

Force of Evil - A Premonition of the Blacklist in Fragments
By Travis Wilkerson

From "The Sound of Fury: Hollywood's Blacklist," Deep Focus 32, edited by Hannes Bruehwiler, Betz+Fischer Verlag, Berlin

1

Can the first 30 seconds of a film explain the world? Can it somehow describe the morass we find ourselves trapped in?

The first image is of the spires of a cathedral, stabbing into the sky above Wall Street. What kind of violence is suggested by this image? Projecting from the floor and into the air itself – capitalism against nature – the instigating force of evil. From those rarified heights, the camera tilts and humans are rendered at the scale and movement of ants. Of course humans are a part of nature. It is only their hubris that conceals the obvious.

July 4th – the million dollar day. The hunger to step over others, to crush them on the way up, as the only path towards "freedom." Independence day. The whole of it resting on the corpses of slaves, the indigenous, the dispossessed, the poor.

Eugene Vale talked about the main narrative intention. The main intention begins with the first words. We are propelled forward and straight into the abyss. The game is fixed. From the beginning. From its inception.

The whole of US myth is built on the pyramid scheme that if you simply work hard enough and well enough then the laws of the system will hoist you up. This myth has the double value of blaming those at the bottom, rather than apologizing for them.

Meritocracy is the opium. Meritocracy is the founding lie. The system is more vertical than a nuclear missile. It produces the weapon. It embodies the weapon. The system is the weapon. Guns are numbers. Numbers are guns.

2

And so again the daggers into the sky – this time while Doris and Joe talk in the park – her desperate attempt to find life inside him, his only chance at redemption, the salvation of community or its annihilation. Birds explode with their steps. Life itself is fleeing. And again the stabbing of a lifeless sky.

"And I could feel money spread all over the city like air." But the exchange isn't commensurate. The air is swallowed up by money. Money preys on air. Money is the predator. "I could breathe the smell of money." But you can't breathe money. Money chokes you out.

Man against man. Brother against brother. Man against woman. Industry against the earth. Everything is atomized. A seamless world fractures into bits.

“I don’t wish to die of loving you.” LOVE = DEATH under the weight of capital.

Establish the Community. Destroy the Community. Destroy the world.

Dangerous questions: What have we in common? What do we share?

The spires above Wall Street stab at the common. The air is common. The spires above Wall Street obliterate the common.

Instead ripped asunder. The common butchered into the singular.
The singular into shreds. The shreds into shards. The shards into splinters

3

Joe returns to a wall street devoid of the teeming life in the fist images. Slow ISO produces the metaphor. Wall Street is post-apocalyptic. An image out of science fiction. Capitalism’s “numbers racket” hits with the force of an atomic bomb. Like now, the buildings haven’t yet collapsed into ruin.

4

And finally the plunge down and down and down...“I found my brother’s body there, where they had thrown it away n the rocks by the river like an old, dirty rag nobody wants. He was dead. And I felt I had killed him.”

Force of Evil doesn’t embody a liberal outlook. It insists on the totality of radicalism. The system itself is in an apocalyptic death spiral. We already knew this then. The blacklist became an inevitability under the force of this film. The blacklist is breathing down our necks again.