

Notes toward an Aesthetic of Popular Culture

By JOHN G. CAWELTI

Whenever criticism feels the impact of an expanded sensibility, it becomes shot through with ideological dispute. In quieter, more stable artistic times, the critic, unburdened by the clash of methods and criteria, can focus his attention on his real task, the exploration and interpretation of individual works of art. But before he can do so with any hope of being understood and accepted by others, he must share with them at least a basic core of assumptions about the nature and value of artistic work. For almost three decades now, the criticism of literature, despite a variety of tangential currents, has flowed fairly smoothly from certain key assumptions of the "new criticism": the integrity and unity of the individual work, the intricate analysis of structure as the key to meaning and value, the central value of complexity of expression as manifested in artistic devices like tension, irony, ambiguity, etc.

But the impact of the new media, the growth of a new pop culture, and the widening range of artistic interests and tasks have opened again the Pandora's box of aesthetic controversy. The resultant confusion is most apparent in film criticism—at present the most highly developed though most pungently polemical area of criticism involving modern popular forms. Compared to film

criticism, other modes of popular art such as pop music, comedy, and formula literature like detective stories, have remained critically inarticulate, except for the work of reviewers. To a considerable extent these modes of popular art still bear the lingering stigma of cultural inferiority which long prevented film criticism from coming into its own. Indeed, the problem of the relationship between popular art and so-called "high" or "serious" art has always been the crux of any attempt to create a popular aesthetic. In this paper, I would like to explore this difficulty and to suggest how some of the recent concepts of film criticism have made possible a better approach to the analysis and criticism of the popular arts.

The traditional way of treating the popular arts has been in effect to deny that they are arts at all, or at least not arts in the same sense as the high arts. This practice has age-old authority since it was first and most compellingly set forth by no less a critic than Plato. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates arrived at a fundamental distinction between "arts" which are rational methods for using true knowledge to good ends and non-arts or "knacks" as Socrates calls them which are capable of moving the mind through pleasure. However, these "knacks" are irrational because they concern not truth, but what pleases. Thus they are practised by a combination of instinct and trial and error and cannot, like arts, be taught or meaningfully discussed. As examples of knacks as opposed to arts, Socrates distinguishes cookery from medicine and make-up from gymnastics. Cookery and medicine both concern themselves with diet. However, where medicine prescribes not what pleases, but what the doctor's knowledge tells him is best for the body to eat, the cook seeks primarily to please, irrespective of the consequences for health. Similarly, the gymnast prescribes exercises aimed at the creation of a healthy body, while the make-up man has the knack of creating a beautiful appearance without concern for the actual state of the body. In the same way, rhetoric, Socrates argues, is not an art based on true ends, but a knack for creating the appearance of conviction: its true and rational counterpart is legislation, the art of prescribing what is right for the health of the state.

Many modern critics have used the Platonic distinction between art and knack to distinguish "high" or "serious" art from the popular or mass arts; in contemporary parlance the Platonic notion of knack has been replaced by such terms as entertainment or "kitsch." But

the basic idea remains the same; arts dedicated to higher purposes are opposed to arts that have simple pleasure or an appeal to the baser emotions as their primary goal.

Today, though many critics have consciously abandoned the negative, pejorative approach that long dominated the discussion of popular culture, the traditional Platonic distinction between art and non-art has a way of lingering on in more positive forms. Much current critical treatment of such film directors as Alfred Hitchcock reflects this tendency. O. B. Hardison, for instance, completely retains the traditional Platonic distinction, but he believes that the rhetorical knacks which Plato condemns are significant arts, which have their own meaningful purposes and are highly valuable in their own way. Thus, for him, Hitchcock is not an artist in the true sense, but a high quality professional creator of entertaining melodrama.

Nobody would seriously compare Hitchcock to a dozen directors and producers who have used the film medium as an art form.

Eisenstein, Chaplin, Ford, Bergman, Olivier, Fellini—the list could be expanded—have qualities undreamed of in the world of cops and robbers and pseudo-Freudian melodrama, which is the world where Hitchcock reigns supreme.¹

In explaining and defining his distinction between “professional” and “artist” Hardison goes on to create a superb contemporary formulation of Plato’s *Gorgias* distinction:

Consider the professional a rhetorician. The purpose of art, says Aristotle, is to give pleasure. Not any kind of pleasure, but the sort that comes from learning. The experience of art is an insight, an illumination of the action being imitated. Rhetoric, on the other hand, is oriented toward the market place. Its purpose is not illumination but persuasion, and its governing concept is that the work produced must be adjusted to the mind of the audience. Rhetorical art succeeds by saying what the audience has secretly known (or wanted to know) all along. Its language is disguised flattery, its norm fantasy, and its symbols surrogates for unconscious cravings. Given the passionate desire that everyone has to suspend disbelief, almost anything works, as witness the comic book and the exploits of Mike Hammer and James Bond; but some kinds of rhetoric work better than others. [and here Hardison departs sharply from Plato] Just as there is good and bad art, there is good and bad rhetoric.²

Hardison’s essay is somewhat ambiguous on the relative value of art and rhetoric. At times he seems to be saying, like Socrates,

that rhetoric is an inferior mode of creation: ("Nobody would seriously compare Hitchcock to a dozen directors and producers who have used the film medium as an art form"). But, on the other hand he seems to suggest that rhetoric, though different from art is equally valid: "If [Hitchcock's thrillers] are rhetoric and shaped by the needs of the audience, they are just as significant as art and just as necessary."³ This uncertainty about the aesthetic value of Hitchcock's work leads Hardison to a particular mode of analysis of his films. Instead of treating them as independent works, Hardison examines Hitchcock's thrillers as embodiments of the middle-class mind of the twentieth century. "Because Hitchcock has continued to produce successful thrillers for over thirty years, his films are a kind of contour map of the middle-class mind during this period."⁴

This approach implies that the work of "rhetorical" or popular artists like Hitchcock is successful because it embodies or expresses the values of the popular mind in a particularly effective or direct fashion. This assumption, shared by many scholars and critics of the popular arts, has made social and psychological analysis the dominant mode of interpretation and analysis in dealing with this kind of material. Thus, the distinction between high art and popular art has led to two quite different modes of discussion: high art is commonly treated as aesthetic structure or individual vision; the popular arts are studied as social and psychological data.

There is certainly some validity to this practice if we assume that what is popular embodies cultural attitudes to a greater extent than that which is not. However, such an approach does have some problems. First of all, what is popular at any given time is not all "rhetorical" art. Indeed, as Frank Luther Mott's study of best-sellers has shown, many novels which we would call high art have over a longer period of years, sold as well as many ephemeral best-sellers.⁵ This is perhaps not as clear in the case of the newer media of film and TV. Nonetheless, films which belong unquestionably to the category of high art—e.g. the works of Bergman, Fellini, Antonioni and Godard—have been quite popular. Correspondingly, many films clearly designed solely for rhetorical purposes, have not been successful. Thus, there is no necessary connection between popularity and those qualities of a work which Hardison designates as rhetorical. The fact that a work is designed to please the audience, clearly does not mean that it will become popular. Otherwise, most Hollywood films

and pulp novels would achieve the popularity of Hitchcock at his best, and works created primarily with a view to an artistic expression of the creator's vision would inevitably fail.

A second difficult question is what psychological process or mechanism makes the expression of commonly held values popular with the public. Is it simply that we find comfort in repetitions of received opinions? But if this is the case, why go to all the trouble of constructing a fiction; if this theory of popularity is correct we should all be satisfied with Fourth of July Speeches and sermons from the church of our choice. Moreover, if we look at some of the most successful popular works, they seem as much to contradict popular views as to affirm them. One of the strongest middle-class values is a respect for law and order and a high valuation of stability and respectable enterprise. Yet in Hitchcock's thrillers, respectable citizens become involved in situations of peril and intrigue where the established machinery of law and order is helpless. Perhaps this is vicarious adventure which springs from the impulse to escape an overly stable and restrictive life. Then Hitchcock is successful because he reflects basic conflicts in the middle-class mind. This is essentially the way Hardison views Hitchcock: his films embody the subconscious need to engage in adventures without destroying the framework of reason and stability:

No matter how we may plot our situation on the charts of reason, the subconscious needs to view life as an epic quest through alien territories and the domains of strange gods, underwritten by providence and with the payoff guaranteed. Hitchcock's thrillers present this fantasy in palatable modern guise.⁶

But if this means that Hitchcock's thrillers constitute an exploration and resolution of the complex conflicts between the conscious mind and the devious subconscious, how do we differentiate this from art. Why is the insight into human life produced by such a work of art any less than that of say, Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Hardison would reply, I think, that Hitchcock's exploration and resolution is more formulaic, more stereotyped than Dostoyevsky's. But, if this is the case, are we not just saying that Hitchcock is an inferior artist? In these terms is not the distinction between high art and popular art simply a means of evading the obvious conclusion that most popular artists are inferior artists, no matter how much pleasure they may give.

Several other difficulties attend the definition of the popular arts along the Platonic lines of truth vs. rhetoric. Are we then to say that high art is not rhetorical, does not depend for much of its effectiveness on a skillful manipulation of audience attitudes and feelings. If all art depends on emotional effect to some extent just where do we draw the line between rhetoric and art? To some extent this depends on the audience and not on the innate character of the work. To a person without much education or sophistication, a soap opera may well be an important source of truths about life. Is it then entirely rhetorical for such a person? Moreover, it is a notorious fact that the popular art of one century often becomes the high art of another. Shakespeare and Dickens certainly thought of themselves as popular artists writing for a heterogeneous public and the media in which they worked were the mass media of their day. Today their status as classics is unchallenged. Does this mean that *Hamlet* and *Bleak House* have been transmuted by some mysterious process from rhetoric into art? From audience flattery into illumination?

I find it impossible to answer these questions very satisfactorily and I invariably run into such mare's nests whenever I try to separate the high arts and the popular arts in this fashion. I recommend that we turn our attention to the work of a different school of film critics, who have managed to surmount this problem. This group is known as the *auteur* critics after a term first given wide currency in an essay by the French critic and director Francois Truffaut.⁷ To understand the particular emphases of *auteur* criticism one must grasp certain aspects of the critical background against which it developed. For many years serious film criticism followed the model of literary criticism by concentrating most of its attention on films which could unmistakably be conceived as total works of art. This meant in practice films which were controlled from inception to final editing by a single artist and which could be viewed as original creations with serious rather than entertaining intentions. Naturally such criticism largely rejected the output of the American film industry where, with the exception of a few rare films like Welles' *Citizen Kane*, the product was the result of many conflicting judgments and the criteria of entertainment commonly played a greater part than the ideals of art. The *auteur* critics, finding artistic value and interest in the Hollywood film, have created a new mode

of analysis based on the individual stylistic characteristics and thematic interests of the director. Their criticism has demonstrated that despite the commercial orientation and artistic limitations of the American film industry, certain directors of great ability—men like Hitchcock, Welles, Renoir, Lang, Ford, Hawks and Cukor—have been able to make significant individual artistic statements. The crucial difference in the approach of the *auteur* critics from that of contemporary critics of literature lies in the way the artistic statement is defined.⁸ Where the new critic defines the artistic statement in terms of the total unity and power of the individual work, the essential reference of the *auteur* critic is to the *auteur's* complete work; the artistic statement is sought not in the complex totality of the individual work, but in those aspects of the individual film which are clearly related to the overall stylistic or thematic preoccupation of the *auteur*. Indeed, for the *auteur* critic, many elements of the work, including some of its most obvious characteristics, may have to be set aside in order to discover the *auteur's* statement:

One essential corollary of the theory as it has been developed is the discovery that the defining characteristics of an author's [*auteur's*] work are not necessarily those which are most readily apparent. The purpose of criticism thus becomes to uncover behind the superficial contrasts of subject and treatment a hard core of basic and often recondite motifs. The pattern formed by these motifs—is what gives an [*auteur's*] work its particular structure, both defining it internally and distinguishing one body of work from another.⁹

An example will clarify what these somewhat enigmatic statements mean. The most obvious defining characteristic of most of the films of Hitchcock is their thrilling, frequently melodramatic, plots presenting situations of international intrigue and crime. These plots are, for the most part, derived from the work of others—many of Hitchcock's films have been based on novels by such writers as John Buchan, Somerset Maugham, Daphne du Maurier, Patricia Highsmith, Cornell Woolrich and even Joseph Conrad. In turn many aspects of the way these stories are realized in Hitchcock's films relate to popular traditions of the thriller and the romance. Yet, despite all these limitations on his originality, limitations typical of those imposed on any director working in Hollywood, Hitchcock remains a highly distinctive and unique director. In what consists

this uniqueness? According to the *auteur* critics the answer to this question lies along two lines: a) the special technical cinematic competence and unique mastery of visual style and editing which Hitchcock brings to his work and b) the way in which he is able to use conventional materials of many different kinds to explore certain moral and artistic themes which have always fascinated him. Anyone who has seen a Hitchcock film is probably at least unconsciously aware of one recurrent motif: the peculiar intensity of attention which is focussed on particular details or objects. Hitchcock's settings are commonly rather austere; even when they represent lavish ballrooms or luxury hotels, they are almost never cluttered with objects or rich with decor. But within this general austerity certain small details and objects, usually very ordinary things, become highly charged with significance and ambiguity: a glass of milk which may or may not be poisoned, a key, a newspaper, a man's hand, these ordinary objects have a way of suddenly becoming symbols of something sinister and terrible. This pattern of the innocent becoming sinister or evil is clearly a basic form of Hitchcock's imagination and few of his most successful films fail to embody it both in detail and in the larger patterns of the story. Film after film is based on the plight of an ordinary person suddenly caught up in a web of intrigue and crime and forced to undergo the experiences of guilt and terror. Those incidents from Hitchcock's films which haunt the mind invariably bear this quality of the sudden transformation of the ordinary into the terrifying: the shower murder in *Psycho* where a ghastly murderous figure suddenly turns up in the most banal and ordinary motel bathroom; the crop-dusting plane in *North by Northwest* which suddenly becomes a murderous instrument, or to take a much earlier example, the tweedy country gentleman in *The 39 Steps* who is suddenly revealed as the leader of the enemy spies when the hero notices that he has a portion of one finger missing. Or think what Hitchcock has so often made of train journeys, commonly experiences of mild boredom and relaxation. Such examples could be multiplied indefinitely, but these should be enough to suggest the presence of basic patterns derived from stylistic and thematic preoccupations which Hitchcock is able to impose on the most diverse and conventional kind of story material.

Because it is concerned not with the unity of the total work, but with those elements which show the individual mark of the

director, *auteur* criticism has been very fruitful in dealing with those films which have been created as part of a mass entertainment industry. The *auteur* approach also has the value of ducking the problematic art-rhetoric distinction by simply ignoring those aspects of films which aim at manipulating audience emotions and attitudes and concentrating on the director's style and themes. Far from distinguishing between "rhetorical" film-makers like Hitchcock and serious artists, the *auteur* critics like to insist on the authentic artistry of a Hitchcock and frequently remind us of the analogy between the "commerical" Hollywood cinema and the equally "popular" Elizabethan theater. Robin Wood draws out this comparison in a statement which directly opposes Hardison's comments on the nature of Hitchcock's films:

Hitchcock's films are—usually—popular: indeed some of his best films . . . are among his *most* popular. From this arises a widespread assumption that, however "clever," technically brilliant," "amusing," "gripping," etc. they may be, they can't be taken seriously. They *must* be, if not absolutely bad, at least fatally flawed from a serious standpoint. And it is easy enough for those who take this line to point to all manner of "concessions to the box office," fatal compromises with a debased popular taste: Hitchcock returns repeatedly to the suspense-thriller for his material; he generally uses established stars who are "personalities" first and actors second; there is a strong element of humour in his work, "gags" and "comic relief" which effectively undermine any pretensions to sustained seriousness of tone. To one whose training has been primarily literary, these objections have a decidedly familiar ring. One recalls that "commerical"—and at the same time intellectually disreputable—medium the Elizabethan drama; one thinks of those editors who have wished to remove the Porter scene from *Macbeth* because its tone of bawdy comedy is incompatible with the tragic atmosphere. . . . What one does not want either Shakespeare or Hitchcock deprived of is precisely the richness their work derives from the sense of living contact with a wide popular audience. To wish that Hitchcock's films were like those of Bergman or Antonioni is like wishing that Shakespeare had been like Corneille.¹⁰

Like many new, partly developed critical methods, the *auteur* approach has been highly susceptible to faddism. Some of its judgments can leave those outside the magic circle of conviction gasping: "Charlton Heston is an axiom of the cinema." Apart from its occasional excesses, however, the *auteur* approach has produced the

most interesting and systematic body of film criticism being written today and therefore merits our attention as a possible model for the analysis and interpretation of popular culture generally.

Auteur criticism has effectively widened our range of awareness in the film, because the *auteur* critic's concept of artistry corresponds with the kind of creativity most successful under the circumstances of popular culture. If we look a little more closely at the concept of the *auteur*, we will see how this is the case.

According to most proponents of the theory the *auteur* is not one of those few film directors who insist upon absolute originality, who create their own material, write their own scripts and thus create total works of art without any compromises for the sake of commercial success or mass audience tastes. On the other hand, the *auteur* is not a mere technician who simply transmits to film the script which an omnipotent producer hands him. Instead, the *auteur* is an individual creator who works within a framework of existing materials, conventional structures, and commercial imperatives, but who nonetheless has the imagination, the integrity, and the skill to express his own artistic personality in the way he sets forth the conventional material he works with. In other words, the successful *auteur* lies somewhere along the continuum between original creation and performance. He is not an original artist because he is an interpreter of materials or of conventional structures largely created by others, but he is more than a performer because he recreates these conventions to the point that they manifest at least in part the patterns of his own style and vision.

Thus, the analogy between Shakespeare and a film *auteur* like Hitchcock is not totally absurd. Like Hitchcock, Shakespeare worked in a popular, commercial medium and accepted the limitations of that medium. He, too, made extensive use of conventional material; as we know from the many studies of his sources, most of Shakespeare's plays were adaptations of existing stories. His work is full of the stage conventions of his time and emphasizes many of the same popular elements on which Hitchcock has fastened: sensational crimes and international intrigues, madness and violence, mystery and romance. Moreover, it is not inconceivable that like Shakespeare's plays, Hitchcock's films will make the transition from the popular art of one century to the high art of another. Still, I find it a little hard to accept the Shakespeare-Hitchcock analogy with the same

conviction as a good *auteur* critic like Robin Wood. Wood, I think, might agree that Shakespeare does far more to transform his materials and thus to create totally unique works of art than Hitchcock does. But, it seems to me there is also something of a theoretic as well as a qualitative distinction here. The distinction I have in mind is a result of the difference between contemporary popular dramatic conventions, and those of the Elizabethan stage. The tradition of the contemporary thriller, which Hitchcock operates within is a far more specialized and restrictive tradition than that of the Elizabethan tragedy. For one thing, the thriller is the result of a longer process of cultural evolution and is consequently more rigid and refined in its conventional limits. In addition, the thriller is generally conceived of as a form which, for purposes of entertainment, restricts the depth and range of emotion which it arouses. While the Elizabethan theater was also devoted to entertainment, it is evident from the plays themselves—and not just Shakespeare's—that the nature and kind of emotion which could be represented was richer and more complex. Elizabethan tragedy arouses pity and fear and brings them to their fullest expression before dismissing them; the thriller arouses these emotions, but never fully because it restricts their expression by relief when we see that the hero and heroine will be saved from a terrible fate and by a displacement of pity and fear into terror and suspense. Even in a film which verges on tragedy like *Psycho*, Hitchcock is very careful to restrict our sense of identification with the heroine by showing her yielding to a temptation so petty that the viewer pities her plight, but does not feel the tragic sense of identification. Then, in the murder scene our emotion is displaced from a specific feeling for the heroine to a more generalized sense of terror and the uncanny, a feeling which is immediately powerful but less deep and lasting in its impact. This is, of course, a function of the conception of entertainment as a highly controlled experience which puts us through an intense series of emotions which immediately dissipate upon conclusion of the performance. Working within the limitations of contemporary conceptions of entertainment, Hitchcock must strive for an artistic effect which is less rich and deep but more tightly focussed and controlled than that cultivated by the Elizabethan dramatists.

Thus, there is some validity to the kind of distinction O. B. Hardison makes between Hitchcock and directors like Eisenstein,

Bergman and Fellini. But this is not a contrast between art and rhetoric, but between different kinds of art. The art of the free creator is the making of a unique and integrated work which in its totality embodies a new conception of art and of the world. The art of the *auteur* is that of turning a conventional and generally known and appreciated artistic formula into a medium of personal expression while at the same time giving us a version of the formula which is satisfying because it fulfills our basic expectations. As noted earlier, the art of the *auteur* lies somewhere between creation and performance. It differs from original creation not in being more rhetorical, but in sharing certain of the characteristics of performance. It is this aspect which relates it to popular or mass culture.

Hall and Whannel point out in their interesting book on the popular arts that these are above all arts in which performance plays a central role. They ascribe this fact to two conditions of popular art: first, the essential conventionality which makes it widely understood and appreciated by places stressing the repetition or performance of something already known rather than the creation of something new; second, the need for a quality of personal style, since among essentially similar versions of a formula the one that manifests most clearly a sense of individual style will be most attractive and gratifying:

Popular art is essentially a conventional art which restates in an intense form, values and attitudes already known; which reassures and reaffirms, but brings to this something of the surprise of art as well as the shock of recognition. Such art has in common with folk art the genuine contact between audience and performer: but it differs from folk art in that it is an individualized art, the art of the known performer. The audience-as-community has come to depend on the performer's skills, and on the force of a personal style, to articulate its common values and interpret its experience.¹¹

The concept of the *auteur* has made available to us, at least in terms of the art of film, an effective means of discussing the kind of art which Hall and Whannel describe in the passage just quoted. Though it is just beginning to develop an articulated method, *auteur* criticism has already given valuable examples of how to define and analyze the personal within the conventional in the work of such directors as Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, John Ford, George Cukor

and many others. It seems to me that with some changes for the different artistic media, the *auteur* approach should be a profitable one for other areas of popular culture. In popular music, for example, one can see the difference between pop groups which simply perform without creating that personal statement which marks the *auteur*, and highly creative groups like the Beatles who make of their performances a complex work of art. The methods of the *auteur* approach—examination of the entire body of work for recurrent stylistic and thematic patterns rather than the isolated analysis of the individual work in its unique totality—should prove a fruitful method for defining those patterns which mark the Beatles as *auteurs* and thereby make more articulate for us the special values of their art. The same method should prove useful in the analysis of highly conventionalized types of popular literature like the detective story, the Western, or the spy thriller. These literary types like films, are dominantly repetitions of conventional formulas which have a simple entertainment function but little lasting interest or value. However, there are always a few writers who, without losing sight of the conventional structures of the story type they work within, still manage to create a distinctive personal art. These are the *auteurs* of popular literature; writers like Raymond Chandler, Ross Macdonald, Dorothy Sayers, and even Ian Fleming, whose personal performances stand out from the mass of mystery fiction. As in the case of pop music and the conventional films, it is not so much the unique totality of the individual work, but the artistic dialectic between *auteur* and convention, the drama of how the convention is shaped to manifest the *auteur's* intention, that excites our interest and admiration.

NOTES

¹O.B. Hardison, "The Rhetoric of Hitchcock's Thrillers" in W. R. Robinson (ed.) *Man and the Movies* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1969) pp. 137-138.

²Hardison, p. 138.

³Hardison, p. 152.

⁴Hardison, p. 150.

⁵Cf. Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes*.

⁶Hardison, p. 152.

⁷Of the various general accounts of the *auteur* theory, the most useful are those in Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* and Raymond Durgnat,

Films and Feeling. The reader should also consult the criticism of Andre Bazin in *What is Cinema?* and Andrew Sarris in *American Cinema* for discussions of the *auteur* approach. I have also been helped in my understanding of the subject by unpublished papers by Charles Flynn and Christian Koch.

⁸Of the *auteur* critics who have written full-length studies of major directors, I have found the work of Robin Wood, who has written substantial monographs on Hitchcock, Howard Hawks and Arthur Penn most interesting. Some of the best *auteur* criticism remains unfortunately untranslated from the French such as the excellent study of John Ford by Jean Mitry.

⁹Geoffrey Nowell-Smith quoted in Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969) p. 80.

¹⁰Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films* (New York: A. S. Barnes Co., 1969) pp. 9-10.

¹¹Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), p. 66.

John G. Cawelti is Professor of English and Chairman of the Committee on General Studies in the Humanities at the University of Chicago. He is the author of *Apostles of the Self-Made Man*, *The Six-Gun Mystique*, and various articles in *American Studies* and *Popular Culture*.

On Chappaquiddick Island
when the car fell
and polluted the
stream

and took someone's life
or two
and gathered the crowds
and started the mouths

from: *Black Swamp Review* 3/4

CRYSTAL POOL by Dick Fillion

and manufactured the tales
and pointed the fingers
and fell the gavels
that

would in years
might
break the back
or tarnish the eagle's feathers

in the house that Jack built.