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*in english*

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# CINEMA

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Number 11

September 1967



Luis Bunuel: *Belle de Jour*, Catherine Deneuve, Genevieve Page.

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# LE CONSEIL DES DIX (Council of ten)

COTATIONS (Ratings)

● Inutile de se déranger (No use bothering)

★ à voir à la rigueur (see if necessary)

★★ à voir (see)

★★★ à voir absolument (see absolutely)

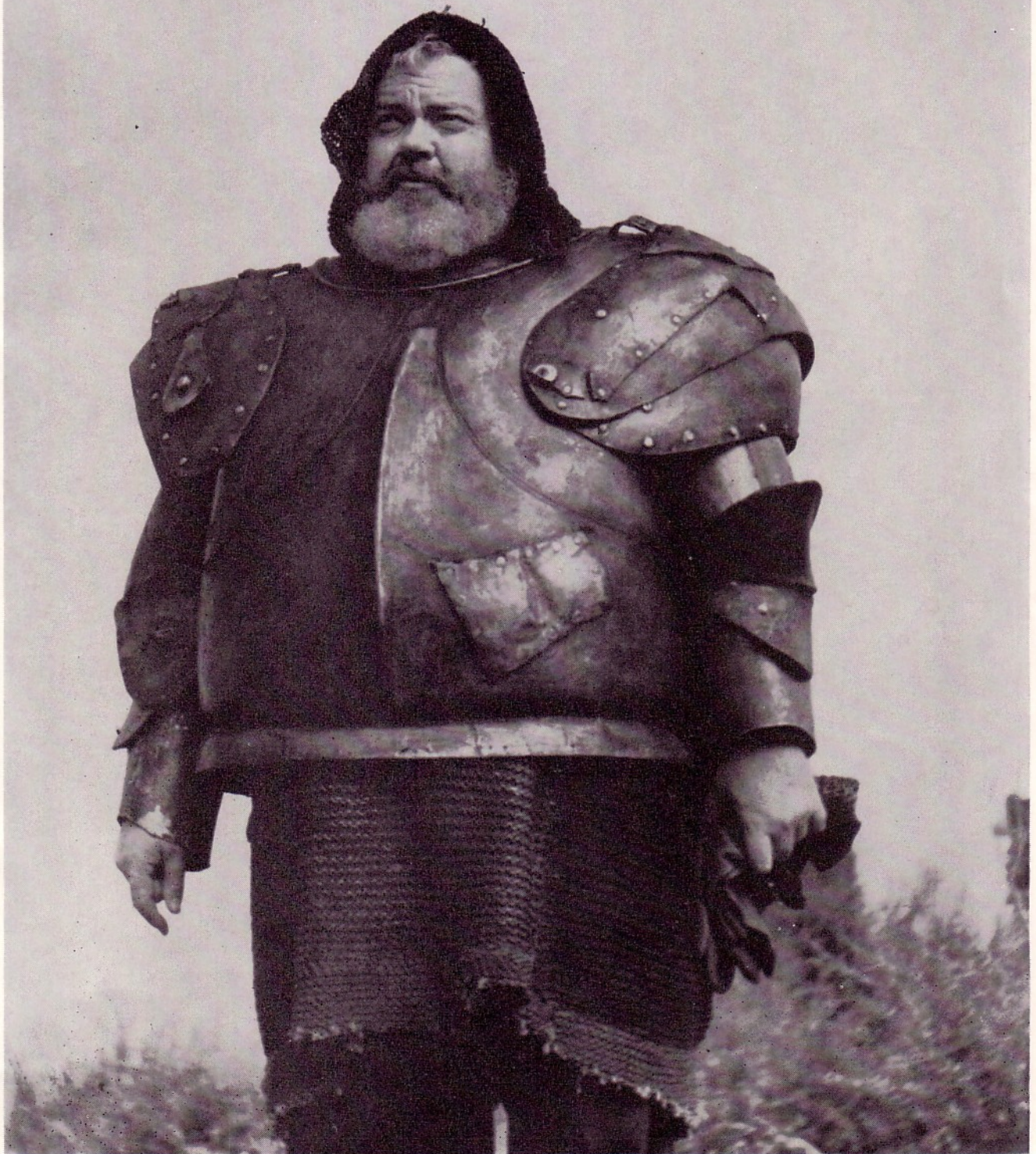
★★★★ chef-d'oeuvre (masterpiece)

	Michel Aubriant (Candide)	Jacques Bontemps (Cahiers)	Jean-Louis Bory (Arts)	Albert Cervoni (France Nouvelle)	Jean Collet (Telarama)	Michel Delahaye (Cahiers)	Jean-Andre Fieschi (Cahiers)	Michel Mardore (Pariscopes)	Jean Narboni (Cahiers)	Georges Sadoul (Les Lettres Françaises)
La Prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV (Rossellini)	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★
Le Chat dans le sac (Cat in the Sack) (Gilles Groulx)		★★★	★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★	★★
Torn Curtain (Alfred Hitchcock)	★★	★★★★	★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★
Cul-de-sac (Roman Polanski)	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	●	★★★★	★	★★	★	★★★★
Du courage pour chaque jour (Kazdy den odvahu) (Evald Schorm)	★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★	★★	★	★★★★
Le Deuxième Souffle (Jean-Pierre Melville)	★★★	●	★★★★	★★★★	★	●	●	★★★★	●	★
Les Coeurs verts (Edouard Luntz)		★	★★	★★	★	★★	★	★	★	★★
War and Peace II (Natacha) (Serge Bondartchouk)	★		★	★		★	●			★
The Bible (John Huston)	●	●	★	★★	●	★★		★	●	★★
Le Voleuse (Jean Chapot)	●	●	●	★★★★		★★	●	●	★★	★
Alvarez Kelly (Edward Dmytryk)	★	●	●	★★		★		●	●	★
L'Espion (The Defector) (Raoul Lévy)	★	●	★	★	★	★	●	●	●	●
One Million BC (Don Chaffey)	★★	●	●		●	★	●	★	●	
Hitler (Stuart Heisler)	●	●	●		★	★★	●	★	●	●
The Russians Are Coming (Norman Jewison)	●		●	★		★	●	●	●	
Tonnerre sur l'Océan Indien (Sergio Bergonzelli)	●						●	●		
Les Enquêteurs (Roland Quignon)	●				●			●		●
La Nuit des adieux (Jean Dréville)	●				●	●		●		●
Othello (Stuart Burge)	●	●	●			●	●	●		●
Soleil Noir (Denys de La Patellière)	●	●	●		●	●	●	●		●



# *Welles on Falstaff*

*Interview with Orson Welles*







Orson Welles: *Falstaff*, Orson Welles.





QUESTION—In the reading, the scenario of *Falstaff* seemed much less tragic than the film that it has become . . .

ORSON WELLES—Yes, now it is a very sad story. Perhaps that is a mistake on my part. Moreover I find the film funnier in English than in Spanish. The Spanish version is very well done, but there were difficulties in translating the jokes. In any case my character is less funny than I had hoped. But the more I studied the part, the less funny it appeared to me. This problem preoccupied me during the entire shooting. I played the role three times on the stage before filming it, and Falstaff appeared to me more witty than funny. I don't think very highly of those moments in which I am only amusing. It seems to me that Falstaff is a man of wit rather than a clown. I directed everything, played everything, in the perspective of the last scene. So that the relationship between Falstaff and the Prince is no longer the simple comic one that one finds in Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part 1*. It is a foretelling, a preparation for the tragic ending. The farewell scene is foretold four times in the film. The death of the Prince, the King in his castle, the death of Hotspur, which is that of Chivalry, the poverty and illness of Falstaff, are presented throughout the entire film and must darken it. I do not believe that comedy should dominate in such a film. Yet Falstaff represents a positive spirit, in many respects courageous, and even when he makes fun of his cowardice. He is a man who represents a virtue in the process of disappearing. He wages a struggle lost in advance. I don't believe he is seeking anything. He represents a value; he is goodness. He is the character in whom I believe the most, the most entirely good man in all drama. His faults are trivial and he makes the most enormous jokes from them . . . His goodness is like bread, like wine. That is why I lost the comic side of his character a little; the more I played him, the more I felt that I represented goodness, purity.

The film speaks too of the terrible price that the Prince must pay in exchange for power. In the historical writings, there is that balancing between the triangle (the king, his son, and Falstaff, who is a kind of foster father) and the other plot, that of Hotspur, which is much longer and intricately constructed, and very interesting. It keeps the triangle from dominating the situation. But in the film, which was made essentially in order to tell the story of that triangle, there are necessarily elements that cannot have the same existence as in the original works. In the face of Falstaff, the king represents responsibility. The interesting thing in the story is that the old king is a murderer, he has usurped the throne, and yet he represents legitimacy. The



story is extraordinary because Hal, the legitimate prince, must betray the good man to become a hero, a heroic and renowned Englishman. . . .

QUESTION — The film becomes a kind of lament for Falstaff.

WELLES—Yes, perhaps that is true. I would like people to see it that way. Although it was not made to be that alone, but also, a lament for the death of "Merrie England" — which is a concept, a myth that was very real for all who speak English, and which, to a certain extent was present in other countries in the Middle Ages. In a general way, it was the age of chivalry, of simplicity, and on on. That which dies is more than Falstaff, the old England, betrayed.

QUESTION — *The Magnificent Ambersons*, too, was a lament for a vanished age. . . .

WELLES—Yes. Not so much for an age as for the sense of moral values that has been destroyed. In the case of *The Magnificent Ambersons*, they were destroyed by the automobile. In the case of *Falstaff* there are others that are betrayed in the interest of power, of duty, of responsibility, of national grandeur, and so on. I put a more personal feeling, a deep emotion, into these two films than into the others. People think that my films are violent and often cold; but I believe that *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Falstaff* represent more than anything what I would like to do in cinema. Whether I have succeeded or not, I do not know; but that is the closest to what I have always wanted to say.

QUESTION—Do you think that there is a difference in style between *Falstaff* and your earlier films?

WELLES — People have always attributed a great deal of importance to the style of my films. Yet I do not think that they are dominated by style. I have one, I hope, or several, but I am not essentially a formalist. I am most concerned with rendering a musical impression. Music and poetry, more than merely visual imagination. The visual aspect of my films is that which is dictated to me by poetic and musical forms. I do not start from forms to try to find a poetry or a musical rhythm and try to plate them on to the film. The film ought on the contrary to follow that rhythm effortlessly. People tend to think that my first preoccupation is with the visual, that only the visual effects interest me. With me all that comes from an inner rhythm. There are many "beautiful" things that I see every day in this film and that I had not even tried to do because they had nothing to do with it. I do not stroll about like a collector choosing beautiful images and pasting them together. I consider a film as a poetic means. I do not believe that it competes with painting or choreography, but that its visual aspect is only a key giving access to its poetry. It does not justify itself in itself. No film justifies itself in itself, no matter whether it be beautiful, striking, terrifying, tender . . . It signifies nothing, unless it makes poetry possible.

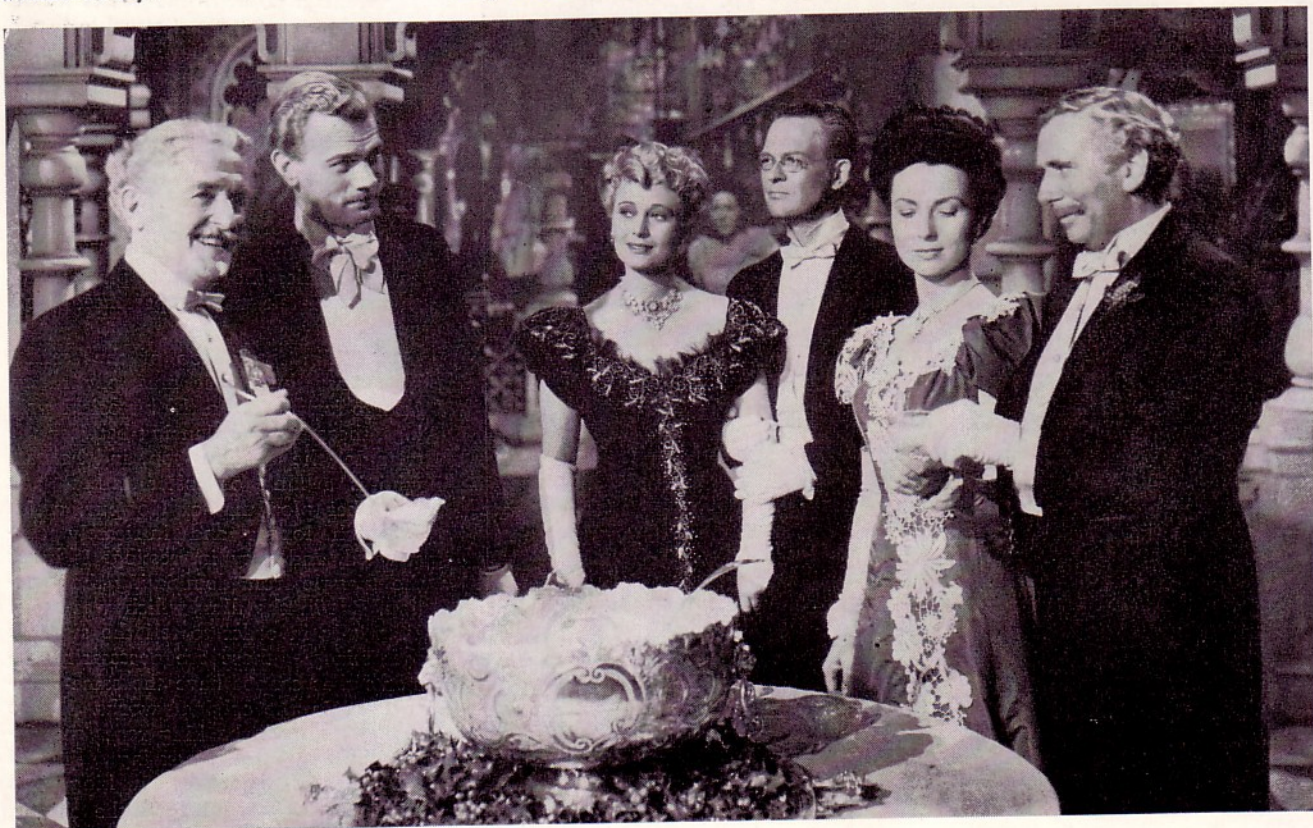
But the difficulty comes from the fact that poetry suggests things that are absent, evokes more than what you see.

And the danger in cinema is that, in using a camera, you see everything, everything is there. What one must do is succeed in evoking, in making things emerge that are not in fact, visible, in bringing about a spell. I do not know whether I attained that in *Falstaff*. I hope so. If so, I have reached my artistic maturity. If not, I am in decline, believe me.

Now, I try to bring about an effect in films, not by technical surprises, shocks, but by a very great unity of form; the true form of cinema, inner form, musical form. I believe that one ought to be able to enjoy a film with one's eyes closed; a blind man ought to be capable of enjoying a film. We all say "The only true films are the silents." But, in fact, cinema has been talking for forty years; so we ought to say something in it, and when something is said, when there is sound and music, that ought to have technically—I speak now, not of poetry, but of technique—an absolutely recognizable form, so that one sees that everything subjects itself to that form. The idea, the personal view of the *auteur* of the film, ought to tend to a unique, total form.

QUESTION—During the filming of the battle in *Falstaff* you made shots of considerable duration and then you shortened them in editing. . . .

WELLES—Yes. If you remember, at first I wanted to make brief shots, but I had to extend them because I realized that the actors would not give a good performance if they did not have something connected to do . . . One would not have had the impression that they



Orson Welles: *The Magnificent Ambersons*.





Orson Welles: *Falstaff*, Welles, Margaret Rutherford, Jeanne Moreau.

were really in the midst of fighting, if they had not had the time to warm up; that is why the shots were very extended. But I knew that I was going to use them only in short fragments. For example, I filmed the battle scenes with a crane that shifted position very quickly at ground level, as quickly as possible, to follow the action. And I knew exactly what I was doing to do after that—to cut and edit the fragments so that each shot would show a blow, a counterblow, a blow received, a blow struck, and so on . . . But I never thought to use more than a short portion of the field covered by the camera. Now the battle lasts about two minutes longer than I had thought beforehand. Maybe it is too extended; I do not know.

QUESTION—The film was to begin with the murder of Richard II . . .

WELLES—We had shot the scene, but then that did not seem clear enough to me. Instead of explaining the political context, it ran the risk of confusing it. Then too, in order to finish it, it would have been necessary to

work on it for four or five days and I did not want to involve the producer in that kind of expense. It was that way with the debarkation of Henry Bolingbroke, which I had also begun to shoot. It was an interesting thing, and I was pleased with that scene, but I believe that a director ought absolutely to be able to reject some of his shots, even the most beautiful. To my mind, an *auteur* who cannot bear the idea of ridding himself of something, under the pretext that it is beautiful, can ruin a film. That a shot is beautiful is not enough to keep it. You remember the two old men walking in the snow? Marvelous images, but I took them out. I could have been self-indulgent and let the audience see those shots. Every cineclub in the world would have said "How beautiful that is!" But they would have compromised the internal rhythm of the film. One ought to be implacable with one's own material! A film is made as much with what one takes away as with what one joins to it.

QUESTION—Does it often happen that you have to sacrifice scenes?

WELLES—During the shooting I sacrifice what in my opinion will not work out, because it is too difficult, or unnecessary to the film as a whole, or boring. I am very easily bored, and I think that the audience may be too. You cinephiles do not feel that boredom. If I were to make films for those who love cinema essentially, I might be too long drawn out. To my mind, one should be able to tell a story by cinema more quickly than by any other means. The tendency in these last twenty years, especially in the last ten years, has been to go more and more slowly, and, for the director, to delight in what people call visual ideas. For me, one of the strengths of cinema is its speed and its concentration. For example, at the end of the film, there is a scene that is not quite the same in Shakespeare, when Henry V gives orders that Falstaff be set free, with, at his back, the two traitors, the most relentless opponents of clemency. In Shakespeare the scene does not happen with Falstaff, nor are the two men there. Their attitude is typical; they are politi-



cal connivers of the palace, the eternal palace schemers. I do not know whether the audience notices this detail, which I think important. I do not like verbiage or lost time; I like what is concentrated and swift.

I know that I lose a great deal that way, and that the audience risks letting some things pass unobserved. I hope that some will see those details, and others, different ones. If everything is clear, precise, the film risks being very thin. I do not want to criticize certain contemporary directors whom people consider very great, but often they film one effect and only one. You can see the film ten times; you will admire exactly the same thing, without discovering anything else.

I think that a film ought to be full of things, details that one does not see the first time. It ought not be entirely obvious. I do not like thin films . . .

QUESTION — Sometimes you shoot the same scene several times, on several days, and yet you scarcely look at your rushes.

WELLES—Rushes are not important for me. And I do not really shoot a new take in the sense in which one understands that in America; that is to say a shot that does not work for primarily technical reasons. In America one does it most of the time for that reason; as for me, I do it because perhaps my purely personal work is not good enough. If I remake a scene, that is because it does not appear perfect to me, and I can do that only when I work in the same setting. I never come back to a setting where I have finished shooting. That is a luxury that I cannot permit myself. But when I have the same actors and I realize that something does not come off, it is better to start again. At Cardona, we did not do many takes, because I had John Gielgud for only two weeks. I knew when we felt that a great deal of work remained—which, moreover, we did later in Madrid. I knew that I would use stand-ins, because John Gielgud played a role that lasted almost as long as mine. Moreover, Falstaff is the most difficult role that I have ever played, and I am still not convinced that I rendered it well. As an actor, I should like to redo three scenes at least. One must be severe with oneself, when one is at the same time actor and director of a film. And as I said, Falstaff is a role that demands an enormous amount of work, a very difficult role.

QUESTION—When you work, on the set there is what one can call a kind of "ordered disorder," for example when you pass from one scene to another in the same day of shooting.

WELLES—There are several reasons for that. First, what seems disordered has in fact sometimes a perfect logic. For one to explain everything to the assistant and to the others would require ten minutes each time—to say why one must move a floodlight, why I do this or



Orson Welles: *Falstaff*, Beatrice and Orson Welles.







that. I do not do so, and that is why I seem capricious. But there are many other reasons. Out of doors, for example, the position of the sun determines everything, so that I pass suddenly from one sequence to another, or even to a sequence that was not planned for that day, if the light seems suitable to me. You see, I do not begin to work saying to myself "Today we will positively make this or that sequence," because if suddenly the sunlight is suitable for another, and if it is the most beautiful light in the world, the only way to make my sequences beautiful too, is to shoot at that exact moment. There are the two technical reasons for that "ordered disorder."

On the other hand, it happens that the actors are not at their best on the day planned. You feel that they would be another day, in another atmosphere. Things are not coming off. Then you must change; that is to everyone's advantage. When all the lighting is in position, to change everything in order to pass to the next scene causes considerable loss of time, and you know that I like to work fast. Therefore I jump about in the work schedule, and I sow confusion. In the end I lose less time; the "disorder" does not necessarily mean that I work slowly. I believe on the contrary that it is desperately necessary to work quickly.

QUESTION—What place do you give to improvisation?

WELLES—In films we are always beggars, in a way; we stand, hands outstretched, hoping that manna will fall from heaven. At times one shoots thinking that God will put something into one's plate; sometimes He does and then one seizes it.

Sometimes things are not in perfect working state and I shoot all the same. I do not think that that makes a great difference. As you know I am in a certain way a maniac, a "perfectionist," but in many other aspects, not at all. I always leave some things unelaborated; I do not believe that a film is to be made like those pictures in which people paint the leaves of a tree one by one. I can work and work still more on an actor's playing, wait until everything is perfect. But in general I shoot more quickly and I am satisfied with it. I work much more crudely than many directors. It may be that an assistant is still running about. That is all the same to me. I go ahead. I believe that that contributes toward keeping its living aspect for the film. The terrible danger for a film is to say "Very well—silence—long pause—" with all those gestures, all that ceremony. I try to keep a little of the feeling of improvisation; of conversation. Ordinarily, I have music on the set. Not here, because I had difficulties with the technical aspect of the organization, on account of the dimensions of the film and the difficulties of my own role, of the costumes, and so on. I had to be much more

austere than usual. But almost always, when I am on the set, there is music, to try to make people forget that they are in the process of making a film.

During the shooting I eliminate everything that could slow it. On my films, the sound engineer does not have the right to ask that a shot be remade. The only thing that he is to do, is to catch the sound. No script girl, however good she may be, has the right to speak. If, without speaking, she wants to shift something, all right, but she must never speak. Sound, makeup, take an hour every day. If one does not let people speak, one gains an hour of shooting. I warn my collaborators at the start that they are not going to like the film because they will not be able to do their work on it, that I will not let them do it. I say to them—"Stay, but you know that you are going to be 'second class citizens' and that nobody will ever ask you 'Is that all right with you?'"

There is almost no makeup in my films; I do not give it a thing. I use it only to change the appearance of a face or someone's age; otherwise, no makeup. In fact, I believe that I was the first director not to use it. There is none in *Citizen Kane*, except for the character that I play. That was the first time, I believe. Perhaps too in *The Grapes of Wrath*. I think that makeup is bad for films. That is what the cameramen think, too. If you take a referendum among all the good cameramen in the world asking them what they think of makeup, I promise you that ninety-eight percent of them will be against it. But the cameramen do not want to take the responsibility of attacking the occupation of the makeup man. That is why they do not go find the director and ask him: "Why all that makeup?" They let people go on smearing themselves, which is pointless.

QUESTION—Did you work a long time on your project before shooting *Falstaff*?

WELLES—Yes, I did a stack of research. Besides, I had already worked on that period earlier. So I know that period rather well. But when you have done that research, then . . . The elements of the research are only a preparation. You must not make museum pieces; you must create a new period. You must invent your own England, your own period, starting from what you have learned. The drama itself fixes the universe in which it is going to unroll.

QUESTION—What importance do you give to the setting in your films?

WELLES—Very much, obviously. But a setting ought not to appear perfectly and solely real. In other terms, one of the enemies of the film is the simple banal fact. A tree, a rock, you know, are the same for the man who takes a family photograph on Sundays and for us. So we must be able, thanks to the photography, to the lighting, and to all that can transform the real, to charge it

with a "character," sometimes with a "glamour," sometimes with an attraction, a mystery, that it does not possess. In this sense, the real must be treated like a setting. There is, too, an aesthetic problem that is almost never resolved in period films. I do not know why I say "almost"; I ought to say never in the history of cinema, with the exception of some films of Eisenstein. Films that I do not admire particularly in themselves but which resolved that problem. The external world, the sky with its clouds, the trees, and so on, have nothing to do with the settings; therefore it matters little whether the latter are convincing, papier-maché or magnificent, whether the actors are in period costume or not, because then they mount on horseback, go off toward a place disclosed to view and suddenly everything is banal, modern. Suddenly you feel that at some moment a jet plane can cross the sky. I do not know why, but I am always aware of the inauthenticity of a period, from the fact that the actors are in costumes and have a false look, when they are in a natural setting. But I believe that that can be resolved, and I resolved it, I think, in a way in *Othello*, and still more here. What I try to do is to see with the same eyes the external real world and that which is fabricated. To create a kind of unity. You see an actor correctly wearing a perfect costume; everything is right; he goes out and suddenly it becomes a rented costume. The only films in which that comes off are westerns and Japanese films, which are like westerns because they belong to a tradition. A thousand samurai films are made every year, and a thousand westerns, but they are founded on a tradition in which costumes and nature have learned to live in juxtaposition, and one can believe them. But see, on the contrary, in *Henry V*, people leave the castle on horseback and suddenly they meet again on a golf course somewhere charging one another; you cannot escape it, they have entered another world.

QUESTION—Ten years ago, in Edinburgh you said that perhaps a happy marriage between Shakespeare and the screen was possible . . .

WELLES—When I made that remark, I was trying to please my audience. That was surely demagoguery. I had to give a two-hour lecture to an audience that had not liked my *Macbeth*. So one had to make friends with it and the first thing that I could do was to admit that I agreed with them in part about *Macbeth*, and in a way, that was true.

That is because, besides the period reconstruction, there is another problem with Shakespeare, that of the text, of course. When he wrote as one did in the time of Lope de Vega, or rather in the time of Shakespeare—because English is richer from that point of view than a Latin language—he did so for an audience which did not see, but which was able to hear. Just as the





'... the real must be treated like a setting.' Orson Welles: *Falstaff*, Keith Baxter, John Gielgud; Baxter, Welles.





Falstaff, Orson Welles.



Falstaff, Jeanne Moreau, Margaret Rutherford.

cinema audience today sees everything, but hears nothing. Shakespeare wrote in that sense, and there is in what he says a close texture that one cannot change. That is what can make him difficult for the audience of today . . .

For example, one cannot expect that a popular audience will appreciate in a film the King's speech on sleep, unless one is dealing with an English audience . . . In English, the text possesses a power, a magic able to transfix two thousand G.I.'s in Vietnam. But translated into French or Spanish it can fail its effect completely. Nothing can be done about it.

WELLES—What is fine, in the character of the prince, is that he is always Falstaff's friend, but that at every

moment something lets one foresee his disgrace . . .

WELLES—That is where the fundamental idea lies, and I have shown it more clearly than in the theatre. Many theatre critics find that the banishment scene, at the end of *Henry IV part 2*, is too much, a little abrupt and improbable. That is merely because the play is often badly performed. I hope that in the film people will understand better what the prince is going to do, that he must betray Falstaff . . . I do not believe that his speech will affront the audience. Of course the problem of the language as a whole remains, but happily the film includes only one speech of that kind. One cannot cut it merely on the pretext that it will not be effective

other than in English. Even if it is not a high moment of the film, it is indispensable for understanding what is happening in the mind of the prince. Perhaps one should cut it in versions other than the English. I do not think that the rest of the film poses similar problems, at least I hope not. The Spanish version is very good, the translation and the dubbing are excellent; I am satisfied with it. To return to the famous speech, perhaps it would be more effective in German or in Russian or in Swedish. Shakespeare translates badly into the Latin languages, and when one comes to that speech, what to do? (Interview taped by Juan Cobos and Miguel Rubio. With the authorization of the review *Griffith*.)



Orson Welles: Falstaff, Tony Beckley, Jeanne Moreau, Keith Baxter.





Orson Welles: *Falstaff*, Jeanne Moreau, Orson Welles.

Photo: René W. Remy





Orson Welles: *Falstaff*.



# Welles in Power

by Serge Daney

1. Of *Falstaff*, Welles said that "He wages a struggle lost in advance." And, too, "I don't believe he is seeking something. He represents a value; he is goodness." That strength and genius—unanimously recognized—celebrate only hopeless causes or majestic downfalls, that a man like Welles, exerting an undeniable influence on those around him, incarnates only the defeated (disappearing, certainly, at the heart of an impressive machinery, but still worn by life, betrayed by their own)—that is a very surprising thing. Strange malediction—that a man too strong can only end badly. And yet, from Kane to Falstaff, from proud display to bareness, from a corpse that one does not see to a coffin that is carried, it is really the same story, that of a man who makes ill use of his power.

Cinema tends to recount how this or that character (and behind him, often, the cinéaste) has obtained some power, that of speaking, or acting, of making a choice, and so on. Those are perhaps the noblest films (like *Le Héros sacrilège*, *Le Caporal épinglé*, or *Le Coeur d'une mère*), the strange roads on which the cinéastes lead their characters, because the simplest road is not always the most natural, because there are detours more rich than straight lines, defeats more noble than victories, and so on. The winning of one's power—aiming at it, meriting it, snatching it—is precisely what Welles speaks of least. It is the witches who shape Macbeth, ad his intuition that pushes Quinlan forward. The films of Welles begin where the others end; when everything is won, nothing more remains but to unlearn everything, unto death, once Quinlan, today Falstaff.

2. The work of Welles, in that way faithful to Shakespeare, is a reflection on the very idea of Power, that excessive freedom that no one can follow without seeing in it, in the end, degradation and derision. Power is an evil that brings life only to those who do not yet have it. Theirs the bold enterprises, the efficacious and astonishing actions, the well contrived plots — men of the future, born to trample on kings, to whom it is given, at least once in their lives, to rock the world. Kings have

other cares; their victory is automatically without prestige, like a repression, a useless recall of the past. Defeat is the only adventure which remains for them.

Absolute power destroys real power, condemns it to futility. "If there is a sense of the real," Musil said, "there must be also a sense of the possible." And a little further, "No doubt God Himself prefers to speak of His creation as potential." In too extensive a power, the possible gnaws away the real, condemns it in advance; one action is never more necessary than another; good and evil, interchangeable, are equally indifferent. He who is master of the possible at twenty, like *Citizen Kane*, ends as slave to his caprices, surrendered gradually to a power without object or echo to an arbitrary and mad activity, useless and expensive, which never involves him completely, but which separates him always more and more from others (like the career of a singer without a voice, or the collections heaped up in Xanadu). Who can do the most, does the least, or acts at the margin of his power. Comedy demands then that from a prodigious expenditure of power there results a rigorously useless life.

From film to film, to the extent that his work proceeds, that Welles ages, the sense of the derisory grows stronger, to the point of becoming the very subject of the film (*The Trial*) that Welles considers his best. Always, everywhere, power is in bad hands. Those who possess it do not know enough about it (Othello who believes Iago, Macbeth victim of a play or words)—or know much too much (Arkadin, Quinlan, Hastler the lawyer), each committed to purely destructive actions by an excess of naivete, as of intelligence.

3. The life of John Falstaff is a commercial failure. Shortly before dying, he observes that his friend—the feeble but prudent Robert Shallow—has been more successful, and he promises himself to cultivate his friendship. No doubt only his sudden death, which no one had foreseen, spares him the last disillusion. Falstaff was born, not to receive, but to give—without discrimination or hope of return—or, if he has nothing, to give himself as an enter-

tainment. Welles calls this waste the goodness of Falstaff (and the latter himself remarks, "Not only do I have wit, but I give it to others." Which is a good definition of genius.) That Falstaff—whom Shakespeare had intended mostly ridiculous—has become, imagined, then incarnated, by Welles, a moving character is not very surprising. His death is not the disappearance—mysterious and legendary—of a Kane, but the drab naked event in which one must read, although nothing is underlined, the end of a world. "If one amused oneself all the year," says the young prince, "amusing oneself would be forced labor." Of what is Falstaff guilty? Not so much of having ill used his power, for he has scarcely any, being a character of comedy, moreover without real courage or authority. Perhaps of having used without restraint speech, that power of parody, of having made from it an interminable histrionics, useless and tedious, in which talent, if there is any, asserts itself for nothing. More certainly still of having so long survived so scandalous a waste of his energy (his puns on "waste" and "waist"). And what is still more serious, victim more than culprit, if he makes ill use of his affections too, when he chooses as his friend the very person who will betray him.

4. The work of Welles is singularly rich in abuses of trust (*The Lady from Shanghai*) or in friendships betrayed (*Othello*). The strange and scandalous complicity that for some time links Falstaff and the young prince makes more and more evident what it passes over in silence, the difference in their natures. But there would be no fascination between them if each did not precisely feel that they are radically different, symbols of two complementary and inimical worlds, like face and reverse of the same coin. On one side, Falstaff who lives on his past, on what he is already, in the entropy of a freedom deliberately ruined. On the other, the future Henry V, who is nothing still, who will perhaps be a great king, if he discovers that exact relation between the effort to supply and the end to attain, the austerity and the rigor that makes power utilizable.



# *The Other Side*

*by Pierre Duboeuf*



Orson Welles: Falstaff, Keith Baxter, Orson Welles.





The almost monstrous egocentricity of the characters whom Welles has incarnated in his past films fascinated only because it was accompanied by a more or less perceptible proportion of vulnerability. Beyond self-assertion, a few scattered but explicit signs betrayed uneasiness and weakness; a certain irritation in the movement of his eyebrows, the sometimes extreme tension of his gaze, or some hesitation in the character's behavior, gave him a pathetic dimension and aroused that sense of fragility that the most instinctive strength gives. The flaw, the sensitive part, once perceived, the fascination was as irresistible as the first repulsion had been strong.

Of this moral image that Welles has bent his mind to retouch from film to film, *Falstaff* offers us the inverted reflection. Not that the film witnesses a change in the proceedings of Welles or a new orientation of his art, but rather because, through the same mode of investigation, he makes a kind of moral discovery. The primitive strength that stirred him has lost its cutting edge; that is enough to change the components of his portrait, not so much in their respective natures as in their apportionment. In the past, strength by its obtuse presence crushed the underlying virtues of the character; today devalorized, made ridiculous, by age it lets appear more clearly what was latent and scarcely perceptible—vulnerability and a certain goodness, the ultimate form that strength or weakness assumes, and which decides the emotional tonality of the film.

From that, to salute in *Falstaff* the most accomplished Shakespearean work of Welles, is not to envisage it in its specific character, in this special position that the film occupies, in relation to his entire work—a kind of corrigendum, or rather, of complement, in the sense in which one says that two colors are complementary, a marginal film in which values are reversed as if to make more explicit the rest of his work by shedding a new light on it.

For there is a great distance between that sombre shot in *Othello* where the convulsed face of Welles emerges and the pure milky whiteness of Falstaff, between the wilful impetuous forehead of Kane or of Arkadin and the full features and the unreserve tinged with melancholy of Jack Falstaff. In the exchange Welles has lost his visual aggressiveness, and if a violent low-angle shot reappears from time to time, it is rather as a nostalgic recollection of the past. But he broods with a disquiet like Rembrandt's over his own face, and it is not inconsequential that he finds there other attunements, accents less brilliant but more human, which he substitutes for the dazzling flashes of the past, so that the icy image of the old Kane, infinitely reflected in the mirrors of Xanadu, recedes before that of a king's Fool, nearer to life.





Orson Welles: *Falstaff*, Welles, Keith Baxter.



# Jack le Fataliste

by Jean-Louis Comolli

*Words.* Like Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste*, but with less naivete and insolence than he, Welles' Falstaff appears at first entirely given to the mania for speech, actually mad with words, building his dreams on them, mixing life and dream, trusting enough in their powers, and certain enough of their fascinations, to leave to them the care of repairing his blunders and his evasions. That is because this Falstaff, in spite of the breadth of his waist, and of the space that he takes up on the screen, is as much if not more a being of air than of flesh. His body is heavy but not his wit, and that body had to be the most cumbersome, disabled, ponderous possible, in order to counterbalance and set off to best advantage the agility of the wit, the fluidity and the plasticity of speech.

In *Falstaff* there are as it were two orders clearly distinct from each other and which complete each other, like two lines that cross each other, oppose each other, and pursue each other, the sector of words and the sector of actions. On one hand the heaviness, the encumbrance, of bodies, with or without armour, whose awkwardness and slowness of motion, at the same time as their enormous strength, are emphasized still more by a choice of short, choppy editing, so that often it seems that Welles has cut into the image to make the gestures and the movements more jerky, more clashing, and by a see-sawing of high and low angle shots. The battle sequence, already famous, but just as well those of the ambush, of the dance in the tavern, or the strolls of Falstaff and Justice Shallow, witness this concern to bring out at the same time the confused haste and the inertia of bodies, their resistance. That is the first space of the film, restricted, constraining, firmly anchored at its confines, limited.

On the other hand the treacherous freedom of words. Falstaff owes all his power to them, by them he wards off the fury of the Prince, reverses the obvious, corrects the true. He is an obstinate sophist, putting into play, like Shakespeare's fools, the entire range of plays on words, witticisms, puns, to get the better of the other, by laughter or by weariness. Words are his weapons, the snares that he passes his time setting around him. Falstaff puts himself on stage with the minimum of gestures and the maximum of words.

*Theatre.* But it is within the film that

one must seek the theatre, and not in Shakespeare's theatre that one must seek *Falstaff*. That tavern, with its long tables and its benches, its common room, the gallery that runs along the upper floor, where from time to time some curious women, scantily dressed, come to lean over, to dominate the scene, is a kind of theatre in the round, in which the actors are not far from spectators when they are not both at once. Other places, another scene, counterpart of the tavern, with other actors and other spectators—the throne room, cleverly tiered, lighted from the side by beams of light that could be those of spotlights. On the one hand the tragedy of power, on the other its comedy.

The parallel between court and hovel affects not only the settings and arrangement of the places; the King finds in Falstaff his double and his reversed image; Prince Henry has two fathers, the noble and the common, two masters, one of mire and one of honor. Divided between both worlds, between these two tyrants who are jealous of each other and hate each other, he rehearses with the one what he plays with the other, all the more proud in the tavern because he is ashamed in the palace. In which direction does one's character incline? Where does sincerity hide? Falstaff, the King, the Prince, all three are equally histrionic, and often with the same emphasis, the same hollow maxims, the same promises and the same abjurations. The King, the Fool, and he who has something of both contrast with one another less than they resemble one another. In this strange Trinity, each is the actor playing himself more or less well, and the differences are only those of technique and of talent. All three rival one another in pride as in cowardice, and this rivalry leads them to humiliate themselves through one another and toward one another. Everything happens as if Falstaff on the one hand, the King on the other, each facing the prince who is an image of themselves, were ceaselessly bent on exchanging their roles with his, never recognizing themselves enough in him, and trying to discharge him, so as to supercharge themselves with it, of the noble side and of the impure side that he assumes, both equally badly.

*Falstaff* is not the dance of vice and virtue changing places with each other that one can believe at first. Falstaff is not goodness itself in the midst of

his shame, nor the King purity in the midst of his hates. Each is the same lie, the same illusion; there is neither redemption nor mercy. This obsession with humiliation is in every Welles film. *Falstaff* is the film of masochism.

*Education.* The relations between Falstaff and Henry are those of master to pupil. *Falstaff* is the story of an education, but rather in the direction of *Faust* and the demonic initiation than that of the *roman d'apprentissage*. For here again the roles are transposed. Guide in debauchery, sovereign at orgies, Falstaff is nevertheless full of discretion with his "pupil." Is he not rather the accommodating servant, and is it not to satisfy the prince that he teaches him to debase himself and himself debases himself? It seems that the pupil undertakes the master's game and defeats him on his own ground. Henry's ruses, his machinations — preludes to other plots—to surprise Falstaff in the very act of lying compel him to lend himself to the role. Here is Falstaff as object. He lets himself be led in every sense, mindful at the same time to be guilty and to pretend innocence. Double masochism, strange satisfaction, to yield to the other while appearing to want to escape him. This perverse duel between master and slave goes further still in parody.

To the noble sequence of the death of the King, in which for a moment Henry, believing his father dead, has possessed himself of the crown and triumphs already, before the King revives to be humiliated and then to humiliate, corresponds the farce of the coronation in the tavern. Pressed by Henry, Falstaff installs himself on a grotesque throne and crowns himself with a saucepan. And Henry plays the humiliated son with a malicious Falstaff. But very quickly—effect of psychodrama—a strange rage seizes the prince, he drives away Falstaff and takes the royal crown from him into his own hands. It is for him to take the role of his father with a repentant Falstaff. Each has what pleases him, and more than the others, Henry; the son humiliates the father whether the latter is absent or present, whether he speaks to him or acts a performance of him, as the father humiliates himself in his son.

Only one person is duped, Falstaff. But that is precisely where one finds Welles' imperious obstinacy at carrying his cross.





Orson Welles: *Falstaff*, Orson Welles.





# Sacher and Masoch

by Jean Narboni

Having dropped down from the sky, as one said, Arkadin's airplane was empty. Van Stratten, uninteresting adventurer, established for a moment as an illusory justiciary, covered with the colors of scorn by the glance of Raina, the daughter, goes off, deceived by the last stratagem to join the numberless roster of witnesses. Let us risk the hypothesis that Arkadin is not dead, too many witnesses seeming still dangerous for him—among them, to begin with, the said Van Stratten. Under the pretext of an English television series, armed with deadly cameras, which, like a magician, he makes appear from his coat as weapons, which he leaves scattered about without a cameraman in the corners of shots the better to mislead the adversary, he traverses the whole earth. "Around the World" this new diabolical enterprise titles itself, reassuringly. The investigator is enchanted at first with his own lucidity in managing to find innocuous images of himself, here, there and everywhere, voluntary exiles, ambassadors and heralds of an independent America, — a woman and her son in the Basque country, some musicians in Saint-Germain, Raymond Duncan *rue de Seine*. Others marked themselves more disturbingly, Dominici in mid-air, old English soldiers buried alive in a London museum, six decrepit intangible old widows ready to tell everything. Little by little in the play of identity and of resemblances, the investigator becomes uneasy; Duncan, with his old Sioux's face, draped in his celebrated tatters, could be Iago in a Turkish bath; the six widows recall or prefigure such-and-such a blind shopkeeper of *Touch of Evil*; the old soldiers could dangerously reveal, one does not know, that Arkadin built his fortune in part by stealing the identity of a very rich English officer whom he had struck down from behind, profiting by the disorder in the trenches. Moreover are the other tatters all dead? The Bernsteins, Lelands, O'Haras, who did not bring to its end a fine old age, Vargas become in his turn detective of invented proofs, and yonder Joseph K. who pretends to understand nothing. Everything becomes a

proof, things, people, everything sends back to Welles the infinitely reflected images of himself (it is not the first time, but today no more "play" of looking glasses nor necessary mirrors)—Rosebud, Quinlan's cave, Sanchez' dynamite, the cafes of the celebrated Sacher in Vienna where Franz-Josef had refreshments just before Sarajevo, the chocolate Himalayas and *bombes glacées* whose dramatic enumeration by Welles links them with other bombs as disquieting, let us say, as those of *The Trial*.

To take upon oneself with impunity to play the "bigger than life," is, literally, to accept taking everything into oneself, the living and the inanimate, things, objects, ants, atoms, machines, the armour of English knights and the end of the world. Between the "my name is Orson Welles" of *The Magnificent Ambersons* and the same sentence in *The Trial*, there is a world of distance, "the" world — passage from the proud assertion of oneself, of one's identity, to the fear of no longer being anyone at all, but everyone and no one. In the noise of the battle, Falstaff wanders, *Pere Ubu*, in Poland, thus everyone and nowhere, the man from Mars astray on the moors, good fellow Michelin ready to de-ring himself in the four winds of combat.

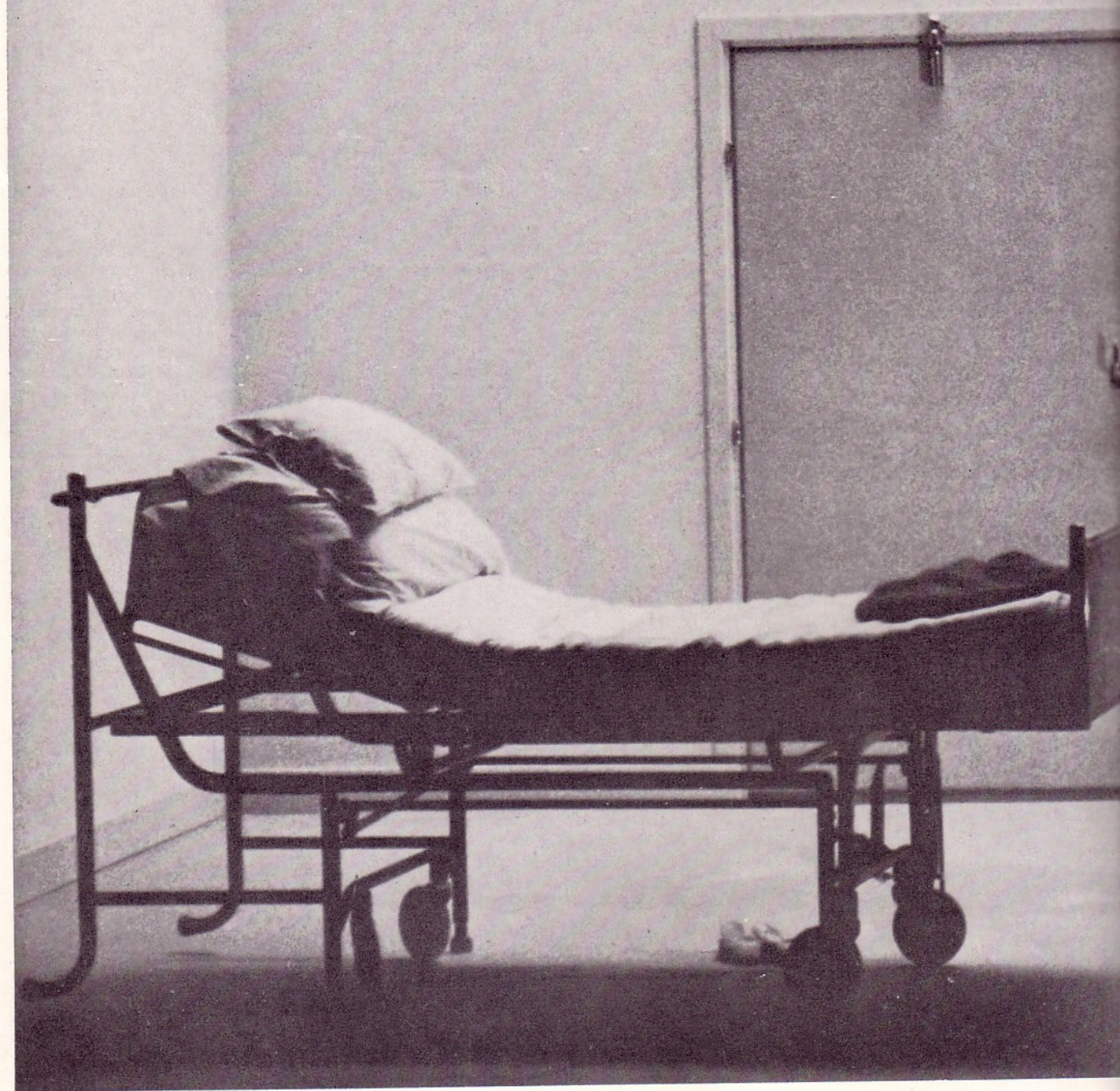
Far from crowning the famous "humanism" in a gigantic figure, Welles illustrates the non-humanism advocated by the genius of Audiberti, supremely self-negating attempt to cosmify beings (the promoters taking upon themselves to be the first victims).

Borges, quoting Hazlitt, wrote that "Shakespeare resembles everyone, except by the fact of resembling everyone." Iago said "I am not what I am." And Falstaff—"To banish Falstaff is to banish the world." Because neither Falstaff nor Welles exist, because they are the world, scattered, everywhere present. As for the man Welles, the paunch, the genius Orson Welles, he is therefore, to paraphrase what Audiberti wrote about Hugo, "only the living place in which the presence of Orson Welles concentrates itself most" (an infinitely small variation between the skinny fascinator Charles Foster and the fat Falstaff).

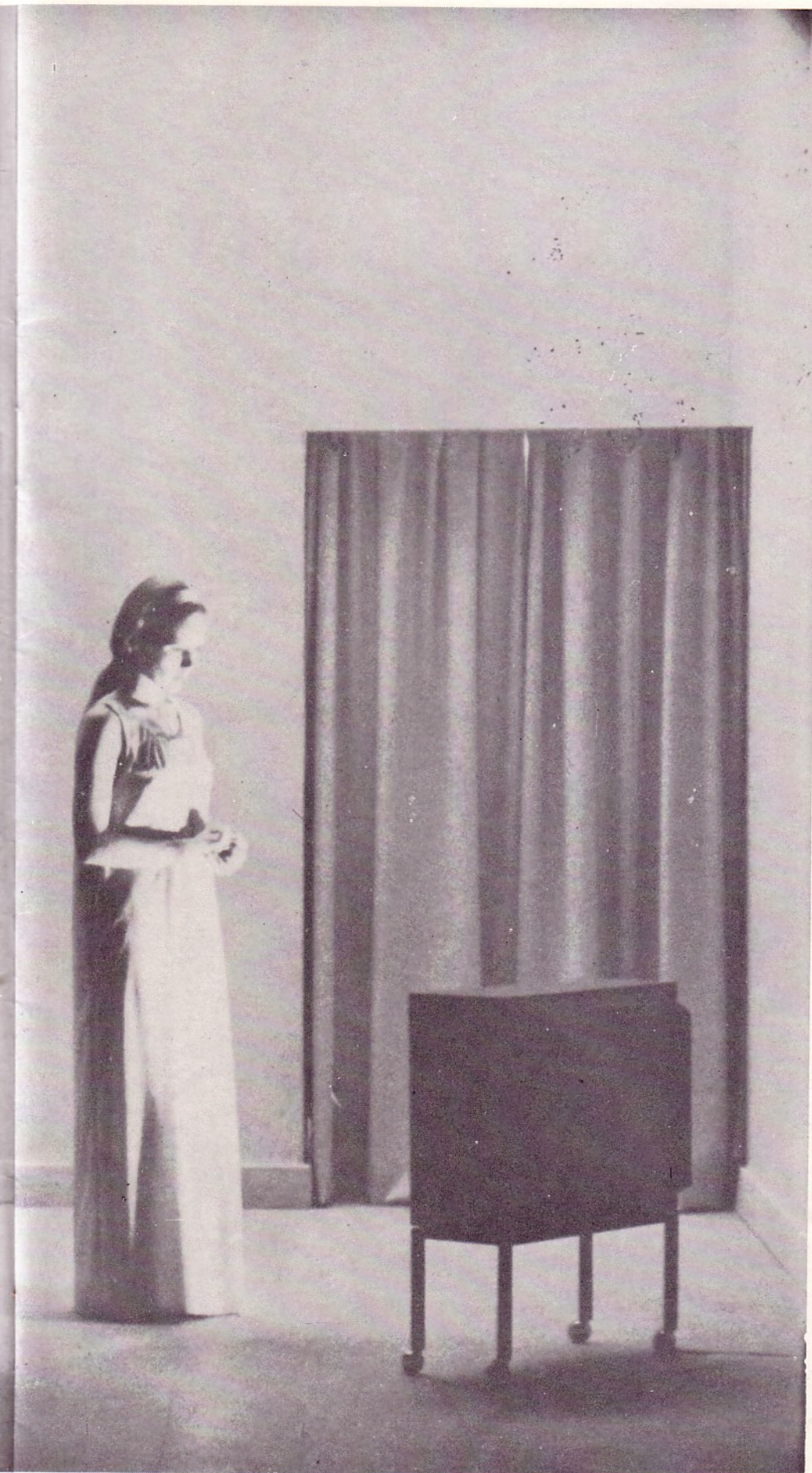


# *The Serpent's Skin*

*by Ingmar Bergman*







Artistic creation has always manifested itself for me like a desire for food. I observed that need with a certain pleasure, but, all through my conscious life, I never asked myself why this hunger had arisen and called for satisfaction. Now, when in these latter days it tends to abate and to transform itself into something else, I feel the urgent necessity to seek the cause of my "artistic activity."

I remember having felt, from my earliest childhood, the need to show off my talents—a skill at drawing, the science of throwing a ball against a wall, my first breast strokes.

I remember having madly desired to attract the attention of the grownups to these manifestations of my presence in the world. Always I considered that I had not awakened others' interest sufficiently. That is why, when reality was no longer enough, I began to tell imaginary stories, to divert those my own age by the prodigious narration of my secret exploits. They were clumsy lies, that were dashed to pieces against the prosaic skepticism of my listeners. Finally, I gave up living in a community and kept for myself my world of phantasms. The boy possessed by imagination and the desire to establish a contact changed rather quickly into a wounded, distrustful, and wily daydreamer.

But a daydreamer cannot be an artist elsewhere than in his dreams.

The need to be heard, to communicate, to live in the warmth of a community, persisted. The more the gates of solitude closed on me, the more the need grew.

So it is rather obvious that I had to end by expressing myself cinematographically. This medium gave me the possibility of making myself understood in a language that surpassed the words of which I was bereft, the music that I did not master, the painting that left me indifferent. Suddenly I could communicate with another with the help of a language that, literally, speaks from soul to soul, in expressions that escaped the control of the intellect almost voluptuously. With all this hunger repressed in the course of my youth, I threw myself into the cinema and for twenty years, without respite and with a kind of frenzy, I fabricated dreams, sensory experiences, whims, fits of hysteria, neuroses, religious spasms, and pure lies. My hunger renewed itself perpetually. Money, fame and success struck me with stupefaction, but essentially had no effect on my work. From the preceding, one ought not to conclude that I underestimate what, by chance, I have accomplished. The fact reassures me that I can see the past under a new and less romantic light. Art as self-satisfaction

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Ingmar Bergman: *Persona*, Liv Ullmann.



can naturally have its importance, — first of all for the artist himself.

Today the situation is less complex, less captivating, and especially less alluring.

Thus, if I want to be totally sincere, I have the feeling that art (and not only cinematographic art) is insignificant.

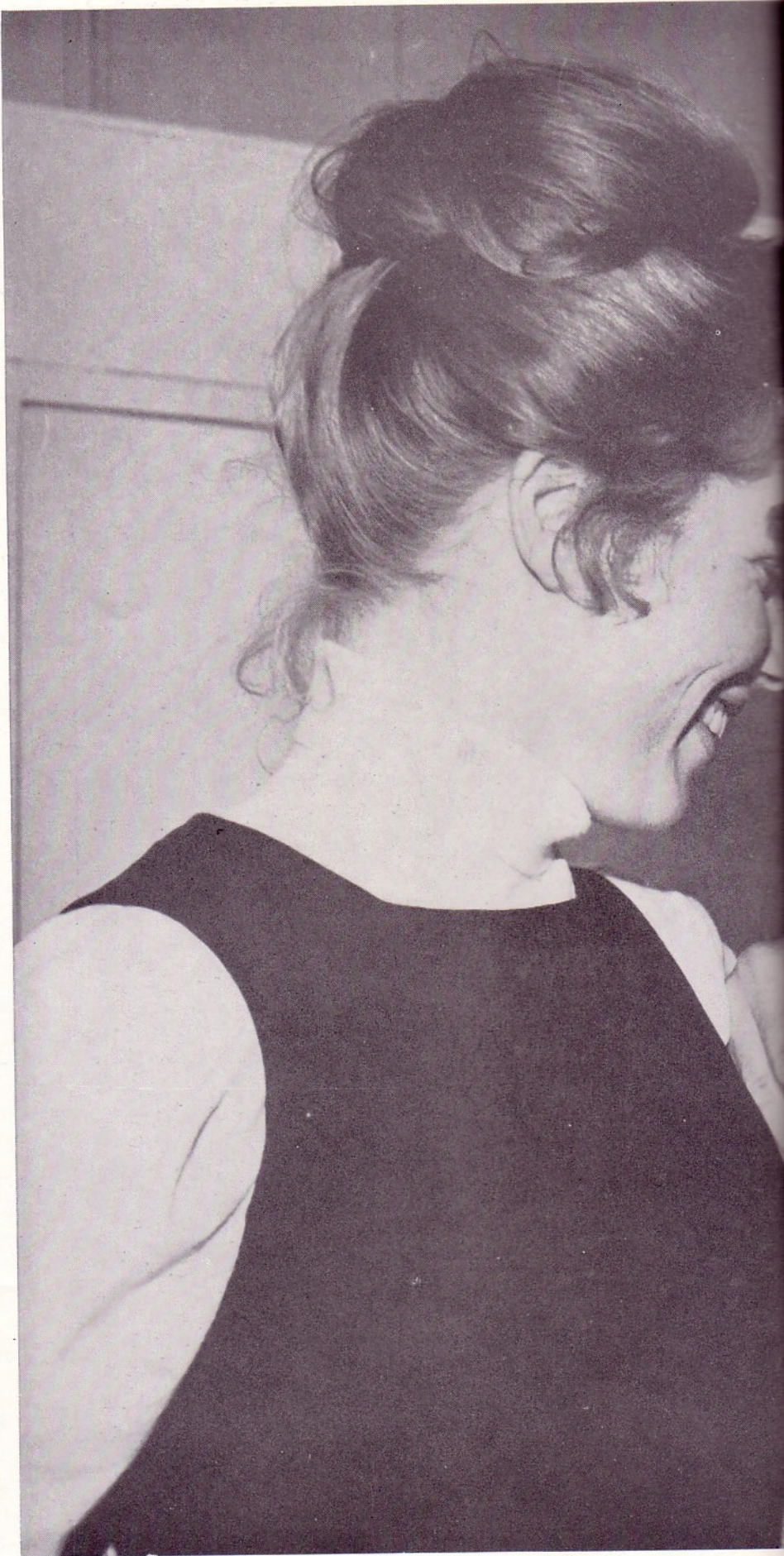
Literature, painting, music, cinema and theatre engender themselves and are born of themselves. New mutations, new combinations, are formed and die out; seen from outside, the activity appears endowed with intense life—grandiose obstinacy that the artists give to projecting for themselves and for an always more distracted audience, the images of a world that no longer even cares about their opinion. On some rare occasions, the artist is punished, art being considered as dangerous and deserving of being stifled or controlled. On the whole, nevertheless, art is free, insolent, irresponsible, and, as I was saying, the movement is intense, almost feverish; it seems to me that it makes one think of a serpent's skin full of ants. The serpent itself has been dead a long time, devoured, devoid of its venom, but the skin moves swollen with a vital ardor.

Now, if I observe that I find myself one of these ants, I am compelled to ask myself if there is any reason for pursuing my activity. The answer is yes. Although I believe that the theatre is a dear old *cocotte* whose best days are over. Although I find, and many another with me, the western more stimulating than an Antonioni or a Bergman. Although the new music gives one the impression of wanting to suffocate oneself in a mathematically rarefied air, although painting and sculpture become sterile and weaken, victims of their own petrifying freedom. Although literature has changed into an enormous rock of words without profound significance or dangerous consequence.

There are poets who will never write verse to the extent that they shape their existence in the manner of a poem, actors who will never appear on stage, but interpret their lives as so many singular dramas. There are painters who will never paint, since they close their eyes, and, in the shelter of their closed lids imagine the purest masterpieces. There are cineastes who live their films and who never will squander their talent to give them materiality, reality.

The same way, I believe that in our days people can reject the theatre, since they live in the womb of a gigantic drama that never stops breaking out in local tragedies. They have no need for music, since at every moment their eardrums are under attack by violent sonorous hurricanes, which reach and go beyond a tolerable intensity. They have no need for poetry, since within the

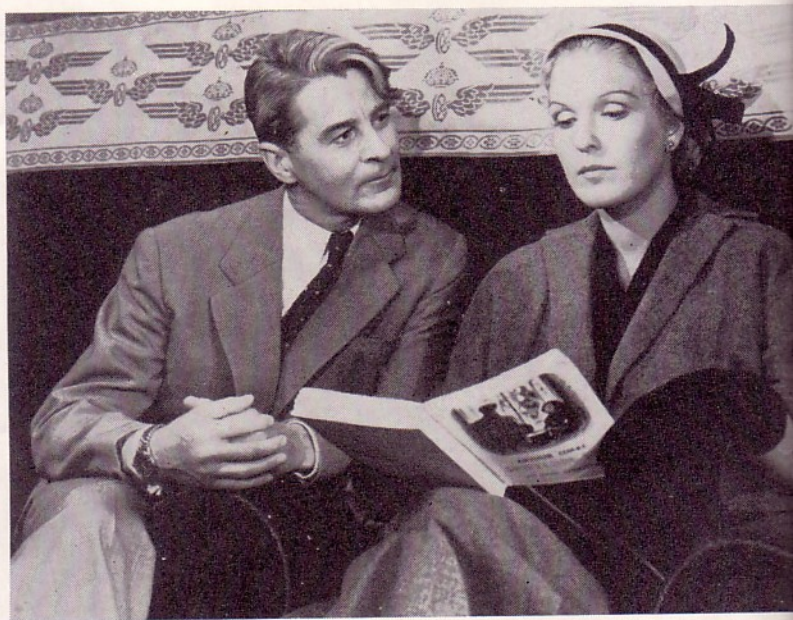
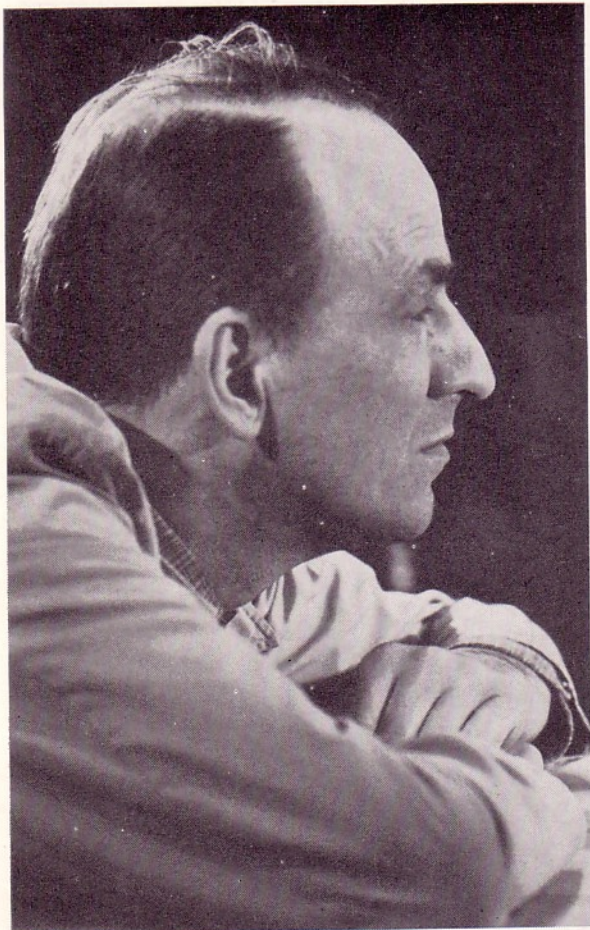
*Persona*, Liv Ullmann, Bibi Andersson, Ingmar Bergman.















new configuration of the world they have become animals with determined functions, subject to metabolic problems, no doubt interesting, but inexhaustible from a poetic point of view.

Man (I mean myself as well as another) has become free, terribly, dizzily free. Religion and art are kept alive only for sentimental reasons, like a purely conventional politeness toward the past, a well meaning solicitude towards the always more nervous citizens of the civilization of leisure.

I speak without stopping, from a subjective point of view. I hope, indeed I am persuaded, that others are of an opinion more nuanced and (they say) more objective. If now I consider the extent of this desolation and, in spite of everything, persist in declaring that I want to pursue the practice of my art, the reason is very simple. (I exclude the material aspects of the problem.)

That reason is called *curiosity*. An intolerable curiosity, without limits, never satisfied, always renewed, that pushes me forward, that replaces completely that hunger for a communion of the past.

I feel as if, after a long detention, I suddenly came out of prison and plunged into this thunderous, agitated, shattering life. I am seized with an unbridled curiosity. I note, I observe, I open my eyes, everything is unreal, fantastic, terrifying, or ridiculous. I catch in its flight a particle of dust, perhaps it is a film—what importance has it, in fact? None, but this particle of dust interests *me*, so it is a film. I go about with this particle captured with my own hands and occupy myself with it, gaily or gloomily. I clear myself a way among the other ants; we accomplish a colossal work. The serpent's skin moves.

That, and nothing but that, is *my* truth. I compel no one else to see in it his truth, and, as consolation for eternity, it is obviously rather meager. But as support for an artistic activity for the few years to come, it is amply sufficient, at least for me.

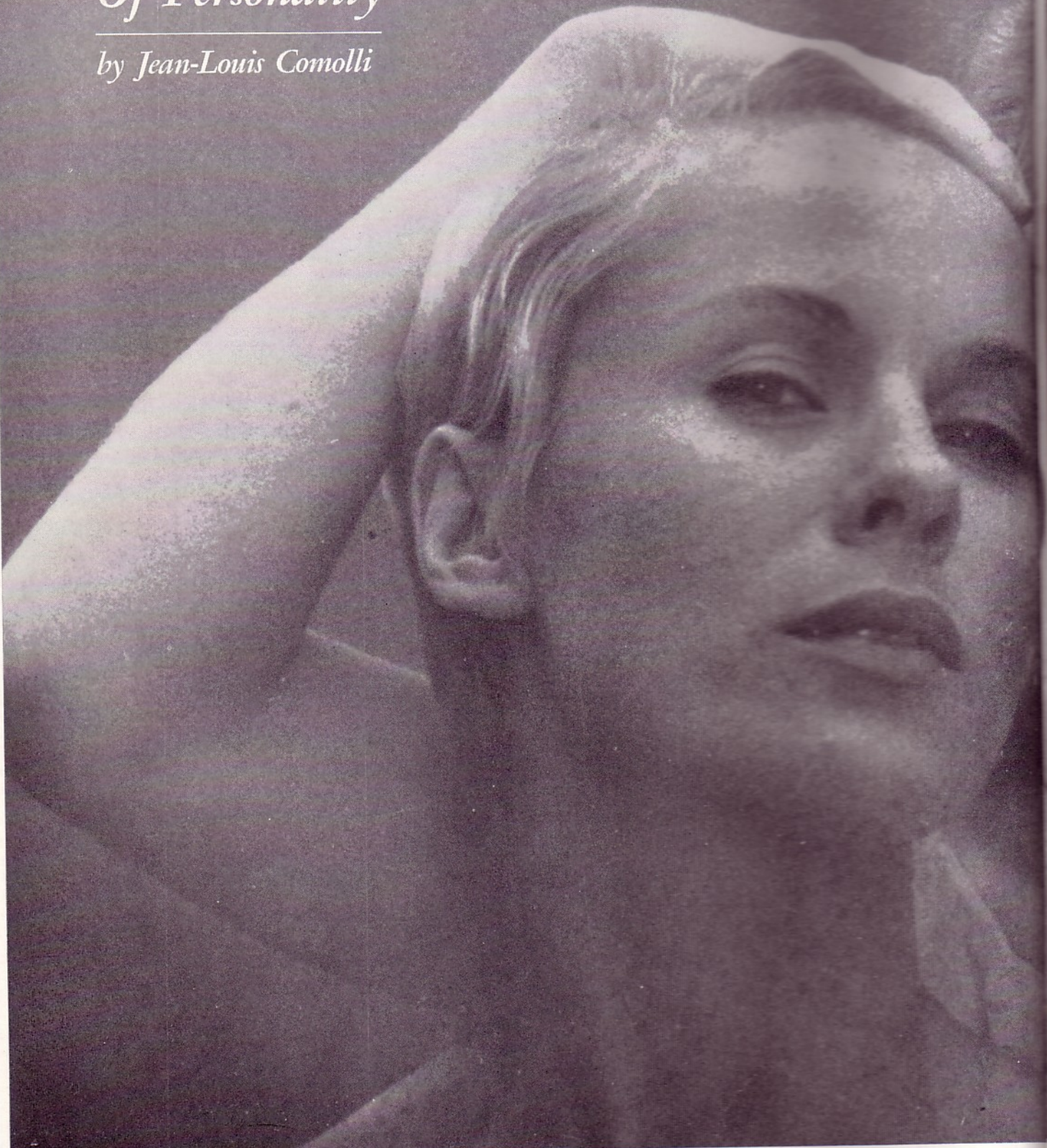
To be an artist for one's own pleasure is not always especially agreeable. But it presents an extraordinary advantage—the artist shares his lot with every living being, who, for his part, lives equally only for his own pleasure. In all probability, the whole ends by constituting a rather extensive fraternity, which, in this way, exists, thanks to a purely egotistical contract, on the warm, filthy earth, under the cold, empty sky.

Opposite page: Bergman: *The Naked Night*, Harriett Andersson; *Monika*, Andersson; *A Lesson in Love*, Gunnar Bjornstrand, Eva Dahlbeck; *Smiles of a Summer Night*, Bjornstrand, Dahlbeck. This page: *Illicit Interlude*, Maj-Britt Nilsson, Birger Malmsten; *Illicit Interlude*, Stig Olin, Nilsson; *A Lesson in Love*, Andersson, Bjornstrand.



# *The Phantom Of Personality*

*by Jean-Louis Comolli*



Ingmar Bergman: *Persona*, Bibi Anderson, Liv Ullmann.





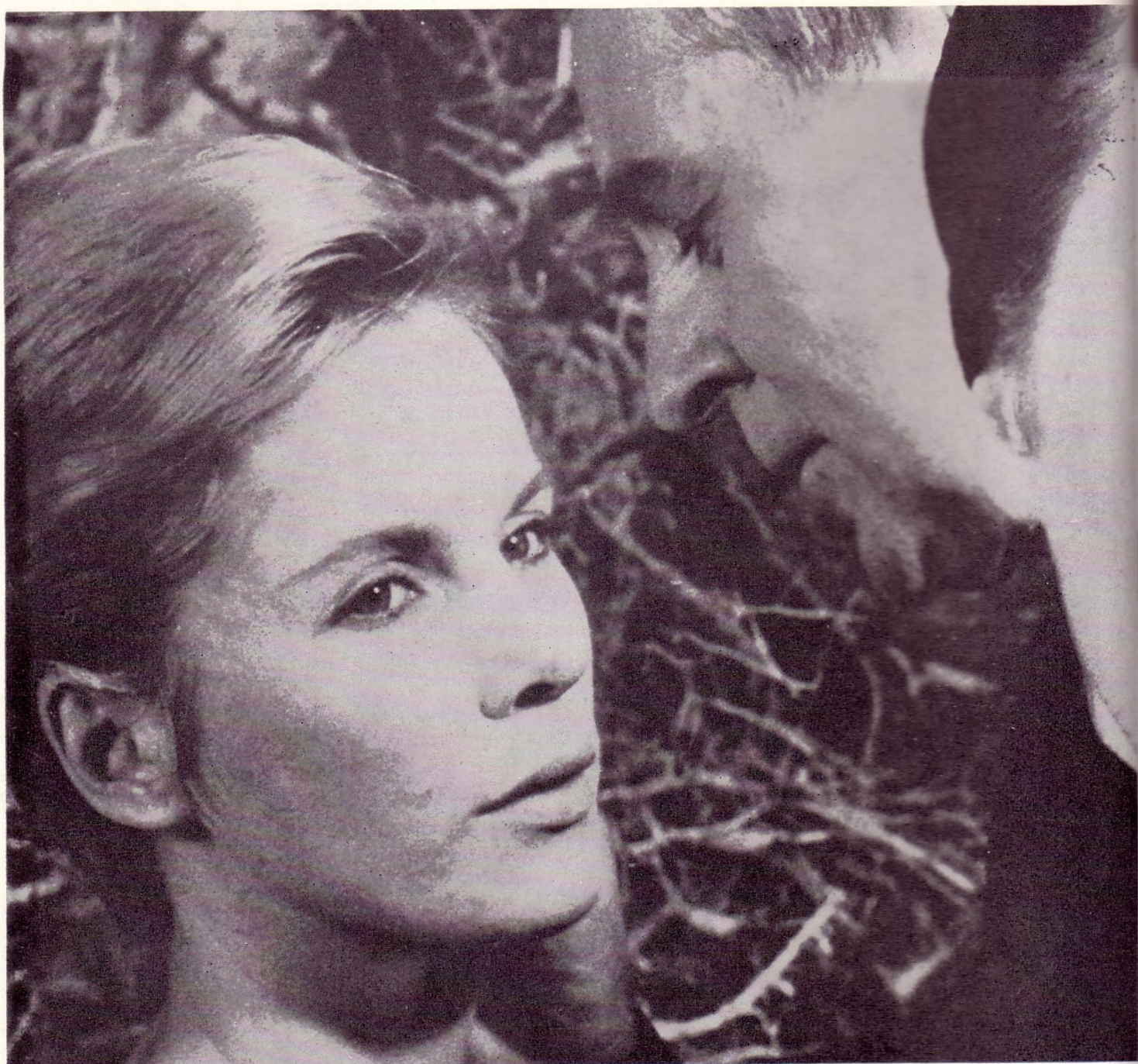
*Persona*—these are the metamorphoses of the Double—dizzinesses of the reflection, disorders of the analogous, mirages of the identical, plays of separation and of connection, bewitchments of similitude, which is the image of which? Not only is the theme of the film this quest of the likeness; a theatre actress (Liv Ullman) loses—for what mysterious reasons, by what unexplained block?—the taste, or the desire, or the very possibility of speaking; she becomes mute, or more exactly, silent, and will no longer speak in all the film (except one word, “nothing”); a nurse (Bibi Andersson) cares for her; she will not stop speaking, wholly giving herself by her words to this complaisant confidant, and soon obsessed by this elusive phantom, prey to a magical possession, vampirism by silence, to the point of losing consciousness of her own being, little by little, and of believing herself the very other, the living, present image of the other.

And that other, of the terrifying refusal of expression, one sees her, not “cured,” but finding again her plenitude, as it were regaining a part of herself that had escaped her. A transfusion of existences, a transmutation of appearances have been effected. One brief instant even, the screen has given us, caught in its passage, the secret of this mute, perhaps irreversible reversibility: a single face, but double, half of one, half of the other, woman.

For not only does this inquiry into uniqueness and duality constitute the subject of *Persona*, but the film as a whole, the film in its parts, obeys these oscillations between the identical and the separable, structures itself according to these variations, abrupt or fluid from reunion to bipartition.

At the beginning—the beginning of the film—and at the end—the end of the film too—there was, there will be the same image. The same, but such that at the end it is the exact reverse of what it was at the start; the same, but reversed, double and returned like the reflection in a mirror—but this mirror would be Time. *Persona* begins with an image that is the beginning of all images—the black screen, the darkness that exists before the projection. Very slowly, very softly at first, two gleams of light appear. Their brilliance increases proportionally as they approach each other; they are the two carbons of a film projector, which attract each other, as if magnetized, until the jerky light. Thus the projection can begin; but has it not already begun? One sees the sprockets that guide the film strip, that strip itself, that jumps before running smoothly, and the first images; but are they not already within the first images? These carbons, this projector, this film strip, are they not precisely in the image of the carbons, of the projector, of the strip and of the very images that make us see them? Never was the





Ingmar Bergman: *Persona*, Bibi Andersson, Gunnar Bjornstrand, Liv Ullmann.

screen a more faithful mirror. We are in front of it, and what it shows us is in back of us. It and we—transparent phantoms.

These first images move past very quickly, as if the speed of the projection were not yet well set—yet they are really twenty-four images per second that the other projector (that of the theatre in which we sit sends to the screen, even when one sees a projector turn more quickly; yet it actually requires twenty-four images per second for one to be able to see the progression of these images projected towards us as if from the other side of the screen, a rhythm still jerky, which soon stretches flashes of conscience and of dream, in

to merge with the flexible rhythm of the real projector. A projector has brought forth another projector, its double, then has absorbed it, has taken it back into itself. During this short period of split identity this second projector has given rise to a few images (scenes of slapstick, male sex organ erect, female sex organ)—images themselves in the images, which, very quickly, the projection continuing, have become the very images of the film. The film begins *really*, the time of the projection and the time projected merge, in phase. The double has rejoined the matrix. But doubt has been cast—is the projector still within the projector, has the screen not remained transparent (a boy will

pass his hand in front of this screen, as if to assure himself of its reality—a pane of glass on the other side of which we sit as spectators): Doubt, all the more because midway through the film, the film strip reappears on the screen, again takes possession of the images, breaks, burns. And the film starts again, but this second part reverses the relationships, destroys the hypotheses that the first part had allowed to be established. There were two women whom everything separated at first and who drew nearer to each other. There will only be one henceforth, under two faces, more and more distinct.

As for the last images of *Persona*, they duplicate the start of the film while



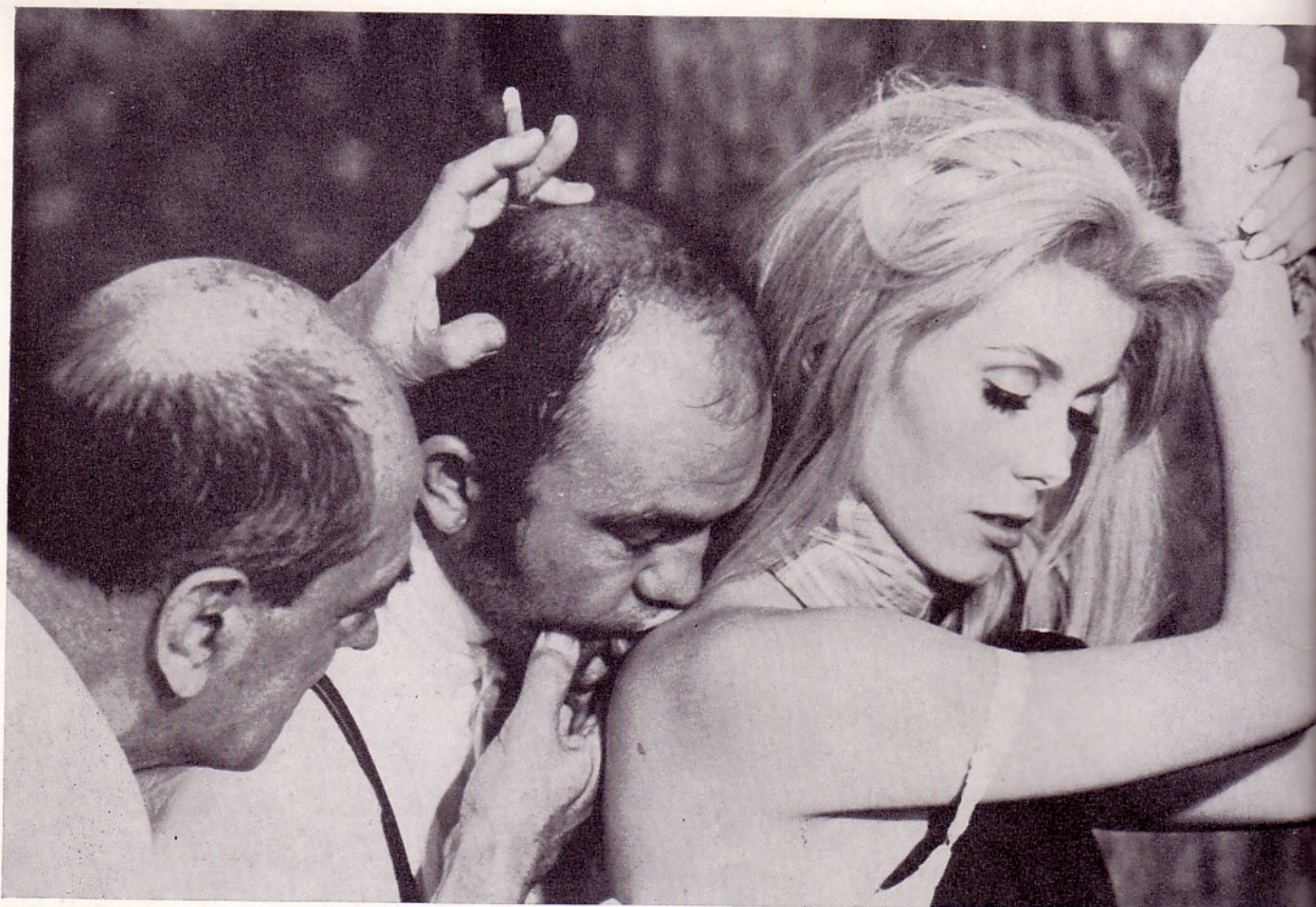


reversing it, break once more the identity between the time projected and the time of projection; the images jump, the sprockets, the film strip, the gear mechanism, the projector take possession of the screen again, the splitting into identical halves takes place again; there is a film strip through which light passes to project on a screen the image of a strip through which light no longer passes; there is a light born of the merging of two carbons which darts to the screen to show the image of the carbons drawing apart from each other and losing their brilliance. It was cinema reflecting itself; the most beautiful of Bergman's films is ended.



Ingmar Bergman: *Persona*, Liv Ullmann.









## *Belle de Jour*

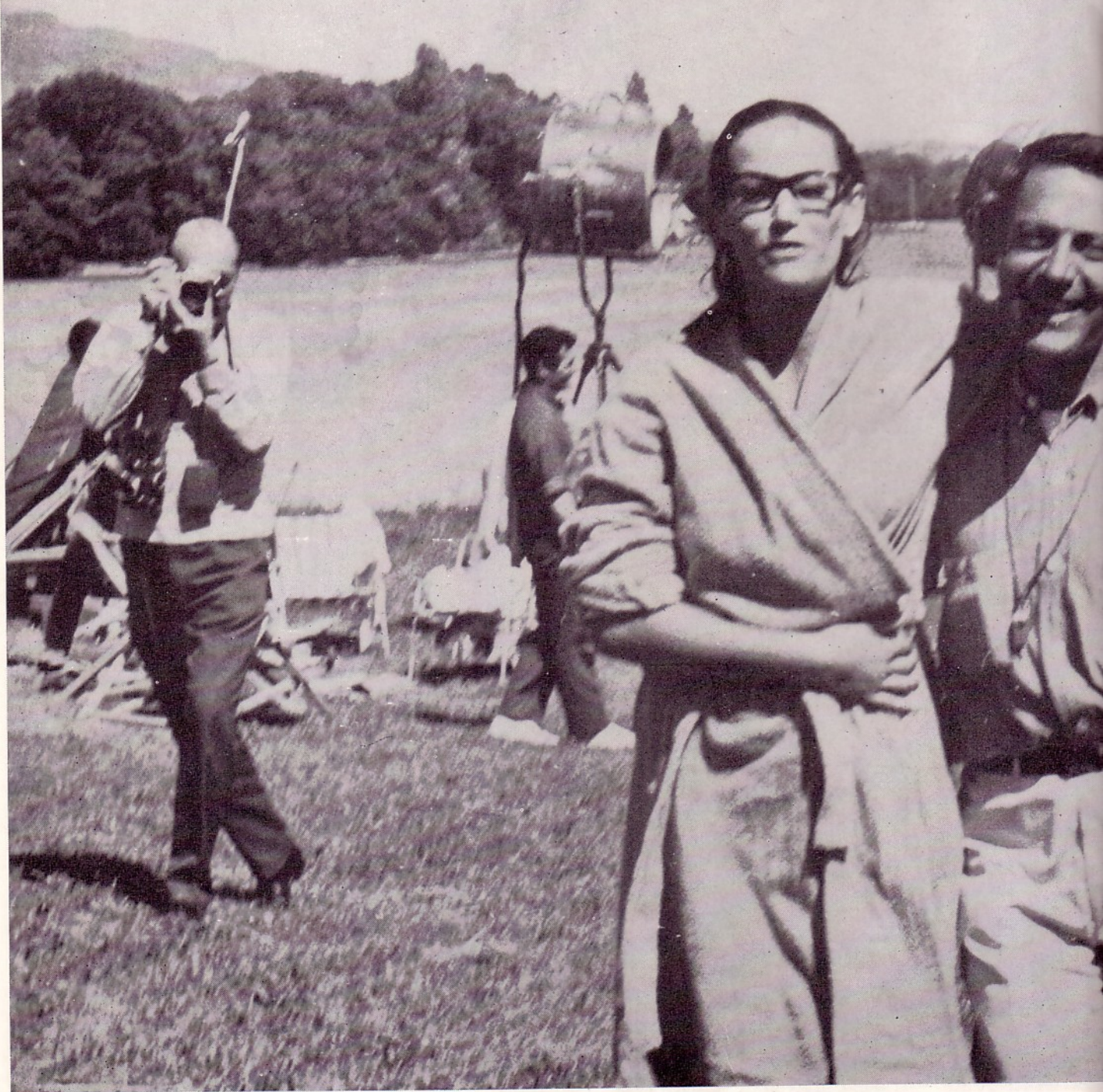
One of the most eagerly awaited films of the year, Luis Bunuel's *Belle de Jour* stars Catherine Deneuve (seen above, left, and below), Genevieve Page and Michel Piccoli (opposite page), and Pierre Clementi (below), as well as Jean Sorel, Macha Meril, and Francisco Rabal. Bunuel appears in several of the production shots on these pages.





# *Meeting with Alain Jessua*

*by Michel Delabaye*







CAHIERS—A few years ago, you spoke of cinema a little disenchantedly...

ALAIN JESSUA—I've changed a great deal. In any case, I spoke in bad faith. With me it was a form of provocation. Equally a form of defense...

CAHIERS—Due perhaps to your work as an assistant?

JESSUA—Due to that, yes, certainly.

CAHIERS—From another point of view, that kind of work is not a bad thing...

JESSUA—It is a good thing. I believe that it is indispensable, by assistantship, or any other form of apprenticeship, to acquire a technical knowledge of the profession. In that sense, I owe it a great deal. Having said that, I believe that a year or a year-and-a-half of assistantship is quite sufficient. It was especially with Ophüls that I learned a great deal, following *Madame D*, on which I was an apprentice, down to the editing, the dubbing, and the sound mixing. That was the most enriching period for me, for I saw there a man who no doubt loved technique, but who was particularly blessed with an extraordinary enthusiasm. I learned much, too, with twenty-six-minute *Flash Gordon*-shorts that we filmed in three months, for American television, in Marseilles studios. That was the ultimate in technical playing. The American method of the permanent setting led us, to group several films in the same setting, and it happened that we would have to shoot three different films by the angle. Once we were aimed at the angle in question, it was not we who moved, but the actors who changed costume. That was really acrobatical. Something that, for me, was a little related to crossword puzzles...

But the trouble with this work—in which I was engaged uninterruptedly from age nineteen to twenty-four—is that you no longer have a personal life, you can no longer reflect. It breaks you completely. You are no longer able to invent anything. And today still, I must make an effort to forget. To forget certain reflexes that were created as a result of a certain "professionalism." For this so-called "professionalism," one must indeed say it, is nothing.

First, people have realized—the great cinéastes have taught us—that in cinema there are no rules. For if there were—it is almost a truism—then there would be nothing more than to apply them, and that would be marvelous! No, there are none. People have talked about cinematographic grammar. That's for the birds. At the time when I started, people were still in the stage of entrances and exits of field. Now that has long since been forgotten. All that one can say, if absolutely necessary, is that when two

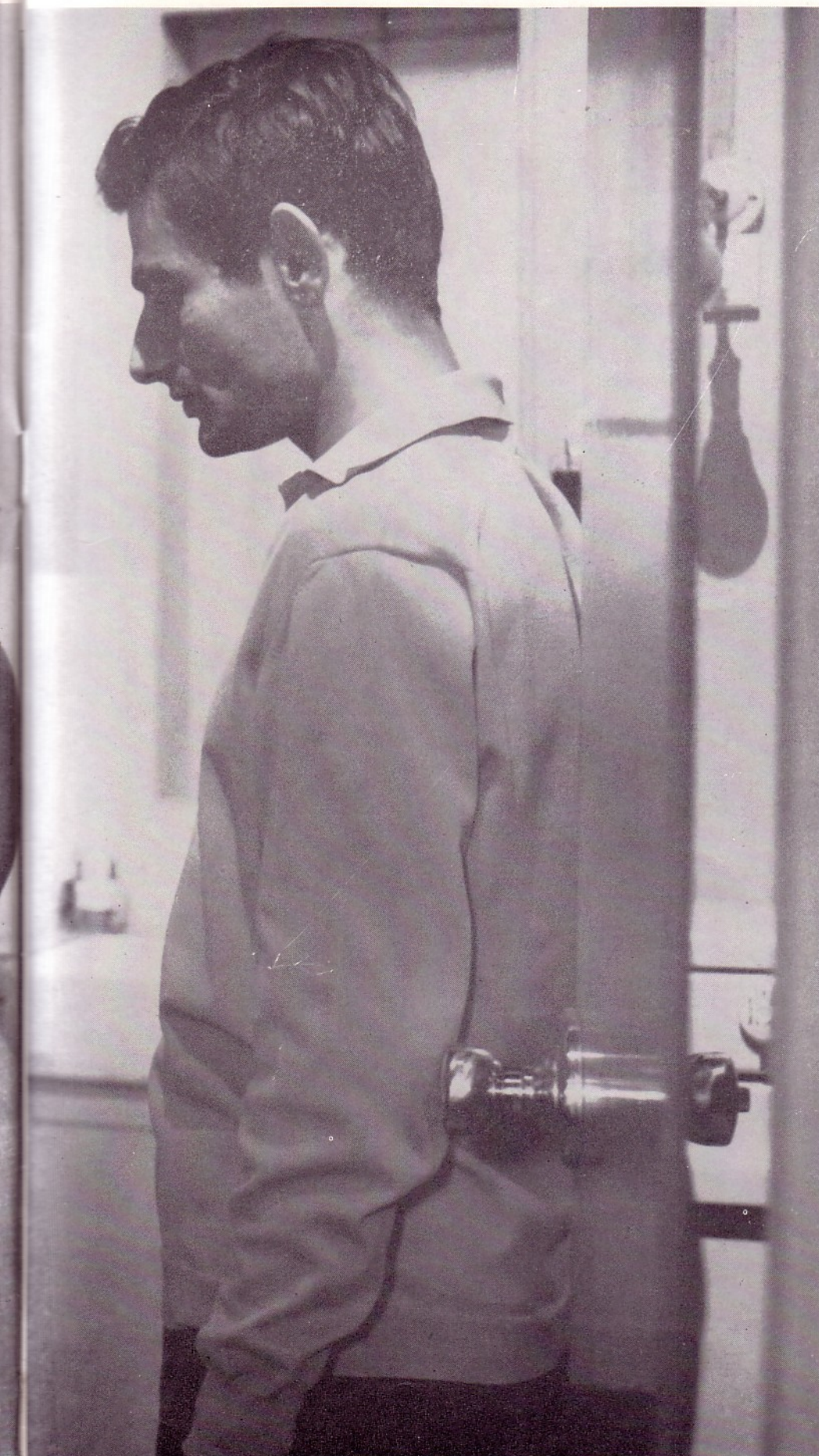
Alain Jessua during the shooting of *Jeu de massacre*.





Alain Jessua: *La Vie à l'envers*, Anna Gaylor, Charles Denner.





characters look at each other, they ought not to look in the same direction. And still one is not certain. . . However, it seems to me that a certain minimum of assistantship is indispensable for the future cinéaste. Or then that he follow shooting sessions if he's lucky enough to be able to. Thus I would like very much, later on, to direct in the theatre. Well, for a year I will find a way to follow the work of theatre directors as an unpaid assistant. . .

CAHIERS—In the time that you were an assistant, did you already think about becoming a director?

JESSUA—That happened, but not immediately. At the start, the mere fact of going to the studio had something magical about it for me. When I was a very young apprentice on *Madame D* (that was still the time when people tried to dishearten those who wanted to work in cinema—somewhat like Army methods, and I do not say that that was a bad thing, there was a scene to be shot with a carriage, with horses—who left dung. And I had the job of cleaning up the dung. Moreover, I was delighted. Delighted, because everything that was part of making a film was equally magical, and a studio was—yes, actually—a dream factory. And then one day, at the time of *Lola Montes*, I realized that I was going to the studio exactly as I would have gone to the office. "And there," I said to myself, "something is not working any more. It is no longer possible . . ." Then I had a very serious automobile accident, during the shooting of *La Meilleure Part*.

That was the complete break. From then on I thought only of directing something, in order to get myself out of the impasse. It was a short. And the surprising thing is that suddenly I found myself in back of a camera to realize—yet God knows if that film was simple, almost naive—that I knew nothing at all; my four years of work were useless to me. Only one thing stayed with me—the lesson of exactingness that I had learned from certain directors like Becker and Ophüls. So I was exacting about the shooting, the actors' playing—about everything, what have you! but all the same I was completely lost.

Now that is a little what I feel today when I am preparing my second film—and it is at once a rich and a debilitating experience to write alone. As for the third . . . there I change. And that is hard. But I believe that cinema, like every art, must move. One must always try something different. Pass through different experiences. There are no methods. And improvisation itself, if one made a method of it, would end in sclerosis.

CAHIERS—But how did matters stand at the time of your first film? That one was, I believe, scarcely pre-mediated.

JESSUA—Scarcely, indeed. At the

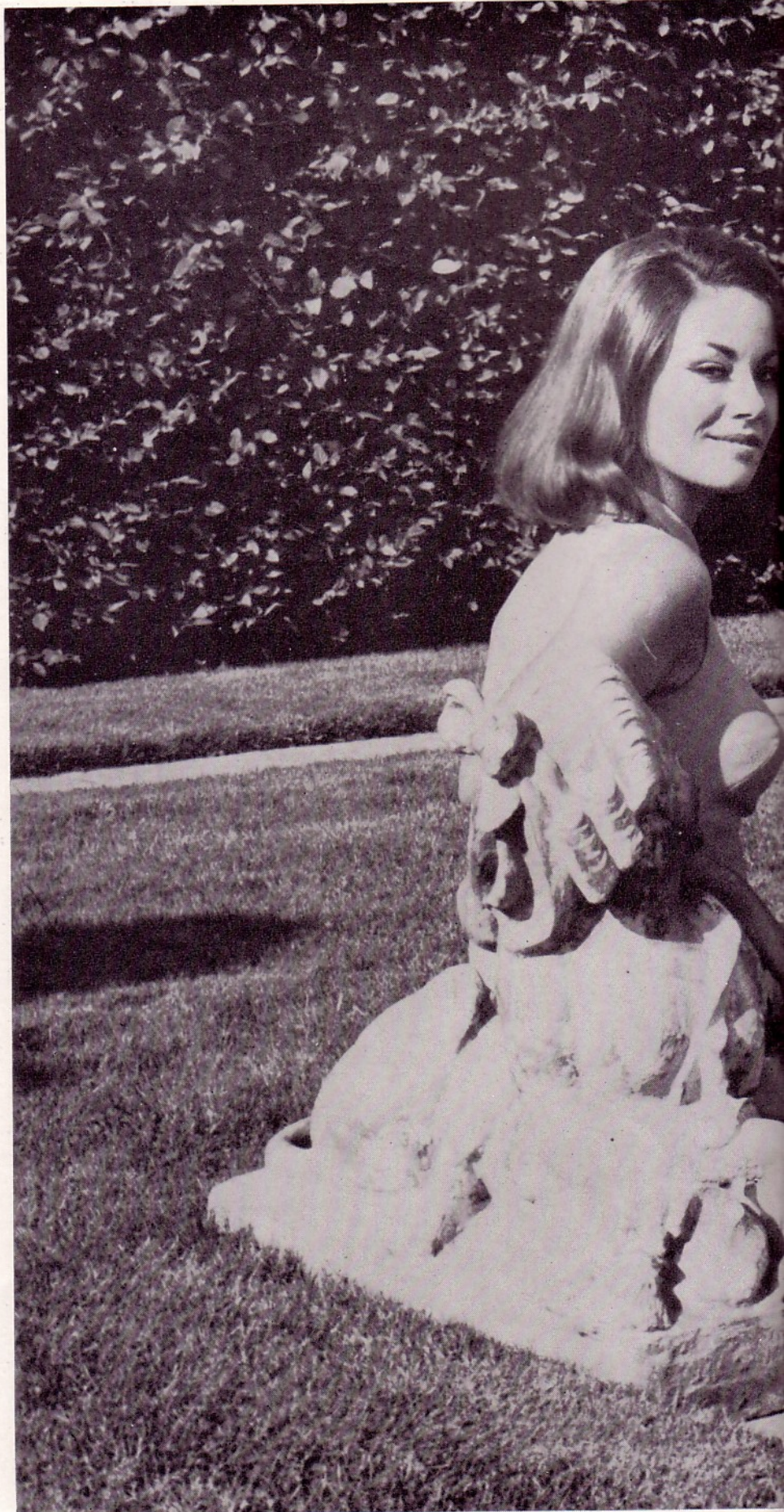


start there was a book of Simenon's, *L'Enterrement de Monsieur Bouvais*, the rights to which I bought with the profits from my short. One of the most unusual of Simenon's novels. It is the story of a man born of a family of rich spinning-mill owners who rebels, leaves for Paris, and joins in the anarchist movement at the beginning of the century. From one experience to another, he tries to realize himself, and his life becomes a constant flight, through the personalities, the successive identities, that he adopts until the end. And it is exactly with the end that the novel starts—a police inquiry in connection with a man living on a small private income, a certain Monsieur Bouvais, about whom nobody seems to know anything. I was very attached to this subject, but I could never bring it to the screen. An abortive project, I believe, must anyway give rise to another that will express it differently. Then I realized that my scenario based on it was only a pale pirating of *Monsieur Bouvais*. Happily I did not leave it at that, and when at last it was possible for me to remain a year without working—for meanwhile I had gone back to work as an assistant—I wrote something that was *La Vie à l'envers* (*Life upside down*).

How did that come to me? I have always had a passion for adventure films. But today, adventure is dead. The only adventure that was left for me to show was interior adventure. Thereby I met again the theme of *Monsieur Bouvais*, for he was a gentleman who tried to break the rhythm of everyday life, and who came to interior adventure, the only way out for him. But I had many temptations—could not my character have other adventures? Meet other women? Leave?—But if it came to leaving, why not for Kamtchatka? No, that did not work. It did not go with the logic of the character, I had to lock myself in, with him, in the subject.

CAHIERS—Did you draw ideas from certain external circumstances?

JESSUA—There is something in which I believe very strongly—the ideas that are in the air and by which one cannot help but be influenced. Certain themes, certain modes of expression.—And that is a good thing. One must not refuse them. And one must not abandon oneself to this current either, but to rebel against it would lead to nothing. Let us take Picasso, for example. He has assumed every fashion. Through realism, collages, negro art, cubism, and so on, he has reflected all the currents of expression of his time. He recreated them, of course, but he had first accepted them. I believe that we are all more or less in that state. At the same time, one must isolate oneself a little. Thus, I think that one ought not go too much to the cinema, if one wants to do something really personal. One undergoes quite enough influences already,



Alain Jessua: *Jeu de Massacre*, Claudine Auger, Jean-Pierre Cassel.



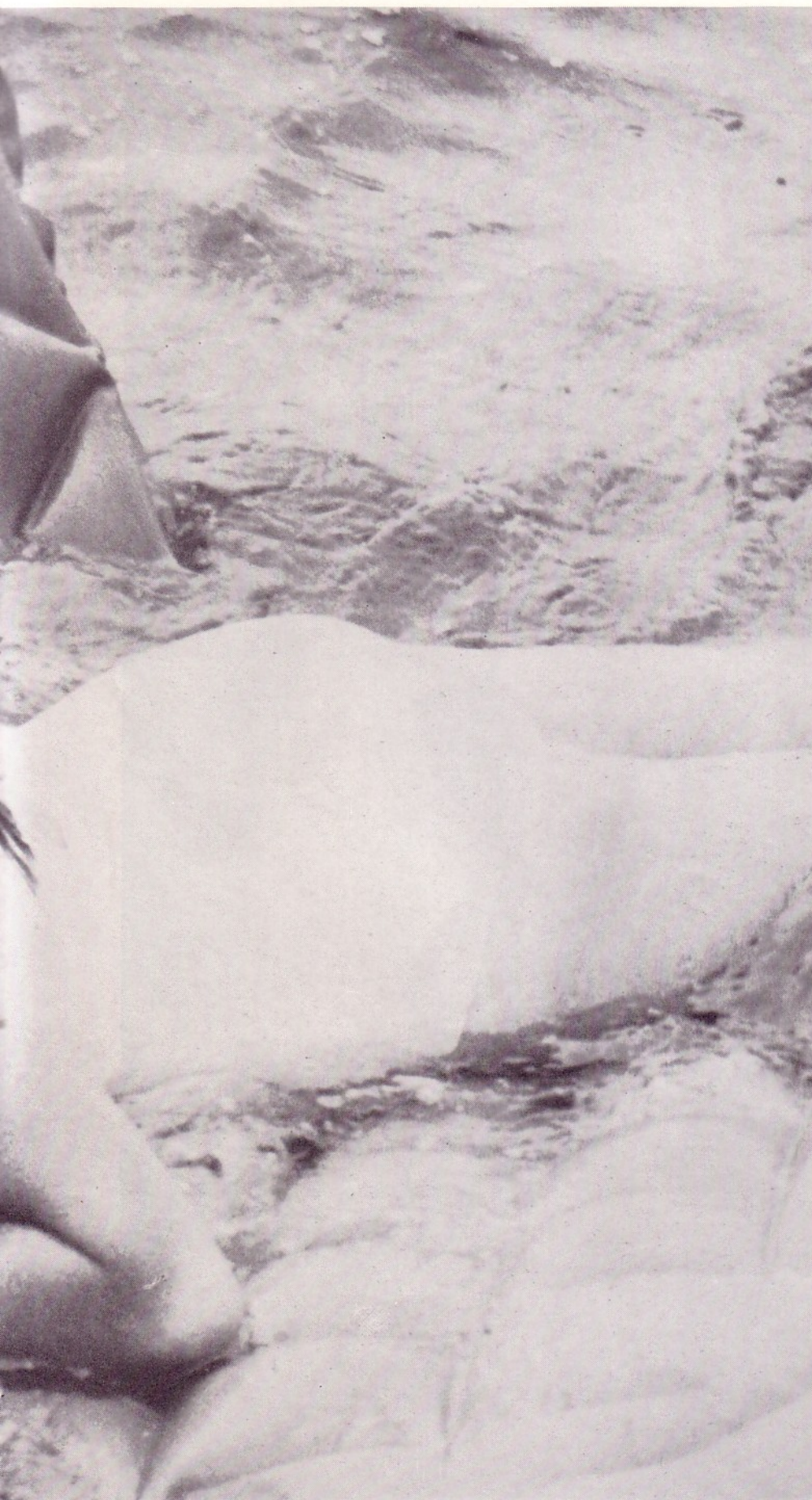






Allain Jessua: *Jou de massacre*, Claudine Auger.





with the press, books, radio, television, to have no need to receive the cinematographic current besides.

CAHIERS—But the person who is easily influenced will be influenced anyway, and the person who is not, can perfectly well go four times a day to the cinema...

JESSUA—I disagree. Who is the youngster who, making verse, after having read *Le Cid*, will not pirate *Le Cid*?

CAHIERS—There is the child who will pirate *Le Cid*, and the child to whom *Le Cid* will open other horizons. . . That is a matter of each person's freedom. There is one who, seeing Welles, will say I want to make a film like Welles, and another who will say I want to make films. . .

JESSUA—Perhaps we are both right. But if I tend just now to speak as I do, that is perhaps because, when one is writing a scenario, one does not so much want to go to the cinema. If you are working on a certain theme, a certain problem, and you happen upon exactly the same thing, filmed by another person, there is a risk that the coincidence will paralyze you. And that is rather what I wanted to say a little while ago—at the moment when one is struggling with one's material, the influence of cinema can be harmful. But I do not make that a general rule. And I do like to go to the cinema—for the pleasure of going to the cinema. A little like an ordinary spectator.

CAHIERS—To go as a spectator—that should be the ideal of the critic.

JESSUA—Yes, for the critic who goes to the films to do his chore—that should in fact be the ideal—to find again that kind of purity of vision, of naivete, of the ordinary spectator.

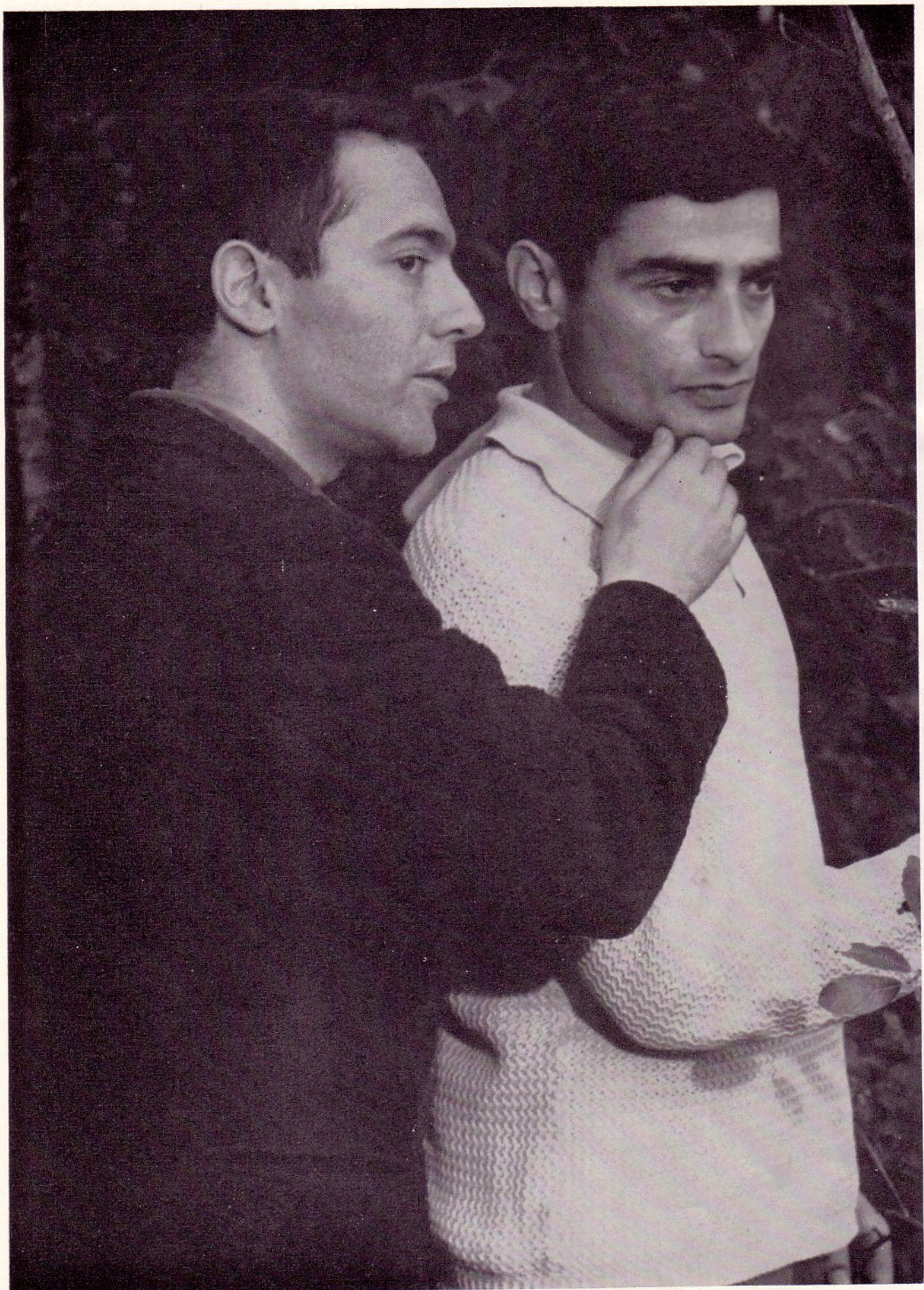
CAHIERS—What do you like in cinema at present?

JESSUA—For me, cinema is Chaplin. He symbolizes the very function of cinema. A function artistic and popular at the same time. And that is the dramatic question at present—how can one please everyone while going to the depth of oneself? But I am going to finish my answer—I like Bresson's films enormously, I like Jerry Lewis very much, Bergman very much, I like very much certain films of Godard's, I like 8½ enormously.

CAHIERS—It is a film that directors like . . .

JESSUA—To my mind it is a very great film. And *Juliet of the Spirits* is an important film. Why?—Oh Lord, I do not think about cinema so deeply. What am I looking for in it?—At the time when I went almost to the point of saying that cinema was not an art, I wanted mostly to say something clever. It is obvious that it is an art. But perhaps I will make myself understood if I say that what I do not believe in is the entity "the Cinema." And if your interview with Eric Rohmer interested





Alain Jessua directing *La Vie à l'envers*, Charles Denner.



me so much, that is because I found in it certain things exactly...

Perhaps I do not have a logically constructed vision of cinema; it is an art that relates to so many disciplines and different techniques.—But if I have my back to the wall, no doubt I will come to say that what I am looking for in cinema is creators who have their own vision of the world. That is the important thing. So there is that vision of the world, conveyed in cinema—in a certain cinema, but there is no "the Cinema." Minnelli for example—I will go to see his films if they entertain me—let us say for the story, for the charm, and I will like that, because I am a good spectator, but I will not go to it for the technique (I do not think about it a single moment, from the time that the film interests me), and especially not, absolutely not, for the vision of the world, for I wonder really where it could be. No doubt one could find it, by splitting hairs, one can find everything, and prove everything, but that becomes a kind of esthetic game that scarcely excites me. In short, with the cinéastes, whom I have named, there is a vision of the world. There is one with Jerry Lewis. As there is one with all the great comics. It may seem strange to say so when one has made *La Vie à l'envers*, but what excites me is the comic cinema. Now all the great comic films (with very few exceptions), the films of Chaplin, Keaton, Lewis are actor's films. And the man who can act his own films represents to me the total cinéaste. At the time when Jerry Lewis was an interpreter only, no doubt he was not a total cinéaste, but he was already *auteur* of the film. For a film of Tashlin's with Lewis was already a film of Lewis', and it was from him, not from the director, that the vision of the world came. The drama of the director who wants to make a comic film? One day he comes upon a character who excites him, but that character swallows him up... What I would want would be some day to succeed in making a comic film, while doing without this intensive presence of the actor.

CAHIERS—You alluded above to the interview with Rohmer. In what way did that interest you?

JESSUA—I must take up again a little of what I said a short time ago. Why have I come to the comic cinema starting from this idea of the vision of the world? That is because people like Fellini, Bresson, Bergman, Godard, and even Welles, if they had not had the cinema to express themselves, would have expressed themselves in any case, I am certain of that. While the Chaplins, the Keatons, the Linders, the Lewises are the only ones who could express themselves *only by cinema*. They make total cinema. Now what I make, what the others make, is not that. So there is no way to get out of that (and here I rejoin Rohmer, for I think that he is

entirely right)—it is very attractive when one directs a film to take cinema as one's object, but it is a mistake.

For when a cinéaste expresses himself, what he expresses is a vision of the world. So what matters is not a question of form; it is one's vision of the world, and that is what one must clarify in proportion as one grows older. And to clarify it, means to go to the depths of oneself, in relation to that expression of the world that matters to you. One thing that affronts me is the passion for cinema as a form of expression, as one sees it in certain films. The result is a diminution, a thinning, of the expression even of the chosen theme. So you can see in what sense the interview with Rohmer interested me.

CAHIERS—Your second film must indeed have some relation to the first, be it only on mythomania.

JESSUA—I do not want to brood too much over the relationships. Starting from the moment when one starts studying one's navel, all is lost. In my first version of the film, I wanted moreover to go to the antipodes of *La Vie à l'envers*. But that was another mistake, for in the final accounting, I had come to something that no longer concerned me. To sum up, one must not ask oneself questions of this kind at all. One must only ask oneself questions that are connected with the subject that one has in hand, and that one must treat in the way that one feels best. That said, yes, no doubt there are relationships. Let us say the theme of escape. That is to say—how to succeed in accepting one's life as it is—or in rejecting it—and how to express oneself. And it is very possible that whatever I do later on, even if I adapt a novel, the theme about which I film will be that of escape.

The story of *Jeu de massacre* is a kind of swindle by dreams. One man makes another dream, and he profits by it. The difference from *La Vie à l'envers* is that I wanted especially to tell a story. Not a suspense story but almost, not romantic but almost.

And in this story, I used the present day problem of intoxication by audiovisual means, all the kind of mythology in which one is immersed at present—James Bond, the comic strip, advertising. It is partly that hold on people that symbolizes my swindle, for there is already swindling in this way of working on opinion.

CAHIERS—Have you thought about your third film?

JESSUA—No. There are, of course, films that one dreams of making. But these are films that one can not make until much later. Cinema is the present day, too, it is the themes that assert themselves as the days pass, and that come to one from outside or from within. In the end, one must live one's life through the cinema. So I cannot say that after this film I will make pre-

cisely such-and-such a thing. At the same time, I know exactly the film of which I dream, but no doubt I am still too young to make it. I will have to wait four or five years. It is a film on anarchists.

CAHIERS—On anarchists, as members of an anarchist society, or on the anarchist spirit?

JESSUA—On the anarchist spirit, which is in a way the spirit of escape, too.

CAHIERS—That makes one think of the banning to minors of *Pierrot le fou*. Moral anarchism, or something of the sort. That was the reason... The other great anarchist, Céline.

JESSUA—Yes, absolutely. But in our days, what are most anarchists? Where are they? Gangsters? They do their grind or not. If they do, they are jobholders. Artists? No doubt they are concerned with preserving their freedom, in the end just what is necessary, but they are—we are—bourgeois. That is why the film on anarchists, for me, passes through the reconstruction of a period.

CAHIERS—Then the film will treat anarchism before the first world war...

JESSUA—Yes. And that was the golden age of anarchism. And that anarchism went very far. Down to the Spanish Civil War, the last great expression, the last great anarchist achievement. Moreover that would be another way to treat anarchism; it would be enough to explore completely one episode, even very slight, of the Spanish war. Only then, one would get oneself abused by all the press.

CAHIERS—Yes; the conformity of the Left has given rise to a new race of orthodox thinkers—

JESSUA—And there is the conformity of the right. And of the center—with Lecanuet.

CAHIERS—Yet the conformity of the right is dead. And that of the center actually presents itself as conformity. That is not dangerous. It is even honest.

JESSUA—What is terrible, is to think that the worst enemies of the anarchists, during the Spanish war, were the communists.

CAHIERS—George Orwell, who belonged to the POUM, saw a great many things in that connection. Afterwards, he was to write 1984...

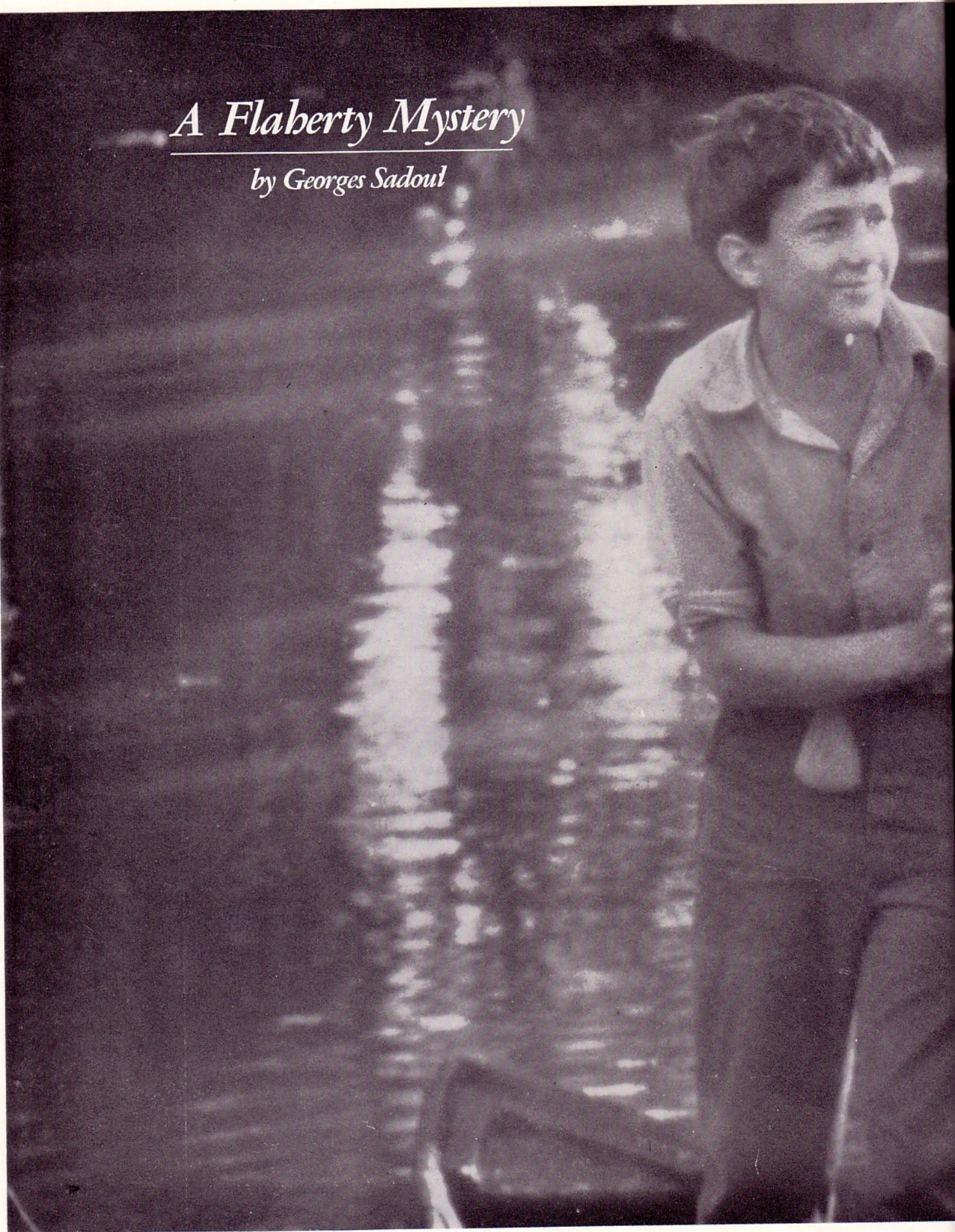
JESSUA—That was frightful; they got themselves liquidated, ripped open, notably at Barcelona. The anarchists had suppressed the employers and enterprises managed themselves. The communists went to the point of reinstalling the employers. Anything was better than the anarchists. They got themselves treated as idealists, as utopians.—Yet they had at least the wisdom of having an empirical point of view on politics. They said, one will indeed see what that will lead to—

(Conversation taped by Michel Delahaye)



# *A Flaherty Mystery*

*by Georges Sadoul*







After rendering homage to Joris Ivens and Alberto Cavalcanti, the Festival of Leipzig (R.D.A.) honored the great American documentary film maker, Robert Flaherty, who died in 1952. Frances Flaherty, his widow and for thirty years his close collaborator, presented for the first time in Europe, the *Studies for Louisiana Story*. She presented this fascinating film at the Cinematheque.

I first saw the documentary film, *Louisiana Story*, which has become a great classic, in 1949 at the Festival of Knokke le Zoute. I had the honor there of meeting for the first time Robert Flaherty—a man of genius. I do not like to put down lists of honored films and film makers, but if a list of the greatest directors of the world was asked of me, I would certainly put down Flaherty alongside of Eisenstein, Vigo, Griffith, Dovjenko, Vertov, Murnau and Chaplin—If I may cite a living genius along with deceased ones.

I was so impressed upon meeting a creator of his value that I forgot all my English and did not dare interview him. At breakfast one day at the Festival, I was placed near him, and I found just the few words necessary to tell him: "It's wonderful to be a film historian. Because film art has not existed for more than fifty-five years, I have the opportunity to meet you. If I were a plain historian, I should never have met with King Arthur, Confucius, or Abraham Lincoln."

Shortly after our meeting I put down some notes. I scribbled a half page while on a train that took me to Paris, crossing the beautiful Flemish landscapes from which Brueghel and Rubens had come. By chance, I found this old scrap of paper upon which I had written: "Robert Flaherty, over sixty years of age, has a very pink face. He is a bit bald and has long hair on the back of his neck which is very white. He is a strong-looking man. His physique resembles that of Louis Lumiere. His large face radiates goodness and roughness. His eyes are very blue, small, and reveal generosity and goodness. His expression is one of exceptional keenness. There is something about him that makes me think of Benjamin Franklin. In any case, he strikes me like a seventeenth-century man.

"He has an ardent taste for good wine, good food, and the beautiful women who walk through the rooms of the Le Reserve Albert Plage. (This hotel built in the style of the sets of *Carnival in Flanders*, is constructed on the outskirts of the town.) He smokes a great deal; he is *gauche* like Charles Chaplin. He seems to be in perfect health. In the fullest meaning of the ancient and present-day expression, he embodies, 'the honest man.' He breathes good will and generosity."

My notes stop there. I did not take

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Robert Flaherty: *Louisiana Story*.







any more from our other meetings. He died in the United States on July 11, 1951. There our encounter ended until this winter when in Paris, I was able to meet his thought and work again by way of Frances Flaherty.

She seems to have passed seventy and is full of remarkable vitality. After her long life, her face and characteristics resemble those of her husband. Her expression also is dominated by kindness, friendliness, energy, love for men; she also has a critical spirit. Before the screening of the study films began, she told me, "This film is the result of miracles. The first one took place immediately after the war when a large petroleum company agreed to finance *Louisiana Story* and invited Bob Flaherty to direct it in Louisiana and take all the time he wished to make the film. He was engaged under generous working conditions, so that he was able to shoot much more film than he had to use for the completed film.

"These rushes or out-takes were saved at the farm which he had bought where he spent the last years of his life. I didn't know what to do with these rushes until an American editor, Nick Cominos, born in Greece, asked me to get in touch with him. I did and he came to the farm in Vermont where he assembled all of the footage. He was guided by the editing plan which had been saved and used by Bob Flaherty for the finished film. Nick Cominos arranged all the shots according to the order the acceptable ones had been placed in the film. When he finished this job he had put together footage which ran for fifteen hours. This means that my husband had shot fifteen more times film than was used in the finished film.

"But to make these studies known, it was necessary to make prints. We had no money to pay a laboratory to do this. Then a second miracle took place. George Amberg, a professor at the University of Minnesota, saw the film. His enthusiasm for it resulted in his locating the necessary money to make 35 and 16mm prints. This was achieved by the generosity of his university and the Hill Foundation which was created by the heirs of a millionaire.

"The cameraman for *Louisiana Story* was Richard Leacock, who is known for his fine television films. But a large portion of the shooting was done by Bob Flaherty, himself. He was always at the side of Leacock selecting the subjects and compositions, during the shooting, unless he was doing the shooting himself. By way of these study films, one can now see, shot after shot, as the director saw in approaching his subject matter—how he chose details and why he disregarded such and such takes. You will see what he saw for the first time and what finally resulted."

"But his last film occupies a special place in his total work. It is different from *Nanook*, *Moana*, and *Man of Aran*. Before undertaking the directing of the film, my husband investigated a number of places in Louisiana. Later he made a synthesis of locales." They helped him to shape the story. Story is the essence of the film title. He made a story about Louisiana. His story relates what he had seen in his investigation of possible locations for the film.

"When he made *Nanook*, Robert Flaherty was still an explorer, and this first early experience of his enabled him to understand that what was of most importance was to discover men and their circumstances. To discover is the essence of Zen; if one understands the essential

thing, then one can discover the general feelings of things.

"Once Eisenstein said that editing was a similar act to that of haiku—Japanese poems made up by a number of set and limited syllables. Well, you will soon be looking at the *Studies for Louisiana Story*, and you will find the exact spirit and images of three famous haikus."

Mrs. Flaherty told me these three poems in English, and I noted them, but my notes are now so incomprehensible, that I am not capable of transcribing them correctly. I know only that it is a matter of ripples, wind on water, a breeze shown by the movement of the pine trees, the concentric waves that form around the tracks of the heron in his course through the marsh.

I find in my notebook a phrase by way of which Frances Flaherty summarizes her essential purpose in these studies and the art of the great, deceased director: "Poetry is discovery. Robert Flaherty was first an explorer. He spent his life as a cineaste discovering men and their environments. And that is why these films are borrowers of poetry."

The essential ideas of these statements I have translated rather loosely in order to explain this film that absorbed our attention so passionately for three hours. The first part of the *Studies* is particularly fascinating. It corresponds to seven or eight blocks of footage which is ended by the final sequence of the film, running perhaps only a total of four or five minutes. The theme is very simple. In the strange swamps, among the water lilies and the towering forests covered with lichens and tropical creepers, the fish, birds, crocodile and finally a little boy appears in a flat boat.

For each of these images used, Flah-



Opposite and this page, Robert Flaherty: *Louisiana Story*.



erty filmed perhaps twenty versions. They are all so beautiful, one wonders why some were eliminated. Simple in their perfection, they show reflections on water, and a giant water lily petal on which glean transparent drops of water.

It is in this acute vision of nature, this means of penetrating the essence of an environment through small details and in turn of the universe, that I find the spirit of Japanese art, such as I have experienced in the springtime. The similarity prompted me to ask Frances Flaherty, "Did this great cineaste know Japan well?" "No, he never put his foot on Japanese soil." This does not prevent the first part of his film from being an uninterrupted flow of haiku.

Another aspect of the film, too short to satisfy, fascinates in another way. One sees Flaherty direct a little boy or the workers like nonprofessional actors. Flaherty rigorously makes the boy repeat a gesture, an expression, or a bit of action ten times until he has obtained perfection from him.

One should be able to see the sixteen hours of the film that follow, as we have already seen at Cinematheque the seven or eight hours, following the same principle, of Eisenstein's studies for his Mexican film which was put together by Jay Leyda. He, too, assembled all the shots according to the episodes which were begun and begun again as many as twenty times.

Literary specialists scrutinize with good reason manuscripts and proofs of Balzac or Proust by way of which the corrections and erasures made reveal the creative process. By using x-ray methods, you can get down to the successive layers of paint, and thereby, penetrate under the surface to see the stages through which a painting evolved—from the very first sketches done on the canvas.

Acquaintance with the rushes is the way we can deepen our understanding of the work of the great cineaste. I have written that the work of Jay Leyda enables us to penetrate the mind of Eisenstein in the way that *The Mystery of Picasso* by Clouzot enables us to see how that great painter worked. These observations apply to *Studies for Louisiana Story* which is a sort of Flaherty mystery. The film enables us to see the swamps, forest, men, and their environment with the keen perception of his blue eyes. Justifiably, Robert Flaherty is called, "the father of the documentary film."

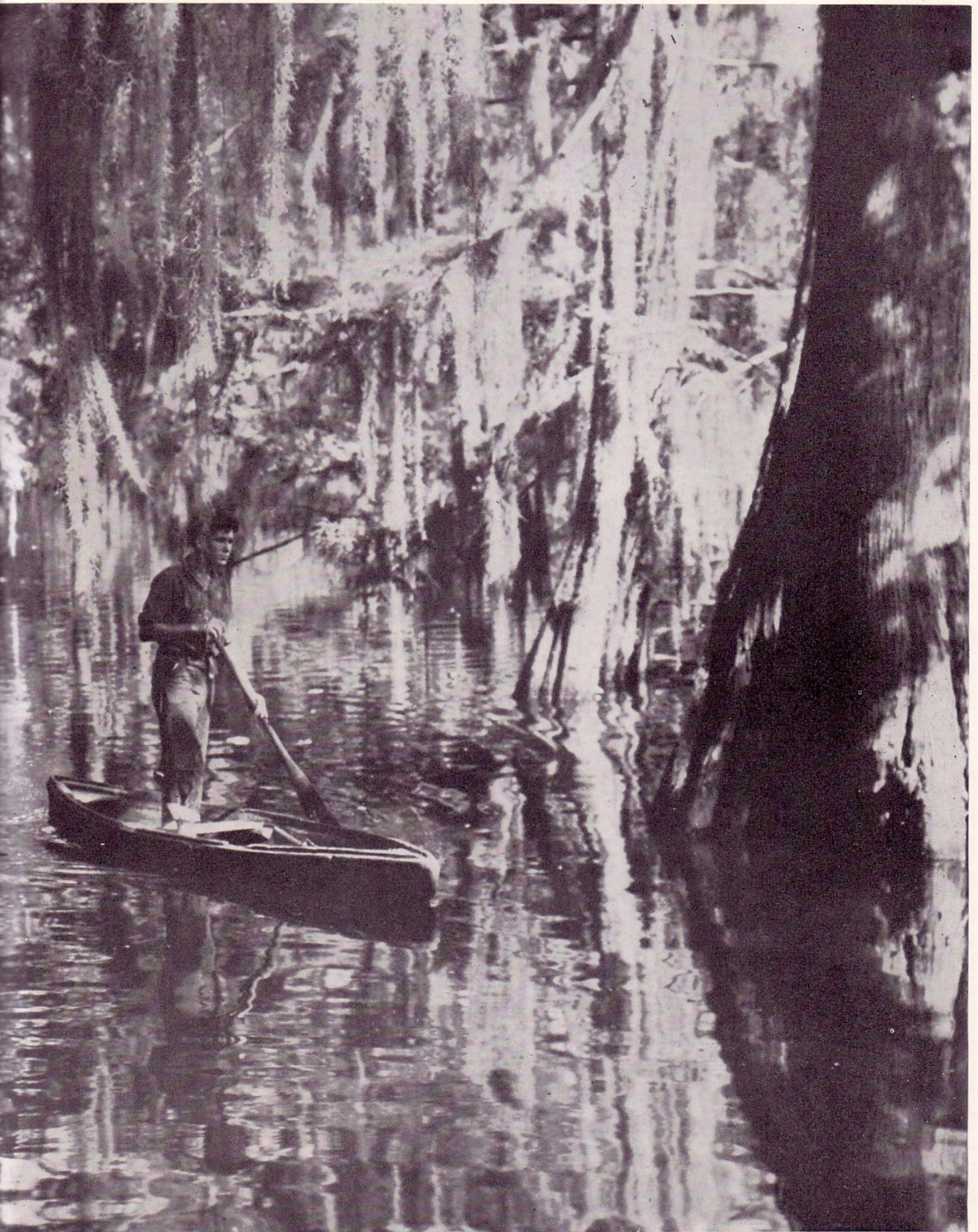
The *Studies for Louisiana Story* are so fascinating, so overwhelming, and so passionate that I would ask that the director of the Cinematheque and Frances Flaherty make the film available, at least the first part, for distribution. If the *Studies* are shown in ninety-minute blocks, I am persuaded that there is a large public that will support it, and it will make an exceptional success.

Translated by Robert Steele

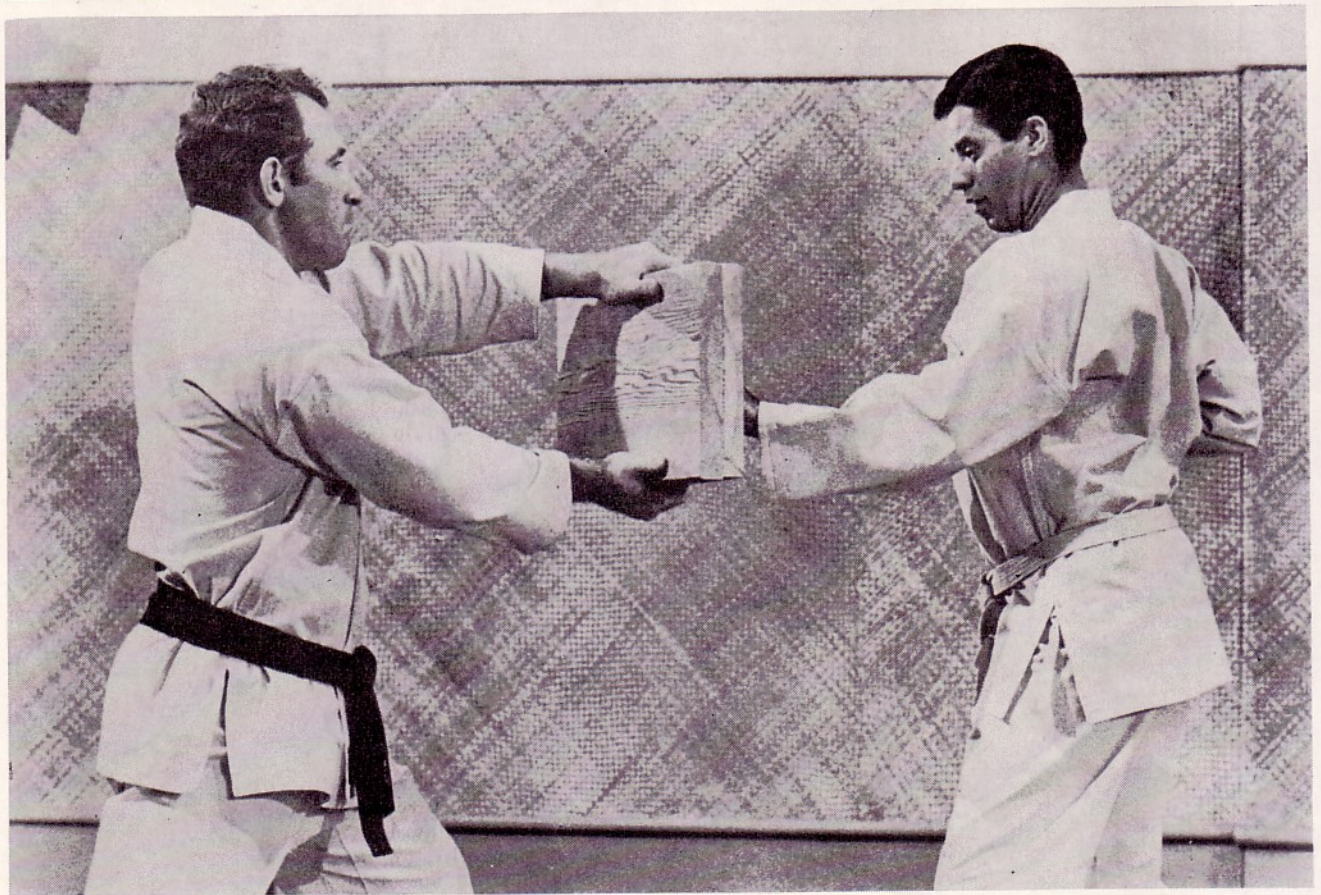


Robert Flaherty: *Louisiana Story*.













## *Cahiers Critiques*

1. ROBERT BRESSON: *Balthazar*, Anne Wiazemsky.
2. JERRY LEWIS: *Three on a Couch*, Jerry Lewis.
3. GILLES GROULX: *Cat in the Sack*, Claude Godbout, Groulx directing.



# 'My God, Wilt Thou Forsake Me?'

*Au Hasard Balhazar* . . . French film of Robert Bresson. *Scenario:* Robert Bresson. *Photography:* Chislain Cloquet. *Music:* Franz Schubert, Jean Wiener. *Decors:* Pierre Charbonnier. *Editor:* Raymond Lamy. *Sound:* Antoine Archimbaud, Jacques Carrère. *Assistants:* Jacques Kébadian, Sven Frostenson. *Cast:* Anne Wiazemsky (Marie), François Lafarge (Gérard), Philippe Asselin (the schoolmaster), Natalie Joyaut (Marie's mother), Walter Green (Jacques), J.-C. Guilbert (Arnold), François Sullerot (the baker), M.-C. Fremont (the baker's wife), Pierre Klossowsky (the grain merchant), Jean Remignard (the notary), Jacques Sorbets (the captain of the gendarmes) Tord Paag (Louis), Jean-Joël Barbier (the dean), Rémy Brozeck (Marcel), Mylène Weyergans (the nurse), Guy Brejac (the veterinarian), Sven Frostenson and Roger Fjellstrom (the young hoodlums.) *Producer:* Mag Bodard. *Producing Companies:* Argos-Films, Parc Film, Athos Films (Paris)—Svensk-Filmindustri, Institut Suédois du film (Stockholm), 1965. *Distributor:* Athos Films. *Length:* 1 hr. 30 min.

This is not "Prayer to go to Paradise with the donkeys." But who has been able really to take Bresson for a Francis Jammes? Since *Diary of a Country Priest*, the work of Robert Bresson has sown doubt to harvest faith, for not to dare to doubt — is that not to believe not enough? That doubt soon because becomes strength and not weakness, but the harvest is evaded; thank heaven, Bresson will never take up the sickle of a definitive message; there are too many tares in Bresson's field, and God himself cannot be certain of recognizing His own there, nor of considering the *auteur* of *Pickpocket* as one of them. Bresson's writing, formally singular, is more than ever in *Au hasard Balhazar* that of a plural work, writing that opens a poem's truth, a poem, one must say, without "ineffable poetry," without effusion, a geometer's poem, a parabola-and-parable poem. If one asks questions of this film—some seasons in Bresson's hell—the answer is the very one that Arthur Rimbaud gave in connection with his own *Saison en enfer*—"It says what it says, literally and in every sense."

Since *Country Priest*, Robert Bresson strikes always at the same point, under the same angle of vision. But it is not a matter of a point of departure style; that is conquered, and, vulnerable and fragile like every conquest, always put again in quest, as it is in this film, in which there is no appearance that is not refused.

Everything began with the *Diary*. Before that there were strangers, Cocteau, Père Bruckberger, and in the *mise en scène*, the old theatre for *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, the old cinema for *Les Anges du péché*. With the *Diary* Bresson begins, and it is by virtue of high treason, in making of the Bernanos novel an itinerary of dereliction. If God is dead, it is in the universe of Bresson and not in that of Bergman, and indeed it appears that that death does not move him. But as he refuses emotion in his aesthetics, it cannot be otherwise in his ethics. So I contradict myself, that is to say that the work pushes me to contradiction, or to conceal again its own contradictions. Enough has never been said of the importance of the repeated presence of the *diary* in the *Country Priest*, of its materiality, or that of the lines written by the young priest in his schoolboy's notebook, which a novel could not make one feel. It is to this diary that the young man gives himself, too, so to himself, and it is himself that he seeks, his own fulfillment, in his maladroit apostolate. The film is neither mystical nor Christian according to the norms. Never did one really feel in it, as sometimes with Rossellini, an impulse, an elevation of the soul to God, therefore a prayer. The search for a spirituality, yes yet everyone passes by at the side. The doctor professing atheism approaches a spirituality. The old priest professing faith is soundness of soul, therefore virtue according to Plato, conviction, experience, professional knowledge. All that is well and good from an earthly point of view and clearly Christian. Visibly, it does not satisfy Bresson. Much has been said of the spirituality of *A Man Escaped* and of *Pickpocket*. That was the period of the eyes' gaze. Then came his *Trial of Joan of Arc*, expected, inevitable. But one would seek there in vain an image of mystical love like that of Joan receiving the host in Dreyer.

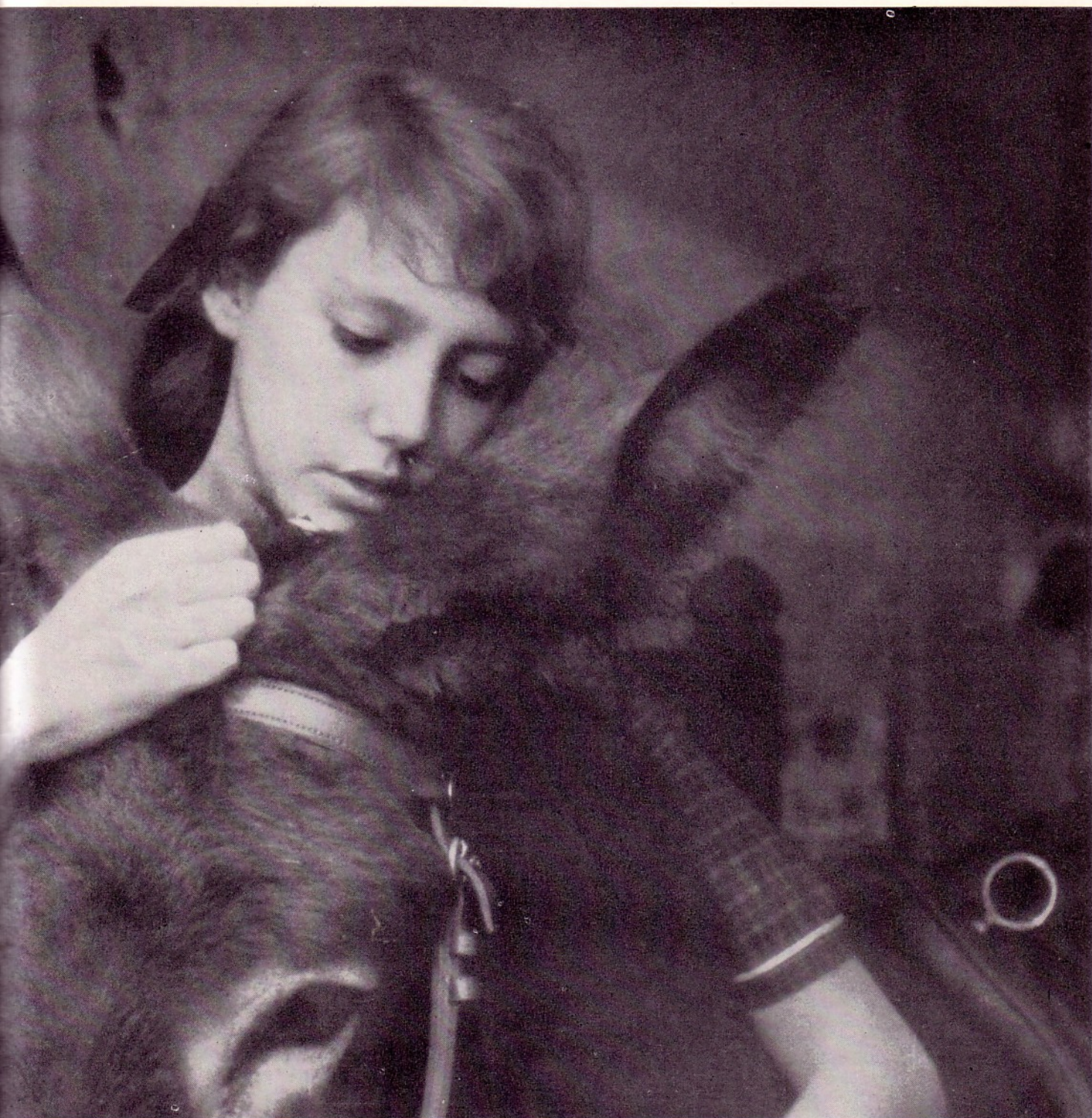
*The Trial of Joan* is entirely made on an object-text, and I have had the idea that that sublime text had evidently been written after the trial by a poet-clerk who was at the trial and who, according to the old medieval tradition, did not sign his work. But it is Bresson's film that made me think of that. His Joan is the least saintly of all the Joans, if one excepts obviously the Saint-Joan of that confounded Preminger. Spirituality, with Bresson, is not saintliness. So his film is made on an object—the text—and on faces immobilized once and for all in only one appearance, that of innocence or of guilt; a film made on four other material appearances—feet, bare in san-

dals or shod, wood, stone, iron.

Antonin Artaud, whose face was that of an exalted monk in the *Passion of Joan of Arc*, wrote, "Human skin, things, the drama of reality, that is what cinema plays with first. It exalts matter, makes it appear to us in its deep spirituality, in its relations with the spirit from which it is sprung." With Bresson, no exaltation, neither of the face nor of matter. There wood, stone, iron and faces are signs, but do not establish relationships of spirituality. And yet in







Robert Bresson: *Balthazar*, Anne Wiazemsky.

all those films, as in *Balthazar*, analogies with Christ, relationships with the Scriptures, never cease, but are more or less directly readable, for even in the *Diary*, in which these correspondences accumulate in the end with a kind of rage, they are neither established nor coordinated.

*Au hasard* *Balthazar* is a parable, and one does not translate a parable clearly. The donkey came among his own and his own received him not. At the start the little children wanted to come unto

him. But people did not too much suffer the little children. . . Balthazar exists, he sees and hears, he is witness and is silent. He sees and perhaps he delights. He sees life; if he "sees it truly," that is wisdom. "You make bubbles of silence in the desert of sounds." He has heard, one would say, only the silence, and he has obeyed, he has submitted, perhaps finding the roots of an obedience antonymous to faith. Balthazar does not make himself recognized; he is present in the world; people load him; people

beat him; a girl loves him, but not enough. He dies and redeems nothing.

Facing Balthazar, the film assembles figures; it does not unite them. Figures, signs, not characters. Individual signs but not individuals. No psychological singularity, but a plural conspicuous in each of its figures,—which is another road to attain the human. ". . . What road has been necessary for me to go even unto you." That of Bresson to go even unto man and perhaps even unto the Son of Man is absolutely not that



of abstraction or of disincarnation. Facing Balthazar, then, there are the wicked, robbers, and to give a sign, Bresson has them (among other crimes) spread oil on the road so that cars will skid; this is not gratuitous; it is imbecile wickedness. There is a girl, Marie, who will be called Madeleine later, but certainly without delaying too long. A girl "with the gaze of a lost child." Marie is the defiance after an impossible innocence, the desire for escape and then a first escape into sexuality. Bresson or the obsession with the flesh, with the sin of the flesh obsession and inhibition. One will meet Marie again in a tumbledown cottage, Marie naked, from the back. This nude figure is not chaste—the girl is not; it wants to be modest, and the girl wants to be. This nude is of a great beauty; it is very moving, very troubling, and it is immediately refused to us. Those who have stripped Marie and who run away throwing into the air the three or four pieces of her clothes are not even obvious. It is satisfied stupidity. "Me my remorse it was the ill-fated woman who remained on the pavement." . . . Marie is and will be the "reasonable victim," "an animal caught in the snares of lovers of beauty." Marie naked, victim and offering. But this victim is not innocent. "At that time, so as not to punish the guilty, people ill-treated girls; they even went to the point of cropping the girls' heads . . ." When people ill-treat donkeys or girls, it is always to spare the guilty. Marie with her dress torn . . . Marie "uncrowned." "A girl made for a bouquet and covered with black spat darkness." "And my mother the woman would be willing to coddle that ideal image of her misfortune on earth."

There are two men who come, uneasy, to the cottage where Marie crosses her arms over her naked breasts. A boy, a kind of eternal fiancé, lily in hand, profile of a saintly image. A man, Marie's father, whom Bresson has move as he has him speak, all of one piece. He is honor and probity in motion, pride too, unacknowledged, and that dignity into which the man has sewn himself as into a covering, once and for all, is detestable. One does not love him; moreover, one loves nobody; one does not love Balthazar either. Only Marie, but why?

Again there is an ambiguous vagabond, not simple enough in spirit to accede to beatitude, somewhat Barrabbas perhaps, as peeled and mangy as a donkey, dedicated to cast stones, to all the suspicions, to all the sins, of Israel—of which a fair share must be his own. There is an old-man-who-has-money, at whose house Marie is going to take refuge one night, and offer herself; why not—it is indifferent to her and she will be called Madeleine tomorrow, one must begin.

For the first time, in connection with

*Balthazar*, Robert Bresson has spoken of eroticism. He has used the word. People are surprised. Let us make no mistake. The word, in fact, is used, misused, abused, in our days. It is one of the custard pies of our time. The thing itself, cinema uses it . . . etc., eroticism of the fair, of the parade, eroticism of the stage, of proclamations, of clearance sales. . . . The ground blossoms luxuriantly with flowers that are not even poisonous, particularly not. They stink or they perfume, but they are not Apollinaire's "*Colchiques*."

It is for that reason that Bresson is right to speak about eroticism in connection with his film, for he speaks about it in the spirit of Georges Bataille. Between the prohibition and the transgression that does not abolish the prohibition is the place of an eroticism, bringing up again the question of the human being. There is a moral value, whether it be value of anxiety or value of accomplishment, value rejected or denied, exaltation or tabu, value inseparable from religiosity, whatever be the dialogue that is set up between Eros and religion, between prohibition and transgression. Bresson's film is at the most secret, the most obscure depth of this situation. "Eroticism and religion," Georges Bataille said, "are closed to us to the extent that we do not situate them resolutely on the plane of interior experience." That is *Balthazar*, in part at the very least; it is all of Bresson. On eroticism, he sketches a restrained, guarded, haughty reflection, which ventures beyond the facade. Until then we had had only descriptions.

Now, as it is written in the testament of Balthazar as Merleau-Ponty, then Jean-Luc Godard, transcribed it, Bresson knows what he says and renounces descriptions. He says that there is no innocence. Balthazar, loaded with the sins of the world and his own secret sins, is not innocent. Innocence is not a matter of course, even for Balthazar. A God or a donkey Balthazar, still less than men, can be innocent. There are none without guilt. Who will cast the first stone? The most guilty, as always, before stoning one another. It is only in a state of guilt that one casts stones. Marie's father is a proud Pharisee. He brings a lawsuit "to have justice done him; he "attacks" legally, as good people say, so he accuses, he casts the stone. His own guilts move him thus. He does not pardon; he does not love. "Thou shalt not judge. Thou shalt not kill. Love one another." Bunuel also describes, but differently, the absolute impossibility of being a Christian, or, I do not know, the impossibility of being an absolute Christian.

Bresson's meditation is traversed, more or less without his knowledge, by a Nietzschean critical vision of resentment, and by a Freudian critical vision of human distress—which, according to Paul Ricoeur, nourishes all modern meditation on the Christian faith. To

which is added, for Bresson, that enlivening irony, that restrained humor, by which he assures, if not the salvation of his soul, at the very least that of his art. A formidable irony, which is not at all that of certainties, any more than it is that of skepticism, an irony that exerts itself on his subject, on his characters, on his writing. Yet it is not a matter of distance, very simply a way of staying slightly above his creation, of standing on tiptoe in order to see better, that is all. And that to the end, to the moment when Balthazar lies down. Balthazar dies . . . or rather it is "total and gentle renunciation," it is Pascalian. There it is—Bresson is Pascalian, therefore a man of contention, one of those deviationists always in quest of a straight line, outside the straight path of the Jesuits. So it is seduction, perversion. Like Hitchcock, Bresson is fundamentally perverse, or, if you prefer the expression of an encyclical, the films of Bresson are "intrinsically perverse."

They do not breathe virtue. Virtue is "a health, a beauty, a well-being of the soul." But that definition of virtue is not Christian, it is Platonic; yet it speaks the virtue and the saintliness of Francis of Assisi. Balthazar is far from that; he is sorrowful, his soul is sorrowful even unto death. Besides, many Christians, and those who, following in their wake, profess the same morality—polluted morality, far from its evangelical source,—have called "virtue" only what Marie was not slow in losing, and they forget or degrade the major, the theological, virtues. *Balthazar*, like all the work of Bresson, is a film subtly unhealthy, as there is something unhealthy in all religiosity, whereby precisely it can be fascinating.

One must indeed recognize that the best defenders of spiritual values are often misbelievers. To be a misbeliever is after all only to believe amiss, that is to say, to believe differently, or to believe something else. Others would speak of heresy. . . . Let us doubt no longer after *Balthazar*; Bresson is a heretic.

Bresson is a sum of refusals, of which the final term is the refusal of culture. The famed definition of culture by Edouard Herriot is radically false. Godard has forgotten nothing; he is quite cultivated. Bresson has paid all his debts; he owes nothing any longer to anyone; he has forgotten everything; he is no longer cultivated. A gardener with very little of the *Candide* naivete, he cultivates his own garden. A Godard film is a work of conversation, of relationships with people; the Bresson film rises, detached. Bresson has cut all the moorings; his film rises because it is lighter than air, than the accustomed air of cinema. Godard touches us, Bresson uproots us. The first moves us, in both senses of the word; the second transports us. But one does not know where.

His confirmed break with the Aristot-





Jerry Lewis: *Three on a Couch*, Jerry Lewis.

lean Probable, therefore with the probability of the crowd, can be a means of writing to make himself read by the greatest number. For none of his refusals emerges on a negation; the refusals that his writing manifests lead to the most real construction. This is not the admirable starkness of Fritz Lang who reduces *mise en scène* algebraically to its "simplest" and strongest expression, Bresson erases completely the backdrop-blackboard of *mise en scène*. He sets aside the blackboard itself. As for the Duncie, the blackboard becomes wood again, under the hoots of the good students, the prize pupils of direction. Lang strips bare; Bresson reclothes, with a monk's robe, with an alb. Pure writing. . . Writing that is a solitude and a morality, a pride too. "One must be proud to make films." A writing that finds again the hairshirt

and the scourge of the poets of the thirteenth century, those who called their poems *dit*s, tellings. *Balthazar* is a *dit*, and its writing is a liberation, a blooming, a breath. In the *dit* of *Balthazar* there is no longer the slightest trace of that "Phoebus" that teems in artistico-realistic writing in the novel, in the theatre, and in cinema. Bresson has become scripturally the gentleman according to La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld. There remains for him only to keep himself free with respect to this writing that he has conquered, which, tightening in on itself and coiling around the one who masters it, could become a bond and hold its master captive. One has little reason for disquiet with Bresson; he has just affirmed more admirably than ever a freedom dearly won that will not yield.

—René GILSON

## Le Médecin Malgré Lui

*Three on a Couch*, American film in technicolor of Jerry Lewis. *Scenario*: Bob Ross and Samuel A. Taylor, from a story of Arne Sultan and Marvin Worth. *Photography*: W. Wallace Kelley. *Camerman*: Dick Johnson. *Music*: Louis Brown. *Song*: "A Now and a Later Love," sung by Danny Costello. *Decors*: Leo K. Kuter and Howard Bristol. *Assistant*: Rusty Meek. *Cast*: Jerry Lewis (Christopher Pride, and Warren, Ringo, Rutherford Heather) Janet Leigh (Doctor Elizabeth Accord), James Best (Doctor Ben Mizer), Mary Ann Mobley (Susan Manning) Gila Golan (Anna Jaque), Leslie Parrish (Mary Lou Mauve), Kathleen Freeman (Murphy), Jill Donohue, Buddy Lester (the drunk), Renzo Cesana (the ambassador), Fritz Feld (attaché at the embassy). *Producers*: Howard Pine and Joe S. Stabile. *Production Company*: Jerry Lewis, 1965. *Distributor*: Columbia Pictures. *Length*: 2 hrs.

There are fewer mysteries and unsettled zones at the frontier of the spectacle and of the dream (those two paranormal universes whose conjunction forms perhaps the normal one) than in *The Patsy*; fewer lures and tracks offered to Jerry Lewis' inquiry, always recommenced, on himself, the limits of his powers and the other side of his magic, than in *The Family Jewels*; it is under the complementary signs of explanation and of frustration that *Three on a Couch* places itself. To the double multiplicity of questions (*The Patsy*) and of possible responses (*The Family Jewels*), this third panel of a true comic trilogy, the first of its genre, replies only by an explanation, necessarily frustrating in that perhaps the thousand questions of *The Patsy* did not call for one, and that in any case the thousand responses (eight, exactly) of *The Family Jewels* could not be brought together into only one. *Three on a Couch* presents itself as the last and synthetic phase of a dialectical operation whose first two terms could appear contradictory and unresolved — *The Patsy*, bitter interrogation on the nature of comic entertainment; *The Family Jewels*, disenchanted exploration of the very powers and duties of the entertainer towards his privileged spectator. In fact, everything happens for Jerry Lewis as if, after the double and sublime assertion of himself, in *Ladies' Man* as inspired manipulator, through the most awkward and



wretchedest of his clown characters, of the power of the dream in time and space, and in *The Nutty Professor* as demiurge of his own nature, endowed with the divine power of metamorphosing himself, of creating himself or destroying himself — everything happens to Jerry Lewis as if, having come with these two films to the farthest point of his character, he had undertaken to start again from zero (*The Patsy* — narrative of the birth and education of an actor), then to go through and to try various incarnations that offered themselves to him (*The Family Jewels* — systematic experimentation with the most different, the most invasive personalities, and their rejection in favor of the most discreet of appearances, the most banal of masks), and that since then he has opted knowingly for this very banality in *Three on a Couch*, a film in which, for the first time, the hero, the principal character is a perfectly adapted (even over-adapted) adult, lucid, conscious of his ends and of his means, being for himself his own patients and his own doctor (his quadruple playing constituting the most efficacious of psychodramatic cures); in short, normal in everything, and like Jerry Lewis himself if he were not Jerry Lewis.

That is because the hero of Lewis' films since *The Patsy* is no longer the actor (spoilsport of the *mise en scène* in *Ladies' Man*, maladroit apprentice-director in *The Nutty Professor*), but the director Jerry Lewis himself, playing cat and mouse with Jerry Lewis actor in *The Patsy*, drawing demonically, out of the shadow in which he stands (his character of Willard, occult *metteur en scène* of the adventures of a little girl who is the ideal spectator, that is to say pure, and menaced by the spectacle), the strings of all the puppets in *The Family Jewels*, at last openly director of his three characters in *Three on a Couch*.

It is not to yield to some delirium of critical interpretation to see in these three films (or in this triple film), — just as, with *The Nutty Professor*, a thematic of the actor had replaced the thematic of the clown (the earlier films of Lewis), a thematic of the director substituting itself for that of the actor — a natural evolution, not only of the character of Jerry Lewis in his films, but, in parallel of his style of direction. Claude Ollier remarked more than a year ago that Jerry Lewis was one of the few creators of forms who have appeared recently in American cinema, and proposed undertaking a true semiological study of these forms, beginning with Lewis' conception of the gag. Let us indicate some reference points for this investigation.

Since *The Patsy*, like Lewis' hero, Lewis' comedy has changed its nature and function. In *Ladies' Man* or *The Nutty Professor*, the gag had a double and symmetrical appurtenance — to the mechanical order and to that of dreams.

On one hand the series of gestures — grimaces, falls, breaks of equilibrium (inheritance from the classical comedy), on the other the series of signs that are not gestures — images, languages, sonorous and visual gags, upsettings of space and time, plays of mirrors and of colors, and so on, this second series of comic occurrences having as its principle no longer that of misleading (errors of judgment that disturb the surrounding order), but that of perverting systematically — the perversion of signs, the making them sick — sickness whose symptoms are hallucinations, mirages, disturbances of perception and of visual and phonic expression (one remembers *faux pas* in the dream of *Ladies' Man*, verbal crossings and overlappings in *The Nutty Professor*).

That was the time of a laughter spacious at the same time by its freedom (no physical or metaphysical curb to Lewis' invention) and by its power to set free (the openings that it pierced in the wall of a dream). But the space of laughter narrowed from *The Patsy* — a rarefaction of actors' makeups, an awkwardness in the second degree of the person learning the actor's work. At the same time, a greater refinement of the gags, which make themselves almost abstract and avow their intellectualism (the pure absurdity of the changes of costume of the aviator in *The Family Jewels*), their effects rising less from their realization itself than from their probability or from their fatality, from their foreseen and dreaded imminence or from their delay, — from a certain form of suspense in which the idea of the gag takes precedence over its realization and is enough to set it in action.

But, especially, since *The Patsy* (and perfectly in *Three on a Couch*), these gags (less gags rather, than sudden fits of burlesque, chilling surges of a comedy on the tight rope) organize themselves one in relation to another, order themselves according to a scale of meanings, with their gradations and their variations; — integrate themselves into the very structure of the film, fixing and bearing the web of the story, constituting the means of progression of the narration. The very nature of the gag is changed; gags are less and less chance events that come to interrupt or to break the course of the story, to dissipate it and in the end to destroy it (as with Mack Sennett) or to comment on it (as in *Our Hospitality* of Keaton). They are now the chance events of the story itself (which is, of course, never simple and linear), they are less and less on the margin of the dramatic progression, more and more at the heart of the movement of the film. All the gags of *The Patsy* have this narrative function. With *The Family Jewels* they acquired a supplementary dimension that one could call metaphysical — that of introducing a doubt, an interrogation, bearing on the very existence of the characters and not only

on their "worth." In *Three on a Couch*, the gag, besides that double narrative and dubitative function, takes upon itself a third dimension, that of nostalgia (that is, sickness, complexes to be exorcised) — a critical, therapeutic function. In giving the comedy to his wife's three patients, the hero (this "normal" man, Jerry Lewis, as in himself he must be, charming, sincere, caught between love and duty), claims nothing less than to cure them (that is, to allow them access to adult age), to constrain them, by gentleness, then by violence, to leave their contemplative state; what are these three girls, if not three spectators, each fixed on an image, until they can see the lies of the images, their illusory power?

It is Lewis himself exorcising his triple phantom (the cowboy, super masculine type, Mister Love; the entomologist, submasculine type, Dr. Jerry; the "sportsman," bell-boy style, who takes upon himself the essential part of the few gestural or physical gags of the film), ridding himself of these three antiquated shadows of himself even as much as he rids the patients of them, saying goodbye to them three times in succession (one time for all?).

It is remarkable that all the gags, all the comic manifestations of the film are on the account of these three puppet characters — equitably distributed to each of them, concerning the realm of each, having as their function, first to guarantee each character, then to dismantle him, with a rigor and a discipline that are the system of construction of the film. First, the introduction of the "normal" characters (the painter and his psychiatrist wife), then constitution of the drama (three scenes in the psychiatrist's office, intervention of the doctor friend, elaboration of the solution); introduction of the three fictional characters (three symmetrical sequences); three scenes of confirmation (the rendez-vous); three scenes of denunciation (with this remarkable effect, that even made ridiculous in the specialties that they have chosen for themselves, the three characters keep all their prestige in the eyes of the girls.) Finally, overlapping of these three worlds, until then isolated in the construction of the film, and their interference with the fourth universe (the normal one) of the hero, his private life. Scene of the surprise-party, with its changes with the characters watching; then mutual annulment of the three masques in only one face, Lewis himself. End of the cure, beginning of happiness . . .

Here, then, is the most "constructed" of Lewis' films, the one in which the comic system marries best the dramatic system. One can regret this coherence, this substitution of the "serious" for the "maniac." The eccentric of the palace yields place to the coordinator of intrigues, and the fool actor to troubled *auteur*. But this is a magnificent itinerary, which goes from the actor to the



creator, and conjugates the spectacle and the reflection on its ends and on its means, sets on the stage of the comedy its spectator and presents within the spectacle the director himself; which knots, as never yet, the giddinesses of the comic to the abysses of the tragic. For this time again in Lewis' work, the frontier between the logic of the dream and that of the spectacle is a wandering one; three times,—when the painter and his wife enter their office and are surprised by a crowd that remains silent, crouched in the darkness, and that assails them with its shouts and with its crush as soon as the light is switched on; when the cowboy crosses an interminable procession of scarcely clad models; when the elevator pours out another crowd—those are, as it were, rough resurgences of a buried past, the claws of the dream and of the madness that seize Jerry Lewis for a moment.

—Jean-Louis COMOLLI

## Broken Traces

*Le Chat dans le sac (Cat in the Sack).* Canadian film of Gilles Groulx. *Scenario:* Gilles Groulx. *Photography:* Jean-Claude Labrecque. *Music:* John Coltrane, Vivaldi, Couperin. *Sound:* Marcel Carrière. *Cast:* Barbara Ulrich (Barbara), Claude Godbout (Claude), Manon Blain (Manon j'sais-pas-qui), Véronica Vilbert (Véronique), Jean-Paul Bernier (Jean-Paul), André Leblanc (Toulouse), Paul-Marie Lapointe, Jean Dufresne, Pierre Maheu. *Producer:* Jacques Babet, ONF Canada, Montreal 1964. *Distributor:* O.N.F. Paris. *Length:* 1 hr. 15 min.



Gilles Groulx: *Cat in the Sack*, Barbara Ulrich.

There are "plastic" geniuses, lovers of play and of lights, for whom everything is always at a distance, like an animal that one does not trap; they are the princes of vision, the pierrots of the intelligible, who frolic in their humor of comedy (Klee, Godard, Jerry Lewis . . .). And there are "physiological" geniuses, the damned of touch and of smell, who crawl on the earth like dogs, on the trail of something, their noses in the humors of human temperaments (Miller, Giacometti, Bergman, Visconti, Losey . . .). To create, for the first amounts to organizing a system of symbols; while the second establish each time a perceptible newness. It is as if the former spoke with words, and the latter with images.

Groulx belongs to the latter, and even pushes a certain realism to its ultimate consequences, holding audaciously the "psychological" bet.

One senses well whence comes such a cinema (which in the end has imposed itself, in its essential tendencies, on a large number of new directors over the entire world)—the attempt to tell "reality itself" (and to tell it, what is more simple, apparently, than to show it?); the desire no longer to play the conventional game of "art" and of *mise en scène*; the intention to rejoin "life," to be directly engaged with it ("It will be beautiful if it is human," Groulx said; and again, "For me, to create in the cinema is essentially subjective and determined by the lived.") In France, the teaching of a man like Bresson goes in the same direction.

Now, how does the *auteur* of *Le Chat dans le sac* come to terms with this deep choice?

He takes a young couple, in the heart of the Quebec winter, and makes them break to pieces before our eyes; for an hour and a half, one is present at a depressing play of prisms that takes place in isolation, between the bony spines of those two lives that never correspond. Yet—in spite of strong appearances—the subject of the film is not non-communication; it is revolt. There is only one hero—the boy, sick with violence. The love situation is only the field of application of released energies, in the limit, only a pretext, or only a device for revealing.

A pretext for what?

For telling the obscure reasons of the one who apprehends himself excluded. To make his voice resonate in spite of everything, from the very depth of solitude. (The retort in which the boy says to the girl that he thought that she, being Jewish, could have understood him, is illuminating, from this



point of view.) It is a film on the minority, on the ghetto, and not on love, nor on a love, be it despairing. (The time of love comes afterwards, when one is free, that is to say, when one reaches one's majority. And the film, contrary to all expectation, ends on a word of hope.)

That is what calls again in question the too easy (and, in fact, quite embarrassing) notion of realism, of which we spoke above; and perhaps in the end, all that can lead to thought. Will such a work, in fact, make perceptible the traps of the alleged *cinéma direct*?

A director—Groulx—starts with the intention of making a film in which one will see, as if through a magnifying glass, a couple in the process of breaking apart, a love transforming itself to incomprehension, soon, no doubt, to hatred, or to indifference; and in reality what he makes, is a film on a confused idea that dwells in him. He wanted to show something of the world, and he makes a portrait of himself . . . (here let one think of the *presence* of the couple of *Voyage en Italie*, as Rossellini succeeded in evoking it, in its very opacity and laceration; or again of the couple in *Le Mépris*; one sees the difference immediately).

When the film is shown, one feels, more or less acutely, this tone of resent-

ment, this rooting in a subjectivity not yet conquered; and that keeps one's adherence.

That is because Groulx has shown a case; and because art (one must, indeed, designate by *some* name what is neither recording of a direct document, nor production without intention), is never a mere statement; it is always an experience. (Deep words of Godard, declaring that he apprehends himself on the model of a scholar who does research). Art is life that tries itself, that plays itself, pursuing an implicit and fundamental course, somewhat comparable to the Husserlian method of "eidetic variations," after having effected the *époké*, the setting between parentheses of empirical existence. That is why the word "realism" is the source of so many difficulties. ("Realism does not consist in showing how things are true, but how things are truly," said Brecht. And a man like Giacometti, for his part, replies to the question by giving as ultimate meaning to his work of a sculptor what he calls, marvelously, "resemblance"; he keeps coming back to the idea of the whole. It is something very close to that which one finds at the heart of Bresson's notion of "unity.") There is neither "the truth" nor truths; there is only the attempt, endlessly recommenced of telling life,

which mixes inextricably with that of living.

But let us return to our cat . . .

The example of Groulx shows that one must not attach oneself to only a single case; and want only to bear witness, under pain of succeeding only in listening to oneself talk in a deserted place suddenly bereft of the light of the world. One must create in freedom, that is to say, one must lose oneself, "move," not attempt to look oneself in the face. Cineastes know that one must "fake" the object to be filmed, setting it at the side, on the oblique, for a mirror shot; otherwise it is the image that is false. Lesson from technique! One does not save detours. Art—and life—already — is a distortion — refraction, wandering, and journeys . . . Broken traces that mark a path.

Groulx's hero does not exist enough because Groulx does not come out of him. On this subject, the comparison with a film like *Prima della rivoluzione* of Bertolucci is interesting. At the very start, the Italian plays the game (that of "imaginative variations," which are the whole of art, its terrible necessity and its privilege, that obligatory mediation of symbols); he puts his character in a situation, at a center of convergences, which he recreates—social classes, age groups, family ties, ideological marking out, historied world—Yet, it is a similar subject—the story of a young man who seeks himself, "in doubtful combat." But in the film of Groulx, he struggles; in that of Bertolucci, he discusses. (Or people discuss for him, but that amounts to the same thing.) And the latter, finally, stirs many more things,—which is the essential. So, to resign oneself to the game and to its rule, to shuffle the cards, to compose—there is an insurmountable truth of *mise en scène*.

—Jacques LEVY

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## 'Echoes Of Silence'

Recently banned by the French censors, *Echoes of Silence* seems to provoke the spectator not because Peter Emanuel Goldman shows a somewhat tarnished girl who sells herself to a fat old man, or a boy who caresses the chest of a male friend, or his hero Miguel discarding a girl with whom he no longer wants to make love—scenes that one could very well find again, with complaisance besides, with many New York film makers; but because, pursuing faces obstinately, hesitating often from one to another, seeking the slightest traces of muteness even in dirty hands, grasped pieces of mirror, hair in disorder, Goldman pushes away the customary points of support, intrigue, clarified unfolding of a lived mixture, commentary by double exposure (only





Peter Emanuel Goldman: *Echoes of Silence*, Jacquetta Lampson, Miguel Chacour.

cartoons sometimes designate the situations), and so on.

The order and number of sequences seem to matter little, to us as to him; there exist two different prints of the film without one's being able to characterize them differently than by variations of duration and of lighting. It scarcely matters either that the musical sequences are repeated; they are there to prolong a state, as in the endless drawings-out, fishing for tuna or ascension, with Rossellini. Each chapter, or canvas, interrupts itself by virtue of continuing

a length of time; the glances exchanged by three girls in a little room lead to nothing and keep within themselves, latent, a drama that does not unfold. To these beings lost in New York, nothing ever happens. A forlorn girl cradles a poor doll and nothing is resolved, one observes only an infinitesimal change. Here time is not accountable to the tumult of everyday life, and the film progresses by amplification, like a wave, slow but without return, not by the addition of actions or events whose exact path one seeks, but by the ensnaring

joining of solitudes. If ever new faces appear, if one frequents surprising spaces—like the museum—an ephemeral metamorphosis can be brought about; Miguel prowling through the museum, like Nosferatu, is suddenly caught in the circle of his motionless prey. But later when the phantoms will scatter in the streets of New York, scarcely distracted by the vehement reading of the Bible, for what reason would the film pace off the glimpsed desert?

—Jean-Claude BIETTE

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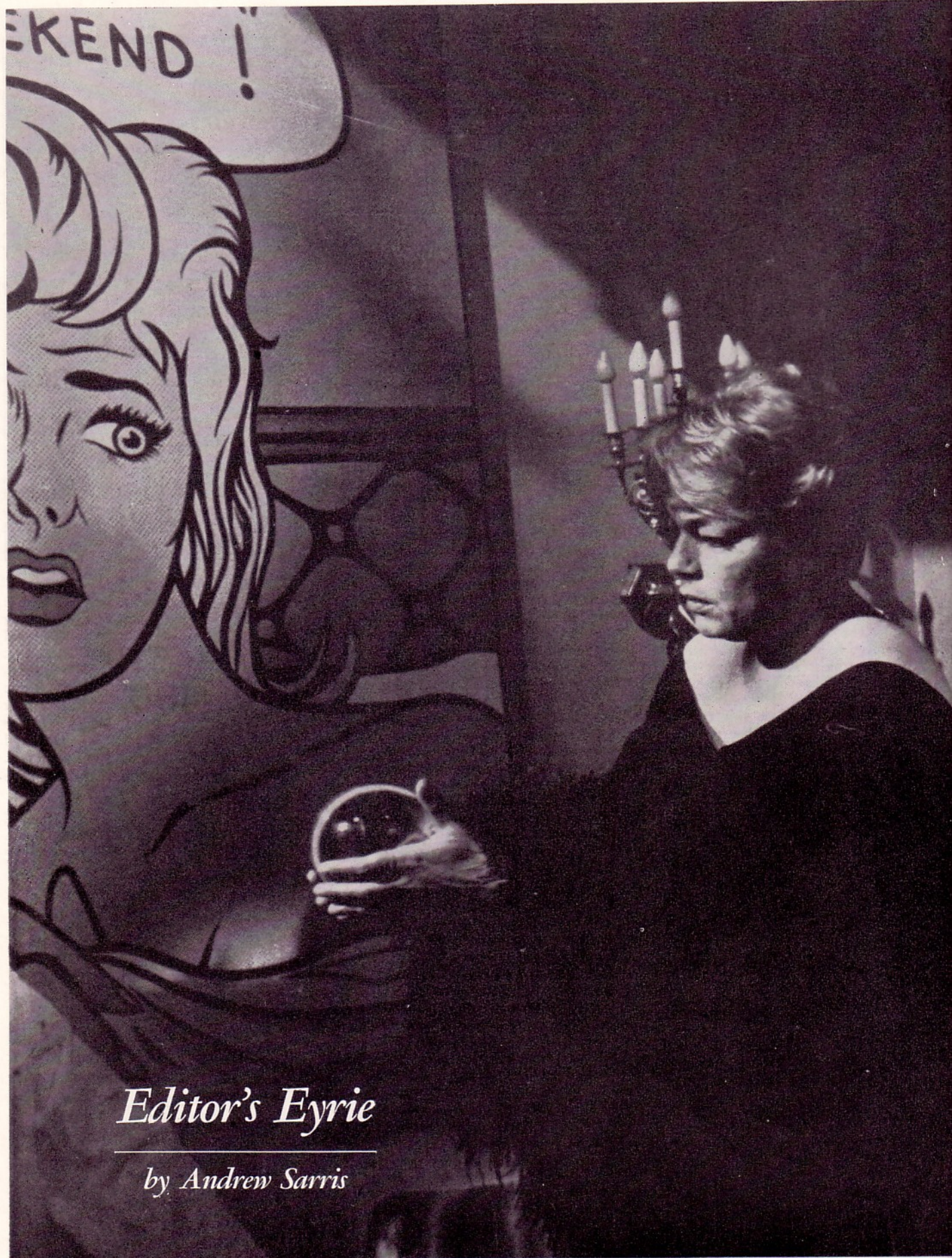
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## *Editor's Eyrie*

*by Andrew Sarris*

Curtis Harrington: *Games*, Simone Signoret, Katherine Ross.







Curtis Harrington writes us from Hollywood as follows: "I'm sorry that my new film, *GAMES*, wasn't mentioned in Variety's "production round-up," because it might be considered to be a forthcoming Hollywood-made film of more than routine interest. I'm enclosing herewith some stills which you might like to have for the Cahiers files. *GAMES*, scheduled for release in the fall, concerns the strange and frightening events that occur when a European woman, with a mysterious past, comes to live with a wealthy young married couple in New York. The woman is played by Simone Signoret; the young

couple by James Caan and Katharine Ross."

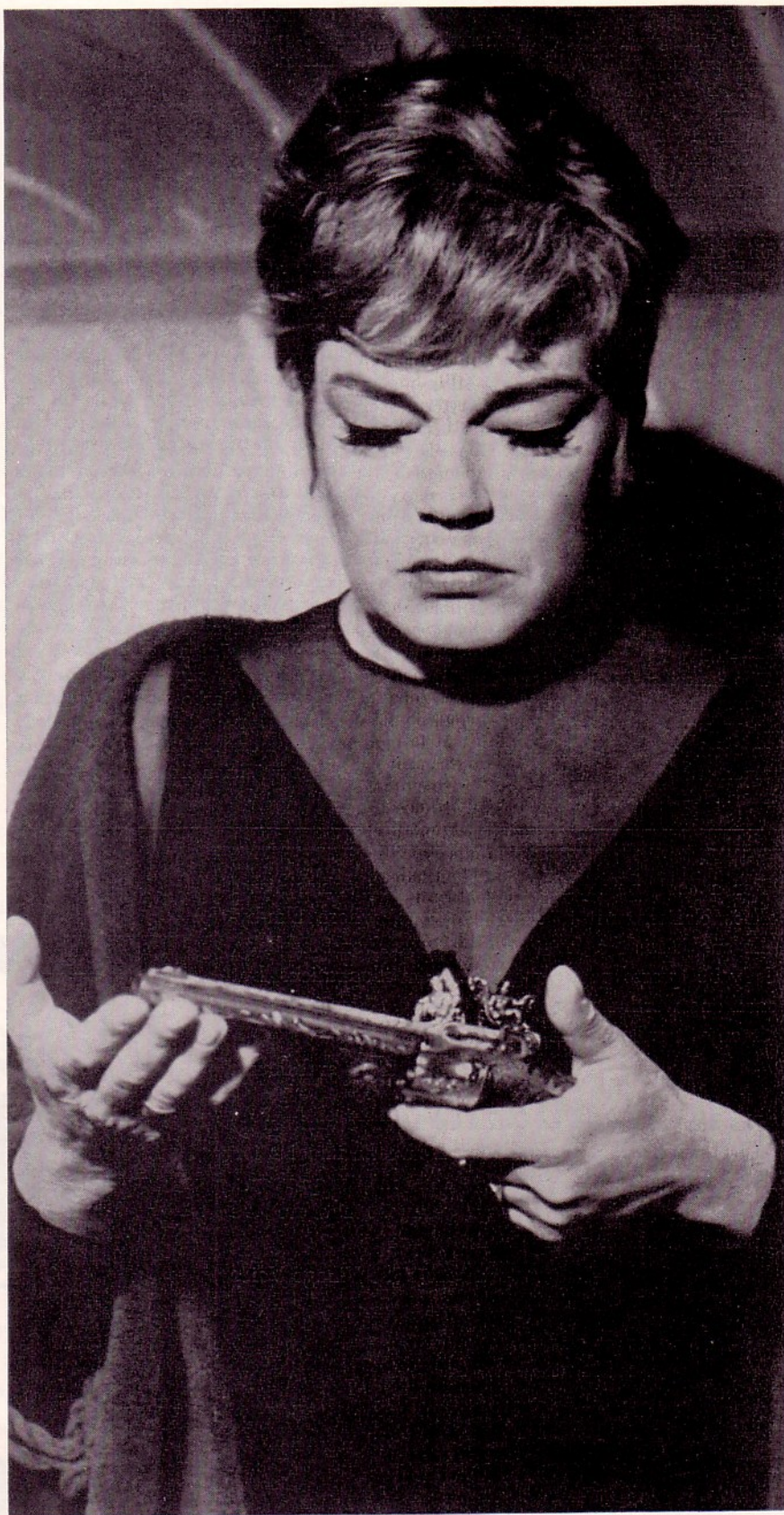
We must say the stills look scintillating and certainly anything that Curtis Harrington does is of more than routine interest. We look forward to seeing *Games* when it is finally released.

We are told also that Samuel Goldwyn, Jr. will produce and King Vidor direct *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones* this fall as one of the first film projects to be announced by the newly-formed theatrical film division of the Columbia Broadcasting System.

The picture, to be made for Goldwyn, Jr.'s Formosa Productions, will be an official production of the CBS film divi-







"More than routine interest?" Simone Signoret in scintillating stills from Curtis Harrington's *Games*. At left, Harrington directs Signoret.



sion, Gordon Stulberg, Director. The picture will go into regular theatrical release on completion.

*Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones*, based on the recently published novel by Ann Head for Putnam, is a modern story of the stresses and strains in a teenage magazine. It ran in a recent issue of Good Housekeeping Magazine.

So much for the press release. The main point is that King Vidor is working again, and how sad it is that he has been idle for so much of his later life. The Montreal Film Festival brought together Jean Renoir, John Ford and Fritz Lang, all Pantheon directors, and all currently without assignments. Meanwhile the latest works of Welles (*Falstaff*), Chaplin (*A Countess from Hong Kong*) and Hawks (*El Dorado*) have been treated very harshly by most of the American critics, the very same critics, in most instances, who have made it impossible for Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot le fou* to be commercially released in America, and if that isn't enough reason for Cahiers du Cinema in English not to be complacent, I don't know what is.

The American Film Institute has finally come into existence amid a hail of controversy. Some of the criticism has been embarrassingly self-seeking, and everyone has jumped on poor Elizabeth Ashley. It's all very silly. The art of

being named to committees may be inherited or acquired, but it is an art nevertheless. Many high-principled individuals step on too many toes to be considered good team players. Call it conviction or tactlessness; the end result is the same.

It is probably unwise to expect or demand too much from the American Film Institute. Vulgarity and philistinism will not be eradicated overnight. Nor will the awful pressure and power of money. We have so far to go and so much to do that even a modest beginning should be considered encouraging. There is much to be done with archives and scholarship and film-making, and those of us who love the cinema should continue to promote these activities with or without the American Film Institute.

I am tired of reading Vivien Leigh obituaries that stress her limitations as an actress. Vivien Leigh was a better actress on stage and screen than most critics gave her credit for being. It was her extraordinary beauty that distracted her detractors from her technical skill as an actress. Terence Rattigan to the contrary, Vivien Leigh's suicide walk in *Anna Karenina* is superior to Garbo's, but, of course, Garbo was the mistress of the medium, and Miss Leigh only one of its most beautiful adornments.

I first saw Vivien Leigh on a Brooklyn screen in 1937 in something called

*Dark Journey*, but I was more struck at the time by Conrad Veidt's dashing U-boat commander. Somehow I missed Vivien Leigh in *Gone with the Wind* and *Waterloo Bridge* until 1945, but I made up for lost time by falling in love with her screen image. It all came down to something glimpsed sporadically in her purring cat-eyes, something cruel and vulnerable and heart-breakingly beautiful. I always thought of Jean Simmons as her successor.

The death of Vivien Leigh darkens another corner of my dream world. I suppose if I had known her in "real" life, I might have mourned her more, but I doubt it. Parenthetically, I always thought she cried too much in the last scene of *Gone with the Wind* and I never knew whether Victor Fleming or George Cukor was to blame for this directorial indiscretion. Margaret Mitchell's Scarlett was more stoical by far. I suppose that was my first directorial insight, my first critical coup, but there remained always something in Vivien Leigh that was beyond criticism, beyond good and bad, beyond good and evil.

The Sadoul-Flaherty interview translated by Robert Steele in this issue of CdCiE reminds us that the annual Flaherty Seminar will be held this year from September 2nd through September 8th at Arden House in Harriman, N. Y. After 45 years, Flaherty is still the noblest synonym for documentary.

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