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Contents

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THE EDITORS announce with great regret the death of SAMUEL T. FARQUHAR, Manager of the University of California Press, on May 23, 1949. He was one of the founding editors of the *Hollywood Quarterly*.

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Roberto Rossellini

LAURO VENTURI

LAURO VENTURI went to Rome to study Italian cinema after graduating from Harvard. He was assistant to Mario Soldati in the production of *Fuga in Francia,* Soldati's most recent film, and to Luciano Emmer in the production of Emmer's films on art. He is a regular contributor to several European periodicals.

I

IN THE YEARS immediately preceding and during World War II, several good, interesting films revived the hopes of the critics in Italy and established new directors. Among these films were Soldati's *Piccolo mondo antico* (*Ancient Little World*) in 1940, Castellani's *Un colpo di pistola* (*A Pistol Shot*) in 1941, Lattuada's *Giacomo l'idealista* (*Jim the Idealist*) in 1942, and Visconti's *Ossessione* (*Obsession*) in 1943; and in them are discernible several elements which again appear in the offerings of the "neorealistic Italian school" in 1945: the use of the outdoors (*Piccolo mondo antico*), of nonprofessional actors (*1860,* directed by Blasetti in 1935), and of a special, still very "French-school" regionalism (*Ossessione*).

With the German occupation and war in the homeland, Italy almost completely ceased to produce films. But after Rome was liberated by the Allies, a new wave started, and it was a tidal wave.

During all this time, Roberto Rossellini, who was born in Rome in 1906, was serving his apprenticeship at the L.U.C.E., a national institute for newsreels and documentary films; he signed three documentaries: *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune, Fantasia sottomarina* (*Submarine Fantasy*), and *Il ruscello di Ripasottile* (*Ripasottile's Brook*), the latter two of which deal with the life of fishes.

In 1938, Goffredo Alessandrini, who must have seemed to Rossellini the "established director" from whom he could learn, was preparing *Luciano Serra, pilota* (*Luciano Serra, Pilot*), and Rossellini joined him as script writer, one of the six who were to sign the finished product.

In 1941, under the supervision of Francesco De Robertis, Rossellini made his first film, *La nave bianca* (*The White Ship*). With *Alfa Tau* and *Uomini sul fondo* (*Men at the Bottom*) Commander De Robertis (he held that rank in the Italian navy) had established himself as a director who exploited flag-waving and military situations with a certain style. His films of yesterday and today do not have enough intrinsic value to survive the test of time. *La nave bianca,* the scene of which is a hospital ship in wartime, is a typical De Robertis story. There is little or nothing in it that announces the Rossellini to come, although his documentarist's attitude toward the subject and some intense dramatic scenes should be noted. It was a success, however, and in the following year Rossellini found himself director of *Un pilota ritorna* (*A Pilot Returns*), another propaganda film, produced by Vittorio Mussolini's own A.C.I. This war film contained certain reconstructed "documentary" sequences on the life of pilots that saved it from being run-of-the-mill. In 1943, he directed *L'uomo della croce* (*The Man of the Cross*), in which can be detected his intention of creating a personal directorial style, if nothing more. It is still war propaganda, but the human element emerges and a certain poetry rises from the war scenes. Although all these films had some success in Italy, Rossellini was considered "a director without special qualities, who had not succeeded in making a name for himself."[1]

In 1944, Rossellini started working on a movie called *Desiderio* (*Desire*). It was a pedestrian story of violent passion, of country girls who come to Rome to make good and instead turn bad. Whether he became disgusted with it or found something better to think about is hard to say; the fact remains that Rossellini abandoned the production, which was later to be completed by Marcello Pagliero and, rightly, forgotten by everybody.

Rossellini's greatest merit, in 1945, was to feel to the utmost the condition, the situation, and the life of his country, and to wish to express what he felt and saw. Nine-tenths of all movie

[1] Adriano Baracco, "Roberto Rossellini," *Cinema,* Milan, October 2, 1948.

directors, European or not, would have refused to work under the conditions that faced Rossellini in 1945. Nevertheless, he went to work in abandoned garages, with insufficient lighting equipment, with outdated negative film, and without money. The script writer lent his apartment for the shooting of the opening scenes, the actors chipped in, and, as happens when there is enough energy, the money was found and the shooting proceeded. The results seemed pretty bad, the photography was rudimentary, the dubbing was hurried and mostly out of synchronization. This film was called *Roma città aperta* (*Open City*). Its enormous success in the United States made Rossellini, shook Hollywood, and put Italy back on the moviegoer's map. The world had caught up with him: Rossellini had found himself. He could let himself go—as his subsequent films, *Paisà* (*Paisan*) in 1946, and *Germania anno zero* (*Germany, Year Zero*) in 1947, gave evidence.

Tired of the war and of its aftereffects, Rossellini then attempted some experiments: *Amore* (*Love*) in 1947–1948, and *La macchina ammazzacattivi* (*The Evil-killer Machine*) in 1948.

After this, many plans and many contracts passed through his hands. A film he was supposed to direct, *La contessa di Montecristo,* was retitled *Aria di Roma,* then quickly scrapped when Hollywood, presenting the opportunity to direct Ingrid Bergman, beckoned to him. Having reached agreements for the production of a film called originally *Dopo l'uragano,* and now tentatively called *Terra di Dio* (*God's Earth*), Rossellini began directing it on April 8, 1949, at Stromboli Island.

II

Rossellini's aims, methods, and results are so closely knit together that it would be useless to consider them separately. He is interested, almost polemically, in present-day life. Looking about himself he receives certain emotions from which derive his opinions; and he wants to express his opinions as directly as possible in his films, by recreating what he has seen in such a way as to convey

these opinions and arouse in the audience reactions and emotions similar to his own. In this, Rossellini plays his full part of poet: at best he is lyrical; at worst, simply an illustrator. And he fluctuates constantly between the two, for the following reasons.

Since *Roma città aperta* Rossellini has worked without a script. He believes in immediate inspiration, and a whole sequence may follow from a decision made on the spur of the moment, on location, or on the set, when he enters into immediate contact with his actors. However, he surrounds himself with writers, assistants, and secretaries; and all of them have the continuous task of suggesting, along the lines indicated by a twenty-page skeleton script, possible developments of plot or the progression of a sequence. Some solutions are refused, others accepted; the decision rests always with Rossellini.

This could lead Rossellini, as it has others, to a pictorial style based on impressions and sensations—a *Louisiana Story* or a *Tabu,*—but it does not, because Rossellini adheres constantly to the human element and never brings himself to turning the camera away from it. People are too much alive and too responsive in their constant struggle to be put aside for long.

Rossellini's actors do not perform according to their own logic or the logic of the part they play, but follow Rossellini's logic, which is mainly governed by what he sees in the story to be told. There is therefore no development of character, no savagely contrived suspense, no astute doses of comic relief. It is reality recreated so as to release an emotion that arises almost accidentally from the material presented.

A method of creation so temperamental and spontaneous cannot give rise to a thought-out, balanced whole. Certain aspects of the plot and certain narrative passages attract Rossellini more than others, and he therefore studies them more closely, renders them more passionately. Not all the sequences can or should be on the same emotional level: the emotional sequences gain from being contrasted with the undistinguished ones, which may be

important to the narrative or to tying the sequences together but do not afford Rossellini a pretext for a visual expansion of the content.

Rossellini knows when a sequence, or a scene, is going to sustain his film, and he assumes an attitude of disinterest toward the rest. What his films lose in construction they gain in immediacy—in an almost physical contact with the material in front of the camera. He does not care if, from shooting without a script, he commits a few or many of those grammatical errors which send script girls to an early grave. It may take as many as three dissolves, as it did in *Desiderio,* to tie together three shots of two persons crossing a garden: without the dissolves they would appear to be going back and forth but not forward.

Once the contact between audience and actors is established, Rossellini relies on continuous improvisation. As long as the public follows the emotions of the scenes, or, more properly, of the scenes in which Rossellini's emotion expresses itself, he is satisfied.

There are in *Roma città aperta* four or five of these instants of startling visual force and profound emotional content: for instance, the sequence in which the SS invade the tenement house, culminating in Pina's death; the return of the children-saboteurs; the execution of the priest. These lyrical passages are balanced by strangely superfluous scenes introduced in an attempt to create a plot—the cocaine addict, for example. And yet, even this was true: "The part of Marina Mari, the drug-stupefied actress who betrays her lover and hands him over to the Germans, was played by the same woman who called me when the SS were searching my apartment. . . . *Open City* was made under the impression, the suggestion, and the influence of what we had just lived through,"[2] writes Sergio Amidei, the author of the script. For the sake of history, let us note also that the real-life priest whose adventures the film depicts was called Don Giuseppe Morosini.

[2] Sergio Amidei, "Open City Revisited," *New York Times,* February, 1947.

But not all these elements were equally felt by Rossellini. In *Paisà* as well as in *Roma città aperta* there is a deep understanding and love for the human being, and an equally exceptional dramatic understatement and concise power. Far from exploiting its numerous climactic incidents, Rossellini chose to present these episodes for what they were worth, without preparation, without suspense. Certain episodes are naturally more fully realized, more deeply felt, and better reproduced than others. "In *Paisà,* Rossellini's method is fully applied. The actors are taken from the street, and it seems that the episodes are invented on the spot. The film is certainly unequal within itself, but for this reason perhaps it reveals even more the personality of the director, creator of images and situations. When the situation is interesting, Rossellini is capable of losing himself in it."[3]

This method culminated in *Germania anno zero.* There, the final sequence, beginning with the return of the father from the hospital, is the climax of Rossellini's art. The first three fourths of the film are given over to the exposition, and to the creation of the moral and physical atmosphere; an introduction, awkward in spots and hardly developed, is all that remains of the secondary themes which the twenty-page outline provided. Little by little, after the work had actually begun, Edmund's sister, his brother, and the loose girl he loves and redeems, all disappeared in the background, and Edmund, the boy whom Rossellini found on a playground and in whom were crystallized all his emotions, alone remained. This done, Rossellini could concentrate fully on the boy and perform his feat, that of the visual exasperation that accompanies the sequence of the boy playing through the bomb-scarred streets of Berlin, his slow climb to the top of the destroyed building, and finally his suicide, the catharsis.

"Edmund's father and mother said yes, and Rossellini took the boy to his hotel, made him wash his hands, combed his hair, and took him to lunch. 'You must be very rich,' said the boy as soon as

[3] Francesco Pasinetti, "Roberto Rossellini," *Gazzetta del Cinema,* Rome, August 21, 1948.

they sat at the table; 'only very rich people can have a tablecloth in Germany.' 'You'll say that in my film,' said Rossellini. 'All right. What is the name of my film?' asked the boy. 'Berlin, Year Zero.' 'What does it mean?' 'You'll understand it when you see it,' answered Rossellini. 'Not before then?' 'No. Before then it will be enough that I know what it means.' "[4]

Rossellini is neither harassed commercially nor too much interested in "what the public wants." He goes on calmly saying what he thinks is worth saying, showing what he deems worthy of being shown. He uses his mental capacities to the full, and everything interests him. He may move between great extremes, from the crude peasant to the sophisticated bourgeois, if he feels there is a movie in it. This he did with *Amore*. *Amore* consists of two short films, *La voce umana* (*The Human Voice*) and *Il miracolo* (*The Miracle*), the first of which was shot when he was taking a busman's holiday in Paris before starting on *Germania anno zero*. Here again we have the exasperation of the content from a visual point of view: *The Human Voice* is a single sequence, a glorified screen test of the actress Anna Magnani. Rossellini works best out of doors, and all the interiors of his films have a contrived, uneasy look about them, as if the camera were ashamed of spying on the actors. And *La voce umana* is limited to the bedroom and bathroom in the apartment of a woman who receives a phone call from her lover who is abandoning her. Even considered solely as an experiment, it is not entirely successful; Magnani is excellent though miscast, but Rossellini feels cramped, and often points his camera to the windows of the sunless rooms as if anxious to go outdoors.

And outdoors he goes in the second part of the film, *Il miracolo*. This time, Magnani is a crude shepherdess who believes a passing tramp to be St. Joseph, and who gives birth in a deserted church on a mountaintop to a child she believes to be Jesus reincarnated.

Both of the characters played by Magnani are crazy: the bour-

[4] Luigi Morandi, "Letter from Berlin," in a Roman newspaper.

geois is crazed with grief at being abandoned by her lover; the peasant woman is the mystically crazed village idiot. Each scene is rendered with a violent immediacy. Each scene is shot as it is thought up and as it is seen. Whether it will tie in with the preceding or the following scene has no importance: Rossellini can dissolve, or fade, or use some mechanical improvisation.

Under the hot sunlight of the Amalfian coast the adventures of the crazy woman are cruelly taken apart by Rossellini. The beggar who kicks down interminable flights of stairs the woman's worldly possessions (her blanket and the tin can in which she keeps her food) reaches instants of sadistic intensity; the way the woman receives the mocking congratulations of a group of students, and prays to her saint, are tributes to Magnani's acting as well as to Rossellini's directing; the slow, painful climb to the church on top of the mountain, where the disgraced and derided woman finds herself alone with a goat and gives birth to her holy child, is an excruciating finale. In a half hour the film expresses the passing of the nine months by means of the progressive stages of decay in the woman's clothing, in a series of separated, sketchy scenes that are treated by Rossellini as if he feared to be moved by them. He is never sentimental, or even emotional; often he remains cold. But from the agglomeration of these scenes, some in good taste and some not (the scene in which the woman discovers herself to be pregnant reminded me of the crudest scenes in Murnau's *Faust*), arises the emotion that the spectator feels, and Rossellini's full message of humanity.

Amalfi and its rocky coast are again the scene of the next Rossellini movie, *La macchina ammazzacattivi* (*The Evil-killer Machine*). Here, Rossellini has a definite message: the philosophical concept that there are no good people and no bad people, and hence that it is impossible to judge the evil ones without judging the good ones. It is the story of a village photographer who is given the power to kill whomever he photographs. After a moment of revenge and exultation in his own powers he destroys his camera.

"Almost a fairy tale, but enclosed inside a clear and full narration of facts and adventures seen from a point of view of dry reality, fictionless realism; as if everything had happened yesterday, or could happen tomorrow. [The part of the devil] is taken by an eighty-year-old man . . . who has come down from the mountains at Rossellini's call and agreed to act the comedy, to play the part. And he strikes histrionic attitudes during the test, with slight licentious gestures. He has never been to a theater, he has never seen a movie. He knew, though, that he was a handsome old man, heavy with serene experience."[5]

What has risen out of Rossellini's imagination in connection with this twentieth-century fable remains to be seen. He himself abandoned further comedy plots, even though they were interpreted by his favorite actress, Anna Magnani, to return to the themes in which he found himself for the first time: people shaken by the holocaust of war, and the aftermath of war reflected in the people who are its victims.

The story of Karin Bjorsen, *God's Earth,* offered him such a plot. From the rushes that have thus far reached Rome the film promises to maintain Rossellini's spontaneity as well as his high artistic standards. The film is being created day by day under the constant rumbling of the Stromboli volcano, created little by little as the suggestions arise from the land itself, from the extraordinary half-deserted town where everybody will be an actor.

"That morning Ingrid [Bergman, playing Karin Bjorsen] was startled and shocked on seeing a fisherman slit open a live turtle. 'Let's put this scene in the film,' suggested [Sergio] Amidei [writer]. They are trying to find motives that will shock and horrify Karin Bjorsen when she first comes to the island. 'It would be even worse if a child did that instead of a fisherman,' Ingrid said. Rossellini smiled and looked at Amidei. Ingrid is ready for neorealism."[6]

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[5] Fabrizio Sarazani, "Ad Amalfi siamo tutti attori," in *Fotogrammi,* Milan, June, 1948.
[6] Lamberti Sorrentino, "La prova del vulcano," in *Tempo,* Rome, April 23, 1949.

Ingrid Bergman's leading man has been found: he is a fisherman from Sorrento, and what decided him to accept the part was the fact that in one day of acting he earned more than in a week of fishing. The twenty-page skeleton script provides one of the characteristic Rossellini sequences: pregnant, frightened and disgusted, Karin Bjorsen climbs to the top of the volcano, as Edmund climbed to the top floor of the bombed building and the shepherdess to the church on top of the mountain.

As we have seen, Roberto Rossellini is a complex personality. He is directing a film that *might* get to Radio City Music Hall, and he knows it. He is playing a crucial hand, but will not make concessions on that account. Now, eleven years and nine films after his *Ruscello di Ripasottile,* he still remembers his fishes: "When I chase fishes under water, I resolve all the directing problems that are waiting to be solved; after underwater fishing, I reach the camera with clear, precise ideas in my head."[7]

III

It would be hard to say that Rossellini is the leader of the new Italian school; it is perhaps more accurate to consider him part of this school and not assign to him any qualities of leadership. His best works have something in common with the best of the Italian production: "... the actuality of the themes, the directness with which these are handled (an audacity that has often been taken for brutality), the simplicity of means of expression, a thought-out simplicity which is not to be confused with lack of skill."[8]

This revolutionary approach was in the air in 1945, and consisted mainly in one's being aware of the economic and political situation of the country and interested in it. That many directors have held to this point of view is evident if one considers that in little more than two years there were produced *Roma città aperta,*

[7] Lamberti Sorrentino, "Un film e un idilio," in *Tempo,* Rome, April 16, 1949.
[8] Aldo Vergano, "Il nuovo realismo," in *Pagine Nuove,* Rome, December, 1947.

De Sica's *Sciuscià, Paisà,* Vergano's *Il sole sorge ancora,* Lattuada's *Il bandito,* Blasetti's *Un giorno nella vita,* De Santis' *Caccia tragica,* Zampa's *Vivere in pace,* and that this attitude persists in the second group of "neorealist" films, *Germania anno zero,* Visconti's *La terra trema,* De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette,* Lattuada's *Senza pietà,* Germi's *In nome della legge.*

There is no submission by the director to a neorealist formula, but each director sees it according to his own temperament and art: nothing could be more diametrically opposed than *Germania anno zero* and *In nome della legge* than *Ladri di biciclette* and *La terra trema.* And yet, all these films have the same physical contact with humanity, with a social and moral atmosphere that is current and alive.

It has been brought to my attention that several challenging points of view have been voiced in the United States about Rossellini: one, that his Italian audiences have not responded to his work with the same enthusiasm as his international audience. This seems both obvious and natural, and nothing to be ashamed of. There is one Rossellini film for five hundred Hollywood musicals shown in Italy; surely, Esther Williams has no more passionate fan than the Italian schoolboy. To the Italian, *Bathing Beauty* is a picture from another world, something new if not different, something in which to escape. And to the American audience, which has just as many reasons to want to escape, although it is diametrically opposed to the Italian's, *Open City* is the exotic film. No one is a prophet in his own country. As for the second dissenting argument, that Rossellini is a naturalist who tends to record rather than to give form, I hope to have shown that it is not so; and may I remind the outspoken but not analytical person who originated it that the very action of composing a shot, the very act of cutting a strip of film to a given length, tend to give form. Far too often, form is mistaken for formalism, and if there is one thing Rossellini is not to be criticized for, for better or for worse, it is being a formalist.

Pietro Germi, an up-and-coming Italian director, whose last film, *In nome della legge,* ranks with the best, recently wrote: "I am not sure that there can be such a thing as neorealism in the films. That which is usually called neorealism is only a 'careless' and 'not constructed' way of narrating a story, which belongs, with all the properties of a personal style, only to Rossellini, and comes to him from his particular talent as a documentarist."[9]

This backhanded compliment is certainly based on observation: but the fact remains that Rossellini, by being "careless" and by "not constructing" his films, has reopened in our decade a little-explored road for the cinema to follow: that of truth, social consciousness, and reality.

The Works of Roberto Rossellini

1941. *La nave bianca* (*The White Ship*). Direction: Francesco De Robertis. Story: Francesco De Robertis. Scenario: Francesco De Robertis, Roberto Rossellini. Cameraman: Emanuele Caracciolo. Music: Renzo Rossellini. Locale: Hospital ship. Production: Scalera. Distribution: Scalera. Produced with the collaboration of the Italian Navy Department.

1942. *Un pilota ritorna* (*A Pilot Returns*). Direction: Robert Rossellini. Story: Tito Silvio Mursino. Scenario: Michelangelo Antonioni, Massimo Mida, Rosario Leone. Cameramen: Vincenzo Saratrice, Crescenzio Gentili. Music: Renzo Rossellini. Actors: Massimo Girotti, Gaetano Masier, Lilli Denis, Aldo Lulli, Michela Belmonte. Production: A.C.I. Distribution: A.C.I. Europa Film.

1943. *L'uomo della croce* (*The Man of the Cross*). Direction: Roberto Rossellini. Story: Asvero Gravelli. Scenario: Asvero Gravelli, Alberto Consiglio, G. D'Alicandro, Roberto Rossellini. Cameraman: Guglielmo Lombardi. Settings: Gastone Medin. Music: Renzo Rossellini. Actors: Alberto Tavazzi, Roswita Shmidt, Hilde Doris, Alberto Capozzi, Zoia Weneda, Antonio Marietti, Piero Pastore. Production: Continentalcine. Distribution: ENIC.

1944. *Desiderio* (*Desire*). Direction: begun by Roberto Rossellini and finished by Marcello Pagliero. Story: A. I. Benvenuti. Cameramen: Lombardi brothers. Music: Renzo Rossellini. Actors: Elli Parvo,

[9] Pietro Germi, "Forse non esiste il neorealismo," in *Secolo Nuovo,* Rome, April 10, 1949.

Massimo Girotti, Carlo Ninchi, Roswita Shmidt. Production: SAFIR.

1945. *Roma città aperta* (*Open City*). Direction: Roberto Rossellini. Story: Sergio Amidei. Scenario: Sergio Amidei, Federico Fellini. Cameraman: Ubaldo Arata. Music: Renzo Rossellini. Actors: Aldo Fabrizi, Anna Magnani, Marcello Pagliero, Vito Annichiarico, Nando Bruno, Harry Feist, Giovanna Galletti, Francesco Grandjacquet, Passarelli, Maria Michi, Carla Rovere. Locale: Rome. Production: Escelsea. Distribution: Minerva Film (Italy), Mayer Burstyn (U.S.A.).

1946. *Paisà* (*Paisan*). Direction: Roberto Rossellini. Story: Sergio Amidei, Roberto Rossellini, Marcello Pagliero, Federico Fellini, Renzo Avanzo. Cameraman: O. Martelli. Actors: Maria Michi and nonprofessionals. Production: O.F.I.

1947. *Germania anno zero* (*Germany, Year Zero*). Direction: Roberto Rossellini. Story: Roberto Rossellini. Scenario: Roberto Rossellini, Carlo Lizzani, Kolpet. Cameraman: Robert Juillard. Music: Renzo Rossellini. Actors: Edmund Moschke, Franz Kruger, Barbara Hintze, Sandra Manys. Locale: Berlin. Production: Tever-Film, Sadfi, Universalia Film. Distribution: G.D.B.

1947–1948. *Amore* (*Love*): (1) *The Human Voice;* (2) *The Miracle.* Direction: Roberto Rossellini. Story: Jean Cocteau (1) and Federico Fellini (2). Scenario: Tullio Pinelli and Roberto Rossellini (2). Cameramen: Robert Juillard (1) and Aldo Tonti (2). Music; Renzo Rossellini. Setting: Christian Berard (1). Actors: Anna Magnani, Federico Fellini. Production: CEIAD.

1948. *La macchina ammazzacattivi* (*The Evil-killer Machine*). Direction: Roberto Rossellini. Story: Eduardo di Filippo, Fabrizio Sarazani. Scenario: Giancarlo Vigorelli, Sergio Amidei, Fabrizio Sarazani, Franco Brusati. Actors: Marilyn Buford, Bill Tubbs, Gaio Visconti, Joe Falletta. Locale: Amalfi coast. Production: Universalia Film.

1949. *Terra di Dio* (*God's Earth*). Direction: Roberto Rossellini. Story: Sergio Amidei. Actors: Ingrid Bergman and nonprofessionals. Locale: Stromboli Island. Production: BERO-Hughes-RKO.

"Shoe-Shine": A Student Film Analysis

MONIQUE FONG

MONIQUE FONG was enrolled in the Third Promotion of L'Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques in Paris when she prepared this analysis of *Shoe-Shine* following the form—called filmographic filecard—regularly used by students of L'IDHEC. It was published in *Bulletin de L'IDHEC,* No. 9, June, 1947. An analysis of *Le Silence est d'or* following the same form appeared in Vol. III, No. 3, of the *Hollywood Quarterly.*

GENERAL INFORMATION

Country: Italy. Director: Vittorio De Sica. Place of production: Scalera Studios in Rome. Production date: 1946. Released in France: February, 1947. (Released in the United States: August, 1947.) Running time: 1 hour, 33 minutes.

About the Production

Producer: U.N.I. Paolo W. Tamburella. French distributor: C.I.D. (American distributor: Lopert Films.)

Credits: authors, Sergio Amidei, Adolfo Franci, Cesare Zavattini, and C. G. Viola; photography, Anchise Brizzi and Elio Paccara; set decoration, Ivo Batelli; music, Alessandro Cicognini; production manager, Nino Ottavi.

Cast: Franco Interlenghi as Pasquale Maggi; Rinaldo Smordoni as Giuseppe Filipucci; Aniello Mele as Rafaele Didio; Maria Ciampi as the fortuneteller; Pacifico Astrologo; Enrico De Silva.

The director: Born in 1902, Vittorio de Sica is an actor and a writer as well as a director. He studied law and then joined an independent theatrical group in Rome. He first came to the cinema as an actor and it was not until 1939 that he began his career as a director.

The films in which he has acted are *La segretaria per tutti* (*Everyone's Secretary*) in 1931, *Gli uomini che mascalzoni* (*What Rascals Men Are*) in 1932, *Darò un milione* (*I'll Give a Million*) in 1935, *Napoli d'altritempi* (*Old Naples*) and *Questi ragazzi* (*These Children*) in 1937, *Hanno rapito un uomo* (*A Man Has Been Kidnapped*) in 1938, *Grandi magazzini* (*Big Store*) and *Manon Lescault* in 1939, *La peccatrice* (*The Sinner*) in 1940, *L'avventura dei piani di sopra* (*Ad-*

venture from Above) and *Teresa Venerdì* in 1941, *Se io fossi onesto* (*If I Were Honest*) in 1942.

The films he has directed are *Roses écarlates* (*Scarlet Roses*) in 1939–1940, *Teresa Venerdì* in 1941, *Se io fossi onesto* in 1941–1942, *La guardia del corpo* (*The Bodyguard*) in 1941, *Bambini ci guardano* (*Children Are Watching*) in 1942, and *Sciuscià* (*Shoe-Shine*) in 1946, in several of which he also appeared as an actor.

About the Script

Locale: Rome and its environs in the months following the liberation; the life of the sidewalk shoe-shine boys. (*Sciuscià,* the original title, is an Italian corruption of "shoe-shine.")

Summary of the sequences:[1]

I. *Prologue* (10 sequences). The friends, Pasquale, fourteen, and Giuseppe, twelve, are Roman "sciuscias" whose dream it is to buy the horse they love for 50,000 lira. The dream is no less forceful for being realizable; bartering the candy and cigarettes they wheedle from G.I.'s supplements their income as shoe-shine boys much less substantially than their exploitation by the criminal black-market gang that includes Giuseppe's older brother. The children's part in setting the scene for the gang's "raid" on a fortuneteller brings them the last 3,000 lira they need to buy their horse, and they spend one ecstatic day caring for him. But it is on the fortuneteller's complaint that they are arrested next day and sent to the children's prison to await court action.

II. *The prison* (4 sequences). The children's prison is cruel, corrupt, crowded, wretched, and dirty. Even the staff members who are still capable of feeling are bound by hopeless inertia. The friends' being together is their only security. Giuseppe's struggles when they are assigned to separate cells is enough to set off a violent, screaming demonstration throughout the prison.

III. *The separation* (6 sequences). Giuseppe is the youngest in his cell among boys who have an air of frank debauchery. Arcangeli, the oldest, aggressively corrupt, becomes his friend. Pasquale is welcomed sympathetically in his cell, which includes an appealing tubercular child named Raffaele. When Giuseppe manages to introduce Pasquale and Arcangeli, they feel instinctive intense antipathy.

[1] The following is an editorial summary retaining the original's division of the story into seven episodes and indicating the number of sequences into which each was originally subdivided.

IV. *The drama* (8 sequences). A prison official tricks Pasquale into believing that Giuseppe is being brutally flogged for his refusal to expose the black-market gang. To put a stop to Giuseppe's torture, Pasquale names members of the gang, including Giuseppe's brother. In revenge for the betrayal of his brother, Giuseppe agrees to Arcangeli's framing Pasquale, insuring that Pasquale will be whipped. Pasquale, bearing lash marks, appeals to Giuseppe to come halfway, literally, to reaffirm their friendship, but Arcangeli intervenes. In the inevitable battle between Arcangeli and Pasquale, Arcangeli falls and wounds himself.

V. *Giuseppe's treason* (4 sequences). In order to reinstate himself with Arcangeli, who has returned from the infirmary with a plan for escape, Giuseppe disavows his reconciliation with Pasquale. Though torn between sparing his brother and sparing Pasquale, Giuseppe permits his lawyer to place all blame on Pasquale at the trial. Nevertheless, Giuseppe is sentenced to one year in prison by the court, Pasquale to two. Back in prison, when Arcangeli reports that his mother cannot provide the money necessary to the escape plan, Giuseppe offers him the 50,000 lira that selling the horse he owns with Pasquale will bring. The day for the escape is set.

VI. *The escape and the accident* (6 sequences). Priests are giving a film showing for the prisoners as the first steps in the escape plan are taken. When the escaping boys are detected and the alarm is given, the projectionist abandons the still-operating projector. A fire starts. The terrified boys running from the fire trample and kill Raffaele. Grief-stricken with Raffaele's death and Giuseppe's escape, knowing that Giuseppe and Arcangeli are using a horse in running away, Pasquale offers to go with a guard in search of Giuseppe.

VII. *Giuseppe's death* (1 sequence). Having left the guard at the stable, Pasquale catches up with the boys and the horse on a bridge. Arcangeli flees before his threats. Pasquale begins to strike Giuseppe for the suffering he has caused him. Giuseppe, trying to avoid the blows, falls from the bridge and is crushed on the stones below. While Pasquale in anguish cries out his friend's name in the night, the guard looks at him in silence and the riderless horse gets away.

DRAMATIC ANALYSIS

It seems impossible to reduce the picture *Shoe-Shine* to a general line, and any attempt to do so would lead to a useless distortion.

It does not belong to any of the accepted categories. It can best be described by comparing it with other pictures, especially with one that is in every respect its opposite: *Citizen Kane.* There is no denying that both these films are masterworks. They are end products of two schools of picture making—which, however, have nothing in common.

The Construction

The story of *Shoe-Shine* is told in simple chronological order. *Citizen Kane* is told in flashbacks, and tries to give a sense of long duration. But this is not merely a question of form.

If Vittorio De Sica had borrowed Orson Welles' method or had simply shown Giuseppe's death first and then undertaken to explain the chain of circumstances that led up to it (cf. *Le Jour se lève*), the resulting atmosphere of tension and irony would have detracted from the importance of the horse and the joy of the children. It is important that the audience be taken unawares by *Shoe-Shine,* that it should experience fear and hope and be unable to guess the outcome of the story.

It is a story that unfolds before our eyes; the children caught in it do not realize what is happening to them. They are more candid and less knowing than the children in the picture *Amitiés particulières;* they do not try to express themselves nor even to influence their own lives. It is their innocence, in fact, that creates the story and makes it great.

Given the strong unity of the plot and its ever-growing tension, it is difficult to divide the picture into episodes. Defining them as we have done in summarizing the story seems arbitary.

Since *Shoe-Shine* is neither an accusation nor a propaganda work, we are spared a "crucial point." The story simply proceeds, step by step, until there is nothing further to narrate. Great skill is shown in putting the single moral-bearing sentence of the story—"If these children have become what they are, it is because we have failed to keep them what they are supposed to be"—into the

mouth of the corrupt lawyer, a man to whom lying is a profession and whom we saw, just a moment earlier, falsely accusing Pasquale in order to save his own client.

The Style

It is here that the fundamental difference between the school that produced *Citizen Kane* and that which produced *Shoe-Shine* appears. To state that *Citizen Kane* is a formal achievement and *Shoe-Shine* is a story is a false explanation of the difference.

Citizen Kane is also a story. But the author of this story is bent on keeping his audience in a constant state of excitement. Every means is good if it contributes toward this end: overthrowing chronological order, presenting the same subject from various points of view, and making the technique itself, for once, a character in the picture, the one to whose "actions" we are most sensitive.

In *Shoe-Shine* the concern is to create an atmosphere and to win the audience through conviction. As a matter of course, *Shoe-Shine* takes its place in a school of numerous pictures born of a certain maturity which the talking picture has reached. The school is marked by the technique's being subordinate to the script, or better, serving to express it. The director has outlived the period when film technique seemed so marvelous an acquisition to him that he could not refrain from showing it off. Now the director has mastered his technique. He has abandoned—regrettably, sometimes—certain means of expression developed by the silent film: symbols, personifications of objects, and the leisurely dwelling on dramatic elements that was indispensable to understanding the action (cf. *Le Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*). He has also discarded the excessive talkativeness to which the early sound pictures succumbed. He has succeeded in making a synthesis of silent and sound techniques, and thus is capable of subordinating them to the full expression of the script. Unfortunately, the soberness and humility he has adopted seem so to constrain a

director that he tends to create dull pictures. *Shoe-Shine* is an exception, from beginning to end. In fact, it is a justification. If one can reproach Vittorio de Sica at all, it must be for his caution in taking sides.

True, he chose a script, actors, and a philosophy of life; but he did not choose an artistic viewpoint. Behind his picture one feels the presence of a sensitive human being, but not always the presence of a creative artist. It should suffice to compare the beginning of *Shoe-Shine* with the first part of *Road to Life*. The Soviet picture immediately takes on a given meaning; every object acquires symbolic value. There is no such "choice" of meaning in *Shoe-Shine*.

The Children and the Grown-ups

In *Shoe-Shine,* two distinct worlds come face to face, the world of children and the world of grown-ups. If there were only the children's world, there would be no dramatic impact, no tragedy. But the picture deals with children who come into conflict with grown-ups, and with grown-ups who have just emerged from the shocking experience of the war and a profound political upheaval. In these two worlds the rules of the game are entirely different, and the conflict is born of the impossibility that one group will understand and adapt itself to the rules of the other. The two worlds do not interpenetrate. They exclude each other.

In Pasquale's and Giuseppe's world, emotions, acts, and loyalties are absolute. Every word has one meaning only: Honor, Justice, Friendship; no ambiguity is possible. In the grown-up world, on the contrary, each word has multiple meanings. There is no absolute justice, but several kinds of justices defined by contracts, codes, laws, and administrative processes. There are also various kinds of friendships with various names, from the purest to the most sordid.

Thus, when Pasquale and Giuseppe buy the horse together no problem arises: the horse simply belongs to both of them. That's all there is to it; it binds them together once and for all. It is a

pact. For grown-ups it would be merely a commercial contract. At the trial, the judge asks Pasquale very precise, detailed questions about the conditions of the contract, how it works, how it can be cancelled, and so forth. The entire conflict of the two worlds is contained in the close-up of Pasquale at that moment. His expression is that of someone who understands and makes a judgment. He realizes that he is confronted with a grown-up. An aborigine witnessing representatives of "civilization" debarking on his island may wear a similar expression.

The great strength of Vittorio De Sica and his scenarists lies in not having taken sides with either of these two worlds. The children are not idealized, nor the grown-ups satirized. Both are shown as they are. Before these boys, who are cruel, shrewd, violent, and uncompromising, looms the world of grown-ups who have been rendered powerless and indifferent by time and events, by life, dissolute men who are too weak to stand up to anything. Such a man is the prison doctor. He is not a bad doctor; but, if the hospitals are filled to overflowing, what can he do? It is the same with the other adult characters, some of whom are little more than silhouettes and yet remain unforgettable: the warden, the police commissioner, the guards, the two attorneys, the blonde woman who visits the small boy with tuberculosis, the fortuneteller, and, above all, the two priests who give the film showing. It is not without reason that the director has shown them terrified by the fire, and their clamor for "light, light" is intentionally ironic. Through them, a whole religion is projected. It should not be forgotten that the jail is a reconstructed old convent, and the first shot we see of it a disused altar.

The children live, love, and die, but it is through the grown-ups that the dramatic conflict arises and is resolved. Grown-ups persuade Pasquale and Giuseppe to become thieves and black marketeers. Grown-ups arrest them and separate them, judge them and punish them. Before the grown-ups, Pasquale is absolutely alone. Giuseppe has abandoned him; no one will defend

him. He has the dignity and the hardness of a man who must defend himself. Still he remains a child. He judges the grown-up world and condemns it; he is too honorable to belong to it. At the time of the fire, when the priests become frantic, Pasquale remains concerned with the only thing that really matters, the death of Raffaele. Finally, when he finds Giuseppe, after so many ordeals, he does not raise his hand against him in anger as a man would, nor even in revenge, but as a silent gesture of punishment. Giuseppe has been weak, he has made common cause with grown-ups; that is why Pasquale's resentment has no limit. It seems that Vittorio De Sica wanted to emphasize adult guilt: Arcangeli, who is immediately responsible for what happened, is much older than the other prisoners, and the moving childishness of the one decent guard should not be forgotten.

Pasquale's personality.—It is dangerous to speak of Pasquale's personality. Yet it is necessary in order to indicate the difference between him and Giuseppe and the strange innovation which this difference brings to the screen. Truly, these two boys have nothing in common. Giuseppe is generous but weak, and ready for treason at the least summons. Pasquale is a hero, a figure of honor and loyalty. He has superhuman, almost symbolic, integrity. He is a key, but he is also a touchstone. Nothing is known of him except his great beauty and a few actions, two of them especially, one when he supports Raffaele coughing, the second, when he punishes Giuseppe at the end of the picture. Around him are formed groups; he is detested, he is loved. He himself remains tense, inscrutable, and his final gesture is one of meting out justice. There is no yardstick by which to measure him. There is no comparable hero in any picture or novel, except Heathcliff (*Wuthering Heights*) perhaps, but one cannot well imagine such unrestrained violence under the sweet Italian sun. Pasquale's impact is felt, and there is no need of explanation or comparison; its finality is so forceful that at times the entire picture seems to be his story alone.

The friendship of Pasquale and Giuseppe.—At first the friendship of Pasquale and Giuseppe does not seem as strange as Pasquale's personality. It brings to mind the *Faux monnayeurs, Enfants terribles,* and *Amitiés particulières,* but such comparisons are barren. In the heroes of these books there is a certain perversity and knowingness that do not appear in *Shoe-Shine.*

Yet Pasquale and Giuseppe are not simply friends. There is intimacy and confidence between them that is bereft of any duplicity. In the beginning there is the trusting submissiveness of Giuseppe, and in the end his punishment. Two characters in this picture function to point up the bond between Pasquale and Giuseppe. They are Arcangeli and Raffaele. For an instant it looks as if, for the sake of a certain symmetry in construction, Giuseppe would find a new leader in Arcangeli, and Raffaele would replace Giuseppe as the younger child whom Pasquale protects. Indeed, not until Raffaele dies and Arcangeli escapes do Pasquale and Giuseppe come face to face again. But it is enough to see that Pasquale's desperation persists even through his solicitude for Raffaele, to grasp that, before all else, he is looking for Giuseppe.

For the first time we see into the heart of such pacts as children make, allocating rights and obligations to each other, pacts in which there are no reservations.

One cannot possibly forget the wonderful invention of the little girl, Nana; symbolic and secret, she has no other purpose than to be the little girl who was there.

CINEMATOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The poverty of filmic techniques in *Shoe-Shine,* which one often hears criticized, is actually one aspect of the picture's harmony. The lack of studied effects, the subordination of technique, justify the style of the whole.

We do not experience here any of the intellectual excitement that we find in *Citizen Kane;* the impact is emotional. Orson Welles found a giddily traveling camera and studied montage

essential to telling his story, whereas in *Shoe-Shine* it was important to rely on the simplicity of a fixed camera and chronological exposition.

TECHNIQUE

The concern is to give a poetic view of a realistic subject. Out of this comes a duality of expression: the children are viewed poetically, the grown-ups realistically.

The short scene of the black-market gang in a restaurant is the most flagrantly realistic. The set decoration, the atmosphere, and the secondary characters are recreated with exactitude. In the midst of all the foodstuffs, we see the leader of the gang with his fat stomach in the foreground and the one-eyed man seated so that his bad eye is in full view.

In presenting the children's world, wide-open long shots, often fixed, predominate, in simple contrast with the closer shots of Pasquale and Giuseppe alone together.

Classic use is made of the plunging camera to express distress and isolation. Examples: Nana watching Pasquale and Giuseppe leave in the patrol wagon; the entrance of Pasquale and Giuseppe into the main building of the prison; Pasquale alone with Raffaele in the prison yard, after being insulted and struck by Giuseppe.

The traveling camera shots are usually matter-of-fact, justified by the movements of the actors (the inspection of the prison). There is one impressive traveling shot that begins with the camera focused on a child sounding a bugle and then rises high enough to include the cells from which the prisoners emerge noisily. Similarly, panning is generally employed to explain or describe things. For instance, the camera discloses the policeman beating a sawdust bag and then the police informer howling.

A more symbolic pan begins with the words "The Free World" on the screen, moves through darkness in which the bars of the prison cells are perceived, and finally focuses on some children in prison uniform.

Close-ups are reserved for critical moments: the policeman's legs as he makes the arrest; Pasquale's hands as he is being fingerprinted; Pasquale's and Giuseppe's hands as they are being separated; Giuseppe's face as he learns that Pasquale has denounced Attilio; and Pasquale as he offers to help the guard find Giuseppe. But this is not essential. The picture sets out to create not a film language but an atmosphere.

The movement of the actors in front of the camera is much more important than the movement of the camera itself. I would direct attention particularly to two shots in which the actors advance toward the camera: first, the scene in which the prisoners demonstrate against the punishment which the guard inflicts on Pasquale, and second, the scene in which Pasquale steps up to Arcangeli before coming to blows with him.

There are, finally, several shots that are especially beautiful in a formal sense, independently of the story they tell. Three shots of Nana: when Giuseppe leaves her and she walks away with hesitant steps along an odd, unexpected path; when she jumps over a waterspout in front of the police station before the patrol wagon leaves; and when she is all by herself in a lonely spot looking after the vanishing patrol wagon. I would also mention the traveling shot toward the entrance of the jail from the approaching car. The most outstanding of all is the shot of Giuseppe's fall in which Pasquale stands alone motionless, leaning against the parapet from which Giuseppe has just fallen yelling.

There is little to say about the editing, which is very simple and clear, dominated by the association of ideas, or sometimes by dialogue or sounds. Worth remarking, however, is the cutting of the struggle in the infirmary toward the end, which alternates shots of the escaping prisoners working on the window and shots of the guard trying to break open the door. The accelerating succession of these shots creates an atmosphere of panic.

Dissolves are rare, and there are no fade-ins or fade-outs. Transitions from one scene to another are made by straight cuts.

Set Decoration

The sets are necessarily realistic, sometimes naturalistic; for example, the fortuneteller's apartment, the police station, and the restaurant. The prison retains a rather tragic and poetic quality owing to the intermingled religious remnants (the altar and the high windows) and the spiral staircase, and, probably, to its monotony also. The patent grandiloquence of the final setting—the small bridge lost in mist—is a debatable asset. However, it is difficult to imagine that a different setting would have been more convincing for this moment in which Pasquale takes off his belt to strike Giuseppe.

Photography

Struggling against the handicap of bad raw film, the photography is sober, like the rest of the production. It would seem that it might best have been painstakingly realistic, with sharp outline and great depth of field. But on the contrary, the use of small-angle lens gives soft effects that help to retain the poetic character of the picture and, by contrast, enhance the realistic performances of the actors.

This technique, which reminds us of many French pictures, is not a drawback, nor does it seem arbitrarily chosen. It does not weaken the emotional impact, but surrounds the adventure with a halo, supplying a new element to serve the basic idea of the picture—the presentation of a realistic story seen through the eyes of children. One should note as an exception the scene, already cited, of the black-market gang in the restaurant, into which the children do not enter at all.

Sound and Music

The sound track is important, almost inseparable from the rest of the film. Sound and music serve to accentuate the poetic quality and to represent certain basic themes. The sound of a horse's hooves returns again and again, and even governs the cutting. In the music two main themes are discernible. One is symbolic, fairly

slow and dramatic, and may be intended to represent Pasquale and Giuseppe. It is heard whenever there is tension between the two boys. The other, a more fragile theme, is simple and seems to represent the horse, marking the poetic element in the picture. It comes back in several variations, some happy, some sad. It is heard distorted impressively through the use of the double-bass solo at the moment when the jeep bearing Pasquale and the guard enters the stable.

Acting

The secondary roles are played with a realism that cannot be found in the French or American film, but sometimes in the Russian (*Road to Life*). This is characteristic of recent Italian pictures. Alongside the two main characters, several others stand out: Arcangeli, Raffaele, Nana, and the little boy who helps frame Pasquale, believing him an informer. The most outstanding is Raffaele, with the charm of an ailing child, thin-shouldered and with a wondering smile on his plain little face.

Then there are Rinaldo Smordini and Franco Interlenghi (Giuseppe and Pasquale). They are not merely striking embodiments of their roles—a device that is dear to the naturalist,—but more definitive and convincing than their roles. Sometimes we may wonder if their part in the poetic interpretation of the story is not greater than that of the authors.

Rinaldo Smordini has the smiling, warm grace of a young Roman, a willful, uncertain chin, spontaneous generosity, and great weakness. Franco Interlenghi is Pasquale, the central figure, who moves throughout the picture with tense, impassive features and superhuman integrity. He brings to mind the often-quoted phrase of Peyrefitte: "Alexander son of Philip, famous for his beauty."

Impact and Contribution of the Picture

Shoe-Shine is a climax. Does this mean that it is also an end? The answer is less evident than it is for *Citizen Kane* or *Paisan,* which, one can be sure, are primarily points of departure.

In any event, *Shoe-Shine* makes an important dramatic contribution. For the first time, a film with a subject of this order has been made without becoming an accusation, a sermon, or a propaganda work. The result is that the audience is much more deeply stirred and more anxious to find a solution, although Vittorio De Sica did not even intend to indicate one.

To summarize: We rejoice in the genius of Orson Welles while seeing *Citizen Kane,* but we have to wait a few days before we have time to appreciate fully the genius of Vittorio De Sica. *Shoe-Shine* does not allow us time to do so.

Subjects for Discussion

1. Compare *Shoe-Shine* with *Road to Life* and, secondly, with *Carrefour des enfants perdues.*

2. Compare *Shoe-Shine* with *Zéro de conduite.*

3. The position of *Shoe-Shine* within the Italian film school. *Paisan.*

De Sica's "Bicycle Thieves" and Italian Humanism

HERBERT L. JACOBSON

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IN THE postwar period the preëminence in serious films seems to have passed to the Italians. In fact it has become fashionable to observe that the mantle of realism has fallen on them from the French, as if the two schools were identical except for the difference in language. As a result the very special nature of modern Italian movie realism—which is that it is Italian first and realistic afterward—has been overlooked. In fact, a case could be made that it is not fundamentally realistic at all, that the naturalistic backgrounds against which the Italians photograph their stories are only a means to an end and quite possibly a means imposed by lack of capital for elaborate studio sets.

What, then, is the underlying philosophy or aesthetic theory that distinguishes their recent productions from those of other nations? It is not really hard to discover. Russian films, too, are usually set in the lower depths, and French films are frequently concerned with the passions of fairly primitive people. But you would not expect to find in a Russian, French, or German realistic film that broad humanitarian sympathy combined with gentle cynicism which Italians alone bear as their trademark. It is an old Italian recipe for living, buried under the garbage of Fascism for a quarter century but never really lost; the war, which scraped over the country like a rake, served to turn it up again. In a world still spinning from the blows of war there are few formulae more practical for day-to-day living, or for making films that a confused humanity will recognize as true.

But precisely because it lacks absoluteness artistically, such an approach can easily result in diffuseness. It is true that, with this formula of general pity for suffering humanity without any special solution for its problems, Luigi Zampa made the beautiful and touching *Vivere in pace* (*To Live in Peace*). But Roberto Rossellini, after his pioneering successes with *Paisà* (*Paisan*) and *Roma città aperta* (*Open City*), forgot to add the salt of cynicism to the soup of sympathy when he came to make *Germania anno zero* and served up a tasteless dish. Yet now, by a more intelligent application and development of this same national recipe, the Neapolitan stage and screen actor-director, Vittorio De Sica, already world famous for his film about the precocious children of Rome, *Sciuscià* (*Shoe-Shine*), has succeeded, in *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves*), in making what is generally recognized as the best film since the war.

This new Italian Renaissance has one thing in common with that of the sixteenth century which serves to set it off from the respective "realisms" of the French, the Russians, or the Germans: its stress on the role of the individual. The poor Italian lives as miserably as the poor of other countries, but his protest takes more individualistic forms. Rossellini's priest, Zampa's peasant and his civil servant, De Sica's proletarian, and Visconti's fisherman all go down fighting: but only the first, a public figure by nature of his calling, has allies, and even he follows his individual conscience and training rather than a group loyalty in sacrificing himself. Indeed, the two most political of these new films, Zampa's *Anni difficili* and Visconti's *La terra trema,* both present this private form of rebellion as the central weakness of the Italian social consciousness.

Ladri di biciclette is the story of a workman's search for his stolen bicycle without which he cannot make a living for himself and his family. To him it is a personal wrong he has suffered: to us, as we follow him through the streets of Rome, it gradually becomes apparent that he is the victim of a social system which forces

his fellows—and will eventually force him—to rob Peter to pay Paul. The story (very freely adapted by Cesare Zavattini from a novel of Luigi Bartolini) is told in such completely cinematographic terms that there has been a tendency to underestimate the plot, even to insist that there is no plot. How erroneous this is may be gleaned from a summary of the story:

After long waiting, an unemployed workman is offered a job as a billboard plasterer, for which he must have a bicycle. To get his bicycle out of hock his wife pawns their bed sheets. She stops to leave an offering with a holy woman who predicted the job, much to the husband's contempt. He rides triumphantly to work, next morning (to stirring music), through the workers' suburbs of Rome, with his sixish-year-old son on the handlebars. He leaves his son at the filling station where the child works. While he is clumsily plastering a billboard, his bicycle is snatched by a feckless youth. The chase in heavy traffic is vain. He reports the theft to a detective at police headquarters who gets angry at his insistence that something be done about it. The detective tells him thousands of bicycles are stolen every day, and rushes off to help quell a political riot. Sad, slow return home with his son in an overcrowded trolley car. Afraid to face his wife. He goes to a Communist party meeting, but when he tries to interrupt the orator to enlist the aid of the comrades, he is hushed out of the room. He gets a promise of help from a garbage-collector friend. Together with his son and two garbage collectors on duty, he starts the rounds of secondhand bicycle stands early in the morning. Everyone in Italy has a bicycle, and thousands are on sale in the streets. He challenges one dealer and calls a policeman, but his suspicion proves false. Near the city gates he spots the thief riding his bicycle, but the man stops only long enough to talk with an old beggar and then escapes again. Father and son pursue the beggar into a charity institution, where he refuses to talk. They follow him into a church where a service is being held at which the poor may give thanks for free haircuts and soup, and create a scandal by insisting on his telling them in midst of Mass where to find the thief. The beggar flees and escapes. They go to the wife's holy woman, who predicts that they will find the bicycle "soon or never." Outside, the father loses patience with his son and slaps him. The kid stages a sitdown. Father goes ahead, but comes running when someone falls into the

Tiber. It isn't the kid, but they become reconciled and celebrate by going to a fairly expensive restaurant, where they are shoved into a corner. They spot the thief on foot and the father chases him into a bordello. Confusion among the ladies. The thief gets out to his own neighborhood near by, where the father is threatened by the thief's friends; he is saved by the kid's calling a cop. The thief has an epileptic fit. Police examination of the thief's miserable room reveals some stolen goods but no bicycle. The policeman explains the hopelessness of the case to the father, who decides not to swear out a warrant and is driven out of the neighborhood by the thief's friends. The father decides to steal a bicycle himself near the stadium while a big football match is going on. He dismisses the kid, who hangs around nevertheless. The father is nabbed in the act and beaten up, but he is saved from arrest by the appeal of the kid. Left alone, the father cries with shame, but his son takes his hand and leads him away, and they disappear in the twilight in the crowd pouring out of the stadium.

What do they mean, "No plot"? Perhaps they are fooled by the perfect synthesis of plot and movement. One sequence flows into another so smoothly, and the action within each scene is kept so natural, that you find it hard to believe the story was ever written down on paper at all; it seems to live and grow under your eyes. There isn't a false note in the whole film. Everything that happens is fresh, yet at the same time seems inevitable once it is over. De Sica's genius is the opposite of Orson Welles'. In Welles' better work you see the hand of the master like an artist's signature on every scene. In De Sica's you are conscious only of a tremendous vitality seething in the actors, seeping out of the very stone buildings, made eloquent by the camera, bursting the limits of the screen itself, but always as if it were an expression of nature, not of the ego of a director, however brilliant.

For his hero De Sica cast a worker from the Breda arms factory, Lamberto Maggiorani, who had never acted before. Now the current mania among Italian directors to use amateurs is not a good thing in itself, but it is a good test of what a director can do without being shackled to the star system with its corollary of being

limited to a certain side of somebody's face when shooting. Take Enzo Staiola, the son in *Ladri,* for example. He is a sturdy little fellow with an outsize nose and big expressive eyes, who can make you run the gamut from laughter to tears in the course of a few minutes the way Chaplin does. De Sica is not solely responsible for this, of course; Italy as a whole should get some of the credit for producing such eloquent types, even among its children. But De Sica has a gift for finding this kind of talent and developing it in a fitting atmosphere.

After his skillful handling of people, De Sica is perhaps most creative in his use of the camera (in the hands of the veteran Carlo Montuori). Sometimes it seems that all he wants to achieve is an almost amateurish clarity, as the camera roams searchingly around workers' apartments or sets the shabby father and son off mercilessly against the majestic buildings which are all that remains of the grandeur that was Rome. But at other times, by a daring use of natural twilight or an out-of-focus lens, De Sica achieves marvelous effects, such as the dawning of consciousness in a whole city or the mixing of humanity in a common cauldron, which occasionally recall the great silent films.

Ladri is not a film without precedents. The chase in the interests of social justice goes back to Griffith's *Intolerance.* But whereas in Griffith one can sometimes admire the technique without necessarily approving the social content (the dashing Kluxers in *The Birth of a Nation,* for example), in De Sica the two are so completely fused that a critical separation is impossible. His genius lies in an almost flawless directorial technique coupled with a moral sense which he knows how to embed unobtrusively in the texture of his story—a morality that *is* the texture of his story. It is a synthesis to which many artists have aspired, but at which few have arrived between Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Picasso's *Guernica.* And it has found its highest expression in our times not in a revolutionary work, but in this humanistic one, a movie about a workman whose bicycle was stolen.

Accorded world-wide critical acclaim, De Sica has also been accused of iconoclasm toward the law, the Church, politics, and practically every other institution touched by his hero in his Odyssey. De Sica seems to be saying that the various panaceas on which the poor pin their hopes are illusory—that in a crisis a man must help himself. This is the inevitable conclusion of the philosophy of individualism in a cruel world, which characterizes the modern Italian cinema school.

The Avant-garde Film Seen from Within

HANS RICHTER

HANS RICHTER, painter and film producer, directs the Institute of Film Techniques of the City College of New York. In 1921, as a painter chiefly interested in the musical interrelationship of forms, he produced the first abstract film, *Rhythm 21*. In addition to his subsequent experimental films, he has produced documentaries and features in Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, and the United States. His most recent film, the color feature *Dreams That Money Can Buy* (1947), is to be followed by "Minotaur, the Story of the Labyrinth," now in preparation.

TWENTY YEARS ago most documentary films, like those made by Ivens, Vigo, Vertoff, and Grierson, were shown as avant-garde films on avant-garde programs. Today the documentary film is a respected, well-defined category in the film industry alongside the fictional entertainment film.

It is time, I think, to introduce the experimental film as a third, legitimate if nonrespected, category, quite distinct from the other two. It has its own philosophy, its own audience, and, I feel, its necessary place in our twentieth-century society. These claims may be more difficult to prove than similar ones for the documentary or the fictional film, but even a partial failure would be a partial success in view of the current confusion about what the experimental film is and what its goals are.

It does not matter what name one chooses to give a thing so long as all agree on its meaning, but it seems that the new name for avant-garde[1]—experimental—signifies an attempt to make this movement "behave," to make it more "responsible," to give it a more "down-to-earth" reason for being. The freedom of the artist? Yes, but within limits! Experiments? Yes, but for a practical purpose!

What purpose? To invent new techniques, forms, gadgets,

[1] The term avant-garde was applied in the 'twenties to the work of independent film artists interested in film as a visual art.

tricks, and methods that might become useful in furthering the film industry. What else *could* be the justification of an experimental film?

There are, however, considerations that make the wisdom of this too facile rationalization questionable. Certainly there are, among other things, techniques, forms, gadgets, tricks, and methods that have been found or developed by the avant-garde. But these concomitants are no more the essence of the avant-garde than the complex chemical processes in the growth of a plant are the essence of a flower. It is a misunderstanding to think that the technical means that the avant-garde used in order to grow reveal its meaning. It is rather the uninhibited use of creative energies, inherent in every human being, that gives the avant-garde meaning and justification: the freedom of the artist—an obvious contradiction to the necessities of the film industry with its social, financial, and other responsibilities.

The fact that Bonwit-Teller uses Dali's style or even Dali himself, and that Macy's uses Modrianesque, Arpesque, or Picassoid patterns in their show windows proves nothing, neither for nor against Bonwit-Teller or Macy's, nor for or against Dali, Modrian, Arp, or Picasso. The relationship between Macy's and Picasso is slightly more than accidental. It is, moreover, in my opinion, exactly the relationship between the film industry and the avant-garde. I cannot see, for instance, that anything was proved when Dali was invited to make a sequence in surrealist fashion for *Spellbound* except the considerable public-relations talent of the producer. The film industry fulfills an important social function by satisfying the desires of human beings who are unsatisfied in life, by offering significant if childish dreams. The avant-garde expresses the visions, the dreams, the playfulness, or the whims (it all depends on how you look at it) of the artist.

No eternal standards or rules for measuring the usefulness of art and the artist can ever be found. Respect for them, however, undoubtedly goes back to the time of the cavemen, when one of

them decided to decorate the cave of his tribe. Since that time, art and the artist have been regarded with a certain awe in every society. Picasso, Modrian, and Dali still profit from the reputation of that first whimsical caveman. They still draw upon his credit (to the horror of some members of the "tribes" of today who wish that the original caveman were back).

No one would try to judge art from the point of view of window dressing alone. One would still allow for the original "magic," one would still concede to the artist the right to rule freely in the realm of his vision. Why not reserve this right for the experimental film as well? To measure it with any other, more practical, standard of values is just as sensible as it is to measure the beauty of a woman with a tape measure.

The origin and development of avant-garde films make a special point of the freedom of the artist (and may suggest, also, why there are no swimming pools in it for their makers).

1. *Orchestration of motion,* the dynamic joy of movement, fascinated and inspired the futurist painters; in 1912, Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase," Picabia's "Boxing." They discovered "dynamism" and "simultaneity." But movement on a canvas remains, by the nature of the canvas, more or less analytical. Viking Eggeling's scrolls, and my own (1919), contained step-by-step transformations of abstract forms which embodied a substantial continuity. They implied real movement. This implication was so forceful that it thrust us toward using film instead of canvas (1921: *Diagonal Symphony* and *Rhythm 21*).

The fascination with abstract movement has been sustained over a period of nearly thirty years: Ruttman, Duchamp, Fischinger, Brugière, Len Lye, MacLaren, Grant, Crosswell, the Whitney brothers. Nowhere, except in some hundred feet of Disney's *Fantasia,* and earlier in some fifty feet of Lang's *The Niebelungen* (1929), has it found a place in the productions of the film industry.

2. "To create the rhythm of common objects in space and time, to present them in their *plastic beauty,* seems to me worth while"

(Fernand Léger). Not the "plastic beauty" of Greta or Marlene but of details of ordinary kitchenware (Léger), a dancing collar (Man Ray), the nondimensional reflections of a crystal (Chomette-Beaumont). Delluc called it, in 1912, "photogenic" beauty. It penetrated the arts, literature, music, dance, but evaporated before the practical eyes of the film industry. As a technical achievement it was just not tangible enough; as a philosophy or an aesthetic of modern art it was too far removed from the patent-leather dream world which it should have served.

3. Another contribution that the avant-garde film offered was "distortion" or "dissection" of a movement or a form. The desire of the early cubists to dissect the object and to rebuild it in terms of painting instead of nature, was reflected on the screen (which is also a canvas). Did the artists who distorted and dissected familiar objects wish to give a kind of distance to our conventional perception of these objects and thus a new aspect to our surroundings in general? Man Ray shot through mottled glass; Cavalcanti printed through monk's cloth, Chomette-Beaumont used multiple exposure; Germaine Dulac used distorting lenses; I turned the camera sideways.

None of these poetic "denaturalizations" was copyrighted; nevertheless they were left untouched by the industry. Of course, in a regular feature they would have disturbed the "expectations" to which the industry has conditioned the general audience everywhere in the world. To develop these "expectations" the industry has spent hundreds of millions until they have become major sociological factors, giving the audience the easiest way to self-identification. And that's why people go to the movies: to forget themselves; don't they?

4. There is finally surrealism, a descendant of the more revolutionary dadaism, loaded with an appeal that reaches even practical minds: sex, as seen by Freud, and the subconscious. Its intention is not to "explain" subconscious phenomena but to project them in the virgin state of the original dream. It seeks to re-create the

subconscious, using the original material of the subconscious and its own methods.

Man Ray's *Emak Bakia* (1926), my *Film Study* (1926), Germaine Dulac's *Seashell and Clergyman* (1928: forerunner of Maya Deren's films)—they all used the associative method to express the experience of dreams and subconscious happenings. Luis Bunuel found a new synthesis in *An Andalusian Dog* (1929), a violently emotional, strongly Freudian film, surpassed in violence only by his last surrealist feature film, *The Golden Age* (1930); Jean Cocteau's milder *Blood of a Poet* (1929) accepted as subject matter, in addition to sex, other experiences, for instance, the lifetime shock to a sensitive boy of being hit in the eye by an icy snowball; the "Narcissus" sequence in *Dreams That Money Can Buy* (1947) follows Jung rather than Freud when Narcissus falls suddenly out of love with Narcissus and has to face his true self.

It is a mistake to feel that these new filmic studies in the realm of the subconscious should have been welcome gifts to an industry that, for sociological and other reasons, cannot afford to take more than an occasional step away from love and sex. True, Hedy Lamarr and Ingrid Bergman were made up as psychoanalysts; in *Lost Week-End* and *The Snake-Pit* psychological themes were treated more sincerely, but without breaking away in the least from conventional storytelling, in which all respect goes to the rational, to logic and chronology, and none to the irrational. In the industry's "psychological" films the irrational is treated, at least by implication, as a kind of mental measles that healthy people, unlike drunkards and the insane, don't have. The unpredictable and irrational qualities of the surrealist films, of the experimental film as a whole, were unadaptable and unsuitable to the film industry. From the point of view of the industry the experimental film is a failure.

Social significance and the experimental film.—If the avant-garde film has not influenced the industry, if it is not really an "experimental laboratory," what can be its practical value? It is

difficult to answer—because there is no right answer to a wrong question.

The greatest creative power of an individual has not always been found to have practical value for society as a whole, at least in the judgment of his contemporaries. Should we rule out creative expressions that cannot be traced for their collective worth? Potentates and dictators have periodically forbidden "modern art." But art, modern or otherwise, survives against all "rational" resistance.

Nobody really knows enough about the ways and channels through which new or even old experiences are integrated into our general behavior. There is more than an even chance that we learn as much through unchanneled and unexpected observations and experiences as through college curricula or, to talk in terms of the motion picture, through standard, obvious, and rationalistic storytelling. Also, nobody knows what will become valuable tomorrow. It is more than conceivable that in suppressing the "un-understandable" experiences of today we might rob ourselves of new experiences *altogether*. Who will predict, for instance, what the discovery of the atom or of the subconscious, to mention only two that are already in the public's mind, will mean in terms of emotional experiences? Would it not be wise to tolerate and even respect "experiment" in films, as an acknowledgment of our fallibility?

It might be not only wiser, but unavoidable. The "experimental" is part of life and no new generation goes along with the reasonable and useful alone. It seeks the unexplained, which cannot be "produced" but has to be "found," "created" by one or another individual. In any society in which the individual is respected, the counterplay of society and the individual and the tensions between them should be considered a healthy sign—even on the screen.

The answer to the question, What is the function of the avant-garde film? must, in my opinion, be: the same as the function of

all arts—to integrate new experiences emotionally, or to express visions which life has withheld from us, or however the analyst of the social function of art chooses to define it.

Experimental and industrial film production are not different steps toward the same goal. They are different processes to reach different goals. Whatever they do in the way of influencing each other is accidental. This, at least, is my personal opinion, hardened by the experience of twenty-eight years with the experimental film.

On occasion, film production becomes destandardized, decentralized, deindustralized; single groups may make single films loaded with the enthusiasm and the experiences of their makers. If one of these makers has the magic of an artist, a rather wide integration of experiments (individual experiences) into film production may take place, as it did, for instance, in Cavalcanti's *Night Mail*. There are also the rare seconds in film history: at the beginning of great psychological or sociological crises, for example, the Russian film directly after the Russian Revolution and the Italian film now after the liberation from a tyrant. (Thus, a *Potemkin* and *Paisan* were created.) At such times, the desires and ideas of the individual may become practically identical with those of society; all the free creative energies will then flow together with the aims of the collective. But except at such rare occasions the needs of the individual and of society are just as much identical as they are different, whatever else we might wish for the sake of mankind.

As to experimental film, I think that the more sharply the contradictory features are designed and the less assimilation of them, the better. For the film industry it will mean a healthy thorn in the flesh; for the experimental film maker it will mean diving into himself instead of working for a tile pool to dive into; for the audience it will mean a chance to choose between remaining in delightful indolence or switching over to active, intelligent collaboration; and the critic might learn not to try so hard to find potatoes where flowers are offered.

In the end we may discover that the independent growth of an experimental film will be not only useful but essential to society, a healthy rebellion against a too complete domestication. I should not worry about *who* gets *what* out of experimental film, as long as it is made with love and conviction. Life will take care of that.

Personal Chronicle: The Making of an Experimental Film

CURTIS HARRINGTON

CURTIS HARRINGTON, young film maker, contributed "The Dangerous Compromise" to Vol. III, No. 4, of the *Hollywood Quarterly*.

"An art in which youth is barred from practicing freely is sentenced to death in advance. The moving picture camera should be like a fountain pen, which anyone may use to translate his soul onto paper. The 16-mm. film presents the only solution, and in this I think America should take the initiative.... It offers an opportunity of trying for miracles."—JEAN COCTEAU, "Focus on Miracles," *New York Times Magazine,* October 24, 1948.

MY NEW FILM, *Picnic,* which at this writing is completed except for the sound score, is the fifth film I have made in approximately seven years. The films that go before it include a version of Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1942), *Crescendo* (1943), *Renascence* (1945), and *Fragment of Seeking* (1946). The first three were photographed on 8-mm. film, and *Renascence* was in color. Seen today in chronological sequence, they illustrate a kind of cinematic development that could take place only outside of regular commercial production and distribution.

At the beginning, my attempt was simply to film a dramatic, literary subject in an effective "cinematic" way. Stimulated by Paul Rotha's exciting critical history of the silent cinema, *The Film till Now,* I sought to emulate the extension of the creative means of the cinema exemplified by the films he wrote about most favorably. Instead of going to a primary source, such as the Hollywood film, which seldom stirred my imagination in the direction I had elected to follow, I gathered inspiration from Rotha's account of the most remarkable efforts in the motion pictures of the past. I set out to investigate the possibilities of the medium on my

own, influenced only by the suggestion of the critical essay. After *The Fall of the House of Usher* I deserted the literary subject altogether, as the later films indicate.

In retrospect it appears most significant that I was especially impressed by Rotha's comment on *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari:* ". . . [it showed that] a film, instead of being realistic, might be a possible reality, both imaginative and creative . . . and the mind of the audience might be brought into play psychologically." Practically without exception, film historians and critics, having noted the great historical importance of *Caligari,* point out that it turned out to be a dead end, an admittedly interesting but wholly isolated work leading nowhere. Only now, exactly thirty years after its production, is the lesson of *Caligari* being applied: most of the motion pictures of the experimental film movement since World War II are concerned precisely with the construction of the imaginative filmic reality—a direct extension of the creative principle of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.*

The postwar experimental film movement, now gradually gaining momentum and strength, results partly from the fact that a generation has grown up to whom the motion picture is as natural a creative medium as the other, older, more well-established arts: this serves to provide the cinema, for the first time in its short history, with a group of creators unprejudiced by theatrical conventions and other distorting preconceptions of film. The growing movement also results from the fact that these young artists at last have accessible to them the means of realizing individual, independent films: the inexpensive 16-mm. equipment that was brought to a point of perfection and became fully accepted only during the recent war. It is possible now to produce the creative film and even make a small profit from its distribution through art galleries, universities, museums, and private homes; that an unexpectedly wide audience for these films exists has already been proved. Until distribution has become more stabilized, however, the individually realized film must continue to be made with an

absolute minimum of means. For me the necessary restriction of means has served as a kind of challenge to my ingenuity and powers of invention. As Josef von Sternberg recently stated, "Films can be made cheaply. . . . the idea is to 'trick the eye.' . . . Expensive details aren't any more necessary in film than details are in painting."

Picnic, which I produced in the summer of 1948, may serve as a good example of how an experimental film may be made on the most slender of personal budgets—and at the same time with a minimum of compromise.

The first and undoubtedly the most important single step in realizing a creative film is the preparation of a detailed shooting script. This requires the film maker to have the whole film, *cut by cut,* firmly set in his mind and on paper immediately before the shooting and long before the cutting. The internal rhythms of the film must be fully planned in writing the script, so that the completed work will not suffer from unanticipated, misplaced emphases or unbalanced tempo. Because the budget will not allow enough footage for taking cover shots of important action in close, medium, and long shots—common practice in making a commercial film, in order to protect the director,—the experimental film maker must be certain of his conception: he must see his film in detail on the screen as it will finally appear, even before he has written down the exact sequence of shots on paper.

Another primary consideration in writing the shooting script must be the settings that will be used in the film. The script must anticipate camera angles in relation to the settings that will be used. The locations for the film must, for obvious practical reasons, be chosen before the script is written, usually concurrently with the conception of the film.

The shooting scripts, even much of the inspiration for the content of both *Fragment of Seeking* and *Picnic,* grew out of photographically interesting settings with which I was familiar and to which I had easy access.

For the same reasons that every young creative writer is cautioned to write about those people and locations with which he is most familiar, I suggest that the most effective experimental film results when the film maker uses settings that he knows well. It is not necessary for him to reconstruct the city of Babylon; he can find in the settings of reality about him—his own or his neighbor's house, a garden, the ruins in a vacant lot, the desert or the mountains—the most evocative of settings, real backgrounds which will lend their aura of actuality to the imaginative event that he causes to take place in front of them. Such use of a real setting instead of one artifically constructed is necessary not only because these locations may be photographed free of charge, but, which is more important, because this essentially "documentary" approach serves to give to the execution of an imaginative conception a validity which it is quite impossible to obtain in any other art form: an immediate juxtaposition of reality and imagination, each lending strength to the other.

In *Picnic* I used only five basic settings: an isolated, rocky strip of beach slightly north of Malibu; a wooded area with the ruins of an exploded (faulty gas main) house near by; a small room with only one window; a long, skyward-leading outdoor cement staircase, and the living room of an acquaintance's house. While on a Christmas trip to the Imperial Valley, I also photographed the protagonist of the film walking through desert wastes and a landscape of burnt trees; this material was then used for a visual time-space bridge in his journey from the beach to the ruins in the forest.

In content, *Picnic* begins as a genre film comedy of American middle-class life and ends as a minor tragedy in the same milieu. But in between the opening and closing sequences, with their filmically objective reality, lies the subjective adventure of the protagonist, who is caught up in a false love. His quest after the object of his love is necessarily doomed because of the influences surrounding her, reinforced by her own true nature. His love is

false and empty because it is being expended on an idealized dream image rather than a reality. Recurrent images throughout the film serve to emphasize the forces of actuality, forces that also appear significantly in the subjective, entirely personal adventure. The imagery of the film is self-contained. All meanings, suggestions, symbols, and ideas are immediately present, if not always immediately perceivable (the layers of meaning must be reached, perhaps, through repeated viewings of the film, in the way that many books must be reread, or music reheard). No special outside frame of reference is required in order to understand it. Of course, already established associations with the predominantly bourgeois pastime of the picnic will serve to heighten certain aspects of the film in the minds of many spectators; this is, to a certain extent, expected and hoped for by the film maker. However, the fact that the film is directly inspired by certain forces in the American culture pattern—and therefore has a more immediate significance to Americans aware of that culture pattern and its implications—does not, in my opinion, obviate the basic, universal validity of the images. With this and many of the other films of the postwar experimental film movement we may once again regard the cinema as a truly international language.

Once the conception of the sequence of images that would constitute the finished film was complete and on paper, and, consequently, the settings and actors chosen, the first day's shooting was merely a matter of plunging in. The young man who had accepted the role of the protagonist (not quite realizing how arduous the task was that lay ahead of him) drove the girl who had agreed to play opposite him, my assistant, and myself to the beach location, and in a state of inevitable confusion we took the first shots, scenes that would appear somewhere in the middle of the completed picture. The film was processed on the following day, and when I looked at the footage I knew that I had successfully begun the actual production of a new film: both the photography and the performances were better than we had dared hope.

With this first assurance behind me, I could move ahead with more confidence; the initial plunge had not been as cold as I had braced myself for, and the sudden warmth gave me the courage to go on to attempt the realization of the more difficult scenes, scheduled to be taken in the following weeks of the all-too-short summer vacation period.

The picnic sequence itself, which we photographed next, presented the most difficulties. On a week-day afternoon, in order to avoid the possibility of a crowded beach, I had to assemble four actors, two assistants, an automobile (none of the people directly involved in the film owned a car), and a picnic lunch. I had to coördinate such details as the correct costuming of the principals. It was difficult to find two middle-aged persons (to play the parents of the protagonist and his sister) with an indulgent enough spirit to consent to spend one whole day at the seashore—especially when that day turned out to be cold and windy and, as we discovered at the last minute, the car we were to ride in had no top. However, we managed to reach the location, and I proceeded with a minimum of complications to film the rather long sequence of the picnickers' perilous descent to the beach. The first part of the afternoon was not without its hazards, however, the wind whipping sand into the picnic lunch and, more dangerously, into a relatively fragile European camera.

After we had finished shooting the picnic scene, I set out with some determination to film a scene of the protagonist falling from a rock into the sea. The shooting was delayed interminably. Falling from a rock into the sea did not, somehow, look as dangerous to me, with my legs sunk securely into dry sand, as it did to the young man who was called upon to do the falling. He saw the danger keenly. After about an hour of watching the tide and making certain that there were no jagged rocks hidden under the surf, the young man fell gracefully into the water. We really hadn't been able to see a thing beneath the foaming water, but I had felt a sort of spiritual certainty that all would be well. A breathless

moment, and then his head bobbed above the surface, and he waved to us. The image had been successfully recorded.

Very late in the afternoon we walked some distance down the now entirely empty beach hunting for four men to play the discoverers of the drowned body. We came across one lonely person who told us that if we continued walking we would come to a beach party of Negroes who might volunteer their services. I rejected the idea then because the sun was sinking much too rapidly below the horizon and the shooting location was already far behind us. Later I rather wished that I had at least sought out members of the party: the pictorial stylization of four anonymous dark figures carrying on their shoulders the body of the "hero" would have contributed to the late afternoon aura of melancholy, emptiness, and death. Instead, I hurriedly placed the camera, and I, with my two assistants, carried the body while the girl operated the camera. To appear thus briefly in my film was not a gesture of vanity on my part, or of superstition (shades of Hitchcock!), but a necessary improvisation, the kind of last-minute substitution that often becomes necessary when one is confronted with limited shooting time. And yet one must not regard the necessity of changing the preconceived plan very suddenly as a wholly unfortunate factor in the production of the personal experimental film; it should be looked upon, rather, as one aspect of the reciprocal play between the film maker and his material. The artist, exerting a formalizing force upon the reality that confronts him, must seize upon the vagaries of that reality, even those that may seem distant from the original dream, and readjust them into the context of the whole. This cannot, of course, always be done with complete success, but the challenge must nevertheless be faced with a certain courage.

The next days were given over to shooting the poetic sequence staged in the ruins in the forest, the suspended, melancholy scene in the tiny room, and the delirium of the climb to the top of the perilously steep staircase. Each day's shooting presented its own

peculiar problems, and each of them was in some way circumnavigated. The ruins in the forest were on a forbidden piece of property, and when the liquid smoke which gives, ideally, the aura of low-lying mists got out of control and rose in great clouds as if the forest were on fire, we were asked to leave. We returned later, however, and surreptitiously finished what we had begun. Again, the protagonist had to cry in the little room, but he could not concentrate. First we sprayed grapefruit juice into his eyes—but the effect was artificial; finally, a Spanish onion produced tears of true mourning. The scene on the staircase proved grueling, the most difficult that the protagonist had yet enacted. He bruised his legs in his agonized attempt to reach the object of his quest, and the perspiration pouring from his forehead into his eyes seemed to result from the anguish of the immobilized dreamer.

On the last afternoon we photographed the final sequence of the film: a scene within the semidarkness of a tasteless home filled with unnecessary bric-a-brac. Into this already overcrowded atmosphere we introduced, so as to make up a kind of cinematic tableau, a coffin in which the protagonist lay, the parents sitting beside it in mourning and the daughter finally revealed in the context of actuality. The room, filled with leftover flowers obtained from several florist's shops, looked curiously correct—the setting for a modern wake.

For almost a week before we photographed the coffin, I had been constructing it out of pasteboard and lining it with satin. The local casket company would not rent me one, but I had paid them a visit nevertheless to see if I could duplicate a coffin in an approximate fashion. As if I were a potential buyer they ushered me into the showroom of coffins, all open, with their elaborate satin insides spilling out over the edges. In this macabre atmosphere I saw how the essentials of a casket could be reproduced quite easily for photographic purposes. The construction of the coffin, even though it was merely a "prop" of cardboard, elicited a marked response from those who happened to see it lying in my

yard. This eminently false suggestion of a symbol of death had immediately assumed its own power; two persons made an elaborate pretense at being afraid even to look at the work I was doing. Since the film maker deals in effect, I could assume from this that I had once more successfully created cinematic reality with the necessary minimum of means.

The production costs for *Picnic,* which runs twenty-five minutes on the screen, were $159.45. During the production of the film I kept a carefully itemized account of all the expenditures:

1,600 feet of Ansco Hypan	$106.08
6 filters, at 45 cents each	2.70
Material for heroine's costume	5.00
Fish net	3.45
Rope	.50
Cheesecloth	1.00
Liquid smoke (2 pints)	5.00
Photofloods	.72
Rental equipment (extra lens and dolly)	9.05
Rental of large electric fan	4.00
Veiling	3.75
Flowers	1.50
Pasteboard for coffin	1.95
Satin lining for coffin lid	3.35
Transportation	5.15
Miscellaneous (including dry ice, make-up, cleaning bill, food for picnic, etc.)	6.25
Grand total	$159.45

I present this chronicle of the production of an experimental film not only as a generally illuminating production account, of which, I feel, there are all too few, but as a note of encouragement: with the knowledge that it *can* be done, that the writing with film of which Cocteau speaks is entirely within the realm of immediate possibility, perhaps more will set out to give their dreams plastic realization.

Documentary in Transition, Part II: The International Scene and the American Documentary

ROBERT AND NANCY KATZ

ROBERT KATZ was Assistant Chief of Production Planning in the International Motion Picture Division of the Department of State in 1946 and 1947, after having served as Deputy Chief of Long Range Operations in the Office of War Information, Overseas Branch, and co-producer of the OWI's United Newsreel. He has contributed to a number of publications, and is at present preparing an anthology entitled "Documentary—The Film of the Future." NANCY KATZ works on industrial and governmental photographic projects. She was a photographer for the Department of the Interior until 1948.

IN PART I of this article we have discussed the erratic development of the American documentary in both the theatrical and the non-theatrical field. The uncertainty of government support since the war, as well as the lack of adequate distributional outlets, has forced the American documentarian to develop a new material basis for peacetime production.

Compared with the American scene, foreign fact films have been given greater opportunities to expand under favorable conditions. Where the documentary was already well established at the end of the war, a period of soul searching and readjustment set in; where it has never had a real chance, we witnessed sudden growth and development.

In many countries, a minimum of material security enables the documentary industry as a whole to grow organically. But more about that later on. It is important, here, to illustrate the wide range of possibilities opened to the documentary by the use of new techniques and challenging subject matter. We shall have to limit ourselves to a few highlights, chosen almost at random from many rewarding foreign films.

It has always been true of the documentary that careful preparation and purposeful planning are essential to a satisfactory end

product. It is equally true that the honest documentarian has to be prepared for sudden changes or even total reversals. Joris Ivens stands out as an independent motion picture reporter whose yardstick is his own conscience. At the end of the war he was put in charge of an ambitious educational film project for the Dutch East Indies. He asked for and was granted full freedom in formulating a visual education program stressing the United Nations theme, Allied achievements in promoting a better postwar world, and the Netherlands' part in it. The advent of the Indonesian independence movement changed the situation so radically that Ivens, in sympathy with the aspirations of the native population, moved to Australia. There he produced *Indonesia Calling,* the story of the ships that did not sail when Indonesian seamen refused to man Dutch munition ships bound to crush the young republic. In this film, as in his earlier *Spanish Earth,* he demonstrated the power of the motion picture in the hands of a partisan who uses his reportorial technique to support and further a cause in which he believes. Even those who ask for encyclopedic detachment and "impartiality" will find it difficult to argue against Ivens' approach. The documentary medium must have room for many categories of film. It can never confine itself to any one approach, nor can it prosper in a vacuum. Pictures such as *Indonesia Calling* are barometers in a war-torn and ever-changing world.

In France the documentary is more actively government-supported than our own, but so far lacks a basic production setup equaling that of Great Britain or Canada. The early French postwar documentary drew heavily on the Resistance Movement for subject matter. *The Liberation of Paris,* containing only authentic footage, and *La Bataille du rail,* which reënacted actual events, are representative of that period. Many other pictures have since been produced, and the French Cinema Statute which discourages double-feature programs has provided new outlets. Among the more recent documentaries Georges Rouquier's *Farrebique* is best known in America. Within the framework of the "four sea-

sons" he tells the true story of a French peasant family. The actors were a whole family who had known Rouquier since his earlier years, and the story is their own with but a few modifications. The dialogue was written according to the temperament of each of the real characters. Rouquier made it a point to keep them at ease between takes, talking about the weather and current farm problems. As a result, the "acting" is superbly simple and convincing, and the picture as a whole is authentic to a rare degree. What distinguishes it from other documentaries with similarly authentic techniques is the combination of traditional camera work with time-lapse photography. Rouquier compressed in screen time those slow natural processes which the human eye cannot follow because of their very slowness. Thus, the growing of a bud in the spring, the unfolding of a flower, the lengthening of evening shadows enveloping a whole valley, become new and exciting elements of the story. Critics who have questioned this device as "artificial" forget that in a film the telescoping of hours or even days into seconds by the means of time-lapse photography is just as legitimate as the development of an entire plot within a few short reels. The technique of time-lapse photography, ordinarily used only for strictly scientific ends, has been introduced here as one of the dramatic elements of a story. The discreet yet effective use that Rouquier made of this new approach confirms the prominent place he has won among modern documentarians.

The success of recent Italian feature films is due in large part to their realism and "documentary" quality. Even before the war ended, important documentaries were being made in Italy. It is notoriously difficult to bring art in general, and paintings in particular, to life on the screen. Many such attempts have resulted merely in pedestrian, travelogue-type films which take the spectator on a guided tour through a museum or provide some similarly static "ersatz." Back in 1938, the German director Curt Oertel and the Swiss cameraman Harry Rengger made an extraordinary picture entitled *Michelangelo*. No actors were employed. Using only

ancient prints, narration, sound, occasional outdoor sequences, and a series of dynamic shots of Michelangelo's work, the film recreated his life story within the framework of the history of Rome and Florence.[1] Several years later, Luciano Emmer[2] used a different device to bring Giotto's murals to life on the motion picture screen. In *Racconto da un affresco,* the story of Christ is cut in sequence, giving dramatic continuity to Giotto's frescoes for the Capella degli Scrovegni in Padua. Accompanied by an effective musical score and occasional short passages from the Bible, the picture is highly dramatic in its rapid succession of pertinent detail, reaching an explosive climax in the gruesome "Slaughter of the Innocents." To say merely that Emmer created a new technique for showing Giotto's work in motion pictures would be to overlook the fact that he also selected the most germane means of presenting it. The frescoes themselves were painted in sequence, almost like a film strip or even a motion picture, and were designed to be contemplated by moving from one panel to another. As his countryman Piero Bargellini pointed out, Emmer reconstructed in the dimension of time the drama that was developed pictorially by Giotto in the dimension of space. Although choppy in places and sometimes overburdened with detail at the expense of the over-all composition of Giotto's panels, *Racconto da un affresco* has opened new possibilities for art documentaries by making use of techniques that stem from the subject matter itself.[3] The recent feature-length picture *Rubens,* made by the Belgians Storck and Haesaert, testifies to the stimulus that art pictures have received from this new approach.

English documentarians have long been pioneers. They have developed new techniques consistently and have, moreover, successfully established that sound relationship between audience

[1] Robert Flaherty is planning to make an American version of this picture by cutting, editing, and adding a new narration in English.

[2] Recently elected Secretary General of the *Congrès International du Film sur l'Art* in Paris. Most of his films were made in collaboration with his wife, Tatinia Granding, and Enrico Gras.

[3] A more detailed analysis is made in our article "Four-Dimensional Art" in the Spring issue of *Furioso.*

and producer which is the only fruitful basis for a large-scale documentary program. Whereas in the United States the documentarian is generally considered the motion picture industry's poor relation (and "long-hair," to boot), many English feature producers started as documentarians, and the documentary medium is held in high esteem. This, by the way, may be one of the reasons why in some English feature movies even phony situations seem real, while in many American pictures even real situations appear phony.

Since the British wartime documentary is relatively well known in the United States, we should like to illustrate here some postwar trends. With the end of the war, which had provided their most dynamic subject matter, the English documentarians went through a period of readjustment. Recent productions show that this was merely a "creative pause." Postwar pictures such as Humphrey Jennings'[4] *Cumberland Story* prove that the English documentary is again hitting its stride. The camera work, executed under the most difficult conditions, is clean and powerful. The sound track is excellent. The picture as a whole has all the suspense of a first-rate feature movie, and is more real. Like the early Russian *Turksib* (1928) and more recent eastern European and French pictures on reconstruction, it was made with a definite purpose in mind. The problem of reopening a long-neglected coal band in the Cumberland region is told by the mine engineer who was actually in charge of the operation. Questions of security, productivity and mechanization, wages and labor-management relations, are faced squarely and without sugar coating. The union leader and the rank and file, selected from among the miners involved in the actual events, act as naturally and earnestly as if they were fighting their battle all over again. Only a director who was not afraid to go right down to the real issues could command such convincing performances from all concerned. *Cumberland Story,* produced for the Ministry of Fuel and Power, is a first-rate ex-

[4] Director of the well-known wartime documentary, *A Diary for Timothy.*

ample of a documentary that tells its story without glossing over problems.

The current British documentary program, evolved during the postwar years and now expanded and directed by John Grierson, will bear careful watching. In the past budget year more than 200 films, varying from one-reelers to pictures of feature length, were produced and distributed on a budget of $4,000,000. As Grierson like to point out, the Central Office of Information, thanks to twenty years of careful planning, is the biggest producer of short films in the world. Today's film subjects, he declared in a recent interview, lack the drama of war and must be handled with a view to including the maximum amount of entertainment compatible with the subject. The goal seems to be information films plus showmanship. Four special series are planned by Grierson: *World in Action,* bringing an international perspective to Britain's various economic problems (the first film in this series, *Inside U. S. Aid,* deals with E.R.P.); *Wonderfact,* illustrating the intensive scientific progress in industry, agriculture, colonial development, and social standards; *Venture,* showing spectacular achievements of individuals; *Britain '49,* and later *Britain '50,* a monthly report on significant national events, in the form of a screen magazine.

Since many of the best Canadian documentaries, such as *The Feeling of Rejection* and the series *Canada Carries On,* have had some American distribution also, it will not be necessary to comment on them at length here. There are two Canadian films of primary importance, however, which have been denied distribution in this country by our Treasury Department (Bureau of Narcotics). These two pictures, *The Drug Addict* and a condensed version called *Payoff in Pain,* were produced by the National Film Board of Canada under the sponsorship of the Department of Health and Welfare with the technical supervision of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In addition to their extensive use throughout Canada, these films have been supported by the Narcotics Division of the United Nations. Our Treasury Department

has asked that these films be withheld in the United States, apparently on the grounds that drug addicts should be treated as criminals and not as sick persons. A letter from the Acting Commissioner of Narcotics, published in the *Saturday Review of Literature,* stated that the banning of the films by the Treasury Department was necessary "because of the lurid manner in which even the best-intentioned vehicle of this type might be exploited. Once the bars were lowered, there would be no basis on which discrimination could be exercised."

A relative newcomer among government-supported documentary producers and sponsors is the United Nations. Anyone who has ever worked for one government will appreciate the difficulties involved in working for fifty-eight nations! Yet the UN Films and Visual Information Division, under the leadership of Jean Benoit-Lévy, has not been content with merely stimulating the production and distribution of new documentaries in many countries. Through its contract production *First Steps* (direction: Leo Seltzer) it also has demonstrated the importance of the cheap, purposeful fact film. This picture, which was produced in the record time of five weeks at the relatively low cost of approximately $10,000, won the 1947 Motion Picture Academy Award for documentary shorts. It was originally produced at the request of India to teach social workers the latest techniques in rehabilitating palsied children and educating them to be useful members of the community. *First Steps* turned out to be so successful that within a short time twelve additional countries asked for different language versions. It is an encouraging example of the effective, and artistically satisfactory, instructional film with a well-defined purpose.

The UN film board, operating under severe budgetary restrictions, has been constructive in many respects. The importance of the program is much greater than its modest scope indicates. It has always been Benoit-Lévy's contention that the documentary can only win its proper place on the screen when it is self-supporting

to a large degree, both theatrically and nontheatrically. As a consequence, the UN film section does not believe in handouts. Its distribution policy is kept flexible by booking its films through national distributors in each country. This policy has paid off. In the summer of 1948, Hans H. Burger's production, *Clearing the Way* (the building of the new UN headquarters in Manhattan), had a sneak preview in New York's Roxy Theater. The showing was so successful that the Roxy booked *Clearing the Way* for six weeks, to run with *Give My Regards to Broadway*. Encouraged by this success, the Roxy later ran the UN film *Maps We Live By* for five weeks. Here is additional proof that the general public is interested in good documentaries, which can be exciting additions to the main feature rather than dull program fillers.

At present, the UN has completed fifteen documentaries, under contract with producers of eleven different countries.[5] The purpose of this program is twofold. By commissioning the films the UN helps materially to produce internationally valid documentaries. By demonstrating their usefulness it hopes to stimulate the creation of new documentary ventures the world over.

Similarly important steps have been initiated by UNESCO in its efforts to eliminate taxes and import duties on educational films. Even if these efforts should be only partly successful, all countries would benefit from the increased international exchange of their best motion pictures.

There are few countries that could not claim to have produced some excellent documentaries. But only where documentarians have established a working relationship between existing needs for film and production has any *steady* progress been made. In the

[5] *The Peoples' Charter* and *Clearing the Way*, UN Film Unit; *Searchlight on the Nations* (freedom of information) and *In the Long Run* (increase of world food supply), United States; *Maps We Live By*, Canada; *That All May Learn* (the fight against illiteracy), Mexico; *The UN in Action* (International Children's Emergency Fund), Poland; *Under One Roof* (the common bond among young people studying engineering), United Kingdom; *Juvenile Delinquency*, Belgium; *The Sea, My Native Land* (merchant seamen's welfare), the Netherlands; *The Eternal Fight* (epidemic control), United States and France; *Lighthouses* (from lighthouse to radar), France; *Green Gold* (conservation and reforestation), Sweden; *Message of Peace* (youth and world understanding), Czechoslovakia; *Defense of Peace* (how the UN works), France.

United States, the hit-or-miss system of production and distribution has resulted in a woefully inadequate setup. Many pictures that are urgently needed are not being produced, and scores of excellent productions are not being used to their full advantage. Since the financial return on documentary is usually modest or nil, documentary has been largely dependent on sponsorship by civic and religious groups, educational institutions, business establishments, or government agencies. Because of its insecurity it has often tended toward noncommittal "neutrality," lacking any definite or challenging point of view. Many so-called good-will pictures have a disconcerting tendency to present the world in the unthinking, good-natured terms of the *Rover Boys*. Documentary producers, torn between the desires to instruct and to entertain, without a specific objective or audience in mind, have often succumbed to muddled thinking.

Documentaries have been dubbed "short subjects" because they are considered rather insignificant fillers in double-feature programs. That is only natural. The usual theatrical "documentary" fare consists of such items as the travelogue in which the narrator, shortly before the fade-out on the dazzling sunset, inevitably remarks that we are now reluctantly bidding farewell to the beautiful land of Oz. There is no reason why poor programming policies should prevail. Increased theatrical distribution of good documentaries, in addition to expanded nontheatrical distribution, is entirely feasible. The public is being told by experts that it *wants* double-feature programs. No one has yet produced conclusive evidence that these experts know the public's mind any more profoundly than their poll-itical colleagues did in the recent presidential election.

The chaotic state of the documentary medium in America is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that there is no comprehensive documentary-film catalogue in existence,[6] and that no one seems

[6] The yearly *Educational Film Guide,* which contains approximately 5,000 selected titles, has become an indispensable source of information on educational 16-mm. films, but covers only one important sector of the documentary field.

to have exact figures on the number of 16-mm. projectors in the United States.[7]

Many organizations promoting the production and distribution of documentaries have done useful spadework. The Film Council of America, the Educational Film Library Association, the New York Museum of Modern Art, many state and local Film Councils, Brandon Films, and last but not least, the audiovisual education departments of many schools have helped tremendously to establish a closer relationship between the public and the documentary producer. Regional projects, such as the Cleveland documentary film project operating on a Carnegie grant, will help materially to establish the fact film as an equal among today's many audiovisual media of information. The University of Southern California, New York University, the College of the City of New York, and the University of California at Los Angeles have instituted film curricula. Some of the government agencies have been allotted funds to resume the production of documentaries. But such useful activities have never been properly coördinated. Even single operations, like our foreign motion picture information program, have suffered from an incredible lack of coördination. In Paris in 1947, one of the authors decided to look up some former colleagues in the U. S. Information Service. Opening door after door, he found the offices empty; budgetary cuts had depleted the office staff. In the film library there were long rows of motion picture cans, neatly labeled and covered with dust. The pictures, into which we of the home office had put so much effort, had ended up in storage at the Paris film library. Very few of them had ever been shown to the French public. This is by no means the worst instance of poor management. The educational motion

[7] The Department of Commerce, without assuming responsibility for the accuracy of its latest figures (as of 1946!), estimates that there are 50,000 to 60,000 16-mm. sound projectors in the United States. The combined total of silent and sound 16-mm. projectors is estimated to be between 300,000 and 400,000, of which 75 per cent are said to belong to church organizations and the rest to schools, clubs, and other organizations. According to the U. S. Office of Education, some 35,000 schools are now equipped to show 16-mm. sound films, as against 485 in 1936.

picture program for occupied countries, such as Germany, is well known to be even more inadequate.

Each country will have to find its own system of documentary production and distribution. We cannot simply copy what others have done, but we can learn many useful lessons.

In countries in which major industries have been nationalized, the entire film industry is operated by the state, and documentary production occupies a prominent position in education and public relations. The reconstruction of devastated territories has been glorified in many powerful Polish, Russian, Yugoslav, and Czechoslovakian propaganda pictures. Scientific pictures (like the Soviet *Story of the Bees,* which won the Grand Prize at Cannes in 1946) and entertainment shorts (such as the many delightful pastel-shade cartoons produced in Czechoslovakia) testify to the variety of techniques that have been developed.

Obviously, the eastern European pattern is not applicable to the United States. The Canadian and English experience, however, has many aspects that prove how efficiently government-supported documentary units can be organized to serve the needs of a nation. In view of the differences between English and American economic policies it will be more advisable to study here the younger but well-established Canadian setup.

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB), formerly under the leadership of John Grierson, has at its peak produced 310 film subjects and processed more than 10,000,000 feet of film, all in one year. Designed to give Canadian communities better understanding of their own problems and how to solve them and to create a better understanding among Canadians by interpreting widely separated communities to each other, the NFB has paid as much attention to distribution problems as to the production of its pictures. In the area of nontheatrical film distribution it has pioneered in developing new methods, which have been studied and adapted by other countries. The annual attendance in rural circuits and at urban library screenings has reached a total of

5,000,000. By booking 30 NFB pictures and many newsreels into 325 theaters with an estimated monthly audience of 2,000,000, the commercial motion picture industry has given the NFB practical support and made its theatrical production program possible. One hundred and fifty-six film libraries and 193 Community Film Councils are founded on the coöperation of local public libraries, provincial departments of education, university extension departments, and a great number of civic and educational organizations. Production costs, owing to careful integration of all activities, were modest. Films commissioned by government departments and other agencies were produced at a cost of $456,650. Films produced in the Board's own program cost $814,114. The total of $1,270,766 represents the production cost of 204 reels of sound film in various languages, comprising 90 complete productions varying in length from one to six reels. The distribution costs amounted to $1,012,646 ($816,786 of which was spent within Canada). The 1947–48 budget brought a cut of $200,000, to which must be added the cut represented by the rising cost of film production. There is no better testimony to the success of the Canadian operation than the fact that in spite of these cuts and reductions in staff the Film Board has been producing an increased number of excellent pictures, and presenting them to more people than ever before.

This article cannot consider all the attempts by foreign countries to foster a self-supporting documentary industry. It is nevertheless worth noting that a conservative country like Holland has introduced a law which has its counterpart in left-wing Czechoslovakia. In both countries it is mandatory for all movie houses to include one educational film in each program. Reliable reports indicate that the Dutch and Czech publics are well satisfied with this arrangement. It gives documentarians a chance to produce and sell educational films on a sound financial basis. The theaters are at liberty to choose from a great number of domestic and foreign films at their disposal. Thus, large-scale competition between

producers, eager to satisfy a critical public, can drive out the dull, pedestrian products and encourage the production of truly interesting and informative documentaries.

There is no easy answer to the many problems facing the American documentary today. It would be foolish to attempt to copy foreign practices which are geared to different economic policies. It would be equally regrettable to disregard the wealth of experience that foreign documentarians have accumulated.

It is safe to say that documentary talent is abundant and that the potential public interest in the medium has never been fully tapped. In order to stimulate the development of informational films, producer, distributor, and audience must be brought together. Since the documentary is still far from self-sustaining, any well-planned governmental documentary program, administered by men with real vision, will be a great stimulus to the industry as a whole. But the most important factor will always be the working relationship between the documentarian and his audience. A central catalogue of the many thousands of documentaries available would be invaluable.[8] A clearinghouse for documentary information is needed. The work of the Film Council of America, which is now doing a fine job of enlightening and assisting the public and producers in making use of educational films, needs support and should be expanded. Ways can and should be found to increase the profitable theatrical distribution of documentaries and to stimulate nontheatrical distribution. The infant television industry may well find the answer to many of these problems if program directors and documentarians can reach a working agreement for "meshing of gears" between the two industries.[9] Thousands of pictures that have never been fully exhibited are hidden away under blankets of dust. They could still be used to great

[8] A plan to assign the preparation of a central catalogue and the releasing of government-produced fact films to the Library of Congress collapsed because of budget cuts, 1947–1948.

[9] A first step in this direction has been made by the recent creation of the National Television Film Council.

advantage. Many more could be produced on a sound business basis. Government-sponsored pictures, which have been restricted for no good reasons, should be made available to the public.[10] The support of specific community film projects with endowments from the existing foundations is highly desirable. The establishment of an independent periodical on the order of the British *Documentary Film News,* devoted exclusively to a searching discussion of documentary films, with no holds barred, would serve producers and the public alike. By exchanging pictures with as many countries as possible, collaborating with the UN Film Board, UNESCO, and similar international organizations, we can explain America to other countries and at the same time benefit by their experiences.

It is no longer enough to produce good documentaries. The best pictures have little effect if they reach only a fraction of their potential audience and if the returns do not enable the producer to continue his work.

Both Grierson and Benoit-Lévy like to quote Kant's remark that "vision without understanding is meaningless; understanding without vision is blindness." It is not surprising that in a world in crisis the documentary should be going through a crisis of its own. It is a magnificent tool for the promotion of understanding and a mature approach to the problems of our time. Our own awareness of its usefulness and the future achievements of our documentarians will have a tangible influence on the solution of many problems confronting us today.

[10] The U. S. Office of Education, through Castle Films, has recently made available for sale a limited number of documentaries produced or sponsored by government agencies (OWI, OIAA, State Department, and others).

The Experimental Cinema Center in Italy

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ALL WHO have had an opportunity to visit the motion picture studios of Rome acknowledge unanimously that the progress made by Italian production in the last few years is quite other than accidental. A film can be based upon the personal success of its creator, even in countries that do not have a vast production, such as Switzerland, Hungary, and Denmark, which provides the outstanding example of Carl Dreyer; but the success of a national cinema depends ultimately upon thorough and patient organization. Eloquent in this regard are the recent efforts of Great Britain.

The Italian films that are now being shown with great success on the screens of the world were created in the face of a spiritual climate and a set of practical difficulties that preclude, at least for the time being, a satisfactory national organization. But if one considers how and where the Italian directors whose names are now known internationally were trained, and if one follows their careers, one realizes that their achievements are due not only to their inner need for expression, but to their preparation, in which the government participated by consistently helping the national cinema.

The Directorate General to which the cinema was entrusted functioned, in the past, to stimulate Italian production by means of these provisions: the creation of the Institute L.U.C.E. for educational films, out of which have come almost all the best documentary film makers of the peninsula, including Rossellini, whose excellent shorts on fishes are remembered; the establishment of Cinema City (Cinecittà) in Rome, along with a large provision for

technical equipment; financial assistance to production through the Film Credit (Credito Cinematografico); and the founding of the Experimental Cinema Center (the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia) for the education of directors, technicians, and actors.

The Center was started in 1935 through the initiative of Luigi Chiarini, who today still devotes his attention to it. The Center had and still has the task of dealing with all problems pertaining to the technique and the art of the film. It has a film library and a specialized library of books on the film, the Italian section for filmology and scientific cinematography. The present Directorate General for Entertainment (part of the Subsecretariat to the President of the Council of Ministers), upon which it depends, refers to it for advice on the film industry.

The present facilities of the Center are the following: two large stages, rented by Universalia Film, which is bound by a special contract to employ graduates of the Center, who can thus enter into production through useful, practical experience; a stage of average size available to the students in producing their test films and film exercises; cutting rooms, projection rooms, classrooms, a dance hall, a gymnasium, laboratories, dressing rooms, restaurants, and offices. The Center trains directors, cutters, cameramen, sound technicians, writers, costumers, actresses, and actors. Students are selected for admission through annual competitive examinations. Although students who are graduates of secondary schools may be admitted to the Acting Division, a university degree is a prerequisite for admission to the other divisions.

The number of students admitted also depends upon the needs of the industry in given fields. In the school year 1948–1949, for example, the search for actors and actresses is given special importance; new cameramen and sound technicians will not be admitted because of the oversupply of technicians in these fields, in accordance with an agreement reached in consultations with the interested motion picture companies.

The Center prepares the students by providing them with all necessary assistance through the technical equipment and other facilities that it has available. Technical lessons are alternated with practical experience in each field—the director directs, the actor performs, the sound technician studies new equipment and even constructs it himself under the guidance of the instructors,—thus maintaining experimental activities consistent with the purposes for which the Center was founded. A student who comes out of the Center has achieved complete professional knowledge, having participated, moreover, in such exercises as permit a judgment of his aptitudes.

Not a few have come out of the Center to contribute effectively to the development of the Italian cinema: De Santis, *Caccia tragica* (*Tragic Hunt*), Zampa, *Vivere in pace* (*To Live in Peace*), Germi, *In nome della legge* (*In the Name of the Law*); the documentarists Pasinetti, Cerchio, Paolucci, Chiari, Antonioni; the actresses Alida Valli, Carla del Poggio, Adriana Benetti, Clara Calamai, Mariella Lotti, Elli Parvo, Jone Salinas, Luisella Beghi, Elene Zareschi; the actors Otello Toso, Andrea Checchi, Vittorio Duse, Massimo Girotti, and a great many others, in addition to an unending series of costumers, screenwriters, sound recordists, cameramen, and lastly, assistant directors among whom even Luchino Visconti found extremely effective collaborators.

The courses in each Division normally last two years and are free. For the most meritorious, scholarships and prizes of work are available. At the end of the courses, as has already been indicated, the students participate in the production of the films made on the stages assigned by the Center to Universalia Film and films made by the Center itself, like *Via delle cinque lune* (*Street of Five Moons*), produced under the direction of Chiarini with the collaboration of students and teachers.

In the cultural field, the Center brought to life in 1937 the review *Bianco e Nero,* which is one of the most frequently quoted of the European film publications. The problems of film are posed

in *Bianco e Nero* with rigorous scientific method. All the best Italian film critics, including those who are associated with the Milanese publishing house Poligono, have acquired experience in the pages of *Bianco e Nero,* where the study of the cinema was and is undertaken in all its aspects: aesthetic and critical, technological and sociological-psychological-pedagogical, that is to say, filmological. The contributors, aside from the critics, include Sadoul, Arnheim, Vincent, Balazs, Auriol, Manvell, Bell, and Lo Duca, among others. Moreover, philosophers such as Benedetto Croce and Ugo Spirito write for *Bianco e Nero.* In connection with the review there is a series of cinematographic studies in which have appeared screenplays by Clair, Feyder, and Dupont, as well as screenplays by Italians and writings of Pudovkin, Eisenstein, Arnoux, Chiarini, Pasinetti, Barbaro, Innamorati, and others. This body of publications constitutes the nucleus of Italian film culture.

The cultural and scholastic activity is closely related to the Center's film library, which collects the most important film works of the past and present. Unfortunately the war seriously damaged the archives, and it is with some difficulty that they are being reconstructed.

In the present phase of reconstruction of Italian cinema, the Center is the governmental agency that has most quickly returned to its work and reacquired stability. Although Cinema City and the Institute L.U.C.E. are finding it difficult to reëstablish themselves after the hard blows suffered during the war, and the Film Credit does not offer the tangible aid that was possible several years ago when its funds were greater, the Center, in the certainty of completing a task useful to national production, continues in its activity of research and training. Ten years ago, when skeptics criticized the Center, there were in its classrooms the young men whose work and genuine artistic quality are respected today throughout the world. The unknown faces that are seen in those same schoolrooms today belong perhaps to the outstanding contributors to the Italian film of the future.

Notes toward an Examination of the Radio Documentary*

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BACK IN the middle 'thirties, Richard Pack and Mitchell Grayson packed clumsy apparatus with which they recorded authentic sounds and interviewed real people along the New York waterfront, in Washington Market, and under Brooklyn Bridge. New York City's municipally owned station, WNYC, allowed the two youngsters to wrap their assorted reports into programs that were broadcast with regularity. I am not sure whether the shows were then called "documentaries," but that's what they were—in a sense.

By the end of the last decade, Gilbert Seldes had written and CBS had broadcast *Americans All—Immigrants All.* Certainly the programs in this series were documentaries. By the end of the decade, too, Philip Cohen had returned from his mission to BBC, reporting on Britain's contribution to the documentary in radio. By that time also, Norman Corwin had found his métier—his best work has always been in the documentary form. In Washington, in 1940, Archibald MacLeish surrounded himself with a group of eager young men (including the same Philip Cohen) working on a Rockefeller Foundation shoestring in an effort to reflect "The American Record" over the radio. One of those young men was Joseph Liss, taken from another documentary job, the University of Chicago's *The Human Adventure.* It was on a Rockefeller Fellowship that Liss wrote one of the greatest docu-

* Network documentary broadcasts are discussed, local broadcasts being mentioned only incidentally.

mentaries we have ever had on the air, *Rebirth in Barrows Inlet.* (Charles Harrell gained stature by working on MacLeish's team; although the bringing of *Child's World* to the ABC network must be credited to Harrell, his principal claim to fame now is that he helped put *Stop the Music* on the air!)

I leaf, thus, through the memory book for one reason: to help distinguish between the new documentary and the old. There were radio documentaries—and some were excellent—before William S. Paley, A. Davidson Taylor, and Edward R. Murrow returned from the war fired with the feeling that the Columbia Broadcasting System must continue to fight. They were the motivators of the new documentary in radio, and their thinking was aggressive. They were going to fight for the Peace. They were going to use radio in America's and the world's uphill climb toward the Brave New World. They set up a documentary unit which was given talented leadership, a budget, and time to do its work, time to carry into effect what Grierson calls the documentary's first principle, the mastery of "material on the spot," time for the dig-in period for coming "into intimacy" with the material. They also gave the unit a definite goal, stated by the man who headed the project, Robert P. Heller, as "to stimulate action by individuals and communities on higher and higher levels of citizenship."

The Pack-Grayson effort on WNYC was reportage, with that minimum of action-inducing underscoring which behooved a municipal operation still watched suspiciously by politicians. There was solid purpose among some of the other early documentarists, and some of it was fulfilled if only indirectly, by setting patterns of programming, developing new and fresher concepts of writing and production, and giving individual artists the opportunity to realize their potentials. But not until the CBS Documentary Unit was organized under Heller did radio attempt systematically to use its medium in a grand design of large resources, great artistic skill, and the purpose of stimulating action.

But what has happened to the radio documentary since that CBS unit was established only three years ago? Of an even half-dozen broad-canvas shows done on three of the networks in the last year, only one seems to this scorekeeper to have met all the qualifications of the good documentary. And this one was not on CBS, but on the ABC network. The program was *V.D., a Conspiracy of Silence,* written by Erik Barnouw and directed by Martin Andrews, under the jurisdiction of ABC's vice-president in charge of public affairs, Robert Saudek.

1) *V.D.* had something important to say.

2) It was done with the help of the United States Public Health Service as part of a broad educational campaign; the factual material was accurate and the sociological direction was clear.

3) The writer was chosen for his competence, not for his bias, and was given the widest latitude artistically. The entire production, from casting to airing, was on a high level of professional competence.

4) It was fair to its basic subject. (No matter what the medium, whether it is painting or film, fairness and honesty must be among the artist's tools; but in broadcasting there is a specific, extremely compelling reason why fairness must be observed: the law of the land happens to demand it. Like the West Pointer, radio *must* be a gentleman—by Act of Congress.)

5) It prescribed a course of action in definite terms.

6) In recognition of the limitations of radio's "one-shot broadcasts," it did not depend for its impact solely upon a single program, but was part of a large, well-organized campaign extending into the entire community.

7) It was broadcast at peak time.

Every one of these criteria, some perhaps with modifications, can be employed in judging the film documentary. But we are concerned here with radio, and we might look at some other documentaries which failed in varying degrees to measure up to the standards met by *V.D.*

Let us take NBC's *Mother Earth,* by Dorothea Lewis, and CBS's *Mind in the Shadow* by Arnold Perl. Each had something important to say, and each said it well, the first about the world food situation, the second about mental health. But both failed, primarily through illustrating what might be called the sporadic school of the radio documentary.

You will note that the program *V.D.* was part of a large campaign being conducted by a government agency against the "conspiracy of silence." Barnouw's show was not only the opening gun of that campaign, it set standards for the campaign itself; never before had the subject of venereal disease been discussed with such candor on a network. Furthermore, the Barnouw piece (as noted in point 6, above) acknowledged that by itself it could accomplish very little. Public action would result not from the broadcast of a "one-shot" radio documentary, no matter how competently executed, but from the wide use of radio and other media of mass communication. The *V.D.* documentary, its artistic integrity granted, had what is much more immediately, directly, and recognizably important to us—absolute meaningful social integration. The basic force behind the documentary, as Grierson has always insisted, must be social. *Mother Earth* and *Mind in the Shadow* did not realize their full social potentialities because they were staged in splendid isolation. They were not part of anything. Somebody at each of the networks said, "This would be a good solid subject for a documentary," and the documentary was done. Although both met most of our other specifications, they failed on this one all-important point.

Another CBS program, *The Hollywood Picture,* had apparently been planned in the beginning with broad social purpose behind it. But it ended in the sporadic category—in addition to having other things the matter with it. Intent listening to that program, followed by careful reading of the script and preceded by familiarity with goings-on behind the scenes, left these impressions: *The Hollywood Picture* was to place the film capital in

focus at the time when the attack against film integrity had become big news through the dismissal of "The Ten"; many months passed before the program was broadcast, and "The Ten" were no longer front-page news; meanwhile, between meddling by some top network executives and muddled notions of propriety on behalf of some Hollywood brass, the script was being dehydrated. In the end, *The Hollywood Picture* became merely radio's self-portrait, an unintentional and therefore incomplete and unsatisfactory figure reflecting broadcasting's own real difficulties and fancied fears.

Two other programs must be mentioned. These, too, like the *V.D.* show, were on the ABC network. One was called *Communism, U. S. Brand;* the other, *Inside Berlin.* They are included among the documentaries only because (*a*) they were ballyhooed as documentaries and (*b*) they did have the outer trappings of the true documentary, in the sense, let us say, that certain newspapers qualify as journalism if you have a manly stomach. Also, they met the radio documentary qualifications 1 and 7 (see list above): they spoke on important subjects and they were put on at peak time.

What is it, then, that *has* happened to the radio documentary? Why does it range from the phony to the ineffective, with only one out of six meeting standards that seem elementary?

There are several reasons, one a major weakness. The reasons—like the results—range from sporadic grab-bag reaching for subject matter to slouchy thinking, which no amount of sheer craftsmanship can use as a foundation for anything approaching social value. But the principal fault is in that grand CBS design upon which all the modern network documentarists have built.

The CBS Documentary Unit was never given a regular time and a definite cycle on the basis of which to build an audience and continuing interest. Even the page boy on the commercial side of the studio knows that no sponsor would schedule a program to be broadcast at one time or another, on one night or another, roughly six times a year. Regularity and continuity were denied

the documentarists. (NBC's weekly *Living: 1949* does have continuity as well as regularity; but it is a 25-minute program that does not pretend to do exhaustive studies of its subject matter; furthermore, the shows on *Living,* while they reflect life, usually make no pretense of offering courses of action and therefore read themselves out of the true documentary classification.)

It is not proposed here that the radio documentary must, for maximum effectiveness, hammer on one subject for thirteen weeks, come what may. A subject should be given whatever length of time it needs, whether it is one hour or twenty-six hours. But the over-all program, as distinct from the immediate subject, must have continuity within itself. *Report Uncensored,* when it was broadcast over WBBM in Chicago under Ben Park, stayed on one subject—whether juvenile delinquency or health or housing—for as many weeks as the topic demanded; then, and only then, did the program tackle another issue. *One World or None,* produced by the above-mentioned Grayson over WMCA a couple of years ago, needed ten broadcasts—and took ten. The same station, WMCA, developed a "major impact" technique with a series on housing when it produced five half-hour programs put on at the same time every night for one week, and then repeated them in reverse order for four weeks longer. The station was after action, and it got what it sought.

Furthermore, for each of the local Chicago and New York programs cited the hour was regular. Listeners knew when the program would be on the air.

Without regularity and continuity—except when a "one-shot" is part of a larger, major campaign, as was ABC's *V.D.*—the radio documentary cannot hope to achieve genuine status. No matter how competently planned and executed, it will most often be just another catch-as-catch-can entry in the broadcaster's "public service" dossier. On the FCC docket that may look pretty. However, it is not the decorative that concerns us here, but the downright practical. Is there a realist in the network house?

Background Music for Radio Drama

BORIS KREMENLIEV

BORIS KREMENLIEV has been active in the field of radio music as a composer, writer of scripts, and producer of musical programs since 1933. During World War II he was attached to the Psychological Warfare Branch of the Army as a specialist in radio music, and until 1946 was musical director of the South German Network operated by the War Department. He is at present on the music faculty of the University of California, Los Angeles.

AMONG RADIO professionals the term "radio music" has come more and more to be applied specifically to background music for radio drama—music that is a by-product of radio itself. Nonprofessionals, however, still tend to think of radio music as symphony programs, opera broadcasts, or the *Hit Parade,* depending on their musical tastes. Composing scores especially for dramatic radio programs is barely ten years old[1] and has not yet fully achieved the status of an art.

Radio in this country is big business, with emphasis on the commercial rather than the artistic. What is popular with the audience is popular with the sponsor: hence, when surveys show that listeners like mysteries and dramatic programs, the sponsor supplies them. At the present writing, approximately one-third of all transcontinental air time is given to dramatic programs, more than one-half of the major ones originating in Hollywood. All these programs depend to a certain degree upon background music for dramatic effect, since sound radio, unlike television and film, must work its magic through hearing alone.

Radio background music, like music in opera, motion pictures, musical comedy, ballet, and television, serves essentially to create atmosphere and heighten emotion. It keeps the story moving by giving it color and by holding the attention of the listener. And it has an added, special function peculiar to the medium because it must attempt, together with the narrator and sound effects, to

[1] In the early days of radio drama, recorded music in the public domain, and mood cues on file in the stations' music libraries, were used.

compensate for the missing visual image. Thus radio music is one of the most exacting technical and creative challenges faced by the contemporary commercial composer.

The fact that the problem of composition is considered last adds to the difficulties of balancing the voice qualities of the cast, the instrumental combinations available, and the type of studio and microphone against the sense (or nonsense) of the script, the musical predilections of the director and sponsor, and the inevitable tyranny of the stopwatch. After he had resolved—or surrendered to—all these warring elements, the composer sits down to write his score. The deadline is usually twenty-four hours from the time the composer receives the script, and from this allowance must be chopped the time required for copying parts. Occasionally the composer has two days in which to work, but whether the time allowed be longer or shorter he must produce from four to eight minutes of background music in much less time than is given to his fellow composer in other entertainment fields.

Roughly speaking, the music used in the presentation of the unseen drama falls into one of four categories: *signature, curtain, bridge,* and *background.* A signature identifies the program and remains the same for all broadcasts in a series. It invariably introduces the program and sometimes closes it too, often serving as a cushion to fill broadcast time in the event that the program should run short. A curtain indicates the end of an act or a scene which the producers think (perhaps justifiably) might otherwise lack finality. A bridge conveys the impression of transition in time or surroundings and is seldom more than ten seconds long. Often a bridge must contain two ideas, commenting on the scene completed and foreshadowing the one to come. Background music *per se* is music that actually backs up speech or action and contributes to the prevailing mood of the scene.

To achieve the desired effects, the radio composer may use an organ alone (*Big Town, Straight Arrow, Grand Central, Dr. Christian*), various small combinations of instruments, or a studio

orchestra with as many as thirty members. An average orchestra numbers fifteen to twenty and is a cross between a chamber orchestra and a dance band. Even at best, radio orchestras are rather thin and need more strings. The accepted practice of using separate microphones for the string section does result in added volume, but it in no way replaces the richness and brilliance of the overtones that more strings would produce.

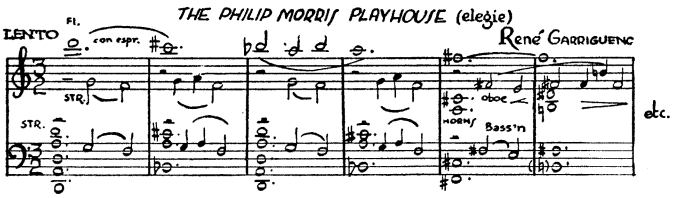
The string section is not used in the same sense as it is in a symphony orchestra, of which it forms the core. In the studio orchestra, where strings are employed either as color or as embellishment, the customary division of the strings is replaced by violins A, B, and C, viola, and cello. The total number varies from four to ten. The string bass belongs to the rhythm section, apparently a hangover from the dance orchestra. Naturally, such a concept has made necessary an entirely new approach to string writing.

Conductors select their woodwind sections with one eye on the instrumentalist's solo virtuosity and another on his ability to double on at least two more instruments in his group. This quick-change policy in radio orchestras makes possible innumerable combinations with only four men in the section and gives the orchestra as a whole a flexible quality that is much sought after. Thus a composer has at his disposal either four saxophones or a woodwind combination that may include flute, oboe, English horn, piccolo, clarinet, bass clarinet, or bassoon.

The brass section is a variation of the trumpet-trombone-horn combination. There may be two trumpets and a trombone or three trumpets and two trombones, for example, with one or two horns. The tuba is sometimes added (*The Fat Man, Ford Theater*).

The percussion section (everybody's favorite) has, and recklessly contributes the services of, timpani, vibra-harp, xylophone, marimba, chimes, drums of all sizes, blocks, triangle, tom-tom, tambourine, cymbals, and so on.

Budgetary considerations constantly limit the size of combinations used, and quite often the small groups produce results less offensive to cultivated taste than the more impressive ensembles. Their effectiveness is attributed to the simplicity with which they are handled—a simplicity that assures melodic and harmonic clarity. Practical experience teaches a composer the advisability of confining his ideas to one or at most two lines when underscoring. In example 1, simplicity and economy of color assure the composer that the cue will be dramatically appropriate and will also *sound* at first reading.



Example 1.

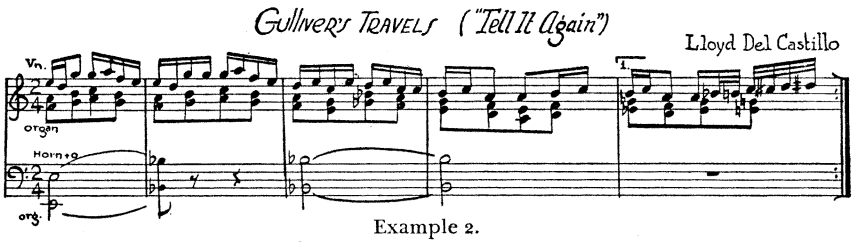
Some unusual blendings have been tried by West Coast radio composers. Basil Adlam, musical director of ABC, who also writes and conducts the music for *Pat Novak for Hire,* has on occasion combined four horns, two harps, and percussion; he backed another show with banjo and tuba; and he has even scored for that old "one-man band" of circus fame, the calliope.[2] For *Stars over Hollywood* Lloyd Del Castillo[3] used organ, harp, and violin. Although Frederick Steiner has a full orchestra for *This Is Your FBI,* he enjoys experimenting with small combinations, and on one occasion used a bass saxophone in the low register, doubled with cello and string bass, to get the illusion of the dull heavy sound of an anvil.

The possibilities of the Hammond organ have scarcely been realized or explored by the radio composer. The instrument has

[2] For the Atwater Kent auditions, Adlam adds to his twenty-piece staff orchestra a second horn, bassoon, and extra strings, increasing the group to thirty.

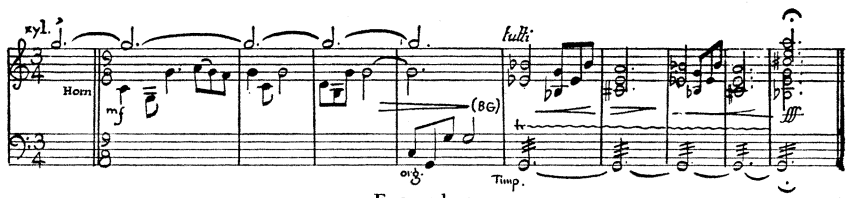
[3] Del Castillo also composes for the *Skippy Theatre,* on which program he uses violin, clarinet (doubling on flute and saxophone), trumpet, piano (doubling on novachord), percussion, and organ.

clean, fast action for staccato passages and an uncanny ability to produce a gradual crescendo from the softest *pianissimo* to a thunderstorm within a few seconds' time, a feat accomplished by means of an innocuous-looking pedal. Its sustaining qualities and its ability to imitate other instruments are well known. Del Castillo, composing for *Tell It Again* (temporarily discontinued in February), used organ, percussion, and a horn. The most critical listener could discern no apparent loss of musical value, whatever his quarrel with the score. Stories dramatized included *Gulliver's Travels, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Peer Gynt,* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* all of which have previously received rather elaborate musical treatment on stage or screen. The level of scoring for the radio productions here was far above average, as example 2, from the opening of *Gulliver's Travels,* indicates. (The script called for a ponderous low theme and a light theme, contrasting the regulation-size man and the little people.)



Example 2.

One manual of the organ imitates strings to support the solo violin while the other supports the horn. Because of their position, the two themes stand out in their natural colors. The middle register acts as a filler, inconspicuously creating the illusion of much larger string and brass sections. Later in the same story, when the *Antelope* sails for the South Seas, music "sneaks and holds behind" the sound effect of a ship under sail:



Example 3.

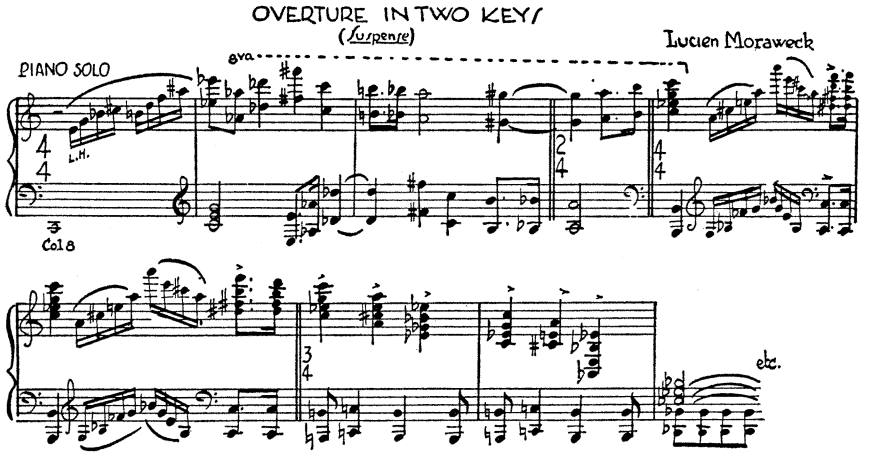
In descriptive music of this type, when a horn is carrying on in the accepted Hollywood tradition, its color predominates and the rest of the orchestra, however busy, remains unnoticed. Realizing this, the composer has written only the music that is noticed. In the *tutti* ending of example 3 the listener is sure that a large orchestra is involved. (It may be pertinent to suggest in connection with this auditory sham that the level of musical background might be improved by shifting some of the music budget into the cost of composing rather than using so much of it on instrumentalists. This is by no means a brief for cutting or limiting the employment of instrumental musicians, but merely a theory, presented with all diffidence, that the best instrumentalists in the world cannot make the music of a fifth-rate composer sound anything but trite and shoddy, no matter how loud.)

Again and again the question of originality in radio scoring comes up. Morris Mamorsky, NBC staff composer, feels that folk songs or standard symphonic literature are legitimate sources for the radio composer.[4] When Cy Feuer was asked to write a score for Ingrid Bergman's radio performance of *Camille,* he modestly decided that the music for that drama had already been written. It was therefore good taste, not inability to write original music, that prompted Feuer to use thematic material from the Preludes to Acts I and III of *La Traviata.* It seems to me that the point, once made, has been labored unduly; the important criterion is that whatever music is used be used appropriately and in good taste. It would be sheer lunacy, for instance, to provide a Mozartean background for such contemporanea as the *Suspense* shows, in which the script treatment is extremely modern. Lucien Moraweck, who supplies the music for this particular chiller, often uses advanced modern devices (see example 4).

As is abundantly true of music for motion pictures, radio music leans chiefly on the idiom of the past, on imitative rather than creative writing. There are indeed few experimental composers in

[4] Gilbert Chase, *Music in Radio Broadcasting,* pp. 56–59.

radio music; in fact, I know only one Hollywood composer who freely indulges in atonal writing, modern techniques, and doublings usually labeled "Oriental" by producer and sponsor alike. (And he is difficult to explain, except on the off chance that the sponsor actually likes modern music.) I don't mean that other commercial composers can't write fresh, new music, that they don't try it, or are unacquainted with the latest trends. They are



Example 4.

in general well-informed, alert musicians, who attend concerts, listen to and buy records, acquire and study modern scores, and keep up to date on musical developments. But this, as has been strongly stated, is *commercial* composing, and these men cannot afford to bite the hands that feed.

Nor is composing for radio, as may be supposed by struggling young composers throughout the nation, a particularly glamorous way of making a living. True, financial remuneration is high for those who reach the top, but the number of radio composers who live chiefly on the proceeds of their craft is startlingly small.[5] Conditions are not likely to attract or to hold the finest musical talent.[6]

[5] The *Musicians' Directory* for January, 1949 (Local 47, AFM), lists 428 composers resident in the Los Angeles area. Fewer than 20 composers handle the major network dramatic shows.

[6] In England and France, on the contrary, radio scores are written by Vaughan Williams, William Walton, Honnegger, and Milhaud, and interpreted by full symphony

The clock never relents, limitations on originality are stringent and irksome, and a radio composer seldom achieves recognition for writing background music.

Before the war, experiments in technical improvement of radio were being widely subsidized. The desire for progress was evident in the outcropping of many sustaining workshop programs, in the engaging of none but first-rate personnel, in the very fact that radio, after two decades, had finally discarded the stock library music cues in favor of original tailor-made scores. When the smoke of battle lifted a little and the much-advertised postwar world was upon us, experiments in sound radio were doomed, jettisoned in favor of radio's much costlier sibling, television. Today the profits of radio go into the development of a wonderful new toy that may make audiobroadcasting obsolete, while radio continues to suffer from its lifelong ailments. Critics who stuff fingers in their ears and bewail the low standards have little to offer but advice, and radio receives scant concrete help or encouragement in conquering its shortcomings.

With respect to radio music, however, the standards self-imposed by the composers, and the specialized training of the more successful men in the field, offer some hope for the future. Of the handful of composers doing mystery and dramatic shows in Hollywood, a fair proportion have had extensive musical preparation. Lucien Moraweck (*Suspense*) and René Garriguenc (*Sam Spade, Philip Morris Playhouse*) studied at the Conservatory of Paris under Desormière, Caussade, and Cortot. (Both of these composers also do at least one motion picture score a year.) Lloyd Del Castillo is a graduate of Harvard. Frederick Steiner was a scholarship student at Oberlin Conservatory. (In addition to *This Is Your FBI,* Steiner has written scores for *Radio Readers' Digest, Columbia Workshop,* and others.) Cy Feuer is a product of Julliard; he was for ten years head of the music department at

orchestras. American composers of the caliber of Aaron Copland and Bernard Hermann prepare music for radio all too infrequently.

Republic Pictures and has written for television and for many radio programs, including *Studio One* and *Ford Theater.*

And yet, much mediocre radio music and much indifferent radio drama goes out from Hollywood over major networks. No one group or person deserves all the blame for existing conditions. The salesman does, of course, have the final word, and the attempts of radio artists to turn out something worth while are repeatedly frustrated. As long as radio is conducted as a business, even its professionals cannot be expected to strike out disinterestedly in the cause of their art. And as long as the audience indicates a strong preference for the vulgar, the pedestrian, and the banal, no discriminating listener who is silent has a justifiable case against the radio programming he deplores.

Film Music of the Quarter

LAWRENCE MORTON

LAWRENCE MORTON, arranger and composer of music for film and radio, is now engaged in writing a book on film music. His series of reviews of film music, begun in Volume III of the *Hollywood Quarterly,* will continue in Volume IV.

HOLLYWOOD's film composers have good cause for the peevishness of their attitude toward their critics. If they sometimes appear to show symptoms of persecution complexes, or to have developed a full set of the protective defense mechanisms common among oppressed minorities, it is not because they nurse imaginary grievances. They are in truth subjected to subtle discriminations not practiced against so-called serious composers who live in cultural centers less suspect than Hollywood.

The discrimination is of various sorts. I happened upon one recently while compiling a bibliography of recorded film music. The standard reference to be consulted was of course *The Gramaphone Shop Encyclopedia of Recorded Music.* Its listings and its omissions are equally curious. No mention is made of Newman's *The Song of Bernadette* and *Captain from Castile,* Waxman's *Paradine Case,* and Raksin's *Forever Amber,* all of which were in the company catalogues by January, 1948, when the *Encyclopedia* went to press. Evidently the editors did not consider this music "serious" enough (the qualifying term is theirs) to warrant inclusion in the book. But they did list Tiomkin's *Duel in the Sun,* and Rozsa's *The Jungle Book, Red House,* and *Spellbound.* Among these works there is little choice in respect to seriousness. All of Hollywood's composers are serious. As to musical quality, however, there are not immeasurable differences; but I can imagine no decent critical judgment that would rank Newman below Tiomkin. Nor can I believe that the omissions were accidental in a third edition labeled "revised and augmented." I can believe, however, that certain snob values mattered. Tiomkin had the ad-

vantage of having had his score recorded by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra under Fiedler, and this gave it a calculable prestige. Rozsa too has prestige; he is a composer of concert as well as film music, and a few of his works have been played by our leading symphony orchestras, although none has been recorded. Alexandre Tansman is another composer of international reputation, and so one takes it for granted that his minuscule *Scherzo* from *Flesh and Fantasy* would be listed; and it is. But the music on the reverse side of the record, Raksin's *Laura* (not the pop-song version), has no separate listing. No doubt the editors regard the popularity of this record as a case of the tail wagging the dog. This judgment still leaves for discussion the interesting problem of the relative merits of a good theme song and a mediocre scherzo. The criterion, I suspect, was the reverence due to European reputation, and suspicion is fortified by finding British film composers generously represented by Addinsell, Alwyn, Bath, Goehr, and Parker, not one of whom gives any convincing evidence of having enjoyed more intimate communion with the muses than their American colleagues. It is reasonable, although it may not be accurate, to conclude that the *Encyclopedia* has a faint anti-Hollywood bias. This the editors are entitled to hold in private conversation, but not in a "complete" reference work.

Discrimination as practiced by film critics comes sometimes from sheer prejudice, sometimes from ignorance, and sometimes from whimsy. Of the prejudiced kind I cite one example, provided for me by a critic who included in his review of *The Quiet One* the bare statement that "there is a distinguished score by Ulysses Kay." Delighted at reading that the score had been noticed at all, I asked the critic to tell me in detail what he liked about it, what "distinguished" it from other scores. His answer was: "Oh, I don't know; I really didn't listen to it. I just didn't recognize the composer's name and so I thought he must be one of the New York composers—like Copland." The intellectual value of such criticism is second only to a plug from Walter Winchell.

Of discrimination arising out of ignorance, there are instances in the absence of commentary on Raksin's *The Force of Evil* and the comparatively lavish attention paid to Auric's *Symphonie Pastorale*. Now Auric certainly has not lived up to the noisy youthful promise of one of The Six. His music for *Blood of a Poet* was beautiful and sensitive, but his later scores, like the current one, are quite indistinguishable from the prevailing hack work of Paris, London, and Hollywood. Raksin's score, on the other hand, contributed genuine emotional qualities to its film. But the film was not much liked, and so the score was ignored. Walton's music for *Hamlet* is another case in point. It is thoroughly cinematic, perhaps too beautiful. But many a Hollywood composer has been pilloried for leaning so heavily upon Ravel and Puccini, and for inflating sonorities already too grandiose, as Walton does for his funeral march. Without belittling the manifest virtues of this score, it must still be said that Walton's reputation will endure not because of *Hamlet* but because of the very different kind of music he has written in his *Symphony* and his *Concerto for Viola;* for his functional music has a decided box-office inflection, to match the accent of Olivier's production. But this should not be construed as a fault in Walton. The fault is with the critics who do not possess the resources for differentiating between the two Waltons, and thus mistake the composer of *Hamlet* for the composer of *Portsmouth Point.*

Such powers of criticism are of course rare among laymen. Mere opinion must suffice as a substitute. This produces discrimination by whimsy, as in the Motion Picture Academy's selection of Brian Easdale's score for *The Red Shoes* as the best of the year. Easdale's is in every way a thoroughly competent job. Modest, workmanlike, genteel, unspectacular, it abounds in pedestrian virtues. The whole sum of its idea is considerably less than Walton's simple device of playing Ophelia with unaccompanied violins in high register. Something other than musical value led the Academy members to select this score. Most important, I suspect, was the

simple fact that a long passage, the ballet music, was "in the clear" and could be listened to without any competition from other sound-track elements. Besides, it had been "sold" to the audience for several reels before it was actually heard, the screenplay insisting that this music was going to be great music, great enough to carry the weight of the film's climax. Obediently enough, the Academy audiences agreed with the script; and this leads one to wonder whether they also believed in magic, which was very "real" on the screen. At any rate they voted Easdale an Oscar, but certainly not on the same grounds that they voted for *Hamlet* and Olivier and the Hustons.

The success of Virgil Thomson's score for *Louisiana Story* would be unbelievable if it hadn't already happened. Almost automatically it received the kind of attention that a Hollywood score almost never receives. In part this was no more than the courtesy due the composer of *Four Saints* and *The Mother of Us All.* But it was also an acknowledgment of the power and influence of the music critic of the New York *Herald Tribune,* and of his fame as the only American member of the international set to have been mentioned by Seremus Zeitblom in his biography of Adrian Leverkuhn. Besides, *Louisiana Story* had about it an importance deriving from its sponsorship by Standard Oil of New Jersey (money and power) and its production by Robert Flaherty (art).

The score is a treasurehouse of folk tunes from the Louisiana country, which Thomson has apparently been the first to exploit. He has arranged them with taste and imagination, carefully preserving their simplicity and charm. The use of this material is a safe and sure-fire procedure, for we live in a time that listens sympathetically to folk music. And when one listens sympathetically he is not likely to ask why the tunes are being played. The plain fact is that Thomson plays them whenever he can think of nothing else to do. He allows their naïveté to substitute, no matter how poorly, for dramatic urgency; and at other times he permits their expressiveness to inflate scenes that are actually bare of

emotional tensions. The result is that we hear some very beautiful music that has nothing to do with the screen.

As for the original music of the score, it is what the Russians would call formalistic. It has formal strength but little expressive power, as if it scorned the demand to be functional. Its principal theme, a chorale, is an admirable structural formula; but neither the melody nor its triadic harmonization is quite strong enough to give substance to the form. It is of little moment that the chorale happens to conform to the twelve-tone discipline, for a discipline of this sort is valuable only as it permits the saying of things not otherwise utterable, and Thomson's chorale does not have this distinction. Equally undistinguished is his quadruple fugue, although it is doubtless formally correct. Now a fugue is an admirable device for keeping one's music going, and four themes are four times as good as one when the music must be kept going a long time. The trouble with Thomson's fugue is that its musical climaxes fail to coincide with the dramatic climaxes of the boy's fight with the alligator. Neither the number of themes nor their manipulation matter in a cinematic sense. It is as though the composer had quite resolved to write his fugue without reference to the screen but with serious thought about the opinion of musicologists. This is one way of winning a Pulitzer Prize. Hollywood, actually, does this kind of thing better; it always kills Indians with four trombones.

Obviously it is not a part of Thomson's esthetic to set a film score to music with the same sensitivity that he has for the words of a Gertrude Stein libretto. In his first book, *The State of Music,* he made it quite plain that he preferred the music of silent films to that of sound films. *Louisiana Story* is in effect a silent film. One can understand therefore why Thomson's scoring technique is not very dissimilar to that of the motion picture organist who accompanied the climbing and descent from a mountain peak with *Ase's Death* simply because he liked the way the piece went laboriously up and down in sequential patterns.

It is all very well to be contemptuous of the cliché, as Thomson is. Such independence is certainly to be welcomed in a genre of music making that is held almost immobile by convention. But it is hardly to be counted an achievement to replace the cliché with the irrelevant. Thomson has thrown the baby out with the bath water. In his desire to avoid anything smacking of Hollywood slickness he has abandoned technical finish. Repeatedly the music stops before its scene is over, leaving great tonal gaps that have the effect of raising one's voice at the end of a sentence. This may be considered artistic in some quarters, but it is difficult to imagine Thomson being quite so contemptuous of craft in his operas or concert music. The fault should perhaps be attributed to the economic necessity of getting the whole score recorded in two sessions. The speed with which this was accomplished has been cited as a virtue, with the implication that Hollywood's care in such matters is somewhat ridiculous. The virtue could not be disputed if only the results had been better.

If I seem to pass over the merits of the score, it is because they have been advertised extensively enough to require no repetition here. For the most part they are of a musical rather than a functional order. But as a film score this one has engendered commentary and reward out of all proportion to its value. A corollary would be to praise the work of a Hollywood hack who has satisfied all the functional requirements of a score without any consideration for musical value. The real problem of film music is to fulfill its function with good music. Hollywood does excellently in a functional sense; Thomson has done well in a musical sense. This leaves the Great American Film Score still to be written. Who will recognize it when it comes? Who will believe it if it happens to wear the Hollywood label? Certainly not the critics, professional or nonprofessional. They have shown themselves susceptible to too many extraneous considerations.

The Mass Media before the Bar

ARTHUR J. FREUND

ARTHUR J. FREUND, a practicing lawyer in St. Louis since 1916, with an honorable record in municipal service, is chairman of the Section of Criminal Law of the American Bar Association and chairman of its Committee on Motion Pictures, Radio Broadcasting and Comics in Relation to the Administration of Justice. The present paper is adapted from his remarks at the second meeting of the Committee, held on November 8 and 9, 1948, in Washington, D.C.

THE COMMITTEE on Motion Pictures, Radio Broadcasting and Comics in Relation to the Administration of Justice was originally formed in the American Bar Association upon the initiative of the Criminal Law Section. The chairman and secretary of this section were selected to hold corresponding offices in the committee. The membership is composed of a small but highly competent and influential group of members of the association as well as distinguished representatives of the press, publishers, news services, and newspaper editors, comic-strip syndicates, comics producers, and the national advertising association representing radio producers.

At the initial meeting of the committee, in June, 1947, there was a general concurrence that the media and the bar would approach the subject with sympathy in a genuine endeavor to reach a satisfactory solution. The problems posed at the meeting by the chairman of the committee in behalf of the bar were (*a*) the emphasis placed by the media upon the depiction of crime and the portrayal of the manner in which crimes of violence were committed, detected, and prosecuted, and (*b*) the manner in which the lawyer, the judge, and the processes of law are depicted.

The views presented to the committee by me at that time were substantially as follows: Outside of the classroom, the home, and the church it would appear that the motion picture, the radio, the comics, and the comic strips constitute the most powerful existing educational influences upon the mental growth of the child, the adolescent, and the impressionable. The usual routine of the

adolescent and impressionable is to read the funnies in the newspapers; later he turns on the radio; in his more deliberate and, often, esoteric leisure he reads the comic books, and in his more extended recreational hours he attends the movies. The sequence is variable, but the ingredients of the diet are staple.

At each step the emphasis in his leisure menu is crime and criminals. In this there is often the seasoning of illicit sex relations. No one of the media alone, at any one time or over any extended period, can be said to be more harmful than another, but the insistent and continued repetition of these influences, each complementing the other, must, it seems to us, produce a deteriorating effect upon the mind of the impressionable. Immature and undeveloped minds are molded by these persistent influences to the concept that crime and criminal conduct is the norm, or at least not far from the norm, of human behavior. Ethical concepts are twisted from reality, weakened, and all too frequently destroyed.

In addition, crime techniques are blueprinted with meticulous accuracy. Criminal methods are set forth step by step, thereby giving the recipient an accurate handbook for antisocial and often criminal conduct.

At the June, 1947, meeting there was a disposition among some of those present on behalf of the media to doubt the existence of any problem and to deny that the processes of justice, including the role of the judge and the lawyer, were unfairly or unrealistically portrayed. After an extended discussion, the meeting concluded with the understanding that the representatives would report the views there expressed for consideration by their respective organizations and that a later meeting would be held. With the assurance of interest by the representatives of the media and their indication of willingness to coöperate toward a common end, it was the general view that the meeting was a success and that there was every reason to hope for effective coöperation.

The history of the committee since its first meeting includes

a session of the Criminal Law Section at the annual meeting of the American Bar Association in Cleveland, in September, 1947. It was highlighted by an announcement of an important change of policy by the National Broadcasting Association on crime portrayals, made public on September 15, 1947, recognizing, among other vital declarations, that "the vivid, living portrayal of crime has an impact on the juvenile, adolescent or impressionable mentality that cannot be underestimated."

At a meeting of the American Bar Association members of this committee, held in Washington in May, 1948, the consensus was that we should, for the present, place our major emphasis upon crime portrayals by the media, thereby subordinating our efforts with respect to portrayals of the courtroom, the judge, the lawyer, and the more formal processes of justice.

On September 7 last, at the annual meeting of this association in Seattle, the Section of Criminal Law held a panel discussion of the media. The panel members met again for a half-hour radio broadcast the next day.

A most encouraging development is an agreement of the Eagle-Lion Studios to produce a motion picture, in coöperation with this association, on the American jury system, showing its historical background, its importance to the citizen of today in the protection of his liberty and property, and the obligation of the citizen when summoned to accept jury service as a fundamental duty of citizenship. This production will be a portrayal of a fictional story with the real motif as background.

This brief outline of more formal aspects of the committee's history gives no indication of the great interest that has been aroused by its creation and operation. Judges and lawyers all over the country have expressed approval and enthusiasm for its objectives. Legislators, both on the national and state level, have expressed deep interest and concern. Many local and state bar associations have advised me that they have appointed committees on the subject, and they seek counsel from the American Bar Asso-

ciation on how they may develop their own programs in the field in coördination with a national program.

Newspapers, from the metropolitan press throughout the country down through rural newspapers using press releases, original writing, and boiler plate, have given much space in their news columns as well as in their editorial columns. Many national magazines have published articles and comments on the subject. The *Journal of the American Judicature Society,* widely read by judges and lawyers, has made our subject a major topic of its discussions.

The radio itself has given voice to the problem. *Town Hall Meeting of the Air* devoted a full hour broadcast to comics; there have been a large number of local radio forums and other local discussion groups, and Fred Allen even posed the query in Allen's Alley. In addition, innumerable organizations in every field having to do with the welfare of youth have expressed their deep concern with this problem and now seek guidance for its solution.

The greater part of this interest has taken root since our initial meeting in June, 1947. At the moment, public alarm and wrath seem to be directed toward the crime comics. Large metropolitan cities and small hamlets have passed local laws censoring or banning crime comics; state laws are under consideration; groups have been formed, both national and local, to remove crime comics from places of sale, and we are currently witnessing in many localities what almost amounts to hysteria, evidenced by the mass burning of crime comics by parents' and children's groups.

It is obvious that the crime portrayals in the comics differ only in method of distribution and format from their brother and sister under the skin, the crime radio programs and the crime movies, and perhaps they will soon be joined by their infant blood relation, crime by television.

In order to give you some indication of the trend of current Congressional thinking, it is only fair to tell you that United States senators have inquired of me within the year regarding (1) the

form of legislation suggested by them to prohibit federal officials from supplying data or case histories for exclusive use by a motion picture company, radio broadcaster, or comic publisher for the purpose of crime portrayals; (2) a set of legislative standards which would run the gantlet of current judicial opinions so that valid legislation might be enacted to authorize the refusal of second-class mail privileges to crime comics; and (3) similar standards for legislation to prohibit the shipment of crime comics in interstate commerce.

May I say that I am wholly opposed to legislation in this field at this time, and that every member of this committee is of the same opinion? Although there is some contrariety of view among the American Bar Association members of this committee upon methods of approach and procedure, the committee is unanimous and unequivocal in its determination to avoid any legislation in this field at the present time. I hope that there may be no misunderstanding about this.

We have been encouraged that the media have themselves taken heed of conditions and of public opinion in the area of our consideration. The National Broadcasting Company has revised its code drastically,[1] the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers, representing a segment of comics publishers, has promulgated a code which promises some, though not substantial, correction; the Motion Picture Association of America has currently revised its code, and the National Association of Broadcasters has set forth new standards of practice.

Although these codes in many respects set forth principles of the highest ethical value, the torrent of vivid crime portrayals continues to pour forth. I think we must inquire, therefore, if codes, as they are now administered, constitute the answer when motion pictures, such as, for example, *The Rope,* a presentation of sordid crime inspired obviously by the Loeb-Leopold episode,

[1] Since this paper was written originally, the National Broadcasting Company, learning that crime portrayals were continuing to enliven other networks, has renounced its policy of abstaining from such programs.

Cañon City, a portrayal of murder in its most sordid form, and *Brute Force, The Killers,* and their ilk, continue currently to crowd our screen. Is radio performing its obligations of public interest, necessity, and convenience when *Gang Busters* and its numerous imitations and prototypes occupy so much of the time in which youngsters are likely to listen? Can comics such as *Crime Does Not Pay* continue to be published in any reasonable resemblance to their present form and yet conform to any code acceptable to the public? Few people ever read the codes, but millions of adolescent and impressionable minds come within the influence of these mass media. The quite obvious fact is that if everyone were agreed that the codes were operating wholly and effectively in the public interest, we should not be holding any meeting here today and there would be no public concern or discussion on the subject, for there would be no problem. We are not so much interested in the printed verbiage of codes, no matter on what high moral and ethical plane they may be phrased, if the material produced thereunder is objectionable and harmful.

It is to be understood clearly that any expression of opinion that I may give, or that I have given, does not represent any considered judgment of the American Bar Association; for although my own views have found concurrence with those of the majority of the members of the council of our Section of Criminal Law, the American Bar Association itself has given no formal or official approval to our program through its governing bodies. However, I think it may also be fairly said that the association has been apprised of our work and the body of the membership seems to approve of what we are seeking to accomplish, as I have previously stated. I insert this caveat at this time, for I should now like to call to your attention some conclusions I have reached as a result of my study, conferences, and interest in this field.

After a consuming and intensive attention to this subject for two years as chairman of this committee on behalf of the American Bar Association, I am of the personal conviction, to paraphrase

the previous findings of the National Broadcasting Company, that the vivid, living portrayal of crime by the media has a profound impact upon the mind of the juvenile, adolescent, and impressionable, and that grave harm has already resulted thereby to uncounted and perhaps uncountable members of our society, and that unless the abuses are curbed and the evils eliminated neither the American Bar Association nor the media, with all their resources and resourcefulness, will be able to stem the tide of restrictive legislation. We cannot too often consider the warning sounded in 1945 by Judge Justin Miller, now president of the National Association of Broadcasters, when he said: "Only by intelligent anticipation of public reaction and by equally intelligent self-discipline can we prevent legislative intemperance." It would appear that to date little self-discipline has been exercised in crime portrayals by the media; and if television follows the pattern already set by the other media, we will have a fourth dimension added to the already disturbing volume of depictions of the techniques of murder and other crimes of violence presented by picture, word, and sound effects.

We also are all aware that crime pays: that is, the lurid, vivid portrayal of crime is one of the most profitable commodities the media now produce, sell, and distribute. During the past two years, I have repeatedly heard representatives of the media say that the crime portrayals in their respective fields are a stimulus required by our changing society and that they are, after all, no worse than the crime episodes told in the Bible, in fairy stories, and in some of the classics, which are the foundation of much of our great literature. I cannot accept this thesis. On the contrary, I believe it is one thing for an adolescent to live in a world of fantasy stimulated by stories in the Bible, by fairy tales, and by great works of classical literature unrelated to his immediate environment or to the realistic possibilities of his everyday life, but that it is a wholly different experience for the impressionable mind to be stimulated in a world of apparent reality where criminal

and morbid activities in which he can actually participate in his day-to-day living are delineated repetitiously for him with blueprint accuracy.

It is only fair to say that we have no authentic data by which the opinions of the representatives of the media or my own can be proved beyond dispute. I could not say to you with complete intellectual honesty that I have any scientific proof to sustain the validity of my convictions; but likewise the media in the same degree lack proof to sustain their own representations. This lack of indisputable and scientific verification of the validity of either view has not deterred me, or those of the opposite camp, or of the public at large, from urging their various opinions with much vigor and without any semblance of any apprehension of serious factual contradiction.

It is possible, I believe, to obtain such proof. I have consulted numerous social scientists with completely objective and unbiased views upon the subject who believe that the facts we need so desperately can be ascertained, and that it is highly important that we have them. I am convinced by these scientists that impartial research upon the highest professional level is possible, and that it is essential that we have such proof so obtained if our efforts can be considered worthy of our abilities.

I am hopeful that we can all agree that an objective scientific study or series of studies upon the high basis I have advocated may be initiated by this group. Acting together in a common purpose with a high goal, I believe that the American Bar Association together with the media can accomplish a common good of incalculable and lasting value for the spiritual and mental health of our nation.

A Bibliography for the Quarter

Book Editor, FRANKLIN FEARING

[The limitations of space set for Volume IV have made necessary a change in the format of the book-review section of the *Hollywood Quarterly*. Happily, it is a change that the editors have become increasingly convinced would better serve the interests of the reader. Rather than presenting extended critical reviews of a few books, the purpose will be to present each quarter an annotated list of publications relevant to the field of communications. Books, monographs, catalogues, and other materials in the field of the *Hollywood Quarterly* will be welcomed for listing by the editor of this section and should be addressed to Franklin Fearing, Book Editor.]

BOOKS

THE TITLES of two recent books illustrate the confusion of attitudes and meanings in the use of the word "experimental" as applied to phases of the mass media of communication. In *Experiment in the Film* (Grey Walls Press, Ltd., 7 Crown Passage, Pall Mall, London, S.W. 1) the term "experimental" is applied to those filmic creations in which there is a more or less conscious intent to explore the expressive and communicative potentialities of the medium beyond the limits established by convention at a given time and place. Under the editorship of Roger Manvell eight specialists have written essays on the following subjects: "Experiments in the Film" (Roger Manvell), "Experimental Film in France" (Jacques B. Brunius), "Avant-garde Production in America" (Lewis Jacobs),[1] "Soviet Film" (Grigori Roshal), "Soviet Documentary" (Roman Karmen), "Expansion of the German and Austrian Film" (Ernest Iros), "Avant-garde Film in Germany" (Hans Richter), "Development of Film Technique in Britain" (Edgar Anstey), and "Experiment in the Scientific Film" (John Maddison).

In a second book, *Experiments on Mass Communication* (Princeton University Press, 1949), the term "experiment" refers to the various techniques of controlled observation which make it possible to express in quantitative terms the effects on belief,

[1] With the permission of Roger Manvell and Grey Walls Press, Lewis Jacobs' article appeared in Vol. III, Nos. 1 and 2, of the *Hollywood Quarterly*.

opinion, or attitudes of exposure to films. This is experiment in the true, i.e., scientific, sense. The book is the product of the collaboration of Carl I. Hovland, Arthur A. Lumsdaine, and Fred D. Sheffield. The present volume is one of four entitled collectively "Studies in Social Psychology in World War II." The studies were sponsored by the Research Branch, Information and Education Division of the Army. The researches reported in the volume on the mass media of communication deal with the effects of such films as the "Why We Fight" series, which were concerned with the ideological orientation of men in service. From the point of view of rigor of method, and scope and significance of results, these are probably the most important experimental investigations yet attempted in the field of educational films.

Both these books are important for the student of film. They illustrate rather neatly certain antithetical trends in film study. In one of the essays in *Experiment in Film* ("Experimental Film in France," by Jacques B. Brunius) the author comments at length on the problem presented by the word "experimental." He finds it and the suggested alternatives—"avant-garde," "abstract," "pure"—equally unsatisfactory. The question is not merely terminological. It relates also to the difference between an approach which emphasizes film as a medium of aesthetic *expression* and one which emphasizes it as a medium of *communication.*

The job that Peter Noble undertakes in *The Negro in Films* (Skelton Robinson, 30, Cornhill, London, E.C. 3) has been long overdue. The chapter headings indicate the scope of the task. After a brief discussion of the Negro on the stage, there are chapters on the Negro in silent films, in sound films, in independent and governmental films, in European films, and in wartime Hollywood, and the Negro in song and dance. There is a chapter on leading Negro players and a final chapter in which the author tries to give a hopeful answer to the question, What of the future? Some hope is needed, because the story Mr. Noble tells is not a pleasant one. The Negro's role in films, like his role in American life, de-

picts him in a manner to justify those who exploit him. With rare exceptions which the author documents, the Negro in Hollywood films is a clown, a superstitious fool, a mental inferior, or a faithful servant. The impact of all this on the motion picture audience outside of the United States is, perhaps, more serious than the effects on the American moviegoer. For the latter it is merely the affirmation of already existing stereotypes. For the world outside which sees the U.S.A. through Hollywood lenses, new stereotypes with their associated attitudes are actually being created. Mr. Noble is properly shocked and indignant at what his research has uncovered, but nowhere does he probe beneath the surface for the psychological and social mechanisms that are responsible. This makes his last chapter, in which he is concerned with remedies, somewhat unsatisfactory. In the appendices there is an excellent bibliography of writings on race relations, and a list of films (1902–1948) in which Negroes or racial themes were featured. This latter lists 195 films exclusive of the British and Continental offerings.

Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1949) is a new edition of John Howard Lawson's *Theory and Practice of Playwriting,* first published in 1936. The present edition consists of two books: Book One is devoted to playwriting and, according to the author, contains only minor changes from the first edition. Book Two, approximately a third of the whole, is devoted to the theory and technique of screenwriting and is new. Part One, called the "First Fifty Years," deals with the history of films from 1898 to 1945. Parts Two and Three, called respectively "Motion-Picture Structure" and "Motion-Picture Composition," are concerned with the analysis of screenwriting as a craft. Throughout the book the author is concerned not only with the techniques of a craft, but also with forms of communication and the social forces which underlie them. This is an emphasis that will make this volume significant for the psychologist and sociologist as well as for the professional writer. There is a check list of films and an ample index.

In *The Art of the Film* (Macmillan, New York, 1948) Ernest Lindgren devotes most of his space to outlining the various techniques that go into the making of motion pictures. He is interested in these techniques only as a means to an end—the expression of an attitude toward life. For him, the art of the film consists in this. The primary intention of the author was to write an introduction to film criticism, and he conceives valid criticism to be impossible without "some knowledge" of techniques. Hence, there are chapters on editing, use of sound, the camera, music, and film acting. Writing is somewhat summarily dealt with in a chapter entitled "Anatomy of the Fiction Film." In a final chapter the author vigorously defends the film as art and critically analyzes the psychological bases of the creative process. He makes the point that this process is not unique to the artist, but is practiced every day by all persons as a necessary part of the strategy of adjustment. This is a useful book for the student and filmgoer, and the professional will find it worth reading. There is a bibliography, and a glossary of more than 500 terms.

It is interesting to speculate whether Lindgren's *Art of the Film* or *Film and Education* (edited by Godfrey M. Elliott, Philosophical Library, New York, 1948) would be more useful to a layman who wishes to understand and promote the use of films in education. *Film and Education* consists of 37 chapters each written by a specialist on some aspect of the nontheatrical film. Included are chapters on the applications of films in the various classroom subjects, the use of educational films in training industrial workers, in the federal government, in nursing education, and in religious education. There are chapters on the problems and practices in the administration of various types of educational film programs, and surveys of the status of educational films abroad. This is, in fact, a comprehensive, if somewhat pedestrian, survey of the present and potential uses of films in education. Its most conspicuous lack is an integrating theory with respect to films, or to education, or to communication. In spite of this it should be a very

useful handbook, and the theory might be supplied by Lindgren's *Art of the Film.*

Speaking of theory, perhaps the most significant book of the quarter is Sergei Eisenstein's *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory,* edited and translated by Jay Leyda (Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1949). This is a group of essays selected, according to Mr. Leyda, to illustrate "certain key-points in the development of Eisenstein's film theory and, in particular, of his analysis of the sound-film medium." The compilation of these essays was one of the last tasks of the author before his death in February, 1948. The dates of publication of the original essays range from 1928 to February, 1945. Many of them have never before been translated. The titles include "Through Theater to Cinema," "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," "The Dialectic Approach to Film Form," "The Filmic Fourth Dimension," "Methods of Montage," "Film Language," "The Structure of the Film," and "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today." These essays, together with those in the earlier volume, *The Film Sense* (revised edition, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947), constitute a systematic statement of the author's film theory. In Mr. Leyda's English they have clarity and vigor.

Also noteworthy among books on film theory is I. Pudovkin's *Film Technique and Film Acting* (Lear Publishers; distributed by Crown Publishers, 419 Fourth Avenue, New York, 1949). These two essays appear in a single volume. They are translated by Ivor Montagu and there is an introduction by Lewis Jacobs. *Film Technique* includes an appendix containing "glossarial notes" and an index of names. There are chapters on the film scenario and its theory, the film director, close-ups, and the actor in the frame. *Film Acting* is a course of lectures delivered at the State Institute of Cinematography, and was first published abroad in 1933. There are chapters on the theater and the cinema, discontinuity in the actor's work in the cinema, theoretical postulates of discontinuity, dialogue, intonation, make-up, gesture,

work with nonactors, and casting. This is the first American edition of a pioneering work and is a compact statement of theory and practice. As Lewis Jacobs points out, these discussions are not intended for the amateur film hobbyist, but he, and in fact anyone with a serious interest in motion pictures, will find them exciting reading.

Eric Barnouw has written and directed radio programs on all the major networks and at present is manager of the Radio Program Bureau at Columbia University. His current *Handbook of Radio Production: An Outline of Studio Techniques and Procedures in the United States* (Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1949) and his earlier *Handbook of Radio Writing* (reviewed in Vol. III, No. 1, of the *Quarterly*) together constitute an authoritative and practical analysis of everything that pertains to the preparation and production of radio programs. Part One of the *Handbook of Radio Production* contains sections on the equipment in the broadcasting studio and the personnel of what the author calls the production team. Part Two is on the team in action; it includes detailed discussions of such topics as fade-ins and fade-outs, dialogue, narration, music, sound background, ad libs, various types of sound effects, and montage. There is a complete script with the director's notes reproduced in full, and a glossary of radio terms. Complete is the word for this handbook. It is complete, it is authoritative, and it is not dull reading.

The question of the origin of motion pictures continues to fascinate the film historians, both amateur and professional. *Magic Shadows: The Story of the Origin of Motion Pictures* (Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C., 1948), by Martin Quigley, Jr., is a recent addition to the literature of the subject. This book is, as Terry Ramsaye notes in his foreword, a prehistory of the motion picture. It finds the origins of the motion picture in Aristotle and Archimedes and traces the story to the latter days of the nineteenth century. There is a bibliography and a descriptive chronology.

Painting with Light, by John Alton, A.S.C. (Macmillan, New York, 1949), is a beautifully illustrated presentation of almost everything which has to do with the use of light in moving and still photography. There are chapters on motion picture illumination, mystery lighting, the close-up, outdoor photography, and the portrait studio. It should be useful to both the professional and the amateur.

The Art of Acting, by John Dolman, Jr. (Harpers, New York, 1949), is a readable and comprehensive treatment of the theory and practice of an art. Chapters include the actor's relation to his audience, emotion in acting, rehearsing, comedy, tragedy, stage diction, the actor's voice, etc. The author, a member of the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, has been president of the National Association of Teachers of Speech and editor of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech.* There is a glossary of stage terms and an annotated bibliography.

The latest of the manuals published by Vocational Guidance Manuals, Inc., 45 West Forty-fifth Street, New York 19, is called *Opportunities in Motion Pictures,* and is by Pincus W. Tell. Its discussion of job requirements and job opportunities in Hollywood is realistic and practical. Under the heading of "Production" the coverage includes jobs in the fields of acting, directing, producing, writing, art direction, photography, story department, and sound. Under "Exhibition" are included the fields of management, publicity, projection, and nontheatrical films. There are a bibliography and listings of trade and technical magazines, labor and production organizations, nontheatrical film producers, and colleges that teach motion picture arts and crafts.

Winchester's Screen Encyclopedia, edited by Maud M. Miller (Winchester Publications, Ltd., 16 Maddox Street, London, W. 1), in spite of certain omissions, is a comprehensive and highly useful volume. The following are the titles of the principal sections: "Films in Great Britain," "Who's Who in Film" (among other items, this section contains over 1,000 biographical sketches),

"Stars and Their Publics," "Making of Films," "Film Music," "Documentary Film," "The 'Specialized' Cinema," and "Children at the Cinema." Under these headings are found special articles, and listings and compilations of various sorts. Examples taken at random of the kinds of useful information which the volume contains are: a list of the production companies, film distributors, and film exhibitors in Great Britain; a compilation of Academy Awards; a directory of the major production companies in all countries; the text of the AMP Production (Hays-Johnson) Code; the casts, directors, and studios of 500 outstanding European and American films made between 1915 and 1947; a compilation of films which had notable musical scores; and a listing of all the *March of Time* subjects since 1936. Notable omissions: In the "Who's Who" section the reviewer was unable to find the biography of a single individual whose sole or major connection with the industry was in the capacity of screenwriter, although the biographical sketches of most major and many minor (very minor!) actors, directors, composers, and producers are included. There is no reference to the craft and talent guilds and unions in Hollywood. There is no listing of trade, technical, and professional publications in the motion picture field. Among the authors of special articles are Sir Alexander Korda, James Mason, and Adolph Zukor. There are a number of full-page illustrations in black and white and in color.

The *British Film Annual* (Winchester Publications, Ltd., 16 Maddox Street, London, W. 1) surveys the achievements of the British film industry for 1948–1949. It contains the pictorial records, plots, and screen credits of the fifty-four British films released in 1948 and eligible for the National Film Awards.

John Gassner has compiled and edited *Twenty-five Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre, Early Series* (Crown, New York, 1949). The twenty-five are: *The Hairy Ape, Desire under the Elms, Paris Bound, The Road to Rome, The Second Man, The Front Page, They Knew What They Wanted, Berkeley*

Square, What Price Glory?, Beggar on Horseback, Craig's Wife, Street Scene, Saturday's Children, Broadway, Porgy, Strictly Dishonorable, Machinal, Gods of the Light, Ile, Trifles, White Dresses, The Clod, Minnie Field, Poor Aubrey, Aria da Capo. There is an introductory note for each play, and an introductory essay by Mr. Gassner entitled "The Happy Years, the Advancing Theatre."

Radio and Television Law, by Harry P. Warner (Matthew Bender Company, 149 Broadway, New York), is a 1,091-page reference work on the legal and regulatory structure of the radio industry. The scope of the work is indicated by the chapter headings: "Administrative Practice and Procedure of the Commission," "The Administrative Process," "Administrative Control of Program Standards," "Network Regulations," "Transfer and Assignment of Broadcasting Licenses," "Frequency Modulation," "Television," "Judicial Review of the Federal Communications Commission," "Legislative Basis of Broadcast Regulation," "Proposals to Amend the Communications Act of 1934." An adequate index makes the volume usable. An appendix gives the complete text of the Communications Act of 1934 as amended. The publishers announce a supplement to cover the following topics: television film contracts, property rights in live television and television film broadcasts, right of privacy in television, and facsimile.

CATALOGUES, REPORTS, PAMPHLETS

The showing in this country of Carl Dreyer's *Day of Wrath* has again turned attention to Danish film production and underscored the fact that this small country has, over the years, made a contribution to film art out of proportion to its size and population. Some understanding of this phenomenon may be found in three publications recently received by the *Quarterly. Docu-*the motion picture. It finds the origins of the motion picture in Aristotle and Archimedes and traces the story to the latter days of the nineteenth century. There is a bibliography and a descrip-

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from 1940 to 1947. The catalogue and the synopses of the films were prepared by Ebbe Neergaard. There is an introduction by Arthur Elton. Each film is completely described, and there are numerous excellent illustrations.

Motion Pictures in Denmark is also by Ebbe Neergaard and may be obtained from the Central Film Library. It is an account of the cinema act of 1938 and an analysis of its effects to 1948. This act, among other things, establishes a licensing system with a state film board, a censorship board, a central film library (Statens Filmcentral), and state production of documentaries. In 1947 the film documentarists in Denmark organized the Dansk Filmforbund "to further the development of the production of documentaries in Denmark, and to take such initiative as may advance and elevate this production." Volume 2, No. 10, of the *Bulletin* of this organization is a special international issue in English. There are articles by Karl Roos, Theodor Christensen, Ebbe Neergaard, Erik Tuxen, and others. The topics include the Danish documentary film legislation and Danish documentary film music.

The Film in Colonial Development is a report of a conference held in January, 1948, in London. The conference was organized by the British Film Institute and the report may be obtained from it, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C. 2. Included are papers by John Grierson ("Film and Primitive Peoples"), Colin Beale ("The Commerical Entertainment Film and Its Effect on Colonial People"), George Pearson ("Making Films for Illiterates in Africa"), Alan Izod ("Some Special Features of Colonial Film Production"), and K. W. Blackburne ("Financial Problems and Future Policy in British Colonies"). The fifteenth *Annual Report* of the British Film Institute is also available.

In these columns we have already directed attention to the recently established *Motion Picture Catalog* published by the Copyright Office, Library of Congress. Issues of this catalog for January–June and July–December, 1948, are now available from the Superintendent of Documents. They cost $1.00 per issue. Ap-

proximately 3,000 films are described, summarized, and indexed annually in this series. The Library of Congress also issues a drama catalogue (*Dramas and Works Prepared for Oral Delivery*) which lists plays and radio and television scripts.

Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 148 (Public Affairs Committee, 22 East 38th Street, New York 16, N.Y.) is called *Comics, Radio, Movies—and Children*. The author, Josette Frank, is Educational Associate in Charge of Children's Books and Radio on the staff of the Child Study Association of America. This is an extremely realistic, nontechnical, and penetrating discussion of a question that has raised the blood pressure of a lot of people. The author explodes the view widely held by parents that juvenile crime is "caused" by comics, radio, or films. The Public Affairs Pamphlets—which cover a wide variety of topics—may be had for 20 cents each.