

# BOOKSHELF

by george l. george

## Recent French Books

A well conceived and extensively documented survey by Luda and Jean Schnitzer, *Histoire du cinéma Soviétique 1919-1940* considers development and motivations as reflections of the Soviet concept of "the socialist man." Interviews with filmmakers, assessment of trends, historic and social considerations, rare stills, all give exceptional value to the book (Ed. Pygmalion/Gerard Walter, Paris, F89).

In *Le Western*, Christian Gonzalez appraises the genre mainly as entertainment, but also as the chronicle of a legend, and a fitting mirror to a colorful era of territorial expansion. The particular styles of John Ford, Henry King, Sam Peckinpah, Sergio Leone and directors of "spaghetti" westerns are discussed (PUF, Paris, F10).

The script of Hans Jürgen Seyberg, *Hitler, un film d'Allemagne*, is a panoramic indictment of the Nazi regime, a fantastic visualization combining historic reconstructions, individual destinies and allegoric tableaux in a nightmarish montage of terrifying reality and taunting kitsch (Seghers/Laffont, Paris, F15).

In *Cinéma et condition humaine*, Michel Estève raises questions of man's confrontation with history and fate, as pictured in current films. Their fusing of form and content, their social and personal dimensions and their esthetic structures are the dominating element of their contemporaneity (Albatros, Paris F44).

A theoretical speculation on the nature and effect of comic film, Jean-Paul Simon's *Le Filmique et le Comique* uses semiology and psychoanalysis to determine the status of film comedy as a "cinematographic discourse" bridging the film itself, its creators and the audience (Albatros, Paris, F44).

Marcel L'Herbier, whose films led the renaissance of French cinema in the years following World War I, retraces his prodigious career in *La tête qui tourne*, a challenging and poignant memoir of a life devoted to the art of "man's new age." Now 89, L'Herbier has retained the passion, the in-

telligence and the sensitivity that marked his film work (Belfond, Paris, F59).

The spoken dialogue of Josée Dahan's film, *Simone de Beauvoir*, reproduces conversations that the novelist/philosopher had in Paris with Jean-Paul Sartre and various friends. Humorous or sober-minded, the interchanges are spontaneous and revealing, as they deal with private, literary or political activities of a remarkable woman (gallimard, Paris, F25).

In *Marguerite Duras*, the filmmaker's work is dissected by Duras herself and her entourage, searching for the meaning behind the meaning in a fascinating process of analytical hide-and-seek and critical probing (Albatros, Paris, F38).

Popular French actor Paul Meurisse completed *Les éperons de la liberté* shortly before his untimely death last year. His memoirs evoke pre-war Paris where he made his reputation singing in café-concerts before leading in films directed by Jean Renoir, Marcel Carné, Jacques Feyder and Henri-Georges Clouzot (Laffont, Paris, F45).

A blueprint for the film of the future is proposed by Guy Hennebelle and his CinemAction team in the French monthly, *Exran* (No. 80). Dubbed "cin-ema d'intervention," it calls for a closer integration of film with contemporary reality, and suggests areas of research in political, popular, experimental, regional and other type motifs that would reflect today's life and aspirations. By the way, *Ecran* is a remarkable magazine, informative and expertly critical, that offers a comprehensive coverage of cinema in France and elsewhere.

An extensive study of the silent Italian cinema is featured in *Les cahiers de la Cinémathèque* (No. 26-27), a quarterly published by the Cinémathèque de Toulouse. This survey encompasses the film history of the period, the filmmakers, their films and their esthetic approach, in an authoritative round-up of a uniquely productive 30-year span.

From G.K. Hall & Co., three guides to references and resources are added to their valuable series: *Charlie Chaplin* by Timothy J. Lyons (\$30), *Akira Kurosawa* by Patricia Erens (\$15) and *Lindsay Anderson* by Charles L.P. Silet (\$18). Each volume, infor-

mative, scholarly and insightful, includes a biography, a critical survey of achievements, a list of films with synopses, credits and notes, an annotated guide to articles, and other appropriate data.

In *Movie Brats*, Michael Pye and Linda Myles examine the effect on the content and form of current movies by the new generation of filmmakers. Coppola, Scorsese, Spielberg, Lucas, Milius and DePalma are the innovators credited with re-orienting the industry to attract a different, younger audience (Holt Rinehart Winston \$12.95/5.95).

Dealing with an industry little known outside Europe and largely identified with Joris Ivens, John Ferno and Bert Haanstra, *Dutch Cinema* by Peter Cowie presents a number of gifted directors from the Netherlands. Their background and goals are perceptively described, and their films knowledgeably analyzed in this informative, illustrated survey (Barnes \$12).

Editor Dennis La Beau has assembled, in *Theatre, Film and Television Biographies Master Index* a comprehensive listing of some 100,000 names of personalities whose full biographies appear in 44 source books referenced in this useful volume (Gale \$35). □

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