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invites the patient to remove his shirt, and the audience gasps at the sight of a welter of pustules and sores. These, one presumes, are the tangible symptoms of his trauma; and as such are presumably to be linked in the mind, by way of the cancerous external growth on a patient's throat (not to mention the similar sores seen on Candice's body as she is bathed), with 'the brood' who are the manifestations of Nola's rage. No such connection is demonstrated, however; and since the various samples we are shown of Dr. Raglan's methods would hardly have seemed out of place in an Esalen documentary, the imaginative leap from known to unknown that is demanded is a little too wide to take. Striking as it is in its own right, the final sequence (Samantha Eggar squatting like an avenging angel on her throne, tearing bloodily at the sac-like appendage sprouting between her thighs to release the latest addition to the brood) seems totally out of keeping with the grey psychological half-tones that have gone before. Amid a flurry of fine performances, Nuala Fitzgerald is outstanding as the gracious grandmother whose façade barely reveals tremors of disquiet, but who remains the figure in the carpet of the appalling picture of inherited insanity that is gradually uncovered. Telling a compulsive story as its hero struggles desperately to keep his child on an even keel in a world which seems to be falling apart (particularly unsettling is his visit to the patient with the cancerous growth, who is discovered rolling around on the floor of his room, muttering in vague explanation that the lymphatic system demands constant movement after a heart transplant), *The Brood* tends to betray its own ambitions by resorting to the malevolently alien creatures. Not to mention the fact that the murderous midgets in their brightly coloured anoraks are already too familiar from *Don't Look Now* and *Communion*.

TOM MILNE

Cuba

U.S.A., 1979

Director: Richard Lester

Cert—AA. *dist*—United Artists. *p.c*—Holmby Film Corporation. For United Artists. *exec. p*—Denis O'Dell. *p*—Alex Winitzky, Arlene Sellers. *p. co-ordinator*—(Spain) Denise O'Dell. *p. managers*—Barrie Melrose, (Spain) Diego Gomez Sempere. *2nd Unit d*—Robert Stevens. *asst. d*—David Tringham, Steve Lanning, Roberto Parra, Javier Carrasco. *sc*—Charles Wood. *ph*—David Watkin. *col*—Technicolor. *camera op*—Freddie Cooper, Eduardo Noe. *ed*—John Victor Smith. *p. designers*—Gil Parrondo, Philip Harrison. *a.d*—Denis Gordon-Orr. *set dec*—Ian Whittaker. *sp. effects*—Antonio Parra, Peter Hutchinson. *m*—Patrick Williams. *cost*—Shirley Russell. *make-up*—José Antonio Sanchez. *titles*—Camera Effects. *sd. ed*—Don Sharpe, Paul Smith. *sd. rec*—Roy Charman, Gerry Humphreys. *p. assistants*—Barbara Allen, Maximo Gutierrez, Juan Gomez. *stunt co-ordinator*—Miguel Pedregosa. *flying sequences performed by*—Visionair. *l.p*—Sean Connery (*Major Robert Dapes*), Brooke Adams (*Alexandra Pulido*), Jack Weston (*Gutman*), Hector Elizondo (*Ramirez*), Denholm Elliott (*Skinner*), Martin Balsam (*General Bello*), Chris Sarandon (*Juan Pulido*), Danny De La Paz (*Julio Mederos*), Lonette McKee (*Therese Mederos*), Alejandro Rey (*Faustino*), Louisa Moritz (*Miss Wonderly*), Dave King (*Press Agent*), Walter Gotell (*Don José Pulido*), David Rappaport (*Jesus*), Wolfe Morris (*General Batista*), Michael Lees (*Maxwell-Lefroy*), Tony Matthews (*Carrillo*), Roger Lloyd-Pack (*Nunez*), Leticia Garrido (*Cecilia*), Maria Charles (*Señora Pulido*), Pauline Peart (*Dolores*), Anna Nicholas (*Maria*), Earl Cameron (*Colonel Rosell Y. Leyva*), John Morton (*Gary*), Anthony Pullen Shaw (*Spencer*), Stefan Kalipha (*Ramon*), Raul Newney (*Painter*), Ram John Holder (*Sergeant*), James Turner (*Chauffeur*), Eva Louise (*Girl in Arcade*). 10,971 ft. 122 mins.

Havana, late 1959. Robert Dapes, a retired British Army major, arrives to take up an assignment with General Bello as security adviser to the crumbling Batista régime. By chance, he later meets Alexandra, with whom he had a love affair in North Africa fifteen years before, and who is now married to the alcoholic Juan Pulido, scapegrace heir to one of the island's biggest (though ailing) rum and cigar conglomerates. Juan has had an affair with Therese, one of his employees, and her brother Julio, a revolutionary supporter newly escaped from custody, determines to avenge her honour by killing Juan. Dapes becomes involved again with Alexandra, after suspicion has (wrongly) fallen on her as a revolutionary sympathiser. As Dapes becomes more dubious about his role in Cuba, revolutionaries stage a massacre at a Christmas party given by Bello; the same night, Julio shoots at and narrowly misses Juan. When the revolutionary call to action comes, Alexandra is seized by Julio (the revolutionaries have kept an arms cache at the factory) and so—when he comes to her aid—is Dapes. When their revolutionary captors are engaged by Bello's forces, the pair—along with Gutman, a shady American businessman—manage to make a getaway, at one point assisted by Skinner, a British businessman now fleeing the country in his ancient plane. As crowds converge on the airport to escape from the country—and Batista and his entourage, including Pulido senior, are spirited away in a private plane—Dapes

waits until the last moment for Alexandra, who finally cannot bring herself to leave Cuba. Juan is meanwhile tracked down at his now deserted villa and shot dead by Julio.

The opening sequences of Richard Lester's new film are striking in a double sense: for the economical sureness with which the groundwork of a complicated intrigue is laid, and for the ease with which the narrative seems to be pushed to one side in favour of a lively surface of incidental gags. This duality has the effect almost of turning the plot material itself into an absurdist jape. What is more remarkable, however, is the way that within these apparent limitations, Lester—here reunited with his frequent earlier collaborators, writer Charles Wood and the brilliant cameraman David Watkin—succeeds in juggling two levels of experience, the sardonically distanced and the generically involving, in working out the narrative. In terms of construction, this is achieved through a plethora of symmetries and parallelisms—stretching all the way from the intricately circular structure to the pattern of relationships (Dapes and Alexandra/Juan and Therese), down to any number of incidental details—which stress the artificial processes of fiction-making even while drawing us further into the elaboration of the story. More than this, one might see in the way the action is visualised a commentary not only on the ostensible historical background but also on the aesthetic concept of the movie itself: one thinks of the overhead view of pursuit through the cane fields, rendering guerrilla warfare in a swirl of abstract movement, or the shot of shattering bottles as the rum factory is abandoned, the mosaic of broken glass echoing the film's splintered formalism as well as symbolising the break-up of the Batista régime. Underpinning this flamboyantly self-conscious approach—and marking *Cuba* as quintessentially a *film d'auteur*—is the sense that what unifies the movie is a kind of inclusive profile of Lester's previous work. Sometimes the echoes are direct: the climactic capture of the tank—where inevitably the luckless figure adjured to drive it "like a car" counters that he is only used to automatic transmission—recalls (and gains in contextual contrast with) the Salisbury Plain shenanigans of *Help!* In the latter film, incidentally, Lester's ambivalent fascination (part lampoon, part celebration) with pulp-fiction formulae was already apparent in embryo. More often, the allusions are generalised: the infallible Denholm Elliott's impersonation of the seedy British salesman—"Your bash, vicar!" he cries cheerily to a Roman Catholic cleric with whom he is playing golf—is a reminder of Lester's long-standing preoccupation with Goon-style English humour. Similarly, the intervention of Jack Weston (star of *The Ritz*) as the even more disreputable American wheeler-dealer—whose assignation with the call-girl provided by his business hosts he treats as if it were subject to the laws of time and motion study—invokes that vein of wisecracking Broadway humour that has formed a parallel stratum in the director's *oeuvre*. (Parenthetically, one might suggest that these two characters would need to be only slightly reinflected for the film to intersect more recognisably than it does already with Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*.) Furthermore, besides reminding us that Lester is a master of the action set-piece (the massacre at the Christmas banquet is a brilliant demonstration of catching the audience on the hop), the new movie subscribes in perhaps unexpectedly full measure to that nostalgically romantic heroism which in various guises has evolved through the director's work in the Seventies. Indeed, the casting of Sean Connery and Denholm Elliott—whose Seventh Cavalry-style rescue gesture at the climax is wonderfully and incongruously stirring—even evokes a specific echo of *Robin and Marian*. Lester ends with a newsreel-like tableau of revolutionary fervour, following immediately on an airport renunciation scene which seems to be a parody of *Casablanca*. This might be read as the march of history pushing Hollywood romantic fiction into an obsolescence from which it can only be redeemed in italicised pastiches like *Cuba* itself. If so, the conceit does not quite come off, and this concluding gesture—particularly in the light of the cautious, respectful treatment of the revolutionaries in the body of the film—reeks instead of a specious pop-radicalism. This is, though, a minor blemish on a movie that for most of the way offers a dazzling display of cinematic legerdemain.

TIM PULLEINE

Dalla nube alla resistenza (From the Cloud to the Resistance)

Italy/France/West Germany/
Great Britain, 1979

Directors: Jean-Marie Straub,
Daniël Huillet

Cert—(not yet issued). *dist*—Artificial Eye. *p.c*—Straub-Huillet/RAI TV Channel 2 (Rome)/INA (Paris)/Janus Film und Fernsehen (Frankfurt)/Artificial Eye (London). *sc*—Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. Based

on the books *Dialoghi con Leucò* (Part 1) and *La luna e i falò* (Part 2) by Cesare Pavese. *ph*—Saverio Diamanti, Gianni Canfarelli. *col*—LV Colour. *ed*—Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *m.d*—Gustav Leonhardt. *cost*—Cantini. *sd. rec*—Luis Hochet, Georges Vaglio. *p. assistants*—Leo Mingrone, Isaline Panchaud, Manfred Blank, Retraud Kühn, Vincent Nordon, Stéphanie de Mareuil, Paolo Pederzoli. *l.p*—Part 1: Olimpia Carlisi (*Nephele, The Cloud*), Guido Lombardi (*Ixion*); Gino Felici (*Hippolocus*), Lori Pelosini (*Sarpedon*); Walter Pardini (*Oedipus*), Ennio Lauricella (*Tiresias*); Andrea Bacci (*1st Hunter*), Lori Cavalini (*2nd Hunter*); Francesco Ragusa (*Literses*), Fiorangelo Pucci (*Hercules*); Dolano Bernardini (*Father*), Andrea Filippi (*Son*). Part 2: Mauro Monni (*The Bastard*), Carmelo Lacorte (*Nuto*), Luigi Giordanello (*Valino*), Mario di Mattia (*Cinto*), Paolo Cinanni (*The Gentleman*), Maria Eugenia T., Alberto Signetto, Paolo Pederzoli, Ugo Bertone, Gianni Canfarelli, Domenico Carrosso, Sandro Signetto and Antonio Mingrone (*People at the Bar*), Gianni Toti (*Priest*). 9,270 ft. 103 mins. *Subtitles*.

Six dialogues between figures from Greek antiquity, taken from Cesare Pavese's *Dialoghi con Leucò*, are followed by an episode set in modern times, taken from the same author's novel *La luna e i falò* (*The Moon and the Bonfires*). PART I: 1. In a mountain landscape, Ixion and The Cloud discuss whether the law of the Gods has changed and whether it can be fought. 2. In a forest, Sarpedon complains to his uncle, Hippolocus, about the way the Gods have treated Bellerophon—the father of Hippolocus and slayer of the beast Chimaera. 3. Travelling along a road in an ox-cart, Oedipus and Tiresias question what it means to say that the Gods exist. 4. In a cave, two hunters wonder about the wolf which they have just killed and which was formerly a man; undecided as to whether the werewolf might not still be part human, they decide to give it a burial. 5. On a terrace overlooking a field, King Literses threatens Hercules that he will be killed and his blood scattered over the cornfields to fertilise them, but Hercules refuses the role of victim. 6. At night, a shepherd explains to his son the nature of sacrifice, and how it has become an instrument of injustice in the hands of the ruling class. PART II: A bastard child, who had been brought up as a foundling and emigrated to America during the Fascist era, returns to Northern Italy after the war. He finds his village caught in the aftermath of civil war and his adoptive family dead, and recounts his experiences to his friend Nuto, a Communist, who tells him about the war and what is happening in the village. The bastard befriends Cinto, the son of a share-cropper, Valino. One night, Valino burns down his farm and kills all his family except Cinto, who escapes; Valino then hangs himself. Nuto tells the bastard the story of Santina, a village girl who was a double-agent during the Resistance and was shot by the partisans.

Jean-Marie Straub has compared *From the Cloud to the Resistance* to his earlier film *Not Reconciled*, and there are in fact many similarities between the two. The theme of both is non-reconciliation (extended in *The Cloud* to include the relationship of gods and men). And with the characters remaining unreconciled, whether to each other or to the world around them, there is also no resolution of the narrative. Although *Not Reconciled* ends with a family reunion, there is no sense there—and still less at the end of the second part of *The Cloud*—that any problems have been resolved or that a new future is about to begin. Stylistically, *The Cloud* follows the pattern first set in *Not Reconciled*, and followed throughout Straub and Huillet's work, of avoiding any 'filmic' embellishment of the literary text being adapted. Wherever possible reported speech in the original is given as speech in the film—whether spoken on screen or in voice-over—rather than its content being enacted for the camera. This literal approach to literary texts is not as innocently respectful as it might appear, since in the course of reproducing the original text the film-makers deprive it of its natural context and present it for inspection, bit by bit. And having disjointed the original, they refuse to supply the kind of joins (match-cuts and so on) which would maintain a normal filmic flow. Although some of the dialogues in the first part of *The Cloud* are cross-cut between the participants, so that the shots form a continuous sequence, in the others blank spacing is used with or without voice-over before the same set-up is resumed. The diction is also broken up, to give an effect of recitation or quotation, and at the end of the dialogue between Oedipus and Tiresias, the shot continues for a full minute with nothing to be heard except the creaking of the ox-cart as it trundles along the road. This description might make *From the Cloud to the Resistance* sound a somewhat intimidating film. It isn't. The dialogues are more or less self-explanatory and do not require background knowledge of the obscurer by-ways of Greek mythology. The continuation of the Oedipus and Tiresias scene beyond the point when the characters have finished speaking is unexpected, and therefore potentially irritating—but only if one's expectations are so attuned to the maintenance of a certain narrative tension that one cannot relax if the tension drops. The second part also operates to minimise tension and to let the spectator just listen and watch. And what is said is so intelligent and so free of hyperbole that it is a constant

pleasure to listen to, while the images have the informational simplicity of a comic strip combined with the naturalness of classical landscape. The subtitles have less of a load to carry than in recent Straub-Huillet films, and they are excellent, except for one serious mistake: "repubblichini" is given as "republicans", when in fact it refers to the Fascists—i.e., the supporters of Mussolini's 'little republic' at Salò.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

Disco-Fieber (Disco Fever)

West Germany, 1979

Director: Hubert Frank

Cert—X. *dist*—Jay Jay. *p.c*—Mondial/Seven Star Productions. *p*—Hans Jänisch, Dieter Geissler. *unit manager*—Josef Moosholzer. *video d*—Klaus Überall. *sc*—Hubert Frank. *story*—Karl Heinz Quade. *ph*—Norbert Stern, (video) Manfred Schebsdat. In colour. *video engineer*—Tom Bartels. *ed*—Hubert Frank, (video) Michael Mester. *a.d*—(not credited). *sp. effects*—Mario Stock. *songs*—"Rasputin" by Frank Farian, George Reyam, Fred Jay, "It's a Holi-Holiday" by Frank Farian, Fred Jay, "Rivers of Babylon" (traditional) arranged by Frank Farian, George Reyam, McNaughton, Dowe, "Ribbons of Blue" by Forsey, performed by Boney M; "Leave a Light (in My Window)" by Carsen, McFadden, "Computer Love" by Kolonovits, Diesel, "One Way Ticket" by Hank Hunter, Jack Keller, performed by Eruption; "Baby Make Love", "One for You, One for Me" by A. La Bionda, C. La Bionda, Palmer-James, performed by La Bionda; "Funny Money Honey", "We'll Have a Party Tonight" performed by The Teens; "Candy Girl", "Do You Remember?" performed by Tony Schneider. *l.p*—Tony Schneider (*Tommy*), Hanna Sebek (*Eva*), Babsy May, Isabelle Dumas, Stefan Reber, Peter Lengauer, Ulli Beiger, Michel Jacot, Josef Moosholzer, Hannelore Schützler, Jan Holander, Michael Hoffman, Gisela Hahn; Boney M, Eruption, La Bionda and The Teens (*Themselves*). 7,779 ft. 86 mins. *Dubbed*.

The amorous adventures of a group of high school students. Tommy, a judge's son, tries to make love in the county court lift, a favourite rendezvous for young couples. During a lecture on Daphnis and Chloë, teacher Miss Hallbach tries to persuade her pupils to be more mature about sex. While Charlie flirts with a Yugoslav girl who turns out to be a prostitute, Walter poses in the nude for artist Eva; he has to hide on the roof when Eva's brother comes to call. When Tommy propositions Miss Hallbach, she invites him round to her flat, but only to chasten him. After a game of tennis, Tommy and Eva make love. At a convent, the Mother Superior finds Charlie hiding in a wardrobe. Tommy hosts a party at his father's house, but Eva walks out in disgust during the screening of a pornographic film. The couple are reunited when the hang-gliding Eva sees that Tommy has spelled out "Ich liebe dich" on the ground.

Its title notwithstanding, the staple ingredients of this German sex comedy—fat youth, bumbling official, blonde in crisp white uniform—only occasionally make way for listless gyrating on the disco floor. Halfhearted and illogical sketches constitute the 'plot', while the dubbed dialogue is equally inane ("She forgot to lock her bicycle again"—"That's puberty for you"). Shot on video (for television?), the sequences featuring such groups as Boney M and Eruption are interspersed at apparently random intervals and have no discernible relevance.

DAVID MCGILLIVRAY

Electric Horseman, The

U.S.A., 1979

Director: Sydney Pollack

Cert—A. *dist*—CIC. *p.c*—Columbia/Universal. A Ray Stark-Wildwood production. *p*—Ray Stark. *assoc. p*—Ronald L. Schwary. *p. assoc*—Michael Britton. *p. co-ordinator*—Mary Cay Hollander. *p. manager*—Ronald L. Schwary. *location manager*—Don Kruger. *asst. d*—M. Michael Moore, Bart Roe. *sc*—Robert Garland. *screen story*—Paul Gaer, Robert Garland. Based on a story by Shelly Burton. *ph*—Owen Roizman. Panavision. *col*—Technicolor. *camera op*—James Glennon. *ed*—Sheldon Kahn. *p. designer*—Stephen Grimes. *a.d*—J. Dennis Washington. *set dec*—Mary Swanson. *sp. effects*—Augie Lohman. *m*—Dave Grusin. *songs performed by*—Willie Nelson. *cost*—Bernie Pollack. *choreo*—Bernardine Kent. *make-up*—Gary Liddiard, (Jane Fonda) Bernadine M. Anderson. *titles*—Wayne Fitzgerald. *sup. sd. ed*—Gordon Davidson. *sd. ed*—William Sawyer, Kurt Schulkey, Robert A. Reich, Ross Taylor. *sd. rec*—Al Overton Jr. *sd. re-rec*—Arthur Piantadosi, Les Fresholtz, Michael Minkler, (music) Dan Walin. *stunt co-ordinator*—Bruce Paul Barboar. *livestock sup*—Kenny Lee. *stunts*—Mollie McCall, Mickey Gilbert, (chase sequence) Corky Behrle, Ken Endoso, Ralph Garrett, Conrad Palmisano, Mary K. Peters, Rick Seaman, Sonny Shields, Rock Walker. *l.p*—Robert Redford (*Sonny Steele*), Jane Fonda (*Hallie Martin*), Valerie Perrine (*Charlotta Steele*), Willie Nelson (*Wendell Hixson*), John Saxon (*Hunt Sears*), Nicolas Coster (*Fitzgerald*), Allan Arbus (*Danny*