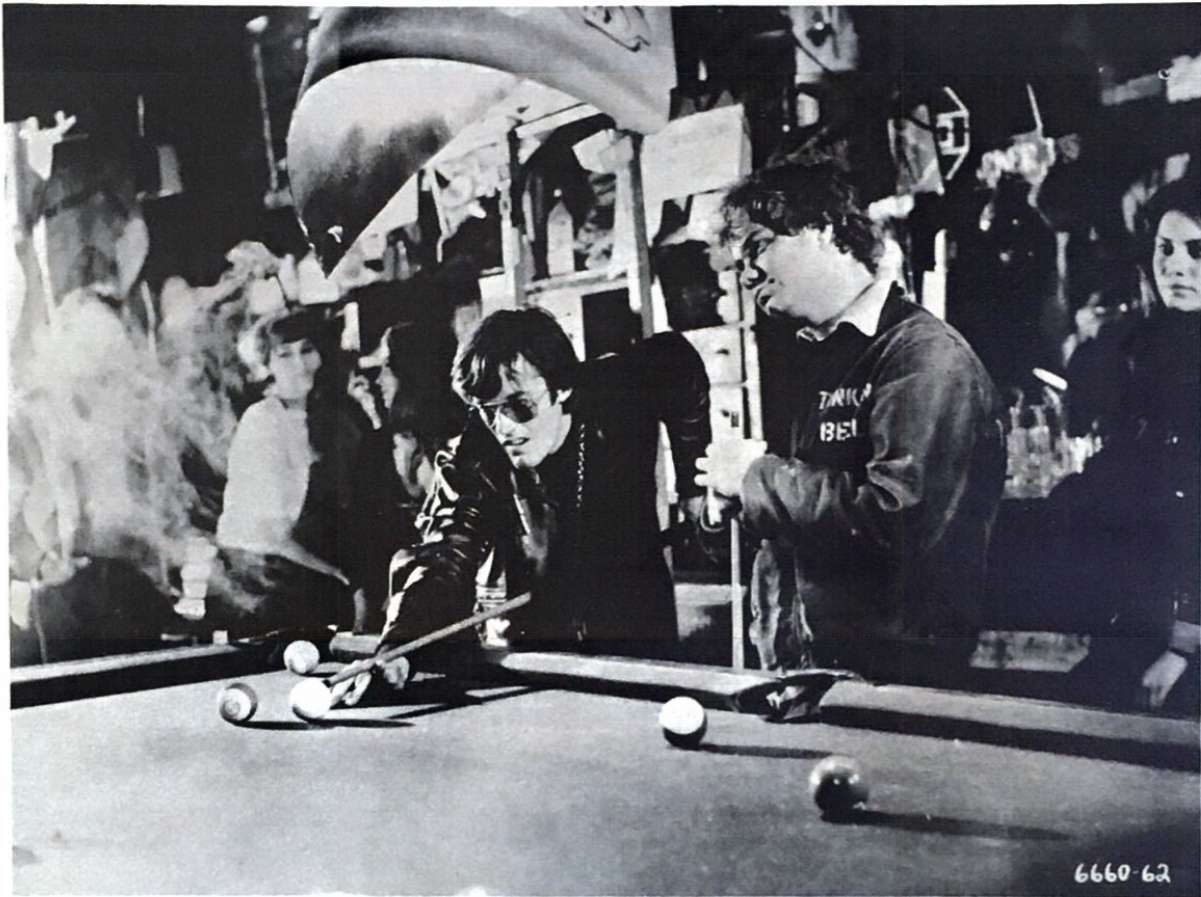


YALE FILM



BULLETIN

featuring an interview with
ROGER CORMAN

VOL. III, NO. 2

OCTOBER

THE YALE FILM BULLETIN

Volume 3 Number 2

October 1966

Published by the Yale Film Society
2005 Yale Station
New Haven, Conn

CONTENTS

Notes From The Editor	p. 2
GERTRUD Gary L. Davis	p. 3
PIERROT LE FOU Robert Edelstein	p. 5
McCAREY'S DELIRIUMS Geoffrey O'Brien	p. 7
MODESTY BLAISE AND JOSEPH LOSEY T.C. Fox	p. 9
INTERVIEW WITH ROGER CORMAN John H. Dorr	p. 11

ON THE COVER : Peter Fonda in THE WILD ANGELS

Editor-in-chief:
Robert Edelstein

West Coast Editors:
Gary L. Davis
John H. Dorr

Assistant Editor:
Martin L. Rubin

Notes From the Editor

AU HASARD BALTHASAR, shown at the N.Y. Film Festival in late September, is probably Robert Bresson's greatest film. The picture is a 'biography' of a domesticated donkey, Balthasar, in a small French town. Through its focus on the donkey, the film captures the history of a generation in the town. It opens on a close shot of the young donkey, ends on a shot of the aged animal collapsing in a field, dying, surrounded by a flock of sheep herding. A seduction scene is played with the boy chasing the girl around Balthasar, and at one point in the film, a party scene, the camera cuts to reaction shots of Balthasar as firecrackers are thrown outside. Though we become very much involved with the human characters of the film, we are rarely allowed to forget Balthasar's presence, and that of other animals in the film. The film's sense of Natural Process, biological evolution, which man, in his self-indulgent, contrived ways, love and cruelty, often neglects, but can never fully escape, master, or understand has rarely been as expressively, religiously portrayed in film as here.

..Also at the Festival was an early film by Bernardo Bertolucci, THE GRIM REAPER. Its emphasis on the narrative to express characters, its limited dialogue is extremely effective, and contrasts sharply with the much more manneristic expository BEFORE THE REVOLUTION. Godard's tenth and eleventh films, PIERROT LE FOU and MASCULINE, FEMININE may share the claim to being his most exciting and matured films to date. Milos Forman's LOVES OF A BLONDE, the well publicized Czechoslovakian film had interesting stuff in it, though was highly over-rated. It is at least less commercial, obvious and technically pretentions than Lelouch's A MAN AND A WOMAN. Renoir's LA CHIENNE was cancelled at the last minute, leaving the Festival with no true retrospective films of interest (in sad contrast to von Stroheim's THE WEDDING MARCH, Feuillade's LES VAMPIRES, Bunuel's L'AGE D'OR shown at previous N.Y. Film Festivals). When Welles' CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT will get a release remains to be seen.

..Godard is scheduled to speak at U.C.L.A. and the University of Wisconsin where he may be showing LES CARABINIERS, his one completed film not yet shown in the United States (excluding his two most recent films). ..Nikolai Cherkassov, one of the great Russian actors and star of Eisenstein's ALEXANDER NEVSKY and IVAN THE TERRIBLE died in early October.. Andrew Sarris' new book on Josef von Sternberg is now available from The Museum of Modern Art.

GERTRUD

The strange career of Carl Dreyer's GERTRUD is well known by now: on the one hand, the hostile incomprehension and insults from many of the Paris critics (and New York was little better) and the outrageous reception by the selection committee for the Academy Awards foreign film category; on the other hand, the few (but increasingly more numerous) critics who have called the film a very great masterpiece. I find it pleasing, in a way, that one of cinema's most assured and serene artists, and one whose career dates well back into the silent period, can become the center of such controversy.

Perhaps Dreyer's very old age is a main cause of the wide misunderstanding which GERTRUD has met. From a seventy-five year old artist one expects, apparently, traditionalist, classical works, hardly experimental ones. And GERTRUD is precisely that, in the deepest sense of the often degraded term: an experimental film.

Because the film has hardly been shown anywhere, I had better summarize its plot. Gertrud is a beautiful, intellectual woman married to a governmental minister. She has recently taken a lover, because she has become convinced that her importance to her husband is secondary to that of his position and promotions. A third man arrives, a poet, whose mistress she was before her marriage; he begs her to go away with him, since he still loves her and considers life meaningless without her. The structural principle of the plot is therefore very simple: Gertrud (rather like Camilla in THE GOLDEN COACH) must choose between these three men, whom she meets and talks with in turn. Finally, however, she decides that none loves her absolutely and that therefore none deserves her. She leaves them all and goes to Paris to study. An epilogue shows her years later, still alone but still dedicated to her unrealisable ideal of absolute love, ready for death.

Nearly all the action in the film takes the form of conversations, most of them between Gertrud and one of the men. No film, to my knowledge, has consisted so entirely of scenes where the characters merely talk to each other. The shots are generally two-shots of great length.

Perhaps GERTRUD's most daring triumph is in dealing a death-blow to the ancient, long-winded useless silent film mentality. Even today, thirty-eight years into the period of sound films, there are still filmgoers and critics who insist, rather desperately, that films are a "visual medium," that the sound track is at best a necessary evil, that the best dialogue is none at all, that silent films are "purer" than sound films, etc., etc. Everyone agrees, undoubtedly,

that films are not literature; but, if so, there is no logic in condemning dialogue, since, once in a film, it is automatically no longer literary but cinematic. Godard, in filming CONTEMPT, said the same thing: he would simply film what was written in the book, since on the screen it would necessarily be different and original, "for if the cinema were not first of all film, it wouldn't exist."

After GERTRUD, because it goes much farther than any previous film in the use of dialogue, one can no longer speak of the image as being somehow more "cinematic" than the text. The problem is simply one of finding the proper balance between image and text, and Dreyer speaks of the process of "purification" to which he subjected Söderberg's play (and the plays from which he adapted certain of his earlier films), so that only the "essential" remains. Few films have been so absolutely concentrated on the essential as GERTRUD.

I realize that in talking of GERTRUD I have concentrated unfairly on the aesthetic problem, as if Dreyer made the film in order to prove a point of theory. He says, "GERTRUD is a film that I made with my heart." More of his comments on GERTRUD, and on his earlier films and films in general, may be found in the interview with him which appears in Cahiers du Cinema in English, Number 4.

-- Gary L. Davis
UCLA

PIERROT LE FOU

"I like music. Things that die-- flowers--love..I like the present because I have no time to think.. What I like is this thing that escapes me-- that I can't control in the present.. I don't know what goes on. It keeps me from going mad."

--from Charlotte's monologue in The Married Woman

PIERROT LE FOU is a terrifying odyssey through the mythical 'spontaneous' present that so many of Godard's characters seek. This quest for the present is always in the context of a society of strict mechanization and conformity, its results nil or tragic. What is so haunting and characteristic of Godard's treatment of the theme is the poetic lyricism the characters attain for a brief while, the seeming freedom in content, juxtaposed with the very bleak view that society controls or destroys them in the end, an overriding classical style. An impulse, acted upon, offers a brief, unequalled freedom, but finishes ultimately in tragedy -- Patricia's call to the police in Breathless, Odile's theft in Band of Outsiders. The hope flight from society as an individual's alternative to civilizations' decay, rendered hopeless by some destiny, is Godard's debt to Fritz Lang; the horror Godard reaches in PIERROT is that we might imagine if Sylvia Sidney turned against Henry Fonda in You Only Live Once.

The story, simply deals with the flight of two lovers, Ferdinand (Jean Paul Belmondo) and Marianne (Anna Karina) upon discovering the corpse of a man murdered in their living room. The film recounts their adventures as they flee both the law and the underworld along the Riviera. Karina, in the end, betrays Ferdinand, leaving him for another man. Ferdinand catches up with her, kills her, and kills himself.

Godard makes use of an impressionistic color and widescreen (references are made to Renoir, the night lights of Paris, Marianne's face are out of Renoir paintings), emphasizing deep, rich colors rather than pastels as in Red Desert. There is something very disturbing in the use of filters in the party scene, the movement of colored lights on the windshield as Marianne talks with Ferdinand in his car. The viewer is confronted by the deep colors as if meeting with a blinding, exaggerated reality rather than a mellowed one. Color and emotion seem to be discovered simultaneously by the two fugitives; our awareness of the impossibility of their permanence is in their very overstatement, emotional rather than intellectual (the latter technique more relevant to the color of Red Desert, or the use of primary colors in Contempt).

The musical 'numbers', games, use of anecdotes in the film work in the strange, deceptively romantic way they do in Band of Outsiders. These devices would, by convention, lighten a film, increase its sense of freedom, spontaneity; in PIERROT they are used largely as comments on the inevitable disaster the two must meet. They are ritual in tone (as the burning of the car, Ferdinand's painting his face blue before his suicide, Marianne's calling Ferdinand Pierrot le fou, crazy Peter, throughout),

foreboding (Sam Fuller's speech in the party scene, the brief self-absorbed monologues of the various guests in the same sequence.

In Alphaville, Natasha can escape the robot-like existence characteristic of Alphaville because the controls were external. Alpha 60 destroyed, much of the community dying off, there remains hope for "those who love, those who weep." In PIERROT, Ferdinand and Marianne must die because the controls, the movement towards self-destruction lie within the individuals. Only in the outside appearances would there seem to be freedom.

-- Robert Edelstein

McCAREY'S DELIRIUM

"Leo McCarey is one of the few directors in Hollywood who understands human beings" --Jean Renoir

If you've seen Harpo Marx smashing a radio which won't stop playing a John Phillip Sousa march at full volume, or Bing Crosby running at the last minute to Ingrid Bergman to tell her she has tuberculosis, or Paul Newman swinging in a drunken frenzy from a chandelier, you already know what the cinema of Leo McCarey is about: laughter and tears raised to the degree where they become blended in a common insanity. McCarey has created his own frantic and beautiful universe and imposed it on players as individual as the Marx brothers, W.C. Fields, Mae West, and Harold Lloyd. Truffaut once defined him as 99% slickness and 1% sincerity, but it isn't that simple; it would be closer to the truth to say that he is 100% slickness and 100% sincerity. He is most true when he is most false, most moving when he is most ridiculous. He is the man who has shown that farce and soap opera partake of the same vision.

McCarey, at present one of the forgotten men of the American cinema, will survive when Minnelli, Preminger, Losey, Aldrich, Cukor, and many other illustrious names are footnotes. I am not choosing names at random. The above-named have all introduced valuable ideas to the cinema, have made worthy and even great films, but McCarey is beyond any theory of mise-en-scene; he is cinema, and leaves the thinking to those more gifted for it. His intelligence is not, as with Hawks or Ford, intuitive; it is non-existent. His work is a delirium of emotion which has no need of analysis or discrimination, since it is in direct contact with the pre-conscious substratum of the human mind.

He is also a great technician. To accuse him, as Sarris does, of not possessing "a sophisticated visual style" is the height of superficial thinking. The contrary can easily be proved by referring to the incredible camera movement with which Cary Grant swivels around to rejoin Deborah Kerr in the last scene of AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER. When Sarris speaks of "his incredibly ugly cross-cutting between one slushily composed composition and another", he is apparently asserting the superiority of Cukor or Minnelli. But since when has it been the business of art to go easy on the eyes? One of McCarey's strong points is that he is one of the most unpalatable of directors. With A STAR IS BORN or SOME CAME RUNNING, we can resort to dissertations on subtlety of mise-en-scene, but AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER and RALLY 'ROUND THE FLAG, BOYS! assault us with a brutality that excludes aesthetic niceties. I do not mean to say that McCarey is crude, simply that he is concerned not with the contemplation of art by an artist, but with a brutal re-creation of the universe.

This may seem preposterous. But I can affirm without wishing to be provocative that McCarey is as brutal a director as Fuller. He is, like Vidor, Borzage, and even Fuller, a member of the Hawksian school, which is to say a master of audacity.

The films are there as proof, if anyone will bother to see them. Take ONCE UPON A HONEYMOON, which walks the tight-rope between horror and hysterical laughter to produce one of the most disturbing films of the Forties. Only McCarey could have combined a comic documentary of the Nazism with a deeply moving farce involving the uneasy relationship between Cary Grant and Ginger Rogers.

Any of his films will do: DUCK SOUP, not only the Marx Brothers' best film but the most diabolical mechanism, the most valid war film in the history of cinema; THE AWFUL TRUTH, along with BRINGING UP BABY the swiftest and cruellest of the great Thirties comedies; MAKE WAY FOR TOMORROW, which, in addition to being "the soggiest tear-jerker of the Thirties (Sarris), is the only important statement on film about old age because it refuses to be respectful; THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S, a poetic work which will have to wait for appreciation until everyone has gotten over McCarey's "liberal" preoccupations; and finally the two culminating films, AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER and RALLY 'ROUND THE FLAG, BOYS!, the ultimate soap opera and the ultimate farce, respectively. The lesson of these last two films is that AFFAIR is a tremendously funny film, and RALLY, a tremendously moving one. Not a new lesson to those who understand Hawks, but McCarey applies it with his own special demoniac rhythm, his own genius for the grotesque and the lyrical (the two here being synonymous).

This is a manifesto, not a critical study. The study will have to wait until enough people have seen McCarey's films for it to have some meaning. The important thing is to track down the pictures themselves and look at them with a mind open and ready to be astonished by the audacity of one of the purest of all film-makers.

-- Geoffrey O'Brien

MODESTY BLAISE AND JOSEPH LOSEY

After the initial reaction to the extreme prettiness of the film, one's first thought about MODESTY BLAISE is that it is not merely different from anything that Joseph Losey has previously done, but that it is a complete reversal. After all, the idea of Losey doing the film version of MODESTY BLAISE is one of a complete mismatch. First, there is his much-publicized dislike of the James Bond films. There is also his declared respect for human life and his disgust with senseless killing, whether it be physical (KING AND COUNTRY) or psychological (THE DAMNED). The art that Losey seems to prefer is baroque; in fact, his style has been termed "modern baroque" by Penelope Huston. Although Losey is among the best and most personal directors of the British cinema, his films have tended to be rather solid and not too experimental or flashy.

Yet, here is MODESTY BLAISE: a pop-art, op-art, super-spy, comic-strip film. And upon a second viewing, one's reaction is that this film may not be so different from Losey's other works as first appearances might indicate.

Thematically, Losey tends to be "socially conscious," while at the same time he is preoccupied with perversions. Sometimes the perversion is inescapable because of the social situation, as in KING AND COUNTRY. Often there is a choice between a normal relationship and a perverse one, but both the perversion and the final resolution of the protagonist (always to the perverse) are dictated by the social situation. This is especially true of THE SERVANT and THE DAMNED. THE DAMNED contains four illustrations of this relationship: the perversion that Alexander Knox, in charge of the government project, forces upon the radioactive children; the perversion that society forces upon the motorcycle gang; the perversions that are forced upon outsiders who come into contact with the situation; and the final perversion that Knox forces upon himself. There are plenty of perverse things in MODESTY BLAISE (it begins with a woman relating to a computer rather than a man); however, it seems difficult to find any social commentary outside of the Johnson parody delivered by Dirk Bogarde -- a seemingly out-of-place sequence, but one in which I believe the clue to the entire film, in relation to Losey's themes, can be found.

Losey has chosen to fill the film with the type of op-art which has so recently emerged and is so decidedly of a certain school that its effect is to definitely date the film. The use of the comic-strip and the super-spy serve the same function. Losey emphasizes the comic-strip aspect further by filming almost entirely in comic-strip colors and comic-strip fashion; I don't remember a single

zoom, and there are very few pans. Whenever Losey wishes to emphasize or create tension, there is a cut, the same way that a strip is forced to develop tension. Also in keeping with the comic-strip atmosphere are the very abrupt cuts that change locale, a technique which seemed to confuse many members of the audience.

Losey is not a "camp-follower", but he does recognize that the mass media offer a picture of how the members of a society wish to view themselves. In making *MODESTY BLAISE*, he has, in effect, turned the media against themselves in order to make his comment. It is the perversity of this society's desires: a society that wishes to be seen as James Bond, and that puts the super-hero in Viet-Nam. that is what concerns Losey.

And so we find that the Johnson parody is not so out-of-place at all. It is the most perverted speech in the entire film, both a reflection of the inherent perversions of society and the perversions which society imposes -- upon itself and upon others. It is appropriate that it is delivered by the arch-criminal Gabriel (Dirk Bogarde), who is the film's most perverted character. After this, all the other ingredients of the film fall into place: the art, the indifference of the characters to perversion, the super-spy, the social implications, the technique, and so on. Thus, one of the film's biggest weaknesses also becomes one of its strengths: by making a film which is irrevocably dated, Losey has also fashioned a work of art that comments upon itself and upon themes which transcend their social and temporal context.

--Terry Fox
Chicago

MODESTY BLAISE AND JOSEPH LOSEY

After the initial reaction to the extreme prettiness of the film, one's first thought about MODESTY BLAISE is that it is not merely different from anything that Joseph Losey has previously done, but that it is a complete reversal. After all, the idea of Losey doing the film version of MODESTY BLAISE is one of a complete mismatch. First, there is his much-publicized dislike of the James Bond films. There is also his declared respect for human life and his disgust with senseless killing, whether it be physical (KING AND COUNTRY) or psychological (THE DAMNED). The art that Losey seems to prefer is baroque; in fact, his style has been termed "modern baroque" by Penelope Huston. Although Losey is among the best and most personal directors of the British cinema, his films have tended to be rather solid and not too experimental or flashy.

Yet, here is MODESTY BLAISE: a pop-art, op-art, super-spy, comic-strip film. And upon a second viewing, one's reaction is that this film may not be so different from Losey's other works as first appearances might indicate.

Thematically, Losey tends to be "socially conscious," while at the same time he is preoccupied with perversions. Sometimes the perversion is inescapable because of the social situation, as in KING AND COUNTRY. Often there is a choice between a normal relationship and a perverse one, but both the perversion and the final resolution of the protagonist (always to the perverse) are dictated by the social situation. This is especially true of THE SERVANT and THE DAMNED. THE DAMNED contains four illustrations of this relationship: the perversion that Alexander Knox, in charge of the government project, forces upon the radioactive children; the perversion that society forces upon the motorcycle gang; the perversions that are forced upon outsiders who come into contact with the situation; and the final perversion that Knox forces upon himself. There are plenty of pervers things in MODESTY BLAISE (it begins with a woman relating to a computer rather than a man); however, it seems difficult to find any social commentary outside of the Johnson parody delivered by Dirk Bogarde -- a seemingly out-of-place sequence, but one in which I believe the clue to the entire film, in relation to Losey's themes, can be found.

Losey has chosen to fill the film with the type of op-art which has so recently emerged and is so decidedly of a certain school that its effect is to definitely date the film. The use of the comic-strip and the super-spy serve the same function. Losey emphasizes the comic-strip aspect further by filming almost entirely in comic-strip colors and comic-strip fashion; I don't remember a single

zoom, and there are very few pans. Whenever Losey wishes to emphasize or create tension, there is a cut, the same way that a strip is forced to develop tension. Also in keeping with the comic-strip atmosphere are the very abrupt cuts that change locale, a technique which seemed to confuse many members of the audience.

Losey is not a "camp-follower", but he does recognize that the mass media offer a picture of how the members of a society wish to view themselves. In making *MODESTY BLAISE*, he has, in effect, turned the media against themselves in order to make his comment. It is the perversity of this society's desires: a society that wishes to be seen as James Bond, and that puts the super-hero in Viet-Nam that is what concerns Losey.

And so we find that the Johnson parody is not so out-of-place at all. It is the most perverted speech in the entire film, both a reflection of the inherent perversions of society and the perversions which society imposes -- upon itself and upon others. It is appropriate that it is delivered by the arch-criminal Gabriel (Dirk Bogarde), who is the film's most perverted character. After this, all the other ingredients of the film fall into place: the art, the indifference of the characters to perversion, the super-spy, the social implications, the technique, and so on. Thus, one of the film's biggest weaknesses also becomes one of its strengths: by making a film which is irrevocably dated, Losey has also fashioned a work of art that comments upon itself and upon themes which transcend their social and temporal context.

--Terry Fox
Chicago

as certain sometimes very famous Hollywood directors do. You know that moral, even before the titles are off the screen. But even so, I felt that I had hurt it a little bit, and in this film I deliberately decided to present the Angels as they are, and to let the audience make this judgment. I am not telling the audience what to think. If they look at it and decide, "Gee, that's a wonderful life," and they want to go out and join Hell's Angels, that's their privilege because that's what they got out of the film. If they want to say, on the other hand, "These are dirty people, the new Nazis, and they ought to all be put in prison," that's their privilege. I hoped in this one that the audience would make their own decisions -- and that decision, on my part, dictated the way in which I made the film; and it dictated, I think, the way in which I got the bad reviews from some American critics who did not understand what it was.

Question: Are there any plans to make THE INTRUDER more widely available for viewing?

Corman: I don't know. The release of THE INTRUDER is one of the great shocks of my life. Despite all the reviews and film festivals, it's been having a very bad time. It's gone through two different distribution companies, both of which went bankrupt. It's with an exploitation company now that's selling it under the title of SHAME and trying to get some money in a rather lurid way. I don't know what they're doing. I know eventually it will go to television under the original name, I think. At that time, you will have 16mm prints available.

Question: The moral situation in THE WILD ANGELS seems somewhat parallel to the situation in MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH where neither the Christians nor the Satan-worshippers are necessarily saved.

Corman: I wouldn't say there was any direct parallel from MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH to THE WILD ANGELS -- at least no conscious parallel. What there is is maybe a general kind of world view on my part. Simply this: that the world is tremendously complex, and that to sit back and make a judgment that this is good or that is bad is much too easy, with the exception of a few things such as murder on one side and devoting your entire life to helping other people on the other side, in which case you can say one is good and the other bad. What is good and what is bad become tremendously mixed up; and it's sometimes impossible to decide which is which.

Question: Do you see Blues (Peter Fonda) and the Vincent Price characters in the Poe films in the same light as being part hero and part villain?

Corman: There is no direct connection between the two. All

INTERVIEW WITH ROGER CORMAN

The following interview was taped at Twentieth Century Fox Studios in Los Angeles where Roger Corman was preparing his next film, THE ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE.

Question: The generally unenthusiastic reception of many of your recent films by American critics has been contrasted by quite a bit of enthusiasm in Europe. To what would you attribute this?

Corman: Well, that's not totally correct, because generally my films have been well-received in the United States. What happens is that I get good reviews almost everywhere in the United States, but I don't get great reviews. In other words, how my films will be reviewed in the United States (for instance the Poe pictures -- I don't think I've ever got a bad review on any of the Edgar Allen Poe pictures in the trades or in any of the New York papers, to my knowledge), the difference between the reviews here and the reviews in Europe: in the United States, I was praised on the basis of having made a good commercial horror film; in Europe, the picture was praised on artistic bases, and the emphasis shifted away from being commercial. As a matter of fact, one of the English critics, writing about me, said, "Roger Corman has become if not the darling of the critics, at least their mascot." It was partially true. I found myself, for a number of years, hardly ever getting a bad review -- both good here and good in Europe, but better in Europe and more recognition on an artistic basis than a commercial basis. As a matter of fact, it's only with my last film that I started getting attacked in the United States -- and for the first time. As a matter of fact, it was so long since I had been attacked by a critic, I got furious, because I was out of practice at reading bad reviews of my films. And I got some very bad ones on THE WILD ANGELS.

Question: In THE WILD ANGELS, was your almost documentary approach an attempt to avoid what so many people have called "cheap Hollywood moralizing"?

Corman: Yes, exactly that. I felt that I was guilty of it myself in a film called THE INTRUDER which I did about four years ago, which got magnificent reviews in the United States. The American critics couldn't have given me better reviews, and the film was a disappointment at the box office. I always tried to figure out why. I saw the film a couple of times a year or so later, and it seemed to me that possibly the unpopularity of the subject matter (about the integration situation in the South) had something to do with it. Partially, I tried to present my moral situation within the film. Now I didn't do it anywhere near as much

there is is the feeling on my part that people are complex, that people have the elements of both good and bad within them, and, if anything, they must make a choice. Sometimes the choice is impossible; sometimes the choice is difficult; sometimes the choice is predetermined -- so a choice is really not a choice. I think of a couple of lines from various pictures. There is the Heavenly Blues line at the end of THE WILD ANGELS, where he says, "There is nowhere to go" -- meaning that there are two choices, which are the square world, as it were (Give up; get a job; shave; get a haircut), or the hip world (Get on the "chopper" again and head out down the mountain). And he cannot accept either choice. Neither choice is good enough for him, and these are the only two choices he knows. When he says, "There is no place to go," that's his opinion of that choice. Whereas, at the end of THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH, the Red Death said to Vincent Price, "Every man creates his own death; every man creates his own heaven and hell." Now, what I meant by that was that that he creates his own heaven and hell on earth. Again, you have the elements of choice, but very often the choice is confused; the choice is difficult; or it is almost impossible to make the choice.

Question: A few questions specifically about THE WILD ANGELS. Why do you include the broadcast about Viet-Nam?

Corman: I am very much against the war in Viet Nam, for one thing. At the same time, I did not want to overtly moralize in that film. I actually included two things there, and I'm very happy you mentioned that because you are the first person who has ever noticed that. I felt I really had something in there, but nobody ever noticed it. They are on the boat, and she (Nancy Sinatra) turns away from Blues, having gotten no satisfaction from him, and takes a kind of release or refuge in the radio, which is what I think people do. Commercialized popular entertainment is a kind of escape. She turns on the radio, and the first thing she gets is a story about American successes in Viet Nam. It seems to me that for years and years and years, all we hear about are American successes in Viet Nam. The obvious question that everyone must ask is that if we have won so many battles, why is this war in this tiny little country still going on? At any rate, that's in there as a kind of concept of managed news, propaganda, and a certain attitude of society. She flips the dial, and she immediately comes up with what I told the composer to write as possibly the worst pop music tune ever written, with a totally phoney and cynical appeal to God, with a rock-and-roll, hard guitar beat, and the wailing teenage singer. I really wanted to say, here are two aspects of American life. I'm not knocking American life; I truly think this is still, for the next year or two, the best place to live. But, nevertheless, within it are the elements of this insane Viet Nam war and also an incredible

commercialization of religion in a totally cynical; and I equate the two.

Question: Would you comment on the use of music in the orgy scene -- the hymns in the background?

Corman: Again, I simply wanted to be somewhat ironic. I am not trying to make too many points, and it would be a mistake to say that I am hitting for some tremendous moment on every cut within the film. But what I was doing there, I was almost amusing myself, at the same time making a kind of a comment. Just as the religious music on the radio was counterpoint to the Viet Nam news immediately before, this is the orgy in a church, and against it there is church music. Again, society is capable of both. I would believe that several of the people in that orgy who are singing the religious songs really mean it. They are really deeply religious at that moment. They may be a little up on marijuana, a little down on liquor -- one thing or another is working on their minds -- but they are probably feeling a religious thing at that moment. And I think it's kind of great that they do.

Question: Did you improvise much during these scenes?

Corman: Yes. The church orgy worked out this way. (I hesitate to use the word orgy, but it's a kind of orgy). I knew in advance my basic movements, and then I improvised and moved around these movements. I used three different camera styles in the church sequence. At the beginning at the church, during the funeral sermon, the camera is constantly moving, as if while the preacher speaks, you cannot really get a beat on anything. The camera is constantly moving but moving on a dolly -- moving smoothly. Then, as Blues challenges the preacher, that is when you come down to something, and the camera stops. There are direct, straight cuts back and forth. Then when we go into the orgy scene, the camera starts to move again, but now it moves in a hand-held way. Again, I cannot totally explain all the thoughts that were in my mind. But, it seemed right to me, and I think there is a justification...the constant through a kind of meaningless sermon that you can't really find any solid ground in. Then the argument, which is very solid, ver direct. A straight camera for that. And then the wild breaking-out movement of the orgy and a hand-held camera, allowing you to participate in the orgy, in which I had worked out in advance (and I work out very much in advance the movements of people and camera) the basic movements of Blues, of Diane Ladd (gish) -- where they were going and what they were going to do -- and then, based upon those, I improvised the movements of the people around them as it seemed to work itself out during the shooting.

Question: Have you ever seen Kenneth Anger's film on a

similar subject: SCORPIO RISING.

Corman: No, I've never seen it.

Question: You have been quoted recently as saying that all your films in the future would be in color and wide screen. What are the formal reasons for this?

Corman: I think that quote was slightly incorrect. The use of wide screen does not mean anything to me one way or the other. I can compose in Academy aperture, 1.85 aperture, or wide screen. Different pictures will require different styles. What I was more interested in, in that statement, was the point about color. I truly believe that the function of the motion picture camera is to reproduce the world around you, either to reproduce it in a naturalistic way, to show you what the real physical world is, or to show the fantasy world (such as in the Poe pictures in certain sequences)-- a world of fantasy, a world of the mind. Now both these worlds are in color. The world around us is in color; and when I think, or when I dream, I think or dream in color. At no time do I function on a black and white level, and I do not think other people do either. I think, therefore, to be truthful both to the real world and the world of the mind, the camera must photograph then, in color.

Question: What do you think of dialogue carrying action as opposed to visual means?

Corman: I am a definite believer in the fact that the cinema is a visual art. I think dialogue must be there, but I try to hold dialogue to the minimum. I think, essentially, you tell your story through the image on film. You then have to accent it with dialogue, because dialogue can go deeper into meanings sometimes than the film can, and you need the words to give yourself an added commentary on what is going on. But I prefer to work on the basis of the visual first. For instance, in THE WILD ANGELS, there is very little dialogue.

Question: Do you prefer to work with method actors?

Corman: I work with method actors, primarily. The training I have had (which has not been extensive -- I wish I had more training in working with actors) has been using method technique. I prefer to work in the style of the method, which had a kind of a bad name at one time. I do not think so many people are attacking the method any more, because they have suddenly found out that everybody is using it. There isn't anybody left to attack it, because everyone has joined the group now.

Question: Would you say a few words about the film you are working on now, THE ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE.

Corman: THE ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE will be shot, again, in a semi-documentary style. I hesitate to use the word "full documentary," because as soon as you are dealing with actors, you are stepping away from straight documentary. It will be semi-documentary in that it will attempt to be extremely accurate and show only those scenes that we know actually took place, or which we can deduce from certain pieces of evidence took place. We will try to show point by point how and why the massacre took place. Again, I will try not to do any moralizing, and, again, the critics will probably attack me as having no viewpoint in the film. But I will try once more to say that this is what happened. Look at it. See what these people did. See how they acted. I may explain a little bit through the dialogue why this took place, and then let the audience decide for themselves if this has any meaning for them.

Question: Your next film for American-International will be the LSD film, THE TRIP. Are you going to try to visualize the LSD experience as you did the X-ray eye experience in X, THE MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES?

Corman: Yes. I hope to work on several levels there. My own personal experience on these levels is somewhat limited. I hope to do four basic trips. The use of the word "trip" is probably wrong in the first two. I hope to do something to show a little accentuation of reality from marijuana. Then, I will do something to show a slightly greater accentuation of reality for hashish. Then I will show a full LSD trip that is good, and a full LSD trip that is bad -- a "hell trip." Now, as soon as I say "a full LSD trip," I realize that I am saying more than I can show, because there is no way, in any art form, to reproduce the full experience. I'll show what I can of the visual aspects of an LSD trip, knowing in advance that you can only show the tiniest portion of it.

Question: How will you research this?

Corman: I took LSD myself once, and I will base a good deal of it on my experience, having taken what must have been a rather mild dose. That has given me some information and so has talking with a lot of people who have taken LSD many times, sometimes in much greater quantities than I did. So the one trip I did take gives me a little personal reference and also enables me to talk more intelligently with and understand other people who have taken it.

Question: Would you comment on your view of the cinema in general. Are there any directors whom you particularly admire?

Corman: I think, in general, there are more competent and good directors in the United States than any place else in

the world. I do not think that there are many directors in the United States as bad as some of the directors in Europe, for instance. At the same time, there are not many directors in the United States who are as good as the very finest in Europe. For instance, I would put a few Italian directors ahead of any American directors, knowing that the American directors, as a group, are far above the Italian directors, because they make some of the really worst pictures you have ever seen. Yet their best -- Fellini, Antonioni, De Sica -- I admire their work more than I do most Americans.

Question: Of the American directors, whom do you particularly admire?

Corman: I think there is a school of the greatest American directors who have built up a body of work over the past twenty or thirty years, who are very, very good. I would put at the core of those directors probably Hitchcock and John Ford, and Howard Hawks right behind them. I personally would prefer either Hitchcock or Ford -- maybe Ford. I think some of the films that Ford did in the Thirties are just magnificent. Yet, at the same time, there is a kind of hip filmic quality that Hitchcock has, that, in a different way, I admire just as much.

-- Interview by John H. Dorr