

Masoch stands back from its characters — it presents them as ridiculous but likeable and certainly interesting — but at every opportunity it lets the audience feel superior. This is a forced superiority — a pose. The film's safe distance from its subject comes too easily to the filmmaker, and our laughter at Masoch's needs comes too easily to us. Only in several shots of their faces after the sex episodes is the distance closed and the superior viewer thrust into the movie — though the extraordinary Francesca De Sapio, as Wanda, is often capable of transcending anything the filmmaker is making her do and pushing the audience to deal with her emotions. But for the most part, *Masoch* is played not for comedy but amusement. The difference is crucial — amusement is for snobs. (MV)

7 p.m.

If you've never seen a film by Claude Sautet, this is as good a sample as any to select. Sautet more or less makes the movie over and over again, and *A Bad Son* shows his always solid sense of craft as well as his warmth for the people he puts on a screen. If those people never come across as especially unique — like the ex-dope dealer (Patrick Dewaere) and the ex-heroin addict (Brigitte Fossey) trying to make a go at rehabilitation — it's because Sautet's particular cinematic skill and tact cannot achieve anything really first-rate. His movies have neither great energy nor great depth, and when their characters are confronted with what should be a life-scalding crisis, he simply withdraws to a position of sentimental sensitivity peculiar to many able and witty but essentially defeated men. His films are tender and persuasive, but his characters have given up trying to make their lives conform to any ideal other than that required by refined behavior and good taste. These are *severe* limits. Yet within them, no one works so nearly

perfectly and consequently so likably as Sautet. (GV)

Glowing Autumn

Japan, 1979

Aquarius

9:30 p.m.

Masaki Kobayashi, himself a septuagenarian, makes his swan-song film about a septuagenarian. Shin Saburi has a yen for a young graphic designer named Autumn, whom he educates so successfully to the sophisticated sexual appetites of a wealthy old man that every time he crosses her mind, a disembodied special effects hand caresses her breast. She takes a younger lover to forget him but, as the old man predicts, such a green young stud can't satisfy her. In mid-story the old man dies and leaves his beloved a round trip ticket to Iran, first class. The film devolves to travelogue footage of "a girl and her rugs" as our heroine searches for the meaning of life and love in the patterns of Persian carpets from Qom to Teheran. All in all, it is a ridiculous production from a once masterful director. (HD)

Thursday, April 9

A Bad Son

France, 1980

Aquarius



Water
Damage
Sale!

STEVEN KENNY