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EDITORIAL

WAITING FOR YESTERDAY TO END

OPEN LETTER TO FILM-MAKERS OF THE WORLD
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CINIM

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LONDON FILM-MAKERS CO-OPERATIVE

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Correspondence, and contributions, should be sent to the Editor, CINIM, 25 Durlston Road, Kingston on Thames. Contributions must be typed double spaced and accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, or international reply coupon. Intending contributors are advised that our main, though not exclusive interest is in the growth-points of the contemporary cinema, in creative film-making, and in the study in depth of work by directors of international status. Original work in the area of film aesthetics is also welcome. (No payment can at present be offered.)

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EDITORIAL

Editorials should be short. And basic. CINIM is planned to appear at least twice a year. It is a magazine run in conjunction with the newly formed LONDON FILM-MAKERS CO-OPERATIVE. It is intended as a platform for advanced criticism, and for imaginative writing on and around the theme of contemporary cinema.

The star of Hollywood sets. The French New Wave flattens out. The era of personal revelation through the cine-camera opens, and as Jonas Mekas hints in his open letter the whole issue of presentation is itself in ferment.

In this context we begin. CINIM will not imitate anyone. CINIM will be CINIM. We aim to go beyond the thought-barriers of the cultural glossies, to go farther in many directions, and to go deeper. In fact CINIM means to become the astronaut of film-critique.

To do this involves having the ability to be both absurd and wise; sometimes one, sometimes the other, sometimes both together. It entails living with diversity of ideas, and with contradiction. Such an approach finds expression in the current symposium on Godard. Three voices emphatically disagree about one man. But perhaps, between them, they draw co-ordinates about this complex film-maker, and, in some measure, fix him.

Philip Crick.

WAITING FOR YESTERDAY TO END

Simon Hartog.

part 1 of reflections on the noisy rectangle

1. MORTALITY

In the beginning, if anyone knows where and when it began, there was the cinema.

"The cinema is man's biggest electric train". Orson Welles.

It could have begun any second now. Or then. It may never have begun, and it may never end. It could well die tomorrow. Or the day after. Then there will be television.

Some have written histories of it. They - the histories and the some - are full of facts, words, stills, and titles. Facts (artifacts) words (visions) stills (movies) can lie. Titles cannot.

THE MASK OF ZORRO is a title. When was it made? Who made it? Who were the stars? Where was the moon? It depends. But titles there are.

Maybe it was all a mistake. Maybe we should forget it, start all over again, and invent a new name. No letters, only grains. But then the grains are on the way out.

"The age of the image has come." Abel Gance in 1915.

2. CORPOREALITY.

The cinema is rooted in two cerebral malfunctions. If we could see well enough, the cinema would be something else.

A. Physiology.

Since it is unlikely that our eyes will ever see through the transparent fraud of moving pictures, the future of the cinema as a mechanical illusion seems certain. To know that the cinema is a form of blindness is all that is needed to begin.

B. Phenomenology.

The world was not created, nor will it be destroyed, at a certain number of frames per second (unlike sex, its unfiltered result is not reproduction).

The cinema is no more than the content of the frames incorrectly perceived. Each frame contains nothing but chemically captured light.

Unfortunately, these traces of light can be made to approximate a non-existent piece of common sense called reality. The cinema, however, cannot start being itself until the image is taken to be an image and

nothing else. The cinema is not something else filmed: it is the frames on the film.

"How did they ever manage to film the Marx Brothers raping Bambi, Goofy and Snow White on Noah's Ark in the Round Pond?" They didn't.

3. PATHOLOGY.

Since its hypothetical birth the cinema has been infected by a number of chronic diseases, which attack with differing intensity in different climates and which are not necessarily unrelated. Unfortunately, the most dangerous of the diseases, realism, has been omitted, because of the difficulty of diagnosing reality.

A. The theatrical.

The theatrical is a disease resulting from promiscuity in the womb. It attacks the primary structure of the frame by forcing the chemical captives into patterns. Such patterns are faces which are recognisable, recurrent, and "in sync" and actions which are continuous in space and time. Its symptoms are close-ups at dramatic moments, tracks and pans which are not arbitrary, quick cutting for action, bizarre angles for mystery, low angles for suspense, and shots through windows for voyeurs. It presents a spectacle which is to be believed rather than seen.

B. The literary.

Music is motion. Painting is space. Writing is causality. Space and motion are the cinema, but causality corrodes the possibilities of the frame. The literary demands that the eye sees only what is relevant to its causal logic. It speaks the language of "characters", "motivation", "development", "miscast" and, above all, of "narration".

"The essence of (the cinematic) art is digression." J-L. Godard.

C. The verbal.

Red (the word) is not red (the frame). The verbal attacks a film in its conception. It makes the camera the slave of the typewriter. It destroys the cinema's essence by imposing on the image an alien tongue. A film which speaks its own language cannot be written or spoken; it can only be seen. The page is not the frame. "Red" is not red.

These diseases limited the scope of the cinema. They were unfortunate - but perhaps necessary - convalescences (?) which had their moments of passion. They were the crutches with which the cinema had to crawl, but now it can walk without them.

The owl of Minerva should soon fly and then tomorrow can begin.

LONDON FILM-MAKERS

CO - OPERATIVE

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"Such a cloudy
sky clears not
without a storm."

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OPEN LETTER

TO FILM-MAKERS OF THE World

Jonas Mekas.

I would like to speak to you through this open letter. Although some specific feelings expressed may be personal, I'll be speaking in the name of the independent film makers of America who have delegated me to do so. You don't often see us at film festivals. Very often, the "independent" American films that you see at Pesaro, at Oberhausen, or Mannheim have very little to do with what we are doing. There is a special festival-minded breed of film-makers, and you find them in every country, who will get their films into any festival, no matter how bad or indifferent their work is. Whereas some of our best film-makers, those who are doing really exciting work, cannot afford the festival prints of their films or, simply, aren't interested in film festivals. There is a feeling in the air that film festivals have become commercial and bureaucratic fairs at which we would feel very much out of place. Even the most advanced ones, like Pesaro, are working within the same commercial festival tradition; they do not truly reflect what's really going on in cinema. At least, we know they do not represent or reflect the new American cinema.

Yes, what about Pesaro? To select the new American films for the current festival, it delegated a French film critic to do it. Now, this critic, no matter how much we respect him, doesn't know much about what's happening in America: his knowledge of American cinema comes from Paris releases and...from film festivals. So we told him: we know best what we have, what's really happening new in our cinema, what would really be of interest for a festival of new cinema. This year, for instance, we would have sent Stan Brakhage's SONGS, Gregory Markopoulos' GALAXIE, Harry Smith's HEAVEN AND EARTH MAGIC, Tony Conrad's FLICKER, Andy Warhol's MY HUSTLER, Bruce Baillie's QUIXOTE. But the festival representative seemed to be very clear in his mind, what kind of films he wanted. He had a very definite conception of what "new cinema" is or should be. He wanted something that already corresponded to that conception. He wanted more of "cinema verite", for instance. And he didn't even look at the truly NEW AND IMPORTANT WORK

DONE IN AMERICA TODAY, the work that would have been a real discovery for the festival. And this happens with that festival whose main aim is to serve the NEW CINEMA.

Or take the Cannes Film Festival. I was asked, this Spring, by the Festival, to suggest what, if anything, there is that they should consider bringing to the Semaine de la Critique. I wrote to them approximately this: "When you ask about films suitable for the Semaine de la Critique, you still have in mind the same type of film you saw four years ago. I could suggest a few titles of that kind of cinema - but since our cinema has changed and is still changing, it would be wrong to help you to continue that dream. Yes, there are the other, and truly new films to take to Cannes. But what's the use even suggesting? What's the use telling you that Andy Warhol has taken Cinema Verite into completely new areas and has produced some of the most important contemporary cinema? Or Brakhage's SONGS? Cannes wouldn't even consider 8mm films. Or Gerd Stern, or Robert Whitman, or Nam June Paik? - They can't even be previewed! You still think in old terms. You still think, that everything that is really good and new in American cinema can be packed up, wrapped up and shipped to you like any other movie, for previewing. This is no longer true. Very often, you have to bring the film-maker, and one or two technicians, and even equipment. For what they are doing, very often, are film evenings, cinema evenings, but no films in the usual, conventional sense. These evenings, like some of the evenings of Gerd Stern (USCO), or Andy Warhol, or Jerry Joffen, or Stan Vanderbeek - with multiple projections and multiple sound systems, and with live participation, would shock Cannes into new visual, kinesthetic perceptions and into the cinema of the future. They would realize that there is truly new cinema, that something revolutionary is happening in cinema.' Etc. I ended by suggesting six programs to take to Cannes. And what do you think happened? A representative of Cannes came to New York, looked at some familiar work, ignored whatever new and revolutionary was happening, ignored film-makers' suggestions, and went back to Paris, declaring to the Press, before leaving, that he has found no interesting work done here and that, therefore, the young American directors will not be represented at Cannes this year.

Dear colleagues, film-makers and film critics: the conception of film festivals must be changed. Bureaucracy has got to go. Film-makers should decide what should be shown,

they know what's happening. Money should be used not for importing stars or for publicity but for paying for the prints of the films shown, for the shipping of films, or for importing film-makers, their technicians, their equipment (for inter-media shows). For instance, even if Pesaro representative would have seen and liked SONGS or GALAXIE, the film-makers wouldn't have afforded to make prints of these films for sending to the festival. Cinema is changing, but the film festivals have remained the same - that's what's wrong.

I went into the film festival aspect in more detail only to show that the new film-maker (and that goes for all countries) can not trust any commercial (or State; or one that is based on commercial tradition) film financing, film production, film distribution, film exhibition or film promotion set-ups and organizations. WE HAVE TO START EVERYTHING FROM SCRATCH, FROM THE BEGINNING. NO COMPROMISES, HOWEVER SMALL.

Five years ago, the young American film-makers got fed up with what we saw around. We started by abandoning all commercial illusions. We started from scratch. We did our work, no matter what distributors or film critics said. The new American cinema grew up like a child, from nothing, not even wanted. Our critics even say that, like children, we don't listen to our parents; we are irresponsible; we use dirty language; we masturbate; we are oversensitive; and other such things of young natural growth. There is much that they don't like about us, there is much that isn't mature or "perfect". We aren't even "beautiful", sometimes. Some of us have pimples on our faces. BUT WE REFUSE TO USE PLASTIC SURGERY TO CHANGE OUR FACES AND OUR SOULS INTO THE FACES AND SOULS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE. Take us as we are, or go your own way - we say. We keep seeing attacks and distortions of our work in French, German, Russian film periodicals - articles usually written by people who have seen only one or two of our films. We stopped bothering about them: we couldn't care less what they say, because we know that what we are doing is beautiful, is important, is changing the face of cinema around the world, is an expression of the changing times, is coming out of our hearts & out of the needs of our souls, and we have a great responsibility to continue that way, not to compromise it, not to betray it - and the dangers & the temptations are many.

Since all commercial film-distribution and film-financing organizations are set-up on a private business basis and not to help the film-maker to continue making films,-

four years ago, the independent film-makers of America organized their own film distribution center, the Film-Makers' Cooperative, which is run by the film-makers themselves. We decided not to give our work to any of the commercial distributors. We developed a more human working system. We stuck together, we grew and expanded. Through the Cooperative, we increased our outlets ten-fold. We created a distribution circuit embracing colleges, universities, film societies, art theaters, art galleries and museums. The circuit is still growing. By now we can make a film for \$10.000 and get the money back with no great effort. Many of our films have been sponsored by the Coop, by advancing money from the coming rentals. At this moment we are setting up 100 theaters (friendly theaters) across the country for the distribution of our work. For this purpose a new division has just been created - the Film-Makers' Distribution Center, which will work in conjunction with the Coop. Fifteen theaters have already pledged to exhibit all our new work. This new set-up, in about a year from now, should make us free to increase our budgets - if the need arises - to \$100.000 or even \$200.000 with no great risks involved and with no commercial distributor or investor dictating to us what we should or shouldn't do.

To promote the idea of free cinema, of new cinema, and to assist some of our European colleagues, this October we are opening a branch of the Film-Makers' Cooperative in London. Arrangements are being made for a distribution center and for a theater, through which our work will be easily available and with little unnecessary shipping expenses to any place in Europe. Through this London center, we also hope that some of the European new cinema - the European Avantgarde cinema - will be able to reach New York.

We want to stress that the Film-Makers' Cooperative and the Center do not divide films into any budget, length, or subject categories. We take cinema as a whole. We are letting all film-makers know that any film-maker who has an extra print of his film (all prints at all times at the Coop and the Center remain the property of the film-maker) can send it to the New York or London branches of the Coop and the film will be distributed, no matter how much or how little it cost to make. We are not categorizing films. Each film at the Coop requires special treatment, each film has its own audience, each film has its own life. At this point, we would like to urge you - and I direct this Open Letter to the independent film-makers of the world, to anybody whose life is cinema, who is making and must make films - to create Film-Makers' Cooper-

atives of your own, in your own countries. There is no other visible solution. There is no other way of escaping the grip of the commercial set-ups. This net of international Coops could then exchange among themselves and help each other beyond the boundaries of their own countries. The boundaries are bound to disappear anyway very soon. With the changing times, with the new spirit in the air, with communications and speed increasing, it would be too bad if we were to delay our action. We have to surround the earth with our films, lovingly, like with our hands. We have to abandon the commercial distribution methods. With whom are we competing? With ourselves? The film-makers should set up cooperative distribution centers, coops, and eliminate all the competitive and negative spirit that still pervades cinema. Let's not worry about the big commercial success and the audience of millions. If the health and freedom of our art needs it we should be willing to retreat to our own homes, to our friends' homes: cinema as a home movie. The art of cinema can not be created with money but with love; it can not be created by compromises but by purity of our attitude. Certain simple truths sound like preaching. But I don't mean to preach. This is an expression of an attitude which I share with many other film-makers.

A note on the Financial Set-Up of the Film-Makers' Cooperative: The film-maker deposits his print with the Coop. That print is his membership card. During our yearly meeting, film-makers elect an advisory board of film-makers, to supervise and to advise the running of the Coop. The film-maker remains the owner of all his prints. He can take them out whenever he wants to. No contracts of any kind are signed. Trust is the basis at the Coop. That's the first condition. Income: 75% of the rentals (from gross) goes to the film-maker 25% goes to the Coop, to cover the running expenses, the shipping etc. The London branch, the rentals in Europe being much lower, will (at least for the time being) operate on 50% to the Coop, 50% to the film-maker (from the gross) basis. The film-maker is allowed (and encouraged) to distribute the same film through other distributors - as long as that other distributor doesn't object to the Coop's distribution of the film and works on humanly acceptable terms. We have been trying to break up the monopolistic film distribution idea. It would be ridiculous to try to sell, for instance, a book through only one bookshop, or rent it thru only one library. But that is what we still find in film distribution. Films should be distributed through as many different distribution centers as possible. By this coming

Christmas the Coop is placing film prints, on 16mm and 8mm for sale in bookshops, in record shops and in general stores. It is time that we revolutionize, bring up to date the methods of film distribution and exhibition. The prints of our films soon will be in every home, on the shelves, like books, so that one can pick them up and look at them whenever one feels like doing so.

Film-makers of the world: let's do it now. Let's go home and start from there. Let us not waste time with any of the old-fashioned set-ups: they are not for us. They are ugly, sick leftovers of egoism and competition. They are from another world. They don't wish us any good. They drag us down. Let's spread the new vibrations of the spirit across the world and keep us growing and keep us in love. Which brings me to my last point: the social engagement. There is all this talk going about our being irresponsible, about the new cinema (all over the world) being irresponsible, socially disengaged. Don't listen to that. We are the most deeply engaged cinema there is. When the film critics say that we are not reflecting the social realities, they mean we are not reflecting those social realities which THEY THINK ARE IMPORTANT and those are, usually, the realities (or aspects of reality) of yesterday, not today. Film critics and the public go by inertia carrying yesterday's engagements on their backs. Artists, when we are really creating from our hearts, we deal with the changing, new realities, new content of the spirit, and we say that we are closest to the pulse of man's heart, we know where it hurts him and what he needs and where he is going or should go. Let's not become weak, let's not give in to the blabber of the press, or film-distributors, or film critics, or politicians: we have to do what we have to do. During the last two years, Film-Makers' Cooperative has sent Expositions of our work to various places of the world. We are watching what's happening in new cinema around the world. And often we are alarmed. Most of the time, what's called the New Cinema by Cahiers du Cinema or Cinema 66 we find is only another variant of the same old cinema. Beware: Dorian Grey is at large! Dorian Grey, the dandy of the supposed New Cinema, will die soon and you'll see his shrivelled, dry, old body appearing slowly from under the beautiful make-up. Beware of film-critics: with their terms and categories they keep you tied down to certain established ideas of the "new". Film-makers: there is very little New Cinema at Pesaro, or Cannes, or Oberhausen, or Karlovy-Vary. Let's not fool ourselves. There will be little new cinema at any film festival unless

the festivals change, change immediately and drastically and totally. The feeling is in the air, however, that things are beginning, will begin to move, are moving already, and the movement will increase in speed, until it reaches the speed of light and sparks fire. The commercial, competitive empires are crumbling. Let's not even waste energy in fighting them, in kicking them: surely, they will fall by themselves. It is more important to do our own creative work, the work of building, no matter on what budget, on what size of film or how long a film; no matter whether film festivals or theaters will or will not show our work; no matter how many people will see it: we have to do it the way we feel it should be done when we really listen to ourselves, our deepest intuitions. That's the only way of doing it.

That's what we (I) wanted to communicate to you. A few facts about ourselves, a few feelings, a few passions. And we hope you are with us. We are with you. There is really no distance between us.

LONDON FILM MAKERS

CO - OPERATIVE

REPORT

Bob Cobbing.

London Film-Makers Co-operative was formally brought into being at a meeting at Better Books on Thursday October 13th, 1966. Thus was forged an important link in a world-wide chain of non-commercial 'underground' film-making.

London Film-Makers Co-operative will aid independent non-commercial film-makers by making available a pool of equipment and technical advice and by encouraging co-operation among members generally. It will help to get

members' films seen by organising viewing sessions and open screenings. It will facilitate exchange of films between Britain and America and other countries and organise a distribution library of films from Britain and abroad. The film-maker will receive 50% of gross hire fees.

Films available for open screenings should be notified to the Co-op's address giving full details including running time. Film-maker members will be asked shortly for details of any films available for distribution. Films from the States will be brought over by Jonas Mekas probably in late November or December. The Co-op is in touch with groups on the continent.

Space for a temporary headquarters has been made available at Better Books. This will house the office and film library. Editing and other facilities will be ready shortly at an address to be announced.

The chairman of the Co-op is Harvey Matusow. Joint Secretaries are Paul Francis and Bob Cobbing. Paul will also be responsible for the distribution library, and Bob will act as membership secretary. The treasurer is John Collins, and Philip Crick will edit this magazine. Other members of the committee are Steve Dwoskin, Michael O'Casey, Simon Hartog, Les Filby and Stewart Kington, all film-makers.

CINIM magazine was originally the inspiration of Cinema 65, the film society which met at Better Books, which tested out in practice a number of ideas leading to the formation of the Co-op, and which will now merge with the Co-op. A week of open screenings, when anyone who had made a film was invited to bring it along for showing, was successfully presented in connection with the London Free School at the Notting Hill Festival.

In the first fortnight of its existence, the Co-op has organised four film-shows including a six-hour all-night programme at the Round-House Rave to celebrate the first number of the International Times. A Spontaneous Festival of Underground Films from October 31st to November 5th is at present being planned. Eventually the Co-op aims to present programmes seven nights a week in its own cinema.

The annual subscription to the London Film-Makers Co-operative is one pound, which includes two issues of CINIM. If you wish to join but already have CINIM No.1, please send seventeen and sixpence.



JEAN LUC

the baptist

S.R.Sheridan.

Cahiers: There is a lot of blood in
Pierrot le Fou.

Godard: Not blood, red.

Godard is the archetype of decadence in bourgeois art. He is excessive, self-indulgent, 'in'cestuous, and naive. His films often bore. Sometimes they are embarrassing, and they are doubtless discursive. So we are told.

Godard is the cinema's Brecht. His heroes belong to a band apart, thieves, tarts, adulterers, assassins, and adolescents. They wander between white-walled apartments and juke boxed cafes in hopped up cars. Pan: a corpse on the bed, a Picasso on the wall, a machine gun on the floor, a fridge, and a photo of Tshombe. The music is sweet and romantic as in a Minelli musical. The violence is decorative. The sex sexless. If it's not done with mirrors and cameras, it's done with computers and adverts. It's Op and Pop. It's la logique vs. la liberté with everything alienated. It's a compression of the world we live in, a critical crystallisation of the Zeitgeist. "I don't know what to do" repeated twenty times is the modern litany. So we are told.

This, in crude form, is the critical polarisation that Godard provokes. The critics have a case, but it is being played in the wrong court. These two positions, however justified, are misplaced and irrelevant. The point is not Godard's errors of taste, if they are that, nor his message, if he has one, but how (and why) he has redefined the cinema. He has, as his detractors point out, opened the floodgates of illusion. What he has washed away is gone. What remains between the spasms of the waves has to be built upon.

Godard's critics are, at worst, myopic, at best, nostalgic. They are in any case harmless. His admirers are not. By subjecting his films to thematic analysis they do him wrong. By accusing him of being a message-monger, they demean his talent. Messages can, after all, be mistaken, and they are always banal. In this age of instant criticism, at the moment the message is formulated it has lost its importance. The postman always arrives too late. See Alphaville or Une Femme Mariée. The thematists have a

better case. Godard does have a predilection for certain themes and settings. This, however, does not define greatness. The master's touch lies in the construction and the handling. Godard may take the modern world as his raw material, but it is the building that matters.

The cinema screen is a curious object. By itself it is nothing. It comes alive only when its existence is forgotten, when it has no identity, when it is completely possessed by an alien force. Godard, an alien force, has taken this non-object, the screen, and has left a mark upon it which nobody will ever be able to erase. He has found the key to a new cinematic dimension at a time when The Others haven't even noticed that they were in a well-littered cage. He has cleared away the rubble which hid the door. Jean-Luc is administering the first sacrament of the new cinema.

Godard is on a trip around his nervous system, and it is at the junctions of the nerves, the synapses, that he is redefining the cinematic sensibility. His films are pure nerve. The traditional conjunctions no longer suffice. They are petrified paths. Instead of discovering new paths which could again decay, Godard has invented a path which only he can use. It cannot by definition be copied. Godard does not create an atmosphere - which could be recreated - he is the atmosphere. When the gap between the nerves - the locus of interest and creativity - has to be traversed, Godard relies on nothing but his feeling in free fall. The cinema of subjectivity objectified can no longer parade. There is now a consciousness conscientiously placed between the spectator and the screen.

Pierrot le Fou, even if it doesn't reach the perfection of Le Nouveau Monde or Les Caribiniens, is the summation of Godard's contribution to date. It is a quest for ontology, a quest that is doomed from the outset. It is a search for a valid image. . The two solitudes that wander through the lush foliage of a season in hell cannot ever remain in contact, so we are left with each individual image as real. The totality is only a collection of images. Each shot stands on its own. There is no inter-cutting within a scene. The actors are not actors. There is no question of giving a convincing performance. They are just there. There is no narrative language. The only cuts in the film are anti-narrative. It is held together by cellotape and motion. There is no next shot, just the shot after the one before.

No actors, no characters, no story, no sense. We just watch and see the cinema born AGAIN AND AGAIN.

Eight [ASIDES] on GODARD

Raymond Durgnat.

GOD, GODOT, GODARD.

1. Godard is a Swiss Calvinist. His art is basically Protestant, in that grey, ascetic images reduce the world to a concept of itself. He photographs Karina like Dreyer photographs Falconetti - except that he reduces her to a "face", ethereal even in gaiety, whereas Dreyer's images are sculptural, anguished.

Godard's is an art of the plastic age, of fluent, pliable, putty characters.

GODARD, AND THE DEATH OF E.M. FORSTER.

2. Those films of his which seem to me ludicrously bad fascinate several people whose opinions I respect, and I explain their infatuation this way (which infuriates them). His evocations of an emotionally and morally lost world would appeal to my acquaintances' disillusionment, their pain, as nice idealistic upper-middle-class liberals, finding themselves in today's cool fluid cynical world. They impregnate his blandness with their own pain.

For me, his best films are those where feelings of pain and loss are most plausible: A BOUT DE SOUFFLE, LE PETIT SOLDAT, and perhaps PIERROT LE FOU; because the characters have positive focussed desires, whose frustrations we observe.

HEAR ME TALKIN' TO YA.....

3. One thinks of his most painful film: LE PETIT SOLDAT. It is an almost Bressonian soliloquy over a silent film (yet a very modern silent film), as Coutard's fingertip-held camera hosepipes along rooftops or flicks from one face to the next. Certain photograms have an almost orthochromatic anguish; natural sounds are eerily excluded; the streetscapes are as evocative as those of Kirsanoff's MENIIMONTANT. Throughout the

film alternates a quality of semi-abstraction and of beautifully textured moments. But in VIVRE SA VIE, and UNE FEMME MARRIEE, Godard's pointillisme of ideas lacks a backbone.

The pimp suddenly goes off into the vocabulary of an RTF documentary on prostitution (and a doctor rambles off into impersonal vaguenesses about contraception). Sex shown by day, in a white sunlit hotel room, with cars purring past, becomes cold as a towel. Brice Parrain discourses on the necessity of detachment and philosophy (which is like pouring water on a drowning pussy). His two studies in woman (prostitute, wife) are studies of philosophical perfidy, in knowing and lying. Even the views of Paris that appear and just fade out, in the "album" style that was quite orthodox in silent films, have here an eerily cold, elegiac meaning.

VIVRE SA VIE is an ironic title; that is the one thing the heroine doesn't do! Instead she is reduced to an unfeeling object. First her heart leaves her mind; then her perceptions quit her body; then she lets herself be sold, and then she's shot: total separation. Like UNE FEMME MARRIEE, its about talk about being only being beating about the bush and not being the being itself. In UNE FEMME, the child has his simple rules; the humanist intellectual stresses that Man must understand before he affirms (but Godard neither understands nor affirms); the wife lies, the husband assents in her lies by his complacency, and lies too; the doctor's "authoritative" impersonal vocabulary outrages the dignity of the individual to whom he speaks.

GODARD AS NOAH.

4. Godard's films, like Losey's go in twos. Two on flirtation, two on cool, flip Belmondo being quit by his woman, two on war and murder, two on women, two on passion, and two on madness versus logic. Yet precisely because he withdraws from reality, they're all the same film; the whole of ALPHAVILLE is merely a tautology of the overtones in A BOUT DE SOUFFLE. What's missing in VIVRE SA VIE, lyrical as it is, is the humanity, the nuances, that appear in so much conversation between non-artists. One thinks of (to take another girl who "lived her life") Christine Keeler: "Ward said it was alright provided I never developed the mentality of a prostitute". There's a better story about split personality in that remark, than in Godard's berserk exploitation of the notion of unreality. Especially when linked with: "My life revolved around him from morning to night. We were like brother and sister."

GODARD AS PHILOSOPHY'S "CON-MAN".

5. As a philosopher, however, Godard is Colin Wilson with a sense of humour. ALPHAVILLE has amusing ideas: the cinema with "tip-up" seats; the execution like a happening; Lemmy using an old safety-razor, like the G-man; the loving parodies of Spillane, e.g. "I shoot first because life's too short to ask questions." Indeed the best in Godard is his verbal gags, often extremely sad. One could even compile a little book of his reflections: "The Wisdom of Jean-Luc Godard".

But smart as his philosophical gags are, they co-exist with a curious archaism of thought.

There are those who cling to traditional notions of rationalism. There are those who can accept neither these nor depth psychology, and who engage in existentialist tussles with the "absurd" or "le néant". Or they may cling to the neo-Platonism that has been for so long the accepted tone of well-bred non-controversial cultural discourses, and which they take care to assume rather than argue - especially if they are from the Catholic bourgeoisie (Cahiers), or the Anglican (Sight and Sound). Or they may return to religion, or wish that they could (thus Malcolm Muggeridge is simply Cardinal Heenan out of drag). Or they may feel driven to reject all isms, and to feel the only integrity is incessant doubt.

Or they may accept notions of the unconscious; and so still believe in causes, structure, emotions, and a "to-all-human-intents-and-purposes" worthwhileness in the "project"; and so believe in subversion through lucidity rather than doubt.

But in Godard there is no unconscious. He is a systematic doubter, not so much of outside reality (which appears in his work as neutral) but of mind itself, because there is nothing in his mind between the conscious purpose and nothingness. But his philosophy is archaic to a degree: the last gasp of Cartesianism. From "I think therefore I am" to: "I'm not sure what I think, therefore I don't exist."

MEMOIRS OF A FASCIST MANQUE

6. In France, Godard is commonly called Fascist; in England, he has become the darling of the sensitive plants of Sight and Sound. Without automatically calling all nihilists Fascists, perhaps we should take more seriously the nastiness in Godard's films. LE PETIT SOLDAT is morally as gripping as it is depressing, like PSYCHO. Our hero veers from bragging about his blandness over the men he's killed to proving how sensitive he is. ("Eyes

Velazquez-grey, or Renoir-grey?")

Concentration camp commandants were great at loving classical music, and the OAS fought for the sake of Western culture. Godard's hero is half-redeemed by being so weak, so green, so wistful. He's a bad Nazi, rather than a good one; a putty Nazi.

Not that Godard is a "para"; his diffidence cuts both ways. But comparison with Antonioni, whose characters share the anguish, the doubt, the nonfeeling of Godard's isn't irrelevant. Godard's characters shrug off grief, turn flip and empty. Antonioni's don't lose their moral compass-points, hold onto their humanity. Not that Godard lacks lucidity. "Oui, je suis un con..." says Belmondo in A BOUT DE SOUFFLE. And Godard's attitude is one of complicity rather than contempt.

GODARD AS CAMP FOLLOWER.

7. Complicity with the morally contemptible is one of the major artistic modes of our time (from the acte-gratuité in Gide to Camus' L'ETRANGER - and innumerable commercial films, e.g. René Clement's PLEIN SOLEIL) whence Antonioni's films have their overtones of obsolescence (his characters are worthy, and they care about not caring), of a brooding Bergman-like intensity. Unlike Antonioni's characters, those of Godard would soon have been morally sodomised by the "paras" mushrooming in the grey skies.

A LIGHT-LEAK, 24 TIMES A SECOND.

8. Godard, who wears dark glasses to hide from the world the fact that he's in a permanent state of ocular masturbation, rubbing himself off against anything and everything on which his eye alights (and that the flicking glance of his camera is the constant dribble of premature ejaculation, a kind of unseeing staring), keeps babbling on about the world being absurd, because he can't keep an intellectual hard on long enough to probe for any responsive warmth.

(Extracts from an
Essay on the same
Theme.)

FILM

Philip
Crick

Godard is the new man, the low-budget, personal-signature man; and he sometimes makes good films. Now: a good film should be grounded in fact. Or, if not so grounded, should at least be seen to cruise over the universe of the real the way a spacecraft orbits around the oceans. It must project like a mini-moon. Constructed so, on free antigravitational footage, such a film survives only when it keeps its ground-to-sky link, its basic radar tether.

This form of rapport Godard most often manages to establish. In essence, the man is a wit. He is the first wit of cinematic cinema. Chaplin, in the old days was the supreme actor-clown. But the director-clown is a new phenomenon. More than half Godard's wry directorial jokes are passed over, at present, even by egghead audiences. Trained in the conventions of plot anticipation, they are still absorbed, many of them, "watching the storyline", at the time when Godard's frames are wisecracking audibly by means of the editing process alone. Example: the party shots at the opening of *PIERROT*. Audiences in the West End remained quite passive (maybe stunned by the sheer torrent of colour) as the various guests at the party repel Ferdinand by talking at the lens (instead of to each other) in pure TV carton-commercialese. (The women drool on about the texture of their hair, and so on, the jargon and syntax indistinguishable from *Paris-Match* copy.) A first story-point is being made, but Godard effects at the same moment a sideswipe at the influence of the adworld on people absorbed in a deep non-communicating co-existence. He also shows in explosive terms the cause of Ferdinand's breakaway.

PIERROT LE FOU is a truly fou film - the first film fou ever to be made; it is one gigantic wisecrack right through.

Yet, all the while, it keeps that needed connection with an unstated reality. This is done by taking certain trends of the time (neofascist thugs more Bond than Bond, car-theft, caprice as a *modus vivendi*, the suntan cult, etc.) and blowing them up to overlife-size the way Lichtenstein blows up a frame of stripcartoon to the area and dimension of

a maximum security prison wall.

This trick resembles the technique of caricature but caricature does not result. Magnification, though it may bring about an absurd effect is not the same as exaggeration. Neither does satire emerge. Satire demands an earnest soul, and Godard's soul is definitely not in earnest.

In *PIERROT*, always irredeemably nihilist, Godard contrives a mocking, self-mocking, darting Grand Guignol style, which is happily allied to the most glorious eye for the machine, for nature, and for the machine-in-nature.

By making the irresponsibility of his characters TOTAL, he crashes through the ethics-barrier, and is able to expose his nonhero naked to the forces of landscape, corpse, and interior. And he does this with such speed of cut that we get that very contemporary feeling of the "separate" merging into the "simultaneous", which is now basic if we are to be able to relax the visual cramp of 50 years of pulp-fiction movie.

So Godard, destroyer, mocker, mockingbird with the needle beak leads his puppet Ferdinand and the girl through the scorching wheat-fields of Central France towards a tangle of half-explained, half-understood intrigues played out beside the indifferent Med.

More blue than blue, more dazzling than dazzle, this cruel sea finds him, after the baptism of the stolen car, more stranded and more alone than Crusoe.

In Bunuel's film of Defoe's island the shipwreck is an accident. With Godard, Ferdinand imposes on himself a VOLUNTARY shipwreck. He drives the stolen car into the sea. He tears off his own supports and mortifies himself. He throws away the outer vestments of technology one by one, and reaches a condition finally of naked self-exile. At this point, "le saison en enfer" begins full blast. Ferdinand is on his way down. Living itself begins to fragment. Soon, man and woman fly apart, she to her criminal fraternity, he towards his predestined exit.

Then, when all ties have been severed, all connections with the mass-society lost, Ferdinand in a very exact sense, goes "off his head". He wraps a bucket of red and blue gelignite sticks around his face, ignites the fuse, and, consistent as ever, dissolves like a pantomime Faust in a puff of dark smoke.

But we do not spare a second in mourning for him or his doublecrossing companion, since the film is no more than a grand firework set off by Godard to illuminate what the word "escape" really means. Here is a rocket film, a film of no return. In it, Godard detonates the norm, and then detonates the detonator.

Camudo

AESTHETICIANS OF THE CINEMA

1 | CANUDO

Simon Hartog

Introduction.

What is the essence of the cinema? Is the cinema any more than a combination of elements taken from the theatre, music, photography, etc? Is the cinema a reality-bound medium of expression? What is beauty in the cinema? In short, by what standards can it be judged? These are all questions about the nature of the cinema, about its aesthetics.

Without wishing to conjure up images of vapid ideological controversy, there is both the room for and the need for discussion of such questions. The lack of aesthetic dialogue is a symptom of the lethargy of the Anglo-American cinema and of the widespread vacuum of critical standards. Answers to these questions provide a starting point both for film-makers and for film critics, yet English and American film magazines - excluding, of course *FILM CULTURE* - seem to consider aesthetics to be beyond their competence.

Avoiding cultural or sociological explanations, there are, at least, two reasons for this timidity which are rooted in the already extant English film books. First, there is the incomprehensible confusion between the techniques of the cinema and the aesthetics of the cinema. A whole library could be filled with books, which are for the most part English, that claim to define the nature of the cinema but that are, in actual fact, little more than explanations for the lay man of the technical complexities of film making. The most recent example of such books is the Pelican, *The Cinema as Art*. The second reason is, however, the most important. The books on film aesthetics which are available in English belong, practically without exception, to one of two closely linked schools of thought: the Russian and the 'realist' or the 'documentary' school. Eisenstein's books, *The Film Sense* and *Film Form*, have been published in both Great Britain and the United States, and his pupils, Herbert Marshall, Mary Seaton, Ivor Montague, etc., have lectured and

written a great deal west of the Channel. Dziga Vertov, another Russian, has had a profound influence on documentary film making and thinking, even though his writings have not been generally accessible. The ideas of Eisenstein and Vertov, their films, and other Russian films, such as Turin's *Turksib*, inspired the growth of the English documentary movement in the thirties, as well as the post-war 'Free Cinema'. The cinema's capacity for capturing 'the real world' led Grierson, Spottiswoode, Rotha, and later Kracauer, to define the cinema as being essentially a 'realistic' medium. This very limiting and limited view of the cinema has dominated and stifled English cinematic thinking, and although very few people accept this thesis to-day, nothing has been done to re-open the debate.

RICCIOTTO CANUDO

(the first visionary)

A la ronde! À la ronde!

Serrons nos mains, et dans nos mains notre sort
Car le vieux monde est mort. (R. Canudo)

Canudo (1879-1923) was born in Italy. He left his homeland while still young to settle in Paris where he spent the rest of his life. He wrote poems, novels, and essays, and gathered around his "cerebralist" review, *MONTJOIE!* men like Apollinaire and D'Annunzio, Ravel and Stravinsky, Léger and Picasso. In fact, Picasso's pen and ink drawing of Canudo adorns many collections of his writings and references to him occur in various dictionaries of the cinema.

In spite of his famous friends, his literary efforts lack distinction. One of his novels was made into a film, but his place in the history of the cinema is justified by other reasons. He is the first theorist of the cinema, one of the first film critics, and an early force in the film society movement.

Aristarco includes Canudo in his chapter on the precursors of film aesthetics. Agel, who bases his analysis of the history of film aesthetics on the cinematic version of Manicheanism, i.e. there are two kinds of films and of film-makers, the realism of Lumière and the fantasy of Méliès, places Canudo in the latter category. Although both of these classifications are fair, they are not complete. In this specialised domain of "studies of studies of", the prize goes to Jacopo Comin, who, in the first issue of *BIANCO E NERO*, suggested that Canudo laid the foundations of the first independent aesthetic of the film.

(For those who wish to pursue this whole subject in greater detail, we suggest these two books: Aristarco, Guido, *Storia delle tecniche del film*. Giulio Einaudi editore. Milan, 1951.

and Agel, Henri, *Esthétique du Cinema*. Presses Universitaires de France. Paris, 1962. No. 751 in the "Que sais-je?" series.)

Canudo was one of the first men to appreciate the potential of the cinema as an expressive medium. The cinema was the "art total", which he baptised "the 7th art". It was the culmination of all other arts.

"There are in reality only two arts, in which all others are included. Since the beginning of time man has cast the best of his emotion, the deepest of his interior life, the most intense signs of his struggle against the 'fugitive' aspect of things in these two palaces of the 'sphere in motion', of the sacred ellipse of Art, Architecture and Music. Painting and Sculpture are no more than 'complements' of Architecture... Poetry is just the effort of the word, and Dance the effort of the flesh, to become Music. The Cinema is the sum of these arts. It is Plastic Art in motion. It is an 'immobile art' and, at the same time, a 'mobile art' (Saint-Point), or an 'art of time' and an 'art of space' (Schopenhauer), or a plastic art and a rhythmic art. It is the Seventh Art."

The total is more than the sum of its parts. In spite of his intuitionist or even mystic, definition of the cinema and perhaps even because of it, Canudo's writings have lost none of their force or relevance. "The will, the science, the art of modern man gave birth to the cinema so that he could explain life with greater intensity and express in time and space, the perpetually new sense of life. The cinema was born to be 'the complete representation of body and soul', a tale told with images and painted with brushes of light."

This "writing with light" is the essence of "the silent art" and the root of its claim to be "the universal language". He saw in the cinema the only genuinely modern art, but it was not modern just because it was born of scientific knowledge. The fact that the cinema depends upon technical foundations is of no importance. Music is not limited by its instruments, and the cinema is not limited by its machinery.

The potential power, the modernity, and the freedom of the cinema are thus established. But what is its rightful domain? It is, "the immaterial, or more exactly the subconscious". In this realm the cinema is sovereign. It is the only art which can present the subconscious directly. Music, its closest rival, can only represent it. "The cinema can (and must) suggest it."

This definition led Agel to label him "a dealer in dreams", Epstein the French director, to sanctify him with the title, "a mission-

ary of poetry in the cinema", and Comin to recall his influence on the avant-garde directors of the Twenties.

It would, nevertheless, be a mistake to limit his importance in this way. Not because the current English critical catechism would have it believed that avant-garde, or experimental, films are only of curiosity value but because his influence and ideas can and do cover the spectrum from the 'straight' directors, such as Renoir, to the experimenters, such as Richter. Canudo, in any case, had nothing but contempt for film-makers who did not link their technical experiments with a human reality.

He, in addition, demanded that a film have a consistent style throughout. He called this consistency "photogeny", and suggests that it can, at least in part, be achieved by making use of different kinds and angles of shots within a scene, as well as by varying "the expressive tonality of images in the same frame". This conception of style in films led him to attack two fundamental conceptual confusions, which were rife at the time and which, even more deplorably, still exist today, realism and theatricality.

"In the cinema, art consists in suggesting emotions and not in relating facts. There is a great temptation to present everything with 'real' images. ... This kind of truth is nothing but vulgar and superficial reality. It belongs to no kind of art."

His dislike of this pseudo-realism was only exceeded by his conviction that the cinema must rid itself of its theatrical influences. "Cinematurgy", as he called it, is a capital sin.

"Don't look for similarities between the cinema and the theatre. There are none... There is no deep similarity either in spirit, in form, or in means of suggestion between the fixed irreality of the stage and the changing reality of the screen. ... This confusion is explained by the sad need to combine the old with the new so that, without bothering to define the new in order to understand it, it will be accepted."

In spite of his enthusiasm for the cinema, he was well aware that there were few films that could be "impenitently exhumed". This was due to the fact that "the blind commercial interests" were busy catering to the lowest common denominator. The "écraniste" (based on the French word for screen, écran, which he coined to replace *metteur en scene*, or director, which he found to be lacking in meaning for the cinema and too theatrical in derivation) was being stifled by the industrial demands of the cinema. He did, however, admire the American cinema of the period. He ascribed the Americans' profic-

iciency to their freedom from rotten traditions and domination by the theatre. The Americans "have nothing to forget". Europe, on the other hand, must "unlearn" all that it had learnt. The European "écraniste" had to become a child again so that he could properly cope with this medium without a past.

His hopes for the cinema are, perhaps, best summed up in an article he wrote about the early Scandinavian cinema. He saw it as, "a magnificent example of the human and visual drama, conceived to utilise nature fully while still being firmly linked to its body and soul".

"We are living the first hour of the Muses' new dance around Apollo's newborn, the dance of lights and sounds around an incomparable edifice, our modern soul."

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an idea for a film by George Andrews.

Nine people sitting around a table drinking coffee in Zocco Chico of Tangier. Guides like hungry sharks around them, slipping them little sample packages. They smoke and eat hashish, get very high. Each when completely stoned starts hallucinating a private dream visible in miniature around the head. Each of the nine incarnates a different cosmic function, they are the ancient pantheon of the gods, Aphrodite, Hermes, Zeus and the others, immortals walking the earth disguised as humans, but they do not know this yet themselves. Each discovers it at a certain moment during their collective hallucination.

Each different function is exaggerated in the most extreme way in phantastic dream play around head. Each brain empties fully its charge of energy patterns. All the memories of a lifetime whizz by in a flash like people on the point of drowning see. Imaginary beings of the utmost beauty and the utmost horror plus surrealist statues and all sorts of weird things intermingled with the ordinary scene in the Zocco, but no one sees any of these hallucinations except the nine. They are not seeing the same thing at the same time. The action in the aura of the dream-play around each head describes psychic landscape he or she is travelling through. Collective death hallucination, astral larvae like a Hieronymus Bosch painting come to life. The horror of the past vomited up as forgotten childhood memories surge forth and the original self stirs into being, breaking the mask of the false personality created by society. One by one they discover the divinity of their original nature and identify themselves with it. Each discovers a tarnished mirror hidden in the brain and polishes surface until it reflects like calm water. Distortions in hallucination sometimes cause ripples, blurs, and flicker effects. Suddenly in perfect focus each of the nine see the same thing at the same time. Simultaneously they complete the awakening of the total brain. Flash of illumination current reveals solar ego of super-self, wheel of fire that is nucleus of each of them, secret name written in the bones and pulse of blood, musical chord being is based on. Each of the nine gradually becomes transparent, becoming first opaque, then translucent as if light liquid gold had replaced blood, then invisible. Last thing to fade out is the tree of nerves whose pattern symbolises the type of activity each has on archetypal level and its way of manifesting here now through instrument of human consciousness. They disappear for a moment and reappear in their normal bodies naked but for their auras of continuous dream activity. As they reappear, Zocco theme fades out, so the nine are sitting alone naked in a circle. Each couple that cares to goes into centre of circle and makes love while the others watch. Let the erotic play be accompanied by the most beautiful hallucinations each lover is capable of imagining. Royal ease of the perfect gesture in the ritual makes each act of love a work of art. Visible psychic aura goes through tremendous changes during love scenes. At orgasm each aura charged to bursting with complex patterns explodes, dissolves, fades out and then back in, completely different but the same for each head, a simple golden

glow without patterns or images. Auras now without dream play, but sometimes fluctuating in intensity. So the nine can communicate telepathically through their mental mirrors. They know how to contract the solid body into a single subtle energy nucleus that can zip outside of space and time and then return to any point in space and time desired. The nine discover that they are the members of the body of a giant, that all together they form a tenth person. This tenth person does not exist except as a collective hallucination of the nine, but because they have imagined him as the total sum of their combined forms of consciousness his existence not only has reality for them, but he is their God who they have dreamed into being, an abstract entity they each incarnate a different function of. Before love scenes the functions are chaotic, sometimes working against each other. After love scenes the functions work together in harmonious free play. The nine bodies contract into nuclei which spin and swirl and merge into one nucleus with elements of them all flickering inside it. The bodies of the nine reappear again and form a circle around the one nucleus, holding hands and dancing around and around so fast that spinning like dervishes they twirl around and levitate and turn into nine planets now in orbit around the one nucleus, which is now the sun. Each human form reappears on its private planet. Private planets dissolve into chairs around table in the Zocco. Busy waiter wants to be paid for coffee, refusing to accept the gold that is in our eyes. So the nine say they are waiting for a tenth who will take care of the bill, say here he comes right now, and point to a spot in the center of the Zocco where a naked hermaphroditic giant nine times larger than an ordinary human suddenly materialises, a hallucination that everyone sees. Panic strikes the Zocco. The giant crushes a police car to scrap metal with his bare hands as if it was made of cardboard, and disappear as suddenly as he came. With him we go too, dissolving before the eyes of the waiter. Fading into the beyond, I give my overcoat to the waiter to sell in the flea market, then dissolve into my subtle self and speed to the assembly of the nine in the mansion which is the body of the tenth, that old one-eyed giant half of whose face is hidden, the primordial fixed point in chaos.

AS WE GO TO PRESS...

...we hear that ECHOES OF SILENCE and PESTILENT CITY, both by Peter Emmanuel Goldman, have been included in the 10th London Film Festival. Peter Emmanuel Goldman is a member of the New York Film-Makers Co-operative. But, says Richard Roud in the Festival Programme Notes, ECHOES OF SILENCE 'has little to do with what is generally known as the "Underground Cinema"; which is just as well'!