

Scott MacDonald
"Screen Writings"

William Greaves

When William Greaves's 1968 feature *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* surfaced in 1991, it was a double-leveled surprise. It surprised those who assumed they were familiar with the major independent and experimental films of the sixties, and it surprised those who believed they understood Greaves's career, first, as a stage and film actor and a teacher of actors (in 1980 Greaves shared the Actors Studio's first Dusa Award with Marlon Brando, Robert De Niro, Jane Fonda, and others) and, subsequently, as a director and producer of documentary films: between 1952 and 1960 he worked on eighty films at the National Film Board of Canada; he then returned to the United States, where he has made dozens of documentaries (and several feature-length fiction films), including *The First World Festival of Negro Arts* (1966), *In the Company of Men* (1969), *Ali, the Fighter* (1971), *From These Roots* (1974), *Booker T. Washington: The Life and the Legacy* (1982), *Frederick Douglass: An American Life* (1984), *That's*

Black Entertainment (1985), and *Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice* (1989), to name a few. Neither Greaves's distinguished career in acting nor his prolific career as documentarian seemed to account for *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*—and yet, as fully as any film he has made, his feature-length critique of the filmmaking process combines his interest in acting and in actors with his need to document and interpret real events.

Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One was conceived as merely one part of a multipartite project ("take one" of a series of "takes") that would involve a crew filming various man-woman couples interpreting a basic scenario Greaves had devised: a painful argument in which the woman complains about the abortions her lover has pressured her to have and claims that he has been having homosexual affairs, and the man temporizes and denies.¹ Greaves was interested in the argument as, at least in part, a metaphor for the social and political struggles of the

1. Greaves discusses *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* at some length in "Sunday in the Park with Bill," by Scott MacDonald, *The Independent*, vol. 15, no. 4 (May 1992): 24–29.

sixties and as a catalyst for an extended exploration of the filmmaking process itself. He arranged the shoot so that multiple cameras would be running simultaneously: while sometimes the focus would be on the actors playing their roles, at other times, the camerapeople would focus on Greaves in conference with the actors, on the various camerapeople and sound people at work, and on the larger social context that surrounded the shoot in Central Park. And Greaves had decided in advance that he would act the part of a director who is not entirely clear about where the process he has set in motion is going, and that he would, subtly but relentlessly, frustrate crew and cast until they were in a state of rebellion. For Greaves, in other words, the *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* project was to be a metaphor for the sociopolitical experience of the sixties, a paean to rebellion against oppression—in this case, the oppression of the conventional, hierarchical power structure of director/actors/crew that had developed during the history of commercial cinema.

While the rebellion was slower and less violent than Greaves might have anticipated, it did occur. Part way through the shoot, the crew met secretly to discuss the project and filmed their discussion (they presented Greaves with the results at the conclusion of the shoot), and, ironically, when one of the actresses (Patricia Ree Gilbert) did storm away from Greaves in frustration, the crew, apparently no longer fully engaged in the process, failed to record the subsequent discussion between Gilbert and Greaves. By the conclusion of the shoot, Greaves had adequate material for at least five "takes," but no money to finance the completion of several features. In fact, it was not until 1971 that a seventy-seven-minute, 35mm blowup of *Take One* (with special split-screen effects Greaves had devised) could be struck—and even once he had a film in hand, Greaves couldn't

find a distributor willing to work with it. For all practical purposes, *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* disappeared until 1991, when it began to resurface at museums and festivals (in the United States, the Brooklyn Museum led the way with a Greaves retrospective).

As an actor and acting teacher, Greaves has spent a good portion of his life interpreting a wide variety of scripts for both stage and screen, and in his work as documentarian he has used various types of visual text and scripted narration. Nevertheless, even for Greaves, *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* was an unusual amalgam of the actors' interpretations of his original scenario and the spontaneous comments of cast and crew during the shooting and, from time to time, of on-lookers: a group of teens watching the process, a mounted policeman wondering if Greaves has the necessary permits, and most notably a funny, eloquent, homeless alcoholic who drifts into the filming at the conclusion of *Take One*.

For *Screen Writings*, Greaves has kindly given me permission to publish the notes he made as he worked on the *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* project, as well as an excerpt from *Take One* that begins with the passage of dialogue between Alice and Freddy that leads to Patricia Ree Gilbert's announcement to Greaves of her frustration with how the shoot is going. The excerpt includes a brief exchange with Greaves before they walk away from the cameras and mikes and then continues with a segment of the crew's secret discussion, with Gilbert and Fellows repeating their scene, with the crew in another discussion of the project (this time outdoors with Greaves), and, finally, with the homeless man's opening comment. Following the excerpt from the film are the program notes Greaves wrote for the Brooklyn Museum retrospective in 1991. The notes explain the meaning and implications of the title and describe some of the film's theoretical background.

Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One

Director's Early Notes Prior to and during Production in the
Spring of 1968

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The film must be simplicity itself. It should be made effortlessly, no pain no strain, no forcing symbolism, etc. All of that must be inherent in the chemical makeup of the SYMBIOPSYCHOTAXIPLASM operation. And yet the film is a series of analogies, metaphors, similes. Things standing for other things, a microcosm of the world, a fragment of the Godhead which is made up of other Godhead fragments.

It is a free-fall in space. We simply don't know where we will land with this creative undertaking. It is a study of the creative process in action. Also, the film is Jazz! It is improvisation. It is an exploration into the future of cinema art.

The film is about fire! Life Fire which is all around us. The task of our cameras is to spot and film the fire until like water hoses, they put the fire out (in a similar way, the electron microscope destroys the character of the atom it is observing!). The film is free association. The camera dashes from fire to fire.

A personal note: Refuse to give a total explanation of the film! First of all it is impossible anyway, due to its complexity. Give only as much of an explanation as will satisfy the performers and film crew. To give more will kill the truth and spontaneity of everyone.

Rumors of unrest and revolution in the crew should develop, should lead to encounters with the director.

The film is rebellion! Rebellion against traditional cinema form. The hippies on the crew are for love and rebellion, in contradistinction to the screen test characters, Alice and Freddy, who are suburbanites, caught in a life of conformity.

Part of the strength, along with the excitement and challenge of this project, is its basic conflict, which is that of identification . . . identification of the actor with the part, the characters with each other, the actors with the director, the crew with the script, with the actors, with the director etc.

What is the psychoanalytical significance of this piece? Is it a dream that has the facade of truth or truth with the facade of a dream? Is it chaos masquerading as order or order simulating chaos? The piece, i.e., this film, must be susceptible to analysis, and yet it must be as unfathomable as the cosmos.

A personal note to (myself): RE: The actors, Patricia Ree Gilbert & Don Fellows. Call Don about the work he did at the Actors Studio, the private moment, where he sang and played a guitar; try to get him to use that level of vulnerability on the set!

Shoot a scene where they do a line reading. Have them improvise and "put clothes on" the dialogue which is naked . . . the kind of "clothing" civilized people use to cover their psyches. Then let the dialogue as written explode.

Other Thoughts:

Influences, concepts and aesthetics for the film

- Jazz
- J. L. Moreno's psychodrama theory
- Eisenstein film theory
- 2nd Law of Thermodynamics
- Arthur Bentley's "An Inquiry into Inquiries"
- Heisenberg Theory of Uncertainty
- Aurobindo on mysticism
- Strasberg on acting
- Stanislavsky on theatre and acting

Possible Casts

Andre Plamondon & Susan Anspach
 Bud Powell & Michel Arthur
 Patricia Ree Gilbert & Don Fellows
 Louise Archambault & Leslie Redford
 Manuel Melamed & Fay Lloyd
 Frank Baker & Audrey Heningham

A personal note to the director

Tomorrow morning psychodrama, tomorrow afternoon.

Let's get shots of tramps and drunks leading up to Victor.

Is Victor the climax for the film?

Order 30 rolls of film.

Let's have crew meeting Friday afternoon to determine what we will shoot on Saturday.

Random thoughts of the director in the editing room

What I have tried to make of this film:

1. A conventional theatrical short inside a major unconventional feature film
2. A conventional screen test inside a major unconventional feature film

This film will tell itself. This film is about us, about the cast, crew and onlookers, about us all as part of nature, and nature has its own story to tell. Our problem, or rather my problem, is to get out of nature's way and let nature tell her story. That's what a good director is—a person who gets his ego out of his own way, he is at best a collaborator and servant of nature . . . but who, paradoxically, firmly controls the conditions of spontaneity, theatricality and drama on the set.

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Transcript of Excerpt from *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm:* *Take One*

I have transcribed the following sequence as carefully as possible from a seventy-minute VHS version of the film, taped in 1991. At times during the film the actors—Patricia Ree Gilbert and Don Fellows—are filmed in close-up, so that their interchange fills the screen. In other instances, two images of the same conversation, filmed from different angles, are seen simultaneously within the frame. In still other instances, we see both actors and the crew (and director) at work. When the actors are in their roles, I identify them by their characters' names—Alice and Freddy—but when they speak about their roles or about each other, I designate them Gilbert and Fellows. In the scenes where the crew members meet to discuss the film, several people are often speaking simultaneously, with the camera moving informally from face to face. I've tried to give some sense of these overlapping conversations. From time to time, I have eliminated a distracting vocal mannerism from the transcription, though in other instances—and especially during the crew's secret meeting—I have included vocal awkwardnesses to accurately represent the viewer's experience.

*The passage transcribed is continuous and occurs near the end of *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*. As of 1992, however, the film remains in process: Greaves plans to re-view it again, to include footage left out of earlier versions.—S.M.*

Exterior Central Park. Gilbert and Fellows have just walked away across a bridge to get ready to continue their scene. Throughout the following exchange they are seen in medium shot in two separate, rectangular images within the frame, filmed with a hand-held camera from slightly different angles and distances.

Fellows: Are you rolling?

Greaves (off-camera): Yeah.

Freddy: Alice! C'mon, can't you wait . . . wait a minute, wait a minute . . .

Alice: Just leave me alone, OK? Just leave me alone!

Freddy: Well now, the least you can do is have the courtesy to tell me what's bugging you. All right? Come on.

Alice: Jesus Christ. I thought once we got married, you know, you'd change and . . . [laughs] . . .

Freddy: [mimics her laugh] You know, I really don't have any idea what you're talking about, Miss Balls.

Alice: Listen, you skinny little faggot, I am fed up, I am absolutely fed up with this shit. Half the time we go out, wherever we're going . . .

Freddy: No, no . . .

Alice: . . . you're trying to get with somebody, or on somebody—I don't know what you boys do . . .

Freddy: Give me . . . give me an example, then, all right?

Alice: You sure as hell don't do anything with me.

Freddy: No? [laughs] I what! I just want to hear it again . . .

Alice: You heard it, you heard it, you heard it, you heard it . . .

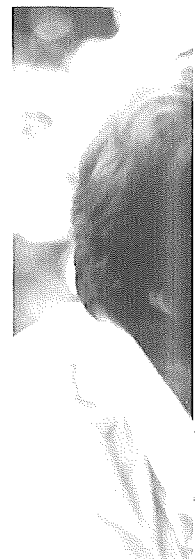
Freddy: And who stops me!

Alice: I never stop you!

Freddy: I can't even get started! You stop every . . .

Alice: That's your problem. You go see the head shrinker.

Freddy (Don Fellows) and
Courtesy William Greaves



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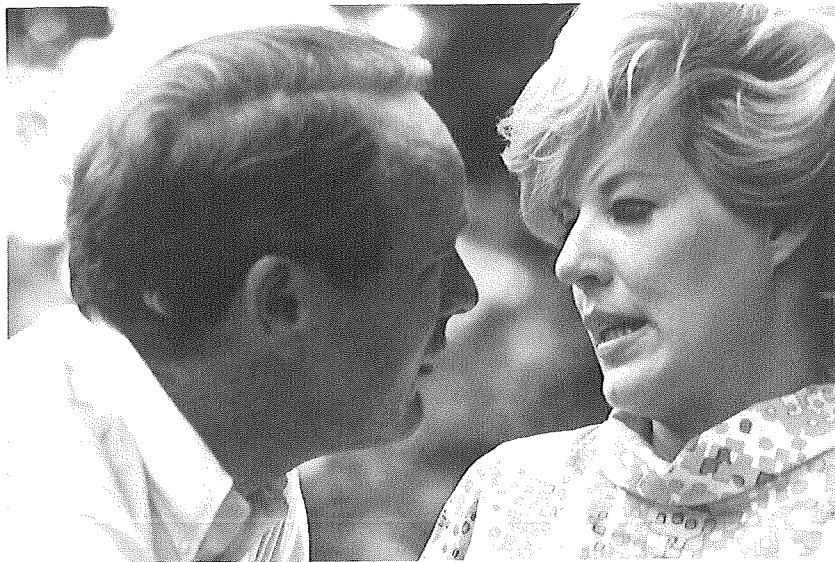
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Freddy: I am not.

Alice: I just did!

Freddy (Don Fellows) and Alice (Patricia Ree Gilbert) argue in Greaves's *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*.
Courtesy William Greaves.



Freddy: I have, haven't I?

Alice: Mmmm, three sessions . . .

Freddy: Oh no, more than that. More than you know about.

Alice: Five sessions.

Freddy: More than you know about, and all I can say is it's about time you started because you need it. Just remember, the person who says the other one is sick is always the sickest of all, baby.

Alice: Huh! You're the fag.

Freddy: I am not.

Alice: The fuck you're not!

Freddy: I'm not. That's something you keep hanging me with and I am not . . .

Alice: The hell you're not!

Freddy: I am not. You can't give me an example.

Alice: I just did!

Freddy: You said something about today. I have no idea what you are talking about.

Alice: I also talked about the first year we were married, about Chuck, Tim . . .

Freddy: I'm talking about today. Talk about today. All right, you've already talked about that . . .

Alice: Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh . . . we already talked about that. That's over with. Yesterday you were a fag, today you're not, tomorrow you're just going to fuck the little robins, or chipmunks here in the park. How about that, huh? Why don't you try a mosquito next?

Freddy: You are really sick. You are really sick.

Midway through Alice's next speech, the right-hand image-within-the-image expands and fills the frame.

Alice: You're damn right, I'm sick, I am sick of you.

Long shot of crew filming actors on bridge

Freddy: You have got to believe me . . .

Greaves: Let's kind of stop . . .

Gilbert: See, I mean this is . . .

Greaves: Now . . . now, take . . .

Gilbert: No, no, no, no, no!

Greaves: Take it easy, take it easy, take it easy . . .

Gilbert (raising her voice): Why should I take it easy! Why!

Greaves: It's going very well.

Gilbert (yelling back at Greaves as she walks away, across the bridge): It's not and you know it!

Fellows (talking quietly to a member of the crew): No, I think she's upset cause I think she was building towards the big climactic shooting or . . .

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We hear crew me walk across the b crew meeting in th pans from one sp several crew merr

Maria Zeheri: Wel know at times wh looking for. It's a film. It's a conflict screen or he's do ways of directing

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Jonathan Gordon simply do it. He's experiment, it's a for Bill to keep in designed to reve

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Crew Person (man, off-camera, talking quietly to viewer): Pat has just slightly flipped out. Unfortunately, both cameras ran out. They're changing magazines. Bill is on; I'm going to stay with him till I run out.

We hear crew member Maria Zeheri begin the following speech as we watch Greaves walk across the bridge following Gilbert. Then the film cuts to an interior scene of the crew meeting in the equipment room to discuss the progress of the shoot. The camera pans from one speaker to another; sometimes voices are heard off-screen; sometimes several crew members speak at once.

Maria Zeheri: Well, I was saying that in a way we are criticizing that he doesn't know at times what he's doing, but I think this is what he wants. This is what he's looking for. It's a certain experiment according to the synopsis or the idea of the film. It's a conflict between him and the actors in a way that he is doing a test screen or he's doing just one dialogue. Now he is experimenting [with] the different ways of directing this same dialogue . . .

Jonathan Gordon: But why film it?

Crew Person (off-screen): No, no, no, no . . .

Maria Zeheri: Well, because the only way he is, because the only way he is . . .

Clive Davidson: We're saying that giving them lines, you give them the lines and then each one acts it out differently. In that case, you shouldn't do that. You should give them a story and then they bring out the lines, something else would come out of it. Actuality is not the problem here. So what if they're running up a hill or sitting on a bench? It can be anywhere, it can be on the moon.

Jonathan Gordon: If he wanted to do this, he could do it on a stage or he could just simply do it. He's actually making a film of this, you know. It's not merely an experiment, it's an experiment that's culminating in a film. And a film not designed for Bill to keep in his basement; it's a film that's designed to play; it's a film that's designed to reveal something, to be a work of art . . .

Maria Zeheri: He first of all can do a lot of work with all this footage in the editing room, according to how the film is edited. Because it's a type of film that you can edit in three hundred different ways. Did you read the concept of it?

Jonathan Gordon: No, I didn't read the concept of it, and I don't know whether we ought to bring the concept in because Bill hasn't mentioned it . . .

Bob Rosen (off-screen): I read the concept, and the concept doesn't help you at all, not one bit . . .

Terry Filgate: The point is I don't see where there's a beginning, or a middle, or an end. I don't mean in a sort of conventional story fashion, but everything we shoot is the same: rather, let's be frank, indifferent actors. Stage actors, not film actors, which is to say it would be great on Sony videotape and you could do a critique, but I don't see where there's any build in the film at all . . .

Stevan Lerner: Well, now you're getting down to the nitty-gritty . . .

Bob Rosen (off-screen): Every situation is new . . .

Stevan Lerner: Not really much is happening, if you ask me . . .

Nicky Kaplan: I think there is, I think there's . . . excuse me . . .

Bob Rosen: OK, tell me, what is happening?

Nicky Kaplan: I've got to unload myself . . . I think . . . it seems to me . . . not having read Bill's concept, it seems to me that there's some exploration of the levels of reality and the supra-levels of reality. OK, so this is another level of reality that we're establishing here and it may be the biggest put-on of all time . . .

Bob Rosen: Recognizing the reality or nonreality, trying to establish that, is useless. For all anybody knows, Bill is standing right outside the door, and he's directing this whole scene. All right, it could be. Nobody knows. Maybe we're all acting, all right? Maybe we're all acting. You know? I'm acting. And that's it. Bill could have stood outside of the door and told me, "Now, Rosen, when you get in there, tell them about this when you get to a certain point." Nobody out there [in the viewing audience] knows whether we're for real . . .

Terry Filgate: Then what is being revealed?

Jonathan Gordon: My whole point is that nothing is being revealed and that's the genius of this film, if there is a genius. I think the genius of this film was that it was provided that somewhere during its filming, the crew should decide to act as an independent unit and come into a room and talk about this film and thereby possibly change the end of it, that this was planned, consciously or unconsciously, by Bill . . .

Terry Filgate: You believe in God after all!

All: [Laughter]

The actors are outdoors, repeating their scene in the park along a walkway. Several extreme long shots of the crew following the actors. Until the end of the following exchange, we see Alice and Freddy and crew members in a continuous shot.

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Greaves: All all this equip three Eclairs equipment h very interest thing . . .

Robert Rosen the director c

Alice (we hear her before we see her): You have been killing my babies one right after the other and you want me to believe in you? You come in like a little Nazi storm trooper. You just don't want any responsibilities. You don't want any wife, you don't want marriage, you don't want children . . .

Freddy: Oh, that's all part of your fantasy, it's part of your fantasy . . .

Alice: The going gets a little tough, a little too tough and you run out!

Freddy: Shhhh! Shhhh!

Alice: FUCK YOU!

Freddy: If you are going to talk that way . . .

Alice: Speaking of fuck, boy, how we've been making love lately, we're never going to have any babies. Fuck you!

Freddy: That's the way you want it, that's the way you want it . . .

Freddy (Camera moves in closer as Freddy kisses Alice. She's unresponsive, and carefully wipes her lips off when he stops): Alice . . .

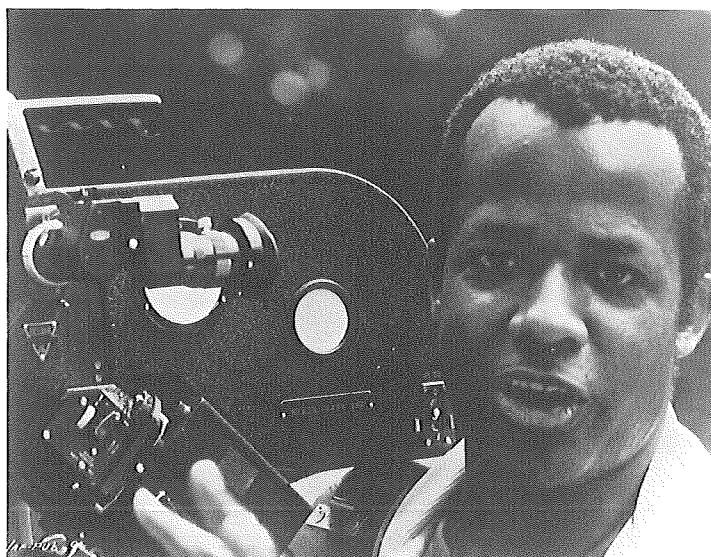
Exterior in the park. The crew has gathered to confront Greaves and to ask him if he knows what he's doing. They are seated on the grass in a circle.

Jonathan Gordon: This is a very strange thing because all I really know is myself and all I really know are the people I really know, and I don't know anybody here, except a few, but I really don't know them. And being forced in a way to listen to this sordid conversation . . . [speaks to a particular crew member] you haven't heard it, you haven't been here for eight days and listened to this sordid, horrible conversation, over and over and over again, with black faces, white faces, tall ones, old ones, young ones, skinny ones . . . You know? Convincing ones, unconvincing ones . . . It does funny things to you . . .

Greaves: All right, all right, all right. So what else can we do? I mean look, we've got all this equipment lying around here. Look, here's a tripod, there's two still cameras, three Eclairs; there's an Arri S; we've got three Nagra's. We've got an awful lot of equipment here. It would be interesting, it really would be, Jonathan; it would be very interesting to see you surface with a better script. And there's no competitive thing . . .

Robert Rosen: What's a better script! I mean, here's a film, you know, and you're the director and . . .

William Greaves shooting *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* (1968). Courtesy William Greaves.



Greaves: A better script as a screen test for a pair of actors.

Jonathan Gordon: The way to make the script better is to first of all drop the euphemisms: you talk real language . . .

Greaves: What euphemisms?

Jonathan Gordon: The euphemisms. Freddy says to Alice . . . Freddy has a cock, Alice has a cunt, Freddy likes or doesn't like to fuck Alice. Alice can't come, Alice has difficulty coming, Alice comes easily. Freddy stays a long time, Freddy stays a short time, Freddy stays an intermediate amount of time. Freddy really loves to fuck Alice. You know what I mean? That's the way to talk, and that's the way people can liberate themselves to talk about themselves and what they really feel . . .

Robert Rosen: You have a line in there like, "Come on, sport, give me a chance." What? Does that mean "fuck"? Is that what it means?

Jonathan Gordon: "Give me a chance!"—it doesn't mean anything. "You never let me touch you"—what does that mean? "It's unnatural"—what does that mean? "Don't you like me to eat you, Alice?"—that means something. Or, "Eat me, Freddy"—that means something. You understand? I'm serious! That is the way the script is transformed from a useless faggotry, from a little semi-annual conceit between two people, to something that never has to be repeated again.

Greaves: This sort of palace revolt which is taking place [the crew meeting with Greaves] is not dissimilar to the sort of revolution that's taking place in America today, in the sense that I represent the establishment, and I've been trying to get

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you to do certain things which you've become in a sense disenchanted with. You know? Now, your problem is to come up with creative suggestions which will make this into a better production than we now have . . .

Robert Rosen: I don't understand at all.

Greaves: It doesn't matter whether or not you understand it. The important thing is that we surface from this production experience with something that is entirely exciting and creative as a result of our collective efforts, as a result of Marsha's efforts, as a result of Audrey, and Sy Mottel; you, Jonathan; you, Bob, Roland Mitchell, Nicky, Frank Baker, Barbara Linden. . . . It's important that as a result of the totality of all of these efforts, we arrive at a creative cinema experience.

Medium shots of cast and crew who are gathered on a knoll. A derelict has drifted onto the set; he's drunk.

Derelict (off-screen): What is this thing? What is this thing? I spoke with you, yes, you're from Canada, right? Oh, it's a movie—so who's moving whom? . . .

Program Notes for *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm:*
Take One

*These are the program notes for the Brooklyn
Museum retrospective of Greaves's films,
with minor revisions made by Greaves during
summer 1992.—s.m*

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Symbios = life in common; Psycho = mind/emotion-based activity;
Taxi = arrangement; Plasm = organic and inorganic matter.

The title Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One is derived from the term "symbiotaxiplasm," coined by the American social philosopher Arthur Bentley in his book An Inquiry into Inquiries. The term is an attempt to express all of the elements and aspects of the cosmos which interact, affect each other, and in which life—particularly humankind—is functionally interrelated.

I was bold enough to insert "psycho" into the middle of the term to achieve the new word "symbiopsychotaxiplasm," which, in my view, involves the first definition as well as affirms more aggressively the role that human psychology and creativity play in shaping the total environment—while at the same time, these very environmental factors continually affect and determine human psychology and creativity. Thus everything that happens in the Take One environment interrelates and affects the psychology of the people and, indeed, the creative process itself.

Another construct of thought in the film involves the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which asserts that energy cannot be destroyed—that it transfers from one entity within a system to another.

Analogically, we assert that same thesis for psychological and creative energy. Thus when the creative or psychological energy in front of the camera appears to decline, there is a commensurate rise in psychological and creative energy behind the camera.

When the energy before the camera rises, the energy behind it declines. It was for this reason that several cameras were strategically positioned and alerted to track—like radar—the flow of energy.

It was also interesting to note that, like the Thermodynamic Law, as it applies to physical matter, the psycho-creative society of any theatrical production is made up of a series of energy entities (artists, technicians, actors, the director, et al.) that are in a constant state of disequilibrium and their struggle to achieve artistic equilibrium is one of the foci of our film. The final equilibrium of Take One is achieved in the editing room, but in achieving it, a new disequilibrium—or struggle—is pursued between the film and its audiences. The audience needs to "understand" the apparent chaos of Take One while paradoxically confronting the fact that, like life, which is chaotic, it still has credibility.

Take One was also heavily influenced by jazz, which, to me as a black man, is an attempt on the part of an enchained human spirit to break free from the prison bars of mechanical tempo and to liberate itself. Analogically, traditional dramatic structure was for me a

conventional prison from which I sought to escape with the free style of the film.

Take One is also about revolution. It expresses the mood of the 1960s in America with respect to Vietnam, civil rights, suffocating morality, and traditional life-styles. The film mimics this revolt. In this case, the director is the authority under assault.

Another interesting sidelight is the fact that the script the actors enact is, on the one hand, somewhat banal; but on the other, it is transformed into something truly important and rewarding when the actors become inspired. In this sense, the text, like the film, is a kind of tour-de-force—a paradox, which is what I wanted to achieve. In the classes where I train actors, I have the actors regularly perform what I call “neutral” dialogue with changing sets of motivations. The text of the screen test is partly based on this acting exercise.

One important afterthought: another theory operating in my conceptualization of Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One is that the overall aesthetics of this film are governed by the Heisenberg Theory of Uncertainty. The theory asserts that we mortals will never truly know what reality is because the means of perception (the electron microscope) bombards and dislocates the subatomic particles of the basic unit of matter—the atom—which it has under observation. In so doing, it destroys the very thing it attempts to perceive!

Once again, the camera functions, analogically speaking, in much the same way as the electron microscope: it attempts to look at moments of truth emanating from the behavior of the actor or any other on-camera subject. The very presence of the camera, invariably and progressively, lessens the incidence of spontaneous energy in the on-camera performance and behavior. This is one reason why the performance of most actors in most rehearsals of a scene is often better than the actor's filmed performance.

In Take One, the Theory of Uncertainty interacts with the Second Law of Thermodynamics, in that the camera constantly forces energy shifts away from its line of fire from behind to in front of the camera, and vice versa.

To get the full value of all this theorizing, I suggest that audiences, at first viewing, try not to analyze any of what I have said, but simply sit back, relax, enjoy and allow their minds and hearts to perceive the metaphors, paradoxes—and the chaos that is life—all of which unfolds on the screen.

Hollis

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