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A Comparison of the Playwright and the Screen Writer

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GEORGE SEATON, after working in the New York theater, came to Hollywood in 1933 as a writer. With *Miracle on 34th Street,* he became a writer-director. In a producing partnership with William Perlberg, Mr. Seaton has written and directed a number of successful films, including *Song of Bernadette, The Country Girl,* and *The Proud and Profane.* As a lecturer, he is a member of the faculty of the Theater Arts Department of the University of California, Los Angeles. Mr. Seaton presented the following talk at the American Educational Theater Association conference in New York City, last December.

LAST SEPTEMBER when I was invited to take part in this discussion here today, I jotted down some notes covering the fundamental differences between the theater and the screen and pointing out the obvious modifications that any writer must make in adapting a stage play to film. I set down these notes without hesitation, convinced that my observations, based on twenty-five years of screen writing, were rather sound. Since September, however, I have seen quite a few motion pictures, in various shapes and sizes and colors; and I have spent some time in New York seeing and studying most of the Broadway plays. What with screens getting wider and the theater increasingly adopting motion-picture techniques in writing and staging, I am not quite certain that some of my September fundamental differences between the two media still exist. I am beginning to feel a deep sympathy and kinship with a father who begins to wonder, on his Silver Anniversary, if all the children in the family are his.

But at the risk of being considered chauvinistic and with a deep hope that the screen will recover from elephantiasis, let me go back to my September song and point out some of the problems that a film writer faces and some of the solutions he must find in adapting a play to the medium of film.

As everyone knows, of course, drama on the stage is largely

unfolded by the actors' speeches—by the word; on the screen, hopefully by action. Most textbooks on the cinema define motion pictures as "pictures that move" and usually italicize the word *motion* to hammer home the point. To understand the screen writer's task, it might be well worth a moment or two to examine the *motion* in motion pictures because I believe that the definition of the word has constantly been changing over the years. In the early days, the camera was placed on a stationary tripod, usually at a distance enabling it to photograph a full shot of the set; and the action, or motion, was provided by the actors moving back and forth across the screen at a fixed distance. Audiences viewed this more or less objectively and derived pleasure from the novelty of seeing photographs in action.

Then, D. W. Griffith introduced the close-up for dramatic effect. The proximity of audience to actor brought about a much desired identification on the part of the viewer toward the performer, and with it came a slightly different meaning to motion. Now the camera, in effect, was moving by the process of editing the film.

Next came the variable focus and the movable tripod. The camera was now able to supply motion without cuts, and actors were able to walk to and from the camera as well as across the screen. With the advent of the camera boom, *Motion* became upper case. Screen writers and directors, enraptured by this newfound maneuverability, wrote for and handled the camera as if it were a bloodhound on the trail of an escaped criminal. It was constantly sniffing around, continuously prowling from room to room, looking under couches, poking into closets. It wasn't a bit uncommon for a scene to start on an insert of a peanut and slowly pull back to a full shot of the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus, making a side trip on the way to a battlefield in Pennsylvania to listen to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Then came the revolution. In the field of screen writing, it was led by Dudley Nichols—who, in my opinion, is not only the

best screen writer but the only true screen writer ever turned out by Hollywood. Mr. Nichols, in turn, gratefully acknowledges his debt to John Ford for turning him into a rebel. Mr. Ford, of course, was never guilty of riding piggyback on this itinerant Cyclops—it just took people a little time to realize that his stinginess of camera movement was not due to being old-fashioned, but rather of being years ahead. I remember a friend of mine and a most talented director and writer, Jean Renoir, coming to my home one night as happy as a child at a Christmas tree. He had just seen *The Informer,* directed by Mr. Ford and written by Mr. Nichols. The reason for his high spirits was, as he put it, "I have just learned how *not* to move my camera."

How then, with such economy of movement, did *The Informer* emerge as one of the classic examples of *motion* pictures? There was camera movement, to be sure, but it did not advance or retreat arbitrarily at the whim of the director. It moved in or back with actors walking toward or from the lens, thus eliminating any sensation of camera movement. The motion, even in intentionally static scenes, was achieved in quite another manner. I can only describe it as motion by selectivity.

In order to make this clear, let me go to the theater for a comparison and pass along some of Mr. Nichols' thinking on the matter. Take, for example, an ensemble scene on the stage. A person sitting in the audience has many choices. He can focus his attention on the actor speaking or on any one of several who are listening. His eye can wander to one side or the other, to characters who are reacting. The stage director can try to control areas of interest; but, in the final analysis, the playgoer observes what he will. He is, in fact, his own editor, splicing together his individual accumulations of perceptions. This is not true of a member of a film audience. No matter where he may sit in the movie theater he sees only what the camera eye allows him to see. This, of course, has been true since Edison's first picture of the sneeze. But until Mr. Nichols came along, this selectivity was accom-

plished after the fact—in the cutting room. Many angles of the same scene were examined, and bits of it were spliced together in the hope that each cut would be dramatically important or possess a fresh visual interest. This was never considered the screen writer's province—until Mr. Nichols began to construct his scripts and write his scenes for the camera finder and not for an entire set. He predetermined what the audience would look at at any given moment. He decided whether the attention should be drawn to the action or the reaction. His scripts achieved a unity and a rhythm that was unmistakable; and with this careful selectivity came a feeling of motion—not motion of camera or of actors but, paradoxically, of the audience. Artfully, he maneuvered and shifted the point of view always in command of viewers' attention. To me, this type of motion is of primary importance in the adaptation of a stage play to the screen.

For economic reasons, most plays now being written for the Broadway theater are single-set shows. Naturally, the more constricted and confined the locale, the more difficult the adaptor's task becomes. Of course, there is always the desire and the opportunity to move the story out of the single set now and then in a natural manner—an opportunity that the playwright would have welcomed in the first place—but there is a danger in using a multitude of sets for the sake of giving the film, as we say in the trade, "production." There was a time, during the thirties, when this so-called "opening the story up and giving it air" was popular. A scene that ran four minutes on the stage and was played, let us say, in an apartment living room usually reached the screen in a half-dozen parts: a few lines in the living room, one or two as the characters exited into the hall, a half page as they walked to the elevator, a page in the elevator, some more as they crossed the lobby, another half page as they climbed into the taxi, and the topper as the cab pulled up in front of some out-of-the-way French restaurant.

This, of course, was not only a waste of money, but sheer non-

sense. The so-called "motion" in such cases succeeded only in destroying the scene. Any screen writer worthy of the name knows that dialogue written to be said in a relaxed manner on a divan cannot be spoken on the move. Conditions alter delivery; and if the former is tampered with, then the latter must be made to conform.

If the original scene has merit, my advice is to leave it alone and provide the motion by selectivity. In such a case, the screen writer must forget the expanse of the stage set and think in terms of the camera lens. He must decide where the emphasis will be—on the speaker, the listener, or both at the same time. He must determine what dialogue can be eliminated and improved by pertinent silent action without loss of content or import. He must set down the pauses as well as the words and fill them with meaning. If he succeeds in all this, he will take the first step toward writing a motion picture, still remaining faithful to the original.

The adaptor must also be conscious of the difference in structure. Theatergoers, it seems to me, are much more patient than movie-goers. The first act of a play is generally accepted as one of exposition. The audience is willing to sit—sometimes squirmingly, but willing to sit—while the maid or the butler or any other representation of the Greek chorus announces the fact that John is home from college, that Mary is engaged to Chester, and that the Mister and Missus have been fighting again. I've been told by painters that a safe criticism of any portrait is to say, "There's something wrong around the mouth." With motion pictures, you're always on firm ground to venture the opinion that "It was a little slow in the beginning." In adapting a play, the screen writer must find ways to condense that first act and get to the meat as quickly as possible. Of course in TV, it has to be even quicker. On the stage, a mystery play can devote act one to relationships, character, and motive for murder and then build up to that moment, just before the curtain, when the least suspected member of the cast takes out a revolver and begins to

clean it. In motion pictures, the film would have to open with an insert of the gun, held in the hand of an unseen villain as he fires two shots. In TV, the body is already on the floor; and the first line is "Don't nobody leave this room."

Third, the adaptor must be aware of distance. In the theater, because of that gap between even the first row and the actors, the performance is almost always a little larger than life. Like the actor whose voice is necessarily a bit loud and his gestures overly expansive, the playwright almost always has to write with a broad pen. This exaggeration, which is not only acceptable but is expected in the theater, is not true with films. Although only a photograph, the motion picture, because of the proximity of the camera to actor (and consequently audience to actor), is candid and realistic. As the actor has to tone down his stage performance for the camera, so does the screen writer have to be on guard against the playwright's necessary overemphasis, the pretentious line of dialogue and the artificiality of high-flown phraseology. He must also be on the lookout for such lines as, "John, you're looking at me so contemptuously!" The playwright, of course, is forced to define John's look for the benefit of those in the distant, less expensive seats. The screen writer merely utilizes a close-up of John, and no words are necessary.

The adaptor must make allowances for theater audiences' acceptance of the limitations of the stage. I think a good example of this is the Mary Martin production of *Peter Pan*. I saw it three times and enjoyed it immensely. Wisely, they made no effort to disguise the fact that they were flying around attached to wires. On the contrary, they did everything to point it up: and by so doing, the audiences' enjoyment was enhanced. Everyone was completely fascinated by the almost unbelievable performance of the wirepullers backstage. Yet, when the show was done on TV, many people, including some critics, complained because they could see the wires. And so it is with films—even more so. The movie-goer takes for granted that nothing is technically impossible on the screen, and the most ingenious special effect goes by

unnoticed and unappreciated. In New York at present, the play *Desk Set* is running. To show a passage of several hours, the stage is darkened; and the large office clock, hanging on the back wall, is illuminated; and the hands of the clock do a few hurried revolutions. When this happened the night I was present, the audience burst into applause at the originality of this clever device. If a screen writer put that in a script, he might very possibly be arrested for beating a dead horse. At least, he would have his Guild card taken away from him. These examples are mechanical ones, I admit, but I also believe theater audiences are far more lenient toward creative endeavor than movie-goers.

The adaptor must avoid the esoteric. Very often, the inexperienced screen writer, witnessing a performance of a play he is to translate into script form, will be completely fooled by the audiences' delight in a line of purely local significance. He must remember that he is writing for a possible audience of fifty million people living in all corners of this country. Beyond that, he is writing for every other country this side of the Iron Curtain—and sometimes, for those behind it. Hilarious references to things like Flatbush Avenue, the Long Island Railroad, the Oak Room at the Plaza, and Hammacher Schlemmer's will not be appreciated in Pecos, Texas, or Calgary, Canada.

The adaptor must, with most plays, simplify. On the stage, cameo performances by minor characters, even if they stop the flow of the story, are appreciated and applauded. On the screen, the writer must stay with his principal actors. It's a lesson I have had to learn over and over again. No matter how outstandingly the small part is played, unless its purpose is to further the main story line and unless the scene is played with one of the principals, it has no place in a motion picture. Why this is exactly, I don't know. I imagine it is because the screen is not so much an acting medium as it is a personality medium; otherwise, how can we explain the success of some big-chested box-office favorites, both male and female.

I have been surprised to find out that this is true also in the

dance. Recently, I appeared on a panel with Michael Kidd, the choreographer, who made the point that in staging a number for the New York theater he always used outstanding talent to carry the weight of any ballet or dance, allowing his leads to get sort of lost in the shuffle. The audience never complained. Yet, when he has done the movie versions of the same plays, he has had to redesign the numbers completely because the filmgoers will not sit still unless the principals are involved every step of the way.

Finally, the adaptor must be a literary impersonator. For anything he might add or rewrite, he must remain faithful to the style of the original author; otherwise, you're apt to get something that might resemble a painting started by Rosa Bonheur and finished by Picasso.

After *The Country Girl* was released, I was most pleased to be told by so many people that they found it exactly like the play. In reality, I eliminated a couple of subplots and a few characters and added three rather major scenes. One addition, I honestly believe gave the play more meaning and substance. Yet this scene was remembered most vividly by dozens who swore that they had seen it in the stage version. Some went so far as to bet me. Of course, I gave them odds. But I was truly flattered by their insistence because, obviously, I made the added material sound like Clifford Odets—and he's an awfully good writer to sound like.

Now that I've pointed out some of the pre-September differences between the stage and screen, let me quickly review the post-September similarities—some of which, I'm afraid, refute many of my assertions.

With the almost universal adoption of the wide screen, the film play is beginning to resemble the stage play more and more. And yet, I believe that the theater, of late, has borrowed more from the screen than vice versa. Two factors, I believe, are responsible for this. The first, as I have mentioned, is the almost prohibitive cost of putting on a play. The second is the pool of creative talent that finds itself at home on either coast.

Directors such as Elia Kazan, Danny Mann, Josh Logan, Garson Kanin, and playwrights like John Patrick, Tennessee Williams, Chodorov and Fields, and Hackett and Goodrich have brought to the theater techniques that were learned in Hollywood. The single-set play has become a cross section of a house or apartment, thereby giving characters an opportunity to move from room to room and always remain in complete view of the audience. The extensive use of bringing lights down and up in the middle of an act is nothing more than the employment of the "fade out" or "dissolve" in bridging scenes. In *The Diary of Anne Frank* (a beautiful play, incidentally), the recorded voice of Anne, reading from her diary, is heard through a loud-speaker, while the actors move silently about the stage. In this way, exposition is projected most economically; and the happenings of months are told in a handful of words. This, of course, is derived from the narrator's voice on the movie sound track. There was a time when the playwright spent sleepless nights trying to figure out ways to get characters off stage so as not to overhear an intimate scene. But this is no longer true. Now, the actors with the lines merely walk through a nonexistent wall into the adjoining room while the other performers remain motionless in sparsely lit areas so as not to detract from the action. This, in effect, is cutting to the two shot. Some directors, in fact, go much further. They often bring a character or characters practically to the footlights and, by controlling the size of the spotlight, give the audience a head close-up, the waist figure, or the medium long shot.

Yes, it's getting so that if you want to see a good, intimate motion picture, your chances are better in the theater than the movie house. This brings us to the other side of the coin, the wide screen, which has practically eliminated the forceful, revealing close-up—to me, the most important tool a writer or director has to work with. To cover this giant canvas, the tendency is to spread the action and employ the group shot—and a stationary group shot at that, because panning on the wide screen is not too success-

ful. Then, in an effort to keep the distant background sharp and clear, one pulls back even farther to carry the focus. In so doing, one pulls right back to 1910; and, once more, the leading lady is heard saying, "John is that a contemptuous look I see on your face?" I do not mean to imply that I'm antiwide screen, but I do think that it is being used recklessly with consideration only for form, not content. When penicillin was first introduced, it was prescribed for everything from the sniffles to a bad golf swing. I believe that we have fallen into the same trap. To film certain intimate stories in wide screen is just as ludicrous as staging a chess match in the Rose Bowl. I think it's fine for musical extravaganzas or stories of man against nature; but man against man or man against himself (which most plays are) require intimacy. The solution, of course, is a variable screen size. There are many who will tell you that small screen, black and white pictures are as obsolete as silent pictures. Well—I think that recently *Marty, On the Waterfront, High Noon, From Here to Eternity,* and—quite immodestly—*The Country Girl* were pretty good films, and successful ones, too. And I seriously doubt if they would have been *as* successful if they had been presented as murals rather than portraits. At any rate, the actors in those pictures were able to stand up without being decapitated.

How—and What—Does a Movie Communicate?

JOHN HOUSEMAN

JOHN HOUSEMAN, who shared with Orson Welles in the creation of the Mercury Theater, has directed plays on Broadway, and produced and directed television and radio programs. On leave of absence from his post as a producer at MGM, he is to be associated this summer in the management of the Shakespearean Theater at Stratford, Conn. Mr. Houseman prepared this paper for the International Design Conference in Aspen, Colo., last summer.

THE MOST COMPELLING INSTRUMENT yet devised for communication between human beings is the image of man himself. Animate this image; breathe life into it; let it move and talk at your bidding, within sight and hearing of an audience that is limited only by the size of our known world—and you have created a genie unequaled for potency and range in the history or in the imagination of the human race.

Two masters currently employ this genie: motion pictures and television. Very briefly, let us examine the uses they make of him, where they coincide and where they differ.

In one essential respect, TV and motion pictures are alike. They both communicate by means of images—human images—projected upon a flat surface and accompanied by the synchronized, though separately recorded, sound of the human voice. They vary technically in their methods of recording and projecting—the one electronically, the other mechanically; the one privately, the other publicly—a seemingly identical product.

But this identity is more apparent than real. Between TV and movies, for all their constant overlapping of each other's functions, there are certain deep and basic differences—aesthetic, operational, and historical.

TV was born, full-grown, as a mass medium, with the accumulated resources of one of the world's great communication systems

behind it. Technically and functionally, it was an elaboration of radio, which, in turn, was conceived and originally utilized as an extension of the telegraph. In a most literal sense, therefore, television is a medium of communication.

Therein lies its strength. The nature of its electric transmission gives it a virtue all its own—the excitement of an unpredictable action recorded, transmitted, and witnessed by the viewer at the instant of its occurrence. The TV camera and its crew, recording and transmitting a scene, are at exactly the same point of observation, with precisely the same capacity for surprise, as you, the eventual viewer, seated before your TV screen. Add to this the very special and characteristic thrill to be derived from the knowledge that your emotions are shared, not only with the recording technicians but, simultaneously, with millions of other persons who are viewing and hearing the same event under conditions and from a perspective identical with your own. Here is a new and very special sense of mass participation. And it applies not only to the obvious suspense of a ball game or of a Congressional investigation but even more directly and potently to the sudden illumination communicated in a debate, in a speech, or in a casual interview by some particularly compelling or disturbing (or even commonplace) human being caught in a moment of revelation. Here again simultaneity, which is the essential and exclusive property of TV, plays a dominant part in the nature and intensity of the emotion that is communicated. It is something that motion pictures, by their very nature, do not and cannot achieve.

Movies have a very different and far humbler origin than TV. They started as a cheap side show, with no audience at all beyond what they could snatch from the vaudeville houses and the shooting galleries. Created by gadgeteers and exploited by small businessmen, the cinema was never thought of as anything but a medium of entertainment. Beginning with the running horse and the jumping man, through *The Great Train Robbery* and the first agitated and trembling newsreels to the full-blown epics of

C. B. de Mille, the movies—short or long, comic or tragic—were created and marketed as dramatic entertainment. Historically and aesthetically, movies are a theatrical medium.

In the present state of the world's technical and economic development, movies play to audiences that are, in the aggregate, far more numerous than those who currently have access to television. Nevertheless, this does not alter the fact that the *unit* of motion-picture attendance is at all times limited and determined by theatrical considerations—from several thousands at Radio City and several hundreds in a drive-in to half a dozen or less at a private 16-mm. home viewing. In each case and for the duration of its running, a temporary and palpable community is formed among those who are physically gathered to view the film. This temporary community conditions the reactions of its members; repeated a billion times, it affects the nature of the medium itself.

So we have come, somewhat circuitously, to the question I was asked to answer here in the first place: How—and what—do movies communicate? Particularly our American movies—or "motion pictures" as Hollywood prefers to have them called.

One way to answer this is to take a look at the human elements involved. If you discover who made the pictures, you may also find out what they were trying to say—or you may not.

The passions behind a gold rush are confused and conflicting; and here in America, in those early days, while it was growing from a side show to a world industry, the film business *did* assume many of the characteristics of a gold rush. The professionals—the skilled prospectors—were few. Close on their heels came the adventurers: a wild romantic troop, violent and reckless, good for anything and for nothing in particular; actors, journalists, mechanics, and gamblers; some from the East, some from overseas, and some from nowhere at all; some educated, some almost illiterate; some middle-aged and some fugitives from college; all men of intense vitality, with nothing to lose. Since most of them lacked formal background, preconceptions, and inhibitions, they

found in movies the perfect field for their semicreative, semicharlatanic energies. To them, the medium was a vacuum in which they found themselves expressing their hopes, their nightmares, their prejudices, and their enthusiasms—all their own personal and collective versions of what constitutes Entertainment.

Out of this hubbub, what *was* communicated? Energy and excitement: the movie makers' contagious energy meeting the excitement of their audiences, most of whom had never been exposed to dramatic entertainment before and who now rushed into the meeting, uncritical and unreasoning, their eyes wide with wonder and gratitude, in this mythical and fantastic world of their mutual creation.

Many of the great names of motion pictures belong to this first wave of adventurers. With them, egging them on and sometimes impeding them, setting up the machinery for turning this great bonanza into an organized and profitable industry, came the businessmen—the promoters, the middlemen, the operators. For half a century, they and the movie makers have lived in an intimate but ambivalent relationship.

Wherever movies are made, this polarity exists: between an urge to create fine pictures and a gnawing preoccupation with their fate at the box office. Between the men who make them and the men who sell them, it is the means that are at issue, not the end. Both want the same thing—audiences; and each is convinced he knows more about the public taste than the other. This tension is as old as the movies. There is no creative picture maker who has not, at one time or another, become deeply involved in this struggle between the artist and the businessman for control of his films. Many, like Griffith and Stroheim, were broken in the struggle and deprived forever of their means of production.

And it should not be supposed that right is always or entirely on the side of the artist. In a medium that has flourished so miraculously—"a business that is also an art form"—how much of the

credit for this bewildering growth goes to the creators of films? How much to those who, by boldly exploiting their work, have developed the vast audiences who have made this creation possible? The truth is that they were all swept along by waves of technological advance and social change over which they had little control and from which they all profited. Chaplin's genius found freer expression and freer scope before a world audience of a hundred million than he ever could have realized on the stages of a few dozen variety halls. Conversely, how much did Chaplin's immediate and universal popularity contribute to the growth of this new public and to the phenomenal rise of the industry as a whole? Today, how much does the general health of the industry depend upon the risky stimulus of genius? How much upon the regular satisfaction of predictable appetites? How is originality to be measured against habit?

These are not easy questions to answer. Indeed, in this long and uneasy partnership between the businessman and the picture maker, it is not always clear who is the progressive and who, the reactionary. The picture makers complain that if the businessman were allowed to have his way he would end up with a product entirely dominated by formula; that exhibitors and theater owners would like nothing better than a regular flow of bigger and better versions of what has succeeded before. Chronically suspicious of any intense or personal communication in films ("Is it Entertainment?"), the businessmen have consistently underestimated the public's ability to assimilate fresh emotional experience.

On the technological level, the roles are reversed. Here it is the businessman who is the radical and the artist who tends to underestimate the public taste for change. In its brief history, three great technical revolutions have swept over Hollywood. All three were commercially inspired, all executed at the behest of the businessmen over the howling protests of the film makers. I am not suggesting that these protests were groundless. It has

never been conceded, and it never will be, that a talking picture is better than a silent picture, or color more effective than black and white; nor is there any comparison, by any aesthetic standards whatever, between the harmonious proportions of the classic screen and the panoramic monstrosities of the present mode. Each one of these unwelcome changes was rushed through by the businessmen in a declining market, to anticipate the defections and stimulate the appetites of a fickle public. In each case, the changes were followed by a sharp rise in aggregate business (which is all the businessman is concerned with), accompanied by an equally sharp drop in the quality of the films made under the new system. (It is a matter of ironic comment that of the films released in 1953 and 1954—two years in which the businessmen decided that color and large screens alone could save the industry—the two that received the highest awards and made the most money were black and white, small-screen productions: *From Here to Eternity* and *On the Waterfront.*

In the past few minutes, I have repeatedly used the word "movie makers" as a general term to describe those who create films in contrast to those who sell them. The time has come to define their function and to try and isolate—in the case of commercial movies intended for mass circulation—those human elements that determine not only their aesthetic form but also the character of their communication.

When you view a movie today, you have to sit through almost two minutes of credits. To conform with union requirements, they include everyone from the hair stylist to the director. All these persons have, in some measure, contributed to the making of the picture; what it finally communicates is, in a very real sense, the sum of their collaboration.

Too often, it is that and nothing more: what is communicated is a general tone of collective competence as well as a vague, not too sanguine hope that the picture will get by and pay for its overhead. Every year, several hundred such pictures are produced in

Hollywood. Of staple length and fairly predictable style and content, they are turned out more or less on schedule and with a fair expectation of aggregate profit. Hundreds more are made at varying costs and with varying degrees of efficiency in the other movie centers of the world.

Though they are the staples of our business, we need not concern ourselves with them here—but only with those movies, large or small, which bear clear evidence of personal expression and make some effort at vital communication. And the question to be answered is, in such cases, *whose expression and whose communication is it?* How is it realized? Who initiates and maintains the aesthetic tone of a motion picture? Who determines its content and controls its form?

Think of some of your own favorite movies; go back quickly over the list of the films you remember as having excited or moved you. On each one of these pictures—clear and unmistakable—is a signature. On many of them, it is the signature of the director: the director performing not only the specific functions of his craft but also the wider and fuller functions of "movie maker."

Since the director works at the very core of the project's activity, it is not surprising that, so often, he should also be its prime mover. His is the one essential and indispensable activity in film making. He it is that executes the movie. At his command and in response to his personal energy, the typed pages of script, the natural or constructed scenery, the lamps, the camera lens, the individual temperament, and the professional equipment of the actors and technicians are suddenly fused in that decisive and final act—THE SCENE, whose sum constitutes a movie. That much, every director must do; it is the specific duty for which he has been hired. It may be *all* that he does or that he is permitted to do. In that case, the finished film reflects his creative personality in a very thin and limited way and communicates virtually nothing except a desire to keep his job. It does not concern us here.

You don't have to be a professional or even a movie fan to

sense—when you see a picture by Hitchcock or Flaherty or Griffith or René Clair—that the director has done far more than stage the scenes. For better or for worse, the movie is *his:* his influence begins before the first word of the script is written, before the first actor is hired, or before the first set is rough-drafted on the designer's board. And it does not stop till the last frame is cut and the last strip of sound track is transferred.

This is not intended as an advocacy of artistic dictatorship or a tribute to monomania. It is a sober realization of the absolute necessity for Unity in an art form that is as mercurial as the motion picture. Making a movie *is* a collaborative act; but such a collaboration functions effectually and freely only within the vital matrix of a well-integrated and unified creative whole.

How many times, in a movie, have you seen camera work that is proficient or even arresting, yet ineffectual and irritating in its irrelevance? Ask any cameraman who is not tired and timorous, and he will tell you that photographing a picture with unity of style and a firm conception of its dramatic form is infinitely preferable to working on one in which he is left to his own devices.

This is true of every technical and creative element involved. It applies very specially to the actor: no actor can give a valid or rewarding performance who has not been made clearly and firmly aware of the total form and final intent of the work in which he is called upon to play a part. Some actors have such strong individual magnetism that the only unity in which they can be integrated is that of their own personality. In that case it is *their* signature that the picture bears.

It certainly applies to the writer, who has always occupied a rather special and equivocal position in the movie world. For all their constant use of dramatic dialogue, movies are not a verbal medium, such as the theater or even TV. Movies are made, not written; a writer does not, properly speaking, write a movie script; he works on one. Therefore, he welcomes the opportunity to collaborate in an act of communication that he shares and ap-

proves and in which good use can be made of his particular kind of imagination and skill. The desperate writer is the one who sits in his cell month after month banging out script for a film of which he barely comprehends the form or the intention: one in which (as so frequently happens for lack of a firm and decisive structure) his dialogue will be expected to bear a load which words alone cannot possibly carry in an art form that is primarily visual. It is out of this despair, and in sheer professional self-protection, that so many of the best writers have quit the business as writers and become movie makers, by adding the functions of director and/or producer to that of their original craft.

For there are producers, too, whose signature may be found on your list: they are those few who have succeeded in turning their amorphous executive duties into a function of creative unification.

To the question, then, of "Who makes the Movies?" there is, as you might have expected, no clear or simple answer. When you have analyzed and explained all the functional and organizational elements that go into the making of a motion picture, you still have not reached the heart of the matter: that unpredictable miracle of individual energy at the core of a movie's essential communication. It may take the form of technical perfection—as in the Japanese picture *Gate of Hell*—in a range and an arrangement of color so exquisitely conceived and executed that it opens up a whole new area of visual pleasure. It occurs when a director, like Kazan in *East of Eden,* suddenly stimulates certain nerves and sets in motion certain patterns of feeling not frequently touched with quite that intensity; or when a writer, like Chayefsky in *Marty,* re-discovers simplicity. It may be a sudden, delightful sense of imbalance, such as that conveyed by Jacques Tati as he moves with jaunty strides through the familiar yet unpredictable universe of *Mr. Hulot's Holiday.* It may be the emergence of a new personality of such beauty or vigor that, overnight, it creates a common mythology among audiences thousands of miles apart and with no other possible point of contact.

For such communications, the movies, with their flexible and highly charged dramatic form, have always furnished a fruitful soil. It is disturbing, therefore, to note Hollywood's growing tendency to concentrate on the filming of material that has already proved itself successful in other media. According to a recent statement, "About eighty percent of our present motion picture output is based on published books, stories appearing in magazines with a national circulation and produced stage plays."

Today, theatrical hits and best-selling novels are being acquired with little consideration for their cinematic possibilities, for no better reason, often, than that they *are* hits and best-sellers. With the gradual decline in the potency of the established star system, and considering the mass audiences' prevalent habit of concentrating their patronage upon a few hugely successful items to the neglect of all others, it may be sound merchandising for the sales and publicity departments to protect themselves with what is known in the trade as "pre-sold" product. But it threatens to turn Hollywood from a vital center of mass entertainment into a conversion plant or disseminating agency for other people's successes.

And that brings me, finally, to consider the *content* of our motion pictures. For reasons that are implicit in their origins and that have multiplied with the years, American film makers have always been reluctant to inject controversial contemporary problems into their work. Save as an occasion for melodramatic action, our movies have remained comparatively unaffected by the shattering events of the past fifty years. The "neorealistic" movies that came out of Italy at the end of the last war; the revolutionary films made by the Soviets in the early twenties; the growing neurosis of German motion pictures (described by Siegfried Kracauer in *From Caligari to Hitler*) that found its culmination in the Nazis' epic nightmares of the late thirties—each of these film cycles, for better or for worse, directly reflects the political events and the mental climate of its own time and place.

Our nearest equivalent, I imagine, are the gangster films—from

the Bad Men of the West through Capone and "Murder Inc." to the latest encroachments of the "Syndicate." But it is hardly the same. Despite all the reproaches that they have called down upon our heads—from well-wishers and ill-wishers alike—it is difficult to see in the endlessly repeated and long since formalized Hollywood gangster movie anything more significant than a regrettable, and apparently irremediable, national taste for violence in our entertainment.

What, then, is the total effect produced by our pictures? Is there, in fact, sufficient unity in our product to carry a consistent or perceptible ideological identity? In all these years, in all these thousands of films that we have made and shipped and shown in every inhabited corner of the globe—what *have* we been communicating? At home, because they are so closely in mesh with the general pattern of our lives, the communication of our movies is hardly separable from that of all the other social and emotional influences to which we are continuously exposed. Abroad, where they arrive as strangers, its nature becomes clearer.

I believe that, in certain ways, our films and the manner in which they are received follow those laws of energy which relate to the attraction of the greater mass. Inevitably, in the past forty years, our pictures have become identified with our position as the world's most rapidly growing unit of political and economic power. For negative as well as positive reasons, the peoples of the world are concerned with us; our presence is pervasive. To satisfy this curiosity and to allay this preoccupation have become the main function of our films abroad.

It has long been the custom to deride Hollywood films for their atmosphere of ostentatious display. The fact is that material luxury, in its most fancy and in its most practical terms, has always been an important element in our communication. To the fabulous palaces and the black marble swimming pools has succeeded the even more alluring spectacle of domestic elegance: the "dream kitchen" in every cottage and the Cadillac in every

garage. In this respect, let's admit it, our movies' communication does not seriously differ from that of the advertising pages of *Life* or the *Saturday Evening Post;* except that, being dramatically presented, the siren message of material well-being is delivered by a film with a far higher degree of personal identification. To some, our films are objectionable flaunting of our good fortune; to many more, they furnish a temporary, if illusory, escape from the bitter realities of want.

If luxury and energy were all we communicated in our movies, it would be a disturbing and discouraging thought. I hope there is something more—something inevitably related to these two but which, in some small measure, transcends them. I believe that, in an uncertain way, our films—for all their violence, their frequent vulgarity and their occasional inanity—*do* carry to the far ends of the earth a residue of something more. It is not easy to define: it has to do with good will and with those rights of man mentioned in our Declaration of Independence; it has to do with the endless horizon and the open frontier which played such a vital part in our brief history; it has to do with the stereotypes of "individual enterprise" and "unlimited opportunity" which, for all their abuses and corruptions, still determine the dynamics of our society. For all that it is largely unspoken and partly unrealized, I like to think that there is communicated by our motion pictures some vague reflection and some weak echo of the American Dream.

Some Considerations on the Rise of the Art-Film Theater

JOHN E. TWOMEY

JOHN E. TWOMEY recently received his M.A. in Communication at the University of Chicago, and is currently employed in the research department of J. Walter Thompson Co. Mr. Twomey is also the author of "The Citizens' Committee and Comic-Book Control: A Study of Extra-Governmental Restraint," which appeared in the recent Duke University publication *Law and Contemporary Problems,* a symposium on obscenity and the arts.

ROGER MANVELL, in his new book *The Film and the Public,* gives a penetrating analysis of the important question of film art *vs.* film commercial. Judging the film in relation to the other media of mass communication, Manvell notes a situation peculiar to the cinema which he feels has inhibited its artistic growth. He writes:

> There is still, after fifty years, almost no specialization in the presentation of cinema entertainment, at least as far as the English-speaking film is concerned. If a picture is to be financially successful, whether it be comedy, satire, melodrama, or tragedy, Western or musical, slapstick, or fantasy, it must pass through the same routine of exhibition. This is very different from the conditions which affect the production of printed publications, broadcasting (in Britain), and even the "live" theatre; in all of these different tastes are deliberately fostered and specialization in kinds and grades of entertainment and information is the very essence of the policy of production. The only specialized form of provision in the cinema occurs in the newsreel theatres and particularly in the few cinemas which screen foreign-language films, and in privately organized film societies.[1]

Evidence generally bears out Manvell's views, but the postwar increase in art theaters ("specialized cinemas" in Britain), film societies, and the nontheatrical distribution of film has encouraged those who feel a need for more "artistic" motion pictures. Many art-film patrons see a renaissance in American movie tastes

[1] (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955), 187–188.

in the initial successes of many newly established art-film theaters and in the influence of art films on Hollywood picture standards.[2]

An important aspect of the growth of the art film has been its increasing appearance on American screens at the same time that television has been creating Hollywood's greatest economic crisis. From 1948 through 1954, the regular movie-house attendance declined some forty million.[3] During this period, theater closures were hitting an all-time high; and exhibitors, in order to stay solvent, came to rely on the innovations of 3-D, drive-in theaters, popcorn concessions, and movies made by the various wide-screen techniques. Some exhibitors began seeking out films of quality to show in small intimate theaters under the title of "adult entertainment" or "art."

Today, there are 226 motion-picture theaters devoting their entire screening time to films from other countries, reissues of old-time Hollywood "classics," documentaries, and independently made films on offbeat themes.[4] This figure does not include those theaters located in foreign-language neighborhoods which show foreign films unsubtitled.[5] Another 400 theaters are run on a part-time art-film basis. Art-film theaters are found primarily in large metropolitan areas and in college and university communities. These theaters represent only an infinitesimal part of the 15,029 permanent four-walled motion-picture theaters in the United States, and are found in only seventy communities. Nevertheless, they represent a distinct change in motion-picture appetites in America.

It is difficult to explain the significance of the emergence of the art-film theaters, their audiences, and what meaning these theaters have. This difficulty stems primarily from the dual nature of

[2] Although the old formulas still prevail in Hollywood, there has been a marked increase in experimentation, the use of new themes, the use of foreign actors, locations and story content, and, most important, a tendency toward realism which can be said to be in some degree influenced by the success of art films in the United States.

[3] *The Film Daily Year Book* (New York: The Film Daily, 1955), 141.

[4] *Ibid.*, 143.

[5] The great majority of these films are never seen in art-film theaters. They are principally shown without subtitles in foreign-language neighborhoods. Very few of the 43 films imported from Mexico last year were shown outside of the Southwest or the Spanish-speaking neighborhoods in large urban centers.

the motion picture. Created as a commercial product, the film is an economic unit governed by the practices of our capitalistic economy. On the other hand, and seemingly in conflict with its economic nature, a motion picture is the creation of artists. A third element, public taste, must also be considered in any analysis of the popularity of a film or film type. Roger Manvell relates these three factors when he states:

> Every picture is a gamble in public taste, and investment in an artist's ideas is the risk which the company always has to take. Even the formula picture is a risk, because the mere mixture of popular themes and actors may not finally combine into a film which makes the money flow back. Every film is a unique event, a unique voyage into the difficult, shifty seas of popular taste.[6]

Of the many factors that have contributed to the building of American audiences interested in art films, the establishment of film libraries and the study of film appreciation in colleges and universities have been important. Chief among film libraries is the Museum of Modern Art, which was begun in 1935, and now contains prints of most of the outstanding foreign motion pictures, American classics, and films of historic value. Maintaining an extensive lending service, the Museum has been a prime mover behind the serious study of the film in American universities.

The widespread wartime use of documentary film—a type of motion picture greatly neglected in the United States because of its presumably small commercial value—helped create audience interest in new film themes and techniques. Of the many 16-mm. movie societies to emerge, the most successful has been "Cinema 16," an educational, nonprofit organization which was incorporated in New York City in 1947. The reason for its organization and subsequent success—it grew from a membership of less than 100 to over 6,000—must be sought in relation to the type of film it has presented. In the words of its founder,

> Cinema 16 offers films that comment on the state of man, his world and his crises, either by means of realistic documentation or through

[6] Manvell, *op. cit.*, 189.

experimental techniques. It "glorifies" nonfiction. . . . It hails a film that is a work of art, but will not hesitate to present a film that is important only because of its subject matter. Its avant-garde films comment on the tensions and psychological insecurity of modern existence or are significant expressions of modern art. Its social documentaries stimulate rather than stifle discussion and controversy.[7]

Elimination of the former monopolistic trade practices of large film producers and distributors also played an important role in preparing the way for the postwar successes of the art film. In the 1940's, a series of federal court decisions stopped such trade practices as blind-buying and block-booking which had long maintained a strangle hold on motion-picture exhibitors throughout the United States. Greater freedom for exhibitors in the selection of films was one result of these court decrees. Some exhibitors used this opportunity to rent foreign or independently made motion pictures, especially when Hollywood film production dropped drastically following the court rulings.

Essentially, postwar films from abroad stimulated the growing interest in motion pictures which did not follow the usual Hollywood formulae. Although the screening of foreign productions in the United States was not a new development, certain events in the postwar period promoted greater acceptance of these films as well as a new popularity among American moviegoers.[8]

Prior to World War I, the film industries of Europe flourished as successfully, if not more successfully, than those of the United States. France, in 1908, sold twice as many films in the United States as our own companies did. By 1914, France had a quasi-monopoly of the entire international film market.[9] But World War I ended European film production. In the ensuing four years,

[7] Amos Vogel, "Cinema 16," *Hollywood Quarterly*, IV (Summer, 1950), 420.

[8] The importation of films from abroad began as a successful commercial venture in the early twenties. Joseph Burstyn and Arthur Mayer of New York and Abraham Teitel of Chicago were pioneers in this field. Abe Teitel was one of the first to make personal trips to Germany and Russia in the early twenties to bring home to special audiences the films of quality being produced at that time. Among the few art theaters established before the postwar boom was Teitel's World Playhouse, which opened at the time of the Chicago World's Fair in 1933.

[9] George Sadoul, "The Postwar French Cinema," *Hollywood Quarterly*, IV (Spring, 1950), 233.

the film producers of America prospered and soon cornered the world film market.

Huge profits from the exported motion pictures enabled the American film industry to make large capital outlays. This solid economic base helped to make possible the films of spectacular themes and technical quality which have made Hollywood famous. Conversely, the European film producers were for many years doubly handicapped. In the first place, the entrenched position and widespread popularity of American imports limited the foreign home market.[10] Secondly, foreign films had little access to the huge American market and only the barest possibility of successful competition in the world market which was dominated by Hollywood.

Effective business practices, augmented by the colossal financial strength of the American film industry, helped to keep foreign films from exerting any real competition either in their home markets or internationally. In addition, American film producers bought shares in foreign producing and distributing companies, and thus gained a degree of control over potential competitors. A prime example of this is Warner Brothers' ownership of 45 per cent of the huge Associated British Picture Corporation. Another practice more apparent to the general movie-going public has been Hollywood's ability to siphon off the cream of foreign film talent as soon as it emerges. Many foreign motion-picture directors and stars come to the United States to make a few pictures and a great deal of money, and later return to their native film industry. But others have remained for longer periods, and some have eventually made their home here.

To combat these inroads on their home film industries, European countries have from time to time enacted various forms of protective laws. In some countries, quota systems, such as the one

[10] "The foreign public wanted Hollywood films, and was prepared to make trouble for any government that sought to shut them off altogether. Foreign exhibitors wanted full houses so they could pay their rent, and their landlords wanted the rent. As an example of how a uniquely popular product can override the stiffest protectionism, Hollywood's success was to be compared with that of French dressmakers and perfume manufacturers." Llewellyn White and Robert D. Leigh, *Peoples Speaking to Peoples* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1946), 79.

instituted by Great Britain's Cinematograph Film Act of 1928, were set up. These acts made it mandatory for motion-picture theaters to show a certain percentage of nationally made films. In Great Britain, Americans countered by setting up their own production companies, hiring British staffs, and proceeding to turn out cheaply done "quickies" to be shown early on the cinema programs and thus comply with the letter of the law. This practice continued until 1938 when a minimum production-cost law was enacted, and the quickie movie soon died.

At the close of World War II, great resistance developed in Europe against the importation of the large backlog of American films produced during the war. European studios, with the exception of those of Great Britain, had produced a very meager number of motion pictures during the war years, and the threat posed to their postwar film industries by the mass importation of American films was universally felt.

In Great Britain, American film companies encountered J. Arthur Rank and a British government who were determined to support their own growing movie industry. Rank, a Yorkshire businessman, began early to build for the eventual postwar struggle with American film competition. In 1943, he combined under his leadership the majority of the major British studios. Backed by solid financial strength and such "prestige" pictures as *Henry V, Brief Encounter, The Red Shoes,* and *Great Expectations,* he set himself to do battle for a share of the world film market as well as the home market. Rank learned his lessons from successful American companies and bought 20 per cent control of Universal-International, an American film-producing and -distributing company. Rank's pictures were initially released and scored their first success through this company.

The postwar economic crisis in Great Britain and the weakened condition of her film industry led the British Government in 1946 to tax up to 75 per cent the film revenue accruing to American film companies from movies shown in Britain. In reaction to

this tax, no American pictures were exported to Great Britain between August, 1947, and June, 1948. During this time, the Rank empire failed, quantitatively as well as qualitatively, to fill the gap with films; and the pressure of possible widespread cinema closures finally brought about negotiations and tax compromises with American companies. The subsequent importation of a year's backlog of American pictures further weakened the British film industry.

It is not surprising that the omnipresent shadow of Hollywood should also influence the substance of the films of other countries. Witness the lament in 1948 of British writer on films Monia Danischewsky:

> Here in Britain we are struggling to emerge from a quarter of a century of American domination of the film industry and to establish a native cinema. Significantly, the struggle has only been to some purpose since we have started making films truly reflecting the British character. This means that they have been slower in tempo than American films, as our lives are slower in tempo, more reticent, understated, sentimental, but with the restrained, inhibited sentimentality of the English. So much had the Hollywood film become the yardstick that when these new British films first appeared, the more commercial elements of the industry, i.e. the distributors and exhibitors, felt that they broke the box-office rules by under-playing the emotions, avoiding the contrived happy ending, sacking the overworked but always unseen celestial choir—and most heinous rule-breaking of all—banning the blonde from the cockpit, the submarine, the coal-mine and so on.[11]

Thus, since World War I, film industries abroad have been directly stunted by the American film industry's superiority in talent, technique, quality, and abundant home and international markets.

Two events are largely responsible for the foreign film's quick gain of a faithful and expanding audience in the United States: J. Arthur Rank's ability to have his prestige pictures distributed

[11] *The Penguin Film Review,* no. 5 (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1948), 87–88.

here and the screening of Italy's *Open City* in New York and later throughout the country. This one Italian picture gained such widespread publicity and mass audiences that its influence on the subsequent popular reception of postwar films from abroad cannot be underestimated.

Roberto Rosselini produced and directed *Open City* in Rome in 1945. He spent less than $18,000 on the picture, used no professional actors or formal working script, and filmed the movie on outdated negative film. But the finished product earned a million dollars in the United States, initiated a Neo-Realistic Italian film era, and created an avid audience for foreign films.

There is no doubt that *Open City* has been an overwhelming success. Similarly, a popular demand did arise, and has continued, for such succeeding Italian films as *Paisan, Shoe-Shine, Angelina,* and *The Bicycle Thief.* But there is doubt about the reasons for both. Some believe the answer has to do with the growth of American audiences with more mature and sophisticated film interests. Other observers point out that these films have been advertised and exploited as "exotic" motion pictures and that herein lies the clue to their popularity. Arthur Mayer, the man who handled the American distribution and exhibition of *Open City* states frankly:

> "Open City" was generally advertised with a misquotation from *Life* adjusted to read: "Sexier than Hollywood ever dared to be," together with a still of two young ladies deeply engrossed in a rapt embrace, and another of a man being flogged, designed to tap the sadist trade. The most publicized scene in "Paisan" showed a young lady disrobing herself with an attentive male visitor reclining by her side on what was obviously not a nuptial couch. "The Bicycle Thief" was completely devoid of any erotic embellishments, but the exhibitors sought to atone for this deficiency with a highly imaginative sketch of a young lady riding a bicycle.[12]

Mayer's disclosures offer important considerations but are by no means a final judgment on the reasons behind the postwar success

[12] *Merely Colossal* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 233.

of foreign films. His comments do, however, further complicate the search for the cultural meaning of the emergence of the art film in the United States.

We know that the potential for the popular reception of quality films has existed for some time. Whether or not the limits of this potential have been reached in the existing art-film audiences remains to be seen. We know too that a series of interrelated social and economic events have provided the means of presenting to discriminating audiences films of artistic quality.

Reiterating the essential facts of the economic aspects of the art film, Arthur Mayer admonishes those of us who praise the new-found popularity of art films solely in the light of artistic taste. He writes:

> Those of us who . . . realize the necessity for such outposts of culture would be of greater service to our cause if we talked less glowingly about the progress of the art houses and sought more zealously to understand the nature of their current status.
>
> Their problems are many. The two primary difficulties, however, consist of a scarcity of pictures and of patrons. . . . And until we have art theaters in the Fargos as well as in New York and Pittsburgh the movement will never be built on a solid national foundation.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Neither of the ancient bogeys—Hollywood moguls or inflexible exhibitors—stand in the way. All that is necessary is for the intellectuals to stop paying lip service to the better cinema and to start paying admission. When they do so the exciting thing about American movies will be, not how much wider they are, but how much better.[13]

At least, Mayer and many others in the motion-picture business have acknowledged that the art theater is a commercially as well as artistically established institution. No longer is the art film a delicacy for the palates of a few connoisseurs. Mayer's views serve as a reminder that, as the art film emerges from the small screening rooms of a few specialized film societies and art-film theaters and reaches for a mass audience, a greater understanding of both its peculiar appeal and its potential market becomes essential.

[13] "Hollywood Verdict: Gilt But Not Guilty," *Saturday Review* (Oct. 31, 1953), 44–47.

Mexican Films: Their Past and Their Future

IRENE NICHOLSON

IRENE NICHOLSON has been co-editor of *Film Art,* published in London, and maker of short experimental films. In 1950, together with friends, she started the Librería Británica, Mexico, the only shop in Latin-America entirely devoted to British books. Miss Nicholson is now back in England working on the scientific monthly magazine *Discovery.*

In Mexico, there is something about the way the light falls, about those immense sweeps of desert and the bald mountains shaped like the landscapes of another planet, about the cactus leaves made liquid by reflections, the photogenic hats, serapes, *rebozos,* the donkeys punctuating the loneliness, that has always, since before Eisenstein, attracted the film director and the cameraman. Indeed, by right of initiative, if not by ownership of the dollars to follow up the initiative, the true birthplace of the cinema industry might have been Mexico; and Hollywood might have been established not in California but on the High Plateau.

In the early days of the camera when the French brothers Lumière were experimenting with moving pictures, a young Mexican named Salvador Toscano Barragán, attracted by an advertisement, wrote to Paris and acquired a combination camera-projector (he had to sacrifice his stamp collection to pay the duty), with which he began to exhibit newsreels and shorts imported from Europe. A flair for showmanship brought him a good profit and allowed him to make his own local newsreels as well. Yet when he went on tour beyond the Texas-Mexico border, he had to write home, "The Yankees have never seen anything like it. They are astonished, but here people don't spend as much as in Mexico . . ."

That was in 1900, and evidently the United States was less cinema-minded then than its vast, poor neighbor to the south.

Then came the Mexican revolution, and Toscano saw that he was in a special position to record history. With one colleague and with the intrepidity of a front-line journalist, he filmed under fire, escaped across roofs, covered battles from Chihuahua to the southern border, captured the gestures of Madero, Pancho Villa, Zapata, Obregón, Carranza, and recorded the landing of the American marines in Veracruz. Even in the midst of the hubbub, he showed an unerring eye for composition. The beauty of the shots and the quality of the photography impressed Paul Rotha several years ago in Mexico when he saw the film in the form in which it had been edited by Toscano's daughter, Señora Carmen Toscano de Moreno Sánchez, and entitled *Memorias de un Mexicano*. It is a historic film, worthy of perservation in the archives of the world's cinema.

But the talkies came, and Toscano could not keep up with the increasing demands upon his purse. He was an engineer by profession, and he returned to a safer means of earning his living.

Later came Eisenstein, and everyone knows the story of how the Mexican scene so entranced him that he overstayed his leave from the Soviet, was recalled, and left the film behind. Most cinema lovers have seen either *Thunder Over Mexico,* Upton Sinclair's version of one incident in Eisenstein's original script, or other slices of those miles of celluloid onto which Eisenstein had printed his deep understanding for the Mexican peasant, silently preoccupied with death, making death flower like a Catherine wheel or an English garden, making death immortal by preserving the old, old gods beside the new men, who are yet older than when the Spaniards came.

Other directors have invaded the country since, but none with Eisenstein's power. Paul Rotha, on a short visit to make a documentary, was interested in the possibility of foreign companies, English or American, shooting films "on location" in the generous spaces of Mexico. However, there are official difficulties, because the Mexican film industry is now strictly controlled by trade unions. Mexicans themselves are making some excellent films,

and the technical standard (camera work, lighting, sets) is as high as anywhere in the world. But, though they insist upon imported movies being matched with an equal number of Mexican ones exported, they are not paying sufficient attention to the needs of the foreign market. There are occasional artistic successes, such as Buñuel's *Los Olvidados* (*The Forgotten*), gloomy and sincere and touchingly beautiful in parts, or his *Robinson Crusoe,* or a more recent film, *Raíces,* made from four stories by Rojas González. But apart from these, there is very little that can be sent abroad except to Spanish-speaking countries and the Spanish-speaking sections of the United States. Buñuel himself produced still another authentically peasant film, of a bus ride from the mountains to the coast; and then, lamentably, a psychological shy-maker, *El* (*He*), in which a surrealist dream is all that remains of Buñuel's mastery of the medium.

"Cantinflas" (Mario Moreno) has made himself into a symbol, as Chaplin did before him. But it is unfair to compare him with Chaplin because he is Mexican through and through, from the trousers riding low on his hips to the endless patter which all boils down to the discovery that "the shoes can be ready tomorrow." There are similarities though. Like Chaplin, he has his stocks in trade, his trousers, his antics performed with a dead-pan face, then the sudden, illuminating smile. Like Chaplin, he has done some good mime, such as the game of billiards played with neither balls, chalk, cues, nor counters in *Si Yo Fuera Diputado* (*If I were a Senator*). Like Chaplin, he has a social conscience which may sometimes obstruct his art but which gives it intelligence above what we usually expect from the cinema. Unfortunately, however, his humor is so local that it can hardly be exported except to Latin-America. He has recently toured England and the Continent, and I understand has been making a film. It remains to be seen whether he can be as good outside of Mexico as within.

It seems that if Mexico really wants to enter the foreign market she should encourage and cultivate young Mexican authors who are writing about the kind of life to be found in Mexico and not

in Europe or the United States. Mexico is a country that is growing fast; it is very modern in certain aspects. But behind the shop window with its nylons and imported automobiles, there is the medieval, still almost feudal country, populated by peasants to whom, though an airplane may be an everyday sight, a motorcar or a train is unknown. This is the Mexico of the previously mentioned *Raíces.* This film, although rather simple-minded in its satire on the "white" visitor and archaeologist, is beautiful in its understanding of peasant psychology. It contains four stories, the best of which is "El Tuerto," about a one-eyed boy who is persecuted by his fellows. His mother takes him on a pilgrimage, where he becomes completely blind when some fireworks explode in his face. The boy would like to kill himself, until the mother reminds him that now his playmates will not molest him: he is blind, to be loved and pitied; not half-blind, to be mocked. That is the miracle which has been performed. They are firm in their faith. The moral is terrible, and lovely.

Besides the works of Rojas González, unfortunately only posthumously appearing on the screen, there are other stories by young and promising Mexican authors; and many of them could very well be filmed for export. Edward Fitzgerald, a Canadian film director living in Mexico, has tried, so far without much success, to interest the obdurately "Hollywood-minded" and "syndicate-minded" union in stories by Ramon Rubín, who has traveled among the more remote Indian tribes such as the Huicholes, and whose tales are full of possibilities for the movie director. He is not, and does not pretend to be, a great writer. But he does know Indian lore, the customs, superstitions, and silences—those silences so useful to the sensitive film director. (As I write this article, I have news that an unpublished story by Rubín is in fact to be filmed.)

Another very promising young writer is Juan Rulfo, who published a volume of short stories (one of which, in translation, appears in the September, 1955, issue of *Encounter,* London), and has followed this up with a short novel, *Pedro Páramo,* written

during the tenure of a scholarship with the Centro Mexicano de Escritores. With its impressionist technique, its playing fast and loose with time, this little volume is almost a film script as it stands. It has faults, particularly in construction of plot, but it is a very sensitive evocation of the mood of a village that was once alive and is now dead; the village had been kept together by one man and therefore disintegrated with him. Ghosts walk the streets and talk of the past; they lie in their graves and talk of what is above ground while they themselves rattle and creak. Memories blow like leaves through the pages, a child flying a kite, a girl sent down a well by her father. When Pedro's wife dies, he orders the church bells to be rung. All the surrounding district think it is a fiesta, and people come in hundreds—there's no stopping them. Pedro takes his revenge, and the village rots. This is Mexico, as Sean O'Casey is Ireland or Faulkner is America. At the time of writing, a letter from Mexico advises that a film under the title of *La Manda,* based on a short story by Rulfo, is just being completed.

In Mexico today, authors like Rulfo and Rubín cannot live by writing. The film industry ought to encourage them, not only because they have already produced material for fine scripts, but in order that more and still better work shall be available in future.

There is one other type of Mexican film that should be mentioned: the musical. Mexican popular music is bright and gay, much less sentimental than its Hollywood equivalent and much more rhythmical as a rule. The directors of their musicals could perhaps learn from Hollywood in the matter of story and plot; but Hollywood could certainly learn from Mexico about guitars and syncopation. Pedro Infante is a star with a good voice and light touch, though a recent solemn and rather "arty" excursion into Gorki was unfortunate. It is a pity these musicals cannot somehow be freed from the language difficulty. They might well be a source of income and recognition for the Mexican cinema industry.

Film Progress in Brazil

GEORGE N. FENIN

GEORGE N. FENIN, a drama and film critic-writer since 1938, now covers theater and motion pictures in New York for various newspapers and periodicals throughout the world. He is also editor of the American *Film Culture* magazine and is working with William K. Everson on an extensive history of the American western film, to be published soon in England and Italy.

THE FIRST AND ONLY GLIMPSE that American audiences have had of the creative work of Brazilian film makers is *O' Cangaçeiro,* directed by Lima Barreto, which was shown in a number of art theaters last year. Though not a masterpiece, it revealed a vigorous grasp of cinematic principles. In directing, acting, cutting, and camera work, the film made a definite contribution to the progress of the motion picture in South America as well as in Brazil. The significance of *O' Cangaçeiro* became clear when, in 1955 at the Third International Festival of Punta del Este in Uruguay, I was able to meet the leaders of the Brazilian film industry, and to discuss the future of motion-picture production in their country.

Five years ago, Brazil was making only a few feature films and most deplorable ones. Since then, both the quantity and the quality of production have definitely advanced. Against four films in 1950, Brazil produced thirty-two in 1953 and twenty-three in 1954. While film production became better organized, it also began to realize the contributions it could make along cultural and educational lines.

The best-equipped and most important studio is owned by Vera Cruz Productions, a company founded in 1949 by Franco Zampari and Francisco Matarazzo. Located between São Paulo and the port of Santos, it represents an investment of 80,000,000 cruzeiros ($1,188,000). A fourth of its area—which compares favorably with the acreage of some Hollywood studios—is occupied by adequate sound stages. Vera Cruz has eleven cameras and

excellent equipment for recording, dubbing, and editing. There are two other studios in the state of São Paulo—Estralla and Multifilms—and smaller ones in Rio de Janeiro.

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The growth of film societies has played a most important part in creating an audience for better native films. Completely ignored by the "intelligentsia" until the early nineteen twenties, movies were accepted on a cultural basis only in 1928 with the founding of the Chaplin Club of movie addicts, and the appearance of Brazil's first film magazine. The club did not last long, however, and there was no critical study of the motion picture until the appearance in 1940 of the new magazine *Clima* in São Paulo. In 1946 Almeida Salles, one of the most enthusiastic and qualified scholars of motion pictures, founded the Cine Club of São Paulo.

Critical study of the film soon spread to the universities and other cultural institutions. Then came the creation of the Filmoteca, the Film Library Division of the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo. The Filmoteca has presented many excellent film showings, including a retrospect of Brazilian productions, a program of international films, and a celebration in honor of Erich Von Stroheim during the latest of the São Paulo International Festivals. The Film Library has also done an important work in saving from destruction many important films that would otherwise have been turned into celluloid scrap for industrial use. The struggle to preserve irreplaceable classics of the screen will continue until legislation saves them from destruction.

In the last few years, the development of film societies in Brazil has been rapid and encouraging. There are now more than thirty. Through close coöperation, they have avoided the unhappy fate of first film clubs. Officers and members of Brazilian film societies have participated as observers at sessions of the Congress of Film Libraries of Argentine, Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay that met in Montevideo. In the future the movement of the above-mentioned countries—integrated with the cultural progress of Venezuela,

Paraguay, Cuba, and Chile—may play a great role in the growth of film appreciation in Latin-America. The Federation of Film Societies of the United States—newly created after the Film Council of America's Second Congress in New York—should coöperate with the South American "Congreso de las Cinematecas" in the exchange of ideas and films.

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Government interest in the film has taken two paths. The more promising has been the creation of the National Institute of the Educational Cinema. Its director, Dr. Gouvea Filho, has formulated two main policies. These are to encourage in general the showing of educational films, and, through special productions, to promote knowledge of Brazil among the Brazilians. The government is striving for a far-reaching policy of education through a specialized cultural and educational magazine, film projection in the most remote areas, a film library which supplies material to schools, and other technical and didactic means.

The government has not been so effective in the methods it has used in the censorship of films. The censor has established four categories for films shown to teen-agers. Pictures are approved for boys and girls of ten, fourteen, sixteen, and eighteen. This seems to us a rather pedantic classification; a span of two years in the maturity of an individual cannot mean much, at least for movie-showing purposes. A change in legislation seems to be in order, and several cultural groups have been fighting either for abolition of censorship or for a better system of enforcement.

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Brazil's progress in film production might have been swifter if Alberto Cavalcanti had not left Brazil in 1953 after producing *Terra é sempre Terra* and directing *Canto do mar, Simão, O Caolho,* and other pictures. For a time the Brazilian industry was led astray through a series of co-productions with Argentines. An example was Carlos H. Christensen's *Manos Sangrientas.* The lesson gained from this experiment was that the Brazilian industry should utilize native talents in writing and technique, while

at the same time aiming its films for an international as well as a domestic market.

Through my talks with Brazilian film makers and through certain films that have been made or planned, I feel hopeful of future progress. Brazil has a wealth of material and creative forces that need only to be properly organized and guided. In direct contrast with what is going on in Argentina, Brazilians show a refreshing desire toward real creation. They are coöperating on a new basis, and they should be able to contribute to the progress of the native motion picture as both an art and an industry. In the past Brazil has lacked film makers who could face and solve the many problems of production, and achieve both artistic and commercial success. Difficulties still remain, but the pioneer period is over, and one can now sense a new dynamic impulse.

Vera Cruz Productions is now preparing a trilogy of films dealing with the history of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. They will be based on *Time and the Wind,* a book by Dr. Enrico Verissimo, Director of Cultural Affairs for the Pan-American Union, which appeared in English about four years ago. The first of the three films will be directed by Lima Barreto, who made *O' Cangaçeiro,* and it will deal with the legendary bandit Captain Rodrigo, whose life will sum up the characteristics of the people of Rio Grande do Sul in past times.

In Punta del Este I was able to see *Sinhá Moça* by Tom Payne, a remarkably well-done film, which has not yet been shown in the United States. It suggests that, by placing emphasis on the vivid and vital reservoir of life in Brazil, on its picturesque and little known history, that nation should be able to produce at least five or six films of international appeal, high quality from the artistic point of view, and interesting possibilities in terms of commercial exploitation. *O' Cangaçeiro* has only a ray of hope in the future of the Brazilian cinema; *Sinhá Moça* reveals the sure possibilities of Brazil's new cinema.

Mankind on the Border

HARRY SCHEIN

HARRY SCHEIN is a Swedish film critic who contributes regularly to *Bonniers Litterära Magasin,* Sweden's leading literary monthly. The following article appeared in BLM, No. 5, last year, and was translated with the author's approval by Waldemar Westergaard, Emeritus Professor of History, and Erik Wahlgren, Professor of Scandinavian and German, University of California, Los Angeles.

THE MARK OF THE master is to set difficult problems for himself, such as to test his powers on an impossible subject and to find out if the impossible really *is* impossible. Lacking even adequate technical equipment, Luis Buñuel tackles *Robinson Crusoe,* deals with unrelieved solitude, and thereby challenges the very elements of film drama. Similarly, Carl T. Dreyer has always given himself difficult problems. In his film on Joan of Arc, he has ignored all the colorful historical stage properties and confined it to a series of rhythmically lighted close-ups around the lonely inner drama of the girl. It is a film about a soul, hard to endure, impossible to forget. *Film is action* and not soulfulness. But laws are not for the master.

Dreyer chose another impossible subject, akin to *Dracula* and *Frankenstein,* in *The Vampire.* In this film, reality and the occult merge into a single whole. The terror aimed at in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* is the innate incompatibility between reality and occult. In *The Vampire,* Dreyer has succeeded in reconciling the irreconcilable and thereby in conquering terror. Not only has he made the impossible possible, but crystal clear as well, self-contained as in any work of art.

In Sweden during the war, Dreyer tried to make a film, *Två Människor* ("Two Human Beings"), with only two characters—a dramatic absurdity. Frankly speaking, the attempt failed. Dreyer persists in believing that the fiasco was not the result of the impossible point of departure, but of the refusal of the producing

company, Svensk Filmindustri, to give him the actors he wanted and the working conditions he considered essential.

At the same time, Gustav Molander of Svensk Filmindustri made a film based on Kaj Munk's *The Word*. If one has a mischievous imagination, he can see Dreyer's new film, based on the same drama, as a subtle revenge on Svensk. A comparison of the two films is devastating for Molander. However, it is futile to make a comparison. Moreover, Dreyer is, to be sure, subtle, but certainly not petty.

Strictly speaking, Molander's film is not poor—in any event, not much poorer than Munk's drama itself. Dreyer has merely succeeded in giving the theme dimensions that are lacking, not only in the play, but probably also in Munk's conception. Dreyer has given Munk's religious appeal a fundamental and universal background that has far greater significance than the religious motif.

For several years, there have been rumors that Dreyer plans a film on Christ. In the light of these rumors, his interest in Munk's drama is natural. In addition to his attraction to the impossible motif of the film, Dreyer let its outer framework serve superbly as a finger-exercise for the Christ film.

The drama *The Word* centers on a Danish farmer family. The old father is a magnificent patriarch, deeply religious but a bit domineering, very proud and closely bound to the soil, and inwardly somewhat resigned in his religious outlook. His oldest son does not believe in God, but is married to an angelic wife. Another son is mad, "not from love, but from Sören Kierkegaard"; he is a religious brooder. The climax is a paraphrase of the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead. When the son's wife dies in childbirth, the family's grief is indescribable. But no one prays to God to restore her to life. Miracles no longer happen. Her little daughter, however, believes in her Uncle Johannes who maintains that he is Jesus of Nazareth, betrayed by his church, living in a world without faith and therefore without miracles.

And then, something happens which may be portrayed on the stage but has no place in the film—the miracle.

If one sees *The Word* as a prelude to the Christ film, he may omit consideration of its religious and propagandistic sectarianism. The elemental Christ legend concerns us all. Unlike Munk's drama, the Christ legend does not put faith *against* reason, but man against his limitations. The Christ story does not attack reason which is always meek, but pride which is always stupid. It preaches, not faith, but love.

In this way, *The Word* assumes its natural place in Dreyer's film production. All his films, including the old ones from the twenties, deal with man on the outer borders of his being. I believe that the land beyond this border is really of no interest to Dreyer. It makes no difference to him whether there is a heaven or a hell, occult light or biological darkness, a triumph of reason, faith, or tyranny. It is the border situation itself that is of interest.

Nowhere has Dreyer's humanistic pathos found more cogent expression than in *The Day of Wrath,* that jewel of his works, that jewel of the film art. *The Day of Wrath* is not based on an "impossible" idea, and perhaps for that very reason is less aesthetic and more direct in its appeal than are Dreyer's other films. It deals with witch hunting during the 17th century. Appearing during the war, it stood *for* reason and *against* faith and superstition. And yet, the same motif as in *The Word* is woven into it: man facing the border of man's being.

When one sees Dreyer in this perspective, it is easier to understand why his new film is so superior to Kaj Munk's drama. Yet this film labors under an important handicap—in its basic idea, in use of the original dialogue, and in the rigid form of the play. It is apparent, however, that Dreyer has conquered not only the theme on its own plane but the form as well. In *The Word,* Dreyer has once again rendered possible the impossible. One "has faith" in the miracle; one sees "theatrical film" as great film.

Dreyer's form is difficult, analytically, to grasp. It is all so

directly concerned with the inner essence, with artlessness and naked reality. His tempo has always been slow; but this very slowness has a function which it fills with unerring precision. He tries to activate the viewer negatively—to escape the customary sweeping the audience off their feet through a strongly accelerated tempo, through whole series of sensations. This active stimulation, so unique in film production, is, however, not forced into the picture through fulsome promises or temptations, but through puritanical simplicity. It is concentrated around the graphic line, the creative lighting, the musical structure, and, most of all, through the purity and naked simplicity of the action itself. Not only are the skies, ocean, and grass of the Danish sand-dune landscape shown archaically pure; but the same is true of every single feature of the film, each being so obviously self-evident that any alternative would seem unreasonable.

The sound technique in this film is supreme. Nature's sounds are heard constantly behind the dialogue. Coastal winds sound their accompaniments throughout the entire film; household noises, the ticking of the clock, the doctor's shears, the sounds of the farm animals—all are noted and reproduced with a subtle refinement that serves as a constant reminder of the reality present in the background of the spiritual drama.

The movement, the use of the camera and the montage are remarkably well balanced. As is always the case with theatrical film, the location is, in the main, limited to the walls of the stage. Dreyer's camera blithely negotiates a 360° circle with such skill that only the trained observer notices it. The camera follows the action so gracefully that it is not observed; the transitions are so logical that they are not recognized as interruptions or dramatic expedients.

The lighting arrangements have always been Dreyer's special technical forte. To be sure, in *The Word,* he has not achieved effects fully comparable with those in *The Day of Wrath.* Moreover, one begins to recognize a technique used earlier—for

example, the indirect light behind the strange roller curtains in *The Vampire,* beyond which a mysterious source of light (even at night) projects window sills and crosses as graphic elements which gives a sense of idyllic sadness and deceptive chiaroscuro.

But all this is, nevertheless, the mere background of the action. In his skill as a trainer of actors, Dreyer has probably never been excelled. How he found Maria Falconetti for the Joan of Arc role in *A Woman's Martyrdom* is now well-known. And, during a long period, he pressed out of this woman all that she could give, so that after this film she never found herself able to face a camera again. Dreyer likes to work with amateurs, as he did, for example, in *The Branded,* a film from the early twenties dealing with Russian Jews.

In *The Word,* the action and direction challenge comparison. To rank the performance of the various players is for me impossible; it would have to take the form of a re-telling of the parts played, of their psychological possibilities and nuances—so satisfying, so moving, so supremely convincing is the acting. Expressive innovations in acting are always entertaining; stage personalities arouse the highest admiration, but Dreyer creates human beings.

The Word belongs to the very few films which leave the happy impression of a great gift. One is grateful, agitated, overwhelmed by an exaltation which only art but almost never film can provide.

When in Rome . . . (Part I)

HUGH GRAY

HUGH GRAY is a screen, radio, and television writer. His connections abroad have included working with Korda, Cavalcanti, and the B.B.C. As a screen writer in Hollywood since 1944, his credits include *Quo Vadis? Ulysses, Helen of Troy,* and *The Prince and the Pauper.* Mr. Gray was recently appointed an assistant professor in the Motion Picture Division of the Department of Theater Ars, University of California, Los Angeles. Part II of the author's impressions on location in Rome will appear in the next issue of the *Quarterly.*

THE INDISPENSABLE Paul Rotha writing in 1930 of the movie of 1913 recalled that it was out of Italy that there came the first big productions or "feature films" as they were known, including a version of Homer's *Odyssey, the Fall of Troy* . . . but greatest of all, the forerunner of every spectacle film since, was *Quo Vadis?*, a veritable mammoth production of 1913, eight thousand feet in length. This was bought and shown by George Kleine in America where, to that date, the most pretentious effort had been *The Life of Buffalo Bill.* Since the day when American producers first saw *Quo Vadis?* cinema audiences of the world have been presented with super-spectacle after super-spectacle. From *The Birth of a Nation,* Griffith's reply to the Italian picture at the end of 1914, through the years of *The Ten Commandments* . . . *Ben-Hur* . . . super-films abounded, developing today into . . . the singing, dancing and talking variety. In the few years just before the war the feature film sufficed to build up the industry (increased audiences meant bigger film studios and larger cinema theaters), and in 1914 the opening of the Strand Theater on Broadway marked a new era in the history of the cinema. The way was open for the position as it is today.

As we read, we cannot help feeling a haunting sense that we are round again at the place where we came in; and that the student of the cinema in the year 2000, when all the prints will have presumably perished, will have to look very closely at the dates in order to find some way to distinguish the two periods 1913 and 1950. Certainly, it is where *we* came in—we, that is, who have been involved during the past few years in the remaking of *Quo*

Vadis?, of *The Odyssey*, and of *The Fall of Troy*, though we have called the latter *Helen of Troy* and have given to Odysseus his Latin name, Ulysses.

Now that the last of this trio, *Helen of Troy*, has finally been presented to the world in a simultaneous global première, some recollections of the days of their remaking, mellowed a little by retrospect, may be worth recording. But first, in order to complete our sense of historical perspective, let me quote again from the same context of Rotha's *Film Till Now:*

> With the outbreak of war in 1914, film production naturally came to an end in Europe. The road was left clear for America to secure for herself the supreme commercial control which she still holds. It was simply a matter of circumstance of which the Americans were quick to take full advantage. That they made the best of their opportunity is only to their credit.

So much indeed had the United States made of her opportunity that five years after World War II the first-generation, American descendant, so to speak, of the Italian spectacle-film maker was back in the "old country" with seven million dollars in his pocket, or at least to his credit in blocked lire, to give its native city a boost and at the same time—since pure altruism is not apparently a feature of business—to do himself a bit of good by using up the blocked lire to make a super-spectacle for half price. He was also prepared, like so many who return to the country of their parents' origins, to challenge the old saying about teaching one's grandmother to suck eggs.

For ten years or more, L. B. Meyer, whose debut in the motion-picture world was as a successful exhibitor of religious movies, had been planning to make *Quo Vadis?* at some favorable moment. Nineteen forty-nine was the silver-jubilee year both of his taking over at Culver City and of the making of the fabulously successful *Ben-Hur*. This twofold silver jubilee was to be celebrated by an even more successful picture, a version of *Quo Vadis?* that would be made with all of MGM's wonderful re-

sources, which were only a dream in the Rome of thirty-five years ago. Circumstances of one kind and another, however, delayed the proposed 1949 start; and it was not until the spring of 1950 that the production was ready to roll. In preparation for this event, multitudinous personnel winged above The City to land at Ciampino Airport. Two thousand years previously, Horace, on the eve of Rome's Augustan surge, had expressed the pious hope that never in all its travels would the sun set eyes on a city greater than Rome. Whether or not this hope was justified in the Phoebus-eye view of the Trans-World Apollos arriving from Culver City, I cannot say. It is more than likely that the majority were preoccupied with the thought that never would this City of Rome below them, nor indeed all the world, see a spectacle to equal the one in which they were about to take their share.

As for me, I do not recall that my thoughts during these moments of arrival were of either of these things. I remember now—as I was being driven from Ciampino to the nearby studios of Cine Città, my eyes delighting in the cypresses that mark the line of the Appian Way—only the German-accented voice of the studio emissary dutifully reciting, like a Cook's guide, a thoughtfully prepared recitative of advice for travellers innocently abroad in Italy and the regulations I would be expected to observe during the making of the picture. For everything was very efficiently organized, as it had to be if the picture was to be completed as planned.

The "old country" over the centuries had had her ups and downs and the present was one of her downs. Or was it? And in what sense? Had not *Open City* and *Paisan, Shoe Shine, Bicycle Thieves,* and a host of other pictures come out of her during the five glorious years preceding our arrival? Which way, indeed, is up; and which, down? This was a question which increasingly presented itself to thoughtful minds in the company during this time in Rome, not only in reflecting on the kind of movies a studio makes (we were back where Rome began thirty years ago) or on

the way people made them, but also when pondering subjects without any relation to movies at all, such as the way other peoples think and live. It was difficult for the thoughtful, for example, to understand how it was possible at one and the same time for them to be so exasperated by and yet so completely in love with a place and a people.

Some of the company, of course, increasingly saw only inefficiency, stupidity, and incorrigible rascality. In others, love prevailed; and what at first had seemed to be conservative prejudices were revealed to be in reality ancient traditions to be respected as a part of a different, well-tried way of life. At one end of this line, then, was the overworked executive who collapsed on the set one night before my astonished and horrified eyes, as if poleaxed. The "inefficiency" of the Romans and their "incomprehensible way of life" had been too much for him; and when, a few weeks later, he began to show signs of recovering from his nervous breakdown he declared that this was the first and the last time he would leave home, and that, once back, he would never move outside the city limits of Beverly Hills. At the other end of the line was the lady from the MGM wardrobe department who found her man and her home among the Romans.

Of course, the situation originally confronting the advanced guard that came from Culver City to study the terrain at Cine Città presented a powerful challenge to that organizing ability, that energetic drive, that capacity to get things done, which have characterized the American in developing his own country and in opening up industry in others. But the fact was that *Quo Vadis?* was to be made on what had been a battlefield, and the battle scars were still very much in evidence.

Cine Città had been built by Mussolini to house the Italian motion-picture industry in a way worthy of the future that he had planned for it. Across the Via Toscolana from it, he had built the Centro Sperimentale where Italian youths would learn to become film makers. Italian troops who had gone over to the Allies had

fought the Germans for possession of these sites during the struggle for Rome. Long before abandoning the studios, the Germans had stripped them of every piece of portable cinematic equipment. Some of the buildings were still in ruins, and the largest stage of all was roofless long after *Quo Vadis?* was completed. The studios had long served as a camp for displaced persons, and several hundreds were still there when we arrived. They were a sign and a remembrance to us of the terrible years just passed, these men and women, penniless and homeless, with their children who whiled away the time playing, of all things, at war! To add to our difficulties, under the conditions then prevailing in Rome, sufficient electricity could not be generated locally to supply the needs of a Technicolor production of the scope of *Quo Vadis?*. Thus, at any hour of the night—usually at the most inconvenient—the light would suddenly go out in one or other section of the city. Clearly, the "old country" was in a bad way.

And yet, in the end, out of Cine Città there came a negative as technically first-class as any that Hollywood could produce; and it was shot on schedule. Only long planning and the vast resources of MGM admirably organized and oriented by the determination to do, when in Rome, as Hollywood does when at home, made this achievement possible. For to have done in Rome as the Roman industry did seemed to the executives of MGM to be the sure road to a debacle, not because of inherent defects in the methods of the Roman film makers working toward their own ends, but because the men from Culver City could not work that way. After all, between the man from Culver City and the Roman there are many differences. These derived not only from their respective societies, so differently constituted, but also from a different sense of time. How truly different the latter is I was to grasp more fully later, during the making of *Ulysses*.

In Culver City, then, as elsewhere in Hollywood, shooting starts at nine and continues till six o'clock with an hour's break for lunch. So was it to be at Cine Città even through the rising heat

of June on into the terrible dog days of August when every man, woman, and child even if they have to beg, borrow, or steal their fares, leaves Rome for the beaches of the Lido di Roma, Fregene, and elsewhere. Under the Hollywood rule, too, the siesta—that centuries old and wise period of repose and recollection that follows lunch—was abolished. However, it was by no means easy to secure the observance of this rule by a people firmly set in a habit so admirably part of their way of life and in view of which they start the working day far earlier than we do.

Equally revolutionary was the edict that no *festa*—no public holiday, that is—would be observed in the studios. The fourth of July was transferred to the Saturday following, thus giving the only full week-end holiday during the entire period of production. Now, in Italy the *festa* is a frequent occurrence—less frequent than in the days of the Emperors when there were something like 120 public holidays—and in the peak period of the production, from April through August, there should normally have been eight of them. Seven of these, the Romans might reluctantly have foregone, but not the eighth. This, the dearest of all to the Roman heart, is the Ferragosto, the age-old commemoration of the triumph of Augustus on his return from his victory over Anthony and Cleopatra, a holiday later taken over by the Christian Church and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin's Assumption into heaven. None of the Romans could believe, up to the very last, that on this day of all days the cameras would turn, and the memory of Augustus would be ignored in the spurning of a deeply rooted custom. But Augustus would not allow himself to be completely ignored. Indeed, in the circumstances, what happened is the kind of thing that makes it easy for superstition to survive everywhere in the world.

This day that is Ferragosto had been set for the beginning of the shooting of the great banquet scene in Nero's palace; and, of course for so large a set, the largest stage—the roofless one—was to be used, tarpaulined over against the unlikely arrival of rain.

Then, in the small hours of the morning of his flouted feast day, the divine Augustus opened the flood gates of heaven and set the rains pouring down upon the magnificent set—all elaborately ready for the traditional Roman orgy that might, likewise, have offended Augustus' deeply ascetic soul. Telephones rang urgently, and the night was suddenly full of the hurrying feet of men summoned to save the dazzling furnishings and to mop up the flooded floors. Thus, unofficially, the feast of Ferragosto was observed. Nothing so startling had happened on the production since the first day of shooting.

For this great inauguration, the Roman press and all the resident correspondents had been gathered together. The brief and breathless moment passed. But a second take, for safety, was naturally called for. The bells rang, the instructions were shouted, and the company waited in hushed expectancy for the cameras to roll. But they did not roll. The electric power had suddenly and inexplicably failed. How could this be? Had not equipment been shipped by the holdful from the United States and dynamos removed from Italian destroyers and installed at Cine Città to generate the needed current? There was one ready answer that sprang to mind, and men looked uneasily at one another. Sabotage! Would this set a pattern? Was the hidden red hand poised to wreck and ruin all that had been planned? For some little while, it looked more and more as if this dark suspicion were true. But experience in handling the power and in nursing the equipment finally provided the true explanation, and sanity was again restored.

Perhaps the most daring decision of all was to record the definitive sound track at the time of shooting. Such a procedure is still virtually unknown in Italian production, where dubbing is the order of the day. In actual production, only a guide track is made; and this, for a number of reasons. One of these may very well be the difficulty of getting anything like adequate silence on the stages, not only because many of them are not soundproof,

but also perhaps because so voluble a people are apt to interpret a plea for absolute silence as merely a request to talk only in a stage whisper. Another reason may derive from the fact that certain actresses, and even some actors, can be admired only for their beauty, since their power to charm the ear is something less than their power to fill the eye. With all this practice in dubbing their own films and with the vast consumption of dubbed American pictures by a people who are among the most ardent movie-goers, the Italian industry has reached a high level in a technique, to which the current version of *Ulysses* is a puzzling exception. But more of that later.

It is, of course, sometimes said that the Italians operate in this way from inefficiency, or because they are lazy. The record of Italy in engineering in general and in the electrical field in particular gives this the lie. And as for laziness, this is a judgment that should not be made without a clear understanding of what a man's neighbor considers to be truly important in life as well as in movies.

Indeed, precisely because of these standards of value, which gave the organizers and the engineers such headaches, the Romans were able to contribute so much to the color and atmosphere of *Quo Vadis?*. For every Italian is an actor, and at least every other Italian is an artist or an imaginative artisan. Further, history is in every Roman's blood; and those who built the sets for *Quo Vadis?* and made the dressings for them had a passionate love of beautiful detail that flowed over into their work even though there was not the slightest likelihood of much of it being seen. The over-all effect, however, would not have been the same without it.

Each man, likewise, felt himself a qualified critic of the script and its production, for the story was out of the Romans' past that still lives so vividly about them. They were tolerant of us for the most part and ready with ideas and advice—even the humblest extra—but there were limits to what they could accept. In Italian,

for example, as some of the members of the crowd explained to me, the very word for a well-shaped woman derives somehow from the name of Nero's mother. Such a woman is *una Poppaea,* and the use of the name in description is accompanied always by a gesture indicative of liberal curves. That an actress with less than generous curves had been cast for such a part remained a source of unhappiness to them and offended without possibility of forgiveness the whole sense of historical association contained for them in the name *Poppaea.*

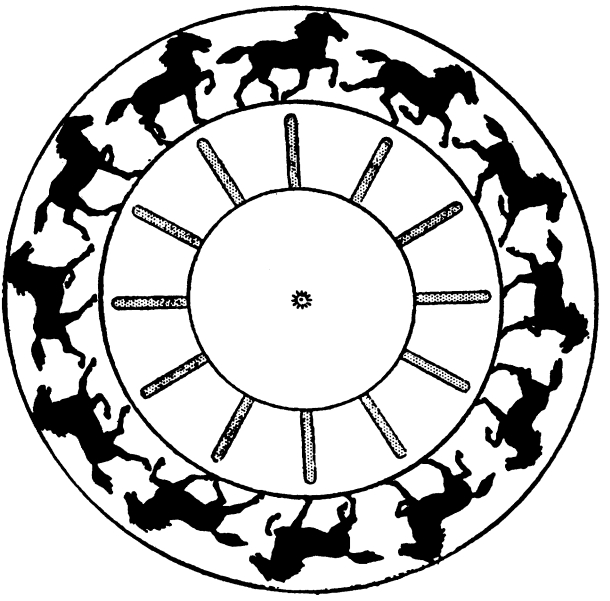
It was, however, as actors that the Romans were mostly with us—on several days, as many as nine thousand of them. And how they gave of their wonderful best! The first time that I was fully aware of their desire to give of this best in the spirit of the true artist was during the shooting of the first crowd scene, at the opening of the picture when the victorious Roman General Marcus Vinicius (Robert Taylor) is shown returning from his campaign, bringing booty and countless prisoners. In our story, the good guys were the Christians; and the bad guys were the pagan Romans. And, as every child knows from the irrefutable evidence of history down the centuries, Christians are mild and gentle; and pagans are brutal. It was in the course of setting this note for the rest of the movie that the Roman masters were to be shown lashing their prisoners along the Appian Way as the hapless creatures struggled to haul the battering rams and towers that had reduced their cities. During this scene, a certain number of the prisoners had to collapse and even die under the relentless brutality of the lash. Now every extra in Rome is a star, at least in the measure of his devotion to his art; and such was each man's determination to give of his best that the advancing army was constantly halted by bodies piled in front at the exact places where the cameras were set up. There, the ground was as littered with corpses as if the prisoners had been moving forward not under the lash but against a stronghold of machine guns. Each man felt it incumbent upon him, for the good of the picture, to die in agony, imperially, as Caesar might have died, right into the lenses.

Perhaps the strongest indication, however, of their devotion to the arts of the theater, and a clue for those seeking to understand another people was given at a later moment. It was one of those occasions when the production was interrupted by what we usually called labor disputes. The details of these incidents were complicated and not at all as politically inspired as some—the sabotage school—wished to believe. Mostly, indeed, they were not even matters of money, but of human dignity and working conditions. A common trade-union weapon throughout Italy is the lightning strike, that may last from a few minutes to several hours. Indeed in Rome, it is not uncommon to find the streetcars suddenly halted for a few minutes and then, as suddenly, moving on. The value or ultimate effect of these maneuvers is not at once evident. There were occasions, however, when the crowds on the set felt called to adopt them; and after a fair warning, a mob of eight or nine thousand men and women who had been roaring and yelling as they knew the crowd had roared and yelled in the Circus Maximus, was all of a sudden seated and as silent as a Roman crowd can be. Then, the protest made and honor satisfied, at the end of the stipulated period of fifteen or thirty minutes, they would rise to their feet; and the only malice they showed thereafter was in their countenances, as the part required from good actors asked to vent their fury on the Christians in the arena. What simple pride they have in their work!

The name *Quo Vadis?* was spoken everywhere all over Rome. It was like the opening up of a new industry in a hard-hit town. When a man told his neighbors, "I'm working in *Quo Vadis?*" they nodded in appreciation; and they knew that he would give of his best, as they would, even if it were only as a super carrying a spear, while dressed in hot metal under a scorching sun. Difficult and wearing though this might be, it had to be done. After all, in those moments was one not an artist? *Pazienza! Pazienza.*

Indeed, there are two words, although superficially contradictory, that a man must learn to understand; and then he will survive, happily, any Roman film adventure, even though he is

the most efficient, pampered Hollywood tycoon. One is *subito* (right away!), the misleading automatic response to any command; and the other is *pazienza,* the literal meaning of which is at once evident, but the full rich meaning of which is learned only after a long while. To understand it fully is to know in some measure why hypertension and sudden death do not haunt the Roman studios as they haunt the stages of multi-million dollar, super-efficient Hollywood. Indeed, something of the full and living sense of this word *pazienza,* and something of the peace that comes with knowing how much faith to attach to the warm, cheerfully deceptive answer *"Subito, signore!"* only truly dawned on me when I returned to work on the production of *Ulysses.*



MUYBRIDGE'S HORSES on a Viewing Disk. At San Francisco in May, 1880, the photographer mounted on a circular glass plate his shots of a horse in motion and projected them upon a screen. He called his machine the Zoögyroscope. Here we see his pictures on the Phenakistiscope, which required the viewer to face a mirror and look at opaque images through slits as he spun the disk.

Film Appreciation in Scottish Schools

MAY GORDON WILLIAMSON

MAY GORDON WILLIAMSON is an English teacher at Boroughmuir School in Edinburgh, Scotland. She is also a film enthusiast whose interests in this field have included work as script writer and assistant director of documentaries. Miss Williamson has recently been appointed President of the Edinburgh branch of the Scottish Educational Film Association for the 1956–57 session.

MORE CHILDREN go oftener to the cinema in Scotland than in any other country in the world. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the proportion of habitual cinema-goers between the ages of six and twenty is greater in Scotland than elsewhere. Since much of Scotland's population in the Highlands and Islands is so scattered that about one third of all Scots children have no chance of seeing films more than once a month (when a traveling cinema may visit their district), these figures must obviously contain a large number of child addicts in the more densely populated areas with a score of five or six visits to the cinema per week.

This is a highly unsatisfactory situation. These habitual attenders, mostly of the poorer classes and with a fairly low mental rating, are living in two separate and distinct worlds—the crude realities of the gray tenement streets of Glasgow or Dundee and the romantic dreams of highly colored Hollywood or Elstree. Unable to reconcile the two, they are unsatisfied, shiftless, and unconstructive in their approach to living when they have to assume adult responsibilities.

Short of forcibly closing the cinema to young people, there is no real answer to this situation. Those of us who concern ourselves with such matters see the chief hope in education. First of all, in the home, church, and school, we must endeavor to make ordinary living seem interesting and significant, so that the child has some stable and enduring satisfactions to set against the ro-

mantic nonsense of second-rate films (for the addict can rarely afford to patronize first-run houses). Secondly, we must make the child face up to the movies he does see, and be prepared to dissect them with honesty and courage. He must be gently persuaded to discard his rose-colored spectacles, even if he is allowed to retain his 3-D lenses.

The whole approach to film must be switched from the purely emotional level to a more intellectual plane. Not that I advocate a stultifying of the emotions! Scottish children are already too inhibited emotionally because of the Calvinistic tradition of church and school and require, above all, re-education in this field. But they must also learn to distrust appeals directed solely to the emotions and to analyze the means by which the appeal is made. Only by educating them in the techniques of the cinema can this be achieved; and the first essential of all criticism, literary, artistic or musical, to be learned is the ability to discriminate between sham and sincerity, between sentimentality and sentiment.

Much has been done in Britain for younger children. The Children's Film Foundation, under the direction of Mary Field, is regularly producing films that have gained international approval. These are shown at Saturday morning matinees run by Gaumont-British picture-houses along with selected Westerns, cartoons, and, more recently, some of the excellent children's films from Russia, Czechoslovakia, China, etc.

It is interesting to note that even before the "G-B Kiddies' Clubs" and the "Mickey Mouse Clubs" of the Odeon circuits started up in the 1930's, the Scottish Educational Film Association was promoting Saturday morning shows for children. In 1951, the Edinburgh Report on Junior Cinema Clubs was published under the same auspices; and this year, a series of afternoon shows is being held in Edinburgh to find out, from the children's reactions, what kind of films have the greatest appeal to the age group between eight and eleven, the main body of matineegoers.

These matinees, however, do not cater to children over the age of twelve, and it is the group between twelve and fifteen that re-

quires the greatest study and care. In England, The Society of Film Teachers concerns itself largely with this age group, working mainly in secondary modern schools where the intellectual equipment of the pupils is inferior to that of those in the grammar schools. The emphasis in this society's teaching is mainly on the content of films and follows fairly closely the lines suggested by the British Film Institute's monthly wall charts of discussion notes on current films, although individual members are free to follow their own devices in their own schools. Some stimulating articles have appeared in their journal, and some really clever short films have been made by school production units.

In Scotland, film appreciation in schools is the pigeon of the Scottish Educational Film Association. Not all local branches have film-appreciation committees; but Edinburgh, at least, has a fairly active one, under the chairmanship of Arthur D. Brown, the honorary secretary of the Edinburgh Film Guild and member of the selection committee of the Edinburgh International Film Festival. Nevertheless, in spite of circulars, meetings, and specimen programs, it has failed to stimulate much action among Edinburgh teachers; and only two schools, Mr. Brown's and the writer's, run film societies. Throughout Scotland, there are only five other school societies affiliated with the Federation of Scottish Film Societies; atlhough, as far as I know, some half-dozen others are operating independently.

The policy of the SEFA in advocating school film societies as the best way of promoting discriminating film-going may seem rather half-hearted. But it cannot be forgotten that Scotland is a country of deeply rooted Puritanism: even the theater is still looked upon askance by many older people, and the cinema is regarded as the devil's playground. To expect to introduce film appreciation as a classroom subject on the same level as music, art, or literary appreciation would be somewhat precipitate. Shades of John Knox! In another twenty years' time, perhaps, something may be done. Even the school film society meets with strong disapproval in many circles. In the senior secondary school where I

teach, many members of staff make no secret of the fact that they believe I am leading my innocent members on the first steps of the primrose path.

The emphasis in these Scottish societies is on style rather than on content. Since very few junior secondary schools (the Scottish equivalent of secondary modern) have film societies, film teaching is mainly confined to senior secondary (the equivalent of grammar) where naturally, with higher attainment level and older pupils, the approach to the subject can well be on a different plane.

My own experience in founding and running a film society is probably typical, and I record it for what it is worth. For years before it became possible to organize anything so ambitious, while I was making my plans, gently preparing the mental climate, and wrestling with problems of projection facilities, I brought film appreciation into the classroom where I teach English. I did this by using any teaching films I had on order, not only for their proper purposes, but also as lessons in film technique; by ordering those actual appreciation films (extracts from *Great Expectations, The Overlanders,* etc.) stocked by the Scottish Central Film Library; and by occasional lessons in script writing when a suitable theme presented itself, such as that wonderfully audio-visual passage in *Martin Chuzzlewit* describing Tom Pinch's night ride to London (leading inevitably, of course, to the good teacher of literature's conclusion that it is impossible to translate the whole flavor of an experience from one medium to another).

At length, I obtained the green light. A school film society was constituted, formed out of the third and subsequent forms (pupils aged from about fourteen and a half to eighteen), some 200 strong, each member paying 3/– (about half a dollar) per year for admission to seven shows held on Friday nights monthly during the autumn and spring terms (September to March). Now I believe that if a film is to have its full aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual impact it must be perfectly presented. But Boroughmuir is an old building, planned without any central hall or auditorium,

powered by antediluvian wiring on direct current, and so I have to go on showing films in a large classroom, with an elderly wreck of a 16-mm. projector shared with three other schools still also on direct current. Sound lacks "top"; pictures jerk and tremble; and only the rarest of shows passes without a hitch. Owing to the vagaries of a neighboring factory, fluctuations occur in the voltage, sometimes dimming the projector lamp and sometimes blowing it altogether.

Strange things can happen on these evenings; but the strangest was a certain Friday the 13th when the city's entire power supply failed because of a storm, and we were left in the dark for over an hour, convinced that on this occasion we had succeeded in fusing the national grid. Thus, it is not surprising that when the time comes to order the films for the coming session, I am always plunged into the gravest doubts whether it is worth while struggling on until the school is rewired for alternating current and we can contemplate the purchase of a respectable projector. Like Gilbert's Constable, "weighing one consideration with another," I can only conclude that a school film society enthusiast's "lot, Is not a happy one" and proceed as before.

If I have one definite policy in the society, it is to demonstrate the infinite versatility of the film medium. I preach constantly that it is an artistic medium in its own right and thus cannot be judged by any other standards than its own. I try to prove that a film is successful only if it employs the potentialities of the medium to the full—that a film should not be a play photographed, the mere illustration of a book, or simply a series of beautiful but unrelated images. I point out that the camera can do things that are impossible to do on the stage, on the radio, or in a book; but that it has, similarly, its own limitations, which, in their turn, impose the film's artistic form.

Our first series of programs set out to illustrate how the camera by its versatility can bring to us experiences that we could share by no means, thus broadening and deepening our interest in the life around us. For this, I drew mainly on short documentary films. Harry Watt's *Night Mail* was an obvious choice here; and,

to balance it, I showed an amusing five-minute trick short *Go Slow on the Brighton Line,* made for television, in which, apparently seated in the cab of a locomotive, the audience hurtles along the rails from London at something like 600 miles per hour and draws up with a sickening jolt at the buffers in Brighton station. *Sailing to the Cape,* a G-B instructional film, let the members share in the rigors of a windjammer in a storm, and *North Sea* took them out with the herring boats in winter. Arne Sucksdorff's *Rhythm of a City* was contrasted with *Waverley Steps,* much to the detriment of the latter, but giving in both cases a new angle on the day-to-day life of a great city. Two cleverly contrived films that had a considerable emotional impact were Norman McLaren's bitter little satire *Neighbours* (shown along with *Kameradschaft*) and Martin Toonder's table-top fantasy *The Conquered Planet.* Still in this vein, we had one evening devoted to the cartoon film, from the early antics of Felix and Mickey by the arty-crafty *Papageno* of Lotte Reiniger to the sophistication of *Rooty Toot Toot* and the abstractions of Norman McLaren's *Fiddle-De-Dee* and *Dots and Loops.*

The next task was to put on a program of the early days, with intent to demonstrate how the camera, from being a mere recording instrument, became a means of creating mood and tension, and how director, lighting expert, and cutter could contribute to the variety and depth of impression by the use of varied angles, camera movement, inter-cutting, size and length of shot, and so on. I may say that this had to be conveyed indirectly, as in a society of youngsters too much technical talk merely bores and sets up a sales resistance to your wares. Excellent material for this period in the cinema is obtainable from the British Film Institute, including *The Lumière Programme, The Indiarubber Head* and *The Well-Washed House,* all with tremendous appeal to children. I was very sorry that there was no example of Griffith's work available, except in full-length films, unsuitable for my purpose.

To sugar the pill, I have been spreading the historical matter over three years, in the form of a history of comedy, beginning with Chaplin's *The Champion* and working on through Harry

Langdon's *Long Pants,* Harold Lloyd's *Safety Last,* and Buster Keaton's *The Navigator* to Will Hay's *Oh Mr. Porter!* and the Ealing productions of *Genevieve* and *Doctor in the House.* It has been very satisfying to discover that the old hands are by far the most successful with young audiences, and that *The Navigator,* shown last year, is still the undisputed favorite. To my relief, they dismissed Will Hay as "corny," and have apparently learned that a string of wisecracks is not enough to constitute film comedy.

One term was devoted to the Continental cinema—a rather pretentious title that boosted membership temporarily when it was rumored that "X" films were to be shown. Our three examples were Pabst's *Kameradschaft,* Clair's *Le Million,* and Tati's *Jour de Fête.* Needless to say, the last was the best acclaimed. Apart from a few odd feature films chosen rather for their low-hire charges and innocuous content than for filmic quality, other programs have had specific subjects such as Scotland or Transport. Under the latter heading, we have access to large numbers of excellent shorts on free loan from the British Transport Commission and the Petroleum Films Bureau. Some of the best of these that I have found are the PFB cartoons by Halas and Batchelor, notably *The Tanker Story* and *The Moving Spirit,* and the workmanlike records of the Farnborough air display and the Le Mans road circuits, while British Transport supply the quiet humour, both verbal and visual of *Dodging the Column* (an account of moving a huge metal cylinder from foundry to oil refinery) and *The Elephant Never Forgets* (a nostalgic ride on London's last tramcar).

No doubt this list of films must sound insular, if not parochial, to the American reader; but it must be remembered that the budget of a school society is very small and that we must rely on the cheaper sources of supply in consequence. I think it is a great pity that Continental and Russian films are so expensive that only flourishing film societies can afford to hire them. It is also high time that some arrangement be made whereby cultural shorts are allowed to pass freely between this country and the United States. At the Edinburgh Festival, we see many delightful American

films but almost never have a chance to hire them unless some far-sighted British distributor buys a copy. I shall never forget the weeks of negotiation with the Board of Trade to obtain permission merely to borrow the University of California's *The Globe Playhouse.*

Unfortunately, time does not allow of discussion after our film shows. No program notes are issued, but I usually give a short preliminary talk. Once or twice, we have had a "Critics" night, with a few short films, at which a panel of four pupils gave their views on each, with reference to specific points such as suitability of subject for film, originality or otherwise of treatment, use of color, commentary, music, and so on. So far, we have had only one symposium on current films, although I suppose this is really an important part of the process of film education that I am willfully neglecting.

To more practical ends, I have held classes in projection and taken groups to the operation rooms of a local cinema. Last year, I was determined that we should make a film of our own, and so with the coöperation of the physical training staff a script was roughed out on basic stickwork in hockey. With a borrowed camera of fixed focus and speed (16 frames) and no tripod, six enthusiastic girls made quite a creditable job of a five-minute instructional, which is now in use for coaching purposes.

I give this detailed account of my own activities as typical of what is going on in Scotland under a few zealots for the cause. Is it really worth it? Are we truly producing discriminate filmgoers by our efforts? Or are we just providing these adolescents with an extra and cheap evening "at the flicks"? My belief is that although they may have absorbed little or nothing of the aesthetics of the cinema they have at least had the opportunity of seeing some of the great classics of the screen; and if I had provided them with nothing more than the glorious belly laughter at *The Navigator,* the gasps and squawks of excitement during *Go Slow,* the sighs of content at the end of *Papageno,* or the indrawn breath of angry horror at *Neighbours* I should still be strong in my determination to continue with the work.

The Director on Horseback

PETER BARNES

PETER BARNES is a young film enthusiast whose articles have appeared in such magazines as *Films and Filming* and *London Town,* as well as in various British Film Institute publications. He has also lectured on the history of the motion picture. Mr. Barnes is currently story editor for Warwick Film Company.

"I've always wanted to direct a picture on horseback."
John Huston on *The Red Badge of Courage*

WITH THE FILM *Moby Dick* nearing completion and the White Whale still lost in the Atlantic, John Huston is once more in the news. But then, the most famous American director now working permanently in Europe is always in the news in one way or another. Much depends on his latest film. The work of Huston, once the white hope of the American cinema, has declined in four years from the magnificent austerity of *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* to the witless inanities of *Beat the Devil.* The reasons for this decline are interesting and significant, for Huston is an artist who seems capable of producing his best work only when dealing with a subject with which he has personal acquaintance and when working within the limits of the Hollywood system. Since he is the director of some of the most notable films of the past decade, it is important, even at this late date, to try to get his career into some sort of perspective.

Son of a famous actor, John Huston was by turns boxer, Mexican cavalryman, journalist, and playwright before he became a script writer on such films as *Juarez, Sergeant York,* and *High Sierra.* In 1941, he directed his first film, *The Maltese Falcon,* which reveals his style at its best—direct, analytic, and disciplined. This film succeeds brilliantly as a character thriller, but also, through its ruthless elimination of inessentials, gains an extra depth. All the characters are obsessed; their lives are devoted to one pursuit only, the acquisition of money (in the shape of the

fabulous maltese falcon, "the stuff that dreams are made of"). *The Maltese Falcon* and, later, *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* show what film art can gain by a relentless concentration on two or three characters only: what might be called "observation in depth" rather than painting the usual broad but superficial canvas—"observation in breadth." For the art of the film loses much by its refusal to abstract or isolate a subject or to work within definite limits.

Huston's next film of real importance, *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* (1949), seems in retrospect his finest achievement. At last, after eight years of creative apprenticeship that included *In This Our Lives, Battle of San Pietro,* and *Report from the Aleutians,* he tackled something big. Based on Ben Travers' arid novel of the effects of loneliness and greed on three men searching for gold, the film has a rare power and depth. As in *The Maltese Falcon,* Huston is concerned with people whose lives are dominated by a ruthless desire for wealth. Though not very worthy members of society, they have, to start with, certain sparks of comradeship and kindliness. But hardship and loneliness individualize like acid, bringing to the surface all the suspicion and hatred in their characters. They begin by pooling the gold and end by fighting for their share.

By concentrating on the three men and not emphasizing the accurately realized background, *Sierra Madre* does achieve a certain universality. Bogart's desire for an eternal leisure relieved by wine and women and Tim Holt's adolescent dream of a peach farm reveal the petty vulgarities of a cheap civilization. This is a work of real integrity and power. Critics who complain of its detachment, and of Huston's artistic detachment in general, fail to see that detached artists are often more truly sensitive to the spirit of their time than the committed.

We Were Strangers (1949) is important in that it raised the first serious doubts about Huston's talents. In all his previous work, he had dealt either with the American scene or with themes

that touched America very closely. But with this story of Cuban revolutionaries who plan to overthrow a fascist government, he was treating a subject outside his usual scope. The film has numerous virtues, a bold dramatic style, a taut structure, dialogue of real force, and acting (Garfield, Roland, and Armendariz) of great subtlety and power. Many scenes are outstanding—particularly that of the lecherous police chief drinking himself into a self-pitying stupor and finally groveling at the feet of the girl China (Jennifer Jones)—and all the action sequences are carried off with superb assurance and skill. But something is missing. This is not just a story of political murder: deeper issues are involved; moral problems have to be settled. In the assassination of the heads of the government, innocent people are to be sacrificed. The ethics of such a sacrifice are briefly discussed, but only briefly, as it is not the business of the film to deal with them. However, it is here that one can detect the fatal flaw. *We Were Strangers* would not have been a better film if Huston had included a fuller discussion of the moral problems involved. But a director must have an imaginative understanding of everything connected with the material he is working on; and if his material involves, as Huston's did, a sense of deep ethical issues, then the director's own awareness and understanding of these issues is relevant. He must convey the sense of them even if they are outside the scope of his film. Huston has failed to achieve this sense; there is a failure of intellect, a failure to be aware of the full power and complexity of his subject.

With *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), he returned to the solid realities of the American scene for his subject; and the result is noticeably beneficial. Gone is the uncertainty, the fatal touch of fantasy which characterizes the former work; instead, there is a complete understanding of all the aspects of his material. Only a minor film, *The Asphalt Jungle* has a solidness and completeness that *We Were Strangers* lacks.

Despite undeniable virtues, however, these two films disap-

pointed. They did not fulfill the promise of *Sierra Madre,* but gave evidence of a talent marking time. Therefore, it was good news to hear in 1951 that Huston was once again tackling something worthy of him—a version of Crane's novel of the Civil War, *The Red Badge of Courage.* The subsequent fate of this film at the hands of palsied Hollywood executives has become famous; and it would be most unfair to Huston to draw any general conclusions from the mutilated final version shown, although one is inclined reluctantly to agree with the critic who said, "There is little anywhere to suggest the essential interior resource that a film of *The Red Badge of Courage* must have." Stroheim's *Greed* and Eisenstein's *Que Viva Mexico!* were mutilated but they retained that essential interior power which is so lacking in Huston's film.

Neither must we pay too much attention to Lillian Ross's book *Picture,* an intelligent but superficial account of the making of *The Red Badge of Courage.* Miss Ross does, however, throw an interesting light on Huston's method of working. After shooting was completed, the negative was turned over by Margaret Booth, MGM's chief editor (who already had had too much say in the film's conception), to a Benny Lewis for cutting. Huston, far from objecting to this arrangement, was no longer interested; he considered his work on the picture completed—shades of Eisenstein! As Reinhardt, the producer, rather sadly observed, "Once the director is through, you can usually do what you want with a picture."

Huston's next three films were all made outside Hollywood. Totally unlike his previous work, both in style and content, they represent in their mediocrity, inherent vulgarity, and emptiness, the unexpected collapse of a unique talent. The first of these films, *The African Queen* (1952), an adaptation of C. S. Forester's novel about a prudish spinster and a gin-drinking adventurer's trip down a tropical river, is probably the best. Anyway, its glaring deficiencies are to some extent covered by the dazzling perform-

ances of Bogart and Hepburn. But the script lacks bite, and the direction is monotonous and ineffective. Gone is the hard confident style and acute approach to character; in its place is flabbiness and a curious air of unreality which have become the hallmark of Huston's later work.

No redeeming features cover the appalling vulgarity of *Moulin Rouge,* adapted from a novel by Pierre la Mure about the life of Toulouse-Lautrec. Even granting that the film does not attempt to be an accurate biography of the artist, its glibness and superficiality are completely unacceptable. The script (Huston and Antony Veiller) is full of such gems as the now famous "So Long Toulouse," and the acting is beyond description—*Moulin Rouge* is probably the worst-acted film to come from a major director in the last decade. But what really appalls is the lack of depth, the purely superficial treatment of Lautrec's life and times. This is in fact a "gimmick" film with the leading actor performing on his knees. The agony, the desperate loneliness of the creative artist, is never even remotely caught; and neither is the authentic period atmosphere despite all the cancan girls, hansom cabs, and bustles. One short dance sequence in Becker's *Casque D'or* is worth the whole of *Moulin Rouge.* Once again, Huston's lack of personal acquaintance with his material has betrayed him.

It was confidently expected that a return to the style of *The Maltese Falcon* would produce a film of some worth. But *Beat the Devil* proved to be completely empty and pointless. This satiric thriller about a gang of crooks on the track of a vast uranium deposit in Africa is neither mildly amusing nor remotely convincing. The plot does bear a vague resemblance to that of *The Maltese Falcon,* but Huston has adopted a fatally fatuous manner towards his subject. He no longer seems to believe in his films. Actors of the caliber of Bogart, Morley, and Lorre can do nothing with dialogue (Truman Capote) which lacks wit and meaning. Except for some bizarre close-ups, this is two hours of unrelieved tedium. From *The Maltese Falcon* to *Beat the Devil,* the decline is complete.

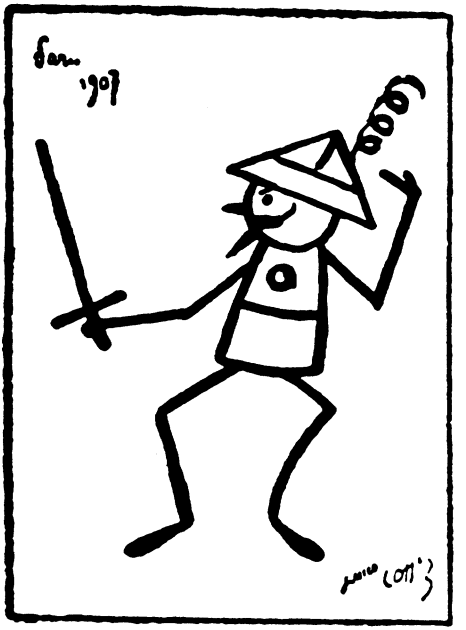
The contrast between Huston's work inside Hollywood and outside is so striking that it draws one's attention to certain facts about "The Dream Factory" which are apt to be overlooked. Hollywood's crass commercialism and ingrained Philistinism are constantly brought to our attention, and it is true that it has much to answer for; the destruction of Stroheim's talent alone is enough to make the angels weep. But this is not the whole story. Aside from technical considerations, Hollywood does provide a framework within which the creative artist can work. Here, competitive pressures are so great that they force deeply held feelings to express themselves with power and yet within the limitations set by a complicated series of conventions. Working within such a framework, the director can concentrate on the problems of his art. The concentration resulting from such a system is evident in all of John Huston's work up to *The African Queen.* Away from Hollywood, his work becomes empty and mediocre. This is true not only of Huston but also of other talented film directors. Milestone, Mankiewicz, and Wyler made *Melba, Escape,* and *Roman Holiday* in Europe. Having escaped from the hateful regime, they find themselves uncreative. American film artists need Hollywood just as much as Hollywood needs them.

Although American directors abroad remain uncreative, foreign directors in Hollywood often do not. The answer to the perennial question "What goes wrong with the great continental directors when they go to Hollywood?" is "Nothing." For such films as *Sunrise* (Murnau), *Fury* (Lang), *Double Indemnity* (Wilder), *The Southerner* (Renoir), *The Seventh Cross* (Zinneman), *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Ophuls), and *Shadow of a Doubt* (Hitchcock) will surely rank among their directors' finest achievements.

American artists, however, lacking as they do a strong cultural tradition, are essentially provincial; and, when cut off from their home roots, they wither and die. During the last two years, Huston has become such an artist. An *émigré* and therefore iso-

lated, he has assumed the disastrous role of European dilettante for which he is so singularly ill-fitted. It is hard to say whether *Moby Dick* will mark another turning point in his career. Together with his script writer Ray Bradbury, Huston, it appears, has taken immense trouble to remain faithful to Melville's great novel. But whether he has been able to transfer to the screen that cosmic quality which makes *Moby Dick* one of the greatest stories of the sea in English literature, remains to be seen.

Huston has obviously taken the wrong turning. It would be impudent to suggest remedies; the true artist must work out his own salvation in his own time and in his own way. One thing, however, is clear: though it may be true that "you can't go home again," for Huston at least it seems the only possible solution.



THE FIRST CARTOON CHARACTER—Fantoches. As early as 1907, Emile Cohl, pioneer in animation, created this figure that appeared in a number of short films.

When the Talkies Came to Hollywood

KENNETH MACGOWAN

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HOLLYWOOD RESISTED SOUND for a number of good reasons besides general inertia. Most of its actors and many of its stars were pantomimists with untrained voices and questionable ability to convey emotion through words. Hollywood stages weren't soundproofed. The theaters as well as the studios had to buy a great deal of expensive equipment. The companies had a large backlog of silent films. And there was the foreign market where few houses were ready for sound.

It was doubly fortunate for the Hollywood studios that they had largely taken to sound before the depression began in the fall of 1929. The Wall Street boom and the quick success of the talkies enabled exhibitors to borrow and to pay off the money needed for new sound equipment; the cost per theater ran from $8,500 to $20,000. If the producers had waited till October 26, 1929—as they might well have done except for Warner Brothers and Fox—sound would have been impossible for ten more years; and receiverships would have come to Hollywood quite a time before 1932.

The reverberating boom of sound may be measured by a few of the gaudy operations of the expanding film companies. In 1928, Fox built a wholly new studio, five miles west of its old one, investing $4,000,000 in buildings alone; and within a year, it bought for over $40,000,000 temporary control of Loew's, Inc., owners of MGM. The Rockefellers thought so well of picture

making and exhibiting that they built the Radio City Music Hall and had their Radio Corporation of America—which made sound-on-film equipment—buy FBO, a film producing company, and the Keith-Albee-Orpheum vaudeville theater corporation, and set up RKO; even in 1931, the film business had withstood the depression so well that RCA added the Pathé studio to its interests. Warner Brothers was prosperous enough to bid against Fox for Loew's, and then to buy the Stanley chain of theaters, along with First National, a producing company that had been set up by a large group of exhibitors. Warner Brothers now controlled about 500 theaters, and other companies bought up other chains and houses. Guesses at the weekly attendance are unreliable, but when one writer says that 57,000,000 went to movie theaters in 1927 and 110,000,000 in 1930, the proportion of increase is probably correct. The fact that the depression didn't hit the film business until about 1932 is proved by the increase of sound-equipped theaters from under 9,000 at the end of 1929 to 13,000 two years later. When Warner Brothers gave up the use of discs in 1930, exhibitors were able to meet the expense of scrapping Vitaphone equipment and putting in sound-on-film projectors.

New Players for Old

Sound—that reluctant revolution—upset the personnel as well as the techniques of Hollywood. Almost anyone could be made reasonably effective as an actor in silent pantomime. Acting with the voice was another matter. Then, too, the recording mechanism was crude to start with. It couldn't handle the screaking voice of Andy Devine. Sibilants were so exaggerated and distorted that I remember how in *The Lights of New York* "success" sounded something like "shuckshesh." Sound cut off the careers of some good actors as well as many incompetents. The imperfect vocal cords of that excellent silent comedian Ray Griffith produced something like a husky whisper. John Gilbert's voice was too high.

Silent actors with stage experience had nothing to fear—men and women like Ronald Colman, Claudette Colbert, William Powell, Marlene Dietrich, John and Lionel Barrymore, George Bancroft, Marie Dressler, Clive Brook, and Joan Crawford. Millions of playgoers, however, held their breaths when they read in the advertisements of *Anna Christie* (1930) *"Garbo talks."* The studios hired, with varying success, Broadway stars such as George Arliss, Helen Hayes, Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Fredric March, Leslie Howard, Clark Gable, Frank Morgan, Sylvia Sidney, Fred Astaire, Paul Muni, Spencer Tracy, and Katharine Hepburn. The screen came to depend on character actors who had learned to speak in the theater—Boris Karloff, Jean Hersholt, May Robson, Nigel Bruce, James Gleason, Charles Laughton, and others. Voice specialists and teachers of acting flocked to Hollywood. With or without the aid of coaches, a number of silent stars who had had little or no experience behind the footlights kept their hold on the public—Janet Gaynor, for instance, and Warner Baxter, Norma Shearer, Charles Farrell, Gary Cooper.

Playwrights and Directors from Broadway

The greatest sufferers when sound came in were the screen writers. A very few, like John Emerson, had had practice in the theater, and they could handle dialogue. Some makers of silent plots learned to do so. But, for a few years after 1929, Hollywood hired playwright after playwright from Broadway. It didn't much matter whether their plays had been successes or flops. They knew how to write lines.

There was some turnover among the directors, though not so much. Most of them had to have what were called "dialogue directors" in Hollywood and "directors of elocution" in London. Some of these dialogue directors—George Cukor, for instance—were soon placed in complete charge of a shooting company. Hollywood hired experienced stage directors like Richard Boleslavsky and Rouben Mamoulian, and started them at the top. Many of

the silent directors adapted themselves quickly and effectively to sound. I will name a few of those who made contributions to the talkie: King Vidor, John Ford, Frank Lloyd, Lewis Milestone, Joseph von Sternberg, Henry King, Clarence Brown, William Van Dyke, Frank Capra, Alfred Hitchcock.

The Frozen Camera

During the first three years of the talkies—from 1928 through 1930—Hollywood all but took the motion out of motion pictures. This was partly due to the studios' turning to plays because they had ready-made dialogue but mostly because of a problem in recording sound. The camera made a noise. To keep this noise off the sound track or the disc, the technicians put the camera in a soundproof room with glass walls. This "icebox," as it was soon called, might be a cube as much as eight feet wide; and, loaded with cameras and cameramen, it weighed thousands of pounds. The icebox froze the camera since much time and effort were involved in moving it about. By putting two cameras, with different lenses, in one box, and a third camera in another, a director could shoot three angles at the same time; but the lighting was often unsatisfactory in one shot, and the cameras couldn't pan or follow the actors far. In general, the first talkies weren't so very different from the static films of the Film d'Art in Paris.

Problems of Sound Recording

Also, there was trouble with the microphones. As yet, Hollywood had no "boom," or pole, to hold the mike over the heads of the players. Sound receivers had to be hidden in different parts of the set where an actor might stand. Andy Devine was wide enough to hide a mike strapped to his chest or back, and thus he began to work once more, though in silent bits. The editing of sound developed very slowly. So did the mixing of speech and natural sounds or music—technically called rerecording and dubbing. Songs were recorded directly on the set through their whole length; after a time, they were recorded without a camera

and played back to the singer, altogether or bit by bit, while he mouthed the words.

The films slowly escaped from the strait jacket of the immovable camera and mike. Somebody put the camera into a padded cloth "blimp," and it could ride on the wheels of a "dolly." It was still awkward to handle; but soon, smaller, box-like blimps came in; and some years later, these gave way to cameras with noiseless gears. While the mike acquired a "boom" that could be lengthened or shortened and moved about just out of the picture, the camera got another type of boom, or crane—a wheeled vehicle with the camera set on a long, counterbalanced arm that could carry the machine and its operators up and down and around at pleasure.

Disc recording of dialogue made it difficult to shoot exterior scenes. With sound-on-film it was much easier. Fox's production of *In Old Arizona* during 1928 and its release early in 1929 brought the Western back to the screen—a kind of film that had been peculiarly fitted to the swift and wide-ranging mobility of the silent camera.

Another development is worth mentioning. Silent film had run through camera and projector at sixteen frames, or one foot, a second, which meant 60 feet a minute. A reel of 1,000 feet lasted for about sixteen minutes on the screen. To improve the quality of sound recording and projection, the film was speeded up to twenty-four frames a second, or 90 feet a minute; thus, a reel ran for only about eleven minutes. A five-reel feature of the 1920's occupied an hour and twenty minutes of playing time, whereas a five-reel sound film finished in only fifty-five minutes. Take this into consideration in judging the length of modern pictures in reels as against the silent features.

Putting Movement Back on the Screen

In 1929, two directors began to show their fellow workers and the public that the talkie could have much of the freedom of movement of the silent film and that sound could add greatly to

the effectiveness of a story. One of the directors had worked some time in Hollywood; the other came from opera and the stage.

In the silent days, King Vidor had created the exciting superficialities of *The Big Parade* (1925). He had shown fine skill with camera and editing in his middle-class tragedy *The Crown* (1928), his last silent film. The next year, when he turned to sound in *Hallelujah* with an all-Negro cast, he used dialogue as little as possible and introduced imaginatively the sounds of the wind and water, birds and insects, and the off-screen sound of running feet as well as Negro spirituals.

Rouben Mamoulian had directed productions of the American Opera Company and brilliantly staged a number of Broadway productions, including the all-Negro play *Porgy*. In his first Hollywood film, *Applause*—in which the singer Helen Morgan played an aging queen of burlesque—he blended music and camera movement deftly, developed lyrical love scenes in contrast to the tragedy of the woman played by Miss Morgan, and came close to the skills of the present-day talkie.

In 1930, the silent directors Lewis Milestone and Joseph von Sternberg used both camera and sound freely and imaginatively. From Milestone's silent and swiftly moving gangster film *The Racket* (1928), he turned to *All Quiet on the Western Front*—Eric Remarque's tragic and mordant story of World War I, told from the point of view of young German soldiers—and he gave it great pictorial power. He intercut most skillfully the sweep and din of battle with intimate scenes of dialogue. Audiences long remembered the scene in the shell hole between the dying French soldier—played beautifully in silence by Raymond Griffith—and Lew Ayres's young German who was soon to die. Von Sternberg—brought to Berlin by Eric Pommer to direct Emil Jannings and Marlene Dietrich in English and German versions of *The Blue Angel*—used all his skill with camera and background action, as well as a new sense of the possibilities of dialogue and music, to make a highly effective film. In the newcomer Marlene Dietrich he found a *femme fatale*. Back in Hollywood, he ex-

ploited her rare personality in *Morocco* (1930) along with Gary Cooper and Adolph Menjou, and then led Miss Dietrich through a descending scale of pictorially glamorous films that had only one high spot, the melodrama *Shanghai Express* (1932).

These directors brought back camera movement and blended it skillfully with varying amounts of dialogue. In *The Front Page* (1931), Milestone showed how a play that depended very greatly on speech could be filmed with swift effectiveness. By the next year, the skills of sound editing had reached the point where the thoughts of the characters in Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*—which had been spoken soliloquies on the stage—could be heard from the screen while the lips of the actors were still.

The Opponents of Sound

On the whole, motion picture directors readily accepted sound. So did the big public. Only the intelligentsia, including many film critics and a few actors, resisted. It was natural that men and women who saw the silent screen reaching a new perfection with the Russians, the Germans, and their American imitators should sorrow over its untimely extinction. (They now look aghast at most of the silent movies that they had so admired.) In 1929, Gilbert Seldes wrote in his book *An Hour with the Movies and the Talkies,* "it is the great popular art and the aesthetes are weeping over its demise." More than one writer recalled that "silence is golden." A playwright said that the talkies would end in the "smellies." Sure enough the producers of a short called *California, Here I Come* required the exhibitor to fill his theater with the scent of orange blossoms, while Italians patented an odoriferous way of presenting a film of theirs called *This Is My Dream.* And Aldous Huxley in his utopia of *Brave New World* envisioned the perfection of screen art in the "feelies"—stereoscopic, of course.

One film critic spoke contemptuously of "Mr. de Forest and his deadly little audion." Mary Pickford said of sound: "It's like lip rouge on the Venus de Milo," completely forgetting, by the way,

that the Greeks painted the bodies as well as the lips of their statues.

Some of the opponents of the talkies went in for arguments of a fuzzily scientific nature. The eye was quicker than the ear. Man could understand pictures better than sounds. And hearing interfered with visual comprehension. The two faculties were at war with one another.

The German Rudolph Arnheim in *Film*—written as the talkies were just taking shape—said that "light gives a more complete and therefore more accurate picture of the universe than sound. Light gives us the 'being' of things, while sound generally gives us incidental 'doing.' " Writing in 1929, the English film maker and critic Paul Rotha said in the first edition of his book *The Film Till Now:*

> No power of speech is comparable with the descriptive value of photographs. The attempted combination of speech and pictures is the direct opposition of two separate mediums, which appeal in two utterly different ways . . . a silent visual film is capable of achieving a more dramatic, lasting, and powerful effect on an audience by its singleness of appeal than a dialogue film . . . Immediately a voice begins to speak in a cinema, the sound apparatus takes precedence over the camera, thereby doing violence to natural instincts.

When Rotha revised *The Film Till Now* for re-publication in 1949, he gracefully admitted that "prophecies about the dialogue film" had been "largely disproved."

Belief in the silent film died hard. In 1928, Jesse Lasky saw that the talkie had "its definite place in the film scheme." "But," he continued, "this does not mean that the silent picture is doomed. On the contrary, it will remain the backbone of the industry's commercial security." The next year, Seldes, too, asserted that silent films would continue to be made; but he recognized that picture and sound might be merged in "an entirely new form—cinephonics, perhaps,—in which the principle of the movie will not be abandoned." Seldes was wrong about the future of the silent film. He was right, in all but name, about

"cinephonics." Within a very few years, directors and writers had learned how to tell stories in filmic terms while taking advantage of the special contributions of sound. These included greater realism and a marked deepening of characterization and content.

Sound Eliminates Subtitles

Few defenders of the silent film recognized the very obvious fact that sound eliminated a major blemish on all but a few of the films made before 1930. This was the use of subtitles to convey information. Obviously they were at odds with the flowing nature of the silent film, and yet it was extremely difficult to do without them. Arnheim saw that "a simple phrase like 'She lived absolutely alone in her cottage' is extraordinarily hard to express on the [silent] screen." Directors tried to reduce these "literary" interruptions to a minimum, and some got as low as a dozen an hour.

One way of escape from the lettered subtitle was the insert. Inserts—letters, clocks, or newspaper items—were, after all, visual objects. They were less offensive than "Came the dawn" or "All the tears of the ages gushed over his heart" or "I'm going back to the country I like and where I belong. Will you come with me?" Yet present-day directors and screen writers strive to eliminate inserts. They try to supply information through dialogue or in other ways; for example, if it has to be conveyed in a letter, they may have the over-screen "thought voice" of the one who wrote the note repeat the words as the recipient reads it.

Spoken dialogue speeded up action. If you study almost any silent film that is not overloaded with subtitles, you will note how long it took characters to convey by action and pantomime what could be told through dialogue in a much shorter time.

Dialogue Makes the Film More Significant

Much more important, of course, was the power of dialogue to characterize people. For centuries, good plays had demonstrated this. In silent films, a man or a woman tended to be a stereotype—

unless a subtitle provided an essay on his character. Working only with the camera, a director had to fall back on visual clichés. A man who stroked a cat was a good man; a man who kicked a dog was a bad man. Through spoken dialogue, on the other hand, a film could present well-rounded characters. Its men and women could have the breadth and depth of true humanity.

Out of this and out of much of the talk in a film, the screen at its best could give us content ranging from emotion to ideas. The moving picture was able at last to take on the high values that lie in the dialogue of a good play.

At first, the problem of the talkie was to retain as much as possible of the unique pictorial meaning of moving pictures while adding the values of the spoken word. This was a most difficult problem and, even today, only the exceptional director succeeds in solving it. But when he does succeed, he demonstrates the vital superiority of the talking picture to the silent movie. As Roger Manvell has put it:

> The most delicate of all instruments, the human voice, and the most highly patterned and artificial of all sounds, musical composition, add their powers to the flow of mobile pictures. The beauties of the silent film seem elementary and over-simplified in comparison with the multi-dimensional experience the interplay of sound and pictures is able to create.

Sounds That Silent Films Needed

Of course, there are other uses of sounds besides dialogue. These are not so important in terms of character and story content, but they may add greatly to the excitement of a scene, and they may help to make the emotions of a character clearer and more compelling. These sounds include the noise of machines, animals, and nature, and off-screen speech.

The early writers on the talkies were bothered a good deal over sound that was not dialogue. They pointed out some of the methods that silent producers had used to visualize sounds, and they debated whether such sounds should now be heard while we

looked at their source. There were deep doubts that an audience should see and hear a clock at the same time; this would mean a double and wasteful emphasis. It was obvious that a clock couldn't go on ticking all through a scene, and it couldn't start ticking at a particular moment unless the camera brought us so close to it that we had to hear it. One writer said that *seeing* a dog bark was sufficient; to *hear* him, too, "adds nothing to the expressive qualities of the image," except "a gain in realism." (I don't think anyone explained that, if we saw a watchdog asleep and then a man nervously attempting to enter a house, it would be much more effective to hear an off-screen bark than to cut to a silent shot of a dog barking.) In von Sternberg's silent film *The Docks of New York,* a man fired a gun, and the director cut to a rising flock of startled birds. Arnheim claimed that this was not merely "a contrivance on the part of a director to deal with the veil of silence"; it was, "on the contrary, a positive artistic effect."

In silent comedies like Harold Lloyd's *The Freshman* (1925), a sound would often have been far more effective than a visualization of its source. For instance, during football practice, Lloyd looked distressed over something, and his legs seemed to be giving him trouble. A cut to a man splitting wood told us that the comedian thought he heard his bones cracking. If we had seen Lloyd's anguish and heard the noise, we would have thought, as he did, that it came from his bones; then, a cut to the real source of the noise would have made the gag more amusing than it was on the silent screen.

Obviously, off-screen sound could do many things more effectively than visual images. Take the subjective reactions of characters under some tension like fear. Griffith used the material of Poe's *The Telltale Heart* in the best of his early films, *The Avenging Conscience.* In the short story, the mind of the terror-stricken murderer, who had buried his victim beneath the floor, magnifies the imagined ticking of the murdered man's watch into the fearsome beating of a human heart. If Griffith had been able to use sound, he could have swelled the ticking of the watch into

throbbing and reverberant heartbeats. Instead, he introduced a subtitle approximating "Like the beating of a dead man's heart," and cut to the pendulum of a clock.

Alfred Hitchcock's first talkie, *Blackmail* (1929), showed us the power of off-screen speech to dramatize subjective fear. In a silent film, if a woman committed murder and the director wanted to emphasize her fear of discovery without resorting to a subtitle, he would double-print over her close-up some newspaper headlines, accusing faces, great lips that seemed to shout her guilt. Through sound, Hitchcock got a more exciting effect. His heroine had stabbed a man who attempted to seduce her. At breakfast, her father asked for the bread knife, and the words "knife, knife, knife" echoed on the sound track over her tortured face.

Contrapuntal Sound That Is Realistic

Some early theorists on sound *vs.* silence often thought the off-screen speeches were "contrapuntal" when they were largely realistic. In Fritz Lang's first talkie, *M* (1931), the unseen mother of a missing child—whom the audience knew had been murdered—called the child's name again and again over the empty stairs, her empty attic room, her uneaten food on the table, her ball in the grass, and the balloon that the murderer had given her, now entangled in some telephone wires. Then, there was the menace of the tune from Grieg that the killer whistled off-screen; heard by a blind beggar, it led at last to the murderer's doom. Lang used with equal skill and enormous effectiveness other off-screen but natural sounds.

Pudovkin thought he was using contrapuntal sound in *Deserter* (1933) during a scene in the fog:

> For the symphony of siren calls with which *Deserter* opens I had six steamers playing in a space of a mile and a half in the Port of Leningrad. They sounded their calls to a prescribed plan and we worked at night in order that we should have quiet.

In 1954, without such a complicated operation, Elia Kazan mixed sound tracks of harbor noises in *On the Waterfront* and

used them with far greater imagination. They drowned out the attempt of a young tough, played by Marlon Brando, to justify himself to the heroine. (Incidentally, Kazan used something like the subjective and drunken camera of *The Last Laugh* as Brando, badly beaten up, staggered towards the entrance to a dock.)

Eisenstein's "Monolog" Becomes Narration

Another use of the sound track was foreshadowed—and with rather absurd emphasis—by Eisenstein when he stated in 1933: "the true material for the sound film is, of course, the monolog." Now, there are monologues and monologues. When the chief of police in *M* told a higher official what his detectives were doing, Lang cut to their activities while the chief went on talking. Film makers began to find in the off-screen voice of a character a useful way of conveying information and saving production costs. Thus, in *Stanley and Livingstone* (1939), Stanley's voice told the story of his search for Livingstone, while we watched silent shots made in Africa with "doubles." Next, the monologue became an envelope for the story and a subjective guide through its action; it has been used effectively in *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), *Brief Encounter* (1945), and on through many more pictures. What Eisenstein called a "monolog," we now find in the narration of all but a very few of the nonfiction films that we call documentaries. *Night Mail* (1936) from John Grierson and Basil Wright and Pare Lorentz' *The River* (1937) were early and notable examples.

Making the Talkies Filmic

While critics worried over the problems that sound created, workaday directors went on experimenting in its use. They recognized that the public wanted this novelty and wanted it badly. Arnheim had said that, in a silent film, "if people were walking across the screen no one missed the sound of their feet"; but I remember with what excitement an audience recognized the

crunch of the gravel as George Bernard Shaw strode down the garden path to make his first speech on film. Arnheim said that "one of the chief tasks of sound film is to avoid sound." There was something in that. Talkies should not be merely stage plays photographed and recorded. But, on the other hand, it was foolish to avoid the use of dialogue to draw out character and increase excitement and pleasure. Directors like Lang and Pabst in Germany; René Clair, Feyder, Renoir, and Duvivier in France; Hitchcock, Alexander Korda, and Carol Reed in England; Vidor, Milestone, Lubitsch, Ford, Mamoulian, Frank Lloyd, Frank Capra, and many others sought more and more successfully to make a motion picture that would be filmic as well as audible. The Americans found an easy and an old form in the Western and a new and lively one in the gangster film. And directors of many nations learned how to make both drama and comedy rich in content as well as kinetic in movement. The talkie became the movie at its best, and went beyond it.

"Camera Three"—an Adventure in Education

ROBERT HERRIDGE

ROBERT HERRIDGE has worked in television for the past five years and is currently the producer of "Camera Three." The following article was given as a talk by Mr. Herridge last year at the Institute for Education by Radio-Television, Columbus, Ohio.

AS A WRITER-PRODUCER in television, I am concerned with the process by which material, more specifically, educational material, is translated into concrete audio and visual forms for television.

Before setting out on an exploration of that process, let me say that it is hardly possible to do more than point up some of the more general problems and techniques of translation where the material comes from the world of human works and knowledge, the world of enduring human actions and values. Secondly, most of us, in this newest of media, are working apprentices, learning as we go about an enormously complicated medium of expression and communication. What I have to say is exploratory and suggestive, based on my experience on "Camera Three," a program on which I work along with Dr. Ward C. Bowen of the State Education Department of the University of the State of New York, our advisor; Frank Moriarty, our director; Clarence Worden, program director; Jim MacAndrew, our moderator; and many others; in fact, that long chain of collaborating individuals from stagehands to producer that makes a program possible. Finally, there are no certain answers; in fact, most of us would be quite happy if we knew all the problems. There is no one best way of translating ideas and material into a television form; and if there were, it would be a kind of death to freeze that form of presentation with the idea that applies to so many of television cliché formats—that is, "Nothing succeeds like success." Nonetheless, I feel that there is an urgent need for a definition or re-

defining of the television-program form, the program form that is television and not something else.

At the moment, television appears to be a great beginning. It is expected to be a common carrier of a wide variety of messages; its end is not defined according to its elements, its potential, its limitations, but according to the purpose of persons who could use it as a carrier of a message. Television is allowed to be everything except itself. It is a kind of ubiquitous arena, a traveling stage upon which here comes everybody, or what you will—a stage to be set up anywhere, and at any time man chooses to press the button of a television set. It is free for all; its audience is everyone—the entire community.

This establishes a very important fact and a profound responsibility. It establishes through form—the format of a program—a direct relationship between material and audience. What is done on the studio side of the camera is directly communicated to the whole of a community. A television program ideally is an experience that involves each and all members of a society—some more, some less. The form of that experience, therefore—the television program form—is *communal* in nature. And although to many this has its drawbacks, I think it is a healthy situation. There are those who shudder at the idea of a whole nation, or of sixty-five million people, gathering at a certain time to witness a television program. But on a smaller scale, this was true of Athens when the entire population of the city gathered to witness and be a part of plays by Aeschylus and Sophocles. The material—the dramas—was man in the infinite variety of his actions and modes of being; the form was communal; the purpose, among other things, was to educate—that is, to teach man how to live with himself, with other men, and the world around him.

The differences are obviously great, but the analogies are important and compelling to anyone thinking of television as a major medium—a new form of communication and expression of enduring human works and values.

One cannot, however, explore the process involved in making a television program without first making clear the end and the purpose of the journey; and, for me, the end and the purpose, or that which makes everything else meaningful, is that television, no matter what the nature of its material, is an art form. It is potentially a major art form, communal in nature. If one believes this, and I do, if one believes that the solution to material—that is, translating an abstract idea into concrete television terms—lies in the creation of an original art form, then he has a clear and over-all sense of his approach.

He will approach the translation of material into form with the same seriousness, the same strictness of attitude, that one approaches any major art form. The same basic aesthetic principles—pace, proportion, dominance, rhythm, unity, etc.—apply. Since like music, poetry, and drama as distinct from architecture, sculpture, and painting, time is a basic element in the form, the television form is dynamic—a better word, perhaps, is organic. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end; with each part of its structure dependent upon the others and upon the function of the whole. This function is equivalent to the effect that the form produces on the spectator. It is an interpretation or illumination of some basic truth concerning real facts or the fact of reality, an audio-visual composition working on various levels of meaning. At its best, it is for the spectator an experience in which he becomes entirely involved, an experience as a kind of journey through which he may pass from ignorance to knowledge concerning some aspect of the human experience. He is left with a final, glowing, and permanent image of life. When it achieves this, television, more than any of the mass media, relates the artistry of the great teacher with the artistry of the great writer, painter, musician, scientist.

I do not mean here to bandy the word *art* or *artist,* to speak of television as being a major art form and then suggest that what follows would be to take pictures of a symphony orchestra or a

play of Shakespeare's, allowing television cameras to be ideal spectators at a play called *Peter Pan* starring Mary Martin. This may all be good theater, but it is not by my definition creating a television art form; it is simply old wine in new bottles. Television has its own elements, its own first principles, its own demands and limitations. We begin with material afresh and not something else.

This is to suggest *one* way, *one* approach to the making of a television program. There are, of course, others equally valid, and perhaps more successful. Since mine is based largely on the varied and experimental history of the program "Camera Three," perhaps a more concrete accounting of some of our experiences with this program will be illuminating and helpful.

Our purpose from the beginning was to experiment, to create a television-program form—a way of presenting material that would come out of the potentialities and limitations of television consistent with the discipline and the elements of the medium. We began by asking questions and making certain assumptions. What we were after was concept and focus, what we were going to do and how we were going to do it.

What did we mean by education through television? Was it teaching people how to play games or how to make things, a livelihood, a profession? Was it teaching people how to live, how to live better lives with their fellow men? The educational process, we thought, involved all of these things and more. In fact, I suppose everything we see, hear, taste, do, and so on teaches us something. The point is WHAT does it teach us and to what end?

We had to establish our values. Our premise was that educational television looked two ways—to the community and to the individual. It involved a communication of all those values that would draw forth from the individual the capacity to live the fullest possible life in the world in which he found himself—a world full of tensions, problems, and complex daily choices—and to live that life together with his fellow men. In brief, we

thought the educational process was directly related to the development of mature human beings.

In establishing this as a motivating idea, we established scope and diversity for the program; and, equally important as a problem, we established an inexhaustible supply of vitally important subject material and men to explore it—the whole of human history, the whole story of man's struggle to live in the world.

Our subject was man and his works; our exploration of subject was according to a variety of educational, intellectual, and artistic disciplines, a variety of perspectives by which one might explore the nature of man and his works.

This gave us room to move around in. It gave us a choice of disciplines with which to focus on the subject. It made possible a chance to present vividly various phases of the human experience by means of the many expressions of it, particularly those we find in the arts—literature, dance, painting, music, architecture—and the methods of truth, the logic, the diagrams, the equations of science, and so on.

In the beginning, our basic program form was what is called in the business a "talk show"—exposition, demonstration, evaluation. If one by one and then two by two we integrated into the form of the talk-show art elements, elements of pure form, and then refined and pared away, we would eventually reach a form that would go beyond utilization of art forms and be in itself an art form.

Now, after more than a hundred programs, we are just beginning to realize all that is involved in attempting to create out of the human experience a television form that projects the shape, the mood, the color, the rhythm, the texture, and the pattern of that experience in such a way that a spectator may become totally involved in it; a program that is an experience with a beginning, a middle, and an end; an experience during which the spectator becomes more and more deeply aware of some phase of reality. Needless to say, this is still a great expectation.

Our experience has worked out roughly in three phases. In the first, exposition-demonstration-evaluation phase, we assumed a symbolic stage. Working before the cameras was a moderator with two or three guest authorities on the subject we were exploring. Three or four lighted areas represented stages in a well-planned and moving exploration of our subject. These areas were set up with objects, two- and three-dimensional, to key the discussion, symbolically or realistically. We made use of dramatic readings to augment and heighten the effect of the exchange of ideas in what might be called a walk around the market place of ideas. Thus, elements of various art forms were integrated into the program, used in various combinations as illustrative material.

For example, in a program on Medieval Man, we combined music and architecture in an eight-minute section—a Gregorian Chant, a slow perusal of a medieval town, the exterior and then the whole of the interior of a cathedral, some twenty pictures. The Gregorian Chant was more than mere background music; it suggested also the single-mindedness and communal purpose of a medieval community, the cathedral being its spiritual heart.

In a program on the Rome of Augustus, we opened with a long dramatic reading out of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. At the same time, we dollied a camera the whole length of the studio into a throne upon which lay a cape, an empty helmet, and an unsheathed sword. It was very simple but effective in suggesting an attitude toward power and the dark chaos of violence that lies just below the surface of power.

On Easter Sunday in 1954, our subject and our approach to it was the Easter Story in terms of western art. We integrated a forty-minute reading of the Trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection—pruned from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—with some forty Medieval and Renaissance paintings, a variety of three-dimensional objects, and the music of Handel, Bach, and Beethoven. Each of these forms is in itself a powerful and profound illumination of the experience. Woven together, integrated as they can be

on television, the various forms become an experience of mounting intensity that is far more than a sum of its parts.

Another illustration of what can be done in making an idea concrete is a series of programs we called "The Shakespearean Man." We utilized our moderator and Francis Ferrgason as a narrating and evaluating chorus to basic scenes of four of Shakespeare's plays. In *Hamlet,* for instance, by means of lighting and staging—low key, light and shadow, the triangular placement of three stools to symbolize social position and human conflict, with two ladders ascending into darkness to suggest at different moments the walls of Hamlet's prison and the endlessly ascending stairs of Hamlet's soliloquies, and with several slashing lights across the bare walls of the studio to bring out its texture—we completed the stage picture and the atmosphere of Hamlet's world. Our concentration was upon character, character relationship within the world of the play. Hence, there were many close-ups, and the scenes were carefully selected to give a sense of the play of character relationships. These are some of the concrete things we did about the problem: how does one translate a Shakespeare play into television terms?

Last summer, we began phase two, which was a movement away from the use of art in illustrative and evaluating forms, a movement toward presenting the thing itself. It was an attempt to think of older art forms as a language with which to make things in television. The series was called "Summer Session"; its subject and theme, the American Experience. Here are some of the variations: Ballad for Walt Whitman; Steamboat Round the Bend; Oh, Susanna!; The Ballad of Huck Finn; Ballet Sequence; The People, Yes; The Ballad of John Brown.

As you can see, the essential form in most of these was the ballad form, a musical form. The ballad form is also a story form; and we told a story through five voices, persons assembled on stage in varying relationships to each other. Our musical instrument was a guitar and/or banjo in the hands of the composer Tom Scott.

He constructed a score woven out of the songs of the period to act as a floor to the dance of voices. The stage picture was the abstract world of the story, the action. He utilized three levels or movements into the heart of the ballad story. The moderator worked at the level of formal exposition. This was picked up by Michael Kane as formal narrator and moved on to the ballader as the informal teller of the tale and from there to the other figures involved in the action. We were fairly successful here, I think, in integrating formal and improvisational aspects of literary, folk, theater, and musical art forms.

Let us take one of these programs and look at it a little more in detail in terms of translating the idea into the concrete program. The program is called "Steamboat Round the Bend." The idea of the program is in the title. It suggests in terms of the American Experience a historical period. It suggests a mode of travel with commercial, emotional, and folk connotations—the Missouri, the Mississippi, the Hudson, and so on. It suggests an all-important invention, an invention that for a long period of time changed the economic and physical landscape of a growing nation. If you allow the idea to flower and blossom in your mind for a while, you realize that out of the original idea and title come its extension into many directions, many dimensions, and in many areas of art, science, economics, sociology, history, and so on. How does one, in a forty-five minute program, integrate these areas to give the audience an over-all sense of persons, places, things, events—an over-all sense of all the original idea-title suggests?

For the over-all form, we chose a musical form, a musical score woven out of the songs and the melodies of the period. This communicated immediately a flowing sense of what we were talking about. Then from those areas that most concerned us, we chose objects, replicas of steamboats from Fulton's "Clermont" to the "Robert E. Lee." We selected pictures depicting the life of the times, the people, the dress, steamboat landings, stretches of river. We selected songs and sayings, folk and formal. We selected his-

torical incidents—the first trip of the "Clermont" up the Hudson, the race between the "Natchez" and the "Robert E. Lee" at the height of steamboat travel. We utilized six persons on the stage: a moderator to take care of the history, the facts, the flow of actual events from the invention of the steamboat to its lingering death some seventy-five years later; the ballader created the over-all musical form; the four actors gave us a sense of the people, of the time, talking—talking about things, talking to each other, talking in a dramatic sequence.

We began the program with an evocation of the time, a narrator setting the scene like this: first, the music, the guitar, the song "Big Old River"—then,

> Picture a time . . . it is mid-afternoon of a summer's day in the year 1850, and you are in any one of a hundred sun-baked towns along the shore of the Ohio, the Mississippi, or the Missouri; and the town is asleep under the sun, and there is perhaps a little wind off the waters of the river, and suddenly you hear it, the cry of the times . . . the cry of the river town . . . Steamboat! Steamboat round the bend . . . steamboat a-coming! . . . and the town is suddenly alive with the magic of a great event.

We began with a particular event and evocation; and for the next forty-five minutes with our narrator, Jim MacAndrew, moving in and out, pointing up the facts and the history of these years, we proceeded to explore in concrete terms a picture of the life and times suggested by the title. We ended the program with a twelve-minute dramatization taken from Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*. After exploring the world of the steamboat, we showed in dramatic and concrete terms a man becoming a pilot. All of this was woven together in a musical form.

In abstract terms, the process of translating an idea into a concrete audio and visual reality is this: you begin with an idea. The colloquial rendering of the idea is in the title. The idea-title evokes, suggests many areas, many dimensions of the human heart, mind, and soul—the human experience. What must be

found and integrated within the musical time form are concrete equivalents in terms of persons, places, things, events, sayings, formal documents, songs, and so on, which will give the audience an immediate experience, a moving tapestry of audio-visual images, both a sensory and intellectual experience, evoking a rounded sense of all that is implied in the idea-title, "Steamboat Round the Bend." This part of the American Experience thus becomes for the audience a present experience of a time, place, and lives. The audience becomes *involved* through a form, communal in nature.

I have emphasized subject material which is, perhaps, easier to translate into television form. If my experience is any judge, there is no area among the arts and sciences, nothing in the human experience, that cannot find a language and a form that is television and not something else.

And this has been our experiment on "Camera Three," to find a language emerging from the facts, the truth, the passion of the human experience, a language which is capable of expressing the many dimensions of man's life in a natural and symbolic world; that is, the world of nature and the world of language, myth, art, science, religion, the varied threads which weave the symbolic and tangled web of human experience, a language with which to create in television a program that is television and nothing but television.

We haven't achieved this yet. We hope to; certainly someone will; and when it happens, television will have reached its maturity in our society as a major form of communication and expression, a major art form. Its form will be communal; it will speak in a universal language, at once simple and profound. It will be for the audience a wholly involving experience, taking them as it were on a vital, dramatic, and deeply beautiful journey through the world of time and man—a journey that will deeply feed their lives with a sense of life.

Educational Television in Pittsburgh

LEWIS DIANA and LEONORE ELKUS

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THE TERM "EDUCATIONAL" is in some ways an unfortunate one, implying a desire on the part of a person or group to educate another. All television educates, but whom does it educate? What does it teach, and how much does it teach? How well does it educate? The answers, of course, will vary; but they are of fundamental importance to educational television.

An educational television station can become an adult and a child education center in all fields, from science to citizenship, from music to the manual arts. It can give courses for credit and courses without credit. It can use the facilities of community centers such as museums, symphony orchestras, planetariums, universities, public schools, and hospitals; and, in the process, it can itself become a school and university of the air.

The primary purpose of educational television should be the stimulation of the viewer to further effort in the area or fields in which his interest lies or can be developed. For example, a good program on literature should stimulate the desire for reading, for the purchase of books, and for discussion in the home and in community groups of the ideas presented. In fact, it is not too much to say that viewer motivation should be as important to an educational station as buying the product is to a commercial station and its advertisers. Along with developing strong viewer motivation, a good educational television station should make use of every possible means to increase the number of its viewers with the least educational background; and, if it is successful, it should, over a period of time, succeed in raising the taste and

standards of its viewers. Initially, however, the basic question is how much of an audience educational television commands.

On April 1, 1952, WQED in Pittsburgh went on the air for four hours a day, five days a week. By September, 1955, its screen was on view twelve hours every weekday except Saturday, and its future plans included an additional six hours on Sunday. Commercial surveys made for commercial clients, without any apparent bias for or against WQED, showed that more than 41 per cent of all families in Allegheny County were watching this station at least part of each week. This is a larger proportion than was anticipated. However, WQED started with one great advantage: Channel 13 was one of only two VHF channels that were operating at that time—and still at the time of this writing—in the Pittsburgh area. On the other hand, many set owners in Allegheny County could receive programs from Johnstown, Pa., and from Steubenville, Ohio; and two additional VHF stations were expected to be in operation shortly.

In contrast with the county-wide commercial surveys, the University of Pittsburgh conducted a survey of the population residing within a seven-mile radius of WQED's transmitting tower. The area of the survey thus included the city of Pittsburgh and the small communities immediately adjacent to it. From this area, 33.5 per cent of television set owners reported that they watched Pittsburgh's educational television station. The amount of time each day that families were tuned to WQED follows: 90 per cent for one to two hours, 8.2 per cent for three to four hours, 0.9 per cent for five to six hours, and 0.9 per cent for seven to eight hours.

Viewers as a whole watched WQED an average of one hour and forty-five minutes each day. Of the total average of 5.7 hours per day that they had their TV sets turned on, the viewers spent 30.7 per cent, or nearly one third, watching educational television programs. Viewers watched an average of about two WQED programs regularly each day. It is also interesting to note that those who were not viewers of WQED kept their sets turned on an

average of 5.4 hours every day, or about 18 minutes less than viewers of WQED.

Viewer and Nonviewer Differences in Occupation

The interview schedule did not attempt a breakdown based on the age, sex, and educational background of respondents. It did attempt an occupational classification, however. Occupational differences between viewers and nonviewers occurred chiefly in the business and professional group. This group included considerably, and significantly, more viewers than nonviewers; in fact, only one respondent was a nonviewer of WQED. Those in the professions and business also accounted for 27.5 per cent, or nearly half, of all subscribers to the station's previews magazine.

Viewer and Nonviewer Program Favorites

A comparison of favorite commercial television programs among viewers and nonviewers revealed only one significant difference in choice of favorites. The programs mentioned most often by both groups were "Studio One," "I Love Lucy," "U.S. Steel Hour," and "Jackie Gleason," in that order. Nonviewers of WQED, however, also mentioned the various television soap operas as favorite programs. No soap opera appeared as one of the top ten favorites; but, as a group, they ranked fifth. The viewers of educational television scarcely mentioned soap operas.

Of the WQED programs, the overwhelming favorite was "Children's Corner," an hour-long, daily program that, to date, has been among this station's outstanding successes. Written and produced by Fred Rogers, assisted by Josie Carey, this program has developed, among children and parents, a loyal following that grows weekly. It has received as many as 3,000 letters in one week. Among other things, "Children's Corner" has taught French through the charming puppet *Grandpère*. The children love the request that they make, write, or draw something and send it in to Josie or Daniel Tiger. No longer are they passive viewers who

send in a quarter or a box top. The children who watch this program actually do something and learn in the process.

WQED's "Don and Art Workshop" has proved to have something of the same value for adults. Here, two high-school shop teachers with warm personalities teach viewers "how to do it" by demonstrating the building of an outdoor grill, the refinishing of an old table, etc. This half-hour program, presented once a week, has drawn 300 or more letters weekly. Usually, the viewers ask for diagrams; and many of the letters come from women!

WQED's most startling innovation has been the widely discussed "High School of the Air" developed by Dr. Harry Snyder with the coöperation of Dr. Alfred Beattie of the Allegheny County schools and Dr. Earl Dimmick, superintendent of the Pittsburgh public schools. Teaching algebra, English and American history with three consecutive half-hour classes three evenings a week beginning at 7:00 P.M., this program last year attempted to prove that anyone, through television, could learn to pass examinations and earn a high-school diploma. Since 80 per cent of the citizens of western Pennsylvania have never graduated from high school, it is understandable why such a program has such a great potential. This potential should prove to be equally great on a national scale.

Eight hundred and ten students enrolled for the first classes of "High School of the Air." Since the examinations could not be given at night, many enrollees were unable to take them. However, 337 did take the examinations under the auspices of the State Department of Public Instruction, and 71 per cent passed. Of 40 students who had enrolled and passed enough courses to receive diplomas, 19 were inmates of Western Penitentiary. The summer program of WQED included the "High School of the Air" in the form of a six-week course offered particularly for the thousands of high-school students who failed one or more subjects last year. Since the cost to the board of education per course for every child was $75.00, it is easy to see that, if ways and means

can be found to have thousands of youngsters do their make-up work via television, the savings in dollars and cents to taxpayers could reach a high figure indeed.

WQED is also producing a series on art appreciation with Gordon Washburn, director of the Carnegie Museum of Fine Arts. And Dr. Ann Wagner, chief of Pittsburgh's Maternal and Child Welfare Section of the Department of Public Health, is continuing her popular series on the new baby and his development. Thousands of young mothers watch this program regularly each week.

Other programs are in various stages of planning and production. For example, a series recently begun is entitled "What Do You Think?" Here, a group such as the League of Women Voters has a discussion on an important issue of current interest with a panel of experts. At the same time, other community groups such as YMCA study groups and veterans organizations listen in. After the first part of the program is over, each group selects one member to go to the station and put the questions and opinions of the group to the panel of experts. This part of the program takes place two hours later. So far, the response from both participating groups and public has been excellent.

Problems Facing WQED

The foremost problem facing Pittsburgh's educational television station is financial insecurity. Were it not for a special underwriters fund, WQED would often be without sufficient funds for its minimum monthly operational costs. WQED's present yearly budget is $300,000. Toward this, the schools of the area have donated thirty cents for each child. But the station has no assured and steady income. Consequently, there is a shortage of funds for promotion that is as important to the growth of the station as good programs. When fine programs that the public does not know about are on the air, they are surely performed in a vacuum; and although WQED has had superb coöperation from all news-

papers in the area, newspaper publicity remains only one part of a well-planned promotional program.

There is also a lack of funds for sets and equipment, which could make the programs more pleasant to watch. Similarly, WQED has a sparse number of paid personnel who, along with their regular duties, have had to train the numerous student volunteers who make up the remainder of the staff. These student and community volunteers have given more than 62,000 hours of their time to date and they comprise more than 60 per cent of the station's working force. If they were not available, WQED would be forced to cut back its hours to four a day, or to triple its present budget. The excellent coöperation and interest of the unions have also made possible the number of hours the station has been on the air.

Eventually, the problem will have to be solved by increased support from the community, from the universities, from industry, and from funds from the State. Despite the generally enthusiastic response to educational television in the metropolitan Pittsburgh area, there still remains a large potential audience to tap. Community support should still be further enlarged. But this remains one of the challenges to be met.

A Bibliography for the Quarter

Book Editor, FRANKLIN FEARING

PROBABLY FEW PEOPLE are aware of the amount of air time given over to religion. Although these programs have large audiences and possess obvious sociological and psychological interest, they have not been systematically studied. We do not know what their religious content and appeal are, what kind of people watch or listen to them, or what kinds of satisfactions their audiences derive from them. A research team working in the metropolitan community of New Haven under the supervision of a committee of the faculty of the Yale University School of Divinity undertook to discover some of the answers to these questions. The results are presented in *The Television-Radio Audience and Religion* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1955, $6.00) by Everett C. Parker, David W. Barry, and Dallas W. Smythe.

The essential purposes of the research were to examine the content of the religious programs broadcast in the New Haven area and, by means of intensive interviews and personality assessment tests, to determine what part these programs played in the lives of the viewing or listening audience. The audience for religious programs was not studied in isolation but in the context of the New Haven community as a whole. Account was taken of the community's history, its specific religious practices, its economic and social-class structure, and the sex, age, and income distribution of its population. Part I reports this background material. Part II presents the results of content analyses of the religious programs. The general characteristics of radio and television in New Haven are described in Part III. Part IV contains results of "depth studies" of individuals representing audiences for the various types of religious programs.

A striking but perhaps not surprising finding is the correlation between religious behavior, in general, and social class. This holds

not only for formal church membership but for audiences for the various types of religious programs. Religious affiliation and interest, in other words, do not exist in watertight compartments but are related to other social aspects of the person such as income, education, occupation, housing, and the like. From the point of view of planners of religious broadcasting, this means that programs beamed for a selected religious audience will also be selective for such factors as education, occupation, etc. And conversely, programs intended for particular educational, occupational, or income groups will be religiously selective as well.

The depth studies in Part IV furnish the most interesting and, psychologically, most significant findings of the study. The data were obtained from intensive, nondirective interviews, and reveal the many faceted character of the needs that religious programs serve. They show unmistakably that these needs are deeply embedded in the personality structure of the individual, and determine the type of religious program he seeks. Some of the programs offer psychotherapy to individuals in whom anxiety levels have become unsupportable. Others offer authoritative affirmation to the timid and frightened. Still others provide an opportunity for nostalgic return to childhood (the "old-time religion") memories.

It seems reasonably clear that religious broadcasting in the main has developed outside the organized churches most of which choose to ignore it. The appeals that it offers and the needs that it satisfies may, in fact, be "religious" only in a rather extended and unorthodox definition of that term. An exception to the general apathy is the Catholic church represented by the *Catholic Hour* and the enormously successful programs of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. The many levels of appeal in Bishop Sheen's programs are reflected in the fact that his audience comes the closest to representing a cross section of the New Haven population.

The authors are careful to note that the results of their study are not to be taken as representative of any community except

New Haven. This suggests the need for studies in other areas where the picture may be quite different. Such studies are of interest not only to religionists but for what they tell us about the anxieties, beliefs, and fears of little studied segments of the population.

* * *

The subtitle of *Personal Influence* (Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1955, $6.00), *The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications,* briefly but accurately states what the book is about. The authors, Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, are concerned with the processes by which people influence each other and how these patterns of influence are related to the great mass media of communication.

There is a widely held notion that some magic resides in these media by virtue of which they can directly influence the behavior of people exposed to them. This belief is not only part of a popular mythology about these media and their effects, but it has even received certain support in communications research and theory. But matters are not so simple. Actually, as the researches reported in the present book amply demonstrate, the factors that influence people to make up their minds to go to a particular movie, buy a particular product in the supermarket, or vote for a particular presidential candidate are only in part the direct result of the massive impacts of advertising campaigns, TV and radio programs, and the like. The influence of the mass media, as the authors point out, is not direct, but is refracted by other forces operating in the immediate social environment of the ultimate consumer. These forces flow from the numerous face-to-face contacts of people, their group loyalties, culturally supported norms, and their dependence on opinion leaders. They do not meet the eye of the untrained observer, and are actually concealed in widely quoted and devoutly believed-in statistics on presumed "effects" of this or that mass-media campaign.

Personal Influence is a book about these subtle influences that

may support or fail to support the mass media. Part I is an evaluation of the extensive literature on patterns of personal influence, especially in small groups. Part II reports results of a detailed study of the channels of influence operating in a particular Midwestern community. This last is a study of factors influencing the decisions in a variety of fields of some 800 women in Decatur, Illinois.

This is a comprehensive and definitive study in a neglected field. It may be read with profit by anyone seriously interested in how people change their minds (when they do!). It is notable, too, for its simplicity of exposition of a subject that is not simple and for its freedom from academic gobbledygook.

* * *

The talks in *Talking of Shakespeare* (Theatre Arts Books, 224 West 4th St., New York, 1954, $5.00) are very good talks indeed. The volume is edited by John Garrett, and the talks were originally delivered as lectures at the Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. They are intended for the intelligent layman, and cover a wide variety of topics. The authors include well-known Shakespearean scholars as well as critics, actors, film writers, and poets. Among the topics are "Shakespeare as a Dramatist" (by Nevill Coghill), "Shakespeare as a Poet" (by Patric Dickinson), "Shakespeare and the Actors" (by Michael Redgrave), and "On Editing Shakespeare with Special Reference to the Problems of *Richard III*" (by J. Dover Wilson). Especially interesting is "The Filming of Shakespeare" (by Paul Dehn), a lively review of the numerous film versions of Shakespeare's plays. Some of these—especially Olivier's *Henry V* and *Hamlet* and the recent *Julius Caesar*—the author thinks were excellent, and some—especially Orson Welles's *Macbeth*—he thinks were dreadful. These essay-lectures are wholly unpedantic, and will hold the attention of any literate person who delights in Shakespeare either in the library or in the theater.

* * *

Readers of the *Saturday Review* are familiar with Goodman Ace's caustic and uninhibited comments on television. A selection of his pieces is to be found in *The Book of Little Knowledge,* subtitled *More Than You Want to Know about Television* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1955, $2.95). Mr. Ace has a sharp and lively pen and is irreverent about all aspects of television including sponsors and commercials. You will enjoy these little essays if you are in the mood for irreverence, but you will probably be annoyed when he talks about your favorite TV show.

* * *

In *I Love Her That's All* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1955, $3.50), George Burns gives an unaffected and at times hilarious account of how two of the best-known comedians in show business got (and stayed) that way. Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about George Burns and Gracie Allen is the fact that they have been playing the same plot for years, and it still seems fresh and funny. A complete script of one of their TV shows is included, and it is funny even in print. This is a must for Burns and Allen fans. There are some excellent pictures and an amusing introduction (for some reason called a "Prologue") by Jack Benny.

* * *

Few people realize the extraordinary complexity of the trade-union picture in the motion-picture industry. Thirty-nine unions have collective bargaining agreements with the Hollywood studios. These unions represent a great diversity of skills and bargaining power. They range from the talent guilds such as the Screen Writers and Screen Actors Guilds to plumbers and sheet metal workers. Hugh Lovell and Tasile Carter in *Collective Bargaining in the Motion Picture Industry* (Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California at Berkeley, 1955, fifty cents) present this picture in considerable detail together with its historical background. The latter includes a commendably dispassionate analysis of the great strikes of 1945 and 1946. The

style is clear; and the point of view, objective. This is a first in a series of studies by the Institute of West Coast collective bargaining systems.

* * *

One of the current crises in higher education concerns the constantly increasing enrollments without a corresponding increase in educational facilities, especially instructors. In other words, it is a question of too many students and too few instructors. Administrators and some educators have sought for methods whereby a single instructor can have instructional contact with an indefinitely extended student audience. Closed-circuit television is offered as a possible solution. *An Investigation of Closed-Circuit Television for Teaching University Courses* by C. R. Carpenter and L. P. Greenhill in collaboration with C. J. McIntyre, H. D. Sherk, G. W. Smith, and R. W. Watkins (Instructional Television Research Program, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa., 1955, no price given) is a carefully designed study to discover whether closed-circuit TV is as effective, more effective, or less effective than conventional lecture methods of instruction. The study extended over an entire semester and involved classes in general chemistry and psychology. Comparable groups of students were exposed to and periodically tested about closed-circuit TV lectures and conventional face-to-face lectures by a corps of instructors.

The findings are presented in the form of detailed statistical analyses. Among the more important conclusions relevant to the major problems of the research are the following:

1. Is conventional instruction more or less effective than closed-circuit instruction? "The overall comparative measurements did not yield significant differences in *informational learning* by students in two different courses of psychology and the lecture-demonstrations part of general chemistry."

2. Is closed-circuit instruction acceptable to students? "Instructional television was *acceptable* to students for the courses as taught in the context of the experiment. Students' general attitudes towards tele-

vised instruction as compared with direct instruction were mainly neutral or slightly negative."

3. Were there any detectable trends during the course of the semester? "No statistically significant trends in effectiveness or acceptance were found over the course of a full academic semester of televised instruction."

4. How feasible is moderate cost closed-circuit television? "It was found practical to use vidicon closed-circuit television equipment under the conditions of the experiment, but there are many problems of *feasibility* and *costs* which need further study preparatory for full scale operations."

5. Was closed-circuit instruction acceptable to the faculty and administrators? "University administrators accept and see promise in closed-circuit television as *one* means of solving difficult problems related to increased student enrollment . . . Experienced instructors generally *do not* prefer instructional television, as used in this experiment, to their accustomed teaching procedures. Faculty members are willing to accept closed-circuit television on an *experimental basis.*"

6. What are the possibilities of using closed-circuit television to extend the power and influence of superior instruction to large numbers of students? "Practical use of the two systems suggests that the potentialities are very great for using single or multiple systems of closed-circuit vidicon television for channeling excellent instruction from a single source or sources to very large numbers of university students."

Many educators will inquire whether "informational" learning adequately defines the function of college education and to what extent, if any, instruction via closed TV is successful for other, perhaps more important, forms of learning.