

arts & letters

MOVIES

Reviewed by John Hospers

Missing

When the regime of Salvador Allende was overthrown in Chile, it began with a strike by truck drivers and spread into a general strike of workers who could no longer endure the arrests of dissidents, massive unemployment, and an inflation of 1,000 percent. A military coup took over, but the rebellion against Allende started from the bottom, not from the top.



Sissy Spacek, Jack Lemmon in *Missing*: a nation's havoc, a family's grief

This, however, is not the picture of Chile we get from Costa-Gavras's latest film *Missing*, in which the entire fault is placed on the military rulers headed by Pinochet and their alleged US accomplices. The film is indeed based on a factual incident recorded in Thomas Hauser's book *The Execution of Charles Horman*, and for all we know the incidents in the film may be true, although American involvement in the coup has been denied in a paper by the State Department in response to the allegations in the film. It is the subject selected rather than the treatment of it that tips us off on the director's sympathies.

Costa-Gavras is still best known for his thriller *Z*, an attack on the fascist military junta in Greece. At that time Costa-Gavras had no criticisms of the Soviets, who were of course meticulous in their respect for human rights. Yet he changed his mind about this in *The Confession*, concerning the Prague trials, which alienated the party faithful. His anti-American bent was obvious in *State of Siege*, concerning American involvement in Uruguay, and it comes out with

equal virulence in *Missing*.

The film presents enough horrors to fill a dozen movies. Yet one cannot help observe that when the principals (Jack Lemmon, Sissy Spacek) are taken through hospitals and morgues to find the missing son, at least the officials do permit them to examine these places, something which would be unheard of in the Soviet Union, where one would look in vain for any person who had been imprisoned or sent to remote labor camps. One would not even be permitted inside the country to initiate such a search.

Whatever his politics, Costa-Gavras is an absorbing storyteller. Though none of his films can approach *Z* for electrifying

suspense, *Missing* is first and foremost a human drama in which the havoc wrought on a nation is concretized in the grief of one family, and the revolution is used largely as a backdrop to their personal tragedy.

Heartland

From the moment that *Heartland* starts rolling, the viewer's breath is taken away by the gorgeous scenery (Wyoming, 1910)—like *Days of Heaven*, except that this is the "real thing": the cycle of the seasons, the animals on the range, the ranch house tiny as an ant under the huge bowl of the sky, the authentic articles of the period down to the kitchen cutlery. Beauty and authenticity are the first impressions, which endure and are enhanced throughout the picture, but even so they are not the principal ones.

The overpowering impression left by the film is that of the tremendous hardship of the rancher's life. If the winter is severe, the cattle and horses die of cold or hunger. (The sound of hungry cattle

and the spectacle of starving horses is too much for some viewers.) If a child is born, there is no doctor within a hundred miles, and precious little medicine. If the cow won't calve properly, there is no veterinarian to be called in. (The scene of the birth of a calf is both harrowing and inspiring.) If you want almost anything at all, you have to produce it yourself. The phoniness of most other Westerns is blatant by comparison.

The beauties of nature, which strike us so strongly in this film, were something the settlers did not have the luxury to enjoy; it is we who have that luxury as we drive through the region on modern highways en route to plush motels. The film shows us dramatically how little of a safety net—a safety net provided by the rise of technology—existed (throughout all history, and even in Wyoming in 1910) between the settlers and death from the elements. The whole film is a kind of vivid footnote to the descriptions of the interdependence of mankind in the products of labor such as are given in the opening pages of Henry Weaver's *The Mainspring of Human Progress* and Rose Wilder Lane's *The Discovery of Freedom*. The film emblazons on our consciousness what human life was like prior to the conveniences we take for granted and consider necessities; it makes us wonder whether, if the cord that ties us to the mainspring of human progress were to be cut, we could survive as heroically as they did, or indeed whether we could survive at all.

Road Games

Australia does it again. *Road Games*, starring two American actors, Stacey Keach and Jamie Lee Curtis, never pretends to be anything more than a modest suspense film. But what it undertakes to do, it does very well. A trucker sees someone burying a body in the Australian outback and, due to a curious but plausible combination of circumstances, finds himself accused of the crime. The story is credible and suspenseful. As a fringe benefit, it provides us with fascinating glimpses of the terrain of western Australia along the national highway leading to Perth. Better a clear small gem than a large cloudy one.

John Hospers is a professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California. His book *Understanding the Arts* was recently published by Prentice-Hall.

BOOKS

The Heart of the Matter

Sex without Love.

By Russell Vannoy.

Buffalo, N. Y.: Prometheus Books. 1980. 226 pp. \$14.95/\$7.95.

Reviewed by David L. Norton and Mary Kille Norton

This wolf in sheep's clothing is subtitled "A Philosophical Exploration" but is in fact a manifesto. Consider the following passage from late in the book.

If my thesis that erotic love is essentially self-interested is correct, it is going to damage seriously the claim that sex with a lover is the supreme experience. Part of the sexual joy lovers experience derives from the feeling that the partner is truly an altruistic person who would be willing to give his all to the act even if he felt he weren't getting very much in return. But if my thesis about the motives of lovers is correct, this joy is based on an illusion.

Lovers, for example, would be on the alert to see that they are getting as much as they are giving, or hopefully, to get more than they give (as with the millions of husbands who leave their wives orgasmically and otherwise unfulfilled). . . . Furthermore, lovers commonly consider the beloved obligated to satisfy them whenever they wish, even if the beloved isn't in the mood for sex at all.

On the other hand, a generous, considerate non-lover is capable of performing a sex act without engaging in violent quarrels if he fails to be satisfied. Nor will such a generous person so readily threaten to abandon his partner if he fails to be pleased sexually with his partner's performance. Nor will he think that it is his partner's obligation to please him whenever he wishes.

Vannoy has two basic theses to urge upon the reader. The first is that sex without love can be "just as fulfilling" as sex with love and "may be even more so." The second is that erotic love (sexual love, romantic love) is an intrinsically contradictory phenomenon that introduces contradiction and hypocrisy into the lives of those who experience it.

His style of presentation is a fast-paced thrust and parry of thesis, counterexamples, counterargument, and new thesis.

The trouble is that Vannoy's determination to promulgate his ideology has a corrosive effect throughout upon the thrust and parry of the purported "exploration." He mischaracterizes views alternative to his own, ferrets out pathology everywhere, manages to seriously misunderstand most of the philosophical classics on sex and love, and slips shoddy arguments for his own theses past the reader. Perhaps most seriously of all, he shows none of the intellectual empathy and generosity that would enable him to discern merit in positions different from his own and that a true "philosophical exploration" requires.

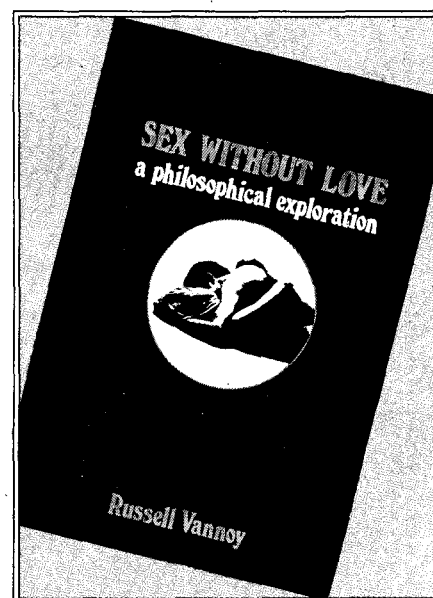
Returning to the opening citation: On what ground does Vannoy attribute to nonloving sex the generosity he denies to love? Do lovers typically engage in violent quarrels and threaten to abandon their partners when they are not sexually satisfied? Since sex is the focus of the nonloving sexual relationship, is it to be expected that nonlovers will surpass lovers in the patience with which they uncomplainingly bear their lack of sexual satisfaction? Is it true that "part of the joy" of sex with love is the belief that one's partner is a "truly altruistic person" who doesn't mind getting little in return? Won't his not getting much in return be of deep concern to the person who loves him? Do we expect "altruism" of persons who love us? Altruism means self-sacrifice, and if we love the person in return, would we not be asking for the sacrifice of what we regard as infinitely precious? And do lovers "commonly consider the beloved obligated to satisfy them whenever they wish," in disregard of the feelings of the beloved? We do not know what concrete examples of love the author may be acquainted with, but he seems to have peered at them through a reversed binocular and often confused love with its common pseudomorphs.

Judging by the frequency with which he repeats it, Vannoy's favorite argument for the superiority of sex without love is that it is "not within the power of a penis or vagina to communicate love at all." On this basis it becomes clear how he can say that "sex without love can be just as fulfilling an experience as sex with love; indeed it may be even more so." Evidently he means: just as fulfilling to disconnected penises and vaginas. In the same vein, one might equally say that letters on a page cannot communicate feelings, nor can the hand that clasps ours, or the arm about our shoulders.

But penises and vaginas are connected

to bodies, and bodies belong to persons, hence penises and vaginas, like words, hands, and arms, can be expressive of persons. If by "fulfilling," then, we mean fulfilling of the persons to whom penises and vaginas are connected, it is clear that relations involving more than penises and vaginas can be more fulfilling (granted that they can sometimes be less), for the simple reason that there is more to fulfill.

Vannoy's carelessness with classical sources on love is pervasive, but an example must suffice. From the *Lysis*, he attributes to Plato the "dour conclusion . . . that there is no philosophical basis on which to justify any form of friendship." But the conclusion is the product of Vannoy's misreading. In the *Lysis* Socrates argues, to be sure, that



neither likeness nor difference between two persons affords the basis of friendship. But he then shows that the basis is both likeness and difference together, a relationship he terms the "congeniality of excellences." Friends must be alike in pursuing the good but different in the aspects of the good that each pursues. In this way they share the most important thing in common, yet each offers to the other something of worth that the other cannot self-provide.

Had Vannoy understood this conception of friendship, it would be sure to displease him, for he takes the inwardly secure individual to be the wholly self-sufficient individual, and from this standpoint all forms of love appear to him as manifestations of insufficiency and insecurity. We suggest, rather, that the secure individual can give of himself without fear of self-depletion and can