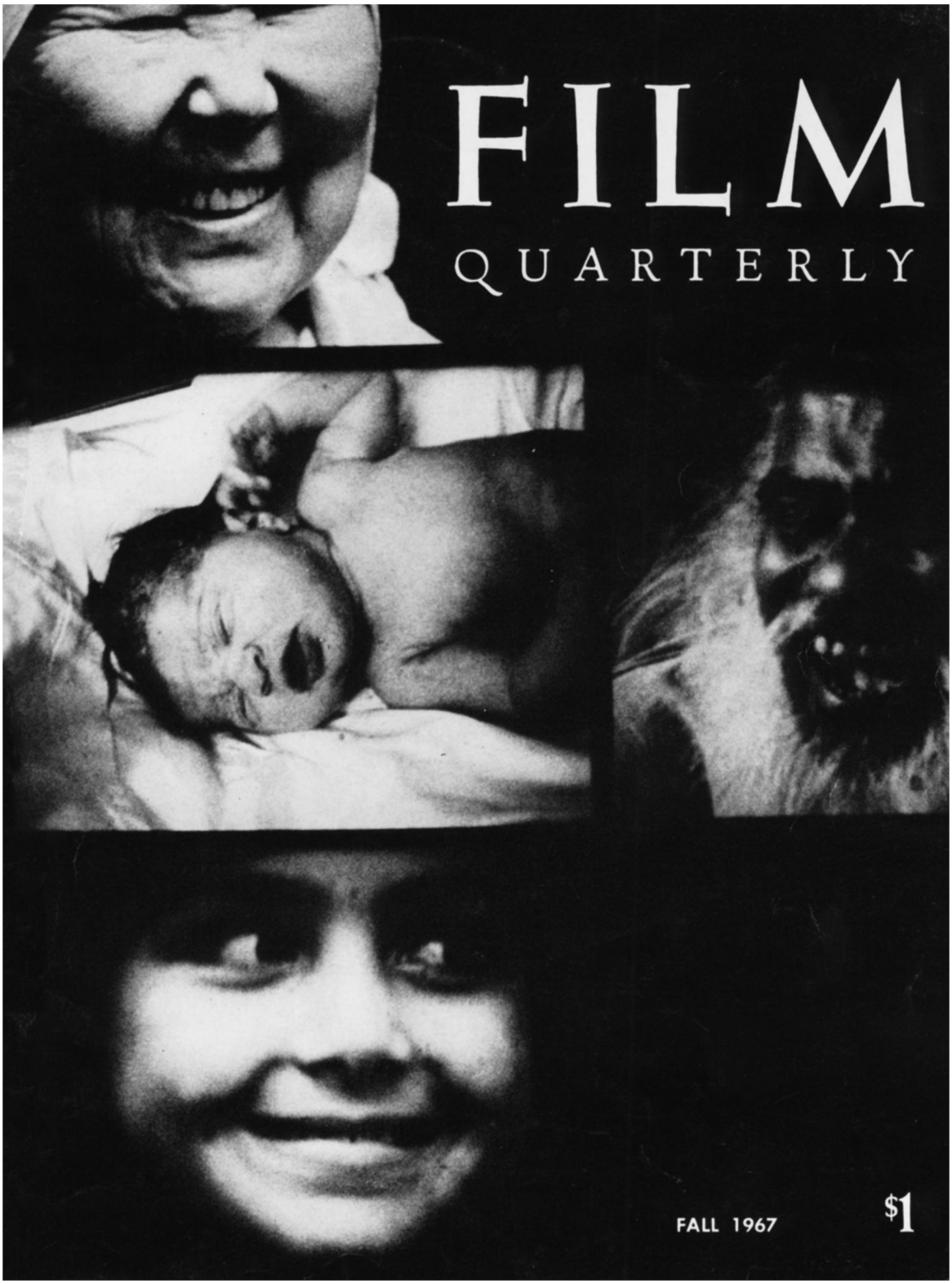

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FALL 1967

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CONTEMPORARY FILMS, INC.

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VOL. XXI, No. 1 Fall 1967

ARTICLES

FEATURE FILMS

ENTERTAINMENTS

BOOKS

COVER: Four of the five screens in the last room of *Labyrinth* (the fifth is located at the left, completing the cross-like shape; it is omitted on the cover to permit a greater size of reproduction). Photo by Ernst Haas, courtesy of Magnum, Inc.

Editor's Notebook

FROM THE BEGINNING

The proper study of film historians is film; but it has been hard to honor this truism for the first decades of the art, for literally thousands of early films have vanished, and have been known only from accounts in catalogues, trade papers, or reviews. This situation (for the American film especially) has recently been astonishingly improved, through the restoration of the Library of Congress paper print collection by Kemp R. Niver. Three thousand films, most of them heretofore unviewable, now exist in projectable form on 16mm; and Niver has now provided a meticulously annotated guide to this vast body of films in his *Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection, 1894–1912* (University of California Press, $27.50). Not content with these herculean labors, Niver has also assembled a hundred illustrative and/or key films from the collection—some eleven hours of viewing time—for the convenience of film scholars and teachers. These include a variety of Edwin S. Porter films made for Edison, a variety of Griffith films made for American Mutoscope & Biograph, other Edisons and Biographs, Lubin and Selig productions, and films made by British, French, and Scandinavian firms. These study reels will be distributed by Brandon Films; prints of any film in the Library of Congress paper print collection can be purchased through its Motion Picture Section, and some prints are available for inspection on Library premises. This wealth of new material will make possible some notable clarifications of how the narrative techniques of the motion picture really developed.

[*contd. on p. 65*]

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faut to the status of lowly contenders to the thrones. (Supposedly, the New Wave directors will receive full treatment in Armes's second volume, *The Personal Style*).

Primarily concerned with matters of style, Armes has devoted much space to Cocteau and Ophuls. He refuses to swim with the current of pseudo-intellectual downgrading of Cocteau as a fraud and dilettante; to Armes, Cocteau was a magician, a sorcerer, a myth-maker, and a spinner of dreams. Ophuls was first and foremost a consistent stylist who showed little regard, like von Sternberg, for meaning beneath the fragile surface of his works, but who left us a *chef d'oeuvre* of rare beauty—*Lola Montès,* a unique if somewhat self-indulgent "symphony of images."

Finally, we must thank Armes for providing us with information about the careers of Jean Grémillon, Georges Rouquier, and Roger Leenhardt, and for including in his book a complete filmography of the fourteen directors he has treated. The book is illustrated with more than twenty stills.

—JAMES MICHAEL MARTIN

Editor's Notebook, contd.

CORRECTION

The credits for our review of MASCULINE-FEMININE incorrectly listed the photography as by Raoul Coutard. The cameraman was in fact Willy Kurant.

CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN A. BARSNESS teaches at Montana State University, Bozeman. CLAIRE CLOUZOT also writes for *Cinéma 67*. CHIDANANDA DAS GUPTA is a long-time member of the Calcutta Film Society; he writes for *Indian Film Culture* and other journals. STEPHEN FARBER is now studying film at UCLA. WILLIAM JOHNSON is a New Yorker who has contributed frequently to this journal. JAMES MICHAEL MARTIN studies film at UCLA. KRYZYSZTOF TEODOR TOEPLITZ is a leading Warsaw film critic whose reviews also appear in the magazine *Poland* (it is his uncle, Jerzy Toeplitz, who heads the Lodz film school). KRISTIN YOUNG is a student at UCLA.

what is cinema? andré bazin • what is cinema? andré bazin • what is cinema?

Essays selected and translated by HUGH GRAY

Although Bazin made no films, his name is one of the most important in French cinema since World War II. Co-editor of the influential journal, *Cahiers du Cinéma,* he was the mentor of a new generation of directors: Truffaut, Godard, Resnais, Chabrol.

Bazin's writings cover every aspect of cinema. He brought to films an intense curiosity and a solid philosophical background. His style was vivid, direct, with a peculiarly French sense of *logique* and cultural scope. The essays in this volume exemplify the range of Bazin's thought: covering both the "ontology" of film and the relations between film and the other arts. *$5.75*

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JUDITH SHATNOFF

Expo 67: A Multiple Vision

Going to Expo '67 to see film was like going on a binge, for film was everywhere, unreeling at a furious rate. Expo was a fair of film.* The most modest pavilion had a 16mm projector grinding out a brave little documentary, while the grander national and theme pavilions featured multi-million dollar shows which explored the latest optical technology—not motion pictures, certainly nothing which could be called a "movie," but multiple-dimension films, multi-screen, multi-image, multi-media light and sound experiences culminating in the most ambitious architectural-film relationship of all, *Labyrinth*. Film at Expo was a dazzling vision, a display of technological expertise which left me wondering Where next? what more? as I went from fabulous show to show, much more impressed by media than by any message.

At Expo form was first. Film came on two screens, on three, five, six, nine in a circle, 112 moving screen-cubes, a 70mm frame broken into innumerable screen shapes, screens mirrored to infinity, a water screen, a dome screen, one plain old square screen for the USSR. In some pavilions show titles reflected the struggle to identify these forms: *Circle-Vision, Polyvision, Kinoautomat, Diapolyecran, Kaleidoscope*. And as there was form, there was format—in *Man and the Polar Regions* a wall of screens rotated around the audience; in *Cine-Carousel* the audience rotated around five screening areas. Format gimmicks can be dismissed because they don't affect perception. *Cine-Carousel* (Canadian Pavilion) was a neat way to keep an audience moving while holding it captive before five dull films on Canadian history. *Man and the Polar Regions* (at Man the Explorer, an Expo Theme Pavilion) was an interesting documentary on polar exploration and contemporary life (even Eskimos dance rock-'n-roll), but its semicircular crawl, left to right, only aroused curiosity: why is it moving? what for? (Unless the movement was a pun, say, on the Arctic Circle. During the first screenings the temperature inside the theater dropped to freezing, which was one sure way to involve an audience.)

Other forms were designed to be spectacular, an optical amusement park. For joy-riding there was *Canada '67* in *Circle-Vision 360°* (Telephone Pavilion)—an all-around picture with the viewer in the middle. Look front, look to either side, look over your shoulder, you see a scene much as if you're in a round glass observation car. When that "car" took off full speed ahead, zooming over Canada land and sea, zipping around street corners, flying, dipping down for a view of the Canadian Rockies or Niagara Falls, it was lots of fun, double Cinerama and better, since no matter where a viewer stands in relation to a 360° image his peripheral vision is involved, contributing to stereoptic effects. Everyone got his share of the ride—which ended with the Canadian National Anthem. Or for a trip without propaganda, there was *Kaleidoscope*, an optical mirror show designed to initiate the viewer into the mysteries of color. There, as you moved from cham-

* A newspaper schedule listed about 95 films at national and theme pavilions, more at La Ronde and the Youth Pavilion, many more in changing programs at the Canadian Pavilion Theatre and the Czech Pavilion. There were also coordinated showings at the Montreal Film Festival and the Montreal Cinémathèque. A pre-Expo competition was held with a $10,000 gold medal prize awarded to the best 50-second film to illustrate Expo's theme, "Man and His World" but neither the Czech prize-winner nor the other silver-medal-winning films were shown at the fair as far as I know.

ber to chamber, sound and light effects became more extreme, images and electronic tracks became more and more abstract, sometimes colliding, more often going their separate ways, until in the last chamber, mirrored walls, floor and ceiling, flashing, whirring incandescent lights, balls of fire and psychedelic explosions were prodded by increased decibels of sound into kaleidoscope symmetry. As one woman said about the mysteries revealed, "What won't they think of next?"

But where form was creatively explored, where film was a multiple vision, multi-images projected onto multi-screens, the advance of the medium was dazzling to behold. The medium itself is not new—some of the earliest film-makers thought of projecting simultaneous images onto more than one screen to form a composite film. About forty years ago Abel Gance used three screens in his little-known *Napoleon*. And Francis Thompson made multi-screen films for years before the grand success of *To Be Alive* at the 1965 New York World's Fair. Similarly, some of the first intermedia shows were put on by Dadaists in the twenties. But Expo provided film-makers with the opportunity (money, prestigious presentation, and so on) to work on a large scale, developing some aspect of the Expo theme, "Man and His World." At Expo, one saw the technological advances in optics, electronics, computer programming, and film production that allow explorations the first experimenters only dreamed of; and, significantly, one saw a huge, ready, and responsive audience.

At any world exposition the public is out to be awed by glimpses of the future, especially ready to greet innovation with that tolerant and complacent "What won't they think of next." Continual change and innovation are expected today as technological advance is often confused with human progress. In addition, the public is long inured to the special narrative devices of film, such as the full screen close-ups that once sent people hooting and jeering out of theaters, their sense of reality offended. Today that precious sense of visual reality can be dislocated, suspended, dispensed with altogether—abstractions are common—or people will respond to multiple realities, to multiple projection, even if their reaction to the simultaneousous in-flow of many images and sensations defies verbalization. They like it. Crowds lined up for hours to see *We Are Young!* on six screens. Daily, 7,500 people go through *Labyrinth* and according to a *Montreal Star* survey, many enjoy it enough to get back in line and go through again. (*Labyrinth* will be on view during 1968).

One explanation for this general positive reponse is that the simultaneity of the multi-image, multi-screen medium is engrossing, intriguing. It involves a viewer in depth. He has to stretch imaginatively, to juggle and resolve impressions on multiple levels, conscious, unconscious, intellectual, emotional. Viewing is a challenge. Of course, people vary in their ability and willingness to take in and process simultaneous film images. During any ordinary activity we simultaneously encounter many different stimuli, but our response is selective. We are aware that life is simultaneous, that at any given moment a vast number of experiences and events occur, but we are physically limited. However, the multi-image, multi-screen medium, more than any other, allows a viewer to range and react individually while he participates and is deeply involved. The medium is extremely flexible.

A cluster of screens can be used as one screen, or each screen can be used individually, or screens can be used in various combinations. Screens can be flat, or curved to help create depth illusions. Images, too, can be single or multiple—one synchronized image over all screens, or isolated on any one screen while black leader is projected onto the other screens. Images can be different on every screen, or repeated on several screens, identically or from different angles, or related as a part to a whole (a close-up with a long shot), or compared, contrasted, opposed. The flexibility of composition is enormous. A film-maker using the medium has been compared to a conductor of an orchestra who can achieve different harmonic and solo effects. These effects must be com-

bined, at length, into a work. In other words, a multi-image, multi-screen film forms in two dimensions: linearly, in time, like conventional monovision, and across the screens, in space, as a mosaic. And, if I may follow McLuhan's idiom, the mosaic is very cool.

Mosaic simultaneity also presents a great challenge to the film-maker. It's difficult enough to make a good film in monovision, using a linear sequence of images. Consider, then, that when two images are simultaneously projected, they are perceived as two images plus their combination—a third entity which they form. As the number of images rises the number of combinations, of different entities, rapidly multiplies. Add color—change screen relationships which change image relationships—two screens, three, five, six—mosaic content gets more difficult to control. Sometimes, of course, content is not a factor. For instance, at a recent USCO show in New York, the order and spatial relationships of images were flexible; it didn't matter how long you stayed with one set of light and sound effects or another; there was no intelligible content, but an over-all atmosphere to absorb. Shows of this sort are totally sensational. They can be programmed soothing or stimulating, and when the viewer has been soothed or stimulated, that is that: a pleasant experience. But if in addition to sensation, mood, atmosphere, a film-maker wants to communicate an intelligible idea, to tell a story or to illustrate a theme, he is up against the challenge that the simultaneous images which express his theme may truly multiply and, in combination, create other or additional themes. The mosaic may say more, or it may babble.

One solution is to keep it simple, and at Expo the three-screen film at the beautiful bubble USA Pavilion was simple. Called *A Time to Play*, the 20-minute film directed by Art Kane showed some of the games children play. The subject is familiar and nothing particular was said about it or about the pretty, racially mixed children at play. One game just followed another with individual screens often used to show different children enjoying the same activity—say, three different girls jumping rope or using different hopscotch patterns. Sometimes the three screens were used as one curving wide screen to show a gang of boys playing follow-the-leader or tug-of-war, or a long view of boys playing king-of-the-mountain was combined with close-ups of their struggle. Simple—even rather predictable. The most interesting sequence was a game of tag photographed from above in late afternoon sun so that the shadows cast by the players ran in repeated patterns; but here, unfortunately, the background music was over-wrought, pretentious. Somehow, too, I got the impression that *A Time to Play* should be advertising something, perhaps milk. It had that glossy commercial quality. There were more interesting explorations of multi-screen to be seen at Expo—for instance, *We Are Young*.

22 minutes, produced by Francis Thompson and Alexander Hammid for the Canadian National Pacific-Cominco Pavilion. Script by Donald Britain and Alex Pelletier. Music by David Amram.

The statistics are impressive: the cluster of six curved screens, three lower and three upper, combined to a total rectangular screen area of about 3,000 square feet—that's almost seven times the size of an average theater screen, almost twice the size of a Cinerama screen. Six Zeiss-Icon 70mm water-cooled projectors, modified to 35mm, ran off 10,000 synchronized feet of brilliantly sharp color film 24 times a day in a 12-sided auditorium (a dodecagon) holding 600 people—that's about 14,000 viewers a day. The 22-minute film had a cast of about 450 young Canadians, nonprofessional actors; it took about nine months to shoot, another five to edit down from 100,000 feet, and cost . . . .? Enough statistics.

We Are Young! was speed, exuberance, vitality. It took off at about a hundred miles an hour and raced through some pretty dazzling optical shocks before literally calling Stop! almost as if the film-makers, Alexander Hammid and Francis Thompson, were saying "Look what we can do if we want to:" A motorcycle comes on fast and furious and suddenly we are on the cycle, on six screens speeding six center road lines into an infinite funnel—the bottom

WE ARE YOUNG!

lines race up, the top lines race down; the illusion aims to swallow us; that's the extra comment six screens made on speed. Or there's a multiple frenzy of rock dancing in mirror repetition, washed with colored light, printed negative, flicking to positive, screen to screen six different gangs rocking far, rolling close. In an instant we got the summary of several dazed journeys through a discotheque. But Stop!

Begin again in panorama: a toddler at the beach; two youngsters on a horse—over the six screens that are almost twice Cinerama, skiing into the ice-blue heart of the Canadian Rockies, beautiful photography, every scene a picture postcard, then traveling over the broad dry plain of an Indian Reservation, a pair of boys in a jeep racing a pair of boys on horseback. And suddenly, full panorama, it's the jeep-wheel view of the race, careening, bounding over the dry brown fields, once, cut to the boys, twice, cut, and the third time, when it's a familiar ride, plunge to the brink of a canyon. The audience screamed. Thompson and Hammid could wow us widescreen too.

One knows that if they had wanted to they could have gone on, gone on, effect upon effect, hustling us through sensations, letting us react through a multiple blast of color and motion to images which are intuitively absorbed but stored in familiar categories like splendid landscape, or children having fun, speed, yes and energy, yes that's youth: we are young. Yes. But all familiar. Thus after reaction comes reduction. Those spectacular effects gloss over, they become interchangeable or become "disposables," entertaining while they last, then everyone cries, Next! Fortunately, before that, Thompson and Hammid cried, Stop.

We Are Young! settled down with two young girls come to the big city to make their way. It followed their sobering introduction to adult life, and, while their tale in parts was awfully cute, one did begin to see some exploration of the brilliant narrative possibilities of multiscreen language. For instance, in one scene, a center lower screen image of a girl examining a typewriter was surrounded by five giant close-ups of her hunt-and-peck typing. This was an immediate representation of what in monovision would require a few seconds of film to portray with a cut from long shot to close-up. Monovision would also follow a normal time

sequence to reveal content: first (long shot), she is perplexed by the typewriter; then (close-up) she is inept using it. But in multi-screen "first" and "then," meeting and use, occur simultaneously. In addition, repeat compositions are pleasing. Viewers have no trouble distinguishing different time and parts of an action while simultaneously absorbing them as a composite "event." We work on both levels easily and so quickly we are hardly conscious of it. But if, instead of related parts of an action, different events are juxtaposed, the presentation of content becomes cubistic. Then we work on many more complex levels. Then the language of multi-screen moves into symbol and metaphor. It is to single-screen as poetry is to prose.

In my estimation, *We Are Young!* only reached this poetic level in one short black-and-white sequence where the two young heroines, dismayed by the monotony of office work, turned to TV for relief only to see a newsreel of much grimmer aspects of adult life, responsibility for poverty and war, ignorance and destitution, the atomic bomb. Here, each screen presented a different event occurring in a different time and/or location, and while these events retained their separate "life," they also merged into a greater entity—a report of contemporary history, a composite provoking many emotions and responses, some conscious, some unconscious, part of which could be verbally reported, more which remained private and intuitive. In this sequence both film-maker and viewer "thought" in multi-screen; that is, a multi-dimension idea took multi-dimension rendition; content fit form. Perhaps the progress of *We Are Young!* from simple young pleasure to complex adult sobriety (leavened with lots and lots of optimism) required a similar progression in narrative technique, but to my recollection Thompson and Hammid were more inventive in *To Be Alive.* In *To Be Alive* multiple images were often used for their symbolic connections and poetic contingencies, particularly on an interracial, intergeographical basis. Perhaps the predominantly white middle-class North American experience of *We Are Young!* was an inherent limitation, as, I suspect, the very simplicity of *A Time to Play* made it mediocre, a three-screen presentation of a single-screen idea. Using three screens the idea is stretched and detailed; we look more attentively at children playing games; but that could have happened by skillful cutting, dissolves, and montage effects on a single screen. Obviously this will occur again and again as multiple forms are used more and more by technical virtuosos who can't think in multiple dimension or who don't have an idea that requires multiple-form presentation.

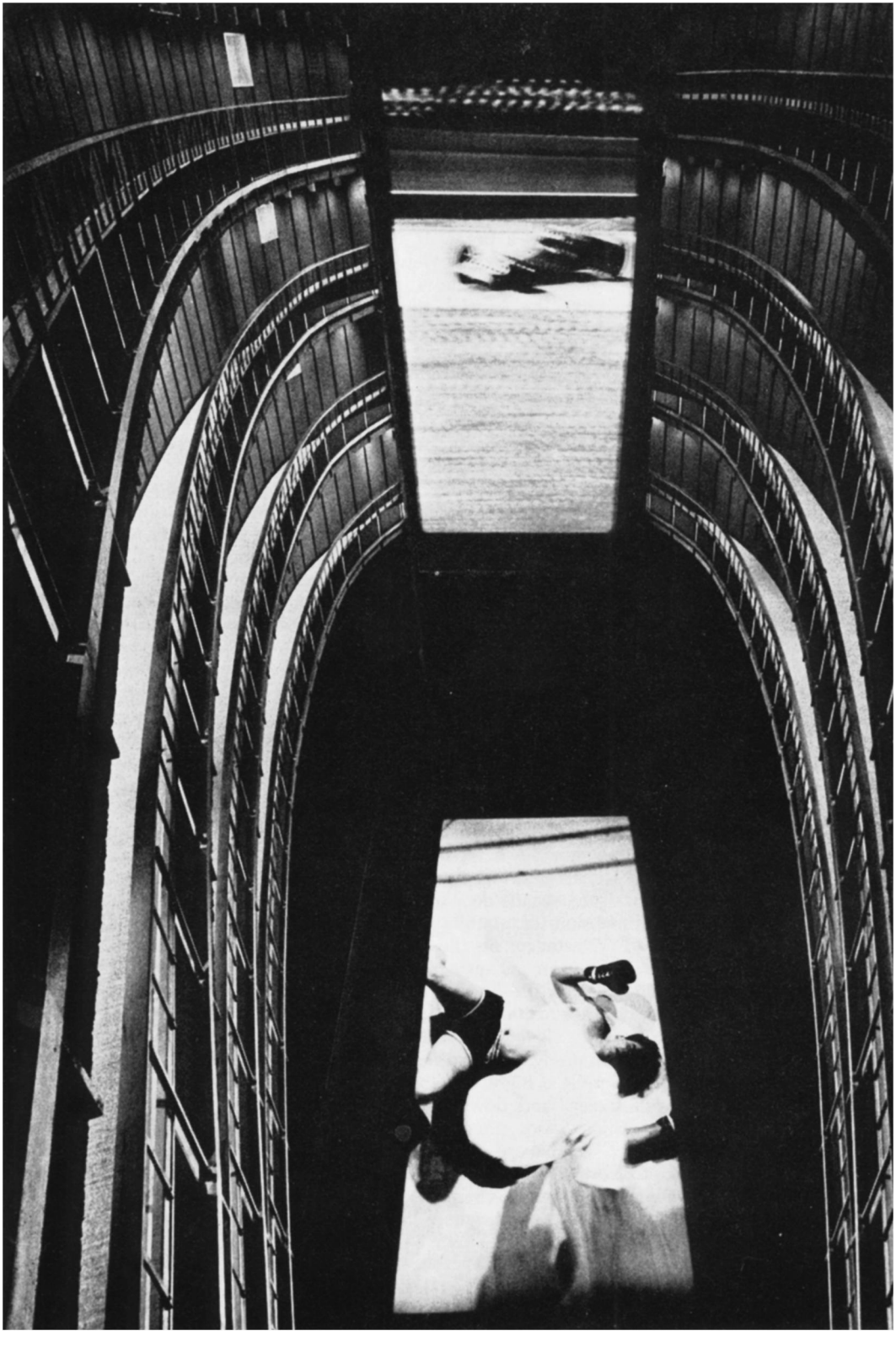
At *Labyrinth,* however, one can see what sophistication and intelligence can accomplish, for *Labyrinth,* the most ambitious film project to date, ranges wide in content and screen relationships, across age, race, geography, history, philosophy, in an integrated structure.

About 45 minutes, produced for Expo '67 by Roman Kroitor, Colin Low, Hugh O'Connor of the National Film Board of Canada as a special theme pavilion. Supervising editor: Thomas C. Daly. Sound: Edward T. Haley. Music: Eldon Rathburn. Architects: Bland, Lemoyne, Edwards & Shine.

In the Greek myth, the hero Theseus descended into the Labyrinth to find and kill the Minotaur, a legendary beast, half-bull, half-man, who yearly demanded the sacrifice of beautiful maidens and youths. The hero needed great courage to find his way to the heart of the maze and kill the beast, and he needed help, a guide-line to follow, to find his way out again. At Expo this myth is rephrased in modern terms. The new Labyrinth is a concrete fortress five stories high which the viewer enters, moving through dim, intimate corridors which prepare him, first to find the hero, then to find the beast which lives inside, then to return, triumphant, to the world.

To find the hero, he enters a tear-drop-shaped auditorium, four tiers high. He stands with 250 other viewers on both sides of a 38-foot wall screen, which fills the wide end of the tear-drop, and peers over a railing, below center, at a 38-foot floor screen. There, the hero, who comes in "two sexes, four colors, and thinks in

LABYRINTH *(Photo by Ernst Haas, courtesy Magnum, Inc.)* ►



the future tense," is born. There, in two brilliant color films whose images relate or contrast in different perspective, the hero develops to a vital peak of energy and confidence at which point he learns there is a beast. It is amazing to see—in fact, the experience of viewing a huge wall with a huge floor screen is itself so unusual that only the second time around did I truly appreciate the images. It is also wondrous to hear—three large speakers behind each screen and about eight hundred smaller speakers around the viewing tiers yield a large round stereophonic sound. And it must have been a devil to produce, for, in order to structure the relationship of images in this unusual relationship of screens, and to balance the sound for all tiers, the producers had to work by trial and error with a wooden mock-up two thirds the size of the oddly shaped auditorium. (To get the peak effect of these screens it's best to stand on the second or third tier center; there, one quickly alternates vertical wall and horizontal floor viewing. The screens are not adjacent because of the problem of "spill" —light from one washing out the image on the other.)

The obvious advantage of a floor screen is that it allows the most realistic presentation of overhead and aerial views. Wall projection of these views requires an adjustment of perception to create the illusion; usually, thus, we are given clues to expect to see "down" next shot when, say, someone leans out a window. In combination with a wall screen, the floor screen gives the added dimension of simultaneous depth perspectives. For instance, on the wall screen one sees the view from an open elevator going up; meanwhile, on the floor screen, the view descends. This approximates the sensation of being on an open elevator; that is, it simulates literal space. Similarly, flying over the molten outpour of steel mills at night, one looks straight ahead, wall screen, and down at the fiery metal passing below, floor screen. In a striking show-off effect, a Japanese child, wall screen, throws a bit of bread to fishes; it lands, plunk, in the water, floor screen. But far more interesting dimensions are created when the perspectives do not so obviously relate, when they only *seem* related.

In a simple instance, some boys, wall screen, climb the scaffold of a building under construction. At the same time the floor screen supplies a dizzy view of the street and buildings below. It takes a moment to realize that although the boys are climbing high, the view below is very much higher, taken from an airplane. The perspectives are seen connectively—literal space is replaced by believable film space—but the exaggeration of the aerial view on the floor screen also simulates the fear and vertigo which is a subjective response to heights. Here, one and one make three.

A wall and a floor screen can also be used for humorous juxtapositions. In one sequence showing the struggle of a fat woman to reduce with exercising machines, we look down at her determined sweating face, and vertically, to the side, at a giant close-up of a rolling ICBM rocket tread—ouch, we say and laugh, putting the two together.

The first stage of *Labyrinth* progresses from the birth of the hero, Man, through the exploratory years of his youth as a member of different races in different lands. A good part of the exuberance and vitality of these years is conveyed through familiar images—motorcycles, dancing, young people diving, swimming, leaping, running—but some unusual images which are unrelated in specific content emotionally refresh and reinforce the familiar stuff. This unit begins and ends with a rock band, and throughout intercut scenes and sounds of teenagers on motorcycles or battling the ocean surf, the rock music persists; it counterpoints the surf which rolls below on the floor screen and oddly, yet correctly, it integrates scenes from the shooting of a samurai movie in Japan. The unit connects as energy, speed, and struggle, the conquering attitude of youth which explodes into professional sports: auto racing and boxing. In this new unit images sometimes relate: long and close shots of the slugging boxing match are shown conventionally, wall screen, and from the top down, floor screen. But soon the images become more powerful as

symbols of survival; these sports move more and more into a revelation of man's struggle to succeed and conquer even, as a voice over the scene of an accident comments, to refuse the fact of his mortality. A fine illustration of this belligerent struggle is the combination of the auto race roaring by, all screen, with the boxer, floor screen, pummeled unconscious. A more poetic rendering of man's urge to exceed his limits, even to conquer nature, is an aerialist sequence where the breathtaking feats of a beautiful young man and woman which have filled both screens are in climax juxtaposed with looming vistas of outer space.

But to this peak comes the cold wind of maturity, when the hero must recognize that there are many battles which will be lost and many struggles which will yield mediocre returns—a disillusion which the creators of *Labyrinth* illustrate with images of derelicts, the Tokyo student riots, the hypnotic time-destruction of gambling and drunkenness, and one of the uglier spawns of technological progress, the concrete octopus of a freeway interchange. The hero has confidently and exuberantly battled his way to . . . What? As each viewer names the What he names the beast of his labyrinth, for this is a modernized myth and perhaps the modern Minotaur is meaninglessness.

In an interview, Roman Kroitor, head of the *Labyrinth* production team, discussed another, quite subtle reason for selecting a wall with a floor screen for this stage of the reconstructed myth. The separation of the screens which forces the viewer to look alternately from side to floor, plus the relatively narrow image on each screen, fits with a stage in human development where the view of life is "blinkered"—seen only in terms of self. Similarly, the widescreen relationship used in the third and last stage of *Labyrinth* refers to the widening of man's view as he learns that the world contains more than his isolated self locked inside private experience. Between these stages is a transitional passage which functions abstractly, perhaps to give the disillusioned hero-viewer time to meditate and to gain hope.

Viewers enter an M-shaped chamber formed by three semi-mirrored prisms that house hundreds of tiny lights winking on and off, reflections against a black infinity. Some people, describing their reaction to this experience, say they felt weightless; some say, serene, suspended between worlds—a reaction particularly possible in the earlier moments when the lights move in their own pattern against a primitive pattern of sound (jungle noises, hyenas, drums) into abstract electronic sound. The lights are controlled by a magnetic track running parallel to the sound track that is heard. At a few points these tracks converge and then the effect becomes gimmicky as the lights leap to the rhythms of background music.

In the third stage, seated in a wide shallow auditorium, we see the resolution of the myth on an unconventional cross of five screens—another structure of relationships which had to be worked out by trail and error. As chief editor Tom Daly described it, some patterns of images refused to work on five screens—demanded three, vertical or horizontal. Other patterns which seemed possible in Daly's specially constructed five-headed moviola turned out in enlargement to contain elements which worked against the desired composite. The bands of black between screens were another factor to consider in forming compositions, whereas these bands don't interfere with the perception of an over-all image (filmed by a special rig of five Arriflex cameras). Nevertheless, the five-screen cross was selected for reference to the tree of life (no theological connection) and because the shape allowed tremendous flexibility of composition, including asymmetric patterns.

In order to guide the viewer on his five-screen journey, Tom Daly developed some "rules" for editing. For instance, he found he could direct attention from screen to screen by the order in which material appeared. Thus, multiple views of Hindus performing absolutions in the Ganges are simultaneously perceived as facets of the same event, until the arrival of something new claims the viewer's attention. If four screens retain their image while one screen changes, we look at the change (this holds true for all multi-screen arrange-

ments). In another example, the serene face of a Japanese man, center screen, is surrounded by four reflections of trees on the pond by which he meditates. His face is replaced by another reflection; then the reflection to the right is replaced by the face of an old Greek woman. As we follow these substitutions, adding the woman to our original impression of serenity and meditation, content expands racially, sexually, geographically. Meanwhile, the images on three screens have stayed constant for a long period of time, a factor which had to be considered during filming to make sure there would be sufficient footage to work with.

In another sequence, Daly used the gestures of a Montreal policeman to work out a visual fugue in which a theme is repeated and starts over again in different places. As the policeman points Go that way, the audience looks that way, and there he re-appears, looking the same. His arrival on the various screens in time governs the fugue effect.

When there are five different images on the five screens the audience is free to look about in any order. Then Daly found that to be absorbed, these images had to be kept on screen for a longer time than compositions using repeating images, or "echo" images, such as four different masks around a center shot of a crocodile hunt.

From this brief synopsis of editing rules and discoveries we can see the continual attention paid to the viewer—to prevent his optical indigestion and to present material as a narrative flow that he could understand. Both Roman Kroitor and Tom Daly emphasized that the astounding effects of multi-screen should not be used simply to astound, that the form should have a worthy content, that content should need the form.

Thus, in the last stage of *Labyrinth,* the hero finds and conquers the beast. His battle occurs in a world of severe geographical contrasts which is often inhospitable: over five screens we see a desert into which, center screen, a film of a Montreal bus plowing through a blizzard is introduced. It is a world where man's loftiest productions are implicitly contradicted: over five screens the sunset skyline of New York City appears between the tombstones of a cemetery as another row of tombstones and is replaced in parts by the defeated faces of derelicts. Man can absolve despair in religious ritual (scenes of Hindus in the Ganges, Buddhist monks); or he can look inside: "That is where you will find the beast." The battle with the beast is primitively dramatized through a long episode in which an anxious and wary native hunter paddles down a jungle river at night and kills a crocodile. It is more subtly implied as a middle-class white woman, no longer young, confronts herself in a mirror.

With the beast recognized and conquered man can begin again, reborn and welcomed through the ritual of baptism into a world-wide human community. Yet, with initiation one must accept ultimate separation: birth includes death. In sequence we see departure, the separation of a weeping Greek family as some of the members emigrate; next we see a more final separation, the state funeral of Churchill presented as a succession of subdued and somber patterns. Then the cycle expands geographically and historically to the death of a civilization: the ruins of Angkor-Wat. Against this cycle of time is a montage which invokes the awesome range of a world simultaneously inhabited by men of twenty-first century science and men of stone-age ideology. The future and the past are simultaneously present. We see one man, a Russian astronaut, trained, then launched by rocket, while other men, in Ethiopia, dance out tribal patterns which have persisted for centuries. In the montage composition, the astronaut appears at the center of individual scenes of him in training, running, being spun around, and so on. The scientific ritual culminates with the launching of the rocket which rises vertically, screen to screen, and is gradually replaced by scenes of the ritual dance in Ethiopia. The separate sound tracks blend and interact. The image of the rocket soaring into space remains on the top vertical screen as a group view of the tribal dancers fills the center, complemented by individual portraits of the dancers on side and bottom

screens. A viewer simultaneously absorbs contrasts in time and location, race, culture, history, psychology, facts of group and individual action; yet that very simultaneity unifies these contrasts and shows them to be paradoxical. The different events connect on the level of human energy, new and old sources to be tapped. They connect as rhythm and ritual.

This sequence and montage development is by far the most sophisticated and poetic use of the multi-screen language that I have seen. It also illustrates an important difference between the multi-vision media and monovision, for I suspect that in monovision the same images, even closely intercut, would mainly communicate contrast. It is the multi-screen presentation that forces us to see contrast and to go beyond, to make those paradoxical connections, perhaps because we can absorb contrasts—even contradictions—one after the other without distress, but when they are presented simultaneously we tend to correlate; we seek a common denominator; our instinct is for order. Hopefully, it is valid, for the conclusion of *Labyrinth* is a celebration of these connections of energy, ritual, rhythm, the cycle of birth and death. Connections are made between the remnants of beauty in the ruins of civilizations and the faces of old people, as all screens are bathed in golden light. The end of the cycle is as precious as the beginning.

The final affirmative images of *Labyrinth* are predominantly rural, filmed in Greece, Asia, and Africa, and I was told that this is so because it was there that the desired images could be found. Truly, such images might be difficult to gather in countries like ours where one more often sees old people still battling life in raw young "blinkered" terms, measuring themselves by youthful standards in a society where the young (supposedly) don't trust anyone over thirty, where youth is a commodity. Here people don't age, they get obsolete. Nevertheless, the conclusion of *Labyrinth* must be regarded as philosophical and hopeful, not descriptive. It's a conclusion which heavily emphasizes human similarity by omitting almost all reference to the "hows" and "whys" which produce vital difference. The extreme divergence of man's values—the varieties of creation and destruction, art and war—are also omitted. To a large extent, the conclusion is a vision of one world/one tribe. In the old myths one Theseus, one St. George, slew the beast. His action was unique. He was a hero and a savior. In the simultaneous wide world of an electronic *Labyrinth* every man is a hero. The conquest of the beast is a conquest of perspective and the return in triumph is indicated by the central image of a newborn infant surrounded by smiling faces, all races, young and old. If, on reflection, conquest seems too easy, triumph too neat, the setting nostalgic, in experience the conclusion is deeply moving. *Labyrinth* ends with a display of human happiness. On every screen images of joy and well-being combine into a powerful affirmation of the beauty of life to which a viewer must respond. In multi-screen the emotional force of film is dynamically advanced.

I think that one experience with multi-vision is enough to convince a viewer that he has encountered the future form of many films, and if there were any questions about the commercial feasibility of the medium—about cost (*Labyrinth,* building and films, took three years to produce and cost about $4,500,000), and the need for special equipment—another show at Expo gave a technological answer: *Ontario, A Place to Stand,* an ever-changing geometry of screen shapes, all the mosaic simultaneity of multi-screen printed onto a single 70mm film requiring only one projector. *Ontario* was another dazzling sight.

Using the one 70mm film and applying computer programming to split-screen printing techniques (it was done in Hollywood, I'm told), director Christopher Chapman turned a banal 16-minute travelogue into a tour de force of rapidly changing screen size and shape, multiple scenes of the province, life and events—everything going on at once, as it actually does. Commerce, industry, entertainment, government, people at work, at play—in *Ontario* a cross-section of activities in parallel time appeared on squares (four squares, eight, sixteen

squares), on circles and rectangles, large and small, squares, circles, rectangles in swiftly changing combinations. Scenes of foresting and ballet dancing alternated on four narrow rectangles; six squares showing six different harvesting machines at work were combined with a circle showing a smiling child. Sometimes the unbroken expanse of 70mm film was used across the 65′ wide screen; sometimes the image was reduced to 16mm size, isolated, or framed into six TV sets all playing the same ice-hockey game. Yes, simultaneous action and high-speed screen geometry almost made the subject matter interesting—almost. *Ontario* stayed a dazzling example of technique. Image size, screen shape, combinations, compositions, seemed limitless, a matter of choice, aesthetics, and above all, correct computer programming—for that's the editing secret.

Split-screen printing has been used for years, in newsreels, trailers, in those telephone scenes which show both speakers, in, for specific example, the montage of Kennedy speeches in *Years of Lightning, Day of Drums,* in some of the spectacular auto-race scenes in *Grand Prix,* but *Ontario* showed the tremendous advance of the process as it includes and surpasses the simultaneous effects possible with any fixed number of screens. It may be a practical advance. A 35mm multi-image film could be shown anywhere. It may be an intimation of newer film forms, perhaps another medium, as technology gallops on.

You could go through films at Expo dazzled by technology alone, and two shows at the impressive Czech Pavilion were in fact devoted to technology, *Polyvision* and *Diapolyecran.* Perhaps that is why they were entirely successful. At the *Polyvision* slide and film show scenes of bread and rolls in mass production, chairs, pencils, autos being manufactured, fit perfectly with the automated cycles of a rolling spinning screen factory, cubes, balls, spools, expanded by mirrors and lots of flashing lights. It's the best industrial display I've seen. *Diapolyecran* was a more poetic paean to technology, presenting an optical narration, *The Creation of the World,* on a wall of 112 moving screen-cubes, each of which housed two slide projectors. A flow of beautiful images in color and black and white, drawings and photographs, approached, receded and simultaneously developed two cycles: the evolution of raw materials into manufactured objects, and the evolution of life from single-cell up to man and woman, Adam and Eve. Thus, industry acquired geohistorical glory and man emerged surrounded by his artifacts as if to say, yes, life is progress, industry is progress, progress yields comfort, comfort yields happiness, which is what Adam and Eve had in Eden—yes, the industrial state must be Paradise. But the images were beautiful. And surely such a statement fits a device which used about 240 miles of circuitry to control 224 projectors and 15,000 slides flipping every fifth of a second.

Both *Polyvision* and *Diapolyecran* were invented by Josef Svoboda, a Czech stage designer, and his profession may indicate how the further expansion of film forms requires a mixture of arts. On the simplest level of mixture were the shows at Expo which combined film with live actors: *Meditheatre, Kinoautomat* and *Laterna Magika* (which I unfortunately didn't see). *Meditheatre* (at Man and His Health, a Theme Pavilion) showed very explicit films of medical "miracles," a kidney "wash," a brain exploration, while actors pantomimed the films and added highly technical narration. It was awesome to watch a surgeon probe a convulsively beating heart and find the precise place to put a plastic patch—it also made many people faint. The effect was quite theatrical. At *Kinoautomat* (Czech Pavilion) an actor on stage asked the audience to make decisions for him, the actor on screen, trapped in a rather dull sex farce: wife versus inexplicable other woman. At crucial intervals the film stopped, the audience pushed buttons to vote should he or shouldn't he, and the film moved on, programmed for the next of 32 possible plot complications. Neither *Meditheatre* nor *Kinoautomat* were interesting as art mixtures. One exploited the mystique of science, the other an electronic game for its effects. (I'm told that at *Laterna Magika* the mix of actors on stage

and screen is quick and delightful and does add dimension to the medium.) A more skillful and potentially fruitful mixture is to be seen at *Labyrinth,* where architecture and film begin to merge, where auditorium, screen size and placement, sound and image are designed to interact kinetically and reinforce idea—a "blinkered" position for a "blinkered" attitude, a wide expanse for a widened perspective. In this sense, *Labyrinth* illustrates the trend towards film as a total experience, the medium as an environment. Will there be room in this environment for the word?

All over Expo—from the temples of propaganda, proud national displays, to the theme pavilions in praise of international man—I was struck by the absence of the word. Hardly a sign. Rarely a bit of printed explanation. And in film after film: lots of carefully edited sound and music, but no dialogue (except in *Kino-automat*); very little verbal commentary and of that, almost nothing said which was not obviously shown. No use of language as an adjunct to vision, to supply an innuendo, a connotation, an allusion, a subtle interpretation worth a thousand pictures—not even at *Labyrinth* which is highly literary. Perhaps that is why many displays seemed interchangeable, praise redundant, and technology far ahead of content. Although, if we are to believe the prophets of communication, words may be outmoded. As the language of multi-vision is further stretched and shaped by master artists—a Renoir, an Antonioni of multi-image or multi-screen—it may create its own poetry and drama. It may have much to say.

WILLIAM JOHNSON

Orson Welles: Of Time and Loss

Judged by first—even second or third—impressions, Welles's films are a triumph of show over substance. His most memorable images seem like elephantine labors to bring forth mouse-size ideas.

His films bulge with preposterously vast spaces: the echoing halls of Kane's Xanadu; the rambling castles of Macbeth, Othello, and Arkadin; the vertiginous offices of *The Trial;* the cathedral-like palace and tavern of *Falstaff.*

His camera moves with a swagger, craning down through the skylight of El Rancho in *Kane* and up over the bomb-carrying car in *Touch of Evil.* When the camera is still, the composition may cry out for attention with anything from multiple reflections (the hall of mirrors in *Lady from Shanghai*) to a flurry of silhouettes (the battle in *Falstaff*).

The action often runs along the edge of violence, and sometimes topples over with a spectacular splash: Kane destroying Susan's room after she leaves him; Mike's brawl in the judge's office in *Lady from Shanghai;* Macbeth overturning the huge banquet table after Banquo's ghost appears; Vargas running amuck in the bar in *Touch of Evil.* At other times Welles expresses his love of spectacle in a show-within-a-show: the dancing girls at Kane's newspaper party and the opera in which Susan stars; the magician's act in *Journey into Fear;** the Chi-

* Welles's hand in *Journey,* officially directed by Norman Foster, is uncertain, and I have avoided citing any further examples from this film.

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nese theater in *Lady from Shanghai;* the flea circus in *Arkadin;* the slide show that begins and ends *The Trial.*

What makes all these Barnum qualities really seem to stick on Welles the director is the style and appearance of Welles the actor. With the sole exception of *Magnificent Ambersons,* the bravura manner of Welles's films centers around characters that he himself plays. It is Welles whose voice booms across the cavernous drawing room of Xanadu, it is Welles who overturns the banquet table at Glamis castle, it is Welles who conducts the slide show in *The Trial.* And the Barnum image is reinforced by his roles in other people's films, from the tongue-in-cheek sophistries of Harry Lime in *The Third Man* to the flamboyant magic of Le Chiffre in *Casino Royale.*

Of course, showmanship can be sublime, and even the harshest critics of Welles's films have some kind words for *Citizen Kane.* Judged simply by its style, the film must be accounted an impressive achievement for any director, let alone a 25-year-old newcomer to the movie medium. Many of the stylistic effects that Welles used with such apparent ease in *Kane* have become common screen currency only during the last ten years—wide-angle perspective, unusually long takes, abrupt cuts, intricate leaps in time, terse vignettes, heightened natural sound, and so on. Though precedents can be found for each of these devices, Welles was the first director to develop them into a full-blown style. With the exception of some typical forties process shots, the whole of *Kane* looks and sounds almost as modern today as it did in 1941—a good deal more modern, in fact, than many films of 1967.

Moreover, Welles's protean style clearly reflects the character of Kane—himself a kind of Barnum who conceals his private self behind a dazzling set of public images. It's possible for a critic to see no deeper into *Kane* than this and still give the film high marks for matching style and content.

Judged by these standards, Welles's other films are inferior. Neither their stylistic inventiveness nor their matching of style and content stands out so obviously as *Kane's.* After a brilliant start, Welles's directing career seems to decline into potboilers (*Stranger, Lady from Shanghai, Touch of Evil*), distortions of literary originals (the Shakespeare films and *Trial*) and a rehash of *Kane—Arkadin*—which demonstrates only too clearly the coarsening of his showmanship.

The foregoing view of Welles is, I believe, utterly wrong, and yet it has plausibility because it rests on a few points of truth. *Arkadin,* for example, *is* an inferior rehash of *Kane,* with grotesques instead of characters and with episodes loosely strung together instead of interlocking. *Macbeth,* with or without due allowance for the conditions under which it was made, *is* often ludicrous. There are other examples which I will come to later.

But it's difficult to maintain a balanced view of Welles's strengths and weaknesses. While his detractors see little but empty showiness, anyone who likes most of his work runs the risk of slipping to the opposite extreme. With a filmmaker as vigorous and idiosyncratic as Welles, it's temptingly easy to find some justification for nearly everything he does. *Arkadin* is based on an exciting and fruitful idea; some of the sequences in the film are excellent; many others are exciting or fascinating—and so I could go on, justifying the film piece by piece to the conclusion that it is all good. But here I'd be falling into the same trap as those who deny the originality of *Kane* because (for example) Renoir had previously used deep focus. It's the total effect that counts, and just as the total effect of Welles's deep focus is quite different from Renoir's, and much more far-reaching, so the total effect of *Arkadin* falls far short of its piecemeal felicities.

Similarly, Welles's films *are* showy, but this is only one side of them. The other, quieter side gives a far better clue to what his films are all about.

One of the finest scenes in *Kane* features no craning or dollying, no dramatic chiaroscuro, no optical distortions, no unusual sound effects, no jump cuts or, for that matter, cuts of any kind

whatsoever. The reporter visits Kane's former lawyer, Bernstein, to see if he can explain "Rosebud." Bernstein suggests that it may have referred to some very fleeting experience in Kane's past, and cites as an example his own memory of a girl dressed in white whom he glimpsed forty years earlier. "I only saw her for a second," says Bernstein, "and she didn't see me at all, but I bet a month hasn't gone by that I haven't thought about her." Throughout the scene the camera remains absolutely still: all one sees is the back of the reporter's head, Bernstein at his desk and rain falling outside the window. This unexpected plumbing of the depths of the cheery Bernstein is made all the more moving by the sudden stillness with which Welles films it.

One of Welles's films—*Magnificent Ambersons*—is nearly all stillness, or only the most leisurely of movements. Its tempo is set by the horse and buggy typical of the age that is ending when the film's action takes place. There is indeed an extremely long, gentle dolly shot that follows George and Lucy as they ride a buggy together through the town. But the basic tempo extends even to Gene Morgan (Joseph Cotten), the man who is hastening the death of the horse-and-buggy age by designing automobiles: he walks with an easy-going gait, and he talks with measured reasonableness even under verbal attack from the arrogant George.

The elegiac mood of *Ambersons* sets it apart from the rest of Welles's films, but its theme recurs in all of them, sometimes burrowing deep beneath the surface, sometimes coming out into the open as in the Bernstein reminiscence. This theme can be summed up as loss of innocence.

Bernstein's regret for a bright moment of his youth is a minor variation of the theme. It is Kane himself who provides the first and most sustained example of lost innocence—though it is one that may easily be misunderstood. Because Freudian symbolism was just creeping into Hollywood films when *Kane* appeared, the sled named Rosebud was widely seized upon as a psychoanalytic key to Kane's character. It is a simpler and more lyrical symbol—of Kane's childhood innocence that cannot be recovered.

CITIZEN KANE

Welles does not, of course, thrust a symbol at us and leave it at that. He has designed the whole film so as to bring Kane's predicament to life before our eyes; and he does this largely by giving an almost tangible presence to the passing of time. This might be called a 3-D film, with time instead of spatial depth as the salient third dimension. Nearly everything in the film contributes to this effect: the juxtaposition of scenes showing the different ages not only of Kane but also of those who know him, notably Jed Leland alternating between handsome youth and garrulous senility, Susan between wispy naiveté and sufficient toughness to leave Kane; the use of a different quality of image and sound in the newsreel of Kane's life, adding distance to the events featured in it and, by contrast, adding immediacy to the events filmed straight; and even such normally gimmicky devices as the dissolves from a still photograph to its subject in motion. Above all it is the structure of the film that brings Welles's theme to life. Two strands are intertwined throughout. In the film's present tense, there is the reporter's vain search for the meaning of Rosebud, which mirrors the aged Kane's own yearning for his lost innocence. Concurrently, the flashbacks into Kane's past follow him step by step as he loses that innocence. These alternating images of past and present fuse together stereoscopically into a powerful, poignant vision of Kane's loss.

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Welles's other films present variations of this

hensively, spanning almost a lifetime of change, several of the other films focus on particular stages: on the initial innocence of Mike in *Lady from Shanghai* and of Joseph K in *The Trial;* on the moment of loss for Macbeth and Othello; on a time long after the loss for Arkadin and for Hank Quinlan in *Touch of Evil.* In the other three films the theme is not tied so closely to a single character: in *The Stranger,* Nazi-in-hiding Franz Kindler threatens the innocent coziness of a New England village; in *Falstaff,* as in *Ambersons,* the loss of innocence lies in the transition betwen two historical ages.

Far from clashing with this lyrical theme, Welles's bravura qualities enrich it. Kane's onslaught on Susan's room comes to a halt when he sees the snow-scene paperweight: the sudden stillness, the whiteness of the paperweight as he cradles it in his hand, his whisper of "Rosebud" are all the more moving because of the lengthy destruction that went before. Similarly, in *Touch of Evil*—the most agitated of all Welles's films—the calm of Tanya's place draws a charge of lyrical power from the surrounding frenzy. The odd parlor, where a TV set is perched on top of a player piano, is like a time machine that whisks Quinlan away to confront him with his distant, innocent past.

In all of his films Welles uses this contrast between movement and stillness to embody the the fragility of life, to compress the change of a lifetime or even of an age into a few vivid moments. Sometimes he reverses his usual method of injecting stillness into movement. The calm flow of events in *Ambersons,* for example, is broken by the lively sleigh-riding sequence, its liveliness sharpened by the brightness of the snow and the airy rapidity of Bernard Herrmann's music. The sudden release of movement gives a physical reality to the passing of time.

FALSTAFF

Falstaff is one gigantic contrast of this kind. Its opening and closing scenes form a reflective prologue and epilogue that stand apart from the main action. The epilogue is straightforward: it shows Falstaff's bulky coffin being trundled slowly off into the distance. The prologue is more unusual. To create it, Welles has sliced half a dozen lines out of the middle of the scene in which Shallow summons potential recruits for Falstaff (*Henry IV* Part II, Act III scene ii). In these few lines Falstaff and Shallow reminisce about their youth. "We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Shallow." "That we have, that we have. . . . Jesus, the days that we have seen!" Singled out in this way, the brief exchange carries a more powerful charge of nostalgia than in the scene as Shakespeare wrote it; and since the main action of the film is appended to the prologue like a huge flashback, this nostalgia affects everything that follows. Indeed, Welles has left the time and place of the prologue so vague that one may end up linking it with the epilogue, as if Falstaff and Shallow are viewing the past from some limbo outside time.

Seen in this context, such excesses of agitation as the battle scenes are only minor flaws. They do not in any way undermine the total effect of the film, of action embedded in reflection. As to other apparent excesses, they turn out to be no excesses at all. The vastness of the film's spaces serve to deepen the sense of nostalgia. The tavern, for example, is enlarged beyond probability in much the same way that a childhood haunt is enlarged in one's memory: this is how Falstaff, the perpetual child, would remember it. Similarly, the wide horizons of the film's outdoor scenes (actually shot in Spain) evoke the spacious, innocent Olde Englande that Falstaff imagined he lived in. Naturalistic settings would have called attention to the costumes, the archaic language, the theatrical structure of the scenes, everything except

what's really important—the characters and their changing world. Welles's exaggerations give the film its human perspective.

Though nostalgia for lost innocence recurs in all the films, in none except *Arkadin* is there any sense of Welles repeating himself. Endless variations on his basic theme are possible, and Welles remains receptive to any or all of them. This is where his other Barnum characteristics—from swaggering camera to tongue-in-cheek humor—come into play. They are usually a sign of the unexpected.

In *Kane,* for example, when Susan makes her operatic debut, the camera suddenly takes off into the flies until it comes to rest on two stagehands, one of whom expressively grasps his nose with thumb and forefinger. The scene is very funny, all the more so because Welles builds it up with the same kind of camerawork he uses elsewhere for serious purposes: the long upward movement apes Kane's inordinate efforts to launch Susan's feeble talent. An even briefer example of this double-edged humor occurs in *Falstaff* when Sir John is lying supine on the tavern floor and Doll Tearsheet, coming to comfort him, climbs over his belly to reach his face. In one stroke Welles translates a Shakespearian metaphor into literal terms ("a mountain of flesh") and draws both humor and poignancy out of this new slant on Falstaff's fatness.

Welles's ability to bring out the unexpected in things usually taken for granted is at work throughout his best films. The most obvious example is found in the opposition between old and new in *Ambersons.* George, who stands for the innocent age that is dying, is the film's most objectionable character; Gene Morgan, who is helping create the age of noise and crowds and air pollution, is its most likable.

Characters like Kane and Quinlan gain depth from similar contradictions. Here, though, Welles avoids not only the obvious cliché of making them out-and-out monsters but the less obvious cliché of making them sympathetic monsters. They do not arouse any set pattern of responses.

One's feelings about Kane, for example, change continually from repulsion to pity, indignation to amusement. At the point where Kane is running for governor and Boss Gettys summons Kane's wife to Susan's apartment with intent to blackmail, one is generally sympathetic to Kane. But in this scene, unexpectedly, is is Gettys who behaves with dignity, and one's sympathies switch from Kane to him. Welles accomplishes the switch without trickery: Kane behaves completely in character, and there is no suggestion that Gettys is a decent politician or has a heart of gold.

MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS

The cross-currents in *Touch of Evil* are even more complex, though at first sight they do not seem so: Vargas is likable and right, Quinlan is repulsive and wrong. But it so happens that Quinlan is right about Sanchez's guilt (as he was no doubt right about many he framed in the past), which means that the moral issue between him and Vargas is not at all neat and abstract—it pivots on the possibility that a callous murderer may not only get away with his crime but his victim's daughter and wealth, too. Moreover, despite Vargas's moral stand, he is teetering on the same brink that Quinlan stepped over decades before, when his wife's murderer escaped punishment for lack of evidence. As soon as Vargas learns that his own wife has been abducted he too takes the law into his own hands. "I'm not a police officer, I'm a husband!" he shouts in the bar where Grandi's gang hangs out, and when they refuse to tell him anything he tries to beat the information out of them. It is only a touch of evil indeed

that separates his destiny from Quinlan's.*

Welles's gift for making a vivid point with some unexpected development is at work even in the minor characters of *Touch of Evil.* Two of these, in particular, are involved in the moral issue—or rather, represent the kind of bystanders who try to avoid getting involved. The night man at the motel where Susan Vargas is being held prisoner is a weak, neurotic creature, so outraged at the slightest infringement on what he considers to be his rights that he has no thought to spare for anyone else's rights. In most films he would merely be contemptible; Welles makes him hilarious and unforgettable. Then there is the blind woman in the store where Vargas phones his wife. As he talks, the woman stands utterly still beside a sign that reads: "If you are mean enough to steal from the blind, go ahead." The scene arouses no sympathy for the woman but a sense of unease. The impression is that she is trading on her helplessness, refusing to take the slightest responsibility for what other people may do.

Perhaps the most subtly unexpected relationships in any of Welles's films are found in *Falstaff.* As portrayed by Shakespeare, Falstaff is not only lazy, gluttonous, cowardly, lecherous, dishonest and the rest but also a great innocent. He is devoid of malice or calculation; no matter what is done to him, he remains open and trusting. He lives in a dream world where there are no politicians or policemen or pedagogues; and when Hal destroys that world by rejecting him, he does not adjust to reality but dies.

Welles magnifies this innocence both by uniting the Falstaff scenes from several plays and by establishing the strong mood of nostalgia discussed earlier. But—and this is the unexpected stroke—he does not do this at Hal's expense. Even in the two parts of *Henry IV* as Shakespeare wrote them—and as they are usually produced on stage—it is hard not to take a dislike to Hal for his callousness and calculation. But Welles makes it as difficult as he can for the audience to take sides between Hal and Falstaff—or rather, to take one side and stick to it throughout.

In the film, Hal is at his least likeable right at the beginning, even before the asides in which he talks of one day renouncing Falstaff's companionship. Welles presents him as an insecure, somewhat unstable, somewhat untrustworthy-looking youth, combining the flaws of immaturity with the shifty traits of his father.* Then, little by little, he acquires firmness and stature. The turning point comes on the battlefield at Shrewsbury. While King Henry is parleying with the rebel Worcester, Hal and Falstaff stand listening side by side. But their reactions are very different: Falstaff tosses out a frivolous remark; Hal silences him with a quiet "Peace, chewet, peace!" and walks over to join his father. During the battle itself, Hal emerges suddenly in close-up from a cloud of dust and is seen for the first time wearing his Prince of Wales coat of arms. From now on he is more and more the political-minded Prince Henry, less and less the irresponsible Hal. But because Welles has made him develop into a more likable human being at the same time that he has assumed his impersonal role, the prince manages to appear reasonable and humane even in the final confrontation with Falstaff: "I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers. How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!"

Like Gene Morgan in *Ambersons,* Hal is changing the world for both better and worse. His political techniques, which Shakespeare depicts more fully in *Henry V,* will lead to Maoism and McCarthyism, but they will also lead to honest and efficient government. While the mood of the film is in sympathy with Falstaff, Welles makes it clear that there can be no final

* In the novel from which Welles adapted the film, *Badge of Evil* by Whit Masterson, the framed man is innocent and there is nothing to explain why the police officer ever started framing suspects. These touches are Welles's own.

* According to Shakespeare, Henry IV acquired the crown by force and duplicity. The subtlety of Hal's characterization — interpreted superbly by Keith Baxter — is obscured a little by John Gielgud's misreading of Henry. While the king has mellowed and weakened with age, he would never suggest—as Gielgud's plaintive declamation does—that the crown was thrust on him.

choice between Falstaff's anarchic freedom and Hal's well-ordered conformity.

The struggle between tradition and progress, old and new, order and disorder is one of the most powerful forces behind Welles's work. It is reflected in his American background and his love of Europe, and in his film-making that embraces both Shakespeare and modern American thrillers.

This drive to reconcile the irreconcilable goes beyond the subjects and themes of his films. In his European-made films it is at work even in the casting, which almost seems to be done on the assumption that Europe is a single country. The entire shaping of each film from *Kane* through *Falstaff* shows a desire to burst out of commonly accepted limitations. Welles is not content with a single viewpoint—in *Kane* there are at least seven different ones (the reminiscences of the five people interviewed by the reporter, the newsreel, and the God's-eye-view opening and closing scenes), while in all his films he alternates between the detachment of stationary long shots and the involvement of wide-angle close-ups or of dolly shots that stalk the action like a hungry leopard. He is not content with the straightforward flow of time—four of his films (*Kane, Othello, Arkadin, Falstaff*) begin with the end of the action before leaping to the beginning, and *Kane* continues leaping throughout; *Ambersons* frequently skips across the years with the most laconic of vignettes. In *Touch of Evil* and *The Trial* the leaps are not so much in time as in space.

The same drive makes itself felt in almost every aspect of Welles's style. It is found not only in the contrast between successive scenes—from stillness to movement, as described earlier, or from silence to noise, darkness to light, and so on—but also within individual scenes, many of which contain visual extremes or discords that threaten to burst the frame. Welles is continually using a wide-angle lens to throw a gulf between foreground and background, making figures near the camera loom preternaturally large over those further away. There are more unusual optical devices: the paperweight that falls from Kane's dying hand, covering and distorting half of the image; the hall of mirrors in *Lady from Shanghai,* splintering the screen into a dozen images; the magnifying glass that enlarges the flea trainer's eye in *Arkadin.* In other scenes the splintering is done by highlight and shadow: the reporter gesturing in the projector beam in *Kane;* Macbeth's breastplate highlighted, the rest of him in deep shadow after his "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" soliloquy; the silhouetted funeral procession in *Othello;* the zebra stripes of light and dark that fall on Joseph K as he runs out of Titorelli's studio.

Welles's persistent attempts to harness opposites and contradictions generate a tremendous potential energy in his films. Usually this energy is released little by little, like a controlled nuclear reaction, maintaining a steady urgency that compels attention. But even his most controlled films are often on the verge of exploding. The three Shakespeare films, for example, suffer in varying degrees from inconsistency of acting styles and accents. The French accents of Jeanne Moreau as Doll Tearsheet and Marina Vlady as Lady Percy in *Falstaff* are the most egregious, but the roles are not central. More damage is done by Margaret Rutherford's assumed Irish accent as Mistress Quickly, since it reduces her description of Falstaff's death to a flat, self-conscious recitation; but Welles immediately repairs the damage in the touching epilogue of Falstaff's coffin.

The two biggest casualties of Welles's explosive pressure are *Arkadin* and *The Trial. Arkadin* is like a grenade that flies apart chiefly along its groovings: each episode holds together fairly well, but fails to connect with the others. *The Trial* is more like the nuclear explosion with which it ends: nearly everything in it disintegrates.

All the centripetal elements of Welles are present in force in *The Trial.* The repeated use of an extreme wide-angle lens exaggerates the depth of each scene, which is further splintered by the application of chiaroscuro to complex settings (the halls and catwalks of the law offices; Hastler's candle-dotted apartment; the cathedral). There are abrupt leaps in space and

time not only from episode to episode but frequently from scene to scene. Both the cast and the locations are multi-national.

Even the style and mood of the film come in fragments. Much of the decor derives from German expressionism of the 1920's, as do the *Metropolis*-like scenes in the vast office where Joseph K works and the rows of bare-chested accused waiting outside the law courts. The opening scenes in Joseph K's room are more like Hitchcock of the *Rope* period. The scene with Leni and Block in Hastler's kitchen (filmed partly with a long-focus lens) have a quiet hallucinatory quality reminiscent of *Last Year at Marienbad.*

The idea of continually changing the settings and mood of the film sounds as if it might have created an apt sense of unease, keeping the audience in the same off-balance frame of mind as Joseph K. Occasionally it does work like that. There is one superb example when K first visits the law courts and walks from a deserted corridor into a jam-packed courtroom. Welles intensifies the transition by having everyone rise to their feet as K enters, and the noise of their movement bursts into the silence like a menacing roar. (This is Welles's own addition—in Kafka's book no one in the courtroom takes any notice of K.)

Most of the transitions, however, break the tension instead of heightening it. The varied settings do not fuse together into an eerie world of their own but remain obstinately separate. Thus when K walks from the huge office into the storeroom where the policemen are being punished, the agoraphobic size of the former and the claustrophobic darkness of the latter tend not to reinforce but to neutralize each other. Time and time again in the film the nightmare is short circuited.

To explain the failure of *The Trial* it's easy to fall back on the accusation of size and showiness. It's easy to argue that Welles's style is too florid for Kafka, who relied on restraint to convey the bizarre misadventures of Joseph K. But these criticisms are irrelevant because they can be leveled at Welles's other films which do not fall to pieces.

Consider *Othello,* which has just as many reasons as *The Trial* for disintegrating. Much of the film leaps fom place to place with no regard for topographical continuity: any attempt to visualize the interior layout of Othello's castle is quite pointless. As with *The Trial,* Welles in adapting the original shifts some scenes and alters others (such as the extended bath-house scene where Iago kills Roderigo). He breaks up the rhythms of Shakespeare's play, sometimes accelerating, sometimes almost halting the action. The settings and the cast are multi-national. Most disruptive of all, his work on the film continued on and off for a period of three years.

Yet the film translates Shakespeare into screen terms with a superb coherence. Welles sets the whole tragedy in perspective with an opening sequence that interweaves the funeral corteges of Othello and Desdemona and the dragging of Iago to his punishment. In contrast to the sweeping flow of these scenes, the beginning of the action has a staccato rhythm as Iago and Roderigo follow Othello and Desdemona to their wedding and then rouse Brabantio. Calm is restored when Othello comes to justify his marrying Desdemona. But from this point on the staccato rhythm associated with Iago gradually imposes itself on Othello's stately rhythm, and the increasing complexity of the film's movements suggests the increasing turmoil of doubt in Othello's mind. In the death scene, when Othello has finally decided there *is* no doubt of Desdemona's infidelity, the stately rhythm reasserts itself. Then there is a brief flurry of movement as Iago's duplicity is exposed and Othello kills himself, followed by a reprise of the grave calm of the opening scene.

There is only one moment, near the end of the film, where the disintegrating forces win out. Welles has Othello stab himself before instead of after the long speech in which he refers to himself as "one whose hand,/Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away/Richer than all his tribe." During part of the speech Othello strides across the hall toward Desdemona's body, and this rather improbable movement is intercut with a jarring close-up in which Welles has a

Harry-Lime-like smile on his face. This one lapse cannot spoil the film: it does, however, make one realize just how cohesive the rest of the film has been.

The binding force in *Othello* and in most of Welles's other films is his use of symbolism. Even the most explicit of Welles's symbols do not exist in isolation: they are rooted deep in the action of the film and share the same degree of reality.

Rosebud, for example, appears at first to be a pat and superficial symbol. As with all mysteries, its revelation is something of a letdown: the sled is "only" a symbol of Kane's childhood. But the symbolism is not confined to the object itself. In fact, the adult Kane is never seen looking at it—the word Rosebud is triggered by the sight of Susan's paperweight. But here again the symbolism goes beyond the object. The paperweight is not merely an artificial snow scene recalling a real one but a snow scene encapsulated and unattainable, like Kane's lost innocence. Moreover, when the paperweight appears in close-up Welles highlights it so that it takes on a glowing halation—very much like the glare of the stage lights when Susan makes her operatic debut. Kane drives Susan to her vocal disaster not just to show his power but because, his own desire being unattainable, he wants hers to come true. Susan fails—the ironic floodlight flickers out as her voice trails away—and she is able to come to terms with reality. But the glow of Kane's desire continues to the end: the paperweight falls and smashes only after his death.

There are further ramifications to this symbolism. When the paperweight is shaken, its artificial snow settles again with preternatural slowness, prolonging and intensifying the matter-of-fact snowfall that covers the sled after young Kane leaves home. This slow settling, which is paralleled in the lingering dissolves between the reporter's interviews and his interviewees' reminiscences, suggests not only the loss of Kane's childhood innocence but the loss of all things with the relentless flow of time. At the end of the film Welles brings out this wider implication still more powerfully by accelerating the time effect. The whole of Kane's life is compressed symbolically into a few seconds as the sled—his childhood reality and manhood dream—burns and dissolves into smoke.

I'm not implying that Welles consciously planned all these interrelationships. But I do believe that he chose the particular objects, incidents, and techniques in these scenes because they felt right to him—and they felt right because they connected with the underlying symbolism. Anyone who thinks my analysis is farfetched should try to explain why the burning of Rosebud is such a powerful scene—even more powerful than the book-burning scenes in *Fahrenheit 451*. After all, a sled lacks the ready-made associations that books have; and Rosebud is not even a new and handsome object like Dali's *Secret Life,* over whose destruction Truffaut lingers for the longest time. It is the interlinking of symbols beneath the surface of *Kane* that accumulates the power of the final scenes.

This symbolism underlying conspicuous symbols can be found in nearly all of Welles's films. Anyone who's seen *The Lady from Shanghai* will remember the squid that pulses up and down in the aquarium as Mike and Elsa kiss. In isolation this might be an overemphatic comment on Elsa's predatory nature, but it works because Welles has imbued the whole film with visual and verbal imagery of the sea. The Lady herself comes from one seaport and has settled in another (San Francisco), and many scenes take place on or by the water. The squid is one of several images involving dangers that lurk beneath the surface, just as they lurk behind Elsa's alluring exterior: there are shots of a water snake and an alligator, and Mike relates a parable about sharks that destroy one another. Even the hall of mirrors connects with the pelagic imagery: the multiple reflections are like waves receding row after row, and when the mirrors are smashed Mike can finally step out onto terra firma, ignoring Elsa's last siren call. It is this cumulative imagery that helps place *The Lady from Shanghai* above other superior thrillers, which owe their success either to a series of disparate effects (like *The Wages*

of Fear) or to sheer verve (like *The Big Sleep*).

The binding symbolism of *Othello* is also based on a sea-to-dry-land progression, but Welles develops it far more subtly than in *The Lady from Shanghai* and with a totally different meaning. Othello is a naval general and water is his element. At the beginning of the film, when he is strong and self-assured, he glides with Desdemona in a gondola, he commands a warship on the billowy sea, he strides beneath pennants that flutter in a stiff sea breeze. Then, as doubts about Desdemona grow in his mind, he begins to flounder out of his element. The one really spectacular scene in the film shows this transition with extraordinary vividness. When Iago says that Cassio has talked of having slept with Desdemona, Othello staggers away (Shakespeare's stage direction reads that he "falls in a trance") and finds himself lying on the waterfront beneath a parapet from which a row of people stare down at him. Welles uses a wide-angle lens and places Othello's bemused face in close-up so that it completely dwarfs the figures above: it is as if Othello were a beached whale. In more and more of the later scenes Welles draws the action away from the sea and the open air to keep Othello stranded. And in these interior scenes he leaves the walls and floors as bare as possible, criss-crossing them with spikes of shadow, in order to accentuate their dryness and airlessness.

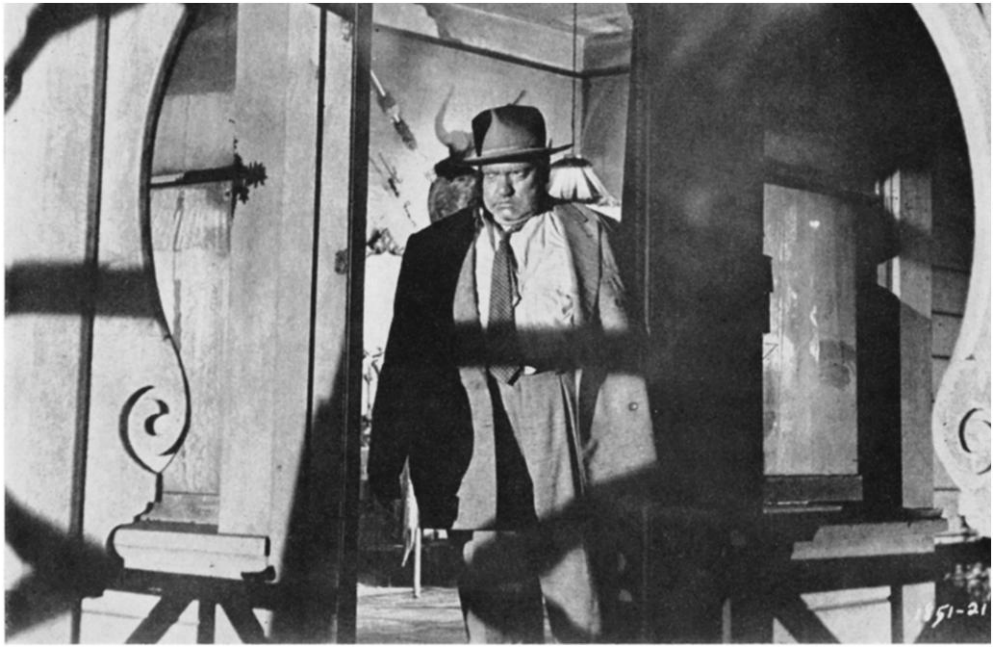
In films with fewer centrifugal pressures than *Othello* or *Kane* the underlying symbolism plays a less important role. Indeed, it may merge indistinguishably into style: the leisurely movement of *Ambersons* and the vast spaces of *Falstaff* might be described as both medium and message.

Elsewhere the symbolism may be too rigid for the theme, or the theme too weak for the symbolism. *Macbeth* is conceived in terms of darkness, which is appropriate enough, but the darkness hardly varies: the film consists of one low-key scene after another. There is no vivid impression of Macbeth sinking from innocence into evil and despair as there is of Othello sinking from innocence into anguish. In *The Stranger* Welles does oppose darkness with light, as the film alternates between the shadowy belfry where Frank Kindler tinkers with the church clock and the whiteness of the New England colonial buildings. But here the situation is too static: the Nazi war criminal pretending to be a good small-town citizen is unchangingly evil all along.

Arkadin fails because its symbolism doesn't counteract but reinforces the centrifugal pressures. In order to suggest the multiple layers of Arkadin's personality, Welles locates the film in different elements—land, sea, air—and in different climates, from the sunny Mediterranean to wintry Germany. But the symbolism lacks a second layer of its own that would bind this geographic diversity together.

As to *The Trial,* it has no underlying symbolism whatsoever—all its symbolism is on the surface. The trouble is not so much that Welles departs from the book but that he does not depart far enough. In the book, Kafka grafts bizarre scenes onto the everyday settings of Prague, binding them together with a matter-of-fact style of writing. But it is impossible to film the scenes as Kafka describes them and at the same time remain matter-of-fact. For example, Kafka can casually write that "the size of the Cathedral struck him as bordering on the limit of what human beings could bear," but this scene cannot be filmed with anything approaching casualness. In adapting the book for the screen Welles had two choices: to tone down Kafka's incidents until they could plausibly fit the everyday settings of a real city, or to amplify Kafka's settings until they fitted the bizarre incidents. The latter choice, arguably the more faithful, was the one Welles made; and he amplifies the style along with the settings.

In making this choice, however, Welles cut himself off from a prime source of strength. *The Trial* is the only one of his films that is not rooted in reality. The best films are worlds of their own that touch common experience at enough points to be accepted as reflections of the real world. It is this basis of reality that sustains Welles's underlying symbolism, which is nearly always elemental in nature—images



Welles as Quinlan in TOUCH OF EVIL

of air, water, snow, fire, light, darkness.

The Trial is not one world but a succession of different worlds. Many of the scenes are so dissimilar in location, tempo, and atmosphere that it is hardly possible to imagine them coexisting on any plane of reality. Weather, the progression of night and day, natural processes of all kinds are almost completely eliminated. There is nothing for any elemental symbolism to get a grip on.

It may be argued that *The Trial* is not meant to be coherent like Welles's other films for the simple reason that it is portraying an incoherent world—that by basing the style of this film on loose ends and nonsequiturs, Welles conveys the sharpest possible sense of the menacing absurdity of modern life. This is all very plausible and could lead to long and inconclusive discussion about the merits of portraying incoherence incoherently, boredom boringly and so on. Luckily Welles has provided his own standard of comparison in *Touch of Evil,* which portrays the incoherence of modern life with a remarkable coherence of style and symbolism.

This is a film of darkness. It begins and ends in the night, and there are many other nocturnal or twilit scenes in between. But it is not a montonously dark film like *Macbeth.* The night is punctuated throughout with lights that make the darkness more menacing, from the glare of the exploding car to the pulsing of neon signs.

It is in this mechanical pulsing rather than in the light and darkness themselves that the underlying symbolism is to be found. *Touch of Evil* is geared to the automatic machinery of our time. The film opens with a close-up of the time bomb as it is set to tick its way to destruction. The film ends with Quinlan unwittingly confessing to a tape recorder. The two machines are uncannily similar in appearance—and also in effect, since the recorder in its own way destroys Quinlan as thoroughly as any bomb.

In between these two mechanical destroyers, other machines dominate the action. In the famous three-minute opening scene the camera follows the car but never allows a clear glimpse of the man and woman riding in it. When Susan Vargas stands on the hotel fire escape calling for help, the engine of Vargas's car drowns out her voice and he speeds unknowingly past her. Quinlan's car is his alter ego: it is big and fat (and Welles exaggerates its fatness with the wide-angle lens), and when it

lurches across the quarrying site where the dynamite was stolen it translates Quinlan's lazy ruthlessness into action. In a way, Quinlan himself is a machine—he has lost nearly all of his human flexibility in order to become an efficient manufacturer of convicted criminals. In the final scene his voice is heard alternately from the radio pick-up and direct from his mouth, as if there were little difference between the two sources; while all around him the oil wells pump on and on in a monstrous parody of his obsession.

Though Quinlan is the only character who has succumbed to the temptation of being a machine, nearly everyone in the film is under pressure to do so. Action, dialogue, camera movement, and editing conspire to keep the film rolling onward with machine-like relentlessness. Characters are caught up in this tremendous momentum in much the same way that Joseph K is caught up in the legal labyrinth of *The Trial:* the important difference is that the momentum of *Touch of Evil* is not conveyed indirectly through fantasy but as a direct, tangible force.

A few of the characters avoid being caught up in the momentum—at a price. Tanya and the blind store woman choose to be bystanders in life. The night clerk at the motel is outraged to find himself in a situation that requires positive action. The scenes involving each of these three have an unexpected spaciousness that heightens the ruthless urgency of the rest of the film.

It is the character who accepts the greatest responsibility, Vargas, who runs the greatest risk of succumbing to the machines. The time bomb at the beginning of the film is in the hands of a murderer; the recorder at the end is in Vargas's hands. There is no doubt that Vargas is right to destroy Quinlan; but the film leaves the audience to wonder whether in so doing Vargas has begun to destroy himself.

I don't want to overpraise *Touch of Evil.* For all its richness it remains a thriller with a Hollywood hero.* But it does succeed superbly where *The Trial* fails—in revealing a nightmare world behind everyday reality.

Moreover, in *Touch of Evil* Welles is once again several years ahead of his time. It is only in the sixties that film-makers have really assimilated the effects of post-World War II technological development on everyday life. Before then technology was usually featured either as mere decor or (in its noisier and uglier manifestations) as the antithesis to a quiet upper-income semi-rural existence. Welles makes it an integral part of life, and though he also uses it to symbolize the temptation of evil he certainly does not present it as the cause. In this, *Touch of Evil* anticipates Truffaut's approach to gadgetry in *The Soft Skin* and, more indirectly Godard's in *The Married Woman.* It's also worth noting that a 1967 film like Furie's *The Naked Runner,* which links modern gadgetry to the amoral expedients of espionage, says nothing that *Touch of Evil* didn't say far better and far less pretentiously ten years before.

It may seem a measure of Welles's limitations that his Hollywood-made *Touch of Evil* is better than his independently made *Trial.* But his work resists easy generalizations. Each of his really outstanding films – *Kane, Ambersons, Othello,* and *Touch of Evil,* with *Falstaff* as a close runner-up—was made under very different conditions. If his most independent film is a failure, it may well be because he seized the opportunity to take bigger risks.

In every one of his films Welles has taken some kind of risk. He has always been willing to pit his recurring theme of lost innocence and his elemental symbolism against the explosive diversity of his other resources. His films depend for their success on a fine balance of all kinds of opposites—sophistication and simplicity, realism and expressionism, introversion and extroversion, clarity and confusion. And yet, with each film, he has rejected the cautiousness and calculation that could assure him of balance at the expense of richness and resonance. He himself has never lost all of the innocence with which he first tackled *Kane.*

* Even though Charlton Heston plays Vargas well, the mere fact that he is a star suggests that Vargas is unequivocally in the right.

KRZYSZTOF-TEODOR TOEPLITZ

Jerzy Skolimowski: Portrait of a Debutant Director

Half a century from now, the film scholar trying to give some order to contemporary events in world cinema may well call the past ten years "the period of debuts." This is not particularly because more new names of directors have appeared than during comparable earlier periods (I suspect their absolute number is neither especially larger nor smaller) but because the psychological and sociological phenomenon of the "debut" has become central to the art.

This turn of events has, no doubt, deep roots in the characteristically different contemporary attitude toward the work of art as such, and is obviously connected with the general state of mind peculiar to our turbulent times. Let me, therefore, insert some broader reflections before considering that singularly talented debutant of Polish films, Jerzy Skolimowski.

A central characteristic of the old art (whose decline began at the end of the nineteenth century) was its drive to create the "perfect work." By this term we must understand a complex of qualities both material and formal, for which the supreme goal was a state of "fullness," "completeness." If we look, for example, at the great bourgeois novels of the nineteenth century, say the works of Balzac, it is clear that the dominant thought of the author was to include in his multi-volume "Human Comedy" the greatest possible sum of knowledge of the human world—to preserve everything that could be understood, and to create a closed world not less complete than the real world. This gigantic task was haunted by a double objective (only inwardly contradictory): to produce an ideal copy of the real world, and to affix to it the features of an independent mechanism running by its own laws—so that the real world is no longer really necessary to it. According to his biographers, Balzac on his deathbed demanded to see Bianchon, the doctor he himself invented in the pages of his novels; and there are counterparts, in other branches of nineteenth-century art, for this kind of artistic process.

With such a conception of the work of art—a conception positing as the supreme goal The Masterpiece, a work almost as perfect as the Creation—the work itself had to fulfill prescribed conditions. The first was the provision of a complete philosophical vision of the world; the second was craftsmanlike perfection.

To create an independent, self-sufficient world, more than outward resemblances to the real world were required; the world of the work had to be endowed with rules, by which its individual elements move and have their being. These rules were supplied by the underlying ideologies and social philosophies of the century. Looking at the great works of nineteenth-century fiction, we can detect in them without great difficulty echoes of the leading ideas of the century—positivism, Christianity, or materialism—as well as the noises of political battle between individual movements and organizations. And such ideologies, expressed either through concrete political sympathies or antipathies, or through establishing the philosophical climate of a work, gave to the work its intellectual backbone; more than that, it simultaneously suggested criteria of evaluation; and this moral basis of art also recruited followers (or opponents).

Together with this normative, ideological evaluation there was also a normative scale of artistic evaluation, based on the criterion of craftsmanlike perfection. In practice this meant the mastering of traditional, accepted rules.

Not much had yet changed from Renaissance times, when painters had to be apprenticed to older masters for many years before they were allowed—only after a faultless acceptance of the rules—to add their own, often revolutionary values to the existing canon.

Under such circumstances, the debut as the appearance of a new artist, enlarging the circle of former masters, assumed the approval either of the circle of presently recognized masters or the devotees of that type of art. In short, art was still carried on under traditions peculiarly like those of the medieval guilds.

The end of the ninetenth century brought the first serious weakening of this structure. The initial violent breaches of tradition came in France, with the impressionists in painting, and the revolt of the poets for whom Rimbaud became the symbol. Later, when the notion of avant-garde arose, the revolt of new generations in arts became in its turn almost a rule. The basic slogan of these artistic uprisings was to reject categorically all former authority, all former world outlooks, all former canons of taste. The new masters, from the generation of Picasso, Braque, Eluard, or Eisenstein onward, became eminent not thanks to, but rather *despite* the authority of the beaux-arts tradition; not because they mastered the accepted forms, but because they negated them fundamentally.

With this evolution of an institutionalized avant-garde, a new type of debutant or "new name" appeared. He was no longer the "first pupil" of an established master (although many avant-garde artists, through a kind of courtesy, paid deference to the great names of the past, as the Cubists to Cézanne). Rather he was the leader of a revolting sect, who marched into art at the head of his followers, bringing a new gospel. Between the debutant and the artistic establishment, bitter struggles took place over problems of aesthetics, philosophy, and politics.

Yet no matter what we think of the essential weight of the avant-garde of the twenties in the history of art, however radical we consider its innovations, we must not overlook its significant similarities to former art—similarities stemming from the conviction of an artistically and philosophically complete character in the work of art. Surrealism, thus, not only postulated a certain style in painting or poetry; it was also anti-bourgeois, and dreamed of a general reconstruction of the human consciousness, based on Freud's theories. Cubism not only suggested ways of painting, it prescribed a general theory of thought based on modern mathematics. For Eisenstein, the theory of montage was not relevant only to film; he applied it to other fields of art, and read into it far-reaching philosophical implications. The rebellious innovators were united with art (they rebelled only against outmoded forms) through a common belief that reality can be ordered according to the proper philosophical rules; it was up to the novel, the poem, or the film to reveal those rules.

During the past decade we have witnessed the gradual vanishing of this attitude. The last school of film thought which tried to motivate its aesthetic postulates with a world outlook reaching beyond the domain of art as such was (aside from Soviet "socialist realism") the Italian neorealist school. Its decline, or rather its splitting up into the individual conceptions and approaches of Fellini, Antonioni, Olmi, and others, also marked the beginnng of a completely new era, in which the notion of the debut has radically changed.

Who is a debutant, and what is a new work, in these times when great artistic programs in art have disappeared or are disappearing?—When the great ideologies waver, the vision of a complete picture of the world seems ever more distant, when the idea of a work of art as a specific sum of knowledge of the world has been undermined?

An approximate answer can be obtained by observing what has happened in the last few years of the film, especially in Europe. Each year the film press brings us names of new directors who are considered outstanding. Not so long ago the critic's interests were concentrated around a few accepted talents, with a

certain number of "promising" talents around them. At present, the critic's attention is scattered, and the road to success has become unbelievably short. The leading directors of the French "new wave" became celebrities almost from the outset of their careers—after only one or two films. A similar pattern can be seen in other countries: England, Italy, and the avant-garde circles in America. The enthusiasm for discovering new names spread also to the socialist countries, and the majority of the younger Polish, Czech, or Soviet directors became world-famous after making only a few films. One of the most startling demonstrations of the process can be seen in the career of Roman Polanski: his very first feature film, *Knife in the Water,* gained him first-rank recognition from world critics, something that would have been unthinkable a decade or so ago. Indeed the careers of directors have come to resemble the careers of film stars—they flame up as rapidly, and sometimes also die as rapidly.

I believe that this speedy, nervous style of discovering new and great names in film, has deep and universal justifications in the situation in which contemporary film-art finds itself in almost all countries of the world.

The first—and most banal—of the justifications is that it is the end of the epoch in which the craft of film-making was kept a secret within the trade. Not so long ago film art, in its technical aspects, had secrets and rules known only to the experts. The concept of the profession of film director was then similar, for example, to the concept of the profession of an engineer or medical doctor. The director was a man who knew the secrets of his profession, and they were unknown and unobtainable to others. But three phenomena have caused a gradual liquidation of these conditions: (1) a tremendous popularization of the basic rules of film technique through thousands of publications, books, all kinds of lectures, and finally through mass film-viewing; (2) a great advancement of film- and photo-technique and the growth of amateur film-making and photography, so that technical achievements previously accessible only

IDENTIFICATION MARKS

to professionals became easily accessible to amateurs who had no technical background whatsoever; (3) especially in the last few years, the rules of traditional montage, film photography, and so on were questioned in practice, and this opened the gates to all kinds of experimentation.

Each one of these phenomena could be discussed in separate articles, but here it will be sufficient to note that they opened the profession of director to an enormous world-wide group of intelligent young people, who transformed themselves into directors almost in the course of a day—from writers, poets, film critics, or correspondents. The situation could remind us—seemingly—of the birth of the film avant-garde forty years ago. But this similarity is only seeming. Because to the avant-garde film in the twenties came people who had already proved themselves in other fields of art—in theater, painting, literature, and so on. Today these are completely new names, never heard before, for whom the initiation into film-making was simply going to movies or, much less often, the amateur film camera. The debutant artists of the avant-garde contributed their new, often broadly motivated theoretical programs – contemporary debutants contribute mainly their "sensitivity."

And here we come to the most essential point defining the present character of film debuts: regardless of the place on earth involved, they take place in an atmosphere of tense, impatient expectation of a "great happening" in

film art. The need for this "great happening" becomes the more urgent as the formal crisis of the traditional commercial cinema becomes more apparent, and the more apparent becomes the impossibility of constructing a broad aesthetic program based on consistent ideas that respect the reality of the contemporary world.

The ideal of traditional art described at the beginning of this article, the "complete work," is considered today an anachronism. The decline of great ideologies, the constantly more frequent resort to partial, pragmatic solutions, and finally the appalling tempo of transformation of civilizations occurring in today's world—all these make the thought of an objective and complete description of the world a hopeless one, and efforts in this direction are from the beginning doomed to failure. In this situation the stress falls on authenticity, on "sincerity," on subjectivism. This is a very general trend that encompasses almost the whole of contemporary art. The place of objective descriptions in literature, painting, and film is taken by a wave of lyrical confessions and subjective impressions. Since we are unable to describe the world as a whole, we recount our own lives, or —at best—some detached and individual case, without ascribing any generality to it.

The contemporary debut is therefore a lyrical confession—nothing can be more natural. An attempt to write an autobiography or express early emotions in poetical form was almost always the first step of a beginning writer. The peculiarity of the contemporary debut, however, is in fact that these first confessions (film *and* literary confessions) of the young authors fall upon ground that is unbelievably receptive and thirsty for discoveries. The wavering of idealistic beliefs, distrust of old philosophical systems, and finally the peculiar state of confusion caused by the tempo of our constantly changing civilization—all that stirs up desires for new truths, revelations, and discoveries. To compare once more today's situation with the one 40 years ago or earlier, it will be obvious that while the former faced resistance from the aesthetics, the way of thinking, ideologies, and the society of that time, the new wave breaks upon a soil that is deprived not only of the possibility, but also of the desire to resist. It is benevolent and ready to accept everything that is new and hopefully redeeming. Never before was the debutant so eagerly awaited, because never before were intellectual circles so shaky, so unsure of their arguments, and so inclined to capitulations as today.

Naturally, this process develops differently in each country. Where the film industry is interested more in originality than in standard mass production, and where cinematography is dominated by the directors—as in France or England, for example—this process takes more drastic forms. It acquires peculiar shapes also in socialist countries, where the film production is noncommercial, but where ideological tendencies have an influence on the development of the film.

Jerzy Skolimowski appeared as a "new Phenomenon" of the Polish film in a rather peculiar period. It was after the famous "Polish School" was extinct—that school comprised of films by Wajda or Munk, that were pathetic and caught up in burning national problems. It was a period in which more and more directors experimented with other themes: either psychological, as in the case of Has, or formal, as in the case of Kawalerowicz. And a sort of commercial form also developed—big historical spectacles, like A. Ford's *The Teutonic Knights,* Wajda's *Ashes,* or Kawalerowicz's *Pharaoh.* Perhaps the reason for this evolution was the gradual loss of faith in the possibilities of the "committed films" that confronted important social problems. This loss of faith was strengthened also by phenomena occurring in the world film: the influence of the French "new wave" on film form; the appearance of analogous events in the English film, as for example the films of Richardson, Anderson, or Lester; and, last but not least, the appearance of the Czechoslovak directors.

Let us pause and consider what influence these developments had on the young Polish director, who had strong ambitions and was free of many of the autobiographical burdens that weighed upon Wajda or Munk, for ex-

ample, who though almost the same age felt compelled to settle their accounts with the war and occupation in which they spent their early youth.

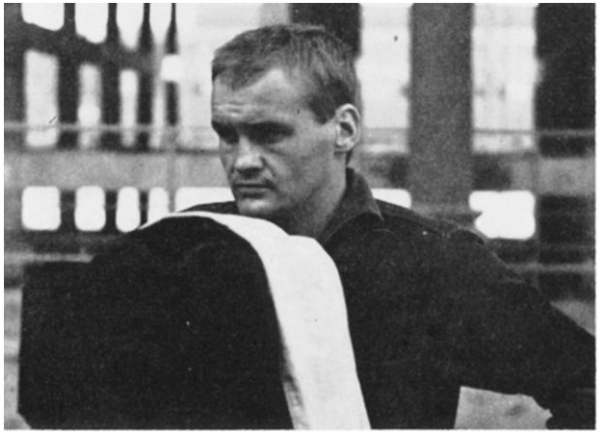
It seems that the first impulse here must be a concern about anachronism. Film festivals and the film press convince us that it is senseless today to present the world audience with problems that may be important for the author himself, but which are not understood because of being particular or even provincial. This apprehension about "provincialism"—one of the strongest apprehensions haunting Polish art for a century at least—constitutes the first step toward embracing the "universal" and "contemporary" problematic. However, that is truly "universal"? Of course, matters of individual psychology, the place a person occupies in a society, love. But also the problem of the young generation—the "mysterious generation" that in a wait-and-see attitude watches the present generation managing its fate. (It was this problem of a new generation on which the French "new wave" based its career—especially in the beginning of its existence.) And finally, the "universal" motive is also the exposure of one's own personality, which whether or not intellectually defined, constitutes by itself a fragment of a picture of the world in which we live.

The first film for which Skolimowski (together with Jerzy Andrzejewski, a writer of the older generation) wrote a screen play was Wajda's *The Innocent Sorcerers.* It is a story of contemporary youth, in a setting of jazz cellars, with stress on motives of seeming cynicism and dreams of a true love masked with apparent coldness. In short, a whole repertory that at that time seemed very modern. In this screenplay debut, however, something else seems of special importance: its peculiar personal setting. For Andrzejewski (who had with Wajda had a joint success with *Ashes and the Diamond,* made from Andrzejewski's novel) the very young poet Skolimowski provided an element of "authenticity." It was up to him to be the expert on how youth really lives; most of all, he must suggest to the experienced writer all the elements of truth, newness, originality, that were essential for a screenplay about the "mysterious generation." This screenplay, in turn, must be for the director of *Kanal* and *Ashes and the Diamond* the spring-board for a switch in his interests and a revision of his national-romantic style into a "modern" style. The very young writer, therefore, came into the film from the very beginning not only as a debutant, but also as a potential redeemer. He accepted a role that is played today by young beginning film-people in all countries of the civilized world.

Skolimowski's second screenplay (with Polanski on *Knife in the Water*) was no less characteristic for his biography, although quite different. Here, Polanski himself was a beginner working on his first feature film. The fact that he worked on it with Skolimowski made the whole undertaking into a manifestation of the young generation. Indeed, *Knife in the Water* is completely different from all Polish films up to this point. The simplicity of narration is in sharp contrast with the formal baroque of Wajda or Kawalerowicz. The frailty of the traditional plot of the film, the concentration on the details of a psychological game, and finally the "universal" problem of love and rivalry of generations, linked with the enigmatic philosophical thesis—all that brings us into an atmosphere very foreign to the Polish School, for which the dominant factor was always didacticism.

Later on, Polanski was to became the leading light of the film trade, and also a model of success, for the people of Skolimowski's group.

After writing *Knife in the Water*, however, Skolimowski enrolled at the film school in Lodz. This decision seems confusing, taking into consideration the fact that it was made by an already noted author, who had proved himself in writing screenplays, at a time when scriptwriters like Konwicki or Stawinski were beginning to produce films themselves. This riddle was solved when Skolimowski, after a few years of studies, assembled his first feature film out of material shot in school during classes in camera-operating and directing. This film he called *Rysopis—Identification Marks.*



WALK-OVER

Rysopis is a surprise. The fact that it was made out of pieces of film that normally are thrown into the trash basket after the professor has seen them shows that Skolimowski did not enter the school in order to learn something, but in order to realize a prepared plan and show his maturity. But what is even more important, Skolimowski for the first time presented in *Rysopis* an almost complete repertory of his way of thinking as well as his repertory of possibilities.

The title of the film suggests an explanation of its content. These are indeed the identification marks of the author: his autoportrait, a description of his daily life, of his love complications, a collection of casual reflections woven by student Leszczyc about himself. Leszczyc was played by Skolimowski himself, and he used the name also in his next film *Walkover*. It seems to be for Skolimowski a cryptonym used in his autobiography. Because *Identification Marks* indeed *is* his autobiography. Skolimowski seems to disprove what I wrote above: in a situation when all ideals, programs, and these fail, documents become significantly meaningful—documents on human philosophies, reactions, impulses—even those that cannot be explained rationally.

Simultaneously, in *Identification Marks*, and more so in Skolimowski's next film *Walkover*, a second aspect came up: attempts to discipline these observations and confessions in the confines of social reality—which could be influences from the Czechoslovak film. Here, in this respect, Skolimowski parts company from Polanski, who avoided this problem he would have had to face if he had continued to make films in Poland.

In order to understand this situation, it is necessay to digress on the subject of the influence of Czechoslovak films in Poland. Traditionally, the relation of the two cultures was rather indifferent, because of their disparate historical traditions. In Poland, the bearer of cultural values was—for many centuries—the nobility, or gentry. It was a social stratum almost completely absent in Czechoslovakia after the frightful destruction of the knighthood by the peasants, during the Hussite Wars and during the Reformation. Later on, the newly developed higher classes in Czechoslovakia were completely germanized when the country was incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thereafter, the bearers of Czechoslovak culture were mostly the peasants. This very different social genealogy established the contrasting character of the neighbor cultures. Polish culture, which was strongly bound up (especially since the Napoleonic Wars) with France, was marked by a certain refinement; it inclined Poles toward romanticism and away from Czech culture, which was plebian and prosaic, and whose language (despite certain linguistic similarities) seems to the Poles rough and vulgar.

At the same time, however, due to these historical circumstances, Czech realistic art and the Czech novel can boast the better tradition. The consequences can be found in today's films. While the Polish School (after dealing with great dilemmas and generalizations) encountered its main difficulty in finding the key to everyday matters, the Czechs proved in the films of Forman, Klos, and Kadar that this precisely is their strongest point.

The success of Czech cinema on the world arena in the past few years has forced Polish film people to reevaluate everything that under the cryptonym of "contemporary" or "universal" constitutes the dream of the Polish film. Up to now, this dream was connected with attempts to copy West European films, mostly French and Italian. But despite many good ef-

forts, it cannot be denied that the films of Godard, Chabrol, Antonioni and others supply us with a picture of a society with entirely different social and economic conditions, and in a different political setting, and facing different moral choices. To transfer onto the Polish screen the problems of "boredom with life" experienced by youth from rich bourgeois families, and the many frustrations demonstrated by Antonioni in the higher circles of the capitalist elite, is rather ludicrous in the context of Polish reality. This does not mean, of course, that socialistic societies do not have their own, and to a certain degree analogous, problems. But the Polish film could not find the key to them. This key was supplied by the Czechs.

Skolimowski maintains in his public statements that he is under the influence of the Czechoslovak film. It is a declaration, the importance of which can be appreciated only in the light of the above remarks. In Polish conditions it constitutes a confession of an almost complete change in orientation. Such a declaration could never have been made, for example, by Wajda or Has. Does it find a justification in the films of Skolimowski?

His heroes—the one from *Identification Marks* as well as those from *Walkover* or *The Barrier*—are undoubtedly blood-brothers of their contemporaries from Western films. But they live differently, and face different problems. All of Skolimowski's films are involved with the moment of choice and decision. The pretext for the contemplation of identification marks is the moment in which the young draftee faces the draft board; in *Walkover* the boxer who hustles amateur boxing matches retreats from the ring in the last minute not only because he has met a stronger opponent, but also because he tries to stop being a hustler. In both cases, therefore, we have to do with an analogous decision, a similar moment of choice: the character parts with confused immaturity at the price of obtaining some form of discipline—formal or moral.

Basically, in Skolimowski's later films the same question arises: to accept or not to accept a society with all its rules and demands. However, the question is not posed in an abstract society—but in an actual Polish reality. The director does not hasten to give an answer. His fullest expression is given in *The Barrier*. The dominating factor of this film is the fierce polemic with the older generation. The vision of this generation is contained in two images in the film: the anonymous mass of people absurdly stamping in one place, and the mighty choir in ridiculous newspaper-hats, singing an inarticulate, pathetic song. This is how Skolimowski sees the same people whom, not so long ago, Wajda portrayed in the harrowing light of burning barricades. What is he saying? Up to now not much: a feeling of his own individuality, expressed best in a lyrical love, and also his attempts to find a new moral scale. The hero from *The Barrier*, like the hero from *Identification Marks* and *Walkover*, will return to the school he ran away from, and will become a doctor. But what kind of a doctor?

Skolimowski is presently making a new film—*Hands Up*. It is the story of a group of doctors who meet after many years at a ball in their former school. It is a polemic with conformity. The people, here named with the makes of cars they are driving (instead of their Christian names), are this time the contemporaries of the director. We have not seen the film yet. However, it is certain that it will be a continuation of the debutant's autoportrait. Skolimowski's creativity testifies to the intricate ways in which the face of the new generation of filmmakers is being formed—ways that lead from "sensitivity" to attempts at independent thinking.

[*Translated by Wanda Tomczykowska*]

BARRIER

JOHN A. BARSNESS

A Question of Standard

When I was a youngster in central Montana, "us kids" spent our Saturday afternoons at the movies, watching Buck Jones or Ken Maynard or Tom Mix pursuing their eternal enemies a-horseback through Republic's boulder-strewn pastures, triumphing in the end over all evil. No doubt several million American men and women can remember this same experience out of their childhoods. The difference between my experience and theirs was that in my case much of the rest of the audience on those Saturday afternoons was made up of cowboys. Along with us smaller fry, the cowboys whooped and hollered encouragement to the hero in the final sequence, and (if memory is not playing me false) emerged from the dim auditorium of the Rialto a little more steely-eyed, their forty-dollar Stetsons a little more firmly cocked across one eyebrow, their high-heeled boots thumping a little more loudly on the sidewalk while they admired their images in the plate-glass windows of Woolworth's.

Indeed, they and the manufacturers of their garb have, in the years since, succumbed more and more to the visible image of the cowboy in the Western motion picture, their shirts now grown tighter-fitting and gaudier, their Levis almost too narrow to slip over their red alligator boots; and their hats grown broader and more tightly-curled of brim (the better, one mocking story goes, to ride three in the cab of a pick-up truck). Obviously, the cowboy has come to believe in himself as the silver screen has portrayed him; not only the cowboy but the American in general has come to believe that mythic image. I suspect further that it has been this fixed belief in the reality of a West that actually never existed which has prevented even serious imaginative versions of the West from ever stepping out of it without being in some sense rejected.

It is possible that serious literature—novelistic or cinematic—has failed to deal adequately with the West at least since Owen Wister's *The Virginian* and Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* first presented the cowboy as hero, just after the turn of the century. With them, America discovered a new image to which its ideal dreams could be attached, and which photographed so well that the movie Western, eagerly accepting the "truth" of the cowboy-as-Virginian, offered it up with real backgrounds that you could go and see—the Colorado Rockies, Arizona's Monument Valley, the high plains of Montana. Never mind the stylized costumes and the impossible plots. Myths have little to do with actuality, only with what is believed to be Truth, a highly variable commodity, whose public artifacts may be as deceiving as the "Western" towns that even today lie in wait for the tourist all along the Continental Divide. Since such topographic reality exists off the screen, it is possible to believe that the virtues displayed with it in the Western movie also exist; in fact, it has been highly improper not to accept their reality.

I would be the last to deny the importance or the impact of the mythic Western—but while it has for sixty-odd years defined the American dream of righteousness, the fact remains that it has at the same time prevented an enduring and important dramatic literature from growing up around the American frontier. In neither novels nor movies—with the rarest of exceptions—has the Western hero since 1900 successfully shaken off the image, part Leatherstocking and part Southern Cavalier, wholly the American ideal of the virtuous natural man, of

which the Virginian on the one hand and Broncho Billy Anderson on the other were the archetypes.

For the sake of that mythic ideal, it is perhaps just as well. The real cowboy, the actual cowboy, who flourished between 1870 and 1890, could never have stood the test. Illiterate, uncouth, unwashed, unglamorous as the dirty cattle-pens to which he drove his charges, that he has in the twentieth century succumbed to the ideal image portrayed on the page or the screen is sufficient proof that the historical original wasn't the stuff of which heroes are made. In spite of this and earlier self-glamorizations, the cowboy rarely, if ever, was as a matter of fact more than a hired hand with a special kind of hat. In the historical West, even when he flourished, he was considerably outnumbered; in the West of my childhood, he was already an anachronism; in today's West, he is largely a decoration, appropriate to rodeos and other theatrical displays, but neither appropriate nor natural to communities whose supermarkets and used-car lots are indistinguishable from their metropolitan counterparts.

Yet whenever this actuality is portrayed on film, it runs the danger of not being believed. The Western motion picture, like the Western novel, has acquired so stalwart a set of traditions, even in those quality examples labelled "A" for adult, that when the actual Western American is portrayed he is liable to be dismissed, ignored, or labelled unreal. So strong has the "set" toward the mythic Western been that only very rarely have the ordinary criteria of literary reality been seriously applied. Even among serious film critics, "good" Westerns are liable to be judged on mythic rather than aesthetic values. The result is that such pictures as *Stagecoach* (1939), *Red River* (1947), and *High Noon* (1952) can hardly be talked about in terms of literary merit or the historical realities which such standards imply.

When a movie about the actualities of Western life does appear, it is frequently received with a sense of bafflement, praised only to be damned, as was the case with *The Misfits* (1961). This film seems consistently to have been viewed at least schizophrenically—as "continuously absorbing" though "a dramatic failure," or "several universes above most American films" but "finally unsuccessful"—for reasons which seem more due to its failure to portray the mythic West than to discernible critical analysis. Simple praise is still reserved for magnificently photographed renderings of the pervasive and simplistic myth, like *High Noon.*

These two movies, in fact, though made at mid-century and within ten years of each other, may be the best representations so far of the gap between the myth and the reality of the West in the motion picture: *High Noon* in its implicit acceptance of the elements of the myth, *The Misfits* in its exposure of a society whose significance does not lie in the fact that it is dying but in the fact that it depends for its existence on its belief in that myth—an image of itself that is as unreal in its historical beginnings as it is now.

Marshal Kane (a name one has trouble remembering; like "the Virginian," he becomes in this film simply "the marshal") must cope with the unreasoning antagonism of a gunman-villain and his cronies, and, just like the Virginian, is faced on his wedding-day with the seeming choice between a gun-duel and his bride. His stern will and his honor give him no choice; he will not run and face the brand of coward and the continued threat of violence; he cannot, and be a man, even though his bride attempts to dissuade him with her hysterical fears and her womanish mores. So he goes out into the street and plays out the little drama of the gunfight, in which, inevitably, he is triumphant. There is very little difference between the classic prototype of the Virginian, and this cinematic distillation, except for those refinements necessary in the light of time and the copyright laws. *High Noon* concentrates all its action in the dénouement, assuming the fact of a courtship and marriage between the marshal and his Quaker lady, and the *a priori* establishment of conflict with the villains, and is thus able to heighten its dramatic intensity through the classic unities. The tensions are also heightened by multiplying the villains as

well as by depriving the marshal of *any* human support, even from his friends.

But inevitably, as in *The Virginian, High Noon,* for all its meticulous craftsmanship, is a projection of a world that never was and a reflection of the elemental frontier myth by which Americans sustain their faith in their own virtues. As myth, it is perhaps the most important translation of the transcendental belief in nature into a concrete image that Americans have. Certainly in the cowboy hero there has been distilled all of the virtues of simplicity which this nation likes to believe are, along with freedom, its basic frontier-inspired characteristics.

High Noon, simply because it so nearly creates the ultimate cowboy image in Marshal Kane, deserves its high rank among Westerns, just as the Westerns deserve their permanent rank among our epic dreams. But such a Western, as well as (or because of) the myth which inspires it, presents an image independent of the actual past and therefore of all tradition and complexity as well. Such an imagined world assumes an eternal dichotomy in environment, in which the frontier contains the only positive influences on man and civilization the only negative ones; the town (symbol of civilization) is corrupt and produces weak and corrupt men, while the West (the frontier) creates strong and uncorruptible men. Villains, of course, are part of the Western natural environment, but it is surprising how often villains are explained by artificial "civilized" corruption (the town, the saloon, the gambling hall) or by early eastern upbringing. In *High Noon,* of course, the villains are not only vicious but the town itself is corrupted into shameful cowardice. Here is Hadleyville, a town with no past—and no reason for existence, so far as we can see, completely outside of history, a whistle-stop on a railroad that comes from nowhere and goes no further. There is no business in this town, not a hint of why it came to be here, or even of why its inhabitants remain. Its marshal is equally nonhistorical, having been (so far as we know) created complete with marshal's badge to serve the law in this town. That this marshal is somehow a cowboy goes without saying; his boots and his hat identify him automatically. He has already been supplied with a brand-new bride and a set of old enemies, none of whom is really explained, along with a dark ex-mistress whose presence seems to be neither noted by bride nor condemned by town. But it's a man's world, in the Western, so the marshal can face the collapse of his marriage still free and armed, and contemplate both it and his imminent death with equal equanimity, in the conviction that he is absolutely right. Yet he is still assumed to be tender and strong, ultimately chivalric. He tries his level best to be gentle in refusing his bride's demands; even his mistress, the town's only high-class whore, is treated with gentlemanly care. His major conflict is a dichotomy between honorable motives: the happiness of a woman versus the honor of a man. Since this is the Western myth, the choice is inevitable and the solution simple; he will meet the villains in his terrible loneliness in a gunfight which will end with his wife's overcoming not only her hysteria but the Quaker pacifism of her past to help shoot down the badmen who endanger him. Like Molly Stark Wood, the heroine of *The Virginian,* she finally possesses the courageous fibre of the pioneer woman who wins the West with her man, and she ultimately complements his honor.

There is really no complexity in this; the issues are clearly understood; the lines are clearly drawn; there is not even the question of legal responsibility. Like *The Virginia, High Noon* allows neither the marshal nor the marshal's wife to face a coroner's jury. The villains are obviously deserving of their fates, unshaven, vengeance-bent, and penitentiary-haunted as they are; the townfolk are a single mass, indistinguishable from one another, weak, corrupt, and unfit (according to the myth) as only the urban can be. Even the heroine has been tainted with their decay; even the hero is tempted, Christ-like, to fall prey to their satanic vision of flight and safety. Yet this issue is never really in doubt; from the time we see that granite face fixed grimly on duty, as the

marshal strides through his town, we know the eventual triumph will be his, regardless of the demons along the way. It is, in the end, an appropriately Puritan allegory, which makes it all the more American, and, in the face of what seems to be the decay of our primordial virtues on the streets of our ever-increasing megalopoli, the more appealing. Time runs out for us all, that clock on the wall seems to say, and in the high noon of our destiny, it is perhaps better that we face our enemies as does Marshal Kane, and then ride off into the primordial Nature from which we came, our sins redeemed and temptation removed by our immersion into the overwhelming West.

That is why, ultimately, all of us are uplifted by the Western, and why the Academy Award which Cooper received for his performance as the marshal is neither surprising nor inappropriate. The portrayal is as exact a characterization of the American image which the cowboy represents as it is possible to make. In such terms, that it has nothing to do with even possible actualities is irrelevant. Montgomery Clift made the errant rodeo-rider Perce in *The Misfits* as close to an exact characterization of the actual cowboy as Cooper did his of the mythic cowboy—yet there were no Oscars for Clift.

The contrast is significant, I think, demonstrating as it does how *High Noon* drew on the apparently unbreakable mythic tradition for its attraction, while *The Misfits,* recognizably and uncomfortably real, plagued by its rejection of myth, was largely ignored or rejected by reviewers. It was, of course, flawed not only by Hollywood's insistence on the Western's "happy ending," but also by the same intermittent failure of dialogue that had plagued Arthur Miller's Broadway successes. But in spite of such defects, *The Misfits* is implicitly based upon a literary standard demanding truthful human experience, universal symbolic verities, and unique narrative, free of the stereotypes of even the most pervasive myths. Hence the puzzled reactions on the part of reviewers. *Time* called it a "dozen pictures rolled into one . . . most of them, unfortunately . . . terrible." In many cases critics failed to recognize the shocking effect of the contemptuous way in which the movie treated the Western myth. Stanley Kauffmann, for instance, blamed what he saw on the fact that "the work and the women are enemies here," pointing out that "Gay's defense of his work is so inept we can only suspect that Miller is on Roslyn's side, which is incredible." Of course it is not incredible, unless you support the Western myth, disguised as man's need for manly work. But Gay's definition of such work is incredible in itself—else we all must define manliness as a generalized skill at seduction plus the ability to work impermanently at a number of physical skills. If so, then most of us must be on "the women's" side, where both permanence and intellect have some bearing on the continuance of the race. It is probably truer, however, to say that Miller is on no side except that of reality. Both Gay and Roslyn, with their naive faith in ideals which cannot work, are as much misfits in the mythic world in which they believe as in the real one in which they exist. Gay, in particular, is *not,* as another reviewer would have it, "the last of the Western giants" in the least, and he has never been one, unless those skills he is so blatantly proud of make him one. But neither his physical skills nor Roslyn's dumb morality equip them to face life. Yet these are the qualities which the Western myth has held up as virtues. In the end, it is the failure to view the film *outside* of those pervasive assumptions that confuses the reviewers. It is most evident when one of them refers quite deliberately to those "uncommonly loquacious Westerners"—a clear reference to the Gary Cooper stereotype, the man of one word—"Yup." This figure has become the Westerner, and to picture him spilling his sorrows in the nearest ear makes him unbelievable.

It is the explicit actuality of *The Misfits* that finally has made it so difficult for this movie to be accepted. This actuality lies not so much in the picture's setting in mid-twentieth century Reno, amid backgrounds familiar to thousands of tourists as well as divorcees, as in the recognition that its people are products of an his-

toric past which affects and frightens them regardless of the limitless West which surrounds them outside of the fragile limits of the town. They live in a history which insistently intrudes on their own mythic dreams. Roslyn remembers an ugly marriage and an uglier childhood; Guido (no mythic cowboy would have that name) lives on the dream of an ancient airborne war and the tragedy of a murderous marriage; Isobelle is perhaps the only happy innocent of them all, with her memories of an idyllic divorce. Perce, the rodeo rider, is haunted by his stepfather and an oedipal relation to his mother; but it is primarily Gay, the cowboy, on whom the burden of history rests. And his is the strongest contrast to the myth of *High Noon;* for though he uses the cowboy myth as his way of life, and stumbles from failure to failure in pursuit of it, shouting defiance in the face of inevitable change, the mythic criteria of absolute independence and virile, physical masculinity on which he shapes his life are the forces which have made him a failure, since they are of little use in truly coping with any real world, historical or contemporary. Thus his failure (in spite of that tacked-on ending which would have you believe two such misfits would fit into marriage) is precisely because he believes in the cowboy myth. That West he believes in is not dead but a phantom, which never existed except in the minds of men like him. His tragedy is that when he is faced with that realization he too will become a ghost.

Indeed, all his companions are misfits in that sense, seeking to live outside of history in an enchanted land of dreams. To Roslyn, this land is a place where pain and suffering have disappeared and only that which is Right remains; for Guido, it is a place where youth endures forever, and the adventure of the white scarves and the wild blue yonder are the eternal marrow of existence; for Isobelle, it is the place where friends are always true; and for Perce it is a place where all rides are first place and he is the all-around cowboy whose mother loves him.

Ironically, these, too, are the values of the mythic Western, beliefs which are the strongest in the Westerners in this film as they are, perhaps, among Westerners in general. Actuality, however, is seen to be far different. Roslyn will be hurt once more by Gay's aging, rigid romanticism; Guido's white-winged craft will lose a strut or a piston and crush his middle-aged body into the sagebrush; Isobelle's friends will fall away; and Perce will smash his face again and again into the arena until he breaks his neck or winds up straddling a chair and taking tickets in a bank parking-lot, working for wages. Gay has already had it, though he doesn't know it—dependent on a current overpowering virility, perched on the verge of age. His pride that he, too, has "never worked for wages"—the slogan of the myth—is revealed in all its pettiness as he weeps, a sentimental maudlin, for his children who have not waited for him.

The central symbol of the whole absurd search is, of course, those pitiful wild horses which supposedly will keep them all from going to work for somebody else—that is, succumbing to a place inside of instead of outside of society. Not only are the wild horses mostly dead—as is, in the end, the dream of the Wild West itself—but going after them is now, as it has always been, exhausting, backbreaking, and cruel. Roslyn, the innocent harlot, poses the ultimate question of reality: is independence worth all that? In these terms, has it ever been independence at all?

Even the Milleresque language cannot prevent that thesis from coming through. Certainly, if one exists in history, a past without responsibility, without ties to and through society, is impossible. Even the wild-horse hunt depends on society, which will feed their meat to its dogs, just as the cowboy's beef is meat for society's tables. In such a world, both the past and the present are far different from the myth; in reality, the cowboy on your right is your pal one minute and seduces your girl the next, and her morality itself is a thing not practiced but yearned after. The urban Roslyn and the agrarian Gay are the same under the skin, both incompetents in a world where

reality does not square with their desires and never did. In the end, there is the realization that not only is there no place for the cowboy—the image of natural man—in contemporary society, there never *was* a place for him, except on its fringes, where he could neither define it nor benefit from it. The dream he dreamed was excessively romantic; the fact that he believed in it made him impossibly so. The same may be said of Roslyn, or all the others in this tale—the misfits who haunt a cruelly indifferent world, yet are, in spite of that, the symbols of its dreams.

Thus *The Misfits* is, in the end, ambiguous, sardonic, complex, full of a terrifying actuality while it mourns the stuff that dreams are made on. It is, of course, not a Western any more, but something else, its values and its themes the opposites of *High Noon,* in which there is never ambiguity, never any doubt that right is right and wrong is wrong—never, ultimately, *any* actuality. *The Misfits* is not a replacement for the Westerns but is perhaps a separate and vital phenomenon, the first film (not, in all probability, the best) to recognize an implicit need to treat the West in other than mythic patterns. Where *High Noon* is simple, *The Misfits* is complex; where *High Noon* knows the answers, *The Misfits* only mounts further questions; and where *High Noon* is the cowboy movie made into the ultimate Western, *The Misfits* in spite of all its flaws, becomes something very close to dramatic literature in the West. So far, no other Western motion picture—*Hud, Lonely Are the Brave, Ride the High Country*—has really attempted that feat nor successfully avoided the mythic trap. I may never see *The Misfits* in company with my cowboy friends at the Rialto; but in spite of their dreams, it is among the first motion pictures to look at their lives through the unremitting lens of reality.

Film Reviews

TWO FOR THE ROAD

Director: Stanley Donen. Script: Frederic Raphael. Producer: Donen. Photography: Christopher Challis. Score: Henry Mancini. Fox.

Two for the Road is at once the most enjoyable American comedy in years and one of the only recent feature films that experiments with the medium.

The movie could be called impressions of twelve years of a marriage, and it consists of fragments from an English couple's five trips through southern France. On the first trip, as hitch-hikers, Mark and Joanna meet and become lovers; the next, two years after their marriage, is spent touring with an ugly American couple and their overindulged daughter; the third is in an MG that destroys itself en route, an accident which introduces the husband to the master architect who makes him a success; the next, with their own daughter, is disturbed by Joanna's brief affair with a French aristocrat; on the current trip—the one which begins and ends the film—they are on their way to business in St. Tropez, tired and bored with each other, with the "farce" of their life together. There is one additional, short sequence, his business trip alone, involving a casual fling with a girl he meets on the road. Otherwise we see nothing of their marriage but what happens on these trips. What is startling is that the trips are jumbled up; the film moves backward and forward in time chaotically, without warning, for an intriguingly gradual, indirect revelation of their experience.

A simple love story cluttered with temporal confusion doesn't sound promising. You think back to *Dear John,* one of last year's dullest and most pretentious movies. But in *Dear John* the time scrambling was merely gimmicky—the director seems to have made the film in chronological order, then jumbled it to woo the art-house crowd. In *Two for the Road* the time

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disturbances are absolutely essential; there wouldn't be a film if the fragments were arranged chronologically. This movie doesn't have an orderly TV story like *Dear John.* And it doesn't depend on psychological realism; it never means to explain, in scrupulous detail, how Mark and Joanna's youthful happiness turns into middle-aged desperation (there are a few superficial reasons, like his preoccupation with his job). The point is a more general one—that life changes over time, and that love relationships, no matter how genuine, even exhilarated at first, cannot sustain their excitement. We're not asked to construct case histories for Mark and Joanna, only to observe their feelings at various moments in time and to *wonder* at the differences. Some people have balked, but I don't see why the rendition of life as startling juxtapositions of irreconcilable moods and impressions is any less true, or reasonable, than the more conventional renditions in which one thing logically follows another, for carefully plotted reason. *Two for the Road* is certainly the first Hollywood movie that registers the radical disruption of standard dramatic continuities that we've been seeing in some of the Underground and a few of the European films in the last few years.

It's not a film of memory, like *8½* or *The Pawnbroker,* though it begins with Joanna remembering their first meeting and sighing, "If only you were ten years younger and knew what you know now." And there are a few crucial scenes which do concern memory. But usually the film does not make transitions through a character's associations or recollections; the juxtapositions transcend consciousness, move through space as well as time. One of the cars in which they are driving passes the young Mark and Joanna hitchhiking; he opens a bottle of wine, and a waiter pours it out on a later trip; she picks up an article of her daughter's underwear that has been soaking in a hotel sink, and wrings out his hat as they trudge through a rainstorm ten years earlier.

Another example may illustrate more clearly how the film works. During their trip with their daughter, when their marriage has already turned sour, and after a particularly nasty, frustrating fight that has left Joanna sleepless, she and Mark are together on the beach. They have a moment alone, and he tells her that he does not understand sex, asks her why "we enjoy it more and it means less"; she answers ruefully, "Because it isn't personal any more," and walks away from him. Donen cuts to an exquisite sunset, their first night on the Mediterranean; their responsiveness to each other, as she tells him that she'll always love him, is spirited and vigorously personal. No one's remembering this experience, and when it's over, the film doesn't return to the later moment, as ordinary flashbacks do; it moves to a third moment of their lives, between the other two. Raphael and Donen are asking us to see, from an almost superhuman perspective, betrayals of time that can never be so clearly apprehended by the people betrayed. The film captures, more poignantly, I think, than any film yet made, the astonishing differences in the ways we perceive life at different times. Anyone can remember the details of a particular experience, can easily tell you that he was happy then while he is unhappy now, but no one who has been saddened about something for a time can remember in any but the vaguest outlines what life *felt* like, moment by moment, when it seemed fresh. He can supply the past experience with a bittersweet nostalgic glow, nourished by his present melancholy, but he can only puzzle over, struggle to reimagine the unapprehensive, giddily confident joy that he actually felt at that earlier time. *Two for the Road* does what no person can do for himself—it presents those two incompatible moments in quick succession, as if each were going to linger indefinitely, as if each moment were Now. But they aren't, of course, they are two different points in the same life, separated by years; and the blindness of Mark and Joanna's absorption in the ecstatic moment is painful.

Lots of films have flashed back and allowed us to see their characters' past, but *Two for the Road* is uncannily affecting because at times it seems to flash forward and let us see their future. At one point late in the film, but in the

early stage of their relationship, Mark and Joanna are playing in the Mediterranean, planning to meet in the same place ten years later, promising each other that this spot of beach will always be theirs. The next scene is on the beach, years later, as a steam shovel levelling the land for a building that Mark designed mercilessly sweeps away the sand castle his daughter has been laboring over. The brusque, unpredictable forward jump in time makes transience—a persistent subject of art—more palpable, more vivid than I thought a film could ever render it.

But the time-shuffling in the movie can express renewal as well as decay. The future may betray the young Mark and Joanna, but the past refreshes them when they are older. This is especially true in one important section of the film, the sequence concerning Joanna's extramarital affair, when we do see from her perspective and share her memories. She has left Mark, but little things keep reminding her of him. She sits talking with her lover, David, listening to what he says, all the while, as Donen films it, sneaking quick looks at her youth, unable to resist laughing at what she sees. The editing suggests that, for better or worse, she can't escape her past. *Two for the Road* attempts to evoke the quality of a failing but enduring relationship; the past has a haunting way of intruding itself into the present that makes separation unthinkable, whatever the cost of staying together. So when Joanna tells Mark, at the end, that he hasn't been able to accept the fact that "we're a fixture, a marriage," she's not moralizing; what she says is quite literally true to what we've seen—although it doesn't negate the recognition that disillusionment is fundamental to marriage. Some may think the ending evasive, but the film is probably more honest in admitting that spoiled relationships survive, because the past is tenacious, than it would be if it showed the couple living happily apart once they decided they couldn't recapture young love.

Resnais is about the only other feature filmmaker who has shattered time as Raphael and Donen do in *Two for the Road*. *Last Year at Marienbad* and *Muriel* are comparable mosaics of fragments of time, jumbled out of normal order. But Resnais' films are puzzles; there is none of the clear distinction of moods that touches us in *Two for the Road*. *Marienbad* shuffles different times more boldly than *Two for the Road*, but less rewardingly too. We may be able to distinguish the moments after watching for a while, but what's the point? None of the moments generates any emotion. What the characters call "past" could just as easily be "present," and of course neither may even be "real." *Two for the Road* is not the same kind of abstract configuration of disjointed time; it concentrates on mood variations because it is a film *about* the passage of time, about time itself, while no one has satisfactorily decided just what Resnais's films are about, or why they're out of order. And *Two for the Road* is the first film I know that convincingly communicates the feeling of time passing, years actually lived in. Other movies that take place over a long period of time tell their stories in sequence and stuff themselves with details that might have filled a decade. *Two for the Road* zigzags through time, removes the stuffing and the casual connectives. The point is the strangeness and the casualness and the sadness of frame-by-frame juxtapositions of joy and despair. By showing us, almost simultaneously, two moments that are years apart, the film compresses time in order to make us stretch it for ourselves. Because of the elaborate extrapo-

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lating—emotional as well as intellectual—that we have to do, we get the feeling that the screen time is moving faster than the "real" time; *Two for the Road's* kaleidoscope of liquid time and emotion blows our minds, gives us the sensation of life actually, painfully changing as we watch it.

Much in *Two for the Road's* observation of marriage is tart and unobtrusively bold. The movie's persistent concern with the depersonalization of sex over a long-term relationship, and its perception of the relentless, trivial cruelties that animate any relationship are striking details that we aren't used to seeing in marital comedies. For example, the complex scene in which Joanna returns to Mark, after her adulterous affair, is beautifully handled. It looks as if there will be a groping but triumphant reunion. He says to her, "You humiliate me and then you come back to me," she nods in agreement, and he cries "Thank God" and embraces her. But after kissing her a few times, he looks up and asks coldly, "Are you sure you remember which one I am?" It is a startling moment, a powerful reversal of the happy fade-out we expect. And although Joanna recoils in horror, his question has its point. Donen's editing has made that clear. The sequence begins with Joanna and David in his car, his telling her that she must decide what she is going to do. At that moment, Donen cuts to her walking into Mark's room. But as she walks toward him, Donen cuts back to Joanna and David in the car, kissing feelingly, then returns to Joanna and Mark for the rest of their scene. In other words, it wasn't such an easy decision as we might want to believe; the two men *are* confused in her mind.

She and Mark do make up, eventually, and promise each other that things will be different. In a more shallow movie that would be the end of it; the married couple may be allowed one problem, then everything is settled. *Two for the Road* is more hardheaded. From Mark and Joanna's tender pledge of renewed love, we cut back to their present trip, a couple of years later, where he is saying, "We should have parted then," and she agrees, "Why didn't we?" In this film the miseries of marriage do not end once and for all with a dramatic recognition and a promise; they recur, and the best that can be hoped is that love, or memories of love, will also flicker, occasionally, to keep the relationship alive. We have no reason to believe that even the understanding they reach at the end is permanent. They've accepted some truths about their marriage, about themselves, about time, but their problems aren't going to vanish forever.

W. C. Fields would approve the film's unsentimental treatment of children. In the scenes with the American couple, their daughter's wilful, almost diabolical uncooperativeness is extremely funny. I don't know how Donen found the little girl to play the part, but he couldn't have done better; just the way in which she emphasizes the word "now" when she says, "I'm hungry, I want to eat something *now*," is harrowing. Her questions are maddeningly inappropriate, yet logical too, and quite familiar-sounding: "Do snakes have nipples?" "Daddy, why did you say Red China was a bitch?"; "Did you do that on purpose, Daddy?" when he drives under a low shelter, knocking their suitcases from the top of the car. After the little girl throws their car keys into the grass, to protest their travel plans, Mark asks Joanna if she still wants a child. She answers, "I still want a child, I just don't want *that* child." But it isn't just *that* child; when they have their own, she's troublesome too. There is one short, absolutely excruciating scene, after they have been evicted from a hotel and are travelling toward another, in which their daughter makes Joanna repeat a nonsense poem and then turns to Mark to repeat an obscene, humiliating duck gesture. The haggardness on both of their faces, as they helplessly comply, is a terse, pungent suggestion that cute little children are not always a pleasure to have around.

One of the most appealing things about the film is that it blurs the line between art and entertainment that many people wish were easier to draw. No one is going to call *Two for*

the Road a great work of cinema art—it's just too pretty, too charming, at times too sentimental. But if you dismiss the movie as "mere entertainment," you dismiss one of the few features made anywhere in the last couple of years that provides a different kind of film experience, and that makes demands on its audience. Most everyone who has written about *Two for the Road* has recognized that there's a "problem" with the film—it doesn't quite find a consistent tone.

The easiest solution is to split responsibility. You can say that Raphael, who also wrote *Darling* (a much worse movie, I think), must be responsible for the "serious" elements, the artistic successes of *Two for the Road,* and that Donen, a director of musicals and lightweight mystery-comedies like *Charade* and *Arabesque,* must have compromised the material, slicked it up for mass consumption. But I'm afraid that won't work. Some of the silliest things in the movie—the bad, recurring joke about the passport that Mark keeps losing, the overemphasis of some of the satire on the American couple—are plainly Raphael's. And one of the least perceptible but most nagging weaknesses grows, ironically, from the strength of his dialogue. Raphael is an extraordinary comic writer, but he's a little too delighted with his own wit. Most comedies depend on our perception of something funny in what a character means quite seriously. In *Two for the Road,* though, the characters talk dialogue that is *self-consciously* funny and sparkling. Some examples: Mark tells Joanna at one point to "stop sniping," and when she objects, "I haven't said anything," he replies, "Just because you use a silencer doesn't mean you're not a sniper." After their first night in bed together, he says, "This is definitely against my principles . . . I wasn't going to sleep in hotels." They return from a gala, and he does a Chicago gangster imitation, "As I said to the duchess, if you want to be a duchess, be a duchess; if you want to make love, hats off"—at which she takes off her tiara and they begin to make love. I could quote a lot more of the dialogue, because I like it, but I think the point should be clear—most of it has a fey, high-comedy dash, which occasionally verges on cuteness. Mark and Joanna do infrequently lapse into simple declaratives ("I love you"), questions ("Do you want a divorce?"), exclamations ("Bitch!"). But most of the time they talk with stylish, almost literary assurance. Even at emotional moments: at the end of their first trip, she is afraid that he won't marry her, and she runs from him, crying, "You just want me to be a beautiful memory"; he chases after her, out of breath, "Who said anything about beautiful?" We all may wish we could keep our cool and talk so wittily during every crisis, but I don't think we quite believe it. And in the long run, this does weaken the film's plausibility and make it seem an elegant confection rather than a serious examination of a marriage's decay.

On the other hand, Donen is clearly responsible for some of the film's strengths. First of all, the movie is technically breath-taking—the editing is masterfully fluid; and Christopher Challis, who worked with Donen on *Arabesque,* must be one of the two or three finest color cinematographers in the world today. His visual effects here are less daring than those in *Arabesque,* but the color is so much more seductive than in other new movies that you wonder if the others are using the same emulsions.

Donen's main achievement is in establishing the mellow romantic atmosphere of the couple's youthful experiences. One could compare the film easily to *A Man and a Woman,* another love story that takes place mostly in cars. *Two for the Road* has a sourness about its portrayal of love, obviously enough, that Claude Lelouch seems incapable of understanding. But even in their romantic moments, the two films are miles apart. Lelouch's idea of romance is children and dogs dancing goofily on the beach, a last-minute clutch in a railroad station. Donen uses beaches too, but his love scenes are much wittier, infinitely more vivid. He has an eye for the outlandish that makes romance believable—distorted angle shots of Mark and Joanna curled up inside large concrete pipes (an image whose absurd, self-conscious exuberance nicely

defines their love), a truckload of sheep they travel with, a train that roars by a few feet from their hotel window; or, on their later trip, a hilarious sequence of their smuggling food and cheap wine into the luxurious chateau room where they are forced to spend the night. This sequence *is* outrageously quixotic, but with a saltiness in the details—their setting up a tent on top of their bed, to escape the mosquitoes—that keeps the daydream concrete. Donen must also be credited for the way in which Audrey Hepburn and Albert Finney play *together* in these scenes; their fooling around, their affectionate teasing of each other is quite persuasive. Their love scenes—an erotic tickling bout, for example—look spontaneous, as if they really like each other. And you remember the images. A lovely short scene in which both of them, badly sunburned after a long day on the beach, survey themselves in a mirror and try to kiss without touching, exemplifies Donen's ability to find striking, funny visual expressions for the Love that Claude Lelouch handles with nothing but pink gauze.

I don't want to be perverse in allocating praise and blame, because the main achievement in *Two for the Road is* Raphael's—the conception is his, so is the pointed subversion of everlasting movie love. And Donen must be criticized for some of the failures, like the smug performance of William Daniels, who badly overplays the meticulous, gassy American husband. These scenes are labored satire, though they have their purpose; they define precisely, if negatively, what Mark and Joanna have in common. Donen muffs the ending of the film too. As I've noted, the fact that Mark and Joanna stay together is believable enough. But the jaunty tone is wrong; it makes the reconciliation seem too coy, too happy, too conclusive, in a way I don't think Raphael intended. Still, *Two for the Road* is the kind of outstanding kitsch that unnerves many people —it's more artful and imaginative than most Art films; it has to be taken seriously, *even though* it's entertaining and sometimes narcotic. *Two for the Road* is an occasionally sentimental, but incisive film lyric that captures the sadness and the vitality of what it is like to live without permanence, the radiance of love and the impossibility of love over time.

—STEPHEN FARBER.

CHARULATA

Written and directed by Satyajit Ray. Photography: Subrata Mitra. Based on a story by Rabindranath Tagore.

The story of Charulata takes place in nineteenth-century Bengal, the period of what is called "The Bengal Renaissance." Western thoughts of freedom and individuality are ruffling the age-old calm of a feudal society. Charulata's husband, suited, bearded, pince-nez-wearing Bhupati is inspired by the gospels of Mill and Bentham, by ideas of freedom and equality. He spends his feudal wealth and all his waking hours on the propagation of these through *The Sentinel,* an enterprise which is destined to flounder by the very fact of the single-minded idealism of its editor. But the winds of change are not only stirring him; unknown to herself, his good Hindu wife, conveniently childless, is no longer capable of treading the beaten path of the ideal woman who wants nothing of life but her husband's happiness. She longs for his company and is bored with his attempts to supply diversions in which he is himself not involved. One of these diversions is her husband's cousin, Amal, who is served to her on a platter by the trusting husband as her friend, philosopher, and guide. In him she finds one with whom she can share her thoughts and on whom she can bestow her affection. Slowly, unknowingly, the relationship turns into one of sexual love. When Amal realizes the nature of his feeling for her, he flees into marriage, and exile in England. Bhupati, who sees in her grief only an innocent affection, suddenly comes face to face with the truth when she breaks down on hearing of her beloved's marriage, unaware that her husband had come back into the room.

Tagore's short story finds the husband departing at the end to be the editor of a news-

defines their love), a truckload of sheep they travel with, a train that roars by a few feet from their hotel window; or, on their later trip, a hilarious sequence of their smuggling food and cheap wine into the luxurious chateau room where they are forced to spend the night. This sequence *is* outrageously quixotic, but with a saltiness in the details—their setting up a tent on top of their bed, to escape the mosquitoes—that keeps the daydream concrete. Donen must also be credited for the way in which Audrey Hepburn and Albert Finney play *together* in these scenes; their fooling around, their affectionate teasing of each other is quite persuasive. Their love scenes—an erotic tickling bout, for example—look spontaneous, as if they really like each other. And you remember the images. A lovely short scene in which both of them, badly sunburned after a long day on the beach, survey themselves in a mirror and try to kiss without touching, exemplifies Donen's ability to find striking, funny visual expressions for the Love that Claude Lelouch handles with nothing but pink gauze.

I don't want to be perverse in allocating praise and blame, because the main achievement in *Two for the Road is* Raphael's—the conception is his, so is the pointed subversion of everlasting movie love. And Donen must be criticized for some of the failures, like the smug performance of William Daniels, who badly overplays the meticulous, gassy American husband. These scenes are labored satire, though they have their purpose; they define precisely, if negatively, what Mark and Joanna have in common. Donen muffs the ending of the film too. As I've noted, the fact that Mark and Joanna stay together is believable enough. But the jaunty tone is wrong; it makes the reconciliation seem too coy, too happy, too conclusive, in a way I don't think Raphael intended. Still, *Two for the Road* is the kind of outstanding kitsch that unnerves many people —it's more artful and imaginative than most Art films; it has to be taken seriously, *even though* it's entertaining and sometimes narcotic. *Two for the Road* is an occasionally sentimental, but incisive film lyric that captures the sadness and the vitality of what it is like to live without permanence, the radiance of love and the impossibility of love over time.

—STEPHEN FARBER.

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paper a thousand miles away. Charu wants to go with him because she cannot bear the prospect of living with her memories in the desolation; he will not take her with him because the company of a wife who is constantly thinking of another will be too much of a cross to bear. He weakens when he sees her plight and offers to take her along; she reads his thoughts and decides to stay. Tagore thus ends on the symbol of a clear break. Ray, perhaps more realistically, freezes them to a state of eternally suspended animation.

The pattern of relationships within the traditional joint family in Bengal is often as complicated as within a whole society—particularly between men and women. Side by side with taboo relationships, there are others which are indulged by tradition up to somewhat vague boundaries of decorum. For a young wife, one of the husband's younger brothers (or cousins) would often turn out to be a special favorite and her relationship with him could well be one of mock love-play without attracting disapproval. The word in Sanskrit for husband's younger brother literally means "second husband"; on the other hand, there is no word for "cousin" in most Indian languages—they are all brothers. Ritualistically, therefore, the husband's younger brothers and cousins are vaguely placed in a sort of "second husband" position, ready to take his place, as it were, but never actually doing so. Even today, it is an ambiguous relationship, made up of brotherly affection often overlaid with tinges of sexuality.

It is in this context, and the context of the gradual liberation of woman from feudal slavery—in which Tagore played a very important part—that the content of Ray's *Charulata* is best understood. It is a context that Ray's film takes for granted for its Indian audience.

Ray had misgivings about the subject even while making the film. How would society take this probe into an area of unspoken internal adjustment-mechanisms? *Devi's* gentle pointer at the price of superstition had come to grief at the box office; if the Freudian undertones in the father-in-law's outlook on his son's wife had been understood, there might have been a minor riot. Indeed there were murmurs on the release of *Charulata;* but they died down when Ray's triumph came in the enormous critical and box-office success of this film. As I was coming out of the theater, I saw a shrivelled old woman, barely able to walk with the help of two young men, wipe her eyes with the end of her sari. Some inner chord in her had been touched.

The secret of her identification with an otherwise uncomfortable theme lay in the state of innocence of the characters who enact the drama of *Charulata.* Their lack of conscious knowledge of what is happening inside them gives them a certain nobility of innocence; it is in their awakening that their tragedy lies. Amal, the younger man, is the first to realize the truth; for Charu it is an imperceptible movement from the unconscious to the conscious in which it is difficult to mark out the stages; for the husband, it is a sudden, stark, unbelievable revelation of truth. All three wake up, as it were, into the twentieth century, the age of self-consciousness. The rhythm of the unfolding is so gentle and true that there is no sense of shock even for the conservative Indian, although Ray's film is as daring for the wider audience as Tagore's story was for the intelligentsia of its day.

"Calm without; Fire within" was the title of an essay by Satyajit Ray in *Show* magazine, in which he found the distinguishing trait of oriental art in the "enormous reserves of power

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which never spilled over into emotional displays." I had returned from Europe the very day I went to see *Charulata* for the first time and still remember the shock of realizing how deep currents of sexual love can be conveyed without two people touching hands. Had Ray made a film about forbidden love which did "spill over into emotional displays," violent explorations of each other's personality through sex, not only would the Indian audience have rejected it, but the film would have lost much of the reserves of power held in check which it constantly suggests. It is the sudden breaking-out from this restraint which gives the scene of Charu's collapse on the bed on having news of Amal's marriage, with the impassive Bhupati dabbing his eyes with his handkerchief after he has witnessed his wife's grief, its emotional power.

The fire within smoulders most of all in Charu herself; she is the only one of the three who has no crisis of conscience. Bhupati feels guilty for not having devoted enough time to her, and blames himself more than others for his predicament; Amal realises that he was about to betray the trust of his cousin and benefactor and beats a hasty retreat. Charu alone never turns back on her passion. Her eyes are tranquil and without accent until the swing scene where she dimly senses within her, for the first time, the onrush of a forbidden love. Then suddenly, they go dark, and the pupils shine (a simple trick of make-up and lighting) like a tigress's. And a tigress she remains, albeit a chained one. In her reconciliation with her husband there is no sense of guilt, only a recognition of reality.

There is a passage in the Tagore story ("Nashtanir" or Broken Home) which reads: "Perhaps Bhupati had the usual notion that the right to one's own wife's affection does not have to be acquired. The light of her love shines automatically, without fuel, and never goes out in the wind."

In words like these, which are interjected here and there in the story, Tagore sums up the condition of woman in a feudal society. Ray had already touched upon it in *Mahanagar* (The Big City) and recorded the hesitant winds of change. In both films, the instrument of change is provided by an unthinking husband who takes his wife for granted and cannot see her as an individual. In *Mahanagar,* the instrument is the job which is to give Aroti a brief but lingering taste of economic independence; in *Charulata,* it is the cousin (brother) who opens Charulata's young mind not only to the joys of literature, but to those of a youthful companionship which she cannot have with her husband. In both, the husbands are theoretically modern but in practice unable to foresee the consequences of their action in disturbing the status quo of their homes—so preoccupied are they with the man's world. Of woman's new urge for a happiness of her own making, both are blissfully unaware. The position is re-stated more weakly in *Kapurush* (The Coward) which could well have been called "Charulata Revisited." It finally freezes her in her condition of awareness of freedom which she cannot have —freedom to earn her own living, to love, and to be somebody in her own right. It is through her failure to achieve these things, in a society which has still not changed enough, that we become aware of woman's urge towards them. Although the development is not precisely that of a trilogy, the three films do hang together, and have a substance which Ray's films lying between the Apu trilogy and the three essays on woman do not have (nor does the film that follows them—*Nayak,* The Hero).

It is in *Charulata* that both the statement and the art reach their height. For the first time since the trilogy, Ray has something different and important to say, and says it really well. It is, to me, his masterpiece since the trilogy. In a classically Indian fusion of decoration and expression, its miniature-painting-like images acquire an autonomy and poise. Its rhythm, gentle as in all Ray's films, never falters, and Ray's own musical score, competent and interesting in previous films, for the first time becomes a major instrument in making the statement of his film. Its title theme (variations on which recur in the film) is derived from the melody of a com-

position by Tagore. The words of the song are so apt for suggesting the restlessness in Charu's mind that one would think it was the words which made Ray think of this particular derivation. (Incidentally, Tagore wrote some 3000 songs and for most of them composed the tunes himself). Another musical motif in the film is taken from a Scottish tune which Tagore had earlier used as the basis for a song sung in the film by Amal and Charu together. It is the first Tagore motif that makes the predominant impression, as memorably as the folk theme of *Pather Panchali.*

The exquisite period flavor is Ray's own, and distinguishes the film from the story, in which Tagore takes it for granted. The sunlit garden, the swing, the embroidery, the floral motifs on the doors and the walls, the horse-drawn carriage, the evocative settings created by Bansilal Chandra Gupta are, however, more than exquisite decorations; they frame the action and set it at a distance—the distance of contemplation.

—CHIDANANDA DAS GUPTA

THE WAR GAME

Directed and written by Peter Watkins. Photography: Peter Bartlett. Editing: Michael Bradsell. 50 mins.

Hopeless? Perhaps not, but a random survey of people on the street about the taboo topic of nuclear war would give us scant reason for hope. People have been anesthetized by years of silence imposed both from without, through the official pronouncements of government and mass media, and from within, from our unwillingness to accept and carry to their logical conclusion facts and events which we know to be true. What Peter Watkins, director of *The War Game,* is trying to do is to break this silence. The BBC, for whom the picture was made, has insured that his break be no more than a crack by refusing to allow it to be seen on television. Perhaps now that the film has won an Academy Award, the BBC's opinion of public tolerance for unpleasant facts will change.

Certainly, it is a disturbing film. It is not fatalistic nor does it advocate a course of action. It merely projects a possible train of events which would lead to a nuclear war, and the probable aftermath.

As a motorcycle policeman drives up to the police headquarters of a small town in Kent, we are filled in with the details of the international crisis; the Chinese have invaded South Vietnam, Russia and East Germany have blocked access to West Berlin. The American attempt to break through to Berlin with ground forces has been overwhelmed, and, in accordance with NATO policy, America has retaliated with tactical nuclear missiles. Russia is left with no alternative but to release bombs on Western Europe and Great Britain. The warning time for Britain will be at most two and a half minutes. The message that the policeman is bringing to the town in Kent, is the announcement of the arrival of evacuees from large target areas, who will be compulsorily billeted with families there. The reception is cool. "Are they colored?" asks a Kent housewife. Profiteering is rife among those who sell civil defense equipment; a typical citizen finds that he can afford only eight sandbags and six planks.

Then the siren wails, and the scramble for shelter begins. In a household which cannot afford a shelter, tables are uprighted in front of the windows. A child alone in a field is blinded by a bomb burst twenty-seven miles away. A house is shaken and curtains catch fire forty miles away. Throughout, the bland voice of the narrator runs on, fact after fact of devastating probability. We return again and again to street interviews. "Is war inevitable?" "If we are bombed, should we retaliate in kind?" The answers are predictable, and frightening. A fire storm is started, and we see people sucked into it like dry leaves before the 100-mile-an-hour winds. A doctor places his patients in three categories—those in the third category being left to die without the benefit of drugs. "Some of these people are just falling apart," says a nurse. We are read a proposed menu by the civil defense department which includes braised steak, apple pie and custard, and then cut to

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a woman who tells us, "We have a half bathtub full of water. We have to drink it, cook with it, even wash with it." A weary police chief tells us, "I've already lost fourteen of my men—from the strain and overwork. People tend to forget that the police and civil defense workers are just normal people with normal reactions." As morale falls, law and order collapse. We are shown the hunger riots and lootings and death by firing-squad of two looters. The priest who is with the looters as they die says, a bit sententiously, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

All of it is credible, all is based on things which have already happened in Dresden or Nagasaki and which we ought to remember, all is understated. We are given the barest taste of what the actuality would be like. There is very little which is actually shocking in the film, nothing which might compare with concentration camp footage, for example. Watkins has avoided anything too sensational to be readily believable. He is dealing with a small attack (which would, however, kill or maim one-third to one-half of the population) and concentrates on individual cases. We are bombarded with faces, listless faces, angry faces, faces in pain, faces of those whose minds have not been able to grasp the meaning of what has happened and who stare at us in bewilderment, as if asking us for some kind of explanation. We are continually being put on the spot. We feel personally blamed when an orphan, asked what he wants to be when he grows up, looks us in the eye and says, "I don't want to be nothin'."

"We must learn to live with, though not necessarily to love, the bomb," says a clergyman. Throughout the film, there are several pompous statements by churchmen about how to reconcile atomic war to our Christian beliefs, all acidly offset by the course of events. "I don't know whether I believe in God or not," Watkins told Gerald Jonas of the *New York Times*, "but if there is a God—and I think I think there is—then He's being very badly served on Earth." The Church is not the only scapegoat, of course, there is also an optimistic economics professor who discusses the effect of war on the economy, but the government is nowhere openly indicted. No doubt this was dictated by prudence, and the government would have been included had the film been made for someone other than the BBC; but in a way this is fortunate, for, aside from the church, Watkins gives us nowhere to fix the blame but on ourselves.

The film gives the impression of pure *cinéma vérité*, both in the interview material and in the directed sequences. The camera is hand-held, the texture is grainy, and the camera is frequently referred to ("We don't want any photographers," says a soldier who is burning the bodies, and one of the looters makes an obscene gesture towards the camera). The success of this method is evident in the total involvement one feels. In fact, the stark truth of the film, like a newsreel, makes it difficult to classify as a work of art. It is not beautiful. But it stirs us emotionally and intellectually as only a personal experience or a work of art can. The performances (all non-actors) are almost all impeccable, and the make-up and special effects are entirely convincing.

Perhaps too convincing, thinks the BBC. They said they feared panicking anyone who might casually tune in. It *does* look enough like the real thing to make this a problem, but I played the game, while seeing the film, of pretending to tune in at various points. Presuming that it takes several minutes for a person to get the gist of what's happening, there are really very few sections which run long enough with-

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out interruptions (either of street interviews, comments or narration, which fix the action in a hypothetical future) for anyone to have the chance to panic. And even if they should panic, surely it's better that they should panic now than when the bombs are already falling. If the chances of war were more remote, perhaps the benevolent ostrichism of the BBC would be justified, but as it is we must accuse them of abetting the silence which has made rational thinking about the bomb impossible. We must know what we are dealing with before we can deal with it, and ignorance about the bomb and its effects is so gross that it can only be tackled effectively through the mass media. That the BBC has failed in this responsibility is most discouraging.

Now *The War Game* is fated to a limited art-house and university-town audience, and we must ask what relevance it will have to the already convinced. I would think the answer is: plenty. For one thing, intellectuals are almost as prone as the average citizen to put the bomb out of our minds, and even if we know the basic facts which the film presents (there are the equivalent of 20 tons of TNT already stockpiled for every person living on the planet), an occasional jog to our memories can do us no harm. We need every ounce of ammunition we can muster to bolster our puny arsenal against the onslaught of official lies. But more than that, the film is an experience. We come out of the theater moved, thoughtful, and determined. And there is the hope, however remote, that some unwitting jingoist will stumble into the theater and be changed.—KRISTIN YOUNG

LOVES OF A BLONDE

Director: Milos Forman. Script: Milos Forman, Jaroslav Papousek and Ivan Passer. Camera: Miroslav Ondricek. Music: Evzen Illin. With: Hana Brejchova, Vladimir Pucholt, Vladimir Mensik, Ivan Kheil, Jiri Hruby, Mila Jezkova, Josef Sebanek.

To describe the parent-children relationship, the waltz-hesitation of inexperienced adolescents discovering their feelings and bodies, there is nobody like Milos Forman. He touches the sore spots and delves deeply with accuracy, lucidity, and tenderness. With this rare combination, he has created the character of Andula in *Loves of a Blonde*—a rather ugly and almost insignificant teen-ager. We wouldn't pay much attention to her if Forman had not shed light upon her in such a way that not only do we care but sympathize as well so that the rest of her personality emerges slowly—a shy, sweet and quite pitiful human being. Forman, though, does not give us time to pity her, for he also shows that she is limited, gullible, and a little mythomaniac.

His vision is two-sided: one side human, the other lucid. To bring together the contradictory parts both of his temperament and his heroine, Forman uses in *Loves of a Blonde* the same link he employed in *Peter and Pavla:* humor. And, as usual with Forman, it works.

It works so well as a matter of fact that it has caused what is, to me, a great misunderstanding: *Loves of a Blonde* is taken for a comedy inciting audiences to roar with laughter throughout.

The film is not a comedy. It is a bitter-sweet account of a few odd days in the life of Andula, a mixed-up kid who wants Love with a big L and gets one night with a pianist who forgets her the next day.

It is true that Milos Forman, probably because he had become successful in the meantime, has somewhat enlarged the features of his characters between *Peter and Pavla* and *Loves of a Blonde;* but when he uses humor, it is, as it was before, to reinforce the reality of what he describes and not to achieve a caricature. It is never a laugh put there for the sake of a laugh.

Forman, who has an acute sense of observation, has seen the funny and the sad aspects of life but it is strange that people, in watching his films, see only the jokes. For instance, each time he describes a documentary-like situation (the veteran soldiers arriving at the station when young recruits were expected, or the ball with the plain-looking girls, or the quarrel between the parents) there is behind these

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LOVES OF A BLONDE

scenes the sadness of the factory foreman's being obliged to supply his sex-starved girls with men (this is based on a real situation), the dim conditions in which the girls live in a provincial town of Czechoslovakia, the failure of understanding between generations. Not that this is expressed in a tragic tone, but a persistent melancholy is present.

Often it is by very small indications that Forman turn fun into disenchantment or disenchantment into fun, like the scene on the stairs when Milda, the pianist, reads the lines in Andula's palm, just to detain her a minute more and attract her into his room. We learn accidentally that Andula has a scar on her wrist from having attempted suicide to get her mother's love back when her parents divorced. One part of us laughs, because the courtship of Milda *is* really funny, but the other half cannot help noticing despair in Andula's remark.

Forman operates the same way in the sequence considered the funniest of the film: the quarrel between the parents and Milda in one bed. Parallel to the hilarious farce of three-way blanket-sharing, the jumping of the boy and the shouting of the mother, there is Andula hearing the truth behind the door. The day-dreamer learns that she has made up her beautiful love-story; she will return to her factory life and dream again.

That *Loves of a Blonde* is considered a straight comedy is also helped by the fact that, in America, there has been an addition to the version released in Europe, and it is a major one. It indicates the mental orientation of the American distributors. This is the scene of Milda entering the window of an apartment building, supposedly invited by his girl-friend of the day who, in fact, has fooled him, and intruding on a sleeping couple in the middle of the night. This is pure farce à la Feydeau: the lover entering the wrong room with his shoes in his hands. The audience loves it but it is not in the tone of the rest of the film. It gives to the character of Milda an aspect of cheap ridicule which is unnecessary since we had understood anyway that he is a little provincial Don Juan. Was this scene first shot, then cut by Forman for European distribution? Has it been added for American distribution?

This is why the audience mistakes *Loves of a Blonde* for a *Georgy Girl* when precisely the phoniness of the latter should render the authenticity of the former more evident. They both have as central characters a clumsy girl in search of love who falls for the unfaithful, the butterfly man; but the similarity stops there. In *Georgy Girl,* the situations and protagonists are artificial and caricatural. There is no more reality in the fat Georgy than in the fake baron and his grotesque butler, no more life in the aggressive nymphomaniac than in the charming irresponsible man she marries. They are puppets and, when they must be funny, their director has to make real efforts, like having Alan Bates take off his pants in the middle of London streets when he is running after Georgy. In *Loves of a Blonde,* the comic verve stems from within the situations themselves, which are not forced situations but events and scenes of every day. Milda's parents are funny because they are not actors but real parents (nonprofessionals) and Forman breaks into their intimacy to let us see how tired parents watch TV, get bored late at night, and quarrel over their kids in a Socialist Republic. They are not clowns cooked up for commercial distribution. I think our laughter at *Loves of a Blonde* hides the embarrassment of having discovered that it is too much like life. There is always a point where life stops being funny.

—CLAIRE CLOUZOT.

HOMBRE

Director: Martin Ritt. Producers: Ritt and Irving Ravetch. Screenplay: Irving Ravetch, Harriet Frank, Jr., from the novel by Elmore Leonard. Photography: James Wong Howe. Music: David Rose.

WELCOME TO HARD TIMES

Director: Burt Kennedy. Producers: Max E. Youngstein, David Karr. Screenplay: Burt Kennedy, based on the book by E. L. Doctorow. Photography: Harry Stradling, Jr. Music: Harry Sukman.

What he defends, at bottom, is the purity of his own image—in fact his honor. This is what makes him invulnerable. . . . The Westerner is the last gentleman, and the movies which over and over again tell his story are probably the last art form in which the concept of honor retains its strength. . . . The fact that he continues to hold our attention is evidence enough that, in his proper frame, he presents an image of personal nobility that is still real for us.

—Robert Warshow, THE WESTERNER

Martin Ritt's *Hombre* and Burt Kennedy's *Welcome to Hard Times* are almost the first two Westerns that successfully subvert the myth of the Westerner defined by Warshow thirteen years ago. Henry King's *The Gunfighter,* often praised as one of the earliest and most significant "realistic" Westerns, looks quaint by comparison; when I saw it recently, I was struck by how creaky and predictable it was. True, its aging protagonist has grown distrustful of violence and youthful bravado, and he refuses to act the dashing gunfighter any longer. But as Warshow recognized, he has the style of the Virginian in spite of his weariness; he is larger than life, tougher than everyone and sadder-but-wiser too, and he can be killed only by treachery. His funeral gets an overflow crowd, and the film's last image, perhaps inadvertently, shows him riding off into heaven, as a hymn swells the soundtrack. A more recent, widely admired Western, Sam Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country,* is a more exceptional film that still works well within convention. Its heroes have been reduced to taking cheap jobs, but that is the world's fault, not theirs. One of them even seems to have lost his integrity, but he remembers the unspoken code in time to prove himself again, in battle. The aging Joel McCrea still talks like a Biblical prophet; his only concern in life is "to enter my own house justified." Thanks to the sagging faces of McCrea and Randolph Scott and to several moving scenes in which the heroes reminisce about their youth—fine, melancholy dialogues that have the quality of revery—the film contains a persistent nostalgia for an earlier era that had room for the valor they are still capable of. For all of their apparent shabbiness, these are still the men around whom myths are fashioned.

A rare movie, Penn's *The Left Handed Gun,* by presenting a neurotic Billy the Kid, is, in intention anyway, a truly unconventional Western; but it doesn't satisfactorily dramatize Billy's neurosis, and since it depends heavily on the standard gunfights and revenges and hairbreadth escapes of Western lore, it never finds a meaningful tone. Only spoofs have seemed able to undercut the myth, though they do it superficially. Still, *Cat Ballou* has affected the Western's vitality. The most popular recent Western, *The Professionals,* not exactly a spoof, does not take itself very seriously either, and depends for much of its appeal on anachronistic cynical humor. Occasionally the director, Richard Brooks, seems to want to turn the professionals into Gary Cooper heroes, but most of the time they are only tough wisecrackers, and Burt Lancaster and Lee Marvin play the parts with appropriately exaggerated comic gusto. No one could believe that *they* were the Western world's last gentlemen.

Hombre has the same cynical sense of humor, but it is a more serious movie—it coherently challenges the Western myth that *The Professionals* can only uneasily kid. In some ways it doesn't look anti-Western. A catalogue of the movie's situations necessarily brings a moan: the hero is a white man who has been raised by the Apaches, the action of the film takes place mostly on a stagecoach with the assortment of passengers we've been seeing for thirty years. But no one has called *Hombre* just another horse opera. The most common criticism of the movie is that it is pretentious. The

patronizing attitude toward American movies remains, "Well, they're so *frivolous,* and when they're not, they should be." To many people there's something pure about an old-fashioned, cliché-ridden but unself-conscious Western. I agree that American movies have often been at their worst when striving to be Meaningful, but that's not always true, and it's becoming less true as we're developing film talents with more sophistication and self-awareness than those early American movie-makers adored by the nostalgic film buffs. People who hate "pretentious" American movies seem to be hankering to return to an age of innocence, a golden age of American movies that, if it ever existed, would look grotesque today.

One thing that has hurt *Hombre,* I think, is most reviewers' assumption that it is a Western about racial prejudice, an overworked subject that doesn't fit easily into the Old West. But the racial question in *Hombre* is important mainly as a way of raising a more general question—the meaningfulness of participation in a corrupt society—and establishing the character of John Russell, a striking variation on the standard, solitary Western hero. Usually the Westerner's aloofness from his society is a vague, unconvincing kind of integrity that comes with his bones; in *Hombre* it has a specific, pointed origin—the mistreatment of the Indians which Russell resents so bitterly. The white man raised by Indians *is* a Western cliché, but the film luckily doesn't spend a lot of time explaining Russell's childhood wounds. A scene early in the film, Russell watching two white men humiliate two Indians who are drinking silently in a frontier saloon, precisely and cogently defines the injustice he is used to. And when he smashes the glass that one of the men is holding into his mouth, with the butt of his rifle, we understand also that Russell will not scruple about using violence to resist that injustice when he can.

The rest of the movie asks us to observe how this fierce bitterness affects Russell's dealings with other people. The man who adopted him, but from whom Russell fled to return to the Apaches, has left him a boardinghouse, managed by a good-natured, ill-treated, middle-aged woman named Jessie. Russell has decided to sell it, but he visits the boardinghouse, meets the woman, and pretends to be interested in her account books, only to tell her, with merciless nonchalance, that she is out of a job; when she asks him why he deceived her, he replies brusquely, "I don't owe you anything." Russell is frankly unconcerned about people and doesn't care to help them; he is no Lone Ranger righting all wrongs. Waiting for the stagecoach out of town, he impassively allows one of the other passengers to be bullied out of his seat by a tough, Grimes (an amusing, coarse-grained performance by Richard Boone), who has no ticket, insisting later that the quarrel was none of his business.

Russell, Jessie, and Grimes, the area Indian agent and his wife, and a young couple leave town on the stagecoach. As the journey continues, Russell persistently refuses to respond to Jessie. At one point she tells him about the boy she married years before, who was senselessly murdered over a trifle. He is unmoved by the story and says simply, "The dead are dead. Bury them." And she answers, "I'm sure that's good advice. The only trouble is, I think you feel the same way about the living." This is not entirely new material for Westerns—in Hawks' *Red River,* for example, John Wayne played a hurt, ruthless man who rebuffed any affection and took killing lightly; but the film failed to really consider the implications of this attitude, pretending instead that the hero's callousness could be easily beaten out of him and laughed away in time for a happy ending. Russell retains his bitterness and his skepticism of romantic cliché throughout the film. He is the first completely alienated Westerner, and *Hombre* is the first Western film I know that carries the hero's alienation to its logical extreme, forcing us to see him from a startlingly new perspective. Russell, like any of the legendary Western loners, is rugged, plain-spoken, courageous. But this film takes place in a landscape where his virtues are no longer absolute, mysterious "givens" of a golden-hazed frontier. We are asked to see his arrogant aloofness from Jessie's point of view,

and from her point of view he looks worse than cold, almost inhumanly severe.

The woman as representative of civilization, in opposition to the hero's more private and violent code of honor, recurs in Western films, as Warshow noted in 1954. But usually the woman is only a minor character, and we aren't allowed to get close to her. *Hombre* pushes us very close to her; the film is as much her story as it is Russell's. The tension in the film, on the deepest level, is the tension between what she and Russell represent. Both have been badly bruised. As she says of her prospects, "Whatever I do, I'm going to have to scratch for it, that much I know." And she sums up her past unemotionally, "I've been wedded and bedded and loved and let down." But in spite of her tired disenchantment, her response to life is utterly different from Russell's. Her feelings are *not* dead; she is affected by suffering, and she instinctively helps people who need it.

What makes Jessie compelling is that she has, at moments, a toughness to match Russell's. Midway through the journey, Grimes and a few men who have been following the stagecoach attempt a robbery. One of the bandits, it turns out, is the sheriff with whom Jessie has just broken off. When he is killed, one of the other passengers asks if she wants anything done for him; she considers his body dispassionately and says, "There's nothing to be done about him."

The film makes it difficult for us to side with either Jessie or Russell for very long. The object of the robbery is the money that the Indian agent, Faver, has stolen from his reservation. Russell recovers the money, but a couple of the bandits escape, holding Faver's wife as hostage. Russell reluctantly agrees to lead the others to shelter. But when Faver tries to steal the money back, Russell orders him into the desert, without water. The others do not object. We can understand Russell's outrage at Faver's duplicity, and to some extent admire his remorselessness; still, his harshness is off-putting, given the desperate circumstances. The next morning they are resting in a deserted mining cabin on the way to the relay station, when Faver comes into view, scorched and exhausted. Russell warns the others that if they call out to offer him water, they will reveal their location to the bandits, who may be waiting nearby. Jessie resists his advice: "But he'll die of thirst." Russell turns on her sardonically, "What did you think was going to happen to him? Yesterday you thought he would just go away, so it was all right." It is a biting moment; and though we may be touched by the woman's humanity, we see that it is polluted by self-deception. We cannot help being impressed by Russell's brutal frankness, his willingness to see things as they are, his refusal to rationalize, even to himself. Jessie's compassion looks shallow, dishonestly pious by comparison.

Jessie does call to Faver, in spite of Russell's warning, and the bandits, still holding Faver's wife, close in on them. Grimes offers to trade Mrs. Faver for the money; he ties her outside, exposed to the sun, and waits. Russell is still disgusted, understandably, with Mrs. Faver for her derisive attitude toward the Indians ("Some of them are quite striking, really . . . but just when you think they're beautiful, they squat and let the dogs lick at them . . ."). Jessie understands his grievance, but she insists that "We'd better help people out of need, not merit." Russell questions Faver and the others to see if any of them is willing to take a chance going out with the money, for the bandits may shoot both Mrs. Faver and her rescuer, once they have the booty. His cynicism is confirmed when Faver refuses to budge; and the others are just as frightened.

Finally, with no other responses, Jessie rises and picks up the moneybag to go. The moment could have been monstrously sentimental, but Diane Cilento handles it with remarkable assurance. She rubs her hands wearily over her skirt as she stands up, walks slowly across the cabin, her eyes down, away from the others. The awkward, embarrassed way in which she moves keeps us from thinking of her as nobly self-sacrificing. The film presents her compassion austerely, without embellishment or glorification of any sort; the point is that she can act in no other way. It is as natural—and as homely and fumbling—for her to help as it is for the

others to shrink. This seems to be an unusually moving, understated film moment—one whose delicacy and authority will be overlooked by *cinéastes* with tastes for fancy effects. Diane Cilento's performance is superb throughout; she keeps Jessie from ever degenerating into the warmhearted Earth Mother stereotype. The performance recalls Patricia Neal's in *Hud,* and in fact Jessie is too much like the Neal character to be called an original creation. But Cilento is not an imitative actress; her talent is highly individual and impressive, and she forces you to take Jessie on her own terms. Her performance in this film and Neal's in *Hud* are certainly two of the finest female performances in recent American movies. And Irving Ravetch and Harriet Frank, who wrote both movies, are among the few American film-makers who respect women, as opposed to Bunnies.

Cilento would dominate the film if anyone but Paul Newman were playing Russell. Newman is probably the most important American film actor since Brando and James Dean, which is not the same as saying that he is the best (though it would be difficult to think of anyone who has given as many compelling performances over as many years). Certain actors, almost without seeming to act, in their sheer physical presence—voice, body movements, facial mannerisms—project a quality that seems recognizable, important to millions of people. They play themselves, with only occasional variations, in every performance, and they keep us interested. Newman's salient quality is supreme bitterness. In his early movies, when his face was softer, he seemed more innocent, more sensitive, which was why he played so many Brandoesque imitations in those years. As he has matured, though, the vulnerability has disappeared more and more. He has nothing in common with earnest romantic heroes, the ones played by Rock Hudson or Robert Redford, and he is pathetically uncomfortable in straight parts—*Torn Curtain,* for example, or several of his romantic comedies. Newman's image is tough, sarcastic, cynical. In *Hud, The Prize, Harper,* and now *Hombre,* he mocks and scorns sentimental pieties; he goes his own way, and he has nothing but contempt for respectable poses.

But he is unlike Brando's alienated hero of the early fifties, for he is witty and articulate in his rejection of society, while Brando's alienation, in *On the Waterfront,* say, is awkward, imperfectly understood, inexpressible, yet profound. Even when cast as a less sensitive hero—in *Streetcar Named Desire,* for example—Brando's rebellion was more primitive, more volatile, less literate than Newman's. The image has changed with the audience's education. Newman is also different, though, from Bogart, another great American cynic, for Bogart's cynicism, as articulate as Newman's, is much calmer; it has reached a state of philosophic tranquillity and vision. Bogart's appeal to so many college students must be just this unstated assurance that he has understood all of life's tricks and can no longer be hurt. He has mastered life —his cynicism and his detachment are highly intellectual and virtually complete. Bogart does not get angry in *The Maltese Falcon* or *The Big Sleep;* when he does seem to lose control of himself, at one moment of *The Maltese Falcon,* it is only a ruse, and it certainly hasn't convinced us. Newman's bitterness, by contrast, always feels more personal, more urgent. This is why the traces of his boyish vulnerability that we still catch at rare moments are important, suggesting that his cynicism is the result not of philosophical reflection, but of a powerful emotional wound. We can never know how the Bogart character in *The Maltese Falcon* became so sour, and we cannot be concerned; as far as we know, he has always been that way and always will be. Newman's cynicism in *Hud* and *Hombre,* on the other hand, has specific antecedents—we must know how these characters have been hurt and humiliated, because Newman cannot present bitterness without suggesting a deep, still explosive involvement that the Bogart character never admits. And to many people, obviously, this compelling image of a man chiselling detachment out of intense pain is at least as attractive as a clean nihilistic stance, studied instead of suffered.

Having said all that, I must also say that

I'm not sure Newman's performance in *Hombre* —certainly his best part since *Hud*—is quite right. It is always intelligent and carefully considered, and sometimes electric. But it is sometimes misguided—too taciturn, too wilfully expressionless, so that at several moments we lose track of Russell's human identity and see him as only the shell of the Wronged Hero. This may be more the script's fault than Newman's, for it depends on too many pregnant silences. In these stretches Russell becomes a blank, and our attention naturally shifts to the other characters.

For the most part, though, the writing is vivid. Some people may call the dialogue "realistic," but in fact it is rather highly stylized. Most of the main characters are wits, and much of the dialogue consists of flavorful repartee: "I've heard about what Apaches do to white women." "They do the same thing to white women that they do to red women. And they don't mind it much, red or white." "How much does a bottle like this cost?" "The best years of your life." It isn't easy to sustain this kind of tart, aphoristic banter, and there are some lapses, but they are surprisingly few; one of the film's pleasures is being startled by its piquant cynicism. At one point Jessie is undressing, unaware that Russell is watching her; after several moments, he warns her to stop. She asks why he didn't clear his throat to let her know he was there, and he responds drily, "I couldn't. My heart was in it." But most of the other characters, perhaps less brazen, have rather cynical expectations of life; and the script commendably preserves a taste of acid. All of the characters, like Jessie, have long abandoned romantic fancies. Faver's wife (excellently played by Barbara Rush) is an especially arresting creation—prim, aristocratic, disdainful, she expresses her disgust with life in an astonishing candidness about the intimacies of her marriage; she looks thoroughly respectable, but she is bored and desperate enough to enjoy shocking others with her blasé verbal exhibitionism. She says, praising her husband's brain, "He reads late into the night, which is just as well, because when he takes off his trousers and folds them neatly over the chair, that sharp, keen intelligence of his doesn't count for very much." She has a clear, crabbed perspective on her youthful fluttering: "When I was 18 and a student of his I heard him read Robert Browning; now I'm 35 and I hear him cough up phlegm."

There are moments when the script tries to underline an existentialist message too strenuously—for example, the dialogue between Faver and the stage driver as they wait out the battle of nerves in the mining cabin at the end. One wonders if, at a tense moment, they would really be inclined toward metaphysical speculation. Although it's refreshing to hear our movies talking as intelligent people talk, this sounds too much like self-congratulation. The film as a whole hardly fits its 1880 setting. Its nihilism and its racial enlightenment sound contemporary. But *Hombre* is so much more alert and sophisticated than the standard Western that it seems ungrateful to talk about anachronisms. The film speaks to us about problems that we care about, and few enough movies do that. To complain that people 100 years ago might not have cared in quite the same ways is a valid aesthetic objection and yet, given the wit and economy of the writing, a quibble.

Ritt is one of the few contemporary directors, here or abroad, who has settled for a completely "clean" style, never cluttered with cinematic effect (except for one bad trick shot, of blood seeming to spurt from a man's face as we see him killed in close-up) or fancy self-consciousness. He never calls attention to his technique; still, this is a rare American film that looks carefully controlled from beginning to end. The opening shot, of Russell's eyes, tense and suspicious, watching a horse lead several others to a corral, sets an important motif for the film. Russell is a man who, though usually silent, seems always to be testing others, observing them very closely in spite of his aloofness. In the mining cabin at the very end, as he waits for the others to act, he even plays God. And though we may despise their cowardice, it is a measure of the film's complexity that we are also uneasy about Russell's arrogant vigilance,

the cruelty of the way in which he quietly torments them, contemptuously dares them to prove themselves less abject than he imagines.

The details in the film are always sharp. I don't know whether it was Ritt's idea or Newman's own to have Russell fold his arms in a peculiar, self-protective way, that looks almost as if he is hugging himself. But it is an ingenious way of suggesting the rejection Russell has endured, the self-sufficiency he asserts so passionately, perhaps also a trace of narcissism. I assume it *was* Ritt, with the Ravetches, who decided that most everything we see in the film should be decaying. The boardinghouse is closing down, and so is the stagecoach office. The relay station along the road has already closed, though one man remains there, waiting listlessly, with nothing to do. And the deserted mine—empty buildings, dust, piles of rocks, absolute silence—where the driver stops early in the journey, and where the final clash takes place, is an evocative, lingering visual image of stagnation. The world Ritt portrays is the West dying.

In this respect the film resembles *Hud,* where Ritt made excellent use of the incongruity between wide open spaces and Cadillacs, a teenage twist contest and the rodeo ring where it is held. Both films present barren landscapes that reflect the characters' desolation, but in *Hombre,* thanks to James Wong Howe's eloquent color photography—a subdued palette, mostly dry browns and greens—the landscape also has a forlorn beauty that haunts us by its irrelevance to the characters' desperation and disgust.

Russell is clearly enough related to Hud—both share the same bitterness toward conventional morals, both are rejected men, both, one might say, in need of a father. But there is no moral patriarch like Melvyn Douglas's Homer in *Hombre.* Russell combines Hud's brutality and cynicism with Homer's unflinching integrity, a more satisfying conception than in the earlier film. In *Hud* there was an unintentional swing of sympathy from Homer to Hud, partly because of Newman's appeal, partly because Homer was too upright to be believed, and partly also—this is often ignored in considerations of *Hud*—because the film itself implied, at moments, that Homer's severity toward Hud was harsher than he deserved. *Hombre* is in sharper control; the cynicism and uprightness are in the same character, and they intriguingly feed on each other. Russell's justifiable anger and his honesty make his bitterness more than personal, but a discerning protest against the viciousness in most people's relations with others. At the same time, though, the bitterness *is* personal, and the hardness to which it leads him blights his integrity, and makes him seem relentlessly casual toward suffering.

Ritt's three recent Western films with Newman—*Hud, The Outrage,* and *Hombre*—are thematically, and to some extent stylistically consistent. Usually two consecutive films by even a talented American director are so different that critics must be at their most ingenious to discover links between them on third or fourth viewing. Ritt's films belong together in more obvious and convincing ways. All of them are cynical, all of them deliberately set out to flout habits of both sentimental thinking and sentimental movies. Hud's refusal to reform was startling to a lot of people, which is more a comment on how bad most of our movies are than on *Hud's* "honesty." Ritt takes perverse, healthy delight in upsetting rickety conventions. The way in which he transformed *Rashomon* into *The Outrage* (a more interesting failure than critics would admit) was revealing; Kurosawa's concern over the impossibility of knowing truth became, in the American film, something quite different—the falseness of people's romantic idealizations of themselves and their experience. The convincing version of the rape was the farcical one; the three heroic tales invented by the bandit, the husband, and the wife were certainly deluded. Ritt's ridicule of the concept of honor in *The Outrage* sheds light on his subversive aim in *Hombre.* The honor that Warshow's Westerner defended means little to Ritt, and he dramatizes it from a less exalted, more hardheaded perspective, to reveal its cruelty. But *Hombre* works craftily to thwart other expectations that are generic clichés. Russell and Jessie, who would have fallen in love in most any standard Hollywood Western, never

so much as kiss; he dies at the end before the romance begins, and without heroic fanfare. Another shrewd reversal of cliché is the way in which Faver's wife almost welcomes being forced to ride as the bandit's hostage. A very short scene between her and Grimes—he asks her if she has a message for her husband, and she replies, "Tell him I'm being well looked after," which makes him laugh, "Well, that's real wifely"—concisely and subtly makes their sexual involvement clear, though she is probably sensible and skeptical enough to understand that he cares nothing for her and will not balk at letting her die.

Ritt's one recent film with a different writer, actor, and setting was *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold,* a dull, competent work that shared the cynicism of his other films but lacked the atmosphere. Ritt works most comfortably in an American setting, and especially as chronicler of an America that is losing its purity—the ruined South of his Faulkner movies, the exhausted West of *Hud* and *Hombre.* He is, in the Western films especially, a cogent interpreter of the death of the frontier. His strength is that he understands the changing Western landscape and watches it closely for what it can reveal of human frustrations; his weakness is a desire to be intellectually fashionable, a weakness that made *The Spy*—set in a world whose coordinates Ritt could only have read about—seems pompous. In addition, that film showed that Ritt is uneasy in handling thriller material, which may explain why the weakest section of *Hombre* is the straight suspense section—the passengers' first fight with the bandits, the journey across the desert to the mining cabin. These scenes are clumsily done, and since all of our interest must center on physical action, they seem wasted footage.

At the end Russell does prove himself to be a noble Westerner after all—he leaves the money with the boy to return to the Indians, fills the moneybags with paper and sets out to save Mrs. Faver himself. But we can't know whether he intended to save her all along, and merely made the others squirm for a while, or whether he has been moved by Jessie's compassion; this uncertainty keeps the ending from appearing facile. Perhaps he would not have acted had Jessie not offered to, and his final gesture may be as much a sullen tribute to her as a confirmation of his own valor. In any case, he doesn't talk like the old-style heroes when facing death. Grimes says to him as they stand facing each other, "I wonder what hell looks like," and his last words are simply, "We've all got to die, the only question is when." This implacable existentialist despair may have been implicit in the silence and alienation of other Western heroes, but this film makes it clearer, and strips the hero's death of the glamor, the sense of martyrdom it usually has. It's a very chilly ending that verifies Russell's bitterness; as he suspected, there is no way of performing meaningful sacrifice. But the film doesn't gush with regret—as "serious" Westerns usually do—over the futility of heroic action in an unheroic world. It simply observes, with pitiless skepticism, that the Old West had no charm over it; heroic flourishes were as ambiguous, as pointless then as now. The film won't even let us take consolation in Russell's courage. When he remains aloof, Russell looks proud and unfeeling; when he participates, he is destroyed. And his death doesn't prove or accomplish anything. Neither pose makes much sense. Beneath all of the flip sexual innuendo, there is a sense of hopelessness in *Hombre* that is worth respecting.

The film as a whole is a cold, ironic requiem for the Western hero. Even before his death, by forcing us to consider his bravery as a kind of ruthlessness, the film has gradually displaced our identification from him to the woman who does not live heroically, who scratches for life and love, and is generous, sometimes, because people need it, not because they deserve it. The Westerner's moral principles, his obsession with personal honor do not concern her, though she can be impressed by his courage after his death; her actions always have a more groping, more disillusioned motivation. She is the only hero we really understand.

The main character of *Welcome to Hard*

Times has much less in common with classic Western heroes than *Hombre's* Russell. Blue (Henry Fonda) is 49 years old, tired, looking for some self-respect, but unshakably cowardly. At the start of the film a stranger comes to Hard Times, kills a few people and sets fire to the town. Blue tries to use one of the saloon girls, Molly (Janice Rule), to distract his attention so that he can take a shot at him. But the plan fails, and the badman rapes the girl and rides away. Most of the town leaves too, but Blue, who has spent his whole life running, decides that there is nowhere worse to go and that he must stay and try to rebuild Hard Times. He lures a few travelers into settling there—a retarded gunman, a promoter, his wife, and the three prostitutes he carries in the back of his wagon. Molly has nowhere to live, so Blue takes her in as his "wife," and he adopts the son of one of the murdered men as their "child." The town begins to revive and to prepare anxiously for the inevitable return of the badman.

The main conflict in the film is sexual, and the sexual roles are interestingly reversed. Blue has the part that usually goes to women in Westerns—he represents civilization, social progress, law and order. Molly taunts him for his cowardice throughout the film while *she* waits, knife sharpened, to kill the badman herself. She encourages the boy, Jimmy, to learn to use a gun, and she admires the gunman for the shooting skill that Blue lacks. The reviewers, who seem joyfully oblivious to sexual symbolism, regard the film as a heavy-handed parable of Good and Evil. The badman, who never speaks, is obviously not a realistic figure, but he isn't an emblem of Evil either. Rather, he represents aggressive, anarchic sexuality; the dissolve from his laughing face to fire clearly enough signals the nature of his villainy. *Hard Times* examines the clash of impulse and civilization that Freud considered in *Civilization and Its Discontents.* Blue understands Freud's argument that civilization must be maintained by forcibly suppressing explosive sexual and aggressive drives. Blue claims that if Hard Times becomes a settled, civilized town, the badman will not be able to destroy it. And there is a lucid relationship between his own sexual reticence and his commitment to peaceful social reform. Only the woman champions violence, and the phallic aggressiveness that she admires is dangerous and threatening to Blue.

Sexual tension animates even the subplot concerning the promoter and his four women. He makes them do all of the work in setting up their tent, while he lounges and supervises. And he too is much older than his wife and his three companions. The most interesting aspect of the film, though, is the conflict of Blue and Molly for the child's affection. Blue resents her urging him to shoot, but the boy is obviously attracted to her, and shares her opinion that Blue is a coward. There is one absolutely chilling, forceful scene in which Molly tenderly calls Blue to her as she is lying in bed; as he embraces her, she screams out for Jimmy, who runs in, rifle in hand. She and the boy smile at each other. It is uncommon Western material—startling dramatization of the conspiracy of mother and son to emasculate the father. The critics of *Hard Times* have conscientiously neglected to discuss this scene because it would have to upset their view of the film as a moralistic fable.

Finally, the villain does return. We become aware of his presence as the camera moves slowly from a pair of lovers kissing to the badman watching them from a distance—a camera movement that again suggests how the badman works in the film, as metaphoric embodiment of repressed sexual instinct. Molly expects all of the men in town to run away, emasculated, "your tail between your legs." She urges the simple-minded gunman to kill the badman and promises her body as a reward. But he is killed, and Blue must face the badman himself once again. He is no braver this time around—the film boldly refuses to provide the transformation we expect—and Blue is able to kill his adversary only because he runs out of bullets. Blue carries the body in to Molly, ruefully. But the man is not dead, and as Molly leans over him, he opens his eyes, knocks the knife out of her hand, and grabs her. She calls to Jimmy, who is holding a rifle, but Blue tries to keep

him from shooting. The gun misfires and kills Molly. It is an unsettling conclusion, expressing the underlying fantasy of the film: woman is dangerous, and she must be destroyed if men are to be able to relax. The film sees the oedipal relationship through the aging father's eyes and the ending expresses his wish that the mother die. But Blue is partly responsible. His civilized fastidiousness as well as Molly's own passionate vindictiveness destroy her. Instead of a happy fade-out, the film forces us to face the fact that the mother-father conflict, or more generally, the clash of civilization and instinct, is irreconcilable; it can be resolved, temporarily, only by killing the life-force. And although the film's last scene, the marriage of a miner and a Chinese prostitute, is meant to suggest that sexuality *can* be civilized, I don't think we're convinced.

Janice Rule, a lovely lady, plays Molly with an exaggerated Irish brogue but with the right kind of blazing sexuality. Henry Fonda is probably the movies' most imposing and attractive father figure today – almost superhumanly gentle, warm, understanding–and he can't help taking most of our sympathy. By making him sexually backward, the film cannily suggests that the reason we can respond to Fonda as Father is because he is not a sexual rival or a sexual menace. We wish our fathers were as emasculated and affectionate, and as apparently dignified as the Fonda image claims.

Hard Times is anti-Western in its settings as well as its characters. Burt Kennedy's Western town is the ugliest you can expect to see on screen–nothing but mud, a couple of ramshackle, decaying buildings, and a well. Everything is grey, except for the bright-colored dresses of the women, which have an almost unearthly dazzle in all the gloom. A funeral hearse, led by black and white plumed horses, topped with skinny black feathers, reveals Kennedy's fine eye for grotesque detail. He also has a delightful frontier comic sense. The scene in which an arthritic old man rides into town, sets up a folding chair, irritably charters Hard Times, then packs up and rides out again, is an unforgettable vignette. Almost as funny is a scene in which the women interrupt Blue in his bath in the middle of town and ask his advice about the miner who wants to marry the Chinese prostitute, claiming she is too young and inexperienced to know anything about love. The trouble with the film is that Kennedy's direction alternates between dry realism and slick Hollywoodese. The rebuilding of the town, the coming of spring, the weekly influx of miners are smoothly executed sequences, but with a folksy-cute bounce that belongs in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers.*

The movie as a whole does not have *Hombre's* assurance or conviction, and it is not free of unfortunate clichés–the Christmas sing, for example, or Molly's shame at being a fallen woman. More important, the complexities in the relationship of Molly and Blue are not satisfactorily explored. There is more, apparently, than animosity between them–he seems to need her respect, and she, at moments, shows affection for him; but the only aspect of their relationship that is fully and persuasively drawn is the hostility.

Whatever their flaws, it may be ultimately more difficult for the Western to recover from these films than from a spoof like *Cat Ballou.* There are no gods in these Westerns; in both films the woman's virtues overshadow the hero's, even though in *Hard Times* it is a man who plays the woman's role. As long as the Western maintained its heroic center, it had nostalgic charm; we enjoyed believing there was once a world where moral distinctions were simple, and great men could set things straight. But it looks as if we can no longer expect such consolation from Westerns. The image of personal nobility that Warshow cited as central to the Westerner's appeal is not, I'm afraid, very real for us any more. Probably it never was; we responded to the Western hero as a quixotic version of ourselves, not as anyone with whom we could *realistically* identify. The sophistication of movie audiences has accelerated in the last few years, though certain daydreams still seem to work for large numbers of people. The Westerner doesn't–his honorable pose, his masculine purity no longer seem relevant to much

that we can take seriously. He seems more and more remote. And it isn't our aspirations or our sense of honor that have deteriorated, as Western apologists might have it; all that's changed is our degree of self-consciousness about the fantasy we once swallowed. *Hombre* and *Welcome to Hard Times* register that change in awareness with considerable artistry.

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The Dirty Dozen is a slickly synthetic, pleasantly brutal war film that two decades ago would have starred John Wayne. Director Robert Aldrich skillfully avoids any troublesome philosophical issues and concentrates exclusively on eliciting thrills and chuckles. He has created a swift, colorful, bloody, irresistible film which follows in the glamorous pattern of *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Professionals* where clever, sinewy heroes outwit, outshoot, and outlive a legion of formidable villains. In this one, a cynical Army Major (Lee Marvin) is assigned to train and lead a dozen homicidal prisoners in a suicidal raid on a Nazi officer's club just before D-Day. Aldrich has padded the film with a passel of commercial faces. John Cassevetes, Clint Walker, Charles Bronson, singer Trini Lopez, ex-pro fullback Jim Brown, Telly Savalas, and Ralph Meeker all perform adequately as members of the odd dozen. Robert Ryan and Ernest Borgnine appear briefly for extra box-office appeal. Aldrich capitalizes on these cozily familiar actors by dispensing with character development, assuming that we can imagine depth by merely looking at these good old faces. Fascinating to watch is Lee Marvin who suggests a dangerously coiled spring about to explode. Marvin's searing wisecracks are the cream of the humor, much of the rest being fraternal slapstick accompanied by tinkly, buffoonish music. The eagerly awaited raid turns out to be a picturesque slaughter that is one of the most splendorously sadistic in memory. The camera is idle and the color wasted until this impressive finale when Aldrich uses lighting, camera, and editing to expertly create excitement and suspense.

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The Empty Canvas is a curious picture, first because of its motley cast (Horst Buchholtz as existential artist, Bette Davis as wealthy, doting Mom, and Catherine Spaak as bitchy, amoral girl-friend), and second because Damiano Damiani's direction seems sincere and restrained yet void of any true sensitivity toward either the characters or the material. Alberto Moravia's story, however shop-worn or hackneyed on the surface, contains philosophical observations, insights here reduced to facile moral judgments. Moravia would have us see that the painter's canvas is empty because the artist himself is, and that the artist virtually represents modern man—soulless and blind to life's better side. "It's been years since I painted anything remotely resembling a human being," Buchholtz tells the tart, just after deliberately slashing to bits a dozen of his Miró-like canvases. He shows her his latest work—a blank surface, a still-life of nothingness, a landscape of absurdity. And from then on the film lacks the power to convince us that Buchholtz (who doesn't help much) is learning anything from his experience; ultimately, his self-pity becomes simply annoying, as are Miss Davis's sleepy Georgia accent and Miss Spaak's deceits. There are no less than three possible endings for the film during the last two reels. Pity Damiani failed to settle for an earlier one.—JAMES MICHAEL MARTIN.

The Endless Summer is a nonfiction movie which normally would have made its rounds within the underground world of the surfing fraternity; but such is the scarcity of "product" that it has secured regular theatrical distribution. And it has undeniable charms: lots of beautiful and often terrifying waves, lots of telephoto shots of surfers on them, and a curious *entre-nous* narration of such stupefyingly ethnocentric character that what in other mouths would be grotesque or even despicable takes on a genial naiveté. The surfers whose round-the-world trek the film follows are two bland, blank, hopelessly forgivable, almost endearing young Americans who care for absolutely nothing except surfing; they find their "perfect wave" in South Africa and surf on numerous beaches where, believe it or not, *nobody has ever surfed before!* Well, this is all good clean fun (an episode with a girl is clearly a phoney staged bit) but it does wear thin well before feature length has unreeled—unless, of course, you happen to also be a member of that worldwide band for whom the movie was made. But it is an amiable novelty, and makes one wonder about the other clans' movies: we know about the skiers and skin-divers, how about the chess players? The low-energy physics boys, that curious international breed? The film-festival journalists? In this super-specialized world, where everybody has his own bag, why not his own film too?—E.C.

The Family Way is being praised everywhere as an inoffensive movie on a delicate subject—impotence. But it's so inoffensive that it's completely worthless. A newly married couple in an English industrial town expect to go to Majorca for a honeymoon, but a crooked travel agent runs off with their money, and they are forced to move in with his parents, indefinitely. In the cramped and tense surroundings—he's a rather vulnerable type who doesn't get along with his loutish, aggressive father—he can't function in bed. Ten weeks later his bride is still a virgin, and the news leaks to family and neighbors, humiliating the young husband. We never understand *why* he's having problems, because the movie stays discreetly away from the bedroom, and because young Arthur is a psychological blank; though he reads books and likes Beethoven (a dull-witted screenwriter's idea of Sensitivity), he certainly doesn't look emasculated. He talks back to his father impudently, even fiercely. The oedipal rivalry is very sketchy; we're *told* that there are difficulties between father and son, but except for one overwraught, elbow-wrestling match, we never *see* much of the intense conflict that presumably causes his impotence. At times the movie ignores the young couple altogether and focuses on the older generation, especially in one incredibly long, contrived, stagey conversation between the two sets of parents when they learn that the marriage "hasn't taken on yet." But whenever anything begins to be provoking—

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scenes between the cynical Mr. Fox and the relatively innocent nurse of one of the rich ladies are as masterful examples of high comic writing as we can hope to see in movies; in their subtle dramatization of the attraction of opposites, in their psychological acuteness and extremely complex manipulation of sympathies, they probably surpass anything that Ben Jonson wrote. (Okay, the comparison isn't fair—Jonson wasn't interested in psychological complexity — but I resent the way in which pompous reverence for the classics has hurt appreciation of this film.) Perhaps what makes these scenes so remarkable is that Rex Harrison and Maggie Smith are two of the finest performers in the world today. Their playing together contains the kind of electricity we're told to expect only in live theater. Harrison and Smith dominate the film, but Cliff Robertson, Susan Hayward, Edie Adams, Capucine, Adolfo Celi are all surprisingly good. The mixture of satire, farce, and thriller works unusually well, but it does lead to a preposterous ending—funny enough, but without any relationship to the film's rather human concerns. *The Honey Pot* is too larky to be art, too talky to be great cinema, but it's delightful entertainment, with a sophistication, for a change, that you *won't* find on television.—STEPHEN FARBER.

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You Only Live Twice sees James Bond buried and married; Connery looks embalmed for both ceremonies. The movie does have a minimally suspenseful, simple-minded plot, which puts it one up on *Casino Royale.* And it's shorter than *Thunderball.* But it's never very interesting. The Bond movies ruined themselves when they abandoned amusing, unadorned comic strip melodrama—cars hurtling over cliffs, tarantulas in bed, poisoned knives attached to ladies' shoes—for ever bigger and more expensive gadgetry, and for elaborate science-fictional machines. In *Twice* you may admire the ingenuity of some of these gimmicks, but it's hard to get very excited by a behemoth computer complex, no matter how colorfully it runs. Bond himself has been getting much dumber, as the machines have been getting smarter, and he would have been killed several times in this film if the script maintained the slightest shred of plausibility. Even the sex and the outrageousness have been curbed this time. But there is one brief sequence, in which Bond's tricky helicopter wipes out five conventional ones, that almost makes the whole movie worth sitting through; it's practically lost in the surrounding junk, but it might stand, if excerpted, as one of the most stunning straight adventure sequences ever filmed. The attractive color photography, mostly of Japan, is by Fred Young; Lewis Gilbert directed.—STEPHEN FARBER.

Books

AMERICAN MONOPOLY IN BRITAIN?

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FILMS: A REPORT ON THE SUPPLY OF FILMS FOR EXHIBITION IN CINEMAS, by The Monopolies Commission, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, at 9s.

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The principal problem in the mechanics of the British cinema lies in the area of distribution. The two big organizations, Rank and Associated British Cinemas (ABC), exert a stranglehold over the business. There is no third circuit. No feature made on anything but the most minute of budgets can hope to survive commercially unless it pleases the bookers at either Rank or ABC. And it has become alarmingly clear during recent years that a majority of the films distributed by these combines are American, either in name or in financial status. British films are now more popular than American, whether they be the films of fashionable directors like

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promising; and the casting of John Gavin as the lump of sturdy American beef was a wonderful idea. But this is only one target of the movie's burlesque, and not all of them are so rewarding. As musical spectacle the film disappoints. The songs themselves—mostly retrieved from the period and nicely lampooned—are pleasant, but the choreography is insipid, and both the color photography and settings are thoroughly ordinary. George Roy Hill's direction is consistently unimaginative. The appeal of the film is in its casting, and here Hunter must be commended for some interesting choices. He has guaranteed his investment by picking Julie Andrews for the lead, but Miss Andrews is an excellent mimic as well as a darling of millions, and many of her stylized facial expressions are very funny. Mary Tyler Moore makes a charming match for Gavin, and James Fox further reveals his range in a fine comic portrait of the irresponsible rich blade. Bea Lillie, in a rare screen appearance, relishes every moment she's on camera; and so does Carol Channing, whose rubbery face is really too grotesque in close-up. Still, the sound of her amazing voice shattering glass, like the spectacle of Miss Lillie talking Oriental gibberish to her sinister servants, reminds us that there is still room for grand "theatrical" hamming in the movies.

—STEPHEN FARBER.

You Only Live Twice sees James Bond buried and married; Connery looks embalmed for both ceremonies. The movie does have a minimally suspenseful, simple-minded plot, which puts it one up on *Casino Royale.* And it's shorter than *Thunderball.* But it's never very interesting. The Bond movies ruined themselves when they abandoned amusing, unadorned comic strip melodrama—cars hurtling over cliffs, tarantulas in bed, poisoned knives attached to ladies' shoes—for ever bigger and more expensive gadgetry, and for elaborate science-fictional machines. In *Twice* you may admire the ingenuity of some of these gimmicks, but it's hard to get very excited by a behemoth computer complex, no matter how colorfully it runs. Bond himself has been getting much dumber, as the machines have been getting smarter, and he would have been killed several times in this film if the script maintained the slightest shred of plausibility. Even the sex and the outrageousness have been curbed this time. But there is one brief sequence, in which Bond's tricky helicopter wipes out five conventional ones, that almost makes the whole movie worth sitting through; it's practically lost in the surrounding junk, but it might stand, if excerpted, as one of the most stunning straight adventure sequences ever filmed. The attractive color photography, mostly of Japan, is by Fred Young; Lewis Gilbert directed.—STEPHEN FARBER.

Books

AMERICAN MONOPOLY IN BRITAIN?

A COMPETITIVE CINEMA, by Terence Kelly with Graham Norton and George Perry, published by The Institute of Economic Affairs, 66a Eaton Square, London S.W.1., at 30s.

FILMS: A REPORT ON THE SUPPLY OF FILMS FOR EXHIBITION IN CINEMAS, by The Monopolies Commission, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, at 9s.

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Schlesinger and Richardson, or the string of horror or *Carry On* comedies that emanate from studios with lesser artistic ambitions. In 1964, the top five money-earning films in Britain came from home studios.

But beneath this seemingly rosy situation can be discerned a unique trend. Just how British is British? In 1960, 53 out of 79 British features were made entirely with home money; in 1965, only 32 out of 69 merited this description—the remaining 37 pictures were financed wholly or in part by America. The advantages of the development are straightforward: it provides access to the US market without control of the film being lost; it provides lucrative work for British technicians; and it does definitely permit a large degree of creative freedom to the British producers concerned.

In a situation where no legislation and precious little precedent exist, however, there are bound to be anomalies. Thus one is confronted with film after film that is American in conception, flavor, and casting (*Doctor Strangelove, Kaleidoscope, Nine Hours to Rama*). Now the Films Act of 1960 specified that the labor costs of two persons involved in a production may be waived but, providing the remainder of the team is British, it can qualify for a share of the British Film Fund, the levy originated by Sir Wilfrid Eady. This Eady Fund, with its extraordinary automatic pay-outs, is the lure to foreign finance. In early 1966 *Variety* estimated that "upwards of 80 per cent of the fund coin will be paid out in the current financial year to American major companies." Quite apart from the myopic outlook of the Fund—it gives only to films well able to look after themselves—it is becoming a valuable source of revenue to American companies.

The acquiescence of the Rank Organisation in this growth of affairs is ironic indeed. To quote the Monopolies Commission Report on the rise of his business, "[Lord Rank] believed . . . that British production could only achieve lasting success in an industry free from American domination and that the British industry could be freed from this domination only by the creation of a powerful vertically integrated organisation, combining the production, distribution, and exhibition of Britsh films." Yet today a handsome proportion of the pictures released under the aegis of Rank come from Universal-International! In addition, Rank is, so to speak, "tied" to Columbia, Disney, Twentieth Century-Fox, and United Artists as far as circuit releases are concerned, just as ABC is committed to Warners and Seven Arts, MGM and Paramount. (British Lion remains the sole "independent" distributor of feature films.)

Both Rank and ABC cling to the idea that by their activities they are sustaining the British industry against American infiltration; that by denying to US companies the control of exhibition throughout the country they are preventing discrimination againt British production. (But, apart from the Odeons, nearly all London's show-case theaters are in the hands of American companies.) Rank and ABC also claim that "the difficulty of financing film production in the absence of major circuits would be likely to lead to an even greater degree of reliance than there is at present—or even to almost total reliance—on American finance," because American companies, obviously, do not look to the British circuits as their earning ground.

The Report has not been so trenchant in its conclusions as some reformers had hoped. Rank and ABC are considered to have a monopoly as far as exhibition is concerned, but the Commission can suggest no practicable alternative arrangement. Even its recommendation that Rank should extend its bookings of short films beyond its own *Look at Life* series carries little weight, although it has stirred Rank to publish its own justification, a report entitled "No Case for Compulsion," in which it is agreed that, subject to market research proving a demand among audiences for quality shorts, Rank will play such films in 13 out of the 52 weeks in each year. The Commission does not decry American financial participation, and points out that if it were withdrawn much British talent would follow it back to Hollywood. (That this is official government policy is evident from the exemption of film from the imports surcharge imposed between 1964 and 1966.)

Terrence Kelly, in his book, maintains "There is no sinister conspiracy of American tycoonery to be outwitted, simply a gap some millions of pounds wide in the British industry which, there being no one else to do so, the Americans have filled," and he goes on to emphasize the importance of building a film school and other facilities so that the best creative men in the home industry can be encouraged. In any event, London is today arguably the world's center of film production, with Chaplin, Truffaut, Antonioni, Zinnemann, Aldrich, Ritt and others at work in the studios during the past eighteen months. The "Quota," whereby 30 per cent of all playing time in British cinemas should be devoted to "British" films still operates as a basic safety level below which home produc-

tion cannot fall. Kelly wisely suggests that in order to maintain the British character of these films, the Board of Trade should foster the employment of British authors, directors, and actors, while allowing more foreign technicians to work under them. It all narrows down to a question of talent. Richard Lester (American), Roman Polanski (Polish), and Joseph Losey (American) are the three leading film-makers identified with British cinema today; indeed they display in their work an understanding of English society that no amount of American money could have bought. British film circles should be afraid not so much of American investment increasing as of its drifting eastwards to other countries who eye the flurry of activity at Pinewood, Shepperton, and the rest with patent envy.—PETER COWIE.

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