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reveal as much naked flesh as plot and time will allow. Only Karen Smith's scatterbrained madam makes any lasting impression, primarily because her comic timing gives her scenes a conviction lacking elsewhere, even more laudable when one considers the dialogue at her disposal: (following Jo Jo's suggestion that they might find a woman interested in Pinocchio's unusual attribute) "A lady might have ambition . . . but to end up a shish kebab!"

DAVID BADDER

Fortini/Cani

Italy/France/West Germany/
Great Britain/U.S.A., 1976

Directors: Jean-Marie
Straub, Danièle Huillet

Dist—Artificial Eye. *p.c.*—Straub-Huillet/Radiotelevisione Italiana (Rome)/Sunchild (Paris)/Polytel International (Hamburg)/Artificial Eye (London)/New Yorker Films (New York). *p/sc*—Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. Based on the book *I cani del Sinai* by Franco Fortini. *ph*—Renato Berta, Emilio Bestetti. In colour. *ed*—Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet. *sd. rec*—Jetti Grigioni. *p. assistants*—Leo Mingrone, Gabriele Soncini, Gregory Woods, Bernard Mangiante. *translation for English subtitles*—Gregory Woods, Misha Donat. *with*—Franco Fortini [Lattes], Luciana Nissim, Adriano Apra. 3,064 ft. 85 mins. (16 mm.). *Subtitles*.

The Italian poet and critic Franco Fortini reads from his book, *I cani del Sinai* (*The Dogs of Sinai*). The author is sometimes seen on screen, but more often he is heard in voice-over, either against a blank screen or a background of written texts—books, newspapers, manuscripts—or of urban and rural landscapes. Sometimes the landscape shots are accompanied only by natural sounds, generally rather subdued. The subject matter of the reading is Italian Jewry (among whom the author grew up), Fascism and anti-Semitism, anti-Arab racism and imperialism. Besides written texts, a television news bulletin from the time of the Six Days War is presented as a document, and there are two short speeches by 'characters'.

Franco Fortini wrote *I cani del Sinai* in 1967, in the immediate aftermath of the Six Days War, partly to explain his refusal, as an Italian Jew and victim of fascist anti-Semitism, to support Israel against the Arabs. The title of the book is explained, somewhat cryptically, in a preface, presented as a text in the film, which reads: "To play the Sinai dog" is apparently a dialect phrase used by the nomads who crossed the desert plateau of El Tih to the north of Mount Sinai. Various interpretations by scholars, its meaning varies between 'to run to the help of the victor', 'to be on the side of the masters', 'to display noble sentiments'. There are no dogs on Sinai. The book mixes reminiscences of a 'liberal' Jewish upbringing under Italian Fascism with reflections on anti-Semitism in history and on other forms of racial exclusion and oppression which have emerged since the war and of which the Arab peoples are currently the victim. The author's immediate present target is those sections of the Italian bourgeoisie which absolve their guilt for past anti-Semitism by now being rabidly pro-Israel and anti-Arab, but he is also critical of himself and his own social stratum—assimilated Jewry—for their complicity, past and present, with this same bourgeoisie. Looking further afield, the author finds in the United States, with its "democratic-egalitarian" racism, its advanced capitalist economy and its role as imperialist super-power, the main locus of oppression. Much of the interest of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's film comes simply from the extraordinary power, compounded of passion and lucidity, of Fortini's text, and in a sense the film can be read as an invitation to listen, now, to the words written ten years ago. The film certainly does little to amplify the content of what Fortini is reading, whether by illustration or by further comment. Such self-effacement on the part of the film-makers is, however, deceptive—as their previous work has shown. What the film draws attention to is less the content of the words than the location of the speaking voice. The film does not seek to alter the words of Fortini's text, or to replace them with others, but it displaces them by its constant attention to the place from which they are spoken. Often the images refer not to the most important event mentioned in the passage being read but to the particular phrase in which the author places himself, however momentarily. Thus a long fixed shot of a rocky coastline by night is motivated by a fleeting reference to the writer's part in helping Jews to infiltrate Israel in 1946 in defiance of the British blockade. The image here serves to fix Fortini's memory, as he himself gives it, but from a different standpoint—that offered to the spectator by the film-makers, neither at the time of the event, nor at the time of the writing, but a further ten years on, in the present. Even more striking is a series of landscape shots, in and around a village in the Apennines where a Nazi massacre

took place during the war. The preceding shot is of Fortini reading; we pass to voice-over and then to unobtrusive natural sound. Only on the fourth of the long panning shots over landscape do we encounter the monument to the victims of the massacre, which is the only testimony to what happened twenty-three years before Fortini was writing, thirty-three years before the making of the film. The film is thus constantly shifting between different registers of presence: of history and memory. The space opened up between the registers precludes identification and instead demands reflection—and attention to one's own processes of reflection. "Memory serves to level everything"; or again: "It is necessary to believe, with Lenin, that for every situation there exists one way out and the possibility of finding it. Or in other words that truth exists, absolute in its relativity".

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

Her Naked Flesh

Greece, (?)

Director: Omiros Efstratiadis

Cert—X. *dist*—Winstone. *p.c.*—GD Films. *p*—Gregory Dimitropoulos. *assoc. p*—Max Roman. *p. manager*—Takis Vlassis. *asst. d*—Yanni Hartomadjides. *sc*—Vagelis Katsanis, John Tziotis. *ph*—Aris Stavrou. *col*—Eastman Colour. *ed*—Kavoukidis. *a.d*—Theodosios Davlos. *m*—Andrew Prezas. *songs*—Helen Roda. *cost*—Theodosios Davlos. *make-up*—George Roys. *sd. rec*—Era Studio, Nick Despotides. *English version*—Max Roman. *l.p*—Helen Anoussaki (*Bella*), Costas Karageorgis (*Sorokos*), Christos Nomikos (*Simos*), Andrea Barkoulis (*Grecos*), Marc Elliot (*Marc*), Rita Bensusan (*Persa*), D. Bloukos (*Garbis*), Lefteris Giftopoulos (*Inspector*), Kostas Rigas (*2nd Inspector*), St. Psaltis (*Jeweller*), V. Kolovos (*Policeman*), Mirka Danezi (*Girl "A"*), V. Georgopoulos (*Girl "B"*), V. Kostantinidon (*Maid*), M. Tobra, Eliko Gika. 6,750 ft. 75 mins. *Original running time*—102 mins. *Dubbed*.

Bella, a former prostitute who runs a cheap hotel in Piraeus, discovers that one of her customers, Garbis, is a member of a gang of jewel thieves and is holding a cache of diamonds. Her lover Simos murders Garbis and the pair plan to use the diamonds as a passport to the carefree life, but the hotel is soon traced by Sorokos, another member of the gang. Bella pretends to be infatuated with him and tricks him into thinking that she intends to share the diamonds with him. When the American leader of the gang, Marc, arrives and is openly suspicious of Bella, she burns her arm with an iron and pretends to each man that the other has tortured her into disclosing that the diamonds are hidden in a ship's graveyard. This leads to a waterfront shoot-out between the two, culminating in Marc's death. The police are alerted by the time a third gangster, Grecos, turns up, but he escapes only to meet his death at the hands of Bella and Sorokos. Simos is meanwhile convinced that Bella has thrown him over, and after discovering that the diamonds have been hidden in the hotel, he plans to take them and make off with a prostitute, Persa. On returning to the hotel, he encounters Sorokos and in the ensuing fight Sorokos falls down the stairwell to his death. Bella convinces Simos that she still loves him, but when Persa discovers that she has been jilted she tips off the police. Bella and Simos are shot down as they attempt to escape.

A gaudy but thinly cut slice of low-life melodrama, conceived rather on the lines of sundry French potboilers of the Fifties and executed with occasional bursts of crude vitality. The sex scenes at least have an unexpected bluntness and the violence is brought off with some sadistic acumen. More significant, inevitably, is the mechanical plotting and non-existent characterisation: the three hoodlums who appear in turn with risible predictability seem to have stepped out of a children's comic. The English title is particularly pointless. (We have been unable to trace the original title and the date of this film.)

TIM PULLEINE

Hra o jablko (The Apple Game)

Czechoslovakia, 1976

Director: Vera Chytilová

Cert—AA. *dist*—Curzon. *p.c*—Krátký Films. *p*—Antonín Vaněk. *assoc. p*—Jaroslav Gigler. *asst. d*—Petr Švedá. *sc/story*—Věra Chytilová, Kristina Vlachová. *ph*—František Vlček. In colour. *ed*—Alois Fišárek. *p. designer*—Vladimír Labský. *a.d*—Petr Bátor. *m*—Miroslav Kořínek. *m.d*—Milivoj Uzelac. *cost*—Irena Greifová. *make-up*—František Čížek. *sd. rec*—Adolf Nacházek. *l.p*—Dagmar Bláhová (*Anna Šimová*), Jiří Menzel (*John*), Evelyn Steimarová, Jiří Kodet, Nina Popelíková, Jiří Lábus, Bohuš Záhorský, Miroslav Umělec, Jana Lynková, Rina Buriánová, Jilka Nováková, Jana Prachařová, Nina Divišová, Miroslav Kořínek, Vladimír Krabánek, Zuzana Schmidová, Hana Smrčková, Petr Nárožný,