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THE WAR BABY REVIEW

or

*The Birth of Western
Civilization*

Boys

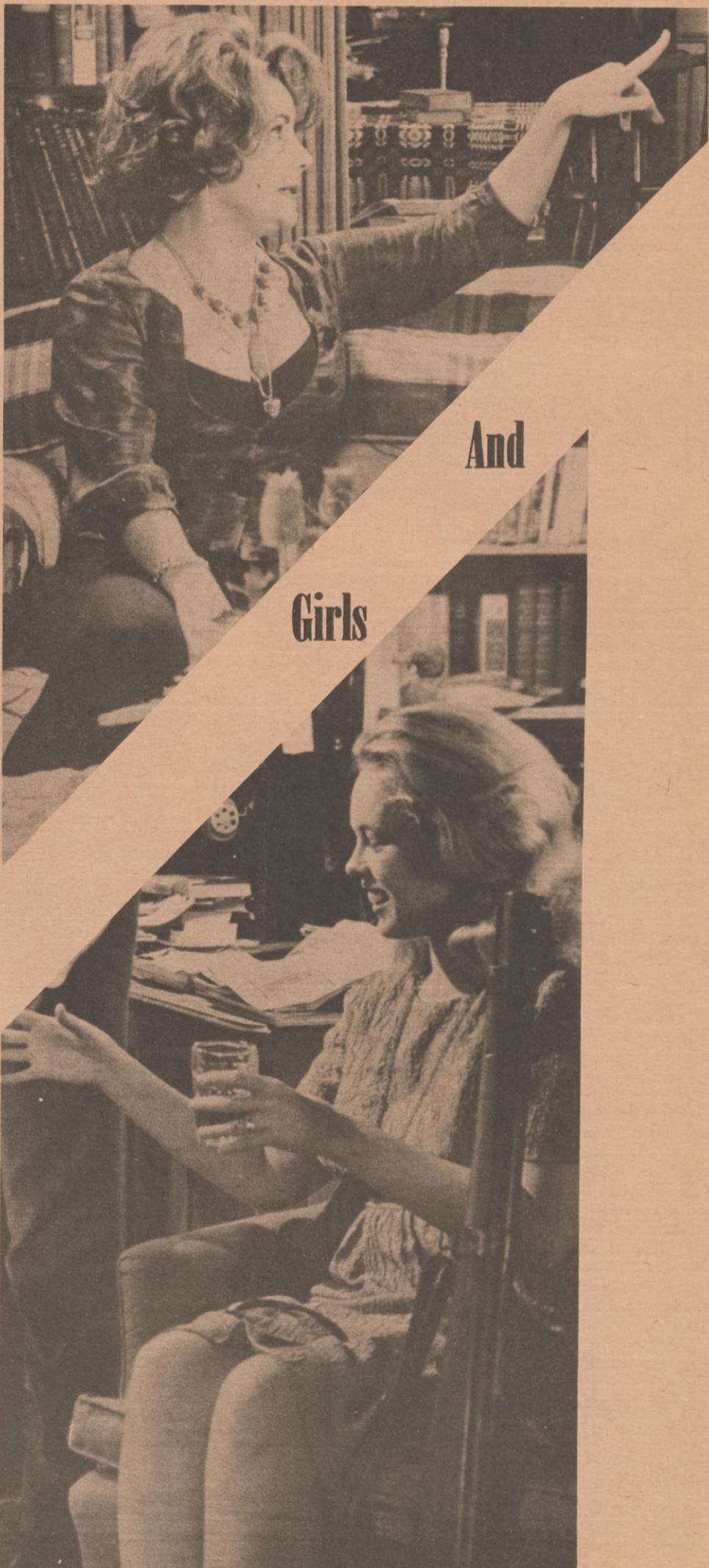


Together

Published by
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May, 1968—No. 3

And

Girls



COUPLES

Community life in John Updike's new novel is very grown-up and sophisticated. Copulation rag, a variety of musical beds, is the town sport and almost everyone participates or feels left out. The couples that live in Tarbox all play an endless number of games—everything from Fish and Concentration to touch football and coffee-table gossip. But screwing each other is still the relied-upon party game, the one that is returned to again and again when the guests have gone home or the husband has gone to work after breakfast. While the children are in nursery school, the adults throw shovels at each other between the sheets of their own sandbox.

(continued on page 3)

THE WAR BABY REVIEW

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:

Joel F. Brenner
Larry Cohen
Matthew H. Fox

We have undertaken in this issue to expand the War Baby, not in size but in intellectual scope, by including articles which do not reflect our own opinions. We do not feel obliged to point this out, in a small review of this kind the editors are usually held to account for what they choose to print.

Contributors

LARRY COHEN, a senior in English, is the fine arts editor of The Daily Cardinal and is the assistant director of the recent production of "Volpone."

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JIM LESAR is a second-year law student and chairman of the Committee to re-open the Warren Commission Report on the Kennedy Assassination.

JOSEPH McBRIDE is the president of the Wisconsin Film Society; his study of Orson Welles will be published this summer.

JEREMY ROBINSON is a senior whose poems "How I Love" recently appeared in Quixote magazine and are now available in supplement form.

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Critical Response

By JOSEPH McBRIDE

Kill the critical spirit in yourself. In art refuse to be convinced except by what provokes an immediate, unreflected moral erection.

—Jean Cocteau

We like to talk about what we have seen. We like to hold the images in our minds, to think out and re-experience our reaction to them. We are critics. We are not satisfied with our immediate experiencing of a work of art—if we have liked it—because it obsesses us and compels us to return to it. In the meantime we have been coming to a conscious understanding of how we have been affected by what we have seen, seen in this case in the womblike darkness of the movie house. If we consciously distance ourselves from a movie we fail to pay attention to what is on the screen and coming through the loudspeakers. The thinking should come afterward. We do not consciously use our reasoning processes while we are dreaming, nor should we think out our experience while watching a movie. A movie should be so transparent—should embody its ideas in shapes and sounds—that it conveys its elemental effects with no more strain on us than that of watching and listening with complete attention.

After this shared experience, a simultaneous heightening of perception, we can analyze what has happened to us. Of course, completely nonintellectual experiencing of a movie, a concert, a painting, a ballet or a sports event is a practical impossibility. Our minds are working consciously part of the time; our sensations give way to our rationality part of the time. Failure to hold our sensory attention may be partly the fault of the work, but often it is the result of our quite natural need to relax, to let up the pace. Thus our less-than-ideal experiencing of a movie may give us in one viewing a partial understanding of how the movie works. Only through repeated viewing, however, can we pretend to make any kind of competent analysis; only when we detach ourselves do we start to become critical.

A work of art is capable of endless experiencing. Each receiver sees new things in it, those "subjective" responses which after all are provoked by the surface of

the work, not by some ineffability surrounding it; each receiver discovers new relations between himself and the work each time he returns to its world. This implies a certain humility in our approach, the realization that a work, if it sets its own terms and follows them with integrity, is larger than its receiver and its creator, that it contains relations which were not intended but are a result of the dynamics of the whole. Finally, though we understand much about how a work creates its effects and why it has the shape it does, we realize that the surface itself is in a way ineffable and defies being contained in words. We turn from discussing it and contemplating it and writing about it to experiencing it again.

If we are critics, we share in the creation of the effects of a work of art—on ourselves. Alfred Hitchcock speaks of the "triangle" of a movie: the tension created by the meeting of material, director, and audience. The author manipulates his material to produce an effect on his audience, who provoke each other into alterations of response. A person may watch a movie in solitude, of course, but the presence of others complicates, heightens his response. Laughter, fear, and boredom are communicable. We are critics while watching a movie in the sense that our unconscious is reforming the images of the film into patterns conditioned by the vagaries of our own personalities.

To be a critic is to analyze, i.e., to break into patterns and examine the structure. We can return to a work of art indefinitely because its effect is different each time. The work is constant, but our rhythm of response is inconstant. Each pattern of light and sound we receive while watching a movie is broken down by our nerves into other patterns in our brains. This is a critical process. We are moved to fear, joy, revulsion or exhilaration according to our capacities as well as to the objectivity of the images being projected. At this stage the subjective rules. Capacities for response vary from person to person. That X is bored with "King Lear" does not mean that "King Lear" is boring. It means that the encounter between the play and X produces boredom.

It becomes apparent that there are two kinds of crit-

icism, and that the one which is articulated is the second kind. If a person does not have the capacity to be interested in "King Lear," he is practicing the first kind of criticism: evaluation. He says no; another person confronted with the play will say yes. These are evaluations, and each is correct for the person making the evaluation. "King Lear" provokes no response in X, so "King Lear" is an ineffective play for X. The converse is also true. This is the meaning of "subjectivity."

Evaluation is of such indefinable gradation of response that articulation beyond yes or no is impossible; the person who evaluates puts labels (adjectives, similes, metaphors) on the work to communicate his feelings about it. Analysis, the second form of criticism, arises from the need to objectify, in nouns, verbs and conjunctions, the nature of response to a work. The analyst must refer to points of fact about the work in question. The work must be taken as it stands without reference to the idiosyncratic reactions of the analyst. (Of course, any human's description of what he sees and hears is colored by his peculiar apparatus of perception, but the task of human discussion is to attempt to fix a common ground of agreement. The seemingly insoluble problem of collating responses to, for example, the Kennedy assassination testifies to the imperfection of human perception but should not discourage us from at least trying to agree on what is happening in the world.) A work can be described as a locus of many points of fact—a film as a system of alternating patterns of light and sound, etc.—though of course there are an infinite number of patterns present in a system of any complexity. It is the task of criticism to isolate as many of these facts as possible from caprices of perception and to assemble them in various ways to illustrate certain points discernible in the work as a whole. The first part of this process—the isolation—of course allows for much error of perception, the second part—the assembling—for even more. But the job must be done.

How then does a critic operate? We have seen that vagueness will not do, that abstract terms will not (continued on page 8)

Boys And Girls Together

By LARRY COHEN

COUPLES by John Updike. Alfred A. Knopf: 458 pages, \$6.95, 1968. Knopf has also published "The Poorhouse Fair" (1959), "Rabbit, Run" (1960), "The Centaur" (1963) and "Of The Farm" (1965).

Until the publication of COUPLES, Updike's career as a writer has been promising but simply that. He has constructed a set of self-imposed limitations that now fill up an entire bookshelf. After a decade of fairly literate and regularly published outpourings, he has become one of this country's cultural oddities: a successful, well-fed, and widely-read author in residence. Four novels and collections of short stories, poetry, and essays constitute proof of his popularity and to a lesser degree, his acceptance by the critics. Each of his books—particularly the novels—is testimony in the case for a first-rate talent that had yet to deliver a big book. With the appearance of each new work, Updike procrastinates like a contractor, pledging his readers a perpetual I.O.U. for the next novel, an unwritten one. But as time went by, it became clear that he was a cheat. He was constantly making debuts and then shying away, teasing his audience with hints that he had a vision but was doing it out in graphic tit-bits. However auspicious, each work communicated shakiness—as if the fear of succeeding or flopping in a major way terrified him.

The germs of bigger, more encompassing schemes have always been lurking in his writing. Despite the final cop-out of RABBIT RUN, Harry Angstrom does come alive as a character. He painfully dribbles off the page in Updike's jerky, angular descriptions of basketball courts and wife-mistress indecision. And underneath all of the busy, pretentious mythology that clutters up THE CENTAUR, a moving, troubling portrait of George Caldwell—part-teacher, part-father—emerges.

In the last few years, however, the limbo between fussed-over prose and genuine writing has gutted itself into a pattern. With each new book, Updike compensates more and more by overwriting. He babbles his typewriter, cuddling each sentence to death with smothering self-consciousness. As a result, his novels read like model lessons in creative writing for old maids. The theology that has always underlined his books has assumed center-stage and his destructive instinct for sheer mannerism has become a dominant trait.

With COUPLES, his fifth and latest novel, he has finally fulfilled some of the early promise. A change in his writing had to occur and the fact that it has is an indicative sign of growth. Contemporaries like Norman Mailer suggested that Updike focus on sexual relationships where his talent was at its most puncturing; others hopefully proposed that he broaden his scope. He has done both and the heavily negative response that COUPLES has received by the Establishment review board ought to encourage him. For the first time since the overly-favorable responses to THE POORHOUSE FAIR (1959), he has risked displeasing the very instruments of his initial success.

Such a compliment is not to say that Updike has steered clear of the characteristic traits that seriously marred his earlier work. The habitual annoyances, the reliance on crutches, are still operating: prefatory quotes by Paul Tillich and Alexander Blok, a classical cover from William Blake's "Adam and Eve Sleeping," the religious breathiness that saddles the prose. Yet the retention of these faulty touches has been balanced for the first time by a sense of scale that his other novels lacked. Updike's lens has been magnified in such a way that his ultra-literary qualities can work in favor of the impact rather than against its grain.

Between the spring of 1963 and the spring of 1964 that cyclically dates the action, Updike intersperses data from the outside world. Jackie Kennedy's baby is born and dies. JFK is assassinated. An unwatched television set has a news broadcast about UN action in the Katanga. The announcements have negligible or no effect on the characters; as inhabitants of an isolated playpen, they intentionally or unconsciously change the subject because they have placed themselves as petulant centers of the

universe. A scheduled party at the Thorne's is held despite Kennedy's death; ludicrously, a husband and his mistress are trapped in a bathroom by the former's unsuspecting wife. Life and death continue undaunted in and out of Tarbox. The only perceptible difference is that one is conducted on television and in the headlines; the other is behind closed doors where the little murders are less noticeable and resemble parody.

Updike sets up the reader as the new couple in town. He is a deliberately casual host; we fend for ourselves for a good third of the book, trying to sort out which couple is which, who is having an affair with who. Instead of the butcher, the baker and the candle-stick maker, we meet the architect, the dentist and engineer. Tarbox is a computer-age nursery rhyme; Chuck Barris game shows are the only gods. There are very few things—or for that matter, very few people—that are appealing. Suburban life is sour, repetitive, and finally desperate.

Yet COUPLES is a good deal more than a sociological textbook. We definitely are treated to a ton of identifiable paraphernalia: the tiresomeness of the sex-games, the verbal bitchiness and small mockeries, the wife-swaps and bed-bouncings, the children who will replace their parents in a similarly bored Utopia. But Updike is

both clever and wise enough to implicate us in the cycle. The novel is a knock-down, drag-out game itself, contrived to wear us out, titillate our involvement and engage our interest if not our sympathies in the accuracy of his chronicle.

People persist in playing the games to ward off the decay that is setting in. Significantly, the real children in COUPLES are characterless no-necks or obsessed with death. The town dentist—Updike's one character who threatens to steal the show—is professionally fascinated with the destruction of dental bridges; by poking and prodding the other couples with his verbal drills, he reveals their cavities without an x-ray machine.

The conclusion of COUPLES is predictable and once again, Updike has trouble ending the book. The remaining couples opt for bridge rather than coupling, at least for the time being. Like reversed amoebae, two pairs divorce and another pair—one from each split—marry and move to another town "where, gradually, among people like themselves, they have been accepted, as another couple." Yet with church steeple metaphors conveniently tied together and the cycle symmetrically completed, COUPLES and its game shows remain as Updike's first ambitious, problematic novel.

Quixote: Sometimes Driftwood

By FRANK WILLIAMS

QUIXOTE (Vol. III, No. 4) March, 1968. (.50)

About a year ago I reviewed an issue of the campus literary monthly for *The Daily Cardinal*, and reached the conclusion that it was a combination of interesting pieces and deadwood. The interest of the March issue is greater, but there is still the combination.

This is most evident in the poetry selections, especially compared to the lucid and lively prose of R.G. Davis of the San Francisco Mime Troupe and to the poetry of Gary Snyder. They don't really sound "revolutionary," though, as they describe what we should do. For example, Davis argues that it is the job of a full-time guerrilla to replace middle-class capitalistic assumptions with a "life style that won't quit," something we can all be in favor of; and Snyder says that the revolution will result in a "totally integrated world culture . . . with lots more national parks," not really a frightening prospect, either.

Dissolving images, word-play, and verbal rhythms are richly displayed in the work of some of the local prose writers, such as Roy Hyman, Anita Decarlo, and whimsical Sharon Levine. The point of Hyman's "Loneliness of the Long Distance Poetry Reader" is not always clear, but he expresses with verve and grace a laughing distaste for pedantry and world-weariness, and he handles "spaced-out" writing cleverly. Decarlo's story "Dead Sea" is macabre but compelling, continually working with implication and connotation: "The boys said, they say, arrayed as they were in boy dreams of battles won from their trenches crab holes spitting in the dunes, that Mary Marie Maria followed after them in the blood spumed water and they watched till the gulls covered her white crying the break of the night fast time and when they lifted she was gone," (Mary has just cut her babies' throats).

Quixote seems to have some claims to being a national literary magazine, and these are supported in the present case by articles describing draft-dodging from Montreal; reviews of professional poets like Yevtushenko, John Gill, and Richard Kelly; and letters and reviews from former students now in Berkeley or Boston, like Anne Fox and Jackie DiSalvo. I found most of these interesting more from the sociological than literary view. Nguyen Tagore, to name one, writes of his recent trip to the mental hospital (I suppose) in a deliberately obscure fashion: "as you know from Texas Telegraph of Sorrows Inc. I have been to Ecbatana, the place where Ali Baba—after Ali

Baba—everybody of their gold—found his Esmeralda . . . The same with the letter from the President of the Union Council, Bruce Russell: does Quixote intend to print everything it receives in the mail?

This question is also relevant when one begins reading the poetry. True, there are competent poems by Victor Contoski, David Hilton (a new voice here, but known in other poetry journals), Dan Rose, and Warren Woessner. But why run a section of the magazine in Finnish? Is Finnish poetry intrinsically interesting, as the accompanying translations by Dick Dauenhauer don't show? And then there are the ravings of Dave Wagner . . . his wife is right when she says in one of his aptly titled "Throw-Away Poems," "Hey dave! how come you always/say shit & turd for everything &/ write it all the time, it ain't exactly a/style." Wagner's other poems have the same obscurities—he hates his audience and doesn't want to talk to them, opening himself to the obvious query: why bother?

Wagner's brutishness is hard to take, but it is more acceptable than the extreme sensitivity of poets describing sadnesses they do not feel: "Like a multitude of weeping men/ I might lament" (Ira Shor); "To Feel Is To Love; but/ I can't believe them" (Opp); and "Stale death/ is grasped with comfort/ and sucked to oblivion" (Chuck Stonecipher). Many of the poems are thus not convincing, and even some of the better ones have dubious spots (try "I am purpled" from Dan Rose's chart-poem.)

When you read the ranting and the raving, the anti-dotes sound that much better. One is relieved that Contoski accepts, even if he plays with logic in his "Utilitarian Poems." The first one directs the reader to cut out the poems; the second poem, logically, is a pair of scissors. And it a real pleasure to see the extended literary allusiveness of Sy Kahn's "Poets on Tour," warning the authorities that poets are loose in the world: "They are spoilers. Watch out, Mr. College President and Mr. Dean—/ The troubadour has often/ Stolen the queen/ And left a muddled maiden's head."

Perhaps the new poets need to explore how much an audience can endure in order to find themselves. Perhaps they will go on, as Contoski, Woessner, Hilton, and even Wagner have, to find natural audiences in other places, since today's poetry scene is so complex. It's lively, yes, but there's a double meaning to Sy Kahn's conclusion which I am implying: "Do you hear, Mr. Bloat-belly/ Powerful Thomas?/ It's a force, Dylan,/ The force that drives the flower./ Thou shouldst be with us at this hour."



THE BIRDS was directed by Alfred Hitchcock and released by Universal-International Pictures in 1963. The script by Evan Hunter was based on a short story by Daphne du Maurier.

Analyzing a movie which has already been reviewed to death (and I use the word advisedly) creates special problems. For one thing, all the reviews that have gone before tend to accumulate and become part of your subjective reasoning.

When I first saw Hitchcock's THE BIRDS (five years ago, at a drive-in theater), my reaction was that the first half of the picture was quite slack, that none of the major characters were very memorable—but that the last half was terrifying. I was considerably more frightened by the birds' final attacks than by anything in "Psycho," which is a much better movie, and they disturbed me for days afterward.

This rather simple reaction of mine corresponds pretty well to the initial reviews of THE BIRDS which treated it as another frothy Hitchcock *frisson de terreur*. The second wave of reviews, however, from the big guns like Pauline Kael ("...a terrible movie...pointless and incomprehensible..."), Dwight Macdonald, and Stanley Kauffmann ("Hitchcock's worst in years") were almost universally derogatory, attacking the movie's logic, the acting, and Hitchcock's direction. They treated the film as if it was the botched hackwork of a fifth-rate neophyte.

It isn't that bad, and the super-commensensical Miss Kael to the contrary, it's not especially incomprehensible or illogical. Perhaps we can explain the ferocious tone of these later reviews by Hitchcock's peculiar standing in the film world. He's a director universally regarded as a major artist who's violated all the standard rules of "serious" film-making; he's also tremendously popular at the box-office.

Most critics, who delight in being connoisseurs, find popularity a little hard to swallow—it only becomes acceptable in retrospect, with people like Shakespeare, Dickens, or Dostoyevsky. That explains the acidulous and insulting tone of Stanley Kauffman, for instance. (I read Kauffman's attempts at criticism with the same enthusiasm I might take in dipping my head in a vat of suet pudding.)

Kauffmann rudely calls Hitchcock "the Fat Boy." Simultaneously (and illogically), he accuses him of being a sadistic cynic and a secret sentimental, implies that he never was much good, but has been on the decline lately. And he wraps up the whole noxious thing with a fatuous misrepresentation of Hitchcock's French admirers.

The last wave of reviews, predictably, are most favorable, ranging from the usual ecstatic eulogies in "Cahiers du Cinema" to Robin Wood's claim (in HITCHCOCK'S FILMS) that THE BIRDS is part of "an astonishing unbroken chain of masterpieces," and "among Hitchcock's finest achievements."

The audience I saw THE BIRDS with in the Play Circle were more in agreement with Kauffman; they laughed and hooted derisively throughout much of the showing, and finally degenerated into yelling "jokes" at the screen. Particularly annoying were a couple behind me, who, besides having their unattractive and smell

Hitchcock's 'The Birds' Revisited Remarkable and Strangely Moving

feet slung over the seats in front of them, were screeching the mild pun "Birdbrain!" at the top of their lungs, with birdlike regularity.

Now, after a while, I began to wonder about the audience's reaction, which appears to have been fairly typical; I've seen far worse movies where nobody complained, much less demonstrated their complaint in such a demented way. (At the incredibly inept RIOT ON SUNSET STRIP, for instance, which I saw with a fairly hip audience, the tone was one of affectionate derision, as if we all sympathized with the poor clods who had to make the movie.)

Is it possible that the annoyance that so many people express for THE BIRDS, which explodes into such manic behavior, is a coverup? Perhaps some of these people realize that if they really succumbed to the movie, they'd be experiencing a terror far more intense and far more disturbing than the customary cathartic release of violence and nightmare you get from, say, Polanski's REPULSION (which, instead of really getting at you, turns its masculine audience into voyeurs—peeping toms with aesthetic passkeys.)

II.

The terror of THE BIRDS as Newsweek's Joseph Morgenstern pointed out, is related to "monster" movies like KING KONG or GODZILLA, but in terms of sophistication, formal excellence, and organic unity, it's as far above them as Fritz Lang's "M" is over the usual mad killer film.

There are three distinct levels in THE BIRDS' appeal to its audience's threshold of fear: first, the irrational; second, the shock which comes from a sudden disruption of complacency; and third, our fear of ourselves.

Most "thrillers" make the irrational, which is at the root of all fear, into something concrete, via long-winded and frequently ridiculous exposition involving suspended animation, mutation—or, in the case of movies like REPULSION and PSYCHO, simplified Freudian psychology. THE BIRDS purposely leaves the nature of its attacks up in the air—which makes them more frightening than if, say, we were introduced to a mad scientist on Laguna Beach, with yet another plot to take over the world.

In addition, THE BIRDS also destroys any symbolic or allegorical significance of the attacks by making fun of six or seven assorted possibilities (Communism, Judgment day, the Bomb) in the great restaurant scene. (That didn't stop singleminded critics like Penelope Houston, though, from dredging up these same rejected theories in their reviews.)

The idea of the disruption of complacency, which Hitchcock himself says is the theme of the movie, is what makes it so formally interesting (and also accounts for many of its failures.) The average thriller is quick to build up a suitably ominous atmosphere—the usual method is to fling somebody's corpse on screen, sometimes even before the credits, but a more sophisticated variant is Frankenheimer's unfortunately premature use of distorted lens photography in the opening scenes of SECONDS.

THE BIRDS, on the other hand, rambles along for close to an hour as if it had nothing more on its mind than the usual banal Hollywood romantic drama. This banality, which I think is purposeful, is what infuriates the film's detractors; they're confusing light parody (which doesn't quite come off) with an inexplicable bout of feeble-mindedness on Hitchcock's part. Instead of accepting—and criticizing—this early section on its own terms, they're damning it for what it isn't.

But the last half of the film would lose a great deal of its force (and also its powerful after-effect), if Hitchcock played coy with us in the beginning, giving us too many sinister views of birds gathering and hatching plots. When the birds do attack (even though we've been prepared for it by the advertising), the attacks seem as fortuitous to us as they do to the characters, because Hitchcock has made us share their complacency through his seemingly lackadaisical build-up.

Now, even while the first half of the movie is creating this slough of self-satisfaction—through both the characters (Tippi Hedren with her irritatingly superficial

What Hitchcock was attempting—a kind of grand quintessential myth of man's deepest inner terrors—is so ambitious and he frequently comes so dazzlingly close, that the hostile reaction of so many critics and viewers begins to seem as inexplicable as the savage forays of the birds themselves.

reserve, and the offensively smug lawyer, Rod Taylor, who makes offhand jokes about a wifemurderer he is defending) and the town itself, which is presented as quietly but stultifyingly provincial (also set for us—in Hedren's drive in—as isolated, surrounded by hills, lake, and bare land)—the film is also drawing a number of parallels (they become even more striking on later viewings) between the birds and the people they are attacking.

That brings us to my third point—the way the film capitalizes on our fear of ourselves. The attacks of the birds are presented as irrational, but though we can't reconcile them as allegory or science fiction, they do seem to be flowing from something inside the characters.

Item: Tippi Hedren has been given a number of mannerisms which accentuate her somewhat birdlike appearance (both she and Jessica Tandy, who plays Taylor's mother, have their hair coiffed like feathers), her first appearance is heralded by a wolfwhistle (which seems to be coming from nowhere), and Taylor jibes that she's "a bird in a gilded cage." Taylor himself, who has a face which could be described as "hawklike," is usually shot from below in his scenes with Hedren, giving him a looming, bird-of-prey aspect. The children in the schoolroom scene are not treated at all as human beings—but as a twittering, singing flock.

There are many other parallels which I could point out. What they all do, of course, is to give added force to later images, such as the ones where Tippi Hedren is imprisoned in the car or the soundless glass telephone booth, with a swirling storm of birds battering away outside. She has literally become "caged" and the early birdshop images have been reversed.

But there is more than irony in these scenes; there is the eerie undercurrent of inevitability which we can never quite verbalize, and which the film's detractors, looking for conventional logic, rather than the logic of myth, tend to ignore.

THE BIRDS has its faults: Tippi Hedren is not assured enough as an actress to give us anything beneath her exquisitely plotted surface mannerisms—this tends to most of the first half of the film. Evan Hunter's screenplay has a streak of archness which Hitchcock's cool and incisive direction cannot always minimize. Some of the process work for the final attacks is also sloppy. A great deal of it, though, especially the aerial shot of birds swooping down on the town's flaming center, is brilliant.

But these faults shouldn't blind us to what is in many ways a remarkable and strangely moving film, the flawed work of a major artist. At its best, in the marvelous black comedy of the minor characters in the restaurant, and in the unforgettable closing sequence with the birds mantling the entire landscape in a dark, undulating blanket, the film is striking and rare and memorable. What Hitchcock was attempting—a kind of grand quintessential myth of man's deepest inner terrors—is so ambitious and he frequently comes so dazzlingly close, that the hostile reaction of so many critics and viewers begins to seem as inexplicable as the savage forays of the birds themselves.



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Lethargy of Despair

By F. ROCCO LANDESMAN

STOP-TIME, by Frank Conroy. The Viking Press: 304 pages, \$5.95.

When J.D. Salinger wrote *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*, he spoke for a generation that still had the prep school to run away from, the family to rebel against, and the "phony" value system to reject. The Holden Caulfields that sprang up like flies around the corpse of Eisenhower America found nourishment in the bloated carcass, and drank their life-blood from the enemy they attacked. But when the culture decayed to a bare skeleton and then to a chaotic heap of bones, there was no longer a structure to oppose. Evolving from oppression to callousness to indifference, the American scene developed a literary sensibility with neither the passion to be angry nor the backbone to be tough, so that when Frank Conroy writes his autobiography at the age of thirty-two, there is little left but the intelligent lethargy of despair. This is a new book, a fine book, and a living document of my generation.

Or should I say, its last will and testament? There are many passages here that scare me but the most frightening thing of all is that someone would write his autobiography at the age of thirty-two. Knowing this, you know a good deal of what the book is about, for it deals with the way one becomes an old man at the age of twenty. But even while showing how one grows old before growing up, Conroy is interested in a much more important problem. *STOP-TIME* is the story of how a man becomes a writer and hidden behind the easy, unembellished prose is a statement on what it means to be a writer today.

The key to the work is the two pages of prologue and two pages of epilogue that envelope the other three hundred, for it is here that Conroy gives his series of loosely-connected incidents a context and a significance. The first sentence reads, "When we were in England I worked well," and although he refers to his writing only once throughout the rest of the book, the story of his life is continually bringing him to the point where he can make that one first statement.

The bulk of the work appears as an extended flashback from that point and proceeds in a roughly chronological order from the first memories of childhood to his acceptance at college. The epilogue, written in almost the present tense, is his comment on his own vision, the final integration of Frank Conroy the character with Frank Conroy the author.

In other novels we have come to expect the presence of the sensitive but defiant narrator who refracts the action to the reader in such a way that he somewhat mitigates the brutal emptiness of the situations he describes. But Conroy gives it to us straight, terrifying us with the knowledge that the character is not only a product of this society, but worse, he feels natural in it. He knows no other way, and the endless succession of billboards and motors and white lines on the highway are accepted facts of his existential journey.

For this is a book of travel, a vision of total mobility and rootlessness, a study in formless freedom. Yes, the author does all the things that authors do in autobiographies, he runs away once, gets laid for the first time, has his Paris experience. But throughout all of it he is moving, restlessly, aimlessly, through a vague maze of non-events, punctuated only occasionally by an insight into a sterile (but stable) whiteness:

I remember waking up in the infirmary at Freemont. I had been sick, unconscious for at least a day. Remembering it I rediscover the exact, spatial center of my life, the one still point. The incident stands like an open window looking out to another existence.

But most often there is movement, New York to Florida, back to New York, Denmark, Paris, back to the States, vivid impressions of "a musty-smelling 1936 Ford with brand-new woven straw seat covers," a train station, a Greyhound bus, and not much else. *STOP-TIME* distills a sense of the endless moment by abstracting the essence of time itself. Time passes so relentlessly, so impersonally, that it ceases to be time at all. One town merges with the next, each new moment is part of the past.

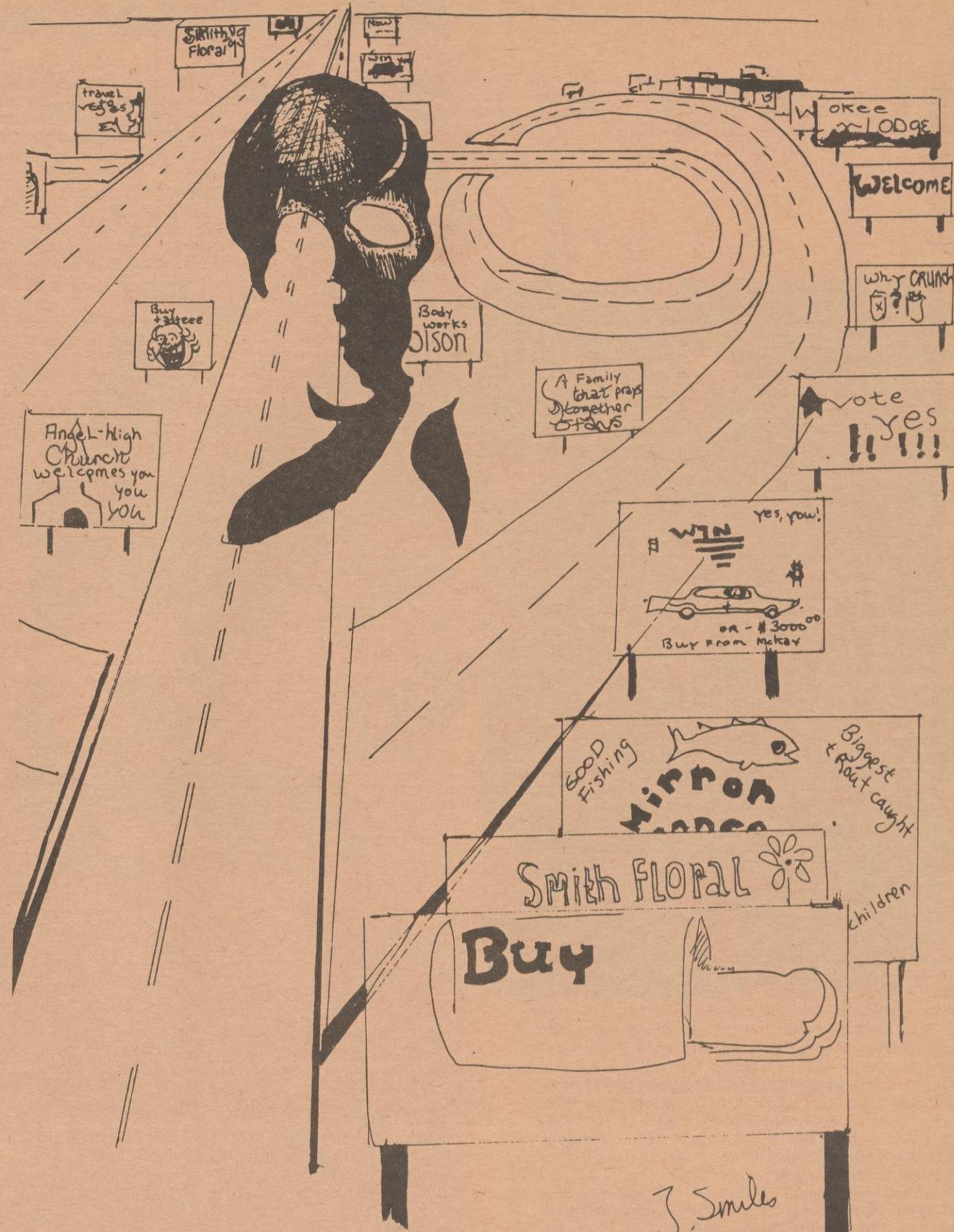
When I started this book, I found it dull at first, and had resigned myself to what I expected would be another variation on the blank page, an atomic rather than organic unity, another tedious exposition of the tedium of life. But soon it came alive with an immediacy I could not ignore and the explanation lies as much within the reader as on the printed page.

I write this review at night and my day was not unusual. The first sound I remember is the alarm clock, no food for breakfast, and I am shuffling nervously in a line at the bookstore, waiting to cash a check. The faces on either side of me are blank with weary anticipation. I clutch my fee card with my name and student number printed very clearly, but the signature is not my own, someone had registered for me. They cash the check anyway. It is late afternoon and I visit a teaching assistant in her office to argue about a grade. She is a little woman with a small head of dark hair now buried in a book while her tiny hands turn the pages, and underline words, and make marginal notes, like a mouse devouring a piece of cheese she digests the symbol structure and image patterns, and turns to me with a hurried smile. "Mr. —

"Landesman."

"Ah yes, Mr. Landesman. Well, Mr. Landesman, I do think you have a basic knowledge of *KING LEAR*. But I have to prepare a class now, so why don't you come back during my office hours, they're posted on the door."

I stand there a few seconds wanting to say something insulting but what has she done to provoke me? One too many cups of coffee burn in my stomach, a cigarette shakes



ever so slightly in my hand, I hurry to the door and leave. In the hall I pass someone I know but whose name I have forgotten, so I say nothing and walk on. I am home, the book is opened before me and I read:

Punching the time clock was a fascinating game. My card seemed to exist on a higher plane of reality than myself. I'd have come to work for no other reason than to hold it in my hands. My name blazed unapologetically. Numbers crowded one another in purple ink. I was reassured, soothed almost, to know that something about me was recordable.

or:

The class hours merged into a day of boredom. The books were dull, mechanical texts from which the teachers rarely strayed. Voices droned at an impossibly slow pace, ideas emerged sluggishly, words and phrases repeated over and over became incomprehensible—my mind could find nothing to attach itself to. I was cast adrift and it frightened me. One could disappear in such a state, simply cease knowing the difference between up and down, or who one was, or where one was. So I put myself to sleep and accepted the mediocre grades I'd done nothing to earn.

Familiar scenes, almost too familiar, but recorded here with an easy, unassuming grace that even the most hardened among us must find compelling. However full and active our personal life may be, this is the context and texture of our existence, and this must be our starting point.

So what happens to Frank Conroy? He becomes a writer. But not the way people usually become writers, and not for the same purposes; he is too honest and contemporary for that:

I read very fast, uncritically, and without retention, seeking only to escape from my own life through the imaginative plunge into another. The real world dissolved and I was free to drift in fantasy, living a thousand lives, each one more powerful, more accessible, and more real than my own. It was around this time that I first thought of becoming a writer. In a cheap novel the hero was asked his profession at a cocktail party. "I'm a novelist," he said, and I remember putting down the book and thinking, my God what a beautiful thing to be able to say.

True, there is none of the literary self-consciousness of an author trying desperately to communicate the profoundest insights of his uniquely sensitive mind, and yet, Conroy's writing is something more than the result of a mock-existential decision and the desire to escape reality. If anything, it is an act of expurgation, a process

in which one's vague, elusive, and less than happy past is objectified into an external reality. When it no longer smoulders within, when it becomes something other, something written on a piece of paper, it can be dealt with, perhaps even related to. To throw out nothing still leaves one with nothing, but at least a cleaner, purer nothing, and perhaps there is some value in the process itself.

If we seek an explanation for the quiet but supercharged quality of Conroy's awareness we must look, then, not so much to the situations as to the writing itself. If his writing is self-purifying, he is not so much describing incidents as changing them.

The writers who led the sexual revolution in this country forged an identity by the continual expansion of their freedom. But a problem arose when they felt just as fettered, just as neurotic, when there were no more rules to break. Conroy's approach is to work in the opposite direction; like Hawthorne, he moves backwards, coming to terms with his own sense of guilt rather than trying to transcend it. As he re-lives each disappointing and mechanical experience, Conroy seems to impart an essence to it through his writing, even while discarding the shell from his past. He (and the reader) is at once cleansed and enriched. Where another writer exalts in the free exuberance of a sexual conquest, Conroy writes on another level entirely, one that is almost beyond interpretation. He describes the first time:

As I fucked her, a certain moment arrived when I realized her body had changed. Her sex was no longer limply the entrance one penetrated in search of deeper, more intangible mysteries. It had become, all at once, *slippery* (Conroy's italics)—a lush blossom beyond which there was no need to go.

STOP-TIME is like that, a series of empty incidents refracted and warmed over by the author's memory. A kind of nostalgic nausea pervades each page, meaningless yet somehow purposeful, listless yet mysteriously filled with life. But where does it all lead? Frank Conroy, at the age of thirty-two, has done it; he has written his life. He has purged himself of his past and that is not really something one can do more than once. There are two possibilities. One is that he define a role for himself as a writer (or something else with a label), though having written this book, that would be little more than the reflex action of a chicken that has just been beheaded. The other possibility is the one suggested in the epilogue, where the writer (the author, Frank Conroy) runs his car into a fountain and tries to kill himself. Emerging from the wreck unharmed, he walks over to the fountain and vomits. The last line of the book is the perfect complement to the first (in which, you remember, he announced himself as a writer). "My throat burning with bile, I started to laugh."

Volpone as The Game Show

By ALAN C. DESSEN

The off-again, on-again, wind-blown, rain-splattered "Volpone" finally received two performances Sunday, even though the first was forced indoors midway in the second act. Neither rain nor hail nor hurled peanut shells deterred these raucous couriers from their appointed rounds, so the show went on, much to the delight of the spectators (themselves occasional participants).

In the early seventeenth century, Ben Jonson begat "Volpone." But in our century, Brecht begat Genet who begat Leroi Jones and "Marat-Sade" and the "theatre of attack" (with the audience as enemy). And in 1968, Stuart Gordon begat "The Game Show" which in turn begat this rendition of "Volpone."

Jonson's play, the putative starting point, received relatively short shrift on Sunday. The persevering animals in the audience were far more interested in the antics of Deena Burton's Nano in the best Harpo Marx-mute pantomime tradition. Several of her bits elicited applause (the cheerleading with pompons during the trial scenes, the charade), applause that was eloquent testimony to the appeal of the non-Jonsonian elements of this "Volpone."

The "Game Show" approach of offensive (as opposed to neutral or defensive) theatre was most evident during intermission when cast members proceeded to feed the animals (i.e., the audience) by throwing into their midst peanuts, marshmallows, and other such tidbits, while "orange ladies" circulated, offering their wares. The crunching of peanut shells during the second act could thereby be interpreted (by, say, a neutral third party) as a witting or unwitting admission of a common animality, a bond between the obvious animals on stage and the now compromised audience.

The outdoor section of the performance (before the rains descended) reaped some unexpected benefits. So one of the spectators turned out to be a tiny dog named Meg who barked furiously at all the exciting moments and, as a self-proclaimed and unabashed animal, was quite willing to be fed and plead guilty as charged. Meanwhile, during Volpone's attempted rape of Celia, the carillon chimed in with a delightfully ironic rendition of "Far Above Cayuga's Waters." A wonderful time was had by all.

Given the free-wheeling nature of the performance as a whole, the acting was uneven, with the broadest parts, those allowing the largest amount of caricature, being the most effective. So Sandra Searles' masochistic Celia (a brilliant comic conception though far removed from Jonson) stole quite a few scenes, even from a fine Corvino (Frank Hilgenberg). Bonario, Jonson's "good man," was savagely parodied by Tom Conway who undoubtedly pulled off the great moment of the performance in his abortive comic descent from his masthead above to "rescue" Celia. Although admittedly having their moments, Volpone (Bob Engel) and Mosca (Jean Witkin) had less luck, partly because they had to sustain their roles over a longer period and partly because of the truncated text which deprived them of speeches that would have helped to establish their rationale (Volpone's opening hymn to his gold, Mosca's aria of self-praise in Jonson's III.1).

Many of the director's cuts and insertions made good sense given the informal outdoor setting and the general tone. So Jonson's elaborate mountebank scene was heavily cut and updated while various topical joke (of the LBJ variety) replaced their seventeenth-century equivalent (whales in the Thames, messages in toothpicks). Moreover, to make sure that no one could possibly overlook the beast fable basis of the plot, the director had his figures on stage revert to pure animality at various moments, necessitating the intervention of the Ringmaster (David Beyer) with a lion-taming whip. Although many features found in the original play were missing here, certainly Jonson's emphatic point about greed and animalism and human nature was not lost.

But obviously something was lost, even admitting the verve and imagination in evidence here. By cutting the opening hymn to gold, Gordon in effect cut out the rationale behind Volpone's power and his threat to society. By reducing the Avocatori (the Venetian judges) to utter fools, Jonson's elaborate demonstration of the limitations of justice is buried beneath an avalanche of easy laughs. And by turning the last two acts of the original

play into rampant stage business and wild screaming dialogue, the spread of Volpone's disease to the world around him becomes something much less, something laughable rather than deplorable.

Clearly the "Game Show"-theatre of attack can involve and even enrage an audience normally aloof and complacent. But what price involvement? Is a play about money and animalism to be deemed successful if x number of peanuts are thrown back at the actors by the supposed animals in the audience? What happens when such involvement is gained at the expense of the thematic and intellectual guts of the original work?

Ironically, Jonson himself, always contending with hostile or apathetic audiences, would have sympathized with Gordon's dilemma. Old Ben too has his belligerent prologues and epilogues, his sardonic attacks upon his supposed "understanders." But, at his best, Jonson involves his audience not through an antagonistic intermission but rather through the brilliant ending of "The Alchemist" which elicits unthinking applause from the spectators, applause that, in effect, condones everything that Face has done and turns that rogue loose to dupe and degrade that same audience once they leave the theatre.

Even here in "Volpone," given a different treatment



Photos by JAY TIEGER

Sunday-Monday

Four A.M.: August.
A darkening moment lingers
As far away a prowling taxi
Searches a narrow street for a certain number,
While here the steady rumble of pistons and
cylinders
Smooths over sound and noise
With a distant but comforting purr.

A single streetlamp burns a feeble yellow light
And casts its warming glow in all directions
At the foot of grey-black stairs,
Protected by vague and upward-reaching
spirals

Two hands touch
And move away.

Two people,
Frightened of tomorrow
When a thousand shoes
Pound the granite steps
And marble pillars reflect a revealing morning
sun,

Two people,
Feeling the shortening shadows
Ebbing from their fingertips,
Turn,
Retreat,
And are alone.

Tomorrow roaring motors will hurry past
On sun-baked pavement,
And massive iron bells
Will call the hour.
But for a fleeting instant
The air hangs thick and heavy
Upon two people and a distant taxi;
A summer night pauses and holds its breath.

by Rocco Landesman



The Kennedy Assassination

By JIM LESAR

Editor's note: This is the second of a two-part series on the Kennedy assassination. Part I, dealing with Arthur M. Schlesinger's *A THOUSAND DAYS*, detailed Kennedy's difficulties in dealing with the Department of State, the Joint Chiefs, and the Central Intelligence Agency.

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS. By Elie Abel. Bantam Books, Inc. 197 pp.

THE REDS AND THE BLACKS: A PERSONAL ADVENTURE. By William Attwood. Harper & Row, Publishers. 341 pp.

Again there was a split on how to react to the emplacement of nuclear missiles in Cuba by the Soviet Union. The issue resolved itself into a question of whether America's initial response should be an air-strike to knock out the missile sites or a naval blockade which would prevent the shipment of more "offensive weapons" into Cuba. The head of the CIA, now John C. McCone, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff favored immediate air-strikes to bomb the nuclear missile sites. The majority of the Executive Committee and President Kennedy finally decided that the naval blockade was the best and least dangerous path to pursue. However, the day after this conclusion had been reached by the Executive Committee, the Joint Chiefs of Staff tried to circumvent it by going directly to the President. According to the account given by Elie Abel in *THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS*, the Joint Chiefs delayed Kennedy's departure for a campaign trip while they gave a last-minute plea "for an air strike or an invasion, anything but the naval blockade that the President's advisers had agreed . . . was the least dangerous first step."

The plea by the Joint Chiefs for more precipitate action was to no avail; Kennedy proceeded with the plan to impose a naval blockade on the shipment of missiles to Cuba. Without seeking to justify the blockade which was imposed, one may still appreciate that the slight difference between the preemptive first strike against the nuclear missile sites urged by the Joint Chiefs and the blockade policy favored by Kennedy may also have been the difference between nuclear war with Russia and no war.

More important in terms of the policy-power struggle going on within the Kennedy Administration were the eventual settlement terms of the confrontation. These are not widely known, or even suspected, in America, for the press bruted about the Administration's interpretation of the crisis—or at least the interpretation which it maintained in public. Thus the public impression was that because the U.S. had stood up to the Russians, the Russians turned tail and ran home with their nuclear missiles. Or, to put it in the cowboy version of Dean Rusk, "we were eyeball to eyeball and the Russians blinked."

There are indications, however, that the settlement terms were far different than popularly believed. The United States did gain the domestic propaganda advantage of being able to claim a "victory" over Russia, an advantage which was politically useful to Kennedy. And Russia did agree to withdraw its missiles and IL-28 bombers. But the United States also made concessions. Kennedy pledged that the United States would not invade Cuba. This pledge was more significant than it may seem at first blush, for both the Russians and the Cubans maintain that another invasion of Cuba was imminent and the nuclear missiles were introduced into Cuba in an effort to convince America that an invasion of Cuba would mean war with the Soviet Union, and there apparently is some reason to think that the United States actually was preparing a second invasion of Cuba. In addition to the no-invasion pledge, the United States agreed to remove its Jupiter missiles from Turkey and Italy. While Kennedy had ordered the State Department to remove the Jupiter missiles from Turkey some months earlier, the order was never carried out, apparently because of strong opposition from the State Department, the Pentagon, and Turkey. Kennedy, however, did not learn of the failure to carry out his order until the time of the Cuban missile crisis. At this point the resistance to removing the missiles was overcome and less than three months later the United States removed from Turkey and Italy a total of 45 Jupiters, which was approximately the number of missiles which Russia was reported to have removed from Cuba.

If the CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed Kennedy on the immediate handling of the missile crisis, there are signs that they were even more disturbed by the new direction which America's foreign policy took after the crisis had ended. One of the more beneficial aspects of the missile crisis was that it convinced Kennedy of the need for a detente with the Soviet Union. He began to search for ways to "cool off" the tensions of the Cold War and reverse the inertia which it exerted in the direction of an ineluctable nuclear conflagration. This concern resulted in his famous American University speech on June 10, 1963. The effect of this speech, as Schlesinger notes, "was to redefine the whole national attitude toward the cold war." The central point of the speech was a proposal for a moratorium on nuclear testing in the atmosphere. But it also held out the possibility of sweeping changes in the relations between the United States and Russia, saying that enmities between states did not last forever, and that "the tide of time and events will often bring surprising changes in the relations between nations." The entire speech was in a vein that was utterly foreign to the usual cold war rhetoric:

"If we cannot end now all our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

Khruschev responded to the American University speech by declaring that "only madmen" could hope to destroy capitalism by nuclear war. Soon thereafter the United States and Russia began negotiations for a trea-

Part Two: From the Hills of Cuba To the Bay of Pigs



ty which would ban the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere. Eventually these negotiations were successful. But before the test ban treaty could be put into effect Kennedy had to overcome the strenuous opposition of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their allies in the Senate.

To obtain ratification of the treaty by the Senate, Kennedy pulled a dirty trick. He signed the treaty. This act made it impossible for the Senate to refuse ratification without slapping the President down and undermining his prestige abroad. Nonetheless, the military made clear its opposition. Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, General Curtis Lemay, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, indicated that if it were not for the fact that the treaty had already been signed and was now before the Senate he would be against it. General Thomas Power, commander of the Strategic Air Command, went even further and declared that the treaty was not in the national interest.

The opposition of the military to the test ban treaty was bound to be even more bitter than it was in the earlier clashes with the Kennedy Administration over the dismissal of General Walker, "muzzling the Generals," and the B-70 bomber. The stakes were much higher. For the test ban treaty meant nothing in itself; it was significant only to the extent that it presaged detente and disarmament. Thus it threatened the very existence of the CIA, the Pentagon, and the whole military-industrial complex. For the only possible justification for such institutions is the serious threat of war, and where the threat of war is not perceived as serious or imminent, they will begin to lose their power and political predominance, until eventually they are discarded.

In this battle with the military, Kennedy won the immediate skirmish. The Senate ratified the test ban treaty on September 24, just two months before Kennedy's assassination.

With the test ban treaty out of the way, Kennedy began to consider other ways of abating cold war conflicts. He had already decided that after his re-election in 1964 the U.S. would drop its opposition to China's representation in the United Nations. A more important development, however, was a cautious groping towards some sort of rapprochement or accommodation with Cuba. William Attwood, former Ambassador to Guinea and now Special Adviser for African Affairs at the U.S.'s UN delegation, reveals part of the secret diplomatic maneuvers going on with regard to Cuba in his new book *THE REDS AND THE BLACKS*. In September of 1963, Attwood was put on to the fact that Cuba was interested in seeking some sort of an accommodation with the U.S. Attwood suggested to Harriman and Stevenson that the U.S. establish "discreet contact" with the Cuba delegation at the UN to find out if Castro did in fact want to discuss a change in U.S.-Cuban relations.

This contact was set up with Dr. Carlos Lechuga, the chief Cuba delegate, who said there was a good chance Castro would invite Attwood to Cuba to discuss the matter. Robert Kennedy suggested instead that meetings might be held outside of Cuba, perhaps in Mexico. While the problem of finding a secretive meeting place was being batted back and forth, contact with Castro was maintained through Lisa Howard, a TV correspondent who knew Castro well, and who in July of 1965 died a somewhat strange death—officially termed "an apparent suicide."

In the meantime, a more direct contact was established through the French journalist Jean Daniel, who seems to have been an unofficial emissary between Castro and Kennedy. At the end of October, Daniel had interviewed Kennedy at the White House where he lis-

tened to the President make such astounding statements as:

"I believe that there is no country in the world, including all the African regions, including any and all the countries under colonial domination, where economic colonization, humiliation and exploitation were worse than in Cuba, in part owing to my country's policies during the Batista regime. I believe that we created, built and manufactured the Castro movement out of whole cloth and without realizing it."

After this interview, Daniel went to Cuba, with the understanding that he was to report back to the White House later about the Cuban response. On November 19 Daniel talked at length with Castro. After some customary denunciations of American foreign policy, Castro then offered some opinions which were every bit as astounding as those expressed by Kennedy:

"(Kennedy) still has the possibility of becoming, in the eyes of history, the greatest President of the United States, the leader who may at last understand that there can be coexistence between capitalists and socialists, even in the Americas. He would then be an even greater President than Lincoln. I know, for example, that for Khruschev, Kennedy is a man you can talk with . . . Other leaders have assured me that to attain this goal, we must first await his re-election."

Of course, Kennedy's re-election never came. Neither did the U.S.-Cuban rapprochement. After Kennedy's assassination Lechuga informed Attwood that he had received instructions from Castro on November 23 to enter into discussion with Attwood. But now Lechuga assumed that the situation had changed. And it certainly had. Attwood informed McGeorge Bundy of this development, but he was later told that the Cuban exercise "would probably be put on ice for a while."

Cuba, however, was not the only critical area which was the object of a flurry of activity in the weeks prior to the assassination. American foreign policy in Vietnam was also approaching a critical turning point. On Monday, November 18, Kennedy called Senator Wayne Morse into his office. Kennedy said that he had been reading Morse's speeches criticizing the war in Vietnam. He was planning a review of, and change in, policies, and these changes would be sympathetic to Morse's views. He wanted Morse to come back to the White House on November 24 and discuss the matter. But as it turned out, that was Kennedy's burial date.

There are other events which tend to confirm Morse's story. One is a rather startling detail which was revealed by James Reston in a column he wrote last September. According to Reston, during the week Kennedy was murdered, the crisis in Vietnam had reached such dire proportions that Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, a long-time political rival of Kennedy's who had just received his appointment as Ambassador to Vietnam at the insistence of Dean Rusk, was flying back home to present a report that the South Vietnamese army was in danger of being overwhelmed and that the war might be lost unless the United States took a more active part in it. So urgent was the crisis that "arrangements had been made for Kennedy to go from Dallas to Vice-President Johnson's ranch" to receive a report from Lodge.

Some background must be recalled here. On November 1, just three weeks before Kennedy's own assassination, Ngo Dinh Diem was murdered by his own generals. Schlesinger reports that after Kennedy heard

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From the Hills of Cuba

(continued from page 7)

that Diem and his brother Nhu were dead: "He was somber and shaken. I had not seen him so depressed since the Bay of Pigs."

Kennedy had good reason to be somber and shaken, for if the United States had not directly participated in the coup, its encouragement had certainly made the coup possible. In late August, Diem, who was already an object of international censure, ordered his troops to carry out raids on Buddhist temples and arrest hundreds of Buddhist bonzes. Even for Diem's dictatorship these nighttime raids were such an excess of violence and terror that the Vietnamese foreign minister resigned and defiantly shaved his head like a bonze. The Vietnamese Generals reacted differently, however. They asked Lodge what our attitude would be if they were to take action against Diem in the event his regime tried to make a deal with Hanoi. Lodge cabled Washington for instructions.

The reply which was drafted in Washington stated that Diem should be given a chance to solve his problems arising from the repression of the Buddhists and the power wielded by his brother Nhu, but if he could not be saved, and if anything happened, "an interim anti-communist military regime could expect American support." While Kennedy evidently signed this draft of the cable at Cape Cod, Schlesinger asserts that "On his return to Washington Kennedy felt rather angrily that he had been pressed too hard and fast." He then began to institute a review of the entire Vietnam policy.

By the time of the Dallas trip Kennedy had decided that the United States had to extricate itself from the war in Vietnam; plans were made to withdraw American advisers as soon as Vietnamese were trained to replace them, and two thousand American troops were reportedly withdrawn in the two months prior to Kennedy's assas-

sination. But when Lodge made his plea to Johnson a few days after the assassination, Reston says that Johnson is reported to have responded: "I am not going to be the first President of the United States to lose a war." Thus the course of future escalation was determined only a few days after Kennedy's death, although for the next year the decision would be kept quiet, while Johnson talked peace to Goldwater and promised not to involve "American boys" in the land war in Asia.

In light of the circumstances recounted above, it becomes legitimate to speculate on the involvement of certain governmental agencies in the assassination of Kennedy. More than that, it becomes obligatory if we are to extricate ourselves from the sort of disaster which befell Germany after the burning of the Reichstag. For the logic of events, if nothing else, would indicate that the assassination of Kennedy was, in effect, a military coup d'etat.

If this conclusion is frightening, its corollary, which was first publicly stated by District Attorney Jim Garrison several weeks ago, is even more so. In an interview with a Dutch television reporter Garrison was quoted as saying that "the next U.S. President who tries to put the brakes on the war machine" will also be slain. More frightening still is the fact that such statements by Garrison and many significant developments regarding the trial of Clay Shaw have not been reported in the American press, with the exception of two New Orleans papers.

The Kennedy assassination is a political question of the greatest importance. All candidates for high political office who seriously claim to present a clear alternative to the war policies of the Johnson regime must address themselves to it. Should they fail to address themselves to this question on their own initiative, they must be publicly confronted with the demand that they do so. Should they refuse to address themselves to the question they must be exposed as shams presenting no alternative to the present regime and treated accordingly.

director were looking over his shoulder; in his book-length interview with Hitchcock this is literally true. Many artists claim that they seldom bother to read the critics; Antonioni, for example, says that critics are idiots, that they like his work for the wrong reasons and dislike it for the wrong reasons. Hitchcock, no doubt encouraged by the dedicated attention Truffaut has shown toward his work, put the problem a little more optimistically: "Psycho," more than any of my other pictures, he told Truffaut, "is a film that belongs to filmmakers, to you and me. I can't get a real appreciation of the picture in the terms we're using now." In other words, today only filmmakers (Truffaut) are competent critics. Hitchcock leaves room for change, however, in his use of "now." He implies that things are changing. And indeed they are. Though the general public has hardly any understanding of the director's authorship of a picture, a few critics have begun to approach films from the director's point of view, to understand the motivation behind each point of style. Of prime importance in this approach, obviously, is determining exactly what is happening on the screen and on the soundtrack. Few writers on film do this, though only by attaining such precision can one deserve the term "critic." A reviewer treats a work as a news event and describes his idiosyncratic reactions to it; at best he writes a good essay, with the film as his point of departure. To analyze a film, however, demands that one understand the mechanics of filmmaking, the functions of the camera. This understanding grows as one learns how to anticipate a director's steps, and if contradicted by what one sees or hears, to discover how the other man's strategy improved or hurt the film.

In short, the critic learns the workings of film style. To understand style he must be constructing his own by making movies and writing scripts, or at least by imagining the movies he would like to make. T.S. Eliot noted that "the nearest we get to pure literary criticism is the criticism of artists writing about their own art." When one writes about the work of a director one admires—not slavishly accepting every stroke as genius but empathizing with both the successes and the missteps of his style—one is in effect assuming the formalized personality, the style, of the director. "Perhaps what I want to say now is true of all literary criticism," Eliot goes on in a context applicable also to film criticism, "that it is at its best when I have been writing of authors whom I have wholeheartedly admired. And my next best are of authors whom I greatly admire, but only with qualifications with which other critics may disagree." When one writes about a director whom one wholeheartedly admires, one is writing about a style completely in harmony with one's own feelings. Truffaut is not Hitchcock, but he feels no strain in accepting Hitchcock's mode of expression. A critic who has confidence in his own ability to create has no need to tear down other men's works but instead tries to write about what interests him in a way which will help himself and his readers learn about the process of creating. The function of criticism is to make art—in writing criticism one tries to give expression to the creative problems that are bothering him. By subserving these considerations to the demands of analyzing a particular work, one objectifies one's own problems and is able to assess them against the standards of a work to which one fully responds.

Critical Response

(continued from page 2)

serve us in attempting to analyze the workings of art. To say that a painting has "beauty," that it is "excellent" or "poor," that it is "striking," that it is "harmonious," that it "conveys a feeling of sadness," is not criticism. Experience consists of particular reactions. We do not feel sadness, we have a feeling which we describe as sadness. It may be caused by a death, by missing a bus, by a slant of light. These are all facts or, as Mr. Eliot put it, "objective correlatives." Emotions are the only facts, and only facts make emotions. The critic's job is in a way impossible. He cannot say this is a fact, though his job is to analyze experience into its components—facts. He can only hope that, by being as precise as his abilities of perception and analysis and re-organization can make him, he can approximate truth. Camus wrote that truth does not exist, only truths. We encounter whatever exists of the abstract (the real) only through the concrete (the actual). The abstract is the result of concrete things being juxtaposed into something more than the sum of their parts. Hand plus knife equals not only hand and knife, but also fear. Oscar Wilde put it well: "It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible."

The only way to escape the frustrations inherent in writing about art is to make art. This could be regarded, in fact, as the function of criticism. It is difficult to believe that a person could have as his sole desire that of being a writing critic, unless he were emotionless, unimaginative, a pedant; in other words, not an artist. A "professional critic" can take pride in his skill as an artist of words, and here criticism becomes essay writing. The essays of Dr. Johnson, Ruskin, Edmund Wilson, James Agee, Dwight Macdonald and Pauline Kael show us writers who know how to string words together in ways musical as well as informative. But this skill is not what makes a man a critic. It is possible, indeed, that a man can be a good critic and be illiterate, if he talks well. Criticism is not poetry. We read an essay because of our interest in the expressive personality of its author, but we read criticism to learn about the work being criticized. Criticism is less a form of art than a subsidiary to art. A man must know how to express in writing what he wants to say, but in criticizing one is more concerned with the artist in question than with oneself as artist: the critic must risk being banal. In the end, the only satisfying form of criticism is the creation of a work of art. In the act of making a film John Ford is expressing his views as to what a film should be in the only precise way; only by making a cut can one demonstrate what a cut should be in all its nuances. By creating a tangible work, Ford is embodying an abstract idea. He is giving form to his view of life, of humor, of love, of color, of sound, and of criticism. He is performing analysis by making a synthesis. His synthesis is, after all, an analysis of actuality; Eisenstein called it "hewing out a piece of actuality with the axe of the lens." The cycle begins again when a viewer reacts to Ford's work, when a critic attempts to analyze it, and when Ford makes another movie, revising, as it were, his last statement on the medium. His criticism, like that of the viewer sitting in the darkened theater, is subverbal and nonintellectual; it expresses itself in physiological terms. Ford moves his camera across a scene; the viewer moves his eyes across the screen. Both are attempts at definition.

The critic, in making a statement on the use of the medium, is conscious always of the difference or the contiguity between what he sees on the screen and what he would like to see on the screen. As Jean-Luc Godard has said, "All of us at 'Cahiers' considered ourselves as future directors. Frequenting film societies and the cinematheque, we were already thinking in strictly cinematic terms. For us, it meant working at cinema, for between writing and shooting there is a quantitative difference—not a qualitative one." The act of criticism is an act of empathy with the artist. When one makes a film the empathy is literal; one is both critic and artist. When one writes criticism the empathy should be as strong. Francois Truffaut says that he writes as if the

THE MATADOR TAKES A PASS AT POETRY

for Houghan

BY JEREMY ROBINSON

Too many poets begin with death.

They behave as if they crave it.

The one great mythic test, the unknown, that will make them men the best.

To me, that's the bull.

I prefer to think of myself as the matador, My hands are quick but don't be deceived. My skill is more than in the second glance: What I was, the image, the mistake, yesterday: some small quest.

The matador-poet is beautiful for his endurance: conscious that each second he must earn his living, strong that each minute is worth all his best. His grace is in evenness and each day holds some pride.

And to those who are sloppy and would go to the bulls, wearing their capes red over their eyes, I cry stop! Bravery isn't an act of danger or despair, but in the grace of the steps that are taken to avoid the test.

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