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How to Look at Television

T. W. ADORNO

DR. T. W. ADORNO, as Research Director during the past year of the Hacker Foundation of Beverly Hills, California, conducted the pilot study which is here published for the first time. Others involved in this study include Mrs. Bernice T. Eiduson, Dr. Merril B. Friend, and George Gerbner. Dr. Adorno has now returned to Germany where he has resumed his professorship in the Philosophy department at Frankfurt University and his position as co-director of the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt.

THE EFFECT OF TELEVISION cannot be adequately expressed in terms of success or failure, likes or dislikes, approval or disapproval. Rather, an attempt should be made, with the aid of depth-psychological categories and previous knowledge of mass media, to crystallize a number of theoretical concepts by which the potential effect of television—its impact upon various layers of the spectator's personality—could be studied. It seems timely to investigate systematically socio-psychological stimuli typical of televised material both on a descriptive and psychodynamic level, to analyze their presuppositions as well as their total pattern, and to evaluate the effect they are likely to produce. This procedure may ultimately bring forth a number of recommendations on how to deal with these stimuli to produce the most desirable effect of television. By exposing the socio-psychological implications and mechanisms of television, often operating under the guise of fake realism, not only may the shows be improved, but, more important possibly, the public at large may be sensitized to the nefarious effect of some of these mechanisms.

We are not concerned with the effectiveness of any particular show or program; but, we are concerned with the nature of present-day television and its imagery. Yet, our approach is practical. The findings should be so close to the material, should rest on such a solid foundation of experience that they can be translated into precise recommendations and be made convincingly clear to large audiences.

Improvement of television is not conceived primarily on an artistic, purely aesthetic level, extraneous to present customs. This does not mean that we naïvely take for granted the dichotomy between autonomous art and mass media. We all know that their relationship is highly complex. Today's rigid division between what is called "long-haired" and "short-haired" art is the product of a long historical development. It would be romanticizing to assume that formerly art was entirely pure, that the creative artist thought only in terms of the inner consistency of the artifact and not also of its effect upon the spectators. Theatrical art, in particular, cannot be separated from audience reaction. Conversely, vestiges of the aesthetic claim to be something autonomous, a world unto itself, remain even within the most trivial product of mass culture. In fact, the present rigid division of art into autonomous and commercial aspects is itself largely a function of commercialization. It was hardly accidental that the slogan *l'art pour l'art* was coined polemically in the Paris of the first half of the nineteenth century, when literature really became large-scale business for the first time. Many of the cultural products bearing the anticommercial trademark "art for art's sake" show traces of commercialism in their appeal to the sensational or in the conspicuous display of material wealth and sensuous stimuli at the expense of the meaningfulness of the work. This trend was pronounced in the neo-Romantic theater of the first decades of our century.

Older and Recent Popular Culture

In order to do justice to all such complexities, much closer scrutiny of the background and development of modern mass media is required than communications research, generally limited to present conditions, is aware of. One would have to establish what the output of contemporary cultural industry has in common with older "low" or popular forms of art as well as with autonomous art and where the difference lies. Suffice it here to

state that the archetypes of present popular culture were set comparatively early in the development of middle-class society—at about the turn of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries in England. According to the studies of the English sociologist Ian Watt, the English novels of that period, particularly the works of Defoe and Richardson, marked the beginning of an approach to literary production that consciously created, served, and finally controlled a "market." Today the commercial production of cultural goods has become streamlined, and the impact of popular culture upon the individual has concomitantly increased. This process has not been confined to quantity, but has resulted in new qualities. While recent popular culture has absorbed all the elements and particularly all the "don't's" of its predecessor, it differs decisively in as much as it has developed into a *system*. Thus, popular culture is no longer confined to certain forms such as novels or dance music, but has seized all media of artistic expression. The structure and meaning of these forms show an amazing parallelism, even when they appear to have little in common on the surface (such as jazz and the detective novel). Their output has increased to such an extent that it is almost impossible for anyone to dodge them; and even those formerly aloof from popular culture—the rural population on one hand and the higher level of education on the other—are somehow affected. The more the system of "merchandising" culture is expanded, the more it tends also to assimilate the "serious" art of the past by adapting this art to the system's own requirements. The control is so extensive that any infraction of its rules is *a priori* stigmatized as "high-brow" and has but little chance to reach the population at large. The system's concerted effort results in what might be called the prevailing ideology of our time.

Certainly, there are many typical changes within today's pattern; e.g., men were formerly presented as erotically aggressive and women on the defensive, whereas this has been largely re-

versed in modern mass culture, as pointed out particularly by Wolfenstein and Leites. More important, however, is that the pattern itself, dimly perceptible in the early novels and basically preserved today, has by now become congealed and standardized. Above all, this rigid institutionalization transforms modern mass culture into a medium of undreamed of psychological control. The repetitiveness, the selfsameness, and the ubiquity of modern mass culture tend to make for automatized reactions and to weaken the forces of individual resistance.

When the journalist Defoe and the printer Richardson calculated the effect of their wares upon the audience, they had to speculate, to follow hunches; and therewith, a certain latitude to develop deviations remained. Such deviations have nowadays been reduced to a kind of multiple choice between very few alternatives. The following may serve as an illustration. The popular or semipopular novels of the first half of the nineteenth century, published in large quantities and serving mass consumption, were supposed to arouse tension in the reader. Although the victory of the good over the bad was generally provided for, the meandering and endless plots and subplots hardly allowed the readers of Sue and Dumas to be continuously aware of the moral. Readers could expect anything to happen. This no longer holds true. Every spectator of a television mystery knows with absolute certainty how it is going to end. Tension is but superficially maintained and is unlikely to have a serious effect any more. On the contrary, the spectator feels on safe ground all the time. This longing for "feeling on safe ground"—reflecting an infantile need for protection, rather than his desire for a thrill—is catered to. The element of excitement is preserved only with tongue in cheek. Such changes fall in line with the potential change from a freely competitive to a virtually "closed" society into which one wants to be admitted or from which one fears to be rejected. Everything somehow appears "predestined."

The increasing strength of modern mass culture is further en-

hanced by changes in the sociological structure of the audience. The old cultured elite does not exist any more; the modern intelligentsia only partially corresponds to it. At the same time, huge strata of the population formerly unacquainted with art have become cultural "consumers." Modern audiences, although probably less capable of the artistic sublimation bred by tradition, have become shrewder in their demands for perfection of technique and for reliability of information, as well as in their desire for "services"; and they have become more convinced of the consumers' potential power over the producer, no matter whether this power is actually wielded.

How changes within the audience have affected the meaning of popular culture may also be illustrated. The element of internalization played a decisive role in early Puritan popular novels of the Richardson type. This element no longer prevails, for it was based on the essential role of "inwardness" in both original Protestantism and earlier middle-class society. As the profound influence of the basic tenets of Protestantism has gradually receded, the cultural pattern has become more and more opposed to the "introvert." As Riesman puts it,

> . . . the conformity of earlier generations of Americans of the type I term "inner-directed" was mainly assured by their internalization of adult authority. The middle-class urban American of today, the "other-directed," is, by contrast, in a characterological sense more the product of his peers—that is, in sociological terms, his "peer-groups," the other kids at school or in the block.[1]

This is reflected by popular culture. The accents on inwardness, inner conflicts, and psychological ambivalence (which play so large a role in earlier popular novels and on which their originality rests) have given way to complete externalization and consequently to an entirely unproblematic, cliché-like characterization. Yet the code of decency that governed the inner conflicts of the

[1] David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven, 1950), p. v.

Pamelas, Clarissas, and Lovelaces remains almost literally intact.[2] The middle-class "ontology" is preserved in an almost fossilized way but is severed from the mentality of the middle classes. By being superimposed on people with whose living conditions and mental make-up it is no longer in accordance, this middle-class "ontology" assumes an increasingly authoritarian and at the same time hollow character.

The overt "naïveté" of older popular culture is avoided. Mass culture, if not sophisticated, must at least be up-to-date—that is to say, "realistic," or posing as realistic—in order to meet the expectations of a supposedly disillusioned, alert, and hard-boiled audience. Middle-class requirements bound up with internalization such as concentration, intellectual effort, and erudition have to be continuously lowered. This does not hold only for the United States, where historical memories are scarcer than in Europe; but it is universal, applying to England and Continental Europe as well.[3]

However, this apparent progress of enlightenment is more than counterbalanced by retrogressive traits. The earlier popular culture maintained a certain equilibrium between its social ideology and the actual social conditions under which its consumers lived. This probably helped to keep the border line between popular and serious art during the eighteenth century more fluid than it is

[2] The evolution of the ideology of the extrovert has probably also its long history, particularly in the lower types of popular literature during the nineteenth century when the code of decency became divorced from its religious roots and therewith attained more and more the character of an opaque taboo. It seems likely, however, that in this respect the triumph of the films marked the decisive step. Reading as an act of perception and apperception probably carries with itself a certain kind of internalization; the act of reading a novel comes fairly close to a *monologue interieur.* Visualization in modern mass media makes for externalization. The idea of inwardness, still maintained in older portrait painting through the expressiveness of the face, gives way to unmistakable optical signals that can be grasped at a glance. Even if a character in a movie or television show is not what he appears to be, his appearance is treated in such a way as to leave no doubt about his true nature. Thus a villain who is not presented as a brute must at least be "suave," and his repulsive slickness and mild manner unambiguously indicate what we are to think of him.

[3] It should be noted that the tendency against "erudition" was already present at the very beginning of popular culture, particularly in Defoe who was consciously opposed to the learned literature of his day, and has become famous for having scorned every refinement of style and artistic construction in favor of an apparent faithfulness to "life."

today. Abbé Prévost was one of the founding fathers of French popular literature; but his *Manon Lescaut* is completely free from clichés, artistic vulgarisms, and calculated effects. Similarly, later in the eighteenth century, Mozart's *Zauberfloete* struck a balance between the "high" and the popular style which is almost unthinkable today.

The curse of modern mass culture seems to be its adherence to the almost unchanged ideology of early middle-class society, whereas the lives of its consumers are completely out of phase with this ideology. This is probably the reason for the gap between the overt and the hidden "message" of modern popular art. Although on an overt level the traditional values of English Puritan middle-class society are promulgated, the hidden message aims at a frame of mind which is no longer bound by these values. Rather, today's frame of mind transforms the traditional values into the norms of an increasingly hierarchical and authoritarian social structure. Even here it has to be admitted that authoritarian elements were also present in the older ideology which, of course, never fully expressed the truth. But the "message" of adjustment and unreflecting obedience seems to be dominant and all-pervasive today. Whether maintained values derived from religious ideas obtain a different meaning when severed from their root should be carefully examined. For example, the concept of the "purity" of women is one of the invariables of popular culture. In the earlier phase this concept is treated in terms of an inner conflict between concupiscence and the internalized Christian ideal of chastity, whereas in today's popular culture it is dogmatically posited as a value *per se*. Again, even the rudiments of this pattern are visible in productions such as *Pamela*. There, however, it seems a by-product; whereas in today's popular culture the idea that only the "nice girl" gets married and that she must get married at any price has come to be accepted before Richardson's conflicts even start.[4]

[4] One of the significant differences seems to be that in the eighteenth century the concept of popular culture itself moving toward an emancipation from the absolutistic and

The more inarticulate and diffuse the audience of modern mass media seems to be, the more mass media tend to achieve their *"integration."* The ideals of conformity and conventionalism were inherent in popular novels from the very beginning. Now, however, these ideals have been translated into rather clear-cut prescriptions of what to do and what not to do. The outcome of conflicts is pre-established, and all conflicts are mere sham. Society is always the winner, and the individual is only a puppet manipulated through social rules. True, conflicts of the nineteenth-century type—such as women running away from their husbands, the drabness of provincial life, and daily chores—occur frequently in today's magazine stories. However, with a regularity which challenges quantitative treatment, these conflicts are decided in favor of the very same conditions from which these women want to break away. The stories teach their readers that one has to be "realistic," that one has to give up romantic ideas, that one has to adjust oneself at any price, and that nothing more can be expected of any individual. The perennial middle-class conflict between individuality and society has been reduced to a dim memory, and the message is invariably that of identification with the *status quo*. This theme too is not new, but its unfailing universality invests it with an entirely different meaning. The constant plugging of conventional values seems to mean that these values have lost their substance, and it is feared that people would really follow their instinctual urges and conscious insights unless continuously reassured from outside that they must not do so. The less the

semifeudal tradition had a progressive meaning stressing autonomy of the individual as being capable of making his own decisions. This means, among other things, that the early popular literature left space for authors who violently disagreed with the pattern set by Richardson and, nevertheless, obtained popularity of their own. The most prominent case in question is that of Fielding, whose first novel started as a parody of Richardson. It would be interesting to compare the popularity of Richardson and Fielding at that time. Fielding hardly achieved the same success as Richardson. Yet it would be absurd to assume that today's popular culture would allow the equivalent of a *Tom Jones*. This may illustrate the contention of the "rigidity" of today's popular culture. A crucial experiment would be to make an attempt to base a movie on a novel such as Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*. It is almost certain that the script would be rewritten and edited so often that nothing remotely similar to the idea of the original would be left.

message is really believed and the less it is in harmony with the actual existence of the spectators, the more categorically it is maintained in modern popular culture. One may speculate whether its inevitable hypocrisy is concomitant with punitiveness and sadistic sternness.

Multilayered Structure

A depth-psychological approach to television has to be focused on its multilayered structure. Mass media are not simply the sum total of the actions they portray or of the messages that radiate from these actions. Mass media also consist of various layers of meaning superimposed on one another, all of which contribute to the effect. True, due to their calculative nature, these rationalized products seem to be more clear-cut in their meaning than authentic works of art which can never be boiled down to some unmistakable "message." But the heritage of polymorphic meaning has been taken over by cultural industry in as much as what it conveys becomes itself organized in order to enthrall the spectators on various psychological levels simultaneously. As a matter of fact, the hidden message may be more important than the overt since this hidden message will escape the controls of consciousness, will not be "looked through," will not be warded off by sales resistance, but is likely to sink into the spectator's mind.

Probably all the various levels in mass media involve *all* the mechanisms of consciousness and unconsciousness stressed by psychoanalysis. The difference between the surface content, the overt message of televised material, and its hidden meaning is generally marked and rather clear-cut. The rigid superimposition of various layers probably is one of the features by which mass media are distinguishable from the integrated products of autonomous art where the various layers are much more thoroughly fused. The full effect of the material on the spectator cannot be studied without consideration of the hidden meaning in conjunction with the overt one, and it is precisely this interplay of various layers which

has hitherto been neglected and which will be our focus. This is in accordance with the assumption shared by numerous social scientists that certain political and social trends of our time, particularly those of a totalitarian nature, feed to a considerable extent on irrational and frequently unconscious motivations. Whether the conscious or the unconscious message of our material is more important is hard to predict and can be evaluated only after careful analysis. We do appreciate, however, that the overt message can be interpreted much more adequately in the light of psychodynamics—i.e., in its relation to instinctual urges as well as control—than by looking at the overt in a naïve way and by ignoring its implications and presuppositions.

The relation between overt and hidden message will prove highly complex in practice. Thus, the hidden message frequently aims at reinforcing conventionally rigid and "pseudorealistic" attitudes similar to the accepted ideas more rationalistically propagated by the surface message. Conversely, a number of repressed gratifications which play a large role on the hidden level are somehow allowed to manifest themselves on the surface in jests, off-color remarks, suggestive situations, and similar devices. All this interaction of various levels, however, points in some definite direction: the tendency to channelize audience reaction. This falls in line with the suspicion widely shared, though hard to corroborate by exact data, that the majority of television shows today aim at producing or at least reproducing the very smugness, intellectual passivity, and gullibility that seem to fit in with totalitarian creeds even if the explicit surface message of the shows may be antitotalitarian.

With the means of modern psychology, we will try to determine the primary prerequisites of shows eliciting mature, adult, and responsible reactions—implying not only in content but in the very way things are being looked at, the idea of autonomous individuals in a free democratic society. We perfectly realize that any definition of such an individual will be hazardous; but we know

quite well what a human being deserving of the appellation "autonomous individual" should *not* be, and this "not" is actually the focal point of our consideration.

When we speak of the multilayered structure of television shows, we are thinking of various superimposed layers of different degrees of manifestness or hiddenness that are utilized by mass culture as a technological means of "handling" the audience. This was expressed felicitously by Leo Lowenthal when he coined the term "psychoanalysis in reverse." The implication is that somehow the psychoanalytic concept of a multilayered personality has been taken up by cultural industry, but that the concept is used in order to ensnare the consumer as completely as possible and in order to engage him psychodynamically in the service of premeditated effects. A clear-cut division into allowed gratifications, forbidden gratifications, and recurrence of the forbidden gratification in a somewhat modified and deflected form is carried through.

To illustrate the concept of the multilayered structure: the heroine of an extremely light comedy of pranks is a young schoolteacher who is not only underpaid but is incessantly fined by the caricature of a pompous and authoritarian school principal. Thus, she has no money for her meals and is actually starving. The supposedly funny situations consist mostly of her trying to hustle a meal from various acquaintances, but regularly without success. The mention of food and eating seems to induce laughter—an observation that can frequently be made and invites a study of its own.[5] Overtly, the play is just slight amusement mainly provided by the painful situations into which the heroine and her arch-opponent constantly run. The script does not try to "sell" any

[5] The more rationality (the reality principle) is carried to extremes, the more its ultimate aim (actual gratification) tends, paradoxically, to appear as "immature" and ridiculous. Not only eating, but also uncontrolled manifestations of sexual impulses tend to provoke laughter in audiences—kisses in motion pictures have generally to be led up to, the stage has to be set for them, in order to avoid laughter. Yet mass culture never completely succeeds in wiping out potential laughter. Induced, of course, by the supposed infantilism of sensual pleasures, laughter can largely be accounted for by the mechanism of repression. Laughter is a defense against the forbidden fruit.

idea. The "hidden meaning" emerges simply by the way the story looks at human beings; thus the audience is invited to look at the characters in the same way without being made aware that indoctrination is present. The character of the underpaid, maltreated schoolteacher is an attempt to reach a compromise between prevailing scorn for the intellectual and the equally conventionalized respect for "culture." The heroine shows such an intellectual superiority and high-spiritedness that identification with her is invited, and compensation is offered for the inferiority of her position and that of her ilk in the social setup. Not only is the central character supposed to be very charming, but she wisecracks constantly. In terms of a set pattern of identification, the script implies: "If you are as humorous, good-natured, quick-witted, and charming as she is, do not worry about being paid a starvation wage. You can cope with your frustration in a humorous way; and your superior wit and cleverness put you not only above material privations, but also above the rest of mankind." In other words, the script is a shrewd method of promoting adjustment to humiliating conditions by presenting them as objectively comical and by giving a picture of a person who experiences even her own inadequate position as an object of fun apparently free of any resentment.

Of course, this latent message cannot be considered as unconscious in the strict psychological sense; but rather, as "inobtrusive," this message is hidden only by a style which does not pretend to touch anything serious and expects to be regarded as featherweight. Nevertheless, even such amusement tends to set patterns for the members of the audience without their being aware of it.

Another comedy of the same series is reminiscent of the funnies. A cranky old woman sets up the will of her cat (Mr. Casey) and makes as heirs some of the schoolteachers in the permanent cast. Later the actual inheritance is found to consist only of the cat's valueless toys. The plot is so constructed that each heir, at the

reading of the will, is tempted to act as if he had known this person (Mr. Casey). The ultimate point is that the cat's owner had placed a hundred-dollar bill inside each of the toys; and the heirs run to the incinerator in order to recover their inheritance.

Some surface teachings are clearly observable. First, everybody is greedy and does not mind a little larceny, if he feels sure that he cannot be discovered—the attitude of the wise and realistic skeptic that is supposed to draw a smile from the audience. Second, the audience is told somewhat inconsistently: "Do not be greedy or you will be cheated." Beyond this, however, a more latent message may again be found. Fun is being poked at the universal daydream of the possibility of coming into an unexpected large inheritance. The audience is given to understand: "Don't expect the impossible, don't daydream, but be realistic." The denunciation of that archetypical daydream is enhanced by the association of the wish for unexpected and irrational blessings with dishonesty, hypocrisy, and a generally undignified attitude. The spectator is given to understand: "Those who dare daydream, who expect that money will fall to them from heaven, and who forget any caution about accepting an absurd will are at the same time those whom you might expect to be capable of cheating."

Here, an objection may be raised: Is such a sinister effect of the hidden message of television known to those who control, plan, write, and direct shows? Or it may even be asked: Are these traits possible projections of the unconscious of the decision-makers' own minds according to the widespread assumption that works of art can be properly understood in terms of psychological projections of their authors? As a matter of fact, it is this kind of reasoning that has led to the suggestion that a special socio-psychological study of decision makers in the field of television be made. We do not think that such a study would lead us very far. Even in the sphere of autonomous art, the idea of projection has been largely overrated. Although the authors' motivations certainly enter the

artifact, they are by no means so all-determining as is often assumed. As soon as an artist has set himself his problem, it obtains some kind of impact of its own; and, in most cases, he has to follow the objective requirements of his product much more than his own urges of expression when he translates his primary conception into artistic reality. To be sure, these objective requirements do not play a decisive role in mass media which stress the effect on the spectator far beyond any artistic problem. However, the total setup here tends to limit the chances of the artists' projections utterly. Those who produce the material follow, often grumblingly, innumerable requirements, rules of thumb, set patterns, and mechanisms of controls which by necessity reduce to a minimum the range of any kind of artistic self-expression. The fact that most products of mass media are not produced by one individual but by collective collaboration, as happens to be true also with most of the illustrations so far discussed, is only one contributing factor to this generally prevailing condition. To study television shows in terms of the psychology of the authors would almost be tantamount to studying Ford cars in terms of the psychoanalysis of the late Mr. Ford.

Presumptuousness

The typical psychological mechanisms utilized by television shows and the devices by which they are automatized function only within a small number of given frames of reference operative in television communication, and the socio-psychological effect largely depends on them. We are all familiar with the division of television content into various classes, such as light comedy, westerns, mysteries, so-called sophisticated plays, and others. These types have developed into formulas which, to a certain degree, pre-establish the attitudinal pattern of the spectator before he is confronted with any specific content and which largely determine the way in which any specific content is being perceived.

In order to understand television, it is, therefore, not enough to bring out the implications of various shows and types of shows; but an examination must be made of the presuppositions within which the implications function before a single word is spoken. Most important is that the typing of shows has gone so far that the spectator approaches each one with a set pattern of expectations before he faces the show itself—just as the radio listener who catches the beginning of Tschaikowsky's Piano Concerto as a theme song, knows automatically, "Aha, serious music!" or, when he hears organ music, responds equally automatically, "Aha, religion!" These halo effects of previous experiences may be psychologically as important as the implications of the phenomena themselves for which they have set the stage; and these presuppositions should, therefore, be treated with equal care.

When a television show bears the title "Dante's Inferno," when the first shot is that of a night club by the same name, and when we find sitting at the bar a man with his hat on and at some distance from him a sad-looking, heavily made-up woman ordering another drink, we are almost certain that some murder will shortly be committed. The apparently individualized situation actually works only as a signal that moves our expectations into a definite direction. If we had never seen anything but "Dante's Inferno," we probably would not be sure about what was going to happen; but, as it is, we are actually given to understand by both subtle and not so subtle devices that this is a crime play, that we are entitled to expect some sinister and probably hideous and sadistic deeds of violence, that the hero will be saved from a situation from which he can hardly be expected to be saved, that the woman on the barstool is probably not the main criminal but is likely to lose her life as a gangster's moll, and so on. This conditioning to such universal patterns, however, scarcely stops at the television set.

The way the spectator is made to look at apparently everyday items, such as a night club, and to take as hints of possible crime

common settings of his daily life, induces him to look at life itself as though it and its conflicts could generally be understood in such terms.[6] This, convincingly enough, may be the nucleus of truth in the old-fashioned arguments against all kinds of mass media for inciting criminality in the audience. The decisive thing is that this atmosphere of the normality of crime, its presentation in terms of an average expectation based on life situations, is never expressed in so many words but is established by the overwhelming wealth of material. It may affect certain spectator groups more deeply than the overt moral of crime and punishment regularly derived from such shows. What matters is not the importance of crime as a symbolic expression of otherwise controlled sexual or aggressive impulses, but the confusion of this symbolism with a pedantically maintained realism in all matters of direct sense perception. Thus, empirical life becomes infused with a kind of meaning that virtually excludes adequate experience no matter how obstinately the veneer of such "realism" is built up. This affects the social and psychological function of drama.

It is hard to establish whether the spectators of Greek tragedy really experienced the catharsis Aristotle described—in fact this theory, evolved after the age of tragedy was over, seems to have been a rationalization itself, an attempt to state the purpose of tragedy in pragmatic, quasi-scientific terms. Whatever the case, it seems pretty certain that those who saw the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus or Sophocles' *Oedipus* were not likely to translate these tragedies (the subject matter of which was known to everyone, and the interest in which was centered in artistic treatment) directly into

[6] This relationship again should not be oversimplified. No matter to what extent modern mass media tend to blur the difference between reality and the aesthetic, our realistic spectators are still aware that all is "in fun." It cannot be assumed that the direct primary perception of reality takes place within the television frame of reference, although many movie-goers recall the alienation of familiar sights when leaving the theater: everything still has the appearance of being part of the movie plot. What is more important is the interpretation of reality in terms of psychological carry-overs, the preparedness to see ordinary objects as though some threatening mystery were hidden behind them. Such an attitude seems to be syntonic with mass delusions as suspicion of omnipresent graft, corruption, and conspiracy.

everyday terms. This audience did not expect that on the next corner of Athens similar things would go on. Actually, pseudo realism allows for the direct and extremely primitive identifications achieved by popular culture; and it presents a façade of trivial buildings, rooms, dresses, and faces as though they were the promise of something thrilling and exciting taking place at any moment.

In order to establish this socio-psychological frame of reference, one would have to follow up systematically categories—such as the normality of crime or pseudo realism and many others—to determine their structural unity and to interpret the specific devices, symbols, and stereotypes in relation to this frame of reference. We hypothesize at this phase that the frames of reference and the individual devices will tend in the same direction.

Only against psychological backdrops such as pseudo realism and against implicit assumptions like the normality of crime can the specific stereotypes of television plays be interpreted. The very standardization indicated by the set frames of reference automatically produces a number of stereotypes. Also, the technology of television production makes stereotypy almost inevitable. The short time available for the preparation of scripts and the vast material continuously to be produced call for certain formulas. Moreover, in plays lasting only a quarter to half an hour each, it appears inevitable that the kind of person the audience faces each time should be indicated drastically through red and green lights. We are not dealing with the problem of the existence of stereotypes. Since stereotypes are an indispensable element of the organization and anticipation of experience, preventing us from falling into mental disorganization and chaos, no art can entirely dispense with them. Again, the functional change is what concerns us. The more stereotypes become reified and rigid in the present setup of cultural industry, the less people are likely to change their preconceived ideas with the progress of their experience. The more opaque and complicated modern life be-

comes, the more people are tempted to cling desperately to clichés which seem to bring some order into the otherwise un-understandable. Thus, people may not only lose true insight into reality, but ultimately their very capacity for life experience may be dulled by the constant wearing of blue and pink spectacles.

Stereotyping

In coping with this danger, we may not do full justice to the meaning of some of the stereotypes which are to be dealt with. We should never forget that there are two sides to every psychodynamic phenomenon, the unconscious or *id* element and the rationalization. Although the latter is psychologically defined as a defense mechanism, it may very well contain some nonpsychological, objective truth which cannot simply be pushed aside on account of the psychological function of the rationalization. Thus some of the stereotypical messages, directed toward particularly weak spots in the mentality of large sectors of the population, may prove to be quite legitimate. However, it may be said with fairness that the questionable blessings of morals, such as "one should not chase after rainbows," are largely overshadowed by the threat of inducing people to mechanical simplifications by ways of distorting the world in such a way that it seems to fit into pre-established pigeonholes.

The example here selected, however, should indicate rather drastically the danger of stereotypy. A television play concerning a fascist dictator, a kind of hybrid between Mussolini and Peron, shows the dictator in a moment of crisis; and the content of the play is his inner and outer collapse. Whether the cause of his collapse is a popular upheaval or a military revolt is never made clear. But neither this issue nor any other of a social or political nature enters the plot itself. The course of events takes place exclusively on a private level. The dictator is just a heel who treats sadistically both his secretary and his "lovely and warm-hearted" wife. His antagonist, a general, was formerly in love with

the wife; and they both still love each other, although the wife sticks loyally to her husband. Forced by her husband's brutality, she attempts flight, and is intercepted by the general who wants to save her. The turning point occurs when the guards surround the palace to defend the dictator's popular wife. As soon as they learn that she has departed, the guards quit; and the dictator, whose "inflated ego" explodes at the same time, gives up. The dictator is nothing but a bad, pompous, and cowardly man. He seems to act with extreme stupidity; nothing of the objective dynamics of dictatorship comes out. The impression is created that totalitarianism grows out of character disorders of ambitious politicians, and is overthrown by the honesty, courage, and warmth of those figures with whom the audience is supposed to identify. The standard device employed is that of the spurious personalization of objective issues. The representatives of ideas under attack, as in the case of the fascists here, are presented as villains in a ludicrous cloak-and-dagger fashion; whereas, those who fight for the "right cause" are personally idealized. This not only distracts from any real social issues but also enforces the psychologically extremely dangerous division of the world into black (the outgroup) and white (we, the ingroup). Certainly, no artistic production can deal with ideas or political creeds *in abstracto* but has to present them in terms of their concrete impact upon human beings; yet it would be utterly futile to present individuals as mere specimens of an abstraction, as puppets expressive of an idea. In order to deal with the concrete impact of totalitarian systems, it would be more commendable to show how the life of ordinary people is affected by terror and impotence than to cope with the phony psychology of the big shots, whose heroic role is silently endorsed by such a treatment even if they are pictured as villains. There seems to be hardly any question of the importance of an analysis of pseudo-personalization and its effect, by no means limited to television.

Although pseudo-personalization denotes the stereotyped way

of "looking at things" in television, we should also point out certain stereotypes in the narrower sense. Many television plays could be characterized by the sobriquet "a pretty girl can do no wrong." The heroine of a light comedy is, to use George Legman's term, "a bitch heroine." She behaves toward her father in an incredibly inhuman and cruel manner only slightly rationalized as "merry pranks." But she is punished very slightly, if at all. True, in real life bad deeds are rarely punished at all, but this cannot be applied to television. Here, those who have developed the production code for the movies seem right: What matters in mass media is not what happens in real life, but rather the positive and negative "messages," prescriptions, and taboos that the spectator absorbs by means of identification with the material he is looking at. The punishment given to the pretty heroine only nominally fulfills the conventional requirements of the conscience for a second. But the spectator is given to understand that the heroine really gets away with everything just because she is pretty.

The attitude in question seems to be indicative of a universal penchant. In another sketch that belongs to a series dealing with the confidence racket, the attractive girl who is an active participant in the racket not only is paroled after having been sentenced to a long term, but also seems to have a good chance of marrying her victim. Her sex morality, of course, is unimpeachable. The spectator is supposed to like her at first sight as a modest and self-effacing character, and he must not be disappointed. Although it is discovered that she is a crook, the original identification must be restored, or rather maintained. The stereotype of the nice girl is so strong that not even the proof of her delinquency can destroy it; and, by hook or by crook, she must be what she appears to be. It goes without saying that such psychological models tend to confirm exploitative, demanding, and aggressive attitudes on the part of young girls—a character structure which has come to be known in psychoanalysis under the name of oral aggressiveness.

Sometimes such stereotypes are disguised as national American

traits, a part of the American scene where the image of the haughty, egoistic, yet irresistible girl who plays havoc with poor dad has come to be a public institution. This way of reasoning is an insult to the American spirit. High-pressure publicity and continuous plugging to institutionalize some obnoxious type does not make the type a sacred symbol of folklore. Many considerations of an apparently anthropological nature today tend only to veil objectionable trends, as though they were of an ethnological, quasi-natural character. Incidentally, it is amazing to what degree television material even on superficial examination brings to mind psychoanalytic concepts with the qualification of being a psychoanalysis in reverse. Psychoanalysis has described the oral syndrome combining the antagonistic trends of aggressive and dependent traits. This character syndrome is closely indicated by the pretty girl that can do no wrong, who, while being aggressive against her father exploits him at the same time, depending on him as much as on the surface level she is set against him. The difference between the sketch and psychoanalysis is simply that the sketch exalts the very same syndrome which is treated by psychoanalysis as a reversion to infantile developmental phases and which the psychoanalyst tries to dissolve. It remains to be seen whether something similar applies as well to some types of male heroes, particularly the super-he-man. It may well be that he too can do no wrong.

Finally, we should deal with a rather widespread stereotype which, in as much as it is taken for granted by television, is further enhanced. At the same time, the example may serve to show that certain psychoanalytic interpretations of cultural stereotypes are not really too farfetched. The latent ideas that psychoanalysis attributes to certain stereotypes come to the surface. There is the extremely popular idea that the artist is not only maladjusted, introverted, and *a priori* somewhat funny; but that he is really an "aesthete," a weakling, and a "sissy." In other words, modern synthetic folklore tends to identify the artist with the homosexual

and to respect only the "man of action" as a real, strong man. This idea is expressed in a surprisingly direct manner in one of the comedy scripts at our disposal. It portrays a young man who is not only the "dope" who appears so often on television but is also a shy, retiring, and accordingly untalented poet, whose moronic poems are ridiculed.[7] He is in love with a girl but is too weak and insecure to indulge in the necking practices she rather crudely suggests; the girl, on her part, is caricatured as a boy-chaser. As happens frequently in mass culture, the roles of the sexes are reversed—the girl is utterly aggressive, and the boy, utterly afraid of her, describes himself as "woman-handled" when she manages to kiss him. There are vulgar innuendos of homosexuality of which one may be quoted: The heroine tells her boy friend that another boy is in love with someone, and the boy friend asks, "What's he in love with?" She answers, "A girl, of course," and her boy friend replies, "Why, of course? Once before it was a neighbor's turtle, and what's more its name was Sam." This interpretation of the artist as innately incompetent and a social outcast (by the innuendo of sexual inversion) is worthy of examination.

We do not pretend that the individual illustrations and examples, or the theories by which they are interpreted, are basically new. But in view of the cultural and pedagogical problem presented by television, we do not think that the novelty of the specific findings should be a primary concern. We know from psychoanalysis that the reasoning, "But we know all this!" is not infrequently a defense. This defense is made in order to dismiss insights as irrelevant because they are actually uncomfortable and

[7] It could be argued that this very ridicule expresses that this boy is not meant to represent the artist but just the "dope." But this is probably too rationalistic. Again, as in the case of the schoolteacher, official respect for culture prevents caricaturing the artist as such. However, by characterizing the boy, among other things by his writing poetry, it is indirectly achieved that artistic activities and silliness are associated with each other. In many respects mass culture is organized much more by way of such associations than in strict logical terms. It may be added that quite frequently attacks on any social type seek protection by apparently presenting the object of the attack as an exception while it is understood by innuendo that he is considered as a specimen of the whole concept.

make life more difficult for us than it already is by shaking our conscience when we are supposed to enjoy the "simple pleasures of life." The investigation of the television problems we have here indicated and illustrated by a few examples selected at random demands, most of all, taking seriously notions dimly familiar to most of us by putting them into their proper context and perspective and by checking them by pertinent material. We propose to concentrate on issues of which we are vaguely but uncomfortably aware, even at the expense of our discomfort's mounting, the further and the more systematically our studies proceed. The effort here required is of a moral nature itself: knowingly to face psychological mechanisms operating on various levels in order not to become blind and passive victims. We can change this medium of far-reaching potentialities only if we look at it in the same spirit which we hope will one day be expressed by its imagery.

The Seventh International Edinburgh Film Festival

MAY GORDON WILLIAMSON

MAY GORDON WILLIAMSON represents the interesting combination of film enthusiast and scholar. As script writer and assistant director, she has worked on documentary films; and she has been associated with educational film groups in Edinburgh. In the more academic sense, Dr. Williamson is a regular contributor to *The Scottish Educational Journal* and a teacher of English at Boroughmuir School in Edinburgh, Scotland.

FROM THE CRITIC'S point of view the chief problem of the Edinburgh Film Festival is *embarras de richesse*. In 1953, the seventh year of the festival, more than 300 films were received from thirty-one countries, and approximately 150 of the films submitted were accepted. Of these, 20 were of feature length; and the rest were of varying footages, from the all-too-short (rare) to the all-too-long (common).

An old theater seating about 2,000 and a tiny newsreel theater seating about 350 showed 35-mm. films; the first gave two shows every Sunday for four weeks, and the second provided a morning session every day except Sunday throughout the three weeks. Sixteen-millimeter films were presented on eleven evenings in a hall holding about 300 and on eight evenings in the miniature preview theater at Film House, the home of the Edinburgh Film Guild. In addition, there were two showings of children's films on Saturday mornings to packed juvenile audiences in one of our largest cinemas; and there was a special performance for the presentation of the David O. Selznick Laurel awards on Sunday, August 30, in another major cinema.

For those in search of further enlightenment there were lectures and conferences: in conjunction with the two-week course on The Art of the Film organized by the British Film Institute, a series of public talks on various aspects of film appreciation by

well-known critics, actors, directors, and producers; a conference on Public Health and the Film (Public Health was the main subject of the scientific and record films in the festival); a conference on Television, Film, and Reality; an unforgettable lecture by Orson Welles on the financial aspect of the film industry; and informal discussions nightly in the lounge at Film House after the evening showings, when film makers and filmgoers could meet on common ground. In fact, if your constitution could stand it, you could live with film in one form or another for a fair proportion of the twenty-four hours for three solid weeks.

The films which arouse most interest each year are, of course, the full-length 35-mm. features. Nothing of the caliber of *The Louisiana Story* emerged last year, and there was nothing startlingly original in subject or treatment. But the general level was high, and most of the films possessed a solid integrity of purpose, although they lacked in artistic and imaginative quality. As usual, this quality had to be sought in the shorter offerings, of which an outstanding example was the French dialogueless *histoire de passion, Le Rideau Cramoisi,* a strangely haunting little tragedy, admirably handled by Alexandre Astruc.

It is difficult to discern trends from one year to another in this festival. If anything, I should say that last year there were more of the borderline cases—fiction films that deal with a serious subject in a serious manner and slip in by the back door. This back door, incidentally, was left wide open in a festival television preview by Denis Forman's definition of Realist, Documentary, and Experimental as "films which serve some social or national purpose, entertainment films which are trying out something new and attempting to break away from more conventional forms, and films which are just made for fun." Even with this, I cannot see why *Member of the Wedding* was included. This rather naïve tale of a maladjusted twelve-year-old seems to have almost everything that the psychiatrist's case-book type of film demands, plus humor, plus pathos, plus lovely face and legs—all of which add

up to successful box office. I could see only one thing to distinguish this bit of photographed stage play from a Hollywood glossy: all the characters sweat copiously all the time.

The Bandit (*O Cangaceiro*), produced in Brazil and directed by Lima Barreto, is another film whose inclusion was hard to justify. Not only is the story banal in the extreme, but the heroine would be perfectly at home in any conventional western. Following in the tradition of the early movies, she remains incredibly respectable although she goes through the most harassing day with her well-combed hair loose and her dress torn. For sheer brutality of character and incident, however, the film worked hard for an X certificate and should draw the mobs from Rio to Rotherhythe.

Martin Luther, produced in Germany by Lothar Wolff and directed by Irving Pichel, may have drawn the crowds in Minneapolis (according to *Life*); but I doubt if it will attract much attention over here. It is a conscientious piece of research, played against authentic backgrounds; but it smells of the lamp. There is too much earnest striving after authenticity to make for good drama. Concentration on a shorter span and fewer facts would have improved the shape of the picture. Niall MacGinnis is a burly but unconvincing Luther; although I should ascribe his failing to the script writers, who rarely gave any incident time to develop.

World without End is one of those honest British documentaries in the John Grierson tradition, full of moral worth and competent workmanship, with just a sufficient leaven of filmic vision to raise it well out of the category of the merely propagandistic. Made for UNESCO by Paul Rotha in Mexico and Basil Wright in Thailand, it was edited in London by the two directors in conjunction. Rather surprisingly it was Rotha, with his island scenes in slow, dreamy, visual images and tempo, who caught the imagination; whereas Wright, whom one remembers for his poetic *Song of Ceylon,* supplied the more factual, down-to-earth material.

For sheer technical brilliance there was nothing perhaps in the festival to compare with the Soviet film, *Glinka.* Made by the two surviving members of Eisenstein's famous triumvirate, Alexandrov and Tisse, it has moments that recall the greatest of Russian documentaries. The color photography is magnificent, but the sincerity of the portrait is marred by the overinsistence upon a dialectic neither interesting nor palatable to a festival audience.

Of outstanding success with festival-goers and critics alike were the films in which nonhuman nature was the chief protagonist. The Soviet film *Life in the Arctic* was universally acclaimed for its lovingly observed animal studies, its admirable color photography, and its straightforward commentary. Even the puma in *The Bandit* steals the picture from the humans during its short appearance. But in *Crin Blanc,* a forty-minute fairy tale set in the Camargue, honors are evenly divided between the quivering, nervous performance of the huge-eyed white stallion and the sturdily frail little boy who rides him out to sea and escapes from his would-be captors after a breathless sequence in which the horse drags the child through miles of reed and shallow water. Disney's *Olympic Elk* also produces some exciting pieces of observation, particularly the she-elks cavorting joyously in the snow on their return to summer territory in the high hills, and the eerie bellowing of the bulls in the rutting season; but the quality of the photography is uneven, and the sincerity of the impression is marred by the wisecracking commentary which seems to be almost an essential of Western Hemisphere popular-science films.

One of our leading British critics speaks of "widies," "deepies," and "flatties"; and to these categories I feel inclined to add "dullies," of which there was the usual plentiful supply, especially among the shorter British films—conscientious efforts that make their point effectually, photograph their subject with a maximum of technical efficiency, but lack just "that little extra something"—that infusion of creative genius—that exalts a film from the merely competent to the memorable. Many of the shorter

films from various countries hovered on this dividing line, dropping over on the wrong side too often through unimaginative or insufficiently ruthless cutting and general formlessness.

One or two which fell on the right side and deserve mention for moments of felicity (although they just failed to qualify for highest honors) are *The Young Chopin, On Closer Inspection, The Grey Metropolis,* and *Shakespeare's Theater.* The first, a Polish entry, has some noteworthy shots in misty forest land and some Dauberesque facial studies; but it never quite makes up its mind whether it is melodrama, musical comedy, or propaganda; and it lasts at least a reel too long. *On Closer Inspection,* by Joan and Peter Foldes, reveals what interest and beauty lie at our back doors if we have eyes to see or a camera to record; but its fine color work is wasted on a shapeless script. A group of amateurs made *The Grey Metropolis,* which is an attempt to portray the spirit of Edinburgh against a counterpoint of word harmonies from the essays of Robert Louis Stevenson. The attempt fails because of technical imperfections and the impossibility of linking words which convey vivid pictures in themselves to actual scenes. (A similar, but glorious, failure to wed visuals to music-hall songs is *Sunday by the Sea,* a one-day trip to Southend. Though full of sly implied comment on pointless English fun, this film lacks the ironic touch essential to the subject.) *Shakespeare's Theater,* from the University of California, just failed to join the highest class, not from lack of scholarship or inefficient editing, but from the unequal quality of the print. As a teaching medium it received the highest praise from a postfestival audience of educationalists, which included the doyen of Shakespeare scholarship, Emeritus-Professor J. Dover Wilson.

Although no cartoon at last year's festival had the satiric bite of Norman McLaren's *Neighbours,* the Canadian Film Board again produced a winner in *Romance of Transportation.* This clever and swift-moving film is a skit on the usual dreary treatments of such topics and has a solemn commentary which is

spoken in delightfully ironic tones, against visuals which pun happily on the history textbook words.

One of the few comic interludes was provided by the Laurel awards. Not that the ceremony was meant to be funny, but to our dour Scots minds any sort of public protestation of virtue is embarrassing; and when we are embarrassed we tend to be pompous. The entire affair was all rather reminiscent of a school prize-giving: the flag-draped platform tastefully set with potted palms; the American Ambassador and the Earl of Elgin resembling the distinguished visitors who present the school medals; Norman Wilson, organizer of the festival and president of the Edinburgh Film Guild, replacing the secretly distrusting headmaster; and the nervous recipients of the prizes perching on chairs too high for them and wondering where to put their trophies after they had got them. However, we, the audience, fairly got our money's worth—with excerpts from all the winners, *Barabbas, Europa '51,* and *The Cruel Sea,* besides *The Village* in its sentimental entirety—and had the vulgar pleasure of seeing the British entry win the jackpot. However, just how *The Cruel Sea* contributed to furthering understanding among men and nations I for one fail to comprehend; it certainly was not for "the dramatization of democratic ideals" or through "insight in the portrayal of the problems and ways of life of the European peoples," as David O. himself put it.

For a final judgment on the Seventh International Edinburgh Film Festival, I should say that there were moments of wonder and excitement in many of the films; but, on the whole, there was nothing to suggest that the realist film is on the way to anywhere, there was no hint of great developments lying just around the corner, and there were no little gems of production to point to the possibility of a genius in our midst. It is noteworthy that although 3-D films were shown two years ago at the festival none have appeared since; nor were there any films this year made for the wide screen. The lunatic fringe was almost entirely absent.

The general impression, then, is not inspiring. We can do the job and do it well; but we are pathetically lacking in intellectual quality, in subtle humor, and, above all, in originality of approach.

Lions on the Lido

THALIA SELZ

THALIA SELZ, at present working full-time on a novel, formerly taught the history of the film at the Institute of Design in Chicago. Although this report of her visit to the most recent Venice Film Festival is Mrs. Selz's first article for the *Quarterly,* she has published many short stories and articles in *Arts and Architecture, Art Digest,* the *Chicago Review,* and other little magazines in the States.

GALA FILM EXHIBITIONS have been galvanizing the competitive spirit in Venice for some twenty years. This August saw the Fourteenth International Festival—preceded for two weeks by the Fourth International Festival of Documentary and Short Films and the Fifth Festival of Children's Films. These two earlier exhibitions were more serious than what followed. The specialists in various fields and the general audience (only one third of that which came to the "big" festival but still numbering many thousands) were at least as much concerned with the films as with their Lido sun tans or their Micol Fontana models.

The big festival is so large that it has two audiences every night, for it seems to be the hallowed tradition of people in Venice who cannot afford tickets to battle for the privilege of buying them with those who can afford a bushel. One audience pays 2,300 lire (about $3.70) a head to dress as implausibly as possible and sit—if fortunate enough to find a seat—in the grandiose, relentlessly air-conditioned projection hall of the Palazzo del Cinema. The other audience pays 350 lire apiece to see the same movies in a large, open-air arena behind the Palazzo del Cinema. The arena audience tends to be more discriminating than the other in its likes and dislikes. If it sees a good bit of acting or an exciting shot it applauds without reserve; if it is bored it gets up and walks out—equally without reserve. The interior audience occasionally claps, but it never walks out, perhaps because there are too many voluminous skirts in the way.

The annual Venice Film Festival is, of course, chiefly a publicity venture, the purpose of which is to advertise the various

national film industries and to promote *tourisme* in Venice. It accomplishes both its objectives very well.

The Lido, on which the festival takes place, is itself a stretch of grayish sand rather too thick with tasteless hotels, bathing cabins, and squabbling children. But fifteen minutes by boat takes the tourist to that city which is such an enchanting piece of pure bunk that only the very young (who have just learned to be scornful) are able to scoff at it.

For the films, as for the ticket-buying audience, there is a certain amount of competition involved. At the conclusion of the festival, six dignified gentlemen, looking as though they could carry their responsibility as well as their white dinner jackets, withdraw to decide on the prizes. But the competition, though exciting, is seldom grim; for there is a tacit understanding that the judges will include as many countries as possible. And, as consolation to the losers, each nation has had a chance to show its most promising movies of the year and to exhibit its favorite film deities for public adoration. The advertising blurb "prize winner at Venice" or "prize winner at Cannes" is useful for attracting the intelligentsia; but it has little meaning to the vast majority of movie-goers, in America at least. It is a token of work well done, and helps the film gain foreign distribution; but with or without prizes, movies will keep coming to the Lido because their publicity departments know that arc lights draw crowds.

Thus, there would be no point in discussing the films so long after the festival were it not for the fact that the primary interest of the festival itself is in general trends, not in sudden, sensational revelations. Most of the twenty-nine entries from sixteen nations had already been widely seen, at least in their own countries, by the time the Italian jury chose them for the Venice competition. In addition, it is always exciting to see how judgments on the spot, one's own and the judges', are justified or reduced to utter absurdity by the passage of time—and more celluloid.

This year, for the first time in the fourteen years of the big International Festival, the chief prize, the gold lion of St. Mark.

was not given out. Instead, the judges awarded the silver lion, second prize, to the directors of six films from six different nations. Heading the list was Japan's Kenji Mizoguchi, for *The Tales of Ugetsu.* The judges explained that they had been unable to choose a single movie worthy of the little golden lion of St. Mark because the best entries were so nearly equal in quality. This may be true, or it may merely be a gracious way of implying that they saw nothing good enough for first prize. Besides *The Tales of Ugetsu,* chief awards went to Italy's *The Useless* (*I Vitelloni*), America's *Little Fugitive,* England's *Moulin Rouge,* France's *Thérèse Raquin,* and Russia's *Sadko.*

Some critics and reporters believed that the decision was influenced by the possibility of complaints from other contestants if any one film took the gold lion. It was known that the American movie industry had objected strenuously to the American entries which the Italian jury picked for competition: *Roman Holiday, The Bad and the Beautiful, The Fourposter, Little Fugitive,* and *Pickup on South Street.* It was reported that American movie magnates were exceedingly annoyed that such films as *Julius Caesar* and *Hans Christian Anderson* were not shown at the festival. One can sympathize on the score of *Julius Caesar,* for none of the American films at the festival came up to it. On the other hand, one might timidly suggest that the American movie industry was fortunate in not having been represented by such an example of unadulterated puerility as *Hans Christian Anderson.*

But the fact remains that no Hollywood film won a first prize, although the New York *Times* of August 30 reports that *The Bad and the Beautiful* was "regarded by many American movie leaders as the best bet for top award at the Venice Film Festival." The only American movie to place among the second prizes was *Little Fugitive;* and its success is important, not only for the film itself, but for Hollywood. However, as everyone knows by this time, *Little Fugitive* is not a Hollywood movie. It was written, directed, photographed, and produced by three people (Ray

Ashley, Morris Engel, and Ruth Orkin) on a most limited budget. Its chief actors are two unaffected small boys. Its subject is simple and its presentation humble. A lot of people on the Lido thought it was the best movie in the festival.

Little Fugitive is a documentary about a boy named Joey who, rejected by the older brother he admires, runs away to Coney Island. Most of the movie traces Joey's adjustments to each new experience Coney Island brings him. The story is as simple as that. It is not beautifully photographed like *The Quiet One,* another low-budget documentary about the problems of the very young and a movie with which critics might well compare *Little Fugitive*. Neither does it have the intense urgency of *The Quiet One* which was about a very sick child. But *Little Fugitive* has considerable human warmth and understanding as well as enormously delightful acting by Richie Andrusco who plays Joey. But, disarming as Richie Andrusco is, he is not the most important thing about *Little Fugitive.* Rather, its importance lies in the purpose behind this movie: to show a real and significant incident in the lives of real people.

Less than six weeks after *Little Fugitive* was seen at the festival, it was receiving rave reviews in New York. Two pictures like *Little Fugitive* and *The Quiet One* do not mean much if they stand isolated. But when audience appreciation enables them to compete even in a small way with the Hollywood monopoly, they encourage other private individuals with good ideas and a little money; and, as has so often been proved before, the result is better movies, not only from the independents but from a stung-to-action Hollywood, too.

If there is one criticism to be made of *Little Fugitive* it is that it pays too little attention to technique. Heading strongly in the direction of simplicity, it overdoes things and sometimes seems to ignore what could have been an imaginative use of the camera, and especially of editing. This is the more apparent because it lacks the slickness of a professional production. But generally, the same criticism could be leveled at almost every film in the festival.

Possible reasons for this are intriguing. We will speculate on them shortly.

Since no first prize was given and no Hollywood film made second place, the question naturally arises as to why Hollywood made so poor a showing. This reviewer submits that the Hollywood films in the festival were slick without being imaginative, entertaining without having much real meaning for modern audiences. On the other hand, why should a complicated movie like *The Tales of Ugetsu* head the list of winners, incidentally giving rise to the unofficial claim that it had thereby won a "moral victory"?

There is something you notice about *The Tales of Ugetsu* right away: the story is especially important to the film. *The Tales of Ugetsu* is based on a pair of sixteenth-century Japanese novellas. Two villagers, Genjuro and Tobei, leave their homes and families to find success in the great cities. Tobei decides to achieve his ends through trickery; and, claiming that he has killed a terrible war lord, he is at once acknowledged a hero. Genjuro falls into the hands of a beautiful princess who takes him to live in luxury such as he has only dreamed of. But at home the village is attacked. Genjuro's wife is killed and Tobei's forced into prostitution. In the city, meanwhile, their new world begins to crumble about the two men's heads. The people discover that Tobei has been lying to them and try to kill him. He runs back to the village and begs his wife to forget his desertion, as he must forget the life she has been living. Fate also catches up with Genjuro. He learns that the princess is a ghost and, hurrying home, imagines that he sees his dead wife waiting for him and tenderly welcoming him back.

It is too easy to say that *The Tales of Ugetsu* is simply another demonstration of the old homily, "There's no place like home." What actually happens is that a proverb is completely revivified by a new and imaginative interpretation. Without revivification any piece of proverbial wisdom will lose meaning and die; therefore, the artist had better be careful in his choice of homilies, for

the infusion of new life is a serious affair for his own art and for that of his culture. The question is, why the particular choice? It is interesting that Mizoguchi chooses to emphasize this theme from Japanese literature, for a number of other festival films—notably from those countries which are making strong bids for recognition as world powers—preach essentially the same sermon.

India's *The Princess of Jhansi,* about an abortive Indian uprising against the British, says "There is no place like (India) home." Russia's *Sadko* wanders half around the world only to find happiness back in Novgorod. *Old Czech Legends* shows the very beginnings of a nation. So does Hungary's *The Sea Rises.* Some of these films are excellent; some are very poor in quality. The significant thing about them as a group, however, is that each emphatically presents its nation as rich in background and sufficient unto itself.

One can draw important parallels with still another film. *The Tales of Ugetsu* has the same poetic quality, the same complexity of structure, the same blending of the real and seeming-real as Ashiro Kurosava's *Rashomon.* Perhaps it is still too early to talk about tendencies, but the ability of these two films to juggle with the symbolic values of the images in man's mind, and the talent with which they have been able to take literature and interpret it in essentially filmic terms suggest the type of moving picture we may expect to see again from Japan—a type which is able to draw upon the rich traditions of local legend and history and give them broad modern significance by means of the most modern art form, cinematography.

The Tales of Ugetsu incorporates strong elements of fantasy. This would be unimportant if the film stood alone, but there is another excellent movie—in this observer's opinion one of the three or four best in the festival—which also deals with fantasy.

Old Czech Legends is a puppet film, almost by definition a *tour de force.* The people in the history of the movies who have been able to make good puppet films can easily be numbered on the fingers of one hand. Maybe the reason for this is the tendency

of their directors to concentrate the camera on the tableau—to film a puppet movie as if it were a puppet play, which of course it is not. Jiri Trnka has circumvented this pitfall chiefly by remembering that the camera can move, can indeed choose its own most powerful angle from which to present the story. By means of this camera, imaginative editing, and wonderfully expressive color (rather intense color, incidentally) the puppet faces and bodies come alive. A weary mother collapses with the body of her unconscious child, and the whole earth darkens. A peasant boy sees a beautiful fairy and there is a sudden close-up of his awkward, grasping hands.

The movie tells the story of the legendary heroes and almost-legendary tribes of the past who came to settle what is now Czechoslovakia. In its rich evocation of these legends and in its poetic mood it bears a certain resemblance to *The Loon's Necklace,* the recent Canadian short made with Northwest Indian masks. Unfortunately, the Czech film won no prize; but it did receive a vigorous ovation from the arena audience, a response not at all dampened by the fact that the spectators were sitting in the rain. *Old Czech Legends* is a compound of outright fantasy and national lore. Together with *The Tales of Ugetsu* it is part of a trend toward a more imaginative film, but is this trend the only one discernible at the festival?

The critic at a film festival sees, for two weeks, an average of two full-length films daily, for each one of which he is subjected to a flood of ballyhoo, some of it astonishingly seductive. It is his job to flounder through this, weeding out the duds and discarding them as gently as possible, and giving blue ribbons to those he hopes (he can seldom be sure) are prize blooms. But the compulsion is always there to see, if he can, in what direction the good films tend to point; and it is so easy to be fooled by a good film which points in no direction at all but is the end of the road rather than a marker on the way somewhere.

At least one fine movie at the festival bears this dubious distinction. Marcel Carné's prize-winning *Thérèse Raquin* is a grip-

ping, completely unified film, well-done in every respect, but somehow lacking life—possibly because in its emphasis on the fatalistic nature of the tragedy, it is part of a French school which is coming to an end.

But the new Claude Autant-Lara, *Absolution Without Confession,* which may be given another title in the States, falls in line with more recent traditions in French cinema. It is a richer, less formalistic exploration of life. It also fits right into place with Autant-Lara's talent. He will probably continue to derive his films from literature (*Absolution Without Confession,* like *Devil in the Flesh,* is based on a French novel), but this is not necessarily bad, and the film is a more complex and more successful exploration of psychology—partly because of its superb editing—than anything else the director has done.

One could go on for a long time—citing the color of *Moulin Rouge,* a certain lusty vigor in the Russian *Sadko,* the marvelous warmth and reality of the Italian *Easy Years.* But in fact, Luigi Zampa's *Easy Years* and almost all of the rest of the Italian entries bring us to a discussion of an important facet of this year's festival.

In August of 1953 as in every year since the screening of *Open City,* the question of the new realism has come up unavoidably. Was it to be the forte of a couple of directors, a movement exploding after the war and quickly dissipating its strength? Or was the new realism to catch at our deepest needs and emotions, not only in Italy but elsewhere, and help to develop a broad new vein of expression? Movies like *Bicycle Thief* and *The Young and the Damned* have given the answer. Now we have, from Italy, a bitter picture of big-city machinations in *Easy Years,* a triple portrait of juvenile delinquency in *The Vanquished,* the moving and lyrical short *Letters from the Condemned,* and finally, from India, *Two Hectares of Earth.*

Two Hectares of Earth, according to press reports, was an enormous success in India, where because of a low budget and a certain unremitting realism it had not been expected to please anyone, in spite of the fact that its director, Bimal Roy, is one of

the foremost in the country. In Venice it was seen by only a few people—chiefly critics—because some mix-up occurred to prevent its entry in the festival proper.

It tells the story of an Indian peasant driven by poverty to leave his plot of land. He travels to Calcutta and tries, with his son, to earn enough money so that they may keep their tiny farm; but they fail through an accident, and the family is left destitute and homeless. Again a perfectly simple story, shorn of everything but essentials: man, poverty, labor, starvation. In itself, this material would be enough to make a moving work, no matter what the manner of presentation. But its tenderness and sense of vast humanity, the power and beauty with which its limitless vistas and small details are shown make it an important film.

Not only has Bimal Roy taken a thesis worth expressing; but, thanks to the movement generated in Italy after the war, he has been able to find the proper means with which to express it. If the film is not shown widely outside of India, at least it will have marked a significant new line of cinematic development in an important part of the world.

But the general cultural tendencies of these movies are only part of the picture. We spoke of the dearth of formal innovation in the material at the festival. There are exceptions: the delightful UPA cartoons for the transition sequences of *The Fourposter,* the rhythmic progression from shot to shot (helped along by a good sound track) in an Italian short on plants which made beautiful use of microscopic photography, the camera as protagonist in parts of Fausto Fornari's *Letters from the Condemned.*

But there you are! Two out of three examples almost come under the heading of experimental cinema and were not even feature-length films. It is true that in the past experimental films have forced us to see new ways of doing things, and one would be relieved to spot evidence of a vigorous movement in the direction of the experimental in Venice. The trouble is that none was present. Of course we need not always look to experimental cinema for our innovations. But the startling thing about Venice

in this respect was its apathy toward any of the new techniques people are discussing and disputing today. In Italy TV has aroused about as much interest as a foreign recipe for chianti. The most energetic and imaginative work for television is being done in Rome, on movie shorts largely conceived by Americans and intended for American TV. The Italian lack of enthusiasm is understandable in view of the alarming discrepancy between the cost of a set and the income of the average citizen, but their essays in 3-D are dull and blinding, and the possibilities of wide-screen, over which German movie makers are building Cineramas in the air, do not for the present intrigue them.

What you have in Italian filmic arts is a not uncommon situation where all progress is being made in only one aspect of a visual medium—the ordinary film, which is often still of excellent quality—with remarkable retardation in others. It is almost as if there is not enough energy to go around. The real explanation is probably first, a complex of economic forces which for the time being discourages experiment in new and costly media; and second, the driving tendency of contemporary Italian artists—writers, sculptors, painters, film makers—to be even more interested in what they express than in how they express it. Since the war these people have striven to evolve forceful means of expression, usually for the sole sake of getting across the idea, the picture of life. If they go into a new medium it will probably be for the purpose of broad and immediate communication; and perhaps they suspect that these new avenues of TV, 3-D and wide-screen go nowhere and will cease to be frequented as soon as the excitement of their discovery disappears.

At this time, then, two distinct trends are evident in the material shown at the Venice Film Festival. One is a conspicuous lack of interest in new formal techniques. The other is a definite development along two different lines in what, for want of a better word, we can call "content."

One of these two general lines of development leads to a greater lyricism and fantasy, but not necessarily toward delicacy of treat-

ment. These are harsh times and lyricism will have to be strong to carry modern moods and needs. But we speak of a kind of "furbishing up" of the imagination which has produced movies like *The Tales of Ugetsu* and *Old Czech Legends.* Such films tend to utilize the past, also, not like a historical dress parade, but selecting from it fables in which their directors believe a modern audience will find meaning.

The other tendency that still appears overwhelmingly present in the best films at the festival is an urgent realism. In a way it is surprising to find it not at all dead, but vigorous in new areas. In *Two Hectares of Earth* and in the Italian films it is considerably different from the realism in *Little Fugitive. Two Hectares of Earth* is a powerful and sometimes cruel film, while *Little Fugitive* is a humble documentary stating in a rather mild manner certain things with plenty of real meaning. One of the chief differences between the two is the difference in the kinds of problems raised by two different standards of living, but their effort to speak directly about the real world is the same.

These two lines of development need not obviate each other at all. It is much more probable that their mutual growth signifies a real invigoration of film making. The judges were right—not in all of their choices, but in withholding the gold lion of St. Mark from any single movie. Though there was perhaps no outstanding *chef-d'oeuvre,* the good films were of an equal, and high, quality. And this is an excellent omen. A good body of work assures a healthy standard as much as one masterpiece.

"Sound and Fury"—*King Lear* on Television

FRANK W. WADSWORTH

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THE HISTORY OF Shakespearean production of the past fifty years shows, with some exceptions, a healthy movement back to the authority of Shakespeare's text and away from the un-Shakespearean spectacle and stage business of the nineteenth century. No longer is it possible to say of the typical production, as Macready remarked of one of Charles Kean's, that it is merely scenes annotated by the text.[1] Most modern producers genuinely seek to interpret Shakespeare rather than to make their productions occasions for the display of their own or their actors' peculiar talents.

This welcome return to Shakespeare's text has influenced attempts to produce the plays through the medium of the motion picture. With a few notable exceptions, the Shakespeare films of recent years have shown considerable respect for the dramatist's own words. In spite of minor cuts and the inclusion of a wearisome amount of traditional stage business, the Bergner-Olivier *As You Like It* of 1938 was essentially Shakespeare's play. So too were Olivier's productions of *Henry V* and *Hamlet,* although there was considerable simplification of the central character in the first and some perverse distortion and excision in the second. Essentially Shakespeare is the current filming of *Julius Caesar.* While all these films have something in them to distress the student of Shakespeare, they are nonetheless recognizable. And all, I might add, have been successful, thus lending weight to the old

[1] The great actor's criticism of Kean's spectacles occurs in a letter to Lady Pollock, later his biographer. See Sidney Lee, *Shakespeare and the Modern Stage* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 14.

saw that there is no such thing as dull Shakespeare, only a dull production.

But now, when producers of stage and motion picture alike are beginning to realize that this most professional of dramatists did understand his own business, a new medium has appeared which threatens to revive the heresies of another age. Television has discovered the Bard, with the result, if we are to judge from the early fruits of that discovery, that the day of "so-and-so's version of" is about to return. What can happen to a play by Shakespeare when it is subjected to the revision necessary to meet the requirements of today's television show was demonstrated last October by the screening of the Omnibus production of *King Lear.* This production, under the auspices of the Ford Foundation's TV-Radio Workshop, was directed by Peter Brook, and starred Orson Welles as Lear. With the backing of the Ford Foundation and the talent and experience of Brook and Welles, the production apparently stood as good a chance for success as any television screening of Shakespeare at this time might be expected to have. But in spite of the care and effort which went into it, the performance was disappointing. The reasons for its lack of success are important enough to merit investigation.

The central fact about the Omnibus production was that the requirements of its medium resulted in the drastic cutting of Shakespeare's tragedy. Actual performance time was about seventy-three minutes—almost thirty minutes less than Maurice Evans' screening of a truncated *Hamlet* last spring. Inasmuch as Alistair Cooke, in introducing the performance, quoted Brook to the effect that he needed no more time than this to tell the "story" of Lear "intact," we may feel that the director's ideas of production and the demands of his medium coincided. At any rate, the Omnibus *King Lear* bore little resemblance to the familiar form of what is perhaps Shakespeare's greatest tragedy, and to a great extent this was the result of the television production's severe abridgement of the text. To realize just how much was lost, however, it is necessary first to examine Shakespeare's own tragedy in some detail.

King Lear is a deceptive play. It seems at first glance and to the uninitiated to offer tremendous possibilities for excision, but it is actually quite the poorest choice for an experiment in presenting Shakespeare abridged. *King Lear* is misleading because it has a subplot. And is not the subplot, as Mr. Cooke reminded his viewers, simply an Elizabethan device to rest the more important actors from the rigors of high tragedy? Consequently, *Lear* seems a promising patient at first. Unlike *Hamlet, Macbeth,* and *Othello,* where the producer can only snip, *Lear* offers the possibility of a major operation—the removal of a large and continuing strand of action which seems at first glance to make its way quite independently of the protagonist's story. But unfortunately for the would-be surgeon, the story of Gloucester and his sons is so much a part of the story of Lear and his daughters that any attempt to separate the two results in a tragedy that is not only thin and weak, but one that is, in its serious implications, quite different from Shakespeare's original. In fact, the subplot is not a subplot at all, in the sense that the secondary actions of such typical early seventeenth-century tragedies as Middleton's *The Changeling* and Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* are, but an organic part of and an important and necessary comment upon the main action.

The function of the Gloucester plot is not difficult to discern. *King Lear* has been praised for the vastness as well as for the tremendous intensity of its emotional storms and has been compared in this respect to the greatest Greek tragedies. While *Hamlet, Othello,* even *Macbeth* are in a sense personal tragedies, *Lear* is, in this same sense, Everyman's; we watch a world, a way of life, torn apart by hate and restored by love. It is the very essence of evil and of good that is revealed, not merely the manifestation of these qualities in the individual. If we ask what gives the tragedy its peculiar universality, we soon realize that the profoundest effects come from the skillful interweaving of the tragedies of Lear and Gloucester, so that the latter continually expounds, expands, and enlarges the story of the king, making the action of the whole

tragedy seem to be the very breach (and eventually, restoration) of nature itself. Alone, the story of Lear is one of an arrogant old man, who pampering himself by trying to retain "The name, and all th'addition to a king" while at the same time conferring "all cares and business from our age," indulges his ego once too often and thereby seals his doom. As such, the tragedy is little more than a study of parental selfishness and filial ingratitude, with the universal pessimism which Mr. Cooke so emphasized in his prologue dwindling to a belief that one cannot trust all of one's children all of the time.

Shakespeare's tragedy begins with a blind and foolish parent. But it is not Lear; it is the sensual Gloucester egotistically joking about his son's bastardy who is seen first. Thus when Lear proceeds to divide his kingdom a minute later, the theme of selfish pride has already been stated, Lear's actions merely amplifying a chord that has already been struck. In a similar manner the whispered treachery of Goneril and Regan ending the first scene is echoed by the immediate appearance of Edmund, with his revealing soliloquy, "Thou, Nature, art my goddess." Already the conflict between active, malignant evil and mankind blinded and weakened by selfish pride has been stated in terms which apply to all men rather than to one alone.

Mingled with the scenes of Lear's rejection are glimpses of the scheming Edmund and his father, with Gloucester's folly serving to remind us of Lear's, until we realize that it is not merely the king and the duke who are blind, but pride itself. Similarly, the Gloucester plot increases the significance of Lear's defeat. Turned out in the storm, driven across the heath by his still tremendous energy, Lear yet retains vestiges of his kingliness, and it is not until the unexpected appearance of Mad Tom causes his wits to turn completely that the true nature of his daughters' cruelty becomes apparent. The irony of this particular bit of action is intense and cruel, for Mad Tom (or Edgar) is after all Gloucester's true son; his disguise results from *his* father's blindness; and Lear's insistence that Edgar owes his present state to his daugh-

ters—"nothing could have subdu'd nature / To such a lowness but his unkind daughters"—reminds us *why* Lear finds himself in his present state. This part of Lear's agony culminates in the grotesque arraignment of the footstools, as Lear pleads his case before Justice in the form of the Fool and Mad Tom. Looking at Mad Tom—an example of parental injustice, as Cordelia is another—we may be forgiven if we ask ourselves whether Justice was served any better by Lear and Gloucester.

The arraignment scene has the horror of the irrational, reflecting the upsetting of natural order which has occurred up to this point. Shakespeare's next scene presents a different kind of horror—the physical—and emphasizes the total degeneracy of evil. Gloucester's blinding, the way for it prepared by his own son, is performed savagely and horribly to the tune of Regan's viciousness. Here, in Goneril's "Pluck out his eyes," in the savage fury of Cornwall's act, in Regan's taunting "How now, you dog!" is revealed the true bestiality of the evil heart. Furthermore, Gloucester's physical anguish reflects the mental anguish of Lear. There is an ironical aptness in their respective defeats—for Lear, the intelligent and arrogant, madness; for Gloucester, the sensual and self-indulgent, blindness. Truly, "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices / Make instruments to plague us."

The Gloucester plot not only widens the implications of Lear's defeat, it also makes more meaningful his victory. The height of Lear's tragedy is reached when close to the breaking point but still rational he comes to the full realization of his own blind pride. His awakening has been a gradual one, culminating when he sends that "houseless poverty" the Fool into the hovel and then, kneeling in the pouring rain, prays, not for himself, but for those whom he has never before thought upon.

> Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
> How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
> Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
> From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
> Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;

> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
> And show the heavens more just.

At last Lear sees all. And then, at the very moment of his newfound humanity, at the very moment of spiritual redemption, Mad Tom shrieks within, the frightened Fool rushes out of the hovel—and Lear's wits are gone. It is the supreme irony of the play and the true tragedy of King Lear. In a sense Lear has lived and died, and all that comes after is anticlimax.

This same vision of truth comes to Gloucester and reaffirms the argument in terms of the many rather than the one. Blinded, with no road to follow, Gloucester can say, "I stumbled when I saw," and a moment later, in his lesser way, make his confession:

> Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,
> That slaves your ordinance, that will not see
> Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly;
> So distribution should undo excess,
> And each man have enough.

Both Gloucester and Lear realize their own mistakes—too late.

The result of the double plot, then, is to make the tragedy a comment upon all mankind—not simply upon one man, or one age, but upon human experience at any time and in any place. Wherever we look in *Lear* we find the basic themes to be recurrent. Love, hate, sacrifice, cruelty—they have an all-pervasive immanence which is the tragedy's real greatness. *Lear* does not derive its power, as to a certain extent do *Hamlet* and *Macbeth,* from purple passages, but from the basic unity of variegated elements which results in the very richness of life itself.

What, we may now ask, did the Omnibus production of *King Lear* give us in place of this richness? Little more, really, than the story of an old man who is turned out by his daughters. Brook's *Lear* opened with a fussy old king who in no time at all was involved in a noisy brawl with his faithful retainer, Kent. Playing with his sword in a manner reminiscent of Lamb's "old man with a walking stick," Welles's Lear was blustering, truculent, senile.

Shakespeare's arrogant, dangerous old king had become a noisy domestic tyrant; his symbol of pride a spectacle of foolish parenthood. And so he remained, for without Edmund's soliloquy to deepen the significance of Regan and Goneril's opportunistic plotting at the end of the first scene, Lear's blindness continued to be his own personal affair. Similarly, the rejection of Lear by his daughters seemed merely petty vindictiveness; the uneasy knowledge of Edmund's parallel wickedness was needed to throw Shakespeare's revelation of evil into its proper focus. Disappointing too was the scene on the heath, for without the knowledge of Edmund's plotting as a background for Lear's plight (and without the new insight of Lear's prayer, which was also cut), the king was a largely pathetic figure, a cold, wet old man, rather than the tragic symbol of humanity achieved too late that Shakespeare intended him to be. The whole story of Lear, in fact, became pathetic rather than tragic, for Lear's place in the larger pattern of human experience was no longer readily discernible. He was Lear merely, not Everyman.

The loss of the tragedy's profounder significance is not the only result of cutting the Gloucester plot, however. So skillfully are the two plots interwoven that it is impossible to remove the one without damaging the structure of the other. For example, Gloucester himself must remain as a kind of structural lackey, even if his own story is pared to the bone, for it is to his castle that the homeless Lear is forced to go; it is there that Cornwall is dispatched from the scene; and it is to Gloucester that Lear's famous "reason in madness" of Act IV, scene vi, is addressed ("matter" which, by the way, becomes rather puzzling, and to many critics disturbing, if one does not remember that Lear's remarks are addressed to "the superfluous and lust-dieted man" himself). Yet if Gloucester remains, he must be blinded, a blinding which now becomes, however, simply a gratuitous horror of the kind so objected to in Elizabethan tragedy by the naturalist critics of a few decades ago. For, as the Omnibus production made clear, to blind a Gloucester who is not the victim of his own child's malignancy

but simply a foolish, well-meaning old man, adds nothing to Shakespeare's tragic pattern; it tends in fact to reduce the credibility of the daughters and to distort Lear's position so that he becomes the pathetic victim of two female monsters, rather than in a very real sense the victim of himself.

Edmund too, that magnificently level-headed plotter, becomes a problem for the reviser, as it is he who causes the deaths of Goneril and Regan. Brook's attempt to solve this problem by blending the character of the foppish and fawning Oswald with that of Edmund was a failure. Oswald's change, in Brook's version, from a cowardly and parasitical steward capable of allowing himself to be tripped and beaten by Kent in the early scenes to Regan's "Lord, and master," actively evil and sure enough of himself to order the hanging of Cordelia, was unconvincing. Still more unconvincing was the assumption that either of the two sisters, characters of considerable stature in their own evil ways, could fight over and kill for such a lackey as Oswald. Nor was Brook any more successful in solving the problem of Mad Tom. Found cowering in a Hansel and Gretel windmill, Mad Tom was a madman without significance, his role as Cordelia's fellow victim lost, his only apparent purpose to add to the noise of a mad scene which in Brook's version was confusing and meaningless. Indeed, the ghost of the departed Gloucester plot haunted Brook's production from beginning to end.

Literary amputation is a dangerous thing—with Shakespeare it usually leads to murder. Once kindled, the desire to cut rages like a hectic in the blood, until the producer, convinced that he knows Shakespeare's business better than Shakespeare ever could have himself, ends with a production that not only is not good Shakespeare but usually not even good theater. Brook's production is a result of this disease. Not only did Brook excise the subplot almost completely, but he cut the Lear "story" itself so drastically that the result was a perversion of many of Shakespeare's characters, especially of Lear. For instance, Brook's version of the protagonist failed to retain any indication of Lear's

spiritual redemption. Of the many image patterns running through the play, one of the most important is that of blindness versus true vision. "See better, Lear;" says Kent after the king has cursed and banished Cordelia, "and let me still remain / The true blank of thine eye." Lear's tragedy (echoed by Gloucester's "I stumbled when I saw") is his inability to see; yet in Brook's version these important lines were cut to an unemphatic "See better, Lear," which because of its position immediately following Lear's "Out of my sight!" lost any real significance in terms of the play's theme. Brook's failure to emphasize these lines stemmed from his inability to see the importance of Lear's eventual spiritual insight, i.e., vision. As a result, the Omnibus Lear went his way to madness, the signs of his increasing awareness of his own blindness lost through cutting and improper emphasis, and his eventual spiritual salvation (emphasized so dramatically by Shakespeare through the old king's kneeling in the rain to pray for those whom he has never thought of before) quite eliminated. What Brook failed to see was that Lear's triumph lies not in the mere recognition of Cordelia's love, but in the awareness this side of insanity of the selfishness of his own life.

The inclination of the director's script to ignore Lear's spiritual greatness, and thus to present a man who was little more than a pathetic hero, was reflected in Orson Welles's acting of the role. The first thing we notice about the Lear of Shakespeare's opening scene is the arrogant regality of the man—in spite of his age he dominates his court physically as well as intellectually. Even more noticeable is his dignity—the dignity of the man born to command. Thus his "Peace, Kent! / Come not between the dragon and his wrath" is no mere bombast, but quiet fury made more impressive by its very restraint, as is true also of the hammering monosyllables of "The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft." When he tells his faithful retainer, "Kent, on thy life, no more," it is the deadly quiet of the threat that marks the measure of Kent's courage. But Welles missed all this, and his Lear was a noisy rowdy who blustered and threatened, with the

result that the effect of the opening scene was akin to that of a tavern brawl. Moreover, Welles's tendency to be noisy rather than dangerous was abetted by the revisions in the text, for the truly frightening part of Lear's disowning of Cordelia, the savage and primitive

> The barbarous Scythian,
> Or he that makes his generation messes
> To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
> Be as well neighbour'd, piti'd, and reliev'd,
> As thou my sometime daughter

which not only prepares for the later cursing of Goneril, but suggests the true depths of Lear's temper, was cut—a cut symptomatic of the general handling of the opening scene where the tendency was to depend upon sound rather than upon words.

Welles continued to depreciate his Lear throughout the performance. Thus the king was presented as a roistering, almost Falstaffian fellow in a visual enlargement of part of Goneril's "His knights grow riotous, and he himself upbraids us / On every trifle." But to have shown a Lear upbraiding his daughter would have been more in keeping with the old tyrant anxious to retain "The name, and all th'addition to a king" than to exhibit the king rioting with his knights. Shakespeare's Lear is not one to stoop. But Welles's was. He was also quite lacking in signs of the tremendous struggle to control himself which characterizes Shakespeare's king. A revealing example of the television production's failure in this respect can be seen in the manipulation of the short speech occurring soon after Lear has arrived at Gloucester's castle, only to find his servant Caius (Kent) in stocks. Lear, fighting his rising fury (whose self-destructiveness he himself senses with ironical perceptiveness—"O me, my heart, my rising heart! But down!") and still refusing to accept the obvious fact of Regan's treachery, answers Regan's suggestion that he return to her sister and ask forgiveness with bitter irony. The irony is blunted upon the dull Regan, but it is not lost on the audience, and it is an important assertion of the tremendous emotion necessary to break so keen a man. Shakespeare's original reads:

> Ask her forgiveness?
> Do you but mark how this becomes the house:
> "Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;
> Age is unnecessary. On my knees I beg
> That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food."

Brook's adaptation is:

> Ask her forgiveness? Dear daughter,
> On my knees I beg that you'll vouchsafe
> Me raiment, bed, and food. Dear daughter,
> I confess that I am old.
> Age is unnecessary.

Much has been lost in Brook's version. First, the information that Lear is still thinking of himself as king, not father—"this becomes the house" having the sense of royal house—is gone. An almost equal loss, the irony becomes ambiguous, as Lear in Brook's version kneels questioningly and then speaks words which because of their changed position could as well refer to Regan herself as to Goneril: "Dear daughter, / On my knees I beg that you'll vouchsafe / Me raiment, bed, and food." And Brook's placing of "I confess that I am old. / Age is unnecessary" reduces Lear's fine irony to obvious sarcasm. Finally (and the many instances of such lineal manipulation are certainly one reason for the artificial and unmelodious speaking of the lines which characterized most of the performance), the movement of Shakespeare's lines is quite lost. As Shakespeare wrote, we have Lear's "Ask her forgiveness?" completing the blank verse pattern for Regan's preceding "Say you have wrong'd her, sir." The forward movement of the verse emphasizes the almost unnatural quickness with which Lear's mind seizes upon the opportunity to display his scorn. But Brook's reading leaves Regan's words in the air—there is an awkward pause, and then Lear begins a new line, forcing the movement to begin all over again. The rest of Brook's reshuffled lines, with the unhappy repetition of "Dear daughter," are blank verse by permission only. Try reading them—Brook lames his actor with verses, losing entirely the music of Shakespeare's original. Unfortunate too is the awkward ending to Brook's rewriting, the two

shortened lines moving brokenly into Lear's "What's he, that hath so much thy place mistook, / To set thee here?" as he at long last (in Brook's version) sees the stocked Kent. In Shakespeare the struggle between father and daughter, between king and daughter, is continued, as the false smoothness of Lear's last line flows without pause into the oily hypocrisy of Regan's reply: "Good sir, no more; these are unsightly tricks." Five lines revised, and neither Brook nor Shakespeare the better for them. The passage is typical of what happens when one tries to rewrite Shakespeare.

Unfortunately Welles's king continued in this petty pace, and the climactic storm scene on the heath revealed a Lear again lacking in dramatic stature. In the play Lear is seen and heard against a background consisting of the description of the storm given us by both the Gentleman and Kent. The fury of the night as they describe it is the measure of Lear's own fury, for the greater storm is in Lear himself, who "Contending with the fretful elements" strives to "out-scorn / The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain." But for the awe-provoking descriptions of the Gentleman and Kent, the television performance substituted a quite ordinary rain, while instead of the defiance of Shakespeare's pagan king, Welles, underplaying for once in his career and depending upon the physical storm rather than on Lear's own spiritual turmoil, gave us only a complaining old man staggering about in the rain, an old man in whom any real sense of spiritual redemption had been lost and whose ready descent into the madness of the "windmill" scene became theatrical, rather than dramatically significant.

Space forbids citing the many other examples of failure to understand Shakespeare's protagonist, but two at least must be mentioned. One, the scene where the sleeping king awakens to find his daughter Cordelia by his side, was a distressing example of missed opportunity. Welles's Lear was presented on a bed from which he did not rise until he and Cordelia were led away to prison to "sing like birds i' th' cage." During most of the scene Cordelia hovered over Lear's bed like a nurse, with the result that

the dominant effect of the recognition was one of sickroom tenderness. But this is not what Shakespeare gave us. *"Enter Lear in a chaire carried by Seruants"* reads the Folio, and we can be assured that the chair at the Globe (or at Whitehall) was a regal one and the "fresh garments" put on Lear in his sleep were royal robes, so that when Lear awakens he finds himself king once more (so hard for him to grasp—and now so unimportant), with his court standing humbly about him. When Cordelia, sparing in words still, but so rich in emotion now, asks her king and father, "O, look upon me, sir, / And hold your hand in benediction o'er me," she kneels before her father's royal chair. In what follows all that has happened to Lear, all that he has learned from his suffering, is concentrated. "No, sir, you must not kneel"—and father and daughter face each other on their knees, true recognition having come to both at last. Visual action speaks eloquently in the theater, and who can say what echoes of earlier scenes will come to the spectator. One thing is certain, though; as father and daughter meet again—and for the first time since the play's opening scene—no one will forget his first sight of the two, as face to face (a bad bit, having the television camera focus on Cordelia's averted head so often) the wilful pride of the father was reflected in the stubborn pride of the daughter. Both Cordelia and Lear, we will feel, have learned a lot.

The most incredible manifestation of the failure of both director and actor to understand what may well be called the epic quality of Shakespeare's protagonist was saved until the end, however. One can forgive much of the amateurishness of the last scene of the Omnibus production, the rhetorical "nevers" to the tune of which Lear died, the many cuts—even the omission of Lear's so human "Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir," and the important, "Do you see this? / Look on her, look, her lips, / Look there, look there!" as Lear thinks he sees Cordelia's lips move and thus dies with an illusion of joy. But one cannot forgive the unbelievable bad taste of Welles's last entrance. *"Enter Lear with Cordelia in his armes"* says the Folio, and the

entrance is in a sense Shakespeare's reaffirmation of faith in the mighty old man, whose physical strength as well as his grief is so far above the "men of stones" surrounding him. Shakespeare's old king comes on, bearing the body of Cordelia as if it were that of a child, the primitive depths of his grief revealed by the starkness of Shakespeare's "Howl, howl, howl!" And then the drop to quiet tenderness as Lear bends over Cordelia—"Her voice was ever soft, / Gentle, and low; an excellent thing in woman." Finally, the emptiness, the real soul's agony of the whispered "nevers" as they trail off into silence. But little of this was captured by Welles. His Lear entered dragging the body of the murdered Cordelia as one would drag the carcass of an animal, alternating each yank at the body with an asthmatic howl—"O heavens, / If you do love old men . . . send down, and take my part!" From this travesty of an entrance through the shrill delivery of the repeated "nevers" to the last staggering progress to the throne on which he died, Welles's Lear was "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." He ended as he had begun, without dignity.

Enough has been written to make it clear that the Omnibus production of *King Lear* was not only an abridgement of Shakespeare's great tragedy, but a perversion as well. The failure to present the character of Lear as Shakespeare conceived it must be borne to some extent by the actor, but to a greater extent it is the failure of the director, for Brook's cuts and revision of material take away much of the actor's most necessary matter. Because of a script and direction that allowed Lear to diminish in stature, the "story" of Lear, as Mr. Cooke called it, became pathetic rather than tragic. But even had the character of Lear been presented in a manner much closer to Shakespeare's intent, the omission of the Gloucester plot would have resulted in a production radically different in effect from that of Shakespeare's tragedy properly performed. Here, though Mr. Brook can perhaps be blamed for a certain naïveté in thinking that the double plot made *Lear* an obvious choice for television condensation, the fault rests eventually with the demands of this newest of media. Shakespeare has not been kept alive to be altered, improved, or drastically

abridged. Just as a condensation cannot do justice to any serious and thoughtful novel, so television cannot with the present limitations on the length of its programs expect to be successful in presenting Shakespeare's plays. A little trimming they can sometimes stand, but as the greatest representatives of Elizabethan drama, a drama notable for its expansiveness, they defy condensation. Television may well in time become a successful medium for their presentation. But to find out for certain it will be necessary for television to grow up to Shakespeare—his stature is too great to be reduced to it.

Shakespeare on the Air in Australia

A. K. STOUT

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TELEVISION HAS NOT YET COME to Australia. And, although the documentary films of the National Film Board and of one or two independent producers have won an honorable place in world estimation, there is as yet no firmly established industry making feature films. The few successful features made in this country (such as Charles Chauvel's *Forty Thousand Horsemen* and Harry Watt's *The Overlanders*) have very properly dealt with Australian themes. Undoubtedly, a very long time will pass before we can risk trying our hand at putting Shakespeare on the screen. However, it is noteworthy that the Olivier *Henry V* and *Hamlet* were well received here, especially in the large cities, whose suburban theaters still revive these films. And MGM's *Julius Caesar* which had its world première in Sydney is becoming a box-office success.

Among the mass media then, we must look for an Australian contribution to Shakespearean interpretation and production in the field of broadcasting. Radio stations here are divided into two groups—the commercial (or "B class") and the national (or "A class"). The latter are controlled by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (A.B.C.). Apart from a very few isolated and heavily cut broadcasts, the commercial stations have left Shakespeare alone. This article will be concerned with the A.B.C.'s policy and remarkable record in Shakespearean radio production as well as with the considerations by which its drama department

has been guided in broadcasting every one of Shakespeare's plays.[1]

The greatness of Shakespeare, even in the field of broadcasting, is not to be questioned. In radio, much depends upon the adaptor, and the adaptation of Shakespeare is an ambitious undertaking. For courage and a real belief in the worth of the task are required to lift a famous work of art out of the frame in which it has made and still makes its effect and to risk translating it into another medium where it may fail, or at best only succeed in a wholly different way. Many people call this sort of experiment rash. "Experiment if you must," they say, "but not with masterpieces." That the experiment has succeeded in Australia can scarcely be denied when the history of the A.B.C.'s policy in the broadcasting of Shakespeare plays is considered. This is not to suggest that all of the broadcasts were successful. Even with an occasional "flop," the plays were worth attempting, if for no better reason than that radio is one of the most powerful media of modern culture. Failure to accept the radio's opportunities to draw on the heritage of the past is a dereliction of duty.

Since the birth of the A.B.C. in 1932, all of Shakespeare's plays have been heard over the air in adaptations varying from 7 to 120 minutes in length. The present policy is to broadcast at least five Shakespeare plays each year in adaptations of not less than 90 minutes. Sometimes a whole evening is given to a play's broadcast. Plays assigned for study in school courses are chosen for production, to help to bring them alive to the students. In Australia there is little chance for most of the population to see Shakespeare in his proper medium. Although radio offers at best a poor substitute, it does have an unrivaled opportunity of introducing millions of listeners to the beauty of his language and of bringing home to them the universality of his plays.

However, the appreciation of Shakespeare on the air is, as in the theater, a two-way business. The audience in a theater has a role to play, even if it is an unconscious one. "Dropping in" to a

[1] I am indebted to Neil Hutchison, the A.B.C.'s director of drama, not only for factual information, but for his expert views on the difficulty and the value of putting Shakespeare on the air.

theater is seldom satisfactory. There must be a sense of occasion in which the audience must coöperate. Similarly, it is impossible to "drop in" on a broadcast of Shakespeare. It is necessary for the listener to make a real effort. During a radio broadcast there is no helpful build-up of darkness and bright lights, of curtain-raising and expectancy. Lacking, too, is the sense of community with an audience, the excitement of shared emotion. If we want to enjoy Shakespeare on the air, we have to summon up the determination to concentrate and to use our imagination—to help Shakespeare make his magic in our own minds and hearts.

For those with an ear for the enchantments of his verse, a great deal of Shakespeare, as a choice for broadcasting, will need neither justification nor comment; for his words make their own unmatchable music. Sometimes, perhaps we are tempted to think that Shakespeare had too strong a sense of the look of the stage to adapt well. But there are compensations. Many of the lyrical and reflective soliloquies reach us—as beautiful songs do—with wonderful directness and actually seem to gain by the fact that we can concentrate upon the meaning and music of the words, without the distraction which the stage setting and movement offer to the eye.

Near the end of 1934, the A.B.C. began to broadcast the whole cycle of Shakespeare's plays. Since that time, all of the principal dramas have been repeated, in some cases three or four times. The A.B.C. has taken advantage of the presence in Australia of distinguished Shakespearean actors and companies. Thus, in the last three years listeners have heard the following productions: Sir Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh in *Richard III,* Anthony Quayle and Diana Wynyard in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Macbeth,* and Robert Speaight in *Macbeth.* In addition, *Hamlet* (with special music composed by Robert Hughes), *King Lear, Richard II, Henry V,* and *Romeo and Juliet* have been broadcast. At the time of writing this brief report, the future schedule of the A.B.C. includes productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* with

Barbara Jefford and Brian Michell (of the Stratford Company), *As You Like It* with Anthony Quayle and the Stratford Company, and *The Tempest* with John Casson.

I am one of those listeners who regret that the A.B.C. still has nothing comparable to the B.B.C.'s "Third Programme." But at least in the A.B.C.'s Shakespearean productions—as indeed in radio drama generally—we have little to grumble about.

War without Glory

DOROTHY B. JONES

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All Quiet on the Western Front is unique among Hollywood war films and remains today one of the few motion pictures ever made anywhere which sets out to examine the cost of war purely in human terms and without taking sides in the conflict. The film does this by picturing with relentless realism the effects of war upon the young men who do the fighting. One would expect that this picture's scenes of trench warfare would appear unimpressive after the many World War II films (including documentary records of actual battles) which have been shown. Nevertheless, because of its unflinchingly realistic portrayal of the effects of war on individual human beings, *All Quiet* remains a document of staggering force with startling relevance today when nations are, for the first time in history, struggling on a collective basis to restrict warfare and to devote themselves earnestly to developing workable alternatives for settling disputes among nations. For it is self-evident that the effects of war upon the bodies and minds of men must be known and understood if we are to have the vision, the will, the strength, and the patience to surmount the serious obstacles which still stand in the way of a world-wide rejection of war.

Based on Erich M. Remarque's famous novel, first published in Germany in 1929, *All Quiet on the Western Front* was released as a motion picture in 1930. Like the book, the film relates the war experiences of Paul Baumer and others of a group of young German soldiers during World War I. When we first see the boys in the classroom, their youthfulness, their naïve faith in their

schoolmaster's perfervid words about the glories of war, their eagerness mingled with youthful uncertainty at the thought of joining up are fully apparent. From this point on, the motion picture shows with unremitting honesty what happens to these boys when they go to war. We are introduced to the ruthless discipline and rigorous training of military life which toughen them for combat. We get our first glimpse of life "up front" as they detrain in a village near the fighting lines. Pictures of the muddy streets, full of the confusion of moving men and equipment, are intercut with close-ups of the strained, bewildered faces of the boys as the smoke of battle darkens the sky and the big guns rumble ominously in the distance. As the film proceeds, we share with the boys a sense of deepening apprehension; we feel ourselves being drawn closer and closer toward the center of the conflict.

Each of the three sequences which picture the boys' experiences at the front rises to a climax of human agony more intense than the one which preceded it; the fighting is shown at greater length and becomes more ruthless and savage. The initial sequence shows the boys' first night under fire when they are sent out under the veteran Katczinsky to lay barbed wire along the front: their apprehension as the truck departs after delivering them to the front, their terror at the screaming shells, and their appearance as frightened children to the brusque but warmhearted Kat who teaches them how to fall and burrow in the earth when the shells come over.

On this first night of action comes the first death. Ironically, Behm, who had been the last and the most reluctant to join up, is the first to be killed. Through the smoke and dust following an exploding shell we hear his muffled, inhuman cries. Then as the smoke begins to clear we see him struggling to his feet, his face smeared with blood and mud, crying out, whimpering, moaning in a wild frenzy of terror: "I'm blind! I'm blind! I can't see! My eyes! Oh, God! I can't see! I'm blind!" The flash of an exploding shell lights up the camera's close view of the horrified faces of his

friends as they watch him. Then, from behind the bomb crater where most of the group are crouching we see Behm, still screaming, as he staggers out of a shell hole and into full view of the enemy. A brief round of machine-gun fire is heard as Behm does a wild, reeling dance; then he falls to the ground, and his cries are heard no more.

Thus war with its seemingly endless tide of death begins for these boys. There follows the sequence in which a group of starving soldiers after five days of continued bombardment are seen in a dugout in the front lines. A series of close-ups reveal what days of hunger and unrelieved terror have done to these boys. The fury of the bombardment increases, and Franz Kemmerich, his hands pressed to his ears in a futile attempt to shut out the sound of falling bombs, starts to scream—frenzied shrieking almost unbearable to hear—as he makes a dash to get out of the dugout. Paul manages to keep Franz from running out, and Kat strikes the hysterical boy in the face with his fist. When one of the timbers over the dugout crashes amid a rain of smoke and dust and dirt, several of the boys begin to scream. In the confusion, Franz, who is again shrieking wildly, rushes out into the trenches where, as he tries to climb over the sandbags, he is shot in the leg by an enemy sniper.

The battle sequence which follows is the culmination of all that has gone before—the recruitment, the training, the arrival at the front, the first detail under fire, and the long bombardment which directly preceded it. This battle sequence itself builds to an overpowering climax of violence and brutality. From the doorway of the dugout, the camera moves slowly back along the top of the trenches recording the scene from a high angle, as one by one the boys take their places in the trenches. This long moving shot is intercut with short scenes of the advancing enemy, as the sounds become cumulatively louder and more frightening—the distant rumble of guns, the whine of enemy shells coming over, and the increasingly loud explosions of enemy bombs. A series of brief shots in rapid succession reveal the charging enemy coming

nearer and nearer the German lines and the rising fury of the encounter. At the height of the attack a shell hole in no man's land, where many French soldiers have just taken refuge, blows up before our eyes. Another shell explodes among the onrushing men; the smoke clears away; a pair of hands blown off at the wrists still hangs from the barbed-wire entanglement; and Paul's head bends over his gun as he sickens at the sight.

The fierceness of the fighting is suggested by the way in which the shots are combined. For example, long moving shots showing French soldiers charging toward the German barbed-wire entanglements and being mowed down by machine-gun fire are repeatedly intercut with quick front views of a German machine gunner firing furiously. The effect of this series of alternating still and moving shots of the gunner and his victims, to the accompaniment of the rat-tat-tat of the machine gun, expresses not only the ruthlessness but the wild ferocity of this mass killing. But still the attackers come and finally begin to pour into the German trenches. Now, again, the camera moves, this time along the top of the trenches as it reveals the wild hand-to-hand fighting which follows. The men's shouts intermingle with the sound of battle as they fight with the desperate brutality of men who must kill or be killed. The presence of few familiar faces heightens the raw animalistic nature of this fighting. Since our sympathies are not with one side or another, nor with one man or another, we see only the carnage, the brutality, the desperation of this fighting; and thus, we overwhelmingly feel the horrible waste and bestiality of war itself.

There is no glamour in this film's portrayal of war, no false heroics, no attempt to gloss over ugly facts. On the other hand, there is no sensationalism in the way that the scenes of war are handled, no attempt to shock for the sake of shocking. Nevertheless, as the camera with unfaltering objectivity records the naked and violent facts of war, we cannot but be shaken by the elemental quality of the scenes themselves. We experience with these boys their shock and disbelief as they witness the first death of one of

their group; the unnerving, unmanning effect of seeing a comrade break after five days and nights of terror and hunger; the almost unbearable tension that precedes an attack by the enemy; the nightmarish din and smoke, blood and confusion which pervade the battlefield; and finally, the fierce animalistic brutality of hand-to-hand fighting.

After the first third of the film has taken us into war with Paul and his group, the picture turns to showing more fully some of the devastating results of these war experiences. The first and most obvious result is what war does to the bodies of men. The widespread maiming, crippling, and dying of men in war is pictured in several hospital sequences. We see Kemmerich die of his wounds; we watch Albert learn that he must face life as a cripple; and we observe Paul, although seriously wounded, recover to return home on leave. That the shattered boys like Paul will find only their war-damaged selves at home is suggested by our first glimpse of Paul's home-coming: as he comes down the street, looking about hungrily at the familiar sights, a one-legged soldier on crutches hobbles across the square. Although the home-and-mother picture which follows is oversentimentalized in the manner of the 'twenties, this sequence of the film still makes unremittingly clear that the home which meant so much to Paul will never be the same. The loved and familiar are colored by the bitterness of being forever removed by a world of horror which stands between him and those whom he loves most, a world of which they know nothing, one which they cannot even imagine. We realize, as Paul does, that the war has given him nothing and has taken everything from him.

The change which has come over Paul and his comrades becomes most apparent in the sequence of Paul's return to the schoolroom.[1] Walking down the street, Paul hears the schoolmaster's voice through the open schoolroom window. We see Paul in his uniform framed in the window of the schoolroom. In the

[1] This very effective sequence was one which was added to the screenplay; in the novel when Paul returns home he finds that the schoolmaster has been drafted into the army.

film's opening sequence many marching soldiers were framed in this same window; now, there is only one soldier, but one with whom we have lived through the war. Over this view of Paul alone we hear the familiar words of the schoolmaster as he speaks of the glories of war. And then, exactly as in the earlier scene, the camera slowly moves back to take in the schoolmaster behind his desk delivering a lecture about war to the youthful pupils. Suddenly the vague sense of a scene repeating itself is abruptly broken, and we see Paul standing in the doorway and hear the welcoming words of the schoolmaster as he draws the young man forward saying proudly to his students, "Here is one of the first to go . . . look at him." Now the camera takes in the eager faces of the children (in a series of close-ups) as the teacher's voice describes Paul to them in these words, "sturdy, bronze and clear-eyed." The words are, of course, intended by the teacher to describe Paul, but hearing them as we look upon the faces of the children, we cannot but realize that the words describe the children themselves and that these boys are Paul and his comrades as they were before the war. Thus, the contrast between the freshness and eagerness of Paul as he once was and his bitter hopelessness in the scenes which follow is pointed up at the very beginning of the sequence.

The parallel between this and the earlier classroom sequence is a telling one in several ways. Not only is there a repetition of place, people, and situation, but of the manner in which image and sound are combined. The movement of the camera in particular subtly creates in the observer a strange dreamlike sense of having relived the scene before, the same sensation which Paul himself obviously feels. This sense of events repeating themselves also has an objective significance. As we look upon the faces of the boys, realizing that they are indeed as Paul and the others were when we first saw them, we know that what we have seen happening to Paul and his comrades will inevitably happen to these lads. We become tragically aware that these boys, and boys like them everywhere, are caught up in a cycle of killing which is being repeated and repeated endlessly.

However, the never-ending process of killing involved in war is best expressed cinematically by the way in which this motion picture follows the history of a single pair of boots. Early in the film, Franz Kemmerich proudly shows his friends in the barracks the new pair of boots of "genuine imported leather" which his uncle has given him. After Franz has been wounded, Paul and the other boys visit him in the hospital where he lies dying. We do not witness Franz's death; instead, we see a close-up of Paul's boots, poised at the top of a flight of steps. These boots slowly descend the stairs of the hospital, another pair held in Paul's hand comes into view, and the camera tilts up to take in Paul's grief-stricken face.

Paul delivers the boots to Mueller, as Franz had requested before he died. Moments later we see another close-up of Franz's boots, marching in a column with those worn by other soldiers; and again the camera tilts up to show that the boots are now worn by Mueller. Then, we see this boy falling; a bullet in his shoulder, he lies writhing on the ground. This picture dissolves into another close-up of Franz's boots again marching in a column with others, and once more the camera tilts up to reveal that the boots are now being worn by another member of the group, a lad named Peter. It is clear from the way he smiles and glances down at his feet that he is proud of his newly acquired possession. Once more the picture dissolves into another in which Franz's boots are seen in the foreground of a low shot of the firing step of a trench; beyond, down the trench, the boots of other men are seen in a long unbroken row. A whistle is heard, and Franz's boots along with the others are pulled up the side of the trench as the boys go over the top. The camera holds the empty trench for a few seconds; then, an explosion is heard, and in a flash of light Franz's boots fall back on the firing step; and Peter's body slithers down past the camera, leaving the boots again in close-up as they come to rest awkwardly on the step. A view of the dead boy's face, blood trickling out of the corner of his mouth, is followed by a repeated close-up of the boots which we now know to be worn by a dead man.

So it is that the story of a pair of boots, passed on from one boy to another, becomes the story of the successive death of three boys, Franz Kemmerich, Mueller, and Peter. Every lad who takes another's place—or, as the film expresses it, every lad who steps into another fellow's boots—is doomed. As each boy is maimed or killed, there will be another youth, fresh, full of life, who will take his place. The cherished boots of Franz Kemmerich, worn by each boy in pride and comfort and pleasure, will (as the countless other boots worn by so many nameless boys) come in time to rest, empty symbols of the many strong, vitally alive young men who wore them. Thus, does the story of a single pair of boots, told without a word of dialogue, show eloquently of the slaughter of youth which goes on in war.

Death and darkness are ever present in *All Quiet on the Western Front.* Our first view of the war front is a small village on a dark day. The streets are full of mud; there is a confusion of men, mounted troops, and hospital trains, while exploding shells in the distance throw up dirt and debris; night comes on, and a pouring rain makes the scene even more dismal. The boys' first assignment to action is to lay barbed wire just beyond a graveyard at night. Here the first death of their group occurs. The big battle is fought in a dull and desolate light which is neither day nor night. In a later sequence, a graveyard serves as the place of battle; and Paul, digging frantically to secure himself from enemy fire, is horrified to find that he has dug himself into a coffin and is lying beside a corpse. Toward the close of the film, as the men march into battle on the eve of the great offensive, they joke grimly about the coffins piled up by the roadside.

In contrast to the depressing darkness, raw brutality, suffering, and death of the war scenes, *All Quiet on the Western Front* gives us in other scenes glimpses of sunlight, untroubled youth, love, and the joy of living. Early in the film, the freshness, fun, and eagerness of youth are fully expressed in the picture of Paul and his comrades. In the classroom, although they are wide-eyed and earnest, they are also full of gay and noisy enthusiasm; in the

barracks, before Himmelstoss makes his appearance, they are exuberant, obviously proud of themselves. This same untroubled youthfulness—this time in counterpoint to the dull, darkened spirit of Paul who has returned from the front—is again seen in the classroom toward the close of the film.

But youth and a love of life in contrast to death are most strikingly dramatized in a brief scene after the death of Franz Kemmerich. Paul, holding Franz's boots in his hand, stands shocked and grief-stricken at the top of the steps leading from the terrace of the hospital. For a moment he remains motionless, quietly absorbed by his inner feelings; then, his features begin to relax. From a deathlike mask of grief his face comes to life before our eyes, expressing deep relief and the joy of being alive, as he descends the stairs and begins to walk, slowly at first (the camera traveling with him), then faster, faster (past the camera), his mood and step growing lighter until he is running swiftly down the pathway through a little wood (away from the camera). The sun is shining on the path, and several young soldiers strolling toward the hospital call to him as he runs past them. "What's your hurry?" one asks, adding to his companion half-jokingly, "I bet he stole those boots." They both laugh and look after him, as the picture fades from view.

This brief scene captures perfectly the feeling experienced by almost every soldier at the death of a comrade. After the first shock there immediately follows the natural relief felt by the survivor, a poignant sense of joy at finding himself alive. He cannot help feeling glad that someone else, even though a friend, rather than he has died; and suddenly he becomes acutely aware of his own aliveness, infused as he is with relief and joy and a sense of his own well-being. So Paul, running down the sunlit path, running away from death, expresses this intense, deeply felt urge to live. And the boys who call out to him, by their secure air of normalcy, by their very casualness, heighten our understanding of the intensity and the meaning of Paul's behavior. Unfortunately, Lewis Milestone followed this scene by another in which Paul,

returning to his quarters, tells Mueller how he felt after Franz's death. Coming directly after the scene just described, Paul's speech is merely a verbal repetition of an idea which has already had eloquent cinematic expression.

All Quiet on the Western Front tells us that even during wartime, people of the warring nations, taken as individuals, can have feelings of love and compassion for one another. This idea is expressed in two scenes which are among the most effective in the entire film. Paul has found shelter in a shell hole when a French soldier descends upon him. Paul stabs his enemy with his bayonet. Finding himself alone with the groaning Frenchman, Paul tries to escape, but the fighting is still too heavy overhead. Horrified, he sees that his hands are covered with blood, and he tries to wash off the blood in the water hole at the bottom of the crater. Now it is night, and we hear the Frenchman groaning in the dark. The flash of exploding shells now and again lights up the crater to reveal the Frenchman lying against the side of the hole and Paul hunched over, his hands covering his ears to shut out the man's agonized moans. The morning light finds Paul disheveled and frantic. He tries to get the Frenchman to drink and realizes that he is dead. With his half-smiling lips and staring eyes, he appears to look accusingly at Paul.

This is one of the scenes of the film which Lew Ayres, in his first important screen role as Paul, is not quite able to handle convincingly.[2] Nevertheless, its effectiveness is felt because of the powerful truths which are expressed as the German youth speaks to the Frenchman he has killed. War demands that men kill one another. But a man can feel compassion for another human being, regardless of his nationality. Face to face with the Frenchman

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[2] Lew Ayres was only twenty years old when he played the part of Paul in this film. It was not until some years later in the middle 'thirties, when he traveled extensively in Europe, that his convictions as a pacifist were definitely formulated. However, he states that his first big screen role in *All Quiet on the Western Front* made a tremendous impression upon him and was undoubtedly an important factor in determining his attitude toward war. When called into service in World War II, Lew Ayres declared himself a conscientious objector and was interned. However, he agreed to serve in the U. S. Army Medical Corps and in this service distinguished himself on battlefields in the South Pacific.

whom he has mortally wounded, Paul is overcome by pity and remorse. From "the enemy," whom he has been taught by the necessities of war to fear, hate, and kill, this Frenchman becomes simply another human being, a man like himself, for whom Paul feels great compassion. In a small crater in the midst of the battle, Paul is overcome by these emotions, and we know that each man who kills so ruthlessly on the battlefield is essentially capable of these same emotions.

Love between the children of the warring nations is also expressed in a tender love scene between Paul and a French girl. Paul, Albert, and Leer pay a night visit to three French girls across the river, bringing them bread and wine. They sit with the girls around a table and watch them eat and drink. Later, from a close-up of a victrola turning unheeded at the end of a record, the camera draws back to take in the quiet, deserted room. Then a bedroom is shadowed on the wall. We see only the shadows of the head of the bedstead and a water pitcher on the table, as we overhear Paul and Suzanne talking quietly together. Paul speaks to her gratefully; but Suzanne, who cannot understand his words, interrupts him repeatedly with a whispered "Poor boy—this terrible war!" We know that in the arms of this girl the youth has found momentary escape from war; whereas, the French girl, in giving her love, grieves at what has happened to this German boy, just as millions of women—mothers and wives the world over—grieve over what war does to their men.

Here with taste and simplicity has been recorded one of the most eloquent love scenes ever filmed. The motionless shadows on the wall are expressive of the quiet mood of the lovers. At the same time since we cannot see them we listen the more intently. Yet, the words which this boy and girl speak are unimportant. The gentle tone, the tenderness in their voices are what matter; although they speak in different tongues, their language is a universal one. The effectiveness of this scene stems in part from its appeal on a primary level of experience: like children, we listen outside a forbidden door; and, like children, we hear not

so much the words as the tone. What we hear are the universal intonations of love as a boy and girl of the warring nations express their love for one another.

The ending of this motion picture summarizes with beauty and imagination all that has been said by the film as a whole. In the death of Kat (which occurs shortly before the last sequence of the film) Paul has lost not only a comrade, but a brother. That Paul looked to the man as to an older brother was touchingly suggested by Paul's affectionate regard and admiration for Kat throughout the picture. A broader significance (the brotherhood of all men) is suggested at the time of Kat's death. Believing that Kat is only wounded, Paul brings him water; but, as he puts the glass to the man's lips, he realizes that Kat is dead (paralleling exactly the circumstance under which Paul, in the earlier sequence, came to realize that the Frenchman was dead). Paul stares at Kat's blood on his own hand (is he remembering the Frenchman whose blood also stained his hands and whom, after death, he spoke of as a brother "just like Kat"?). As if sensing the boy's thoughts, the officer asks, "You're not related—are you?" Paul, recalled from his inner thoughts, replies dully, but not without bitterness, "No, we're not related."

It has been a joke between Kat and the boys that the war will not be over until the enemy gets Katczinsky. Now that the older man is gone, Paul is desolate. This we sense from the image which immediately follows the scene of Kat's death, for we are shown a cold, barren, and desolate wasteland pitted with the ugly marks of war. Here, indeed, is no man's land—no man is seen, no sign of life, not even a growing thing. Here is how the world would look—covered with hideous scars and deserted of all life—if man were to destroy it with his final, most violent of all wars. This image pictures clearly Paul's feeling at the death of Katczinsky: this is not only the end of the war, but the end of the world for Paul. This feeling of emptiness and utter hopelessness shows in his face as he sits in the trench, leaning against the sandbags. The only sound is the softly played music of a harmonica, a small

plaintive kind of tune which runs like a thin but steady stream of life through the quiet and otherwise desolate scene.

But something catches the boy's eye, and the hint of a smile plays around his lips as he leans forward to look. Now, we see his face from the outside of the trench as he looks through the square gun hole, and the camera moves slowly down the side of the trench to show us in close-up what the boy has seen: a butterfly has settled on the half-open lid of an old tin can. Paul's helmet appears over the top of the trench, and quickly the film cuts to a fallen log on the enemy side where a sniper's head appears. Slowly, the sniper moves into firing position, resting his gun on the log. Then, we see Paul carefully put out his hand to reach for the butterfly; the sniper, with the same deliberate care, takes his aim. There is a close-up of the butterfly on the can as the boy's hand comes slowly into the picture reaching for it. Again we glimpse the sniper, his finger going with careful deliberateness to the trigger of his rifle. There is a final close-up of the butterfly and the boy's hand which almost reaches it when there comes the sharp sound of the rifle. Instantaneously the harmonica music (that steady thin stream of life which has run on unceasingly through these shots) is suddenly stilled; the hand is convulsively and involuntarily drawn back a little; then comes to rest, quiet in death. There follows a scene of boys in uniform walking silently in single file up a hill; this scene is superimposed over the background of row upon row of white crosses. There are many strange faces among the boys, but as Paul, Kemmerich, Behm, Mueller, and the others whom we know pass, each looks back over his shoulder at the audience; each look is sorrowful, bewildered, and even accusing; then, the boys pass on silently up the hill.[3]

[3] The ending of this film which deservedly won high praise was not that originally made for the picture. Carl Laemmle, Jr., recalls that neither he nor Lewis Milestone felt satisfied with the ending as it was originally shot; and one evening, only two days before the picture's world première at the Carthay Circle in Los Angeles, they sat around discussing this fact. The well-known cinematographer Carl Freund was among those present, and it was he who conceived the idea of the boy being shot by a sniper while reaching for a butterfly. Both the producer and director immediately saw that this supplied exactly what they had been searching for; and Lewis Milestone worked out, shot, and edited the scene within forty-eight hours.

The paralleling of shots and the paralleling of the slow, cautious movements of the sniper with those of Paul have a multiplicity of meanings. We have seen earlier that Paul has caught butterflies to mount them and preserve their beauty. So eager is he to capture this thing of beauty in an otherwise desolate world that he has completely forgotten where he is. He moves slowly, unaware of his own danger, intent upon capturing and preserving the beauty of a short-lived thing. The sniper moves with the same slowness and caution, but for the purpose of destroying a human life which has not yet begun to fulfill itself. The motives are in full and meaningful contrast: they express a love of life intensely and warmly felt and the drive to kill which is inherent in war. In the series of alternating shots we see two human beings, each moving slowly and intently toward his chosen end. The tension is heightened by the slowness, by the quietness of the movements of these two human beings, and by our anguished knowledge of what the end must be. Yet there is no anger at the sniper, but only a feeling of sadness and resignation; for we know that this is youth reaching for life on the one hand and humanity intent upon death on the other. And when the single shot from the rifle comes at last and the music halts abruptly, the silence which follows has an emptiness and loneliness which endures, as though youth itself had been forever silenced by that shot. Then the sight of the silent uniformed figures, which pass before us, reminds us of the millions of youths who have gone and of the millions who may yet go in this way unless war can be eradicated.

The film *All Quiet on the Western Front,* like the book on which it is based, has a documentary quality. But, whereas the book is the sensitive memory of one soldier, the film is an objective record of the raw facts of war. The autobiography of Erich Remarque's war experiences with its eloquent simplicity tells us, far better than the film, the inner thoughts and emotions of a young soldier. On the other hand, the film with its relentless objectivity is able to give us a much more accurate and powerful

knowledge of actual warfare. We see and hear not only the stabbing bayonets and the screaming shells; but we experience as well the tensions, the unbearable anxiety which precedes the battle, the unmasked brutality of killing, and finally the sense of loss and depression which comes in the wake of a war experience.

The film is episodic like the book. In many ways this fragmentary method of telling the story appears to be better suited to the novel than to the motion-picture medium, for the film falters and appears disjointed in some spots where the connection between one scene and the next is not immediately apparent. All but a few of the incidents pictured in the film have been taken directly from the book; nevertheless, in filming the story, Lewis Milestone showed ingenuity and originality. Although this picture was made during the first years of sound when camera movement was consistently being sacrificed to dialogue, Milestone made the camera the primary means of expression. The moving camera was used to create many of the finest scenes of the picture (notably, as has already been shown, in the battle sequence); and it was also the means by which the director maintained continuity within many individual scenes, thereby helping to build the mood or idea he wanted to express (as in the long, unbroken scene in the barracks when the camera draws back gradually, pausing as it includes one and then another of the boys as they laughingly accost Himmelstoss, and finally takes in the whole barracks as the outraged officer orders the entire group to attention). Nor did Milestone underestimate the power of the silent image, as most directors at that time were inclined to do. We have already mentioned numerous scenes which illustrate this, but to these should be added the wordless farewell in the hospital ward between Paul and Albert: Paul, departing on leave for home, turns back at the door but can find no word to say; and Albert, whose leg has been amputated, glances down at the photograph of himself and Paul, hides the lower part of the picture with his hand, and looks after his departing friend with tear-filled eyes. Mile-

stone also shows that he knows how to combine sound and image to achieve the desired effect. This is particularly evident in his use of sound in building up the tension of the battle sequence.

One of the most remarkable things about the book is its complete lack of partisanship. In the motion picture, as in the book, the story of these young soldiers is told with such deep compassion that they appear to us not so much as Germans but as merely human beings about whose fate we feel a deep and tragic concern. As in the book, too, the conversations of these men as they talk about the war are the words of men who could as easily be French, English, Russian, or Italian, as Americans or Germans. But the film goes even further: it fittingly embodies the spirit of universality expressed in the novel by having Americans play the part of German soldiers. The inherent meaning of this objective fact about the film must not be overlooked in judging its effectiveness.[4] For in a film in which Americans (who were among the victors of World War I) play with true understanding the role of the vanquished, there can indeed be no enemy and no thought of victory; and we are thus able to achieve an entirely new perspective about war. The impact is particularly great because there is no enemy, as such, in the film. The loud riot of killing is especially shocking since the strong feelings which it arouses in us cannot be discharged, cannot be focused against any enemy. In the battle scenes, the camera with an unremitting objectivity typical of the film's entire portrayal of the fighting, takes no sides in the conflict—for example, a German machine gunner's view of the attacking French soldiers as they fall before his fire is followed later in the same battle sequence with a similar view from behind the French machine gunner as he mows down the counterattacking

[4] In this connection the spontaneous comment of a noted German sociologist who recently sat in on a screening of this picture is worth noting. He had entered shortly after the picture started and consequently missed the introductory credits. As the lights went on after the conclusion of the film he asked a remarkable question: "Was this picture dubbed in English?" He had known, of course, that the picture was based on the German book; and he explained that he thought there had been a German version of the film made. But that he could, through identifying with the boys in the film, have for one moment believed they were actually German, suggests the remarkable universality achieved in this film by having American boys play sympathetically conceived German roles.

Germans. We accept these boys and completely identify ourselves with them; yet, we can find no enemy to hate and to blame for their suffering. There is only one thing to hate, and that is war itself.

By overlooking the issues of World War I, by making nationality, national interests, and feelings of national pride purely secondary (or by ignoring them completely), *All Quiet on the Western Front* greatly oversimplifies the problems of war which the world faces today. But by so doing, Carl Laemmle, Jr., Lewis Milestone, Maxwell Anderson, George Abbott, Arthur Edeson, and others responsible for the film were able to achieve their aim of making an appraisal of war from a purely humanistic standpoint. Such an appraisal is invaluable in a world which is struggling to unite itself in the name of peace. At some future time when war has been outlawed, *All Quiet on the Western Front* will doubtless be remembered as a milestone in our thinking about war.

Film Censorship in Norway

GILBERT GEIS

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NORWEGIAN FILM PEOPLE like to recall that Oslo had its first cinema performance more than a month before New York City previewed motion pictures at Bial's Music Hall on April 23, 1896. In early March, 1896, a German, Max Skladanowsky, had visited Oslo, then known as Kristiania, with a touring motion-picture enterprise. The following spring, the city had its first full-length cinema performance when two Frenchmen introduced the "living pictures" at Brødrene Hals's concert hall. It was this second visit which inadvertently led to the founding of the Norwegian exhibition industry. When the Frenchmen's apparatus broke down, they enlisted the support of a Norwegian instrument maker, Olaf K. Bjercke, to help with repairs, and Bjercke became so entranced with the equipment that he purchased an old set from the Frenchmen and was soon touring Norway himself with a film show.

By 1900, filmstrips were being used as introductory features on the regular Cirkus Varieté vaudeville shows. Oslo's first permanent motion-picture house was opened in November, 1904, at Stortingsgaten 12, and bore the same name as its address. Early film performances lasted from 20 to 30 minutes, and had such intriguing titles as:

The Interrupted Wedding Night
or
The Soldier in the Mattress
Piquant and Amusing

Soon—perhaps by virtue of such offerings—motion-picture houses were spread throughout Oslo. Music was added to increase

the drawing power of the films, and some theaters experimented with actors reading the dialogue in the silent films.

Censorship was practiced informally at first. The police exercised a light control over film content, occasionally ordering that small segments of pictures be removed. In one instance, the police chief objected to a brutal killing and to the final shot in the same picture showing the murderer being guillotined. The offending portions were removed and the gaps explained by a substituted caption: "Because of police restrictions, this event does not occur."

The national film law of 1913—the legislation which also enabled the municipalities to assume ownership of motion-picture theaters in Norway—decreed the first official film censorship. The law declared that the king should appoint authorities to censor all films prior to their exhibition, and on this foundation the present censorship office, the *Statens Filmkontroll,* was constituted. The specific areas in which the censor should guard against undesirable film content were detailed in the legislation: "The authorities must not approve pictures whose performance they feel will conflict with the law, or offend decency, or lead to brutality or moral degeneration."

In 1921, the law was extended to include special rules for the showing of films to children. In particular, it now required that "pictures which the authorities think will effect children's minds or their sense of justice in an injurious manner must not be approved for performance before them." Children were defined as persons who had not yet reached their sixteenth birthday.

At present, it appears likely that the censorship provisions will soon be amended for the first time in more than 20 years. A committee, appointed by the Storting to study the question prior to its consideration by the national body, recommended in the spring of 1952 that films permissible for children should be divided into two further categories: (1) those which may be seen by children between 12 and 16 years of age; and (2) those suitable for children under 12. Children under five would be barred from

motion-picture theaters, and those between five and seven would have to be accompanied by adults, and would not be allowed to attend performances which end after seven o'clock in the evening. Children between seven and sixteen would not be allowed to view films which end after nine o'clock unless accompanied by adults. A minority of the committee recommended that children under seven should not be admitted to motion-picture shows; otherwise, the proposals were adopted unanimously.

The State Censorship Office began its work on June 10, 1913. All film-rental bureaus that have pictures they wish to submit for consideration by private or municipal exhibition outlets must first present them for censorship. The Censorship Office operates in the following manner:

One person views each of the films submitted. Traditionally, this duty has been shared by two regular censors, a man and a woman. Bernt A. Nissen, a former political reporter for *Dagbladet,* Oslo's Liberal party newspaper, has been with the State Censorship Office since 1934. Mrs. Karin Bøe Skaug, mother of two children, has been censoring pictures since 1938. Both Nissen and Mrs. Skaug were relieved of their offices during the German occupation but returned to their jobs when Norway was liberated in May, 1945.

The two censors each work three days a week viewing pictures, and on an average day will see two feature films, plus a number of shorts and trailers. The censors themselves do not cut the films; they only tell the film bureaus whether they will approve the film as it is, whether it will be suitable for children and adults or for adults only, and what changes would be necessary either to have the film approved or to have its classification category changed. If there are any doubts, both Nissen and Mrs. Skaug see the picture and reach a joint decision. If they cannot agree, they ask a third member of the censorship board, named for this specific task, to see the picture. The decision of this individual, at present Arthur Winsnes, professor of the history of ideas at the University of Oslo, is then accepted as final.

The films which each censor will see are selected at random. It is amusing to note, though, that Mrs. Skaug generally reneges when it comes to passing verdict on "sex" scenes.

"I am extremely difficult to offend on such matters," she says. "Especially when it concerns naked women on the screen, so I have to ask Mr. Nissen for his opinion in these cases."

Picture categories are represented by colors: White means that a picture may not be shown in Norway; yellow, that it is permissible only for adults; and red, that it is permissible for both adults and children. The Norwegian exhibition organization is such that a red rating represents additional financial profit for a film, since many remote Norwegian villages, because of limited potential audience, will not accept a film unless it has a red rating. On the other hand, in urban areas, an adult-only rating may increase attendance because some persons are wary of a film which is considered on a children's level. In general, most film bureaus prefer to cut scenes—even at the sacrifice of some narrative continuity—if there is a possibility of obtaining a red rating.

Many of the censorship decisions, particularly in the sensitive area of domestic productions, receive mild criticism, but since its setup the State Censorship Office has been involved in but three major squabbles. Two concerned American films; the third was related to a French newsreel which portrayed the assassination of King Alexander II of Yugoslavia and the French foreign minister, Louis Barthou, in Marseilles on October 9, 1934. The French government objected to the pictures which had been taken by an alert photographer and then smuggled out to England. The State Censorship Office also objected, and the pictures were not passed. Oslo's theaters, however, seized upon an obscure point in the censorship code which says that only pictures which are in Norway for a period of longer than 14 days need be censored. The newsreel thus ran for eight days in the capital city—added to the six since it had come to Norway—before its period of grace expired. Then it was withdrawn from circulation.

Both incidents involving American films, occurring in prewar

days, were concerned with political censorship. The first took place in 1929, when the American film, *The Story of Nurse Edith Cavell,* after first being approved by the censor, was opposed by Norwegian governmental authorities. The head of the Norwegian exhibition association was told by the Norwegian prime minister not to show the film, but the picture was run nonetheless on the ground that all censorship powers were vested in the State Censorship Office and not subject to any veto by higher authority.

Confessions of a Nazi Spy, ten years later, was the other American film involved in a censorship dispute. Legally, there was nothing in the film, under the Norwegian code forbidding censorship on political grounds, that could lead to its rejection. At first, the picture was programmed in Oslo, but then it was removed from circulation by the State Censorship Office because of pressure from the Germans and a disinclination to antagonize the Nazis under the precarious international situation then existing. Thirteen years later, with the memory of the subsequent German occupation in mind, the rejection of this picture by the State Censorship Office remains a sore point in the Norwegian film world—the one dark spot on the censorship record that will very likely operate against any repetition of such an occurrence in the future. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* was released in Norway following the liberation of the country.

In practice, censorship cuts are made on two fundamental grounds: offences against decency, and brutality. To the censor, the idea that American films might require cutting on the first ground is patently absurd, though even the highly liberal definition of film morality employed by the State Censorship Office is sometimes taxed by French, Italian, and East European motion pictures. However, morality offenses, altogether, constitute a very minor basis for censorship. In 1951, only one picture, the French film *Boutes de Nuits,* was cut for indecency—it lost 83 meters between the censor's office and its exhibition under the Norwegian title, *Nattklub i Paris.* Though completely "tamed," the

film, undoubtedly aided by advertising which vividly illustrated scenes no longer included, enjoyed an unusually long run in Oslo.

The differing ideas of sexual decency for film between the American and Norwegian industry are indicated in the concluding statement of the leader of the Norwegian film world in an article about American congressional hearings on alleged Communist influence in Hollywood. He notes:

> Apropos of this witchhunt it should be mentioned that the beautiful Danish film, *Ditte Menneskebarn,* which was a tremendous success in Norway, is forbidden in the U.S.A. The reason advanced is that in one scene Ditte undresses in order to bathe and in another a three-year-old boy stands naked on the steps and urinates. Such things are not allowed to be shown to the virtuous Americans in films.[1]

Excessive brutality, however, is regularly invoked by the censor in making cuts in films—particularly in American films.[2] Table 1 shows the amounts clipped from films submitted to the State Censorship Office since the war, arranged according to the country in which the pictures originated. The figures, while providing a good index of the censorship incurred by each nation, cannot be judged as a literal measure of the unacceptability of films from various countries exporting them to Norway, since the film bureaus, well aware of the strong taboos held by the Norwegian censors, will not go to the expense of inserting Norwegian titles at the cost of a print (more than $1,000 for some technicolor pictures), plus the texting price (about $200, including the translator's fee), for a picture which appears to stand little chance of being approved for exhibition in Norway.

Table 1 shows that censorship control over motion-picture

[1] Kristoffer Aamot, "Tragikomediene i Washington Slutt," *Norsk Filmblad,* 15 (December, 1947), p. 469. Though the connection is not mentioned, *Ditte Menneskebarn* might have come to Aamot's mind in connection with the congressional hearings because its author, Martin Andersen Nexo, a Dane, is the leading literary Communist in Scandinavia. *Ditte Menneskebarn,* presumably with the offending portions removed, was shown in New York City during the spring of 1951.

[2] This has been true for some time in Norway. Harley noted in 1939 that Norway had banned ten pictures, all American, "all of the gangster or criminal type." John Eugene Harley, *World-Wide Influences of the Cinema: A Study of Official Censorship and the International Cultural Aspects of Motion Pictures* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1940), p. 171.

content is, at least in regard to those pictures which are submitted for approval, not much more than a token effort. The number of meters—4,478—clipped from the 1,278 American films, which were approved for exhibition during the more than six years which have been tabulated, adds up to no more than the length of two feature films.

TABLE 1

METERS CUT FROM FILMS SUBMITTED TO THE STATE CENSORSHIP OFFICE FROM MAY 11, 1945, THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 1951

Country	Meters submitted	Meters cut	Meters cut per 10,000 M.
United States	3,254,868	4,478	13.8
Great Britain	839,538	467	5.6
Sweden	671,090	362	5.7
France	524,823	481	9.2
Denmark	179,186	69	3.8
Soviet Union	149,199	263	18.3
Others*	123,780	433	35.0
Italy	103,186	149	14.5
Norway	85,109	6	0.7
Germany	81,921	119	14.7
Total	6,012,700	6,827	11.4

* Countries represented in this category and the number of meters they submitted are: Austria (20,544); Czechoslovakia (19,298); Mexico (15,632); Finland (14,154); Switzerland (10,557); Sweden-Finland (7,478); Belgium (5,708); Hungary (5,346); France-Italy (3,782); Scandinavia (3,033); France-Great Britain (2,700); China (2,500); Argentina (2,460); Portugal (2,356); and Spain (1,988).

Source: Compiled from the monthly reports of the State Censorship Office.

Censorship, therefore, affects but a negligible amount of the content of films which are exhibited in Norway. Only the most offensive brutality shots are eliminated, except, of course, when pictures are rejected *in toto,* or are not imported into Norway because of the known antipathies of the State Censorship Office.

Table 1 provides a clue to reactions to American films vis-à-vis the products of other nations. Among the four major film suppliers—the United States, Great Britain, Sweden, and France—American pictures are cut significantly more than the films from the other countries. Some of the remaining nations, notably the Soviet Union and Italy, have had their products clipped to a greater extent over the six-and-one-half-year period; but the

Table 1 index, because of the small total meterage for these countries, cannot be accepted as too reliable a measure for more than the four leading nations.

Certainly, the need for censorship of American films in Norway is greater than that anticipated when the first censorship bill was introduced in 1913. Then, during a heated debate on the

TABLE 2

CLASSIFICATION BY THE STATE CENSORSHIP OFFICE OF FILMS SUBMITTED FOR CENSORSHIP, MAY 11, 1945 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 1951

Country	Total films	Per cent adult only	Per cent adult/children
United States	1,278	58.7	41.3
Great Britain	341	63.0	37.0
Sweden	271	66.1	33.9
France	194	75.3	24.7
Soviet Union	74	37.8	62.2
Denmark	70	57.1	42.9
Others	48	68.8	31.2
Norway	41	22.0	78.0
Italy	40	80.0	20.0
Germany	32	71.9	28.1
Total	2,389	60.2	39.8

Source: Compiled from the monthly reports of the State Censorship Office.

measure, one Storting member, declaring that there appeared to be little need for censoring American pictures, noted:

I have received information from a reliable source that over in America they have now come to where they will introduce censorship in film studios, so that pictures from there should not be dangerous. But in France—and it is from there that we get the most and the most dubious pictures—they have no such censor in the film studios.

The censorship picture can be filled in with a consideration of the films which are placed in each of the three exhibition categories by the censor. Table 2 presents the division of films into the adult-only and the adult-children classifications. No more than six films have been rejected completely in any one year since May, 1945. Of the twenty-four films given white (rejected) des-

ignations in the period under consideration, sixteen were produced in the United States. Some of the titles suffice to illustrate the kind of pictures turned down: *Dillinger, The Last Mile, Scarlet Claw, Johnny Eager, Kansas Raiders.*

Table 2 underlines the dichotomous character of much of American film production. Among the four major producing nations, American films are the most censored in Norway, and yet the United States also produces the largest percentage of films approved for exhibition to children as well as adults in Norway. The table also illustrates the subjective element that obviously enters into censorship categorization. Norwegian pictures are hardly as inoffensive and childlike as the table might lead one to believe, with 78 per cent of them approved for exhibition to children. Knowing the financial value of such a rating, the censor often exercises considerable tolerance in judging his own country's productions. One film, for instance, *Nødlanding* (*Emergency Landing*), a mediocre spy melodrama based on wartime events in Norway, contained at least one exceedingly brutal scene which would have immediately earned it an adult-only label if it were a foreign production. In Norway, the film was approved for both children and adults, with the specification that advertisements should note that the picture was "not suitable for smaller children." What characteristics might define a "smaller" child were not indicated.

Two questions grow out of observation of the relatively large amount of censorship directed against American films—particularly since there is a strong belief in the United States that Hollywood's outpourings are so hemmed in by taboos and self-censorship codes that they can rarely be much more than sugar-coated nonentities. Is the Norwegian censor oversqueamish on the question of brutality? And, even if this is true, why do American films in contrast to the products of other major film-producing countries contain so much more material offensive to this squeamishness?

The answer to the first question appears to lie somewhere be-

tween a definite negative and a clear-cut positive statement. The State Censorship Office reflects a national characteristic when it reacts more strongly against "excessive" brutality in films than against "excessive" and "open" sexuality. Norway, despite its experiences during World War II, appears to be, at least emotionally, sympathetic to the long-standing Scandinavian ideal of pacifism. Norway itself has a low crime rate, considerably lower than the United States.[3] On the other hand, most persons acquainted with both cultures agree that Norwegians are considerably franker than Americans in their public treatment of sexual matters.

The head of the State Censorship Office has underlined the first of the two preceding interpretations—in addition to providing a neat insight into the extrapolation that often is made from American motion pictures to conclusions about the realities of life in the United States. In answer to a question about the State Censorship Office's rationale in regard to brutality in motion pictures, particularly American films, Mr. Nissen said:

> We realize that a large country such as the United States can have such things as we see in hard-boiled gangster films. But things are different in a small country like Norway. We simply have not been exposed to such things in our small country. Our communities are rather peaceful. People are not accustomed to go with weapons—for example, with pistols. They are not accustomed to shooting. They are not used to recklessness and roughness as a way of life.
>
> We won't have such things impressed upon our people. It's not healthy. We haven't got the problem and we won't have it introduced by means of films. That's the reason why we are so strict against brutality in motion pictures which have come to us.[4]

In an interview on his sixtieth-birthday celebration recently, Mr. Nissen added these remarks on the subject:

> When gangster films came in the years between the wars, we first reacted in this manner: We let the film bureaus understand that gang-

[3] "The crime rate in the United States is more than ten times higher than in Scandinavia." David Abrahamsen, *Who Are the Guilty? A Study of Education and Crime* (New York: Rinehart, 1952), p. 4.

[4] Interview with the writer, January 14, 1952.

ster films were not welcome here. Today the war has certainly brutalized many of us. In many respects the films are harder than before. Wild West films in those days were almost idyllic. Now they are stronger; technical improvements have made it easier to present hard scenes, and when someone is killed in technicolor, we can see the blood running. We are particularly anxious about the youth, anxious about gangster motifs. . . . We must take a mental hygiene viewpoint, and we rely here on psychological experience. There has been a tremendous development in this field, and we have a much better background today than before.[5]

Analysis of the reasons behind the high percentage of brutality scenes in American films leads back to the distinctive characteristics of the American motion-picture industry. Catering to the maximum financial exploitation of a world-wide market brings with it a host of international taboos. These combine with strong pressures within the country, from groups with special outlooks and interests, to block many of the avenues along which Hollywood films might move in search of dramatic impact. Appointed or self-constituted guardians hover alertly on the threshold when Hollywood treats themes about which they hold a particularly militant viewpoint—generally negative. These groups represent a potential economic threat, particularly effective in a business like the American motion-picture industry, which requires an exceedingly high investment in each individual film and, therefore, depends upon a high return in order to make up the investment and secure a profit. Since a large share of the film money is controlled by banking interests, financial gambles are discouraged. Economic boycotts can readily wipe out the total value of a motion picture, reducing it to little more than two miles of exposed film.

Given this condition, Hollywood probably exploits brutality as one of its few unblocked dramatic outlets, despite the specific injunction of the Motion Picture Association Production Code, which declares that "brutal killings are not to be presented in detail" and, in a generous concession to learning theory, notes

[5] *Aftenposten,* July 17, 1952, p. 2.

that "the important objective must be to avoid the hardening of the audience, especially those who are young and impressionable, to the thought and fact of crime. People can become accustomed even to murder, cruelty, brutality, and repellent crimes, if these are too frequently repeated."

Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites have pointed out that "it is the perennial function of drama and literature to present images of what violent impulses, usually restrained in life, might look like if more fully expressed."[6] Though, according to the findings of one researcher,[7] Hollywood products tend to play down the brutality and sadism in books from which they might be screened, they take advantage of their freedom to film scenes of physical violence which, as we have seen, often go beyond the tolerance of the Norwegian censor. Hollywood films possibly turn to brutality because so many other avenues of audience stimulation, allowed to film makers in countries with less internal censorship and more modest financial aims, are closed to them.

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[6] Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites, *Movies: A Psychological Study* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950), p. 175.

[7] Lester Asheim, "From Book to Film," in *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication,* ed. by Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950), p. 306.

The Cult of the Unintelligible

GERALD PRATLEY

GERALD PRATLEY is a film commentator for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and a frequent contributor to the *Quarterly*. The following is the text of an address which Mr. Pratley gave at a discussion of Cocteau and *Orphée,* held by the French Ciné Club of the University of Toronto.

ENDLESS AND FRUITLESS hours are spent arguing the merits of works such as *Orphée,* which, to me, do not have sufficient intrinsic value to make lengthy discussion a profitable pastime. At first I decided not to participate in this debate as it appeared to be a waste of time. On second thought, however, it seemed that a brief summary of my ideas about this type of film might help those who, like myself, wish to bring about a more rational consideration of such pictures in the appreciation of the film.

The cinema means different things to different people, and its vast audience is made up of groups—some large and some small—each finding satisfaction in a wide range of subjects reflecting various degrees of skill in presentation. Therefore I have no wish to offend anyone when I say that I obtain no enjoyment from Cocteau's films and feel that the cinema would be none the poorer without him; I realize that a minority group of people exist which, if we are to believe their word, do admire him and find genuine satisfaction in his work. I am aware also that these people may feel as disappointed in my lack of response to *Orphée* as I am in those who say they do not like *Miracle in Milan,* which film, incidentally, reveals by comparison the emptiness of Cocteau's work more than discussion will ever do.

I can say in a few words why I do not like *Orphée.* It does not make sense, it has no beauty, there is no truth in its murky depths, its characters are vapid, it is not particularly well-made, and the acting leaves much to be desired. Only Auric's sensitive score gives the film what few affecting moments it has. Full of vague and meaningless utterances, it is frequently pretentious and in

bad taste, as in the device of having motorcyclists (looking like clumsy imitations of G.I. Military Police) run people down in the name of Death.

This opinion is based on a standard of criticism arrived at over a period of many years spent in the appreciation of the motion picture, and I shall no doubt be called a Philistine because of it. Defending this opinion usually results in endless argument about what is bad taste, what is sense, what is beauty, what is truth, and so on, with those persons who delight in rejecting the accepted standards of judgment in order to embrace and justify the unintelligible. I have willingly subjected myself to the tedium of seeing *Orphée* three times in order to make sure that I am not being unjust or slow to comprehend important qualities which might not have been apparent on the first screening. But liberal-minded as I may try to be, this willingness to go more than halfway to understand what a creator is attempting to do must find a dividing line between content which is justified and acceptable and that which is not. Otherwise, under the guise of abstractionism, artists will (and some undoubtedly do) turn out very shoddy works which are condoned by their supporters. And these supporters, in their desire to be tolerant and understanding, prove their liberality by going to great lengths to establish such works as experimental and of the highest value.

It is not important that I did not like *Orphée*. What is important is the principle behind the works of Cocteau and his kind, and therein lies a danger which can be exposed only by truthful evaluation. The fair-minded critic frequently condemns the hacks who create bad art in a realistic vein, but he seeks to do justice to the obscurantists on the basis of the unusual nature of their work. However, the devotees of the unusual film elevate their absurdities out of all proportion to their value. They convince themselves that these peculiar artists are getting out of the rut and are pushing the frontiers of the cinema into a glorious future. However, none of the obscurantists have succeeded in creating any new method of expression and presentation which has be-

come incorporated into the standard technique of motion pictures and has been accepted by the public. To this opinion, Cocteau admirers are quick to retort that his and similar work are years ahead of their time. Nevertheless, in attempting to prove that these films are "experimental," they overlook such genuinely experimental contributions as those in *The Passionate Friends* and *Death of a Salesman*.

The English theater critic and author Ivor Brown has coined a most appropriate name for the obscurantists. He calls them "botchers" presumably because they find it difficult (if not impossible) to create a work of art which communicates clearly to their audiences; whereas, they find it comparatively easy to create products in which the meaning (if there is one) is clear to the creators.

Undoubtedly a secondary motive promotes this obscurantism. It is difficult these days to achieve recognition in the many forms of art because so many excellent artists, writers, directors, and composers are at work in painting, in literature, on the stage, on the screen, and in music. We all know that, if given the opportunity, many of the supporting players in most plays and films could play the leading role as well as the person already enacting it. But so fierce is competition that it requires a trick of Fate, a consuming ambition, or a setting aside of principles to become the star of the show. The same applies to participants in the other arts. One sure way of making a name for oneself, however, and without delay, is to create something which no one understands. Then, because few critics and pseudo intellectuals are honest enough to admit they do not understand the work, they begin arguing about it and trying to discover something significant in its vagueness. Almost overnight the creator becomes famous, or notorious—whichever way you look at it—simply because he has been supported by a small esoteric group throughout society everywhere. The members of this group like to think that, in associating themselves with the abstractionists, they are elevating

themselves above the mass of the people who are honest enough to reject such works as being without value and importance. To write adverse criticism results in further publicity, in which, of course, they revel.

There is also, I think, a tendency on the part of some individuals to support such works simply because of the learned superiority which comes with proclaiming their enthusiasm for these bewildering puzzle pieces. This, in turn, is prompted by a fear that in disavowing these distortionist fallacies they will reveal their lack of profundity, be looked down upon with scorn, and ultimately be rejected from intellectual circles. I believe that many of the obscurantists know full well what they are doing and laugh up their sleeves at the serious interpretations which fatuous students and admirers attempt to read into their lunatic symbolism.

The plea is frequently made that artists should be free to create what they wish and should not pander to the public or work in fixed forms of expression. This is true up to a certain point. What the artist should not overlook is that his duties are to let others know what he is thinking and feeling and to convince them that his thoughts and emotions are worthy of consideration. He cannot do this unless his meaning is clear. If the artist is unable, by whatever method he chooses, to illuminate and communicate his views, he is deficient both mentally and artistically.

In these days of world turmoil, when moral, political, and economic judgments are faltering, we sadly need the logic of art as a form of communication. Symbolism is valid only when it is relevant to facts which cannot be freely or better expressed by direct representation. In a world where lunacy is more prevalent than reason, Cocteau, Daren, Richter, and their imitators, together with their kindred in the other arts, are wasting our time with their frequently erotic and abstruse confusion. This is to say nothing of the false qualities and bewilderment that their abortions bring to the minds of young film enthusiasts who are faced with

reviews and statements which deny the common sense of opinions generally held, are contrary to reason, and are obviously inconsistent with the truth.

The obscurantists will always command a small following. Were it not so, most of them would not exist, particularly in the expensive medium of films. They are entitled to their place, as others are entitled either to accept or reject their efforts; and I express the hope that they will not disappoint their followers by withholding their supply of blood and demented poets. Conversely, I hope they will not be so overrated by film societies that these groups will cease to function in the interests of comprehensible cinema. I know many people whose interest in the obscurantists is mainly a desire to keep abreast of events; their responsibility is to keep a proper sense of values where cinema art is concerned; otherwise, the day will come when artists such as Reed and Lean, Wyler and De Sica, and even Chaplin will be looked upon as unimportant because they have accomplished the most difficult feat of creation: that of making their work universally understood.

Films from Overseas

GERALD WEALES

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AMONG THE RECENT foreign films are three more refugees from *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. Each of these—*Seven Deadly Sins, Rome 11 O'Clock,* and *Justice Is Done*—tells a series of stories which are loosely joined by a central situation or idea. *Seven Deadly Sins* is the most artificial of the three and, perhaps for that reason, is the best. The device that holds together the six episodes of the deadly sins (avarice and anger are treated together) is a carnival barker who tells the stories as he exhorts his customers to throw baseballs at dolls representing the sins. As played by Gerard Philipe, the barker is enthusiastic and, at first, amusing; but necessarily he becomes repetitious as the number of his appearances increases. The presentation of the eighth sin at the end of the picture, which is rather more cute than necessary, is probably ineffective largely because the barker, whose part is more extensive in it than in any of the others, has ceased to be of interest. Each of the episodes has its own cast and director; performers such as Isa Miranda, Viviane Romance, and Michèle Morgan appear in pieces directed by such men as Eduardo de Filippo, Roberto Rossellini, and Claude Autant-Lara. The episodes are, however, little more than anecdotes; and often, as in the one that Rossellini takes from a Colette story in which "Envy" is depicted in a girl's jealousy of her husband's cat, they seem a little strained. Carlo Rim's "Gluttony," in which Henri Vidol climbs out of the bed which he is sharing with Claudine Dupuis and her sleeping husband to get a bite of cheese, is little more than a risqué story with a surprise ending that makes it acceptable

to mixed company. "Pride," the Claude Autant-Lara offering, is the old story about the poor girl at a party who refuses to be searched with everyone else when a jewel is missing because she has hidden food in her purse; it is the acting of Michèle Morgan as the girl and Françoise Rosay as her mother that gives this scene its particular distinction. This film is part of a long tradition certainly; since the days of the medieval sermoneers who told tales to prove moral points, only the simplest stories have been used to illustrate the sins. Still the final effect of the picture is that a great amount of ingenuity and style has been wasted on a picture of little substance. The episodes are not sufficiently entertaining within themselves, and the lack of centrality of point of view or intent keeps them from having any significance outside their immediate impact.

In *Rome 11 O'Clock,* on the other hand, the individual stories are built around a central incident which attempts to make a comment on the social and economic conditions in present-day Rome. The picture is based vaguely on an actual accident, the collapse of a stairway which injured many girls who had lined up on it to be interviewed for a secretarial position. In most of the recent Italian films the social comments have been implicit in the surroundings and the plot—for instance, the importance of the theft of the bicycle in *The Bicycle Thief*—but in this picture Guiseppi de Santis prefers to be explicit. That hundreds of girls turn up to wait for the one available job seems comment enough. However, the director has Lucinna step out of turn and start the struggle on the stair which leads to its collapse. Then, Lucinna's husband makes a speech in which he denounces the conditions that have made his wife a scapegoat for a more general guilt. The inspector, the landlord, and the others to whom the speech is made, all of whom share the guilt of the times, are properly chagrined and allow Lucinna to go free. Such sentimentality is an unnecessary cheapening of a position that has already been underlined too often in the film. Sentimentality, in

fact, is the curse of the whole picture, as it has been so often of recent Italian importations. The stories of several of the girls on the stairway run concurrently; most of them contain generous proportions of hokum. The rich girl decides to stay with her poor artist husband; the pregnant unmarried girl is received back into the bosom of her family; the young girl who wants to be a singer gets to sing during the radio interview of the victims; and, although the singer is not immediately skyrocketed to fame, she is given a romance to take her mind off her musical future. The most sticky bit of all is the incident of the shoes; outside the operating room where Cornelia is dying, her sister fingers her scuffed shoes; earlier Cornelia had worn her sister's shoes, and the sister had forced her to change as she stood in the line of job-hunters. Although moments are touching, no character is developed fully enough to give depth to the film. Nor are the cinematic possibilities in the collapse of the stairway realized; the falling timber does no more than heighten the confusion that grows out of the great number of vaguely defined characters that the spectator must keep separate in his mind.

André Cayatte's *Justice Is Done* is in many ways similar to *Rome 11 O'Clock*. It has a central incident, the trial of Elsa Lundenstein for the mercy killing of her employer and ex-lover. In showing the degree to which the lives of the jurors affect their decisions, the picture attempts to make telling comments on the nature of justice in France and, by implication, in all countries. As the trial progresses, its effects on the jurors are shown. Felix the waiter, made important by his position as a juror, wins the consent of his sweetheart's parents; the middle-aged lady thinks that she has found romance only to discover that Elsa Lundenstein's present lover has been courting her to win sympathy for Elsa; the farmer faces the difficulty of keeping his farm going for his shiftless hired hand diverts his wife's attention while he sits in court. Although some of the stories are interesting and some of the performers, such as Marcel Peres as the farmer, are excel-

lent, the film leaves the general feeling that it is too contrived. Finally it becomes most interesting as an explanation of the French legal system and that, certainly, could not have been Cayatte's intention. In the end Elsa is found guilty by a margin of one vote; and there is too easy irony in the last-minute news of the suicide of a playboy-juror's rejected mistress, an incident that would have caused him to vote on the other side had he known earlier.

Much more entertaining is *Fanfan la Tulipe,* a cloak-and-sword comedy in which Gerard Philipe plays a country bumpkin, more naïve than D'Artagnan, but just as talented with a girl or a sword. At first Fanfan is convinced that he is destined to marry the princess of France, whom he saves by casually killing five or six highwaymen; but before the end of the picture he settles, wisely, for Adeline, the sergeant's daughter (Gina Lollobrigida). He must first save her from the agents of Louis XV, an operation during which he accidentally wins a war that is going on. The picture's charm lies in Philipe's portrayal of Fanfan, who is as strong and brave and beautiful as ever an adolescent could want to be, and in the make-believe atmosphere that colors it from the moment that the irate farmer hunts Fanfan and his daughter out of the haystack to Fanfan's presentation and reward before the King. It has, too, the fairy story's unconcern for death; when the villainous but amusing Sergeant Swagger falls with such finality down a cistern, Fanfan shrugs and so does his audience. There are faults, of course, but the picture takes itself so lightly that the failings can be more easily ignored than they could in a film that was more pretentious. For instance, the picture is accompanied by an unnecessary narration which makes obvious comments on the slapstick war scenes; they are like the too specific titles to Chaplin's *One O'Clock* which detract from the comic effect of the action itself. Sometimes, too, the tongues of director Christian Jacques and script writer Henri Jeanson get so far in their cheeks that the film lapses into the kind of clumsy farce that

rendered the Burt Lancaster burlesques, such as *The Crimson Pirate,* so much inferior to the idea behind them. But if these criticisms can be leveled against the film, and if the horseback derring-do is not quite up to our more flamboyant westerns, and if Gerard Philipe is not so clever with his sword and his footwork as Douglas Fairbanks was, the film is still wonderfully funny and for that a great many things can be forgiven.

A Bibliography for the Quarter

Book Editor, FRANKLIN FEARING

BOOKS

IF, IN ADDITION TO BEING a business and a technology, we insist that film making is also an *art,* we are put to it to state at precisely what points in the process the acts of artistic creation occur. The collective character of movie making is in part responsible for this difficulty. There are many creative skills and acts—writing, directing, set designing, composing, acting—each of which contributes its important bit to the whole; but we are bound to inquire when and how the whole becomes different from the sum of these parts. There are doubtless many points in the film-making process where crucial and essentially aesthetic decisions are made, but the one which perhaps more than any other results in whatever artistic unity the product possesses is the point at which the film is cut or edited. It is here that a series of creative decisions are made which will determine, if ever, whether the photographed images coalesce into meaningful wholes. In juxtaposing sequence A and sequence B there emerges not A plus B, but a unity which is neither A nor B.

This is psychologically and aesthetically a fascinating operation without a precise parallel in any other art form, and too little attention has been paid to it in the works on film theory. The Russian theorists, especially Pudovkin and Eisenstein, have discussed certain aspects of it; but it has remained for a committee of the British Film Academy to prepare a definitive work on the subject. *The Technique of Film Editing* (Visual Arts Books, Farrar, Straus and Young, New York, 1953, $7.50) is written and compiled by Karel Reisz under the guidance of a committee of the Academy consisting of Thorold Dickinson (chairman), Reginald Beck, Roy Boulting, Sidney Cole, Rombert Hamer, Jack Harris, David Lean, Ernest Lindgren, Harry Miller, and Basil

Wright. The book falls into three sections: the first is largely concerned with the history of the problem and contains reviews of the works of the pioneers in the practice of the editing art—Griffith, Pudovkin, Porter, Eisenstein, and the rest. The second, called the Practice of Editing, is concerned with specific editing problems in dialogue, action, comedy, and montage sequences, and with editing in documentary, educational, and newsreel films. These editing problems are richly illustrated with examples from many films. The third section is concerned with the principles of editing and contains discussions of timing, pace, rhythm, selection of shots, and sound editing. There is an appendix devoted to cutting-room procedure, a bibliography, and a glossary of terms.

It is impossible here to review in detail this informed and scholarly book. While written at the professional level, any person interested in film making, particularly in how it is that the moving visual and sound images *communicate,* will find it exciting reading.

* * *

Films in Psychiatry, Psychology and Mental Health (Health Education Council, No. 10 Downing Street, New York 14, 1953, $6.00) by Adolph Nichtenhauser, Marie L. Coleman, and David S. Ruhe is a guide for those who want to use films in mental education. To quote from the foreword:

> The core of this book is a series of fifty-one penetrating, critical reviews of films in psychiatry, psychology, and mental health, supplemented by brief descriptions of fifty additional significant and available films in this area released up to January, 1953. The cumulative meaning of these reviews is analyzed in four chapters of evaluative discussion immediately preceding them. Exact and up-to-date information on the source or sources from which the films can be obtained is also given with each review.

The analysis of each film includes a detailed description of its content, a critical appraisal including an evaluation of its effectiveness, and a statement of the types of audience for which it

would be most useful. The films reviewed range from those intended for professional and special-interest groups to those whose appeal is primarily to lay audiences. Some representative titles are *Angry Boy, The Quiet One, Activity Group Therapy, Embryology of Human Behavior, Problem Children, Symptoms of Schizophrenia, Unconscious Motivation,* and *Narcosynthesis.* There are introductory chapters on how to use the book; how content and presentation influence each other in psychiatric, psychological, and mental health films; the use of motion pictures in the teaching of psychiatry; and a review of a half century of motion pictures in neurology, psychiatry, psychology, and mental-health education. Clearly this is the indispensable book for those interested in any aspect of mental-health education. The only addition that occurs to this reviewer would be a critical appraisal of the Hollywood attempts to show psychological and psychiatric aberrations in fiction films. Happily this cycle seems to be, at least temporarily, concluded; but an informed analysis of this type of film, including a winnowing of the good from the bad—not all of them were bad, certainly—would be useful and interesting.

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In *Conversation and Communication* (International University Press, Inc., New York, 1952, $4.00) Joost A. M. Meerloo discusses the need and necessity of improving human relations through communication—"conversation." The author's intent is sound: to bring to bear the resources of psychiatry, psychology, semantics, anthropology, and related disciplines in understanding the role of communication in human affairs. The subtitle is "A Psychological Inquiry into Language and Human Relations," but it falls far short of this in achievement. In the foreword Dr. Meerloo informs us that originally he planned to supplement his essays "with many scientific footnotes, quotations and references" but that his research material was destroyed by an allied bomb which fell on Holland. It is this reviewer's opinion that the author would have been well-advised to have looked again at con-

temporary research data and theory in linguistics, semantics, and communication. Such a review might have made him hesitate to assert that man possesses an "instinctive urge to communicate," that the Von Fritsch data on bees is evidence for communication among these insects, that so-called extra-sensory perception is communication, and that dogs, cats, and other animals have a "language." Dr. Meerloo's essays suffer—as do many other well-intentioned discussions of communication—from the tendency to equate "communication" with *all* forms of human and sub-human interaction. The result is that the word loses any precise meaning. Dr. Meerloo's bibliography contains references to works which do make these critical distinctions, notably Charles Morris' *Signs, Language and Behavior* and George Mead's *Mind, Self and Society*. However, it does *not* contain references to Cantril's *Invasion from Mars,* Lazarsfeld's studies in communication, or Merton's *Mass Persuasion*—all of which are pertinent to his subject and might have clarified his discussion.

* * *

The Theory of Stereoscopic Transmission and Its Application to the Motion Picture by Raymond and Nigel Spottiswoode (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1953, $6.00) deals exhaustively and authoritatively with 3-D motion pictures. Most of us take it for granted that objects "are" near at hand or far away, but how the human mind apprehends this fact from the relatively limited data furnished by the sense organs is a problem that has concerned philosophers, psychologists, physicists, and engineers from Bishop Berkeley to the present. Bats apparently can do it without the aid of eyes through a radar-like process. Man does it visually with the aid of two eyes (which complicates the business a lot) and an intricate set of optical, neural, and psychical processes. The current interest in depth perception is not concerned with how we see the solid three-dimensional world of spatial reality, but how we may translate the two-dimensional world of the motion picture into a simulacrum of the three-

dimensional world. For a number of years technologists and inventors have tried various devices to make this possible, but the technical and especially practical difficulties have never been satisfactorily surmounted unless, indeed, they have been surmounted by 3-D. If this has now been done, movies will, according to enthusiastic entrepreneurs, become really "real." Whether their effectiveness as a communication medium is increased remains an open question.

The present book is an exhaustive examination of stereoscopic transmission as a solution of this problem. It is written primarily for the specialist and deals only with the technical and theoretical aspects of the subject. There is no discussion of aesthetic or communication problems, or with the even more difficult problem of acceptance by the mass audience of the necessity of wearing glasses while looking at films. A final chapter setting forth "Fields for Future Research" presents a sobering picture of the unsolved problems still ahead of 3-D. These include, for example, "a rigorous physiological study of stereoscopic eyestrain which may be produced equally with all types of viewing systems except those (not yet in existence) which are fully stereo-stereoscopic. . . . Are stereoscopic distortions caused by change of seating position less or more objectionable than the corresponding distortions of flat films? . . . What is the stereoscopic resolving power of different spectators, and what is the limit this sets to the resolving power required of the transmission system? . . . What, if any, is the effect of 3-dimensional fades, dissolves, and wipes in breaking the continuity of stereoscopic reality?"

The book is beautifully printed and amply illustrated, but it suffers from the lack of an index which would be especially useful for a technical work of this type, and it seems a pity that proof reading did not eliminate the necessity of inserting a list of twenty-six separate and presumably serious errata.

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New Screen Techniques (Quigley Publishing Company, Inc., Rockefeller Center, 1270 Sixth Ave., New York, 1953, $4.50) is

also about 3-D and the other "new" techniques which, according to the editor, Martin Quigley, Jr., usher in a new age for motion pictures. But it is quite a different sort of book. It is, in fact, something of a hodgepodge. Sandwiched among blurbish pieces by assorted presidents, vice-presidents-in-charge-of, chairmen of boards, and public-relations specialists are a few sound and well-written articles on 3-D, Cinerama, Cinemascope, and stereophonic sound. These latter are written by research engineers and other technical specialists in the fields of stereoscopic and wide-screen pictures. The section on stereoscopic films is the most informative and, for the layman, most interesting—perhaps because there is much more to say about this technique. These articles, while not as comprehensive as the Spottiswoode book, will be more readable for the nonspecialist.

* * *

The *Handbook of TV and Film Technique* (Pellegrini & Cudahy, New York, 1953, $3.00) by Charles W. Curran appears to achieve admirably the purpose set forth in the introduction, namely, "to outline briefly, in simple, everyday, nontechnical language any layman can understand, the main and basic facts about this business of producing motion pictures." It is intended primarily for "executives," presumably those persons who expect to use films or TV as advertising media. A mass of technical information has been translated into very simple language. There are sections on 16-mm. vs. 35-mm. films, color *vs.* black-and-white, the shooting script, the cameraman and sound man, cutting, fades, dissolves, wipes, animation, titling, casting for TV films, etc. Roughly one fourth of the 119 pages is given over to a discussion of production costs, including the pay scales for writers, actors, and studio technicians. There is the usual glossary of technical terms.

* * *

The Crowded Air (Channel Press, 1440 Broadway, Suite 1360, New York 18, 1953, $2.75) by Roger Manvell is a thoughtful and informed discussion by the well-known Director of the British

Film Academy of the past, present, and future of TV in Britain and the U.S.A. Basically, Dr. Manvell is concerned with the awe-inspiring changes in human affairs which result from the development of communication technologies that make it possible for the voice and image of man to be projected to any audience of indefinite size. We know but little about the potentialities of this power. Dr. Manvell believes that its development and spread will be enormously fast—much faster than, for example, the development and spread of the communications technologies concerned with the written and spoken word. It will not take six centuries as did printing, but is likely to occur in a single generation. Even now, he believes, few people can really *read*. In view of this and in view of the catastrophic possibilities (Dr. Manvell is much impressed with the picture painted by Orwell in *1984*) we cannot afford to indulge ourselves in attitudes of condescending indifference or in minor perturbations about its bad effects. He reviews the situation in Britain and the United States with respect to public ownership *vs.* private sponsorship and finds that each system reflects, and is reasonably suited to the country in which it was developed. He has some shrewd things to say about the basic (note *basic*) differences between TV and the theater, TV and the motion picture, and the peculiar requirements of TV as a medium of communication. All in all, this little essay (there are only 97 pages) contains more insight and wisdom regarding these important problems than anything this reviewer has read for a long time.

* * *

Although he had made numerous short films earlier, King Vidor's first feature-length picture (*The Turn in the Road*) was released in 1918, and his most recent (*Ruby Gentry*) was released in 1952. Between these two dates he has directed some forty-odd feature-length pictures, and much Hollywood history has been written. In *A Tree is a Tree* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1953, $3.95) he tells the story of this career. Included in the list of his pictures are such notable films as *The Crowd,*

The Big Parade, Hallelujah, Our Daily Bread, H. M. Pulham Esq., Stella Dallas, and *Street Scene.* The title is taken from the remark attributed to Abe Stern, an early Hollywood producer, who said, "A rock is a rock, and a tree is a tree. Shoot it in Griffith Park!"

Mr. Vidor's reminiscences are unassumingly told and bear the stamp of candor. Although his experience in Hollywood spans the period of the great political and industrial crises in the industry, these either passed him by, or he decided they did not belong in this chronicle. But the anecdotes of his experiences with such personalities as Chaplin, Lillian Gish, Garbo, W. R. Hearst, Samuel Goldwyn, and others are amusing and revealing. An appendix contains a list of the Vidor films with complete screen credits.

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No discussion of current literature in mass communications would be complete without some reference to the Mentor series (New American Library of World Literature, 501 Madison Ave., New York 22) which continue to appear in the thirty-five and fifty-cent editions. Among the current titles are Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class,* Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems* (enlarged and brought up to date by Oscar Williams), Albert Schweitzer's *Out of My Life and Thought, The Glorious Koran* (an explanatory translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall), René Sédillot's *The History of the World in Two Hundred and Forty Pages* (translated from the French by Gerard Hopkins), George Gamow's *One Two Three—Infinity* (science for the layman), Edith Hamilton's *Mythology,* Saul K. Padover's *The Living Constitution* (text and story with digest of important Supreme Court decisions affecting it), and Margaret Mead's *Growing Up in New Guinea.*

RESEARCH, JOURNALS, ETC.

The Film Division of the American Jewish Committee, 386 Fourth Ave., New York 16, has issued a new edition of *Selected List of Human Relations Films.* Films are selected for inclusion in the catalogue because their content will be useful in promoting wholesome intergroup relations and strengthen American democracy against all forms of totalitarianism. One hundred and sixty-odd films are listed. Each is briefly characterized, and essential information is given regarding its length, where it may be obtained, and the type of audience for whom it will be most effective.