HOLLYWOOD QUARTERLY

Volume III • WINTER, 1947-1948 • *Number* 2

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY AND LOS ANGELES

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BOOK REVIEWS (*Continued*)

Experimental Cinema in America

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LEWIS JACOBS has contributed articles on the motion picture to two encyclopedias and to numerous magazines. His book *The Rise of the American Film* is now published in three languages. In Hollywood, aside from his own screen writing, he has taught screenplay technique to new contract writers at Columbia Studios and is now completing a book on the structure and art of the motion picture for Harcourt, Brace.

This article is the first half of an essay which is to appear in a forthcoming book, *The Experimental Film,* a collection of essays on the avant-garde cinema of America, Britain, France, Russia, and other countries, edited by Roger Manvell and published in England by the Grey Walls Press. Part Two: 1941–1947, will appear in the Spring, 1948, issue of the *Hollywood Quarterly.*

(PART ONE: 1921–1941)

EXPERIMENTAL cinema in America has had little in common with the main stream of the motion picture industry.

Living a kind of private life of its own, its concern has been solely with motion pictures as a medium of artistic expression. This emphasis upon means rather than content not only endows experimental films with a value of their own but distinguishes them from all other commercial, documentary, educational, and amateur productions. Although its influence upon the current of film expression has been deeper than is generally realized, the movement has always been small, its members scattered, its productions sporadic and, for the most part, viewed by few.

In Europe the term for experimental efforts, "the avant-garde," has an intellectually creative connotation. But in America experimenters saw their work referred to as "amateur," an expression used not in a laudatory, but in a derogatory sense. Lack of regard became an active force, inhibiting and retarding productivity. In the effort to overcome outside disdain, experimental film makers in the United States tended to become cliquey and in-bred, often ignorant of the work of others with similar aims. There was little interplay and exchange of ideas and sharing of discoveries. But with postwar developments in this field the old disparaging attitude has been supplanted by a new regard and the experimental film maker has begun to be looked upon with respect. Today the word "amateur" is no longer used; it has been dropped in favor of the word "experimenter."

The American experimental movement was born in a period of artistic ferment in the motion picture world. During the decade 1921–1931, sometimes called the "golden period of silent films," movies were attaining new heights in expression. Innovations in technique, content, and structural forms were being introduced in films from Germany, France, and Russia: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Waxworks, The Golem, Variety, The Last Laugh, Le Ballet mécanique, Entr'acte, The Fall of the House of Usher, Emak Bakia, The Italian Straw Hat, Thérèse Raquin, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Potemkin, The End of St. Petersburg, Ten Days That Shook the World, The Man with the Camera, Arsenal, Fragment of an Empire, Soil.*

The "foreign invasion," as it came to be called, enlarged the aesthetic horizons of American movie makers, critics, and writers, and fostered native ambitions. Intellectuals hitherto indiffer-

ent or hostile now began to look upon the cinema as a new art form. Books, essays, articles, and even special film magazines appeared which extolled the medium's potentialities and predicted a brilliant future. Film guilds, film societies, film forums, and special art theaters devoted to showing "the unusual, the experimental, the artistic film" sprang up, so that by the end of the decade the film as a new art form was not only widely recognized but inspired wide enthusiasm for production. Young artists, photographers, poets, novelists, dancers, architects, eager to explore the rich terrain of movie expression, learned how to handle a camera and with the most meager resources attempted to produce pictures of their own. The expense proved so great that most of the efforts were abortive; in others, the technique was not equal to the imagination; and in still others, the ideas were not fully formed, but fragmentary and improvisational, depending upon the moment's inspiration. Consequently, while there was a great deal of activity and talk, hardly any experimental films were completed. It was not until the main current of foreign pictures had waned—around 1928—that experimental cinema in America really got under way.

Two films were finished in the early 'twenties, however, which stand out as landmarks in American experiment: *Mannahatta* (1921) and *Twenty-four Dollar Island* (1925). Both showed an independence of approach and probed an aspect of film expression that had not been explored by the film makers from abroad.

Mannahatta was a collaborative effort of Charles Sheeler, the modern painter, and Paul Strand, photographer and disciple of Alfred Steiglitz. Their film, one reel in length, attempted to express New York through its essential characteristics—power and beauty, movement and excitement. The title was taken from a poem by Walt Whitman, and excerpts from the poem were used as subtitles.

In technique the film was simple and direct, avoiding all the so-called "tricks" of photography and setting. In a sense it was the forerunner of the documentary school which rose in the United States in the middle 1930's. *Mannahatta* revealed a discerning eye and a disciplined camera. Selected angle shots achieved quasi-abstract compositions: a Staten Island ferryboat makes its way into the South Ferry pier; crowds of commuters are suddenly released into the streets of lower Manhattan; an ocean liner is aided by tugboats at the docks; pencil-like office buildings stretch upward into limitless space; minute restless crowds of people throng deep, narrow, skyscraper canyons; silvery smoke and steam rise plumelike against filtered skies; massive shadows and sharp sunlight form geometric patterns. The picture's emphasis upon visual pattern within the real world was an innovation for the times and resulted in a striking new impression of New York.

Mannahatta was presented as a "short" on the program of several large theaters in New York City, but by and large it went unseen. In Paris, where it appeared as evidence of American modernism on a Dadaist program which included music by Erik Satie and poems by Guillaume Appollinaire, it received something of an ovation. In the late 1920's the film was shown around New York at private gatherings and in some

of the first art theaters. Its influence, however, was felt more in still photography, then making an upsurge as an art form, than in the field of experimental films.

Twenty-four Dollar Island, employing the same approach as *Mannahatta* and having much in common with it, was Robert Flaherty's picture of New York City and its harbor. The director had already established a style of his own and a reputation with such pictures as *Nanook of the North* and *Moana.* In those films his major interest lay in documenting the lives and manners of primitive people. In *Twenty-four Dollar Island,* people were irrelevant. Flaherty conceived the film as "a camera poem, a sort of architectural lyric where people will be used only incidentally as part of the background."

Flaherty's camera, like that of Strand and Sheeler, sought the metropolitan spirit in silhouettes of buildings against the sky, deep narrow skyscraper canyons, sweeping spans of bridges, the flurry of pressing crowds, the reeling of subway lights. Flaherty also emphasized the semiabstract pictorial values of the city: foreshortened viewpoints, patterns of mass and line, the contrast of sunlight and shadow. The result, as the director himself said, was "not a film of human beings, but of skyscrapers which they had erected, completely dwarfing humanity itself."

What particularly appealed to Flaherty was the opportunity to use telephoto lenses. Fascinated by the longer-focus lens, he made shots from the top of nearly every skyscraper in Manhattan. "I shot New York buildings from the East River bridges, from the ferries and from the Jersey shore looking up to the peaks of Manhattan. The effects obtained with my long-focus lenses amazed me. I remember shooting from the roof of the Telephone Building across the Jersey shore with an eight-inch lens and, even at that distance, obtaining a stereoscopic effect that seemed magical. It was like drawing a veil from the beyond, revealing life scarcely visible to the naked eye."

Despite the uniqueness of the film and Flaherty's reputation, *Twenty-four Dollar Island* had a very restricted release. Its treatment by New York's largest theater, the Roxy, foreshadowed somewhat the later vandalism to be practiced by others upon Eisenstein's *Romance sentimentale* and *Que viva México.* After cutting down *Twenty-four Dollar Island* from two reels to one, the Roxy directors used the picture as a background projection for one of their lavishly staged dance routines called *The Sidewalks of New York.*

Apart from these two early efforts, the main current of American experimental films began to appear in 1928. The first ones showed the influence of the expressionistic style of the German film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.* Expressionism not only appealed to the ideological temper of the time, but suited the technical resources of the motion picture novitiates as well. Lack of money and experience had to be offset by ingenuity and fearlessness. "Effects" became a chief goal. The camera and its devices, the setting, and any object at hand that could be manipulated for an effect were exploited toward achieving a striking expression. Native experimenters emphasized technique above everything else. Content was secondary, or so neglected as to become

the merest statement. One of the first serious motion picture critics, Gilbert Seldes, writing in the *New Republic,* March 6, 1929, pointed out that the experimental film makers "are opposed to naturalism; they have no stars; they are over-influenced by *Caligari;* they want to give their complete picture without the aid of any medium except the camera and projector."

The first experimental film in this country to show the influence of the expressionistic technique was the one-reel *The Life and Death of 9413—A Hollywood Extra.* Made in the early part of 1928, this film cost less than a hundred dollars and aroused so much interest and discussion that Film Booking Office, a major distribution agency, contracted to distribute it through their exchanges, booking it into seven hundred theaters here and abroad.

A Hollywood Extra (the shortened title) was written and directed by Robert Florey, a former European film journalist and assistant director, and designed and photographed by Slavko Vorkapich, a painter with an intense desire to make poetic films. It was produced at night in Vorkapich's kitchen out of odds and ends—paper cubes, cigar boxes, tin cans, moving and reflected lights (from a single 400-watt bulb), an erector set, cardboard figures —and a great deal of ingenuity. Its style, broad and impressionistic, disclosed a remarkable selectivity and resourcefulness in the use of props, painting, camera, and editing.

In content, *A Hollywood Extra* was a simple satirical fantasy highlighting the dreams of glory of a Mr. Jones, a would-be star. A letter of recommendation gets Mr. Jones to a Hollywood casting director. There Mr. Jones is changed from an individual into a number, 9413, which is placed in bold ciphers upon his forehead. Thereafter he begins to talk the gibberish of Hollywood, consisting of slight variations of "bah-bah-bah-bah . . ."

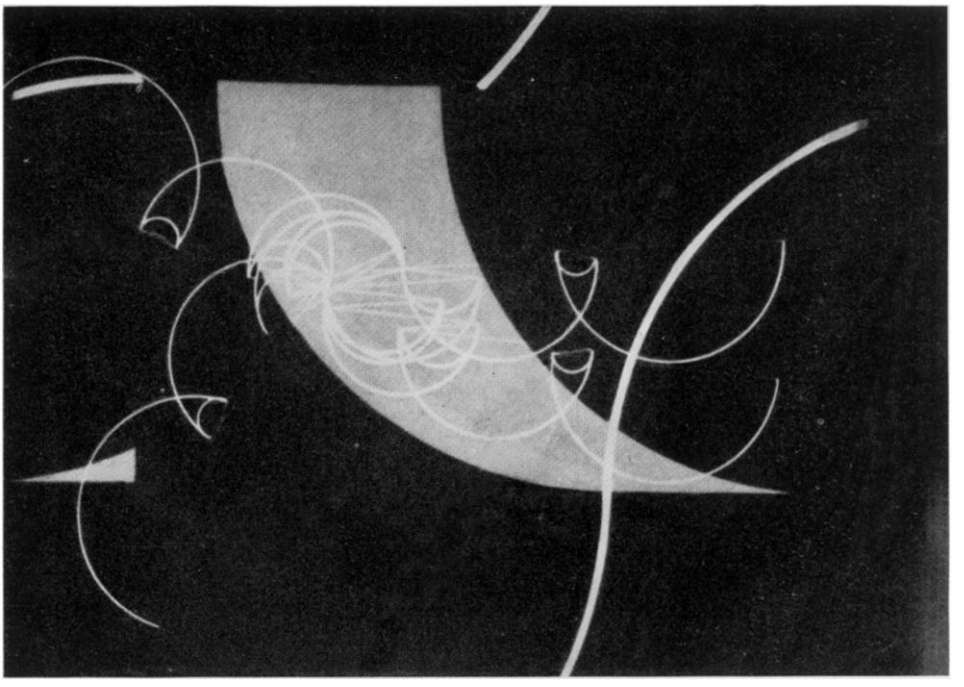
Meanwhile, handsome Number 15, formerly Mr. Blank, is being screen-tested for a feature part. He pronounces "bah-bah-bah" facing front, profile left, profile right. The executives approve with enthusiastic "bah-bahs."

Subsequently, the preview of Number 15's picture is a great success. A star is painted on his forehead and his "bah-bahs" become assertive and haughty.

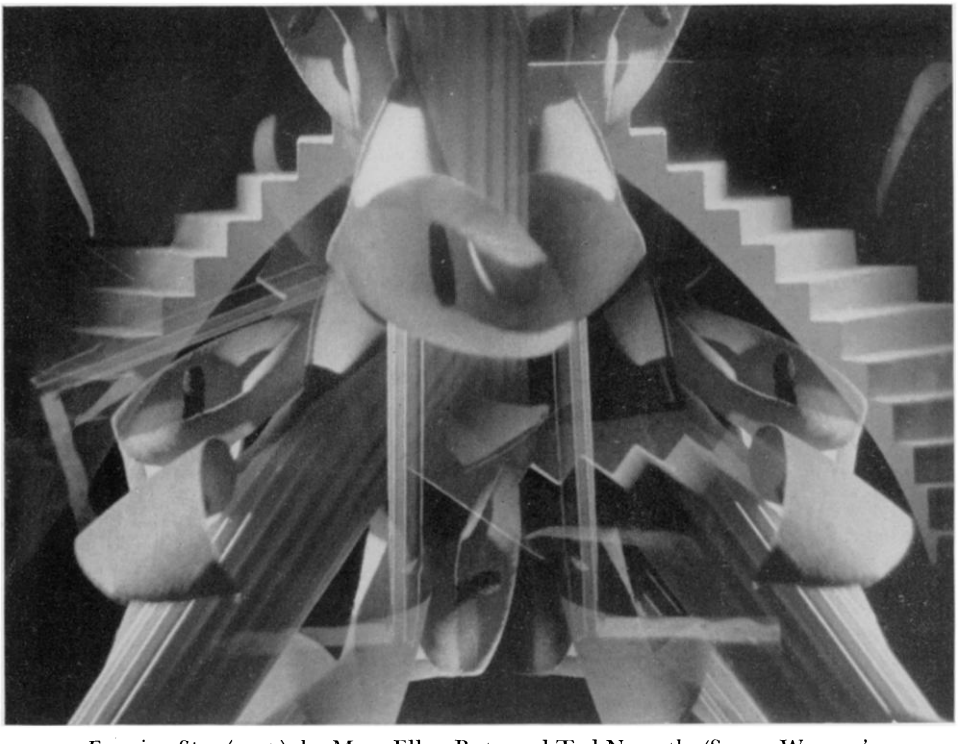
But Number 9413 is less fortunate. In his strenuous attempt to climb the stairway to success the only recognition he receives is "nbah-nbah-nbah"—no casting today. From visions of heavy bankrolls, night clubs, glamour, and fanfare his dreams shrink to: "Pork and Beans—15 cents."

Clutching the telephone out of which issue the repeated "nbahs" of the casting director, Number 9413 sinks to the floor and dies of starvation. But the picture ends on a happy note ("as all Hollywood pictures must end"). Number 9413 ascends to heaven. There an angel wipes the number off his forehead and he becomes human again.

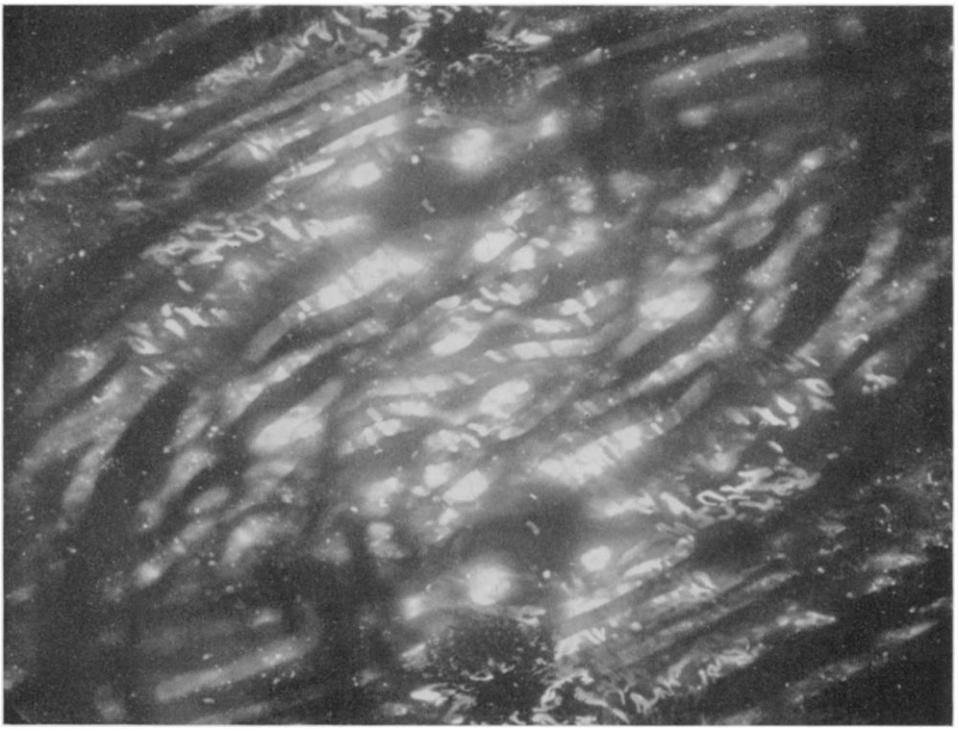
Something of the film's quality can be seen in the description by Herman Weinberg (*Movie Makers,* January, 1929): "The hysteria and excitement centering around an opening-night performance . . . was quickly shown by photographing a skyscraper (cardboard miniatures) with an extremely mobile camera, swinging it up and down, and from side to side, past a battery of hissing arclights, over the thea-



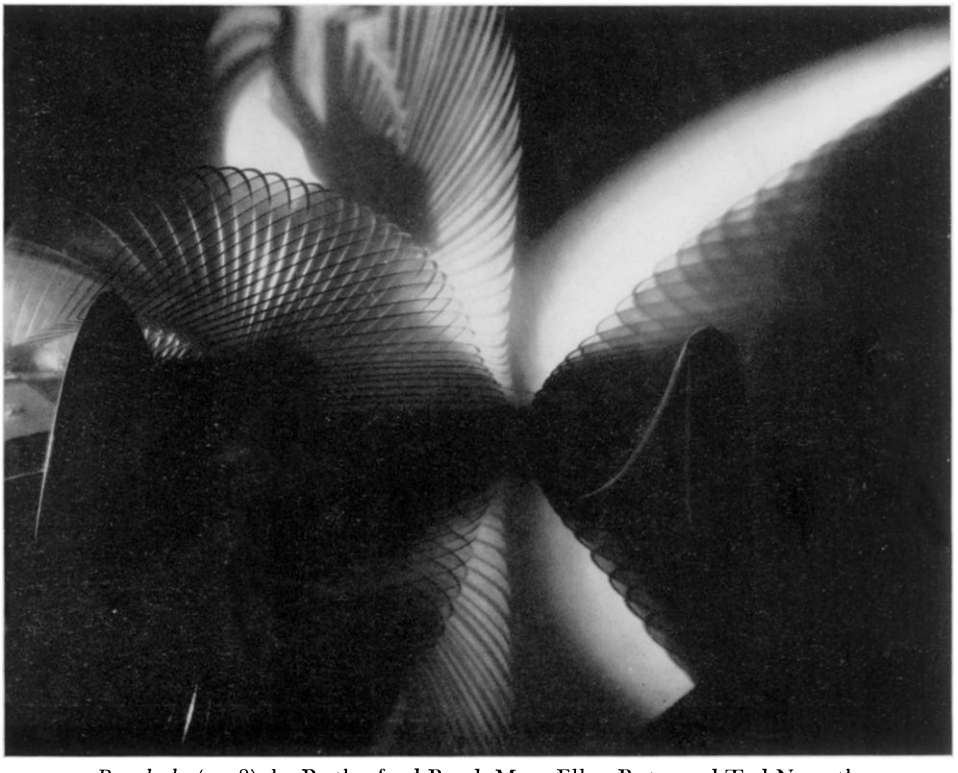
Synchronization (1934), by Joseph Shillinger and Lewis Jacobs.
(Drawings by Mary Ellen Bute.)



Evening Star (1937), by Mary Ellen Bute and Ted Nemeth. (Score: Wagner's *Evening Star,* sung by Reinald Werrenrath.)

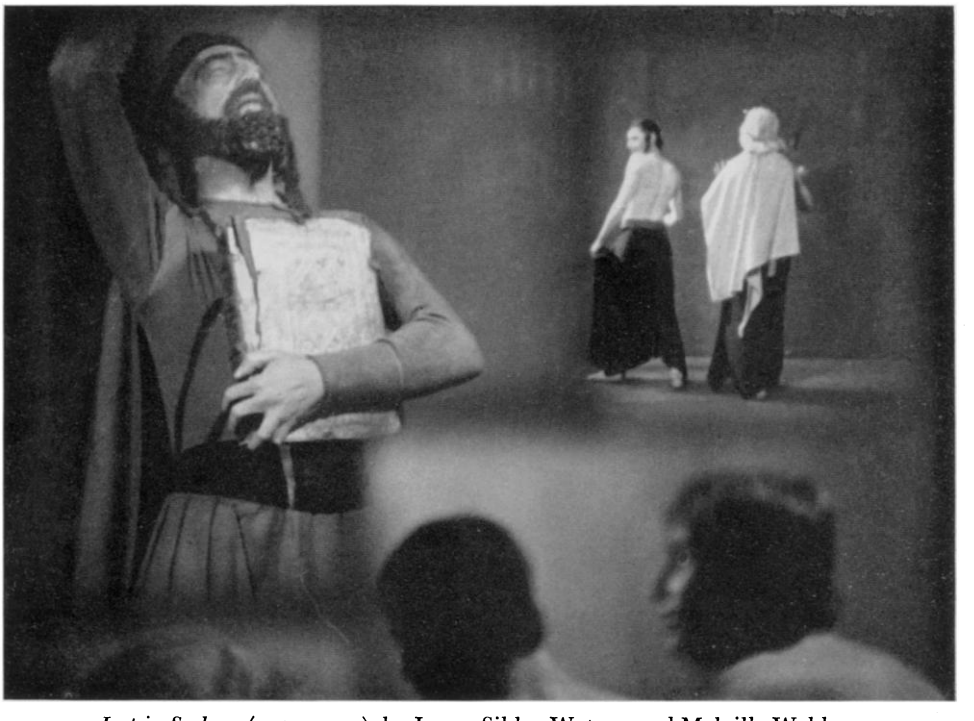


H_2O (1929), by Ralph Steiner.

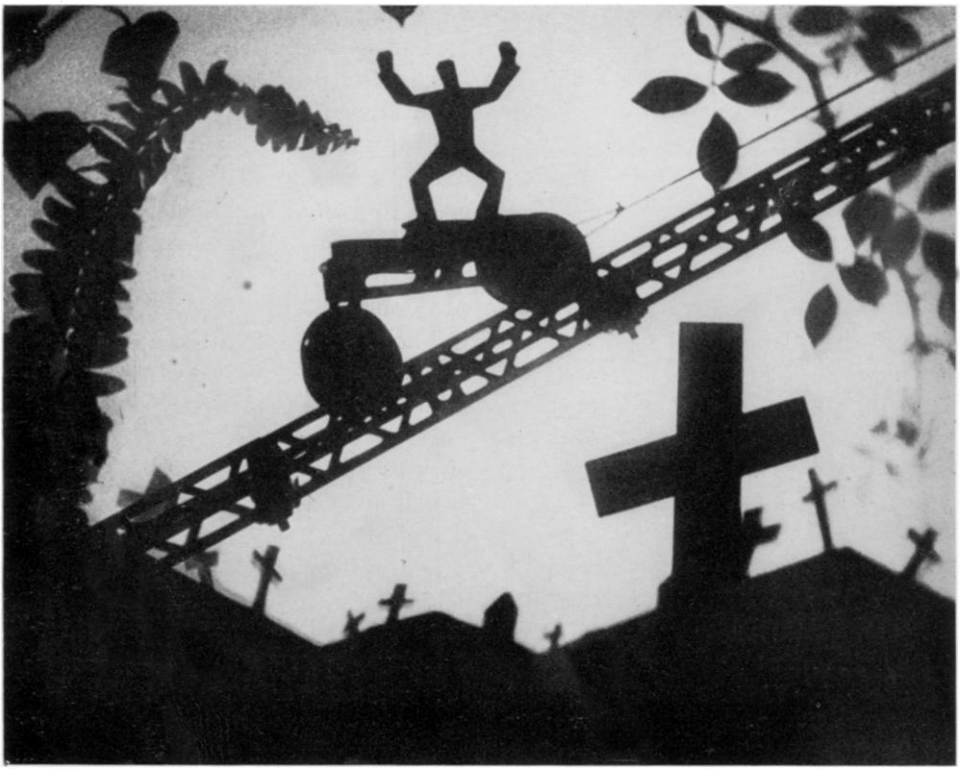


Parabola (1938), by Rutherford Boyd, Mary Ellen Bute, and Ted Nemeth.

The Lost Moment (1928), by Paul Fejos, with Leon Shamroy and Otto Matieson.



Lot in Sodom (1933–1934), by James Sibley Watson and Melville Webber.



A Hollywood Extra (1928), by Robert Florey and Slavko Vorkapich.

Dawn to Dawn (1934), by Joseph Berne. Screenplay: Seymour Stern.

ter façade and down to the arriving motor vehicles. To portray the mental anguish of the extra, Florey and Vorkapich cut grotesque strips of paper into the shape of gnarled, malignant-looking trees, silhouetted them against a background made up of moving shadows, and set them in motion with an electric fan."

Following *A Hollywood Extra,* Robert Florey made two other experimental fantasies: *The Loves of Zero* and *Johann the Coffin Maker.* Both films, also produced at a minimum cost, employed stylized backgrounds, costumes, and acting derived from *Caligari.*

The Loves of Zero was the better of the two, with a number of shots quite fanciful and inventive. Noteworthy were the split-screen close-ups of Zero, showing his face split into two different-sized parts, and the multiple-exposure views of Machine Street, the upper portion of the screen full of revolving machinery dominating the lower portion, which showed the tiny figure of Zero walking home.

Despite their shortcomings and their flagrant mirroring of German expressionism, these first experimental attempts were significant. Their low cost, their high inventive potential, their independence of studio crafts and staff, vividly brought home the fact that the medium was within anyone's reach. One did not have to spend a fortune or be a European or Hollywood "genius" to explore the artistic possibilities of movie making.

Appearing about the same time, but more ambitious in scope, was the six-reel experimental film *The Last Moment.* Produced in "sympathetic collaboration" by Paul Fejos, director, Leon Shamroy, cameraman, and Otto Matiesen, the leading actor, this picture (also not studio-made) was saturated with artifice and effects gleaned from a careful study of the décor, lighting, and camera treatment of such German pictures as *Waxworks, Variety,* and *The Last Laugh.* Made up of innumerable brief, kaleidoscopic scenes, it was a vigorous manifestation of the expressionistic style.

The story was a "study in subjectivity," based on the theory that at the critical moment before a person loses consciousness he may see a panorama of pictures summarizing the memories of a lifetime. The film opens with a shot of troubled water. A struggling figure is seen. A hand reaches up "as if in entreaty." A man is drowning. This scene is followed by a sequence of rapid shots: the head of a Pierrot, faces of women, flashing headlights, spinning wheels, a star shower, an explosion, climaxed by a shot of a child's picture book.

From the book the camera flashes back to summarize the drowning man's life: impressions of school days, a fond mother, an unsympathetic father, a birthday party, reading Shakespeare, a first visit to the theater, the boy scrawling love notes, an adolescent affair with a carnival dancer, quarreling at home, leaving for the city, stowing away on a ship, being manhandled by a drunken captain, stumbling into a tavern, acting to amuse a circle of revelers, reeling in drunken stupor and run over by a car, attended by a sympathetic nurse, winning a reputation as an actor, marrying, quarreling, divorcing, gambling, acting, attending his mother's funeral, enlisting in the army, the battlefront. No attempt was made to probe into these actions; they were given as a series of narrative impressions.

The concluding portions of the film were told in the same impressionistic manner. The soldier returns to civilian life and resumes his acting career, falls in love with his leading lady, marries her, is informed of her accidental death, becomes distraught, and is finally impelled to suicide. Wearing his Pierrot costume, the actor wades out into the lake at night.

Now the camera repeats the opening summary: the troubled waters, the faces, the lights, the wheels, the star shower, the explosion. The outstretched hand gradually sinks from view. A few bubbles rise to the surface. The film ends.

In many respects the story was superficial and melodramatic, with moments of bathos. But the faults were overcome by freshness of treatment, conception, and technique, making the film a singular and arresting experiment.

This camera work of Leon Shamroy, then an unknown American photographer, was compared favorably with the best work of the European camera stylists. "*The Last Moment* is composed of a series of camera tricks, camera angles, and various motion picture devices which for completeness and novelty have never before been equaled upon the screen," wrote Tamar Lane in the *Film Mercury,* November 11, 1927. "Such remarkable camera work is achieved here as has never been surpassed—German films included," said Irene Thirer in the New York *Daily News,* March 12, 1928.

But *The Last Moment* had more than superior camera craftsmanship. For America it was a radical departure in structure, deliberately ignoring dramatic conventions of storytelling and striving for a cinematic form of narrative. Instead of subduing the camera for use solely as a recording device, the director boldly emphasized the camera's role and utilized all its narrative devices. The significant use of dissolves, multiple exposures, irises, mobility, and split screen created a style which, though indebted to the Germans, was better integrated in visual movement and rhythm and overshadowed the shallowness of the picture's content.

Exhibited in many theaters throughout the country, *The Last Moment* aroused more widespread critical attention than any other American picture of the year. Most of it was as favorable as that of John S. Cohen, Jr., in the New York *Sun,* March 3, 1928: "One of the most stimulating experiments in movie history... *The Last Moment* is a remarkable cinema projection of an arresting idea—and almost worthy of the misused designation of being a landmark in movie history."

More eclectic than previous American experiments was *The Tell-tale Heart,* directed by Charles Klein. It set out to capture the horror and insanity of Poe's story in a manner that was boldly imitative of *Caligari.* Like the German film, the foundation of the American's style lay in its décor. Angular flats, painted shadows, oblique windows and doors, and zigzag designs distorted perspective and increased the sense of space. But opposed to the expressionistic architecture were the early nineteenth-century costumes, the realistic acting, and the lighting, sometimes realistic, sometimes stylized.

Although poorly integrated and lacking the distinctive style of *Caligari, The Tell-tale Heart* had flavor. Even borrowed ideas and rhetorical effects

were a refreshing experience, and the use of a Poe story was itself novel. Moreover, the general level of production was of so professional a standard that Clifford Howard in *Close Up,* August, 1928, wrote: "*The Tell-tale Heart* is perhaps the most finished production of its kind that has yet come out of Hollywood proper."

Soon after *The Tell-tale Heart,* a second film based on a story by Poe appeared, *The Fall of the House of Usher.* Poe's stories were to appeal more and more to the experimental and amateur film makers. Poe's stories not only were short and in the public domain, but depended more upon atmosphere and setting than upon characterization. What particularly kindled the imagination of the experimenter was the haunting, evocative atmosphere which brought to mind similar values in memorable German pictures which, like *Caligari,* had made a deep impression. Even to novitiates Poe's stories were so obviously visual that they seemed almost made to order for the imaginative cameraman and designer.

The Fall of the House of Usher was directed and photographed by James Sibley Watson, with continuity and setting by Melville Webber. Almost a year in the making although only two reels in length, the production strove to make the spectator feel whatever was "grotesque, strange, fearful and morbid in Poe's' work."

Unlike the previous "Caligarized" Poe story, *The Fall of the House of Usher* displayed an original approach to its material and an imaginative and intense use of the means of expressionism which gave the picture a distinctive quality, setting it apart from the experimental films of the day. From the very opening—a horseman descending a plain obscured by white puffs of smoke—mystery and unreality are stressed. Images sinister and startling follow one upon the other. A dinner is served by disembodied hands in black rubber gloves. The cover of a dish is removed before one of the diners and on it is revealed the symbol of death. The visitor to the house of Usher loses his identity and becomes a hat, bouncing around rather miserably, "an intruder made uncomfortable by singular events that a hat might understand as well as a man."

The climax—the collapse of the house of Usher—is touched with grandeur and nightmarish terror. Lady Usher emerges from her incarceration with the dust of decay upon her, toiling up endless stairs from the tomb where she has been buried alive, and topples over the body of her demented brother. Then, in a kind of visual metaphor, the form of the sister covering the brother "crumbles and disintegrates like the stones of the house and mingles with its ashy particles in utter annihilation," wrote Shelley Hamilton in the *National Board of Review Magazine,* January, 1929.

The distinctive style of the picture was achieved by a technique which showed the makers' assimilation of the values of *Destiny, Nibelungen,* and *Waxworks.* The various influences, however, were never literally followed, but were integrated with the film makers' own feeling and imagination so that a new form emerged. Watson and Webber's contribution consisted in the use of light on wall board instead of painted sets, optical distortion through prisms, and unique multiple

exposures and dissolves to create atmospheric effects that were neither realistic nor stylized and yet were both. Characters were also transformed to seem shadowy, almost phantom-like, moving in a tenuous, spectral world. The entire film had a saturated, gelatinous quality that rendered the unreal and evocative mood of Poe's story with corresponding vivid unreality.

Unfortunately the picture was marred by amateurish acting and ineffective stylized make-up and gestures. Nevertheless it was an outstanding and important independent effort, acclaimed by Harry Alan Potamkin in *Close Up,* December, 1929, as an "excellent achievement in physical materials."

In sharp opposition to the expressionistic approach and treatment was the work of another group of experimenters who appeared at this time. They looked for inspiration to the French films of Clair, Feyder, Cavalcanti, Leger, and Deslaw. Their approach was direct, their treatment naturalistic.

Perhaps the foremost practitioner in this field because of his work in still photography was Ralph Steiner, the New York photographer. Almost ascetic in repudiation of everything that might be called a device or a stunt, his pictures were "devoid of multiple exposures, use of the negative, distortion, truncation by angle, etc.," for the reason, he stated, "that simple content of the cinema medium has been far from conclusively exploited."

Here was a working creed that deliberately avoided effects in order to concentrate on subject matter. H_2O (1929), *Surf and Seaweed* (1930), and *Mechanical Principles* (1930) were produced with the straightforward vision and economy of means that characterized Steiner's still photography. Yet, curiously enough, these pictures in spite of their "straight photography" gave less evidence of concern for content than, say, *The Fall of the House of Usher,* which employed all the "tricks" of cinema. As a matter of fact the content in the Steiner films was hardly of any importance, certainly without social or human values, and was offered solely as a means of showing an ordinary object in a fresh way. Limited to this visual experience, the films' chief interest lay in honest and skilled photography and decorative appeal.

Steiner's first effort, H_2O, was a study of reflections on water, and won the $500 *Photoplay* award for the best amateur film of 1929. "I was interested in seeing how much material could be gotten by trying to see water in a new way," Steiner said, "rather than by doing things to it with the camera." Yet to get the water reflections enlarged and the abstract patterns of shadows, Steiner shot much of the film with 6- and 12-inch lenses. Although it was true that nothing was done to the water with the camera, it was also true that if Steiner had not used large-focus lenses he would not have seen the water in a new way. (The point is a quibbling one, for devices, like words, are determined by their associations in a larger unity. A device that may be integral to one film may be an affectation in another.) H_2O proved to be a series of smooth and lustrous abstract moving patterns of light and shade, "so amazingly effective" wrote Alexander Bakshy in *The Nation,* April 1, 1931, "that it made up for the lack of dynamic unity in the picture as a whole."

Surf and Seaweed captured the rest-

less movement of surf, tides, and weeds with the same sharpness and precision of camerawork. *Mechanical Principles* portrayed the small demonstration models of gears, shafts, and eccentrics in action, at one point evoking a sort of whimsical humor by the comic antics of a shaft which kept "grasping a helpless bolt by the head."

Essentially, all three films were abstractions. Their concentrated, close-up style of photography made for an intensity and pictorial unity that were still novel. They represented somewhat refined, streamlined versions of *Le Ballet mécanique* (although without that historic film's percussive impact or dynamic treatment) and proved striking additions to the growing roster of American experimental works.

Another devotee of French films, Lewis Jacobs, together with Jo Gercon and Hershell Louis, all of Philadelphia, made a short experiment in 1930 called *Mobile Composition.* Although abstract in title, the film was realistic, the story of a developing love affair between a boy and girl who are thrust together for half an hour in a friend's studio.

The psychological treatment stemmed from the technique used by Feyder in *Thérèse Raquin.* Significant details, contrast lighting, double exposures, and large close-ups depicted the growing strain of disturbed emotions. In one of the scenes, in which the boy and girl were dancing together, the camera assumed a subjective viewpoint and showed the spinning walls and moving objects of the studio as seen by the boy, emphasizing a specific statuette to suggest the boy's inner disturbance.

Later, this scene cut to a dance rhythm stimulated Jo Gercon and Hershell Louis to do an entire film from a subjective viewpoint in an attempt at "intensiveness as against progression." The same story line was used, but instead of photographing the action of the boy and girl the camera showed who they were, where they went, what they saw and did, solely by objects. That film was called *The Story of a Nobody* (1930).

The film's structure was based on the sonata form in music, divided into three movements, the mutations of tempo in each movement—moderately quick, slow, very quick—captioned in analogy to music. It used freely such cinematic devices as the split screen, multiple exposures, masks, different camera speeds, mobile camera, reverse motion, etc. In one scene a telephone fills the center of the screen; on both sides of it, counterimages making up the subject of the telephone conversation alternate. The spectator knows what the boy and girl are talking about without ever seeing or hearing them. "Motion *within* the screen as differing from motion *across* the screen," pointed out Harry Alan Potamkin in *Close Up,* February, 1930, "... the most important American film I have seen since my return [from Europe]."

The spirit of the time changed, and as American experimenters grew more familiar with their medium they turned further away from the expressionism of the Germans and the naturalism of the French to the heightened realism of the Russians. The impact of Russian films and their artistic credo, summed up in the word "montage," was so shattering that they wiped out the aesthetic standards of their predecessors and ushered in new criteria. The principle

of montage as presented in the films and writings of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and especially Vertov, became by 1931 the aesthetic guide for most experimental film makers in the United States.

Among the first films to show the influence of Soviet technique was a short made by Charles Vidor called *The Spy* (1931–1932), adapted from Ambrose Bierce's story, *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge. The Spy,* like *The Last Moment,* revealed the thoughts of a doomed man. But unlike the earlier film, which used a flashback technique *The Spy* used a *flash forward.* It depicted not the recollections of the events of a past life, but the thoughts of the immediate present, projected as if they were taking place in reality instead of in the mind of the doomed man.

The picture opens with the spy (Nicholas Bela) walking between the ranks of a firing squad. Everything seems quite casual, except for a slight tenseness in the face of the spy. We see the preparations for the hanging. A bayonet is driven into the masonry, the rope is fastened, the command is given, the drums begin to roll, the commanding officer orders the drummer boy to turn his face away from the scene, the noose is placed, the victim climbs to the bridge parapet. Now the drumbeats are intercut with the spy's beating chest. Suddenly there is a shot of a mother and child. At this point the unexpected occurs. The noose seems to break and the condemned man falls into the river. He quickly recovers and begins to swim away in an effort to escape. The soldiers go after him, shooting and missing, pursuing him through the woods until it appears that the spy has escaped. At the moment of his realization that he is free, the film cuts back to the bridge. The spy is suspended from the parapet where he has been hanged. He is dead.

The escape was only a flash forward of a dying man's last thoughts, a kind of wish fulfillment. The conclusion, true to Bierce's theme, offered a grim touch of irony.

In style *The Spy* was highly realistic. There were no camera tricks, no effects. The actors, who were nonprofessional, used no make-up. The sets were not painted flats nor studio backgrounds, but actual locations. The impact depended entirely upon straightforward cutting and mounting and showed that the director had a deep regard for Soviet technique.

Other experimental films in these years derived from the theories of Dziga Vertov and his Kino-Eye Productions. Vertov's advocation of pictures without professional actors, without stories, and without artificial scenery had great appeal to the numerous independent film makers who lacked experience with actors and story construction. These experimenters eagerly embraced the Russian's manifesto which said: "The news film is the foundation of film art." The camera must surprise life. Pictures should not be composed chronologically or dramatically, but thematically. They should be based on such themes as work, play, sports, rest, and other manifestations of daily life.

The pursuit of Vertov's dogmas led to a flock of "ciné poems" and "city symphonies." Notable efforts in this direction included John Hoffman's *Prelude to Spring,* Herman Weinberg's *Autumn Fire* and *A City Symphony,*

Emlen Etting's *Oramunde* and *Laureate,* Irving Browning's *City of Contrasts,* Jay Leyda's *A Bronx Morning,* Leslie Thatcher's *Another Day,* Seymour Stern's *Land of the Sun,* Lyn Riggs' *A Day in Santa Fe,* Mike Seibert's *Breakwater,* Henwar Rodakiewicz's *The Barge, Portrait of a Young Man,* and *Faces of New England,* and Lewis Jacobs' *Footnote to Fact.*

These films were mainly factual—descriptive of persons, places, and activities, or emphasizing human interest and ideas. Some were commentaries. All strove for perfection of visual values. Photography was carefully composed and filtered. Images were cut for tempo and rhythm and arranged in thematic order.

Other films strove to compose sagacious pictorial comments in a more satirical vein on a number of current topics. *Mr. Motorboat's Last Stand,* by John Flory and Theodore Huff, which won the League award for 1933, was a comedy of the depression. In a mixed style of realism and fantasy it told a story of an unemployed Negro (Leonard Motorboat Stirrup) who lives in an automobile graveyard and sells apples on a near-by street corner. Being of an imaginative sort, Mr. Motorboat pretends that he rides to work in a vehicle which was once an elegant car but which now stands battered and wheelless and serves as his home. The fantasy proceeds with Mr. Motorboat making a sum of money that he then uses as bait (literally and figuratively) for fishing in Wall Street. Soon he becomes phenomenally rich, only to lose everything suddenly in the financial collapse. With the shattering of his prosperity he awakens from his fantasy to discover that his apple stand has been smashed by a competitor. Called the "best experimental film of the year" by *Movie Makers,* December, 1933, the picture was a neat achievement in photography, cutting, and social criticism.

Another commentary on contemporary conditions was *Pie in the Sky* by Elia Kazan, Molly Day Thatcher, Irving Lerner, and Ralph Steiner. Improvization was the motivating element in this experiment, which sought to point out that, although things may not be right in this world, they would be in the next.

The people responsible for *Pie in the Sky*—filmically and socially alert—chose a city dump as a source of inspiration. There they discovered the remains of a Christmas celebration: a mangy tree, several almost petrified holly wreaths, broken whisky bottles, and some rather germy gadgets. The Group Theater-trained Elia Kazan began to improvise. The tree evoked memories of his early Greek Orthodox background. He began to perform a portion of the Greek Orthodox ceremonial. The other members of the group "caught on," extracting from the rubbish piles a seductive dressmaker's dummy, a collapsible baby-tub, some metal castings that served as haloes, the wrecked remains of a car, and a worn-out sign which read: "Welfare Dep't." With these objects they reacted to Kazan's improvisation and developed a situation on the theme that everything was going to be hunky-dory in the hereafter.

Pie in the Sky was not entirely successful. Its improvisational method accounted for both its weakness and its strength. Structurally and thematically it was shaky; yet its impact was fresh and at moments extraordinary. Its real

value lay in the fact that it opened up a novel method of film making with wide possibilities, unfortunately not explored since.

Two other experiments sought to make amusing pointed statements by a use of montage. *Commercial Medley* by Lewis Jacobs poked fun at Hollywood's advertisements of "Coming Attractions" and its penchant for exaggeration by juxtaposing and mounting current advertising trailers. *Even as You and I* by Roger Barlow, LeRoy Robbins, and Harry Hay was an extravagant burlesque on surrealism.

Just when montage as a theory of film making was becoming firmly established, it was suddenly challenged by the invention of sound pictures. Experimental film makers, like all others, were thrown into confusion. Endless controversy raged around whether montage was finished, whether sound was a genuine contribution to film art, whether sound was merely a commercial expedient to bolster fallen box-office receipts, whether sound would soon disappear.

Strangely enough, most experimental film workers were against sound at first. They felt lost, let down. The core of their disapproval lay in fear and uncertainty about the changes the addition of the new element would make. Artistically, talking pictures seemed to upset whatever theories they had learned. Practically, the greatly increased cost of sound forced most experimenters to give up their cinematic activity.

There were some, however, who quickly displayed a sensitive adjustment to the introduction of sound. The first and probably the most distinguished experimental sound film of the period was *Lot in Sodom* (1933–1934), made by Watson and Webber, the producers of *The Fall of the House of Usher*. It told the Old Testament story of "that wicked city of the plain, upon which God sent destruction and the saving of God's man, Lot," almost completely in terms of homosexuality and the subconscious. The directors avoided literal statement and relied upon a rhythmical arrangement of symbols rather than chronological reconstruction of events. The picture proved a scintillating study, full of subtle imagery, of sensual pleasure and corruption. A specially composed score by Louis Siegel incorporated music closely and logically into the story's emotional values.

Lot in Sodom used a technique similar to that of *The Fall of the House of Usher,* but far more skillfully and resourcefully. It drew upon all the means of camera, lenses, multiple exposure, distortions, dissolves, and editing to achieve a beauty of mobile images, of dazzling light and shade, of melting rhythms, with an intensity of feeling that approached poetry. Its brilliant array of diaphanous shots and scenes—smoking plains, undulating curtains, waving candle flames, glistening flowers, voluptuous faces, sensual bodies, frenzied orgies—were so smoothly synthesized on the screen that the elements of each composition seemed to melt and flow into one another with extraordinary iridescence.

Outstanding for its splendor and intense poetry was the sequence of the daughter's pregnancy and giving birth. I quote from Herman Weinberg's review in *Close Up,* September, 1933: "I cannot impart how the sudden burst of buds to recall full bloom, disclosing the poignantly lyrical beauty of their

stamens, as Lot's daughter lets drop her robe disclosing her naked loveliness, gets across so well the idea of reproduction. Her body floats in turbulent water during her travail, everything is immersed in rushing water until it calms down, the body rises above the gentle ripples, and now the water drops gently (in slow motion—three-quarters of the film seems to have been shot in slow motion) from the fingers. A child is born."

Suffused with majesty and serenity, this sequence can only be compared to the magnificent night passages in Dovzhenko's *Soil*. Like that Soviet film, the American was a luminous contribution to the realm of lyric cinema.

The second experimental sound film of note was *Dawn to Dawn* (1934), directed by Joseph Berne. The screenplay, written by Seymour Stern, was based on a story reminiscent of the work of Sherwood Anderson. A lonesome girl lives on an isolated farm, seeing no one but her father, who has been brutalized by poverty and illness. One day, into the house comes a wandering farm hand applying for a job. During the afternoon the girl and the farm hand fall in love and plan to leave together the next morning. That night the father, sensing what has happened and afraid to lose his daughter, drives the farm hand off the property. At dawn the father has a stroke and dies. The girl is left more alone than ever.

The subject differed from that of the usual experimental film, as from the sunshine-and-sugar romances of the commercial cinema. What it offered was sincerity instead of synthetic emotion. The actors wore no make-up. The girl (Julie Haydon, later to become a star) was a farm girl with neither artificial eyelashes, painted lips, glistening nails, nor picturesque smudges. All the drabness and pastoral beauty of farm life were photographed by actually going to a farm. There was an honesty of treatment, of detail and texture, far above the usual picture-postcard depictions. The musical score by Cameron McPherson, producer of the film, used Debussy-like passages to "corroborate both the pastoral and the erotic qualities" of the story.

The picture was weakest in dialogue. This was neither well written nor well spoken and seemed quite at odds with the photographic realism of the film. Nevertheless, *Dawn to Dawn* displayed such a real feeling for the subject and the medium that it moved Eric Knight, critic for the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* (March 18, 1936) to write: "I am tempted to call *Dawn to Dawn* one of the most remarkable attempts in independent cinematography in America."

Other films continued to be made, but only two used sound. *Broken Earth* by Roman Freulich and Clarence Muse combined music and song in a glorification of the "spiritually minded Negro." *Underground Printer,* directed by Thomas Bouchard and photographed by Lewis Jacobs, presented a political satire in "monodance" drama featuring the dancer, John Bovingdon, utilizing speech, sound effects, and stylized movements.

Two other silent films were made at this time: *Synchronization,* by Joseph Schillinger and Lewis Jacobs, with drawings by Mary Ellen Bute, illustrated the principles of rhythm in motion; *Olivera Street,* by Mike Seibert, was a tense dramatization of the aftermath of a flirtation between two Spanish street vendors.

By 1935 the economic depression was so widespread that all efforts at artistic experiment seemed pointless. Interest centered now on social conditions. A new kind of film making took hold: the documentary. Under dire economic distress aesthetic rebellion gave way to social rebellion. Practically all the former experimental film makers were absorbed in the American documentary film movement, which rapidly became a potent force in motion picture progress.

One team continued to make pictures under the old credo but with the addition of sound—Mary Ellen Bute, designer, and Ted Nemeth, cameraman. These two welded light, color, movement, and music into abstract films which they called "visual symphonies." Their aim was to "bring to the eyes a combination of visual forms unfolding along with the thematic development and rhythmic cadences of music."

Their films, three in black and white—*Anitra's Dance* (1936), *Evening Star* (1937), *Parabola* (1938)—and three in color—*Tocatta and Fugue* (1940), *Tarantella* (1941), and *Sport Spools* (1941)—were all composed upon mathematical formulae, depicting in ever changing lights and shadows, growing lines and forms, deepening colors and tones, the tumbling, racing impressions evoked by the musical accompaniment. Their compositions were synchronized sound and image following a chromatic scale or in counterpoint.

At first glance, the Bute-Nemeth pictures seemed like an echo of the former German pioneer, Oscar Fischinger, one of the first to experiment with the problems of abstract motion and sound. Actually, they were variations on Fischinger's method, but less rigid in their patterns and choice of objects, tactile in their forms; more sensuous in their use of light and color rhythms, more concerned with the problems of depth, more concerned with music complimenting rather than corresponding to the visuals.

The difference in quality between the Bute-Nemeth pictures and Fischinger's came largely from a difference in technique. Fischinger worked with two-dimensional animated drawings; Bute and Nemeth used any three-dimensional substance at hand: ping-pong balls, paper cutouts, sculptured models, cellophane, rhinestones, buttons, all the odds and ends picked up at the five and ten cent store. Fischinger used flat lighting on flat surfaces; Bute and Nemeth employed ingenious lighting and camera effects by shooting through long-focus lenses, prisms, distorting mirrors, ice cubes, etc. Both utilized a schematic process of composition. Fischinger worked out his own method. Bute and Nemeth used Schillinger's mathematical system of composition as the basis for the visual and aural continuities and their interrelationship.

Along with their strangely beautiful pictorial effects and their surprising rhythmic patterns, the Bute-Nemeth "visual symphonies" often included effective theatrical patterns such as comedy, suspense, pathos, and drama in the action of the objects, which lifted the films above the usual abstract films and made them interesting experiments in a new experience.

Remembrances of Jean Vigo

GYULA ZILZER

GYULA ZILZER, illustrator and painter, etcher, engraver, and lithographer, has been working in Hollywood for the last seven years. The films on which he has worked as production illustrator include *The Life of Jack London, Sahara, The Other Love,* and *The Macomber Affair.* Most recently, he worked as special production assistant and designer on the forthcoming *Miracle of the Bells.*

IT HAS taken fifteen years for America to discover Jean Vigo.[1] Now that film lovers in New York and in Los Angeles have had a chance to see Vigo's *Atalante* and *Zéro de conduite,* it may perhaps be interesting to set down some of my observations of his tragic life and his work. As a close friend of his in France, I knew him during the most active part of his life. I had the fortune to know him and be associated with him before he became a legend.

It should be said that it also took many years for France to discover and appreciate Vigo. In 1932 the censors suppressed his *Zéro de conduite* as an outrage against educational institutions and harmful to children. Today his films are constantly shown there as the classical work of a French genius, and the young look up to him as a burning symbol.

Knowing Jean Vigo's life story is a key to understanding his work. Only in terms of the remarkable circumstances of his childhood can his remarkable achievement at the age of twenty-five be understood. Believing in this new art of canned time, he dared to create by his own efforts motion pictures that have already outlived most of the work of his contemporaries who were bolstered by money, expert craftsmen, and fine technical facilities.

It would take another article to analyze why some movies are short-lived and what keeps some of them alive longer. It would be most interesting to investigate why so many are still-born. But Vigo's life makes indirect comment on these questions, showing how he brought to his films his full life experience, with all its bitterness and all its disillusion. He created a poetry of realism.

Certainly, we could argue about the technical imperfections of his creations. Some critics, their sense of what is real or good or true long dulled by viewing hundreds of technically perfect imbecilities, have not been able to see beyond these imperfections. But the peoples of the tragic lands of Europe have no difficulty in seeing the beauty in the strange creations of this young man, fifteen long years dead.

Vigo's family came from the Basque Pyrenees, where his grandfather was an important government official. If it can be said of anyone that he is a born revolutionary, it can surely be said of Jean Vigo. His godfather, Jean Jaurès, was the great French socialist who led in opposition to World War I and, on the eve of the war, was shot and killed in the editorial offices of the newspaper he founded, *L'Humanité.* Vigo's father, Almereida, was a newspaperman and the editor of an antiwar magazine; long before World War I began, he was

[1] Last year, the *Hollywood Quarterly* published an article about Jean Vigo by Siegfried Kracauer, and in *The Nation,* James Agee, the film critic, has paid him homage in two long articles.

fighting its advent, and after it had broken out, he still, with great courage, continued fighting until, finally, the government confiscated the paper and put him in jail. The infant Vigo was taken to visit him there. Vigo told me the whole story one afternoon as we sat on the terrace of a little Paris café, at a table reserved for the habitués of *L'Humanité*. He said that he had taken his first infant steps in the prison. When Almereida died suddenly in jail, the official announcement was "suicide."

After his father's tragic death, Vigo was brought up by friends and admirers of Almereida. Later he was educated in various boarding schools.

Vigo inherited the strength and energy of his forefathers and the carefreeness of the mountaineers of the Pyrenees. He had a sense of contrast between great and small, and the feeling of isolation and helpfulness that belongs to those come from small, isolated mountain communities. At the same time, from his grim childhood onward, Vigo carried with him a bitterness which was to dominate his work. His films were not imagery created for entertainment, but a projection of life with blood flowing through it.

He started his career in a photographer's studio and later became an assistant cameraman. In frail health, he was for two months in a sanatorium in southern France. There he met Lydu, who was also a patient. Later, Lydu and he were married and lived in Nice. She helped him with a little money and much encouragement to realize his first dream as director-producer-everything, *A propos de Nice,* which Vigo described as having a documentary point of view.

In those days, about 1928, I was a young painter struggling with my art and the attendant difficulties of daily life. I used to place my ardent drawings against fascism and its brutality in Henri Barbusse's weekly magazine, *Le Monde*. These drawings caught Vigo's attention and brought us together. I can never forget how he saved me from my poverty, inviting me to live with him and his family as his guest for six months. Boris Kaufman, a most talented young cameraman, and his wife lived with us. He was to "turn" all of Vigo's masterpieces.

In this period Vigo planned out his documentary about Nice. The Carnival of Nice was to be the background of the picture: the tireless efforts of hundreds of *Niçeois* who labored industriously all year through to make huge, grotesque papier-maché figures to be carried in the Carnival's processions. The art of designing and fashioning these fantastic monsters was bequeathed down through the generations. For months while bored visitors idled in the luxury hotels, the townspeople labored in preparation for the Carnival week. Vigo captured in his film the boredom of the rich and the enthusiasm of the poor, eager to entertain them.

I remember how desperately—and how unsuccessfully—we watched for a clear, bright day. Despite the legend of the sunny Riviera, so zealously guarded by the tourist bureau, Vigo's masterpiece was set in a cloudy Nice. My role in its production was a minor one: I helped to carry the terribly heavy camera and was allowed to point out here and there an interesting or picturesque angle that I thought worth photographing.

Before he left Nice, Vigo founded a film society for the presentation of the best avant-garde and documentary films. Later, in Paris, he made a film with Kaufman about *Tarnis, the Swimming Champion,* using slow motion to elaborate the techniques of masterful swimming. He also wanted to make a film on tennis, but for lack of funds was forced to abandon his plans. It was then that he started work on *Zéro de conduite,* perhaps his best and most complete film. In it he depicted his own life in boarding schools and the rigors and cruelties imposed on the children; and, perhaps wishfully, the vengeance of the children on their oppressors. I have noted before that the Paris censor considered this film an attack on the best interests of the educational institutions of France and declared it harmful for children to see. He forbade its being shown before the public.

At the press showing, there was open hostility. The sensibilities of well-behaved and well-brought-up citizens were deeply shocked to see such childrens' conduct as Vigo presented. In the course of the performance the lights had to be put on many times, and the showing ended in open fights. It was a film about children in which no compromise was made with the sentimentality of the commercial films. Vigo had his own vivid memories to confirm the truth of his statements. They gave him the courage to show as he did what children may think of grown-ups.

Many new approaches were utilized in *Zéro de conduite.* Some could be called surrealistic, although Vigo was never considered a surrealist—his search for realism was too deep. However, the use of memory elements somewhat distorted, as in the scenes of the dormitory or the walk in the afternoon, could justly be called expressionism.

After the rejection of *Zéro de conduite,* which no one had seen but everyone talked about, Vigo prepared many new scripts and tried to find financing for them. He wanted to do one film with Blaise Cendrars, and another with La Fouchardière, who wrote the magnificent film *La Chienne.* He had also planned a film on a convict settlement. Financial difficulties blocked all these plans, but he could not be discouraged. His frail body was like a steel frame with electric bulbs inside; his conviction and spirit shone through. He stuck to his work.

Then came the idea for *Atalante.* It is a story of a barge, essentially very romantic in subject, but, with its slowness, its dirtiness, and its seemingly boring happenings, hardly romantic in the usual movie sense. A barger lives in confined quarters without much horizon—and still, every child dreams about living on a barge. Vigo, too, must have had this dream once, for he made the picture out of the elements of dreams: slowness, grayness, timelessness. The story is beautiful in its simplicity. A peasant girl marries a barger for adventure. The barge sets off on its long, slow passage to Paris. The girl dreams about the Paris that she has never seen. She is more and more excited. When the barge arrives in Paris, the skipper and the girl quarrel; she leaves, to discover Paris alone. In a cheap dance hall she giggles at a young apache's cocksure campaign for her interest, but she is lonely and lost in the big city. When the mate of the barge finds her at the proper time, she returns

wordlessly to the barge. The story is told in the most effective pictorial way. Basically it is a documentary film. The exteriors were shot on a real barge; the interiors, in an exact copy of the barge on a studio stage. The outside settings were realistic, but the inside of the cabin was a fantastic world contrived by the mate out of junk-shop treasures and souvenirs of Oriental sea voyages. The role of the mate was played in a masterly way by the great comedian Michel Simon. He proudly displays his tattooing to the skipper's wife, played by Dita Parlo, the Hungarian actress. The rest of the cast was made up by Jean Dasté of the *Compagnie de Quinze,* an avant-garde theater group, who had also played in *Zéro de conduite,* and Gilles Margaritis. Kaufman's superb camera work, and Vigo's imaginative direction and his way of telling a story, assured a successful film.

With the completion of *Atalante,* Vigo fell seriously ill. It was twelve years before the development of today's miraculous drugs. Hope was given up. All his friends understood that he was doomed.

Meanwhile, *Atalante* had been put into the hands of distributors. They were frightened of a picture in which a barge was of central importance against the severe background of a canal, so they decided to prepare a box-office version. A theme song was added, a sentimental melody that was in vogue just then, *Les Chalands qui passe.* Its title became the title of the film and, as a last insult to poor Vigo, close-ups of popular music-hall artists were superimposed on the film. The mutilation of his work added torture to the last week of Vigo's illness.

We buried him on one of the rainy autumn days that are peculiar to Paris, with all his friends around him. The same evening, *Les Chalands qui passe* opened. The youth of Paris was there. The actors who had participated in the film, weeping and deeply moved, spoke and payed homage to Vigo. It was an unforgettable spectacle of genuine appreciation.

Such was the life of one of the most gifted of French directors. He could have made great films. He possessed enormous power and imagination. He found real poetry in the world of projected shadows.

From his childhood memories in the prison with his father he developed into a man in revolt against the injustices of our times. Silenced by the censors, mutilated by the trade's demand for profits, he is a living symbol today of a creative film director in a losing fight against the bonds of the commercial film world.

Vigo once wrote me a letter. I was discouraged at the time and it helped me to get through the darkness. It illuminates the darkness still.

"Allez-y droit, tête en avant! Vous finirez bien par rencontrer quelque chose... Courage, ça ira, nom de Dieu!"

A New Generation of Radio Comedians

FLORA RHETA SCHREIBER

FLORA RHETA SCHREIBER's study of three radio comedians follows her critique of Henry Morgan in the Fall, 1947, issue of the *Hollywood Quarterly*. Her articles on the theater arts have appeared in numerous journals, both popular and scholarly; her work in the theater arts has been both professional and academic. Formerly on the faculty at Brooklyn College and at Exeter College in England, she is now teaching at Adelphi College.

THE RADIO humorist, contemplating the face of America, scrutinizes it for telltale signs that will reveal its nature, and the comic imagination acts as a mirror that can reflect truthfully without being taken too seriously. A friend who tells you what he really thinks doesn't long remain a friend. A psychiatrist who tells you what he thinks exacts a toll of effort and cash. But no one has yet complained that S. J. Perelman or James Thurber or Mark Twain told him off.

This harmless, impersonal telling-off finds an effective outlet in the radio, and radio comedy can act as critique and corrective. The radio humorist makes us laugh at social foibles which are often the same as our own maladies. Laughing, we feel better; and laughing, we see more clearly. The more insecure the age, then the greater the need for this corrective.

Contemporary chaos finds expression, radio-wise, in the sallies of the younger generation of radio comedians, including Jack Paar, Abe Burrows, and Robert Q. Lewis, who have been cited by *Motion Picture Daily*'s 1947 poll of radio editors as the most promising stars of tomorrow.

The newcomers are conscious of being the younger generation. "I'm not angry with Fred Allen for picking on me last week," says Paar. "I know he didn't mean to be unkind. I guess he's just against young people being on the radio. But I'm not worried, the Child Labor Laws are on our side! . . . I still think a lot of Fred Allen. He's the grand old man of grand old men. I didn't want to be on the radio, Mr. Allen, but there's a drive to keep us kids off the street. I don't know what Mr. Allen wants me to do. Where can I go? I'm too young to die! . . . If Allen continues his crusade against the younger set, Boy Scouts will stop helping him across the street, the Y.M.C.A. will revoke his towel, and the kids on Juvenile Jury will beat him to death with Popsicles."

Whereas the comedians of the old guard came to radio via vaudeville, radio itself was the incubator of the new generation. Before the war, Paar was a radio announcer, first in Cleveland, later in Buffalo. Lewis has been in radio since he was a child. Burrows was for many years a gag writer, feeding material to other comedians.

The new group differs from the old guard by virtue of belonging to a different generation, a generation born during World War I, which lived through the depression and fought in World War II. While the oldsters were enjoying the heyday of the boozy 'twenties, with their smug securities, the new group were children. But when it was time for the children to grow up and perhaps repeat the pattern of their carefree elders, the pattern had some-

how slipped from under them. The 'thirties were suddenly earnest; the early 'forties, grim.

The new humorists bring a new voice to radio, a voice that rasps with sublimated indignation despite its surface smoothness. These are the *enfants terribles* of radio humor, and they have created a humor of revolt.

Revolt is expressed not violently, but quietly in a direct, person-to-person style dating back to the early 'thirties and developed by Raymond Knight, Colonel Lemuel Stoopnagle, Ransom Sherman, Fletcher Wylie, and Arthur Godfrey. Paar plays himself straight in a calm, unhurried manner. When performing before GI's in the Pacific, he would come on stage smoking a pipe, completely casual. His radio manner, too, is as casual as smoke rings. Robert Q. Lewis has a self-effacing, gentle, spoofing manner. Burrows pictures himself as gauche, unattractive, plaintive. "Hello, I'm Burrows, like he said. . . . I come from New York, as if you thought I was born in London. . . . It seems that mine is the only radio program that women turn off to listen to the ball game. . . . Frankly, I feel that a suave, smooth style detracts from the charm of my natural crudeness. . . . We characters last longer in pictures—long after the Cornel Wildes and Gregory Pecks have lost their looks we'll still be repulsive. . . . If you've got a radio I hope you listen tomorrow. If you haven't got a radio, just open your window. . . . I sing real loud. . . . I'm going to ask all my listeners to dress formal. . . . If you don't listen in, Burrows will be hurt. He's sensitive."

There is the revolt against little things, as little as table etiquette. "Most errors," Paar declares, tongue in cheek, "are made when eating spaghetti. The secret of enjoying spaghetti is eating it properly. You put a little on your spoon and start spinning it. You spin it and spin it and spin it. And how do you know when you have enough on your spoon? You look down, and if the tablecloth's gone, that's it!" The image conjured up is a radio equivalent of the visual bout Charlie Chaplin has with spaghetti in one of his early films. The spaghetti whirls, and our absurd sense of dignity, of the titanic importance of trivia, whirls with it.

The same frisky tone characterizes Paar's description of Boston. "Boston.—The custom of extending the little finger while drinking tea originated there. The extending of the little finger gives one poise, éclat, and élan. Besides, it's a handy place for hanging a small derby." And again: "In Boston the society restaurant is Saltonstall's Little Armenia. They only admit bluebloods. In fact, there's a man at the door with a pin-testing device. Now let's eavesdrop at a table where a man and his wife are dining:

SHE: Oh, Philip.

HE: What is it, darling?

SHE: The menu. Will you read it to me?

HE: Of course, dear. Where is my lorgnette? Ah, what have we here? My favorite way of preparing baked beans.

SHE: How its that?

HE: Rather simply, dear. You dig a hole in the ground, fill it full of beans, put a fire under it, and cover it with pavement.

SHE: Sounds wonderful. What do they call it?

HE: Highway Sixty-six!

The deflation of the élite is accompanied by the championing of the average. Paar's lady on a mock *Truth and Consequences* program receives more gifts than Princess Elizabeth, and his

Agatha Geltnick is a little lady who could have a movie contract but is much happier at her present job of washing cars.

Lewis has a quiet tenderness for the not quite successful. Once he featured the Number 11 song, the one that just didn't make it. Another time he presented Bette Davis and Benny Goodman as guest stars. It happened—with admirable malice aforethought—that the particular Bette Davis in front of his microphone was a girl who works as a stenographer in a firm on New York's Thirty-fourth Street, and the particular Benny Goodman, a Brooklyn soda jerker. "Who is to say who is the real Bette Davis and the real Benny Goodman," Lewis remarked in a conversation with the writer.

Lewis also stated the case for the group when, in the same conversation, he described his own humor as springing from a love of the average man. Foibles he observes, of course, and his characters even represent these foibles, but the characters do not represent the whole man. Lewis is quick to admit that his character Ann, for instance, is a take-off on popular confusion, but he is equally quick to assure you that Ann is by no means a direct representation of the average woman—Ann who listens to the radio with one ear and reads the newspapers with the other; Ann who, proclaiming herself conservation's conscience, would send those who heedlessly fling food down their gullets back where they came from, yes, even if they came from as unsubversive a place as Yonkers; Ann who has probed into the cause of the food shortage to emerge with a definitive answer—too much food is taken internally; Ann who is burned up about Congress and knows how these Congressmen get elected—through politics; in short, Ann who, because a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, is certainly living dangerously.

The housing shortage and food conservation have evoked a stream of gags springing from an awareness of social paradox, albeit of its more obvious aspects. Lewis' Ann serves just one slice of bread for dinner—a slice of bread with the bread pudding. Paar speaks similarly of the little old lady next door who buys bread every day so that she can have one slice at every meal, whereas she never used to buy any bread at all. Lewis' Ann further comments, "We have a housing shortage and Congress has to have two houses," while Paar declares that the Housing Committee has announced that there is no housing shortage, but that the announcement came from the Committee's headquarters in an empty lot. Burrows speaks of "the West—where there's no housing shortage and no houses!"

Much of the humor springs from a hearty dislike of bombast and floridness. Lewis parodies the oracular style of film and radio documentaries by using his frequently reiterated "From the dim red dawn of time"; by using a technique of simple repetitiveness in which the narrator says, "She had black hair," and the character repeats, "I have black hair"; and by using a comic montage, such as, "First, we ask ourselves this question: What is a scientist? . . . Webster, in his famous best-seller, entitled Dictionary, under Scientist says: See Appendix. So we consult Appendix and under Scientist it says: See Encyclopaedia Britannica. So we look into Encyclopaedia Britannica and under Scientist it says: See John Kieran.

So I saw John Kieran and he said: Why, Bob Lewis, you're just the man I'm looking for. There's a question I wanta ask you . . . what is a Scientist? So, if he doesn't know, what do you want from me? A little documentary music, Howard, please."

Burrows spins a mock-heroic saga, utilizing the same mounting technique: "A magnificent tribute to man's ingenuity in the eternal struggle with Mother Nature—Boulder Dam, mighty Boulder Dam, mighty, mighty, mighty! Three hundred miles to the west is Hollywood. Hollywood—twinkling jewel of the Southland—dreamland of every American boy and girl, mecca of millions, gossamer web of loveliness, fairyland of fortune, Paradise of producers —Hollywood. Oh, look—it's Hollywood and Vine—There's Hedda Hopper—Hello, Hedda. Oh, it's just a fruit stand—Hello, fruit stand—Hello, fruit stand. Ah, wondrous Hollywood! . . . And yet lovely Hollywood, with all its translucent loveliness, all its gemlike beauty, could not live a single day—not a light would light, not a camera would roll, not a starlet could bathe—without . . . Boulder Dam. Turn on, O mighty wheels; pump on, O mighty dynamic heart! Feed America, water America, clothe America. Build Her Mighty Industries. Good Luck to you, Boulder Dam!"

Mark Twain used a similar mounting technique in *Colonel Sellers:*

"These are the Early Malcolms—it's a turnip that can't be produced except in just one orchard, and the supply is never up to the demand. Take some more water, Washington,—you can't drink too much water with fruit—all the doctors say that. THE PLAGUE CAN'T COME WHERE THIS ARTICLE IS, MY BOY!"

"Plague? What plague?"

"What plague; indeed? Why the Asiatic plague that nearly depopulated London a couple of centuries ago."

"But how does that concern us? There is no plague here, I reckon."

"Sh! I've let it out! Well, never mind—just keep it to yourself. Perhaps I oughtn't said anything but its bound to come out sooner or later, so what is the odds? Old McDowells wouldn't like me to . . . to . . . bother it all, I'll just tell the whole thing and let it go. You see, I've been down to St. Louis, and I happened to run across old Dr. McDowells—thinks the world of me. . . . Well, the other day he let me into a little secret, strictly on the quiet, about this matter of the plague. You see it's booming right along in our direction—follows the gulf stream, you know, just as all epidemics—and within three months it will be just waltzing through this land like a whirlwind. And whoever it touches can make his will and contract for the funeral. Well you can't cure it, you know, but you can prevent it. How? Turnips! That's it! Turnips and water! Nothing like it in the world, old McDowells says, just fill yourself up two or three times a day, and you can snap your fingers at the plague."

Saying nothing impressively is another technique used to parody the bombastic. In *James Aberdejan, Armenian,* Burrows carries his dislike of bombast into a parody of the more blatant aspects of Norman Corwin's style: "We know what your dreams were like—they were as American as apple pie—the crunch of a hot dog when you walk on it on a cold day—the smack of a wet cigar when it hits you across the face—the rattle of cement when you're in the mixer." Accompanied by appropriate musical fanfare, Lewis declares: "Four out of five scientists have studied science. Statistics prove that more scientists are Paul Muni than anybody else." And Paar: "Friends, here's a little girl who was practically unknown till she became

popular." And again Burrows: "Don't forget to write for our free booklet entitled 'How to Write for Free Booklets.'... A wise philosopher once said: 'If people spent more time talking to each other there would be a lot more conversation.'... People often get discouraged and when that happens there's a little story I like to tell. Several years ago there was a man who was pretty discouraged—lost his business, didn't know which way to turn. Well, sir, one afternoon he wandered into a movie theater and there on the screen, playing a small part, he saw this beautiful girl—a few weeks later he saw this lovely girl in another picture—from then on he went to see every one of her pictures. Well, friends, you may not believe this, but today that girl is Rita Hayworth—so never be discouraged."

All this is reminiscent of Colonel Mulberry Sellers' inviting friends to a family dinner where was served an abundance of clear, fresh water and a basin of raw turnips—nothing more!

Newspapers and magazines, radio and motion pictures, advertising and commercials are the butt of a substantial share of the humor. "I want to thank Fred Allen and Jack Benny for mentioning my name this week, and I also want to thank Westbrook Pegler for not mentioning my name," is Paar's newspaper crack. Burrows' is: "It was on Sunday and I happened to be at home. I was feeling pretty depressed—I had just finished reading the funnies."

Burrows parodies the fashion magazines with: "Girls! Be strong! Of course, I understand how hard it is to resist new fashions—you know, *Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, Mademoiselle, Charm, Glamour, Schmammer*—all those mags that are filled with spinach for the modern tomato. I read 'em all. I'm a sucker for those poetic ads—I love 'em—you know, the kind that read: 'We took some twinkling stardust from the skies, some romantic magic from fairyland and some of the glowing fire of love's own dream and blended them all together to make these lovely Miss America Galoshes!' Now that's potent stuff, and when they use the same technique on the new fashions, you girls are dead! I read one piece that was absolutely irresistible. It started off with 'Don't be a last-year girl! Get yourself a new shape! It's easy to have a wasplike waist. Just get yourself one of these heavenly new tiny corsets made of shimmering, stainless steel. This corset will give you that lovely wasp waist forever—because it's welded on.'"

Burrows directs a few well-earned darts at the motion picture industry. "In writing stories for pictures," he observes, "there are certain fundamental rules which it pays to follow: (1) All heroes should be rich and handsome, and all heroines should be extremely beautiful—this is known as realism; (2) All pictures should have happy endings except tragedies—which should be avoided."

Paar stages several mock radio programs—an amateur show in which the winner gets three dollars and a two-week engagement in a coal mine, and a forum in which Paar cautions: "Please, ladies and gentlemen, let us not open our forums too wide." The subjects for discussion in this forum are: "Is There Americanism in Hollywood? Will the Pressure Cooker Replace the Atom Bomb? Which Way is Hollywood and Vine?" And the speakers blurt in a cacophony of irresponsibility: "I'll take either side—I'll take a cup of tea—

Who's got the dice?—Please, Mr. Paar, don't ask such questions."

Interweaving the contemporary with the historical, Paar presents disk jockeys in the days of the Pilgrims, Screwball Standish, the world's largest used-boat dealer, as a sponsor, a transcription presented by the Ponce de Leon Fountain of Youth, a musical program by Spike John Cabot Lodge Jones and his Salem Slickers.

Lewis describes a Hooper rating as a radio report card and created the word "Hoopertension." Of Hooper ratings Burrows has this to say: "A low rating doesn't necessarily mean that a radio comedian has a bad show. All it means is that he loses his job. And there's something else which is just as bad as a low rating . . . that's if you have a high rating and the sponsor's wife doesn't like you. Well, . . ."

This critical approach to radio has much in common with both Colonel Stoopnagle's heretical treatment of commercials and Raymond Knight's *The Cuckoo Hour,* on the air from 1930 to 1938, in which Knight badgered women commentators, radio orators, and "music depreciation" programs.

These comedians take a sportive attitude toward the fraudulent imitation of science. Notice Paar's tone: "The scientists of America light the way to progress, catering to our every comfort. In the field of electricity they have given us the electric iron, the electric blanket, the ELECTRIC CHAIR. . . . In the field of medicine we find such renowned scientists as Dr. Pasteur and his famous serum, Dr. Ehrlich and his magic bullet, DR. BROWN AND HIS CELERY TONIC." It is a crescendo in which the third of the series deflates the other two.

Paar debunks certain aspects of modern technology: "Well, regardless of our little disappointments, this is a marvelous age we're living in. Just think—today we have great steamships. SOUND: TOOT, TOOT. . . . Today we have trains. SOUND: BROMO-SELTZER TRAIN EFFECT. . . . Today we have airplanes. PLANE ZOOMS PAST. . . . And today we have Sonny Tufts. SOUND: BROMO-SELTZER TRAIN EFFECT. . . . And today we have disk jockeys—disk jockeys are a modern invention."

When Paar is asked, "Who are the writers of this program?" he replies: "No writers. We have an electric typewriter, you just put a blank piece of paper in and set for Funny!" "I like the old-fashioned kind of comedy, the kind that's written by steam!" the questioner responds. "Sounds great," Paar agrees; "you could get a good laugh and have your pants pressed at the same time."

Inventing new but impossible machines for comic effect is in the spirit of Colonel Lemuel Q. Stoopnagle, who invented a slot machine which blows off steam, lights up, whistles, makes five minutes of loud silence when you put a dime in it, and eventually returns your coin so that you can give yourself a tip for tray-juggling in a self-service restaurant.

Henri Bergson would have loved these inventions, for they fit so neatly into his definition of the comic as the mechanical encrusted on the living. The Paar sequence is funny precisely because it represents an extreme situation in which the mechanical is superimposed on the human to the point where the human ceases to exist. "You just set for Funny" the way you set your alarm clocks, and the living spirit of

comedy—Bergson's *élan vital*—is reduced to a metallic click.

Burrows' malapropisms, somewhat in the spirit of Jane Ace of *Easy Aces,* are also a form of inventiveness. "Me red *corpusuckles* racin', I await for you, my sweet. . . . Suddenly lo and *get hold,* leave us face it, we're in love. . . . Leave us not blush with no shame if people *bandage* our name. . . . In some other life we once was man and wife; in an old French *chapeau* we was mated; now mine love for thine, just as thine love for mine, has been *reincarcerated.*"

The *enfants terribles* strike out lustily against authority. Paar, for one, virtually became a demigod among the men he entertained in the Pacific because he spoke for them directly and, speaking, became their wish fulfillment. Although he has served as a toastmaster at a Washington banquet for three generals, brass hats commonly regard him as Peck's bad boy. And with cause. He has described an officers' club as a "big tent show with rules." "Lieutenant," he began in dulcet tones, on another occasion, "a man with your I.Q. should have a low voice, too." And another time, in similar accents: "Colonel Smith here tonight is a great friend of mine—there isn't a thing he wouldn't do for me that I wouldn't do for him. And that's the way it's been for the past five years—we haven't done a damn thing for each other."

The *enfants terribles* take sides with children against their parents. "This is your Uncle Jack," says Paar. "Tonight I want to talk to you about your parents. You've been brought up to believe that your mother and dad know everything. That's adult propaganda and they've been handing it out for years." Uncle Jack then proceeds to help analyze some of these old saws and wise instances. According to the vast and mighty trade union of parents everywhere, "Early to bed and early to rise makes you healthy, wealthy, and wise." "Well," asks Jack, the adage-killer, "did you ever take a good look at the Milk Man?" Say the parents: "Don't cross your bridges till you come to them." "Well," reflects Paar, "first of all, it's impossible. Just try walking down the street and make like you're crossing a bridge; an old lady will walk up to you and say: 'What are you doing?' And you'll say: 'I'm crossing my bridges before I come to them.' Just wait and see how fast they wrap you in a cold wet sheet and put you away." Say the parents: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." And Paar retorts: "Why . . . so you don't pass your arithmetic test and go to your grave not knowing that six and four make ten, is that so important? When you grow up you can hire college graduates, C.P.A.'s, fifteen dollars a week and they figure the whole thing out for you. . . . But supposing you do sweat and worry, and try, try again, and finally get the answer: seven and five are twelve. Do you think you're through? Do you know what they have waiting for you next? Fractions. . . . Look, kids, if at first you don't succeed, give up. Good night, kiddies."

Mark Twain used to rouse children similarly from dull obedience. In his *Story of the Bad Boy Who Didn't Come to Grief,* Twain wrote:

> Once this bad boy stole the key of the pantry, and slipped in there, and helped himself to some jam, and filled up the vessel with tar, so that his mother would never know the difference; but all at once a terrible feeling didn't come over him, and something didn't whisper to him, "Is it right to disobey my mother? Isn't it sinful

to do this? Where do bad little boys go who gobble up their good, kind mother's jam?" . . .

No meddling old clam of a justice dropped in to make trouble, and so the model boy George got thrashed and Jim was glad of it, because, you know, Jim hated moral boys. . . .

And so he grew up, and married, and raised a large family, and got wealthy by all manner of cheating and rascality, and now he is the infernalist wickedest scoundrel in his native village, and is universally respected, and belongs to the legislature. . . .

So you see there never was a bad James in the Sunday-school books that had such a streak of luck as this sinful Jim with the charmed life.

Mom becomes a temptress on a path of negativism when Paar assumes the role of boy strangler in a topsy-turvy soap opera proudly presented by the Fatal Toy Company. For it is Mom who, for his birthday, has lovingly given him his first strangling cord and a genuine Lucrezia Borgia poisoning kit. When Burrows playfully describes himself as "creator of songs like Mother used to write," the silver in mother's hair again loses some of its traditional inviolability. When Lewis tells the saga of Dina Pitkin, a darling progressive school child who has graduated to the Waves, the animus is directed against the new mother. It is six months since Dina has been heard from, but Mrs. Pitkin is unworried. "I believe she stepped out six months ago," Mrs. Pitkin comments airily.

Mrs. Pitkin, though a take-off on a contemporary attitude, is a direct descendant of the mother of Mark Twain's sinful Jim. "Jim's mother was not anxious on Jim's account," Twain wrote. "She said if he were to break his neck, it wouldn't be much loss. She always spanked him to sleep; and she never kissed him good night: on the contrary, she boxed his ears when she was ready to leave him."

The bad boys refuse to be told "how" by the professional recipe-givers of the world, that mighty throng whose much-touted love of humanity is dollar-generated. Burrows often assumes the role of a sardonic "friendly philosopher," and his friendly talks are tall talks. "So just settle back while I kinda rummage through my philosophical garbage can," he begins. "The wise philosopher is happy, because there's a burden off his mind.—There's been a family living in this tiny apartment over my garage—husband, wife and six children all living in this tiny apartment and I've been worrying about them a great deal." He pauses to transmit his smile of professional good cheer, and then resumes. "Well, I don't have to worry about them any more—this morning I finally had them evicted.—Funny, how these little problems solve themselves." "Look for the silver lining," Burrows reflects on another occasion, "isn't that depressing?" Burrows inverts some of the injunctions of salesmanship. "Stay bald," he advises. "Buy our special brochure entitled *Ill Health and How to Attain It; or, 500 Useful Diseases*," he suggests. Paar does likewise when he presents as a special feature that eminent gourmet Jack Duncan Hines Paar in a lecture entitled, "Adventures in Eating; or, What to Do Till the Doctor Comes."

The bad boys refuse to be duped by high-pressure salesmen. Paar projects a picture of the salesman's alter ego, an alter ego that comes alive on filter in a sequence in which two people swap homes—a country home and a city apartment. The usual superlatives of

selling are told straight: the building itself has been judged one of the finest in the city. But the filter voice intrudes snidely: "JUDGED? IT'S BEEN CONDEMNED." The ingratiating selling voice continues with: The place is huge. Why, the distance from the kitchen to the bathroom alone must be at least fifty yards"; and the filter voice says quietly: "THROUGH THE WOODS." "You know," says the city-mouse customer, "I'm a little worried about my hay fever in the country." "Don't give it a thought," responds the amiable country-mouse salesman, "the place is absolutely free from ragweed." But his filtered conscience says, *sotto voce:* "SURE. THE POISON IVY STRANGLED IT."

Paar uses the same technique in his Saga of Used-car Dealer Honest Joe. "This car has only been driven 3,000 miles," says the salesman, but his alter ego on filter adds, "IT'S ALSO BEEN TOWED 6,000 MILES." "I have a nice car to trade. It's never had a flat," says the other dealer. But the voice on the filter adds: "NATURALLY; THE TIRES ARE FILLED WITH CEMENT." "This car has had only one owner—a very gentle gray-haired old lady," and the alter ego adds: "OF COURSE, AT NIGHT WHEN SHE PUT ON HER HELMET, SHE WAS KNOWN AS MA OLDFIELD, QUEEN OF THE HOT RODS." "Is your car new?" "Of course. It's a late model," and the filter adds, "BELONGED TO THE LATE GEORGE APLEY. IN FACT, THIS CAR'S THE REASON HE IS THE LATE GEORGE APLEY."

Hardheadedness goes beyond mere sales resistance. It extends into a denial of popular illusions of romance and romanticism. Popular illusions about fame are caricatured by Paar's image of a scientist, Stanislaus Stanislaus Stanislaus, who declares solemnly: "I owe all my success to that famous Russian scientist, Boris Lavoris. He taught me that in order to invent something great you must suffer. I'll never forget his first great experiment. Boris locked himself in his laboratory and suffered—no food for fourteen days—and oh, how he suffered! And how did it affect his work? Terrible! He died." Lewis similarly debunks illusions about success in a take-off of a composer and his wife. The wife, the traditional little woman in everyman's success story, is the composer's inspiration, but paradoxically her powers lie in an infinite capacity to nag.

Popular illusion totters again when Paar dissipates the halo surrounding courtship, the marriage service, and honeymoons in his *Romance of an Usher and an Usherette.* "What was there about you that attracted me?" she asks. "It wasn't the Eyes and Ears of the World," he replies. SHE: Are you sure you love me? HE: I've loved you for a long time . . . through twenty-six musicals, thirteen double features, eight cartoons, four newsreels, and one lousy cowboy picture. SHE: Have you been unfaithful? HE: I have a confession to make. I've been unfaithful. The last time Betty Grable appeared on the screen . . . I watched. SHE: And after all we've meant to each other . . . the way you used to shower me with gifts. It was you who taught me the meaning of the word love . . . I'll never forget the first time you recharged my flashlight battery. HE: Let's get married immediately. SHE: Wonderful. Think; in a little while we can start raising a family. HE: How many children should we have? SHE: Three would be lovely . . . a tall girl for me, a tall boy for you . . . and a Selected Short Subject.

"And so," comments narrator Paar, "they were married in the Little Theater around the Corner." The minister intones with mock solemnity: "We are gathered her to join in wedlock these two young people, and so if there is anyone in this theater audience who objects, let him speak now or forever hold his stub. . . . The couple will step forward and kindly join flashlights. . . . And so with the power vested in me as head usher, I now pronounce you man and wife. Bless you, my children, and there's immediate seating in the balcony."

The couple's thoughts are of a honeymoon. "How about a short cruise around the water fountain? Or, if you don't like to travel, we can spend our honeymoon here in the orchestra," he suggests. "I have a better idea," she replies. "Let's go up to the loges . . . I like to smoke."

Narrator Paar brings things to their comic coda with: "After the ceremony they spent a lovely two weeks' honeymoon in the Paramount Theater . . . and they would have been gloriously happy but for one thing—he was in the Paramount Uptown, and she was Downtown!"

In Burrows, antiromanticism expresses itself in a repudiation of the very things which Wordsworth and other poets of the nineteenth-century Romantic School glorified. The sea is grist to Burrows' raillery. He sings: "I love songs of the sea. I guess that's 'cause I love the sea. There's nothing like it—the salt in your nostrils, the moon over the port bow, the flapping of sails in the breeze, the scream of the gulls overhead, the trade winds in your hair. I gotta try it sometime. You see, my actual sailing experience has consisted of sailing fifty-two times through the tunnel of love. But to prove I really love sailing—forty of those trips through the tunnel of love were without a girl."

Robert Bridges can sing of how the nightingale awakens poetic eloquence in Sophocles and in the sick heart of Keats. William Ernest Henley can dismiss the lark, dismiss the blackbird, to say of the nightingale: "I love him best of all." Robert Louis Stevenson can count a nightingale in the sycamore as great a blessing as meat in the hall, a bin of wine, a spice of wit, a house with lawns, a living room by the door. Robert Underwood Johnson can liken the coming of the nightingale to the coming of a lover. William Johnson Cory, eulogizing a friend, can say that one thing Death cannot take is the nightingale, the friend enjoyed in life. But to Burrows the romantic aura surrounding the nightingale dissolved into a weary joke: "I feel great—had a wonderful night's sleep—and you know why I slept so well? There's been a little nightingale singing outside my window, and last night I shot it!"

Burrows sees love as a headache rather than as a heartache and suggests that the famous song be changed to "Peg o' My Brain." The male in the Burrows songs is always in perpetual flight from the pursuit of the female. "She's waiting for me at the Church around the Corner—so please show me some place to hide." Or, "In a western picture—when the hero realizes he's in love with a girl, he does what any decent, self-respecting, well-adjusted man should do—he rides away."

The humor is a humor of revolt because it has eyes to perceive and the capacity to reproduce what it sees on its

canvas. But, unlike the humor of passionate rebellion, monumental in its indignation and expressed in the comedy of the great classic tradition—from Aristophanes through Rabelais and Mark Twain,—it lacks both depth and breadth. Some of the most crucial issues of our time go unexplored; for, when the humorists turn to politics, for instance, the sense of rebellion which was so strong against personal authority suddenly fades. Paar speaks of Senator Brewster's pulling the ocean from under Howard Hughes, and of how, on the radio last Sunday, he learned that Walter Winchell is very angry with Russia and the worst may happen—Russia may find itself completely cut off from its supply of Jergens Lotion. Or Burrows tells how in both the major political parties the ring is full of hats and how, personally, he thinks we got enough hats in the ring—how what we need now is a few heads. Or Burrows describes how every year at election time they run cartoons of donkeys and elephants. Then we go to the polls, vote, and what do we wind up with? Elephants and donkeys. Or Burrows finds that the news these days is so exciting—the elections, high prices—it's getting so he's starting to read the front page before the comics.

The new humor, it is true, continues frequently to be concerned with the stock in trade of the old humor, with comedians kidding themselves and each other, their script writers, their music conductors. And here again is the stock roll call of familiar places, with particular emphasis on that forever-commemorated comic corner of Hollywood and Vine. At times it seems, indeed, as if the newcomers were repeating the sins of their elders in their preoccupation with the close at hand—with radio itself and the periphery of radio—rather than with the comically consequential in society itself.

This limitation of outlook has kept the *enfants terribles* from being anything more than gentle satirists, for all their accuracy of observation and the tragedy it implies. Yet one note is clearly sounded: the humorists' hatred of sham is absolute. The world they have explored emerges as a world of false fronts and blatant promises, essentially arid at the core. Paar looks at this world with frisky dispassion. Burrows debunks, and searches for common sense. Lewis watches and, though critical, is not angry, for his anger is tempered by an unshakable faith that the common man is a "pretty wonderful guy."

A Survey of Film Periodicals, II: Great Britain

PETER NOBLE

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I THINK it is safe to say that Europe, and more specifically Britain, has shown during the past twenty years a far greater interest in an examination of the aesthetics of cinema than has the United States. As a consequence, distinguished international magazines like the famous *Close-up, Cinema Quarterly, Sight and Sound,* and *Film Art* have had their editorial origins in Britain, while it is in the realm of fan magazines that the United States has long assumed a dominant position. Before the outbreak of World War II, British bookstalls were flooded with gaily covered copies of *Modern Screen, Silver Screen, Photoplay* (the best of the batch), and other American fan publications, but wartime restrictions caused them to vanish from the British scene. A number of English fan publications have sprung up in the past few years, some to last for only a few issues, others to stagger along as best they can under existing paper restrictions and regulations.

Thus an over-all survey of British film periodicals and magazines at the present time would closely resemble Arthur Rosenheimer's admirable American survey which appeared earlier in the *Hollywood Quarterly*,[1] for the fan papers here now far outnumber the more serious and critical journals, which was not true ten years ago when *Close-up* and *Cinema Quarterly* flourished.

However, in spite of the shallow content and publicity "puffs" contained in the score or so of fan magazines published in England, there is a hard core of serious film journalism contained (*a*) in intelligent journals like *Penguin Film Review,* (*b*) in some of the film trade papers, and (*c*) inexplicably enough, in certain of the fan magazines themselves.

The writer would like to emulate Arthur Rosenheimer by pointing out that the listing here is as complete as it could be made under existing circumstances, when paper regulations often cause the sudden demise of apparently flourishing magazines while resulting in the almost as sudden appearance of new titles on the bookstalls. At the office of the *British Film Yearbook,* and also at the British Film Institute, every kind of film publication is carefully filed, but it is still possible that some omissions have occurred. Nevertheless, taken in conjunction with Rosenheimer's survey, this brief survey should provide as wide an examination of the subject as has ever appeared in any internationally circulated publication to date.

[1] Vol. II, No. 4, July, 1947.

General and Aesthetic

Although, as Mr. Rosenheimer pointed out, Britain has had a long and honorable record of supporting important and influential magazines dealing with the aesthetics of film, at present the only publications comparable with the *Hollywood Quarterly* are *Sight and Sound* and the *Penguin Film Review.* Even these high-quality journals, however, lack the scholarship which makes the *Quarterly* so outstanding and authoritative a medium for the expression of serious critical opinion.

Sight and Sound: Published quarterly by the British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C. 1. Price, 2/6d. per copy. Subscription, 10/6d. per annum.

Edited by Oliver Bell and R. W. Dickinson, this, as Arthur Rosenheimer remarks, is "one of the finest film magazines in the world." Founded in 1933, it is the official organ of the British Film Institute, and almost everyone of note in film making and film writing in all parts of the world has contributed to it. Originally it was intended to be privately circulated to subscribers only and designed to be read mainly by members of British Film Societies. At first modestly published along the lines of *Film Forum,* mentioned below, it soon began to make itself felt, and during the past fifteen years it has increased in scope and influence. Handsomely produced on art paper, and liberally illustrated with stills of "unusual" and foreign films, it maintains the highest standard of film criticism and today has a wide circulation both among members of Film Societies and among the general public in Britain and the United States. During the war it was forced to change its format, becoming a slender pocket-sized journal (like the American *Coronet* magazine). Since the spring of 1946, however, *Sight and Sound* has returned to its previous size and its standards are higher than ever before. Typical contributors to the most recent half-dozen issues are Eisenstein, Dilys Powell, Dr. Roger Manvell, H. H. Wollenberg, D. W. Griffith, Peter Noble, Herman G. Weinberg, Herbert Margolis, Hermine Rich Isaacs, Andrew Buchanan, Norman Wilson, Catherine de la Roche, and Rachael Low. *Sight and Sound* is, in short, the best magazine of its kind in Europe, possibly in the world, and, with the *Hollywood Quarterly, Cinema,* and the *Penguin Film Review,* makes up a quartet of indispensable contemporary literature of the screen. From time to time *Sight and Sound* publishes, as a supplement, another Index in its series on the work of such directors as Griffith, Stroheim, Chaplin, Land, Dovzhenko, Lubitsch, Flaherty, and Richter. Other supplements include such titles as *Film Music* by Hans Keller and an *Index to the Negro in the American and European Cinema* by Peter Noble.

Penguin Film Review: Published irregularly by Penguin Books, Ltd., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, and 245 Fifth Avenue, New York. Price, 1/- per copy.

Founded in the summer of 1946 by Roger Manvell, H. H. Wollenberg, and R. K. Neilson Baxter as joint editors, the *Review* has maintained the high standards set by the first number. Dr. Manvell, a distinguished figure in film circles here, and author of *Film,*

a study of film aesthetics which has been one of the most astonishingly successful books on the cinema ever published, continues his editorship, aided by Baxter and Wollenberg. Under their banner they have gathered together many fine critical pieces; the magazine is especially notable for its range of authoritative articles on the Continental cinema. To date, six issues have appeared, and Dr. Manvell is planning, as soon as paper regulations permit, to turn the Review from an "irregular" publication into a monthly. Distinguished contributors so far have included Anthony Asquith, Michael Balcon, Richard Winnington, Michael Powell, Basil Wright, Ivor Montagu, Thorold Dickinson, Dilys Powell, Edgar Anstey, E. Arnot Robertson, David Lean, and Catherine de la Roche.

Film Quarterly: Published by Pendulum Publications, Ltd., 34 Southampton Street, London, W.C. 2. Price, 2/– per copy. Subscription, 8/8d. per annum.

Edited by Peter Noble, who founded it in the summer of 1946, this quarterly has had six issues so far, and a circulation has been established which should enable it to continue indefinitely. Described by Mr. Rosenheimer as a "well-rounded little magazine," *Film Quarterly* is designed to function as a platform for serious discussion of all facets of cinema and filmic interpretation, with special reference to the work of directors, screenwriters, cinematographers, and technicians. It encourages serious new writers, and is especially interested in publishing the theories and opinions of directors, screenwriters, and others actively concerned in the production of films in all parts of the world. Contributors have included J. B. Priestley, Michael Balcon, Oswell Blakeston, Jack Lindsay, Harry Wilson, Julia Symmonds, Jean Cocteau, Louis Golding, James Agate, Roy Alexander Fowler, Peter Cotes, Oswald Frederick, and Erich von Stroheim.

Stage and Screen: Published irregularly by Pendulum Publications, Ltd., 34 Southampton Street, London, W.C. 2. Price, 2/–. Subscription, 8/8d. for four consecutive issues.

Edited and founded by Peter Noble, the first number of this magazine appeared in the spring of 1947. Like *Penguin Film Review* it is ostensibly a quarterly, although "officially" it comes under the heading of "irregular" publications. The first three numbers contain critical articles by Sir Laurence Olivier, Oswell Blakeston, Adrian Cairns, documentary film director Ken Hughes, Alan Dent, J. C. Trewin, Brian Desmond Hurst, Peter Cotes, and Hans Elsner. In general, *Stage and Screen* is an attempt to provide a magazine for intelligent filmgoers and theatergoers; the emphasis has been on the work of directors, particularly those of the Continental school of film making.

Film Forum: Published bimonthly by the Federation of Scottish Film Societies, Film House, 6/8 Hill Street, Edinburgh 2, Scotland. Price, 6 d. per copy. Subscription 3/6d. for six issues.

Edited by Norman Wilson, the organ of the Federation of Scottish Film Societies has been in existence for two years. It is primarily concerned with the art of the cinema and contains articles and reviews by leading Scottish writers on films, such as Forsyth Hardy,

Norman Wilson, C. A. Oakley, Cyril Ramsay Jones, and John Grierson. Principally concerned with the activities of the Film Societies in Scotland, it nevertheless contains lengthy film reviews and reviews of books and articles on all serious aspects of film making. Understandably, the flavor of *Film Forum* is nostalgic, since the dozen Scottish Film Societies whose work it records are engaged mainly in the exhibition of classic silent and early sound films. An "austerity" production, it nonetheless manages to cram considerable serious and useful comment into its eight or ten pages.

Screen: Published occasionally by Galgo Publications, 23 Peter Street, London, W. 1. Price, 1/6 per copy.

This well-produced journal, edited by William Reid and Helen Fraser, was founded in 1946; three copies have appeared so far. Its objects are "to produce a review covering all aspects of the film world, to widen the critical attitude of cinemagoers and to provide an adequate section on international films and the documentary." Like *Film Quarterly* and *Stage and Screen,* it is serious and intelligent without attempting to be high-brow or scholarly. Its appeal is mainly to the more enlightened filmgoer; articles so far have been by such writers as Roger Burford, Harry Wilson, Peter Graham Scott, and Roy and John Boulting. Special attention is given to British film production, though the first three issues give the impression of a divided editorial policy. It would seem that if the proportion of "personality" articles and gossip features increases, or at any rate persists, *Screen* will become rather a better-quality fan magazine than a promising serious journal, as it is at present.

Sequence: Published quarterly by the Oxford University Film Society, Somerville College, Oxford, England.

This quarterly, the organ of the Oxford University Film Society, is edited by a trio of undergraduates—Lindsay Anderson, Penelope Houston, and Peter Ericsson. It is the most promising new serious cinema publication since *Cinema Quarterly* and *Close-up.* Recent articles include studies of John Ford and essays by Lord David Cecil, G. D. H. Cole, Gavin Lambert and the three editors. It is a beautifully illustrated and wholly admirable publication.

The British Screen: Published occasionally at 15 Arnos Grove Court, London, N. 11. Price 1/6 per copy.

Founded with the object of providing a magazine to be exclusively concerned with the more serious aspects of British films, this journal is edited by Peter Noble. Essays on directors and their work, film and book reviews, studies of leading personalities in British pictures, and well-written critical articles by distinguished writers are the chief features. There are film and book reviews. The current issue contains work by Basil Wright, Paul Rotha, Herbert Lom, Ralph Keene, Sydney Box, James Mason, Oswell Blakeston, and others.

Film Reviews

Monthly Film Bulletin: Published monthly by the British Film Institute. 15/– per annum.

A sister publication to *Sight and Sound,* the *Bulletin* provides most sat-

isfactory reviewing of all films exhibited in Great Britain. Complete production details of each film are provided, as well as cast lists. The reviews are brilliant, concise, and extraordinarily perceptive, written by the distinguished team of reviewers employed by the British Film Institute. Particular attention is paid to the audience-suitability of each film (and no punches are pulled). Documentaries, shorts, and educational films are all examined with equal care in a journal which is indispensable to the serious filmgoer. An index to the work of directors whose films have been reviewed during the last twelve monthly issues appears at the end of each year.

Focus: Published monthly by the Catholic Film Society, 69 Sumner Place Mews, S.W. 7. Price, 6d. monthly. Subscription, 7/– per annum.

Intended for Catholic readers, this monthly review contains detailed but inexpert criticisms of releases of the month, particular attention being paid to aspects of especial Catholic interest. Films are often criticized for not conforming to the moral criteria of the Catholic Church, while inevitably such productions as *Going My Way* and *The Bells of St. Mary's* receive lavish praise for their friendly delineation of Catholic priests and for their particular religious viewpoint. At one time the magazine was known as the *Catholic Film News,* but apparently the editors are now endeavouring to widen its scope, calling it, in full, *Focus: A Film Review.*

Contemporary Cinema: Published monthly at The Vicarage, Thornton-le-Fylde, Near Blackpool. Price, 6d. per issue. Subscription, 7/– per annum.

Edited by the Rev. Gordon Ledwell Wheeler, this is the monthly organ of the Church of England Films Commission, and describes itself as a "Christian review of the films." There are general articles of interest to intelligent filmgoers, some good reviews by Roger Manvell—with no apparent religious bias,—and occasional articles dealing specifically with religious films by such pioneers of the religious film movement as J. Arthur Rank, the Rev. Brian Hession, and Norman Walker. The editor seems genuinely interested in cinema itself rather than cinema for propaganda purposes.

Technical and Craft Publications

The Cine-Technician: Published bimonthly at 2 Soho Square, London, W. 1. Subscription only: 6/– per annum.

Edited by Harold Myers, the journal of the trade union, the Association of Cine-Technicians, was founded in 1935 to perform the functions of linking film technicians, providing an outlet for their views, helping them in their work, and through them benefiting the British film industry generally. During its thirteen years of existence practically every producer, director, writer, and leading technician in the British film industry has contributed to the magazine, and it maintains an extremely high standard of content. Understandably, most of each issue is concerned with technical and trade union activities, but there are, in addition, well-written articles on all facets of film production, both British and foreign, and a particularly well-developed

book section. No film reviews are included. The illustrations are varied, though mainly shots of films in production in British studios.

British Kinematography: Published quarterly by the British Kinematograph Society, 2 Dean Street, London, W. 1. Subscription only: 15/- per annum.

Edited by R. Howard Cricks, this quarterly magazine is the journal of the British Kinematograph Society, and is highly technical. Mainly concerned with the technical developments in cinematography, it occasionally has articles on more general aspects of film production. Its tone is learned, authoritative, and especially suitable for those who are interested in the engineering aspects of film production.

The Scientific Film: Published monthly at 34 Soho Square, London, W. 1. Subscription to the general public, 3/- per annum.

The journal of the Scientific Film Association, a monthly bulletin, is issued free to members. In 1943 the Scientific Films Committee of the Association of Scientific Workers formed a new body, the Scientific Film Association, to promote through films a wider understanding of science and of the scientific outlook. The first president was Arthur Elton; he was followed by Basil Wright, who also edits the bulletin. Membership of the association includes some forty Scientific Film Societies and several hundred individual members

Film Industry: Published monthly at 136 Wardour Street, London, W. 1. Price, 1/- per issue. Subscription, 12/6 per annum.

This slim, not very well produced, austerity magazine was founded in July, 1946, apparently intended primarily to be a record of British film production for our film workers and technicians. Most of the articles are written around productions currently on the floor of our studios; occasionally a more general article by a member of the British film industry appears. Interesting features are the lists of production credits of all British films, the lists of casting credits, and detailed reviews of new British films. Strongly partisan, this magazine should be read in conjunction with the established trade papers, especially the official technical journal *The Cine-Technician,* the views and policies of which it often opposes.

Trade Publications

The Cinema: Published weekly at 93/95 Wardour Street, London, W. 1. Price, 1/- per issue. Subscription, 30/- per annum.

Now in its thirty-seventh year, this publication, edited by L. H. Clark, possesses the largest circulation of any British film trade journal. It is racily written, containing up-to-the-minute news and gossip and an extremely good Studio Section edited by C. A. Williamson, one of Britain's leading film trade journalists. Apart from his excellent, comprehensive feature dealing with productions currently on the studio floor, there are reviews and "lightning guides" for exhibitors, written strictly from the "popular" angle. Serious, intelligent, or "arty" productions get short shrift from this paper, as from all trade journals. "Good family booking," "stimulating entertainment for good-class cinemas," and "sure-fire musical"

are typical of the snappy reviews encountered. There are very few outside contributions. The editorials are written by the proprietor, Samuel Harris, in a slightly hysterical style which he has made peculiarly his own.

Cinema and Theatre: Published monthly by Hutchinson's Periodicals, Ltd., 10 Great Queen Street, London, W.C. 2. Price, 1/6d. per issue. Subscription, 20/– per annum.

Founded in 1946, this is rapidly becoming one of the best of our trade journals, and also possesses a certain popular appeal through its regularly featured "profile" and "personality" articles on leading figures in British film production. It also contains articles on British and American directors, features on studios and film production, reviews of current Hollywood and British releases, a technical section, a 16-mm section, and several other features of interest to exhibitors. Smaller in format than the other trade papers, it is nevertheless well illustrated and well produced, and seems likely, before very long, to rival the more established periodicals.

Daily Film Renter: Published at 127 Wardour Street, London, W. 1. By subscription only: £2 per annum.

Edited by Ernest Fredman, this slim trade journal has in the past few years been published only three times a week instead of, as before the war, daily. Strictly for exhibitors and film trade personnel, it specializes in news items dealing with the British and American industries, giving up-to-the-minute information about new developments. News, fair; no articles; a limited appeal.

Kinematograph Weekly: Published weekly by Odhams Press, Ltd., 93 Long Acre, London, W.C. 2. Price, 1/6d. per issue. Subscription, 50/– per annum.

Edited by Connery Chappell and A. L. Carter, Britain's best-established trade journal is reliable, conservative, informative, fairly sober as trade papers go, and gives adequate space to world film production. Everyone of note in the British film industry has contributed articles from time to time; it is occasionally controversial, and always interesting. As Mr. Rosenheimer points out, all trade papers are vociferously engaged in "selling" pictures to exhibitors, and while inevitably all the American journals believe that Hollywood makes the greatest motion pictures, British trade papers naturally feel that the most praiseworthy productions always emanate from Denham, Pinewood, Shepperton, or Elstree. *"Kine Weekly"* tries hard to steer a careful middle course, although it tends slightly to favour home production. Its outstanding feature is the weekly review of current releases in Britain by the famous "Josh" Billings, a man reputed to have his finger well and truly on the filmgoing public's pulse. The editorials are usually serious, sober, and fair-minded. It is highly recommended for any student of film production.

Today's Cinema: Published at 93/95 Wardour Street, London, W. 1. Price, 6d. per issue. Subscription, 25/– per annum.

Edited by L. H. Clark, published only three times a week during the past few years, *Today's Cinema* presents

mainly news of productions on the floor in Hollywood and Britain and items of gossip about leading figures in British production and exhibition. Reviews based on trade showings are featured with studio news by C. A. Williamson. The valuable content of the three weekly issues may usually be found in *Cinema,* a sort of omnibus volume issued weekly by the same publishers.

Show World: Published weekly at 14 Irving Street, London, W.C. 2. Price, 4d. per issue.

Edited by Frank Woolf, this approximates to the American *Billboard,* but contains a special section on British film production. There are notes and news, production details of films on the floor, and occasional reviews of outstanding British films.

Documentary and Nontheatrical Publications

Documentary Newsletter: Published monthly by the Film Centre, 34 Soho Square, London, W. 1. Price, 6d. per copy. Subscription, 12/6 per annum.

With the January, 1948, issue, *Documentary Newsletter* takes the name *Documentary News.* Edited by David Boulting, this excellent journal, the official mouthpiece of the British documentary film movement, has an editorial board consisting of the movement's leading figures (Stephen Ackroyd, Donald Alexander, Max Anderson, Edgar Anstey, Geoffrey Bell, Ken Cameron, Paul Fletcher, Sinclair Road, Graham Tharp, and Basil Wright). First published in 1940, it has steadily grown in size and influence and is now a well-produced, widely read, and authoritative magazine. There are articles on modern documentary, a particularly constructive review section, and a comprehensive book review section. Intelligent, hard-hitting, controversial, sociological, *Documentary Newsletter* is to the documentary movement what *Sight and Sound* is to the larger spheres of film activity.

The F.D.F.U. Bulletin: Published monthly at 2 Soho Square, London, W. 1. Subscription only: 2/6d. per annum.

The organ of the Federation of Documentary Film Units is issued monthly to members only, and is concerned with certain facets of British documentary film production. Recommended only if read in conjunction with *Documentary Newsletter.*

Monthly Review: Published monthly by the Information Department, Films Division, Central Office of Information, Malet Street, London, W.C. 1. Issued free, to subscribers only.

Now in its second year, this review was founded as a broadsheet, detailing month by month the activities of the Films Division of the British Central Office of Information, the wartime Ministry of Information. It has grown into a well-produced monthly magazine, printed on paper of good quality with excellent illustrations. The distribution in October, 1936, was 150 copies; the circulation today is approximately 1,000 copies and the demand is still growing. Edited by R. E. Tritton, the Director of the C.O.I. Films Division, and Marjorie Catch, its Information Officer, this journal publishes articles by leading writers on documentary and nontheatrical produc-

tions. Among the recent contributors are Cyril Ramsay Jones, John Maddison, Hugh Stewart, Catherine de la Roche, Muir Mathieson, Raymond del Castillo, Forsyth Hardy, and Marie Seton. Documentary releases are reviewed at length, stating full production credits and details. In addition, there are sections of British studio news and well-written book reviews.

Mini-Cinema: Published quarterly at 93/95 Wardour Street, London, W. 1. Price, 2/6d. per issue. Subscription, 11/– per annum.

This quarterly, published by the proprietors of *Today's Cinema* and *The Cinema,* is also edited by L. H. Clark. It is concerned entirely with 16-mm film production and distribution; it gives details about new 16-mm films and reports developments in both the professional and the amateur fields. It is directed to the many hundreds of British 16-mm exhibitors, the exhibitors who make a practice of showing films in mobile cinemas to the tiny villages and rural communities in the North, West, and South of England. Well produced and illustrated, it contains reviews of new 16-mm releases and features an extensive technical section.

The Film User: Published monthly by Current Affairs, Ltd., 19 Charing Cross Road, London, W.C. 2. Subscription, 10/– per annum.

Edited by Bernard Dolman, this monthly, formerly known as *The 16 mil. Film User,* incorporates the *Higher Education Gazette.* Its presentation of 16-mm production and distribution does not emphasize the educational uses of 16-mm sufficiently to justify its inclusion under the heading of "Educational Magazines."

Educational Magazines

Look and Listen: Published monthly at 30 Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4. Price, 1/6d. per issue. Subscription, 20/– per annum.

Formerly known as *Educational Screen,* this well-produced and well-written journal provides information to educators about the availability and usability of nontheatrical films. It reports fully the increasing use of audio-aids in the classroom, and is designed to serve the needs of individual teachers as well as a wide variety of educational establishments. Published occasionally are articles by well-known figures in the British film industry, but the bulk of the material is supplied by educational writers and theoreticians.

Educational Film Bulletin: Published at 2 Newton Place, Glasgow. Price, 1/– per issue. Subscription, 13/– per annum.

The organ of the Scottish Educational Film Association, it is mainly interested in nontheatrical films as teaching aids in the Scottish schools. Modestly produced, it should be read in conjunction with *Look and Listen;* it is written and edited entirely from the point of view of film's immediate educational utility.

Amateur Magazines

Amateur Cine-World: Published quarterly by Link House Publications, Ltd., 24 Store Street, London, W.C. 1. Price, 7d. per issue. Subscription, 2/10 per annum.

Founded in 1934 and incorporated with *The Miniature Camera World,*

this is the only journal in Britain specializing in amateur film production. It gives regular news of the activities of the many amateur film production groups now working in England and Scotland and features a film review section written from the amateur's point of view and many excellently written technical articles by leading experts. It is illustrated with scenes from films made by amateur groups.

Fan Magazines

Although British fan journals cannot approach in size and scope the truly amazing American variety, there have grown up in the past few years, and especially in the wartime period, more than a dozen new publications specifically directed to the "fan." British fan magazines differ in many ways from the American, for the embarrassing and often laughable "private life" features made popular by the United States fan magazines are not encouraged, owing to the much more severe libel laws of Britain. Most British fan magazines follow a certain pattern. There are news and views of the stars, and details of new and forthcoming films from Hollywood and Britain. In addition there are a number of "personality" articles, potted biographies, life stories, and occasionally critical articles on aspects of film production (though these are lamentably few). Most magazines also carry a film-review feature, though here again the influence of the studio "handouts" is all too painfully obvious. Eulogistic throughout, with only one or two exceptions, British fan magazines exert no influence over film production, and serve only to keep the uneducated filmgoers up to date with news of their favorite stars.

These magazines are so similar that there is no point in describing them separately except for *Picturegoer and Film Weekly.*

Picturegoer and Film Weekly: Published fortnightly by Odhams Press, Ltd., 185 High Holborn, London, W.C. 1. Price, 3d. per issue.

Edited by Maurice Cowan, *Picturegoer and Film Weekly* manages to print in each issue one or two articles that are calculated to appeal to the more intelligent types of film fan. Lionel Collier, an experienced and respected film critic in Britain, conducts a shrewd and eminently readable feature, the best in British fan journalism and up to the standard of most of our newspaper criticism. W. H. Mooring's Hollywood column is sober and intelligent. *Picturegoer* used to be a fairly innocuous fan magazine, but at the outbreak of war it was incorporated with a sister publication, *Film Weekly,* long known as one of the most authoritative of the popular film journals in Europe. The influence of the latter on the joint publication is apparent, and although *Picturegoer and Film Weekly* is not, perhaps, up to the standard of the prewar *Film Weekly,* it is undoubtedly Britain's leading popular film journal and has a very wide circulation.

Picture Show and Film Pictorial: Edited by Maud Hughes and published fortnightly by Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4. Price, 3d.

Film Illustrated Monthly: Edited by John Rowe and published at 87 Park Drive, London, N. 21. Price, 1/3d. per issue.

Film Monthly Review: Edited by Norman G. Marcus at 50 Aylestone Avenue, London, N.W. 6. Price, 9d.

Film Feature: Edited by Jack Gourley at 144 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow. Monthly price, 1/–.

Film Shot: Edited at 8 Springfield Avenue, Hereford. Bimonthly. Price, 2/–/.

Screen Review: Edited by Stanley Williams, at 6A North End Road, London, W. 14. Monthly price, 9d.

Motion Picture Journal: Edited by James Stott at 268 Ripondon Road, Oldham, Lancs. Bimonthly. Price, 9d.

Close-up: For the Filmgoer: Edited by Dail Ambler at 480 Kings Road, Chelsea, S.W. 10. Monthly price, 1/–.

Film Mirror: Edited by William Harris and published monthly by Beveney Publications, 6 Monmouth Street, London, W.C. 2. Price, 4d.

Movie Mag: Edited by Eric Hale and David Boyce and published bimonthly at 23/28 Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4. Price, 1/–.

Filmfare: Edited by Richard McDermott at 27 East Hill, London, S.W. 18. Quarterly price, 1/6d.

Film Book Club Newsletter: Edited by Peter Noble and published by Pendulum Publications, Ltd., 34 Southampton Street, London, W.C. 2. Monthly: issued free to members of the Film Book Club. Subscription for nonmembers: 3/– per annum.

World Film Digest: Edited by William Harris and published bimonthly by Beveney Publications, 6 Monmouth Street, London, W.C. 2. Price, 6d.

Transatlantic Stars: Edited by Raymond Leader, and published by Pendulum Publications, Ltd., at 34 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C. 2. Quarterly. Price, 1/6d.

See: Edited by Gordon Ledwell Wheeler, and published monthly at Beechwood, Carleton, Near Blackpool, Lancs. Price, 1/–.

Band Wagon: Edited by Norman Kark and published monthly at Grand Buildings, Trafalgar Square, London, W.C. 2. Price, 1/6d. per issue. (This magazine also deals with theater, vaudeville, and radio.)

Screen Time: Edited at 197 Wardour Street, W. 1. Occasionally. Price, 1/6d.

Screen Stories: Edited by Jim Cooper and Douglas Endersby, at Barrett House, Barrett Street, W. 1. Bimonthly. Price, 6d.

YEARBOOKS

Kinematograph Yearbook: Published annually by Odhams Press, 93 Long Acre, London, W.C. 2.

This remarkable publication, like the leading trade paper, *Kinematograph Weekly,* is edited by Connery Chappell and A. L. Carter and published by Odhams Press. Founded thirty-five years ago, it emphasizes the exhibiting aspects of the industry. A full list of cinema theaters in Great Britain, with complete details on characteristics such as seating capacity, makes up almost half the book. It contains large sections on 16-mm exhibition and on cinema equipment, a general trade directory, a list of film companies, a list of trade organizations, a list of all films released

during the year, both British and foreign, and an inadequate 40-page Who's Who which includes leading persons in motion picture production and exhibition. This yearbook is the standard work of reference for exhibitors and has a certain degree of interest for the journalist.

British Film Yearbook: Published annually by Skelton Robinson, 22 Chancery Lane, London, W.C. 2.

Now in its third year, this yearbook edited by Peter Noble is specifically concerned with British film production. The biographical index of more than 200 pages includes 2,000 biographies of actors, writers, producers, directors, production executives, leading figures in the industry and, in fact, from all facets of British film. The plans for next year's volume call for some 3,000 names in the biographical index. Resembling in format Quigley's *Motion Picture Almanac,* each issue contains articles, chapters, and essays by leading figures in British film. The 1948–1949 edition, now in press, contains articles by Sir Stafford Cripps, Sir Alexander Korda, Brian Desmond Hurst, Michael Balcon, James Mason, Dilys Powell, David Niven, Basil Wright, David Lean, Sir Henry French, Anatole de Grunwald, Oliver Bell, and Sir Philip Warter. The reference section provides a complete list, with full production and casting credits, of every British film released during the year, feature length, short, and documentary. There are complete lists of production companies, studios, and distributing companies, as well as sections on producers, directors, screenwriters, art directors, composers, sound engineers, film editors, publicists, and 16-mm developments.

Unclassified

There are a number of publications dealing exclusively with films which cannot be classified under any of the above headings. The first is *Film and Fashion,* edited by W. H. Handley, which mainly discusses British and Hollywood films from the fashion angle. Liberally illustrated with photographs of film stars in new dresses and costumes from their films, it mainly appeals to women fans. Bimonthly price, 2/–.

British Picture News is published by the J. Arthur Rank Organization, Imperial House, Air Street, London, W. 1. It is not sold in Britain, being for export only. It is a large and lavishly produced fan magazine, concerned naturally with Rank productions and Rank stars, which means, in fact, two-thirds of current British film activity and personnel. This will soon be joined by a magazine, as yet untitled, from the Korda Organization, also for export only, and even more lavishly produced, we are promised.

Finally, there are two publications specifically designed for children. The first is the *Gaumont British Junior Club News and Views,* the monthly organ of the G. B. Childrens Cinema Club, and issued free to members. Published at 52 Haymarket, London, S.W. 1. The other is the *O.N.C.C. Monthly Review,* the monthly magazine of the Odeon National Cinema Clubs for Boys and Girls. Edited by L. V. Barnett and published at Empire House, St. Martins-le-Grand, London, E.C. 1, it is issued free to members only.

A Survey of Film Periodicals, III: France (as of November 1, 1947)

L'I.D.H.E.C.*

THIS LIST was prepared by the director of the remarkable library of *L'Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques* in Paris, a graduate professional school that is also a center of technical, historical, and psychological research. The periodicals having outstanding interest for students of film are briefly described.

General and Aesthetic

Cinéma: Cahiers de l'I.D.H.E.C. (Chapbooks of the Institute of Advanced Motion Pictures Studies): Published at irregular intervals. Editorial offices: I.D.H.E.C., 6 rue de Penthièvre, Paris VIII.

Bulletin de l'I.D.H.E.C. (Bulletin of the Institute of Advanced Motion Picture Studies): Editor-in-chief: Jean Debrix. Business office: I.D.H.E.C., 6 rue de Penthièvre, Paris VIII. Foreign subscriptions: Ten issues, 325 francs (Fr. Postal Acct. No. Paris 555–79).

This magazine publishes very full studies on all problems of the aesthetics and techniques of motion pictures. In each number there appears, in the form of a filmographic file card developed by l'I.D.H.E.C., a detailed study of an important new film, French or foreign, and a considerable amount of background material.

La Revue du Cinéma: Monthly. Business office: 20 Place de la Madeleine, Paris VIII. Foreign subscriptions: 6 months, 700 francs (Fr. Postal Acct. No. Paris 5670–48).

This is a journal of high literary quality and impeccable physical format. On its pages, specialists discuss all aspects of film as a mode of expression: film making, history of the films, problems of design, sound, and music. Moreover, *La Revue* publishes interesting film criticism with respect to film aesthetics. It has correspondents in London, New York, and Hollywood.

Revue Internationale de Filmologie: Quarterly. Business office: 92 Champs-Elysées, Paris VIII. Foreign subscriptions: 3 issues, 600 francs.

This is the organ of a movement devoted to crystallizing the philosophic concepts of motion picture art and to placing them within the framework of the major thought disciplines. These profound studies, combined with research tending to create a rational and entirely new terminology, are proof of the interest now being taken in films, within a sphere which still remains foreign to them.

Technical Publications

La Technique Cinématographique: Bimonthly. Business office: 122 avenue de Wagram, Paris XVII. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 1,000 francs (Fr. Postal Acct. No. Paris 156–326).

Sciences et Industries Photographiques: Monthly. Business office: 165

* An article on the *Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques,* by Charles Boyer, appeared in Vol. I, No. 3, of the *Hollywood Quarterly.*

rue de Sèvres, Paris XV. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 850 francs (Fr. Postal Acct. No. Paris 38–178).

Trade Publications

Le Film Français: Weekly. Business office: 29 avenue Matignon, Paris VIII. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 900 francs (Fr. Postal Acct. No. Paris 4254–49).

This weekly provides trade news about motion picture production and exhibition. It publishes lists of technical material for the use of distributors and exhibitors.

La Cinématographie Française: Weekly. Business office: 29 rue Marsoulan, Paris VIII. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 900 francs (Fr. Postal Acct. No. Paris 706–90).

Le Courrier du Centre: Monthly. Business office: 2 avenue Matignon, Paris VIII. Foreign subscription: One year, 900 francs. In combination with *Le Film Français,* 1,500 francs (Fr. Postal Acct. No. Paris 4254–47).

Le Cinéopse: Monthly. Business office: 73 boulevard de Grenelle, Paris XV.

Fan Publications

L'Ecran Français: Weekly. Editorial and business offices: 100 rue Réaumur, Paris II. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 700 francs (Fr. Postal Acct. No. 5067–78), or $6.00, through Harold J. Salemson, Box 1621, Hollywood 28, California.

This is the best informed of the mass-circulation film magazines. It publishes in each issue articles concerning the aesthetics and techniques of motion pictures, as well as serious criticism of all recently released films.

Cinévie: Weekly. Business office: 17 rue de Marignan, Paris VIII. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 960 francs (Fr. Post. Acct. No. Paris 4837–26).

Cinémonde: Weekly. Business office: 2 avenue Matignon, Paris VIII. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 1,160 francs (Fr. Post. Acct. No. Paris 1299–15).

Cinévogue: Weekly. Business office: 2 avenue Matignon, Paris VIII. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 1,150 francs (Fr. Post. Acct. No. Paris 1299–15).

Paris-Hollywood: Bimonthly. Business office: 2 avenue Matignon, Paris VIII. Foreign subscriptions: 6 months, 400 francs.

Ciné-Miroir: Weekly. Business office: 13 rue d'Enghien, Paris I. Foreign subscriptions: 6 months, 650 francs (Fr. Post. Acct. No. Paris 426–15).

Films Magazine: Weekly. Director, Paul Plançon: 76 rue de la Pompe, Paris XVI. Subscriptions through Editions Filmagazine, 90 Cours Vitton, Lyon (Rhône).

Pour Vous: Weekly. Business office: 5 rue du Faubourg-Poissonière, Paris II. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 950 francs (Fr. Post. Acct. No. Paris 4812–45).

Stars: Le Guide des Spectacles (The Guide to Show Business): Monthly. Business office: 49 avenue d'Iéna, Paris XVI. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 700 francs.

Educational Film Publications

Films et Documents: Monthly. Business office: 10 rue Ducouëdic, Paris XIV. (Fr. Post. Acct. No. Paris 711–32.)

Film et Famille: Monthly. 19 rue des Ponts-de-Comine, Lille (Nord).

Ciné-Club Publications

Ciné-Club: Monthly. Organ of the French Federation of Ciné-Clubs. Business office: 2 rue de l'Elysée, Paris VIII. (Fr. Post. Acct. No. Paris 5397–81.)

Bulletin du Ciné-Club de La Maison des Lettres: Monthly. 143 rue Bois-Denier, Tours (Indre-et-Loire).

Amateur-Cinema Publications

Photo-Revue: Monthly. Editions de Francia, 118 rue d'Assas, Paris VI. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 220 francs (Fr. Post. Acct. No. Paris 4632–28).

8, 5, 16: Official Organ of the French Amateur Film-makers' Club. Business office: 9 avenue de Montespan, Paris XVI.

Cinéma-Amateur: Monthly. Editorial and business offices: 8 rue de la Michodière, Paris II. Foreign price per issue: 90 francs (Fr. Post. Acct. No. Paris 5503–70).

Photo-Cinéma: Monthly. Business office: 189 rue Saint-Jacques, Paris V.

News Services

France-Film Informations: Weekly. Agence d'Informations Cinégraphiques, 40 rue des Martyrs, Paris VII. Foreign subscriptions: One year, 300 francs.

Archives Internationales "Pharos." Business office: 2 boulevard Montmartre, Paris IX. (Fr. Post. Acct. No. Paris 22–76–30.)

The British Cinema Audience

MARK ABRAMS

MARK ABRAMS, economist and writer, is Managing Director of Research Services, Limited, a market and social research organization in London. His recent publications include *The Condition of the British People, 1911–1945*, and *Britain and Her Export Trade*.

IN THE YEAR 1946 the British public provided cinema box offices throughout the country with $484,000,000[1]—roughly one-fifth of the nation's annual clothing bill, one-seventh of its yearly outlay on rent and light, or one-thirteenth of what is paid for food. Altogether the British people spent on movies just under 2 per cent of its total expenditure on all consumer goods and services.

So much and no more the British Treasury tells us about motion picture audiences in Great Britain. Until recently nothing else was available. But in the first five months of 1947 a revealing survey was carried out on behalf of Hulton Publications, the publishers of some half dozen magazines, including the British equivalent of *Life*. The survey began as a straightforward readership study, but the questionnaire was extended to cover most forms of leisure activity—reading, drinking, gambling, gardening, holidays, smoking, filmgoing, ownership of pets, use of cosmetics, etc. The survey ended by providing a full picture of the pattern of the ordinary, commonplace life of the British people.

The sample used for the enquiry consisted of 10,200 persons at least 16 years of age. It reflected as accurately as possible the known characteristics of the total adult population in terms of age, sex, economic status, region, size of community, and marital status.

The over-all results from the questions dealing with filmgoing show that in an average week British adults[2] buy 26,000,000 tickets at the box offices of Britain's 4,800 cinema houses. This means that the average cinema takes $1,940 per week and sells 6,250 admission tickets at an average price of 30 cents.[3]

Who are the adults who buy these 26,000,000 tickets each week? According to the survey, the tickets are bought by a little more than half the adults in the country—by only 19,000,000 out of the total adult population of 36,000,000. The survey shows that in an average week nearly half the adults in the country do not go to a movie. On the other hand, one adult in every five goes at least twice each week, thus accounting for just more than half of all tickets sold weekly.

How often do these British adults go to the cinema? What the Hulton Survey has to say is presented in the first table given below (p. 156).

Thus, for 44 per cent of the adult population, going to the movies is a regular item in the weekly schedule of relaxation; for another 43 per cent it is very much of an exception; and for a

[1] Rate of exchange—throughout this article British monetary values have been converted at the rate of £1 = $4.

[2] Adults in this article are defined as people aged 16 years or more.

[3] These figures for the average week of the average cinema include an allowance for 4,000,000 tickets sold each week to children.

final 13 per cent the cinema is still part of an unknown world.

The figures show no appreciable differences in the moviegoing habits of men and of women; the really striking contrasts are those between the rich and the poor and the old and the young; the working class and the young unmarried provide far and away the greater part of the money going into the box offices.

Frequency of cinema visits	*Per cent of adult population*	*Per cent of adult males*	*Per cent of adult females*
Twice a week, or more..	19	18	20
Once a week.....	25	24	26
Once or twice a month..	20	20	19
Three or four times a year	23	23	24
Never	13	15	11
Total.....	100	100	100

The survey divided the population into three main economic groups: upper, middle, and lower.[4] Their moviegoing habits are not identical. The typical member of the higher income group is apparently satisfied if he gets to the movies once every two or three weeks. The appetite of the average worker is more voracious. In the lower income group there is admittedly a small section which, mainly because of old age or poverty, never goes to the movies; but apart from these stay-at-homes the working classes flock to the movies with such avidity that they account for more than 70 per cent of the average audience. A tabulation shows:

Frequency of cinema visits	*Upper* (Per cent)	*Middle* (Per cent)	*Lower* (Per cent)
Twice a week, or more.	9	14	22
Once a week.....	23	27	25
Once or twice a month.	27	24	17
Three or four times a year	32	26	21
Never	9	9	15
Total.....100		100	100

Even more interesting are the results of the survey dealing with the habits of the various age groups. Among the youngest adults, those less than 25 years of age and mainly unmarried boys and girls living at home with their parents, the cinema is a weekly "must." For those adults, however, who have reached their forties the figures are very different. Either they have outgrown the movies or they have never got used to them, or they are too busy—whatever the reason, more than half of them go to a movie less than once a month.

	Age group			
Frequency of cinema visits	*16–24* (Per cent)	*25–34* (Per cent)	*35–44* (Per cent)	*45 & over* (Per cent)
Twice a week or more.....	46	22	15	10
Once a week.....	31	31	29	19
Once or twice a month	15	24	22	18
Three or four times a year	6	18	25	31
Never	2	5	9	22
Total	100	100	100	100

So far we have looked at the moviegoing habits of particular age groups and particular income groups. We have seen that the most striking contrast is between the young and the old. What this amounts to from the point of view of those who make and sell films is that there is not one adult population; there are three—the 15,900,000 who go to the cinema frequently (once a week or more), the 15,500,000 who go occasionally (less than once a week), and the 4,600,000 who never go. At a first glance

[4] Upper—people living in households where the head of the family earns more than $2,600 per annum; this group forms 13.4 per cent of the population. Middle—people living in households where the head of the family earns between $1,400 and $2,600; 20.6 per cent of the population. Lower—people living in households where the head of the family earns less than $1,400; 66.3 per cent of the population.

the most distinctive mark of these three populations is their age composition. The "frequent patrons" population is outstandingly young; half of them are less than 35 years of age. At the other extreme, the nonpatrons, we find that three out of every four are more than 44 years of age.

Age group	*Frequent patrons* (Per cent)	*Occasional patrons* (Per cent)	*Nonpatrons* (Per cent)
16–24	25	7	2
25–34	25	20	9
35–44	22	24	16
45 or more	28	49	73
Total	100	100	100

There are, however, other traits and habits which help to set the identity of each of the three populations. Among the 15,900,000 adults who go to the movies at least once a week are to be found most of the readers of the tabloid and novelette press, most of the men who gamble, and most of the women who are lavish in their use of cosmetics. To some degree, some of these attributes are functions of age; but whatever the causal relationships, it remains true that the patrons of the cinema constitute a segment of the adult population with its own peculiar interests, habits, and tastes.

There are eight morning papers which are published in London and read throughout the country. Most of them have much the same penetration among each of the three adult populations. The one outstanding exception is the *Daily Mirror*. This paper is tabloid, both in size and make-up. Normally, half its space is taken up with comic strips, pictures, advertisements, and sports; the rest is made up, in roughly equal parts, of news stories and features, both with a heavy accent on "human interest." This is the daily newspaper of 27 per cent of those who go to the movies at least once a week. The *Mirror*'s score among the rest of the population is a bare 17 per cent.

The nation's Sunday tabloid, the *Pictorial,* is even more attractive to the moviegoing population; one in every three of them read it regularly. In content the *Pictorial* has stiff competition from the *News of the World,* the only newspaper in the world with a "certified net sale exceeding 7,000,000 copies per issue." It is the regular Sunday newspaper of 55 per cent of our film-fan population. Here are the headlines of half a dozen stories taken at random from the current issue: "Inge Petersen Had Secret Men Friends"; "Baby Burned in Bin: Mother on Probation"; "Doctor's Wife Wouldn't Give Up Girl Friend"; "Child in Cave Tragedy: Girl of 13 Accused"; "Trail of Blood Led to One-Legged Man"; "Wants to Wed Man Who Attacked Her."

Both these Sunday newspapers are, of course, read by persons who are not film fans, but the *Pictorial* reaches only 20 per cent of them and the *News of the World* only 40 per cent.

The same pattern runs through magazine reading. Periodicals which tend to avoid the use of words (e.g., *Picture Post* and *Illustrated*) find their greatest support among the devoted patrons of

READING HABITS OF THE THREE ADULT POPULATIONS

Periodical	*Frequent film patrons*	*Occasional film patrons*	*Nonpatrons*
Daily Mirror	27	17	17
News of the World	55	37	47
Sunday Pictorial	31	21	19
Picture Post	29	26	15
Illustrated	18	15	8
Woman	11	7	4
Woman's Own	10	6	4
Men Only	7	5	2
True Romances	4	1	1

films. When it comes to magazines still largely based on the printed word, their preference is for such titles as *Woman, Woman's Own, Men Only,* and *True Romances.* All of these have substantial circulations, but not one of them is read by as much as 10 per cent of those who are not film fans.

In another leisure activity, gambling, the three populations again lead different lives. Gambling in Britain is largely a male habit and the two commonest forms of gambling are based on greyhound racing and football. Each week more than 11,000,000 persons—nearly a third of Britain's adults—fill in a football coupon. They aim to forecast the results of a dozen or so major league games. The average stake is 10 cents and the possible winnings anything up to $150,000. Film fans, more than others, are prone to indulge in these pursuits. Almost half the male film fans send in football-pool coupons every week, and one in every eight of them also finds time to visit a dog-track. Of the "nonpatrons" roughly two-thirds have no truck with either pursuit.

	Frequent film patrons (Per cent)	*Occasional film patrons* (Per cent)	*Nonpatrons* (Per cent)
Take chances in football pools	45	36	31
Go to dog tracks	12	8	6
Neither	51	61	67
Total	108[a]	105	104

[a] These figures relate to men only; the totals are greater than 100 per cent because some men both fill in coupons and go racing.

It is difficult to find a precise female equivalent for gambling. Perhaps the use of make-up expresses something of the same impulse: to gain considerable returns from neglible investments. Whereas the young man hopes that 10 cents on the Rangers will bring him $100,000, his sister—particularly if she is a film fan—may hope that 25 cents on mascara will bring her a husband. The truth is that, irrespective of age, the woman film fan is a much heavier user of cosmetics than is the woman who is not interested in films. What is more, the older this film fan is, the greater is the discrepancy between her and other women in the same age group. The survey shows that, of all women more than 44 years of age who go to the movies at least once a week, 23 per cent regularly use lipstick and (or) face powder, and a further 37 per cent use additionally and regularly either nail varnish, rouge, or mascara. But of all women over 44 who never go to the movies, 78 per cent use no cosmetics at all, not even face powder or lipstick.

Using	*Frequent film patrons* (Per cent)	*Occasional film patrons* (Per cent)	*Nonpatrons* (Per cent)
No cosmetics	18	31	68
Lipstick and (or) powder	22	24	16
Lipstick, powder, and one other	60	45	16
Total	100	100	100

Although sociological study of the filmgoer is still in its infancy, the material available through this study reveals certain general outlines. There is a distinctive film-fan population, composed mainly of young persons and persons in lower income brackets, with its own peculiar hallmarks. In comparison with non-filmgoers and, less markedly, with infrequent filmgoers, more of its members depend on periodicals which may be characterized as dealing with violence, romance, and sex; more of its men depend, presumably for additional excitement, on the hazards of gambling; and more of its women, for enhanced allure, on make-up.

Performance under Pressure

ALEXANDER KNOX

ALEXANDER KNOX is an actor, playwright, novelist, and screenwriter. His last two films were *Indian Summer,* at RKO, which he co-authored and played in, and *Sign of the Ram,* at Columbia, both unreleased.

IN AN EARLIER article in the *Hollywood Quarterly* I tried to prove that there is a difference between acting and behaving, that acting is richer than behaving, and that since acting in isolated moments has been caught on film there is no reason why it should not be caught more frequently in sustained performances. At this time I should like to deal with a few more of the facts and conditions in the motion picture industry in Hollywood which militate against acting, and to refer to one postwar development which seems to prove my point—my point being simply that I view with rather more alarm than some of my contemporaries certain obstacles which acting must hurdle before it can reach the public.

Like most people, I find a certain enjoyment in viewing things with alarm, and first, I hope you will indulge me in such oversimplifications and exaggerations as are bound to accompany the "viewing with alarm" type of trend spotting. Second, it is important to remember that the subject I am dealing with is very poorly documented—that the skills, moods, emotions, and personality exploitations that go to make up a performance are so evanescent that any discussion of them is likely to share that quality. And thirdly, you may be more sympathetic toward my conclusions if I am explicit about the point of view from which they arise.

You are probably familiar with Mr. Harley Granville-Barker's preface to *Hamlet,* the first few pages of which express this point of view expertly. Mr. Granville-Barker considers that the dramatist's master secret is to learn the right sort of material to give his actors: "Shakespeare learns to work in the living mediums of the actors and their acting. If the dramatist cannot work in it, clearly he is no dramatist at all. He soon sees, moreover, that it is the *essential thing* which no pageantry must be let overshadow, nor mechanical tricks degrade." This conclusion was reached on the subject of *plays* written to be acted *without scenery,* and some people may find it difficult to see the connection between this comment and the film, which is frequently written to provide magnificent scenery for the minute speck of more-or-less decorative acting, like the fly on the wedding cake; but this is only one kind of film, and it is my belief that, as the medium develops, the actor will become—in a somewhat different way—as essential to it as he was to the theater. I think it is true that pageantry and mechanical tricks have received more attention from creative film makers than performances have done, and this is of course reasonable and natural in the present stage of development of the film.

In achieving a suspension of disbelief there have been, still are, and probably always will be, two tendencies in technique, manifest in films wherever they are made—toward "actualism" and

"stylization." In this connection, of course, these words refer to techniques, not matter; to manner, not subject. Any manner can be used to deal with any subject, and the rights and wrongs of this or that relationship of manner and subject doesn't concern us here. It is obvious that all performing is to some extent stylization, and it is equally obvious that the more actualistic a film is in manner (whatever its matter), the more behaving it will require and the less acting. In this discussion, therefore, I am thinking mainly of those films the appeal of which is, at least in some degree, larger than life.

I have referred to the "creative film makers," and before we go any further I think it might be wise to make some effort to find out just who creates what, when, and where. Film making is a curious mixture of critical and creative talents, and there seems to me to be an unnecessary amount of jealously between different departments of film making which might be at least partly eliminated by a consideration of the critical and creative contributions.

Plato assumed quite simply that the creative state occurs when "the mind is no longer in a man," and that unless man has attained this state he is powerless as an artist. Herbert Read in *The Innocent Eye* makes the same point somewhat differently when he says, "It is the function of art to reconcile the contradictions inherent in our experience, but obviously the art which keeps to the canons of reason cannot make the necessary syntheses. Only the art which rises above conscious reality is adequate." E. M. Forster calls it "dipping into the subconscious." If these quotations from experts indicate the truth about the creative state, it must be admitted (*a*) that talent is not creation, and (*b*) that the creative state is, to say the least, somewhat unusual. Unusual or not, it is the precise proportion of the product of this state that must give to any work whatever of freshness or excellence it may have. So it becomes increasingly curious to note the general feeling among moviemakers that their personal honor is being attacked when it is suggested that the creative element in movies is sometimes somewhat hard to find.

It is obvious that a cameraman may be creative when he conceives a shot and, to a lesser degree, when he executes it. It is obvious that a cutter may be creative when he hauls up from his subconscious a happy juxtaposition of two scenes. The writer is creative before and during his writing. The director, purely in his function as director, is creative when he conceives shots and when he executes them. From all this it is obvious that there is a great deal of overlapping. The overlapping is sometimes called "coöperation," but more often "interference," and it is interesting to note that the coöperation or the interference takes effect at one point—the set: the only place where the actor can be creative.

If we examine these overlapping functions closely, I think we may find that some of the so-called creative functions are not creative at all, but critical. It may be very helpful to separate these two tendencies rather carefully. E. M. Forster, in an address at the Harvard Symposium on Music, had many vital and illuminating things to say on the subject of criticism in relation to music, and I wish he could be persuaded to spend a little time separating the creative and critical functions in movie-

making. "Think before you speak is criticism's motto," he says; "Speak before you think, creation's." And, later in the essay, "If criticism strays from her central aesthetic quest, something happens, but not a work of art." "Criticism," he says, "can eliminate a particular defect, perhaps; to substitute merit is the difficulty."

With so much "coöperation" in films, defects are eliminated and lie writhing all along the path of progress, but I am not so sure that a merit automatically springs into being whenever a defect is dropped by the wayside.

Where the actor is concerned, acting merit certainly cannot be created in the cutting room, although it may seem to be, and although that grim chamber is eminently suited to the elimination of whatever almost anyone, from the wardrobe man to the producer, happens to consider a defect. So the actor must create when the cameraman has finished his arduous work of setting up a shot and is very anxious to get on to the next setup; when the director has just come back from telling the producer on the telephone that he is doing the best he can with the hams the budget has allowed him; and when the cutter sits on the outside of the circle sharpening his scissors. Incidentally, the writer is no help at this point, because he has just had a good line altered, first by the producer, rewritten by the director, and said incorrectly by the actor. The writer is aware that it is his business to write the words and the actor's business to say them, but he remembers certain passages in, for instance, Shakespeare, which from a casual reading would appear impossible to speak, yet when they are spoken by an accomplished actor have a totally unexpected brillance and power. Such a writer might wonder what would happen to a similar gem of *his* in a film script, and he might regret that the present studio technique is apt to encourage that kind of acting which hasn't time to spend on difficult concentrated speeches, and therefore that kind of writing which needs grunting, not speaking.

Mr. Granville-Barker spoke the truth when he said that Shakespeare "cut the coat to fit the cloth" or tempered the wind of his inspiration to the shorn lamb—the shorn lamb being the actor; —but Shakespeare had the right to demand that the actor be capable of more than a smile and a grunt. For the actor, then, there are two places where defects can be eliminated, the set and the cutting room, and there is one place where merits can be created, the set. And it is here at this critical point that all the financial and mechanical and creative and critical forces in the industry are brought to bear, resulting frequently in a profusion of second-rate performances and ulcers.

The nature of the creative process among actors is one of those questions —like the best way to make coffee— which cannot be finally decided; but in the making of coffee there are certain fundamentals, water and coffee, without which good coffee has seldom been made, and in the making of a performance there are also certain fundamentals.

Preparation beforehand does not solve the problem. When an actor is studying a particular part in the theater, he has two important aids: the emotional sweep of the play, and the relationship, in both its subtle and its obvious aspects, between himself and

his audience. He must still create the "illusion of the first time" and must behave as a human being. This behaving is very similar in process to a child's trying to behave. He must do a greater or less violence to his own personality for an end which he considers worth the effort. A child often finds direct and immediate advantages in behaving—peace of mind, absence of punishment, being liked, being admired. The actor's satisfaction in the film is not psychic, but monetary; it is not immediate; and certainly it is not direct.

Then, at the same time that he is behaving, he must have an attitude toward his behaving. In its crudest form this attitude may be a consciousness of the necessity to keep in key. In its more complicated forms it is a comment on the character in its relation to the story, just definite enough to be undetectable, but never absent. It is this comment which makes some performances, for the period of their duration and long afterward, seem more immediate, intimate, and affecting than the real people we meet and talk with. To gain the maximum effect in any dramatic presentation, the audience must seem to know the characters in the story far better than they know themselves. At any given moment, if the actor leaves his knowledge and understanding of the character out of his mind and his voice, there is a loss of richness.

In the two-hour playing time of a film, no author can tell everything about a complex character. We could watch a real situation in life for many more than two hours and fail to gain a real understanding of the people involved. An important difference between life and drama is simply this: that the significant details are crowded together in drama. These details are the bones to which the actor gives life. If he gives only the immediate, thin, literal meaning of the line, it isn't life at all, but a mechanical imitation; for an emotion without a comment, an emotion without an emoter, does not exist.

Sometimes, for the sake of the drama, it is necessary for the actor apparently to do just this—to create an emotion without an emoter, to wring all human elements from a line so that it is dry, brittle, and lifeless. This, too, the actor must do, and this the inferior actor cannot do. The inferior actor cannot help filling a line with the comment of his own personality, and if this personality happens to be vacuous or petty, the comment destroys part of what the writer tried to say and the vacuousness becomes more interesting to the audience than the character, and the spell of the drama is broken.

In my experience, the actor who is incapable of making the right kind of comment in a performance is apt to be incapable of refraining from making the wrong kind—and most bad performances spring from this cause.

If the personality of the actor is vivid and interesting and the part is written for its display, we have what is popularly known as personality acting, in which the comment is made in terms of the actor's own personality. Naturally, he does not say the lines or perform the gestures of a film in the way he privately behaves at home. Each line and each gesture is a bundle of impressions charged with years of experience in making his own personality clear to spectators and in captivating them with the personality thus presented. Personality acting is, in short, a sort of public

wooing, bisexual, and therefore both polygamous and polyandrous.

This kind of acting is interesting and valuable both in theater and on film, and as long as suitable parts are provided they will be suitably played; but it is wise to remember that many of these actors are capable of another kind of acting which, to me, is more impressive as acting.

The heights of the profession are reached by actors who can play a number of different parts, behave the parts accurately, comment in the person of the imagined character, and play them all, not as if the parts were written for them, but as if they were created for the parts.

This is a subtle and curious art, requiring at its best a high degree of skill, and the precise degree of consciousness—how much you forget yourself in your part—is a matter of individual habit and technique. The actor may have dipped into his subconscious at home or anywhere, but on the set he must, even if slightly, dip again. He must also retain the active memory of all the preceding dips. Whatever the degree of consciousness, and whatever qualities of skill or nerve he may possess, the acting of a scene of any size and scope requires unusual concentration.

What are the conditions under which this act of creation is expected to take place?

You have been waiting for hours. Suddenly your waiting is ended. One second you were waiting. The next you are holding up production. The setup is made. You are ready. Set, props, furniture, lights, effects, sound, and camera are now waiting. You have a last flurry of doubt about remembering lines. It is somewhat warm under the lights. You can't see who is shouting at you. The cameraman creeps in and reminds you in a fatherly manner not to bend too far to the left on the turn. The sound man appears at your other side and reminds you to raise your voice on the speech where you drop your head. All this time the make-up man is patting you with puffs or swabbing the sweat from your forehead. Wardrobe runs in and peers at you, then explains that he had nervous prostration lest you were wearing the wrong tie. The prop man is messing around with the eggs you are about to eat. The gaffer puts a light meter against your left eye. *Speed. Action.* So you dip into your subconscious.

I was watching a popular star one day at a distance of about fifty feet. He had an enormously difficult scene to play and he was walking along muttering his words. An opera singer can practice aloud backstage. An actor, for some reason, mutters. This actor, who had received a deserved Oscar, made a timid gesture or so. An electrician in the gallery inquired in a friendly manner, "What'cha doin', bub, rehearsin'?"

On one occasion, and I admit it is somewhat exceptional, I had a four-page scene coming up. We began it. Seventeen times we began it, and each time there was a mechanical breakdown—arc noise, camera noise, dolly noise, light failure, or someone with severe bronchial difficulties on the set. On the eighteenth take everything was perfect until the last sentence and the silence was heavy as fate, all animation, all breathing even, being suspended, waiting on my words.

I blew.

Since the last rehearsal we had been

over the beginning of the scene seventeen times, the end not once.

These occasions are trying to a director. He is reasonable enough to know that it is not profitable to scold the arc for failing, the film for breaking, or the camera for being noisy, and it is considered bad discipline to scold the actor. But the actor who blows is conscious of not being scolded and, in time, he is apt to develop curious resentments against the mechanical gadgets which make his work possible and impossible at the same time. These resentments change to active distrust—no arc light has ever been fired because an actor blew, so why should he feel guilty when an arc splutters? Gradually he is convinced that the lights are purposely malignant, and the men in white coats pick him up in the back garden wearing heavy boots and trampling burnt-out mazdas.

I once visited a set where a parrot and a cat were performing. The assistant director, hoarse and frenetic, shouted, "Now this time when I say quiet I mean QUIET! Please, please remember we're working with animals!"

I have tried to indicate some phases of the creative process in an actor's performance and the conditions under which it is expected to proceed. If my impression is even partly correct, no general improvement in performances can be expected without, first, a keener recognition by production managers of those scenes the quality of which will depend largely on performances, and second, a willingness to discover ways and means of providing the actor with a somewhat more relaxed atmosphere and set of circumstances in which to work when such a scene is to be shot. There is no other solution to the problem except a little more time and this costs money.

In the cutting room the actor's creation—finished—fixed—irrevocable—is held up for approval or disapproval before the eyes of four or more functionaries whose boredom with the procedure can be assumed to be in direct relation to their creative frustration. Here is an anecdote which illustrates the extremes to which this frustration on one occasion led three persons: A well-known character actor was given an important line to say at a point where the writer, the director, and the producer required a laugh. They had given the line a great deal of thought and it was an excellent line. The actor, when the line was given him, recognized its quality but realized that in the situation, if he read it in the obvious way, part of the audience might be ahead of him, get the point on the third word, begin laughing, and prevent the rest of the audience from enjoying the joke by making it impossible for them to hear it. So the actor read the line in a manner which concealed its emotional implications until the necessary information had been imparted; the picture was cut and run and nobody in the audience laughed, and there were wild recriminations in the producer's office next day. The actor was called in to do a retake of the line. Before doing it, they ran the film so that he could see what was wrong. What was wrong was, quite simply, that in the cutting room a movement of the eyes which had occurred at the end of the line had been considered unnecessary and had been cut out. Three intelligent men thought the joke was in the words. Actually, the joke was in the gesture. What had happened, obviously, was

that these three men in the projection room or the cutting room knew what was coming and, knowing it, failed to see it. They were not objective about what was happening on the screen; they were seeing preconceived notions, and in the interests of brevity they had ruined the joke. I do not believe it is possible for anyone to see the same scene done from ten different angles, repeated over and over again, and remain objective. If the scene has emotional tension, any unexpectedness in a given take is apt to be embarrassing, and, generally speaking, I think that a great many actors would agree with me when I suggest that of a given set of takes the probability is that a mediocre one will be chosen. Actually, I should be surprised if this were not so. Art by committee is criticism, not creation, and the conditions in a projection room are not always friendly even to good criticism.

To make it more difficult, most actors agree that when they see themselves in rushes they experience the emotion they felt at the time of the take, and find it impossible to be objective, and if anyone thought I had a solution to offer for this unfortunate state of affairs, I am sorry to disappoint them. The semidivine critical faculty will continue to be exercised in adverse circumstances, and the divine creative faculty will continue to be exercised under inhuman conditions. There is a slight hope that, with more time on the set, one of the forces inimical to performances will be to some extent controlled. More time on the set will make possible either an alteration in existing contractual arrangements, allowing for more flexibility on the part of both artists and producers, or a state of affairs permitting the fact of good performances to have greater interest to the public and therefore greater financial value to the producer.

Of course, there are many points which I have not time here even to mention. The selection of actors is important, and there is plenty of material elsewhere which proves how damaging the star system, for instance, is to the standards of acting.

There is the question of rehearsal periods before shooting begins. Repeated rehearsal seems to be increasing, and I have not spoken to a director or an actor who disapproves, although many do not think it solves the real problem.

There is the large question of the training of actors. Most studios now pay dramatic coaches comparatively small salaries, although they have sometimes done excellent work.

From this point of view alone, if I were a major producer, I would view with alarm the definite and steady decline in the number of theatrical productions in New York and the more frightening decline in the professional theater outside of New York. The amateur theater is only a slight mitigation, and the summer theaters not much more. When rehearsals are limited to a week or so, the actor learns little but facility, even if the director is good. In this connection it is interesting to note that of twenty actors receiving Academy Oscars during the past five years, sixteen were theater-trained. In the five British pictures which have received general acclaim in this country within the past two years, the eighteen stars and featured players have all been theater-trained.

Most of us, I suppose, have seen these

five films: *Henry V, Brief Encounter, Great Expectations, Odd Man Out,* and *Thunder Rock.* They have been greeted with a concerted cantata of serious interest, and, for the most part, praise from critics which is unusual in the history of American film criticism. "British Film" as an entity has suddenly become important—a serious subject for conversation.

Some consider the British invasion a looming threat.[1] Others, like Mr. Goldwyn, say that it will stimulate us to greater efforts. Early in August, Mr. Harry Brand, the President of the Independent Exhibitors Association, stated in the *Hollywood Reporter* that the great motion picture industry in Hollywood need have no fear whatever of British films, because the American public, if we follow one simple procedure, will not go to see them, and the procedure which we must follow is to make films as good.

Can we? Let us consider these British films. There is obviously nothing startling about their subjects. Shakespeare has been attempted before; so has Dickens; *The Informer* was made a long time before *Odd Man Out;* marital tangles were popular in Hollywood before *Vacation from Marriage* or *Brief Encounter;* and a great variety of Hollywood fantasies preceded *Thunder Rock.*

It is equally obvious, from a list of fine Hollywood films which would probably include, *Wuthering Heights, All Quiet on the Western Front,* and *Stagecoach,* that Hollywood has writers and directors as capable as any in Great Britain. Several of the actors in the British films I have mentioned have appeared in Hollywood films or are available for them. Hollywood has never been reluctant to import talented actors.

It seems to me that there are two interesting facts about British productions which may help to explain the quality of these films. The first fact is general and deals with the whole somewhat disorganized nature of the British industry. In Great Britain, in recent years, the creative people in the film industry seem to have been given a much more complete authority by Mr. Rank than by any major producer in Hollywood up to this date. Second, the contractual obligations between producers and studio owners, between producers and craft unions, between producers and actors, are so flexible in England that it is possible, without overpowering financial loss, to stop production on a picture for a few days. This fact alone is, in my opinion, of great importance to the industry, because on it depends a kind of leisure on the set which is a necessary condition for really good performances. In reading reviews of these pictures, most of us were probably struck by the uniformity with which all the performances were praised. One reason became clear when we saw Finlay Curray, the convict of *Great Expectations,* doing a three-word bit in *Odd Man Out,* or Robert Donat appearing for a minute in *Captain Boycott.* Undoubtedly, there are many factors which must be investigated in explaining the excellence of these films, but very important among them is the whole fabric of flawless performances so detailed, so careful, and so shrewd that even the some-

[1] This paper was written prior to the imposition by the British Parliament of a heavy import duty on American films, and its repercussions in America.

what phony heroics of *This Happy Breed* were almost concealed by them. Of course, the value of the performances is vastly increased by the sensitivity of direction and the general excellence of dialogue. But that is not the subject of this paper. It is important to note that the factor which many actors feel is seriously lacking in Hollywood—time on the set—is present in England.

I have heard two producers who have returned from England in the past year after making a film complain bitterly about the English industry's amateur spirit and its inefficient system of film making. I am sure these producers are not really more concerned about efficiency of manufacture than about quality of product, but it would seem that some of the Hollywood efficiency they missed in England might with advantage be applied to the problem of finding an economical means of providing a little more time for acting when it is necessary. Personally, I do not think it would require much more than two or three days added to the schedule of the average film, an added cost of twenty to seventy thousand dollars. This is a rather small figure when we think of the sets costing five times as much that are built and never used.

The closeness of the British film industry to theatrical London has often been mentioned as a reason for the general high level of performances in British films, and undoubtedly this has an effect; but it is also necessary to remember that film schedules for people appearing in a play in London have to be adjusted and readjusted to a degree that would persuade a Hollywood production manager to find another way of making a living.

And if anyone thinks that the answer to what I have said about British films is the simple statement that they have not made money, I believe he is fooling himself dangerously. To be valid, any comparison between the box office of British and of American films exhibited in the United States must be objective enough to include three considerations: the quality of the release, the budget for promotion, and the amount of money spent (sometimes over a period of many years) publicizing the actors. If it is to be valid, we must compare the gross of any British picture with the gross of a Hollywood picture made with unpublicized actors, a low promotion budget, and a poor release. A picture without a star is generally considered box-office suicide in Hollywood. If a comparison such as I have indicated were made by men who have access to the necessary information, I have no doubt that they would be forced to the conclusion that quality itself has value at the box office—a sentiment one is often urged to deny.

Inasmuch as the Hollywood film industry is an industry, the men in financial control must inevitably, out of the normal instincts of self-preservation, view this whole problem from a somewhat different standpoint than the creative artist. They must hover somewhere between two very definite points of view: that which says spend as much on quality as the traffic will bear, and that which says get by with the least the public will accept.

And please don't conclude that I am equating quality with costs. I am speaking of an industry in which one production technique seems to have come dangerously close to resulting in an automatic reduction in quality.

For certain types of scenes, most actors I have spoken to agree that generally they do not have enough rehearsal time, and, more important, they do not feel the interest and the quiet and the relaxation which can alone encourage the real act of creation.

Altogether, it seems to me that organization and efficiency, concentrating as they do on the one moment when the actor can be creative, have already passed the safety point, and that there is a remote possibility that Hollywood may, in an orderly and efficient manner, organize itself out of the film business.

When a man chooses a subject to make into a film, not because it interests him creatively but because he thinks it will make money, he is going to be timid about the way he makes the film. The enemy of creative effort in any art is the man who has so little faith in the validity of what he has to say that he, in terror, insures himself by saying it in an old and proved way. When one is either confident of the reception of what one has to say or careless of its nature, the method of expression is apt to be more daring, more exciting, and more effective. Ultimately, many of the difficulties of the creative branches of the film industry spring from an inherent contradiction implied in the classifications art and industry.

It is probable that both of these aspects are best served when the techniques are under the control of creative people. Eric Johnston, speaking before the United States Chamber of Commerce, urged the need for a new definition of capitalism. He said that capitalism should be considered a "competitive economic system designed for the enrichment of the many, and not to make a few men rich." I am sure that the film industry will "enrich the many" in more than one sense when its control is more largely in the hands of its creative men. The industry will serve the public best when it also serves its creators.

It is very doubtful that an undeviating adherence to factory methods of production will ever get the quality of performance that could be obtained in other ways. Only a man who is confident of what he has to say is relaxed enough to recognize new and surprising skills in any department. A good actor, finally, is an actor who can at one and the same time satisfy and surprise you. When a man is looking for clichés, he is too nervous to be satisfied by anything, and he certainly does not want to be surprised.

Granville-Barker emphasized the fact that Shakespeare wrote for actors. The writer and the director in certain kinds of film must fulfill the same function, and I feel that in British films recently they have fulfilled this function with great skill and with resultant profit. In my opinion, it is not an observation of minor importance that the creative men connected with the manufacture of recent British films seemed to value acting, to some extent at least, for its own sake, and it is no accident that it is the creative men, the men who have something to say, who *do* so value it. If Hollywood is right in being a little nervous about the British invasion, a study of conditions necessary to good performances might afford part of the remedy.

Homage to Raimu

HERBERT L. JACOBSON

HERBERT L. JACOBSON, formerly a writer and director in American Network radio and television, supervises a variety of entertainment activities in Trieste, including a chain of radio stations, motion picture distribution, an opera house, and a ballet company. As a military intelligence officer during the war he served in New Zealand, Australia, Ceylon, Africa, and Italy. He has contributed theatrical articles to the *New Yorker* and the leading Italian review, *Il Mondo Europeo.*

THE FRENCH actor, Raimu, is dead. He had many admirers outside France, particularly in the Latin countries. Among the foreign-language film audiences of the United States he was regarded as one of the world's greatest character actors—perhaps the greatest since his Jewish countryman, Harry Baur, was tortured to death by the Nazis while refusing to reveal a secret of the French resistance.

It would be too easy to classify Raimu as purely a comedian and thus dismiss him from serious consideration as an actor. But, like Charlie Chaplin's, Raimu's comic characterizations always had their near-tragic aspect. It is not irrelevant that Chaplin's film, *The Dictator,* which brought tears of laughter to the eyes of the American public, brought tears of sorrow to the cheeks of Italians and Germans, who had actually experienced a dictator. It might be said equally of Chaplin and of Raimu that, in the last analysis, their comic relief consisted in the avoidance of an impending tragedy, and therefore the word "comedian" does not suffice to describe either of them.

A death mask of Raimu would have more than a maudlin interest, for throughout his acting life he had worn a mask. It was not the literal mask with which the ancient Greeks, in their passion for abstraction, covered the faces of their actors, but the kind of mask created by typing oneself. Thus to recall Raimu's appearance is to recall his art.

His person gave an impression of a unified figure rather than a grouping of clearly defined features, and the economy of line added force to his characterizations. He had a paunch, but it was nothing to make you laugh. It served instead to add weight to his words. It was one of those paunches that give a becoming air of solidity and security to bankers and dictators alike. But it was also a merry paunch, such as a well-fed tramp might sport. Raimu had a deep, mellow, and flexible voice, of which the keynote was a sort of friendly grumble. He was not very tall, but he could make himself seem so if the role called for it. His gestures were spare, since the expressiveness of his eyes and mouth in that round, smooth face made arm swinging superfluous. When he did move, however, it was with his whole body, which, for all its bulk, was graceful.

With his flexible equipment he might have chosen to assume many diverse roles. Instead he very definitely typed himself. Typing is very dangerous; it ruins an actor more often than makes him. Witness Katherine Hepburn, once America's most gifted young actress, who has wasted herself for years now playing a perennial Bryn Mawr sophomore. But if the type is well

chosen and well carried off it gives its possessor a great advantage in creating an illusion of reality; his audience already has some idea of the character he is portraying even before the tale is told.

In the modern French school of movie acting, typing has been widely adopted and with conspicuous success. Jean Gabin is immediately recognizable as a man who has loved and perhaps killed; Louis Jouvet is obviously a man who has loved and suffered; Charles Boyer, a man who has loved and reflected.

Successful typing is not confined to France, however. In Germany, Jannings; in England, Richardson; in the Soviet Union, Cherkassov; and in the United States, Robinson; each, one of his country's leading actors, has regular recourse to the device. Each, however, adds to the universal figure he portrays certain so-called "national characteristics," thus deliberately helping to mold the myth of the national type. Emil Jannings portrays the classic methodical German, brutal when aroused. Ralph Richardson brings to his English characterizations, even of simple people, a sense of personal dignity by no means to be confused with coldness. Nikolaj Cherkassov, in his portrayal of historic Russian figures, is always the Slav whose reaction to both humorous and serious situations seems both slower and, in some ways, profounder than those of Western spirits. Edward G. Robinson, of course, reflects the staccato aspects of American civilization.

For his type Raimu chose the French peasant, with roots in the soil. Only Chaplin, representing the dispossessed of this world, the decadent (or aspirant) petit bourgeois of hat, cane, gloves, and no home, has chosen a type with an appeal more universal for our time.

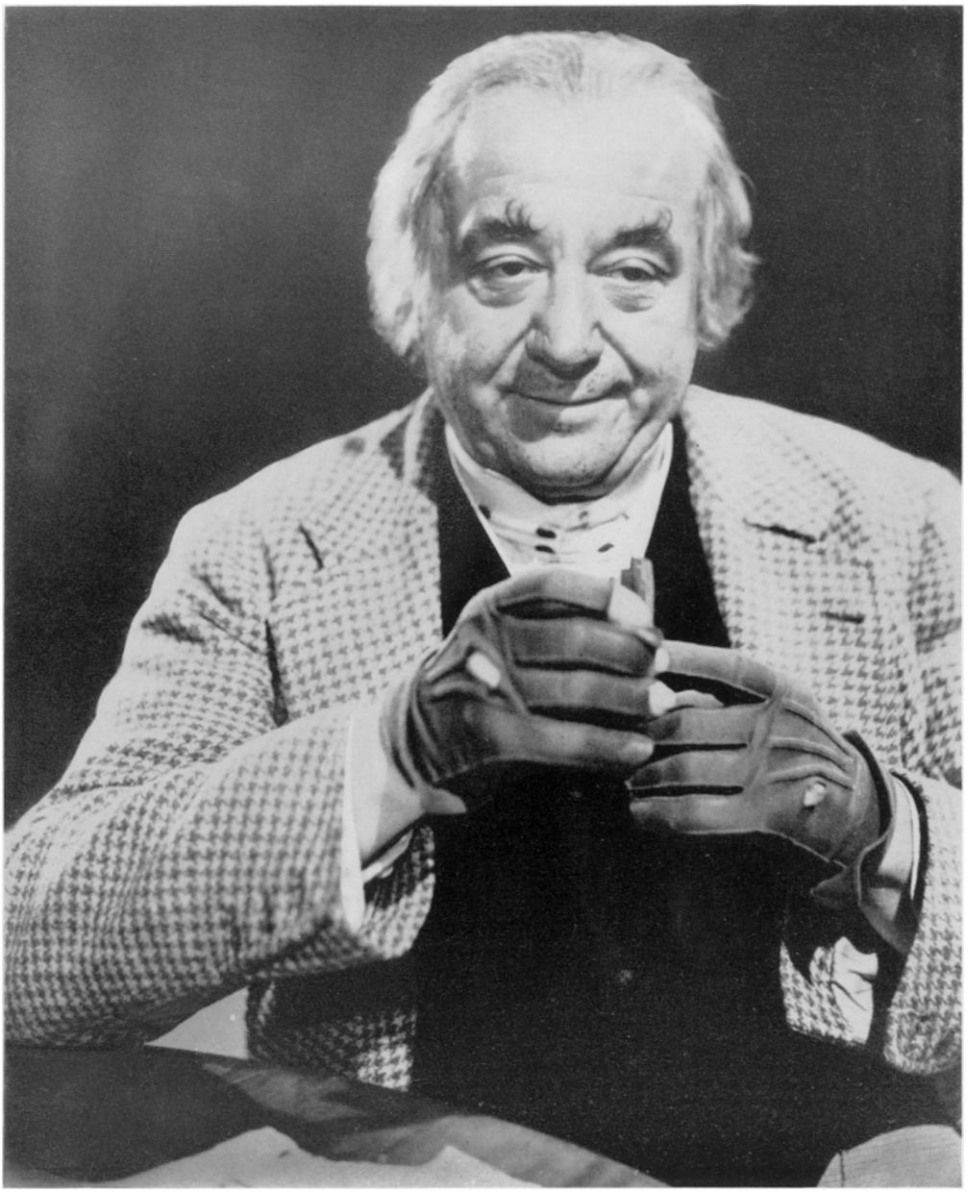
Raimu did not always portray peasants, of course, but he almost always constructed his character on a peasant basis, adding and changing the type only so far as the particular subject was nearer to the land or further from it. In *The Man Who Seeks the Truth,* for example, he played a cosmopolitan banker involved in a sophisticated sexual relationship. His usually bearded cheeks were smooth; his usually rumpled hair was neatly groomed; instead of the usual wrinkled suit with bursting buttons, he wore a neatly cut smoking jacket; his speech and manners were impeccable. Yet, with all this, he still gave the impression of a country boy who had made good in the big city, where he had been thoroughly polished up, but in whose heart the generosity of Nature still found room and outward expression.

As the small-town mayor in the now classic film, *Carnet du bal,* he is again the peasant, but this time he is one who has been elevated by his comrades to the glory of their mayorship and who is both proud of the compliment and humble before its significance. Even in his masterpiece, *The Baker's Wife,* he is not literally a peasant, but a country baker whose being is so bound up with his community that the temporary loss of his wife to a shepherd adversely affects all his customers.

On this base Raimu even succeeded in creating a new ethical type in the theater, not an easy thing to do in a medium which is three thousand years old. He originated the role of the husband betrayed but triumphant. Not triumphant in the sense of murdering

Raimu in *The Baker's Wife,* the picture which first brought him fame in America.

The Well-digger's Daughter.



Midnight in Paris.

The Man with the Derby Hat.

the lover or the wife, nor in winning her back by a sudden display of superior sex appeal; on the contrary, when Raimu's woman came back to him, it was because he was morally a better man than his rival, and tolerant even to washing away the sin in the flood of his understanding. Raimu's art made possible the creation of a character symbolizing not so much the triumph of reason over instinct as the victory of spiritual over sensual love.

Raimu died at fifty-five. Unlike some stars who, like Peter Pan, dread growing up, he had been playing middle-aged roles for at least a decade. Much of the tragic aura which distinguished this comedian was due to the fact that he chose to represent an age group in which the spirit, triumphantly reaching the top of the hill, meets the body unwillingly climbing down. Raimu gave it an even wider application; he used the peculiar problems of middle age to symbolize every man who awakes suddenly to find that his dreams have not come true. Through the art of Raimu such men may find peace and a limited contentment in the conquest of an unkind fate by the powers of love and reason.

So Raimu is dead. What a loss his death is we have appreciated by recalling what a treasure he was in life. To him we owe much past joy and much understanding that will outlive him and, we hope, flower beyond our time. Such a debt can be repaid only in part and only in one way: by respecting the aesthetic and spiritual standards which he so faithfully honored in his acting life.

An Exhibitor Begs for "B's"

ARTHUR L. MAYER

ARTHUR L. MAYER, for twenty years a theater exhibitor, both circuit and independent, owns the Rialto Theater in New York, which has recently terminated a long-time policy of exhibiting blood-and-thunder films exclusively, in order to show foreign films instead. With his partner, Joseph Burstyn, he has imported many memorable foreign films, among them *Open City*. Also active in documentary production, Mr. Mayer is a director of World Today, Inc., founded by John Grierson, as well as supervisor of Pilot Films, the Motion Picture Association's experimental educational project. During the war he served as Assistant Coördinator of the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry, as Film Consultant to the Secretary of War, and as Assistant to the Chairman of the American Red Cross.

FOR YEARS the self-appointed custodians of our morals—economic as well as social—have accused the motion picture industry of being a monopoly dominated by the producers and the distributors, who, by means of a nefarious device known as block booking, have compelled exhibitors, and therefore audiences, to consume bad films along with the good. Bad and good, in this kind of thinking, were synonymous respectively with cheap and expensive. If exhibitors were no longer compelled to book "B" pictures in order to obtain "A's"—so went the argument,—the artistic and intellectual standards of the screen, now depressed by greedy movie magnates, could soar to rarified levels. Through a system of trial and error—government trials, and the errors of all concerned—this Utopia has at length been achieved. It now appears, however, that in destroying block booking our blockheaded reformers have also undermined the industry's primary expedient for progress—a fumbling, crawling expedient, but better than none. I refer to those "B" pictures which used to be produced, without stars, at costs of from $100,000 to $300,000. Untrammeled by either huge costs or the necessity of "protecting" an investment in a featured player, they provided a field for occasional experiments in thematic material, and a testing and training ground for new directors, writers, cameramen, and actors. Out of these "B's" came much that was appalling, but a saving fraction that made for progress and higher standards.

Even a spokespaper for the industry, the *Motion Picture Herald,* refers to the "necessity of stemming the current declining tide in quality." A reliable survey indicates that although 85,000,000 persons in the United States are in a financial position to go to the movies at least once a week, only 60,000,000 are regularly doing so. A potential audience of 25,000,000 is apparently so cold to the current movie merchandise that it has developed an immunity to advertising superlatives and all the ballyhoo of exploitation. This situation deeply disturbs the studio executives and they proceed to lose their heads completely. They cut their advertising budgets, reorganize their executive staffs, retaining the institutionalized dead weight, and discharge young employees with young ideas. Obviously, if moving pictures, both as commerce and as art, are to prosper, and if in spite of tripled production costs they are to meet successfully the challenge of the rapidly rising tide of television, outdoor night entertainment, and for-

eign film production, some new means for encouraging the spirit of innovation and initiative which dominated their early days must be devised.

It must be emphasized that the pioneers of the picture industry were experimentally minded. "Pants pressers," I have heard them derisively designated. If that were true—and it is not,—they would have creased trousers horizontally, diagonally, or in any other unprecedented fashion calculated to excite public comment and to enhance private profit. To the casual observer they appeared mild, meek men. But in the spirit they were wild-eyed, irrepressible rebels. Their lofty ambitions were matched by their lively imaginations. They looked at a small animated picture in a box and saw the germ of the greatest mass medium of entertainment, art, and communication that man has ever known. They took the shadows of which Edison thought so slightingly that he declined to invest $150 in an application for foreign patents, and transformed them into the substance of a two-billion-dollar industry. They haunted nickelodeons and dreamed of marble palaces with regimented ushers, luxurious lounges, rising orchestra pits, and rising admission prices. The three-minute, jerky snatches of battleships and of girls climbing apple trees blossomed before their eyes into three-hour reconstructions of the classics, technically impeccable though slightly altered in content for mass consumption.

The legitimate theater from which at first they drew a sustenance of hack performers and creaky dramas faded into a satellite stage. Adolph Zukor would introduce Sarah Bernhardt in *Queen Elizabeth* to Main Street; Jesse Lasky bring Geraldine Farrar from the Diamond Horseshoe to the Bijou; Samuel Goldwyn cultivate Mary Garden; Carl Laemmle dream of the star system, which, in the hands of Metro and Paramount, would eventually darken his small Universal.

The unique nature of the new medium was explored by its exploiters. There were no shackling traditions. No one maintained that he knew exactly what the public wanted. No themes were too high-brow or radical; no actors too unknown, too passé, or too subversive; no technical difficulties insurmountable. Pictures ceased to be made in the streets (now, with critical acclaim, they are returning to them) and were staged on studio sets. Writers, cameramen, directors, actors, laboratory technicians—frequently one and the same—learned the rudiments of their trade. The director discovered how to guide the seeing eye of a mobile camera, and the cameraman how to manipulate it so as to intensify audience participation. Together, they explored a new world of double exposures, dissolves, strange camera angles, and pictorial composition to create mood and emphasis. Shamefaced actors, condescending between theatrical engagements to appear on the screen, acquired new techniques more realistic and more akin to pantomime than anything that had been required of them on the stage. The art of editing was discovered, with its fluid manipulation and interplay of sequences.

The story of how the experimental screen of thirty years ago was converted into the assembly-line production methods of today is far too long to recount here. Nonetheless—occasionally by intent, sometimes by accident,

and frequently with considerable stealth on the part of all participants, —pictures continued to emerge which strayed from the well-worn familiar paths and tried, in content or mechanics, to tell a new story, or to tell the old story in new terms. They cost little, as compared with present standards, and consequently a producer could afford now and then to give his craftsmen some leeway for innovation. He used them also to introduce and to train new writers, new directors, new actors, new cameramen, new editors, new musical directors. Occasionally, one of these experimental "B" pictures boomed into a box-office bonanza. *Hitler's Children,* which cost less than $150,000, proved a gold mine for Edward Golden, its producer, and brought to its adaptor, Emmet Lavery, and its director, Edward Dmytryk, the mingled joys and tribulations of national reputations.

On the whole, guided not unnaturally by considerations of immediate income rather than cinematic progress, the exhibitors are little inclined to experiment with experimental pictures. They have found the moviegoing public pathetically apathetic to art and readier to spend its hard-earned cash for escapist entertainment than for significant studies of controversial issues or the miseries of mankind. Their zeal for the development of new screen personalities is tempered by the sad experiences of seeing their protégés of yesterday adorning the marquees and screens of their competitors.

Under the much-abused block-booking system the exhibitor had little choice. To get the good pictures he had to play the bad, or at any rate what he considered the bad. It cannot be denied that this system of buying films like fruit in a basket, good on top, bad at the bottom, encouraged the production and consumption of as vast an avalance of triviality as has ever been inflicted upon a public, inoffensive or otherwise. With rare exceptions, producers, authors, directors, and performers of "B" pictures seemed to consider the assignment a chore below their personal dignity, to be performed perfunctorily, carelessly and ineptly. They regarded themselves as copycats following the path of least resistance, rather than as bloodhounds on the trail of thrilling new audience scents or, more accurately, cents.

Block booking, however, served as a vehicle for a substantial amount of dramatic and technical innovation that proved of great value to subsequent "A" productions, and for the schooling and introduction to the public of many of the present brightest luminaries of the film firmament. It is doubtful if any five-million-dollar specials did more to advance the cause of good pictures than such comparatively inexpensive films as Von Sternberg's *Salvation Hunters,* Flaherty's *Moana,* Mamoulian's *Applause,* Vidor's *Our Daily Bread,* Dieterle's *Fog over Frisco,* Capra's *Flight,* Hecht and MacArthur's *The Scoundrel,* John Ford's *Lost Patrol,* Leo McCarey's *Make Way for Tomorrow,* Preston Sturges' *The Great McGinty,* Garson Kanin's *A Man to Remember,* Val Lewton's *The Curse of the Cat People,* and Adrian Scott and Edward Dmytryk's *Crossfire.*

It could be argued that a system of distribution which encouraged such provocative productions will be judged to have more than atoned for its sins. Certainly, no large industry can con-

tinue to prosper, no art to flourish, which fails to assure progress through constant experimentation and the encouragement of innovations. The majority of our leading directors and stars, from Porter and Pickford to Wyler and Van Johnson, were trained in the hard school of inexpensive films. Samuel Goldwyn, over the years the most consistent producer of high-class, high-cost pictures, cut his eye teeth on program features. Great cameramen like Gregg Toland, James Wong Howe, and Carl Freund had years of experimental work behind them before they achieved their present mastery of their art.

Nevertheless, the opponents of block booking, unmindful of such considerations, arose in their righteous wrath. Smiting right and left, they have felled that innocent bystander, the experimental picture. Under the recent court decree, block booking is banned. All pictures must be sold individually. Every film must stand or fall on its potential box-office merits. There must be competitive bidding by exhibitors for each production. Such an auction-block system can only increase the present pressure for star values, elaborate production, and huge advertising campaigns. The learned judges can now repair to their homes and over the teacups bewail the immaturity of the films and their lack of social content. They have devised a scheme not even dreamt of by government prosecutors or ladies' club lecturers, guaranteed temporarily to increase producers' profits and permanently to impede cinematic progress. Some new performers may be developed in limited numbers on the legitimate stage, or imported from abroad. Some competent authors, albeit untrained in the mysteries of film adaptation, may be tempted from the less lush fields of fiction and drama. But where or how shall we develop the directors, cameramen, and technicians of the future? How many producers will dare to experiment with new personalities, much less new themes, new backgrounds, and new techniques in pictures costing two million dollars and more?

The elimination of "B's" is not solely attributable to the ban on block booking. Hollywood, always prone to excess, has inflated even the inflation. In the past four years the prices of stories and materials, the remuneration of labor from the most expert to the least skilled, has risen so much that the cost of producing anything from a short to a super-duper has almost tripled. While expenses mounted and war prosperity brought longer runs, the studios produced fewer and fewer films. In 1941–1942 American movie companies made 534 pictures. In 1946–1947 there were approximately 375. Warner, Metro, Paramount, Universal have for the past few years shunned "B's" like the plague and associated themselves exclusively with high-budget pictures. They have indicated no change in their production plans for the immediate future. With declining production, employment fell during the past year alone from 30,000 to 21,000. For the first time in many years, 20th Century–Fox and several other major companies report that in a period longer than six months they have not signed a single actor or entertainer from Broadway. The men and women thrown out of work, the returning veterans who cannot find jobs, the newcomers who cannot even find a place to sleep, are in large measure young people vibrant

with old visions now discarded by their disillusioned elders and with new ideas of how to achieve them. If the motion picture industry neglects to train these boys and girls, if it denies them an opportunity to develop and perfect their skills, it is ruining not only their futures but its own.

During the last year there have been, as there always will be, a few exceptions to the rule that experimentation and expensive pictures do not go hand in hand. MGM's *The Beginning or the End* represented a huge investment in an effort to dramatize, so that all who sit can see, the dangers inherent in atomic-bomb warfare. Its good intent was of the highest order, but it was soon playing on double features with a Skelton comedy billed above it. Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra,* although its artistic merits may be the subject of acrimonious debate and its box-office fate the subject of universal agreement, is a lavish and laudable adventure on the part of RKO. Louis de Rochemont's *Boomerang,* like its predecessors *The House on 92nd Street* and *13 rue Madeleine,* proved a noteworthy effort to utilize documentary techniques, which made such rapid strides during the war, as a medium for exciting tales of current events. It was of such pictures that Michael Curtiz once said, "They make your hair stand on the edge of your seat." They discard the shackles of formal studio sets and go to the city streets for their backgrounds and even for nonprofessional players in minor roles. They may well serve to stimulate the long-sought production of pictures in areas remote from the Hollywood scene, particularly New York City, where the ferment of an international capital, combined with the presence of talented authors and actors, laboratory and studio facilities, make such ventures in independent production particularly propitious. Cost, however, as well as exclusively high-brow appeal, must be cautiously pruned. In the entire United States there are fewer than 100 theaters catering primarily to sophisticated, novelty-seeking audiences—"sure seaters," we used to call them because seats were always available. Foreign films, even those of merit, have seldom in the past grossed more than $50,000. A technically satisfactory two-reeler costs more than that today.

For many years, unit production, as opposed to the mass methods of major companies, has been the white hope of the intellectuals. The comparatively high standards of the Goldwyn, Selznick, and Disney organizations have in a measure justified faith in independent production. During the war, motivated more by the burden of high taxes than by a desire for freedom of self-expression, many directors and performers seceded from the major companies and formed their own producing units. Thus far they have done nothing to prove that their standards of skill and taste are superior to those of their former employers. Now, with the increased pressure of inflated costs and deflated loans, it would be unreasonably optimistic to expect them to venture far in experimental fields.

This is even truer of independents, like Monogram for example, which specialize primarily in inexpensive action pictures, westerns, and reproductions on a modest scale of major-company successes. A notable recent exception by a company which never before dallied with novelty was Repub-

lic's *Specter of the Rose.* Ben Hecht was given a free hand as writer, producer, and director to forage in new pastures. The verdict at the box office was negative, but it is reassuring to know that his sponsors are financing Orson Welles in the production of *Mabeth* on a short shooting schedule.

All in all, however, a dark cloud obscures the American silver screen. English, French, Italian, and Scandinavian pictures are surging forward, vibrating with new aspirations and newly acquired skills. Film lovers who have not yet seen the Italian picture *Paisan,* the French *Battle of the Rails,* or the Danish *Day of Wrath,* have a treat in store for them. Unless domestic producers are prepared to return to the eager experimentalism of their early days, their leadership in the cinema world is threatened. Other industries spend millions in their research laboratories. General Electric and Standard Oil know that these millions are not wasted. Comparatively speaking, through renewed production of "B's," the motion picture industry could finance its research with little loss and with occasional surprising profits.

But the "B's" of the future cannot be the "B's" of the past. Like *Crossfire,* they must be formative rather than formula. They must experiment with new subjects, new attitudes, new locales. They must make no assumptions about public taste except that, like the tide, it flows and ebbs even when it is least apparent. They must welcome new talents and new faces, some of which will eventually become the best-loved talents and faces in the world. Above all, they must be made by men—and there are hundreds of them in Hollywood and elsewhere—who are proud to prove that, although handicapped by small budgets, they have the instinct and the craftsmanship and, above all, the passion, to illuminate the road to the future.

Films for the Church

MICHELA ROBBINS

MICHELA ROBBINS, a New York newspaperwoman now in Los Angeles working on a novel, spent several months reviewing church films and interviewing their makers, in preparation for this article.

MORE THAN one million people lined up last year to catch films that celebrated the wonders of nature and their relation to God. Thousands of youngsters gulped down their breakfast of a Saturday morning to get to church early. Churches were billing Movies Tonight above sermon and pastor, and playing to full houses. If at one time motion pictures were censured by Papal encyclicals and Protestant blue laws, the church today has revised its attitude and is looking to this mass medium as a new and powerful form of education and evangelism.

The wartime impetus to the production of 16-mm films extended to religious productions. The possibilities of increased attendance and influence for the church were tremendous; the films turned out were heterogeneous, unequal in concept and treatment, ranging from missionary training films (how to build a lean-to in the jungle, how to approach a tribal chief) and pictures urging more active participation in church affairs (*And Now I See,* Lutheran) to pictures that attempted to deal with the moral and metaphysical questions raised by the atom bomb (*Way of Peace,* Wartburg Press; *God of the Atom,* Moody). The majority were dramatizations on a higher or lower technical level of Bible stories, missionary conscience-tweakers, and biographies of religious personalities. With one or two exceptions these frankly evangelistic films (and all of them are that) have had neither the propaganda power nor the emotional appeal of religious pictures produced for the commercial market, such as *The Song of Bernadette* or even *Going My Way.* The potentialities for the church in terms of indoctrination, education, and moral and spiritual guidance have yet to be realized.

It is perhaps unexpected that the Moody Bible Institute, which is supported by the fundamentalist, so-called "conservative" Protestant churches, is the organization that today makes most use of advanced techniques and propaganda devices in film making. Moody has produced three pictures and is working on a fourth, all of them evangelistic. "But," says director Irwin Moon, "if I were to go into an Army group or a high school auditorium and say, 'O my brethren, come unto Jesus . . .' they would throw pop bottles at me." It is to avoid the pop bottles that Moon states his fundamentalist sermons in concepts, images, and language familiar to his audience and in a field with perhaps the greatest general appeal today, popular science.

God of Creation, for example, makes use of lapsed-time photography, telescopic and microscopic camera, special effects, and animation to present what is essentially an illustrated lecture in color, beautifully done and fascinating to the layman, at the highest level of popularized science. "Consider the lilies of the field," says the Bible. The

picture does so with lapsed-time photography that shows roses, lilies, poppies, azaleas springing up, jerking violently with the force of their growth. The buds pop open, develop, and die in a few seconds. Bean plants thrust their roots into the ground, and we see them spread out in ever more intricate pattern. We examine through the microscope a leaf section, observing the oblong cells with the chloroplasts moving around within them—possibly the first colored movies of the process of photosynthesis. "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works: in wisdom hast Thou made all," exclaims Moon, and the film observes the minuscule paramecium, an organism so tiny that millions may exist in a drop of water, yet which could clog all known space within five years, were its reproduction unhampered. Through the 100-inch telescopic camera at Mount Wilson we see movies of the heavens. With animation and special effects Moon indicates in easily assimilable terms the enormousness of known space, in which our solar system is but one of a hundred million similar universes, the nearest neighboring star of which is four and three-tenths light years from our sun.

How does Moon link up these diverse phenomena with the fundamentalist doctrine? "You know," he says, "to me the most wonderful thing in all the universe is the fact that this great God who made heaven and earth actually loved me enough to die for me; that He loved enough to bear the guilt, the shame, and the punishment of all my sin. . . . The Bible tells us again and again that Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe. . . . There is only one thing that can block this miracle and that is our unbelief."

The transition from objective fact to metaphysical dictum might be considered logically tenuous, but the total effect provides a strong dramatic bond. *God of Creation* has been shown to more than one million people in the past year by the Moody Institute, which charges nothing for the showing and sends its own projectionists around to churches, schools, colleges, wherever people will see it. While there is no apparatus to determine statistically just how effective the film is, the Institute has received numerous testimonial communications. One Staten Island high school teacher, for example, was so moved by the film that she gave up teaching life science to go into child evangelism. "All my life I've been giving children wrong ideas," she wrote. "Now I want to atone."

Another film, also devised to combine illuminating scientific phenomena with fundamentalist doctrine, is now in process at Moody. It will explore the newly discovered noises of the not-so-silent deep. Heretofore, scientists and poets alike had considered the depths of the ocean incomparably soundless. During the war, however, Navy sonar equipment revealed the "silent deep" to be noisier than the much-maligned barnyard. Moon has recorded all sorts of fish noises. Porpoises sound like laughing hyenas, croakers like percussion instruments; the inch-and-a-half-long snapping shrimp makes a sound equivalent, at peak intensity, to that of a battleship at full speed at a comparable distance. Doing his own deep-sea diving, Moon is now filming underwater life in color to accompany the sound track. The moral of Moon's picture (*Voice of the Deep*) will be something like this: Man thought the sea

was silent until he found the proper equipment with which to hear. The reality of the Divine Creator also will become apparent with the proper equipment, and that equipment is faith.

The haunting realization of ultimate powerlessness in an inscrutable world, usually the motivating force of religions in every society, has been enormously intensified since the happenings at Hiroshima and Bikini. It was to be expected that the churches would be concerned with the far-reaching social and personal implications of the atom bomb. Both Moody's *God of the Atom* and the Wartburg Press's *Way of Peace* deal with them in film, and it is interesting to note that, although their techniques and their approaches are different, they both arrive at the necessity of gaining spiritual security by somehow identifying oneself with the Eternal.

God of the Atom continues the popularized-science approach. Diagrams and animation give a few elementary principles of atomic structure. Models and shots of the 184-inch cyclotron illustrate how a substance is bombarded with atomic particles. A Geiger counter demonstrates the presence of radioactivity in the bombarded substance. Then the film shows scenes taken by Army and Navy cameramen at Nagasaki and Bikini, some of them already seen in newsreels but not the less dramatic for that. One shot in particular comes to mind: the underwater blast in which the entire Bikini lagoon rises slowly, inexorably, in a tremendous, unbelievable column of water and smoke and bits of battleships. Although the film contains exciting moments, it is spotty; in two places the action stops completely while a young atomic physicist and a naval commander speak at length to the camera, both declaring that the only salvation from potential destruction by the atom bomb is to "get the world back to God." "If history has taught us anything," says the physicist, Larry Johnston, "it is that man cannot control himself. He needs help. He needs the kind of help which, in my experience, only God can give. . . . The truth as I see it is that God has sent His Son Jesus Christ for the very purpose of providing us with a way of escape from the folly and destruction of our self-centered living. For me this is no academic statement, but an experimental fact."

Way of Peace is more interesting from a technical point of view. Blanding Sloan and Wah Ming Chang did the picture in color with three-dimensional model sets and animated puppets. The film opens with a shot of the earth among the heavens, goes from there to the good things upon the earth, the fields and the forest, men tending their herds and their harvests. But man built a wall between himself and God, says the narrator (Lew Ayres), as the film creates a continuing effect of a wall built higher and higher, throwing the figures of men into shadow. From behind the wall men push a tremendous rocket-like atom bomb. They set it off, and in a really imaginative sequence the earth is smashed by a series of violent explosions. The camera moves back to encompass the entire globe burning and smoking, and gradually the earth is consumed before our eyes until finally, in the last scene, we see the heavens, as at first, but with a space where the earth once was. Break down the wall between you and God,

for only in personal redemption is there a defense against the atom bomb, says the narrator. While the picture stresses the necessity at all costs of preventing another war, it places its major emphasis, like *God of the Atom,* upon personal responsibility and salvation.

The slickest, most professional religious picture thus far made was commissioned by the Protestant Film Commission, which is a liaison organization for fifteen denominations. PFC is impressed with the necessity of turning out pictures that will compare, technically at any rate, with the Hollywood product, and it is prepared to hire professional Hollywood talent to achieve this. *Beyond Our Own* (Jack Chertok, producer; Sammy Lee, director) is a smooth, fast-moving, dramatic film which successfully integrates individual human problems into its sermon. The story is about two young brothers, the lawyer brilliant, flashy, ambitious, the doctor serious, quiet, idealistic. The physician, leaving his position in a hospital and a promising career, goes to China as a missionary doctor in order better to help others. The lawyer gets a position with a good firm, marries, works hard for success (the symbol: a hundred-thousand-dollar litigation between oil interests). When his son is killed in an accident, the lawyer loses all interest in life. He does not have faith in God to sustain him, the film explains. He goes to China, where he finds his brother happy in his work, helps evacuate Chinese children from a hospital during a bombardment, sees a Chinese friend die serene in his faith in Christ, and himself finds the faith. He returns home to his own missionary church activities and benevolent works. Lose yourself in Christ if you will find yourself, says the film.

If the China portrayed in this picture is cleaner and happier than the one we read about in the newspapers, if the guns booming are anonymous, remote from the implications of the present civil war in China, it is because *Beyond Our Own* is not concerned with economic and political questions and makes no attempt to touch them, except incidentally. Indeed, the only religious picture this reviewer saw which actually relates personal Christian ethics to the immediate realities of the world in which we live is a documentary commissioned by the American Missionary Association of the Congregational Christian Church (*The Color of Man*). This is the church that set up schools for Negroes in the South before the Civil War, at a time when educating slaves was considered subversive practice indeed. This kind of courageous, fighting Christianity is apparent in the picture itself. God created all men equal, says this film; the caste of color based upon prejudice, ignorance, and fear must be removed from the whole of our American life, strengthening its unity. The film opens with two soldiers, one Negro, one white. Is there any real difference between them, is one inferior? asks the narrator. We cannot answer that question, he declares, without going into the background of the Negro. And the camera shows us that background, unsentimentally and yet with a stark beauty that reminds one of Margaret Bourke-White's photographs of the South. People forced to work land that does not belong to them, forced to live in broken-down shacks that do not belong to them, forced to go to schools as

inadequate in roofing as they are in teaching equipment. And not just the deep South. We see the northern city slums as well, the crowded apartment houses and dark alleyways. This is not the whole picture, however. The Congregationalist churches have set up schools and colleges with interracial faculties in the heart of the South, and we see earnest young men and women studying, trying to better themselves and their people, working as teachers and doctors. Education has improved the health-destroying diet of the Negro, says the narrator, but it is not enough to know what to eat; you must have money to buy milk and eggs and butter. What are the problems of the Negro? Education, jobs, the right to vote, discrimination (a Negro soldier walks past a sign in a railroad station reading "white baggage only"). The picture closes on a young colored Boy Scout pledging allegiance to the flag. But *is* this one nation, indivisible? asks the film, and answers that a true application of Christian principles must make it so.

The Color of Man was made by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Couilliard. It has the strength, the realism, and the moving simplicity of a first-class documentary and is a fine example of what the churches could do in this field.

If the six pictures mentioned above are not always successful, they do show greater imagination and spiritual power than the majority of 16-mm religious pictures now being produced or commissioned by a number of religious organizations and churches—most actively, the Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Southern Baptist Convention, Catholics, and the Protestant Film Commission,—as well as by commercial producing organizations.

By far the dominant producer in the field is Cathedral Films, a private organization run by an ordained minister, the Rev. James Friedrich, which makes and distributes its own pictures and also turns out films on assignment. Cathedral has produced twenty-two films, sixteen of them Biblical dramas directed primarily at Sunday School audiences. Since these pictures are prepared for some thirty denominations, including the Catholic distributor, Loyola Films (somewhat revised versions), and Jewish congregations (Old Testament stories, primarily), Cathedral must be extremely careful about differences in theological interpretation. One big problem, for example, was by what method to baptize John the Baptist. The film finally cut to a bystander at the crucial moment, thus by-passing the problem and saving the picture.

Jairus' Daughter is fairly typical of Cathedral's pictures. Deborah, the daughter of a rabbi, goes to the seashore every day to hear the new Messiah preach. Her father has orders to spy upon Jesus and to discredit Him if possible. But when Deborah falls ill and the Jewish doctor cannot help her, Jairus pleads with Jesus to save her. Jesus stops to heal Lydia, and by the time He gets to Jairus' house Deborah is dead. But Jesus casts out the professional mourners and by praying for Deborah brings her back to life.

This picture follows the Biblical episode closely. Others add or delete scenes for dramatic purposes, and in some, like *Amos,* the story line is created whole. Like all the films, *Jairus* is slow-moving and overweighted with dia-

logue; exposition is substituted almost entirely for action; the acting is amateurish, and the dialogue stilted, a sort of quasi-Biblical language that in no way reflects the beauty of the original. Some of these faults undoubtedly are the result of a shoestring budget (a two-reel picture is shot in two days; a three-reeler in three or four days). There is little opportunity for any real direction or rehearsing, and director John Coyle does a good deal of shooting from the cuff.

Despite the difficulties, some of the Bible stories show an occasional flash of dramatic power and here and there photography which not only is artistic pictorially but which develops the action and feeling and gives a genuine Biblical quality to the films. One scene that comes to mind is within Jairus' house, where the professional mourners sit in their loose black robes like harpies, the stylized posturings of their bodies and arms giving the scene a real Hebraic folk quality. This effect is spoiled almost immediately when Jesus sends the women out, and they register rage and scorn in some of the most obvious, hammed-up pantomime this side of a high school pageant.

The kind of thing that could be done within the scope of Biblical drama actually was done by Friedrich in 1939 in a full-length feature called *The Great Commandment* (Irving Pichel, director; Dana Burnet, writer), a drama of Biblical times done with simplicity and power. The acting is very good, including one performance as fine as anything ever done on the American screen (Maurice Moskovitz as the Scribe). The story is set in the Kingdom of Judea under the Roman tyrant and tells of two brothers, both Zealots, members of the underground, and of the conflict between them over the best way to revolt. (There is a parallel conflict over a girl.) One brother (John Beal) goes to find the Messiah who will lead all the Zealots in a revolt. He finds Jesus Christ, who tells him to have mercy upon his enemies, for those who live by the sword perish by the sword. He returns to call off the revolution and finds his brother killed by a Roman (Albert Dekker), but, inspired with Christ's teachings, he defies his people and forgives the Roman, and they go off together to spread the Gospel.

If the message of this film may be disputed—certainly some church leaders under the oppression of later Caesars have found other teachings of Christ to guide them,—there is no doubt about its effectiveness in getting that message across. The question of the content of religious pictures, of course, can in no way be separated from the doctrine of the church as a whole. The Bible is filled with material that is vital, dramatic, and immediately applicable to the basic problems of human existence and morality. The ways in which that material is presented in film may vary widely. In *The Great Commandment,* for example, Jew and Gentile alike are shown mocking Jesus, and Jew and Gentile alike are shown following his teachings; another Cathedral film, *Journey into Faith,* the story of the Crucifixion, does not make this point, and as a result is open to the criticism of anti-Semitism, as Friedrich himself is frank to admit. *Esther,* Cathedral's latest, certainly is an episode that could have pointed a sharp lesson against religious persecution, even at (perhaps we should say especially at) a child's level of under-

standing. However, *Esther* gives no real moral or spiritual guidance and is the weaker dramatically because of that.

According to sociologists, the devout observances, the musical and ceremonial aspects of religion, yield a satisfaction above and beyond that of mystic fulfillment, a fundamentally recreational satisfaction. In this respect the use of motion pictures can increase the influence of the church simply by increasing attendance. And it does. It has. One church estimated that attendance increased four times since it started showing films. The possibilities are enormous. There are 16,000 commercial theaters in this country; there are 254,000 churches. There are some 10,500,000 theater seats; there are 50,000,000 church seats. Despite bottlenecks in film distribution and availability of projection equipment, it is conservatively estimated that 15,000 churches now show films regularly to more than 4,000,000 people, and there are 10,000 church applications for new projection machines on manufacturers' waiting lists. The 16-mm magazine *Film World,* recognizing the growing interest, has just launched a religious quarterly, *Church Films.*

But quantity is not enough. Religion always has been a means by which people sought spiritual serenity amid the confusions and dangers of their daily life. What constituted serenity differed, of course, with each society, sometimes with each community. Today, the confusions and dangers, the perplexities and problems, and the feeling of helplessness are constantly being intensified. How successful the church will be in increasing its influence in the future will depend much on how far the churches, through their films and otherwise, are willing to come to grips with the burdening problems and anxieties of our times.

The Camera's Bright Eye Is Lowered Becomingly

WILLIAM SERIL

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A MAJOR aspect of the film's unprecedented capacity to see into complex changing events is its singular adroitness in selecting meaningful detail for attention.

In the movie *Double Indemnity*, for example, an intense melodramatic climax of rich cinematic texture occurs in the scene depicting the murder of the husband by his wife and her lover. She is driving an automobile through a night-darkened street, with her husband seated alongside and her accomplice hidden behind them on the floor of the car. By prearrangement she sounds the horn as a signal to the concealed man, who seizes the husband by the throat to choke him to death.

The actual strangling is never really shown on the screen. Instead, the camera focuses attention on a close-up of the wife, who meanwhile remains at the wheel, driving. Yet the slaying, in all its stark physical violence, is most vividly *implied* by the expressive emotional play in the woman's eyes, mouth, shoulders, and hands, mingled with the mounting agitation, agonizing consummation, and exhausted subsidence successively realized by the pulsating musical background.

The associative process contained in this oblique inference embodies a unique "cinemidiomatic" flair. An aspect of an already selected framework of incident is selected for attention. Motion, change, and event are intimated rather than enacted; action is *suggested* by visual indirection, by the aesthetic expedient of concentrating on elements appropriate to the action, in place of the action itself, and, as in the strangulation "scene," allusion is immensely enhanced by the effective interplay of sound.

The camera's deft, wary ability to see only what it *should* see, circumspectly avoiding the imprudent, was utilized with charm and effect by Chaplin in *Monsieur Verdoux:* The financially destitute Bluebeard and one of his many wealthy wives have retired together for the evening, leaving the camera discreetly stranded outside the bedroom door, disappointedly staring out through the hallway window into the night. But music again encourages understanding of what must be happening, unseen, inside the boudoir. First, its melody coyly betokens marital coziness. Then it rapidly alters to presage a turbulent destructive force, culminating in a thunderous fortissimo. At last the rhapsody reassumes a more tranquil mood. Day is dawning and a morning light appears through the window. M. Verdoux emerges from the room, rested and refreshed, debonair as ever, preparing to count the money for which he has, manifestly, just murdered another wife.

Fanciful, unobtrusive inference thus

enables the motion picture to communicate the substance of unpleasant situations, gaining, rather than weakening, dramatic impact by allowing the story to be told in terms of simultaneous occurrences or incidents subsidiary to the main plot line. This distinct phase of the camera's fluency is further illustrated in other examples:

To indicate the death of a man from a glassful of poisoned liquor which he has just drunk, the camera dwells upon another glass, held in the hand of the murderer, who is standing next to him. In close-up, the goblet quivers harrowingly against the killer's fingers, ultimately spilling its contents as he drops the glass in horror-stricken awareness of the accomplished deed. (This was in the film *Payment Deferred.*)

Similarly, at a bowling alley, the murder of a gang leader is intimated as the camera follows a ball which he rolls down the alley. Gunshots are heard. The ball strikes the pins and they immediately fall—all except the head pin, which spins giddily around, nearly rights itself, then slowly topples over, emitting a hollow clink. (*Scarface.*)

With an utterly different motif, a whimsical jest from *Miracle on 34th Street,* Santa Claus is demonstrating his mastery of bubble gum to a little girl. As he starts to blow an unusually large bubble, the camera engrosses itself in the mobile face of the child looking on. Although Santa and his bubble are invisible to the camera, it is most apparent from the child's look of growing amazement that the bubble has now reached enormous proportions. Then it is heard bursting, and Santa is next seen at a mirror, painstakingly trying to remove the gum splattered all over his whiskers.

Indirection, in itself, does offer the film creator many challenging opportunities, even if only for experience in proportion, form, and style. Nevertheless, it is worth considering when and why the varied aesthetic requirements of film-making favor the use of indirection as an expedient rather than merely as an exercise in ingenuity.

The motion picture's singular ability to *approximate* full, lifelike statement is widely celebrated, and deservedly, though it is always an error to attempt to make art too lifelike. The Russian director Pudovkin has concisely drawn attention to this fundamental aspect of the cinema: "Between the natural event and its appearance on the screen there is a marked difference. It is exactly this difference that makes the film an art."

Of course, the principle of selection is characteristic of all art, good or bad. While effective direct statement also may challenge the film maker's ingenuity, indirection can often be much more persuasive and significant than a direct statement of the total dramatic incident. Moreover, the task of describing events on the screen is often markedly influenced by the delimiting physical or moral nature of the very events that are to be represented. Scenes of bodily injury and pain, disaster, nudity, sexual activity, et cetera, invariably solicit the utmost adroitness from the film creator, so it is especially there that evocative indirection can be supremely important.

To illustrate, here are three terse, pictorially suggestive episodes which dramatize violent happenings that are somewhat similar in content, capitaliz-

ing, as it were, on the detail carefully selected for *omission* by the camera:

In the English picture *The Fugitive* a motor car races through the countryside, gaining additional speed as it approaches a hill. Climbing at a still more accelerated pace, the automobile hurtles headlong into the face of the camera atop the hill. There is an abrupt screen blackout and silence at this moment. Then the story continuity is resumed in a hospital setting. (The smash-up of the vehicle, while itself not beheld, is nevertheless strikingly outlined in the sharp, time-encompassing technique of film editing.)

Love Affair: A young lady steps out of a taxicab at a crowded intersection, pays the driver, and, while anxiously gazing up at a near-by skyscraper tower, hurries there to meet her lover. The camera eye remains with the cab driver, and in another second the significant blending of his intense pantomime with the screams and mechanical effects heard on the sound track conveys the realization that she has been accidentally struck down by a passing car while crossing the street. (The effect being achieved within the initial shot, editing was needless.)

America's Highways, one in the documentary series *This Is America,* shows an intoxicated man tottering and weaving his way out of a bar toward his automobile, parked directly in front of the place. The camera, stationed across the street, watches as he bolts off in the car and speeds dizzily down the highway. Now it looks back toward the saloon, then stops, surprisingly, at the adjacent property—a cemetery. (The camera's eloquence abides here in a simple panning gesture.)

Roger Manvell in his book *Film* has laid clear-cut emphasis upon the idea that "all works of art are successful because of, not in spite of, the limitations their form imposes on them. . . . To the person who can discern the work of a good artist, a great part of the satisfaction is derived from the sense of a difficulty overcome." In motion pictures, censorship, technical impossibilities, costliness, and a host of other related problems are sometimes a decided artistic *advantage,* because content can be depicted by inference where direct statement would be expensive, hazardous, or improper. It is paradoxical that restrictions imposed upon the camera's freedom in this way actually become a new source of aesthetic values and inventiveness.

Nakedness can be neatly delineated off-scene, as in *Laura:* A writer, ensconced in his sumptuous bathtub, converses grandiloquently with a hard-boiled, sneering detective who is questioning him. Presently it is quite evident, from the contemptuous expression on the detective's face (close-up), that the puny, effete body of the writer has emerged from the tub off-screen.

The murder of a little girl in *M:* Her rubber ball rolls from behind a hedge, coming to a dead rest near by, and a toy balloon, given her by the murderer, is seen caught on the telegraph wires overhead.

The unseen disposal of a dead woman's body is inferred from a splashing sound as the camera concentrates upon her horse standing alone on the cliff above the stream. (*They Won't Believe Me.*)

Beyond its subtle avoidance of the forbidden and the obvious, the camera is skillful in arousing dramatic con-

jecture, by inducing the spectator to improvise thematic resolutions and thus share in the screen creation.

Sing You Sinners presents a man hesitant about accepting a heavy racing bet proposed to him by a gambler. He considers, refuses, walks away, stops, muses, turns back again, and is about to reply as the scene dissolves to a view of him at the race track, excitedly intent on winning the wager.

In *The Maltese Falcon,* brief sight of the open doorway of an apartment suggests that a gunman held prisoner there has escaped while his captors were busy arguing.

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty: Flying-ace Mitty, having already bagged eighteen Nazi planes, is again engaged in fierce aerial combat with the enemy, but very soon gets the proper machine-gun range, aims, and fires. Then the scene fades into a close-up of Mitty pasting a nineteenth swastika on the fuselage of his plane!

Brief, suggestive understatement is important in stimulating the spectator to participate more rewardingly in the screened event. Overemphasis certainly inhibits the observer's responsiveness, and, correlatively, pictorial and aural values are greatest when they summon forth the utmost attentive imagination. Consequently, the camera, when tactful and retiring, can be a brilliant, allusive instrument of detailed film expression.

Where storytelling urgencies impose demands upon the resourcefulness of the cinema craftsman, he does well to take his cue from Shakespeare (*Hamlet,* Act 2, Scene 1):

"By indirections find directions out."

Spiders in His Mind

NATHAN NORMAN WEISS

NATHAN NORMAN WEISS, a student at the New School for Social Research, writes a weekly theater column for Boston's *The Jewish Advocate* and monthly film criticism for Richmond's *Outlook*. He is co-author of a story in the current issue of *Perspective*.

I

THE FILM *The Woman on the Beach,* which was produced in Hollywood and therefore comes by its English language more or less legitimately, is essentially French. Whereas the Hollywood product is most often concerned with unlikely people in absurd complications, this picture, like European films generally, is solidly based on believable human beings going about their comprehensible human failings. It considers human relations with the integrity of objective and the taste for proper emphasis which are the mark of its director, Jean Renoir.

At the opening, a recuperating coastguardsman about to be discharged from wartime service insists that he is still ill because he continues to suffer a recurring nightmare, and at once we are treated to a Daliesque impression of the dream. The serviceman, stationed on the shore of a typical New England fishing town, is about to marry a customarily plain, solid, bewildered girl of the village. He meets the self-designated tramp, a self-aware, brazenly outspoken woman, and her blind husband who, until he was afflicted, had been the world's leading painter, and who now, a man of wisdom tempered with resignation, struggles to express his art in literature.

After establishing the three characters, the film is occupied with their complex interrelations. The woman appears to take a sadistic pleasure in corrupting the young man. The artist makes now derisive, now sympathetic overtures to the young man. The theme of the artist's obsession with his frustrated lifework as a painter, causing maltreatment of his wife, and in turn bringing the serviceman—on horseback—to her rescue, culminates, when his masterworks burn, in his sudden realization that he *can* express himself adequately in literature. This releases his wife from enslavement to him; but, understanding the cycle of mutual retaliation in which they were bound, the illusion-free pair reunite in facing reality. They then disengage the young man from their web, cease tormenting him, and he, a free agent again, returns to his plain young lady.

The identification I make with Jean Renoir's picture goes beyond this external story line, which merely functions as an intellectual framework for the intangibles of mood, feeling, and ideas that spring from it. Because such improvisations cannot be part of the visible and audible evidence of the film, the following speculation on the inner core of Renoir's creative conception must be entered into the record largely uncertified.

II

An underlying purpose of the film is to compare the folksy and the bizarre ways of life. It questions the efficacy of health, as health is understood in the

writings of Henry Miller: on the one hand are the normal (those stable at the moment), humdrum, dull, unproductive people, and these who are the healthy appear in the picture in a viciously accurate country-dance sequence, replete with tables laden with layer cakes and punch; on the other hand, in superb contrast, the unhealthy: the nonmaterialistic, spiritual artist and the predatory woman, both assuredly neurotic, but better neurotic than dead. And that is a point here; the first group, smug in a health of obedience and righteousness, is dead, while the second, however sick, is still struggling, hence alive.

The film's conclusion is correct: the couple reunited, the boy alone; but it is not presented consistently with Renoir's basic conception. He offers the conclusion from the point of view of the artist and his wife, while the film is actually conceived from the point of view of the coastguardsman. It is *his* day in the sun which is being explored, and his day is even representative of his lifetime: the morning-to-midnight span, beginning with the surrealistic nightmare, symbol of his stirrings in the womb, through the barely awakened state representing his life, with a flash of insight into life's potentialities for the truly alive, returning inexorably to the failure and doom of death.

The young man is of such disarming manner that we may overlook his heroic quality. He is indeed a monumental Hero. His position is the shade of grey in the world of black and white —in our society, of the dead and the living. He is ourselves, being manipulated constantly: by the woman, whose sexual strivings are greater than his, inasmuch as she is more certainly alive; by the artist, whose knowledge and objectivity are infinitely greater than his; by the fiancée, beckoning him into the calm of death. Being so manipulated, and just barely knowing it, he must always be in flight.

Now he is on the defensive, inarticulate in the high-powered company of the living, in a hurry to complete his course and return to the dead society of his fiancée. Again, having tasted life, he is a step ahead of the community to which he belongs; he has troublesome aspirations to live. When he leaves the country dance to seek once more the artist and the woman, he specifically states, "I am going to find myself." There, with the living, briefly *he* is alive; possessing the woman, he experiences a momentary superiority; with the artist he struggles for a triumph, contemptuously utilizing his material advantage of sight over the blind man.

In the unfolding there is a distinct flavor of inevitability, and it rides with the young man. When the tramp of a woman hits the screen, it is as though she were already known to him, though there have been no prior meetings. Again in the meeting of the serviceman and the artist: a predestined flavor, I may call it, but it is something more, something very casual and not quite genuine, with the quality of a dream. My suggestion is that Renoir's hero is so vitally the only major being in this study that, taking his point of view, no one else in the picture really exists. The woman and the artist came bidden by a whim of the young man's mind and they remain as long as they are needed to illustrate the exercise in his mind; when he has finished, they are free to go, while he remains alone.

III

Rough studio cutting, apparently designed to trim a commercially unmovable property down to Grade B running time (71 minutes) and enable it to return its negative cost on the twin-bill circuits, has jeopardized and possibly, on occasion, falsified M. Renoir's intentions in this movie literature of conscious and subconscious elements. When the motif of violence is encountered in the film, is it sadism or, conceding the film to be entirely from the viewpoint of the young man, masochism? And, in an expanded version of the film, it might be revealed, even perhaps unconsciously on Renoir's part, that the body of the film is a dramatization or reënactment of the initial nightmare sequence. Even as it stands, however, one recognizes M. Renoir as one of the practitioners of enlightenment who have come and gone with the suddenness of spasm in RKO Radio's constant reorganization.

At least this is apparent, whatever about it may not be: *The Woman on the Beach* is no commonplace affair. It may be that the picture is too complexly conceived for mass audiences; yet there is a nicely calculated design over the semiprofundities within, and a great many persons will not be inclined to peek. At one viewing, a neighborly audience buzzed around the fascinating prospect that the blind man wasn't blind at all; after all, we have not learned to suspect that a film might dare to disturb an audience's peace of mind so far as to prove not that a blind man wasn't blind, but that he wasn't dead. It is unprecedented that an avant-garde movie which has not been drastically bowdlerized is being exhibited in that most unlikely place—the double-feature movie house around the corner.

I wonder how far Renoir's actors understood his conception of the picture. At any rate, Robert Ryan is very much an actor and not at all the usual personality male, and it is very encouraging to see him interpret so worthy a role as Hero. Securely ensconced in the personality division, Joan Bennett is nevertheless being handled to great advantage, again and again; I can't but feel it is trickery, but who can deny the cajolery of an able sorcerer? Charles Bickford, back from the banished, is above my acclaim.

Finally, it is essential to congratulate all hands for providing a genuinely stimulating film experience, singling out Hanns Eisler for his really admirable functioning as composer. And, as a raised footnote, to disperse any fears among those who may not have seen the film that the painter's masterpieces, repeatedly referred to in the picture, may actually be shown in it, let me say that, charitably, they are not—a tactful policy for Mr. Albert Lewin and others of past indiscretions to adopt.

Film Music of the Quarter

LAWRENCE MORTON

LAWRENCE MORTON, orchestrator in motion pictures and radio, has contributed film music criticism to a number of journals. His earlier review of the quarter's film music for the *Hollywood Quarterly* appeared in Volume III, No. 1.

WHAT QUALITY of person Amber was in the novel to which she gave her name is a matter about which I shall die in contented ignorance. On the screen she is many things. In the version of the screenwriters she is a cynically wise and ambitious wench simultaneously ennobled and driven to corruption by an overpowering and unrequited love. Linda Darnell's acted Amber is a dullard, the merest imitation of what the great courtesans of history must have been. A third Amber is the cosmetic creation of the make-up and costume departments; but they only made Miss Darnell look like an actress.

By the time the filmed Amber reached the music department it was apparent that what she deserved in the line of musical characterization was a tune composed by a Victorian psalmist, published by Theodore Presser, and played on a harmonium at a deadly mezzo-forte. This is the kind of music that a talented composer cannot write; consequently David Raksin created a fourth version of the character. His music gives Amber the dimensions that the screenwriters and the actress herself hoped but failed to give her. It is frankly romantic music. It has a suggestion of English folk melody, as if it would remind us of the homely environment in which we first meet Amber. And in its subsequent phrases it moves on to material that is more sensual in sound and arrives at a rather passionate climax. In the sense that the music gives Amber sweetness, grace, intensity, allure, and passion (none of which she otherwise possesses) it must be regarded as the most successful part of a characterization which still, on the whole, remains inadequate.

Where the picture is of epic proportions, as in the scenes of the plague and the great fire, the music is of corresponding size and forcefulness. Some observers have been struck only by the loudness of the music here; much more impressive, however, are its structure, its workmanship, its musical completeness. The fire music, for instance, is a set of variations written over a ground bass consisting of a reiterated downward scale. It is an apt dramatic device for a scene that grows by accumulation rather than by development; and at the same time it permits free play of pure musical imagination. The plague music gains its effectiveness less through a formalized pattern than through melodic leaps, contrapuntal treatment of the theme, and dissonant harmonies—all of these devices so manipulated as to convey the qualities of pain and anguish. This is large-scale music; and since it is designed for over-all effect rather than for a slavish synchronization with the screen, it achieves genuine musical integrity and self-sufficiency. It is music that has been composed, not carpentered according to cue. It should be noticed and appreciated by critics who say that it is impossible to write good music to a stop watch.

Elsewhere in the score there is music for less pretentious purposes but of great attractiveness and charm. For a scene in the king's antechamber Raksin has written a period piece in Handelian style, complete with doubled oboes, characteristic horn passages (with shakes), and a tune for the high E-flat trumpet. I mention the style and orchestration of the piece not only because they are musically interesting but also because they point up so ironically the humor of a situation in which the king's mistress, his petitioners, and his foppish private secretary are all hopelessly caught up in a web of intrigue and petty personal animosity. The composer's ironical attitude is extremely helpful to a film which lacks wit; it brings to this scene the *esprit* that George Sanders brings to the role of Charles II.

Raksin's score has the misfortune of being too good for its purposes. The disparity in quality between the music and other elements of the film illustrates quite clearly the interdependence of the several crafts involved in picture making, the inability of one to raise, even when it surpasses, the general level of achievement. Yet one shudders to think of what *Forever Amber* would have been with a score less distinguished than Raksin's.

The Swordsman is a light treatment of the Romeo and Juliet theme, set in Scotland, given a happy ending, and provided with a score by Hugo Friedhofer. The picture requires that the music perform only the more primitive functions; it must establish local color and be everywhere a faithful duplication in sound of such drama as exists in the romantic machinery of duels, chases, pastoral and love scenes, and in the inevitable triumph of goodness in a naughty world. Within the framework of this kind of romance there is still plenty of room for the composer to move around in.

The main point of interest in Friedhofer's score is the musical evocation of the Scotch atmosphere. Without at any time imitating the sound of bagpipes or quoting folk tunes, the composer constructed much of his basic material on the premises of Celtic music. There is no tune in the pure pentatonic ("black key") scale, but there are several in the diatonic that omit or sharpen the fourth degree or flatten the seventh and thus produce the required exotic effect. The 6/8 rhythm and the Scotch snap are prominent, as is the drone bass in fifths, particularly in the progression of tonic to flatted seventh. The drone bass is echoed in the persistent tonic-dominant relationships which are emphasized throughout the score. And there are other Scotch characteristics that are more easily pointed out in the process of listening than described in words.

The whole score recalls Friedhofer's music for *The Bandit of Sherwood Forest*. There is much interplay between trumpets, horns, and woodwinds against neutral string or mixed backgrounds—an orchestral technique that has connotations of cool, northern, outdoor atmosphere. If not original, the technique has at least Friedhofer's personal stamp: clean writing, good bass lines, and the solidity of full but not too luxurious texture. He is one of the few film composers who are able and not afraid to employ the classical sonority of simple four- or five-part writing; it can be heard in the music for the javelin-throwing contest, in the tune

that appears to be associated with the hero, and in the charming love theme (which is carefully *not* plugged). The whole score has the hallmark of solid musicianship.

A very different approach to musical problems is Frank Skinner's in *Ride a Pink Horse*. Here the music is entirely realistic. For one hour and forty minutes we hear nothing but the music of a fiesta against which all the action takes place. This would have been a completely logical procedure if we always perceived the music in properly realistic perspective. Dialogue of course made this impractical, and logic had to give way. At first interesting, the music gradually became tiresome and finally downright irritating. Thus reduced to humdrum service, music loses all its powers of suggestiveness and dramatic urgency.

Another logical but musically unsatisfactory procedure was in Daniele Amfitheatrof's main-title music for *The Lost Moment*. The composer wrote a prelude based on fragmentary quotations of themes later employed fully in the score. These fragments included a passage for violin solo, some piano music later played by the schizophrenic heroine, and a chorus of otherworldly voices singing wordless chromatic passages that actually suggest nothing more distant or imaginary than the clichés of the day before yesterday in middle Europe. The experiment failed because the overture scheme requires more time for unfolding than is permitted by the duration of the main title. The score as a whole is competent, but its idiom is uninteresting; and it is held down to routine by the mediocrity of the film.

Notes and Communications

MOTION PICTURES IN DENMARK

FOR A small country—of four million inhabitants, half of New York City—Denmark already has a glorious history in motion picture making. Danish directors such as August Blom, A. W. Sandberg, and Benjamin Christensen introduced the first long-reelers and turned out the heartbreaking historical melodramas and the films based upon Dickens' books in which Waldermar Psilander and Olaf Fonss starred. Those of us who were children after the First World War still remember the Danish comics Pat and Patichon. The "Duse of Motion Pictures," the "unrivaled" Asta Nielsen, provoked the first movie critics to write more enthusiastic praise than any later actress ever won. She has just published two books of memoirs called *De Tiende Muse* (a pun meaning either the Tenth or the Silent Muse). She evokes the days of her debut in the movies around 1910 and the series of films in which she performed later under such directors as Pabst, Lubitsch, Wegener, Lang, Murnau. One of her pictures, *Joyless Street,* introduced the young Greta Garbo. Now somewhat deaf, but still stately, Asta Nielsen lives by herself in Copenhagen and will probably end her days in comparative well-being since she is soon to obtain from the government, as an honored veteran of the movies, what amounts to a pension, an exhibitor's license.

No one in Denmark can open a motion picture theater without an authorization from the government. In that indirect way the government controls the importation of foreign pictures. There are so few picture houses (fewer than 300 for the whole country) that each one makes a sizable profit, even after 60 per cent of the box-office receipts have gone to the government for taxes. But the number of pictures which can be shown in Denmark is very much limited.

Under such conditions, the number of movies—12 to 14—turned out each year by the three major Danish studios and a few independent companies is quite remarkable. The most important of Danish directors is still Carl Theo Dreyer, an interview with whom is reported later. His recent picture *Days of Wrath* has had great success abroad. Another Danish picture has been well received: *Red Meadows,* a story of the resistance, directed by a former actress, Bodil Ipsen, with the technical assistance of Lau Lauritzen. Both have joined again to produce *Afsporet,* a good realistic film of the French school. There are four other Danish directors who rank with those of other countries: Johan Jacobsen, who recently made a picture on the pattern of *Tales of Manhattan;* Ole Palsbo, the director of a social picture on unwed mothers; Bjorne Henning-Jensen, who put on the screen Martin Andersen Mexos' famous novel *Ditte Manneskebarn* (*The Silly Children*); and Christen Jul.

Most of these directors learned their technique by making documentaries,

for Denmark produces short subjects under a remarkable system which produced 150 short-reelers in the years from 1941, when the system was put into effect, to 1946. The government uses a considerable amount of the taxes it collects from exhibitors to produce documentaries under the sponsorship of two organizations: the Government Motion Picture Committee, including representatives of all departments, commissions subjects of general interest to be produced by the studios; and the Danish Cultural Film Committee, in which all cultural and tourist organizations, schools and unions, are represented, receives a subvention from the government and produces its own films. Since the features produced through these two organizations are distributed without cost to all picture houses, there is practically no outlet for any other type of short feature production.

The conception of the documentary as a public service of the government enables a sizable number of young movie technicians to turn out pictures free from commercial preoccupations and to try out new forms. The Danish school of documentaries, very much influenced by the British and especially by Arthur Elton, who came to work in Denmark, had already produced interesting features before the war, most of them directed by Karl Roos and Theodor Christensen. Most noteworthy was their short on peat, Denmark's main fuel. Christensen carried on his work in informative film even under the occupation. With his camera hidden in a truck he accompanied his comrades of the resistence on sabotaging expeditions, and made his picture *Your Freedom Is at Stake* under the Germans' very noses.

The fact that saboteurs were willing to take a cameraman along and thereby increase the risk of their being caught should the film record of their activities fall into the Germans' hands, is striking evidence of the great respect for documentaries in Denmark. Everyone wants to have a part in them. It is due to the general interest, no doubt, that so small a country has been able to turn out technicians and pictures that have proved a match for those of larger countries.

In London as in Paris, one of last year's sensations in motion picture circles was the showing of Carl Dreyer's movie, *Days of Wrath*. No picture by the Danish master who directed *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* had been seen in foreign capitals since his famous *Vampyr*. The audiences were profoundly impressed with his contriving of an eerie atmosphere compounded of mysticism and reality, with the composition of his shots, his uncanny skill for modeling faces with a kind of inner light, his nerve-tautening use of muffled sound suddenly pierced. Carl Dreyer had lost none of his art during the period when nothing was heard of him abroad. What had become of him in the meantime, what were his plans for the future? No visit to Copenhagen would have been complete without an interview with one of the greatest directors of all time.

Dreyer lives with his wife in one of the beautiful modern apartment houses which are the pride of Scandinavian countries. Soon after I arrive at his home for tea, I appreciate what I had been told about the magnetism of his personality by several of his former collaborators. His calm blue eyes are penetrating. He speaks excellent English in

subdued tones which cause me to lower my voice unconsciously. The rhythm and sense of control in his pictures appear to be carried through his own life. He ponders over each of his answers, and I feel strong determination in his very mildness.

We recall his early work which coincided with the glorious days of the Danish film industry. From 1912 to 1917, Dreyer, who had started as a newspaperman, learned the technique of film making while working in various capacities for Nordisk Films Company. He started his career as director in 1917 with *The President,* in which we see, for the first time, sets complete with four walls being used and actors reasonably close to the age of the characters they were playing. Flashbacks are intelligently used and there are some interesting symbolic shots, but otherwise the film displays none of the characteristic Dreyer touches already quite noticeable in his next picture, *Pages of Satan's Diary,* which he made only a year later. "When I made *The President,*" Dreyer reminisces, "I was too busy with material problems to think of directing. I let the actors do what they liked. Later I saw my mistakes on the screen and learned my lesson. That's how one learns to direct."

Pages of Satan's Diary, an illustration in four episodes of the Devil's career on earth, recalls *Intolerance* in many ways. Dreyer admits having learned a great deal from Griffith, especially the use of close shots. He acknowledges him and Eisenstein as his masters. As we come to discuss the latter's picture *Ivan the Terrible,* Dreyer stresses that in spite of obvious faults it is a great picture, not only because of its admirable moments, but because of the director's effort to create a new technique. "Eisenstein," says Dreyer, "should be applauded for having broken with the style he had created and used with such success in *Potemkin,* for instance, and for having resolutely forged ahead trying to find a new form. What the movies need most at present is individuals expressing themselves originally." As I object that it may be hard for a director to relinquish the themes and the technique which he knows best, he replies that a director's inspiration should always be renewed and that therefore he should work on a different subject each time. According to him, the mark of truly great works is that the spectator is touched by the spontaneousness of the creation, he can feel the heart of the director. Therefore inspiration is of the utmost value and a picture shouldn't be planned in too great detail. I am shown one of his screenplays: action and dialogue are indicated, but there is no mention of shots. Since Dreyer writes all his screenplays—he says it is inconceivable for him to shoot a scene which he hadn't thought out himself first,—I wonder why he couldn't plan his shots. He replies that it would be suppressing one source of inspiration. It is only when one has seen the actors and the actual sets that the final conception takes form. For the same reason Dreyer does his own cutting: the best ideas come when one can feel all the tiny pieces of film under one's fingers.

Since he writes his own screenplay, directs and edits his own picture, Dreyer seems to have attained the dream of most motion picture people. But he goes even further. I recall the characteristic use of light and sound in his various pictures. Let the cameraman be Rudolf Mate or Carl Anderson,

the pictures are always lit by that same flame which reveals inner meanings. Dreyer respects the men he has worked with, yet he always worked very closely with them. Dreyer's sound—that peculiar tense muffled tone of the conversation achieved by asking the actors to forget the microphone and talk naturally—is a part of the rhythm of all his pictures. "Important events do not happen in a tumultuous atmosphere," says Dreyer. "People say that my cutting is slow. It is not; but the actions in my pictures are deliberate. An atmosphere of tension is best created in quietness."

Each of his major pictures seems to bring to life a peculiar atmosphere of mysticism within which the characters are no longer able to detect the real world from the supernatural one. Would Dreyer say that his aim in making movies is to create an atmosphere? Dreyer nods his assent, but recalls that he also produced some very realistic pictures such as *Du Skal Aere Din Hustru* (*Le Maître du logis*). And in Copenhagen movie circles there are many stories about the minutely planned realism he brings to the details of his pictures. For instance, it is said that he let Anna Svierkerd, the actress who played the witch in *Days of Wrath,* stay for two hours on top of a ladder before taking the shot of her face turned to the fire. No wonder she looked realistically horrified.

Anna Svierkerd's performance in Dreyer's film was her first in movies. Two of the other main characters in the picture were performing their first movie roles. I remark that *Vampyr* also was acted mostly by amateurs. Doesn't Dreyer believe in the use of professional actors? "The people one uses should know how to act," he answers, "for where there is no gold you cannot bring it out. However, the main thing is to have actors fitting the characters. Then one only has to let them follow their inspiration. I always try to make them forget the camera and be as natural as possible, and I have as few rehearsals as I can to avoid stiffness." Falconetti in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and Lisbeth Movin in *Days of Wrath* were more wonderful than in any subsequent picture; Dreyer's ideas about actors must work.

Why hasn't a born movie maker, a man who has proved his worth and who lives for the cinema, been more productive lately? Denmark's production is necessarily very limited. However, in its important school of documentaries Dreyer has recently made several films, and has written scripts for several others. He is full of ideas for pictures. In 1945 he tried an original experiment in Sweden, making a picture with only two characters. He has just sold a screenplay about Mary Stuart, written in English, to an English firm, and he may go to England to shoot it; he is also discussing the possibility of doing it in the States. He is very much interested in going to Hollywood, where he thinks he might be able to realize some of his ideas.

Dreyer believes that American producers have come to realize the necessity of breaking away from routine pictures. I know that he could certainly bring original and good ideas to Hollywood: he has proved his worth. But I wonder whether his individuality could express itself in the studios of California. Wouldn't he be constantly fighting against the dominating goal of saving money by saving time? Thereupon Dreyer reminds me of how

Vampyr was shot: it was an independent production and had to be done on an economy basis; the crew went to a small French village and shot in some deserted houses—which, by the way, explains the regular use of ceilings in this picture several years before Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane;* and, according to Dreyer, more effectively created an atmosphere of unreality than could have been done, had studio sets been used, the false reality of which the public has grown accustomed to. The use of real sets and of amateur actors produced a remarkable picture that should prove how economically Dreyer can shoot.

Will American producers be convinced by that instance? Will they be more sensitive to the value of the pictures Dreyer has made and the screenplays he has written? Would he be able to work with the same freedom in the States as in Europe? It would really seem worth while to try. The attempt might give Hollywood production—which needs it, when compared with European production—not a second *Passion de Jeanne d'Arc,* since Dreyer believes directors should never twice tackle similar subjects, but another masterpiece of the same quality.

JUDITH PODSELVER
Paris, France

A UNIVERSITY COURSE IN THE MOVING PICTURES

ALTHOUGH several universities now offer courses in the moving pictures, the courses are so new and so rare, particularly those in the aesthetics of the art, that they provide no established pattern comparable, for example, to that set by courses in the novel and the drama. Although this pioneer situation has its advantages, it also has its difficulties. It is the purpose here to describe a course in the moving pictures recently established in the Department of English at Purdue University and to present some of the problems which have arisen with it.

The course at Purdue is, to an appreciable degree, a comparative study of narration. Its chief materials are twenty-four films chosen not only to illustrate the aesthetics of the cinema but also to trace its history. And because an analysis of the cinematic method is clarified by comparison and contrast with other kinds of narration, the course also includes four novels, six plays, a short story, three so-called film plays, and a scenario. Since the purpose is to enable the student to become a discriminating spectator at the movies, the course is a study of the moving pictures as narration having similarities to other forms of narration but also having significant differences. It is the study of moving pictures as literature.

One of the problems in the teaching of this kind of course is the paradox, inherent in the art of the moving pictures themselves, that a film worth studying is so interesting that study of it is difficult. The method adopted at Purdue represents a compromise between analyzing a film, as it were, in a laboratory and viewing it as though in a theater. At the class meeting preceding that in which a film is to be run off, the film is discussed and out of this discussion come specific questions to be answered by the student after he has studied the film on the screen. At the screening there is enough light in the room to permit note taking. In these

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One of the problems in the teaching of this kind of course is the paradox, inherent in the art of the moving pictures themselves, that a film worth studying is so interesting that study of it is difficult. The method adopted at Purdue represents a compromise between analyzing a film, as it were, in a laboratory and viewing it as though in a theater. At the class meeting preceding that in which a film is to be run off, the film is discussed and out of this discussion come specific questions to be answered by the student after he has studied the film on the screen. At the screening there is enough light in the room to permit note taking. In these

respects the approach to studying a particular moving picture is not theater-like. Otherwise, the student attends the laboratory period, scheduled once a week, much as he would a moving picture theater. The films are screened at a time and place separate from the classroom meetings. The student is a spectator not just as an individual, but as a member of an audience made up of the class and not infrequently a few outsiders. Only rarely is the film interrupted for on-the-scene discussion, and seldom are parts of the film rerun. For the silent films, to simulate an important condition under which they were originally presented, a pianist provides the proper musical background. Although for a film such as *The Birth of a Nation* it is impracticable to provide the accompaniment the director intended, that is, a full orchestra carefully rehearsed to synchronize with the running of the film foot by foot, this accompaniment is approximated inasmuch as the pianist follows the original score. Music from the *Valkyrie* as an accompaniment to the ride-of-the-clan sequence in *The Birth of a Nation* illustrates for the student the importance of music in building up mood and thus becoming a part of the film itself, and it points the way to an appreciation of the use of background music in sound films. But such theater-like conditions, germane to the moving pictures, only increase the obstacles to the study of a film and thus constitute a problem not yet solved.

A very real handicap is lack of materials. Inasmuch as 16-mm films are less expensive to rent and less expensive and less complicated to screen than 35-mm, the selection of moving pictures is limited to those that are available on the smaller film. Of these there are comparatively few; and of the few, still fewer that are suitable. The most useful source of supply at present is the Museum of Modern Art Film Library. Commercial organizations which rent 16-mm films are less satisfactory as sources, their collections having been built up, as an examination of their catalogues reveals, for less serious purposes. For much the same reason—and for other reasons, too—a dependence on films that happen to be presented currently in local theaters is also unsatisfactory.

Moving picture stills to represent salient points about a film or a director's technique are helpful in class discussions, but suitable stills are rarely available. Purdue University has purchased from the Museum of Modern Art the extensive exhibition entitled "David Wark Griffith—American Film Master," a collection of enlarged photographs, posters, stills and blown-ups of individual frames from the battle sequence of *The Birth of a Nation.* More of this kind of material is needed: stills from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* for a more detailed study of settings, costumes, and make-up than is possible during a single screening of the film; stills from *Potemkin* to illustrate Sergei Eisenstein's composition and variety in crowd scenes; from *Anna Christie* for an examination of outdoor scenes in a sound film made at the time when the microphone imposed limitations comparable to those of the camera in early silent films; from *The Grapes of Wrath* for a certain kind of montage, etc.

A study of the history and aesthetics of the moving pictures has a place in liberal education. Is the moving pic-

ture industry interested enough in this kind of education to help? A practical way in which it could help would be to make available on 16-mm film significant moving pictures, stills from these pictures, and certain scenarios. Films are now being made for classroom teaching of almost every subject from grammar school arithmetic to medicine. United World Films, organized by Universal Pictures Corporation, has recently announced that it is going to make 16-mm educational films and that it will "finance to the sum of $3,200,000 an integrated series of eighty-six short films on the subject of world geography." Even a considerably smaller sum invested in the teaching of moving pictures might pay dividends. It should not be too great a risk. In 1936, Mr. Will Hays, as director of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, declared: "Recognition of the motion pictures as an art by the great universities [will mark] the beginning of a new day in motion picture work. It [will pave] the way for the motion picture's Shakespeares." The day has been marked and the way is being paved. The motion picture industry could help with the paving.

A. R. FULTON
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[THE EDITORS will welcome further communications about existing motion picture courses, improving motion picture courses, and sources for feature films and related materials.]

Book Reviews

Book Review Editor, FRANKLIN FEARING

DOCUMENTARY CLASSIC

Grierson on Documentary. Edited and compiled by FORSYTH HARDY, with American notes by RICHARD GRIFFITH and MARY LOSEY. New York: Harcourt, Brace. 1947

IF Robert Flaherty is the father of documentary, then John Grierson is certainly the foster parent. Grierson reared it, nursed it, brought it of age, instructed and gave it direction at every turn. No one else writes of the documentary field, either critically or in its defense, with the same authority. *Grierson on Documentary* is at once a compilation of his writings and an outline of the growth and development of the form itself. For these are the articles that literally set the course for documentary. Collected and arranged by Grierson's friend and admirer, Forsyth Hardy, and with additional informational introductory material by Richard Griffith and Mary Losey, the American editors, the book provides equally a history of the movement and an insight into the thinking that inspired it.

Grierson would be the first to argue that neither documentary history nor documentary thinking can be considered as simply a personal affair. He has always been reasonably selfless in his devotion to the cause; and the fame he has, we can feel, rests less on any personal tub-thumping than on the sheer volume of his writing and lecturing—and the vast success that has attended every enterprise he turned his hand to. Tireless in spreading the word "documentary" through the public prints, he was no less insistent that all the young men about him be equally articulate. It was persistent publicity almost as much as the films themselves that won attention for documentary as a movement during the early 'thirties in England, and, more slowly because less persistent, during the late 'thirties in this country.

Grierson's love and appreciation for films are profound, dating back to his very childhood; and his approach to films was as unorthodox as it was auspicious. Graduating in philosophy from Glasgow University, he came to this country in 1924 on a Rockefeller Research Fellowship to study the effects of the various mass cultural media upon public opinion. Of them all, motion pictures most absorbed his attention, and he began writing extensively about them, notably in the pages of the New York *Sun.* It was while Grierson was still in America that he saw *Potemkin* and *Moana,* two films with utterly different yet importantly related approaches to the creation of reality on the screen. By what Hardy rightly calls "an act of creative imagination," Grierson took these elements of film art—the propagandist in Eisenstein, the acute observer of a culture in Flaherty—and welded them into a new form, the documentary; or, more specifically, the British documentary.

When Grierson returned to England, he propounded his ideas to Sir Stephen

Tallents, propaganda head of the Empire Marketing Board, the function of which was to promote and integrate the production, preservation, and transport of the Empire's food supply. Tallents was sympathetic, and Grierson became the Board's Film Officer. Immediately he began forming about himself a group of young men who preferred "the dog biscuits of E.M.B. production to the flesh pots of Elstree and Shepherd's Bush." They saw and studied old films in the realist tradition, everything from newsreels and westerns to avant-garde efforts and the Russian epics. While Walter Creighton made *One Family* in the story film style. Grierson went off to the North Sea to do a short picture on the herring fisheries. *Drifters* confirmed all his theories; its immediate success assured the future of his project. By July, 1933, when the E.M.B. Film Unit was dissolved, it had turned out dozens of films; but, more important, it had also begun the training of many of the men who are now among our leading documentalists, men like Basil Wright, Arthur Elton, Stuart Legg, Paul Rotha, John Taylor, Harry Watt, and Edgar Anstey.

Tallents moved to the General Post Office, and the Grierson unit moved with him. Now began the series of films which have become the classics of the British documentary: *Song of Ceylon, Night Mail, Coal Face, North Sea.* Their common problem was to get behind the story of communications, to relate it in human terms to the people of Britain. This approach to fact, in which facts are seen not in isolation, but in their effects on everyday living, gradually gained popular support. Sponsorship for documentary began to appear outside the sphere of government alone, in industry and in social-welfare groups. Hardy reports that by 1937, when Grierson resigned from the G.P.O., more documentaries were being produced without Government sponsorship than with it.

Grierson left the G.P.O. to set up the London Film Centre, a sort of clearing house for documentary production. It passed on ideas, undertook research, planned and supervised production in an attempt to indicate needs and avert needless duplication. One of his most important contributions in this period was the production program he drew up for the Films of Scotland Committee, documenting in a series of seven related pictures Scotland's national aims and achievements.

Again a public servant—a term that Grierson is particularly fond of,—in 1938 he visited Canada, Australia, and New Zealand to investigate the possibilities of film production in those countries. It was on this trip that he drew up the plan that became the National Film Act of Canada. A year later he was appointed the Canadian Film Commissioner, charged with putting into operation his own design. The work that Grierson did in Canada is without parallel anywhere. In England, his range was limited to the operations of specific governmental bodies; in Scotland, he was held to a specified number of films. But in Canada, the entire nation was his to put on film, to instruct, to enlighten, to integrate. Soon from the Film Board appeared the *Canada Carries On* series, documenting Canadian achievements and intended solely for Canadian distribution. Almost simultaneously, *The World in Action* films began, using a

March of Time format in their approach to world affairs. Although designed primarily to orient the Canadians from the screen of their favorite theaters, the series was widely seen in both the United States and England.

Equally important to Grierson was the development of the nontheatrical field, and in this the Canadian experiment was supremely successful. Fully half the production, Hardy tells us, was for that audience, and he reached it by making films available through newly established film depositories, through factory circuits, and through traveling projector units sent off into areas where there were neither the theaters nor the equipment for regular film shows. Again Grierson faced the difficult but stimulating task of creating a new body of documentary workers, of imbuing a new group of young men with his own mature concepts of the documentary mission. Films have been pouring out of Canada in a vast stream ever since, some good, a few bad, many indifferent. Quality to one side, however, it is typical of Grierson's influence that even though he himself has been away from Canada for more than two years now, the general trend and conception of the pictures is of a piece with those produced under his own supervision.

Early in 1946, Grierson came to the United States to form International Film Associates, a nonprofit organization for the research, planning, and development of sponsored films relating to international understanding. Like the old Film Centre in London, Film Associates was not a producing but a planning body to advise and integrate production. Shortly thereafter he incorporated The World Today as a production company to make sponsored films on world affairs. The company carries on under the expert direction of Stuart Legg, Grierson's assistant at the National Film Board of Canada and one of his first E.M.B. disciples.

Grierson himself has gone on to UNESCO, again in a film advisory capacity. In Paris, and at the moment in Mexico, he is again writing and speaking the words that will inevitably become the cornerstones for future developments in the use of documentary for world understanding. He knows the value of his medium, its usefulness for national unity and its potentialities for international understanding. The speeches, it is hoped, will become the opening chapters of the next Grierson book.

The opening chapters of this Grierson book, however, are not about documentary at all. They are reprints and compilations of many of the shorter bits of film criticism that he continued to write in the early 'thirties, while already active in documentary production: reviews of comedies, notes on directors, an excellent selection titled *Hollywood Looks at Life.* They reveal his acute critical sense and his gift for the pungent phrase: "When a director dies," says Grierson of Von Sternberg, for example, "he becomes a photographer." Forsyth Hardy, as editor, has chosen well, pointing the reviews gradually to the heart of Grierson's main concern, and his own as well, the film of fact.

In the sections that follow, Hardy holds fairly close to a unity of time rather than of subject. Thus *A Movement is Founded* includes not only a record of the work of the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit, but Grier-

son's basic pieces on the aesthetics of the documentary form as well. *Documentary Achievement* includes his excellent historical summary, *The Course of Realism,* and an account of his Scottish experiment, along with still pertinent observations on the use of films in the classroom and in religious institutions. The book closes with two chapters giving in extension Grierson's views on the role of documentary in education and, larger, in the struggle for a democratic world.

If those views can be summarized at all, it would be in this quotation from a speech given before the International Labor Organization in 1944: "The source of vital education today is no longer the formal education system. It resides rather in functional international organizations like U.N.R.R.A. and the I.L.O., and in functional national organizations which are actively concerned in developing the welfare of the people. I doubt if the people any longer put their hope in formal education, and for the good reason that it is not associated with their actual needs. There are brave exceptions, I know; but, by and large, education has been so anxious to avoid political difficulty that it has steered away from those needs which produce political expression and therefore produce political difficulty. It has come to teach the techniques of understanding but not the substance of it. It gives technical skills but not the sense of a living and organic social participation."

Films, and especially documentary films, Grierson has always maintained, could fill that need: Reach the audiences in the theaters, certainly, he would argue, but do not forget that there are even vaster audiences in the universities, schools, churches, youth organizations, business and service clubs, trade unions, women's groups, and professional associations. They too can be reached, welded together and mobilized by the educational community organizations themselves. "If those organizations show even a modicum of intelligence in regard to this development," wrote Grierson in another article, "they will be in a position to direct the whole force and character of the film services which are developed." And what Grierson was urging on a community level at the close of this book, he is now urging on an international level in the councils of UNESCO.

It is impossible to put down this book of essays without sharing with Hardy much of the same admiration and enthusiasm for Grierson's work that inspired the collection. Grierson's penetrating intelligence, his wit, his candor, his skill in organization and, above all, his unceasing devotion to the ideals of documentary are well revealed in these pages; and not only in Hardy's introduction, but more especially in Grierson's pieces themselves. It is to his credit that he had none of them altered or changed, so that a close reading of the successive chapters becomes something of a revelation too, and often by virtue of their seeming inconsistencies.

For example, Grierson and Flaherty are and always have been the closest friends. Indeed, it was to describe Flaherty's *Moana* that he first used the very term "documentary." In his earlier critical writings on Flaherty, Grierson was lavish with his praise: Flaherty could do no wrong. But then documentary was young, and Flaherty's was

one of the few film names connected with the movement that really meant anything. Later, as Grierson's social approach became established and accepted—an approach radically differing from Flaherty's own romantic one,—his pieces began to reflect this differentiation.

Again, when documentary was young in England, Grierson and all the people around him wrote earnestly about the aesthetics of the new form. His own *Symphonic Film* articles are brilliant representatives of this phase. It was on their artistic merits that documentaries first won the support of any substantial portion of the English audiences, and Grierson correctly emphasized that quality. In Canada, on the other hand, his problem was to turn out vast quantities of films to do a specific job in the shortest possible time, and with the assistance of only a small cadre of professional documentalists. For the rest, he had to train hundreds of new people. Putting first things first, he bade good-bye to beauty and emphasized the social message that he wanted in each of his pictures. This was his "anti-beauty" period, a period in which he wrote violently against "arty" fact films. He got the pictures that he wanted, though; and knew through it all that, as production continued, quality would improve. Today he would be the first to insist on artistic soundness in the films from The World Today.

For in all his writing Grierson has ever been a polemicist first, and no small part of the admiration due him is for the excellence of the arguments he can present in defense of his side; particularly since one can feel sure that, if the issue is a fundamental one, his arguments attach themselves to a long and consistent development, the outlines of which he has stated and restated clearly and patiently in his own fresh and lucid style. Grierson would never deny that he is a polemicist; but few would dare to accuse him of intellectual dishonesty. He would also insist that he is a propagandist as well; but he would—and in *The Nature of Propaganda* he does—take great pains to point out the difference between his understanding of propaganda and Goebbels'. For Grierson, propaganda and education are virtually one; in fact, today they should be one. And today no medium exists to equal the power and the persuasiveness of the documentary film to carry the propaganda of democratic enlightenment into the classrooms and the councils of the nations.

After all the many solid achievements in the documentary field in recent years, the Grierson book answers a very definite need for authoritative information about it. Its content supplements and carries forward Paul Rotha's earlier *Documentary Film;* and indeed adds to it a whole new dimension, the dimension of aims and purposes. Unlike the Rotha book, *Grierson on Documentary* does not limit its audience simply to those whose interest is in films alone. This is a book that can be read with equal value by educators, public figures, and representatives of private industry. It cannot fail to suggest to them new film solutions for their own special problems, new ways to relate their own special interests to the world around them. Perhaps *Grierson on Documentary* should be recommended to these groups specifically. Informed film people will want to read it anyway.

It goes without saying, however, that before documentary—and particularly documentary in this country—can reach its fullest usefulness, the urge and desire for its special kind of enlightment must be aroused again, as it was in the war years. Documentary in America stands sadly in need of more Griersons to go about explaining both the need for and the value of these films. Perhaps, since Hollywood has already shown a willingness to incorporate a documentary approach into some of its films, it can also be persuaded to adopt a measure of documentary thinking as well. Unless, of course, the Thomas Committee has succeeded in convincing it that any kind of thinking in films today is unwise and dangerous. But vacuums are quickly filled. Documentaries are primarily "think" films, and if Hollywood proves unwilling to think today, there, too, might lie an opportunity for the American documentalists, an opportunity that a Grierson would be the first to grasp.

ARTHUR KNIGHT
Assistant Curator
Museum of Modern
Art Film Library

ENTERED INTO THE RECORD

Radio's Best Plays. Selected and edited by JOSEPH LISS. New York: Greenberg. 1947

IN ASSEMBLING these twenty scripts between permanent covers (in a rather audaciously titled volume), radio writer Joseph Liss has done his profession a not inconsiderable service. The essentially transitory nature of the medium, the taunts and barbs so casually hurled at radio from every quarter, have often resulted in devaluating the worthwhile work of a handful of serious craftsmen.

One can indeed be grateful for this chance to study the techniques of a group of plays that are, for the most part, fine ones, particularly when they were missed on first airing or have not been heard in recent years. Such a script is Archibald MacLeish's *The Fall of the City.* It remains today as oddly stirring as it was on first hearing; the sharp prophetic edge of this great dramatic poem has not been dulled by time. In *October Morning,* Millard Lampell examines the meaning of the late anti-Fascist war in terms of a thoughtful veteran's reacquaintance with his young son. If Lampell had written nothing else for radio, *October Morning* would stamp him as a consumate craftsman. His economical use of sound to underscore mood, his artful blending of the storytelling protagonist with dramatic incident, his studied synthesis of voice and music never fail to achieve their fullest effect.

A young Canadian named Fletcher Markle (known to Americans through his Columbia Workshop plays) has written *Sometime Every Summertime,* an honest, engaging look into the murkier recesses of the mind of a priggish young advertising man on a summer holiday. Though Markle merely reports on the phenomenon of prejudice, never probing too deeply beneath the skin of his rather likable snob, this drama is one of the most unusual in the book. Certainly it is worth additional hearings in the future.

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Arthur Laurents is represented here by a sensitive script on the difficult subject of readjustment of the mutilated soldier to social usefulness. There are also competent scripts by Norman Corwin, Ethel Deckelman, and Mr. Liss himself.

But one might find fault at the inclusion of three or four of Mr. Liss's selections in a volume of "plays." The two cantatas—Marc Blitzstein's *The Airborne* and *The Last Speech,* based on Franklin D. Roosevelt's undelivered 1945 Jefferson Day address—hardly take wings from the printed version alone. And John Faulk's *Fourth of July Picnic* is a mawkish monologue done in the worst pseudo-colloquialist tradition (I fear Mr. Faulk fancies himself another Will Rogers). Then, too, the reader well may wish that the anthologist had troubled to read his own manuscript over at least two or three times more. The prefatory notes abound in such strange constructions as this one: "In the past twenty-five years—the age of radio—have there been more illiterate books and magazines published per reader than bad radio plays produced? . . . Is the percentage of visible flops on Broadway greater than the invisible duds on the air?" For one thing, only the brashest of cynics could look you in the eye while equating the theater's "visible flops" with radio's "inivisible duds." Whether a play succeeds or fails seldom has more to do with its merit generally than the Hooper rating of *The Great Gildersleeve* does with its dramatic excellence or lack of it.

A little later on in his introduction, Mr. Liss sets up "literature that reflects universal experience" as the criterion for the "best entertainment" (we won't go into *that* debauchment of critical standards). Then he proceeds to prove this by including such scripts as Al Morgan's *The Little One* (dealing with the universal experience of an actress who marries a man three feet tall) and Lucille Fletcher's *The Hitch Hiker* (an excellent play, by the way, but one which reflects the universal experience of a motorist who, having been killed while starting on a trip, continues onward, unaware of his demise, stalked most of the way by Death disguised as a hitch hiker).

Despite such faults, however, *Radio's Best Plays* is a volume that all creative workers in film will want to examine, a book to challenge the recriminators of radio drama by showing them what can be done despite the seemingly topless barriers of sponsorship and censorship. Because these plays impress so vividly, it is difficult to remember that the screenwriter's *sine qua non*—the visual dimension—is unknown to the writer for radio.

NEWTON E. MELTZER

HANNS EISLER: COMPOSER AND CRITIC

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THE BOOK is mistitled; for Mr. Eisler's real theme is not film music, but his

own indignation at what passes for music making in the stuidos. This is rather surprising since it had been expected, ever since the word got around that Mr. Eisler was writing a book, that he would report on his film-music project at the New School for Social Research, financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. That report now appears as a thirty-page appendix to the present volume; we hope there is more to come. What he has given us in the meantime is his opinion of film music on the "commercial" front, his analysis of what makes it go round and round and always come out the same, his recommendations for improvement, and a rather sly refutation of the phony aesthetics of Serge Eisenstein.

Here are some of the things Mr. Eisler is indignant about: the use of the leitmotif, the insistence upon melody and euphony, the use of music as illustration, the employment of clichés and stock music, the standardization of interpretation. All of these are on the musical level. On the industrial level, he is indignant about the Tin Pan Alley origin of the prevailing rules of thumb, the "often grotesque artistic incompetence" of conductors and administrative personnel, the failure of music to keep pace with technological progress, the absence of adequate planning for music, the pressure of deadlines. On the sociological level, he is indignant about the contractual arrangements between composers and their employers, the corruption of the potentialities of mass culture, the traditional servility of the musician who has been trained throughout history to "please, even at the price of self-humiliation," and the "pseudo-democratic luxury" of movie palaces under the influence of which "the function of music has become transformed into the function of ensnaring the customer."

Mr. Eisler fulminates against these evils as though he has discovered them. Yet they have been named and discussed many times before; they have been lamented and castigated and ridiculed by everyone from Bosley Crowther to Samuel Goldwyn, from Oscar Levant to Aaron Copland, and by music critics from Haggin of the *Nation* to Downes of the Times. Mr. Eisler is thus no revolutionist or iconoclast. He has merely thrown himself (and rather late at that) into a struggle of long standing. He has done a more nearly complete job than the others; and he has employed the most telling weapons—irritation, idealism, intelligence, musicianship, and a formidable power of irony and invective.

It must be said, however, that his analysis of the present state of film music is sometimes biased, oversimplified, and impolite. While all the evils he names do exist, they certainly are not universal; and there are variations of degree and kind. His indictment is so sweeping as to consign to hell fire a number of legitimate practices and an amount of good film music which, in a less Jehovah-like judgment, would he regarded as extenuating.

For example: Mr. Eisler builds a two-page case against the use of the leitmotif, "the trademark, so to speak, by which persons, emotions and symbols can instantly be identified." Although his definition flatters the perceptiveness of audiences, his argument is based on a very proper analysis of the place of the leitmotif in the Wagnerian system, in both its technical and

its aesthetic aspects. But certainly the ultimate and only valid use of the device was not made by its inventor, any more than the final ramifications of the sonata form were explored by Haydn and Mozart. Any composition made up of tiny elements—the first movement of Copland's *Piano Sonata* will serve as an example—can be analyzed in terms of the leitmotif technique simply by supplying a literary terminology for those elements and a literary program for the whole piece. But this does not make the *Sonata* a Wagnerian composition. Similarly, the mere repetition of thematic bits does not make a film score Wagnerian, even if the composer thinks it does. Half a century ago Bernard Shaw ridiculed Edward German's claim that his music for *Richard III* was written "with *leitmotivs* after Wagner's plan." "Hang it all," wrote Shaw, "have you never been to the opera? Surely you have heard at least Der Freischütz or Robert le Diable, or even Satanella, with their one or two comparatively undeveloped, unaltered, and uncombined *leitmotivs* labelling stage figures rather than representing ideas. Yet you can hardly have supposed that these were 'after Wagner's plan.' "

On the whole, the leitmotif is used in film scores much as it is used in *Richard III, Freischütz,* and *Robert le Diable,* and hardly at all as in *Tristan.* One may indeed quarrel *with composers* for employing it indiscriminately slavishly, with poverty of imagination or bad taste. This is to quarrel with their skill, their craftsmanship—in short, with their musicianship. But it is purely academic to object to the leitmotif in principle, merely because it is a helpful device for the composer, an aid for the listener, a means of creating a musical climate and achieving a degree of coherence and unity. This is exactly what it sets out to do. One could as well criticize the twelve-tone system for abandoning tonal centers—that is, for accomplishing one of its main objectives.

This still leaves unchallenged Mr. Eisler's objection to the use of recurrent themes, a less serious objection since it contains no element of the current opposition to everything Wagnerian. Now the principle of repetition of themes, whether for musical or dramatic purposes, is basic to all music except (possibly) that written in the twelve-tone system to which Mr. Eisler subscribes. In this system repetition is a matter of choice, at least in practice even if not in theory. Mr. Eisler appears to have made a choice against it, although his position on this point is ambiguous. But it is apparent that he would no more give up the principle of nonrepetition than Stravinsky would give up its opposite. This is matter of faith, not of logic, although logic can be used successfully to support either position. Many composers hold to both faiths, either alternately or simultaneously. In *Lulu,* for instance, Alban Berg found the leitmotif technique perfectly compatible with the twelve-tone system; and Roy Harris, no twelve-toner, has written much nonrepetitive music.

It appears that many of Mr. Eisler's objections to today's film music are based less upon its actual failures than upon his desire to promote the twelve-tone aesthetic. This is the weakness of his position as a critic. But it is also the strength of his position as a composer. Out of his musical faith arises his second main thesis, that modern music

(particularly twelve-tone) is what the films need in order to realize their fullest potentialities. His argument for it is excellent. He points out exactly *how* the new musical resources are applicable to films. Modern music, he says, has atomized the conventional musical idiom; and its composition according to "constructive principles" makes it pliable according to the specific requirements of films. Modernism has liberated music from the traditional and outworn associations that limit its expressiveness. It is, *par excellence,* the medium for the construction of the short forms which films require. Its prose character is in keeping with motion pictures. Its excision of the principle of modulation enables it to move rapidly from one situation to another, just as films do. It is constantly rather than occasionally dynamic because of "the ever-present factor of the unresolved."

The validity of the author's contentions, even if it be not accepted on the basis of his argument, has been incontrovertibly proved in such film scores as *White Floods* and *The Forgotten Village,* in which he applied his principles without let or hindrance. And even his Hollywood films, in which he was limited by all the machinery of prevailing prejudice and habit, have always given some indication of his dramaturgical and musical intentions. Mr. Eisler has a rare and original talent. If Hollywood is to be deprived of his services, which it can ill afford, it is fortunate in having at least a verbal exposition of his ideas. His book provides much food for thought during the impending famine.

LAWRENCE MORTON

RULE, BRITANNIA!

British Film Music. By JOHN HUNTLEY. London: Skelton Robinson. 1947

Incidental Music in the Sound Film. By GERALD COCKSHOTT. London: The British Film Institute. 1946

THESE books appear to be attempts to console the British people for the decline of their empire by telling them about a newly discovered territory in which a kind of cultural imperialism is already operating, to Britannia's greater glory. Film music is the new jewel in the British crown. If only the British will steer clear of the baneful influence of Hollywood's music, the authors suggest, superiority in the international film field can successfully be maintained. This superiority has already been established by the great British composers who have been employed by the studios. Time and time again their names are cited; and we discover that Britain now has her own three B's—Bax, Bliss, and Britten. One would think, from the frequency with which the names of these composers are invoked, that each of them had written as many film scores as Max Steiner. Actually, Bax has composed one documentary score; Bliss, three feature films; Britten, one feature and a dozen documentaries. And there are other composers of international importance who have worked in films: Lambert, Vaughan Williams, and Walton. But most film scores have been written by the "commercial" geniuses such as Richard Addinsell, Hubert Bath, John Greenwood, and Percival Mackey. Fountainheads of all this excellence are Ernest Irving, Louis Levy, and, most important, Muir Mathieson.

We are prepared for all this enthusi-

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asm, naïveté, and national pride in a hopeful foreword to the Huntley book by Mr. Mathieson, the first British musician who, in my memory, has failed to remind us of the Golden Age of Purcell. He suggests that film music is becoming terribly important and that the British brand is just on the verge of real greatness. Then Mr. Huntley takes over. Chapter i proclaims that film music holds interest for everyone, but that it must be studied to be appreciated. Chapter ii is a 75-page history of the art in Britain; this history dates from The Year One (1935) when Arthur Bliss wrote the score for *Things to Come.* Chapter iii discusses music for documentary films; chapter iv, music for cartoons, newsreels, and industrial films. Chapter v is a symposium on recording, in which Mr. Huntley's brief discussion of procedures is supplemented with essays by an engineer, a music director, and an orchestral violinist. Chapter vi is a catch-all of 20 pages of quotations from critics and observers, followed by an American critic's analysis of Walton's *Henry V,* and two hopeful essays by Vaughan Williams and the ubiquitous Mathieson. The appendices include a biographical index of some 200 composers, music directors, recording engineers, and sound-track stars; and there are miscellaneous lists of gramaphone recordings of film music, recording orchestras, BBC film-music broadcasts, featured dance bands; and finally a brief bibliography. The usefulness of this varied material is in large part vitiated by the absence of a general index.

From this summary of the contents it is at once apparent that *British Film Music* is a kind of vat into which its author has poured a heterogeneous assortment of facts, figures, anecdotes, magazine articles, and thumbnail biographies. Almost all the material is the kind of stuff regularly being spewed out by publicity departments. The two-page section on *Caesar and Cleopatra,* for instance, begins with an apostrophe to producer Gabriel Pascal and a paragraph explaining that the film probably cost more than *Gone with the Wind.* Another paragraph tells how Auric was engaged to write the music after unsuccessful attempts to procure Bliss, Britten, Walton, and Prokofiev. A few paragraphs of appreciation of Auric's personality and temperament are quoted from a critic who was obviously writing for the fan-magazine trade. Then Mr. Huntley tells us how Pascal taught a percussion player to strike an anvil "with feeling." The peroration declares that this was all a never-to-be-forgotten affair.

After publicity blurbs, the author's main source of material is Kurt London's outdated book on film music. London is quoted whenever anything needs to be said about the theory or function of film music. Presumably the author has little of his own to offer. All the evidence indicates that he is not a musician at all, but a music lover with unbounded enthusiasm, very little critical judgment, and meager ability as a writer of expository or descriptive prose. To call Auric a "detached modernist" is neither informed criticism nor adequate description. The constant coupling of the adjective "modernistic" with the name of Christian Darnton is not helpful to the reader; is Darnton "modernistic," one would ask, in the manner of Britten, Stravinsky, or Hindemith, or has he a modern-

ism of his own? A score by Vaughan Williams is said to be "grand"; one by Lord Berners "gave the spine tingles"; another by Addinsell is "witty, beautifully orchestrated." When such comments come at the end of a paragraph or two narrating the plot of a picture, one begins to wonder why the book is entitled *British Film Music.*

Yet there is some interesting information in the book. One learns, for instance, that the problems of British composers are very much like those of the Americans. Even in highly cultured Denham, composing against time is the rule; commercialism is rampant; the classics are dragged into the market place without conscience; mass appeal is sought, usually on the premise that vulgarity is easier to sell than quality. Mr. Huntley, of course, does not underscore these industrial hazards; but these bits of "social criticism" were for this reviewer the only oases in a desert of platitude and publicity.

Mr. Cockshott's little eight-page pamphlet expresses approximately the same attitudes as Mr. Huntley's book. It contains nearly as many ideas and is much more thoughful. All the source material, in matters of aesthetics, is provided by Kurt London, Maurice Jaubert, and Walter Leigh, who are all extensively quoted. Some of their ideas, long generally accepted, are due for serious questioning, such as the one that film music must be unobtrusive, apprehended in some mystical way by unidentified organs other than the human ear. Questionable also is the notion that small orchestras are more suitable than large ones for the recording of film music. It appears to me, however, that a film's budget is more often than not the deciding factor in these matters: witness Auric's un-Gallic extravagance when he had a Pascal-sized budget for *Caesar and Cleopatra,* and compare it with the economy, both instrumental and budgetary, of his *Blood of a Poet.* Various media of expression have their various virtues, but they are not comparable. Beethoven did not hesitate to use some of his grandest ideas in his quartets and piano sonatas, reserving some of his smaller ones for an orchestral work like the *Eighth Symphony.* Economy of means is currently fashionable, it is one of the criteria of good taste nowadays; but fashion should not be confused with aesthetics. Real economy is a matter of style, not of instrumental resources. Stravinsky, in his latest symphony, requires a very large orchestra to be economical with.

Mr. Cockshott also finds Hollywood the source of all musical evil. This is easy to do when one ignores the fine scores and cites all the mediocre ones, which, I do not deny, Hollywood produces in quantity. But who would base a criticism of Beethoven on a study of *Wellington's Victory* and the *King Stephen Overture*? And what critic has not pointed out that even the masters have produced their full quota of trivia?

I would not deny the authors' claims of excellence in British film music. I have frequently found it imaginative and effective in ways that Messrs. Huntley and Cockshott appear to have no appreciation for. But they should understand that its best scores can stand on their own merits. Their stature is not increased by belittling Hollywood's. And the almost indiscriminate praise meted out equally to the music of William Walton and that of Hubert

Bath, the latter of whom has come to be regarded as a hack by most American musicians, is hardly the way to glorify British art. It reveals the flaws in the British crown's newest jewel.

LAWRENCE MORTON

BLITHE CRITIC

Chestnuts in Her Lap, 1936–1946. By C. A. LEJEUNE. London: Phoenix House, Ltd. 1947

RARE indeed are the samples of daily or weekly dramatic reporting which can bear rereading more than a year after they have been written. There are the products of Shaw's happily remembered days as critic for the *Saturday Review*; his successor, Max Beerbohn, filled two volumes, *Around Theatres,* with the polished and witty weekly articles which still jolt the reader into critical awareness. The best of Nathan, Krutch, and Benchley is still readable. But that is about all. So far, the motion picture critics have produced nothing to stand beside it.

Now here is C. A. Lejeune, who has written an article on the films for the *London Observer* each Sunday for a good many years, harvesting the best of her work of the past ten years into a volume entitled, for fairly obscure reasons, *Chestnuts in Her Lap.* The articles were good reading, many people will vouch for it, from Sunday to Sunday. How do they stand up to the solitary dignity of a binding and a singularly attractive printed page?

One thing is quickly evident. If these brief reviews are still lively it is for a reason very different from that which made the reviews of Max and G. B. S. so telling. Both of them wrote with a certain condescension for the art they criticized. They protested it too often, perhaps; they had no great fondness for the theater, and from this very fact sprang a fine sense of balance, a lack of the cant which blights so many pages of dramatic criticism. Mrs. Lejeune loves the films. There can be no doubt of this. She loves all of them. Her son, E. A. Thompson, in a brief introduction to this volume, confirms it. But we would not need his filial evidence, for she shows it herself on nearly every page. Not only the good movies—the bad ones, too. She writes with the same gusto of Laughton's performance as Rembrandt and of Paramount's crocodiles advancing in mass formation to destroy the wicked natives who endanger Dorothy Lamour's life. It is quite clear that she has enjoyed both, albeit in very different ways.

And this is certainly a good thing. Too many otherwise competent critics forget that the distinguishing characteristic of the cinema is, as Mr. Thompson says in his introduction, "that . . . it can actually show you five thousand charging rhinoceri." Mrs. Lejeune never forgets it, but she keeps her balance admirably, in spite of her delight in the mad and wonderful things which can happen in the world of Technicolor. Perhaps she is at her best in recounting in mock solemnity the involutions of a Hollywood plot at its most foolish. Let me commend as examples her reviews of two operas, long since forgotten by most moviegoers but recreated with delight by Mrs. Lejeune. One is *Her Jungle Love* (this is the one about the crocodiles); the other is *The Sun Never Sets* (the Hollywood Empire, C. Aubrey Smith, molybdenum, and democracy). She uses a question-and-answer form, reminiscent of Frank

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Sullivan's dialogues with the Cliché Expert. She spares you no fatuous detail of the plots; the condemnation is left for you to make. It is interesting to note that she reserves this form almost always for reviews of violently escapist films set in the jungle or on the high seas. One wonders what her lucid mind would have found in that more culturally revealing brand of Hollywood slickness of which *Mildred Pierce* is an excellent example.

Her book is not only restrained ridicule, however. She has a great sense of the potentialities of the motion picture, and she is remarkably good at evoking the special qualities of those films which point towards them—the affectionate care of Laughton's Rembrandt, the miracle behind the many faults of Disney's *Snow White,* the warmth and tenderness of Chaplin's little Jewish barber in *The Great Dictator,* the style which makes many of us remember Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons* with more gratitude than *Citizen Kane.*

She convinces you always that she has *seen* something. Her feminine attention to costume, which may often amuse a mere male, is put to wicked use in her devastating comments on *Leave Her to Heaven;* she seems to remember infallibly every gown each heroine wears. But in her review of *Caesar and Cleopatra,* by a few carefully chosen words, she creates a picture which reminds you with brilliant economy of what it was like to *see* this film.

More than her eyes are busy. Her ears are busy, too. In one article she reminds us: "It is now fifteen years since the films began to talk. They have shown us, during that time, many miraculous, stimulating and instructive things, but *said* about as much of value as you could hear comfortably in a weekend." A great many people in the film industry might profitably read this article in which a woman who uses words skillfully and wisely writes of the great power of the word, too often forgotten by our moviemakers.

No one can agree with all Mrs. Lejeune's judgments. American readers, I suspect, may balk at the extravagant praise which she lavishes on the films of Noel Coward. Not that *Brief Encounter* and *In Which We Serve* were not films of considerable distinction, full of shrewd small accuracies, but even these shared with all Coward's work a core of falseness which becomes almost embarrassing at times. It is surprising to find Mrs. Lejeune saying with great justice of Saroyan's *The Human Comedy,* "the picture it gives of American life is almost certainly oversentimentalized in its effect, but in its detail it is convincing and valuable," and then saying without qualification that Noel Coward has "taste and a talent for truth." No one will quarrel over the talent, but it often seems to be a talent for the sentimental cliché. Nor is "taste" quite the word we should use for the vulgarized film version of *Blithe Spirit.*

But this is carping about a book of brisk, intelligent, stimulating writing about an art which is one day going to startle many persons by producing works of real significance. I don't believe that Mrs. Lejeune will be startled. Meanwhile, in turning these pages we will find much laughter, much wisdom, and some incidental clues to the power we may yet hope to find more fully realized in the films.

RICHARD ROWLAND

BUSINESSLIKE FILMS

Films in Business and Industry. By HENRY CLAY GIPSON. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1947

IN 1897, three advertisers sponsored the outdoor showing of a film in Herald Square, New York. Since then, business firms have been making increasing use of motion pictures; the precise number of films made each year for business organizations is difficult to determine, but some idea of the current volume may be obtained by noting that Mr. Gipson lists eighty-five companies now producing industrial motion pictures and slide films.

Mr. Gipson's book is a useful though limited guide to the whole field of commercial films. Although written particularly for the guidance of potential sponsors of such films, it can be read with profit by all students of motion pictures as an introduction to an important though inadequately covered aspect of the medium.

The book examines two topics: first, the job that films can do for business; and second, the process of making business films. In the first and more valuable section of the book, Mr. Gipson cites the successful utilization of films by leading companies in training salesmen, servicemen, and technicians, in making sales presentations, and in advertising products. The reader is struck here with the wonderful variety of functions that films can fulfill and, at the same time, with the fact that audiences of millions see some of these films—films which are not designed primarily to entertain, but which, through clarity of presentation, achieve an effect that is entertainment of a high order.

Mr. Gipson is less impressive in his chapters on film production. His most serious shortcoming here is that he establishes no standards by which the sponsor can judge the quality and effectiveness of a production. In this respect he might have described in some detail the means by which certain successful films solved specific problems for their sponsors. Also, his treatment of the material in this section is out of balance. Although admitting that the script of a film is its most important element, he gives only four pages of general discussion to script writing. On the other hand, the techniques of editing and animation are discussed quite extensively, even though they are of less practical interest to the sponsor.

Throughout, the author writes as a craftsman who apparently does not feel called upon to differentiate among the levels of social content in the films he is assigned to write or produce. For example, the films of the National Association of Manufacturers which "combine educational content in the field of economics with entertainment" are approached in the same way as the "safety-education" films of an insurance company.

A fairly complete glossary of film terms is a useful adjunct of the book.

ROBERT RAHTZ