

some of the things which money can buy; now we are called on to give the things of the spirit. English people will do well to remember this clear invitation when the time comes for electing another government this year.

## Dr Kildare and the Couch

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Screen psychiatry inherited much of the cinema's older mythos of medicine. Young Dr Kildare, old Dr Gillespie, and their myriad colleagues easily switched from homey simplifications of the medically arcane to palatable psychoanalysis, the old soap-opera science keeping up with progress, prescribing Freud's protean penicillin.

Of course, the new language had to be learned. And sometimes, the screen refracted the careful terminologies with disconcerting imprecision. The language of the couches and clinics, often beclouded enough, seemed to have been imperfectly absorbed by the popularizers themselves, emerging like the spirited garblings of matrons describing their illnesses and operations over tea—or Thurber's triumphantly inexact maid, Della, whose sister, she confided, 'got tuberculosis from her teeth, and it went all through her symptom'.

Much of the difficulty had to do with the importunate imperialism of the new depth psychology, whose revelations, formulated in the special language of its own province, could usurp so easily the imaginative essences of works of imagination. Dostoevsky had written psychological novels, and Goethe and Coleridge had projected the turmoil of personality upon creations of action and symbolic meaning. But their terms were always those of the novelist and poet; their characters were not case-studies masquerading as fiction; their claims to universality were persuasively inspired, not dogmatically pre-supposed.

Freud's own literary power had been misleading. His accounts of cases were not mere reports, but works of creative interpretation. The

novelists who took his insights at second-hand too often failed to create personality. They assumed a structure of interpretation; their characters were believable only if one believed first in psychoanalysis, as in a religious architecture bearing separate components of faith. Many painters, too, proffered the new symbols as if they carried the meanings of old magics, like the simple words of proverbs, instead of being still too new, too bound in their intention to too short a time and too narrow a place. Music, only, seemed to retain its autarky. At least, if some composers did try to set *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* to a tune, their literalizing went unnoticed among the sounds—except, perhaps, by those who suspected all along that modern cacophonies really denoted obscure derangements expressed musically, in chords of diminished superegos.

In the cinema, as in radio and television melodramas, it was also difficult to absorb the disembodied findings of psychology, or social psychology, recreating them in valid terms of the filmic or aural media. We became used to—even tolerant of wordy explanations of the motivations of characters, delivered by white-tuniced oracles in speeches suitably sprinkled with the powerful words of the new *mystique*: ‘guilt’, ‘complex’, ‘frustration’, ‘ambivalence’, ‘anxiety’, ‘neurosis’, ‘unconscious’, ‘ego’. and whatever others might dress up the hasty scarecrows of characterization.

The weakest moments of *Crossfire* to choose an example of much finer quality than most, were those during which the personality of the homicidal anti-Semite was being verbally dissected in psychosociological terms. The strongest were those in which he revealed his character through his acting. That the conception of character which he projected was derived largely from the findings of the social sciences concerning race prejudice and mania is not important from the standpoint of the creative problem. An actor, or painter, or musician, or novelist may have a ‘philosophy’ underlying his work. But his problem as artist is to express himself by means of his medium—else why be an artist at all?

Nor is the creative problem one of merely dramatizing some scientific certainty. A work of imagination assumes grounds of credibility quite different from those of a work of science—just as we cannot speak of dramatizing a syllogism, an inherent antinomy. One may be rigorously logical, or scientific, in discovering the meaning and value of one’s beliefs. But their expression in a work of art must be according to another logic, having to do with another commitment on the part of

artist and audience, another order of persuasion.

In fact, the troubles of films that have taken scientific psychology as thematic material have come often from their being merely psychiatry—and this too facile or too simple. The problem was apparent from the beginning of the genre—for example, the earliest, and still one of the most interesting American films of the type, Charles Vidor's *Blind Alley*, of 1939. Here the familiar theme of the fugitive gangster dominating a house of ordinary, decent folk was given a psychiatric twist. The master of the house, Ralph Bellamy, happened to be a psychoanalyst. When reason and even violence failed to overcome the gangster, Chester Morris, Bellamy decided to 'destroy' him by analysis—showing, by the way, and despite provocation, a rather cavalier ethical commitment to the uses of science.

Like a wizard exercising an omnipotent magic, Bellamy uncovered the basic father-hatred that had made and motivated the gangster. Presto! The gangster was powerless. Now that he knew the cause of his criminal urges, he could no longer pull triggers against society, the father-image, and was killed. Bellamy needed only a few hours of incisive incantations, according to the time-span of the film.

Such therapeutic speed, it may be added, seems to characterize the psychiatric cures effected on the screen. And making long and difficult matters appear quick and easy is what we mean by oversimplification, after we have disposed of righteous disputations over the nuances of terminology. Even the Europeans, so quick to decry Hollywood's miraculizing, have made what can only be bad propaganda for psychiatry, allowing dramatic licence to solve in moments problems usually needing years. *The Eternal Mask*, made by the Swiss in 1936, first shown abroad the next year and currently being revived, is a fine film, a screen classic, demonstrating the use of surrealist style to express disturbance of mind and spirit. But its drama depends fundamentally upon extraordinary simplification. The doctor who risks his patient's life and his own reputation on his new meningitis serum plunges instantaneously into schizoid delusions, after his patient dies. This much may be credible—although it doesn't speak well for the emotional stability of doctors. But he emerges from his delusions—symbolized expressionistically, recalling the genre of German surrealist cinema that owed so much to Freud—in a matter of hours, returning to productive normalcy with an ease that must chagrin those whose daily concern, and anguish, is to bring the psychotically deluded back to a reality they can share.

The mercurial magic of screen psychiatry comes in for some mild parody in Danny Kaye's comedy, *Knock On Wood*. Mr Kaye is often called 'irrepressible'—although his material on the screen rarely extends him to the full range of his skills, and we are always disappointed even as we are entertained. Here he is a ventriloquist who uncontrollably expresses through his dummies his inhibitions concerning marriage. Before he becomes involved in scatterbrained skullduggery involving spics and secret plans, he comes under psychoanalytic treatment—prettily professed by Mai Zetterling. The treatment, which is supposed to be 'new' and rapid to begin with, is turned to farce when Kaye turns psychoanalysis against Miss Zetterling. He bones up on Freud overnight, reveals her own repressions to her in a few flashes of insightful jargon, and they fall in love—or is it really a case of mutual transference between two therapists? After this, and only from the scientific standpoint, the following hilarities are anticlimactic.

Beautiful lady analysts are no longer uncommon in films, and are probably related in their appeal to the beautiful lady doctors who occasionally appear in switches on old themes of medical eroticism. After all, one of the favourite games of children has to do with playing at being doctors and nurses, and grown-ups have grown into at least sufficient reason to perpetuate the fantasies. Ingrid Bergman, as she appeared in *Spellbound*, is perhaps the ultimate in the field—although the wailful theme used in Miklos Rozsa's musical score persists in memory as having been more powerful in opening the hidden areas of the mind of the hero, Gregory Peck, and in discovering the villain, Leo G. Carroll. Psychiatric melodramas, in fact, seem to require the soundtrack punctuation provided by themes, electric organs, and other devices for producing sound effects in the guise of music. Radio and television simply carried them over from soap operas and detective stories into dramas of sudsy psychiatry. The audience, apparently, wouldn't recognize climaxes or other significant moments, unless they were opulently underlined by aural tutti-frutti.

Documentary, or 'non-theatrical' films dealing with psychological material may not have suffered as much from synthetic music, but they also have been weighted down by too literal an exposition of science. There is a growing 'literature' of films treating the social sciences for purposes of instruction and information. Most of these are 16mm size, and rarely find their way into commercial distribution, where they are shown for profit in order to entertain. They are usually 'sponsored' by universities, business organizations, educational groups,

or foundations interested in using audio-visual media to deal with problems of individual and social behaviour. They find their audiences in college classes, church, labour, or community organization auditoriums, or among people interested enough in unusual films to seek them out at the small cinemas where they are shown. Many are effective within their limited compass. But many more are as heavily burdened by verbose narration as are the theatrical films by wordy dialogue. And the more substance film narration and dialogue assumes from outside the film, the less credible and effective is the audio-visual experience of the film itself.

An engrossing example of the dramatic power of imaginative documentary is *The Lonely Night*, written, directed, and produced by Irving Jacoby of Affiliated Films for the (American) Mental Health Film Board. This film excited such interest in its initial non-theatrical showings that it was put into commercial distribution, and booked into 'art' theatres, as well as into regular non-theatrical channels.

The story it tells is fiction, but is not false. It is well to understand at once that documentaries require as much creative imagination as do formally dramatic films. There is no 'reality' anywhere simply awaiting cinematic record, no representation of locale, behaviour, and events that does not involve selection, organization, and technical manipulation. Documentary is a style, as is fictional drama. Both can be true or false—to their own respective conditions and criteria. The case of 'Caroline Cram', the disturbed young woman in *The Lonely Night*, is a typification, a sensitive recreation that distills the qualities of many instances; more than this, the case has been imbued with an essential dramatic personality: the generalization has been given particular life.

The film portrays the young woman's disturbance undogmatically, as a matter of mental health, rather than an epic symbolizing ancient instinctual agencies. Her problem is revealed in notably realistic interviews with her analyst, and in flashbacks to the childhood experiences in which her personality took form. In contrast, we are also introduced to the 'Dunnes', who seem to be making a life with their three young children in which the ordinary frictions of daily living are dealt with wholesomely, in a climate of love and mutual respect. Their present life is unlike Caroline's past; their future will not be her travail now.

The film doesn't preach. The narrator, Frank Silvera, is no omniscient priest of some scientific certainty. If it had not been introduced as dealing with modern psychiatry, one could regard most of the film's

lessons as articulate expressions of old wisdoms. No miracles occur in the analyst's office. In fact, the sequences there stress the slow, often agonizing process of self-discovery, the extraordinary patience of the conscientious psychotherapist. Nothing is oversimplified, yet the film is wholly clear according to its point of view—without the weight of masses of theory or findings. One reason for this is that the film limits itself to a few basic principles of mental health. Another is that it doesn't try to make propaganda for an ecumenical scientific discipline, and can spend its time making itself clear.

But *The Lonely Night* is noteworthy not only for a clear, sensitive script—or, by the way, its fine, unexaggerated music, composed by Mel Powell and played by the New Music String Quartet, with Benny Goodman. The film has moments of high drama; those in which Marion Seldes appears as 'Caroline' are especially moving. Miss Seldes gives a performance of astonishing skill, projecting a characterization that is truly profound and wholly credible—so much so, in fact, that one is aware of an especially intense response on the part of some of the audience. Women who watch the film seem particularly moved, as if they have been unprepared for this synthesis of documentary realism and dramatic characterization. They cough, they fidget, reaching interminably in their handbags for unneeded things. If they were watching Joan Crawford, Bette Davis, or Barbara Stanwyck in one of their familiar vehicles, they could traverse with greater equanimity spiralling passions and hysteric ecstasies, arriving at the closing denouements of romantic detumescence with dampened handkerchiefs, but elevated emotions.

*The Lonely Night* is intended to move people, but to move them to *do* something. It is meant to teach, not to blow up gusts of ready-made passion in studio wind-machines, providing easy catharsis for costive spirits. The neurotic behaviour dramatized by Miss Seldes is plainly unhealthy, not idealized to inflict vicarious tortures. The psychological drama of the film relies neither on romantic alchemies nor psychoanalytical magic. The audience learns that there is hope for Caroline—not in manipulating a jargon, nor in some happy ending, comfortably inevitable, but in a painfully slow attrition of irrational responses. It also learns something of a kind of world in which children can be brought up to self-respect and reliance, to mental health without need of therapy.

The entertainment film has tried to dramatize psychotherapy without allying it. *The Snake Pit*, it will be recalled, followed Olivia De

Havilland through a psychotic crisis, even into a mental hospital exposing some of the ineptitudes and inhumanities of institutional care. Miss De Havilland's travail, in fact, seemed even more severe than Miss Seldes's, involving a more violent withdrawal from reality, requiring shock treatments and other radical therapy. If the film commendably did not make Miss De Havilland's sickness seem trivial and her cure easy, it could not, nevertheless, avoid psychoanalytic pontification or some fairly sticky theatricalism—such as a scene in which the patients at a mental hospital joined in singing 'Going Home', to the Dvorak music. The point of the scene was to play up the poignancy of the desire to go home, to be free, to join the world again. But cheap tears for the audience were bought at the cost of good taste and credibility. The singing patients might have been air cadets, or sea cadets, in some familiar pot-boiler about *esprit de corps*, the honour of the old academy, or some such like. Psychotherapy was given a theme song, put across in a production number—as if to show us that we were watching something made to entertain us, after all.

Of course, films have to entertain. When they do not, the theatres are empty and discussions of their effects become academic. And psychiatry is no more sacrosanct a subject for the movies than is religion. As for the latter, *Martin Luther* demonstrated that even theological debate can be made fascinating. The problem is not one of inherent complexity of subject-matter, although the ponderous jargon of psychiatry can make it so appear. Here *The Lonely Night* offers ample proof that films can inform people about principles of mental hygiene without first inculcating a faith in a particular scientific ritual, with its own esoteric language, understood only by initiates.

There may be fundamental opposition between the ideas of entertainment and of education—when the former is defined in the practical, popular sense of passive amusement. If so, there are limits to what can deliberately be taught in the fictional entertainment film—although, of course, the attitudes the audience may develop from films are incalculable, and unpredictable. Popular entertainment, moreover, characteristically builds upon notions which have been accepted so widely and for so long, that they are assumed to be certainties—although many may be mutually contradictory. Popular entertainment does not teach, but reassures—which can be construed as bad teaching, to be sure. It is a commonplace admonition to aspiring creators of fiction for popular magazines, radio, films, and television that their stories had best illustrate some old maxim: that if they choose to

challenge old ideas in some way, they had better write for media reaching a smaller, more receptive audience. One difficulty, then, of the psychiatric film designed to entertain is that it must establish its assumptions, giving them the force of old ideas. A way of doing this is to couch them in a familiar form, such as the common melodrama with its accustomed opposition of good and evil, and its happy outcome. But the results are inevitably dubious, if for no other reason than that the theories and findings of science are not certainties, and may not be proposed as comforting axioms. The film psychoanalyst usually sermonizes in the same kind of masquerade as does the 'doctor' in the cigarette or toothpaste advertisement. He either simplifies to the point of falsehood, or juggles the coloured balls of a jargon to mystify the onlookers.

*The Lonely Night* does not start out to 'entertain' in the popular sense. It teaches, and the audience learns. There is a story that is absorbing, although it does not follow conventional fictional patterns. The film is simple, yet subtle, holding much to interest even those sophisticated enough to raise questions or qualifications. It is popular, yet not popularized; comprehensible without debasement. It engrosses, hence its demands upon the audience are met with interest and participation. This can be a definition of 'entertainment', too.

## Heard and Seen

### CANNES: TEN MARKS FOR TRYING

The programme for the sixteen days of this year's Cannes Festival, the seventeenth of the series, was considerably more uneven than it has been for several years past and this, it seemed to me, made it more than usually interesting for the serious student of cinema. With three or four exceptions the great names were absent, and the number of predictable smash hits was surprisingly limited when one first looked at the complete list of entries. But as the brilliantly sunny days passed, it became increasingly evident how stimulating was the great proportion of work by very young or inexperienced directors, and one