

Juxtaposition of real and unreal

Haines's Steppenwolf is faithful to Hesse

By IAN BALFOUR

The filming of Hermann Hesse's novel *Steppenwolf* is an ambitious venture for any director. If the novel is to survive the translation of medium, sophisticated visual technique is requisite. Fred Haines, responsible for the filming of *Ulysses*, has undertaken the imposing task with not unmitigated success.

Thomas Mann thought Hesse's 1927 novel as daring as Joyce's *Ulysses*. Though somewhat of an exaggeration, Mann's dictum was close to the truth. Both thematically and structurally Hesse's novel was a pioneer work. It far surpassed his early, simplistic novels in the Romantic tradition as well as his initial Jungian gropings that found expression in *Demian*.

Steppenwolf traces the individuation process of Harry Haller, a middle-aged author not at peace with himself or his milieu, the prototype of the modern, alienated intellectual. The novel presents Haller's inner struggle from a multiplicity of perspectives, which is one of its literary strengths, but a potential stumbling block to the film director. Haines, who has apparently been studying

Hesse for several years, has responded to his particular challenge in admirable fashion.

The *Steppenwolf* Treatise, which forms the second part of the novel, presents Harry Haller's character from an ironic, omniscient perspective. Haines ingeniously presents this section in animation, establishing the necessary change in viewpoint with a corresponding one in visual imagery.

As for the autobiographical section of the novel, Haines owes much to the example of Ingmar Bergman, particularly to the latter's films of the mid-fifties. Haines' oblique angles and steady pacing are reminiscent of *Wild Strawberries*, among other films. Throughout these sequences, Haines' chiaroscuro is remarkably faithful to Hesse's and is often visually quite engaging.

The Magic Theatre, a symbolic arena where Haller can enter the doors of his multi-faceted personality, is the most challenging part of the novel to the reader and is most difficult to render in visual terms. The action is pure surrealism and Haines has to resort to a variety of devices to capture Hesse's kaleidoscopic effect.



Hermine (Dominique Sanda) and Maria (Carla Romamelli) use their enigmatic looks to lure Harry Haller (Max von Sydow) into The Magic



Theatre — For Madmen Only, in Fred Haines's production of *Steppenwolf*, now playing at the Towne Cinema.

Most of this is accomplished through double matting, a device which enables characters to be presented against a painted background. If the visuals sometimes dangerously approach those of a psychedelic light show, at other times, the juxtaposition of real and unreal are quite amazing, as when Mozart conducts the music of the spheres.

Max von Sydow convincingly portrays Harry Haller, who faces the task of reconciling the animal

and civilized poles of his personality. Von Sydow is an experienced Bergman actor, who can capture the enigmatic, problematic character of Haller without leaving any rough edges. Dominique Sanda is less than stellar in her portrayal of Hermine, Harry's female alter ego who seduces him into the exploration of his soul. And Pierre Clementi is only two-dimensional as Pablo-Mozart, Hermine's partner in leading Harry to realize that humour is the principle

whereby the warring elements of his spirit can be reconciled.

George Gruntz' has contributed a very intelligent score which blends Mozart and jazz to good effect and complements the visual action.

Hesse is met with misunderstanding, exaggerated praise on the part of his cult followers and reactionary cynicism on the part of most academics. The merit of Hesse's achievement, as of Haines' film probably lies somewhere between these two extremes.

**Heroes close to the edge
Kotcheff explores drive**

By AGNES KRUCHIO

"There is a Yahoo in each of us," said Ted Kotcheff in an interview this week.

The director of such successful films as *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, *Outback*, and *Edna the Inebriate Woman* (a film that won all the major awards in England two years ago), was the guest of the film department last week.

Kotcheff was referring to the transformation of the hero in his film, *Outback*, a film about an Australian schoolteacher, who, on holidays, becomes caught up in a bloody kangaroo hunt. A friendly, energetic, unpretentious man, Kotcheff was answering students' questions during his two day visit.

"In some ways, although it was about Australia, *Outback* was my first Canadian film," he said. "The people in the *Outback* share the problems of our northland, of being trapped in seemingly endless space.

"I really felt for those people in the *Outback*; they live in incredibly inhospitable surroundings. They are brutalized by the environment. Someone there once said to me, 'It's death to farm out here, it's worse than death; do you want them to sing opera as well?'"

"*Outback* is about a man who has all sorts of illusions about himself. We all find that we are capable of all sorts of things that are morally wrong. This schoolteacher finds

that he can get caught up in the excitement of a chase and neither his education, nor his character, will shield him from this confrontation with the environment.

"All my characters seem to share the same quality of being people who don't know themselves very well, but who have an obsession, a deep drive, and they throw themselves into all sorts of situations where they could come face to face with themselves."

Starting out at the CBC before he ever got on the air, Kotcheff began directing television drama at the age of 24. Emigrating to England in 1957, he directed television and theatre plays; he had some seven plays to his credit before he made his first film in 1963, *Tiara Tahiti* ("which I like to hide"), and in 1965 he made *Life at the Top*, with Laurence Harvey and Jean Simmons; in between he directed more plays and musicals.

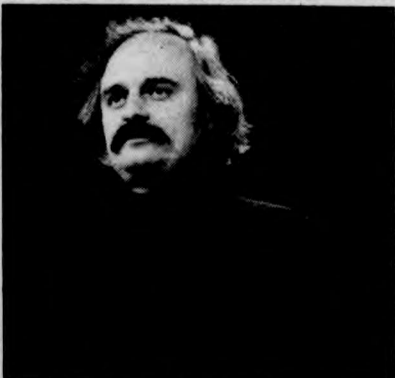
"I like working with actors, and from time to time I come back to experiment with actors, a pastime for which you have neither time nor opportunity in the public glare of film-making. The theatre is more private — it's just you and the actor; it's really refreshing for me."

He first came back to Canada in 1973 to make *Duddy*, and now has lived in Los Angeles for the past five or six months. But he wants to live here.

"The ideal would be to station myself in Toronto or Montreal, and have American financing," he said.

"Films are going to be very crucial for Canada; I think this country doesn't know very much about itself, and that's its problem. Films are the first sign of self-examination. *Duddy* was part of that process, and so was *Going Down the Road*. I have seen some very interesting stuff."

He is planning two new films. He will visit Toronto to shoot one, a tragi-comedy produced by United Artists, sometime in June or July.



Ted Kotcheff

Tremblay's Bonjour La Bonjour**Play reveals society's 'marginals'**

By MIRA FRIEDLANDER

"What I wanted to do this time was to describe two ordinary, day-by-day marginals, a boy and a girl, who are marginals because they are lovers, though they're brother and sister," says Michel Tremblay, in reference to *Bonjour la, Bonjour*, now at the Tarragon. "Some think they are monsters, but they are the only normal people; the rest, who are supposed to be normal, are the real monsters."

If one takes Tremblay at his word, the statement that this play makes seems to be a questionable one. If he is using the theme of incest to make a comment upon society's prejudices in dealing with their marginals, he has not been clear enough in his use of parallels.

There is no other choice but incest for the boy, coming out of a family in which he has been reared all his life by four sisters. His oldest sister claims that he would have been better off to have become a homosexual, that this was his only escape, and he didn't take it. Being a homosexual being preferable to becoming involved in incest, is only a value on a social scale for what is "normal".

Tremblay has drawn three of the sisters in great depth, showing them all to be in severe stages of neurosis, either from too much money and not enough challenge, from insecurity, or from paranoia.

Nicole, the sister involved in the incestuous relationship, on the other hand, is a sketchily-drawn character, who appears on stage only in direct relation to her affair. At these moments she is an average "normal" woman, in love, and very aware and sensitive. This imbalance weighs the scales in favour of their relationship, and makes

them a totally empathetic young couple.

But does Nicole really have no problems beyond dealing with a society set against her? Wouldn't the very nature of the relationship and the struggle against society create some deep-rooted problems? Although the couple does question the advisability of breaking off, this information seems to be hastily thrown in, rather than being a very serious consideration. Some of the real questions in such a relationship Tremblay never deals with.

In order to deal with a new type of "marginal" in a dramatic context, Tremblay has sacrificed a certain amount of perception, to further his theatrical aims. This is a pity, for there is great potential here for an in-depth analysis. One is left with two opposing viewpoints, the first being that he is championing incest, the second, that he is showing how the roots of "abnormalities" take hold. The larger question of "marginals" in relationship to

their society gets lost in the use of incest as the vehicle for this purpose.

In Glassco's production, the eccentricity of the other characters in relation to the couple heightens this problem. Although the company is strong as an ensemble, and works cleverly with an inventive set, the characters are just a touch too cliché.

The one exception is Ed McNamara as Gabriel, whose subtle underplaying of the lines gives strength and pathos to his portrayal as the father. The boy, Serge, played by Jim Henshaw, unfortunately accentuates his feeling of family entrapment by constant grimaces and looks of confusion, that tend to give his character a semi-puppet appearance.

Tremblay's script is undoubtedly an interesting and controversial one, and perhaps with some work on it, could be more so. At this moment, it is still very much a 'script in progress.'

Janet Amos and Jim Henshaw in *Bonjour La Bonjour*