of almost unlimited suggestibility"—perhaps to aggravate his nearest competitors, the Puritans.

Shortly thereafter, Plymouth's William Bradford, disturbed by the "beastly practieses of madd Bacchinalians," dispatched Miles Standish to secure Morton's arrest; Morton was charged with selling firearms to the Indians and shipped to England. In a subsequent Puritan expedition, John Endicott felled the infamous maypole.

The passing of Merry Mount has been described by so many American writers that it has become a myth, asserts McWilliams, professor of English at the University of Illinois. All have found in this brief episode a "mirror" of the values and assumptions of their own times. In his 1720 historical account, for example, Cotton Mather attacked Morton venomously, betraying his fear that a new "counterculture" might again threaten the peace.

Farther removed from the event but still in the shadow of the founding fathers, Nathaniel Hawthorne took an ambiguous approach to the Merry Mount conflict before concluding that Morton symbolized the "English past," and the Puritans the "American future." During the 1920s William Carlos Williams decried Puritanism as the source of modern America's troubles and condemned the Puritans for their "repressed sexual envy." During the 1960s, Robert Lowell's drama *The Old Glory* stressed racial hostility between Puritans and Indians.

McWilliams suggests that the "meaning of the conflict" at Merry Mount has always been ripe for reshaping "because its historical facts had been conveniently obscured" from the beginning. Only two eyewitness accounts exist of the episode, Morton's *New English Canaan* and Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation.*

The Artist as Stricken Child

"Michelangelo's Mutilation of the Florence Pietà: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry" by Robert S. Liebert, in *Art Bulletin* (Mar. 1977), 815 Schermerhorn, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027.

Of Michelangelo's many unfinished works, the *Pietà* in Florence is the only one that the sculptor mutilated before abandoning it. He destroyed Christ's left leg and damaged both arms before friends persuaded him to stop. Significantly, says Liebert, the group of figures was intended to adorn Michelangelo's tomb, and the face of Nicodemus resembles Michelangelo's own features. Why did Michelangelo try to wreck this particular creation in such a way? And why did the destruction occur when it did?

Liebert, a Columbia University psychiatrist, rejects several explanations—such as that the marble was flawed or the sculptor a hopeless perfectionist—to focus on Michelangelo's own explanation: He destroyed the *Pietà* because his steward Urbino, his "beloved servant and companion," was nagging him to finish it. At the time (late 1555), Urbino lay dying. The prospect of imminent loss preoccupied Michel-

Section of engraving, attributed to Cherubino Alberti, of the Florence Pietà, *depicting Christ's now missing left leg.*

Photo: Lichtbildwerkstatte "Alpenland."

angelo, then 80 years old. "Nothing but unending wretchedness remains for me," he wrote after Urbino's death.

Irritation and blame directed at a dying loved one are typical responses to feelings of abandonment, but for Michelangelo, Liebert argues, the experience was especially traumatic. After 26 years of service, Urbino had probably become a surrogate for Michelangelo's mother, who died when he was six. (As a result, Michelangelo avoided relationships with women throughout his life.) Enraged at a second loss of maternal affection, Liebert contends, he found an outlet in mutilation of the *Pietà,* a symbol not only of his own death and the approach of Urbino's but also of "loving fusion" between mother and son. Nevertheless, the theme continued to obsess Michelangelo, and he was working on yet another *Pietà* when he died 10 years later.

Back to Big Movies

"Hollywood Harakiri" by William Paul, in *Film Comment* (Mar.-Apr. 1977), 1865 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023.

Emerging from the slump of 1969/70 (when Paramount, for example, went $60 million into debt on four films), Hollywood has enjoyed its greatest financial successes during the past three years. With the return of the blockbuster movie—*Jaws* ($118 million in rentals alone), *The Godfather* ($85 million), *The Exorcist* ($82 million)—the industry, its admirers claim, has once again found a mass audience.

But those who hail the return of the truly "popular" movie, writes Paul, film professor at Haverford, overlook the fact that historically the movie industry has employed a *variety* of genres to create and