

THFM-2611-001 (3 credit hours)
INTRODUCTION TO SCREENWRITING

Winter 2021
Tuesdays and Thursdays 1 – 2:15 PM
Room: Zoom, link forwarded via email

Instructor: **Noam Gonick**
E-mail: n.gonick@uwinnipeg.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to the basics of screenwriting through the adaptation of a Chekhov short story and the development of an original short film script. It includes a study of the language of screenwriting, narrative principles, formatting, script analysis, and adaptation. The course also deals with the position of the screenwriter in the filmmaking industry.

Students are **required** to have researched discussion points ready for class and participate constructively in critiquing the work of classmates, contributing to in-class discussions. Written assignments including (but not limited to) screenplays will be a mandatory part of this course. Creating your “personal banner”, writing script outlines, synopses, character backgrounds, and other pre-script ‘preparatory’ writings will be required elements for the successful completion of this course. Public presentations and “pitching” of assignments and the constructive critiquing of others’ work are all integral aspects to this course.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- "Typhus" (1989) by Anton Chekhov
PDF Attached to this Syllabus

- “Some Ideas on the Cinema” by Cesare Zavattini
PDF Attached to this Syllabus

Notes: Students are advised some assignments will be required in duplicate for each member of the class to read out loud via Zoom. This will require individuals to email PDF’s to the professor in advance of class time. Free Screenwriting software such as Celtx will be required. Resources: <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/screenwriting-software/>

GRADING

Constructive class participation (see comments below)	20%
Adaptation of "Typhus" (due February 26, 2021).....	40%
Short original screenplay (due April 4, 2021)	40%

TOTAL.....	100%

Late Assignments will **not** be accepted without a medical certificate. Typo-free and organized presentation of written work is an integral part of the overall mark.

GRADING SCALE

A+	90 - 100%	GPA 4.50	C+	65 - 69.9%	GPA 2.5
A	85 - 89.9%	GPA 4.25	C	60 - 64.9%	GPA 2.0
A-	80 – 84.9%	GPA 4.0	D	50 - 59.9%	GPA 1.0
B+	75 - 79.9%	GPA 3.5	F	Below 50%	GPA 0
B	70 - 74.9%	GPA 3.0	Work not submitted will be graded as 0.		

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (all dates subject to change)

January 7, 2021 Introduction to Prof Noam Gonick, Syllabus & Writers' Room Workshop

UNIT 1: SCREENPLAY ADAPTATION

January 12 Reading Assignment due: "Typhus" by Anton Chekhov
 Class Discussion: "Typhus" summary, themes
 Research Methodologies, interpretive inspirations

In Class Discussion: Who is your favourite Screenwriter (and why?); what is your favourite screenplay (and why?); what is your favourite film scene (and why?)

January 14 Research Presentations in-class: expanding upon Chekhov's "Typhus"
 Class Discussion: Reinterpretation (updating) versus Historical Films

January 19 Class Discussion: Your "Banner", interpretation and obsessions.

January 21 **Assignment due:** Adaptation Outline (1 Paragraph, approx. ½ page)
 Presentation of Outlines in class, discussion

January 26 Continuation of Outlines presentations, discussion

January 28 **Assignment due:** Character Backstories (1 Page)
 Presentation of Character Backstories, discussion

February 2 Continuation of Character Backstory presentations, discussion
 What is a story beat?

February 4 **Assignment due:** Beats on recipe cards (1 Page)
 (with class feedback/discussion)

February 9 Completion of Beats presentations/critiques

Basic Script Formatting, Screenwriting Style

February 11 **FIRST DRAFT due:** "Typhus" Adaptation (up to 8 pages MAX)
 Assignment Readings: Class Critique

February 23 Completion of FIRST DRAFT readings

February 23 **VW Date**

February 25 **FINAL DRAFT due:** "Typhus" Adaptation (up to 7 pages MAX)

UNIT 2: ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

In-Class Reading: "Some Ideas on the Cinema" by Cesare Zavattini

Class discussion: Neorealism and "Walk About" prep

Class discussion: revisiting your "Banner".

March 2	"Walk About" – All Students are required to walk their own neighbourhoods.
March 4	<u>Assignment due: Pitch Ideas for Final Script</u> (up to 1 page)
March 9	Completion of pitching of ideas for Final Script
March 11	<u>Assignment due:</u> Beats on recipe cards
March 16	Completion of Beats on recipe cards
March 18	<u>Assignment due: Character Breakdowns (1 Page)</u> Assignment Presented: Class Critique
March 23	Completion of Character Breakdown presentations
March 25	<u>Assignment due: FIRST DRAFT ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY</u> (up to 8 pages MAX) Assignment Reading Aloud: Class Critique Discussion: Script Analysis and Revision
March 30	Continuing to present First Drafts
April 1	The Screenwriter in Winnipeg's film/television industry
April 6	Original Short Screenplay FINAL DRAFT due (up to 7 pages MAX)

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Source: Some of the preceding remarks on participation are borrowed from <http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/seminars.htm> - and used with permission from the Department of Sociology, University of Winnipeg

Six Hallmarks of Constructive Class Participation

a. The most difficult and important skill in effective class participation is good listening. You need to attend carefully to what others are saying. And, then you need to learn to respond intelligently and helpfully. A class is not just a collection of individual points of view declared one after the other. It has a rhythm, often an unpredictable rhythm, which is established, above all, by the ways in which the participants respond to each other. If someone's contribution is puzzling, then ask her/him to continue, taking care of a

particular trouble you have with a point she/he raised. If the contribution is very good, tell the speaker so. If you disagree or have an alternative point, then put that on the table.

As in a conversation, in a classroom discussion the participant has to be prepared to be flexible, adjusting her/his participation to what is happening moment by moment. This is the major challenge of the process.

b. Participants need to be careful of interrupting someone else before she/he is finished. This habit can close some participants down so that they are reluctant to contribute. By the same token, participants should recognize that they have the responsibility for keeping the discussion focused on the matter at hand. Thus, you should, when necessary, challenge the relevance and the direction of certain remarks. Just because you need to be polite does not mean you cannot be firm in requesting a return to the main point or to a previous point that has been abandoned too quickly.

c. It is entirely appropriate to decline to respond if someone asks you a direct question. If you have nothing relevant to say on the point, there is no need to pretend. Simply decline the invitation, and let the class session continue.

d. Good class participation does not depend upon the frequency or length of one's remarks. In fact, the person who is always ready to jump in at the slightest opportunity or whose opinions are delivered at great length can often harm a class, first, by excluding others and, second, by encouraging others to rely on her/him to pick up any slack moments. Hence, you should constantly assess the nature of your contributions. Are you speaking up too much? Do you tend to make very long comments? Is the group getting to depend upon you too much? In this regard, you need to consider what one might call one's conversational "trigger finger". This phrase refers to the time people take to react to a question or to someone else's point. Some people react very quickly and are ready to jump in with their views almost immediately; other people need some time to reflect on how they are going to respond. If those with a quick conversational "trigger finger" take over, then others rarely get a chance to speak up, because by the time they are ready the conversation has shifted to something else. So you need to assess how you, in your keenness to respond, may be closing out someone whose reaction time is slower than your own. If you have already spoken a few times, try delaying your next entry into the conversation, setting up a pause which may invite someone who has not spoken to say something.

e. It is particularly important for good participation that you remain alert to the group dynamics in the class. For example, some people find it difficult to speak. Perhaps you could invite them to state their views on something, encourage them to pursue a point they have just introduced, or encourage them in some way to join in. The best participants are those who not only provide interesting and relevant comments themselves but also actively encourage others to join in.

f. An effective participant will reflect upon the nature of her/his contributions, paying particular attention to any habits she/he is falling into. Are you always sitting in the same chair? Do you sit at the back (wayyyyyyyyy back) of the classroom, away from everyone else? Do you always speak up early? Do you have one particular form of comment that you always use? How much time do you usually take to make a point (are you too brief or too long-winded)? And so on. To derive the best learning from the classroom experience, you should learn to experiment with different styles. For example, if you like to speak up and generally do so quite early, try for a couple of class sessions not saying anything too early on, reserving what you have to say until later. If you are by nature someone who initiates the discussion by putting new points on the table, why not try for a few sessions being reactive, that is, taking your cue from points others have raised. If you usually offer only brief remarks, take a chance on expanding your views. If you are by nature quite talkative and like to offer long comments, think about trying a more concise approach as an experiment.

Six Criteria for Grading Participation—The criteria the instructor considers in assigning participation marks includes the following points (which reflect the above remarks):

- a. Preparation: Was the student prepared for class, including demonstrating she/he read the required readings in a timely manner?
- b. Quality of the participant's contributions to the discussion: Did the student contribute some relevant remarks about matters arising in the discussion?
- c. Nature of the participant's interaction with others: Did the student listen well? Did she/he encourage others to speak up? Did she/he ask helpful questions or offer useful follow-up remarks to keep the flow of the conversation polite and relevant?
- d. Some negative points: Excessive digressions; verbal or non-verbal hostility, indifference, boredom, ridicule; over-eagerness to contribute; refusal to put any views on the table; Facebooking, texting, emailing, and the like.
- e. Environment conducive to scholarly interactions: The student helped maintain an environment conducive to scholarly interactions (e.g. respecting fellow students, which is important since it is more likely to lead to lively debates and discussions). In other words, students helped generate an environment where all participants felt comfortable and motivated.
- f. Attendance: Students should note very, very carefully that in this scheme missing several class sessions will lower one's mark exceedingly. Even if your participation is very good, missing many classes can result in a very low participation mark.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION POLICY & COURSE CONTENT

Theatre & Film are communal art forms in which a number of interdependent artists and crafts people co-operate to create a work of art. This fact is necessarily transferred to the learning situation, and is reflected in many of the Department's courses. Consequently, it is the Department's policy that students are required to: complete homework such as reading, line-learning, script analysis, prop lists, design drawings, etc.; attend classes; attend rehearsals, meetings or shoots both within and outside of class times; and, in short, exhibit commitment towards the inevitably shared endeavours of our field of study.

Any student failing to fulfil these requirements is harmful to the progress of dedicated students and may, after due warning, be asked to withdraw from any individual Departmental course.

COURSE CONTENT NOTE

Dramatic Literature depicts a wide variety of human action, both elevated and base, public and private, physical and psychological, sexual and non-sexual, etc. The Department of Theatre and Film will not undertake to censor the subject matter of dramatic works.

Students who have concerns about dealing with the full range of content and style in drama/film are urged to discuss these concerns with the course instructor.

HEALTH AND ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Life happens to everyone. If you are experiencing a crisis in your life, or if you have a physical or mental health issue, communicate with your Professor or Accessibility Services – let us know so we can provide support or direct you to those who can. The earlier we know, the earlier we can discuss what resources might be available. Students with documented disabilities, or temporary or chronic medical conditions

requiring academic accommodations for tests/exams/presentations (e.g., private space or more time) or during lectures/labs (e.g., note-takers) are encouraged to contact Accessibility Services (AS) at 204-786-9771 or accessibilityservices@uwinnipeg.ca to discuss appropriate options. All information about a student's disability or medical condition remains confidential. If you are registered with Accessibility Services, do not assume that Accessibility Services (AS) has informed your instructor that you have registered with them. Please see <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/accessibility>. If you do not register with AS, you cannot be granted special consideration (e.g. extra time to write exams/tests, attendance issues because of physical or mental health conditions, etc.).

The University of Winnipeg promotes a scent-free environment. Please be respectful of the needs of your fellow classmates and your instructor by avoiding the use of scented products while attending on-campus lectures and labs. Exposure to perfumes and other **scented products (such as lotion)** can trigger serious health reactions in persons with asthma, allergies, migraines or chemical sensitivities. We are asking for your cooperation to create a scent-free environment **on campus** by students, faculty and staff.

"THE REAL THING" LECTURE SERIES

Normally, during the FW terms, the Department of Theatre and Film presents a series of lectures held on Wednesdays during the free period (12:30-13:20). This series will feature speakers from a range of areas in the performing arts: technical, performance, design, management, film, directing, playwriting, etc. These speakers will specifically address issues related to "the business of the business," and attendance is compulsory for some courses (for example, all Honours level students must attend). This year, the series has been somewhat truncated. One lecture took place by Zoom in September, and further lectures may be added in the winter term online (by Zoom or other platform). Watch our website for information on further lectures as they are planned.

ORIENTATION ASSEMBLY

Each year in September we hold an *Orientation Assembly* to welcome students to the new term; introduce our new students to faculty and other students; provide information about the department, its various activities and those of its professors; and deliver news about what's coming up. Those considering Honours are strongly recommended to attend. All others are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Our Orientation Assembly took place by Zoom in September. Occasionally during the year, other Town Hall type Department-wide meetings may be called; check our website for information as new meetings are planned.

TAFSA

All students enrolled in at least one theatre or film class are automatically members of TAFSA, the Theatre and Film Students' Association, which plans a number of exciting activities each academic year. Activities organized by TAFSA include regular **Performance Jams**, **Department parties** and **Socials** as well as **DioFest** (a new play festival featuring student written and produced plays), and **24/7** (an event in which students move into our building and several plays are written, rehearsed, produced, and presented – all in a period of 24 hours!).

Please join TAFSA to find out more at their meetings, every second Monday from 12:30-13:20 pm (by Zoom or other platform in 2020-21). Follow TAFSA at @tafsauw on Instagram. This is a great opportunity for students to connect with other like-minded people and a way to get involved in the department events.

BUILDING SECURITY

To safeguard the health of the UWinnipeg community — and support public health efforts — during the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the UW campus is closed until further notice. All academic instruction and evaluation will continue through alternate delivery.

The Asper Centre for Theatre and Film (home to the Department of Theatre and Film) is CLOSED as per Campus policy. Access for students attending in-person labs in our building will be arranged as necessary. All studios and labs are locked 24/7.

NOTE: It is **MANDATORY** that anyone attending labs or rehearsals in the building carry an ID card/student card to verify they are allowed to be on campus. If a Security Guard checks and you do not have proper accreditation, **you will be evicted.**

These rules are in place to protect our students and our equipment; please respect them.

RECORDING ON-LINE CLASSES

The instructor may choose to record a zoom or video class if there are online connectivity issues, absences, or to post to Nexus for later review.

If a lecture is recorded, students will be given notice (via the course outline or on a case-by-case basis) that their personal information may be captured; informed of how long the recording will be retained; and whether the recording will be used for evaluation of any kind. Students will also be given the option to turn off their cameras/microphones and use pseudonyms to remain anonymous (except where class participation is required).

Students with concerns or who wish to seek alternate arrangements may discuss the matter with the instructor.

Access to recordings will be limited to the academic staff, students, and others with a legitimate need. Recordings containing student personal information will not be posted publicly, but only on UW-approved servers.

No student is allowed to disseminate recordings outside of the class or post recordings publicly. Access to the recordings will be limited to the instructor and the students.

ELECTRONIC COURSE OUTLINE ADDENDA

Students must check our website at <http://uwinnipeg.ca/theatre-film> and read the menu items called *Fire Safety Instructions in the Asper Centre for Theatre and Film* and *Access Card/Building Use Policy*.

Room bookings at the ACTF are suspended until at least December 31, 2020 and possibly longer. However, when we are able to allow students to book rooms again, links to *Room Booking Instructions* and electronic *Online Room Booking Form* can also be found on our department website. Please read and note all instructions carefully.

GENERAL NOTES

- Students can find answers to frequently ask questions related to remote learning here: <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/covid-19/remote-learning-faq.html>.

- Students should check their UWinnipeg e-mail addresses daily as this is the most direct way instructors and the University will contact students, particularly during the current remote learning environment.
- This course outline should be considered a guideline only. Time constraints and other unforeseen factors may require that some topics be omitted or covered in less detail than indicated.
- Archival records such as videotapes, sound recordings, and photographs may be made or taken during class or lab times. The University uses such materials primarily for archival, promotional, and teaching purposes. Promotional use may include display at open houses or conferences, or use in advertising, publicity, or brochures. In reading and accepting the terms in this course outline, students acknowledge consent for such use by the University. Should a student not wish to convey such consent, they should withdraw from this course immediately.
- Unless necessary for accessing class, cellular phones should be turned off during classes and examinations. Texting is not permitted in class.
- Any student attending a test or final examination may be required to present proof of identity; photo identification is preferred.

It is the student's responsibility to retain a photocopy or computer disk copy of **ALL** assignments submitted for grading; in the event of loss or theft, a duplicate copy is required.

- When it is necessary to cancel a class due to exceptional circumstances, instructors will make every effort to inform students via uwinnipeg email (and/or using the preferred form of communication, as designated by the instructor), as well as the Departmental Assistant and Chair/Dean. ***Students are reminded that they have a responsibility to regularly check their UWinnipeg e-mail addresses to ensure timely receipt of correspondence from the university and/or their course instructors.***
- **Regulations, Policies, and Academic Integrity:** Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the "Regulations and Policies" found in the University Academic Calendar at: <https://uwinnipeg.ca/academics/calendar/docs/regulationsandpolicies.pdf>. Particular attention should be given to subsections **8 ("Student Discipline")**, **9 ("Senate Appeals")**, and **10 ("Grade Appeals")**.

Please note the importance of maintaining academic integrity, and the potential consequences of engaging in plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic misconduct. Even "unintentional" plagiarism, as described in the UW Library video tutorial "Avoiding Plagiarism" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvFdxRU9a8g>) is a form of academic misconduct.

Similarly, uploading essays and other assignments to essay vendor or trader sites (filesharing sites that are known providers of essays for use by others who submit them to instructors as their own work) is a form of misconduct, as it involves "aiding and abetting" plagiarism. More detailed information can be found here: Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures: <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/institutional-analysis/docs/policies/academic-misconduct-policy.pdf> and <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/institutional-analysis/docs/policies/academic-misconduct-procedures.pdf>.

- **Copyright and Intellectual Property.** Course materials are the property of the instructor who developed them. Examples of such materials are course outlines, assignment descriptions, lecture notes, notes on whiteboards, test questions, and presentation slides—irrespective of format. Students who upload these materials to filesharing sites, or in any other way share these materials with others outside the class without prior permission of the instructor/presenter, are in violation of copyright law and University policy.

Students must also seek prior permission of the instructor/presenter before, for example, photographing, recording, or taking screenshots of slides, presentations, lectures, and notes on the board. Students found to be in violation of an instructor's intellectual property rights could face serious consequences pursuant to the Academic Misconduct or Non-Academic Misconduct Policy; such consequences could possibly involve legal sanction under the Copyright Policy (https://copyright.uwinnipeg.ca/docs/copyright_policy_2017.pdf).

- **Research Ethics.** Students conducting research interviews, focus groups, surveys, or any other method of collecting data from any person, including a family member, must obtain research ethics approval before commencing data collection. Exceptions are research activities done in class as a learning exercise. For submission requirements and deadlines, see <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/research/human-ethics.html>.
- **Privacy.** Students should be familiar with their rights in relation to the collecting of personal data by the University (<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/privacy/admissions-privacy-notice.html>), especially if Zoom is being used for remote teaching (<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/privacy/zoom-privacy-notice.html>) and testing/proctoring (<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/privacy/zoom-test-and-exam-proctoring.html>).
- **Respectful Learning Environment.** All students, faculty and staff have the right to participate, learn and work in an environment that is free of harassment and discrimination. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful manner on campus and in the learning environment irrespective of platform being used.

Behaviour, communication, or acts that are inconsistent with a number of UW policies (e.g., *Respectful Working and Learning Environment Policy* at <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/respect/respect-policy.html>; *Acceptable Use of Information Technology Policy* at <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/institutional-analysis/docs/policies/acceptable-use-of-information-technology-policy.pdf>) could be considered “non-academic” misconduct.

More detailed information can be found here:

Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures: <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/institutional-analysis/docs/student-non-academic-misconduct-policy.pdf>

And <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/institutional-analysis/docs/student-non-academic-misconduct-procedures.pdf> .

- Students may choose not to attend classes or write examinations on holy days of their religion, but they must notify their instructors at least two weeks in advance. Instructors will then provide opportunity for students to make up work examinations without penalty. A list of religious holidays can be found at <http://uwinnipeg.ca/academics/calendar/docs/important-notes.pdf>

VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL DATES

The voluntary withdrawal dates for each term, without academic penalty, are:

- **FALL TERM COURSES:** November 17, 2020 for Fall courses which begin in September 2020 and end in December 2020;
- **FALL/WINTER TERM COURSES:** February 23, 2021 for Fall/Winter courses which begin in September 2020 and end in April 2021;
- **WINTER TERM COURSES:** March 16, 2021 for Winter courses which begin in January 2021 and end in April 2021.

Students are encouraged to speak to the Instructor before withdrawing to explore other options.

Please note that withdrawing before the VW date does not necessarily result in a fee refund.

TYPHUS

In a smoking-compartment of the mail-train from Petrograd to Moscow sat a young lieutenant, Klimov by name. Opposite him sat an elderly man with a clean-shaven, shipmaster's face, to all appearances a well-to-do Finn or Swede, who all through the journey smoked a pipe and talked round and round the same subject.

"Ha! you are an officer! My brother is also an officer, but he is a sailor. He is a sailor and is stationed at Kronstadt. Why are you going to Moscow?"

"I am stationed there."

"Ha! Are you married?"

"No. I live with my aunt and sister."

"My brother is also an officer, but he is married and has a wife and three children. Ha!"

The Finn looked surprised at something, smiled broadly and fatuously as he exclaimed, "Ha," and every now and then blew through the stem of his pipe. Klimov, who was feeling rather unwell, and not at all inclined to answer questions, hated him with all his heart. He thought how good it would be to snatch his gurgling pipe out of his hands and throw it under the seat and to order the Finn himself into another car.

"They are awful people, these Finns and ... Greeks," he thought. "Useless, good-for-nothing, disgusting people. They only cumber the earth. What is the good of them?"

And the thought of Finns and Greeks filled him with a kind of nausea. He tried to compare them with the French and the Italians, but the idea of those races somehow roused in him the notion of organ-grinders, naked women, and the foreign oleographs which hung over the chest of drawers in his aunt's house.

The young officer felt generally out of sorts. There seemed to be no room for his arms and legs, though he had the whole seat to himself; his mouth was dry and sticky, his head was heavy and his clouded thoughts seemed to wander at random, not only in his head, but also outside it among the seats and the people looming in the darkness. Through the turmoil in his brain, as through a dream, he heard the murmur of voices, the rattle of the wheels, the slamming of doors. Bells, whistles,

conductors, the tramp of the people on the platforms came oftener than usual. The time slipped by quickly, imperceptibly, and it seemed that the train stopped every minute at a station as now and then there would come up the sound of metallic voices:

"Is the post ready?"

"Ready."

It seemed to him that the stove-neater came in too often to look at the thermometer, and that trains never stopped passing and his own train was always roaring over bridges. The noise, the whistle, the Finn, the tobacco smoke—all mixed with the ominous shifting of misty shapes, weighed on Klimov like an intolerable nightmare. In terrible anguish he lifted up his aching head, looked at the lamp whose light was encircled with shadows and misty spots; he wanted to ask for water, but his dry tongue would hardly move, and he had hardly strength enough to answer the Finn's questions. He tried to lie down more comfortably and sleep, but he could not succeed; the Finn fell asleep several times, woke up and lighted his pipe, talked to him with his "Ha!" and went to sleep again; and the lieutenant could still not find room for his legs on the seat, and all the while the ominous figures shifted before his eyes.

At Spirov he got out to have a drink of water. He saw some people sitting at a table eating hurriedly.

"How can they eat?" he thought, trying to avoid the smell of roast meat in the air and seeing the chewing mouths, for both seemed to him utterly disgusting and made him feel sick.

A handsome lady was talking to a military man in a red cap, and she showed magnificent white teeth when she smiled; her smile, her teeth, the lady herself produced in Klimov the same impression of disgust as the ham and the fried cutlets. He could not understand how the military man in the red cap could bear to sit near her and look at her healthy smiling face.

After he had drunk some water, he went back to his place. The Finn sat and smoked. His pipe gurgled and sucked like a galoche full of holes in dirty weather.

"Ha!" he said with some surprise. "What station is this?"

"I don't know," said Klimov, lying down and shutting his mouth to keep out the acrid tobacco smoke.

"When do we get to Tver."

"I don't know. I am sorry, I ... I can't talk. I am not well. I have a cold."

The Finn knocked out his pipe against the window-frame and began to talk of his brother, the sailor. Klimov paid no more attention to him and thought in agony of his soft, comfortable bed, of the bottle of cold water, of his sister Katy, who knew so well how to tuck him up and cosset him. He even smiled when there flashed across his mind his soldier-servant Pavel, taking off his heavy, close-fitting boots and putting water on the table. It seemed to him that he would only have to lie on his bed and drink some water and his nightmare would give way to a sound, healthy sleep.

"Is the post ready?" came a dull voice from a distance.

"Ready," answered a loud, bass voice almost by the very window.

It was the second or third station from Spirov.

Time passed quickly, seemed to gallop along, and there would be no end to the bells, whistles, and stops. In despair Klimov pressed his face into the corner of the cushion, held his head in his hands, and again began to think of his sister Katy and his orderly Pavel; but his sister and his orderly got mixed up with the looming figures and whirled about and disappeared. His breath, thrown back from the cushion, burned his face, and his legs ached and a draught from the window poured into his back, but, painful though it was, he refused to change his position.... A heavy, drugging torpor crept over him and chained his limbs.

When at length he raised his head, the car was quite light. The passengers were putting on their overcoats and moving about. The train stopped. Porters in white aprons and number-plates bustled about the passengers and seized their boxes. Klimov put on his greatcoat mechanically and left the train, and he felt as though it were not himself walking, but some one else, a stranger, and he felt that he was accompanied by the heat of the train, his thirst, and the ominous, lowering figures which all night long had prevented his sleeping. Mechanically he got his luggage and took a cab. The cabman charged him one rouble and twenty-five copecks for driving him to Povarska Street, but he did not haggle and submissively took his seat in the sledge. He could still grasp the difference in numbers, but money had no value to him whatever.

At home Klimov was met by his aunt and his sister Katy, a girl of eighteen. Katy had a copy-book and a pencil in her hands as she greeted him, and he remembered

that she was preparing for a teacher's examination. He took no notice of their greetings and questions, but gasped from the heat, and walked aimlessly through the rooms until he reached his own, and then he fell prone on the bed. The Finn, the red cap, the lady with the white teeth, the smell of roast meat, the shifting spot in the lamp, filled his mind and he lost consciousness and did not hear the frightened voices near him.

When he came to himself he found himself in bed, undressed, and noticed the water-bottle and Pavel, but it did not make him any more comfortable nor easy. His legs and arms, as before, felt cramped, his tongue clove to his palate, and he could hear the chuckle of the Finn's pipe.... By the bed, growing out of Pavel's broad back, a stout, black-bearded doctor was bustling.

"All right, all right, my lad," he murmured. "Excellent, excellent.... Jist so, jist so...."

The doctor called Klimov "my lad." Instead of "just so," he said "jist saow," and instead of "yes," "yies."

"Yies, yies, yies," he said. "Jist saow, jist saow.... Don't be downhearted!"

The doctor's quick, careless way of speaking, his well-fed face, and the condescending tone in which he said "my lad" exasperated Klimov.

"Why do you call me 'my lad'?" he moaned. "Why this familiarity, damn it all?"

And he was frightened by the sound of his own voice. It was so dry, weak, and hollow that he could hardly recognise it.

"Excellent, excellent," murmured the doctor, not at all offended. "Yies, yies. You mustn't be cross."

And at home the time galloped away as alarmingly quickly as in the train.... The light of day in his bedroom was every now and then changed to the dim light of evening.... The doctor never seemed to leave the bedside, and his "Yies, yies, yies," could be heard at every moment. Through the room stretched an endless row of faces; Pavel, the Finn, Captain Taroshevich, Sergeant Maximenko, the red cap, the lady with the white teeth, the doctor. All of them talked, waved their hands, smoked, ate. Once in broad daylight Klimov saw his regimental priest, Father Alexander, in his stole and with the host in his hands, standing by the bedside and muttering something with such a serious expression as Klimov had never seen him

wear before. The lieutenant remembered that Father Alexander used to call all the Catholic officers Poles, and wishing to make the priest laugh, he exclaimed:

"Father Taroshevich, the Poles have fled to the woods."

But Father Alexander, usually a gay, light-hearted man, did not laugh and looked even more serious, and made the sign of the cross over Klimov. At night, one after the other, there would come slowly creeping in and out two shadows. They were his aunt and his sister. The shadow of his sister would kneel down and pray; she would bow to the ikon, and her grey shadow on the wall would bow, too, so that two shadows prayed to God. And all the time there was a smell of roast meat and of the Finn's pipe, but once Klimov could detect a distinct smell of incense. He nearly vomited and cried:

"Incense! Take it away."

There was no reply. He could only hear priests chanting in an undertone and some one running on the stairs.

When Klimov recovered from his delirium there was not a soul in the bedroom. The morning sun flared through the window and the drawn curtains, and a trembling beam, thin and keen as a sword, played on the water-bottle. He could hear the rattle of wheels—that meant there was no more snow in the streets. The lieutenant looked at the sunbeam, at the familiar furniture and the door, and his first inclination was to laugh. His chest and stomach trembled with a sweet, happy, tickling laughter. From head to foot his whole body was filled with a feeling of infinite happiness, like that which the first man must have felt when he stood erect and beheld the world for the first time. Klimov had a passionate longing for people, movement, talk. His body lay motionless; he could only move his hands, but he hardly noticed it, for his whole attention was fixed on little things. He was delighted with his breathing and with his laughter; he was delighted with the existence of the water-bottle, the ceiling, the sunbeam, the ribbon on the curtain. God's world, even in such a narrow corner as his bedroom, seemed to him beautiful, varied, great. When the doctor appeared the lieutenant thought how nice his medicine was, how nice and sympathetic the doctor was, how nice and interesting people were, on the whole.

"Yies, yies, yies," said the doctor. "Excellent, excellent. Now we are well again. Jist saow. Jist saow."

The lieutenant listened and laughed gleefully. He remembered the Finn, the lady with the white teeth, the train, and he wanted to eat and smoke.

"Doctor," he said, "tell them to bring me a slice of rye bread and salt, and some sardines...."

The doctor refused. Pavel did not obey his order and refused to go for bread. The lieutenant could not bear it and began to cry like a thwarted child.

"Ba-by," the doctor laughed. "Mamma! Hush-aby!"

Klimov also began to laugh, and when the doctor had gone, he fell sound asleep. He woke up with the same feeling of joy and happiness. His aunt was sitting by his bed.

"Oh, aunty!" He was very happy. "What has been the matter with me?"

"Typhus."

"I say! And now I am well, quite well! Where is Katy?"

"She is not at home. She has probably gone to see some one after her examination."

The old woman bent over her stocking as she said this; her lips began to tremble; she turned her face away and suddenly began to sob. In her grief, she forgot the doctor's orders and cried:

"Oh! Katy! Katy! Our angel is gone from us! She is gone!"

She dropped her stocking and stooped down for it, and her cap fell off her head. Klimov stared at her grey hair, could not understand, was alarmed for Katy, and asked:

"But where is she, aunty?"

The old woman, who had already forgotten Klimov and remembered only her grief, said:

"She caught typhus from you and ... and died. She was buried the day before yesterday."

This sudden appalling piece of news came home to Klimov's mind, but dreadful and shocking though it was it could not subdue the animal joy which thrilled through the convalescent lieutenant. He cried, laughed, and soon began to complain that he was given nothing to eat.

Only a week later, when, supported by Pavel, he walked in a dressing-gown to the window, and saw the grey spring sky and heard the horrible rattle of some old rails being carried by on a lorry, then his heart ached with sorrow and he began to weep and pressed his forehead against the window-frame.

"How unhappy I am!" he murmured. "My God, how unhappy I am!"

And joy gave way to his habitual weariness and a sense of his irreparable loss.

Anton Chekhov
23rd March, 1887

Some Ideas on the Cinema

CESARE ZAVATTINI

Cesare Zavattini (1902–89) was the central theoretician of neorealism, although he owes a debt, as do almost all intellectuals of the left, to the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). In turn, Zavattini's writings in realist film theory were extended by André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer in the 1950s. Zavattini scripted scores of films but his most outstanding are those that he made with De Sica. The two men shared a close personal relationship from about 1940 to De Sica's death in 1974. Most of Zavattini's work has the moral agenda of awakening people to the actualities of the world around them, to the connection of human being to human being, relationships that had been blurred or effaced by twenty years of Fascist rhetoric.

I

No doubt one's first and most superficial reaction to everyday reality is that it is tedious. Until we are able to overcome some moral and intellectual laziness, in fact, this reality will continue to appear uninteresting. One shouldn't be astonished that the cinema has always felt the natural, unavoidable necessity to insert a 'story' in the reality to make it exciting and 'spectacular.' All the same, it is clear that such a method evades a direct approach to everyday reality, and suggests that it cannot be portrayed without the intervention of fantasy or artifice.

The most important characteristic, and the most important innova-

Cesare Zavattini, 'Some Ideas on the Cinema,' *Sight and Sound* 23:2 (October–December 1953), 64–9. Edited from a recorded interview published in *La rivista del cinema italiano* 2 (December 1952). Translated by Pier Luigi Lanza

tion, of what is called neorealism, it seems to me, is to have realised that the necessity of the 'story' was only an unconscious way of disguising a human defeat, and that the kind of imagination it involved was simply a technique of superimposing dead formulas over living social facts. Now it has been perceived that reality is hugely rich, that to be able to look directly at it is enough; and that the artist's task is not to make people moved or indignant at metaphorical situations, but to make them reflect (and, if you like, to be moved and indignant too) on what they and others are doing, on the real things, exactly as they are.

For me this has been a great victory. I would like to have achieved it many years earlier. But I made the discovery only at the end of the war. It was a moral discovery, an appeal to order. I saw at last what lay in front of me, and I understood that to have evaded reality had been to betray it.

Example: Before this, if one was thinking over the idea of a film on, say, a strike, one was immediately forced to invent a plot. And the strike itself became only the background to the film. Today, our attitude would be one of 'revelation': we would describe the strike itself, try to work out the largest possible number of human, moral, social, economic, poetic values from the bare documentary fact.

We have passed from an unconsciously rooted mistrust of reality, an illusory and equivocal evasion, to an unlimited trust in things, facts and people. Such a position requires us, in effect, to excavate reality, to give it a power, a communication, a series of reflexes, which until recently we had never thought it had. It requires, too, a true and real interest in what is happening, a search for the most deeply hidden human values, which is why we feel that the cinema must recruit not only intelligent people, but, above all, 'living' souls, the morally richest people.

II

The cinema's overwhelming desire to see, to analyse, its hunger for reality, is an act of concrete homage towards other people, towards what is happening and existing in the world. And, incidentally, it is what distinguishes 'neorealism' from the American cinema.

In fact, the American position is the antithesis of our own: while we are interested in the reality around us and want to know it directly, reality in American films is unnaturally filtered, 'purified,' and comes out at one or two removes. In America, lack of subjects for films causes a crisis, but with us such a crisis is impossible. One cannot be short of

themes while there is still plenty of reality. Any hour of the day, any place, any person, is a subject for narrative if the narrator is capable of observing and illuminating all these collective elements by exploring their interior value.

So there is no question of a crisis of subjects, only of their interpretation. This substantial difference was nicely emphasised by a well-known American producer when he told me: 'This is how *we* would imagine a scene with an aeroplane. The 'plane passes by ... a machine-gun fires ... the 'plane crashes ... And this is how *you* would imagine it. The 'plane passes by ... The 'plane passes by again ... the 'plane passes by once more ...'

He was right. But we have still not gone far enough. It is not enough to make the aeroplane pass by three times; we must make it pass by twenty times.

What effects on narrative, then, and on the portrayal of human character, has the neorealist style produced?

To begin with, while the cinema used to make one situation produce another situation, and another, and another, again and again, and each scene was thought out and immediately related to the next (the natural result of a mistrust of reality), today, when we have thought out a scene, we feel the need to 'remain' in it, because the single scene itself can contain so many echoes and reverberations, can even contain all the situations we may need. Today, in fact, we can quietly say: give us whatever 'fact' you like, and we will disembowel it, make it something worth watching.

While the cinema used to portray life in its most visible and external moments – and a film was usually only a series of situations selected and linked together with varying success – today the neorealist affirms that each one of these situations, rather than all the external moments, contains in itself enough material for a film.

Example: In most films, the adventures of two people looking for somewhere to live, for a house, would be shown externally in a few moments of action, but for us it could provide the scenario for a whole film, and we would explore all its echoes, all its implications.

Of course, we are still a long way from a true analysis of human situations, and one can speak of analysis only in comparison with the dull synthesis of most current production. We are, rather, still in an 'attitude' of analysis; but in this attitude there is a strong purpose, a desire for understanding, for belonging, for participating – for living together, in fact.

III

Substantially, then, the question today is, instead of turning imaginary situations into 'reality' and trying to make them look 'true,' to make things as they are, almost by themselves, create their own special significance. Life is not what is invented in 'stories'; life is another matter. To understand it involves a minute, unrelenting, and patient search.

Here I must bring in another point of view. I believe that the world goes on getting worse because we are not truly aware of reality. The most authentic position anyone can take up today is to engage himself in tracing the roots of this problem. The keenest necessity of our time is 'social attention.'

Attention, though, to what is there, *directly*: not through an apology, however well conceived. A starving man, a humiliated man, must be shown by name and surname; no fable for a starving man, because that is something else, less effective and less moral. The true function of the cinema is not to tell fables, and to a true function we must recall it.

Of course, reality can be analysed by ways of fiction. Fictions can be expressive and natural; but neorealism, if it wants to be worthwhile, must sustain the moral impulse that characterised its beginnings, in an analytical documentary way. No other medium of expression has the cinema's original and innate capacity for showing things that we believe worth showing, as they happen day by day – in what we might call their 'dailiness,' their longest and truest duration. The cinema has everything in front of it, and no other medium has the same possibilities for getting it known quickly to the greatest number of people.

As the cinema's responsibility also comes from its enormous power, it should try to make every frame of film count, by which I mean that it should penetrate more and more into the manifestations and the essence of reality.

The cinema only affirms its moral responsibility when it approaches reality in this way.

The moral, like the artistic, problem lies in being able to observe reality, not to extract fictions from it.

IV

Naturally, some film-makers, although they realise the problem, have still been compelled, for a variety of reasons (some valid, others not),

to 'invent' stories in the traditional manner, and to incorporate in these stories some fragments of their real intuition. This, effectively, has served as neorealism for some film-makers in Italy.

For this reason, the first endeavour was often to reduce the story to its most elementary, simple, and, I would rather say, banal form. It was the beginning of a speech that was later interrupted. *Bicycle Thieves* provides a typical example. The child follows his father along the street; at one moment, the child is nearly run over, but the father does not even notice. This episode was 'invented,' but with the intention of communicating an everyday fact about these people's lives, a little fact – so little that the protagonists don't even care about it – but full of life.

In fact *Paisà*, *Open City*, *Sciuscià*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *La terra trema*, all contain elements of an absolute significance – they reflect the idea that everything can be recounted; but their sense remains metaphorical, because there is still an invented story, not the documentary spirit. In other films, such as *Umberto D.*, reality as an analysed fact is much more evident, but the presentation is still traditional.

We have not yet reached the centre of neorealism. Neorealism today is an army ready to start; and there are the soldiers – behind Rossellini, De Sica, Visconti. The soldiers have to go into the attack and win the battle.

We must recognize that all of us are still only starting, some farther on, others farther behind. But it is still something. The great danger today is to abandon that position, the moral position implicit in the work of many of us during and immediately after the war.

V

A woman is going to buy a pair of shoes. Upon this elementary situation it is possible to build a film. All we have to do is to discover and then show all the elements that go to create this adventure, in all their banal 'dailiness,' and it will become worthy of attention, it will even become 'spectacular.' But it will become spectacular not through its exceptional, but through its *normal* qualities; it will astonish us by showing so many things that happen every day under our eyes, things we have never noticed before.

The result would not be easy to achieve. It would require an intensity of human vision both from the creator of the film and from the audience. The question is: how to give human life its historical importance at every minute.

VI

In life, in reality today, there are no more empty spaces. Between things, facts, people, exists such an interdependence that a blow struck for the cinema in Rome could have repercussions all over the world. If this is true, it must be worthwhile to take any moment of a human life and show how 'striking' that moment is: to excavate and identify it, to send its echo vibrating into other parts of the world.

This is as valid for poverty as for peace. For peace, too, the human moment should not be a great one, but an ordinary daily happening. Peace is usually the sum of small happenings, all having the same moral implications at their roots.

It is not only a question, however, of creating a film that makes its audience understand a social or collective situation. People understand themselves better than the social fabric; and to see themselves on the screen, performing their daily actions – remembering that to see oneself gives one the sense of being unlike oneself – like hearing one's own voice on the radio – can help them to fill up a void, a lack of knowledge of reality.

VII

If this love for reality, for human nature directly observed, must still adapt itself to the necessities of the cinema as it is now organised, must yield, suffer and wait, it means that the cinema's capitalist structure still has a tremendous influence over its true function. One can see this in the growing opposition in many places to the fundamental motives of neorealism, the main results of which are a return to so-called 'original' subjects, as in the past, and the consequent evasion of reality, and a number of bourgeois accusations against neorealist principles.

The main accusation is: *neorealism only describes poverty*. But neorealism can and must face poverty. We have begun with poverty for the simple reason that it is one of the most vital realities of our time, and I challenge anyone to prove the contrary. To believe, or to pretend to believe, that by making half a dozen films on poverty we have finished with the problem would be a great mistake. As well believe that, if you have to plough up a whole country, you can sit down after the first acre.

The theme of poverty, of rich and poor, is something one can dedicate one's whole life to. We have just begun. We must have the courage

to explore all the details. If the rich turn up their noses especially at *Miracolo a Milano*, we can only ask them to be a little patient. *Miracolo a Milano* is only a fable. There is still much more to say. I put myself among the rich, not only because I have some money (which is only the most apparent and immediate aspect of wealth), but because I am also in a position to create oppression and injustice. That is the moral (or immoral) position of the so-called rich man.

When anyone (he could be the audience, the director, the critic, the State, or the Church) says, 'STOP the poverty,' i.e. stop the films about poverty, he is committing a moral sin. He is refusing to understand, to learn. And when he refuses to learn, consciously, or not, he is evading reality. The evasion springs from lack of courage, from fear. (One should make a film on this subject, showing at what point we begin to evade reality in the face of disquieting facts, at what point we begin to sweeten it.)

If I were not afraid of being thought irreverent, I should say that Christ, had He a camera in His hand, would not shoot fables, however wonderful, but would show us the good ones and the bad ones of this world – in actuality, giving us close-ups of those who make their neighbours' bread too bitter, and of their victims, if the censor allowed it.

To say that we have had 'enough' films about poverty suggests that one can measure reality with a chronometer. In fact, it is not simply a question of choosing the theme of poverty, but of going on to explore and analyse the poverty. What one needs is more and more knowledge, precise and simple, of human needs and the motives governing them. Neorealism should ignore the chronometer and go forward for as long as is necessary.

Neorealism, it is also said, *does not offer solutions. The end of a neorealist film is particularly inconclusive.* I cannot accept this at all. With regard to my own work, the characters and situations in films for which I have written the scenario, they remain unresolved from a practical point of view simply because 'this is reality.' But every moment of the film is, in itself, a continuous answer to some question. It is not the concern of an artist to propound solutions. It is enough, and quite a lot, I should say, to make an audience feel the need, the urgency, for them.

In any case, what films *do* offer solutions? 'Solutions' in this sense, if they are offered, are sentimental ones, resulting from the superficial way in which problems have been faced. At least, in my work I leave the solution to the audience.

The fundamental emotion of *Miracolo a Milano* is not one of escape (the flight at the end), but of indignation, a desire for solidarity with certain people, a refusal of it with others. The film's structure is intended to suggest that there is a great gathering of the humble ones against the others. But the humble ones have no tanks, or they would have been ready to defend their land and their huts.

VIII

The true neorealist cinema is, of course, less expensive than the cinema at present. Its subjects can be expressed cheaply, and it can dispense with capitalist resources on the present scale. The cinema has not yet found its morality, its necessity, its quality, precisely because it costs too much; being so conditioned, it is much less an art than it could be.

IX

The cinema should never turn back. It should accept, unconditionally, what is contemporary. *Today, today, today.*

It must tell reality as if it were a story; there must be no gap between life and what is on the screen. To give an example:

A woman goes to a shop to buy a pair of shoes. The shoes cost 7,000 lire. The woman tries to bargain. The scene lasts, perhaps, two minutes. I must make a two-hour film. What do I do?

I analyse the fact in all its constituent elements, in its 'before,' in its 'after,' in its contemporaneity. The fact creates its own fiction, in its own particular sense.

The woman is buying the shoes. What is her son doing at the same moment? What are people doing in India that could have some relation to this fact of the shoes? The shoes cost 7,000 lire. How did the woman happen to have 7,000 lire? How hard did she work for them, what do they represent for her?

And the bargaining shopkeeper, who is he? What relationship has developed between these two human beings? What do they mean, what interests are they defending, as they bargain? The shopkeeper also has two sons, who eat and speak: do you want to know what they are saying? Here they are, in front of you ...

The question is, to be able to fathom the real correspondences between facts and their process of birth, to discover what lies beneath them.

Thus to analyse 'buying a pair of shoes' in such a way opens to us a vast and complex world, rich in importance and values, in its practical, social, economic, psychological motives. Banality disappears because each moment is really charged with responsibility. Every moment is infinitely rich. Banality never really existed.

Excavate, and every little fact is revealed as a mine. If the gold-diggers come at last to dig in the illimitable mine of reality, the cinema will become socially important.

This can also be done, evidently, with invented characters; but if I use living, real characters with which to sound reality, people in whose life I can directly participate, my emotion becomes more effective, morally stronger, more useful. Art must be expressed through a true name and surname, not a false one.

I am bored to death with heroes more or less imaginary. I want to meet the real protagonist of everyday life, I want to see how he is made, if he has a moustache or not, if he is tall or short, I want to see his eyes, and I want to speak to him.

We can look at him on the screen with the same anxiety, the same curiosity as when, in a square, seeing a crowd of people all hurrying up to the same place, we ask, What is happening? What is happening to a real person? Neorealism has perceived that the most irreplaceable experience comes from things happening under our own eyes from natural necessity.

I am against 'exceptional' personages. The time has come to tell the audience that they are the true protagonists of life. The result will be a constant appeal to the responsibility and dignity of every human being. Otherwise the frequent habit of identifying oneself with fictional characters will become very dangerous. We must identify ourselves with what we are. The world is composed of millions of people thinking of myths.

X

The term neorealism – in a very Latin sense – implies, too, elimination of technical-professional apparatus, screen-writer included. Hand-books, formulas, grammars, have no more application. There will be no more technical terms. Everybody has his personal shooting-script. Neorealism breaks all the rules, rejects all those canons which, in fact, exist only to codify limitations. Reality breaks all the rules, as can be discovered if you walk out with a camera to meet it.

The figure of a screen-writer today is, besides, very equivocal. He is usually considered part of the technical apparatus. I am a screen-writer trying to say certain things, and saying them in my own way. It is clear that certain moral and social ideas are at the foundation of my expressive activities, and I can't be satisfied to offer a simple technical contribution. In films which do not touch me directly, also, when I am called in to do a certain amount of work on them, I try to insert as much as possible of my own world, of the moral emergencies within myself.

On the other hand, I don't think the screenplay in itself contains any particular problems; only when subject, screenplay and direction become three distinct phases, as they so often do today, which is abnormal. The screen-writer as such should disappear, and we should arrive at the sole author of a film.

Everything becomes flexible when only one person is making a film, everything continually possible, not only during the shooting, but during the editing, the laying of tracks, the post-synchronisation, to the particular moment when we say, 'Stop.' And it is only then that we put an end to the film.

Of course, it is possible to make films in collaboration, as happens with novels and plays, because there are always numerous bonds of identity between people (for example, millions of men go to war, and are killed for the same reasons), but no work of art exists on which someone has not set the seal of his own interests, of his own poetic world. There is always somebody to make the decisive creative act, there is always one prevailing intelligence, there is always someone who, at a certain moment, 'chooses,' and says, 'This, yes,' and 'This, no,' and then resolves it: reaction shot of the mother crying Help!

Technique and capitalist method, however, have imposed collaboration on the cinema. It is one thing to adapt ourselves to the imposed exigencies of the cinema's present structure, another to imagine that they are indispensable and necessary. It is obvious that when films cost sixpence and everybody can have a camera, the cinema would become a creative medium as flexible and as free as any other.

XI

It is evident that, with neorealism, the actor – as a person fictitiously lending his own flesh to another – has no more right to exist than the 'story.' In neorealism, as I intend it, everyone must be his own actor. To want one person to play another implies the calculated plot, the

fable, and not 'things happening.' I attempted such a film with Caterina Rigoglioso; it was called 'the lightning film.' But unfortunately at the last moment everything broke down. Caterina did not seem to 'take' to the cinema. But wasn't she 'Caterina'?

Of course, it will be necessary to choose themes excluding actors. I want, for example, to make a report on children in the world. If I am not allowed to make it, I will limit it to Europe, or to Italy alone. But I will make it. Here is an example of the film not needing actors. I hope the actors' union will not protest.

XII

Neorealism does not reject psychological exploration. Psychology is one of the many premises of reality. I face it as I face any other. If I want to write a scene of two men quarrelling, I will not do so at my desk. I must leave my den and find them. I take these men and make them talk in front of me for one hour or for twenty, depending on necessity. My creative method is first to call on them, then to listen to them, 'choosing' what they say. But I do all this not with the intention of creating heroes, because I think that a hero is not 'certain men' but 'every man.'

Wanting to give everyone a sense of equality is not levelling him down, but exalting his solidarity. Lack of solidarity is always born from presuming to be different, from a *But*: 'Paul is suffering, it's true. I am suffering, too, *but* my suffering has something that ... my nature has something that ...' and so on. The *But* must disappear, and we must be able to say: 'That man is bearing what I myself should bear in the same circumstances.'

XIII

Others have observed that the best dialogue in films is always in dialect. Dialect is nearer to reality. In our literary and spoken language, the synthetic constructions and the words themselves are always a little false. When writing a dialogue, I always think of it in dialect, in that of Rome or my own village. Using dialect, I feel it to be more essential, truer. Then I translate it into Italian, thus maintaining the dialect's syntax. I don't, therefore, write dialogue in dialect, but I am interested in what dialects have in common: immediacy, freshness, verisimilitude.

But I take most of all from nature. I go out into the street, catch

words, sentences, discussions. My great aids are memory and the shorthand writer.

Afterwards, I do with the words what I do with the images. I choose, I cut the material I have gathered to give it the right rhythm, to capture the essence, the truth. However great a faith I might have in imagination, in solitude, I have a greater one in reality, in people. I am interested in the drama of things we happen to encounter, not those we plan.

In short, to exercise our own poetic talents on location, we must leave our rooms and go, in body and mind, out to meet other people, to see and understand them. This is a genuine moral necessity for me and, if I lose faith in it, so much the worse for me.

I am quite aware that it is possible to make wonderful films, like Charlie Chaplin's, and they are not neorealistic. I am quite aware that there are Americans, Russians, Frenchmen and others who have made masterpieces that honour humanity, and, of course, they have not wasted film. I wonder, too, how many more great works they will again give us, according to their particular genius, with actors and studios and novels. But Italian film-makers, I think, if they are to sustain and deepen their cause and their style, after having courageously half-opened their doors to reality, must (in the sense I have mentioned) open them wide.