

AN INTERVIEW WITH JEROME HILL, SEPTEMBER 5, 1971, NEW YORK. INTERVIEWER: JONAS MEKAS

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL

JEROME HILL: Let's say that, as a child I never had any trouble in school. Chiefly, because I had learned to read very rapidly, probably, and I think my interest, usually, was in getting by, in school. I never got good marks, I just wanted to get by, so that I could do what I really wanted to do, which was to paint or write, or all the various things I was interested in. My father insisted on taking us out of school every year for two months and bringing us to the Far West. There we had, supposedly, tutors and people who were teaching us and the rest of the time they had an awfully hard time to keep us in, my two brothers and my sister.

Another thing that had helped me in school was that I've always been a good mathematician. It seemed to me that it was the only subject where I wasn't depending upon somebody's opinion of something. And I took great pleasure in geometry, then in trigonometry, and algebra. But by the time I got to Yale, I had to take history, philosophy, English literature etc. . . And as I never agreed with anything I was hearing, I would go to class, and I would draw, all through the class. And then, just at the end of term, I would learn enough just to pass the examination. But the minute I could major in a subject, which was my junior year, I selected music. Yale had a very good music school. I would normally have gone to an art school, but the art school in Yale at that time was very bad. At the music school I studied not as a performer, but as a composer, and an orchestrator—concentrating on counterpoint, harmony. And this really was something that I'm sure I never could have picked up on my own. I was very happy that I could do that, and with a teacher like Bruce Simonds! I think Huxley once said, "One is very lucky to meet one great teacher in one's life." Bruce Simonds was such a teacher for me. He was a marvelous pianist and a great musicologist. And I think I never forgot anything he ever said to me; it was engraved immediately in my mind.

QUESTION: How old were you at that time?

HILL: I was ready for college a little bit early. I finally went in at 17.

At Yale, right away I found a few friends, three or four of them at the most, who all had this same rebellious attitude that I had. They didn't like Yale, and they didn't want the formal education to interfere with what they considered was their education. I mean, they wanted to really be reading. These were exciting days. T.S. Eliot poems were coming out, e.e.cummings poems were coming out, Gertrude Stein was bursting into prose, and you'd do anything to get a pirated copy of *Ulysses*. Naturally, we'd go to our courses and none of these people would ever be mentioned. It was a sort of double life that we led. We were just barely getting along in class but we in the meanwhile were reading and discussing and writing. I was very active drawing for the Yale Record, which was a comic magazine. I don't know what I thought I was going to become. I think I thought I would become a book illustrator; and I was very much in sympathy with that whole French school of book illustrators, where they had raised book illustrating to an art, way above the books we knew as kids.

During that stage of my life at Yale, I was considered by my family as an invalid. I had had a goiter which had been operated on, but I'm perfectly sure that afterward I was sick only because I was told to be sick. I was told that for six years I would have to be careful, and I think I let six years tick away, without ever doing any exercise. I never built my body up. I didn't have any sports that I could do. Skiing I hadn't discovered yet. And generally, I had my head in a book, or was drawing. At Yale I'd be doing the sets for the playcraftsmen. The "Yale Dramat" at that time was very exciting, with Monty Woolly directing the performances.

QUESTION: Did you study any painting?

HILL: No, I just ignored painting completely.

QUESTION: Architecture?

HILL: No, I didn't go to the architecture school. But because I drew with great facility, (this, incidentally, was one of my problems)—I was called in by all my friends in the architecture school to do their *pochets* at the end of the year. They would draw just elevations and plans and I was called in to really do the architectural renderings and so forth. A tremendous amount of that architectural education rubbed off on me. So that in the summer when I'd go travelling, I was always making architectural trips, I'd say. I would be following a pilgrimage route to Campotella, and I would stop at each of the monasteries and make drawings of architectural details.

At this period we speak of, I still was a very sallow, rather fat, pimply, physically-underdeveloped student, a student who didn't do very well in school. As a matter of fact, I couldn't even pass French. This is a language which I now speak certainly as well as English, if not better. But I didn't like the way they taught me. I was going to learn French on my own time and not in school. But it delayed my diploma for a year and a half. In other words, I really was not going along with the stream of my contemporaries. . .

FIRST FILM, "TOM JONES"

QUESTION: When did you get interested in cinema?

HILL: My first role as a film director was when I was called upon to co-direct an enormous feature-length film version of *Tom Jones*, in Yale, in 1927. That became the worst film you've ever seen.

QUESTION: Who was the co-director?

HILL: A man called Winston Chiles did the camera work, and I think he financed it. He and Eric Haight financed it. Bill Hinkle and I directed it. The cast probably included people like Rudy Vallee, I think, and Jode Whitney, and maybe Peter Arnold, or Lucius Beebee. I don't remember, I mean, all sorts of people. . .

QUESTION: How long was it, actually?

HILL: It was very long. . . Two and a half hours.

QUESTION: Was it 35mm?

HILL: No, it was 16mm. A copy of it sits in the Yale library.

QUESTION: What happened to the film after you completed it?

HILL: It was shown once, and people were very nice about it. But it was a total disaster. But one of our friends who had graduated the year before, Howard Barnes, had become the movie critic for the Tribune, and he came and saw it and gave it a fantastic review in the Tribune, which it didn't deserve at all. I think we were proud that we shot it all in Harkness, in that building that had just gone up, and none of us liked. None of us approved of the architecture of Yale, none of us liked anything about it. And we said to ourselves: this isn't a college, this is a movie set, let's shoot a movie here. And so we used all the commons rooms and all the stairways and we did everything to make it look like a little English village, which is just what it already looked like. I shouldn't be as bitter as I am about Yale, but I still am bitter about it.

QUESTION: Have you seen the film since?

HILL: I haven't seen it for thirty years. But I was told by Standish Lawder that the print is there, at Yale, and it's certainly available to look at. One day recently I went down to the New York

Public Library and looked up the Herald Tribune review. And it's ridiculously enthusiastic and favorable. The picture, really, had no filmic values as I know them at all.

PAINTING STUDIES. ROME AND PARIS YEARS.

QUESTION: What about your painting activities? When did that start?

HILL: Painting, I jumped into it the minute I graduated. The minute I left Yale, I couldn't wait to leave the country. America was in the middle of Prohibition. My dream was to go to Rome and I thought of myself as studying in the American Academy. But the first thing I found when I arrived in Rome was that the American Academy was run by a man from the Yale Art School, and there was the same academic atmosphere which I had run away from before. So I rented a private studio. I shared it with a friend, a huge room. Down at the other end was an architect working who turned out later to be Edgar Durrell Stone. I didn't know that at the time. I stayed there for a year, drawing from models and painting from models in what was called the British Academy.

At the end of the year I saw that Rome was not for me. I was deeply involved in its history; I'd already done a complete universal historical chart—chronological chart—but my creative impulses were not being stimulated. I was too overcome with the past, in Rome. So I went to Paris. That would have been 1928. There I discovered the very fine, small Scandinavian Academy which was run on a marvelous system of having a different teacher every Friday. You never knew who was going to arrive. But somebody would always come and criticise your work. They were people like Friesz, and Dufresne, Despian and Warquier. They were extremely varied. So that was a very intensive period of painting. And shortly after that I went to Cassis to paint and I ended by deciding to live there. But about that time the clock that I spoke about that was ticking inside me,—I'd been told that I would feel badly for six years,—at the end of the sixth year to the day, to the hour almost, I suddenly felt well. And I rushed off and I think I bought a ski suit and I bought a pair of skis and thought, now enough of all this, I'll have an active physical life and I'll try, if possible, to really become like one of my contemporaries. . . . But I must say, skiing is the only exercise that I've ever enjoyed, or spent any time on. It appeals to me for its mathematical and artistic quality rather than its speed. . . . I never went into it competitively. In 1950 I made a film about skiing.

EARLY WORK IN CINEMA

In 1932, I guess it was, I got a hold of one of the first Eastman Kodak Specials, that marvelous camera, the first 16mm camera that could qualify as a real camera. Then, I really broke out.

QUESTION: Does some of your footage go further back?

HILL: The footage of me, but not the footage taken by me.

QUESTION: You mean, the footage which you are using in the first half of the *Film Portrait*, goes only to 1932? I mean, the footage identified now as *Fortune Teller*?

HILL: I filmed that shortly after I got the camera. It was the first complete film that I made. That was in 1932.

QUESTION: But what about the *Magic Umbrella* footage, in *Film Portrait*? I thought it carries a date of 1927?

HILL: That was a very early film and the cameraman was a friend. But it was what I call a real "home movie". I was learning my craft. We were, of course, making fun of the chase film. We loved the *Perils of Pauline* idea. We made it in one or two afternoons with the idea of showing it at a party to entertain friends. The "spaghetti" film, which is included in the *Film Portrait*, was also made just to make our friends laugh.

"FLAHERTY" PERIOD (DOCUMENTARIES)

QUESTION: Your completed early work seems to fall into one or other style of the Documentary Film—I am talking about films like *Snow Flight* and *Grandma Moses*. But your early incompleted work, which you have pulled out from your cans, to be included into the *Film Portrait*—it seems to belong in the Avantgarde tradition. Where do you think this Avantgarde line comes from?

HILL: The arrival of *The Blood of a Poet* was a most tremendous event. And *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. Strangely enough, they were not financially successful at the time. About this time I thought I would become a commercial film-maker. And so instead of using them as inspirations I went more in the Flaherty direction, to *Nanook* and *Moana*.

QUESTION: Cocteau's influence is very noticeable in the early footage.

HILL: Yes, but you see, I was doing what most young people do. There was a dichotomy. I thought if I'm gonna make my living in cinema, I'll have to do commercial type films. And that's what I did.

QUESTION: Your first completed film was *Snow Flight*? In 1938?

HILL: Yes. It was made actually at the request of Hannes Schneider, to illustrate his skiing techniques. Otto Lang, who was then writing a book on the dynamics of skiing, was the star. We went into it very, very thoroughly. There was much slow motion in it. The film originally was called *Snow Flight*. It's now called *Ski Flight*, I think. It was programmed by Warner Brothers with *Snow White*, and they opened together at the Radio City Music Hall. So they had to change the title.

QUESTION: Where was the film made?

HILL: It was shot at Mt. Rainier and Mt. Baker, Mt. Rainier is right near Seattle, and Mt. Baker in Canada. This, you see, was after the *putsch*, and there were these Austrian skiers who wanted to leave, and I'd helped them to come to America. We'd spend all our time filming and spreading the good word about the Arlberg technique, which was then the only technique which was taught.

Snow Flight was followed by the *Seeing Eye*. It was made in Morristown as a promotion film to interest people to raise money and to show how the training of dogs is done, and how the training of the blind man is done. I think they still use it.

QUESTION: When was the *Seeing Eye* made?

HILL: Right after *Snow Flight*. Just before the war. In the army, I was in the film division, making training films. I was drafted in 1942. I was working here, in Astoria. I don't think that there exists any film that I made during that period; at least I haven't seen any. The only one I had any pride in was on poison ivy. It was on how to indoctrinate the soldiers not to get poison ivy.

CARL JUNG AND SCHWEITZER

QUESTION: Where does your interest in Jung and Schweitzer date to?

HILL: The Schweitzer film began in 1951 and went till 1958. In 1951, my cameraman, Erica Anderson, got the Jung footage also. And then, while talking to Jung, he gave me the idea for *The Sand Castle*. He said, "Don't put me in the film; let my ideas be shown in a film."

QUESTION: Do you have much footage on Jung?

HILL: I have some, but mostly very limited.

Jung was the reverse of Schweitzer. Everything we got on Schweitzer was usable. Schweitzer was always "photogenic," he works outdoors mostly, he's not self-conscious in front of the camera. With Jung, all of our meetings were in dark rooms, and he's not

particularly photogenic. But when I found that he was a stone carver, that stone carving was his hobby, I concentrated on his carving of stones. But right then, he sort of turned me loose from doing a film directly on him. He gave me the idea of the nine year old boy, he gave me the idea of somebody following the voice of the unconscious and the effect he would have on others. He gave me the idea of opposites being reconciled, and destinies being turned upside down. Well, endless, endless things that were all incorporated into both *The Sand Castle* and *Open the Door and See All the People*. *Open the Door* was not a sequel; it was a development of the ideas of Jung further.

GRANDMA MOSES-SCHWEITZER-JUNG TRILOGY

QUESTION: There is one interesting thing, about your documentaries. You have Grandma Moses, this very beautiful, old woman. Then you have Dr. Schweitzer, this fantastic, wise, beautifully aged, old man. And then, Carl Jung, another fantastic, old sage. These are all very wise, beautifully aged people. It's like a trilogy about three human beings, a Trilogy About How to Age Beautifully and Still Remain Sane, and still work for the society of human beings, for the humanity.

HILL: At one time I thought this was what I would make: a series of biographical films, of people near the end of their lives. And I made a list. The list included Frank Lloyd Wright, Robert Bridges, it included all sorts of people who later did have films made of them. But it seemed to me that to do these films I had to become part of their lives. I did not want to make fast, journalistic reports. Somebody, I think Norman Cousins called the Schweitzer film a "portrait in depth." It took me five years to make it. It took living in his house in Gunsbach, sending Erica Anderson out to the hospital in Africa. Schweitzer was most cooperative, a marvelous person to work with. I think, in his heart, he was probably a filmmaker himself. He took over right away. He knew how to direct a scene, and he made me direct it in secret. He wouldn't allow anybody to know the film was being made. The cameras were always hidden, and all the scenes of his wife, of his children, were all surprise shooting, stolen, and he winking at the whole thing, *thinking* it was . . . a laugh.

FILMS ON THE UNCONSCIOUS—JUNGIAN FILMS

QUESTION: Your documentary period was followed by your Comedies, or rather, Allegories.

HILL: I always liked Tati's work. I think he's one of the funniest film-makers.

QUESTION: But Jung keeps coming in, through the back door . . .

HILL: Yes. Although there are funny scenes in them, they always illustrate a point of Jung's.

QUESTION: They are sort of morality "plays," or, rather, films.

HILL: Yes, they are. *Film Portrait* also, actually starts as a farce. But the farcical situations are not just for laughs.

THE FILM PORTRAIT.

QUESTION: Your next period became characterized by completely different techniques, mostly animation and painting on film. It began with *Death in the Forenoon*.

HILL: This began with my decision to make the *Film Portrait*.

QUESTION: So that, actually, the *Film Portrait* begins around 1965?

HILL: Yes, around 1966. Let's say, shortly after the year of my father's death. The contents of the house were divided between my brothers and me, and I got a copy of all of his old footage. The minute I saw this fantastic 35mm footage from 1912-14, in perfect condition taken by Pathé cameramen, although still on nitrate, I grabbed it and took it to the lab here in New York. I couldn't find anybody who would handle it, because it was nitrate. The outsides of the reels were beginning to blister. But finally somebody was found who would work on it and make an immediate, beautiful fine-grain negative, and the original was dumped into the East River.

QUESTION: You actually . . . dumped it?

HILL: Oh, they took a ferryboat and dumped it. They were terrified it was going to explode. So I stored the prints on my shelves and occasionally I'd look at it, and I felt some day something had to be done with it. And so I suppose the germ of the idea began in my head, to do a film about myself in relation to cinema. Because I'd been touched by films so early in my life, and was very conscious of them and was seeing myself on the screen when I was only seven—an experience which very few kids of that time had. So then I began asking friends, and I found loads of people who had footage of me. And then there were the unfinished films like the *Magic Umbrella* and the *Spaghetti*. I began doing the preliminary cutting—shortening work. And I wondered if I could now paint on them, if I could color some of these images the same way

that Méliès did. Because the films we used to see, as children, were hand-colored Méliès films. For the first try, I picked the bullfight footage, absolutely arbitrarily: it was the easiest can to reach on the shelf. I brought it down, put it on a glass table, and began painting the opposite color on the negative—which Méliès didn't do. Méliès, if he wanted a pink dress, he painted a pink dress on the positive. But here I was coping with a matador with a red cape and I knew I'd have to paint it green, so I started doing that.

QUESTION: Wait . . . Why did you have to paint it green?

HILL: Because I'm painting the opposite color. I'm painting on a negative with a negative color. I took the negative, and the muleta was in his hand and I painted it green. And then I filled in the bull with what I thought was going to be bull color, in negative.

QUESTION: So that one has to know something about color, about the negative color of each color.

HILL: Yes. The great thing about this process is that as you do it you can send it back to the lab and have them print it and see how you're doing. And then you can go on with it and change it. So the first footage came back and the muleta was red but the cow was purple, the bull was purple. So then I changed something else, and I began painting other things. I'd introduce a whole cast of new characters, and a new bull.

QUESTION: You worked on 35mm?

HILL: Yes, on 35mm negative film. In certain scenes a fantasy grabs hold of you and the whole thing splits open and every inch of it is colored, and people drop down out of the trees nearly. Probably I spent three weeks on these three minutes. It is a very very long process. You work all day long and you get about three feet of film. But that was the first try, and the results I loved. I'd had once in mind doing a film on cathedral windows. But this was so much more brilliant than any film I could have got from Chartres. The colors were so vivid. And the men at the lab kept saying it's not going to work, this color won't last. Well, now it's six years old and it's lasting.

QUESTION: Suppose, by mistake, they wash it off?

HILL: They can't, it won't wash off. I've tried it. It's a special color that goes right into the emulsion.

QUESTION: What inks, colors do you use?

HILL: It's an Eastman Kodak dye, Eastman Kodak developed it. I'll look up the name on the bottle . . . So I kept painting. Everything that moves rapidly is successful, everything that flut-

ters is successful. The girl that screams is successful because she's nervous. You have a calm policeman next to her, and her hat is fluttering and she's screaming. But my next subject was a mistake. It was Jesus, Mary and Joseph, wandering through New York on the back of a donkey during the Christmas rush hour. They were supposed to be very calm and passive, and to move slowly through the crowd, and the crowd was supposedly frenzied and trembling. So I filmed the crowd at high speed and I did everything I could to create hustle and bustle, and then I painted what I thought was a calm quiet Mary and Joseph and, of course, I couldn't do it. They came through like flames, they're the vibrant ones! And then I went on to *Canaries*, that was the next film, and all during this my eyesight was changing. I was having to use different glasses and people were warning me that poor Norman McLaren had practically lost his eyesight. So I began doing less and less of this technique and although I'd love to do more I don't really know if I can . . .

QUESTION: *Death in the Forenoon*, *Merry Christmas* and *Canaries*, all three done in this technique, exist now as separate, individual films. Did you paint other films or sequences that you didn't release as separate films?

HILL: I did *Magic Umbrella*, which is now part of the *Film Portrait*. I used similar technique for the entire scene of the automobile arriving at the house, in the *Film Portrait*. In other cases I would cut out stills and move them the way that I had done in *The Sand Castle*. The scene where my mother puts me to sleep and I look out the window, is done exactly the way the dream sequence in *The Sand Castle* was done, that's stop frame animation.

QUESTION: Seeing your work, one can't help noticing a radical change in your work, beginning with *The Death in the Forenoon*. Your work became much more personal, in its techniques and in its ideas. Has your friendship with the Avantgarde film-makers and a close familiarity with their work contributed to this change?

HILL: I would say, that this was very important, having met Stan Brakhage, and you, and Peter Kubelka, and seeing a group of people who were working the way I'd always wanted to work. This was very much for me a shot in the arm. There was also a marvelous feeling that there was a public for this kind of film. Before, I still had a feeling that I would have to make it on the Flaherty level. I think *Grandma Moses* is pretty much like a Flaherty film. The Schweitzer film is perhaps what Flaherty did for *Michelangelo*. Of course, he didn't do too much of it himself. But it's the idea, as I voice it again in *Film Portrait*; it's trying to get away from the big studios, the big companies, the union crew, the temperamental

actors and actresses, stars—that whole system had never interested me. And both *The Sand Castle* and *Open the Door* were attempts to by-pass all that and to make use of a different kind of actor. In both films I used people who were performers, in a sense, but they weren't regular steady actors. They were people who had acted, but I chose them for their types and for the fact that I thought they would *not* act, that they would be themselves in front of the camera. Of course, that also, by indirection, has become a method of acting.

QUESTION: Is the footage in *Film Portrait* in chronological order?

HILL: No, by no means. Let's say, the film primarily has to do with me. Then, immediately, and perhaps even more important, it has to do with film. It's about my relation to film. Quite a few people have said, "Why don't you mention yourself as a painter?" or "Why don't you show yourself designing a building?" or "Why don't you show yourself writing music?" and so forth. Purposefully, it is entirely concentrated on the film aspect of my life.*

QUESTION: Some of those other aspects come in indirectly. It's clear from the film's credits, for example, that you wrote the music for the film.

HILL: Yes, I did. Anyway, now even as important as cinema and me in the film, is that the whole thing is a dissertation on time. Almost the first words that are uttered have to do with the present, the future, and the past. Long before I go into the past I go into

* Looking through Jerome Hill's files at the Anthology Film Archives, I jotted down the following notes: Born in St. Paul, Minn. Yale University (music). Rome. Paris (studies painting at the Academie Scandinave under Orhon Friesz, Charles Dufresne and Georges Gromaire). Paints frescoes and stained glass windows in the church of Bocca Grande, Florida. A book, "Trip to Greece," 1936 (photographs; publisher: Marle Armitage). Records Schweitzer playing organ, at Gunsbach, for Columbia. World War II: liaison officer with 1/5 squadron (under Marin la Meslée). Designs a house in Cassis, 1930. Composa Suite per Clavicembalo; Suite in 9 tempi per 10 strumenti; Concerto No. 2 per clavicembalo e orchestra—performed at the Basilica di Santa Cecilia, Rome, May 20, 1971. Paints at Cassis 1931-39. Exhibits at Autumn Salons, Salons des Tuileries. One man show, Galerie Paquereau, Paris, 1938. One man shows: Carstairs Gallery, New York, 1962. Babcock Galleries, New York—1964, 1967, 1969, 1972. Galleria 88, Rome, 1971. St. Paul Art Center, 1965. Art Institute of Minneapolis. Designs the productions of "Pantagleize," Marseilles-Cassis, 1967. These notes should give some idea of the diverse interests of Jerome Hill.

the future. So there is no regular chronology in it. I build up many different possible deaths or fates that could happen to me, or destinies, I pile them one on top of another—things that couldn't happen, things that I'd like to have happen, things that I hope won't happen, and, finally, all this ends in a reversal of time. Anyway, then I really *slide* backwards with pictures losing a year at a time. So I go way way back and I go to my birth, but almost immediately afterwards I go before my birth to build up a little bit where I was born, the atmosphere I was born into, and was eventually brought up into. And there I have used two people outside of the family. One is Louis Tiffany, and the other is Scott Fitzgerald—two people I knew about very early in my life and whom I didn't know well enough but they were like inspirations to me to get out of where I was and that there was a world somewhere else where things were happening that were interesting, and that I would have my own identity. Unfortunately, I was labeled with the name of my own grandfather. I had a horrible complex that it took me years and years to get over, but finally I did overcome it. Anyway . . .

Then, there is a fairly regular time sequence up to the age of thirteen. I think I'm pretty well documented. But from thirteen to twenty-three there is a total gap in which I claim nothing happened but obviously something did happen. But that you have to see in the film, how it's handled. It's a stagnation, a total stagnation with the two images fighting with each other. Then, the period of my life from twenty-three until I got my first movie camera — not many years, it's only about five years — I have depicted just as a continual round dance in which nothing happens. I'm just going round and round and round forwards and backwards, backwards and forwards and making contacts and breaking them and not getting anywhere at all. And then, with the camera, I start off and again I touch cinema because by pure chance I found myself drawn to La Ciotat and Cassis where it happens that film had begun just before I was born and there I was to see the two Lumiere brothers every day and got caught in this whole thing. And then a section which I don't think you've seen yet in which I just experiment with the camera. I do all sort of things with time and space and color and light. Then I show a short film intact, one that I made in 1932, it's now called *The Fortune Teller*. So that still leaves me in 1932. Then I come up again through the years, through the war, but not jumping very very wildly and it's all connected with cinema — until I'm in 1950. 1950 is where I come up out of the amphi-theatre with the

camera over my shoulder and my cousin is with me and I put the camera down and I make her look into it and I make her look into it five or six different times.

QUESTION: This is old, actual footage?

HILL: Yes, shot in 1950. It's from Cassis, from the *How to Be Happy Though Healthy* film. Every time she looks in, she sees something different and I make use of that to talk about cinema in general and I also tell then what I've done since then — I come right up to today with it, through the split screen. So then I discuss film in general, how cinema was just born in time, how all of the arts were tending toward film and because man had become almost a creature of machine, there had to be an art in which the machine played a part, which took a machine into account, and that film finally came along to be the seventh art. A discussion of the magician and the artist and the functions of a film-maker and the editor follows; how the real alchemy, the real creative act where he's totally under control, happens in editing. And that's all done as if I were an alchemist. Then I haul off and go right back to the beginning of the film shown in one of my little viewers and I begin thinking about the past and the present. And I compare the past to all of my reels on the right, and the future to the reels on the left that I haven't edited yet; and the present is that thing that keeps going back and forth in the middle. Then, finally, the music stops and I make a statement that really there is no present, the only viable eternal moment being the moment that the artist fixes once and for all and will remain forever, and that is the only present. So at last the present is spoken of, the present that in the very beginning of the film had been ignored is defined as nonexistent, except as a work of art. And then, very soon, I show that flight of stairs that the girl runs down — a very complex painting working — and you see it on one of my viewers, on moviola — because there are many viewers in the editing room and I'm showing the films through the viewers — she goes down the stairs and then, twenty years later, that same stairs, and then forty years later the same stairs with the girl still running down it, but everything totally changed, the whole world had changed but landscape and sea were the same, and then the railroad station with the train going through it and the train doesn't stop. So it ends with that, the establishment of what is the present. So really it's a film about time — and, possibly, in a Proustian sense, but it's a little bit different, I think, from Proust. Well, maybe it is . . .

So I say, it is not at all chronological although there is a general built-in chronology. Originally, I had the end title there. But Mary Ellen Bute said, "Don't put the end title on it—it just stops . . . the train goes through—"

QUESTION: Good . . . That sounds good.

HILL: So I immediately took it off, a much better idea. Because the implication, of course, is that I could go on, like you in *The Diaries*, until the end of my life. Now I've really, let's say, started making a biography film.

QUESTION: Because now you've lost your innocence. Now you are conscious of the form of a *diary* film, and it's a different thing.

HILL: I purposefully took the word "biography" out and made it "portrait" because a portrait of any given person is a portrait usually of one time, one moment. Biography usually does go for . . .

QUESTION: This is more a portrait than a . . .

HILL: Yes. It happens I lately reread *The Education of Henry Adams*. And its companion: *Mt. St. Michel and Chartres*. And I had never read them with the proper eyes or the proper state of mind. But in lots of ways I realize that he waited til just about the age that I am now to start writing them. He felt that he couldn't write them til he was in his sixties and that he was meeting a century that had very much the same changes that mine has had. And he had the same problem of printing them privately—he didn't want the public to see them. He felt it was so much his personal thing that he wanted to leave that it shouldn't have anything to do with his reputation as a writer, and now they are his most famous books. It was his friends—I think while he was still alive they persuaded him to publish them.

A POSTSCRIPT: *For a critical evaluation of Jerome Hill's work in cinema see Jonas Mekas' essay "A Few Notes on Jerome Hill's Film 'Film Portrait'", in a Macmillan edition of a collection of essays (edited by Philip Nobile), "Favorite Movies."*

FILMOGRAPHY OF JEROME HILL

Tom Jones, 1927. (Co-director: Bill Hinkle). 2½ hours. Based on the classic by Henry Fielding. After a limited Yale University run, was deposited with the Yale University archives.

The Magic Umbrella, 1927. An early Avantgarde work. Shot and edited, not released. (Incorporated in full in the *Film Portrait*.)

Fortune Teller, 1932. An early Avantgarde work. Shot and edited, not released. (Incorporated in full in the *Film Portrait*.)

Snow Flight, 1938. A documentary study of the skiing techniques of Hannes Schneider, with Otto Lang. Released through Warner Brothers under the title of *Ski Flight*.

Seeing Eye, 1940. A promotion film about training of dogs for the blind.

Grandma Moses, 1950. A documentary on the octogenarian artist. Released through Radim Films.

Salzburg Seminar—1950. A documentary on the international music seminar.

Cassis, Or How to be Happy Though Healthy, 1950. An autobiographical, humorous sketch.

Albert Schweitzer, 1950-57. 82 minutes.

The Sand Castle, 1961. 64 minutes. A Jungian allegory.

Open the Door and See All the People, 1964. 82 minutes. A Jungian comedy.

Schweitzer and Bach, 1965. A sketch of Albert Schweitzer playing Bach on the organ at Gunsbach.

Death in the Forenoon or *Who's Afraid of Ernest Hemingway*. 1966 (filmed in 1933). 2 minutes.

The Artist's Friend, 1966. A humorous sketch. Not released.

Merry Christmas, 1969. (Incorporated in full in the *Film Portrait*.)

Canaries, 1968. An animated sketch.

Film Portrait, 1965-71. 90 minutes.*

* All of the films listed here are available through Monument Film Corporation, 267 West 25th St., N.Y.C. 10001.