

# **BOMB**

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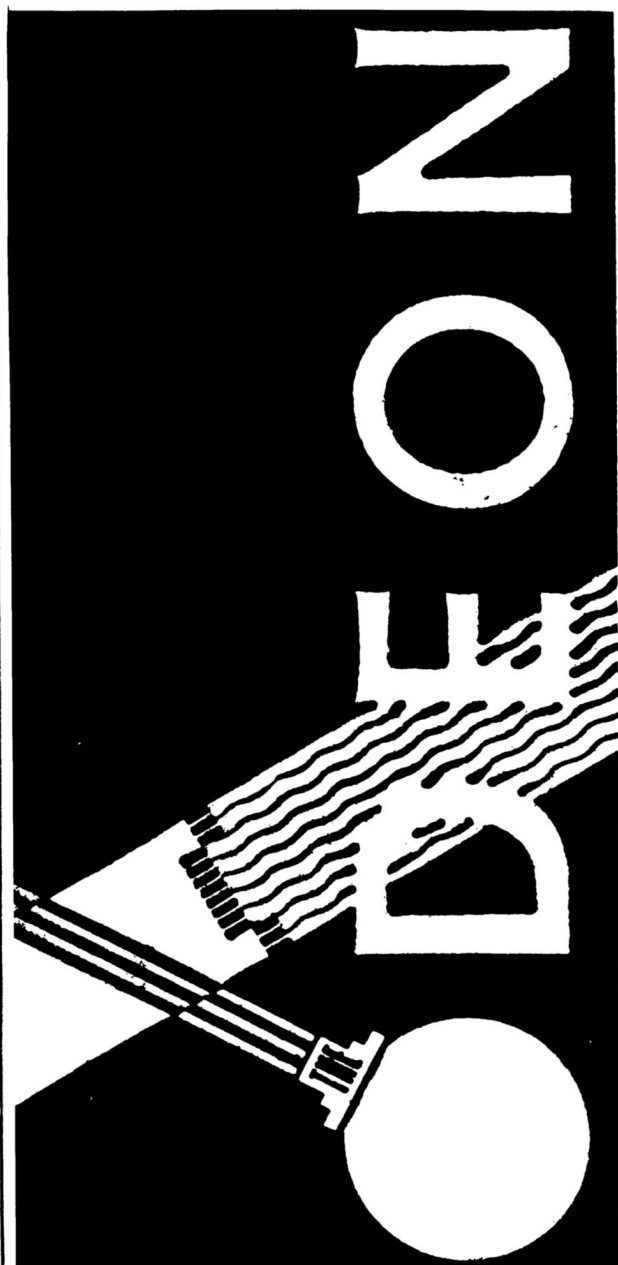


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# BOMB

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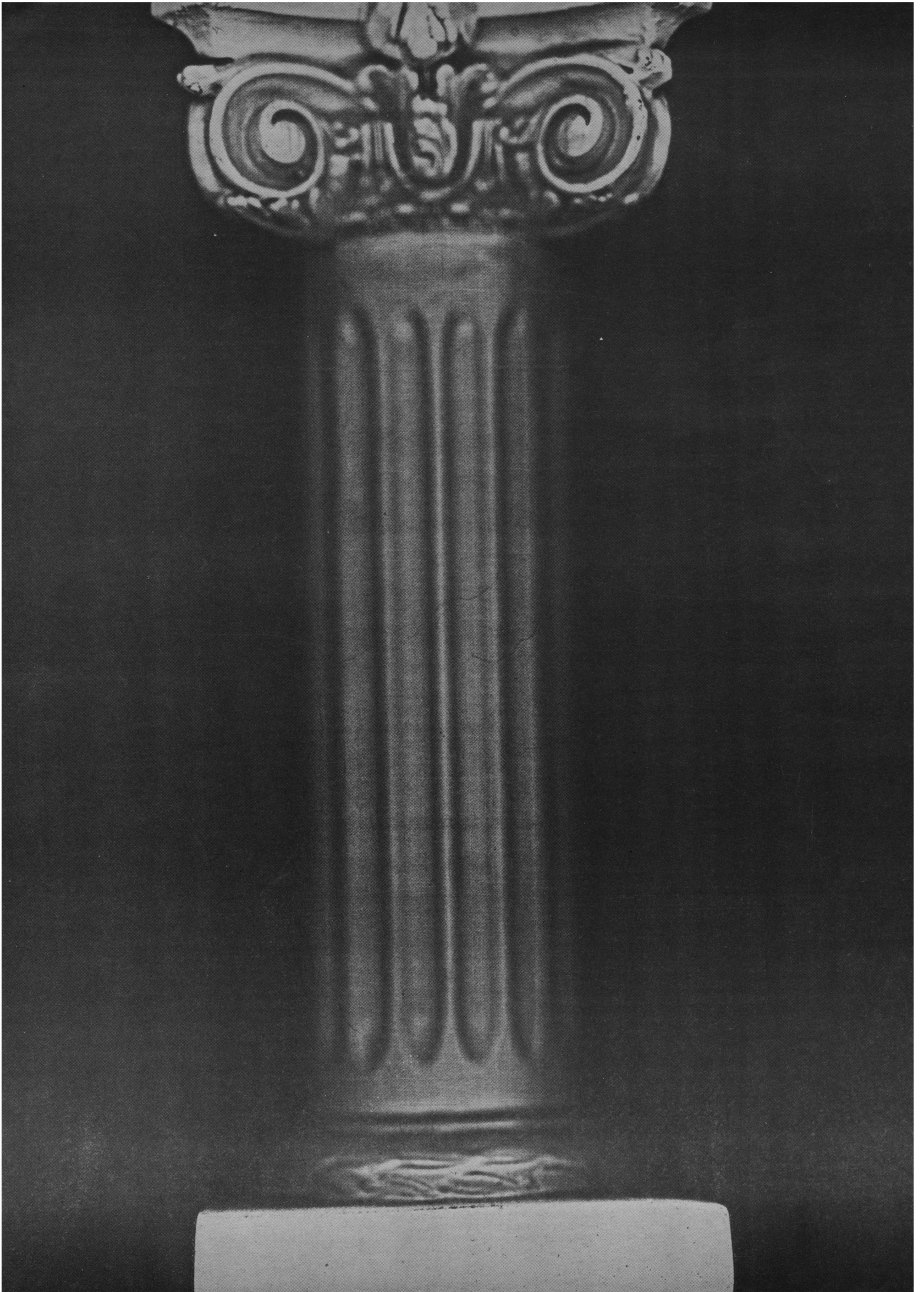
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# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

by Kathy Acker

*Being the First Chapter of*

## I RECALL MY CHILDHOOD

My father's name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

I give Pirrip as my father's family name on the authority of his tombstone and my sister—Mrs. Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith.

On Christmas Eve 1978 my mother committed suicide and in September of 1979 my grandmother (on my mother's side) died. Ten days ago, it is now almost Christmas 1979, Terence told my fortune with the Tarot cards. This was not so much a fortune—whatever that means—but a fairly, it seems to me, precise psychic map of the present, therefore: the future.

I asked the cards about future boyfriends. This question involved the following thoughts: Would the guy who fucked me so well in France be in love with me? Will I have a new boyfriend? As Terence told me, I cut the cards into four piles: earth water fire air. We found my significator, April 18th, in the water or emotion fantasy pile. The cards were pointing to my question. We opened up this pile. The first image was a fat purring humpert cat surrounded by the Empress and the Queen of Pentacles. This cluster, travelling through a series of other clusters that, like mirrors, kept defining or explained the first cluster more clearly, for there is nowhere to go there is no lineality of time time is an almost recurring conical, led to the final reversed (not consciously known by me) image: during Christmas the whole world is rejecting a male and a female kid who are the genetic existing scum. To the right of this card is the Star. To the left is the card of craftsmanship which due to hard work succeeds.

Terence told me that despite my present good chance and my basic stability and contentedness with myself (the fat purring human cat), or alongside these images, I have the image or obsession of being cast out and scum. This powerful image depends on the image of the Empress or the image I have of my mother. When I was very young, even before I was born, my mother hated me because my father left her (because she got pregnant?) and because my mother wanted to remain her mother's child rather than be my mother. My image of my mother is the source of my creativity—I prefer the

word consciousness. My image of my hateful mother is blocking consciousness. To obtain a different picture of my mother, I have to forgive my mother for rejecting me and committing suicide (the picture of love, found in one of the clusters, is forgiveness transforming need (the savage red untamed lion) into desire (the two lovers hold the cup of fantasy with the caduceus of health)).

Due to this hatred, the cards continued, I separate women myself into virgin meditation (The Hierophant) or the scumiest lust, rather than believing I can be fertile.

I have no idea how to begin to forgive someone much less my mother. I have no idea where to begin repression's impossible because it's stupid and I'm a materialist.

I just had the following dream: In a large New England-ish house I am standing in a very big room on the second floor in the front of the mansion. This room is totally fascinating, but as soon as I leave it, I can't go back because it disappears. Every room in this house differs from every other room.

The day after my mother committed suicide I started to experience a frame. Within this frame time was totally circular because I was being returned to my childhood traumas totally terrifying because now these traumas are totally real: there is no buffer of memory.

Pure time is not time but a hole. Inside this hole everything that happens not comes back again because it never went away. There is no time; there is. Beyond the buffers of forgetting (memory is a tool of forgetting) which are our buffer to reality: there is. As the dream: there is and there is not. Call this TERROR call this TOTAL HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY. The PIG I see on the edge of the grave is the PIG me neither death nor social comment kills. This TERROR is divine because it is real and may I sink into IT like I sink into the arms of any man who shows me affection.

How can I start talking to you about my mother? I'm a mass of memories feelings anxieties. Fuck psychology. My mother was a drunk. Oh I'm so embarrassed to admit my mother was drunk. She didn't drink four bottles of Schmirnoff's a day. She'd down one glass of Scotch fall down on her hands and knees and crawl dog-style across the

floor to the nearest available man place her head on his left thigh. Then she'd try to crawl up the man. Didn't give a damn if her husband who drank four bottles of Jack Daniels a day when she wasn't watching him saw her.

I grew up in this typical American family life.

My mother often told me, though not directly cause when she wasn't drunk she pretended sex and booze are non-existent, the only cause in this world is money. You shouldn't care if an action is right or wrong: you should totally care if you're going to profit monetarily from it. Grow up, kid.

The helmeted bow-legged stiff-muscled soldiers trample on just-born babies swaddled in scarlet violet shawls, babies roll out of the arms of women crouched under POP's iron machine guns, a cabby shoves his fist into a goat's face, near the lake a section of the other army cross the tracks, other soldiers in this same army leap in front of the trucks, the POP retreat up the river, a white-walled tire in front of three thorn bushes props up a male's head, the soldiers bare their chests in the shade of the mud barricades, the females lullabye kids in their tits, the sweat from the fires perfumes reinforces this stirring rocking makes their rags their skins their meat pregnant: salad oil clove henna butter indigo sulfur, at the base of this river under a shelf loaded down by burnt-out cedars barley wheat beehives graves refreshment stands garbage bags fig trees matches human-brain-splattered low-walls small-fires'-smoke-dilated orchards explode: flowers pollen grain-ears tree roots paper milk-stained cloths blood bark feathers, rising. The soldiers wake up stand up again tuck in their canvas shirttails suck in cheeks stained by tears dried by the steam from hot train rails rub their sex against the tires, the trucks go down into a dry ford mow down a few rose-bushes, the sap mixes with disemboweled teenagers' blood on their knives' metal, the soldiers' nailed boots cut down uproot nursery plants, a section of RIMA (the other army) climb onto their trucks' runningboards throw themselves on their females pull out violet rags bloody Tampaxes which afterwards the females stick back in their cunts: the soldier's chest as he's raping the female crushes the baby stuck in her tits

(continued on p. 6 )

I want: every part changes (the meaning of) every other part so there's no absolute/heroic/dictatorial/S&M meaning/part the soldier's onyx-dusted fingers touch her face orgasm makes him shoot saliva over the baby's buttery skull his formerly-erect now-softening sex rests on the shawl becomes its violet scarlet color, the trucks swallow up the RIMA soldiers, rainy winds shove the tarpulins against their necks, they adjust their clothes, the shadows grow, their eyes gleam more and more their fingers brush their belt buckles, the wethaired-from-sweating-during-capture-at-the-edge-of-the-coals goats crouch like the rags sticking out of the cunts, a tongueless canvas-covered teenager pisses into the quart of blue enamel he's holding in his half-mutilated hand, the truck driver returns kisses the blue cross tattooed on his forehead, the teenager brings down his palm wrist where alcohol-filled veins are sticking out. These caterpillars of trucks grind down the stones the winds hurled over the train tracks, the soldiers sleep their sex rolling over their hips drips they are cattle, their truck-driver spits black a wasp sting swells up the skin under his left eye black grapes load down his pocket, an old man's white hair under-the-white-hair red burned face jumps up above the sheet metal, the driver's black saliva dries on his chin the driver's studded heel crushes as he pulls hair out the back of this head on to the sheet metal, some stones blow up

My mother is the most beautiful woman in the world. She has black hair, green eyes which turn gray or brown according to her mood or the drugs she's on at the moment, the pallor of this pink emphasizes the fullness of her lips, skin so soft the color of her cheeks is absolutely peach no abrasions no redness no white tightness. This in no way describes the delicacy of the face's bone structure. Her body is equally exquisite, but on the plump or sagging sides because she doesn't do any exercise and wears girdles. She's five feet six inches tall. She usually weighs 100 pounds even though she's always taking diet pills. Her breasts look larger and fuller than they are because they sag downwards. The nipples in them are large pale pink. In the skin around the nipples and in the tops of her legs you can easily see the varicose veins breaking through. The breast stomach and upper thigh skin is very pale white. There's lots of curly hair around her cunt.

She has a small waist hands and ankles. The main weight, the thrust, the fullness of those breasts is deceptive, is the thighs: large pockmarked flesh indicates a heavy ass extra flesh at the sides of the thighs. The flesh directly above the cunt seems paler than it has to be. So pale, it's fragile, at the edge of ugliness: the whole: the sagging but not too large breasts, the tiny waist, the huge ass are sexier MORE ABOUT PASSION than a more-tightly-muscled and fashionable body.

My mother is the person I love most. She's my sister. She plays with me. There's no one else in my world except for some kind of wierd father who only partly exists part out of the shadow, and an unimportant torment I call my sister. I'm watching my mother put on her tight tawny-orange sweater. She always wears a partially lacey white bra that seems slightly dirty. As she's struggling to get into a large white panty girdle she says she doesn't like girdles. She's standing in front of her mirror and mirrored dresser. Mirrors cover every inch of all the furniture in the room except for the two double beds, my father's chair, and the T.V., but they don't look sensuous. Now my mother's slipping into a tight brown wool straight skirt. She always wears tight sweaters and tight straight skirts. Her clothes are old and very glamorous. She hitches her skirt up a little and rolls on see-through stockings.

She tells me to put on my coat and white mittens because we're going outside.

Today is Christmas.

Huge clean piles of snow cover the streets make the streets magical. Once we get to the park below the 8th Street Bridge I say to myself, "No foot has ever marked this snow before." My foot steps on each unmarked bit of snow. The piles are so high I can barely walk through them. I fall down laughing. My mother falls down laughing with me. My clothes especially the pants around my boots are sopping wet. I stay in this magic snow with the beautiful yellow sun beating down on me as long as I can until a voice in my head (me) or my mother says, "Now you know what this experience is. You have to leave."

My mother wants to get a strawberry soda. Today my mother's being very nice to me and I love her simply and dearly when she's being very nice to me. We're both sitting on the round red vinyl turn-

able seats around the edge of the white counter. My mother's eating a strawberry soda with strawberry icecream. I see her smiling. A fat middle-aged man thinks we're sisters. My mother is very young and beautiful.

At camp: males string tents up along a trench filled with muck: slush from meat refuse vomit sparkle under arching colorless weeds, the soldiers by beating them drive back the women who're trying to stick their kids in the shelter of the tents, they strike at kick punch the soldiers' kidneys while the soldiers bend over the unfolded tent canvas. Two males tie the animals to the rears of the tents, a shit-filled-assed teenager squatting over the salt-eroded weeds pants dust covers his face his head rolls vacantly around his shoulder his purple eye scrutinizes the montage of tents, a brown curly-haired soldier whose cheeks cause they're crammed full of black meat're actually touching his pock-marked earlobes crouches down next to a little girl he touches her nape his hand crawls under the rags around her throat feels her tits her armpits: the little girl closes her eyes her fingers touch the soldier's grapejuice-smear wrist, from the shit heaps a wind-gust lifts up the bits of film and sex mag pages the soldiers tore up while they were shitting clenched the shit burns the muscles twisted by rape. Some soldiers leaving the fire wander around the tents untie the tent thongs they crawl on the sand, the linen tent flaps brush their scabies-riddled thighs, the males the females all phosphorescent nerves huddle around the candles, no longer wanting to hear anything the teenagers chew wheat they found in the bags, the kids pick threads out of their teeth put their rags on again stick the sackcloth back over their mothers' tits lick the half-chewed flour left on their lips

My mother thinks my father is a nobody. She is despising him and lashing out at him right now she is saying while she is sitting on her white quilt-covered bed "Why don't you ever go out at night, Bud? All you do is sleep."

"Let me watch the football game, Claire." It's Sunday.

"Why don't you ever take Mommy out, Daddy? She never has any fun. Actually I believe my mother's a bitch.

"You can't sleep all the time, Bud. It isn't good for you."

"This is my one day off, Claire. I want to watch the football game. Six days a week I work my ass off to buy you and the kids food, to keep a roof over your head. I give you everything you want."

"Daddy, you're stupid." "Daddy, you don't even know who Dostoyevsky is." "What's the matter with you, Daddy?"

My father makes my flesh slime.

Daddy's drunk and he's still whining, but now he's whining nastily. He's telling my mother that he does all the work he goes to work at six in the morning and comes back after six at night (which we all know is a joke cause his job's only a sinecure: my mother's father gave him his first break, a year ago when the business was sold, part of the deal was my father'd be kept on as 'manager' under the new owners at \$50,000 a year. We all know he goes to work cause there are drinks and he doesn't hear my mother's nagging.) He's telling my mother he gave her her first fur coat. My father is never aggressive. My father never beats my mother up.

The father grabs a candle, the curly brownhaired soldier his red mouth rolling around the black meat takes out his knife: his hand quickly juts the red rags over his sex his pincher his grabber the curly brownhaired soldier jerks the sleepy young girl's thighs to him, she slides over the sand till she stops at the tent opening, one soldier's mutilated forehead cause he was raping over an eagle's eggs the eagle scalped him another soldier's diseased skin-pores these two soldiers gag the father, the father throws a burning candle into their hairs, the curly brownhaired soldier takes the young girl into his arms, she sleeps she purrs her open palm on her forehead to his shudder trot, the clouded moon turns his naked arm green, his panting a gurgling that indicates rape sweat dripping off his bare strong chest wakes the young girl up, I walked into my parents' bedroom opened their bathroom door don't know why I did it, my father was standing naked over the toilet, I've never seen him naked I'm shocked, he slams the door in my face, I'm curious I see my mother naked all the time, she closely watches inside his open cause gasping mouth the black meat still stuck to his teeth the black meat still in a ball, the curly brownhaired lifts her on to her feet lay her down on the dog-kennels'

metal grating hugs her kisses her lips the ear hollows where the bloodstained wax causes whispers his hand unbuttons his sackcloth pulls out his member, the young girl sucks out of the curly brownhaired's cheeks the black meat eyes closed hands spread over the metal grating, excited by this cheek-to-stomach muscle motion bare-headed straw-dust flying around his legs injects the devil over her scorches, the dogs waking up at the metal gratings leap out of the kennels their chains gleam treat me like a dog drag in the shit, the curly brownhaired nibbles the young girl's gums his teeth pull at the meat fibres her tongue pushes into the cracks between her teeth, the dogs howl their chains jingle against the tar of the road their paws crush down the hardened shits, the curly brownhaired's knees imprison the young girl's thighs.

My father's lying in the hospital cause he's on his third heart attack. My mother's mother at the door of my father's room so I know my father is over-hearing her is saying to my mother, "You have to say he's been a good husband to you, Claire. He never left you and he gave you everything you wanted."

"Yes."

"You don't love him."

"Yes."

I know my grandmother hates my father.

I don't side with my mother rather than my father like my sister does. I don't perceive my father. My mother is adoration hatred play. My mother is the world. My mother is my baby. My mother is exactly who she wants to be.

The whole world and consciousness revolves around my mother.

I don't have any idea what my mother's like. So no matter how my mother acts, she's a monster. Everything is a monster. I hate it. I want to run away. I want to escape the Jolly Green Giant. Any other country is beautiful as long as I don't know about it. This is the dream I have: I'm running away from men who are trying to damage me permanently. I love mommy. I know she's on Dex and when she's not on Dex she's on Librium to counteract the Dex jitters so she acts more extreme than usual. A second orgasm cools her shoulders, the young girl keeps her hands joined over the curly brownhaired's ass, the wire grating gives way, the curly brownhaired slides the young girl under him his pants are still around his knees his fingernails claw the soil his breath sucks in the young girl's cheek blows straw dust around, the mute young girl's stomach muscles weld to the curly-headed's abdominal muscles, the passing wind immediately modulates the least organic noise that's why one text must subvert (the meaning of) another text until there's only background music like reggae on that ground: the inextricability of relation-textures the organic (not meaning) recovered, stupid ugly horrible a mess pinhead abominable vomit eyes-pop-out-always-presenting-disgust-always-presenting-what-people-flee-always-wanting-to-be-lonely infect my mother my mother, blind fingernails spit the eyes wandering from the curly-headed, the curly-headed's hidden balls pour open cool down on the young girl's thigh. Under the palmtrees the RIMAS seize and drag a fainted woman under a tent, a flushing-forehead blond soldier burning coals glaze his eyes his piss stops up his sperm grasps this woman in his arms, their hands their lips touch lick the woman's clenched face while the blond soldier's greasy wine-stained arm supports her body, the young girl recovered.

New York City is very peaceful and quiet, and the pale gray mists are slowly rising, to show me the world, I who have been so passive and little here, and all beyond is so unknown and great that now I am crying. My fingers touch the concrete beneath my feet and I say "Goodbye, Oh my dear, dear friend."

We don't ever have to be ashamed of feelings of tears, for feelings are the rain upon the earth's blinding dust: our own hard egotistic hearts. I feel better after I cry: more aware of who I am, more open. I need friends very much.

Thus ends the first segment of my life. I am a person of **great expectations**■

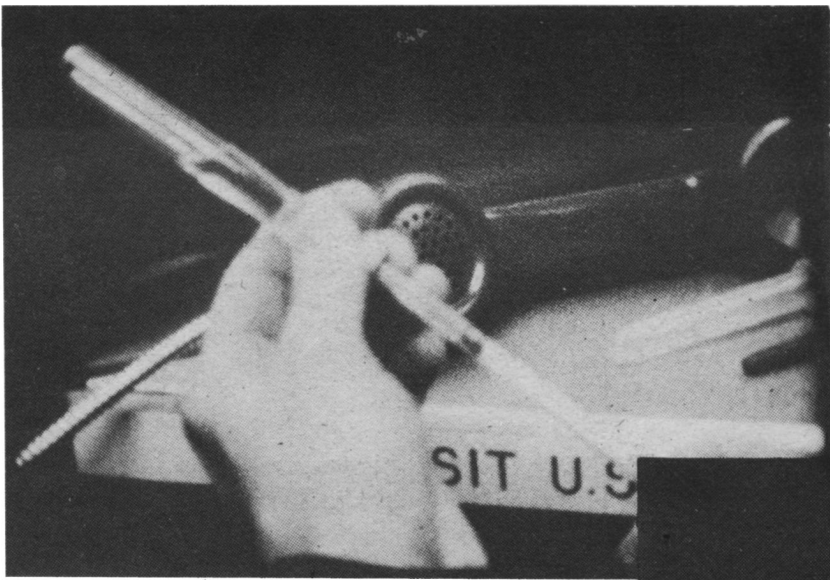
N. Y. C. Dec. 1979

I'm just wild about Harry  
I'm just wild about Harry  
I'm just wild about Harry  
I'm just wild about Harry  
I'm just wild about Harry

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Working rough for **LULLABYE**, a seriagraph of Harry Crosby by **Duncan Hannah**  
represented by **Stefanotti Inc.**



Jimmy DeSana/S8 Still, Motive

## Michael McClard

### Interviewed by Kathy Acker

A. Ahh, Michael, what was your motive in making MOTIVE?

M. That's really a terrible question Kathy.

A. (laughter) That's my one planned question.

M. Ummm, that's pretty hard to answer. I'm still having this problem because I don't think MOTIVE was ever really finished.

A. Well, when I saw the film I noticed that on the one hand the main character who Jimmy DeSana plays, a business man, umm...the point where he was a mass murderer and there was no reason given in the film why he committed these murders, he just did...There was this whole quandry about that, and because the question was never even asked...why he did it, on the other hand the film sometimes was very straight narrative and sometimes was...not artsy but decorative in a way especially the focusing of the camera and everything was very pretty. So there seemed to be a repetition of his lack of motive in the way the camera wobbled between genres.

M. I wanted to make something that was nice to look at, or maybe I wasn't even thinking about that at the moment of looking through the camera and trying to shoot a scene, I wanted to make...I wanted to *see* something that looked beautiful through the camera, but in terms of having a purpose to this beauty or having a strong statement to make about cinema or life...I mean, I did have an idea about...a *general* idea about what this character was up to. I had an idea about *why* he would be committing these crimes, right, but I didn't want to make it really obvious in terms of the film because I thought the film should be about the obscurity of that motive, you know, that the film shouldn't supply the answer, that if there is a solution the viewer should be able to extract it from the film with whatever degree of acumen the viewer extracts any other conclusion from the rest of existence, without being told that he's going through this therefore he's doing that. Or that this is what's happening now and that's why this is... You know, all those kings of narrative conventions. Like the way language is used to close the plot, in order to make it hang together...

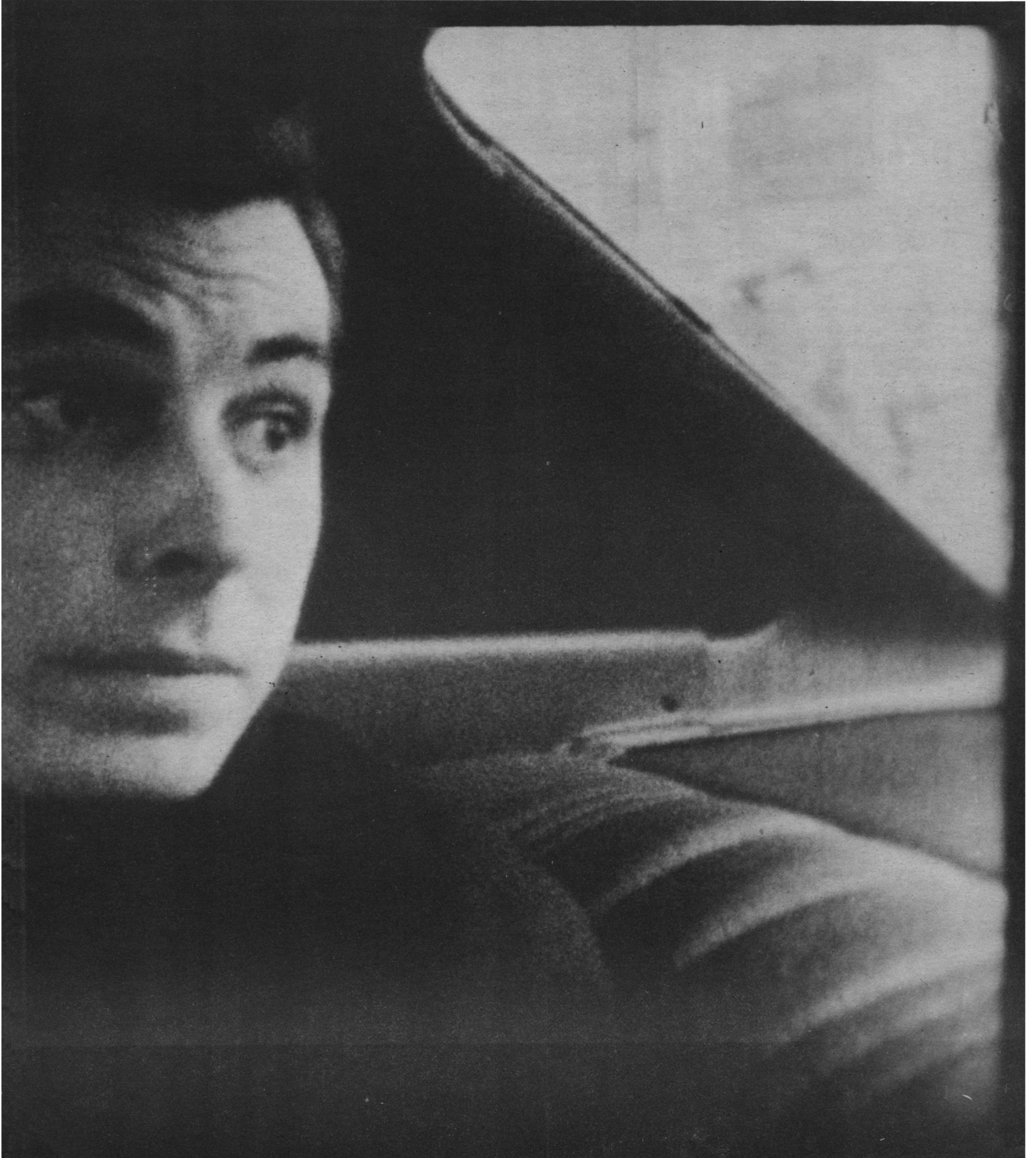
A. Right, so in a way it was seeing that...there was almost no psychology in the film. That's what was one of the most striking things and the absence of psychology was a freeing sort of movement, or felt as such...

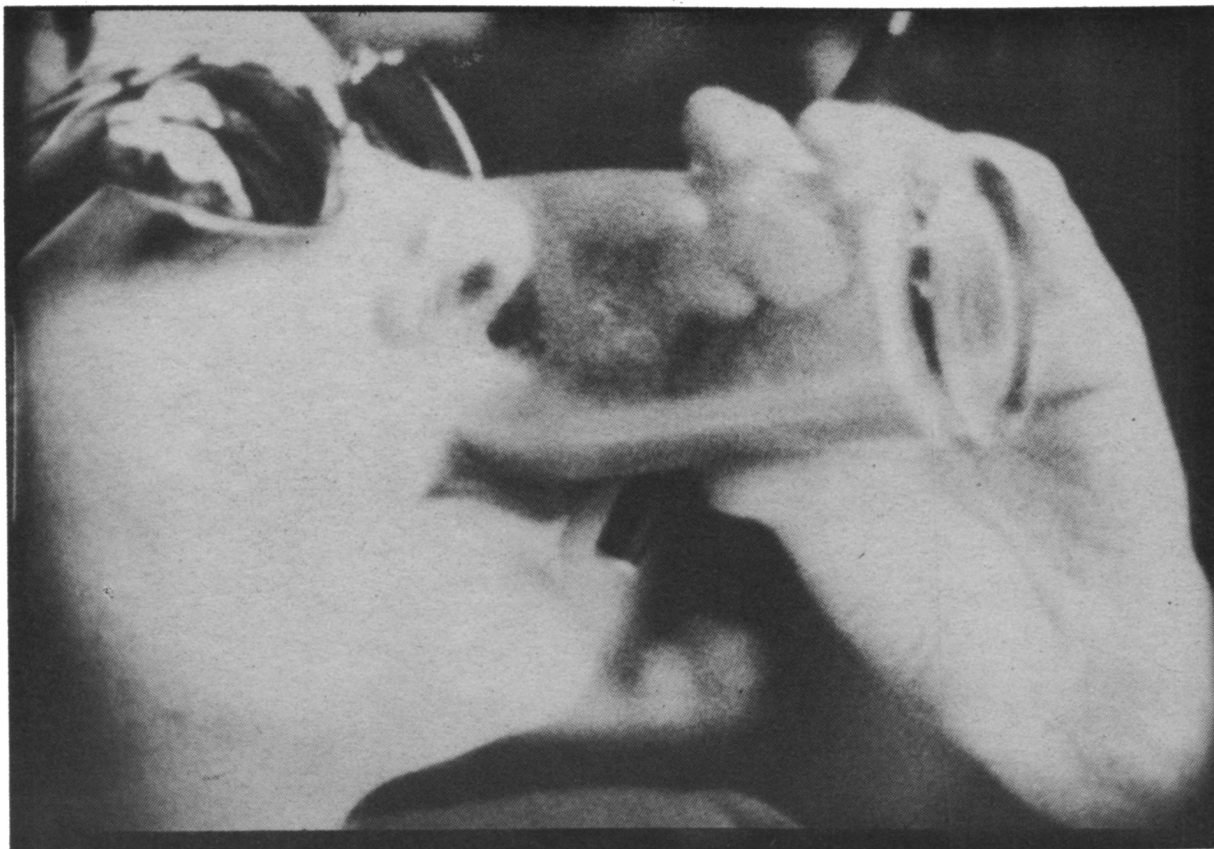
M. Well, I felt like dealing with the activity of murder, but I knew it would invite this heavy psychological analysis, and that would be the most obvious approach to analyzing the film, and so I tried as much as possible to strip the film of anything that would lend itself to that kind of analysis, which meant in certain ways keeping the character very flat and...well, in some ways I think that that flatness also reveals other aspects...thematic aspects of the film.





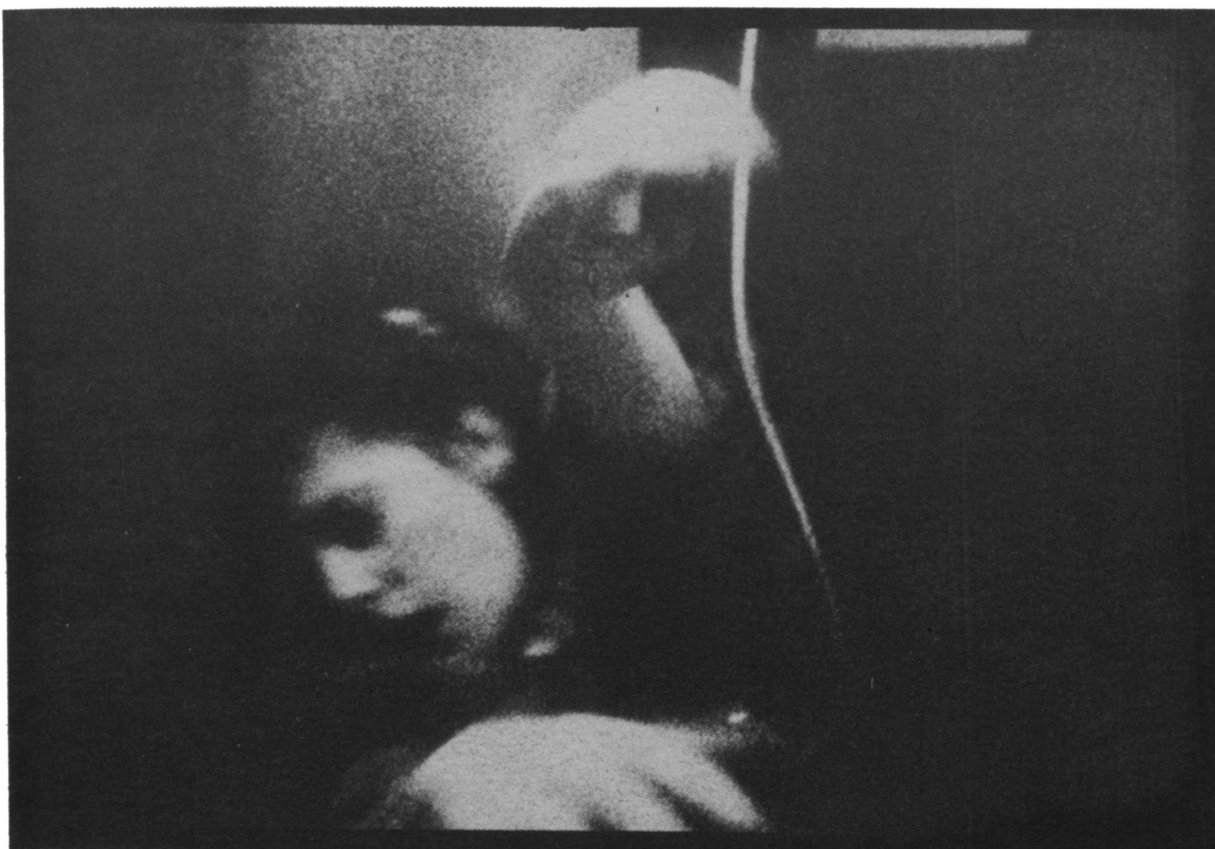
# ***MOTIVE***





*MOTIVE is a S8 Feature Film Produced by Liza Bear and Michael McClard/Written and Directed by Michael McClard/Starring Jimmy DeSana with Paula Greif and Tim Collins, John Lurie, Rae Spencer-Cullen and Betsy Sussler. MOTIVE premiered at The New Cinema in April of 1979.*

*Rae Spencer-Cullen  
Betsy Sussler  
Paula Greif*



A. Could you say what those other aspects are?

M. Well, now it seems a little naive maybe. Just that by taking away all of the psychological handles, the moral handles or whatever, you end up with a character who's compelled rather than motivated and that's part of what I was trying to get at. The character really didn't believe in anything or wasn't really driven by anything, so this was the extreme that he was resorting to in order to have a sense of identity or have a sense of being.

A. Well, there's this French novelist, Pierre Guitat, who says the main thing he wants to get beyond in his books, in his novels, is to get beyond human psychology or what he calls neurosis so that he can get at, again, what he calls biological reality or reality, and that the one thing that inhibits it is this neurosis or idealism.

M. Yeah...

A. Which he attacks very much from a leftist point of view.

M. I haven't read...

A. Yeah, right, I'm just saying that it seems similar.

M. It sounds similar except it sounds more high-minded.

A. Yeah, he is a little high-minded and very theoretical (laughter).

M. But it was weird because...I mean it made for a very unglamorous film in a certain way and...I'm not sure whether it was memorable or not. I tend to think it was kind of unmemorable.

A. I remember it.

M. It just seems like it was so flat and...

A. That's why I find it memorable, because I found it absolutely unremitting, it never gave you a second-to...the most memorable thing is how you were really hard-edged about what you were doing, you never lapsed for a minute.

M. Which, in its own way, is a very formal thing.

A. It's a very formal film.

M. Yeah, it was, it's true, and it was hard to do because the tendency is to want to do all of the other things that make it bearable.

A. Yeah.

M. I mean the things that you know will make people want to pay attention.

A. Like the scene where Betsy's (Sussler) in the phone booth and she dies. That could have been a very funny scene...It was pretty funny.

M. It was funny yeah, but it wasn't comic.

A. The tendency could have been to make it extremely comic.

M. Or melodramatic or tragic...

A. Yeah.

M. I think we're going to continue working on the film though. We've talked about it. We haven't really done it, but Jimmy is interested.

A. What do you think the film needs? To be longer or...

M. Yeah, maybe to make it just a little bit more extreme, like add another...it's absurd, maybe it's black humor, it's a humor that you can't...

A. Blackest black, because black humor always went back to this idea of normal. It is just what it is.

M. In retrospect I also feel like there are kind of political connotations that I would like to make more emphatic or somehow a little bit clearer.

*(continued on p.42)*

# I WAS AN EXTRA IN A WOODY ALLEN FILM by Tina L'Hotsky

I was an Extra in a Woody Allen Film. I played a Marilyn Monroe look-alike in a cabaret scene. I was situated behind the principal table where Mr. Allen carried on his drama. I was the 1/80th of a second in the 137th degree of the camera's angle as the lens raced (swept past me). I will probably be a blur in an out-of-focus background. All this may decay forever on the cutting room floor.

All this talent for \$27.50 a day at three days in a cold, gloomy, deserted high school close to the waterfront.

For 11 hours a day we were relentlessly ordered around by a Jock Gestapo; bearded brigade members of the Screen Actors Guild who talked to each other via walky-talky. "Let's move 'em over now. Pile 'em in now. The truck's coming over to pick 'em up." When the truck came we were herded over to the main studio where we filed in and huddled in the anti-chamber to the set. Tensely awaiting our places, we were given precise military commands by these Neanderthal men. We were told to laugh, look up, or turn away, act natural or report back to the high school when we were to be dismissed. They stuffed us with jelly donuts in the morning. The crowd must have consumed 3 billion carbohydrates in those long dark hours before we went to the set.

We were informed of SAG penalties and NO LUNCH. We sat around in eternally endless moments, braced and tense, ready to perform anything in this comedy. I sat there, for what seemed like an infinity in my rhinestones, lacquered hair, melting make-up. At times a strange hunger would come over me in those many hours of waiting. It was no ordinary hunger. It was molecular. It was restrained inertia.

I counted the dust particles in the air. Why was I convicted to show business? Who was this madman behind the camera? I longed to return to the banality of everyday life.

Various rumours circulated as to what the plot was about. Was Woody Allen caught in a time warp in the 1940's? Did the UFO's land on a lawn in New Jersey in the middle of a garden party while Klaus Nomi died of 3rd degree burns to his white vampire skin? Or was Charlotte Rampling going to the Berlin Film Festival?

On the third day of shooting I had lost my will to live and I showed up on the set an hour and a half late. The casting director stormed into Make Up, red-faced and waving my pay sheet. He bellowed, demanding to know what had happened to me. How dare I, etc.

All in all, I admitted to him, "Miss Monroe was ALWAYS late!" ■





Babs Egan

# MENAGE

Betsy Sussler Interviewed by Craig Gholson

Written, Produced and Directed by Betsy Sussler  
Starring Lindzee Smith and Caz Porter:  
Also starring Robert Cooney, Michael McClard,  
James Nares Lisa Rosen and Leslie Schiff.  
With Babes Egan, Suzanne Fletcher, Lance Loud,  
Glenn O'Brien, Teranse Sellers and Duncan Smith

and, in order of appearance, James Shuvus, Richard  
Bach, Amy McMahon, Betsy Sussler, Luther  
Thomas, George Mendez, Becky Johnston, Steve  
Mass, Craig Gholson, Georgia Marsh, Anna  
Schroeder, James Crosby, Kenny Angelica, Cody  
Murphett, Simeon Gallu, Carol Skelsky, Jacqueline

Schnabel, Amos Poe, Vicky Galves, Duncan  
Hannah, Anita Sarko, Millie David, Haoui Montaug  
and Eric Mitchell.

Camera: Betsy Sussler, Robert Cooney and Coleen  
Fitzgibbon.



Lisa Rosen and James Nares



Betsy Sussler, James Nares, Luther Thomas



Glenn O'Brien and Babs

*MENAGE* is a S8 feature film in two parts, "The Story of Myra and Ian" and "Scenes from Everyday Life." At the time of this interview, March 1981, it had just been completed.

CG: When did you conceive of the idea of filming *MENAGE*?

BS: I never conceived of a single idea that could embody the film—the first thing I shot as *MENAGE* was the centerpiece for a play called "Pre-Paradise Sorry Now" which is the story of the Moors Murderers. That section of the play was descriptions of the murders. There were no explicit murders portrayed, but recorded material from the activities of murder: screams, yells, gags, orders, choking, exclamations and more gags that had all been recorded on audio tape during the murders. This was coupled with discussions between Myra and Ian (the murderers) about what they had done that had been ineffective during the last murder and how they would conduct themselves for the next one. Essentially how they would correct their aesthetics and ethics towards a method of murder.

CG: That was a play by....

BS: That was part of an obscure play by Fassbinder that I shot as a film. But I didn't like the rest of the play because it was too moralistic. Lindzee Smith and Caz Porter did a spectacular job with the staging and direction of the play. We worked the whole play around the notion of film so that everything was very flat and done against a screen. The characters in the play were supposed to be the most evil manifestation of people's indifference to each other. And to a lesser degree every other scene in the play fell in line with this acceptance of a very clear cut definition of what is right and what is wrong. It was a foregone conclusion that anybody with power, anyone who was a murderer, was in fact immoral. Not ever amoral. And somehow, I hated that.

CG: (laughter) So, tell the story of the Moors Murderers. These were English Moors Murderers?

BS: Yes, it happened in the late sixties in the north of England in Manchester, a factory town. Two very young lovers, Myra Hindley, aged 23 and Ian Brady, 28, killed several children and buried them on the moors. He was a clerk and she was a shorthand typist and they met in the office and fell in love. It was a long courtship. He would turn her on and be real chummy and then wouldn't talk to her for three weeks. She fell madly in love with him and when he finally asked her out she was completely hyped for it. Right away he started telling her about his hopes and dreams which were basically to become a self-styled Fascist and rule a small contingent of followers and make her his Lieutenant. The final outcome of all this was the murder of these young children who were samples of what they called The Unworthy, although they never developed an explicit definition of The Worthy vs. The Unworthy outside of the fact that their victims were Unworthy and they as the self-chosen murderers were Worthy. The beginning of all this was that he started her reading material on Nazi war criminals and then turned her on to pornography or books that dealt with sex and power, kinky sex, etc. He didn't make any distinction between pornography, or any literature for that matter, murder, atrocities, or totalitarian governments. He was only interested in these things in so much as they all equated with the notions of power—power over other humans. And he thought that by mimicking elements of these activities, he too would become powerful. And of course, murder is a powerful medium, but I think the irony of it all is that it doesn't take a very great talent to do it. *Anyone* can and Ian wanted to be an elitist, I think that's why he was trying to perfect his style. Anyhow, he started Myra out on all this literature and the he got her into posing. He recorded *everything* they did: Myra in little black panties with her dog...

CG: How many murders did they actually commit?

BS: They only prosecuted them for three, but I think they committed more. They had one little girl who was a next door neighbor and was very friendly with them. She would come over to their house and sit around and chat about all these murders in the newspaper and drink wine with them. Wine is an important part of their rituals. Myra was very Catholic and some of the Catholic rituals seemed to be repeated in the murders.

CG: What form did the murders take?

BS: Well, there were two that were interesting besides being sensational. One was a little girl who was forced to pose nude, in pornographic poses and subsequently bound, gagged and murdered. Ian photographed everything (she's in an attitude of prayer in one of them) and Myra recorded it. The last murder was staged as a spectacle. They wanted to start building an army so they tricked Myra's brother-in-law into becoming an unwitting accomplice by staging it for him. It was a private piece of theater. They axed this 17-year-old boy to death. Her brother-in-law was in shock most

of the time. He had to help them clean up and then ran home to his wife on the pretext of getting some sleep and the two of them called the police. The thing is that this is all downplayed in the film, I mean the actual murders. I didn't want to exploit a 7-year-old girl's death by making it a visual staple in the film. It's only mentioned in passing in a voice over. But the activities *surrounding* it are part of the film.

CG: So they ultimately got captured and prosecuted?

BS: Yes. What happened in that part of the film actually happened. A policeman posed as a baker's delivery boy and knocked on the door. Myra didn't want to let him in so he forced his way past her and Ian was lying nude on the couch writing a letter to his boss telling him why he couldn't come into work that

because it was so unaesthetic. What we all really wanted was some kind of shootout, some blood, and what happened was simply an example of English justice—they went to jail." Became invisible so to speak. And then she said, "Do not think that this is a call for capital punishment, I would never ask anyone to do something I would not do myself (kill someone). I just mean (and these are very astute statements) that the Judge, Jury and Press were all left hanging." And it was the hanging from not having any visual impact to the end of a trial that they thought should accompany the denouement of these two people, characters' actions.

CG: There was no catharsis.

BS: Yeah. And then somebody else said the person

Terence Sellers

Robert Cooney



day. The reason he couldn't is because when he was axing this boy to death he hit himself on the ankle and couldn't walk, so there was this cute little note he was writing saying he was run over by a motorbike. Anyway, the cop walks in and says he heard there was some trouble there last night and Ian tried to say it was a homosexual who had come on to him and they had a row, when really that's how he lured the boy to his house in the first place—by posing as a potential lover. And the policeman kept insisting and finally Ian turned to Myra and said "It's all up." And that was it.

CG: So how did you do research for this?

BS: I didn't start doing research on Myra and Ian right away. After I shot the film for the play (and you couldn't get all the information from that dialogue) I wrote short vignettes about power struggles among groups of three because that's what all the murders were, and shot some of these. It wasn't until then that I started reading reports, journalists' reports and books about the murders. You see, everything was done in pieces. I didn't treat the film as a whole—actually complete a finished script, that is—until it was almost all shot. Most of the research went into the soundtrack. Some of the books were ridiculous. One journalist tried to use the events of the murders as a justification for getting pornography off the newsstands. The reasoning being that these poor innocent people who would ordinarily just be clerks and shorthand typists went around reading this material which induced them to commit murder. At the end of the book she said (this is a bit of a paraphrase, "At the end of the trial we all felt let down

they really hated, even though Ian had instigated all of the murders, was Myra. They complained of her mask-like face all through the trial.

CG: So, in effect, during the trial they wanted similar scenarios to those that Myra and Ian had acted out.

BS: Yeah...

CG: Some equivalent, like in a theater piece.

BS: Exactly. And this, in effect, was the basis for the whole film—to set up theatrical situations that had no denouement or an outcome(s) that was so deadpan it would become farcical.

CG: Are they still in jail?

BS: She was up for parole but they're still in jail.

CG: When did you actually start filming?

BS: The Story of Myra and Ian was shot two years ago, maybe more. But I didn't do any actual shooting for the rest for a long time because I was doing other plays and another film.

CG: Myra and Ian constituted the first part, the prologue.

BS: Yes, and then the other part of the film, "Scenes from Everyday Life," I started shooting about 15 months ago. It didn't take long to shoot. I just had to keep starting and stopping because of money.

CG: Did you lose momentum?

BS: No, it's an entirely different sort of film. When I started filming again I thought about facets of Myra's and Ian's lives—catholicism, or the way they treated sex, their insular way of life, their expectations or whatever that also existed, or manifested itself in more common occurrences in other people's lives. I treated each vignette as a 1-3 minute film in its own right, a scene from everyday life. And

(continued on p. 42)

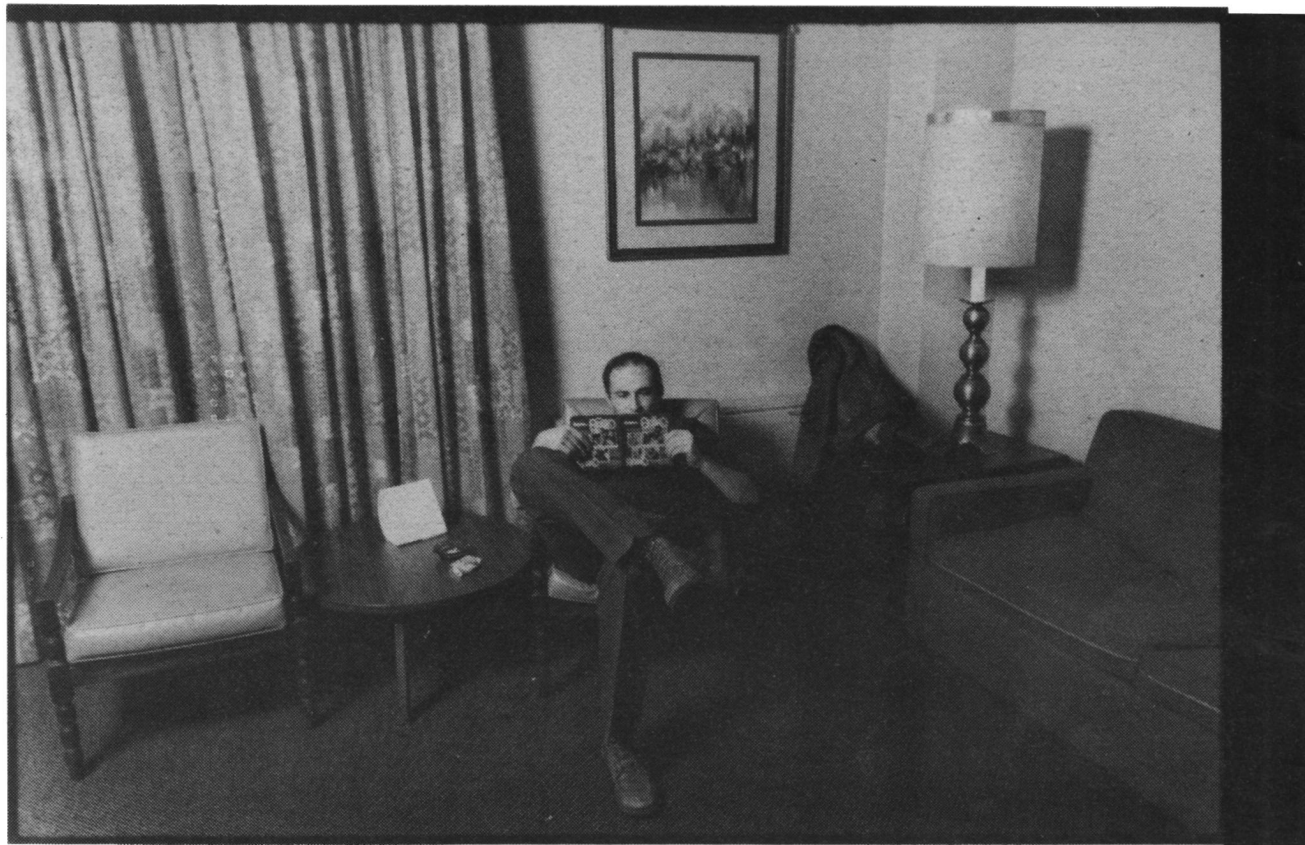
# THE THIRD PERSON

A Film by Michael Oblowitz

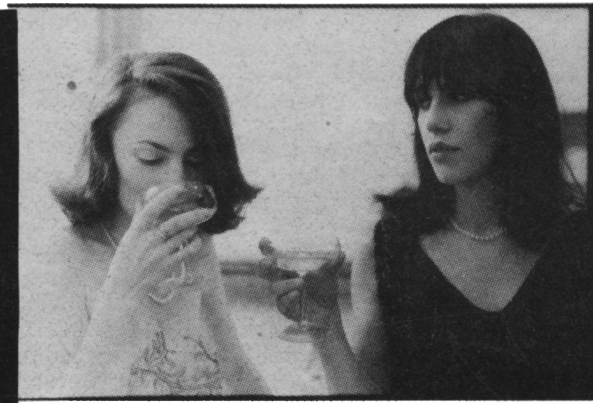
*The Third Person* is about a modern couple, trapped by their social and economic circumstance in an increasingly more violent and psychologically turbulent relationship with each other. The film stresses their utter alienation from, and incapacity to relate to, the world at large. This separation from the mainstream of everyday life forces a depressingly disturbed dependence on each other, the consequences of which are neither foreseen nor understood by either of them. Their relationship becomes a metaphor for a sado-masochistic behaviour pattern that underlies many modern hetero-sexual relationships. Their life, without a sense of history or culture through which to articulate and interpret their behaviour, is not an uncommon modern existential situation. Their attempts at expressing their frustration take on progressively more and more pathogenic forms moving towards an inevitable finale...■

Michael Oblowitz. 10/17/81.  
2:45 a.m./NYC

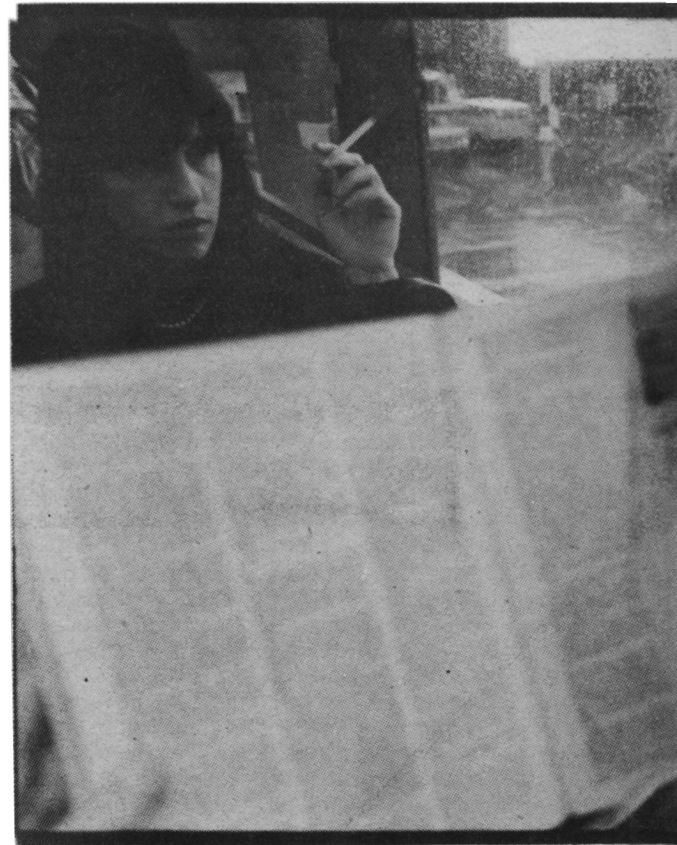
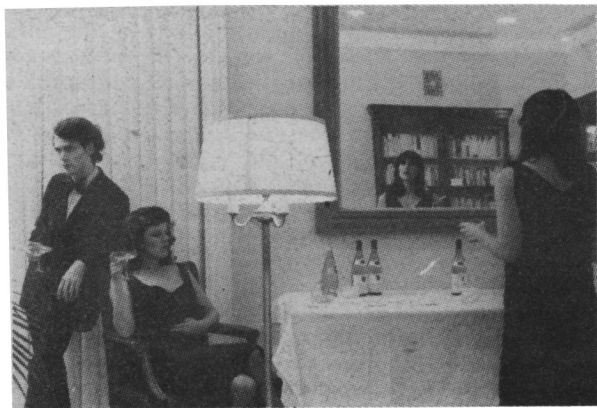
*Written, produced and directed by Michael Oblowitz*  
*Camera: Michael Oblowitz*  
*Assistant Director: Michael Shamberg*  
*Assistant Camera: Christof Lanzemberger*  
*Editors: Skip Lievsay, Lizzie Borden*  
*Music: Anton Fig Make-up, Dunja Sagov*  
*With: Rosemarie Hochschild*  
*Ron Vawter*  
*Will Patton*  
*Fiona Templeton*  
*Nancy Riley Peyton*  
*Stuart Sherman*



Ron Vawter



Will Patton Fiona Templeton Rosemarie Hochschild



Rosemarie Hochschild



*Rosemarie Hochschild*

COMING SOON...



*Ron Vawter*



*Rosemarie Hochschild*



*Ron Vawter*



*Nancy Riley Peyton*



1898

Dora visits  
Freud.

Herr K. pro-  
positions Dora.

Dora slaps  
Herr K. in the  
face.

Suzanne Fletcher

## Sigmund Freud's Dora

In 1899, Sigmund Freud began treatment with an 18-year-old girl who was brought to him for analysis by her father after she had written a suicide note. Freud was eager to use this case to demonstrate the hypotheses laid out in his "Interpretation of Dreams" but after only three months of treatment the young woman walked out, without being cured.

Five years later Freud published an account of this failed treatment, calling it a "Fragment of an Analysis" and giving his patient the name *Dora*—that of a servant in his household.

Recently, Dora has been a focus for the appropriation of psychoanalysis by feminist theory. Questions about the exchange of women, the representation of female sexuality, and the marginal or contradictory position of women in language, have been discovered in her story.

But the descriptions Freud gave of Dora are not innocent documentary facts. Freud constructs her as a character in the structure of his "novelette", as a recollection of the words he remembers her having spoken, as an object for his scientific detective-work. Thus the presentation of her sexuality is also a function of these analytic and narrative processes.

The psychoanalytic method itself is a process of reading the language and symptoms of the patient; Freud's written case history is a reading of that reading, which we in turn read.

The film, *Sigmund Freud's Dora* starts from the position that these processes of representation are not only a factor in psychoanalytic texts. They exist no less in a film's shot-counter-shot than they do in advertising; no less in the iconography of the mother than they do in pornography.

140 minute film (16mm color sound) by Anthony McCall, Claire Pajackowska, Andrew Tyndall and Jane Weinstock.



Anna Hegira, *The Mother*

*Sigmund Freud*: Joel Kovel  
*Dora*: Silvia Kolbowski  
*Dora's Mother*: Anne Hegira  
*Talking Lips*: Suzanne Fletcher

Additional writing: Ivan Ward  
Camera: Babette Mangolte  
Sound: Deedee Halleck

New York City, 1979

Quotes from television advertising and film pornography divide up the narrative sections of "Sigmund Freud's Dora": The most pervasive, and the most extreme forms of sexual representation.





# Why Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend Diamonds

by Duncan Smith

*Why are diamonds a girl's best friend? Diamonds, the most popular gemstone, are also the symbol for steadfast love. A girl's best friend finds symbolic expression in the idea of the diamond. However, a diamond is not a friend, nor a lover, and then it is in very odd ways.*

"A diamond is forever," so say those advertisements for diamonds, the female being quietly embraced by the man she is either engaged or married to. Her ring indicates lifelong friendship with the companion. The ring can be worn until she dies and thus she may pass it on as an heirloom, a testament to her brief stay in the world of the living, a monument of her former life. Or she may discard it as soon as that love has corrupted into divorce, a broken engagement, her partner's death, and so forth. Even off one's finger, diamonds are still around, they still "ring" and are not necessarily on one's finger.

When we hear a record being played, we know that a record player's pick-up and its needle are composed of a perfectly hard substance, a diamond. Rubies, the next hardest, are not as strong as the diamond, probably because of the diamond's four-carbon molecular structure, a structure that pervades the entirety of the diamond, making it the hardest, the most "invincible" of all matter. *Adamas* is the Latin word for diamond, "diamond" being a corruption from that adjective, invincible. Steadfast, invincible love has the diamond as its metaphor, but the music or song heard by those two lovers is facilitated by the very substance they wear on their fingers.

To hear a song off of a record has the diamond as its medium. The sound of the record is thus transmitted by a diamond and the lovers who are staring at their diamond sanctifies precious, steadfast love, the diamond "rings" in front of their ring.

When lovers say, "*Darling, this is our song,*" they may or may not be aware that "*their song*" is rung into their ears by a diamond. A song that memorializes a love is also the diamond ring or "ringing" diamond stylus memorializing their love.

A diamond stylus is only heard, not seen. The brilliance of a diamond ring is also met by the brilliance of sound waves meeting the air, the sound waves reverberating by means of the faculty of a diamond stylus' perfect contact with two sides of a record's groove. The jewel that is seen is also the jewel that is heard.

A diamond in contact with one's eye, the diamond ring, is also the diamond in contact with one's ear. The heart, the place where love builds its figurative home, has "ear" within the heart of the word h(ear)t. And "hard" is allophonic with "heart," just as "heard" is also euphonious with those two words. A hard diamond is placed in conjunction with the hearts of lovers and with their "ears," the sound of the diamond that falls into the hearts of lovers, into the "ear" which is in the heart of h(ear)t or h(ear)d. Pearls, too, have "ear" within their heart, p(ear)l. Steadfast, invincible, "hard" love builds its home around the hard diamond seen or around the hard diamond heard in the ear over a record player, the immortal song now deep in the hearts of lovers. The "song in my heart" has been heard and seen, since within our hearts lives a diamond, a four-cornered, four-chambered object, just as our heart is. (There are heart-shaped diamonds.)

The strength of the diamond, its uniform, crystalline structure, has no air within it, no air for sound to reverberate within it. The heart, however, is quite loud, for even in the greatest of silences, we can always hear our hearts. Remember when Rachel Welch had to close her ears in the movie *Fantastic Voyage*? The microscopically shrunken vehicle ventured into the comparatively gigantic chambers of the man's heart, and the sound of the muscle beating was unbearably loud for the voyagers. There is no sound within a diamond, no pockets of air, at least in

flawless diamonds. When the diamond performs its function as stylus, the sound has the diamond as its point of origin, albeit the perfectly faceted and angled sides of the diamond can register all the variations felt along the record's groove. Never, never, never though can the diamond have sound pass through it for the diamond's symmetry and the ensuing vibrations can only issue upon contact with the diamond's outside, while this jewel's inside, its heart, its airtight interior cannot carry sound within it.

Furthermore, this diamond-idea is related to the idea of the Holy Trinity, particularly in relation to the Holy Spirit of the Holy Ghost. The correspondence of the Mystical Kabbala has the diamond represent the idea of one in three. God is the three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost/Spirit represents the love between the father and son, between the unbegotten Father and the begotten Son, Christ. The Virgin Mary was infused with the spirit of the Holy Ghost at Annunciation. At Christ's Baptism and the Pentecost are also where the Holy Ghost made its divine presence felt.

The angel Gabriel at Mary's Annunciation was never really seen, for according to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, careful inspection of the New Testament reveals that the angel imparted some kind of inner voice within the "silence of Mary's soul." God spoke to Mary via the angel at the moment where the Holy Ghost, represented by the form of a dove, was present as well. A dove, with its wings outspread, forms a diamond shape, four diagonals join its tail, two wings and beak. The spirit or breath of God, his "sound," in its broadest figurative sense, is effectuated by the dove, the Holy Spirit in its diamond shape.

Furthermore, at Pentecost, when Christ promised the Holy Spirit would visit Mary and his disciples, the Holy Ghost was described as "a roar like that of mighty winds filled the house and tongues like tongues of fire rested in everyone present." Old Testament meanings concerning spirit are often concerned with breath, the breath from God's mouth that gave life to Christ, that breath being the Holy Spirit with its "mighty winds" and "tongues like tongues of fire."

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## *Darling, this is our song.*

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Back to diamonds. If diamonds facilitate the transmission of sound to our ears, conceivably we are in the position of duplicating the Trinity. Singer-musicians breathe into our ears when we hear the record. Singer-God has a diamond-Holy Ghost for us Gods on earth, us Christs who are Gods in the flesh. This voice from afar, God, enters our ears, as the Virgin was inseminated with Christ's embryo through her ears. (St. Augustine thought that Mary was fertilized in such a fashion.) We, as listeners to music, to the diamond ring, receive the spirit, the voice, the breath.

The eternal love of the Holy Spirit for the Father and the Son congrues with the diamond, this symbol of steadfast love. The Holy Ghost, as a four-cornered dove, or diamond stylus, is eternal, despite the relative duration of a diamond stylus being only 100-500 hours of playing time. The record's grooves wear down the stylus into unplayability, an argument against its steadfastness in playing or ringing out those songs of love.

Synthetic diamonds are made from graphite when extremely high temperatures and pressures are exerted on the substance that allows us to write, the pencil with its graphite. A stereo pick-up has a diamond stylus for writing out the record grooves into the air, and it is a diamond, derived from carbon, just as another writing implement has only simple carbon within it. Imagine writing with a diamond tipped pencil. Also, in order for oil to be mined, synthetic diamonds bore into the earth's crust so as to unearth the crude. This is odd, since oil is what makes up record discs, them being played by diamonds, and them being mined by diamonds.

Heroin users may have what are called "works," the usual needle, syringe and cooking spoon. Heroin and its necessary needle also entail the necessary "pick-up needle" with its diamond stylus. This association finds its truth in the myths of junk taken by musicians. They may have made albums or not and what albums they play a pick-up needle is needed, or if their need for junk is great, they use a needle full of prepared heroin to pick them up. A diamond stylus, if pressed hard enough, could puncture your skin, while a needle and syringe will accomplish the act. Even with "glass works" the (sharp) diamond stylus finds its companion in something else crystalline, a

glassy needle. These associations should be placed next to the mythology of drug-taking musicians or music lovers, reinforced by the stylus that lets them hear their own music. It is an alignment to an object that resonates a primary masochism, crystalline drugs the interiorized object that magnifies the external world's cruelty on its recipients. The heroin and cocaine addict demonstrates, though not completely, that such consumption is an allegory of a pulverized diamond stylus.

The ritual of cocaine or heroin ingestion through the nose remains within this general crystallization that the diamond idea secretly originates. The crystal powder is cut into lines over a pane of glass or mirror. A razor is often used, a highly sharp tool whose cutting power metaphorically resides with the cutting power of the diamond. If glass or a mirror is used for the razor to cut the dust up on, we then encounter a crystal cut by a near crystal on a crystal; crystals are cut by crystals on crystals; diamonds are cut by diamonds on a diamond; diamond styluses are cut by diamonds on diamond records, enabling more pulverization, the pulverization of the diamond stylus that fictively becomes the precious powder we put into our bodies. And all of this is accompanied by a loud rapping of the razor on the mirror as it divides up the powder. A diamond stylus elicits sound just as the razor, another sharp implement, elicits peals into the air.

One procedure in coke or heroin taking consists of using a pen empty of its ink-filled cartridge. The hollow tube allows easy suction of whatever drug under question. Again, another writing implement enters into a ritual of drug taking.

A few words on the nose. The nose is a prosthetic extension of the body, it is an appendage of the body, particularly the face. The nose "sticks out," it juts into the air. One's profile has the nose as its distinguishing mark, a kind of "prow" or "stylus" or more cryptically, a permanent "dais" of the body that writes itself through the empty air. Figuratively, the diamond resembles the nose for the nose forms a small "V" reproducing the diamond's point that is either placed in platinum or on record grooves. The nose is a diamond also in terms of a topography of the ego; every ego is a bubble of sorts, an envelop of skin and with the nose, this raised platform, this "dais," or organ, is a bump in the ego-bubble. Jacques Lacan said that recognition of an ego is recognition of a nose. The diamond, since it is attached to the body, a "hump" of sorts on the body, resembles the nose in the object's interruption of the body's relatively smooth homogeneity. They are, in a broad system of substitutive terms, lumps, outgrowths, cysts, pockets, lobes and so forth. Indeed earlobes can bear diamonds, earrings, and like fingers, another bodily appertenance, they can bear diamonds with their customary diamond rings. Even the head, the body's biggest "bump," can bear a necklace at its base.

The cocaine or heroin that goes back into the nose goes back into the diamond-hood these drugs are metaphorically derived from. From the pulverized diamond stylus to the lines on a diamond surface to the diamond in the nose-diamond. The song played by a diamond corrupts into dust which returns to the most diamond-like part of the body, the nose. Similarly, too much dust inhaled collapses the diamond-nose just as the diamond stylus had collapsed from too much playing. People who snort too much diamond dust also lose their diamond, their nose, since the ample diamond dust was derived from playing the diamond too frequently, the ambiguity here residing in either snorting too much dust or, because they are saturated with music, diamond-written sound.

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## *Jeans that cover legs for walking are met by cars that somewhat dispense with legs for driving.*

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Yet have we answered the question "Why are diamonds a girl's best friend?" Perhaps the discussion should explore the role of Norma Jean as the quasi-auroress of this invincible demand.

Is a platinum record playable or not? Can I play a platinum record with a diamond stylus? Then it will really be a diamond ring, since diamond rings are set in platinum, and the platinum record played by a diamond needle is also a diamond ring, a diamond supported by platinum.

The next transition: from gold records to platinum records to diamond records. A diamond record played by a diamond stylus. An invincible record and its invincible pen. The love between those two diamonds will be invincible, the record that never warps played by its stylus that would never corrupt or bore

(as synthetic diamonds do) into the oil record, since this record is now a diamond and not vinyl/oil. Now laser beams are being used as styluses on video-discs, the beam in question will never warp the record, although its incredible cutting power is capable of boring holes through diamonds.

One question has plagued me during this discussion: what other jewels could be used for a stylus? Besides the diamond, what could be substituted, what would allow the divine breath to vibrate perfectly throughout the air? A ruby stylus, an emerald stylus, a pearl stylus, a sapphire stylus, a topaz stylus, lapis lazuli, amethyst? Rubies might be appropriate since they are the next hardest gem to the diamond, and indispensable in the formation of laser beams. Emeralds are much too precious, rare and expensive to be used, besides we would be straining ourselves terribly to see such an exquisite though tiny stone, once made into a nearly invisible writing point. Sapphires were originally used as styluses, and like the emerald we would be despondent not to be able to see the pale, cross-shaped star draped over these magnificent gems. I will discuss pearl styluses further on.

Certainly the listener is not at a loss when the music compensates for the absence of the visual brilliance of the diamond or any of its equivalents. Listening to the compositions of musical geniuses must face the inevitable loss of those prismatic gleams when light strikes these jewels under question. The tininess of the diamond stylus cannot shed the treasured refraction; placing one's finger under the pick-up needle asserts the diamond's presence, albeit by mere touching—and if the stereo's "power" button has been pressed—a finger's pores and rippling array of lines, swirls, "grooves" again, facilitates the diamond to register the sound of such a fingertip's landscape. We can then "hear" the finger that only feels hot or cold, rough or soft—and another argument for the diamond's perfection—sound for the touch, sound for the short interval of pain at the stylus' sharpness, and while under such a delicious sensation, we beg our ears to receive the equivalent; oddly, it all started since the prism was never seen.

Pearls, however, would not hurt whatsoever if they were made into styluses. Their roundness and smoothness would be a welcome sensation to the finger dismayed by the surgical potential of the other gem. Oddly enough, inside the pearl is a sharp object, a chip off of the oyster's exterior. The oyster's outside, composed of calcium, grows layers and layers of shell. These encrustations are what pearl divers chip off and insert into the oyster's lip. Once inside the oyster, this formerly "outside" chip irritates the soft, fleshy interior, thus propelling the oyster to cover the hard edge of the chip with what will eventually become the ideally smooth surface of the pearl. From the outside of the oyster to its inside, and once inside, the chip is then a "foreign" body (although it is part of the oyster, hence not so foreign) about to become reconciled with the interior; whenever the oyster is happy with the very thing that caused so much discomfort, the pearl diver may remove the former chip. The pearl is thus a prophylactic to the pain of the oyster's inside. Eventually, the pearl consecrates the oyster's relative ugliness, the oyster's exterior layers of unsightly calcium growth, when that ugly exterior

was the very origin of the pearl, before it evolved into its hemispheric perfection. A pearl, like a diamond, is really a chip, a hard, knife-like surface. (If you have ever dived for oysters for perhaps eating them on the half-shell, your fingers get sliced up terribly.) But only in the heart of the pearl does the chip exist. To touch a pearl stylus is a comfort in comparison to a diamond stylus. Indeed, if such a stylus existed, the pearl just might (a hypothesis) wear down and become the chip it began building itself upon. Then that chip would be diamondine. The heart of the pearl has a diamond, however odd that may strike your ears.

All record grooves are now suited for the purposes of a diamond's point to travel along. What would a record's grooves evolve into if a pearl, a round pearl, were to be used. Instead of V-shaped valleys we would have U-shaped ones; the pearl would have to touch on grooves that were essentially curved, not angled as with a diamond. And what would that sound like? What would a pearl stylus do to a record's sound, what would the sound sound like? Would the music become softer, fuzzier, slower, what? To hear a gem "clearly" has always had the diamond as its standard. Could there be a pearl sound standard where the category of "clarity" and "sharpness" no longer applied, but the predicates of "subtlety" or "softness" did? Conjecturing a pearl stylus, even in the shape of a record's grooves, seems at best fantasm; its only truth is that diamonds and pearls are gems, and hence interchangeable; if not, the imagination leaves the pearl to a future of silences, whereas the diamond maintains both visual and acoustic brilliance. All those pearl divers have to do then is to drop diamond chips into the oyster and see whether

*"Angel dust" resonates with the idea of the angel Gabriel accompanied by the Holy Ghost at Mary's Annunciation when she is about to hear God.*

calcium by-products will make the nacreous shell of the pearl. A diamond is now in the heart of a pearl. That double gem will elicit delicious sound, eventually after the pearl dust has scattered itself over the record disc. As the pearl wears down, casting the sheeny black surface into one that is more opalescent, this hybrid stylus then advances the sound's quality and clarity once the strange stylus is fully a diamond.

This hypothetical situation with a pearl-diamond stylus, this pulverization of the pearl as it transforms itself into a diamond in the process, could happen with a diamond as well. The 500th playing time of the diamond stylus signals the diamond stylus' vulnerability, its breakage. Could the diamond stylus be shedding itself along the way

Let us suppose that a diamond does just that, that by wearing down, it chips off, it crumbles through strain towards its 500th playing time. And where do these diamond morsels go, where do these even tinier fragments of the diamond stylus go? A transformation of the diamond stylus takes place, and, conceivably, diamond dust results. This is quite possible with the fabulation of a diamond record and its diamond stylus, since the cutting of a diamond has to take place

with a diamond, the diamond record's grooves doing the pulverizing, the cutting. Powder then fills the air and enters into ourselves in the strangest of ways.

Since my entire argument is replete with hypotheses, I shall make another. After the diamond's fictive wear-down into diamond dust since it played so many times on the record, the dust became transformed, alchemized if you will into the pharmacological habits of a record's listeners, the drugs cocaine and heroin.

With all this dust travelling through the air, this precious dust from the diamond playing on record grooves and its being pulverized by such grooves, the dust enters our bodies. If the similarity between cocaine or heroin or any other dust-like drug is justified, then this dust enters, as is a common practice, through the nose. Of course, rock musicians will snort "rocks," the rocks in question being more precious than gold, a rock not as expensive as the rocks that are diamonds. A bird of paradise flew up my nose could mean the four-cornered dove of the Holy Ghost is flying up my nose and into my lungs, the very site of breath or spirit again. "Angel dust" resonates with the idea of the angel Gabriel accompanied by the Holy Ghost at Mary's Annunciation when she is about to hear God. The head that is suffused with diamond dust, or sound for that matter, cannot ingest diamonds *per se*, only their closest equivalents: substances that are crystalline, expensive and in association with the non-representational, non-worldly commonplaces of music. "Getting high" on music or drugs finds the diamond-standard always within the two categories. Besides the music industry attempts to saturate its viewers with scopic or visual spectacle as well as aural spectacle. Here, the thing that is missing is the drive of the heaving of the lungs, satiated by near diamond dust, an illegality and the envy of those hungry spectators who think that rock musicians get all the "dust" or "rocks" they want.

Norma Jean starred in a film *All About Eve*, a film that appeared in conjunction with *Sunset Boulevard* with its Norma Desmond. Both films were up for the 1950 Academy Awards and are often billed with each other in movie houses not to mention the instance of seeing *Sunset Boulevard* on television when *All About Eve* was playing on another channel, the two films having begun at the exact same time.

Norma Jean appeared outside of *Sunset Boulevard*, but she was inside it, inside that film by virtue of the one name that was "inside" of her, the "Norma Jean" inside Marilyn Monroe. Norma Jean is, however far-fetched this sounds, the Norma Desmond played by Gloria Swanson. Norma Jean-Desmond is the star who can cross either place, either film, her only ticket being "Norma," Marilyn's original name, a strange entrance to the *All About Eve/Sunset Boulevard* sepulcher buried within ourselves.

Norma Desmond can flip into Norma Diamond, the "diamond" being the first word Norma Desmond called out in the bridge game sequence in *Sunset Boulevard*. Diamond and Desmond both have an initial "d" to their sequence of identically numbered  
(continued on p. 47)



# FAG RAG

By Terence Sellers

She is the most disgusting creature known to fags. She hangs around the waterfront all night trying to make a queer guy. They could care less. Sometimes she dresses up like a guy but they all know who it is. She is the fag rag whose only ambition is to suck cock. It's so lowlife it's appalling, and we all wish someone would teach her a lesson but that's just what she wants, besides she's a dumb type who probably wouldn't learn. So she stays stupid and full of yearning.

Sometimes on a slow night the bartenders on West will tolerate her nasty twat on a barstool. But as soon as some trade comes in she has to get out. She is just a bum looking for a handout. One place has a lot of trouble with her since their john is right next to the back entrance, so she can sneak in and hide out in the bathroom. It's dark in there and sometimes she gets away with her tricks. More often you hear a lot of yelling and scuffling and she gets her ass thrown back out on the curb. The queens pretend to feel sorry and tsk over her presumption. But in general no one gives two shits.

She will undoubtedly tell you, if you bother to listen, that no one can tell the difference between a male mouth and a female mouth. She is really a fool. She can't get it through her head no one wants to submit to the degradation of coming within a mile of any part of a woman no matter how much the "same" it is. The queens pretend to believe what she says and fake like they'll take her in the john to prove it—she's so screwed up she'll even go for a queen—they take her \$ and dash back to the bar, laughing their heads off. "I'm no lesbian." they scream at her.

They won't let her in the Toilet because she stays there all night and butts into everything. She tries so hard to win approval, to be slavish and proper but there's nothing worse than a pushy masochist. One night the bouncers threatened to mess up her face if she didn't clear out. She started screaming they didn't want her because she was so fucking obedient, even more than any male slave. She raved so much they'd punch her one but they knew what was happening and got the cloak-room nelly to come out and slap her one before they dumped her in a cab. "Get on home to your husband, girl." No doubt she was swooning all the way home over the rough treatment she'd received, going over and over in her mind their faces, voices, the dose of bottomless contempt they gave her. That's why no one likes having her around, you can't help giving her what she wants.

She's a good-looking girl with a sexy figure, I guess, and she dresses well and looks Uptown. Why she doesn't answer an ad or make arrangements with a call service I don't know. There's plenty of hustlers wouldn't mind beating up on her for a hundred or so. She just likes to fuck up the guys' scene is what it is. She wants to be one of the guys. But one night after she tried to bust into a private party in one of the leather bars down on West a few guys talked about it and decided it was time someone cleaned up the neighborhood.

Her typical scene is to get decked out to the nines and cruise up and down West, stand in front of the bars out on the sidewalk and just stare in at the guys. If the bartender doesn't seem too hostile she'll saunter in. Most of the time he won't serve her and she gets tossed out for loitering. If it's slow he'll let her buy a drink and overcharge her \$5 or \$10. She hangs around, drinking and staring. She really is a gorgeous girl and seems the perfect Hollywood match for all the cowboys and cyclists except. She'll pick out a guy and glide over and make her move. They usually ignore her, but if the guy has a date he'll come over and tell her to fuck off. Then she has to split, fast. On very rare occasions she picks some guy who needs the money bad. He'll look around cautiously and catch the bartender's eye who lets him know he knows it's just a trick. So they'll go into the john. Now and then some square guy will try to pick her up, relieved he doesn't have to think about coming out that night. She gets wildly indignant and starts yelling, "Don't you know this is a gay bar?" which totally confuses the guy. In general no bartender lets her stay for more than one drink, except at one very strict leather bar where she has to pay a penalty tax of \$20 with each drink. She pays.



Duncan Smith, Terence Sellers and Duncan Hannah Photo by EDO

So one night they put out the alert for her. Someone spots her hanging around on a corner and goes up to her, inviting her for a drink. She's in heaven. She can't believe it. They walk around to a quiet little spot. No one's around yet so he excuses himself and makes a few calls. When he comes back they chitchat about this bar and that bar and then she makes her bid. "Hey...uh, fella," she says in a low and sultry voice, glancing nervously at the bartender at the other end of the bar, "I think I could be of service." She nudges him coyly near his crotch with her hipbone. He takes a pull at his drink and waits on his disgust to have its full flower. "I'll pay," she whispers, pursing her waxy red lips like an asshole. "Nah, not tonight," he puts her down and she besieges him with requests as to when. "Later, later," she's tantalized "but I got a friend." She squirms all over herself just thinking about an available one. "You probably think I'm pretty strange hanging around this scene, don't you?" she challenges him. "You might not believe it but I do get what I want. Like for instance, yourself, why did you pick up on me?" She's so fucking stupid. "Uh, I don't know, who cares?" "I've got no choice," now she's whining. "It's the only way I can get off." He gets really revolted hearing her talk about her gruesome female sexuality. "Oh yeh," says he, "sodomasochist's liberation." She's all agog. "I knew you had some brains behind that pose." She yammers on, pleased to have hooked up with such a goodlooker and his buddy. More guys are coming in the place, waiting.

The decoy comes over and has a drink with them. She smiles and shakes hands and immediately makes her offer. He accepts, and asks her if she wants to come into the backroom. She quivers all over with the thrill of it. The infamous backroom. She knocks over the barstool in her eagerness to follow him. "Very unladylike behavior," sneers a queen. After about one minute a few more guys wander on back. You hear a few high-pitched yells

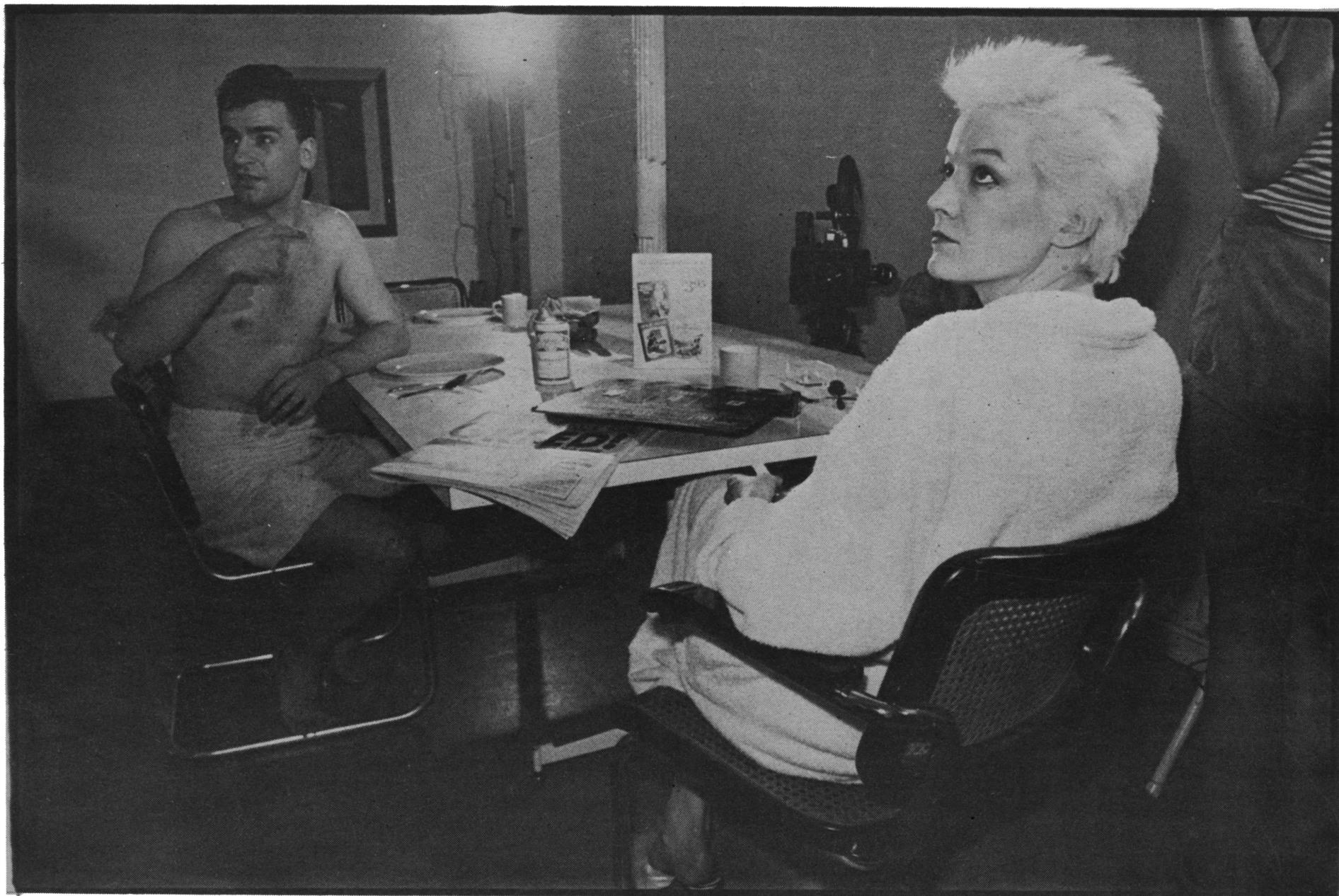
and one long strangled kind of sob and then nothing and the guys come out. Two are lugging a big green plastic trashcan. It only took about ten minutes.

When I came into the backroom she was on her knees in front of him and he was playing around, rubbing his crotch but holding her away. Her eyes were popping out of her head and glued to his bulge. It was real nasty. When she saw me and the other guys she got a little nervous. "Dontcha want to do my friends too?" and with craven delight all over her face she breathed Oh yes. "Beg them, ask them if you may have the honour of being their Vicitm." She was begging just like he told her to as they hoisted her up on the pooltable and tied her up tidily. When she was good and ready we let her have it with mophandles and chair legs till she was good and broke down. Then we got the pipes out, the one's we'd filled with concrete for a job not too different from this one. Special attention was given to her pretty pretty face. It was real awful the way she liked it. Even though she fought like mad towards the end you could see she was hot. I wasn't the only one who got really pissed off over that. One of the guys who has a taste for such things shoved his pipe all the way up her snatch as hard as he could. We put it in the can and went out on the wharf where we just left it. Then we went out to the Pier and finished ourselves off. Someone remembered to go back to the bar and clean up.

After a couple of days they wrote up in the paper a little piece about the body being found. They couldn't figure out who'd done it. We found out who she was and all. We passed the clipping around, then Frankie burned it and we had one on the house. Word got around about it for those who were really interested and that was the end of that. Miss T., the famous girl, delivered a sermon on the subject: "Let that be a lesson to all you trash, to stay out of dens of evil where you are not lusted after." ■

**Eric Mitchell's**

# **UNDERGROUND USA**



*Above:  
Eric Mitchell, Patti Astor and Becky Johnston;  
Photo: David Armstrong  
Left: Eric Mitchell and Cookie Mueller, Still.  
Above Right:  
Rene Ricard, Tom DiCillo, Patti Astor and Eric  
Mitchell, Still.*



**UNDERGROUND USA**, written and directed by Eric Mitchell, cinematography by Tom DiCillo, produced by Eric Mitchell and New Cinema Productions with Erdnor Raushalle. A New Line Cinema release.

Vicky.....Patti Astor  
 Kenneth.....Rene Ricard  
 Frank.....Tom Wright  
 Victor.....Eric Mitchell  
 Roommate.....Jackie Curtis  
 Uncle.....Taylor Mead

By David Ehrenstein

Underground U.S.A. is a satire of contemporary New York "scenemaking" in the form of an update of "Sunset Boulevard." "Underground U.S.A." is both a personal triumph for its creator, actor-director Eric Mitchell, and a further indication of the importance of New York's new-wave film movement. New-wave filmmakers like Mitchell have emerged to challenge both commercial moviemaking and the avant-garde. Shown in rock clubs and lofts, these loose, free-form super-8mm narratives quickly gained a loyal cult following for their witty explorations of hip urban life and times. In a style combining amateur enthusiasm with sophisticated visual know-how and a sharp sense of social and political observation, these films are the diametric opposite of the staid formalism of the "experimental" establishment.

His first feature, "Kidnapped" (1978), took on political terrorism, recasting it in the form of a group improvisation for jaded, aimless bohemian types who dabble in it like the latest fashion craze. Political satire figured in Mitchell's next feature, "Red Italy" (1979), as well. Here the actor-director found fun in recreating the style of Italian films of the '60s, shooting his story of a young disillusioned worker (played by Mitchell himself) and his glamour-ridden starlet girlfriend (Jennifer Miro) in any "Italian movie"-type location he could find—espresso bars, restaurants, vacant lots, etc.

"Underground USA" is, on the surface, less political than these other films, but in moving the Super-8 underground into the 16mm bigtime, Mitchell has managed to remain true to his "outlaw" origins while at the same time bringing the new wave movement to the attention of a larger public than it has ever enjoyed.

"Underground USA" is set in the present, but just as "Sunset Boulevard" was haunted by Hollywood's silent movie past, so Mitchell's film uses the Warhol '60s Pop Art scene as a point of reference. As played by Patti Astor, Vicky is clearly meant to represent Edie Sedgwick, the superstar of Warhol's legendary cinematic psychodramas ("Poor Little Rich Girl," "Vinyl," "Beauty No. 2"). Like Norma Desmond, she lives with her butler (Rene Ricard as an effete Erich Von Stronheim) in high style, half-mad and lost in drug-induced dreams of a comeback. But instead of William Holden's disillusioned writer-turned-gigolo, a completely spent and soulless Joe Dallesandro-styled hustler, played by Mitchell himself, is offered.

But while paying generous tribute to the Warhol era (the cast is filled with Warhol veterans like Jackie Curtis and Taylor Mead) Mitchell's approach is never nostalgic. "No More '60s, No More '70s" reads the actor-director's press release for the film. "Underground USA" is in many ways a ritual purging of the past to end a decade whose main stylistic theme (echoed culturally high and low, from art deco to "Grease" and "Happy Days") appeared to be a desire to escape into the world of other, supposedly "better" times.

What the film finds in the present is a New York too sophisticated for its own good. As the characters drift from party to party engaging in idle chit-chat we learn of an art market so controlled by capital that paintings are bought only to be stored away for profit, never to be seen again.

We eavesdrop on chic gossip about a fashion world so stagnant and corrupt that no one of taste dares be caught dead in the clothes of a successful designer. People only come to life when prodded by drugs. Money has replaced sex as the object of everyone's desire.

Mitchell's social prognosis is grim, but on the visual level the effect of "Underground USA" is oddly cheering. Frame after frame shows the inspiration of the best of European and American filmmaking. Mitchell's eye is as keen as Godard's in ferreting out color and detail in the most banal of circumstances. Strategically placing his camera to take in as much space as possible, Mitchell uses mirrors and Sternberg-style heavily shadowed lighting to give the

cramped spaces his characters move in an enormous sense of depth.

The deadpan acting style he and most of his other players indulge in owes much to the work of Rainer Werner Fassbinder. But while this flat-affect approach is Mitchell's main dramatic technique, it doesn't stop him from utilizing work done in a contrasting style as is the case with Rene Ricard's remarkable emotional *tour-de-force* as Kenneth the butler.

There's a rich, multi-layered texture at work here. Characters exist less for themselves than as iconographical anchoring devices—points of reference in a hall of mirrors crossing space and time. The time is now, but it also the *then* of the '60s and the '50s and (remembered) '20s of the Billy Wilder melodrama. As these spent sophisticates move through Mitchell's carefully designed decor trapped in their narcissistic fantasies, going through the motions of rituals that have lost all meaning for them, we may giggle but at the same time be touched by their lives of noisy desperation.

This chic wistfulness comes to a climax in the film's final party scene. Told by Kenneth that "Andy" has called and she'll be shooting a film next week, Vicky—wearing an incredible neo-cubist black and white dress—emerges from her bedroom to face what she thinks will be a roomful of well wishers. But it's just her butler, her chauffeur and her hustler—the same people she's been with throughout the film. Without losing an iota of cool she languidly approaches her chauffeur, who's slowly opening a bottle of champagne. "Is everyone here?" she asks. "We only invited a *very* select group" he replies. ■



Richard Sohl and Chris Stein  
Photo, Bobby Grossman



Glenn O'Brien and Debby Harry  
Photo: Bobby Grossman



Debby Harry, Marie-Paule and Terry Toy

# GLENN O'BRIEN'S

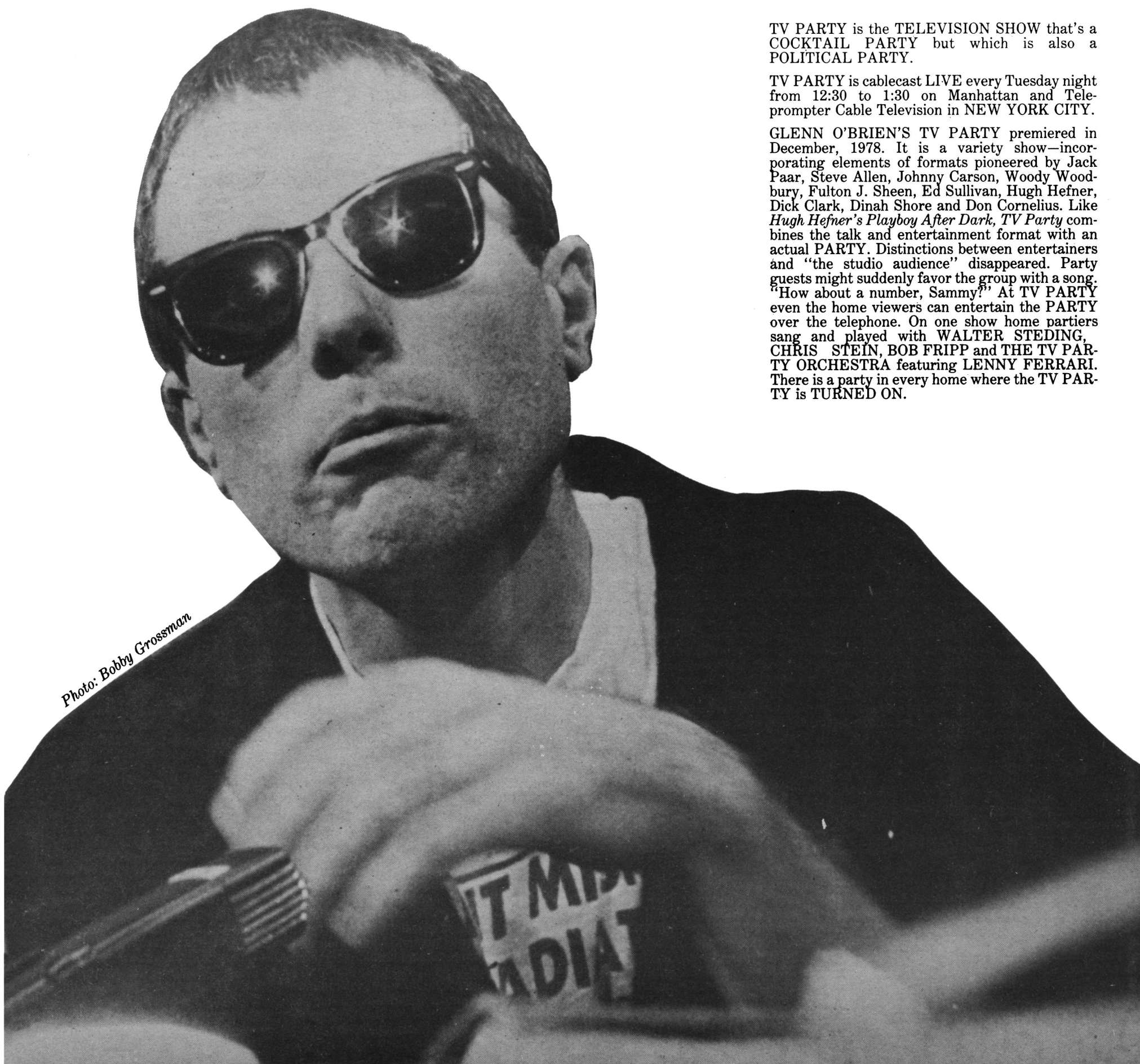


Photo: Bobby Grossman

TV PARTY is the TELEVISION SHOW that's a COCKTAIL PARTY but which is also a POLITICAL PARTY.

TV PARTY is cablecast LIVE every Tuesday night from 12:30 to 1:30 on Manhattan and Teleprompter Cable Television in NEW YORK CITY.

GLENN O'BRIEN'S TV PARTY premiered in December, 1978. It is a variety show—incorporating elements of formats pioneered by Jack Paar, Steve Allen, Johnny Carson, Woody Woodbury, Fulton J. Sheen, Ed Sullivan, Hugh Hefner, Dick Clark, Dinah Shore and Don Cornelius. Like *Hugh Hefner's Playboy After Dark*, TV Party combines the talk and entertainment format with an actual PARTY. Distinctions between entertainers and "the studio audience" disappeared. Party guests might suddenly favor the group with a song. "How about a number, Sammy?" At TV PARTY even the home viewers can entertain the PARTY over the telephone. On one show home partiers sang and played with WALTER STEDING, CHRIS STEIN, BOB FRIPP and THE TV PARTY ORCHESTRA featuring LENNY FERRARI. There is a party in every home where the TV PARTY is TURNED ON.



Glenn O'Brien, David Byrne, Ernie Brooks  
Photo: Bobby Grossman



Chris Stein, Walter Steding and  
Robert Fripp Photo: Kate Simon.

# TV PARTY

TV PARTY is a medium for establishing a PARTY NETWORK. THE PARTY is the highest expression of social activity—the co-operative production of FUN. THE PARTY is the first step in organizing society for mutual interests.

TV PARTY believes that SOCIAL affinity groups will provide the foundation for any effective political action. SOCIAL DREAD is what keeps citizens out of existing political organizations. Existing political organizations such as the political parties do not have the inclination or ability to truly PARTY, indicating the negative character of their functions.

TV PARTY will run a full CAST of candidates in the 1981 NEW YORK CITY ELECTIONS, led by Producer and Host of TV PARTY Glenn O'Brien, who is running for mayor. A distinguished slate of artists and musicians will be announced in the near future, running for City Council, and other important posts.

The principal plank in the TV PARTY PLATFORM is INDEPENDENCE from the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA and NATION STATUS for the FREE PORT OF NEW YORK.

Using the models of HONG KONG and other free ports, TV PARTY will establish a government which makes a profit, eliminating the need for most TAXES, and paying citizens a NATIONAL DIVIDEND. A profitable government will not be hard to achieve once the draining taxes of New York State and the Federal Government are eliminated. Profits will come from various government businesses, such as a monopoly on GAMBLING. New York might become a banking center like SWITZERLAND or THE BAHAMAS, a shipping registry haven like LIBERIA or PANAMA, a major philatelic producer like THE VATICAN.

TV PARTY will make New York a truly FUN CITY by eliminating harmful laws, deregulating personal relationships, achieving full employment and reinstating Rent Control. But the first task will be for the FREE PORT OF NEW YORK to repossess the local electromagnetic spectrum from foreign interests such as THE CONTINENTAL AND GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS MONOPOLIES, CALIFORNIA based ENTERTAINMENT CARTELS, and ANTI-NEW YORK "cultural" propagandists.

In America TV is the form of government. Nothing can be governed but people and TV has proved the greatest modern instrument of their control. TV PARTY presents and reveals ENTERTAINMENT as the ACTUAL form of GOVERNMENT. The institutions commonly called the government are merely the dramatic program, formalizing the results of TV's direction of masses of minds.

The TV MASS MIND is a sophisticated archetype of informed idiocy, created after years of research by government, media and industry working hand in claw. The networks are geared to the LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATORS of opinion and emotion. The low level of intelligence manifest is often decried by intellectuals, but it is practically univer-

sally accepted by the same intellectuals and sophisticates of all sorts because this blandness and bad taste and stupidity is presented as a result of Democracy in Action. The stupidity of TV is accepted by the vast masses with intelligence superior to the TV COMMON DENOMINATOR IQ because it arouses in them feelings of superiority and contempt for the average. TV is a camp. The average person believes himself above the average person whom he believes is a moron.

Cable TV has made it possible for local alternatives to the standards of national programming. Recognizing the inherent POLITICAL POWER of all television programming, TV PARTY is the first political party to deal directly with the ACTUAL MEANS OF MODERN GOVERNMENT. TV PARTY runs and RE-RUNS on a platform that begins with personal relationships, personalities conspiring for fun. We take it from there. THE PARTY serves as an accelerator and co-ordinator of interpersonal relationships, and as a model for larger social and political networks based on positive social inter-action, i.e. FUN.

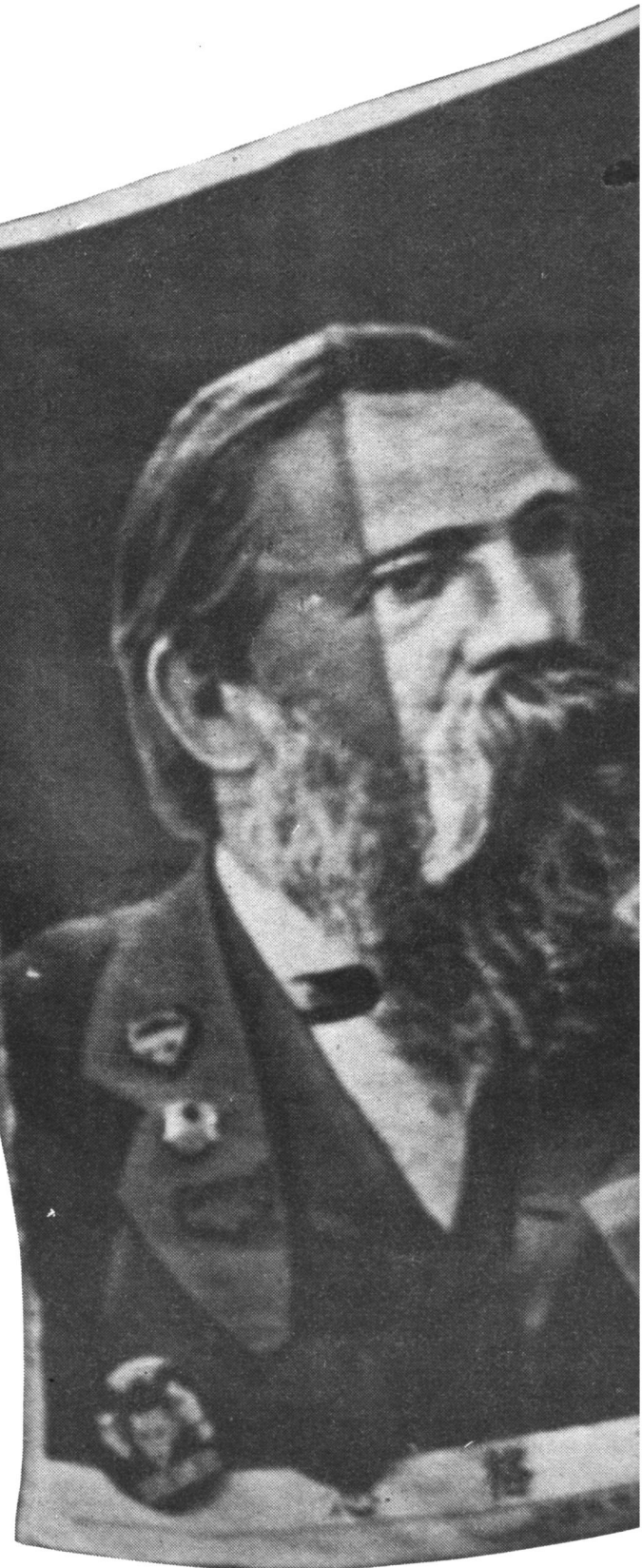
SOCIALISM begins with GOING OUT EVERY NIGHT.

TV PARTY will campaign for putting all important governmental processes on TV. The present cable system can be expanded easily with government subsidies, providing slots for City Council meetings, court sessions and the Mayor's Show. GOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES will be scrutinized by the entire populace and if they do not INFORM, DEBATE, CONSIDER, DECIDE and ACT EFFECTIVELY (not to mention intelligently and ENTERTAININGLY) they will be changed. Statesmen will perform or their ratings will fall and they will be DROPPED.

GOVERNMENT consists of GOING THROUGH CHANNELS. We can change the government simply by CHANGING THE CHANNEL.

CONTINENTAL PROGRAMMING is the enemy of culture, which is always local. A national American culture is as impossible as it is undesirable. The attempt to create such a culture by the CONTINENTAL AND GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS MONOPOLIES is the last and most reprehensible phase of imperialism, a technique termed "Global Absorption" by National Security Guru Zbigniew Brezinski. It is responsible for destroying whatever fledgling cultures existed on this continent at the turn of the century. It is responsible for SHOPPING CENTER ARCHITECTURE and TRAFFIC COP as CULTURE HERO.

The only cure is MASS LOCALIZATION. Independence for NEW YORK is just the first step in creating a DIVIDED STATES OF AMERICA and a DIVIDED NATIONS (D.N.) Culture begins with LOCAL PROGRAMMING. The failure of the National Networks is the same as the failure of the National Government. Local programming and fully empowered local government can make this city as good as it is in REALITY. But as it is our



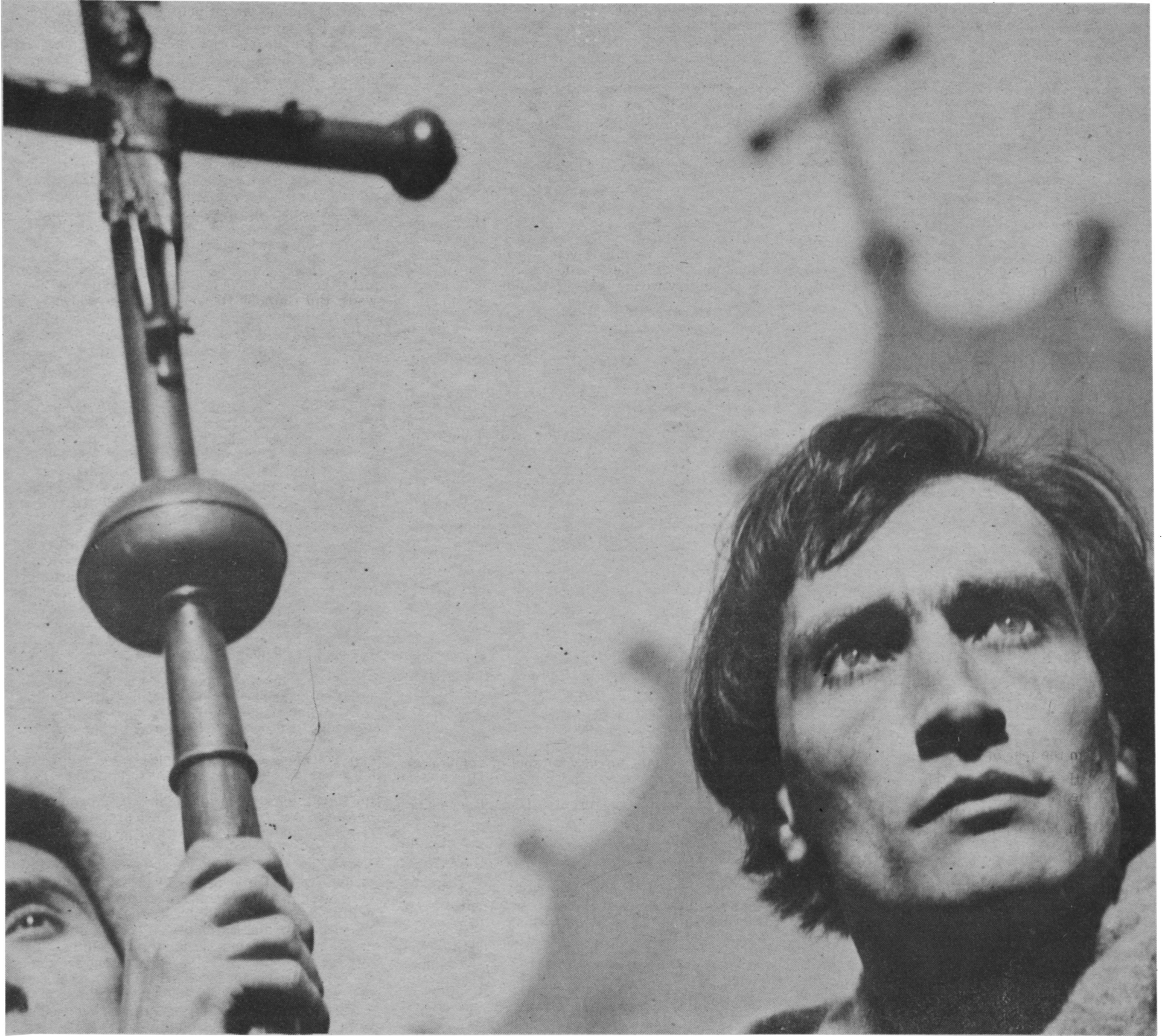
REALITY is constantly assaulted by dreams and visions of an inferior quality. NEW YORK is America's greatest center of culture, but this culture is nearly totally blacked out of radio and television communication. NEW YORK has dozens of the greatest bands in modern music but their music is not played on the radio. New York performers are not seen on television. Why should we import all of this "talent" so inferior to our own? We are not doing it. It's being beamed in. The Networks are polluting our environment. TV PARTY demands local control of the Electromagnetic Spectrum. No image irradiation without representation.

TV PARTY is produced and Hosted by Glenn O'Brien/Directed by Betsy Sussler/Managed by Babs Egan/Cameras, Edo, Fred Brathwaite, Coleen Fitzgibbon, James Nares and Lisa Rosen; Sound Kris Randall

# BLACK MOON

Gary Indiana:

*Artaud, in a detail from Dreyer's JOAN OF ARC*



"The Russians will swallow Europe," a visiting Californian asservated at dinner, vigorously masticating a morsel of calamari. "First they'll seize the Persian Gulf. Then push into Pakistan. Then India, see? The Domino Theory was an underestimation, if anything."

It was the year of a black moon, a year when Mercury went retrograde on an average of once a week. The new one beginning had every appearance of kicking off with World War III. Have you ever tried debating with anyone whether or not the human race will be eradicated in the immediate future?

"I don't think they'll do it," one says. "I mean I just don't think it would happen."

"Yes," insists the other, sounding even more stupid, "But what if it DOES?"

The Californian reminded me of my father, whose impromptu glosses on History had suffused the late hours of my childhood when, after drinking most of a fifth of Chivas, he perceived the diabolical nature of World Communism with preternatural clarity.

"This is the greatest country in the world," he would say, his eyes burning as if they suddenly beheld the Antichrist. "Just go over to Russia and see what the Red Communists call freedom!"

Freedom, nuclear destruction and the moral iconography of the Catholic Church were the principal ideological features of my childhood. The horrors of godless Communism were lavishly illustrated in the cautionary lectures of Sisters Mary Bonaventure and Timothea, the Kafkaesque brides of Christ who taught my second and third grade

classes. In China, the yellow Reds drove spikes through the skulls of our missionaries, nailed slivers of bamboo under their fingernails, tied them to bonsai crosses and left them to rot in the rice paddies ("long fallow under Communist rule"). These, truly, were the martyrs of the modern world, "who will one day be recognized by the Holy Father." That meant Canonization, which at that time I imagined involved firing first and second class relics of the departed Saint from a canon a la Ringling Brothers. (First Class Relics are actual bits of the body, Second Class Relics a shred of the saint's apparel. A Third Class Relic is merely some object touched by him or her in the course of Good Works, hardly worth bothering with.)

For fifty cents—piously reserved from our allowances—we could redeem a pagan baby through the



sacrament of Baptism. Each time you redeemed a pagan baby in China, you received a brightly colored picture of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, Pius XII or some other favorite religious personality. Especially devout children in my school collected them and traded them like baseball cards.

My father began building a cement bomb shelter in our basement in 1958. Your home shelter was supposed to be hermetically sealed off from the outside world, which would soon be completely destroyed by ballistic missiles. One day, three out-sized manila envelopes arrived from Civil Defense. These contained phials of water purifying tablets, khaki-green tins of dehydrated, radiation-proof food, booklets on decontamination and Defending Your Bomb Shelter—one indispensable ingredient was a shotgun. In a real nuclear "conflict," it was thought, imprudent neighbors who had frivolously failed to build their own shelters were likely to drop by on the pretext of borrowing a cup of sugar. If they did, you were supposed to blow their heads off.

America, Love It Or Leave It. Finish your plate, there are kids starving in India. It's the Russians that want a war, not us. I'm not saying Hitler was right but I'm not saying he was wrong either. They smell funny. Stevenson will hand the country over to the Reds. If Kennedy's elected he's going to build a secret tunnel to the Vatican. Next thing the Pope will be running the country. When the Pope opens the envelope the Virgin gave Bernadette, he'll know the date of the end of the world. Death means nothing to them. That's why they want a war.

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

Motto in day-glo above the stairway of the Mudd Club: NUKE 'EM TILL THEY GLOW!

I never believed in God. Never.

My mother "lost her faith" when her brother died, a horrible death from cancer of the thyroid.

My father says he gave up praying when he realized he only did it when he was afraid of death.

Perfect faith means doing good out of love of God and not from the fear of Hell.

My stepbrother returned to the Church after a brief, half-hearted lapse, the faith of the convert being always more intractable than that of the Catholic-born. (A born Catholic knows there is no escape from the Church. A convert only suspects it.) Visiting him in St. Louis in 1977, I was amazed to find the walls of his modern house decorated with stylish icons and an iron crucifix acquired in Japan.

"The new Mass in English is something I can really relate to," he told me. "They have a Sunday folk mass we take the kids to. And the priest gives everybody the Kiss of Peace after Communion now, instead of just waving the cross in your face." On the TV, Martine Marratt's videotapes of gang war in the South Bronx were playing, part of a CBS Special on Violence. In my brother's house the South Bronx was an immense, spectral landscape, unimaginable except through the miracle of television. "You should go," he added skeptically.

Viva and I were sitting in the Greek Gardens on 8th Street when Danny Fields came in.

"The Pope just went by."

"Was that what all those umbrellas were? The Pope?" Viva said. "I can't believe we've been sitting here for an hour and the Pope went by less than ten feet away and we missed him."

"He was wearing a pink plastic slipcover," Danny Fields said. "In an open car."

"I just can't believe we missed the Pope."

"Yesterday he said a Mass for Young People at Shea Stadium, and at one point, you know, he

began making this strange noise into the microphone, it was like, 'wuuu-wuuu, wuuu-wuuu.' And the TV commentators couldn't figure out what it meant, 'wuuu-wuuu, wuuu-wuuu,' like that, over and over, it was like a Polish mantra or something."

"Wuuu-wuuu?"

"Yeah, Wuuu-wuuu. Wuuu-wuuu."

"Maybe it means, 'Peace Be With You' in Polish."

I trace the phases of the moon in the cover of Ted Berrigan's **Red Wagon**, wait for you to call like an idiot. For a month I succumbed to the tender miseries of love, knowing the whole time that eventually it would be me or you staying in, turning down invitations, being rude to friends on the phone so they wouldn't tie up the line.

This week I have a vivid oblong scar on my forehead, just about my right eye—one night, trying to go to my bedroom noiselessly, I walked into the air-conditioner. Of course everyone thinks you hit me. I wish you had.

Florence Lambert and Michel Auder show me their video collage, **Jesus**, a ravishingly photographed survey of religious images and testimonials from former Catholics about the mystery of Jesus. (What I so much value in Michel's work is its organic necessity, the way it arises naturally from his life—also his courtliness towards his material.)

In the tape, Tina L'hotsky explains that Jesus was an alien from outer space, sent here to take over everyone's mind. Diego Cortez describes how he and some friends made six hundred dollars swiping pocketbooks at a revival meeting. Taylor Mead, dressed as the Bishop of Tribeca, blesses the fire hydrants and the cars, and is then attacked by a Devil brandishing an enormous rubber penis.

"Take and eat of this, for this is my body," Alice Neel quotes. "To me, that's pure cannibalism carried over."

Every Tuesday, Father Hathaway gave religious instruction for the boys at St. Thomas Aquinas. You had to ask him what was a sin, what wasn't, in an endless attempt to rid your soul of venial and mortal offenses.

Was it a sin to masturbate, Gerard Papillon wanted to know.

"If you did it before you knew it was a sin, no," Father Hathaway assured everybody. "But now you know, it is."

At the height of the Hostage Crisis, Iranians marched through Tehran whipping themselves with chains as part of an annual religious frenzy.

"See?" A cab driver told me excitedly. "They're totally insane. You don't know what they'll do next. They aren't brought up like us. They're not Christian."

James Nares invites me to his place on 37th Street to see **No Japs At My Funeral**, a video interview with an ex-IRA officer named Jackie. This is a very polished, precise work, with a minimum of shot changes and extraneous material. The thing that's striking about Jackie—besides his sincerity, his moral attractiveness, his good humor—is that his relationship to the source of his oppression is direct, visceral. The Left, here, was denied this relationship in the 60s. Sartre said in **Saint Genet**, "Evil is the systematic substitution of the abstract for the concrete." When the Left existed here—and it doesn't now, since Marxism itself has undergone a fatal crisis—it could only rally itself against a life full of color TV, Pontiacs, and McDonald's hamburgers, the very things the rest of the world ardently craves. And when the Left went bust, its leaders turned to one or another version of Jesus, transcended reality, dropped out of the moral universe to panhandle for 10-year-old Korean gurus.

I decide to take you at your word, that you don't want me to stay in just because you might call. So I linger after an editorial meeting, agree over the phone to join friends at a film. When I get home, there's an angry message that you called and I wasn't there.

There's a direct relation between religion and nuclear war. Even some reasonable people believe that Nostradamus and the last chapters of the Bible foretell everything, that the mushroom cloud produced by an atomic explosion corresponds in all particulars to the fires in the Apocalypse. Even the Marxist religion, in the Gospel According to Engels, predicts a messy end for late capitalism on its regressive swing back to savagery.

For Catholics, at least, there's always Heaven after the last ICBMs and MIRVs have shot their wads. But Catholic Heaven isn't everybody's idea of a day at the beach—as a Chinese doctor at the 29th Street VD Clinic invariably tells his patients, "No sex, no alcohol, no spicy food for one week." Catholic Heaven is a lot like Switzerland, but without Godard and Alain Tanner.

You tell me you're afraid to die, that we should "go to an island somewhere." (We're already on an island, somewhere, but never mind.) I tell you I'll go with you, just to make you happy. You tell me you'd rather be alone. Sometimes, when you're particularly contrary and stubborn, I think there's a slight possibility that you secretly love me. Is that why you're usually accomodating, easy?

"So I was working in this insurance office with this Lithuanian woman named Anna. She was really straight laced, uptight, very Puritan. She only spoke to me once, in the lunchroom, about how her family 'escaped to freedom' during the last war. So I said, 'How did you ever get to America in the middle of the war?' and she said, 'We didn't go to America, we moved to Dusseldorf.'"

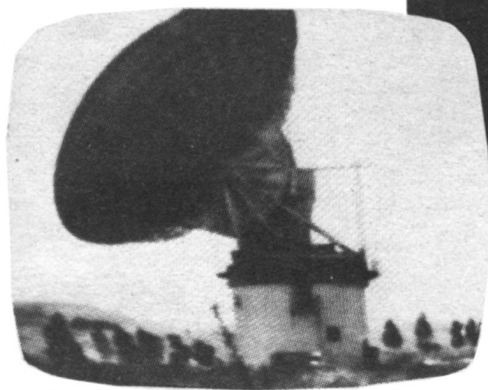
I can't tell if everyone I encounter is afraid because the kind of people I'm friendly with are the kind likely to be afraid right now, or if people are, generally, truly afraid. The news makes my skin crawl, frankly. Whenever they start displaying maps you know something unpleasant is happening in the world.

But something unpleasant is always happening in the world, and someone is always afraid.

Florence Lambert and I take a large dose of MDA and go to the Bleecker to see **Alien**. The film: a small crew of space travellers lands on an ugly, mist-shrouded planet where they find a space ship resembling a large dead cockroach. Inside the cockroach they find an egg. The egg spurts open and something like egg foo yung shoots out, landing splat in the face of a hapless Space Explorer. The egg foo yung turns into this disgusting slime all over the guy's face, something like a soft-shell crab with the tail of a garter snake that wraps itself around his neck. Doctors on the space ship try to snip its legs off, but its blood is this goopy yellow acid that eats through five thousand tons of metal. Then the Alien disappears and this horrible thing with three rows of teeth pops out of the guy's stomach at space dinner time, ruining everyone's appetite.

The Alien grows inexorably and hides in dusky passages of the ship. The MDA transforms this creature into a fat drag queen. The women crew members find their lipsticks, face powders and heels missing. On their mission of extermination through the twilight guts of the space vehicle the astronauts are constantly encountering a blob-like form in a ratty blonde fright wig, its tentacles clapped provocatively to its hips, the sequins of its purple chemise sending laserlike flakes of light down narrow, high-tech corridors. Its sinuous lips part suggestively, revealing the triple row of killer teeth. Surprise, the alien is Mae West in outer space. Is this how the world ends? Not with a bang, but with Mae West? *N.Y.C. January 1980* ■

Station Sehoul, Africa's first satellite earth station at Souk El Arba, Kingdom of Morocco, built in 1968. Stills from Super 8 film and videotape of work in progress.



# A NEW WORLD

## SOME FACTS:

Television transmitters:	
World total	24,980
Africa	200
Americas	4,810
Asia	6,610
Europe	11,250
Oceania	360
USSR	1,750
Developed countries	23,840
Developing countries	1,140
Television receivers (per thousand people)	
World total (in millions)	384
Africa	6.8
Americas	285
Asia	28
Europe	246
Oceania	259
USSR	221
Developed countries	301
Developing countries	22
Radio transmitters:	
World total	25,510
Africa	700
Americas	12,740
Asia	2,730
Europe	5,980
Oceania	330
USSR	3,030
Developed countries	18,840
Developing countries (excluding China, Korea, Vietnam)	6,670
Radio receivers (per thousand people)	
World total	305
Africa	72
Americas	898
Asia	81
Europe	331
Oceania	632
USSR	492
Developed countries	696
Developing countries	83
World total receivers (in millions)	
World total receivers (in millions)	953
Developed countries	788
Developing countries	165

## Introduction

For over a decade, on the international circuit in Nairobi, Havana, Paris and Belgrade, at first in UNESCO corridors, later on the agenda of working subcommittees, a new concept has been gaining ground. Concerned about the strident inequities of the status quo, not only in basic necessities but also in communication resources—the information gap between the haves and the have-nots—the Non-Aligned Movement, a kind of giant collaborative of about two-thirds of the world's nations, is working to establish a New World Information Order, with increasing momentum in the last two years. This is partly a result of the explosion of new sophisticated electronic technologies, and also a keen realization by Third World leaders that their own economic growth requires access to improved communication systems for both domestic and international traffic. They see the current domination of information gathering and dissemination by the Western news media and computer conglomerates as a hang-over from colonialism and the sacrosanct Western concept of "free flow of information" as essentially a one-way street, in which the rest of the world is viewed through predominantly Western eyes, from a Western cultural perspective and according to the dictates of multinational corporations.

**Liliana Garcia, Costa Rica:** *Free flow? What free flow? It means you are free to send and we are free to receive.*

**Chen Chimutengwende, Zimbabwe:** *Most of the people in Western societies don't understand much about the Third World problems of communication. For instance, they have a hang-up, I would say, on the question of government involvement in mass communication. And myself as a journalist, as a professional mass media person, I am not very happy with government intervention in mass media in theory, but I find at this stage of our development we haven't got a choice. The governments have to be involved at one stage or other because we are living in a period where our development is a planned development, and in that case the role of the media has to be properly defined to see where it can promote that national development.*

**George Wedell, England:** *Do you think that over time government will begin as it were, to take a rather more detached view of the media and will say, well look, in order to get the full value of the freedom that we've fought for, we really must allow this freedom,*

*not only to ourselves but also to our fellow citizens, even if they don't always agree with us. Do you think there's a chance of that?*

**CC:** *I think there is a chance as we...our states become consolidated, because at the moment they are young, vulnerable and sometimes not sure which way they are going, and they become sensitive to anything that might easily...that might be considered something which can erode their power. And I think eventually I would like to see more control of the African mass media by African professional media people and with maximum participation by ordinary people. But initially that will be very difficult. And so I think it is the task of Third World communicators to educate their government on the best ways of making mass media effective—and they can be effective if the professional people were given enough freedom to operate them as they understand them.*

The text reprinted below is the first chapter of a 45-page manifesto\* drafted by a committee of African, European, Asian and Latin American experts led by the now-legendary Tunisian Information Minister, Mustapha Masmoudi, who, at a Havana Cuba non-aligned conference in 1978, was assigned the task of collecting "comments, suggestions, proposals and recommendations" for making the new order a reality. Since the publication of the manifesto, the debate between adherents of the status quo and proponents of the new order has reached new dimensions—to the extent that it is finally receiving acknowledgement in certain sectors of the US press—the *New York Times* (both viewpoints) and *Broadcasting Magazine*, which staunchly defends the interests of commercial enterprises—not surprisingly, given the latest resolutions adopted at UNESCO gatherings in October and February. These empower a special subcommittee to convene in Guyana in May to discuss some proposals which the Western news agencies see as a potential threat to the profitability of their operations and their monopoly over world news. The agenda includes such topics as the licensing of journalists and the setting up of an internationally recognized professional code of ethics that would make "responsibility" towards the host country a key factor in reporting.

—Liza Bear, April 1981

\*A copy of the New World Information Order manifesto was xeroxed (with some resistance from the personnel) at the AID, Agency for International Development, office in Washington.

نحو نظام إعلام عالمي جديد



# INFORMATION ORDER WHY?

The New World Information Order requires a universal act of awareness. So far this has been limited, because of the reticences caused by certain fears. Such fears are aroused by the prospect of change that will adversely affect direct interests. The information media have as their role the awakening of public opinion to the need for changes that profit the whole of humanity. The idea should be accepted everywhere that the present order is nothing but an amalgam of disorders and that, therefore, change is imperative.

The present document aims to set out the principal reasons that militate in favour of change; and to point out the actions needed to make such changes accomplished facts.

In the modern world, information is characterized by certain fundamental imbalances; these are reflections of the general imbalance that affects international society.

## A. POLITICAL ASPECTS

In the political field, i.e. from the conception of information to the editorial, production and operating levels, there are many imbalances. Among these are:

—A *flagrant numerical imbalance between North and South.*

This is shown by the divergence between the volume of information originating in the developed world and aimed at developing countries, and the volume of news that travels in the opposite direction. Almost 80 per cent of news that circulates through the world comes from the big transnational agencies; but these allocate only about 20 or 30 per cent of their news to the developing countries although the latter represent almost three quarters of the whole of humanity. This means a veritable monopoly on the part of the developed countries, to their own advantage.

—An *inequality of means in the information field.*

The five biggest transnational agencies themselves monopolise, among themselves, all that exists of material and human potential<sup>1</sup>, whereas almost a third of the developing countries do not yet possess a single national agency.

Inequality also exists in the way the frequency spectrum is divided up between developed and developing countries. The former control nearly 90

per cent of the source of the spectrum, while the developing countries have no means of protecting themselves against foreign broadcasts. It is also difficult for them to compete against such broadcasts, all the more as some of them are sent out from broadcasting stations located inside the developing countries. Concerning television, 45 per cent of developing countries have no television stations of their own; this disproportion is made even worse by the broadcasting within such countries of a great many programmes made inside developed countries.

—*Supremacy in fact, and a will to dominate.*

The above are illustrated by the marked indifference of the media of the developed countries, particularly those of the West, towards the problems, preoccupations and aspirations of the developing countries. They are based on financial, industrial, cultural and technological power and relegate most of the developing countries to simply being consumers of the information sold to them as merchandise. The transnational agencies control the circulation of information as if it were their right, and operate without any hindrance in the majority of developing countries; they also entirely dominate the technological field as illustrated by the systems of communication by satellite, which are entirely run by the great international complexes.

—A *lack of information on developing countries.*

Daily events in the developing countries are reported to the world through the channels of the transnational media; these media also "tell" the developing countries what is happening in foreign countries, through the same channels. By only informing the developing countries about news items which they have filtered, cut down and distorted, the transnational information systems impose their own way of seeing the world on to the developing countries. As a result, communities that are sometimes geographically close to each other only know each other through these transnational information systems. Moreover, the latter often show these communities (when they take notice at all) in the most unfavourable light, stressing crises, strikes, street demonstrations, putsches etc...or even holding them up to ridicule. When the newspapers of the industrialized countries present the problems of the Third World in an objective manner, together with their achievements and aspirations, they do so only by printing supplements of special editions, for which they charge higher prices.

— *Survival of the colonial era.*

The information system as it is at present operated sanctions a form of political, economic and cultural colonialism. This shows in the often tendentious style of reporting of news concerning the developing countries. The style consists in highlighting events whose importance, in certain cases, is limited or even non-existent; in collecting unrelated facts and presenting them as a "whole"; in setting out facts in such a way that the conclusion to be drawn from them is favourable in the interests of the transnational system; in amplifying facts of small dimension so as to arouse unjustified fears; in keeping silent on situations unfavourable to the interests of the media's native countries. In this way, world events are covered only according to the interests of certain societies.

In the same way, the news is distorted and misrepresented according to the moral, cultural or political values of certain States, disregarding the values and preoccupations of the other nations. The criteria of selection are consciously or unconsciously based on the political and economic interests of the transnational system and of the countries in which this system is implanted. One must also note the use of labels, adjectives, and persuasive definitions, chosen with the intention of denigrating.

—An *alienating influence in the economic, social and cultural spheres.*

Apart from the domination and manipulation of the international traffic in news, the developed countries practice other forms of hegemony on the mass communications institutions of the Third World. First, they possess the media through direct investment. Then there is another method of control which is even more decisive at present, namely the near-monopoly of world publicity. This is wielded by the great publicity agencies which operate like communications transnationals, and which earn their incomes by serving the interests of the transnational industrial and commercial corporations which dominate the world of business. Another form of domination is the influence used to oppose the social

<sup>1</sup>The five biggest international agencies group among themselves more than 500 bureaus; they maintain 4,319 correspondents or freelance contributors in foreign countries, in an average of 116 countries; and each agency puts out a daily average that ranges from 11.2 million to 17 million words.

evolution of Third World countries. This is practiced openly by the propaganda institutions. In addition, in our day, publicity advertising, magazines and television programmes are themselves instruments of cultural domination. They transmit towards developing countries messages which are harmful to their cultures, contrary to their own system of values, and detrimental to their aims and their development efforts.

—*Messages ill-suited to the areas where they are broadcast.*

Even important news is sometimes deliberately neglected by the big information media, in favour of other items of news that only interest the public in the country where the news system originates. Such news is broadcast to client countries, and is practically imposed on them, although the readers and listeners in the client countries have no interest in it. The great mass communications media and the people who work for them pay no heed to the real scope of their messages. They cover events only according to the needs of their home countries. And they also disregard the impact of their news beyond their own frontiers. They even ignore the important minorities and foreign communities on their own national territory, whose needs in the matter of information are different from their own.

The fact therefore needs to be stated that the present order of information, based as it is on a quasi-monopolistic concentration of power in the hands of a few developed nations, cannot meet the aspirations of the international community with its enormous need for better dialogue, carried out in respect and dignity. All these deficiencies of a political and conceptual character are worsened—if they do not claim to find their justification—by the present inadequate international juridical structures.

## B. JURIDICAL ASPECTS

The traditional concept of rights in the field of communications is founded on individualistic considerations, to the detriment of collective needs. The present international juridical framework is incomplete, and even inexistent in certain fields. Also, the application of present legislation is arbitrary. It favours a few countries at the expense of the majority, because of a view of freedom limited to those who own or control the communications media—who are often the same people who own or control the means of production. In this field, many questions need to be raised.

—*Rights of the individual and rights of the community.*

The philosophy which predominates to the present day has favoured the rights of professionals in the information field; that is, the rights of a small number of persons or entities who are specialists in this activity. In consequence, the rights and preoccupations of the collectivities have been more or less ignored. Yet, if it is true that the right to information is inherent in human nature, it is none the less—perhaps even to a greater degree—the natural right of every human collectivity, in the sense that each people feels a pressing need to communicate with “the other”, not only to realize and protect his own personality but also to know and understand other peoples better; and through communications established to this end, the peoples wish to create conditions that will favour a climate of mutual comprehension and respect, and cooperative links that will be profitable to all.

—*Freedom of information or of the informer?*

Freedom of information, presented as the corollary of freedom of opinion and freedom of speech, was actually conceived as “freedom of the informing agent.” Thereby it has become an instrument of domination in the hands of the owners of the information media. Juridically it upholds the rights of the “informer” and is silent on his duties and responsibilities toward the “informed.”

—*Rights of access to sources of information.*

This is seen unilaterally, and essentially to the profit of those who have the financial resources to obtain and spread information. This fact has allowed certain big transnational firms to exalt this right into their own privilege, and has permitted wealthy powers to establish their domination over the information circuits.

—*The ineffectiveness of rectification rights.*

Contrary to the domestic laws of certain countries, the right to rectification is regulated in a very inefficient way in international law. Apart from the 1952 Convention, no valid ways exist to assure to States the possibility of getting false or inexact statements concerning themselves rectified. Moreover, the 1952 Convention itself is not very efficient (articles 3 and 4). It is in fact restrictive and unfavourable to developing countries.

—*The absence of an international code of ethics and*

*the defective character of the regulations governing the profession.*

Inequalities concerning the above are favoured by the absence of an international code of ethics. Attempts made up to the present by UNESCO and the United Nations to institute an international code of ethics suitable to the needs of the individual and the collective have not succeeded.

—*Imbalance in copyright.*

The above has been regulated for a long time by the Berne Convention of 1886, which is protectionist in its field of application, in the length of time that rights are valid, and by the rarity of the waivers that can be applied to the existing regulations. The Universal Convention of 1971, which revised the 1952 Convention and was administered by UNESCO, applies a less rigorous degree of protection. The Florence Convention has not profited developing countries because of the protectionist effects that have developed out of it, although it has favoured the circulation of intellectual products of industrialized countries toward developing countries. Altogether, the international publishing and distributing system now operating, though it pretends to safeguard copyright has led to the cultural and political domination of the industrialized countries over the whole of international society.

—*Imbalance in the allocation of the source of the spectrum.*

The unsatisfactory character of the provisions of article 9 of the radiocommunications settlement must be exposed. These confirm the rights already established in respect of the allocation of the source of the spectrum, and so deprive recently independent countries of the means of making their voices heard in a satisfactory manner.

—*Disorder and lack of coordination in telecommunications and in utilization of satellites, together with blatant inequalities between States regarding possession of these means.*

In the absence of effective regulation, the present inequalities in this field are likely to increase, at the risk of consolidating irrevocably the rights of the stronger. It hardly needs be emphasized that such great progress has been made in this field that, without appropriate regulation, a veritable invasion of radio broadcasts and television programmes can be expected, violating national territories, private homes and private consciences. This threat cannot be too strongly denounced.

## C. TECHNICO-FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Because of the structures inherited from colonialism, the limited extent of trade and the slackness of economic relations, telecommunications between the developing countries have by no means met the countries' hopes of closer links and of greater circulation of information. The developed countries benefit from possessing the most efficient and the least expensive communications circuits and resources. The developing countries experience the inconveniences of a faulty and costly organisation in the communications system now in force. The developed countries' technological advance and the tariff system they have imposed have enabled them to benefit from monopolies and privileges. This includes both the pricing system for transport of publications and telecommunications, and also the use of technical methods of communication and information.

The most recent attempts to rectify this situation, such as the Geneva administrative regional conference for the planning of long wave and medium wave broadcasting, organised by the I.T.U. in 1975, have not succeeded in reforming the system in a satisfactory way. In fact, the above-mentioned conference only served to confirm the existence of a situation unfavourable to the interests of small countries.

Satellites will risk intensifying this imbalance if vigorous international action is not undertaken, and if technical aid is not brought to developing countries. This imbalance manifests itself particularly in the following fields:

### *Telecommunications*

The present structures and configurations of the telecommunications networks between developing countries are based only on rates of profitability and of volume of traffic, and so are a serious handicap in the development of information and communication. The handicap is felt both at the levels of the medium and of the tariff:

Concerning the medium—besides the absence of direct links—a concentration of communication networks exists in the developed countries. The equipment imposed by the former colonial powers excludes, for certain developing countries, the possibility of sending information beyond their frontiers (ground base stations allowing only the

reception of television programmes produced in the industrialized countries, without any possibility of broadcasting towards them).

Concerning tariffs the situation is even more striking, and even more excessive in certain aspects. The present pricing system was set up in a way that disadvantages small output, and so it perpetuates the stranglehold of the rich countries over the circulation of information. To say the least, it is strange that for the same distance, communication should be more expensive between two points inside developing countries than between two others situated in developed countries.

Similarly, nothing can justify the fact that the same communication can cost less when it travels from a developed to a developing country than in the opposite way. The survival of anachronistic methods is the reason why, for example, a telegraphic press circuit sometimes costs as much or even more than a telephone circuit. How can the big press agencies justify the privilege that gives them, because of the density of their traffic, fulltime use of circuits at a cost that in certain cases does not amount to any more than the cost of a daily average of one hour? The situation is made even worse in certain countries, where the telecommunications network has been contracted over to foreign companies whose aim is to make a profit, and to canalise international traffic towards their home country.

### *Satellites*

Although the 1977 Geneva conference tried to establish main heads of procedure to prevent abuses in the use of satellites, the developing countries are still threatened by anarchic utilisation of outer space, which worsens the imbalance of the present telecommunications system.

### *Allocation of radio frequencies*

The problem of the dividing up of the spectrum of frequencies, a limited universal natural resource, now presents itself with particular urgency. The developing countries are more determined than ever to contest vigorously the right that the developed countries have arrogated to themselves in the use of the frequency spectrum. They are also determined to secure for themselves a fair share of this spectrum.

It is a secret for nobody that almost 90 per cent of the source of the spectrum is held by a few countries and that the developing countries, with far greater stretches of territory, possess fewer channels than the developed countries. The power density to the square kilometre is four times less in the developing countries than in the developed.

### *Transport of publications*

The imbalance already noted in the telecommunications field can also be seen in the field of the circulation of newspapers and publications.

—Tariff rates and the exchange of newspapers are fixed, like the rates for all other correspondence, by the Universal Postal Convention and all members of the Universal Postal Union are obliged to respect these rates.

—With regard to newspapers, and bearing in mind their role as purveyors of information, culture and education, the Universal Postal Convention leaves its member countries free to concede a 50 per cent reduction of tariff to all printed matter, including newspapers, periodicals, books and brochures.

—As well as the optional nature of this reduction, air transport imposes a bottom rate which does not favour publications with a small circulation, that is those from the developing countries.

The developing countries are aware of these dangers and these various imbalances. Meetings between the Heads of State of the Non-Aligned Countries, the frequent meetings of international organisations and the contacts between organisations directly or indirectly linked with information, have helped to clarify what actions need to be taken to establish a new world information order. With this aim in view, certain structures have been set up at the regional level (African, Asian, Latino-American and Arab radio and agency unions) and also at the level of the non-aligned nations (such as the intergovernmental council for the coordination of information, the coordination committee for the news agencies' pool, the cooperation committee for radio services, the telecommunications experts committee...).

But these are limited achievements. Their merit is that they have expressed a wish for progress and change. The essential remains to be done and there is still a long road to travel. Success depends above all on the developing countries, but also on cooperation from their partners, i.e. the developed countries and the international organisations. How then should one create this new world information order, and what would it consist of? ■

# FUTU RISTI C RH YTHM

David McDermott

a combination of the positive past and present

"The internationally syndicated article by Dr. David Walter McDermott III that puts across the point that America and the World are on the edge of Paradise."

1928

"Society learns to conduct itself properly"

*The gentleman or lady.* The individual who dares to take the responsibility of dreaming the most positive dream for Manhattan, America, and the world will, with the help of his likewise thinking friends, surely control the universe shortly. All negatives must be refined out of society by law of nature because negatives only frustrate what modern man wishes to accomplish and that be a veritable paradise on Earth.

It all begins with the calling card. One may be hungry or cold, but one must have one's proper name and title ready to present to society. It is with the calling or visiting card that one first becomes committed to socialism. The high Art of calling and receiving ones friends is an education for all. A society of freinds regularly exchange each others' worn negative qualities for each others' ideals of Godliness. Alas the planet Earth is inhabited by wood sprites, nymphs, gods, godlings, spirits, queens, kings, fairies, leprechauns, and good witches. Indubitably we be the Gods of the universe and it be our dream that rules. It is only for us to begin thinking, acting and dreaming like Gods and the extraordinary inheritance of powers will be ours. It is our destiny to rule. There is no one more fit than us. Heaven, Heaven, all aboard for Heaven.

from a radio broadcast

1928

"Society learns to share"

Please share with your friends. Take them out to dinner. Gladly pay for the cab. Give your clothes that don't fit to friends they do fit instead of paying bad tailors to butcher the garments. Please share with your friends. Invite your friends to weekend or indefinitely stay at your home when you find them wandering. Be genteel, be aristocratic, take care, handle carefully the society of your friends as one handles precious glass. All will be well when we treat our friends and ourselves like nobility. Remember we are a fallen aristocracy. We must dream each other to the deserved heights of success and glory. We are the inevitable millionaires. Signing off.

## A TRUE STORY ABOUT TWO PEOPLE

Easter 1964

by  
Cookie Mueller

I had two lovers and I wasn't ashamed. The first was Jack. He was seventeen and I was fifteen. The skin of his face was so taut over protruding bones that I feared for his head, the same sympathetic fear one has for the safety of an egg because of its fragility, its vitrescence. He wore his black hair all greased up spiralling into his languid eyes. Jack owned only black clothes and he wore his cigarettes in the rolled up sleeves of his black tee-shirts, showing off his arms which were big for a skinny person.

Once I visited him in the hospital; he had infectious hepatitis and chirossis of the liver, resulting from his four year bout with alcoholism. He didn't look too good either, all yellow in a murky blue private room. His visitors had to wear hospital gowns and surgical gloves, also masks over the nose and mouth which really frustrated him because everyone looked so morose without smiling mouths. My nose and lips were the first nose and lips he had seen in two weeks: after his mother left I whipped off not only my mask and gown but my pants and hopped into the hospital bed with him. I kept my rubber gloves on.

He was very sick and quite contagious and looked ill but sexy like pictures of Proust on his death bed and I was in love and we were teenagers going steady.

He had been expelled from high school for bringing in real moonshine, corn liquor, from his uncle in West Virginia and he had gotten all his best friends drunk on the lunch break and tried to beat up his American History teacher when Jack cornered him later in the bathroom.

Jack had a black Impala with red rolled and pleated bucket seats, racing cams, dual exhausts, tire slicks, a roll bar, Laker pipes, big foam dice hanging from the rear view mirror and four on the floor of course. We drank Sloe Gin or Laird's Apple Jack or sometimes Thunderbird and ate bennies like little candies.

And then there was Gloria. She sat three rows in front of me in Algebra class. I watched her hair-dos from the back, everyday they were different: Beehives, Barrel-curls, Air-lifts, Artichokes, Pixies, Flips, French Twists, Bubbles, Double-Bubbles.

The things I liked best were the way her scalp shone through all that teasing as if her head was a mango and the spit curls pasted down beside her ears with clear nail polish and bitten to the quick fingernails. I even liked the warts and nicotine stains on her index and second fingers.

I began spending Saturday nights with Gloria when Jack got too drunk and had bloody cut eyes from fights. I slept in her single bed with her and she first used to feel me up and kept telling me, "Just pretend I'm Jack, just pretend I'm Jack."

In the beginning the cajoling was necessary but in the weeks that followed I didn't have to pretend she was Jack anymore. Jack and Gloria liked each other and no one ever suspected anything about Gloria and myself. For appearances we were best girlfriends, both of us with our combustible hairdos, teased so high as to induce acrophobia and our black tight skirts hobbling us and our spike heels clicking down the high school hallways. We picked up guys together, smoked a lot of cigarettes, sniffed glue, drank terpenhydrate and codiene.

I stopped seeing Jack and took his initial ring off when he went to jail for a B and E charge. I stopped seeing Gloria when she got pregnant and decided to get married to Ed, her long time boyfriend, who she kept telling me she didn't love nearly as much as she loved me.

Years later I found out that Jack, who was always pretty literate, was writing a novel and shooting speed, never being able to drink again because of his liver. As for Gloria, that girl, born of a light bulb it seemed, had died when she had gotten silicone injections for her little tits and it spread all over her body making tiny lumps arise on every inch of her skin, until finally the plastic entered her pulmonary arteries and the aorta and she died of a silicone heart.

## COMING OF AGE IN XANIA

By Lynne Tillman

Sitting on a sidewalk in Athens, sitting on the curb in front of a shoe store, Jack saw me and called out, "Are you an American?" and I answered Yes and told him I was looking for a hotel. "Share mine," he said, "a dollar a night."

Jack was from Chicago, a spoiled and wealthy Irishman who wanted to write. He had just gotten to Athens from Tangier. He had reddish hair, pale skin and eyes Carla calls "sadist blue." He was recovering from an unhappy love affair which, having ended badly and to his disadvantage, made him vindictive and self-righteous. I didn't want to travel alone and he looked like a life-saver. We went to Crete and he hated me or at least it seemed that way. Look, Jack, I told him, you can stay in the house I'm renting but our being together is insane since you criticize me constantly. He didn't argue this point and we agreed to be housemates only. But Xania is a small city and a small Greek city at that and a young woman doesn't leave a man simply. Or at all. Friends of Henry Miller littered the island and all would later descend on me for my unfairness to Jack who was drinking so much now.

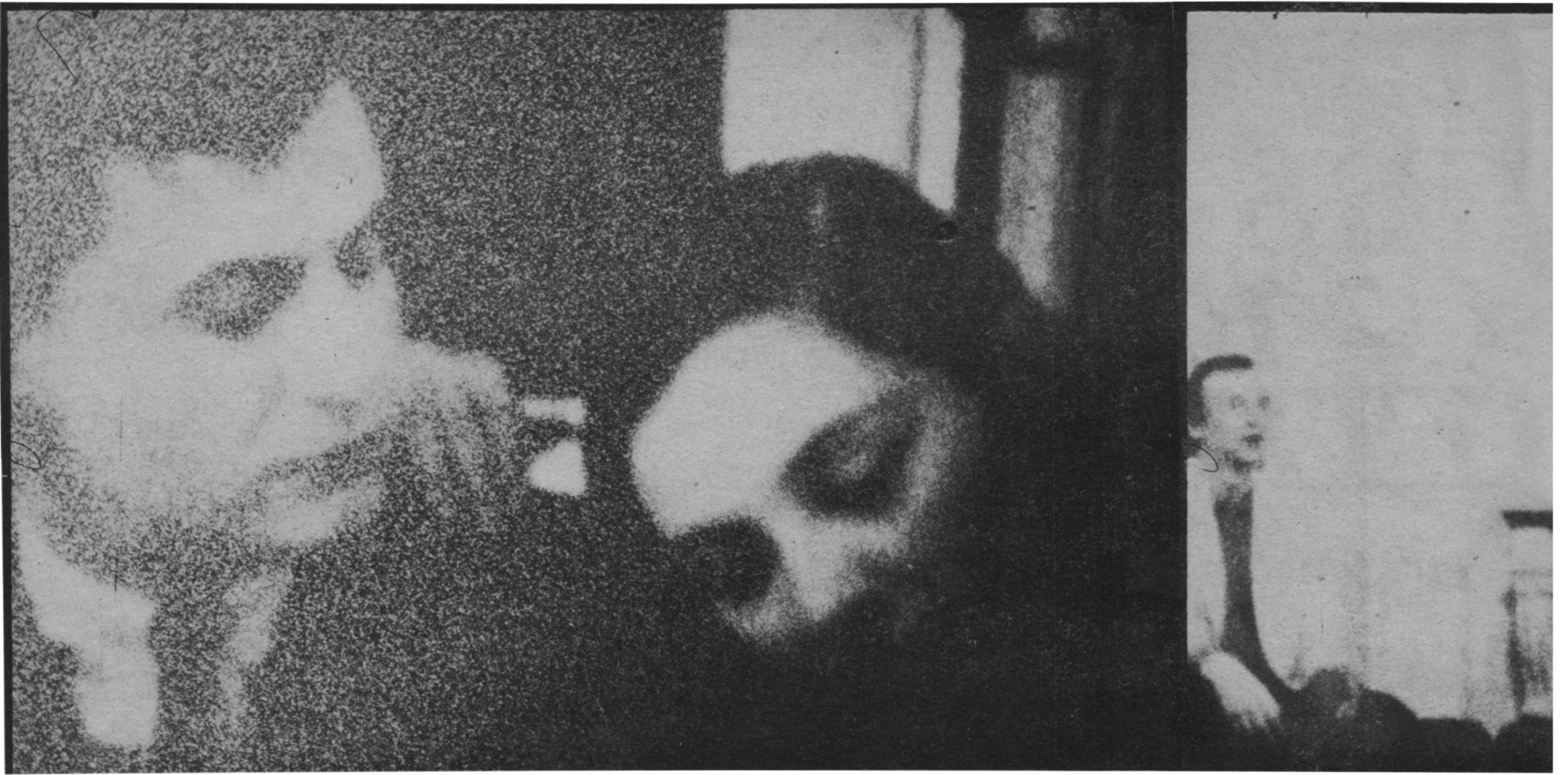
I had fallen in love with Charles who arrived with Betsy and her child. She was separated from her husband who had remained in their native land, South Africa. Charles told me that he and Betsy were friends. They seemed like adults to me, the big-time, and when Charlie looked at me longingly, I returned the look. At first we were secretive. Betsy, who was older and probably wiser, seemed to take this in her stride and Charles moved out, into his own room near my rented house. Jack still slept in my bed and every night I would leave my house and go to Charles' bed. He wanted to be a writer too. Jack and I would have pleasant talks together on the terrace. We'd smoke grass and he'd talk about his broken heart. Things seemed ok and in fact they were extremely bizarre.

The first week in Xania I was cast, in my naivete, as the young thing who arrives in town and enters into a world she doesn't understand. This was my screen role in Charles Henri Ford's film *Johnny Minotaur*. I had been given Ford's address by a Greek called Stephanos. He approached me on the Spanish steps, urging me to go to Crete and look up Charles Henri. Luckily for Charles Henri who left Xania shortly after filming Jack and me in a classic beach scene—I wore a skirt and held a black doll in one hand, a pinwheel in another—he never saw his second heroine devolve into her role.

Xania is made for secretive strolls, its lanes curve from house to house. I took these turns recklessly, leaving my house every night, strolling a curved lane to Charles' bare room where we would lie together on a skinny cot. Morning would come and I'd stroll back to my house. Breakfast at the Cavouria restaurant and a swim before lunch. I took to going fishing and the fishermen would smile as I walked down the pier to the tower and cast my line into the sea. I never caught one.

Betsy continued to be civil to me. We went dancing at a tavern where the Greek sailors did their famous carrot dance. Charles hadn't come and I sulked. Betsy was understanding and her graciousness made me uncomfortable. We watched a sailor place a carrot at his crotch and another sailor hack away at it with a knife. I went to sleep outside the tavern in Betsy's car and woke to find Greek sailors peering through car windows. I was driven home.

(continued on p. 50)



## Becky Johnston Interviewed by Betsy Sussler

S. What got you off on the idea of *Sleepless Nights*?

J. Well, I'd been reading a lot of Bataille and so called pornographic literature. I wanted to do something with the idea of using pornographic language but never fulfilling the usual expectation by providing pornographic imagery. So I set up a situation where everyone is referring to a woman. But a woman who becomes an object (sexual) in a very explicit way—a language object. She became the subject of a rape but it was a linguistic rape.

S. Did you identify with any of the male characters?

J. No, (laughter) I was looking at them as real extreme male types all borrowed from movie stereotypes. Eric plays Sam Spade, Rene quite consciously created his character around Truman Capote and John was the retro-psychopath.

S. Why was the psychopath in cowboy clothes?

J. I wanted to use sets and costumes that pointed to a completely artificial space in order to make them very extreme caricatures. They were all given certain outfits that either fit with the nature of the character or in John's case, the costumes fit into the adolescent boy landscape.

S. Have you seen Maya Deren's film *Meshes of the Afternoon*?

J. No, I've heard of it.

S. Well, in "Meshes," the props, objects and the woman, assume a special kind of power, by the fact that they reappear, juxtaposed with particular incidents, gestures, etc. And it's not that these objects imply meaning in themselves as much as the insistence of their reoccurring image becomes portentous, magical...

J. Like a fetish object?

S. Could be...actually, in your case it only applies to the woman, Marie-Paule. What was she?

J. An obsession.

S. Is that why you shot her in slow motion, so she could be examined?

J. I hadn't intended to shoot it in slow motion but

the footage looked so inappropriate when it came back from the lab. It didn't have the quality of something that was very mysterious and it didn't displace her at all. She seemed as real as they did and I wanted her to become completely imaginary.

S. Something ethereal and erotic?

J. Yes, and this is where she was a great actress. She was able to evoke a different relationship with each of the men without saying a word. I gave her such a limited number of things to do. There is a constant—a repertoire of actions—coming towards, moving away, embrace. With Eric it becomes very violent, he grabs her and forces her to embrace, with John it's very childish, an innocent embrace and with Rene, the kind of embrace you would do with a father.

S. Did you talk with her about the script? Had she read it?

J. She didn't read the whole thing—no. I didn't want her to read it. I only wanted her to know what her relationship with the three men was and let her go from there.

S. Did you plan on working with her from the beginning?

J. No, I had actually written it with someone else in mind but then as I got to know Marie-Paule, it seemed impossible to do it without her. She knew all of the men in the film and they were comfortable with her. I wanted her to be able to embrace all the men.

S. It seemed much more of a mystery than a detective film even though you used the TV detective show voice-over for the narration. A mystery surrounding Marie-Paule's character, built through mood and atmosphere—her image, music and the camera movement (which is constantly moving with and around her).

J. Yes, and the mystery really is "Who is this woman?" What I wanted to do was set up a schism between the information you were being given about her by the men, which was very literal, very descriptive, she was such and such...and then the way the audience would respond to her and create their own image of her by exploiting their emotions and using really seductive music, making her image as seductive as possible through all the slow

motion...

S. It was a seduction and not just a tease?

J. Yeah, definitely. Not so much to involve the audience in the story but rather to set up a ploy—to create an interface between what you know about her from what the men say and how you FEEL about her from what you see. As you gradually get more seduced by her image, the men's descriptions of her become more violent, more pornographic.

S. So you never let her speak?

J. She couldn't talk because she was the subject of the sentence. It was impossible.

S. When did you decide to use the voice-overs?

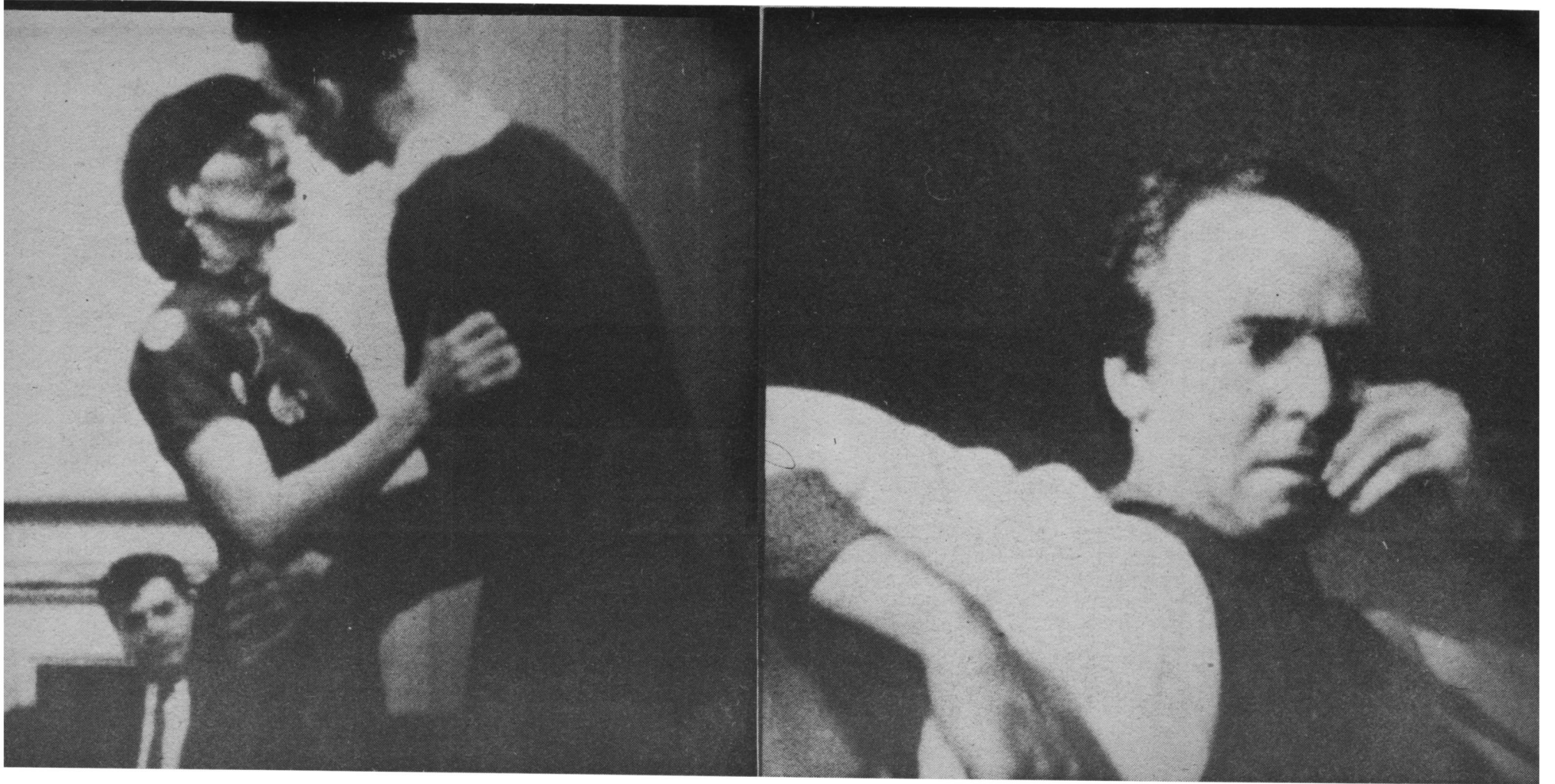
J. The film changed several times. As we were shooting it I began to realize that it was much more a parody of itself than I thought it would be—largely because of the sets. I got so into this fantasy of being an interior decorator that the sets took on a character of their own. You couldn't play anything out realistically in those sets. For instance, when John Lurie is singing "Your cunt is a trap with teeth. You want to amputate me." That was intended to be a very violent scene, a head-on shot with a frazzled monologue. It ended up being his playing guitar with the cowboy hat on; completely ludicrous. He consistently did that with his character—brought it to the edge of total ridiculousness—and it worked. Anyway, I knew I wanted the voice-overs to be out of *Dragnet* but I didn't know how they would work. In its first edited version, I was afraid the film had no story. So I recut it to lead to one. I knew it would end up with Marie Paule and John having the same mother, that was it. Then I went to Gary Indiana and he looked at the film and we talked about how they should be written and then worked on them together.

S. Do you think the film is violent?

J. No, I think I could be accused of mystifying violence but I don't think I could be accused of it being violent.

S. Well, I didn't intend it as an accusation.

J. But I'm saying I think one could, and for me that's problematical about the film. I mean there is that whole last sequence, where you aren't sure, but you assume she's being killed because she is



# SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

struggling. But it's shot in such a way that it's about movement and gestures of fear and struggle. That death scene uses the same choreography as was used in the dancing scenes between her and the three men throughout the entire film.

S. But that's what I mean, it's violent in its persistence...

J. Yeah, I know what you mean, in that respect it's a very violent film. It's violent in terms of setting up a subject, a woman, and consistently abusing the subject linguistically.

S. I don't think it was simply a linguistic violence. The most haunting thing about the film is that you become possessed by her image. The men in the film are obsessed with their stories of her but the audience becomes possessed by her.

J. She's meant to be an enigma, she's always referred to in the past tense. You never know whether the men did in fact have a relationship with her or whether it was their fabrication about themselves. Then it becomes more about their fantasies of themselves and using her as a text to allow themselves to be read. They were really not delivering lines as much as fantasizing alone.

S. How much do you collaborate on your films?

J. I have a real double bind, schizophrenic attitude about that, because on the one hand I like it when people completely take control, so much so that there's nothing you can do about it...you just have to innovate, you trust them to take over. But I hate it when someone is putting their two cents in without having any emotional or intellectual or any other attachment to it. They only have a genuine interest in telling you what they think. Basically I don't want to hear it unless they are concerned with how it will effect the outcome of the film as a whole. So I'm not really open to suggestion as I am open to being completely taken over by someone who will just say—It has to be done this way—For instance Rene just knew his character like that, or someone like Michael Oblowitz—he knew what the image should be just by standing and looking at the set. He would tell me what he thought, and we would try it out and if we didn't like it we would try something else out. Same with Gary Indiana, in fact, the only real collaborative work I've done has been working with him.

S. Why incest?

J. Do you want to know the story of the film?

S. Yeah, sure.

J. Well, nobody really knows the story of this film. It starts in 1935. Rene is wealthy, young. He has an on-again, off-again relationship with a woman who he really loves, but she isn't so crazy about him. They stop seeing each other and much later, run into each other at a party. He has a voice over that describes the meeting. "I was at a party—I remember—I looked across the room and saw her again. It had been so long...the gin and tonics...noise everywhere...the next thing I knew I was waking up in bed next to her. Her hair was wet against her forehead, I kissed her eyes..."

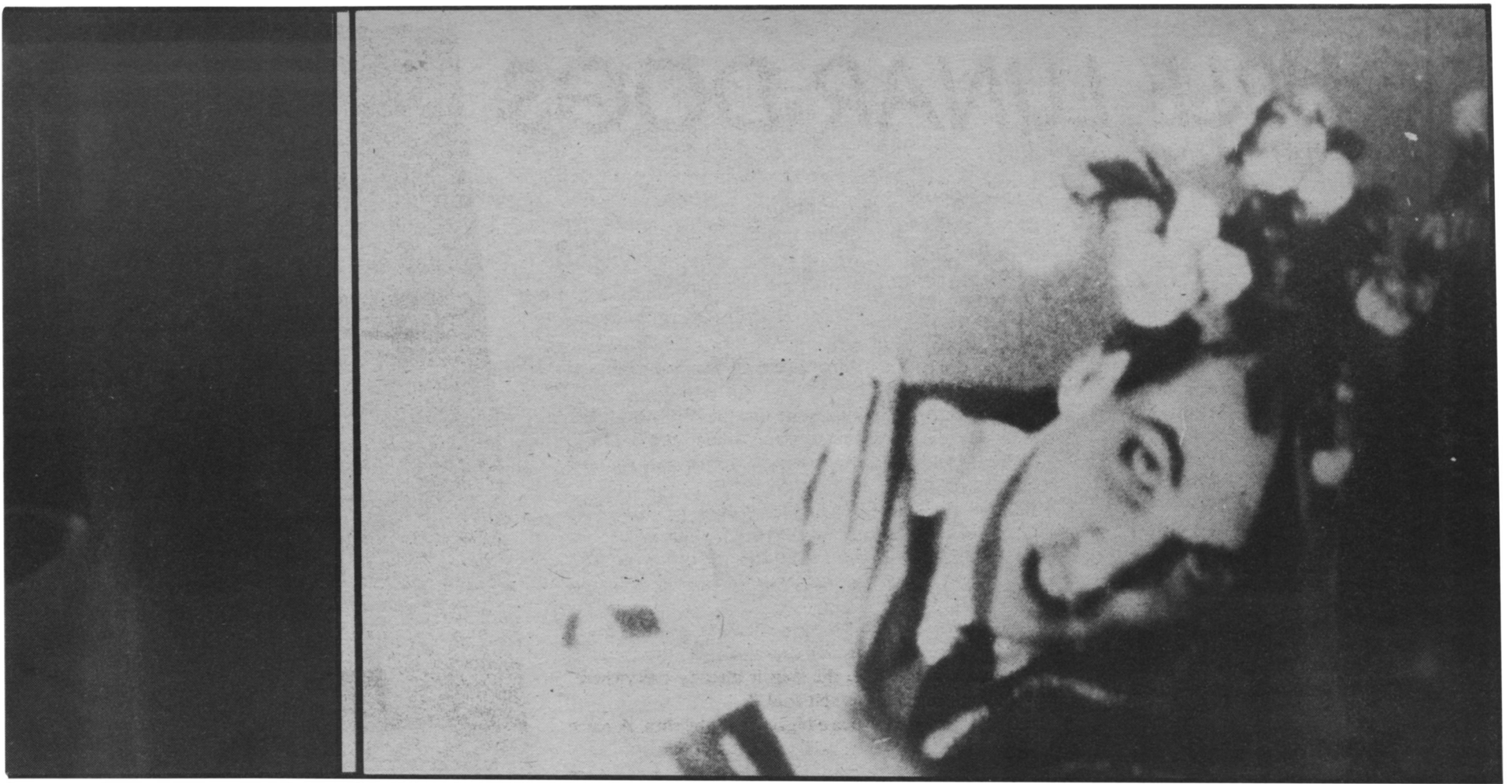
The woman gets pregnant and doesn't want Rene to have anything to do with the child. She blackmails him for money, saying she'll spread it all over the papers that he got her pregnant and left her stranded unless he gives her some dough. He gives her the money and she leaves. He never sees her again. And she has other plans up her sleeve, spends all the money he gave her and puts the kid in a foster home. The kid is Marie-Paule. Then the mother marries some creep and they move to the suburbs. They have a son—John Lurie—who's a bit psychotic. He describes living with them in one of his voice-overs:

"Life in a pigsty, plastic over the furniture, germs in my brain, in my throat, in my microbes. The microbes are destroying me piece by piece. Brown liquid shoved under my nose till I vomit. Trapped. She beats me and runs off with another man every night. I saw him dancing with her. He kissed her hard on the mouth. I think I grabbed her that time..."

He's your typical Oedipal nut...mother's a slut, etc. Eventually he freaks out completely and kills her, remember, he says in one scene, "He killed his mother. He killed his mother. He took her by surprise one night as she was coming down the stair." ...He's so schizophrenic he refers to himself in the third person. So, after he kills her, he gets put away...locked up. In another scene he talks about what happened immediately after the murder. "Afterwards, all I remember was the ride. It was a long ride. My clothes were too tight, but I got to

live in a new house with clean walls, and there was no plastic over the furniture, and we had lots of servants." The ride is a ride to the looney bin and the tight clothes are a straight jacket, the new house and servants are the sanitarium and attendants. But he quickly gets bored with life in the sanitarium and escapes, steals a car and just starts driving, remember the first voice-over in the film, he says, "Escape from a bad dream. I don't care where I end up. The lights on the road dripping in the rain. They are after me with their guns. Their dogs are dripping blood on their teeth. Her face keeps coming back to me through the windshield."

Jump back to Marie-Paule. She's been living with a horrible foster family and decides to run away and look for her real father. All she knows is his name and that he lives in New York. She gets on the highway to hitchhike and is picked up by John Lurie. He doesn't really have anywhere to go and drives her all the way to N.Y. On the way, they have an affair, going from one motel to another. He's completely nuts about her, loves her madly, more obsession...Marie-Paule calls Rene (who is her father, remember?) while on the road and tells him she wants to meet him. He's understandably a little paranoid, and thinks her mother put her up to it to shake some more bucks out of him. So he hires a detective, Eric Mitchell, to check her out and find out what her game is. Eric is to pretend that he is an old friend of Rene's. When Marie-Paule arrives, she turns out to be the complete opposite of what Rene expected. He says in a voice-over, "Blood is thicker than water. I met her. She's ethereal. She can't be real, she just came up to me and kissed me. That was all I needed..." He invites her to move into the house with him, as a result, John Lurie, who sticks around because he's still crazy about her, has to stay in a crummy hotel. "Exiled to a fleabag hotel. The wallpaper is the color of a urine sample. Every once in a while I try to see her, but he keeps her trapped in his castle." Rene can't stand John and does everything he can to get him out of the picture. He asks Eric to check up on John, find out what his story is. Meanwhile, Marie-Paule and Eric are having a secret affair. He says, "Hotels in back alleys, love on the run. Just to be alone with her I have to find some smelly hotel where the pillowcases look like they were used to wrap trout in..." He keeps the job as detective, checking up on John just to be able to be near Marie-Paule. He finds out



a few things, like the car John came up in was stolen, he has a phoney name, but doesn't connect anything up. Marie-Paule eventually falls in love with Eric but he turns out to be an egotistical sadist, who can't love anyone but himself. He constantly abuses her, treats her terribly. At the same time, John is behaving like a complete lunatic, harassing her, calling up at all hours of the night, spying on her and Eric, and Rene becomes bitter and possessive and denounces both Marie-Paule and Eric as having betrayed him and only wanting him for his money. She decides it's all a bit too much to handle and leaves without telling anyone. The only thing she leaves behind is an old photograph of her mother for Rene. John stays around in the city for a while, and at one point comes over to Rene's house. He sees the photograph of his mother and freaks out. Rene tells him that the photo is of Marie-Paule's mother, a woman he loved once. John goes berserk, says he has to find Marie-Paule, he knows where she would be, etc. He scares Rene shitless, and Rene and Eric both work in earnest to find out what the story on John is, the stolen car, phoney name, etc. They find out that he and Marie-Paule had the same mother, and that John killed her...but it's too late, John has disappeared. They can't find him and have called the police. The last time we see Marie-Paule in the film is her waking up in bed in the hotel she's staying at. She hears a noise, sounds like someone's breaking into her room, and runs to the door to try to close it. Then you see her struggling with someone, but you don't know who. And then you see her lying in bed, with a voice-over of Rene's: "I'm so alone I could die. I don't know myself anymore. Maybe I'll go away, meet new people. There are no new people. If I could escape from my memories, escape from a bad dream..." So maybe she dies and maybe she doesn't. never wanted that to be completely clear.

S. You fragmented the narrative, with the intention of making the mother and the daughter interchangeable?

J. Yes, absolutely. When they refer to SHE, it's very ambiguous. You always assume they are referring to Marie-Paule, but in many cases John and Rene are talking about the mother.

S. I think the film was instilled with a psychic narrative (and by psychic I mean a form of concentration that exists in the film outside of the text)

which could be continuous. This and the fact that the image didn't necessarily support the soundtrack, obfuscated what was past, present and future. A linear narrative would have been too explicit. Instead, you caught clues.

J. But the clues are ultimately misleading. What interests me about detective stories is the structure—everything ambiguous is given meaning in a second reading. There are always two stories—the one you experience while actually reading the book, and assume things because of the placement of clues...and the story you retain after finishing, and know exactly how the clues led you to make false assumptions. The reader is either in the position of being duped or knowing too much. But in either case, he/she has to work while reading and afterward. When the final denouement occurs, arbitrary plot twists become comprehensible. You go back, retrack and re-examine what you had thought while reading. And, if the difference between the two is very great, then you know it's a pretty good book. That was why the whole mother thing came up, because I wanted people to think that when the men spoke of her, it was always Marie-Paule, but in fact, in many cases, it was the mother they were talking about. You obviously would never know that until you had seen the film through to the end.

S. Did you use a secret subtext to inform the narrative?

J. Yes, in many respects the she is also myself. It's not being autobiographical, but there's a lot of me in the woman being described. And a lot of fantasies about what I would like to be or am afraid of. Then the dates that come before each voice over: April 18, 1955 (the day John and Marie-Paule met) is my birthday. April 24 (the day John and Marie Paule fall in love) is Eric's birthday and so on.

S. Do you think there's any connection between the words promiscuity and freedom?

J. Yes, if you happen to be a man. ■

N. Y. C. April 1980

*SLEEPLESS NIGHTS is a S8 Feature Film Produced, Written and Directed by Becky Johnston/Voice Overs written by Gary Indiana/Camera, Michael Oblowitz/ Starring Marie-Paule, John Lurie, Eric Mitchell and Rene Ricard. SLEEPLESS NIGHTS premiered at The New Cinema in October of 1979.*

*Stills from SLEEPLESS NIGHTS, preceding page, Eric Mitchell and Marie-Paule; Rene Ricard, Eric Mitchell, Marie-Paule and John Lurie; Rene Ricard: above, John Lurie.*



# DOUBLE LUNAR DOGS

Excerpted from a text by Robert Heinlein

## Joan Jonas

Location: the spiral museum as space ship, audience below in the past looking up at a scroll unwinding on the different tracks, the ramps, the corridors, where illusion occurs...

### Part One

Scene I: Darkness in the corridors above, the sound of a struggle, metal on metal, a flash of bright light, male and female voices speaking through megaphones:

"Is it gone?" "Yes, I caught a glimpse, a female, I think with four legs."

"We'll never catch it now." "Who wants to?" Descending silently they run, their increased weight slowing them until they land at home.

Scene II: The Village (the lowest section of the ship—the air grows moist and warm, giant green plants obscure the metallic view).

Light: green/yellow.

The woman, in pink, arrives at the compartment of the scientist, in green.

Curious, she asks him, "What is the reason for the upper corridors, and who are the mutants?"

He sings the song of creation (a myth of the ship's origin to comfort the farmers), she dances to radio observatory sounds.

"Your head was too big, but I saved you. You were to be a scientist. You must be instructed in right-thinking or you will deviate. You must never explore the corridors above this level. The mutants are a gang of renegade wizards. They call themselves 'The Double Lunar Dogs'—they will capture you and put a spell on you."

She answers: "But these visions of strange vistas and great distances where I am on the outside and not the inside."

He: "Look out! Those destructive fantasies must be eradicated."

Scene III: The Right Thinking Research Library  
Shining in red/yellow light, layers of transparent glass tablets line the walls.

She devours the ancient texts on the track of an undefined secret—Basic Modern Physics.

The scientist: "This is one of the most valuable of the sacred writings. Our forerunners were romantics. Their truths were handed down in allegorical language. Gravitation, for instance, equals love." (A couple embracing, a love story told backwards.)

"Two bodies attract each other directly as a product of their mass. Out of sight, out of mind," he drones. She asks, "What about this trip mentioned in the books, and what is this planet earth?"

He: How can that move against which all else moves? The ancient holy men (the first wizards) invented fantastical worlds and called them heavens. Supposedly a vast space with pinpricks of light outlining mythological creatures. There is no trip, no earth, only the here and now on this ship...this is our world.

Yes, she could see the wild extravagance in these astronomical fantasies, but why so heavy in the village and so light in the corridors. Floating was pleasure—and these nagging flashes of blue over soft green fields—but she put aside such fantasies and plunged into the here and now.

### Part Two

Scene I: In the corridors, part way up on a research program to wipe out mutants, she floats dreaming of friction and electricity.

Sounds of her capture by the muties—she does not struggle.

Scene II: In the compartment of the Double Lunar Dogs

Blue light, pale moons, stars line the silver walls, her dress is red. The Dogs (men and women and children, Queens and Kings of the long forgotten snowy lands) surround her.

"You can't accept things as they are," they say.

"What does the trip mean to you?" they ask.

"An illusion for those who dream beyond the here and now," she answers, "and dreaming is wrong thinking."

"Did it ever occur to you that the ship is going somewhere, that it's actually moving?" they ask.

"That's impossible, the ship is already everywhere. The only meaning is spiritual."

Dogs: "Imagine a place bigger than the ship. A place with the ship moving inside of it."

"There can't be a place bigger than the ship. There wouldn't be a place for that to be."

"No, there would be emptiness all around."

So many vaguely familiar images on the walls.

Scene III: Corridors—blue flickering lights

They take her higher to no weight moving like fish, like spiders on a thread. She notices that the ship is a giant cylinder with great columns supporting enormous weight.

Scene IV: The Central Control Room

A sacred and taboo place whose location had always been a mystery. It takes a long time to open the big round door.

They lead her into an enormous silver sphere with the machinery of the controls floating in the middle—time slows and turns around—she is frightened, this is not her territory. She has never experienced such height. They sit in front of the central panel.

"We're going to show you the stars."

The sphere turns from silver to dark as they pass their hands over the lights of the panel which change...

The mirrored stars look down.

Light after jeweled light on dangling mirrors, she hangs alone in the center of the stellar universe...

For the first time she knows the intolerable ecstasy of beauty unalloyed...

The muties laugh, the lights go on...

Her heart pounds, her chest aches, things will never be the same—this unbearable yearning.

"What was that?"

"That's it, that's the universe. Some of those stars are bigger than the ship."

Scene V: New Insights

She stays with the Double Lunar Dogs rereading all the old books in the silver blue light, stories of the earth that trigger elaborate landscape fantasies, dry and wet and hot and cold walking on the outside.

"Why don't they fall off?"

"Gravity."

She dreams of climbing out of the ship and walking the surface of the moon. The full moon. Tides.

"Why is it heavier in the lower levels?"

They show her books on centrifugal force, and the art of astrogation...They read to her of light years and spiral nebulae, of galaxies, of solar systems, curved space, of light and dark and sun, of snow and ice and wind and rain...

Scene VI: The 'Captain's Veranda'

Where it is either very bright or very black

The Double Lunars finally take her to the highest point, the most direct view of the stars which appear to move in circles due to the motion of the ship.

"Let's get the ship moving again—finish the trip,



find the planet"...thinking the people in the village will help. They give her a knife and escort her down, down.

### Part Three

Scene I: The Corridors

She floats down, landing hard, feeling the strange uncomfortable weight pulling, pulling.

Scene II: The Village

Sluggishly she wanders through the green plants looking for old friends—they are grey, having aged more rapidly than her.

She tells the ancient scientist what she has seen in the upper levels—he does not react.

She falls asleep and awakes to find herself a prisoner, her knife gone.

Scene III: The Trial

The way things look according to where you stand.

"She is no longer a scientist. She went over to the muties and has returned to preach heresy, seeking to undermine the authority of our colony."

"But you can see by the stars that the ship is actually moving, that we were on a trip from one planet to another."

"Your head was always too big for your body." And she is condemned as a heretic to die.

"But it moves, it moves."

Scene IV: Jail—Murky

An old friend is allowed to visit and she persuades him to seek help from the Lunars.

### Part Four

Scene I

Her friend climbs half way and is captured by the Lunar Dogs in dim light.

Scene II

In the red compartment of the double dogs they agree to help in the rescue.

Scene III

Outside the jail—with a magic formula they overpower the guards and open the door.

Scene IV: Battle and Journey to the Top

Flashes of red and blue light—sounds approaching, receding like signals...

Fighting on the lower ramps is heavy but as they ascend it lessens and finally free of her captors, they take the new recruit to the captain's veranda where they show him the stars through glass. ■



**EXTENSION CORD, Jimmy DeSana** color photograph courtesy Stefanotti Inc.

# FIRE ENGINE RED

by Craig Gholson

from the forthcoming novel,  
*Too Smart to Have Fun*

*From beside an upturned metal milk crate, a black cable coiled across the carpet, ending with a pretzel-like flourish in a silver plug poised below a silver socket. A black leather biker's jacket hung off the seat of a soda fountain stool. Two drumsticks lay parallel to each other in a diagonal across the skin of a snare drum like a knife and a fork after the completion of a meal.*

Planted in front of the drums and at the center of the room was a microphone and cocked against the wall was a fire-engine red Fender Stratocaster. The walls and ceiling of the room were patchworked with foam and honeycombed with egg cartons that had been tacked on to provide insulation and to improve acoustics. Scraps of carpet had been used for a similar purpose on the floor, a collage of one faded oriental rug, a discarded runner of worn red pile and a square of tattered shag. Over the door was an oval plaque, a refugee from some suburban den, made of cheap cherry wood and shellaced shiny. Burnt into its surface in charcoal black cursive script was "R and R Room", a monument to countless middle class cellars where basement bands practiced and where a hobby, rest and recreation, turned into a ruling passion, rock and roll. Or in the least, it was a reason to escape the pressures aboveground and to leave as soon as possible.

Framed in the angle formed by the half-opened door of the practice room, was the zigzag of one leg hoisted over the arm of an old stuffed couch. The bottom of the tapered black chinos exactly met the top of a spike-toed black leather boot. The boot looked like a canoe, but had the personality of a submarine. Above the point of the toe hovered a haze of smoke. From off to the side, on the couch, came the repetition of a sequence of sounds—the sucking sound of a deep inhalation, the stifled choking of a withheld breath, and the gust of the expelled breath. The cycle ended with a sigh as one puff of smoke moved from behind the wall and merged with the cloud. Wisps of smoke snaked around each other in calligraphic patterns, a mirage of three-dimensional Chinese characters spelling out a fortune no one present could decipher.

From somewhere behind the door, in the tone of a drill sergeant, a voice yelled, "Okay, break's over. Let's go."

The response to the order came quickly: three moans, the assorted creaks of bodies readjusting in chairs and then silence.

"Come on, you guys," the authoratative voice pleaded, turning whiny and, still getting no response, stern. "Brian."

The leg in the doorway jackknifed up, scattering the smoky oracle floating above the boot off babbling in the wind.

"Huh?"

"The break's over. Let's get back to practice."

"Sure thing," the voice attached to the boot said. However, the boot remained attached to the end of the leg which remained positioned over the arm of the couch.

"All of us," came the other voice with a glare attached to it. Then, in a stage whisper to himself, "Maybe it's time to instigate fines for certain infractions against the band."

"What're you going to take it out of? Our salaries?"

Voices guffawed and bodies shifted their positions, the one behind the door stomping across the floor peevishly. When Lowell came to Brian's boot obstructing his passage into the practice room, he plowed right into it, jamming Brian's calf against the frame of the door.

"Ow," Brian yelped, raising himself off the couch to rub his hand over his calf. "What'd you do that for, you jerk?"

"To make sure you hadn't OD'd," Lowell said turning on the microphone in the middle of the room.

"You can't OD on grass, wise ass."

"You just go catatonic. Huh, Brian?"

Brian raised his body off the couch and tried to stand defiantly in the doorway. As he stood, his red-rimmed eyes started spinning like the digits of a slot machine. His consciousness rolled down off his neck like a rollercoaster, bounced at his feet and finally repositioned itself in the vicinity of his head. Brian giggled. "It's a good thing I'm feeling so good, otherwise..." he trailed off.

"Just plug your guitar in, will you?" Lowell said disgustedly. "If you can find the hole."

From the other room chairs squeaked sighs as bodies removed themselves. Sets of feet shuffled across the floor. A pop top was ripped off of an aluminum can and there was the fizz of carbonation, a splat as it hit the floor and an "Oh, shit. Who the fuck shook up the beer?"

Brian had bent over in the doorway to rub his leg, waiting for Lowell to look over at him. Jeff came up behind Brian and goosed him with the neck of the bass he was carrying. Brian jerked up and with one hop landed in the room. Now he had his hand protecting his ass.

"Fuckin' perverts around here." He shook his head and brought the small brown wad of paper between his finger and thumb up to his mouth. It glowed briefly and then went out.

"Hey, let me have a hit before it's gone," Jeff cried to Brian's back.

Brian turned around to face Jeff and popped the roach back on his tongue and swallowed. He gave Jeff a big Cheshire cat grin. "It's out, prankster." He stuck his butt out at Jeff and, this time, pulled it in just in time to miss the swinging bass.

"Don't get uptight, Jeff," Brian said in a soft, level tone as he plugged in his guitar. "I've got another one we can smoke after practice. Just try and play bass better than you aim, okay?"

"What a burrrr-n," Lowell said into his mike. He knocked on it twice with his finger and got two thuds in response. "Kim? Kim?" he whispered into the mike with the high far away voice people use to imitate the caw of a crow.

Kim came into the room in a three-piece pin-striped suit with a beer in one hand and a soggy dishrag in the other. From between the jagged points of bangs poking directly into her mascara outlined eyes, Kim stared at the three of them. Finally she asked, "Which one of you lame brains shook up the beer?"

And, getting no answer, "You know you lose half of it with your half-assed jokes."

"One pothead and one lush," Lowell said to the room.

"It's pitiful..." Kim said to herself, throwing the dishrag in Lowell's face as she walked back to take her seat behind the drums. "...a goddamn waste."

Lowell spat twice as the dishrag fell off his face. Wiping his lips with the back of his hand, he leaned into the mike and announced funereally, "Ladies and gentlemen..." and after an expectant pause, solemnly, "The Rolling Stones." Brian kicked his Strat into action with the opening chords of "Brown Sugar" as Lowell let loose with a banshee rebel yell, "Awl rat." Like an insane round, Brian kept repeating the first seven chords of the opening again and again and faster and faster. Jeff struck random notes on his bass while Kim played dainty little flourishes on her cymbals. As the sound approached the veloci-

ty of heavy metal chipmunks, Lowell began speaking in the oratorical tones of a professional TV announcer, his pitch rising to denote his mounting enthusiasm.

"Not an impersonation. Not a simulation. An incredible...TRIBUTE. 'Not the Rolling Stones.'"

The noise stopped, everyone still. Brian walked over to Lowell's mike and let loose with a giant raspberry. "Sppllllll..." his lips flapping like laundry in the wind and with big globules of spit flying off like the laundry hadn't gone through the "spin dry" cycle.

"Thanka, thanka," Lowell said Lawrence Welk-style. "That was just great, you guys." His eyes went glassy, but he brought one hand up and slapped himself alert. "Hello? Okay, where were we?"

Everyone relaxed and started fiddling with their instruments in earnest.

"Let's try that beginning where Kim starts it off by herself," Lowell suggested. And without waiting for any sign of agreement, he pointed back at Kim and said "Go."

She took the two sticks in her hand and hit the drum in front of her steadily. Kim played the drums like she was throwing knives at the wall. Her style was basic, no frills, percussive mumbletypeg. After the seventh stroke, Lowell motioned to Jeff who played three ascending notes for Kim's every two beats and then three descending notes. The bass notes were a rumble you didn't hear as much as feel. The Rhythm Orchids, as the band was called, played a music of jagged edges and deep empty hollows. They knew what they couldn't do. They used the limitations of their musical ability to create a spare, economical music; sharp, pointed and succinct but not without the power to extend and transfigure.

Lowell nodded to Brian whose right hand was raised above his guitar in preparation to swing down over the strings. He struck and the collision of pick on strings caused the guitar to emit a sound with all the potential to curdle milk.

"Hold it. Wait a minute," Lowell cut in as the remnants of the chord ricocheted off the walls.

"Where'd that come from?"

"Whadya mean, 'Where'd that come from?' It came from my guitar, bimbo," Brian said with his hand on his hip.

"Well, just because it came from your guitar doesn't mean it belongs in this song. It sounded awful." Lowell picked at the electrician's tape wrapped around the mike stand.

"I thought it sounded okay," Jeff said quietly.

"I thought it sounded neat," Kim said, using the interruption to gulp a few swallows of beer.

"It wasn't even in tune, you guys." Lowell's voice was rising in pitch.

"So?" Brian said putting his other hand on his other hip. "I'm not interested in fuckin' music. It's the noise in the music I'm after."

"Me too. But, at least, I like my noise to be in tune."

No one spoke, the only sound in the room was the buzz of the amplifiers.

"Brian, do you ever practice?" Lowell said assuming a chit-chat tone of voice.

"Sure I practice." Brian pulled a joint out from the cellophane wrapper of his pack of Marlboros and lit it. He took a puff, held it and after expelling the smoke said "Two hours, man."

"A day?"

Brian singgered. "You gotta be kidding. I don't even fuck or eat for two hours a day. That's in a week. Two hours a week."

"I rest my case," Lowell said looking at Jeff and Kim. He got no agreement from Kim.

"I thought it sounded neat," she repeated. "Look Lowell, if you know what you want, why don't you tell him. You don't have to make a federal case out of it."

"I told him what I wanted before the break," he answered Kim, staring at Brian. "He's too stoned to remember. I said I wanted it to sound ominous, but sort of...alluring, you know, appealing."

Brian jeered, "Well for somebody who's so concerned with music, you're none too specific. How about saying F sharp or something."

"You're the guitarist," Lowell shouted. "If I knew how to play the guitar I would."

"Well you don't so you can't so you're stuck now, aren't you?"

"Boys, boys," Jeff said like a third grade teacher. "Stop that this instant."

Jeff had an endless repertoire of routines he went in to to break the tensions that came up within the band. There was little he wouldn't do to keep everyone happy or failing that, civil or failing even that, in a state of truce. He had stuck a lampshade on his

head so many times to lighten up their moods, he was considering installing a rheostat.

This time, however, no one cracked in the face of sheer idiocy. In their stubbornness each turned to their particular vice for comfort; Kim to drinking beer, Brian to smoking pot and Lowell to simply pouting. Corniness having failed, Jeff was forced to resort to that other emotional warhorse, changing the subject. "Look you guys, we've almost got the chorus down. Let's just complete that and we can work through the beginning at practice tomorrow. We're all too tired right now."

Tired of holding both their physical and emotional positions, the other members of the band tacitly agreed by making tentative movements toward their instruments. Lowell coughed to clear his throat and Kim tapped on her snare. Brian put out his joint and carefully placed it next to his cigarettes and lighter on top of his amplifier. "From the bridge then," he said sticking a silver tube on one of his fingers and sliding it down the neck of his guitar. Brian produced the teeth-grating, jaw-grinding wail of metal on metal as Kim and Jeff pounded out the thud-kerplunk of a boiler-room beat. Lowell sang in a voice so nasal his lips barely moved. Over it all, with full parts of sneer and whine, he chanted:

School's just a way of killing time  
and picking up a few facts  
Here I am at 23, waiting and wondering  
when they're going to teach me to act  
Yes, I've been to college  
and no, I don't know what or how to do  
I'm just one of thousands of  
white boys with the amotivational blues.

Without the next section of the song being sketched out, when Lowell finished his yelping vocals, the music just petered out lethargically. Nevertheless, Lowell was pleased with the sound of it all. "I think it sounds sufficiently ethnic in a post-modern way."

"Gee, you should become a rock critic," Jeff said. "I'd probably make more money."

"If you made *any* money, you'd make more money," Brian muttered. "We've gotta play again soon."

"We will, we will. When we're good and ready. Let's call it quits for tonight. And Brian, try and come up with an opening chord that not only dogs can hear, okay?"

"Aw, fuck off. No one appreciates my artistry." Brian snapped the locks shut on his guitar case. "Come on, Jeff, let's turn off our minds, relax and float downstream."

"Be sure and take a paddle with you so you make it to practice tomorrow night," Lowell called after Brian and Jeff as they headed for the roof. The door had already slammed shut, but Lowell knew they had heard him because of the muffled grousing that filtered back from the stairwell.

"What time is it, Low?" Kim asked.

"It's just 10. Are you working tonight? What time do you have to be there? Do you want some tea? Another beer?" Revved up after practice, Lowell needed to discuss what had occurred over and over again, until he calmed down and the velocity of the experience itself had slowed down.

"Naw," Kim said. "I've got to be at...dig this...Frosty's Brrrr-lesque...too much, huh?...pretty soon. 'Let our gorgeous, gyrating gals melt your inhibitions with their bodyheat.' I'm really getting sick of doing this, Low. It's disgusting. Last night I was so bored I combined all these dance steps. One leg was screwing around doing the mashed potatoes, the other leg was boppin up and down doing the pony, my hips were doing the shimmy, shimmy shake, one arm was hitch-hikin and the other was doing the swim including the back stroke, breast stroke and dive. I was a regular dance smorgasboard. It was like a cripple having an epileptic fit, real spastic. It was so sick-o and you know what? The old goats were lappin' it up. It was disgusting. But the scariest part out of the whole nightmare-rama was that there I was up there being a real spaz and even I thought 'Hey, this is a pretty cool dance step.' I lost all reality. I've been dancing now for six months and it's really starting to get to me. Plus, to top it all off, you know what? I haven't even saved up any money to go to law school. I'm never going to get to go. Oh, but listen to me, Low, I'm turning into a real tragedy queen, aren't I? I know you've heard it all before, but Low, I tell you, it's really getting to me, dancing at those bars. The money's good, but I keep spending it all because I feel so bad about what I had to do to get it. It's my goddam Catholic upbringing. God, I'm really going off the deep end. Listen to me, will ya? I've just got to keep remembering, 'Angels fly because they take themselves lightly.' It's true, it really is."

Lowell knew Kim was drunk when she got loose enough to start bringing out some of her sayings. She knew it too. "Jesus, look what time it is. It's been real, Low. Gotta go," Kim said, snatching up the briefcase she used to tote the tools of her trades, drumsticks and leotards. In her three-piece pinstriped suit, Brooks Brothers button-down collared shirt, prep school tie and with her brief case dangling from her fist she looked exactly like a corporate lawyer headed for his downtown office. Except, she had a beer in her free hand and as she trotted out the door and off to Frosty's Brrrr-lesque she kept whispering to herself, "Angels fly because they take themselves lightly."

With Kim gone, Lowell was alone in the practice room. The volume of Kim's presence was countered by the void of her absence. And being there in that room alone not only reminded Lowell of his need to blow off steam about the practice but compounded that yearning. He walked around the room flipping switches off. Cut off, the luminous red lights of the amps reluctantly faded like hot coals that doused out by water reveal, when cold and harmless, how small they actually are. Switched off, the amplifiers no longer emitted the hollow hum they produced when turned on but idle. Not so easily terminated, a version of the same buzz reverberated in Lowell's mind. Scanning the room one final time for unwanted sound or light and discovering none, Lowell turned out the overhead and quickly shut the door. He walked across the room and sat down behind a heavy mahogany desk which, positioned at one end of the long rectangular room, afforded a view of the entire room. He pulled the beady string hanging from the metal innards of the Tiffany desk lamp. Incandescent light froze his hands as they lay crossed on the green desk blotter. Through the lamp's translucent colored panes of glass, a deep and ripe light filtered out into the room. It was not a light that illuminates or clarifies but one that coats the surfaces of things and smudges edges. It was the dusty light of loneliness. Staring out into the room Lowell's hands began a fidgety dance. His eyes roamed the room but what he actually was doing was flipping through his mental rolodex for someone to call, preferably to go to visit.

The room Lowell looked out on belonged in Wyoming, not Manhattan. As much as the practice room was a bleak testament to urban cold-water flat consumerism, a supermarket shanty created from discarded egg cartons and milk crates, this room was a relic from an earlier, rustic type of consumerism, a trapper's paradise. The practice room was shabbily functional while this room was Lowell's grotesque version of aesthetics which shared much in common with those of Teddy Roosevelt. The only discrepancies in this model of a low-rent hunting lodge were structural ones. There wasn't an enormous fireplace composed of boulders or raw timber beams scaffolding the ceiling. However, the bogging accoutrements of Lowell's decor made such potentially glaring admissions not only unnecessary, but unnoticeable.

Stuffing was at a premium. If an object's purpose was to be sat upon, it was invariably stuffed. All the furniture bulged and absorbed sound. There were two leather couches and a horsehair chair with matching horsehair footstool. Mounted on the walls were glassy-eyed momentos that marked the hours and hours Lowell spent stalking the wilds of musty backrooms of taxidermists and furriers. Poking their necks out of plaques were the heads of antlered deer, moose and antelope. A squirrel perched on a tree limb, his head cocked to the side and jaws clamped around an acorn. More exotic and functional to boot was a blowfish lamp. A barracuda stretched across the wall, mouth agape and exposing an ordered forest of treacherous teeth. The spots of a leopard skin were tacked next to the stripes of a zebra skin, examples of nature's Op Art. In the middle of the floor rested a mangy bear skin rug, its head attached but flattened a bit from being stepped on accidentally and danced on deliberately. The end table featured an ash tray centered in an elephant's hoof. And from a rough hewn tree stump coffee table, an erect kangaroo held court with small pieces of dry scrub brush arranged around its sturdy rear legs. Within this room the tones of the lumber and carcasses supplied a fiesta of browns, beiges, sepias and tans in shades ranging from dull to dingy. If one's aunt had been Ernest Hemingway, she would have decorated a room like this. Like Lowell, the room was rococo in an American way, prissily macho, aggressively trophy-oriented under the guise of proving oneself a representative of Manifest Destiny. Except that all that remained of the experience for Lowell in his time was a vague concept of some ideal that once existed and an intense, campy nostalgia for the trophies that once represented those ideals.

At his desk, thumbing through the bits of paper he had intended to enter into the ledger he used to document his life, Lowell came to a piece of paper with a

telephone number printed beneath the name "Brad." He dialed the number. "Brad?"

"Yes."

"Hello, this is Lowell. I don't know if you remember me, but we met several months ago at the Terminal Bar."

Brad, caught up in trying to remember, responded with an insecure but encouraging, "Yes?"

"I'm a friend of Morgan's. I had asked him for your number so that I could invite you to see my band."

"Oh, yes." A broadly drawn, cartoon-like face surfaced, bowing at the waist. "When are you playing?"

"Oh, we're not. I just thought if you weren't busy I might stop by and introduce myself."

Brad was flustered by such forwardness presented so formally. "Well, alright...."

Brad was shocked at how little time had elapsed between Lowell's phone call and the ring of the doorbell. He had been working in his black book and assumed he had enough time to finish and clean up the after effects of his clipping, pasting and writing before Lowell's arrival. Wrong in his conjecture and irked by the abruptness of the visit, he just left the mess as it was and opened the door. Lowell stood in the hallway, plain-faced and in a cumberbund.

"Hello, Brad." Standing stiffly, he stuck out his hand. "I hope I haven't inconvenienced you by my visit." He bugged his eyes out to encourage a response. Brad remembered the simple features to which Lowell applied such ornate expressions.

"Oh no. Not at all. Please come in. I was doing something however, which has the place in a bit of a mess." Brad found himself patterning his response after the syntax of Lowell's question. He had made a very overt effort to stop it. "In fact, it looks real shitty."

"Oh it looks fine. It looks...exciting," Lowell said pushing aside a stack of magazine clippings to sit down on the couch. "What were you doing?"

"Oh, just working on a little book I keep. Would you like some tea or coffee?"

"Please."

"Which?"

"Either is fine."

Brad hated making decisions for others almost as much as he hated making them for himself. He decided to make tea and coffee because it would take longer. "I'll be right back," he said, turning to walk into the kitchen. He put the water on to boil and prepared the pots and cups before reentering the room to talk.

"Quite a cozy little apartment you've got here," Lowell said gesturing out with his hand. "Does your girlfriend live here as well?"

"Yes."

"You can tell by the little details."

"Right, like the long hairs caught in the drain and the toothpaste tube squeezed in the middle." Brad went back into the kitchen to pour the hot water, wondering if Lowell had taken what he had said as a quip or as defensiveness. Brad wondered himself. He placed the pots of tea and coffee on a tray with cups, spoons, a carton of milk and a bowl of sugar and went clattering back into the living room.

"Wonderful," Lowell said choosing to pour himself a cup of tea.

Brad admitted to himself he did find Lowell an interesting character and chose tea too. He cleared his throat and took a sip of the tea before asking, "Were you in the neighborhood?"

"Well, it's not too far from where the band practices which is also where I live. I just felt like taking a walk and canvassing new fans."

"I've never seen your band. I don't even know what they're called. Are they going to play soon?"

Lowell leaned back, pleased that the purpose of his visit should surface so spontaneously. "The Rhythm Orchids we're called. I'm the lead singer and we've got Brian, the diplomat's son turned guitar terrorist, Jeff the Long Island contractor's son on bass and Kim, U.S. Army brass' brat drummer."

"And what'd your parents do?"

"My father's a lawyer in Boston. I think he'll run for some kind of political office soon. He's got all the money he needs so I think he's going to go after power in a more formal way. Like father, like son. I don't have his money but underneath I think we're really after the same thing—mass popularity. The Rhythm Orchids are just my form of politics. And just like politics you spend more time and energy getting people to agree on something than you do actually doing it. Slow death by committee. It's infuriating. I just spent almost an entire 'practice' arguing with Brian, our guitarist, over whether a chord he came up with for my new song belonged in the song or in a kennel. But listen to me whining. You might think we weren't good or something. It's just that it's hard to work with people."

Brad looked over towards his desk. "It's hard to work alone, too."

"We're both right," Lowell said.

Both Lowell and Brad raised their teacups, clinked them together and said, "It's hard to work. Period."

After Lowell expressed his frustrations with practice, he was able to turn his interest to Brad. Taking another sip of tea, he began, "Where's...now, what's your girlfriend's name?"

"Susanah." Brad raised his teacup which covered his mouth. He was uncomfortable under Lowell's scrutiny.

"Is she...away," Lowell guessed.

"She had a dance class after work and then she went to her acting class. So when are The Rhythm Orchids going to play?"

"Soon, soon. Quite driven."

"Excuse me?"

"She sounds possessed."

"No, no. She's just very active, energetic."

"Does she want to be an actress?"

"Well, she's taken her modeling portfolio around and I guess that's her immediate goal. And it's useful to have studied acting. Not only for the skill but for the ability to be comfortable in front of people." Brad suddenly got up out of his chair. Standing up, he said, "Do you want a beer?"

Lowell brought his napkin up to his mouth and laughed. "No, the tea's just fine." Brad began walking into the kitchen as Lowell continued, "I'm sorry if it seems like I'm...shall we say, 'intensely interested.'"

Still walking, Brad said, "Oh no, that's alright. I just feel like a beer."

In the kitchen, Brad rinsed out the glasses that had been sitting in the sink all day, sponged off the counter, wiped the scum out of the drain, cracked ice cubes into a bucket and refilled the icetrays. Taking one beer out of the refrigerator, he pulled a six-pack from beneath the sink and, after rearranging the contents of the refrigerator so that the unchilled beers would be separate and less accessible than the cold ones, he wedged the six-pack in.

"Anything I can help you with," Lowell shouted over all the clattering issuing from the kitchen.

"Uh...no, thanks," Brad said walking back in with a beer in his hand. After sitting down across from Lowell again, Brad noticed he hadn't opened the bottle and went back into the kitchen for an opener.

The discomfort that arose for Brad when Lowell turned his attention towards Brad had propelled Brad into the kitchen for an agitated session of KP. And although Brad's newfound and even manic interest in kitchen cleanliness bodily removed Brad from Lowell's observation, it also allowed time for Lowell to carefully examine Brad's surroundings. Noting the black book, Lowell was bent over the opened page when Brad once again returned from the kitchen.

"This is a very elaborate scrapbook."

"Oh that. It's just something." Brad was mortified. In a continuation of his flurry of tidiness, in one fell swoop he scooped up clippings, paste, pen and book, tossed them in a desk drawer and shut it. If Brad's reality had been a blackboard he would have erased it.

"It's very nice," Lowell said searching for an uncharged compliment.

"I'm embarrassed you saw it."

Lowell tried again to make the situation better. "It's very well done. Is that what you...do?" Lowell blanched at how that sounded.

"I suppose so. It is the only place I do actually write and I consider myself a writer...well a potential writer...so I guess that's my work."

"I thought it really looked good." Having had enough time to realize exactly how intrusive he had been, Lowell was appalled by what had happened. He felt foolish. "You should...do something with it," he began and immediately realizing how lame that advice sounded, started babbling off the top of his head. "Like you could...you could...I know, I've got an idea...you could..." Finally, something came into his mind. "You could start a newsletter for a band, a fan club type of thing for some band. Like us. That's it. Just do something like what you do and print it up. Start a newsletter for The Rhythm Orchids."

As juvenile as the idea seemed, Brad applied himself to the suggestion because entertaining such an abstraction got him off the hook of talking about the reality of his work. "But I've never seen the Rhythm Orchids."

"Well then, do it for some band you do like and have seen," Lowell blurted out. Lowell was so disconcerted that he was momentarily willing to suspend his own assertive competitiveness in his band's behalf for another band's benefit. "Like Johnny Germaine. You like his band, don't you?"

"Yeah, I don't know though. It sounds stupid but it

might be fun."

"What do you have to lose?" Lowell was relieved that Brad had taken Lowell's grasping-for-straws idea even half-way seriously. On his part, Brad was glad for the straw. And once Lowell's thoughts shifted from his embarrassment with himself to the idea that had popped into his mind to distract both he and Brad from that embarrassment, he was astonished to discover that the idea wasn't a bad one at all.

"You know, there are enough bands that play the Terminal Bar who are good enough that they really need publicity. And even if some aren't what you could term musically proficient, at least they're interesting. We're all tired of being ignored by the record companies and press. Just because you play in a bar doesn't mean you're just a bar band. We're treated like amateurs, no-talents. Just because kids like to go to the Terminal to have fun, it's not taken seriously. They're missing the point. That is the point. It is fun and we are serious and it's time to be recognized." With Lowell's experience at being a lead singer, stepping up onto a soap box came naturally to him.

"Do you think there's enough interest, Lowell?"

"Do it to create interest. You're interested in those bands, right?"

"Yeah."

"Well, so are other people. Even ones that don't know it. Rather than waiting for the press and record companies to wake up and come in from the outside to discover what's going on and misrepresent it, do it from the inside and represent it the way it is."

"But it sounds like 'Pollyanna Goes Into Publishing!' You know, like, 'Hey, I've got an idea! Let's start a newspaper!' Everything's said with an exclamation point at the end of it."

"So?"

"Is that the way those things happen?"

"Yes. How do you think I formed my band. I said, 'Hey, I'm forming a band!' And I said it with a big enough exclamation point that other people believed me."

"It sounds too simple. And, simple minded."

"Well saying it's the easiest part obviously. Doing it's another matter altogether. But saying it is a start."

Brad felt silly in the face of Lowell's enthusiasm. He said giddily, "Well, I was the editor of my high school newspaper."

"See, you've already done it," Lowell's arms were flailing in the air with jerks like marionettes make when controlled by beginners. The faux pas which instigated the discussion had been absorbed by the quirkiness of Lowell's movements and the dizziness of his spontaneity. "And," he said, the protectiveness toward his band resurfacing, "your idea is much better than mine."

Brad had forgotten his beer during their interchange, but instinctively reached for it and stuck it in his mouth in order to give himself time to think. Finally, after holding the beer in his mouth as long as he could, he had to gulp and ask, "What idea was that?"

"Rather than a fan club for one group, start a newspaper covering all of them. That's exactly what we need. And once you've discovered what's needed, you have a responsibility to do it."

"Who me?" Brad said in a high-pitched voice, the mock innocence of the phrase and intonation disguising the seriousness of the intention, the challenge. The question mark resounded like an exclamation point.

Outside the door Susanah fumbled with her keys, twice missing the lock before aiming successfully. Sitting at his desk, Brad was preoccupied with looking through the Black Book and was oblivious to the scratching sounds at the door. Although he failed to notice the muffled indications from the hallway that Susanah was entering the apartment, it was impossible to ignore the melodrama of the entrance itself. Susanah shuffled in with the dull-eyed and long-faced expression of a pack mule and was just as burdened with bundles. Playing the last few steps of her walk of weariness for all they were worth, Susanah stumbled up next to a chair and let her load drop to the floor. As her fingers unclenched, purse, briefcase, gym bag and portfolio plopped to her feet, their four flat thuds the aural equivalent of her spirits. Keeping her feet where her last step had positioned her, Susanah fell rigidly backwards into the chair. Sitting in the chair like a plank would and with all the expression of a two-by-four, Susanah's posture and personality were stiff to the point of catatonia.

Brad, the sole witness of her entire somnambulistic spectacle, had turned his head from his reveries when Susanah entered the apartment. The whirlwind of his own inner dialogue of possibility and impossibility coupled with the audience member's role as silent spectator rendered Brad speechless in front of Susanah's speechlessness. They both just sat there, one poised in mid-thought and the other poised in mid-performance, until finally Brad's thoughts turned to Susanah and the perimeters of Susanah's performance included Brad.

"I'm ex-haus-ted," Susanah said closing her eyes and tilting her head backwards so that her nose pointed to the ceiling.

Brad looked at the ceiling. "Lowell came over and..."

"I'm un-be-lievably tired." Susanah's head tilted even further back. Her nose now pointed at the wall. Brad looked at the wall. "...and we were talking and the idea came up that I begin...that I edit a newspaper...or at least, a newsletter, so..."

"I'm just beat. I've never heard you babble before, Brad," Susanah said, her voice strangled in the right angle formed by her neck and head.

"...I'm considering mimeographing, xeroxing something maybe laid out like my book...maybe offset..."

Susanah snapped her neck taut and her head bobbed back into place. "What are you talking about? I've never heard so many maybes coming out of your mouth. Are you on something?" She finally looked in Brad's direction.

"No, you've never seen me excited before. If you'd just come down off stage, Sarah Bernhardt, you might..." Brad knew mentioning how Susanah had been acting since she came in was a big mistake, particularly in the manner in which he had done it, but the temptation to tell the truth was too great and he began telling the truth in almost the only way he knew how, sarcastically. There was relish in his voice as he began and a regret as he paused. Brad was so certain of the logistics of the fight that he even stopped talking a few seconds before she had the chance to interrupt him. On her part, Susanah rose to the occasion, expressing new facets of one of her favorite dramatic emotions, indignation.

Knowing Susanah's preference in roles, Brad expected a classic line and was not disappointed when she stood up, stamped her foot, glared and shouted "How dare you?" He even whispered along under his breath. Then according to the game plan, Brad leaned back in his chair, gave Susanah the floor and waited for her to hang herself in the web of her own emoting.

"After all I've been through today, you have the nerve...you, who just lays around all day...you, lazy son-of-a-bitch, have the absolute gall to make fun of...to ridicule me...ME...for something I do. When you do as much as I do in a day, then and only then will I even consider you in a position to criticize me."

Brad's logic, the spider, saw Susanah stumble and moved forward. The opportunity to pounce had come sooner than he had expected and so Brad hadn't quite enough time to calm himself down to the point at which he sounded level and rational. He began by sounding more like Susanah than he liked, but quickly enough shifted into reason's serene tones.

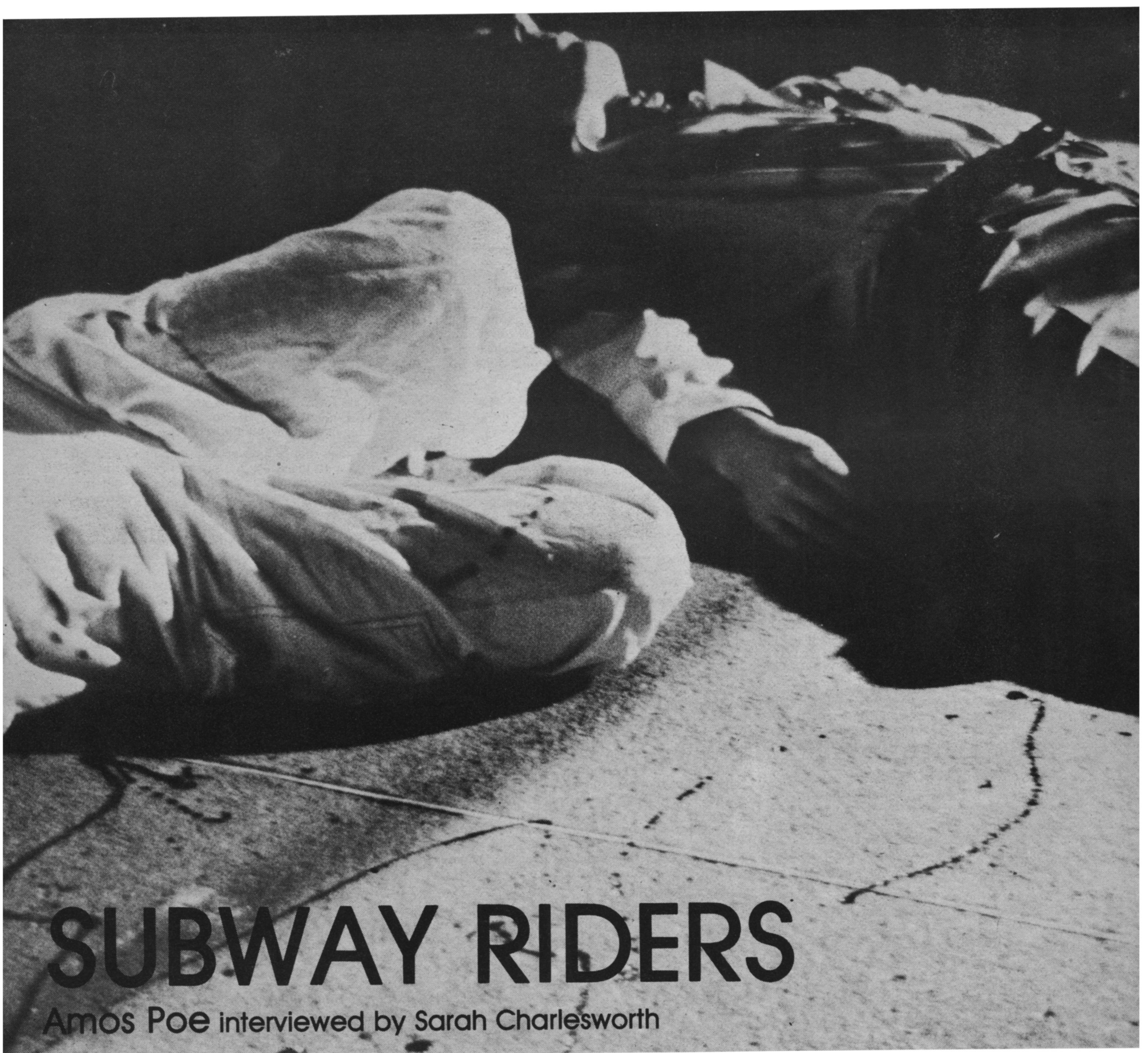
"Wait a minute. If you would...if you *could* have just listened to what I said, Susanah, you might have heard that what I was attempting to discuss with you was about doing something. If you're so interested in my doing something why don't you encourage me in that direction? Why don't you support me in doing something other than constantly watching your act. Or is that, in fact, what you really want—a personal captive audience?"

Susanah didn't fight like Brad did with sharp, quick kidney punches of logic. She didn't hear the words, the accusations, the questions and even if she had, her response would not have been in keeping with the lethal combination of high school debate and dirty pool that Brad used so effectively against her. Susanah became more flustered and more irritated until finally, rubbed raw in exasperation, she started crying. "You don't understand me or what I'm going through."

"Now take the situation, flip it over and make it my fault. Nice try, Susanah."

Brad knew being sneered at drove Susanah crazy and, sure enough, she made fists with her hands and her arms went rigid. Her neck flushed and her eyes were pinpointed in rage. Slightly tilting her head back, her tears diagonaled across her cheeks and flowed down her neck and into her hair, rather than dribbling past the contours of her nostrils and mouth to drip off her chin. "Asshole," Susanah fired

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# SUBWAY RIDERS

Amos Poe interviewed by Sarah Charlesworth

AP: Is this for the record?

SC: For now. Later on you can rewrite the record if you want. Two years into the work—how do you feel about SUBWAY RIDERS as you've completed it?

AP: I feel good about it.

SC: Of all your films, SUBWAY RIDERS seems to have gone through the most transformations in its production period. How has it changed since you first conceived it?

AP: Yeah, I don't know...the more it's changed the more it's stayed the same. It's different from my script but still recognizable. It's taken more time so the bottom line is that it has to pay off.

SC: It has to pay off? In what sense?

AP: Well, in order to make it all worthwhile, it has to be so much stronger—or make a lot of money or whatever. Something BIG has to come out of this picture.

SC: In SUBWAY RIDERS the main character was originally played by John Lurie but was switched to be played by John in part and you in part. Could you clarify?

AP: When I first conceived of SUBWAY RIDERS, at a party I had in December of 1977, it was a thing about a saxophone player. In fact, I meant to title it THE SAXOPHONIST.

SC: Is that the one with James Chance?

AP: Yes, James Chance. I was filming James playing under a street lamp on Lafayette Street. I liked that image, and the film just grew out of that image—a sax player in an urban landscape. Then I met John, I thought I could work more easily with him and I

started to write it specifically for him by observing his nature.

SC: It's about a psychopathic killer isn't it?

AP: No, it's much more than that. It's based on the concept of the modern hero—a tragic hero and a musician, and John was supposed to play Ant Zindo, though all the characters in the film were conceived as tragically heroic. But John was *the* musician.

SC: Tell me how you see a musician, a sax player, as modern hero?

AP: Well, he's the focal point of modern mythology.

SC: What do you mean?

AP: Most people base their lives on musical figures.

SC: Most people base their lives on musical figures?

AP: Uh huh. Like that guy, whats-his-name...Mark Chapman.

SC: O.K....ummmm...how did the role switch to you?

AP: There was a break in the shooting, and when we resumed production, like the day before, John came up to me and said, 'he couldn't afford to play the role of a psycho-killer.' He was going into the studio to do a demo with THE LOUNGE LIZARDS and Chris Stein. He felt his responsibility was there and I understood his predicament—financially, psychologically, professionally; so I figured it was either ending or postponing the film, or going ahead without John. Then I thought, "We have to go on, well how?" It was too late to bring in a new actor, so I said "Fuck it, I'll just do it and see what happens!" I talked it over with my co-producer Johanna Heer, and the rest of the cast, re-wrote a scene and went on.

SC: So it was an improvisation?

AP: Yeah, you could say that. The original script was always a very straight narrative, a kind of demonic action urban picture. It continually changed into a more psychological warp; neurotic, psychotic, schizoid, paranoid, obsessed...though at first I hoped to make it like Dante's INFERNO and PARADISO and like that, in terms of literature, it was well...poetically mythologically bent.

SC: You're back to the modern hero?

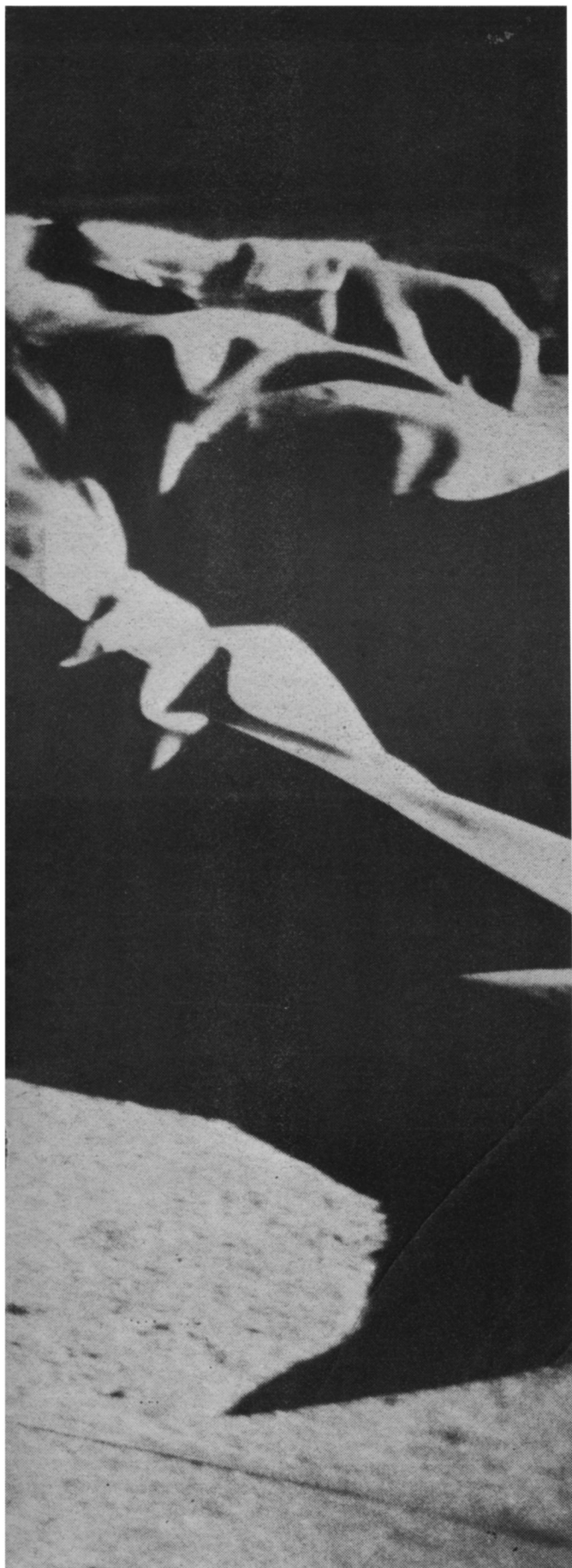
AP: Yeah. Five and now six modern heros. It's a drama.

SC: About...

AP: People's obsessions and frustrations—careers, drugs, artistic expressions, etc. It's about people's lives. It's a drama or a series of dramas. For instance, when Johanna and I were talking about shooting it in color, I was saying how it should be a drama of colors of pictures. Johanna was very much for it, we worked out an equation. From there I became interested in the levels of drama.

SC: Could you elaborate on what you mean by levels of drama?

AP: Well, drama exists between the contrasts of certain identities or images, and I tried to deal with this in THE FOREIGNER, but with that it was in black and white, and the contrasts were like...drawings or photographs, but with color...I had to redefine my standards. I wanted to use wide and macro lenses...Sergio Leonesque, it works in Westerns—the wide screen landscape and then a tight closeup of a fly in a bottle, captured or something—but in my case the landscape was like the fly in the bottle, and



my closeup was under its skin. So the drama works as a contrast of the two lenses.

SC: You mean there's no in-between?

AP: No medium shots.

SC: What is the relationship of color and character?

AP: Each character has an identifiable color as part of their territory or frame, so that the film itself is like a color co-ordinated legend. Instead of a drawing more like a sculpture. A self-reference point.

SC: Your intention initially was, then, to use color to enhance the sensory impact or emotive impact of the images?

AP: Yeah, exactly, a manipulation.

SC: Let's talk about the concept of narrative. You had to alter the script during the shooting. Would you say that your conception of narrative has to do with telling a story in the classic sense? Going from beginning to end?

AP: Yeah. Yeah.

SC: And a moral?

AP: Yeah, I think that's the most important part in film making. Telling a story and having a moral. You need to tell a story to have a good film.

SC: Why?

AP: Because there's nothing else. Every person's life is a story. But not all have to be told.

SC: You could turn on a camera in a room of people and leave it on for two hours and in the end there would be something resembling a story which is recorded in "real time."

AP: Yeah, but that's a documentary.

SC: I'm not talking about documentary, I'm talking about what the parameters of a story could be.

AP: I'm talking about narrative, a movie that tells a story. There are films that don't tell a story, but a movie has to tell a story, whether it's BIRTH OF A NATION or MEAN STREETS or PERMANENT VACATION.

SC: Well, I don't know whether I agree with you that films have to tell a story in that sense.

AP: There's nothing else.

SC: Do you feel that SUBWAY RIDERS is in any way a copy or an imitation of any type or genre or is it...

AP: A genre unto itself would be apropos.

SC: Well, say in the sense, and I'd like to know if you agree with me, that to a certain extent, your previous film, THE FOREIGNER, is a pseudo spy movie—it's like a spy movie only it doesn't ever work out quite right...

AP: Well, yeah, a bad spy movie.

SC: Or, UNMADE BEDS, which is reminiscent of the style of a French New Wave film, referring to Godard's BREATHLESS?

AP: Yeah...UNMADE BEDS was a homage and THE FOREIGNER was an anti-homage. Each film has to be the complete opposite of the one preceding it...

SC: Oh yeah?

AP: Yeah.

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*Clockwise from left: Scene from SUBWAY RIDERS; John Lurie: Amos Poe and Cookie Mueller.*

*Following Page: Susan Tyrrell and Robbie Coltrane; Bill Rice; Charli Kaleina and Amos Poe.*

*This interview took place in N.Y.C. in January of 1981 a few weeks before the final edit of SUBWAY RIDERS was completed. SUBWAY RIDERS is premiering at the Carnegie Hall cinema and will be featured at the Bleeker St. Cinema this month. UNMADE BEDS was made in 1976, BLANK GENERATION, in 1976; and THE FOREIGNER, in 1978.*



SC: Why?

AP: That's what keeps it interesting.

SC: Do you feel that you self-consciously make references to other films or to other genres?

AP: No.

SC: I do.

AP: Yeah but I don't even see those things anymore. Only in UNMADE BEDS, I retain that feeling, but not really in THE FOREIGNER or in SUBWAY RIDERS.

SC: How do you conceive THE FOREIGNER?

AP: THE FOREIGNER remains a mystery to me now, a very cloudy space where questions are allowed to go. Say you call it a genre, where the typical film tells a story by giving certain facts. THE FOREIGNER tells a story by leaving out the facts, a cloudy space where ambiguity, most fears and emotions exist. If the film is successful at all, in any sense, it's only if that occurs, that type of mystery.

SC: Do you self-consciously frustrate the viewer's accustomed expectations?

AP: No, I never frustrate their expectation. I have no idea of their expectation...except to be entertained.

SC: It's like being a host at a party?

AP: Exactly.

SC: What about acting? Do you conceive of characters and then find actors and actresses that can make those characters come alive? Or do you use personalities to fill out the characters; almost as extensions of the actor's own personality—as with John for instance?

AP: Both, I try for a balance of both. I just look and listen.

SC: In terms of acting style, do you subscribe to some notion of naturalism or realism or do you feel that your casting as well as your directing is...well in most of your work the acting is very deadpan, low key...underacted for the most part. The impression is not that you're attempting to make a realistic character but that you are allowing the realism of the actor and the filmmaking moment to emerge. It's not dramatic acting.

AP: Well...it's below dramatic acting. Sub-dramatic...

SC: Would you say it's stylized?

AP: Sometimes when the actor understands the emotion of stylizing a character, it's stylized...

SC: Well, for instance the character Eric plays in

THE FOREIGNER is very stylized. He didn't resemble a spy, as much as he did an actor in a spy movie...An actor acting. I had the impression he was acting the part of an actor not a spy.

AP: Well, that's Eric's approach to acting. He's extremely specific and that's where it comes from.

SC: Do you use actors and actresses of different types and different approaches?

AP: In SUBWAY RIDERS, they're all extremely different. Susan Tyrrell is very dramatic, Cookie is both camp-comical and poetic, Charli is kind of weird method, Robbie Coltrane is like British or Scottish Shakespearean, I think the most dimensional actor I've worked with. John is a natural type like... Peter Lorre. But most of the actors I've worked with I never saw act.

SC: Do you see the context of your work changing as time goes on?

AP: I hope so. Yes, but I can't explain.

SC: Who do you feel your audience is and has been?

AP: I think my audience has been the modern alienated young person of the world.

SC: So they have to be alienated?

AP: Or at least have experienced it at some point in their lives and aware that they experienced it. But the work changes and I think the audience is not that limited, as far as popular culture...my idea of my work's importance is to see how it moves the culture to where I'd like to see it. Pop art.

SC: But wouldn't you make a distinction between Pop Art including film of course, and popular art?

AP: Ummm...

SC: The difference between Campbell's soup and a Warhol? I think there's a difference between pop film and popular films.

AP: You can have a Pop film that's not popular, but I don't think you can have a popular film that's not Pop.

SC: You don't? Would you say APOCALYPSE NOW is Pop?

AP: Extremely. It's experimental American Pop. The two most important American films of the seventies— APOCALYPSE NOW and THE GODFATHER—moved American culture or reflected it in some way. Whereas, STAR WARS, for instance, became a culture or something like that. An ever expanding neighborhood. So I feel a little less isolated maybe, more friends more enemies. SUBWAY RIDERS is an attempt to see more than my block, it's much broader.

SC: To what extent do you feel the film is a product of the director and to what extent do you feel it's collaborative?

AP: Most films are a direct responsibility or expression of the director. There is a collaboration that occurs between the director, the writer, the actor, the cameraperson and the rest of the crew. The better that collaboration, the better the film ultimately becomes.

SC: What about the relationship between a director and a producer, a particularly critical relationship in terms of the outcome of films in general. Have you worked with producers in any traditional sense?

AP: No I never have. Except for SUBWAY RIDERS—I've produced all my films. SUBWAY RIDERS was co-produced by Johanna Heer, under the corporate title of Hep Pictures.

SC: In terms of future films that you're planning, what kind of production situation are you ideally working towards?

AP: I wouldn't mind producing my own films or the films of other directors. But the thought of having a competent person to take on that responsibility and not interfere in the work that I must do, is certainly appealing. Ideal.

SC: Do you want financing from "Hollywood", big production companies?

AP: Yeah. That would be ideal.

SC: In your writing as well as your editing, how do you conceive of or use the experience of lived time in relation to the experience of 'fictive time'? Is temporality in general a critical dimension of your work?

AP: I'm not sure if I understand the word "temporality".

SC: About time, having to do with time.

AP: Oh...I thought you meant political as distinguished from spiritual...you mean how do I edit time?

SC: How do you use film time in relation to fictive time?

AP: In UNMADE BEDS I tried to incorporate 'time-lapse' between two eras, the late fifties versus the late seventies. The real time was inspiring a kind of trip through time, to a time that you wanted to be in or were in fact in, part of the time; therefore you were in the time that you were in...the "retro look", as in fashion...baggy pants and pink shoe laces...two tone shoes. A creation of reality that deals with memory, a

chain reaction of nostalgia. So that the "success" of the film is whether it can communicate today, yesterday, and tomorrow.

SC: So what you're saying, is that you make a film of current time, and that you're incorporating the fictive time of the 50's, and then you're boiling it down to 90 minutes?

AP: Yeah. But the fictive time...ummm...comes from the movies of that era not through having been conscious of living in it. So that BREATHLESS will always be about the late fifties becoming the sixties and UNMADE BEDS the seventies becoming the eighties. The stuff of legends.

SC: In other words, you feel that the fiction or the narrative is located in one point in time, from which the past or the future is perceived?

AP: Exactly, perceived. The vanishing point or illusion. In UNMADE BEDS it was a kind of joke to recreate another time and another place. James Nares did the same thing a couple of years later, with ROME '78, which was a joke about a more previous time, but was very much about 1978 bohemia.

SC: So it's a joke about the romanticism of the times we're living in?

AP: It was.

SC: Do you feel your films are about NOW—about a contemporary experience?

AP: Yeah.

SC: So the violence of SUBWAY RIDERS is very much how you experience the violence of N.Y.—of our environment.

AP: Filtered through this sensitivity to current times comes my expression and my vision, visuals specific to my life—being alive, not just fashionable.

SC: What do your movies represent? Do they come from your experience, your fantasies, your unconscious?

AP: They come probably from fears, fears and yearnings.

SC: So they are a projection of your unconscious?

AP: Ummm...yeah.

SC: To what sense do you incorporate actual dreams into your writing of a script—into your imagination or realization of a movie?

AP: Completely. I don't sense any borders...ummm...I view my films a lot of times in a state of...semi-consciousness. When I see the old films, it's like a recurring dream or ghosts in a familiar landscape that haunt me.

SC: So, making films is like making dreams, for you?

AP: Exactly, but I don't know if the films look like my dreams...

SC: I'm not talking about look like, so much as what part of your mind you write from.

AP: Writing and especially shooting a film is like being in the middle of a very powerful dream, an excited state, sweat and chills...that's why after shooting a film, everyone goes into a coma or a deep depression or both. There's almost nothing as satisfying as the production period—it's crazy and it's when I feel most alive.

SC: Would you identify with the lead character or all of the characters in SUBWAY RIDERS? Are they projections of you?

AP: They're projections of both myself and the people who portray those characters, the actors whose work is to become the film. If I was just writing it, yes, it would be just me; but since it's performed, it's not just me...and that's a great release and relief. That's why I wouldn't want to act in a film I direct.

SC: But that's in fact what you did in SUBWAY RIDERS.

AP: That was against my better judgment.

SC: I suppose I'm suggesting that you work more directly out of your unconscious—less self-consciously than most people. Not only filmmakers but artists as well; your approach is more intuitive than intellectual.

AP: I suppose... I'm sentimental, romantic—it brings out an intuitive logic. The intellect is there but I've got to feel it in my gut, maybe that's intuition. I don't know. Sometimes when people see my films, they say I got a "good eye", not a "good mind", but I think cinema is sensual not intellectual.

SC: Do you think they're naive?

AP: Yeah. I treasure that. It's like something that's me that I try to retain, just to keep sane. I think we're all naive, it's just that some of us express it, some defend it, some just try to live with it. You can't be an artist if you're not naive. When the radishes come up, they come up. You don't question the radishes. If they taste good, they taste good. (laughs)

SC: You're a natural philosopher (laughs). One of your first films, THE BLANK GENERATION, was about music. Is that still a primary interest for you in terms of film?

AP: Yeah. Music is one of the primal motives behind my films, and that's my primary motive in making

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# CARL APPELSCHNITT

Interviewed by Sarah Charlesworth

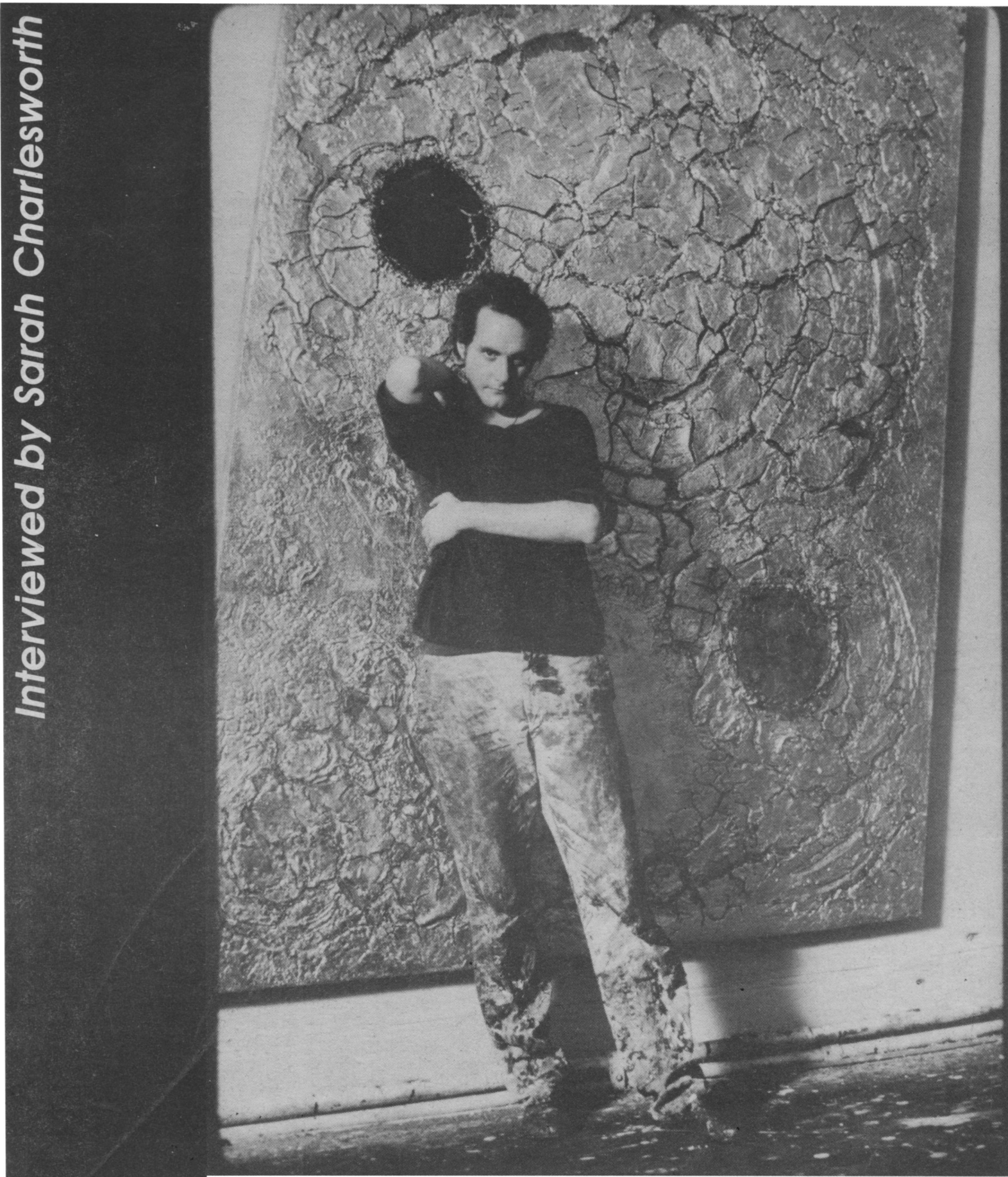


Photo: Kate Simon

Carl Appelschnitt/ Sarah Charlesworth

S.C. The first impression that I feel your work gives is one of being abstract. Its immediate impact depends on its presence and its physicality as an abstract object. There is no specific use of figuration or imagery per se and yet the work does clearly have a sense of connoting a specific experience or a topology of an event and I wondered how you feel about abstraction v.s. referentiality—if the two can be compared that way.

C.A. Do you want me to define the terms?

S.C. Can you talk about content in relation to your work that way? Or imagery?

C.A. Whew...In the sense of symbolism? In the sense of a symbol coming through the paint, of the cracks being some sort of a symbol?

S.C. No, there are several artists around whose work has a degree of abstraction and yet they still make use of images that are very clearly recognizable as images. Whereas, in your work, there really isn't something that functions as an image—there is not a picture of something and yet they're associative.

C.A. They're references to the Universe—and in that sense there is an image. I have a difficulty with images of this plane. I'm not painting *thingness*.

S.C. Your working process requires a lot of labor, there is obviously a building up of surfaces with materials which creates a very specific look to the

finished work. Is this look something you've pre-imagined or that you're in a process of evolving as you are working on the painting?

C.A. It evolves through paint.

S.C. Is there content?—Do you have the idea that you want to make it look *like* something?

C.A. No, I'm totally unaware of that. When I'm painting I feel part of the paint. I'm not aware of anything but the paint or the chemicals I'm using.

S.C. And yet it's not simply about the gesture in the sense of a Pollack or about formal abstraction in the sense of a Minimalist painting. Do you understand your work as pure physicality, pure materiality, or is there an allusion being made to something other than itself?

C.A. There are no allusions being made. The painting is just that. What they might do is spark a reference, whether it be some distant memory or... People say it looks like flying over the deserts of Africa or they see the ruins of civilizations—but the paint is just the paint. I'm aware of what I'm doing with it in so far as the movement of the paint... there's no reference.

S.C. You're talking about dreams or distant memories...

C.A. Or distant Future.

S.C. These are just associations one might have with

the work. You don't specifically have a dream and then attempt to recreate an experience.

C.A. I might dream of flying through consecutive vibrations of energy and I might do drawings of consecutive spheres within spheres, but in the painting, the physicality is very direct. I'm like a primordial monster. I do the paintings to feel why I did them.

S.C. Are there specific symbols in your work? Symbols that are specific to a culture, our culture?  
C.A. It's really more symbolic forms than symbols. I respond to the energies, the whirling energies. I see those symbols running all through history, from ancient art to Malevich. They're references in space and time and an important part of 20th Century Art. Kandinsky wrote a pamphlet called *The Spiritual in Art* in 1917 and there's Malevich's *The Artist, Infinity and Suprematism*. Then there was this thing that began in Milan, The Pictorio Metaphysico. It's quite fascinating. Groups of artists—it was pretty world wide, from Mondrian to Kandinsky, from Russia to de Chirico, became obsessed with alternative realities. And then the Abstract Expressionists here in New York...and that whole Jungian...when Jung talked about the visionary mode...Pollack.

S.C. Do you feel your work is expressionistic?

C.A. Yes.

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(continued from p. 13)

the only stipulation for myself was that three people would be in a struggle for power, no matter how ludicrous the scale seemed. So you get one where two girls are discussing this boy who's standing right next to them. That sort of gossip happens a lot and while it's not on the same level of intensity as two people murdering a third...Yeah, so back to the answer to that question, I stopped thinking about Myra and Ian. I was thinking much more about New York. After I shot those scenes I found that they were such banal and common occurrences in our lives that there wasn't enough to sustain my interest. I needed something more dramatic. So that's when I started shooting those scenes that were scenes from everyday life off the t.v. so to speak. I mean they were more overt. For instance Annie Oakley shoots Mae West for trying to steal her boyfriend. But VERY deadpan.

CG: So how do you think they relate to Myra and Ian?

BS: They don't. (laughter) I mean we all have a common history, a common religion (Judeo-Christian) and, even though in the vignettes people are from different classes, a common culture. I think in the sources of any sort of power struggle you have some common ground. And some that isn't but I never even tried to explain this to myself in a logical way. I picked up things that were quite blatant—sexual relationships, monetary relationships, friendships that were ambivalent, class relationships and juxtaposed them with another narrative that literally ran along side them on the sound track. These narratives seemed to coincide at times...

CG: It was ambiguous.

BS: Yeah, and paradoxical.

CG: The ambiguity is reflected in the title MENAGE as well. The title has implicated within it menage a trois which involves three elements but it also has menagerie, like packs of wolves or tribal elements, sexual elements which are about tribes, menageries, a lot of people.

BS: That's why I chose it. In any sort of scene, for instance in an art scene where the people are socially, economically and emotionally dependent upon each other, you do develop tribal habits and that exists in lower classes as well. In the upper classes, it's a more insular family sort of tribalism. In the latter it's an extended family.

CG: You basically used that family in making the film as well. There are a lot of filmmakers or people who are "on the scene" in the film.

BS: Well, I don't know if I'd want to put it that way.

CG: Well, it all goes back to a social and professional familiarity.

BS: When I write a scene I usually have someone in mind but it wasn't necessary to cast with those same people, but I have to think of someone even if it's nothing like them in the end. I have written scenes for people, but then it's because of how I think they could act in them.

CG: What relationship do you think MENAGE has with your own work in the theatre collective, Nightshift?

BS: Well, it's a theatrical film. And Caz and Lindz had a great deal to do with the prologue. They were the only two actors in it besides a brief appearance by James Shuvus who was working with us on the whole play. But the film was shot as if it were theater in a proscenium arch and the acting...

CG: The acting was very broad, theatrical acting. It wasn't naturalistic.

BS: No, I hate that. I like it to be as fake as possible. Sometimes the faker I'd have people do things, the more natural it looked. Which was a bit of a surprise.

CG: Your videotape, TRIPE, also concerned elements of three.

BS: Right—a man, a woman and a dog.

CG: So what is it about three?

BS: Two is so boring. And once a third element comes in the situation is immediately activated. It becomes less clear as to who is fucking who or who is friendly with who. The possibilities become greater.

There's not a one-to-one ratio anymore. Things shift, especially power plays, in a matter of seconds. Which is what happens in the film.

CG: How did you direct the acting?

BS: Well, I would choose two or three gestures and one attitude for each character knowing that when the script was actually acted out these attitudes would come into conflict with each other and have to change.

CG: So do you think the actor has to know the motivation?

BS: No, I hate that. And it wasn't that sort of script. Well, that's not entirely accurate. There was a subtext in some instances, but we never dwelled upon it.

CG: That film collective...what was it called...a long time ago...where the films were shown on St. Marks Place?

BS: You mean The New Cinema?

CG: Yes.

BS: It wasn't all that long ago. Two years maybe not even that. It wasn't a collective, by the way, even though it may have seemed that way. It was run by Becky Johnson, James Nares and Eric Mitchell. Period.

CG: Well anyway, all of those people surrounding that, I was wondering how or what about that scene had changed.

BS: Well, it was great because they had all these people with all this talent—acting, directing, making music, etc., and no one is making it yet but everyone thinks that they will and they have some time to give to other people and so what becomes possible is almost anything given the economic conditions, which of course dampen it a bit but also make it exciting. For awhile. And then you make a film that takes an enormous amount of time for everyone involved and you're still broke and there's no way to distribute it in a large way. And you can't make a film without thinking of how to distribute it which was why New Cinema was begun in the first place. Also, making films under those economic conditions...O.K., you don't have to spend three years trying to get the money, but you don't necessarily want to get tied to the aesthetics that a low budget film force upon you—one-to-one shooting ratio, no rehearsals, long shots, etc.

CG: But you knew those ideas back then and you know them now. What changed? The approach?

BS: But back to the point. One would like to spend more time on a film. I mean, Film, like Literature, like Art, is a very serious medium and anyone would like to spend a few months developing a script. Which means they have to have money to eat while they are doing that. They would like to work with people over a solid period of time which means that you have to pay them...things like that. So making a film in a big way means channelling all your energies into that and that does not include working on someone else's film.

CG: MENAGE was shot on a very low budget and yet the acting and the camera work are very sophisticated but not precious or arty...

BS: Halfway through the film I developed this thing against beauty and shot a few scenes and then decided that beauty had its place along with pleasure, etc., and got back into it. Did you think that the film was about a particular milieu? Because it wasn't.

CG: No.

BS: I mean I do write from my life but then again I don't write just from my life. There was one instance which was my private joke and that's where Lindz Smith and Duncan Smith are talking to Babs Egan who is playing a whore. Lindzee is being obnoxious and Babs says if you don't like it go home and do it with your wife. Lindzee tells her to leave his wife out of this and then Duncan tells her that his wife is really a wonderful woman. That was a private joke.

CG: Not so private anymore.

BS: It's not fun if it's too secret.



(continued from p. 10)

A. That's partly what I wanted to ask you about next, what do you feel the political implications are that you want to make more prominent, that you want to enlarge upon?

M. Well, there is this parallelism in terms of the main character's daily activities. It's all kind of business related. He deals with his broker, and he takes trips, he's a boss man. The decisions that he makes in his office or at his desk effect possibly thousands of lives, millions of lives, or at least parallel decisions being made by thousands of people like him do every day. In some ways it's very similar to his making these deathtraps for people that are like logical constructs or things that he sets up and then walks away from and the mechanism continues until somebody is killed by it. His obsession is with making things, making the traps. He's obviously not interested in who the specific victim is. Which is something I also wanted to remain as an ambiguous point in the film—whether or not his victims were deliberately selected or random.

A. What happened that you didn't expect... I mean, because the film is so much about what you expected. It's such a logical film and it's so hard-edged and given that very heavy set-up, what happened, or did anything happen? Was there any process is what I'm asking. Or was the process almost nil?

M. Oh no, there was process, but I mean the pre-conception I think really...it was an *a priori* thing...I knew there would be a lot of unexpected things and such, a lot of the film was set up so that there was no possible rehearsal, there was no way to decide in advance what or how...Liza (Bear) and I would meet Jimmy at the place where we were going to shoot, and it was just pure projection, separate, independent projection. We'd talk the day before and if Jimmy was, ah, had business someplace and it was convenient...

A. Really?

M. I didn't want to get into writing dialogue.

A. So it was mainly improvised?

M. It was almost totally improvised by everybody who was in the film.

A. Oh really?

M. Yeah, I provided the concept and almost everything else was improvised.

A. How was...who did the camera work?

M. I did most of it, but not in a vacuum. Jimmy did the point of view shots in the scene with Paula Greif at the end of the film and Liza did some of it in the scene where the guy gets pushed off the building. But when it was time to do a shot I would consult with Liza and Jimmy about it.

A. So it was very much in a way a product, after the initial conception, it was very much a product of everyone who worked on it.

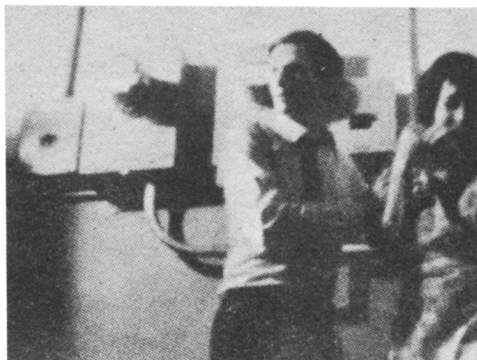
M. Absolutely, it was basically improvised. It was a matter of agreeing on what the films should be, and everybody was subject to the same quandary.

A. Oh, that's interesting, yeah.



Haoui Montaug and Michael McClard

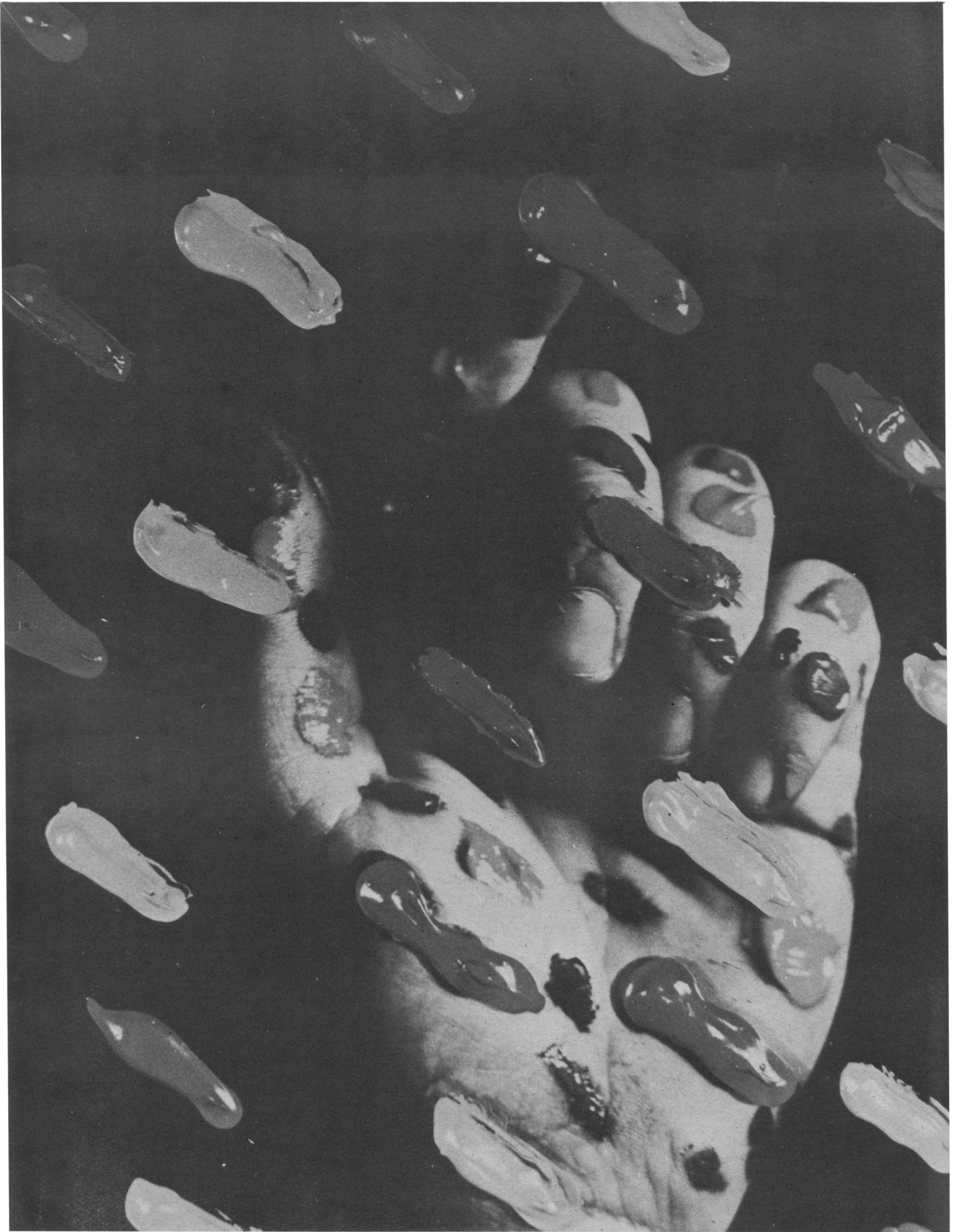
Michael McClard and Leslie Schiff

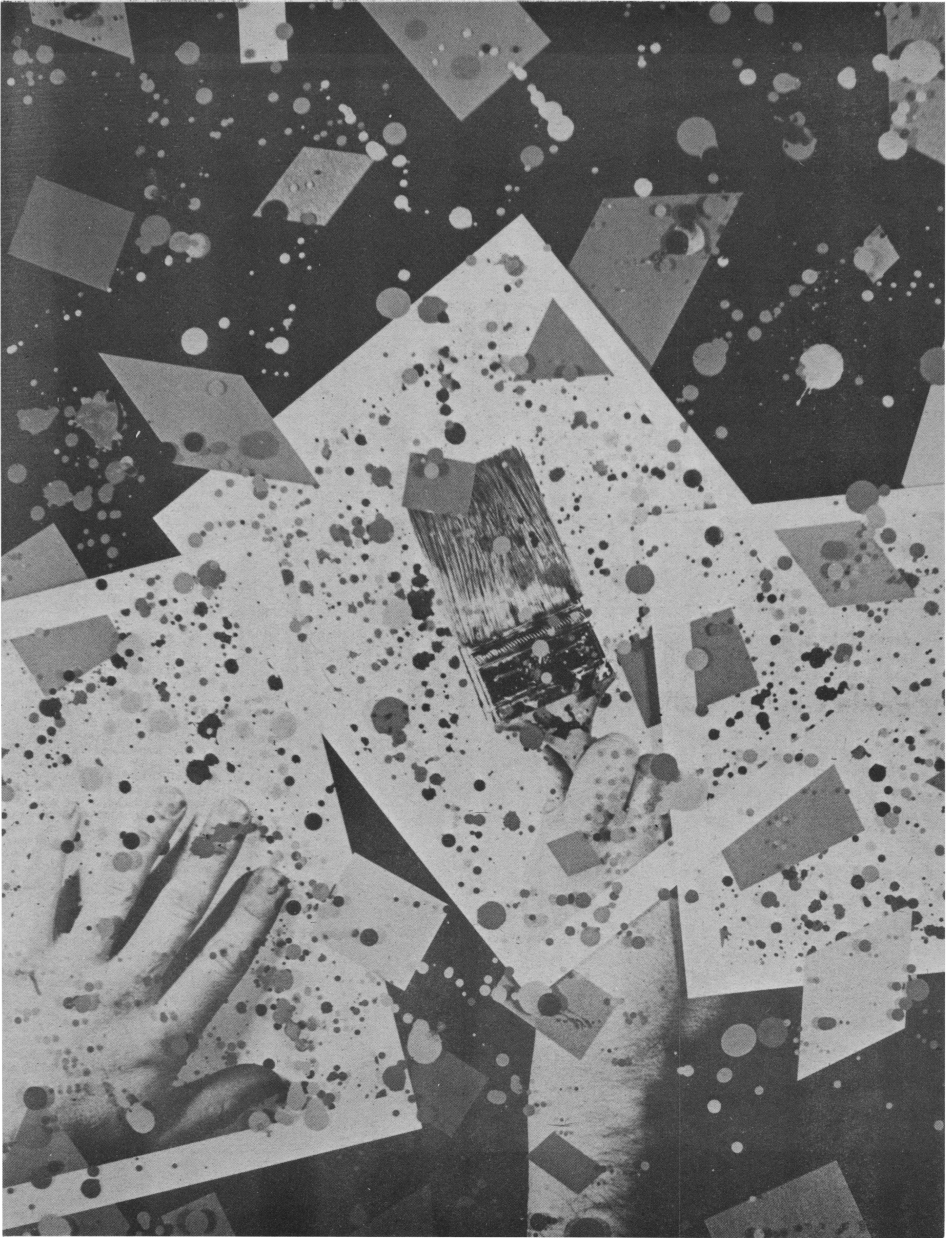




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letters as well as the final "mond." Now that Norma Desmond is Norma Diamond, Norma Jean is Norma Diamond as well.

"Norma" refracts into the French word for love, *amour*. With Norma Diamond or Norma Jean we can obtain the transformations of "love diamonds" or "love jeans," since *amour* or love lies buried in Norma. I have already shown how "love" and "diamonds" symbolize each other, the diamond "ring" that is already a diamond stylus that "rings" out songs of love. Such a diamond reverberates Neil Diamond singing "Forever in Blue Jeans." (His first name is an anagram for "line," the lines or grooves his voice sings from? He is also the one who sings the *Jazz Singer* lyrics "Love on the rocks..."). "Forever in Blue Jeans" translates into "Forever Listening to Blue Diamonds"; there are blue diamonds (blue diamond styluses?), like the Hope Diamond, as there are blue jeans. Neil Diamond sings the "blues."

Jeans are made of denim. "Denim," as anagram, is "mined." The mining of oil needs diamond drills, the playing of vinyl records diamond styluses. Our dancing to this sound is fulfilled when we wear jeans or "denim," such sound the vinyl oil that has been "mined."

Jean, the word jean, cryptically advocates identity since "jean" angulates into "I am," the "I am" a translation of "jean," the piece of cloth or the Jean in Norma Jean. "Jean" is also a homonym for "gene," the repository of the DNA molecule and the building blocks for chromosome formation, a 20th century positivist's pleasure-word. (DNA, a pleasure-word too, has at least two letters in common with *jean*; besides, are not jeans also called "denim jeans"? Respelled, "d[-] [-]jan[-]" echoes DNA, a significant idea when one confronts genetic scientists who like to wear denim jeans.) The *Je* in *jean* is identical to the French "I," made possible by our memories of that language as well as j's proximity to i in the alphabet. (A study of American culture and its origin in the thinking of *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* would be interesting; Davy Crockett with his racoon hat and blue jeans is echoed by Rousseau's similar head-piece, but did he wear the cloth of *de Nimes* as all those 1950s youngsters did?) Furthermore, "denim" 's anagram, "mined," congrues with the "I am" idea within "jean," *my* jeans, the jeans of *mine*, etc. (Homosexuals usually wear a pair of denim to the *Mine[d]shaft*.)

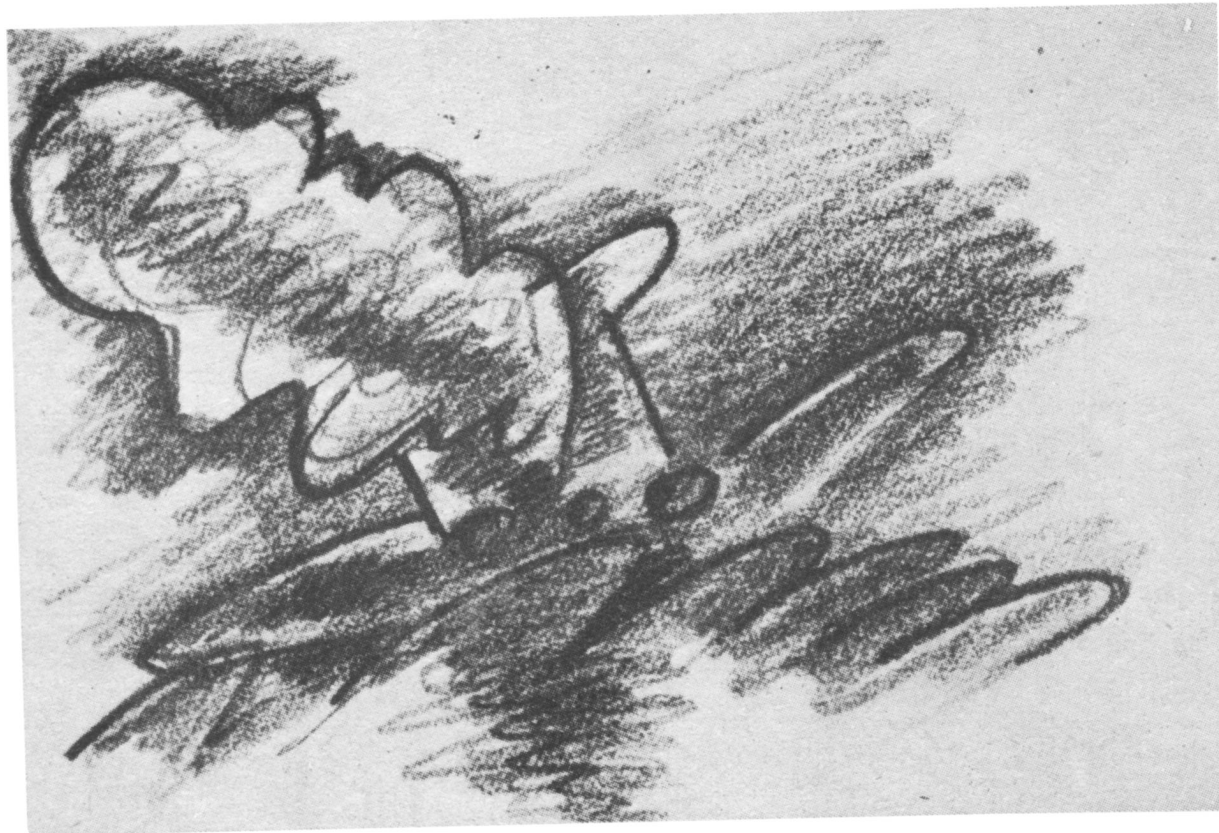
Even in "diamond" there is this "I am" moment. The letters after its initial "d" are "i," "a" and "m" exhibiting the "I am" that is a refraction from "jean," or the proper name "Jean." Diamonds can then be respelled into "djeamonds." Furthermore, in "America" one finds the "I am": "I am erca," or "I am e car". The latter phrase could translate into "Jean a car" or "Jean, a car," a truism for stars (Norma Desmond/Jean) are supposed to be cars. Getting into a pair of jeans is an allegory of getting into a car. (*Jeans that cover legs for walking are met by cars that somewhat dispense with legs for driving.*) Besides every American has a particular brand of jeans as they have a particular model of a car, a Levi's or a Ford. And every American takes care of their jeans or car, the phrase "I am erca" from "America" now splintering into "jean care," "care" embedding "car" and "ear" as well. ("America" also anagrammatizes into "I camera.")

The car's affinity with the diamond stylus is proved by styluses played on vinyl grooves while cars drive over asphalt roads. A car is a stylus (related to the prows of ships, ships substitutive with cars), thereby displaying the idea that a car in transit is an allegory of a diamond stylus in transit, grooves and roads the paths on which the respective objects travel along. The tire of the car is a stylus too, styluses write as do tires write, tire always already an anagram for "rite," a homonym with "write."

Of course Marilyn Monroe would think "Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend" since within "diamonds" lies buried the "Jean" she kept buried. Marilyn Monroe's best friend is her name "Jean" long after she had left that name for one that is new, rewritten and non-original. Marilyn will always be the friend of "Jean" since that name was bestowed to her at birth, but "Jean" never issues from her lips in her films, whereas diamonds will, *djeamonds/djeamonds/diamonds* being the place of her secret name. Yet she wears jeans in *The Misfits* and was married to Joe DiMaggio, "Joe," an "O, je," this "je" buried in "jean." Meanwhile, Norma in *Sunset Boulevard* falls for Joe (Gillis). Diamonds are Marilyn Monroe's friend (Monroe's sounding like *Mon-rose*) because she had lost the buried name Jean (buried in diamonds/Desmond), once stardom demanded a pseudonym.

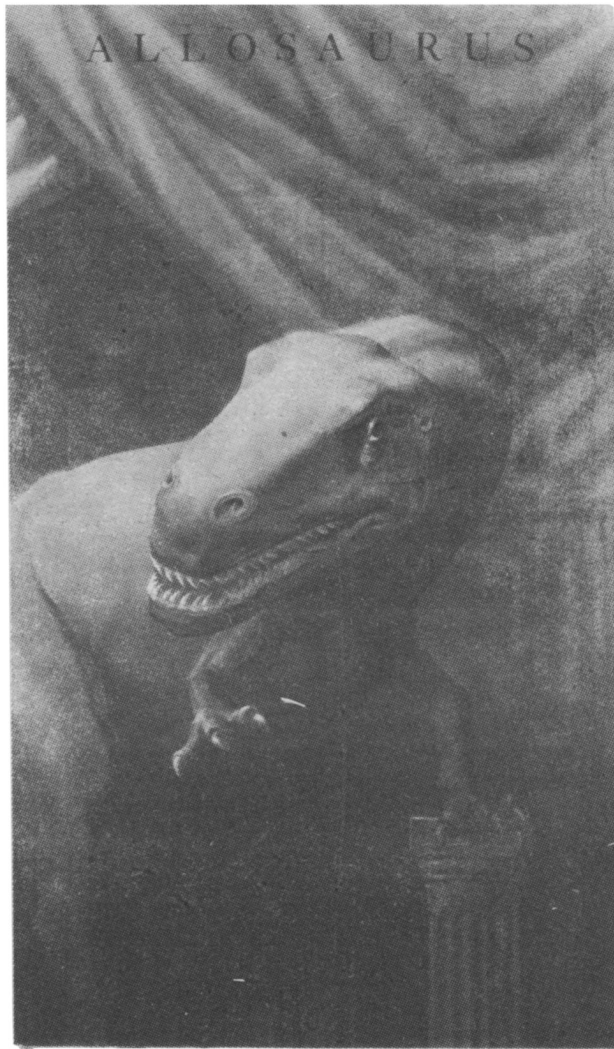
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S.C. What's the difference between the type of Expressionism involved in this work and other forms of Expressionism?

C.A. We see things prismatically now.

S.C. What do you mean we see things prismatically?

C.A. It has to do with the fracturing of the spectrum, the attention on color. Eighty years ago, before the Impressionists things were seen in primary ways and then with Impressionism, people went crazy. They thought Renoir was trash. There was a change in the vision around that time. And of course the advent of photography changed the way we see. Painting became more expressionistic—Art in general became more...direct, less pictorial. German Expressionism was very surrealistic, a guttural expression of the consciousness in Germany. They were responding to the imagery and what was happening in Germany at that time. Then everything got fucked up during the war...and then in New York, that show at the Mac-Millan Gallery in 1942—Pollack and Kline, DeKooning and Clifford Still's yellow and red painting; Jackson Pollack's last figurative painting. It just smashed painting open and there was no excuse for figurative painting at that point.

S.C. It is interesting to try and differentiate between a form of expressionism that evolved in America in the 1950's...

C.A. In the 40's...

S.C. Let me finish here—that kind of Expressionism which was a reaction against a very formalist, academic tradition of Modernism, specifically European; Abstract Expressionism in the U.S., a social gesture within the context of a Modern Art tradition and expressionism as it exists today.

C.A. Now it deals with a more direct knowledge, it's no longer so academic. Ouspensky talked about the forms of knowledge—the third form is language and mortality; the fourth form, telepathic communication, symbolism and immortality—DIRECT KNOWLEDGE.

S.C. Oh boy, O.K., would you say Expressionism today seems more personal or less self-conscious?

C.A. Yes, less *self*-conscious. You must realize what happened—painting has gone through a tremendous transition. Robert Smithson hated painting but to me, what he was doing was painting with the planet—which is a kind of symbolism—direct contact...hmmm

S.C. Maybe the word expressionistic is misleading.

C.A. Very misleading and academic.

S.C. I've always found my own work to be involved in a social and cultural sphere larger than myself. The meaning of making art for me has very much to do with the meaning of making a statement about art or the world at that particular moment in time.

C.A. Sarah, I am trying for the paintings to illuminate. For paintings to have an illumination—to bring some kind of light, here.

S.C. Do you feel that as an artist you are working in isolation, apart from a more intellectual or literary tradition of art or do you feel that your work addresses this tradition specifically?

C.A. I think it deals with tradition. I always look at history as stepping stones. The idea of art being a re-definition of the surface of a canvas—that seems to be very important—it seems to be my obsession. That's why I stopped doing figurative work.

S.C. Why the re-definition of a canvas?

C.A. That is my obsession—my addiction to paint.

S.C. But that doesn't fully explain why you stopped doing figurative work.

C.A. I needed something with more endurance than an illustrated image of man.

S.C. So you feel figurative work is by its nature illustrative, or do you feel that the work you were doing...

C.A. I feel that my personal work was illustrative. Not all figurative work is. It's all very personal, the artists, what they're obtaining, what information is coming through, whether it be Malcolm Morley or Richard Serra. The idea that it all is equally important and at this point synchronistic—in all realms of painting, art or...

S.C. You're not saying that all work is equally important?

C.A. What I'm trying to say is that I am not placing a judgement on figurative work.

S.C. Do you think there are specific trends in painting now? Do you feel any particular connection with ideas developing in Art?

C.A. Most definitely I see a new vision, a new consciousness, well not so much a new one as an old one...

S.C. In New York at this time?

C.A. I'm thinking about the planet.

S.C. If you can call 20th century art visionary, do you see a specific kind of consciousness—a freedom from restraints, or a kind of focusing of attention, energy?



C.A. The awareness of another nature of existence. Pop Art taught us about the material—that we are Pop Art, the awareness that there are other realms has also been given to us. We are gaining a logic of the unity of all that is, and we *are* all that is.

You see, I think you could take one of my paintings to an aborigine or a thousand years into the future and they would understand...its not about a single moment in culture, its more about a spark...of humanity■

(continued from p. 47)

As well, "diamonds" are going to be Marilyn's "best friend" since the "dia" in this word can be easily transformed into "die" or its homonym, "dye" (as in hair-dye). She sung of "diamonds" and she "died," killed herself or was murdered, along with her dyed blonde hair of the hue called "platinum," echoing the platinum that diamond rings are set in. Norma Djeanmond will die young and she will dye her hair. Americans will love (*amour*) jeans forever or they will love Norma Jean forever. Furthermore, they will listen to diamonds forever while wearing their blue jeans, the jeans whose "blue" color is always already in conjunction with "blue" diamonds or Neil Diamond's "blues."

The diamond that is worn, is also a part of the "Norma" in the Desmond/Jean constellation, "worn" a distorted anagram of "Norma" as "Morn[a]/Worn[a]," the "M" always reversible into a "W" in this mythological hieroglyphic. Worn diamonds are a translation of Norma Desmond/Jean; to wear jeans occurs when we wear diamonds, those diamonds usually styluses, the "wear" having "ear" within it for *wearing* jeans occurs when our ears hear diamonds as we dance in nightclubs in our jeans.

Maybe the ultimate mystery in "jean" is its refraction into "jean," "r" a truncated "n"; the ear and the meanings that issue forth from this aperture are always the most unconscious, "jean"/"I ear"/"I hear"/"I here"/"I am" accounting for the unconscious in "jean." ("Jear" is close to "year"; we wear our jeans for years, our diamond styluses last for years; the fading of our jeans took years, etc.)

The above is a cryptonymy of the word "jean," the secret surname of one of America's legends, Marilyn Monroe. That word is thus in intimate conjunction with the word "diamond," but what are the other facets of the diamond, this jewel whose letters can gleam like jewels?

After all this discussion of the "dia" in this word, what about the "monds" in "diamonds"? *Monde* is French for world, in German *Mond* is its word for moon. But none of these words confirm the sound-related nature of diamonds. "Monds" is simply a refraction thrown off by the word "sound." (Yes, "sound" can sound differently.) Already the closest anagram from "monds" to sound is "somnd." We can obtain "sownd" (reversing the "m" again). "Sownd" is the closest to "sound," sound is phonetically "sownd," the "ou" of "sound" having an "ow" sound. "Diamonds" gleam like the diamond into "dia-sound," or "dias-sound," a dias or podium or stylus like the diamond.

Dia, respelled into die, is now in association with sound, producing "die sound." In "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend," the advent of a "girl's" death has diamonds to prevent its approach. The die sound/diamond(s) speaks of death at the very moment it assures the girl of life, security, attractiveness. She may begin to look old, but diamonds prevent that aging, this symbol for steadfast love ignores flesh's decay (diamonds, like love, are forever) while reminding ourselves that its ring(ing) and singing is death, diamonds, a "die sound." (The author's name will ring throughout his lifetime "Duncan Smith," or "D.S.," a *die* sound.)

When Norma Jean/Marilyn Monroe sings "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" we do not notice the "are" is an anagram for "ear." Of course the diamond is in our ear, particularly when we hear, "Diamonds Ear a Girl's Best Friend." But what probably happens is that girls get earrings, diamond earrings, a demand they place on the partner who has assimilated their "cry" for diamonds. But the "demand" resounds with "diamond," here the "diamond demand" an allophonic tautology. Girls demand diamonds, they cry for diamonds.

Diamonds, too, are a girl's best friend only when we bear in mind that a gift is implied, the demand for a gift fulfilled, the diamond for a gift, here diamonds, fulfilled. ("T.G.I.F.," an anagram for "gift," is an abbreviation for "Thank God It's Friday," the Fri-

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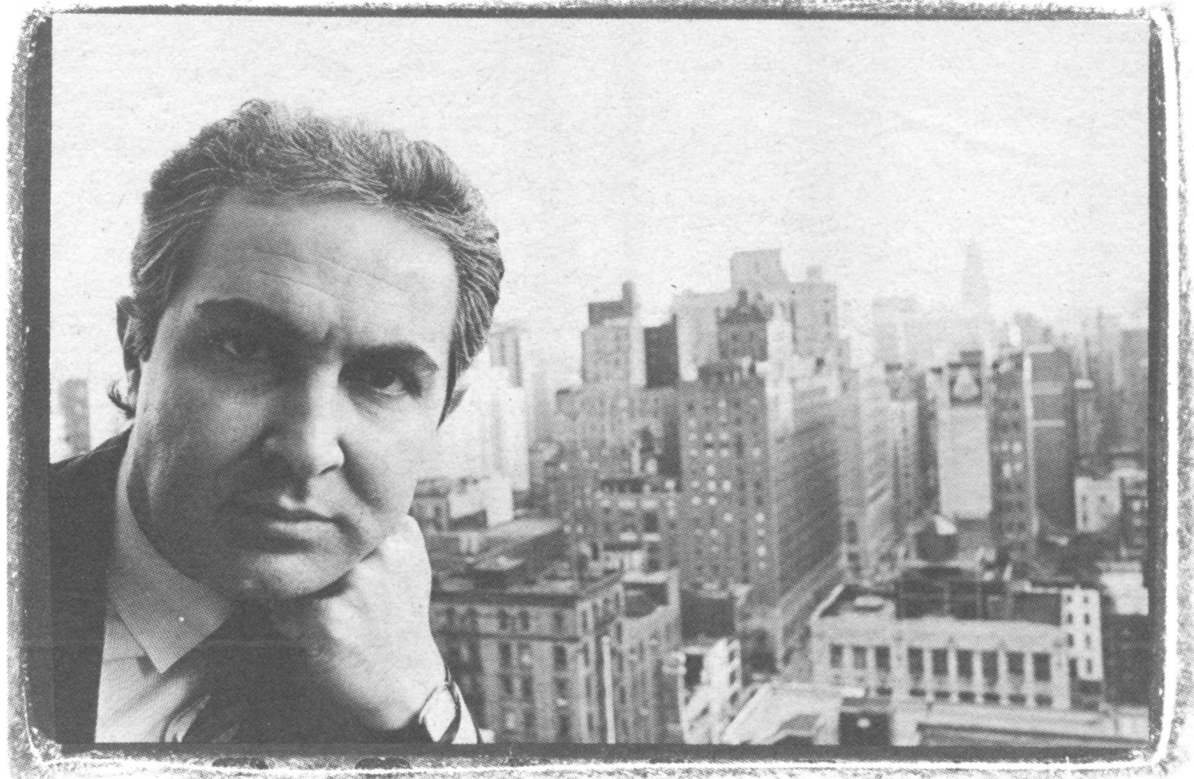


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(continued from p. 49)

day evening when people go to dance halls to listen to music played by diamonds.) But what returns? Surely not diamonds in the form of rings, earrings, magical powders or money, but the paltry substitute of just the music, the "ring" of a diamond stylus, the "ring" in the ear, the "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" played over the film sound track, record player or radio. Without diamonds, girls settle on diamond styluses, the invisible ear-ring. The song "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" thus confirms that the mere hearing of the song is the fulfillment of the diamond demand, the only diamond obtained being the "ring" in the air or in the ear in light of the absence of a "ring" on one's finger. At the moment Marilyn Monroe strikes one's ear, a diamond hovers, propelling the deprived listener a vague sense that their friend, whoever it may be, is nearby.

(continued from p. 40)

movies, changing the culture that we live in. I mean if we don't change what's going on, then who will? With the BLANK GENERATION, it was all happening around the corner, in the neighborhood, now it's so much more wide-spread, but less intense...ummm.

SC: Do you think there is a common style among the younger underground filmmakers in New York?  
AP: No. Not as such. There's some people that could be grouped together. The B's, Eric, Vivienne Dick, and Becky, even Betsy all work in Super 8, but their films are quite different, apart from the fact that they're both primitive and sophisticated in the same breath.

SC: You've been called both a punk and a new wave filmmaker...to what extent do you see that term as a kind of stylistic label, are there basic conceptual ideas that those terms represent?

AP: There are conceptual innovations, just like you could group Rossellini, Visconti and DeSica, and call them post war Italian neo-realists, that's more like a group show, and I'm not that interested in the similarities between artists but more in their uniqueness...

SC: Is there a common style? I'm trying to generalize.

AP: O.K. Ummm...there are some films that may be similar on a literary level, like Becky's and Betsy's. Maybe Edo and Eric have the same fashion fetishisms...James' ROME 78 reminded me a lot of

UNMADE BEDS...I think the B's intentionally or unintentionally copied THE FOREIGNER, in some of their films...there were a whole rash of films for a while about terrorists and kidnappings when that was in the news. Michael Oblowitz uses stereotypes and camera movements that are a lot like THE FOREIGNER's, except they're cleaner. Vivienne Dick's films are quite unique. But basically, there's a big difference in everyone's approach and care. Once you take the time to look at each film—you sense more the differences than the similarities.

SC: In your life in New York, it seems you spend as much time with visual artists as you do with filmmakers. Is there a common thread?

AP: I'm drawn more to artists, than to one particular medium...

SC: Is there a commonality between the best of the filmmaking that's being done and the other current art?

AP: Yeah, hustling, exposure, immediate and long-term gratification. Some filmmakers do other things besides making films. The common bonds of people interest me, but I still see most everything in terms of cinema...I'm still a voyeur but I'm beginning to participate more...I'm learning...my attitude is becoming less passive. Or my passivity is becoming more active.

SC: It's as though you were watching your life as if it were a movie.

AP: Yeah...a tragicomedy, a musical, a love story...whatever. I want to make movies and I want to live. I guess that's my role in the movie I'm watching. I feel like that's what I was born to do ...I think this is where I came in.■

(continued from p. 37)

towards Brad with enough velocity to puncture. Turning away, without waiting to witness the accuracy of her aim, she swept herself toward the bedroom door. "Cunt," Brad spit back at her as she slammed the door shut. He knew she hated that word.

Brad stonily turned back to his desk and began leafing through his book again. In the bedroom, Susanah sat propped up in bed crying, vigorously rubbing at her fingernails with cotton balls drenched in fingernail polish remover. All in all, the mechanics of the fight had run smoothly.

Brad remained at his desk for another hour considering the pros and cons of establishing a newspaper. He finally stopped himself at a point when the pros

outweighed the cons. Satisfied and excited, Brad could now afford to feel guilty at having made Susanah cry. He walked around, switching off all the apartment lights except one. He cracked the bedroom door slowly and silently and the light fell in and arced across the bed. Brad shyly peeked around the door. Susanah was sleeping peacefully, her hands carefully positioned flat against the sheet so as not to disturb the new coats of fire-engine red polish that lacquered her nails, ten lustrous stains mounted on sheets as white as camphor.

(continued from p. 29)

The strolls continued. Charles was good-looking, moody, given to short-lived enthusiasms and other things I can't remember. Jack and I socialized with Greek waiters. Waiters have always been partial to me—my mother has always said I had a good appetite. One such waiter took us for really good food in a place where men who were almost colonels cracked plates over their heads even though this was then against the law. The waiter then took us to his home and fed us some of that plum booze that's thick like a hot night itself. Jack and I went home and I went for my usual stroll. Several weeks later it was common knowledge that the waiter's common-law wife wanted to kill me. Alfred Perles, his wife, and Betty Ryan—the friends of Miller—all accused me of destroying Jack. It was the right time to leave.

The woman who took care of my rented, decrepit house and lived just across the lane offered to wash my hair and bathe me. I hadn't had a hot bath in two months. She heated the water in a huge black cauldron over a fire in front of her house. She sat me in a plastic tub. She even scrubbed my back. I felt she had some sympathy for me, and had watched, from her position in the chorus, other, similar young women.

There was no love lost. Charles slept at my house on my last night in Crete, Jack having sailed away, alone, almost nobly, a week before. I refused to make love with Charles, complaining of the heat and the bugs, and as a final indignity kept my underpants on and slept over the covers, while he slept beneath them. Charles and Michael, who had played Count Dracula in Ford's movie, drove me to the airport. On a similar ride one year later Betsy's husband who had come, I imagine, to win her back, would be killed in a car crash. I got back to Athens.

# BOMB

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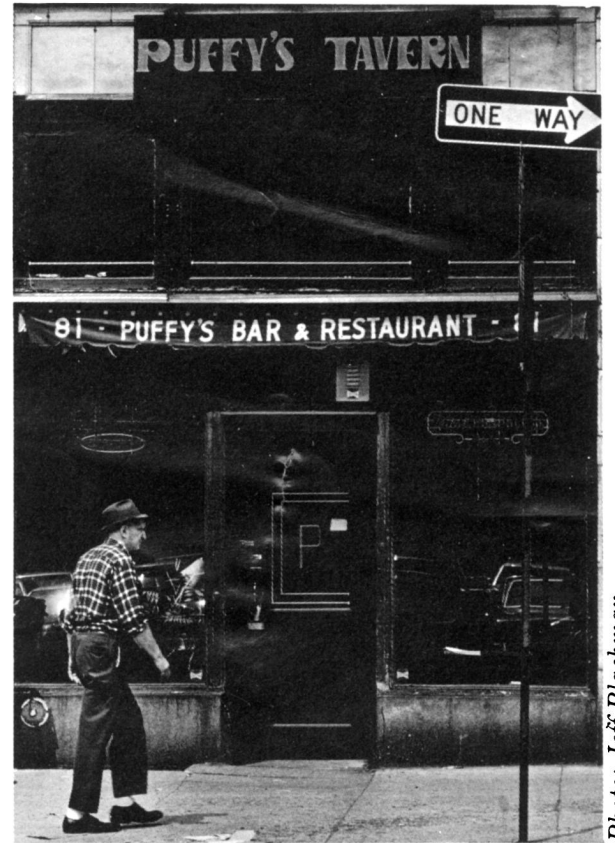


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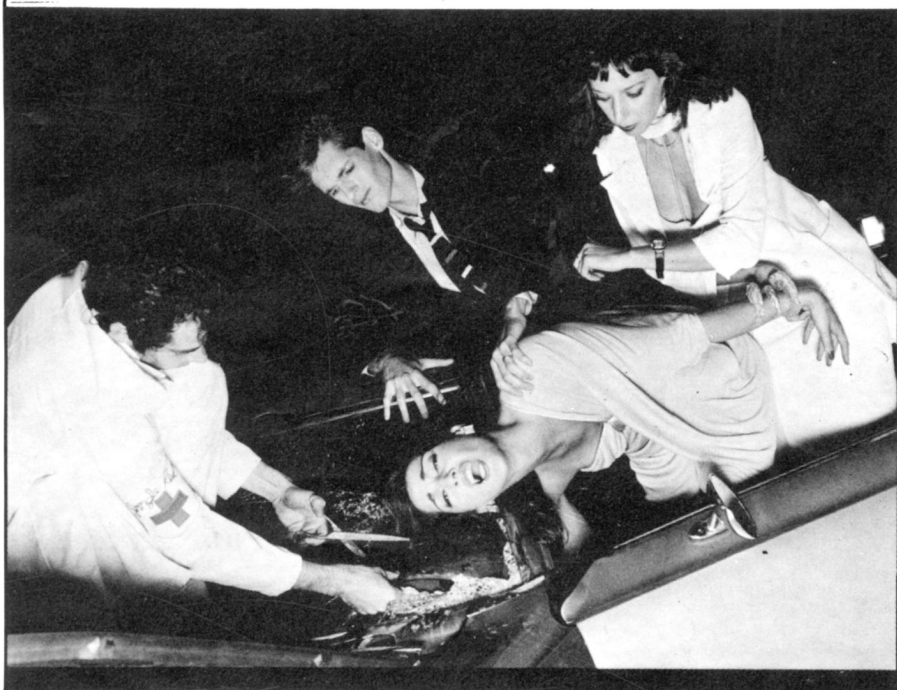


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