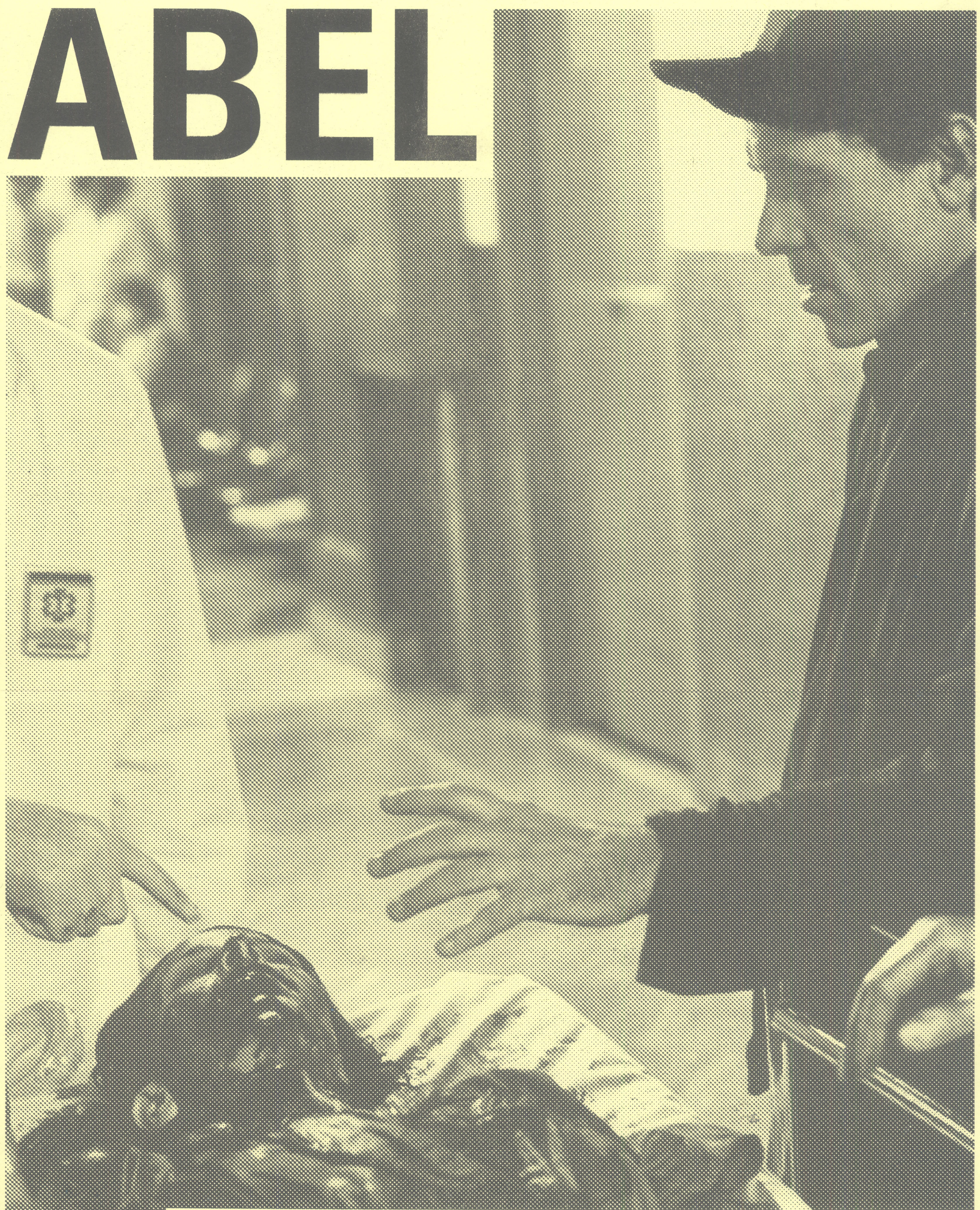


ABEL



FERRARA

"Ferrara has often expressed his admiration for the exacting artistry of John Cassavetes, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and Pier Paolo Pasolini. Several principles unite the respective works of these four filmmakers. First, a practical principle: the constitution of a variable but faithful group of collaborators (Ferrara's team includes the writer Nicholas St. John, the composer Joe Delia, the cinematographer Ken Kelsch, the editor Anthony Redman, the producer Mary Kane, and the writer/actor Zoë Lund). Second, a stylistic principle: the exclusive privilege accorded by these filmmakers to the description of human behavior via gestural, actoral, and emotional invention. And a third, a fundamental theoretical principle: these filmmakers explicitly conceive of their work as a vast enterprise of political critique".¹

"One concept unites Ferrara's work with that of some of his contemporaries: the only story is the story of evil. Two possible positions instantly follow from this. The first is fatalistic (in the manner of Marguerite Duras's famous phrase from *The Truck* [1977], "The world hurrying to its end, that's the only politics"), demanding a frontal description of "the disaster," whatever and wherever that disaster may be. The second position is tragic, maintaining a principle of resistance to evil while knowing all along that this resistance is doomed to failure. Ferrara is on the top rung of tragedians, even though, as a filmmaker, he is essentially boundlessly optimistic."²

"Ferrara's films are structured like passages through the looking-glass; it is a matter of passing from the recto to the verso of a given situation or image. This gives rise to a typical narrative structure of Ferrara's work. Films are organized upon a single major fold, where the beginning finally meets or "touches" the ending to offer a striking comparison, or a more gradual pleat, where the major fold is progressively translated throughout in a series of small folds (akin to a pleated skirt) over the entire structure of a film."³

"Dangerous Game fully justifies its status as a "mirroring film" by producing the inverted reflection of a received opinion. Creation does not consist of building but destroying, and shooting amounts to a general carnage (this term appears twice in the script), while acting (this epicenter of creation) does not consist of simulating and making things clearer but overexposing, going down into the depths. In this sense, the film belongs to that great romantic tradition inaugurated by Milton's *Paradise Lost*: the Bible told from Satan's viewpoint, the rebel angel struggling against the "tyranny of Heaven," an agent of knowledge and revolt, the ill-fated version of the demiurge. "The devil... is the pure essence of poetry. Even if it wanted to, poetry could not construct: it destroys; it is only true when in revolt." Dangerous Game re-creates this romantic tradition in cinema, treating creation as a

negative passion, the film maker as an antichrist, and all participants in the process as burdened and condemned to propagate evil — starting with the spectator."⁴

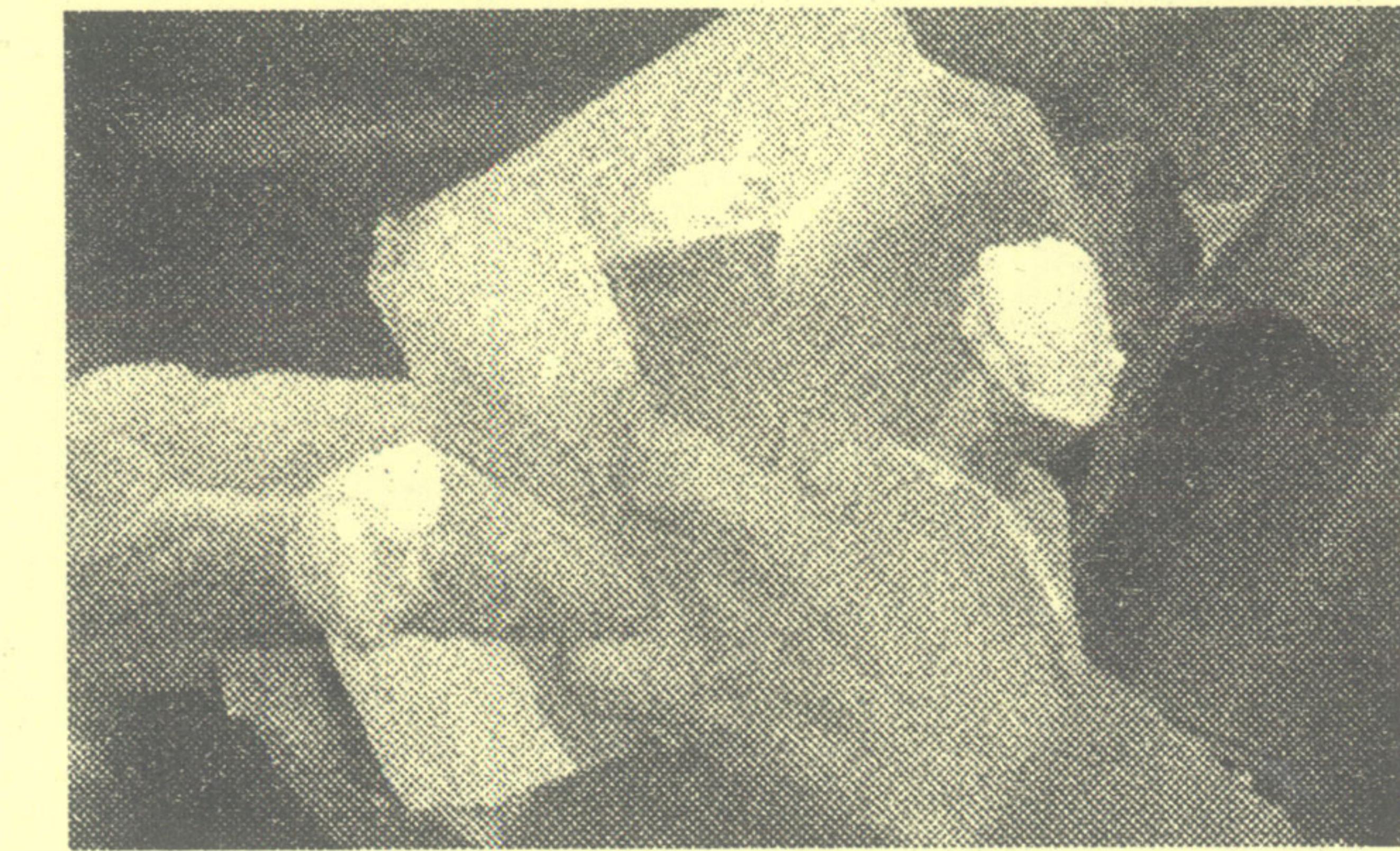
"New Rose Hotel offers an audacious synthesis of the most advanced ideas formulated by the previous films. Sandii updates the archetype of the universal killer, Pandora (already prefigured in *Peina*, king of vampires in *The Addiction*). Sandii is responsible for all ills; because of her, human DNA is destabilized and everyone is struck down and killed. But she also destabilizes affective relations. Her illusion devours experience and everything that experience holds intimate. Not only do images now lack all origin (documentary images endlessly appear on screens, already viewed and edited, with no sign of how or by whom), not only do actions reduce themselves to preparatory fragments and indications of failure, but Sandii herself ends up deprived of her protagonist status. She no longer constitutes an origin or an explanation. Sandii is the reverse of Kathy in *The Addiction*, with whom she forms a diptych. Sandii spreads ill with the blind pride of a creature who seems unaware of what she is doing, while Kathy appropriates and rationalizes guilt to the point of death. Sandii appears among the three enchantresses — or, in mythological terms, Keres, the goddesses of punishment — from whom she cannot initially be distinguished; she might be just any other girl, undiscernible among her bookends, and inaccessible to any form of human discernment. With her, the distinctions between illusion and truth, cause and effect, and ignorance and duplicity are abolished. It can no longer be fathomed why vengeance must be wreaked, or for whose profit. There is no longer even room, in this godless night, to pose the question. The irresistible Sandii thus represents the triumph of the serial killer, destroying at once the human race and the possibility of making sense of that destruction. With a crazed audacity, *New Rose Hotel* tackles not only the sense of disquiet but also the sense of unlimitedness that eats men away."⁵

"The Addiction explores a historical synthesis. It offers, for cinema, a balance sheet of the twentieth century. The principle of vampirism — a particularly rich figurative schema — signifies the Vietnam War, Nazism, drugs, all

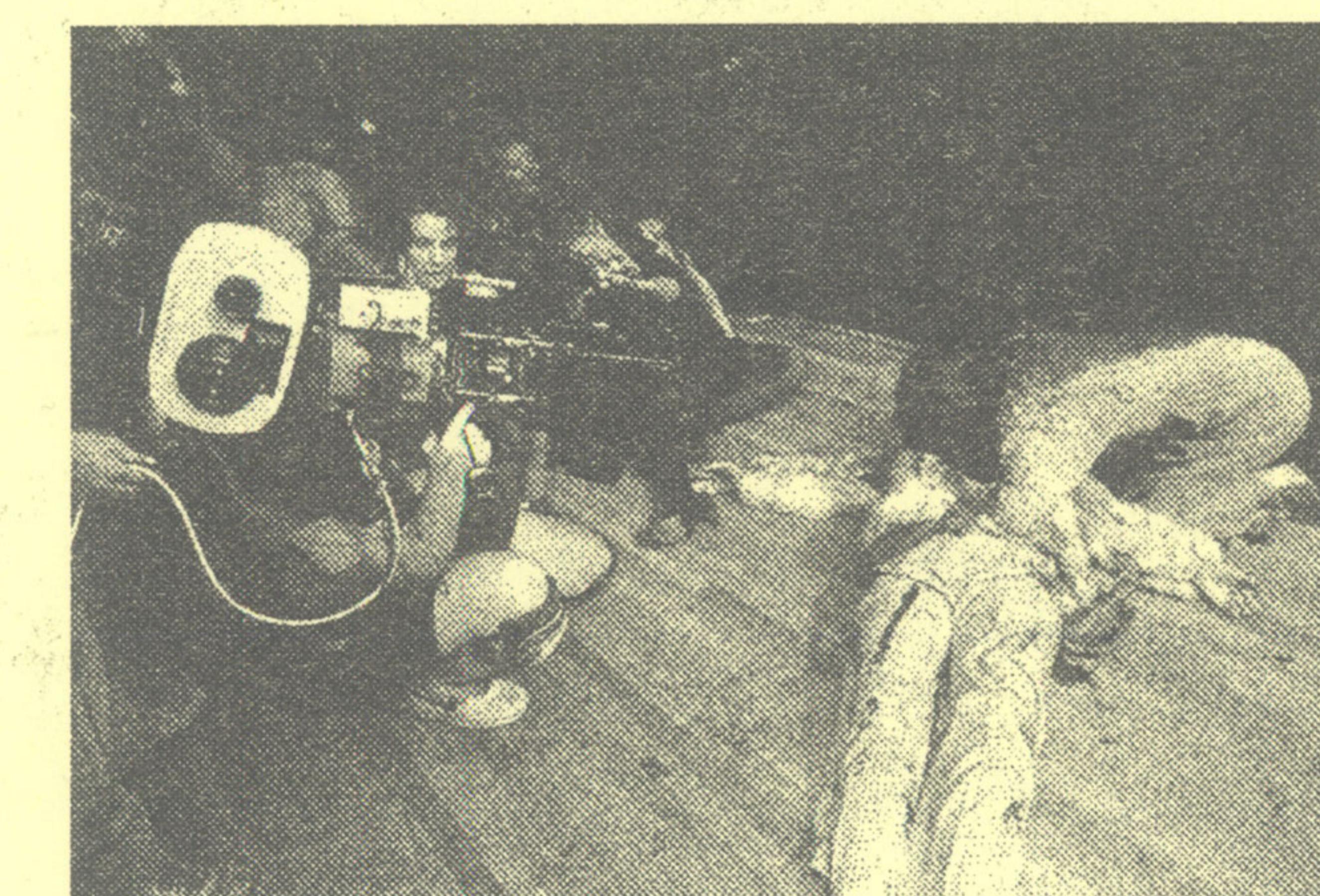
contagious diseases such as AIDS, American imperialism, and poverty. Ferrara's work, in coming to grips with modern evil, can be envisaged as an ever more carefully argued-out description of capitalism as catastrophe."⁶

"The cinema of the negative can ultimately aspire to compassion, as long as we understand compassion as having nothing to do with false pacification or aspiring to any fallacious reconciliation. This compassion looks evil in the face and resolves nothing; it cultivates and propagates its rage in the way that rage infects an organism—or as a deathly dream still haunts the mind upon waking."⁷

Abel Ferrara: "(...) Just a final word. It's a very historical place here, and you have to support cinema, man! 'Cause film is twenty-four frames a second, and when you sit in a room, between every fucking frame is a little bit of black. So, at the end of the fucking hour-and-a-half movie, everybody here sat in the dark for maybe thirty minutes. When you watch tapes, it's a constant obliteration of your mind. In these thirty minutes of darkness, there is a symbiosis between the audience and the film. That's when you make your own film. And you also watch a film with everybody all around you, everybody here at the same time and that's not like watching video, man, even if videos saved our lives. Anyway, support the Cinémathèque."⁸



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