

# INTERVIEWS

## Introduction

The four interviews which follow were conducted in the late 1990s when I was researching the critical history of *mise-en-scène*. They appeared as an appendix to my PhD and quotations from the interviews were published a number of subsequent publications, most notably *The Life of Mise-en-scène: visual style and British film criticism, 1946–78* (MUP, 2013).

The interviewees were selected for their first-hand experience of the debates around the relative significance of film style which played out across a number of small film magazines and elements of the national press in the early 1960s; subsequently each became an influential figure in film publishing and education. Ian Cameron and V.F. Perkins were founder editors of *Movie*, building on their work on the film section of *Oxford Opinion*. Charles Barr was writing about film for another student magazine, *Granta*, when he encountered the startling claims about movies in *Oxford Opinion*; subsequently he published he published articles in *Motion*, *Movie* and *Film Quarterly*. Alan Lovell's politically engaged attitude to film positioned him on a different side in some of the debates of the early sixties; his writing at this period appearing in *Definition*, *Universities and Left Review*, and *Peace News*, among other publications.

There are a few points that may provide helpful contextualisation. The first is to note the significance of the order and timescale of the interviews (the first taking place in July 1996, near the end of the first year of my PhD and the last in April 1999 during its final stages). When I interviewed Ian Cameron I hadn't yet read *Oxford Opinion*, the issues of which I subsequently tracked down at the BFI and the various copyright libraries. This had a bearing, of course, on how informed my questions were, but also on my ability to respond to some of the replies. The recollection of each of the critics I spoke to is exceptionally good, but had I read *Oxford Opinion* prior to the first interview, I might have helped fix the chronology of Cameron's recollection of their encounter with *Cahiers du Cinéma* more accurately, for example. Furthermore, as the interviews progressed, I developed a

clearer sense of the argument of my thesis, and this informed the kinds of conversations I was able to have, and the debates I was able to engage with.

More generally, as you will see, each of the interviewees is extremely generous in their answers, sometimes asking suggestive questions or proposing other areas for enquiry. In all, they provided an elegant extra form of supervision, to complement the excellent guidance which I received on the project as a whole from my actual supervisor, Douglas Pye. Being able to conduct these interviews was enormously rewarding for me at the time, and it is my hope that reading them will prove interesting and informative today.

JOHN GIBBS, 2019

