

DENNIS HOPPER'S THE LAST MOVIE:

BEGINNING OF THE END

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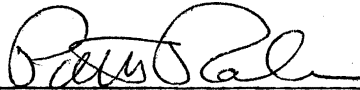
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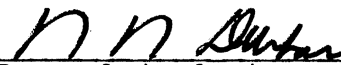
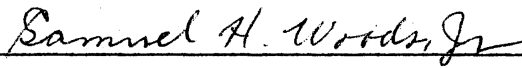
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## PREFACE

The best film criticism heightens the viewer's pleasure by enriching his response to the film as a work of art. Thus, I am indebted to the pioneer critics Dennis DeNitto and William Herman, whose Film and the Critical Eye (New York: Macmillan, 1975) provides a good model for archetypal analysis and which inspired the pattern used in the "explanation" section of this paper. I am also indebted to Northrop Frye, whose essay on "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths" from Anatomy of Criticism introduced me to concepts that permeate the present work. I would like to thank Dennis Hopper, Stewart Stern, and Satya DelaManitou, whose gracious cooperation and assistance added a personal dimension to this study.

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DENNIS HOPPER'S THE LAST MOVIE:

BEGINNING OF THE END

When judged by audiences accustomed to Hollywood heroes and soap opera formulas, The Last Movie tends to provoke an extraordinary response. It was acclaimed "best feature" at the 1971 Venice Film Festival by the International Committee for the Diffusion of the Arts and Letters of Cinema, but it is listed in The Film Buff's Bible as "not worth seeing." It was featured in Life, Look, Esquire and Playboy as the most anxiously awaited film of 1971, but after a two week run in New York and Los Angeles it was withdrawn from circulation. Judged by commercial standards The Last Movie has been, to this date, a landmark failure. But its occasional revival on cable television and its appearance at university film festivals testifies to a persistent core of interest which may indicate that audiences are less hostile to Hopper's distinctive narrative technique than Universal Studios had anticipated. The problem that many viewers have had with the film may be implicit in a remark that Hopper made after the phenomenal success of his first film, Easy Rider. "I'm very hung up on structure," he told a reporter for Sight and Sound. "I look for ideas, take in all I can. I formulate, I lay it out. But movies are beginning to catch up with the novel, beginning to get into the mind."<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to its conspicuous prerelease publicity and in spite of the interest shown on college campuses, The Last Movie has received

very little serious critical attention. Early reviewers were for the most part acrimonious--upset, it would seem, by what Foster Hirsch calls "its hectically non-linear structure."<sup>2</sup> Thus Stefan Kanfer, writing for Time, condemned the film as "formless, artless,"<sup>3</sup> while Hollis Alpert complained in the Saturday Review that it "all but defies linear description."<sup>4</sup> David Denby of The Atlantic Monthly echoed this opinion, reviling the film as "an endless, chaotic, suffocating, acid-soaked movie with moments of clarity and coherence that don't connect with each other or with what goes on in the visionary sections."<sup>5</sup> And Andrew Sarris, who called the film "muddled," concluded his review by denouncing it as "a hateful experience."<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to account for the tone of outrage typical of these instantaneous evaluations, especially in view of the fact that much of our serious literature since Joyce has been non-linear. Perhaps Pauline Kael comes close to an explanation when she says of Hopper that "his deliberate disintegration of the story elements he has built up screams at us that, with so much horror in the world he refuses to entertain us."<sup>7</sup>

Following the rush of weekly reviews there appeared a smaller group of articles by critics who, though less than fully enthusiastic about the film, perceived that The Last Movie had been given short shrift. In a column pointedly entitled "Overlooked & Underrated" Stuart M. Kaminsky called The Last Movie "a mad attempt to break through conventions and film."<sup>8</sup> He defended the non-linear structure as a continuation of the experimental tradition, noting that "Hopper does nothing in his film that has not been done by underground filmmakers like Kuchars or Jack Smith, but he has done it overground, in

a commercial 35mm film with theater distribution."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, in an article provocatively titled "You're Wrong If You Write Off Dennis Hopper" Foster Hirsch proclaimed that "it is not, as most of the reviews might lead you to believe, contemptible or vicious or idiotic: it is not a public offense; what's more, it is not incoherent. It has temperament. Pace. Energy. Conviction. It certifies that the virtues of Easy Rider were not lucky guesswork."<sup>10</sup> Hirsch goes on to note that "the film attempts to occupy vast spaces" and concedes, perhaps prematurely, that "the narrative base cannot support with complete comfort the archetypal--and myth-ridden--superstructure."<sup>11</sup>

It may be, however, that the "problem" of structure which has troubled so many reviewers is really no problem at all. If, as Hopper's remarks imply, The Last Movie gets into the mind, then what is significant is not time sequence or causal relationships, but image patterns that group and regroup in alternative combinations as in the play of memory, when a person tries to draw meaningful connections between events. This would explain why the film, in Hollis Alpert's words, "all but defies linear description." In any case we can agree with Hirsch that The Last Movie "rightfully commands more respect and attention than it has received."<sup>12</sup> In the effort to amend the lapse this paper represents a beginning.

As a visionary work The Last Movie is the latest development in Hopper's preoccupation with religious and sacrificial subject matter, evidenced by his photographic treatment of "The Last Supper" (exhibited in Spoleto, Italy, from a touring exhibition of Hopper's photographs organized by the Fort Worth Art Center), by the Christ symbolism in Easy Rider (George Hanson, the innocent, is slain while sleeping



between Wyatt and Billy who Hopper admits represent for him the "two thieves"<sup>13</sup>) and by his regard for religious allegory in art of the Flemish and Italian Renaissance. In fact as actor, writer, painter, sculptor, photographer, and student of art history, Hopper has consistently displayed an interest in Christology.<sup>14</sup> Moreover his concern with suffering and sacrifice extends into the personal sphere. "The first time I heard about the crucifixion of Christ," says Hopper, recalling his childhood, "I couldn't stop crying for two days."<sup>15</sup> As understudy to James Dean in Rebel Without a Cause (an experience which, it is said, was to "alter his life totally,"<sup>16</sup>) Hopper apparently empathized with the role of the rebel outcast--a role which, in religious terms, is epitomized by Christ. Fifteen years after Dean's tragic death, while Hopper was filming The Last Movie, he instigated a James Dean memorial mass in Peru.<sup>17</sup> Just how closely Dean, Hopper, and Christ are associated in the filmmaker's own mind is a matter of speculation. But it is said that Hopper carried a portrait of Jesus that looked almost exactly like himself and was once convinced that, like Christ, he was going to die in his 33rd year.<sup>18</sup> If, as several of his biographers suggest, he has assumed the mantle of James Dean, Hopper may have placed himself in the sacrificial role: "to die in the movie," as Kansas tells Maria, "like Dean did."

The Last Movie extends the sacrificial theme into the apocalyptic mode. It is, as the title implies, eschatological: concerned with ultimate or last things such as death, judgment, heaven, and hell. Produced in 1970 at the climax of a decade characterized by war, psychedelia, and social disintegration, it echoes on a mythological

level the millennial hopes and fears of a generation of idealists--a generation of "heroes," to use Hopper's epithet<sup>19</sup>--who had often, like Kansas, suffered misunderstanding, persecution, and imprisonment, and who were turning, as The Last Movie finally turns, from politics to mysticism.

Although sources for The Last Movie are as various as Hopper's full range of experience it has much in common with The Gospel According to Thomas, a gnostic book which contains the sayings of Jesus as recorded by Didymos Judas Thomas, discovered after the Second World War in a ruined tomb near Nag Hamadi, Egypt. The Thomas gospel, which is thematically similar to other apocalyptic and millennial literature--notably Revelation--brought Hopper back from unbelief. "I was a Methodist first," he says, "then an agnostic, and then an atheist. Now they call me a Bible Belt communist."<sup>20</sup> Hopper's description of the book is brief and accurate: "there's no miracles--it's just what Christ said."<sup>21</sup> He quotes from the gospel, in Anthony Macklin's phrase, "extensively and enthusiastically." Stewart Stern affirms that "he felt that it had a tremendous application--almost a weird application--to his own personal convictions."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore it is apparent, as Macklin has noted in conjunction with Easy Rider, that the Thomas gospel helped form Hopper's artistic vision. This book bears on The Last Movie in three ways:

1. The gospel, like the film is eschatological: concerned with first and last things, with "kingdom come." Furthermore in Thomas' book the beginning and the end are one. "Blessed is he," reads saying

eighteen, "who will stand in the beginning, and will know the end and will not taste death."<sup>23</sup> Except for its epilog The Last Movie begins at the ending and ends at the beginning. And contrary to expectation Kansas does not "taste death."

2. The Thomas gospel is imaged in a series of paired opposites, the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Light, each with its respective inhabitants: the infant and the old man, the serpent and the dove, the male and the female, the left hand and the right hand, the Corpse and the Living One, and so on. The Last Movie, as we shall see, also works in a series of paired opposites, of image groups belonging to the paradisaical World of Light and the demonic Kingdom of Darkness.

3. Finally, Thomas presents us with a universe of what Northrop Frye calls "total metaphoric identification"<sup>24</sup> in which everything is potentially identified with everything else. The point of merger is also the point of liberation. Thus:

When you make the two one  
and make the inside like the outside  
and the outside like the inside  
and the upper side like the under side  
and (in such a way) that you make the man (with)  
the woman a single one . . .

When you make eyes in place of an eye  
and a hand in place of a hand  
and a foot in place of a foot  
an image in place of an image  
then you will go into [the kingdom].<sup>25</sup>

Other sayings extend the identities until the two opposing worlds merge in the All.

Thus we have in The Gospel According to Thomas an eschatological universe of daydream and nightmare imagery--the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness--presented as paired opposites which are metaphorically identified with each other and with everything else. This scheme is congruent with Hopper's tendency to view the real world through "dialectic logic" (to use his own term<sup>26</sup>) and with his stated belief that symbolism, mysticism, and reality are inseparably combined.<sup>27</sup>

When asked if he saw The Last Movie as a dialectical structure Hopper replied "it was operating in me--I don't know whether it was operating in the film or not, because the film becomes its own life. Jean Cocteau said the day you sit in the theater and know its finished is the day you know you don't have anything to do with it anymore. . . It no longer belongs to you. It belongs to the world."<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless Hopper pays direct homage to the Thomas gospel in The Last Movie, for the sermon board of the church facade, featured twice in medium shot, is labeled "Church of Didymos Judas Thomas" and contains a paraphrase of Thomas' saying number sixty-seven: "Show me the stone the builders have rejected, for they are the corner stones." But the influence of the Thomas gospel runs far deeper than this. In fact, as I shall argue, its pattern of imagery provides a master plan for Hopper's film--a blueprint which, when understood, not only helps elucidate the "plot" but which transforms The Last Movie into a full, rich, and deeply moving experience. Astounding as it may appear to most readers the underlying pattern is simply this: that the visual motifs in The Last Movie, like the major imagery in The Gospel

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According to Thomas, consist of inverse image pairs belonging to the daydream and nightmare worlds, that the "plot" consists of the conversion of motifs, and that at the climax of the film these opposing images merge.

bring structure

✓✓

practice

Hopper himself does not offer a schematic analysis of The Last Movie. "All I can do," he says, "is to keep juxtaposing realities--contrasting, jarring sensibilities into a subliminal awareness of group collision and surface scratching."<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless he is, in his own words, "very concerned with design."<sup>30</sup> In this paper it is my intention to explicate the design of the film. I will isolate the major motifs common to the daydream and the nightmare worlds, trace the conversion of motifs through the plot line, and show how these opposing images coalesce at the climax.

The Daydream World, or the world of desire fulfilled, is presented in a series of linked episodes in which Kansas and Maria wander through a flower-laden countryside that suggests, with its majestic landscapes, its sun rays, and its heraldic colors green and gold, a paradise on earth. Here Hopper, who plays Kansas, is cast as a second Adam with Maria as his Eve. The movement in this series of episodes is upward, beginning with Kansas on his horse in the idyllic fields, following the lovers hand in hand toward the foot of the mountain past silhouetted children who stand like angels at the gates of Eden through the gates themselves--present here as steps leading up through an oval cleft in the precipice--into a small, rounded, womb-like canyon where, naked on a table of rock at the foot of a waterfall and within sight of the Priest and his entourage of children hiking on the trails above, Kansas and Maria make love. Later as they

sit overlooking the valley plans for an ascent to the daydream world continue. "Just give me a little adobe up on those rocks," says Kansas, pointing to a mesa, "and I'll be a very happy man."

Present in these idyllic episodes are eight motifs which recur as daydream imagery throughout the film: Kansas as Adam, Maria as the virgin, or madonna figure, the canyon as the womb or temple, the slab of rock on which the couple makes love as the table, the child conceived here as the infant, imaginary adobe as the pinnacle, the horse as the servant, and the setting as a paradise under countenance of the Priest. Together these eight motifs represent the world of aspiration and desire.

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In opposition to the daydream world is the world of nightmare imagery: the familiar world, in Northrop Frye's words, "of bondage and pain and confusion . . . of perverted and wasted work, ruins and catacombs, instruments of torture and monuments of folly."<sup>31</sup> As in the case of the daydream motifs eight major nightmare images, generated early in the film, run throughout The Last Movie. Thus the opening sequence with its shots of the Corpus Christi procession intercut with the aimless parade of mock-movie paraphernalia and followed by a haggard and bleeding young man give us Kansas the scapegoat. Similarly the fur-stoled and miniskirted Maria who poses on the steps of a ruined church facade is Maria the harlot--an identification confirmed by later events. Meanwhile the juxtaposition of processions creates a sense of confusion appropriate to the labyrinth. Throughout the early scenes flash shots of the jail, like shots of the coffin-strewn sanctuary, serve as prototypes for the dungeon. During the cast party the ear piercing ceremony, staged as a mock Eucharist, gives us

a model for the altar, with the masked figures behind it as four versions of the beast. The dead man is present in the opening scenes not only as the corpse strapped to the red car but also as the stone monument which seems to tower over the graveyard sequence. The churchyard itself with its tombstones, dry bones, and burning tree is representative of Golgotha, existing (like the rest of the nightmare world and its inhabitants) under countenance of the mock Director, whom the Priest calls "the Evil One."

Thus we have in the opening scenes eight pairs of linked images which function as motifs throughout the film. Maria, for example, is not just the virgin or madonna figure; she is also, in Hopper's terms, "Mary Magdeline, the Mary that Christ talked about."<sup>32</sup> Similarly each image characteristic of the daydream world has its dialectic counterpart in nightmare. The following chart (Figure 1) is based on my own close analysis of the film.

The image groups listed here are typical not only of The Last Movie but of eschatological works in general. Moreover, they interact in ways which are characteristic of most visual motifs in the film. But these dichotomies are neither absolute nor permanent: they merge during the apocalyptic sequence. This adds an interesting complexity to the analysis. The Priest, for example, is here identified with light while the mock Director is identified with darkness--but as Hopper points out, "it could be looked at the opposite way."<sup>33</sup> For The Last Movie tells the story of Kansas' descent from the daydream world of paradise regained to the nightmare world of "bondage, pain, and confusion." Throughout the central part of the film, which carries the weight of the narrative, we may trace the conversion of motifs from

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The Cross

Daydream (Priest)	Nightmare (Mock Director)
1. Paradise	Golgotha
2. The New Adam	The scapegoat
3. The virgin	The harlot
4. The table	The altar
5. The pinnacle	The labyrinth
6. The temple	The dungeon
7. The infant	The dead man
8. The servant	The beast

*struct.*

The Archway

These terms are linked at one end by the Archway  
and at the other by the Cross.

Figure 1. Dichotomies



daydream to nightmare imagery in preparation for his sacrificial death.

The descent is foreshadowed even as Kansas and Maria reach the pinnacle, for his rapidly escalating scheme to build a hotel in place of the "little adobe" of his dreams is symptomatic of the perverse sense of values that would despoil the very paradise he sought. Economics is important here, for it is in part their desire for the products of civilization that destroys the dream. Thus the decline begins when the couple actually acquires a "little adobe"-- with swimming pool--on a mountain overlooking the city, for as Kansas says, "There's an awful lot goin' out and there's nothin' comin' in." Descending from their pinnacle in hope that the movie company will return, Kansas and Maria enter the labyrinthine city below. Here begins the drinking, gambling, and whoring section (accompanied intermittently by the "hee-haw" siren reminiscent of a ravenous beast) that ends with Kansas broke, evicted, alienated from Maria, and wandering across the desert in search of a phantom gold mine. On his return to the village, in a completion of the descent, he is thrown into jail by Mercado, the mock Director, who is shooting his own make believe version of The Death of Billy the Kid in which the "actors" commit real violence. Maria is back at work in the whorehouse, and Kansas is conscripted to play the leading role in the make believe production, which Mercado calls the "Last Movie." As his part in the "Last Movie" is announced Kansas is surrounded by the masked animal figures familiar from the mock Eucharist section, above.

Thus we have moved with Kansas and Maria from the pinnacle through the labyrinth, from the paradise through Golgotha, the desert, from the home or temple to the dungeon. Maria is a harlot, and Kansas is the

scapegoat cast in the role of the "dead man" who must perish under the cross on an altar-like street to be consumed by the beast. The conversion of motifs is complete.

In The Gospel According to Thomas the two opposing worlds so carefully delineated merge. Thus in saying 23 "When you make the two one, and make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside . . . then you will go into [the kingdom]." <sup>34</sup> And in saying 3 "The old man in his days will not hesitate to ask an infant of seven days about the place of life, and he will live, For many of the first will be last, and they will be a single one." <sup>35</sup> In The Revelation of St. John the Divine a similar merger occurs in the person of Christ, who says "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." In fact the merger of opposites seems to be typical of eschatological works, which end by recombining polar images into the original unity of creation. In the screenplay for The Last Movie this kind of merger takes place at the very conclusion, in what was originally scripted as Kansas' death scene. As the villagers lay the dying man (who was to have been called "Tex") on a litter we see into his mind:

His MOTHER'S BREASTS, full, the milk leaking out. MARIA'S FACE and TEX splashing it with milk from the goat. MARIA'S MOUTH seeking. TEX'S MOUTH, seeking. The MOTHER in the photograph. A BABY (Tex) suckling at the Mother's breast. . . .

TEX on the pinnacle, screaming in terror. Klee klee klee klee klee! The BABY (Tex) crying. The RACE TRACK the runner, far away. . . .

The withered, dried-out BREASTS of an OLD WOMAN (Tex's Mother). A HORSE raises its tail and defecates. WIMPY stops eating his hamburger. TEX, as a man, is CRYING on his DEAD MOTHER'S BREAST as she lies in a coffin.<sup>36</sup>

Thus Maria and the Mother are allied in metaphorical identification, as are Tex, the baby, and the man.

But in The Last Movie as we have it this merger of opposites is further extended and presented at a different point in the narrative, for in the film version it is Kansas' state of delirium prior to the sacrifice that serves as an "apocalyptic vision" in which daydream and nightmare imagery coalesce. After the fight in the whorehouse as Kansas drags himself onto the saddle of the servant, his horse, we hear the continuing wail of the beast. As he lurches through the maze-like, echoing Inca arches--present here as temple, labyrinth, and dungeon--he imagines himself in a pinnacle in the posture of Adam triumphant although the lyrics which accompany this section, "Who nailed you up there/and strung you limb from limb," identify him as a Christ figure in the scapegoat role. Maria is present as a mini-skirted nun--an amalgamation of the virgin and the harlot--perched on the barren sterile rocks at the cleft in the "gates of Eden" which by juxtaposition consolidate the fertile paradise and Golgotha, the desert. A closeup of a baby turning his head away from its mother's spurting breast is matched with a closeup of Kansas in the same act while he moans "I'm dying I'm dying I'm dying," metaphorically uniting the infant and the dead man. Furthermore, while awakening from his delirium, he is attended both by the Priest and by a villager who resembles the

mock Director, pressed close to the Priest's shoulder. Thus Kansas's question, "who are you?" is ironically appropriate at this point, for here the image pairs characteristic of the two worlds have merged.

One other kind of merger remains possible--that in which the eight categories coalesce into a single metaphor, or monad. This occurs at the movie fiesta where we see Kansas robed and bloody exactly as in the opening procession, riding a horse through an archway which, as always in The Last Movie, links the two worlds. As he traverses the passage we cut to the "other side" (now square rather than rounded) which is also the "other side" of space and time. Suddenly it is night. Torch-carrying villagers surround a limp figure, presumably Kansas, suspended from a stunt harness above his horse. As the mock Director calls for "Musica!"--a time link with the "Musica!" which began the film--the camera zooms back to reveal the figure, apparently dead, framed in a gateway at the end of a long road and dangling like a hanged man.

There are several things worth noting in this scene. The sudden shift from day to night that occurs as Kansas passes through the arch implies the existence of a missing time interval. There are several hours which seem simply to have vanished, as if the shots which portray events during this period had been snipped out of the film. But on a moment's reflection it is clear that the "missing" shots are not really missing at all: they are in fact the shots of the movie fiesta and Corpus Christi procession which opened The Last Movie. This sequence, which Stewart Stern calls "the heart of the film,"<sup>37</sup> contains (as the reader may recall) imagery common to the eight linked pairs of

motifs. Thus--and this is the important point--the interval spanned by these shots coalesces into one moment and is embodied in a single image: Kansas the hanged man, "el Muerto."

It is clear, of course, that Kansas is scripted to die in the mock Director's movie, "like Dean did." He is captured, jailed, shriven, and shorn. After the confession, in which he accepts responsibility for what has happened to the village ("I sinned Father . . . the movies!") we see him led to the killing spot by a parade of drunken revelers while he is participating in the festivities--smiling, drinking, waving, and nodding approval of the Priest's call for "Joy! Joy!" The shot in which the Priest commands the crowd to "listen to the Director" should be contrasted with his earlier remark, "don't listen to the Evil One." The Priest's words as they appear in Dennis Hopper's and Stewart Stern's 1965 screenplay (somewhat shortened in the actual film) underscore the ritual nature of this festival:

"I am making, with God's help, light from the darkness . . . we do again that last day the movie, when the man was kill' an' stan' up again. Each one will be actor. Each will pray. Flowers. Feast. When is finish', I hope people forget. An' the games will stop. Maybe life can begin. We must all pray for this. . . ."38.

Thus Kansas is to serve as a kind of scapegoat whose "death" will affect a catharsis, freeing the village from violence and apostacy. And in the original screenplay Kansas (known as "Tex") actually does die of an imaginary gunshot wound which he believes has been inflicted by the mock Director, although according to the script "In reality

there is no wound--only the old makeup blood around the tear in the shirt."<sup>39</sup> The screenplay reads as follows: "He lies dead in the middle of the road, with his mouth loose and his eyes not blinking, and the fur stole touching his cheek. . . . Only his mind is still alive, detonating its final disconnected images through its broken circuits."<sup>40</sup>

Much that is controversial in The Last Movie--its improvisational technique, its relationship to the audience, its defiance of expectations based on linear plot patterns--is focused on this projected death scene. For as Hopper says, "By the time I got to the end I didn't feel that it was advantageous to the film that he die."<sup>41</sup> Thus when Stern was invited to view a rough assembly of the film he was astounded to discover that the death scene he had envisioned as the climax of his screenplay had never been shot. "I went down and saw all this glory spinning out on the screen," says Stern, "and also all this shit. I was exalted and horrified. I kept asking to see those scenes and then it turned out that they weren't there. I tried and tried to prevail upon him as to the sense of putting them in . . . and he was really adamant. He said 'Look. There are many movies in a movie . . . but this is my movie, my movie, and that's the movie that's going out on the screen.'"<sup>42</sup>

Hopper's judgement seemed to be vindicated when The Last Movie won the best picture award at the Venice Film Festival in 1971. But after this even the executives at Universal Studios demanded that he change the climax. "They didn't deny that it was an artistic movie," said Hopper, "but they told me the only good artist was a dead artist. They said it would never be commercial . . . and that they were going

to shelve the picture unless I killed the guy at the end. They didn't care how I killed him--if I dropped a camera on him or ran him over with horses or how I did it. They just wanted me to kill him at the end."<sup>43</sup>

Kansas' death would have served as a focal point for the major themes of the film while satisfying the audience's sense of narrative conventions. But in The Last Movie as we have it Hopper has created something quite unusual: something which strips away the accretions of convention and reveals The Last Movie in its affinity with the Dionesian origins of drama. For at this point in the film the fictional world so carefully assembled begins to fall apart. The "Priest" blows his lines and laughs at the camera, the "mock Director" appears out of costume, and "Kansas," shirtless, says "Hey, fellas, I don't even have my fuckin' scar on." It appears that we are watching documentary footage of Dennis Hopper and his crew preparing to shoot the last scene of their film. This realization is followed by the disintegration of film technique: the "Priest" sticks out his tongue in slow motion, the "mock Director" shoots a gun which goes off out of synchronization, the sound track degenerates into a medley of motifs--the alarm bell, a chisel, wailing, the "hee haw" siren, a baby, sheep--which bear no clear relationship to what is happening on the screen. At the conclusion of this section there is an amplified and attenuated gunshot sound mixed with an ominous guitar chord as Hopper gets up and walks out of the shot with the "mock Director" clinging like a demon to the back of his shirt. When asked to account for this disintegration Hopper said he felt that audiences should be more involved. "Once we were all tribal," he explained, "and stories were tribal

activities." All members of the tribe, he continued, whether involved in the story or not, participated in the ritual.<sup>44</sup> Thus it is interesting to note that what we have at this point in The Last Movie is something like the medieval masque (associated like Hopper's film with the Corpus Christi festival) in which as a final gesture of surrender the actors unmask and join the audience in a dance.<sup>45</sup>

The following shot of children silhouetted on a hill, recalling a similar shot from the graveyard sequence, suggests the innocence of a game, just as (finally) The Last Movie has become a game. And when the climactic death scene does occur it too has become play acting: Hopper falls into a "crucifix" pose, flat on his back with arms outstretched above his head, in an unmistakable imitation of the death of Billy the Kid--then, in front of his assembled audience, rises and repeats the fall. This act, we may assume, would climax the movie fiesta if there were still any fiesta to climax. It is the great "death" scene we have been expecting since the opening shots, and to delay it to this point, after the actors have unmasked, is to force a reconsideration of everything that has gone before. It is Hopper, not Kansas, who plays the scene, and it is the real inhabitants of Chincero, not the make believe villagers, who watch the "resurrection." We can now see The Last Movie as a series of envelopes, beginning with Fuller's "Billy the Kid" Western, expanding into the mock Director's "Last Movie," unfolding into The Last Movie as Stern and Hopper once conceived it, and opening finally into the movie on the screen in front of us--Dennis Hopper's last movie. Thus at the climax of the film we have the merging of art and life at the same time that, in a final liberation of opposites, death and resurrection become one.



Hopper spent two years editing his movie in a theater outside Taos. "I cut a lot of footage that I never use in the film," he said. "In the outtakes of The Last Movie I have a full Western. There is also a linear story of Kansas and the girlfriend and the Priest."<sup>46</sup> But Hopper's concern was not with telling a linear story. He abandoned the relatively small Movieola in favor of the full size movie screen, then worked by combining and recombining images from his forty hours of footage until he had transformed the narrative from a linear mode, as the screenplay, into an organic creation in which events are linked not chronologically but imagistically, as in stream of consciousness or free association. "The film dictates the design," said Hopper. "I'll see something that I think is a beautiful shot. I'll want to incorporate it in the film. But the concept doesn't change."<sup>47</sup>

Once the concept is understood the "plot" of The Last Movie becomes clear, and may be summarized, as we have seen in four parts: the presentation of opposing worlds, Kansas' descent from the daydream to the nightmare world, the merger of opposites focused through Kansas as sacrificial victim, and liberation of the conflict thus created into game. It is true that The Last Movie all but defies linear description, and it is also true that this very complexity makes it a potentially fascinating experience. Like Antonioni's Red Desert and Fellini's 8½--both earlier examples of nonlinear films--Hopper's second movie (which is surely not his last) is ready to reward those who will give it the close attention it deserves and commands. Critics who watch the film unprejudiced by anachronistic notions of plot may

find, as I have found, that The Last Movie is a coherent, rich, and deeply satisfying work of art.

## EXPLICATION

The following section is a viewer's guide to The Last Movie. Here I break the film into thirty-one scenes and explicate them in order of their appearance. My intention is to show how these scenes relate to each other and to the total structure.

## Logo

The Last Movie begins with a visual allusion to the creation of the universe as told in Genesis. It opens with the screen in total darkness, representing "the face of the deep." Over this darkness we hear the voice of Mercado, the mock Director, who announces to the void that "Now is the time to begin the beauty contest for my movie. Musica!" Cued by this statement as by the Biblical injunction "Let there be light!" stars, galaxies, and a swirling firmament appear, along with the street music which will carry us from this cosmic viewpoint down to the setting on earth. The swirling firmament, surrounded by the words "Universal Presents," is in fact the distributor's logo, incorporated here as part of the story and thus introducing the inverse relationship between reality and art which operates throughout the film. The Shakespearean metaphor in which "all the world's a stage" is implicit here, for in this film all the world's a movie, and the director is omnipotent.

## Beauty Contest and Procession

Following the logo the viewer is plunged into a world of confusion created by the juxtaposition of enigmatic images. This section of the film is out of sequence--it depicts events which occur very near the end of the story. Shots of a Corpus Christi procession followed by a gaunt and haggard looking young man (Kansas) with his hand held over his heart are intercut with shots of a beauty contest taking place on the steps of a ruined church facade. Meanwhile stick imitations of cameras, microphones, lights, and other movie paraphernalia seem, through juxtaposition, to merge with the religious procession. In a pan from Kansas to an effigy of Jesus, the young man is compared with Christ.

Central to this section is the juxtaposition of Christian and mock Christian elements, each with its counterpart. The Priest with his monstrance, his robes, and his canopy is juxtaposed to the mock Director, characterized by cigar, sheriff's vest, and cavalry hat with death-like crossbones. Similarly the ritual in the sanctuary is juxtaposed to the beauty contest on the steps of the mock church, the blessing is placed next to what appears to be the sacrificial butchering of a lamb, and the religious procession is compared to the procession of stick movie camera. It should be noted that the beauty contest parallels the Annunciation: Maria is chosen to "do the part in the movie" just as Mary (in Luke 1:28-31) is chosen to "star" as the mother of Christ.

#### The Western

The procession is followed by a Western-in-miniature: the climactic section of an old fashioned shoot-'em-up which Sam Fuller (a real life director of "B" Westerns) and his crew are making in the village. Although the production is unnamed we may refer to it on the basis of the story it tells as The Death of Billy the Kid. The shoot out parodies the typical Western fight scene: Art, the imprisoned cowboy, is shot in the face while catching a gun, an outlaw falls from a third story roof through a board canopy, the sheriff's deputy leaps over a hitching post to knock a bandit off his horse. Later these acts of killing and destruction haunt the film as flashbacks which prefigure Kansas' own impending death. Together with the lascivious behavior of the performers in the saloon these scenes explain the Priest's charge that the movies have brought violence and immorality. Thus Sam Fuller's movie, in the social context of the village, inverts the usual Western theme,

for while depicting the advent of law and order in the midst of an untamed wilderness The Death of Billy the Kid causes the disintegration of civilization in the village. ✓

#### Kansas Interlude

This is the first of several "Kansas" interludes (which later include Maria) that are both lyrical and idyllic. The innocence apparent in this setting is not original innocence, but as suggested by the song "Bobby McGee" innocence sought and reclaimed: "Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose/ Nothin' ain't worth nothin' but it's free." The superimposed title, "A Film By Dennis Hopper," identifies the mounted cowboy as director as well as the central character. Hopper as Kansas is the hero, the new Adam, with all the world before him.<sup>48</sup>

#### The Cast Party

The cast party serves as a parody of the Last Supper with Kansas in the role of Christ. It is interrupted by a cut to the climactic death scene from The Death of Billy the Kid which, if we had seen the whole production, would have followed the opening shoot out. Taken together, the cast party and the death scene develop the theme of sacrificial death, with Billy and later Kansas as the pharmakos, the scapegoat victim. ✓

The identification of Kansas as Christ is first apparent when he walks past the long table of revelers grouped in postures which reflect the grouping of disciples in a painting of the "Last Supper" on the wall above. Significantly, the place where Christ should sit is empty; behind it is a mirror. The fact that Kansas stands apart from the party

identifies him as the missing reveler who would ordinarily be seated in that place. Kansas walks away from his companions into the garden, where he weeps. The comparison with Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane is difficult to overlook.

The theme of sacrificial death is further developed during the dancing scene. Here the lyrics, which we may read as if addressed to Kansas, predict his "broken body's bleeding on an altar made of stone . . . sacrifice your soul to a world that's sick and wrong . . ." Immediately following this Hopper cuts to an incongruous ear piercing ceremony which takes place on the party table under the painting of the Last Supper. The candles, the wailing, the masked figures towering over a man stretched out on the altar-like table all suggest cannibalism or the black mass: a parody of the Eucharist. It would seem that Kansas intuits not only his sacrificial death, but also the process of sparmagos, or the tearing apart and eating of the sacrificial body, as Christ's body was symbolically consumed at the Last Supper.

The insert of the climactic scene from The Death of Billy the Kid, which interrupts the cast party, seems to foreshadow Kansas' fate. The legendary Billy, of course, is usually cast as the innocent victim: a man forced by circumstances into the role of "outlaw"--in social terms, an "outcast"--whose death is necessary in order to restore law, order, and morality to the community. In the insert shown here Dean Stockwell, the actor who plays Billy, gives such a convincing performance that Thomas Mercado (a villager who will later emerge as the mock Director) attempts to rush to his aid and must be physically restrained by the film crew to prevent him from spoiling the scene. Flashcuts from this "Western Pieta" appear as motifs throughout The Last Movie.

### Kansas Interlude

As exposition this section gives us Kansas' name. It emphasizes the nostalgia theme typical of the longing for a "golden age" ("I'd trade all my tomorrows for one single yesterday.") It is significant that Kansas rides out of this paradisaal setting through an archway into Sam Fuller's world of movie violence, for throughout The Last Movie the archway separates the daydream and nightmare worlds.

### Shooting the Western

Here the viewer sees Sam Fuller and his movie crew filming the shoot out and celebrated death scene from The Death of Billy the Kid. This short course in technique provides a model of the filmmaking process which the villagers will imitate with their stick cameras, tin reflectors, and cane microphones. It demonstrates the potential power of the director, whom Mercado imitates not only in his costume but also in his apparent omnipotence. But perhaps more important is the fact that Kansas is established here as Dean's ("Billy's") stunt man, and therefore as the other Billy, Dean's double.

### Graveyard Sequence

Here Kansas' and Maria's visit to her grandmother's grave is intercut with flash shots of killings from The Death of Billy the Kid. This section is full of details which seem to prefigure Kansas' own death: the hearse in the background as the couple climbs into his red truck, the open coffins in the ruined cathedral, the fact that Maria is dressed in mourning, and above all Kansas' near collision with a "matching" red car that has a corpse in "crucifix" position are, to say the least,



ominous. Yet the central part of this section, both emotionally and thematically, is the lyrics:

La de da, the daydream  
 is more than I can stand . . .  
 Twenty three years old, goin' on four hundred  
 I'm a man of desparation in my prime goin' blind  
 I'll drink myself to death if I'm not careful  
 And I'm not careful.

At the end of this section the Priest leads his followers out of the village street while Mercado (the mock Director) and his gang take over the church facade. The issue is joined.

#### Imitating the Movies

The Priest asks for Kansas' help because the villagers, in a hellish imitation of movie making, are "killing themselves in the streets." Although he at first denies responsibility--"I'm just a hired hand"--Kansas attempts to show the fighting villagers that "we don't do it that way in the movies . . . it's all phoney." Mercado's response, "It's not real. We have to hit you" is ominous in view of the fact that Kansas is later cast by the mock Director in the role of a man who dies. The Priest at first tells the people not to listen to the "Evil One" but, on the verge of defeat, he seems to undergo a conversion: flames shoot up around him as, calling "Joy! Joy!" he decides to go along with the game. Thus the Priest and the mock Director, who seem to function as contrapuntal figures throughout the film, are in league.

### Realizing the Daydream

This scene represents the high point of romantic love, in polar opposition to the whorehouse scene that follows. The familiar archway is present as a cleft in the rock--the "doorway" from the song "Spaces Between Spaces" that accompanies this section--through which Kansas and Maria must pass to reach the Edenic setting that exists, as the lyrics imply, "beyond space and time." The images here exude fertility: flowers, flowing water, pollinating bees, as well as the couple's actual love making. The children's song from the rocks above, translated "play the bell, play the bell . . . in the night that the baby was born" adds a verbal dimension to the fertility theme while alluding to the birth of Christ. Immediately after the culmination of desire this paradise starts to fall apart: Maria wants a swimming pool and Kansas wants a resort hotel. But civilization and its products are incompatible with the dream. ✓

### At the Pinnacle

Here we see Kansas and Maria in their "little adobe"--complete with frescos, picture window, built-in bar, and swimming pool. When Kansas warns Maria that "there's an awful lot goin' out and nothin' comin' in" she answers "You want I go back to work? OK, I support you." Here the viewer learns for the first time that Maria is a whore.

### Truck Scene

Descending to the city, Kansas and Maria learn by letter that the movie company will not return to Peru. The movement in this scene and those that follow is toward the demonic world.

### The Kitchen Scene

This scene serves as an introduction to Neville Robey and his dead ducks: "Got 'em with my carbine, five in a row; they fell down just like a Gook!" Killing reappears not in context of the Western but in context of the war, which is like a "childhood sweetheart" to Neville. This encounter moves the viewer closer to the nightmare world of violence, adultery, and perversion which is to follow.

### The Checker Game

It is interesting that Kansas announces his intention to "take some money" from Neville--an intention that escalates into the search for the gold mine. Neville is indeed a "map"--not only to the mine, but also to the moral wilderness in which he and Kansas wander. Mrs. Anderson and her daughter are present as the whores.

### The Dinner Party

The dinner party functions as a parody of the family gathering, attended by Kansas, Maria, Neville, Mrs. Anderson, her daughter, and a young man who seems to serve as chauffeur, with Harry Anderson at the head. The conversation centers on sex, money, and Hollywood--all ingredients of the demonic world. As the group rises to go Maria stands patiently in the background clutching her cloth coat while Kansas nuzzles Mrs. Anderson's fur. The party ends on a toast "to all the whores in the world"--a phrase which indicates the dominate tonality of this scene and of the scenes that follow.

### Car Ride

Here the viewer is plunged into the middle of the maze. The "hee haw" siren, which recalls the howling wail from the ear piercing ceremony, suggests the wail of beast such as might appropriately inhabit this modern labyrinth. The rhythmic repetition of flashing lights adds a special fascination to this short scene, which continues the descent into the belly of the beast.

### Whorehouse

The whorehouse inner chamber stands at the other pole from Kansas' "little adobe on the hill" as the container of depravity, the matrix of perversion, the demonic translation of Eden. The sound of the music box, which was previously heard while Kansas and Maria made love under the waterfall, invites a comparison with that counter-event. The overhead mirror itself suggests the inversion of values characteristic of the whorehouse scene: homosexual love, the mixture of religious and erotic art, Mrs. Anderson's sadism, the incipient adultery, the equation of love with money. Furthermore, the grouping by way of mirrors of the three Marys--Mari "the Mistress," and Marietta "the Maid" are positioned on either side of Maria, Kansas' girlfriend--suggests that it is really she who is being prostituted here. This suggestion is appropriate, for it is Maria who embodies the Edenic dream, and it is Maria who is here neglected, humiliated, and--in a final inversion of the romantic ideal--beaten black and blue by her lover.

### The Next Morning

This scene of alienation between Kansas and Maria recalls the original daydream ("We are going to be so happy here, even without a swimming pool and a motel?") and marks the failure of that dream. In exchange for their Edenic setting Kansas will acquire, for Maria, a "fur coat of Mrs. Anderson"--the fetish which serves as the erotic link between Maria, the redeemed harlot, and Mrs. Anderson, the fallen lady. Here Kansas' exile begins.

### Acquiring the Fur

The exchange takes place in Mr. Anderson's hunting room, making the fur--and for that matter, Kansas too--a kind of hunting trophy. Mrs. Anderson tells him "you're my whore now."

### Search for the Goldmine

The lust for gold is associated with isolation and sterility as Kansas and Neville wander through the desert.

### The Assayer

By the time that Kansas learns the goldmine is worthless he has lost everything: his money, Maria, their house, his innocence. Yet he seems to come to some kind of realization: "We're friends, you know that? . . . We're already rich." Thus, though the quest for wealth has failed, Kansas has returned psychologically to the starting point: "Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose/Nothin' ain't

worth nothin' but it's free." But he is understandably bitter about his losses.

#### Rampage, Capture, and Escape

Kansas vents his rage and frustration by smashing the window of the assayer's office in the movie set--a symbol for the money values and false expectations epitomized in Hollywood films--that have led him astray. At this point he is captured, accused by Mercado of "stealing the sets," and caged in the jail like an animal held for sacrifice. After escaping from the jail he is wounded in the shoulder, an event which occurs on a large flat mass of rock at the bottom of a semi-circular terraced enclosure--a kind of theater reminiscent of the "altar made of stone." The wailing sound here recalls the ear piercing ceremony. Kansas, mounted on horseback, is paraded through the mob whose verbal scourging ("Don't kill him! Don't turn him loose") suggests further parallels with Christ.

#### Fight in the Whorehouse

Apparently Maria, in Kansas' absence, has resumed prostitution. When he goes in search of her he is thrown out of the whorehouse by the same pistola who threatened his life before. The flash cut to Kansas in his Billy the Kid outfit--"I've never been jerked off a horse before"--is a reminder of Billy's make believe death and therefore prefigures the impending sacrifice.

## Delirium

This sequence is "apocalyptic" in that it intermixes fragments of the "daydream" and the "nightmare" with fragments from The Death of Billy the Kid, bringing these three worlds into metaphoric identification as they exist in Kansas' mind. The imagery consists primarily of Maria as virgin, mother, and whore, together with Kansas gaunt and bleeding like a Byzantine Christ intercut with previous shots of Kansas, the new Adam. Closeups of a baby at the breast are match cut with shots of Kansas at the breast, drawing the virgin, the whore, the mother, the infant, and the sacrificial victim into close association. As Kansas awakes the jump cutting, involving both the mock Director and the Priest, suggests that these two figures are allied through Kansas as God and Satan are allied through Job.

## The Movie Fiesta

After awakening, Kansas follows Maria to the beauty contest at the movie fiesta--the same fiesta portrayed in the opening shots. It is at this point that he rides his horse through the archway to the "other side" of space and time. He is captured by the mock Director and presented to the crowd as "the most precious part of my movie . . . the best part of the Last Movie: The Dead Man!" The fireworks which follow recall Sodom and Gommorah, the glowing cities of infernal night. The grotesque and distorted music reinforces the sense of horror while the mock Director waves a liquor bottle in parody of the blessing. As the celebration comes to a climax the figure of a huge cowboy on the movie church explodes and tumbles to the ground. The Priest's comments,

"Within a man of light there is only light. Within a man of darkness there is only darkness," echo saying 25 from The Gospel According to Thomas and suggest that the daydream and nightmare worlds are subjective phenomena. But the viewer may note, as Kansas certainly does, that all the major ingredients from the Billy the Kid movie are in effigy except for Kansas himself.

#### Jail

Kansas' comments about "that kid" are enigmatic--perhaps an unassimilated remnant of the screenplay version. But his analysis of the "problem" is the same as the Priest's: that the movies have brought "immorality" (principally apostasy) to the village. His belief that "they're gonna kill me tomorrow" is interesting in this context, for here Billy's death, his own death, and the "sin" of the movies are linked.

#### Shriving

Although the Priest assures Kansas that "this is just for drama, this just to make symbolic" the sponge bath suggests a ritual preparation for the sacrifice. In contrast to his previous assertion of innocence ("I'm just a hired hand") Kansas here confesses--"I sinned, Father . . . the movies!"--thus taking on the sins of the village just as Christ, the innocent victim, took on the sins of the world. The scapegoat formula is complete.



### Parade on the Movie Lot

As the Priest, Mercado, and Kansas prepare to reenact the Billy the Kid death scene Hopper's film veers away from the scripted story and presents us with a mock death accompanied by the stripping away of masks. We see the Priest, Mercado, Kansas and the villagers in a gala, drunken procession followed by shots of the Universal Studio's publicity photographer taking still photographs of Stella Garcia, who plays Maria. Dennis Hopper, no longer Kansas, tells his actors "I've gotta get this thing over with. I've got a lot of things I gotta do." The lyrics which accompany the following scene--"spaces between spaces and lines between lines"--are extended by the puzzle of movies within movies and suggest the narrative mode of the film.

### Death and Resurrection

It is interesting that Hopper takes his fall at the bottom of the steps which, like the archway, join the two worlds: the same steps which near the beginning of the film divided the Priest's followers from Mercado's gang. Hopper's make-believe death at this point signals a reconciliation. The subliminal two-frame message "ripped/torn," inserted between his "death" and "resurrection," suggests sparmagos, or the mutilation of the sacrificial body. But when Hopper rises, turns toward the audience and sticks out his tongue he seems to mock the very notion of death. The repetition of the fall ritualizes it, turning the act into a kind of dance: the transformation of life into art.

### Recapitulation

In the footage which follows the camera itself unmask: the shakey zoom shot, the clapstick, and the labeled leader are all outtakes or trims which would normally be left on the cutting room floor. By including them here Hopper displays the raw material of his film. But the shot of the villager on the roof with his sheriff's star, cavalry hat, and gun is unexpectedly lyrical. The camera holds on him as if the operator had no purpose in shooting except to use up film, simply staring at him until (as when a word repeated over and over loses its meaning) with an embarrassed smile and a slight movement of the hand this person ceases to be a character in Hopper's film and becomes a villager standing on the roof of a movie set, absurdly wearing a sheriff's star and a cavalry hat. It is a revealing moment.

### Epilogue

The conversation around the campfire is of course dislocated-- in the proper chronology it would have been a part of the search for the goldmine. Much could be said here about life imitating art, with comparisons to the villager's imitation of the movies. But what is really interesting about this scene is that against all odds Kansas and Neville found gold anyway. As Stewart Stern envisioned it, "The trek is like a march of death--despite its occasional hilarity, there is a sense of doom about it, of final failure." . . . The feeling is always there that their hope is as hollow as a drum and they are embarked on a great mistake, a childish, mindless, desperate gamble in which they can only lose. . . . Then they make their

strike!"<sup>49</sup> Thus what seemed to be a delusory hope based on the fictional experience of Walter Huston in Treasure of Sierra Madre turned out to be more than a delusion. The movies came true.

The infant's cry past the end of the film--in the black leader after the conclusion of shots--completes the ceremonial movement toward life. Thus The Last Movie, which began with the creation of the universe, ends with the suggestion of new life and a new beginning. It recalls the third saying from The Gospel According to Thomas: "The old man in his days will not hesitate to ask an infant of seven days about the place of life, and he will live, for many of the first will be last, and they will be a single one."<sup>50</sup> And it extends the affirmation of life which begins at the point where Hopper, despite the ultimatum from Universal Studios, refuses to die in his own film. "How did you know when you had finished the movie," I asked him. He replied as if the answer were self evident: "When I looked at it and said 'that's it'."

Universal executives carried out their threat to shelve the picture. After a token two week run in New York and Los Angeles The Last Movie was withdrawn from circulation. Whether or not the film has commercial potential is an unanswered question: it may be that The Last Movie, like the once suppressed masterpiece Citizen Kane, will find its audience over the years. In any case it will be interesting to review the film from the perspective offered by Hopper's future work. But for now the auteur's comments on the ending of the film seem to reflect his own ambiguous role as filmmaker, artist, and prophet: "You see a guy in a burning tree," says Hopper, "and there are children. He says 'God is everywhere.' It's like the

burning bush in the Bible: it seems that truth comes from the tree,  
the burning bush. But this time there's a man setting it on fire."<sup>51</sup>



## NOTES

1 Axel Madsen, "California Dreaming," Sight and Sound, Summer, 1970, p. 129.

2 "You're Wrong If You Write Off Dennis Hopper," New York Times, 24 October 1971, p. 160.

3 "From Adolescent to Puerile," Time, 18 October 1971, p. 87.

4 "The Last Shall Be First," Saturday Review, 16 October 1971, p. 63.

5 "Visions of the End," The Atlantic Monthly, December 1971, p. 132.

6 "Films in Focus," The Village Voice, 14 October 1971, p. 80.

7 "Movies in Movies," The New Yorker, 9 October 1971, p. 152.

8 Take One, March-April 1971, p. 31.

9 Kaminsky, p. 31.

10 New York Times, 24 October 1971, p. 160.

11 Hirsch, p. 160

12 Hirsch, p. 160

- 13 Anthony Macklin, "Easy Rider: The Initiation of Dennis Hopper," Film Heritage, Fall, 1969, p. 9.
- 14 See, for example, his work as presented by Henry Hopkins, "Dennis Hopper's America," Art in America, May-June 1971, p. 80.
- 15 Interview with Dennis Hopper, Taos, New Mexico, 10 April 1976.
- 16 Tom Burke, "Dennis Hopper Saves the Movies," Esquire, September 1970, p. 171.
- 17 Burke, p. 15
- 18 Brad Darrach, "The Easy Rider Runs Wild in the Andes," Life, 19 June 1970, p. 49.
- 19 Darrach, p. 59.
- 20 Interview with Dennis Hopper, Taos, New Mexico, 10 April 1976.
- 21 Interview with Hopper.
- 22 Telephone interview with Stewart Stern, 2 April 1976.
- 23 Robert M. Grant, The Secret Sayings of Jesus (London: Fontana Books, 1960), p. 131.
- 24 Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 124.
- 25 Grant, The Secret Sayings, p. 136.
- 26 Interview with Dennis Hopper, Taos, New Mexico, 10 April, 1976.

- 27 Interview with Hopper.
- 28 Interview with Hopper.
- 29 Publicity poster for The Last Movie used at the Venice Film Festival, 1971.
- 30 Interview with Hopper.
- 31 Frye, p. 147.
- 32 Interview with Hopper.
- 33 Interview with Hopper.
- 34 Grant, The Secret Sayings, p. 136.
- 35 Grant, p. 117.
- 36 Stewart Stern, "The Last Movie" (an unpublished screen play), pp. 117-118.
- 37 Telephone interview with Stewart Stern, 2 April 1976.
- 38 Stern, "The Last Movie," p. 96.
- 39 Stern, "The Last Movie," p. 116.
- 40 Stern, "The Last Movie," pp. 116-117.
- 41 Interview with Hopper.
- 42 Telephone interview with Stewart Stern.

43 Interview with Hopper.

44 Interview with Hopper.

45 A comparison of The Last Movie with medieval drama, especially the masque, would make a fascinating study. It is sufficient here to cite Northrop Frye's comments on the form. "The archetypal masque," he says, "like all forms of spectacular drama, tends to detach its settings from time and space, but instead of the Arcadias of the ideal masque, we find ourselves frequently in a sinister limbo, like the threshold of death in Everyman, the sealed underworld crypts of Maeterlinck, or the nightmares of the future in expressionist plays. . . . The action of the archetypal masque takes place in a world of human types, which at its most concentrated becomes the interior of the human mind." Anatomy of Criticism, pp. 290-291.

46 Interview with Hopper.

47 Interview with Hopper.

48 An argument could be made that one of the myths behind the film is Billy the Kid or some other tale of the American Adam. Readers who wish to explore this idea might consult Ursula Brumm's American Thought and Religious Typology (New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1970).

49 Stern, "The Last Movie," pp. 82-83.



50

Grant, p. 117.

51

Interview with Hopper.

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