

Constitution, a complicated argument could be mounted. It could be argued that the Constitution of 1787 was not born *de novo*, but existed amidst a cultural consensus that involved a myriad of traditional customs and everyday assumptions, and that one they have had certain expectations of treatment, or "rights" in that sense; that is, not the French sense of "universal rights" but things that neighbors assumed of each other, the "rights of Englishmen" that Burke talks about. It is inevitable that the framers assumed such habits as part of an understood "way of life" and did not feel any need to mention them in the Constitution.

It could therefore be argued that the concept of a "way of life" changes, that the cultural context now surrounding the Constitution is very different. In any case, the mechanism remains a "deliberate sense" one, with the people ultimately deciding and the imposition of supposed "rights" by Court edict remaining a distortion of the Constitution.

A subsidiary problem surrounds the concept of "equality" as found in the Declaration. Jefferson's prose here is very compact, and now little understood. It is compact because he was addressing a body of like-minded educated men here and abroad who were well-versed in political philosophy. He meant that some truths were "self-evident" to them, and not to any highwaymen or jackanapes. The phrase "self-evident" indeed contradicts the vulgar reading of the equality clause. What did Jefferson mean by a "right" to life and liberty? He certainly believed in hanging murderers, despite their "right" to life. He would certainly have endorsed conscription in times of national emergency, despite a "right" to liberty. What Jefferson meant, and all of his intended readers would have understood, is that the stated "right" meant that you could not be deprived of life or liberty without due process.

Of course, all of this takes place within the context of a Declaration of *Independence*, which amounts to a national and international lawyer's brief against George III. The English King is here indicted for violating those "self-evident" rights—through impressment, confiscation, taxation. In a long bill of particulars, Jefferson is so un-egalitarian that he refers to the

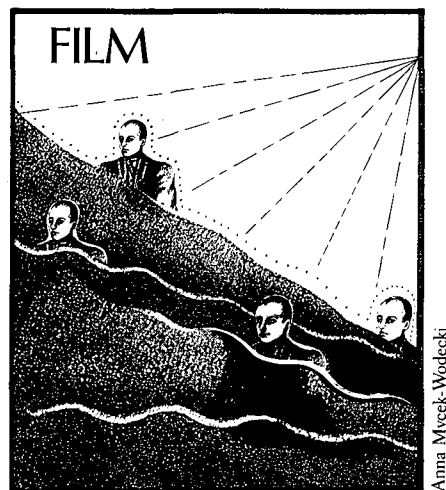
British employment of "savage" Indian warriors against the Americans.

But, if he thinks the Indians are "savage," what then does he mean by "all men are created equal"? Remember that Jefferson is a highly educated 18th-century rhetorician. That means that everything in his "declaration" will be linked to its main thrust. The main thrust is "independence," independence from England. Jefferson is speaking as a prosecutor, and King George III is in the dock.

In this specific context, what "all men are created equal" means is that Americans, under "nature's god," are not naturally inferior to Englishmen. Americans are "equally" entitled to independence from England as Englishmen would be if *they* wished to kiss America goodbye. The phrase also implies that Americans are "equally" as capable of governing themselves as Englishmen are, and, based upon his *Notes on Virginia*, it is clear that Jefferson thought more so. Perhaps above all, it must be remembered that the Declaration is not self-expression on Jefferson's part. He knew that he had to craft a document for which Americans would be willing to risk their lives to sign, one that would be credible not only to American educated opinion but to educated opinion abroad.

There is a kind of cool 18th-century poetry in the language of the final and Tenth Amendment to the Bill of Rights: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." Very high on the conservative agenda should be the restoration of this spirit of limited government. We should, as I would put it, re-acquire these founding documents, most importantly by understanding their language—which derives from an American political tradition that can be discerned in the colonial constitutions of the various nascent states, which can be discerned in the Mayflower Compact, crafted just off the shore, and from thence goes back to 1688 and the classical traditions of republican thought.

Jeffrey Hart is a senior editor at National Review and a professor of English at Dartmouth College.



A Great Novelty by David R. Slavitt

*My Father's Glory
My Mother's Castle
Produced by Alain Poiré
Directed by Yves Robert
Written by Lucette Andrei
and Yves Robert
Released by Orion Classics*

At a certain point, maybe two-thirds of the way through the pretentious nonsense of *Barton Fink*, I began to despair of finding anything interesting enough to write about, even in a bimonthly chronicle. I was wavering between guilt (I was wasting my time) and anger at the sad state of affairs in which there was nothing in theaters worth recommending, or even talking about as an interesting failure. I found myself thinking of Paul Goodman who, for a short while, reviewed movies for, I think, the *Partisan Review*. He wrote about Charlie Chaplin in one issue, then someone like Jean Renoir, and then, abruptly, he quit, on the ground that there wasn't anything else in movies worth paying attention to.

Well, it's extreme, but it began to seem less and less nutty to me, particularly after I caught *Angele* on the Bravo channel one night. This is a 1934 Marcel Pagnol film, rather less well-known than the Fanny trilogy or *The Baker's Wife*, but a splendid piece, nonetheless. It is about an innocent peasant girl in Provence who is seduced by a fast-talking slicker from the

city, taken away to Marseille, and turned out into a life of prostitution. That's just the set-up, though. The real business of the movie is her rescue by Fernandel, playing an early version of the honorable oaf that was to carry him through a long and illustrious career. He is a former foundling who works as a farmhand on her family's farm, and he fetches her and her illegitimate child back home to a mother who is heartbroken but sympathetic, and a father who, feeling dishonored and disgraced, is driven almost to madness. Angele's reprieve from the root cellar to which her father has consigned her is an unsappy affirmation of the kindness and good sense of the country people of Provence. The conclusion is that Angele marries a young man from a not-too-distant hill town where there are flowers and almond trees. He will marry her and take her and the baby up into the hills with him. Such a subject handled too roughly or clumsily would be disastrous, but Pagnol's broad, simple strokes, and his sure sense of knowing just how far he can go without insulting the integrity of the material or the intelligence of the audience make for a real power that is a close French equivalent to the later work of William Faulkner, particularly in the comic novels, *The Hamlet*, *The Town*, and *The Mansion*.

Those hills of Provence figure again as a site of refuge and renewal in *Harvest*, a Pagnol film of three years later, with Orane Demazis returning to play another dishonored damsel—a rape victim this time—and Fernandel pulling his long faces and toothy grins as the honorable if oafish itinerant knife sharpener. In *Jean de Florette*

and *Manon des Sources*, Claude Berri's films that were based on Pagnol novels, there is a magical aura to the hill country where the half-wild girl romps in a savage innocence in which she knows more about the source of life-giving water than any of the villagers do.

The legacy of Pagnol seems to be endlessly rich and continually nourishing. In *My Father's Glory* and *My Mother's Castle*, Yves Robert's screen version of Pagnol's *Memories of Childhood*, we see the hills as the major characters they became for young Marcel. Robert was a friend and associate of Pagnol's and staged several of the late master's plays in Paris. This adaptation—the singular is appropriate, because there is really the one film in two pieces with two titles—is a kind of homage not just to Pagnol but to the pastoral world that spoke so eloquently to him and through him.

Pagnol was born in Aubagne on February 28, 1895. His father, Joseph, was a village schoolteacher who, in 1898, was promoted and transferred to Marseille. From 1900 onward, the Pagnols—Joseph, his wife Augustine, and their children, Marcel and Paul—went off to a country place, some four miles beyond the end of the trolley line. In memory and, more likely than not, in actual fact, this was unspoiled country back then. There was no electricity, no running water (except from a cistern on the roof), no indoor plumbing. The life out there, so different from that in the city, became a childhood Eden that was to inspire the elegiac pastorals that were to come from Pagnol's pen and camera during much of this century (Pagnol died in 1974). To that rugged and austere countryside and to the people this strange terrain nourished and formed, Pagnol brought a quality of quiet free-floating attention that he must have learned as a young boy out gathering mushrooms or wild grapes, or tending Lili des Bellons' traps. There is a steadiness of gaze and a deliberation that city people have neither the occasion to use nor the opportunity to acquire. These were qualities of Pagnol's work, and they are what both Berri and Robert have, in their different ways, tried to emulate. Robert's work seems at first somewhat less theatrical, but over the course of nearly

four hours of exposition, development, and resolution, one sees that there is simply a change in focus. Small gestures become the fulcrums of very large pieces of machinery. There is, in *My Father's Glory*, a romance between Aunt Rose and a portly gentleman she meets in the Park Borély in Marseille, which is observed by the five-year-old Marcel and in which he plays a small part—as Aunt Rose's pretext for her frequent excursions to the park. The progress of the romance is not the five-year-old's paramount concern; he is more interested in flinging bread (or sometimes stones) at the ducks. But there is an occasion when the grown-ups meet even in the rain, and something extraordinary seems to have happened because they are waltzing, the two of them, alone on the grass, to the lush music on the soundtrack (by Vladimir Cosma). The child is aware of this extraordinary business, and we see him, to the left, just within the frame of the screen, playing on a small carousel. A gorgeous moment, it allows for (but does not require) Seurat, and Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts," and the Breughel painting Auden is talking about.

In another of my unsuccessful forays, I'd tried Terry Gilliam's *The Fisher King* with Jeff Bridges and Robin Williams as a semi-crazed street-person, and while it is mostly saccharine piffle, there is one extraordinary moment in which Williams is following Amanda Plummer through a crowd of commuters in Grand Central Station, and as a way of demonstrating his happiness and craziness, Gilliam introduces a waltz onto the soundtrack and has all the commuters dance with one another. It is a remarkable couple of minutes but it violates the texture of the movie, or, worse, it demonstrates that the movie doesn't really have a texture. The similar but smaller gesture in *My Father's Glory* works better, persuades us more thoroughly, and doesn't violate anything.

The title is playful and refers, at least initially, to Joseph Pagnol's success in a competitive hunt with Jules, the portly gentleman of the Park Borély who is now married to Tante Rose and is Marcel's Uncle Jules. With a little luck and with Marcel's help—he flushes the birds—Joseph manages to bring down two *bartavelles*, which are large

LIBERAL ARTS

KEN'S NEXT

Now there's a doll to introduce little girls to a more realistic world of fashion. Since few women possess the 35-18-33 measurements possessed by glamorous dolls, Cathy Meredig, founder of Self-Esteem Toys in Minneapolis, has refashioned the image of Barbie into a more realistic mold. What she has designed is a full-figured doll based on the more common measurements of 36-27-38, complemented by a shorter neck and larger feet.

red or royal partridges. The brace of game birds that Marcel retrieves is his father's glory, except that the real glory is the father's promotion from know-all demigod (he is a teacher, after all, at the school young Marcel attends and combines both parental and scholarly authority) to fallible and yet lovable human being. These are issues of as much subtlety as substance, and without the steadiness of vision both of Pagnol and of Robert, the epiphany to which the movie tends and on which it depends could have been vulgarized and ruined. Instead, it is deeply satisfying and moving.

My Mother's Castle is also a playful title, having to do with one of the châteaux through the properties of which the family used to take an illegal shortcut that reduced by several miles their walk each Friday from the end of the Marseille trolley line to La Bastide and their country cottage. There are a number of different arrangements Joseph Pagnol has made in order to avail himself and his family of this shortcut—deals with a canal worker, with one of the owners, some of the caretakers, but, most important, with his own scruples. He also relies a bit on stealth and luck that eventually fails. A warden not only confronts the family but bullies, threatens, and, most important, humiliates them all, particularly Augustine, Marcel's *maman*. (Nathalie Roussel plays Augustine and has a whole-wheat beauty not unlike that of Dorothy McGuire.) The family's ex-trication from the chagrin and the threat of that mean and officious warden is a characteristically Pagnolesque moment, a reversal, a blessed relenting not so much on the part of the warden as of the benevolent place itself, a gift, as it were, of those hills and their state of grace.

The angle of vision is that of the mature and sophisticated adult looking back on a lost golden moment. One can recall the figures of Pagnol's mental repertory company, the benevolent oaf that Fernandel used to play (here, it's the canal worker who is even given a Fernandel-like "Ah, ya-ya," at one point) or the benevolent scamp (the poacher here but clearly the precursor of Amédée in *Angele*). Or we can skip directly to our own experience, think of the "good old days," and join Pagnol in his exquisite combination of thanks-

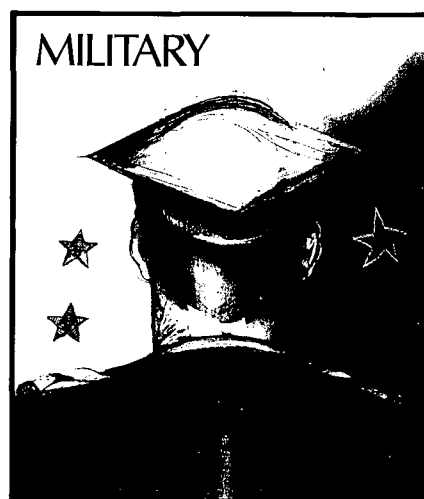
giving and mourning with which the film so gracefully ends. It is true, as Raymond Williams has pointed out in *The Country and the City*, that the recollection of a time about a generation and a half ago as a golden age is a constant in English poetry that goes back several hundred years, but our time has experienced more dramatic and violent changes than any our ancestors had to experience. The automobile has transformed geography, probably irreversibly.

When the railroad tracks come through in a Western to join the town to the rest of the country, we know that the good times are gone and that the frontier has closed down. Our sense of loss is only sharpened by the glimpses the cinematographer has contrived for us of that world that has all but disappeared. Robert's miracle here is in creating a limitless panorama of stern beauty that spoke to Pagnol and cannot fail to speak to us. There is a spectacular thunderstorm. There are splendid vistas—Marcel and Paul argue every morning about whose turn it is to throw open the shutters to the daily miracle of the view. There is, most of all, a feeling of wholeness and security—a continuity of family, society, and nature that is happiness, which is a gift better than wisdom, because wisdom is only what some of us earn in compensation for the inevitable loss, by change or by death, of precious moments of happiness.

Pagnol wrote, "In these memories of childhood, I will not speak of myself either badly or well: it is not me whom I speak of, but a child who I no longer am. It is a little person whom I knew and who found himself in the open air, in the manner of the sparrows who disappear without leaving a skeleton. Moreover, he is not the subject of this book, but the witness of very small events. It is merely a testimony of a bygone age and a little song of filial piety which in our day, perhaps, may pass for a great novelty."

It is up to us to realize that the events are not, after all, so small. And that this film by Yves Robert is one of the grand achievements of movies, right up there with those of the master, himself.

David R. Slavitt is a poet and novelist who lives in Philadelphia.



Confessions of an Ex-Marine

by Clinton W. Trowbridge

Creative, Close-Order Drill

"Left! — —! Left! — —! Left! Right! Left!" The drill instructor inside of me had successfully surfaced and was now exulting in command. We were approaching the corner of the parade field, and I was getting ready for "To the left! — —! March!" when it suddenly occurred to me that it might be amusing to preface that with one "To the rear! — —! March!" followed almost immediately by another—a sort of platoon pirouette, a bit of Marine Corps skip step, so precisely executed that surprise would be transformed into wonder. It was the perfect opportunity to impress Lieutenant Bingham and the rest of the brass. The question was not would my troops respond—they were Marines!—but would Dennis Riley, in charge of the platoon to my rear, understand and, more importantly, react in time to avoid terminal collision. His pirouette would force the platoon behind him to do the same. The domino principle would apply, and the total effect would be a maneuver that would go down in the history books.

Two columns had already hit the barracks wall, some thirty yards off the edge of the field. "To the rear! — —! March!" I shouted, but by then the platoon was sprawled up against the