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ARTICLES

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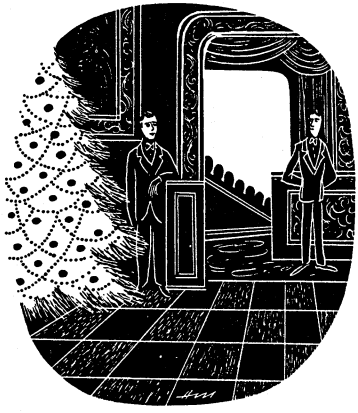

Editor's Notebook

As we go to press, the San Francisco Intertional Film Festival has just ended. An imposing gala affair, the festival displayed to the local public and to many critics and journalists 16 features and some 60 documentaries and experimental films (including several about which we hope to write in the Spring issue). The jury (Arthur Knight of the *Saturday Review*, Albert Johnson of *Sight & Sound* and this journal, and Irving Ackerman, dean of the San Francisco exhibitors) awarded prizes to *House under the Rocks* (Hungary)—best film; Satyajit Ray—best director (for *Aparajito*); Ruth Leuwerik—best actress (for *Taiga*); Massimo Girotti—best actor (for *Road a Year Long*); Joris Ivens' *The Seine Meets Paris*—best documentary; *Two Men and a Wardrobe* (Poland)—best experimental film. These and several other films shown at the festival deserve prompt and widespread American distribution.

Some readers have wondered at the omission of a manifesto from our first issue. It might have been a nice gesture; and indeed several manifestoes just happened to be lying around the office. We discarded them in the belief that the total continuing effect of the magazine will serve as manifesto enough, and that our contributors deserve all the space that can be squeezed out of our financially limited pages. But from time to time declarations of critical stance will appear in this column.

For one thing, we are in favor of cinematic movies, still believing that the film is an art form in itself, not merely a convenient means of mass-distributing novels or plays. It is not grinding a critical axe to point out that the filmed plays, which seem finished enough and often moving in their time, do not last; they cannot produce the aesthetic effect peculiar to the film—a merging of form and content so compact, under a tension of material and intention so fine, that its emotional result is an almost physical impact. "Ca, c'est du cinéma!" the French critics used to say, when a film gave them this rare experience. It is a saying for which we have hardly any use nowadays.

Ten years is a long time in the cinema, and not many films pass the test of sheer bearableness after that period. Of those films which do last, it may be only a sophisticated fiction to think that they are the films in which a creative

[*Continued on page 63*]

THE COVER: Sophia Loren in *The Black Orchid* (Paramount—directed by Martin Ritt).

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character complexities of this late Victorian set-piece.

John Gielgud's Holmes, inscrutable master of needle and slipper, and his *eminence grise* Dr. Watson (admirably delineated by Sir Ralph Richardson) serve as perfect foils for the masterful Moriarty and Mrs. Hudson of Orson Welles and Brenda de Banzie. If the hound at times exhibits that lamentable anthropomorphism characteristic of the late Rin Tin Tin, he still fills his brief, deadly function almost beyond cavil. Incidentally providing a glimpse of another notable English director, Sir Carol Reed appears briefly as the country doctor of the first scene.

While one must reserve the highest measure of praise from a film patently dedicated to the celebration of a world long since forgotten, *The Hound* yet commands our attention for the high gloss and polish which Mr. Lean brings to his camerawork, forcing us to wish once more that this able director would turn his hand to those contemporary themes with which his colleagues—most notably Paul Rotha—have so long and fruitfully been engaged.—JONATHAN HARKER

COMPETITION NO. 2

Entries should be addressed to: "Film Quartered," University of California Press, Berkeley 4, California. Deadline: January 15, 1959. Prizes will be announced in the Spring issue.

A Los Angeles psychiatrist was recently quoted (out of context) as saying that horror films such as *I Was a Teen-Age Werewolf* and *Blood of Dracula* constitute a form of "self-administered psychiatric therapy for America's adolescents." Submit a title, with brief synopsis, for a similar film of equal or greater psychotherapeutic value to the nation's teen-agers.

[Editor's Notebook, continued]

imagination has come directly to grips with its subject and fashioned an original work in film terms from the outset. *Citizen Kane, Potemkin, The Navigator*—such masterpieces do indeed fit the pattern. But what of the other films remaining in one's personal collection of endlessly reseeable films (say *Rashomon, The Informer, Le Jour Se Lève*)? Very many are derived from previously existing literary works. And the present is the heyday of the adaptor, in Hollywood and elsewhere. If, as Prévert once remarked, the writer of the script is the male principle in the creation of a film, while the director is the female, gestative principle, we seem to be well into an age of cinematic parthenogenesis, in which the screen writer no longer fulfills his main function, but is artistically parasitic upon previously existing literary works. (We are of course aware of the economic reasons adduced for Hollywood's now almost exclusive reliance on "pretested" story properties, and do not mean to blame writers for a situation not of their making and, in some cases at least, not to their liking.) And, if the film-makers rely upon novelists and playwrights to go out into the world, find what is interesting or important, and mold it into dramatic or narrative form, it is only to be expected that they will also follow the path of least resistance in adapting literary works for the screen. That path, down which we tread with numb familiarity by now, is the path of sticking with the given dialogue, scene structure, point of view, settings, and so on—or worse, to alter these on artistically irrelevant grounds so that even the stagy or literary unity of the original is destroyed.

The film-maker is too often only an attendant at an elaborate transmission-belt, the product of which is a visual bodying-forth of events originally described in words. Words cram the soundtracks and flood the ears. Cinemascope has brought the screen closer to the shape of the stage; cutting has slowed to a deadly crawl, while actors prowl about in long shot, talking at one another. (Cinemascope, incidentally, is one of the things we are *against*. Oddly enough, in this we are at one with virtually everyone in the film industry—including, it is said, some of the men whose gambit the wide screen originally was.)

Indeed one is forced to question whether we are living in the visual age so confidently foreseen over the years. In television as on the movie screen, dialogue is first and blocking next and editing nowhere, in spite of pious admonitions to "keep it visual." Maybe people just *like* talking? Talk was, after all, the mainstay of radio for several decades. Maybe the ear *is* more powerful than the eye? Maybe you can-

not follow tight visual action too well with an arm around the girl friend or a hand on the beer can?

However, to all such sophistic doubts we pay as little heed as possible, sitting about, for example, in Berkeley's Cinema Guild—a kind of Shepherd's Hotel of the film, where any worthwhile picture ever made will come by if you sit patiently—and meditating on our poor muse. We simply do not think it possible for any experienced movie-goer to deny that films these days are talking too much and moving too little and too slowly. It is refreshing when somebody like Kubrick or Lumet or Ritt finds his half-million and sets out to make a small, incisive, active picture, leaving name stars and the floss known as "production values" to the big, lumbering filmed plays. Gigantism, we beg leave to point out, is a disease.

In this issue we present a series of conversations with men who have helped divert film production into new channels abroad. In our next issue we plan to run a similar set of interviews with some of the men in Hollywood to whom we can look for new developments there. We also hope to include articles on problems of present-day documentary, Chaplin's method of gag-development, some remarkable new television techniques, and others—together with a sizable number of comprehensive reviews.

About our contributors: HUGH GRAY, screenwriter and novelist, teaches the aesthetics and history of film at the University of California, Los Angeles. He was moderator at the Flaherty Seminar this past summer.

DANIEL AUBRY has worked in the film industry in France and Mexico. He is presently the Hollwood representative of *Septimo Arte*, a monthly published by the University Film School in Mexico City, and attends UCLA as a graduate student in film production. JEAN MICHEL LACOR is preparing to attend the IDHEC in Paris. They interviewed Buñuel in September 1958.

GEORGE BLUESTONE is the author of *Novels into Film* and of several articles on film. He is also a poet, and teaches at the University of Washington. ARTHUR MAYER, who here takes up the cudgels for the theater owners, is an exhibitor who has also been a foreign-film distributor and a publicist, and is now a producer. He has operated theaters in all parts of the United States but is best remembered as the "Merchant of Menace" who, when deprived by the major companies of all desirable features, successfully ran the Rialto Theater in New York with an exclusive diet of murder, mystery, and horror films. On the other hand, he imported and distributed, with Joseph Burstyn, such foreign classics as *Open City*, *Paisan*, and *Bicycle Thief*. As head of the Paramount advertising and publicity department he was in charge of the campaigns which introduced to the American public such stars as Mae West, Marlene Dietrich, and Maurice Chevalier. He recently produced *High Hell* for Paramount release and is now preparing a new picture, *633 Squadron*, for United Artists release. He is the author of *Merely Colossal* and, with Richard Griffith, *The Movies*. If his article does not cause wholesale apoplexy in Hollywood, we expect many contributions to our "Correspondence & Controversy" section for the next issue.

ALBERT JOHNSON is Assistant Editor of this journal and also American representative of *Sight & Sound*, in which his articles and reviews regularly appear. He is one of the world's leading authorities on the musical film.

LOLA G. YOAKEM is a television and screen writer. She recently compiled and edited *TV and Screen Writing*, just published by the University of California Press—a volume of information and advice from established writers in many TV and screen genres, all active members of Writers Guild of America.

Het Achterhuis*

Shooting has been completed on the promising production of Albert and Frances Hackett's adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Already acclaimed on the stages of the world, this great human document of a child's maturity and tragic seclusion in Holland, during the Nazi occupation, has been carefully cast and directed by George Stevens. The office building on the Prinsengracht canal, in which Otto Frank and his family were forced to live for two years, hidden and cared for by a few friends, has been authentically reconstructed from photographs taken in Amsterdam. All of the actors in the film, aware of the depth and dedication necessary for portrayal of once real-life characters, each made vivid in Anne's diary, rehearsed constantly within the confines of the two floors at the top of the set [see photo of set at right], taking their meals there—becoming intimately involved in recreating a touching requiem.

Appearing in the film will be Joseph Schildkraut, again portraying Otto Frank, and Gusti Huber, once more the wife of the family. The part of Anne is played by Millie Perkins, a New York student and model, making her screen debut, and Richard Beymer, another newcomer, enacts young Peter Van Daan, Anne's first romance. Shelley Winters, whose most memorable appearance in the cinema was in another Stevens film (*A Place in the Sun*), plays the neurotic Mrs. Van Daan, and Ed Wynn is the querulous dentist, Mr. Dussel.

One of Anne Frank's favorite pastimes was collecting pictures of movie stars, and she occasionally imagined herself going to Hollywood someday. Even her vivid imagination, however, could not have foreseen the scope of her actual, and tragically unknowing, contribution to the cinema.

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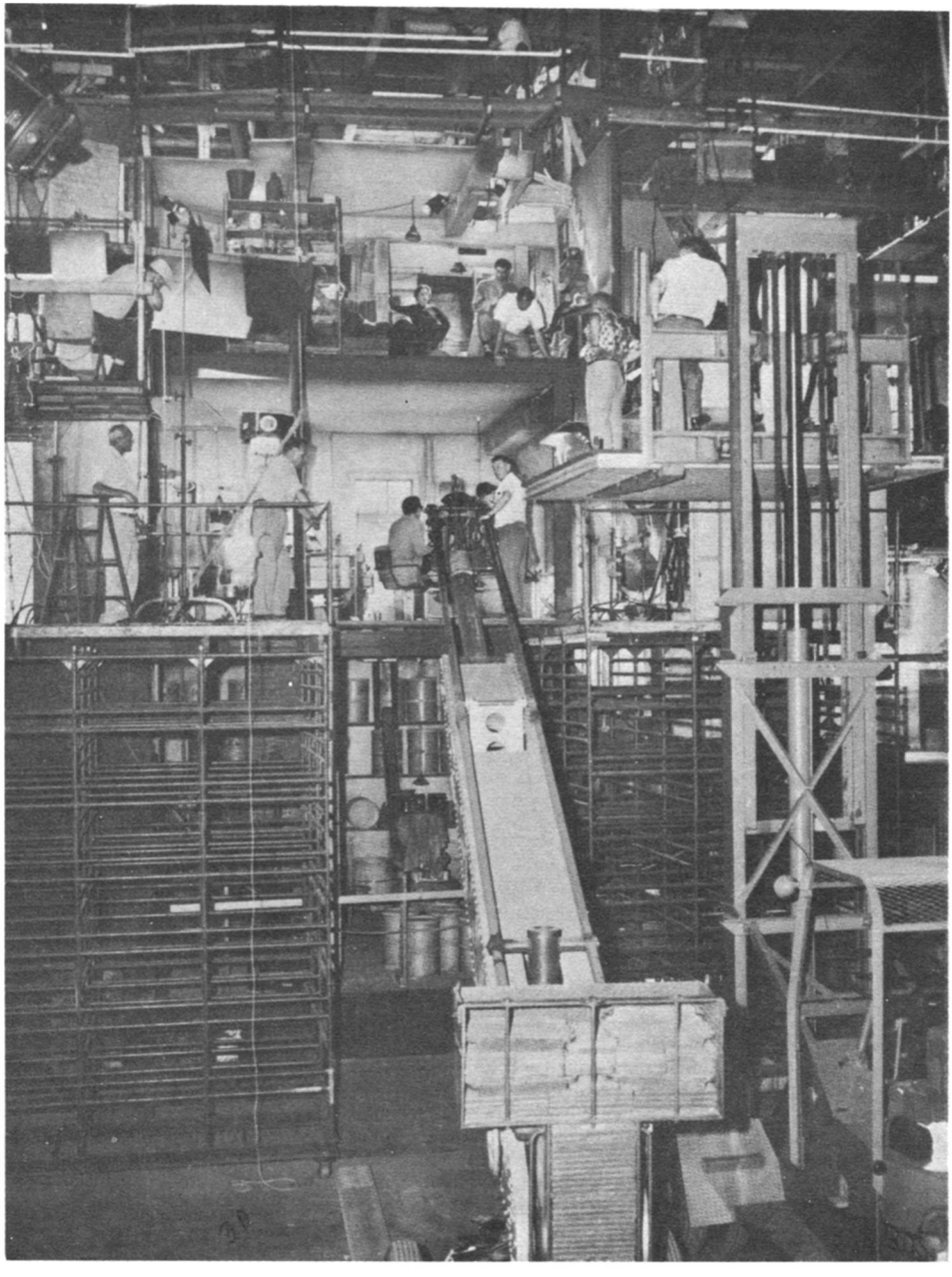
* The original title of Anne Frank's diary—roughly, "The Secret Annex."



The Growing Edge

On the following pages we present a series of interviews with men whose work has lain on that live and growing edge where the products of the film industry sometimes attain the stature of art.

HUGH GRAY

Satyajit Ray

I shall always carry with me my first impressions of our guest of honor as he arrived at the Flaherty Foundation Seminar this past summer. It was the end of a long road from Bengal to Brattleboro, Vermont. His commanding height, his broad build, the fine head and the probing, wondering, kindly eyes were immediately striking, and he smilingly refused to allow anyone to help him with his heavy bag. Tucked under his free arm was the script of his work in progress, the untitled sequel to *Pather Panchali* and *Aparajito*. In it, as I learned later, was a profusion of neat sketches that seemed to crowd out the sparse Bengali text, for Ray had been an artist before he became a director and was also, among other things, an illustrator of books. As he explained to me:

"My grandfather was a painter, a poet, and also a scientist who, in addition to editing the first children's magazine in Bengal, had introduced the half-tone block to India. My father was equally well known. He it was who wrote, among other works, Bengal's classic Book of Nonsense—an Englishman might call him India's Edward Lear. I myself was attracted first to physics and economics, graduating with honors in those fields from Calcutta University. I went to Shantiniketan, a somewhat unusual school, one you may never have heard of, founded at the turn of the century by Rabindranath Tagore. The Tagores and my own family had been friends down the years, and so it was natural that I should go there. Anyhow, it was there that I first developed my aesthetic interests and acquired some skill in drawing. There is one man in particular to whom I shall always be grateful—a man named Bose, my teacher of painting. I think I can truly say that he gave me a deep insight into creative activity."

"Did you take a degree there?" I asked.

"No. I didn't even complete the course. There were no films there and somehow, I don't know how it happened, but films appealed to me. With Tagore dead (he died in 1941) and after reading widely in the history of art and studying in particular Chinese calligraphy, I went back to Calcutta. Having decided that there was no future for me in the fine arts, in 1943 I joined an advertising firm there, as an art director. I stayed with them a long while and went through every department. When I was in a position to do so I introduced into their advertisements a fusion of modern western and Bengal tradition, to give it a new look."

Of course, it is easy to be wise after the event, but as Ray told me the details of his early life I felt a sense of inevitability about every stage of all this preparatory work. The decisive moment came when he was asked to illustrate an edition of *Pather Panchali*. This story had first begun to appear as a serial in 1931 and had at once become immensely popular. Its authenticity as a story of Bengal village life, much of its auto-

biographical, was unmistakable; subsequently it joined the list of best-selling books and continues there.

Slowly Ray's own instincts and the book worked together, through script after script, to give the right shape in his mind to a tale that called out to him to film it. He knew, however, as he has elsewhere said, that it could not be cast into the usual mold of cut-and-dried film narrative. It had to be true to the world of Bengali village life. But the day of filming was still distant; the final form was still to be found, and there were other seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

"In 1950 I went to England for a while, for my firm, and while I was there, in three months I saw more than 90 films. I was studying everything, ceaselessly. It was *Bicycle Thief* that finally gave me the idea of how to make my own film. No stars, and mainly on location.

"When I got home I started to look about hopefully for finances. For all of 1951 I tried to get backing. But I convinced no one. What I wanted to do had not been done before. Our films are either the conventional ones, modeled on Hollywood, their structure and climaxes derived from theater, or they are devotional, or, again, mythological. The only kind of professional encouragement I got came from one single man: A friend of mine who had worked with Jean Renoir on *The River* had told him of my plans and later, when I met Renoir, he insisted that I shouldn't give up. I didn't, and by 1952 I had scraped together enough to make a beginning. I wanted at least to get a start and then, with that, to convince a backer. So we started, a group of amateurs and one professional—the art director. And only two of our cast were professionals. It would have been foolish for any of us to give up our jobs, so we filmed on Sundays and holidays and in the end we got our footage. But nobody rushed to help. In the end, after more than a year and a half of delays, the Bengal Government came to our rescue. We exposed about 45,000 feet of film and the final cut ran to about 11,000 feet. The music was composed and recorded by a friend of mine, an excellent instrumentalist, in a session of fourteen consecutive hours."

He paused thoughtfully, as if living over that

Satyajit Ray talking with Hugh Gray at the Flaherty Seminar. (Photo: Clemens Kalischer)

PATHER PANCHALI: *Subir Bandyopadhyaya as Apu, the boy who grows to adulthood as the trilogy progresses.*

strenuous time. Then he returned once more to the economic problems that had beset him. "Costs have to be held to a minimum in enterprises of this sort. This influences the form and structure of the film itself. It means long takes and the minimum of angles. Then again, in India raw stock is rationed. So you can't afford to waste any. In any case, I don't rehearse much. Especially with nonprofessional actors. I find the first spontaneous actions are usually their best. I averaged about three takes. Of course I was deeply aware that we were all learning as we went along. For that reason we shot in sequence so that we would be a little more sure of what we were doing when we reached the moments of dramatic climax."

"Did you change the story much?"

"Less in *Pather Panchali* than in *Aparajito*. In India *Aparajito* has been criticized on occasion because of the number of departures from the book. People know it so well and expect to see it just as they have read it. Even in *Pather Panchali*, though, I made a number of changes in the order and of course I had to cut down the number of characters throughout. In the book there are three hundred of them!

"In other words, I made whatever changes I felt were demanded by the medium, departing, that is, only from the literary form, not from the truth. Cinema has its own way of telling the truth and it must be left free to function in its own right. I am interested first and last and only in the cinematic way of motion-picture making."

"Did you feel that this story had some sort of a moral or a message that was essentially Indian, or of Bengal, and for that reason attracted you to it?"

He shook his head. "I don't like morals or messages. This story says true things about India. That was enough for me. It had the quality of truth, the quality that always impresses me, wherever I see it and as I have seen it in films such as *Nanook* and *Louisiana Story*, *Earth* and *The Southerner*."

"What about part three of the trilogy?"

"I've started shooting—for three days. But I've halted while my principal actor grows a beard!"

"When do you expect to finish?" He had no final date. But he could not afford to dawdle. Success had made some differences. Already *Aparajito* had got back its negative cost. *Pather Panchali*, delayed because of the business that goes with official associations, was doing well. Ray had had many lucrative offers from the studios. But he wished to go his own way. That meant he must be careful of costs and his pace of work must be economical.

Talk of pace in shooting brought us to story pace, and through this gateway we returned to the world of *Pather Panchali*. "By your standards, my pace is slow—or leisurely, shall we say?" Earlier in our seminar we had agreed that pace was something intrinsic to the subject, and derived from it and not from some external circumstances. He agreed. "It is a matter not just of physical movement but of rhythm, the rhythm of people moving both individually and as a whole, in a pattern." We spoke of the sequence in *Pather Panchali* where the fat confectioner walks through the woods. . . .

Ray continued, "The scenario itself was conceived in terms of seasons and followed their changes of light. As for the day-to-day lighting, when you are outside the studio the morning light is the morning light and the evening, the evening, and there is nothing you can do about that. For the rest, I don't like filters, especially the deep filter. It does something to the Indian skin. In short, I respect natural light-

ing. Indoors, I don't like multiple shadows. I prefer reflected and not direct light, or light from multiple sources."

"We have spoken a little about the music, what of sound effects? Was there any special reason for one use of sound in particular—in the scene in *Pather Panchali* when the mother gives way to an outburst of grief."

"You are asking why I went from a human to an instrumental sound at that particular moment?"

"Precisely."

"There were a number of reasons. First of all, I felt that the impersonal, instrumental sound would give a more universal quality to the expression of grief, and to its effect on the hearer, a quality that the individual personal outburst of the woman could not give. Then again, I felt that my actress, excellent as she was, could never achieve the kind of effect I was after."

Now we passed on to transitions. I noted that he seemed not to favor the traditional cuts, and least of all the standard dissolves.

"I hate conventional time lapses. They draw attention to themselves. I like strong modulations from one thing to another. You see, I am always hopefully concerned to get the feeling of the movement of life itself. There are no neat transitions in life. Things make the transition for me. A traveling train, for example. Again, there is no moment of evident transition, say, from childhood to boyhood, or on to youth."

This brought us to meaning and symbols. Did he intend, as it seemed to me he did, to reach for as many simultaneous meanings as possible?

"Yes. Don't misunderstand me, though. I'm not talking, for example, about composition for composition's sake or anything like that. I shy away from it. It is an aesthetic apart, and not truly cinematic. It is self-conscious, and eventually static. It's too pictorial. I think Sucksdorff falls into that trap, and so, it seems to me, does the Mexican cameraman Figueroa. For surely in cinema we must select everything for the camera according to the richness of its power to reveal."

DANIEL AUBRY and J. M. LACOR

Luis Buñuel

For more than thirty years Buñuel has been making films which have shocked, offended, and rarely pleased "l'homme moyen sensuel." At the age of fifty-eight he is still happily smashing false idols, happily still making films as he sees them.

When we went to see Buñuel in Mexico he had just finished his latest picture, *Nazarin*, produced by Barbachano (*Raices*, *Torero*). This film, his first since *Death in this Garden*, was adapted from a Perez Galdós novel published in 1880. It is the story of a young priest, Nazarin, who tries to live in imitation of Christ. He meets with prejudice, official pressures, and eventual disillusion. Buñuel has scrapped the biblical analogies of the novel. His interest lies in the character of the priest played by Francisco Rabal. Nazarin, as seen by Buñuel, is driven by a "perverse mysticism," nevertheless Nazarin is pure, he has humor and depth.

We asked if the film contained the anticlerical element so often found in Buñuel's work. He answered that *Nazarin* is not a "message film." Buñuel added that he feels a repugnance for messages of any kind. Still, he admits that the film does follow what he calls his "linea de siempre," that is, not necessarily anticlerical but generally antireligious. When asked

Luis Buñuel

for the origin of this tendency Buñuel answered simply: "For eight years I was a student of the Jesuits."

Buñuel's films are often noted for their violent impact. We asked him if violence in his films was not often gratuitous. Buñuel said that he first used violence as a surrealist weapon. "I myself do not enjoy slitting eyes open (as in the *Le Chien Andalou*). We did it only to offend the bourgeois. But by now violence and dreams have almost become personal conventions of mine, and therefore I try to get away from them."

"Can you tell us about other traits or mannerisms which characterize your work?"

"Well, for one thing, I love making fun of operas. In nearly all my films I insert a scene based on an opera. In *Los Olvidados* do you remember the scene where the boy is being brought back dead to his house and the mother passes by unaware that the body is that of her son? Well, that's from *Rigoletto*."

Buñuel told us that he had reached a stage where he felt himself incapable of making a strictly commercial picture. At one time he could make a film such as the *Gran Calavera*, a financial success, in order to get the money to make *Los Olvidados*. Now, however, when he thinks in terms of audience it consists of some fifteen people. "I make films for only a few friends," Buñuel said, "and of course to please myself."

"Do you think you could have made the same kind of uncompromising films anywhere else but in Mexico?"

"No, even in Europe I could never have made such films as *El*, *Los Olvidados*, or *Nazarin*. When *Los Olvidados* was shown in Cannes a famous French producer said to Marcel Carné: "This is the kind of film I wish you would make for me." To which Carné answered: "If I had come to you with the same script you would have turned me down flat." The producer laughingly agreed.

When filming Buñuel works very quickly. He finished *Nazarin* in twenty-five days. He has done five of his films in seventeen days. "On the set I improvise," he told us. "I know what I want in a scene but I'm not sure of how to get it until I see it before my eyes. I can't think in abstract terms. Technically, I am never looking for effect. I wish only to tell the story." Buñuel claims that out of three hundred set-ups in *Nazarin* two hundred and ninety-nine are dolly shots. "But," he adds, "you won't be aware of a single one." (Buñuel in most cases uses the dolly to readjust framing during a scene.)

We asked him if he cut his own pictures. "Yes, usually in three days. You see, the film is usually cut in my mind before I start filming. What's more, I don't shoot any coverage, what you call protection. I know when I want a close-up so why should I take a longer shot of the same thing."

"What about casting? Do you like working with stars?"

"No, I don't like working with stars. For casting I depend mostly on my intuition about the physical requirements of the role. In *Nazarin* I needed a dwarf. We screened eight of them, all nonactors. The one I chose on the basis of his physical appearance turned out to have extraordinary acting ability. However, for speaking parts I much prefer working with a professional actor rather than with a nonactor."

"Which of your films do you prefer?"

"I suppose, *L'Age d'Or*, *El*, and *Nazarin*."

"You write most of your own scenarios, don't you?"

"Yes, either alone or in collaboration with a writer."

"There seems to be a certain similarity in

subject matter between your *Nazarin* and Bresson's *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*. What did you think of Bresson's film?"

"I've never had a chance to see it. However I very much admire Bresson on the basis of *Un Condamné à Mort S'est Echappé*."

"Your opinion of Fellini?"

"A great talent in the service of moral putrefaction."

"What about Kubrick and *Paths of Glory*?"

"Magnificent. I am very anxious to see into what direction Kubrick will evolve in his next films."

"Now, what about your own plans. Weren't you supposed to do Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* in Hollywood?"

"Yes, we had Alec Guinness for the part. But even with Guinness the producer wasn't able to raise enough money. Right now I'm adapting a script from a novel by Henri Castelloux, *Fever Rises to El Pao*. It will be shot in February with Maria Félix and Gerard Philippe. I'm somewhat nervous because the subject lacks humor. Actually it is close to melodrama. It will be tough going, but maybe we will pull it through."

Los Olvidados

GEORGE BLUESTONE

Luigi Zampa

Luigi Zampa's reputation in the United States is based almost entirely on one film, *Vivere in Pace* (To Live in Peace), which appeared shortly after World War II in the ferment of the Italian film renaissance. Due in part to remarkable performance by Aldo Fabrizi and John Kitzmiller, the film has since earned a solid place for itself among the classics of neorealism. In Italy, Zampa's reputation is founded on a handful of additional films, notably *Angelina*, one of Anna Magnani's most impressive vehicles, and *Anni Difficili*. Since I had heard very little of Zampa in recent years, I found myself looking forward to our visit with considerable curiosity. I remembered that among devotees of serious cinema a few years ago, Zampa's name would be regularly included with De Sica and Rossellini as one of luminaries of Cine Città. When Vernon Jarratt's *The Italian Cinema* appeared in 1951, it was a shot from *Vivere in Pace* that adorned the dust jacket: the celebrated scene in which the American Negro and the German soldier roar in alcoholic revelry. But except for a badly dubbed version of Moravia's *Woman of Rome*, which Zampa adapted in 1954, little had been

Luigi Zampa

heard of him here. By 1956, having evolved a new kind of poetic film, Federico Fellini had become the most celebrated name in Italian cinema. What had happened to Zampa?

His apartment in the fashionable Parioli district of Rome gave us no clue. I had arrived with a friend, John Freccero, an American Italianist who had kindly consented to spare some time from his Renaissance researches to come along as interpreter. A maid ushered us into a comfortable sitting room, elegantly furnished by Italian standards. On a coffee table lay the usual copy of *Cinema Nuovo*, a biweekly with the format of *Look* and the critical quality of our best quarterlies. The irony of *Cinema Nuovo's* presence was to strike me later on when I remembered that its editor, Guido Aristarco, has been waging an influential rear guard action to save neo-realism, the very movement which catapulted Zampa to world-wide fame.

When Zampa appeared, to order drinks, I was prepared for his intensity. Zampa carries his forty-odd years very well, his short stature giving the impression of greater height. That afternoon he seemed troubled, uneasy, a certain edgy animation pervading his voice. When I put my first question, his answer came vehemently, as if too long a time had passed since someone had asked his opinion.

What I wasn't prepared for was Zampa's bitterness.

—Mr. Zampa, I've heard it said that neo-realism was an authentic movement right after the war, when it was responding to the brute problems of war and reconstruction, but that possibly it has exhausted itself. What do you think of this? What do Italian directors have to look forward to?

Right now, things are bad, bad, bad for us. After the war, we were left free to do as we pleased. That was a wonderful time for us. Italian artists had been restricted for over fifteen years, the time of the "white telephone" films when all we could make were empty comedies about well-to-do people. But now the censorship has come back. We have not one censor but two—the civil and the ecclesiastic. Between the two, it has become almost impossible to work freely. I envy directors in the United States.

But in the United States we still have our Production Code. Even independent producers must still abide by the Code or run the risk of being ruined financially.

Yes, yes, but remember, in the United States it is still possible to make films like *On the Waterfront* and *Blackboard Jungle*, both in some sense critical of American life. Films like that could not be made in Italy today. That is why you are getting so many harmless comedies like *Poveri ma Belli*. No, I do not exaggerate. We are as restricted today as we were under Fascism. Let me give you some examples.

A few years ago, I made *Anni Difficili*, a film which was very well received here and abroad. A few years later, I wanted to make a new film called *Anni Facili*. The story was to take place later in time, but it was not to be a sequel. All the two films really had in common was the resemblance in title. Someone in the civil censor's office must have remembered that *Anni Difficili* was critical of certain bureaucratic abuses in Italy. Now it is the custom here to submit our scripts to the censor's office for clearance in order to avoid difficulties later on. Normally, approval is a routine matter, but when I submitted the script for *Anni Facili*, I began getting what you call a run-around. Each

time I called the censor's office, I was told that the script was still being considered. This went on for months. You see, they were hoping that if production were delayed long enough, I would become discouraged. But I did not become discouraged.

I will give you another example. You know that Fellini is supposed to send *Cabiria* to the Cannes Film Festival. Well, I understand there is one scene where Cabiria, a prostitute, goes to a shrine to pray. Now it seems that someone in the office of the Vatican film censor has become troubled over this scene and has tried to prevent the film from being shown. When Fellini heard of this, he went to see Cardinal Siri of Genoa, to ask him if *he* found anything offensive in this scene. The Cardinal was not offended, and he used his good offices to have the film approved by the Vatican. Now I consider myself a good Catholic, but I am also anticlerical. I do not believe in this kind of interference with artists. It does seem that *Cabiria* will be going to Cannes, but only because of Fellini's good fortune.* You see, between the two censors, it is impossible to feel unrestricted today, and the censors are getting bolder. I have heard of a case where a local priest who objected to a film was able to get the only movie house in town shut down. And that is not the worst of it.

You've had other experiences?

Yes, there was something worse. In 1952, I made another film, *Processo alla Città* (City on Trial). The story takes place in Naples around 1905. It is based on an actual incident involving a judge who helped corrupt the entire city. Now you would think this story was far enough removed from contemporary events not to offend the government. The film won two of Italy's most important film prizes, and I was looking forward to a successful run abroad. As a matter of fact, I.F.E. (Italian Film Export) was to distribute it in the United States and I even went over to New York to supervise the opening. In the meantime, it seems that the Italian consul saw the film, thought it showed Italy in a bad light, so he refused to permit the distribution of the film. You remember when your ambassador, Mrs. Luce, prevented your *Blackboard Jungle* from being shown at Venice? Well, this is the same case. Only in reverse.

Where is the film now?

As far as I know, it is still sitting there. In the offices of I.F.E. in New York.†

How would you rate City on Trial *as an artistic work?*

It is my best film. (Zampa says this sadly, but not resignedly, and one senses his suppressed indignation.)

Have you ever thought of making films in America?

America? I would go there tomorrow if I could.

Then why haven't you gone?

I do not know anyone there.

Are you perhaps underestimating your reputation in America? Anyone who knows films remembers and admires Vivere in Pace. *One of our most literate directors, Joseph Mankiewicz, is here in Rome right now. Wouldn't it be possible to speak to him while he is here?*

I do not know him.

Do you have any ideas for the kind of film you would like to make, in case you should get a chance to work in the States?

Yes, I do. You see, when the exhibition of

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* Of course, at Cannes Giulietta Massina went on to win the best actress award for her performance in *Cabiria*. It may be instructive to refer to my interview with Fellini in *Film Culture*, October 1957. Fellini was evasive about the Cardinal Siri incident. Moreover, he tends to disagree in every respect with Zampa's views.

† The offices of I.F.E. inform me that a dubbed version of *Processo alla Città* has been "widely shown in this country from coast to coast" under the title *City Stands Trial*. However, I have found no reviews or literature in the trade papers. In any event, my correspondent at I.F.E. informs me that Zampa's film has not been shown here in its original Italian form. Another distributor, Favorite Films in Los Angeles, now handles the dubbed version.

Processo alla Città fell through, I had a lot of time on my hands. I spent many hours wandering around New York. It is a wonderful city, what I saw of it. One night, in a bar in Greenwich Village, I met an American photographer who showed me some stills of Italians in New York. I became tremendously excited, began thinking about the impact of New York on my countrymen over there. The generation that still remembers Italy is dying out, you know. I think there's a very good film to be made there. I think I could make it.

Coming back to what you were saying about the direction of Italian films. Apart from censorship, isn't it possible—now that the problems of war and the aftermath of war are no longer so immediate—that Italian film-makers are ready to try new techniques, new themes? Is the success of La Strada, *for example, purely a matter of censorship?*

Well, you must understand. I have always responded to social themes. All my films have been suggested by news events, by immediate problems. That's the way I work best. Now Fellini does not have my problem. He makes films about his childhood, his dreams. What I said before is still true—it has become impossible to make films of social criticism in Italy. In America, this is still possible.

What have you been doing, now that you aren't working in films?

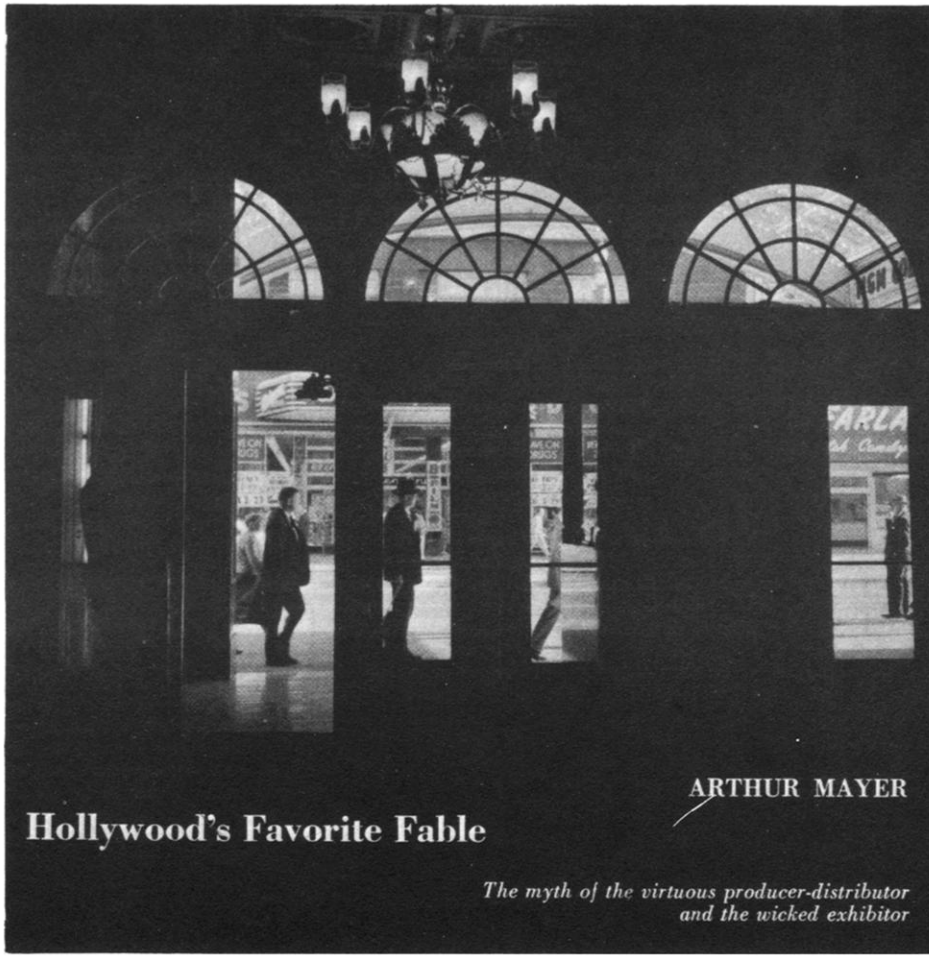
I am writing a novel. Yes, a novel. About a man who grows up during the period of Fascism, becomes a successful playwright, and later turns to film. Yes, you might say it is largely autobiographical. And I shall tell you—this is difficult for me. I am not a novelist by nature. But an artist must express himself. Now that films are censored, I write a novel. If they ever censor novels, I will take up—painting.

—A moment later, Zampa returned with a bulky set of page proofs. It was going to be a long book, over 500 pages. While he was showing us the proofs, Zampa's son, a good-looking boy about twelve or thirteen, came in and solemnly shook our hands. I noticed Zampa watching him with pride, affection, and some concern.

"And what will you call your novel?" I asked as Freccero and I were about to leave.

"Il Successo—The Success," Zampa answered, smiling sardonically.*

* *Il Successo* has since been published by Mondadori. As we go to press we learn that a new film by Zampa has been released. Titled *La Ragazza del Palio,* it stars Diana Dors and Vittorio Gassman.



ARTHUR MAYER

Hollywood's Favorite Fable

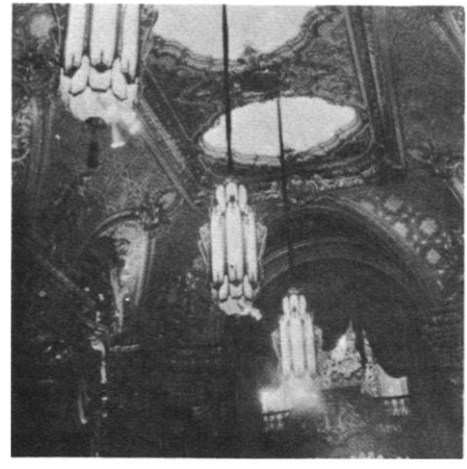
The myth of the virtuous producer-distributor and the wicked exhibitor

Once upon a time the only way to see a movie was to go into a theater. This meant passing by a little device known as a box-office; and through the box-office window passed every penny that was made in the movie business. For forty years, except for occasional crises, the pennies or their foreign equivalent continued to flood into Hollywood in an ever-increasing volume from the picture palaces and the shooting galleries of the world. And then suddenly in the late '40's television antennae raised their ugly heads on the housetops of the nation. A new way of seeing movies minus queues, parking, baby-sitters, above all minus box-office, had been born.

The picture industry staggered under this below-the-belt aerial assault. Weekly attendance declined from approximately eighty million in 1948 to forty-two million in 1957. Fifty-eight hundred conventional, four-walled theaters closed their doors and of the remaining 14,500 at least 50% are having trouble meeting rising payrolls, not to mention even more rapidly rising rentals for the limited number of desirable films. If the picture companies now proceed to sell their post-1948 negatives to television and if pay-television achieves its announced objectives of showing important new pictures first-run, movie theaters are about to fade into a nostalgic memory like buggies, moustache cups, and ladies' corsets.

The uninitiated might expect that under such perilous circumstances the exhibitors' anguished cries for help would meet with a ready response in the home offices and studios of the picture-makers. But this is actually far from the case. Most manufacturers regard the welfare and high standing of those who retail their product as a matter of urgent importance to their own success; no such community of interests is recognized in the movie world. If it is recognized it is only paid tongue-in-cheek lip service (if such a feat is conceivable) in ghost-written speeches of sales managers delivered at theater-owners' conventions.

Picture producers themselves almost without exception look upon exhibitors with unconcealed contempt and hostility. Not only studio executives but their bosses, the agents, bankers, and psychoanalysts who are the real rulers of Hollywood today, refer to the theater owners as parasites upon the motion picture body. Writers, directors, and performers not personally acquainted with a single exhibitor know that they are uncouth, stupid, or dishonest and probably an amalgam of all three infirmities.



Decline and fall? ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶

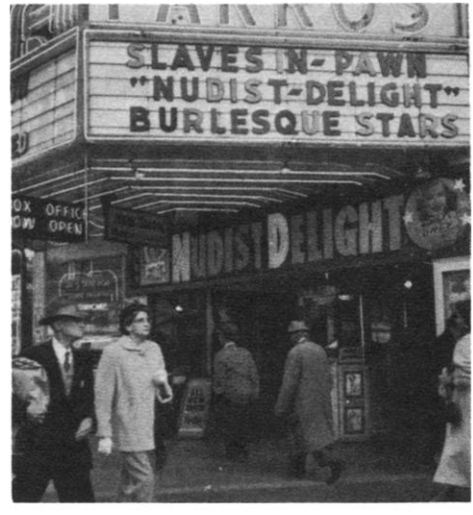
All of the ills of the industry—its excessive reliance on stars, its addiction to escapist formula stories, its fear of giving offense to any loud-mouthed pressure groups—are laid at the exhibitors' door. And what enrages Hollywood even more is that "these real estate operators who should be taking gum off carpets," as Joe Mankiewicz once politely phrased it, are able to "exploit the greatest concentration of talent in the entertainment world" and to "make a fantastic profit," leaving only a negligible portion for the creative, technical, and managerial brains of the industry. So widespread is this fable that when Paramount Pictures, Inc. was forced under the terms of the government Consent Decrees to divorce its theater holdings and divide its assets and liabilities supposedly equally between two new corporations, all of the guys with the inside dope unhesitatingly retained their interest in the new theater company in preference to the new production concern. Their stock today, in spite of American Broadcasting—Paramount's far-sighted in-

vestment in the television business, is selling at only $19. On the other hand, simple folk around the country who were not so well informed, stuck with the new Paramount Pictures Corporation. In spite of a production record redeemed by only a few smash box-office attractions and a series of up-to-now unrewarding efforts at diversification, their stock is worth 178% more than it was at the time of the split and it is currently quoted at $42.

The shuttering of small theaters and the consequent ruin of countless old showmen who invested their life savings in brick and mortar arouses in Hollywood's breasts (the male as well as the more-publicized female) no distress, sentimental or financial. On the contrary, I have frequently heard the brutal and less-than-entirely accurate comment that the elimination of small theaters is a blessing in no disguise: the cost of servicing them was greater than the revenue derived.

This feeling is so widespread that when a picture-maker encounters an exhibitor and his family vacationing at Palm Springs or Palm Beach, far from being gratified that his productions are contributing to the affluence of a customer, he indignantly wires the head of his sales department, complaining that his films are obviously being rented at too low a figure and that prices should be promptly increased.

Long before toll-TV has had any adequate public test of its popularity or even its feasibility, prominent industry figures have rushed into print to announce that it represents the wave—the airwave, I presume—of the future. So wide is the chasm that separates Main Street from Vine that men of long experience and reputed sagacity are prepared to discard prematurely the sole established channel of distribution and financing to gamble on a gadget whose box-office appeal must inevitably for a long time remain undeterminable and whose projection on small boxes in the home cannot escape being far inferior to what the wide screens of the theaters can provide.



All of this is the more amazing since the heads of the four most important picture-producing and distributing companies—Barney Balaban of Paramount, Spyros Skouras of 20th Century-Fox, Jack Warner of Warner Bros. and Joseph Vogel of MGM—are all former exhibitors. If Mr. Mankiewicz is to be relied upon, a training in gum removal is the first requisite for rising to the presidency of a motion picture producing company.

Of course, no one in his senses would maintain that the theater owners' record over the past sixty years has been an exemplary one. There have been far too many

chiselers in the ranks and too many so-called leaders interested in their own advancement rather than that of their fellow exhibitors. The physical condition of a large number of theaters has been permitted to deteriorate until today a shockingly high percentage are shabby and uninviting. Projection and sound are frequently thoroughly inadequate. Even more alarming has been the decline in the showmanship and ingenuity in the exploitation of pictures on which exhibitors used justly to pride themselves.

But any criticism of the business practices or judgments of theater owners comes with small grace from the men who sold their pre-1948 negatives to television for less than the collapse in their revenue which immediately ensued as a direct consequence of the havoc perpetrated on theater grosses. If there is any more effective way to ruin your own business, or more despicable, than to ruin the men who have for years been your customers, it has still to be devised. And even now as the more thoughtful leaders in the industry, men like Spyros Skouras, publicly admit that the sale of the old films was a blunder of colossal proportions, other picture-makers, eager for a fast buck—one of the jibes that so frequently is hurled at exhibitors—are proceeding to dispose of their post-1948 features to be distributed gratis by television in competition with the theaters which are still the sole source of industry revenue.

By the same token, Hollywood's indignation at the merchandising delinquencies of the theater owners would be more impressive if it did not emanate from the same sources who, confronted by the most devastating competitive situation in their history, proceeded with only two honorable exceptions to cut their advertising budgets to the bone and to dismember their publicity departments. As for the charge of questionable exhibitor business practices, I only regret that the worthy gentlemen who make these accusations have apparently never done business with some of the film salesmen I have encountered over the years.

These blasts and counter-blasts between producers and exhibitors have been going on since the 1890's when the word was first bruited about that there was gold galore not only in the distant Yukon but right under your nose in the penny arcades of Fourteenth Street, Market Street, and the Loop.

The men who promptly responded to that agreeable rumor were neither altruists nor amiable idealists. Some of them came from the less exalted echelons of show business—medicine men, carnival barkers, circus roustabouts, race-track touts. Others, many of foreign birth, were garment workers, furriers, small retailers—men of limited means

and education and unlimited ambitions. As the nickelodeons replaced the penny arcades, there was an opportunity for anyone who could by hook or crook, preferably crook, lay his hands on a projection machine and a few films; and that was what most of the now-revered founding fathers of the film industry were after.

It did not take them long—four years, to be accurate, after the first nickelodeon opened its doors in Pittsburgh in 1909—to run afoul of Edison, Vitagraph, Biograph, and the rest of the original producing companies who also controlled the camera and projection-equipment patents. After a brief period in which these outfits had indulged in cutthroat competition, they had reached the conclusion that the free enterprise system, however estimable in theory, was in the picture business a short cut to bankruptcy. Accordingly they pooled their patents and their talents in the General Film Company which distributed their joint product regardless of quality or lack thereof, at a standard and inflexible rate of ten cents a foot. To obtain his projection equipment and two weekly shows, every exhibitor was assessed a license fee of two dollars per week fifty-two weeks in a year, payable in advance. This levy alone netted General Films approximately $1,250,000 a year—not hay, as the saying went in those halcyon, pre-inflation days.

Against these exactions "the gypsies and bunko artists," as they were already referred to by the moguls and their satellites, rose in the righteous wrath of men who saw the chance of a lifetime rapidly receding. They bootlegged equipment and film and bribed or manhandled trust inspectors. Meanwhile, the unlicensed producers on whom they depended for pictures fled to the less assiduously policed portions of the country—Hollywood's remoteness from New York and its proximity to the Mexican border accounted far more than its sunlight for its magic transmutation into the film capital of the cinematic world.

So successful were the tactics of the rebels that long before the courts got around to declaring the General Film Company a conspiracy in restraint of trade, it had lost all power to enforce not only its license and fee regulations, but also its edicts that films should be restricted in length to one reel and that the names of the performers should be kept a strict secret. In this respect, as in so many others, the exhibitors were far better aware of public taste. They knew that their audiences were eager for feature-length films and that "Little Mary" and "Charlie" were personalities which, properly publicized, could become known and loved all over the world.

This failure by a few men to control the industry did not long deter their successors from making a similar effort. Amusingly enough, they were led by many of the same characters who had been loudest in their denunciation of the practices of "The Trust."

Famous Players-Lasky, Fox, Warner, and Loew started to acquire theaters in all parts of the country, though as the courts were later to point out, they acquired them mainly in different sections so as to compete as little as possible with each other. To obtain control of strategic houses (no longer converted storerooms but in many cases costly picture palaces stuffed with rococo, plaster and plush), they used peaceful persuasion whenever possible. When it was not, they organized so-called "dynamite squads" and "wrecking crews" calculated to make the most recalcitrant exhibitor discern the advantages inherent in selling his theater for considerably less than its actual value or even in many cases giving away a substantial interest in it in return for the assurance of peace, product, and protection.

Once a major company successfully penetrated into a town, it not only played its own pictures but, through reciprocal agreements with other producers, had the choice of their features, although some other local theater may have been showing them for years and had been prepared to meet any competitive offer to continue to do so. In this fashion, independent exhibitors were not only deprived of all desirable first-run product; they frequently could not show such pictures second-run until a full year had elapsed!

At this late date it may appear pointless to recall the abuses, thoroughly documented in the government equity suit against "Paramount *et al.*," to which the exhibitors were for many years subjected. They cannot, however, be completely overlooked if we are to understand the hostility and suspicion with which theater owners without exception regard picture producers and distributors and why at times they may appear to those unacquainted with the history of the industry unduly acrimonious and uncoöperative.

As early as 1921 they appealed to the Federal Trade Commission for protection against their most aggressive adversary, Famous Players-Lasky. The Commission, after a six-year delay, issued a "cease and desist" order. The five major producing companies, however, strongly entrenched in the business administrations of Coolidge and Harding, blithely ignored the order. They continued to acquire theaters until by 1945 they owned 70% of the first-run houses in the 92 largest cities and 60% in the communities with populations of 10–25,000. Long before this, however, the Department of Justice, under continued independent exhibitor prodding, brought suit to enjoin the majors from further violations of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. So skillful, however, were the legal procedures of the defendant companies that it required twenty-three years of litigation before the final suit was completed with a sweeping victory for the government, fully substantiating most of the exhibitor complaints. Indeed, no one today seriously questions the court's conclusion that "by fixed runs, clearances and prices, by pooling agreements and part ownerships

among the major defendants, and by cross-licensing" the producers had succeeded in establishing "a system in which competition was largely absent."

This is not the article in which to analyze the various expedients by which the court sought to re-establish a free market in the movie industry with a better adjusted balance of power between the makers of pictures and their customers. Touching only the high spots, the defendant producers were ordered to divest themselves of all their theater holdings; to discontinue block booking, the trade practice by which pictures were sold in groups rather than individually; and to rent pictures in competitive situations, not to a regular customer but to the highest bidder.

This effort to superimpose by legal fiat an entirely new structure on a functioning industry proved as disastrous as could have been anticipated. The producing companies, relieved of their theater investments, sold their old negatives down the river to television. Deprived of block booking, they lost all incentive to turn out films in sufficient volume to keep the theaters adequately supplied with product. And they supplied it not with the requisite regularity but only in the seasons or holiday weeks best calculated to return a high rental.

Competitive bidding functioned only in the case of the big blockbusters which it enabled the producers to sell at unprecedentedly high percentage terms. The theaters which succeeded in obtaining them were usually those best equipped by small investment and low overhead to make a high bid, but the worst equipped in standards of operation and physical equipment to cater to discriminating audiences. Few new, modern theaters are being constructed, for there is no inducement to potential builders to make the large outlays involved lacking some assurance that outstanding product will be available. All in all, the exhibitors might well say with Pyrrhus (at least those who have ever heard of the disgruntled King of Epirus): "One more such victory and I am undone."

The complete undoing of the exhibitors would cause no distress whatsoever to some leading industry figures. Sam Goldwyn, for one, is quite frank about it. His advocacy of the production of approximately only fifty pictures annually would mean the annihilation of at least 90% of the present theater owners.

But younger men like Robert Benjamin and Arthur Krim, whose courage and resourcefulness have resuscitated United Artists while their more powerful rivals were cautiously curtailing their commitments, are prepared to accept the exhibitor as a necessary evil with whom they must continue to cohabit, however uneasily, for many years to come. They, like the vast majority of those engaged in distribution and exhibition, realize that better relations between the makers and retailers of pictures are essential to a reasonably profitable industry and that to obtain such better relations some alleviation of the terms of the Consent Decrees imposed by the Department of Justice on the vanquished defendants must be obtained.

To encourage the production of more pictures, block booking, with a reasonable cancellation privilege designed to prevent a flood of bad pictures being forced down the public's throat, should again be permitted. Theater circuits, eager to produce pictures, should be allowed to do so. And if exhibitors can become producers, producers in all logic should be permitted again to become exhibitors. None of them, it can confidently be predicted, would care to operate more than a few strategically located theaters to

act as showcases and to publicize their new product efficiently. Such a re-entry into the field of exhibition might well make the majors a little more sympathetic with exhibitor problems, a little more concerned than they now are with orderly release schedules, and certainly less inclined to regard television as their salvation.

Competitive bidding should definitely be discontinued. It is unenforceable except for a limited number of smash box-office attractions. It leads to ruinous competition for these desirable pictures and this in turn forces admission prices so high that they are converting what was once America's favorite form of mass entertainment into a medium for a well-to-do clientele. We have found by experience that rightly or wrongly most exhibitors will not expend huge efforts to publicize films when only a small share of the increment remains in their bank accounts. It is probable that beyond a certain point high rentals are self-defeating and that lower and fairer prices might well lead to greater grosses.

Arbitration of all controversies between exhibitors and distributors, which has long been delayed by the distributors' unwillingness to include picture terms, should be promptly established. Certainly there are no issues at stake that cannot better be adjusted by impartial arbitrators than by those solely interested in protecting their own interests. Some system of graduated film rentals dependent upon the volume of business obtained in proportion to the usual theater gross is not impossible to work out if and when there is really a wish to do so on both sides of the bargaining table.

Frequent round-table meetings of exhibitors and producers should be held. COMPO (the Council of Motion Picture Organizations) once held such a conference and it proved a resounding success. The men who have to sell pictures to the public have much of value to impart, if given the opportunity, to the men who make them. The men who make them can explain some of their heartbreaking problems of story selection, casting, and union restrictions to the theater-owners. From such gatherings the truth may emerge that all the morons are not on Main Street nor all the villains on Vine.

It is not my impression that a sixty-year-old feud can be quickly and satisfactorily settled through the adoption of these suggestions. But I am convinced that their adoption would establish a more equitable system of trade practices than now exists in the motion-picture industry and would allow the men in that industry to spend less time fighting each other and more time fighting for their self-preservation. If the leaky raft on which they are now navigating such rough seas goes down, it will not make much difference except to future historians whether producers, distributors, or exhibitors were most to blame.

PHOTO CREDITS: Clemens Kalischer, Columbia Pictures, Continental Distributing Co., Edward Harrison Pictures, Films Inc., Luis Buñuel, MGM, Toho, Twentieth Century-Fox, United Artists, Warner Brothers.

ALBERT JOHNSON

The Films of Vincente Minnelli: Part I

Vincente Minnelli.

"You see, the search for an appropriate style is as valid for musicals as it is for drama. One has to tell a story in as mannered a way as possible—to create a little magic. It is not always easy to catch each delicate nuance, to be able to allow the characters to reveal themselves incongruously."

—VINCENTE MINNELLI, *in a speech in San Francisco*

A film director can become a modern Merlin if he wants to, creating in each film some additional aspect of a writer's dream-world. In the works directed over the past fifteen years by Vincente Minnelli, one can observe the most impressive experiments with the motion picture in such disparate, evanescent realms as the musical, popular comedy, and melodrama. In recent years, Minnelli's choice of film material has revealed, more than ever, his keen excitement over works that are completely apart from the genre which brought him initial fame—the musical. Like such predominantly musical personalities as Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, Minnel-

li's ventures into other forms of film entertainment have somewhat assuaged his eagerness to become solely involved with songs and dances. There is all the difference in the world between *Meet Me In St. Louis,* for instance, and *Gigi,* but before examining the films themselves, it is best to say at the outset that Vincente Minnelli represents the director-as-artist, working freely in a milieu that is too often accused of insensitivity. He belongs neither to the old school nor to the new, but remains in a special position of accomplishment, one which permits all spheres of the visual and decorative arts to embellish his films. A continental in manner, Minnelli's style is akin to Ophuls'; he is a master of the decorative image.

Even as a youth, in the Chicago of the 1920's, Minnelli displayed a flair for colorful rearrangement when he worked as a photographer's assistant. He had lived in a world of *carnevale* as a child, for his family comprised a troupe of traveling entertainers. Alert, inquisitive – excited by the world of the theater and the new "thing" called talking pictures that had gobbled up the audiences upon which the Minnelli Brothers Dramatic and Tent Shows depended, young Vincente's mind was fired by visions and ambitions. At the age of 16, such artistic ability was not unnoticed for long. The boy's knowledge about the sights that were meant to astonish entertainment-seekers bordered upon genius, and the Balaban and Katz theater chain hired Minnelli as an assistant stage manager and designer. The apprentice became master at a tender age.

The theater and cinema world in America during the late 1920's and throughout the 1930's seems to have been more conducive to the encouragement of vital and imaginative young artists and playwrights than it has been since. The musical comedy and revue, already made an enduring aspect of Americana by the productions of Ziegfeld, were also identified in the minds of theater-goers with opulent spectacle and masses of beautiful women. It was the time of George White's *Scandals* and Earl Carroll's *Vanities,* and there was a competitive spirit about the works of these epic impresarios. These men surrounded themselves with glitter, and their staffs consisted of the country's most ingenious artists and stage designers. Ziegfeld, White, and Carroll were constantly on the lookout for new talents, and word soon got around about some sets and costumes seen in a stage show out in Chicago. It was Earl Carroll who discovered young Minnelli first, and he commissioned the youth to design a 300-foot curtain for his 1931 edition of the *Vanities.* Minnelli's aptitude as a scenic designer then earned him a position at the Paramount Theater on Broadway, which for many years remained a center for popular New York stage shows accompanied by feature films. Minnelli's work at the Paramount was characterized by a precocious ability to create, with the utmost effectiveness, the costly type of tableaux already made popular by Ben Ali Haggin's arrangements of girls and glamor for Ziegfeld's revues. He succeeded in bringing artistic stature to this theater and one should recall that the entertainment combination of stage-and-screen shows also had great economic appeal during those depression years.

In 1932, Grace Moore requested that he design both scenery and costumes for *The Du-Barry,* a fustian operetta with music by Carl Millocker. Even such austere critics as George Jean Nathan and Brooks Atkinson were overwhelmed by the elements of visual brilliance involved in this production.

Minnelli was famous overnight. In 1933, he was appointed art director of the newly-opened Radio City Music Hall in Rockefeller Center, the most enormous showplace in the world. This was Radio City's great period, and its reputation today as a center for stage spectacle is founded upon the achievements of Minnelli and his associates in the years 1933–1935. He was able to utilize several fully equipped stages and a horde of singers and dancers; his scenic experience during this period is definitely discernible in certain sequences of his later films.

Minnelli returned to Broadway and became director-designer for two of its greatest revues, "At Home Abroad" (1935) and "The Show Is On" (1936), and he first arrived in Hollywood in 1937, at the invitation of Paramount. This

was during Paramount's glossy period of musicals when, aiming to satisfy the public's taste for lavishness, all sorts of musical extravaganzas were before the cameras, including all-star revues like *Murder at the Vanities, The Big Broadcast* and *Artists and Models.* After eight months in the strangely efficient, big-business, production-line atmosphere of motion picture making, Minnelli fled back to Broadway. Minnelli had been quietly able to control his productions in New York; in Hollywood he found that he was merely one of many cooks in the preparation of an overrich celluloid melange of white feathers, white furniture, and swing music.

It was not until 1940 that he was convinced that he should give Hollywood another chance; and perhaps it was easier then, for his show, *Very Warm for May* (1939) had been very coldly received by the critics. It was producer Arthur Freed who got Minnelli to return west, and for two years Freed indoctrinated the skeptical Minnelli into the ways of film-making, allowing him to become familiar with various departments until, in 1942, Minnelli was assigned to direct his first picture, *Cabin in the Sky.*

The film was released in 1943, without much fanfare, and it took American audiences by surprise. Wartime austerity had become discouragingly permanent, and this screen fantasy was wholeheartedly accepted as a blessed escape from reality. Ethel Waters (who had worked with Minnelli before in *At Home Abroad*) was asked to recreate her stage performance in *Cabin in the Sky,* and the remainder of the all-Negro cast was chosen with excellent judgment, including Eddie "Rochester" Anderson as the lovable, philanderous "Little Joe" and Lena Horne (in her screen debut) as the devil's disciple, "Georgia Brown."

Top: CABIN IN THE SKY: *John W. Sublette and Ethel Waters.*
Center: I DOOD IT: *Red Skelton and Eleanor Powell.*

Bottom: MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS: *Darryl Hickman and Margaret O'Brien.*

Minnelli was able to bring out the utmost in imaginative charm of locale, even in such an unlovely place as a deep South slum quarter. He immersed the black-and-white barriers of that locale in a warm solution of pink-brown "sepia-color," and created a strangely unique Afro-American pastorale. Oddly enough, the film is the most acceptable all-Negro musical ever made, despite its adherence to stereotypes, for the entire business is stylized. Minnelli sidestepped the censors, who frowned upon the film's potential usage of the word "Hell," or the depiction of it. The word, "Hades" was used instead, and he inserted a sequence filled with steam vapors in which thirty male dancers in mottled union suits and females in hula skirts and oil-cloth brassieres writhed sinuously among some rocklike cliffs. One did not need to mention the name of such a place, and Lucifer's air-conditioned office was suspiciously like the inner sanctum of an MGM studio executive.

The performance of Ethel Waters was both a musical and dramatic achievement. Her rendition of a song written for the film by Harold Arlen, "Happiness is a Thing Called Joe," is one of the film's most memorable interludes and in the "Honey in the Honeycomb" number, Lena Horne and Waters transformed a piney-woods ginmill into a bistro replete with Harlem glamor at its most seductive. The emergence of Lena Horne as "la belle exotique" in so many MGM musicals is directly attributable to her debut in this film, and it was her ability to combine her exoticism with a quality of mockery that saved the character of Georgia Brown from becoming distasteful. She was obviously not what she pretended to be, and Minnelli's direction skillfully brought out the pathetic inability of Little Joe to resist this unearthly siren—especially in the duet, "That Ole Debbil Consequence." *Cabin in the Sky* was a very auspicious beginning for Minnelli as a film director, and it is bewildering to realize that it has not been revived for a decade in this country, despite its excellences.

Minnelli's next assignment was Red Skelton's film musical, *I Dood It* (1943). It was a potboiler, quickly made for the comedian's eager audiences, when Skelton was at the peak of his career. But Minnelli recognized this clown's predominant talent for mimicry and pantomime, and the two hilarious mimes performed by Skelton were on a level with Chaplin at his best. One of them, involving Eleanor Powell (she is completely inebriated, and Skelton tries to put her to bed) is still one of the funniest sequences in American film comedy. When seen today, *I Dood It* is full of surprising vitality and Eleanor Powell's flair for comedy suggests acting ability completely overlooked during most of her dancing career.

The "Jericho" number, including a rousing pianistic display by Hazel Scott, is the most strikingly bizarre moment in the picture. Lena Horne, splendidly gowned, is accompanied by a chorus of young Negroes in formal evening attire; they all appear backstage to rehearse a number. It is night, and the theater is bare and underlit; the singers are photographed in half-tilted images, sharply cut together, each shot building to revivalist intensity, and the men sway and shout around Horne in this surrealistically shadowy world. This is cinematic style in the twenties' early-talkies tradition of "jazz mania," and it is probably the closest many of us can come to the fascinating theater era of Florence Mills.

The film left one totally unprepared for *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), which has remained Minnelli's masterpiece in the lyrical evocation of an era. It is filled with an excitement that appears to have swept through MGM during the war; the film's director, cast, and technicians seem to have given to *Meet Me in St. Louis* a dedication, humor and charm that only a labor of love can evoke. To a public that was not quite prepared to accept Judy Garland as an adult, she suddenly became one, and the songs by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane were placed at her disposal like gifts before a shrine. No one else has ever been able to sing these songs as well. Judy Garland created a stylized portrayal of American adolescence that remains an object lesson in musical-comedy performance, a blend of the real and the idealized. Her singing of "The Trolley Song" is still a captivating romp,

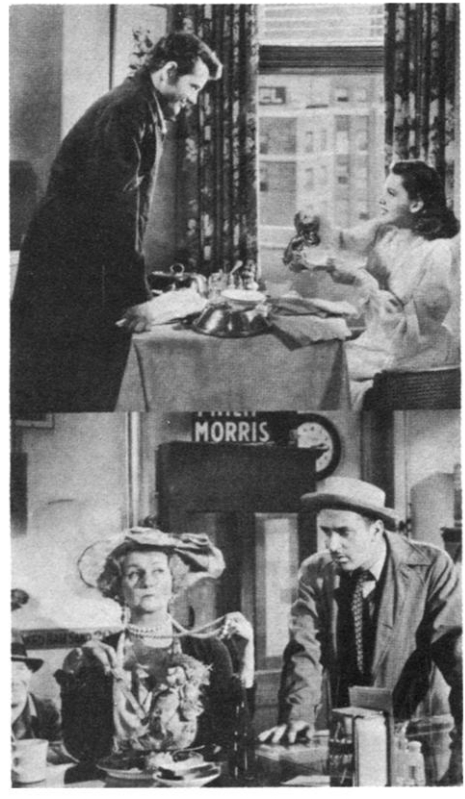
superbly arranged, but in "The Boy Next Door" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," she made her Missouri teenager as mature as Duse. A few years ago, during an informal talk, Minnelli said that *Meet Me in St. Louis* was "full of inconsistencies of plot" and that the real reason why he wanted to do the picture in the first place was the Halloween sequence. The first image, entirely made of the alchemy of witchcraft, with its spectacle of small children costumed in absurd remnants of adult clothing, leaps from the screen with an authenticity so embroiled with nostalgia and personal reminiscence that it all becomes Americana, somehow, and the dialogue rings true. "When people open the door, don't throw too much flour!" Mary Astor warns Margaret O'Brien, as Tootie, the youngest of the film's memorable quartet of daughters (Lucile Bremer, Garland, Joan Carroll, and O'Brien).

The excitement and terror of the night confront the child as she walks toward a street bonfire her friends have built. The leaves of Halloween blow all about her, and the fake long nose and glasses she wears make her resemble a delightful troll. "Somebody take the Brockhoffs!" is the fearful cry, and, of course, Tootie bravely accepts the challenge.

Eyes wide with horror, she walks off alone. When a horse suddenly neighs, she is livid with fear. Tootie peers inside the desolate-looking Brockhoff mansion. Dark-haired Mrs. Brockhoff, her bearded husband and their slumbering bulldog are like three symbols of evil by the hearthside. When the man answers the doorbell, the fear-stricken Tootie looks courageously up at him and shouts: "I hate you, Mr. Brockhoff!" and throws the flour into his face.

After the shock of the moment, the man half-smiles at the child's hastily retreating figure and wipes his forehead, as his bulldog calmly licks the flour. The camera quickly cuts back to Tootie in full flight, with stormy music urging her back to the safe companionship of her playmates. Half-fainting and breathless, she tells them: "I killed him!" And in almost Walpurgian rapture, these October goblins chant, "Tootie killed the Brockhoffs! She's the most horrible!" Since this tribute raises Tootie to the highest pinnacle of her young life, she soon begins to chant along with them, incredulous at first, but watching the world take on new proportions as she begins to believe what all are yelling. "I'm the most horrible!" she screams jubilantly. "I'm the most horrible!" and the sequence ends.

Perhaps too much emphasis cannot be placed upon the influence of the war era upon Minnelli's early films, for the elements of its atmosphere were more obvious in *The Clock* (1944). It was



THE CLOCK:
Lovers in pantomime: Robert Walker and Judy Garland.
The comic grotesque: Moyna Magill and Keenan Wynn.

the director's first non-musical, a simple love story about a soldier and his girl in New York City. This theme had become the major literary cliché of the home front, but Minnelli's desire was to make his young couple symbolic of all wartime lovers, forced to give meaning to their relationship even when apart. Behind the action lingers the half-shadow of death. It was a new experience for Minnelli, this little city-drama, and he has said that he was not the original director, but was given liberty to improvise after his assignment to the picture.

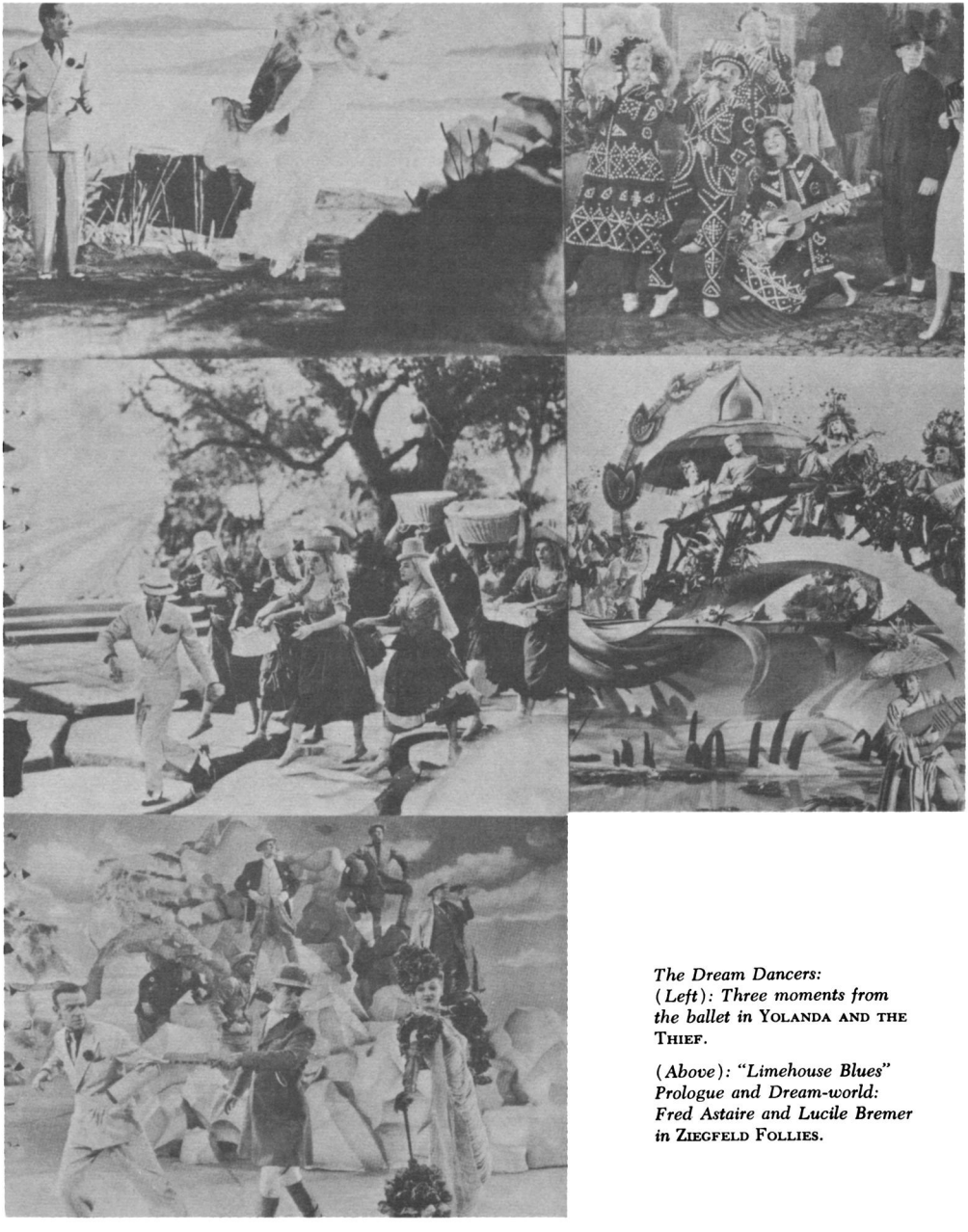
Whether his cast had already been set up for him, one does not know, but it is known that Judy Garland was determined to develop herself as a straight dramatic actress, and that Robert Walker was not only the leading juvenile of that era, but also *the* symbol of the American G.I. Both performers had very strong screen personalities that defied the anonymity which their roles seemed to demand from them. Walker had less difficulty in this sphere, because the "nice guy" quality was his special forte: he *was* G.I. Joe. But it was difficult to think of a girl with Garland's personality being overlooked in the manswarm of the city.

What impresses one most about *The Clock* today are the intimate insights into the life of New York City itself, its wartime aura and the final sequences showing the lovers' brief hotel honeymoon and farewell in Grand Central Station. Minnelli wanted to make New York a character, too, with a gallery of people that could not exist elsewhere. He put into the film everything that he could remember about New York, constantly improvising and changing bits of sequences in order to include some sudden recollection. The comic-grotesque elements of characterization are beautifully handled by the eccentric milkman (James Gleason), an ebullient night owl (Keenan Wynn) and an elegant harridan who minces her food with precise gestures at a lunch counter (Moyna Magill).

Carefully woven into a romantic city-legend of the forties are such images as the drab civil ceremony, with dusty potted palms and the roar of the elevated drowning out the words of the ritual; the couple's search for privacy in a cafeteria, where an eavesdropper listens to their conversation, while gobbling his pie à la mode; and the sequence in which the newlyweds enter a cathedral, and repeat their marriage vows to one another. The sequence in the hotel bedroom is a detailed, intimate vignette of such actions as lighting "the first pre-breakfast cigarette" and drinking "the first cup of morning coffee together." Minnelli had found this sequence difficult to film convincingly, and decided to cut out all dialogue and to do the entire scene in pantomime. The silence is not unnatural, and the sequence ends before one becomes convinced that some word should be spoken.

In the turmoil of Grand Central Station the couple say good-bye very simply and quickly, and then the camera rises away from Garland, slowly walking ahead into the anonymity of the crowded terminal; the shot seems to expand more and more until it constitutes a tragic panorama of wartime humanity.

Yolanda and the Thief (1945) was actually the first film of the decade to revive interest in modern ballet for musicals. Arthur Freed and Minnelli, ever ready for a new genre, wanted to create something specifically in cinematic terms, and *Yolanda and the Thief* represents, to a very great degree, the producer's interest in merging the elements of modern art, dance, and photography with some revolutionary lyrical effect—an interest which was to result in *An American in Paris*. Minnelli of course, was attracted by the possibilities offered in Ludwig Bemelmans' fantasy, in spite of its insane plot (Fred Astaire was a gambler who managed to convince Lucile Bremer that he was her guardian angel). The director asked costumer Irene Sharaff to give the film something of the quality of Bemelmans' book and drawings. The colors all seem to be out of a child's paint box, and Minnelli calls the picture a kind of "South American baroque." Unfortunately, the film was a commercial failure. The plot was astoundingly fey for servicemen audiences, and perhaps the entire concept was too sophisticated as mere escapism for the average film goer. Since the film has never been revived, it is difficult to say what its effect would



The Dream Dancers:
(Left): Three moments from the ballet in YOLANDA AND THE THIEF.

(Above): "Limehouse Blues" Prologue and Dream-world: Fred Astaire and Lucile Bremer in ZIEGFELD FOLLIES.

ZIEGFELD FOLLIES: *Lucille Ball.*
UNDERCURRENT: *Robert Taylor and Katharine Hepburn.*
THE PIRATE: *Gene Kelly and Judy Garland.*

be today, but one cannot help conjecturing that *Yolanda and the Thief* was ahead of its time.

As complete fantasy, it has a charm unequalled by any other musical, although the film suffers from too little dancing, and both Astaire and Bremer seem a bit embarrassed by their roles. The most attractive sequences in *Yolanda and the Thief* are the scintillating "Coffee Time" number, a piece of work so rhythmic and dazzling to the eye that one is left gasping with wonder, and the dream-ballet, choreographed by Eugene Loring.

It is through the device of dreams that the cinema finds its most facile route to dancing, and the opening moments of the dream-ballet are not revealed to be fantasy at all until Astaire (a perennial man in the white flannel suit) stops to light a stranger's cigarette and discovers the man to have an alarming number of arms and hands, each holding an unlit cigarette. The settings, by Jack Martin Smith, are whimsical and striking. The last section of the ballet, though rather disorganized, has a sharp image in which "women from the race tracks" in stylized 1912 costumes pull Astaire to a setting where one sees, in a vivid moment, a group of touts and jockeys with binoculars poised astride some oddly shaped rocks. The image is marvelously suggestive of an Edwardian twilight at Ascot.

It was inevitable that Vincente Minnelli would create a musical revue for the screen, and in 1945, he directed *Ziegfeld Follies.* This film is the revue to end all film revues, with a cast assembled from the wealth of talent at MGM during this period. The director combined the pace of Broadway with the technical ingenuity of Hollywood, and *Ziegfeld Follies,* particularly its musical numbers, has become one of the major studies for devotees of lyric theater. There

are too many excellences about the film for adequate discussion here, but the opening number, a burst of pink and white splendor, is stunningly mounted and, as performed by Fred Astaire, Lucille Ball and a score of dancers, it has the excitement and energy of an opening night on Broadway. This sequence is done in super-Minnellied style, like the tropical barroom in the *Love* number from the same film. One is overwhelmed by olive-skinned beauties of fiery temperament, menacing Lascars and Negroes, cigarette smoke, beaded curtains, hothouse flowers and cockatoos, and it was a tribute to Lena Horne's artistry that she was able to dominate all these. An element of high satire emerges brilliantly in "A Great Lady Meets the Press," when Judy Garland creates one of her finest moments in the cinema, singing and dancing in a parody called "Madame Crematon."

But in the center of the film stands its masterwork: Eugene Loring's dance story to "Limehouse Blues." Minnelli found the dream sequence already choreographed before he was assigned to the picture, and he thought the dance had little in common with the song. In order to have any integration of mood and choreography, he made the sequence follow the mood of the song, and decided to film a prologue and epilogue to Loring's dream-dance, very much in the pattern of a silent movie. The sets for these prologue-epilogue scenes were those used for MGM's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Minnelli limited the use of color in these sections to black, brown, and yellow. The entire feeling of the number is theatrical and it is an imaginative period-piece.

From the very first images, a marvelous mood is created: A sailor leans against a gaslit wharf; a Chinese ancient with an opium pipe; flossy streetwalkers in feather boas; and under it all, the muted stirrings of a great orchestra, hinting at the sad thrills of this mythical Limehouse. From somewhere, the faint wail of a singer (Pamela Britton) is heard, starting the verse of the blues. A passing street vendor wheels an old-fashioned gramophone playing loudly "'E pinched me!" a rowdy song from an old Binnie Barnes movie. Some aristocrats in Edwardian dress emerge from a basement tavern, jostling past Fred Astaire in the guise of a Chinese wanderer. In black, with slouch hat and slippered feet, he is a more angular, latter-day Barthelmess, with a touch of Harlequin in his posture. Some jaunty buskers, in traditional garb, prance about with tambourines, singing "Wot 'Cher" with music-hall abandonment, making Astaire seem more forlorn by contrast.

The fusion of music here is thrillingly atmospheric and entirely unreal: the harsh gramophone, the singer, the cries of the street entertainers, and the still-dormant orchestra blend in a peculiar harmony of artificial perfection: half-Dickens, half-Daumier, with a trace of Phiz. Lucile Bremer, in a lemon-yellow dress, quite modern in appearance, is also from some nonexistent world of inscrutable Eurasians.

The singer begins the haunting chorus of "Limehouse Blues," and both Astaire and Bremer move, in seemingly unconscious synchronization, to the cadences of the music; they are dancing, actually. The voice of the singer seems to control them both, for each pause and subtle turn of their figures rests upon the falling notes of the song, as serpents before a flute. The plot moves quickly, almost before one has a chance to adjust to melodrama. A merchant accosts Bremer, offering his arm, but she moves away to admire a fan in the window of a curio shop. Pricing it, she finds that it is too expensive, and walks on, while Astaire, looking longingly at the fan, is accidentally shot in an exchange of gunfire between some thieves and policemen. As he begins to lose consciousness, the prologue leads into the main part of the number, an elaborate, dream-underworld garden of blue-and-gold "chinoiserie," first seen in semi-darkness, with Astaire weaving desperately through a cluster of fans toward an elusive hand clutching the shop-window fan. The subdued musical background of harps and strings rises to a climax with lights sweeping brightly over the set, revealing a scene of breathtaking scope and color—filled with exotically costumed creatures, half-floral with their spangled, leaflike arms and spiral headdresses, all statuesquely attitudinized like temple gods.

It is a superb illustration, with Astaire and Bremer in scarlet garments, responding precisely to their choreographic timing, snapping and spiraling some large fans to quickening fanfares. But all this richness of sound and visions soon fades into the epilogue. Astaire dies, after Bremer (now in the clutches of the merchant) picks the crushed fan from his hand, then drops it in disgust. She walks away with her benefactor, laughing. The song's last strains are heard again from the tavern, and a sailor and policeman are the last images seen through the gust of fog and music. The entire sequence remains the most exquisite revue number ever filmed in the history of screen musicals.

It is conceivable that after the exhausting challenges of *Yolanda and the Thief* and *Ziegfeld Follies*, Minnelli first felt the desire to vary the types of films he wished to work with. A concern for character development and creation of mood was only sharpened by his experiences with *The Clock*. Minnelli's venture into mystery-melodrama, *Undercurrent* (1946), was not an outstanding film, but it exhibited his interest in psychopathology (later treated in his more notable film, *The Cobweb*.) But Katharine Hepburn and Robert Taylor did not belong in such an environment, though their portrayals were far from "bloodless." The two performers were so strongly typed as "sensible" people that mere stylized Hitchcock, with Taylor as a maniacal murderer, did not quite come off. However, *Undercurrent* is never dull. The use of Brahms' Third Symphony (the third movement) as a leitmotif, sets a mood of elegant melancholia; the mordant portrayal given by Robert Mitchum is one of his most provocative, and the suspenseful attempts made upon Hepburn's life during the film are quite absorbing. The climax, conceived in photographic terms (Taylor is crushed to death by Hepburn's horse), is an act of violence as impressive visually as its literary influences from Lawrence or Jeffers. *Undercurrent* was popular melodrama, made by the reputations of its stars: Hepburn as comedienne of sophisticated comedy, and Taylor, the romantic idol, making his first post-war appearance. Both behaved "incongruously" in this film, but, at the time, most people were unaware of Minnelli's search for an appropriate style in drama.

The Pirate (1947), adapted from S.N. Behrman's comedy, was also disappointing. The magical control of a Lunt and Fontanne over the frothy dialogue and colorful environment of this West Indian baroque was lost upon the screen. Physically, the production was stunning, but the acting was strangely uninspired. Cole Porter's lyrical score had only two songs suited to Judy Garland's vocal eccentricities ("Mack the Black" and "Be a Clown"). During the early portion of the film, one expected better things to come, but finally, only Gene Kelly's first dance ("Niña") was memorable. Kelly was allowed to dominate the film, performing two other dances as well; one, an acrobatic number with the Nicholas Brothers, and a lavish black-and-red "dream ballet" evoking the pirate as a figure of danger. This ballet is accompanied by a thunderous musical arrangement, but it amounts to nothing of consequence. It is a piece of cinema trickery that attempts to build the gymnastics into a big ballet, yet there is an inescapable feeling of torpor overhanging the entire business. One suspects that Garland's nervous intensity, quite noticeable in *The Pirate*, was an indication of her subsequent illness, and she was given very little to do in the picture. Spectators were led to expect at least one dance utilizing the two principals, and emotional preparation for dance is actually built up when Garland sings "Love of My Life," but such actions never occur. Thus, a plethora of talk and nonlyrical behavior spoiled the effectiveness of the entire film. *The Pirate* does exhibit Minnelli's awareness of grandeur in beautiful backgrounds, and the initial appearance of Garland in the film is like a crisp, windswept watercolor by Winslow Homer. She stands near the seawall, holding a large white hat against her head, and in that instant, the Caribbean takes on a wondrousness of atmosphere, uncluttered and

The ball sequence: Jennifer Jones in MADAME BOVARY.

realistically "felt" by the spectator. It is just for a few seconds, however, because the sequence soon falls into slapstick. The "Be a Clown" number, one of the joys of the film, gave Garland a chance to display a flair for vaudeville humor (later developed in *Easter Parade*), and Kelly's exposure to the circus and commedia dell'arte styles in this picture were later influences upon his own direction in the first episode of *Invitation to the Dance*.

Minnelli's search for style was more successful in *Madame Bovary* (1948), another venture into the realm of non-musical material. Although Robert Ardrey's screenplay was quite faithful to the novel, Jennifer Jones' performance as Emma was geared toward creating pathos for the tragic heroine rather than irony, and much of the sardonic denunciation of romanticism is extracted in *effect* because of the style in which the film is made. Peculiarly enough, *Madame Bovary* became a *defense* of the romantic view of life. Minnelli tried to give the story dramatic perspective by adding a prologue and epilogue portraying Gustave Flaubert (James Mason) on trial, defending his novel against charges of immorality. But this film version of the literary work is primarily a romance in the strictest definition, despite its tragic ending. The village of Yonville is very attractive, and as Emma recounts her supposedly dull existence there, the townspeople going about their routine tasks are shown in the most picturesque manner. Even the country crudity of Emma and Charles' wedding has the robust movement and interest of a Breughel. The middle-class appear really rather pleasant, so that Emma's chafing restlessness and quest for luxury seems natural only because a spectator is convinced by Jennifer Jones' beauty, upon which Minnelli chiefly relies for Emma Bovary's incongruity. She is a physical misfit rather than a psychological one. Perhaps because of this, the ball sequence in *Madame Bovary* is the most intriguing in the film, and the most poetic. Robert Planck's camerawork is impressive. The first view of Emma entering the ballroom, in a gown

far too magnificent for the locale, casts a Hollywoodian visual polish over Yonville's aristocrats. Rodolphe (Louis Jourdan) engages Emma in a waltz. The camera swirls with the dancers, each image flashing by through Emma's eyes, revolving more swiftly with the dancers' strides, and Miklos Rosza's music is reminiscent of Ravel's "La Valse." The sequence rises to a climax with a grandiose cry from the elderly nobleman: "The ladies are growing faint! Break the windows!" and in perfect synchronization to the waltz measures, a retinue of liveried servants smash gilt chairs through the tall, glass-paneled doors. Curtains blow upward into the chandeliered ballroom and breezes sweep through. The sequence is endowed with an enchantment that the viewer responds to without question. When her drunken husband (Van Heflin) appears, calling Emma's name and weaving his way roughly across the dance floor toward her, she runs out of the chateau, and the bleakness of the next scene adds a striking contrast to the dream-ball one has just witnessed.

Wedding menace: Melville Cooper and Spencer Tracy in FATHER OF THE BRIDE.

Emma sits silently beside her shame-faced spouse in a trundling carriage. A swift close-up of her face shows her brimming eyes, retaining some of the past sparkle in the darkness. It is beautifully Flaubertian, this moment—and perhaps Minnelli had found here the appropriate style he sought.

Of the three films directed in 1950, after a year's rest, Minnelli's career benefited most by the famous musical, *An American in Paris.* The other two films, *Father of the Bride* and *Father's Little Dividend,* were light, domestic comedies, unpretentious and, for the most part, undistinguished. The casts and plots were almost identical, concerning the tribulations of an American lawyer in suburbia (Spencer Tracy) while undergoing the ritual of his daughter's lavish marriage and her subsequent pregnancy. As portraits of American society, the films are only half-true, but the subject was comfortably attractive, like the daughter (Elizabeth Taylor), and both films were extremely well received, especially *Father of the Bride.* Its best moment occurs when Spencer Tracy dreams of chaos descending upon him during his daughter's wedding ceremony. It borders upon slapstick; the horror of being struck to the floor, or tearing one's trousers in front of the shocked congregation, or having the floor turn to rubber quite suddenly. These things provoked laughter, and were familiar enough, perhaps, to spell commercial success.

An American in Paris is filled with the old exuberance, and it is also filled with the lyric zest and dynamic creativity of the dancer-actor Gene Kelly. Fortunately, Minnelli found the excitement of Kelly quite contagious. Of course, Arthur Freed spurred them on, and the result is musical history. Kelly's individual dances are supreme examples of lyric theater, from the sidewalk playfulness of "I Got Rhythm" sung with the French children, to the wild abandon of "Tra La La," or the ritual love-dance by the Seine with Leslie Caron. The charm of the "By Strauss" number, danced by Kelly and elderly

Mary Young, still captivates an audience completely, and the huge ballet, an amalgam of French impressionist art, dance, and music, created a sensation. Kelly's choreography was conceived in cinematic terms, and Minnelli has said that the film was far along before any clear ideas were worked out for the ballet. Then, quite suddenly, one of the players (Nina Foch) contracted chicken pox and shooting was suspended for three days. Along with Kelly and Irene Sharaff, Minnelli worked out the plan for the entire dance in this period of time. Minnelli felt that a story in the ballet would be wrong, and finally, Alan Jay Lerner's screenplay worked in a series of associations which maintained the spirit of Gershwin's Paris.

When viewing the *American in Paris* ballet again, one still experiences some of the surprise of the first time. There is the sketch lying among the confetti, and the red rose evolving in successive splashes of color. It is all impressive because of the sumptuous richness of its visions, and the world created in the ballet is explicitly nostalgic, though the Henri Rousseau section, which gives Kelly and Caron an opportunity to sparkle, has a Cohanesque charm, firmly emphasizing the merriment associated with expatriate Yankees in France. The interpolated music in this section (by Johnny Green) is a brilliant touch; it fits into the suite with such ease that it is disconcerting to realize that it is not Gershwin. The Toulouse-Lautrec section, in which characters from paintings and drawings are reproduced, deserves to be seen several times. The pace of the ballet is American, though the flavor is French, and the eye is besieged almost too swiftly to fully capture all the nauances of color, design, and action. The ballet is *dazzling*; perhaps this is the only way to describe its effect. It is, in many ways, not a ballet, but a sort of choreographic essay, undisciplined, and savagely insistent that the spectator should at some point gasp in amazement at the technical achievements. The dancers

French Impressionism and the dance: Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron in the Toulouse-Lautrec sections of the ballet from AN AMERICAN IN PARIS.

Auto hysteria: Lana Turner in THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL.

were able to run about with complete freedom in Kelly's sprawling dance patterns, and all of the dancing in this Paris was "on the run." The dreams in the *American in Paris* ballet are such stuff as Hollywood is made on; the witchery is of a frantic nature. The transition back to the shot of Kelly upon a balcony, pensively overlooking Paris in the midst of the "black and white" costume ball, is just a momentary respite before the happy ending. But the reunion of two lovers was pretty lackluster after the dance images preceding it. Still caught by the splendor of carnival and jubilation in the ballet, one had a tendency to look downward, half-expecting to see confetti on the floor of the theater.

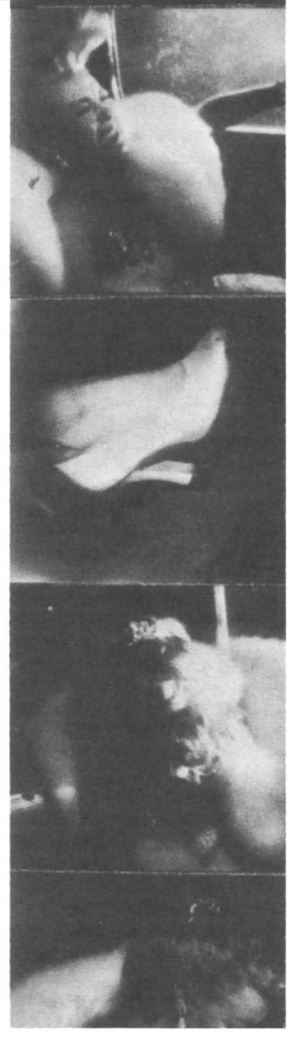
Minnelli retired from film work for a complete year after *An American in Paris*. His desire to experiment with other forms of screen material, especially drama or light comedy, seemed to have possessed his mind and spirit, because his later work in musicals had little of the vigor of the Gershwin escapade. He was drawn toward deeper studies of the American social scene, and the use of satire in describing them.

In 1952, he directed three films. The first, *Mademoiselle,* was the second section of a package-film entitled *The Story of Three Loves*. It was sandwiched-in between two heavier episodes, and here, Minnelli made a sly fairy tale about an adolescent (Ricky Nelson) who daydreams about his pretty governess (Leslie Caron), who in turn daydreams about a make-believe lover (Farley Granger). Through the machinations of a magical matriarch (Ethel Barrymore), the adolescent is transformed into the lover, with predictable results. It was charming fluff, tinted with color and supernatural subtleties.

The Bad and the Beautiful is Vincente Minnelli's most brilliant piece of drama-direction. The story of an ambitious film-maker, Jonathan Shields (Kirk Douglas), the film followed the influence of *Sunset Boulevard* in Hollywoodian self-analysis. With producer John Houseman, Minnelli created a slickly mounted film, highly sophisticated and perceptive in its treatment of epic heeldom. The performances by Lana Turner, Dick Powell, and Gloria Grahame were excellent, and Gilbert Roland, the perennial Latin lover, came back into popularity because of his work in this film. *The Bad and the Beautiful* is tightly woven together with pieces of movieland authenticity. Minnelli's bits of recollection are utilized as satire, especially in his treatment of the characters portrayed by Roland and Grahame. There is, for instance, one brief sequence showing a Beverly Hills party. Conversations are cut across one another, with laughter and shouting intermingled. The camera swings over the guests, glancing here and there, pausing long enough for one to catch a few phrases, then moves on. A voice is heard singing plaintively, and one sees a girl (Peggy King) sitting on a piano stool, oblivious to and ignored by everyone else, singing exactly like Judy Garland. Then, the camera moves on, impassively.

Another undeniable asset to the film as a whole is a haunting musical score by David Raksin. His mood-stricken theme runs across the images like a river, and, seeping into the consciousness, forces one to accept the music as a part of the images, the characters, and the entire environment of wealth and weariness which makes Hollywood a lesser Babylon.

Robert Surtees, the cameraman for *The Bad and the Beautiful,* created one of the most exciting sequences of the decade for the picture:



the car-hysteria episode. It is the section in which Georgia Lorrison, the neurotic movie star (Lana Turner), yields to a fit of anguish while driving her automobile away from her lover's mansion. The preceding sequence in which she is rejected is highly over-dramatized, with Kirk Douglas emoting in his most flamboyant manner, actually resorting to silent-film technique. It is rare to witness upon the screen today a scene in which the "heavy" grabs a handful of the heroine's hair, jerks her head back, and sneers down into her face, while "the other woman" slumps languorously over the balustrades of a dimly lit staircase. Yet, it is possible that this histrionic prelude makes its aftermath more compelling. It has the uncanny effect of making the auto sequence more effective by creating a state of high emotional tension.

Turner emerges from the mansion, dazed, in white ermine, and drives away. Her sobs soon build to hysteria, and lights of cars send flashes across the windows as she reaches a moment of unbearable frenzy, releases the steering wheel entirely, and screams in emotional agony. Her foot presses the brake. One hears only her screams, the honking of passing auto-horns, and suddenly, it is raining. The car bumps along uncontrollably for a second, then comes to a standstill. Turner falls over the wheel, still sobbing uncontrollably as the sequence fades. It is superb theater, one of the great moments of human despair shown in cinematic terms, and a prime example of the coördination of actress, director, and cameraman which can create a perfect visual moment of dramatic poetry upon the screen.

[Part II of this article will trace Minnelli's career to the present and comment on the significance of his work for film history.]

LOLA G. YOAKEM

Casting

in contemporary theatrical motion pictures and filmed television programming

Criticism of casting methods generally in current use is becoming a popular pastime in Hollywood. Actors, producers, exhibitors, directors, agents—all are affected by the casting system and, in increasing numbers, are making themselves heard in disagreement with it. One prominent producer-writer believes casting directors and their departments should be "totally abolished." Another producer-agent has stated publicly that "the entire casting set-up needs a thorough housecleaning." A top actress tells of a casting director who was also an agent demanding a commission from those whom she recommended. A star actor goes on suspension rather than continue to submit to what he feels is unfair in his contract. A promising young actor, with New York stage and television experience, is finding his path in Hollywood beset with frustrations because he does not seem to have the right contacts. Small agents have complained because they think they are not getting equal consideration with larger agencies. Exhibitors, comparing neighborhood theater receipts with profits of comfortable earlier years, keep crying for new faces in theatrical features.

Casting methods are not all that is wrong with filmed entertainment, but correction of what is amiss in this important phase of production should certainly go a long way toward an over-all remedy.

There's a half century of celluloid between D. W. Griffith and John Frankenheimer: and while these two are directly opposed in methods, they have in common with every other director the same objective—audience acceptance. Griffith himself had been an actor, yet only two of his early players—Mary Pickford and Blanche Sweet—had previous acting experience. His casts were actually individual projections of his own thespic talents. If they had acting ability, they learned and perfected it under his direction: but many reached stardom not because they could act, but because they were pleasing in appearance and projected their individual personalities in repeated appearances to audiences who were naïvely impressed with any animate filmed subject. Today's John Frankenheimer believes that his casts provide him with sixty percent of his direction: and there is a promising trend among producers to do away with the strictly visual selection of casts, giving the actor instead an opportunity to study the script for a few days so that he can work out his own ideas as to the characterization.

The casting patterns established in the earlier years of movies were followed, more or less, for forty years. The system is based upon "face casting." In the beginning, the director procured his actors wherever he could, sometimes off the streets or wherever he happened to be shooting his film. Later, with the growth of the business, the patterns were elaborated: casting directors, with assistants and ever-expanding departments, were added; talent scouts roamed the world in search of photogenic faces; and the bookers of early vaudeville acts burgeoned into a many-handed artists' and managers' representation business, augmented by a few talent agencies that were set up by close relatives of major studio executives in order to derive agency commissions from actors under contract to the studios. But no matter how elaborate the system became, one basic factor prevailed: the accent was always on the face—the pretty girl, the handsome man—was she a looker? was he a matinee idol? If anyone ever asked whether the prospective actress or actor could act, the records have not included it for posterity. The studios had acting schools, replete with a wide

array of coaches, to take care of that relatively unimportant item. It was like this until the advent of TV.

Even in the first years of television, the assignment of actors to both starring and supporting roles tended to adhere to the existing casting system. While this medium was an outgrowth of commercially sponsored radio, it nonetheless turned to motion pictures for guidance, even though, in the beginning years, the movie tycoons followed a policy of ignoring it in the hope that it would slink away and die. TV executives eagerly hired casting personnel from movie lots, and for a few years it looked as if the new home entertainment vehicle would fall into the same system. But, today, after a decade of experience, TV has set up its own casting patterns dictated by the economics of its production structure. Its programming schedules have increased steadily while the numbers of theatrical motion pictures have decreased from their previous high levels. Eight of the major movie lots now operate television production subsidiaries, and, as of June 1 this year, there were thirteen independent TV producers actively in work.

The phenomenal rise in the number of independent movie producers has come about because of the practical cessation of the previous big studio operations resulting from economy measures following the inroads TV made upon movie audiences. And many independents came into being because of the high personal taxes on star and executive salaries. By forming their own companies, these people are able to net more, taxwise, under the corporation capital gains, allowing them to take their earnings over a longer period of time.

In motion picture production, as a result of these economy measures, there are fewer casting directors on studio payrolls today. Some of these have set up casting bureaus to supply services on a contractual fee basis. Some of them operate as freelance casting directors. In television, one casting director may service a half-dozen different shows for the independent producing firms. In some of the larger TV companies, several casting executives may be employed on the staff to procure talent for all the programs. The agents must work with these casting directors and bureaus, whether independent, freelance or staff. Generally, this does not apply to the stars in either movies or TV. The producer usually commits the star to a feature or a TV series when putting together the package program for his initial financing. Central Casting, an organization formed by the studios to provide a common pool of available actors, still supplies bit players and extras. But the supporting roles are filled by the casting directors or services. There are also some TV shows in which the producer himself does all of his own casting, regardless of the role.

Another factor that gives rise to much controversial opinion these days is the agent-producer. Most of the larger talent agencies, as well as many of the smaller ones, are TV and/or motion picture production firms as well. It is an obvious conclusion that these firms will cast their own clients whenever and wherever possible in their own product first. In many instances, the star, the supporting players, the

In JOHNNY CONCHO, *which he produced himself, Frank Sinatra broke away from his usual type of role.*

director, the writer, and the producer may all be represented by the same agency for which they are working. It is not unusual for one such large operation to have as many as ten or twelve different TV series commercially sponsored on the networks or in syndication to the independent stations in the same year.

But TV has few stars of its own: not many actors have attained stardom in television only; those who are now of star calibre in this medium secured such stature in radio, vaudeville, night clubs, the stage, or movies. A possible exception might be Jim Arness, the continuing leading character in *Gunsmoke* on CBS-TV, who was a relatively unknown actor until he was cast in this series.

Due to the peculiarities of the early movie medium, many apparently whimsical beliefs influenced the casting methods. Some directors believed that stage experience was actually a deterrent to film acting, and most of them preferred inexperienced people whom they could mold into shapes of their own making. In this manner Mae Marsh, a complete amateur, became a star under Griffith's direction; and Gloria Swanson, with relatively little experience, was turned by DeMille into the first beautifully-gowned clotheshorse type of glamorgirl.

In the early days of motion pictures, thus, some stars in continued demand remained in favor not through great acting talent, but because they adjusted to the director and his idiosyncracies, thereby reaping stardom from their repeated appearances on the screen. It is reasonable to believe that many actors with greater innate ability were relegated to anonymity because of temperament clashes with directors. The fact that the "star temperament" came into being and was much publicized probably stemmed from suppressed individuality on the actor's part during the time he was rising to stardom: once an established contract headliner, he had an opportunity to vent his own ideas even though they might oppose those of the director.

While TV may not have developed any stars of its own, it has served as a showcase for a great deal of new dramatic talent. Eva Marie Saint and Joanne Woodward were viewed on the home screens before being given a chance for stardom—and Oscars—in theatrical film features. Network TV has been known to seek out unknown actors for the sole purpose of making sure they can be wholly identified with the sponsor's product. In such instances the actor may be required to make personal appearances for the sponsor as well as to deliver the commercial plugs for the sponsor's product. There have even been instances when supporting players were required to render such extracurricular services as filmed commercials for the sponsor. In one case recently, a second lead on a TV series, which has been in production for several years, was suddenly advised that he must sign an exclusive contract or be fired. Since exclusives in subsidiary roles are usually a hardship on an actor, unless he is very well paid for it, this particular man resigned from the series. He has since discovered that his nonexclusive freelance status makes possible much greater earnings than when he was working the series on a nonexclusive basis. While it is undoubtedly true that any actor with a reliable record of two or three years' experience in a TV series may have much in his favor as far as the casting directors are concerned, it still points up a situation which is very familiar to the viewing audiences—that of seeing the same actors repeatedly on many different shows in varying roles. Overexposure is a primary concern of the acting profession. It can be fairly concluded that this is what happened to Milton Berle, Sid Caesar, Imogene Coca, and Jackie Gleason. All are fine comedians: but nothing can become more boring to an audience, nor more wearing on the comic, than an hour of variously styled bits and pieces of humor and gags. At the same time, situation comedy, which adds a story line to the humor and gags, can continue to find steady favor with the viewers at home.

The curtailment of big movie studio production and the expansion of independents have helped acting talent in respect to script approval. Not many stars remain under exclusive contract to studios as in former years: most

Burl Ives as Big Daddy and Jack Carson as his son Gooper in CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF.

of them are in independent production of their own features or, for tax reasons, prefer a free-lance status. In either case, they can approve the story. In TV, many of the stars own the shows in which they appear. Even those who do not have any part of its ownership still may, and usually do, require script revisions if they do not like a scene or lines. It is even a general practice for supporting actors to suggest changes in the script. As a matter of fact, this practice sometimes results in a bad show if there are too many alterations from the original: and a poorly-rated show is not a credit the actor wants to mention. Actors should be concerned with script quality, but only if they are expert enough in story matters to have fully qualified opinions. There are many instances in which lines may not read well, scenes may not play the way they are written. The ideal situation in which to produce a good show, whether for theatrical features or television, is one in which the producer knows good material when he sees it on paper, then works with the writer during production with a capable cast and director. All too often the scripts are sold and bought by people who do not know a dramatic sequence from an exposition scene. More often than not they want physical action and conflict—thus the plethora of westerns, of war and horror features. Most of all, in both TV and movies producers are afraid of original material—the scripted stories that have not previously appeared in any other medium. Yet in this direction might lie the answer to many of the current questions. Certainly the so-called untested material could be a very real challenge to the casts.

Television, with its tremendous needs for dramatic material, has also increased employment opportunities for actors. Most of its drama shows were popular with viewers until the past year when, perhaps coincidentally, many of them began to "go Hollywood" and present adaptations of material instead of originals. As the current season begins, *Studio One* and *Climax* are in limbo. *Playhouse 90* continues on CBS-TV along with the new *Desilu Playhouse,* which will present drama, musicals, and *Lucy* specials.

The curtailment of production always works a hardship upon the acting profession. Among the major motion picture lots, Twentieth Century-Fox leads the current schedules with 32 features in the planning stage. The decrease of TV drama creates still more competition for fewer jobs. Many movie companies are continuing production abroad in order to use profits earned there which otherwise may not be removed. In addition, there is an increasing number of TV series being filmed in England, Europe, Africa, and Japan. These, of course, use native talent, even though they are screened to American viewers. Add to these items the number of young actors coming up who rightly want a chance to follow their chosen profession, and the casting picture is not very attractive.

Both movies and TV need new people to augment the veteran casts, but in times of intense job competition new people find it difficult to break in. Yet, paradoxically, without new acting talent it looks as if many veteran actors will be kept out of work due to dwindling production.

Certainly there are hundreds of new people wanting in. How can they open the doors? One of the answers may be personal publicity. A prime example of what publicity can do for an unknown actor is the *Marty* movie. When Paddy Chayefsky, Delbert Mann, and Fred Coe joined their talents to produce it, they began a publicity campaign for the picture even before they began shooting the film. By the time it was released, Marty was almost one of the family. Borgnine became a star overnight and won an Oscar for his performance. Whether the young actor hires a press agent or not, he must be seen; he must get his name into print in the trade papers; he must make contact with those who may be in a position to recommend or hire him. All of this may be necessary before he can even get an agent to represent him.

While an agent is not necessary to TV talent in New York, in Hollywood it is. However, most agents will not sign an actor to a representation contract unless and until they have gotten him an assignment. Even then, if the future does not look too promising, they may not commit him to signing with them because they are required to procure a certain minimum amount of work for him under the artists and managers agreement. Agents naturally want clients who are easy to sell. Getting an agent is like getting a loan—easy to do if you don't need it.

Even many of the professional players have agent trouble, particularly in the areas of smaller firms who do not get as much attention from casting directors as they think they deserve. One of the biggest problems arises from type casting, the long-time bugaboo of the acting trade.

To clear the ground before discussing this topic, there is a difference between an actor, as such, a performer, and a "personality" as the term is used today. An actor acts: he subjugates his own personality to that of the characterization he is projecting. A performer may be a dramatic actor, but more correctly, he is a specialty artist, a singer, dancer, comic, acrobat, or gymnast. A "personality" may be either of these, or any entertainment individual prominent in the public eye. While this term was not used in previous years, there were still many personalities who became stars and who were neither actors nor performers. These people were typed—they always played themselves—regardless of what role they essayed. Many of them retained their popularity for years. It may be assumed that they had something that audiences liked. On the other hand, it may also have been that studios had a great deal of money invested in these personalities and, if advertising and publicity could do it, they wanted to get it back.

Type casting is inevitable for most actors, and, although few of them like it, there is little that can be done about it. All film players want to become established: in order to reach this goal they must appear in casts: if they deliver exceptional interpretations and characterizations in any particular role, they will impress audiences and will be remembered by the producers and casting directors. And they will be called when a similar part comes up in any script thereafter. As long as the type any given player does well remains in vogue, there will be work and he will prosper. But types have a way of losing favor from time to time.

Motion picture stars have always fought type casting. If a star is well received in a leading role, that means the movie made a profit; after that, the studio will look for stories with similar characterization, and the star has become a type. Many stars are simply leading men or leading women whose personalities are perennially pleasing. They too are types, but it is no problem to them because they can continue to essay straight roles. The character men and women bear the brunt of type casting, along with the specialty performers.

When Frank Sinatra first came into movies he was an established singer, therefore he appeared as a singer. His insistence on being given dramatic leads eventually won for him a co-starring role in *From Here to Eternity*. He is still a singer; but he is now also a dramatic actor of well-proved ability. Ed Wynn, a renowned musical comedy star of stage, screen and radio, won national acclaim for his dramatic supporting role in *Requiem for a Heavyweight* on CBS-TV; Jack Carson, long a comedy star of movies, broke the type-casting mold

Townsend Harris in Japan: Sam Jaffe and John Wayne in THE BARBARIAN AND THE GEISHA.

by agreeing to appear on TV in dramatic leads at a time when executives of that medium were anxious to present movie names. One of the most recent breaks with type casting in the star bracket of motion pictures is exemplified by John Wayne's role in *The Barbarian and the Geisha.* Wayne plays the role of a mid-Victorian American ambassador to Japan—replete with costume. It may be presumed that, in making such a break with the familiar Wayne type casting, he wanted a chance to act without the aid of a horse. And John Wayne is a star of such stature that he may, and can, have his own way about it.

Casting directors, whether on studio staff, in television production, or working a show on a fee basis, usually follow the paths of least resistance. From the point of view of many actors, the average casting executive is maintaining a closed-door policy, favoring a few and ignoring the majority.

Sidney Harmon, writer-producer of *Anna Lucasta* for United Artists release, believes that casting departments and casting directors should be "totally abolished." He thinks the movie industry should have new methods for casting. "A reading is good enough for radio, but it won't do for pictures since it merely tests an actor's voice and ability to read with inflection, but not his ability to act." For Harmon's *Lucasta* and *God's Little Acre,* prospective cast members were given a copy of the script with minimal instructions, and asked to return in two or three days with their own characterizations worked out.

Harmon believes the producer himself should observe the performances and make his own selections on the basis of acting ability. He thinks casting directors and their departments are "wedded to the outdated system of face casting." Producers of theatrical motion pictures should take the time to see as many plays and pictures as possible, familiarizing themselves with the talent that is available rather than farming such important work out to casting directors. Harmon is of the opinion that the public demands good acting today and it is up to the movie producers to give it to them.

Actress Dana Wynter, under contract to Twentieth Century-Fox; but permitted to accept television assignments, believes TV acting is of great benefit to movie acting because it shows to audiences and producers a different phase of a star's personality, which executives in the movie studios don't normally see. She thinks her TV appearances have led to movie roles very different from those she was previously cast for.

Her first acting job after arriving in this country from England was on a now inactive hour drama series which was produced in New York. Miss Wynter charged in *Daily Variety* (and her statement was never challenged) that "the casting director was an agent on the side and I had to give her a percentage. She told me she had gotten me the job and unless she was my agent I would be blackballed for life. I would not go along with it. I don't think there's a connection, but I never again got a show on that network."

Casting directors often refuse to recommend talent represented by smaller agencies, according to David L. March, who heads the Fame Agency and is the producer of *Cry Baby Killer* for Allied Artists release. He says there is a "lack of integrity and understanding toward talent on the part of casting people both in mo-

tion pictures and television." He thinks a casting director should and must be able to recognize talent and should never ignore any individual, especially when that individual has film to attest to his ability. In his opinion there is "over-coöperation between casting directors and the big artists' agencies," and he thinks this is the biggest detriment to the development of new talent. In March's words: "The entire casting set-up needs a thorough housecleaning."

Meanwhile, until such improvements in casting methods are made that new acting talent can be developed and established professionals have equal job opportunity with all others, the greatest responsibility rests with the producers.

Along with the story, the producer's greatest assets are his casts. He can correct the casting situation as it now exists and thereby do both himself and the industry a profitable favor simply by opening his mind and his doors to the actors.

That some leading producers are in agreement with such thinking is shown by a recent ad which Jerry Wald Productions ran in the Hollywood trade papers. "Help Always Wanted —Our doors are open constantly to all fine talent of the motion picture industry. We are eager to work with anyone who can help us make better films. . . . If you believe you can contribute to the making of successful films we are interested in you. We envision an upsurge in business. And we are preparing for it."

Film Reviews

The Roots of Heaven and *The Barbarian and the Geisha*

Whichever way you look at it, Romain Gary's Prix Goncourt novel, *The Roots of Heaven,* was destined to be filmed—not sooner or later, but sooner rather than later, not by the French, but by the Americans, and not by any director, but by John Huston. It is a book, first of all, dramatically congruent with the industry's present temper, which demands, at the same time, the safe bet and the big gesture, and which insists on foreign locales, large-scale action and, whenever possible, international casts. As a property for Hollywood, *The Roots of Heaven* has the requisite pre-sold audience; it seems, also, more filmically manageable than most novels, popular or otherwise, and it combines a topical message of humanitarian concern with the perennial attractions of exoticism and adventure. A set of fashionable and extraneous values, then, comes into play, though the book

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itself is in no way diminished by them; as a book it succeeds in evoking the shade of Conrad, but as a film it looms most significantly in the gathering moral shape of films current and to come, films which Hollywood now finds both convenient and commendable. In recent major productions, issues of pacifism, racism, and militarism have been addressed within the prescriptions of the Western, the chase thriller, and the action film, and Stanley Kramer is presumably out to heighten this emerging ethos with his projected version of *On the Beach*, Nevil Shute's romance of nuclear devastation. The signs are up, though in what direction they are posted is still uncertain. The oddest film of the year, *Wind Across the Everglades*, deals with plumage-plundering *vs.* the Audubon Society. *The Roots of Heaven* is about the hunting and killing of elephants. It remains for the *kitsch*-hounds to pick up the scent.

Gary's book is a parable of conservative idealism ironically transmuted into anarchy when set against the politics of revolt. The hero, a veteran of Nazi labor camps, embarks on a crusade to save the elephant herds of French Equatorial Africa from extinction at the hands of trophy hunters, ivory traders, zoo-keepers and native tribes. Although he is first exploited and then betrayed by the ambitions of a local nationalist leader, he succeeds in arousing world-wide attention, and the book ends as he withdraws, a living legend, into the jungle.

This has been made the subject of a Big Film, personally produced by Darryl F. Zanuck with all the luxuries (or agonies, which cost as much) of location shooting, star players squandered in brief but showy parts, and perhaps the most sought-after director in the business.

On the face of it, *The Roots of Heaven* is promising Huston material. Like nearly every film he has ever made, it is concerned with a prodigious undertaking: sometimes it is the pursuit of wealth, sometimes it is an objective in war, or blowing up a ship or a politician, or killing a whale. Usually it involves a protracted physical ordeal of utmost realism; Huston's actors have been known to suffer a good deal. Then, of course, the assignment suits Huston's personal reputation as a globe-trotting director who works on the grand scale in the rough. The trouble with *The Roots of Heaven*, and with the last half-dozen or so of Huston's efforts, is that the virtues of this approach exist quite independently of the film itself. A style of *modus operandi*, elaborate with suggestions of integrity, perfectionism, devotion and marvelous temperament (e.g., his celebrated walk-out on *A Farewell to Arms*), has come to be substituted for quality as an accomplished fact in work done. Huston's true style has evolved as a sort of behind-the-scenes swagger, which finds an exact correlation in the increasingly improvised and decorative nature of his films. All the energies of production are spent upon surface; in effects of color, lighting, and framing (usually provided by the brilliant Oswald Morris); in an impressionistic gloss on costumes, scars, sweat, sand, and the precise entry of bullets into flesh. The appeal is to the eye, or as it were, to the eye-*cum*-guts.

Yet it is sad to find Huston's most reliable gift, his tremendous physical expertise, deserting him at this point. By which I mean not so much his technical command as his sense of muscular stress and excitement in his material, his ability to exert the pressure of the physical universe upon his actors, so that all curses of climate, weather, terrain, fortune, fatigue, and impossible odds become proofs of human endurance. The novel *The Roots of Heaven*, even if taken on this level alone, offers at least one heroic exercise of this dimension, but the principals of the film move through it in a dispassionate processional of misery in the abstract. Trevor Howard's voice grows hoarse from the quantities of sand hurled in his face, Juliette Greco turns ashen and has to be carried, Eddie Albert sweats blood, and so on, but what they are all escaping from, or struggling toward, or Up Against is never made clear, even in a tactical sense.

Since, in fact, they are moving in a world of ideas, the issues are larger than any mere physical texture, or directorial talent for such, can serve. The great irony is that the "issues" are

not so cinematically inexpressible as one would suppose from this film, with its hasty digest of plot developments and its numerous speeches uttered in the eyes-on-the-far-horizon style. In the first place, the film is not big enough, strange to say; it never really opens up, spatially or atmospherically, and there aren't enough elephants when elephants are needed most. Secondly, it is severely hampered by a misshapen script, organized too faithfully after the form of the book, which is discursive and declamatory. Instead of demonstrating, the film proselytizes. It picks out a few incidents, photographs a number of the characters in their habitats, inflates two or three of the more expendable passages, then toward the end seems not to have enough time and closes on a note of hollow bravado. The scenarists (Patrick Leigh-Fermor and Gary himself) might have done better to mount the whole film as the piece of journalism which is the book's pretense. Gary's narrative technique of on-the-spot pick-ups, employed intermittently throughout the book, suggests the possibility of a dynamic film version, covering the action as "news" and conveying the drama of its effect. And the presence of "Abe Fields," Gary's *Life*-size ace photographer, as witness and ultimate convert to the cause, might have provided this approach with its logical point of departure, its leap into form. In the book, the fantasy of the plot is projected in a context of documented realities, chiefly political. In the film, we have only a sporadic and muffled sense of these realities, mainly because the film has no point of view. What is the use of introducing Fields so late in the film (later, it seems, than in the book)? Why not *start* with Fields on an assignment? If this be *Citizen Kane*, make the most of it. For the lesson of *Kane* that will never be learned by Hollywood in its lust for "properties" is that film skills possess an inner rhetoric to which perspective, point of view, is the key, and that without this key montage is impossible; so our films become monstrous hybrids—laborious, defeated efforts of adaptation.

The Roots of Heaven is no better and no worse than the conventional action film with pretensions. It fails Gary, but it is very good Milton Caniff, and the casting is so keen that, if you have read the book, you can recognize the characters before they speak a line of dialogue.

THE ROOTS OF HEAVEN:
Trevor Howard, Errol Flynn, Juliette Greco

Huston's other current film, *The Barbarian and the Geisha*, finds the director on holiday in Japan, shooting from a script that contrives to blend "The Cavalcade of America" and "My True Story." Much has been made of its distortion of the career of Townsend Harris, but this seems to be beside the point. "I wanted to make a Japanese film," Huston is reported to have said. Whatever that may mean, the result is about as "Japanese" as *Sayonara*. It is a long drone of a film, logy with local glamour, unpleasantly jingoistic in tone, and graced with an impersonation by John Wayne of the Prudential rock. It marks, perhaps, the nadir in Huston's absorption with appearances, and it is saddening to think that the director of *The Asphalt Jungle*, made eight years ago on an MGM lot, has gained professional freedom and international celebrity in order to become, at 51, yet another taskmaster who goes out in the midday sun.—ARLENE CROCE

The Old Man and the Sea

This is a very curious film. In a sense it is quite ambitious, although it comes from Hollywood in an era of cautious blockbusters and indeed cost some millions of dollars to produce. The theme it takes from the Hemingway story is nothing less than that of human failure and death, or more precisely, of the manner in which men meet them; "man can be destroyed but not defeated." It attempts an unusual type of narrative for a film, half visual and half verbal. And also, by following the simple Hemingway story without adding plot complications, it faces Spencer Tracy with the challenge of a *tour de force* of unassisted acting. —Virtually unassisted, at least, for Felipe Pazos, Jr., who plays the boy, is embarrassingly wooden, and the café owner, Harry Belaver, is only adequate. The boy, of course, was up against an experienced actor of formidable presence, and some of his lines, with their air of transliteration, were inevitably awkward. Still, performances like this make one wonder if Flaherty ever really said that children and animals are the best natural actors.

Tracy carries off his task remarkably well; and it is to the solidly founded and by now rather filial affection that we have for him that the film will probably owe whatever commercial success it has. (It is to be "roadshown" in the manner of *Around the World in 80 Days.*)

In structure *The Old Man and the Sea* attempts to approximate the effect of the Hemingway story by utilizing vast stretches of narration (spoken by Tracy, and woven quite neatly into the words he speaks on the screen). For a film of this sort, we may be prepared to accept devices which would in an ordinary story film seem merely ridiculous; but on the whole, the experiment cannot be considered very successful. The old demon of redundancy rears his head as persistently as in any Shakespeare film. "He smiled," says the narration; and a faint smile crosses Tracy's face . . . John Sturges, the director, told me that both Tracy and editor Arthur P. Schmidt wanted to use less narration, but he looked at the film without it and decided to keep it all; so the blame must fall squarely upon him. It was, no doubt, a tempting solution: while the old man sits in the skiff, waiting for the fish to do something new, let us have the narration keep things going by telling of past or imminent events, or explaining things that might not be understood. But the incessant talk weighs heavily upon the pace of the film, which is by the nature of the action none too sprightly at best. Tracy's delivery of the narration is properly old, tired, sometimes almost bored;

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once or twice it verges on the merely pitying. The dialogue—or more often monologue, as the old man talks to himself—is overwhelmed by the narration; and it is sometimes sententious or even grotesque: "I love you and respect you, fish, but I will kill you." Here, and in the old man's meditations on luck and "going out too far," the thematic burden seems to overpower Sturges and Tracy alike —as indeed it perhaps overpowered Hemingway; for to the film as to his writing one may have objections about the mystique of the hunt, the bond of hunter and hunted, the beauty of the properly managed and submitted-to kill, whether it is a question of bulls, matadors, or fish. All this can seem tiresomely allegorical—or worse yet, merely uninsightful. The ponderousness of the narration and the old man's reflections, however, is relieved occasionally by humorous nuances: "Bad news for you, fish!" when the cramp goes out of the old man's hand; or, to himself, after some particularly platitudinous musings, "You give me good counsel—I'm tired of it!".

Though Sturges confesses that "this is perhaps the sloppiest film I ever made, technically," in many technical respects *The Old Man and the Sea* is quite intriguing. James Wong Howe's photography, of which much has been said, is very—sometimes overly—beautiful. It is perhaps sad that the film is in color; for in a film on a serious theme, done with a measure of artistic ambition, the distractions and irrelevant prettiness inevitable with color can only be an obstacle to total emotional precision and impact, notwithstanding the greater "identification" with stars that is always cited in behalf of color. Practically all of the action is outdoors, and although a good deal of the playing of the giant marlin was done by process shots, the camerawork is open and active and has none of the skimped feel that so often results from shooting against cumbersome widescreen sets. There is, of course, much spectacular underwater material showing the sharks attacking the marlin.

There are several dream-sequences in the film, handled by dissolving from the old man's sleeping form to various scenes that appear within masking wave-like distortions around the edge of the screen: notably a recurrent image of lions playing like kittens, and also a funny scene from the old man's youth when he won an Indian-wrestling match from a huge Negro, the champion of Casablanca. The music of Dimitri Tiomkin is perhaps somewhat overbearing, attempting like the narration to cover what were feared to be *longeurs* in the action and to hype up dramatic occurrences such as the harpooning of the marlin and the appearance of the sharks.

As a whole, *The Old Man and the Sea* is a strange amalgam of practically unassisted acting, good camerawork and editing, and a lot of special effects. It is a goodly distance from the razor-sharp suspense of Sturges' *Bad Day at Black Rock* or *Gunfight at the OK Corral.* But it is in many ways an encouraging film, though seriously flawed, and we can certainly continue to look to Sturges for interesting work.

—Ernest Callenbach

Home Before Dark and *I Want to Live*

Superficially we appear to be at a time of the escapist picture, since this would permit an easy explanation of the current deluge of teenage exploitation and horror films—presented to a public which presumably wishes to find its thrills vicariously. The best (and the worst)

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of these films are usually low-budget (under $80,000) made for a quick sale to distributors. They are at one end of a scale, with creaking, top-heavy blockbusters costing three, four, five million dollars at the other end. But in fact, in between there is a steady flow of medium-budget pictures which, although primarily commercial productions, find their drama and excitement in events which are much closer to home than, say, those of *Blood of the Vampire* or the twice bowdlerized *South Pacific*. Two current examples are Mervyn Leroy's *Home Before Dark* (Warners') and Walter Wanger's *I Want To Live* (Figaro-UA).

Leroy's film, scripted by Eileen and Robert Bassing from the former's novel, turns out to be a modest, unpretentious but almost completely successful "little" film. (Not in fact so very little, since cast and other costs pushed the budget up close to two million.) In her readings, Mrs. Bassing came across the startling statistic that of those who are released from a mental hospital one out of two is sent back within a year, since in most cases patients are returned to the situation which originally contributed to their mental collapse. The Bassings have dramatised such a case.

Jean Simmons plays a young woman who returns to live with her husband, step-sister, and step-mother after a year in a mental hospital. She was committed when she began to have "delusions" of someone else's grandeur—that her husband was in love with her step-sister.

The story opens with the husband's arrival at the hospital. His wife comes down a corridor and tentatively, hesitatingly greets him. A nurse pulls him over to a window where, with the peculiar inhumanity reserved for hospitals, he has to sign for his wife, just as if she were so much certified mail. From this moment the audience's sympathy is with the girl. The writers sustain this sympathy throughout a detailed examination of the ensuing months when we begin to suspect, with the girl, that perhaps after all her suspicions were justified.

Above: Jean Simmons as the mentally disturbed wife of college professor Dan O'Herlihy in HOME BEFORE DARK. *Below: Susan Hayward as Barbara Graham in* I WANT TO LIVE. *Both films are distinguished by excellent performances from carefully selected casts.*

One of the strengths of a screenplay like Satyajit Ray's for *Pather Panchali* is that he presents human frailty without loss of sympathy for the characters. And here, the Bassing's story would ultimately have failed to convince if the husband's attitude and feelings had remained as sketchily demonstrated as they are in the beginning. Ambiguity, at the beginning, has in this case a dramatic function, but the story would have frittered away all its credibility if it had remained one-sided.

This is ultimately what is wrong with Wanger's *I Want To Live* (directed by Robert Wise). We are never really given both sides of the story—the story of Barbara Graham, a curiously literate good-time girl who had excellent taste in selecting clothes, but little or no judgment in choosing friends, and who was finally executed with two associates for the brutal slaying of Mrs. Mabel Monahan in her home in Burbank, California.

The original material for the screenplay by Nelson Gidding (and Don Mankiewicz) is a series of articles written by San Francisco *Examiner* reporter Ed Montgomery, and to a lesser extent some letters of Barbara Graham. Wanger was reportedly first intrigued by Montogmery's change of heart during the case—from an early perhaps opportunistic certainty that the girl was guilty to a later conviction that she was innocent.

This in itself sounds like promising dramatic material, particularly when the girl died protesting her innocence. Montgomery had earlier won a Pulitzer Award as an investigative crime reporter, but his articles during Graham's trial contributed to the widespread public certainty of her guilt. "It's her tough luck to be young, attractive, belligerent, immoral, and guilty as hell," as he put it. Later, when Graham was awaiting execution, Montgomery ran a series of articles with an entirely different emphasis, and attempted to get her associates Perkins and Santo to talk.

But Wanger also switched his interest—to a concentration on Barbara Graham's story, although since Montgomery's influence was vital, he plays a considerable part in the final screenplay. (But there is apparently no time to *show* the grounds of his change of heart. As it is, when he is accused by Graham's lawyer after the trial of being responsible for her conviction, his line, "Don't believe everything you read in the papers," is read with a concern and sympathy which takes us by surprise.)

But this in the end is not the only thing to go. Little time is spent explaining the critical rejection by the Supreme Court of her lawyer's appeals, or the possible motives of Perkins and Santo for remaining silent, when they could have cleared her—if she were innocent.

Thus we are left with an odd sort of amalgam —a character who is presented with extreme sympathy (the preview audience was literally shouting for her), but with insufficient *evidence* for the audience to make up its own mind as to her guilt or innocence. This, Robert Wise and Nelson Gidding told me, is not vital to the picture, since the issue is not her guilt or innocence but the existence of a judicial and penal system which permits such a situation as this to develop and be consummated by execution. Unfortunately, however, no proper conclusion can be reached by an audience about the merits of capital punishment, when, in an extremely emotional situation, it has not been made clear that the guilt or innocence of the central character is not relevant.

This, finally, is not done. And it is hard to see how it could be. The star system and the commercial requirements of such a film are still with us, and when a character is presented as sympathetically as the writers, the director, and Susan Hayward herself have done here, we should not be taken aback. But little room has been left for abstract judgment. Perhaps the commercial film is the wrong place to try for such an effect, and perhaps the recent and more cerebral NBC *Omnibus* offering on capital punishment satisfied those who will be left cold by the bathos of Barbara Graham's predicament.

Technically, Wise is often brilliant, and his control over transitions in a film whose material must often have appeared intractable, reveals his close collaboration with the writers. Earlier in his career he was an editor—with Welles on

Citizen Kane and *Magnificent Ambersons*—and the style of his present film was in many ways anticipated in *Set Up*, which won for him a Cannes Festival award when it was presented there in 1949.—COLIN YOUNG.

Mon Oncle

The world of Jacques Tati is the acerbic, astringent one of René Clair set at a comic tilt, without the mordant irony of Clair and without his great humanism. Having said that, we get Tati into reasonably sharp focus without having to compare him with Chaplin, the Olympian model for both. There is no disaffection toward Tati in saying that he is a lesser artist than either Chaplin or Clair; to mention him in the same breath with them is to raise him in stature above all other comedians functioning in the world today. But it would be a mistake to limit Tati's art merely to that of a practicing comedian; he is a creative one, with the touch of a poet, and if the ultimate statements he makes in his films are rather less cosmic than those of Chaplin and Clair they are nonetheless universal and heart-warming for all their aiming at small targets.

Although Tati eschews dialogue, he is not primarily a mime and we seldom see his facial reactions in any extended close-up. This is his greatest single point of departure from the great mimes like Chaplin, Langdon, Raymond Griffith, Marcel Marceau, and the Barrault-Baptiste of *Les Enfants du Paradis*. He is, in a sense, as frozen-faced as Keaton and, like him, depends on the inventiveness of his gags. But he uses his body more expressively than Keaton, particularly his walk, which is a kind of hesitant lope tempered by an almost exquisite *politesse*, as if he did not wish to trespass against anyone—as indeed he does not. For Keaton's moodiness, though, he substitutes an irrepressible optimism (befitting a pipe-smoker), while both are at loggerheads with a world they never made. In short, Mr. Hulot, the tall, lean, gangling character Tati has created, is something very special. In this film he is the lovable ne'er-do-well uncle we'd all like to have, rejected by the family as an impractical, unambitious, bumbling old fool, but full of understanding and sympathy for our own problems. He is, of course, a bachelor, as what woman could stand his self-possessiveness? And with his little hat, trench-coat, pipe and tactful gait, he has with only two films, *Mr. Hulot's Holiday* and *Mon Oncle* (My Uncle, Mr. Hulot) already become as recognizable a figure in a large part of the world as the little tramp of Chaplin . . . and as lovable. (Tati's postman in *Jour de Fête*, although a different character, already foreshadowed Mr. Hulot in his bumbling awkwardness and in his optimism in the face of a baffling universe.)

Mon Oncle, which Tati both wrote (with Jacques Legrange) and directed (as he does all his films), is Tati's own *Modern Times*, a satire on the world of gadgets and machines. Both Chaplin and Clair have made withering comments on this mechanized world (Clair in *A Nous la Liberté*, of course) before Tati. But the latter still finds something new to say about such a world by centering on its effects upon a small boy, Hulot's nephew (Alain Becourt), who leads an unhappy life in his parents' "modernistic" home when he would much rather be out on the streets, taking "potluck" in life with his amiable uncle. In the boy's antiseptic home Tati has much fun at the expense of the current vogue for "Danish modern" or what-have-you *arts décoratifs*, with sharp, angular furniture, etc., with push-button kitchens of surgical precision, with plastics, the *dernier cri* in formal gardens and automatic garage doors, push-button fountains and gates, and the like. He has just as much fun with the kind of people who think they fit so well into this *milieu*. He satirizes the snobbishness of an artificial "caste" system in animals as well as humans; there is an adorable shot of a bunch of mongrels poking their heads wistfully through the bars of an iron fence at one of their number who is received in this grand house which is off-limits to them. A few moments before, of course, he had been one

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MON ONCLE: *Mr. Hulot's house (above) and the maison Arpel (below), with Tati and Dominique Marie, the grotesque neighbor.*

of their number, happily rummaging in the garbage cans with them. The boy's father, Arpel (Jean-Pierre Zola), runs a factory making plastic tubing and resignedly permits his wife (Adrienne Servantie) to talk him into giving her brother, Mr. Hulot, a job there. Mr. Hulot's contretemps at the factory also give the film some of its funniest episodes. The wit here sometimes borders on the surrealistic, as in the scene where a slight chance mishap while reporting to the personnel manageress for assignment makes him appear to be a most questionable candidate for any job and gets him booted out without further ado.

Meanwhile, we have seen how Mr. Hulot, himself, lives—in one of those *quartiers* of Paris made memorable by Clair, with its denizens peretually hovering in and around the local *brasserie*, and its lively, voluble street-life. Hulot lives in a walk-up in a workingclass neighborhood, presided over by the ubiquitous plump *concierge*, which is a little poem in pastels, open-faced landings and balconies, hidden stairways, window-gardens and curtained glass panes catching the sun. The spectacle of Mr. Hulot arriving, greeting the *concierge*, chatting with her pretty daughter, and mounting to his room on the top floor where he opens his casement window, notices the sun glinting on it, and moves it back and forth so its reflection will catch the attention of a bird in a cage on the window sill of his neighbor, thereby making the bird chirp merrily in response, is one of the most charming and exhilarating passages imaginable. Mr. Hulot's sudden appearances and disappearances from floor to floor in this enchantingly constructed house must be seen to be believed. The simplicity with which such lovely effects have been achieved by Tati in this film recalls Degas' dictum, "You use seven people to paint a crowd, not seven hundred." And when Mr. Hulot makes the trip down, completing his "visual rondo," he has truly achieved a thing of Mozartean grace and perfection. What need have we, indeed, of Mr. DeMille's seven hundred or seven thousand milling across the screen as against such meaningful simplicity?

There is, also, a running gag through the film, a trick played by the kids in the streets on unsuspecting passersby, which is delicious but too good to give away here, as the surprise element in it is the greater part of its effectiveness. Hulot and his nephew discover it during one of their forays. It is this gag which forms a kind of *leitmotif* in the film and in which the unhappy boy's father finally joins. This occurs at the airport, where father and son have gone to see Mr. Hulot off. Hulot has been given a job by the father in the provinces, having failed miserably to maintain the high standards of efficiency at the factory. The boy is desolate at losing his only friend, his uncle. Then his father suddenly

pulls the old street gag quite by accident. Explosive laughter bursts from the boy and his father as they see the gag work, while the camera cuts to a close-up of their hands, clasped in camaraderie. Things will be better now.

Chaplin and Clair drew a longer bow but not even they were more unerring than Tati in hitting their respective targets.—HERMAN G. WEINBERG

Me and the Colonel

William Goetz in *Me and the Colonel* produces the minor miracle of creating a credible modern-day fairy tale. This film traces the growing into affection and respect of two men as different from each other as two men can be: which is to say, not very. Danny Kaye, in the calmest and most touching portrait of his career, plays Jacobowsky, the on-the-lam, wandering Jew from Poland, Berlin, Vienna, Prague, and Paris, who beats it out of France, just in the nick of disaster, in June 1940. His traveling companion before the engulfing *Wehrmacht* is Curt Jurgens, as a quite mad, anti-Semitic, but fiercely brave and increasingly likeable Polish Colonel, entrusted with delivering vastly secret plans to London. The Colonel is a snob we are all prepared to hate; but it is testament to Jurgens' competence as an actor that the Colonel comes to win our begrudging respect, ultimately our affection. Their shared friend is Nicole Maurey as Suzanne, an innkeeper's daughter—a consummate Dulcinea del Toboso—very lovely, very democratic, very French. Akim Tamiroff, with still another accent, is the Colonel's orderly, a sweet, disorderly soul. Françoise Rosay makes a *sympathique* Parisian hotel manager, and Alexander Scourby contributes a witty, urbane, and—in an off moment—human German officer. On the road the entourage meets up with a tough, traveling Mother Superior, Martita Hunt. Quite a cast. The director (Peter Glenville) doubtless is a genius, for he has taken this batch of variously outrageous personalities and muted them into a team: in the case of Kaye, the alchemy achieves pure gold.

S. N. Behrman and George Froeschel, using the stuffs of the earlier play by Franz Werfel and Behrman, have *not* written a sermon on a Rolls Royce which preaches the embarrassment of togetherness shared. They have written a story, more specifically a movie; and move this picture does, across the map of France. From the first, when the romantic Colonel drives behind the enemy lines to retrieve the innkeeper's daughter, while the frightened Jacobowsky looks on, to the last when the two men submerge in a submarine on their way to England (this time the girl is left behind!) the picture accomplishes perpetual motion. In an important way, the pair play Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in France, but it is the film's puzzle that one is never clear which is the idealistic Don and which his practical sidekick. Or rather, there is a transvaluation—in fact, transfer—of values, for the Jew becomes romantic while the Colonel indulges in theory. At the fade-out, Jacobowsky is clearly convinced that the initial retreat was worth it, for he is in love with the girl too, and emboldened by the success of the flight he now fears no man and damned few women.

This picture is about love: love in its various guises—of man for country, man for man, man for woman, and the practical love of the itinerant Mother Superior for God. It is a wonder the movie doesn't suffocate in its welter of good feeling, and disintegrate into cheap sentimentality. But it doesn't, mainly because of the good taste and wit of the

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script writers, who remember perhaps from Freud, and Aristotle before Freud, that humor is the most efficacious way to meet anxiety. Bosley Crowther's dissent about this film notwithstanding (*New York Times*, August 31, 1958, Sec. II, 1: 8) the theme of anti-Semitism *is* a proper one for comedy, and the writers wisely have kept a good deal of the bitter wit and cunning of the play. Werfel, who was himself a refugee from Hitler, had told the story to Max Reinhardt and Behrman as a comic absurdity—perhaps the hilarious therapy in Werfel's own agonized flight through France.

The photography is black and white, but the film achieves chiaroscuro insights into men who are, after all, themselves "compromises" of good and evil. Jacobowsky is human, that is to say, albeit admirable, less than perfect. For one thing, Kaye does convey the irritatingly fawning quality of the Jew, "deferential, glad to be of use," anxious and desperate to be loved—though, as the girl shrewdly points out, Jacobowsky realizes this is an impossible goal. Further, and there can be no doubt about it, in his desire to survive, when we first meet Jacobowsky he is turning the color of fear: yellow. Somewhere in their mad trip thorugh France, the Colonel teaches Jacobowsky the value of physical courage: that he who turns and runs away may live to run away on every other day.

Kaye's credibly human Jew is a welcome contrast to the recent triptych image of the Jew *qua* pugilist we have gotten on the screen, inspired no doubt by the splendid successes of the Israeli army and Hemingway's memorable portrait of Robert Cohn, that fighting Jew from Princeton. Mel Ferrer, in a caricature of Cohn, slugged at Robert Evans' greasy Romero in Zanuck's all-around loser, *The Sun Also Rises*. In *The Young Lions* Montgomery Clift as Noah Ackerman takes on four of his anti-Semitic company cohorts to prove his worth as a man. Worst of all is the flagrant distortion of the Jewish Roth (and Goldstein too) in Paul Gregory's maiming of *The Naked and the Dead*. Mailer depicts Roth as a rationalizing coward, who only just before his death knows why the other men had made him into a punching bag (they needed a scapegoat). In the filmed *Naked*, we first meet Roth as a Golden Gloves champ, astutely admired by all for having pommeled someone who called him a "lousy Jew."

Kaye's Jacobowsky has corrected this stereotype, which replaced the old nonexistent sissy Jew with an equally silly fantasy Beowulf. Kaye dresses like a natty Anthony Eden, though someone has suggested he is playing Chaplin's tramp underneath. But Kaye wisely flees at the point of the drunken Colonel's sword: there is a time to dodge, as well as a time to fight. Throughout, Jacobowsky remains less brave than the Colonel, though under the Colonel's courageous officering, Jacobowsky does become as brave as a man should be. Jacobowsky quietly sips wine in a provincial cafe, which he knows is a death-trap, rather than lead the watching Gestapo to the hiding Colonel.

This leads to the question: what is it that the Jew teaches the Colonel? Early in the film, Jacobowsky announces that his own resourcefulness (the hot Rolls) and the Colonel's strength (the Colonel can drive) will deliver them both from France. The Colonel snobbishly and cruelly resists the friendly overtures of this pushy M. Grabowsky, this Liebowitz. He tells Jacobowsky he seeks only an honorable death, which for him is the sole possibility. Jacobowsky counters with the alternative of an honorable life, and suggests that in life there is always the mitigating circumstance, always

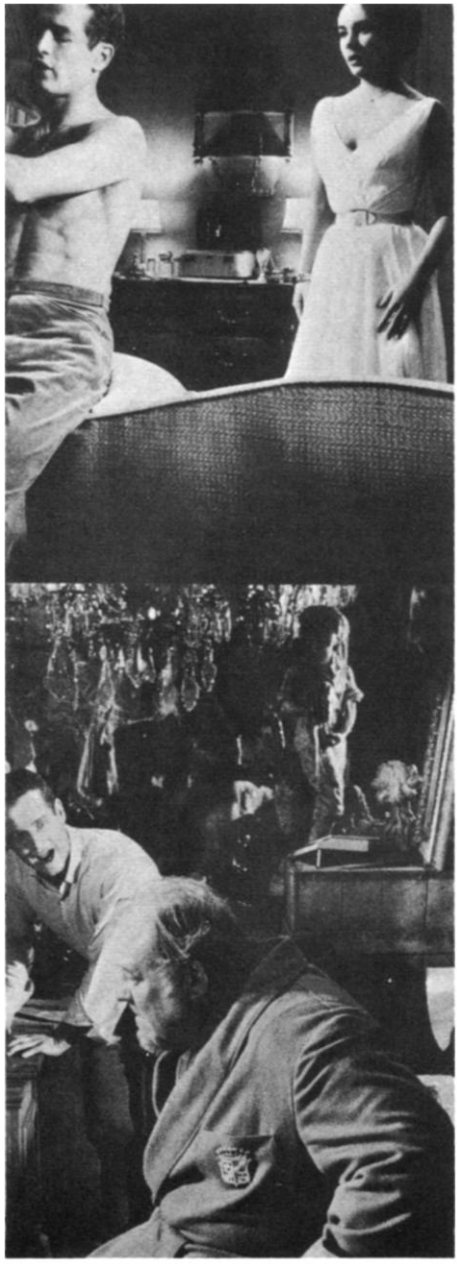
the second possibility. This the Colonel resolutely denies.

Much later, the Colonel's own second possibility vests. Jurgens has a fine moment when, in order to save him, Jacobowsky strips the drunken Colonel of his uniform, and for the first time, the Colonel is bereft of his monolithic defense. "What have you done to me?" the Colonel asks. The answer is simple: he changes from a tin soldier into a man. Later, the Colonel must remain silent, and pretend to be Jacobowsky's idiot cousin, before the slings and arrows of the German major. The Colonel's outrage has become that he cannot denounce the major, rather than the unimportant fact he is now considered a Jew. And the Jew's suit of clothing (another stereotype) saves the Colonel's life.

Realizing the Colonel's humiliation, and knowing that he is coming between the lovers, Jacobowsky leaves the Colonel and the girl. But his lesson has taken. It is the Colonel who comes to rescue the Jew in the sad, ambushed cafe, with the apology that he is late only because he is not as talented as Jacobowsky in the ways of procuring gasoline. Jacobowsky insists this gesture will mean death for them both. The Colonel disagrees, for he knows that in life there is always at least another possibility, especially with a clever Jewish staff officer. And so there is—to wit, the miracle of the Mother Superior's tandem. The resourceful Jew has taught the strong Colonel to share what Henry James has called "the masculine character . . . the ability to dare and endure, to know and not to fear reality, to look the world in the face and take it for what it is."

In the beginning, Jacobowsky and the Colonel must take flight together in order to survive, the Jew seeking an honorable life and the Colonel an honorable death. The fugitives are in the grand picaresque tradition of the Don and Sancho, Tchitchikov and Nozdrev (those not-so-dead Russian souls), indeed Huck and Jim—including their cinematic blood-brothers in *The Defiant Ones*. Just as, strangely, the two men had come from the same town in Poland (a fact Jacobowsky cagily uses to outwit the hedonistic German major) it is fitting they should end together. "The world needs you both," Suzanne says to her departing "two possibilities." She is right; and so does the world need more intelligent, entertaining films like *Me and the Colonel*.

The Jew, Werfel, in fleeing from the Nazis received sanctuary at Lourdes. He later wrote: "One day in my great distress I made a vow. I vowed that if I escaped from this desperate situation and reached the saving shores of America, I would put off all other tasks and sing, as best I could, the song of Bernadette." *Me and the Colonel* sings Werfel's hymn too, though cadenced perhaps in a more secular way. This film, like *The Defiant Ones*, teaches the reality principle: that under the pressures of the "desperate situation" the myths of stereotype lose relevance. The world, as was France in 1940, may become a darkling plain, swept with all the alarms, terrors, and confusions which beset the human condition: but it is *one* world—or none—for both Christian soldier and deracinated Jew. Happily, in this film the two men do become, in Arnold's phrase, "true to one another." The widest abysses of communication may be spanned, even the strongest commitments of hatred and fear overcome. Jacobowsky's pre-natal snakebite of pride, and the Colonel's environmental fetter of prejudice, are lost amid love's Kropotkinesque labor, and the beaten ghosts "leave not a rack behind."—HERBERT FEINSTEIN



Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

After Richard Brooks' direction and adaptation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, one was just a bit more apprehensive than usual when it was first announced that he was to perform the same tasks for Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

However, this film is quite distinguished in a surprising way, because it manages to be adult in theme, entertaining in presentation, and to an extent, faithful to the original work. The films exists on its own four feet, so to speak, without the censorial agony of trying to bring the hot tin roof of homosexual implications upon the screen. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is one of the best presentations of neurotic family life in the Deep South—a genre seemingly at its height this year with *God's Little Acre* and *Hot Spell* very recently in our memories.

One of the interesting aspects of the film is that Brooks had as his script assistant the same James Poe who authored the *Hot Spell* screenplay—so it seems that Mr. Poe is rapidly becoming a master of the moss-covered mood play. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is still a tragedy of domestic and psychological proportions, and the marital conflict of Maggie and Brick Pollitt stands at the heart of the film. Here, it is Brick's confusion about the relationship of his wife and his best friend, Skipper, that drives him to drink and self-enforced celibacy. The fact that Skipper is dead only intensifies this guilty confusion, but all verbal intimation of latent sexual aberration is absent. Since this was the chief matter of Brick's violent arguments with his father, the terrifyingly self-confident landowner, "Big Daddy" Pollitt, director Brooks has resorted to the use of the camera to add impact to arguments which lack the shock value of hidden scandal. The thing that matters most in the film is not whether "Big Daddy" will live or die, but whether Maggie and Brick will be reconciled and become heirs to his wealth.

It also matters that we, as spectators, should be kept interested in these events and incredible people, and what results is cinematic style at its

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF:
Above: Southern sexercise.
Paul Newman and Elizabeth Taylor
Below: Mendacity lost.
Paul Newman and Burl Ives.

slickest. One gets a picture of the contemporary South that does not exist, really, but its images hold us constantly. Maggie and Brick are two of our most photogenic screen performers, Elizabeth Taylor and Paul Newman; the famous brass bed gleams wickedly in Technicolor, and the interiors of the great house are stunningly prepared by William A. Horning and Urie McCleary, thoroughly convincing one that this place *ought* to exist, even if it does not.

The long, emotion-wracked first sequence between Maggie and Brick in their bedroom is beautifully underlined at the proper moments by a subdued modern-jazz score, and the players are sharply aware of the moods and tensions that Williams must have wanted in his original conception.

The choice of Taylor and Newman for these pivotal roles was exceedingly fortunate, for Miss Taylor has become a very good actress. As Maggie, her accent strikes the only false note—it is unnecessary, perhaps, but every reaction is correct. Her strange amalgam of ladylike insecurity and adolescent petulance makes Maggie more persuasive and realistic when the battle of the sexes in a hot climate gets under way. Paul Newman's portrayal of the moody ex-athlete is a sensitive, subtle delineation of Williams' favorite American symbol: the morally maimed hero. Behind an icy-eyed mask of indifferent alcoholism, Newman once again proves himself to be among Hollywood's best actors, and some additional scenes and bits of business given to him in the film bring more poignance to the character of Brick, particularly in the basement sequence with "Big Daddy."

As "Big Daddy," Burl Ives is wonderfully gruff, pathetic, and less vulgar than in the play, and as a result, taken as a serious figure, not a clown. He has some fine moments when arguing with Brick (as well as an effective piece of reminiscence about his boyhood) and cameraman William Daniels follows Ives' hulking figure with a dramatic eye; one perceives Daniels' exciting work in those moments when Brick tries to escape his father's questions, or during their talk in the antique-cluttered basement.

Madeleine Sherwood is the only actress who could play the wasp-tongued "Sister Woman," mother of the horrible no-necked monsters, and she gives a loud, flawless performance. Jack Carson, as Gooper, her husband, is surprisingly impressive in a thankless role, and Judith Anderson, of all people, makes such a grotesque character as "Big Mama" just the right blend of southern-fried ham and noble, Trafalgar Square suffering. The chief craftswoman in the film, she bursts upon the scene quite broadly, but in that moment when she carries "Big Daddy's" birthday cake toward the camera, silhouetted in darkness, she suddenly speaks her quiet sorrows like some displaced Melpomene.

As for the musical score: it has a brief story behind it. The film was suddenly rushed into release before a score could be written, so out of the studio archives at MGM came a piece of music already used in some earlier, forgotten film, and it fitted the mordant goings-on in the Pollitt plantation quite beautifully. It is a fine score, jointly written by Charles Wolcott, Andre Previn and Jeff Alexander, and it skillfully weaves through that mansion of mendacity with a blues-truth all its own.—ALBERT JOHNSON.

Pot Bouille

In the battle between illusionists and audience, the French are clever sneak punchers. Unlike the sentimental fudges and stiff pageants that others dredge from social distress, their films are notorious for an elegant, silver-footed irony. But let the viewer be on his guard!—in all illusion, charm, sensation and tempo are the sauce that makes gritty truth palatable.

Once again, in Julien Duvivier's *Pot Bouille*, the reviewers have been had. Their frayed titillations—"boudouir romp . . . rollicking sex farce . . . mischievous capers . . . tongue-in-cheek antics . . . bawdy cuckoldry"—will send leering clerks and sniggering aesthetes scurrying to the theater. And they will get their money's worth. But make no mistake. For all its bare flesh, insinuations, and outright lechery, the film is no "Getting Gertie's Garter" in high style, period dress, and foreign language. It is a moral sneer at the petit-bourgeois.

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Adapted from Emile Zola's novel, its evocation of the Paris of the 1880's is superb. The immediate focus is a large apartment house where the dwellers, indifferent to their own conventions, are driven, Zola-fashion, by mechanical passions and fatefully conceived solutions—a maze where the author prods his laboratory specimens now this way, now that. It is a bustled world of cluttered rooms, seductions on thick down pillows, love nests in *Odalisque* decor, backstairs gossip, rain-drenched streets, musty shops, lusting wives, gluttonous merchants, salons, dances, and small talk.

At the invitation of an uncle who lives with his wife, a fluttery hypochondriac, and a drab of a mistress under the same roof, a young fortune hunter from the provinces (Gerard Philippe) enters this sewer of respectability. He is a shrewd, sensual opportunist, an anti-hero, as venal as the other occupants, but lacking their hypocrisy. Himself corrupt, he observes their corruption and web of intrigues with a scoundrel's tolerance, a jackal's greed, and the clarity of his own obsessive ambition.

The young adventurer finds employment in a fabric shop. The beautiful, aloof proprietress recognizes his business flair, but resists his advances. It is a momentary failure. He moves to another shop, becomes her competitor—and establishes himself in the bed of his boss's wife. He becomes a bright-plumaged scavenger of hyper-tensed wives, giddy mistresses (other men's), and ripe, marriageable daughters, and makes his conquests with the dialects and postures of the romantic love they long for. The entire house, except for the buxom maids whom he chooses to ignore for bigger game (their humor and earthy cynicism are the counterpoint of working class honesty—the only refreshing note in the film), is his sexual domain.

The families befriend him and he betrays them. The men rage in deceit, the women suffer the lover lost and admire the departing rapier-like figure. He plunges headlong into another feverish pursuit, escaping pride and boredom, but always keeping a sharp eye for a commercial opportunity. And there the film might stand—The Parvenu Boys in Libido Land—a fantasy of sexual excesses and blustering cuckolds. But this tale of a charmer probes deeper.

He is challenged to a duel by a feckless boob (after a bedroom confrontation scene that is a classic of its genre). The boob is depressed by his bravado. He seeks the advice of his paunchy associates who, themselves, are lamenting their fickle mistresses. And where do good bourgeois discuss a problem of life and death?—over a heavy meal. They decide on the wiser course—the sensible solution: the gesture of a duel is poppycock in an age where honor is purchased cheap in the market place or soiled in the courts.

And the philanderer gratefully accepts. He is, we find, no gallant, not even a heedless libertine. He is no different than the people he exploited, and he succumbs just as inevitably to the pressures of society. In the end, he finds L-O-V-E with the beautiful fabric-shop owner and marries her—or, more specifically, her business. It is the totally unoriginal way he gets what he wants.

Philippe, in a familiar role for him, brilliantly defines and reinforces our idea of a brassy rooster with guile, no morals, and less courage. Danielle Darrieux, Dany Carrel, the veteran character players Jane Marken, Henri Vilbert, and Jean Brochard, and the rest of the large cast are impeccable.

Pot Bouille is another impressive performance from the old master, Duvivier. He directs with a cool head, and infuses Henri Jeanson's witty, explicit script with an attractive air of confused foolery. But if he never blunts a point, neither does he miss one. There are mordant scenes in the film that are a remarkable blend of sophistication and social comment. With beautiful, and always appropriate, sets, costumes and music, he has managed to impart just the right fragrance to conceal the unpleasantness. There are breathtaking moments in the black-and-white photography of Michel Kelber (one of the world's great cinematographers), particularly during the salon and ball scenes, when, for an instant, the plastic material springs to life . . . and we are no longer looking at actors . . . .

But then, the men who made this film are artists.—MARK SUFRIN

The Nun's Story

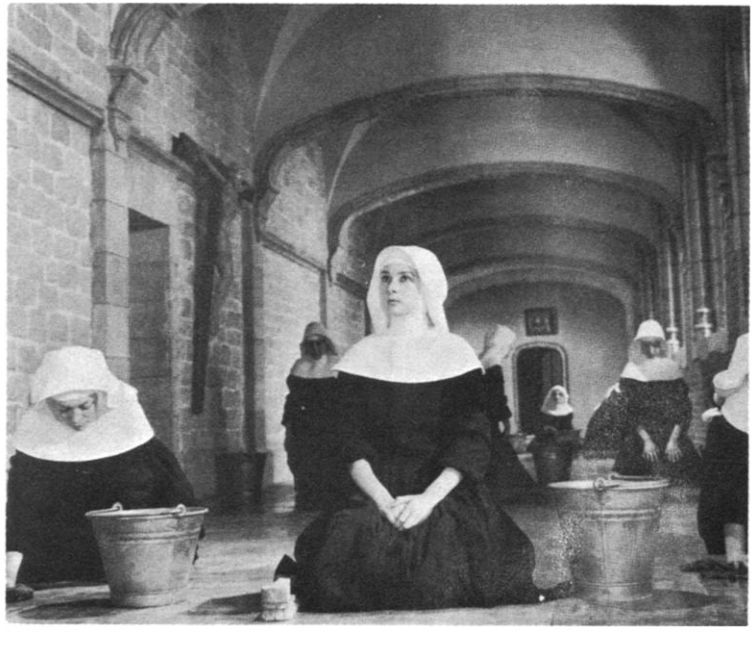
Not only is this film a major directorial achievement in the career of Fred Zinnemann, but *The Nun's Story* is the best study of religious life ever made in the American cinema. A masterpiece of semidocumentary and character revelation, it covers a period of almost two decades in the life of a young Belgian girl who enters a convent and its atmosphere of interior silence and self-sacrifice.

The progress of this character from Gabrielle Van der Mal to Sister Luke is shown in every ritualistic detail, and after some initial scenes of quiet luxury in Ostend, when Gabrielle (Audrey Hepburn) says farewell to her physician-father (Dean Jagger), the spectator is immediately led behind the cloistered doorways of the nunnery.

Exemplary camerawork by Franz Planer and art direction by Alexander Trauner endow these sequences with a Gothically austere beauty in background and perception; each image is carefully presented, whether lingering briefly upon a Dürer-like crucifix in an agony of sunlight, or dispassionately observing the prostrate figures of the novices lying face downward in their community of selfless dedication.

The episodes describing Sister Luke's nursing duties after she leaves the convent contain an absorbing succession of character studies among a world of nuns filmed against many locales, from the interiors of a Belgian asylum to the inchoate routines of medicine in the African bush.

The entire film exhibits a warmth of cinematic approach and intimate attentiveness to character-detail and background not found to such a complete degree in a Zinnemann film since *The Member of the Wedding*. In all of his



THE NUN'S STORY: *Sister Luke (Audrey Hepburn) in "the grand silence."*

works, there has been some touch of documentary, and here, it is particularly discernible in the Brussels madhouse, where violent patients shriek from steaming tubs while a nun sits patiently attending them, and in the film's observations of the native population in the Congo. The sweeping rivers and sounds of Africa, and an amusing sequence showing some native children watching a Christmas service, are impressively contrasted to the autumnal disciplines of the European world.

The leisurely pacing of the film is part of a respectful labor of love, and, surprisingly, only the wartime sequences seem oddly ineffectual. However, this section of the picture is utilized chiefly to further emphasize Sister Luke's growing inability to ignore the impulses of the outside world, and the difficulties of showing the introverted personalities of nuns are managed by astute implication and understatement most of the time, with even the smallest roles brilliantly etched by such performers as Mildred Dunnock, Patricia Collinge, Margaret Phillips and Patricia Bosworth.

Audrey Hepburn's delineation of Sister Luke's crumbling inner conviction and emotional turmoil is a sincere and deeply moving portrait, and the best performance of her screen career so far. As the indomitable Mother Superior, Dame Edith Evans remains, to the end, symbolic of a paradoxical philosophy of self-abnegation and gentle tyranny which gives the film its unique tragic depth. In their American screen debuts, both Dame Edith and Dame Peggy Ashcroft give superb performances. The latter, as Mother Mathilde, the supervising nun of the Congo hospital, is a mistress of the meaningfully averted glance; her portrayal is the one in which we perceive most clearly the humane balance of religious duty and worldly intuition which Sister Luke cannot attain. In her milieu of African joys and sorrows, Ashcroft represents finally, the grandeur of Mother Mathilde's triumph over the self, and the admirable inner strength of a true nun.

Sister Luke's secular anxieties are adroitly stirred by the cynical Italian whom she assists in surgery, Dr. Fortunati (Peter Finch), and Zinnemann handles their duologues with taste and humor. Robert Anderson, in an impeccable screenplay, gives Sister Luke and Dr. Fortunati sensitivities that help each performer to capture sympathy with ease.

Perhaps *The Nun's Story* is most notable for its sudden intimations of mortality and despair in a sacred environment. The attack upon Sister Luke by a madwoman (Colleen Dewhurst); the murder of Sister Aurelie (Dorothy Alison); the smiling omniscience of Mother Christophe (Beatrice Straight) and the indescribably tragic, bitter look on the face of Mother Katherine (Barbara O'Neil) as Sister Luke relinquishes her vows, are all glimpses into aspects of human frailty that bring profundity to this story of religious athanasia and disillusionment.

The final sequence of *The Nun's Story*, showing Gabrielle walking out the back door of the convent into a world of post-war strangeness, is a thing of tremendous force and beauty. The garments of Sister Luke hang from a peg in the cloister chamber (where we and the camera remain), while at the end of a narrow alleyway Gabrielle looks toward the Belgian canals, the sun, and the sky. Suddenly, a great bell within the convent strikes, calling the nuns back to a world of "the grand silence" and somehow, we accuse ourselves for ignoring so often both the interior beauty of the soul and those who may have found it. —ALBERT JOHNSON

Notti Bianche

Notti Bianche is diabolically clever in the real sense of that cliché: not just "very" clever (which it isn't) or antithetical to life (which it may be) but baffled by its own design. From its title to its innermost intuition it spins out paradox, doubles, and neat dialectic. But the better Visconti's geometry works, the more trivial his material becomes.

The layout (adapted from Dostoyevsky, the supreme geometrician) is as follows. Natalia

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(Maria Schell) has her choice of two men. To the Lodger (Jean Marais) she gave her heart a year ago. When he left (mysteriously, of course) he asked her to wait a year, and the time is now up. The other (Marcello Mastroianni) meets, woos, and nearly wins her from her faith with his doggy, frantic affection during the three "sleepless nights" of the title. The night her confidence in Marais cracks, a miraculous snowfall transfigures the city, ironically blessing Mastroianni's triumph with a skyful of sterility-symbol. But as day breaks over the white, empty streets (which at night are full of shifting, flickering life) Marais is found waiting at the canal bridge, and after a panicky but decent farewell Natalia goes off with him. Clearly, for anything to come of this diagram the director must be really perceptive.

Visconti is not. He can multiply effects—chiaroscuro lighting, tricky substitutions, three-dimensional compositions—and he is an expert with atmospheric props—mist, rubble, poor folks, etc. But people are beyond him.

From three root figures, the Lodger, the Landlady, and the Girl, Visconti derives plenty of fractions and equations, if no human beings. The Lodger splits into a trite double; Mastroianni shy, fussy, helpless, plaintive, likable, derelict; Marais inscrutable, imperative, laconic. To spice this formula come the usual ironies. Thus, when Marais first appears to the Girl she is blushful, contented, and literally pinned to the skirt of her blind grandmother; when Mastroianni finds her she is forlorn, standing on a canal bridge at night, and he supposes (hopes) she is a whore. Mastroianni's landlady mothers him with rackety matutinal care; Marais patronizes his with detective thrillers and opera tickets. The Girl is more interestingly split. At Natalia she is full of innocent energies, weeping, laughing, naïve and sententious, changeable and adamant—all by impulse. As the whore (Clara Calamai) she is a stereotype of handy, venal sex, locked clumsily to Natalia by a scheme of dull opposites and coincidences. If Visconti gets effusions, not performances, from his principals, he must blame himself for putting schematics in the place of drama. —JAMES KERANS

Muhomatsu, the Ricksha Man

Judging by this film, which won the Grand Prize at Venice, it was a poor year in Japan as everywhere else—unless, as one suspects, the sending of this film to the festival was an attempt to entice Western audiences with familiar material. Starring Toshiro Mifune, and made in widescreen ("Tohoscope") and color, *The Ricksha Man* is what the Japanese consider a mere "two-handkerchief picture." It is the second version of a popular story made by director Hiroshi Inagaki, who is a master of *jidai-geki* (he also made *Samurai*).

The plot is episodic, a string of incidents illustrating the heart of gold of Matsugoro, a rather wild ricksha man. He rescues a small boy and befriends his family; the father, an army captain, dies; the mother asks Matsugoro to help train the boy in manly ways, and he does so. When the boy goes away to school, Matsugoro has what he considers evil thoughts about the captain's wife, and rushes out in the snow to die. Two bankbooks are found, showing he had deposited in their names all the money the family had given him. By this time the second handkerchiefs are out. The finale finishes them off: Mrs. Yoshioka embraces Matsugoro's cold body.

This is the stuff of popular fable; it belongs in the world of Robin Hood, and its charms are those of athleticism, incidental comedy, and bathos. Mifune, "that great ham," as Donald Richie has called him, is a kind of Japanese Douglas Fairbanks, and if there have to be characters who regret "evil thoughts" it is well that actors of his sort are around to play them; he is a supple actor, and radiates joy. Several of the episodes are positive larks: the retaliation against the stingy theater owner (Matsugoro fries garlic and leeks in the midst of the audience and creates a hilarious brawl), the foot race in which his ricksha-man's gait incongruously brings him belated victory, and his startling virtuoso performance on the huge Gion drum.

Mrs. Yoshioka is played by Hideko Takamine, who has been seen here as the teacher in

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Mrs. Yoshioka is played by Hideko Takamine, who has been seen here as the teacher in

24 Eyes; in 1956 she won the top Japanese acting awards. She is pleasantly subdued, with perhaps just the proper touch of "evil thoughts" of her own.

In sum, a pleasant but entirely routine picture which may be quite palatable to Western audiences.—ERNEST CALLENBACH.

The Road a Year Long

The Road a Year Long, directed by Giuseppe De Santis (*Caccia Tragica, Riso Amaro*) was made in Yugoslavia with an Italo-Yugoslav cast; it is a work of sprawling structure about isolated hill peasants who decide to build a road from their village to a valley below. Although De Santis is obviously condemning whatever official indifferences exist that oppose his protagonists, the road-building is really a background for his chief concern: the various emotional and psychological changes brought to the villagers of Zagora.

De Santis' happy peasants singing over rock-piles are not any more convincing than they were in the Italian rice fields. But the acting is brilliant and obviously evoked by a master behind the camera. In the film's four episodes, each merged into the other, two men dominate the story. A glib ex-sailor and vagabond, Naklapolo (Massimo Girotti) sings and jokes his way through life until the road building forces him into leadership of the men and devotion to Catherine (Silvana Pampanini), whose house stands in the way of construction. Girotti's facile personality brings sardonic humor to the role, particularly when he sings lustily to a graveyard that must be desecrated in order to make way for the road. Ivica Pajer plays Lorenzo, a restless Eros of the village, with so much truth and sudden pathos that his affair with the storekeeper's glamorous wife (Eleonora Rossi-Drago) has some of the richness and impact of Girotti's early work in *Ossessione*. In the minor roles, Bert Sotlar, Milivoje Zivanovic, and Niksa Stefanini are insurpassable.

De Santis' Yugoslav venture is an unwieldy film, and his peasant women a bit too beautiful, but he is still an ardent cinema champion for the dignity and courage of simple men of the European soil. —ALBERT JOHNSON

Illicit interlude: Ivica Pajer and Eleonora Rossi-Drago in THE ROAD A YEAR LONG.

The Captives

In this our comfortable cave
We watch the moving shadows and
Rejoice that they are made by fingers,
While with our own hands
We rattle our chains,
Laugh, jeer, kick dust, applaud.

Once, it was thought to give us
Bright pastoral scenes:
A silly dream world,
Full of strange colors—
Birds with fantastic plumage,
Sunsets,
Men and girls strolling on a river bank
As if there were nothing
More exciting to do.

We soon stopped all *that!*
We whistle too at the projectionist
If the light sometimes goes out,
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Chicago, Ill.

For the Defense

The first issue of the new *Film Quarterly* was very interesting and I wish the magazine all success. I especially enjoyed Herbert Feinstein's breezy article on the Hollywood ladies in relation to the Hollywood version of the law. I don't suppose that factual accuracy is in itself very important to any art, but since the films in question profess to be "realistic," and since Hollywood makes such a great show of the availability of "research" staffs and of the use of "technical" advice, the audience probably expects facts, professional or other, to be reported accurately in a film, and any clear departure from the known facts in any production must call the artistic integrity of the thing into question for those who happen to know.
—MARK SCHORER
Berkeley, Calif.

Film Quartered

CONDUCTED BY A. PISMO CLAM*

This department features regular competitions. Any number of entries may be submitted, but each must be 250 words or less, and none can be returned. One prize of $10.00, and $3.00 prizes for additional published entries, will be awarded.

RESULTS OF COMPETITION NO. 1

Competitors were asked to review certain "unrealized" films in the style of a well-known critic or magazine. First prize goes to Noilly Prat, whose imitation of *Variety* seems closest to the original. I especially liked his "DEATH is a natural for exploitation here . . ." Threnody Cooper's Tyler vs. Bresson fell further from the mark, but its grandly swelling period was deemed worthy of inclusion. I sadly missed reference to Robert Flaherty in Mr. Harker's Museum of Modern Art note, yet his "Incidentally providing a glimpse . . ." is a model of perverse sentence structure, and undoubtedly vintage MMA.

VARIETY, Paris, Nov. 30

H. G. Clouzot, of *DIABOLIC* renown, has sent grosses soaring at the Atelier Lyrique with a new three hour Cinemascope shocker, *DEATH ON THE INSTALMENT PLAN* (*MORT À CREDIT*). Pic shapes as bonanza for this small (482) nabe, first frame chalking up record-breaking 900,000 francs. Based on Celine's Depression days novels *JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE NIGHT* and *DEATH ON THE INSTALMENT PLAN*, flick tells sordid story of author's adolescence and career in Cameroons and U.S. Director spoke opening nite to jammed house, urging "greater freedom in a new political climate," had some Americans here concerned over alleged Red tinge to reels depicting hero's adventures in World War I and brief term at Ford plant. *DEATH* is a natural for exploitation here, but dubbing and heavy shearing would improve U.S. artie prospects, with shapely Simone Signoret and heavy Yves Montand plus factors. Algerian street-fighting limited attendance Sunday (29) but rave reviews in key mags are packing them in, with S.R.O. sign diplayed today. Direction excellent, lensing so-so. —NOILLY PRAT

Although in choosing to symbolize the deep rejection of society and its demands that Thoreau's book demanded, M. Bresson has employed his characteristic strategy of merging real and phantasmic actions, attempting to produce a species of surrealism *al fresco*, through the use of a nonactor, an unknown New England farmer, and exploiting his uncanny natural skill at handling bean seeds (around which, as a kind of grail, the entire center sequence of the film is ponderously but meticulously constructed) while keeping always in view, at a level just shading below the conscious, Thoreau's fundamental phobia for human relationships, disguised as it so skillfully was under resistances impervious to the ordinary inquiring reader's mind; nonetheless we may still wonder if he has been entirely successful in preserving the profound emotional contact which Thoreau was able, perhaps unwitting of his real techniques, to build up in the reader—or, for that matter, whether in following the structure of Walden so strictly, and refusing *tout court* to introduce any alleviating plot elements, he has not turned the cinema inside out, as it were, and made it a mere appendage of literature.
—THRENODY COOPER

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES. Originally a cameraman, David Lean turned to direction as early as 1942, when he co-directed *In Which We Serve* (1942). More recently, he has specialized in literate, if not especially cinematic, adaptations drawn from classic English novels. His *Hound of the Baskervilles* (1958), shown here by kind permission of its American owners Product Pictures, captures an *ambiance* of solipsistic dread unparalleled since the *wunderkind* days of Orson Welles (*Citizen Kane*, 1941; *The Magnificent Ambersons*, 1944), eschewing though it does the more taxing

* Mr. Clam is a director well known from his nonperformance of that role in *The Bank Dick*.

character complexities of this late Victorian set-piece.

John Gielgud's Holmes, inscrutable master of needle and slipper, and his *eminence grise* Dr. Watson (admirably delineated by Sir Ralph Richardson) serve as perfect foils for the masterful Moriarty and Mrs. Hudson of Orson Welles and Brenda de Banzie. If the hound at times exhibits that lamentable anthropomorphism characteristic of the late Rin Tin Tin, he still fills his brief, deadly function almost beyond cavil. Incidentally providing a glimpse of another notable English director, Sir Carol Reed appears briefly as the country doctor of the first scene.

While one must reserve the highest measure of praise from a film patently dedicated to the celebration of a world long since forgotten, *The Hound* yet commands our attention for the high gloss and polish which Mr. Lean brings to his camerawork, forcing us to wish once more that this able director would turn his hand to those contemporary themes with which his colleagues—most notably Paul Rotha—have so long and fruitfully been engaged.—JONATHAN HARKER

COMPETITION NO. 2

Entries should be addressed to: "Film Quartered," University of California Press, Berkeley 4, California. Deadline: January 15, 1959. Prizes will be announced in the Spring issue.

A Los Angeles psychiatrist was recently quoted (out of context) as saying that horror films such as *I Was a Teen-Age Werewolf* and *Blood of Dracula* constitute a form of "self-administered psychiatric therapy for America's adolescents." Submit a title, with brief synopsis, for a similar film of equal or greater psychotherapeutic value to the nation's teen-agers.

[Editor's Notebook, continued]

imagination has come directly to grips with its subject and fashioned an original work in film terms from the outset. *Citizen Kane, Potemkin, The Navigator*—such masterpieces do indeed fit the pattern. But what of the other films remaining in one's personal collection of endlessly reseeable films (say *Rashomon, The Informer, Le Jour Se Lève*)? Very many are derived from previously existing literary works. And the present is the heyday of the adaptor, in Hollywood and elsewhere. If, as Prévert once remarked, the writer of the script is the male principle in the creation of a film, while the director is the female, gestative principle, we seem to be well into an age of cinematic parthenogenesis, in which the screen writer no longer fulfills his main function, but is artistically parasitic upon previously existing literary works. (We are of course aware of the economic reasons adduced for Hollywood's now almost exclusive reliance on "pretested" story properties, and do not mean to blame writers for a situation not of their making and, in some cases at least, not to their liking.) And, if the film-makers rely upon novelists and playwrights to go out into the world, find what is interesting or important, and mold it into dramatic or narrative form, it is only to be expected that they will also follow the path of least resistance in adapting literary works for the screen. That path, down which we tread with numb familiarity by now, is the path of sticking with the given dialogue, scene structure, point of view, settings, and so on—or worse, to alter these on artistically irrelevant grounds so that even the stagy or literary unity of the original is destroyed.

The film-maker is too often only an attendant at an elaborate transmission-belt, the product of which is a visual bodying-forth of events originally described in words. Words cram the soundtracks and flood the ears. Cinemascope has brought the screen closer to the shape of the stage; cutting has slowed to a deadly crawl, while actors prowl about in long shot, talking at one another. (Cinemascope, incidentally, is one of the things we are *against*. Oddly enough, in this we are at one with virtually everyone in the film industry—including, it is said, some of the men whose gambit the wide screen originally was.)

Indeed one is forced to question whether we are living in the visual age so confidently foreseen over the years. In television as on the movie screen, dialogue is first and blocking next and editing nowhere, in spite of pious admonitions to "keep it visual." Maybe people just *like* talking? Talk was, after all, the mainstay of radio for several decades. Maybe the ear *is* more powerful than the eye? Maybe you can-