

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

Fall 2021
Tuesdays and Thursdays 1 – 2:15 PM
Zoom MTG ID: 884 8593 2228

Instructor: **Noam Gonick**
Virtual Office Hours: By appointment
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. *A pack of blank recipe cards or index cards will be a requirement for participation in this class.*

REQUIRED TEXTS

- "The Darling" (1899) 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 "The Darling" (due October 21, 2021)	40%
Short original screenplay (due November 30, 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)

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

UNIT 1: SCREENPLAY ADAPTATION

September 7 Reading Assignment due: "The Darling" by Anton Chekhov
 Class Discussion: "The Darling" 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?)

September 9 Research Presentations in-class: expanding upon Chekhov's "The Darling"
 Class Discussion: Reinterpretation (updating) versus Historical Films

September 14 Class Discussion: Your "Banner", interpretation and obsessions.

September 16 **Assignment due:** Adaptation Outline (1 Paragraph, approx. ½ page)
 Presentation of Outlines in class, discussion

September 21 Continuation of Outlines presentations, discussion

September 23 **Assignment due:** Character Backstories (1 Page)
 Presentation of Character Backstories, discussion

September 28 Continuation of Character Backstory presentations, discussion
 What is a story beat?

October 5 **Assignment due:** Beats on recipe cards (1 Page)
 (with class feedback/discussion)

Basic Script Formatting, Screenwriting Style

Reading week October 10th – 16th

October 19 **FIRST DRAFT due:** "The Darling" Adaptation (up to 8 pages MAX)
 Assignment Readings: Class Critique

October 21 Completion of FIRST DRAFT readings

October 26 **FINAL DRAFT due:** "The Darling" 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".

October 28	"Walk About" – All Students are required to walk their own neighbourhoods, or the University of Winnipeg zone.
November 2	<u>Assignment due:</u> Pitch Ideas for Final Script (up to 1 page)
November 4	Completion of pitching of ideas for Final Script
November 9	<u>Assignment due:</u> Beats on recipe cards
November 16	<u>Assignment due:</u> Character Breakdowns (1 Page) Assignment Presented: Class Critique
November 16	VW Date
November 18	Completion of Character Breakdown presentations
November 23	<u>Assignment due:</u> FIRST DRAFT ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY (up to 8 pages MAX) Assignment Reading Aloud: Class Critique Discussion: Script Analysis and Revision
November 25	Continuing to present First Drafts
November 28	The Screenwriter in Winnipeg's film/television industry
December 2	Original Short Screenplay FINAL DRAFT due (up to 7 pages MAX)
December 7	[reserve day in case class writing schedule needs prolonging]

CLASS PARTICIPATION

The details of 'Constructive class participation' parameters and expectation of students during script analysis sessions will be delivered in class.

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 cooperate 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.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Human Rights and Diversity

All students are encouraged to visit the University's Human Rights and Diversity website (<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/respect/index.html>) to familiarize yourself about your rights, the University's policies, and resources in place to support you. This site includes links to the University's Sexual Violence Policy and Procedures (<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/respect/sexual-violence-policy-and-procedures.html>), as well as resources for getting and providing support and clear steps for disclosing or reporting sexual violence.

Sexual Violence Resources on Campus

From the UW Human Rights & Diversity website:

The University takes all disclosures and reports of sexual violence seriously; survivors of all backgrounds and experiences will be treated with dignity, respect, and care. If you have experienced sexual violence, there are trained staff to help you in whatever way suits you best."

Disclosing is telling a member of the UW Community that you have experienced sexual violence. This could be someone you trust or feel comfortable with, like a professor, coach, another staff person, or a member of the Sexual Violence Response Team (**SVRT**). A disclosure can be made in order to receive support, accommodation, or to be connected to other resources. The Sexual Violence Response Team (**SVRT**) is a small team of specially trained, well-situated staff that coordinates and organizes services for survivors in a confidential manner. For example, if you personally do not feel comfortable talking to your professors about extensions or deferring work, they would be able to arrange changes for you without telling the professor why you need accommodation.

Contact SVRT by phone at 204-230-6660. [You can find more information on disclosing here.](https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/respect/sexual-violence/support/index.html) (<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/respect/sexual-violence/support/index.html>)

Reporting is making a statement to the **Human Rights & Diversity Officer (HRDO)** with the intention of seeking remedy, sanction, or consequences through the university. Once a report is made, the **HRDO** will review your report and discuss your options. Your options could include an investigation process, or informal resolution (if you wish to resolve it without an investigation). The **HRDO** can still connect you with support, accommodation, or external organizations while the investigation is taking place.

You can contact the HRDO by phone at 204-988-7508 or by email at hrdo@uwinnipeg.ca
You can report online here » (https://uwinnipeg.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4ONi2EP1gcXjyBv)

PUBLIC HEALTH COVID CONSIDERATIONS

In the current changing health situation, the schedule and content of the course may be subject to change on short notice. Every effort will be made to inform students of these changes, to deliver the course content in the best way possible under the circumstances, and to evaluate students fairly.

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

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. and are open to all students. The speakers will specifically address issues related to "the business of the business."

Pending health guidelines, lectures are planned to be in-person in the Theatre on the following dates:

October 6, 2021
November 10, 2021
January 19, 2022
March 2, 2022

Guests will be confirmed shortly.

MANDATORY ATTENDANCE FOR HONOURS STUDENTS: Beginning in January, attendance at **EVERY** lecture is mandatory for ALL Honours students in Theatre (that is, anyone taking 4000-level courses in any area), as well as students in THFM-3110 Screen Acting, THFM-3201 Styles in Design, THFM-3801 Production II, and THFM-3920 Musical Theatre.

All students are encouraged to attend these fun and informative lectures. Please see our department website in the Fall for information.

ORIENTATION ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 at 12:30 pm we will 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.

ALL STUDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED AND WELCOME TO ATTEND! Please see our department website for information.

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. This is a great opportunity for students to connect with other like-minded people and a way to get involved in the department events. Visit the TFSA Instagram account at **@tafsauw**.

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 to the public until further notice. Students, Faculty and Staff must use specific access points to buildings and provide identification upon entry.

Information about access for students can be found at <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/covid-19/on-campus-learning-faq.html>.

NOTE: It is **MANDATORY** that anyone entering the building and attending classes, labs or rehearsals in the building carry an ID card/student card to verify their vaccination status and that 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.

SECURITY PHONE (General, non-emergency, Safe Walk and Safe Ride): 204-786-9272
SECURITY EMERGENCY NUMBER: 204-786-6666

The Asper Centre for Theatre and Film is equipped with an emergency-only phone to contact Security immediately in the main lobby by the House Management Office. This can be used in an emergency situation to directly connect with the UW Security Services.

Students are encouraged to visit the UW Security Services webpage at <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/security/index.html> for complete information about campus security and emergency procedures.

RECORDING ON-LINE CLASSES

The instructor of an on-line class 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

Department Website: <https://theatre.uwinnipeg.ca> or <https://film.uwinnipeg.ca>

Please refer to the website for department information, but particularly regarding:

Fire and Safety Information for ACTF: Students must check our website and review the *Fire Safety Instructions in the Asper Centre for Theatre and Film* and *Access Card/Building Use Policy* at <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/theatre-film/student-resources/loves-labours-lost-production-schedule.html>.

Room Bookings for Class Assignment Work: We expect students will be allowed to book rehearsal room space FOR CLASS-RELATED WORK ONLY. Please see our website links to *Room Booking Instructions* and electronic *Online Room Booking Form* found on our department website at <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/theatre-film/rentals/access-card-and-building-use-policy.html>. Please read and note all instructions carefully. Room booking availability is subject to change according to public health and university policies.

GENERAL NOTES

- **Students can find answers to frequently asked questions related to the University's Covid-19 policies for the 2021-22 year here:** <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/covid-19/index.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 environment of quickly-changing circumstances.**
- **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 webmail (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.***
- 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 or examinations without penalty. A list of religious holidays can be found in the 2021-22 Undergraduate Academic Calendar, <http://uwinnipeg.ca/academics/calendar/docs/important-notes.pdf>

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 emphasize the importance of maintaining academic integrity, and to 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>.

Respectful Learning Environment

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 <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/respect/respect-policy.html>, Acceptable Use of Information Technology Policy <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>.

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, 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 are reminded of 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>).

VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL DATES

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

- **FALL TERM COURSES:** November 16, 2021 for Fall courses which begin in September 2021 and end in December 2021
- **FALL/WINTER TERM COURSES:** February 16, 2022 for Fall/Winter courses which begin in September 2021 and end in April 2022
- **WINTER TERM COURSES:** March 16, 2022 for Winter courses which begin in January 2022 and end in April 2022

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.

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904)
 The Darling
 Translated by Constance Garnett

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) was a Russian writer of short stories and plays. He trained as a physician, practicing medicine throughout his life, but his heart was in his writing. He is known as a master of short fiction and one of the founders, along with Ibsen and Strindberg, of the modern theater. His plays, such as *Uncle Vanya* (1897), *The Three Sisters* (1901), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), are still performed today. Chekhov died of tuberculosis in 1904. "The Darling" was published in 1899.

Olenka, the daughter of the retired collegiate assessor, Plemyanniakov, was sitting in her back porch, lost in thought. It was hot, the flies were persistent and teasing, and it was pleasant to reflect that it would soon be evening. Dark rainclouds were gathering from the east, and bringing from time to time a breath of moisture in the air.

Kukin, who was the manager of an open-air theatre called the Tivoli, and who lived in the lodge, was standing in the middle of the garden looking at the sky.

"Again!" he observed despairingly. "It's going to rain again! Rain every day, as though to spite me. I might as well hang myself! It's ruin! Fearful losses every day."

He flung up his hands, and went on, addressing Olenka:

"There! that's the life we lead, Olga Semyonovna. It's enough to make one cry. One works and does one's utmost, one wears oneself out, getting no sleep at night, and racks one's brain what to do for the best. And then what happens? To begin with, one's public is ignorant, boorish. I give them the very best operetta, a dainty masque, first rate music-hall artists. But do you suppose that's what they want! They don't understand anything of that sort. They want a clown; what they ask for is vulgarity. And then look at the weather! Almost every evening it rains. It started on the tenth of May, and it's kept it up all May and June. It's simply awful! The public doesn't come, but I've to pay the rent just the same, and pay the artists."

The next evening the clouds would gather again, and Kukin would say with an hysterical laugh:

"Well, rain away, then! Flood the garden, drown me! Damn my luck in this world and the next! Let the artists have me up! Send me to prison!—to Siberia!—the scaffold! Ha, ha, ha!"

And next day the same thing.

Olenka listened to Kukin with silent gravity, and sometimes tears came into her eyes. In the end his misfortunes touched her; she grew to love him. He was a small thin man, with a yellow face, and curls combed forward on his forehead. He spoke in a thin tenor; as he talked his mouth worked on one side, and there was always an expression of despair on his face; yet he aroused a deep and genuine affection in her. She was always fond of some one, and could not exist without loving. In earlier days she had loved her papa, who now sat in a darkened room, breathing with difficulty; she had loved her aunt who used to come every other year from Bryansk; and before that, when she was at school, she had loved her French master. She was a gentle, soft-hearted, compassionate girl, with mild, tender eyes and very good health. At the sight of her full rosy cheeks, her soft white neck with a little dark mole on it, and the kind, naïve smile, which came into her face when she listened to anything pleasant, men thought, "Yes, not half bad," and

smiled too, while lady visitors could not refrain from seizing her hand in the middle of a conversation, exclaiming in a gush of delight, "You darling!"

The house in which she had lived from her birth upwards, and which was left her in her father's will, was at the extreme end of the town, not far from the Tivoli. In the evenings and at night she could hear the band playing, and the crackling and banging of fireworks, and it seemed to her that it was Kukin struggling with his destiny, storming the entrenchments of his chief foe, the indifferent public; there was a sweet thrill at her heart, she had no desire to sleep, and when he returned home at day-break, she tapped softly at her bedroom window, and showing him only her face and one shoulder through the curtain, she gave him a friendly smile. . . .

He proposed to her, and they were married. And when he had a closer view of her neck and her plump, fine shoulders, he threw up his hands, and said:

"You darling!"

He was happy, but as it rained on the day and night of his wedding, his face still retained an expression of despair.

They got on very well together. She used to sit in his office, to look after things in the Tivoli, to put down the accounts and pay the wages. And her rosy cheeks, her sweet, naïve, radiant smile, were to be seen now at the office window, now in the refreshment bar or behind the scenes of the theatre. And already she used to say to her acquaintances that the theatre was the chief and most important thing in life and that it was only through the drama that one could derive true enjoyment and become cultivated and humane.

"But do you suppose the public understands that?" she used to say. "What they want is a clown. Yesterday we gave 'Faust Inside Out,' and almost all the boxes were empty; but if Vanitchka and I had been producing some vulgar thing, I assure you the theatre would have been packed. Tomorrow Vanitchka and I are doing 'Orpheus in Hell.' Do come."

And what Kukin said about the theatre and the actors she repeated. Like him she despised the public for their ignorance and their indifference to art; she took part in the rehearsals, she corrected the actors, she kept an eye on the behaviour of the musicians, and when there was an unfavourable notice in the local paper, she shed tears, and then went to the editor's office to set things right.

The actors were fond of her and used to call her "Vanitchka and I," and "the darling"; she was sorry for them and used to lend them small sums of money, and if they deceived her, she used to shed a few tears in private, but did not complain to her husband.

They got on well in the winter too. They took the theatre in the town for the whole winter, and let it for short terms to a Little Russian company, or to a conjurer, or to a local dramatic society. Olenka grew stouter, and was always beaming with satisfaction, while Kukin grew thinner and yellower, and continually complained of their terrible losses, although he had not done badly all the winter. He used to cough at night, and she used to give him hot raspberry tea or lime-flower water, to rub him with eau-de-Cologne and to wrap him in her warm shawls.

"You're such a sweet pet!" she used to say with perfect sincerity, stroking his hair. "You're such a pretty dear!"

Towards Lent he went to Moscow to collect a new troupe, and without him she could not sleep, but sat all night at her window, looking at the stars, and she compared herself with the hens, who are awake all night and uneasy when the cock is not in the hen-house. Kukin was detained in Moscow, and wrote that he would be back at Easter, adding some instructions about the Tivoli. But on the Sunday before Easter, late in the evening, came a sudden ominous knock at

the gate; someone was hammering on the gate as though on a barrel—boom, boom, boom! The drowsy cook went flopping with her bare feet through the puddles, as she ran to open the gate.

“Please open,” said someone outside in a thick bass. “There is a telegram for you.”

Olenka had received telegrams from her husband before, but this time for some reason she felt numb with terror. With shaking hands she opened the telegram and read as follows:

“IVAN PETROVITCH DIED SUDDENLY TO-DAY. AWAITING IMMATE INSTRUCTIONS FUFUNERAL TUESDAY.”

That was how it was written in the telegram—“fufuneral,” and the utterly incomprehensible word “immate.” It was signed by the stage manager of the operatic company.

“My darling!” sobbed Olenka. “Vanka, my precious, my darling! Why did I ever meet you! Why did I know you and love you! Your poor heart-broken Olenka is alone without you!”

Kukin's funeral took place on Tuesday in Moscow, Olenka returned home on Wednesday, and as soon as she got indoors, she threw herself on her bed and sobbed so loudly that it could be heard next door, and in the street.

“Poor darling!” the neighbours said, as they crossed themselves. “Olga Semyonovna, poor darling! How she does take on!”

Three months later Olenka was coming home from mass, melancholy and in deep mourning. It happened that one of her neighbours, Vassily Andreitch Pustovalov, returning home from church, walked back beside her. He was the manager at Babakayev's, the timber merchant's. He wore a straw hat, a white waistcoat, and a gold watch-chain, and looked more a country gentleman than a man in trade.

“Everything happens as it is ordained, Olga Semyonovna,” he said gravely, with a sympathetic note in his voice; “and if any of our dear ones die, it must be because it is the will of God, so we ought to have fortitude and bear it submissively.”

After seeing Olenka to her gate, he said good-bye and went on. All day afterwards she heard his sedately dignified voice, and whenever she shut her eyes she saw his dark beard. She liked him very much. And apparently she had made an impression on him too, for not long afterwards an elderly lady, with whom she was only slightly acquainted, came to drink coffee with her, and as soon as she was seated at table began to talk about Pustovalov, saying that he was an excellent man whom one could thoroughly depend upon, and that any girl would be glad to marry him. Three days later Pustovalov came himself. He did not stay long, only about ten minutes, and he did not say much, but when he left, Olenka loved him—loved him so much that she lay awake all night in a perfect fever, and in the morning she sent for the elderly lady. The match was quickly arranged, and then came the wedding.

Pustovalov and Olenka got on very well together when they were married.

Usually he sat in the office till dinner-time, then he went out on business, while Olenka took his place, and sat in the office till evening, making up accounts and booking orders.

“Timber gets dearer every year; the price rises twenty per cent,” she would say to her customers and friends. “Only fancy we used to sell local timber, and now Vassitchka always has to go for wood to the Mogilev district. And the freight!” she would add, covering her cheeks with her hands in horror. “The freight!”

It seemed to her that she had been in the timber trade for ages and ages, and that the most important and necessary thing in life was timber; and there was something intimate and touching to her in the very sound of words such as “baulk,” “post,” “beam,” “pole,” “scantling,” “batten,” “lath,” “plank,” etc.

At night when she was asleep she dreamed of perfect mountains of planks and boards, and long strings of wagons, carting timber somewhere far away. She dreamed that a whole regiment of six-inch beams forty feet high, standing on end, was marching upon the timber-yard; that logs, beams, and boards knocked together with the resounding crash of dry wood, kept falling and getting up again, piling themselves on each other. Olenka cried out in her sleep, and Pustovalov said to her tenderly: "Olenka, what's the matter, darling? Cross yourself!"

Her husband's ideas were hers. If he thought the room was too hot, or that business was slack, she thought the same. Her husband did not care for entertainments, and on holidays he stayed at home. She did likewise.

"You are always at home or in the office," her friends said to her. "You should go to the theatre, darling, or to the circus."

"Vassitchka and I have no time to go to theatres," she would answer sedately. "We have no time for nonsense. What's the use of these theatres?"

On Saturdays Pustovalov and she used to go to the evening service; on holidays to early mass, and they walked side by side with softened faces as they came home from church. There was a pleasant fragrance about them both, and her silk dress rustled agreeably. At home they drank tea, with fancy bread and jams of various kinds, and afterwards they ate pie. Every day at twelve o'clock there was a savoury smell of beet-root soup and of mutton or duck in their yard, and on fast-days of fish, and no one could pass the gate without feeling hungry. In the office the samovar was always boiling, and customers were regaled with tea and cracknels. Once a week the couple went to the baths and returned side by side, both red in the face.

"Yes, we have nothing to complain of, thank God," Olenka used to say to her acquaintances. "I wish everyone were as well off as Vassitchka and I."

When Pustovalov went away to buy wood in the Mogilev district, she missed him dreadfully, lay awake and cried. A young veterinary surgeon in the army, called Smirnin, to whom they had let their lodge, used sometimes to come in in the evening. He used to talk to her and play cards with her, and this entertained her in her husband's absence. She was particularly interested in what he told her of his home life. He was married and had a little boy, but was separated from his wife because she had been unfaithful to him, and now he hated her and used to send her forty roubles a month for the maintenance of their son. And hearing of all this, Olenka sighed and shook her head. She was sorry for him.

"Well, God keep you," she used to say to him at parting, as she lighted him down the stairs with a candle. "Thank you for coming to cheer me up, and may the Mother of God give you health."

And she always expressed herself with the same sedateness and dignity, the same reasonableness, in imitation of her husband. As the veterinary surgeon was disappearing behind the door below, she would say:

"You know, Vladimir Platonitch, you'd better make it up with your wife. You should forgive her for the sake of your son. You may be sure the little fellow understands."

And when Pustovalov came back, she told him in a low voice about the veterinary surgeon and his unhappy home life, and both sighed and shook their heads and talked about the boy, who, no doubt, missed his father, and by some strange connection of ideas, they went up to the holy ikons, bowed to the ground before them and prayed that God would give them children.

And so the Pustovalovs lived for six years quietly and peaceably in love and complete harmony.

But behold! one winter day after drinking hot tea in the office, Vassily Andreitch went out into the yard without his cap on to see about sending off some timber, caught cold and was taken ill. He had the best doctors, but he grew worse and died after four months' illness. And Olenka was a widow once more.

"I've nobody, now you've left me, my darling," she sobbed, after her husband's funeral. "How can I live without you, in wretchedness and misery! Pity me, good people, all alone in the world!"

She went about dressed in black with long "weepers," and gave up wearing hat and gloves for good. She hardly ever went out, except to church, or to her husband's grave, and led the life of a nun. It was not till six months later that she took off the weepers and opened the shutters of the windows. She was sometimes seen in the mornings, going with her cook to market for provisions, but what went on in her house and how she lived now could only be surmised. People guessed, from seeing her drinking tea in her garden with the veterinary surgeon, who read the newspaper aloud to her, and from the fact that, meeting a lady she knew at the post-office, she said to her:

"There is no proper veterinary inspection in our town, and that's the cause of all sorts of epidemics. One is always hearing of people's getting infection from the milk supply, or catching diseases from horses and cows. The health of domestic animals ought to be as well cared for as the health of human beings."

She repeated the veterinary surgeon's words, and was of the same opinion as he about everything. It was evident that she could not live a year without some attachment, and had found new happiness in the lodge. In any one else this would have been censured, but no one could think ill of Olenka; everything she did was so natural. Neither she nor the veterinary surgeon said anything to other people of the change in their relations, and tried, indeed, to conceal it, but without success, for Olenka could not keep a secret. When he had visitors, men serving in his regiment, and she poured out tea or served the supper, she would begin talking of the cattle plague, of the foot and mouth disease, and of the municipal slaughterhouses. He was dreadfully embarrassed, and when the guests had gone, he would seize her by the hand and hiss angrily:

"I've asked you before not to talk about what you don't understand. When we veterinary surgeons are talking among ourselves, please don't put your word in. It's really annoying."

And she would look at him with astonishment and dismay, and ask him in alarm: "But, Voloditchka, what am I to talk about?"

And with tears in her eyes she would embrace him, begging him not to be angry, and they were both happy.

But this happiness did not last long. The veterinary surgeon departed, departed for ever with his regiment, when it was transferred to a distant place—to Siberia, it may be. And Olenka was left alone.

Now she was absolutely alone. Her father had long been dead, and his armchair lay in the attic, covered with dust and lame of one leg. She got thinner and plainer, and when people met her in the street they did not look at her as they used to, and did not smile to her; evidently her best years were over and left behind, and now a new sort of life had begun for her, which did not bear thinking about. In the evening Olenka sat in the porch, and heard the band playing and the fireworks popping in the Tivoli, but now the sound stirred no response. She looked into her yard without interest, thought of nothing, wished for nothing, and afterwards, when night came on she went to bed and dreamed of her empty yard. She ate and drank as it were unwillingly.

And what was worst of all, she had no opinions of any sort. She saw the objects about her and understood what she saw, but could not form any opinion about them, and did not know what to talk about. And how awful it is not to have any opinions! One sees a bottle, for instance, or the rain, or a peasant driving in his cart, but what the bottle is for, or the rain, or the peasant, and what is the meaning of it, one can't say, and could not even for a thousand roubles. When she had Kukin, or Pustovalov, or the veterinary surgeon, Olenka could explain everything, and give her opinion about anything you like, but now there was the same emptiness in her brain and in her heart as there was in her yard outside. And it was as harsh and as bitter as wormwood in the mouth.

Little by little the town grew in all directions. The road became a street, and where the Tivoli and the timber-yard had been, there were new turnings and houses. How rapidly time passes! Olenka's house grew dingy, the roof got rusty, the shed sank on one side, and the whole yard was overgrown with docks and stinging-nettles. Olenka herself had grown plain and elderly; in summer she sat in the porch, and her soul, as before, was empty and dreary and full of bitterness. In winter she sat at her window and looked at the snow. When she caught the scent of spring, or heard the chime of the church bells, a sudden rush of memories from the past came over her, there was a tender ache in her heart, and her eyes brimmed over with tears; but this was only for a minute, and then came emptiness again and the sense of the futility of life. The black kitten, Briska, rubbed against her and purred softly, but Olenka was not touched by these feline caresses. That was not what she needed. She wanted a love that would absorb her whole being, her whole soul and reason—that would give her ideas and an object in life, and would warm her old blood. And she would shake the kitten off her skirt and say with vexation:

“Get along; I don't want you!”

And so it was, day after day and year after year, and no joy, and no opinions. Whatever Mavra, the cook, said she accepted.

One hot July day, towards evening, just as the cattle were being driven away, and the whole yard was full of dust, some one suddenly knocked at the gate. Olenka went to open it herself and was dumbfounded when she looked out: she saw Smirnin, the veterinary surgeon, grey-headed, and dressed as a civilian. She suddenly remembered everything. She could not help crying and letting her head fall on his breast without uttering a word, and in the violence of her feeling she did not notice how they both walked into the house and sat down to tea.

“My dear Vladimir Platonitch! What fate has brought you?” she muttered, trembling with joy.

“I want to settle here for good, Olga Semyonovna,” he told her. “I have resigned my post, and have come to settle down and try my luck on my own account. Besides, it's time for my boy to go to school. He's a big boy. I am reconciled with my wife, you know.”

“Where is she?” asked Olenka.

“She's at the hotel with the boy, and I'm looking for lodgings.”

“Good gracious, my dear soul! Lodgings? Why not have my house? Why shouldn't that suit you? Why, my goodness, I wouldn't take any rent!” cried Olenka in a flutter, beginning to cry again. “You live here, and the lodge will do nicely for me. Oh dear! how glad I am!”

Next day the roof was painted and the walls were whitewashed, and Olenka, with her arms akimbo walked about the yard giving directions. Her face was beaming with her old smile, and she was brisk and alert as though she had waked from a long sleep. The veterinary's wife arrived—a thin, plain lady, with short hair and a peevish expression. With her was her little

Sasha, a boy of ten, small for his age, blue-eyed, chubby, with dimples in his cheeks. And scarcely had the boy walked into the yard when he ran after the cat, and at once there was the sound of his gay, joyous laugh.

“Is that your puss, auntie?” he asked Olenka. “When she has little ones, do give us a kitten. Mamma is awfully afraid of mice.”

Olenka talked to him, and gave him tea. Her heart warmed and there was a sweet ache in her bosom, as though the boy had been her own child. And when he sat at the table in the evening, going over his lessons, she looked at him with deep tenderness and pity as she murmured to herself:

“You pretty pet! . . . my precious! . . . Such a fair little thing, and so clever.”

“ ‘An island is a piece of land which is entirely surrounded by water,’ ” he read aloud.

“An island is a piece of land,” she repeated, and this was the first opinion to which she gave utterance with positive conviction after so many years of silence and dearth of ideas.

Now she had opinions of her own, and at supper she talked to Sasha's parents, saying how difficult the lessons were at the high schools, but that yet the high school was better than a commercial one, since with a high-school education all careers were open to one, such as being a doctor or an engineer.

Sasha began going to the high school. His mother departed to Harkov to her sister's and did not return; his father used to go off every day to inspect cattle, and would often be away from home for three days together, and it seemed to Olenka as though Sasha was entirely abandoned, that he was not wanted at home, that he was being starved, and she carried him off to her lodge and gave him a little room there.

And for six months Sasha had lived in the lodge with her. Every morning Olenka came into his bedroom and found him fast asleep, sleeping noiselessly with his hand under his cheek. She was sorry to wake him.

“Sashenka,” she would say mournfully, “get up, darling. It's time for school.”

He would get up, dress and say his prayers, and then sit down to breakfast, drink three glasses of tea, and eat two large cracknels and a half a buttered roll. All this time he was hardly awake and a little ill-humoured in consequence.

“You don't quite know your fable, Sashenka,” Olenka would say, looking at him as though he were about to set off on a long journey. “What a lot of trouble I have with you! You must work and do your best, darling, and obey your teachers.”

“Oh, do leave me alone!” Sasha would say.

Then he would go down the street to school, a little figure, wearing a big cap and carrying a satchel on his shoulder. Olenka would follow him noiselessly.

“Sashenka!” she would call after him, and she would pop into his hand a date or a caramel. When he reached the street where the school was, he would feel ashamed of being followed by a tall, stout woman, he would turn round and say:

“You'd better go home, auntie. I can go the rest of the way alone.”

She would stand still and look after him fixedly till he had disappeared at the school-gate.

Ah, how she loved him! Of her former attachments not one had been so deep; never had her soul surrendered to any feeling so spontaneously, so disinterestedly, and so joyously as now that her maternal instincts were aroused. For this little boy with the dimple in his cheek and the big school cap, she would have given her whole life, she would have given it with joy and tears of tenderness. Why? Who can tell why?

When she had seen the last of Sasha, she returned home, contented and serene, brimming over with love; her face, which had grown younger during the last six months, smiled and beamed; people meeting her looked at her with pleasure.

“Good-morning, Olga Semyonovna, darling. How are you, darling?”

“The lessons at the high school are very difficult now,” she would relate at the market. “It’s too much; in the first class yesterday they gave him a fable to learn by heart, and a Latin translation and a problem. You know it’s too much for a little chap.”

And she would begin talking about the teachers, the lessons, and the school books, saying just what Sasha said.

At three o’clock they had dinner together: in the evening they learned their lessons together and cried. When she put him to bed, she would stay a long time making the Cross over him and murmuring a prayer; then she would go to bed and dream of that far-away misty future when Sasha would finish his studies and become a doctor or an engineer, would have a big house of his own with horses and a carriage, would get married and have children. . . . She would fall asleep still thinking of the same thing, and tears would run down her cheeks from her closed eyes, while the black cat lay purring beside her: “Mrr, mrr, mrr.”

Suddenly there would come a loud knock at the gate.

Olenka would wake up breathless with alarm, her heart throbbing. Half a minute later would come another knock.

“It must be a telegram from Harkov,” she would think, beginning to tremble from head to foot. “Sasha’s mother is sending for him from Harkov . . . Oh, mercy on us!”

She was in despair. Her head, her hands, and her feet would turn chill, and she would feel that she was the most unhappy woman in the world. But another minute would pass, voices would be heard: it would turn out to be the veterinary surgeon coming home from the club.

“Well, thank God!” she would think.

And gradually the load in her heart would pass off, and she would feel at ease. She would go back to bed thinking of Sasha, who lay sound asleep in the next room, sometimes crying out in his sleep:

“I’ll give it you! Get away! Shut up!”

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.