

private feelings, and begins the play in the costume that Lingo brought, with prisoner musicians and dancing inmates in prison garb providing accompaniment. As Li Jiamin sings, young prisoners also begin to cry, perhaps lamenting their own long rides alone for figurative thousands of miles, as the state would have it, to repentance or reform.

Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles may rank as one of the smaller films in Zhang Yimou's canon, yet it brims with feeling and, yes, with ideology. Is the filmmaker utilizing Ken Takakura, the taciturn Japanese icon, as a tool of esthetic estrangement, a way of evoking difference not only between Japan and China but also more fundamentally between the generations, in both countries? The film's ellipses, its puzzling transitions and sudden leaps, work hand in hand with its comic moments to disorient the viewer, leaving a sense of disturbance amid its gentler sentimentalities.—Robert Sklar

Army of Shadows

Produced by Jacques Dorfmann; directed by Jean-Pierre Melville; screenplay by Jean-Pierre Melville, based on a novel by Joseph Kessel; cinematography by Pierre Lhomme; art direction by Theobald Meurisse; edited by Françoise Bonnot; music composed by Eric de Marsan; restoration (2004) by StudioCanal/Beatrice Valbin-Constant, under the supervision of cinematographer Pierre Lhomme; starring Lino Ventura, Simone Signoret, Paul Meurisse, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Claude Mann, Paul Crauchet, Christian Barbier, Serge Reggiani, André Dewavrin, Alain Mottet, and Cayla-Legrand. Color, 145 mins. A Rialto Pictures release.

Army of Shadows (*L'Armée des Ombres*), the Rialto Pictures restoration of Jean-Pierre Melville's magnificent 1969 epic about a group of French Resistants during World War II, opened in New York City to unanimously superlative reviews—a far cry from the film's original French reception, which was punctuated by charges of Gaullist mythologizing and conservative manipulations of history. Yet, as Ginette Vincendeau writes in *An American in Paris*, her comprehensive study of the director, Jean-Pierre Melville, the French response was a matter of “bad timing,” in a post-May 1968 climate of cynicism that rendered any association of heroism and De Gaulle suspect. In fact, as this new release (and first U.S. screening) amply demonstrates, Melville's third Resistance film (preceded by the 1947-1949 *Silence de la Mer*—Melville's first feature film—and *Léon Morin, Prêtre* of 1961) is an exquisite meditation on the futility of war, the necessity of human connection, and the inevitable destruction of the latter by the former.

Long acknowledged as a ‘Father of the New Wave’ for his simultaneous creation and renewal of cinematic language, Melville knows how to transform the most minute concrete detail into an abstract philosophical proposition, how to make the single image speak volumes, and how to construct unbearable tension out of a terse, reduced number of elements. This is his signature: the gritty masculine universe of ambivalent heroes, of heroic ambivalence. In speaking of the Hollywood cinema that he both admired and reworked, Melville remarked, “America is the sublime and the abominable.” That same contradiction can be seen in this parable of resistance, in which no pyrotechnics, no visibly dramatic heroics, not even the specificity of a Manichean division of actions, provide us with an easy complacency about righteous behavior.

There is much in the film on the side of this ‘abominable’—the relentlessly claustrophobic atmosphere, the pervasive aura of futility, the inevitability of death and betrayal, the pathos of anonymity. But there is also the ‘sublime,’ in this case effectively rendered in part by the performance of Simone Signoret as Mathilde, a heroine modeled on at least three real *Résistantes*—Lucie Aubrac, Dominique Desanti, and Maud Begon (and probably on many others less famous or even unknown). Mathilde, the sole woman in the group, has a strength, intelligence, and conviction equal to that of its leader, Philippe Gerbier (Lino Ventura). This ‘sublime’ is not, however, entirely based on the character of Mathilde or on the real exploits of her models, but on the way in which the close-up is used—luminous in moments of deepest tension and greatest tragedy. In fact, close-ups of women's faces can be seen to structure the film, complicating the imputed misogyny found in Melville's incessant portrayal of masculinity, and, more importantly, providing an invisible thread in a fabric across which is traced the semiotics of despair.

Army of Shadows, a film that Melville, a Resistant himself, waited twenty-five years to make—a film acknowledged in the U.S. only now, thirty-seven years after its release—is even more relevant today, not only for its reappraisal of the French Resistance in a more enlightened context but for the pressing political, moral, and ethical questions that it raises as we confront our own social contradictions.

The title of the film comes from the novel on which it is based, Joseph Kessel's 1943 book drawn from his own experiences in the Resistance, which Melville read while he was with the Free French forces in London. Both the novel and the film are works of the heart for their authors; Kessel reportedly wept when he saw the finished film. He added a preface to subsequent editions of the book in which he clearly states that “there is neither propaganda nor fiction in this book; no detail is forced or invented. What I've assembled here are somewhat

random and unadorned daily events as they were actually lived... I wanted to say so much and yet said so little.... [In this France without laws], the national hero was clandestine, immersed in illegality...waging the highest and most beautiful war in the catacombs of revolt...so that Frenchmen could die as free men.” And Melville explains that “out of a sublime documentary about the Resistance, I've created a retrospective reverie, a nostalgic pilgrimage back to a time that profoundly marked my generation.”

This reverential and extremely personal tone opens the film, yet it is not without irony: the cold, disturbing beauty of its *mise-en-scène* and the relentless pessimism of its narration are as far from melodrama and sentimentality as one can get. “Bad memories, I welcome you anyway... You are my long-lost youth...” (“*Mauvais souvenirs, soyez pourtant les bienvenues...vous êtes ma jeunesse lointaine...*”), a quotation from the nineteenth-century satirist Georges Courteline added by Melville to the film's beginning, is something of a false lead; the rest of the presentation (despite the subjectivity of varied voice-overs in keeping with the different narrators of Kessel's text) is as pared down, laconic, austere, and controlled as any of Melville's hallmark gangster films (the greatest ones made after 1963, when he solidified both his style and his popularity—*Le Doulos* (1963), *Le Deuxième Souffle* (1966), *Le Samouraï* (1967), *Le Cercle Rouge* (1970), *Un Flic* (1972)).

With the exception of its breathtaking opening shot—with its columns of German soldiers marching forward from the Arc de Triomphe—the film has almost no historically specific realism, and this was Melville's intent. He said that *Army of Shadows* was less about the Resistance per se, than about a certain idea of it. This conceptual emphasis, an organization of atmospheres rather than details, produces what Tom Milne has called Melville's characteristic mix of intensity and austerity, and provides the filmmaker with a structure of discreet, self-contained episodes, concise object lessons in the grim consequences of solitude and isolation, loyalty and betrayal, that characterize life in the Resistance during France's darkest years. While the situations vary, the somber and austere tone never does.

The film opens as Resistance agent Philippe Gerbier is taken to a Vichy concentration camp and then released before his planned escape. He arrives at the Paris Gestapo headquarters at the Hotel Majestic, but here his escape is successful. He kills a guard (perhaps sacrificing a fellow prisoner) and hides for an extremely tense interlude in a barber shop where the ‘close shave’ given him by a disturbingly impassive barber (Serge Reggiani) ends up being the Resistance aid he needs. He then joins his comrades Félix (Paul Crauchet), Le Bison (Christian Barbier), and neophyte Le Masque (Claude Mann) in Marseilles in order to execute a



Resistance member Philippe Gerbier (Lino Ventura) is driven to a Vichy concentration camp in Jean-Pierre Melville's *Army of Shadows* (1969).

young traitor named Dounat (Alain Libolt), something none of the men have either the expertise or the stomach to carry out. And yet, they do, reinforcing their determined positions on the hard path of Resistance.

A new recruit, Jean-François Jardie (Jean-Pierre Cassel) delivers a radio transmitter to Mathilde; she places this in a shopping satchel and covers it with kindling twigs in order to transport it, in her turn, through the streets of Paris. Jean-François (also known as St. Jean) visits his older brother Luc (Paul Meurisse); unbeknownst to him, this brother (also known as St. Luc) is the head of the entire network, but neither one ever learns of his brother's true wartime identity. Gerbier and Jardie, under the cover of nighttime coastal mists, board a submarine for London, where Jardie is decorated by General De Gaulle (in his single shadowy and almost monumental presence in the film). While Gerbier is in London, Félix is arrested in Lyons, and Gerbier is parachuted back into France. Mathilde devises a plan to rescue Félix with the help of Le Bison and Le Masque: disguised as Germans they enter the well-guarded hospital, but Félix is too badly tortured to be moved. Jean-François gets himself arrested to reach Félix, but is too late, and he succumbs to torture as well. Gerbier is arrested in Lyons and Mathilde engineers his rescue from a Gestapo 'shooting gallery.' While he is hiding in an isolated safe house, Jardie tells him that Mathilde has been arrested. Fearing that the Germans will make her talk by threatening her seventeen-year-old daughter (whose photograph she has kept in spite of Gerbier's warning), Jardie, Gerbier, Le Bison, and Le Masque gun her down near the Arc de Triomphe. In a parallel to the opening credit sequence, we learn in a post-script (another of Melville's additions not found in Kessel's book) that all the men have died in action or under tor-

ture. Far from an exciting and edifying action film such as René Clément's *Is Paris Burning?*, Melville's film deflates the fabrications of heroism. Rather than the celebratory anthem for which it was criticized upon its original French release, *Army of Shadows*, in Ginette Vincendeau's words, "places a theatrically mythical De Gaulle half-way through the film and then stages the demise and death of all of its protagonists."

Yet what strikes one about this film is not the individual composite sketches (using Kessel's term) of French Resistants, but the rigorously precise classicism and formal beauty for which Melville is known, which has to do, in large part, with the brilliant cinematography of Pierre Lhomme, who also supervised the restoration (a true 'act of memory' for him because it allowed him to see the film with fresh eyes). Every shot is bathed in a lugubrious yet stunning semidarkness, where icy blues and greys are paradoxically sumptuous in their spare evocation of atmosphere. Film scholar Adrian Danks describes Melville's last film, *Un Flic*, in terms appropriate to *Army of Shadows*: "[In the] creation of a hermetic and completely defined world...the film is suffused by a blue light [which] takes on the extreme tonal abstraction of a late Turner painting. This melancholic and metallic blue sheen... this sense of painterly composition and control, [gives us] characters who are trapped in the half-light of somnambulistic actions and events." Lhomme is very specific about the creation of this mood: "Melville's own style was extremely sober and precise without any useless words. I assure you that you will understand much about the Occupation of France immediately at the beginning of the film. A few minutes to let you know the atmosphere, what was the mood of France and what was the main character of the film." Melville himself has spoken of this

very precise formalism in reference to *Silence de la Mer*: "I wanted to attempt a language composed entirely of images and sounds, and from which action would be more or less banished. So I conceived the film a little like an opera."

One has only to think of the first two shots of *Army of Shadows* and their mirroring sequences at the end of the film to understand the power of the film's *mise-en-scène*. The film opens, as noted, with an astonishing stationary shot that lasts for an entire minute; the Arc de Triomphe dominates the deserted scene while the muffled offscreen sound of marching boots builds our anticipation. Then in the distance we see a column of soldiers who turn out to be Germans, first crossing the screen laterally and then turning to advance toward us as the band strikes up. This sequence-shot of the Wehrmacht marching down the Champs Élysées is one of only two shots that Melville claimed to be really proud of in his career. "For that scene I used the sound of real Germans marching. It's inimitable. It was a crazy idea to want to shoot this German parade on the Champs Élysées. Even today I can't quite believe I did it.... At three o'clock in the morning [during rehearsal on the Avenue d'Iéna] with all traffic stopped and the Avenue lit entirely by gas lamps, men in uniform began to march past. It was a fantastic sight. Wagnerian. Unfilmable. I swear to you that I was overwhelmed." This documentary-style shot—impersonal, factual, and unrelated to any of the characters in the narrative—contains all that need be known about Occupied France.

Immediately following is a shock cut to a police van that we follow at a distance as it makes its way through a downpour across fields streaked with yellow and green (this is the first and only time we will see such natural vividness). This is the van transporting Gerbier to the concentration camp, and it is our entry into the netherworld of Resistance solitude, solidarity, and betrayal. The film's final two sequences create a sort of frame around this realm of shadows; a rapid backwards tracking shot away from Mathilde's body sprawled on the pavement, a black screen, and then, as we see each of the four men (Le Masque, Le Bison, Luc Jardie, and Gerbier) in close-up, we are told of their individual deaths by means of intertitles. Notably, Jardie, like the real Resistance hero Jean Moulin on whom he is partly based, dies after revealing only one name—his own. And Gerbier, we are told, has decided this time when ordered to do so in a second Gestapo 'shooting gallery,' not to run. (This is another departure from Kessel's book, where Gerbier, far from being killed, "manages to find his half-smile again.") The film's final shot reprises the original view of the Arc de Triomphe, but this time it is seen from behind the windshield of the car, that is, from an enclosed space, framed by the dark shoulders of the men whose fates are sealed.

Yet, as I earlier noted, there are moments of transcendence in this deeply melancholy film, and these have to do, paradoxically, with close-ups of women. The first, and certainly most important, is the look on Mathilde's face as she recognizes that she will be killed. Already we have seen several charged close-ups of Mathilde—the wordless expression typical of Melville's women because, according to Rui Nogueira, he simply couldn't write dialog for women. (Melville stated that he did in fact like women, but that he liked men's stories more.) This final exchange of looks between Mathilde and her killers stands out not only as a moment of supreme dramatic intensity, but also as an example of the artistry that saves the film from utter demoralization.

In her autobiography, *Nostalgia Isn't What It Used To Be*, Simone Signoret describes Melville's directorial expertise when she recounts how this scene was shot:

We rehearsed. I exited, walked with eyes glued firmly to the ground. Melville came toward me, saying, 'That was fine.'... And I, who never want to explain anything, felt compelled to add, 'Well, maybe... still, she's just betrayed her pals.' 'Who told you she's betrayed them?' 'I've read the script.' 'So what! I wasn't there! I don't know if she gave them away!' 'Nonetheless, they're going to kill her!' 'Yes, they will kill her, but that doesn't prove that it was she who talked too much.'... That's a fantastic indication, full of ambiguity. When the camera pans on those four guys in the car, for a fraction of a second there's this look exchanged between Mathilde and her pals: she realizes they are going to kill her. If Melville hadn't talked to me the way he did just before the take, that look would never have existed: a mingling of surprise, terror and complete understanding.

And it is she who, throughout the film, has reached out to the men, has provided the connection and the hope without which all action would be cold and automatic. The ultimate irony is that this look, this woman's face, remains the significant detail that gives the film its pulse.

There are other women's faces, variants of this particular look: a woman gazes at Jean François in a Marseilles cafe; the fresh face of Mathilde's daughter smiles out from the photograph she carries; a young English woman who Gerbier sees during the blitz laughs casually with a young soldier, a vision repeated as he confronts a moment of pure terror. In a curious way these women signal the absent *Résistantes* who crystallize around the figure of Mathilde (a character who, incidentally, is quite different in Kessel's novel, where she has many children, lives in extreme poverty, and acts in an often rash and hysterical manner in spite of her courage). Lucie Aubrac, for example, who cofounded the Resistance group *Libération-Sud* (where Melville had worked as a militant before he left for London) and who staged a dramatic rescue of her

husband from Montluc prison, wrote about these real exploits just after the war (dramatized in a somewhat romantic way in Claude Berri's 1997 film *Lucie Aubrac*). These women can be found in modified form in Mathilde's attempted rescue of Félix and resonate for viewers familiar with Aubrac's story.

Likewise, the 250 women memorialized in Charlotte Delbo's *Le Convoi de janvier 24* (1943) [*Convoy to Auschwitz*] reflect many of the characteristics and experiences outlined by Kessel but only suggested by Melville. And there is the makeup artist, Maud Begon, about whom Signoret writes, "On the set we had a real 'Mathilde.' Maud Begon had put in nineteen months' captivity, from fort to camps. She made us up—that is, she improved me and she disfigured those who'd supposedly been subjected to torture. For the latter, she undoubtedly called on her memories to do her job well." These women are the other shadows in this army, specters whose flickering presence allows a momentary glimpse into a possible time when such struggles won't be necessary.

There are still other shadows behind these shadows, and these have to do with the unnamed yet always present black hole of the Occupation era, the treatment of French Jews. In his eloquent review of *Army of Shadows* Jonathan Rosenbaum proposes that, among the many subtexts in Melville's work, the primary one in this film might be the Holocaust. He goes on to connect what he terms a "metaphysical defeatism" born of survivor guilt with the existentialism that nourished Melville's youth (he was part of that postwar intellectual scene around Saint Germain that gave us the work of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir). This is why, Rosenbaum concludes, so much of the suspense of *Army of Shadows* is inflected by moral conflict. Although I would not place the

same emphasis on the moral dilemmas of post-Holocaust philosophy, Rosenbaum seems to me to have illuminated something crucial.

I would give these shadows proper names—Kessel, Grumbach, and Kaminker. For the first, the author of the novel, Kessel's increasing identification with his Jewish background developed throughout his career, such that when he was named to the Académie Française, he made a point of asserting his Jewish identity. And it was Kessel who, while in the maquis's Carte network, along with fellow Resistant Maurice Druon, translated the lyrics from Russian for what became the Resistance anthem, "*Le Chant des Partisans*," also the signature song of the Jewish ghetto resistance. One year after *Army of Shadows* was released, Kessel wrote about the idea of a Jewish homeland in *Mur à Jérusalem* (*A Wall in Jerusalem*), from which the documentary film of the same name (directed by Frédéric Rossif) was made.

As for Grumbach, this is Melville's given name; this son of a Jewish wholesale merchant changed it to Melville after reading *Moby-Dick* during the war, and the name has remained as evidence of the director's legendary passion for American culture. Although he never treated specific Jewish themes in any of his films, they are arguably under the surface of many of his 'outsider' texts, and he was said to have been extremely moved upon seeing Marcel Ophüls's epic of French collaboration in the Final Solution, *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1970).

And finally, Simone Kaminker, who changed her name to accommodate her professional career as an actress. She, too, enlarged on her Jewish identification as she grew older, writing the powerful novel *Adieu Volodia* (1985) about Jewish immigrant culture in Paris at the turn of the century, and tirelessly championing Mosco Boucault's magnif-



Simone Signoret's portrayal in *Army of Shadows* is modeled on three real-life Resistance members—Lucie Aubrac, Dominique Desanti, and Maud Begon.

icent documentary about Jewish Communist partisans, *Terrorists in Retirement* (1982).

But perhaps the most significant element of this trajectory involves Maud Begon, who, as a prisoner of Ravensbrück, bore a number on her arm. For her role in Moishe Mizrahi's *Madame Rosa* (1977), as the blowsy, aging prostitute-survivor, Signoret insisted on wearing a numerical tattoo (the number was Begon's), even though this was never visible in the film. According to the actress, Begon "was the only one of us to know that Madame Rosa, deported in 1942, was perforce one of that little band of people whose only identification mark from then on was a number in which the two first figures could only be sixteen or seventeen thousand." Madame Rosa became for Simone Signoret (in the words of her biographer Catherine David) "the phantom of the millions of Jews exterminated by the Nazis, of whom Simone Kaminker could so easily have been one, as she well knew."

In *Army of Shadows* there is no specific reference to Jews; Melville had no intention of making an historically accurate Resistance film. In the words of Vincendeau, "Melville wants his war film, like his thrillers, to reach beyond the generic realm, into a 'universal'...moral code and a tragic mode." And it is in this context that an understanding of the implications of the Holocaust in the film can be read.

Jean-Pierre Melville has long enjoyed cult popularity among cinéphiles, yet he must be considered beyond this small group as one of the truly great directors of all time, and this is no exaggeration. This legendary 'man of the cinema,' whose output was a mere thirteen feature films and one short, was stopped at the height of his inventiveness at the age of fifty-six by a stroke which killed him in 1973. There are, fortunately, several useful sources for insight into the character and the art of this extraordinary man. There is the previously noted book by Ginette Vincendeau as well as the (out of print but available in libraries) essential *Melville on Melville* by Rui Nogueira. And each of the current DVD's (*Le Samouraï* and *Le Cercle Rouge* by Criterion and *Léon Morin, Prêtre* by BFI) contain a wealth of background material, including wonderful interviews with both Vincendeau and Nogueira, as well as with the director himself. In every account, Melville's iconoclastic and self-invented personality (which produced films with a maverick spirit, whether they were made in entire independence in his own studio on Rue Jenner or with larger commercial support as his films became more popular), is noted.

However, it's not simply the Stetson hat and dark glasses that solidified his iconic persona; it is his absolute passion for the cinema, more specifically for American cinema (and American culture in general). He loved the classical American cinema for its formal perfection, its ability to be both

entertaining and thought-provoking at the same time. It is his respect for his audience and his complete faith in the power of images to inspire serious reflection that allowed him to create a kind of two-tiered cinema, one that gripped the audience with its stories while it kept them contemplating its visual beauty and profound philosophical implications.

But Melville didn't simply ape American models; he made distinctly French films that adapted the careful precision of the best Hollywood directors (and he had a pantheon of sixty-four of them) to the themes and concerns of his own native country. His films are unmistakably French, no matter how inspired or informed they are by his American mentors. This is what has led Rui Nogueira to conclude that "Melville was a great American director lost in France." He may indeed have been that, but with *Army of Shadows* Melville has in fact made a great French film for a lost America.—Sandy Flitterman-Lewis

The Notorious Bettie Page

Produced by Lori Keith Douglas, Pamela Koffler, Katie Roumel, Christine Vachon, and John Wells; directed by Mary Harron; screenplay by Mary Harron and Guinevere Turner; cinematography by Mott Hupfel; edited by Tricia Cooke; music by Joseph S. DeBeasi and Mark Suozzo; art direction by Thomas Ambrose; costume design by John A. Dunn; starring Gretchen Mol, Chris Bauer, Jared Harris, Sarah Paulson, Cara Seymour, David Strathairn and Lili Taylor. Black & white and color, 91 min. A Picturehouse release.

In the first fifteen minutes of Mary Harron's third film, we're shifted around a bit in time. First we have a caption reading "New York 1955—Times Square." Soon after, we're in "Nashville 1936," and before too much longer, we're back in "New York," only in "1949." Captions like these are typical in the cinema, but in *The Notorious Bettie Page* these labeling titles inadvertently reveal the film's attitude toward history. Virtually every image in this film is internally marked with finality, a security that 'the past' is as easily pulled out and replaced as a file folder—categorized, not coincidentally, like the smut collection presided over by the film's resident taxonomists, Irving and Paula Klaw (Chris Bauer and Lili Taylor). *Bettie Page* implicitly asks us to pull history out of the dusty drawer and examine it, lord over it, with the photographer's magnifying eyepiece.

This attitude toward the American past is, as it happens, typical of Harron's directorial style. Under the auspices of tackling suburban complacency and the button-down Republican mind, Harron's films frequently succumb to a snide detachment and a rampant historical presentism. *American*

Psycho (another collaboration with Harron and screenwriter Guinevere Turner, from 2000) turned the Eighties into 'The 80's,' with Reaganite values and tinny Katrina and the Waves music ratcheted up to the level of lubricious parody. Likewise, Harron's *I Shot Andy Warhol* (1996) depicts the Sixties as 'The 60's,' with cartoonish flower-power grandstanding only serving to make Warhol's Factory seem a relative oasis for the comfortably numb.

In many ways, *Bettie Page* continues this selectively iconic, VH1 approach to the past. *Bettie Page* delivers "New York 1955—Times Square" as a world of repressed gentlemen in their fedoras, squirreling around in the dark after some racy photos and 8mm films, while The Man lurked in the night, ready to quash all that innocent fun. And, based on the condensed assault of scenes that immediately follow—incest, rape, and spousal abuse, all in a ten-minute interval—"Nashville 1936" was no picnic either.

None of this is to suggest that facts in the life of Bettie Page (Gretchen Mol) should be sanitized in order to avoid casting American history in a negative light. Yes, there were indeed Congressional smut trials led by showboating politicians like Estes Kefauver (David Strathairn)—and governmental repression and encroachments on our privacy should always be interrogated, by art as well as scholarship, if we're to maintain a realistic and useful relationship to our own past. Nevertheless, Harron's film relies on smug shorthand that flatters its own audience for our presumed enlightenment. Senators and G-Men are all slicked back in their gray suits, a tube of Brylcreem wedged up their tight bureaucratic asses. This is a *Saturday Evening Post* nightmare, the forced rectitude of the Eisenhower era, and *Bettie Page* makes palpable the need for crusading mavericks to overthrow its hegemony. (And, if parallels to the present era are detected, all the better. You, the discerning Landmark moviegoer, have already proven by your ticket purchase that you stand above the mundane.)

Whereas Michel Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, cautioned his readers not to congratulate themselves too quickly by identifying with the outlaws, harlots, and pervers of the Victorian era (noting that "we 'other Victorians'" were in fact more repressed than we knew, and that living in the present is in itself no one-way ticket to freedom), Harron and company do exactly that. *Hey, look, lurking in the back alleys of New York and some weird out-of-the-way suburbs, people were dealing in sex!* It's unclear whether this is supposed to be a newflash or a vindication of the drab normalcy of seemingly *outré* sexual practices, some sort of comic attempt to hang a Vanillaroma car freshener around the neck of B&D. (For any of this to be fun, don't we at least have to *pretend* that it's dangerous?) On the other hand, the filmmakers disproportionately choose to highlight Page's

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