

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

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



Photo: Lichtbildwerkstatt "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

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sustain mass appeal. By contrast, Hollywood's heavy reliance in the 1970s on the big-budget, multicharacter action film presages "disaster for the art form and, in the long run, for the industry itself."

Relying on "bankable" stars, sophisticated marketing techniques, and ever-rising film budgets (up to \$15 or \$20 million), producers are looking for the safe "pre-sold product." With recent movies now a cornerstone of network TV programming, new films must possess some "unique"—and expensive—quality to lure customers away from their television sets. As a result, fewer movies are being made and distributed. (Universal opened *Jaws* in 500 theatres for a 12-week run; during this period it launched no other films.) This strategy has had some short-term success: The top 79 films in 1975 grossed \$700 million, but of these, 15 accounted for 57 percent of the total "take."

With fewer movies, however, opportunities for young filmmakers are reduced. Moreover, while a successful blockbuster may give some directors—Stanley Kubrick, Robert Altman—the financial security to pursue their own interests, just as often it will have the opposite effect. Faced with artistic independence or a percentage of the box office, how many top directors, asks Paul, will "give up the chance to tie into one of the \$50 million-plus grossers?"

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**RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**


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### *Nietzsche's Notion of Shame*

"'The Reddened Cheek': Nietzsche on Shame" by Carl D. Schneider, in *Philosophy Today* (Spring 1977), Carthage Station, Celina, Ohio 45822.

Blushing, wrote Darwin, "is the most peculiar and human of expressions." But the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), obsessed with the emergence of a new *type* of human being, proved ultimately more concerned with that mother of the blush—shame.

Nietzsche's interpretation of shame was dynamic and often contradictory, writes Schneider, professor of religion at Meadville-Lombard Theological School. He did not mean "shyness" or "guilt" and had no patience for those "shamed" by their instincts. True shame he associated with the mysterious, the masked, the *valuable*. It occurred when man perceived himself as merely a "tool of manifestations of will infinitely greater than he is permitted to consider himself"—as when creating and procreating, or in the presence of nature, art, or truth. In the end, what was of value was "like a woman. She should not be violated." The "noble" man or artist should embody the "pathos of distance," where keeping one's distance betokens respect.

By contrast, the ignoble and mediocre man craved the explicit and lacked a "delicate reverence." Thus, Nietzsche detested scientific