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Through the death of Irving Pichel the *Quarterly* loses an able editor and an acute writer, the University an inspiring teacher, the motion picture a wise and sensitive director, and so many of us a rare friend.

THE EDITORS

The Coming of Camera and Projector—PART I

KENNETH MACGOWAN

KENNETH MACGOWAN, a former producer of plays and films, is a member of the staff of the Department of Theater Arts at the University of California, Los Angeles, and an editor of the *Quarterly*. This article is part of a book, *The Film of Yesterday and Tomorrow,* to be published next year.

THE STORY OF THE INVENTION of the tools of the motion picture is a long and sometimes a confused one. It begins with the projection of static drawings, and this goes back to the middle of the seventeenth century when some one of three or four men invented the magic lantern.[1] Next, about 1825, came the rediscovery of the persistence of vision that Greeks had observed and commented on more than two thousand years before, citing the circle of light produced by a whirling firebrand. Rediscovering what Lucretius and Ptolemy knew resulted in toy-like machines that made drawn figures seem to move. After that, a man succeeded in projecting such drawings on a wall. The next invention that was a necessary and, indeed, a fundamental factor in the development of the motion picture came in photography; and photography had to pass step by step from the daguerreotype through the wet plate and the dry plate to flexible film. With all this behind them, the inventors of the motion-picture camera and projector had to create complicated shutters, intermittent devices to move the film by jerks, loops to keep the jerks from tearing the film, and many other details. Also, they often followed false leads—attempted to make talkies before electronic amplification had been dreamed of and worked on stereoscopic movies before cheap polaroid filters had been developed. Some men helped

[1] In a coming issue of the *Quarterly,* Mogens Scot-Hansen will discuss the invention of the magic lantern.

without meaning to. The first exploiter of moving pictures didn't want to project them on a screen.

At this late date, it is impossible to say who first invented the motion picture. Can we even claim that anyone played a prime part? Many men contributed to the work; and contributed in varying degrees; but nobody kept incontestable records of the part he played in creating the mechanism of what Basil Wright has called "the first and only new art-form to be discovered by man within recorded history." National pride affects the opinions of the few historians. Thomas A. Edison and Eadweard Muybridge take the bows in America, the Lumière brothers in France, and William Friese-Greene to some extent in Great Britain. Little is heard of John D. Isaacs, an engineer who may well have invented all of Muybridge's mechanisms, of a young Englishman named William Dickson who helped work out Edison's camera, or of Thomas Armat who devised the Vitascope projector to which the famous name of Edison was attached. Anyone who tries to discover and name the inventor of the motion picture is lost in a webwork of complications and confusions. Nobody can give a positive and unqualified verdict.

Roget on "Persistence of Vision"

As I have said, an ancient Greek first speculated about the continuous streak path of light that he saw when he swung a torch. Comets had been producing the same sort of effect for countless years before Dr. Peter Mark Roget lectured to the British Royal Society of Surgeons, in 1824, about the "persistence of vision" that accounted for this effect. But it was a much rarer and more complicated phenomenon than a swift light that Roget dealt with. By accident, he had looked through the slatted openings of a Venetian blind at a moment when a cart was passing; and he had noticed that certain spokes of its wheels seemed curved. His explanation was that an image stays on the retina of our eyes for a perceptible moment before it fades away. We see it long enough for it to blend with the next image, whether we are looking at a

swiftly moving light or photographs of a galloping horse. Quite unconsciously this English son of a Swiss father lectured on a law of nature that was to produce drawings that moved, and ultimately motion pictures.

Both factors in Roget's observation played into the development of the motion picture. Besides the persistence of vision, there was the matter of the Venetian blinds, which, in a certain way, did the work of the shutter in a motion-picture camera. Here, as with the magic lantern, there seems to be considerable published confusion about who first dealt scientifically with the persistence of vision and observed the curious behavior of a moving wheel behind bars.

Miracles from Whirling Disks

The noted astronomer and mathematician Sir John Herschel—like Roget, the Anglicized son of a Continental father—seems to have understood persistence of vision; but he did no more about it than to say that he could show a friend both sides of a coin at the same time, and then spin a shilling to prove it. The friend reported the trick to Dr. William Fitton; and Fitton drew a bird on one side of a pasteboard disk and a cage on the other, spun the disk by two strings on each side, and showed the bird sitting within the cage. Beginning about 1826, another English physician, a Doctor Paris, turned an honest shilling by having artists—including George Cruikshank, illustrator of Dickens—make up a number of other designs on disks. By calling his toy the Thaumatrope (magic turning), he set the fashion of strange Greek and Latin names for a long series of devices to visualize movement.

Let us now return to the matter of the Venetian blinds or any other set of openings between solid surfaces. In 1820, four years before Roget's paper, someone known only as "J.M." in a letter to a learned journal in Great Britain had written about having seen some of the spokes of a wheel bend and distort when they were observed through vertical bars. In 1828, a Belgian scientist named Joseph Plateau, who had had some training as an artist, reversed

the phenomenon. He painted a distorted head on a disk, and, by revolving this disk at a different speed from that of a slotted disk in front of it, he brought the head back to a normal shape. In fact, he produced four heads out of one.

Between 1828 and 1831, Plateau and several other scientists published papers on the peculiarities of revolving wheel-like disks. Among these men was Michael Faraday, the great student of electricity and magnetism. He reported in some detail an experiment in which he looked through a slotted disk in motion and noted what seemed to happen to a similar disk revolving behind it. The squarish slots in Faraday's front disk acted very much like a camera shutter. The bars between the slots in the rear disk gave him something to watch instead of spokes. By spinning the disks in various directions and at various speeds, Faraday could make the rear disk appear to speed up, slow down, or even stand still.

Moving Pictures without Photographs

In 1829, Plateau's intense interest in optics led him to stare at the sun for almost half a minute in order to test the effect of such stimulus. The most important effect, unfortunately, was a growing blindness that became complete within four years. During those years, however, Plateau invented a single disk that would show figures in apparent motion. One side of the disk, which had a number of radiating slots, was blank. On the other side were an equal number of figures drawn in progressive stages of movement. The viewer revolved the disk with the figures facing a mirror. Looking through the slots, he saw the figures move. This was a great step forward from the study of revolving wheels or from making a single distorted drawing turn into four normal ones. Here, for the first time, were moving pictures. They were only drawings, not photographs, but they had motion.

In these same years, another man invented the same device. He was Dr. Simon Ritter von Stampfer of Vienna. In naming their devices, the two men helped still further to set the fashion for

classical terms that has ended in our public's becoming accustomed to words like cinematography, the anamorphic lens, Cinerama, and CinemaScope. Plateau called his machine a Fantascope (phantom view), whereas Stampfer used the term Stroboscopic (whirling) Disk. Very soon, a London dealer in magic tricks was commercializing the device as a Phenakistoscope (deceitful view), and that name supplanted those that Plateau and Stampfer had used.

Stampfer went a bit further, however, than Plateau. Although he marketed the disk that had to be seen in a mirror, he proposed another type. This one consisted of two disks revolving on a single axis. The viewer looked through the slotted one and saw the figures moving on the other. In 1849—though Plateau was stone-blind—he used a glass disk for the figures; and, by putting a light behind it and hiding from view all but one of the slots, he was able to show moving figures to a small group of people. He even suggested the use of photographs, but he never attempted the formidable task of taking them.

Another machine for viewing drawings in motion appeared in 1834. This was an invention by William George Horner that was later called a Zoetrope. Inside an upright pasteboard drum without a top, the viewer placed one of a number of long strips of drawings. While the drum revolved on a pivot, he looked through slots in the upper part and saw, for example, a monkey jump over fence after fence or a sprite leap out of a bottle and back in again. If the Zoetrope was only a toy, it was a very popular one. (I had one as a Christmas gift fully sixty years after it was first invented.) Indeed, its popularity was so great that a tendency developed in later years to call all the disk devices Zoetropes or "zoetropic."

Movement at Last Projected

Thus far we have a magic lantern without continuous movement. We have a spinning toy that puts a bird in a cage. We have revolving disks and drums that show drawings in motion. But we

have no machine for the projection of drawings that go through a cycle of movements.

The first device for throwing moving figures on a wall was developed about 1852 by an Austrian ordnance officer named Baron Franz von Uchatius. At first he used the double disks of Plateau. One remained a shutter. The other, made of glass, carried the drawings. Uchatius added a light and two lenses. The result was a projected moving picture, but the combination of a weak lamp and a shutter set a limit of six inches to a clear image. So, in 1853, Uchatius eliminated the shutter and used a powerful limelight. A stationary disk carried the picture with a lens behind each of them. His limelight, with a condensing lens in front of it, revolved behind the picture disk and threw large and brilliant images on a wall. Thirty years later, the Austrian's first device worked successfully when the arc light or the incandescent bulb could be substituted for his weak kerosene lamp. Why Uchatius didn't use a stationary limelight at the beginning has never been explained.

It is interesting—and in a curious way prophetic—that, eight years before Uchatius showed his invention, a high army officer had asked him to develop his idea as a means of military instruction. Thus, in 1845, an Austrian field marshal recognized that moving pictures—even though they were only drawings at that time—could be a teaching aid for the army. They were to become a most potent aid when inventors had added photography to projection.

Enter Photography

The camera goes back beyond Kircher and even beyond Leonardo da Vinci. But it had nothing to do with photography until men had discovered that certain chemicals could be affected by light and that other chemicals could "fix" these unstable bodies. In 1839, came the first two successes in photography. On burnished metal, Louis Daguerre created what the elder Oliver

Wendell Holmes called "the mirror with a memory"; it preserved, each in a single copy, the image of our forefathers. An Englishman named Fox Talbot created a negative—in which light areas of the scene appeared dark and dark areas, light—instead of the positive picture of a daguerreotype. Further, Talbot's negative was on a thin piece of paper; and, when he oiled the paper, it became transparent enough to make a positive print on another piece of paper. Daguerre's method led only to the popular tintype of a century ago. Talbot's negative, changing from paper to glass to film, led finally to the modern motion picture.

When photography was ten years old, men began to experiment with stereography—which has now come to the screen as 3-D. One English scientist showed drawings through a three-dimensional device as early as 1838; and in 1849, another Englishman first used double photographs in the type of holder which became so popular a feature of late nineteenth-century parlors. In the 1850's and 1860's, inventors in Europe wasted considerable time trying to wed stereoscopic photos to the disks of Plateau and Stampfer. The 3-D mania spread to the users of Uchatius' projection device, and it affected even the men who were beginning to use film in the late eighties.

The use of photos instead of drawings in Uchatius' machine was made possible by two Germans, William and Frederic Langenheim, who emigrated to Philadelphia. In 1850, Frederic Langenheim patented a method for making positive prints on glass at about the same time that the wet-plate negative replaced the paper form that Talbot first produced.

Making Motion out of "Stills"

An Englishman in 1852 and a Frenchman eight years later—Wenham and Desvignes—seem to be the first men who tried to photograph separate stages of objects in motion and then reconstitute their movement on the revolving devices that did not entail projection. Between 1860 and 1870, two Americans made

much the same photographic experiment; but they were more resourceful in displaying the results. These men—like the Langenheims, they lived in Philadelphia—were Coleman Sellers and Henry Renno Heyl.

With wet plates and an ordinary camera, the only way to photograph a figure in motion was to stop the motion. After one shot had been taken and another wet plate put in the camera, the figure had to move into a new position for a new photograph. Thus Sellers and Heyl slowly and laboriously took a series of posed "stills." We know that Sellers photographed his wife sewing, one of his sons rocking in a chair, and the other playing carpenter; Heyl and a dancing partner posed in six stages of a waltz while someone pressed the bulb. Sellers did his work about 1861 and Heyl, about 1870.

The methods that the two used for showing their pictures were entirely different. They had only one thing in common—intermittent motion.

Sellers pasted his prints on a kind of paddle-wheel device. Each picture moved quickly toward the eye, was held for a moment by a spring, and then snapped away. The principle was a little like that of the "riffle book"—made by a man named Linnett in 1868—whose bent-back leaves, when released by the thumb, showed a rapid succession of pictures that gave the impression of movement. By calling his paddle wheel the Kinematoscope (moving view), Sellers used for the first time the Greek root that we find today in cinema, Cinerama, and CinemaScope.

Heyl's viewing was more ingenious than Sellers' and involved projection. He mounted eighteen photographs on a glass disk—his six stages of the waltz repeated three times—jerked them around mechanically in front of his light, while a shutter exposed them only when they were at rest. Heyl must have had quite a bright light and a good lens, for on February 5, 1870, when he first showed his dancers, along with some acrobats, he is reported to have satisfied an audience of 1,600.

Movie Cameras from French Scientists

So far we have only some posed photographs of figures in motion. We have a camera that has to be stopped for long moments while plates are changed and the figures moved. Where are we to find a true motion-picture camera—a device that will take a number of shots in rapid succession on a single plate or other surface? In theory and in practice, France leads the way.

In the early sixties, three Frenchmen theorized. Instead of plates, two of them actually proposed the use of paper bands, somewhat like our present film. In 1864, one of these two Frenchmen, Louis Duclos du Hauron, took out a patent on a very complicated camera. It had a large number of small lenses and a very long shutter-band. Duclos' machine was never used successfully, but he must be credited with setting forth in his patent application the many uses to which the motion picture was to be put. He proposed to show to "a whole assemblage . . . the enlarged images of a great number of pictures." He listed just such subjects as we see today: "the movements of a battle, a public fete, a theatrical scene . . . the grimaces of a human face . . . the eruption of a volcano."

Ten years later in 1874, the astronomer Pierre Jules César Jannsen succeeded in making the first practical camera, but he used it for recording only one event. This was the passage of Venus across the face of the sun, and Jannsen had to take his device to Tokyo to secure the photographs. Curiously enough, he used only one principle of the modern motion-picture camera—intermittent motion. For the rest, he went back to Uchatius and Daguerre. Not being able to use wet plates for so long an operation as photographing the movement of a star, he placed daguerreotype material on the outer portion of one of the Austrian's disks. Between this and a telescopic lens, he used a shutter disk. Jannsen devised an elaborate and accurate set of gears that turned the disks at different speeds. With this camera, he was able to

make forty-eight exposures on a disk and to stop them at the proper moment. Since Jannsen merely wanted an accurate visual record of the behavior of Venus, he never tried to develop a projector.

By 1882, this same idea of a revolving shutter and a photographic disk reappeared in the so-called "photographic gun" of another scientist, Étienne Jules Marey, who pioneered in the study of animal movement. This camera looked like a shotgun crossed with a revolver. In its muzzle was a telescopic lens. At the other end, above the gun grip and trigger, Marey had a cylindrical chamber in which the disks revolved. He developed this first of hand-held cameras in order to "shoot" birds in flight. Before the turn of the century, he was using sixty-five feet of celluloid film in his device; and he had developed a means of projecting other photos besides those taken with his gun. From 1870 onward, Marey used a number of methods to record and analyze the movement of animals. In each instance, he employed a single camera. At first, he took as many as a dozen pictures on one plate to show the progressive movements of men and horses against a black background. By 1882, he had an outdoor studio so arranged that the background could be moved along a circular track as the sun passed across the sky. Within seven years, with a box camera and film, he was taking motion pictures of fish. In 1894, he made the first picture in slow motion—shots of a falling cat turning over and landing on its feet. Marey's objective in what he called "chronography" was always, and exclusively, scientific. He remarked, "It is not the most interesting pictures that are the most useful."

The Amazing Muybridge

Before Marey had used his photographic gun or done more than record various stages of movement on a single plate, a photographer in California was using a battery of twenty-four separate cameras to take successive positions of horses and other

animals in motion. More than that, he had projected his moving pictures before at least four audiences in San Francisco.

This man is the most picturesque and controversial figure in the pioneer stage of the movies. The name he used was odd enough—Eadweard Muybridge—and some said that he made it out of Edward James Muggeridge after he left his native England. At the peak of his career, he looked somewhat like Walt Whitman trying to play King Lear. In the midst of his experiments in phographing motion, he killed his wife's lover, and was tried and acquitted. Except for this interlude, which occupied him for some two years, Muybridge worked at his project in California from 1872 to 1879, and elsewhere well into the nineties. Through much of this time, we find conflicts of opinion about why his project was financed and about how much aid he got from whom in making pictures and projecting them.

The popular story of how Muybridge got launched on his career is picturesque and true, up to a point. It seems to be a fact that Leland Stanford—a former governor of the state of California, founder with his wife of Leland Stanford Junior University, and owner of a string of race horses—wagered someone in 1872 that all four feet of a trotter left the ground at one point in his stride. According to common account, he bet $25,000 and then spent $40,000 hiring Muybridge to prove it. But Muybridge himself says that—though he had to use a heavy camera and wet plates which took minutes to change—he won the bet for Stanford in "a few days." Then, according to Muybridge, the millionaire became so interested in the photography of animals in motion that he blew the $25,000 and $15,000 more in backing the photographer's idea of using a battery of cameras. The man that Stanford chose to write up the whole experiment says there were no satisfactory snapshots before 1877, and that it was Stanford who conceived the idea of setting off a battery of cameras in succession.

The First Projection of Unposed Photos

The confusions and contradictions over Muybridge and his work increase when we turn to the question of who first projected unposed photographs of things in motion, and just when he did it. In 1880, *The Scientific American* reported that on May 9 in San Francisco, Muybridge's "Zoögyroscope . . . threw upon the screen the living animal. Nothing was wanting but the clatter of hoofs upon the turf." Supported by California periodicals, the report mentions pictures of bulls, greyhounds, deer, athletes, and even birds. Yet most histories of the early days of motion pictures ignore this show before the San Francisco Art Association. They say that Parisians taught Muybridge the art of projection a couple of years later.

These historians report, quite truly, that Muybridge's still photos made something of a stir when they were displayed and published in Paris in 1878. These writers recall that Marey corresponded with Muybridge through a letter in the scientific periodical *La Nature,* urging him to photograph birds; and Muybridge replied that he intended to do so. But one American historian says that Meissoniere—the French painter of cavalry horses in battle—was so excited by Muybridge's photographs that he got Stanford to send Muybridge to Paris in 1881, where Meissoniere, according to this dubious authority, conceived the idea of having the photographs projected through a version of Uchatius' device. Another account says that Meissoniere thought the still photos "didn't seem right," and rigged up a chair propelled on rails so that he could sketch a running horse. Still another version of the story has it that in 1880 Muybridge's horses were printed on Plateau disks and sold in London. The same source says that Marey, not Meissoniere, was the man who guided Muybridge toward projection. A French writer, however, tells us that Muybridge brought his own projector to a party given by Marey. This fits in with the record of the show in San Francisco. The French

account avers that silhouettes of the horses were drawn on the projection disks; but it is hard to believe that *The Scientific American* would have grown so excited over silhouettes, or have called them "photographs." Muybridge wrote that he retouched some of the outlines.

Despite all the confusions over Muybridge and his work, a few things are certain. In Paris, he changed the name of his projector to the Zoöpraxiscope. From the spring of 1884 till the autumn of 1885, under sponsorship of the University of Pennsylvania, he took 100,000 dry-plate photographs of animals in action, including lions, kangaroos, athletes, and nude young women skipping rope. At the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, he exhibited 20,000 of these pictures—though not of the active young women—in what he called the Zoöpraxographical Hall.

Muybridge's Career Built on Isaacs?

There can be no question that Muybridge's battery of cameras took the first instantaneous photographs of successive stages of the natural, unposed movement of animals. Or that these photographs were the first of the kind ever projected in public. But a confusion arises over how far Muybridge was responsible for all this.

Whether Muybridge or Stanford got the idea of putting a number of cameras in a row and setting them off in the proper order as a horse ran past them at forty feet a second, a young engineer named John D. Isaacs may have worked out the idea. At first, there were five separate cameras, then twelve, and finally twenty-four. Muybridge says he devised a method of opening and closing the shutters of the cameras at the right moment, and either Muybridge and/or Isaacs developed two other methods. Terry Ramsaye, who interviewed Isaacs some forty-five years later, learned that the first method—which made the horses break threads as they ran—wasn't satisfactory; and he says that Isaacs' more ingenious devices produced the best of the famous photos. Muybridge never mentions Isaacs in any of his writings.

Like so many of the men who experimented with motion-picture photography, Muybridge began by making stereoscopic shots. Although he soon recovered from this obsession, he never could quite give up using batteries of cameras. He saw what Marey did with a single lens, but all through his work Muybridge insisted on a dozen or two. At Philadelphia, he tried a slight digression. He had his twenty-four cameras photographing the animal from the side, but he also wanted to take pictures from angles at the front and rear. To get these last two components in a spurious kind of 3-D, he had to have his cameras packed close together. So he built a machine with twelve lenses about three inches apart.

(First of Two Installments)

THE GOLDEN COACH: JEAN RENOIR'S LATEST

JEAN RENOIR, like his two distinguished countrymen René Clair and Julien Duvivier, made films for a number of years in the United States. His American films cannot be considered comparable to those he had made before coming here. The same is true also of the American films of Clair and Duvivier. It is also true that each of these directors made films similar in genre and form to those on which their fame is based and that they had relative freedom of choice of material, but were limited to a degree in the autonomy to which they had been accustomed in making their films. More important, they were addressing a market something less than hospitable to their severally characteristic styles.

Since his departure from Hollywood, Jean Renoir has made two films: *The River,* shot in India, and *The Golden Coach,* shot in Italy. Both films are, like his best French pictures, casual and somewhat improvisational in form but warmly and affectionately human. They are also Renoir's first color films, and therefore remind us sharply that Renoir is a son of Auguste Renoir and that he was reared in a home in which color was part of the daily bread on which the household lived.

Because of such considerations as these, the editors feel justified in printing in this issue two comments—written from two viewpoints—on the more recent of these films, *The Golden Coach.*

I. A *commedia dell' arte*

JAMES E. PHILLIPS

JAMES E. PHILLIPS is an associate professor in the English Department of the University of California, Los Angeles. A frequent contributor to the *Quarterly,* he has written about mass media versions of *Henry V, Hamlet, Macbeth, Richard III,* and *Julius Caesar.* He is also author of *The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays.* Mr. Phillips is currently abroad on a Fulbright award studying the relation of music and poetry in the Renaissance.

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL published on the West Coast is obviously no place for a timely review of a film that has been familiar to critics and audiences alike since the first of the year. By now, Jean Renoir's *The Golden Coach* has run the gantlet of morning-after analysts everywhere and has emerged from the ordeal with at least its pictorial achievements triumphant. Recorded first impressions proclaim it "A stunningly colorful show," "A grand pictorial impression," "Consistently lovely to see." And all agree that "Magnani is . . . in Technicolor beautiful." A viewer of the film who has had some weeks to brood over its effect cannot deny these impressions of visual delight set down in the short hours between the end of the picture and the deadline for a late-morning edition. But being blest by leisure, he may, perhaps, consider in retrospect the purely literary and dramatic values of the film—values which seemed to trouble those who registered their immediate reactions to *The Golden Coach.*

For although the first-night critics have consistently praised the visual values of *The Golden Coach,* they have just as consistently expressed doubts and misgivings about its nonpictorial values. They have worried, for example, about its thematic development, its consistency in characterization, its dramatic structure, and—above all—its sudden and unexpected revelations of meaning that are not Technicolorfully beautiful. One reviewer agreed that the film is glittering and ornate but concluded that insofar as dramatic values are concerned it is "empty and artificial."[1]

[1] Hollis Alpert, "The Neo-Classic Renoir," *Saturday Review* (Jan. 23, 1954), p. 63.

Another observed that *The Golden Coach* is "handsomely mounted, and if you don't try to read as much significance into it as [Renoir] does, it's possible that you'll find some mild enjoyment in a few of its episodes."[2]

Without denying the pictorial richness and ingenuity of the film, this commentator must confess that in retrospect the permanent values of Renoir's latest work seem to lie in exactly those areas dismissed by the reviewers—the dramatic structure, the content, even the "significance," if you will. Should *The Golden Coach* attain and maintain a place in the history of cinematic art, it will be, I think, not on the score of its visual qualities alone but on that of its subtler poetic and dramatic qualities as well. To appreciate these latter, however, it is essential to understand the acknowledged controlling force in the film—the Italian *commedia dell' arte.*

In his prefatory statement, Renoir himself indicates the *commedia* as his inspiration; and most of his critics have recognized this influence, at least in a superficial way. But the almost casual introduction of direct picturization of *commedia dell' arte* scenes into the film is understandably disappointing to viewers who, familiar with visualizations of the art in *Scaramouche* and in *Les Enfants du Paradis,* anticipate more. In fact, if one has any complaint against Renoir's handling of the *commedia* element, it is only that so little of it is directly portrayed. He shows us enough to whet our appetites for more of Harlequin, Columbine, Pantalone, and the rest in their stylized enactments of traditional situations. But for his own good reasons, Renoir saw fit to reduce drastically the direct picturization of the *commedia* after the first half of the film. The makers of *Les Enfants du Paradis,* employing the closely related tradition of the harlequinade, were perhaps wiser in this respect. They not only reminded us frequently and pleasurably of the superb pantomimic talents of Jean-Luis Barrault, but they also made these episodes in abstraction an integral

[2] John McCarten, "Jaunty Columbine," *New Yorker* (Jan. 30, 1954), p. 87.

part of their story. One is grateful that Renoir made the vitality of the *commedia* tradition equally convincing, at least in the first half of *The Golden Coach.*

However, the more important influence of the *commedia* tradition on *The Golden Coach* is to be found, I believe, not in the direct representation of that art, but rather in its control of the whole spirit and treatment of the film—including the polyglot accents, the unexpected veerings from sentimentality to farce, and the other unpredictable qualities of the work which seem to have disturbed the first-night reviewers. The latter failed to see that the *commedia* provides more than occasional glimpses of an entertaining set of stock characters and the somewhat worn-out "life-versus-art" theme of a play within the play. A brief review of the tradition will serve, perhaps, to suggest the extent to which it motivated the whole conception of the film.

Fragmentary as are the actual *commedia* episodes filmed by Renoir, they nevertheless are refreshing reminders of the vitality of this centuries-old dramatic tradition. The whole history of the *commedia*—as Kathleen Lea[3] has shown in her massive study of the subject—tended, from its origins in the *Atellanae Fabulae* of the third century B.C. to its emergence in full flower in sixteenth-century Italy, to catch and to crystallize in formal patterns those basic situations and character types that lie at the heart of all theater, including the Shakespearean. The empty braggart, the cantankerous old pantaloon, the heartsick young man, the winsome Columbine (as shrewd as she is winsome), the tumbling and impudent clowns always anxious to please and to disturb—these were sure things on the popular stage of ancient Rome. They can also be found beneath the highly individualized portraits of Shakespeare's Falstaff, his old Capulet, his Orlando, his Rosalynde, his Dromios, his Touchstone, and even his Fool in *Lear.* Moreover, all of them, under very thin disguises, survive today in almost any motion picture in such roles as those portrayed

[3] *Italian Popular Comedy* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1934).

over and over again by an Andy Devine, a Lionel Barrymore, a Chaplin in his more sentimental moments, a Hepburn, and a Danny Kaye. One achievement of the *commedia dell' arte* of the Renaissance was to catch these types of universal appeal in their abstract state, in their essence, so to speak, and thus to preserve the basic sources of universal delight in such type characters as the Capitano, the Pantalone, the Colombina, the Arlecchino, or Pulcinella.

I should like to show that much of the purely dramatic vitality of *The Golden Coach,* above and beyond its pictorial vitality, comes from the universal sources of characterization that the *commedia* tradition provides. But before turning to that aspect of the film, I should like to point to another—and perhaps even more important—source of the film's essential quality in the same tradition. By definition, *commedia dell' arte* means the free improvisation on a given plot outline (the scenario) by a given set of characters. As Winifred Smith says, after a thorough study of the subject,

> A *Commedia dell' arte* was always in part the transitory creation of the individual actors who played it; the plot was known to each member of the troupe, so well-known, indeed, that an entrance or an exit was never missed, but the dialog was chiefly left to be struck out by the suggestion of the moment. Hence the name,—*commedia dell' arte all 'improvviso,* professional improvised comedy,—for only the actor profession or gild, *arte,* could be sure enough of itself and sufficiently at home on the stage to play without being tied to lines.[4]

In other words, improvisation by given characters on given themes and situations is the essence of the *commedia* tradition. I think it is just this aspect of the tradition, which most of the first-night critics seem to have missed entirely, that goes farthest in explaining the basic character and quality of *The Golden Coach.* For the film is confessedly by the director, and obviously to some

[4] *The Commedia Dell' Arte* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912), p. 2.

viewers, an improvisation on given themes and characters. As Renoir says in his remarks introducing the picture,

> It is in homage to the ancient Italian theatre, more particularly to a certain form of the theatre, the *commedia dell' arte*. . . . But don't jump to the conclusion that my story is about the *commedia dell' arte*. No. I just attempted to follow its style, with its involved, complicated situations. . . .

It is important to note here that Renoir seems clearly to have had in mind the improvisational quality of his model. For example, he also employs the word "fantasy" in describing *The Golden Coach*. Considering Renoir's approach to the English language, I feel justified in suggesting that when he uses this term he means to imply not "fantastic"—with its connotations of the weird and distorted—but rather "fantasia" in the musical sense, or the free treatment of a given theme. For the whole film, it seems to me, is indeed a brilliant fantasia in the musical sense—a sense, by the way, that corresponds exactly to the tradition of the *commedia dell' arte* and its improvisational approach. The given theme is the ancient, if slightly disreputable, set of stock situations and stock characters. The "fantasia" develops in the free treatment of these situations and characters with variations drawn from every style, every period, every culture. Although Renoir disregards the logic of realistic drama and the demands for some kind of larger ethical or social "significance," he remains completely regardful of the perennial dramatic vitality of the basic tradition.

For example, his handling of the setting for his particular presentation of a *commedia* troupe is one that, in the *commedia* tradition itself, is both unexpected and freshly revealing. *Les Enfants du Paradis* suffers in comparison on this point. Barrault's harlequinade is presented in the expected, traditional environment—the streets of Paris. Renoir, with a surprise characteristic of his model, presents his *commedia* troupe not in the historical

Italianate circumstances that we associate with *I Pagliacci,* but rather in the unexpected terms of the impact of this ancient, old-world art upon the half-Spanish and half-Indian culture of the New World in the eighteenth century. Certainly one of the most subtly realized scenes of the film is that in which the camera recorded the straw-hatted, expressionless faces of South American Indians as they watch Columbine, Harlequin, and Pantalone perform the stylized theatrical routines descended from classical Roman antiquity. Such a scene arouses an interest that is at once theatrical, historical, and even anthropological. In such values, springing as they do from the improvisational style of the *commedia,* does the lasting appeal of Renoir's film lie.

Set in this fresh and surprising fashion, the direct presentation of the *commedia dell' arte* endows *The Golden Coach* with some of its richest moments. Such moments, pictorially as well as dramatically satisfying, leave one with a desire for more of the same. But after the first half of the film, such scenes are rare. Meanwhile, Renoir's mercurial talent, directed by the improvisational style of his model, had turned to other sources of dramatic and theatrical satisfaction within the framework of the given situations and characters.

One of the more rewarding of such unexpected turns was Renoir's clearly deliberate misuse of standard dramatic clichés, most of which were drawn from the materials of the *commedia* itself. Consistently, for example, he never allowed a scene fraught with sentimental or melodramatic potentialities to be introduced without reducing it at the outset, by some device, to absurdity. Thus when the Viceroy, the Bullfighter, and Felipe come in turn to woo Camilla, the crying of Isabella's baby is the first thing that greets them and us. Nothing is better designed to keep the sentimental cliché of a class B film romance in its place than a squawling product of the eventual realities of such a romance. Isabella's baby does not, of course, deter the conventionally amorous threesome from their conventional rivalry, but it serves

very effectively to set their relationship with Camilla and with each other in the proper, nonsentimental perspective for the rest of us. Here again the essential spirit and quality of the *commedia dell' arte* tradition is clearly apparent. Stock characters in a stock situation are treated with a freedom and unexpectedness that is in itself the principal source of delight.

In the same spirit, Renoir made a virtue of the necessity of employing actors with a variety of accents—the flat, midwestern American of Felipe; the arch, stage British of the Viceroy; the clipped, House of Commons tones of one of the councilors; and the variety of Italian inflections. The reviewer who thought it "too bad that the cast speaks English in such a variety of ways" and blamed the situation on a "polyglot effort" missed, I think, both the inspiration and the effect of what he called "a strange assortment of accents."[5] Such assortment is directly in the *commedia dell' arte* tradition and achieves here exactly the effect that linguistic variety was designed to achieve in the *commedia* itself. Winifred Smith shows that in the sixteenth-century Italian *commedia* dialect differences were an established device for marking off the various stock characters, or "masks." As a not unusual example, she cites a *commedia* of 1609 which contains French and the Italian dialects of Venice, Bergamo, Bologna, Rome, Naples, Perugia, and Florence—each deliberately designed to accentuate the character type who speaks it.

I do not know that Renoir had this tradition in mind when he chose actors with a variety of English accents. But the effect in terms of heightened characterizations is manifestly the same. Each distinctive intonation serves to point up the universal type portrayed—the earnest and idealistic romantic hero in the American; the man of the world, slightly weary of his experience, in the stage British; and the Islander secure in his own sense of the civilized decencies in the school British. By the standards of Hollywood efforts to achieve historical accuracy at all costs, such accents, and indeed such characters, may appear to be totally out

[5] McCarten, *loc. cit.*

of place. But in the world of universal experience, fashioned by Renoir under the inspiration of the *commedia dell' arte,* the diversity is acceptable and delightful. It is an important part of the fantasia, where audience pleasure arises principally, as it does in its musical counterpart, from the unexpected treatment of the universally recognized. We delight in the sharp delineation of the familiar type, and we delight equally in discovering the type in the most unexpected of surroundings. The tight-lipped decency of the British councilor's "Hear! Hear!" in the Spanish councils of the New World juxtaposes one familiar experience with another; and in that larger world of dramatic values that rises above the merely historical and realistic, the juxtaposition seems not only pleasurable but convincing.

Unfortunately, this spirit of free improvisation upon given themes is not always clearly maintained in the film. In his spoken foreword, Renoir suggests that he sought to portray in the film "the deliberate confusion of what is real and unreal." There are, indeed, occasional glimpses of such a theme in *The Golden Coach,* most notably, perhaps, in the lines of Magnani which close the film. But such moral values are only apparent intermittently and are never clearly realized. Thus the critics who, following Renoir's own announced lead, sought for some deeper significance in the film, were understandably confused and disappointed. To such critics, the film is glittering and ornate, but—in terms of deeper meaning—empty or at best clouded.

But I wonder if such critics were not led away from the true purpose and the essential quality of *The Golden Coach* by a subsidiary intention that seems to have been an afterthought with Renoir himself? Some three years ago when he was planning the film, Renoir explained to Gordon Allison that *The Carriage of the Blessed Sacrament*—as the director then referred to his film—"is light, witty, and without bitterness. A good study of people like *Carnival in Flanders.*"[6] He made no reference at that time to

[6] "Jean Renoir," *Theater Arts Monthly,* XXXV (Aug., 1951), p. 19.

the larger significance suggested in his foreword, and sought for by the critics in vain. In retrospect, *The Golden Coach* seems pretty much to be what he originally intended it to be—"light, witty, and without bitterness. A good study of people . . ." As such, it is in form and spirit thoroughly in the *commedia dell' arte* tradition.

II. "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"

THALIA SELZ

THALIA SELZ formerly taught the history of the film at the Institute of Design in Chicago, and is currently working full time on a novel. Mrs. Selz's publications include articles and short stories in *Arts and Architecture, Art Digest,* the *Chicago Review,* other little magazines in the States, and a previous piece on the Venice Film Festival of 1953 in the Spring, 1954, number of the *Quarterly.*

LATELY, A NUMBER of my friends have said to me that they do not understand *The Golden Coach.* Now that I have seen the movie, I do not understand my friends. They confessed that they did not comprehend the precise value of some of the symbols—well, how difficult can you make a simple movie?

The plot describes how a troupe of Italian players at the end of the eighteenth century come to a Spanish colony in South America, how the Viceroy of the colony falls in love with their chief actress Camilla and decides to give her a costly golden coach—thereby antagonizing his court—and how Camilla wants everything: the coach, the Viceroy, Ramon the bullfighter, her first lover Felipe, and her stage career.

Personally, I choose to regard the film as a fairy tale for grown-ups; this makes it a little different from ordinary fairy tales, but all the old devices are there. The movie opens with a long shot of a red velvet curtain; it parts, and there is a tracking shot toward the stage; then suddenly we, the audience, are in the midst of the

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action: "Once upon a time there was a beautiful golden coach and a handsome prince. . . ." At the end of the film, the red curtain falls; and, as at the end of a play, an actor steps forward to remind us that what we have seen is a play—not real but a story—and that our heroine must remain in the world of make-believe. Throughout the film we are reminded, either directly or by implication, that we are watching a work of fantasy: there is the traditional golden object coveted by many (in this case a coach), the traditional group of heroes striving to win the beautiful heroine, the duel, and the abrupt happy ending. At one point the heroine, the common actress Camilla, even stops to point out to her aristocratic persecutors that "in the play, at the end of the second act, when Columbine is cast out by her masters, they suddenly bow to her." And lo and behold, the nobles, compelled by the magic of the fairy story, their faces caught in surprise, bow to Camilla.

But because the film is a fairy tale for grownups, Jean Renoir has made certain concessions to the grown-up world which knows how life *really* is. For one thing, the good people are not completely good, nor are the bad people all bad. Camilla has a ferocious temper and is as greedy as a pig, and the Viceroy is apt to act like a spoiled brat. The wicked nobles adore pretty girls, and at least one of the scornful noblewomen confesses that she is charmed by the vulgarity of the players. As in all good fairy tales for grownups, there is a satisfactory amount of sex and a great deal of humor.

Perhaps there is too much humor for our sour souls—perhaps we can't laugh any more to see some of our fondest grown-up illusions gently ridiculed. For instance, there is the muscular hero Ramon, the bullfighter. In the midst of his love scene with Camilla, Ramon reveals that he is not only stupid but a vulgar publicist as well—he is at the height of his popularity; so is Camilla. What a drawing card their relationship would be! They could double their audiences! Then there is Felipe, Camilla's

decent, righteous lover. Realizing that he is falling from her favor, he decides to "win glory in battle." He joins the regiment which is fighting Indians and returns months later to persuade Camilla to follow him into the wilderness to live with the Indians, for he has discovered that the savages are honest and clean minded. Felipe the honest hero has metamorphosed into Felipe the reformer. Camilla's third lover is the Viceroy. In the tradition of the fairy story, he stoops from loftiness to love a common woman; but he is shown acting like a spoiled little boy much of the time. And when, in line with the traditional fantasy, the Viceroy decides to give up his position and his wealth to win Camilla's favor, we are shown that he cannot—that life will not let him.

Even our heroine is not true to any one lover through fire and water. She is true to each of them—briefly. At the end, our lusty, immodest Camilla even wins the approval of the "saintly" Bishop and gets his permission to sing in High Mass.

But the film is a fairy tale, and so—there is a happy ending. However, we are reminded that Camilla cannot stay to wed her hero; she must lose all three lovers because none of them is permanently real except herself, on her stage. *That* is her world. And the golden coach, in which everyone has wanted to ride—the symbol of all men's desires and of the possession of power—what about that? Well, Camilla gives it to the Church (in order, we suspect, to appease the Bishop's wrath at the Viceroy); and the Bishop announces that the coach will now become a symbol in that community of charity and life everlasting, as it will henceforward carry the last sacraments to the dying—"Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home. . . ."

When a movie fails to communicate to an audience, I feel that the fault usually lies with the director who has failed to take the right factors, or enough factors, into consideration. But this time, we are probably at fault for failing to appreciate *The Golden Coach*. Some of us whom Hollywood has nourished, like savage dogs on a diet of still throbbing meat, would rather see Mickey

Spillane. Those of us who are more sophisticated seem to search in this film for abstruse symbols, for a "study" of something or other. The use of symbol in *The Golden Coach* is on the level of the obvious fairy tale, and it is not a "study." This is why I have used the terms fairy tale, fantasy, play, and make-believe interchangeably. The movie is an adaptation of the one-act play *Le Carrosse du Saint-Sacrement* by Prosper Mérimée who, in turn, based his work on a famous Lima legend; and this may account for the desire to find something hidden or scholarly in the movie. This is an interesting fact, but Jean Renoir has embroidered the basic fabric with so much individual fantasy that he has really made the film a very different work.

Some critics have suggested that Renoir was doing an adaptation of the *commedia dell' arte* to the twentieth-century cinema—as is so much the fashion these days when we take an ancient artistic form and adapt it with clever tricks to our own artistic needs—but I do not believe this. Such self-conscious investigation of the past is no more than bastard archeology. Renoir used elements of Mérimée's play, of the *commedia dell' arte,* of the fairy tale, and of the motion picture to produce a creative work of the imagination which should charm and amuse us for a little while. The only prerequisite for enjoying this disgustingly unpretentious film is a sense of humor—or perhaps, sense *in* humor to help us laugh at our own foibles so delightfully mimicked.

Films from Overseas

GERALD WEALES

GERALD WEALES is on the faculty of the English Department at the Newark College of Engineering, Newark, New Jersey. In addition to his frequent contributions to the *Quarterly,* Mr. Weales has published reviews and articles for such periodicals as *Nation, Hudson Review,* and *Films in Review.*

THIS HAS BEEN a quarter of diversity, if not of quality. Most of the offerings have been unimposing; most of the pleasures have been moderate.

Beauties of the Night has come into the country dressed in awards from a number of film festivals, sporting the name of René Clair as director and co-writer of the screen play. Yet it is greater in anticipation than in realization. The film is a fantasy in which Claude, a despondent, attic-poor composer, reduced to teaching music in his native provincial town, escapes from the wretchedness of the present day into his dreams which are admirably layered so that he can be a romantic and musical success in three different periods at once. He is a turn-of-the-century composer about to have his first opera performed and about to consumate a liaison with a married lady of quality; he is a mid-nineteenth-century hero of the Algerian wars who wins the heart and, almost, the favors of a Moorish beauty; he is a music teacher in the time of Louis XVI who gives an impassioned speech about equality—he is after a baron's daughter—which brings on the French Revolution. He moves with ease from period to period in his well-regulated dreams; but as each situation becomes hopeless and as his swashbuckling successes collapse, the ages overlap, the characters move from one century to another after him. He retreats finally into prehistoric times where he is rescued by his twentieth-century friends in a jeep and is driven, past a series of signposts reading weakly, "To the Middle Ages, etc.," through history back to his own time where he finds success and love. Moral: *chacun à son âge.*

There are funny things in the film, notably the recurrent moments in which all of the characters become operatic. But there is no consistency of spirit. A great part of the time the film is simply outrageously farcical with not even a hint of subtlety; occasionally it lapses into the satirical; sometimes, particularly in the twentieth-century scenes where Claude's friends mistake his desire for sleep for a proposed suicide, it becomes a comedy of character like some of the old Michel Simon pictures. Gérard Philipe, who plays Claude, is expected to strut and swagger in the dream sequences, to droop and despair in the waking moments; he does all that is expected of him, but one misses the great fun of *Fanfan la Tulipe* in which Philipe and the audience could have a good time together. Here, he appears too often uncertain. There has been some talk of the scene in which Gina Lollobrigida walks into her bath as the camera plays lovingly along her back; certainly Lollobrigida deserves the attention of both the camera and the comments, but it is a little sad that there is so little else to talk about in a René Clair film.

Clair's limited success is certainly less unhappy than what has befallen Charles Dickens and Jean Cocteau in works of theirs which have been transposed into film in two new English offerings. Noel Langley in *The Pickwick Papers* and Charles Frank in *Intimate Relations* have taken fixed and familiar literary figures and used them grievously. The startling thing about Langley's *Pickwick* is that it is dull. The characters and incidents are there, but it is impossible to care. James Hayter's Mr. Pickwick and Harry Fowler's Sam Weller are recognizable, or almost, but they are not sufficiently their literary counterparts to be old friends. As Mrs. Leo Hunter, Joyce Grenfell does another of her magnificently toothy routines; but she is rather more Grenfell than Dickens. Although Langley has been accurate in dialogue and action, he has changed the spirit of the book. A double take, for instance, seems a highly improbable attribute for a member of the Pickwick Club; yet it becomes the inevitable reaction for

Snodgrass, Winkle, Tupman, even Pickwick himself to almost every situation. Although Dickens allowed himself considerable slapstick; for instance, when Pickwick and his friends get caught in the army maneuvers—an incident which is not in the film—the secret of their imperturbability and their charm is that they do not for a moment suspect that their dignity has been touched. Perhaps it would be just as well to leave Pickwick on the pages of the book, unless of course UPA decided to animate the novel with Mary Petty as technical adviser.

The characters of Jean Cocteau's *Les Parents Terribles* are less well known than those in *The Pickwick Papers,* and certainly no one would suggest for a moment that there is anything lovable about them. Still they are considerably more interesting than one might guess from seeing *Intimate Relations,* an English version of the play that Charles Frank directed and wrote. Cocteau's strange play concerns a mother whose devotion to her son has caused her to neglect her husband who takes a mistress who falls in love with the son and whose marriage is arranged by the mother's sister who has loved the husband for thirty years. There, in a burst of relative clauses, is the story of a batch of psychological caricatures that Cocteau in his own movie version of the play, released here in 1950 under the title *The Storm Within,* made at once funny and touching and frightening. Gabrielle Dorziot, who plays Aunt Léo in the French version, manages to embody an icy, acid, unexpressed passion which makes her the most interesting of the five characters and the one through whom the other relationships became clear; Ruth Dunning, who plays Aunt Léo this time, is little more than a wisecracking chorus, for all her statements about her unfulfilled love. Nor does Frank make any particular use of the camera. In both movies, young Madeleine has the same kind of an apartment with the same twisted-iron stairway in it. But in Cocteau's version, the camera used the convolutions of the stairway to make comments on the characters; whereas, in Frank's version, the characters use the stairway to get to and from the

attic. *Intimate Relations* has other annoyances than its general inadequacy; the most notable is the top of the Sacré Coeur stuck outside Madeleine's window just to prove that this very English movie is French.

The Holly and the Ivy is the only movie aside from *Beauties of the Night* that might attract more than passing interest in this quarter's list. Its chief virtue is that it creates an illusion of reality. The parsonage in which the family of the Reverend Mr. Gregory meet for Christmas is entirely believable. Most of the acting is extremely good, particularly that of Ralph Richardson as the parson and of Margaret Leighton as the drunken daughter; only a few of the minor characters, the semicomic aunts, push realism to the edge of burlesque. The problem is that this film is about absolutely nothing; it has all the depth and deliberateness of the *Ladies' Home Journal.* The parson's children are unable to tell him about themselves; but when they do finally, there is a sudden and soothing burst of saccharine with Christmas bells in the background, and all ends well. There is, though, no real reason why he couldn't have been told in the first three minutes of the film; there is no real conflict between father and children. Although this film is probably more literate and less obvious than a Hollywood version might be, it is the same brand of hokum. However, like most good soap opera, it is rather appealing part of the time.

Less happy portions of regeneration can be found in *The Horse's Mouth,* a tepid little English comedy, and in *Sins of Paris,* a tiresome French melodrama. The former mixes some Gaelic fun about an oracle down a well with the need to remind a London editor that he is first a man, second a newspaperman. The serious part of the movie is hopeless; the comic part is little better, but the Abbey Theater's Maire O'Neill does have a bit as Mrs. Lenihan whose lost spectacles the oracle is asked to find. In *Sins of Paris,* a prostitute is saved by the love of a good man; but before the joyful fade-out, Malou's fellow hostesses must be safely ticked off by jail, death, or marriage. In short, the French equivalent for turkey applies here.

To mention Noël-Noël's *Parade du Temps Perdu* at this spot may seem a little irrelevant; but since its subject is bores, it is not completely out of the way. Arthur Mayer and Edward Kingsley, the distributors of this picture, afraid that an illustrated lecture on types of bores might not draw crowds, call the picture *Spice of Life* and hope for the best. Noël-Noël, who wrote the picture, plays the lecturer and the victim in most of the illustrations; a number of gimmicks—pictures that begin to move, a Punch-and-Judy stage on which examples are acted out, a magic blackboard that argues with the lecturer—are devised to keep the audience from growing restive. Robert Benchley's *An Evening Alone* has been playing around the theaters again, perhaps to remind us what the comic lecture film looks like at its best. Even so, a full-length Benchley would be rather a lot to take; and so, for all his personal charm, is Noël-Noël and his *Parade.*

From Spain comes *Flamenco,* a mixture of dance recital and travelogue, which Enrique Guerner has filmed, under Edgar Neville's direction, in a dreadful color process called Cinefocolor. The film illustrates the variations on flamenco dancing as it passes from one section of Spain to another. The appeal of the film is directly proportional to one's knowledge of Spanish dancing. Pilar Lopez, Maria Luz, Antonio, and some excellent amateurs do well by the various dances; but the variation is often slight from one to another, and—perhaps as a result of the repetition—the film is rather too much for me. The two most appealing things are some wonderful gypsy voices and occasional shots—such as one of a wagon tiredly jouncing its way across a wooden bridge and up a hilly road—which make one want to see a film in which the photographer's camera work could be more than mere decoration.

Continental and Otherwise: The Specialized Cinema in Britain

COLIN YOUNG

COLIN YOUNG is a philosophy graduate of the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. Before leaving his native land, he was a film critic for the Aberdeen *Bon-Accord and Northern Pictorial.* Since the fall of 1952, Mr. Young has been studying in the Motion Picture Division of the Theater Arts Department at the University of California, Los Angeles.

ENTERTAINMENT PATTERNS VARY with location, with climate, and with culture. One of the variations in patterns applies to the specialized-cinema audiences which appear in different countries, their structure, and the means which exist to satisfy them. It is the purpose of this article to describe the situation in one country—Britain. "Specialized cinema," used in a very general way, refers both to private-membership film societies and to the British equivalent of American art theaters. Most of the following references are to Scottish situations, but it can be assumed that these indicate obliquely what is available in most specialized cinemas throughout Britain.

Despite the success of film societies in some centers, the specialist filmgoer in Britain is still—on any absolute standard—rather poorly served. Although he is able to see many of the contemporary French and Italian productions, he finds it much more difficult to sample the new films from other countries, especially those from Germany, Sweden, and Spain; and he sees practically none from Asia and South America. And what is perhaps more annoying, he is still poorly served on a relative basis.

In most Swedish cities, for example, it is comparatively easy to pick up films from five or six countries within a few weeks, and in Stockholm within one week. The reason for this richness is obviously not primarily an advanced aesthetic taste (although this may result from the richness), but a small native film produc-

tion. Swedish companies cannot satisfy all the needs of a city like Stockholm (population, 1950: 745,936), which is smaller even than Glasgow, Scotland (1951 census: 1,089,555). It is natural, because of language similarity, to look first to the other Scandinavian sources; but even this leaves a large gap, which is presently filled by American, British, French, German, and Italian producers.

But in Scotland, as in Britain generally, the situation is different. National film production is still lower than national consumption; but, the British filmgoer speaks English. This is the tragedy of the British entertainment situation, the cross which the public has to carry. It speaks English and precious little else. Thus, the absence of *La Prima Communione* from neighborhood theaters is comparable to the scarcity of Neopolitan jokes in local pubs. Both situations are regrettable, but understandable.

There are two sources of resistance to specialized cinema in Britain: cinema ownership and mass-audience preference. Each has its different features. When a national cinema circuit—like J. Arthur Rank's massive Odeon Theatres—is tied to a producing organization (in this case, Rank's affiliated production groups), its first function is to act as releasing organization for these productions. After this is done, the national circuit will make additional contracts to exhibit other productions. Rank, to continue our example, is unlikely to enter into any such agreement with rival producers within Britain. But he does consider himself free to find contracts with American producers; and indeed his relationship with Fox, Universal-International, and United Artists goes somewhat deeper than that. (For example, United Artists has a large investment in Odeon Cinema Holdings, Limited.) However, Rank's starting position is that he cannot nearly satisfy the demands of his theaters with product from his own studios. He must go outside the country. On the assumption that there is little articulate audience demand for anything else, he goes to Hollywood for his needs. And all this applies correspondingly to his competitors, to the local circuits, to the combines, and to

independently owned cinemas. There is nothing to stop them from exhibiting foreign-language films in lieu of Hollywood productions or, in general, from moving into the specialized cinema field—nothing, that is, except audience preference.

Statistics are hard to secure; but we can go, for example, to the annual report of any film society (except perhaps the outstandingly successful Film Society in London and Forsyth Hardy's and Norman Wilson's group in Edinburgh[1]). There is one report, for example, in which the founding secretary of a 16-mm. society in a town of 60,000 wonders how he can raise the membership to 300—that is, to one half of one per cent of the population.[2]

A large amount of the public's unwillingness to accept specialized cinema is doubtless a reaction against the Continental films included in their program—a reaction against the foreign languages used in the films. This problem came in with sound. An increasing number of contemporary producers and distributors solve it by dubbing English dialogue to the picture. By doing so, however, they more often than not (perhaps always) take the film out of the art-theater class.

Nevertheless, some independently owned theaters are making a success of foreign-language film exhibition. These cinemas fall into two groups. The first, probably the largest, is similar to what is known in the United States as the art theater. It shows foreign-language films as well as offbeat British and American productions and finds room for documentaries and other shorts made with a particular skill. This is where you will find *Rashomon,* a Sucksdorff short, a *Mister Magoo,* and a Norman McLaren dabble. These cinemas are to be found in some large cities. There are several in London, and there is one each in Manchester, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Although they are not normally very large, they are better dressed than, say, neighborhood theaters. They

[1] It was the latter group, under Wilson and Hardy, which inspired the annual documentary film festival as part of the Edinburgh Festival of Drama and Arts.

[2] "Film Societies: The Other Side," *Sight and Sound* (January, 1950), p. 45.

consider themselves first-run houses, exclusive but not pretentious; and they aim their programs at a very particular section of the film audience.

The second class consists more or less of neighborhood theaters which often exist in university towns and in some cities. They are found for example in Cambridge, Oxford, and St. Andrews. University-town cinemas show occasional foreign-language films while the university is in session. At other times they exhibit the normal run of American and British films.

Since London, like New York, is a peculiar entertainment situation, and the envy of the rest of the country, it will not be discussed in this article. Glasgow, however, can be taken as representative of the contemporary situation in the provinces. Here, three houses regularly show foreign-language films; and other houses offer them from time to time. (In the last year, the number of houses showing an occasional foreign film has at least doubled.) The Cosmo, one of the three regulars, belongs to the first class, mentioned previously. Whereas, the others—the Tonic and the Grand Central—are in the second class.

The Cosmo, which was opened in May of 1939, was the first British cinema (outside London) to be built specifically for the exhibition of foreign-language films. Situated near the center of Glasgow's main shopping district, it seats 825 people—about the same size as the Filmarte which was reopened in New York for much the same purpose about the same time. When the Cosmo was planned, the project was given little articulate encouragement. Most published opinion was pessimistic, and many groups had other plans ready for the use of the building if the specialist cinema failed. But from the beginning it was a success, and continues to be so.

The Tonic, by comparison, is unpretentious. It is part of a circuit of six small theaters in Glasgow and neighboring towns. The manageress often doubles as receptionist and usherette. She has intimated that foreign films are being shown by way of an

experiment. Success may lead to the gradual spreading of the policy to include the other cinemas in the circuit.

Most neighborhood theaters in Scotland have a change of program in the middle of each week, and are closed on Sundays. At present, the Tonic shows foreign-language films—advertised under the heading "Continental"—Monday through Wednesday and English-language films—termed (happily) "Otherwise"—Thursday through Saturday. Thrown in under "Otherwise" during May of 1953 were such English-language gems as *Blue Blood, Cave of the Outlaws, Forest Rangers,* and *Francis Goes to the Races.* The layout of the published program suggests that these theaters are aiming the two kinds of entertainment at different sections of the public. The "Continental" films are listed together on one page, and only for this type of program are screening times given. This is for the fastidious who think that the beginning is the time to go in.

Glasgow's Grand Central cinema lies in the center of the city, but for the last fifteen or twenty years has not been recognized as a first-run house. It is properly a neighborhood theater in the city center. There has been a tendency for the Grand Central to make its choices from the more sensational Continental productions. And this deserves some discussion.

In Britain, as in America, there is an established system of film censorship. But unlike America, Britain has centralized its public censoring, so that each film shown publicly in a commercial cinema must obtain and display a British Board of Film Censors certificate which classifies it as falling into one of three groups. The nature of this censorship and its basis in moral and civil authority need not concern us. What is interesting is that in 1951 a new classification was added. Previously, there had existed the "U" classification which passed a film for general (or universal) exhibition, the "A" classification which passed a film as more suitable for adult exhibition, and (since 1937) the "H" classification which passed a film for exhibition only to adult audiences

(over sixteen). The new "X" certificate replaced the third or "H" classification, and was conceived to help secure the exhibition of films which might otherwise have been banned in whole or in part for moral grounds. The "X" would prevent the film from being shown to children, so that the morals of the young would be saved.

However, some exhibitors, knowing man's weaknesses (or at any rate his tastes), have found it profitable to exploit a film on the basis of its "X" certificate. One London exhibitor proudly presented a program as being the "Xiest program in town," and the Board of Censors immediately wished they had chosen another letter for the third classification. This is in line with some contemporary West Coast (American) advertising for Italian films, and is becoming an established part of motion-picture technique. It is important to remember when considering the growing popularity of Continental films in Scotland that this trend has its supporters—and they are, by no means, only in the management of the Grand Central.

Recently, the managers of the three Glasgow cinemas were sent four questions to which they were invited to reply:

1. Why is your theater showing Continental films?
2. How successful are these programs?
3. Are admission prices altered for these programs?
4. What are some recent titles?

The answers show certain similarities. None of the theaters makes any change in admission prices. The price range is kept in strict competition with neighboring theaters of the same class. The answers to the second question are uniformly favorable. The Grand Central says, simply, "Very successful." The Tonic says, "We have been pleased with the response," and continues, interestingly, to point out that the Italian operatic films which they show are especially popular. The Cosmo is a little more modest: "Our average attendances must compare very favorably with cinemas showing what are termed everyday programs." Each

manager replied that there was a definite public demand for foreign-language films of the type which his cinema shows. The Grand Central was content to leave the matter there; but the other managers went a little further, and their answers suggest that their policies are based on certain economic considerations, not aesthetic ones—although we shall have to qualify this shortly in relation to the Cosmo.

The Cosmo, to repeat, was intended from the first to be a specialist theater, with the status of a first-run, first-class house. It is independently owned and operated. As such, if it attempted to make a living from engaging first runs of British and American productions, its life would be a continuous pitched battle. This battle would not only be tiresome; it would be expensive. But in the specialist field, the Cosmo has almost completely a free hand. And this, quite apart from aesthetic considerations, is desirable—is so indeed with any commodity.

The Tonic's problem is slightly different. This cinema finds that it can afford contemporary British or American "A" pictures only when the demand to see them has fallen below the profitable level. Thus, there occurs the experiment of leavening what sound like outrageously bad American "B" pictures with what turns out to be an exceedingly catholic selection of foreign-language productions.

However, the Cosmo manager also gives what amounts to an aesthetic justification for showing foreign-language films. He says, "There is a more even standard in excellency than is found in American or British films." This has long been a favorite claim of a certain minority—whether in Glasgow, Hampstead, or Greenwich Village—and it is most interesting to see the Cosmo manager, a business man, come out into the open and say so. If it sounds like an overstatement, it need not be. He is not necessarily denying the considerable postwar achievements of some American and British directors. The works of these men find their way into the commercial cinemas in Glasgow; and, if they do not, they are considered for exhibition in the Cosmo.

This brings us to a statement of the films shown recently in the three cinemas. (The lists are those offered by the managers.) In the Cosmo: *Souvenirs Perdus, Caroline Chérie, Les Septs Péchés Capitaux, Rashomon, Prima Communione,* and *Casque D'Or.* The Tonic had a different set: *Un Grand Patron, Le Voyage en Amérique, Fröken Julie, Los Olvidados, Marriage of Figaro, Don Quixote* (Spanish), *Edouard et Caroline, Furia, Rigoletto,* and *Trois Télégrammes.* The Grand Central had the first three mentioned for the Cosmo plus: *Les Enfants Terribles, Le Garçon Sauvage,* and *Three Forbidden Stories.* This list reads rather well; and, although some are better than others (even much better), this is not unhealthy and is not peculiar to foreign films.

Thus, the situation, at least in Glasgow, is undoubtedly improving. The owners and the managers of the Cosmo can take a large amount of the primary credit for this. True, there is not yet the richness of Sweden; but this is largely because a different (film) economic situation exists in the two countries. There is little critical support for specialist cinema in provincial newspapers—and this is all part of the same problem. Provincial critics (or at any rate their editors) tend to follow, not lead.

The dominant influence will remain the film society. There are two societies in Glasgow, and we might turn our attention to them. However, a change of scene will permit us to examine the role of the film society in a city which has no other source of specialized cinema. The city we go to is Aberdeen. It lies in a windy northeasterly corner of Scotland and is the third or fourth city of Scotland, rivalling Dundee some miles to the south. In the commercial field, Aberdeen has five first-run cinemas and many more neighborhood theaters. Two of the major houses are owned by a local circuit, which also controls all the neighborhood theaters as well as the only professional legitimate theater in the town. Two of the other major cinemas are in the Rank Odeon Circuit; and the fifth belongs to the Gaumont group, a Rank subsidiary. Rank's main competitor, Associated British Pictures

Corporation (ABC), has at present no theater in Aberdeen, although it would like one.

During a typical four-month period (July–November, 1951), there was generally at least one commercially exhibited film each week which was worth reviewing. Some of the titles from the period were *Born Yesterday, Lavender Hill Mob, City Lights, Ace in the Hole, Teresa, A Walk in the Sun,* and *Strangers on a Train.* Nevertheless, during this period, the commercial cinemas were virtually closed to contemporary foreign-language productions—with one unremarkable exception, *Clochemerle,* which was shown at a Rank theater. And apart from *City Lights* (and *All Quiet on the Western Front* at a neighborhood theater), no old classics were revived. Thus, although the standard of the best of British and American productions was high, there was still a large gap which could only be filled by a specialized cinema or a film society. Aberdeen, to repeat, has none of the former, but has two film societies.

The first of Aberdeen's film societies, and the oldest, is called the Film Society. The second, formed since the war, is known as the Film Appreciation Group. A letter circulated recently to interested bodies in Aberdeen sums up the present situation. The combined membership of the two societies is 2,500, with a supposed overlap of 500. This is the largest combined membership in proportion to population for any city in Britain. (1951 census: 182,714; percentage membership: 1.4 per cent). In an eight-month (autumn to spring) season, the Society and the Group both offer eight 35-mm. performances on Sunday evenings in two major theaters. The Group also offers a subsidiary series of eight or nine performances in 16-mm., and there are occasional additional shows.

Two general aspects reveal themselves as regards the broader policy of the two societies: the presentation of world cinema for its entertainment value (Society) . . . . and interest in the aesthetic and historical side of film appreciation (Group).[8]

[8] From a letter circulated by the Committee for a Civic Arts Centre Association for Aberdeen and the North East.

Clearly the two societies are thus ideally complementary. The Society provides the same kind of entertainment as a specialized commercial cinema. It has the disadvantage of not being in the commercial market and must, accordingly, wait for a contemporary Continental film which is still successful commercially in other cities. (This applies to all film-society choices.) But the Society has the advantage of a subscribed membership and can rely on a period of financial stability which is sometimes necessary for experiments—even those of a delicate nature.

And the Group is thus able to give most of its time to consideration of the film as art. Originally, there was some suggestion that the Group should not try to compete with the established Society, but should build its programs from films not considered contemporary. But this was soon found to be an artificial limitation. In recent developments, the secretary of the Group has attempted to give point to his programs—particularly in the subsidiary historical series. Here, he tries to offer double features on directors—as far as possible, an earlier and later work of each—and this has been especially successful.

To balance the list of films shown commercially in Glasgow, there follows a list of the programs shown by the two Aberdeen societies in the period September–November, 1951. The Society's first three programs included the following films:

1. *Berliner Ballade* (Stemmle, 1949), three selections from *The Poet and the Painter* (Festival of Britain, 1951, John Halas, etc.), and *Strandhugg* (Sucksdorff).
2. *Jofroi* (René Pagnol) and *Shakespeare of Kronborg* (Dreyer).
3. *Molti Sogni Per le Strade* (Camerini, 1949).

The first three of the Group's 35-mm. series were

1. *Il Miracolo* (Rossellini with Magnani) and *L'Onorevole Angelina* (Zampa with Magnani).
2. *La Grande Illusion* (Renoir, 1937), *Shadows on the Snow* (Sucksdorff), and *The Train* (Gösta Werner).
3. *Les Parents Terribles* (Cocteau, 1949) and *Adventure in Bokhara* (Production Protzanov, 1943).

The first three of the Group's 16-mm. series were

1. *October* (Eisenstein, 1927) and *Storm Over Asia* (Pudovkin, 1928).
2. *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915).
3. *Julius Caesar* (David Bradley) and three James Broughton shorts.

When asked to estimate the impact of the two societies on public taste, secretary William Thompson of the Group was not optimistic. He does not think that much has been done in either society to open up public response to "genuine creative film making." There is a combined membership of approximately 2,500. According to the secretary, the "really interested enthusiastic nucleus in Aberdeen amounts to about 500, maybe less"—that is, one fifth of the combined membership. This minority he feels more sure about, particularly the "young people—birds of passage—who support the societies for genuine reasons and take away a zest for the best they have seen." For the rest, the film societies, in a town which has no established tradition to break the Sabbath for a film show, appear to be providing a pleasant way to pass a winter Sunday evening, and possibly also a minor exercise in snobbism.

According to the secretary, there are three main sources of difficulty for a society organizer. First, the availability of good films; second, the financial limitations; and third, the lack of adequate screening facilities. Of these, film availability is a persistent problem for the film society. Two primary sources are the Central Booking Agency and the National Film Library, both of the British Film Institute in London. The National Film Library continues to strengthen the film society's position by a developing policy of assistance.[4] But this does not yet solve all the booking secretary's problems. And, since importation of selected films is beyond the reaches of most society budgets, this leaves a recurring problem for a society which makes an honest attempt to present constructive and lively programs. It is embarrassing

[4] H. Forsyth Hardy, "Help for Film Societies," *Sight and Sound,* VIII (Spring, 1939), 12–13.

to have to apologize to an audience which has been attracted by an advertisement for *The Magic Garden* and *Occupe-toi d'Amélie* that instead, they will see *La Grande Illusion* and *Shadows Over the Snow*. And it is infuriating to plan a program to illustrate the work of a director and, instead of the classics for which he is famous and which were promised you, to have to make do with his insignificant work—the only films available at the last hour.

Not much money is necessary to run a film society. The expenditure of the Film Appreciation Group for the year 1951–1952 was a little more than £1,000 ($2,840), and this covered the costs of seventeen performances and the operating overheads. Although this is not a large sum of money, each penny of it is hard earned. An examination of the accounts for the above period shows that there is a net profit of only about £70 ($198), and that for each member of the Group there is spent or invested (in some negotiable property like film journals) an average £1 ($2.84). Clearly, without considerable rise in membership, the relative costs of film hire and transport (almost 30 per cent) and of cinema rental (about 45 per cent) will eat into the subscriptions. (The highest individual subscription for the seventeen performances is thirty shillings or $4.25.) Further, the Group is probably nearing its peak. Membership for 1952–1953 was slightly higher than the previous year, with a cash-in-hand figure of £140—twice the previous year's balance. This slight improvement occurs against a background of falling membership and financial losses in most other societies throughout the country. In the south, television is blamed for quite substantial drops; but this has not yet affected the north of Scotland to the same extent. (However, the Coronation boosted TV-set sales.)

Thus, any possible expansion of activities must be accomplished by cutting costs, not by increasing income. Without some national reorganization (and its nature is hard to envisage), the cost of film rental must be treated as a constant which is liable to

rise rather than fall. Almost two thirds of the costs after film rental are consumed by cinema hire and other projection expenses. Here is a possible source of future economy—given central premises at the disposal of both societies. And there is an Arts Council-backed plan to achieve this. A recent appeal from the Civic Arts Centre Association said, "Lectures, amateur film-making, library formation, frequent previewing"—all of these out of the reach of the two societies as they are at present organized—"would at last become a reality . . . . on the establishment of a Civic Arts Centre." The Group's secretary, in writing of this, is enthusiastic. Central premises are, he says, "the one great hope to provide a truly generous implantation of serious film 'edification' in a community dominated by commercial exploitation." Such facilities will give the societies a chance to establish their work, he continues, as something "worthwhile and potent in enlarging the creative field of film."

Perhaps this is the beginning of a trend—not a lone example in Scotland—in which film watchers will be encouraged to become film makers, even at an amateur, exploratory level. If so, this is a development in the right direction. There comes a time when a man cannot listen to another word about film criticism. He simply has to forget talking, and go out and shoot some film.

These notes on Aberdeen and Glasgow should convey some of the problems facing the specialized cinema in Scotland—and thus, in Britain generally—and how they are being met. In the cities at least, the outlook is promising; but in the end, the specialists—like everyone else—may be at the mercy of changing conditions within the world's film industry.

The B.B.C. and All That

JOHN GRIERSON

JOHN GRIERSON has long been synonymous with documentary motion pictures. In addition to a lifelong personal association with Robert Flaherty, he developed in the twenties the extensive use of documentary films in public information for the British Government Service. Mr. Grierson also planned National Film Units for all the Commonwealth countries; established the National Film Board of Canada; and, during World War II was General Manager of Wartime Information in Canada. After the war, he became Director of Mass Communications at UNESCO until 1948 when he returned to England as Controller of Films for the Central Office of Information. Three years ago, Mr. Grierson initiated British-government sponsored Group 3, which has been making feature films on a commercial basis but with the prime purpose of developing new talent and new experiments in picture making. Recent films directly produced by Mr. Grierson include *The Brave Don't Cry* and *Man of Africa.*

IN THE TELEVISION CONTROVERSY in Great Britain, one thing is clear: the commercial promoters have taken a drubbing on the case they have presented. They have, of course, had to try very hard to make us forget Mr. J. Fred Muggs, the monkey star of American radio who crashed the American presentation of the Coronation. Desperately, they would have us believe that the case for commercial television is an eminently respectable one. They identify it, for example, with the case for the freedom of the press.

But their appeal has largely failed. They can't expect to exorcise J. Fred Muggs very easily, because everyone senses that these commercial promoters are up to a bit of monkey business anyway—and why aren't they honest about it? Just as the example of the monkey is difficult to defend, so is the example of the American. And their analogies aren't sharply chosen. Film making is in no way tied up with advertising as commercial television is bound to be. Newspapers are; but they have, for all to see, editorial controls which largely prevent their exploitation by advertisers. Another business altogether is when advertisers so completely finance and control the service that they can determine the creative work in all its particulars. This is not neces-

sarily or invariably a bad control, but from the public point of view it can be dangerous. All sensible people appreciate this.

Unfortunate, too, has been the appeal to the freedom of the individual and to the right to choose which has been easy meat for the bishops and the vice-chancellors. They have put the case for over-all public responsibility which limits the right of the individual. They point out that television, because of the weight and penetration of its influence, requires special safeguards against exploitation. The weight of this influence derives, of course, from the vastness of TV's audience—greater far than any except for that of radio itself. Television's penetration derives from its presence in the home, every hour of the day or night—a counter attraction to every domestic routine and every personal discipline. To consider lightly this power is clearly dangerous.

The easiest of all claims to override is that the public will find the quality of program that suits it and "to say that this would involve debased programs is equivalent to passing a vote of no confidence in the British people." This was presented by a Member of Parliament. An old lady fixed it in a trice by saying, "Isn't the police a vote of no confidence in the British people; and aren't the churches?" Someone else, remembering "Lead us not into temptation," remarked, "Isn't it the habit of all good people to pass a vote of no confidence in themselves, and very properly too?" In fact, agreement comes easily that freedom of choice is a pretty thought, but civilization consists in keeping it in relative order.

Television, on the face of it, seems to demand a rather special need for order. It provides the conditions of an intimate audience and of a relaxed one. Its cheapness and its almost incidental nature seem to indicate the unimportance of program quality. Even the safeguards that attend public performances are lacking. You may read only the sports page of a newspaper, but you have at least to undergo the discipline of reading it. Cinema is sufficiently costly to make you choose with a certain precision of judgment. Television, wide open, is potentially a sort of public fair with an

infinity of side shows yelling you up to the latest sensation. J. Fred Muggs isn't an accident. He is the fairground inevitable. He is, of course, you and me and all of us with our pants down.

Now that I have demonstrated the difficulty of the commercial case, let me say immediately that I am for it. I am for it in spite of the danger. Perhaps I am for it especially because of the danger. I wish the commercial-television people had not made a case for their eminent respectability. I wish they had made a case for their vulgarity. I wish they had not denied J. Fred Muggs so summarily. For I think that in throwing him out they may have been throwing the baby out with the bath water. I say this because there is something about this dangerous business, this J. Fred Muggs business, which we sorely need.

I am, of course, involved in the argument—as any film man must be. Television can do all sorts of things on its own, and ably too. It can give an immediate sight of public events. It can provide a living magazine about wonderful places, things, and people. It can give you stage shows of all kinds. But when all this has been said, TV is just another way of presenting films—without the cumbersome process of carting them around in cans and of projecting them with fuss, expense, and danger in theaters all over the country.

The film world has one great virtue. It is notably a world of fly men, fast men, noisy men, and thoroughly vulgar men. You might say that, if it is publicly responsible, it is only for a buck. You might also say that if it ever does anything good, this is only because the innate goodness of mankind occasionally creeps up on it through a producer, through a director or a writer, or through the odd workings of the Almighty in the public taste itself. But the film world is vital in the sense that it isn't smarmed over with deceptive words and attitudes. It doesn't choke goodness with lip service and make it sick with professionalism. It isn't holier than thou because it isn't holy at all. It isn't removed from the people. It lives where the people are. Its consequent great virtue is exuberance.

But there isn't a lot of room for producers and directors in the film industry. There can't be. On the competitive level now established, films are costly. There is also a limit to what we make because the theaters need only so many films. Some of us suspect that they need far, far fewer than they presently get. There is, you say, always room at the top. But you have to be a majority producer—or writer or director—to get there and stay there. I make the necessary reservation that some great goods come in small bulk.

This means of course that television provides now, and will more and more provide, an outlet for the creative talent which does not make, or want to make, the grade of commercial cinema. The film maker must consider television as the other half of his field of opportunity. TV will be the more vital to him as he conceives of himself as a minority artist. True, there has grown up in the film world, painfully over the years, an Art Theater Movement which is a precious aid to the independent film maker—particularly in America. But this is never the guarantee of the price of the negative. Since television represents the alternative basic economy for film makers, the more certainly must they turn to it. Their case is important because the renegades from the commercial cinema may provide much of the great visual talent to come. Film makers must have in their reserve the special visual talents—particularly the poetic talents—which the majority cinema cannot easily use.

I conclude from this that the future of television in Britain means life or death to a great part of the art of cinema itself. Any form of television which diminishes its vital development means a loss to the creative life of the nation. Any form of television which, for whatever reason, nurtures it, is a gain. Art is the only world of human activity in which, by social sanction, the end has always justified the means. In the name of Leonardo and a host of others, the patronage of the vital arts has forgiven the great vulgarians their sins. Notable are the mealymouths of overt

goodness who have produced fewer artists than these other, more apparently doubtful, forces. This is a point of some consideration as we film makers now approach the threshold of television and the august portals of the B.B.C.

One of the difficulties in the present controversy has been to find a convincing basis for attacking the B.B.C. Almost all the professional forces of virtue have lined up on the side of the B.B.C.; and for this very reason, I propose now to search it with a jaundiced eye. When I hear the cry, "Lord, Lord," I am skeptical.

I have one preliminary reason which derives from the nature of aesthetic. Whatever the regiments of virtue may do, they do not make art—and for the patent reason that art does not come out of virtue but by its own, very different branch, from the human root itself. The more this law is forgotten, the more accepted, academic, and respectable the making of art becomes; the more, that is to say, art loses its immediate contact with the soil, the more vacuous is the result. This, with Hazlitt, I have held to be self-evident. I restate it because of the increasing airs and claims of the forces of respectability: the illusion that a position in education, religion, social welldoing, or public administration gives you special privilege to speak with insight on the creative force and equips you to control it. These attainments, however honorable, do not in fact bring a man closer to the creative act, but separate him from it. This, every working artist knows.

Let me say at once that the B.B.C. has done a wonderful job according to its lights. It has been a national instrument of the greatest integrity in difficult times. It has been honest as an organization and honorable as a service. Its public manners are impeccable, in the English manner, which alone studies the impeccable. Let us by all means follow its advocates a part of the distance and without demur.

"The B.B.C. was constituted to minister to the information, education, and entertainment of the people. It has magnificently

fulfilled this mandate" (Harold Nicholson); "In a world of poison, the B.B.C. is a great antiseptic" (Leon Blum); "Throughout the world it is trusted and feared as the mouthpiece of objective truth" (Lord Simon); "It has created public taste in Homer, Virgil, Chaucer, and Bertrand Russell" (Lady Bonham Carter). The only qualification of these claims by its friends is that the B.B.C. tends to be "too timid, too complacent, too cautious, and too conceited." On the other hand, the Beveridge Committee of Inquiry, set up by the British Government, found "not a single serious case of bureaucracy, complacency, favoritism, or inefficiency." Even its monopoly is "more apparent than real." Its Staff Association says, "The Regional Organizations within the B.B.C., the friendly but unrelaxing rivalry between programs and departments, generate considerably more vitality than might have been expected in a monopoly and than is frequently observed in private enterprise."

But this affects my skepticism not at all. The really interesting thing about the B.B.C. is not that it is a monopoly but that it is a monopoly in the possession of the official and orthodox forces of politics, religion, and culture—the forces that are said to make up the "English Establishment." The English Establishment is traditionally a great power in the land; indeed uniquely so, because no other nation has anything like it. Here, the forces of Court, County, Church, and State combine—and with a harmony which surpasses alien understanding—not only to speak for England, but to see to it that any odd voices there may be will, sooner or later, be raised in unison. It is the liberalizing force in the English political genius—smoothing out, polishing up, and creating the great unity-with-a-minimum-of-difference which is England's historical character.

Some have taken a poor view of the English Establishment in action. It has been thought of as Vanity Fair as well as "My Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen." My parents charged me to avoid its communion and I was once counseled not even to use its lava-

tories. Browning worried about its ribbons; and Bunyan, Payne, and Cobbett fought it. With varying success, great men like Carlyle, Wells, and Shaw scorned it. "But in the end the Thing gets hold of you," says A. J. P. Taylor in a recent essay on Cobbett. "Indeed the Thing shows its greatest skill in rewarding its opponents." Get hold of you, it mostly does and with a spanking range of social bribery that makes every other venal system banal and clumsy in comparison. This means that in the cultural matter which is the root of the matter in any State, England has come to expect, and unconsciously operates, as effective a control of creative energy as any authoritarian regime: the tighter for not being tight, the more complete for not dreaming of anything of the kind—which is the English way of saying that the right hand is unaware of what the left hand, the dangerous one, is doing. Roundheads and Radicals, Papists and Puritans, the English Establishment has swallowed the lot. Although you may think of England as running a sort of cultural OGPU for the elimination of every freeborn talent and every incipient rebel, the possibility exists to say that here is the English political genius working at its surest. If it gathers to itself every creative force, from politics to poetry—however rebellious and however strange—it is acting with the instinct of the maturest of political animals. It is safeguarding its strength.

But if the B.B.C. is pillar and instrument of this powerful English force, there is a point which may well deserve your attention. In the pursuit of its function and the fulfillment of its needs, the B.B.C. has converted the normal process of absorption into an abnormal one never before contemplated in the English philosophy. It has reached out everywhere and to every talent large and little; and everywhere, it has evened up, smoothed out, and liberalized in the traditional manner. Here I submit the crucial question. Is it possible that, by excess of influence, the B.B.C. has turned a healthy life-absorbing force into a life-destroying force? Is it possible that, instead of being the enormous asset to the na-

tional strength we all expected, it has become—not out of dereliction of duty but out of its own nature—just as enormous a liability? This, to me, is the central issue of the controversy and the one on which a decision will ultimately be made.

No national undertaking has faced so complex a task or one where so many unlooked-for results came from apparently reasonable intentions. The mandate of the B.B.C. was to minister to the information, education, and entertainment of the people. And the B.B.C. has taken the mandate at the order of its word. It has been first-rate in information, and there is no end to its education. There is more and more about more and more, in obedience to the nineteenth-century fallacy, first revealed by Walter Lippmann, that the necessity of intelligent citizenship is to know everything about everything all the time.

The trouble in an increasingly complex world is that education about everything turns out mostly to be education about nothing. You sigh for something in the less literate villages of your youth, where men arrived further by pondering longer on less. Any dominie of the old school would have told you that knowledge does not necessarily make for vitality or that culture does not create a character. The claim is earnestly made that the B.B.C. "does not lead or mold public opinion." What if it encourages the habit of not having any at all?

Nor is the B.B.C.'s case for an ever larger dish of Hutchins' "hundred best books" as self-evident as it supposes. The B.B.C. has certainly done wonderful things for music and, by creating a new market, has, without a doubt, encouraged composers. But in the fields of creative literature, its admiration for the great and the dead has become, by sheer emphasis, a sort of denial of the here and now, the alive and troublesome, which is becoming a national habit of mind. The gentlemen in a library—the gentlemen of leisure in a library—have been taking over all of us. Their best is an impressive best, but not necessarily helpful if experience is always at one gentlemanly remove from us. Although I

have respect for the classics, I doubt if they are half as good for us as feeling very much alive in the present and doing something of our very own and for ourselves. The time may have come to reconsider the effect of the B.B.C.'s constant propagandist pressure in these matters.

An important point here is to distinguish the B.B.C.'s own responsibility from that of mass communications in general. Radio, like the cinema and the newspapers, is one of the powerful new forces which impel us to live life at a distance. In this respect, the B.B.C. is the unwitting instrument of the results whatever they may be. It cannot be blamed for them any more than any other operator of radio. The question is whether, with its orthodox educational and cultural policies, the B.B.C. has put life at a greater distance than it would be if it were, like the movies and the newspapers, closer to the people, commoner about its function, and altogether more exciting in its habit.

Interesting to note is how the approach works out in the apparently lesser matters of the everyday programs. The B.B.C. has gone to great lengths to extend the range of its observation. Professional or amateur, public figure or man in the street, it will sooner or later have at you with its microphone. It will examine you in public or in your parlor. The B.B.C. has, in fact, a distinguished record in the invasion of privacy. Here, of course, its manners tell, as they certainly don't in its American counterpart. But do they tell too much? You may feel outraged at the notion, but I beg you to think it over.

I, for one, find the contact with the people flat and safe and inconsequential. Except for a rare exent—for example, when the charwomen of Whitehall took a commentator over and blew a sudden rich wind over the immaculate air—I do not seem to be hearing very much of the noisy, raucous, and authentic voice I not only know, but also know I need. Everyone is in his best bib and tucker for the parson.

Many of us who have operated on the B.B.C. have been con-

scious of a related problem. For an hour of the public's attention, producers in my trade may work intensively for half a year trying to get color and size into the work we offer. At our best, we spend a great deal of time—yes, in laborious intensive rehearsal—to get to what we think may be the deeper levels of the natural. The B.B.C. doesn't work at its material with anything like the same intensity. The first impression is that they are all pretty lazy and languid and inclined to coast on their schoolboy education. One certainly hears much in comedy about B.B.C. "types." But this isn't altogether true. If the standard of exchange of experience you set yourself—and unfortunately set everyone else—is the thin, safe, and artificial standard of the polite conversation, the dress debate, and the suburban party, the less you work at it the better. This accounts at once for a sense of public responsibility. It cannot lightly, the B.B.C. says, give offense. Certainly the telephones blaze and the newspapers shout when a commentator gets tight and adds a not inconsiderable metaphor to the language. The truth of the matter is that in persistently not giving offense, the B.B.C. arrives largely at the anemic.

What is so wrong about giving offense anyway? Why shouldn't the B.B.C. live in a storm of rows? And whoever said this was an unhealthy thing to do? I know the American radio a little because I have lived and worked in the United States. I suppose I deplore its more offensive habits. But I ask you seriously to ponder the thought that it notably exudes vitality and, even more importantly, induces vitality in others. When the quality of the vitality is questioned, consider, possibly, that any is better than none at all. The end result of American radio is, I suspect, a deeper contribution to the fiber and spirit of the national life than its superior critics, like Hutchins, allow.

Paradoxically, the heartier vulgarities of America are what make the country wonderful in recollection. It isn't the University of Chicago, but Halstead Street, the Black Belt, and the Loop. No doubt the same sort of thing made the Elizabethan Age won-

derful too. If we want to find that secret again, I suspect that instead of broadcast readings of Shakespeare we should re-create the conditions in which Shakespeare and his fellow rogues and vagabonds had their creative being.

The correct analogy for the B.B.C. is, I think, in the development of the American continent which had for its by-product the dust bowls of the West. Certain fundamental factors—the relationship of mountain to plain and forest to river, soil stability, and even the nature of the life-giving soil itself—were forgotten. The point of absorbing the creative force is obviously well lost if it so operates as to allow the growth of nothing worth absorbing. That I submit is the present impasse of the B.B.C. The eulogies of the B.B.C., with which I largely agree, do not touch on the point.

One unique thing about the B.B.C.—unique in that we take it for granted—is that it is thought of almost exclusively as an absorber of the talents of others and from roots other than the B.B.C. itself. There it is, a richer, more powerful, sponsor of the arts than Europe has ever seen, richer than all the Medici combined. Yet no single original distinguished school of expression has sprung from it. In the same time, the cinema has produced a dozen and more vital schools of aesthetic quality. The game is given away by a plea for an "extra hundred thousand pounds a year for Variety." That is the figure of ambition for the one single active creative art inside radio. The figure is the more distressing when one considers that the B.B.C.'s almost principal crime has been the emasculation of this once great art of the English people.

To do it justice, the B.B.C. constantly feels that something is lacking. But what does it do? It ranges out still further into the Provinces and into Scotland, hoping that they have some last remainder of native wit to bring to market. To regionalize and multiply the same old thing is to beg the question, if what is needed is something different in kind. Even the discovery of new local sources of creative energy does not explain why the metro-

politan force is itself impotent. In the result, the B.B.C. influence, whether in London or in Edinburgh, is only to add to the parade of personalities without power and to parlor games without point.

It is notorious that the creative people of the B.B.C. live in some unaccountable fear which has nothing to do with economic security. I have known men to worry intensely even when they got the soft answer which deflates all violence in this well-mannered institution. The occasional shot rings out in the corridors. A well-known broadcaster screams in desperation and, for some reason, is publicly honored in doing so. That he has made the greatest possible public success out of being "unmannerly" in and on the B.B.C. is in itself a phenomenon of some significance. But more important, it registers his and everyone else's sense of the B.B.C.'s distance from it. With much respect to Homer, Virgil, Bertrand Russell, Uncle Tom Cobley and all, I suggest the fear is not so unaccountable if you wake up in the night feeling there is nothing there. "Can anything succeed if there is a cold dying center?" said J. B. Priestley recently. "All who work for vast organizations begin to lose sight of their original purpose. Very soon more and more authority is given to tidy, cold-blooded types and less and less to untidy hot-blooded creative types." How much the more frightening this is in an organization whose principal duty is to warm the heart and excite the mind and the will of the nation!

The dangerous thing today is not simply that we uproot the arts from their warm local sources and transfer them to sterile metropolitan ones. What far more destructively happens is that we transfer artists at a great rate from a creative habit of life and thought to a noncreative one. We make them "public relations officers," scores of them. We encourage them to be critics where the work is softer, the pay more certain, and the public presentation more flattering than it is for creative men. We give them as critics our sycophantic attraction as we give to artists only our patronizing notice. This turning topsy-turvy of the world of

values is common to other spheres besides radio. Loosely, we encourage many original talents to take to administration. Indeed we make these second-rate activities both safer and more attractive.

In this matter, the B.B.C. is by far the most foolish operator in the country because it is destructive of its own ultimate interest. Nor has it its own other ways of stirring up the conditions under which the creative process stirs and develops. The gentlemen in the striped trousers could not know what they are. The turncoats would be prejudiced witnesses anyway. The B.B.C., in fact, employs every talent except the talent for creating the conditions of creative effort. This cannot be an accident. I suggest it is of the logic of its size and of its policy and of the curse that nails it to Orthodoxy.

This then is why we film makers, as we approach the threshold of television, have some reason to be skeptical of the notion that the B.B.C. shall be its "onlie begetter." The B.B.C. has no record of begetting or of even liking TV. I say simply, and I hope quietly, that the B.B.C. is there, wonderfully there, to be walked out of and to be kept away from. That is its peculiar challenge in the life of Britain today and to the life force of Britain in particular. It takes chances, say its admirers. Let us go, please, where they take wilder chances. Let us, I beg, prefer the long competitive spoon with the devil to the milk and water handouts of this episcopal clinic. There is a certain guarantee of life in consorting with the thugs of the cinema. I am sure it will not be otherwise with their brethren of commercial television if they will only stop trying to outdo the B.B.C. in their protestations of good intention. As I said at the beginning, commercial television is dangerous. But if you have followed me, is it more dangerous—can anything be more dangerous—than the progressive diminishment and elimination of vitality itself?

From some original prejudice, I hate commercialism with every sense I have. I expect many of the advertising "services" that the commercial sponsors offer will be thoroughly phony and a blister-

ing loss to the public economy. But if a proportion of their ill-gotten gains come to the lively arts and to the arts of being lively, they will be well justified. We shall at least be able to say with Housman on the Mercenaries, "What God forgot these men defended and saved the sum of things for pay." Remembering the B.B.C.'s claim to Chaucer and Bertrand Russell, you will perhaps pardon me if I tip a wink to the Wife of Bath and the younger Russell and vote for the jungle.

As for England it cannot afford not to. Her pursuit of urbanity has become, in the hands of the B.B.C., a breeder of apathy, which of all wasting public diseases is the surest killer. I think England senses and begins to know this. If anyone talks about the difficulty of finding a formula that will combine a satisfactory pretense of public respectability with commercialism, he doesn't know his England. It has been finding formulae for Boards ever since it set up the London Hackney Carriage Board to find a soft job for one Congreve, a dramatist. For Boards are yet another expression of the English genius for compromise.

From the beginning, to say "either the American type of television or the B.B.C. one" has been silly. The issue never lay between these equally embarrassing alternatives, and does not now. Any sensible person can suggest other possibilities. The Socialist Party will, of course, fight strenuously on this cultural matter as is now their wont. I imagine the older socialist guard will sit sorry and silent as they defend, in the long run, the very force which enticed them away from their radical origins and polished them up and polished them off as per usual. But, as I said at the beginning, this is something of a sham fight. Competitive television in England is a pretty sure bet and for the basic political reason I have disclosed. In such vital matters England doesn't make mistakes for long.

Music, Television, and Aesthetics

ROBERT B. CANTRICK

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TELEVISION IS A HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL subject. Within the field, there is sharp controversy over production procedures; outside the field, over the quality of programs. All the way round, things are just tumultuous. Don't be so naïve, however, as to conclude that for this reason the subject should be approached with caution. Your genuine scholar—who begins by scrupulously confessing the general lack of experience on all sides, who goes on to summarize the chief conflicting points of view, and who ends with a few highly tentative conclusions—ought to be gently shepherded back to his Sanskrit. This attitude will never get you anywhere in television. Ask any expert (i.e., anyone with six or more weeks of experience). It is absolutely necessary to be dramatic. Unless you rock the audience with a tremendous emotional impact in the first two minutes, well—dolly back, brother. You'll get your dials flipped.

No, the following remarks are not calmly reasoned. I have abandoned myself, heart and soul, to the spirit of this great new medium. Away with scholarly detachment! This is going to be as provocative as possible.

My subject is the telecasting of musical performances. I contend that TV directors are fumbling this business and that a little clear thinking can easily solve the problem.

There is no doubt that this is a problem. So far, the general reaction of music lovers to TV concerts has been "Please give us radio back again." And, of course, if the video portion of the telecasts they have seen has been a disturbing influence, who can

blame them for complaining? On the other hand, no music lover in calm possession of all his senses will maintain that a telecast of a concert has to be objectionable by nature. Indeed, if he is in possession of all his senses, he has his eyesight, which he himself uses when he goes to a concert. He may not always enjoy what he sees; he may turn and whisper to his neighbor, "Isn't she a witch!" Nevertheless, he turns back again to stare some more at the witch and comes away from the concert with a more significant recollection than if he had been blind. Television can add the video element to musical broadcasting. Therefore, television should make the total experience richer for the viewer than radio could. Why doesn't it? The cause is not any inherent defect in the medium; rather, it is bad directing—the pictures draw attention to themselves, rather than to the music.

The problem, in short, is to plan a pictorial sequence sufficiently skillful to efface itself completely from the attention of the viewer who can then transfer all of his interest to what he hears. He should not only hear music; he should "see" music. Let's get one thing clear right at the beginning, though. The TV camera cannot take the place of human eyes on the scene—not literally. It is not like eyes. It does not have the same angle of vision; it does not move in the same manner; it does not see binocularly. Therefore, to attempt to use the television camera as you use your eyes is a mistake. Rather, use the camera in ways which come naturally to it. Since the camera has a narrower angle of view than the eyes, it is more selective. Therefore, turn this selectivity to expressive advantage. Since it can dolly, tilt, pan, and truck—in ways totally different from the movements of the eyes—make these techniques reveal aspects of the performance inaccessible to the eyes alone. Since it transmits a picture in two dimensions—whereas the eyes work as a pair to give stereoscopic vision—exploit the flatness of the picture according to all the familiar principles of pictorial composition. Since it possesses enormous potentialities for fantasy, let it experiment with sub-

jective-camera techniques, with choreography, and with abstract imagery. Then the television medium will be exploiting the great advantage it possesses over radio—not to take the place of a person present at the performance but, on the contrary, to witness in its own unique way. Television experience is no substitute for real experience, but it can get us closer to the real thing than radio can by exploiting its own characteristic way of "seeing" the music.

Now this visualization requires an enormous amount of planning by the TV director. It cannot be ad-libbed. To be convinced of this, you need only reflect what an enormous amount of planning the composer puts into his "audio sequence." The director's first responsibility is to reconstruct in his mind the course of thinking which has already taken place in the composer's mind. Such a re-creative process has proved a challenge to listeners of the highest intelligence for generations. Even the most gifted director will devise a superficial treatment if he underestimates the amount of musical insight required at the very outset. Yet this is only one third of his task. In the second place, he must find ways to translate the musical meaning into visual terms by exercising all the imagination at his command. Finally, he must critically review his work to guard against the possibility of having overdone the job and having created too much visual interest. The kind of creative work the director does, and the amount of it, have to be subordinated to the ironclad dictates of the composer.

This is a tremendous responsibility. It is not unlike the position in which serious composers find themselves when they undertake to write film music for the first time, after having done a great deal of concert music. They use the same basic tools and skills of their craft, but in a totally different way. They cannot allow their music to develop according to purely musical principles; it must follow and be subordinate to the pictorial sequence. Most movie music is not very interesting on the concert platform for this reason—too dull. By the same token, a TV director doing a telecast of a concert is under obligation not to allow his pictorial sequence

to develop according to purely visual principles; it must follow and be subordinate to the musical score. Were this telecast to be exhibited in a kinescope later, without the audio element, it would probably be a little on the dull side too. Thus, the director is not really boss in this situation; he is a collaborator—not in an administrative sense, but in a more fundamental, more challenging sense—creatively. Can he grasp the composer's structural outline and its aesthetic content? Can he use the skills and tools of his craft to enhance the significance of the composer's message?

I wish more directors understood this profound challenge and would take it up. Composers for the films—and even long before them, composers of songs—have found the challenge of collaboration with other arts to be stimulating. By their contribution, composers have raised poetry, drama, and cinema to artistic heights of unique significance. The same exciting potentiality lies before any imaginative television director who is entrusted with the responsibility for putting music on the air.

Now when I say directors are fumbling this business, I do not refer to the handful who have already understood the problem and, indeed in some instances, have already proposed highly original and imaginative solutions. I refer to the great majority who haven't taken the trouble to face the problem at all. We see their work on the airways time and again. There is no excuse for it. The simple discussion I have given above is not so profound that it could not have occurred to any director with a conscience. Any time you see a bad telecast of a musical performance, don't blame it on the nature of television. Blame it on the nature of directors.

(I warned you this was going to be provocative.)

So much for the evils in present practice. What about solutions to the problem? Once a director fully accepts the nature of the challenge involved in telecasting concerts, he is bound to find himself in the realm of aesthetics. Whenever you have to search for general concepts which apply with equal validity to several arts, you become a philosopher of art. In the present example, I

do not think it necessary to have read Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, Hegel, Croce, and Dewey. I hope not, for the sake of getting something done within the next hundred years. But I do think the reading of some of the literature on the aesthetics of the films—of which a respectable amount is lying around, unjustifiably neglected—is a great help. In fact, if any serious student of the films has steeled himself to stay with me this far, he is undoubtedly muttering, "Old stuff!" For thirty years, the art cinema has been working on the aesthetics of those same audio-visual relationships now operative in television—those which are to be found wherever camera and microphone are simultaneously trained on moving, sounding subject matter. Apropos of our problem, there is also another body of literature which antedates even the classic studies of film: the essays of Jaques-Dalcroze and his disciples, concerned with the relationships between music and motion in general.

As far back as 1933 in his *A Grammar of the Film,* Raymond Spottiswoode said, "The study of the cinema must ultimately take a place within the province of the science of aesthetics." Seventeen years later, an eloquent tribute to this viewpoint was paid by the University of California Press, when it brought out a new American edition of his book. The preface to this 1950 edition asks candidly:

> How, then, does this early study of film stand up to the passage of time?. . . . The answer seems to be that. . . . There is . . . a continuing need to go back to fundamentals. . . . Film makers do not for the most part search in the film's arsenal of powers for an apt means of expression.

Does this have anything to do with television? The preface continues:

> [the author's] stress on the distinction between . . . the stage . . . and the screen seems to need just as much emphasis now as then. Films like *Mourning Becomes Electra* continue to be produced; and television offers a flat and melancholy reminder in many an American home

that personality cannot be projected through the ether by a mere representation of the actor's face and gestures!

In short, telecasters, no less than film makers, need, as stated in this same preface,

to lay aside conventions and think themselves into the very stuff of their medium, as the poets, painters, and composers of the last sixty years have found it necessary to do.

Why shouldn't the aesthetics of cinema have much to contribute to the understanding of the television medium? Both media use motion-picture cameras to photograph moving subjects; therefore, such manipulative techniques as camera movement, choice of lens, composition, etc., are equally applicable. Both media use microphones to record continuing sounds; therefore, such manipulative techniques as boom movement, direction, distance, etc., are equally applicable.

Of course, this is only half the story, as any curbstone expert knows. There is also a great difference. Whereas film makers record events for showing *later,* telecasters record events for transmission *simultaneously.* This is a difference, not in camera techniques, but in purpose—camera techniques are employed for different ends in television. Therefore, although the aesthetics of film are valuable in analyzing the whole repertoire of technical devices of camera and microphone, they are mostly of negative value in suggesting the proper uses of these devices in television. Applied to music, at any rate, they tell us what *not* to do.

So, we have to begin with a "Declaration of Independence": WHEREAS, The motion picture has little or no interest in reporting a concert simply for its own sake, just as it took place; and WHEREAS, This is exactly what telecasting has a major interest in doing; therefore be it *Resolved* that the following practices are taboo in television: (1) treating the performance from the viewpoint of a dramatist by emphasizing people's reactions to it (e.g., showing a beautiful lady in the audience moved to tears); (2)

playing up spectacular aspects of the performance for the sake of showmanship (e.g., showing the conductor's graceful hands or the flashing sequins of the prima donna's gown); (3) sight-seeing with the camera during the performance in search of constant novelty for its own sake; (4) using, generally, any technique which draws attention away from the composer's message and interrupts the continuity of the musical thought.

However, we cannot celebrate our independence with unconfined joy unless we have a "Constitution" ready. Otherwise, we shall have plunged into anarchy. I propose the following preamble: We, the telecasters and musicians of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish aesthetic justice, provide for common understanding, insure the domestic viewers' tranquillity, promote the general adoption of artistic procedures, and secure the blessings of artistic collaboration to ourselves and our public, do ordain and establish this "Constitution" for the telecasting of musical performances.

What are the "Articles of our Constitution" to be? This is a job for many minds. I propose herewith a shopping list as an aid to the discriminating customer in choosing his own "Articles." As notes jotted down on the back of an old envelope, these are not supposed to be complete or systematized—merely, as we hoped in the beginning, provocative.

We shall not take over the complex categories of the film aestheticians. Admirable as these are, we need to rethink the problem in the light of new purposes. To keep things as simple as possible to begin with, we shall point out only two basic purposes: the video element may reinforce or counterpoint the audio element—two categories as old as the history of aesthetic thought: similarity and contrast.

Video Reinforcement

Video reinforcement is always accomplished by picturing the source of the sound—the singer, the pianist, the player in the

orchestra who has the melody at the moment, etc. This is, of course, the most obvious thing to do; and everyone does it—the thoughtful and the thoughtless alike. Unfortunately, it is not successful when done thoughtlessly. How many times have we seen a soft, tranquil solo passage in the orchestra photographed as an intense, dramatic close-up? The camera gets as close as possible to the soloist at the most sensational angle possible. This is like seasoning white wine with catsup. By all means, let us really make the drama of the music visual; but sheer sensationalism is not the answer. Drama is more complex than that; it has many elements and utilizes every degree from the least to the most intense of the expressive spectrum. Moreover, it is constructed in time—with a beginning, a middle, and an ending, plus carefully balanced areas of tension and relaxation along the way. We must differentiate many ways of showing the source of the sound, each with its appropriate purpose. Here, the aesthetics of the film are very helpful. They analyze for us the complete catalogue of photographic techniques. Let us consider the things we can do, one by one, and fit them to appropriate musical situations. Never forget that we confine ourselves at present to video reinforcement of the music; counterpoint comes later.

FACTORS INHERENT IN THE CAMERA ITSELF

Composition.—A close-up is more intense than a long shot. An angle shot is more dramatic than a straight one. Two shots or three shots have greater complexity than one shots. With these things in mind, compose the picture as sensitively as the music was composed. If a singer is just beginning Schubert's "Ave Maria," let the camera select and arrange those pictorial elements of the scene which form the most spiritual, peaceful composition conceivable. A dramatic close-up would not serve this purpose; a medium or long shot would. Choice of a one shot, two shot, three shot, etc., is often dictated by the music. A musical or pictorial composition may include more than one main theme simultane-

ously. For example, if a violinist and a pianist reach a point in a sonata where each of the two main themes is played fortissimo, a two shot is definitely needed.

Choice of lens.—A lens which increases the sense of depth in a picture adds overtones of significance not present in a flatter, more two-dimensional shot. A lens which makes the subject seem distant affects the viewer differently than one which makes the subject seem closer. For example, it is possible to take a close-up from a distance by using a narrow-angle lens, but this does not have the same intensity as a close-up taken with a wide-angle lens from a position closer in. This could be put to musical use, for example, by using a "long" close-up on the wood-wind soloists at the beginning of Ravel's "Bolero" and increasingly "closer" close-ups on each recurrence of the theme on a new instrument. One close-up would not be framed any more tightly than another, but they would reflect the growing intensity of the music.

Distance.—Given two cameras using lenses of equal focal length, the one farther from the subject produces pictures of greater emotional objectivity—the greater the distance, the greater the sense of detachment; the closer the camera, the greater the sense of emotional involvement. In the romantic music of the late nineteenth century, close-ups would frequently be appropriate; in the classical music of the early eighteenth century, rarely.

Focus.—A clear image likewise gives a sense of emotional stability; a blurred image, a sense of emotional duress. It is conceivable that a series of shots, building intensity as they followed the progress of a Tchaikovsky symphony, would move closer to the performers until at the climax the viewer would be swept into the very vortex of the situation by means of a blurred image.

Movement.—The camera can pan, tilt, dolly, and truck. What appropriate devices to use during connecting passages, moving from one subject to the next! In the first movement of the Mozart *G Minor Symphony* during the grand pause for a measure's duration between the first and second subjects, why not pan from the

first violins who had the chief role to the wood winds who now come into prominence?—a more expressive depiction of the brief silence than a cut, since it stresses the continuity of the music. In a Bach organ fugue where a stretto passage builds up intensity to a climax, the camera might dolly in toward the console and arrive at a close-up just as the musical climax was reached. Long crescendos, as in Rossini overtures, can be expressively depicted by a slow dolly in; long diminuendos, by a slow dolly back. In a string-quartet opening where (as in numerous instances) the performers join each other one by one, the growth from one shot to two shot to three shot to four shot could be achieved by a carefully planned trucking movement, thus conveying the feeling of continuous growth inherent in the music. Very important in connection with camera movement is the speed with which it is executed. A slow truck or dolly is entirely different in effect from a zoom. Trucking also lends itself to long passages of music which do not serve thematic purposes but act as extensions, transitions, excursions, etc. The listener's attention is not supposed to be completely absorbed at such times; he finds a slow shift of the visual scene a welcome "breathing space." The tilt, like the pan, will reflect the continuity of the musical thought better than a cut when the melodic thread passes from one performer to another seated farther upstage. This might happen, for instance, in the Brahms "Double Concerto" where the cellist and the violinist play, seated and standing, respectively.

In general, the mobility of the TV camera is what distinguishes it most characteristically from the listener in the concert hall. The camera's privilege to move around is a tremendously expressive asset.

FACTORS INHERENT IN THE SWITCHING SYSTEM

The cut.—Switching from one camera to another in the flick of an eye lends itself aptly to music in which the ideas are introduced with this kind of crisp incisiveness—for example, in the keyboard music of Bach.

The dissolve.—In music where the thoughts melt into one another at a more leisurely rate, a dissolve is a more appropriate way to connect different shots. This is true of music of an improvisatory character, such as that of Debussy.

The fade.—Pianissimo beginnings and endings suggest fading in or out to black. Because the fade has conventionally come to denote the passing of time, it could probably be used effectively only between movements of a large work or between whole pieces. For example, at the end of the funeral march of the *Eroica Symphony,* the camera might fade a shot of the strings to black, then fade in again on the conductor as he changes expression and attitude completely for the scherzo to come.

The wipe.—There are times when music seems to be erased from one level to recur at another—for example, in a *concerto grosso* when the theme is taken over by the small *concertante* group from the larger ripieno. In such instances, a wipe would be an expressive visual representation of what is happening musically.

The superimposition.—In highly dramatic music when two or more themes—announced separately at first—are combined, a superimposition sometimes provides the effective visual climax. This device is limited by the nature of the subjects concerned. They must have individuality of appearance so that the eye immediately perceives the superimposition for what it is. A piano keyboard, for example, can be effectively supered over a close-up of a singer because the two subjects are completely different in appearance. But an attempt to super the wood-wind section of an orchestra over the brass section would result only in confusion, since there is very little difference in appearance between the two on the small scale represented by the television screen. The technique of superimposition reminds one of the techniques of twentieth-century painters who show the viewer more aspects of the subject at once than his eye could perceive by looking at the subject. Here again, the unique expressive potentialities of television

are illustrated, not as a substitute for seeing the thing itself, but as a unique medium of communication in its own right.

Split screen.—This is a concept which has run into considerable confusion in the hands of film aestheticians. Here, we intend it to mean the use of one image inserted in a part of another larger image which fills the rest of the screen. For example, the telecasts of the recent political conventions sometimes "wiped" the commentator down to one corner of the screen where he remained in close-up as the rest of the screen was filled with a shot of the convention floor. This device would be of extraordinarily powerful use in musical realms to show the activities of a conductor and his players at the same time. One camera would photograph the conductor's head and shoulders; this shot would be inserted in miniature in one part of the screen, and the remainder of the screen would show the players as seen from the audience. In effect, the conductor would comment on the music as it was played. This device should naturally be limited to those conductors who are expressive in appearance.

FACTORS INHERENT IN THE SEQUENCE OF SHOTS

The scale of the musical conception.—Some pieces of music are simple, some complex; some short, some long; some dramatic, some merely decorative; some intimate, some not. A pianist doing a Bach "French Suite" does not require pictorial treatment on a grand scale. In some of the movements in simple two-part form, a half-dozen shots might do the trick, even counting the ones which are repeated. One shot would cover the opening period to the double bar, and a slight modification of the shot (e.g., a short dolly or truck) would cover the repeat. A second shot would begin after the double bar; and, as the phrase lengths of the music contracted and began to build to the high point of the movement, a third shot would be added—possibly a fourth. On the repeat of the strain, the second, third, or fourth shots would be repeated, probably literally—a total of seven shots, at the outside. The

minuet and trio form is an example of a longer movement, but the problem is still not on a greater scale. You would simply put together three sequences of the type described above and come out with a total of about 20 to 25 shots. Since the treatment is still basically simple, the large number of shots should not mislead you to build some kind of dramatic sequence by using all the tricks in the bag to reach a great climax somewhere around shot 16, say, and then to recede gradually into profound meditation by shot 25. However, if the same pianist follows this Bach suite with Beethoven's "Hammerclavier Sonata," the most complex pictorial treatment would be appropriate. There could be dozens of conceivable shots, running the gamut of expressive possibilities; and these would have to be connected in long formal developments requiring many minutes to run their pictorial course.

Length of shots and rate of cutting.—In the Bach suite discussed above, there might not be marked variation in the length of shots. The opening period might be 25 seconds long (50 with its repeat); the second section after the double bar might be 40 seconds long (divided into three or four shots; 80 seconds long with repeat). The total length would be 130 seconds. If we use five shots, the average shot length would be 26 seconds; if seven shots are used, the average shot length would be 18 seconds. Such tediousness would probably drive the typical New York TV director to cutting paper dolls, but it happens to express the symmetry and serenity of this music. There is no way to change the situation, unless you know how to get in touch with Mr. Bach and advise him that a prospective sponsor would like him to pep up his production a little bit. Some up-and-coming young man with an advertising agency ought to be happy to try this as a terrific publicity gag.

In the "Hammerclavier Sonata," on the other hand, the length of the shots would vary markedly. The sonata-allegro form of the first movement requires a moderate rate of cutting—recalling in many respects the architectonic scheme of the two-part form dis-

cussed above—raised to a grand scale with innumerable complexities inserted. The scherzo requires a very rapid rate of cutting with its musical ideas flashing by in rapid succession. That shots as short as a half second might be used to great effect is not inconceivable. The songlike third movement demands a very leisurely rate of cutting. Some shots might be held on the screen, varied with movement, for as long as several minutes. The final movement with its complexities of fugal procedure and fantasy should combine fast and slow cutting rates in complex successions.

Repetition versus variation.—As we have already seen, there is every reason to repeat shots when the music repeats passages. However, the effect on the listener of a musical repeat is to establish symmetry. Symmetry involves the matching of two distinct entities. To achieve this effect visually, the use of two different shots of the subject possessing symmetrical qualities is often desirable. For example, when the pianist plays the first period of a two-part form, a medium shot at a side angle might be used. Meanwhile, have the second camera take up a position slightly more to the front; but in every other respect, match the composition to that of the first camera—the same distance from the subject, the same position of the subject in the frame, the same lens, etc. When the musical repeat begins, cut immediately to the second camera. The viewer is shown a picture which he recognizes to be somewhat different, but only enough different to identify it as a second shot. The most striking fact about this second shot is its symmetry with the first picture. The two shots follow each other directly in time, just as does the musical repeat. They are really two different *occurrences* of the same thing, just as the music is. In a sonata form where themes are literally brought back after much contrasting material has been used, a literal repetition of the original picture is in order. Notice, though, that a composer rarely allows literal repetition to continue for long in this form without variation; therefore, be ready to modify the original shot sooner than on its first occurrence.

Video Counterpoint

When the picture adds aesthetic factors not present in the normal experience of the concert-hall listener, it counterpoints the music. This is a far more difficult matter to handle successfully than video reinforcement because of the delicate balances involved. What kind of addition can be accepted as an enrichment of the total experience, rather than as an interference with it? How much can be added? These questions are moot at the present time. Some purists reject any attempt at this kind of thing; whereas, some experimentalists welcome every attempt, however extreme. Between the two extremes are to be found all degrees of acceptance.

There are three ways to achieve video counterpoint:

By realistic means, picturing the source of the sound.—The camera has unexpected powers of editorializing. It need not be confined to reporting what is before it, but can add its own comments. With the subjective-camera technique, the camera seems to take on the personality of a human being and to react to what it sees. In relation to music, the most obvious use of this device is humorous. Imagine a telecast of a band concert. After a serious piece, the audience applauds for an encore; and the band roars into "The Stars and Stripes Forever." The camera in delight could wag its head back and forth in rhythm; or it could fasten its gaze on the bass-drummer's stick and tilt rhythmically up and down with it on every beat. Suppose that the tuba player comes forward to play "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep" as a solo. When he reaches his famous passage, descending note by note lower and lower, the camera might jerk note by note higher toward the ceiling. Serious uses of the subjective-camera technique might include a combination of camera movement with blurring of focus at a point in the music where visual fantasy is to be introduced. Suppose, for example, that the conductor's motions happen to be extraordinarily rhythmic in some long passage.

A camera in the balcony with a zoom lens might pass from a long shot of the ensemble to a close-up of the conductor, gradually blur the image of his rhythmic motions, and slowly dissolve to abstract movement on another camera matched in rhythm to the conductor's motions.

By realistic means, picturing something other than the source of the sound.—This approach involves picturing any real objects present in the concert hall, except the performers. Suppose, for example, the music is built of highly stylized blocks of phrases, as in the Prokofiev *Classical Symphony*. The camera's gaze might wander to a backdrop or proscenium arch decorated with highly stylized panels. One setting could be held in view for one musical phrase, a second could be quickly panned into view for the next musical phrase, etc. During a transition passage to a new theme, the camera could slowly tilt up along a molding and arrive at another series of stylized designs, such as decorative motifs painted on the set, just as another main section of the music begins in another key. This would call for flawless timing to match the movements with the musical ideas. Otherwise it would become a distraction. Only if the pans and tilts coincide very obviously with the phrase lengths (or period lengths) would the technique succeed in illustrating the character of the music rather than calling attention to its own cleverness. When columns, arches, and steps are part of the stage setting, this technique is particularly adaptable. Another use of camera movement away from the source of the sound can be employed with lighter music. Suppose the telecast comes on the air during a children's concert and the solo cellist is playing "The Swan" from Saint-Saens's *Carnival of the Animals*. After picturing the soloist, the camera could slowly slip away and orient the viewer to the situation by looking around the hall and the audience. The music dreams on, pleasantly and smoothly, not requiring intense concentration, while the viewer gets his bearings. Not only is the announcer spared considerable explanation when the piece ends, but also the story is told more effectively than by words.

By nonrealistic means.—The camera can leave the scene of the concert altogether and visit realms of fantasy. Rudy Bretz (television director on the staff of City College of New York) and Burton Paulu (professor of music at the University of Minnesota), in coöperation with the Fund for Adult Education of the Ford Foundation and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, recently made a number of important experiments in telecasting symphonic music. Among the devices they used, in addition to realism, were abstract images moving on a rear-projection screen. In one sequence, a dancer in the wings off stage interpreted the music choreographically. Her shadow was projected onto the rear of the translucent screen and photographed from the front by the camera (all off stage). In another sequence, a flexible mirror made of steel was treated so that its surface reflected myriad points of light; these were projected onto the rear of the screen as an operator bent the mirror back and forth to the rhythm of the music in a variety of ways, making the points of light "dance" through endless variations of abtract patterns. It is worth noting that these highly imaginative techniques involved visual performances taking place simultaneously with the music, not anything "canned" in advance. Thus, the characteristic immediacy of the television medium was being exploited; these techniques were not simply poor makeshifts for those which Hollywood might be able to stage in a slicker manner. Paulu and Bretz also used the device—suggested by Jaques-Dalcroze in 1925—of picturing drawings or paintings related to the spirit of the music.

The script for these symphony telecasts was an ingenious business. Each page consisted of four vertical columns. The first on the left gave the number of the shot—first, second, third, etc. The next column showed which of three cameras was to take the shot. The third column gave the subject of the shot—for instance, "bass trombone"—plus information about the composition of the shot and the appropriate lens. The final column at the right gave the number of measures for which the shot should be held. When

the telecast went on the air, musician-supervisor Paulu, following the score, counted the measures aloud over the intercom system into the earphones of the director, cameramen, and floor manager. As the proper bar number came along, director Bretz broke in with instructions to the crew. This is a good, thorough method to be followed when the director is a nonmusician carrying out the ideas of the supervisor (or producer) who is a musician. However, if the director can memorize the musical structure, he can greatly simplify this script into a run-down sheet for use on the air. The bar-numbering device will then be replaced by actual knowledge of phrase lengths, and the elaborate description of each shot will be replaced by accurate foreknowledge of what instrument has the melody when. The director will then be working only from a list of the shots in order. This more practical and more sensitive method of working will come about in the future when a nucleus of musicians learns enough about television production to direct shows. Then they will be able to plan their productions carefully in advance in collaboration with TV producers and crew; and when air time arrives, they can take over the active direction themselves.

And so, we come to the end of the shopping list—at least, for the present. No doubt, tomorrow or the next day someone will come along with additions—probably with deletions too—but that will simply serve to keep the controversies boiling. Nothing better for the health of TV than some good arguments! We are apt to be behind the times in this matter of audio-visual artistry, anyway, as it concerns music. We need to get the subject out for a good airing and stir up some constructive action. As long ago as 1925, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze—a man with great vision—had these things pretty well figured out in his discussion of music and cinema. It's time we caught up with him:

> Certainly then there are many ways of blending aural and visual impressions. . . . the forms of the visual symphony have not yet been determined. The seventh art is hesitant among a number of new pos-

sibilities; it is so young and vital that it is continually being carried off into hitherto unexplored fields; assured of success, it is quite ready to throw away the forms it momentarily adopts as soon as it glimpses the possibility of conceiving new ones. How could it accept any ultimate style when it constantly sees its means of expression grow in number?

The projected and mutually consenting union has not yet come about; it will take place only on quite special conditions—the same as those which secured the partnership existing between words and music. . . . In the present state of things, music that desires close alliance with the moving image finds itself continually thwarted by the accumulation on the screen of effects of extreme variety and interest. . . . Development is necessary for every musical idea, to unite with which the ever advancing pictorial ideas should also be developed continuously, adapting themselves to various forms. These forms are probably to be found in slight variations of nuances and progressive modifications of light and movement, during the somewhat prolonged exposure of a typical picture.

Municipal Motion-Picture Theater Ownership in Norway

GILBERT GEIS

GILBERT GEIS is an instructor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Oklahoma. He presented "Film Censorship in Norway" in the Spring, 1954, issue of the *Quarterly*. The following report is a continuation of his research in Oslo where he spent 1951–1952 on fellowships from the Fulbright program and the Social Science Research Council.

THE ORGANIZATION of the film-exhibition industry is a rather controversial subject in Norway. "The most unique system this side of the Iron Curtain," one commentator has labeled it.[1] A Danish film periodical printed a heated exchange of articles between the head of the film-exhibition industry in Oslo and the motion-picture editor of the city's top-circulation newspaper. The title of the lead piece shows the emotion attached to the subject. "Look at Norway—or Glimpses from a Dictatorship," the newspaperman called his first contribution to an effort to dissuade the Danes from adopting the structural organization of the Norwegian film industry.[2]

Yet, with all the partisan outcries, there is little objective information on Norway's film-exhibition structure—despite its long-standing existence and its pioneering achievements. This paper, therefore, represents an attempt to plug some of the informational gaps and to assay without malice the functioning of the Norwegian system, with particular attention to the key city of Oslo.

Oslo has a total of 30 motion-picture houses, providing seats for 17,500 persons, or a ratio of one theater seat for about every 25 persons in the city's population. These relatively limited film-

[1] Jon Mathisen, director of Statens Filmsentral, in a speech at the University of Oslo, April 2, 1952.

[2] Reidar Lunde, "Look at Norway—eller Glimt fra et Diktatur," *Biograf-Bladet* (Copenhagen), 24 (September, 1951), pp. 14–15.

exhibition facilities reflect building allocations rather than a demand situation. Elaborate prewar theater-construction plans were shelved by the Germans during the occupation of Norway from 1940–45. During the postwar period, the Labor government has given theater-expansion plans a low priority in a building program which is aimed first at reconstructing the war-decimated northern areas of Norway and then at housing a rapidly urbanizing population.

Norway's major theaters are owned and operated under a system that is a singular variation on the relatively unrestricted private-ownership pattern prevalent in the United States and on the tightly controlled State-ownership pattern in the Soviet Union. *Norway's motion-picture theaters are generally owned and operated by the muncipalities.* The supervision of the various city systems is usually in the hands of a group of men appointed by the city government and banded together within the National Association of Muncipal-Theater Owners (*Kommunale Kinematografers Landsforbund*).

The history of the municipal-theater movement in Norway shows how the system fought for existence and success. It helps to explain present antipathies which were formed in the past and which would be incomprehensible were the system to be viewed only from a contemporary frame.[3]

In 1913, the Storting, Norway's parliament, opened the way for the municipalities to gain control of motion-picture theaters. This same legislation also set up the first film-censorship machinery in Norway. The clause which allowed the municipalities to take over the theaters forbade the showing of films without permission from the city governments. This stipulation aroused

[3] The two best-written sources on the Norwegian motion-picture industry are *Film og Kino,* yearbook of the National Association of Municipal-Theater Owners, and *Norsk Filmblad,* the same organization's monthly periodical. In addition, the Oslo branch of the association celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary by publishing a short review of its history under the title *Oslo Kinematografer Gjennom 25 Aar* (Oslo: Aasens, 1950). There exists no general history of the industry, though the National Association continually points out the need for a careful study of this unique system while many of its pioneers remain alive.

little political opposition in the Storting; major debate centered, rather, on the censorship provision.

By 1917, some ten cities had made use of their legal prerogative to take over the theaters within their boundaries. On May 19, 1917, these cities grouped together and formed the National Association of Municipal-Theater Owners, noting in the first section of their bylaws that the association's task was "to protect the interests of municipal motion-picture theaters in all matters."

Oslo did not annex its motion-picture theaters until seven years later—on January 1, 1926. The move was fought bitterly all the way. In 1915, a three-man committee, appointed to investigate the question of municipal ownership, voted two to one against the move and declared that it appeared "rather unreasonable and undesirable in a city the size of Oslo to introduce further censorship of the entertainment which the adult population seeks."

Finally, in 1919, the council, reconsidering its position, authorized the city to pre-empt the theaters. During a four-year "transition period," the private owners were permitted to operate their theaters under the supervision of a five-man committee. In this period, the owners received 50 per cent of the profits; the city, the other 50 per cent. When this intial agreement expired in 1922, the theater owners managed to obtain a three-year renewal, but the city then took 60 per cent of the profits.

In 1925, when the second agreement terminated, the council debated three possibilities of operating the theaters: by a single private company, by a private company in which the city would buy 51 per cent of the stock, or by the city itself. Since the city council was then under the control of the group which had persistently pressed for complete ownership, the last proposal was accepted by a 44 to 40 vote, and the Oslo Theater Association (*Oslo Kinematografer*) opened its office on January 1, 1926. The Oslo system affiliated itself with the National Association of Municipal-Theater Owners at once.

The National Association, embracing all of the city-owned

motion-picture theaters, enjoys a clear membership superiority over the privately owned theaters in Norway, although the advantage does not reveal itself fully until income and patronage figures are examined. In total theaters owned, the National Association membership in 1953 had only 37 per cent, or 188 of Norway's 508 motion-picture houses. The 37 per cent included in the association fold, however, accounts for 54 per cent of the country's total motion-picture theater capacity, or 74,024 seats out of 136,518.

Income and patronage statistics underline the greater volume of business handled by the municipal theaters. Out of the total number of people who attended motion pictures in 1953, the city-owned theaters accommodated 84 per cent of all adults (23,838,-115 out of a total of 28,492,591) and approximately the same per cent of all children—persons under 16 years of age—(4,583,237 out of a total of 5,632,051). Theater-income figures show that in 1953 the municipal systems accounted for 85 per cent of the total motion-picture theater gross, or 46,856,488.25 of a total of 55,446,073.79 kroner.[4] (One kroner equals 14.05 cents.)

The system of municipal-theater ownership enjoys a monopoly in Bergen, Norway's second-largest city, and a virtual monopoly in Oslo. In Oslo, the municipality now owns and operates 20 of the 30 motion-picture theaters within the city's boundaries. The 10 theaters not under its control lie within the second-ring Aker district, which was not annexed into Oslo proper until the beginning of 1948. Three of Aker's theaters were taken over by the Oslo municipal system; the others were not deemed sufficiently important for the city to bother operating them, but they must pay 10 per cent of their net income to the city under a licensing agreement that will expire at the end of 1954.

[4] Income and patronage figures, unlike those for the number of theaters and their seating capacities, include the sums for the Norsk Bygdekino A/S, a traveling, State-subsidized motion-picture caravan which visits isolated communities in northern Norway, giving performances in schools, public buildings, and even occasionally in private homes. Norsk Bygdekino is responsible for something less than 10 per cent of the total income-and-patronage figures.

The 20 municipally owned theaters in Oslo, with 91.5 per cent of the city's seating total, consist of nine first-run theaters (premiereteater), nine second-run houses (repriseteater), one news-reel, and one documentary short-subject theater.

A five-member Oslo Theater Board of Directors (*Oslo Kinostyre*) —a group not unlike the board of directors of a corporation—supervises the Oslo theater system, maps out general policy, and solves management deadlocks. Members of the board are appointed by the city government for four-year terms. Remuneration is insignificant: 2,000 kroner yearly for the chairman and 1,000 for each of the remaining members.

Day-to-day affairs of the theaters are administered by the Oslo Theater Association which is set up on the lines of a private business company. The administrative director of the Oslo Theater Association is Kristoffer Aamot, around whom a major share of the controversy about the operation of the municipal-theater system in Norway has centered.

Born in Oslo in 1889, Aamot has been associated with this city's motion pictures for more than 25 years. He was a member of Oslo's three-man delegation on the joint muncipal-private board that ran the theaters during the second interregnum period from 1921–25. An ardent fighter for complete municipal ownership, Aamot was made a member of the first board of directors of the municipal system when this line was adopted in 1926. He served in this capacity from 1926–33, as chairman from 1929–31, and as vice-chairman from 1932–33. In 1934, Aamot was elected administrative director of the Oslo Theater Association, succeeding Jens Christian Gundersen who had held the post since its creation in 1926. To put Aamot into office, Liberal party members combined with the Labor party representatives in the city council and outvoted the council's Conservative party plurality by a bare 11 to 10 margin. Aamot's appointment is valid until he reaches mandatory retirement age in 1955.

By profession, Aamot is a journalist; by political faith—at least

during his earlier years—he is an ardent Labor party man, having joined the Norwegian Labor party in 1906 and having edited youth-group newspapers during 1908–9 and 1911–12. In both periods, he was jailed for antimilitary, antiroyalist activities; and Labor party members continue to be amused by recurring front-page newspaper pictures of Aamot escorting the Norwegian king to first-night engagements of politically or socially significant films. During his early years, Aamot was known as a "traveling speaker and agitator; one of the leading figures in the young socialist league's cultural affairs."[5]

Aamot was a member of the Labor party when it was affiliated with the Comintern during the hectic years of 1919–23. His membership during this period, at least in part, appears to have caused some accusations of "Communist sympathies," particularly by officials of firms associated with the American motion-picture industry. Although the Labor party made a clean break with Moscow in November, 1923—when the Norwegians objected to external edicts on their internal affairs—and has since had a continuous record of straightforward social democracy, other party members have also been plagued occasionally by recollections of the Comintern period.[6] However, Aamot's situation has been aggravated by the record of his 1923–24 business managership of *Norges Kommunistblad;* and it has been particularly intensified, at least for the American-oriented critics, by his lukewarm attitude toward the United States, especially Hollywood,[7] and his praise of the Soviet film industry after a visit to Russia.

[5] Per Egeberg Sogstad, *Ungdoms Fanevakt: Den Sosialistiske Ungdomsbevegelsens Historie i Norge* (Oslo: Arbeidernes Ungdomsfylking, 1951), p. 111.

[6] The best example is that of Trygve Lie, former secretary-general of the United Nations. After a Moscow visit in 1948, Lie was challenged at a New York press conference with the question: "Are you or have you been at any time a member of the Communist party?" Lie's angry answer, which side-stepped what could have been an extremely awkward political explanation, was that "anyone who reads the record knows that I have always been a member of the Norwegian Labor party, which is a socialist, not a Communist, party." Francis Carpenter, apparently unaware of the subtleties of the situation, reports on the exchange of words in *Men in Glass Houses* (New York: McBride, 1951), pp. 45–46.

[7] Aamot is outspoken in his beliefs, and it is not difficult to document his opinions—particularly from editorials that he writes for *Norsk Filmblad.* His treatment of the hir-

The most serious charges leveled against Aamot concern the unrestricted influence that he exerts both in Oslo and in the entire Norwegian film industry. He is very often labeled "dictator" of the Norwegian motion-picture world. On the Oslo scene, the charge grows out of Aamot's position in the Oslo Theater Association. Here, usually with assistant Theodor Rosenquist, who has been with the association since 1926, Aamot views some three to four hundred feature films a year—a procedure, incidentally, which is in striking contrast to booking practices in the United States where the exhibitor rarely, if ever, is able to see in advance the product that he is interested in purchasing. In regard to the films he sees, Aamot has a free hand to decide if they shall be shown in any of the 20 city-owned theaters in Oslo as well as where, when, and how long they shall be allowed to run.

Aamot claims that this manipulative power gives him, a public servant, the opportunity to function in the public's interest, without all-pervading regard to the financial considerations which override most cultural objectives in privately run motion-picture theaters. He feels that he cannot ignore public opinion too much in his decisions, though he can help to mold this opinion. For example, he admits that he grants all possible concessions in Oslo to Norwegian films, even to the extent of allowing them to play at a loss for some time; but he claims that this is a clear-cut example of public service in the best interests of the whole community.

In the lead editorial of the first number after Norway's liberation of the National Association's periodical, Aamot clearly stated his basic creed of municipal motion-picture theater responsibility:

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ing of Will Hays as adviser to Eric Johnston, his successor, is not atypical. Aamot noted sarcastically that Hays had been employed at a $100,000 yearly salary "so as not to make his transition into unemployment too hard on him," and then added, "It is pleasant to know how the Americans use the film rental which comes from Norway, among other places. With such a salary for a single man it is quite understandable that they require higher film rentals." *Norsk Filmblad,* 15 (November, 1945), p. 29.

We must hammer into our minds and our thoughts again and again that the municipal-theater management must never let up. It must continually be alive, steadily renewing itself. The public must never get the impression that municipal operation of motion-picture theaters is losing its grip and falling asleep. The theaters were not given to the municipalities out of regard for us, but for the benefit of the public. The public has the right to demand the best of us. Good films—so long as it stands in our power—good locales, good apparatus, and a continuously better and better service in all directions.[8]

On a national level, the linking of Aamot's name with practically every significant film endeavor in Norway has reinforced the charge of "dictator" against him.[9] Included in the list is the presidency of the National Association which Aamot has held since 1929. Lunde's severe criticism of the muncipal-ownership pattern in general, and of Aamot in particular, illustrates the running fire to which Aamot has been subjected—along with an amusing story on the association's elections.

Every year, Aamot is unanimously elected in accord with the same traditional ceremony. Director Aamot, who presides over the convention, nominates . . . Rolf Hofmo as chairman of the elections committee. The chairman of the elections committee then proposes that Mr. Aamot be reelected president of the organization. No voice raises itself in protest or proposes a change in the presidency. . . . At one of the last meetings, Hofmo was unable to attend. Director Aamot nominated in his place another party member, Kaare Haugen, as chairman of the elections committee. Everyone was so astonished to hear a new name that silence enveloped the huge hall. A dropped pin would have been noticed. And in this moment one man was heard to whisper to the person next to him: "Is Hofmo dead?"[10]

[8] "Vel Møtt Igjen!" *Norsk Filmblad,* 15 (October, 1945), p. 4.

[9] Lunde, *op. cit.,* p. 15. Lunde tells the story of the visit of a Swedish producer, who had planned some outdoor shots of Norway as background material for a proposed Orson Welles film. The Swede told reporters that he was going to confer with Aamot about the matter, and the following day one newspaper commented angrily that "God's free nature is still not ruled over by the almighty director of the Oslo Theater Association."

[10] *Loc. cit.* The point of the story is not new. In 1948, Kaare Haugen (*Arbeiderbladet,* September 18, 1948, p. 6) had noted, in Aamot's defense, that nothing kept the association from selecting a new president if it were so inclined. The reason for Aamot's re-elections, he claimed, was the realization by the membership that he was the one man best suited for the position.

But the position of the National Association is not as strong as its organizational pattern may indicate. During negotiations with other groups from which the theaters hope to gain some advantage, the association, as the sole representative of the complex of municipal-theater systems, exerts its greatest influence. In this connection, the association has carried on direct negotiations with the State (over tax laws applying to motion-picture theaters) and with film importers (over rental fees). Its position here is not unlike that of an American trade-union serving as the bargaining agent for its membership. The similarity often appears strengthened when, for example, the association petulantly points out how it has obtained advantages, granted on an industry-wide basis, both for its own membership and, in consequence, even for those who do not support it financially.

On the other hand, the individual city systems enjoy an almost unrestricted degree of autonomy within the national organization. These individual systems have complete freedom in selecting their programs. They are generally receptive to films from all Western Hemisphere producers; and this places the potential audience, as one Norwegian has noted with considerable truth, "in an enviable position in contrast to the American public, because the public's ability to see foreign films in the United States is related to factors other than the public's best interests."[11]

The vitiated strength of the National Association on a country-wide basis is also reflected in its periodical which complains, for instance, about the lack of coöperation received from the members—less than half bothered to return a questionnaire submitted to them by the national organization. Further, the periodical *exhorts* the various muncipal-theater systems to behave along lines deemed proper by the national organization, for example, to support domestic film productions—one of Aamot's strongest beliefs. Typical is the call, under the heading "We Have a Duty":

[11] Arnold Wik, "Frihet til Aa Velge Film," *Norsk Filmblad,* 15 (March–April, 1947), p. 146.

There is a duty which the municipal theaters have above all others. And that is to give Norwegian films all the support that we can. It is fine that theaters provide direct support to Norwegian films through subscriptions for the building of film studios and by setting aside a percentage of film income as we have done. But what will support the Norwegian films significantly more is the programming efforts of the theaters.

It is an imperative duty of all municipal theaters to give Norwegian films the best publicity, and last, but not least, to hold Norwegian pictures on the program as long as possible.

It is particularly this last item that has been lacking.[12]

The pattern emerging here indicates a comparatively weak control exerted on a national level, but an extremely high degree of managerial autonomy on a muncipal level—at least in the subject city of Oslo.

The charge that Aamot is dictator of the Oslo film industry—aside from its foundation in his interlocking directorships and in his personality[13]—appears to be in relation to the traditional structure of motion-picture industries in general, against which the Norwegian organization stands out as a particularly deviant pattern.

There seem to be two salient features in the structure of the Norwegian film-exhibition industry: (1) The absence of managerial dependence upon the financial good will of the general public in the formulation of its policy. (2) The control of all exhibition outlets by a single management. The lack of dependence upon public good will, as expressed in box-office totals, can produce at least two unusual motion-picture situations. An example of the first, the ability to experiment, occurred in Oslo in 1929 when the municipal system opened a newsreel theater and supported it—despite an extremely long period of financial loss—until the venture built up its own audience and began to operate

[12] "Vi Har Plikter" (editorial), *Norsk Filmblad,* 14 February, 1946), p. 3.

[13] "Aamot has from his earliest youth been a *driving force* within his party; *been a member, but always soon after a leader or chairman* in all kinds of groups and clubs and boards in the Labor party and Labor press in Oslo." (Italics supplied.) *Nationen,* March 25, 1939, p. 3.

at a profit. In the second direction, absence of the need for general-public support can lead to catering to special-interest groups, such as the educated, the lovers of cowboy films, the Anglophile, and so on.

Although the structure of the Norwegian motion-picture industry does not appear to differ radically from that of other mass-communications media in Norway, the most important single item in structural framework of the Oslo film industry becomes clear by a comparison with Norway's radio and press.

The Norwegian radio is operated as a state monopoly, and there is no direct connection between the entertainment desires of the public and the programming of the radio management. In fact, because of the complete absence of advertising, the public has little financial basis by which it can express its will to the radio directors. The operation of "public opinion" is nebulous but cannot be discounted entirely. However, this public opinion would apparently have to be severely tried before it would prefer action to apathy in a field of such minor over-all importance as radio entertainment.

A similar situation prevails in Norway's press, although newspaper ownership is nominally private (i.e., by various political parties) rather than municipal or state. But most Norwegian newspapers operate at a financial loss that is written off through subsidization by political parties.[14] Therefore, the public can exert little direct-financial pressure other than in the direction of the party itself. True, the public can transfer allegiance from one newspaper to another; but this frequently requires a shift in political affiliation which, in Norway, is fairly closely tied to an individual's position in the class structure. In practice, most Norwegians simply read several newspapers.

It appears, then, that the outcry against monopolistic operation in the film-exhibition field is based on something more than the tactical moves of the management or an opposition growing

[14] *Aftenposten,* May 26, 1952, pp. 1–2.

out of a basic antisocialism frame of reference. This outcry is theoretically as much a rejection of the principle on *traditional* grounds as it is a protest against a situation which holds real or potential dangers that are greater than those already inherent in the radio and press in Norway. Both these last media exert a strong control over the stimulus which they present to their audience. The radio has a wide choice in selecting its programs;[15] the press has an almost unlimited range of material which it can utilize to fill its columns. The motion-picture industry in Norway, on the other hand, controls only the exhibition outlets; it has little influence in determining the shape and the content of the over-all product from which it is forced to draw its fare.

Several facts can be marshaled to support this observation. Norway imports from three to four hundred motion pictures each year. From this import total, the Oslo theater management must select about two hundred films to satisfy the requirements of local exhibition facilities. The limits of possible manipulation within this arithmetical framework are scarcely outstanding.

Nevertheless, the Oslo film-exhibition industry, despite charges of dictatorship, appears to come out well in comparison with the film-exhibition industry in American cities of comparable size. In the United States, the audience is not restricted by the uncontrollable decision of the individual theater managers except as these express a city-wide pattern; but it is the victim of a more efficient limitation which is exercised at the source. The American film-production industry is often able to throttle a large part of the import of foreign-made films. As a result, the power of the movie-going public, expressible through its financial strength, is largely illusory because the public is presented with a limited

[15] That the same situation and dangers are not altogether absent in the United States, despite a different radio structure, can be seen from Merton's remarks after a case study in radio mass persuasion. He notes that "the organization of American radio permits the building of a public figure who can be utilized for purposes of mass persuasion. Whether this influence is to be exercised for good or for ill continues to be largely a decision vested in the directors of radio networks and stations." Robert K. Merton, *Mass Persuasion: The Social Psychology of a War Bond Drive* (New York: Harpers, 1946), p. 172.

number of previously sifted stimuli. These stimuli may be rejected, but rejection does not occur within a universe of alternate choices from which additional selection may be drawn. In simpler terms and generally speaking, Americans at home can either go to domestic films or stay away from the movies altogether in most parts of the United States. In fact, even the choice of domestic films can be effectively restricted by the industry through such practices as block booking.

In Oslo, on the other hand, the choice of picture entertainment is considerably wider. An interesting comment in this connection is that made by a student of motion pictures after an investigation of the English industry. He felt that the danger of unrestrained power in the motion-picture field lay not in the structural organization of a municipal system but in the relatively uncontrolled private-enterprise setup. He wrote:

> I envisage also that communal authorities might build their own cinemas and administer them (I believe this is the case in Norway). From such communal cinemas beneficial and constructive ideas would permeate the State which, otherwise, as we have seen, is bound to decay in an age of increasing centralisation.[16]

[16] J. P. Mayer, *Sociology of Film* (2nd ed.; London: Faber and Faber, 1946), p. 183.

Consumption of Mass Media by Polish-American Children

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CHILDREN ARE IMPORTANT CONSUMERS of such mass media as television, motion pictures, and comic books. Like all consumers, they make selections of quantity and quality; and their selections frequently depend upon simple acts of attention. These selections may not be made, however, by individual volition alone, for the individual's choices are often based largely on the accessibility of what is consumed and on the type of attention permitted to him by external factors. The character of attention is contingent to some degree on the individual's interest, but it is also limited by the amount of social encouragement or discouragement given to it.

The purpose of this paper is to show how the character of the social life of a particular audience affects both the selection from and the attention to three mass media. The audience[1] was made up of seventy-nine upper-lower-class schoolboys of an urban Polish-American community. Each group of two to five children was interviewed for a minimum period of four hours. The resulting data consisted of the answers to the interviewer's questions and the children's spontaneous discussions about mass media. Obviously, the audience was a homogeneous population which varied only in age from individual to individual. The data and conclusions refer to this population.

[1] For details of method and sample, see Eliot Freidson, *An Audience and Its Taste* (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, 1952). The writer wishes to thank the principal and teachers of the Chicago elementary school who cooperated so generously when he gathered the data.

Typical Experiences with the Media

For each of the mass media, there seems to be a typical social situation of spectatorship. Television tends to be viewed mostly in the company of the family; movies, in the company of friends; and comics, alone.[2] Each of these situations has its own implications about the content that is accessible to the individual and the degree of attention that is possible. We shall describe these situations here and indicate how they affect access and attention.

Watching television with the family.—Kindergarten children, stimulated by portions of television content, occasionally withdraw their attention in order to re-enact the events they have just seen. A typical comment follows:

> When Gene is on, and he's fighting, I act like I'm Gene and fight with my sister.[3]

On the whole, however, the children themselves are not responsible for withdrawal of attention from television. Rather, they are frequently distracted by the adult activities which occur in the living room where the television set is located. For example, there is the complaint:

> When you get to sit alone [to watch television], someone knocks on the door and bang—blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

The kindergarten-age child seems to be so dependent on the love and approval of his parents that he subordinates his preference for particular types of content to that of his parents. One youngster remarked:

> I listen to the news a lot. [Why?] 'Cause my mother and father listen, and they think it's important; so I want to do what they think.

[2] See Eliot Freidson, "The Relation of the Social Situation of Contact to the Media in Mass Communication," *Public Opinion Quarterly,* XVII (Sept., 1953), 232–233 for quantitative evidence of this. Not reported there is a chi squared association of 94.30 between the three media and situations, with a probability that the association is chance of less than .001 and a Tschuprow's T of .56.

[3] All quoted material is from transcriptions of recordings of interviews that took place during the first five months of 1951. The names of children and theaters are fictitious.

The necessity for such subordination of preference seems to be tempered by occasions when the parents deliberately humor the child's taste and allow him to select the program. Between his strong desire to retain the approval of his parents and their tendency to please him because of his youth, the kindergarten child seems to be more successful than older children in avoiding conflict with the rest of the family about what content will be accessible at any particular time.

At the second-grade level, however, there is evidence that the child is not being as humored as younger children and that his own preferences are assuming more force. A great deal of conflict precedes and accompanies watching television with the family: the child wishes to watch one type of content, and other, frequently more influential, members of the family want to look at another type. The very young and the adult seem to have the most power in determining the channel, as can be seen in the following:

> I hate that program, but my brother puts it on—we had a fight about it. . . . Sometimes I got to watch Kukla, Fran and Ollie, those stupid—sometimes my little brother and sister fight for it.
>
> They turn the television off when my mother's listening to Dennis Day [on the radio], and I got nothing else to do so I listen to it. I can't [go out] to play baseball, and so I got to listen to it.

The child's desire naturally tends toward watching television alone in order to prevent content that is boring or annoying. But there is another reason that the child wants to watch alone: even when he is looking at what he prefers, other members of the family interfere with his concentration. Two children explained:

> I'd rather watch with myself—it's quieter. I'm sitting and watching television, and my brother and sister sneak in and hit me, and I'm knocked cold.
>
> I'd like to listen alone . . . 'cause they make all the noise. She's hollering and making noise, and I can't even hear television. When company's over, I can't even listen to television; they talk too much, so I shut off the television and go outside.

From the second grade on, children do not have ultimate control over what they see on television. Parents have the final authority and frequently use it to select content that displeases their children. To overcome this, the child must have his own set, or he must plague his parents until they give in wearily to his demands, or he must wait until he is an adult. If these possibilities are not present, the child must be satisfied with control over the set only when his parents and siblings are away or especially benign; and he must often suffer content that bores him, interruptions that distract his attention, and, above all, the disruptive presence of others.

The pattern intensifies in the fourth grade:

I'd rather watch alone 'cause I can watch what I want. [My grandfather] always wants to watch wrestling.

One boy told of an invention to help the situation:

You put the television set in the oven and change the channels by the oven switch. . . . Then it would be too hot for other people to change channels.

By the time the child has reached the fourth grade, he has become old enough in his parents' eyes to be saddled with the responsibilities of caring for younger siblings and small but irritating chores of housework. We begin to run across complaints about having to go to the store in the middle of a program. Other complaints include:

They bother me all the time. I have to get 'em toothpicks, water.
My brother or sister does something, and I got to take care of them.

In the sixth grade, the same pattern of interruption and lack of control over the set is found:

When the whole family's there, they talk and talk.
When my mom and dad are there, they listen to musicals; and I want to see adventures.
When you watch television at home, you always got to go to the store or something and miss half the program.

Sixth graders still more than the younger children, prefer going to the movies to watching television. When questioned about their preference, they gave their reasons in terms of the incompatible situations in which they must watch television. Many mentioned going to the movies "just to get out of the house." Obviously, the typical situation of watching television does not allow consistent access to desired content and does not encourage concentrated attention.

Watching movies with friends.—The older these children are, the more they feel that members of the family interfere with their viewing; thus, they come to prefer the less accessible but nonfamilial neighborhood movie theater. In a sense, television drives them out of the home into the theater.[4] At the movies (unlike television in the home), the child can be with his friends. He is able to control the selection of content by his choice of theaters; and once he has paid the admission price and entered, no one can suddenly change the picture to something he does not want to see. In short, movies give the child accessibility of desirable content. But children, characteristically, see movies in the company of their friends. To what extent does the peer situation at the movies allow them to concentrate their attention?

Since the kindergarten and second-grade children of the group studied do not attend movies regularly, they could not provide useful information about the experience; but the fourth-and sixth-grade children were most informative, as the following remarks show:

If something exciting happens at the show, everyone's yelling, "Ah, ah, ah," and you can't hear anything.

When you go to the Rialto, the usher sticks you way back in the movie house; and then someone starts a fight, and all the kids got to get out of the theater.

My boy friend keeps hitting me when we go, and I don't get to see enough of the picture.

[4] In the kindergarten, 100 per cent of the children responding preferred television to the other media. In the sixth grade, only 37 per cent of the children responding preferred television to the other media; the remaining 63 per cent preferred movies. One would expect this trend to continue as adolescent courtship begins.

There's too much noise at the show too, like when you get some little guy sitting beside you—what a racket!

Every time I go [with other boys], they start talking and blabbing. . . . Every time I go with someone, it seems like they seen it and start talking and telling me all about it. They go to get candy, and they trip.

The kids make too much noise. Like in a comedy, wowie, the picture starts to shake, and you can't hear a thing—they make too much noise.

Given the picture of noise and activity that the above quotations present, it is not surprising to learn that the theater is sometimes used as an indoor playground. For example:

At the Paradise, the kids don't even look [at the screen]. They just pay twenty-five cents to sit for a few hours over there and talk and gab. . . . The older kids and the little kids go there to run around and throw popcorn at each other.

A kid brought a BB-gun . . . and bwong, went right off my chest. And I was looking around, and there he was looking so calm at the picture. Richard brought a squirt gun to the show. So did I, but don't tell anybody.

Although the movie situation permits the child to select the type of content he wishes, his opportunity to concentrate attention on the content is limited by an audience that is shouting, running up and down the aisles, and fighting. The context of neighborhood-theater matinees interferes with attention and seems to diffuse effects that may be potential in the content itself. Indeed, whereas there is sometimes opportunity for the child to be alone when he watches television, there is never opportunity to be alone in a movie theater—he must be "alone" in public.

Reading comic books alone.—We have examined the context in which some children usually watch television and movies. Our presentation is in part a caricature, stressing one aspect at the expense of others; but its justifiable points are that the children live in a social world and that the patterns of their consumption of mass media are organized as modes of social activity. If the children are personally motivated to seek concentrated doses of

particular types of content from the mass media, then neither television nor movies, with their distracting social contexts, provide the environment that allows the optimal dosage. If they seek such satisfactory content, they should prefer to consume a medium that can provide it. Comic books are read in a characteristically solitary context that allows concentrated attention, and there is little practical restriction on the content that may be selected. Comics, therefore, should be most attractive. But only two children out of sixty-nine responding prefer comics to movies, radio, or television. The reason for this becomes clear only after we learn how comics are used.

Since the kindergarten and second-grade children cannot read fluently enough to consume many comics, we must report data only from the fourth and sixth grades. There, we find that comics are ubiquitous. They are read "in the attic, in ratholes, at my cousin's, at my auntie's" and "at home, in school, in the street, home behind the couch, in my bedroom, at my boy friend's."

Such statements lead one to believe that comics absorb all the children's time. A picture leaps to mind of children scattered about, quiet in hidden places, alone, completely taken up by their reading. But one remembers that these older boys see as many as three movies a week, watch television as much as six hours a day, and attend school for six hours a day; and the belief that comics absorb so much time and energy becomes impossible. Since the general statement that they are read "just about everywhere, all the time" seems exaggerated, our attention may focus on the concrete situations in which the children report reading them. We find that they are read "in the schoolyard" when there is a recess, "in bed at night" when the child is supposed to be asleep, "on the trolley" when he is going from one activity to another, and "in the lobby" of a theater when he is waiting for a friend to accompany him inside.

Reading comics alone seems to be a filler activity, a method of passing odd periods of time when nothing else can be done, when

worth-while television programs are not accessible, when the weather is inclement for sports, when there is no one to play with, or when the occasion or price for a movie is lacking. The medium of comics is distinguished from television and movies by its flexibility: comic books are portable and require no electricity, they can be carried about and used to fill in such empty hours as arise during the course of the day. With comics, the condition of accessibility of desirable content and the condition that allows concentrated attention are met without qualification. But comics are used in such a fashion that although attention is present it is not sustained. In other words, comics are used to pass time that is empty of other activities.

Patterns of Consumption and Community Life

The character of television—at the time of our study at least—is such that it must be consumed in the home and that each member of the household cannot have his own set. Since television offers a variety of choices at any point in time, to the extent that members of the household wish to make different choices, conflict exists.

The Polish-American children of this report live in large households which are made up of many children and, frequently, grandparents as well. They tend to live in a building in which their immediate family is on one floor and an aunt's family on another. The constant interaction of an extended family results in difficulty about having a television set to one's self. Further, the father is in a more secure position of unquestioned authority here than he is in the urban middle-class family. Thus, the child is not in the habit of getting his way in the face of timid parental resistance, and he must more often avoid than initiate a struggle over channels. The selection that finally emerges is a function of the social structure of the household. And, in turn, the attention that can be paid to the selection depends on the interrelationships of members of the household and the interaction that takes place

among them. Finally, the child's position in the household determines the pattern of his consumption of television.

The pattern of motion-picture consumption may be treated in the same fashion. Movies are displayed in public places to which anyone with the price of admission has access. If we ignore the organized distribution of films that limits choice and the social process of recommendation and ridicule that prejudices choice, we may say that the spectator selects his content by choosing the theater he wishes to attend. Once there, no conflict flows from that choice, since all who attend have chosen the same film. But children attend movies at a time of day when adults do not. Therefore, there are not enough adults present to insist on the basic audience convention of attentive silence. A few hundred children assembled in a hall without effective discipline seem bound to attend to each other's behavior as much as to the movie itself—bound, in fact, to create a play situation in which only a portion of their attention is given over to the screen. This is not conducive to absorbing the content.

With comics, we can see clearly how the consumption of a single mass medium does not stand alone, but is geared into the consumption of other mass media—geared, in fact, into the whole organized round of social life. Since the reading of comics can be done anywhere and without others, this activity serves to pass the time when other social activities are impossible. The pattern of consuming comics is formed negatively, as it were—formed by the absence of other activities.

The pattern of reading comic books as well as of watching television and of going to the movies is formed as much by the existence of other activities in the community as by their immediate social context in the home or theater. The season of the year, the day of the week, and the time of the day are indices of the occurrence of such activities as watching sporting events, playing games outdoors, vacationing away from the community, working, attending school, or going to bed. The consumption of

each of the media meshes into that totality of organized behavior that we call society, and is itself part and parcel of organized community life.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have argued that the pattern of consumption of mass media is to be understood adequately only by referring to the organized social and technological context within which the individual spectators move. To illustrate this, we presented material on the way in which a group of children experience the mass media. It is of course consonant with the argument that other spectators than the ones described here will have different experiences according to the character of their social life.

In conclusion, it may be said that, if the pattern of consumption of mass media cannot be understood except by reference to the particular context surrounding it, then surely the *effects* of that consumption as well cannot be understood without such reference. In order to speak of effect, we must be certain that access and the possibility of attention exist in the first place; and we must know the range of actual contact and the quality of attention. These things are likely to vary from community to community (as well are from social role to social role), and thus are to be learned not only by studying the relation of the content of what may be consumed to the preferences of individuals, but as well by studying the social life of the community into which the one must penetrate and the other must always be plunged.

A Bibliography for the Quarter

Book Editor, FRANKLIN FEARING

DID YOU KNOW that in a public-opinion poll 88 per cent of those asked were able to identify the picture of Elsie the Borden Cow? And that this figure was exceeded only by President Truman's recognition score of 93 per cent? Dwight D. Eisenhower's picture trailed Elsie's with a recognition rate of 83 per cent. In an earlier poll (1945) when Elsie achieved a recognition rate of a mere 58 per cent, she was trailed by Albert Einstein (48 per cent), James F. Byrnes, then Secretary of State (44 per cent), and Van Johnson (43 per cent). These intriguing and possibly meaningful statistics are contained in a hilarious (and sobering) little book *The Relaxed Sell* by Thomas Whiteside (Oxford University Press, New York, 1954, $3.50).

This is a book about what goes on in the fantastical world of advertising, especially in what the dust cover calls the "glowing" world of radio and TV advertising. Each chapter—many of which have already appeared in the *New Yorker*—is an essay in which the author with a kind of round-eyed, clinical detachment gives the details—apparently *all* the details—of how products—sometimes quite inferior products—are "promoted" in all the mass media. Besides the wonderful story of Elsie—who, incidentally, was conceived (shall we say?) by the Borden Company in 1936 to offset the lamentable public misunderstanding of the true character of the giant milk companies—there are chapters on the TV interplanetary-space opuses "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet," "Captain Video, *et al.*"—which, for some strange reason, seem given over to the sale of breakfast foods—and on the ladies who suffer and suffer in the interests of the sale of soap. But for this reviewer's money the best chapter is the one about the incredible tale of the Reynolds ball-point pen. This product—which will write under water, but not always above it—once sold for $19.98

and, in 1946, earned its promoter Milton Reynolds $1,558,607.81 *after taxes.*

In the chapter which furnishes the title for the book, we learn how the TV commercials are put together for Lucky Strike cigarettes and especially about the problem of the announcer who has to smoke through the rehearsals and when the show is on the air. As he tells it to Thomas Whiteside, the situation is really critical:

> I had five pages of hard sell to do solo, and I had three drags to take. I wasn't easy about it. But I finally solved the problem. The trick is either to blow all the smoke out before you speak or get most of it out. I took it up with the production boys. "Let's show relaxation," I said. "Let's wait a few seconds after I take a drag. Let me blow the smoke out." The boys liked the idea. I blew the smoke out slowly, and it worked beautifully. It was a *relaxed* sell.

The Relaxed Sell is a diverting if unorthodox contribution to certain unexplored aspects of mass communication.

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After *The Relaxed Sell,* it is fitting that we should discuss Stuart Chase's *Power of Words* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1954, $3.95). Mr. Chase's preoccupation with language and its effects is not new. In 1938, his *Tyranny of Words* made semantics a subject of dinner-table conversation. In the present book, he is concerned not alone with the misuse of language but with all aspects of the communicative processes. This is a large order, but the author is not daunted by linguistics, cybernetics, meta-linguistics, group dynamics, Korzybski, brain physiology, the perception theory of psychologists, and the studies of such specialists as Karl von Frisch, Robert Yerkes and others on the "communications" of bees, chimpanzees, and other animals. With astounding verve, he wades through all this material and makes it interesting. This last will not surprise those who know Mr. Chase's gifts as a popularizer. Whether he has succeeded in integrating all this into a picture of communication that will be

acceptable to the various specialists involved is perhaps doubtful. It seems to this reviewer that Mr. Chase has been oversold on the engineering models of the communicative process. It is also clear that he does not understand too well the implications for communication of contemporary perceptual theory. He has an extremely entertaining chapter on current work of the psychologists on perception, but he doesn't seem to know what to do with this material after he has it. At any rate, he does not seem to link this material in any significant way to communication. This is not surprising since the engineering approach to which Mr. Chase is committed more or less ignores human perceptual processes. To this reviewer, any discussion of communication as a human activity that does not take these processes into account is superficial. This failure to grasp the importance of perception in human communication is also reflected in the book's—otherwise excellent—bibliography which contains no reference to the works of George Herbert Mead. Mead, more than any other single person, furnishes the psychological basis for understanding communication and symbolic processes in general. In connection with these latter, it also seems odd that Mr. Chase makes no reference to the contributions of Kenneth Burke. In spite of these limitations and omissions, *The Power of Words* is an extremely interesting book. The author has brought together a large amount of diversified material, and presents it persuasively and dramatically. Especially good is part two which is devoted to applications; and this reviewer particularly recommends the chapters "Economic Talk," "Guilt by Association," "Gobbledygook," and "Schoolroom Talk."

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The third, and undoubtedly the best, of the three books on communication is Rudolph Flesch's *How to Make Sense* (Harper Brothers, New York, 1954, $2.75). This author's earlier books on readability, especially *The Art of Plain Talk,* resulted in a kind of minor revolution in the field of communication. They not only pointed out the rather obvious fact that much written communi-

cation was incomprehensible, but they provided a practical technique for testing any given piece of prose for its degree of comprehensibility. The Flesch formulas have been challenged frequently, but they started what Flesch himself calls a "readability movement." Many people including such professional communicators as journalists, writers of advertisements, and even college professors became conscious that much that they produced was incomprehensible to the people for whom it was intended. Although the formulas provided merely a relatively quick way for finding out just how comprehensible a sample of writing was, they did not tell the writer what to do about it. The present book contains no prescriptions, but it does discuss the problem of how to be comprehensible in a communication-filled world. Dr. Flesch's discussions of grammar ("Is Grammar Necessary?"—the answer is No!), vocabulary ("Does Vocabulary-Building Pay?"), punctuation, and "How to Talk to Anybody" are, as the dust cover truly says, "frank, direct, and good fun to read." In an appendix, he presents an entirely new formula which is based on the assumption that readability contains two factors: "realism" by which is meant specificity and concreteness and "energy" by which is meant forcefulness and vividness. Specific directions are given for pretesting any piece of prose in order to obtain a readability score which represents a combination of these two factors. To demonstrate the procedure, two samples of prose are tested: one from the writings of Immanuel Kant and one from Dickens' *David Copperfield*. No one will be surprised that Kant achieves a zero and Dickens a very high readability score.

In an earlier age, as Dr. Flesch points out, an illiterate person may have been happy; but today, there is no retreat from communication. We must learn to command words and to be comprehensible, or we will perish. His lively and unpretentious discussion of these problems is notably free from the gobbledygook of the semanticists and communication engineers as well as the specious simplicity of the professional popularizer.

There is, this reviewer presumes, an audience of unknown size—probably predominantly female and undoubtedly middle-aged—in whose fluttering hearts the name Rudolph Valentino still arouses images of the fabulous Latin lover with the sleek black hair, the heavy-lidded eyes, and the matchless profile. For these, Alan Arnold has written *Valentino* (Library Publishers, 8 West 40th Street, New York 18, 1954, $3.50). Beautifully illustrated, this book professes to tell the true story of the man behind the legend. This "hero of a thousand dreams" (from the dust cover), it seems, was only a simple Italian boy who came to America to seek his fortune and made good in a big way, but who was eventually sacrificed to a public which would not distinguish between the screen-created myth and the reality. For readers not bemused by this myth—whose chief memory of Valentino is the extraordinary occurrences at the time his body was on public view in a New York mortuary when a force of a thousand police was unable to hold an hysterical mob in check—this rather sloppily written book will offer little. Since it is wholly without documentation, *Valentino* is not of much value as a contribution either to the social history of an interesting period or to the history of the film.

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French Film by Georges Sadoul (British Book Centre, Inc., 420 W. 45th Street, New York 36, $3.50) is another volume in the National Cinema Series which has been brought out under the general editorship of Dr. Roger Manvell. Other important works in this series are *The Soviet Cinema, The Italian Cinema,* and *The Scandinavian Film.* The present volume is magnificently illustrated and traces the history of the French film from October, 1888, when Jules Marey demonstrated his "chronophotographs" before the Académie des Sciences in Paris to 1950 and the work of René Clair, Jean Painlevé, Louis Daquin, and other contemporaries. As Dr. Manvell notes in his brief Foreword, no one is better qualified to write on the history of the French cinema than

Georges Sadoul whose monumental *Histoire Générale du Cinéma* has reached its fourth volume.

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In *The Public is Never Wrong* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1953, $4.00), Adolph Zukor (with Dale Kramer) joins the lengthening procession of Hollywood immortals who, late in life, have felt the urge to commit to print memories of their personal participation in the rise of a fabulous industry. Most of these books have been a little disappointing, but Mr. Zukor's is impressive, not only because it tells of a career that begins with penny arcades and nickelodeons and ends with 3-D, but because it is told quite simply and unpretentiously. Those middle-aged fans who like to recall a mad, mad youth spent in movie palaces will delight in Zukor's reminiscences of John Barrymore, James K. Hackett, Marguerite Clark, William S. Hart, Douglas Fairbanks, Fatty Arbuckle, Pola Negri, Rudolph Valentino, Norma Talmadge, Gloria Swanson, Clara Bow, and of course, Mary Pickford. His book should be read in conjunction with Arthur Mayer's *Merely Colossal,* especially chapter ten of the latter volume. Together, they give a picture of an extraordinarily interesting personality.

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An Introduction to Radio and Television by David C. Phillips, John M. Grogan, and Earl H. Ryan (Ronald Press, New York, 1954, $5.00) is, according to the authors' Preface, an introductory survey for those who want a general understanding of radio and TV and for those who plan careers in this field and expect to obtain specialized training. There are chapters on station organization, station personnel, programming, writing, producing, newswriting and newscasting, educational television, and films for television. The appendices contain sample radio and TV scripts and the inevitable glossary of terms. Somewhat unusual are the chapters on the public and private regulation of radio and TV

and on audience measurement. The chapter on regulation presents the broadcasters' and telecasters' creed and discusses the FCC and how unions operate in radio and television. To this reviewer, these discussions seem so carefully neutral as to sound naïve. But, on the whole, this seems to be a competently written introductory text.

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No survey of current contributions to mass communications would be complete without listing the recent Mentor Book titles (New American Library, 501 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N.Y., thirty-five and fifty cents). They include *The Iliad,* translated by W. H. D. Rouse; *Ethics in a Business Society* by Marquis W. Childs and Douglass Cater; *How the Great Religions Began* by Joseph Gaer; *Diet to Suit Yourself* by Walter Ross; *The Execution of Private Slovik* by William Bradford Huie; *The Life of the Spider* by John Crompton; *A Brief History of the United States* by Franklin Escher, Jr.; *Lives of Destiny as Told for the Reader's Digest* by Donald Culross Peattie; *An Analysis of the Kinsey Reports on Sexual Behavior in the Human Male and Female,* edited by Donald Porter Geddes; and *New World Writing, No. 5* by various authors.