

Another Wormwood success

# Hunger satisfies

by William Dodge

Now a reputable shot-in-the-dark operation, Wormwood's Dog and Monkey Society runs the risk of being boycotted for consistently screening material far too commendable for the everyday aspiring pan-artist.

What happens to a hired assassin (a critic who conspires with muckrakers) when the usual Hollywood-gum-ball-of-a-plot isn't there quacking away like a convenient sitting-duck, begging for nasty quips or at least a Marx Brothers reunion? Don't tell me the peanut gallery is finally stumped?

Hunger, a 1966 Norwegian film written and directed by Henning Carlsen, is simply stunning. A towering achievement, this film breathes with a tragic beauty unparalleled in motion picture history. Or let's just say, this cultural snob loved it.

The screenplay by Henning Carlsen is based on Knut Hamsen's novel about the trials of a young writer in late 19th century Christiania (now called Oslo). The film lends itself to both a subjective viewing, from the perspective of the writer whose peculiar struggle and sensibility prevent him from finding any conventional work, and from a more political viewing, namely of the society that exists in direct antagonism to the artist's sensibility.

Swedish actor Per Oscarsson is utterly convincing in his portrayal of the writer. He captures the writer's stumbling idiosyncracies and deliriums with gestures that

combine both a Chaplinesque courtesy to crusty old boots and street beggars, and the more tragic pleas of a figure whose entire worth diminishes with each visit to the pawnbroker.

The film is shot in black and white and despite the poor quality of the print, many striking techniques and rich tones successfully explore the writer's neurosis. One particularly strong scene occurs in a nightmare where the writer is down on all fours, on a cobblestone lane, stalking and growling at a vicious-looking dog. Brilliant whites obscure the edges of the frame and give the scene a completely surreal atmosphere. The same brilliant white is used throughout the film to convey the writer's delirium and gradual loss of strength.

Other images are particularly strong as well. The aristocracy is found under a bowler hat, sporting a cane as he strolls through the park and sits with a dignified air on the very same park bench which the hungry artist is sitting on, writing. The writer quickly insists that this dignified piece of aristocracy get up and sit elsewhere because he is accustomed to sitting alone when he works.

Whenever a policeman appears ready to arrest this pale, emaciated man sleeping on a park bench or stooped over in a street, delirious, and gagging on some food which he can't hold down, the artist quickly composes himself and asks the policeman what time



it is. The bewildered policeman does not know that the correct time corresponds symbolically to man's fate and the writer either praises or hurls abuse at him for not knowing the real time.

The writer's own efforts to find work are continually frustrated. When he writes a letter of application for a grocery clerk job, the owner refuses him the position because he has incorrectly dated the letter 1848. It is actually 1890. The owner informs him that he can not hire a man who is sloppy with figures. The artist then apologizes and says the date was the result of some slight preoccupation of

his. Of course no reference is made but 1848 is the year Karl Marx wrote the Communist Manifesto and revolutions took place all over Europe. A slight preoccupation, he says.

Another striking scene in the film revolves around the writer's infatuation with a woman he sees strolling through the park one day. He follows her home.

We know, eventually, the writer and the muse must confront each other. She daringly invites him up to her apartment one night when the maid and her mother happen to be out, but after teasing him she decides too many of his hairs are falling out at a rather early

age. Again, his sensitivity only reinforces the solitude society has condemned him too. He leaves her apartment embittered by the realization that though he is willing to exist on a trifle, there is no place for him in the society she symbolizes.

"The question, for all those who cannot live without art and what it signifies," said Albert Camus, "is merely to find out how, among the police forces of so many ideologies (how many churches, what solitude!), the strange liberty of creation is possible."

## Musical Hegelian

by Eric Simpson

What did Ludwig von Beethoven and Georg W.F. Hegel have in common besides the year of their birth? According to James Stark of Mount Allison University both of these giants of the 19th century captured the spirit of the age in the dialectical method.

Dr. Stark, a reknowned

vocalist and the author of several books on music history, concentrated on the Eroica Symphony No. 3 in E Flat Major Opus 55 and the famous Symphony No. 5 in C Minor Opus 67 during a lecture he gave on January 11 in conjunction with the **Words about Music** series sponsored by the Dalhousie Department of Music.

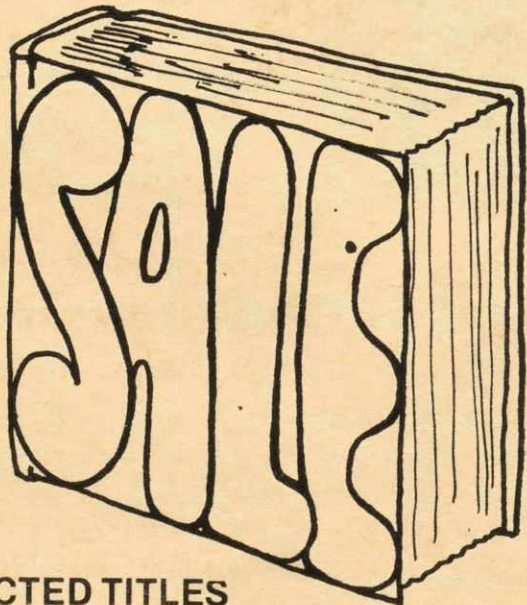
Stark said the antagonistic forces of contradiction expressed theoretically in Hegel's philosophy are found in musical reality in the work of Beethoven. The music of Beethoven, in a constant state of becoming, moves relentlessly through the three stages of the dialectic (thesis, antithesis and synthesis) to a final resolution. Stark considered the coda and the recapitulation forms of synthesis and he said that the first movement of the Eroica was "a perfect example of the Hegelian dialectic in a piece of music." Stark described the opposition found in the Eroica as a restless striving against a stasis stability.

Beethoven, in a break with tradition, introduced the first concrete examples of a rigorous movement through conflict and change to powerful resolution.

Although the lecture was more musically pleasing than philosophically accurate, the two hours were enjoyable. We await the attempt to relate Kant and Bach. Or perhaps Sartre and Bob Dylan.

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