

1834 JK13

Thur Fri Sat
✓

INTERNATIONAL CINEMA

PRESENTS:

LA
TRAVIATA

Director: Mario Lanfranchi

The physical beauty of Anna Moffo, celebrated soprano of the Metropolitan, is, of course, a rarity in the world of opera. Linked to her vocal and dramatic attainments, it makes Miss Moffo a "natural" for the translation of an operatic classic to the screen. "LA TRAVIATA," whose immortal Verdi score has a libretto based on "The Lady of the Camellias," the romantic drama of Alexandre Dumas fils, thus embellishes the story of a woman who really lived, and whose grave, in a Paris cemetery, is even today a kind of shrine. The orchestra and chorus of the Rome Opera, and Miss Moffo's co-players, Gino Bechi and Franco Bonisolli, make authoritative contributions to this important film version of a great musical love drama.

LA
STRADA

Directed by Federico Fellini; title translation: "The Road;" screenplay by Fellini, Ennio Flaiano, and Tullio Pinelli; photography by Otello Martelli; music by Nino Rota. With Giulietta Masina, Anthony Quinn, Richard Basehart, Aldo Silvani. Italian dialog with English subtitles.

"The final sequence, as Zampano learns long afterwards of her death, and staggers down to the twilight beach and claws the sand and sobs . . . is one of the most compulsive displays of emotion in Fellini's cinema. LA STRADA is filmed with an eye to visual distress that never falters. When "The Fool" has been killed, the whole landscape seems to mourn with Gelsomina; the snowy fields and roads reflect her grief . . . throughout this picaresque film, Nino Rota's famous tune comes and goes like romance or like a tantalizing ideal."

—Peter Cowie, *Seventy Years of Cinema*

"An unforgettable experience . . . a picture to place among the deathless masterpieces. Giulietta Masina's pantomime has the beauty and expressiveness of a clear pool . . . it is a performance of astonishing power, for it not only expresses perfectly the weak and wandering mind but also the world's great dazzling beauty."

—Archer Winsten, *New York Post*

January 11-13, 1973, 184 JKB

Thursday	"La Traviata"	4:30 & 8:20
	"La Strada"	6:20
Friday	"La Traviata"	6:30
	"La Strada"	4:30 & 8:20
Saturday	"La Traviata"	4:30 & 8:20
	"La Strada"	6:20

DOUBLE FEATURE PRIVILEGES ALL THREE NIGHTS

75¢ at door or International Cinema card
admits to both features any evening.

more incisively comic it would have been had Alexander been portrayed as an irascible churl who didn't give two cents for nature and loathed kids. W.C. Fields knew how to treat the same theme with proper respect; the mere thought of that master idler is enough to set the flaccidity of *Alexander* in perspective . . . All the same, Philippe Noiret is an able and appealing actor who makes the most of a poor bargain. There is some visual fun, too, as in the system of pulleys Alexander rigs up over his bed to bring sausages, wine and other goodies into reach with a minimum of effort. Those who insist on having movies with a 'positive outlook,' and those who think pictures like *Bambi* are simply adorable, may find *Alexander* just the thing for a family outing." *Alan M. Kriegsman* (7/24/69).

NEWSWEEK. "Aux plumes! is the battle cry of an endearingly silly French farce called *Alexander*. To the feathers! Hit the hay! And not for any fashionable sexual sports, since this may be the least fashionable film of the year, but for sweet, solitary sleep broken up only by long stretches of supine idleness. Directed with great zest and remarkable perseverance by Yves Robert, this celebration of leisure's pleasures stars Philippe Noiret as a henpecked farmer . . . The plot probably sounds square enough to head your current list of must-miss movies, but you'll be missing some good laughs and an uncommon lot of smiling. *Alexander* really is square, but harmlessly, shamelessly so. How stern can you be with a comedy that's filled with photographs of birds, fish, fields of wheat, sunflowers and a perk-eared mutt who does backflips for the hell of it? While the life-loving theme is straight out of Jean Renoir, the style is early Pagnol. Nobody makes movies like this any more, which is why it's such an unexpected pleasure. A yawn alone is contagious, but a smiling yawn is infectious." *Joseph Morgenstern* (4/28/69).

January 18-20, 1973, 184 JKB

Thursday	"Alexander"	4:30 & 8:05
	"Martin Fierro"	6:15
Friday	"Alexander"	6:20
	"Martin Fierro"	4:30 & 8:05
Saturday	"Alexander"	4:30 & 8:05
	"Martin Fierro"	6:15

DOUBLE FEATURE PRIVILEGES ALL THREE NIGHTS

75¢ at door or International Cinema card admits to both features any evening.

ALEXANDER

A Cinema V Release in Beautiful Eastmancolor



"The freshest, funniest picture so far this year."

- NBC Monitor

"A deliciously happy comedy. Very now!"

- Judith Crist

"'Alexander' spells pleasure."

- Playboy.

ALEXANDER (Very Happy Alexander)

FRENCH (1968).* Original Title: *ALEXANDRE LE BIEN-HEUREUX* (Very Happy Alexander). A Co-Production of GUEVILLE FILMS, MADELEINE FILMS and COLOMBE FILMS. Released in the U.S. by CINEMA V. Executive Producer: LEON CARRE. Producers: DANIELE DELORME and YVES ROBERT. Director: YVES ROBERT. Screenplay and Adaptation: YVES ROBERT and PIERRE LEVY-CORTI. Based on an Original Short Story by YVES ROBERT; Dialogue by YVES ROBERT. Photography: RENE MATHELIN. Music Composed and Conducted by VLADIMIR COSMA. Editor: ANDREE WERLIN. Art Direction: JACQUES D'OVIDIO. Sound: GUY ROPHE. English Subtitles by NOELLE GILLMOR. Eastman Color. 94 Mins. [G].

Alexander PHILIPPE NOIRET
La Grande FRANCOISE BRION
Agathe MARLENE JOBERT
Angele Sanguin ANTOINETTE MOYA
Sanguin PAUL LE PERSON
Colibert PIERRE RICHARD
La Fringale JEAN CARMET

Synopsis

Alexander is a hulking and good-natured peasant who would dearly love to devote all his time to sleeping and doing absolutely nothing. But his shrewish wife, known as La Grande, forces him to do all the chores on their 300-acre farm, constantly ending his reveries by either snapping her fingers or giving him orders over a walkie-talkie. Then one day Alexander becomes a widower when his wife and in-laws are killed in an automobile crash. Free at last, he takes to his bed, refuses to budge from the house, and trains his faithful dog to do the marketing. Gradually, Alexander's philosophy that man was meant to relax and enjoy life, not work, wins him a few converts and the remaining villagers decide that something must be done before laziness reaches epidemic proportions. Although Alexander does leave his house when his dog temporarily disappears, he still refuses to return to work and devotes his waking hours to fishing, swimming and drinking wine in the open fields. In time he finds a companion in Agathe, a lazy village girl, who eagerly shares his happy-go-lucky life. After they have decided to marry, Agathe discovers the amount of property Alexander owns and she is soon considering the fortune that could be made by developing the 300 acres. On the day of the wedding, Alexander is kneeling at Agathe's side when he suddenly hears his dog barking outside the church. As he turns his head, Agathe snaps her fingers, a la La Grande, and Alexander leaps to his feet. Saying "No, no," he backs out of the church and — still a free spirit — runs off with his dog.

Critique

SUMMARY. The majority of critics agreed with the Chicago Sun-Times' Kathleen Morner that "the freshness with which this simple tale is told will delight all free spirits and would-be free spirits." Reviewing from the San Francisco Film Festival, the Chronicle's Paine Knickerbocker called *Alexander* "that delightful rarity among festival films, a sunny comedy which achieves distinction merely through its most felicitous manner," and the N.Y. Daily News' Ann Guarino added that "the rustic comedy probably will strike a responsive chord in most men — especially the hen-pecked type." For the N.Y. Times' Howard Thompson, the "star" and "funniest thing" about "this beguiling little picture" was "the hero's guardian, a scrappy, four-legged performer known simply as Dog." While the Los Angeles Times' Charles Champ- lin mildly qualified his praise of Yves Robert's film by calling it "a very commercial movie, a slice of invention rather more than a slice of life," he nonetheless felt "it has those qualities of warmth and charm which are always rare and welcome." Of the few critics to express major reservations, Variety's 'Mosk' noted that this "bucolic ode to laziness" is "reminiscent of Marcel Pagnol's pictures, Mack Sennett, Jean Vigo's poetic *L'Atalante* and even Jean Renoir's *Boudu Saved from Drowning* (FF '67). But the warmth, dizzying pace and invention, poetic insights and charms of those originals are not quite achieved in this easygoing series of clever sketches which do not always have a fluid, forward drive and cumulative comic and satirical pitch." The Village Voice's Andrew Sarris further complained that the central character "is as much slothful and asexual as nonconformist, and thus it doesn't cost the character anything to follow his own course." While there were these few reservations expressed about the film's merit, there were none voiced about the acting of Philippe Noiret and the performing of the mongrel dog — "one of the great scene-stealers of our time" (Champlin).

Critical Consensus: 7 favorable, 3 mixed, 1 negative.

NEW YORK. "Thankfully some of the eternal movie-making verities don't change. One of them is that there's a kind of bucolic comedy that the French film boys excelled at a generation or two ago that is still with us, and in a week where the clichés have felled us there's mind-to-mind resuscitation in *Very Happy Alexander*, a very happy movie indeed. Much in the tradition of such comedies as *La Kermesse Heroique*

and *The Baker's Wife*, the film is a very 'now' one in style and technique (to a purpose and not for its own or the *auteur's* sake) and, in fact, in theme. It's about a guy who cops out on the Establishment and on the affluent society, deciding that there's more to living than work and the acquisition of money. What takes it out of the frenetic youth-bag, hyper-sexed bit we keep being crammed into by the sexploaters is that the copper-out is a middle-aged farmer . . . Co-produced with his wife, Daniele Delorme, and co-authored from his own original short story, director Yves Robert's *Very Happy Alexander* emerges as an old-style French comedy, its laughter derived from its people and its beauties from their exposition, and a new-style film in its quick-cut suggestive techniques, its subtle moralities and its theme. Mr. Robert, who gave us *The War of the Buttons* [FF '63], has that special way with children that saves them from the 'cutes' and a way with village 'types' that emphasizes their typicality without caricature. Philippe Noiret is perfect as Alexander; Francoise Brion is the most luscious of shrikes as his wife, and Marlene Jobert a toothsome bit as the nearly-green-eyed girl. Her transformation at the sniff of affluence is the ultimate comment on the acquisitive female; her through-the-door courtship with Alexander the quintessence of eternal femininity. If the film sags a bit for those with a low bucolic-paced-humor quotient, rest assured it snaps back to a biting finale. And besides, Noelle Gillmor, undoubtedly the subtitler supreme, has finally come up with the only adequate translation of *merde!* Like the film, it is a very happy inspiration." *Judith Crist* (2/24/69).

WASHINGTON POST. "Ever since someone first claimed that hard work was virtuous, men have racked their brains for ways to avoid it altogether. Now, from France, comes the latest film embodiment of this fantasy . . . As a charter-member of SNORE (Society for the National Obliteration of Responsible Exertion), I think I can appreciate the nobility of the idea as well as the next bloke. I can also, however, recognize a cop-out when I see one. The hero [of this film] is a slacker, all right, and his rebellion is thorough-going. But he's such an obvious goody-goody underneath it all — adored by children and dogs, a friend to butterflies and bulrushes, generous and sweet-tempered. That's just the trouble. Director-scenarist Yves Robert has so loaded his tale down with sugar-coating that all the seditious sting is drained away. Nothing much is left but 'wholesome entertainment,' that is to say, savorless pap. How much

of a word or phrase to characterize persons or situations—is especially skillful. Mann makes abundant use of this musical device throughout the story, and its function is both structural and aesthetic. Characters are made more vivid and meaningful through it, as for example Tonio's father, who is almost never mentioned without reference to "the field-flower in his buttonhole," or Hans and Ingeborg, whose normality and "life" are repeatedly symbolized in the phrase "blond and blue-eyed." Such recurring phrases as "gypsies in a green wagon" play a definite part in giving continuity to thematic elements of the story, just as nostalgia and the sense of reminiscence are heightened by repeated reference to "the old walnut tree, the fountain, and the sea." Similarly, the reoccurrence of a quadrille scene and the reappearance of a Hans and Ingeborg constitute an extended use of the leitmotiv.

Tonio's stay at the Danish resort is the occasion of his at last coming to terms with his dilemma. Although he is deeply moved as of old, and stirred with momentary longing, when he sees another young Hans and Ingeborg at the dance, he is no longer completely envious of the fair, blue-eyed breed. He has found a balance between the burgher and the Bohemian, between "spirit and life," and he is reconciled to his own middle-way position. He feels increasingly that for the artist such a position is tenable and that from it he may act as a commentator and mediator without identifying himself exclusively with either extreme. Indeed, he comes to see that his creative force finds much of its strength in the play of tensions which his dual nature and divided sympathies have brought about. In his passionately felt yet quietly beautiful letter to Lisabeta, which concludes the story, Tonio gives moving expression to the insight he has achieved. If it seems in part youthfully romantic and lyrical, it is yet resolute and perceptive, and full of quiet promise.

January 25-27, 1973, 184 JKB

Thursday	"Tonio Kroeger"	4:30 & 7:50
	"Uncle Vanya"	6:05
Friday	"Tonio Kroeger"	6:15
	"Uncle Vanya"	4:30 & 7:50
Saturday	"Tonio Kroeger"	4:30 & 7:50
	"Uncle Vanya"	6:05

DOUBLE FEATURE PRIVILEGES ALL THREE NIGHTS

75¢ at door or International Cinema card
admits to both features any evening.

TONIO KRÖGER

GERMAN-FRENCH (1964). A Co-Production of SEITZ-FILM-AUFBAU (Göttingen), HERBESTELLT VON DER THALIA FILM (Berlin) and MONDEX-PROCINEX FILMS (Paris). Released in the U.S. by PATHE CONTEMPORARY FILMS. Director: ROLF THIELE. Screenplay: ERIKA MANN and ENNIO FLAIANO; Based on the Novel by THOMAS MANN. Photography: WOLF WIRTH. Music: ROLF WILHELM. Art Direction: FRANZ SEITZ. (No Other Credits Available.) English Subtitles. 90 Mins.

Tonio Kroger JEAN-CLAUDE BRIALY
Lisaveta Iwanowna NADJA TILLER
Konsul Kroger WERNER HINZ
Frau Kroger ANAID IPLICIAN
Herr Seehaase RUDOLF FORSTER
Ein Kaufmann WALTER GILLER
Knaak THEO LINGEN
Eine Dame ADELIN WAGNER
Adalbert Prantl BEPPO BREM
Inge Holm ROSEMARIE LUCKE
Mädchen ELISABETH KLETTENHAUER
Young Tonio Kroger MATHEEU CARRIERE
and
Policeman Peterson GERT FROBE

It is now generally agreed, among critics, that Thomas Mann has been from the first an unusually self-conscious writer, most of whose works contain in some degree portraits of the artist. Even to the reader unfamiliar with Mann's life and works, *Tonio Kröger* evidences a lyric and personal quality which belongs most appropriately to autobiography. Spiritually, and in many respects historically, Tonio's background and development are those of young Thomas Mann, and *Tonio Kröger*, written in 1903, reveals Mann more nearly at full length than anything he had done up to that time.

The circumstances of Thomas Mann's background, birth, and early life closely parallel those of Tonio Kröger. Born in the north German city of Lübeck in 1875, Mann was the son of a prosperous grain merchant and his partly Brazilian wife. Like Tonio's father, Consul Kröger, the elder Mann was of the patrician bourgeoisie: conservative, fastidious, highly respected, a senator of his town. Similarly, Mann's mother was the model for Tonio's: dark, musical, southern, "different from the other ladies in the town." Whatever traits he inherited from his mother, Mann remained by heredity and environment predominantly bourgeois, and he has always been keenly aware of the significance of his origin. In middle life he wrote, "I am the son of the German bourgeoisie and never have I disowned the spiritual traditions which belong to my origin." It is Mann's awareness of this bourgeois quality of his character which unquestionably lies behind and intensifies his natural inclination as an artist to inquire into the function of art and especially the relationship of the artist to the world about him. Writing in 1936 of some of his early stories, which he termed "the Tonio Kröger group," Mann confirms this tendency: "These tales . . . all wear the impress of much melancholy and ironic reflection on the subject of art and the artist: his isolation and equivocal position in

the world of reality, considered socially and metaphysically and as a result of his double bond with nature and spirit."

Tonio Kröger's middle-class heritage and his strong consciousness of it are thus Mann's own, and Tonio's "bad conscience" about his class and vocation, his natural bourgeois suspicion of the artist as abnormal, are those of his creator. For Tonio, as for Mann, the dilemma is one of his dual nature—that of the burgher turned artist—and the sense of isolation the artist feels in a bourgeois society. It is this theme of isolation, of the sensitive, perceptive man in the materialistic, middle-class society, which is predominant in *Tonio Kröger*, as in most of Mann's early works. Such a theme raises fundamental questions concerning the function of art, the place of the artist, and the nature of humanity itself. What are the ways in which Mann, through Tonio, presents these questions, ponders them, and finally seems to achieve at least a partial resolution of them?

There is little that is difficult or obscure about the structure of *Tonio Kröger*. Its action is largely episodic, yet as a whole it has a completeness and symmetry which, along with its youthful lyricism and its employment of the leitmotiv, give it striking musical affinities. Tonio's sense of isolation and inferiority because of his dual nature is brought out clearly in the initial episodes of the story. Hans Hansen is the blond, blue-eyed extrovert, the symbol of "life" for fourteen-year-old Tonio, the "life" of the physical world represented by Hans's love of horses, swimming, and joyous action. For Tonio, even at fourteen, "life" is of the spirit and the intellect; his loves are music and literature, the inner life whose faraway, loved symbols are "the fountain, the old walnut tree, his fiddle, and away in the distance the North Sea." At sixteen Tonio is hopelessly infatuated with Ingeborg Holm, like Hans one of the fair, blue-eyed ones, happy symbols of normality. The sense of isolation and inferiority increases, and Tonio continues to suffer. "To feel stirring within you the wonderful and melancholy play of strange forces and to be aware that those others you yearn for are blithely inaccessible to all that moves you—what a pain is this!" The dancing-school episode, with the foppish dancing master and the embarrassing quadrille, point up Tonio's isolation and his yearning. The breaking up of his old home and his pleasure-seeking sojourn "in large cities and in the south" do not wean him from his northern bourgeois desire for "life," nor do the years of travel and worldly pleasure satisfy his longings of the spirit. Despite the fame he has attained as a writer whose name is "a synonym for excellence," he is still the "lost burgher," the Bohemian with a conscience, tormented by the haunting problem of "the artist and his human aspect."

Still searching, Tonio lives for a time in Munich, pursuing halfheartedly a pseudo-Bohemian existence for which, in its arty and sloppy affectations, he feels little but disgust. An artist and a creator, he is also still Consul Kröger's son: conservative, fastidious, correct. His conversation with Lisabeta, the young Slavic artist, in her studio constitutes perhaps the turning point of the story. In their discussion of what to Tonio is the melancholy position of the artist, he discloses to her his "bad conscience" at being different and apart, his misgivings as to the rightness of his vocation, the painful dilemma he faces in being "called to knowledge without being born to it." Tonio's bitter contemplation of the isolated genius and his enforced separation from "life and love," his rather romanticized self-pity have here something of the Byronic hero, without perhaps the Byronic shrillness and railing against humanity.

Lisabeta, however, points out in her reply that one can consider such questions from the other side, that the artist's profession can be defended, not perhaps by saying anything new, but by reminding oneself of "the purifying and healing influence of letters, . . . the redeeming power of the word," of "literary art as the noblest manifestation of the human mind" and the poet as "the most highly developed of human beings." Perhaps Mann intends some irony here, but Lisabeta asks significantly, "Is it to consider things not curiously [i.e., closely] enough, to consider them so?" In conclusion Lisabeta points out to Tonio the way to his problem's solution; it is she who makes him first realize his true position, that of "a bourgeois on the wrong path, a bourgeois *manqué*." Clearly conscious of this, Tonio is ready now to set out on the road north that leads to his eventual acceptance of his position.

Structurally and thematically, the discussion between Tonio and Lisabeta is crucial. Yet beneath the undeniable grace and charm of Mann's prose the reader may find aesthetic or intellectual positions suggested which are perhaps open to question. Is the artist, as Mann seems to imply, really inferior to the "normal" person, to the good, practical burgher? Should one "not tempt people to read poetry who would much rather read books about the instantaneous photography of horses"? And what of Mann's concept of the artist as a divided man, torn by a dualism of "spirit" versus "life"? Is this perhaps an antithesis more dramatic than real, more arbitrary and confusing than accurate and defensible? To what extent, one may ask, has Tonio created here his own problem in conceiving of "spirit" (the life of art and the intellect) as dead and "life" (that of the "normal" person) as banal and bourgeois? And as a consequence is he conceivably the victim of his own arbitrary ideology? Such questions, whatever the reader's answers to them, are not insignificant, and they would seem to indicate that Mann's story gives rise to some questions of which the author himself was not altogether conscious.

When Tonio leaves Lisabeta and the Bohemian life of Munich, he has still to resolve his dilemma. He is still "doubly isolated"—cut off alike from the burghers and the Bohemians. To attain some kind of acceptance of the artistic life, to render it enduring and if possible productive, is still Tonio's problem. In search of a final solution he turns again northward, toward Lübeck. His visit to his old home is not especially satisfactory, and there is a symbolic irony in his being mistaken in his native city for a swindler and an impostor, one who leads as it were a double life.

In Denmark, by his beloved sea, Tonio revels in the peace and quiet, in "the pure fresh breath of the softly breathing sea." Even the gray, stormy days, when "the waves lowered their heads like bulls and charged against the beach," and his mundane table companions at the little seaside hotel afforded him pleasure and solace. He was finding affirmation of what he had once said to Lisabeta: "That man is very far from being an artist . . . who does not know a longing for the innocent, the simple, and the living, for a little friendship, devotion, familiar human happiness, . . . for the bliss of the commonplace."

In telling of Tonio's stay in Denmark, Mann's descriptive powers are at their best. The close harmony he achieves between Tonio's moods and those of sea, sky, and weather, the lyric wistfulness of Tonio's recollections, the employment of the leitmotiv for bringing out the story's thematic unity—all these find perhaps their finest expression as the tale approaches its end. One of these devices—the leitmotiv, the repeated use

184 JKB

Thur Fri Sat
✓

INTERNATIONAL CINEMA

PRESENTS:

Romeo & Juliet

FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT'S
FIRST FEATURE FILM

The 400 Blows

Ballet

February 22-24, 1973, 184 JKB

French

Thursday	"The 400 Blows"	4:30 & 8:30
	"Romeo and Juliet"	6:15
Friday	"The 400 Blows"	6:45
	"Romeo and Juliet"	4:30 & 8:30
Saturday	"The 400 Blows"	4:40 & 8:30
	"Romeo and Juliet"	6:15

DOUBLE FEATURE PRIVILEGES ALL THREE NIGHTS
75¢ at door or International Cinema card
admits to both features any evening.

The 400 Blows

First and foremost of the New Wave masterpieces is this moving story of a young boy turned outcast. Not loved at home or wanted at school, he sinks into a private and fugitive existence that leads to reform school. Actually the autobiography of Truffaut's childhood, THE 400 BLOWS has now been re-edited by him into a new and never-before-seen version.

"Brilliant . . . Tremendously Meaningful."
NEW YORK TIMES

"One of the Great Timeless French Pictures."
NEW YORK POST

"A Touching Unforgettable Drama!"
CUE MAGAZINE

STORY

Antoine, aged 12, knows that his "father" married his mother only after his own illegitimate birth. He knows, too, that his mother is not faithful to his father, and that neither are particularly interested in him. Antoine and best friend Rene play hookey, giving as excuse his mother's death. When his parents, both alive, arrive at the school, the lie is revealed, and his usually gentle father slaps him.

Afraid to return home, he commences a life of hiding and petty thievery. He attempts to steal a typewriter from his father's office, is caught, and is jailed with drunkards, thieves, and prostitutes. His parents say they cannot cope with him and turn him over to be sent to reform school.

Life at the reform school is regimented and lacking in human warmth. He receives a visit from his mother only to be assaulted for causing the loss of his father's job. Afterwards he has a chance to escape and takes it. The guards pursue him to the edge of the sea where he pauses, feet in the water, trapped. The scene freezes into a still photograph.

COMMENT

"A cinema that brilliantly and strikingly reveals the explosion of a fresh creative talent . . . Here is a picture that encourages an exciting refreshment of faith in films."
New York Times

"THE 400 BLOWS" brings us one of those great timeless French pictures that wring your heart with their beauty, truth, and despair. This is a living, breathing, fascinating story which carries significant messages for the world today."
New York Post

"Like everything else in this remarkable picture, it goes right to the core of the subject. It is the first feature-length film by one of France's younger directors, Francois Truffaut, and marks him as a director of considerable skill but, more important, an artist with a sensitive grasp of the character and quality of the contemporary world . . . A picture every one with a serious concern for fine films will not want to miss."
Herald Tribune

The 400 Blows

First and foremost of the New Wave masterpieces is this moving story of a young boy turned outcast. Not loved at home or wanted at school, he sinks into a private and fugitive existence that leads to reform school. Actually the autobiography of Truffaut's childhood, THE 400 BLOWS has now been re-edited by him into a new and never-before-seen version.

"Brilliant . . . Tremendously Meaningful."
NEW YORK TIMES

"One of the Great Timeless French Pictures."
NEW YORK POST

"A Touching Unforgettable Drama!"
CUE MAGAZINE

STORY

Antoine, aged 12, knows that his "father" married his mother only after his own illegitimate birth. He knows, too, that his mother is not faithful to his father, and that neither are particularly interested in him. Antoine and best friend Rene play hookey, giving as excuse his mother's death. When his parents, both alive, arrive at the school, the lie is revealed, and his usually gentle father slaps him.

Afraid to return home, he commences a life of hiding and petty thievery. He attempts to steal a typewriter from his father's office, is caught, and is jailed with drunkards, thieves, and prostitutes. His parents say they cannot cope with him and turn him over to be sent to reform school.

Life at the reform school is regimented and lacking in human warmth. He receives a visit from his mother only to be assaulted for causing the loss of his father's job. Afterwards he has a chance to escape and takes it. The guards pursue him to the edge of the sea where he pauses, feet in the water, trapped. The scene freezes into a still photograph.

COMMENT

"A cinema that brilliantly and strikingly reveals the explosion of a fresh creative talent . . . Here is a picture that encourages an exciting refreshment of faith in films."
New York Times

"THE 400 BLOWS" brings us one of those great timeless French pictures that wring your heart with their beauty, truth, and despair. This is a living, breathing, fascinating story which carries significant messages for the world today."
New York Post

"Like everything else in this remarkable picture, it goes right to the core of the subject. It is the first feature-length film by one of France's younger directors, Francois Truffaut, and marks him as a director of considerable skill but, more important, an artist with a sensitive grasp of the character and quality of the contemporary world . . . A picture every one with a serious concern for fine films will not want to miss."
Herald Tribune

THE 400 BLOWS (Les quatre coups), screen play by François Truffaut and Jean-Pierre Leaud, directed and produced by M. Truffaut, produced by Les Films du Carosse and Sedif and presented by Zenith International Film Corporation. At the Fine Arts, Fifty-eighth Street west of Lexington Avenue. Running time: ninety-eight minutes.

Antoine Doinel Jean-Pierre Leaud
 René Patrick Auffay
 Mme. Doinel Claire Maurier
 M. Doinel Albert Remy
 The Teacher Guy Decomble

By BOSLEY CROWTHER

LET it be noted without contention that the crest of the flow of recent films from the "new wave" of young French directors hit these shores yesterday with the arrival at the Fine Arts Theatre of "The 400 Blows" ("Les quatre cents coups") of François Truffaut.

Not since the 1952 arrival of René Clement's "Forbidden Games," with which this extraordinary little picture of M. Truffaut most interestingly compares, have we had from France a cinema that so brilliantly and strikingly reveals the explosion of a fresh creative talent in the directorial field.

Amazingly, this vigorous effort is the first feature film of M. Truffaut, who had previously been (of all things!) the movie critic for a French magazine. (A short film of his, "The Mischief Makers," was shown here at the Little Carnegie some months back.) But, for all his professional inexperience and his youthfulness (27 years), M. Truffaut has here turned out a picture that might be termed a small masterpiece.

The striking distinctions of it are the clarity and honesty with which it presents a moving story of the troubles of a 12-year-old boy. Where previous films on similar subjects have been fatted and fictionalized with all sorts of adult misconceptions and sentimentalities, this is a smashing

convincing demonstration on the level of the boy—cool, firm and realistic, without a false note or a trace of goo.

And yet, in its frank examination of the life of this tough Parisian kid as he moves through the lonely stages of disintegration at home and at school, it offers an overwhelming insight into the emotional confusion of the lad and a truly heart-breaking awareness of his unspoken agonies.

It is said that this film, which M. Truffaut has written, directed and produced, is autobiographical. That may well explain the feeling of intimate occurrence that is packed into all its candid scenes. From the introductory sequence, which takes the viewer in an automobile through middle-class quarters of Paris in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, while a curiously rollicking yet plaintive musical score is played, one gets a profound impression of being personally involved—a hard-by observer, if not participant, in the small joys and sorrows of the boy.

Because of the stunningly literal and factual camera style of M. Truffaut, as well as his clear and sympathetic understanding of the matter he explores, one feels close enough to the parents to cry out to them their cruel mistakes or to shake an obtuse and dull schoolteacher into an awareness of the wrong he does bright boys.

Eagerness makes us want to tell you of countless charming things in this film, little bits of unpushed communication that spin a fine web of sympathy—little things that tell you volumes about the tough, courageous nature of the boy, his rugged, sometimes ruthless, self-possession and his poignant naïveté.

They are subtle, often droll. Also we would like to note a lot about the pathos of the parents and the social incompetence of the kind of school that is here represented and is obviously hated and condemned by M. Truffaut.

But space prohibits expansion, other than to say that the compound is not only moving but also tremendously meaningful. When the lad finally says of his parents, "They didn't always tell the truth," there is spoken the most profound summation of the problem of the wayward child today.

Words cannot state simply how fine is Jean-Pierre Leaud in the role of the boy—how implacably deadpanned yet expressive, how apparently relaxed yet tense, how beautifully positive in his movement, like a pint-sized Jean Gabin. Out of this brand new youngster, M. Truffaut has elicited a performance that will live as a delightful, provoking and heartbreaking monument to a boy.

Playing beside him, Patrick Auffay is equally solid as a pal, companion in juvenile deceptions and truant escapades.

Not to be sneezed at, either, is the excellent performance that Claire Maurier gives as the shallow, deceitful mother, or the fine acting of Albert Remy, as the soft, confused and futile father, or the performance of Guy Decomble, as a stupid and uninspired schoolteacher.

The musical score of Jean Constantin is superb, and very good English subtitles translate the tough French dialogue.

THE 400 BLOWS (Les quatre cents coups), screen play by François Truffaut and Jean-Pierre Leaud, directed and produced by M. Truffaut, produced by Les Films du Carosse and Sedif and presented by Zenith International Film Corporation. At the Fine Arts, Fifty-eighth Street west of Lexington Avenue. Running time: ninety-eight minutes.

Antoine Doinel Jean-Pierre Leaud
 René Patrick Auffay
 Mme. Doinel Claire Maurier
 M. Doinel Albert Remy
 The Teacher Guy Decomble

By BOSLEY CROWTHER

LET it be noted without contention that the crest of the flow of recent films from the "new wave" of young French directors hit these shores yesterday with the arrival at the Fine Arts Theatre of "The 400 Blows" ("Les quatre cents coups") of François Truffaut.

Not since the 1952 arrival of René Clement's "Forbidden Games," with which this extraordinary little picture of M. Truffaut most interestingly compares, have we had from France a cinema that so brilliantly and strikingly reveals the explosion of a fresh creative talent in the directorial field.

Amazingly, this vigorous effort is the first feature film of M. Truffaut, who had previously been (of all things!) the movie critic for a French magazine. (A short film of his, "The Mischief Makers," was shown here at the Little Carnegie some months back.) But, for all his professional inexperience and his youthfulness (27 years), M. Truffaut has here turned out a picture that might be termed a small masterpiece.

The striking distinctions of it are the clarity and honesty with which it presents a moving story of the troubles of a 12-year-old boy. Where previous films on similar subjects have been fatted and fictionalized with all sorts of adult misconceptions and sentimentalities, this is a smashing

convincing demonstration on the level of the boy—cool, firm and realistic, without a false note or a trace of goo.

And yet, in its frank examination of the life of this tough Parisian kid as he moves through the lonely stages of disintegration at home and at school, it offers an overwhelming insight into the emotional confusion of the lad and a truly heart-breaking awareness of his unspoken agonies.

It is said that this film, which M. Truffaut has written, directed and produced, is autobiographical. That may well explain the feeling of intimate occurrence that is packed into all its candid scenes. From the introductory sequence, which takes the viewer in an automobile through middle-class quarters of Paris in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, while a curiously rollicking yet plaintive musical score is played, one gets a profound impression of being personally involved—a hard-by observer, if not participant, in the small joys and sorrows of the boy.

Because of the stunningly literal and factual camera style of M. Truffaut, as well as his clear and sympathetic understanding of the matter he explores, one feels close enough to the parents to cry out to them their cruel mistakes or to shake an obtuse and dull schoolteacher into an awareness of the wrong he does bright boys.

Eagerness makes us want to tell you of countless charming things in this film, little bits of unpushed communication that spin a fine web of sympathy—little things that tell you volumes about the tough, courageous nature of the boy, his rugged, sometimes ruthless, self-possession and his poignant naïveté.

They are subtle, often droll. Also we would like to note a lot about the pathos of the parents and the social incompetence of the kind of school that is here represented and is obviously hated and condemned by M. Truffaut.

But space prohibits expansion, other than to say that the compound is not only moving but also tremendously meaningful. When the lad finally says of his parents, "They didn't always tell the truth," there is spoken the most profound summation of the problem of the wayward child today.

Words cannot state simply how fine is Jean-Pierre Leaud in the role of the boy—how implacably deadpanned yet expressive, how apparently relaxed yet tense, how beautifully positive in his movement, like a pint-sized Jean Gabin. Out of this brand new youngster, M. Truffaut has elicited a performance that will live as a delightful, provoking and heartbreaking monument to a boy.

Playing beside him, Patrick Auffay is equally solid as a pal, companion in juvenile deceptions and truant escapades.

Not to be sneezed at, either, is the excellent performance that Claire Maurier gives as the shallow, deceitful mother, or the fine acting of Albert Remy, as the soft, confused and futile father, or the performance of Guy Decomble, as a stupid and uninspired schoolteacher.

The musical score of Jean Constantin is superb, and very good English subtitles translate the tough French dialogue.

February 22-24, 1973, 184 JKB

February 22-24, 1973, 184 JKB

Thursday	"The 400 Blows"	4:30 & 8:30
	"Romeo and Juliet"	6:15
Friday	"The 400 Blows"	6:45
	"Romeo and Juliet"	4:30 & 8:30
Saturday	"The 400 Blows"	4:40 & 8:30
	"Romeo and Juliet"	6:15

Thursday	"The 400 Blows"	4:30 & 8:30
	"Romeo and Juliet"	6:15
Friday	"The 400 Blows"	6:45
	"Romeo and Juliet"	4:30 & 8:30
Saturday	"The 400 Blows"	4:40 & 8:30
	"Romeo and Juliet"	6:15

1834-JKB

Thur Fri Sat

INTERNATIONAL CINEMA

PRESENTS:

(Poster
Behind
folded)

Miss
Julie

Jean-Paul Belmondo in

That Man from Rio

March 8-10, 1973, 184 JKB

SWEDISH

Thursday	"Miss Julie"	6:20
	"Man from Rio"	4:30 & 8:00
Friday	"Miss Julie"	4:30 & 8:00
	"Man from Rio"	6:10
Saturday	"Miss Julie"	6:20
	"Man from Rio"	4:30 & 8:00

FRENCH

DOUBLE FEATURE PRIVILEGES ALL THREE NIGHTS
75¢ at door or International Cinema card
admits to both features any evening.

1834 JK13

Thur Fri Sat

INTERNATIONAL CINEMA

PRESENTS:

CLAIRE'S KNEE

Oyster Girl

CHINESE

with English subtitles

Thursday	7:10 pm
Friday	4:30 pm

*"'CLAIRE'S KNEE' is a masterpiece.
A film every viewer should savor
for himself." —Saturday Review*

*"Rohmer again proves
himself master of the
literate and literary film."
—New York Magazine*

FRENCH

with English subtitles

Thursday	5:15 & 8:50 pm
Friday	6:05 pm
Saturday	8:40 pm

AWARDED THE SILVER LION PRIZE

Seven Samurai

UNCUT VERSION

ORIGINAL STORY OF "THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN"

Directed by AKIRA KUROSAWA

JAPANESE

with English subtitles

Friday	8:00 pm
Saturday	5:00 pm

CLAIRE'S KNEE

his early Chabrol days, has the elegant assurance needed by a kind of high comedy that no one except Rohmer is even attempting these days. Aurora Cornu, who, in real life, is a poet and novelist, seems so genuinely amused by what's going on that the fact that she sometimes looks directly at the camera only increases the resonance of the performance: a professional actress would not look at the camera, nor, probably, would she be as spontaneously alive on film. Rohmer has obtained equally responsive performances from the two younger girls, especially the enchanting Beatrice Romand, who, when she first comes on the screen, looks like the sort of child who should be heard but not seen, and then, in a matter of several scenes, has turned into a most desirable, unpredictable woman . . . *Claire's Knee* is a difficult film to do justice to without over-selling it. It is so funny and so moving, so immaculately realized, that almost any attempt to describe it must, I think, in some way diminish it." *Vincent Canby* (2/22/71 & 3/7/71).

March 22-24, 1973, 184 JKB

Thursday	"Claire's Knee"	5:15 & 8:50
	"Oyster Girl"	7:10
Friday	"Claire's Knee"	6:05
	"Oyster Girl"	4:30
	"Seven Samurai"	8:00
Saturday	"Claire's Knee"	8:40
	"Seven Samurai"	5:00

DOUBLE FEATURE PRIVILEGES ALL THREE NIGHTS

75¢ at door or International Cinema card
admits to all features any evening.

Director: Eric Rohmer

The fifth in the series of Eric Rohmer's "Moral Tales" following his highly acclaimed "My Night at Maud's," "CLAIRE'S KNEE" is one of those rare motion pictures that has the distinction of being not only a completely satisfying and enjoyable cinematic experience, but is also the recipient of practically unanimous critical acclaim.

Vincent Canby (New York Times) feels that "'CLAIRE'S KNEE' is superlative—and that almost any ordinary way to describe it must in some way diminish it."

Synopsis

On a summer day (Monday, June 29th) in the French Alps resort village of Talloires, a chance meeting takes place between two old friends who may in the past have been lovers — Jerome, a 35-year-old French diplomat intending to sell his family estate in nearby Annecy, and Aurora, a Rumanian novelist spending the summer with a divorcee, Mme. Walter, and her two teenage daughters, Laura and her step-sister Claire. As Jerome and Aurora talk, Jerome reveals that he plans to marry the woman with whom he has been having an affair for the past six years; during all that time, he explains, both have maintained their independence, have never grown tired of each other, and have been friends as well as lovers ("Love and friendship are the same thing"). Aurora, after admitting that she is searching for a theme for her next novel, dares Jerome to act as a "guinea pig" in an experiment: since Laura has developed an adolescent crush on him, Aurora suggests that he encourage the young girl and whatever transpires will be the subject of her book. Taking up the challenge, Jerome devotes his time to the adolescent Laura, and dutifully reports all the details to Aurora. But when Jerome kisses Laura during a mountain hike, she pushes him away (later claiming, after Jerome loses interest in her, that she confused love with the need for a father image) and consequently takes up with a boy her own age. At the same time, 18-year-old Claire, who has been away, arrives and rivets Jerome's attention, seemingly as much by her indifference towards him as by her ideal physical beauty. Admitting his obsession with Claire, Jerome tells Aurora: "You create the story no longer. I do." Rather than seduction, however, Jerome's goal is an "unspecified desire" to touch Claire's knee, which her athletic boyfriend Gilles so casually fondles. "In every woman there's a vulnerable point," explains Jerome. "For Claire it's the knee. It is the magnet of my desire. It would be easier to seduce her than touch the knee." On the evening before his departure, Jerome takes Claire to town on his motorboat; and, when a sudden storm drives them into an empty boathouse for shelter, he tells her that earlier in the day he saw Gilles embracing another girl. When Claire begins to cry, Jerome reaches out, and caresses her knee. Later that night, he relates his triumph to Aurora: "It really took a lot of courage. To touch her knee was the most extravagant thing to do, and at the same time the easiest. What I thought to be a gesture of desire, she took as one of consolation. It was as if I had had her . . . And I got her away from that boy for good." The following morning (Wednesday, July 29th), Aurora bids farewell to Jerome with the news that she, too, is engaged. Then Jerome leaves, somewhat smug in the belief that he has rightfully awakened Claire to Gilles' deceptive nature. But, from a balcony, Aurora sees Gilles explaining to Claire that what had been reported to her as a liaison was nothing more than his attempt to console one of their troubled friends. As they sit down on a lakeside bench and Gilles affectionately puts his arm around Claire, the young girl shrugs off the misunderstanding by saying, "It doesn't matter."

Critique

SUMMARY. "What's important is the way people say things when faced with a problem. A person's diction is a reflection of his personality, of what he is." So spoke writer-director Eric Rohmer in discussing his

Six Moral Tales, the fifth of which — *Claire's Knee* — premiered in Paris in December, 1970, and quickly won France's Prix Louis Delluc Award as the Best Picture of the Year (later, the film garnered the Grand Prize at the 1971 San Sebastian Film Festival). Reporting from Paris, *Variety*'s 'Mosk' praised Rohmer's "knowing, cultivated language" and his "classical, elegant manner of looking at people as they look at themselves." Further, since Rohmer dealt with "literary, literate characters," 'Mosk' found the picture to be "a welcome change from today's more forthright and sexplicit pictures." Similarly, *Claire's Knee* was applauded by virtually every American critic upon its U.S. release in 1971: "A masterpiece — the conversations sparkle with wit, have a tinge of eroticism, and lead to revelations that are surprising, thought-provoking, and, although kept in a subdued key, dramatic . . . The film is fresh and new because of intelligence and subtleties that are more common to the novel than the cinema" (Hollis Alpert, *Saturday Review*); "A truly beautiful motion picture — Its architecture is exquisite, its details superb, its inquiry into human nature satisfying . . . The considerable dialogue adds rather than detracts from its cinematic virtues, for the acting is first-rate and the exploration of certain reactions is fascinating" (Paine Knickerbocker, the *San Francisco Chronicle*); "Sure to captivate serious audiences . . . This sophisticated, stunning blend of conversation, character interaction, and lovely scenic quality pulls you deep into its grasp" (William Wolf, *Cue*). Adding to the accolades, the *Chicago Sun-Times*' Roger Ebert awarded four stars to "this extraordinary film" ("*Claire's Knee* is a movie for people who still read good novels, care about good films, and think occasionally"), while *Newsday*'s Joseph Gelmis relished the "intelligent conversations and atmospheric locales" and noted that "Rohmer excels in the precision of his settings and his dialogue." One particular opinion most critics shared was the *N.Y. Daily News*' Kathleen Carroll's view that in this "exquisitely-made intellectual exercise," the "actors look as if they were not acting but living their roles," and that "the most extraordinary performance is given by Beatrice Romand — a stringy, mop-topped teenager with soul-searching eyes [who] blossoms into a woman before the viewer's eyes." In addition, the reviewers also agreed with New York's Judith Crist that, apart from providing "fascinating" people and "stimulating" talk, Rohmer had placed his characters in "a brilliant and luscious lakeside setting where the glorious sun-drenched scenery engulfs us." A few critics, however, qualified their admiration with some reservations. Although the *New Yorker*'s Pauline Kael said that *Claire's Knee* "is all surface; it has no depths" — and "no emotional steam when it gets to the subject of sensuality and compulsive attraction" — she nonetheless described it as "a lovely" and "unusually civilized film," and one that she "enjoyed very much." And while the *Los Angeles Times*' Charles Champlin conceded that "*Claire's Knee* is endlessly talky," he added that Rohmer's film was more than redeemed by "the subtle shadings of human relationships," as well as by "the quite extraordinary charm, believability and complexity of his characters." But *Time*'s Stefan Kanfer in the only negative review, felt that *Claire's Knee* failed as "an opalescent homage to M. Marcel Proust, its spiritual father." After commenting that "Karel Reisz (*The Loves of Isadora*) and Alain Resnais (*La Guerre Est Finie*) were also 'disciples' of Proust, Kanfer stated that Rohmer was "much less a filmmaker . . . His work is sterile in its perfection; it lacks nothing but passion.

And without that Proustian quality, all drama, all conflict, however witty or profound, becomes mere talk." Such qualifications aside, the extremely affirmative consensus — one of the highest ever recorded in *Film-facts* — seconded *Newsweek*'s Paul D. Zimmerman that "Rohmer is a director of considerable audacity . . . Without lifting his camera above that knee, he creates a climate of edgy eroticism and high drama. At 50, Rohmer, is the most complex and engaging screenwriter working today. *Claire's Knee* confirms his place among French directors of the first rank." **Critical Consensus:** 14 favorable, 1 mixed, 1 negative.

VILLAGE VOICE. "Eric Rohmer's *Claire's Knee* is the first indisputably great film of 1971 . . . We have been hearing for a long time that the narrative in film is dead, and that henceforth we would be entering an era of themes rather than plots, ideas rather than intrigues. But what about *Airport* and *Love Story*, the philistines wailed. But to this bemused observer, *Airport* and *Love Story* seem too high a price to pay for the preservation of the plot in cinema. Aimless, brainless formulas hardly seem the cure for the current disease of fictional debilitation in film. What we need are new initiatives and inspirations, and these we have suddenly received from an unexpected source: Eric Rohmer, a French director past 50 with seven films to his credit, [has] rejuvenated the movie narrative at a time when too many prestigious directors — Godard, Bergman, Antonioni, Fellini et al. have renounced it . . . In *Claire's Knee*, the characters are all vacationers, and hence function at that tempo of leisure and boredom at which the most trivial incidents can erupt into the most tremendous events. Nonetheless, the tendencies of summer vacations toward triteness (lost innocence, lost illusions, lost virginity, end of summer equals end of youth or end of life or end of love) are all resisted strenuously by Rohmer. His camera belongs to no character's feverish subjectivity, but rather to the objective spectacle unfolding before it. Rohmer lets us look at Claire's knee not so much as if we were Jerome (Jean-Claude Brialy) looking at the knee of Claire (Laurence De Monaghan), but rather as if we were witnessing the transformation of an image into an idea, sensuality into sensibility, a bit of furtive voyeurism into an obsessive illusion, and, most important of all, a suggestion of fetishism into a surge of feeling . . . But what is so remarkable about Claire's knee? Certainly not the knee itself, nor even the manner in which it is presented. Claire's knee is exciting simply because the title of the movie has alerted us to its pivotal role in the development of the narrative. It is the visible evidence of the protagonist's folly and of ours as well and of cinema's most of all. For is it not the fundamental folly of cinema to depend on surfaces for the expression of essences? And is not the comely but otherwise ordinary knee of Claire more beguiling visually and cinematically than the exquisite soul of Laura (Beatrice Romand)? But that is what summer vacations are for, after all; to develop a preference for the glamorous counterfeit over the gloriously real thing. To be bedazzled by the sun, and consoled by the cool waters. To play God a little, and crawl like a snake a little. To mark time, to kill time, and finally to use time as an alibi . . . Some reviewers consider *Claire's Knee* a castigation of the intellectually manipulative Jerome, a ridiculous creature floundering in the intuitive morass of desire. They point to the fact that Jerome fails to break up the romance of Claire and Gilles (Gerard Falconetti) as if that were the whole point of his campaign. Quite the

contrary, I think. His whole summer had dribbled down to a desire to stroke Claire's knee, and he succeeded in that desire without ever feeling the loss of an entire human being seen for the last time in a spasm of beautiful rage and sorrow at a distance behind the windshield of a car. This last shot of Laura, unobtrusive, perhaps even undistinguished by any dynamic principles of the medium, represents one of the glories of the narrative cinema. What we see ultimately in *Claire's Knee* is a spiritual misadventure unfolding discreetly against the background of nature, cruel and indifferent in its breathtaking beauty. Claire too is breathtaking in the smug complacency of her sensuality, but Laura is heartstopping in the harshness of her emotional intelligence. And it is to emotional intelligence that Rohmer's cinema is ultimately dedicated, and what a relief in this age of the barbarians." *Andrew Sarris (3/11/71).*

NEW YORK TIMES. "Eric Rohmer's *Claire's Knee* comes very close to being a perfect movie of its kind, something on the order of an affectionate comedy of the intellect that has no easily identifiable cinema antecedents except in other films by Mr. Rohmer, most notably *My Night at Maud's*. It is the product of a literary sensibility, and it grows out of a literary tradition, but it is, first and foremost, a superlative motion picture . . . The film is the fifth in Rohmer's projected cycle of *Six Moral Tales*, each of which is designed as a variation on the theme of the man who, in love with one woman, feels drawn to another. The joys in Rohmer's *Moral Tales* exist not so much in the variations he works, nor in contrasting one film with another, but in responding to the various levels of experience contained within each film. Of the three *Moral Tales* I've now seen, including *Maud* (the third) and *La Collectionneuse* (the fourth), *Claire's Knee* is by far the most fascinating. It is both more easily accessible than *Maud*, and more complex, less of a conventional narrative and more of an emotional experience . . . *Claire's Knee* unfolds like an elegant fairy tale in a series of enchanted and enchanting encounters, on a lake, in gardens heavy with blossoms, in interiors that look like Vermeers. Everything in this world has sharply defined edges, like the lake, which is not bordered by beach but by a man-made quay . . . We come to know Rohmer's characters much as we come to know people socially in real life, through their faces, their gestures, the way they dress and how they talk. Jerome, Aurora and Laura live according to sharply defined rules of behavior. Although they may seem romantic in that their conversation is mostly of love and friendship, this is, of course, a human activity of the most refined sort. When they explore their own emotions, test their feelings and exercise aspects of their will, it is a sport for esthetes. For them, in spite of all their talk about being bored with love and suffocated by beauty, each polite meeting becomes as fraught with suspense and danger as a confrontation of gladiators. Beneath this surface level, *Claire's Knee* is also about self-deception, about cruelty, about a certain kind of arrogance that goes with wisdom, and very much about sex. It is no accident that the beautiful, lean, comparatively stupid Claire is the only person in the movie enjoying, at the moment, a completely satisfactory, uninhibited sex life . . . The film is as physically lovely as any I've seen in years, and the performances are of such variety and wit that they should remove forever the notion that Rohmer, with his literary sensibility, is not essentially a filmmaker. I can't think of a recent film in which all the performances have been so consistently fine. Jean-Claude Brialy, whom I haven't seen since