Cinerama

When moviegoers die, instead of paradise they go to Paris, for where else can you find 300 screens showing nearly every film you’d want to see, not to mention movies like Captain Blood, which bad boy Errol Flynn buckles his swash across the seven seas, and through I’m not dead, I may be in heaven, walking down the rue St.-Antoine, making lists of my favorite movies, number one being Cocteau's Beauty and the Beast, but I’m with Garbo at the end: “Where is my beast? Give me my beast.” Oh, the beasts have it on the silver screen—Ivan the Terrible, M, Nosferatu, The Mummy—all misshapen, murderous monsters, because no matter how beautiful we are, inside we know ourselves to be bloodsucking vampires, zombies, freaks cobbled together with spare parts from the graveyard, and God some kind of Dr. Frankenstein or megalomaniacal director, part nice-guy Frank Capra, yes, but the other part Otto Preminger, bald, with Nazi tics, because the world is beautiful and hideous at the same time, an identical Technicolor sky over us all, and the stars. Who came up with that concept—the distance, the light, the paparazzi flash? And the dialogue, which is sometimes snappy or très poétique, as if written by Shakespeare himself, then at other times by the most gutteral Neanderthal on the planet, grubbing his way across the landscape, noticing the sky only when it becomes his enemy or friend, dark with birds, not Hitchcock's, but dinner, throwing rocks into the sky, most of them missing their target, a few bouncing off his prognathous jaw, like Kubrick with his cavemen and spacemen existing on the same continuum, a Möbius strip to be sure but with Strauss, both Richard and Johann, in the background, and though it's winter there's a waltz in the air as I walk through the Place des Vosges, and I'm still trying to come up with number two, maybe 400 Blows or Breathless, because here I am, after all, in Paris still expecting to see Belmondo and Seberg racing down the street, cops after them, bullets flying, and maybe I am in heaven, but I'll always be waiting for Godard.

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