

simple and lucid fashion without resort to popular tricks. She has never renounced her serious literary concerns. She is a member of the older generation who has most decidedly helped in a bridging of the gap from the pre-second world war days to the present-day young writers, a person who has helped during those 'barren wastes of post war German literature' to create an atmosphere of stability both with her choice of theme with its ever optimistic note of hope, and with her use of clear, simple neo-classical language. As Greene wrote of Mauriac, so too one may say of Gertrud von le Fort that here is a writer for whom the visible world has never ceased to exist and whose characters are people with souls to save or to lose. If one can judge from the number of translations of her works of late, ranging from versions in English American to Japanese, then they may well be signs that people beyond the confines of Germany are coming to value her writings.

Heard and Seen

SITUATION REPORT

Whatever may be said by the band of young iconoclasts who have just started a new film magazine, *Movie*, there is a new spirit stirring in the British cinema. 'All we can see', they insist in type the size usually employed for minor headlines, 'is a change of attitude, which disguises the fact that the British cinema is as dead as before. Perhaps it was never alive. We are still unable to find evidence of artistic sensibilities in working order'. It is the privilege of the young to be extreme, and the editorial board of *Movie* is to be congratulated on breaking new critical ground on which to cultivate a fine and lively set of fresh ideas and prejudices that are in honourable descent from *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*: but not everyone is going to agree with them. To do them justice, agreement is the last thing they are seeking, since they feel that they have a great many new and important things to say that have been left unsaid in this country for far too long. And disagreement on the grand scale they soon aroused, as those who listened to Carl Foreman talking to them in the recent 'New Comment' programme dedicated to *Movie's* first number will remember with amusement.

Still it takes, as they say, all sorts to make a world; and if *Movie* is entitled to one opinion, this need not stop others from holding different ones. I, for one,

am convinced on the evidence presented this year that British films have certainly made a reasonable advance in the tricky game of Grandmother's Steps which world cinema production only too often resembles. Awards at film festivals are notoriously erratic, but this year we have really not done too badly. Our entry at Cannes consisted of *The Innocents* and *A Taste of Honey*, and not only did the performances of Murray Melvin and Rita Tushingham in the Richardson picture jointly win one of the two prizes for outstanding acting but also—and more important—wherever one went critics of every nationality were loud in their praise of the film as a whole, for its script, direction and acting. They thought it to be new, good and to show a wholly unusual integrity. At San Sebastian the British entry was John Guillermin's odd, inconsistent but ambitious shot at the impossible, *The Waltz of the Toreadors*, made from Jean Anouilh's play. Not quite, one would have thought, the inevitable choice for censor-ridden Spain: but the grand jury unanimously awarded the prize for the best actor to Peter Sellers for his despairing, farcical, tragic performance as Anouilh's General in this picture. And then, a week or so later, at Berlin *A Kind of Loving*, John Schlesinger's first feature film, won the Golden Bear which was a mild surprise to a good many of the British critics. When we put in *Term of Trial* as our entry for the last important festival of 1962—Venice—it seemed possible that we might gather in another prize; if not for the whole film then surely for Sir Laurence Olivier's masterly performance as the defeated schoolmaster. But, as I said, the reactions of festival juries are unpredictable, and *Term of Trial*, a far better film in every way than *A Kind of Loving*, received no prize at all. Still, the tally is not dishonourable for one year, considering the doldrums in which the British cinema was becalmed for so long.

What is really encouraging about the current British output is that it is far more varied in range and pitch than it has been for some time. Admittedly we are all growing a little over-familiar with the northern industrial background, photogenic though it often is; and perhaps a little weary of the aggressively lower-class atmosphere which is so often denuded of most of the working-class virtues. Nevertheless after many years of having to accept shallow, empty stereotypes instead of the simmering, quirky, rebellious real people all around us, it is a refreshing change to be confronted with Arthur Seaton and Joe Lampton or Jo and Geoff, graceless though they may well be. An irritated northerner recently protested to me that he found many of the characters in this type of film as unrepresentative of the people he knew as were the 'who's for tennis' young people of the drawing-room comedies, but the comment is not universally valid. When, for instance, an unpretentious film in much the same kind of teenager context as many of those set north of the Trent happens to be set well south of it, in Bristol which I know well, it seemed to me very true in its essentials. The young people hanging aimlessly around the bus station or the docks, riding their motor cycles far too fast down the road to Avonmouth or struggling for the crowded buses to Filton, were genuine in both voice and manner. I do not believe *Some People* would have been made

ten years ago or, if it had been, it would not have been anything like so good.

British films today are not afraid to tackle difficult subjects either. *Victim*, *Life for Ruth*, *Whistle down the Wind* may handle homosexuality and religious beliefs in a simplified way—over-simplified if you like—but at least they do try to show what a certain kind of person might do in a certain set of circumstances, and they often leave one with a good deal to think about after the film is over. They present characters against authentic and comparatively unfamiliar backgrounds; unglamorized, muddy or snowbound, with ugly little houses and beautiful stark countryside behind them; there is more and more a real sense of place. Social realism, however, is not the only subject in fashion, though occasionally the jaded critic may feel that it is. *The Innocents* was a most beautiful, subtle composition of images in which the sinister and the elegiac were cunningly balanced, and the soundtrack was almost a character in itself. Henry James' story was exteriorized to a degree that scandalized some purists, but no one could deny that it was admirable cinema. *The Waltz of the Toreadors*, under John Guillermin's direction, tried to do something that even the French find difficult—treat a tragic situation farcically; and though it did not come off, it was certainly a very honourable failure. The colour was delicious, the wit was splendid so long as it was muted, and the camera-work was often of the most intelligent. Add to all this Peter Sellers' extraordinary bravura performance as the General—twice as large as life and half as natural—and one has a film which should have been outside the British reach altogether. John Mortimer's *Dock Brief* starring Richard Attenborough and Peter Sellers, is a flight into lunacy that does not come off either, but it has some good ideas, and the director has had the sense to leave the strange strophe and antistrophe of the Mortimer dialogue in its full flavour. It is, in effect, very like a more concentrated Goon Show and will appeal to the same audiences. With *Billy Budd* and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* appearing as we go to press, and *This Sporting Life* in the offing, it would seem as though 1962 will go out with a bang and not a whimper; this corpse may be dead, in the opinion of *Movie*, but it certainly does not seem to be lying down.

MARYVONNE BUTCHER