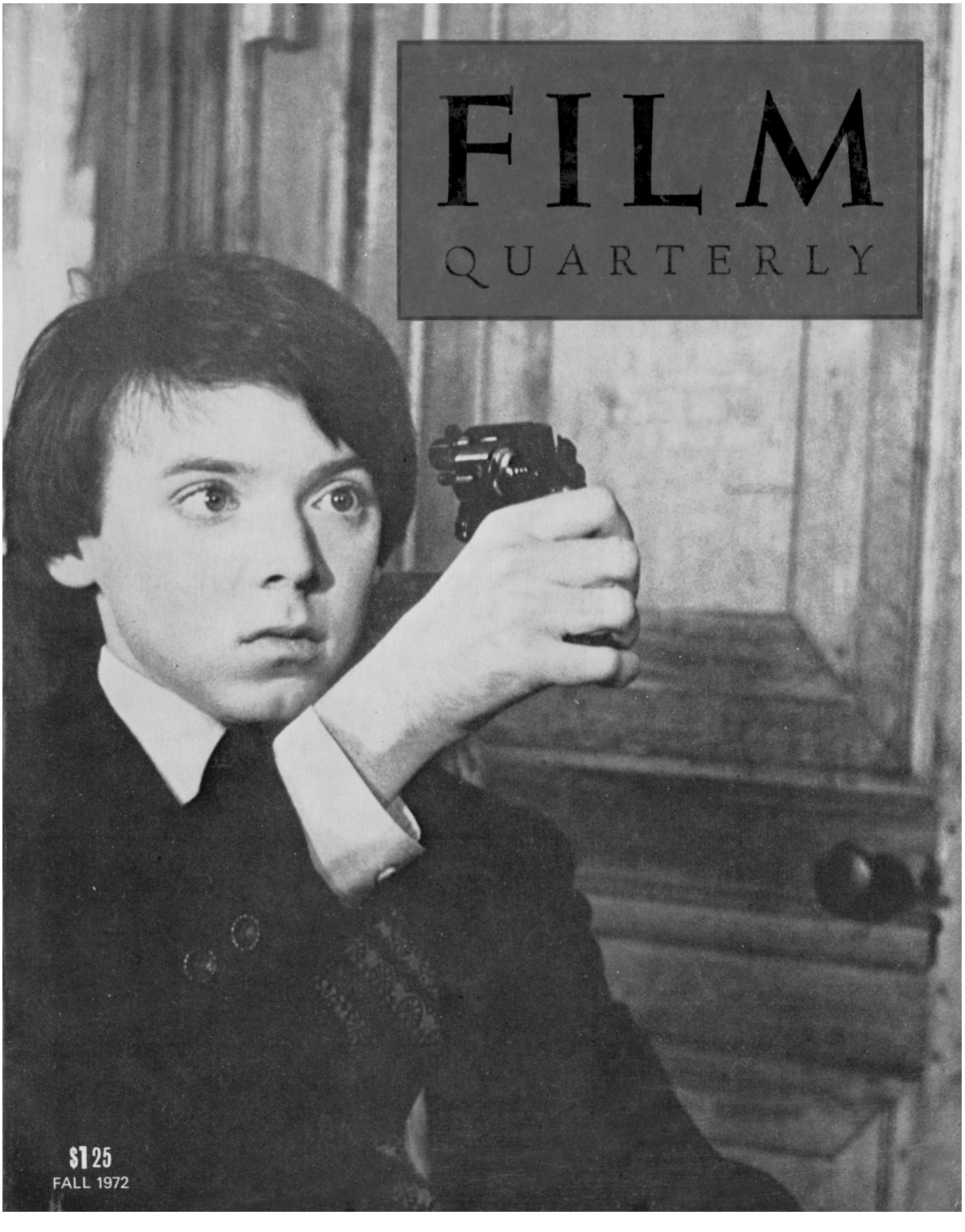
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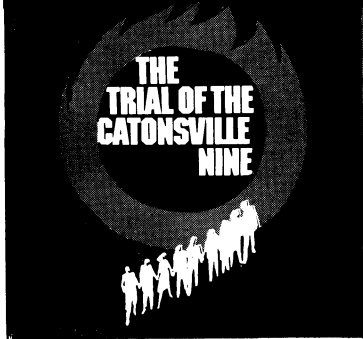

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VOLUME XXVI, No. 1 Fall 1972

Editor's Notebook

ARTICLES

INTERVIEWS

REVIEWS

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JOAN MELLEN

An Interview with Gillo Pontecorvo

The director of THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS, which has become a classic because of its astonishingly newsreel-like reconstruction of the Algerian independence struggle, spoke with Joan Mellen in English. His remarks have been slightly abridged for publication.

As a Marxist, what has attracted you to making films about the colonial revolution rather than films about struggles in industrialized countries?

I have made so few films that my answer must be "by accident." I make one film every four or five years. In all, I have made four films.* I was also supposed to make a film about a section of Fiat called "Confino Fiat," where they put all the politically active workers during the Scelba government and the entire series of center governments which brought a great repression to Italy. It wasn't shot for a number of reasons. But I might have done that film instead of *Algiers*. The fight of oppressed people against colonialism, in any case, interests me because it's one of the most difficult moments of the human condition. And because our entire civilization is constructed within this matrix. On the shoulders of colonial people, we draw all our strengths. And our manner of thinking and our culture depend always to a greater or smaller degree on this fact. Even if you don't have colonies, your manner of thinking, your culture, derives from the fact that Americans came from Europe . . . I was also going to make a film last year about Pinelli, the anarchist who "fell" to his death from police headquarters. I was so stupid, I let someone who had seen *Sacco and Vanzetti* convince me that the theme was too

**The Long Blue Road* (1957); *Kapo* (1959); *The Battle of Algiers* (1965); *Burn!* (1969)

close. Now, I'm furious not to have done it. But it's too late to make this film because a few days ago we had another incident (the murder of Calebresi, the police officer implicated in the Pinelli death) . . . One year ago the event seemed as if it were finished and you could handle it. But now many other things have happened.

What were some of the difficulties in shooting Battle of Algiers? *Was it hard to get people to work with you? Were you assisted by the Boumedienne government?*

Getting people to work with us was more the achievement of the Algerian co-producer than the government. From the government we had the normal things, but these were more easily obtained than anywhere else when you want to shoot in a street. You must have a permit and they give it very promptly. What was more useful was that they gave us the possibility of using some soldiers in the mass scenes. The Algerian and Italian producers were obliged to pay, but less than usual. We had excellent collaboration with the people who were brought to work with us. Even though they were paid, they participated more than the usual extras . . . it was a most interesting experience because we went there with a very small crew. The Italian producer to whom I brought this subject told me that he would make any film I wanted, but that this project was impossible. It meant "making a film without any meaning, in black and white, without actors and without a story." He said that "the Italian people don't care about black people." I told him I am sorry, but Algerians are white like you. In fact, the Italian people were very touched by the war in Algeria because both Algeria and France are so close to us. Still, they didn't want to make the film. One producer said, "only because it is you, I will give a minimum guarantee of 45 million lira ($80,-000)"—which is nothing. The film earned this amount in Italy in six days!

The crew was so light and we had so little money that we began the film without even a script girl, thinking we could find one there. After one month we had to call a script girl from Rome because of the confusion in the footage caused by the young Algerian girl . . . In the other branches of work we did much better. For instance, we had only one chief electrician and when we arrived we asked people who usually put electricity in houses to work with us. Our electrician began to teach them what they must know to work in films. The Algerians were very clever and very rapid learners. After a short time we had nearly a normal crew. The same thing was done by Gatti, the photographer, who chose three young men and worked with them. They took notes and made little designs of where the lights should be, scene by scene. I can remember the name of a young man who is now a good photographer there, Ali Maroc. He was working and trying to learn exactly as if he were in a course of cinematography. And it was very easy for Gatti because he likes this kind of situation. In any case it was very useful that the crew was so compact. We did a lot of work that usually presupposes an enormous crew—the mass scenes for example. We saved money because we did things in a nontraditional way.

It is clear that you have made a film on the side of Algerian independence. But is this undermined in any way by treating the violence committed by Algerians and French in a one-to-one relationship? You show the Algerians killing someone, then the French retaliating, then the Algerians, etc., whereas in the historical situation the French killed hundreds of thousands more than the Algerians, including women and children. There is only one moment in the film where we get a sense of this, when Ben M'Hidi says, "Give us your napalm and we'll give you our women's baskets."

This happens in an extremely tense moment of the film and it creates a proper balance of the problem. I thought it was enough. He says it at the moment toward which all the dramaturgy has been pointing. Then you see the Algerian people being tortured and you hear the musical motif of Ali La Pointe. You feel the difference between the French and the Algerians who are defending themselves with anything they have.

There is another more important point. I think it is insignificant to say, "One side killed ten, the other killed two." The problem is that

they are in a situation in which the only factor is oppression. Then they begin to fight and I don't believe that when people fight, some fight hard and some fight less hard. The Algerians castrated people and also committed torture. You must judge who is historically condemned and who is right. And to give the feeling that you identify with those who are right. At the beginning I wanted to call the film by another name, a biblical term, "to give birth in sorrow." But my associate producer said, "You are mad, no one will go and see it with this dull title." But this title gives an indication of my intention. The birth of a nation happens with pain on both sides, although one side has cause and the other not . . . when the torture became theorized and scientific, it became an important moment of the war, and for this reason we began the film with torture. Then we didn't persist in showing it because our aim was not to put the accent on the repression, but on something more worthwhile, in homage to the people who fight for freedom. We didn't care if you could find sadistic people among the paratroopers; it is not interesting. It is much more interesting to show that you could find among them some who had ideas, confused ideas taken from their experience in Indochina and from half-digested books they read. In any case if you put a colonel who is completely normal and obliged by the historical context to do something, you condemn the one who sent him, *il mandante*. This is the logic of colonialism. . . .

Was Battle of Algeria *shot with any degree of continuity?*

No, for many reasons of organization. When you have crowds, you must shoot all the crowd scenes to spend less money. The crowd scenes which generally seem credible enough, and even spontaneous, are the most organized part of the whole film. Because we did not have a very long time to shoot, we drew all the movements of the crowd with chalk on the actual pavement, "action 1, 2, or 3, this group goes around," etc. This is how we did the great crowd scene, the demonstration down the stairs. When this became automatic, I no longer looked at it and my assistant controlled it when we shot . . . I took the five, ten, fifteen people who were nearest to the camera and worked only with them. I didn't even look at the others. I looked to see if the expression on their faces was right. A crowd scene can be spoiled if the expression of only one person is not exactly what you want. It is the person two meters from the camera who conveys the feeling and determines whether the scene is right or not. In this way you create the feeling of a stolen moment during an actual happening. If you don't have this kind of control, you always have two or three people who are looking the wrong way and the scene is spoiled.

Were your nonprofessional actors familiar with the actual Battle of Algiers? Were they participants in the historical incidents described in the film?

No, because the complexion of the people of Algiers had changed completely. After the victory many people arrived from the rural areas who didn't know what had happened in Algiers. They occupied the houses in the Casbah vacated by the others who were now living in the better part of the town, where the Europeans had lived before. We shot principally with them for a simple economic reason: they needed the money and were happy to work with us. They didn't know exactly what had happened, but they were in favor of what had happened.

You asked me before about the FLN leader in Tunis who didn't know that the demonstrations in 1960 were about to take place. We wanted to give the feeling that when the river begins to flow, nothing can stop it, even if something gives the appearance of stopping it. The finale of the film, the music which is the theme of Ali, is not finished, but open-ended music. It is left open to give the sense that it is not only for Algiers, but for all people in this condition. The condition goes on not only in Algeria.

How much of the original script changed from the time it was written to the final version? I read somewhere that you changed the scene in which the three Algerian women transform themselves into French women, that there was originally dialogue in this scene.

Again I am sorry to bore you with music, but for me the roots of a film are always in music.

I was not happy with this scene when I was preparing the script with Franco Solinas. He felt one way, I didn't feel that way. But I had nothing to propose in place of what we had. Sometimes you don't like something, but you have no alternative. The terrible day in which I was supposed to shoot this scene arrived. We began at 8 o'clock and by one o'clock we had not shot anything. In the script there was a joke among the girls waiting for Djafar, a light moment which I felt was very false. It broke the unity of the film. Finally, because I was desperate, I said that in an hour we must begin to shoot. We went to eat and I was beside myself. I ate alone without the crew thinking of how I could shoot the scene . . . finally I thought of a percussion piece I had recorded on a cassette machine before the beginning of the film . . . I decided to try this because I thought it was very beautiful. Suddenly I said, "It's very easy, it's done." I cut all the dialogue; who cares about the dialogue? I didn't have the girls laugh; I made the scene very tense. And the rehearsal was with this music, but with loudspeakers, very loud. Immediately it generated a terrible tension, not only for me, but for the three girls in the scene, who were not professionals but picked up in the street. They began to feel it. The scene became very short and, I think, moving. In one hour we had done the whole scene. It was very, very satisfying for me.

Was The Battle of Algiers *popular in Algeria?*

I have heard that the first time the film was shown many wounded people went to see it. It was the greatest box-office success ever. But this was to be expected. It didn't depend on the film. Rather, it was because it tells the story of the Algerian people for the first time.

Among political people some made criticisms. And even this depended on the fact that after liberation many groups were fighting for personal power. Those who were far from the group which co-produced the film (The Casbah Film Company and Yacef Saadi, military commander for the autonomous zone of Algiers during the Battle of Algiers), objected on two grounds: that the film was too kind to the French and that we showed someone who was alive, Yacef Saadi, whose enemies were against this. They were not very profound criticisms, but sometimes they were very severe. They depended on one's political position. But the film was an obvious success, the first film about the struggle for national liberation.

When was The Battle of Algiers *finally shown in France?*

It was shown first in Italy, because the film is an Italo-Algerian coproduction. Second, or at nearly the same time, it was shown in Algeria. In France the producers of the film did not even try to show it for three years because the situation was so tense that we were sure it was impossible. The French delegation had walked out of the Venice festival when the film was shown. It was shown in France finally one year ago. We had the permission of the censor. We took great precautions for the opening because we were afraid of trouble. We had more than fifty private showings for political and cultural personalities and for journalists. And we had a marvellous reception that we would never have believed possible. Even the newspapers said marvellous things from positions that might well be dangerous. They said that the film doesn't offend France. So we were very hopeful.

Three large theaters were ready to open the film when they received threats telling the managers of the theaters that "we are going to kill you, your wife, and your children." These men, who were not paid to be killed, said "No, thank

you." They didn't open the film. So for another six or seven months after having had the approval of the censor, the film did not open. They tried to open it in rural areas outside of Paris, where there were students and workers, but even there the fascists put bombs in the theater three times and huge quantities of dirt were thrown on the screen. Later the French director Louis Malle took the matter into his own hands and brought about the showing of the film.

The use of sound, and music in particular, is one of the most outstanding qualities of your films.

The rapport between music and image for me is extremely important. First of all because the only thing I like deeply in my life is music—more than movies. I wanted to become a composer, but for economic reasons I could not, because you must have enough money to study for eight years, eight hours each day, to become the director of an orchestra or a composer. And so I began to study music when I was already too old. I worked with a friend, a French composer of atonal music named Leibowitz. I would begin from time to time for three months and I would always stop for financial reasons.

Perhaps it seems strange, but movies fulfill some of the desires which impel me to write music; not all, but some. The most beautiful moment for me in movies is when you begin to make the sound. At this moment I am really happy. For all my documentary films I wrote the music. "Wrote" is of course overstated because I can't write, I haven't studied. I can play and discuss with another composer. I say "another" because I am in this strange Italian category "melodist." In Italy there are two categories, melodist and composer. A "melodist-composer" can't sign something alone, and this is right because he must have someone who can do the orchestration and write the music. But I have collaborated on the music in all my films.

The only one in which I have not done this is *Queimeda, (Burn!)*. We had only two months in which to do the editing and they came close to Christmas when the film had to open. For superstitious reasons I invented a little theme. When the child puts his hands up, followed by a long shot of the sugar cane fields on fire, there are a few notes, a *nota tenuta* that I wrote. Superstitiously I put this in during the recording. We put away what had been written for that moment in the film. I played it on the piano and the orchestra played it immediately after. Because in all my films I had done some of the music, I was afraid not to have done it in this film as well.

I think that any director begins with a little fear the morning when he goes to the set to shoot. But *I* go with great fear. Sometimes I arrive without knowing where to put the camera and what to do with it. If I've thought of the scene before and tried to compose the theme of the music, if I have found this theme, my behavior is completely different. I become extremely sure of myself and I know exactly what to do or not to do. When I discover the music, it is as if one were going in the dark on the stairs, and you had something to hold onto so that you could be sure and not hesitate. The same thing is true for me when I have the music, the sound. I know, for instance, that I can stay on this face just a little more than usual or just a little less because you must do this and not another thing. . . .

When I have no music, I don't know. I wait. It is always an embarrassing situation when you arrive and don't know how to place the camera, what to do, because a thousand solutions may be correct. The crew creates a strange silence so as not to disturb you. And this silence disturbs you much more because you know that they are waiting . . . Apart from the story that any movie has to tell, there is sometimes, although not always, another story—which tells the inner story: the hope, the sorrow, the fragility of happiness or hope, the absurd, the great themes of the human condition. For me when I am ready to tell this second story, to express its presence, I depend very often on music. I don't want to make a theory of this. I speak only of what happens to me, what I experience personally. I know that many people believe that music is something joined, tacked onto the imagined work unjustifiably. Each person expresses himself in very different ways. When I express my-

self, it comes principally from the music . . . sometimes the imagination seems completely dead, when you write or when you shoot; it can happen at any moment. The camera that you have put in front of a face is unable to find the necessary emotion to go beyond the banality of this face to find underneath the person's real humanity. I am able to create this difficult contact between you and the exterior world, you and other people, you and the difficulties of the human condition thanks only to the music.

For this reason, for me, music is extremely important and it is important not only for the counterpoint between music and the image, sound and the image, but really for providing a key to communication. And to communicate means to understand people. And so for me if films were done without music, I would probably do some other kind of work. And when I say music, of course I don't mean only music, but silence, all that is constructed with sound—noise, moments of rhythm, all this.

There is also another mania in my work, photography. I consider that in films until now we all, all directors, have used photography in a passive way. If you really pay attention, between good photography and mediocre photography in movies there is not a great difference. In a way both are always dominated by objectivity. This is not creative photography, but passive. If instead you visit an exposition of photographs or look in a library book about photography, you will see how much they try to find new ways and how much difference there is between one photography and another. So I think this is one of the future ways in which movies can develop. And in a little, little, little way, extremely little, I have tried not to be passive in my use of the camera.

In *Kapo* and *The Battle of Algiers* we made a lot of tests before beginning to create a granular effect and to gain a feeling of truth. We wanted to recreate the reality that the majority of people know, the reality that reaches them through the mass media, through television. On television they use certain kinds of lenses and they use them generally because if there is a fire or shooting, the men who work for television stay as far away from the action as they can; they need a telephoto lens. And granular effects come from the fact that very often newsreels are "contratype," using a negative made from a positive because the original has been lost. And so the problem for me was to find something which looks like reality as people know it through the mass media, without being so sloppy and so ugly.

You can't go on for two hours with the bad quality that you can accept in newsreels. I was seeking a photography that resembled newsreels, but without these weaknesses. In *Kapo* we achieved this, but not very well. In *Algiers* it was better because we realized that it is not effective to do it all in the laboratory later. You must prepare beforehand. Certain kinds of developing baths produce granulosity, but the same kind of baths also provide great contrast. To give only one example, you must shoot with a very soft stock and diffuse the light because later the extent of the contrast will be too great because of the methods you must use. This is only one of the thousands of problems involved in this kind of photography. Another difficulty is that if you always shoot with diffused light, covering the sun with filters, you risk photography without vitality. I tried these things to have the totality of the frame in soft light. And there is a point of focus with a concentration of light which doesn't cause too much contrast but is sharp enough.

For the "Jesus Christ" [the projected new film], the problem is very much more difficult. All the Visions—the Jungian part of the film, the subconscious presence, not only in Jesus Christ, but in all the oppressed people of this period—are inevitably contaminated visually by the daily reality people are simultaneously experiencing. For the part of the film that shows sad faces, poor houses, killing, the oppression of Romans and difficulties of life in general, I wish to have photography like that of *Algiers* which, now that I have done it, is very easy to do, like a documentary. But for the other I need something completely different.

I want to fight against the dictatorship of the lens. What makes a painter so free and what constrains us so much is that his art passes only through his hand and his eye, while we must pass through something, the camera, which makes us prisoners of reality. Try to fight against him. He is a terrible enemy. It may seem strange, since we have not yet finished the script, but I am already making photographic tests for my new film, to try to have the Visions, the scenes for example in which we want to create the impression that God is speaking to someone, as free as a painter might have them. We want to convey the presence of a subconscious typical of a certain ethnic group in an intense existential situation.

For this I am looking for something resembling the pointillism of the painter Seurat where the very strong, burning white devours the rest of the design. I am looking for something which derives from two very different painters who are nonetheless close to each other: Hieronymous Bosch and the Goya of his "dark painting" *(la pintura de la quinta del sordo)*. This is a magic painting with strange faces of peasants and strange shapes. But the Goya and Bosch will be only for the Vision part of the film.

The goal is to allow freer possibilities for the photography. And the best result I have found so far comes from shooting in 16mm, very overexposed 16mm. But this is only the first attempt. Perhaps we will shoot in some different way. It is not useful to try any experiments until you solve the problem of the photography. You must surmount this problem. Unhappily.

Why have you chosen the figure of Jesus as the focus of your next film? It seems a surprising choice since Battle of Algiers *and even* Queimada *indicate a commitment to struggles in the present. One would expect this subject of Pasolini, but not of you.*

Pasolini made a very valuable film in *The Gospel According To St. Matthew*. He was dealing with a "sediment" which was deposited in the popular mind over a period of 2,000 years—and he accomplished this. We are trying something different . . . to speak of the historical Christ. What interests me is the antiauthoritarian component which was very strong in Christ. I believe that even if Christ sought to move solely on a religious plane, despite his idea of himself and of what he was doing, he was really deeply revolutionary. He was in opposition to the old authoritarian and repressive society, the Jewish society of this period from which he drew his origins. I am interested in the process by which society, any kind of society, arrives at a point of total crisis, as has ours today.

The old slave society was ready to collapse and give way to the middle ages. It was near its end and it was time to prepare a new kind of society. When a society is at this point, it very often happens that men, thinking that they are advancing traditional ways, do exactly the opposite and prepare what we generally call new values. This is characteristic of that period. Therefore, I call my film not the story of Jesus Christ, but *Time of the World's End*. It is a biblical term, but for me it conveys a time of vast change. I find a great similarity with our period of total crisis, with its expectancy of new values, awaiting even a new way to approach the revolution.

We are living after the occurrence of certain deceptions, after the "parthenogenetic" attempt of the socialist revolution to happen all at once and by itself, full grown, like the supposed virgin birth of the Messiah. After a certain disillusionment we are seeking a new way of looking at revolution, at change and at the birth of new values. With this approach we can encompass the "new left," many Spontaneist movements,

even the Jesus movement which has turned in a bad direction. But all this ferment means that the searching process is going on. Some of these groups are confused, but the soil from which they come is the same. And in this way I find great similarity between the period of *Time of the World's End* and now.

The conception of Sir William Walker in Burn!, *played by Marlon Brando, is confusing. Why would the Royal Sugar interests choose to represent them a person who has become so dissolute, who has fist fights in the slums, an alcoholic? Yet despite what seems an inconsistency in the conception of the character, Brando carries the ideas of the film and you use many, many close-ups of him.*

Because with one expression, he conveys more than ten pages of dialogue. And he is the only one who can do it. His eyes simultaneously express sadness, irony, skepticism, and the fact that he is tired . . . Walker changed because he discovered that there was nothing behind the side he helped. The same thing happened to many intellectuals after the last war, the deception growing inside them and the emptiness at the same time.

Men like Walker, full of vitality and action, then change the direction of this vitality. They go to sea, buy a boat, drink, beat people up. They don't believe in anything. When they ask him to return to Queimada, he wants to go because he liked his youth, he liked Jose Dolores, and he needed money . . . He does the same things he did before, but like a mercenary, without belief in anything.

Then, at the end of the film—this person who doesn't believe in anything cannot understand those who do.

His defeat is a comparison between himself and Dolores, who grows up. His development symbolizes the maturing of the third world, a moral growth which continues to the moment when Jose Dolores refuses to speak any longer to Walker. Walker is defeated because he can no longer manipulate. His consciousness is that of the European who can be very friendly, but who must always be the one who decides. Walker encounters, in contrast to his emptiness, someone who is full of purpose. And this is his great defeat.

This is why he wants to free Jose Dolores, not only because he is his friend, but because if Jose Dolores escapes, he will not feel so dirty. He is desperate when Dolores refuses. He sees his own emptiness before his eyes. And you know we had to stop shooting when we came to this scene because Brando was afraid. It may appear strange, but Brando, because of his sensibility, after years and years of sets, after years and years of success, is very often afraid of difficult scenes, extremely afraid. And he is tense and nervous when he is in such a situation. In this situation he was not able to function.

The dialogue was originally longer. And suddenly the same thing occurred that happened when the girls changed their appearances in *The Battle of Algiers* and we cut out all the dialogue. I told someone to go buy a recording of Cantata 156 of Bach, because I knew that it gives the exact movement of this scene. And I cut all the dialogue. Without saying anything to Brando, I said we will shoot now, we have waited too long, we will try to shoot. I put the music on at the moment when I wanted him to open his arms and express his sense of emptiness. I put on the music without telling him. I said only "Don't say the last part of the dialogue." He agreed. He was happy to do this; he said it was stupid to use too much dialogue. From this moment he was so moved by the music that he did the scene in a marvelous way. When he finished the scene, the whole crew applauded. It was more effective there than on the screen later. The sudden tension we obtained was surprising. And Brando said this was the first time he had seen two pages of dialogue replaced by music. But he was happy.

Were you as satisfied with the use of nonprofessional actors in Burn! *as you had been in* The Battle of Algiers? *Which of the people were professionals?*

Only two, Teddy Sanchez (Renato Salvatori) and Brando. Prada was President of Caritas for Colombia and a lawyer. He was very surprised when I met him and said, "Do you want to play in my film?" He was happy to do it.

And another nonprofessional was Mr. Shelton, who in reality is the administrator for British Petroleum for Colombia. It is not very difficult to make people act, not in the theater, but in movies. You must consider all the help the lenses, the distance of the camera, the movement of the camera, the position of the camera can give you.

At the beginning Evaristo Marquez (Jose Dolores) was completely unable to do anything. I had not even done a test with him because I liked his face so much. I thought his face was perfect for what we wanted. I was afraid to be afraid. I was afraid that if I made a test and he wasn't good, I wouldn't use him. So I risked it. And after fifteen days I was so desperate that I called my producer saying that despite what I have always said, namely that anyone can play in movies, this is an exception. Because he is completely unable to move, even to turn around. Yet it's a disaster to re-shoot fifteen days of work. So we stopped shooting with him. I changed the program, shooting all the scenes with other people during the day. During the evening, until I fell asleep, I tried to work with him, explaining the ABC's of what we were asking. I was helped by Salvatori, an Italian actor who would very kindly repeat the text during the day when he himself was not shooting. My wife and the script girl also helped Marquez with his lines. We were all around him. I played his whole part a thousand times. After ten days he was really better. We have in the film the first scene we shot with him which was not good, but everything he did later is of a completely different quality.

At the beginning we constructed his performance in a mechanical way. If I wanted a glance of irony, I would change his position in the scene. I put the camera higher and on his face so that he was obliged while looking at the camera or at Brando to have his head down. The problem was for him to remember to put his head down during the previous phrase. The script girl, who was out of the frame, touched his leg at the moment when he had to put his head down so that he would be able to do it a second later. The next problem arose because as soon as she touched him, he remembered that he had to do something. But instead of doing it, he would quickly put his head down. . . . To get him to glance we would direct his attention first to one spot, then to another, mechanically. And Brando said "If you are successful with this scene, I know someone who will turn over in his grave—Stanislavsky." Later, when Marquez began to play almost well, Brando said, "now Stanislavsky is spinning in his grave. . . . "

The scene in which Jose Dolores returns to his people, defeated, smiling sadly at the people who are so glad to see him, was done with the Stanislavsky method. We tried to make Marquez recall, by analogy, something he had felt in his youth, to reproduce this feeling. So we started from the Stone Age and finished in the sophisticated age of Stanislavsky.

BOOK NOTE

At last we have an inside story of what goes on in that netherworld to which consorship has retreated: the Code and Rating Administration which gives films their fatal X's, GP's, and R's. *The Movie Rating Game,* by Stephen Farber (our Los Angeles Editor) has just been published by the Public Affairs Press, 419 New Jersey Avenue S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003 ($4.50). It is a personal and detailed account of Farber's six harrowing months as an "intern" (with Estelle Changas) on the rating board. Like Shaw refusing not to speak evil of a deceased British censor, whose career was "one long folly and panic," Farber documents the board's origins, confusions, systematic interference with film-making behind the scenes, exaggerated delicacy about sex coupled with complacency about violence, and isolation from the industry's only remaining regular customers—the young viewers whose intelligence, sensitivity, and experience the board systematically insults. Farber notes the current board tendency for repressive "psychoanalysis" to rush in where religion no longer treads, and makes some sensible and moderate suggestions on how the board and its functions should be overhauled. Recommended reading, especially for anyone tempted to believe that the rating system has "solved" the censorship problem. —E. C.

FRANCIS LACASSIN

The Comic Strip and Film Language

The comic strip is now becoming intellectually respectable in somewhat the same way that film did, three or four decades ago. Studies of contemporary strips abound; serious artists are using the form for their own purposes—often, of course, satirical purposes. As the French historian Francis Lacassin argues in the pioneering article below, the "language" or syntax of the comic strip shows many similarities to (and certain historical priorities over) the language of film.

The article has been translated by David Kunzle, author of the forthcoming* The Early Comic Strip: Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet, c. 1450–1826*—a sociocultural history of the first mass medium's origins—and he adds notes of his own which qualify some of Lacassin's findings and extend them even further back in time.

There are obvious analogies and intriguing relationships between the various processes of visual narrative known to modern civilization. It is no accident that such film-makers as Federico Fellini, Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, Jacques Rivette, Jean-Luc Godard, Ado Kyrou, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rozier, Boileau-Narcejac, Claude Lelouch, Jean-Paul Savignac, and Remo Forlani, not to mention television people, are assiduous readers of comic strips. And we know that Alfred Hitchcock and Henri-Georges Clouzot compose their entire films on paper before shooting them.

ELEMENTS OF A LANGUAGE

The cinema and the comic strip were both born toward the end of the nineteenth century, and they have experienced a similar initial reception: disdain from the intellectuals, enmity from critics, and immense public acclaim.

In both, the language is composed of a succession of "shots," (that is to say, images with variable framing) in a syntactical arrangement or *montage*. The comic-strip page demonstrably corresponds to the film sequence, or to the act of a play, except that the background tends to change more often. The daily comic strip of three or four images is comparable to the cinematic scene.

Which of the two arts borrowed this structure, this language, from the other? While the cinema has been for nearly forty years an art recognized and sanctioned by cultural critics, the comic strip was—at least until recently—ignored or scorned. Hence the prevailing tendency to define or analyze the comic strip in terms of cinema, and to see in it the use of "cinematographic" language and editing.

But what if the situation were really the reverse?

Translated from Lacassin's *Pour un neuvième art: la bande dessinée* (Paris: Union Générale, 1971) and his preceding article "Bande dessinée et langage cinématographique" (*Cinema '71,* Sept. 1971), by permission of the publishers. The material has been slightly abridged from its longer version in the book, but incorporates the refinements Lacassin made in the book.

The nomenclature of film syntax is well known: long, medium, close-up, high-angle, low-angle, travelling, panoramic shots; special effects for "subjective camera," and so on.

Many devices—above all framing—are of course the exclusive property neither of the cinema nor the comic strip, but characterize the figurative arts in general. Painting has used long and semi-long shots and even close-ups, in the form of details, medallions, and portraits. Engraving and later caricature imposed on the eye and mind that oblong, nearly square format* to which the cinema remained attached until Professor Chrétien developed his anamorphic lens. The originality of the cinema consisted rather in the arrangement and alternation of imagery with variable framing. Yet here too the seventh art seems to have been preceded.

A LANGUAGE INVENTED BEFORE THE CINEMA

Long, group, and medium shots are commonly found in all the nearer ancestors of the comic strip, particularly in popular picture stories such as the *Imagerie d'Epinal.* When the latter utilized little scenes printed together on a single plate, it adopted the medium shot almost exclusively. From 1827 onwards, the Swiss draftsman-writer Rodolphe Töpffer inserted some long shots into the series of medium shots recounting the loves of his M. Vieux Bois. From the time of *Doctor Festus* (1829) Töpffer varied not only the angle of vision, but also the format of each scene.

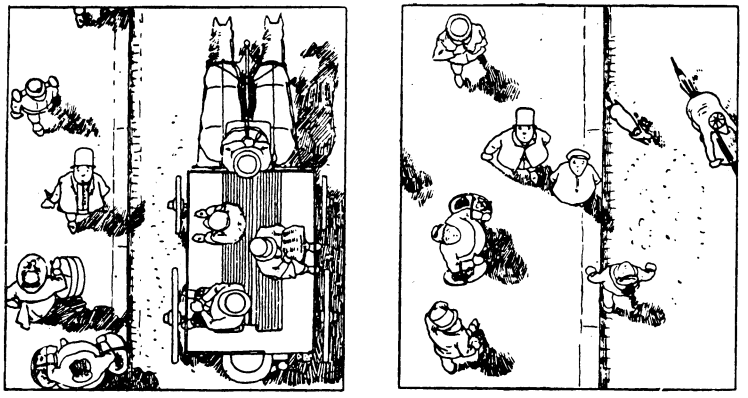
Heavily influenced by the most recent formal developments in the *Image d'Epinal,* the Frenchman Georges Colomb, alias "Christophe," at first imitated its monotonous presentation: plates composed of rows of an identical number of boxes. Contrary to the *Image d'Epinal,* however, where the upright format of the boxes derives from book-illustrations, Christophe's were horizontal, like those of the cinema screen. Although he tended to favor the medium shot, Christophe did not hesitate to interpose from time to time absolutely unprecedented framing, like the medium-long shot; and, furthermore he introduced what will later be called the "American" (head to knees) shot, which he used widely and intelligently in "The Fenouillard Family at the Exhibition" (1889), the first episode of the famous series.

A few weeks later, the description of an excursion to Mont Saint-Michel gave him an opportunity to describe the landscape in a large group shot. In the first episode the father is surprised in the foreground sleeping on a bed, viewed slightly from above. The author had already arrived at a radical application of the latter effect in the form of an aerial view of Paris, when the Fenouillards, visiting the capital, are caught up and lifted away by the anchor of a balloon. As these two examples demonstrate, Christophe was not using the high angle in expressionist fashion, but in his concern for realism. Hence his infrequent use of it. The foreground shot (strangely reserved to the head of the family, to the detriment of the other members) afterwards regularly punctuated the course of his adventures. A few years later, the pimples decorating the nose of the sapper Cambember led the author to show him in medium close-up, but hardly more than three or four times in the space of a few years.

Christophe may also be credited with some other more technically subtle discoveries. Thus night scenes traversed by delightful silhouetted figures (the Fenouillards pursued by the Japanese police) were precursors of those high-contrast and back-lighting effects of art-cinema. In his concern with creating depth by enlarging perspectives, Christophe used figures as repoussoirs, or foreground foils: the Cornouillets seen from the back at the end of a line stretching into the distance; old Fenouillard sitting at the foreground edge of a scene extending as far as the horizon, and in the middleground, the mother and their two daughters. To the same ends, he conceived the perspective of a street, with horses entering from three sides.

In the episode of the Fenouillard odyssey called "With the Papuans," Christophe antici-

*Upright formats were equally favored by these arts, from their inception down to our own day. The reason why film chose a horizontal format (as opposed to the predominantly upright format of its predecessor in still photography) must lie elsewhere.—TR.

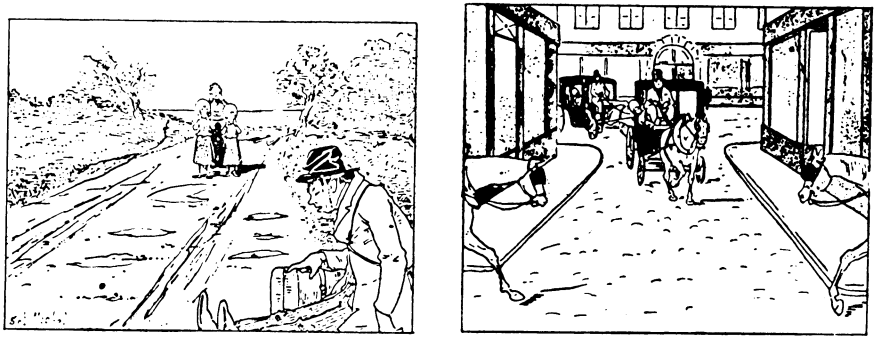


A vertical tilt-shot: Christophe's "Second Voyage of the Fenouillard Family"

pated the invention of the subjective camera by yielding the floor, or rather the pencil, to one of the daughters, Miss Cunégonde. The latter draws a most hilarious scene in her own clumsy, expressive manner. Similarly, at a later date (before 1914), J-P. Pinchon and Caumery had Bécassine draw in her own racy style certain striking scenes. In the modern comic strip, the American Lee Falk indulged or rather has the natives indulge in exaggerated evocation of the Phantom, whom they revere like a god; the artist rendered them in a childish, naive style. As far as the camera-eye is concerned, the cinema has uncontested priority, for the American strip —the most advanced linguistically—seems not to have practised it before 1945. One of the pioneers in this domain was surely Milton Caniff, who used it, from January 1947, in the very first strip of the adventures of Steve Canyon.

This much is certain: it was Christophe who, between 1889 and 1892, discovered all the rudiments—save the extreme close-up and low-angle shots—of a language, which the cinema did not master (and yet claimed to have fathered!) for many years after its birth, November 28, 1895. The American strip scarcely discovered them until 1900–1905, and the French strip was more tardy still.

Thus, in the *Epatant,* for all its novelty-seeking, no medium close-up shot appeared in the adventures of the Nickle-Plated Feet Gang before 1909, when we witness the encounter of a cream pie with the face of Manounou, the wife of Ribouldingue. A few months thereafter Louis



Depth of field in Christophe: "The Fenouillard Family at Mont St-Michel"

Forton made a regular practice of this innovation. He experimented also with the "American" shot, the foreground shot, and depth of field emphasized by repoussoir effects. Having learned to vary the format of the scenes, he finally ventured, in January 1911, his first close-up—perhaps the first in the French comic strip—forestalling the film-maker Louis Feuillade by about two years. Only the insertion of letters and visiting cards, which the spectator had to be able to read, justified for Feuillade the use of so tight a frame, until he finally applied it to the face of the two famous adversaries in *Juve contre Fantomas* (1913).

The extreme close-up *was* born on a cinema screen. But only the comic strip, mirror of the imaginary, could raise it a fantasy level denied to cinema, mirror of the real. Even with the resources of microphotography, the camera would indeed be incapable of showing as Sy Barry did, in 1964, the silhouette of the Phantom reflected in the pupil of an outlaw terrified at his approach!

But before going on to enlarge its language (as the preceding example testifies) by means of specific adaptation of elements originating in the film, the comic strip seems, once the excitement of first discovery was over, to have entered a period of routine stylistic simplification. An invincible torpor rendered the French-language comic strip, forgetful of the example of its predecessors, incapable of any technical innovation down to 1946, that is until Hergé and the Belgian school made their massive entry. Stranger still, the American strip, from 1905 onwards, led by the Katzenjammer Kids, passively accepted the convenience of the medium shot, which remained the golden rule down to the great turning-point in the thirties.

There is only one explanation for this falling off. The adventure strip, which had a dire need for abrupt cutting, did not appear in America until 1929. Until that time (which coincided more or less with the birth of the talkies in the cinema), comic strip production was entirely dominated by comic characters. Unlike the Nickle-Plated Feet Gang, moreover, they appeared not in magazines but in series of weekly or daily strips, developing in twelve or four scenes what had previously formed the substance of a single cartoon. The only kind of framing familiar to the latter seems proper also to the "multiple cartoon" of the comic strip. The example of "Blondie," which has not changed in this respect since it was created in 1929 by Chic Young, or that of "Peanuts," with its equally monotonous framing,* are sufficient evidence that even the later American comics production remained rather insensitive to the formal evolution of the adventure story.

Our first conclusion must be: with a few rare exceptions, the comic strip gathered most of its basic expressive resources without recourse to the cinema, and often even before the latter was born. But it would be rash to deduce that the latter is a tributary of the former.

For priority does not necessarily mean influence. It is more reasonable to suppose that comic strip and cinema have both separately drawn the elements of their respective languages from the common stock accumulated in the course of the centuries by the plastic and graphic arts. The comic strip owes its lead over the cinema to the fact that printed pictorial narrative was already mature many years before moving photography was born. It is therefore more judicious to suppose that the two media are autonomous, at least in the technical domain. Elsewhere, they will engage in fruitful exchange, but the hour is not yet come.

A CREATIVE SYNTAX

It is the essence of the cinema to reflect the passage of time, for it is the art of movement, which implies duration. How does the comic strip manage to express these with mere inanimate images? By adjustment of content, framing, format, and by organizing the images in a structure through *montage*. For the film image,

*To cite "Peanuts" as an example of backward technique is misleading because the strip, created in the heyday of the postwar adventure strip, represents (as the UPA cartoons did on the screen) a deliberate rejection of the sophisticated dominant style. The graphic simplicity, or even monotony, of "Peanuts" heightens its psychological finesse.—TR.

as for the drawn image, montage acts as syntax. But montage is not limited to the arrangement of variously framed shots according to a logical order. By manipulating their duration, by changing them around, montage can control dramatic intensity and even invert—like the Russian filmmakers—semantic content. A subjective dramatic logic thus prevails over simple grammatical and formal logic. It can animate excessively static scenes, and concentrate the spectator's attention on, or distract him from, an action. Finally, we know that the process of parallel cutting permits one to follow two actions situated in different places or times. Montage thus plays a truly narrative role within a basic grammatical function.

The comic strip, from the first moments of its existence, experimented with the rudiments of montage, then cast them aside until about 1932–35 when, under the influence of the cinema, it recovered them, and has been improving on them ever since.

Töpffer opened his M. Vieux Bois (the story of a lovesick old bachelor) with a few strictly uniform-image pages. But he then quickly disrupted the scene format, making it alternately "short" and "long." The former retains the normal shape (1/6th of the page), the latter occupies the space of two scenes: the graphic lengthening of the image corresponds to the chronologically lengthening of the scene.

By such alteration, the author suggests movement and duration. Here is a three-stage example. A long scene shows how "M. Vieux Bois embraces pastoral life on behalf of the health of the Beloved Object, and takes the provisional name of Tircis." To the left the shepherd Tircis plays the flute at the feet of a gaunt shepherdess; to the right Töpffer includes a dog, a valley, hills, sheep, a tree. Such an image adequately conveys a rural sojourn of some duration. And the following scene, of a brevity underlined by the absence of background, confirms the passage of time, by isolating in a medium shot the two pro-

tagonists in city attire: "M. Vieux Bois returns home, the Beloved Object being sufficiently fat." Third stage (long scene): lateral view of a tree-lined road along which two men walk, carrying the protagonists on a ladder: "M. V.B., finding that his horse has exploded in the meadow, has himself carried."

The first cinemascopic image is intended to convey duration by means of disparate elements and the static character of the description. The last tries to express it by the dynamism already implicit in the notion of a journey and the arrangement of the figures. By placing them in Indian file and in a precise left-to-right succession, Töpffer forces the spectator's eye to run across the image lengthwise, creating the illusion of movement obtained in the cinema by the travelling shot.

By attempting cross-cutting from the very first page of *La Famille Fenouillard,* Christophe was to take montage experimentation even further, despite his rudimentary material. At that time, he had not yet discovered the suggestive power of variation in format. Having devoted two images to the presentation of the shop, and then the family, he recounted in the following four scenes: the bad fall of Artémise from the first story window, beneath the eyes of her mother; the fall of Cunégonde into a well, in the presence of her father; Artémise sucking her thumb on the soft dung-heap where she landed; and a section of the well inside which, caught by a nail in her descent, Cunégonde happily splashes in a bucket.

Christophe thus fused in a simple sequence two incidents which according to the caption took place the same day, but at different times. Even if the comic strip here anticipated what was to become a basic cinematic method, it should not be credited with having originated it, but only with having adapted narrative techniques bequeathed to the serial novel by Eugène Sue and other masters of the genre.*

The page following this experiment is reduced to a single giant image showing in section the comfortable, gleaming drawing-room of the Fenouillards: Monsieur and Madame are dozing in an armchair, rocked by the song which the girls intone as they accompany themselves on the piano: the calm after the storm. Thus the "montage" constructed by Christophe comprises four short scenes and one long one. Subsequently he realized the full creative power of montage, intercutting the sleep of M. Fenouillard resting on a hotel bed with shots describing a tourist excursion of the womenfolk. Cross-cutting here permits him to contrast the philosophical demeanor of the father with the feverish agitation of the mothers and daughters.

One of the later episodes in "Journey to Le Havre" marked definite progress in Christophe's technique; for the first time, he decided to break up an image so as to reduce the time-span that it conveys. The occasion for this innovation was an animated altercation in a Le Havre tram, between the paterfamilias and an Englishman who bumped into Madame and her daughters as he seated himself. The progress of the battle is measured in a long and four short, very craftily alternated scenes, and Christophe devised moreover a use (conventionally comic now, but revolutionary at the time) of the alternating over-the-shoulder shot.

A page from the episode "With the Sioux" testifies to even more remarkable progress in Christophe's understanding of the multiple creative effects of montage. Between two long shots of a torture stake surrounded by screaming and dancing Indians, he inserted an image divided into four equal parts. Each represents Fenouillard in close-up tied to the stake and reacting differently each time he is threatened with a different weapon: dagger, saw, pincers, fork. The page closes on a cinemascopic image which fills the last two compartments, and which, juxtaposed with another of normal format, produces an effect analogous to the cinematic dolly-back shot. The use of three images in different formats was an innovation unsurpassed by even Burne Hogarth in 1950!

*William Hogarth, the supreme master of the satirical picture story in the eighteenth century, had already employed cross-cutting in *Marriage A-la-mode* (1745), in which the fortunes of the married couple are united in scenes 1, 2 and 5, intercut with the separate adventures of the husband (scene 3) and wife (scenes 4 and 6).—TR.

Montage in Christophe: "With the Sioux"

DYNAMIC ILLUSION

In the film as in the comic strip, duration is expressed in two ways, according to whether it measures static time or dynamic time. In the latter, it represents the time span necessary for the unfolding of an action. In the former, it conveys what is called "dead time," that is, intervals irrelevant to the plot, presupposed and unstated, which happen to separate two episodes.

In the film, the illusion of even the most complex movement is produced not only by change in the pose of the figures, but also by change in position of the camera. In manipulation of the image surface the comic strip has discovered a graphic equivalent to even the most complex adjustments in camera-angle. Instead of reproducing a movement in its entirety, which is denied to it by virtue of its two-dimensional universe, it renders the moments of starting and stopping.

One of the oldest examples of "dollying in" in the modern comic strip was furnished by Alex Raymond in a page from "Flash Gordon," dated 8 October 1935. Still somewhat clumsy, it would be barely distinguishable from lateral travelling, were it not followed by a close-up shot. At the far left of a cinemascopic image representing the inside of a cave, stands Flash Gordon on a crag, sword in hand facing us, half clasped by the frightened Queen Azura. He is holding off a handful of warriors placed at the extreme right, below the crag, whose heads and weapons only protrude into the frame. The direction of the movement (southeast, northwest) is clearly indicated by the lower position occupied by the assailants and their lances pointed in the direction of the hero. It is confirmed by the following image which shows him in close-up, embracing Queen Azura.

This kind of movement was perfected in 1946 by Burne Hogarth, who matched it with a simultaneous change in angle. The point of departure is now with Tarzan on the far left, seen from the back and from slightly below, a woman and two men. One of the latter points to a very long desk at the end of which, far right, an Asian is seated, seen from the front and slightly from above. The Asian is viewed close-up in the next shot. The northwest—southeast direction conforms better to film optics and is easier on the eye. Finally, use of the low angle enabled the draftsman to avoid cheating as Raymond had in representing the figures only in part.

The dolly-back shot, less often used as a rule than the preceding kind, obeys the same laws. Only the order of the images is inverted, the smaller one preceding the longer one. Christophe is doubtless the first to have used it, in the torture stake sequence mentioned above. The first scene shows the head of the family tied to the stake, in a medium shot. The following scene in long-shot, cinemascope format presents the stake and the prisoner at the extreme right, with the rest of the field occupied by the camp as a whole invaded by soldiers who rout the Indians.

Both Burne Hogarth and Morris (as for example in "The Caravan") make skilful and habitual use of the panorama. This even appears in a rudimentary fashion, in the strip Lee Falk created in the thirties, "Mandrake the Magi-

Tarzan as drawn by Burne Hogarth.

cian," but with Hogarth the panorama attains a certain psychological finality: violent antagonism, latent anguish, emotional explosion, etc.

MOVEMENT WITH PARODISTIC INTENTION

Just as Hogarth used an unrealistic vision of movement in order to seize our emotions, the comic draftsmen used it parodistically in order to provoke laughter. The American Bill Holman, creator of "Spooky the Cat" and "Smokey Stover" (1935), was surely among the first to apply the idea of making false teeth or ears fly off a person subjected to a violent emotion. In Europe, artists have sent a wig flying in such a case, or else, to express rage, sent the person himself flying, and left him stamping around in space. In Hergé's "Jo et Zette," which is less realistic than his more famous "Tintin," fainting persons leap backwards in space, then free-fall to the ground. Some artists improved on the device by making the fainting character leave his shoes behind, fixed as it were to the ground.

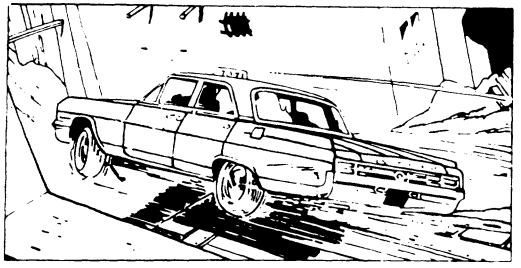
Morris cites a parodistic use of movement typical of "Lucky Luke": "The gunman fires so fast that he drops a bottle, draws, fires, holsters and catches the bottle again before it has time to hit the ground. I maintain that the comic strip expresses more clearly and efficiently a gag like that than any other medium; even the animated cartoon or slow-motion film does not permit the spectator to linger over those three fractions of a second occupied by the gesture of that character."*

The comic strip abbreviates movement, or rather relieves it of certain phases and contracts the time necessary for its execution. The strip can also, as in the above example, expand time for comic purposes.

Exaggeration or hyperbole is sometimes directed at the kinetic energy of movement to which a laughable violence accrues: a spittoon which jumps under the impact of the spittle projected at it, and gives off a metallic ring. Sound effects, especially in onomatopoeic form, are often introduced as comic reinforcement. Similarly ideograms, or certain graphic tricks common to the comic and the dramatic, prolong

*"Profession—draftsman," in *Giff-Wiff*, 16 December 1965.

and underline movement. As Morris puts it, "Parallel lines have no significance in themselves. But place them behind a person or an object and any child will tell you that they are lines of motion. And note this: the longer the lines, the faster the motion. Little arcs, punctuated with little puffs, indicate movement by successive leaps (there is a lot of leaping around in comic strips!)."



Hergé often interlaces these lines under the feet of his characters, in configurations similar to those used on highway signs for dangerous bends, etc. In the adventure strip, lines of motion become little explosive streaks of lightning, when violent impact is to be rendered.

The attitude of the comic strip towards movement is evidently flexible, and ceaselessly evolving. Structurally discontinuous, it may reduce movement to a single phase, thus excluding animation, but in certain situations, particularly in fighting scenes where a single phase and a single picture prove inadequate, the strip is ready to innovate, even to run counter to tradition. As Morris indicates, rapid motion to and fro may be expressed by projecting all the phases of the movement onto the same image: as when a character shakes his opponent, or repeats a gesture in quick succession. This device, typical of the comic genres, has been adapted in a slightly different form by the adventure strip. Instead of just part of the body responding to this linear animation, the outline of the body as a whole may be repeated: Bob Kane uses dotted lines to locate the different positions of Batman as he leaps through the air. Sy Barry gathers in a single image the flashes of a battle between the Phantom and a bandit. This method supersedes that of Hogarth and other classics, who broke a fight scene down into several images of varying angle and depth.

The most modern adventure strip reveals an increasingly marked preference for contracted as against analytic vision. This is in order to dissociate comic strip technique from that of the film. Certain artists such as Carmine Infantino (who draws "Batman" nowadays) have abandoned the traditional cinema-screen image-shape, in favor of frames cut into long vertical or horizontal slats, which results (among other things) in the radical transformation of movement expression.

Some Supplementary Notes by David Kunzle

This is not the place to quarrel with Lacassin's assumption, which is so widely shared, that the comic strip and cinema were born at the same period. Since the material has simply not been available hitherto, critics cannot know that, in fact, the narrative picture strip reached a certain maturity in German, Dutch, and English broadsheets in the seventeenth century. In my book, which the University of California Press will shortly publish, I reproduce an extensive corpus of these remarkable early picture stories, which will thus become available for analysis and discussion. Nor need we at this point question by what feat of logic Lacassin makes the "birth" of the comic strip postdate by two generations one of the recognized "fathers" of the art (for Gombrich, *the* father), Rodolphe Töpffer. It is true that the weekend supplements of the big American newspapers reached (from 1896) a far wider audience than the European humorous weeklies which had hitherto carried the comic strips; but the basic language of these strips, especially as regards "cinematic" elements, was created earlier—before Christophe, even, whose role is quite properly emphasized by Lacassin, even if his primacy in certain respects is not so extensive as it is made to appear. The purpose of the following is to show how cinematic devices were developed by three major

figures of the nineteenth century (pre-Christophe) comic strip: Rodolphe Töpffer, Gustave Doré, and Wilhelm Busch.

TÖPFFER

The close-up was a device familiar to Töpffer. One may cite the heads of the monks in *Vieux Bois* 86, the Marquise's dog in *Jabot* 41, and the repeated heads of the three scientists dying of a suppressed hypothesis in *Festus* 72. It appears at its most cinematic when it is combined with parallel cutting. The best example of this combination is to be found in *Vieux Bois* 62–68, where close-up and narrow panel alternate with long shot and broad panel. While M. Vieux Bois and the Beloved Object pursue their pastoral life in long, panoramic scenes of idyllic serenity, the miserable Rival is turning furiously around in a waterwheel, of which we see only the outer section of the arms, and the Rival's head trapped therein. (This alternation is repeated no less than seven times.) Similarly, when Jolibois is imprisoned in a cage as a bizarre "psychiot" landed from outer space, the scientist who found him quietly writes up his memoir about him for the Academy Bulletin (*Pencil* 17). This time only narrow panels are used, but in such a way that the series of four narrow panels showing Jolibois desperately flailing around in his cage is intercut with four panels, which start narrower and which progressively grow narrower still, cutting off more and more of the scientist's figure until only his nose and bonnet are visible. In *Dr. Festus* (drawn in 1829 before the first of Sue's novels were published) a highly complex system of parallel development of plot is the very basis of the narrative, as of the comic mechanism as well. The careers of the four principals, Dr. Festus, Milord, Milady, and the mayor, continuously interlace and separate in a tangled web of surrealistic adventure.

In Töpffer the close-up results less from the conscious decision to select a detail for particular focus, than from the need to speed up the narrative and open up a new comic mechanism. The close-up and truncated figure represent the

logical extension into "framing" of the artist's innovation in linear abbreviation, which is based upon the premise, entirely novel at the time although the quintessence of any theory of caricature, that less can say more. To convey the furious rushing to and fro of couriers, Töpffer shows them neatly crossed in mid-picture, with their mounts cut off at the haunches (*Pencil* 50). When the wastrel Albert is repeatedly kicked out by his father, all we see, in an intercut series of very narrow panels, is the fleeing bottom half of Albert and the father's lower leg applied to his rear (*Albert* 8, 9, 12, 14). Later in the same story (23–25), the hero is depicted as a salesman climbing from floor to floor of an apartment building. As he rises we see progressively less of him, and finally at the top or eleventh floor, only a fraction of his coattail and the back of his trousers. Similarly, to convey the repeated toasts to revolutionary ideals, Töpffer shows the hands holding the glass, repeated sixteen times in a diminuendo which also (as in Albert climbing the stairs) rises on the page, as it recedes towards the horizon of vision.

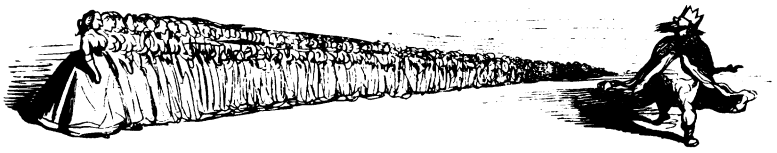
The conclusion to *M. Pencil* could hardly be more cinematic, although on this occasion it conveys the stoppage of time (or its infinity). We see, in close-up against a distant horizon, the telegraph pole of Europe, at last come to rest after so many agitations; then more telegraph poles, also at rest, in a medium-long shot; then the same in a very long shot, taken slightly from above. The "camera" thus pans back to convey the peace at last descending upon the world. The final image also carries the credits.

Finally, we may add that the dolly-back shot was not unknown to Töpffer. As the pedant Crâniose harangues M. Crépin (*Crépin* 52), he steps backwards to reinforce the idea that he "recoils at the prospects awaiting society": the camera follows him, leaving the seated Crépin cut off at the knees.

DORÉ

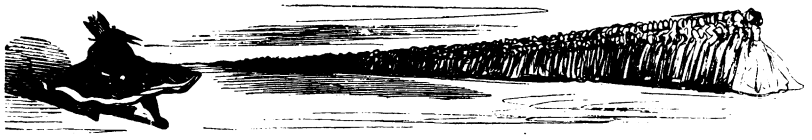
The effect of Gustave Doré's *Histoire de la Sainte Russie* (1854) remains to be measured. Casually sloughing off the burden of strict narrative continuity in a parodistic history which has all the appearance of being impatiently sketched and patched, but is redolent with mock documentation, the twenty-two-year-old artist is able to break all the rules regarding image format and content. As in Rabelais, whose work he had just illustrated and by whose method (or lack of it) he was profoundly influenced, "fais ce que voudras" is Doré's motto. Anarchy reigns: images vary in number anywhere between one and sixteen per page, in shape anywhere between the very tall, the very broad, the square, the triangle and the lozenge; and are arranged haphazardly so that no two of the one hundred and eight pages look alike. They are "montaged" and captioned to maximize our sense of incongruity and discontinuity, and induce a kind of verbal indigestion and visual vertigo. To take just one page (6) containing seven scenes in seven different shapes: group shot in polar landscape of polar bear, seal and newborn human; medium shot of two penguins; close-up of human head, cut off at the neck; medium shot of figure climbing a mountain; panoramic view of mountains. Typically, Doré follows a cinemascopic view of a densely packed, anonymous army on the march, with a close-up of one or several of its members, highly individualized or else in black silhouette. A baroque battlepiece is followed by a detail shot of lances cutting off heads and limbs; then the same scene, by nocturnal snowstorm; finally the aftermath, in a medium shot of lances and severed heads.

Doré's method of mixed, heavily editorialized narrative opens up a realm of metaphor denied to earlier comic strip artists who are all—even Töpffer—concerned with maintaining narrative on a single level of consciousness. Doré is at once historiographer and cartoonist in content and style. He intersperses the narrative with antipictorial devices (blanks, black spaces, blotches etc.), with the visual realization of appalling puns, with allegories borrowed direct from caricature, and with pictographic inserts which may be described as close-ups reduced to symbolic isolation: to describe the terror under Ivan the Terrible, and the reorganization of the army under Nicholas I, diagrammatic renderings of (respectively) various instruments of tor-



From Doré, La Sainte Russie.

Après avoir pleuré amèrement, et de son mieux, une existence si injustement éprouvée par le malheur, Vladimir, soudain, se rappelle avec mélancolie que les larmes ne sauraient être les loisirs des grands, et combien d'impérieux et de cruels devoirs sont attachés à la couronne : le mariage en premier, cette abnégation du cœur, cet adieu à l'imprévu, au-devant duquel il marche sans crainte par amour pour les siens. Les plus splendides beautés du pays sont réunies afin qu'il fixe son choix.



Entre les cent son cœur balance.

ture and weapons of war are made to suffice. Doré's pictography takes a decisive step towards the kind of abstraction exploited by the comic strip artists of today, when the interminable series of battles between Peter the Great and Charles XII is encapsulated in repeated rows of smokepuffs.

Among Doré's subjective-camera effects we find the "quotation" of primitive Russian popular imagery, where the artist as it were hands over the pencil to representatives of the people he is describing; and the mock censorship of the full page consisting of a heavy blotch: "let us screw up our eyes so as to see (the reign of Ivan the Terrible) in only the broadest terms." Like the film-maker who varies the contrast or focus according to his subject and the emotional tone he wishes to project, Doré manipulates two basic styles, run parallel and in conjunction: the heavily hatched (à la Daumier), and the lightly sketched (à la Töpffer). It is possible that the silhouette effects, which became so popular in the French comic strip (notably in *Le Chat Noir,* 1880s), even before Christophe, derive from Doré; and that the same artist was the first to use the negative image (white line on black, introduced into *La Sainte Russie*).

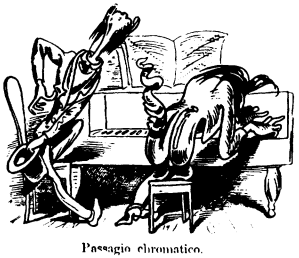
BUSCH

Like Töpffer, Busch uses predominantly the medium shot, but interspersed at fairly regular intervals (every dozen or so images) with the close-up. He rarely pans, being little concerned with décor. In *Max und Moritz* (1863), we see the hen-bait in extreme close-up, below the retreating feet of the pranksters. This is however exceptional in that, unlike Doré, Busch rarely brings objects into sharp focus, reserving such emphasis for the human physiognomy. Thus the shot of the widow Bolte, bust-length in bed, precedes a full-length shot of her standing in consternation at the sight of her hanged hens. Sleeping figures are often shown close-up, with their head thrown back so as to present the least dignified view, all snoring nostril (this could be described as a low-angle shot). On one occasion Busch tells a whole chapter (the second in *Der Geburtstag,* 1873) or even a whole story (*Die Prise,* 1868) with head and bust alone, an idea which can be traced back to Chodowiecki in the late eighteenth century.

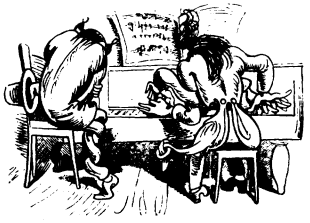
Busch's framing is of lesser interest, however, compared with the manifold devices he developed for the rendering of movement, sound, and pain effects. The explosions, which combine all three, are probably best remembered: a pipe filled with gunpowder sends the smoker flying backwards in a vortex of flash-lines; or, better still, in that disgraceful mockery of Parisian sufferings during the siege of 1870–71, Monsieur Jacques fires himself like a cannon-ball out of his boots, straight and spiralling explosion lines marking his trajectory until he splatters onto the ceiling.

If, as Morris reminds us, there is a great deal of leaping in the modern comic strip, there is a great deal of falling in Busch, and to render its violence, Busch hit upon a method remarkably close to and in some ways more effective than the purely conventional disembodied, parallel flash lines used today. He merges the shading, floorboard and wall lines with the figure to suggest sudden plumetting through open space. He also formulated a more conventionalized sign for movement in the comma-like skidmarks used behind the feet of Father Time as he strides through the night (repeated chapter vignettes in *Julchen,* 1877). Body-movement in response to pain is a specialty of Busch—it had to be, for there is so much pain in his work. He can make the agony spiral out of a cut or burned ear (with close-up of ear, *Fipps der Affe* ch. III), reduce the human form to rubber under the shock of a bitter medicine, and, with a somewhat different intent, punish a character by literally shrivelling him to death.

Busch was probably the inventor of an even more fertile device, the "pattern of oscillation," described in other terms by Lacassin. Strangely, the German artist arrived at the formula in a mature form as early as 1865 (48 years before Duchamp's famous "Nude descending a Staircase"!), but seldom applied it afterwards, and never to the same effect. The dazzling virtuosity and digital dexterity of Franz Liszt inspired a progressive series of linear distortions and exaggerations: first, the hands at the piano appear to have grown rubber fingers, then they sprout ten fingers each, then the pianist acquires two sets of arms with ten fingers on each of the four hands, and in the *finale furioso,* his whole body is reduced to an arc reaching from one end of the piano to the other, and consisting entirely of the oscillating outline of arms and hands. That which the photographers tried so strenuously to eliminate, became a positive challenge to the graphic artist. The development of the pattern of oscillation is worth a chapter to itself in any history of the comic strip, not least because of its evident relationship with photography, animated cartoon and cinema.

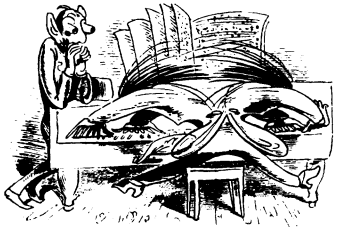


Passagio chromatico.

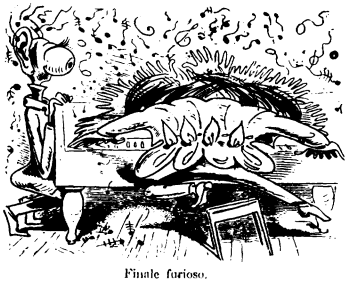


Fuga del diavolo

Forte vivace.



Fortissimo vivacissimo.



Finale furioso.

Bravo-Bravissimo.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

Grierson on Documentary

THE LAST INTERVIEW

John Grierson, son of a Scottish minister, was the prophet of an idea which was breath-taking in a day when no one used film for anything except entertainment: he proposed that it should be poetry and that it should address itself to the actual social problems and possibilities of modern industrial society. Armed with guile, determination, and a caustic wit (which can be studied in his book, **Grierson on Documentary**) ***he trained a generation of young directors, and produced a host of films—in which ordinary working people appeared on the screen for the first time. He set up the National Film Board of Canada; he traveled about the world thinking and talking about communications problems—to which, as in this interview, he often proposed novel approaches. Crusty, sometimes profane, he was a man with a vision—of how film, and other media, might "serve the people"; his ideas influenced everyone in the film world, and we must come to terms with them as we struggle for new understandings of the media in our world. Grierson died last February; the following text is drawn from a day-long conversation held shortly before his death. It will also appear in Elizabeth Sussex's book on British documentary, to appear in 1973.***

How do you evaluate documentary today?

I would evaluate it in terms of the extension of its explorations. It has explored very, very well, but there is one weakness. It ceased exploring into the poetic use of the documentary approach with us in the thirties. I think we represented the top in Britain—people like Basil Wright, Stuart Legg, Arthur Elton, myself, Cavalcanti, Benjamin Britten (music), Auden (poetry). We worked together and produced a kind of film that gave great promise of very high development of the poetic documentary. But for some reason there has been no great development of that in recent times. I think it's partly because we ourselves got caught up in social propaganda. We ourselves got caught up with the problems of housing and health, the question of pollution (we were on to that long ago). We got on to the social problems of the world, and we ourselves deviated from the poetic line. But nobody has encouraged the poetic line, not even the BBC which is the strongest force in the whole documentary field and the one that ought to have carried on the poetic line . . .

Of course the greatest thing of all to me has been the use of the film for simple purposes: that is, not just in teaching, but in the teaching of health, not just the teaching of health and

medicine but the teaching of health and medicine at the most primitive and primary levels, the use of the film to educate the starveling peoples, the up and coming people. I'd say the great achievement of documentary today is what it has done and is doing in the less privileged countries, not least of course in countries like India . . . There's no question at all that the biggest thing that will happen is when something really serious is done in a country like India. India has got 550 million people. Well, all the mass media together, that's to say radio and the movie, they only arrive at an audience of 100 million people. That is, 450 million people are outside the range of the so-called mass media. Well, there is a whole world for the documentary film to take over . . .

What have you been doing in India?

I was there merely making a survey to give the Canadian Government in the first place, and other countries concerned with aid programs, a realistic view of what could be communicated, what had to be done about communications in India. I think I must be the first person to lay my finger on that point that all these mass media together only arrived at 100 million people and 450 million people were living on word of mouth. And of course there were so many people living grandiosely in India on the illusion that somehow or another they were working with the mass media and therefore were the most important force in the modern world that it needed somebody to come in coldly from the outside and say "You bums, you only arrive at 100 million people. What the hell? You're in the peanut business. You're not in show biz, not in big time. The big time is word of mouth, to get into the word-of-mouth business."

And of course once you get into the word-of-mouth business, you're in very different territory. You're in with all the teachers then, and you suddenly realize the most important force in the world today is the teaching force. That's the biggest change that has happened in our time, that the teaching force has become the greatest political force not just in countries like Canada, but I think in countries like the United States too. And of course if the teaching force begins to arm

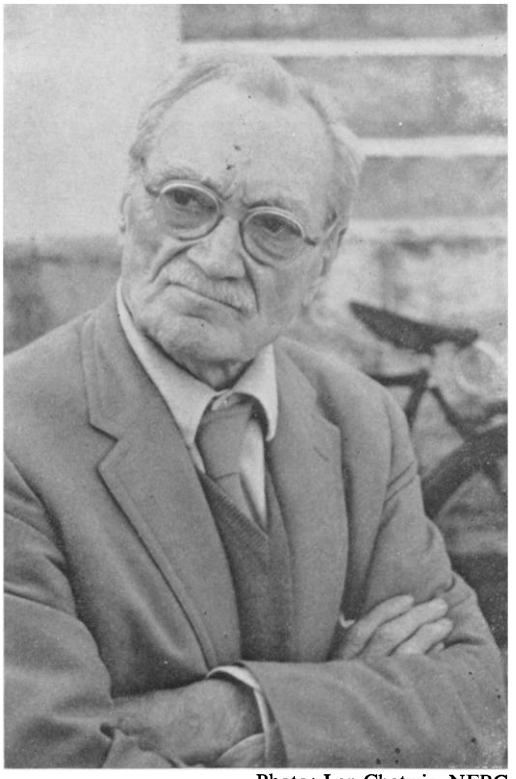


Photo: Len Chatwin, NFBC

itself with the serious use of the film as a power of expression for democratic purposes then you've got yourself a very very big development indeed, which makes all our developments of the thirties in England look like two cents. Oh, I think there are far bigger things happening than anything we dreamt of.

What exactly is the word-of-mouth business?

Let me begin at the beginning. Word of mouth means word of mouth, that is, the people are illiterate; therefore they depend on what is said to them . . . But in a social revolution like the social revolution of India, you've got teachers all over the place, teaching sanitation, teaching health, teaching progressive agriculture of one kind or another, teaching community development in various ways. Now wherever you get a teacher you get somebody using his mouth. In other words there's a conveyance by mouth or by illustration, and what they're doing is working up from the illustration, to the use of the epidiascope, to the use of the magic lantern (which is basic in India anyway; it's about 2500 years old to my knowledge in India), to the use of the

comic strip (which of course again is 2500 years old—the comic strip in India using five or six different illustrations to tell a little story: you get children doing it quite automatically in the villages of India). But you go from there of course to the film strip, and from there to the local film, to the film-making process on the 8mm level or the 16mm level.

What role should documentary play now in Britain?

Oh well, what role it's got to play here wouldn't interest me very much because I think there's such a thing as priorities, and what's happening in England's not half so important as what's happening in China. I mean really, really! I mean this is a fat country, a fat and lucky country. It can afford even to stop working every now and again . . .

You can't generalize from England . . . You can't generalize about documentary from English documentary. English documentary had a very vivid life in film form during the thirties and during the war. It's had a very good life on television in terms of news, news in depth, and in terms of some social observation too. But really I don't think there's been any contribution by Britain to documentary in the last ten years of any new sort. It hasn't given any great leadership in the matter of the use of film by the backward countries . . . I mean, I read yesterday that half the industry people are unemployed. Damn it all, the country should hire them all to go and teach people elsewhere how to use these new instruments. The whole thing's wrong. If this country had any spirit at all, it wouldn't stand for technicians being unemployed. It would send them out to teach. If there's nothing to do here, there's plenty to do elsewhere.

Would you say that a new basis for sponsorship is needed?

No, documentary is concerned in the last resort with the creation of loyalties . . . so the loyalty of sponsorship is always there, an inevitable relationship of documentary. Remember, documentary was developed on the thought that it was not there necessarily for entertainment. Occasionally it has been in the entertainment business but only incidentally. It's always been related to government sponsorship, and to those sponsors who saw the value of using it to illustrate their interests or to create loyalties of one kind or another. And the great example of course is Shell Oil. Shell Oil was the first and greatest of the sponsors because it saw the full implications of its international operation . . . For example, one of the propositions that were first put to us in the early thirties was that they found in the Gulf of Persia that it took two men to lift a bag of cement. Therefore they were in the nutrition business . . . So they were in the business not only of creating a new nutritional basis but of teaching nutrition, teaching sanitation and so on . . .

Now there is a new basis for sponsorship today, but it will always be of the same logical nature. The sponsorship is not by accident. It is always and has always got to be logical. The trouble with the people today is that they don't know how to sell the relationship, because they are not as tutored as we were in the political and economic relationships of things.

The documentary film in Britain has failed for lack of an intelligentsia. It hasn't got an intelligentsia today that can really go and tell the people in sugar or the people in some other commodity why logically they are concerned in a particular educational or inspirational purpose.

This, however, may be a guide to a new phase of sponsorship. There has been this concern, not only in Canada but certainly in Canada we have it, with the distance between the local community and the central governing body—the distances, the gaps presently appearing in the democratic process. So much so that people are crying out for what they call participatory democracy, and they're crying out for some way of solving the problem represented in the streets by the protest movements of one kind or another. Note they are encouraged to do so by the presence of the mass media, and the fact that they can get plenty of publicity if they make enough noise. So that there's a situation aggravated by the mass media, the fact that people are rather inarticulately seeking to express themselves in this modern democracy.

Now how can we fill this need? Well, we can obviously do it by developing local television: the expression "We've got to have, not local presentation" (that's to say presentation of the local case by some faraway landlord like the BBC) "but local representation" (that is presentation of the local story by local people, which is a very different thing). Presentation is not representation, and that's where the BBC is making the biggest mistake of its life . . . No matter how much noise you make on the BBC you're after all being edited by outsiders—just as for example I'm doing this tape, and I know that this is not me at all because you're going to edit it. I'm going to be edited by an outsider, and I will not be represented. I'll be merely presented.

However, the lead to sponsorship in this situation is that development of the local television thing will immediately raise the question of who is going to give an account of the stewardship in the local community . . . Let's take a small town, for example: there'll be a chamber of commerce; there'll be a Rotary club; there'll be schools; there'll be parent teachers associations; there'll be a university possibly. Well, think of all the people that are there with their organized representational councils or gatherings. They will all want to have a piece of the local expression, won't they? They'll all want to have a say in the making of the films, or at least a film to make. If they don't get on television they'll make a film, which they can circulate through the local halls and the rest. Now who's going to pay for all these things? Well, I should think that one of the almost inevitable sources of finance will be the people who run the local industries. They are the new sponsors . . .

What's been wrong with sponsorship from the beginning is that the film-makers have not been imaginative enough about where the sponsors could be served by the cinema. They've been quite content, the poor bastards—and poor bastards they very often are—to make just a catalogue of events and of products, flattering the sponsor. Well, they've sold their birthright in doing that.

What did you think of the Free Cinema films?

I never knew what they represented. The Free Cinema was based on the fact that they were going to be free of sponsorship, that is government and other sponsorship, so it was really an economic title, wasn't it? They were going to be free. Well, this was the beginning of the thought that somehow or another you can be free. You can be free from financial constriction in the making of films. Well, I doubt if you can be, and I just don't see it . . .

There has been this cry every now and again. The first *avant-garde* in Paris said they would be free. Well, when their parents' money ran out and their friends' money ran out, they weren't free any more. They were working for Paramount; they were working for somebody. No, you can't be free when you're spending a million dollars. You've got to be loyal to whoever puts up the million dollars, or the terms on which the million dollars is given. And the nearest thing to freedom you can get is to be the boss of the million dollars, which I always was, you see . . .

Then of course by raising the whole question of freedom, you are raising a very very serious matter indeed, and that is the whole anarchy into which film-making has fallen, and it's been possible for it to fall into anarchy because, with the 16mm film and with cheap production, an affluent society and cheap production, it's possible to make a film in America for quite a small sum of money. And therefore you can be as free as you like if you will only limit the cost of your picture and limit the expectation of an audience. But of course the first thing that happens to you is that you get yourself a good audience, and then you want a bigger audience, and then you are no longer as free as you were because you want more money to be more certain of the big audience. And so it goes, and you're back in the same old grind. And that's happening of course to Warhol. Warhol is the victim of his own success, not that his pictures were worth very much anyway at any time except that they were symbolic of a will to impertinence, arrogance, which was fashionable at a time when people wanted really to spit at the law, spit at everything that represented Vietnam, everything that represented the ghettos. It became fashionable to spit at authority in every way so that

those artists who symbolized this impertinence, no matter how vulgar or obscene, they tended to have a vogue. But I don't think we're arrived at an aesthetic of freedom because there's no aesthetic of freedom in the sense that you're always subject to the laws of harmony. You're always subject to the laws of expression . . . So the idea of being free of the necessary restraints of art, I mean that's out of the question . . .

But even the aesthetic of freedom as pronounced by people like Jean-Luc Godard, doesn't seem to be getting along very well just now. I mean Jean-Luc Godard's all right. He can be as idiotic as he likes. He's always a good poet anyway, and you can recognize the style of a poet even when he's in complete disorder. But what's permissible in Jean-Luc Godard—and we know he can be good—is impermissible in the second-rate, people who are basically second-rate and are incapable of the first-rate. And there's always the thought too behind this cry of *auteur, auteur* and freedom, first of all it's not very realistic in the sense that if you ever deal with film you depend on so many people, and documentary of course is the great example of how we all worked together and felt the necessity of working together and never for a moment thought that the individual could live without a relationship with the poet and composer or whoever it was . . . Well, there are one or two individuals that do in a way meet the terms of *auteur*. I think Hitchcock does. Hitchcock can do just about everything, and a Hitchcock film is a Hitchcock film, except that Hitchcock himself would probably say that no person ever depended so much on the projection printer and on the trickery that can be done in a lab. In fact when Hitchcock went over to Hollywood and discovered all the tricks that can be done in the lab, I met him again just then and he was a very excited man indeed . . .

But he is, he can be thought of as an *auteur,* and I suppose Chaplin certainly can be thought of as, you know, being very much a personal artist. There are certainly several personal artists in the history of the cinema, but very few. Most are dependent on others, and most of them were associated with schools. The great example of course is Mack Sennett. Mack Sennett is a much more important name than probably any other in the whole history of the cinema, and yet not because he did this film or the other film but because he represented a whole explosion of film-making. The French have not proved it, I think, have not proved the possibility of *auteurs* because none of them have really been *auteurs.* And in other words I would think that most of their cry about the freedom of the artist, and their cry about the personal right of the person, is in a way a reaction belonging to the French sense of defeat. The French—you'd better look at the French rather carefully—they were really defeated in the last war and in the war before that. You know, they haven't won a victory of any order since Napoleon, and they are a defeated people and the trouble is that they have inflicted their aesthetic of defeat on other people. Other stupid people have been accepting all these agonies of the French mind, which are all I'm sure resident in their defeat. And I think the real villain behind Jean-Luc Godard is General Giap who beat them at Diên Biên Phu. The French haven't got over Diên Biên Phu, and of course the defeat in Algeria. And they're all screaming out loud there for some sort of wild blue yonder, simply because they're a defeated people. Now the Americans have got the same sense of defeat, and they're screaming for personal freedom. They're screaming for a new world in which there's no discipline, no establishment, because they too have been caught with defeat . . .

And so now you get an aesthetic of the underground. You get an aesthetic of the dirty-dirty. Where else have you got to go? If you can't face the light there's always the dark, you know. Oh, it's a very exciting time. I should think we've had a more exciting time watching these infant philosophers take over; and to watch poor old *Sight and Sound* fall for it hook, line and sinker, without knowing what the hell it's doing. At least England has the advantage of being an undefeated people but no, no, not *Sight and Sound. Sight and Sound* has been falling hook, line and sinker for every piece of nonsense from the good old *Cahiers du Cinéma.* Petty bourgeois types

all, the *Cahiers du Cinéma*; I know them, nice fellows, nice fellows, but good God Almighty you wouldn't go to sea with them! A test; it's a test.

Did you take much part in actually making the early documentaries?

Och, at the beginning of the thing you see the rushes. You know what's going on. Of course, finally, when you're making hundreds a year, there has to be a good deal of decentralization, but nonetheless in the thirties we were all in together. We could all edit well. We could all write well. There was no part of it we couldn't do, even camerawork. The one credit I was absolutely insistent on was putting my name on as a cameraman on one picture, and it's still there. I'm very pleased with that, having my credit as a cameraman on *Granton Trawler*. I had to put my name on because nobody else was on the picture except me. It was a solo effort.

It's a very nice film, Granton Trawler.

Aye, it's a sweet little film. I've got a funny feeling about it, a weird faraway feeling . . .

If I were going to talk about the thing that gives me the biggest kick looking back on documentary, it was the absolute discipline of the documentary people in the thirties. Nobody stepped out of line, because they knew that divided we would perish but together we could stand. And we were disciplined of course for a purpose. We were *engagé* and the first thing about being *engagé* is discipline. Even the selflessness of some of the documentary people was a very remarkable thing. They didn't put their names on pictures. People finally had to try and discover where the credits lay, and the poor old Film Institute's never quite discovered how the credits of documentary lie, even today, because we kept putting on the names of the young people, not the names of the people who were concerned. There were years when Cavalcanti's name never went on a picture. It was because we weren't concerned with names. We weren't concerned with that aspect of things, with credits. It was only latterly that credits became important to the documentary people.

Can you give me other examples of selflessness, or sacrifices?

I didn't mention sacrifices. I said the discipline meant they didn't concern themselves with personal publicity. I wouldn't regard that as a sacrifice. I think publicity is no great gift. No, I mean that they did take limited salaries and didn't raise salary questions. They were good for sixteen hours a day, most of them. They worked day and night if necessary. For example, there was one case where a film went adrift, and every now and again a film does go adrift. But you'd only to put up the signal and people would come in from all over and make a desperate effort. And we had, on this occasion, people who had left the government unit coming back in and working day and night.

What film was it?

No, I won't tell you that. But it was one film that really was saved by the fact that we put up the sign of distress and in came the people from elsewhere and just started work as if they had never left, which meant that we had three shifts going day and night. We remade that picture in three, four weeks.

How do you explain this kind of dedication?

Do you need to explain dedication? Film is exciting. Using film in a purposive way was exciting. It was exciting new aesthetic territory. People were not only finding the art of the cinema, but they were finding themselves as artists. And not only that but the subject matter itself was very exciting, and in some cases was the new range of technological discovery, new range of scientific discovery and the implications of scientific discovery. They were dealing in some cases with the future of new countries or the future of underdeveloped countries. There were all kinds of intrinsic interests in the pursuit of documentary. No, I don't think the sacrifices were considerable unless you say it was a sacrifice not to go to Hollywood. Well, I suppose some of us could have gone into the big time if we'd wanted, if you call that the big time. But I never thought of that as the big time. I would have thought that was the small time, going into show business. To me the big time was public service, and I think something of that spirit was shared by many people there . . .

I always think of documentary as having cer-

tain fundamental chapters. The first chapter is of course the travelogue, that is, the discovery that the camera can go about: it's peripatetic. The second chapter is the discovery by Flaherty that you can make a film of people on the spot, that is, you can get an insight of a dramatic sort, a dramatic pattern, on the spot with living people. But if course he did that in respect of faraway peoples, and he was romantic in that sense. The third chapter is our chapter, which is the discovery of the working people, that is, the drama on the doorstep, the drama of the ordinary.

But there is a fourth chapter that's very interesting, and that would be the chapter in which people began to talk not about making films *about* people but films *with* people. That was the beginning of *cinéma-vérité,* when people started going down and getting close to people, not as Flaherty did. Flaherty didn't really know what was going on among the Aran Islanders; he was too distant from them. But when the people went down and made *Housing Problems* in Stepney, they knew the people, and you could recognize right away that this was a new relationship entirely between the film-makers and the films, that they were making films with the people and that they were, well, very close to the people indeed. That's of course the real beginning of *cinéma-vérité,* and any effort by anybody else to say that *cinéma-vérité* has any other origin than in *Housing Problems* and the English documentary school, is just nonsense.

Of course the French are always finding phrases and discovering terms for things, but generally about ten years late, like for example *musique concrète.* When that started appearing and I was one day in Cannes—invited, I think by Jean Cocteau, to hear this amazing new world of *musique concrète*—I laughed if I did not sneer because it's something we'd all been playing with a long time before, maybe twelve years, something like ten years before. We'd Britten and all sorts of people involved.

However, the next chapter, this making films with people—you've still got the problem that you're making films with people and then going away again. Well, I see the next chapter being making films really locally, and there I'm following Zavattini. Zavattini once made a funny speech in which he thought it would be wonderful if all the villages in Italy were armed with cameras so that they could make films by themselves and write film letters to each other, and it was all supposed to be a great joke. I was the person who didn't laugh, because I think that *is* the next stage—not the villagers making film letters and sending them to each other, but the local film people making films to state their case politically or otherwise, to express themselves whether it's in journalistic or other terms.

So there you are. These are the chapters.

JAMES ROY MacBEAN

Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group: Film and Dialectics

Godard is alive, well, and has just released a new film in Paris. Critically injured in June 1971 in a near-fatal *quartier latin* motorcycle accident, Godard pulled through six anxious months of hospitalization and was almost literally pieced back together in the course of several operations and skin grafts.

Appropriately, the film he and Jean-Pierre Gorin have just released bears the title *Tout va bien* (All's Well)—a title which they originally intended, long before Jean-Luc's accident, as an ironic comment on the self-satisfied optimism of bourgeois society. But the title has also picked up a very literal sense of well-being now

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that Godard has successfully recovered from his injuries and is back to work. For the now 41-year-old Godard, *Tout va bien* is his twenty-fifth feature film in 13 years and the seventh film he has made collectively under the aegis of the Dziga Vertov Group.*

With *Tout va bien* eagerly awaited at both the New York and San Francisco Festivals this fall, I think this is an opportune moment to undertake a retrospective look at the body of work issued up to now by the Dziga Vertov Group. Incidentally, such an appraisal seems all the more opportune just now in light of Jean-Pierre Gorin's recent disclosure that he and Godard intend to do a number of projects individually in the immediate future, although they still plan to do certain projects collectively.

Let us try to determine, then, what characterizes the films of the Dziga Vertov Group? Since I have already dealt elsewhere [see *Film Quarterly,* Winter 1970–71, and *Sight and Sound,* Summer 1971], with the first, *British Sounds,* and the third, *Vent d'Est,* of the Dziga Vertov Group's films, I shall here concentrate on *Pravda, Struggle in Italy,* and *Vladimir and Rosa* —the second, fourth, and fifth. Before discussing these films, however, a word should be said about *Till Victory,* Godard and Gorin's film on the Al Fatah liberation struggle in Palestine, which, had it been released, would have been their sixth and most ambitious film to date. Unfortunately, however, a number of problems have arisen which have caused Godard and Gorin to hold grave reservations about their film's analysis of the Palestinian situation—and, consequently, they have decided to withhold release of the film in its present form. Shot in Palestine during Spring 1970—at a time when the collapse of King Hussein's rule in Jordan seemed imminent and Yassir Arafat's Al Fatah organization seemed to have consolidated its position of leadership in the liberation struggle —*Till Victory* was to have been a *défense et illustration* of how the Fatah Movement's thorough, patient, and systematic planning and organization made it a model of revolutionary preparedness. The sudden turn of events which saw Hussein's troops rout the Palestinian guerillas in Fall 1970 and decisively in Spring 1971, however, came as a great surprise and disappointment to Godard and Gorin—as well as to many international observers.* When I spoke with Gorin about *Till Victory* in Paris last summer he acknowledged that this setback at the practical level of revolutionary struggle was forcing him and Godard to take a long self-critical look at the theoretical analysis which led them to ally themselves with the Al Fatah position. Pending this autocritique—which, of course, had to await Godard's recovery from the accident—*Till Victory* was to remain in limbo. Their present plan is to transform the Palestinian film into a critical and self-critical analysis of how (and how *not*) to film history in the making.

All the films of the Dziga Vertov Group are fairly difficult to get to see. Even in America, where distribution rights have often been sold in advance as a means of raising the money to make each film, the Group's films have had very short commercial runs and have been limited

*The nucleus of the Dziga Vertov Group has always been a partnership between Godard and one other person—first with Jean-Henri Roger (a young militant from Marseilles) for *British Sounds* and *Pravda,* then with Jean-Pierre Gorin (a 29-year-old former journalist and student activist) for the last five films the Group has made—but the collective planning and making of the Group's films have involved many other individuals and militant groups as well. (Incidentally, some Godard filmographies list *Un film comme les autres* [A Film Like All The Others] as the first of the Dziga Vertov Group's films; however, although this film on the French May riots of 1968 grew out of Godard's participation in some of the loosely organized militant groups that sprang up during that time, the film was finished in late 1968, which, to my knowledge, antedates by at least several months the founding of the Dziga Vertov Group. It should, I think, be considered a precursor of the Group's work rather than a part of it.)

*Al Fatah was one of the first organizations to understand the Palestinian question as more than an Arab-Israeli confrontation and to concentrate on the urgent need for radical social change in the Arab countries, particularly in Jordan. Since the guerillas' setback in 1971 the Fatah Movement's generally disapproving attitude toward airplane hijackings and other acts of publicity-oriented terrorism has caused dissension—most notably with the "Black September Group" responsible for the murderous raid on the Israeli Olympic team.

for the most part to the university circuit. In France, it has been even more difficult to get to see them, for Godard has refused to release them commercially, and outside of an occasional screening at the Cinémathèque, the only opportunities to see these films have been screenings set up for groups of militant workers or militant students' organizations. (The arrangements for such screenings have been handled by the editors of *Cinéthique*—the highly influential journal of Marxist-Leninist film theory in France.)

The reason for this relative exclusiveness is fairly simple, and it is related to Godard's reasons for deciding to work collectively in the first place: in bourgeois capitalist society, art, like everything else, is above all a *commodity*—and the reputation of the artist is largely what determines the value of a work of art. But this value based on the artist's reputation is almost solely an *exchange value:* the art market, and, to a great extent, our art criticism (which is an appendage of the art market) do not take up the question of the *use value* of a work of art; or, if they do, it is only in terms of the decorative potential, the status potential, the investment potential, or—for the intellectuals—the work of art's potential for enabling us to *see* something in a new light. (Notice, by the way, the bias toward *contemplation* which is the bourgeois intellectual's trademark.) The way in which art is a product of class struggle, and how in each historical period and in each of its many stylistic trends, art is useful to the ruling class as an ideological tool which disseminates values (e.g., contemplation rather than action) that serve to perpetuate ruling class power and privilege—such considerations of *use value* are taboo. What is emphasized instead, and what builds an artist's reputation, is *a distinctive personal style.*

Originality, novelty, uniqueness, and individuality are the highest goods of bourgeois art; and these qualities, when conspicuously or flamboyantly displayed, are taken as emanations of genius. Moreover, since Duchamp, it is not even necessary that these qualities be manifested in the *execution* of a work of art; for Duchamp, though seeking to destroy the cult of the artist as creative genius, merely shifted our attention from execution to *selection* of a work of art. Although his ready-mades seemed to negate the values of bourgeois art by asserting mass production instead of originality, commonplace familiarity instead of novelty, easy duplicability instead of uniqueness, and anonymity instead of individuality, in the end, the bourgeois values were dramatically reinforced, although shifted in their focus, by the simple fact that Duchamp's act of operating a reversal of the values inherent in a work of art could, itself, be reversed and turned back into a demonstration of the most brilliant originality, novelty, uniqueness and individuality . . . *not in the work of art itself but in the mind and sensibility of the artist!* The old adage "le style, c'est l'homme" thus attains its apotheosis in bourgeois art: since a distinctive personal style is seen to be an emanation of the artist's unique sensibility, the bourgeois artist can flaunt his unique sensibility merely in the selection of what he chooses to designate—and has the personal flair to impose on the critics and the art market—as "art" (e.g., Duchamp's toilet and Warhol's Campbell Soup cans). In short, bourgeois art, like bourgeois society, functions on the principle of the apotheosis of the individual. To be famous, i.e., to be instantly recognized as a distinctive individual, is, as Warhol himself pointed out, the great bourgeois dream.

By working collectively and withholding his personal "signature" (the art consumer's guarantee of "originality") Godard challenges this glorification of the individual, and by de-emphasizing the exchange value of his reputation, Godard attempts to shift the film-goer's attention to the use value of a film. But what is the use value of a film? Significantly, in asking this question we run up against a train of thought which permeates bourgeois idealism's thinking on art, namely, that what makes art so special, so wonderful, is that art is the one human endeavor which has *no practical use* [sic] and thereby "frees" man from the "vulgar" material exigencies of life and allows him to function in the "higher" realm of the spirit. A correlative of this idealist contempt for man's material needs is the notion that art, true art, deals with eternal and universal values of the human spirit

and that a concern for the specific issues that urgently confront us in our everyday life has no place in art, or, if it does find a place, is considered an intrusion which weakens the value of the work of art as art. (Witness, for example, the cautious, qualifications, and criticisms offered by American Brecht scholars.)

In short, the dominant idealist thinking on art has the effect of eliminating from art or limiting to a very minimal level what is disparagingly referred to as "politics." Art is treasured, on one hand, for offering man the "free" exercise of his intelligence and imagination, but he is "free" only to exercise his intelligence and imagination on timeless and universal values (particularly on the world of sentiments) that are untainted by "politics." Is this pervasive devaluation of politics accidental? Or does the history of class society indicate that time after time and place after place art has been in the service of the ruling class elites, of pharaohs and priests and emperors and kings and popes and dictators and presidents and philanthropic industrialists, who have held positions of power and privilege in society and who have recognized the *use value,* to *them,* of keeping people's attention diverted from questioning the existing order by providing them with *art?*

And so, interestingly enough, when we ask what is the *use value* of a film or of any work of art, we must also ask *for whom*—and also, unfortunately, *against whom*—art has use value in a class society? (The question of what use value art would have in a classless society is a very interesting one which I intend to explore elsewhere.) Where film is concerned, Godard has found it necessary to reconsider the audience his earlier films reached and to ask himself whether, realistically, that audience of "art buffs" could be expected not only to recognize the class nature of the film art but also to take a class stand *with* the exploited classes in attempting to transform film art into something that would be useful to those working actively, theoretically and practically, for profound, revolutionary social change? Obviously, Godard realized that by no means all—and most likely only a very small minority—of his old art-house audience could be expected to undergo this radicalization, so deeply engrained were the sophisticated prejudices of idealist aesthetics. Consequently, Godard decided to make it difficult for the old audience to co-opt his new films, starting by refusing to allow the new militant films to be shown in the old temples of the art film. Moreover, Godard and Gorin purposely have made it difficult for any carry-overs from the old audience to relate to the new militant films in the old idealist way, for they want, above all, to use art in a new and revolutionary way that will no longer cover up the class divisions of society and the struggle between the classes but instead will call attention to and aggravate class contradictions by sharpening the line of demarcation between classes and between those willing to involve themselves actively in class struggle and, on the other hand, those not willing to do so. Toward this end, *the Dziga Vertov Group's films throw out a challenge to each spectator to confront the reality of class struggle and to take a stand in it.*

And the challenge is a tough one. The Marxist-Leninist and Maoist slogans which turn so many people off are abundant in these films, and they are embedded in voice-over texts which, to many film-goers, seem to drone on tediously or to rant abrasively. Audiences accustomed to bourgeois movies which emphasize entertainment or "art" are certainly not going to dig hearing lengthy analyses of revisionism or of ideology or of the need to struggle against bourgeois individualism. And they'll couch their objections in terms of our sacrosanct aesthetics —"politics have no place in art"—or in terms of our so-called intellectual objectivity—"I'm willing to discuss these ideas rationally, but, please, no slogans!"—or, finally, on our self-indulgent demand to be entertained—"it's boring"—but all too often these attitudes merely represent some of the dodges by which the bourgeois conscience conveniently rationalizes its avoidance of issues which challenge the political status quo. Whether they are confronted with these issues elsewhere or not, they resent being confronted with them in art, of all places, and walk out—often during the film—feeling

self-righteously indignant.

However, it's by no means only the unpoliticized spectator who gets turned off by these films. Aware that a radical posture is fashionable these days, especially among youth, Godard and Gorin have carefully tried to avoid eliciting the facile, ego-tripping spectator-response of simply shouting "Right on!" at the appropriate signal. In particular, the dogged persistence of the voice-over texts—delivered in monotone—in the Dziga Vertov Group's films, presents a calculated obstacle aimed at separating the superficial, posturing radical role-player from the serious individual who is willing to do the work of exploring and acting upon the issues presented in the films.

It's the latter, finally, the actively committed Marxist-Leninist or Maoist militant, for whom the films of the Dziga Vertov Group are made.

The point is worth emphasizing, for there has been a lot of confusion over just whom these films are intended to reach. Much of the confusion has stemmed from those who assumed that since the films take a class stand with the working class they must be made for workers; and from this point discussion has degenerated into the old impasse "but will workers be able to understand these films, aren't they too intellectual for workers?" But Godard and Gorin have argued that their films are not for workers in general, for some vague "masses," but rather are for specific groups of militants, some of whom are workers, some of whom are students, some of whom are simply full-time activists, but all of whom can be expected to involve themselves in the theoretical and practical exploration of issues presented in the films. Moreover, Godard and Gorin have pointed out that it would be presumptuous on their part to make films *for* the masses or even *on behalf of* the masses. Coming from the petit bourgeois milieu, they acknowledge that they do not have the kind of working-class experience of oppression that would enable them to deal with the day-to-day experience of the worker, particularly the worker who has not yet developed a class-conscious analysis of his own oppression and alienation. Nonetheless, what they can do to help bridge this gap is to begin to work cooperatively and collectively with small groups of militant workers and students and film people who can learn from one another's experience, can exchange information, can begin to share experience by undertaking group projects, and can develop their revolutionary theory and practice simultaneously.

How has this worked out thus far? Well, the planning stages of each of the Dziga Vertov Group's films have involved lengthy discussions with various militant groups which Godard and Gorin have been in constant contact with for several years now. Moreover, the interaction has been reciprocal: the various militant groups have often discussed the planning stages of their actions with Godard and Gorin. When I asked recently if these militant groups were involved in the shooting and, particularly, the editing stages as well as the planning stages of the Dziga Vertov Group's films, Gorin replied that, yes, to a certain extent, they were, especially since he and Godard are firmly committed to Vertov's insistence that editing is a three-stage process that begins with "editing before the shooting" and includes "editing within the shooting" as well as the final "editing after the shooting." In this sense, then, even groups like the Palestinian guerillas, who could obviously not be present in Paris for the "editing after the shooting" stage, can be said to have played a part in the editing process. And this is by no means mere playing with terms, for Godard and Gorin have repeatedly emphasized that unlike other militant film groups such as Newsreel or Chris Marker's SLON or the French CGT labor union film group of Paul Seban, the Dziga Vertov Group rejects the "reflection of reality" notion of the cinema and therefore refuses the "go out and get footage" approach *(la chasse aux images)* which invariably emphasizes the "you are there" immediacy quality of events at the expense of a thorough analysis of the causes, effects, relations and contradictions of events.

PRAVDA: A DIALECTICAL MATERIALIST THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

This rejection of the facile emphasis on im-

mediacy is most evident in Godard's *Pravda* (a film, by the way, which marks a transition in the Group's work, since Godard planned and shot the film in collaboration with Jean-Henri Roger, discussed and debated the editing of it with Jean-Pierre Gorin, and ended up putting the final cut together entirely on his own)—for *Pravda* is as much a film on how to get at truth *(pravda)*, particularly in the cinema, as it is a film on the post-Dubcek situation in Czechoslovakia where it was shot in spring 1969, the year after the Russian armed intervention there. What is ultimately at stake in *Pravda*—and in the Dziga Vertov Group's work as a whole (as well as in the work of the Group's namesake)—is the attempt to elaborate and implement in cinematic terms *a dialectical materialist theory of knowledge*. [For an intelligent but unnecessarily pedantic introduction to Vertov's own efforts to lay the foundations of such an epistemology, see Annette Michelson's recent article on Vertov in *Artforum*, March 1972.]

The first section of *Pravda* presents various images and sounds which Godard's voice-over commentators simply refer to as "external manifestations of the communist reality and the communist irreality in Czechoslovakia today." The methodology of this opening section, they acknowledge, is that of "a political travelogue," and the voice-over text is in the form of a "letter-to-a-friend-back-home." (Here, as in Montesquieu's famous *Lettres Persanes*, the procedure of utilizing the point of view of a complete stranger who finds himself in a foreign country has the very constructive and ironic effect of helping us to see "as if with new eyes" things we might otherwise take for granted.)

In *Pravda*, however, the "new eyes" with which we see Czechoslovakia are not meant to be the eyes of just anybody—and in fact Godard clearly wants us to consider that the act of developing a point of view which will enable us to comprehend the situations presented (in the film as in life) is above all *a mental act* in which (despite the eminently visual metaphor of *point of view*) the act of seeing is not necessarily the primary one and may indeed be far less constitutive of a point of view than the act of listening to the spoken word. Throughout his films, Godard has continually explored different combinations of visual or aural preeminence, weighing the relative usefulness and reliability of the cinematographic image and the spoken word. Sometimes, especially in the early films, Godard seemed to find the image more trustworthy than the all-too-fickle word; more recently, however, as his investigations (starting with *Le Gai Savoir*) have led him to probe more deeply into epistemological questions, the spoken word has clearly asserted its pre-eminence in his films as the conceptualizing element in attaining knowledge.

In *Pravda*, for example, the conceptualizing point of view is established not by the image (which gives one a point of view only in the perceptual sense) but by the spoken words of the man whose voice we hear addressing his letter to "Dear Rosa." His name is Vladimir, and we quickly realize that the point of view of the stranger in Czechoslovakia is that of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin returning to the earth to take a look at the progress of socialism and jotting down his impressions (and the analysis of those impressions) in a letter to "Dear Rosa"—an obvious allusion to Rosa Luxemburg, with whom Lenin, in fact, carried on a famous correspondence.

And what Vladimir sees in contemporary Czechoslovakia doesn't look at all like socialism to him! " . . . TV girls wearing cashmere sweaters . . . billboards for large American corporations in the fields along the highways . . . neon signs advertising Russian trains . . . tanks, yes, tanks to watch over the peasants . . . wire fences the government puts around everything which is the private property of the people . . . "—all these are part of the concrete situation in Czechoslovakia. But, as Vladimir admits, these images and sounds are not enough: the material in this first section of *Pravda* is really just a travelogue like any other—"like Delacroix in Algiers or Chris Marker in the strike-torn factories of Rhodiaceta. *The New York Times* and *Le Monde* call it news. And I agree with you, Rosa, that it isn't enough. Why? Because it's only the knowledge perceived by our

senses. Now one has to make the effort to rise above this perceptual knowledge. One needs to struggle to transform it into rational knowledge."

This task, then, is undertaken in the second section of *Pravda.* While the "travelogue" could only serve to present fragments of "the concrete situation in Czechoslovakia," the second section presents an attempt to develop "the concrete analysis of the concrete situation."

Vladimir tells us of renting a car at Prague airport—the red car we see in the images. "And guess who we rented it from?" asks Vladimir. "Just as in Moscow, Warsaw, or Bucharest, we rented it from an American company. Hertz or Avis. Two branches of American banking or chemical trusts." And he goes on to explain that the car is a Skoda, manufactured in Czechoslovakia at the factories nationalized in 1945 by the popular democratic forces after their victory over fascism. "Produced in nationalized factories, the Skoda belongs, then, to the Skoda workers—the car should be at the service of the people who produced it. But Hertz and Avis don't rent cars out of good will; they do it for profit. And, deviously, with the complicity of the Czechoslovak leaders, Hertz and Avis have *appropriated* what should rightfully belong to the Czechoslovak people. Moreover, the appropriation of *surplus-value*—theoretically eliminated in socialist countries—makes its ugly reappearance. And, practically, the more the socialist workers of Skoda work, the more the imperialist shareholders fill their pockets."

What we're dealing with here, Vladimir remarks, is *revisionism in practice.* But Czechoslovakia's reintroduction of various features of capitalism is only one side of the coin of revisionism—and the other is Russia's willingness to accommodate the capitalist West while tightening her bureaucratic stranglehold on the socialist East. And who is always the victim of revisionism? In Moscow as in Prague, it is the worker who suffers the oppression of the bureaucrats who are supposed to serve him. "Once the people have put them in power, the revisionists devote all their energy to keeping the people —especially the working class—out of power. . . . The revisionist bureaucrats, like all reactionaries, are afraid of the people, that is why they make use of police terror. Just as in the capitalist countries, the ministry of the interior becomes the ministry of oppression."

Equally unsparing in its criticism of both Moscow-style revisionism and Prague-style revisionism, *Pravda* neither justifies nor decries the Russian armed intervention in Czech affairs in August 1968: that is not the major issue. And what little documentary footage Godard uses of Soviet tanks in the streets of Prague is not at all utilized for its dramatic "you-are-there" quality; rather, this material, like the rest, is presented simply as "external manifestations" which need to be organized in the editing so as to "establish a new contradictory relationship between them . . . and to bring into light the internal causes . . . of the present situation in the socialist republic of Czechoslovakia."

The methodology of the film, then, is to move constantly back and forth from practice to theory and from theory to practice. Following step by step the process of acquiring knowledge outlined by Mao Tse-tung in his essay "On Practice," *Pravda* begins with the practice of gathering perceptual knowledge, but the voice-over commentators *immediately* sense the inadequacy of this "travelogue" approach and therefore undertake *right from the start* the theoretical task of transforming perceptual knowledge into conceptual knowledge. And as soon as judgments and inferences have been drawn, theory is tested and developed . . . *in practice.* And, of course, practice constantly creates a new concrete situation which requires a new transformation of theory to produce new knowledge of each new situation. In short, as I have indicated, what is at stake here is a dialectical materialist theory of knowledge in which, as Lenin argued somewhat crudely in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and with more sophistication in his *Philosophical Notebooks,* consciousness is always "consciousness of some thing," i.e., there is no "ideal" realm of "pure thought"; and knowledge is not disembodied knowledge of the "essence" of *things-in-themselves* but is rather *a dialectical process of interaction, of work,* between man and man and between man and

things. Thus, as Marx so incisively put it, man experiences the world not in order to understand it but to *transform* it.

Likewise, Godard's films are aimed not at helping us to understand the world as a *given* but to understand and affirm our inescapable role of constantly transforming it. Consequently, his films resolutely avoid the detached "eye of God" point of view, and instead openly affirm the work and struggle of the film-maker (Vertov's "man with a movie camera") who, himself, is involved in social practice and the relations of production just like everyone else.

Finally, as important as the epistemological concerns may be in *Pravda,* no discussion of this film is complete without a consideration of how Godard explores issues in this film through his use of color and movement. Right from the beginning, Godard utilizes the colors and movements of Prague's streetcars as a means of calling our attention to one of the film's basic issues —the task of distinguishing the shades and nuances of different types of socialism and the different directions in which they are moving.

"We are in a socialist country," says Vladimir; "whoever says socialist says red. The red of the blood spilled by the workers for their emancipation. But there was fighting between the different kinds of red. Between the red which comes from the left and the red which goes off towards the right." And as we hear this commentary, we see in the image a busy street in downtown Prague; but suddenly a bright red streetcar comes into the frame from the left, blotting out all depth-perception as it fills up nearly the entire screen. The streetcar comes to a halt, its red panels sliding slowly to a stop and revealing slightly orange areas where the red paint is chipped and fading. After a moment's pause, slowly, then quickly gathering speed, the red panels of the streetcar begin sliding off towards the right, their blemishes disappearing again as the streetcar's movement blurs the details so that one sees only the dominant red. But what is behind that unified facade? The seeds of doubt have been planted. Is there a connection between the fact that the red of socialism is beginning to look faded and blemished and the fact that this same red of socialism, here in Czechoslovakia, is moving towards the right?

Granted, of course, we are operating here at a transparently symbolic level, but Godard's artistry is such that he takes cinematic structures that are aesthetically interesting in themselves (like this shot's organization of color, line, plane, and movement) and builds out of these structures a rich cluster of connotations that both deepens the aesthetic experience and at the same time refers us back out of the internal structures of a work of art into the world of social practice. Instead of merely using the red streetcar shot for its combination of "local color" and abstract beauty (which is how Chris Marker uses an almost identical shot in his *Sunday in Peking*), Godard takes these elements as starting points—eminently cinematic ones—and links the abstract to the concrete while transforming the superficial aspects of "local color" into conceptual tools for probing deeper into the "red of socialism" in Czechoslovakia.

Throughout the film the color red serves as a focal point for highlighting the contradictions of revisionism: repeated shots of a lovely dark red rose—associated with the blood of the workers as well as with "red" Rosa Luxemburg and the "purists" of socialist theory—give way at the end of the film to a shot of that same rose lying trampled in the mud. And the spilling of the workers' blood in their struggle for liberation—referred to early in the film—gives way to the spilling of a glass of rosé wine carelessly poured to overflowing: a symbol of the callous betrayal of the workers (and of socialist principles) by a privileged and élitist bureaucracy. But perhaps the most telling use of color to highlight revisionism's contradictions is so *material* that it is hardly symbolic at all: over a fuzzy shot of an off-red neon sign advertising AGFA film in downtown Prague, Vladimir apologizes for the poor quality of the color, explaining that "it's West German film processed in Soviet labs."

Another recurring image in *Pravda* is a high-angle long shot of a circular tramway interchange where the streetcars of Prague come into the frame from the upper right, proceed leftward

around the circle, discharge their passengers and proceed out to the upper right again. Near the end of the third section of *Pravda*—placed in a crucial position just before the beginning of the brief lyrical 'coda' which terminates the film—the circular interchange is seen for the last time, while on the soundtrack we hear the following exchange:

Rosa: *Toi aussi, tes réponses tournent en ronds et nous n'avançons pas.* [You too, your answers are going around in circles and we're not making any progress.] Vladimir: *C'est en tournant en ronds que nous avançons.* [It's in going around in circles that we make progress.]

At one level, metaphorically, the circular streetcar interchange is a graphic representation of the reversal of direction in revisionist Czechoslovakia: the reversal of the red of socialism, moving left with the masses, then leaving the masses behind and moving off to the right again. But at another level, also metaphorically, Vladimir's defense of going around in circles alludes to the circular structure of the film as a whole and to the circular process of moving dialectically from practice to theory back to practice in a constant testing and development of theory (knowledge) as well as a constant transformation of the world (practice). This seemingly off-hand defense of circularity—placed in the mouth of *Pravda's* Vladimir—corresponds with Lenin's own notion (it is Hegel's as well) that "human knowledge is not (or does not follow) a straight line, but a curve, which endlessly approximates a series of circles, a spiral." Or, as Mao puts it, "Practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge. This form repeats inself in endless cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such is the whole of the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge, and such is the dialectical-materialist theory of the unity of knowing and doing."

STRUGGLE IN ITALY: MAN'S SOCIAL BEING DETERMINES HIS THINKING

Continuing their Marxist investigations, Godard and Gorin focused their attention, in *Vent d'Est* (Wind from the East) and *Lotte in Italia* (Struggle in Italy), on the nature and function of *ideology*—an area which has recently been very fruitfully explored by French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. In fact, while planning *Struggle in Italy,* Jean-Pierre Gorin held frequent discussions on the problem of ideology with Althusser, who was then writing an essay entitled "Idéologie et Appareils Idéologiques d'état," which was subsequently published in the philosophical journal *La Pensée,* no. 151, June 1970, Paris.* It is not surprising, then, in light of this cross-fertilization of ideas, that the Dziga Vertov Group's *Struggle in Italy* (this time, it is primarily Gorin's work) and Althusser's essay on ideology are as alike as fraternal twins.

This fraternal relation of film and essay, however, has its drawbacks as well as its strengths. Although the central protagonist of *Struggle in Italy* is a young Italian girl who, at the beginning of the film, declares herself "a Marxist and a member of the revolutionary movement," nonetheless, and in spite of its title, the film is *not* concretely based in any specific situation in Italy or anywhere else. Indeed, it is a film that could have been shot anywhere (much of it was shot in Paris), for it is about a situation that supposedly exists *everywhere* in the advanced industrial capitalist world. On the whole, then, *Struggle in Italy* is a purposely abstract didactic film on the difficulties a young militant girl from a bourgeois background must overcome to rid herself of the ruling class ideology which permeates her consciousness and behavior.

We see in the first part of the film various aspects of her daily life, identified by a male voice-over commentator as "militancy," "university," "society," "family," "sexuality," etc. The various "post card" glimpses of her handing out leaflets, going to class, trying on sweaters in a store, monopolizing the bathroom in her family's flat while putting on her make-up, making love, etc., all represent, as she later acknowledges, "a bourgeois account of a bourgeois

*This essay is now available in English in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* by Louis Althusser, Monthly Review Press, New York and London.

woman who is in contradiction with herself." Interspaced among these admittedly superficial images are lengths of black leader which, we gradually realize, represent gaps in her consciousness—"black spaces" which must be filled in with images that reflect the true nature of her relations to the class society in which she lives. The central problem is that man's knowledge of "reality" is, by reason of his historical position in class struggle, *"a necessarily distorted reflection of his relation to production."*

It is, of course, the essence of Marxist thought that "man's social being determines his thinking" —and, of course, in Marxist terms, the most important constituents of "social being" are man's relations to production. A given mode of production, like capitalism for example, will entail certain "relations of production"—which relations must be *reproduced* constantly, day after day, by inculcating in individual consciousness values and a worldview that "reflect" these dominant relations of production. This task of reproducing the "relations of production," as Althusser points out, is largely carried out at the level of *ideology,* i.e., by the State's various "vehicles" of ideology. What happens, according to Althusser, in each of these vehicles, is that the individual's real relations to the relations of production are distorted because they are short-circuited into a relation to an Absolute: in the schools, Learning; in church, God; in the courts, Justice; in politics, The Party; in labor organization, The Union; in the communications media, The Facts; in art, Truth and Beauty; and in the family, Proper Behavior. As a result of this ideological short-circuiting, then, an individual's worldview is not a representation of his real relations to the relations of production which ultimately govern his existence, but rather a representation of *imaginary* relations to his real relations to the relations of production. In short, Althusser argues, "ideology equals imaginary relations to real relations."

For Paola Taviani, the student militant of *Struggle in Italy* (played by an actress of the same name), the attempts to break out of bourgeois ideology are acts of life-style rebellion: thus in the second part of the film she tries to "get to know the working class" by striking up a conversation about revolutionary politics with a young salesgirl who waits on her as she tries on sweaters; she tutors a young male worker in mathematics, hoping thereby to "serve the working class"; and she attempts to "revolutionize" her sex life, as well, by arranging with her boy friend to make love in the afternoon instead of at night as they usually have done. But this, too, she realizes, reflects her class privilege: workers can't afford such a luxury, they have to work all afternoon.

Sensing that her efforts thus far have still been marked by a bourgeois mentality, Paola takes a job in a factory. But she is not accepted by the women who operate the other sewing machines: she obviously comes from a different background, has different manners, and is suspect. Why should a pretty young bourgeois girl want to work in a factory? Why should she want to "join the working class?" Finally, the crowning blow comes when she realizes she is not even able to keep up the crushing pace of productivity demanded by the shop foreman.

Trying to analyze these failures, Paola asks herself just what reality or aspect of reality is "reflected" in each of her acts? And she concludes that "the problem is not one of 'reflection' in general, but of *the struggle between reflections which deny the objective contradictions and reflections which reveal and express them:* the struggle between bourgeois ideology which wants the world to stay like it is and revolutionary ideology which wants to change it."

Applying this insight to her own actions, Paola realizes that the various images from the first and second parts of the film have covered up the contradictions because they have reflected only one of the two terms of the objective contradiction. The second term has always been missing—it has been a "black space," a taboo that has remained repressed and inaccessible to her bourgeois consciousness. Now, however, her increased level of consciousness—which, through practice, is more closely aligned with the class consciousness of the working class—enables her to reveal and express the contradictions by filling in the gaps. Thus the film repeats

images from the first and second parts, but now a shot of Paola trying on a sweater in a boutique is not followed by "black space" but by a shot of the manufacturer's workshop where the sweater is made. Consumption is no longer something accomplished in a void; it is related to the relations of production. As other images are repeated, they too are complemented now by images of the relations of production.

These shots of factories, workshops, delivery trucks, etc., do not offer solutions in themselves; but they help Paola to understand that these "relations of production," which, as she remarks, in Italy today are "specifically capitalist relations of production," have been "reflected" in even the least suspect areas of her consciousness and behavior. And this "reflection" has been subject to the ideological distortion which substitutes *imaginary* relations to production for the real ones which have conditioned her social being and her thinking.

But now that Paola has seen through this ideological distortion, the film does not come to an end. Godard and Gorin make it clear that heightened awareness is not an end in itself. It is not enough merely to understand the world; the real task is to change it. Nonetheless, the achievement of class consciousness and the struggle to pierce the veil of bourgeois ideology play an important role in the revolutionary transformation of the world. As the male voice-over commentator of *Struggle in Italy* puts it, "We must recognize that at a certain point in the revolutionary struggle, the most important task is *theory*." Moreover, the importance of ideological struggle must not be underestimated: Engels, one will recall, attached such importance to it that he maintained (in a famous passage of a letter to Franz Mehring) that seeing through bourgeois ideology would destroy it. For ideology to function effectively, he argued, it had to remain *unconscious*. "Otherwise," he remarked, "the whole ideology would collapse."

But in *Struggle in Italy* Godard and Gorin have only dealt with the struggle of one individual to see through bourgeois ideology. For Paola Taviani, this ideology may indeed collapse; but the larger task which the film engages is that of *bringing ideological struggle out into the open* where each individual can begin to discover for himself his real relation to the process of production. In line with this task, then, Paola defines the path she must take: "To make a change in my life, to bring about a transformation in myself means heightening the contradic-

tions between my militant practice and the dominant bourgeois ideology. It means bringing class struggle into my personal life."

Finally, flaunting the state-owned RAI-TV network in Milan for whom *Struggle in Italy* was made—and who subsequently refused to show it—Godard and Gorin close the film by having Paola sing the first verse of *The Internationale* while the male voice-over commentator declares repeatedly that the future will be a future *di lavoro e di lotta:* of work and struggle.

VLADIMIR AND ROSA: THEATER AS REVOLUTION, *NOT* REVOLUTION AS THEATER

Although at first viewing the insistent comedy of *Vladimir and Rosa* seems to set this film somewhat apart from the theoretical explorations of the previous Dziga Vertov Group films, nonetheless, in its own humorous way, *Vladimir and Rosa* takes up the issues defined at the close of its immediate predecessor, *Struggle in Italy:* the necessity of heightening the contradictions between one's militant practice and the dominant bourgeois ideology by bringing class struggle into one's personal life, and thereby *changing one's life.*

There has been much talk, of course, about "life-style change" and the rise of a "counter-culture" in which each aspect of an individual's appearance and behavior can be interpreted—and is often consciously intended—as a *sign* of that individual's rejection of the "straight" life-style. Among certain segments of the counter-culture there is even a special prestige attached to being a "heavy," someone who flaunts the conventional *mores* outrageously with his or her bizarre—and often very theatrical—appearance and behavior. Indeed, the theatricality of everyday life in the polarized America of the late sixties is a subject that has been much discussed; and I suppose the prevailing attitude toward this phenomenon is a negative one: people seem to feel that theater should be clearly separated from "real life."

Old prejudices against the theater, a certain moral stigma attached to the profession of actors and actresses, and perhaps a mixture of fear and envy which the ordinary individual experiences when confronted with people who have a gift for acting out the extraordinary, the full gamut of human passions—all these are undoubtedly involved, even if unconsciously, in people's attitudes on this matter. Then, too, there is a tendency to believe that the polarization of society, itself, is responsible for the theatricalization of everyday life—an attitude which critically fails to understand the very considerable theatricality that is involved in acting out social roles in even the most homogeneous societies. [For excellent material on this subject, see Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.*]

But the demand for a strict demarcation between theater and reality is even expressed, very outspokenly, by Robert Brustein, who, as a man of the theater, ought to know better. (Brustein is a drama critic, a director, and dean of Yale Drama School.) Seemingly unaware of the irony of his position, Brustein bristles at any theatricality outside of the theater; and, once he has spotted any, refuses to see anything below the surface of theatricality. This leads him to such follies as thinking he can dismiss the Black Panthers for their "public-relations-conscious paramilitary costumes"—thus writing them off as "mere" theater—and, on the other hand, so thoroughly misunderstanding the point of the Chicago 7's theatrical defense tactics that he offers the admittedly "terrible judicial overkill" of that trial as demonstrating that theatricality is counter-productive. In short, while justifiably indignant at the market-oriented revolutionary posturings of entertainers and the fashion-oriented revolutionary posturings of "the radical chic," Brustein utterly fails to understand, or even, it seems, to examine the various functions which theatricality can perform outside as well as inside the theater.*

*I single out Brustein because he has been extremely vociferous in denouncing both the growing "theatricalization of everyday life" and the avant-garde trends in drama (happenings, multi-media events, etc.) which encourage the blurring of distinctions between theater and reality. For further discussion of these issues—and of Brustein's position on them—see the sections entitled "Event as Theatre/Theatre as Event" and "The Film Revolution" in Albert J. LaValley's interesting

And it is precisely such an examination that Godard and Gorin undertake in *Vladimir and Rosa,* a film which re-enacts, very theatrically, the theatrical antics of the Chicago 7. In this film Godard and Gorin take all sorts of artistic liberties with the facts of the Chicago trial—like including two young women among the defendants—but they very faithfully retain the hilarious Yippie tone of the proceedings: and, in many ways, *Vladimir and Rosa,* for all its levity, qualifies as a reconstituted documentary. Focussing, as it does, on a much-publicized trial, it even has an illustrious antecedent in Méliès's theatricalized reconstruction of the famous Dreyfus trial. And in this sense, *Vladimir and Rosa* is part of Godard's continuing reflection on the cinema's way of getting at truth through a dialectical synthesis of the fictional and the real.

Although the *commedia dell'arte* style of this film would seem to put the emphasis on the fictional aspect, Godard and Gorin are clearly interested in the *significance* of the Chicago trial —which they see manifested in the defendants' theatrical ways of carrying out their defense. Moreover, they sensitively distinguish a number of different defense styles in the trial: the rollicking and outrageously carefree style of Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, the more serious analytical approach of the dedicated militants among the defendants (here Godard undoubtedly has in mind Tom Hayden), the more traditional "bleeding liberal" approach taken by David Dellinger and his attorney William Kunstler (identified as "John Kunstler" in the film), and, finally the dignified rage of Bobby Seale (identified as "Bobby X" in the film) as he stands up for his legal right to serve as his own counsel—a right denied him by Judge Hoffman (the film identifies him as "Judge Himmler"), who ordered Bobby bound and gagged for his "disorderly" refusal to give up his rights.

These different defense styles, as interpreted by Godard and Gorin, represent the respective defendant's willingness or unwillingness to make a thorough break with the system. Thus, the Yippies' break is demonstrated by their scorn for normal legal procedures and their refusal to treat the legal system with the fear and reverence which the repressive order demands of its subjects. On the other hand, Bobby Seale's break is demonstrated by his cool and courageous stand in provoking the system to reveal that in America "justice" is selective, that blacks cannot even expect the courts to let them utilize in their defense what few rights they are supposed to have. As for the dedicated militants in the trial, the film seems to understand implicitly why their actions at the trial seemed pale and insignificant compared to Abbie and Jerry's antics and to Bobby's determination: namely, the militants' main task is *organization,* and that task requires patience and discretion rather than public flamboyance. (In the film one of the militant defendants talks of his organizing work in factories.)

Contrasted to these three positions, however —all of which demonstrate different ways of making a clean break with the system—is the William Kunstler-David Dellinger approach, which Godard and Gorin label *une mise-en-scène bourgeoise, style comédie française,* and which they liken to the stuffy, traditional legal defense put forth in France recently by the otherwise intensely militant editors of a Maoist workers' paper called *La Cause du Peuple.* "Although the people being tried in Paris had been working in ways leading to a new conception of political action," Gorin explains, "they were not acting in a new way in the trial itself." Likewise, Dellinger and Kunstler might express their criticisms of the American political and legal systems, but their courtroom procedure—polite, learned, and formal—could be seen as largely a product of their bourgeois background and their liberal humanist respect for *some* legal process, even if it was a thoroughly corrupt one. In short, as Godard puts it, "they hadn't radicalized themselves yet."

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anthology, *The New Consciousness,* recently published by Winthrop Publishers, Cambridge, Mass. On the specific issue which most concerns us here—the function of theatricality in making revolutionary social change—Brustein has made his position all too clear in an article entitled "Revolution as Theatre," *New Republic,* March 14, 1970.

Throughout the film the emphasis is on the way one *acts,* for the film's basic thesis seems to be that our relationship to the repressive system around us is demonstrated in our way of *acting*—and the theatrical metaphor is particularly appropriate for that eminently theatrical situation known as a trial. In this sense, then, if revolution seems theatrical, it is not, as Brustein argues, because revolution has become (mere) theater, but rather because theater too is a way of making the revolution. As Brecht put it, "We are concentrating on theater precisely because we wish to prepare a means of pursuing our affairs via the theater too. We must not be led by the urgency of our situation to destroy the means we want to make use of. The more haste, the less speed. The surgeon who has heavy responsibilities needs the little scalpel to lie lightly and easily in his hand. The world is out of joint, certainly, and it will take powerful movements to manipulate it all back again. But among the various relevant instruments there can be one that is light and delicate and needs to be handled with ease."

In *Vladimir and Rosa,* as in the Chicago trial itself, the theatrical style is predominantly one of slapstick comedy. In fact, this is a film that might well have been made by the Marx Brothers—Groucho, Chico, Harpo, Zeppo . . . and *Karl*—with the whole gang on trial not for rioting or even inciting to riot, but for "conspiracy to incite to riot." Much of the humor in this film comes from the antics of Godard and Gorin themselves, for they are on screen quite a lot either as Yippie defendants (they seem to have cast themselves as Abbie and Jerry, though Jean-Luc stands trial as "Friedrich Vladimir" and Jean-Pierre as "Karl Rosa"—whence the film's title) or in their equally humorous role as film-makers attempting to "make political film politically." Early in the film they hilariously stammer their way through a self-interview carried out on a tennis court (Jean-Luc pacing up and down on one side of the net with headphones and a directional mike; Jean-Pierre on the other side lugging a tape recorder), with both men oblivious to the tennis balls whizzing by them (and occasionally bouncing off them) from the game of mixed doubles being played on that same court.

In addition to their stammering and stuttering, Godard and Gorin adopt zany accents throughout the film that make French come out sounding like a mixture of Portuguese and German. In their self-interview on the tennis court —the subject of which, naturally enough, is how to make political film politically—they make a series of puns on the word *balles* (alternatively "balls" . . . as in "tennis balls," "bullets" . . . as shot from guns, and "balls" . . . as in the French equivalent of small round candy drops), and Godard points out, stammeringly, that *le ciné-mama* (that's the best pun of them all) also shoots bullets . . . sugar-coated bullets that can be deadly. But the essential problem for them, as militant film-makers, he explains, is how to render in images *la rupture*—the break with the system. And one way to do it, he suggests, is "to find the images that oppress us in order to destroy them." And in that sense, the image we see at that very moment is a good illustration of what Godard is talking about, for this shot juxtaposes the bourgeois complacency and leisure of the tennis players, on one hand, with the *work* and *struggle* (both class struggle and struggle for the means of cinematic production) of the militant film-makers. Later in the film, Godard again takes up the notion of the film-maker's break with the system, and he makes the voice-over comment that "one can't be content just to break with *narrative*"—a self-critical reference to an earlier stage of his own development on the way to making political film politically.

As the film progresses, however, the humor takes a decidedly vulgar turn (as Groucho's was known to do occasionally)—especially when Godard and Gorin detail an elaborate "shit-eating test" they recommend for determining whether prospective jurors are racists, or when they don police uniforms and do an agit-prop demonstration of police brutality by having Jean-Luc unzip his fly and pull out a huge phallic billy-club. Finally, there is a lame but amusing in-joke on the Dziga Vertov Group's characteristic inclusion of sections of "black leader," which they triumphantly identify in this film as signifying the involuntary absence of a real "black leader," Bobby Seale, who, of course, was forcibly separated from the rest of the defendants during the Chicago trial and ordered to stand trial alone at a later date.

In spite of the rough spots, however, the comic tone of *Vladimir and Rosa* is refreshing. (As Brecht wrote, "A theater that can't be laughed in is a theater to be laughed at.") For one thing, it indicates that far from losing his sense of humor in the process of becoming radicalized, Godard has just as keen a wit as ever. Moreover, far from relegating humor to some "private" area of his life where revolutionary firmness might momentarily be relaxed, Godard clearly has a healthy recognition that humor can be an effective weapon in the revolutionary struggle. And that's a lesson not every would-be revolutionary has learned, I'm afraid.

And on the larger question of the function of theatricality in the struggle for revolutionary social change, *Vladimir and Rosa* demonstrates Godard and Gorin's sensitive understanding of the very significant revolutionary uses of theatricality both in the Brechtian sense, in the theater, and in the Abbie Hoffman-Jerry Rubin sense, in the streets. Whether in changing your consciousness or in changing your life-style, theatricality can have an important role to play —and, as film-makers seeking to make political films politically, Godard and Gorin clearly intend to continue their explorations into the dialectics of theater and life, art and reality.

LORANT CZIGANY

Jancsó Country

MIKLÓS JANCSÓ AND THE HUNGARIAN NEW CINEMA

It has often been said that the Hungarian national obsession is history. The reason is simple enough: for a small country, Hungary has a miserably eventful history. Since the collapse of the independent kingdom in 1526, the country has been oppressed by powerful friends and foes alike. The course of events—open rebellions, uprisings, wars of independence, revolutions and counter-revolutions—might seem to provide a colorful, somewhat romantic narrative for the outsider. For the Hungarians, however, it is a deadly business: one long struggle for survival. What is surprising is that in spite of the continuous struggle, the Hungarians maintained their own ethnic identity, and were able to create a national culture.

The intelligentsia, particularly the writers, has always represented the vanguard of the forces responsible for much of the historical consciousness. The new generation of cinema directors that has emerged in the past ten years must be seen in the context of this tradition.

The development of the Hungarian cinema reflects only too well the ups and downs of re-

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As the film progresses, however, the humor takes a decidedly vulgar turn (as Groucho's was known to do occasionally)—especially when Godard and Gorin detail an elaborate "shit-eating test" they recommend for determining whether prospective jurors are racists, or when they don police uniforms and do an agit-prop demonstration of police brutality by having Jean-Luc unzip his fly and pull out a huge phallic billy-club. Finally, there is a lame but amusing in-joke on the Dziga Vertov Group's characteristic inclusion of sections of "black leader," which they triumphantly identify in this film as signifying the involuntary absence of a real "black leader," Bobby Seale, who, of course, was forcibly separated from the rest of the defendants during the Chicago trial and ordered to stand trial alone at a later date.

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cent history. The early movie-makers in the *belle epoque* of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy established a tradition of literary adaptations, taking the new art form very seriously. As the old monarchy fell apart, so did the budding cinema industry. Revolution and counter-revolution followed. The socialist Republic of Councils in 1919 had very little time to promote artistic creation; it did, however, nationalize cinema production. The climate of the repressive Horthy regime that followed was not particularly favorable to artistic experimentation. Leading film-makers, directors, actors left the country by the dozen. It is enough to think of the Korda brothers, including Sir Alexander Korda whose contribution to the British cinema is generally acknowledged. Most of the expatriates headed for Hollywood: names like Michael Curtiz (Mihály Kertész) are still familiar in this country. But the expatriates settled in other countries too. Béla Balázs, one of the greatest theoreticians of the early cinema, whose *Theory of the Film* is now a classic, chose Germany. Obviously, in a country which suddenly lost two thirds of its former territories there were all sort of troubles—not only economic but emotional readjustment was needed. The tradition of literary adaptation lived, but directors and scriptwriters found they had no outlet for their talents.

In 1945, after World War II, a new chapter was opened in the Hungarian cinema. The new regime held cinema in high esteem as an art form. An Academy of Dramatic and Film Art was established with Béla Balázs as its director. Artists who had been silenced under Horthy could experiment freely. But in 1948 the cinema industry was nationalized for the second time, like other private enterprises, and soon suffered the worst effects of the Stalinist Rákosi era: socialist-realist soap operas were produced about starry-eyed youngsters on the collective farms, about workers who attempted to increase production: in a word, the cinema became "an ideological weapon in the class struggle," copying busily the schematic mould of the Soviet cinema of the Cold War era. These were the years when even the classics of the Soviet cinema (Eisenstein, Dovjhenko, and Pudovkin) were rejected either as formalists or as lacking the correct ideological tendency.

The new course advocated by premier Imre Nagy in 1953 eased the situation of the film-makers too. There were signs of recovery: the new films, like Zoltán Fábry's *Merry-Go-Round* (1955), and *Professor Hannibal* (1956) and Imre Fehér's *Sunday Romance* (1957) opened up new vistas. Luckily for the Hungarian film the aftermath of the Revolution of 1956 did not reverse the prevailing trends in film-making. The liberalization in the early sixties released a generation of directors who are still dominating the scene. The most significant names are: Miklós Jancsó, András Kovács, and István Szabó. The real turning point was marked by Jancsó's *Cantata* in 1962.

For this sudden development there are historical reasons. The first reason is organizational: the Academy of Dramatic Art was reformed throughout—new teachers were appointed, representing the younger generation; the number of studios was increased and technical facilities improved. At the same time a new studio was created, named after the revered Béla Balázs, explicitly so the younger generation could experiment in a congenial atmosphere. The shorts made at the Béla Balázs Studio and shown at international festivals clearly signalled the birth of the Hungarian New Cinema.

The other reason was political. A degree of artistic freedom was clearly evident in the treatment of the recent past: the events of the 1956 Revolution in Zoltán Fábri's *Twenty Hours* (1964), the suffocating atmosphere of the Rákosi regime in István Szabó's *Father* (1966), or the frank examination of war crimes still painful to the national ego in András Kovács's *Cold Days* (1966). The open discussion of contemporary issues in Kovács's *Difficult People* (1964), or *Walls* (1968), seemed to provide a voice of dissent without opposing the official position to a dangerous degree.

Perhaps one more reason should be added. Most of the young film-makers held the late György Lukács in great esteem. This reverence

for Lukács is a curious mixture of admiration and philosophical inspiration. The reverence was addressed to the grand old man of Marxist philosophy, always a bit of an outsider in his own country, who never repented his role in the 1956 Revolution. The moral courage of this fragile old man made a great impression. The philosophical inspiration came from the essence of Lukács's teachings: the need for continuous and frank self-examination. As an original Marxist thinker, he knew that dogmas are the archenemy of creative Marxism. In this way Lukács is largely responsible for the critical tone of the present-day Hungarian cinema. Moreover, he is a *rara avis* among philosophers: he can discuss cinema with depth and precise knowledge. His interest in the art of the cinema sprang from his lifelong friendship with Béla Balázs. The esteem between the directors and Lukács, needless to say, is reciprocal: in an interview which appeared in the Hungarian journal *Filmkultúra,* in 1968, he declared that both Jancsó and Kovács are great artists who are asking the *right questions* in their films, like Ibsen or Chekhov, the idols of his young age, and that he still expected much of them. It is true that Lukács has certain reservations about the intellectual potential of the cinema, particularly in his *Aesthetics,* but he has always seen the role of the cinema as a true social avant-garde.

The most important characteristic of the Hungarian New Cinema is the final escape from the literary tradition which still haunts the older generation of directors in Hungary. The idea that you cannot make a great film except from a classical novel lingers on. Jancsó himself for example—as he told me in Paris in 1967—when about to make a film of Rózsa, the legendary hero of *The Round-Up,* first thought of a classical novel; but luckily for him, and for us, the daughter of that particular author made some annoying difficulties regarding the copyright, and Jancsó dropped the idea. Most of the young directors are making *auteur* films. Jancsó is a particular case: he sticks to his own scriptwriter, Gyula Hernádi, a significant writer on his own.

If we accept the definition that the early classic Soviet cinema was a cinema of political criticism and agitation, and neorealism was a cinema of political criticism and comment, then the new generation of Hungarian directors use the cinema—for the first time—as a medium of sociopolitical *debate.* Because of this second characteristic of the Hungarian new wave the films are usually open-ended. This is in line with Lukács's idea about film: the director has to raise the question only, it is the audience who is supposed to find the answer. It is also an open revolt against the convictions of the *bad* socialist-realist cinema which gave an optimistic ending to all problems, as officialdom did not want to admit that tragedies happen *even* in the course of building socialism. (The inevitable happy ending thus forced the socialist cinema into the worst traditions of the Hollywood soap opera.)

It is not unusual among young Hungarian directors that they go around with their films to take part in discussion with audiences. They want participation. They want to gauge the reaction of the audiences, see what lines of thought arise in connection with the questions they are putting to them. Film is a powerful medium to excite discussion.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that the new films—including Jancsó's—are popular with the large masses of Hungarian cinema-goers. The Hungarian "silent majority" of cinema-goers is not better than its Western counterparts: they are all for a good story, spectacular action on the wide screen, and of course, a happy ending—where all the sugar-plums go to the good guys, and the bad guys, if they do not go to hell, are at least adequately punished. The new films, however, do capture the audience for which they are intended. Cinema-going has always been a vital part of Hungarian intellectual life and the under-forty generation follows the latest developments with keen interest. Jancsó, for example, is very popular with university students, although he is not exactly a young man—he only appeared quite late on the scene.

Miklós Jancsó is now just over fifty. He is only four years younger than Fábri, the most

prominent director of the older generation. He made his first feature film in 1958 *(The Bells Have Gone to Rome)*. His early short film, *Immortality,* about Hungarian sculptor, George Goldmann, won him the Best Art Film Prize at the San Francisco International Festival in 1960. His second feature followed in 1962: *Cantata.* The film was given a somewhat cool reception in Hungary, notwithstanding the fact that, in the words of Italian critic Ugo Casiraghi, "It depicts the crisis of an intellectual, a surgeon, represented by Jancsó with such extraordinarily profound insight as to be comparable only to Mikhail Romm's *Nine Days of a Year . . .* "

The years between Jancsó's first two full-length feature films were spent in experimenting; he earned wide recognition as a leading documentary film-maker with an unusual technique. After the success of *Cantata* Jancsó's films were shot in rapid succession. *My Way Home* came in 1964, a largely autobiographical recollection, taking place at the end of World War II and introducing a young actor, András Kozák, who is a sort of alter ego for Jancsó. It was followed by *The Round-Up* in 1965 which made his name in the English-speaking countries. In 1967 *The Red and The White,* relating an episode of the Civil War in Russia in 1920, was released. Next year he finished *Silence and Cry,* a film about the aftermath of the Republic of Councils in 1919. The greatest controversy was caused by his *Confrontation,* finished in 1969. This film examined the student movement at the time of the Communist takeover in 1948–49. The students of 1948 were by 1969 middle-aged fathers, managers, professors, and doctors, and they saw Jancsó as a merciless Grand Inquisitor tearing into pieces their heroic, revolutionary past. The next film, *Sirocco,* relates a strange episode of the interwar years: a handful of Yugoslav *ustashi* are trained in great secrecy in Hungary for acts of terrorism. *Agnus Dei* appeared in 1970, and last year the news came that yet another film was finished. This time the hero is Dózsa, the leader of a 16th-century peasant revolt in Hungary, who was burnt alive. *(The People Demand*—also called *Red Psalm).*

All Jancsó's films, as it appears from the above catalogue, treat some event of historical importance. The dates are crucial dates, at least in Hungarian history. Yet it would be a great mistake to think that Jancsó is making historical films in the accepted sense. He examines patterns of behavior in a given historical context. Those who saw most of Jancsó's films were forced to realize that he is asking the same question in each of his films. He uses the same scriptwriter, Hernádi; the same hero, Kozák, appears on the screen; much of the scenery is the same, photographed from the same angles and with the same technique. Jancsó is not afraid of repetition: he knows that his obsession stands or falls on how many facets of his basic question he is able to analyze on the screen as fully as possible.

What is the question Jancsó is asking so relentlessly? To illustrate the basic point, Penelope Houston describes the opening shot of *Silence and Cry* in an excellent analysis of Jancsó (*Sight and Sound,* 1969). No better example could be found: we see a high sand dune, so bleached and glittering that at first glance one is likely to take it for snow. A prisoner and his escort walk past. We have no doubt about their relationship, but they don't seem unfriendly, there is no tension. "Get me a twig," the guard says, "No, up there"—he points to the dune. The prisoner slowly climbs, his face is motionless, as if he expected this seemingly senseless order. The guard turns to his companion: "Well, why don't you shoot?" The sound of the gun does not seem to disturb the silence of nature. As the lifeless human figure, shot in the back, topples down, up in the sky a bird is singing; it is not the cry of a frightened bird. The camera has recorded the event indifferently, it does not focus on a twitching hand, or blood slowly running on a frozen face. The killing, and it is a killing, not an execution or a murder, is a completely casual, bloodless, and emotionless business. A basic human relationship is established: the man with the gun has the power, the victim accepts it. Death is a result of a move, as in chess: Rook takes Pawn. Miss Houston has her point: this is Jancsó country, no doubt about it.

The Jancsó country is a closed world with its own set of rules. As in chess, you cannot make an *illegal* move, or the game would stop. You can avoid the law, you can even disregard it, life goes on, but in chess a Bishop can never move according to the rule laid down for a Knight. The chessboard is the wide screen, because the background for Jancsó's world is that endless flat plain, the Hungarian *puszta,* the barren, barbaric beauty of which was discovered for the cinema by the camera of Georg Höllering in his *Hortobágy* (1934). In *The Round-Up* we soon learn it is a place that allows no concealment. There are few trees, the blazing sun casts sharp shadows round the white walls of a solitary farm building. If you follow your instinct to run away, the moment of truth is near: you are closed in in an open space. This last act of self-preservation is a semantical absurdity; the plain is endless, it stretches as far as the eye can see: there is nowhere to run. The landscape is basically horizontal, the sharp contrast of the vertical human figure is diminished by the vast proportions of the surroundings.

The figures of the chessboard are divided into two distinct categories: the oppressors and the oppressed. Or even more simply: if there are two groups of people, only one can have power. This is the basic rule of Jancsó's game. His theorem is that those who have the power use it, not because they are wicked, or without morals, but by definition: power exists only if it is used. The supporting theorem is that stalemate does not exist. It is probably a bitter lesson drawn from East European history. If you live in Jancsó country you have to accept these rules.

To achieve a stark insight into the nature of power Jancsó drastically simplifies the world. First of all he throws out all value judgments as far as humanly possible. He uses basic abstractions in constructing the images of his pictures, in their extreme opposite forms: horizontal-vertical, black-white, or round-rectangular. Then he transfers the same basic categories to human characters and relations. Actors are not allowed to reveal what is going on inside the minds of the characters they are representing. Speech is confined to words of order or command, and pressing for or communicating information. This economy of dialogue is essential not to let the relationship caused by the unequal distribution of power, out of sight. If you are feeding a computer, no matter how complicated the data are, you have to break them down to fit the binary system. Jancsó's binary system is the structure of power.

And for that matter it is quite immaterial, whether the audience is familiar with the historical background of Jancsó's films, or not. I feel obliged, however, to give a coherent narrative of at least of one of his films to illustrate Jancsó's obsession with power. The majority of the critics who have written about Jancsó agree that *The Round-Up* is perhaps his best film, and already a minor classic of contemporary cinema.

The action takes place in the 1860's, at the time of the Italian *Risorgimento.* While the Italians were breaking away from Habsburg rule and Papal supremacy, the Hungarians felt that the time was coming for a compromise with Austria. There was still general resentment against the Austrians; memories of the ruthlessly crushed revolution of 1848 still lingered on, particularly among the people of the countryside. The administration was bent on consolidation. A Royal Commissioner was appointed to deal with all types of unrest in the vast *puszta,* where peasants not only cherished the memory of the exiled leader of the revolution, Kossuth, but dreamed and sang about a new uprising. Commissioner Ráday rounded up all sorts of people in a fortress which stood in the middle of nowhere. The aim of the operations was to track down the most dangerous of the local *betyárs* or bandits— Sándor Rózsa, a legendary figure of the revolution. The interrogations went on day and night with sophisticated methods and refined cruelty. The wills of the individual prisoners were broken with various methods: eventually most of them proved willing to collaborate. Even those who had not committed any sort of crime were resigned to their fate. They spied on each other, denounced each other, and entertained false hopes.

We are there to observe Jancsó's analysis of the machinery of oppression. The oppressed are the people: peasants, farmers, agricultural workers. Most of them are victims of a backward

economy, a few are petty criminals; perhaps one or two of them committed murder or robbery, but the majority of them are not guilty in any sense, except for an occasional bitterness against their fate. They are clearly defined human beings: trying to preserve their identity, instinctively hiding their little something that distinguishes them from their fellow men. They are made to suffer and they accept their fate. Their resignation is temporary only; if they see the smallest chance, they immediately make schemes for survival.

By contrast, the forces of oppression are less clearly defined human beings. We see them only in the context of their function; they look less individual because of their dark uniforms. They ask questions in a totally unemotional manner, but with an air of unconditional authority. Their authority is derived from a political power that cannot be reached. When one of the interrogators is degraded and thrust into the yard with the peasants we learn that this mysterious tyrannical force is founded on internal tyranny. One of "them" becomes one of "us," simply because he is accused of being Veszelka, an allegedly dangerous criminal. The internal structure of the oppression is mysterious not only for its victims, but for the spectators too. Even the lowest-ranking among "them" seems to share information denied to the victims. In this way Jancsó emotionally commits the spectators to the destiny of "the people."

In the absolute isolation created by Jancsó's use of the space of the endless *puszta,* as if on a desert island, the rule of power is not limited by any considerations of an ethical order. There is an extraordinary scene when a girl is stripped naked and then beaten to death. It is done in a completely casual way. The recording by the camera does not stress the suffering inflicted. By a leisurely movement of the camera Jancsó achieves a balance between the exact amount of visual information we should receive to grasp the significance of what is going on and recording the effect of this refined cruelty on the other spectators: the victims who are forced to watch the event from the top of the prison. Eventually we learn that the object of this exercise in humiliation is not the satisfaction of sadistic cravings in the oppressors, but simply to extract information from the fiancé of the tortured girl.

To avoid emphasis, the humiliation, the torturing very often is not even treated in the foreground. In Jancsó country suffering is inflicted and accepted as a natural phenomenon. The rules of the game include the perfect collaboration of the victim in his own destruction. Jancsó drives his point home beautifully.

Should one question the validity of the rules of the game outside of Jancsó country one may be reminded of the horrors of the recent past. Why do people collaborate in their own destruction? Why did the Jews walk almost unresistingly to the gas chamber? Why could very ordinary people become accomplices in monstrosities? Why did people believe during the purges that their respected fellow citizens were spies, traitors? Why did they collaborate in the preparation of show-trials with forged evidence? Why did the victims believe that the interests of the party required them to accept the role of traitors?

The why is not Jancsó's concern. He knows that the why cannot be answered. It is his relentless insight into the *how* which makes him an outstanding artist. It is perhaps on account of his preoccupation with the technique of physical and mental cruelty that one critic called him the master of artistic cruelties. It is a misleading approach. It could imply that Jancsó is a modern Marquis de Sade. Nothing could be further from Jancsó. He makes an effort not to be subjective, he is not involved.

The Round-Up like *Silence and Cry* or *The Red and The White* is coldly intellectual. Psychological tension is built up in the audience by withholding vital information pertaining to the meaning of the strange maneuvers of those who possess the power. We have the same uneasiness as the victims. Fear is born out of uncertainty, but the camera records the fear of the victims with restraint. Recording emotions would involve too much psychology, and it is psychology Jancsó wants to avoid at all costs; again, this is why the actors are allowed very little speech.

It is the almost incessant movement of the camera by which Jancsó achieves detachment. Having recorded a death of a character who

previously mattered to us, the camera suddenly shifts to a long shot of the event, or moves indifferently towards the sky; it creates a sense of proportions about our human affairs; relativity is brought home. It is that "benevolent indifference of the universe" Camus spoke of.

The repeated use of the same technique can result in mannerism. There are numerous critics who accuse Jancsó of mannerism, and not without reason. The Hungarian *puszta* and the Russian steppe in *The Round-Up* and in *The Red and The White* respectively have not only the same function, but see very similar action too. The only difference is that in *The Round-Up* the role of the oppressed and oppressors is permanent, while in *The Red and The White* both reds and whites have their ups and downs. Jancsó is examining two different facets of the same question. The style serves his purpose effectively.

If we know the background of his filming, it is evident that he is constantly searching for stylistic improvements. An article describing Jancsó during shooting appeared in *New Hungarian Quarterly*. The reporter is shocked: during takes Jancsó is very indecisive, he speculates for a long time about what angle the camera should take to the scene. He does not look at the script, and has not the slightest intention of doing so. In other words: he is composing on the spot. He appears to have a very definite idea of what he wants to shoot, but he is almost always unsure about the manner.

Looking at the result we would assume that he is a very dictatorial director. He limits the freedom of actor, scriptwriter, cameraman alike. He does not care about the content of the dialogue. He gives vague directions: "Here you say something. You decide on a good phrase." But one thing is sure: this "something" must not contain value judgments or express any kind of philosophy. According to Jancsó the actor is not there to interpret the role, because that is the spectators' sole right.

From these features it seems to be clear, that for Jancsó history plays a secondary role only; it is simply a pretext. He changes details or important factors alike quite arbitrarily. The splendid garment of the bat-wing-cloaked police in *The Round-Up* is anachronistic. The fortress where the interrogations are conducted was not in the middle of the *puszta,* but in the city of Szeged. Hungarian critics were quick to point out these shortcomings. Historians challenged him in elaborate treatises. Jancsó could not care less, he knows his history; in his university days he devoted much time to history, folklore, and social anthropology.

If history is only a vehicle for his message, does he have a direct political message coded in the thinly veiled parable of the oppressors versus oppressed? Many critics suggested that *The Round-Up* is a symbolic reenactment of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. This interpretation was highly favored among Hungarian emigrés at the time when the film was shown in Western Europe. Yet Jancsó's films are made and released without any apparent official opposition.

Jancsó refuses to comment, he keeps his silence. And he is right: the writing is on the screen. If he explains, he would trample on his own *raison d'être* as an artist. He would be doing what he does not allow his actors to do: narrowing the possibilities of interpretation, interfering with the rights of the audience.

Perhaps Jancsó wants to show us simple truths, which are the most difficult to arrive at. Perhaps he is saying that killing or maiming each other cannot be explained away by ideology, religion, or even loyalties—that in the broader context of our indifferent universe it makes no sense. Still we have to keep on rediscovering this simple truth in each new context, in each new war. And that we are guilty for collaborating in our own self-destruction, even though it appears that we are on the side of the hopeless, defeated victim.

One thing is sure, that Jancsó, like all great artists, is committed. He is committed to that little gleam of hope, that in spite of the deadly oppression, the long and agonizing silence of the meek will come to an end; it will give way to a piercing cry, which will shake the foundations of all kinds of totalitarianism, just as the walls of Jericho fell at the sound of the trumpet.

Reviews

HAROLD AND MAUDE

Director: Hal Ashby. Script: Colin Higgins. Photography: John Alonzo.

Harold and Maude is one of the best movies to come out of Hollywood in years. It is a love story, a sentimental black comedy, a ludicrous tear-jerker, a grisly social satire.

Harold (Bud Cort), an exceedingly pale youth who lives with his shrill mother in a lavish manor, is obsessed with death, and stages gruesome "suicide attempts" to wierd mama out. He drives his own hearse, and attends funerals "for fun." At one of these funerals, Harold meets Maude (Ruth Gordon), a vital and capricious free spirit who is approaching eighty. Maude tries to strike up a relationship, although Harold is so frozen and sullen that it is difficult for him to speak. "Do you sing and dance?" asks Maude as she blithely rips off a priest's Volkswagen. "Uh . . . no," says Harold flatly.

As their friendship develops, Maude quite literally gives Harold the gift of life. There are several marvelous sequences in which Maude takes Harold to her railroad-car home and treats him to a sensual smorgasbord—she has him stroking tactile sculptures, inhaling "odorifics," eating ginger pie and drinking organic wine; she sings to him about freedom, shows off her paintings, teaches him how to play the banjo; she dances with him, turns him on to yoga breathing, and gets him stoned—ceaselessly expounding on personal liberty, living for the moment, and "fighting for the big issues."

At home, Harold's mother, who knows nothing of Maude, fills out his computer-date application forms by answering all the questions herself, while Harold loads a short-barrelled revolver and shoots himself in the face. When the computerized women arrive to meet Harold, he sends them away screaming by performing various clever apparent self-mutilations.

Harold and Maude declare their love for each other and sleep together. Harold is liberated from his theater of death. He now makes love, and sings and dances and turns somersaults in the sun.

The ending of the film, which I will not reveal, is sudden and rudely unsettling, yet we begin to realize that we have been subtly prepared for it. In a quick, harsh and wordless sequence, we suddenly know that we care for Harold and Maude as people, as lovers, and not simply as strongly defined character *types* (grotesquely death-obsessed adolescent; funky-trippy earth-mother).

Harold and Maude is a film about freedom. The film-makers have audaciously attempted to suggest the possibilities for achieving personal autonomy in modern society. While neither "dialectical" nor "militant," *Harold and Maude* is in many ways a political film, and speaks directly and urgently to the audience through the character of Maude and through the comprehensive ridiculing of oppressive social elements. Maude philosophizes continuously about living life to the fullest, about rebellion and nonconformity, about individualism and spontaneity. Her speeches are in fact a remarkable compendium of libertarian attitudes, ranging from anti-statism down to the most personal and immediate independence. That Maude can get away with delivering lofty messages and still remain "in character" is a triumph for the makers of this film. They have designed a character who is both a sympathetic human figure and a mouthpiece for precise cultural criticism. Maude's social and private radicalism is so integral to her personality that it arouses none of the discomfort that is commonly experienced when a movie character expounds about "life."

Potential didacticism is offset by outrageous absurdity.

The film functions as a sarcastic attack on specific repressive forces. Harold's mother is shown as a superficial, sexually uptight socialite who alternately babies and ignores her son. She is selfish to the point of not truly recognizing Harold as a separate person. The Army, the police, the clergy, and the psychiatric establishment are all relentlessly lambasted. Uncle Victor, "General MacArthur's right hand man," is missing his right arm, but has rigged up a hilarious mechanical device that makes his empty starched sleeve salute. He keeps saying things

like, "Let's get back to a war worth fighting and an enemy worth killing!" The image of mangled Uncle Victor leading pale Harold through the grounds of a veterans' home with hunched, blanketed casualties limping and collapsing all around them, and Victor telling Harold how the "Army takes care of its people," is typical of the film's unflinching social comment and genuinely black comedy.

A gruff police officer who chases Maude on the highway is shown as mean, dumb, and ultimately powerless. The priest is portrayed as sexually frustrated and totally superfluous. Harold's psychiatrist mindlessly intones Viennese aphorisms, and the clear visual suggestion is that psychiatrists seek to duplicate themselves.

What are the messages of *Harold and Maude?* Rid yourself of all authorities, give up the ideas of power and status and private ownership, get in touch with your body; create, rejoice in the moment, forget your obsession with death. These points in *Harold and Maude* are *explicitly stated* and *explicitly visualized.* Maude actually says that we should liberate ourselves from private property and she "borrows" vehicles from various authorities to remind them that ownership is transient. She says, "What's the use of nations and borders and patriotism?" She tells a policeman that she doesn't believe in licenses —and promptly steals his motorcycle. When Harold says he's going to be drafted, her immediate reaction is "Well, *don't go.*" Throughout the film, Maude replaces respect for laws with allegiance to her desires and her conscience. She dismisses conventional behavior and "aims above morality" toward a personal, independent ethic of openness, spontaneity, and generosity. Ultimately, Maude is even able to aim above fate, and manipulate the grim ferryman to suit her own wishes.

In August, 1972, I spoke with the creators of *Harold and Maude.* Colin Higgins, 31, author of the original screenplay, made two short films at UCLA, *Retreat* and *Opus 1,* which are included in the Genesis program, and has written an unproduced screenplay for a lavish version of *The Canterbury Tales.* Originally, *Harold and Maude* was to be a half-hour Master's thesis film, but he decided instead to write a feature-length script, which was sold quickly to Paramount.

"I was supposed to be the director, and part of the deal was that I would do a test which they would approve. So I made the test, with a different cast but with a professional group of people. We shot it on the stages at Columbia for two days; three scenes, $7000. They saw the test and they decided that they would prefer another director. . . . I don't think they really wanted me to direct the film in the first place. I was going to make a half-million dollar film and they wanted to make a million-and-a-half dollar film. They didn't think I could handle it. The test itself isn't that bad, but I should have spent the two days doing one scene instead of three. I wanted to show them how quick I was . . ."

The studio brought in Hal Ashby, who had directed *The Landlord,* and things were smoothed out. Higgins says that Maude's philosophizing was more extensive in his original script (and in his subsequent novelization, which is being published all over the world), but that he is happy with Ashby's final product, which he described as "pared to the bone."

The character of the ice sculptor (played by Cyril Cusak), who appeared briefly and gratuitously in the released version, was apparently added to the script because the studio felt that the movie would be too short. (Ashby: "It was filler.") In the sequences that were shot, Cusak ploddingly chipped away at huge blocks of ice. By the end of the day, his work would always melt. Higgins's intention was "a pictorialization of existential philosophy; like Camus' Sisyphus . . . a prevalent twentieth-century style—an individual doing one thing endlessly and without hope," to be contrasted with Maude, who is full of variety and innovation. Most of the elaboration of the character was cut.

Also cut was a sequence between Harold and his mother. "It opened up with a shot of a large, silver-plated serving dish. A hand comes in and removes the cover and there, on a little bed of parsley, is Harold's head. Two hands come into the frame and pick up the head, and we move

back and there's Harold holding his head and looking at it. He sort of peels off the latex blood and walks over to his bedroom chair where a headless dummy sits. He puts the head on the dummy, but the head really isn't sitting right, and he goes into the closet to find something.

"Swing around to the door and his mother enters in an evening gown. She says, 'Now listen up, Harold. Your computer date will be arriving and it would be nice if . . .' and so forth. Cut to the closet and Harold is just sitting there listening to her talk to this dummy in the chair. And then she says, 'Well, I've got to go to this ballet with the Fergusons . . .' and she turns a little. 'You're looking a little pale, Harold. You try to get a good night's rest . . .' and she leaves."

Higgins has written another feature film called *Killing Lydia,* and is writing two Movies of the Week, *The Devil's Daughter* and *The Distributor.* Strange as it may seem, he is interested in directing his own films.

"We're all Harold, and we all want to be Maude. We're all repressed and trying to be free, to be ourselves, to be vitally interested in living, to be everything we want . . ."

Hal Ashby, 42, started out operating a script-copying machine at Universal. He became an assistant editor and eventually a full editor. He got in with Norman Jewison and was the cutter on *The Cincinnati Kid, The Russians Are Coming, In the Heat of the Night* (Academy Award for editing), and *The Thomas Crown Affair.* He also worked as associate producer on *Crown* and *Gaily Gaily.* Then he directed his first film, *The Landlord,* which is a gutsy and moderately successful comedy-drama with Beau Bridges as a lily-white rich kid who acquires a slummy tenement in a black ghetto. Ashby now has a deal with Columbia to direct *The Last Detail* with Jack Nicholson from a novel by Darryl Poniscan.

"Editing really is a good school. It's the perfect place to examine everything. Everything is channelled down into that strip of film, from the writing to how it's staged, to the director and the actors. And you have the chance to run it back and forth a lot of times, and ask questions of it—Why do I like this? Why don't I like this?

"If I had it all to do over again, I would rather go at it a different way, because it just takes too much time out of your life—the union rules, the demands that are made on you before they'll let you break loose. You've got to work at it for eight years before you're eligible to edit a film, which is very debilitating. It was damn near 12 years before I could direct my first film. But I was fortunate, I worked with some really good people, people that made me feel creative. . . .

"I say, Good Lord, go out and somehow raise the money to make your own projects. It's not easy, by any means, but the potential is there for becoming just as good a film-maker in a much shorter time. I feel very strongly about this."

Harold and Maude was made for a million-and-a-half in early 1971, shot entirely on location around the San Francisco Peninsula. It is a film of brilliant surfaces. Detail is impeccable but unemphasized. So-called plot eccentricities are acceptable because we are watching a fantasy of essences—love, freedom, death. Ashby indulges in none of the technical flourishes that often pass for "style"—no long tracking shots or far-out angles or whiz-bang cutting. His method is straightforward and brisk, and his camera techniques do not detract from the human action. "I try to mold the style to suit the particular project." He is an expert film-maker and he has succeeded wonderfully.

Inevitably, "I ran into trouble with Paramount. We had a scene when Harold and Maude started to make love; their kissing becomes more passionate, and they lie back on the bed. We didn't actually have a scene of them making love, but I wish I'd shot it. Now all we have is the shot of them together in bed in the morning, with Maude asleep. Paramount said it would be too tough for people. I said, 'That's sort of what the whole movie is about, a boy falling in love with an old woman; the sexual aspect doesn't have to be distasteful.' They said it would turn everybody off. I was crazy about the footage. But it was a losing battle."

—MICHAEL SHEDLIN

LE BOUCHER

(The Butcher) Written and directed by Claude Chabrol. Producer: Andre Genoves. Photography: Jean Rabier. Music: Pierre Jansen.

Here is a French film which, in the tradition of such French classics as *Les Enfants du paradis* and *Casque d'or,* is about the inability of two true lovers to get together. Yet hearing this description, who would imagine anything like *Le Boucher?* That such a film be romantic, tragic and moving is nothing new. But that it be also a disturbing mystery story, a kind of horror story, in which insanity and perversion are central, we do not expect.

Putting the horror elements temporarily to one side (as, in a sense, the film does itself) we have the following story. In one of those provincial French towns where life is static and insulated, Paul the butcher (Jean Yanne) meets Hélène the schoolmistress (Stéphane Audran) and a friendship, a kind of Platonic love, develops. The difference in their backgrounds and social positions would seem to preclude the friendship. But a mutual solitude, and a common sensitivity and intelligence, bring the two of them together until, although they remain somewhat formal with each other, they are the most important people in each other's lives.

Mature, independent, to all appearances entirely in control, yet without a hint of coldness or rigidity, Hélène seems a magnificent woman. We see, even when she does not, that Paul is in love with her. He treats her in a sweet, shy, worshipful way. As they picnic in the woods, Paul diffidently asks her why she has chosen not to have any lovers. She explains that ten years ago she was so badly hurt by a lover's leaving her that she became physically ill for a long time (some sort of breakdown). Now she is happy and does not want to risk another affair. Paul says that not making love can drive you crazy. Hélène answers that making love can also drive you crazy. He asks her what she would do if he kissed her. She says she would do nothing but asks him not to; and he doesn't.

Of Paul's past we know that his father, whom he hated, was also the butcher in the town; that his parents' marriage was bad; and that he spent fifteen years in the army and is haunted by the memories of the carnage he saw. He also has a puritan side: he shows disgust when Hélène implies that her way of solving the "problem" of her sexual urges is to masturbate.

But there is another part to the story. Someone is going around the town stabbing young women to death, bringing grief to their families and friends and fear to everyone—for the murders appear gratuitous, the murderer remains at large, and the police have absolutely no evidence to go on. Here the film is a mystery story, in which early on we come to suspect that Paul is the murderer, our suspicions are confirmed, then cast into doubt, then finally confirmed absolutely.

Paul, then, is a "madman" who uncontrollably murders young women (the connection of his madness with his war experiences and with his occupation is made quite obvious). His madness, though, is of a particular kind and is presented to us in an analogous way: all his "mad" behavior (except possibly at the end of the film) takes place when he is alone with his victim and all of it takes place off-screen: we never see it. We see him (except for a brief while at the end of the film) only with Hélène —either alone with her or with others as well— and thus we see only the respectable, likable and quite genuine side of his character that he shows society and the woman he loves. Thus his life as a murderer corresponds to the repressed or hidden side of all of us. We all have behavior we conceal from others, things we do only when no one can see us, even if it be only talking to ourselves, throwing something in anger across the room, staring at ourselves in the mirror, or looking at someone in the apartment across the way. For Paul the butcher, this behavior is stabbing young women to death.

Looked at in this way, *Le Boucher* can be seen as a film about personal integration versus fragmentation. Like the voyeur, the exhibitionist, and the rapist, Paul the murderer approaches women in a distorted, partial way rather than as one whole being approaching another. The complement to his murdering of women is his unrealized, imaginary love affair with Hélène, which (in an extraordinarily moving scene) he reveals to her only when he is dying: "I dreamt of you every night, I wanted

to hold you in my arms and protect you, only with you was I able to forget who I was, I lived only for you." (Quoted from memory.) He has chosen her as the object of his love precisely because she is unattainable.

> To prefer the imaginary to the real [Sartre has written in *The Psychology of the Imagination*] is not simply to prefer an imaginary richness, beauty and splendor to a mediocre actuality *despite* the fact that they are unreal. It is also to adopt imaginary feelings and behavior precisely *because* they are imaginary. It is not simply this or that image that one chooses, but the imaginary *state* itself with all it entails, it is not just the features of reality (poverty, frustrated love, failure of one's undertakings, etc.) that one tries to escape, but the form itself of reality, its quality of *presence,* the responsiveness it demands of us. . . . This artificial, congealed, formalized life in slow motion, which for most people is just a makeshift, is exactly what the schizophrenic desires. The morbid dreamer who imagines he is a king would not adjust to a real kingdom, nor even to a tyranny where all his desires would be granted. . . . If the schizophrenic imagines so many amorous scenes, it is not only because his real love has been frustrated, it is even more because he is no longer capable of love.

Paul's love for Hélène is, for him, just such an instance of choosing the imaginary and gives us a more critical perspective on all those idealized fictional loves whose beauty and romantic power come precisely from the fact that they are never, or only fleetingly, allowed to realize themselves. Abortive love affairs, encounters where we and the other are both aware of the possibility of loving each other but where the love is never realized, are among our most common experiences. But part of us persists in thinking of these as our great love affairs when it is surely these which are not.

One way the film progresses is in changing dramatically our attitude toward Paul, first alienating our original liking and sympathy and then replacing it with a new kind of sympathy based on a new knowledge. But another way the film progresses is, more subtly, in casting into doubt and modifying our original attitude toward Hélène. Unlike Paul, she is not hiding from us any fact of her life or element of her personality. What happens instead is that the circumstances of the story and the development of the themes, as they unfold, put what we do know about her in a new light.

At first Hélène appears to us wholly admirable. Strong, serene, independent, gracious, loved and admired by the children she teaches and by the people of the town, she seems almost the ideal woman, or rather the ideal human being, for these are qualities which almost all of us aspire to. The one odd or questionable thing about her is that she will not have lovers. Yet the way she explains this, it is perfectly understandable, even commendable, for it is apparently the price she must pay for the happiness she has regained, a happiness which benefits not only herself but everyone around her.

Her "detachment" thus appears of a wholly salutary kind. Indeed in the early stages of her suspicion about Paul, her detachment helps her to protect him: just before the police come to interrogate her about the body she and the children found, we see her in lotus position, meditating. We can assume she meditates regularly, or at least whenever there is a crisis, and in this case it enables her to remain composed and to lie convincingly to the policeman, concealing the evidence that would lay suspicion on Paul.

Yet after Paul's dying confession of his love, our view of her is complicated and modified. Once again after ten years, despite her renunciations, love has entered her life; once again she has been drawn in and changed by a relationship; and once again she is losing the man. But this time, in a sense, she is the betrayer. Suddenly her stance toward the world is put into doubt and we come to see her independence, her sexual renunciation, as a denial of life, a kind of crime against life.

That she might have "saved" Paul, that if she had reciprocated, his fantasy might have

been realized—all this is questionable at best. Nevertheless, in a way far less obvious than Mr. Duffy in Joyce's "A Painful Case," she has "withheld life" from another human being. That she is not dried-up and sterile like Mr. Duffy or like the hero of "The Beast in the Jungle," that she is not a Miss Havisham who has locked herself off from the world and is revenging herself upon it, nor an unconscious lesbian like Olive Chancellor, that she is not anti-life in any such obvious and simple ways, only makes the point stronger—and more universal. She is an admirable and, in general, life-enhancing woman. If she has denied life and love to another to protect herself, then we all do. More even than the pain and shock of Paul's death and of all the events that have gone with it, it is this knowledge that has destroyed her serenity and that leaves her standing, perplexed and undecided, by the edge of the lake. How long she stands there, whether she walks in and drowns herself or walks away, we do not know.

"Most novelists lose creative intensity when they have no point to make," John Bayley has written in an introduction to *War and Peace;* "they slide over, and edge away. When Tolstoy has no point to make his description gathers wings." Chabrol is like most novelists, not like Tolstoy. He is very far from such film-makers as, say, the Forman of *Loves of a Blonde,* who lovingly explore the texture of life for its own sake. When in his other films, even the better ones, Chabrol does bring in material outside his structure, purely for our observation, it is liable to consist of crude caricature (for example, in *La Femme infidèle,* the characters of the secretary, the crazy guy in the café, and the drunken wife at the nightclub—although some of these are very amusing).

In *Le Boucher* there is virtually no extraneous material, nothing that is there simply for the sake of observation, that does not make a point. Indeed *Le Boucher* is characterized by that functional style in which nothing is wasted: every scene, every shot, advances the story (I am using story here in its broadest sense, to include characters, themes and feelings), and every shot is composed to show us exactly what we need to see. But this does not mean that the film is in any way mechanical, sketchy, or superficial in its representation of the life it does show. On the contrary, most of the film has an extraordinary richness of behavioral nuance and detail, with its accompanying implication, expressing itself in facial expressions, vocal inflections, postures: the way Paul walks a few feet behind Hélène as they leave her building; the delicacy with which the two converse at the picnic; the longing with which he looks at her from a distance in the dance sequence; the mixture of fear, distress, control, and tact in Hélène's reactions to Paul during his second visit; and so on. The film lives. This is due, as much as anything, to the beautiful, sensitive acting of the two principals: Stéphane Audran, Chabrol's wife, who has appeared in most of his films and has grown with him to give her finest performance in her deepest role; Jean Yanne, no less good, in a sensitive, sympathetic role quite different, paradoxically, from the brutish, repugnant characters he has played earlier (the male lead in Godard's *Weekend* and Paul in Chabrol's previous film, *Que la bête meure*).

Chabrol's tight, intricate design is more than a beautiful way of advancing, linearly, the events of the story; it is also an organic structure in which character, event, dialogue, image, and environment all contribute to a single whole. Location, for example, is integral. Hélène's apartment, situated above the classroom and which we repeatedly see her ascend to and descend from by means of a steep circular staircase, is a kind of tower, a superior retreat from which she gazes down at the village and the life below. Paul pays her three visits. The first two times, he comes up to the apartment to be with her—among the rare times, one assumes, that she has allowed the seclusion of her fortress to be breached. The third time, when she is afraid of him, she runs down to shut him out; but he gets in anyway, to the classroom, and it is down there that she is confronted with his shame and suffering—and with his suicide. In a more schematic and artificial way, the caves—where Hélène takes the children and whose walls are covered

with the drawings of Cro-Magnon man—are meant to suggest the primitive impulses which are part of civilized man's heritage.

One way the elements of the film work is in developing two basic themes—marriage and death—and a special relationship between them. The film is structured so that marriage, and things associated with marriage, form an almost continual background to Hélène and Paul's relationship. The children of Hélène's class serve first for her, and then for her and Paul together, as a kind of surrogate offspring; and Chabrol is particularly skillful in having them continually run through the film—sometimes central to the action, sometimes peripheral to it—but always in a way that is organic and unforced. All this accentuates our perception of Hélène and Paul as two unmarried people moving in a framework where marriage is fundamental, and emphasizes along with it the possibility, always held out but never realized, of a marriage between them. At the same time there is a continual background of death, both in the murders occurring in the village and in the war deaths of Paul's recollections and conversation.

The most luminous way these two themes are represented, and fused, is in the two ceremonies: the wedding and the funeral. At the beginning of the film the church bells ring, introducing the first sequence: the wedding of Léon Hamel and his bride. This wedding ceremony is not only our introduction to the world of the film, to the village and its inhabitants: it is also Hélène and Paul's introduction to each other. The church bells ring again for one other ceremony: the funeral of Léon's beloved wife, the bride of the first ceremony and the second young woman Paul has murdered; and Paul and Hélène are at the funeral. If Léon and his wife are joined in marriage and separated by her death, the relationship of Hélène and Paul is such that, in the romantic tradition, they come closest to being married in death—in his death in this case. It is only in dying that he can confess his love for her, and that she can accept it and kiss him for the first time.

The film has its flaws. There is a big flaw in the mystery: an implausible contradiction in the logic Paul uses (involving the two cigarette lighters) to conclude that Hélène knows he is the murderer. There are one or two momentary imperfections in the acting. There is one moment (the arrival at the hospital) where Chabrol's lucid visual exposition abandons him. And I don't think that the slowing down of tempo during the drive to the hospital is successful. Although the style here is meant to be more subjective than in the rest of the film, the actual effect is to make it appear that Hélène is not trying to get Paul there in a hurry, an impression Chabrol almost certainly did not intend and which would not fit if he had intended it. But if these flaws, some of them quite subtle, are bothersome, it is because they are seen against the perfection of most of the film; and even the worst of them is not seriously damaging.

Le Boucher seems particularly remarkable when we consider the route Chabrol has taken to get to it. His early films (*Les Cousins, Les bonnes femmes, L'Oeil du malin,* etc.), while skilled and sometimes powerful, usually settled for easy, obvious points and ironies, and their treatment of their characters was superficial when it was not gross and contemptuous. Of *Les bonnes femmes* Chabrol said: "I wanted to make a film about stupid people that was very vulgar and deeply stupid," and not only this but also the other early films generally bear out this shallowly cynical intention. After a series of commercial failures, Chabrol spent a four-year period (1964–67) on films, mostly spy spoofs, aimed at commercial success. Only one film from this period was shown in the United States, and it received little attention. *Les Biches* (1968) was slick, empty, and absurd. As recently as early 1969, before *La Femme infidèle* opened here, the most probable estimate of Chabrol was as a film-maker whose films were shallow and false at best, whose best films were at least seven years behind him, and who would never do anything worthwhile again. *La Femme infidèle* was something new: it had a fineness, an evenness of tone and style, that no earlier film had had. But it was nevertheless an external, coldly satirical film, with shallow, uninteresting characters, or characters it made shallow and uninteresting by its neutral, unsympathetic treatment.

Le Boucher is a radical departure: the first of Chabrol's films to treat its characters with compassion, love, and understanding rather than with irony, contempt, or disgust. The human folly which before seemed no more than the oddities of this or that class or milieu now is seen as the human predicament itself; what before was material for melodrama, farce, and black humor is now material for tragedy. We can see that the obsessions of *Le Boucher* are in many ways those of the earlier films, but the treatment has changed. There are obvious points of comparison, for example, between Paul in *Le Boucher* and André, the motorcyclist of *Les bonnes femmes,* who is obsessed with women's necks—who charms women, then takes them into the woods, only to strangle them. But in *Les bonnes femmes,* this was a kind of sick joke. Chabrol was laughing—and asking us to laugh—at Jacqueline, who thinks André is the Mr. Right she has been dreaming of and who gets murdered by him; at all the shop girls for the banality of their lives and the stupidity of their aspirations, their stupidity in even *having* aspirations; and at André himself, who was no more than a grotesque. This is playing it safe, a way of dissociating oneself from one's obsessions because one is afraid of them. It is quite another thing to implicate oneself in one's obsessions: to try to feel what it's like to be a pathological murderer and to experience his sufferings and longings—or what it's like to care about such a person, to feel affection and gratitude toward him and at the same time fear and horror of him.

For Chabrol, *Le Boucher* is a prodigious leap to a new plane of artistic consciousness. It allows us to look back on the earlier films—failures and shallow successes, artistic and commercial efforts alike—as learning and preparation for this, his first serious, honest film. But it is more than that. By the grace and understanding with which it represents fundamental aspects of human experience, by its power to resonate and to disturb us, to make us feel and reflect upon what is has shown us, it stands among the rare masterpieces of the film medium.

—PAUL WARSHOW

FRENZY

Producer-Director: Alfred Hitchcock. Script: Anthony Shaffer. Photography: Gill Taylor. Music: Ron Goodwin.

In the past decade, the most serious charge against the work of Alfred Hitchcock has been that of *dullness,* that absence of suspense in the simplest cinematic translation, that lack of surprise and malevolent wit that characterized the unforgettable twists of terror in *Psycho.* If Hitchcock's temporary "decline" in the genre of suspense films outraged his audiences, his followers never really deserted him; the spectators held on patiently throughout *The Birds,* praising its moments of excitement and ignoring the missed opportunities to make it something totally extraordinary. With *Marnie,* the lack of a strong feminine personality threw the entire film off-balance, one might say, and Sean Connery's Bondian image did not transfer its charm into a milieu hitherto reserved for such screen stalwarts as Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman. The problem of casting seemed to overwhelm the master as well as a propensity for hoping that the actors would vivify the sluggishness of such scripts as *The Torn Curtain* and the incredibly lifeless *Topaz.* The masterful cameo role of a pathetic expatriate, exquisitely played by Lila Kedrova, remains the shining episode in *Torn Curtain,* and the harrowing depiction of the awkward procedure of killing a human being by thrusting his head into a gas oven, or a suspenseful bus ride across hostile borders—these were almost lost because of the incongruous presence of Paul Newman and Julie Andrews. Hitchcock should always be aware that time is meaningless to his legion of admirers throughout the world and the Gaumont-British days are as alive as ever. There was an odd period in American cinema when it was felt that Newman's abilities could encompass the demeanor of Nobel prize-winners, in either literature or science, but alas, this was a misguided assumption. In the cinema of today, there are limits to the acceptance of fantasy, and one would trade a million glamorstars for the Hitchcockian verisimilitudes of some contemporary Donats, Pilbeams, De Marneys, Ashcrofts and Lorres. It was extremely difficult to imagine Miss Andrews behind the

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—PAUL WARSHOW

FRENZY

Producer-Director: Alfred Hitchcock. Script: Anthony Shaffer. Photography: Gill Taylor. Music: Ron Goodwin.

In the past decade, the most serious charge against the work of Alfred Hitchcock has been that of *dullness,* that absence of suspense in the simplest cinematic translation, that lack of surprise and malevolent wit that characterized the unforgettable twists of terror in *Psycho.* If Hitchcock's temporary "decline" in the genre of suspense films outraged his audiences, his followers never really deserted him; the spectators held on patiently throughout *The Birds,* praising its moments of excitement and ignoring the missed opportunities to make it something totally extraordinary. With *Marnie,* the lack of a strong feminine personality threw the entire film off-balance, one might say, and Sean Connery's Bondian image did not transfer its charm into a milieu hitherto reserved for such screen stalwarts as Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman. The problem of casting seemed to overwhelm the master as well as a propensity for hoping that the actors would vivify the sluggishness of such scripts as *The Torn Curtain* and the incredibly lifeless *Topaz.* The masterful cameo role of a pathetic expatriate, exquisitely played by Lila Kedrova, remains the shining episode in *Torn Curtain,* and the harrowing depiction of the awkward procedure of killing a human being by thrusting his head into a gas oven, or a suspenseful bus ride across hostile borders—these were almost lost because of the incongruous presence of Paul Newman and Julie Andrews. Hitchcock should always be aware that time is meaningless to his legion of admirers throughout the world and the Gaumont-British days are as alive as ever. There was an odd period in American cinema when it was felt that Newman's abilities could encompass the demeanor of Nobel prize-winners, in either literature or science, but alas, this was a misguided assumption. In the cinema of today, there are limits to the acceptance of fantasy, and one would trade a million glamorstars for the Hitchcockian verisimilitudes of some contemporary Donats, Pilbeams, De Marneys, Ashcrofts and Lorres. It was extremely difficult to imagine Miss Andrews behind the

Iron Curtain for any reason whatsoever, whereas Madeleine Carroll or Anny Ondra would have delineated every nuance of chic, feminine distress with their usual blonde aplomb. Would any Hitchcock scholar or devotee deny that the *only* memorable moment in *Topaz* is the image of Karin Dor, sinking floorward in a mortal swoon, engulfed in billows of a purple gown? Besides, *Topaz* was peopled with a cast of neo-zombies of fairly familiar appearance only to those who had managed to see a number of dreadful "international" features, and even the original ending of the film (a duel in a deserted stadium) failed to bring this oddity to life. One became alarmed that the promise of *Psycho* had somehow led to the elephantine, torpid, almost somnolent *Topaz.* Although the French, not having to listen to the dialogue too carefully, found *Topaz* to be a work of merit, it must be stated emphatically that, compared to *Topaz, Waltzes from Vienna* is a triumph.

This brief preamble of rather testy observations only serves to emphasize that *Frenzy,* Alfred Hitchcock's latest film, is indeed triumphant in almost every way, and it is a cause for jubilation among those who admire suspense-thrillers. It is filmed in the London of today, but without the "trendy" atmosphere of the Beatles-Twiggy mob. It is, rather nostalgically, the enduring, everyday London of Covent Garden, Tottenham Court Road and the Embankment—a sunny London, really, where commonplaces of traffic, banalities and dignities of language and behavior can camouflage the activities of a savage rapist-strangler who compulsively snuffs out the lives of women by day or night. Armed only with a necktie, the murderer terrorizes the city, with nonchalant, incurable dementia.

What delights and chills the spectator is the splendid casting. Although Jon Finch's introduction to American audiences was not entirely disappointing, his rather stilted Macbeth in the Polanski film does not prepare us for the ambiguous portrait of a maladjusted ex-RAF flyer named Richard Blaney. In this role, Finch is quite convincing as he trudges through what seems to be a thoroughly dead-end route to thwarted hopes and ultimate penury. Having been fired from his barman's job by an insupportable employer, Blaney roams the streets, ignoring the news headlines about the necktie murders, and oblivious to a detailed psychological conversation in a pub between two men who analyze the personality of the murderer. Later, when Blaney angrily chastizes himself on the street for not being able to follow up a racing tip that had paid off in large winnings, the musical score suddenly bursts forth, and one knows at once that the stage is set for dark deeds. Once the suspense is established—the knowledge of Blaney's penchant for uncontrolled violence—scriptwriter Anthony Shaffer and Hitchcock never release the tensions until the final sequence.

Although several murders are committed during the film, Hitchcock only permits us one graphic sequence of mayhem, a testament to the demands of today's horror film genre. One remembers the cinematic technique from *Strangers on a Train,* in the party sequence, where Robert Walker jokingly pretends to strangle one of the lady guests, a particularly prim British dowager. Here, in *Frenzy,* the position of the camera is the same, concentrating primarily on the victim's face and throat, with the necktie sinking into the folds of flesh. No tricks, only the excruciating, gurgling descent into death that evokes astonishment and dismay on the part of an audience. Again, in comparison to the earlier film, the victim, although younger and attractive, is a very decorous, self-confident British type, well-coiffed and impeccably groomed, so that her ravishing has an even more profound piteousness about it. Her helplessness while sub-

mitting to the attacker's desires is acutely dramatized by having her recite some prayerful poetry as she distractedly, involuntarily pulls her disarranged brassière over an uncovered breast.

Hitchcock's underlying indictment against society in *Frenzy* is, it seems, the general tendency of people not to want to be involved in troubles of any kind. The camera reflects this dispassionate attitude in two notable moments: after the first murder, the camera remains on the street below. The victim's body is discovered offscreen and we hear a scream. Two young girls, engrossed in conversation, stop for a second, then move on. The camera later follows the murderer and a prospective victim up the stairs of an apartment building and they enter a flat, the door closes, and in almost stealthy silence, the camera moves slowly down the stairs again and out into the loud noise and bustle of traffic. It is brilliantly discreet, and chilling as well. The major character of noninvolvement is exemplified by the cameo portrait of a hostile wife, Hetty Porter (Billie Whitelaw). Her husband tries to help Blaney hide from the police, out of their friendship during wartime, but Hetty's unshakable mistrust is persuasively presented, finally conquering her husband's divided loyalties.

In fact, all of the characters seem *real.* Barbara Leigh-Hunt's depiction of Blaney's divorced wife is totally sympathetic and yet indicative of a certain wilfulness and ambition that would alienate a man of Blaney's disorganized temperament. Her beauty is in the glossy tradition of the Hitchcock blonde, but rather softened here to fit the middle-class milieu and one's identification *with* the story. On the other hand, Anna Massey, as "Babs" Milligan, a barmaid who is in love with Blaney, is a superb, original creation, almost Dickensian in effect. She is completely without pretensions, sensible and although tough, just a bit guileless. Miss Massey succeeds in being the season's most unlikely and lovable heroine, with a perky-bird earthiness all her own.

It would not be possible for Alfred Hitchcock to restrain his sense of humor, and in *Frenzy,* most of it is given to Alec McCowen as Inspector Oxford, who, in the course of investigation of the necktie murders, is encumbered in his home life by a wife who experiments with French cuisine. The sequences in which Mrs. Oxford (Vivien Merchant) serves outrageous dishes to her husband are not only filled with plot information (sometimes redundant), but most intriguingly, packed with some of the best facial expressions, subtle delivery of lines and superb comic timing to be found in Hitchcock since Radford and Wayne in *The Lady Vanishes.*

Hitchcock's big scene in *Frenzy* involves the murderer's frenetic effort to regain a damning piece of evidence from the fist of a corpse. Unfortunately, the corpse has been placed upside down in a sack of potatoes, and any effort to describe this sequence further is a futile gesture, for it is Hitchcock's brilliance, his innate genius for this sort of suspense that will keep these moments alive forever. It is at the beginning of this sequence, however, that one's attention is drawn to Ron Goodwin's excellent score. The mordant melody takes on a slow waltz tempo as the murderer moves from the street to the flat—weaving with beautiful, sinuous calm before the moment of terrified remembrance. It is coincidental but thrilling to feel the association with a waltz-tempo and the murderous impulse in both *Frenzy* and *Shadow of a Doubt* (although Cotten's victims were all merry widows). The theme has been heard earlier, dramatizing Blaney and his plight, but the sudden shift in musical mood at this point gives the film a depth of emotion that is an understated, sonorous enrichment of the audience's responses to the murderer's personality.

Frenzy, then, is Hitchcock's return to the realm he commanded so long: the fears and excitement felt when viewing and hearing the stories of a diabolical narrator. Shaffer should work with Hitchcock again, and it is a pity that they are not collaborating on the film version of *Sleuth.* Two final delights in the film were recognizing a similarity to the ending of *Dial M for Murder* (the play, not the film) used here, with its uncomplicated, terse finale, and in the middle of the film, suddenly seeing Elsie Randolph as a wary hotel employee, casting a baleful eye at the hero, as if she were about to sing from one of her old musicals—"You've Got the Wrong Rhumba."

—ALBERT JOHNSON

STRAW DOGS

Director: Sam Peckinpah. Script: David Zelag Goodman and Peckinpah (based on a novel by Gordon M. Williams). Photography: John Coquillon. Music: Jerry Fielding. Cinerama Releasing Corp.

At first there's a lot to puzzle over. Peckinpah has shifted his usual violent action from the mythic American West to the contemporary English West, which seems too small and comfortable to contain it. What is he doing in this alien setting? Why did he exchange his tough outdoor heroes for a mouse-like professor?

In retrospect, the earlier films turn out to be closer to *Straw Dogs* than they first seem. In all of them, the myth of the West is besieged by the unromantic forces of modern society. The old-timers in *Ride the High Country,* Joel McCrea and Randolph Scott, represent the dream of a simple code of honor that could bind good man and scoundrel alike; but they have to contend with a reality made up of reckless innocents like Marietta Hartley, fanatics like her father, and selfish punks like the brothers at the gold mine. In *The Wild Bunch,* modern society is more deeply entrenched, and the old-timers are losing their grip on the dream: when William Holden explains that Robert Ryan has to pursue the Bunch because he gave his word, Ernest Borgnine exclaims, "Yes—but to a *railroad!" The Ballad of Cable Hogue* summarizes the taming of the West: realists like Stella Stevens and David Warner can survive, but Jason Robards the dreamer dies, crushed by an automobile. Modern, pragmatic society has taken over. This is where *Straw Dogs* comes in.

It is partly Peckinpah's own fault that the underlying theme of his films is often overlooked and he is accused of wallowing in gratuitous violence. There is sometimes a kind of brutality in his visual style—a tendency to overdo close-ups, movement, cutting, and sound so that nonviolent scenes become strident while the violent scenes appear to be the one spectacular purpose of the film. This happens with *The Wild Bunch* and, to a lesser but misleading extent, with *Straw Dogs.**

Mathematician David Sumner (Dustin Hoffman) is spending a year's sabbatical in the Cornish farm where his wife Amy (Susan George) grew up. He has left turbulent America for rural England, only to find himself on top of a seething volcano of sex and violence. Unfortunately, Peckinpah blunts the irony of the situation by heavily underlining the portents of trouble to come. The film opens with children playing among the graves of the village churchyard; and before long we see one man crush another's hand on a beer mug until the glass breaks; a teenage girl giving David the come-on and, at night, watching him through the farm window; the village halfwit being hit in the face by his brother for accosting girls (and later strangling the teenager); and Amy flaunting her naked breasts in front of two lecherous young villagers. The atmosphere is dangerously close to the parodic world of *Cold Comfort Farm,* where the rustic idea of "having a nice time" is to be "raping somebody, or beating somebody, or having religious mania or being doomed to silence by a gloomy, earthy pride, or loving the soil with the fierce desire of a lecher. . . ." In fairness to Peckinpah, it must be said that the book on which the film is based, Gordon Williams's *The Siege of Trencher's Farm,* presents the villagers as even more brooding, intense, and exotic than they ever are in the film.

David's character is pushed to the other extreme. His behavior for much of the time is weak and evasive to the point of cowardice, and in one sequence Peckinpah's heavy-handed style makes him seem unnecessarily contemptible. Some villagers take David out hunting, and then two of them slip away to the farm and rape Amy. When Peckinpah intercuts the rape with scenes of David on the moor, he keeps Amy's heavy breathing on the sound track, thus creating the impression that David knows what is going on and is conniving in it.

Yet there are subtleties amid the excesses, and the film is not just a melodrama about a worm

*Although Peckinpah disowned the final cut of *Major Dundee,* it can be related to both the theme and style of his other films. Charlton Heston and Richard Harris, like McCrea and Scott, are opponents bound by a code of honor which becomes more and more incongruous to their situation—an arena of cultural rivalries (involving Indians, Mexicans, and French as well as white and nonwhite Americans) which offers an analog of modern urbanized society. Here, though, as in *The Wild Bunch,* most of the emphasis is on the fighting.

who finally turns with a spectacular outburst of violence. David briefly shows his teeth in an earlier scene where a retired major and the local minister and his wife pay a visit to the farm, and he calmly needles them about the violence of Christianity. Though he has had a few drinks, there is more to this than Dutch courage. For once he is dealing with educated people who can understand the kind of language he normally speaks, and he seizes the opportunity to work off some of his frustrations.

In his dealings with the other villagers, David faces obstacles beyond his normal timidity. There are class and educational differences: he is not interested in what the villagers have to talk about, and doesn't know what to say to them. Then there are cultural differences—from habits of speech to getting into the wrong side of a car for driving—which the young men make pretexts for derision. These obstacles are all the most frustrating because modern society appears to have given David and the villagers so much in common. Back in the time of the Old West, a Cornish villager would have had trouble understanding a Londoner, let alone an American, and he would have known hardly anything about events across the Atlantic. Today, thanks to TV, radio, and films, the various branches of the English language are converging to mutual comprehensibility, and the Cornish villagers in *Straw Dogs* can talk glibly about America's riots and demonstrations. At the same time, thanks to the increasing mobility of modern society, there's nothing unusual about an American being married to an Englishwoman and living thousands of miles away from his home ground. Yet these homogenizing forces offer no guarantee against prejudice. In fact, as *Straw Dogs* suggests, by throwing together people who do not share the same code, they may simply increase the opportunities for conflict. Though the fact that David is American and the band of villagers is English does not cause the final clash, it certainly adds to the fury.

Controversy has raged over the violence of this climactic sequence. Some critics, both approving and disapproving, have taken it as a rite of *machismo*: they believe Peckinpah is saying that only through violence does David become a man. Yet the ending of the film makes it clear that this is not what Peckinpah had in mind. We last see Amy crouching on the stairs in silent shock; David is taking away the halfwit whom he has been protecting from the villagers, and when the latter says "I don't know my way home" he answers, "I don't, either." The mood here is far closer to desolation than triumph. In finally breaking out of his weakness David has swung to the opposite extreme, unleashing all his frustrations and aggressions in an orgy of blood lust. At the end he is no closer to being a secure and balanced man than he was before, and he knows it.

Other critics, conceding that this is what Peckinpah may have intended, assert that he has made the violence so graphic and dramatically satisfying that it overrides all reservations. It's true that we are rooting for David to stand up to the villagers, but we do this less because we identify with him as a hero than because we are fed up with his weakness. In fact, Peckinpah may have exaggerated this weakness in order to keep all of us, including diffident math professors, from identifying with him too closely. Some viewers may still share David's enjoyment of his blood lust: all I can say is that I found the violence jagged and unsatisfying—almost a repeated *coitus interruptus* of climaxes—with every indication that Peckinpah planned it that way.

There is no steady buildup to a grand confrontation. Much of the sequence takes place in semidarkness, so that we rarely know which attacker is where, and the action leaps continually from one part of the farmhouse to another. There is almost no attempt to create any specific

suspense. Except for one villager seen climbing up to a bedroom window, Peckinpah keeps us in the dark about the number of surviving and active attackers, revealing nothing more significant of their plans than David himself knows. As a result, most of the attacks come suddenly, without preparation, so that we cannot savor them in advance.

Peckinpah's style for this sequence reinforces the staccato, arhythmic pattern of the action. Only at the beginning does he use any of the slow motion which gave the climactic sequences of *The Wild Bunch* their lyrical ambivalence, and then only briefly: for the shooting of the major who tries to intervene and for the first smashing of farmhouse windows. Once the attack gets under way, all traces of lyricism disappear. Peckinpah's aim and achievement stand out clearly if the siege is compared with the equally controversial violence in *A Clockwork Orange*. When Alex's brutality swings into action, Kubrick lingers over it, making it rhythmic and balletic, fascinating and repelling us at the same time. Peckinpah does not linger: he sandblasts his way through the climactic sequence, driving out any perverse charm.

What makes the violence of *Straw Dogs* particularly disturbing is that Peckinpah steers clear of the stock responses to it. On the one hand, he does not equate violence with heroism. In swinging from excessive weakness to excessive violence, David does not gain instant salvation. On the other hand, Peckinpah does not equate violence with villainy by implying that it could and should have been avoided. If David had been a stronger character, perhaps Amy would not have been raped; but the band of villagers, primed with alcohol and indignation, would still have clashed with any outsider who stood in their way. After all, the major is presented as a cool and authoritative character, and his intervention gets him shot. No matter how secure and tough-minded David had been, he could have ended up with just as much maiming and killing on his hands. The point is that he would not then have done it for the wrong reasons.

China and Russia — filmmaking perspectives

Dianying/Electric Shadows:
An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China
by Jay Leyda

Because he worked with the Chinese film industry in Peking from 1959 to 1964, Jay Leyda has had access to more Chinese films and relevant documents than any other Western scholar. In *Dianying* he describes both historic and current film production, using the films themselves as primary source material. He covers the film industry (the rise and fall of film studios, the influence of foreign filmmakers, the problems of film distributors), gives synopses of important and representative films, and introduces us to the notable filmmakers, actors, and actresses of China.
$12.50

The Poet as Filmmaker
by Alexander Dovzhenko
edited and translated by Marco Carynnyk

The Ukranian filmmaker Alexander Dovzhenko (1894-1956) is considered by many to have been one of the world's greatest film directors. His major works include *Zvenihora, Arsenal,* and *Earth.*

This book is a translation of portions of Dovzhenko's writings: His *Autobiography,* which appears here for the first time in English; his *Notebooks,* which combine a diary, a war journal (he was a war correspondent in World War II), and sketches for work—films, stories, plays, and novels; and *The Enchanted Desna,* the first part of a planned autobiographical film tale.
$10.00 (est.)

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Peckinpah is not concerned with putting labels of right or wrong on the violent actions and reactions in the film. Here, as in his earlier films, he is focusing on the tension between the individual and the disintegrating forces of society. David starts out as a man who takes no individual stand: he either drifts with the forces of society or takes refuge from them in the beautifully structured universe of mathematics. When he is forced to take a stand, the result is shattering. He cannot go back to drifting and escapism; he must now face his shattered self and try to piece it together.

In the age of revolutionary mass movement, corporate capitalism, and B. F. Skinner, the idea of personal responsibility may seem old-fashioned, but in Peckinpah's view the sheer multiplicity of social, economic, and political pressures makes it more essential than ever. In Cable Hogue's time, the pace of change was still acceptable: Stella Stevens and David Warner could adapt to it without compromising their individuality. But today, adaptation beyond a certain point has negative survival value, except on the level of mere existence. The individual is tempted to find a refuge—either in a mental world, as David does, or in a large organization or movement. This is not to say that escape is intrinsically wrong, still less that a mental world or an organization is nothing but a bolthole. The judgment rests with the individual: only he or she can know where cowardice or pathology begins. It is because of this knowledge that David's experience is so shattering.

Paradoxically, by focusing on one individual in one specific crisis, Peckinpah has limited the scope and impact of his film. It would be unfair to compare *Straw Dogs* with *The Sorrow and the Pity*—few fictional dramas could stand the comparison—but it should be noted that the value of personal responsibility emerges in this documentary not from one central character or crisis but from an astonishing parade of individuals and experiences. A less unfair comparison is with Peckinpah's own *Ballad of Cable Hogue,* whose characters and events, though disparate and often exaggerated, interlock with one another to create an exuberant richness that *Straw Dogs* lacks. The issue in the foreground of *Straw Dogs*—the interrelationship of weakness, strength, and violence—is handled with a skillful blend of complexity and clarity; but the background falls apart into lay figures and contrived situations. Peckinpah seemed to recognize what was missing: with *Junior Bonner,* while keeping to a contemporary setting, he returned both to the American West and to a more reflective and multilayered texture. If Peckinpah can ever combine the intensity of *Straw Dogs* with the richness of *Cable Hogue* and *Junior Bonner,* he will give us a truly impressive film.

—WILLIAM JOHNSON