



Special 2005



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Mad Brains

In der Frage, wo und wie der allgegenwärtige Begriff „verrückt“ sinnvoll anzubringen ist (und wen oder was er überhaupt bezeichnen mag), herrscht glücklicherweise Dissens. Längst verfügt das Wort, kolloquial gebraucht, über ausreichend positive Obertöne, um unter fortschrittsfreudigen Zeitgenossen als einigermaßen rehabilitiert zu gelten. Wer darauf verzichtet, eigenwillig zu denken und zu handeln, Bedeutungen zu verrücken, sich hinwegzusetzen über die Beengungen des Bürgerlichen, wird größere künstlerische oder wissenschaftliche Leistungen nicht zustande bringen.



Im Kino sind die verrückten Forscher, die Mad Brains, die über moralische und ästhetische Konventionen hinaus zu denken bereit sind, schon deshalb unentbehrlich, weil sie dem Medium so sehr entsprechen: Eine Kunstform, die in Laboratorien und an Schneidetischen entwickelt wird und erst in der Fusion von Bildern, Klängen und Worten künstlich Sinn gewinnt, muss den Experimenten entfesselter Wissenschaftler schon aus Gründen der

Selbsterkenntnis sympathisierend gegenüber stehen.

Unter dem Titel „Mad Brains“ beleuchtet das diesjährige KINO UNTER STERNEN-Special daher an sieben Abenden die amoralische Arbeit leicht verwirrter Forscher, die den Geheimnissen der Seele ebenso vehement hinterher jagen wie den schier unerschöpflichen Möglichkeiten der



Manipulation der Menschenkörper. Schon das frühe Kino liebte seine hochbegabten Kriminellen – Robert Wienes expressionistisch-paranoides Psychiatriedrama *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1920), ein Klassiker der dämonischen Leinwand, ist hier nur die Spitze des Eisbergs.



Der Tonfilm setzt die alten Obsessionen des Kinos mit neuen Mitteln fort: Ein Spezialist menschlicher Abgründe, Erich von Stroheim, hat 1936 an Tod Brownings bizarrer revenge tragedy *The Devil-Doll* mitgeschrieben. Im Kino ist der Mensch ausbaubar, lange vor den Exzessen der plastischen Chirurgie: Während bei Browning sich die Opfer des bösen Lionel Barrymore auf Puppengröße verkleinert sehen,

benötigt in Georges Franjus surrealem Schocker *Les yeux sans visage* von 1959 die junge Heldin nach einem schweren Unfall neue Haut für ihr Gesicht. Ihr Vater, Franjus mad scientist, zieht den wertvollen Rohstoff ahnungslosen nächtlichen Passanten ab. Aber Verbrechen zahlt sich natürlich auch in solchen Geschichten nicht aus.

Deutlicher ins Humoristische tendieren Jay Roachs (populärwissenschaftlich unterfütterte)



Agentenfilm-Persiflage *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997) sowie Stanley Kubricks famose Cold-War-Satire *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), die Peter Sellers als wahnsinnigen US-General präsentiert. Wie weit (und wie gefährlich) sich der experimentierlüsterne Wissenschaftler mittels toxischer Substanzen und anderer Grenzerfahrungen von sich selbst entfernen kann, führt Ken Russells spätpsychedelischer Thriller *Altered States* (1980) vor – und eine aktuelle Rarität aus Südkorea demonstriert schließlich noch, dass die Angst vor der Übernahme der schönen grünen Erde durch Außerirdische nie ganz unbegründet ist: Die Horrorkomödie *Save the Green Planet!* (2003), das absurde, jederzeit

überraschende Debüt des Filmemachers Jun-hwan Jeong, wird im KINO UNTER STERNEN als Österreich-Premiere zu sehen sein.

The Obsession of the Flesh

Enter the mad scientist

"The problem of infusing dead matter with life, a central concern of mad scientists everywhere, is also a pointed allegory of the modern world's difficulties in reconciling the seeming contradictions of matter and mind, science and superstition." David Skal, Screams of Reason

The phrase "mad scientist" conjures the image of a character obsessed with human flesh. As Skal noted, the mad scientist conducts either some form of anatomical reconstruction, genetic manipulation or organic experimentation. However, there are many different interpretations of "the mad scientist". How did Skal's flesh-obsessed scientist become the dominant stereotype? Considering its many successful alternatives, the flesh-obsessed mad scientist is a puzzle. Dr Strangelove, from *Dr Strangelove: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), was a comical caricature of the handicapped mad scientist. John Nash, from *A Beautiful Mind* (2001), was a schizophrenic math genius who earned both our respect and pity. Dr Emmett Brown took families on fun-filled rides that went *Back to the Future* (1985). And finally Dr Hannibal Lecter, from *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), was an evil doctor who ate human liver with fava beans. However, the creation of Baron Frankenstein remains the main event in mad scientist history. Skal called *Frankenstein* "the gateway" of all mad science.

Origins of the mad scientist

A burgeoning theme of mad science can be found as early as in *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920). The insidious Dr Caligari controlled a somnambulist. The somnambulist, whose only thread of humanity was his appearance, was portrayed as a flesh puppet. In Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), the fragility of the human flesh led to inefficiency in the authoritarian factory-state. Rotwang, our earliest impression of a white-haired mad scientist, was deployed to solve *Metropolis'* problem. To create a new leader for the slaves, he constructed a robot. By deciding to replace fragile flesh with metal, Rotwang made a nihilistic criticism of human flesh.

The success of *Frankenstein* (1931) consolidated the mad scientist's position as a highly recyclable and profitable movie character. *Frankenstein's* success led to a whole era of films with flesh-obsessed mad scientists played by Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi. *Frankenstein* itself spawned derivatives such as *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and *Son of Frankenstein* (1939).

It was highly likely that this period of film assimilated the mad scientist into popular culture. There was a strong consistency amongst the mad scientists in film that eventually founded the stereotype. The mad scientist was usually a man who had shut himself out from the rest of the world, and led a secret life furthering his research. In the example of *Invisible Man* (1933), Griffin regretted his experiment and tried to find a reversing agent to win back his life and love. His

invisibility forced him to hide from public attention but he later discovered it was a powerful form of 'soft' power.

The mad scientist wanted to become the most powerful man of all; he wanted to become "Him". Fundamentally, he conducted experiments to fulfill a type of human desire: the desire for beauty in *Les Yeux Sans Visage* (1960), the desire to play God in *Island of Lost Souls* (1933) and the desire to control one's evil in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931).

The Mad Scientist's Various Evolutions

Successful filmmakers of the genre created a new experience for cinema viewers while preserving the classic perspective of the mad scientist. Most of them achieved their goals by intensive use of sexual imagery and gore. This tactic immersed their audiences in the inner insanity of the flesh-obsessed mad scientist, bringing the horror directly to their eyes. Dwain Esper's exploitation classic *Maniac* (1934) tempted audiences with fleeting shots of women's breasts and the gouging of a cat's eye. Recall that this was considered near taboo in the days of 1930s filmmaking.

In Andy Warhol's *Flesh for Frankenstein* (1974), Paul Morrissey retold the familiar story of Frankenstein with an ironic play between the sexual attractiveness of nudity and the repulsiveness of raw, inner flesh. Baron Frankenstein dissected his female subject as he raped her, revealing the horrifying liberalism of his 'total' appreciation. The unthinkable suddenly made obvious, *Flesh's* shocking yet artistically beautiful cinematography asked frightening questions about the human perspective. Nudity and gore are both facets of the flesh, external and internal, but usually engender different responses. As we see in the film however, the fine line that exists between these two facets can be crossed.

In *The Fly* (1986), David Cronenberg forced his audiences to be obsessed with the flesh. First, a shot of the dying monkey turned inside-out and the larvae baby shocked his audience into an appreciation for the human form. The images of living, uninjured human beings became welcome reliefs from the gore. Second, Cronenberg teased his audience into thinking that the procedure had positive effect when a sex scene between his protagonists supposedly went on for hours. These two plot devices amplified the audience's horror when they viewed the protagonist's slow and painful mutation into an insect. With a finale intense in gore and violence, Cronenberg reminded us that small mistakes in science have serious consequences.

Interestingly, there has been a limited resurgence of the mad scientist in recent film. This was influenced by comic books that used the flesh-obsessed mad scientist in their storylines. *The Hulk*, created by Marvel Comics in 1962, is a prime example. In Sam Raimi's *Darkman* (1990), Darkman was a reluctant scientist-turned-freak who could become invisible. While Raimi was clearly influenced by the *Invisible Man* and *The Fly*, he added a twist by presenting his mad scientist in the style of a comic book protagonist. The recent film version of *Spiderman* (2003) showed Spiderman

battling The Green Goblin, a tragic scientist-turned villain who performed dangerous experiments on himself. Dr. Octopus, another mad scientist-turned-villain, is set to appear in the sequel.

Mirrors: film history and science history

To fully understand the dominance of the flesh-obsessed scientist, it is also important to reflect upon the scientific concerns of the past century. Then, Man had achieved an impressive mastery of his physical world. His fascination with science had gone beyond the observation of Newton's Laws of Physics; this had evolved into replication and application, which earned him the gift of the steam engine. As the railroad revolution unfolded, scientific Man took on a tougher challenge and started investigating the physics of the microscopic. Bohr's theory of the atom started an obsession for all things small which was then followed by the founding of quantum mechanics. The science of the flesh, however, had less robust success. However, when Watson and Crick discovered the dual-helix structure of DNA, they opened the gateway for the new sciences. Using the mad scientist as a vehicle, filmmakers had conspicuously chosen to engage in the controversy surrounding these new sciences.

Filmmakers were ahead of their time when they started to participate in this debate as early as the 1920s. It was not difficult to predict where science was headed. These new sciences, such as genetic engineering and other forms of biotechnology, were not exactly new but merely the next logical step in Man's conquest of knowledge.

The debate over mad science continues till today. It is now possible for one to get a life extension at a cryogenics facility. Doctors surgically remove one's head and proceed to replace one's blood with cryogenic fluid. One's body parts are then frozen, only to be "reanimated" in the future. At the global level, the situation is equally frightening. When President George W. Bush placed restrictions on American stem-cell research based on ethical considerations, countries such as Singapore saw potential for a new competitive advantage. Singapore's government has adopted a life-sciences strategy. The ethical criticisms of the UK's 'Dolly' clone have not stopped South Korea from developing her recently-proven cloning capabilities.

Thus, the ethics of modern science are still as controversial as that of the mad scientist. By examining the obsession for the flesh, filmmakers have given the mad scientist film a relevance that spills over far into the future.

Darren Shi, *Day for Night*; Fall 2004, Vol.3, Issue 1, Evanston, Illinois

Madness at the Edge of Science

What is it that we love about the mad scientists in our movies and history? Is it because their probing of the unknown piques our curiosity? Is it their seeming superiority to the common herd? Or is it that they — at least for a while — get away with more than we can?

They do so in many realms of knowledge. Some of them are practical, and quest for better things for the human race. Others are decidedly less practical. One of their most prominent technologies has been advanced medicine. Filmic mad scientists of the 1930s and 1940s led the vanguard in such efforts as keeping organs alive outside the body, cryogenics, new methods of surgery, robotic parts for humans, and new serums. Others harnessed electricity for all sorts of uses, but mostly to bring dead flesh back to life (always a useful ability), or to power advanced robots and death rays.

In fact, their films have been hotbeds of fortean technology, introducing then-taboo ideas, preparing audiences for technological development in a world in which moral and scientific values would change and old taboos would be discarded. The movies render such taboo topics psychologically "safe" by making the inventions those of "madmen."

The scientists who have uncovered the great secrets and developed the miraculous inventions in real life have been a decidedly less colorful lot — if one disallows such exceptions as Nikola Tesla, Jack Parsons, Wilhelm Reich, Timothy Leary, John Lilly, Sir Fred Hoyle and Prof. Kevin Warwick. Most of the "boffins" who helped develop the atomic bomb and other such wonders were reportedly all too normal. But their proclivities for blithe destruction have often left their cinematic versions far behind. It is the potential for cutting-edge science to wound that makes fictions about the subject relevant.

In the movies, scientists are quite often "mad," and have been so since the silent movies. The things they do, however, have been fairly consistent. They tend to be smarter than the heroes, and have wittier lines, often of a boastful nature. A surprising number can play Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue* from memory. They will persevere despite repeated failures. These are usually on human subjects whose remnants, living or dead, are stored in commodious basements. Often unreliable technical equipment, anatomical parts and/or lab assistants plague the scientists. None of their electrical devices have fuses, though their machines tend to come equipped with overload switches to make sure their laboratories can explode during the last reel. These people are enthusiastic about their work, perhaps even carried away with it. They will let no one get in their way, especially those who call them insane, and start — but do not finish — going for the authorities. Generally their creations, be they mechanical or living, go out of control. Until the climax, that is, when they turn on their creator(s) and are soon destroyed themselves. This is usually due to fate, or "God," which

restores the status quo against the blaspheming mad scientist. And it is this last motif that connects the various aspects of the subject together: the "God-like" man who rejects the accepted ways and pursues the unknown, running into trouble as a result.

An early prototype for the movie mad scientist is the alchemist. Considered by chemists to merely be their primitive precursor, the true alchemists of the Middle Ages were actually, it appears, pursuing a spiritual development technique in which spirit, symbol and physical manifestations were yoked together. Alchemical work is sometimes reflected in the well-known stereotype of the mad scientist, one of the most famous motifs of which is the artificial creation of life.

Paracelsus (circa 1493-1541), perhaps the most famous alchemist, claimed to know the secret of creating a "homunculus" (a tiny artificial man) by means of a complex process whose first step was the burying of sperm — within a sealed glass container — in horse dung. One alchemist who may have influenced the literature of mad science was Johann Konrad Dippel (1673-1734). A man of great pride, he felt no limitations to his intellect and was interested in pursuing the great mysteries. When he registered at the University of Giessen (sixty miles north of the real Castle Frankenstein near Darmstadt, Germany), he registered as "Franckensteina." Some three years later he completed his dissertation. As it was a skeptical work — whose title *De Nihilo* meant "On Nothing" — it outraged many of his superiors. Dippel is remembered these days for a few achievements. He was the formulator of Dippel's oil, a nerve stimulant and anti-spasmodic once widely used. The discovery of the chemical — potassium ferrocyanide — used in the artists' pigment Prussian blue was his. Dippel was a pioneer in psychosomatic medicine as well. He was apparently more interested in other things. These included acquiring riches through "alchemy," involvement in political intrigues, and studies on the mechanisms of life. Like the fictional character Dr. Frankenstein, he was an ardent vivisectionist, had ideas on how to restore life to the dead, and he was reportedly interested in performing his many secret researches in Castle Frankenstein — though his death ended his attempts to secure the place. Dippel's life, like that of many of his sort (the Comte de Saint Germain, for example) was a mixture of genius and deceit, in the interest of goals we can only guess at. Dippel's "alter ego," Victor Frankenstein (the fictional creation of Mary Shelley), has, through movies on the creation of artificial life, become the arch "mad scientist". We will here be concerned with his various movie incarnations. While there were two minor silent film versions of the Frankenstein story, the classic Universal Studios version of 1931, with Boris Karloff as the monster, became the touchstone for all that followed. Its scientist, renamed Henry Frankenstein, works in an old watchtower strongly resembling the tower used in the 1926 silent film *The Magician*, which featured alchemical elements. Dr. Frankenstein, though not perhaps certifiably mad, is near that point in his obsession about creating new life from stitched-together corpse parts — if "madness" is being obsessed with something people think is impossible. He keeps his uncanny creation locked away. It, after the fashion of most monsters, manages to escape

and terrorize the countryside. During a siege by a torch-bearing mob, the doctor is carried off by the monster and, after a confrontation with it in an old mill, is nearly killed. (...)

The sequel, *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), stresses the alchemical influences more strongly. A prototypical alchemist, one Dr. Septimus Pretorius, blackmails Dr. Frankenstein into creating a woman. Dr. Pretorius has earlier succeeded in creating a collection of homunculi, but is unable to make a normal-sized being, so is inspired to collaborate. While the brain for the female monster is created alchemically by Pretorius, its other parts are, like those of its intended husband, second-hand. Like Frankenstein (and Dippel), Pretorius was a controversial presence at the University and, as he relates to Baron Henry Frankenstein, "was booted out, booted, my dear Baron, is the word, for knowing too much". *The Bride of Frankenstein*, amusingly, was one of the earlier films to equip its mad lab with an all-purpose, self-destruct switch. The third film in the series, *Son of Frankenstein*, was made in 1939. (...) Basil Rathbone plays a normal, if highly strung, scientist who, step by step, is made "mad". Upon inheriting the Frankenstein estate, he and his family move there, with no intention of carrying out his father's "unholy" work. Yet the authorities and the villagers of Frankenstein suspect he will carry out researches like those of his father. When he discovers that the monster still survives in a coma, tended by Ygor, he revives the monster, under controlled conditions, hoping to vindicate his father. Needless to say, he gets carried away when he does so, and things go awry. Soon he is alienating nearly everybody, and only when he destroys his father's reanimated creation is he restored to the good graces of the community.

While there were further *Frankenstein* sequels put out by Universal Pictures, all of them equipped with colorful mad scientists of one sort or another, it is probably more productive to move on to the remakes of the story released during the '50s and thereafter, for the best of them crystallized some themes implicit in their forebears. The first of these, Hammer Film Productions' *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), created a more rebellious doctor than the Universal films dared, because there was a more relaxed censorship standard at that time. The doctor is no longer depicted as sympathetic; in fact the interest of the film is directed towards the scientist rather than the monster. Peter Cushing's doctor is not "mad" in the same way, being ever so cool and collected as he carries out his scientific heresies — in addition to a few casual murders when needed. In this film, he has no moral compunctions at all. (...)

In the foregoing pictures, there is one overriding theme: that man is taking too much upon himself when he decides to play God, for which he does not have the ability. Thus the parodies of humanity he creates act as rebukes to his hubris. They are to him as he is to God and hint that the faults in the human situation may relate to an equally flawed supreme being who would allow such pain and degradation to exist. This philosophy is at odds with Darwinian theories of the gradual improvement of species by survival of only the fittest. From this springs the dark humor that

punctuates the Frankenstein films. In fact, the mad scientist motif nearly always hints at an incipient anarchy that could dominate everything if not stopped. (...)

A far more realistic and disturbing scientist was depicted in the 1959 Georges Franju film *Les yeux sans visage*, a French production that was released in the U.S. as *The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus*. Dr. Genessier, a ruthless plastic surgeon, had been responsible for his daughter's facial disfigurement in an auto accident. He dedicates his life to giving her a new face, a task requiring facial transplants — which do not take for long. After her system rejects each one of them, Dr. Genessier arranges for the kidnapping of further unwilling donors. It soon becomes apparent that his motivation is not his daughter's happiness, but a desire to dominate. He is rebelling against a situation where he is made to feel less than God-like. The film is one of the masterpieces of the genre and the anti-vivisection message is effective. (...)

The present fear of transforming into something primal and unfeeling is also powerfully depicted in *Altered States* (1980) by screenwriter "Sidney Aaron" (Paddy Chayefsky) in the Ken Russell-directed film. The scientist in question here, Edward Jessup, is patterned after iconoclastic real-life scientists including John Lilly and possibly Timothy Leary. And this provides greater depth, for few mad scientists have been based on anything other than previous fictional personae, with the exception of Nikola Tesla, who was the model for several characters.

Like his prototypes, Jessup is searching for the secrets of the universe, making use of psychoactive drugs to do so. By accident, his experimentations venture into territory where mind and matter join and he alters form, first to a rambunctious and destructive prehistoric man, and later into a primordial energy being. Eventually his love for his wife restores his consciousness to normal reality and he is able to regain the humanity he lost. He is far luckier than Dr. Jekyll in this regard.

The element which has made these latter-day forays into the genre as good as they are is a more realistic attention to actual human concerns and ideas, reconnecting us with what was valid about them and their heresies in the first place, boding well for the continued vitality of the genre.

While mad scientists are a cliché, hence their increasing rarity in serious films, real "mad science" is in full swing as we enter the third millennium, and recalls the filmic versions of the 1930s and 1940s. Doctors can at long last transplant organs and limbs from one body to another with comparative ease. The basic programming of life is being mastered. Not only has genetic expertise produced modified lifeforms and clones, the code of the human genome has been cracked. Robots of all sorts have been manufactured, and ordinary folks have owned certain types as "pets". Machines the size of molecules have been created. Some of these even — shades of Frankenstein — combine biological and machine parts. In 2001, what once was heresy threatens to become normalcy.

Douglas Chapman, *Mad Scientists and the Movies*; *Strange Magazine* #2, 1988.

6. Juli **Les yeux sans visage**

F/I 1959. Regie: Georges Franju. Mit Pierre Brasseur, Alida Valli, Edith Scob, Francois Guérin, Alexandre Rignault, Claude Brasseur. 90 min. OmeU.

Ein angesehener Chirurg schickt seine treuergebene Assistentin aus, um in den Straßen von Paris hübsche junge Mädchen aufzusammeln und in sein Haus zu lotsen. Zweck der blutigen Operation: Doktor Genessier versucht mithilfe Frischfleischs das entstellte Antlitz seiner Tochter wiederherzustellen. Einem unirdischen Wesen gleich irrt die Tochter mit weißer Maske durch die Flure. Kunstvoll schauriger Horror, von Kameravirtuose Eugen Schüfftan in Bilder von bestürzender Schönheit gesetzt.



By his reckless driving, a brilliant plastic surgeon, Dr. Genessier (Pierre Brasseur), is responsible for disfiguring his daughter Christiane (Edith Scob). Unaccustomed to being "contradicted" by fate, he resolves to confer a new face on his daughter. His devoted assistant Louise (Alida Valli) drives into Paris, and lures students who resemble Christiane to Genessier's home;

there he attempts, vainly, to graft their faces on to hers. At last his own face is torn off by the dogs on which he intended to perform experiments, and his daughter, still faceless, wanders off into the night. The doves which, for Franju, suggest madness, hover round her head, as if their fluttering were her shattered, freed thoughts.

"When I shot *Les yeux sans visage* I was told: 'No sacrilege because of the Spanish market, no nudes because of the Italian market, no blood because of the French market and no martyred animals because of the English market.' And I was supposed to be making a horror film!" (...)

That the storyline contains unoriginal ingredients can't be denied; here is the mad surgeon, the secret operating-theatre, the hounds. (...) This doesn't mean that there is any need to apologize for, or explain away the horror content of *Les yeux sans visage*. The horror genre is as much a part of modern mythology as the Western or the detective story. It's ironical that our mythology springs either from religion or from pulp pops. The mad scientist, like the gunslinger, is a figure in our pulp pantheon. As valuable an analysis of our society's stresses and strains could and no doubt will be written in terms of these contemporary archetypes as in terms of high culture artworks. In his sensitive acceptance of the *infra dig*, Franju is heir to Apollinaire, to Cocteau and Breton, who had spotted the poetry of Arizona Bill, of Mack Sennett and Fantomas two world wars before Anglo-Saxon *littérateurs* had even begun worrying about pop culture, let alone attempting to understand

it. Franju hasn't the least intention of diluting the story's pulp shocks, nor even of sublimating them. Poetic, like religious, myth, has every right to concern itself with the pounding of blood and the rumbling of thunder, with indelicate sensations indelicately rendered; its finesse lies in the grafting on such libidinous roots of the more delicate stems of feeling. (...)

One wonders, if Franju is really protesting against science, or medical ethics, per se, whether Genessier hasn't been too completely assimilated to Baron Frankenstein. After all, his motive isn't scientific curiosity, and his conduct is hardly ethical. Still, the overtones remain, and are reinforced by the lecture of which we catch a glimpse as the film begins: "the subject is completely



exsanguinated", says the lecturer, whereupon the audience, including a Jesuit, bursts into applause. It's significant too, that the graft Genessier attempts is currently on the border of science fact and science fiction. Plastic surgeons still have to take the new skin from another part of the patient's body, because, except in the case of identical twins,

"foreign" skin mobilises the home antibodies which attack it. Franju explained: "The hostile antibodies could be destroyed by X-ray bombardment, except that the dose needed is so massive that it would kill the patient as well. The Yugoslavs have developed a bonemarrow graft, but the face is something else again." Is it possible that we might one day soon have facebanks as well as bloodbanks and eyebanks, or even standardised faces which the body and mind would slowly remould and reinterpret? Genessier's innovations belong to the order of disturbing scientific possibilities, like immortality by deep freeze, and so do carry a Frankensteinian overtone, of sorts. Obviously, though, Franju isn't indicting scientific hubris in the face of any divine or natural order. It is Genessier's will to power which brought about the road accident, which so distorts his love of his daughter, and which reduces other girls to abstractions. However pure and benevolent science may be, there is certainly a scientific callousness just as there is a militaristic, a moralistic, an ideological, or any other sort of callousness. We don't need to argue a case from recondite theories about surgery only being sublimated sadism to begin with. (...)

Franju doesn't show us Christiane's faceless face at the end, but I believe that as she walks into the night air, freeing the dogs and the doves from her father's cages, the ghostly face hovering over her scarred tissue is the most beautiful face in the world. She is mad, but her madness is an absolute, an impossible assent to freedom, to tenderness and powerless mercy. As the mad were thought to be, she has become divine.

In this affinity of angels and animals, of those above and below the routines of rationalist calculation, the film evokes a kind of moral metaphysic and acquires a theological ring. Dr. Genessier ("Genesis") is God, who insisted on "ruling the road" - Christian orthodoxy sees pride vis-à-vis God as the original sin, but an anti-Christian metaphysic might well ascribe the megalomania to God. His daughter, Christiane ("Christian") is his creature - a female Adam, a virginal Eve. But as Genessier doesn't rule the road, she has to suffer to redeem his pride, so she's also a female Christ (orthodoxy describes Christ as the second Adam). Louise is Genessier's Holy Christ, a dark angel selecting sacrifices. And in this black, inverted theology, it's not the Son of God who is crucified for man, but woman who is flayed alive to atone for God's mad pride. (...) Franju's style extends a melodramatic idea into a mythological malaise.

Raymond Durnat, Franju, University of California Press, 1967.

Georges Franju's *Les yeux sans visage* is a masterpiece of poetic horror and tactful, tactile brutality. In the movie's sinister first scene, anxious-looking Alida Valli drives by night through the deserted suburbs of Paris, searching for a place to dump the inert humanoid passenger slumped in the backseat. The look is black on black, with gleaming highlights; the musical accompaniment is gleefully carnivalesque.

Franju, best known for the 1949 abattoir doc *Blood of the Beasts*, was a surrealist fellow traveler and *Les yeux sans visage* has a beyond-lurid premise. Plastic surgeon Professeur Genessier attempts to restore his daughter's mutilated face with skin obtained from young women abducted by his zombified lover. In between grafts, Genessier's birdlike daughter, Christiane, flits about the château, eyes peering through the sockets of a molded plastic mask. In the end, Christiane regains her humanity — although perhaps not in precisely the way we might expect, vanishing into the darkness in a cloud of doves.

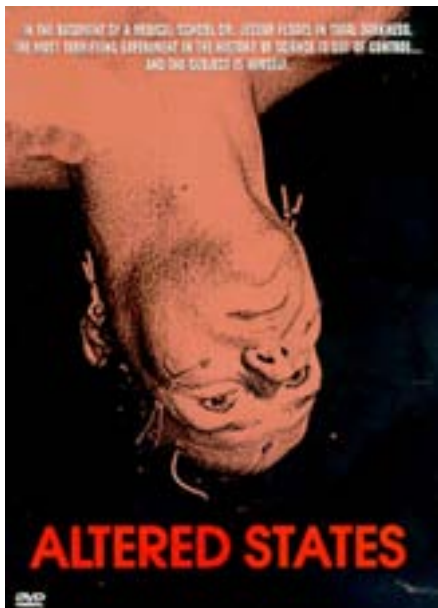
On the one hand, *Les yeux sans visage* is a mad-scientist fairy tale in the tradition of *Professor Cyclops* or *Island of Lost Souls*; on the other, it's one of the three movies (along with Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* and Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom*, both 1960) that created the modern slasher-shocker. Like Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus*, *Les yeux sans visage* is enriched by free-floating allusions to then-recent European history. It takes no stretch of the imagination to hear the hounds of "night and fog" or see the coldly psychopathic Genessier as a Nazi scientist. Even crueler than the operation at the movie's center is the utter callousness with which he buries someone else's daughter, pretending she's his own.

J. Hoberman, Village Voice ; October 29, 2003.

11. Juli **Altered States**

US 1980. Regie: Ken Russell. Mit William Hurt, Blair Brown, Bob Balaban, Charles Haid, Thao Penghlis, Drew Barrymore. 102 min. OF.

William Hurt als Bewusstseinsforscher, der auf eine höhere Daseinsebene vorstoßen will, indem er mit halluzinogenen Drogen im Isolationstank experimentiert. Während er einer Vision des kollektiven Unbewussten näher zu kommen glaubt, beginnt sein Körper rapide zu verfallen. Eine Allegorie, vom exzentrischen Stilisten Ken Russell, der ohnehin gern wie ein mad scientist inszenierte, weniger profund als psychedelisch angelegt: Rasant, gutaussehend und geisteskrank (unsterbliche Dialogzeile: „This is your brain on drugs“).



I can tell myself intellectually that this movie is a fiendishly constructed visual and verbal roller coaster, a movie deliberately intended to overwhelm its audiences with sensual excess. I know all that, and yet I was overwhelmed, I was caught up in its headlong energy.

Is that a worthy accomplishment for a movie? Yes, I suppose it is, if the movie earns it by working as hard as *Altered States* does. This is, at last, the movie that Ken Russell was born to direct — the same Ken Russell whose wretched excesses in the past include *The Music Lovers*, *The Devils*, and *Lisztomania*. The formula is now clear. Take Russell's flair for visual pyrotechnics and apocalyptic sexuality, and channel it through just enough scientific mumbo jumbo to give it

form. The result may be totally meaningless, but while you're watching it you are not concerned.

The movie is based on a Paddy Chayevsky novel, which was, in turn, inspired by the experiments of Dr. John Lilly, the man who placed his human subjects in total immersion tanks — floating them in total darkness so that their minds, cut off from all external reality, could play along the frontiers of sanity. In *Altered States*, William Hurt plays a Harvard scientist named Jessup who takes such an experiment one step further, by ingesting a drug made from the sacred hallucinatory mushrooms of a primitive tribe. The strange thing about these mushrooms, Hurt observes in an easily missed line of dialogue in the movie, is that they give everyone who takes them the same hallucinatory vision. Perhaps it is our cellular memory of creation: There is chaos, and then a ball of light, and then the light turns into a crack, and the crack opens onto Nothing, and that is all there was and all there will be, except for life, which has its only existence in the mind.

Got that? It hardly matters. It is a breathtaking concept, but *Altered States* hardly slows down for it. This is the damnedest movie to categorize. Just when it begins to sound like a 1960s psychedelic fantasy, a head trip — it turns into a farce. The scientist immerses himself in his tank for too long,

he regresses to a simian state, physically turns into some kind of ape, attacks the campus security guards, is chased by a pack of wild dogs into the local zoo, and kills and eats a sheep for his supper before turning back into the kindly Professor Jessup, the Intellectual Hulk.



The movie splits up into three basic ingredients: The science, the special effects, and the love relationship between the professor and his wife. The science is handled deliciously well. We learn as much as we need to (that is, next to nothing) about total immersion, genetics, and the racial memory. Then come the special effects, in four long passages and a few short bursts. They're good. They may remind you at times of the sound-and-light extravaganza

toward the end of *2001*, but they are also supposed to evoke the birth of the universe in a pulsating celestial ovum. In the center of this vision is Dr. Jessup, his body pulsing in and out of an apeshape, his mouth pulled into an anguished "O" as he protests the hell of being born. These scenes are reinforced by the music and are obviously intended to fuel the chemically altered consciousness of the next generation of movie cultists.

But then there is the matter of the love relationship between the professor and his wife (Blair Brown), and it is here that we discover how powerful the attraction of love really is. During the professor's last experiment, when he is disappearing into a violent whirlpool of light and screams on the laboratory floor, it is his wife who wades into the celestial mists, gets up to her knees in eternity, reaches in, and pulls him out. And this is despite the fact that he has filed for divorce. The last scene is a killer, with the professor turning into the protoplasm of life itself, and his wife turning into a glowing shell of rock-like flesh, with her inner fires glowing through the crevices (the effect is something like an overheated Spiderman). They're going through the unspeakable hell of reliving the First Moment, and yet as the professor, as Man, bangs on the walls and crawls toward her, and she reaches out, and the universe rocks, the Man within him bursts out of the ape-protoplasm, and the Woman within her explodes back into flesh, and they collapse into each other's arms, and all the scene really needs at that point is for him to ask, "Was it as good for you as it was for me?"

Altered States is a superbly silly movie, a magnificent entertainment, and a clever and brilliant machine for making us feel awe, fear, and humor. That is enough. It's pure movie and very little meaning. Did I like it? Yeah, I guess I did, but I wouldn't advise trying to think about it very deeply.

Roger Ebert, Chicago Sun-Times, January 1, 1980.

16. Juli **Save the Green Planet!**

Südkorea 2003. Regie: Jeong Jun-hwan. Mit Shin Ha-kyun, Baek Yun-shik, Hwang Jeong-min, Lee Jae-yong, Lee Ju-hyeon, Gi Ju-bong. 118 min. OmeU.

Bei der nächsten Mondfinsternis wird der Prinz von Andromeda auf ein Signal seiner irdischen Komplizen hin die Welt erobern. Nur Lee Byong-gu kann die Erde retten: In selbstgebastelter Superheldenuniform entführt er einen wichtigen Manager (und vermeintlichen Alien-Agenten), um im heimischen Untergrundlabor die Wahrheit aus ihm zu foltern. Vielleicht spinnt Lee aber einfach auch nur. Und es wäre auch Wahnsinn, mehr als die Eröffnung dieses im Minutentakt Überraschungen auftischenden, hochrasanten, mühelosen Genre-Crossover-Geniestreichs zu verraten.



Mad conspiracy rules in Korean writer-director Jang Jun-hwan's snazzy, playful, somewhat gory, often hilarious, and generally unpredictable first feature. *Save the Green Planet!* opens with a bang — a pair of wackos in homemade superhero gear abducting a middle-aged business tycoon in an underground garage — and never looks back. The protagonist of Jang's early short *2001 Imagine* believed himself to be the reincarnation of John Lennon; here, the 35-

year-old filmmaker posits a more elaborately delusional antihero. It is Lee Byeong-gu's contention that Kang Man-shik, the CEO of a chemical corporation for which Lee used to work, is a creature from outer space — an Andromedan prince, to be precise. The earth is being taken over by these extraterrestrial beings, with the destruction of the planet scheduled for the next lunar eclipse. Indeed, as Lee explains to his blank, dumpy female accomplice Sooni, Kang is the "perfect" specimen, with "no trace of alien."

Once Lee and Sooni have imprisoned Kang in the sub-basement of the strange, strange ramshackle chalet they call home, Lee sets about proving Kang's Andromedan nature by applying nasal spray to his feet. With earth's would-be savior babbling nonstop nonsense as he sets about torturing his stoic captive, *Save the Green Planet!* establishes a powerful sense of mania. That Lee is a beekeeper and Sooni, a sometime tightrope walker, calls him "honey" only adds to the sense of derangement.

Like the season's other Korean release, Park Chanwook's *Oldboy*, Jang's movie is a heady mélange of revenge, hallucination, and Grand Guignol. *Save the Green Planet!* shares its star (Shin Ha-kyun) and something of its tone with Park's 2002 thriller *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*, but is less oppressively claustrophobic than *Oldboy*, a machine-tooled fantasia in which every surface seems lacquered with sweat. Not only does *Green Planet* appear to reference a number of turbulent incidents from South Korea's recent past, but Jang's delivery is engagingly loose. His one-movie

new wave makes adroit use of photos, surveillance cams, animated drawings, newsreel footage, and a recurring, discordant version of "Over the Rainbow."



Shifting gears from wacky to suspenseful to sadistic, *Save the Green Planet!* is consistent only in its flash and characters — the movie is populated by multiple crazies, including the eccentric detective who, dropping in on Lee, manages to not notice anything odd until he finds a dog gnawing on a human bone. The movie starts like a creepy-crawly *Silence of the Lambs*-style policier with eco-hysterical overtones and — zooming back to put human history in the most atrocious possible perspective — winds up somewhere beyond *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, if not underground paranoidist Craig Baldwin's *Tribulation 99*. Among other things, Jang contrives the funniest death-of-the-dinosaurs theory and *2001* parody that I've ever seen, and there's a comedy control-room Armageddon ready-made for William Burroughs.

What's most remarkable about this lurid, wildly busy spectacle is how serious it can be — that is, how poignant and poetic. It's hard not to be touched by Lee's vision of his mother (who has been put in a coma by an industrial accident) telling him that he alone can save the earth or the idea that, although the green planet may explode, television will always remember us to the cosmos.

J. Hoberman, *Village Voice*, April 19th, 2005.

20. Juli **The Devil-Doll**

US 1936. Regie: Tod Browning. Mit Lionel Barrymore, Maureen O'Sullivan, Frank Lawton, Robert Greig, Lucy Beaumont, Rafaela Ottiano. 79 min. OF.

Klassiker des Horrorfilms. Ein zu Unrecht eingesperrter Bankier flieht aus dem Gefängnis, um seine früheren Partner als die wahren Schuldigen zu überführen und seinen guten Namen wiederherzustellen. Dabei bedient er sich der Maske einer knorrigen Puppenmacherin und einer Formel, die Mensch und Tier auf ein Zehntel ihrer Körpergröße schrumpfen lässt. Bizarr schöner Eintrag ins Genre der Mad Scientists, an dessen Drehbuch kein Geringerer als Erich von Stroheim mitgewirkt hat: Genial die Szene, in der einer der Bösewichte als Weihnachtsschmuck vom Christbaum baumelt!

The British Board of Film Censors, distressed by the large harvest of horror that Hollywood had produced in 1935 - in addition to M-G-M's *Mark of the Vampire* and *Mad Love*, there had been Universal's *Werewolf of London*, *Bride of Frankenstein*, and most annoyingly, *The Raven*, a cartoonishly cruel Karloff-Lugosi vehicle which had drawn particular protest in the British press - announced that it would severely restrict horror entertainment. A strange ritual dance soon began between M-G-M and the British censors over *The Witch of Timbuctoo*, similar to the detailed Production Code Administration negotiations over script development that had become common in America.



Browning, Guy Endore, and Garrett Fort completed a script in the summer of 1935, based extremely loosely on the Merritt book. Their scenario centered on African witchcraft and a method by which human beings could be shrunk into living voodoo dolls. Duval, a revenge-seeking, wrongly convicted escapee from Devil's Island, returns with the magical secret to Paris, where, disguised as an old woman with a doll shop,

shrinks a band of Parisian Apaches, who carry out telepathic instructions to murder two of his enemies and terrorize a confession out of the third. He then commits suicide.

The Production Code Administration was uneasy with the script. But the real challenge came in late 1935 when the British Board of Film Censors ruled out the voodoo angle entirely. (...)

The studio removed all references to witchcraft, substituting a science-fictional rationale. As filmed, the story recounted the bizarre revenge of the now-renamed Paul Lavond (Lionel Barrymore), a Parisian banker framed by his crooked associates and condemned to Devil's Island. He escapes in the company of a mad scientist, Marcel (Henry B. Walthall), who, with his even more unbalanced wife, Malita (Rafaela Ottiano), has perfected a human miniaturization process. Their goal is benevolent, if a bit misguided: they believe that reducing the size of people is the perfect answer to overpopulation and dwindling resources. Marcel dies and Lavond moves to Paris with Malita,

planning to use mad science to aid his revenge. The perfectly shrunken homunculi have no will of their own - their brains are wiped clean in the downsizing - but they can be controlled telepathically, and carry tiny stilettos tipped with paralytic poison. Lavond assumes the disguise of an old woman, Madame Mandelip, whose toy store in Montmartre provides a perfect cover for manufacturing the deadly "devil dolls." Lavond places the creatures in the homes of his enemies, where they serve double duty as jewel thieves and paralysis-dispensing puppets to force confessions from Lavond's enemies, and exonerate him in the eyes of his daughter (Maureen O'Sullivan), who has grown up in his absence, convinced of his guilt. By eliminating the actual possibility of murder, the original revenge story had been softened almost to the point of cuteness, but at least it could pass the censors. (...)

The Devil-Doll revisits several Browning films, most obviously *The Unholy Three*, in which Chaney also used an old-lady disguise to case wealthy homes for jewels. *Dracula* is also evoked with its theme of mesmeric influence (like Lugosi, Barrymore spends significant time lingering below windows, projecting his will). *West of Zanzibar* and *The Road to Mandalay* are also thrown into the mix, with their themes of revenge and concealed identities between fathers and daughters.

To create the illusion of miniaturized humans and animals, the studio employed double-exposure optical printing techniques, but achieved far greater success by simply building gigantically oversized sets on the biggest M-G-M facility, sound stage no. 12. Browning shot *The Devil-Doll* in thirty-eight days. (...)

Frank S. Nugent of the New York Times enjoyed *The Devil-Doll*. "Not since *The Lost World*, *King Kong* and *The Invisible Man* have the camera wizards enjoyed such a field day. By use of the split screen, glass shots, over-sized sets, and other trick devices cherished of their kind, they have pieced together a photoplay which is grotesque, slightly horrible, and consistently interesting." *The Times* praised Browning for investing "essentially ridiculous episodes with a menacing, chilling quality which makes it impossible for you to consider them too lightly".

The Devil-Doll cost \$391,000 and made a \$68,000 profit, virtually the same cost-to-profit ratio as *Mark of the Vampire*. It came nowhere near the performance of his earlier work for Metro; by commercial comparison, even *The Thirteenth Chair* was a triumph. Browning's films were simply not earning. In the eyes of the studio, he had ceased to be a player. (...) Browning spent two long, inactive years trying to launch another project.

David J. Skal / Elias Savada, *Dark carnival: The Secret World of Tod Browning – Hollywood's Master of the Macabre*, Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1995.

25. Juli

Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb

UK 1964. Regie: Stanley Kubrick. Mit Peter Sellers, George C. Scott, Sterling Hayden, Keenan Wynn, Slim Pickens, James Earl Jones. 93 min. OF.

Die ultimative Weltuntergangskomödie. Ein wahnsinniger US-General namens Jack D. Ripper schickt die Bomber gen Russland, um „die Reinheit der Säfte zu wahren“, ein Haufen denkbar ungeeigneter Politiker und Militärs (darunter Peter Sellers ekstatisch in drei Rollen und George C. Scott in seiner besten) berät sich im Warroom, will die Katastrophe verhindern – und scheitert, natürlich, gründlich. Zur unvermeidlichen Apokalypse tröstet ein alter Schlager „We'll meet again, some sunny day . . .“

Dr. Strangelove ist vielleicht der letzte Film, in dem sich Kubrick noch als Zeitgenosse zeigt. Viele Anspielungen werden für das damalige Publikum leicht zu entschlüsseln gewesen sein. In Präsident Merken Muffley (Peter Sellers in einer von drei Inkarnationen) werden die Zuschauer den Demokraten Adlai Stevenson, nicht nur wegen der Glatze, wiedererkannt haben; General Turgidson (George C. Scott spielt ihn mit aufdringlicher Prägnanz als chauvinistischen



Kriegstreiber) repräsentiert die Falken im Stab Kennedys wie beispielsweise General LeMay; die Titelfigur (Sellers in einer weiteren Rolle) vereint Züge Henry Kissingers und des Zukunftsforschers Herman Kahn sowie Wernher von Brauns. (...) Kubrick verwendet eine Reihe ganz unterschiedlicher Strategien, um den Ernst seines Sujets zu unterlaufen, schöpft Genrekonventionen

aus (insbesondere die des Kriegsfilms) und knüpft an bewährte Traditionen der Satire an. Die spaßigen Rollennamen Jack D. Ripper, Buck Turgidson, Bat Guano, Major King Kong etc. - sind gleichermaßen der englischen restoration comedy wie dem zeitgenössischen Kabarett verpflichtet. Terry Southern empfahl sich mit seinem pikaresken Skandal-Roman *Candy*, in dem er die Psychoanalyse- und Orgasmushörigkeit im Amerika der Nachkriegszeit verhöhnt, für derlei Anzüglichkeiten. Erotik taucht in *Dr. Strangelove* in vielen Maskierungen und Sublimierungen auf, aber nur einmal in Gestalt einer Frau. Das Sperrfeuer der Anspielungen und Metaphern ist flächendeckend genug, um das gesamte Figurenensemble ausdauerndem Spott preiszugeben, aber eine Spur zu blindlings, um Situationen und Charaktere mit präziser Ironie auszuloten. Die Figur des Generals Jack D. Ripper wirft allerdings ein faszinierendes Schlaglicht auf die Sexualpathologie des Kalten Krieges. Er schildert seinem Adjutanten Mandrake (Sellers in seiner dritten Rolle) seine Theorie über die perfide Bedrohung der lebenswichtigen Körpersäfte durch die kommunistische Weltverschwörung und eröffnet ihm, er sei ihr erstmals beim Liebesakt auf die Spur gekommen und habe die Zeichen der Erschöpfung sofort richtig gedeutet: "I do not avoid

women, Mandrake, but I do deny them my essence.“ Daß der Verweigerung des Orgasmus die gleichen Mechanismen wie dem globalen Machtkampf der Supermächte zugrunde liegen könnten, ist eine Diagnose, der sich mancher Analytiker anschließen würde. (...)

Auch wenn verschiedene Spielarten der Kriegsführung - Strategie, Luftkampf, die Erstürmung des Stützpunktes durch Infanterieeinheiten - durchexerziert werden, bleibt der Konflikt im Film abstrakt. Die „gegnerische“ Seite bekommt man nie zu Gesicht, selbst die Rakete, die den Bomber trifft, ist nur auf dem Radarbildschirm zu sehen. Es gibt, vorerst, keine Opfer. Die Auslöschung der Weltbevölkerung scheint Kubrick nur darstellbar in der graphischen Abstraktion einer gigantischen Anzeigetafel im war room. Der Zuschauer wird nur mit Entscheidungsträgern, Politikern und Militärs konfrontiert. Kubrick verfolgt diese Abstraktion konsequent; die eigentlich Betroffenen sitzen in den Reihen der Kinos. Das erzählerische Räderwerk von *Dr. Strangelove* wird regelmäßig von Kommunikationskrisen in Gang gehalten. Kubrick, der ja bald selbst ein sich Verbarrikadierender werden sollte, erforscht den fatalen Zusammenhang zwischen Weltferne, Kontrolle und Allmachtsphantasien. (...)

Das Drehbuch greift die stabile Dreiecksstruktur auf. Regelmäßig wechseln Kubrick und seine Co-Autoren zwischen drei Schauplätzen, den Gliedern der unterbrochenen Befehlskette: dem war room, der Luftwaffenbasis und dem B-52-Bomber. Mit jedem Umschnitt wird die Schraube des Verderbens eine weitere Drehung angezogen. Zugleich entreißt die Parallelmontage den Zuschauer regelmäßig den doch irgendwie behaglichen Momenten exzessiver Lächerlichkeit und schafft für den Augenblick des Umschnitts eine Distanz, die den Ernst der Lage ins Gedächtnis zurückruft. (...)

Kubricks Szenarium hält Krieg und Zerstörung bis zu den letzten Minuten im Wartestand: Ein Kurzschluß verhindert, daß sich die Luken öffnen, Major Kong versucht, die Bombe per Hand zu lösen, die Zeit drängt, das Ziel ist schon in Sichtweite. Spätestens hier kehrt Kubrick die von Hitchcock aufgestellten Prinzipien des Suspense - die emotionale Anteilnahme des Publikums, seine Identifikation mit den Protagonisten - ins Gegenteil um. Es ist ein paradoxer, misanthropischer Suspense. Im Roman war die Bombe zu schwer beschädigt, um zu detonieren; im Film obsiegt Kubricks Pessimismus. Er zieht den Zuschauern ein letztes Mal vertrauten Boden unter den Füßen weg, wenn er im Abspann über die Dokumentaraufnahmen von Atomexplosionen das Lied „We'll Meet Again“ legt, einen Schlager, der zur Zeit des Zweiten Weltkriegs populär war und in dem das Publikum seine Sehnsüchte und Hoffnungen sentimental bestätigt finden konnte. Angesichts dieses präzedenzlosen Schreckens ist er völlig deplaziert, als wolle Kubrick um jeden Preis belegen, daß nicht nur die Reaktionen der Figuren dem Anlaß unangemessen sind, sondern auch die des Zuschauers. (...) Coursodon und Tavernier nennen Kubricks Haltung eine „Misanthropie, die nicht in Berufung geht“.

In: Andreas Kilb / Rainer Rother u.a., Stanley Kubrick, Bertz ,1999.

6. August **Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery**

US/D 1997. Regie: Jay Roach. Mit Mike Myers, Elizabeth Hurley, Michael York, Mimi Rogers, Robert Wagner, Seth Green, Charles Napier, Will Ferrell. 94 min. OmU.

„Allow myself to introduce. . . myself!“ Mike Myers als in der Gegenwart wieder aufgetauter Sixties-Agent Austin Powers, der den Widerspruch zwischen seinen echt schlechten Zähnen und seiner libidinösen Veranlagung nicht wahrhaben will – sowie als dessen ewiger Widersacher Dr. Evil, der den Widerspruch zwischen seinen größtenwahnsinnigen Weltherrschaftsplänen und seiner generellen Inkompetenz nicht wahrhaben will. Eine psychedelisch-ausgelassene, liebevolle Parodie auf Agentenfilm-Klischees à la Bond.

Only in the mind of Mike Myers is the swinging, go-go private eye a figure in need of reinventing. Nonetheless, Mr. Myers throws himself wholeheartedly into the job of bringing a desperately hip, sweetly funny throwback named Austin Powers to life. Austin returns in 1997 after 30 years' worth of cryogenic freezing, and his ruffled shirt and silly grin remain unchanged. Don't blame yourself for never having noticed he was gone.



Yet Mr. Myers turns his own fondness for Austin into an easily acquired taste. *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* is as goofy and throwaway as the *Brady Bunch* movies, but it has the same winking appreciation of vintage kitsch. And its touch is similarly light, given that the range of this parody covers all the trends and attitudes that once made Austin the toast of Carnaby Street. (He is first seen being chased through London streets by a mob of women in full mod regalia. It must be that two-inch-wide shiny white belt of Austin's that drives them wild.)



Written by Mr. Myers and cheerfully directed by Jay Roach, *Austin Powers* mixes movie parody with culture shock. As it sends up *James Bond*, assorted Peter Sellers films and the smarmy playboy heroes of many forgettable detective romps,

this comedy also enjoys the thought of Austin as pure anachronism. Fabulously out of touch, he comes bounding into 1997 with a taste for Burt Bacharach love songs (Mr. Bacharach does a sporting cameo here) and once-suave lingo. The catch phrase that could catch on: Austin's smug little lion tamer exclamation, "Oh, behaaave!"

If, like Austin, you're inclined to say "This sort of thing ain't my bag, baby," think twice. *Austin Powers*, like its hero, has a delightfully misplaced faith in its own relevance. This comedy can be sophomoric, but at some moments it's also unexpectedly sharp. And the film's singlemindedness is so dauntless and just plain nutty that it's hard to resist.

Like *This Is Spinal Tap*, *Austin Powers* takes faintly laughable pop effluvia and finds the makings of a permanent giggle. Complacent macho spies will never look the same, nor will the kind of film that plays the opening bars of "Rule Britannia" to indicate a scene shot in England. This satire also sends up its antiquated genre with useless, important-sounding titles and with a purring female voice heard during Austin's time-travel stage. When, after being frozen and stored between fellow artifacts Gary Coleman and Vanilla Ice, he is brought back to full grooviness, the voice explains: "Stage two. Warm liquid goo phase beginning."

Austin returns to a life of intrigue with Elizabeth Hurley as his sidekick, playing something like a feminist Jean Shrimpton, and a nemesis who is succinctly named Dr. Evil. The star plays this role, too, and he's even more comfortable as a bald, scarred Ed Sullivan type with a taste for world domination. Dr. Evil sits in the obligatory high-tech conference room and commands an army of hench people, among them the "founder of the militant wing of the Salvation Army."

In his spare time, he is also the father of a rebellious teen-age son who doesn't understand him. "But Scott," Dr. Evil asks plaintively, "who's going to take over the world when I die?" Carrie Fisher has a funny scene as the jargon-spouting counselor who tries to help work out these father-son difficulties in group therapy.

Among the better bits here is a climactic showdown, with Robert Wagner as a villain in an eye patch and Mr. Myers and Ms. Hurley in silver lame. The last two are being lowered ("All right, guard: begin the unnecessarily slow-moving dipping mechanism!") into what is supposed to be a tank of sharks. As some measure of how the world has changed since Austin last enjoyed this kind of experience, no sharks are available to participate. They are endangered, so it's sea bass instead.

The film narrows its range and aims for a teen-age audience - a group that may be entirely oblivious to its jokey references - with bathroom jokes and frat house humor. Robotic babes in go-go boots fire weapons concealed in their bras, and there are elaborate sight gags in which symbolic props cover naked body parts.

Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*, May 2, 1997.

10. August **Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari**

D 1920. Regie: Robert Wiene. Mit Conrad Veidt, Werner Krauß, Lil Dagover, Friedrich Feher, Hans Heinz von Twardowski. 73 min. Stumm

Schattenspiel an grauer Wand. Ein hypnotisch schöner Somnambuler geht um, ermordet im Auftrag seines Herrn, des Hochstaplers Caligari, einen Beamten und raubt eine junge Frau aus ihrem Schlafgemach. Der definitive Klassiker unter den Klassikern des Horrorgenres – ein Film der grotesk verworfenen Dekors, krummen Nächte und beklemmenden Andeutungen. „Mit unserer Phantasie kann kein Kino mit“, so Kurt Tucholsky über Dr. Caligari, „die größte von allen Seltenheiten – ein guter Film. Mehr solcher!“



Die Originalhandlung spielt in einem erdichteten nordwestdeutschen Städtchen nahe der holländischen Grenze, das Holstenwall heißt. Eines Tages zieht dort ein Jahrmarkt ein, mit Karussells und allerhand Attraktionen - darunter der des Dr. Caligari, eines unheimlichen, bebrillten Mannes, der den Schlafwandler Cesare zur Schau stellt. Zur Beschaffung seiner Lizenz begibt sich Caligari zum Rathaus, wo ihn

ein anmaßender Beamter von oben herab behandelt. Am nächsten Morgen wird dieser Beamte ermordet in seiner Wohnung aufgefunden, was jedoch die Stadtbewohner nicht vom Besuch des Jahrmarkts abschreckt. Unter der Menge, die ins Zelt des Dr. Caligari strömt und dort Cesare langsam aus einer aufrechtstehenden, sargartigen Kiste hervortreten sieht, befinden sich auch Francis und Alan, zwei in Jane, eine Arzttochter, verliebte Studenten. Caligari erzählt dem schauernden Publikum, daß der Schlafwandler Fragen nach der Zukunft beantworten werde. Alan, stark erregt, will wissen, wie lange er noch zu leben habe. Cesare öffnet die Lippen; es ist, als werde er von gewaltigen hypnotischen Kräften gelenkt, die von seinem Herrn und Meister ausstrahlen. „Bis zum Morgengrauen“, antwortet er. Bei Tagesanbruch muß Francis erfahren, daß Alan genau in derselben Weise wie jener Beamte erdolcht worden ist. Der Student, der Caligari in Verdacht hat, überredet Janes Vater, ihm bei seinen Nachforschungen behilflich zu sein. (...)

Caligari zeigt die Seele am Werk. Auf welche Abenteuer läßt sich die revolutionierte Seele ein? Die erzählerischen und bildlichen Elemente des Films drängen zwei einander entgegengesetzten Polen zu. Der eine mag „Autorität“ genannt werden oder deutlicher: „Tyrannei“. Das Thema der Tyrannei, von dem die Autoren wie besessen waren, zieht sich vom Anfang bis zum Ende durch den Film. Drehstühle von unglaublicher Höhe versinnbildlichen die Überlegenheit der städtischen Beamten, die sich auf ihnen hin- und herdrehen; und nicht anders zeugt die gigantische Stuhllehne in Alans Dachstube von der Gegenwart unsichtbarer Mächte, die ihn in ihrer Gewalt haben, Treppen verstärken die Wirkung des Mobiliars: so führen zahlreiche Stufen zur Polizeiwache hinan;

und in der Irrenanstalt selbst sind nicht weniger als drei parallele Treppenfluchten aufgebogen, um Dr. Caligaris Stellung an der Spitze der Hierarchie zu kennzeichnen. (...)

Gegenpol ist nun in Wirklichkeit der Sammelpunkt von Elementen, die sich auf den Jahrmarkt beziehen, den Jahrmarkt mit seinen Zeltreihen, seinem Menschengewimmel und seinen verschiedenartigen Sensationen. Hier mischen sich Francis und Alan freudig erregt unter die Gaffer; hier, auf dem Schauplatz seiner Triumphe, wird Dr. Caligari zu guter Letzt überführt. In ihren Versuchen, dem Sinngehalt des Jahrmarkts beizukommen, beschwören literarische Quellen wiederholt die Erinnerung an das biblische Babel herauf. Die Art und Weise, wie sich diese biblischen Bilder aufdrängen, zeigt, daß der Jahrmarkt eine Enklave der Anarchie im Gebiet der Vergnügungen ist. (...)

Mag es Absicht sein oder nicht, *Caligari* legt eine Seele bloß, die zwischen Tyrannei und Chaos hin und her gezerrt wird. Sie ist in einer verzweifelten Lage, denn auf ihrer Flucht vor der Tyrannei gerät sie unausweichlich in einen Zustand äußerster Verwirrung. Es ist daher nur folgerichtig, daß der Film eine alles durchdringende Atmosphäre des Grauens verbreitet. Die Gleichsetzung von Grauen und Hoffnungslosigkeit erreicht ihren Höhepunkt in der Schlußepisode, die das Alltagsleben wiederherzustellen sucht. Abgesehen von der zweideutigen Figur des Direktors und den etwas schattenhaften Ärzten und Wärtern, macht sich die Rückkehr zur Normalität dadurch bemerkbar, daß man die Menge der Irren in ihrer wunderlichen Umgebung auf und ab wandeln sieht. Das Normale als Irrenhaus: die Vereitelung aller Hoffnungen könnte nicht drastischer dargestellt werden. Und in dieser sind Sadismus und Zerstörungslust an der Tagesordnung. Das wiederholte Vorkommen solcher Züge auf der Leinwand zeugt von der Rolle, die sie damals in der Kollektivseele spielten.

Siegfried Kracauer, *Von Caligari zu Hitler, Eine psychologische Geschichte des deutschen Films*, Suhrkamp, 1984.

Kracauer sah in *Caligari* eine Tyrannen-Figur - eine Sicht, die gerechtfertigt erscheint, wenn man sieht, wie er seinen Somnambulen unter Kontrolle hält und wie er als Direktor einer Irrenanstalt agiert. In anderer Hinsicht jedoch - in seiner Haltung gegenüber den wohlbestallten Autoritäten und der guten Gesellschaft Holstenwalls - ist er, wie Langs Mabuse, eine gefährliche subversive Kraft. Aber er kann auch nicht allein als negativer Charakter beschrieben werden. Selbst wenn man ihn für jenen mordenden mad scientist hält, den Francis in ihm sieht, sind unsere Reaktionen auf ihn doch komplex und doppeldeutig. Immerhin ist er die einzige Figur im Film, die ihrer Natur folgt, unabhängig von den Konsequenzen. *Caligari* ist der einzige, der sein Leben voll ausschöpft, und dessen Fall - wenn es sich denn um einen Fall handeln sollte - etwas von tragischer Größe in sich birgt.

Uli Jung / Walter Schatzberg, Robert Wiene: *Der Caligari-Regisseur*, Henschel, 1995.