CINEMA IN SOCIETY[1]

(I)

"MAY not Wisdom and the English people," runs the closing sentence of Mr. Huntly Carter's book, *The New Spirit in the Cinema,* "build a splendid Theatre-Cinema, temple to initiate all into a new philosophy and a new religion?"

This sentence, which is curiously symptomatic of the age in which we live, provides a useful starting point for a discussion of the cinema. For the cinema must not be regarded as an isolated phenomenon. It must be seen against the social background of our time and as the latest phase in the development of modern art.

There has been a pronounced tendency in recent critical theory to make art serve some purpose beyond itself, often to turn it into a substitute for religion. Instead of looking to religion to provide them with their philosophy, it is to art that educated people are more and more inclined to turn. It is poetry or the novel or, according to Mr. Carter, the cinema that will initiate us into that new philosophy and that new religion which remain significantly so vague and ill-defined.

For the origins of this attitude we must go back to the upheavals of the sixteenth century which destroyed European unity and divided culture into a vast number of tiny independent cells—some religious, others not—each basing its life on a different and usually contradictory philosophy.

The mediæval artist lived in a stable world with a heaven above and a hell beneath. He thought of himself not as a lonely individual, but as a member of the community. He was as a rule content to portray the world in which he was placed or to incorporate in his work a generally accepted philosophy. He had no need to try to create a fresh one or

1 Substance of a paper read to the University of London Catholic Society (Graduate Section).

to solve metaphysical problems. A reasonable philosophy found a place for all human activities. It was realised that art satisfied a *natural* human need whether it consisted in building churches or merely painting pictures for the delight of one's fellow men. It had no need of any other justification, whether social or political: it was simply there.

When the old world came to an end, men found themselves in a world in which there were opinions, points of view, but no universally accepted philosophy and therefore no *certainty*. What happens? Much of the best art takes on a speculative note, becomes an attempt by the artist to solve "the riddle of the universe." In other words, the function of the artist undergoes a change. Art attempts something that was previously accomplished by the theologian and the philosopher.

The disruption of the old world was responsible for other changes—changes in the internal structure of society. The distance between the different strata of society widens until finally the social organism splits up into the "classes" of which we have heard so much in recent Marxist criticism. Now this has had far-reaching influence on modern art and particularly on the youngest of the arts—the Cinema. In pre-Renaissance times there was, it seems, no distinction between what is crudely called "highbrow art" and "popular art." There was only one art which appealed in a greater or lesser degree to all sections of the community. And as late as the seventeenth century Shakespeare was able to provide entertainment for the intellectual as well as for the groundling.

This distinction has become extremely accentuated in our own time. On the one hand we have an art which is concerned with the highly abstruse speculations of individual artists and which is only intelligible to a gradually narrowing circle. On the other, a popular art—if it can be dignified by that name—which is usually based on the deliberate exploitation of uneducated people for purely commercial reasons.

It follows from the break-up of society that all art tends

to become propaganda for something—propaganda for some private interpretation of the universe, or propaganda for the views of a large syndicate or of a government. In other words, a number of different factors—the division of culture, the increase of elementary education, the growth of commerce and the perfection of machinery—have conspired to place the general public in all countries completely at the mercy of the big scale propagandist. We get propaganda in its modern sense, that is to say a ruthless attempt to coerce the public, to force on it a particular idea or a particular philosophy at all costs and by any means in one's power. In a world in which there is an intense desire for certainty coupled with an apparent absence of any such certainty the people as a whole become easy victims for the political dictator who claims to have found the key of eternal life and is in a position to make it extremely uncomfortable for anyone who is disposed to deny these claims.

The distinction between "highbrow" and "popular" art applies with particular force to the cinema. One might feel tempted to differentiate between Film with a capital F and the commercial cinema; but this would be misleading. We must remember that the cinema is both an *art* and an *industry*. The film director, who is the real creator of the film, is probably never his own master to quite the same extent as the writer or the painter or the musician. I therefore propose a tentative distinction between films which are more art than industry, and films in which the emphasis falls decidedly on the industry.

In the first group the personality of the director predominates. He is an individual artist trying to express a personal vision in terms of celluloid. The best example is the earlier work of G. W. Pabst who made *Joyless Street, Crisis* and *Kameradschaft*.

In the second group the director is primarily the servant of a syndicate which employs him to carry out its wishes. This group has three sub-divisions.

First, there is the film of pure entertainment of which a good example is Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too*

Much. It provides admirable entertainment and from a technical point of view it is first class. It does not try to impose any philosophy on the audience: it is one of the very few classes of film in which to all intents and purposes there is no propaganda.

Secondly, there is the purely commercial film which is based on the theory of giving the public what it wants—one of the most appallingly demoralising theories ever propounded by a crumbling civilisation—and whose only aim is to draw the largest possible audiences.

Thirdly, there is the film in which the director, who may be and sometimes is a first-class director, is the servant of a political dictatorship whose aim is to impose a definite philosophy on the largest possible number of people. The classic example is the Soviet cinema.

It should be noticed that there is a connection between the commercial film and the political film which are in a sense working in the same direction. By deliberately exploiting the public, by pandering to its basest instincts, the American film magnates are really preparing the way for the film of political propaganda. For it is obvious that a public which has already been thoroughly demoralised in advance is likely to succumb far more easily to dictatorship than one which has managed to preserve something of its original human integrity.

One of the reasons that makes the cinema a potent means of propaganda is that it is *mechanical.* In the cinema it is possible to distinguish between the "form" and the "content" of a film to a degree that would be quite unthinkable in any of the other arts. Probably most ordinary intelligent people have felt at one time or another, when watching a film, that they were watching something so puerile that they would never have dreamed of reading the same story if it had been cast in the form of a novel instead of a film. And it is true that the mechanical side of the cinema has been so highly developed that the most lurid Hollywood sex-drama can be put across with exactly the same efficiency as a piece of genuine social criticism like the films of René

Clair, or Chaplin's *Modern Times*, or the more recent *Dead End*. Indeed, the skill with which a big commercial film is turned out far exceeds the skill with which writers of the same class like Gilbert Frankau or Ethel Dell turn out their wares.

It is not difficult to see why this is so. The cinematic image is an extraordinarily complex thing and it is rapidly becoming more complex. The film director has this advantage over the practitioners of the other arts. He is not confined to a single technical process, he is not working in a single medium. On the contrary, he is able to draw on most of the other arts until his own is a sort of amalgam, a composite art. Like the painter he appeals to the eye, but he is able to put his images in motion. From the theatre he takes acting; he has the same command of the spoken word as the dramatist, but without his peculiar limitations. He has music. Colour is improving and will in time undoubtedly be perfected; and when it is perfected it will certainly add to the range of feeling that the good director is able to express. Finally, it seems likely that he will in due course be able to produce a completely stereoscopic, that is, a three-dimensional image.

In fact, it seems probable that in a comparatively short time film will rank far higher than it does at present among the seven arts. It is already able to create a good many effects that are peculiar to it. It can already show, for example, with remarkable vividness the inner workings of the human mind, or the human mind in an abnormal state —as we can see from the Swiss psycho-analytical film, *Die Maske*.

And yet the cinema is still in its infancy. It would be idle to pretend that its finest achievements—that films like *Potemkin* or *Crime et Châtiment* or *Storm Over Asia*—are comparable to the masterpieces of the other arts. Here, perhaps, an illustration will help us. We may compare a novel like *Lady Chatterley's Lover* with the Czech film, *Extase*. The theme of both works is the dilemma of a normal, healthy young woman who is married to an impo-

tent husband. Although Lawrence was working in a single medium, although he was obliged to rely on the written word, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* seems to me to be a piece of literature of permanent value and *Extase* a very minor performance. Why? The main reason of course is that Lawrence was a great writer and Machaty merely a competent director. But there is another reason. Lawrence was working in a traditional art-form; he had behind him the whole weight of countless other novelists who had used and experimented in the same medium. Now the film director is in a very different position. He has no tradition behind him; he is not yet master of his very complicated medium. With the result that the need for constant technical experiment distracts his attention from the thing he is trying to express. Thus the symbolism of *Extase*—the husband's pince-nez, the pearls, the shots of stallions being gelded—appears to be so much clever trickery. We cannot see the film as a whole: we see it rather as a ingenious conjuring trick—wondering all the time how the director did this and why he did that.

At the present time, then, the technical side of film seems to me to be very much in advance of the value of the experience that it is able to present. It is not without significance that the most successful films have been concerned, on the whole, with social criticism—with witty but essentially destructive criticism of current institutions and abuses. It is far more successful in pulling down than in building up. This means that though it is still a very imperfect art, it is already a very potent means of propaganda. It follows from this that though it *may be* a great asset—that it may be used, as it was in that admirable documentary film, *Housing Problems,* for drawing attention to social evils —it is bound to be a great menace. A highly developed system of propaganda cannot help being dangerous in an age in which the majority of people are entirely without any system on which they can base their lives.

In this country and in America there is no doubt that the popular press and the popular cinema, which are really

working in the same direction, have been powerful factors in undermining culture—in cheapening and vulgarising emotion, in debasing moral standards and generally fostering the prevailing state of instability.

(II)[2]

It may be profitable at this point to glance at the uses to which the Cinema has been put in Soviet Russia. For Soviet Russia is at once the perfect illustration of contemporary *sectarianism,* and the most thoroughgoing and the most successful in its application of propaganda.

At the end of the World War Russia was one of the most backward of the European countries as far as the Cinema was concerned. The films produced were negligible both in quantity and quality. There were comparatively few cinema theatres in the big towns and many of those were actually falling into a state of disrepair. With the conclusion of the Civil War of 1921-2, which put the Bolsheviks into power, the organisation of cinema and radio as instruments of Bolshevist propaganda was undertaken on a large scale. Film production and distribution were completely in the hands of the government and grew apace in every department; and side by side with the growth of film production and film distribution a vigorous campaign was carried on to popularise the Cinema and to provide scientific film education. Training schools were opened in which students were instructed in all branches of the industry and a large number of books on the cinema of both a popular and a technical nature were published. The complete success of the plan has been remarkable.

Whatever one's views, it is difficult not to respect the foresight and energy with which the Bolsheviks carried out their plans. In a country as vast as Russia it was the only possible means of effectively disseminating the Communist philosophy. One of the things that makes the Cinema the most effective means of propaganda is that it is peculiarly

2 This section contains material from a note on the Soviet Films published in *Arena* for October, 1937.

the product of our own times. It has developed as it has, precisely because *potentially* it is able to express better than any other art-form the ideas and experiences of our time. It has been rightly described by one critic as "the art-form of democracy." It must be remembered, however, that the cinema can be effective only in the case of people who are "film-conscious," who are in a particular state of receptivity, who have a particular faculty of being influenced by filmic images. It is for this reason that the methods employed by the Bolsheviks for instructing the people were such a necessary part of the campaign.

It is worth while examining in some detail the content of the most famous Soviet films. The first thing we notice is that the propaganda was essentially popular in nature and aimed at converting not the intellectual minority, but the unintellectual majority. That is to say, the method consisted in the scientific application of the principle of giving the public what it wants, or rather making it want what you have to give. Thus it is a notable fact that the earliest Soviet films bear a marked resemblance to the productions of Hollywood. As one writer put it, they were Marxian in plot and Hollywood in action.

The general method employed has been well described by Mr. Huntly Carter in a book from which I have already quoted.

"Outside Bolshevist Russia," he writes, "the distressed people took their wishes to the cinema to have them fulfilled by unintentional means. To derive consolation from material objects not intentionally designed to afford consolation. In Russia the people liberated from the old restraints took their wishes to the cinema to have them fulfilled by intentional means. At first they sought relief from the fear that their new kingdom (as Bolsheviks called Russia) would be overthrown. They found the pictures intentionally designed to afford relief and to place the audience upon a mountain whence they could see distinctly all parts of the Bolshevist structure which was finally to deliver the people from captivity."

It is clear from this that the Cinema was destined to fulfil a twofold function. One was to take advantage of the anxiety which the Russian people was suffering from after

the upheavals of the Revolution and the Civil War, and to suggest that liberation from that anxiety would only come through Communism. The other was to undermine the old order and to show the Communist panacea of the future. Thus the Soviet film divides into two periods—the period in which destructive criticism predominates and the period of reconstruction portraying the triumph of the new order. To the first period belong *Potemkin, The General Line, Mother, Storm Over Asia, October* and *The New Babylon*. To the second *Turk-Sib, Earth, The Road to Life* and *Men and Jobs*.

The most obvious characteristic of a Russian film is the discrepancy between its technical brilliance and the crudity of its propaganda. The anti-capitalist propaganda in the work of the two most distinguished Soviet directors, Eisenstein and Pudovkin, is of the most obvious kind. One thinks, for example, of the pictures of hideous, bloated bourgeois and thin, lithe, dark Bolsheviks. The same method—the psychological method—is used in the anti-religious propaganda. One of the most striking instances is the religious procession in *The General Line* which from an artistic point of view is one of the finest sequences in any of Eisenstein's films. The subject of the film is the contrast between the old and the new methods of farming. There has been a drought and the village priest—represented as an amiable and superstitious imbecile—organises a procession. The whole village with the customary ceremonial sets out for the fields. The toiling, sweating mob labours slowly up the hill. All kneel and pray. A shadow passes across the sun. Everyone looks up hopefully. Has the prayer been answered? The clouds pass. The sun beats down with renewed fury on the exhausted mob and the parched fields. The whole thing ends in ridiculous failure. It is of course the application of a simple pragmatic test and a skilful exploitation of crowd psychology. The reasoning is as follows: They prayed for rain, but no rain came. Since the prayers were not answered, God does not exist. Prayers don't work. What we need is not unmoded superstition,

but improved mechanical efficiency. The rest of the film is used to show the superiority of Bolshevist methods of farming over the old religion.

There is a still more interesting example of the same thing in *October*—the sequence of the evolution of the idea of God. First of all we see a shot of a crucifix, which is followed in rapid succession by shots of the principal symbols of other religious bodies, working from Buddhism and Confucianism down to the idols of the most primitive tribes, until a final shot shows two hideous and obscene little images grinning at one another. This sequence is supposed to reduce the idea of God to an absurdity. The method is to represent the enemy in a physically ridiculous light. Superficially it is plausible enough, and exactly calculated to convince the public to which it is addressed. The rapid, staccato Russian cutting has a bewildering effect on the mind. One has an intensely vivid impression of the chaos of belief, of warring sects and doctrinal contradictions. It is of course this state of bewilderment that the film director intends to produce, and it must be confessed that the skill with which it is done is remarkable. It succeeds, as far as the simple person is concerned, in hiding the absurdity of the argument. The truth is that the whole procedure is invalidated by assuming what is supposed to be proved. The sequence is not argument at all; it merely illustrates an *a priori* theory in the director's mind; and it is presented in such a way that the arguments against his assumption simply do not arise.

The two most widely seen films of the second group are Ekk's *Road to Life* and Turin's *Turk-Sib*. Compared with films of the first group they are far more positive in their approach to the problem and they contain no purely destructive criticism and no references to class conflict. *Turk-Sib* deals with the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway and *The Road to Life* with the Communist attempt, which was apparently successful, to reclaim certain bands of hooligans who wandered about the great towns marauding, and to turn them into presentable Soviet citizens. Both

films show great technical accomplishment and *Turk-Sib* in particular contains many scenes of outstanding beauty. The propaganda in this film is of a far more subtle kind. Although it is on the surface a simple documentary film showing the building of a railway, it also symbolises the triumph of the new order over nature, depicting, with great power, the victory of the Bolshevik man over the forces of the natural world. The effect of the film on the spectator is not, therefore, to work him up into a frenzy of revolutionary zeal, or to persuade him to join in the work of demolishing all surviving traces of the old order. Its effect is rather to give him a sense of liberation—a liberation which comes not from the sense of having freed himself from the restraints of the old order, but from having conquered fresh fields. At the same time it is impossible not to remark the fundamental poverty of outlook displayed in both films. For the ideal of civilisation implied in both is a poor thing. In the last analysis, indeed, the Bolshevist panacea is an illusion. It is possible to feel temporarily buoyed up by the exhilarating effects of the immediate, material triumphs of Communism like the construction of the railway; but it offers nothing lasting. Indeed, the new world is an appallingly narrow world. Behind the illusion of liberation, of freedom from restraint, man is really creating for himself new and unnatural restraints. The Communist victory is a victory from which man emerges with his stature terribly shortened.

(III)

We may now turn to the Catholic attitude to the Cinema. On a number of occasions and particularly in the Encyclical, *Vigilanti Cura,* the Pope has exhorted Catholics to take an interest in the cinema. But it has never been the policy of the Popes outside the sphere of Faith and morals to impose a hard-and-fast plan upon the faithful. The Encyclicals are general statements of principle which leave the faithful to work out the details of the scheme for themselves. I wish

to stress this point in view of certain misunderstandings that have arisen in connection with the Pope's pronouncements.

Before I offer any comment, however, I propose to give a brief sketch of the various ways in which Catholics have responded to the Papal lead.

The response which has, perhaps unfortunately, aroused the most attention was the Clean Film Campaign which was the work of the Legion of Decency in America and, it seems, of the Westminster Catholic Federation in this country. The Legion of Decency, as its curious name suggests, was concerned exclusively with the moral aspect of the cinema; it showed none of that concern for the artistic side which was such a striking feature of the Pope's Encyclical. It was carried out not, as the Encyclical suggested, with the assistance of technical experts, but under the joint supervision of ecclesiastical authority and fathers of families. Its aim was in no sense to promote the interest of Catholics in the cinema, but to eliminate by any means in its power the more flagrantly immoral elements of the commercial film. It published from time to time lists of films which were apparently divided into three classes: films that were morally unexceptionable, films that were not actually immoral but of no moral value, and films that nobody, certainly no Catholic, ought to see.

A more interesting example is provided by the Belgian Catholic Centre of Cinematographic Action under the leadership of Canon Brohée. In one of the pamphlets published by this body the Canon points out that Belgium is not a great film producing country; and, as a result of this, the Centre has concentrated its attention on exhibiting films. It has tried to reverse the principle of giving the public what it wants by making the public want better films. It has done this by getting a large number of cinema theatres—there were between three and four hundred in 1934—under its control. The fact that it has carefully considered the artistic value of film seems to me to have made its work immeasurably more important than the work of the Legion of Decency.

In France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Italy Catholic cinema bureaux have been established. One of the most successful of these is the *DOCIP* (which stands for Documentation Cinématographique de la Presse) which is a branch of the Catholic Centre of Cinematographic Action. By means of a system of filling in questionnaires, film criticisms have been drawn up which are suitable to the various periodicals in which they are to appear: technical and highbrow ones for the more learned and literary reviews, popular ones for the dailies, and "snappy" ones for a journal like *Soirées,* a weekly run by Catholics. As a result of this, every film that is shown in Brussels, unless it is too bad for mention, is reviewed in the leading Brussels Catholic or quasi-Catholic dailies as soon as it is shown. A brief notice of it is given together with indications of the type of audience for which it can be recommended, and is published daily as long as the film is being shown. When the film goes to the provinces a similar programme is carried out in the local papers. In this way films are considered from every possible angle—aesthetic, moral, technical and as entertainment.

In England special difficulties have been created by the smallness of the Catholic body. The two most prominent responses to the papal lead have been the formation of the Catholic Amateur Film Society, which makes and exhibits its own films, and the publication of regular film criticism in one of the four Catholic weeklies.

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Having tried to give as objectively as possible a short account of what seem to be the most important aspects of the contemporary cinema, it remains to express an opinion on those facts. Fortunately the subject belongs to that no-man's land which lies somewhere between faith and morals and belongs mercifully to neither. It therefore remains a matter of pure speculation, in which at present nothing is settled.

"Criticism," said a great French poet, "should be partial,

passionate, political, that is to say, written from an exclusive point of view, but from the point of view which opens up the widest horizons." No one will feel inclined to deny that the criticism of Catholics—particularly the Legion of Decency with its incredible lists—has been "partial," "passionate" and "political." When we ask whether it has been of the kind that opens up the widest horizons, it is less easy to assent. It may seem to some, indeed, that instead of opening up horizons it has rather plunged us into a fog. As Catholics we approach things from an exclusive point of view, but unfortunately this sometimes means that in practice we are inclined to mistake a series of preconceived ideas for a Catholic standpoint and simply increase the prevailing darkness.

Among these proconceived ideas the following seem to me to be the most prevalent and the most dangerous:

The first is what sometimes passes for the absolute Catholic standpoint—the view that modern civilisation is finished and that the only hope for Catholics is to go out into the wilderness and build a new Catholic civilisation.

The second is what may be called the Mediterraneo-centric point of view which believes that culture begins at Calais and, extending in a south-easterly direction, ends abruptly somewhere in the neighbourhood of Sicily. This view regards England, if not civilisation, as finished and believes that our only hope is to betake ourselves to one of the so-called Catholic countries where it is still possible to lead a full Catholic life.

Thirdly, and perhaps the most insidious of all, is the belief in concerted action, the belief that it is everybody's duty to "get together" and if not to start a movement, at any rate to join a movement. For people who hold this view it seems to be an article of faith, of blind faith, that movements are of value in themselves however vague their object, and that one is necessarily doing something important if one attends a mass-meeting at Albert Hall with a record number of bishops on the platform and a poem by Mr. Alfred Noyes.

All three points of view have this in common, that they

are negative and in the last analysis escapist; and they explain why Catholic interest in the cinema has been for the most part negative and escapist too, with its unerring instinct for concentrating on the unimportant points like the Legion of Decency which irrestibly suggests a legion of ostriches burying their heads in the sand.

The problem: What are Catholics to do about the cinema? is, I think, capable of two solutions. There is first the Catholic solution, and secondly the sectarian solution. We have to remember that from a cultural point of view and in the eyes of the non-Catholic world, the Church is a sect, is simply one of the innumerable bodies which are trying to win others to their views. Now the danger is that the Catholic, particularly in a country like England where Catholics are in a minority, may come to accept this position, may try to fight the modern world with its own weapons. This is the sectarian solution. We must distinguish between using the *resources* of the modern world and using the methods of the modern world which are the outcome of an abnormal situation which, as Catholics, we do not desire to perpetuate.

It is a regrettable fact that so much Catholic activity in England has been of a sectarian nature. The Catholic is brought up to regard himself as a member of a small, persecuted minority. He lives in an atmosphere in which he is overwhelmingly conscious of the gulf which separates him from the non-Catholic world. Now our mission as Catholics is *to* the non-Catholic world. The first task of Catholics ought to be to break down the barriers, to establish contacts with the surrounding world. We ought not to be content to be Catholics in private life or when we are getting together with other Catholics, and something completely different with other people. Instead of breaking down the barriers the sort of Catholic activity we have at present does everything to maintain them, to preserve the closed world of English Catholicism. This unhealthy Catholic segregation is symbolised by the All-Catholic Cruise.

The need for Catholic newspapers or Catholic broad-

casting or Catholic film directors is not be denied, but it is to be denied that we want them on the lines on which we are working at present. The sort of Catholic newspaper that is needed is not one that caters *exclusively* for a Catholic minority, but one that gives the same news and deals with the same topics as the non-Catholic press, but from an *implicitly* Catholic view. What in fact do we find? We find that the language, the type and the tricks of the Northcliffe and Beaverbrook press are imitated. We find a monstrous competition to establish the largest net sale. We find attempts to bolster up the faithful by printing in huge headlines the legend that "Catholicism is winning all along the line" when it is doing nothing of the sort, which is the outcome of a frenzied desire to keep up appearances at all costs, even at the cost of truth. In fact, an ignoble attempt to spread a veneer of Catholicism over something which is fundamentally *un*-Catholic. The result of these tactics is that the average English Catholic lives in an unreal world. He is a stranger in his own country not because he has principles where other people have none, but because he is deprived of the normative influence of the rest of the world.

Now the cinema is one of the largest industries in the world and, as things are, I cannot see that there is the slightest possibility of Catholics exercising any direct influence at all over either the distribution or the production of films.

The fact is that a Catholic art and a Catholic cinema are only possible in a society that is truly Catholic. Not a society which is officially Catholic or which the majority of people are Catholics, but a society which is founded on Catholic principles. I think we must make up our minds that in our present society Catholic activity can only be *indirect*, can only take the form of a gradual infiltration of Catholic principles. It is useless to try to take the Kingdom of Mammon by storm. However successful in other spheres, in the sphere of art shock tactics are fatal. We shall not serve the cause of truth by turning out pseudo-Catholic works of art of the sort to which we are at present accus-

tomed. For such things are false, base and unreal. They do not possess the vital contact with their age without which there can be no good art.

The most hopeful approach, therefore, is the one adopted by Canon Brohée and the Belgian Catholic Centre of Cinematographic action. An age which is as confused as our own is not rich in masterpieces. It is an age of odds and ends, an age which produces a few good lines or a good chapter here or a good film-sequence there, but few complete works of art. It follows that it is an age in which good *criticism* is of the first importance; it is also an age which throws a very heavy burden of responsibility on the critic, particularly on Catholics who happen to be critics. Catholicism may be, it ought to be a plus quantity; but it can only be a plus quantity if we remember that in art the claim of truth is paramount. To be a good critic demands a great intellectual asceticism. It is particularly difficult for a Catholic who is writing as a Catholic to be sure of telling the whole truth; it is particularly difficult for him to avoid the easy solution, the neat formula. He has to remind himself again and again that the only art that is immoral is bad art, and that it is often the art which has a veneer of religion that is profoundly immoral.

MARTIN TURNELL.