1 The Limits of the Novel and the Limits of the Film

I. THE TWO WAYS OF SEEING

SUMMING UP HIS MAJOR INTENTIONS in 1913, D. W. Griffith is reported to have said, "The task I'm trying to achieve is above all to make you see."[1] Whether by accident or design, the statement coincides almost exactly with an excerpt from Conrad's preface to *Nigger of the Narcissus* published sixteen years earlier: "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*."[2] Aside from the strong syntactical resemblance, the coincidence is remarkable in suggesting the points at which film and novel both join and part company. On the one hand, that phrase "to make you see" assumes an affective relationship between creative artist and receptive audience. Novelist and director meet here in a common intention. One may, on the other hand, see visually through the eye or imaginatively through the mind. And between the percept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image lies the root difference between the two media.

[1] Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film* (New York, 1939), p. 119.
[2] Joseph Conrad, *A Conrad Argosy* (New York, 1942), p. 83.

Because novel and film are both organic—in the sense that aesthetic judgments are based on total ensembles which include both formal and thematic conventions—we may expect to find that differences in form and theme are inseparable from differences in media. Not only are Conrad and Griffith referring to different ways of seeing, but the "you's" they refer to are different. Structures, symbols, myths, values which might be comprehensible to Conrad's relatively small middle-class reading public would, conceivably, be incomprehensible to Griffith's mass public. Conversely, stimuli which move the heirs of Griffith's audience to tears, will outrage or amuse the progeny of Conrad's "you." The seeming concurrence of Griffith and Conrad splits apart under analysis, and the two arts turn in opposite directions. That, in brief, has been the history of the fitful relationship between novel and film: overtly compatible, secretly hostile.

On the face of it, a close relationship has existed from the beginning. The reciprocity is clear from almost any point of view: the number of films based on novels; the search for filmic equivalents of literature; the effect of adaptations on reading; box-office receipts for filmed novels; merit awards by and for the Hollywood community.

The moment the film went from the animation of stills to telling a story, it was inevitable that fiction would become the ore to be minted by story departments. Before Griffith's first year as a director was over, he had adapted, among others, Jack London's *Just Meat (For Love of Gold)*, Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, and Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth*. Sergei Eisenstein's essay, "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today,"[3] demonstrates how Griffith found in Dickens hints for almost every one of his major innovations. Particular passages are cited to illustrate the dissolve, the superimposed shot, the close-up, the pan, indicating that Griffith's interest in literary forms and his roots in Victorian idealism[4] provided at least part of the impulse for technical and moral content.

From such beginnings, the novel began a still unbroken tradi-

[3] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form*, trans. Jay Leyda (New York, 1949), pp. 195–255.

[4] Jacobs, pp. 98–99.

tion of appearing conspicuously on story conference tables. The precise record has never been adequately kept. Various counts range from 17 to almost 50 per cent of total studio production. A sampling from RKO, Paramount, and Universal motion picture output for 1934–35 reveals that about one-third of all full-length features were derived from novels (excluding short stories).[5] Lester Asheim's more comprehensive survey indicates that of 5,807 releases by major studios between 1935 and 1945, 976 or 17.2 per cent were derived from novels.[6] Hortense Powdermaker reports, on the basis of *Variety's* survey (June 4, 1947) that of 463 screenplays in production or awaiting release, slightly less than 40 per cent were adapted from novels.[7] And Thomas M. Pryor, in a recent issue of the *New York Times*, writes that the frequency of the original screenplay, reaching a new low in Hollywood, "represented only 51.8 per cent of the source material of the 305 pictures reviewed by the Production Code office in 1955." Appropriate modifications must be made in these calculations, since both Asheim and Powdermaker report that the percentage of novels adapted for high-budgeted pictures was much higher than for low-budgeted pictures.[8]

The industry's own appraisal of its work shows a strong and steady preference for films derived from novels, films which persistently rate among top quality productions. Filmed novels, for example, have made consistently strong bids for Academy Awards. In 1950, *Time* reported the results of *Daily Variety's* poll of 200 men and women who had been working in the industry for more than twenty-five years. *Birth of a Nation* was considered the best silent film; *Gone with the Wind* the best sound film and the best "all time film."[9] Originally, both were novels. The choice of *Gone*

[5] In Marguerite G. Ortman, *Fiction and the Screen* (Boston, 1935).

[6] In Lester Asheim, "From Book to Film" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1949).

[7] In Hortense Powdermaker, *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* (Boston, 1950), p. 74.

[8] For example, Asheim reports that of the "Ten Best" films listed in the *Film Daily Yearbook* for 1935–45, fifty-two or 47% were derived from established novels.

[9] *Time*, LV (March 6, 1950), 92. From the point of view of thematic conventions, there may be further significance in the fact that both films

with the Wind was a happy meeting of commercial and artistic interests. For when, some five years later, *Time* reported *Variety's* listing of Hollywood's "all time money makers," Miss Mitchell's title stood ahead of all others with earnings of some $33.5 million. More important, of the ten most valuable film properties, five had been adapted from novels.[10] The high percentage of filmed novels which have been financially and artistically successful may be more comprehensible when we remember how frequently Pulitzer Prize winners, from *Alice Adams* to *All the King's Men*, have appeared in cinematic form.[11]

Just as one line of influence runs from New York publishing house to Hollywood studio, another line may be observed running the other way. Margaret Farrand Thorp reports that when *David Copperfield* appeared on local screens, the demand for the book was so great that the Cleveland Public Library ordered 132 new copies; that the film premier of *The Good Earth* boosted sales of that book to 3,000 per week; and that more copies of *Wuthering Heights* have been sold since the novel was screened than in all the previous ninety-two years of its existence. Jerry Wald confirms this pattern by pointing out, more precisely, that after the film's appearance, the Pocket Book edition of *Wuthering Heights* sold 700,000 copies; various editions of *Pride and Prejudice* reached a third of a million copies; and sales for *Lost Horizon* reached 1,400,000.[12] The appearance, in 1956, of such films as *Moby Dick* and *War and Peace*, accompanied by special tie-in sales of the novels, has continued this pattern.

But when Jean Paul Sartre suggests that for many of these readers, the book appears "as a more or less faithful commentary" on the film,[13] he is striking off a typically cogent distinction. Quantitative analyses have very little to do with qualitative changes. They tell us nothing about the mutational process, let alone how to judge it. In the case of film versions of novels, such analyses are even less helpful. They merely establish the fact of reciprocity; they do not indicate its implications for aesthetics. They provide statistical, not critical data. Hence, from such information the precise nature of the mutation cannot be deduced.

Such statements as: "The film is true to the spirit of the book"; "It's incredible how they butchered the novel"; "It cuts out key passages, but it's still a good film"; "Thank God they changed the ending"—these and similar statements are predicated on certain assumptions which blur the mutational process. These standard expletives and judgments assume, among other things, a separable content which may be detached and reproduced, as the snapshot reproduces the kitten; that incidents and characters in fiction are interchangeable with incidents and characters in the film; that the novel is a norm and the film deviates at its peril; that deviations are permissible for vaguely defined reasons—exigencies of length or of visualization, perhaps—but that the extent of the deviation will vary directly with the "respect" one has for the original; that taking liberties does not necessarily impair the quality of the film, whatever one may think of the novel, but that such liberties are somehow a trick which must be concealed from the public.

What is common to all these assumptions is the lack of awareness that mutations are probable the moment one goes from a given set of fluid, but relatively homogeneous, conventions to another; that changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium. Finally, it is insufficiently recognized that the end products of novel and film represent different aesthetic genera, as different from each other as ballet is from architecture.

The film becomes a different *thing* in the same sense that a historical painting becomes a different thing from the historical event which it illustrates. It is as fruitless to say that film A is better or

deal with the Civil War and that both are sympathetic to the secessionists. To what extent has the Southern defeat haunted our national consciousness?

[10] *Time*, LXV (January 17, 1955), 74. The figures are quoted from *Variety's* forty-ninth anniversary issue. The filmed novels were: *Gone with the Wind, From Here to Eternity, Duel in the Sun, The Robe*, and *Quo Vadis*.

[11] Among other filmed Pulitzer Prize winners: *The Good Earth, Gone with the Wind, The Late George Apley, The Yearling, The Grapes of Wrath, A Bell for Adano, The Magnificent Ambersons, So Big, Arrowsmith, The Bridge of San Luis Rey, Alice Adams*.

[12] Jerry Wald, "Screen Adaptation," *Films in Review*, V (February, 1954), 66.

[13] Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?* trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York, 1949), p. 245.

worse than novel B as it is to pronounce Wright's Johnson's Wax Building better or worse than Tchaikowsky's *Swan Lake*. In the last analysis, each is autonomous, and each is characterized by unique and specific properties. What, then, are these properties?

II. A NOTE ON ORIGINS

At least part of our definition of the two media may be read at their respective points of origin. It is no accident that American writers, as Roger Manvell's bibliography shows,[14] have been preoccupied with the industry's history and financial organization. For the American film began as a gadget and ended as a billion-dollar investment. Its primary appeals all along have been to our dual American love of innovation and splendor. Erwin Panofsky, in his perceptive essay on motion pictures, has been sensitive to the impact of these origins on the art of the film.[15] The origins of the film, according to Panofsky, suggest two fundamental implications. First, that the "primordial basis of the enjoyment of moving pictures was not an objective interest in a specific subject matter, but the sheer delight in the fact that things *move*," no matter what things they are. I would amend Mr. Panofsky's statement to read, "sheer delight in the fact that *images* move." For it was a delight in an illusion resembling reality that first brought customers to the zoetrope, the nickelodeon, and the carnival sideshows. We take no special delight in the sight of a family eating, of a mother feeding her baby. But when precisely these images appeared as illusory images on a screen, they caused a sensation.

The second fact we are to understand, Panofsky goes on, is

> that films . . . are originally a product of a genuine folk-art. At the very beginning of things we find the simple recording of movement, galloping horses, railroad trains, fire-engines, sporting events, street scenes. And these films were originally *produced* by people who did not claim to be artists, and were *enjoyed* by people who did not claim to be artists, and who would have been much offended had anybody called them art-lovers. They were taken by photographers who were anything but "directors," and were performed, when it had come to the making of narrative films, by people who were anything but actors.[16]

[14] Roger Manvell, *Film*, revised ed. (London, 1950), pp. 251–263.

[15] Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Moving Pictures," *transition*, No. 26 (1937), p. 121. A revised version appears in *Critique*, 1 (January–February, 1947).

As if by instinct, even the earliest American films were already making use of their own peculiar properties. Before 1905, "Instead of emulating a theatrical performance already endowed with a certain amount of motion, the earliest films added movement to stationary works of art, so that technical invention could achieve a triumph of its own."[17]

The choice of subjects for these early animations were those three most appealing to the mass audience of the time: (1) melodramatic incidents, preferably of the sanguinary kind found in popular nineteenth-century historical paintings, or in plays, or in popular wax-works; (2) crudely comic incidents—the beginning of the pie-throwing genre; (3) scenes represented on mildly pornographic postcards. In point of fact, Panofsky concludes, the legitimate paths of evolution were opened up not by running away from the folk-art characteristics of the primitive film, but by developing it "within the limits of its own inherent possibilities." The three primordial species could develop ultimately into genuine film-tragedy, genuine film-comedy, and genuine film-romance, as soon as one realized that they could be transfigured "not by artificial injection of 'literary' values, but by exploiting the unique and specific possibilities of the new medium as such."

Because its history is longer and its materials more refined, the novel is more complex. In approaching the novel—a term we have used thus far with a confidence more apparent than real—we are faced internally with the fluidity of its boundaries and externally with its particular relationship to life. If the film is protean because it has assimilated photography, music, dialogue, the dance, the novel is protean because it has assimilated essays, letters, memoirs,

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[17] See also Jacobs, pp. 3–77.

histories, religious tracts, and manifestoes. There is no such thing as *the* novel.

A second difficulty arises because, as we shall also see in the film, aesthetic apprehension is constantly driven back to epistemology. Since the manipulation of visual stimuli in the film and verbal manipulation in the novel both presuppose a spectator, attention is constantly forced to move between subject and object. Where Rudolf Arnheim, the psychologist analyzing the film, begins from cognitive premises, Edwin Muir, the critic analyzing the novel, feels compelled to end with them. Early in his book, Arnheim says, "It is one of the author's fundamental principles that art is just as much and just as little a part of material life as anything else in the world; and that the only way to understand art is to start from the simplest forms of sensory-psychological impression and to regard visual and auditory art as sublimate forms of seeing and hearing."[18] Edwin Muir, toward the end of his study, *The Structure of the Novel*, finds that in trying to ascertain reasons for particular limitations in the novel he was driven "at least to the limitations of our vision of the world. We see things in terms of Time, Space, Causality . . . ."[19] We may expect, then, to cope with similar problems in a comparative study of the two media.

The novel's imprecise boundaries have made critics reluctant to classify it with absolute assurance, and have even doomed to failure those critics who have attempted strict definition. E. M. Forster recognizes the problem when he quotes Chevalley's definition of the novel, "*une fiction en prose d'une certain etendue*," and adds that he will consider as a novel any fictitious prose over 50,000 words.[20] Forster is aware that one must begin somewhere, and because the point at which one begins is a construct, the construct is necessarily naïve. Critical constructs distort the novel in much the same way that novels distort life, since in both cases one can hope to catch but a small fragment of the whole. Yet when Forster ends by doubting that "there is such a thing as a critical equipment," he is not discounting the value of his lectures. He is merely being clear about their limitations. True comprehensiveness comes only from reading the novel again and again, and sometimes not even then. When Forster satirizes the critic who classifies novels according to nine types of weather, and Henry James inveighs against the "clumsy separations" which "are made by critics and readers for their own convenience, and to help them out of some of their occasional queer predicaments,"[21] they are concerned not so much with the feebleness of criticism as with the presumptions of that particular kind of criticism which turns the reader away from the living fiction toward the empty construct. They are not despairing of any approach; they are merely discouraging the wrong one.

[18] Rudolf Arnheim, *Film*, trans. L. M. Sieveking and Ian F. D. Morrow (New York, 1933), p. 11.
[19] Edwin Muir, *The Structure of the Novel* (New York, 1929), p. 113.
[20] E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York, 1927), p. 17.

That much modern criticism comes close to despair is not only evident but understandable. Throughout *Forms of Modern Fiction*, for example, the collection of critical essays edited by William Van O'Connor, there runs a motif of anxiety, a recurring sense of collapse the moment formal criticism is brought to bear on the novel. "We cannot be both broad and critical,"[22] says Allen Tate, and adopts what he calls "the short view." By showing how Emma Bovary's mind, at a given moment, is rendered with perfect sensuousness, Tate offers a special angle from which to read the entire novel. Yet this is less a comment on the helplessness of criticism than on the limitations of the verbal process itself.

In a sense, this process of taking up a vantage point that is constantly aware of opposite tendencies has been typical of every major definition of the novel since its inception. Faced with new experiences, the novel has been forced to find new modes of rendering them. And criticism, faced with the *fait accompli*, has had to coin new terms. Thus criticism is perpetually a step behind the novel, as the novel is perpetually a step behind life. Each continually rejects its past. That is why the history of the novel reveals a constant warfare between opposite tendencies.

Harry Levin has reminded us of the conflicting tendencies even at the points of origin. The French *roman* suggests remote origins

[21] Henry James, *The Art of Fiction* (New York, 1949), p. 14.
[22] Allen Tate, "Techniques of Fiction," *Forms of Modern Fiction*, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minneapolis, 1948), p. 33.

in medieval romance. The Italian *novella*, the cognate of the English word, means "news" and suggests a new kind of anecdotal narrative claiming to be both recent and true. Thus the novel "touches heroic legend at one extreme and modern journalism at the other."[23] The eighteenth century finds Henry Fielding describing *Joseph Andrews*, "this species of writing, which I have affirmed to be hitherto unattempted in our language,"[24] as "a comic romance . . . a comic epic poem in prose." If the affectation of Samuel Richardson was to be made ridiculous, the comic element had to be introduced in order to correct, in Levin's compound phrase, "obsolete ideals and false ideologies."

Almost a century later, new social realities had made Fielding's familiar polarities obsolete. In his study of M. Beyle, which opened the third and concluding number of his *Revue Parisienne* (September 25, 1840), Balzac says, "I do not believe the portrayal of modern society to be possible by the severe method of the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."[25] Distinguishing between the literature of imagery, exemplified by Victor Hugo, and the literature of ideas, exemplified by Stendhal, Balzac considers himself an exponent of literary eclecticism, combining the sensual luxuriance of the one and the ideational dryness of the other.

In America, with the appearance of *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne went on to place himself at one end of the novel's original polarity of *roman* and *novella*. Renouncing the "novel," which presumes "to aim at a very minute fidelity . . . to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience," Hawthorne defines his book as a "romance," which attempts to read the "truth of the human heart" and "has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation."

By the twentieth century, after the exhilarating discovery that consciousness, and the unconscious, possessed hitherto undiscovered powers, new definitions began to force the setting up of new oppositions. Instead of distinguishing between two or more kinds of reality, epistemology questioned whether any fixed reality was possible at all. In *Don Quixote*, the mock hero continually confuses illusion and reality, but the reader is never in doubt about the distinction between armored knights and windmills. In Gide's *The Counterfeiters*, however, the reader is never certain where reality lies. Reality is too shifting, too elusive to be arrested with certainty. Like Edouard in *The Counterfeiters*, the novelist now begins by saying, "I should like to put everything into my novel,"[26] and ends by despairing of getting anything in. The inability to arrest a reality that is perpetually out of reach becomes a central theme. Not only does the novelist begin to doubt reality; he doubts his medium as well.

There is a sense, then, in which our twentieth-century novels have abandoned the drama of human thought and action for the drama of linguistic inadequacy. "It is almost as though language and subject had reversed roles. Where language was formerly used to comment on social and psychological conflicts, sociology and psychology now elucidate the traits of language itself." When Sartre concludes, "The literary object, though realized *through* language, is never given *in* language. On the contrary, it is by nature a silence and an opponent of the word . . ."[27] we realize that the great polarities have reached a new and striking conclusion. Language has become a character in the novel.

André Gide makes this point explicitly. In his journal, Edouard begins to catch sight of the "deep-lying" subject of his work-in-progress: "It is—it will no doubt be, the rivalry between the real world and the representation of it which we make ourselves . . . ." Language is no longer a secondary matter, "an external manifestation"; and technique, the manner in which one arranges his language, "not only . . . *contains* intellectual and moral implications, but . . . *discovers* them."[28] Finally, in A. A. Mendilow's study of

[23] Harry Levin, "The Novel," *Dictionary of World Literature*, ed. Joseph T. Shipley (New York, 1943), p. 405.

[24] Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (London, 1954), p. 23.

[25] Honoré de Balzac, "A Study of M. Beyle," *The Charterhouse of Parma*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff (London, 1950), p. xii.

[26] André Gide, *The Counterfeiters*, trans. Dorothy Bussy (New York, 1949), p. 172.

[27] Sartre, p. 44.

[28] Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery," *Forms of Modern Fiction*, p. 16.

the novel, the limitations of language become a central preoccupation:

> Language cannot convey non-verbal experience; being successive and linear, it cannot express simultaneous experiences; being composed of separate and divisible units, it cannot reveal the unbroken flow of the process of living. Reality cannot be expressed or conveyed—only the illusion of it.[29]

But to recognize the disparity between language and that which language depicts is not to discover an impasse. The distinction between word and thing is, after all, not new. What does seem to be new is the intensification of polarity between the constructs of verbal expression and the elusiveness of nonverbal experience. In mystical writing, one could simply label nonverbal experience "ineffable" and leave it at that. But today even the attributes of the ineffable have changed. The emphasis has shifted from elucidating a fixed and unchanging reality to arresting a transient one. Where Fielding, Balzac, and Hawthorne could stake out their claims with a certain confidence—although "affectation," "modern society" and the "truth of the human heart" are each in turn a different kind of territory—the modern novelist is riddled with doubts. Not only does he doubt his ability to stake out claims; he also doubts the existence of what he is claiming. At the very least, he is tormented by its chameleon-like character. Reality is never the same from one moment to the next. Not only does it change according to its own laws, but the novelist himself makes it change. His very act of writing alters his subject matter. "To speak is to act"; says Sartre, "anything which one names is already no longer quite the same; it has lost its innocence."

The moment our attention with respect to nonverbal experience shifts from substance to process, from being to becoming, from stasis to flux, the discrete character of language no longer seems adequate. Where the recurrent trope depicting art as holding the mirror up to nature once suggested the possibility of a virtual image at least, the question now becomes whether any image is possible at all. Where words once seemed a rough vehicle for conveying reality directly, they now seem to become weapons which puncture reality the moment they are applied. So that even creating the "illusion" which Mendilow speaks of becomes a torment.

[29] A. A. Mendilow, *Time and the Novel* (London, 1952), p. 81.

If the tendency of the modern novel has been to escape the limitations of language, one must meditate on the extraordinary effects which have been revealed in the process. It seems as if Proust and Joyce, confronted by those limitations, had resolved to uncover every hidden resource which their medium allowed. Necessarily, the recognition that once you "enter the universe of significations, there is nothing you can do to get out of it,"[30] returns the novelist to a rather stoic acceptance of his medium. And this acceptance permits him to discover new possibilities, new permutations and combinations which he had not dreamed were there.

Active imagination on the one hand, and aesthetic apprehension on the other, take their place as types of ordinary cognition. The verbal constructs of language become inseparable from the nonverbal constructs of sense data. When Hugh Dalziel Duncan defines great literature as "the conscious exploration through the imagination of the *possibilities* of human action in society,"[31] he is rephrasing Harry Levin's observation that because the novel combines "the qualities of a human document and a work of art," it may be judged by what it says and how, by truth and beauty both. When Duncan argues that a theory which allows "action to go forward in terms of symbolic action" presumes "a theory of the imagination as part of action," he is deliberately blurring the distinction between sociology and aesthetics. If the imagination is viewed as a type of human behavior, then socio-psychological analysis becomes inseparable from aesthetic analysis. Each conditions and supports the other. We shall see to what extent the shaping power of the mass audience leaves its mark on the film, but we may note at this point the analogous way in which the reader's symbolic action leaves its imprint on the novel.

Already we can observe how contrasting origins and development have brought the media of film and novel to radically dif-

[30] Sartre, p. 24.

[31] Hugh Dalziel Duncan, *Language and Literature in Society* (Chicago, 1953), p. 3.

ferent points. Where the film has not yet begun to question its ability to render certain types of physical and even psychological reality, the novel is no longer so confident. In Mendilow's terms, the novel "first tries to reflect reality as faithfully as it can, and then, despairing of the attempt, tries to evoke the feeling of a new reality of its own."

III. CONTRASTS IN THE MEDIA

The Film: Raw Materials

Such differences as we have already noted in the two media become even more obvious when we examine, in more detail, the peculiar properties of each. The film is based on the optical principle known as persistence of vision. After exposure, the retina of the eye retains the image of a picture approximately 1/10 of a second longer than the duration of actual contact. The principle was applied in the old zoetrope, for example, where apertures were cut in a freewheeling disc. When the disc was revolved at a given speed, the light through the apertures would seem to be continuous. A series of separate images, run behind the apertures, would create the illusion of constant motion. The principle has remained the same from the flashcards of the nickelodeon to the splendor of the widescreen. In the movie theater we sit in darkness much of the time. Our eye fills in the gaps.

The silent film was made up of separate frames joined on rolls of celluloid at a standard rate of sixteen frames to the foot. In sound films, twenty-four frames or 1½ feet per second run before the lens of the standard projector. At this rate, the eye receives the illusion of normal movement. The average film runs about 80 minutes and measures about 7,200 feet in length, although historically films have varied from as little as 50 feet or less to as much as 48,000 feet or more. Full-length films are made up of 1,000- or 2,000-foot reels, so that in the latter case an average feature runs about four reels. The standard width of the film strip is 35 mm., and a substandard width of 16 mm. is popular for noncommercial use. Innovations in stereoscopic films have set off further experiments with 55 and 65 mm. film, which may very well render the conventional mechanics obsolete (see James L. Limbacher's survey, "Widescreen Chronology," *Films in Review* [October, 1955], p. 403 ff). Whatever the standards of the future, however, it is highly probable that the film's basic materials will remain more mechanically fixed than those of the more traditional arts.

Beyond these limitations, however, the camera is free to use almost endless visual variations. It is at this point that the camera, its reel of sensitized film sprocketed in place, announces itself as an artistic instrument. The camera can go anywhere, see anything, in the natural world. Placed in front of a church, it can effect a number of distortions without even moving. Beginning with a two-inch lens, the cameraman can shoot the church in its entirety and end with a forty-inch lens which reveals no more than a notice pinned to the door. The two-inch lens most nearly corresponds to the vision of human eyesight and may therefore be used as a norm. Lenses of less than two inches distort space by extending and exaggerating distances, as through the wrong end of a telescope; lenses of more than two inches distort space by reducing and compressing distances, as through the magnifying end. Gauzes can be used to soften the outlines of scenes; masks can be used to give the illusion of looking through a keyhole or a heart or a cathedral arch. Sometimes the lens is smeared to give blurred or watery effects. Even immobilized, the camera makes space pliable.

More significantly, however, the camera can move, and its mobility has enabled it to achieve unprecedented visual effects. At this point, the film declares its historical independence from the theater. Mobile, the camera can see over a hundred miles of prairie, or count the eyelashes on an actor's lids. It can whirl over ballrooms; ride on cranes up houses into windows; move on a truck alongside galloping horsemen; take nose dives on the fuselage of an airplane; pan up skyscrapers by pivoting vertically on its tripod; or, by pivoting horizontally, brood across a deserted battlefield.

Similarly, it can distort light to fit a desired mood—deepen shadows, highlight faces, amplify contrast, turn night into day or faintly defined clouds into sharp ones. John Howard Lawson emphasizes these capabilities by suggesting that "the light pattern is the key to the composition, which is never static. The composition

is not merely a commentary on the action. There is a changing dynamic relationship between each person or object in the scene and the camera."[32] Thus, when the camera swings through the window to find the sleeping man in the first shot of *Body and Soul*, "the instrument itself is acting."

Like a precocious child, however, the camera can become offensive through sheer virtuosity. Basil Wright is correct when he says that "the good cameraman is as sparing as possible in the use of elaborate stunts."[33] The technique of the camera has, after all, been evolved by the demands of men making films for a specific end. Consequently, "the apparatus should be subservient to the idea."

The danger of the runaway camera never persists simply because the camera does not crank itself. Behind the lens is a creative brain directing its steady and often ruthless vision. And it is to the film-maker in relation to his instrument that we must look for the real center of the film's uniquely creative process.

On the face of it, to be sure, the camera approximates our ordinary perceptions. "It is the normal part of our behaviour," says Ernest Lindgren, "to look one moment at one thing, and the next moment at another, according to the direction in which our attention is attracted."[34] In order to alter our view, a mere movement of the eyes is sufficient. But sometimes we turn our head, or move it up or down. Sometimes the impulse for movement is transferred to our whole body, and, to get a particular angle of vision, we turn around or walk. Indeed, this selective and erratic manner of seeing, Lindgren argues, "is the keystone, not merely of the whole theory of film editing, but of the whole technique of filmic representation."

V. I. Pudovkin suggests the same thing in his axiom, "The lens of the camera replaces the eye of the observer."[35] But Basil

[32] John Howard Lawson, *Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting* (New York, 1949), pp. 382–383.

[33] Basil Wright, "Handling the Camera," *Footnotes to the Film*, ed. Charles Davy and Lovat Dickson (London, 1937), p. 44.

[34] Ernest Lindgren, *The Art of the Film* (London, 1948), p. 53.

[35] V. I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique*, trans. Ivor Montagu (London, 1935), pp. xiii–xiv.

Wright, the British photographer, points out, as Pudovkin and Lindgren ultimately do, the essentially radical departure of eye from camera:

> First and foremost we must remember that the camera does not see things in the same way as the human eye. The brain behind your eye selects the points of emphasis in the scene before you. You can look at a crowd and see nothing but one umbrella, or you can look at an empty field and see millions of separate blades of grass. . . . Not so the camera. The lens soullessly records on a sensitised piece of celluloid simply the amount of light of differing values that passes through it. No amount of thinking on the part of the cameraman will achieve any other emphasis. Out of a wide landscape it will not pick out that certain tree. You, as a person, have got to interfere, to place the camera in such a way that the picture it records will somehow give the emphasis you require.[36]

With Pudovkin's observation that the marked difference between the natural event and its appearance on the screen is exactly "what makes the film an art," we are brought to the heart of the creative film process. Bound by its respect for physical reality, but unbound by the vision of any *one* spectator, the lens becomes an ideal, unrealistic eye; unbound by natural observation, the eye of the spectator becomes omniscient. It took several years for film-makers to understand that the film's angle of vision was non-naturalistic; that being non-naturalistic, yet bound by optical and mechanical laws, the film had found its formative power. In many early films, an immobilized camera, set at a given distance, recorded the action before it in sequences that corresponded roughly to theatrical acts. In spite of some amazing effects in Méliès, who used the technique, the results remained little more than animated postcards.

Then, in the history of film technique, there came two astral hours. In *Enoch Arden*, D. W. Griffith outraged his superiors by alternating a medium shot with a close-up instead of filming his scene continuously in the usual manner. Griffith, in mobilizing the camera, had discovered the principle of editing. Having found the

[36] Wright, pp. 38–39.

true nature of motion pictures, Griffith went on to discover, through the camera, a multitude of ways in which to render spatial movement through exciting visual rhythms. In a short time, the inter-cut, the parallel development, the extreme long shot, the fade-out, the fade-in, the dissolve, the flashback, all became common currency in editing techniques.

Once film technicians discovered that the strips of celluloid were their real raw material, and once directors interrupted the camera's naturalistic eye to join the film in ways contrary to nature, the mode of transition from one shot to the next became all important. Spatial transition, the core of editing, becomes, in Raymond Spottiswoode's phrase, "the grammar of the film." And the principle is as central today as it was in its infancy. Lindgren gives us the main design:

> The normal method of transition from shot to shot within a scene is by means of a cut which gives the effect of one shot being instantly replaced by the next. The normal method of transition from one scene to another is by means of the mix or dissolve which is always associated with a sense of the passage of time or of a break in time. A sequence is normally punctuated by a fade-in at the beginning and a fade-out at the end. The fade may be quick or slow according to the emotional mood of the film at the moment it occurs and to the degree of emphasis which the director desires to give the pause at that particular point.[37]

Where Lindgren's statement has the matter-of-factness of assimilated tradition, Pudovkin's adumbration has the ring of a manifesto: "I claim that every object, taken from a given viewpoint and shown on the screen to spectators, is a dead object, even though it has moved before the camera. . . . Every object must, by editing, be brought upon the screen so that it shall have not photographic but cinematographic essence."[38] If by a "dead object" in this context we understand "dead" to mean lacking in significance with respect to a total structure, just as a phrase detached from a poem

[37] Lindgren, p. 67.
[38] Pudovkin, pp. xiv–xv.

is dead, then Pudovkin will not seem to be overstating his case. And if we remember that the analogy to poetry is figurative and not literal, then the domain of the film will remain autonomous. In his brilliantly pioneering work on film aesthetics, Vachel Lindsay grasped the difference firmly: "A list of words making a poem and a set of apparently equivalent pictures forming a photoplay may have entirely different outcomes. It may be like trying to see a perfume or listen to a taste."[39]

When, however, Pudovkin insists without reservation that the material of the film director consists not of real processes happening in real space and real time but merely of those pieces of celluloid on which those processes have been recorded—then aesthetic emphasis turns to distortion. So exhilarating was the discovery of the film's formative principles, that the rhythm of montage tended to obscure the photographic demands of the individual shot. It is becoming increasingly clear that in addition to its place in the sequence, the photograph must be granted its own integrity. In order for the shot to be integrated into a larger structure, the shot itself must be recognizable as a copy of physical reality. The sled in *Citizen Kane* must first be recognizable as a sled before it can be contrasted to the fantastic cluster of art works upon the lawn. If the cinematic eye can link diverse spatial images, the images themselves must be meticulously arranged. Like musical notes, each image must have the proper timbre before the entire sequence can be strong. Even though the photographic image is different in quality from the object it records, Panofsky's observation that what we work with in the film is *physical reality* seems highly relevant. For although it is true that all the objects and persons in the film can be arranged in all sorts of ways, "there is no running away from them."

Arnheim, in his discussion of film metaphor, suggests the same thing. Noting that the sound-film is so sensory a medium that things which belong together abstractly and not materially cannot be shown together, he goes on to say: "Just as a grinning death's-head does not in a film appear as a symbol but as an actual part of the human skeleton, so the connection between two objects shown

[39] Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (New York, 1915), p. 272.

on a film simultaneously never seems metaphorical but always at once real and ontological."[40] Like Panofsky, Arnheim is suggesting that there is a photographic literalness in the film which is inescapable and which makes metaphor impossible except in a highly restricted sense. Even Thomas Mann, who seriously misjudges the film in other respects, supports the notion that almost any story will be accepted so long as it "is set in a frame of scenic and mimic detail which is true to life and reality . . . ."[41] Any discussion of editing, then, must remain at least peripherally aware of the shot's obligation to representational fidelity. The film's spatial freedom is always modified by realistic demands.

The Trope in Language

The film, then, making its appeal to the perceiving senses, is free to work with endless variations of physical reality. "Literature on the other hand," Mendilow points out, "is dependent entirely on a symbolic medium that stands between the perceiver and the symbolised percepta . . . ." Perhaps nothing better illustrates this root difference between language and photographed image than an appraisal of each medium's ability to render literary tropes.

Carrying Mendilow's statement a step further, we observe that word-symbols must be translated into images of things, feelings and concepts through the process of thought. Where the moving picture comes to us directly through perception, language must be filtered through the screen of conceptual apprehension. And the conceptual process, though allied to and often taking its point of departure from the percept, represents a different mode of experience, a different way of apprehending the universe.

The distinction is a crucial one, for it generates differences which run all the way down the line from the media's ability to handle tropes, affect beholders, render states of consciousness (including dreams, memories, feelings, and imagination), to their respective methods of handling conventions, time, and space.

The linguistic trope is the novel's special way of rendering the

[40] Arnheim, p. 265.

[41] Thomas Mann, "On the Film," *Past Masters and Other Papers*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York, 1933), p. 263.

shock of resemblance. By juxtaposing similar qualities in violently dissimilar things, language gets its revenge on the apparent disorder of life. It binds together a world which seems atomized and therefore chaotic to the primitive mind. Modern theories of symbolic thinking demonstrate that we necessarily see resemblances in the most ordinary perceptions. Arnheim points out that an illusion, to be strong, does not have to be complete in every detail: "everyone knows that a clumsy childish scribble of a human face consisting of two dots, a comma, and a dash may be full of expression and depict anger, amusement, fear . . . ." A kind of basic tropism is involved in such a process: the mind sees resemblances in the disparate sources of scribbled drawing and angry face.

So similar are linguistic and cognitive processes in finding resemblances that critics like Cleanth Brooks build their analytical systems around the metaphor. The difference between the artist who coins metaphors and the ordinary mind which classifies objects derives largely from the fact that the artist casts his net much wider. Where the cognitive mind finds common traits in collies and boxers and calls them dogs, the maker of tropes finds common qualities in slings, arrows, and outrageous fortune. Literary tropes, however, are distinguished from cognitive classification, first, by their verbal origins and, second, by a kind of connotative luxuriance. Not only does the power of the trope inhere in its figurative character but in its ability to compound itself without damage to intended meanings. Virginia Woolf, contrasting the novel and film, is especially sensitive to the unique power of the figure of speech. The images of a poet, she tells us, are compact of a thousand suggestions, of which the visual is only the most obvious:

> Even the simplest image: "my love's like a red, red rose, that's newly sprung in June," presents us with impressions of moisture and warmth and the flow of crimson and the softness of petals inextricably mixed and strung upon the lift of a rhythm which is itself the voice of the passion and the hesitation of the love. All this, which is accessible to words, and to words alone, the cinema must avoid.[42]

[42] Virginia Woolf, "The Movies and Reality," *New Republic*, XLVII (August 4, 1926), 309.

We have already seen that a special kind of film trope is possible, but only when it is confined to cinematic terms: it must arise naturally from the setting (as Lilian Gish's knitting in *Way Down East*, or Marlon Brando's horse in *Viva Zapata*). If disparate objects are compared, the film metaphor must be predicated upon a clear suspension of realistic demands (as the invasion montage in the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup*). Since the latter is rarely successful (the notable failure of the cradle linkage in *Intolerance*), the former technique must carry the burden of metaphor. James Agee, speaking of the metamorphic mobility of the silent-screen comedian, his ability to assume physical shapes suggesting objects or emotions, is able to say, "It was his business to be as funny as possible physically, without the help or hindrance of words. So he gave us a figure of speech, or rather a vision . . . ."[43] But if such figures work at all, they do so by becoming appropriated to the peculiar laws of the film, and not by simple conversion. The final and most central cinematic analogy to the metaphor may be found in the special case of editing (discussed below), where two disparate elements, as in the trope, are linked together to create a *tertium quid*.

That film tropes are enormously restricted compared to literary tropes is indicated by the character of the compacted imagery in almost any passage by Marcel Proust. Watching the aged Duc de Guermantes, Marcel marvels to find him showing his age so little, and understands why

> . . . as soon as he rose and tried to stand erect, he had tottered on trembling limbs (like those aged archbishops who have nothing solid on them except their metallic cross . . .) and had wavered as he made his way along the difficult summit of his eighty-three years, as if men were perched on giant stilts, sometimes taller than church spires, constantly growing and finally rendering their progress so difficult and perilous that they suddenly fall.[44]

[43] James Agee, "Comedy's Greatest Era," *Life*, XXVII (September 5, 1949), 70.

[44] Marcel Proust, "The Past Recaptured," *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. Frederick A. Blossom, II (New York, 1932), 1123.

The images of metallic cross, men on stilts, in turn taller than church spires and still growing, depend for their effect precisely on the fact that they are not to be taken literally. The quality of precarious summits common to stilts and years is the resemblance which yokes these things together. In the process a new thing is created which resides neither in octogenarians nor in stilts. The moment such relationships lose their novelty and become habitual, they become cliches. So that besides conceptual appeal and figurative luxuriance the final property of the trope is its insistence on perpetual renewal. It is a way, then, of packed symbolic thinking which is peculiar to imaginative rather than to visual activity. Converted into a literal image, the metaphor would seem absurd. In such attempts, to adopt Virginia Woolf's formulation, "Eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples." She is right in concluding that the results of conversion from linguistic to visual images are disastrous to both. The difference is too great to overcome.

Just as the cinema exhibits a stubborn antipathy to novels, the novel here emerges as a medium antithetical to film. Because language has laws of its own, and literary characters are inseparable from the language which forms them, the externalization of such characters often seems dissatisfying. The distinction between the character who comes to us through a screen of language and the character who comes to us in visual images may account, perhaps, for the persistent disclaimers of film commentators like Michael Orme[45] and Thomas Craven.[46] Protesting De Mille's butchering of *Four Frightened People* by E. Arnot Robinson, Orme reflects, "you cannot transpose any one character from page to screen and hope to present him entirely as the novelist created him or as the novelist's public knew him . . . . who can really recall hav-

[45] Michael Orme, "The Bookshelf and the Screen," *Illustrated London News*, CLXXXVI (March 10, 1934), 368.

[46] Craven's statement reads, "I doubt if the most astute and sympathetic reader ever visualizes a character; he responds to that part of a created figure which is also himself, but he does not actually see his hero. . . . For this reason all illustrations are disappointing." In "The Great American Art," *Dial*, LXXXI (December, 1926), 489–490.

ing seen a screen performance which really and truly portrayed his favourite character as he knew it?"

Editing: The Cinematic Trope

If the film is thus severely restricted in rendering linguistic tropes (despite dialogue which will be discussed presently), it has, through the process of editing, discovered a metaphoric quality all its own. We have already noted how the spatial liberation of the cinema was its unique achievement. But film editing, combining the integrity of the shot with the visual rhythm of the sequence, gives the director his characteristic signature.

"The first thing to be observed about the technique of editing," Lindgren observes, "is that it affords the film-maker a new field for his powers of selection." Since the complete action of any given scene is made up of a large number of moving components, the director must constantly choose which detail he will emphasize at a given moment. Selection, however, can go much farther than this. Through editing, the film-maker can eliminate meaningless intervals, concentrate on significant details, ordering his design in consonance with the central line of his narrative.

For example, Pudovkin poses the problem of presenting a man falling from a window five stories high. The director, in this case, would take one shot of a man falling from a window in such a way that the net (into which he safely falls) is not visible on the screen; then a shot of the same man falling from a slight height to the ground. Joined together, the shots would give the desired impression of continuous fall. It is precisely this technique that Griffith used in the Babylonian episode of *Intolerance*, which Pudovkin had seen and admired. The camera, it should be noted, has not followed nature. Instead, the director has selected two points in the process, leaving the intervening passage to be filled in by the mind of the spectator. This extraordinary power of suggestion is indeed unique in the dramatic arts. "It is not correct," Pudovkin warns us, "to call such a process a trick; it is a method of filmic representation exactly corresponding to the elimination of five years that divides a first from a second act upon the stage." The method corresponds roughly to the temporal gap between one

panel and another in Renaissance frescoes depicting the lives of saints, except that in the film the action seems continuous.

In cinematic terms, then, the method of connecting the film strips becomes the basic formative function. For the two strips, joined together, become a *tertium quid*, a third thing which neither of the strips has been independently. This is the essence of that much abused concept of Eisenstein's which we have come to know as montage.

Given the transition, the relationship between shots as the center of the creative process, a high degree of discipline must be exercised in the editing. Long shots must dovetail with close shots. There must be a logical connection between the shots, a kind of visual momentum, or transference. We see a man about to cross a street. In a close-up, we see his face twist in horror. We cut immediately to a scene in front of him. A car is bearing down on a small child. We accept the instantaneous shift because, interested as we are in the cause of the horror, we are propelled visually to the next significant detail. Different points of view must thus be carefully blended to suggest a continuous action.

Building his design out of individual strips, always thinking plastically, the film-maker may use almost endless spatial combinations. He may, for example, use contrast ironically. When Alec Guinness, in *The Promoter*, achieves a social triumph by dancing with the Countess of Chell, the film cuts to a shot of greasy sausage frying in a skillet. It is the next day and the "card's" mother is preparing his meal in their dingy kitchen. Or the director may use what the Feldman brothers call parallel editing.[47] A wife, to make her husband jealous, is seen flirting with a willing lover. We cut to an office where the husband is seen making advances to his secretary. The director may use symbolism. In *Strike*, the shooting down of workers is punctuated by shots of the slaughter of a steer in a stockyard. In *The Blue Angel*, birds are used with consummate artistry as a kind of leitmotif. In the opening scene, Professor Unrat coos at a caged canary. Later, having devoted himself to Lola, a music-hall singer, he watches pigeons flying up against a clock whose bronze figures ominously mark the passage

[47] Joseph and Harry Feldman, *Dynamics of the Film* (New York, 1952), p. 86.

of time. And at the height of his degradation, the Professor crows like a cock. The possibility for plastic comments like these, as distinct from verbal renditions of the same effects, is unprecedented in the arts.

A new kind of relationship between animate and inanimate objects springs up, a relationship which becomes the key to plastic thinking. Pudovkin points out quite cogently that relationships between human beings are, for the most part, illumined by conversation, by words. No one carries on conversation with objects, and that is why an actor's relationship to objects is of special interest to the film technician.

Within the composition of the frame, the juxtaposition of man and object becomes crucial. "The performance of an actor linked with an object and built upon it will always be one of the most powerful methods of filmic construction."[48] We have only to think of Chaplin to see the principle in operation. The dancing rolls in *The Gold Rush*, the supple cane, the globe dance in *The Great Dictator*, the feeding machine in *Modern Times*, the flowers and drinks in *Monsieur Verdoux*, the flea skit in *Limelight*—these are only isolated examples of Chaplin's endless facility for inventing new relationships with objects. He leans on a doorman as on a lamppost, and the animate becomes inanimate. The spring of the watch in *The Pawnshop* comes alive, and the inanimate becomes animate. The confusion dynamizes the relationship, and the distinction between man and object is obliterated. Man and object become interchangeable, and the inanimate joins the animate as an actor. Certainly this accounts for a good part of Chaplin's filmic genius.

Not only has the film discovered new ways to render meanings by finding relationships between animate and inanimate objects, but the human physiognomy itself has been rediscovered. So pervasive has been the power of the close-up to convey emotion that in "*Der Sichtbare Mensch*" Béla Balázs places the film on

[48] Pudovkin, p. 115. A telling account of a familiar phenomenon appears in Lindsay, p. 15: " . . . there came to our town not long ago a film of a fight between Federals and Confederates, with the loss of many lives, all for the recapture of a steam-engine that took on more personality in the end than private or general on either side, alive or dead."

a par with the invention of the printing press. The method of conveying meaning by facial expression, a method which according to Balázs fell into desuetude with the advent of printing, has been revived by the "microphysiognomy" of the screen image. The face becomes another kind of object in space, a terrain on which may be enacted dramas broad as battles, and sometimes more intense. Physiognomy preëmpts the domain of nonverbal experience: "The gestures of visual man are not intended to convey concepts which can be expressed in words, but such inner experiences, such nonrational emotions which would still remain unexpressed when everything that can be told has been told."[49]

Just as words are not merely images expressing our thoughts and feelings, but in many cases their *a priori* limiting forms, the subtleties of the mobile face not only render hitherto unrecorded experiences but also create the conditions for new experiences to come into being. If, then, "the film increases the possibilities for expression, it will also widen the spirit it can express." If Balázs goes too far in calling for an "encyclopedia of comparative gesturology," he at least draws attention to the unprecedented possibilities of the human face. These possibilities have given rise to a wholly different kind of acting. The microdrama of the human countenance permits the reading of the greatest conflicts in the merest flicker of an eye. Understatement becomes the key to film characterization. The subtleties of Mme. Falconetti's face in Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, or of Giulietta Massina's in Fellini's *La Strada* would have been incomprehensible to anyone in the dramatic arts before 1900.

In a real sense, then, Pudovkin is right when he says, "In the discovered, deeply imbedded detail there lies an element of perception, the creative element that gives the event shown its final worth." By selecting and combining, by comparing and contrasting, by linking disparate spatial entities, photographed images of "the deeply imbedded detail" allow the film-maker, through editing, to achieve a uniquely cinematic equivalent of the literary trope.

[49] Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, trans. Edith Bone (New York, 1953), p. 40.

Sound in Editing

If the emphasis so far has been on spatial movement, I do not mean to overlook the function of sound in editing. I mean only to emphasize that sound is subsidiary to the moving image, that dialogue, music, aural effects take their place as separate lines in the ensemble which editing creates. Just as the first narrative films erred by imitating the fixed frame of the stage, the first sound films erred by imitating theatrical dialogue. Sound films, like the early silents, aroused curiosity as a toy and, in the process, were almost talked to death. Intelligent critics were quick to attack this fault, and some even argued against the sound track itself. An art, they said, thrives on the limitations of its materials and every gain in realism (like painting plaster of Paris figures in lifelike colors) must be accompanied by an aesthetic loss. But the aesthetic loss was temporary and the film learned the proper use of its new dimension. "One can imagine," writes Panofsky, "that, when the cave-men of Altamira began to paint their buffaloes in natural colors instead of merely incising the contours, the more conservative cave-men foretold the end of palaeolithic art. But palaeolithic art went on, and so will the movies."

A case in point is René Clair's initial resistance to sound. So repelled was he by the early dissonance that Clair for a time seriously considered abandoning the film for a career in fiction. Even after he resigned himself to the inevitablity of the soundtrack, as Georges Sadoul tells us, Clair satirized the medium. In *Sous les Toits de Paris*, "The glass-panel door that slams to before certain of the characters are about to speak is in this respect something of a symbol." Not until the recent *Les Belles de Nuit* does Clair seem to accept symbolically this entrenched nemesis of the silent film. Clair's poor composer reacts to a rash of discordant noise, aural representatives of a disordered world, by retreating into a world of dreams. In his dream-world, the sounds—a bugle blast, the tenor-manager of an opera house accepting the young hero's opus, a seductive temptress singing her affections against exotic settings —fall more gently on the ear. But gradually the dreams become frantic and distasteful, the sounds more harsh than any in the hero's waking hours. And when he awakes, highly relieved to

escape the madness of his dream-world, he symbolically accepts the harsh acoustic world from which he had fled. With the discovery that sound could thus be integrated into the total film structure, Clair seems to have become reconciled to the aural dimension of motion pictures.

Yet in one sense the conservatives who objected to sound were right. Every filmic innovation from sound to 3-D and the wide-screen processes has been accompanied by a throwback to false theatrical conventions. But these throwbacks have been brought on less by the innovation than by a misunderstanding of its proper role in the film medium.

With sound, as with the subsequent innovation of color and stereoscopic film, came a new dimension and new possibilities for selection. But the proper role of sound became apparent only when the film, as in the work of René Clair, once again asserted its fundamental editing principles. Although Pudovkin's early notes are speculative rather than definitive, there is from the beginning, supplementing the *parallel* use of sound in dialogue and music, the guiding principle of counterpoint, a logical extension of the technique of editing. Pudovkin visualizes "a film in which sounds and human speech are wedded to the visual images on the screen in the same way in which two or more melodies can be combined by an orchestra . . . . " To urge the contrapuntal use of sound and image was to point up hidden resources that the filmist might easily overlook. But Pudovkin goes too far when he suggests that one must never show on the screen a man and reproduce his words exactly synchronized with the movement of his lips. To forego the right of synchronization is to forego another valuable and essentially contrapuntal device, namely the contrast between a line of dialogue and the speaker's face.

The classic statement on the aesthetic use of sound came as an articulate statement from the Russians after the Americans had presented the first commercially practical example. *The Jazz Singer* opened in October, 1927. In August of the following year, a statement by Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov appeared in a Leningrad magazine, arguing essentially for a strict use of "non-synchronization." The statement ignores, of course, the realistic tug of synchronized speech, just as an emphasis on editing

tends to overlook the photographic demands of the individual shot. If, however, we exempt dialogue from the onus of strict non-synchronization (Eisenstein violated his own credo by synchronizing speech and image in *Alexander Nevsky*, his first sound film), the statement can and has stood as a guide to most serious filmists. In *Alexander Nevsky*, the camera tracks along bleak wastes of ice. But the Prokofieff score, suggesting quiet, ominous preparations, adumbrates the coming Battle of the Ice. In *High Noon*, the theme of the ballad, introduced during the credit titles, is carried over into the marriage ceremony, suggesting the coming desertion, the lonely conflict. Thus sound is used to reinforce, comment on, anticipate the film's visual images.

That the final word on sound has not yet been pronounced is indicated when we contrast the aural work of various film directors. Discussing his scenario for *An American Tragedy* (which Paramount paid him for but never produced, substituting the melodramatic version directed by Josef von Sternberg in 1931), Eisenstein says flatly, "The true material of the sound film is, of course, the monologue." But such a recent tour de force as *The Thief*, which abandons dialogue entirely, seems to restate the case for movement, music, and nonverbal sound effects as the emblems of subjective moods. Between these extremes, is the combination which Laurence Olivier uses in the sound track of *Hamlet*. Sometimes Hamlet's voice is rendered in interior monologue; sometimes, when his emotions burst out naturally, in spoken soliloquy. At times, the words are synchronized with the speaker's lips; at other times they merely accompany the face of the listener. Suffice it to say that dialogue, interior monologue, sound effects, music are ultimately determined by and therefore subservient to the demands of the visual image.

Like color, like stereoscopic film, the talkies opened up new cinematic possibilities. But each innovation has conformed in the end to pictorial requirements. Sometimes the innovation has been consciously suppressed. In *Modern Times*, Chaplin kept his mechanized tramp from talking when talking did not suit his purposes. After filming *Henry V* in technicolor, Olivier did *Hamlet* in black and white.

What the dimension of sound implies for the film's ability to render experiential time we shall see in our discussion of time and space in the two media.

IV. THE AUDIENCES AND THE MYTHS

The Novel

Differences in the raw materials of novel and film cannot fully explain differences in content. For each medium presupposes a special, though often heterogeneous and overlapping, audience whose demands condition and shape artistic content. Because the shaping power of reader and movie-goer has, perhaps, been too often neglected in considerations of the filmed novel, it requires special emphasis here.

When Sartre, speaking of literature, points out that, by a reversal which is "characteristic of the imaginary object, it is not [Raskolnikov's] behavior which excites my indignation or esteem, but my indignation and esteem which give consistency and objectivity to his behavior,"[50] he is pushing to its limits the spectator's claim to an active role in the aesthetic response. But if the history of aesthetics proves anything, it is that a given set of myths, symbols, conventions is unable to satisfy all spectators at all times in all places. On the other hand, according to Sartre, one "cannot write without a public and without a myth—without a *certain* public which historical circumstances have made, without a *certain* myth of literature which depends to a very great extent upon the demand of this public." It follows, then, that in a society like ours, "where we are conscious of separation in time (through our historical sense) as well as in space, literature is assigned the task of creating and sustaining communal symbolic characters who must become part of the experience of every individual who is to take part in this society."[51] If we take seriously Tobler's classic definition of philology as "that branch of the humanities which strives to understand the manifestations of the intellectual life of a nation, period or person as far as this life manifests itself in lan-

[50] Sartre, pp. 50–51.
[51] Duncan, p. 5.

guage," it follows that linguistic analysis distorts literature insofar as it neglects symbolic levels which, only by entering the public domain, as it were, become comprehensible to particular audiences.

The precise contours of such approved myths in literature need not concern us here beyond our noting what any number of literary historians have already pointed out, that the rise of the novel "coincides with the educational diffusion of literacy, the technological perfection of printing, and the economic ascendancy of the middle classes."[52] The coincidence has led to the recurrence, in the Western novel, of root-problems derived from the conflicts and adjustments between Protestant ethics grounded in Judaeo-Christian religion, and the rise of a middle-class society founded on an industrial organization of production. Whether one uses the technique of a Kenneth Burke in searching out the associational clusters of images in literary expression; of a Perry Miller in explicating the history of ideas in a relatively homogeneous culture like New England; of an F. O. Matthiessen in bringing the resources of history, language, and psychology to bear on the texts of given novels—one finds recurring again and again, under the aegis of conflicts between good and evil, the great oppositions between the individual and society, sin and morality, mind and heart, flesh and spirit. One needs only to trace recurrent attitudes to the novel's typological characters—the usurer, the virgin, the frontiersman, the egoist, the artist, the criminal, the entrepreneur, the landed aristocrat, the transgressor and law-enforcer—to find common patterns of approval and disapproval. In spite of inevitable "ambiguities, differences, every kind of divisiveness"[53] in our linguistic appeals to one another, the novel has retained a complex but common body of themes, settings and attitudes which are characteristic of middle-class refraction. If, in Mendilow's phrase, even the most independent writer "is grappled to the soul of his times with hoops of steel," it is reasonable to expect that the novelist will use notations which are comprehensible to his readers and, today especially, will pit himself against some startling new

[52] Levin, p. 405.
[53] Duncan, p. 140 ff.

experiences which are entering the public domain. One of his most important discoveries, for example, is that status as well as sexual repression can cause anxiety.

This mutual extension of the boundaries between social and imaginative action lends increasing support to the value of approaching literature as an "institution." David Daiches' assumption that the most significant modern fiction "represents an attempted adjustment between literature and a certain state of transition in civilization and culture generally"[54] supports Levin's definition of realism as "a continuous effort, from one generation to the next, to adjust the techniques of literature to the changing conditions of life." In the institutional approach, the critic assumes a necessary difference between art and life and considers literary convention the gentlemen's agreement between them.[55] He assumes that even though literature, "instead of reflecting life, refracts it," literature is, at the same time, always "an intrinsic part of life." He assumes that in the steady adjustment of literature to life literary conventions change with experience and that judgments are therefore falsified if we apply current standards to old works, if, for example, we judge the heroic couplet by the credo of the Imagist Manifesto, or *Le Cid* by Strindberg's psychology. Since there is that in literature which is at once perpetually dying and perpetually coming into being, the institutional approach assumes that literature, like other institutions, the church, or the law,

> . . . cherishes a unique phase of human experience and controls a special body of precedents and devices; it tends to incorporate a self-perpetuating discipline, while responding to the main currents of each succeeding period; it is continually accessible to all the impulses of life at large, but it must translate them into its own terms and adopt them to its peculiar forms. Once we have grasped this fact, we begin to see how art may belong to so-

[54] David Daiches, *The Novel and the Modern World* (Chicago, 1939), p. 2.
[55] Harry Levin, "Literature as an Institution," *Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment*, ed. Mark Schorer, Josephine Miles, and Gordon McKenzie (New York, 1948), p. 550. "Convention," says Levin, "may be described as a necessary difference between art and life."

ciety and yet be autonomous within its own limits, and are no longer puzzled by the polarity of social and formal criticism.[56]

The Film

How the institutional approach, appropriating the influences of both audience and medium, may be applied to comparative film criticism is indicated by the manner in which the director must attend to the requirements of the mode of industrial production (the profit motive dividing bourgeois artist from mass audience), unofficial and official censorship (the Production Code), modern folk myths (the perpetuation of symbolic heroes—the actor, the tramp, the cowboy, the gangster, the Disney stable of fable—and the popularization of melodrama, slapstick, spectacle). Each contributes to a complex but common body of conventions which, as in the novel, are perpetually being broken.

The product of a commercial society, the Hollywood commodity must make a profit; to make a profit, it must please consumers. Where a novel can sell 20,000 volumes and make a substantial profit, the film must reach millions. This explains, perhaps, why writers accustomed to working in isolation are continually unnerved by the co-operative demands of film production. More than anyone else, novelists with screen-writing experience have been responsible for scathing indictments of the film industry.[57] The playwrights have been both less frequent and less severe in their attacks.[58] And the directors, being too busy making films,

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 552.

[57] Novels about Hollywood which are sardonic and critical in tone include Budd Schulberg, *What Makes Sammy Run* and *The Disenchanted;* F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Last Tycoon;* Jay Richard Kennedy, *Prince Bart;* Nathaniel West, *Day of the Locust;* Robert Carson, *The Magic Lantern;* Horace McCoy, *I Should Have Stayed Home;* James Cain, *Serenade;* Aldous Huxley, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan;* Peter Viertel, *White Hunter, Black Heart;* Norman Mailer, *The Deer Park.* Manfred A. Wuerslin (University of Wisconsin) is at work on a dissertation considering "The Image of Hollywood in Modern American Literature, 1920–1950."

[58] *The Big Knife* by Clifford Odets is a rare and angry theatrical indictment of Hollywood. In Robert Aldrich's film adaptation of the play, a conscious effort is made to dissociate the villain-producer, Stanley Hoff, from the industry as a whole.

have complained little or not at all. Discontent, it seems, has been directly proportional to one's lack of training in joint production. This accounts, too, both for the antipathy of individualistic scholars to film research and for the neglect of scenario-writing as an independent art form. If it is true, as Margaret Kennedy points out, that screen writing "is no more a work of literature than is the recipe for a pudding,"[59] both the resistance and the unhappiness of screen writers are more understandable. But the contradictions generated by the exigencies of the market and the tendencies of the medium make the problem more complicated than this.

On the one hand, we find the elaborate apparatus of the studios, the orchestral nature of the production crew, the necessity of catering to the tastes of a mass audience, the profit motive, the official and unofficial censorship imposed by state and industry. On the other hand, the filmic thinking of the individual craftsman, the rightness of the screen for the freewheeling, plastic imagination, the resistance of film to any kind of rigid code, the rich and complex subject matter offered by the film's heterogeneous audience, the adaptability of that audience to thematic and formal innovation. On the one hand, acceptance of the most implausible heroics; on the other, insistence on absolute fidelity to realistic detail. The ordinary comforts of reliable conventions are all but impossible when the conventions themselves conflict. This tug of contradiction, this pull of opposite tendencies, has both strengthened and weakened the film from its inception. Just a step behind the artist, and sometimes overtaking him, has been the shaping power of censor and audience. In the film, more than in any of the other arts, the signature of social forces is evident in the final work.

Directly and indirectly, the structure of the film has been conditioned by a carefully supervised content. This control is not surprising since big business has always treated the film as a commodity. As early as 1915-16, French Pathé, then the world leader in the newsreel field, formed an alliance with DuPont, which had risen to industrial eminence in 1915 through war munitions contracts with England.[60]

[59] Margaret Kennedy, *The Mechanized Muse* (London, 1952), p. 13.

[60] Lawson, p. 327.

In 1915, American Tobacco tried to effect a merger between Paramount and the leading independents, but the agreement fell through because Adolph Zukor of Paramount wanted to keep monopolistic control of the field. Then the Kuhn, Loeb investors, Jeremiah Milbank, of Chase National Bank, and others became actively interested in the new industry. With various modifications, this pattern of close alliances between investment banking and corporate production has persisted to the present day.[61]

Along with the rise of Hollywood as a business community, trading in the commodity of art, came the rise of self-appointed moral censors. Individual states set up their own censorship codes, reflecting the preferences of particular regions. When *Volpone* was shown in Boston, a note had to be appended on the screen to the effect that, of course, Mosca was duly apprehended and received the punishment he deserved. Thus, moral control has continually altered filmic content. Religious, social, and cultural defenders of public morality continue to buffet Hollywood's conscience with a mélange of ethical arguments. Most powerful of these has been the Catholic Legion of Decency, whose A, B, and C ratings are significant emblems for every Hollywood producer.

Pressured in one way or another during the twenties, before the Legion of Decency ever came into being, Hollywood, in 1934, almost in self-defense, adopted a revised version of the much-publicized Production Code.[62] With minor revisions, the Code has been, or has attempted to be, standard operating procedure in Hollywood ever since. The censor, in his explicit restrictions against verbal and visual sin, makes no bones about tampering with the film-maker's subject matter. But the Code, on the other hand, says nothing about artistic techniques. And the conflict between artistic freedom and thematic control has had the practical

[61] For more detailed analyses of film financing and its effect on film production, see May D. Huettig, *Economic Control of the Motion Picture Industry* (Philadelphia, 1944); Ernest Borneman, "Rebellion in Hollywood," *Harper's Magazine*, CXCIII (October, 1946), 337–343; "Movies: End of an Era?" *Fortune*, XXXIX (April, 1949), 99–102, 135–150; Helen B. Shaffer, "Changing Fortunes of the Movie Business," *Editorial Research Reports*, II (September, 1953).

[62] See Ruth Inglis, *Freedom of the Movies* (Chicago, 1947).

effect of taxing the ingenuity of directors, writers and cameramen who try to evade the Code's specific strictures. Hortense Powdermaker has noted the Code's basic absence of logic.[63] Since "moral concepts are not distinguished from physical facts," the Code "simply does not belong to this world." While the prohibitions fit very well with the general studio atmosphere of meticulous attention to small details and very little emphasis on meaning, "no one connected with motion picture production believes in the system of morality it embodies." Everyone knows that houses have toilets, love gets physically consummated, childbirth is a biological function, and marriages frequently end in divorce. But this information may never be explicitly conveyed on the screen.

The artificiality of the Code, which fails to distinguish between obscenity and honesty, is bound to submit to the corrosion of time and practice. If the film, as George Bernard Shaw once said, is "reeking with morality but does not touch virtue,"[64] then virtue will find other means of asserting itself. It is true that the absence of censorship is no guarantee against bad taste and pornographic sensationalism, as any number of pre-Code films will graphically attest, but a liberal censorship at least creates favorable conditions for good taste and honesty. Inevitably, the exigencies of commercial interests which find sex saleable and of artistic integrity which deplores restriction combine to work modifications. That is why recent challenges to the Code have come from extremes in film mediocrity and excellence. Within the industry, the challenge has come both from Howard Hughes' release of *The French Line* and United Artists' release of Otto Preminger's *The Moon is Blue* and *The Man With the Golden Arm*, all three without the Breen Office seal of approval. Conversely, and less obtrusively, a kind of modification has come from pictures which have received the seal but which contain scenes that might once have been elided by the Hollywood censors. For example, there are scenes depicting a house of prostitution in *The Egyptian*, unusual violence in *On the Waterfront*, a married couple lying together in a double

[63] Hortense Powdermaker, *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* (Boston, 1950), p. 77 ff.

[64] George Bernard Shaw, "The Drama, the Theater, and the Films," *Harper's Magazine*, CXLIX (September, 1924), 426.

bed in *Anna*, and adulterers who are not mortally punished in *Tea and Sympathy*.[65] Each in its own way has modified the sanctity of the Code. The challenge from outside the industry has come in an action by Dr. Hugo Flick, the New York State censor head, permitting the retention of a scene showing the birth of a buffalo in Walt Disney's *The Vanishing Prairie;* in Supreme Court decisions refusing to uphold local censorship suits against Hollywood's *M*, France's *La Ronde*, and Italy's *The Miracle;* in Maryland, Kansas, and Ohio state courts which have reversed censorial prohibitions against *The Moon is Blue.*

In spite of these inroads, Hollywood still begs off from the charge of censorship by pointing to its audience. Every innovation is greeted with the cry, "The box-office won't stand it," even after innovations again and again prove the cry wrong. The prospect is less dismaying when we remember that the Hollywood producer is governed less by the laws of aesthetics than by the laws of the marketplace. It is significant, for example, that *The Jazz Singer,* after the rejection of sound by most major studios, was released by Warner Brothers as a means of averting bankruptcy; and that wide-screen and stereoscopic innovations were adopted only after television had become an economic competitor of some magnitude.

Faced with the charge of mediocrity, Hollywood pleads the heterogeneous nature of its customers, pointing to differences in taste between region and region, city and farm, men and women, adults and children, educated and illiterate, race and race, religion and religion. And although there is always a Shaw to argue that "levelling, though excellent in incomes, is disastrous in morals,"[66] the industry almost always quietly returns the responsibility to its vague and tyrannous audience. The fact that a few courageous independents like Stanley Kramer and Robert Aldrich have been able to produce quality films that also sell is merely the exception that proves the rule.

Margaret Farrand Thorpe reminds us that the Lynds' *Middletown* sets the responsibility for the level of the average movie squarely in the lap of the average citizen's wife: "What the adult female chiefly asks of the movie is the opportunity to escape by reverie from an existence which she finds insufficiently interesting."[67] That is why, according to Mrs. Thorp, there is social and psychological significance in the fact that 70 per cent of Gary Cooper's fan mail comes from women who write that their husbands do not appreciate them.

When no less a novelist than Elizabeth Bowen can lend support to this analysis by writing, "To get back to my star: I enjoy sitting opposite him or her, the delights of intimacy without the onus, high points of possession without the strain,"[68] the analysis uncovers a real demand which the film-maker must fulfill. It helps explain, perhaps, the shaping conventions of both glamor and the star system. Since Mrs. Thorp and Miss Bowen are both women, we should not be surprised to find some of their impressionistic insights being supported by any number of audience research projects. The studies in Leo Handel's *Hollywood Looks at its Audience* reveal that women's preferences do in fact differ from men's. These studies, if they are accurate, bear out Mrs. Thorp's observation that the whole glamor system depends on the identity of star and role: "To the majority of spectators the stars are not so much actors as *alter egos,* or at least close personal friends, and to see them behaving out of character is to see one's universe rock, to feel one's personality dim, a sensation not unlike going mad." Miss Bowen adds, glamor "is a sort of sensuous gloss: I know it to be synthetic, but it affects me strongly."

In brief, the Hollywood film is faced with the search for a formula that cannot be found; with satisfying needs that cannot be satisfied. The tension has created demands, both real and illusory, either originated by, or imposed upon, the heterogeneous audience, and the demands have built up over the years a loose but well-defined series of conventions which add an unofficial code to the written one. The stipulations of Code and censor

[65] Charles Samuels, "The Great Censorship Rebellion," *True,* xxxv (February, 1955), 39–40, 65–68.

[66] George Bernard Shaw, "The Cinema as a Moral Leveller," *New Statesman: Special Supplement on the Modern Theater,* III (June 27, 1914), 2.

[67] Margaret Farrand Thorp, *America at the Movies* (New Haven, 1939), p. 5.

[68] Elizabeth Bowen, "Why I Go to the Movies," *Footnotes to the Film,* p. 213.

may prohibit the acknowledgement of biological realities, but no one forces the evasion of social realities. The official Code may disallow religious satire; but the unofficial code disallows pro-labor sentiment. The existence of an unwritten code suggests that the industry is interested in imposing ideas as well as in reflecting them. Working together, the two codes have been responsible for creating a set of myths which, even in the reputable Hollywood product, is rarely questioned. Ben Hecht, who has learned the tyranny of formula by growing rich on it, bitterly attacks the industry's "organized lying":

> Two generations of Americans have been informed nightly that a woman who betrayed her husband (or a husband a wife) could never find happiness; that sex was no fun without a mother-in-law and a rubber plant around; that women who fornicated just for pleasure ended up as harlots or washerwomen; that any man who was sexually active in his youth later lost the one girl he truly loved; that a man who indulged in sharp practices to get ahead in the world ended in poverty and even with his own children turning on him; that any man who broke the laws, man's or God's, must always die . . . or go to jail, or become a monk, or restore the money he stole before wandering off into the desert; that anyone who didn't believe in God (and said so out loud) was set right by seeing either an angel or witnessing some feat of levitation by one of the characters; that an honest heart must always recover from a train wreck or a score of bullets and win the girl it loved; that the most potent and brilliant of villains are powerless before little children, parish priests or young virgins . . . that injustice could cause a heap of trouble but it must always slink out of town in Reel Nine; that there were no problems of labor, politics, domestic life or sexual abnormality but can be solved by a simple Christian phrase or a fine American motto.[69]

While most of these moral judgments are, of course, based on the Ten Commandments, the behavior depicted does not square with the facts of life.

[69] Ben Hecht, *A Child of the Century* (New York, 1954), p. 469.

Lest the uniqueness of the film's virtues be extended to its vices, one ought to remember that similar conventions have existed in most of our mass-arts. When Merle Curti discovers, for example, that the nineteenth-century dime novel, as promoted by the Beadle brothers, George Lippard, and others, consistently found the remedy to social evils not "in a social attack on the problem but rather in single-handed effort,"[70] he is merely noting the precedent for the film's finding personal solutions to universal problems.[71] Every persistent convention which Curti finds in the older genre has its Hollywood counterpart: the triumph of virtue over vice; the happy ending; the emphasis on adventure, suspense, melodrama; the exaltation of common virtues against aristocratic snobbishness; the homage to God and country and rugged individualism; the norms of Anglo-Saxon Christianity. In short, a kind of folk appropriation of Protestant ethics in which self-reliance, perseverence, pluck, and individual prowess are the keys to, but not the warranties of, personal luck, and in which fortuitous grace is bestowed by a fate over which the individual, finally, has no control. Every major American novelist, from Herman Melville to William Faulkner, has had to fly in the face of such popular myths. And now, in muted or modified form, the film has hardened these conventions into a governing tradition.

If recognizing this continuity has the advantage of placing the film in the perspective of traditional mass arts in our culture, it does not necessarily mitigate the force of those precedents described by Curti. The unconscious or conscious adherence to convention has an enduring influence on film content. No small measure of the screen writer's rancor comes from the knowledge that while the nineteenth-century reader, if he had the price, could choose Melville and Hawthorne as well as dime novels, the twentieth-century fan can only rarely choose Chaplin and Griffith. Movies are simply too expensive to permit the kind of variety which the novel allows.

Even Chaplin violates conventional totems at his peril. For the Chaplins and Griffiths and Capras, insofar as they have survived

[70] Merle Curti, "Dime Novels and the American Tradition," *Probing Our Past* (New York, 1955), p. 175.

[71] See Lester Asheim, "Mass Appeals" in "From Book to Film," p. 138 ff.

at all, have done so within the domain of traditional sanctions. Hardly any subject matter submitted to the film has been able to avoid the twin conventions of theme and medium. Lester Asheim, in his sample of twenty-four film adaptations, found that seventeen increased the love emphasis; that sixty-three per cent of all the films in the sample had a romantic happy ending, but forty per cent (one-fourth the entire sample) required an alteration of the story to accomplish it; and that in no case was a "negative" ending retained.

If filmic deviations from the novel can be quantitatively measured in this fashion, there is another stratum of underlying assumption which is more elusive. Political and social attitudes, though less precise, are operative nonetheless. Supplementing the taboos which rankle Ben Hecht, these assumptions appear whenever Hollywood even verges on controversial issues. The use of fake newsreels to defeat Upton Sinclair in his gubernatorial campaign in 1934 was only a more obvious outcropping of a generally scrupulous defense of business mores. Rose Terlin's observation that typical labor films like *Black Fury* and *Riff-Raff* assume there is "no cause for the strike save personal animosities or someone's personal ambition,"[72] remains, with rare exceptions like the modern story in *Intolerance* and *The Grapes of Wrath,* an accurate description of movie protocol, even down to recent efforts like *On the Waterfront.*

Upon the medium, then, lies the shaping power of businessman and audience. On the one hand, commercial production; on the other, mass consumption; and a Code that mediates between them. The resulting tensions are enormous. And yet, to the invisible hand which hovers above the filmist, guiding him, pressuring him, wheedling him, there is a counter-irritant. For the Code succeeds in inducing a kind of inverted world which ultimately works against itself. Movie dreams feed and quicken ordinary desire. Desire, unable to achieve the dream, turns to discontent, and greater discontent intensifies the need for dreams. So the film helps to build a circular process of increasing tension. Constantly enticing,

[72] Rose Terlin, *You and I and the Movies* (The Woman's Press, 1936), p. 28. See, too, Upton Sinclair, "The Movies and Political Propaganda," *The Movies on Trial,* ed. William J. Perlman (New York, 1936), p. 189.

the dream-world strengthens the very rebelliousness which its makers try to quell. There is still no way out of the circle. For after the plush and glamor, there must still come too many bleak houses, friendless streets, dull jobs.

What we find distasteful, then, is nothing but the worst aspects of Victorianism in modern dress. It is the hypocrisy rather than the sentiment which repels us. What is pernicious is not that the audience accepts, and even believes, the movie myths, but that the industry tries to institutionalize those beliefs to the exclusion of others. The restrictions are unmistakable; penalties await the transgressor. Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux* and the union-sponsored *Salt of the Earth,* two recent challenges to Hollywood conventions, had to be made with great difficulty outside the industry, and even then both ran afoul of distribution outlets. For the film has greater consequences than Victorian novels. Not only does it influence fashions and mores, but it threatens to replace reality with illusion outside the movie theater. What might happen was indicated when the Gary Cooper Fan Club of San Antonio made a serious and determined effort to nominate their hero vice-president of the United States. Their platform was his perfect adaptation for the office: "he doesn't talk much, said they; he knows what it's all about; and he gets things done. They could cite any number of instances, on the prairies or in the Himalayas."[73] When old ladies use umbrellas to swat actors who play movie villains, and youngsters back away from the real Boris Karloff, then what Jung calls the "participation mystique" becomes a kind of national psychosis.

It is against this kind of unreality that the counter-irritant works surreptitiously. For in spite of the cant, Hollywood films have been imbued with an extraordinary amount of earthy energy. Siegfried Kracauer, and Wolfenstein and Leites have convincingly demonstrated that the psychological history of a nation can be read in its motion pictures.[74] If this is true, then the particular case of the Hollywood product reveals certain redeeming traits.

[73] Thorp, p. 93.

[74] See Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler* (Princeton, 1947), and Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites, *Movies: A Psychological Study* (Glencoe, Ill., 1950).

For it seems as if the pioneer virtues—courage, energy, hard work, the refusal to be disheartened by difficulties—having reached their last outpost on the Pacific frontier, had become absorbed by the film. And we may assume, with Mrs. Thorp, that "these are qualities that America still cherishes and she insists on finding them in her ideal men and women."

So pugnacious is this counter-irritant that the movies, together with radio, television, and the comic strip, are building up a whole new American folklore. It is the creatures of these media, Mrs. Thorp points out, "that our children want to hear stories about, to keep models of on their desks, to have printed on their sweaters, to take to bed with them." The only real characters for whom they have anything like the same kind of affection are the heroes of the Western serials who share a good many of the cartoon characters' traits, namely personality, energy, the ability to win against odds. Pogo and L'il Abner share these traits with Chaplin and the Marx brothers, and certainly we tend to take them all more or less seriously.

If Hollywood has excelled in slapstick, gangster films, romance, adventure and musical comedy, it is because all of them manifest a broad and nervous kind of energy. For it is here that moral qualities and the qualities of the medium combine to turn out some gold with the dross. The best of Griffith, Von Stroheim, Chaplin, Ford, Capra, Huston, no mean achievement for a new art, have been less a tribute to the liberality of censors than, borrowing Alistair Cooke's phrase, to the film's "innate and impenitent democracy." After all is said and done, the serious filmist has shown remarkable cunning in slipping reality through an all but impenetrable door. Whenever the parlor has grown stuffy with stale decorum or strait-laced convention there has always been a Charlie to come crashing through the floor.

The complexity of society's shaping power, then, is enormous. That is why, as Mrs. Thorp points out, "the movies seem to be quite as capable of proceeding on two levels as Elizabethan tragedy: poetry and psychology for the gentlemen's gallery, action and blood for the pit. . . . In the picture on two levels may lie the whole solution of movies for the millions." In any event, the prospect is exciting. For out of the constant warfare between the spirit of the prude and the boldness of the pioneer, between the ethics of the buccaneer and the niceties of the boudoir, has come a usable artistic tradition.

What can the film-maker who essays adapting novels to the screen make of this tradition? Mrs. Thorp's suggestion that the film proceed on two levels assumes optimum conditions, of course, but the film adapter must work with what he has. Leda Bauer and Nelson Algren[75] may write amusing accounts of what happens when the movies tackle novels and novelists respectively. But the film adapter, beyond understanding the limits and possibilities of his medium, must make a serious adjustment to a set of different and often conflicting conventions, conventions which have historically distinguished literature from the cinema and made of each a separate institution.

V. OF TIME AND SPACE

A clearer understanding of the reciprocity between spectator and art object, of the shaping power of audience and thematic convention, enables us to return more confidently to an appraisal of the media's fundamental ability to handle time and space. Any comparative analysis of novel and film reverts, finally, to the way in which consciousness absorbs the signs of both language and photographed image.

It is difficult enough to delineate the separate bodies of conventional myth which distinguish novel from cinema. But a further difficulty arises when we realize that convention's adjustment to the changing facts of life has necessarily accelerated because change itself has accelerated. Attempting to explain the time obsession of the twentieth-century novel, Mendilow reminds us of Whitehead's observation that

> . . . in the past the time-span of important change was considerably longer than that of a single human life. Thus mankind was trained to adapt itself to fixed conditions.

[75] See Leda V. Bauer, "The Movies Tackle Literature," *American Mercury*, XIV (July, 1928), 288–294, and Nelson Algren, "Hollywood Djinn," *The Nation* (July 25, 1953), pp. 68–70.

> Today this time-span is shorter than that of human life, and accordingly our training must prepare individuals to face a novelty of conditions.[76]

If language has become a protagonist in the novel, there is a sense in which time has become its foil. Like the novel and the film, language and time begin in apparent harmony and end in hostility.

The Modes of Consciousness

It is a commonplace by now that the novel has tended to retreat more and more from external action to internal thought, from plot to character, from social to psychological realities. Although these conflicting tendencies were already present in the polarity of Fielding and Sterne, it was only recently that the tradition of *Tristram Shandy* superseded the tradition of *Tom Jones*. It is this reduction of the novel to experiences which can be verified in the immediate consciousness of the novelist that Mendilow has called modern "inwardness" and E. M. Forster the "hidden life." Forster suggests the difference when he says that "The hidden life is, by definition, hidden. The hidden life that appears in external signs is hidden no longer, has entered the realm of action. And it is the function of the novelist to reveal the hidden life at its source." But if the hidden life has become the domain of the novel, it has introduced unusual problems.

In a recent review of Leon Edel's *The Psychological Novel: 1900-1950*, Howard Mumford Jones sums up the central problems which have plagued the modern novelist: the verbal limitations of nonverbal experience; the dilemma of autobiographical fiction in which the novelist must at once evoke a unique consciousness and yet communicate it to others; the difficulty of catching the flux of time in static language. The summary is acutely concise in picking out the nerve centers of an increasingly subjective novel where "after images fished out of the stream of past time . . . substitute a kind of smoldering dialectic for the clean impact of drama."[77]

[76] Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures in Ideas* (London, 1934), p. 94; quoted in Mendilow, p. 9.

Béla Balázs has shown us how seriously we tend to underestimate the power of the human face to convey subjective emotions and to suggest thoughts. But the film, being a presentational medium (except for its use of dialogue), cannot have direct access to the power of discursive forms. Where the novel discourses, the film must picture. From this we ought not to conclude like J. P. Mayer that "our eye is weaker than our mind" because it does not "*hold* sight impressions as our imagination does."[78] For sense impressions, like word symbols, may be appropriated into the common fund of memory. Perceptual knowledge is not necessarily different in strength; it *is* necessarily different in kind.

The rendition of mental states—memory, dream, imagination—cannot be as adequately represented by film as by language. If the film has difficulty presenting streams of consciousness, it has even more difficulty presenting states of mind which are defined precisely by the absence in them of the visible world. Conceptual imaging, by definition, has no existence in space. However, once I cognize the signs of a sentence through the conceptual screen, my consciousness is indistinguishable from nonverbal thought. Assuming here a difference between *kinds* of images—between images of things, feelings, concepts, words—we may observe that conceptual images evoked by verbal stimuli can scarcely be distinguished in the end from those evoked by nonverbal stimuli. The stimuli, whether they be the signs of language or the sense data of the physical world, lose their spatial characteristics and become components of the total ensemble which is consciousness.

On the other hand, the film image, being externalized in space, cannot be similarly converted through the conceptual screen. We have already seen how alien to the screen is the compacted luxuriance of the trope. For the same reasons, dreams and memories, which exist nowhere but in the individual consciousness, cannot be adequately represented in spatial terms. Or rather, the film, having only arrangements of space to work with, cannot

[77] *Saturday Review*, XXXVIII (April 25, 1955), 19.

[78] J. P. Mayer, *Sociology of Film* (London, 1946), p. 278.

render thought, for the moment thought is externalized it is no longer thought. The film, by arranging external signs for our visual perception, or by presenting us with dialogue, can lead us to *infer* thought. But it cannot show us thought directly. It can show us characters thinking, feeling, and speaking, but it cannot show us their thoughts and feelings. A film is not thought; it is perceived.[79]

That is why pictorial representations of dreams or memory on the screen are almost always disappointing. The dreams and memories of *Holiday for Henrietta* and *Rashomon* are spatial referents to dreams and memories, not precise renditions. To show a memory or dream, one must balloon a separate image into the frame (Gypo remembering good times with Frankie in *The Informer*); or superimpose an image (Gypo daydreaming about an ocean voyage with Katie); or clear the frame entirely for the visual equivalent (in *Wuthering Heights*, Ellen's face dissolving to the house as it was years ago). Such spatial devices are always to some degree dissatisfying. Acting upon us perceptually, they cannot render the conceptual feel of dreams and memories. The realistic tug of the film is too strong. If, in an effort to bridge the gap between spatial representation and nonspatial experience, we accept such devices at all, we accept them as cinematic conventions, not as renditions of conceptual consciousness.

Given the contrasting abilities of film and novel to render conceptual consciousness, we may explore further the media's handling of time.

Chronological Time

The novel has three tenses; the film has only one. From this follows almost everything else one can say about time in both media. By now, we are familiar with Bergson's distinction between two kinds of time: chronological time measured in more or less discrete units (as in clocks and metronomes); and psychological time, which distends or compresses in consciousness,

[79] See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Le Cinéma et la Nouvelle Psychologie," *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 26 (November, 1947), pp. 930–943.

and presents itself in continuous flux. What are the comparative abilities of novel and film to render these types of time?

To begin with, Mendilow describes language as "a medium consisting of consecutive units constituting a forward-moving linear form of expression that is subject to the three characteristics of time—transience, sequence, and irreversibility." But we must remember that Mendilow is here referring to chronological time only. And chronological time in the novel exists on three primary levels: the chronological duration of the reading; the chronological duration of the narrator's time; and the chronological span of the narrative events. That the three chronologies may harmonize in the fictive world is due entirely to the willingness of the reader to suspend disbelief and accept the authority of convention. As long as the novelist is not troubled by the bargain into which he enters with his reader, the three levels do not come into any serious conflict.

But Laurence Sterne saw a long time ago the essential paradox of the convention. If the novelist chooses to chronicle a series of events up to the present moment, he discovers that by the time he commits a single event to paper, the present moment has already slipped away. And if the novelist discovers that it takes a chronological year to record a single fictional day, as Sterne did, how is one ever to overcome the durational lag between art and life? If the present moment is being constantly renewed, how can prose, which is fixed, ever hope to catch it? Whenever a novelist chooses for his province a sequence of events which cannot be completed until the present moment, the three levels come into open conflict. In Sterne and Gide, that conflict becomes more central than conflicts between the characters.

The film is spared at least part of this conflict because one of the levels is omitted. Since the camera is always the narrator, we need concern ourselves only with the chronological duration of the viewing and the time-span of the narrative events. Even when a narrator appears in the film, the basic orientation does not change. When Francis begins to tell the story of Dr. Caligari, the camera shows his face; then the camera shifts to the scene of the story and there takes over the telling. What has happened is

not so much that Francis has turned over the role of narrator to the omniscient camera as that the omniscient camera has included Francis as part of the narrative from the beginning.

The ranges of chronological time for reader and viewer are rather fluid, yet more or less fixed by convention. Where a novel can be read in anywhere from two to fifty hours, a film generally runs for one or two. *Intolerance* runs over two hours; the uncut version of *Les Enfants du Paradis* over three; and *Gone with the Wind* and *War and Peace* slightly less than four. Since the fictional events depicted in both novel and film may range anywhere from the fleeting duration of a dream (*Scarlet Street* and *Finnegans Wake*) to long but finite stretches of human history (*Intolerance* and *Orlando*), the sense of passing time is infinitely more crucial than the time required for reading or viewing.

We may note, of course, that a fifty-hour novel has the advantage of being able to achieve a certain density, that "solidity of specification" which James admired, simply because the reader has lived with it longer. Further, because its mode of beholding allows stops and starts, thumbing back, skipping, flipping ahead, and so lets the reader set his own pace, a novel can afford diffuseness where the film must economize. Where the mode of beholding in the novel allows the reader to control his rate, the film viewer is bound by the relentless rate of a projector which he cannot control. The results, as may be expected, are felt in the contrast between the loose, more variegated conventions of the novel and the tight, compact conventions of the film.

Sometimes, to be sure, the conventions governing quantity do affect the end product. The silent version of *Anna Karenina* with Garbo (called *Love*) and the subsequent sound versions (the first with Garbo and Fredric March; the second with Vivien Leigh and Ralph Richardson) dropped the entire story of Levin and Kitty. And Philip Dunne, the veteran screen writer, tells us that the boy in the film *How Green Was My Valley* never grew up, thus leaving out half the novel; that the *Count of Monte Cristo* contained no more than 5 per cent of its original; that *The Robe* and *The Egyptian* used less than a third of theirs.[80] While such quantitative deletions do alter the originals, it is, in the last analysis,

[80] Wald, p. 65.

the qualitative rather than the quantitative differences that militate against film adaptations of the novel.

If, as Mendilow says, "Fictional time is an ineluctable element in the novel," and fictional time treats of both kinds of time, then we discover that the moment we shift from chronological to psychological time, certain special problems arise.

Psychological Time: Variability in Rate

We speak of psychological time here in at least two roughly defined ways. The first suggests that the human mind is capable of accelerating and collapsing the "feel" of time to the point where each individual may be said to possess his own "time-system." The second suggests, beyond this variability in *rate*, the kind of flux which, being fluid and interpenetrable, and lacking in sharp boundaries, can scarcely be measured at all.

As long as the kind of time we are talking about in any sense implies discrete units in a series, language seems roughly adequate to the task. For example, the observation that chronological time crowded with activity, the sense of time passing quickly, seems "long" in retrospect, whereas chronological time taken up with dull and undifferentiated activity (the sense of time passing slowly) seems "short" in retrospect still has built into it a concept of measurement. It assumes the clock as a standard of measurement, for this kind of psychological time seems "long" or "short" in terms of certain normative expectancies. It assumes a normative "feel" for chronological time which may be distended or compressed by the stress of the moment, or by memory.

Here language is still appropriate to its task. Mendilow points out, for example, that in *Tom Jones* each book draws on a progressively greater length of the reader's clock time to cover a progressively shorter period of fictional time. So that where Book Three covers five years, Book Nine and Ten cover twelve hours each. The implication is that both for Tom and the reader, the events of the five weeks which occupy the last two thirds of the novel will seem "longer" than the events of the twenty years which occupy the first third.

Compression and distension of time has its exact equivalent in

the film's use of speed-up and slow-motion. We have already noted how Pudovkin found the creative element of film in "the discovered, deeply imbedded detail." But that the deeply imbedded detail is in constant motion has further implications for filmic structure. Like the principles of editing, the principles of movement seem to collect around centers of gravity dictated by the film's persistent and almost willful self-assertion. "A sure folk instinct was shown," writes Panofsky, "when the photoplay immediately became known as the movies." Lawson extends this insight by making movement the pivotal element in film structure: "The conflict of individuals or groups projected on the screen has one characteristic that is not found in other story structures. *The conflict is in constant motion.*"

From this there develops a new kind of artistic reality, what Pudovkin calls filmic time and filmic space; what Panofsky calls the Dynamization of Space, and the Spatialization of Time. The theatrical producer, says Pudovkin,

> . . . works with real actuality which though he may always remould, yet forces him to remain bound by the laws of real space and real time. The film director, on the other hand, has as his material the finished recorded celluloid. . . . The elements of reality are fixed on those pieces; by combining them in his selected sequence according to his desire, the director builds up his own "filmic" time and "filmic" space.[81]

The director, then, creates a new reality, and the most characteristic and important aspect of this process is that laws of space and time which are ordinarily invariable or inescapable become "tractable and obedient." Hollywood's silent comedians made use of this freedom in their own unique way. James Agee has noted how Mack Sennett, realizing "the tremendous drumlike power of mere motion to exhilarate,"[82] gave inanimate objects a mischievous life of their own, "*broke every law of nature* the tricked camera could serve him for and made the screen dance like a

[81] Pudovkin, p. 53. See, too, A. Nicholas Vardac, *Stage to Screen* (Cambridge, Mass., 1949) for the influence of nineteenth-century theater on early American cinema.

[82] Agee, p. 74.

witches' Sabbath" (italics mine). And other comedians, energized by the liberation of untrammeled movement, "zipped and caromed about the pristine world of the screen." No previous narrative art has been able to achieve such graphic effects.

Not only is space liberated, but *because* it is liberated, time is, too. In thirty seconds, we see shoot, stem, bud, and blossom grow gracefully one from the other, a process that takes weeks in ordinary time. Just as space can be molded, time can be arrested and quickened. Anyone who has seen the remarkable slow-motion sequence in *Zéro de Conduite* can attest to the dramatic power of distended time. By interfering and only by interfering with natural time was Jean Vigo able to render the dream-like essence of the pillow fight.

Similarly, it is easy to find innumerable examples of accelerated motion in Hollywood where the emphasis has always been, for example, on the murderous pace of the comic chase. Chaplin outraces the Keystone cops. W. C. Fields dodges in and out of traffic at eighty miles an hour. Time is distorted in the opposite direction, but the principle remains the same. Spatial mobility makes time more flexible. A man is trying to find a job without success. The film may suggest the dreary routine of job-hunting by intercutting shots of the man's feet walking along asphalt streets with close-ups of other men shaking their heads, saying no. Four or five such alternate shots, taking a few seconds of running time, can suggest a process taking months, or even years. Thus the film is able, in an instant, to suggest the sense of monotonous events that seem "short" in retrospect, even though the duration of those events is "long" by clock time.

As for the kind of rhythmic progression one finds in music, the film has an exact parallel in the thoroughly discussed theory of montage. Not only does each shot take its meaning both from preceding shots and future expectations, but the use of sound (music, dialogue) provides a complex system of counterpoint.

Psychological Time: The Time-Flux

As soon as we enter the realm of time-in-flux, however, we not only broach all but insoluble problems for the novel but we also

find a sharp divergence between prose and cinema. The transient, sequential, and irreversible character of language is no longer adequate for this type of time experience. For in the flux, past and present lose their identity as discrete sections of time. The present becomes "specious" because on second glance it is seen as fused with the past, obliterating the line between them.

Discussing its essential modernity, Mendilow lends support to the idea that the whole of experience is implicit in every moment of the present by drawing from Sturt's *Psychology of Time*. For Sturt tries to work out the sense in which we are caught by a perpetual present permeated by the past:

> One of the reasons for the feeling of pastness is that we are familiar with the things or events that we recognize as past. But it remains true that this feeling of familiarity is a *present* experience, and therefore logically should not arouse a concept of the past. On the other hand, a present impression (or memory) of something which is past is different from a present impression of something which is present but familiar from the past.[83]

How this seeming contradiction operates in practice may be seen when we attempt to determine precisely which of two past events is prior, and in what manner the distinction between the memory of a past thing and the impression of a present thing is to be made. At first glance, we seem perfectly able to deduce which of two remembered events is prior. For example, on the way to the store this morning, I met a group of children going to school. I also mailed my letter just as the postman came by. I know that ordinarily the children go to school at nine o'clock and the postman comes by at eleven. Therefore, I deduce that I went to the store *before* I mailed my letter. Although I have not been able to give the act of my going to the store an exact location in the past, I have been able to establish its priority.

On second thought, however, it seems as if (apart from the deductions one makes by deliberate attention to relationships) the memory of a past event comes to me with its pastness already intended. The image I have of my friend *includes* the information that this is the way he looked the year before he died. Similarly, if

[83] Quoted in Mendilow, p. 98.

I have a mental image of myself on a train to Kabul, then summon up an image of myself eating chestnuts, I know that the first is an image of a past thing and the second an image of a present thing because the image of myself on the train includes the information that the event took place last year. At the same time, I know that I am eating chestnuts right now. Here the perceptual witnessing of my present action checks and defines my mental images, confirming both the priority of the train ride and the presentness of the eating.

But suppose I bring my attention to bear on an object which is present now and which was also present yesterday at the same time, in the same place, in the same light. If, for example, I look at the lamp in my room, which fulfills all these requirements, then close my eyes and behold the mental image, how am I to know if that image refers to the lamp which was there yesterday or to the lamp which is there today? In this instance, which is tantamount to fusing a thing's past with its present, my present image, for all practical purposes, no longer respects the distinction between past and present. It offers me no way of knowing the exact location of its temporal existence.

This obliteration between past and present is precisely the problem which faces the novelist who wishes to catch the flux in language. If he is faced with the presentness of consciousness on the one hand, and the obliteration of the discrete character of past and present on the other, how is he to express these phenomena in a language which relies on tenses?

Whether we look at William James' "stream of consciousness," Ford Madox Ford's "chronological looping," or Bergson's "*durée*," we find the theorists pondering the same problem: language, consisting as it does of bounded, discrete units cannot satisfactorily represent the unbounded and continuous. We have a sign to cover the concept of a thing's "becoming"; and one to cover the concept of a thing's "having become." But "becoming" is a *present* participle, "become" a *past* participle, and our language has thus far offered no way of showing the continuity between them.

So elusive has been the *durée* that the novelist has submitted to the steady temptation of trying to escape time entirely. But here, too, the failure has served to dramatize the medium's limitations.

Speaking of Gertrude Stein's attempt to emancipate fiction from the tyranny of time, E. M. Forster notes the impasse: "She fails, because as soon as fiction is completely delivered from time it cannot express anything at all."

To be sure, there seem to be intuitive moments of illumination in Proust and Wolfe during which a forgotten incident floats up from oblivion in its pristine form and seems thereby to become free of time. Proust's involuntary memory fuses the experience of his mother's madeleine cake with the former experience of Aunt Léonie's, and the intervening time seems, for the moment, obliterated. But it is the precise point of Proust's agonizing effort that—despite our ability, through involuntary memory, to experience simultaneously events "with countless intervening days between" —there is always a sense in which these events remain "widely separated from one another in Time." The recognition of this conflict helps us understand why every formulation which attempts to define a "timeless" quality in a novel seems unsatisfactory, why Mendilow's attempt to find an "ideal time" in Kafka seems to say little more than that Kafka was not plagued by the problem. In the end, the phrase "timeless moment" poses an insuperable contradiction in terms.

We can see the problem exemplified concretely in a passage from Thomas Wolfe's *The Hills Beyond*. The passage describes Eugene Gant's visit to the house in St. Louis where his family had lived thirty years before. Eugene can remember the sights, shapes, sounds, and smells of thirty years ago, but something is missing—a sense of absence, the absence of his brother Grover, of his family away at the fair:

> And he felt that if he could sit there on the stairs once more, in solitude and absence in the afternoon, he would be able to get it back again. Then would he be able to remember all that he had seen and been—that brief sum of himself, the universe of his four years, with all the light of Time upon it—that universe which was so short to measure, and yet so far, so endless, to remember. Then would he be able to see his own small face again, pooled in the dark mirror of the hall, and discover there in his quiet three years' self the lone integrity of "I," knowing: "Here is the House, and here House listening; here is Absence, Absence in the afternoon; and here in this House, this Absence, is my core, my kernel—here am I!"[84]

The passage shows the characteristic, almost obsessive longing of the modern novel to escape the passage of time by memory; the recognition that the jump, the obliteration, cannot be made; the appropriation of non-space as a reality in the novel—not the feeling of absence alone, but the absence of absence.

We arrive here at the novel's farthest and most logical remove from the film. For it is hard to see how any satisfactory film equivalents can be found for such a paragraph. We can show Eugene waiting in the house, then superimpose an image of the boy as he might have looked thirty years before, catch him watching a door as if waiting for Grover to return. But as in all cinematic attempts to render thought, such projection would inevitably fail. How are we to capture that combination of past absence and present longing, if both are conditions contrary to spatial fact?

The film-maker, in his own and perhaps more acute way, also faces the problem of how to render the flux of time. "Pictures have no tenses," says Balázs. Unfolding in a perpetual present, like visual perception itself, they cannot express either a past or a future. One may argue that the use of dialogue and music provides a door through which a sense of past and future may enter. Dialogue, after all, is language, and language does have referential tenses. A character whose face appears before us may *talk* about his past and thereby permeate his presence with a kind of pastness. Similarly, as we saw in our discussion of sound in editing, music may be used to counterpoint a present image (as in *High Noon* and *Alexander Nevsky*) and suggest a future event. In this way, apparently, a succession of present images may be suffused with a quality of past or future.

At best, however, sound is a secondary advantage which does not seriously threaten the primacy of the spatial image. When Ellen, the housekeeper, her withered face illumined by the fire,

[84] Thomas Wolfe, *The Hills Beyond* (New York, 1941), pp. 37–38. In *Thomas Wolfe: The Weather of His Youth* (Baton Rouge, 1955), pp. 28–53, Louis D. Rubin, Jr. analyzes in some detail Wolfe's handling of time.

begins telling her story to Lockwood in *Wuthering Heights*, we do sense a certain tension between story-teller and story. But in the film we can never fully shake our attention loose from the teller. The image of her face has priority over the sound of her voice. When Terry Malone tells Edie about his childhood in *On the Waterfront*, the present image of his face so floods our consciousness that his words have the thinnest substance only. The scars around his eyes tell us more about his past than any halting explanation. This phenomenon is essentially what Panofsky calls the "principle of coexpressibility," according to which a moving picture—even when it has learned to talk—remains a picture that moves, and does not convert itself into a piece of writing that is enacted. That is why Shakesperian films which fail to adapt the fixed space of the stage to cinematic space so often seem static and talky.

In the novel, the line of dialogue stands naked and alone; in the film, the spoken word is attached to its spatial image. If we try to convert Marlon Brando's words into our own thought, we leave for a moment the visual drama of his face, much as we turn away from a book. The difference is that, whereas in the book we miss nothing, in the film Brando's face has continued to act, and the moment we miss may be crucial. In a film, according to Panofsky, "that which we hear remains, for good or worse, inextricably fused with that which we see." In that fusion, our seeing (and therefore our sense of the present) remains primary.

If, however, dialogue and music are inadequate to the task of capturing the flux, the spatial image itself reveals two characteristics which at least permit the film to make a tentative approach. The first is the quality of familiarity which attaches itself to the perceptual image of a thing after our first acquaintance. When I first see Gelsomina in *La Strada*, I see her as a stranger, as a girl with a certain physical disposition, but without a name or a known history. However, once I identify her as a character with a particular relationship to other characters, I am able to include information about her past in the familiar figure which now appears before me. I do not have to renew my acquaintance at every moment. Familiarity, then, becomes a means of referring to the past, and this past reference fuses into the ensemble which is the present

Gelsomina. The spatial image of Gelsomina which I see toward the end of the film includes, in its total structure, the knowledge that she has talked to the Fool and returned to Zampano. In a referential sense, the pastness is built in.

That the film is in constant motion suggests the second qualification of film for approximating the time-flux. At first glance, the film seems bound by discrete sections, much as the novel is bound by discrete words. At the film's outer limit stands the frame; and within the frame appear the distinct outlines of projected objects, each one cut as by a razor's edge. But the effect of running off the frames is startlingly different from the effect of running off the sentence. For whether the words in a novel come to me as nonverbal images or as verbal meanings, I can still detect the discrete units of subject and predicate. If I say, "The top spins on the table," my mind assembles first the top, then the spinning, then the table. (Unless, of course, I am capable of absorbing the sentence all at once, in which case the process may be extended to a paragraph composed of discrete sentences.) But on the screen, I simply perceive a shot of a top spinning on a table, in which subject and predicate appear to me as *fused*. Not only is the top indistinguishable from its spinning, but at every moment the motion of the top seems to contain the history of its past motion. It is true that the top-image stimulated in my mind by the sentence resembles the top-image stimulated by the film in the sense that both contain the illusion of continuous motion. Yet this resemblance does not appear in the *process* of cognition. It appears only after the fact, as it were, only after the component words have been assembled. Although the mental and filmic images do meet in rendering the top's continuity of motion, it is in the mode of apprehending them that we find the qualitative difference.

In the cinema, for better or worse, we are bound by the forward looping of the celluloid through the projector. In that relentless unfolding, each frame is blurred in a total progression. Keeping in mind Sturt's analysis of the presentness of our conceptions, a presentness permeated by a past and therefore hardly ruled by tense at all, we note that the motion in the film's *present* is unique. Montage depends for its effects on instantaneous successions of different spatial entities which are constantly exploding

against each other. But a succession of such variables would quickly become incomprehensible without a constant to stabilize them. In the film, that constant is motion. No matter how diverse the moving spaces which explode against each other, movement itself pours over from shot to shot, binding as it blurs them, reinforcing the relentless unrolling of the celluloid.

Lindgren advances Abercrombie's contention that completeness in art has no counterpart in real life, since natural events are never complete: "In nature nothing at any assignable point begins and nothing at any assignable point comes to an end: all is perfect continuity." But Abercrombie overlooks both our ability to perceive spatial discreteness in natural events and the film's ability to achieve "perfect continuity." So powerful is this continuity, regardless of the *direction* of the motion, that at times we tend to forget the boundaries of both frame and projected object. We attend to the motion only. In those moments when motion alone floods our attention and spatial attributes seem forgotten, we suddenly come as close as the film is able to fulfilling one essential requirement of the time-flux—the boundaries are no longer perceptible. The transience of the shot falls away before the sweeping permanence of its motion. Past and present seem fused, and we have accomplished before us a kind of spatial analogue for the flux of time.

If the film is incapable of maintaining the illusion for very long, if its spatial attributes, being primary, presently assert themselves, if the film's spatial appeal to the eye overwhelms its temporal appeal to the mind, it is still true that the film, above all other nonverbal arts, comes closest to rendering the time-flux. The combination of familiarity, the film's linear progression, and what Panofsky calls the "Dynamization of Space" permits us to intuit the *durée* insofar as it can, in spatial art, be intuited at all.

The film, then, cannot render the attributes of thought (metaphor, dream, memory); but it can find adequate equivalents for the kind of psychological time which is characterized by variations in rate (distension, compression; speed-up, *ralenti*); and it approaches, but ultimately fails, like the novel, to render what Bergson means by the time-flux. The failure of both media ultimately reverts to root differences between the structures of art and consciousness.

Our analysis, however, permits a usable distinction between the two media. Both novel and film are time arts, but whereas the formative principle in the novel is time, the formative principle in the film is space. Where the novel takes its space for granted and forms its narrative in a complex of time values, the film takes its time for granted and forms its narrative in arrangements of space. Both film and novel create the illusion of psychologically distorted time and space, but neither destroys time or space. The novel renders the illusion of space by going from point to point in time; the film renders time by going from point to point in space. The novel tends to abide by, yet explore, the possibilities of psychological law; the film tends to abide by, yet explore, the possibilities of physical law.

Where the twentieth-century novel has achieved the shock of novelty by explosions of words, the twentieth-century film has achieved a comparable shock by explosions of visual images. And it is a phenomenon which invites detailed investigation that the rise of the film, which preëmpted the picturing of bodies in nature, coincides almost exactly with the rise of the modern novel which preëmpted the rendition of human consciousness.

Finally, to discover distinct formative principles in our two media is not to forget that time and space are, for artistic purposes, ultimately inseparable. To say that an element is contingent is not to say that it is irrelevant. Clearly, spatial effects in the film would be impossible without concepts of time, just as temporal effects in the novel would be impossible without concepts of space. We are merely trying to state the case for a system of priority and emphasis. And our central claim—namely that time is prior in the novel, and space prior in the film—is supported rather than challenged by our reservations.

VI. CONCLUSION

What Griffith meant by "seeing," then, differs in quality from what Conrad meant. And effecting mutations from one kind

of seeing to another is necessary not only because the materials differ but also because the origins, conventions, and audiences differ as well.

What happens, therefore, when the filmist undertakes the adaptation of a novel, given the inevitable mutation, is that he does not convert the novel at all. What he adapts is a kind of paraphrase of the novel—the novel viewed as raw material. He looks not to the organic novel, whose language is inseparable from its theme, but to characters and incidents which have somehow detached themselves from language and, like the heroes of folk legends, have achieved a mythic life of their own. Because this is possible, we often find that the film adapter has not even read the book, that he has depended instead on a paraphrase by his secretary or his screen writer. That is why there is no necessary correspondence between the excellence of a novel and the quality of the film in which the novel is recorded.

Under these circumstances, we should not be surprised to find a long list of discontented novelists whose works have been adapted to motion pictures. The novelist seems perpetually baffled at the exigencies of the new medium. In film criticism, it has always been easy to recognize how a poor film "destroys" a superior novel. What has not been sufficiently recognized is that such destruction is inevitable. In the fullest sense of the word, the filmist becomes not a translator for an established author, but a new author in his own right.

Balázs has, perhaps, formulated the relationship most clearly. Recognizing the legitimacy of converting the subject, story, and plot of a novel into cinematic form, Balázs grants the possibility of achieving successful results in each. Success is possible because, while "the subject, or story, of both works is identical, their content is nevertheless different. It is this different *content* that is adequately expressed in the changed form resulting from the adaptation." It follows that the raw material of reality can be fashioned in many different forms, but a *content* which determines the form is no longer such raw material. If I see a woman at a train station, her face sad, a little desperate, watching the approach of a hissing engine, and I begin to think of her as a character in a story, she has already, according to Balázs, become "semi-fashioned" artistic content. If I begin to think of how to render her thoughts in words, I have begun to evolve a character in a novel. But if, returning to my impression of that woman at the station, I begin to imagine Garbo in the role of Anna Karenina, I have again transformed her into a new artistic content.[85]

In these terms, says Balázs, the fully conscious film-maker who sets out to adapt a novel

> . . . may use the existing work of art merely as raw material, regard it from the specific angle of his own art form as if it were raw reality, and pay no attention to the form once already given to the material. The playwright, Shakespeare, reading a story by Bandello, saw in it not the artistic form of a masterpiece of story-telling but merely the naked event narrated in it.

Viewed in these terms, the complex relations between novel and film emerge in clearer outline. Like two intersecting lines, novel and film meet at a point, then diverge. At the intersection, the book and shooting-script are almost indistinguishable. But where the lines diverge, they not only resist conversion; they also lose all resemblance to each other. At the farthest remove, novel and film, like all exemplary art, have, within the conventions that make them comprehensible to a given audience, made maximum use of their materials. At this remove, what is peculiarly filmic and what is peculiarly novelistic cannot be converted without destroying an integral part of each. That is why Proust and Joyce would seem as absurd on film as Chaplin would in print. And that is why the great innovators of the twentieth century, in film and novel both, have had so little to do with each other, have gone their ways alone, always keeping a firm but respectful distance.

As we go on to trace the mutations from book to film in six specimen adaptations, our task will be greatly simplified if we remain aware of these crucial differences between the media. An

[85] For an excellent analysis of contrasting ways in which a literary story, a filmed story, and human consciousness order reality, see Albert Laffay, "Le Récit, le Monde, et le Cinéma," *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 20 (May, 1947), pp. 1361–1375; No. 21 (June, 1947), pp. 1579–1600. See, too, Siegfried Kracauer, "The Found Story and the Episode," *Film Culture*, II, No. 1 (1956), 1–5.

art whose limits depend on a moving image, mass audience, and industrial production is bound to differ from an art whose limits depend on language, a limited audience and individual creation. In short, the filmed novel, in spite of certain resemblances, will inevitably become a different artistic entity from the novel on which it is based.

2 The Informer

The Informer, BY LIAM O'FLAHERTY APpeared in 1925 to a reception of mixed reviews. O'Flaherty was recognized as a "subjective naturalist,"[1] a peripheral voice in the Irish Renaissance who possessed a passionate, even compelling style, and as a kind of psychological realist who understood the violent tendencies beneath the calm exterior of human behavior. If his work was uneven, or inconclusive, or poorly plotted, it was, nevertheless, deeply felt. Earlier that year, a kind of allegorical composite of O'Flaherty's main themes—the Irish peasant, his struggles, his explosive passions, his rebellious nationalism—had appeared in his novel, *Black Souls*. The main character, Fergus O'Connor, a wanderer who alights in the quiet peasant community of Rooruck on the shores of Inverara, and sets off a violent eruption because of his passion for the wife of a native villager, looks ahead to the explosive style of *The Informer*.

Around 1930, John Ford, who had already been directing Hollywood films for sixteen years, became interested in the story, and began, without success at first, to get his studio to approve it. In 1935, encouraged by the success of *The Lost Patrol*, a low-

[1] See John M. Manley and Edith Rickert, *Contemporary British Literature*, 3rd edition (New York, 1935), p. 45.

NOVELS *into* FILM

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