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Contents

The Wide Screen of Yesterday and Tomorrow

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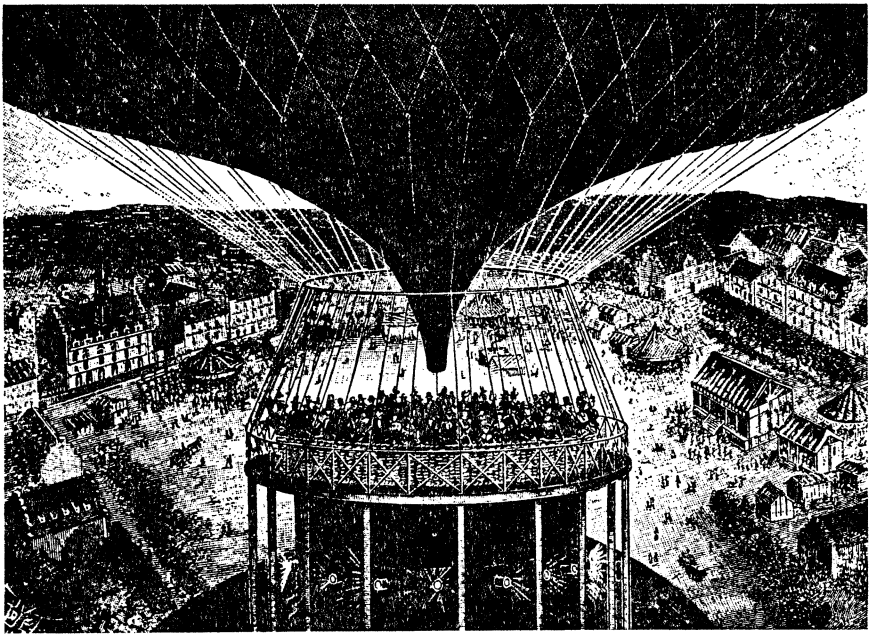
TWO HUNDRED MEN AND WOMEN stood or sat in the basket of a balloon. Above their heads hung the lower part of the huge gas bag and about them were all the proper rigging and ballast. The great craft was still at anchor, and these aeronauts of 1900 could see all around them the panorama of the city of Paris. Then, suddenly, the captain of the balloon announced: "Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to leave the garden of the Tuileries. Cast off!"

The balloon seemed to ascend as hand-colored film in ten motion-picture projectors beneath the basket threw on a circular wall some 333 feet in circumference the vista of the City of Light falling away below the spectators. Then came "a minute of obscurity" (was there a "fade" in the film?), and the officer announced: "We are about to land in the Great Square of Brussells." After that, the balloon took its passengers to England, the Riviera, Spain, Tunis, the Sahara, and back to Paris for their final descent. On the trip, the happy balloonists saw such spectacles as a bullfight, a carnival, cavalry charges, a storm at sea, and a desert caravan.

This Is Cinéorama

This show, called Cinéorama—please note the *o*—came to Paris almost 60 years ago. As a matter of fact, its inventor had developed and patented his equipment in 1897 when practical projectors were hardly a year old. Here, in Raoul Grimoin-

Sanson, we have another of the many Frenchmen—from Lumière and Méliès to Chrétien of CinemaScope—who have contributed so notably to the technical development of motion pictures. Like Méliès, Grimoin-Sanson had been a magician, and the magic of Cinéorama—just as with any feat of necromacy—came from the union of imagination with high technical skill.



THE WIDE SCREEN IN 1900—A contemporary drawing of Cinéorama at the Paris Exposition. Hand-colored motion pictures were thrown on the circular wall of the building by ten projectors beneath the audience. Here we see the descent of the balloon in Brussels.

Cinéorama was a three-day wonder. Then the police appeared and closed the show. A workman had fainted when the arc lights of the ten projectors heated the booth—just below the audience—to over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The authorities remembered the tragic fire at a charity fete three years before, when more than a hundred members of the French nobility and of high society had burned to death during a film showing. The police dared not risk another holocaust. Cinéorama had to go. As for Grimoin-Sanson, he gave up motion-picture work and turned his attention from the overheating of projection booths to the cooling of ice chests.

He made a fortune through insulating refrigerators with chopped cork.

Grimoin-Sanson's claim that the builders of the projection booth had failed to follow his designs gains some support from the technical ingenuity with which he solved his major problem. He locked together ten 70-mm. cameras to take his panoramic views, and—according to reports of the times—his cameras and his projectors were so nicely adjusted that the edges of the separate shots matched closely on the screen. Since each frame of film was almost square, Grimoin-Sanson's 333-foot picture was more than 30 feet high. Here was a screen with a proportion of 11 to 1, as against the oblong shape of 1.33 to 1 that dominated motion pictures from 1895 to 1953. (Hollywood technicians call such a proportion of width to height an "aspect ratio of 1.33:1.") The *o* in Cinéorama takes on a peculiar significance when we realize that, at the turn of the century, Paris saw two of the half-cylinders of our present-day Cinerama brought face to face. There, in 1900, was the ultimate in wide screens. It dwarfs CinemaScope and Todd-AO, as well as Cinerama.

Walt Disney's Circarama

Cinéorama also dwarfs the only other circular movie that I have come across in the records of the past fifty years. This is Circarama, devised for Disneyland by the father of Mickey Mouse. It is Lilliputian in comparison with Grimoin-Sanson's show, yet ingenious and effective. The audience walk under the lower edge of a circular screen, and gaze up at a panorama of color film that takes them—as if in an automobile—through the streets of Los Angeles, down a freeway, out to a harbor, and through the desert to the Grand Canyon and other sights of the Southwest. The screen, eight feet high and 130 feet in circumference, is divided by dark vertical strips into eleven panels. Through openings in the strips, eleven synchronized 16-mm. projectors throw their films on the panels opposite. The strips break the complete illusion of one great, encircling movie, but they serve to hide

any failure of the tiny 16-mm. frames to match at their edges. So far as screen progress goes, Circarama gives us the illusion of a trip in the automobile of 1957 instead of the balloon of 1900.

France—Pioneer in New Processes

Between Cinéorama and Circarama lie a surprising number of attempts to change the size and the shape of the screen. Most of them were French, and most of them are forgotten. At the Paris exhibition of 1900—well-named *L'Exposition Universelle*—there was not only a screen so wide that it was round. Three other film shows broke experimental ground.

Visitors heard as well as saw three exhibits of talkies via the phonograph, one of them graced by the great Bernhardt and Coquelin. Meréorama set its audiences on the bridge of a steamship and took them out of the harbor of Marseilles, into a storm at sea, and on to Algiers; this show anticipated by four years the American Hale's Tours that installed the spectators in a railroad car. Finally, Paris saw pictures on a screen 70 feet wide and 53 feet high. When Lumière was asked to create an *écran géant* for the exposition's Galérie des Machines, he began by installing a screen 100 by 80 feet—as high as a six-story house. Alterations in the building before the fair opened forced him to reduce his screen to 70 by 53 feet—still twice the height of ours today. By dipping it in water to make it translucent, he managed to show his giant films to a gigantic audience of 25,000 people at a time, half of them on one side of the great sheet and half on the other. So far, the only rival of this screen has been the one that the engineer and inventor Lorenzo Del Riccio set up at Columbus, Ohio, in 1919, for a summer conference of the Methodist Church; it was 165 by 135 feet.

70-mm. Films from 1896 to 1900

Between the last years of the nineteenth century and the depression of 1929, more than a dozen men besides Lumière and Del

Riccio tried to change the size of the screen or the width of the film or the shape of the picture.

In the 1890's, many Europeans were imitating Edison's camera because he hadn't patented it abroad. Curiously enough, many of them didn't adopt his 35-mm. width; some used film as narrow as 12 mm. and some as wide as 80 mm. When inventors began to develop projectors, however, they found it wise to adopt Edison's width because they wanted to use his hundreds of films. In the United States, his patents forced at least one rival to adopt a film frame about twice as wide and twice as high, with a lot of other differences including lack of perforations. This competitor of Edison was the so-called K. M. C. D. Syndicate, which included Edison's former employee Dickson and an inventor named Herman Casler. The first output of their camera, in the winter of 1895–96, was for the peep show called Mutoscope, but, by the fall of '96, they were projecting films in New York's Olympia Music Hall. They called their process Bioscope, a name that was to rise to far higher fame through Griffith's first work some fifteen years later. On Bioscope's first bill was the shot of the onrushing Empire State Express that made strong men gasp and weak women faint, as well as a scene of candidate William McKinley receiving a delegation of admirers. The Bioscope pictures were shot in the Edison proportion of 1.33:1, but because the image on the film was about eight times as large as Edison's, they could be projected with less grain on a screen that filled the proscenium. Thus Bioscope first successfully introduced the big frame in the camera and the oversized picture on the screen.

The same year that Biograph was first projecting large frames, Léon Gaumont developed a 60-mm. camera from a patent by Georges Demeny and projected a ballet at the huge Théâtre du Chatelet in 1896–97. In 1900, Lumière shot scenes at the Paris Exposition on 70-mm. film, but he never showed these pictures publicly. Soon Bioscope was able to use the more economical 35-mm. film, and American movie-goers saw no more giant

screens until 1926. Then came the astonishing but brief sensation of a Gargantuan experiment by Paramount.

Magnascope Distends the Screen

The trick was nothing more than projecting the old 35-mm. film with a wide-angle lens that threw a larger picture. Simple as it was, the "process" developed by Del Riccio acquired the impressive name of Magnascope. Early in 1925, the Eastman Theater in Rochester, New York, tried this out on Paramount's feature film *The Thundering Herd*. For the scene of the buffalo roundup, the screen opened up from about 20 by 15 feet to about 40 by 30. At the end of 1924—almost two years before Paramount was ready to exploit Magnascope on Broadway—the Italian director Arturo Ambrosio used just such a lens to blow up the hand-colored scene of the burning of Rome at the close of his *Quo Vadis?* The first use of Magnascope in New York, at the end of 1926, was for only two scenes in *Old Ironsides*. When the frigate *Constitution* appeared, sailing toward the audience, and later, when the battle with the Barbary pirates began, the black cloth masking the top and sides of the screen drew up and back, and the spectators saw the picture grow to what seemed twice its former size. They also saw the picture grow grainier, and perhaps that was why Magnascope was used only in single, exciting episodes of a few pictures released before 1930. After long neglect, the device turned up again to make the storm sequence in David Selznick's *Portrait of Jenny* (1948) more impressive.

From Vignettes to Split Screens

Putting two pictures on the same screen is a hoary device. There must have been a few even before 1903, when Edwin S. Porter showed his fireman dreaming of wife and child vignetted in the upper corner of the scene. Splitting the picture from top to bottom seems to be a newer trick. Like the vignette, it was used for a long time only in an episode or two, never for an entire

film. In 1927, Murnau put two scenes side by side in *Sunrise* to show different aspects of vacation time. The next year, in *Les Deux timides* (1928), René Clair printed three bed scenes in the same frame to make a comic point. *This Is Cinerama* (1952) indulged in one spasm of triple vision. At a point in *There's Always Fair Weather* (1955), Gene Kelly—director and innovator as well as actor and dancer—split the wide screen of CinemaScope into three panels in order to cover the divergent careers of its three heroes.

The Amazing Triptych of Abel Gance

Thirty years ago, an enterprising French director astonished Paris with the last word in splintered images. Instead of splitting one screen into three parts, Abel Gance used three screens. Placed side by side and covering an area of 50 by 12½ feet, they sometimes showed the audience a single long picture, but more often two or even three different scenes at the same time.

In *Napoléon-Bonaparte* (1927), Gance had intended to tell the life story of the Emperor, but after five years of preparation and many months of shooting, he had produced a film eight hours long—which had to be drastically cut for public presentation—and he had got Napoleon no further than the conquest of Italy. With the triple cameras and triple projectors developed by the noted French technician André Debrie, Gance was able to show huge audiences at the Paris Opera House a production that was as bizarre and unprecedented as it was sometimes confusing. A French critic has said that the camera work was "extraordinarily mobile" and, at times, even subjective. The confusion in the minds of many spectators was not due to how Gance photographed his scenes but, rather, to how he showed them on the three screens.

At the beginning, Gance used only the central screen. With the scene in the French Convention, however, his triple projectors spread a single vast image out and across all three. Gance

had other tricks up his cinematic sleeve. Sometimes he threw a single image on the middle screen, while he used the others for shots that were related in time or through symbolism. For instance, in the center he might show the head of Napoleon or a triumphant eagle, while at the sides he projected the Grande Armée moving outward in mirrored shots.

Aesthetically, Gance's triptych was much more daring than Waller's Cinerama. Theatrically, it was much less effective. Waller let his audience enjoy peripheral vision. Gance asked his to do a kind of peripheral thinking. That is a very difficult process in the movie theater. There, all in all, speed is of the essence, and the hurrying film allows little time for reflection. The visual effects that Gance created were extraordinary, I'm sure, but at times the audiences in Paris—and still more in other European cities where *Napoléon-Bonaparte* was shown—must have been as baffled as American movie-goers would be if at a foreign film they tried to read two or three lines of translated dialogue placed side by side.

In 1935, Gance showed parts of his old triptych film on a single screen, adding new shots and also stereophonic sound. Twenty years later, he was still enamored of what he called Polyvision, but the only director who had followed his lead was Claude Autant-Lara. He used Chrétien's lenses to squeeze three images onto a single frame for *Construire un feu* (1930), and thus cover a screen about the shape of CinemaScope's.

The Wide Screen Sixty Years Ago

The wide screen—and by this I mean a single screen broader than usual but relatively low—might have come to New York in May of 1894 if the Lathams had been a little more enterprising. In their camera, they used film half again as wide as Edison's, and the pictures they took were twice as wide as they were high. Unfortunately, like Edison, the Lathams preferred the peep show at first. But soon their most enterprising partner, Enoch Rector,

left the firm and put wide film on the screen. On March 17, 1897, his Veriscope camera used 11,000 feet of 60-mm. film to record the Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight and soon he was showing his pictures—we don't know how many feet of them—on a screen at the New York Academy of Music in a ratio of two to one. There seems to have been no talk of the advantages of the wide film. Rather, the width and the shape that the Lathams and Rector adopted appear to have been a matter of sheer accident.

Not so with a later inventor, the Italian director and producer Filoteo Alberini. In 1910, he became fascinated by what the French called the *premier plan* of American films. It was a kind of "medium shot" that cut off the legs of the actors and emphasized torsos and heads. Alberini wanted to retain this intimacy and yet at the same time put the actors against a fuller and wider background. The next year, he patented a camera, the Panoramica, to do this. It had a pivoted lens that swept across each frame of a 70-mm. film. The result was an image close to the shape of CinemaScope's—about 2.5:1.

Old Processes Used Today

Alberini didn't have even the brief success of Rector, but he tried again along other lines, and so did a surprising number of inventors between the beginning of World War I and the end of the silent era. The men of those days sought to achieve the wide screen by a number of different methods. Some of these were improvements on older processes. All of them roughly resemble one or more of the five kinds used today. These, as I described them in an earlier article,[1] include the wide film—which culminates in Todd-AO—cropping the image through masks in the projector, VistaVision, Cinerama, and CinemaScope.

The wide film of the Lathams and Rector was the basis of the first of many experiments after Alberini's. In 1914, Edwin S.

[1] "The Screen's 'New Look'—Wider and Deeper," *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television,* XI (Winter, 1956), 109–30.

Porter, director of *The Great Train Robbery,* abetted by Adolph Zukor of Famous Players, tried to create the kind of broad image that we now see highly developed in Todd-AO. The next year, however, a fire destroyed the films and equipment of Porter and Zukor, and then World War I diverted their attention to the golden opportunity of monopolizing film production. Later I shall tell how Hollywood tried wide film again at the end of the 1920's.

In 1916 came the first attempt, so far as I know, to fill an elongated screen by cropping the height of the image in the projector—the method used by *On the Waterfront* and other films of recent years to make the old 35-mm. frame into a mild imitation of CinemaScope. While Griffith was directing *Intolerance,* he allowed E. W. Clark to make some experimental shots with wide film. Using a wide-angle lens, he added a third more coverage at the top and sides of each frame. Clark reduced his negative to 35-mm. prints, cropping off the top and keeping his figures full size on a screen a third wider than usual. Since no company took up his idea, he began developing, in 1919, the process now called VistaVision, which I described in my previous article. Paramount bought Clark's patents in 1926, and then forgot about them until a few years ago. About 1928, Alberini, along with the Englishman George Hill, also tried Clark's idea of running a 35-mm. negative horizontally through the camera, but, again, without commercial success.

Two Projectors Instead of One

Between the time when Cinéorama put ten images side by side and when Cinerama did this with three, there were other attempts to widen the screen by using more than one projector. An American named John D. Elms invented a camera with two lenses that took pictures on a couple of 35-mm. films. In 1922, he demonstrated the projection of two frames side by side, but he didn't solve the problem of joining the edges smoothly. Fifteen years

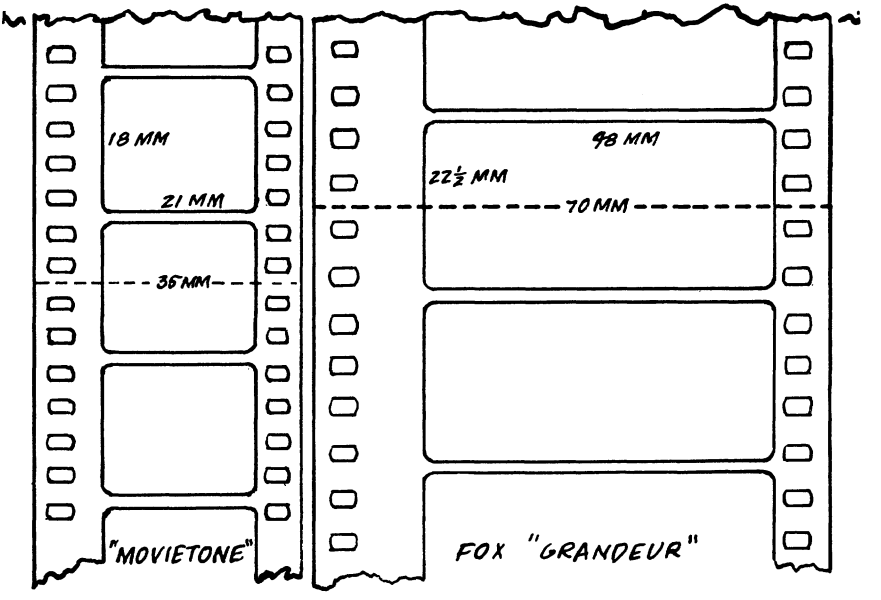
later, Henri Chrétien did the trick more successfully and far more spectacularly by mating two projectors equipped with his CinemaScope lenses. But another fifteen years had to pass before Hollywood studios began to use Chrétien's lenses, and they never adopted his twin projectors that covered the widest and biggest screen since Cinéorama.

It was at a Paris exposition devoted to the wonders of electricity that Chrétien thus combined, in 1937, the process later called CinemaScope with the wide-screen idea common to Cinéorama, Gance's *Napoléon,* and Cinerama. Using two linked cameras—like Cinerama's three—and adding his anamorphic lenses, Chrétien squeezed onto two black and white 35-mm. films wide views of hydroelectric plants. Two projectors with his special lenses "unsqueezed" the two films to cover a concrete wall on the outside of the Palace of Light. To make the edges of his two pictures seem to match, Chrétien, like Waller with Cinerama, used saw-toothed masks, but the Frenchman's were stationary instead of moving. At Chrétien's evening shows, Parisians saw one continuous picture on a screen 200 feet long and 33 feet high. Nothing so wide and nothing so huge in square footage has been seen since Grimoin-Sanson's Cinéorama. Though each little frame of 35-mm. film was multiplied more than 1,200 times in width, and almost 7,000,000 in area, the French film historian and technician Jean Vivié reports that the results "were most satisfactory."

Movie-goers came close to seeing the double screen covered by twin projectors in *Gone with the Wind* (1939). David O. Selznick toyed with the idea when he began production by burning down back-lot settings at the RKO-Pathé studio for the scenes of the destruction of Atlanta. He photographed the scenic holocaust with two cameras and showed the combined scene to his backers, but he found that they were all too sure that the film would be successful without adding double screens in the theaters showing the film.

Enter the Wide Screen, 1929

Before we consider the virtues and faults of our present-day 'ramas, 'scopes, and 'visions, let's review the abortive labor of Hollywood to fill America's theaters with wide screens in the late 1920's. Today, this is all but forgotten, yet if the depression hadn't



WIDE FILM IN 1929—While Hollywood was still adjusting itself to the talkie revolution, it began to experiment with wider film for a wider screen. At the left is the width that prevailed from 1896 to 1953, and the frame adopted for the talkies. Fox, which called its sound film Movietone, put out Grandeur in the size shown at the right.

come along, something very like Todd-AO would have been with us for all these past twenty-five years.

Hollywood hadn't learned too much about making talkies before some of the studios added a new complication by trying to go a step further than Paramount's Magnascope. Some say that the film companies went for the wide-screen film because they had watched the theaters buy millions of dollars' worth of sound equipment from the manufacturers of radios and phonographs, and the movie producers thought they could turn an honest and rather large penny by forcing the theaters to buy a new batch of

projectors and screens—this time from corporations controlled by the producers.

At any rate, the studios began experimenting with ways of producing a large picture without any more grain than 35-mm. film in normal projection. This turned out to be a wide film throwing a wide image on a wide screen. Various studios used various widths of film. Fox and MGM adopted 70-mm. At first, Paramount engaged André Debrie to develop a 65-mm. process, then had its own Del Riccio provide 56-mm. cameras and projectors. First National—merged with Warner Brothers—tried 65-mm. RKO turned to Natural Vision's 63.5-mm., which George Spoor and P. John Berggren had been working on for quite a number of years. When prints from the wide negatives were projected, the aspect ratio ran from 1.87:1 to a little more than 2:1. The odd part about this revolution in film shape—and all the money and effort that went into it—is that very few wide films were actually released. The few that were shown played only in New York and Los Angeles. Fox led off with its Grandeur films. In September, 1929, it showed two shorts and a feature, *Fox Movietone Follies of 1929,* on a 28- by 14-foot screen at the Gaiety Theater on Broadway. The next February came *Happy Days,* 42 feet wide and 20 feet high, at the Roxy. Fox's final wide film of the year was *The Big Trail.* In 1930 and 1931, First National went wide and handsome on *Kismet* and *Lash,* and MGM on *Billy the Kid* and *Great Meadow.* Paramount's Magnafilm never got beyond two shorts. In most cases, the studios shot the pictures with both a wide-film camera and the regular 35-mm. Except for the three films from Fox and one or two others, even New York didn't see wide films; the producers made their release prints from 35-mm. negatives.

1931—Exit the Wide Screen

It looked promising for a time and also a little messy. How to standardize wide film and equipment? Would it be 70- or 60- or

56-mm? The depression solved that problem, but a bit belatedly. The news of October, 1929, was slow in reaching the ivory towers and tin ears of Hollywood. The *Film Year Book* of 1930 editorialized:

> Double width films on screens that will fill the proscenium arches are forecast for the larger theaters long before this year comes to a close. With color to play with, the enlarged screen is ideal for the four- and five-thousand seat houses. It takes the wide screen to properly set off color, so these two major developments of 1930 promise to go forward hand in hand.

But before the year was out, the tiny boom of the big screen was over. Word came that the exhibitors wouldn't play ball. They had bought new projectors for the talkies, but that was in the Harding-Coolidge boom. They simply couldn't find the money for new equipment. The theaters and the producers had met something worse than the competition of television in 1952. The audience was broke.

At Last, Film Makers Debate a New Process

There were three interesting side issues to the wide screen of twenty-five years ago. Waller, the man who, ironically enough, was to develop Cinerama, reported to his Paramount employers: "I think its value is only a novelty one." Critics, as well as producers, felt something stereoscopic about these broad pictures. And the men who were actually making Hollywood pictures began to debate just exactly what was the best shape for the screen.

In many arts, new mechanical techniques have been developed by the artists for their own purposes. But it was mainly scientists, plus two or three still photographers, who created the movie process; and they hadn't the least idea of where it was going. Then commercial film makers discovered that the motion picture could tell stories, and they developed it into more or less of a new art form. In the case of the talkies, it was scientists, again, who developed the new technique. Sound and dialogue didn't come

because of any demand from the men who directed and wrote pictures. Indeed, a great many of them objected to the change. When the producers set their technicians working on the wide film, it was significant of a new and healthier attitude among the film makers—a sense of responsibility and even power—that the directors, the cameramen, and the technicians at last started to talk about what was going to happen to the art that they worked in. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences held meetings, and Eisenstein—newly arrived in Hollywood—sounded off.

The Proper Shape—Square, Round, or Oblong?

A few directors had worried about being confined to the four by three (1.33:1) oblong, and a few had tried to do something about it within the old camera. For instance, in *The Birth of a Nation,* Griffith occasionally masked the bottom and the top of the screen to emphasize horizontal movement; and in a scene in *Intolerance,* when a soldier plunged from the towering ramparts of Babylon, Griffith tried to concentrate on the man's fall and to increase the apparent height of the walls by masking in the sides of the scene until he had a tall, narrow picture.

Eisenstein, too, wanted a tall frame for some scenes and a wide one for others. He wished, he said, "to intone the hymn of the male, the strong, the virile active *vertical composition* . . . a vertical perception led our hairy ancestors to a higher level." Skyscrapers and chimneys expressed this. But he liked the horizontal, too. It suited "big trails," "fighting caravans," "covered wagons," and the endless breadth of "old man rivers." He toyed with a circular frame that could be made into rectangles of different shapes. He was ready to settle for a square that could be similarly reshaped.

At an Academy meeting in September, 1930, Eisenstein became ecstatic: "I think this actual moment is one of the great historical moments in the pictorial development of the screen. . . . Gee, it is a great day!" In one respect, however, Eisenstein was definite and, perhaps, right. He was against "the dull proportions of the present standard film size."

For the benefit of the Academy, artists and technicians reported on the virtues of "dynamic symmetry," "the whirling square," or "the golden mean," which an art authority named Jay Hambidge had believed was the basis of Greek architecture and ceramics. This perfect proportion came out at about 1.62:1. There were statistical studies of 250 great paintings dealing with action or emotion, and someone reduced the giant screen of Rubens to quite a series of graphs. But all they found was what they were looking for because they chose only a few out of thousands of paintings.

After a lot more research and argument, members of the Academy decided that the screen might be safely stretched out to 2:1 but that the best ratio lay between 1.6:1 and 1.8:1. Hambidge was in by a nose. Few Academicians stood up for the old frame that had lasted more than thirty years.

The "Dynamic Frame"—Many Shapes from One

Twenty-five years after Eisenstein's plea for a screen that could show different scenes in different shapes, an American achieved this in England. (We must note, again, that a Frenchman made the first experiment. It was Autant-Lara with his *Mobilia* of the late 1920's, but his attempt seems to have been unsuccessful.) With the financial aid of the British Film Institute's Experimental Committee and Associated British Pathé, Glenn Alvey had the opportunity, which America had denied him, of demonstrating his Dynamic Frame. Using VistaVision and Technicolor, he shot a thirty-minute film version of H. G. Wells's fantasy *The Door in the Wall.* In his camera, he used masks—technically called mattes—to change the shape of the screen image on his negative. He could move the horizontal and/or the vertical ones at the same time or separately, and thus change the shape of the picture. The screen could seem tall and narrow or low and wide. Whatever shape he used could shrink or expand.

In *Sight and Sound* (Winter, 1955–56), Derek Prouse credited

the Dynamic Frame with the virtue of "the elimination of meaningless space." He described how the changing shape fitted the dramatic mood of the various scenes. When the child, in a tall and narrow shot, opens a door "and advances into the magic garden, the slowly expanding view becomes subjective and conveys astonishment and strangeness." At one point, "the child, wandering in the garden, sits down on what—in the small-size frame—one takes to be a garden seat. He starts up violently; and the screen, expanding to full size, swiftly reveals that he has sat on the foot of a huge monster." Obviously, as Prouse points out, the shape of every shot must be planned in the script before shooting. Also, the Dynamic Frame seems best fitted to fantasy, the musical, or melodrama.

Differing Views of the New Look of Today

When Cinerama, 3-D, and CinemaScope changed the look of the screen, the Academy held no meetings, but individual film makers were fairly voluble. There was a good deal of objection outside of the industry. And a lot of cheers from Hollywood's publicity men.

Before 3-D suffered a natural demise, some critics complained that adding a third dimension to color photography would bring the film too near a reproduction of reality to be truly creative. Goethe had said: "It is through the limitations of an art that the master shows his genius." Half a dozen years before 3-D raised its ugly head and thrust it through the screen, the astute English film critic Roger Manvell inveighed against the "three-dimensional, all-talking, all-smelling, all-tasting, all-feeling chaos which is the inartistic affair called the experience of life." "It is wrong," he wrote, "to try to make art too life-like."

An exhibitor disposed of 3-D rather neatly when he advertised an old-fashioned flat film with these words:

Do You Want A Good Movie—
Or A Lion In Your Lap?

Samuel Goldwyn put the bee on size, shape, and depth when he said: "The only important dimension is the story." But naturally enough, the studio that introduced CinemaScope had a somewhat different point of view. Twentieth Century-Fox saw the "new look" as "one of the greatest technological advancements" since sound. (Its eyesight hadn't been quite so sharp when Chrétien offered the process about twenty-five years before.) At first it looked as if Fox was selling a combination of 3-D and Cinerama. Its booklet declared that "actors seem to walk into the audience, vehicles roar into the front rows . . . audiences are taken for breath-taking rides on roller-coasters." Then Fox got round to the idea of "audience participation," and had to go back to the Attic theater for something to match CinemaScope. The spectators, the pamphlet asserted, "are made to feel part of the exciting action—the goal of the earliest Greek dramatists—instead of merely watching it." Of course no Athenian playgoer, even if he had a front-row seat, ever got so intimate a view of an actor. One of Fox's producers said, according to *Life,* "Here was Lauren Bacall on a couch! . . . She filled the screen! She was sixty-four feet long"—a slight exaggeration.

Is the Wide Screen Too Wide?

Some of the attacks of Hollywood film makers against the wide screen were a bit off line. For example: "Who wants to see a nuance as big as a house?" Many of the hostile didn't notice that wide screens were, at most, only a couple of feet taller than the old ones, and usually a little shorter. As you will see later, the width of theater prosceniums limits the height of CinemaScope quite as much as it does its breadth. Therefore, full heads couldn't be much larger than before; and, because of cutting problems, single-face close-ups weren't used so frequently.

No, the real point of attack had to be width, not height. The more astute critics and directors inveighed against a "letter slot" screen. George Stevens, who made *A Place in the Sun* and *Shane* without benefit of CinemaScope or SuperScope, called the new

shape "a system of photography that pictures a boa constrictor to better advantage than a man." Also, as he put it, "no screen is larger than its smallest dimension."

In answer, friends of the wide screen turned to the physiology of our eyes. They pointed out that the two together cover a width of almost 200 degrees, and that this is a good deal wider than Cinerama's 145 degrees coverage from the best seats, let alone what CinemaScope can offer. The defenders of the Fox process and of Todd-AO might have pointed out that the average stage setting for a Broadway play is also twice as wide as it is high. But this would have brought them up against a nasty and embarrassing fact. On the stage, we don't see an actor twenty feet high or an actress stretched across a forty-foot couch. As we concentrate on one player, then turn our eyes and even our heads to watch another, we are conscious—but not too conscious—of the three-dimensional setting behind them. The scenery is not competing with the actor for the audience's attention. Faces and bodies, furniture and walls, don't share the single surface of the screen. There is the possibility, of course, that if Cinerama ever turns to drama instead of travelogue, we may find that peripheral vision will give us something a bit more like the values of the living stage.

What about Stories?

What would the wide, wide screen—not a slightly wider one like VistaVision's—do to the story? Some critics of the first CinemaScope productions were rather bitter. Remembering how the early movies thrived at British fairs, Walter Lassally wrote in 1955, "Today, with the emphasis on novelty, noise, and spectacle, the cinema is on its way to returning to its birthplace, the fairground . . . the present situation is bound to split the industry to some extent into circus and cinema, with main emphasis on the former." At the time, there seemed to be no question that the wide screen would be given over to historical spectacles, big westerns, musicals, and melodramas with outdoor chases. It was rather

amusing to note the success of costume pictures—at least for a time—and then recall that only a few years earlier one of the exhibitors who had found them "poison at the box office" advised the producers: "Don't send me any more films in which the hero signs his name with a feather." A gloomster among the critics said that in the future the public would see intimate films only on television. Though the first four years of CinemaScope gave us no outstanding dramas of intimate action, we had plenty of such films made in VistaVision or 35-mm. Furthermore, TV sent to the black and white screen of normal shape intimate stories like *Marty*.

Is the New Shape Pleasing or Distracting?

Apart from the vital matter of the story, the movie-goer must ask and answer three fundamental questions if he wants to judge the value of CinemaScope, Todd-AO, or any other process that gives us a screen twice as wide as it is high. Is the long, narrow screen pleasing—whether we sit in the last row or the first? Is a third of the screen a complete waste—even a distraction—when a story deals with tight personal drama instead of visual pageantry or a gun fight? Have we lost some of the important values of direction and editing that film makers developed through years of work with the narrower screen?

The answer to the first question—is the shape of the wide screen pleasing?—will be largely a matter of the movie-goer's personal taste and sensitivity. Like Alexander Pope, he may prefer a work of art in which "no monstrous height, or breadth, or length appears."

As to whether things and people toward the sides of the screen will distract attention from the main action, there seem to be two attitudes. They are "Yes, and we must do something about it," and "Maybe the audience will like to be distracted." Directors and cameramen who have worked for the wide screen realize the danger of distraction. For example, Herbert A. Lightman, after shooting *Oklahoma!* with the Todd-AO camera, wrote an article

in which he explained how he tried to concentrate attention on the central action by using static objects in the foreground or filling the side areas of the screen with shadows. When Twentieth Century-Fox first hailed the virtues of CinemaScope in a booklet, it was quite conscious of the problem which Lightman and others were to face. The studio saw the nettle and grasped it boldly. In a rather remarkable statement, it tried to turn a failing into a virtue:

> The medium enhances the importance of background material, both as regards sets and actors. Their increased size on the big screen permits of closer scrutiny of them *if the viewer chooses to look at them. As a result more actors will be used in all scenes in order to fill the screen* [my italics].

Cutting and Directing for the Wide Screen

The skills of directing and cutting developed through twenty-five years of the silent screen weren't destroyed by the talkies. They were modified, but they were also built upon and improved. Will the two-to-one screen do violence to what had become a supple and perfected technique?

It may be too soon to say, though we can note changes in directing and cutting and listen to many a wailing Cassandra. For example, Richard Kohler wrote in *Sight and Sound:* "Unless the present trend is wisely deflected, aesthetic rights gained in half a century of struggle will be cut, literally, into long narrow ribbons, with the public cajoled into applauding the butchery." Long, long ago, when the anamorphic lens was hardly more than a smile—a broad smile—on Chrétien's face, Arnheim said that the introduction of color, stereoscopy, and the big screen would make the camera "an immobile recording machine," and every cut would be a mutilation. We would go back to a fixed camera and an uncut film, and produce a kind of stage play without intermissions.

At first, there seemed to be something in this gloomy view. Productions in CinemaScope had some of the static quality of

the "ice box" films of early sound days. The camera moved, of course, but, if it panned at all, the distortion of lines and masses near the sides of the screen became obvious. In a scene between three or more people there were fewer cuts—and there always will be, I think. This is partly because rapid cutting is disturbing on the wide screen, and partly because the wide screen can hold a wider group of actors than the narrower one. From the start, there were two-shots, as well as group shots, in CinemaScope, but over-shoulder shots came into use rather slowly. Inserts are harder to handle. The montage—with its series of many rapidly dissolving images—seems quite impossible. In sum, CinemaScope and Todd-AO do not and cannot use as many setups and cuts as the narrower screen.

Up through 1955, it seemed clear that pictures shot for the wide screen had lost—and, perhaps, *had* to lose—some of the rich variety of angles, as well as visual movement, that we had grown to expect from films. Again, Fox tried to make the best of a bad bargain. It declared that CinemaScope gives a movie "the lifelike fluidity of the stage." So far as the theater is concerned, this was a grotesque statement—and self-contradictory. Also, it implied that other films are neither lifelike nor fluid, which is rank absurdity.

There can be no question that some early CinemaScope productions—*How to Marry a Millionaire,* for example—seemed much more like stage plays than movies. If the wide screen survives and if no genius turns up to restore the cutting and camera freedom of the narrower picture, then the director of a picture in CinemaScope, SuperScope, or Todd-AO will need the skill of his stage counterpart in moving characters from one position to another. He can't jump his camera about as he used to, through setup after setup. Instead, he has to move the actor.

Incidentally, the wide screen puts new demands on the actor. In two ways he becomes more like the player in a Broadway production. Because scenes are shot in fewer setups, he must learn far longer stretches of dialogue. Also, when the camera is centered

on other actors in the set, he has to play in pantomime because he is not off-screen as he might have been on the narrower film.

Proscenium Problems

One very serious problem about the wide screen is how to fit it into the average proscenium. (Cinerama gets around this by thrusting the curving sides of its screen out into the auditorium.) The majority of America's 17,000 theaters can use screens not much more than 25 feet wide. The situation is worse in Great Britain and on the Continent. In houses with narrow prosceniums, the height of a picture in CinemaScope or SuperScope has to be less than the height of a picture on normal film; or else the sides of the shots have to be cut off with masks, and then the wide screen isn't really wide. Even VistaVision has its architectural troubles. In large theaters, overhanging balconies may cut down the height of its ideal 1.85:2 screen, or force the tearing out of seats at the back of the lower floor. In the late 1920's, when Hollywood began to develop the wide screen, the Wall Street boom was at its height, and the big theater chains, controlled by the producers, were ready to build larger houses designed to handle the new shape. We may shortly see a trend toward fewer and larger theaters—if the wide screen holds off the TV menace.

The Wide Screen Brings Back Audiences

Up through 1955, the wide screen of CinemaScope—used by other producers besides Fox—was doing pretty well, and VistaVision wasn't far behind. In spite of architectural difficulties, there were more than 13,000 theaters in the United States equipped for CinemaScope and some of the other processes, and almost 7,000 more abroad. (Now there are about 40,000 all told.) In 13 months the rentals from *The Robe* passed $13,500,000. From 1953 to 1955, the earnings of the film companies took a jump. (Incidentally, the use of the wide screen increased the use of color by the major studios as part of the battle with TV.)

The Screen in Temporary Chaos

Amid all the welter of new cameras, projectors, and aspect ratios there is one consolation for those who remember the movie theaters of forty years ago. How pleasant it is to see again the "silver screen" of the old days! Its metalic sheen was brought back by 3-D to keep images from depolarizing on the flat white finish then in use. CinemaScope and the rest used the highly reflective surface of this new—and old—screen in order to "soup up" the light from the projector so that it would be bright enough to cover a much wider area.

But what are the new processes doing to the long-established, the uniform, and the world-wide system of distribution through the standard 35-mm. film width and almost identical projectors? Cinerama, Todd-AO, and the road shows of Fox, MGM, and Paramount are not yet compatible with 35-mm.—or with each other. The new and versatile projectors of Todd-AO may partially solve this problem, but only for the bigger and more prosperous theaters. As Roger Manvell has put it, the new processes "destroy for the first time in screen history the universal nature of the screen medium." Will film societies and art theaters be able to afford new compatible projectors when their old 35-mm. machines wear out? Are we, therefore, in danger of losing access to the library of our films of the past?

TV and Wide Films

What about the compatibility of TV and feature films? It existed—and still exists—in the case of motion pictures made in 35-mm. But how to get CinemaScope and Todd-AO onto the TV screen?

Few people remember—or even know—that a camera lens takes a round picture, and that this shape was masked down to a rectangle for both snapshots and the screen. More people, perhaps, realize that the viewing end of the television tube would have been round if its makers hadn't decided to imitate the shape of the old motion-picture screen. Whether or not they adopted

this shape so as to be able to show films, it is ironical that the wide-screen productions Hollywood made in order to fight TV competition can never be sold to television as they stand. CinemaScope and Todd-AO simply won't fit the home screens. Some film producers like to believe that by a mechanical miracle the wide films can be automatically adapted to the 4-to-3 proportions of TV. Some say that the trick is merely to mask off the sides of the wide negative and print the middle portion of 35-mm. stock; but these people ignore the fact that the action isn't always in the middle of the frame, and actors often make entrances and exits at the sides. Wiser minds think that the only solution lies in laboriously cropping every shot in the negative to 35-mm. proportions. This will mean selecting and using only a portion of each wide scene, and this portion may be from the right of the original shot or the left or the middle. An optical printer may have to blow up one part of a scene. This TV film won't be what the director and his cutter originally conceived. The composition of the individual scenes won't be what the cameraman shot. Furthermore, after the various scenes have been selected for cropping, the laboratory will have to make a "dupe" negative, which will degrade the sharpness of the print for TV. The results should be far more disastrous than cropping 35-mm. frames to fit a 1.85:1 ratio, or cutting off the ends of CinemaScope pictures in a theater with a narrow proscenium.

The Dubious Future

At the present writing, it looks as if George Stevens had been too pessimistic when he wrote in the summer of 1953, "Unless we come to our senses, we'll end up with a magnificently huge screen, no picture, and no audience." Nevertheless, the future of movie houses and the pattern of TV entertainment is uncertain. Will the showing of Hollywood films on television ruin all but the bigger theaters and the bigger pictures? And will feature films drive out the "spectaculars" now coming into our homes over the air?

Venice Film Festival, 1956

FRED ROOS

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A FEELING OF OPTIMISM seemed to prevail as the over three thousand delegates, film makers, journalists, and assorted observers converged on Venice's Lido island for the last and probably most important film festival of the long 1956 season. Venice was to be the seventh festival held in Europe within a five-month period, and, despite the rather unenthusiastic reaction that the others had received and the still lingering memory of the 1955 Venice fiasco, hopes were high in Venice opening day. The festival had a new director and a new system of operation designed to raise the general standard of films shown. The predominant feeling was that things would be different at Venice this year.

The trouble that had plagued Venice in the past as well as most other film festivals in the past was that too many mediocre films found their way onto the festival screen. This problem stemmed from the method of film selection, or rather from the lack of film selection. In the past, the directors of the Venice festival had invited countries to submit as many as four films to its International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art. The selection of these films was left up to the various countries. Usually the country's government or an association of its film producers did the selecting. The Venice festival was obliged to screen the selections that were submitted to them.

Private interests and prejudices often came to bear on a country's selection of films. The system did not always result in a country's best and most representative motion pictures being seen at the festival. The United States was perhaps the biggest

offender in this respect. In 1955, festival audiences had to sit through performances of such films as *The Kentuckian* and *Interrupted Melody,* motion pictures that were far below film festival quality and hardly representative of the American film industry's best work of the preceding year. *Interrupted Melody* was shown as a substitute by MGM for its much better film *Blackboard Jungle* when the American ambassadress to Italy disapproved of the latter entry. The new directors of the festival were hoping to avoid incidents of this nature when they formulated the new set of regulations for 1956.

The most important change in 1956 was the creation of an art selection committee to decide on the acceptance or rejection of the films submitted by the various governments, associations of producers, and individual producers. This committee also had the right to issue direct invitations to producers for films that possessed outstanding artistic qualities even if they had not been formally submitted to the festival.

Too many films and too many prizes had been two additional criticisms frequently directed at former film festivals, and the new directors also sought to avoid these. In the past, the festival had shown all of the films submitted by each country, with the number usually reaching as high as thirty or forty. The number and nature of the prizes awarded had also reached such a ridiculous point that only rarely did a film entry leave the festival without some kind of award. One year at Venice, 34 cups were awarded to 18 films. The results of these two offenses were an overlong and crowded screening schedule and a cheapening of the festival's artistic significance. In 1956, the selection committee purposely kept the number of films selected at a low of 14 and reduced the number of prizes to three: best film, best actor, and best actress. The hope was that a mere invitation to the festival would become recognized as a distinct honor.

However, the documentary and children's film exhibition, which preceded the main festival of 1956, still used the old system

of selection. All of the faults that Venice was trying to avoid in the feature-film festival were glaringly apparent during the documentary and children's film sections. Of the 197 films shown, the great majority were only of average interest and quality. The grand prize winner was a United States entry, *On the Bowery,* directed by Lionel Rogosin. This selection met with little criticism.

Immediately upon the announcement of the new operating procedure, the festival's high intentions for a completely artistic and noncommercially dominated festival were put to the test. The American and British associations of motion-picture producers—perhaps the two most important film organizations in the world—did not like the new conditions and refused to cooperate. Nevertheless, the festival directors refused to give in to their demands for the right to select their own entries. Although the American MPA did not participate officially, two organizations, Twentieth Century-Fox and the independent Associates and Aldrich company, accepted invitations to the festival. Great Britain was not represented.

With this test safely passed, the Venice directors awaited the festival itself to ascertain the success or failure of their new system. Fourteen films from nine countries were ready for screening before the festival audiences and the seven-man international jury. John Grierson, British writer and film director, had agreed to chair the jury composed of Andre Bazin, French film critic; G. B. Cavallaro, Italian film critic; Marcovic Ermler, Russian director; James Quinn, director of the British Film Institute; Kiyohiko Ushihara, Japanese film director; and Luchino Visconti, Italian film and stage director. Each film was to have three screenings. The principal showing was scheduled for 10:00 P.M. in the main Palazzo. Simultaneously, the general public would be able to see the film in the adjoining outdoor arena. An afternoon screening was planned for those journalists and others who would be unable to be accommodated in the main hall at night.

At the opening-day luncheon held for the journalists, nothing but enthusiastic praise was heard for the festival's new system and its firm stand against the American and English film companies. However, it was apparent that the kudos could quickly turn to barbs should the films turn out to be bad or merely mediocre. In the evening, the festival's art-above-commercialism theme was momentarily lost from view as the showing of the German film *Der Hauptmann Von Koepenik* was held up almost an hour until Lollobrigida had at last safely arrived and settled in her seat. The flash bulbs were still going off as the first images came on the screen. This third and latest film version of the famous Carl Zuckmayer satirical play failed to impress the majority of the audience. Next day, the inevitable rumblings could be heard from the press on the need for "festival quality films."

The daily festival routine was now under way. In addition to the screening of the fourteen official festival entries, retrospective programs of films by Carl Dreyer and Charlie Chaplin were offered each morning. Many special showings of films not officially entered in the festival were given every day in one of the four projection rooms of the Cinema Palace or at a nearby public theater. An avid film-goer, if he so desired, could view films almost continuously from early morning to late at night.

Two rather strange films from Greece and Japan were shown the second night. *Dracos,* the work of a twenty-nine-year-old Greek director Nikos Koundouros, was received, for the most part, unenthusiastically, though praised by a small minority of critics. Although this film suffers from a few extravagances in style, it never bores. *Harp of Burma,* a black-and-white entry by Ichikawa, demonstrates that Japan's particular forte of presenting pictorial beauty on the screen is not confined to color. The film presents several memorable sequences, but the story of a Japanese soldier turned monk tends to become overly sentimental. The critics generally liked *Harp of Burma,* and the film seemed to gain increased approval as the festival progressed.

At most film festivals, there are usually a few individuals who have what they believe to be new and revolutionary film-making techniques and ideas that they hope to sell to the film world. They arrange showings of their films and busily go about trying to spread their message to anyone who will listen or accept a handful of printed matter on the subject. Venice was not without these. The third day, Frenchman Eugene Deslaw presented a screening of his *Images en Negatif,* a film projected entirely in negative. No one was quite as enthusiastic about it as Mr. Deslaw, who proudly told his plans for more all-negative films. A few days later, a man named Robert Amoroso announced a showing of his revolutionary new process, Realvision, an intriguing idea in which films would be seen without the use of a screen. Those who came to see the new idea at the announced place and time felt cheated indeed when Mr. Amoroso and Realvision failed to appear.

The third night's program of official festival entries featured a pair of feature-length documentaries. The Italians presented *Empire of the Sun,* which tells the story of the Inca Indian tribes of the Andes in Cinemascope, color, and very loud stereophonic sound. Despite its beauty, the film seldom generates any real feeling or understanding for the Inca people that it portrays. It tends more toward the Walt Disney school of documentary making though it lacks the charm of the Disney productions. However, *Empire of the Sun* was quite a hit with a majority of the audience, as they broke into applause eighteen times during its projection to show their approval for particular scenes. (Incidentally, this became an increasingly annoying habit during the festival until one night an English critic pointed up its ridiculousness by clapping after every shot of the film that was being projected. The claques and their followers got the point, and the cacophonous outbursts became considerably less frequent.)

Shown the same evening as *Empire of the Sun* and quite different in approach and feeling was *Torero,* a Mexican documentary on the life of bullfighter Luis Procuna. With Procuna playing

himself, the film manages to convey a true feeling for the little understood art of bullfighting and for the men who make it their life.

For the next three days, the artistic level of the films took a considerable drop. Russia's *The Undying Garrison,* America's *Bigger Than Life,* and Italy's *Sister Letizia* all received tepid receptions. The Russian film is no better than countless other World War II films, and fine performances by James Mason and Anna Magnani in the latter two films are not enough to overcome their other deficiencies.

Among the journalists and observers as they lounged about between films on the Lido beaches or in the Excelsior Hotel lobby, the three days of bad films—perhaps combined with the fact that there hadn't been a major party given for several days—resulted in dissatisfaction and a renewal of the old favorite conversation piece, "What is wrong with the film festival?" Some even went so far as to criticize the festival's new system that had been so enthusiastically endorsed but a few days before. "The selection committee is bad," they said.

Next day, the showing of the delightful Spanish entry *Calabuig* and the extravagant reception following its screening brought a return of good feeling. The film, directed by Luis (*Bienvenida Mr. Marshall*) Berlanga and starring American actor Edmond Gwenn, was the festival's first comedy since opening day. It is the story of a kindly atomic scientist who seeks to escape from his life of bomb development by taking up incognito residence in a tiny Spanish village full of amusing provincial types.

With the beginning of the Chaplin retrospective showings and the presentation of the excellent second Japanese entry *Street of Shame,* the festival's air of good feeling continued. The death of Kenji Mizoguchi, director of *Street of Shame,* had been announced only a few days before; and the festival directors thoughtfully arranged for the reading of a ten-minute eulogy to him prior to the evening screening. The film deals with the lives of a group

of prostitutes in 1956 Tokyo. It shows that Mizoguchi was equally at home with a contemporary subject as with a historical one, such as his classic *Ugetsu.*

J. A. Bardem's *Calle Mayor,* the second Spanish film in the festival, brought forth the strongest critical praise of the festival thus far. It again brought much attention to the suddenly awakening Spanish film industry. Betsy Blair enacted a role similar to the one she had in *Marty* with great effectiveness despite the fact that her voice was dubbed in Spanish. Suffering slightly from some unclear characterizations in the script, *Calle Mayor* still remained to many the most satisfying motion picture of the festival.

Shown just before Bardem's film was a startling animated short from Great Britain. *A Short Vision* humorously but strongly reveals the suicide of mankind by an A-bomb, and won first prize in the experimental category of the documentary exhibition.

Claude Autant-Lara's strange comedy *La Traversée de Paris* was seen the next day. Those who could understand French said its dialogue was extremely subtle and amusing. The others interested themselves in the performances of Jean Gabin and Bourvil as well as Autant-Lara's unusual use of color tint in some of the black-and-white scenes. The critics could find little fault with the film, but few lavished great praise on it.

The much discussed *Attack* by America's Robert Aldrich was the next offering. Because of the subject matter of the script, Aldrich was unable to get any government or army coöperation in making his film. It deals with cowardice during combat by a United States Army officer. There were rumors that the film had met with the displeasure of the United States Italian ambassadress. Even if true, the new festival rules prevented any action similar to that which had caused the *Blackboard Jungle* incident of a year before. *Attack* received mediocre appraisals from most of the critics except the Italians, who praised the director's handling of violence and forthrightness in dealing with a controversial theme.

René Clement's *Gervaise* was the last official entry of the festival. It is a typically sad Zola tale of the downfall of a French country girl in Paris, and features an acting tour de force by Maria Schell in the title role. Her performance as well as the film was accorded extravagant praise. Despite the excellence of the performances and production, the story fails to achieve any true and clear dramatic crises and climaxes, elements always necessary in great tragic drama.

After thirteen days, the festival had reached its end. All that remained was the announcement of prizes. The nonentered film *Bus Stop* was to be shown following the awards as a special treat arranged by the festival and Twentieth Century-Fox.

Luchino Visconti read the jury's report amid the massed confusion of photographers and TV technicians milling at will about the stage. The report began with a few sentences of praise for each of the 14 films, and then selected the Japanese *Harp of Burma* and the Spanish *Calle Mayor* as being particularly outstanding. Since the jury was unable to decide which of these two films was the superior, it had decided not to award a *grand prix* "St. Mark Golden Lion" this year. The acting awards were given to Bourvil for his performance in *La Traversée de Paris* and to Maria Schell for her role in *Gervaise*.

As usual, there were other prizes offered by outside organizations. This spread the festival honors out among several films. Five different films were named best of the festival by the various awards juries, pointing up the closeness of this year's Venice competition. Since nine different countries were competing, once again arose the inevitable problems of film judging at international film festivals. What is good to one group may not necessarily be so to another. For example, most festival observers considered *Attack* just average, but the Italian press gave it their own Passinetti Prize for best film of the entire festival. A ten-man jury representing the International Federation of Cinema Press gave *Gervaise* top honor, along with *Calle Mayor*. Another surprise

victor in the extra awards was *Calabuig,* named the festival's best by the International Catholic office of the cinema. The juries that judge the films, particularly the one officially named by the festival, are as international and competent as it is possible to make them. Nevertheless, judging differences are bound to arise in a situation where each juror may have a different native language, a different frame of reference, and a different criterion of judgment.

The lack of an official grand prize and a clear cut winner brought mixed reactions. Many felt cheated while others thought the jury had made a wise decision. Another group was of the opinion that it made little difference and that the awarding of prizes was one of the least important parts of a film festival. The latter viewpoint inevitably gives rise to the question "What *is* important about a film festival?" As the Venice Festival of 1956 closed its doors for another year, a surprisingly large number of answers were being given, and the Venice Festival directors expressed the one most commonly heard.

In 1932, when the Venice Biennial Art Exhibition chose to organize and present under its auspices the world's first International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art, the avowed purpose was to raise the new art of motion pictures to the same level as other accepted art forms. The opening of the first festival in July, 1932, could justifiably be termed an important landmark in the history of the cinema. In its beginning, the Venice festival had three general goals: to further aesthetic ambition and technical progress in films through friendly film-festival, rather than box-office, competition; to present a meeting place for the exchange of ideas and viewpoints among the film artists of the world; and to publicize and focus world-wide attention on the cinema medium and its cultural contribution to people everywhere. Then as now, these were aims of high purpose, and were enthusiastically endorsed by everyone.

What then of the accusations of commercialism leveled at the

Venice and the various other film festivals? It has been said that Venice's real purpose in holding a film festival is to attract tourists, who are its lifeblood. A case can be made for this view. The film festival has its prominent place in Venice's carefully planned summer calendar in which there is not a week free of some unusual attraction for visitors. Over ninety thousand people attend the various film showings of the festival, and thousands more flock to Venice in the hope of being near the famous. As the multitudes come, Venetian business booms. Although these facts cannot be denied, there seems to be no reason to label them as film-festival evils. One cannot deny Venice its existence. That a film festival is of enough interest to attract such an audience is more a healthy sign than a manifestation of commercial domination.

There is also the talk of commercial exploitation within the festival itself. All film festivals continue to receive the criticism that the big studios use festivals to further their commercial aims. As described earlier, in 1956 Venice went to great extremes to purge its festival of any taint of studio domination. It chose its own films, and the general level of excellence went up. Despite its efforts, Venice was unable to stamp out entirely the signs of commercialism. Producers still saw to it that their starlets were on hand to reap the advantages of any free publicity that might come their way. Stunts and hoopla were as plentiful as ever.

Producers of strictly commercial films brought their product to the festival and arranged countless special screenings for the vast army of journalists and the important distributors who were on hand. The press was bombarded with publicity handouts on films of every sort. There was at times a strong atmosphere of buy and sell about the festival, which rankled the artistic purists. However, the majority of observers have come to accept these activities as a necessary part of the peculiar motion-picture medium. The finest Van Gogh painting did not cost the artist more than a few dollars to produce. A motion picture may cost a million. Without this so-called commercial activity, few films

would ever be made. As long as there are film festivals, there will be a certain amount of it taking place on the side lines.

The Greek film entry in the 1956 Venice festival presents an interesting example of this unavoidable liaison between art and commerce. Thanassis Athanassopoolos, the film's twenty-nine-year-old producer, made *Dracos* in Greece for approximately $40,000. This amounts to an extravaganza in Greece. The most money a Greek film can hope to return in its domestic market is $20,000. Thus, the producer had to seek foreign markets to make up the $20,000 deficit. Until this was done, he and his talented young director could not begin to make any more films in Greece. At the festival, Athanassopoolos busily sought out every foreign distributor he could find in hopes of selling his excellent but unusual film.

Other producers were also finding that a film festival could serve as a great selling place for films. The Italian documentary *Empire of the Sun,* shown the third day, had been sold in almost every major country by the end of the festival. This is perhaps the least interesting activity of a film festival, but to a certain group of people it is the most important one.

The promoting and marketing of films is not the only non-artistic activity of a film festival. The Communist countries have found that a film festival can also have political importance. At the Venice festival, over 20 delegates and 38 films represented the U.S.S.R. and its satellites. They also brought with them an endless supply of propaganda literature, much of it completely unrelated to films, which they daily issued to newspapermen and other festival observers. Their receptions and parties spared no expense. The Russians sought further good will with Sunday morning attendance at mass and a special visit with the Cardinal at their own request. Both the Russians and the Chinese arranged for special film exchanges with Italy in the coming months. Individual delegates took advantage of every opportunity to further the feeling of good will. Their films, however, were surprisingly free of propaganda, stood out extremely well on their artistic merits

in the documentary and children's film sections of the festival, and were awarded a total of 14 prizes. The children's films from The Peoples' Republic of China and Czechoslovakia were particularly outstanding in their use of puppets and animation.

To the Spanish director J. A. Bardem, the Venice festival had an unusual personal importance, also indirectly connected with politics. From time to time, Bardem's political views have given him trouble with Spanish dictator Franco. At one point during the production of his film *Calle Mayor,* he was apprehended and put into jail for over a week. Winning a prize at Venice held more for him than mere prestige. It would go far to secure his film making and political future in Franco's Spain. Though no grand prize was given this year, Bardem must have been thankful for the naming of *Calle Mayor* one of the two best films in the festival.

Although the producers' associations of Hollywood and Great Britain refused to give any official coöperation at Venice this year, one major studio, Twentieth Century-Fox, found the festival of enough importance to participate. *Bigger Than Life* was officially entered in the festival and *Bus Stop* was presented on closing night through the courtesy of Spyros Skouras. Fox's reasons for participating may have been purely artistic, but more than likely there was a bit of practical economic reasoning involved. One of the regulations of the Venice festival states that any foreign film invited to the festival will not be subject to the usual film-import laws and restrictions of the Italian government. This means that an invited film, in its subsequent release in Italy, will not be counted as one of the company's yearly import quota of 25 films. Further, the revenues of the film will not be frozen in Italy; the profits can be taken out by the company with no restrictions. All this, of course, adds up to a lot of advantage for a producing company, particularly a large one such as Fox that has more than 25 films it would like to import each year. Thus, an official invitation to the Venice Film Festival has more importance than just recognition and honor to a motion-picture producer.

Though the commercial and political importances of a film fes-

tival seem numerous and all important the previously mentioned aims that guided the Venice directors in the beginning have not proved to be just empty words. One of the most important artistic achievements that a film festival can have is to bring world attention to distinguished motion pictures from small countries and previously unrecognized film makers. One of the most striking examples of this occurred at Venice in 1951, when Japanese films were entered for the first time since before the war. Kurosawa's classic *Rashomon* was shown and unanimously given the grand prize. Exhibition releases in America and Europe soon followed for *Rashomon* and other Japanese films. The world suddenly became aware of a new and outstanding group of film makers in the Orient. Had it not been for the Venice Film Festival, this recognition might have been many more years in coming.

A similar situation may have taken place at Venice in 1956. Two of the festival's outstanding entries came from Spain, a country whose film industry has produced little of importance for many years. As a result of their showings at Venice, *Calle Mayor* and *Calabuig* are both headed for international release. The motion-picture world is now anxiously waiting to see more from talented directors Bardem and Berlanga, whose success may pave the way for more distinguished production from the revitalized Spanish film industry.

A film festival is also one of the few places where a documentary or children's film maker can receive any kind of world recognition. Where else can one view the latest productions of such outstanding artists as Basil (*Song of Ceylon*) Wright and Jeri Trnka.

In accordance with one of the initial aims, the Venice directors have always tried to make the film festival a meeting place for the exchange of ideas and viewpoints between the film artists of the world. This most recent festival was no exception, since during its course numerous conventions and meetings, formal and informal, were held. These functions included a meeting of the International Institute of Films on Art, a meeting of representatives from the various film schools throughout the world, and a

convention of film-festival directors. One of the most worthwhile of these activities was a four day assembly on relations between cinema and theater. Open forum discussions were held, featuring various critics, actors, directors, and writers noted for their familiarity with both film and theater. A particularly significant film, such as *A Streetcar Named Desire,* was shown before each forum. The assembly was very stimulating and successful. Since some of the film world's outstanding artists and observers can always be found gathered at film festivals, festival directors would do well to use this talent in more activities of this nature. The value of the film festival as an artistic function would greatly increase. Other small but serious activities, such as the reading of a eulogy to the late Japanese director Kenji Mizoguchi before the showing of his film *Street of Shame,* can help raise the dignity of a film festival and the entire motion-picture medium.

The 1956 Venice Festival served two valuable functions for all film festivals in the future. First, it presented a test case for a new system of film selection. Second, it brought together for the first time the directors of nine international film festivals for the purpose of exchanging opinions and settling on a 1957 calendar best suited for all. The Venice selection system was generally adjudged a success. Further improvement could be brought about by making the selection committee larger and more international and by giving its selectors more time to seek throughout the world for the best available cinema art for showing at the festival. The selectors should attempt to select films that authentically reflect the national characteristics of the countries they represent.

Two more festivals will take their places on the summer schedule in 1957. In Locarno, Switzerland will renew its festival program. The United States, strangely enough one of the last major countries to join the movement, this year may present its first festival at Santa Barbara, California. Ralf Jester of Paramount studios, one of the chief organizers of the proposed Santa Barbara festival, spent the summer in Europe attending most of the major film festivals and gathering information on operational procedure.

G.B.S. The Movie Critic

DONALD P. COSTELLO

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"THE CINEMA is a much more momentous invention than printing was."[1] Thus did Bernard Shaw, in 1914, blast his way into a new role—that of movie critic. His startling view of the importance of the cinema is, so far as an extensive search reveals, Shaw's first recorded statement on the films. From that optimistic beginning, Shaw the movie critic became, in turn, violently antagonistic, hopeful, enthusiastic, and disappointed. His last printed statement on the movies,[2] published in 1949 just a few months before his death, showed that he had become disillusioned in the course of his observations of the cinema. He recognized, it is true, that in modern films "there is no limit to scenic possibilities; and directors may spend millions of pounds profitably instead of a few thousands." But, he lamented, "The results so far include megalomaniac demoralization, disorganization, and waste of time and money." Yet Shaw was able to summon some of his original optimism—enough, in fact, to close his final statement on the movies with the hopeful prediction: "These evils will cure themselves."

Bernard Shaw has been examined from an astounding multiplicity of viewpoints. Any bibliography of Shaw will reveal studies of Shaw the music critic, the drama critic, the critic of society, religion, politics, Shaw the Fabian, Shaw the dramatist, Shaw the propagandist, and even Shaw the "saint." One would think the beleaguered man's potentialities would have been exhausted. But it seems that no one has thought of examining Shaw the movie critic, although Shaw did, characteristically, have exciting and violent views on the subject of this new art form.

[1] "The Cinema as a Moral Leveller," *The New Statesman: Special Supplement on the Modern Theatre,* III (June 27, 1914), 1.

[2] "Shaw's Rules for Directors," *Theatre Arts,* XXXIII (August, 1949), 11.

Between his first and final statements about films, Shaw published enough of his opinions to create a considerable body of Shavian criticism of the motion picture. It is my purpose to isolate his movie criticism, to analyze it, and to attempt to extract from it a coherent statement of Shaw's theories on this "momentous invention."

Any such program as mine in this paper carries with it, it must be admitted at the outset, a certain inevitable artificiality. No one has the right to assume that Shaw worked out in his own mind a perfectly formed, complete, detailed, and consistent theory of the motion picture as an art form or as a means of mass communication. He did not publish formal criticism on the motion picture as he did on the drama and on music. Yet Shaw's statements and opinions on the films cannot be profitably discussed unless they are treated *as if* they were part of a somewhat formal theory. A theory must be deduced from his scattered statements if they are to become more than mere unrelated opinions. There is no other way to operate—unless everything he said is simply reproduced, in chronological order. When all of Shaw's statements concerning films are collected, however, they fall naturally into a generally coherent and clear arrangement. As I discuss his statements and quote from Shaw's articles, I shall attempt to keep the artificiality to a minimum and shall be careful not to impose any of my own theories upon Shaw. Wherever possible, I shall allow Shaw to speak for himself.

There is ample evidence that Bernard Shaw had a long-standing interest in motion pictures. Indeed, his interest spanned the conception, birth, adolescence, maturity (and, some would say, senility) of the medium. Shaw even had a prenatal interest in the cinema, for photography itself fascinated him long before anyone thought of putting the pictures together and making the images move:

> Always progressive, Shaw become a fanatical devotee of photography, in which he became proficient in the late nineties. Photography was a pariah among the arts. It promised to be revolutionary.[3]

[3] William Irvine, *The Universe of G.B.S.* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1949), 124.

Shaw's interest in photography was not simply curiosity over a new gadget; he saw both its limitations and its powers to destroy old art forms and to create new ones:

[Photography] seemed to minimize technique and maximize realism and ideas. No more was necessary. Shaw announced the imminent desiccation of painting as an art. But not the total desiccation. The camera could not represent the supermen of Michelangelo until nature produced them, nor did it need to attempt the "pious edifications"[4] of Raphael, Kaulback, and Delaroche. All else it could equal or surpass. Shaw envisaged a composite art in which poser and photographer would coöperate to produce every effect of expression and design.[5]

After pictures began to move, Shaw's interest in the camera did not slacken. On the contrary, it became even more intense. A co-worker with Shaw's motion-picture producer, Gabriel Pascal, says, in a statement edited and approved by Shaw himself:

For Bernard Shaw it is, luckily, just not too late to take advantage of the vast opportunities of the new folk-drama medium. From its earliest and crudest beginnings he was intrigued and curious about it, dropping into little backstreet, "flea-pit" cinemas to watch the strange antics of these *parvenu* celluloid celebrities, and find out what, if anything, all the excitement was about. At once he recognized that a revolution in drama and, consequently, in dramatic writing, was on its way.[6]

Shaw continued to have an avid interest in the medium of the motion picture. So intense was that interest, in fact, that even the motion-picture professionals were surprised. Samuel Goldwyn reports on an interview with Shaw:

To my surprise, I learned then that he was a picture enthusiast. He told me that there were two people whose films he never missed—Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford. Regarding the former he was

[4] Archibald Henderson, *George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works* (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Company, 1911), 224.

[5] Irvine, *loc. cit.*

[6] Marjorie Deans, *Meeting at the Sphinx: Gabriel Pascal's Production of Bernard Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra* (London: Macdonald and Co., Ltd., 1946), 29, 30.

especially enthusiastic. I found, in fact, that he was as familiar with Chaplin's work as am I myself.[7]

When Shaw turned from a mere interest in the cinema to commentary upon it he did not, as I indicated at the beginning of this paper, enter into this new role timidly. He always considered the motion picture a most significant invention and did not hesitate to say so. In his first months of cinema commentary, Shaw remarked:

> I shall not be at all surprised if the cinematograph and phonograph turn out to be the most revolutionary inventions since writing and printing, and, indeed, far more revolutionary than either; for the number of people who can read is small, the number of those who can read to any purpose much smaller, and the number of those who are too tired after a day's work to read without falling asleep enormous.[8]

Although Shaw's opinion of the *value* of the cinema underwent many changes, he never swerved from his early insistence upon its *significance* and its almost limitless potentialities. As late as 1945, while his *Caesar and Cleopatra* was being filmed, Shaw, impressed by Pascal's huge crouching sphinx silhouetted against a background of desert sand and sky, exclaimed:

> What scope! What limitless possibilities! When I look back on my work as a young man with my colleagues in the theatre, it seems to me we were like children playing with wretched makeshift toys. Here you have the whole world to play with![9]

Shaw's basic theory of the cinema seems to divide itself into two relatively distinguishable aspects: the film as an art form and the film as a means of mass communication. His opinion of the movies as an art changed rather drastically when sound was introduced. However, his theory of the value of the movies as communication remained basically the same throughout the medium's development. Although these two aspects will be discussed separately

[7] *Behind the Screen* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), 257.

[8] "What the Films May Do to the Drama," *Metropolitan Magazine,* XLII (May, 1915) 54.

[9] Deans, *op. cit.,* 28.

here, it must be remembered that he would never allow a complete dichotomy between art and communication, for he considered all great art didactic.

Shaw's theory of the cinema as art begins with his views on the silent film. "In the early days of the cinematograph," he said in 1914, "when it was a scarce and expensive curiosity, some of the films were clever and witty."[10] But, he lamented, "all that is gone now." The major cause of the lack of art in the silent cinema was, Shaw continued, the necessity of pleasing everybody, the simple fact that:

> . . . a film must go round the world unchallenged if the maximum of profit is to be made from it. . . . The result may be studied at any picture palace. You have what an agricultural laborer thinks right and what an old-fashioned governess thinks properly sentimental. The melodramas are more platitudinous than melodrama has ever been before. The farces, more crudely knockabout than any harlequinade ever enacted by living performers. . . . There is no comedy, no wit, no criticism of morals by ridicule or otherwise, no exposure of the unpleasant consequences of romantic sentimentality and reckless tomfoolery in real life, nothing that could give a disagreeable shock to the stupid or shake the self-complacency of the smug.

Thus, even in the silent film, one of the reasons given by Shaw for the movies' lack of art was their failure to give a "criticism of morals," brought about by an attempt to be popular. The same feeling was expressed by Shaw in even more colorful language ten years later:

> The colossal proportions [of the films] make mediocrity compulsory. They aim at the average of an American millionaire and a Chinese coolie, a cathedral town governess and a mining village barmaid, because the film has to go everywhere and please everybody. They spread the drama enormously, but as they must interest a hundred per cent of the population of the globe, barring infants in arms, they cannot afford to meddle with the upper ten per cent theatre of the highbrows, or the lower ten per cent theatre of the blackguards. The

[10] *The New Statesman, loc. cit.*

result is that the movie play has supplanted the old-fashioned tract and Sunday School prize: it is reeking with morality, but dares not touch virtue. And virtue, which is defiant and contemptuous of morality, even when it has no practical quarrel with it, is the lifeblood of high drama.[11]

But this was not the only quarrel Shaw had with the silent films. He felt that capitalism had brought the cinema under the control of producers with imperfectly developed artistic instincts and ideals, men who had their eyes fixed primarily on financial rewards. "You cannot," he stated simply, "combine the pursuit of money with the pursuit of art."[12]

Not only did Shaw consider the movie moguls too money-seeking, but also, in order to make larger profits, too money-spending. In 1924, he complained:

Take an opium eater's dream to Los Angeles, and they will realise it for you; the more it costs the more they will believe in it. You can have a real Polar expedition, a real volcano, a reconstruction of the Roman Forum on the spot: anything you please, provided it is enormously costly. Wasted money, mostly. If the United States Government put a limit of $25,000 to the expenditure on any single non-educational film, the result would probably be an enormous improvement in the interest of the film drama, because film magnates would be forced to rely on dramatic imagination instead of on mere spectacle. Oh, those scenes of Oriental voluptuousness as imagined by a whaler's cabin boy! They would make a monk of Don Juan.[13]

More than twenty years later, Shaw repeated his complaint against spectacle, and admitted bitterly to S. Winsten that now that he found himself making movies he had become convinced of the necessity of spending exorbitant sums of money:

You must understand that people who understand nothing about art, and that is the vast majority, judge a thing by its cost and the cost of the film will determine its popularity. You see there is no sex

[11] "The Drama, the Theatre, and the Films," *The Fortnightly Review,* CXVI n.s. (September 1, 1924), 290.

[12] *Loc. cit.*

[13] *Ibid.,* 291–92.

appeal in my film [*Caesar and Cleopatra*[14]] and we have to make up for it by ton loads of sand and appealing sphinxes and great crowds.[15]

Aside from these general complaints against the films, Shaw collected, in the early days of his movie criticism, an oppressive list of specific and purely technical failings:

Overdone and foolishly repeated strokes of expression; hideous make-ups; close-ups that an angel's face would not bear; hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on spoiling effects that I or any competent producer could secure quickly and certainly at a cost of ten cents; featureless, over-exposed faces against under-exposed backgrounds; vulgar and silly sub-titles; impertinent lists of everybody employed in the film, from the star actress to the press agent's office-boy . . .[16]

There is room for improvement in the technical photography; and the comic films would be very much more amusing if they were acted quite seriously and not tomfooled with. Really accomplished producers, with a high artistic conscience, a keen sense of beauty, and what I call the tact of good fun, are more wanted than anything else at present.[17]

It is obvious that Shaw considered the silent film an entirely distinct medium from that of the theatrical drama. In this theory, he was, of course, in accord with the most distinguished of the professional students of the cinema: Paul Rotha, V. I. Podovkin, Allardyce Nicoll, and S. M. Eisenstein. Shaw stated this opinion clearly, with a characteristic matter-of-factness: "The movies are more tempting: there is a new art there; and I may be tempted to try my hand at it . . ."[18]

As a corollary, Shaw felt that, because the movies were a distinct medium, "Movie plays should be invented expressly for the screen by original imaginative visualizers."[19] He could see no par-

[14] It is, incidentally, interesting to note that *Caesar and Cleopatra* turned out to be the most expensive motion picture ever made in Great Britain. J. Arthur Rank spent over a million and a quarter pounds on it (Roger Manvell, *Film* [Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1950], 13).

[15] *Days with Bernard Shaw* (London: Hutchinson, 1948), 151.

[16] *Fortnightly Review*, 292–93.

[17] *Metropolitan Magazine*, 23.

[18] *Fortnightly Review*, 300.

[19] *Ibid.*, 291.

ticular advantage in inviting the coöperation of skilled dramatists in the preparation and production of film dramas, except that

> It may be commercially advisable to engage highly skilled dramatists for film work because their reputations will draw audiences in a film theater just as they will in an ordinary theater.[20]

From a technical standpoint, however, Shaw doubted if the ordinary professional dramatist possessed any of the "special talent demanded by the film."[21] Rather than the wholesale employment of stage dramatists in the writing of film plays, Shaw saw the movies as an opportunity for those dramatists and actors "formerly disabled by incidental deficiencies of one sort or another that do not matter in the picture theater."[22]

> Take the actor or actress with bodily grace, facial expression, pantomimic genius, and ardent dramatic imagination, but with a wretched voice or a lisp or a stammer or a hopelessly foreign or socially unpresentable accent. Take again the would-be author who is full of plots and adventures and romances, but has no gift of verbal expression. These failures of the spoken drama may become the stars of the picture palace. And there are the authors with imagination, visualization, and first-rate verbal gifts, who can write novels and epics, but cannot for the life of them write plays. Well, the film lends itself admirably to the succession of events proper to narrative and epic, but physically impracticable on the stage.[23]

Shaw went on to sum up succinctly his view of the distinction between the two media as he saw it in 1915: "The art of the theater is a far more specialized, more limited, and consequently more exacting art than the art of the picture palace."[24]

Although the media were different, Shaw felt that the silent film would have an important effect upon the drama of the legitimate stage. He rejoiced at the prospect of eliminating from the repertory of the stage the overplotted play, and of substituting for it his own kind of loquacious drama. He expressed his con-

[20] *Metropolitan Magazine, loc. cit.*
[21] *Loc. cit.*
[22] *Loc. cit.*
[23] *Loc. cit.*
[24] *Loc. cit.*

jecture so clearly and, incidentally, brought out such important distinctions between the two media, that extended quotation is justified:

> There exist an immense number of plays in which, though the plot is ingenious and exciting, the dialogue is worthless and superfluous, and in which material for half an hour's entertainment has been spun out into three acts or more. . . . they can now be completely shorn of their dialogue and yet reexpanded into long film dramas, with scores of different scenes, by the representation of the narrated incidents (which take place off the stage in the original play) in the manner to which the film lends itself so effectively and easily. In this form such plays will be finally lost to the spoken drama, and the result will be that the theater will find itself cut out by the picture palace as regards the very sort of play—the so-called "well made" or "constructed" play of the French school—on which it has been for so long almost wholly dependent.
>
> Also, the elaborate art of scenic illusion will be hopelessly beaten and exposed by the pictures. The film can take you into the open air, over the hills and far away, up the mountains and over the seas. It can show you . . . all sorts of conditions of life which the theater can only imitate clumsily and distressingly when it dare attempt them at all.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> By accustoming the poorest playgoers to genuine realism in scenery at so low a cost . . . it reduces the would-be deceptive realistic scenery of the spoken drama to absurdity, both artistically and economically, and thereby gives a powerful and elevating impulse to the restoration of the conditions under which the theater attained its highest and freest point.
>
> Consequently . . . Film Drama will compete so successfully with the spoken drama that it will drive it to its highest ground, and close all paths to it except those in which its true glory lies; that is, the path of high human utterance of great thoughts and great wit, of poesy and prophecy. Or, as some of our more hopelessly prosaic critics call it, the path of Talk.[25]

Ten years were all it took to convince Shaw that the film drama had no lasting value of its own, although he still apparently felt

[25] *Loc. cit.*

that it had a beneficial effect on legitimate stage drama. In 1924, Shaw complained that the medium of the silent screen had played itself out:

> The silent drama is exhausting the resources of silence. Charlie Chaplin and his very clever colleague, Edna Purviance, Bill Hart and Alla Nazimova, Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford and Harold Lloyd, have done everything that can be done in dramatic dumb show and athletic stunting, and played all the possible variations on it.[26]

Shaw considered the silent screen so exhausted that he facetiously predicted that soon "an Oscar Wilde of the movies will flash epigram after epigram at the spectators."[27] He confessed that he shared Barrie's belief: "The film play of the future will have no pictures and will consist exclusively of sub-titles."[28]

Shaw hesitated now to try his hand at film writing, as he had long thought of doing. The medium no longer had enough to offer, and he felt he would only be wasting his gift of language: "Asking me to write a dumb show is rather like asking Titian to paint portraits in black and white."[29] There was only one function left for the silent film—to exploit its ability to create the fantastic through its technical virtuosity and through its very reality. Shaw apparently realized that the film is the perfect medium for fantasy—because it is so realistic (seeing is believing!). What was, it seems, his final statement on the silent film indicates perfectly his acute perception of the value of the misused medium: "There is one sort of dumb show that is something more than a play with the words left out, and that is a dream. If ever I do a movie show it will have the quality of a dream."[30]

When sound was first added to the pictures of the cinema, the professional students of the art raised a great and anguished cry. The leader of them all, Paul Rotha, condemned talking pictures in his 1930 book, *The Film Till Now*. Others of the pioneer film

[26] *Fortnightly Review*, 293.
[27] *Ibid.*, 293–94.
[28] *Ibid.*, 293.
[29] *Ibid.*, 300.
[30] *Loc. cit.*

critics joined in the attacks on the introduction of sound, and predicted that the cinema would lose its distinct characteristics and become simply an extension of the stage, creating only "filmed plays." Ever since that time, the students of the cinema have formed two armed camps: those whose orientation lies toward stage drama insisting that the films are no longer a separate medium but merely remove some of the barriers and restrictions imposed by the stage; those whose orientation lies toward the cinema insisting that the films are still a distinctly different art form, depending upon visual appeal, economizing on dialogue, demanding movement instead of artistic limitation, etc.[31] Shaw clearly aligned himself with the former group. He never again mentioned the old distinctions between the media. Instead, by both word and deed, he asserted that he no longer recognized a basic difference in medium between stage and screen.

In 1929, soon after the birth of the talkies, Shaw summed up his opinion toward them in an interview with G. W. Bishop of *Theatre Guild Magazine*. The only real differences Shaw could discover between the drama and the talkies were the magnification and intensification that take place on the screen. This magnification did not demand a new kind of writing—it merely demanded a new kind of acting:

> The ordinary actor—as such—is unsuitable for the talkies. The technique is quite different. . . . When the talkies came along the movie actor rushed in and, on the whole, was found to be a failure, for although he knows technically how to move he knows next to nothing about the voice . . . we shall have to breed a race of talkie actors who have mastered the technique of moving and talking.[32]

Shaw was quite satisfied that there were no further major differences:

> I have satisfied myself by a successful personal experiment that it is possible to reproduce [on the screen] dramatic dialogue such as I

[31] See Bibliographies in Allardyce Nicoll, *Film and Theatre* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1936) and Paul Rotha, *The Film Till Now* (London: J. Cape, 1931).

[32] "The Living Talkies: an Interview," *Theatre Guild Magazine*, VII (November, 1929), 32.

write, the effect being as convincing as when it is spoken on the stage.... It has been established already that stage action can be reproduced effectively on the screen.... I see no reason why *The Apple Cart,* for instance, should not be produced [for the talkies] exactly as it stands.[33]

Not only did the words of Shaw indicate that he felt there was only an incidental difference between the two media, but he confirmed his words with actions. In 1931, Shaw allowed British International to film his *How He Lied to Her Husband.* Cecil Lewis directed the movie exactly as Shaw would have directed it on the stage; he even used only three walls of one room. The film was so uncinematic that Alexander Baksky concluded sadly: "He evidently does not feel the difference between the movies and the stage."[34] *Arms and the Man* was the only other of his plays that Shaw allowed to be made into a film before his fateful meeting with Gabriel Pascal. The results were largely the same as those with *How He Lied to Her Husband.* Allardyce Nicoll reports that this movie, too, was "fundamentally a screen-picture of the written drama," and that "the result was that no more dismal film has ever been shown to the public."[35]

For many years, both before and after sound entered the films, Shaw had fought a battle against signing away the right to film his plays. He didn't trust the cinema sufficiently to turn over to it his beloved works. Shaw said that he:

... could find nobody who wanted to do anything with my plays on the screen but mutilate them, murder them, give their cadavers to the nearest scrivener, without a notion of how to tell the simplest story in dramatic action, and instructed that there must be a new picture every ten seconds, and that the duration of the whole feature must be forty-five minutes at the extreme outside. The result was to be presented to the public with my name attached, and an assurance that nobody need fear that it had any Shavian quality whatever, and was real genuine Hollywood.[36]

[33] *Loc. cit.*
[34] "Review of *How He Lied to Her Husband,*" Nation, CXXXII (February 4, 1931), 136.
[35] Nicoll, *op. cit.,* 164, 165.
[36] Deans, *op. cit.,* vii.

The temptation must have been strong: The London *Times* of March 27, 1920, reports that "Mr. Bernard Shaw has refused an offer of a million dollars for the film rights of all his plays." It is obvious that what Shaw was looking for was a producer who shared his theory that the cinema was "filmed plays," at least a producer who wouldn't insist upon changing his dramas too radically. On Friday, December 13, 1935, a day Shaw called an "Auspicious day in the history of Art,"[37] he found that man. "Gabriel Pascal," said Shaw,

> is one of those extraordinary men who turn up occasionally, say once in a century, and may be called godsends in the arts to which they are devoted. Pascal is doing for the films what Diaghileff did for the Russian Ballet."[38]

At least, Pascal was performing as a Diaghileff to the plays of Bernard Shaw. He produced, in turn, with the closest of possible collaborations from Shaw himself, film versions of *Pygmalion* (1938), *Major Barbara* (1941), *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1946), and, after Shaw's death, *Androcles and the Lion* (1952). Where additional scenes were called for, Shaw wrote them himself. Pascal was too much of a movie-man to commit the same mistakes of absolutely unchanged transcriptions that Shaw's earlier producers perpetrated. Throughout all of these productions, however, Shaw was somewhat niggardly with respect to changes. Pascal reports that, although Shaw had a great "genuine instinct for camera angles and as much rhythmical sense for movie continuity," he "had no respect whatever for the so-called technique of the cinema."[39] "He told me," Pascal goes on, ". . . that nothing matters but the story itself; and the duty of the producer is to tell this story simply and faithfully, keeping to the author's intentions." After Shaw's death, Pascal confessed that he did not, after all, share Shaw's theory about the demands of the cinema. *Major Barbara* and *Caesar and Cleopatra,* at least, were not, thought

[37] Gabriel Pascal, "Shaw as a Scenario Writer," *G.B.S. 90: Aspects of Bernard Shaw's Life and Work,* ed. S. Winsten (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1946), 256.

[38] Deans, *loc. cit.*

[39] *G.B.S. 90,* 257.

Pascal, successful when transferred to the screen: "They are essentially stage plays, based largely on dialogue and argument rather than action, dramatic emotion, and visual scope."[40] On his film version of *Caesar and Cleopatra,* Pascal was particularly hard. "I dislike it very much," he said, "and consider it a gorgeous bore."[41]

Shaw, however, was intensely pleased with the film productions. He was not disturbed by any possible uncinematic qualities that they might possess. They were, at least, real Shaw. "Before this," he told Bennett Cerf, "I could only say that Shaw's plays were the best I've ever seen. Now I can also say that Shaw's movies are the best I've ever seen."[42]

Shaw's subsequent opinion of the movies as an art form should be obvious. Because the films were an extension of the stage, the quality of the cinema depended upon the quality of the plays—and whether or not these plays were ruined by stupid producers. Shaw was completely enthusiastic about the possibilities of the cinema, because it eliminated so many of the restrictions of the stage. He wrote in 1946 that if he was then at the beginning of his career he would "write for the screen and never dream of turning back to the limitations of the stage."[43] Still, for all his enthusiasm, Shaw was never blinded to the stupidities of Hollywood producers: as late as 1946, William Saroyan tells of Shaw "scoffing at the producers of moving pictures."[44]

Perhaps the ultimate in Shaw's appreciation of the motion picture as an art form is to be found in his gently humorous but obviously heartfelt "Message from G.B.S. to America," which was a spoken preface by Shaw for the film version of *Major Barbara:*

I am within forty minutes' drive of the center of London, and at any moment a bomb may crash through this roof and blow me to atoms, because the German bombers are in the skies. Now, please under-

[40] Sol. Jacobson, "Androcles in Hollywood," *Theatre Arts,* XXXVI (December, 1952), 66.
[41] *Loc. cit.*
[42] "G. B. Shaw's *Pygmalion* is the Best Motion Picture G. B. Shaw Has Ever Seen," *Newsweek,* XII (December 5, 1938), 25.
[43] Deans, *op. cit.,* 29.
[44] "My Visit with G.B.S.," *The New Republic,* LXXIII (July 2, 1946), 80.

stand, I can't absolutely promise you such a delightful finish to this news item. Still, it may happen, so don't give up hope yet. If it does happen, well it will not matter very much to me. As you see, I am in my 85th year. I have shot my bolt, I have done my work. War or no war, my number is up. But if my films are still being shown in America, my soul will go marching on, and that will satisfy me.... When I grew up they told me that the war in America had abolished black slavery, so that job having been done, I determined to devote my life as far as I could to the abolition of white slavery.... Look after my plays and look after my films. They are all devoted to the abolition of that sort of slavery.[45]

Now that an examination has been made of Shaw's notions about the artistic value of both the silent films and the talkies, let us turn to his views of the motion picture as a means of mass communication. He has left us, not surprisingly, no dearth of opinions. It is apparent that Shaw was greatly concerned with the potential propaganda force of this new invention. His attitudes toward its educative value were more enthusiastic and more consistently favorable than his attitudes toward its artistic worth. Only once did he complain about the social dangers of the cinema: he was worried, in 1914, about its destructive force as a "moral leveller"; he was concerned over its "desolating romantic morality."[46] As noted previously here, Shaw considered the necessary universality and attempt at popularity of the cinema as destructive of both art and society. He went on to explain:

Now levelling, though excellent in income, is disastrous in morals. The moment you allow one man to receive a larger income than another you are on the road to ruin. But the moment you prevent one man having a more advanced morality than another you are on the same road.[47]

Shaw preferred, however, to speculate about the potential values of the medium as an educational force, rather than to complain about its present failures. In the same year that he was warning about the cinema's dangers, he was praising it enthusi-

[45] "From Shaw to U.S.," New York *Times Magazine,* June 1, 1941.
[46] *The New Statesman, loc. cit.*
[47] *Ibid.,* 2.

astically in a contribution to a symposium on the cinematograph which was run in the London *Bioscope*. The very force which makes it dangerous could also make it extremely valuable:

> The cinematograph begins educating people when the projection lantern begins clicking, and does not stop until it leaves off. . . . And it is educating you far more effectively when you think it is only amusing you than when it is avowedly instructing you in the habits of lobsters.[48]

Shaw considered the most important educative role of the cinema as a purely social one, as a means of social leveling: "Probably at present the best work the cinema does is the exhibition to masses of poor children of the habits, dress, manners and surroundings of people who can afford to live decently."[49] The cinema had, thought Shaw, still a further social value. It provided cheap entertainment for the poor:

> The cinema is cheap. For a halfpenny a boy is allowed to enter and sit out three films. For a penny he can stay the whole way through the entertainment. Not, of course, at the fashionable West End cinemas, but in the poorer districts, where all cinemas fill up their vacant seats in this fashion. The penny is often very well spent indeed. Take the not uncommon case of a child whose mother is out at work until late in the evening. To keep him out of mischief whilst she is away, she can either lock him in or lock him out. Usually she locks him out, preferring that the risk of his doing mischief and stealing food should be borne by other people. To a boy so situated the hospitality of a warm picture theatre with an exciting entertainment is priceless. . . .[50]

And yet the films had not only a general social value, but specific movies, like the controversial silent film *Dawn* could bring vital social messages to thousands of people whom the stage could never reach:

> That film, in a rather wonderful way, with the assistance of a great English actress [Sybil Thorndike], does bring home to the people

[48] "Education and the Cinematograph," *Bioscope* (June 18, 1914), 1222.
[49] *Loc. cit.*
[50] *The New Statesman, loc. cit.*

that above all the regulations you can make, above all the laws you can make, above all the duties you owe your country, above the laws of war, there is something higher than that, and that is the law of God.[51]

For political reasons, too, Shaw was enthusiastic about the cinema. Its control over its audience was so great that it had the power of inculcating political doctrines to which, in their provincial isolation, many common people would never be exposed. He thought, for example, that MGM's silent film *The Big Parade* (1925) was such a picture. It was, he said, "a fine pacifist study of war,"[52] and he welcomed its showing in England, in spite of a rash of British patriotic attacks upon it.

Shaw also welcomed the quick growth of the cinema, both for the sake of democracy, and for the advancement of his own political theories:

Think, too, of Democracy when all the great political speeches are filmed, and I shall be able to tell my audiences what I really think of them without having the platform stormed by an infuriated mob.[53]

The movies were, thought Shaw, important as an educative aesthetic force as well as a useful social and political tool. He saw a definite value in the cinema's dissemination of beauty:

The cinematograph, by familiarizing us with elegance, grace, beauty, and the rest of those immoral virtues which are so much more important than the moral ones, could easily make our ugliness look ridiculous.[54]

Beauty, with its civilizing powers, could also be brought by the motion picture into those outlying districts where, heretofore, the people had had to spend their lives ignorant of the finer elements of culture:

[51] Quoted in Russell Thorndike, *Sybil Thorndike* (London: T. Butterworth, 1929), 307, from a speech against movie censorship which Shaw delivered to the Chief Constable at Harrogate.

[52] "The Big Parade," *Literary Digest,* LXXXIX (June 12, 1926), 29.

[53] *Metropolitan Magazine,* 54.

[54] *Bioscope, loc. cit.*

I once saw an excellent film in which Sarah Bernhardt figured as Queen Elizabeth. It was in a small town on the Welsh border, to which it could never have paid any manager to bring so expensive a star; and I realized that if the people there were ever to hear great plays handsomely mounted and spoken by famous actors (an absolutely necessary part of high popular culture), the synchronized cinema and gramaphone was their only chance. Already they can hear the singers of Westminster Cathedral singing the masses of Palestrina . . .[55]

When they can see and hear Forbes Robertson's Hamlet equally well produced, it will be possible for our young people to grow up in healthy remoteness from the crowded masses and slums of big cities without also growing up as savages.[56]

The variety of fields in which the films could play an important educational role were, thought Shaw, virtually unlimited. He admitted that "it is impossible to say how the educational powers of the cinema can be 'best' applied."[57] But he had a number of specific suggestions as to fields in which the movies could well enter:

An obvious application of the cinema to education is the reform of the Art School, with its "life class" studying an absurdly unlifelike naked human being in a condition of painful and hideous simulated petrification and paralysis. Our art students slave for years at this abomination, and finally deprive themselves of all power of drawing or even seeing a figure in action. The cinematograph can not only show the figure in action, but can arrest the action at any instant, and thereby . . . surprise here and there a moment at which the figure is graceful and expressive. . . . In all athletic exercizes, and in dancing, what is called "showing form" can be done by the cinema. Much of the clumsiness and ugliness of our habits is simple ignorance; we have never seen anything better, and are even ashamed of pleasing our natural taste for something better, because it would make us look peculiar.[58]

[55] *Metropolitan Magazine*, 23.
[56] *Ibid.*, 23 and 54.
[57] *Bioscope, loc. cit.*
[58] *Loc. cit.*

Shaw recognized still more advantages of the motion picture—in addition to its roles as both an art and as communication. He saw that it had great value for the actors. No longer would they "be condemned to the inhuman task of playing Hamlet for hundreds of consecutive nights."[59] He lamented that the great actors of the past "might have been creating a thousand new parts while they were repeating old ones in tedious long runs that only wasted their talents and staled their enthusiasm!"[60] And, perhaps most important, the great actor would be immortal: "At all events we shall hear no more of the fugitive fame of the actor's art which perishes with himself; for Robertson's Hamlet, filmed and recorded, may delight posterity. . . ."[61]

Not content, of course, with mere criticism, enthusiasm, predictions, and scoffings, Shaw also had a number of suggestions:

> Every American aspirant to film work should be sent to Denmark or Sweden for five years to civilise him before being allowed to enter a Los Angeles studio.[62]
>
> . . . all patentees of apparatus should be drowned, shot, sent to St. Helena, or otherwise effectively excluded from the studios, the moment they demonstrate the practicalities of their inventions.[63]
>
> Write better films, if you can: there is no other way [to improve the future artistic development of the films].[64]
>
> The moral is, of course, that the State should endow the cinema. . . . I suggest that what is wanted is the endowment, either public or private, of a cinema theatre devoted wholly to the castigation by ridicule of current morality.[65]

In our examination of Shaw as a movie critic we have seen him to be fluid but consistent, angry but enthusiastic. From first to last, he thought the cinema vital and significant. He viewed the silent films as too commercial and popular, too "moral," too spec-

[59] *Metropolitan Magazine*, 54.
[60] *Loc. cit.*
[61] *Loc. cit.*
[62] *Fortnightly Review*, 293.
[63] *Theatre Guild Magazine, loc. cit.*
[64] *Fortnightly Review*, 291.
[65] *The New Statesman*, 2.

tacular, and too careless. He considered the silent film a distinct medium from the legitimate stage—a medium with its own special demands in writing and acting. Shaw felt that the silent films would drive the theater to higher ground, even though the silent cinema itself soon exhausted its own value. The addition of sound, he thought, made the movies an extension of the stage. He no longer considered the cinema a separate medium, but saw it merely as a stage without traditional restrictions. Then Shaw turned his attack on what he considered the stupidities of film producers. He withheld the movie rights to his own plays until he found a producer willing to film them with a minimum of changes. Shaw was eminently satisfied with the faithful transcriptions which Gabriel Pascal produced for him. The attitude of Shaw toward the educational value of the films was consistently enthusiastic. Though he recognized their dangers, he saw their extreme power as valuable to society, politics, beauty, art, culture, athletics, dancing, and actors. In short, Shaw was a movie critic who was excited at the potentialities of the films but disappointed by the actualities of men. He saw the cinema, most of all, as a means to force people.

> . . . to see farther than their own noses and their own nurseries, [then] people will begin to have some notion of the sort of world they are living in; and then we, too, shall see—what we shall see.[96]

[96] *Metropolitan Magazine, loc. cit.*

Films from Abroad—
Progress and Poverty

ANDREW C. MAYER

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THE NEW BRITISH COMEDY *Private's Progress* is practically an American picture, in everything but the accents. The plot is one of those long, complicated affairs about army life that, at various times, have made use of the talents of such stalwarts as Abbot and Costello, Martin and Lewis, and, if memory serves, Laurel and Hardy. As is customary in such things, there are two principal characters, the stooge (Ian Carmichal) and the wide boy (Richard Attenborough), who have a sort of Trilby-and-Svengali relationship. Of course each is ultimately recognized and rewarded as he deserves. For the most part, the strictly GI routines are so familiar as to be largely uninteresting—the awkwardness of new recruits being drilled, the peremptory nature of a medical inspection at sick call, the neurotic tendencies of the psychiatrist.

Nevertheless, some of the newer gags are very nicely worked out. The orientation talk, for example, is a masterpiece. It begins with an utterly incomprehensible presentation of charts by an inept young officer and eventually deteriorates into a wonderfully detailed lecture by Richard Attenborough on how to cheat the British railway system out of its fares. The Information and Education program must have constituted a serious menace to the sanity of practically every soldier in World War II, and its possibilities for satire are virtually unlimited; but until now it seems to have escaped anything more than passing mention. Another novel gimmick shows how a small detail of larcenous trainees are able to sequester about a third of all the supplies they unload from a truck.

Plotwise, however, *Private's Progress* does not move very rapidly, and our innocent victim of selective service goes through his military paces with the same lack of awareness that characterizes his earlier civilian activities. The action finally begins when the film is already about half over, and, as one might have anticipated, involves a secret mission. It would be unfair, if not actually a breach of security, to disclose the nature of the mission, but of course it too entails a certain amount of chicanery. The chief culprit is admirably played by Dennis Price, and his downfall is quite naturally brought about by one of our hero's more fortunate mistakes.

* * *

A comedy-fantasy of an entirely different kind is Carol Reed's *A Kid for Two Farthings.* The title role is played by a mangy young goat, which, through a congenital deficiency, somewhat resembles a unicorn; and the child who buys it (Jonathan Ashmore) expects it to perform all kinds of miracles. It does, of course, and the aged tailor (David Kossuth) gets his steam-pressing machine, the handsome vacuous young wrestler (Joe Robinson) wins his match against Primo Carnera, and all is more or less right with the world. In other words, this is a Saroyanesque sort of comedy, where violence is never very real, and poverty is in glorious Technicolor. This is a much more aimless sort of picture than most of those Carol Reed has done; and, although it has some nice sentimental moments and some nice Jewish jokes, it seems for the most part too disorganized to be entirely successful.

* * *

One of the most highly touted of this year's crop of foreign pictures has been Federico Fellini's *La Strada.* It is a well-conceived modern-dress version of an old *commedia dell'arte* piece, with the roles of Harlequin and Columbine somewhat reversed. Giulietta Masina is really quite charming as the slow-witted apprentice clown whom Anthony Quinn buys from her mother, as

a replacement for her sister who has died. He alternately beats her and ignores her, and her attempts to escape are abortive. Her only source of comfort is an itinerant tightrope walker who, in accordance with the traditions of the art form, is the natural enemy of her lord and master. The end of this feud is, of course, predictable; but the point of the film does not lie in its rather inconclusive denouement. The end of the picture is in fact worse than inconclusive: it is almost meaningless, because it is too obvious. Audiences by now have become almost as accustomed in the movie house as in the theater to inept, inarticulate, brutalized protagonists; but, for the most part, these characters undergo some sort of evolution. Terry Malloy does finally break through the sound barrier in the last maudlin scene of *On the Waterfront,* and Stanley Kowalski does ultimately outgrow the need for violence by the end of *Streetcar Named Desire.* These changes are not exactly transformations, but they do represent a kind of progress. At the end of *La Strada,* though, Anthony Quinn, who has throughout shown himself incapable of being anything more than a strong man, whether in or out of costume, finally realizes that it has been, after all, rather a fruitless occupation; but he appears to do nothing with this discovery except consider the possibility of suicide. The entire last sequence is a desperate effort to make a point out of what is and ought to be a pointless film: the sudden disclosure that the girl has died is followed by a rather obvious and badly conceived street fight which supposedly demonstrates the limitations of mere brute strength, whereupon Anthony Quinn, who had previously displayed no tendency to introversion, begins to stare morbidly at the incoming tide. The whole symbolism is somehow a little too turgid to be true and brings to a sticky end what is on the whole a very evocative and touching story.

* * *

Another exercise in pathology is the recent production of *The Proud and the Beautiful,* which is based on a story by Sartre. The

title roles are played by Gerard Philipe and Michele Morgan, who take rather a long time to demonstrate the well-known effect on a man of a good woman's love. The man is an alcoholic ex-doctor who gave up medicine for stronger potions after having killed his wife in the course of an operation. He has become a derelict, scorned and pitied by the local doctor of the remote Mexican village where he has taken up residence, and patronized by the townspeople, for whom he performs a kind of Latin-American dervish in exchange for a bottle. The woman is a refined and elegant traveler, just passing through, whose husband opportunely dies of the dreaded spotted fever; and Gerard Philipe, whose Hippocratic instincts are not yet entirely dead, saves her from being contaminated. Under her steadying influence, he appears to give up dancing, at least in its most extreme forms, and even to some extent to discontinue drinking; but, of course, it is the epidemic which ultimately restores him to a potentially useful existence, and the film ends in an embrace. The motivation, therefore, presents an interesting contrast to Sartre's better known story *Les Mains Sales,* where a man is proved incapable of doing for professional gratification what he can do for love. The present film, being a little less cynical in its message than Sartre generally is, somehow is less convincing. However, the peak of our hero's career, where he administers a spinal injection to the lady in a graphic demonstration of amorous sadism, is depicted with more than enough specificity to persuade the lay viewer of its accuracy. In an age where foreign pictures have become almost as overelaborate as American ones, this is a refreshing throwback to the unrelieved squalor of the good old days.

Richard III: The Preservation of a Film

JACK DIETHER

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THE EVALUATION of Sir Laurence Olivier's *Richard III* as a film adaptation of Shakespeare raises many problems, some of which have been astutely aired in this and other journals. Considered purely as cinema, it gives rise to further questions, notably those pertaining to the current practices of film distribution and exhibition throughout the world. The present spate of three-hour-plus films (*War and Peace, Giant, Around the World in Eighty Days, The Ten Commandments,* etc.)—those phenomena much disliked (for obvious commercial reasons) by both distributors and exhibitors—is bound to put a strain on those practices, and the outcome is doubtful. In the case of *Richard III,* "practical" commercialism is definitely winning out over artistic considerations.

With regard to the artistic side of this work, the issue is fairly clear. From the complex pros and cons of critical debate over Olivier's adaptation of the play, one area of general agreement has emerged: the film is thoroughly unified and integrated on its own terms, and brilliantly presented—on those terms. Using about half of the total number of lines in the play, adding a few from *Henry VI, Part 3* and other sources, and scrambling them thoroughly in respect to syntax and order of presentation, Olivier has fashioned a film in which the basic ingredients of the plot are, as James E. Phillips[1] expresses it, both simplified and clarified,

[1] "*Richard III:* Two Views," *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television,* X (Summer, 1956), 399–407.

especially for those quite unfamiliar with the tetralogy of plays of which it is originally a unit. It has been made to stand entirely on its own feet as a self-explanatory piece of dramaturgy.

Whether or not this involves an oversimplification and therefore distortion of the original dramatic values of the play, as Phillips and others persuasively contend, it does represent a coherent and logical film drama in its own right. It is pure cinema in the best sense; as Harry Schein states, "*Richard III* will go down in film history on the strength of its explosive beauty, its refined aesthetic details."[2] Its integrity as a film, now and in the future, is therefore eminently worthy of consideration, and this integrity is seriously threatened by those same pressures of unremitting commercialism mentioned above.

In the initial presentation of the film to this country, there were two unique circumstances. First, it was only the second major-studio film ever to be premiered on television. Second, it was accompanied by the release by RCA-Victor (in conjunction with release by HMV in England) of a complete recording of the sound track of the film (Victor LM-6126)—the first nonoperatic or balletic feature-length sound track ever to be commercially recorded in its entirety (and a three-hour one at that!).

This recording has made it possible for anyone interested to make a closer study of the film adaptation than would be possible either from repeatedly attending the film and trying to make notes or from comparing the original play with a publication of the text of the film scenario such as was offered by MGM for its *Romeo and Juliet* in 1935. For just as a reading of the plays is no substitute for hearing them spoken, as Shakespearean scholars have long pointed out, so a mere reading of the scenario in "cold print" tells relatively little about its justification in terms of timing, delivery, and dramatic and rhythmic flow.

The recording alone cannot, however, convey the full essence of the film. For the gradual disinheriting of Shakespeare's verse

[2] *Ibid.*, 415.

as almost the sole conveyor of scene and background realism in his plays, in favor of physical realism, probably reaches its climax in the recent films of such men as Olivier, Welles, and Castellani. They have been at pains to produce essentially cinematic versions of the plays, in which the first consideration has been to free the camera in every possible sense from the limitations of the stage and the second consideration has been to reconcile the great verse as far as possible to these demands.

Olivier, in *Henry V,* introduced his particular concept of Shakespearean film production formally, as it were, by dramatizing the concept itself, showing it grow and take shape during the progress of the film, as if engendered by the advice of the Chorus to his audience: "On your imaginary forces work." In *Hamlet,* his method was presented full-bloom without formal introduction or apology. Here, the camera became such a senior partner with the "dialogue" that Olivier later cautioned his audience to consider the film an "essay on *Hamlet.*" The controversy aroused by that film has naturally been renewed by the presentation of his third Shakespeare film, *Richard III.*

In this connection, Meredith Lillich interestingly points out that in 1935 Olivier was approached to play Romeo on the screen under Irving Thalberg, and "refused on the grounds that 'Shakespeare should never be filmed'."[3] Whatever happened in the ten intervening years to modify the "never" in Olivier's mind, he evidently approached the matter as a serious problem, not as a stunt. After all, he seems to have concluded, the transformation from the Elizabethan playhouse to the modern screen is perhaps no more drastic than that from the former to the modern stage, and possibly less drastic than that to the typical nineteenth-century stage with its fixed sets and long scene changes. The question is not simply that of filming Shakespeare. Rather, it is one of adapting him wholeheartedly to the film medium, just as staging Shakespeare, even today, is for the most part a matter of adapting

[3] "Shakespeare on the Screen," *Films in Review* (June–July, 1956), 251.

him to the modern theater. In both cases, the ultimate questions of style must be faced and somehow answered.

Thus the complete, untouched, and unedited recording of *Richard III* is in a very special and peculiar position. It is a literal rendition of the sound alone of a quintessentially cinematic piece of work, in which, furthermore, music is a very important adjunct to the visual continuity, sometimes in lieu of dialogue. Therefore, it was probably inevitable that the recording should be roundly criticized in some quarters as a recording per se. Eric Bentley, in his article "Poor Richard's Soundtrack,"[4] takes about two-hundred lines to demonstrate that the recording is quite incomprehensible to anyone who has never seen the film (which is already self-evident), without bothering to consider whether anyone at all would want to regard it as an entity in itself. In fact, considering the nature of the recording's appeal, it is difficult to imagine any consumer-potential who has not seen the film or ever intends to.

A more humorous and endearing reaction of the record critic to the sound qua sound is revealed by Edward T. Canby:

> In the same way the music, which is so effective a binder, punctuator, mood-maker, scene-changer for the film, is ugly and much too prominent on the discs and often with unintended effects—as when one burst of music seems to swallow up the king and his henchmen as though the floor had suddenly collapsed beneath them.[5]

Reference here is undoubtedly to the scene wherein the little Duke of York suddenly points with malicious glee at Richard's humpback. I will never again hear that passage without chuckling at this figment of Canby's imagination (just as I hope some day to see a really cinematic swallowing-up of the villains in *The Magic Flute*).

The plain fact is that Olivier's method of enforcing marital equality between the aural demands of Shakespeare's poetry and

[4] *High Fidelity* (March, 1956). Reprinted as "Olivier on Disk" in *What Is Theatre?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956).

[5] "The New Recordings," *Harper's Magazine* (April, 1956), 104.

the visual demands of the movie camera, with music as an important third factor, makes any claim of an independent distinction for the recording utterly impossible; and Bentley's dissection of the recording as if it presented such a claim is simply beating a dead donkey. Furthermore, in the exercise of this fruitless labor, he entirely overlooks the potential historical importance of this new phonographic medium for all serious students of the cinema. The very boldness of the choice for such an innovation increases the excitement of its challenge.

Even before the completion of *Richard III*'s initial New York run at the Bijou Theatre, I became aware of an additional importance of the recording to future film students. A sound track had been preserved of a "good" print as it was originally distributed, free of mutilation by time, local censorship, and possible secondary distributors. This fact was brought forcibly to mind upon observing that even the print initially shown at the Bijou was already slightly shorter than the recording, and that each successive showing I attended differed a little from its predecessor. A check with the distributor (Lopert Films Distributing Corporation) revealed only that the prints shown on different occasions were "probably" different ones. So, already there were differences, before the film had even gone into general release!

The most important scene present in the recording but absent from the Bijou run and from the TV showing is that of the execution of Buckingham (Act V, Scene i). This scene is important because its inclusion is indicative of an essential principle of good Shakespearean editing, that a major issue presented is always to be resolved, never left hanging. Occasionally, Olivier and his co-editor, Alan Dent, slip up on similar, smaller dramatic points. But here, they have been at pains to emphasize Buckingham's false oath in II, i:

> Whenever Buckingham doth turn his hate
> On you or yours . . . God punish me
> With hate in those where I expect most love! . . .

immediately after hearing King Edward's solemn admonition to Hastings,

> Take heed you dally not before your king,
> Lest he that is the supreme King of kings
> Confound your hidden falsehood . . .

And it is intolerable that the inevitable antithesis and resolution,

> That high All-Seer that I dallied with
> Hath turned my feigned prayer on my head,
> And given in earnest what I begged in jest.

should be missing. Although less important, missing at the Bijou on various occasions were the following scenes: the domestic one with the queen's family (II, iv) up to the entrance of Dorset, Buckingham's account of Edward's bigamy to the citizens, and Richard's instructions on the night before the battle. Censored on TV were the scenes of Hastings in bed with Jane Shore, the execution of Hastings, the murder of the boy princes in the Tower, Richard's nightmare, and his death.

However, all these deletions, totaling not more than six or seven minutes, are of minor concern compared to the announcement, made after the initial run had concluded, that the general release of the film would be made with additional cuts totaling half an hour! Furthermore, this would be done against the better artistic judgment of Olivier himself! This is the way the announcement was made in *Variety* on September 11, 1956:

OLIVIER NODS 30-MIN. CUT OF 'RICHARD III' GLOBALLY

"Richard III" will be released for wide distribution later on this month in a trimmed version that will run two and a half hours instead of the original three.

Laurence Olivier starrer is being cut all over the world in line with a distributor complaint that it's tough to sell the overlength epics. Olivier was originally firmly opposed to any cuts, but later was convinced of the commercial necessity and gave his okay.

Since the release of this version is still pending at the time of writing, its exact effect will have to be discussed later.

Add to these cuts probable further mutilations by policy and accident, including its eventual sale to a TV exhibitor who will further "trim" it to the "standard" ninety minutes if it is not already there, and it becomes apparent that the recording will become increasingly important as a reference point back to Olivier's true original intentions. Few important sound films of the past are to be seen in unblemished prints, and no doubt the particular admirers of these films would give much to possess at least sound records of their original totality. Concerning the present recording, a small complicating factor to be mentioned is that at least one pair of lines originally heard on the screen are not to be found even on the records:

> Clarence, beware, thou keep'st me from the light;
> But I will sort a pitchy day for thee.

Does an even longer print exist that bears Olivier's final sanction? The possibility is slight.

What we have said above about the principle of resolving in Shakespearean fashion each dramatic point raised applies equally to such an integrated musical score as Sir William Walton has written for *Richard III,* and obviously musical considerations will count for even less with the professional "trimmers" than dramatic considerations. The complete recording thus affords an admirable opportunity to study carefully Walton's methods of development, variation, and integration. Yet most of the critics have tended to regard the matter as beneath their contempt, and some have complained of the "distortion" of dramatic values that the predominance of purely musical development on the records entails.

I would like, therefore, to attempt to correct some of the prevalent misunderstandings in this respect, and to give a more coherent appraisal of the music from a functional point of view. The first important point to consider is that Sir Laurence obviously regards the incidental music as a factor in equal partner-

ship, so to speak, with camera and script, as in the case of his two earlier Shakespeare films, also with Walton's music. That this is the kind of music Olivier wants cannot be doubted. One of the more unusual aspects of the making of these films has been the acknowledged close rapport between director and composer during and throughout shooting rather than entirely after shooting and editing (so that in fact filming and editing may be framed to composed music as well as the more usual way round). It is no longer possible to consider Olivier's work aesthetically without reference to this aspect.

Olivier refers to himself as an illustrator of Shakespeare; and, in the broader view, illustration can be accomplished not only through motion-picture photography but also through music. In recording excerpts from *Henry V,* Olivier did not use direct excerpts from the sound track, as were used for the *Hamlet* recording. Rather, he fashioned a special recording that constituted a kind of tone poem based on the film and used exclusively his own voice, solo, in speeches of the Chorus, Henry, Michael Williams, Montjoy, and Burgundy, knit together by music.[6] Here, voice and music form an equal partnership of two, while the longest stretch of the recording, the actual Battle of Agincourt, is described by music alone. Very little of the text of the play was thus presented in this 25-minute recording, as critics, especially those who didn't care for the music, were hardly loathe to point out. But it made a sustained, integrated whole, and one that evidently satisfied Olivier deeply. Eric Bentley sarcastically ends his article "Poor Richard's Soundtrack" with the question, "When will Sir Laurence learn that we love him for himself alone?" To this, an apt rejoinder might be "When will the critics realize that Sir Laurence is not at all interested in pampering such an adolescent phenomenon?" No one can open-mindedly listen to the *Henry V* record without realizing that music is an integral part of his cinematic approach to Shakespeare.

[6] The recording may be heard, slightly abridged to fit one LP side, on Victor LM-1924, with the excerpts from *Hamlet* on the reverse.

Thus, the "long stretches of William Walton music" referred to by reviewers of the *Richard III* recording as at the very least a "necessary evil" of such a presentation are actually proportionate to the musical stretches that Olivier deliberately incorporated in the *Henry* recording made expressly for the phonographic medium. In Olivier's opinion, this music, then, needs no apology as music. Obviously too, he does not regard as an unfortunate distortion of the drama the last five minutes of *Richard,* from "My kingdom for a horse" to the end, although these minutes are totally without dialogue, and therefore devoted entirely to music in the recording. Not finding anything memorable in the final set speeches, Olivier simply wanted to end it this way, just as he ended *Hamlet* with an extended funeral march. But this is surely the first *Richard III* in which Shakespeare's contribution actually ends with the almost notorious line quoted above! (This fact emphasizes the irony that his kingdom for a horse is just the bargain he gets—the horse over which his corpse is trussed and lugged from the field.) Naturally, the visual aspect is part of this end concept; and, as elsewhere, the appreciation of the recording needs to be augmented by a knowledge of the silent action, the expressiveness of which goes hand in hand with that of the music.

With regard to the quality of this music, *chacun à son goût,* naturally. But when appropriateness is considered, there has been some misunderstanding in one important respect. Derek Prouse, for instance, has written in *Sight and Sound:*

> Sir William Walton has unhappily misunderstood the nature of the kingship his music is meant to illustrate, and it booms majestically and continually of dignity and glory—not, one feels, a conscious irony.[7]

How obtuse to suggest that Walton could mistake Shakespeare's villain-king for a shining hero, and that everyone else could sit by and let him do it! The misunderstanding is entirely Prouse's. What "booms majestically" is the main march subject in E flat

[7] "Film Reviews" (Winter 1955–56), 145.

major, which forms the main-title music of the film, and which with its subsidiaries dominates also the final act at Bosworth and environs. This is the motif of Henry of Richmond, who symbolizes in the play the hope of England, the will to survive and to be once more a part of the beneficent natural order destroyed by the deposition of Richard II one hundred years before. This is the kingship that it was Shakespeare's task as a loyal Tudor playwright to propagandize in his chronicle plays, and it is eloquently expressed by Walton's march subject. Because of this, it might be said that the main-title expresses the *raison-d'être* of the play as a whole, rather than the qualities of the title character, as might be expected. It expresses in musical terms what Henry does not say in words in the missing final couplet of the play:

> Now civil wounds are stopped, peace lives again:
> That she may long live here, God say amen!

The march itself has been widely praised for its shapeliness, even by such critics as Hans Keller[8] who dislikes the rest of the music. Its main section is an unusually long cantabile, 21 bars in length, formed from four "4-bar" periods, of which the final period is unexpectedly and movingly extended to a length of nine bars.[9] Its contour is Elgarian and Holstian, but actually superior to most of the similar subjects of these composers as well as to Walton's own marches for the coronations of George VI and Elizabeth II.

Three times, this march is heard in its entirety. At the main titles, it effectively counterpoints a written historical summary of medieval England. Any misapprehension that it is related to Richard himself is logically ruled out at the very last note of the music, where the whole E-flat-major complex is suddenly contradicted by a stinging minor-chord *tremolando* that accompanies the opening shot of the first scene—a close-up of the English

[8] "Film Music and Beyond," *The Music Review* (May, 1956), 156.

[9] This device has been used in such striking themes as the D-flat subject of Mahler's *First Symphony*.

crown hanging over Edward's coronation. Consequently, in one musical stroke of genius, the factional struggle for the crown, which Richard is shortly to take up with deadly malice, is immediately characterized as a virulent poison in the body politic, endangering the renewed hope of returning peace. The *tremolando* occurs again before Richard's coronation, but the march is not heard again as a whole[10] until the morning of Bosworth Field, where it accompanies Stanley's exultant ride to Richmond's camp. Stanley himself has been horribly compromised by his cowardly acquiescence in Richard's ruthless climb, and here the glorious feeling of beginning to cleanse himself of the evil into which he had drifted is expressed alike by the taking to horse with furled banner and by the freshness of the climate and of the music. The scene is the quintessence of Olivier's cinematic approach. At the very end, after Stanley retrieves the crown from behind a bush, the theme is heard once more, with augmented dynamics, while the *tremolando* becomes the antithesis of its former self, the stinging minor chord changed to a radiant major—England cleansed and purged of its poison.

A simple symbolic device, then, holds Olivier's production together as another does *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. This is the symbol of power, ambition, succession, the continuity of history—the crown of England itself. In *The Ring,* a musical motif in the major mode signifies power for good, beneficence, Valhalla, and Wotan; whereas, the same idea in the minor signifies power for evil, malevolence, Ring, and Alberich. Similarly, in *Richard III,* the same symbol connotes either good or evil depending on who wears it. At the very beginning of the film, we see the crown descending on the head of Edward; later, it descends on Richard's head; and, at the very end, it is held up before Richmond against a gleaming sky, while a similar transformation takes place in the musical leitmotiv.

[10] Its opening figure is suggested, along with those of other themes, in the antiphonal blowings of the rival night watches on the eve of the battle. This Mahlerian device was favored by Walton also in *Henry V,* in the eve of Agincourt scene.

This emphasis on the symbol is pointed up in Richard's first soliloquy,

> Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?
> Tut, were it farther off, I'd pluck it down.

and in the conversation between Hastings and Catesby, which of course Olivier gives in full:

Hastings: What news, what news in this our tottering state?
Catesby: It is a reeling world indeed, my lord,
And I believe 'twill never stand upright
Till Richard wear the garland of the realm.
Hastings: How! wear the garland! Dost thou mean the crown?
Catesby: Ay, my good lord.
Hastings: I'll have this crown of mine cut from my shoulders
Before I'll see the crown so foul misplaced.
But canst thou guess that he doth aim at it?
Catesby: Ay, on my life . . .

This then is the rationale, the unifying principle, of Olivier's *Richard,* as the Globe Playhouse is that of his *Henry V* and the "mole of nature" that of his *Hamlet;* and the music incisively reinforces this unity.

A few lesser leitmotiven make themselves felt as well. There are two chief feminine themes, which neatly contrast in their different types of softness not only with the masculine subjects, but with each other as well. The first is Lady Anne's motif, a plaintive oboe theme at one point reminiscent of the melancholy *Andante* of Tchaikovsky's *Fourth Symphony.* Distinct from this oboistic quality is the low seductive flute theme with pizzicato accompaniment that characterizes Jane Shore, highlighting the effectiveness of Olivier's device of bringing her visibly into the play and putting her silently in front of his camera. Thus "she hangs in the offing," as the critic of *Time Magazine* put it, "like a sensuous portrait by Rubens, and fills the court with just the kind of sexual music Shakespeare meant when he spoke of 'the lascivious pleasing of a lute.' "

King Edward is associated with the sound of a baroque organ, so that contrasting themes in this unusual timbre, following his coronation and on his deathbed, are easily linked into a moving commentary on his sudden decline. That Walton considers the timbre, rather than the themes, enough to identify him, is indicated by the fact that one of those used after his coronation is heard again in the orchestra at the transition from the coronation procession to Richard's soliloquy, and again at the point where Richard drags his wife from *his* coronation to the throne. In the second case, the transformation by tone color and accompaniment alone is remarkable. The onset of the theme in the organ is formal and a little quaint; the same thing in the woodwinds, with a soft *agitato* string accompaniment, is electrifying and dramatic.

Another simple alternation of major and minor is the little mock-regal theme of the formal greeting of the boy princes after their father's death—formal since the elder brother Edward is presumably king-elect—

Prince: Richard of York! How fares our loving brother?
York: Well, my dread lord; so must I call you now.
Prince: Ay, brother, to our grief, as it is yours.

turned to a piquant minor as "with heavy heart" they go hand in hand to the Tower. (Note the pathetic irony of the royal "our" for "my" in the above quotation, as well as of "dread lord.") The old Duchess of York's speech about the unending strife of the rival houses,

> Accursed and unquiet wrangling days,
> How many of you have mine eyes beheld!
> My husband lost his life to get the crown,
> And often up and down my sons were tossed,
> For me to joy or weep their gain and loss . . .
> Blood against blood, self against self . . .
> O let me die, to look on death no more!

is set to the same brooding, sinister music as the scene of Clarence's murder in the Tower, but without the grisly little shrieks

of the woodwind that warned of his approaching doom. Best of all is a saucy martial rhythm in the snare drum before the battle, satirical in effect as it is played behind Richard's reading of the note left in Norfolk's tent:

> Jockey of Norfolk, be not so bold,
> For Dickon thy master is bought and sold.

Obviously, the composer of *Belshazzar's Feast* and *Façade* has that blend of dry wit and emotional scope that succinctly characterizes Olivier's special genius.

Just as the omission of the scene of Buckingham's execution left the moral issue of his existence, which Shakespeare had so carefully prepared, unresolved, as described above, so the same omission fails to do justice to Walton's musical characterization. Here a restless theme, full of tension and conflict, associated with Buckingham's revolt against the excesses of his co-conspirator Richard, is slowed down to accompany a tolling bell as, in captivity, he awaits his death:

> Why, then All-Souls' day is my body's doomsday . . .
> Come, sirs, convey me to the block of shame:
> Wrong hath but wrong, and blame the due of blame.

Since it is within the province of music to augment quite unconsciously in the minds of the spectators the structural unity Shakespeare always strove for, Olivier is quite justified in giving it a leading part. But it should by now be evident that when the film, despite its comparative length, is so tightly knit that the excision of even a few minutes impairs that unity of structure quite drastically, a major abridgment can be expected to destroy it altogether. The rigid Procrustean outlook of the exhibitors is as harmful to such a work as would be that of the curator of an art museum who insisted on trimming the outsize great paintings to accommodate existing frames. Poor Richard indeed!

Alexander Korda

IAN DALRYMPLE

IAN DALRYMPLE entered the British film industry as a cutter in 1927. In the middle 1930's, he turned to writing, preparing the screenplays for *Pygmalian, Storm in a Teacup,* and other pictures. Joining Crown Films of the Ministry of Information during the war, he produced a number of long and short documentaries, including *Target for Tonight* and *Western Approaches.* Among his productions since the war have been *The Heart of the Matter* and *The Wooden Horse.* This article has been reprinted from a recent issue of *The Journal of the British Film Academy* by special arrangement with its editor, Roger Manvell.

THE HISTORY OF BRITISH film production is the somber tale of acute industrial crises flaring up from a chronic condition induced by a malignant virus: the whole being set within the cancer of a nation's economic dilemma. Into this melancholy scene, Alexander Korda shot up as if from a trap door in the stage and with a flash of red fire, and a chord in the orchestra. There is no doubt that time and again he appeared to some timorous or envious wiseacres in the role of Mephistopheles; but let it be said at once that with his innumerable friends, and the many actors, artists, writers, technicians, and craftsmen who ever worked for him, the impression will remain of a prince of Light.

Alex was aware of British cinematic history, and himself chose to live a good deal of it with us. But he ignored it, and went on making films. For twenty-five years, he dreamed up, created, promoted, financed, directed, produced, or otherwise fostered some hundred films—mostly of high standard, some of them of the highest, some of them commercial failures, one or two of them disastrous; yet the majority of them were successes, and at least eighteen of them top winners at the box office. He did this over a first period when the world was grinding to a stop; over a second in which it was blowing itself to pieces; over a third when Europe, at least, was in ruins; and over a fourth in the turmoil of a revolution in mass entertainment. And he did it in the teeth of City[1] skepticism, of exhibitors' apathy, of black-out, V-bombs, and a

[1] Financial interests.

war economy; of 400 per cent inflation, controls, permits, and postwar stringency and shortages; of foreign quotas and blocked currencies; of falling audiences and the change in taste of the postwar young; of a receivership clamped impetuously upon British Lion by the Board of Trade; of the deprival three times of studios he had taken to his heart; and, throughout, under the severe handicap of not controlling theaters.

We have many causes for gratitude to America; and I would put even higher on the list than her sale to us of forty-nine old destroyers, her free gift to us of the young Alex. His career in California came to an end when the front office conveyed to him their views on the progression of one of his films; and to the end of his life Alex was not always patient with the views of others on any subject, least of all the form and content of his productions. Finding himself unable one morning to enter the studio gates in Hollywood, he returned to Europe; and after an abortive trip to Berlin, where the rising Nazi Party filled him with foreboding for the future of Ufa, and of civilized life, he set himself down in Paris. Suddenly he got his break, with Paramount; and this turned out to be the start of his rise to fame. The screen was then laboriously learning to talk, and, while he was making *La Rive Gauche,* he visited a successful play called *Marius.* At a time when a stark study of marital impasse set in Wigan[2] might be bought for filming to emerge as a gay romance with music of young love on the Prater, Alex elected to present the play on the screen exactly as it was; and this bewildering eccentricity resulted in triumph.

It was in Paris that Vincent Korda joined what he calls the circus, having been summoned by his brother from his happy life of high painting and low subsistence in the south. Alex took him onto a set which purported to be Marseilles and said: "Vincent, you know Marseilles." "Yes, Alex," replied Vincent. "Tell me, Vincent: is this like Marseilles?" "Not at all, Alex," replied

[2] A mining and manufacturing town near Liverpool.

Vincent; and his career as a painter was over, at any rate for twenty-five years.[3] In Paris, too, Alex first met Dave Cunynghame. He met him each morning at the studio gate, where Dave was posted by Paramount to check on the newcomer's time-keeping. That the result must have been to their mutual satisfaction is likely; for thereafter, apart from a period during the war, Dave was at Alex' elbow to the end.

Alex made *Service for Ladies,* which turned out so creditably that it proved a sad setback for British film advancement at the time. A visiting executive from the mother-studio was so startled on learning its moderate cost that he shouted: "Say, it isn't your job over here to compete with us in Hollywood!" As to the film's merit, a probably apocryphal story tells of a debate between Zolly[4] and Alex some years later on the set at Denham. *Service for Ladies* had entered into the argument, which Zolly pooh-phooed as a "lousy film," Alex rather naturally maintaining its excellence. All work on the floor stopped while the brothers retired to the projection room and the film was dug out of the vaults and run for them; whereupon, at the end, Alex pronounced with his small-boy grin: "Zolly is right. It is lousy." Alex' finest characteristic, after his invincible courage and his lofty generosity, was his modesty over his own work.

He was even a better director than, in some respects, he was a producer. Vincent will have it that his brother's talent for film making was literary; and truly the subject matter as often as not came from that source. Further, he directed with writers on constant call: Lajos Biro, Arthur Wimperis, Clemence Dane, and, later, Sherriff. Thirdly, he had read almost every noted work of the imagination in five languages. Hungary is a country where the literature of the great nations is commonly taken in by youth; and later, even on the set, Alex was never without a book (and it wasn't the appropriate film script). On the other hand, he rarely

[3] Vincent Korda designed the settings for a great number of his brother's films, including notably *Things to Come* and *The Private Life of Henry VIII.*

[4] Korda's brother Zoltan, who directed many films.

achieved a final script before production; whether from incapacity to visualize from the typed page (in a foreign language, remember) or because of the compulsion in all his waking hours simultaneously to attend to so many aspects of so many projects. But, above that, I do not think that such an adroit director of players (and particularly of women), a man who perceived so clearly and infallibly the essential situation and points of a scene in a dramatic medium, and gave the scene such an effective and neatly wrought structure, can be said to have fundamentally only a literary talent. First, he could set up a camera, he could line up a long shot, and how impeccably he composed a close-up! Secondly, his treatment was neither descriptive nor static. He was never led down the dusty path of narrative as many of us are, nor was he enticed into glades of verbiage. In his view, a film consists of some dozen truly found and richly played sequences, neatly chained by the necessary links. *Drama* is doing; *cinema* is movement. So that, although his pretty, silent film, *The Private Life of Helen of Troy,* had many of its points made in a profusion of subtitles, Alex had learned his lesson; and when it came to talkies he rarely was discursive and was never weakened by a diarrhea of dialogue.

I resume my tale with a fanfare—the formation of London Films. The postwar technician has, happily, no experience of the "quota" film, and therefore I should explain that it was evolved to meet the provisions (and evade the principles) of the British Quota Act of 1928.[5] *Service for Ladies* had led to *Wedding Rehearsal;* but also it prompted Paramount to assign Alex a program of productions to satisfy the Act. Thus, it was the ironical fact that London Films was formed to make quota films. But Alex never took kindly to the cynical exercise of either art or craft and the sort of films to which the infant Big Ben[6] boomed forth its

[5] To secure the showing of American films in England, American companies had to finance a certain quota of British-made features in which 75 per cent of the labor costs were paid to Britons.

[6] The clock tower of the Parliament building was used at the beginning of the main title of each picture as the trade-mark of London Films.

first introductions bore small resemblance to the worthless pound-a-footers pumped out by upstart self-styled producers. The explanation is that it was at this time that Alex first dipped into his own pocket to maintain standards; and it may do no harm to improperly instructed politicians and officials to know that, the last time he measured up to the accumulated cost of the pursuit of quality, he made a personal contribution of half-a-million pounds.

The first of the alleged Quota Films, for example, was *Men of To-Morrow,* directed by Leontine Sagan, with Emlyn Williams and Merle Oberon in the leads. Now it was that Zoltan Korda joined the "circus," and from that time the story of an individual becomes the chronicle of three brothers. Zolly made *Cash*—a title of happy portent for his subsequent gifts to the box office—and presented Robert Donat, soon to bring British films to glory. Donat played in another of the series, *That Night in London,* directed by Rowland V. Lee. Leslie Banks and Carol Goodner played in *Strange Evidence,* and Alan Dwan contributed Owen Nares and Binnie Barnes in *Counsel's Opinion.* The preparation and supervision of these five films, however, was insufficient outlet for the Korda dynamism; and, leaving Cunynghame in charge, he himself crossed to Paris, where he produced and directed *The Girl from Maxim's* for Gaumont-British, with a cast headed by Leslie Henson, Frances Day, and George Grossmith, one of the founders of London Films.

Alex now lost his taste for quota films, and maybe for dipping in his pocket; yet perhaps he dipped once more, for somehow he contrived to set up and himself direct *The Private Life of Henry VIII.* Such was its originality at the time that the very unit which made it, on being invited to view the first cut, greeted the end in puzzled silence. Nor did Alex himself at first utter a word; but, after contemplation, with a few more pounds from somewhere and the ingenious make-do of Vincent, Alex added the execution scene. *The Private Life of Henry VIII* has ever

since been hailed as the key film in British film history, though *Rome Express,* Hitchcock's *Murder, Atlantic,* and Asquith's early work should not be forgotten. From the start, Alex never made "British" films; he made films in England for international exhibition among the best of American, French, and German product. Key film for Britain or not, *The Private Life of Henry VIII* opened the door to Alex' fortunes, and was soon followed by Czinner's *Catherine the Great;* the charm of Leslie Howard in *The Scarlet Pimpernel,* directed by Harold Young; and his own ill-starred production of *The Private Life of Don Juan,* with Douglas Fairbanks.

Fame hath her perils, no less than failure; and about this time there began to appear on Elstree sound stages a number of mysterious gentlemen in short black jackets and formal hats. Technicians assumed them to be bailiffs; but as so often about life, technicians were wrong.

The Prudential Assurance Company had so ably instilled into the little men and women of Britain the virtue and advantages of providence, that they were trapped in the toils of their own benevolence and burdened with the task of investing over a million pounds a week. Characteristically, their eyes turned overseas, but at this point we learn of an almost incredible intervention (and I write as a Tory). A Tory-dominated national government brought pressure to bear on the Prudential to make a substantial contribution toward the expansion of British film production. The eagles of the Pru soared over Elstree and noted that John Maxwell had resourcefully supplied his own financial needs: they hovered over Shepherd's Bush and concluded that the Ostrer Brothers had found the crock of gold. Then they sighted Alex, and swooped, and saddled him with Denham Studios. Not the three-stage unit of his dream, but with the mammoth plant whose modern destiny would be to serve as an American Army depot.

Lew Thornburn, today at Shepperton, and the fourth survivor of Alex' original band of trusties, tells of a sad moment on the

eve of Denham's opening. Alex, on a late tour of inspection with him one Saturday afternoon, having trudged the whole forbidding length of the notorious corridor, sank wearily down on some synthetic stonework, and looked drearily into the future. "I have made a terrible mistake," he said. The mistake was not the building of a studio at Denham as a home for London Films, of a size which he might himself keep occupied, and for which he might reasonably assume responsibility; but his folly was in allowing himself to accept the contractor's grandiose conception, with the enormous load it would lay on him, and the confusion of his own plans by the need to foster alien projects.

Denham was then on the drawing board, but Alex had no intention of abandoning production during the building. At Elstree, and later at Isleworth, in the grounds of Sound City, and at last on the Denham Lot, Zolly made *Sanders of the River* with Paul Robeson; Iothar Mendes, *The Man Who Could Work Miracles;* Anthony Asquith, *Moscow Nights,* with Harry Baur and a juvenile to be known one day as Sir Laurence Olivier. William Cameron Menzies and a brilliant miniature department eventually completed the stupendous and prophetic film *Things to Come,* with H. G. Wells in enthusiastic attendance; and finally René Clair brought Robert Donat nearer to the peak of his career in *The Ghost Goes West,* but not without dissension, and not without some remake. Alex, with his universality, may have found the film in its first form too regional in tone and class. But the fact is that from this time there were to be increasing signs of his inability to delegate or to accept the ideas of others or of the sort of producer he was becoming. Alex was a brilliant bringer-out of actors, but, with one or two exceptions, not of directors. It has to be said that he would employ men of artistry, imagination, and individual gifts, in the full appreciation of their worth, only to cloud their originality and break their morale. But it has also to be said that he was frequently justified in his interference by the result at the international box office.

Now Denham had been completed and equipped under the direction of Jack Oakey; and with Alex' volatility he had forgotten his forebodings, and no one was prouder or happier at its inauguration. And superbly indeed did he watch over its activities at the start from his office in the old house overlooking the gentle Colne. The estate had been known as The Fishery, and Alex resolved to fish. He set forth one Sunday with his personal driver but soon gave up casting, handed the rod to his companion, and himself went to sleep on the bank! Denham became overnight Britain's own Hollywood, and in that first period a brilliant procession of talent streamed down that corridor, and lunch in the restaurant presented an ever more intriguing assembly. Marlene Dietrich, Charles Laughton, Annabella, Aubrey Smith, Conrad Veidt, Robert Donat, Laurence Olivier, Miriam Hopkins, Merle Oberon, Morton Selton, Ralph Richardson, Sabu, Gigli, Jack Hulbert, Clive Brook, Roger Livesey, René Clair, Jacques Feyder, Georges Perinal, Harry Stradling, Otto Kanturek, Freddy Young—oh, the cream of Europe's cameramen and art directors—and in that galaxy even Vivien Leigh, Rex Harrison, and Ann Todd were only stars-to-be.

Even music (not one of Alex' interests) was liberated from serfdom, and under the direction of the infant Muir Mathieson the engagement of serious composers began with Arthur Bliss and William Walton. Eric Pommer made *Fire Over England,* with Flora Robson and the still-boyish Olivier; Zolly introduced Gigli to the cinema, and then Sabu in *Elephant Boy,* with the help of Robert Flaherty; Feyder made *Knight Without Armour.* And, insufficiently occupied with other people's scripts and budgets and production heartaches, Alex himself made perhaps the best film of his life, *Rembrandt;* which to their eternal discredit, captured neither the mass nor the intelligentsia. Then there were the tenant producers to cope with, and the partially sponsored units such as Victor Saville's. He alone made *Dark Journey,* which placed Vivien Leigh on the ladder; *Storm in a Teacup* to launch

Rex Harrison; *South Riding* for Ralph Richardson, Edna Best, Ann Todd, and John Clements; and *Action for Slander,* directed by Tim Whelan.

Nor were the studios the limit of Alex' activities. With the help of Continental friends and London bankers, he built and equipped Denham Laboratories; and now, too, he was called in to investigate color systems, and at last selected Technicolor. It is not generally known, perhaps, that Alex was at one stage intimately involved in British Technicolor, and was largely responsible for the establishment and rapid development of the Harmondsworth plant. From his early days, Alex gave constant thought to the technical side of film making; and it was typical that, in the present transitional stage, his last program should consist of one film in wide-screen Eastman Color, one in CinemaScope, one in CinemaScope with conversions from standard 35-mm. negative, and one in VistaVision. Yet another development was his inclusion and shareholding in United Artists: part of a double coup, of which the second part was the securing of their important product to Oscar Deutsch and his growing but film-starved Odeon Circuit.

There was a successful end, too, to yet another sort of negotiations. In 1936, Alex became a British national, and was able to say with that mischievous smile to one of his Continental associates: "Now I can call you a blotty foreigner."

Meanwhile, the strain of keeping Denham in full occupation was beginning to be felt. Not only was a great deal of money tied up in films made there, but finance was reverting to suspicion of the British industry in general. As usual the producers were to blame, and there were to be drastic cuts in the scale of films, even at Denham. W. K. Howard made *The Squeaker;* Milton Rosmer, *The Challenge;* Basil Dean, *21 Days;* Thornton Freeland, *Paradise for Two,* with Jack Hulbert; and Brian Desmond-Hurst *Prison Without Bars,* and *The Night of the Fire* for Richard Norton and Josef Somlo. But Alex himself would have none of

this compromising: only the big-scale productions stood a chance, and he had the answer to the growing apathy of the audiences. Technicolor was ready.

Fox had already made a success with *Wings of the Morning,* and Alex decided that what was sauce for the goose of spectacle was sauce for the gander of domestic comedy. *The Divorce of Lady X,* however, though possibly a *succès d'estime,* was no cure for box-office anemia; and he, too, now put his faith in the goose, and in the one man who combined with him so well, his brother Zoltan. His last big films at Denham were all in Technicolor and all directed by Zolly: *The Four Feathers, The Drum,* and *The Thief of Bagdad.* But before we say goodbye to the Alex of the thirties, we should mention his history of aviation, *The Conquest of the Air;* the delightful nature study, *The Private Life of the Gannets,* made with Julian Huxley; and the charmingly novel cartoon film, *The Fox Hunt.*

Already toward the end of 1938, the split had come with Prudential, who were regretting their acquiescence in endowing British films and the choice of poor Alex as beneficiary. Alexander Korda Film Productions had to be formed, and it was now that Harold Boxall came into Alex' life, first as representative of debenture holders, but soon to assume the financial wardship of Alex' affairs for eighteen intricate years. How well he watched and warded will transpire, but first came a shattering blow.

If this were a film a balloon would now go up; the standard Air Ministry allowance of three aircraft would pass overhead; the standard War Office allowance of three Brengun carriers would trundle by; three guns would fire and dummy bombs would drop; and a platoon of admittedly genuine soldiers (their pay as extras intercepted by the Treasury) would totter good-naturedly forward into a cloud of spurious smoke. In short, it was war, and it caught Alex with two finished and one incomplete productions on the grand scale; while the closing of the cinemas brought the release of *The Four Feathers* to a stop at its start. Cashwise, Alex was broke.

Broke or not, he was already involved in a first war service to the country. About the last of August, I was summoned to the Colne-side office, and found there Alex, Biro, Wimperis, Valentine Williams, Bob Sherriff, Adrian Brunel, and Miles Malleson. The door opened, and Squadron-Leader H. M. S. Wright entered, and to his astonishment we all stood to our feet as one man. Spontaneously we had expressed our common feeling, our reliance on the Royal Air Force to save the country; and it was to spread that confidence among the public that we made *The Lion Has Wings,* with Michael Powell and Desmond-Hurst directing the reconstructions, and with documentary sequences made by the then G. P. O. Film Unit. It was a full-length film, and all the while we were making it we were expecting the *Luftwaffe* to spoil our story. It was on the screens by the beginning of November; it was passed to the exhibitors on minimum terms, and Alex finished paying for it by mortgaging his life insurance, and then went to the United States.

He went, first, because he had no money to work here; secondly, to finish *The Thief of Bagdad;* thirdly, to sell his store of films and earn dollars; and, fourthly, because he was already planning quite another sort of propaganda film, which turned out very well indeed for our cause in the States and our morale at home, the famous *Lady Hamilton.* But Alex wouldn't stop in America; he was back in a month or so, and thereafter for three years paid regular visits in calm or blitz. More than once, he flew over in an ordinary bomber on delivery to the Royal Air Force. Once his oxygen tube became disconnected in his sleep, and he owed his life to the keen eye of Captain Hussey, R.N., who, on retirement after the war, became his personal aide until his death. But, by 1943, having won over a million dollars for the Treasury and having made *Lydia,* he could no longer endure his remoteness from the war, and he returned to England, for good. As the government turned a deaf ear to his request to be dropped by parachute in the Balkans, he found another outlet for his energies.

Alex set up MGM-London, put the top writers of the day under contract to prepare a colossal program, and started to recover, improve and equip the new studios at Elstree which were then being used as a depository. But despite his long and patient negotiations with all manner of authorities, in the course of which he won all that was needed to make the studios the best in England, he was never himself to enjoy their use, for in 1946 he split with MGM; and all he had to show for three years' work was *Perfect Strangers,* of which he himself took over direction, and which he made to an obligato of V-1's, over Denham by day and circling his top-floor flat at Claridge's by night.

But Alex was no longer broke. Throughout the war, along with more immediate concerns, Harold Boxall had worked hard; and by 1946 he had paid off Prudential for Alex' old films, he had realized Alex' holding in Denham Laboratories and United Artists, and he was able to inform Alex that there were £600,000 in the bank. Moreover, his recaptured films had a prodigious reissue and foreign exploitation value. So Alex secured Shepperton and made *Anna Karenina,* with Vivien Leigh, directed by Duvivier, and *An Ideal Husband* himself; and there developed the association with British Lion, and the National Film Finance Corporation came into existence. The first thing to be said here is that Alex' position was only that of adviser on production, and that henceforth he surrendered his artistic career to the service and fostering of others. We whom he served had the credit and reward of successes: he took the kicks for the failures. The second thing is that the films made under the scheme won far, far more in entertainment tax than they lost in N. F. F. C. finance, and earned a huge sum in foreign currencies, including dollars. And the third thing is that, as I have said, Alex forfeited £500,000 of his own.

The list of films is not contemptible. Carol Reed's *The Fallen Idol, The Third Man, The Outcast of the Islands, The Man Between;* David Lean's *The Sound Barrier* and *Hobson's Choice;*

Asquith's *The Winslow Boy;* Powell and Pressburger's *The Small Back Room, Gone to Earth, The Tales of Hoffman;* Gilliat's *State Secret* and *Gilbert and Sullivan;* Launder's *Belles of St. Trinians;* Kimmins' *My Own Executioner, Who Goes There?* and *The Captain's Paradise;* the Boultings' *Seven Days to Noon;* Foxwell's *The Intruder.* And how well Sir Arthur Jarratt sold the films I know from my own *The Wooden Horse,* directed by Jack Lee, starring Leo Genn and introducing Anthony Steele. (If I have not mentioned Herbert Wilcox, it is because no one ever held *his* hand, or had to.) And when times grew difficult, it was Alex who put in four small-budget, short-schedule films, and himself directed *Home At Seven* in ten days, to show the way. Nor did Alex confine himself to fighting our battles at home. He set up agencies in the Commonwealth, in New York, and throughout the eastern hemisphere, and achieved, in total, a huge foreign revenue for these films (though not all were suitable).

Nevertheless, the Board of Trade decided to put an end to British Lion's production activities. Brokenhearted as Alex was, he was at his bravest and best as ever in times of emergency. Immediately he sat down, planned the program, which was to be his last, estimated pretty well exactly what each film would cost, and somehow produced the finances. That program was *A Kid for Two Farthings, Summer Madness, The Deep Blue Sea, Storm over the Nile* . . . and *Richard III.* The effort and anxieties no doubt hastened his end; but he went down, irrepressible and undefeated, and planning yet another program.

Alex had his limitations as a chief: he was a man you worked for rather than with. But his thoughtfulness and kindness were nevertheless unique, and he had a remarkable memory for the smallest detail. During the war, on one of his visits he asked if there was anything I needed. As it happened, I badly needed a pair of nail-scissors and couldn't buy them; and, sure enough, on his next visit he brought me two pairs, one straight, one curved (and cartridges of lipstick for my wife). Despite his ability to talk

with all and sundry, he could not assess public opinion in Britain after the war—he was amazed by the Socialist victory in 1945, and I don't think he realized until the end the current limitations to public taste in the cinema. And yet, who else would have so promptly supported Sir Laurence Olivier over *Richard III* and be so richly justified by the result?

It was sad that he, who had been one of the Founder Members of the British Film Producers' Association, should have felt the need to resign from it on an issue of principle. But to set against that, he, more than anyone, was responsible for the establishment of the British Film Academy, and his name will remain with us always as that of the most distinguished of our Fellows.

Some Biographical Notes on Korda

1893–1913: Born on September 16, 1893, at Pusztaturpaszto, near Turkeve in Hungary. Korda was the eldest of three brothers, and his father, a land agent, died in 1906 when his eldest son was 13. To help his family, Korda undertook various jobs, and his ambition was to become a journalist. Eventually, at the age of 17, he went to Paris where he did occasional writing for the Hungarian journal *Fuggetlen Magyarorszag.* He spent rather over a year in Paris, and returned to Hungary with a knowledge of French. Because of this he got work subtitling films, and from this work graduated into actual directing. He directed his first film in Budapest in 1914.

1914–16: During this period, he made films of increasing importance. In 1915, he produced several films in Kolozsvar (Transylvania) and in Budapest.

1917: This year he planned and built the new Hunnia studios in Budapest. The studio was of glass then, and still exists today. He was by now making comedies and historical films.

1918–26: After the War, Korda moved to Vienna, where he became a director of the well-known company Sascha Films. Of his first picture for Sascha, *The Prince and the Pauper,* the *Times* writes (in their obituary) that it created "a new standard in production and was a conspicuous success." They go on to say that he was "a bold experimenter, with a highly developed artistic sense . . .

he paid particular attention to the improvement of technique, and his patient study of the mechanical processes involved brought its reward." He also worked in Berlin, where he made several large-scale films including:

A Modern Dubarry (1921)
Samson and Delilah (1922)
Mayerling (1923)
Der Unbekanute Morgen (1923)

1926–30: In Hollywood, Korda made several films including:

The Stolen Bride (1927)
The Private Life of Helen of Troy (1927)
Her Private Life (1927)
The Squall (1929)
Lilies of the Field (1930)
Women of the Field (1930)
The Princess and the Plumber (1930)
Dance Fever (1930)
A Modern Dubarry (1930)
The Golden Calf (1930)
Dollar Princess (1930)

1931–36: Returned to France, he directed for Paramount:

Rive Gauche (1931)
Marius (1931)

Korda came to London for Paramount, and there directed:

Service for Ladies (1931) with Leslie Howard
Wedding Rehearsal (1932)

George Grossmith introduced Korda to Lord Lurgan and Captain Dixie. Together they founded London Film Productions Ltd. in 1931.

The old British and Dominion studios were used at Elstree where on a single stage Korda made *The Private Life of Henry VIII, Don Juan, Scarlet Pimpernel,* and the studio scenes for *Sanders of the River.*

Worton Hall studios in Isleworth were used for *Things to Come, The Ghost Goes West,* and *The Man Who Could Work Miracles.* Parallel to this, Denham Studios were being planned, backed by a £500,000 debenture from the Prudential Assurance Co. Ltd. The studios were built in nine months, and production began there in 1936.

Other important dates in Korda's life are:

1935: Became associated with United Artists and was elected to the Board.

1943: Amalgamated his old company, London Films, with the MGM British Studios and became Chairman, Managing Director, and Production Supervisor of the new undertaking.

1945–46: Severed his connection with MGM and became once more head of London Film Productions.

1947: Was one of the Founder Members of the British Film Academy, which he was largely instrumental in initiating.

1951: Elected a Fellow of the British Film Academy.

Sir Alexander Korda died on the twenty-third of January, 1956.

Goodbye Mr. Chips

GERALD WEALES

GERALD WEALES will be remembered by *Quarterly* readers for his several "Films from Abroad" reviews. Having formerly taught at Georgia Tech, Newark College of Engineering, and Wayne State, he is currently completing his Ph.D. Mr. Weales's publications include articles in *Commentary, Commonweal, New Republic,* and *The Reporter.* His children's book, *Miss Grimsbee Is a Witch,* has just been published.

SINCE I GREW UP in this most mechanical of all countries, where all those people who laughed at Robert Fulton have been dangled before me as terrible object lessons, I hesitate to pass a judgment on the current experiments in the syndication of teachers, the use of film and television as a substitute for the instructor in the classroom. However, I still perform before a live student audience with a certain amount of pleasure and, I hope, with some degree of effectiveness, so my suspicion of the syndicated teacher is a natural one.

The syndicated teacher is actually only the plain, garden-variety teacher, the best of the crop if possible, doing his regular education bit, his lecture or demonstration, on film or before the television camera. The idea is that through these new media, the best teachers can reach the greatest number of students, that in one technological swoop the teacher shortage can be solved and the quality of teaching improved. The idea is still no more than a hope. Even the strongest proponents of syndication are redolent with reservations. Experiments in the use of closed-circuit television, such as those at Pennsylvania State University and New York University, have produced only tentative results, have emphasized the limitations of the medium as strongly as they have indicated its possibilities.

Although the idea of mechanical substitution for the teacher implies something quite new in American education, syndication is actually a bloodless brother to the great number of experiments that are going on across the country in the use of teachers' aids.

The opponents and supporters of syndication are forming on familiar lines, on those already laid down in the old fight about the use of audio-visual materials in teaching. It is the familiar quarrel between matter and method, the running warfare that has given to 120th Street—the street that separates Columbia Teachers College from the rest of the University—the title "the widest street in the world." The audio-visualizers, usually educationists, label their opponents as reactionaries and fuddy-duddies, lovers of scholarship at the expense of human beings; while the opposition, firing from the stronghold of the humanities, attacks the audio-visual admirers as worshippers of gimmicks and gimcracks who sacrifice human beings to techniques.

Since audio-visual aids can be as basic as the music teacher's pitch pipe or Bishop Sheen's blackboard, not even the stanchest supporter of the written and spoken word can condemn them wholesale. Yet, as they multiply and become more complicated, the teacher is in danger of drowning in the flood of films and filmstrips, records and tape recorders, opaque projectors and tachistoscopes that have been devised to make the work of teaching simpler and more direct. Obviously most of these materials and machines are genuinely useful in a limited way. The tape recorder, for instance, can be valuable in a speech class where it can play back to a speaker his own voice with his own problem. Nevertheless, I have taped a round-table discussion in a college weak on facilities and got a reproduction of the articulate and clear voice of the moderator, the whispered contributions of the panel members, the shuffling of the class and background music from a choir practicing in a high school that happened to be next door. The opaque projector, too, has its uses; it is a device that throws onto the screen a reproduction of any written, printed, or picture material fed into it. Charles Shapiro, an instructor in English at Wayne University in Detroit, a man not ordinarily charmed by mechanical devices, is willing to sign a testimonial to the value of the projector in the teaching of freshman compo-

sition, where it can be used to show a student theme on the screen as a basis for discussion. I have used projectors, however, in a college without a prepared projection room and have spent so much time readying the machine, centering the material, and placing the students that the discussion hour ended before it was properly begun.

My inept adventures at the edge of the world of audio-visual wonders will certainly give comfort to those adherents of the techniques who believe that the widespread use of teaching aids has been ineffective largely because the teacher has neither the facilities nor the training to make use of what is available to him. The comfort, however, must be a cold one. Although the users and the abusers of this mechanical abundance share the complaints that the machines take too much time and demand special conditions and that the material at hand is often irrelevant to a class's immediate concern, the genuine quarrel with the special techniques is much more basic. Like many other teachers, I distrust audio-visual devices simply because I suspect that they come between me and the students, that the attention on both sides of the classroom has to be siphoned through a mechanism, and that in the siphoning a genuine relationship is lost. The loss of this relationship is the chief complaint against syndication, too, because there the connection between student and teacher is not simply interrupted; it is broken. The teacher is on display as though he were performing behind a one-way glass, like the one that tourists used to look through to watch the Dionne quintuplets play; and neither he nor his viewers can reach through to make any kind of contact.

At this point, those practical men who advocate syndication begin to get restive. Like the Preacher in *Ecclesiastes* they begin to mutter, "Vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity," for they believe that the much touted rapport between student and teacher seldom exists. In a sense, they are right. I have never known a teacher who could not be induced by one bright, lively class into believing

that he had the indefinable quality that every teacher has been looking for since Socrates first inspired such devotion among his followers; but I have also never known a teacher who did not suspect that all of his colleagues operated without the magic touch. The kind of contact that syndication breaks is a much more matter-of-fact one. It is the classroom connection that lets a teacher know by the look on the faces of the students that he will have to back-track and explain something once again; it is the physical presence of the instructor to whom a student can direct a question or a comment at the moment when it is most valid to him and perhaps to the rest of the class.

When I visited a class involved in the New York University experiment in teaching freshman composition by television, I talked to a student whose only complaint against the procedure was that she could not ask questions. At NYU, each class meets three times a week. Two of these meetings are in a receiving room with a television set at each end where the students hear and watch a lecturer in action. The lectures are given by the leading professors in the English Department, each taking his turn with the particular subject in which he is most competent. The third meeting is a tutorial one where the students face an instructor in the flesh. Since this hour must be used for the writing of class themes, the assignment of outside preparations, the discussion of corrected papers and occasional quizzes on the course readings, there is little time for a general discussion of the lectures. As the young lady said, "The only thing that bothers me really is that I can't ask questions. Sure, there's Friday, but we never have time then to get all the questions answered." Her statement implies that she, at least, saves her questions for the tutorial hour in the hope that they will be answered, but it is probable that a good many students who have questions on Monday and Wednesday while the lectures are in progress have decided by Friday that they are of no consequence.

The behavior of the class the day that I was there indicates that

something more may be lost than simply the chance to ask questions. The students gave the receivers a respectful attention, probably because there was a faculty member present, but they allowed themselves a little more freedom than they might have taken in direct lecture. One boy yawned broadly in the imaged face of the instructor and several students tittered derisively at a reference to the professor's cocker spaniel, a remark that was not supposed to be funny. When the lecturer made what he intended as a joke, one girl whirled around to look into the supervisor's face before she smiled; academic jokes are apparently not to be laughed at, but to be shared. Of course, yawns and restlessness, even sleep and newspaper reading, are occupational hazards of the live lecture, too. Still, when the students in a classroom begin to retreat into some private reverie, the teacher at least has a chance of calling them back by shifting his approach or shuffling his material; the syndicated teacher doesn't even know that they are gone.

Before the program at NYU was begun, Dean Thomas Clark Pollock was quoted in a publicity release as hoping that the experiment might bring "the best teachers closer to the students than they are in a lecture hall." Although the students may be closer to a teacher's image than they ordinarily would be, the closeness is spatial not psychological. Since the NYU telecasts originate in a studio, a remoteness grows out of the artificiality of the teacher's surroundings. He may be as studiously casual as a celebrity in a whisky ad, but there is a bogus quality to his person-to-person manner that should be apparent to anyone who has seen Dr. Frank Baxter or Dr. Frances Horwitch on commercial television.

The experiments at Penn State, where beginning courses in chemistry and psychology were taught by television, hoped to avoid artificiality by placing cameras in a lecture hall where the instructor was speaking directly to students, by televising him in genuine classroom surroundings. Yet, the published report of the

experiment indicates that both the teachers and the students in the receiving rooms experienced the same lack of contact. Even the students who were in the presence of the instructor were apparently inhibited by the televising process, for the teachers reported that they were unusually shy about asking questions.

The point of the experiments in syndication, however, is not to see how closely the new media can be made to approach the average classroom. The Fund for the Advancement of Education has financed the experiments at NYU and Penn State, and the Office of Naval Research has undertaken experiments with film to see to what extent the new media can replace the conventional teacher. Dr. Clifford P. Seitz, head of the Human Engineering Division of the Special Devices Center of the Office of Naval Research at Port Washington, New York, and his colleague Dr. Loran C. Twyford, acting head of the Communication Psychology Division, both strong advocates of syndication, are somewhat sanguine. They do not believe that syndication is a panacea, but they do think that it can one day relieve teachers of much work in the preparation and repetition of lectures, freeing them apparently for research or counseling.

Their particular baby, the experiment that they like to use as an example, is a study that SDC made for the Army on the training of soldiers in the use of the M-1 rifle. Although the study involved a complete analysis of the soldier in relation to his rifle, the important part of the program, so far as syndication is concerned, was the use of films to replace the preliminary rifle instruction ordinarily given the soldier before he goes to the range to fire. By means of six short films, which were made available to the soldier in tents on the range where he could show them to himself as he needed them, the preliminary instruction was reduced from twenty-eight to four hours. They are understandably proud of the twenty-four hours that they saved the Army, but the significance of the experiment beyond its immediate situation is at best doubtful. There are no statistics on the use of the new

method by the Army or no indication of how widely it has been adopted; Dr. Alexander Goldman of SDC said that he thinks the study has had a great effect on the Army "impactwise," but he was admittedly speaking from intuition. More important, though, is the simple fact that the firing of a rifle is a rather specialized motor skill that has only a slight relationship to education in general.

Most of the syndication experiments have been concerned with finding out how well facts can be taught through the use of film and television. Penn State's report on its use of television indicates that, although the students in the receiving rooms got slightly lower marks on factual tests than those in control rooms under normal conditions, the difference was too small to attract a statistician's attention. There are no published results on the NYU experiment as this essay is being prepared. Another experiment at Penn State, one that the Instructional Film Research Program ran in cooperation with the SDC Human Engineering Division, showed that ninth-graders could learn almost as much general science from films alone as they could from a teacher and a textbook.

The emphasis on the learning of facts, however, like the pride in the teaching of skills, is at best an oblique approach to the problem of education. Dr. Goldman at SDC said that the first question that had to be asked in the M-1 training study was "What are you teaching him to do?" The question has a significance far beyond the SDC's concern with the rifle. Perhaps television and films can indeed someday teach information and skills as well as live contact between student and teacher, but education is more than the accumulation of facts and the mastering of skills. It is a state of mind that is compounded as much of questioning and doubt as it is of answering and certainty. It is necessary at one stage in the education process to learn to read "Nan runs fast. Sammy runs fast, too," but at some point the question, what makes Sammy run, must finally stick in the student's mind. Per-

haps, the advocates of syndication are correct when they accuse the vested interests of traditional education of talking on a level much higher and more rarified than the one on which they operate. Yet, the embracing of techniques that seem to underline the factual at the expense of the intellectual seems no solution at all.

As the experiments with television and film continue, and the growing student population indicates that they will of necessity continue, it might be well for teachers and administrators to remind themselves now and again of one of the epigrams of Heraclitus, a man who managed a deal of communication with a minimum of audio-visual techniques: "Eyes and ears are bad witnesses to men if they have souls that understand not their language."

A Bibliography for the Quarter

Book Editor, FRANKLIN FEARING

BROADCASTING has many faces. It is a technology, an industry engaged in selling a product, an instrument of social control, and it may even be an art. But, in the vast literature on the subject, there have been remarkably few attempts to see it as a whole. To do this, it is necessary first, to have a working knowledge of a large number of diverse and highly specialized fields and secondly, to fuse this knowledge in such a manner as to bring out broadcasting's most important characteristic—its uniqueness as a means of human communication. This uniqueness, as Sydney W. Head makes clear in *Broadcasting in America* (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1956, $6.00), results from the fact that through radio and TV it is possible simultaneously to deliver identical messages to an indefinitely large audience. The social, psychological, and political consequences of this are almost unimaginable. In order to understand this new kind of communication and to assess its meaning for society, it is necessary to synthesize information from such diverse specialties as electronics and radio law, the economics of advertising, and the techniques of opinion measurement.

Mr. Head's knowledge of these specialties is impressive. Beginning with four chapters on the physical bases of radio and TV transmission, he moves easily in Part Two through an account of the growth of broadcasting from the early types of wire and wireless communication in the 19th century to the emergence of TV in the middle of the 20th century. Part Three contains a detailed analysis of the economics of the broadcasting industry including a study of the role of advertising and the rate structure. Finally, in Parts Four and Five—roughly a third of the book—the thorny problems of social control and effects—good and bad—are discussed.

The author's commitment to the American system of control is wholehearted, although he is careful to point out that a blanket endorsement of the *status quo* is not implied. However, in a book essentially concerned with the social assessment of a potent means of human communication, the somewhat dogmatic assertion in the Preface that the American system is sound and "suited to our social, political, and economic philosophy" is not necessarily self-evident. Comparison with other systems of control would have been useful.

It seems to this reviewer that Mr. Head is somewhat cavalier in his treatment of the creative resources of the mass media. These media, he believes, offer little scope for the innovator. He seems to be saying that there is something intrinsic to mass communication which limits, if it does not actually prevent, creative innovation. This is a questionable assumption. For reasons, which Mr. Head does not discuss, but which may be inherent in the American system of control, limitations *are* all too frequently placed on the freedom of the creative artist. However, even under these inhospitable conditions, there is some evidence of true creative activity. There are even attempts to work out a systematic aesthetic concerned with the examination of the unique creative resources of these media. There are, for example, the discussions of the highly successful TV writer Paddy Chayefsky of the unique communicative resources of that medium for the creative writer, and the many articles and books on the aesthetics of the film. And after all, even the most captious critic must recognize that there occasionally appears something on the TV and motion-picture screens that is aesthetically significant, that is "successful," and that reflects an understanding of the peculiar resources of the media. The restricting limitations do not exclusively derive, as Mr. Head seems to assume, from something peculiar to these media, from the fact, for example, that they are collectively rather than individually created, but from other factors.

These are minor reservations. In *Broadcasting in America,* Mr.

Head has done a competent, even brilliant, job in collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting an enormously diverse and complicated body of facts. The appendixes contain an interesting item-by-item comparison of the TV, radio and motion-picture production codes, and the bibliographical notes for each chapter.

* * *

It is not clear to this reviewer in just what sort of college course *Communication: Handling Ideas Effectively* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1956, $4.50) could be used as a text. The authors—Roy Evan Johnson, Marie Schalekamp, and Lloyd H. Garrison—apparently envisage a new type of course concerned with basic communicative skills. They have prepared a book which covers such diverse topics as getting the most out of college, how to improve reading ability, critical listening, language, effective writing, verbal expression, the art of discussion, pronunciation, diction and grammar, spelling and punctuation, and even letter forms. Certainly these topics are all concerned with communication, and the idea of bringing them together in a text for purposes of instruction is admirable. What will happen when such an idea meets the occupational conservatism of college professors with vested interests in maintaining traditional departmental lines is not too hard to imagine. According to the dust jacket blurb, the book is intended for freshman courses. This intent seems to be reflected in the simple style and the elementary approach. Whether these are appropriate for some of the topics is questionable. In the case of such complex subjects as "The Nature and Function of Language" (in *one* chapter) and "What Your Mind Does with Ideas," the result is an artificial and naïve simplification.

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Although most of us probably take for granted the use in political campaigns of the mass media, especially radio and TV, we may be quite ignorant of the ways in which these media are manipulated for political purposes. As we watch (with whatever enthu-

siasm or fortitude we can muster) the TV screen or listen to the radio, we are, of course, expected to believe that the speeches, announcements, and "events" are the spontaneous and unrehearsed expressions of the candidates and their supporters. It may be disillusioning to discover that much if not all of this is in reality the result of the skills of a new kind of politican who has become the unseen but indispensable operator in political campaigns. How he operates and what his services cost are the subjects of a careful and extraordinarily interesting analysis by Stanley Kelley, Jr. in *Professional Public Relations and Political Power* (The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, Md., 1956, $4.50).

The public-relations expert is a specialist in creating and directing a favorable public opinion for an employer. Until recently, his professional services have been utilized primarily by business. His appearance on the political scene especially at the national level is new. Mr. Kelley's purpose is to show how this expert operates in politics and to assess the consequences for democratic government.

It is in his special knowledge of the resources of the mass media of communication that the public-relations professional makes his most important contribution to political campaigning. From Mr. Kelley's study, it is clear that no candidate, at least at the national level, now ventures to go before the TV cameras except as every detail of his appearance is planned and directed down to the minutest detail by this specialist. At least one politican (not a public relations expert) is quoted as saying, "if present tendencies continue, our Federal elections will increasingly become contests not between candidates but between great advertising firms."

To document his study, Mr. Kelley devotes the major portion of his book to an analysis of four case histories in which the actual operations of this new kind of politican are presented in detail. The first of these is concerned with the activities of a California firm *Campaign Inc.,* which has been employed by various candi-

dates, parties, and pressure groups. The second is an examination of the three-and-a-half year campaign of the American Medical Association against President Truman's proposals for national health insurance. The third is a study of the 1952 senatorial campaign in Maryland that resulted in the defeat of Senator Tydings by the politically unknown John M. Butler. The fourth is concerned with the public-relations activities in the 1952 presidential campaign. In all of these cases, the professional public-relations specialist played a substantial if not a major role in the battle for men's minds— and votes.

Mr. Kelley presents a fascinating picture. Not the least interesting aspect is the attitudes of these professionals toward their profession, and its ethical problems. The selling of a political product with the same basic techniques used to sell soap seems to result in what the clinician would probably call "intrapsychic tensions," at least in some cases. According to the author, these manifest themselves in various ways. There are those who reject political clients for universities or charitable institutions that are regarded as "cleaner." At the opposite extreme are those who take an amoral or frankly cynical view of their jobs, and especially of some of the candidates they serve. Mr. Kelley closes his book with a discussion of this problem and a quotation from a particularly frank anonymous professional: "Fifty per cent of what we say in a campaign is baloney."

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The A-V Bibliography (Wm. C. Brown Company, Dubuque, Iowa, 1955, $3.75) by F. Dean McClusky is a second edition, the first having been published in 1950. Some 2,000 items have been added and classified under eight headings. Each item is briefly characterized. This is probably the most comprehensive bibliography in this field and should be useful to teachers and others specializing in this area.

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James S. Kinder and F. Dean McClusky are the editors of the *Audio-Visual Reader* (Wm. C. Brown Company, Dubuque, Iowa, 1954, $3.75). It contains some 200 articles written by over 100 authors. The material is classified under the same headings used in the *A-V Bibliography* mentioned above. James Kinder is Coordinator, Audio-visual Services at the San Diego State College, and F. Dean McClusky is Professor of Education on the Los Angeles campus of the University of California.

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Audio-Visual Procedures in Teaching (Ronald Press, New York, 1956, $6.00) is a comprehensive, well-written textbook designed for students in professional education courses and teachers in service. It is divided into twenty-nine chapters covering the major types of audio-visual procedures and equipment. The author is Professor of Education in the Santa Barbara College of the University of California.

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The Manual of Audio-Visual Techniques (Prentice-Hall, New York, 1955, $3.60) is paper-bound, and is intended for use in workshops, short courses, and seminars. It is divided into eight units, each of which contain problems and projects illustrating the use of particular techniques. The authors are Robert De Kieffer, Director of the Bureau of Audio-Visual Instruction and Associate Professor of Education at the University of Colorado, and Lee W. Cochran, Director of the Bureau of Audio-Visual Instruction, State University of Iowa.

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The *1956 Film Library,* issued by New York University, 26 Washington Place, New York 3, is a catalogue of the 16-mm. films available for rental from that university. The films are listed alphabetically by title. Each film is fully described including information regarding length, whether sound or silent, rental price, and source. There is a classified index that gives the films under

such headings as The American Scene, Anthropology, Child Development, Health Education, Labor Management, and Science and Nature Study. The policy of the Library according to the introductory statement is as follows: The Film Library performs two general services; namely, to circulate films for rental within the University and within the borders of the continental United States, and to make available for sale on an international basis a number of films for which the Film Library acts as sole distributor. The Film Library continues to function as a specialized library, with special interests, within the framework of education. It has traditionally held the view that two important functions of the motion picture lie in its capacity to focus on the nature of the process of human conflict and to describe the world we live in.

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Sport and Dance Films (Educational Film Library, Inc., 345 East 46 St., New York City 17, 1956, $1.25) is a descriptive catalogue of selected 16-mm. films on sports, dance, and recreation. The compiler was Effietee Martin Payne, Associate Professor of Health and Physical Education, Morgan State College, Baltimore, Md. Each film is fully described including information as to source, rental price, or cost. In addition, the films were appraised by a panel of specialists in physical education. These appraisals were expressed in the form of ratings of film content, instructional qualities, and technical qualities. These ratings are included with the description of each film.