding up a sequence in order to pick up the pace is "à la Mack Sennett." What we are seeing is ineptitude—coyly disguised.

And indecision: the movie tries to keep all possibilities open. The bathtub sequence from the English comedy of twenty years ago, *On Approval,* is soddenly imitated, and then *another* bathtub scene sinks whatever comedy was left in the first. Two Lee Marvins—playing bad and good gunfighters—still may not suffice, perhaps some in the audience may not appreciate parody, may long for a "real" romance—therefore a younger hero is also provided. Youth is supposed to be so attractive that it doesn't require characterization (which might even be considered a deterrent—limiting possible audience appeal) so Callan just cavorts, grinning archly to convey sexiness. And on the chance that he isn't well-known enough, there's Hickman of TV "fame" cavorting, and so on. There are even two minstrels—wasn't Cole enough?—is it perhaps that Stubby Kaye makes it *cuter*? A black man and a fat man—so nobody can fail to realize that the ballad singing is "for fun." These ideas and roles aren't linked in a conception: most of this movie is irrelevant to any conception except trying to get a response.

Cat Ballou isn't a parody—that would mean *stylizing* the conventions of a genre, not just using them and making jokes about them. It's a "lampoon," a novelty picture. So many of these pictures are novelties now, aren't they, these pictures looking for gimmicks, trying to "grab" you? And it lampoons the only safe target—itself.

Seeing it is rather like having to attend a company dinner where the executives are trying so desperately, condescendingly hard to involve you that the more strained and tiresome and simpleminded they get, the more the faces around the tables try to reassure them by overreacting. Perhaps some of them—on both sides of the table—mistake this false jollity for a good time. It is, after all a demonstration of democracy: they degrade us along with themselves. And we *are* degraded if we accept movies like *Cat Ballou* as the entertainment they claim to be.

The movie is so uncertain of its tone that it even tries for a little poignancy or extra depth —something that can pass for meaning or a statement—by having Cat say to the aged robbers who have lost their spirit, "How sad—you got old." It isn't age that's sad, it's wasted lives —like the lives of movie-makers in a commercialized culture who don't know what they want to do or are too fearful to do it. The people who made this movie are in no position to pity *others* for lacking spirit. "How sad," we might say to them, "you tried too hard and you didn't know how. You got caught in the big trap: you wanted to provide something for everybody and you didn't dare to risk anything." The only thing *Cat Ballou* is serious about is success—which is just what must be risked in the arts.

—PAULINE KAEL

THE KNACK

Director: Richard Lester. Producer: Oscar Lewenstein. Script: Charles Wood, based on the play by Ann Jellicoe. Music: John Barry. Woodfall (Lopert).

Vital! Exuberant! Joyous!

If one had to sum up *The Knack,* those three adjectives might help convey—if words can—the wonderfully heady feeling one experiences non-stop from this film's first images to its final credits.

And it is inventive. Director Richard Lester fuses many diverse techniques (gimmicks too) into a totally satisfying entity. Reverse motion, quick motion, subtitles, overexposed film, well-integrated silent film routines, cutting on a dialogue cue to a visual "punch line," match-cutting and jump-cutting are only a few of the devices woven together by superb editing, imaginative cinematography, and the final unifying element, a graceful and rhythmic score,

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which in its own right is engaging and, like each of the other film elements, serves its purpose in the fabric of the film as it continually and unobtrusively moves the action forward from one madcap sequence to the next.

Nancy (Rita Tushingham) has just arrived in London, looking for the YWCA. Tolen (Ray Brooks) is a great man with the women, or so we are led to believe by his roommate Colin (Michael Crawford), a young bachelor schoolteacher who is less than successful with the opposite sex. They share a sprightly old Victorian house in Shepherds Bush, London. Colin advertises a "room to let" and a third male is added to this wacky house: Tom (Donal Donnelly), a probable homosexual, who likes to whitewash the rooms he rents.

Nancy has a series of comic adventures as she diligently troops through London searching for that maddeningly elusive YWCA; at the same time, Tolen, Colin, and Tom frolic through a number of insane moments, mostly concerned with girls. Eventually, in a junkyard to which Tom has taken Colin with the promise of securing for Colin a bed bigger than Tolen's (on which Colin plans to launch a successful sexual campaign), the young men meet the wandering girl, the two parallel threads of storyline are joined, and the already hectic pace of *The Knack* is accelerated as the film moves toward Colin's recognition of his own manhood and the consequent destruction of his overblown and self-limiting fantasies concerning Tolen's supposed sexual virtuosity.

If during the first three-quarters of *The Knack,* Tolen seems to us to be an incredibly successful sexual superman, pinning down one feverishly compliant Lois Lane every three minutes, it is *only* because we see him through Colin's eyes. Colin is such an abject failure that Tolen's successes are magnified out of all proportion. Colin's fantasy life is memorably captured during the film's opening scenes. Using overexposed film, Lester's fluid camera moves caressingly across a houseful of superb young girls all, it would seem, personally clothed by the editors of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar,* in fashions tinged with determinedly exotic overtones: boots, skirts that hug the figure while displaying lots of fleshy leg, medallions that slide across bulky sweaters graphically revealing the lush hills and valley of a female's upper anatomy.

As the camera moves up and down the stairway in Shepherds Bush (Tolen lives on the second floor) jammed with girls waiting on line for Tolen (who incidentally has a guest register in which he asks the girls, after their long awaited minutes with him, to restrict their comments to "one word"), Lester darts in for details, details that reinforce the already throbbing quality of Colin's fantasy: wet female lips, creamy skin, an innocent Botticelli-like face and Tolen languidly caressing the shoulder of one of the many beautiful young things.

If this all seems exaggerated to the point of absurdity—that is precisely the point. For it is this exaggeration that so well succeeds in capturing the surreal, the ridiculous quality of Colin's (and many another young man's) sexual fantasies.

Though Tolen does exhibit a certain flair with the opposite sex, especially in one bravura scene in which he all but succeeds in seducing Nancy (but carefully stops to toss her, like a bone, to Colin) using nothing more than his voice with its wet, sensual, nasal tones, he is certainly not the Don Juan that Colin believes. When Colin finally does start to exert himself—at the behest of Nancy who wants to taunt Tolen for his cruel dismissal of her—he quickly picks up "the knack." This results in the film's last fantasy scene, a hilariously wicked bit of nonsense in which Colin finally liberates himself from the burden of his self-defeating fantasy.

Lester's tongue-in-cheek wit and decisive eye for detail give him a unique ability to catch the pulsating vitality, the helter-skelter madness of those young adults who, by retaining their joy in life, have not become part of the strapped-down middle-aged world. Like the Beatles in *A Hard Day's Night,* Colin, Tolin, Nancy, and Tom are members of a generation not yet devitalized or corrupted by any permanent ar-

rangement with the adult world. As they romp through London on any of their many sprees, Lester catches the drab faces and drabber comments of adults whose reaction to the wonderful spontaneity of the younger generation is marked by a contemptuous mistrust. The young people, upsettingly, remind them of the loss of the spark, the steady and inevitable erosion of much that was best in them.

Using the streets, parks, buildings, and waterways of London as the background for much of the film's action, Lester (who is an American) gives us a breathtaking, freshly seen London. Instead of the heavy drabness or the suffocatingly sweet picture-postcard image which have been the doleful fate of this grand city in most films, we discover through Lester a pucky, vibrant, and diverse city. What a welcome change from the drab Midlands we've seen in much of recent British cinema! London is brought alive, in all its rich diversity, as Truffaut, Godard, and Renoir have succeeded in bringing Paris to life.

Though the temptation and the opportunity to spray your shots all over the place without hitting target is greatly magnified when you attempt to fuse together as many and diverse elements as Lester has in this film, it's amazing how negligible are his few and minor misses—the most disturbing being Nancy's unconvincing involvement with Colin which is used to propel us in to the film's final sequences. And only after the film is over does one realize how carefully it has been put together. How painstakingly planned. For nothing takes so much forethought to successfully carry off as the look and feel of spontaneity.—YALE M. UDOFF

HELP!

Director: Richard Lester. Producer: Walter Shenson. Script: Marc Behm and Charles Wood, based on a story by Marc Behm. Camera: David Watkins. Music: John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

I suppose the worst and the best thing one can say about this second Beatle film is that it is very little like the first one, *A Hard Day's Night.* Sequels, particularly in the movie industry, are usually well-meant (in terms of dollars) attempts to duplicate an original success. The result is usually a parody of the first, at best, and at worst it is like the person at a party who insists on retelling a joke the way *he* heard it—same punchline, same characters, only it happened in Chicago instead of New Orleans. In directing the new Beatle film, Richard Lester has avoided this particular problem. The characters, of course, are the same, and there are a few oblique reminders of the first film, but *Help!* is for the most part an original effort.

It is not, however, incomparable. "Running, Jumping, and Standing Still" is very much in evidence, but instead of capering through *Mad* magazine, the four bizarre harpers are now japing *Harper's Bazaar.* Where the first movie was what might be called "dry" camp—witty, tight, even slightly acid—the new one is very juicy, very Richard Avidon camp. The credits at the end stress the technical aspects of the film, which are many and impressive. The colors are luscious, the tones exquisite, the angles ravishing, and the lens work is simply *wog!* It's what I would call eatable art. (Take a big bite of Beatle.) But inside the fruitcake, no file. It's like leafing through *Vogue,* but with a plot. And if you take *Vogue* page by page, you get bored by the end. Plop art.

There is, I would say, very little of the censor laws' "redeeming social significance" here. Unlike *Hard Day's Night,* which by means of a picaresque structure ran through a series of wonderful satiric sketches, *Help!* is a hapless farce from beginning to end, with many a limp-wristed flap at expected targets: mad science, Scotland Yard, James Bond movies. Even Terry Southern gets a fingery flutter. But there is no point, no bite, no edge. It's cotton candy, and in wide-screen Technicolor. From the few side remarks that I caught—and the Liverpuddlian accents *still* muffle a lot of meaning—the thing may be one huge in-joke, hinging on the farcical plot in which a fat caliph tries to recover a

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Director: Richard Lester. Producer: Walter Shenson. Script: Marc Behm and Charles Wood, based on a story by Marc Behm. Camera: David Watkins. Music: John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

I suppose the worst and the best thing one can say about this second Beatle film is that it is very little like the first one, *A Hard Day's Night.* Sequels, particularly in the movie industry, are usually well-meant (in terms of dollars) attempts to duplicate an original success. The result is usually a parody of the first, at best, and at worst it is like the person at a party who insists on retelling a joke the way *he* heard it—same punchline, same characters, only it happened in Chicago instead of New Orleans. In directing the new Beatle film, Richard Lester has avoided this particular problem. The characters, of course, are the same, and there are a few oblique reminders of the first film, but *Help!* is for the most part an original effort.

It is not, however, incomparable. "Running, Jumping, and Standing Still" is very much in evidence, but instead of capering through *Mad* magazine, the four bizarre harpers are now japing *Harper's Bazaar.* Where the first movie was what might be called "dry" camp—witty, tight, even slightly acid—the new one is very juicy, very Richard Avidon camp. The credits at the end stress the technical aspects of the film, which are many and impressive. The colors are luscious, the tones exquisite, the angles ravishing, and the lens work is simply *wog!* It's what I would call eatable art. (Take a big bite of Beatle.) But inside the fruitcake, no file. It's like leafing through *Vogue,* but with a plot. And if you take *Vogue* page by page, you get bored by the end. Plop art.

There is, I would say, very little of the censor laws' "redeeming social significance" here. Unlike *Hard Day's Night,* which by means of a picaresque structure ran through a series of wonderful satiric sketches, *Help!* is a hapless farce from beginning to end, with many a limp-wristed flap at expected targets: mad science, Scotland Yard, James Bond movies. Even Terry Southern gets a fingery flutter. But there is no point, no bite, no edge. It's cotton candy, and in wide-screen Technicolor. From the few side remarks that I caught—and the Liverpuddlian accents *still* muffle a lot of meaning—the thing may be one huge in-joke, hinging on the farcical plot in which a fat caliph tries to recover a

mystical ring now being worn by the unknowing Ringo. Ring-wearing, I understand, is a homosexual high-sign in gay old England, and the threat of amputation in order to get the ring may have caused many a thrill under the mauve velour, though to the innocent eye it was nothing more than hokum for the sake of jokum.

Plenty jokum, however, and the experience is a merry one, if perhaps a half-hour too long. The first scenes are the best (as in so many recent films, the footage backing the titles provides a very high point from which the rest of the film seems to slide off into the popcorn), and the early episodes in which the caliph and his henchmen try to abduct Ringo's ring are very funny. Towards the end there is some extremely arty footage shot in the Alps, which reminded me of a lengthy martini ad, but which is also a beautiful experience in visual enjoyment, and the whole thing is put together with (*Tom Jones*) subtitles and (James Bond) trickery which makes the film worth seeing if you like technical virtuosity largely for its own sake. (I kept feeling I was looking at the *Lensman's Annual Yearbook: 1965; or, That's Great, But See What I Can Do!*) If you like your camp cluttery, and don't mind the clanking of a cutting machine, this is the flick for you.

In all truth, however, there is little cause for complaint. The film was made for Beatle fans, like all the rest of the paraphernalia of magazines, wigs, photographs, posters. We can rejoice that it never stoops to the Elvis-epicac level, that it *is* sumptuous, expensive, unsparing in color, sound, and all the sensuous elements available to the modern film-maker. There is no feeling of vulgar waste, moreover—except as a monument or a circus involves a certain amount of conspicuous redundance—no sense of film-flam. You go and you have a good time, without feeling that you are being pandered to. Still, the first Beatle film was made for the same audience, and it somehow transcended its own purpose. It was like those old Good-Humor bars: every now and then when you got down to the stick you found that you had a "lucky one." The first Beatle movie was a lucky one. There was something extra under the chocolate and vanilla. *Help!* is all ice cream, and with no napkin either. Hence, the title.—JOHN SEELYE

Short Films

CORONATION

Conception and direction: Richard Meyers. Music: Fred Coulter. Costumes: Mel Someroski. Sound recording: Don Baker. 16mm, B&W, optical sound, 23 min. 207 Crain Avenue, Kent, Ohio.

> *Unknowingly we sense certain implications through visual phenomena. The film-maker's imagery dispenses with known values and tries to entertain certain of these unknown implications.*
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> —RICHARD MEYERS

This statement from Richard Meyers, film-maker and art instructor at Kent State University (Ohio), is the basis for my analysis of his last major film, *Coronation*.

The words I deem important in the statement need further comment. "Visual phenomena," first, are not objects of the sensible world, but rather retinal images of motion, shape, color, or shadow that the conscious mind seldom recognizes. The unconscious can, however, "sense certain implications," certain para- or supra-logical correlation or connections and from them draw conclusions. "The film-maker's imagery," i.e., the images (not symbols) that appear on the theater screen, "tries to entertain" (not logically analyze or explicate) some of those fleeting retinal impressions by attempting to

mystical ring now being worn by the unknowing Ringo. Ring-wearing, I understand, is a homosexual high-sign in gay old England, and the threat of amputation in order to get the ring may have caused many a thrill under the mauve velour, though to the innocent eye it was nothing more than hokum for the sake of jokum.

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recreate those that well up from the unconscious. By so doing, the film-maker often introduces new or altered "visual phenomena" that renews the process and results in the growth and development of a film.

One problem in this method is that the process can renew itself endlessly and no complete film would ever result. Meyers solves this problem by imbuing his films with a loose narrative form. He creates situations and atmospheres into which he looses his actors (much like happenings) and what then appears as narrative on the screen is a combination of the actors' reactions to the situation and Meyers' reaction to his assembled footage in editing.

For example, much of the action in *Coronation* is set in a surrealistic medieval bazaar and involves a large crowd of appropriately costumed people (mostly Meyers' students). There is to be a coronation ceremony before which the Old King (dressed in a modern business suit) must be killed in order for the New King to assume the throne and rule a rather nebulous kingdom. The Old King is chased, caught, and struck down and the crowd cheers, "The King is dead! Hurrah!" But up he comes again and the crowd cheers, "The King is alive! Hurrah!" This is repeated three times while the New King's face registers alternate exultation and anxiety. When the Old King is finally assumed dead, the New King is crowned. Whereupon his subjects pelt him with eggs, vegetables, and rocks while he retreats, with his retinue of musicians and the coffined body of the Old King, to a raft for safety. The Old King then struggles to life for the last time and is pushed, coffin and all, into the water. The raft is upset by all this commotion and the whole company falls into the water, the musicians still playing their instruments and one riding his cello, while the New King sinks shouting "Mother! Mother! Mothermothermother!"

This basic situation for *Coronation* was shot all in one day. After Meyers viewed this footage, he spent the next two months on this theme. There is a sequence of the New King being dressed in ritual robes while a voice intones all the necessary paraphernalia for the coronation ceremony. The New King's mother is introduced as an elderly Lady Luck who incessantly plays a pin-ball machine and laughs hysterically and somewhat malignantly each time the bells ring and the lights flash. There is a night sequence in which the New King seems to emerge from underground in the midst of a circle of naked young men. This is followed by a dreamlike slow-motion run that seems to take the New King nowhere.

The foregoing has been a summary of the *events depicted* within the film (by no means a summary of the film itself) and an attempt to give some idea of the film's growth. The film as a whole may be best described by its effect on the viewer, or, at any rate, on this viewer. It is like a black-and-white magical incantation that leaves one shaking—half with fright, half with laughter. The laughter is produced by the absurdity of the events previously described. The fear—perhaps anxiety is a better word—is evoked by the pace of the visual shocks counterpointed by the more stable, but unnerving, droning of the voice on the sound track. But there is something more that builds tension. There is the screen that has the dark, malevolent quality of some early German and some early American horror films. There is that voice that has at once the quality of being eerily familiar and almost unintelligibly foreign. The pace, again, is of constant frenzy, as much within the shot as from shot to shot, never allowing the tension in the viewer to wane. And then there is that demoniacal laughter of the controlling presence at the pin-ball machine.

I would venture, also, that much of the film's effect derives from its technical primitiveness. With the exception of the aforementioned slow-motion shot and one sequence in which a black background is animated to simulate a pin-ball machine indicator panel, Meyers depends exclusively on lighting, camera placement, and editing for his effects. There are no multiple exposures, no wildly moving camera, no fantastic special effects created by an even more

fantastic crew of special effects men, not even a fade or a dissolve. The sound, too, is simple: no echo-chamber, no fantastic mechanical or synthetic sounds, no chaotic mixing. Just the human voice and a string quartet. Perhaps after being left cold by so many elaborate Hollywood "horror" films, we need a return to the more basic methods of shock, that Meyers seems able to provide.

Richard Meyers, like Edgar Allan Poe in his early tales, has the kind of genius that dotes on both the weird and the absurdly humorous and achieves its artistic truth by piling detail upon detail. Poe's *The Man That Was Used Up* is a good example of this tendency. This type of artistry seems to have no justification beyond itself, and so the socially oriented critic may say that *Coronation* is "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." I can only refute this by saying that the "unknown implications" that Meyers, through the medium of film, "tries to entertain" in turn entertain us. And more deeply, these "unknown implications," sensed "through visual phenomena," come away from the theater with us and make the film rewarding for infinitely longer than its duration on the screen.

—Earl Bodien

RE-ENTRY

By Jordan Belson. 6 min.

This is the film Belson made with his Ford Foundation grant; and in case the ugly and pointless attacks on that grant program need any further rebuttals, this single film should suffice to kill them dead dead dead. If Ford's support of experimental film-making had resulted only in this one short work, it would still have been well worth it.

Visually *Re-entry* is a bit like early Kandinsky: loose, vivid, cloudy shapes for the most part; in energetic action. The structure, though it is difficult to write about, is that of a trip out, followed by a re-entry; the allusions are not only (as in Belson's previous film, *LSD*) to hallucinogenic drug experiences but also to space travel; the spatial experiences of the film are very suggestive at times of rocket flight or—more generally—of rapid passage through immense spaces. There are no literal scenes in the film; nothing can be "recognized" except—for an instant and for those who happen to be familiar with such things—a shot of part of a solar flare. Likewise there are no literal sounds: the track, which Belson composed by the manipulation of many kinds of sounds (a good many, he says, drawn from nature, and some created electronically) is a subtle orchestration of roars, tones, beats: noises with an uncanny feeling matching that of the images—suggestive of cosmic processes, or perhaps of the subliminal rhythms of the inner cosmos.

Belson's films in his latest and freest period include *Allures, LSD,* and *Re-entry.* In all of them Belson has worked with immense care and finesse, though with simple equipment—he is fanatical in his craftsmanship. (Thus he works slowly: *Re-entry* took about a year to make, on the full-time basis made possible by the Ford grant.) His films are, I think, genuinely mystical: that is, they are simulacra of visionary experiences, not just fiddling around with shapes and colors; they are not, to use the familiar cuss-word, "formalist." Yet they are in one sense purely formal—their subject matter has no *literal* significance and cannot be discussed as can plot, character, etc.

They have, instead, an emotional significance like that of music. Now the aspiration to accomplish this kind of thing is long-standing: there has been talk ever since the 'twenties of films that create "visual music." Why have these almost universally failed, while Belson succeeds? The answer, I imagine, is partly just that Belson is a talented artist where others have been only ingenious experimenters. But I also think that, by accidents of life and times, he has been able to tap in on levels of perception most filmmakers do not reach. As I tried to suggest in an earlier article on his and related work [*FQ,* Spring, 1964] I think the power of such films lies in their utilization of perceptive patterns we do not usually experience consciously: as, to use

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a simple example, music may echo the heartbeat; as, to use a more fashionable one, a flashing light may approach the alpha-frequency of the brain. In other words, I suspect that such apparently abstract work is in fact very physiological. (Similar factors operate, of course, in conventional film-making—most obviously in editing, where gross body rhythms play a large part; here, however, we are dealing with a visual and aural world that is "elemental.")

Belson's recent films may then be realistic in one sense: they convey an image of the universe as it is perceived *beneath* the routine thresholds of everyday perception. Like some drug experiences, this can be frightening. There is an awesome quality to *Re-entry* especially: as of stupendous power, chaos, the operation of immense forces over immense distances. The film hurls you through spaces in a way that is often not at all reassuring. But then, deep in the mind, on those levels where we still react as very young children, that is quite likely the way the world is. Belson is one of the few magicians who knows how to get at this.

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

Entertainments

R. M. HODGENS*

The Glory Guys, or *Major Dundee* rides again. Similarity is profuse: superb James Wong Howe lensing, characteristically Bible-banging Sam Peckinpah dialogue, large cast and budget in a proudly old-hat Cavalry-*vs.*-Indians setting, plus three performers from the earlier film—Senta Berger, Michael Anderson, Jr., Slim Pickens—with at least two of them playing more or less the same roles. The hero, Tom Tryon, is a proper Charlton Heston-surrogate. Riz Ortolani's score is on a par with Daniele Amfitheatrof's for *Dundee.* There's a well-staged slug-fest or two, a fair performance from James Caan as an indomitable Irish trooper and a better one from Pickens in Ward Bond's old role of the garrulous top-kick. The rest is the mixture as before.

—DAN BATES

The Great Race is, to extend Dwight Macdonald's terminology, "mid-camp"; in it Blake Edwards deploys an enormous and charming (though never quite hip) collection of bric-a-brac, human and otherwise: zany costumes, antique and Jules-Verne cars, blizzards with polar bears, a faggoty crown prince and a villainous general, sit-in demonstrations for women's rights, a barroom brawl, and a custard pie melée in tones of creamiest raspberry. Through the decor, which is designed and photographed with lavish attention, cavort Jack Lemmon as the evil genius professor (and the prince), Tony Curtis as the dashing, Tom-Swiftish, and aptly asinine young blade, and Natalie Wood—whose shark-toothed energy is for once put to proper use—as an intrepid girl reporter. Love triumphs in the end, with the nicely calculated inverse probability that gives this picture much of its considerable delight; it's as expensive as *Mad, Mad World,* but it preserves a certain insolent lightness and won't leave you with that awful taste in your mouth.

—E.C.

Harlow (Electronovision version). *Harvard Lampoon,* look no further. The worst movie of the year is here. Also, there should be a special award for the process in which it was shot, a technique that could spell the doom of the film art, while giving what moguls and misguided or uneducated directors (Kubrick astonishingly among them) choose to call "new birth" to the motion picture industry. Electronovision may have potential as a technical device, but what emerges here recalls nothing less than a giant-screen kinescope from television's early days. There's the same bad lighting, the same raucous acoustics; the same coughing and clearing of throat before giving mere lip service to lines (by Karl Tunberg, who wrote the Wyler *Ben-Hur,* or at least took credit for it) that deserves no better, the same cardboard props and use of actual settings, not for reality's sake but to save time and money. Bill

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Belson's recent films may then be realistic in one sense: they convey an image of the universe as it is perceived *beneath* the routine thresholds of everyday perception. Like some drug experiences, this can be frightening. There is an awesome quality to *Re-entry* especially: as of stupendous power, chaos, the operation of immense forces over immense distances. The film hurls you through spaces in a way that is often not at all reassuring. But then, deep in the mind, on those levels where we still react as very young children, that is quite likely the way the world is. Belson is one of the few magicians who knows how to get at this.

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

Entertainments

R. M. HODGENS*

The Glory Guys, or *Major Dundee* rides again. Similarity is profuse: superb James Wong Howe lensing, characteristically Bible-banging Sam Peckinpah dialogue, large cast and budget in a proudly old-hat Cavalry-*vs.*-Indians setting, plus three performers from the earlier film—Senta Berger, Michael Anderson, Jr., Slim Pickens—with at least two of them playing more or less the same roles. The hero, Tom Tryon, is a proper Charlton Heston-surrogate. Riz Ortolani's score is on a par with Daniele Amfitheatrof's for *Dundee.* There's a well-staged slug-fest or two, a fair performance from James Caan as an indomitable Irish trooper and a better one from Pickens in Ward Bond's old role of the garrulous top-kick. The rest is the mixture as before.

—DAN BATES

The Great Race is, to extend Dwight Macdonald's terminology, "mid-camp"; in it Blake Edwards deploys an enormous and charming (though never quite hip) collection of bric-a-brac, human and otherwise: zany costumes, antique and Jules-Verne cars, blizzards with polar bears, a faggoty crown prince and a villainous general, sit-in demonstrations for women's rights, a barroom brawl, and a custard pie melée in tones of creamiest raspberry. Through the decor, which is designed and photographed with lavish attention, cavort Jack Lemmon as the evil genius professor (and the prince), Tony Curtis as the dashing, Tom-Swiftish, and aptly asinine young blade, and Natalie Wood—whose shark-toothed energy is for once put to proper use—as an intrepid girl reporter. Love triumphs in the end, with the nicely calculated inverse probability that gives this picture much of its considerable delight; it's as expensive as *Mad, Mad World,* but it preserves a certain insolent lightness and won't leave you with that awful taste in your mouth.

—E.C.

Harlow (Electronovision version). *Harvard Lampoon,* look no further. The worst movie of the year is here. Also, there should be a special award for the process in which it was shot, a technique that could spell the doom of the film art, while giving what moguls and misguided or uneducated directors (Kubrick astonishingly among them) choose to call "new birth" to the motion picture industry. Electronovision may have potential as a technical device, but what emerges here recalls nothing less than a giant-screen kinescope from television's early days. There's the same bad lighting, the same raucous acoustics; the same coughing and clearing of throat before giving mere lip service to lines (by Karl Tunberg, who wrote the Wyler *Ben-Hur,* or at least took credit for it) that deserves no better, the same cardboard props and use of actual settings, not for reality's sake but to save time and money. Bill

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While Gregor's reasoning on why the German film

industry is indeed stuck at zero is interesting, to my mind he omits the most significant part of the problem. The axe-wielding Pommer Committee (a sacred cow which is never criticized) did its best to finish off the German industry in a manner worthy of Machiavelli, but the real villian was geography.

From the very foundation of the industry, Berlin was a *filmwelt* in itself. Most of the major studios were located there (with the exception of Bavaria in Munich) and the so-called studio system was in full operation. When a project was under consideration, it simply took a few telephone calls to gather together a director, writer, producer, cameraman, designer, and cast. Today, studios are situated in Berlin, Munich and Hamburg, and it is virtually impossible to get the old-fashioned stock-company together to get a project off the ground. And no studio is anxious to invest much money in Berlin as a central location for obvious reasons.

The utterly incredible statement by Gregor that "the idea that the German film under Hitler achieved any degree of serious artistic integrity, is a legend which is supported only by those who are lacking in political sensitivity," makes one wonder exactly what the "political sensitivity" of the Gregor faction might be. I will not question their "sensitivity" but their political views should not affect their honest criticism of films.

Gregor was hardly out of short-pants when the war was over; one is curious to know just where he saw all the major German films 1933-1945 which he so blithely dismisses. It took this writer about three years work to dig the majority of the important films of the Nazi period out of dead storage, and those he viewed in Germany were screened on the condition that no German national attend.

While it is certainly stretching the point to defend much of the work of Veit Harlan (*Pedro soll Hängen* is an exception) certainly it is arrogant to dismiss out of hand such works as Käutner's *Auf Wiedersehen, Franziska, Romanze im Moll* or *Unter den Brücken*; Wysbar's *Fährmann Maria* or *Anna und Elisabeth;* Selpin's *Heiratsschwindler*; Felsenstein's *Ein Windstoss*; or Braun's *Nora* to mention just a few of the nonpolitical films, to say nothing about the consummate skill (no matter how odious the subject matter) of Bertram's *Kampfgeschwader Lützow* or Weidenmann's *Junge Adler,* two superlatively made propaganda features. Gregor will have to do better than throw phrases around about *Kirchhofsruhe der Diktator* to convince anyone who remembers films of the period. When he has seen and analyzed a few more of these works for their artistic values perhaps he will have a better idea of what he is talking about.

And as for Leni Riefenstahl, her art is without question, whatever her politics. Anyone who can find much of a political nature in *Olympia* (in the German, French, or English version) is looking for something that simply isn't there.

When the current generation of German critics gets over its breast-beating, sorrows-of-Werther period, it might get together and suggest some solutions to the current dilemma instead of merely deploring it in such self-righteous and uninformed terms.

—David Stewart Hull

Ulrich Gregor replies:

I think it is quite normal that one tends to be particularly critical of the films of one's own country—that has nothing to do with "masochism," "self-debasement," or "breast-beating," as Hull likes to put it. It does not require an exceptionally high degree of critical insight to come to the conclusion that the current German cinema (at least the commercial production) is not worth much because it repeats the same clichés over and over again and achieves no contact with present-day reality. It is significant that a lot of the recent Federal Film Prizes went to utterly conventional works like Thiele's *Wälsungenblut* or Hoffman's *Das Haus in der Karpfengasse.* I think it is a wrong point of view to explain the present situation of German films out of economic factors alone. You cannot eternally blame the Pommer Committee for "finishing off the German industry." By now, it could long have recovered, if there had been more people with courage and imagination. It is true that film production in Germany today is decentralized and that there are studios in Hamburg, Munich, and Berlin; but what prevents telephone calls between these cities, to call together a production team? Actually this is done all the time: directors, writers, producers, cameramen, designers, and cast move easily and constantly from one place to the other. The problem is not that they are working too little, but too much (very often for television); what matters is that the results are insignificant.

My article was not primarily concerned with German films before 1945. But I think it is not a critical argument that someone was "hardly out of short-pants" at some time or other. It is a legend that German nationals are prohibited from seeing films of the Nazi epoch, if it is for a film history research purpose. From all those 1933-1945 films that I have so far seen, only Käutner's *Unter den Brücken* seems an artistic success to me, and it is not at all a typical production of the epoch. Another much-famed Käutner film which Hull praises, too, *Romanze im Moll,* contains a lot of artificial cliché figures and therefore seems to me highly questionable. I am totally unable to understand how one can praise the "consummate skill" of typical Nazi propaganda films like Weidenmann's *Junge Adler.* Their "skill" seems to me only disgusting, as I consider disgusting the skill with which Leni Riefenstahl made her filmic hymn about the *Reichsparteitag*—a film which like no other glorified the work of the *"Führer."* Nor do I find it so difficult to see the political intentions of Riefenstahl's *Olympiade,* where sport is treated primarily as an affair of fighting and "gaining victory."

In my opinion, solutions to the present-day dilemma of German film can only develop out of critical reflection about the past. We need not so much new economic "formulas," as new ideas, a new political conscience, a new orientation in the present world.

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