

David C. Porter

THE BEAST

Introduction

This book is primarily composed of frames from two films by Barry Mahon: *The Sex Killer* (1967) and *The Beast That Killed Women* (1965). Mahon was a marginal figure in his day, and is even less well-remembered now. If he were still alive, he would no doubt be surprised to learn that anyone still chooses to watch his films, which are programmatic, functional works of bare-bones sexploitation cinema, shot with blunt artlessness, never exceeding 80 minutes. He is not a forgotten auteur: these are films which exist to exhibit naked flesh, and they are rigorously unambitious in every other regard. His aesthetic sensibility could perhaps best be described as "indifference"; he favors static medium shots, framed so that the subject is more or less in the middle of the image, or moving through it. Although this subject is usually a naked woman, it could just as easily be any other object of similar dimensions. His brief Wikipedia article tells us that he "was the first movie producer to adapt and apply computer technology (as well spreadsheet applications, such as MultiPlan) to the breakdown, scheduling, budgeting and financial analysis of feature-length motion pictures and movies-of-the-week for Columbia Pictures." That is his legacy.

The picture on the following page is *Portrait of a Courtesan* (c. 1597) by Caravaggio. This painting, part of the collection of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (now the Bode Museum), was destroyed by fire in 1945, days after the fall of Berlin, and now exists only in photographs. The model is Fillide Melandroni, a personal friend of Caravaggio's and, indeed, a highly successful courtesan. She also posed for the painter as Judith and Mary Magdalene, among others. Caravaggio, who never painted a female nude, killed Melandroni's likely pimp, a man named Ranuccio Tomassoni, in 1606. It was an accidental death; he had been attempting only to castrate him.





































































