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AMERICAN VISIONS

THE FILMS OF CHAPLIN, FORD, CAPRA, AND WELLES, 1936-1941

by
Charles John Maland

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(American Culture)
in The University of Michigan
1975

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Marvin Felheim, Chairman
Associate Professor Frank Beaver
Assistant Professor Frank Rossiter
Lecturer John Allen

To my parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project could never have been carried out without the encouragement and aid of a number of people. It is with pleasure and gratitude that I acknowledge a few of them specifically.

My thanks must first go to my dissertation chairman, Marvin Felheim. Without his encouragement this study would probably never have begun. Professor Felheim, along with my other committee members--John Allen, Frank Beaver, and Frank Rossiter--did much in clearing up some of my stylistic and thematic muddiness.

Thanks also go to John Raeburn for leading a provocative seminar on the relationships between film and culture in the winter of 1974 and for so cheerfully reading my chapters on Capra. To the members of that seminar, and particularly to Marvin Olasky and Neal Gabler, I am indebted.

For offering me a congenial atmosphere to study film, I am grateful to Mr. Charles Silver and his staff at the Museum of Modern Art and to Mr. Patrick Sheehan and his staff at the Library of Congress. Mary Corliss of the Museum of Modern Art graciously allowed me to choose from the stills collection. A fellowship from the Horace Rackham School of Graduate Studies enabled me to pursue this study full time during the past year.

Finally, to Nancy Klein Maland who had the patience and love to support my writing and share my movie-going, I can only say thanks, realizing how inadequate words sometimes are. She will never know how much she helped.

PREFACE

This is a study of the relationship among filmmakers, films, and culture. More precisely, it is an examination of the cultural significance of the films of Charles Chaplin, John Ford, Frank Capra and Orson Welles between 1936 and 1941, a period in which American culture went through a period of crisis and the Hollywood film was reaching the peak of its success as a popular art form.

The seed which eventually germinated and grew into this study was planted several years ago during a highly successful Frank Capra Festival in Ann Arbor, which Capra himself attended for a time. On the fifth night of the festival, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington was shown, and one sequence particularly spurred my curiosity. In that section, wide-eyed Jefferson Smith, a newly appointed senator, takes a bus tour upon first arriving in Washington. For several minutes the camera focusses on nearly every important monument, statue, and document associated with American patriotism, from the flag and the Liberty Bell to the Declaration of Independence and the Lincoln Memorial. To an audience of students who had been living through the anti-Viet Nam War years, this overt expression of national pride seemed curious at best, dangerously uncritical at worst.

I left the screening with mixed feelings. The film was technically engrossing and well acted by the whole cast, as well as fully entertaining. After having seen Mr. Deeds Goes to Town on a previous night, I was beginning to sense that a coherent vision developed throughout Capra's films. Yet my doubts about the patriotic montage remained. When I learned that Mr. Smith was the second largest grossing film of 1939--second only to Gone With the Wind--it began to seem that the film itself, especially the montage, must be closely related to American cultural patterns in the late thirties. The notion of film as a source of cultural history was not new, but no approach that I could find completely suited my needs.[1]

What was necessary, it seemed, was an approach to film that would allow one to clarify the relationships among a talented filmmaker, his films, and the culture in which he lived and worked. The approach that evolved after a good deal of thought, discussion, and study is eclectic but hopefully sound. Before getting into the substance of the study, I would like to make my assumptions and approach clear.

The primary assumption is that there is a close connection between popular feature films and culture. To avoid confusion, when I speak of "culture" throughout this study, I use the term in an anthropological sense. Since Edward Tylor first defined culture in 1871 as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law,

custom and any capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society," the controversy over the precise meaning of the term has been constant. Several elements of the definition of culture are important. First, culture is learned by people through their social relationships and is largely transmitted by symbols. Language, of course, is one of the primary symbolic systems through which people learn culture. Second, culture consists of the meanings, values, and practices that are commonly shared by members of a society. Despite personal idiosyncrasies--which are necessary, or culture would never change--members of a society have similar pictures and images in their minds of what is real, what is good, and what actions are considered proper by the society. Finally, culture is both overt and covert. Despite the fact that people consciously adhere to cultural meanings and values, many aspects of culture, such as the proper distance necessary to carry on a normal conversation with another person, are practices but not consciously thought out. These latter meanings and practices are covert culture.[2]

How, then, can one relate the films of a successful director to culture? Kenneth Burke has provided part of the answer when he suggested that all art is "symbolic action," a "strategy" worked out by an artist in response to a particular "situation." This situation/strategy approach, which has also been employed successfully by an

intellectual historian, is helpful because it enables the student of film to look at a film not simply as an *object*, but as the *outcome* of a director's attempts to create an imaginative construct which develops his vision of the world and at the same time communicates to a popular audience.[3]

What I am really proposing is a cultural variant of the *auteur* theory. As *auteur* criticism has thus far been practiced, it has been less a theory than an organizing principle for film history. Though some critics would consider a director who had no thematic continuities but only recurring stylistic similarities in his films an *auteur*, I would not. I would rather follow Truffaut, who once defined the film *auteur* as "one who is motivated by the need to introduce his own ideas on life, on people, on money and love into his work." Though it is true that most *auteurs* must work within the bounds of financial constraints, a number of American directors have had the talent and integrity to develop a coherent vision, evident in recurring thematic and structural patterns, throughout much of their work. For my purposes, these people are the true *auteurs*.[4]

Because he is a member of society, the *auteur* has been influenced by the cultural values of his milieu. By looking at a representative *auteur*'s background, one can get an idea of the cultural forces that molded his vision of the world. By looking at his strategic responses to

social and historical changes as expressed in his films, one can get a better sense of a whole generation's felt life and cultural dilemmas. The recurring patterns in his own popular films give us an indication of an entire culture's felt needs. Since film--especially in the late thirties when over eighty million people attended films each week--is a popular art form, a successful auteur's films seem a particularly effective index of a nation's cultural history.

The choice of the word "visions" in the title of this study was carefully made. Yet because the word has its mystical connotations, perhaps some clarification is necessary. The sociologists of knowledge Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann have suggested that in every society, some people are involved in defining on a sophisticated level the official social view of reality. In traditional societies, it was the shaman or some other religious leader that carried out the function. In modern societies philosophers, artists, and scientists have been the constructors of social definitions of reality. In defining that reality, these people create what Berger and Luckmann call "symbolic universes," which are mental images of a whole world whose purpose is to legitimate the "institutional order by bestowing upon it the primacy in the hierarchy of human experience." By making a society's existing roles, priorities, and operating practices seem correct, the symbolic

universe provides a comprehensive justification for the way the society operates.[5]

When I speak of an auteur's social "vision," I mean something similar to the symbolic universe. Since the work of philosophers and scientists in American society has become increasingly arcane--as indeed has the work of many modernist artists--it seems to me that the function of developing a coherent form of cultural explanation and of reaffirming existing values to the majority of people has largely been taken over by the popular arts. The auteur's social vision is a symbolic universe meant to present a pattern of values and meanings in a popular fictional form to a broad audience.

As Berger and Luckmann also point out, the official symbolic universe of any society may also be challenged by those who perceive a different set of meanings and are articulate enough to express an alternative to the official view of reality.[6] Though it is rare in Hollywood to find a director who can make films that present a vision fundamentally at odds with that of his audience, it may occasionally happen. As the chapter on Welles points out, however, such a director is not likely to retain an honored position in Hollywood, if only because his films fail to make enough money because the director's new perceptions fail to gratify audience expectations.

Finally, the question of the precise relationship among the auteur, his movies, and cultural values and

meanings must be raised. Culture is a product of people: it results from their creative and positive actions in society. But culture also creates people: by continually acting and thinking in a certain way, people internalize those cultural actions and thoughts, eventually coming to view them uncritically as reality itself. Thus the relationship between an auteur and his culture is dialectic: culture creates the auteur, yet the auteur creates culture. This relationship also holds with films and culture: culture influences the values and meanings expressed in films, but the films may also influence the culture by presenting new meanings and values which people begin to accept. Though the degree to which an auteur creates or is created by culture varies with the person, the dialectic remains. With this dual relationship in mind, we can study an auteur's work first by studying his background to see what his culture made him, then by examining his films to see how he responded to that culture. By studying the auteur, his films, and his culture with these relationships and definitions in mind, one can begin to develop a deeper and more careful understanding of all three.

Film critics sometimes make broad and inaccurate generalizations about the American culture scene without first displaying an understanding of the historical period they are studying. Because I want to avoid this stumbling block and because an understanding of American cultural life between 1936 and 1941 is essential to the argument

of this study, the first chapter will treat the central cultural patterns at work in America as the country moved from FDR's first reelection in 1936 to our entry into war after Pearl Harbor. It will also give a brief history of Hollywood and the studio system in the thirties to indicate something about the environment in which Chaplin, Ford, Capra, and Welles worked. Following that chapter come the central preoccupations of this study: to describe the American visions of the four directors and to relate those visions to the changing American culture between 1936 and 1941. Besides those central issues, I hope it will also throw some light on the significance of that incredible patriotic montage in Mr. Smith Goes to Washington that started me on this track several years ago.

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CHAPTER I

AMERICA AND HOLLYWOOD, 1936-1941

> Every work of history constructs contexts and designs forms in which reality can be comprehended. History creates comprehensibility primarily by arranging facts meaningfully and only in a very limited sense by establishing causal connections.
>
> --Johan Huizinga[1]

I

American movies of the depression decade can be adequately understood only in the context of the period. As a popular art form intent on reaping profit, the movies had to aim at as large an audience as possible. As artists living in America--a country with a democratic ideology--some film directors felt a profound ambiguity about the culture in which they lived and the audience to which their films were directed. This section, following Huizinga, attempts briefly to reconstruct the context of American culture from 1936 to 1941, in which Chaplin, Ford, Capra, and Welles created their American visions. The context is not meant to be exhaustive, but indicative, an aid in making the films to be treated later more comprehensible as cultural products.

Otto Rank's suggestion that all art oscillates between the poles of individual and community seems to describe the movement of American art from the twenties to the thirties. For many artists, and for Americans generally, the thirties were a decade in which eyes were turned toward the problems of society.

It is not difficult to see why. Responding to the economic breakdown in 1929 and 1930, the entire nation was, in a sense, turned inward, forced to confront fundamental problems of national economic structure and social relationships as the depression wore on. Because the depression came so suddenly, because it followed a period of unparalleled prosperity and consumption, the problems facing Americans seemed both more pressing and more difficult to resolve. The story of America from the Crash to Pearl Harbor is one of a nation attempting to work out a new national consensus.

The lack of cultural consensus in depression America was not solely a result of the Crash. Until about World War One, the dominant cultural value system in America was based on Protestant small-town values. Termed by historians the genteel tradition, it was an ethic that stressed the importance of hard work, inner self-restraint, respect for learning, and strict morality.[2] Largely formalistic, the attitudes and values of the genteel tradition were unable to keep pace with the rapidly changing face of industrial America after the Civil War. As a result, they began to

seem arbitrary and repressive to many, especially to the new Southern and Eastern Europeans with Catholic or Jewish backgrounds, whose traditions were very different from the Northern European Protestants. In the aftermath of World War One, which the genteel Woodrow Wilson had hoped would make the world safe for democracy, the genteel tradition lost its dominance, and American culture was deeply split among the values of various groups: older religious Protestants, urban immigrant workers, and cosmopolitan urban youth. The Red Scare of 1919, the attack on the small town and Puritanism by intellectuals, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, the drive for immigration restriction, the emotion-pitched debates on Prohibition and the Scopes trial--these phenomena suggest that beneath the surface of prosperity in the twenties lay a profound cultural disunity. The genteel tradition was no longer acceptable as a dominant American form of explanation.

During the depression, FDR and the New Deal's response to the nation's economic woes served as a national cultural unifier. When Roosevelt took office, the nation was at the depth of the depression. Though industrial production had risen 15% between July and October, 1932, it declined sharply from then until it hit its low point in March, 1933. As early as October, 1932, some states had proclaimed bank holidays, and when FDR took office on March 4 of the next year, 38 states had closed their banks. On the same day,

the New York Stock Exchange closed, and for the first time since 1848, the Chicago Board of Trade shut its doors.[3]

Spurred by government spending, this bleak economic situation began very gradually to improve. By the time FDR was up for reelection, Congress had passed legislation dealing with social security, organized labor, and public employment, and FDR enjoyed huge popular support. In his reelection campaign he attacked the "economic royalists" who opposed his policies; the result was one of the biggest landslides in American history, Roosevelt losing only Vermont and Maine.

The reform spirit, which peaked in 1935 and 1936, began to wane after 1937. In that year FDR lost a good deal of support, due in part to his court-packing scheme. Likewise, the recession of 1937, which carried over into the first half of 1938, suggested to many that the Roosevelt economic policies were only prolonging the misery wrought by the depression. Though the economy slowly began to pick up in the latter part of 1938, in 1939 nine million people were still out of work, and the economy never really recovered until the war stimulated production.[4]

Though the New Deal had created a wide political base for the Democratic Party by 1936, it is easy to overemphasize the degree of radicalism in the thirties. The same year as FDR's reelection saw the publication of Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People, whose philosophy stressed not how to reform the system, but how

to succeed within it. The book became a perennial best seller--by 1948 it had sold over 3.5 million copies, including 750,000 in the first year. That its first boom occurred in the depression suggests that American ideals of success had not dissolved with the Crash but carried on and developed a modern salesmanship aspect in those years.[5]

One can, it seems, too easily emphasize the discontinuities of American experience in the thirties. To neglect continuities is to distort the past. When the Lynds returned to Middletown in 1935 to conduct another sociological investigation of the town they had studied in 1925, their results were surprising to many. Though one would expect substantial changes to have occurred in the turbulent decade that had elapsed, the Lynds found that "Middletown is overwhelmingly living by the values by which they lived in 1925."[6] Instead of attributing the depression to fundamental contradictions of capitalism, the citizens of Middletown apparently saw the economic breakdown as a temporary failure to be overcome by the values of hard work and individual conformity to social norms. The depression was for them a personal rather than a social failure.

A close look at America in the thirties reveals that the essence of the period is not to be found in its conservatism or radicalism (it had both), but in the very process of searching for a definition of America. In a seminal essay on America in the thirties, Warren Susman has argued that

> it is in fact possible to define as a key structural element in a historical reconstruction of the 1930's the effort to find, characterize, and adapt to an American Way of Life as distinguished from the material achievements (and the failures) of American industrial civilization.[7]

One of the roots of this attempt to create and define a distinctive American Way of Life lies in the early essays of Van Wyck Brooks. Allied to a circle of young cultural radicals like Randolph Bourne, Paul Rosenfeld, and Waldo Frank, Brooks wrote for the short-lived Seven Arts. In his 1915 book, America's Coming of Age, Brooks criticized the split in America between the highbrow and lowbrow, between high ideals and practical realities. Life in America, argued Brooks, had become profoundly split: theory--a person's ideals--had no effect on his actions in practical affairs. Ben Franklin and Jonathan Edwards had no common ground. What America needed was "a middle tradition, a tradition which effectively combined theory and action."[8] That tradition, said Brooks, could find its roots in the work of Walt Whitman, the only American artist to unify partly American ideals with realities.

The initial search for a "usable past" in the twenties was largely critical. Brooks himself wrote studies of Mark Twain and Henry James, decrying the pinched society that narrowed the talent and potential genius of each man. Though Lewis Mumford was more positive in assessing the contributions of 19th-century American writers in The Golden Day (1926), he often contrasted the creative

atmosphere of American life in the 1840s and 1850s with what he saw as the barrenness of America in the twenties. By the end of the twenties many exiled American artists had returned to their country, searching for alternatives to the often isolating and self-centered expatriate life in Paris.

The thirties saw these American artists--so often estranged from the dominant American business values in the twenties--return to the people. Whether the people they returned to were the proletariat or the middle class depended on the artist. But common to both was a rejection of the decadent and self-serving aesthetic attitudes of the twenties.

For many artistic exiles, their return was to the cultural roots they had rejected the decade before. The American Scene painters, some of whom had been artistic experimentalists in the twenties, stressed the importance of region in art after the Crash. Grant Wood argued in 1932 that an artist must paint the area he knows and of which he is a part. Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri was more truculent when, at the 1932 Federation of Arts Conference, he said:

> No American art can come to those who do not live an American life, who do not have an American psychology, who can not find in America justification of their lives.[9]

Love America, Benton seemed to counsel American painters, or leave it. The climate of opinion in the thirties turned the

eyes of artists to the problems and possibilities of their nation.

Closely related to the search for the American Way of Life was a psychological condition common to many in the thirties. The abruptness and intensity of economic collapse served to magnify the sense of isolation and alienation experienced by many in the thirties, an alienation that had been more bearable in more prosperous times. This fact, combined with the breakdown of community due to industrialization, urbanization and bureaucratization, led people to seek group identification. In addition to being a decade during which Americans searched for their unique way of life, then, the thirties were a decade of commitment. Identification with some social group seemed necessary for people; to deny group association was to invite charges of selfishness, lack of "concern" for people, aestheticism, or worse. In a country whose ideology of enlightened individualism often has tended toward personal atomization and social fragmentation, this trend toward commitment was an aberration. It did, however, provide people a sense of sharing the burdens, both mental and physical, brought on by the depression.

As mentioned above, for some people the group commitment in the early thirties took the form of identification with the proletariat. When the economic system was at its nadir in 1932 and 1933, the Marxist analysis of the inevitable destruction of capitalism and the consequent

proletarian revolution seemed inexorably to be unfolding in history. Edmund Wilson, one of the many who believed that capitalism was doomed and that Americans must seek true community, wrote in 1932 that "capitalism has run its course and we have got to imagine something better."[10]

When social thinkers combined personal commitment with a search for an American Way of Life in the early thirties, they occasionally developed original, provocative, and challenging ideas about humanizing American life. As Richard Pells has shown, a few thinkers like Lewis Mumford, John Dewey, Sidney Hook, and Reinhold Niebuhr emerged from the period of exhortation and polemics with cultural criticism that extended into the realm of social theory. By attempting to salvage what was good in liberalism and to combine it with the socialist tradition, these men balanced seemingly contradictory ideas about the individual and society, thought and action, Marxism and liberalism. Their contributions, rooted in the confusing and dark days of the early thirties, were the exception rather than the rule.[11]

From about 1935 or 1936 until our entry into war, however, the search for an American Way of Life and the need for group commitment took on an increasingly conservative tone. The search itself intensified, but it was accompanied with a decrease in radicalism and a consequent tendency to glorify anything American. In view of the increasingly urgent world situation, this rising pessimism about radical and liberal reform is understandable. When

placing the films I am writing about in context, perhaps the most important factor to remember is the increasing tendency to focus on foreign affairs and to turn away from problems of domestic reform.

It might be helpful to remember a few key events that led to the holocaust of World War Two. Hitler was given absolute power by the Reichstag in March, 1933, a day after FDR took office. The Spanish Civil War, in which the Communists began to appear as totalitarian as the Fascists, was fought from 1936 to 1939. The Munich accord was made in September, 1938, and England declared war on Germany in early September, 1939, only eight days after Hitler and Stalin signed their non-aggression pact. Finally, Japan, which had begun military operations in Manchuria in 1931 and signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany in 1936, attacked Pearl Harbor in December, 1941. In the face of this perpetual atmosphere of crisis and of the new media which brought the events to the American public with such total immediacy, it is not surprising that foreign affairs began to occupy a more important place in national debate.

Another factor helps to account for the decline of radicalism and of debate on domestic reform in the late thirties: the Popular Front policy of the Communist Party. Before 1935, the Communist Party's "third period" party line adopted a strategy of attacking social democrats in the depression. According to this approach, FDR was a "social fascist" and the whole New Deal a hopeless liberal attempt

to revive the already decayed capitalist system. By 1935, however, the increasing threat of Hitler and Mussolini led the Communist Party into its Popular Front period, in which cooperation with anti-fascist groups was deemed essential to defend against the ominous threats of fascism.[12]

This new policy of cooperation with bourgeois governments hastened the decline of radicalism and, paradoxically, spurred the development of a rosy view of American life. In fact, the Communist Party after 1935 tried its hardest to outdo all other groups in showing the intensity of its Americanism. Earl Browder's assertion that the Party "is really the only party entitled by its program and work to designate itself as 'sons and daughters of the American Revolution'" shows the extremity of their turnabout.[13]

One event illustrates graphically how far the Communist Party would go in affirming its connection to American traditions. In 1937, on the anniversary of Paul Revere's famous ride, a Young Communist League chapter in New York, noting the D.A.R.'s failure to commemorate the event, hired a man in colonial garb to ride a horse down Wall Street, bearing a sign reading: "The DAR forgets, but the YCL remembers."[14]

During the Popular Front period, the dominant Communist rhetoric appealed not to the "proletariat," but to the "people." The traditional authorities cited to bolster arguments were not Marx, Engels, and Lenin, but Jefferson, Jackson, and Lincoln. Instead of calling for proletarian

literature, critics praised folk songs and folk art. Local Communist Party chapters were discouraged from holding closed meetings in secret halls, but were urged instead to hold open meetings, where local residents would be invited to square dance. The Communist Party member in the Popular Front period was no different from any other local resident except that, as one pamphlet put it, he happened to believe in dialectical materialism. Though in terms of membership, this was a most successful time for the Party, its approach was almost indistinguishable from any anti-fascist liberal group. The effect of "Communism is 20th-Century Americanism" was to unite many diverse people against fascism but also to turn efforts away from critical analysis of the domestic problems of American society.[15]

Ironically, as the Popular Front period progressed, more and more Americans began to perceive Communism as simply another form of despotism. The news of the Moscow Trials, of repressive Communist treatment of other leftist groups (notably the Anarchists) in Spain, and finally, of the Nazi-Soviet Pact all led to a drastic decline in Communist support. Robert Skotheim has convincingly argued that there was in the late thirties a rediscovery of European totalitarianism in America, which led to the opinion that Communism and Fascism were merely left and right manifestations of the same repressive tendencies.[16] The effect of such a discovery was to start a general decline in liberal progressive reform and a rise in the

tendency to see America as the last bastion of world freedom, a "vital center" pinched between the mirror-image despotisms of Communism and Fascism. The roots of the American conservatism in the forties and fifties thus were nourished in and extend deeply into the cultural soil of the late thirties.

In light of this decline of radicalism and increased awareness of foreign threats, the search for an American Way of Life from 1936 to 1941 continued and even intensified in literature, scholarship, the visual arts, social thought, and all facets of American life.[17] Though it would be folly to attempt to illustrate this tendency in this brief space, I would like to mention perhaps the dominant mode of expression that characterized the search for an American Way of Life: the documentary.

The meaning of the term "documentary" ranges between two poles. One extreme type of document informs the intellect: timetables, hard news and almanacs all give facts. The other type informs the emotions: human interest stories, for example, arouse emotional response. Most documents, however, mediate between the two. William Stott has called this form--characteristic of expression in the thirties--the <u>social document</u>. These documents, he explains:

> increase our knowledge of public facts, but sharpen it with feeling; put us in touch witn the perennial human spirit, but show it struggling in a particular social context at a specific human moment. They sensitize our intellect (or educate our emotions) about actual life.[18]

In the thirties there was an emphatic tendency to confront actual human situations and human problems in art and reportage. In Whitman's words, the impulse was:

> to give ultimate vivification to facts, to science, to common lives, endowing them with the glows and glories and final illustriousness which belong to every real thing.[19]

That Whitman should make such a statement suggests that the documentary impulse, which is closely related to realism in the arts, was a factor before the turn of the century. In his study of American writing from 1890 to 1940, Alfred Kazin traced the realistic strain from Howells to Agee. "Our modern literature in America," he wrote, "was rooted in the 1880's and 1890's . . . in the need to learn what the reality of life was in the modern world." For Kazin, the tendency toward social documentary in the thirties was "largely the story of the American people as they came to understand it for themselves in a period of unprecedented crisis." This "extraordinary national self-scrutiny" was a reaction against the private escapism of the twenties, an honest attempt to deal with human problems in a historical situation.[20]

The impulse toward social documentation took many forms in the thirties, but most often it stressed sight and sound.[21] The introduction of radio in the early twenties and the talking film in 1927 signaled a transition from the Progressive generation, which was one of printed words, to the thirties generation, which was one of seeing

and hearing. The thirties were a decade of Fireside Chats, of the geometric human patterns of a Busby Berkely musical, of Amos and Andy, of soap operas, of gangsters careening around corners in their getaway cars with their machine guns spitting at their pursuers.

Radio in particular gained public support as a medium of information in the thirties, while the reputation of newspapers declined. In the early thirties many newspapers carried on a deliberate "blackout on current problems" in an attempt to downplay the degree of the economic crisis. In 1936 over 80% of all newspapers opposed FDR, which only intensified the public distrust of newspapers. In contrast, news on the radio was direct verbal communication, heard in actual voices. When Edward R. Murrow broadcast from a London rooftop during a German bombing in September, 1940, his urgent and intense delivery, coupled with the sound of bombs exploding in the background, made the world crisis seem alive and real to his listeners. The radio commentators--men like Murrow, Lowell Thomas, and H. V. Kaltenborn--vivified the fact for a decade that demanded the social documentary and the feeling of involvement in social affairs that it provided.[22]

The New Deal also stimulated the tradition of social documentation. FDR himself was a lover of facts. That he grasped reality through stories of individual cases is revealed by his tendency to send out officials for information on specific facts and his habit of illustrating his

fireside chats with stories about people who wrote to him. In addition, the WPA, which began in 1935, hired American writers and artists in many fields. Their efforts led to the collection of American folk songs, from murals painted on government buildings to plays performed by the Federal Theatre Project. These diverse modes of WPA expression, all a part of the search for an American Way of Life, help to explain why social documentation so often took on a pro-New Deal tinge.[23]

The social documentary impulse took many other forms in the thirties. Social scientists wrote on pressing human problems (the Lynd's Middletown in Transition and Dollard's Caste and Class in a Southern Town). Such documentary film-makers as Pare Lorentz, Robert Flaherty, and Paul Strand studied problems in the Dust Bowl and in the Spanish Civil War. A number of reporters traveled the country and wrote on the difficulties faced by the common man. One of the most popular forms, especially in the late thirties, was the documentary book, which contained both a narrative and photographs, the most outstanding achievement of which was James Agee and Walker Evans' Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.[24]

The cultural effect of social documentation was, like many cultural activities in the thirties, neither radical nor conservative in essence, but increasingly conservative as the decade wore on. Though there was in the tradition some attempt to grapple with the problems presented, quite

often the intent was simply to go through the motions of documentation. Speaking of documentary reportage, Stott notes that "it was plain that the chief end of such reportage would be descriptive, not instrumental. A reporter would go 'in search of America' . . . to locate and define it, not to change it."[25]

By the end of the decade, the documentary became another means of praising the superiority of American institutions over European barbarism. The documentary, writes Stott, "began as a way of calling attention to America's failures and ended by celebrating its successes." When Roy Stryker, head of a federal photography agency, instructed his men, he told them not to bother with the "odd or unusual," but instead to seek "the America of how to mine a piece of coal, grow a wheat field, or make an apple pie." By 1941 the American appetite for apple pie seemed insatiable.[26]

If the tendency of the social documentary was to glorify anything American as the war approached, it was typical of American culture in the period. The road of the thirties for many Americans progressed from identification with the dispossessed early in the decade to identification with anti-Fascists to a final identification with America itself. Richard Pells has astutely noted this common path when summarizing the direction taken by many American authors:

> If the writer's discomfort with solitude led him first to the working class and then to the Popular Front, it also accounted for the ease with which his literary radicalism could be converted into a defense of existing cultural standards. Where novelists, poets, and playwrights had been exhorted to create revolutionary works of art in the early 30s, they were now encouraged to immerse themselves in the mores and customs of the common man.[27]

Thus far I have deliberately neglected the cultural significance of Hollywood and its films in the late thirties. Certainly the movies stood in close relation to the cultural developments I have just traced--the decline of radicalism from 1936 to 1941, the increasing attention to foreign threats, the stress on defining an American Way of Life in times of crisis, the importance of personal commitment to group causes, the impulse toward social documentation. We can now move on to a look at the relation of Hollywood and its films to these cultural currents, and the place of Ford, Chaplin, Capra, and Welles in the industry itself.

II

> The camera seems to me, next to unassisted and weaponless consciousness, the central instrument of our time.
> --James Agee[28]

As mentioned above, the thirties were a decade when sight and sound predominated in art and communication. More direct and personal than print, sight and sound gave Americans a sense of actual participation in social problems that was desperately needed by many in the thirties. And no other medium so effectively used both as the Hollywood

feature film. From the late thirties to the end of World War Two movies reached their apogee as an American popular art.

A simple comparison gives an idea of just how widespread the habit of moviegoing was in the thirties. In 1938 there were over 80 million admissions per week in U.S. theaters, representing 65% of the total American population. By 1968, the figure had dropped to 20 million, only 10%. In 1937 over 500 feature films were produced in the United States; in 1969 the number was less than 175. With production, distribution and exhibition all united and controlled by Hollywood (with financial backing in New York), the cultural influence of movies was as profound in the late thirties as television is today.[29]

It is significant that the depression never immobilized Hollywood as it did most other industries. In 1929 the movie industry, having just switched to the talkies, was artistically in a period of transition, but business--in part due to the innovation--was never better. Not until 1931 did Hollywood begin to feel the crunch: Fox saw its 9.2 million dollar profit in 1930 melt into a 5.5 million dollar loss in 1931; Warner's went from a 17.2 million dollar profit to a 7.2 million dollar loss. Hollywood continued to suffer until 1933, with 1932 the darkest year.[30]

But after FDR took office, the industry began to recover. Exhibitors began to use such gimmickry as bank

night and screeno (types of giveaway contests) to lure in customers. Double features became common. While unemployment remained high and many industries stagnant, the movie industry was surprisingly strong. In 1937, the trade magazine Variety summed up the condition of the industry:

> while the theaters were the last to feel the pinch of the depression they have been in the vanguard of industries emerging the earliest. . . . With the dawn of 1937 the position of pictures in all particulars compares very favorably with 1929.[31]

Except for the recession of late 1937 and early 1938, Hollywood had nothing but good news about domestic attendance. In 1939--the year of Gone With the Wind--Hollywood had a bonanza year, with profits slightly down in 1940 and a recovery in 1941.[32] Though it is true that as the war approached, foreign markets began to dwindle, only after 1946 did the Hollywood Golden Era begin to decline because of a number of factors, including the beginnings of television, the traumas of government anti-trust actions, and the depletion of talent (especially among screenwriters) after blacklisting.

In order to keep attendance levels as high as they were in the thirties, Hollywood had to make a lot of movies. According to one estimate, over 7,500 feature films emanated from Hollywood between 1930 and 1945.[33] And to make that many movies, even if many of them were low-budget, quickly-shot "B" films, an efficient system of production had to be in operation. The structure that made possible most of the Hollywood films in the thirties was the studio system.

By the mid-thirties eight studios made nearly all of the Hollywood films: M-G-M, Warners, Paramount, 20th Century Fox, RKO, Columbia, Universal, and United Artists. Each of them had on contract workers in all facets of film-making from the stars and directors to the cameramen, set designers, technicians, script girls, and laborers. In addition, some studios developed distinctive styles. M-G-M, the richest studio with the biggest stars (Garbo, Norma Shearer, Jeannette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy), did films with a polish and technical skill that was unsurpassed in the thirties. Paramount was European in style and approach: many of its key directors and technicians--Lubitsch, Murnau, Paul Leni--came from Paramount's German sister company UFA-EFA. If M-G-M appealed to the middle-class and Paramount, the upper class, Warners aimed at the working class audience. It specialized in gangster films, Busby Berkely musicals and topical "realistic"films starring people like Jimmy Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, and Bette Davis.[34]

The studio system was both a blessing and a curse. It did give talented people access to equipment and money for making a film that they otherwise would not have had. It also on occasion brought together just the right people to make a successful and provocative film. But it also could be repressive and constricting for a person, especially a director who was interested in retaining his creative integrity. Between 1930 and 1939, Michael Curtiz directed 44 films and Mervyn LeRoy, 36. One can not make that

many movies without often becoming mechanical and uninspiring.

Granted that the studio system could be very restrictive and that most studio directors were not too creative, some directors did attempt to challenge the treatment they received by the studios. By 1936 a group of about 100 (of 250 total) Hollywood directors had organized a Screen Directors Guild, with men like John Ford, Lewis Milestone, and King Vidor as officers. Just like the Actors and the Writers Guilds, they were seeking recognition from the producers, hoping to bargain for better conditions.[35]

In 1938, the year before it gained recognition, the Guild released a paper which argued that the producer-oriented structure of the industry was "an involved, complicated, and expensive system of supervision which separates the director and writer from the responsible executive producers." Most of the producers, it went on, "have been promoted to positions of authority for which they are unqualified, inexperienced, and utterly lacking in creative ability." The paper compared the year 1926-27, when 34 producers delivered 743 features, to 1936-37, when 220 producers did 484 features: about seven times more producers made half as many films in 1936-37. Granted that the first statistics treated silent features, the rise is still amazing.[36] By the late thirties some of the top directors like Ford, Capra, Leo McCarey, and Lubitsch were

avoiding the producer-director conflict by producing their own films. One of the interesting phenomena in Hollywood during the thirties was the friction between the directors, who wanted a greater creative freedom, and the studios, who were putting up the money.

In spite of the conflict, however, the nation's movie houses in the late thirties were the meeting halls for children and adults alike, a place where people could engage themselves in a level of reality apart from the monotony and worry of everyday life. One movie-goer has recalled how intense was the spell woven by such stars as Nelson Eddy and Jeannette MacDonald. "It was not unusual," she remembers, "to find a teenager who could--God save us--go word for word through the book and lyrics of Naughty Marietta."[37]

Indeed, Hollywood was an American frontier, sandwiched in time between the frontier of the West and the frontier of space, a place where American dreams were mass-produced for the millions. It is impossible to gauge precisely the powerful effect that Hollywood had on the hopes and aspirations of Americans in the thirties. Poet John Clellon Holmes, speaking from personal experience, says that "the experience of movie going in the thirties and early forties . . . gave us all a fantasy life in common, from which we are still dragging up the images that obsess us." In a statement that contains at least a grain of truth, he also suggests that "the movies of the thirties constitute, for my generation, nothing less than a kind of Jugian collective unconscious,

a decade of coming attractions out of which some of the truths of our maturity have been formed."[38] It is not unreasonable to speculate that one way of seeking to understand the experience and attitudes of the generation that reached maturity in the late thirties is to study the cultural images, symbols, and stories that flashed on thousands of movie screens across the nation in the decade before World War Two. Though many remember these movies in the thirties as "escapist," such is hardly the case, particularly in the late thirties. It is true that some of the most popular movies in the early thirties--those of the Marx Brothers and Mae West and the Busby Berkely musicals, even the gangster films--hardly seemed to take seriously the economic and social ills pervading the country. But as Andrew Bergman has argued in his short study of the cultural significance of film cycles in the thirties, "escapism" is hardly a useful critical term: even the most frivolous popular movies bear a relation to society, since people do not escape into something they can not relate to.[39]

Even in the early thirties some movies attempted to deal with contemporary social and political issues. Mervyn LeRoy's I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang (1932) dealt with a returning war veteran who, unable to find work, resorts to stealing and is caught. After twice spending time in a chain gang and twice escaping, the hero (Paul Muni) finds himself alone in depression America. The last shot is of Muni disappearing into darkness after a short visit to his

second wife. When she asks him how he survives, he replies abruptly, "I steal."

Besides the prison cycle of the early thirties and the first cycle of gangster films, each of which depended on a certain harsh realism, a short cycle advocating a return to the land appeared in 1933 and 1934. Besides Stranger's Return and State Fair (both 1933), King Vidor's Our Daily Bread was a part of the cycle.[40] The Vidor movie showed the development of a cooperative farm peopled by victims of the depression. Its rejection of individualism and defense of a cooperative economic approach in times of trouble makes it atypical in American film history. Indeed, Vidor had an extremely difficult time finding backers for the film--he could get no loans until he had gotten the support of a man as financially solid as Chaplin--and the Hearst press immediately jumped on it as "pinko" after its release.[41] Nonetheless, the images of a community working together, expressed when the people dig a two-mile trench to irrigate their dying corn crop, was Vidor's way of dealing seriously with a topic of fundamental importance to the early depression years.

After FDR's reelection in 1936, however, American movies became topical and "concerned" on a much broader scale than in the early thirties. One reason for this change was the politicization of Hollywood in the mid-thirties. In his study of Marxism in the U.S., Daniel Bell has argued that Marxist influence in the depression developed

in several successive waves. The first wave swept across the country in the early thirties, influencing literary people concerned mainly with self-expression, men such as Edmund Wilson, John Dos Passos, and Sherwood Anderson. After these men became disillusioned in the mid-thirties, a second wave influenced slick writers, stage people, actors, and Hollywood. These groups, argues Bell, gained "excitement, purpose, and equally important, 'answers' to the world's problems" from causes.[42] In essence Hollywood discovered personal commitment at about the same time as the Popular Front period began and, ironically enough, as radicalism in American culture generally began to decline.

The memoirs of Harold Clurman, the director of the Group Theatre who spent some time in Hollywood in the mid-thirties, would seem to support Bell's contention. In 1935, Clurman wrote, "Hollywood was the symbol in the show world of money-making unrelated to any other ideal." But when he visited Hollywood in 1937, he found that "Hollywood was in the throes of a social consciousness of which the Spanish situation was the fiery focus."[43]

The abrupt political change in Hollywood is related to several events. The first was a reaction against the activities of producers during the 1934 California gubernatorial campaign, in which radical Upton Sinclair and his EPIC (End Poverty in California) movement had won support of the Democratic Party. Not only did the industry's czars contribute to Republican Frank Merriam's campaign (and even

more, require that actors also contribute), they also smeared Sinclair by making "newsreels" showing shiftless bearded vagrants marching to California, ready to share the wealth. By developing this more overt form of political action, the industry helped to defeat Sinclair, but also managed to alienate a number of actors and writers, some of whom even organized a Sinclair Committee.[44]

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 also politicized Hollywood. In that year the Anti-Nazi League, headed by Dashiell Hammett, was formed. It not only urged an end to the embargo on Spain so that supplies could be sent there, but also called for a boycott of Japanese goods and an embargo on the sale of arms to Japan. The League united a broad spectrum of Hollywood types, from radical screenwriters to New Dealers to Republican producers. The organization was influential for several years, playing a key role in mobilizing opposition to both Leni Reifenstahl, the German documentary director, and Vittorio Mussolini, the bomber pilot-film director son of Il Duce. Only after the Stalin-Hitler pact did the Anti-Nazi League begin to crumble.

Finally, the enactment of the Wagner Act in November, 1935, which ensured the legality of labor unions and the right to bargain collectively, spurred a good deal of labor activity in Hollywood between 1936 and 1941. As mentioned earlier, the studio system could easily lead to arbitrary and draconian practices on the part of the producers. The

studio setup was essentially feudal in many respects, and the attempts of the Screen Director's, Actor's, and Writer's Guilds to be recognized by the producers began in earnest after the Wagner Act was passed.

Much of this political activity was pro-New Deal, and, as such, a reflection of the national unity forged by FDR after 1936. In these Popular Front days radicals and liberals were working together to combat the fascist threat. But by 1939, Hollywood had to reckon with the charges of Congressman Martin Dies that many Hollywood figures were Communists. All through 1939 and into 1940, Dies suggested a strong influence of Communism in Hollywood, accusing even cherub-faced Shirley Temple of being used by the Communist Party. Though Dies never proved any specific charges, his accusations made headlines throughout the summer of 1940, making Hollywood uneasy and providing domestic fascist groups with the theme song, "Reds in Hollywood." Though such accused actors as Jimmy Cagney, Melvyn Douglas, Franchot Tone, and Humphrey Bogart were eventually cleared by a Dies statement, the whole phenomenon tended to move the Hollywood political tone into a more centrist and Americanist position, just as the country itself was moving toward war.[45]

All these factors had an effect on the type of movies made by Hollywood between 1936 and 1941. In many ways Hollywood was responding to the same impulse toward social documentation and toward a definition of the American Way

of Life that was mentioned above. The mood was optimistic, democratic, critical of self-serving and greedy businessmen, supportive of the common man. As the decade wore on, there was, in Arthur Knight's words, "a forthright expression of the inherent strength of democracy to bring about national recovery and a solution to these problems."[46]

Perhaps the most graphic way of showing how Hollywood turned about from 1936 to 1941 is to compare top-grossing pictures of 1935 and 1941. According to Variety, the leading money-makers of 1935 were Mutiny on the Bounty, Top Hat (Astaire and Rogers), David Copperfield, Lives of a Bengal Lancer, China Seas, Curly Top (Shirley Temple), and G-Men. This was the first full year after the Hays Code began to be enforced, curbing sex and violence on the screen. These top movies were either light entertainment featuring a dancer like Astaire or a child star like Temple, movies based on literary classics or historical themes, or gangster films.[47]

In contrast, the leading grossers in 1941 were Sergeant York, The Great Dictator, Honky Tonk, A Yank in the R.A.F., Philadelphia Story, Dive Bomber, Caught in the Draft. Though all these movies were released before Pearl Harbor, only Honky Tonk, which featured Clark Gable, and Cukor's Philadelphia Story, with Katherine Hepburn, Jimmy Stewart, and Cary Grant, lacked direct treatment of war themes. Hawks' Sergeant York was based on the story of World War One hero Alvin York and starred Gary Cooper as the Southern pacifist

who finally chooses to join the army and fight for his nation. The eyes of the country had turned to visions of war.[48]

Besides the musicals (the most popular teams being Astaire-Rogers and Eddy-MacDonald), the literary adaptations of classical novels and plays (which were popular in the first few years after the Code), and the child star movies (Shirley Temple and Mickey Rooney were both the top drawing stars for more than one year), several types of movies were popular from 1936 to 1941. What follows is not a general history of Hollywood movies during the period, but rather a brief summary of how the movies contributed to the search for an American Way of Life and to the broader cultural impulse toward social documentation.

In the early days of Hollywood's social commitment after the formation of the Anti-Nazi League, a number of movies dealing with themes of social injustice or social problems gained prominance. Two types predominated. The first took an environmentalist point of view towards crime and juvenile delinquency. Fritz Lang's <u>You Only Live Once</u> dealt with a criminal who, when released from prison, finds himself boxed in by society, forced to live again as a criminal. One critic, admiring Henry Fonda's performance and Lang's subtle expression of his bleak world view, has called the film "one of the great films of the thirties."[49] In the same genre, Wyler's <u>Dead End</u> (1937) and Curtiz's

Angels With Dirty Faces (1938) both suggested that juvenile delinquency results from poor social conditions.

A second type dealt with mob behavior and lynching. Winterset (1936) was based loosely on the Sacco-Vanzetti case, and LeRoy's They Won't Forget, on the Southern small town. In the LeRoy film, a Southern lawyer (Claude Rains) is intent on making a political career by convicting a Northerner of a crime he did not commit. LeRoy implicitly suggested that federal benevolence and anti-lynch legislation (which had been filibustered by Southern Senators in 1935) were the answers to mob behavior. Fritz Lang's Fury was not so optimistic. Like the LeRoy film, it dealt with lynching in a Southern town; but except for its pasted-on happy ending, the film portrayed the irrational nature of mob behavior with devastating accuracy.[50]

Another popular genre in the late thirties was the biography of a famous person. Usually these biographies dealt with important people in a common context; often, as the decade wore on, they championed their dedication to humanity and to vaguely democratic ideals. Among many others, the most well-known was the Paul Muni trilogy: The Life of Louis Pasteur (1936), Emile Zola (1937), and Juarez (1939). The first showed the dedication of a scientist who fights against ignorance and elitism in his profession to discover ways of helping humanity. Zola focused on one man's fight against anti-Semitism and for truth and justice.

In keeping with the patriotic surge which swept the country in 1939 and 1940--Hollywood's most intense expression of searching for America--Juarez was a topical battle between the democrat peasant leader and the dictatorial Emperor. Biographies of American heroes became so popular that in early 1939 biographies of Grant, Sam Houston, Lincoln (two), Alexander Graham Bell, Buffalo Bill, and even Postmaster James A. Farley were in the works.[51] Sergeant York, mentioned above, was very much a part of this trend, as was Ford's Young Mr. Lincoln, and in some ways, Citizen Kane, though the attitude Welles took toward his hero was very different from the norm.

Besides the biographies, Hollywood sought out the essence of America and displayed its patriotism (in part as a response to Dies) through movies on the American past, including westerns. Though westerns have become our national epic in the 20th century, their popularity has fluctuated through time. After the inception of the talkies, westerns--which often depend on landscape and movement for much of their effect--declined in importance for almost a decade. Though many low-budget westerns began to appear in the mid-thirties as fillers in double features, few studios spent big money or invested their big stars in westerns until 1939.

Suddenly, westerns became the genre. The top directors and top stars began to work on westerns. In less

than two years these westerns appeared: Ford's Stagecoach, Vidor's Northwest Passage, Marshall's Destry Rides Again, Lang's The Return of Frank James and Western Union, Wyler's The Westerner, Dwan's Frontier Marshall, and Bacon's The Oklahoma Kid. Among the stars working on these films were John Wayne, Marlene Dietrich, Jimmy Stewart, Jimmy Cagney, and Humphrey Bogart. Nelson Eddy even made a western musical in 1939--Let Freedom Ring--which concluded with the evil capitalists slinking out of sight and Eddy giving a stirring rendition of "America."[52] Lewis Jacobs found that in 1939 Americanism was increasing so monumentally that many theaters had begun to open and close their movies with a flag waving on the screen, accompanied by a chorus singing the national anthem.[53]

Along with westerns, other movies scoured the American past for themes and topics. In The Prisoner of Shark Island (1936), John Ford told the story of Dr. Samuel Mudd, who was imprisoned for treating the wound of John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln's assassin. Later, in Drums Along the Mohawk (1939), Ford studied the travails of life in the Mohawk Valley during the Revolutionary War. Wyler's The Little Foxes (1940) starred Bette Davis and dealt with a decaying and cruel aristocratic family in the old South. But the culmination of the historical films was undoubtedly Gone With the Wind (1939), the romanticized recreation of the South during the Civil War, the American film probably seen by more people

more times than any other. Its vital mixture of a story of unfulfilled love, an epic national conflict, an evocation of a lost way of life, and an upbeat ending ("tomorrow is another day") makes it the popular culmination of American historical movies in the thirties.

A final trend in Hollywood movie making; closely related to the histories of the late thirties and early forties, was the war movie. Before 1938, Hollywood was hesitant to make any movies about a war that was still being fought. Because much of Hollywood's box office came from foreign countries--Germany and Italy as well as France and England--it was financially unwise to risk alienating any country engaged in a war or sympathetic to one side. Will Hays, as representative of the industry, repeated constantly through 1938 that Hollywood was in business for entertainment, not for propaganda.

But a combination of factors led to a situation whereby war films were permitted and even encouraged by 1939 and especially after 1940. First was a general cultural recognition of the rising threat of totalitarianism that we have already discussed. The American audience was thinking about the German threat and gradually became willing to pay for movies about the evils of fascism. Second, Germany and Italy began to ban American films. As these foreign sources of income began to dry up, Hollywood felt less bad about keeping neutral--an anti-fascist stance could no longer lose money in places where the films were banned--and even

began to cultivate and expand the American and Latin American audiences to make up for losses in Europe. One industry analyst noted that the beginning of war in Europe both cut the foreign market and expanded the domestic one.[54]

It is clear that economic factors played a big part in the loosening of Hollywood's restrictions against controversial war films. Two statements by Will Hays suggest how Hollywood began to sense a new market in 1939. In his annual statement to the public in 1938, Hays was still critical of movies that were too overtly political: "Entertainment is the commodity for which the public pays at the box office. Propaganda disguised as entertainment would be neither honest salesmanship nor honest showmanship." However, in his report a year later Hays proudly endorsed the new group of films "which discussed the values of our present-day democracy and emphasized the traditions that have made this country great."[55] It seems that propaganda, after it began to sell in 1939, suddenly became good and honest showmanship.

This change in temper encouraged a slow increase in war movies. Before 1939, the only real war movie on a current conflict was Blockade (1938), produced by Walter Wanger, a strong advocate of intervention. The movie was extremely discrete in its topicality, so much so that at times one wondered which side was which. Nonetheless, its defense--however veiled--of the Spanish Loyalists created a furor when it was released.[56]

When Warner Brothers sought to throw light on Nazi sabotage in the U.S. in Confessions of a Nazi Spy (1939), many still criticized it as propaganda.[57] By 1940, however, anti-fascist movies became more common: that was the year of The Great Dictator, Four Sons, Mortal Storm, Foreign Correspondent, and Escape. The first was Chaplin's satire of Hitler, to be discussed later. Both Mortal Storm and Four Sons treated the impact of Nazism on family relationships of Europeans. Foreign Correspondent was Hitchcock's contribution to the defense of England; the suspense film concluded with Joel McRae broadcasting to America from London at the height of the Blitz, asking for aid. LeRoy's Escape followed an American's attempt to rescue a woman from the grasping clutches of the Nazis.[58] After 1940, the war movie became a staple--between 1942 and 1945, about 500 of the 1700 movies made in Hollywood were war movies.[59]

Between 1936 and 1941, then, Hollywood began to respond often to "social issues." The topical films, the histories, the biographies and the war films all demonstrated the trend. For most liberals, this was a good sign, suggesting the growing maturity of Hollywood. Lewis Jacob's conclusion to The Rise of the American Film in 1939 accurately sums up the liberal-progressive attitude to the new movies:

> The graveness of the past ten years has seen the content of movies take on a more serious tone. A depression-hit America has focused the movies' attention upon social corruption, economic discrepancies, political maladjustments, and has started a search for a code of personal and social values that will

> not rest entirely on sex and affluence. A fascist-threatened world has brought to films, as to the nation, a respect for force and an intense interest in war, nationalism, democracy.[60]

Though one can hardly deny that the Hollywood movies in the late thirties were democratized, if one means by the term that the common man was championed and the social or economic elitist was often scorned, the ideological ends of the movies were often more conservative than the liberals hoped, especially as the decade wore on. Though the original liberal intent was to show one's "concern" over social problems by making movies (or literature, or documentaries, or plays, or whatever) about the world's problems in hopes that they would thus be solved, the resulting movies often told a different story. The trend that William Stott noticed in thirties documentaries also seems recognizable in the Hollywood movie industry: the topical and social urgings "began as a way of calling attention to America's failures and ended by celebrating its successes."[61] The process which began as a critical questioning of American life gradually developed into a glorification of the American Way of Life as we entered the war.

It is within this context of American culture and Hollywood itself that the directors we will discuss worked. A few of their movies have already been mentioned; before beginning with Chaplin, we should make explicit which movies will be treated in the study.

Between 1936 and 1941, Charles Chaplin made two films: Modern Times (1936) and The Great Dictator (1941). Both of these films are interesting responses of a great film director and actor to his times. Chapter two will focus on Chaplin and his two films.

John Ford was a studio director, though notoriously curt and short-tempered with producers who tried to interfere with his work. Though he made 14 movies between 1936 and 1941, we will examine only five of his films in that period. These movies correspond to Ford's most popular period, and in my judgement collectively represent one of the most creative short periods for a single director in the history of the American film. In addition, each movie bears an interesting relation to broader cultural concerns. The five films to be treated in chapters three and four are Stagecoach, Young Mr. Lincoln, Drums Along the Mohawk (all 1939), The Grapes of Wrath (1940), and How Green Was My Valley (1941).

The most popular American director of comedies in the late thirties--after Leo McCarey and before Preston Sturges--Frank Capra has been underrated by film critics. As perhaps no other director who worked within the studio system in the thirties, Capra's movies bear the imprint of a unique and distinct sensibility. Because he did much to build Columbia from a two-bit independent into a major studio, Capra received virtual carte blanche from studio head Harry Cohn. Chapters five and six focus on Capra's five films of the

period: Mr. Deeds Goes to Town (1936), Lost Horizon (1937), You Can't Take It With You (1938), Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939), and Meet John Doe (1941).

Finally, Orson Welles was already an established virtuoso in both radio and the theater when he burst into Hollywood in 1940. Hired by RKO to help the company escape financial catastrophe, Welles was given complete control of his first film; the result, Citizen Kane (1941), is an American masterpiece. Chapter seven will study Kane and Welles' second film, The Magnificent Ambersons, which was was shot in 1941 but not released until early 1942.

Because the choice of these particular four directors may seem arbitrary, let me give an indication of why they were chosen over directors like Hawks, Milestone, Lang, Lubitsch, and a number of others. My primary consideration was the creation of a unified vision, a "symbolic universe," that the director expressed both in the form and content of his films over a period of time. Chaplin, Capra, and Welles all had an unusual degree of control over their movies and were all able to impress their sensibilities on their films. Ford had less control than the others over many of his films and, unlike them, often made movies adapted from popular novels (though Welles adapted Ambersons and Capra, Lost Horizon). Nonetheless, his films play upon one another to an amazing degree. His style and his attitude toward his subject are evident in all five movies treated in the study.

A second consideration was the director's interest in problems of culture and society. All four directors studied below took seriously the social problems evident in the modern world and expressed a social vision in their movies. Chaplin and Welles were both critical of the modern world, and their films attacked society and conventional values through satire and even, at times, through cynicism. Their films contributed little of positive value to the search for the American Way of Life, except for elements of The Great Dictator. Capra and Ford were much more in the American vein: Capra spent much effort trying to portray the good and the bad in modern America, while Ford more characteristically looked for and found lasting values in treatments of the American past. Better than any other Hollywood directors between 1936 and 1941, these four showed how film could be a director's form of artistic expression and of cultural communication to a popular audience.

CHAPTER II

CHAPLIN: THE TRAMP TURNS SOCIAL

> Viewed as a whole, Chaplin's career is a cinematic biography on the highest level of artistic expression.
>
> --Andrew Sarris

The achievement of Chaplin is best placed in perspective by calling him the Shakespeare of film comedians. Like Shakespeare, he developed his art in an extremely fruitful creative environment. Both the Elizabethan stage and the silent film comedy had numerous talented practitioners, but Chaplin and Shakespeare both stood a cut above their rivals, both in breadth and the quality of their work.

Chaplin's creative verve spanned four decades; he directed and acted in his own films from the beginnings of Hollywood until after television and the breakup of the studio system began to erode the popularity of films in the fifties. Following a childhood of poverty, his early financial success enabled him to amass a personal fortune that freed him from the economic limitations imposed on most Hollywood directors. As a result, his films are personal artistic expressions as perhaps no other films in American--and perhaps even world--film history. Not only did he write, direct, and act in all of his films, he also composed his

own scores after sound was introduced. From this total control and activity came the highly personal films of Charles Spencer Chaplin.

The universal character of Chaplin's achievement is attested to by the mounds of Chaplin criticism and biography that began appearing even before 1920. The book has yet to be written, however, that adequately studies Chaplin in the context of his times. In many ways, a close study of Chaplin's life and films reveals a great deal about American cultural and social history from the progressive age to Chaplin's triumphant return to the United States for a visit in 1972.[1]

Besides City Lights (1931), which he began before the Crash, Chaplin made two films in the depression: Modern Times (1936) and The Great Dictator (1940). As mentioned in the first chapter, the thirties were a decade in which artists began to consider seriously problems of society in their work to a greater degree than in the twenties. Through the impulse toward social documentation, artists showed that they cared about the difficulties facing society and wanted to help alleviate them. Chaplin, too, was affected by this trend: Modern Times and The Great Dictator were his responses to what he considered the chief social threats to humane living in the world. He used his comic talents "for the people" by applying them to the growing dominance of machines in society and to the Fascist threat presented by Hitler.

At the same time that Chaplin faced these moral and social dilemmas, he was challenged by a major aesthetic problem. After the introduction of sound to the movies--ironically a technological development--Chaplin was forced to confront the question of what role sound and specifically speech had in his art. Until City Lights Chaplin's art was exclusively visual--pantomime supplemented by minimal titles told the whole story. In City Lights Chaplin did compose his first score, but he continued to resist the temptation to talk.[2] Only in the next two films did he gradually break his silence. The way he began to use dialogue and what he expressed in doing so are the major questions we will consider in this chapter.

I

The cinematic visions created by a director are inevitably influenced by his background and experience. Because of this, any cultural study of a filmmaker must attend to the biographical factors that helped to make him what he was. The environment he grows and matures in, the people with whom he associates, and the events of the times that influence his consciousness, all take on a significance when considering a talented director's films. In the case of Chaplin, whose control over his films was as complete as any one man's can be in the complex process of making a film, this is doubly true.

Born on April 16, 1889 (four days before Hitler--another wry coincidence fostered by history), Charles Spencer Chaplin, Jr., was the son of two vaudevillians. His father was from an Anglicized French Jewish family and was well known as a music-hall singer in the 1880's. Hannah, his mother, was of Spanish and Irish descent, and was also a singer and dancer in various troupes, working under the stage name of Lily Harley. Charles was raised with a half-brother, Sidney (from Hannah's earlier marriage), four years his elder.[3]

Chaplin barely remembers his father, "a quiet, brooding man with dark eyes," who had high hopes for success as a singer, who loved music, but who never made it to the top. As times got rougher for him in the 1890's, he began to drink heavily and was separated from his wife, only sporadically giving Hannah and the sons any support thereafter. He died in London's St. Thomas Hospital when his son was only ten. In his study of the Chaplin "epos" Parker Tyler makes a convincing case that Chaplin's work is deeply affected by the loss of his father in his early years.[4]

After Chaplin's parents separated, his mother continued to support her children by singing. Since she was something of a success, earning 25 pounds a week at one point, this was not too difficult until she began having trouble with her voice. Even after small colds, she began getting laryngitis, often for weeks at a time. Once, while performing, her voice cracked to a whisper and Charles, Jr.,

a five-year-old waiting in the wings for his mother, made his stage debut singing a ditty called "Jack Jones."[5]

After Hannah lost her singing voice, thus losing her means of supporting her children, life on Kennington Road became difficult. The mother and two sons came upon hard times and all went to the Lambeth Workhouse when Chaplin was six. When the boys were separated from their mother and sent to the Hanwell Residential School for Orphans and Destitute Children, Chaplin had sad and empty days. After Hannah's health improved, she took her boys out of Hanwell, supporting them by sewing. At seven, Charles joined a music-hall group called "The Eight Lancashire Lads," and his stage career began. One day he returned to see his mother, and the house was empty. Hannah's mind had failed, and she had been taken to an institution.[6]

After living "like a Dickens waif on the London streets" for a time, Chaplin got another stage job and gradually worked his way up to a job with the Karno Company. Fred Karno was a top theatrical figure in England. While building up his reputation with the Karno Company, Chaplin had his first love affair. The object of his adoration was Hetty Kelly, a dancer in a troupe that performed just before Chaplin's act. After a short and ideal romance that Chaplin recalls fondly in his autobiography, Hetty turned down his marriage proposal, and he never saw her again. Clearly the idealized view of women apparent in Chaplin's films is related to the romantic memories of that unfulfilled love affair.[7]

Legend sometimes assumes that Chaplin dropped into Hollywood--god-like from the skies--and started making brilliant comic movies with no previous experience. Though it is true that Chaplin had done no work on movies, he was an established music-hall comedian when he left the touring Karno Company in Kansas City on November 28, 1913, and headed for Hollywood after signing a contract with Mack Sennett. Sennett had been having trouble with his star film comic, Ford Sterling, and hoped that Chaplin might develop enough talent to help keep Sterling in line.[8]

The rest is familiar history. Beginning at $150 per week, Chaplin soon developed his tramp character, crudely at first, and was directing his own films. After leaving Keystone, Chaplin made fourteen shorts for Essanay, twelve for Mutual, and in 1917 signed a one million dollar contract, with complete artistic freedom, to make eight films for First National. In 1919 he formed, along with Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and D. W. Griffith--the top stars and the top director of the day--United Artists Company. All of his films from A Woman of Paris (1923) to Limelight (1952) were made independently at Chaplin's La Brea Avenue studio and released through United Artists. A King in New York (1957) and Countess From Hong Kong (1963, starring Marlon Brando and Sophia Loren) were both made out of the country. In 1972 Chaplin returned to America after his self-imposed exile of twenty years and received a tremendous welcome in

New York and Hollywood. Since 1953, he has lived in a chateau in Vevey, Switzerland.[9]

II

The best way to approach Chaplin's work in the late thirties is to recognize that the central index of Chaplin's response to his times is found in his treatment of his tramp character (or his variation). In fact, one need not exaggerate to say that the genius of Chaplin as a filmmaker resides in his main character, the tramp. Andrew Sarris noted just this point when he wrote that "for Chaplin, his other self on the screen has always been the supreme object of contemplation."[10]

From the day of the tramp's creation, he was in conflict with society. Chaplin recalls telling people on the first day he used the tramp costume that he was "always hopeful of adventure and romance," though society rarely allowed his dreams to come true.[11] The very visual impression that the tramp makes reinforces his relation with society. Though the clothes he wears--suit, derby, cane--would seem to qualify him as a respectable member of society, the fit excludes him. On top, his hat is too small, creating an air of tentativeness, while on the bottom, his shoes are many sizes too large, making his dexterous attempts at escape seem even more remarkable. The visual contrasts hold also with the coat and pants: the coat is tight, emphasizing his tiny stature when compared

with other men, and his pants balloon. The omnipresent cane--when compared to the tramp's otherwise shabby dress--gives him a hint of gentility in his poverty, allowing him to maintain a measure of dignity even in the most trying circumstances.

This unassuming and battered character became a mythic hero for 20th-century Americans, appealing to an urban audience in much the same way as Paul Bunyan, Davy Crockett, and Mike Fink had captured the imagination of the expanding America of the 19th century. In contrast to these earlier heroes, who exemplified the values of self-reliance, activity, and westward movement toward a progressively better life--the ideal mythos for a country with vast expanses of free land and a rapidly developing economy--Chaplin's tramp was cast in an entirely different mold. In an urbanizing industrial age, people began to feel less certain of the control over forces that affected their lives; they began to feel trapped by institutions. The tramp, physically small (in stark contrast to the burly and over-muscled 19th-century heroes) is constantly a victim of social storms that toss him about but never succeed entirely in subduing him. By refusing to bow to the forces that oppress him, the tramp became an underdog hero of unparalleled popularity to the early film-going audience in America, a battered and beleaguered man who represented their fears about the confusions and conflicts of the machine age.[12]

From Chaplin's early films through City Lights, the tension between the tramp and society was constant, but any criticism of society was only implicit. Though The Idle Class satirized the rich, and The Pilgrim, puritanical religion, the satire was gentle and no explicit condemnation of society in general could be drawn. But with the depression, the situation changed: Chaplin began to use his tramp for more explicit topical themes and social criticism. In doing so, Chaplin was responding to the same impulse toward social documentation--the picturing of human problems in realistic situations to show the artist's concern--that affected so many other American artists in the depression. Instead of continuing the comic and essentially innocent relationship between the tramp and society that was characteristic of his earlier films, Chaplin felt that the times demanded a change. In his perceptive essay on the development of the tramp character from City Lights to Monsieur Verdoux, Robert Warshow summed up the new social pressures working on artists during the depression:

> The society, seeing in the individual both an indispensible instrument and a constant danger, would find it necessary to take a more active and organized interest in all his concerns and the individual would be forced thereby to assume a position: he would have to be for or against the society, and his decision would immediately become the determining factor in his life and the defining element of his character.[13]

According to Warshow's interpretation, social institutions were encroaching more and more upon people's lives in the thirties and that fact--combined with the increasing

immediacy of the economic and social problems facing all Americans--was forcing the artist (and in Chaplin's case, the tramp) to take a definite stand in relation to society.

Interestingly, this interpretation has a biographical base. After City Lights--a film which contained the traditional Chaplin satire against the rich in the character of the millionaire who was generous only when drunk--Chaplin made a trip around the world, visiting many artists, dignitaries, and social thinkers, as well as gaining an insight into the world-wide suffering caused by the depression.

Besides his comic talent, Chaplin also tried to develop his capacities as a social philosopher. Though he only had two years of formal education, he early began to educate himself. According to one biographer, he was at age seventeen already reading in politics, economics, philosophy, Schopenhauer, and Shakespeare, possessing a "vividly intelligent mind." When the depression broke, it was only natural that he speculate about the problems of the era. While in Europe and England, he often discussed the depression with his hosts and acquaintances. Upon meeting Ramsey MacDonald, Chaplin tried unsuccessfully to draw the Prime Minister into a political discussion. Later, he suggested to Lloyd George some ideas about slum clearance and relief to the unemployed. In Berlin, he reportedly so impressed Einstein with his knowledge of financial and social affairs that Einstein told him, "You're not a comedian, you're an economist." According to Huff,

Chaplin's panacea for nearly every depression problem was to "reduce the hours of labor, print more money, and control prices."[14]

Chaplin did not begin making notes for his new film until the last leg of his trip, the boat ride from Japan to California. The eventual result--Modern Times--should be seen in part as Chaplin's response to the depression conditions that he saw and to the opinions of world spokesmen toward it that he heard on his world tour. The period that Chaplin spent abroad began a decisive new phase in the tramp character, which eventually led to his destruction. In Parker Tyler's words:

> What was steadily borne in on Chaplin by his intercourse with distinguished men, and by the lines of thought thus started in his own mind, was the social or suprapersonal meaning of the Tramp's figure.[15]

When searching for dominant patterns in Chaplin's work, one must focus primarily on the development of the tramp character. The tramp was a new social man in Modern Times, and by the conclusion of The Great Dictator, his life was ended, with nothing but a cousin reincarnated briefly as Calvero in Limelight twelve years hence.

III

When compared to a Lubitsch drawing-room comedy, a Hitchcock suspense film or a Fritz Lang melodrama done during the same period, Chaplin's films in the thirties seem stylistically primitive. Otis Ferguson, in reviewing Modern Times, felt just that. "Because of its old-time

atmosphere," Ferguson argued, "Modern Times is about the last thing they should have called" it. According to Ferguson, the sets were elaborate and falsely stylized when they should have been more modern, the acting was jerky and stiff, the technique unspectacular, and the only surprise was "that these primitive formulas [were] so genuinely comic and endearing."[16]

In one sense Ferguson is right: compared to the standards of the 1936 "A" productions, Chaplin's movies do seem anachronistic. And as was mentioned earlier, he was at the time deeply involved in trying to understand the relation of his tramp character to talking films. But it would be more accurate to separate Chaplin from the typical Hollywood film standards. He had his own organic style of filmmaking, which fit his creative intent.

Chaplin's filmmaking methods are rooted in the early days of Hollywood and bear the influence of D. W. Griffith. When Birth of a Nation played in Los Angeles, Chaplin saw it nearly every week. The pantomime of such scenes as the pastoral family shots early in the film or the return of the Little Colonel left their impression of Chaplin. Pantomime and the importance of character are everywhere evident in Chaplin's approach to filmmaking.[17]

Because he early became financially independent of Hollywood, in part because as director and actor he did not have to pay a star an astronomic weekly salary, Chaplin could work slowly. Like Griffith, he improvised his stories

as he went along, until Modern Times, when the financial squeeze of the depression forced him to prepare scripts ahead of shooting. Nonetheless, he always worked painstakingly, often taking many shots over and over, always working for perfection. Adolphe Menjou, who starred in The Woman of Paris, recalls going through over a hundred takes of a kissing scene with Edna Purviance before Chaplin finally was satisfied.[18]

Above all, the style of a Chaplin film--its camera work, its lighting, its sets, its structure--is subordinate to the main character. Like Fielding's Tom Jones, Chaplin's films are usually episodic, following the hero from place to place with little apparent direction. Gerald Mast has summed up the typical Chaplin structure succinctly:

> Chaplin's structures are not stories but thematic investigations--putting the wandering picaro, the homeless tramp (or some variation of him) in juxtaposition with a particular social and moral environment. . . . The films are not structured around stories--what happens to the characters--but an investigation of the theme implied by the generic title.[19]

From this structure--based on the centrality of the tramp--the rest of the Chaplin style follows. The most significant aspect of the Chaplin camera work (usually done by Rollie Totheroh) is its lack of significant activity. It rarely moves and when it does, it is following the movements of an actor, usually the tramp or his variant. Chaplin once wrote that he loathes tricky camera effects, like "photographing through the fireplace from the viewpoint

of a piece of coal." Instead, the camera setup, he argued, should be based "on facilitating choreography for the actor's movements."[20]

By focusing on the actor in his environment, Chaplin constantly stresses the relationship between man and society. Though he rarely uses the close-up, which is the carrier of emotion rather than fact and thus would work against the man-society tension, it occasionally becomes one of Chaplin's main dramatic devices. Chaplin once said that "comedy is life viewed at a distance; tragedy, life in a close-up."[21] When Chaplin does use a close-up, it functions not necessarily for tragic effect, but certainly to heighten emotional pitch. The final shot of City Lights, where the tramp, responding to the flower girl whose sight has been restored, smiles an enigmatic combination of joy, compassion, apprehension, and pathos, illustrates how effectively Chaplin could use the close-up in the rare occasions he chose to.

Chaplin's editing was unobtrusive. Since the term often crops up when a critic discusses film style, let me clarify what I mean. To suggest that Chaplin's editing is unobtrusive is simply to say that the editing does not call attention to itself, as for example, it does when Orson Welles uses long dissolves in Citizen Kane during the breakfast table montage. Even the more spectacular editing effects in Chaplin's work remain virtually unnoticed.

In The Great Dictator's globe ballet, for example, I was astonished when reviewing the film to count over ten separate cuts from the beginning to the end. On first viewing, one gets the overwhelming feeling of smoothness and grace unmodified by cutting. When Chaplin writes that "quick cutting and dissolving from one scene to another are the dynamics of film technique," he sums up his practice well.[22]

In short, Chaplin's style grew organically from the way he understood filmmaking: as a comic form that was essentially pantomimic and that relied on the character of the tramp as the center which the rest of the film revolved around. In Modern Times and The Great Dictator Chaplin gradually worked dialogue into his approach to filmmaking. Since that development is so integrally related to those two films and Chaplin's experience in the thirties, the discussion of how Chaplin gradually adapted the use of dialogue to his art will be included in the next two sections, which deal specifically with Modern Times and The Great Dictator.

IV

In Modern Times Chaplin places the tramp in the midst of a complex industrial society and forces him to grapple with the difficulty of earning a living, an activity for which the tramp was hardly suited. Chaplin himself indicated how Modern Times began to germinate in his consciousness:

> It started from an abstract idea, an impulse to say something about the way life is being standardized and channelized, and men turned into machines--and the way I felt about it. I knew that was what I wanted to do before I thought of any of the details.[23]

Several events probably helped to stimulate Chaplin's imagination. In his world tour he had the opportunity to talk with Gandhi when the advocate of Indian independence and non-violent resistance was visiting England. Knowing of Gandhi's aversion to machines, Chaplin prodded him, asking him if it was not true that machines, if used altruistically, could release man from bondage and shorten his hours of hard work. Gandhi replied that boycotting machine-made goods was a way of throwing off British rule, since the British owned the machines. In addition, India was to Gandhi's mind less geographically amenable to the rushing activity of a vigorous industrial society. This discussion may well have prodded Chaplin into revaluating his attitude toward the place of machines in the modern world. In fact, by the end of his tour, Chaplin was already discussing the problem of automation doing away with jobs.[24]

More specifically, Chaplin remembers being interviewed by a reporter who told him gruesome stories about conveyor-belt production in Detroit. Young men came to work in factories from the farm, the reporter told Chaplin, and within three or four years they were transformed into zombie-like nervous wrecks. This story gave Chaplin the idea for Modern Times, he tells us, especially the feeding machine scene.[25]

When he was about ready to release Modern Times, Chaplin gave reporters yet another story about the beginning of the film's idea. "I was riding in my car one day and saw a mass of people coming out of a factory," he told one reporter,

> and was overwhelmed by the knowledge that the theme note of modern times is mass production. I wondered what it would be like to the progress of the mechanical age if one person decided to act like a bull in a china shop. . . . I decided it would make a good story to take a little man and make him thumb his nose at all recognized rules and conventions.

Finally, Chaplin told another reporter that the idea began after a conversation in a restaurant with a friend who was railing about how even people were becoming machines.[26]

It is fair to say that probably all these experiences had an effect on Chaplin's consciousness, though we can never fully recreate what went on in his complex mind. Certainly the notion that the machine was beginning to dominate modern civilization was not new. At the turn of the century, Henry Adams was so strongly affected by the potential power of huge machines that he characterized the Dynamo as the central symbol of the age, representing complexity, multiplicity, chaos, and the eventual destruction of the modern world. This symbol he contrasted with the Virgin, who represented the unity of the Middle Ages. Viewing the Gallery of Machines in the Paris Great Exposition of 1900, Adams felt "his historical neck broken by the sudden eruption of forces totally new."[27]

Thorstein Veblen, another 19th-century man who lived to see the face of America take on an industrial cast, also used his probing and eccentric powers of observation to consider the social effects of mechanization. In 1914 Veblen suggested that the machine was even altering so basic a human conception as time when he wrote that "modern life goes by clockwork." But just as important, society becomes so highly organized and confusing that to survive, man must nearly become a machine himself.

> To take effectual advantage of what is offered as the wheels of routine go round, in the way of work and play, livelihood and recreation, he must know by facile habituation what is going on and how and in what quantities and at what prices and when and where, and for the best effect he must adapt his movements with skilled exactitude and a cool mechanical insight to the nicely balanced moving equilibrium of the mechanical processes engaged.[28]

In short, the modern world was becoming as difficult to understand as Veblen's convoluted writing style.

Though Veblen still had faith that efficient engineers and workmen would keep the machine under control, others were less hopeful. In the twenties and thirties there was among many artists an increasing concern about the place of machinery in modern life. Eugene O'Neill's Dynamo--the symbol recurs--and Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine were both popular plays that sought to explore how much men were becoming machines: highly rational, efficient, and punctual, but lacking more basic human emotions. Sherwood Anderson's Poor White (1920) told of an inventor whose creations destroy

the values and securities of small-town life without replacing them with any comparable structure of values.

But the monumental work of the relationship between machines and modern society was Lewis Mumford's Technics and Civilization (1934). As no one before him, Mumford penetrated the links between technological innovation and the development of social institutions. With a broad historical perspective and a wide-ranging familiarity with the chronology of invention, Mumford was well aware of the dangers of the machine but remained optimistic. In concluding his study, he wrote:

> In discussing modern technics, we have advanced as far as seems possible in considering mechanical civilization as an isolated system; the next step toward reorienting our technics consists in bringing it more completely in harmony with the new cultural and regional and societal and personal patterns we have co-ordinately begun to develop.[30]

Mumford was seeking a new way of life, a new system of values, that would use machines in a way that would serve instead of enslave human beings.

Like these artists and social thinkers, Chaplin realized that because of technological development, modern man was confronted with a welter of problems, rooted in the machine process, that was unheard of and unworried about in traditional societies. In Modern Times he uses his comic talents to consider those new problems.

As Mast has noted, comedy has treated the relation between man and society in two polar ways. Throughout history, comedy most commonly has upheld the values and

assumptions of society, urging the comic figure to mend his ways or more viciously condemning him for failing to conform to social conventions. At the other pole, comedy may side with the comic figure in his conflict with society, holding that the individual's actions and values are superior to those of the oppressive society. Though examples of both types have occurred throughout history, the pro-social type is more characteristic of the past, while the anti-social type is more characteristic of modern society.[31]

Though sometimes the tramp was willing to become respectable in order to win the girl (Easy Street), he is defended in Modern Times in his battle with social rules. The film opens with a title reading, "Modern Times is a story of industry, of individual enterprise--humanity crusading in pursuit of happiness." The title then cuts to a clock reading a minute before six, after which follows an Eisensteinian montage: the first shot is of a herd of sheep bunched close together, all moving in one direction, which is immediately followed by a similarly composed shot of a mass of workers leaving a factory after their shift is over. After this prologue, the tramp is introduced and the action begins.

The tramp is working on the assembly line in a factory--the Electro Steel Company--tightening bolts with a wrench in each hand. The factory boss is piecing together a puzzle and reading the funny papers in his office (a

typical picture of a wealthy man in thirties movies). Over an intercom he orders a husky employee to speed up the line. Finally lunchtime arrives and the line stops, but the tramp continues his mechanistic jerking, unable for a moment to stop. Just as he calms enough to eat his lunch, the owner and some inventors bring down a timesaving feeding machine and the little fellow is chosen to try it out. Strapped to the machine, he is automatically fed corn on the cob, soup, and cake. After a time, however, the machine goes berserk, feeding the tramp bolts, spinning the corn cob in his moustache, spilling soup down his shirt, and smashing the puffy cake in his face while sparks fly uncontrollably from the machine. The owner decides not to invest in the inventors' product.

The line resumes after lunch, and the boss commands another speedup. This time the tramp cannot keep up but tries so hard that he falls onto the belt and is carried into the bowels of the machine, metaphorically swallowed by the industrial process. When the machine is finally reversed and the tramp belched out of it, he has lost his work ethic. In a fantastic spirit of spontaneity, the tramp dances around the factory, pulling levers and squirting oil in the eyes of his pursuers. Picking up his two wrenches, he begins to tighten every nut in sight, including two strategically located buttons on a woman's dress. Finally caught, he is straightjacketed and sent to a mental institution.

Upon release, the tramp goes back to work but finds that the workers have gone on strike. Outside the factory, he hops on the back of a truck that is driving down the street but is jolted off--along with a red flag--as the truck rounds a corner. Picking up the red flag and trying to wave down the trucker, the tramp inadvertently becomes the leader of a radical parade that walks toward him from behind. The police break up the crowd and the tramp is sent to jail.

In many ways, the opening factory sequence is the most creative and funny section in the film. The rest of the film treats the tramp's experiences in jail, his meeting with the gamin (Paulette Goddard), and their consequent attempts to carve out a secure life for themselves in modern times.

In jail, the tramp's roommate does needlepoint. When they go to lunch, the tramp sits next to a prisoner who pours some "joy powder" in the salt shaker to avoid being caught with drugs. Salting his food generously, the unsuspecting tramp begins to feel strange after eating; he dances back to his cell and miraculously stops a jailbreak by using his new-found strength and courage. Pardoned for his bravery and good behavior, the tramp is taken from his homey jail cell--with its flowers and picture of Lincoln on the wall. When he learns the news, he asks the warden (in a title), "Can't I stay a little longer? I'm so happy here." But to no avail--the tramp is thrown into the cold cruel

world. Armed with a recommendation from the warden, he is given a job as a shipbuilder but is quickly fired when he sinks a half-built ship.

Then he meets the gamin. A poor victim of the depression, the gamin is alone after her father was killed in an unemployment riot and her sisters were placed in an orphanage. She is hiding from the officials to keep from being sent to the orphanage herself. Significantly, they meet as the gamin is trying to win her daily bread. Having stolen a loaf of bread from an untended bakery truck, she sprints down the street and collides head on with the tramp. Though he admits to the theft (he wants to return to prison anyway), the police will hear nothing of it and the gamin is placed in a paddy wagon. Frustrated, the tramp goes into a restaurant, orders a huge meal (food again) for which he has no intention of paying, and offers himself to a policeman. This time he is accepted.

Thrown into a paddy wagon, he sees the gamin sitting at the front. The truck gets into an accident and the pair escapes. Together they sit on a curb and dream of a perfect life of domestic bliss which they could enjoy if only they had the money. In their collective dream, fruit trees are within reach through an open window, a cow at the back door gives milk automatically, and steak fries on the stove.

Suddenly, a passing cop jolts the euphoric couple back to reality. Determined to help the gamin, the tramp gets hired to replace the night watchman at a department

store. The first night he allows the gamin to sneak in, feeds her at the food counter, and tucks her into bed in the furniture section. While doing his rounds he catches three burglars--all former employees of the factory that the tramp worked in. They all drink in celebration, and the tramp loses his job the next day and is sent again to jail.

Released the next week, the tramp finds the gamin waiting for him. She takes him to their "dreamhouse," a broken-down shanty that nearly topples when the door is opened. The two eat supper--this time pork chops--the next morning the tramp goes swimming in six inches of water, and at breakfast he reads that the strike is over. He hurries to the factory and gets the last job.

In the factory again, the tramp works as assistant to a head mechanic. As man again confronts the machine, the head mechanic (Chester Conklin) is swallowed by the hungry device, getting caught in the cogs. The lunch whistle blows and the tramp--obeying the clock as any good technological man--stops in the midst of trying to free the man, sits down, and feeds him his lunch. Finally the mechanic is freed but the workers decide to go back on strike. Outside the factory, the despondent tramp accidentally steps on a board that flips a brick squarely against the top of an officer's head. Back to jail.

A week later the gamin again greets the tramp on his release. She has secured a job as a dancer in a cafe and

helps the tramp get hired as a singing waiter. At work, the tramp has difficulty keeping up on his orders. Trying to deliver roast duck to an impatient customer, he gets caught on the dance floor, waltzing in a crowd with the duck in the air. A man on the dance floor grabs the duck and uses it as a football with three others. The tramp intercepts a pass and, eluding his foes, runs for a touchdown.

As performance time draws near, the tramp is nervous. Just before he begins to sing, his cuff--and the lyrics to his song--flies off his wrist. Forced to improvise, he sings and pantomimes a love song in a garbled language that sounds like a combination of French, Spanish, and Italian. The song is a tremendous hit, and the tramp seems at last to have found a niche in society. When the gamin goes on stage to perform, however, the parole officers who have been searching for her are in the audience. They stop the show and attempt to capture her, but with the tramp's help, the gamin escapes.

The last scene takes place at dawn, at the edge of a road outside the city. The gamin has been crying, morose from having her dreams so nearly realized then crushed one time too often. Never giving up, the tramp comforts her; a title reads, "We'll make it." Wiping tears away, the gamin gets up with the tramp and together they walk down the road, away from the camera, toward the rising sun.

Besides the opening factory sequence, much of the humor reflects back upon earlier Chaplin films. In the

department store, for example, the tramp roller skates, recalling one of his earliest successes, The Rink. But in in Modern Times the performance is even more perfect, and Chaplin adds a new twist--the tramp skates on a second-floor ledge with the safety railing down. Every circle he makes brings him closer and closer to catastrophe.

Charlie's problems as a waiter in the cafe sequence also have their parallels in The Rink. Just as in the earlier film, the waiter-tramp in Modern Times fails to satisfy his impatient customers: he gets his swiss cheese only by drilling holes in a chunk of regular cheese, he confuses the in and out kitchen doors, causing his fellow workers much distress, and he loses his roast duck to a chandelier. The comic bits in Modern Times are both well conceived and superbly performed by Chaplin the actor.

The development of the tramp character in Modern Times bears the imprint of the times. When Chaplin was beginning to write the script in mid-1932, the American economy was in dire straits and many intellectuals were calling for "proletarian" art. In Axel's Castle (1931) Edmund Wilson both explicated the works of the Symbolist writers and criticized them for their self-indulgence. Their work, according to Wilson, was stylistically and subjectively impressive but somehow empty and dessicated in times of world crisis. He concluded his impressive study by calling for artists to develop an art that would retain the best

subjective insights of symbolism while addressing itself to the objective social world of naturalism. Without this public and social orientation art lacked an essential dimension.

In the early thirties, many intellectuals went beyond Wilson in their demand for a socially conscious art. Such Marxist critics as Mike Gold, Joseph Freeman, and Granville Hicks judged the aesthetic validity of a work solely in political and economic terms. Their attitude that art was the handmaiden of the imminent proletarian revolution had an influence on literary intellectuals disproportionate to their numbers.[32]

Modern Times, though not at all ideologically Marxist, responds to this demand that art must confront social "reality." When Chaplin was in England in 1931, he met George Bernard Shaw at a dinner party. After dinner, Shaw attacked Chaplin's films, saying that all art should have a progressive message. Chaplin replied that the business of art was not to propagandize, but to intensify feeling. Though the argument died as quickly as it had flared up, the idea had been planted in Chaplin's mind by one of England's foremost men of letters.[38]

Several patterns in Modern Times illustrate how Chaplin responded to these pressures. On the most general level Chaplin included situations and stereotypes that were topical. A good part of the film takes place in a factory, hardly a common setting for Hollywood films in the thirties.

Besides picturing unemployment and its consequences on poor families, Modern Times includes strikes, protests, marches, and red flags. Just as the tramp always had represented the world's underdogs, here he sides with another type of underdog, the victims of an economic system that is shut down more often than not. The factory president is shown as an infantile and callous man, whose time is spent putting together jig-saw puzzles; he represents one stereotype that popular audiences could laugh at, just as the foolish intellectual inventors, who could not even control their own inventions, stand for another stereotype in the popular iconography of the thirties feature film.

Besides these topical types and situations, two patterns develop through the film. The first concentrates on the relationship between the tramp and conventional society--particularly the work world. Since the early films, the tramp had been a divided character. On the one hand, he was something of a bohemian vagabond: rootless, free, and spontaneous. On the other, he was the aspiring apprentice, hopeful of being recognized in respectable circles and of winning the woman of his dreams.[34] In Modern Times the tramp is torn between a spontaneous denial of social convention (the tramp as a "bull in a china shop") and an aspiration toward bourgeois respectability through honest labor.

This conflict is evident from the opening sequence, where the tramp diligently tries to keep up with his work

on the assembly line until he comes unstuck. Released completely from the worker side of his being, the tramp dances--Pan like--around the factory, disrupting the entire factory with his antics. Later in the film his attempts to work as a shipbuilder, a night watchman, a mechanic's helper, and a waiter are counterpointed by his "joy powder" bliss, his roller skating, and his nonsense song. In Modern Times the tramp's spontaneous side is irrepressible; it also makes him unsuitable for the world of work.

A second pattern, related to the first, concerns the relationship between the tramp and the gamin. Just as the evolution of the tramp is crucial to an understanding of Chaplin's work, so too is his treatment of women. As Molly Haskell has argued, women for Chaplin were "traumatically crucial to his life and to the ego at the center of his art."[35] Chaplin's stormy personal life, which included four marriages and a much-publicized paternity suit during World War Two, in addition to the poignant romance with Hetty Kelly in his youth, is one indication of how important the image of women was in Chaplin's consciousness.

From his early films a discernible progression in Chaplin's heroines is evident. Edna Purviance, the heroine of many early films through Woman of Paris is a genteel Victorian woman who bears close resemblance to the Griffith women played by Lillian Gish or Mae Marsh. Her purity and beauty are so strong that the tramp even aims at respectability at times to win her love. In The Gold Rush Georgia

Hale is less refined than Purviance, but still a woman who wholly captures the tramp's heart. The blind girl (Virginia Cherrill) in City Lights represents a special case--her handicap first draws the tramp close to her and elicits his sympathy and compassion. Until she regains her sight, the tramp holds a control over her that he had never previously experienced. For Edna he had to reform to win her love; for Georgia, he had first to earn a fortune. The Chaplin attitude toward women continued its fascinating development from Modern Times and The Great Dictator through Monsieur Verdoux and Limelight.

In Modern Times the gamin is the focus of the tramp's affections. The intensity of their relationship slowly develops after they collide on a sidewalk. This second pattern of development relates inversely to the first. As the tramp slowly becomes estranged from the work world, he becomes more attached to the gamin.

In the first half of the film, Chaplin intercuts the story of the tramp as workman with the story of the gamin's trials and traumas. After her father is shot and her sisters sent to the orphanage (again the institutions of modern society are portrayed as impersonal and cold-hearted--just as in The Kid), the gamin is left to fend for herself. The kindness offered by the tramp--he offers to serve her jail term--begins to spark a relationship that is based on mutual trust and kindness in the face of an uncaring and threatening society. For a time both try to adapt to

society together (the dream sequence and the shanty sequence) but society again rebuffs their attempts. In one critic's words, the relationship between the tramp and the gamin reflects "something like sexual equality with a normal woman,"[36] a type continued in The Great Dictator. It is ironic that in a time when radicals were calling for proletarian equality between workers (though this meant for the most part male workers), Chaplin created one of the rarities in Hollywood--an equal relationship between a man and a woman.[37] Rejecting the idea of class solidarity, Chaplin opted for an anarchic community of two, bonded together against the repressiveness of conventional society.

Before Modern Times was released, critics had a good time speculating on whether Chaplin's new film would be truly radical. Because it contained a topical theme at a time when Hollywood was still worried about finding film genres that would draw an audience without violating the Hays Code, even the New Masses film critic admired the film:

> I came away stunned at the thought that such a film had been made and was being released. It's what we have dreamed about and never expected to see. . . . To anyone who has studied the make-up, financial and ideological, of Hollywood, Modern Times is not so much a fine picture as an historical event.

Forsythe praised the film even though it did not adhere to any politically radical stance. But because it reflected the feelings of "an honest man," Modern Times won his praise.[38]

Though Modern Times was originally to have been called The Masses, Chaplin wisely discarded the more topical and transient title for one with a more universal connotation. In doing so, he created a film that criticizes modern society more radically than he would have by following the party line. If by radical one accepts the dictionary definition of "going to the foundation or source of something," surely Modern Times is a radical critique of the foundations of modern industrial society. By using his pantomimic comic skills (and virtually ignoring the pressures to use sound dialogue), Chaplin treated an issue that still challenges any industrial society, capitalist or socialist: how can machines be used to serve people, to prevent ecological disaster, and to preserve the possibility of fulfilling human relationships while still providing the release from burdensome work for which they were first created? Lest anyone thinks that Chaplin's gimmicks, such as the Big Brother screen in the employee's restroom, are exaggerations, he need only look at the May 19, 1974, Detroit Free Press, which reported that the United Auto Workers were filing grievances against the major auto companies "for installing cameras near production lines and in restrooms." The problems caused and issues raised by the Watergate bugging (and Coppola's similar fictional treatment of the moral issues it raises in The Conversation) remind us that Modern Times is a film which transcends its era.[39]

V

Not until October 15, 1940, did Chaplin release the film that followed Modern Times. For a long time Chaplin had been toying with the idea of making a film on Napoleon, but not until 1939 did he begin another film. Two years earlier Alexander Korda, noting the resemblance between Chaplin and Hitler, suggested that Chaplin do a Hitler film based on mistaken identity. Chaplin recalls not thinking much of the idea at first, but then--anxious to get back to work and aware of the topicality of the subject--he reconsidered.[40]

Because the idea presented him a way to ease into dialogue film--with the tramp mostly silent and the Hitler figure speaking for comic effect--Chaplin began developing a script on January 1, 1939, and finished it three months later. When the war in Europe broke out in early September, 1939, production of The Great Dictator was halted briefly but Chaplin decided that satire and laughter were essential in times of trial and resumed shooting. Filmed from September, 1939 to March, 1940, the film was then edited and the score added. In October, 1940, The Great Dictator premiered in New York at the Astor Theatre, the day after Gone With the Wind ended its prolonged stay at the same theater.

More than any other Chaplin film, The Great Dictator is a product of Chaplin's artistic consciousness grappling

with a major public issue of the day. He was not alone: by 1940, most artists as well as many Americans were caught up in the fascist controversy. The Sunday before The Great Dictator opened, the New York Times book review section mentioned a number of similarly topical books. Ernest Hemingway's statement of commitment, For Whom the Bell Tolls, was advertised. Edmund Wilson's study of Marxist thought, To the Finland Station, which had been conceived several years earlier in enthusiasm but concluded with a more tragic and pessimistic vision, was reviewed. So was Faith for Living by Lewis Mumford, who had since 1938 been a vocal spokesman for intervention against fascist barbarians. Eleanor Roosevelt's The Moral Basis of Democracy, Allan Nevin's biography of John D. Rockefeller (a figure who would have been debunked in the twenties or vilified as a capitalist oppressor earlier in the decade), and Claire Booth Luce's Europe in the Spring, a topical report of her visit to study European political conditions, were also discussed. The dialectic of debate had shifted from capitalism-socialism four years earlier to democracy-fascism.[42]

The front page headlines of the Times on the day that The Great Dictator opened reveal the state of world crisis that was everywhere evident. One read "London is Rocked by Heaviest Raid: RAF Keeps Berlin Awake Six Hours." Another showed the concerns of national debate: "Lindberg Assails Present Leaders--Asks Voters to Back 'Strength and Peace' instead of 'Weakness and War.'"[43] Whereas only four years

earlier, America was experiencing one of its most intense periods of domestic reform, by 1940 that reform zeal had been spent as Americans concentrated their attentions on working out a viable position regarding the European War. Begun before the war in Europe began, The Great Dictator, along with Monsieur Verdoux, were Chaplin's two forays into the arena of the topical social-critique film. By Limelight (1952), Chaplin's burning impulse toward cinematic social criticism had cooled. The setting of that film was London in 1914, and though it took place on the eve of World War One, it focused not on wide social themes but on personal problems of an aging artist.

The Great Dictator reveals its historical context and point of view from the opening title: "This is a story of the period between two World Wars--an interim in which Insanity cut loose, Liberty took a nose dive, and Humanity was kicked around somewhat." From the titles, the film cuts to the opening sequence of the Jewish barber as a soldier in World War One. By establishing this beginning point, the sequence eases the audience into a historical perspective. After the barber-soldier saves the wounded pilot, only to learn that the war was over and his country defeated, a documentary montage moves the film's setting to the present.

By documentary montage, I mean a series of shots, usually connected by slow dissolves and characterized by double exposures, that was a widely used convention in the thirties films, meant to express passage of time. Just as

important, the documentary montage usually included headlines from newspapers or some public activity or response to events that would suggest the broader social implications rooted in the film's subject matter. Of the directors discussed in this study, Capra and Welles both used the documentary montage extensively. In a sense, Citizen Kane epitomizes the convention with its long documentary on the public life of Charles Foster Kane early in the film.

The Great Dictator's montage follows the barber's injury and ride to the hospital, and contains the headlines meant to represent the time span from armistice to the rise of fascism: "Peace," "Dempsey Beats Willard," "Lindbergh Flies the Atlantic," "Depression," "Riots in Tomania," "Hynkel Party Takes Power."

These headlines, along with the opening titles and the prologue World War One sequence, are all introductions to the film that impress upon the audience the historical roots of the film. As such, they continue the social orientation of Modern Times while becoming even more specific. In many ways, the opening of The Great Dictator symbolizes a number of cultural currents influencing artists in the late thirties. The anti-fascist implications of the headlines make the film acceptable to popular front ideology (which was beginning to break down when the picture opened but which first stimulated American anti-fascist activity from 1936 on). Likewise, the opening suggests that the filmmaker is personally committed to a social position that

will be developed in the rest of the film. All of these factors make The Great Dictator a film that culturally reveals its times.

After this prologue the film develops along parallel lines the stories of the barber and the dictator. The barber returns to the ghetto after suffering from amnesia for years, unaware of the changes that Hynkel's rise to power has caused. There he meets Hannah, the daughter of his neighbor, and a romance grows. Hynkel orders his troopers to leave the ghetto dwellers alone until he can borrow money from Epstein, a rich businessman. When that transaction is closed, Hynkel again starts the persecution. The barber is arrested while Hannah and her family escape to Osterlich, a bordering free country. Hynkel has a conference with Napolini (Jack Oakie), a fellow dictator, after which he decides to invade Osterlich. However, the barber escapes and through a number of coincidences, is mistaken for Hynkel. After invading Osterlich, he addresses a huge crowd of soldiers and instead of praising them, gives an impassioned speech defending liberty, democracy, and the integrity of each human being. The film ends with a shot of Hannah looking up, a ray of light shining on her face, promising a more hopeful tomorrow.

Two elements in The Great Dictator are the most important in the development of Chaplin's art: the introduction of dialogue and the continuing decline of the tramp character. In The Great Dictator, Chaplin plays both the barber

and Hynkel. Though the barber resembles the tramp in some superficial ways, he is not the tramp of old. It seems somehow predictable that the demise of the tramp intersected with the introduction of dialogue to a Chaplin film.

The story of how Chaplin gradually capitulated to the technological innovation of sound is more artful than one might expect. After sound movies were introduced in the late twenties, Chaplin began seriously to consider whether or not to use dialogue. The production of City Lights was halted for a time before Chaplin decided against using dialogue for several reasons. First, he considered himself a pantomime artist and thought that film was more purely a visual and silent art. Considering the quality of most early talkies, such an attitude was understandable. In addition, Chaplin was afraid that the tramp would be destroyed by sound. Finally, many of his best effects had been gained by undercranking the camera, hence speeding up the action. With the sound camera in 1930, this would have been impossible.[45]

Yet Chaplin was torn between his devotion to the tramp's pantomime and his desire to say things and make stands almost impossible to convey without talking pictures. Parker Tyler has succinctly identified this tension between the tramp and the social critic in the thirties:

> Gestures without speech, without sound--this was the fate of the Little Tramp; a fate accepted without protest. Silence was, finally, the supreme armor against the reality of the world. And yet, because

> a certain professional ego grew strong in Chaplin, the hermetic silence of the Little Tramp became hatefully irksome.[46]

In confronting this tension, Chaplin chose to opt for sound over the continued pantomimic life of the tramp.

In City Lights Chaplin composed his first musical score but used no dialogue. Only in an indirect way did the tramp speak. In one scene the tramp is at a party given by his millionaire friend, listening to a singer perform. To his chagrin he accidentally swallows a whistle and begins to choke. Each choke is accompanied by a shrill burst from the whistle. Through this gag, the tramp first "speaks."

In Modern Times Chaplin uses dialogue in a way that related organically to his subject matter. In a sense, he plays with the idea of sound as a technological development. The film, whose title and theme suggest the dangers of the machine age, first introduce the talking only through machines--and tyrannically. In the opening factory sequence the factory owner--on a television screen--tells a muscle-bound employee to speed up the assembly line. Later, when the tramp is lighting a cigarette in the rest room to relax, the owner's glowering face appears on a huge screen and orders him back to work. When the inventors--machine men themselves--coax the owner to try their feeding machine, they do so not through direct conversation, but on a machine, playing a record on a phonograph. By introducing words in Modern Times in this way, Chaplin wryly comments

on how in modern times machines tyrannize even the movies. The method fits precisely into the work as a whole.

Later in Modern Times the tramp first speaks words. But not directly--his first words to his audience after twenty years of silence are sung. This occurs when the nervous tramp, in his first appearance as a singing waiter, loses his cuff (and lyrics). Improvising, he sings a gibberish song about a romance and, gesturing with grace and clarity, communicates in his own way as clearly as the mechanically expressed words of the owner and the inventors. Chaplin had his tramp speak briefly to contrast through the use of sound the opposing sensibilities of the spontaneous tramp and the technological men, who could not even speak directly to another human but had to have an electrical medium to convey their words. Using sound in this way, Chaplin granted the tramp one more reprieve before the tyranny of words overcame him in The Great Dictator.

As his desire to speak on social affairs overcame his talent at pantomime, Chaplin finally made a dialogue film. In doing so he continues with the contrast begun in Modern Times. In his new film the contrast is between Hynkel, who speaks loudly, mechanically (using microphones), and virulently, and the barber, who speaks rarely but always in a gracious and dignified way. The totalitarian society of Hynkel becomes the analogue to the oppressive factory machines in Modern Times.

The most striking use of dialogue in The Great Dictator lies in Hynkel's speeches. Just as in Modern Times, speaking sometimes means gibberish. But the speaking and intent of Hynkel stands in direct contrast to that of the tramp in Modern Times. The tramp's song was his way of trying to survive in a hostile world without being gulped up by social threats: he sings to bring about his passive dream of harmony. Hynkel, however, speaks to arouse masses of people, to manipulate, to control: he exhorts to reach his active dream of unlimited power. The frenzy at the end of his first speech and during all of the second speech expresses Chaplin's conception of Hynkel as a man made irrational, blinded by his perverted quest for power. In contrast, the barber's speech at the end, while emotional, defends the rights of all men and attacks Hynkel's tyranny.

Besides using words to contrast his two main characters, Chaplin also plays with sound to produce comic effect. When Hynkel, dictating a letter, speaks several long sentences before halting, his secretary types two or three letters. When he mutters only a few syllables, she zips along through several lines. In another scene, the barber and three friends all eat some pudding, one of which is supposed to have a coin in it, to decide who will be chosen to dynamite Hynkel's palace. To foil the plan, Hannah puts a coin in each serving, and when two of the men discover their coins, they secretly slip them onto the barber's plate. After he swallows them and his own coin to destroy

the evidence, he begins to cough, and clinking noises result. Like the whistle in City Lights and the tramp's indigestion in Modern Times, the coin grates on the tramp's stomach, placing him in a comic situation. A final way that Chaplin plays with sound occurs when Napolini and Hynkel hold their "negotiations" over the fate of Osterlich. When it becomes clear that neither man will give way, a shouting match ensues. With both men bellowing at the top of their lungs, nonsense rather than sense inevitably follows. Just as the tramp used pantomime to make sense in the early films, Hynkel and Napolini show that words are no guarantee of meaning.

Chaplin's dialogue jokes pale in comparison to the comic pantomime (in one typical "joke," the barber, when asked if he's Aryan, replies, "yes, a vegetarian"). Though he was unable to compete with verbal comics like Groucho Marx or W. C. Fields, he was still the master of pantomime. In the prologue, the barber is chased in a circle by a spinning, unexploded bomb. He also loses a grenade down his sleeve after pulling the pin and finds it just in the nick of time. The dictator, after holding a baby for the crowds, makes a magnificent gesture wiping off the hand that the baby's seat rested upon. The coin scene contains more subtle pantomime, whereas the food fight--with spaghetti and whipped cream--is boisterous Keystone slapstick.

But the two most brilliant moments of pantomime occur back to back, contrasting Hynkel and the barber. The first

is Hynkel's globe ballet, accompanied by the Prelude to Act I of Wagner's "Lohengrin," where the dictator, alone in his office, tosses up the balloon globe, mesmerized by his single-minded dream of conquering the world. After he throws it into the air several times, gracefully controlling the globe's direction, the dictator grasps it in his arms and says, "You're mine," whereupon the balloon bursts. The dictator's dream disappears like a wisp of smoke, the exploding balloon being Chaplin's beautifully chosen symbolic comment on the futility of the dictator's aspirations.

Immediately after the globe scene, the barber shaves a customer to the lively strains of Brahms' "Hungarian Dance No. 5," heard on his radio. Synchronizing his movements to the song's rhythms, the barber applies the shaving cream, sharpens his razor on a strap, shaves the customer, cleans his face, shines his bald head, takes off his apron, and collects his fee. The barber's precision and speed emphasize that Chaplin had lost none of his pantomimic genius. Like the shoe-eating scene in The Gold Rush, this is one of the Chaplinesque scenes that one enjoys no matter how many times it is seen.

Structurally, The Great Dictator is more complex than the earlier Chaplin films. Because two main characters, both played by Chaplin, and two ways of life are contrasted, this is necessarily so. Whereas earlier it had been possible for Chaplin simply to follow his tramp around on his

various escapades, now in The Great Dictator he had two characters to develop, each in his own environment.

Consequently, the film contains two major settings: the ghetto and the dictator's palace. The first is simple, a recreation of what Chaplin envisioned an urban European folk community to be like. People live in close proximity, Hannah doing laundry for the people down the street, a barbershop on the corner, a fruit market in the middle of the block. Homes are furnished simply with warm fireplaces and solid wooden furniture. This setting shifts to Osterlich, a dreamland of milk and honey, after Hynkel has the barber's shop burned and orders the ghetto terrorized.

In contrast, the dictator lives in opulence. His office is a huge room where aides scurry back and forth, carrying out Hynkel's every whim. Hynkel has a separate room for posing, a piano room, a palatial barber shot (with hydraulic chairs), ballrooms, dining rooms, conference rooms, chandeliers, winding staircases. His living quarters are as grand as the barber's are simple. Sitting in his chair of power, living in splendor, the dictator at a snap of his finger can threaten the lives of people from whom he is completely isolated. Throughout most of The Great Dictator, Chaplin intercuts the activities of Hynkel and the life in the ghetto.

This dual setting gives Chaplin a way to contrast his two main characters. Though he is most interested in exposing and satirizing Hynkel's pretensions, Chaplin also

creates an interesting figure in the barber. Fundamentally, the barber is a transitional figure, half way between the tramp of the earlier films and Chaplin himself. In contrast to the tramp, the barber has no exaggerated costume: he has shed the tramp's roomy shoes, his baggy pants, his frayed coat. And in this case, the clothes mirror the man. The barber's more subdued dress represents his subdued behavior. He is gentle, kind, and humbly dignified, a man who wants only to do his work quietly and live in peace. This quiet dignity clearly points forward to Calvero in Limelight and, in his gentler moments, to Monsier Verdoux.

Though on occasion the barber reminds us of the old tramp--for example, when he dances drunkenly along the street after accidentally being smashed on the head with Hannah's frying pan--he is predominantly a different character. More than the tramp ever did, the barber is reconciled to his community and its way of life. He stands for the values of the whole community, the values that are threatened by Hynkel's arbitrary use of power. In Modern Times the tramp and the gamin were individually flailed and battered by the forces of their own society. In The Great Dictator the ghetto community is powerless before the omnipotent dictator.

Rather than the barber, however, the character that most engaged Chaplin's interest was Hynkel. The central thrust of The Great Dictator is satirical, Chaplin's attempt to ridicule and expose the stupidities, pretentions, and vices of a dangerous man. Chaplin expressed his point of

view in an interview before the film opened. Behind the movie, he said, is the idea that:

> laughter may help to check the bad behavior of the world. . . . Leaders with tenth-rate minds have captured the new instruments of propaganda and are using the instruments to destroy good, civilized, kind behavior. I'm the clown and what can I do that is more effective than to laugh at those fellows who are putting humanity to a goosestep?[53]

In portraying the leader with a "tenth-rate mind," the picture drawn of Hynkel is that of a callous and heartless man who is blinded by his own sense of greatness and who has no respect for human life.

Hynkel's sense of self-importance is indicated throughout the film. The file cabinets behind the desk are false; when pulled, they swing open and become full-length mirrors--Hynkel as Narcissus. Among his many other activities, Chaplin compares Hynkel to Nero, when instead of fiddling while Rome burns, Hynkel is shown playing his piano while the barber's shop burns. Likewise, Hynkel thinks of himself as Christ: when Schultz criticizes him for his intolerant policy toward the Jews, Hynkel brands him a traitor. Dramatically wrapping his cape about himself, Hynkel asks, "Schultz, why hast thou forsaken me?" Hynkel even goes so far as to compare himself to one of the most popular and mysterious actresses of the thirties. After Field Marshall Herring encourages his dreams of world conquest, Hynkel looks to the ceiling, hand on forehead, and echoes Garbo's famous line from Grand Hotel: "I want to be alone." These

references serve only to underline how weak and ludicrous the "great" dictator really is.

For Hynkel, all people are instruments and certain groups of people, less than animals. In his office, when he needs an envelope sealed, he has a subordinate lick it. After Schultz calls him a "medieval maniac," he sends him to a concentration camp, not because he particularly dislikes Schultz, but because he ha the audacity to question the dictator's policies. When two men lose their lives demonstrating a new type of bullet-proof vestand a parachute, Hynkel can only criticize Garbitsch for wasting his time examining inventions that do not work. After he learns of a strike over the quality of sawdust in the bread, Hynkel orders all the offenders shot: "we don't want any dissatisfied workers." All of his policy decisions are made on a purely practical basis: he stops persecuting Jews when he needs a loan from the Jew Epstein; when he gets the loan, persecution begins again. Hynkel's character is perfectly symbolized in his speech when he snorts like a pig when talking about the Juden. Using every trick imaginable, Hynkel disparages the minority Jews to whip his sons and daughters of the Double Cross into a nationalistic and racist frenzy, a powerful force that he uses to gratify his own inflated self-image.

Did Chaplin succeed in his satire of Hitler? When the film was released in 1940, Hitler represented a much

more serious threat than when Chaplin first conceived of the film over three years earlier. Because history in a sense altered the audience response to the film, opinion on it was curiously mixed. It did very well at the box office; though receipts were less than expected when it first appeared at higher prices, Variety reported that it was doing tremendously well when prices were dropped to regular levels. According to Chaplin, The Great Dictator was his biggest grossing film up to 1940. Clearly an intense national interest in the film developed. After all, what could be expected from a film by perhaps the most well known film personality about one of the world's most powerful men?[47]

Critics were split on the film. New York Times critic Bosley Crowther, a strong advocate of "social relevancy" in films, thought the film too long, somewhat repetitious, and misguided in the last speech. But he approved of Chaplin's attempt to deal with a critical social problem: "He is seriously applying all the talents at his command--keen and withering mimicry and a genius for comic distortion--to reveal the monstrous abnormality of the most dangerous man in the world.[48]

To give an idea of how mixed the reactions to the film were, one might cite two reviewers. Catholic World thought it "more devastating than any bomb invented," while Saturday Review editorialized that "the root problem in The Great Dictator is simply that Hitler and his doings are no

longer funny."[49] At a time when America was torturously attempting to forge a new foreign policy and attitude toward the fascist threat, The Great Dictator was caught up in the currents of national debate. Any film on such a controversial event necessarily elicits mixed opinion.

The part of The Great Dictator which received the largest criticism--the final speech--has divided viewers and critics to the present day. When I recently saw the film in a college audience, the viewers applauded the speech at its conclusion. Other times, a rather tense and uncertain silence or even a few derisive laughs have followed it. Most critics, including those for the Times, Newsweek, Nation, and Commonweal, thought the ending out of place. In a letter to the Times a week after the film opened, Chaplin defended his film. It was still possible, indeed necessary, to laugh at Hitler, he argued, since laughter is "health-giving." The film was not propaganda, but a story, and the ending was justified:

> To me it is a logical ending to the story. To me it is the speech the barber would have made--even had to make. . . . May I not end my comedy on a note which reflects, honestly and realistically, the world in which we live, and may I not be excused for pleading for a better world?

Note how clearly this letter expresses a view of art as social document. In doing so, it reveals much about both the intensity of the times and the involvement of Chaplin in it. Certainly one can not fault an artist for expressing his vision of the world as honestly as he can or for

"pleading for a better world." Chaplin's honest intentions are not suspect. His artistic choices, however, may be challenged.[50]

I doubt seriously Chaplin's contention that the speech is the one "the barber would have made." Though the dramatic didacticism of the speech is foreshadowed in two of Hannah's earlier speeches, nothing in the film prepared us for the impassioned final soliloquy delivered by the barber.[51] He was portrayed in the film as a quiet and humble character, not very courageous (witness the coin scene), certainly not particularly eloquent. In addition, the speech itself is expressed in an aesthetically poor fashion. Whether we watch a play, a film, or read fiction, the ideas which affect us most profoundly are those which arise out of the actions of the characters, not those which are explicitly preached to us as viewers or readers. The final scene of The Great Dictator, if taken as the barber's speech, seems just that type of preachiness, the type that Chaplin himself lampooned in The Pilgrim.

But there is one reasonable aesthetic explanation for the final speech: that it is delivered not by the barber but by Chaplin himself. As the barber and Hynkel become confused through mistaken identity, somehow Chaplin himself enters the film. While the barber and Schultz are given a royal escort to the huge crowd of soldiers, the audience is watching the last moments of the tramp's life. Climbing up a long stairway with the word LIBERTY carved on

the marble wall, the barber-tramp is walking to his execution, just as Verdoux moves toward the gallows at the end of Monsieur Verdoux.

The being who finally makes the speech is not the barber nor the tramp, but Chaplin himself. Unable because of the world crisis to keep himself aesthetically detached from his cinematic persona any longer, Chaplin himself had to speak and in doing so, buried the tramp. In his letter to the Times, Chaplin writes that he, not the tramp or the barber, must be excused for pleading for a better world. Andre Bazin has argued that this final speech is "one of the great moments in world cinema," during which the myth of Charlie the tramp finally ends:

> Charlie's lunar mask disappears little by little, corroded by the gradations of panchromatic stock and betrayed by the nearness of the camera, which intensified the telescopic effect of an already aging man, furrowed here and there by grief, his hair sprinkled with white, the face of Charles Spencer Chaplin.[52]

But just what does Chaplin say in the final speech? Much has been written defending or criticizing its existence, but virtually never does anyone study its form and content. Visually, the barber steps up to the microphone after Garbitsch has made a speech about how Hynkel will lead his country to domination of the world. The barber at first does not wish to speak, but then begins slowly, in a subdued and humble tone, gradually working up to an emotional peak until the tension subsides. Then the barber speaks to Hannah about man's soul being given wings

and "flying into the rainbow." The camera begins with a medium close-up of the barber, lit from the left, then cuts for a moment to Hannah listening on the radio, returning to dolly in to a close-up of the barber. For several minutes the camera does not move, capturing minutely the barber's perspiring temples, the sweat dripping on his shoulders. At the speech's denouement, Chaplin cuts to Hannah's response to his speech, first a medium shot of her kneeling on the ground, followed by a close-up of her face looking up, then a medium close-up that tilts up as she stands and looks into the sky in hopefulness, the clouds breaking and light shining on her face.

The speech itself bears the influence of what might be best described as popular front sentiment stripped of its radical implications. Far from being rigidly ideological, the popular front was more characteristically a congeries of attitudes and emotional responses toward issues.[53] It divided the world into fascists and anti-fascists, attributing all evil to the former and all good to the rest. It was optimistic about the future, believing that reason and science would lead to progress through history. It championed "the people" and castigated anyone who challenged them. Finally, it found heroes and used political rhetoric derived from American traditions. Clearly, the popular front sentiment was attractive to American liberalism in the thirties.

Chaplin's speech follows that sentiment. He begins by saying he does not want to be an emperor but only wants to help and to work with all men. The world, however, has "lost the way." Greed, machinery, and cynical knowledge have blunted the qualities of happiness, kindness, and gentleness. Though the essence of inventions like the radio and airplane "cries out for the goodness in man--cries out for universal brotherhood," evil men and evil systems have misused them, torturing and killing innocent people.

But the dictators are "unnatural men--machine men with machine hearts." They can not survive against those who have "the love of humanity" in their hearts, who will "unite in the name of democracy." These people must challenge the dictators, must "fight for a new world" where men can work, the old can have security, the young a hopeful future. This new world will be one where "science and progress will lead to the happiness of us all." The barber closes with a mystical vision of the Phoenix rising, where "the sun is breaking through," and a new and kindlier world is born "where men will rise above their greed, their hate, and intolerance."[54]

Like FDR and other internationalists from 1939 on, Chaplin was doing his share to move Americans toward the Allied cause. Though the speech failed to cohere as it might (at one point the barber says that "we think too much and feel too little," but later says that all people must

"fight for a world of reason . . . where science and progress" will lead to a happy world), the sentiments were correct for the times. The popular front anti-fascism was slowly becoming the pro-war liberal position. Though the popular front period of the Communist Party ended with the Stalin-Hitler pact, the tendency to divide the world into democrats versus greedy tyrants was to live on, not only into World War Two but also into the post-war era. Then it was not only possible but common for people to switch mentally their scapegoat from one totalitarian state to what they perceived as another.

Chaplin lost his tramp but made his political stand in The Great Dictator. In 1942 he made a speech advocating the opening of a second front in Russia; predictably, after the war he was badgered by the House Un-American Activities Committee though he never actually testified. Politically, Chaplin was certainly no Marxist. How could any Marxist justify Chaplin's wealth? He was instead an artistic individualist whose childhood of poverty gave him a sympathy for the underdogs of society. When political leaders manipulated masses of people for their own evil designs, it was understandable that Chaplin became aroused. When machine technology regimented and fragmented human behavior, Chaplin's anarchism was clearly challenged. A complex man, he was caught up in the spirit of the times, making films more socially oriented and topical in the thirties than before or after (though Monsïeur Verdoux and

A King in New York also contain strong bits of satire). If his vision was simplified, it was also that which his consciousness told him he had to say.[55]

Chaplin remembers the thirties as a time when "economic reverses brought out the greatness of the American people." When FDR ordered the bank holiday, he tells us "even the cinemas sold on credit--and for 10 days, while Roosevelt and his 'brain trust' formulated the New Deal, the people acted magnificently." The New Deal saved capitalism from complete collapse, creating "some of the finest reforms in the history of the United States."[56] Politically, his memories of the early and mid-thirties are happy ones.

About the movie industry, Chaplin has less fond memories. Sound had taken over, disrupting an art which became overnight "a cold and serious industry." Huge cameras rolled around the stage "like juggernauts," while sound technicians looked "like warriors from Mars."[57] Chaplin admits that even when the camera became more mobile, he could hardly find energy to work.

After City Lights, Chaplin did not begin work again until his social conscience finally impelled his imagination. Perhaps Chaplin would have made no films in the thirties after City Lights without the impetus provided by the decade's social and political crisis. Even so, Chaplin in 1964 had severe doubts about his topical movies of the

thirties. Remembering a critic who in 1931 had told him to be more realistic in his films, Chaplin wrote:

> Had I known then what I do now, I could have told him that so-called realism is often artificial, phony, prosaic and dull; and that it is not reality that matters in a film but what the imagination can make out of it.[58]

Indeed, making satirical films on topical subjects can be dangerous, for history has a way of dooming topical art and of distorting the artist's intentions. To a generation that learned of the horrors of the concentration camps, The Great Dictator, especially its harmless appearing camp scene, must have seemed almost misanthropically perverse. Chaplin himself wrote that if he had known of the malignity of Nazi concentration camps, he would not have made The Great Dictator, "could not have made fun of the homocidal insanity of the Nazis."[59]

But such are the vagaries of history. And Chaplin had no more clairvoyant touch with the future than any of his contemporaries. In his two films before World War Two, he expressed through comedy a developing vision of America, or at least of modern society. In Modern Times his defense of the authentic individual over the repressive society is a topical theme even today. Certainly when Capra and Ford criticize American values, they do so from a different vision of man and society than expressed in Modern Times. Though Welles in Citizen Kane is more cynical about society than Capra and Ford, he dwells on how webs of social relationships connect people, and how those webs help to

indicate but never fully explain the behavior and consciousness of a powerful man. Never in Kane is a character so separate and estranged from society as the tramp.

By 1940, however, Chaplin seemed to be working toward his definition of an American Way of Life, moving from a radical stance against society to a necessary acceptance of some of its basic values. Through his explicit critique of a foreign world view, Chaplin was implicitly expressing an alternative set of values that could be placed in opposition. In his final speech Chaplin used language then current in American political rhetoric: "the people," "liberty," "democracy," "science and progress," "free the world." And just as important, Chaplin argued that these ideals were worth fighting for, both in Hannah's speeches ("We should all fight back--we can't fight alone. We can lick them together."), and in the tramp's final speech. In The Great Dictator Chaplin came closer to identification with the American cause than in any other film, including Shoulder Arms. Though by Monsieur Verdoux he had retreated, expressing an understandable disillusionment with the state of the world, for a few years his hatred of fascism had united him with many, perhaps most, Americans.

Finally, Chaplin's films of the late thirties, as all his other films, disclose the tension of a highly talented filmmaker working with his times and himself. If The Great Dictator has its shortcomings, Modern Times remains one of the greatest film comedies ever made. And

both provide subtle visions that help us understand the interplay between the mind of Charles Spencer Chaplin and the world of the late thirties.

CHAPTER III

JOHN FORD: THE HISTORICAL FILMS OF 1939

> In times of danger when there is a quicksand of fear under men's reasoning, a sense of continuity with generations gone before can stretch like a lifeline across the scary present.
>
> --John Dos Passos

In moving from Chaplin to Ford and Capra, we must shift gears. As we have seen, Chaplin enjoyed a tremendous creative control over his films, almost from the day he began directing at Keystone. His films from the thirties were those of a maturing artist, preoccupied with social commentary on contemporary issues, all expressed through the weapon of comedy. Truly a universal figure, Chaplin felt alienated from society more often than not. To champion national values was simply not a part of Chaplin's persona.

In contrast, Ford and Capra were both centrally located in the American grain. Both Catholic and sons of immigrants, Ford and Capra succeeded in the movie industry and seemed intent on repaying their debt to America by making films that accentuated what they considered the most positive aspects of American life. Though their cinematic

visions of America differed, Capra and Ford seem much closer to one another and to mainstream American values than to either Chaplin or Welles.

Since both achieved great popular success in Hollywood between 1936 and 1941, the task of the next four chapters is to examine the most characteristic and popular films of Ford and then of Capra during that period. In doing so, we will focus on the stylistic and thematic preoccupations that constitute the director's personal statement and on the cultural significance and context of each of the films. The first challenge is to assess and define the three historical films directed by Ford in 1939: Stagecoach, Young Mr. Lincoln, and Drums Along the Mohawk.

I

The values, both explicit and implicit, in many of John Ford's films--community solidarity, close attachment to the land or to a region, importance of tradition, affirmation of American destiny, dislike of Puritan moralism--are rooted in his early experiences and social environment. Born Sean Aloysius O'Feeny on February 1, 1895, in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, John Ford was the last child of two Irish immigrants, Sean O'Feeny and Barbara Curran. Ford's father anglicized his own name to John Feeny and around the turn of the century moved his family from their Cape Elizabeth farmhouse to nearby Portland, where he operated a small business.[1]

Life in a Maine seacoast town at the turn of the

century left its stamp on Ford. Away from the restlessness of an urbanizing and industrializing America, Ford grew up before the world wars, while the automobile and airplane were just developing and movies were in their infancy. Living in a three-story house overlooking the ships coming into the Portland harbor, Ford experienced the world as a first-generation American child in the waning days of New England small-town life. It was the decline of that way of life that Sarah Orne Jewett chronicled in The Country of the Pointed Firs.

Ford graduated from Portland's Emerson Grammar School in 1910. A former classmate remembered that Ford would "do things, like in writing composition, that showed artistry, but at the time you didn't think much about it. They were just things that were funny." At Portland High School he showed no special promise as a student but was a top fullback on the football team. At six feet, two inches and 175 pounds, Ford earned the nickname of "Bull." After graduating from high school in 1914, Ford went directly to Hollywood to get a job with his older brother, who had taken on the name of Francis Ford and was a contract film director for Universal Studios.[2]

Like Chaplin, Ford came to Hollywood while it was still in its free wheeling days. Not yet had it become the center of world filmmaking. Only in 1913 had Hollywood been granted status as a city independent of Los

Angeles. That same year D.W. Griffith had broken convention by making an ambitious four-reel movie, Judith of Bethulia. The year before, Thomas Edison had hit upon the idea of releasing films in monthly parts, and serials were born. It was upon a Universal serial series that Francis Ford, thirteen years his brother's elder, worked after having spent some years in New York as an actor in both theater and film.[3] When Sean Feeny arrived in Hollywood, he decided to become Jack Ford.

Besides working as a laborer and prop man in Hollywood, young Jack Ford was a stunt man who, in his own words, "did a lot of stunts--catching the speeding train on horseback, jumping a horse off a cliff, that sort of thing."[4] Besides his now famous appearance in Birth of a Nation as a member of the Ku Klux Klan, Ford occasionally acted or served as assistant director in his brother's films. Before long, he caught the attention of Universal head Carl Laemmle and began directing on his own.

In 1917 Ford began to direct westerns, the genre for which he is deservedly most famous. Already firmly established as early as 1909, westerns have been the most enduring and popular movie form in America.[5] Ford's first successful westerns began in his collaborations with Harry Carey in The Soul Herder (1917), the first of the Cheyenne Harry serials. From these early days on, Ford developed a tendency to collaborate often with those actors, cameraman, and writers with whom he could easily work.

In 1920 Ford made his first significant non-western subject, a comedy of Irish life in New York called The Prince from Avenue A. Four years later he received his first major acclaim with The Iron Horse, a western epic about the building of the first transcontinental railroad. The film was Fox's answer to Paramount's The Covered Wagon, which director James Cruze had made so successfully the year before. A surprise blizzard, which occurred on location, helped to give the film visual excitement. Made for $280,000, it grossed over three million dollars.[6]

Ford's Four Sons (1928), a story of a Bavarian mother's four sons, three of whom are killed in World War One while the other goes to America, was Ford's biggest film after The Iron Horse. By the time sound films were introduced, Ford had become a successful, though not top, director. When the nation's exhibitors voted on top box-office directors in 1927, Ford was listed eighth of 85 directors. After sound was introduced, he made a number of relatively unspectacular films, slowly learning how to make sound complement his visual talents. His first major sound film, The Informer (1935), used an unconventional expressionist visual style and skillful handling of sound to examine the mind of an informer during the Irish rebellion. The success of The Informer owes much to the screenplay of a favorite Ford collaborator, Dudley Nichols, and to the performance of Victor McLagen, who won the Academy Award that year as best actor.[7]

In 1936 Ford became involved with the newly formed Directors Guild of America (DGA), an organization formed "to protect the creative and economic interests of directors in radio, television,and film."[8] At its first meeting in Los Angeles on January 15, 1936, the 29 directors present elected Ford treasurer. King Vidor and Lewis Milestone were also elected officers. On the board were included such men as Borzage, Hawks, Mamoulian, Wellman, and LaCava, all top directors in the mid-thirties.

The Guild arose in large part to combat the severe creative limitations that increasingly had been placed on directors by the studio producers after sound was introduced. In an interview in New Theatre in April, 1936, Ford described some of the problems:

> The director arrives at nine in the morning. He has not only never been consulted about the script to see whether he likes it or feels fitted to handle it, but he may not even know what the full story is about. They hand him two pages of straight dialogue or finally [sic] calculated action. When he leaves at night, he has literally no idea what the next day's work will bring.[9]

Directors like Ford and Capra worked tirelessly to help break down such limitations placed upon them and their colleagues by the studios in the thirties.

Perhaps more than any other American director, Ford gained a reputation of being a man jealous of the right to control his activities on the set without interference. Because he started directing in the open-ended early days of the movies, he became used to making movies without

studio interference. As Richard Schickel has suggested,

> It's possible he accomplished so much in the studios because he refused to surrender the freedom he enjoyed as a young man....[Ford] was an essentially serious and economic craftsman, and he could survive under the new rules, but he never did learn to like taking orders from businessmen.

He had, in the words of a friend, "a big streak of contempt for any kind of authority, any kind of paternal influence on him--all the producers, all the money--they were his enemy."[10]

Throughout his career, Ford acknowledged that a director must, if he wanted to continue working, make financially successful films. In an interview with Jean Mitry, Ford expressed his conviction that "if a director's films do not make money, he cannot expect to retain the confidence and good will of the men who put up the wherewithal." To protect his creative autonomy, Ford did not waste money. In contrast to Chaplin, he disliked having to reshoot scenes many times. Instead, he argued that in the first or second take "there's a sparkle or uncertainty" about an actor's performance that comes off well on film and that is difficutl to recapture. In addition, because film was so expensive, it has been said that Ford cut in the camera--that is, he exposed only the footage that he wished to be included in the film. Because of his methods, Ford was able to finish his films on time and within budget and to control--to a great degree--what finally ended up on the screen.[11]

Ford retained that autonomy in another way. Whereas in the thirties it was characteristic of directors to work under contract for one studio over a long period, Ford often moved from studio to studio. Perhaps because his reputation for being a reliable director was widespread, he could afford to sign only short-term contracts. If a studio displeased him, he could simply move to another. Between 1934 and 1940, Ford made films for Fox (before it merged with 20th Century in 1935), Columbia, RKO, United Artists (for both Goldwyn and Wanger), and 20th Century-Fox. This habit of moving from studio to studio, while continuing to use many of the same character actors, was another way that Ford retained the freedom to imprint his stamp on his films.

Between 1935 and 1938, Ford moved around a lot, directing for the most part standard studio fare. In those years he made a historical costume drama (Mary of Scotland), a south seas romance (The Hurricane), a vehicle for Shirley Temple (Wee Willie Winkie), and a World War drama (Submarine Patrol). In another film, The Plough and the Stars, adapted from Sean O'Casey's play about a man and woman during the Irish Rebellion in Easter Week, 1916, Ford again got studio interference. According to Ford, the studio added some scenes about the couple before they were married and "completely ruined the damn thing--ruined the whole story."[12]

But with Stagecoach, Ford's most creative period began, lasting from 1939 to 1952 and ending with The Quiet Man. The first wave included films before World War Two: Stagecoach, Young Mr. Lincoln, Grapes of Wrath, How Green Was My Valley. After the war, Ford founded an independent company, Argosy Pictures, headed by Marion Cooper, which financed its own films until 1952. During this period came top westerns--My Darling Clementine, Fort Apache, She Wore A Yellow Ribbon, and Rio Grande--as well as the story of an Irish-American boxer returning to his people, The Quiet Man.

Ford continued making films until 1966, with fewer successes. To my mind only The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance rates with the earlier films, though some think highly of The Searchers. Another film, Cheyenne Autumn, is memorable for its sympathetic treatment of American Indians, in stark contrast to the ruthless savages portrayed in a film like Stagecoach. Though he directed no completed films after Seven Women (1966), Ford was given a special award in Hollywood by Richard Nixon in early 1973, the first film person to be granted such an award by a president. On August 31, 1973, John Ford died of cancer.

The achievement of Ford lies in the remarkable unity evident in a diverse group of films. Though he made films on Irish life, south sea islanders, wars, and American history, though he traversed many genres, including gangster films, war documentaries, costume dramas, and

westerns, Ford developed a personal vision that was constantly apparent, especially in those films that particularly interested him.

The vision created by Ford was characterized by a refusal to define the individual apart from the two social institutions closest to him, the family and the community. The sense of closeness to family and friends is everywhere evident in Ford's films, a sense that Ford seemed to share in his life. He was married to the same woman, Mary, for over forty years, and while in Hollywood, lived in the same house for thirty years. If one goes closely over Ford's filmography, studying the actors, actresses and technical people, he will notice how often Ford used the same people in his films, from such stars as John Wayne and Ward Bond (both of whom started with bit parts) to such character actors as Ford's brother Francis (usually a drunk) and the ubiquitous bartender Jack Pennick. The recurring faces in film after film remind us of how important community and family were to Ford.[13]

Working in a medium infamous for its stress on stars, heroes, and personalities, Ford labored against the grain. His heroes, even a mythic figure like Abraham Lincoln, are never praised or presented individually, but always in terms of their relation to community or family, to their connection with other people. In some Ford films, it is hard even to decide who the hero is, because the film's

focus is on a group of people in a difficult situation. In one critic's words, "For Ford, the greatest tragedies in life are either not belonging or having no home, or in losing your home and sense of belonging."[14] Raised in a small-town pre-industrial environment, Ford lived to see men walk on the moon, lived also to see wars, urban disorder, social discontent, and a steady erosion of the values he held as sound. When he presented a happy vision of society in his films, he nearly always was probing the past. For in the past--whether mythical or real--lay the America that Ford respected so deeply.

II

In the several years before Pearl Harbor Americans became especially interested in their nation's past. We have already seen how the popular front sought after 1935 to claim American heroes for the "democratic" tradition, giving up the demand for "proletarian" art as alien to American life. Gradually, as the years wore on, artists began to move away from social criticism and toward the examination of American traditions. Many artists, uncomfortable with the solitude that was a part of their profession, were led to commitments--first to radical causes, then to the popular front, and finally to a defense of existing cultural values and of the common man. Though few if any American film directors made radical gestures (King Vidor's Our Daily Bread was one of the few truly radical films of the era), after 1936 most directors found

themselves quite at home with those existing cultural values. As the war approached, Hollyoood, along with many other sectors of American cultural life, began to define the goodness of the American Way of Life that only five years before seemed to be on the brink of collapse.

As early as 1936, Malcom Cowley noticed this shifting emphasis toward American history. Instead of the cynical and debunking attitude toward America's past that had been so common among intellectuals in the twenties, Cowley noted in his review of Van Wyck Brooks' The Flowering of New England that men were "turning back to the great past in order to see the real nature of the traditions that we are trying to save, and in order to gain new strength for the struggles ahead."[15] Just as every generation creates its own history to suit its present needs, Cowley's was delving into its national past to search for traditional values that would help order life in an era of crisis.

This reawakened interest in America's past was everywhere evident. The huge popularity of such historical novels as Drums Along the Mohawk, Northwest Passage, and Gone With the Wind attest to the change. So too did the lyrical praises of the American people found in Carle Sandburg's The People, Yes or Archibald MacLeish's "America was Promises." The Southern Agrarians and some Southern historians had since the twenties sought to develop a vision of the Old South that would prove an acceptable--and for

them, necessary--alternative to the secular society brought about by modern industrialism.

One manifestation of this trend was a growing interest in American folk art--art arising from "the people." Constance Rourke, whose American Humor (1931) had delved into American folklore in search of native sages and wits, was a driving force in preserving American folk art as director of the Index of American Design. A part of the WPA Federal Arts Project, the Index, in addition to its other activities, reproduced plates of early American furniture, glassware, pottery, textiles, silver work, and other crafts.[16]

In addition to the Index, the activity of museums in the thirties helped to stimulate interest in folk art and the American past. The Whitney Museum, which had been established in 1930 solely to show native work, became a top national gallery. In 1935 it displayed American genre paintings and in 1938, a century of American landscape. A year later the Metropolitan Museum offered an exhibit called "Life in America." This rediscovery of the American past, Oliver Larkin has written, "was a blend of rhapsody, ridicule, and nostalgia, of hopeful self-glorification, sober pride, and sheer curiosity." Not only was the rediscovery important in poetry, historical novels, folk art, and painting, but it was also evident in music and scholarship as well.[17]

Hollywood also had its patriotic revival. We have already noted the renewed interest in westerns during 1939 and 1940, as well as the concentration upon biographies of famous Americans. Margaret Thorp, in a study of American movies published in late 1939, wrote that 1938-9 "was motion pictures most American year."[18] Of the 574 features made that year, 481 were tales of American life. Not only was 1939 the year of the most popular historical epic of all time--Gone With the Wind--it was also the year of gangster films like The Roaring Twenties, and westerns like Dodge City, Northwest Passage, Union Pacific, and Destry Rides Again. Within the industry an important economic factor helps explain this change: as political tensions rose in Europe after Munich, European censors, particularly in Germany and Italy, were by 1939 placing heavy restrictions on American films so as nearly to destroy the market. Stories of the American past were clearly one way of compensating for some of the lost European market by expanding the American one.

Many of the historical films contain an effusive patriotism. In an article written shortly after Stagecoach was released, Frank Nugent (who ten years later was writing screenplays for Ford), noticed this new trend:

> Hollywood has begun to wave the flag. It has discovered America, discovered democracy, and discovered what George M. Cohan discovered years ago...that you can always bring the house to its feet by playing the Star Spangled Banner and running the red, white, and blue to the top of the flagpole.

Nugent pointed out that Warner Brothers was making patriotic shorts on the Bill of Rights, the Alamo, Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, and others; that Paramount upon request from the War Department rewrote the pacifist ending of Men With Wings; that Let Freedom Ring closed "with Nelson Eddy leading a labor chorus in singing 'America' and the dirty capitalists slinking out of sight."[19] For Nugent it was too often clear that Hollywood was going beyond simple Americana. All across America the fiddles of patriotism had begun to tune up well before Pearl Harbor. The void of cultural values brought about in part by the iconoclasm of intellectuals in the twenties was being filled in the late thirties by a patriotic belief in American folk wisdom.

With this in mind it becomes easier to understand Ford's rise in popularity in 1939 and 1940. It was not so much that Ford suddenly sensed and sought out a popular audience in his historical films of 1939, but rather that the audience came around to his vision of American history. As has been mentioned, Ford was primarily a director of westerns in the silent days and in the mid-thirties did a number of American historical films. But these films lacked the public acceptence enjoyed by Ford's 1939 histories in part because they simply didn't speak to the needs and desires of audiences during Roosevelt's first term as they did to the people living on the brink of

World War Two. By then, Ford's vision of America was one whose time had come.

But just how did Ford view the American past? A scene from The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962) helps to explain. In the scene, a young reporter asks Senator Ransom Stoddard if an event from the distant past--purportedly factual--may not simply be legend. Stoddard stares at the newsman, then calmly replies, "when the fact becomes legend, print the legend." Fort Apache carries a similar attitude. In that film, Colonel Thursday's stupid leadership, which leads to his own death and the deaths of many subordinates, is later remembered as an heroic effort in defense of the nation. Both examples suggest that for Ford the past is important not as a precise catalogue of facts but as a source of affirmation. If a vision of the past seems to instill national pride and community solidarity, Ford hints, then the question of its truthful or legendary basis is unimportant. This tendency to select from the past those elements which would affirm the American cause, regardless of the facts, was welcome in 1939.

Ford's lack of concern with the precise facts can be illustrated by his second historical film of 1939, Young Mr. Lincoln. Though Ford told Peter Bogdanovich that "everything in the picture was true," such was not the case. It is true that the screenwriter, Lamar Trotti, did research Lincoln's life and used dialogue taken from Lincoln's statements. But the trial in which Lincoln used an

almanac to exonerate his client took place not when Lincoln was a young man, but in 1858, only two years before he was elected president. Likewise, the briefly treated romance between Ann Rutledge and Lincoln at the opening of the film was unheard of before Lincoln's death, and seems to be more a fabrication of Lincoln's former law partner than anything else.[20]

The same is true of Stagecoach and Drums Along the Moahwk. Though both are placed in historical settings and attempt to use realistic settings and costumes, the stories are fictional attempts to entertain and instruct the audience. That Ford came to the fore as a Hollywood director in 1939 (he was given Grapes of Wrath, the hottest material around, to direct at the end of the year) suggests that the content and quality of his vision struck an affirmative chord in the collective American movie-going consciousness.

III

The most resilient and consistently popular genre in the American popular arts since the late 19th century is undoubtedly the western. In dime novels, pulp magazines, movies, and finally television, westerns have been a staple entertainment form. By dramatizing the struggle between the forces of civilization and savagery on the western frontier, by developing a set of conventions readily understood by audiences, by remaining flexible enough to

allow treatment of contemporary issues, values, and preoccupations in a historical setting, the western has become the peculiarly American epic.[21]

When one speaks of the western film, no director looms so large as John Ford. Though Ford made many silent westerns, Stagecoach was his first in a line of notable sound westerns and his first of nine westerns shot in Monument Valley, that rugged Arizona landscape characterized by a rolling desert dotted with awesome massifs jutting toward the clouds. Stagecoach was also one of the first in a series of memorable American westerns made in 1939 and 1941, constituting something of a western film renaissance. The form had been largely neglected in "A" productions after sound was introduced.[22]

The idea to film Stagecoach was largely Ford's. After reading Ernest Haycox's "The Road to Lordsborg," in the April, 1937, issue of Collier's and seeing possibilities for a film, he bought the story rights himself for $2,500. He had a difficult time interesting studios in his western; RKO turned it down while others left Ford's approaches unanswered. Finally Walter Wanger agreed to produce it as the last film on his United Artists contract. Rejecting Wanger's suggestion of getting Gary Cooper and Marlene Dietrich as too expensive, Ford hired a little-known actress named Claire Trevor and his former prop man, John Wayne, to star.[23]

Stagecoach opened in late February of 1939 and all factors considered, did very well at the box office. Though the biggest draws in early 1939 were Wuthering Heights and Confessions of a Nazi Spy, Stagecoach--lacking the stars that would automatically draw in customers--won the distinction of opening at the Radio City Music Hall and grossed $85,000 the first week. It continued to draw big crowds in cities across the country into April and May.[24]

The action of Stagecoach takes place in the form of a stagecoach journey. A diverse group of people leave Tonto en route to Lordsburg, with two stops, at Dry Fork and Apache Wells. The journey is made more hazardous by the constant threat of the warring Indians, led by Geronimo. This journey motif is common in Ford's films, also important in Grapes of Wrath, Wagonmaster, and Cheyenne Autumn. So also is his tendency to place a group of people in a difficult situation. When Jean Mitry asked Ford why he so often did so, Ford replied:

> It enables me to make individuals aware of each other by bringing them face to face with something bigger than themselves. The situation, the tragic moment, forces men to reveal themselves and to become aware of what they truly are.[25]

A major element in Stagecoach involves the shedding of pretensions and the pulling together of a group of people.

Andre Bazin once wrote that Stagecoach was like a perfectly balanced wheel which remains in equilibrium on its axis whatever the position.[26] To develop the metaphor, one might say that the Stagecoach story has five spokes.

The first two are traditional western plots: the warring Indians and the avenging hero. Throughout the film, whenever the stagecoach leaves the safety of a settlement, it ventures into threatened territory. This strand of the story is resolved with the magnificently shot and edited chase scene near the end of the film. The second western strand involves Ringo and the evil Plummer brothers. The Plummers have murdered Ringo's father and brother, then framed him of their foreman's murder, sending him to prison. Ringo settles his score with the Plummers by gunning down all three of them in a shootout on the darkened streets of Lordsburg at the film's conclusion.

The third and fourth elements of the story are the comedy and romance. The comedy is used to break up the tension provided by the first two plots. It comes primarily from the blustering cowardice of the stagecoach driver, Buck, and the alcoholic interactions between the whiskey seller Peacock and the drunken Doc Boone. Doc Boone's character was added to the story by scriptwriter Dudley Nichols and Ford and was so successfully acted that it won Thomas Mitchell the Academy Award for best supporting actor in 1939. The romance between the prostitute Dallas and the prisoner Ringo begins with glances from the moment Ringo hops on board and culminates in their impending marriage as the film closes.

But the final and to my mind most critical spoke:of the

Stagecoach wheel centers on the interaction of the characters and their gradual development into something of a cohesive group. It is this part of the story that is most markedly a creation of Ford and Nichols just as it is the part that gives us an insight into Ford's vision of the American west from the perspective of 1939.

The visual style employed by Ford in Stagecoach accentuates the importance of the group. After the introduction of the characters--one of the most economical, swift-moving beginnings in film history--Ford characteristically moves between long shots of the stagecoach moving across the desert and medium closeups of characters in the stagecoach itself. The long shots emphasize the relative weakness of people in a hostile environment, while the medium closeups allow Ford to illustrate how the characters react to their threatening situation. In addition, the long shots are carefully composed, giving the film a poetic quality that critics have often commented upon, a visual beauty that suggests Ford found an aesthetic delight merely in showing the imperious Monument Valley landscape. Ford has said that he painted a lot in his youth and always had an eye for compostion.[27] This Fordian tendency to stress the beauty of landscape--later emphasized similarly by Robert Altman in films like McCabe and Mrs. Miller and Images--sets him apart from Capra and Chaplin, neither of whom seemed interested in anything but developing the narrative and characters.

The characters in Stagecoach are described in rich detail. Besides Buck, the driver, and Sheriff Curly Wilcox, who rides shotgun, six begin the trip from Tonto: Mrs. Lucy Mallory, a gentlewoman from Virginia, is pregnant and hoping to reach her husband, a cavalry lieutenant, before her baby arrives; Hatfield, a gambler and fallen aristocrat, accompanies Mrs. Mallory when he sees the low quality of the other passengers; Peacock, a whiskey drummer, hopes to return to the "bosom of his family" in Kansas City, Kansas; Gatewood, the crooked town banker, is absconding with ten thousand dollars of the bank's savings money; Doc Boone, the drunken doctor, and Dallas, the town whore, are both social outcasts being run out of town by the ladies of the Law and Order League.[28] Finally, between Tonto and Dry Fork, the stagecoach picks up the Ringo Kid, whose horse has gone lame. The way in which Ford presents this motley group of characters and develops the relations between them so that our sympathies are drawn toward some and our contempt toward others is the key in understanding the primary intent of Stagecoach.

At one level, Stagecoach characters are divided into types that would have been widely acceptable to the popular front. At the beginning of the film, the class lines of characters is clearly made apparent:

Aristocrats: Mrs. Mallory and Hatfield.

Bourgeoisie: Gatewood (monopoly capitalist)
Peacock (small businessman)
Doc Boone (declining intellectual)

Working Class: Ringo, Dallas, and Buck

When the characters eat a meal at Dry Fork, the class distinctions are clear: Ringo and Dallas sit down at one end of the table, and Gatewood, Hatfield, and Mrs. Mallory move to the other end.[29] Doc Bonne's rejection of "respectable" values--indeed, he is the victim of these values--draws him closer to Ringo and Dallas. He gets forced out of town with Dallas, helping her along, and he knows and admires Ringo, having once set a broken leg for Ringo's brother. As the movie progresses, especially after Mrs. Mallory's baby is born in Apache Wells, all the characters, excluding only the unregenerate Gatewood, begin to shed their social distinctions and to treat one another with basic human respect.

That Ford and Nichols were particularly interested in getting a capitalist for a scapegoat is apparent from the changes they made from the story. Gatewood and Doc Boone are added to replace two rather faceless characters in the story, the Englishman and the cattleman. Doc Boone was added primarily to exploit the comic possibilities of of his dealings with Peacock, but Gatewood was added to give the audience an evil capitalist to despise. As we saw in Modern Times and will see later in Capra and Welles, the image of the dishonest man of wealth and power was a consistently appealing icon to the American popular audience in the late thirties.

Judging from contemporary reviews, the popular front aspect of the film helped Stagecoach gain acceptance from the Left. Howard Rushmore in his review for The Daily Worker endorsed the compelling view of Stagecoach as a political tract:

> It is a film not only of first rate entertainment, but of social significance. Ford and Wanger have taken care to show that society's outcasts have often qualities which the elite lack. The banker, the villain of the piece, spouts in approved Hoover fashion....Neither Mr. Wanger nor Mr. Ford attempt to cloak their sympathies, which, as the public knows, have long been on the side of democracy and there are a number of brief scenes which prove they aren't afraid to bring out that fact on celluloid.[30]

It seemed to many that Gatewood's arrest at the film's end for misappropriation of bank funds was a leftist statement by Ford and Wanger.

But this view of Stagecoach as a leftist tract, however, is slightly off center: it mistakenly sees Ford's Irish-Catholic social conservatism as popular frontism.[31] Certainly no endorsement of a future proletarian state, Stagecoach places its hopes for social stability and individual happiness in an institution other than government. Essentially a backward-looking film, Stagecoach places its hopes on the family. The only hope for a satisfying social life in the old West or in 1939, suggests Ford, lies in the ability of Americans to re-establish close-knit family units, characteristic of an earlier frontier America.

Though this social vision is not readily apparent on the surface of the story, when one looks closely, he sees

that the actions of the characters are often motivated by their families. Lucy Mallory is traveling to meet her husband, hoping to reach him before her baby is born (in the story she is only on her way to marry Richard. The whiskey drummer is on his way back to family. His first words are spoken to the bartender, inviting him to stop at his home if in the area: "nobody sets a better table than my dear wife Agatha." Throughout the film, Peacock considers his family first whenever he is called upon to make a decision. Both Ringo and Dallas have lost their families: Dallas was orphaned as a child, and Ringo's father and brother were killed by Luke Plummer. Their romance, developed throughout the movie, is their way of getting back to the richness, security, and fulfillment of family life. The point where their marriage is assured comes when Ringo sees Dallas holding Mrs. Mallory's baby, her maternal instincts shining. Though some women might be offended that Dallas is defined almost solely in terms of future wife and mother, they needn't be. As Molly Haskell has argued in her book on women in films, "For Ford, as for almost no other American writer or director, the word 'wife' is an honorific term."[32] Ringo, unlike most western heroes, will become a settler--he already has a ranch--and as his wife, Dallas will not become some genteel custodian of culture but instead will share the burdens and the trials of frontier life, thus achieving nobility and

playing a crucial social role. To be a wife, for Ford, is not to be disparaged but to be important, to be essential.

The importance of the family in Stagecoach is also emphasized by the most important single event in Stagecoach: the birth of the baby. If Gerald Mast is correct in suggesting that the film primarily emphasizes how a group can transcend petty differences and express warmth and kindness to one another, the turning point occurs when Mrs. Mallory faints just after the group arrives at Apache Wells.[33] Until that moment, conflict between characters has been constant. Hatfield has nagged Doc Boone for smoking in front of a gentlewoman; Mrs. Mallory has snubbed Dallas' offer for help; Gatewood, Hatfield and Mrs. Mallory have refused to eat near Ringo and Dallas. The list could be extended. But when Mrs. Mallory faints, a unity begins to form. Curly and Hatfield rush to lift Mrs. Mallory gently off the floor and carry her to a bedroom. Ringo makes Doc Boone some hot coffee to sober him up. Only Gatewood continues to bluster. After the baby is delivered and Dallas carries it out of the bedroom for all to see, everyone crowds around Dallas to see the baby. Peacock, who had before been timid and uncertain, finally asserts himself, quieting the others so that Mrs. Mallory will not be disturbed. Hatfield, who has had only sharp words and scorn for Doc Boone earlier, demands "respect for his professional opinion" after he delivers the baby successfully. And Mrs. Mallory, after Dallas sits up all night to care for the

baby, sheds her aloofness and seems truly grateful for the kindness that Dallas has displayed. The birth of the baby--the event through which the Mallorys "officially" become a family--unifies the diverse group and even deepens the romance between Dallas and Ringo.

It is significant that the only character unredeemed by the miracle of birth is Gatewood. Worrying only about himself and the money he has stolen, Gatewood never worries about Mrs. Mallory's condition as all the others do. Remembering that Gatewood's marriage seems less than ideal--his wife is a leading vigilante of the Law and Order League, a puritanical woman whom Gatewood seems to despise--Ford seems to argue that only with a respect for the institution of the family and the close human relationships it develops can a person transcend his egoistic and acquisitive tendencies and develop a self-effacing and loving nature without which any society is chaotic and self-destructive. And Ford goes even further, hinting that miscegination is not conducive to the kind of family he wants. Two less-than-satisfactory marriages are between Buck and his Mexican wife Juliana, and between Chris, the owner of the inn at Apache Wells, and the Apache Yakima. Buck complains that he can never make ends meet; because of the extended family, he feels that he is "feeding the whole state of Chihuahua." Likewise, Yakima is treacherous; she escapes in the middle of the night with horses and rifles, presumably to aid her people's cause. When Chris

discovers she has escaped, he laments more about the loss of his horse than of her disappearance. Though the hope of a successful society leans on a respect for the family, the races must not be mixed.

This subtle stress on the importance of the family becomes more apparent in The Grapes of Wrath and How Green Was My Valley, as we shall see in the next chapter. It might be enough to conclude this discussion of Stagecoach by noting that in it, the West and the characters who know its ways the best--Ringo, Dallas, and Doc Boone--seem to possess a special quality that helps to break down social distinctions and to establish democratic equality between people. Though the towns do have their narrow and evil people--Gatewood and the "uplifting" women--it seems that for Ford, as for Frederick Jackson Turner, democracy resulted from the special vitality found only in the people living on the cutting edge of civilization. This unarticulated hint of national uniqueness and patriotic verve was to be developed more explicitly in Ford's next film, Young Mr. Lincoln.

IV

That Ford should have made a film on one of America's most durable national heroes in 1939 is no surprise. We have already noted the general interest in filmed biographies in the thirties, which was in turn part of a reawakened interest in American biography generally in the thirties. It was not so much the case that more

biographies were being written as that the tone of the biographies was more generous than the characteristic cynical and debunking biographies famous in the twenties. Biographers of American subjects in the thirties bent over backwards to emphasize positive contributions of their subjects. The decade was dominated, in Alfred's Kazin's words, by "solid and affectionate" biographies.[34]

Lincoln was an important hero to the thirties, as he had been to nearly every generation after his assassination. Since he came from humble roots, had a wry folk humor, presided over the country during its most critical internal crisis, and was shot down at his greatest hour, Lincoln bears a special position in the American popular consciousness. In 1939 Carl Sandburg's four-volume biography of Lincoln was completed. And in addition to Young Mr. Lincoln, Robert Sherwood's popular Broadway play, Abe Lincoln in Illinois, starring Raymond Massey, was filmed in 1939.[35]

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the public's demand for openly patriotic films, Young Mr. Lincoln was somewhat disappointing at the box office, despite the buildup it was given and the ballyhooed preview given at Springfield, Illinois, on Memorial Day, 1939. Not only were stars shipped in from Hollywood and critics from New York to get the first viewing of the film, but Marian Anderson was hired to sing the Star-Spangled Banner before the performance. Nonetheless, Young Mr. Lincoln

consistently drew fewer people than Juarez, the Paul Muni film released about the same time. Juarez, with its explicitly "democratic" theme, was more in turn with the spirit of the times: didacticism was preferred over subtlety.[36]

Perhaps one reason for the film's lack of popularity was its refusal to stress patriotism and democracy. The mood of Young Mr. Lincoln evokes a way of life long since gone, leaving only a sense of nostalgia for a mode of existence that has disappeared. In contrast to the rugged terrain of Monument Valley, Ford concentrates on the drowsily winding river, the huge shade trees, and the virgin land of the fertile midwest plains. And in contrast to the travelers in Stagecoach, in Young Mr. Lincoln Ford views the lives of people in the close-knit community of Springfield, Illinois, in the late 1830s. The outdoor shots of Abe studying the law near the river, riding into Springfield on a mule, feet almost dragging on the ground, or climbing a hill in the midst of an approaching thunderstorm all show Ford's understanding of the relationship between character and nature, as well as his ability to convey that understanding visually. Likewise, Alfred Newman's score showed that he understood Ford's inclination toward American folk songs of the 19th century to underscore emotional or patriotic movements in the film. Newman, who also did the scores for the next three Ford films we will be considering, used for the dance scene the same theme that Ford used again when Wyatt Earp and Clementine

Carter dance on the church floor in My Darling Clementine. And Abe's two songs played on the jew's harp are "Turkey in the Straw" and "Dixie," which effectively unite the folk and patriotic traditions.

According to Ford, "The idea of the picture was to give the feeling that even as a young man you could sense that there was going to be something great about this man."[37] The structure of the screenplay, written by Ford and Lamar Trotti, is circular. It begins in New Salem, Illinois, in 1832, with the young Clay family coming into town in a covered wagon. They trade some books for merchandise with storekeeper Abe, including Blackstone's Commentaries. After Abe decides on a career in law, moving to Springfield in 1837, the now grown Clay boys, Adam and Matt, get involved in a scuffle at a Fourth of July celebration and are accused of murder. After talking down a lynch mob through calculated wit and restrained wisdom, Abe defends the boys at their murder trial. Destroying the validity of the only damaging testimony by referring to an almanac listing the position of the moon on the night of the murder, he brings freedom to both of the Clay boys. In the final scene, the reunited Clay family again thanks Abe for his kindness, then rides away again in their covered wagon.

Fundamental to Ford's image of Lincoln is Abe's close connection to the common people. Sergei Eisenstein, in a glowing essay on the film, has compared it to a

daguerreotype from the 1830s come to life.[38] The period costumes--narrow-waisted checked dresses and dainty bonnets for the women, frock coats and beaver top hats for the men--lend to the mise en scene an air of historical reality. So too do the activities of the Independence Day celebration, in which Abe is a constant participant. He watches with respect as veterans of the War of 1812 and the Revolutionary War pass by in the parade. He displays a bewildered indecisiveness as he tries to choose between the peach and the apple pies in the pie-judging contest. His strength brings him victory in the rail-splitting contest, while his slightly dishonest ingenuity, consisting of tying his end of the rope to a wagon, then driving off the horse, ensures that his struggling tug-of-war team will win.

Though he is of the people, Ford's Lincoln also possesses the special qualities of wit, human sympathy, and clear-headed wisdom that makes him an ideal leader. In the dramatic evening lynch scene, lit by the flaming torches carried by the enraged mob, Lincoln's special qualities are most apparent. Alternating between closeups of Abe, reaction shots of Mrs. Clay, and long shots of the mob, Ford masterfully traces how Abe is able to bring the crowd back to their senses, first through humor ("hanging is so permanent"), then through reasoning ("We do things together that we'd be might ashamed to do by ourselves....'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy'"). By his

ability to convey to others the moral consequences of their actions, Abe becomes an ideal Fordian hero and leader.

Several elements in the film manage to convey Abe's future greatness. The lynching scene is one. So is the inclusion of Mary Todd and Stephen Douglas in the film. After Abe quiets the crowd, he is invited by Mary Todd to a dance in a letter that reads, "how much we admire your conduct during the recent deplorable uprising." After the trial, during which Douglas lends his services to the prosecutor, both Mary and Douglas contratulate him on his ingenuity in winning the case. Outside the courthouse, as Abe steps awkardly into the bright sunlight, a crowd of people cheer him for saving them from their impulses.

The final scene, which also conveys Abe's future greatness, resulted from a lucky accident. In it, Abe walks up to the top of a hill alone, as dark clouds ominously gather above. When he reaches the top, lightning strikes and rain begins to fall. The scene was unplanned, shot by Ford on the spur of the moment when a thunderstorm did begin. Like the snowstorm in The Iron Horse or the storm in She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, this scene shows Ford's ability to use the acts of nature to deepen and beautify his story. Though some critics thought the scene heavy handed and overly explicit, it seems to me an apt and artful conclusion to the film.[39]

An important issue, which lies at the very foundation of the film and reveals a good deal about the social

function of the late thirties Hollywood movies, remains to be discussed. That is the film's attitude toward law. In the introduction we noted that films may reasonably serve as symbolic legitimations of the social system, as much as sermons, philosophical treatises, or political rhetoric. The ideas underlying a film can serve consciously to reaffirm a viewer's values or even unconsciously to shape them. Young Mr. Lincoln's treatment of the law shows how movies treatment of the law shows how movies may become sources of social legitimation.

From the opening scene, the law and Lincoln's conception of it are a central concern in the film. When he trades for Blackstone's Commentaries, he grasps the book and says reverently, "Law," in a tone of voice that suggests a metaphysical and nearly mythical respect. Ford then cuts to Abe reading his book while sitting against a tree near the river bank. He reads a passage: "Law...is the rights of persons and the rights of things. Rights to life, reputation, and liberty...rights to acquire and hold property. Wrongs are violations of these rights." After considering the passage, he tells himself, "By jing, that's all there is to it, right and wrong. Maybe I ought to take this up serious." For Lincoln, the law is simply a question of natural and instinctive morality, but it is interesting to note that the natural rights include--not accidently, it would seem--both human and property rights.

Abe's musings on the law are interrupted by Ann Rutledge, who encourages him to make a career of law. After dissolving magnificently from the river in spring to the ice-filled river in the winter--from Ann's life to Ann's death--Ford brings Abe back to Ann's grave where he finally decides to go into law full time. After moving to Springfield, he settles his first case between two bickering neighbors by using a Solomon-like common sense. No legal principles are involved, only some simple reasoning.

It is in the court scene, however, that the implications of the film's attitude toward law are made most clear. The thesis expressed in Young Mr. Lincoln suggests that law and justice are merely a question of simple morality and that anyone who uses this common-sense morality will be rewarded in the courts. The court scene propagates, perhaps unconsciously, a myth popular in the late thirties, the myth of benevolent authority.

In that scene, the courtroom styles of Lincoln and prosecutor John Felder are contrasted. Felder's argument is based on Old Testament retribution. He begins his opening statement, "Thou shalt not kill," and reasons that since Scrub White, the murder victim, was dead, the lives of one or both of the Clays "must be wiped out as a man wipeth a plate." Felder's stern approach leads him to call Mrs. Clay to the stand, demanding that she tell which of her sons killed Scrub, thus convicting him to death.

Abe's approach is, again, simple and witty. When Felder puts Mrs. Clay on the spot, he objects: "I may not know so much of law as Mr. Felder, but I know what's right and what's wrong, and I know what you're asking is wrong." In the rest of the trial his folksy presentation contrasts starkly to Felder's stiff and formal approach. When Felder speaks, Judge Bell is shown asleep and snoring. When Abe tells his story about the dog and the pitchfork or asks J. Palmer Cass why he doesn't use his real name--Jack Cass--the judge laughs loudly and sympathetically. After the first day of the trial, the judge visits Abe in the evening and suggests that a lawyer with more experience might be able to help him. Throughout the trial the judge unabashedly sides with Lincoln, reinforcing the sense that one need only have a natural moral respect for life, liberty and property to obtain justice in a court of law.

Part of this respect for law and authority seems to come from Ford's Catholicism. As Will Herberg has pointed out, the Catholic Church in America has taken on the characteristics of the Irish Catholic Church. Important for our purposes is what Herberg calls the "intense reverence for the clergy" characteristic of the Irish Catholic laity.[40] A strong theme in Young Mr. Lincoln, as in many of Ford's films, is the respect for legal and religious leaders. In turn, these leaders are nearly always pictured as active and endearing members of the community.

Whatever the roots of Ford's attitude toward law and authority, the fact remains that its treatment in Young Mr. Lincoln legitimates the existing order. Besides appealing to other Catholics like Ford and to conservatives generally, the film's treatment of benevolent authorities also appealed to those Americans who still supported the New Deal and FDR in 1939. After the balance shifted on the Supreme Court in the late thirties, New Deal welfare legislation was deemed constitutional by the court. Since so many poor Americans benefited from that legislation, their support for the legislative and judicial systems, as well as for FDR himself as symbolic leader of Federal benevolence, becomes more understandable.[41]

Thus, the social effect of movies is curious: they both reflect and create culture. By noticing the increasing stability and response of the government to difficult to difficult economic problems after 1932 and by recognizing that change in their themes and preoccupations, the movies were reflecting culture. But by including and perpetuating such myths as the myth of benevolent authority, the movies were creating culture; that is, they were expressing values and shaping meanings that became a part of the American "symbolic universe," the American view of reality. Only when the myth and the reality--unequal administration of justice for particular marginal groups--come into conflict does it become clear how socially significant the movies can become in providing experience and molding a

particular social view of reality. The tendency to glorify the American past and American ideals that became so widespread in American movies from 1939 until the end of World War Two provided a firm foundation for what C. Wright Mills has called the "American celebration" of the forties and fifties. The beautifully evocative and nostalgic films of John Ford were a part of that foundation.[42]

V

The critical and popular reaction to Drums Along the Mohawk, Ford's third historical film of 1939, was just the opposite of that accorded Young Mr. Lincoln. Among the critics Drums was much less successful. For example, Otis Ferguson wrote that Young Mr. Lincoln was, in its quiet honesty, "an expression of the country's best life that says as much as forty epics." Drums Along the Mohawk, however, was precisely the type of boisterous epic that Ferguson disliked; though he admitted it was a cut above most historical pictures so common in 1939, it still had "too many type situations and too many types--ugh-ugh Indian, hell's-fire Army widow, little fellow with big jug, etc." Time's reviewer suggested that the audience of Drums "may be as happy as the settlers when the war is ended." In general, critics saw nothing special in the film.[43]

Nonetheless, it did much better with the public. Released a few weeks after Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Drums didn't do quite as well as that second biggest

grosser of 1939, but it did do much better than Young Mr. Lincoln. It had successful opening runs and, like Mr. Smith, enjoyed continued success in second runs for quite a long time.[44] Several reasons for its public success seem apparent: unlike Young Mr. Lincoln, it was a color film. It had Claudette Colbert (and a more direct romantic interest). It was quickly paced with a good deal of action. And it was an open celebration of the strength and resilience of the American spirit. There were no unruly mobs in Drums.

The film also received a boost from the fact that it was based on a highly popular novel of the same title, published in 1936. The historical vision expressed by the author, Walter Edmonds, differed from Ford's. Though he was a prolific author of historical fiction, Drums was undoubtedly Edmonds' most popular work. In a study of Edmonds' approach to history, Ray Martin Bartram has written:

> Edmonds revisits the past to discover ordinary people busy at ordinary tasks. He has a remarkable pictorial talent and a taste for multiplicity and variety of detail, human skill in the use of tools and techniques, and bustling activity. His settings are minutely detailed, but his characters and their motives are not deeply analyzed.

In the introduction to Drums Edmonds points to parallels between the Revolutionary War and the thirties, revealing his individualistic conservativism. Both eras, he suggests, were confronted by "a reckless Congress and ebullient finance," both had dire poverty; both tried government relief

and saw it fail; and finally, both had people "who took hold of their courage and struck out for themselves" as the only solution to local problems. For Edmonds, the central government in both eras was "totally unfitted to comprehend a local problem."[45]

Ford shifts the emphasis of the novel away from local-national antagonisms toward a stress on community solidarity and, indeed, on national pride. With screenwriters Lamar Trotti and Sonja Levien, Ford left out a number of of subplots, including the arrest of John Wolff as a Loyalist sympathizer, the illicit love affair between Nancy Schuyler and Jerry McLonis, and the death of McLonis at Widow McKlennar's hand. But Ford made an even more important change: instead of simply being an historical drama, it is a western.

It is true that Drums lacks the spurs and saddles, the cactus and cowboys that usually accompany the traditional western. Nonetheless, the film is a documentation of conflict between the forces of civilization and savagery at an early enough time when even the Mohawk Valley was considered the west. It is a film about the taming of the wilderness, about the western advance of civilization, about the establishment of a secure community on the frontier through the joint efforts of hardy pioneers, about the growth and development of the American nation and the patriotic spirit that helps to bring it along. In some ways, it is Ford's most clear and optimistic statement

concerning the historical roots of American nationhood. As William Pechter has noted, in Drums "the archetypal drama of the progress toward community is played out with a confident balance and a tranquil acceptance of the values that the polarities of wildness and civilization are assumed to possess."[46]

Though Stagecoach had its Puritanical uplifters and Young Mr. Lincoln its dangerous mobs, both of which marred successful community life, Drums seems to present Ford's vision of the ideal American community, the place at which civilization is far enough advanced to bring people together but not so far as to suffer from "the blessings of civilization" that Doc Boone sarcastically commented upon at the close of Stagecoach. A constant conflict in American history since Ann Hutchinson defied the Puritan orthodoxy has been the opposition between the mutual claims of the individual for freedom and the community for social order. Drums presents an idyllic vision of the two strains in a balanced harmony. The individual develops a degree of freedom by having his own farm (and is aided in doing so by the community), yet he perceives that his interests are best served by participating in community affairs and even fighting for the community's existence.

The action of the film follows the attempts of Gilbert and Lana Borst Martin to build a household within their community, beginning in 1776 and continuing for several years thereafter. After their marriage in Albany,

Gil and Lana move to Deerfield, near the fort at German Flat in the Mohawk Valley, where Gil has begun to clear land for a farm. When Indians destroy their farm and force them to the fort, Gil joins the militia in tracking them down. When the militia returns after a long campaign, the wounded Gil tells Lana that only 240 of the 600 men returned alive. Several years later, after the Martins have a son, the Indians attack again and everyone returns to the fort. When the ammunition gets low, Gil volunteers to make a daring run to Fort Dayton for reinforcements. The Indians surround the fort, and just when they begin to charge it successfully, Gil returns with troops (a la the Ku Klux Klan rescue in Birth of a Nation), the Indians are subdued, and the community learns that Cornwallis has surrendered. The concluding shots--accompanied by "My Country 'Tis of Thee"--are of a black servant and a Christianized Indian looking on with pride as the new flag is raised and of Gil leaving the fort with Lana, telling her, "Well, I reckon we better be getting back to work. Goin' to be a heap to do from now on."

The whole community is structured around an agrarian way of life, in which both men and women toil hard to ensure survival. The most important character in the film is Lana Martin. By showing how she gradually sheds her city ways in the process of becoming a valuable member of the pioneer community, Ford expresses his attitudes toward the East and the West. At the opening of the film, Lana is an

Albany aristocrat being married to a somewhat uncomfortable Gil Martin. In her first night in the cabin, she is terrified when Gil's Indian friend, Blue Back, comes unannounced into their cabin to escape a storm.[47] However, Lana is a determined woman and eventually even helps her husband in the fields and socializes easily with the other women in the area. Her transition in the film is from the standpoint represented by Mrs. Demooth, who boasts about the high-quality Wedgewood china she regularly used for meals, to that represented by the hardy and candid Widow McKlennah, Ford's comic characterization of the rough-hewn pioneer woman, played in scene-stealing fashion by Edna Mae Oliver.

Besides stressing the superiority of western agrarian values, Ford suggests the importance of community rituals to cement the framework of society together. Several of these rituals in Drums parallel the Fourth of July celebration in Young Mr. Lincoln. The first is the wedding, which takes place in the East, where Gil is noticeably nervous in proper society. When they get to Deerfield, however, a land-clearing day is held to give Gil and Lana some farmland. A title in the film mentions how such activity had been a common custom in the Mohawk Valley. Much later, after the Martins' first child is born, the community again celebrates by drinking--particularly Christian Reall--and still later, by dancing at a harvest festival. Ford had a distinctive talent for making such celebration scenes visually striking and thematically important to his vision

of human society. Discussing his tendency to include dancing in his portraits of community life, Ford once said that dancing is "a ritual, part of their tradition."[48]

With the community and its survival as the central goal of all human activity in Drums, it is predictable that both religion and politics are subordinate to the community--or, rather, are handmaidens to community well-being. When Gil and Lana stop at an inn on their way to Deerfield, the Tory Caldwell, looking sinister in his three-cornered hat and patched eye, asks them what political party they belong to. Gil answers curtly, "the American." Likewise, when the men are all called to join the militia and to practice marching, their leader, General Herkimer, expresses the common sentiment about why they must be willing to fight:

> This is our home and our land, and I say it's worth fighting for, only we got to do it by ourselves. Congress can't help us. They say Washington needs all the troops he can get and that the frontier will have to look out for itself.

Rather than fighting for any abstract ideologies or principles, the inhabitants of the Mohawk Valley are fighting for the protection of their land and houses. When the war is over and the flag raised over the fort, the pioneers gaze at the flag with pride, seeing it as a symbol of their newly won peace.

The minister of the people is something of a comic figure, largely because his prayers sound like community newsletters. Besides asking for God's military aid in

battle, he prays in an early church service for a young woman who is courting a man from Massachusetts ("and Thou knowest no good can come of that"); for Peter Paris, who "has the flux real bad"; for his uncle, storekeeper Isaac Paris, who "says that he has just got in a new supply of calicos, French broadcloths, fancy handkerchiefs, new hats, and heavy boots, all at bargain prices." In concluding this prayer he tells that Washington has suggested the militia mobilize since Tories and Indians are threatening the area in large numbers. Later, before the final skirmish at the fort, the pastor prays again:

> Almighty God, by Whose divine assistance Samson did smite the Philistines, hip and thigh with great slaughter, help thy people now...that we may drive our enemies back into the wilderness, for we all know only too well what will happen to us if these sons of Belial ever get over these walls.

No abstract or intellectual theologian, the pastor seeks to enlist the power of God to serve the community's immediate needs. Like the other characters in the film, the minister plays his part in helping the community survive in times of crisis. The increasing awareness in American culture of foreign totalitarian threats in 1939 helped to make this point of view congenial to American audience.

Thus by the end of 1939, Ford had finally found his historical American utopia in a pioneer community during the Revolutionary War. Though the meaning of Drums is extremely simple and straightforward and none of the characters seem particularly deep, yet its comedy, its visual

beauty, and its many-sided picture of all facets of harmonious community life make Drums a satisfying film to watch. People struggle, but they triumph and affirm their commonly held values. In his next important films, Ford's optimism would be tested as he dealt with the distintegrating effects of modern industrial society on the family and the community. But his discovery of a close-knit and harmonious community in the American past offered the American film-going public "a sense of continuity with the past" that could "stretch like a lifeline across the scary present." That such a community was the product of the imagination was immaterial to Ford; it was the historical legend that affirmed the national purpose.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN FORD: THE FAMILY AND THE MODERN WORLD

> Our ancestors would be bloody ashamed if they could see us today.
>
> --John Ford

After his historical films of 1939 had boosted his reputation both in the industry and among critics and the public, John Ford's next two major films--The Grapes of Wrath(1940) and How Green Was My Valley (1941)--treated very similar subjects. Both were based on highly popular novels written in the thirties. Both dealt with the attempts of close-knit families to stay together in times of social stress. Both had strong mother figures whose power, love of family, and endurance were unyielding.

But these similarities were accompanied by extremely different modes of presentation. In his study of Ford's films, French critic Jean Mitry described these differences well:

> Between Grapes of Wrath and How Green Was My Valley there is a sort of inverse symmetry. One is as much realistic, true to life, and objective as the other is lyrical, detached from life, and subjective.[1]

If Grapes of Wrath is one of the grimmest documentaries of the depression era, How Green Was My Valley is surely

one of the most nostalgic evocations of traditional values and fond memories. In both films, the style fitted the content well, manner and matter were successfully united. So successfully, in fact, that the films together earned five Academy Awards. Ford himself won best director award for both films, Valley was named best film of 1941, Jane Darwell was best supporting actress as Ma Joad in Grapes, and Donald Crisp as the best supporting actor as Mr. Morgan in Valley. Working with stories that were sometimes antithetical to his sensibility, Ford along with his collaborators nonetheless managed to make two popular films that extended and deepened the vision of society that Ford had begun to clarify in his historical films of 1939.

I

An important factor in the Ford films from Young Mr. Lincoln to Valley was the presence of producer Darryl F. Zanuck. Though the influence of the producer is an element often disregarded by auteur criticism, it can sometimes illuminate a director's career, even if the precise contribution of the producer is difficult to gauge. The two Ford-Zanuck family films of 1940 and 1941 help to illustrate how a producer influenced what we have been calling Ford's American visions.

Darryl F. Zanuck was, with Sam Goldwyn and Irving Thalberg, one of the several best-known producers in the depression decade. Born in Wahoo, Nebraska in 1902, he

began as a writer in Hollywood in the early twenties. By 1927 Zanuck had worked his way through the ranks at Warner Brothers and had been named head of production. He was instrumental in engineering the early Warners sound successes--The Jazz Singer and The Lights of New York--as well as in encouraging the gangster cycle (Little Caesar), the biographical (Disraeli), and the backstage musical cycle (Forty-second Street), all in the early thirties.[2]

In April , 1933, Zanuck quit Warners after a dispute with Harry Warner. For the next year and a half, he formed and ran his own company, 20th Century, that released its films through United Artists. Then In 1935, the financially tottering Fox Company merged with the substantially smaller 20th Century in the hopes that Zanuck could bring prosperity to both. Between 1935 and 1940, when Grapes was released, Zanuck concentrated his attention on producing oftentimes innocuous money makers: Shirley Temple vehicles, romances starring Tyrone Power with Alice Faye or Sonja Henie, and so many historical dramas that some wags insisted on labeling the studio 16th Century Fox.

Thus, when Zanuck bought Steinbeck's popular novel for $75,000 in 1939, many observers thought that he did it to keep the controversial work from being filmed. It is true that in the late forties he produced a number of films like Pinky and Gentlemen's Agreement that dealt with timely social issues, but in 1940 he had no reputation of being a social critic. Nonetheless, Zanuck--despite warnings

from some quarters that the film would be boycotted by California interest groups or censored by the Hays Office--immediately set screenwriter Nunnally Johnson to work on a script. Ford was assigned to direct the film, it was shot in the late summer and fall on 1939, and its premiere was held at New York's Rivoli Theater on January 24, 1940.

The relationship between Ford and Zanuck seems to have been good. Ford made westerns for Fox all through the twenties and continued working occasionally for them in the thirties, most notably on the three Will Rogers films and The Prisoner of Shark Island, all Americana. After Stagecoach, all of Ford's six films (excepting only The Long Voyage Home, produced by Wanger) through Valley were produced by Zanuck. Their harmonious relationship seems to have stemmed from the fact that they agreed on what emphases a film should have and that they heeded one another's suggestions.

Zanuck's contribution to both Grapes and Valley was to temper the sharpenss of the social criticism and to emphasize the importance of the family theme in each film. It is important to note that these changes were of the sort that one would expect Ford himself to make.

While Nunnally Johnson wrote and rewrote the script of Grapes, Zanuck collaborated closely with him and, according to Johnson, helped immeasurably in keeping the script moving. Johnson has said of Zanuck, "He was the

best editor in chief .... Every script I wrote was improved by his editing."[3]

The most important change Zanuck made in the script of Grapes was to change the ending. The original screenplay ended with Tom Joad leaving to become a labor organizer, but Zanuck added the scene where Ma Joad says that the people can't be wiped out because they have too much determination and ability to survive. Ford had no quarrel with Zanuck over the ending; of it he once said--in his usual habit of understatement--"the mother had a little soliloquy which was all right." In addition to the changed ending, Zanuck helped in giving Grapes the proper sound effects. According to Ford, it was Zanuck's idea to add the chirping of the crickets during the scene with Casey under the bridge, as well as to use a single accordian to play "Red River Valley." Said Ford, "it was very American and very right for the picture."[4]

A month after Grapes was released, Zanuck bought the rights to Richard Llewellyn's How Green Was My Valley, perhaps seeing similarities between it and Grapes. Zanuck's memoranda to screenwriters suggest he played an important role in downplaying the social criticism of the novel. To the first assigned screenwriter, Ernest Pascal, he wrote, "I am disappointed in the script, mainly because it has turned into a labor story and a sociological problem story instead of a great human, warm story about real living people." Later, when Philip Dunne was assigned the script

and William Wyler tentatively named director, Zanuck complained to Wyler, "I was bored to death by the repetition of the strike business and of starving babies, etc." Wanting no part of making "an English Grapes of Wrath," Zanuck had the story told through the eyes of the young boy, Huw, with the whole film structured as the memories of Huw as an old man looking back on the past.[5] It is clear that like Ford, Zanuck was more interested in probing the difficulties of a small group of people than in making a broad indictment of social ills. In fact, Zanuck's criticism of the early scripts of Valley follow the central thrust of the novel: not a proletarian tract, Valley is a pastoral memoir of days gone by. Because Zanuck played such an important part in the early preparations of both films (Ford was assigned to both after the scripts had been substantially completed by the screenwriter in consultation with Zanuck), the final form of the films is tinted with his influence. Thus the quality and content of Ford's vision of America in the late thirties and early forties owes at least a small amount to the editorial skills and productive efforts of Darryl Zanuck.

II

Based on perhaps the most controversial novel in its decade, The Grapes of Wrath is one of the outstanding cultural documents to be released by Hollywood in the studio era. Bought by Zanuck shortly after it was published, shot

by Ford while it was still on the best-seller lists, Grapes enjoyed a public interest that insured its success. Its combination of social criticism and roots in national traditions and myths makes it as powerful today as when it was first released in 1940.

Both the novel and the film culminate in many ways a number of the decade's preoccupations. By the way it focused on one of the era's most tragic problems--those encountered by dispossessed Dust Bowl families who fled to California toward promises of prosperity, only to find hostility and unemployment--Grapes satisfied for many middle-class Americans their needs to feel involved in and concerned about the plights of those less fortunate than themselves. By attacking the bankers who threw the Oakies off the land and the orchard owners who refused to pay them a living wage, and by championing the goodness of the little people, Grapes appealed to liberals and radical with popular front sentiments. Finally, through Steinbeck's careful observation of facts to give his narrative a sense of authenticity, as when he details towns passed on Routh 66 or repeats the vernacular speech of truck drivers and waitresses in truck stops, Grapes displays the decade's stress on the importance of documentary realism in art.

Though the importance of Zanuck in the production in unquestioned, it would be a mistake to overemphasize his contribution. When Ford was assigned to direct the

film, the cast had largely been chosen and the script virtually completed. Though he failed to have Jane Darwell replaced by Beula Bondi as Ma Joad--probably a fortunate failure--Ford was luckily successful in talking Zanuck into signing Henry Fonda to play Tom instead of Tyrone Power or Don Ameche, who at that time were Fox's standard leading men. From that point on, Ford played the crucial role in making the film what it became.[6]

The story of Grapes is well known. Tom Joad, returning from prison after serving fours years for manslaughter, finds his family thrown off their land during the Dust Bowl. They are on their way to California in hopes of finding work picking fruit, enticed by a handbill advertising work. On the difficult trip, both Grandpa and Grandma Joad die. When the rest of the family get to California, the Joads live in squalid Hoovervilles, filled by other starving Oakies unable to find work. When they finally find a job working for subsistance wages, Tom gets mixed up in a labor scuffle and kills a man, getting a wound himself. The family leaves the next morning, hiding Tom in the back of the truck under a mattress. Luckily, the family stumbles into a government cooperative camp run by the people who live in it, supervised by a government representative. After living in this harmonious community for a time, Tom decides to leave the family to become a labor organizer. The last scene shows the rest of the

family leaving for another job, Ma affirming the resilience of the people and their innate capacity to survive even the most trying of circumstances.

Though there has been a great deal of controversy over how radical or conservative the novel and the film are, over whether they are art or propaganda, and over how closely the details of the works art to actual social conditions, it is perhaps accurate to say that the sentiments of the novel and the film are actually quite close and that the appeal of both lies in the honest sympathy and respect both works show the characters and in the probing way they present an unmistakable social dilemma. Neither the novel nor the film offers any concrete solution to the ills they describe, though as George Bluestone has suggested, the novel has a greater "moral anger" than the film.[7]

The major element the film leaves largely untouched is the biological emphasis of the novel. Interspersed throughout the novel are countless references to animals and parallels between man and beast. In a largely critical survey of Steinbeck's work, Edmund Wilson argued that the basic constant in Steinbeck's work was his "preoccupation with biology." Though Wilson admits Steinbeck did have an unerring talent at observation, he argued that Steinbeck had no solution to man's inhumanity to other men save "an irreducible faith in life."[8] It is true that Steinbeck's biological bent, overemphasized by Wilson's elitist literary

bias, is nonetheless an important part of the novel virtually neglected in the film.

In contrast, the film focusses primarily on presenting visually the human dimensions of a social dilemma. Ford's cameraman was Gregg Toland, who only a year later was to shoot Citizen Kane for Orson Welles. But rather than seeing Grapes as Toland's visual warmup for Kane, it is much more instructive to see it as a demonstration of Toland's virtuousity and his understanding of how different subjects demand different visual styles. Shortly before his death, he wrote:

> Each film should have its own particular style. A comedy and a tragedy whould not be photographed in the same way. The Grapes of Wrath is a harsh film; The Long Voyage Home, a character film; Citizen Kane, a psychological study in which the external realities were very important.[9]

Indeed, from the opening shot of Tom Joad walking alone down a country road, the land flat and the telephone poles planted with monotonous regularity along the ditches, Toland's camera produces a grainy realism that has a documentary flavor. With a film that consists almost entirely of the Joads riding in their ramshackle truck, interspersed with stops at Hoovervilles and harrassment by authorities, this harsh style is organic to the film.

The sound track reinforces the visual style, though at critical moments it tends to soften the social criticism. While the Joads are on the road, the sound of a knocking old engine is constant. In the flashback scene, when

Muley tells of the caterpillar tractors, Toland's montage of the caterpillars is accompanied by sounds of the powerful engines and creaking tracks of the huge machines. The ringing cash register in the truck stop, the squeaking springs on the old truck, the thudding blow when Tom clubs a strikebreaker--all add to the realistic focus of the camera. The vernacular dialogue ("No, my old man got a place, forty acres") does the same.

But if the dialogue and sound effects add to the camera style, the music softens their harshness. Used sparingly during the film, music heightens the effects of the emotional parts of the story. Except for the dance scene (that nearly obligatory scene in a Ford film where "She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain" and "Turkey in the Straw" are included), the only important music is "The Red River Valley" played softly on a guitar or an accordian. When Ma Joad slowly throws some old mementoes into the stove just before leaving Oklahoma, when the truck finally leaves the farmplace, when Grandpa Joad dies, when Tom and Ma say their last goodbyes, the song was played by a Ford assistant, Danny Borzage, on his accoridan. The song is entirely appropriate to Ford's vision of America: it elicits a sentimental response from its audience at crucial moments and its lyrics--"From this valley they say you are leaving/Do not hasten to bid me adieu,/But remember the Red River Valley/Where I'll always love you so true"--

reinforce a central theme in Ford's work, the tragedy of being torn from home and from cultural roots.[10]

It has already been suggested that the power of Ford's Grapes of Wrath lies in its documentation of a social dilemma and the human consequences it fosters. If in Valley Ford emphasizes the slow dissolution of a family and subordinates the social factors that help to bring it about, in Grapes the breakdown of the family is presented as a consequence of social and natural forces working together.

The scene that exposes the problem--and to my mind, the most perceptive, powerful, and excruciating scene of the whole film--is the scene where Tom and Casey discover Muley in the abandoned Joad cabin, whereupon Muley tells the story of how his family was pushed off their land.[11]

The scene opens after Tom and Casey enter the darkened house as the wind howls and dust flies outside. They light a candle and Tom finds his old hat and his mother's old high-buttoned shoes. A squeaking door arouses them, and Muley emerges from the shadows, his haggard eyes apprehensively glancing back and forth from Tom to Casey. The entire exchange is shot almost in the dark, with only the eerily candle-lit faces showing on the screen.

When Tom asks why the Joads were forced to leave the land, Muley answers simply, "The dusters...blowin' the land away, blowin' the crops away, blowin' us away now." Then Muley begins to describe his experience, and Ford cuts to the first flashback. In it, a banker in his shiny car

talks to Muley at his farmplace, Muley's poorly dressed and gaunt family in the background. The banker tells Muley the dusters have made the tenant system unprofitable, that one man on a tractor can work over a dozen farms. When Muley objects that he can't survive with less land, the banker says he can't help it, he's only following orders from above. Muley's son asks whose fault it is. The banker says it's the Shawnee Land and Cattle Company, which owes money to the bank in Tulsa, which takes orders from the East. The helpless Muley has no tangible enemy to challenge: the corporate state has no sympathy for a single tenant farmer. The land company "ain't nobody."

As the banker pulls out a big cigar and starts his car to leave, Muley delivers the central challenge and tragedy of the film:

> Well, I'm right here to tell you, mister, ain't nobody going to push me off my land. My granpa took up this land seventy years ago. My pa was born here. We was all born on it, and some of us was killed on it...and some of us died on it. And that's what makes it ourn--bein' born on it, and workin' on it, and dyin' on it--and no piece of paper with writin' on it.

As he delivers the speech, John Qualen as Muley begins in a rage and when he gets to the last sentence, crouches down in helpless sorrow, grabbing a handful of dirt, throwing it down, and weeping.

Ford then cuts for a moment to the Joad cabin where Tom presses Muley for more of the story. Muley begins to tell of how the caterpillars took over the land, as Ford dissolves to a montage of caterpillars shot from below to

emphasize their power, then to the second flashback. In this section Muley stands with a shotgun, his son with a baling hook at his side, to defend their land against an approaching tractor. In the background stand the rest of the family; behind them, the wash is flapping on the clothesline. When Muley recognizes the driver as the son of a neighbor, he asks him why he turns against his own people. The driver answers that it is for the three dollars a day that will feed his family. Again Ford shoots the tractor from a low angle, Muley from above (Toland's camera was to use angled shots again a year later in Citizen Kane). The driver tells Muley that to fight is hopeless, that another tractor would come if he didn't do the job, then puts on his goggles--giving him a robot-like appearance--and starts his machine. In one of the most brilliantly conceived series of shots in the film, Ford focusses first on the track of the cat, following it as it moves across the frame to push the people aside. The next shot is of Muley and his son looking hopelessly as they see, and the audience hears, the house collapse, after which the camera pans left to see the flattened house and the caterpillar moving off in the distance. The final shot begins again on Muley and his family, then pans down to their shadows, which are lying directly across the tracks. As the caterpillar destroys the house, so do the tracks it leaves overrun even the shadows of the victims. The encompassing power of the machine and the forces it represents contrasts

starkly with the helplessness, isolation, and abject misery of Muley. The power of this scene to expose the gap between man's ability to control nature technologically and his inability to use his inventions for humane social ends reminds one of Modern Times: as the tramp was victimized by the factory, the farmer is uprooted by the tractor.

The problem, having been thus revealed in the flashback, is then subordinated to the story of the Joads' struggles in a hostile world. After the first major scene, the structure of the film is more effective than the novel; in Otis Ferguson's apt words, the film "all moves with the simplicity and perfection of a wheel across silk." In the book, the Joads enter the government camp about two-thirds of the way through, then leave to pick fruit, encountering the same difficulties they had before they arrived at the camp. In the film, however, all the Joads' problems gradually build on one another until the cooperative camp serves as an oasis, the climactic penultimate scene. Instead of placing the killing of Casey and Tom's clubbing of a strikebreaker after the government camp scene, the film places them before. Then the camp, where people live free from police intervention in a sort of ideal community harmony thanks to the benevolence of the Federal government, serves as an apt climax. Tom's leaving the government camp to become a labor organizer also works well structurally: not only does it further the breakdown of the family begun by the social conditions described earlier in

the book, but it also makes Tom something of an ideal Fordian hero, a man who subordinates his own desires and ambitions for the welfare and values of a larger community.[12]

Along with this structural superiority, the film as it appears on the screen mutes some of the more direct criticisms in the Steinbeck novel and the final Johnson screenplay. Certainly the position of the government camp in the film's structure tends to suggest that New Deal liberalism was attuned to national traditions. The camp also supports the benevolence of authorities that was evident in Young Mr. Lincoln. Likewise, the final speech by Ma Joad strikes an infinitely more affirmative note than the book's final scene, where Rose of Sharon nurses a starving grown man. Cut from the screenplay in the final version of the film is an exchange between Mr. Thomas, the farmer who hires some of the government camp men, and Wilkie, the head of the central committee. When Tom asks who the "reds" are, the film has Mr. Thomas say, "I ain't talking about that one way or another." In the screenplay, however, Wilkie answers the question first by telling a story about how a large landowner defined a red as "any fella that wants thirty cents an hour when I'm payin' twenty-five."[13] Though the film does present a number of authority figures, especially the thugs of the orchard owners, in an unfavorable light, the general drift of the film seems to endorse a liberal conception of the essential

dignity of all people as well as of the federal capacity to solve the social dislocations pushed on many people by the industrial system.

Though an endorsement of social action seems suggested at times, it is more a vague urge than a clear program. Tom Joad's inability to define problems ("What is these reds, anyway?"), coupled with his desire to help his people out of their situation by learning the precise nature of the social forces that oppress them, is a perfect representation of the film's attitude toward the situation of the Oklahoma migrants in California. When Tom, fearing that officials will catch up with him, leaves Ma and the family in the evening, he tells Ma what he will be doing:

> I'll be everywhere, wherever you look. Wherever there's a cop beatin' up on a guy, I'll be there. I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our people eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build, why, I'll be there, too.

As much as any character in the depression movies, Tom represents the intense desire of many Americans to be involved, through their sentiments at least, in the human problems caused by the depression.

The film could not end with a call for action. The final words had to be those of the powerful Ma Joad, whose determination and strength in the face of adversity provided an ambiguous enough ending to satisfy anyone. As the Joads leave the camp for another picking job, Ma admits they'll have "maybe twenty days' work, maybe no day's

work." Nonetheless, she gives an affirmative ending surprisingly similar to the ending of Capra's Meet John Doe, both of which praise the power of the little man on the eve of World War Two. "Rich fellas come up and they die, an' their kids ain't no good, and they die out," says Ma, "but we keep a comin'. We're the people that live. Can't wipe us out. Can't lick us. We'll go on forever, Pa, 'cuz we're the people."[14] Like the editor Connell in Doe, Ma Joad suggests that when times get difficult, it is the common people who rise to the occasion and survive even the most trying of circumstances.

Despite--or perhaps because of--the changes made in the film, it was a critical and popular success. Still riding high on the publicity of the novel, Grapes got all the pre-release publicity anyone could have desired. A sampling of critical comments gives an idea of how impressed critics were:

> New York Times: The Grapes of Wrath is just about as good as any picture has a right to be . . . . /It/ is no one man job, but a composite masterpiece by which a tragic phase of the American scene has been brought poetically to life on the American screen.
>
> Life: It marches straight to its tragic end with a reality that suggests a superb newsreel, with a courage that merits a badge of honor for the U.S. movie industry.
>
> Nation: With it a new period in the development of American moving-pictures could begin. . . . Grapes of Wrath is Hollywood's most distinguished offering.
>
> Commonweal: /Grapes of Wrath shows/ that Hollywood does have a capacity for truth which it seldom exhibits.
>
> Saturday Review: /Grapes of Wrath/ has a courage, an outlook, a realism that Hollywood has never dared reach before.

The reviewers thought the film not simply good but rather superlative.[15]

The film's popular appeal was not as great as the reviews, but nonetheless Grapes did very well at the box office. Considering that it did excellently in the first two or three weeks in a number of cities and then tapered off, it would seem that a slightly limited audience was extremely anxious to see it and that it didn't draw people back on second runs to see it again, as Mr. Smith had a year earlier.[16]

Certainly Grapes of Wrath--novel and film--has become as much a monument of the depression experience as Uncle Tom's Cabin was of the American 1850s. Malcom Cowley has gone so far as to suggest of the novel that "a whole literature is summarized in this book and much of it is carried to a new level of excellence."[17] In many ways, it sums up the hopes and fears people felt toward the modern world better than any other work in the era.

Instead of being simply a radical critique of capitalism, Grapes is in many ways, as Richard Pells has so perceptively noted, "a nostalgic hymn to the nation's past."[18] The problems presented in the book would not have occurred, we are led to believe, if the farmers had not been torn forceably from their land. And the problem with the economic system, as Muley found out, was not simply that it operated on profit but, more important, that its power was so huge that it could not even be located to be attacked

and that it willingly created machines that would harm people's chances of living with pride and fulfillment.

John Baxter has suggested that Grapes appealed to Ford because the travails of the depression farmers reminded him of the plight of Irish peasants thrown off their land by Irish landowners during the potato famines.[19] As the film stands, this suggestion would seem at least partially convincing. More accurately, Grapes criticizes modern industrial society from the point of view of Jeffersonian agrarianism.

By Jeffersonian agrarianism, I mean a social view which holds the ideal community will be one in which sturdy yeomen farmers live self-sufficiently by owning small tracts of their own land. Only these healthy and productive farmers could possibly achieve political independence: since they each had a stake in society, they all would be active and responsible citizens. Jefferson himself sought to move Virginia society in this direction by abolishing entail and primogeniture. Some of his followers went so far as to claim that a man who lived on and tilled an area of land for some years rightfully owned the land. The basic tenets of Jeffersonian agrarianism were thus widespread ownership of land, political democracy, and individualism.[20]

The ideals of Jeffersonian agrarianism, particularly its stress on the importance of the land, are clearly at work in Grapes. We have already noted Muley's dramatic apostrophe to the land in the flashback scene. One line in

particular--"And that's what makes it ourn: bein' born on it, and workin' on it, and dyin' on it"--comes straight from Jeffersonian ideology. The same spirit informs Grampa Joad when he tells the rest of the family he's decided not to go to California: "This here's my country. I b'long here." Picking up a handful of dirt, he adds, "It ain't no good--but it's mine." Significantly, just before Grampa dies, he grabs another handful of dirt, dropping it on his chest when he finally loses all strength. Throughout the film, the tragedy is best summed up by Pa's words in the final scene : "I ain't no good no more, and I know it. Seems like I spen' all my time these days a'thinkin' how it use'ta be--thinkin' of home--an' I ain't never gonna see it no more."

That Ford should have emphasized this aspect while downplaying the biological, religious and more specifically political themes is not surprising when one thinks of the attachment to the land apparent in his earlier films. Ringo and Dallas in Stagecoach do not plan to live in Lordsburg or Tonto, but to settle on Ringo's small piece of land across the border. In Young Mr. Lincoln Abe's entire efforts are aimed at keeping together the Clay family, who have their own farm in frontier Illinois. And the greatest tragedy in Drums occurs when Gil and Lana lose their farm--crops and cabin burned to the ground by Indians. In Ford's vision of America, the westward movement is continually strong not mainly because of the solitary woodsmen

like Daniel Boone or Davy Crockett, but because of the second wave of settlers, the independent and hard-working families who stake a claim and produce their own means of survival. When America "progressed" so far that economic considerations made it more convenient to shove those independent farmers off their land, the country, for Ford, had gone to hell. In spite of the contributions of many artists and technicians, Grapes remains Ford's own document of that tragedy.

III

In early 1942, shortly after the U.S. entered World War Two, How Green Was My Valley won the Academy Award for best film of 1941, its director, John Ford, was named best director, and Donald Crisp, whose career had started with D.W. Griffith at Biograph, was named best supporting actor. A year later, Mrs. Miniver, a film about a courageous woman and her family struggling in war-torn England, was named best picture, with its director, William Wyler, and its leading actress, Greer Garson, also winning Academy Awards. The same year that Mrs. Miniver proved such a popular formula, Welles' The Magnificent Ambersons, a film which documented the neuroses and personal conflicts of a declining aristocratic family at the turn of the century, failed abysmally at the box office and with the critics.

By 1941, the topical film of social criticism, like Grapes, had begun to decline, while the popularity of films

about happy families had begun to rise. Why was this so? During the late thirties, Arthur Knight has correctly noted

> growing tensions produced a notable series of films that rode the mounting wave of liberalism without recourse to either the "fantasy of goodwill" or "screwball comedy": labor unrest, slum housing, unemployment and dislocation . . . were put on the screen with a directness that stressed the social and economic sources of such hardships. There was a sympathy for the common man and new hope for a better tomorrow.[21]

Grapes, of course, was a central film in this movement. By 1942, however, that reform zeal was spent: Americans were fighting another war. The declining radicalism and rising nationalism of the late thirties go far toward explaining the demise of the topical film of social comment.

But the war doesn't fully explain the popularity of a film like How Green Was My Valley. A broader answer for the popularity of films which treat harmonious families, often nostalgically in small-town settings, must be sought.

A good part of that answer lies, I think, in the peculiar nature of modern industrial societies. The popular arts, including the movies, are themselves the products of an industrialized society which promotes literacy and offers leisure, thus creating an audience for various forms of mass art. But along with this leisure come a particular set of frustrations and social dislocations brought by the high mobility, the continually changing values and patterns of life, and the decisive split between the public and private lives that are inherent in such a society. The popular arts thus become in part a sort of secular religion, a

way for people to soothe the psychic wounds inflicted upon them by a grating society and a place where frustrated desires and needs receive some measure of gratification.[22]

One yearning common in 20th-century American society is for a sense of belonging, of membership in a harmonious family and community. This nostalgia for earlier (and better) times which has its roots in the Romantic movement and in the pastoralist tradition, has been--and continues to be, judging from the recent renaissance of nostalgia in American film, popular music, and television--a fairly constant element in popular culture for some time. Richard Schickel, analyzing the values in the Disney animations, has suggested that "this nostalgia for communities past is an antidote to the pace and disruptive quality of modern life . . . which is often expressed . . . in personal homesickness and longing for lands never seen."[23] A central element in Valley is precisely that--Huw's "personal homesickness," his insistence on returning to the Wales of his childhood if only in memory.

But more specifically, Huw seeks to remember his family when it was whole. A particularly important part of nostalgia concerns not simply the longing for community, but for a united family. As the 20th century has worn on, the extended family has become a rarity just as the nuclear family as important economic unit has practically dissolved. The historian Thomas Cochran has suggested that one of the fundamental changes in 20th-century America has been the

shift from family security to institutional security. By this he means that the family can no longer provide the economic security it could (and was expected to provide) in the 19th century and that such responsibility has shifted, stimulated in large part by assistance programs developed to cope with the depression, to such institutions as the federal government, labor unions, and private insurance companies. Cochran adds that the urban-consumer mentality in the 20th century--which demands a constant growth in production and consumption--makes it almost impossible for people to feel secure and that such developments as nursery schools and longer education have also helped to break down the cultural centrality of the family.[24] This shifting of economic and social importance away from the family unit helps to explain the popularity of family films at the beginning of World War Two. These two factors--the general cultural nostalgia for close families and the more particular and direct effect on families separated by the draft as the war began--combined to make the idyllic memory of the Morgans and the stalwart strength of the Minivers decisively appealing to the movie-going audience. Ford's personal concern about the importance of the family seems to have been a more commonly shared cultural concern.

One might even suggest that Ford's treatment of the family in Grapes and Valley symbolically represents a larger shift in the American film industry at large from a social criticism to affirmation, another indication of

the decline of radicalism between 1936 and 1941. So long as enough intellectuals demanded a socially aware Hollywood, the industry responded with mildly reformist films. Though as we have seen, Grapes was hardly a radical tract, it did focus its realistic camera on a trying domestic problem spawned by the depression and the Dust Bowl. The film was, however, something of a culmination of Hollywood's liberal film. Though the brash young Orson Welles would in 1941 offer his veiled critique of the archetypal American tycoon, he was, as he always has been, an exception. After 1940, Hollywood wanted to offer and the public wanted to receive films that defended the virtue of the American cause or presented a harmonious and courageous world whose stark contrast to the contemporary chaos made it a two-hour stay against confusion. How Green Was My Valley presented just such a world.

Or, more precisely, Valley presented the memory of such a world. Earlier, quoting Jean Mitry, we noted the contrasts between Grapes and Valley, calling the latter lyrical, non-realistic, and subjective. If by nostalgia, we mean a longing for some happy earlier circumstance, certainly Valley is one of the most purely nostalgic films in the history of the movies. It is narrated by Huw Morgan as an old man as he readies to leave his town and his valley forever. The film consists of his recollections of what life was like for him--the youngest child in a family of

nine--when he was still a child in the last decades of the 19th century.

Philip Dunne's screenplay follows the main action of the novel, leaving out a number of complexities that would have only confused the film.[25] The action begins with Huw as an adult narrating to introduce his family and their living situation. Besides his mother, Beth Morgan, and his father, Mr. Morgan, Huw has one sister, Angharad, and five older brothers--Ianto, Ivor, Davy, Gwilym, and Owen--all of whom work in the coal mine. As the film opens, Ivor marries a woman from another valley named Bronwen. Shortly after, when a wage cut at the mines is made, Mr. Morgan and his sons dispute how to handle it. The sons want a union, but the father wants to hear nothing of such "socialist nonsense." The boys leave to live in a lodging house, all except Huw, who is too young to work. The miners strike for twenty-two weeks and when people begin to attack Mr. Morgan's name, Mrs. Morgan goes to their meeting one winter evening, telling them she will kill any man who harms her husband. On the way home, she and Huw fall into the ice river and are almost frozen to death.

Huw and Mrs. Morgan then are bedridden for a long period, Huw reading children's classics and being visited often by Mr. Gruffyd, the town minister. When Beth is finally well, the men who were angry with her earlier come to apologize. While they are at the Morgan home, a messenger brings news that Ivor and his singers are to

sing before the Queen. During the celebration of this honor, Ianto and Mr. Parry, a pinched religious hypocrite, argue over the union and Christianity. Mr. Gruffydd intercedes, arguing that the unions are necessary to give the men strength, but warning them that with strength goes responsibility. "You cannot conquer injustice with more injustice," he says, "only with justice and the help of God."

Finally the strike ends, but some men, including Owen and Gwilym, are laid off because there are now too many laborers. They leave for America. It is spring and Huw, who has been slowly recovering since his accident, goes with Mr. Gruffydd to a hill where daffodils are blooming. Encouraged, almost ordered, by Mr. Gruffydd to walk, Huw takes his first steps since his accident. After this episode, we learn of Angharad's love for Gruffydd. Though she would like to marry him, she gets another offer from Iestyn Evans, the son of the mine owner. When Gruffydd tells her he cannot marry her because his dedication to his calling would make him a poor provider, Angharad marries Evans.

The next sequence follows Huw's experiences as a scholar. Tutored by Mr. Gruffydd, he is able to go to school at another village. There he is beaten twice--once by another boy, once by the schoolmaster for fighting. After the second flogging, Dai Bando, who has been teaching Huw to box upon the request of Mr. Morgan, goes to school and beats the schoolmaster before his pupils. While Huw

is finishing school, his brother Ivor is killed in the mines, and Bronwen, his wife, gives birth to a baby boy. Though Huw receives his diploma enabling him to pursue a career in law or medicine, he decides to forgo further education, instead choosing to work in the mines and provide money for Bronwen.

Times continue to worsen. Davy and Ianto are laid off because their experience makes their wages too high. Davy goes to New Zealand and Ianto to Canada. Angharad, who has been living in Capetown, returns to the village and Huw goes to visit her. He finds her unhappy with her marriage, still crushed because Gruffydd would not marry her. When the townspeople begin to gossip about Angharad and Gruffydd, Huw begins to fight his peers, defending his family name. At a church meeting, Mr. Gruffydd resigns his office, angered at the religious hypocrisy of his congregation. Later, Gruffydd gives Huw the watch he had gotten from his own father, telling Huw, "we will live in the minds of each other."

Another whistle signals yet one more disaster at the colliery. All the town runs up the long hill to see what is the matter, including Gruffydd and Angharad, whose eyes meet for the first time since the wedding. Mr. Morgan has been caught in a mine accident. Huw, Mr. Gruffydd and Dai Bando go deep into the mine shafts to search for him. Eventually they find him as he breathes his last breaths. The memory of his father's death brings Huw back to the

present. The final shots are happy mental images of Huw's family and Gruffydd before Huw's green valley had begun to darken.

The setting and mise en scene stress the warmth and wholeness of memory. The set itself was based on some footage of a Welsh village that Carol Reed had filmed and then sent to Fox to help Fox art department head Richard Day in his construction. Built on an eighty-acre area in the Ventura Hills, the town cost $150,000 and was christened Cerrig Ceinnen. A reservoir had to be built to bring water to the mines, and according to one observer, Ford hired all Welsh extras for added authenticity.[26] At the beginning of the film, Ford's shots of the landscape surrounding the mine on the hill show a green and verdant valley. Gradually, as the film progresses and the family begins to fall apart, that same area becomes increasingly ugly, until the end of the film, when Huw again remembers the past, and a vision of the valley's lushness returns in his memory.

As important as the total construction itself are the furnishings of the Morgan home. The large family dining table, the warm hearth, the picket fence and small front yard all provide a sense of close family life in days gone by. At the center of the household are the cash box, from which Mr. Morgan distributes spending money, and the family Bible, from which he reads to members of his family at important crossroads that need religious

inspiration or solace. He reads from his comfortable rocking chair. When the sets are combined with the background singing of the Welsh singers heard throughout the film, one gets an increasingly convincing picture of past community living.

The most powerful moments of the film derive largely from Ford's ability to compose characters within the frame in such a way as to accentuate visually the attitudes of characters toward one another. When Owen and Gwilym are about to leave for America, they stand with their father in front of the Morgan house. As they quietly prepare to part, Mrs. Morgan, crestfallen beyond words, comes to the door. Her position on the left edge of the frame sets her apart from the other three gathered at the right, emphasizing the emptiness and isolation she feels at the moment. Later, when Huw first walks again, Ford has a long shot of Huw on the left of the screen and Gruffydd, on the right. Gruffydd stands under a tree, the ground is covered with daffodils, and light shines in brilliantly from the background. The shot is repeated at the end of the film, perhaps representing better than any other shot the nostalgic tone and thematic intent of the film. Finally, in a shot that looks as if it were a carefully composed painting, Ford emphasizes the pain among everyone in the Morgan family that accompanies the death of Mr. Morgan. The camera focusses on the elevator as it brings Huw, Gruffydd and the dead Morgan to the surface. Huw sits leaning against an

elevator wall on the right edge of the frame with his father's head lying on his lap. Standing, almost hovering, over them is Gruffydd. His body is slightly to the left of center frame, balancing Huw's location on the right, and his arms stretch completely across the frame, creating a tent-like cover to protect Huw. Thus Ford establishes a final shot of Huw with the two people who meant the most to him.

The two characters most crucial to the meaning of the film are Gruffydd and Mr. Morgan. Though the style of life presented in the film gradually breaks apart due to the disintegrating influence of the colliery (in Huw's words, "as the slag had spread over my Valley, so now a blackness spread over the minds of the people"), the responses of the two to these changes are more important than the facts of the changes themselves. Whereas Grapes had focused on an objective revelation of social injustices, Valley concentrates on the subjective responses to social disruption.

In Huw's memory, Mr. Morgan represented a traditional way of dealing with new problems. His was the voice of authority in the family, and he expected everyone to respect the hierarchical structure of the family. When his sons want to argue about unions, he forbids them to speak. No social injustice, he says, is "more important than good manners." When the sons persist, he dismisses all save Huw from the table. Huw also remembers his father's religious devotion: reading Isaiah 55 for Psalm 23 when his brothers

left home, giving a prayer of thanksgiving when he learns that Ivor will sing before the Queen, or vowing never to return to church if the deacons choose to censure Angharad publicly. Finally, Huw recalls his father's disappointment when he learns that Huw will not try to become a doctor or lawyer. Though Morgan goes out to get drunk when he learns of Huw's decision, one suspects that he is at least slightly proud that Huw will follow his footsteps. Huw's comment at the opening of the film best sums up his attitude toward his father: "Everything I learnt as a small boy came from my father, and I never found anything he told me to be wrong or worthless."

Huw also learns from Gruffydd. With Huw's father, Gruffydd helps to settle the strike. More important, his attitude toward unions helps to reconcile the Morgan family. In his dispute with Mr. Parry, Gruffydd says that in his opinion unions were acceptable in the sight of God if the men in them retain a sense of responsibility. Hearing this, Morgan invites his sons back into the house. Huw most vividly remembers Mr. Gruffydd for the faith he had given him. When Huw is bedridden, it is Gruffydd who visits him and tells him he will walk when the first daffodil blooms on the mountain, even though the doctor says Huw might never walk again. With Gruffydd's encouragement, he does. With all these things, Gruffydd also teaches Huw the value of memory. When Gruffydd is ready to leave the Valley, he gives Huw the watch he had inherited from his father. As

Huw begins to leave the room, tears in eyes, Gruffydd consoles him, suggesting a lesson underlining the entire film. "No need for us to shake hands," he tells Huw, "we will live in the minds of each other."

Thus ends How Green Was My Valley. As the film closes, the narrator Huw reflects upon the events of his life which saw the breakdown of his family and his Valley. Uneasy in the present, he must be satisfied to live in the past. "Men like my father cannot die," he concludes, "They are with us still--real in memory as they were in flesh--loving and beloved forever."

Viewed as a whole, Valley is a defense of traditional values as the only way to combat the onslaught of modern industrialism. Religious faith and strong family ties provide for Huw the most happy recollections of his green valley. When his family breaks up and the religion of his people falls prey to hypocrisy and secularism, Huw has only his memories to fall back upon. He can find no more satisfying a place in the modern world that could the wandering Oklahoma Joads.

IV

We have now progressed far enough to develop some hypotheses about the patterns in Ford's films of the late thirties. Though the nature of the studio system within which Ford worked militated against the development of a clear social vision through a number of films, I think it

should be evident that from 1939 to 1941 Ford achieved to a remarkable degree that clarity in his films.

Auteur criticism in the past decade has succeeded in developing an almost consensual attitude toward a number of American directors. Lubitsch is remembered for his famous "touch," Hawks for his "professionalism," Capra for his optimistic celebration of the common man. The tags that Ford has inherited are "traditionalism" or "conservatism" or "populism."[27] A major difficulty with auteur criticism criticism as it has thus been practiced is that it fails to give adequate attention to the changing face of American culture. To suggest that Ford's films are all characterized by a common point of view is folly. After all, the man directed films for over fifty years; and as critics like Sarris and Wollen have pointed out, much of his work is best viewed and considered as a response to changing historical conditions. We are thus back to Kenneth Burke's suggestion that art can usefully be placed into a human context by seeing it as a strategy of "symbolic action" responding to a changing situation. In what follows, I do not intend to give an overall statement of Ford's social vision, but rather to identify how the patterns relate to broader trends in American culture during the same period.

The most striking element in Ford's films during these years is the fact that they art optimistic about society in those films which deal with the past and pessimistic in those relating to the present. Though it is

true that some negative social elements creep into the historical films of 1939--the reforming ladies of Stagecoach, for example--for the most part Ford paints a positive picture of human society in the three films. In Grapes, of course, the modern world is a place where hostility, indifference, cruelty, or oppression are more commonly given to the Joads than sympathy, compassion, or understanding. Ma Joad's final affirmation of the people rings false when one thinks back on how her way of life has been destroyed and on how slim are the chances that she will ever return to former agrarian way of life. Finally, How Green Was My Valley, which combines the past and the present by using a narrator in the present to reflect on his childhood, suggests that the modern world has so destroyed those qualities which make life fulfilling that people can only find peace of mind by cherishing the memories of better times.

Besides this overall attitude toward society, a number of other elements recur through these five films. Among the most important are a particular type of hero, the presence of strong and admirable older women, younger women whose function is largely ornamental, a predominance of social rituals that bind communities together, and two distinct categories of villains.

The Ford hero of the late thirties is capable of resolving the contrary pulls of individual and social values. In a country long characterized by the conflicting strains of competitive individualism and social

responsibility or conformity, such a hero would inevitably appeal to a popular audience. At first glance it seems as if the Ford hero is a man who subordinates his wishes and desires to the goals of society. As we have seen, Abe Lincoln is such an effective leader because he arises from the people and has a native folk humor and wisdom. He defends the Clays not out of selfishness, but because the boys need a sympathetic aide. In Drums Gil Martin selflessly risks his life to save the lives of his neighbors by running for help. Tom Joad makes a similar sacrifice--he leaves his family, turning his efforts toward helping the outcasts of society. Mr. Gruffydd, in some ways the hero of Valley, has so devoted his life to serving the spiritual needs of his congregation that he refuses even to marry.

But underlying the hero's devotion to his community is another personal conviction about the nature of the good society. The late thirties Ford hero is usually an agrarian, one who holds that democracy and community cohesion can result only from a society in which many people possess land. Ringo, we remember, has a ranch across the river, the place he and Dallas are heading for when the film ends. Young Abe Lincoln, when he is musing over Blackstone's Commentaries, includes in the natural rights of man the right "to hold and acquire property." Though we don't know if he owns property, he does admire the Clay family, who have their own farm (Abe tells Mrs. Clay at one

point that she reminds him of his mother). In both Grapes and Drums, the greatest tragedies deal with the land, when the Indians burn the Martin farm and when the capitalists order the Joads from their land. Only Valley, the sole film lacking an American setting, pays no particular homage to the value of owning property. If the Ford hero is a defender of traditional values, they are partly the values of 19th-century American individualism, stressing self-reliance and hard work. But individualism in Ford's films is always restrained by the importance of community and family. Though the Ford hero has an urge to work on his own land, he also believes in the authority of law and religion and dislikes those who use their power, wealth, or prestige--people like Gatewood or the orchard owners or the hypocrite Mr. Parry--to oppress or take advantage of the common people. In short, the Ford hero is an important spokesman for both individual and community values.

Just as important in these Ford films are the mother figures. When Huw Morgan says that his father was the head of the family and his mother was the heart, he summarizes the importance of older women for Ford. Mrs. Clay, Widow McKlennar, Ma Joad and Beth Morgan all contain qualities of strength and determination. Except for the Widow McKlennar, each of the women fulfills her responsibility as protector of the family, the key social institution. Though the Widow has no children in the film, she does serve as mother figure to Gil and Lana by taking them

on as hired workers when their farm is burned and by willing them her farm as she lies on her deathbed. This picture of older women may appear incidental until one begins to search for other strong older women in Hollywood films. As critics have pointed out, Ford is one of the few directors who have created admirable older women in a number of his films.[28] He recognized in his films, as have few other directors have, how important strong mothers in helping beleaguered families to survive. And, of course, family and home are for Ford the heart of civilization.

The younger woman in Ford's films of the late thirties has two different qualities, sometimes combined in the same woman. Like Dallas, she provides a romantic element in the story, or like Mrs. Mallory, she develops throughout the story from an aristocratic Easterner into a person who gains a sympathy for the democratic values of the West. In Young Mr. Lincoln, the Clay daughters provide a subplot of romantic interest, as does Ann Rutledge, while Mary Todd, in her gradual acceptance of Abe's talents, represents the conversion of the aristocrat. Lana Martin in Drums combines both types, while Grapes--significantly, as the story of the modern era--contains neither. In that film only Rose of Sharon, whose husband deserts her, in any way resembles the other young women in Ford's films. Both Bronwen and Angharad provide romantic interest in Valley, and--again significantly--Angharad becomes unhappy when she is denied marriage to Gruffydd and instead marries the

wealthy son of the colliery owner. Excluding Lana and Angharad, none of these roles is particularly major, but it is important to note that Dallas, the Clay sisters, Lana, and Bronwen all seem likely to become strong mother figures as they age. By marrying and accepting the role of wife and mother, they provide the link which allows the perpetuation of the agrarian way of life. It is important to note that Rose of Sharon's husband abandons her when the Joads are torn from their land. Romance and marriage succeed in these Ford films only within the context of a stable community.

In addition to these particular character types, certain actions also recur. In each of these five films community rituals of one sort or another are carefully presented; their function is to suggest how, through shared experience of elemental human activity, groups of individuals are cemented into like-minded communities. As we have seen, one of the main events in Stagecoach--the birth of Mrs. Mallory's child--is the catalyst that brings into harmony a group with diverse social and cultural backgrounds. In Young Mr. Lincoln the July Fourth celebration, from the parade to the tug-of-war, provides one of Ford's most sustained views of community activity. Drums has a marriage, a birth, a funeral procession, a church service, a land-clearing day, and a harvest celebration--a ritual, one is tempted to say, for every occasion. The high point in Grapes of Wrath occurs when the people in the

agricultural camp have a dance and successfully stop threats of violence by outsiders as the dance proceeds. Valley also has a wedding, a birth (of Bronwen's son--off-screen), church services and, most important of all, the constant background of voices singing Welsh folk songs and hymns appropriate to the moment.

A final pattern also seems evident in the choice of villains. Very generally speaking, the villains are those who challenge the dominant community norms. In Stagecoach, Gatewood's villainy stems from his greed. Later in Grapes, his type is magnified a hundred-fold: by the modern era, greed has become so highly organized and centralized that it has become dominant rather than deviant. The real villain in Young Mr. Lincoln is attorney John Felder, whose conception of the law is not that of simple natural morality but of unyielding retribution, of Old Testament justice. The modern industrial system, represented by the colliery and the school, becomes the villain in Valley; as time passes, the effect of that system is to inculcate destructive social values into the consciousness of the entire community. Finally, in both Stagecoach and Drums, Indians are presented as foes of the inevitable westward movement whose challenge to the "progress" of the frontier demands that they be exterminated. Thus the villains are either individuals within the society who display excessive greed, heartless legalism, or Puritan moralism, or external groups and forces that challenge the existence of a way of life.

If the first type is clearly related to the popular front conception of the villain as man against the people, the second can easily be seen as a parallel to foreign totalitarianisms threatening American values.

In looking over these pattems, one begins to observe a curious paradigm forming. Ford's social vision as expressed in these five films is that of a 19th-century liberal, a man who believes in democratic individualism, self-reliance (and self-restraint), and widespread ownership of property. This liberalism--the rational side of the Ford world view--is not unrestrained but is always tempered by an emotional side, provided by the strong mothers and the community rituals, which present the strength and courage of the human spirit in the face of adversity, as well as a social concern and interaction which serve as a basis for fulfilling the human needs which rational liberalism cannot supply. This second side stems at least in part from Ford's Catholicism, which would never allow him to accept liberal individualism wholeheartedly, and also in part from his small-town upbringing, which gave him a conviction that community solidarity is one of the most important elements of human life. The head and heart are thus united in the Fordian vision of the late thirties.

In his films Ford attempts to resolve artistically some of the weaknesses in liberalism, the dominant value system in American culture since at least the Age of Jackson. The tendency of that liberalism has been to

encourage scientific and technological innovation and to organize life in a highly rational way. Though liberalism was a perfect ideology for smashing stale idols and outworn superstitions, thus freeing people who had been subjected since the dawn of time, it also tended, as Lionel Trilling has noted, "toward a denial of the emotions and the imagination." Charles Foster has made a similar point when he argues that the American Enlightenment had a "spiritual thinness" which laid "the bricks of civilization without sufficient spiritual straw." Ford, in his films of the late thirties, blunted the stress on innovation and change inherent in liberalism, adding to it the important emotional element through his sentimental portraits of family and community life. Though in doing so he left some questions about these tendencies of liberalism unanswered, Ford did achieve in his films an uneasy reconciliation of head and and heart, the reason and emotions. One might say that Ford presented in his films a vision which fulfilled the ideals of democracy set forth by Whitman in Democratic Vistas. Not only was it a democracy of individualism but it also contained the essential second half of democracy, which Whitman called "adhesiveness or love, which fuses, ties, and aggregates, fraternizing all."[29]

Nonetheless, Ford's resolution in these five films was tentative. As we have already noted, the chief aspect of these films is that they are optimistic when dealing with the past, pessimistic when dealing with the present. I

would argue that this seeming contradiction, so evident and unresolved in the Ford films, was a broad and very common conflict in American culture in the late depression years, an indication of the crisis of progressive liberalism generally.[30] Since liberalism first became the dominant mode of political and cultural discouse in the early 19th century, Americans had generally had an inflated conviction that progress was inevitable, that America was a nation of destiny. This progressive faith lasted so long as the American industrial system continued to grow, but in the depression, when it seemed to collapse and when it became apparent as well that the dreams of equality and liberty for all systematically excluded various minority and immigrant groups (witness the Indians in Ford's films), the ideal of progress--so crucial to American liberalism--began to fade. To make matters worse, the increasing awareness of foreign totalitarianisms began to discredit seriously the liberal conception of the rational, well-informed liberal citizen.

Thus, in American culture at large in the late thirties and early forties, a conflict which Gene Wise has called the "progressive anomaly" had become widespread. Many people were rediscovering America's past with fervor but were pessimistic about the present. The Protestant social gospel was breaking down with a concurrent rise in neo-orthodox theology. American historians were beginning to revaluate the accuracy of the progressive categories of explanation that had dominated the historical field since

Turner. Literary critics were turning away from Marxist and other sociological methods of criticism toward the complexity of the New Criticism. Though this list could be extended to many areas of American cultural life that had a connection to liberal ideology, it is enough to say that the progressive anomaly in Ford's work is but one manifestation of a broad and significant change in the way Americans perceived reality in the years just before Pearl Harbor. In presenting the unresolved tension between the fulfilling past and the chaotic present, Ford's films reflected a harsh and disquieting cultural dilemma common in the late thirties.[31]

Once again, I would like to stress the important place of the American film as an index to cultural values and cultural change. The films of John Ford clearly relate to the cultural trends in American life in the late thirties. They both reflected cultural preoccupations (as the progressive anomaly) and helped to mold cultural attitudes. There is no doubt that the patriotism in the Ford historical films of 1939, taken along with the general patriotic tone in Hollywood films of that era, helped to create and bolster the celebration of the American Way of Life in the postwar years. Likewise, if we extended our discussion to cover the Ford films of the forties through the sixties, we would find that, in common with his culture, Ford developed a greater sympathy toward immigrants, blacks and native Americans, as well as a much more complex attitude toward

the nature of the American western experience and of human existence itself.[32] Thus I must reiterate my contention that films are valuable sources of cultural history since they both reflect and create culture, and that auteur criticism needs a greater focus on the auteur's culture, since his social vision is shaped and influenced by the culture of which he is a living and working member. A man like John Ford, born in a small Maine town before the turn of the century, becoming one of the best of American film directors, is best seen as both a product and a creator of culture.

CHAPTER V

FRANK CAPRA: FILMMAKING AND COMMITMENT

> My whole philosophy is in my films. People are basically good or can be made good. Sentimental? Of course, but so what?
>
> --Frank Capra

It is understandable that both John Ford and Frank Capra have expressed high praise for each other's work. Their social visions were similar, sharing both a strong element of national pride and a broad democratic strain. In the introduction to Capra's autobiography, Ford called Capra "an inspiration to all those who believe in the American Dream . . . the greatest motion picture director in the world." In the text of the book itself, Capra writes that "John Ford is the Compleat Director . . . the dean of directors, undoubtedly the greatest and most versatile in films." Even allowing for the usual degree of hyperbole common in Hollywood autobiographies, no one familiar with the work of both directors in the late thirties and early forties would doubt that they admired one another's work or that their visions were shaped by similar cultural forces.[1]

Like Ford, Capra was the son of immigrant parents. Three years younger than Ford, he did not come to America

until he was six years old, however, and did not reach Hollywood until he was almost thirty. Nonetheless, like Ford, Capra gained a degree of experience as a film director in the silent days and directed his first popular successes in the mid-thirties. Between 1934 and 1941, Capra and Ford each won three Academy Awards as the best director, both failing only in 1937 and 1939. During World War Two both made documentaries for the war effort. More than any other American directors in the late thirties, Capra and Ford were consistently able to sense the pulse of the American film-going public.

In contrast to Ford, who began to gain critical acceptance as early as the fifties by French and British critics, Capra has had a low critical reputation since he made his last important film, State of the Union, in 1948. The generation of critics who grew to maturity during World War Two and the postwar era seemed to have little use for his sentimental, idealized "reformist" comedies. Nonetheless, there is a suggestion that the pendulum is beginning to swing back. On many college campuses, Capra is among the most popular of directors, and recently the first anthology of essays on Capra's life and work has been published. Not only was Capra one of the superb technicians in Hollywood during the studio era ("in my pictures," he has justly claimed, "people's eyes are riveted on the screen"), he was also one of the most popular comic directors between 1934 and 1941. Because of their tremendous

popular appeal, the Capra comedies are, as one critic has written, "among the most valuable sociological documents in the history of the American cinema, reflecting a decade's idealized view of itself." The next two chapters will concentrate on the relationship between the Capra comedies and the changing American culture between 1936 and 1941.[2]

I

In examining the facts of Frank Capra's life, a picture quite different from the lives of Chaplin and Ford emerges. In many ways, Capra's story is--for a time--the story of the Horatio Alger hero, who through luck and pluck makes it in America. Raised in poverty, working hard to get an education, thwarted for a time in his efforts to succeed, Capra finally made it to the top of the heap. There he remained for a little more than a decade, from 1934 to 1946, after which, almost as suddenly as he rose, Capra's star declined. His reputation was low for most of the fifties and sixties, but in the past five years, a number of colleges have held successful Frank Capra festivals. Like Chaplin--though for vastly different reasons--Capra was anathema to Hollywood in the fifties. But like him, Capra seems to be attuned to the temper of the seventies.

Capra was born on May 18, 1897, in Bisaquino, Sicily, a village near Palermo.[3] He was the youngest son of Salvatore and Sarah Nicolas Capra's seven children. When he was six years old, his family immigrated to America, following

Frank's brother Ben, who had come five years earlier. When the family finally reached Los Angeles, Ben was waiting for them with a rented house on Castelar Street.

If we can take Capra's autobiography at face value, the picture that develops is of a latter-day Ben Franklin, born in poverty and learning early to scramble for existence. "My tough family's drive to accumulate money," he writes "could only be matched by my own stubborn drive to get an education."[4] While in grammar school, he hawked newspapers. During high school, he did some morning janitor work, played guitar at a restaurant, and continued to work for the Los Angeles Times on Saturday nights. At Cal Tech (his family laughed at his decision to go to college), he ran the dorm laundry, worked for a power plant doing odd jobs, and waited tables between classes. During Capra's college years, his father--who had scraped up enough money for a down payment on a fifteen-acre lemon grove--was crushed to death in a machine accident, and the family moved to Los Angeles from their orchards at the foothills of the Seirra Madre. Capra borrowed his tuition money for his remaining three years, contributing his earnings to his mother.

After receiving a degree in chemical engineering in June, 1918, Capra enlisted in the Army. His visions of heroism in France were scuttled when he was assigned to teach ballistic mathematics at Fort Mason in San Francisco. When his stint was completed, he found himself an unemployed

chemical engineer. For several years between 1920 and 1923, he roamed around the West and Southwest hustling at anything that would bring him a few dollars.

There are a number of versions about exactly what Capra did in these years to keep himself busy. Capra writes at one point that for the three years he was "hopping freights, selling photos house to house, hustling poker, playing guitars." A New Yorker staff writer wrote in 1940 that Capra in 1922 became a salesman of Elbert Hubbard books; the "fourteen volume de-luxe editions" were sold door-to-door for $120. Richard Griffith says that Capra sold "wildcat oil and gold stocks." A Saturday Evening Post found that he bacame a "tinhorn gambler and petty financial pirate."[5]

Whatever the specifics, it is safe to say that during this period of roaming, Capra developed an image of what America outside of Los Angeles was like. After going through the processes of American education and roaming the country for a time, the Sicilian immigrant had been pretty thoroughly introduced to and assimilated into the values of American culture. In recalling his experiences in the first few years after World War One, Capra told an interviewer that he

> got a real sense of small towns, got a real sense of America . I found out a lot about Americans . . . . I saw the deserts, the mountains, I met the farmers, the people, the people who were working and not complaining. It was a great experience. I met a lot of Gary Coopers.[6]

While many other Americans were reading scathing attacks on small towns like Main Street and Winesburg, Ohio, Capra was wandering around, completely missing the "revolt against the village."

Capra's first exposure to filmmaking, amusingly described in his autobiography, took place in San Francisco when he conned a beginning producer into believing he was from Hollywood.[7] But Fultah Fisher's Boarding House (1923) got good reviews and doubled the producer's investment, and Capra was hooked on film. The next several years were critical in his development as a filmmaker. From the time he made that first film until the time he directed Harry Langdon in Tramp, Tramp, Tramp (1926), Capra worked in nearly every key area of filmmaking. He edited for a newsreel photographer, was a prop man and editor for comedy director Bob Eddy, and wrote gags for Hal Roach's Our Gang comedies and later for Mack Sennett. As an editor, Capra developed a keen sense of how a film is successfully fitted together. As a prop man, he learned the importance of choosing the props appropriate to a film's setting, theme, and tone. As a gag man, he learned how to construct comic situations and visual gags that would later counterbalance the moralistic and serious aspects of his films. By introducing Capra to these various elements of filmmaking, these experiences provided the roots for his later belief that, though filmmaking is a collaborative effort, it is not a committee

creation, that the director should be the primary force in making a film.

After his brief rise and fall as a director for Harry Langdon, Capra went to work as director for Columbia Pictures, then one of the little-known independent film companies on Hollywood's poverty row. Harry Cohn, Columbia's president, had chosen Capra because his name was the first on an alphabetized list of unemployed directors. The coincidence proved to be one of the luckiest of Harry Cohn's life.[8] At Columbia, Capra directed seven silent films in 1928. Then, like John Ford, he spent the early days of sound directing a good number of films, slowly developing and learning the craft of sound film directing, as well as experimenting with themes and situations that would later become central to his vision. Among the dozen films he directed between 1929 and 1933 that still hold up today are Platinum Blonde, American Madness, and Lady for a Day.

Then in 1934 Capra directed a quickly shot story about a rich girl trying to escape her father and a poor newspaperman who helps her in exchange for an exclusive scoop. Though the critics were lukewarm, the film gradually began to develop a following by word of mouth. At the Academy Awards ceremony, that sleeper--It Happened One Night--became the first and only film ever to win Oscars for the five major awards: actor, actress, film, director, and screenwriter. And the scrambling and ambitious Frank Capra, who had been striving for the best director award since

1929, finally had crawled to the top of the heap.

From that point until at least 1946, Frank Capra remained at the top. Excluding the low-budget, quickly shot Arsenic and Old Lace, Capra's next six features--Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, Lost Horizon, You Can't Take It with You, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Meet John Doe, and It's a Wonderful Life--comprise a unified artistic vision rare in American film history. Viewed chronologically, they form in themselves a cultural history of how one man, intent upon pleasing and teaching a huge moviegoing public, responded to the depression and to the approach of World War Two. During the war itself, Capra helped to explain the war effort to millions with his Why We Fight series, sponsored by the U.S. Armed Forces.

But besides making films between 1934 and 1946, Capra was a constant advocate of director power against arbitrary studio behavior. After making the highly lucrative It Happened One Night, Capra won virtually absolute control over his films. Because his vision was so close to that of the dominant American culture, Capra continued to make financially successful films and continued to have independence. In addition, since he believed the director should be the prime mover in filmmaking and since he had a position of power, he often spoke out for his point of view. In a letter to the New York Times in 1939, Capra wrote that 80 percent of the directors today shoot scenes

exactly as they are told to shoot them . . . and . . . 90 percent of them have no choice in the story or in the editing." In the letter he argued that the Screen Directors Guild, of which he was president, was seeking from the producers only two rights; 1)to read the script before beginning to shoot, and 2)to assemble the first rough cut of the film. As president of the Guild, Capra was instrumental in getting the producers to recognize the Guild as a bargaining agent for the directors and their assistants, largely by using his role as Academy president and as the master of ceremonies for the 1939 Academy Awards presentations as a lever. A constant theme running throughout his autobiography is the primacy of the director in film production, or in Capra's slogan, "one man, one film."[9]

After It's a Wonderful Life, arguably his best film (and his personal favorite), Capra began to decline. After State of the Union, he made only four more feature films, two of them pale remakes of earlier films, none of them well received. Though he tried to begin one or two more features in the sixties after Pocketful of Miracles (1961), Capra finished none. Nonetheless, the vitality and intensity of his films from 1934 to 1946 remain lasting monuments to a man who was one of the masters of the American cinema.

II

The thirties, one critic has written, were above all a decade of commitment and the search for culture. They

were years of commitment because the widespread severity and longevity of the depression led people to believe that it could be overcome only if people committed to a cause would work hard with others toward a solution. This stress on commitment led to the search for culture or, more precisely, to the search for a system of values, meanings, and behavior that would together create a humane and harmonious way of life. While the movement to commitment was often spurred by radical or reformist impulses and was particularly strong in the first half of the decade, the search for an adequate culture, also called the search for the American Way of Life, became increasingly important in the late thirties as a new American nationalism began to form.[10]

The experience and films of Frank Capra provide insights into how he was influenced by the decade's stress on commitment and how he contributed to the cultural definition of the American Way of Life. To understand how Capra's work typified certain cultural trends in the thirties, we must first mention how he differed from some of the major artists of the twenties.

As we have already mentioned, the artists of the twenties were iconoclasts. Whether they attacked the repressiveness of Main Street, the vulgarity of Babbitt, and the stupidity of the yokels, or praised the flappers and philosophers who were ushering in a new age, the artist of the twenties most typically challenged the values of the genteel tradition--decorum in manners, respect for "high

culture," piety in morals--in favor of aesthetic freedom and individual authenticity. The religion of art took precedence over the demands of social values. Though these artists succeeded in calling into question the value system of the genteel tradition, they failed to create any widely applicable value system to replace it. As we have seen, the result was a situation in which conflicting value systems (city-country, native-immigrant, young-old, genteel-vernacular) clashed continually and irreconcilably during the twenties. Had it not been for the prosperity that many groups (excepting farmers, laborers, and some minorities) enjoyed during the decade, thus creating a degree of economic and political (Republican) consensus, it is likely that social conflict would have become more bitter and explicit in the decade, as it did in Germany.

It is important to note the social backgrounds of the artistic leaders in the twenties. Dos Passos, Cummings, Cowley, Edmund Wilson, Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis and Eliot all came from old respectable families or from aspiring families with enough money to send their children to prestige universities. All were educated at Harvard, Yale, or Princeton. There they received a genteel education, but also became aware of modernist artistic currents and social ideas springing from Europe. In many ways, their rebellion from American cultural values was based on these new European ideas. It is important to note, above all, that most were of English or Western European descent.

Capra, though of the same generation, shared little of their experience. Whereas they were born into the privileged classes, Capra was born at the bottom. While they were deriding the values of the genteel tradition in the twenties, Capra was struggling for success, working for an education, playing by the genteel rules of equal opportunity and hard work. Instead of studying Proust, Joyce, and Nietzsche in the twenties, he was studying the hamlets of the hinterland, trying to make a living in Hollywood by his brashness and ambition. Ironically, the privileged artists of the twenties were often pessimists, while Capra was always in many ways a buoyant optimist.[11]

When the depression struck, Capra was no more committed to expressing a social vision in his art than any of the artists of the twenties, and less than writers like Dos Passos and Millay who were radicalized by the Sacco-Vanzetti affair. In fact, as the economic crisis deepened, many of the aesthetic radicals of the twenties became political radicals, expressing commitments much earlier than Capra. Dos Passos, Wilson, and Cowley were only three of the most notable to make their radical commitments explicit in the early thirties. By the end of the decade, even Hemingway expressed a social commitment of sorts in <u>For Whom the Bell Tolls</u>.

Capra's work of the early thirties displays little explicit commitment to a particular social position. His most successful films of those years arose from his

relationship with screenwriter Robert Riskin. Riskin was born in New York the same year as Capra and worked as a newsman and playwright before coming to Hollywood to write for films after sound was introduced. Though he continued to write for Capra after 1934 (Mr. Deeds, You Can't, Doe), it is true, as Richard Corliss has observed, that these later films offer "less the sense of Riskin's involvement . . . than do those films whose protagonists are New Yorkers of his old milieu: high-pressure bankers, newspapermen, Broadway sharpies."[12] Though Capra was perfecting his craft in these early thirties films, the social vision expressed in them came as much from Riskin as from Capra himself.

The starting point of Capra's own social commitment is located sometime in 1935. In his autobiography he describes an incident which is central to an understanding of his films from 1936 to 1948. After winning the Academy Award in 1934 for best director, Capra was nervous and uncertain about following up with another successful film. After being unable to find a good story, he decided to feign sickness. Complaining about his health for a few weeks, Capra then actually became bedridden, suffering temperatures of 104 degrees and confounding the doctors trying to diagnose his illness (for a time they thought it was tuberculosis).

After ten days in the hospital, Capra was about ready to give up the ghost. Then one day a stranger came

to visit him. With the radio tuned in to a Hitler speech, the man castigated Capra for his selfishness. An evil man like Hitler could reach fifteen million people for twenty minutes, he argued, but a movie director like Capra could communicate with hundreds of millions for two hours. Capra was wasting his God-given talents, making him an offense not only to God, but to humanity. After this confrontation, Capra's health began to improve immediately, and he began to have a conscious social and moral purpose in mind when making his films. In his own words:

> I knew then that down to my dying day, down to my last feeble talent, I would be committed . . . . Beginning with Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, my films had to say something. And whatever they said had to come from those ideas inside me "that were hurting to come out."

After his "conversion," which was as much social as religious, Capra's films were to a much greater degree his own creations. Whereas Robert Riskin had been as important as Capra in determining and devleoping the themes of their collaborations in the early thirties, after 1935 Capra resisted Riskin's efforts to gain more recognition on the credits and began to see clearly the outlines of the "one man, one film" idea.[13]

As an independent-minded director, Capra had strong convictions about what filmmaking was. His primary goal in filmmaking was not to develop a small cult which would appreciate the subtleties of his films, but rather--as is often the case in the popular arts--to reach as wide an audience as possible. Indeed, the epigraph to his

autobiography says: "There are no rules in filmmaking, only sins. And the cardinal sin is Dullness." In his most popular years, Capra attracted audiences through two basic elements: comedy, to relax and entertain the audience; and social moralism, to teach the audience or to reaffirm already held values. More than any other American director, excepting possibly Ford, Capra made films in the six years preceding our entry into World War Two whose values represent a gradual reformation of a dominant American value system.

Why was it that these Catholic directors, sons of immigrants, were able to present films whose values were so widely popular and acceptable to American audiences? The answer lies, I think, in the very fact of their immigrant status and subsequent successful positions in Hollywood. It should be remembered that in the early 20th century most first-generation immigrants were systematically excluded from advancing in the social and economic system because of their national or religious backgrounds. (Capra, we remember, could not find a job after World War One, even with a college degree.) Largely because it was not "respectable," Hollywood was an exception. In fact, by the thirties, it was a commonly held belief that nearly all the successful people in Hollywood were either Jewish, Catholic, or foreign-born. The reason that so many of these "marginal" people were successful in Hollywood is clear. Because of the limitations placed on immigrants by the dominant

American culture, these immigrants, as they worked within the system to succeed, became extremely sensitive to the American power structure and to the myths, images, and ideologies that legitimated it. They also often became among the staunchest defenders of those myths as well, especially if they succeeded themselves within the rules of the game. As Robert Sklar has argued, the successful Hollywood filmmakers possessed "precise antennae to detect the pressures and needs of American social groups."[14] Such sensitive awareness was invaluable in creating popular films.

In trying to define how Capra's films relate to those larger cultural pressures and needs and what they contributed to the reformulated definition of the American Way of Life, we must turn to the films themselves, and more particularly, to the formula followed by Capra's films. By formula, I follow John Cawelti's definition: "a conventional system for structuring cultural products."[15] To be a formula, a narrative type must have recurring conventions and structures that are immediately familiar to popular audiences. The detective story and the western are, of course, two of the most durable formulas in American culture.

In the previous chapters I have stressed the recurring patterns in the films of Chaplin and Ford. Here I am arguing that Capra's films had more than recurring patterns--they represented a formula of their own for a

decade, one which was familiar to and eminently successful with popular audiences. Defining the elements of the Capra formula will help us understand the cultural functions that it was serving. Cawelti has argued that the cultural functions taken over in modern societies by the popular arts include the ritual reaffirmation of values, game participation, and ego-enhancement through fantasy. We will be primarily concerned with the first, with how Capra reaffirmed the values of his audience in his films.[16]

This concept of formula is also helpful to the cultural historian and the student of values because it holds that the formula is flexible enough to allow treatment of different issues as the culture itself changes. One of the biggest weaknesses in film criticism today is its inability to recognize that changes in a particular genre are related to changes in culture--that, for example, we have popular front westerns and anarchic or fatalist westerns and cold war westerns, all products of changing cultural concerns and moods. Thus in this inquiry into the films of Capra, we shall also be interested in how Capra's formula responded to the changing historical situation, in what values he expressed and reaffirmed as the years progressed.

Despite their unique formula, the Capra comedies are closely related to a film genre popular in the middle thirties, the screwball comedy. As Andrew Bergman has pointed out, the characteristic film comics of the early thirties--particularly the Marx Brothers and W.C. Fields--

were zany and anarchic, expressing the widespread feeling of social dislocation and rootlessness then pervading the culture. After Roosevelt's welfare legislation began to inspire more confidence and optimism in the culture, the screwball comedies began to affirm social values rather than to satirize or spurn them. With Capra's It Happened One Night one of the earliest examples, such films as My Man Godfrey, Ruggles of Red Gap, Easy Living, and The Awful Truth all fit into this new brand of comedy.[17]

But one can reach back even further, I think, to discover the roots of the Capra formula. In The Age of Energy, Howard Mumford Jones describes the novel of reform popular in the first fifteen years of this century:

> Seldom before had so many novelists agreed upon a philosophy and a program. The American ideal was, they felt, sound at heart, and if the republic had gone wrong, if the people had been tricked, the people would go on learning the truth, turn the rascals out, and reform what was wrong. The hero in these stories is usually a representative of the plain people . . . . Our hero learns of chicanery, discovers how corruption operates . . . or otherwise displays the potency latent in simple morality and an American theory of the state as expressing popular will.[18]

This description of the middle-class novel of reform gives us insight into the Capra formula and how it differed from most screwball comedies. In most of the screwball genre, no reformist impulse is evident because no major sources of evil creates conflict in the film. Rather, comedy arises when the values of the West, the small town, or the common folk are confronted with those of the East, the city, or the rich. Though the latter were, of course, more often

objects of scorn in the thirties, they rarely in the typical screwball comedy created enough problems to necessitate a reformist impulse.

But the key to the Capra formula is a reform element based solidly on middle-class values.[19] The Capra hero is not out to restructure the American economic or social system in any fundamental way, but literally to re-form American society in the mold of traditional ideals, those stemming from simple Christian ethics and the words of American political heroes. Like Ford, Capra looks into the past for the inspiration and guidance needed to deal with present problems. By adding to the screwball comedy this element of reform, Capra was able both to entertain his audiences and to satisfy a need we have discussed above, the emotional need to feel actively involved in and concerned about the problems of the depression.

With these roots in mind we can briefly sketch the central elements of the Capra formula. The first element, of course, is the Capra hero. Played usually by Gary Cooper or James Stewart, the Capra hero combines a child-like innocence with strong inner convictions and an ability to articulate and defend those convictions against the onslaughts of the corrupt, cynical, and venal. The beliefs held by the hero are rooted in the values of the middle-class small town--especially his belief in Christian neighborliness and in the goodness of the common man that stems from it. Though we often see the Capra hero away from his

home environment, the film usually indicates that he is a respected and willing member of some harmonious community. His ability to defend the ideals he has learned sets him up as a leader and spokesman of that community.

The Capra heroine is also important to the formula. She is usually a career woman, either a secretary or a newswoman. At the beginning of the film, she is cynical about the Capra hero, but as time passes, she begins to admire his sincerity and honesty, and is eventually converted from her earlier attitudes. Capra makes the change more believable by making the heroine a small-town girl, often the daughter of a selfless doctor, who had come to the city to work and was hardened in her beliefs there. By the end of the film, the Capra heroine has been completely won over by the hero and is usually ready to quit her job and marry him, presumably giving up her career to find fulfillment through her husband's destiny.

The third element in the Capra formula is the ritual humiliation of the Capra hero, often accompanied by a betrayal by one whom he trusts. The hero, who is placed in a strange environment, is usually made to look foolish by the corrupt villains in concert with the media. The villains, though they change from 1936 to 1941, are usually greedy men devoid of ideals. The media, in contrast, are a more neutral entity. They can be used for good or for evil, but their primary function is to make the hero's actions public. While the media publicize him, the Capra

hero is confronted by the media and the forces of evil and is humiliated at some public place, a courtroom, a ball park, a Senate chamber. The humiliation is usually the result of betrayal of the hero by someone he trusts and serves to challenge all the values the hero has previously stood for.

Finally, the Capra hero is absolved, and the values he represents emerge intact. Two key conventions are involved in the hero's ritual victory. The first is a benevolent figure of authority--a judge, a vice-president, later an angel--who recognizes the hero's goodness and defends him from the forces of evil. This conventional character, as we have seen, also occurs in Ford's Young Mr. Lincoln as a judge. The second convention is the crowd, which besides presenting a visual contrast to the hero himself, also has a thematic intent. Though, as we shall see, Capra's attitude toward groups of people is more ambivalent than his statements about the goodness of the common would indicate, crowds do often participate in the hero's victory by publicly affirming his values and helping to bring about his victory.

These four elements--the Capra hero, the Capra heroine, the ritual humiliation, and the ritual victory--are key to the Capra formula. It is important to note, however, that the formula as expressed will not always be contained in pure form in all of Capra's films from 1936 to 1941. In fact, the theory of formula is important for that

reason: Cawelti developed the theory not to judge the artistic quality of the work, but to enable the cultural critic to "deal with the relationship between the work and its culture."[20] As the elements of the Capra formula shift in degree and emphasis, we will be able to infer the changing tenor of American culture between 1936 and 1941 and to identify Capra's response to changing historical conditions. With the theory of formula in mind, we can now move on to consideration of Capra's films themselves.

III

Mr. Deeds Goes to Town (1936) marks the beginning of Capra's "committed" period of filmmaking. To symbolize Capra's declaration of directorial independence, it was also the first film where his name appeared above the title of the film in the opening credits. As a work of popular art, it stands in direct contrast to one of the major preoccupations of American writers in the twenties (and earlier): the revolt from the village.

Though it flowered in the twenties, the revolt from the village was presaged by a number of literary works in the late 19th century. E.W. Howe's The Story of a Country Town (1883), Mark Twain's The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg (1900), and Edwin Arlington Robinson's Tilbury poems all painted a bleak picture of the repressiveness, vulgarity, and spiritual emptiness of small-town life around the turn of the century. With the publication of Sherwood

Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio (1919) and Sinclair Lewis' Main Street (1920), however, the revolt against the village became fashionable. For a number of years it was a sign of sophistication to scorn the "yokels" and their way of life. H.L. Mencken's derisive essays from Dayton, Tennessee, during the Scopes trial were typical of the times.

But by the early thirties, when the economic system had collapsed, this sophisticated criticism of the twenties began to seem frivolous and self-indulgent. One scholar, studying the literary revolt after World War One, concluded that the movement which "had begun so bravely in 1915 fizzled out rather dismally in the thirties."[21] The negativism of the prosperous twenties began gradually to melt into the halting affirmation of the troubled thirties.

Mr. Deeds stands the twenties' attitude toward the small town on its head. Rather than basing his film on some literary work from the twenties, Capra used the short novel Opera Hat, by Samuel Budington Kelland, a popular writer who published often in America and Saturday Evening Post in the thirties.[22] The story was of a young man named Longfellow Deeds who inherits twenty million dollars and the presidency of an opera board when his uncle dies. He leaves his small town, goes to the city, and runs into a series of problems because of his belief in popular art as opposed to the opera board's elite conception of high art. A murder is committed, which he solves with the aid of an ex-gangster he has hired as a bodyguard. As the

story ends, Deeds is about to marry the secretary of Madame Pomponi, a leading opera personage.

In the film version, Capra retains the barest elements of the story and molds it into a narrative more suited to his new commitments. More than the story, Capra's film stresses the distinction between the values of the small town (Mandrake Falls) and the city and, unlike the characteristic trends of the twenties, comes down squarely in defense of the small town. The scene at the Mandrake Falls train station, where Deeds is given a huge send-off, is an addition in the film intended to stress the basic cohesion of the small-town community. Likewise, the intrusion of the depression worker, Deeds' subsequent plan for using his money, and the climactic courtroom scene, as well as the romance between Deeds and reporter Babe Bennett--in short, nearly the whole second half of the film--were the creations of Capra and Riskin. Capra himself has said that he was not so much interested in the opera element of the story as he was in the question of what a country boy like Deeds would do with twenty million dollars in New York during the middle of the depression.[23]

Though a film like Mr. Smith or It's a Wonderful Life exhibits greater technical virtuosity than Deeds, Capra demonstrates in this film most of the characteristic elements of his style. The genius of Capra's style is his ability to draw the viewer's attention into the screen so much so that elements of the style are rarely noticed. The

art of hiding style, however, is in itself an art--Capra hides his style and involves his audience in several ways. First, his films are quickly paced. While making American Madness, Capra learned that by cutting out long walks and slow dissolves, by speeding up dialogue and filmed action in general, the pace of his films would involve audiences more completely.[24] The editing device which helps him to move his story along is the wipe, which consists of a line moving from one side of the screen to the other, "wiping" one shot away as it brings another on the screen. Though it often appears artificial today, the wipe is used in Deeds most effectively to show five courtroom testimonies in less than a mintue. Where a cut seems too abrupt and a dissolve too slow, the wipe is perfect for Capra's needs.

A second element Capra often uses is the documentary montage. As we have seen, Chaplin also uses it sparingly, but it is included in every Capra film from 1934 to 1946. In Deeds the documentary montage is used to make the hero's actions public, to humiliate him in the Cinderella Man stories, to publicize the fortune he inherits, the farm plan he initiates, the court hearing he is forced to accept. The montages, by making details of Deeds' private life public, expand the significance of the hero's destiny, thus further engaging the audience.[25]

Visually, Deeds--like most Capra films--consists mostly of medium shots and medium closeups. Unlike Ford, who likes to dwell on very long shots that stress the

relation of people to natural environment, Capra is an indoor studio director interested mainly in faces and dramatic development through character interaction. In the courtroom scene, for example, Capra alternates between medium closeups of Deeds, the lawyers, the witness, and the judge, occasionally including a long shot of the crowd in the courtroom. Always the stress is on people and their actions within the frame.

Capra's sound tracks also involve the audience. In Deeds, vernacular and slang dialogue, Riskin's specialty, made the film seem realistic and modern to thirties' audiences. In addition, music used at emotional moments of the film underlines the relationship between the hero and "the people." Whether it is Corny Cobb musing about getting the "sackeroo," the Falkner sisters charging that Deeds is "pixilated," or Deeds himself talking about "doodling," the dialogue is consistently interesting and often--particularly in the speech by the drunken poet Murrow--comic. When Deeds leaves the Mandrake Falls train station, the town band plays "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" and "Auld Lang Syne," both favorite Capra songs that celebrate human relationships. Later, the duet of "Swanee River," played by Babe, and "Humoresque," played by Deeds, illustrates Capra's penchant for using music as a way of bringing people together, noticeable also in the bus scene in It Happened One Night and the duets between the Colonel and Long John

in Meet John Doe. Music in Capra films is often realistic--that is, it is performed by characters on the screen and is not simply background but rather in some way integral to the development of character or of emotional impact. Like Ford, Capra is attracted to music that is familiar and well liked by his audience. Both directors use music to help deepen their pictures of fulfilling human interaction. Thus, in all these areas--pacing, editing, documentary montage, visual style, dialogue, and music--the primary intent in a Capra film is to create a bond between the viewer and the screen. "In my pictures," Capra once said, "you can't take your eyes off the screen because something is going to happen."[26]

Besides being representative of the Capra style, Mr. Deeds is also, with Mr. Smith, the purest expression of the Capra formula, a sort of introduction to what he would try to accomplish in the next decade. After his conversion, Capra's first message was, in his own words, that

> a simple honest man, driven into a corner by predatory sophisticates, can, if he will, reach deep down into his God-given resources and come up with the necessary handfuls [sic] of courage, wit, and love to triumph over his environment.[27]

This theme, Capra added, prevailed in nearly all his future films.

At the center of the formula, of course, is Longfellow Deeds, a man who inherits twenty million dollars when his uncle dies in an auto accident. In Mandrake Falls, Deeds plays tuba in the town band, is a volunteer fireman, and

poetry for special-occasion postcards. To these elements--all part of the original story--Capra adds two significant details: Deeds owns a tallow factory (a light in a world of darkness) and is the son of Joseph and Mary Deeds. In the story, Deeds owns a wool, hide, and fertilizer business and is the son of Luther and Susan Deeds. As we shall see, the Capra hero is often compared to two other suffering heroes, Christ and Abraham Lincoln, the religious and political heroes of the Capra formula. These comparisons are reinforced in the film when Babe, and later Corny, say that Deeds is being crucified, as well as when Deeds, describing his feelings upon first visiting Grant's tomb, says, "I can see the beginning of a new nation, just like Abraham Lincoln said." (One wishes that Deeds could have chosen a more appropriate hero than Grant, whom he eulogizes in front of his tomb, but since Lincoln's grave is not in New York, I guess one must take the heroes available.)

Several other characteristics distinguish Deeds. He has a romantic, almost chivalric, notion of marriage: several times he mentions he is waiting for a "lady in distress." In business affairs, he is a practical Yankee. When he learns that the opera loses money, he tells the board that "common sense" tells one that it must be run incorrectly. When the lawyer Haller agrees to settle quietly for a million dollars instead of seven million, and

when Cedar (of the law firm Cedar, Cedar, Cedar, and Budington) says he will manage Deeds affairs for free, Deeds immediately becomes suspicious. In his refusal to allow his butler to help him put on his pants, Deeds shows a democratic distaste for social distinctions and hierarchical forms of social behavior. Finally, Deeds possesses a simple morality. Talking to "Mary" (Babe's pseudonym), Deeds says, "What puzzles me is why people seem to get so much pleasure out of . . . out of hurting each other. Why don't they try liking one another once in a while?"

Deeds' simple belief in the golden rule make him appear vulnerable and childish to city sophisticates. Cedar says Deeds is "naive as a child." Early in the film, Corny calls him a "yokel," and MacWade, the editor of the paper, calls him a "cornfed bohunk." This element of vulnerability and innocence is key to the Capra hero, endearing him to audiences who know what he does not, that his goodness and honesty are being mocked and taken advantage of. With these qualities, however, he becomes something of an underdog who eventually truimphs over adversity, converting others to his honesty and simplicity. It is significant that in the courtroom scene Babe, Corny, and Mac all defend the same man they had ridiculed earlier in the film.

The career woman in Deeds is Babe Bennett, star news reporter. Except for Rosalind Russell's Hildy Johnson in

Hawks' His Girl Friday, Jean Arthur as Babe (and as Saunders in Smith) was possibly the best of the Hollywood newswomen after the Hays Code's taboo on sensuality began to encourage the career woman type after 1934.[28] Babe's first scene in the film shows her as a cynical reporter after a scoop at any cost: she promises her editor, Mac, a story about Deeds if he will promise her a one-month paid vacation. Predictably, by calling herself Mary Dawson, a stenographer, Babe is able to wrangle a story from Deeds, mocking him as the Cinderella Man.

But as she spends more time with him, Babe begins to see what her self-confessed "warped sense of humor" is doing to Deeds. Sitting at her typewriter, unable to write her daily exclusive on Deeds, she tells her roommate Mabel, "I'm crucifying him. . . . Here's a guy that's wholesome and fresh, and to us he looks like a freak." After quitting her job, Babe attends the court hearing, expresses her love for Deeds publicly, and finally persuades him to defend himself. Her conversion (like Corny's and Mac's) illustrates the warmth and goodness that the Capra hero radiates to the people with whom he comes into contact. By the end of the film, Babe is in Deeds' arms--he has finally won his "lady in distress." As was the fate of most working women in the thirties' films, the last scene means repudiation of career in exchange for embraces of the hero.

Also central to the formula of Deeds is the contrast between the city and the small town, the source of much of

the movie's comedy. In Mandrake Falls, we see the loading dock at the town station, the station itself as Deeds prepares to leave for New York, and the interior of Deeds' home. At the station is a corny sign ("Welcome to Mandrake Falls,/Where the scenery enthralls . . . .) and a laconic station master. What we see of the town leads us to believe that it is a small quiet village where people lead comfortable middle-class lives, eating apple pie, drinking lemonade, and having an active concern for the welfare of one another. In contrast, the city is the place of cynicism, sophistication, and snobbishness. Deeds lives in a mansion replete with butlers and valets. He meets the opera board in his home, and visits Tullio's, "Home of the Literati" (Riskin's satire on the Algonquin Round Table group). In the city we see only chiseling lawyers, conniving newspeople, and envious relatives. Two comments by Deeds emphasize the contrasting attitudes the film presents toward the two environments. The first is his comment to the poets that people in Mandrake Falls wouldn't make fun of the poets if they were to go there, even though their ways of life are different. The second is his paraphrase of Thoreau when he tells Mary: they "created a lot of grand palaces here but they forgot to create the noblemen to put in them. I'd rather have Mandrake Falls." At a time during which few people could afford splendor, Capra's attitude toward the plain and the opulent environment was sure to find favor.

The dramatic structure of Deeds is one of its strongest points. A brief summary of its direction should make that clear. Opening with Semple's death and the response of the media, Capra goes to Mandrake Falls, where Deeds is pursuaded to leave for New York. There he is confronted by the strange ways of the city, and especially the chiselers who want a cut of his money. Partly because Babe (as Mary) provides him with strong--albeit insincere--support, he is able to resist and challenge the values of the city sophisticates. When he learns Babe's true identity, however, he is crushed and decides to return to Mandrake Falls.

But as Deeds comes down the staircase to leave the mansion, Capra adds a topical element to complicate the plot. A starving unemployed man dressed in ragged clothes bursts into the mansion with a pistol. Holding Deeds at gunpoint, the man castigates him for his selfishness, calling him a "money-grubbing hick" who is swimming in wealth while outside people are starving unless they are lucky enough to find a breadline.[29] Deeds, who earlier has said that he wants to do some good with his money, is converted to serving the people in much the same way that Capra described his own conversion. But when he sets out on his plan to give away ten-acre fully equipped farms to unemployed workers and tenant farmers, the lawyer Cedar has him committed on an insanity charge. The following scene, in

which Deeds is shown unshaven, sitting imprisoned in dark shadows near a window at the county hospital, is dramatically the low point of the film. The Capra hero, we are led to believe, is finally destroyed by his foes.

At the court hearing, Deeds continues his refusal to to utter one word in self-defense. Cedar has a number of witnesses, including the eminent psychologist Dr. Emile von Haller, testify against Deeds. Finally, when Babe avows publicly that she loves Deeds, he decides to testify. Not only do Corny, Mac, and Babe support him, but so too do the depression farmers in the courtroom and even the judge himself. The key argument is Deeds' defense of his wealth-sharing plan, in which he argues that the wealthy man has a responsibility to share his wealth with the poor, that a man in a rowboat should not help the man who is tired of rowing, but the one who is drowning. After Deeds successfully disputes all the charges against him, the judge tells Deeds he is not only sane, but "in the opinion of the court . . . the sanest man who ever walked into this courtroom." Pandemonium breaks loose in the courtroom, and Deeds gathers his "lady in distress" into his arms as the film ends. The structure, in which the hero is placed into a strange environment, humiliated, apparently defeated, finally rising to defeat his challengers through his innate goodness and ability to articulate his values, represents a clear-cut and total victory for Deeds. Only Cedar,

his colleagues, and the angry relatives (who claimed a part of the money) remain upset.

It is in the courtroom scene that Cedar and Deeds clash. Cedar, who represents the greedy capitalist, calls Deeds' defense mere "childish ravings," further emphasizing the innocence of Deeds. In attacking him, Cedar charges that "if this man is permitted to carry out his plan, repercussions well be felt that will rock the foundations of our entire governmental system." Cedar never elaborates on why this would be so, and his words, along with his slick shyster appearance, leave us with the distinct impression that Cedar, like Gatewood in Stagecoach, is merely spouting patriotic rhetoric to mask his own self-interest.

In contrast, Deeds' plan is presented as simple humanitarianism. A small-town man who becomes wealthy by accident, Deeds wants to make sure, as he tells the opera board, that his money is put to good use. Money and power, we find, do not corrupt the Capra hero. When he is challenged by the unemployed worker, he makes his decision. Speaking in the courtroom, Deeds compares his actions to men driving their cars up a hill: the men who make it to the top in high gear have a responsibility, he argues, to help those who can't make it up the hill at all. "From what I can see, no matter what system of government we have, there'll always be leaders and always be followers."

Because leadership has in part been thrust upon Deeds, he is merely carrying out his leadership role as his small-town values tell him he should. The cure for the depression offered by Deeds is generous and benevolent leadership.

The details of the conflict between Deeds and Cedar deserve closer scrutiny. Deeds' original plan is to give each of two thousand farmers a ten-acre farm. Just as the problem in Grapes of Wrath stems from the breakup of the agrarian society, so Deeds plans to spend his money in an effort to rebuild the agrarian way of life. As Raymond Durgnat has noted, Deeds does not challenge the financiers, but instead lesser scapegoats like Cedar, the snobbish poets, and the effete intellectual psychologist. The film, writes Durgnat, "is sufficiently ambigous for a New Dealer hardly to notice that, on balance, it is propaganda for a moderate, Republican point of view." Though Capra does not write much about his political views during the thirties in his autobiography, his short discussion of his meeting with FDR suggests that he never supported a Democratic presidential candidate in the thirties and forties, lending a degree of credence to Durgnat's observation.[30]

This optimistic solution of Deeds, a victory of small-town over city values and of generosity over greed, drew acclaim from the critics and money from the public. Time said the film had "the funniest as well as the most spiritually nourishing climax of the season." Otis

Ferguson praised Capra's ability to use both visual and verbal humor, comparing him with Rene Clair, and concluded that Deeds was "literally too much for words, more to be seen than heard about." From Ferguson, that was high praise indeed. To Graham Greene, the film was "Capra's finest . . . a comedy quite unmatched," by a director who possessed "a sense of responsibility . . . a kinship with his audience, a sense of common life, a morality." Though one New York critic didn't particularly like Capra's characterization of the city and thought the hero should have been defeated in the end, even he liked the film. The critical response was overwhelmingly positive.[31]

After It Happened One Night, a film that helped to make Capra's name, it was almost inevitable that his next film would arouse interest. But Deeds did more than arouse interest; it was a smash. Not only was it held over for an extra week at the renowned Radio City Music Hall after grossing over $100,000 the first week, but its success also continued around the country, as the film challenged the financial success of Modern Times.[32]

This almost unqualified success of Deeds among critics and the public alike raises an interesting cultural issue. The optimism of Deeds closely parallels the optimism of the New Deal, which by 1936 had already successfully implemented its major social-welfare legislation. Longfellow Deeds' courtroom speech, which hinted that the wealthy were morally obligated to help their less fortunate neighbors,

won plaudits even from the Left. Peter Ellis, film reviewer for New Masses, called Deeds "the first real surprise to come from Hollywood since The Informer." Because of its realistic treatment of the plight of the depression unemployed, Ellis argued, the film "approaches the social film."[33] By this he meant, it seems, that Deeds dealt seriously with problems that the Left considered important.

This endorsement by the Left suggests that even by 1936, when the Popular Front period had just started, the decline in radical thought and action had already begun. Though Deeds was probably the nearest thing to a radical--no, a reformist--film that Capra ever made, it nonetheless based its solution to the era's problems not on fundamental restructuring of social relations between people, but instead on the willingness of the wealthy to share their wealth, on their good will and generosity. In Deeds' courtroom speech, Capra was endorsing the genteel qualities of good character and duty (stressed by the banker Walter Huston earlier in American Madness), which consisted of a deep sense of personal and social responsibility on the part of society's leaders. Because Deeds is of the people and inadvertantly stumbles into his position of power, we can believe his generosity. But how is it that even the New Masses critic could rave about a film with a solution like that?

One must first say that compared to the rest of the Hollywood films produced during the previous year--films

like David Copperfield, Ruggles of Red Gap, Alice Adams, Top Hat, or The Golddiggers of 1935--Deeds was indeed an ambitious "social film." But the answer, I think, lies deeper and is related to the need to feel involved in the decade's suffering, pain, and social problems. Though America entered the depression a middle-class nation and emerged the same way, the stinging problems the crisis engendered compelled people to seek commitments. Capra himself affirmed his commitment in 1935, later than many, at a time when it began to seem to many observers that the country was finally emerging from its darkest hours. The need for commitment remained, however, and Capra conveyed that sense of commitment, that element of re-form, better than any other American director. The solutions he offered were not so important, I would argue, as the display of commitment itself. The country had already begun its drift toward an optimistic new nationalism, and Capra, in his first film of committed comedy, had done his part in reaffirming traditional values that would move America in that direction.

IV

If Deeds is the purest statement of the Capra formula, Lost Horizon is perhaps the least characteristic film that Capra made between 1936 and 1941, as well as the least successful. It is the only film in that period not set in America, lacking an American hero and a clearly

defined villain, and not treating some specifically political or cultural problem in Ameria. Nonetheless, it plays an important part in helping us to define Capra's social vision. Instead of addressing himself directly to specific and topical social problems as he had in Deeds, Capra turned philosopher-divine in Lost Horizon. In a key scene in the film, the High Lama tells hero Robert Conway that he had long admired the Conway who wrote that there is "a moment in every man's life when he glimpses the eternal." After immersing himself in social problems in Deeds, Capra turned his efforts toward creating his Utopia, his "glimpse of the eternal."

The film is based on the best-selling novel by the British writer James Hilton, who told an interviewer that his novel "was germinated out of anxiety for the European situation and a desire to stage a conception of the world as far removed from this sort of thing as possible." Certainly in 1936 and 1937, with news of the Spanish Civil War, Japan's increased attacks on China, the Moscow trials, hero worship in Germany, and continuation of the depression, the desire to escape a troubled world by imagining a harmonious world through fantasy must have been strong indeed. Capra himself tells of reading the book and dreaming about it all the next night, particularly the scene where Conway and the High Lama meet and talk about the meaning of Shangri-La.[34]

After his second big success in as many films, Capra had the confidence he lacked before making Deeds. In fact, he may have been too confident. The day after reading the book he told Columbia president Harry Cohn to buy it for a film that would cost two million dollars (then half of Columbia's yearly budget). After years of making well-conceived, inexpensive, tightly structured films, Capra was ready to fall prey to the temptation of making a Hollywood specatcle.

Surely among the impressive elements of Lost Horizon are the elaborate sets of Shangri-La and the scenes of climbing in the snow-swept mountains. According to one observer, it took 150 men two months to build the central set, including the temple, whose highest point rose ninety feet. Most of the outdoor snow scenes, excluding a few long shots of an actual snowcapped mountain range, were shot in a huge freezer warehouse in Los Angeles. The problems of trying to make a film with actual snow, steaming breath, and fifteen degree temperatures are vividly described by Capra in his autobiography.[35]

Briefly, the plot concerns the abduction of Robert Conway, a famous British soldier and diplomat, and a small group of traveling companions, while they think they are escaping Baskul, China, to go to Shanghai. Instead, the unknown pilot takes them toward Tibet. When their plane crashes, the pilot dying, the group meets some natives on foot, who take them to a beautiful and peaceful valley in

the midst of frigid mountain surroundings. Though some of the guests are restless, Conway feels at home. He learns about the society and is even granted a visit to the High Lama. On a second visit the High Lama turns over the destiny of Shangri-La to Conway, then peacefully dies. Conway's brother, however, convinces him that the Lama's words are all a hoax and that they should leave the Valley. Conway does leave, but when he finds that his brother's lover, a resident of Sahngri-La, dies when exposed to the environment outside Shangri-La, thus fulfilling the Lama's predictions, he slowly and painfully makes his way back to Shangri-La. The last shot, accompanied by ringing bells, is of Conway finally reaching again the entrance to the Valley of the Blue Moon, the home of Shangri-La.

It is true that Lost Horizon deviates significantly from the exposition-humiliation-victory structure of Deeds. The structure is one of the major flaws of the film and will be discussed later. It is important to note, however, the similarities to the Capra formula that are at work in this film, as well as specific touches and details in Lost Horizon that relate to other Capra films.

The character of Robert Conway is central to the meaning of Lost Horizon. As with other Capra heroes, Conway is a man with settled opinions and values, with superior leadership capacities. In the opening sequence, we see him overseeing and directing the escape of foreigners from

war-torn Baskul, a task he carries out with characteristic calm and patient self-control. As a soldier and diplomat, Conway has so distinguished himself in the Far East that the British officials feel unable to participate in a conference with foreign countries without his presence. He is clearly an accomplished man of affairs, touted as the next Foreign Secretary.

But another aspect of Conway's personality is more important to the film: his philosophical side, his idealism. Despite his success in affairs of state, Conway is also an author, presumably, we gather, of philosophical or theological works. It is by reading his works that the High Lama has decided to bring him to Shangri-La in hopes that Conway will be qualified to succeed him as the guiding spirit of the community. In this perspective Conway, like Deeds before him, becomes a Christ figure. Not only is he chosen to come to this Heaven on earth, but he also explicitly calls the High Lama "Father" and is in turn called "My Son." Like Deeds and Smith, Conway has power as a form of leadership thrust upon him, and like them he willingly takes on the responsibilities that leadership entails, but not without being betrayed, tempted, or otherwise challenged.

Besides the central character, the minor characters also bear resemblance to characters from Deeds. In creating the minor characters, Capra and Riskin departed most decidedly from the novel. Mallinson, Conway's aide in the

novel, becomes George Conway, Robert's impulsive and hyperactive brother. The British missionary Miss Brinklow is changed into the American prostitute Gloria. Though the character Barnard is preserved almost as written, he also becomes a foil for a comic character added to the film, the paleontologist Alexander P. Lovett. Finally, the beautiful Lo Tsen is split into characters--Sondra and Maria--so that both Conway brothers have a romantic interest.

Conway's companions serve much the same function as Babe, Corny, and Mac in Deeds. All of them are afflicted by some moral weakness, but are gradually converted to the hero's way of thinking by the end of the film. Gloria is rude and harsh to her companions before they reach Shangri-La, but stops wearing makeup and begins to act much more gentle as time passes. Lovett, an effete intellectual who is anxious about being knighted for his fossil discoveries, dislikes Shangri-La when he first arrives. Gradually he sheds his pretensions and his desires to return home, however, and actually begins to teach a geology class to Shangri-La children. Barnard, who was a successful businessman until the Crash forced him to become a swindler, is at first avariciously excited over the gold he discovers at Shangri-La, but after a time decides to help the people of the Valley build a more efficient plumbing system. Only George continues to despise Shangri-La. Though in Deeds it was the hero himself who won over the minor characters

in Lost Horizon it is a combination of the hero's leadership qualities and the calming effect of the placid and harmonious community into which the characters are led that brings about their conversions.

Besides these character types that recur in the Capra formula, a number of smaller details link Lost Horizon with other Capra films. The candle which illuminates the key scenes in the High Lama's quarters expresses the light imagery that in Deeds was suggested by his ownership of the tallow works; both Deeds and Conway are, in their distinctive ways, lights to the world. Similarly, the timidity and awkardness of a man overwhelmed by a woman's beauty, which in Deeds was shown when the hero tripped over a garbage can after proposing to Mary Dawson, appears again in Lost Horizon when Conway stumbles over a step after first seeing Sondra. The betrayal of Deeds by Babe, done when she posed as Mary and wrote scandalous articles about him, is parallel to Maria's lying to Conway that she is really very young and that all of the High Lama's "glorious concepts" are mere sham. Though there is no career woman in Lost Horizon, Maria (with George) serves the same betrayal function of the Capra heroine, while Sondra fulfills the romantic function. Finally, the use of the documentary montage, common to all Capra films between 1936 and 1946, is in Lost Horizon used to establish how important Conway is to his government, and (later in the film) to show

the intensity of Conway's struggle to return to the Valley of the Blue Moon.[36]

The meaning of Lost Horizon, especially as it relates to Capra's developing vision, is primarily centered on the two scenes in which Conway visits the High Lama. Chang, the High Lama's assistant, has already told Conway that life expectancy is higher in the Valley because of the "absence of struggle." Instead of working onesself to death, as is common in Western cultures, people in Shangri-La live relaxed, full lives. Because there is no scarcity in Shangri-La, Chang has told Conway, there is no envy, no greed, no desire to possess, and hence no crime. Conway observes that Shangri-La must be certainly led by "some shrewd guiding intelligence."

When the time comes, Conway is led through a hexagon-shaped door into the High Lama's chambers. The Lama sits on a chair with a candle stand immediately on his right and two large opened books, also on stands, at his right and left. Conway sits before him, disciplelike, on a small stool. In the two scenes with these men, Capra alternates between a closeup of Conway, a medium shot of the High Lama alone in the frame, and a medium shot of both, Conway in the foreground with his back turned. The flickering candle sheds light on both of them, with the High Lama's white hair lit to appear circled with a halo.

In the first meeting the High Lama explains the nature and philosophy of Shangri-La. Though the setting is Eastern

(and as such compares to Capra's The Bitter Tea of General Yen), the philosophy is Western and Christian. The High Lama is really Father Perrault, a Belgian priest who came to the Shangri-La in 1713. His community is formed to preserve the best of civilization as the rest of the world wallows in "an orgy of greed and brutality." When this brutality and lust for power destroy the rest of the world, Shangri-La will offer "new life" to those who seek it. Then, says the High Lama, life will be "based on one simple rule: be kind." After the greedy devour one another, "the Christian ethic shall prevail and the meek shall inherit the earth." The entire conversation of the High Lama is thus couched in Christian terms.[37]

In the second meeting, the High Lama hands to Conway "the future and destiny of Shangri-La." Because he will soon die, the Lama advises Conway "to be gentle and patient, to care for the riches of the mind, to preside in wisdom while the storm rages without." In his last moments, just before he dies, the Lama has a vision of "a new world . . . stirring clumsily but in hopefulness." After thus turning over his responsibilities to Conway, the High Lama dies peacefully, and the candle at his side is extinguished by a breeze coming through an open window.

Thus the message of Shangri-La is religious and, specifically, Christian. Capra was born a Catholic but, according to his autobiography, was not a "good" Catholic,

but a "Catholic in spirit: one who firmly believes that the anti-moral, the intellectual bigots, and the Mafias of ill will may destroy religion but they will never conquer the cross." In short, his religion, as his political views, rested on the hope that human kindness, generosity, and love for others would be repaid with like behavior. Capra's vision is not an intellectual ideology, clearly and precisely wrought; it is rather an emotional feeling or intuition that kindness will beget kindness. The statement by Pascal, quoted by Capra at a crucial point in his autobiography, sums up his attitude well: "The heart has its reasons that reason knows nothing of." In introducing that comment, Capra writes: "My films explore the heart, not with logic, but with compassion." The message of Shangri-La--centered in the two exchanges between Conway and the High Lama--is thus not only related to Capra's vision, but is more: an expression of Capra's Utopia, his Heaven on earth.[38]

Despite this central theme, however, Lost Horizon is not a unified and effective film. After the fine reviews of Deeds, critics were mixed about Lost Horizon. Frank Nugent said the film had the best photography and sets of the year, but that some of the characters--George, Sondra, Maria--were thin and rather listlessly played. Otis Ferguson noted that mere spectacularism does not make a film, voicing his disappointment because he knew that Capra

was capable of making fine films on shoestring budgets. Commonweal called it "something new under the motion picture sun," but New Masses, after its praise of Deeds, called it "the apotheosis of escapism."[39]

The problem with Lost Horizon lies mainly in the structure. I mentioned earlier that the film does not subject the hero to a ritual humiliation which he eventually transcends, emerging victorious. In his autobiography Capra talks about the disastrous preview the film had, after which he cut out the first two reels and began with the evacuation of Baskul. He did not, however, solve the film's structural problems. The first third of the film, until the passengers finally reach Shangri-La, the film loses its drama, its sense of conflict. Though there is an attempt at the end of the film to build tension--when Maria talks Conway into leaving and he struggles to return after doing so--it does not really work. Robert Conway's struggle against the elements is not nearly as effective on film as Deeds in the courtroom or Smith in the Senate chamber when judged from a dramatic point of view. Shangri-La itself is, in Richard Griffith's words, "cold, unconvincing and strangely uninviting."[40] Perhaps because we are unable to imagine a world in which conflict, struggle, and tension are nonexistent, we are unable to suspend our disbelief. Or perhaps the inferno always seems more tempting and interesting than paradise. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that Capra involved his audience in the

third of the film to a degree impossible for him to sustain throughout. Though Lost Horizon has its virtues as a technical feat and an expression of Capra's philosophy, it remains one of his least satisfying films. By straying from the American scene, with its quick humor, its naive innocents, and its worldly cynics, Capra had removed himself from the source of his creative vitality. It is to his credit that he had the wisdom to return--and to stay--home.

CHAPTER VI

FRANK CAPRA AND THE AMERICAN WAY

> Maybe there really wasn't
> an America, maybe it was
> only Frank Capra.
> --John Cassavetes

Capra's next three films after Lost Horizon--You Can't Take It with You, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, and Meet John Doe--constitute a lasting record of a man battling with his times and himself in an era of crisis. In many ways, Capra's response to the times serves as an apt metaphor for the challenges and crises that many middle-class Americans experienced as they felt the impact of the coming war and left behind many of the problems and contradictions exposed by the depression.

As the times changed, Capra's formula also changed. The buoyant optimism of Deeds and the gentle serenity of Lost Horizon gradually became things of the past. Although You Can't reaffirms the belief that good can convert evil, Capra's next two films became increasingly uncertain about the optimistic solutions and myths Capra had earlier so blithely presented. The villain who challenges the Capra hero (Edward Arnold plays the part in each of the three films) becomes increasingly ominous, powerful, and difficult to

overcome. In presenting the conflicts between the hero and the villain, Capra lays bare a number of contradictions long implicit in American culture, contradictions which we have even today been unable to overcome successfully. Because mere goodness and kindness were not sufficient to overcome the evil forces in these films, Capra also began increasingly to appeal to national myths and symbols as a source of inspiration for overcoming these seemingly insurmountable problems. These three trends--declining optimism, growing power of the villain, increasing appeal to nationalistic slogans--are central in helping one understand Capra's three films between 1938 and 1941 and the developing definition of the American Way of Life that was forming as World War Two inexorably approached.

I

By 1938 Frank Capra had become the top director in Hollywood. Not only was he president of the Academy and director of three consecutive important films, but he was also the most highly paid director of 1938 and had gained enough reputation to make the cover of Time. It was the year of his forty-first birthday, and the swiftness of his success was nearly overwhelming. Since Lost Horizon had failed to live up to expectations, Capra had decided to return to American settings. In his autobiography, he describes his feelings after making Los Horizon: "I had no idea what the next forty years would bring me. But I knew what I would try to bring to them: films about America and

its people; films that could be my way of saying, 'Thanks, America.'"[1] More clearly and consciously than before, Capra's commitment in filmmaking would be directed toward an identification of the "good" values--selflessness, love, kindness, patience--with national values.

You Can't Take It with You, Capra's next film, was aptly dubbed by one critic "Shangri-La in a frame house."[2] Surely the dream of Shangri-La, of a non-acquisitive society where the ruling principle is "be kind," seemed to be transferred into the home of the bizarre and happy Vanderhof family. Everyone in the house, Grandpa Vanderhof is quick to point out, does exactly what he or she wants to do.

The film was based on the successful Kaufman and Hart Broadway play of the same title. Capra saw the play, which opened in December 1936 and was still playing when the film was released in 1938, when he was in New York for the opening of Lost Horizon. After some wrangling with Cohn, Capra finally talked him into paying the $200,000 asking price for film rights.

Because of the recession in late 1937, Capra could hardly have chosen a better time to make a film which championed individual happiness and neighborly love over the struggle for wealth. After the economy had made some gains due largely to government spending in 1936 and 1937, it reversed in September, 1937. Not until the outbreak of war in Europe necessitated the huge growth in defense spending after 1939 did the economy recover and finally pull

out of the depression that had continued for a decade.[3] As the depression continued and the chances for economic advancement remained slim for most middle-class families, a film castigating the monopoly capitalist and praising the close-knit happy family of individualists, defending spiritual over material satisfactions, was sure to be popular.

And successful it was. Not only was Capra granted another Oscar as best director, but the film was also named best picture. It did not make as much as Snow White or Love Finds Andy Hardy, both of which also had greater appeal to children, but Capra was the top money director of those who made only one film in 1938. Though the critics agreed that the film was a popular success, some felt that Capra's fantasies were beginning to strain even the most supple imagination. Commonweal found it "more serious" than the play, but nonetheless "an entirely satisfactory comedy." For Time it was "easily the number one cinema comedy of 1938." Otis Ferguson was skeptical about the sentimentality of the film, but the leftist New Masses had the strongest words against it, calling Kirby's change of heart at the end "the snidest piece of nirvana all of the fantasy factories on the west coast have ever turned out."[4]

Graham Greene, however, wrote the most judicious review of the film. He recognized that Capra was above all trying to give the popular audience what it wanted, a fantasy Christmas Carol with "bad rich men and good poor

men." The director who made the picture contrasting Wall Street and life in the Vanderhof home emerges, wrote Greene, "as a rather muddled and sentimental idealist who feels--vaguely--that something is wrong with the social system." More than any other critic, Greene realized that Capra's appeal was, as the director himself admits in his autobiography, not to the head but to the heart, "that great soft organ with its unreliable goodness and easy melancholy and baseless optimism." Though gushy sentiment may at times seem embarrassing, "the cinema, a popular craft, can hardly be expected to do more" than what Capra achieved in the film.[5]

In much the same way that Capra added the theme of unemployment and agrarian reform to Mr. Deeds, he added the munitions theme to You Can't. In the play the villain Anthony P. Kirby, Sr., was merely a rich man. Capra and Riskin turned him into a powerful financier trying to take over the munitions industry and form "the largest individual monopoly in the world." Like the unemployment situation, the munitions industry was a topical item often in the news during 1935 and 1936. In 1934 the Nye Committee sought to determine the extent to which bankers and munitions interests had actually influenced President Wilson's policy decisions after 1914. Their hearing continued for nearly two years. In 1935 a young journalist named Walter Millis published a popular book called Road to War, which argued among other things that because of their heavy sales of munitions,

American arms interests had acquired a large investment in the Allied Cause in World War One. The American public had become so convinced by these revisionist arguments that 70 per cent of Americans polled in 1937 said the United States should have stayed out of World War One. Even a month after World War Two began in Europe, 34 per cent of people polled said that American entry into World War One had been due to "propaganda and selfish interests."[6]

The major conflict in You Can't is between the value systems of Kirby and Grandpa Vanderhof, or in Capra's words, "devour thy neighbor versus love thy neighbor."[7] Kirby, the aspiring munitions magnate, lives only to work. His every effort is devoted to the growth of his own personal power and wealth, with no consideration of the well-being of others or even of his own personal health. Because of his chronic stomach ailment, Kirby constantly has to take bicarbonate of soda ("Ten thousand a year for doctors and I'm still taking this stuff"). Like Semple's eye twitch in Deeds and Blakely's in You Can't, Kirby's physical deficiencies become for Capra an indication of a deeper spiritual malaise.

Grandpa Vanderhof, in contrast to Kirby, lives not to work, but simply to live. He is a spontaneous individualist who believes people will live together best if each is allowed to pursue his own interests. Though he worked for a time as a businessman, and made a lot of money, he finally admitted to himself that he didn't enjoy what he was doing

and decided to quit. Then he began to spend his time doing the things he enjoyed most--playing the harmonica, going to graduation ceremonies, and encouraging people to develop their own interests and talents. He believes in the superiority of traditional American ideals over foreign "isms" and has a faith that, like the lilies of the field, his family and friends will be taken care of by the Lord. Whenever he goes outside, the many neighbors that greet him and ask for advice suggest how important a community leader he is. Grandpa's good humor is in direct opposition to Kirby's dour attitude. In the conflict between their two value systems, Grandpa stands for altruism over egotism, generosity over greed, happiness over material gain, love over money, peace of mind over constant worry.

The film shows a rearrangement of the Capra formula and a number of details that shed light on other Capra films. In both the creation of the Capra hero and the heroine, the functions have been divided. The Capra hero is half played by Grandpa, half by Tony Kirby, Jr. Grandpa represents the side of the Capra hero that is a leader and spokesman of his community values. Though his community is a neighborhood in New York City, its atmosphere resembles Mandrake Falls. Tony, on the other hand, represents the romantic side of the Capra hero. Though he has yearnings that resemble the Capra hero--he would rather be a biologist than a businessman--he does not have the courage to act on his convictions until nearly the end of the film. Like the

Capra hero, however, he develops a romantic interest in a working woman and wins her by the end of the film.

As we remember, the Capra heroine generally has two functions: to serve as a romantic figure for the hero and to be converted by the hero's value system. Alice Vanderhof is a working girl, a secretary to Tony Kirby, but she is never cynical like Babe Bennett and thus never has to be converted. Alice does have a romance with Tony, but the conversions come from the other characters. The first convert is Mr. Poppins, the office clerk who is persuaded by Grandpa to leave the job he does not like for the easy life style of the Vanderhof home. Later Tony, who has been wanting to reject the life of business from the beginning of the film, also converts. Most important of all, Kirby, Sr., rejects his values at the end of the film for Grandpa's. Thus even the villain becomes a hero of sorts.

The action of the film presents the two different ways of life and shows how Grandpa's proves superior. The Vanderhof home is filled with creative screwballs. Alice's mother, Penny, writes mystery stories, largely because she wants to make use of the typewriter that has mistakenly been delivered to their door. Alice's less-than-graceful sister, Essie, is practicing to become a ballet dancer, taught by a destitute Russian immigrant, Kolenkhov, who always arrives conveniently at mealtime. Essie's husband, Eddie, accompanies her by playing Chopin on the xylophone. He also helps Alice's father, Paul Sycamore, and Mr. DePinna--a former

milkman who decided one morning to stay--to make firecrackers in the basement. The black servant Rheba and her boyfriend on welfare round out the happy household. Later, Mr. Poppins joins the group to work with the men in the basement.

Problems arise when Tony proposes marriage to Alice, who is worried that Tony's parents will not approve of their son marrying a lowly stenographer. Tony, however, is not to be denied. When Alice arranges an evening for the Kirbys to visit the Vanderhof home, Tony agrees. Because he wants his parents to meet Alice's family as they really are, however, he brings his parents, both dressed in dinner clothes, a day early. Kirby, though he does not personally know that Grandpa is the person who is holding out on his land-buying scheme, is having the house watched. When a small group of Kirby's own underlings break into the house, amidst a wild fury of exploding firecrackers, everyone in the house, including the Kirbys, is arrested and taken to the county jail. Kirby learns that Grandpa owns the house he wants and boasts about his Darwinian strength as opposed to the rest of the "scum" in the cell with him. Grandpa loses his temper, calling Kirby a "dull-witted fool" for believing that money alone makes a man superior. Instead, Grandpa says that one's success is measured by the friends he has and by that standard, Kirby is a total failure as a man and a father.

The courtroom scene vindicates Grandpa. Kirby has four lawyers defending him while Grandpa defends himself. Grandpa admits his guilt, but the kindly judge--here again the benevolent authority--suspends their sentence and fines them $100. Refusing to accept Kirby's money, Grandpa is surprised to see his friends in the court gallery collect the money themselves. This support of friends recalls the unemployed farmers in Deeds and looks forward to the final scene in It's a Wonderful Life, where George Bailey's neighbors stream into his house with money on Christmas Eve to save him from jail. This tendency to measure a person's success by the number of friends he has rather than the number of dollars he earns is central to Capra's vision and was understandably an especially popular point of view during the depression.

After Kirby and his family have been subjected to the experience, however, Alice leaves the city. She simply can no longer face Tony. Grandpa, after reading a letter from Alice and respecting her decision not to return, decides to sell his house and move the family away from the city so that it can once more be reunited. In the final scene, as the Vanderhofs move their belongings into a van, Alice returns and urges Grandpa not to sell the house, for it would destroy their neighborhood. Tony and his father come into the house. After being scolded by Grandpa and seeing Grandpa's friends in the courtroom, Kirby has begun to reevaluate his life. When Grandpa offers him a seat and asks him to play a duet

(Kirby had been a top harmonica player in his youth), Kirby takes out the harmonica that Grandpa had slipped into his pocket at the jailhouse and plays "Polly Wolly Doodle" with him. The lovers are united, Kirby is converted, and Grandpa's life-giving world view is maintained. Kindness again overcomes wealth, power, and narrow self-interest.

You Can't is one of Capra's most entertaining films. In it, Capra displays a remarkable ability to employ visual humor, a reminder of his apprenticeship in silent film comedy. For example, when Penny types her manuscript, she has a live kitten sitting on her typed pages to act as a paper weight. Essie's ballet, Blakely's eye twitch, Kolenkhov's wrestling match with Kirby, Mr. DePinna's discus costume, the trained crow, and the constantly tumbling Home Sweet Home sign all add a primarily visual humor to the film. One of the best single instances of visual humor occurs when Grandpa, seeing Kolenkhov, Eddie, and Essie kneeling and rolling the carpet away from him, is barely able to resist the temptation to throw darts at their vulnerable backsides.

In addition to the visual humor, Capra emphasizes three objects which become visual symbols that clarify and extend the meaning of the film. The first is the elevator, which represents the harried, high-pressure world of Business. As the film opens, we see Mr. Kirby stride into an office building and an open elevator, which takes him up to his private office. Later Grandpa, after telling Blakely he

cannot be bought off, coaxes Mr. Poppins to leave his menial tasks, and both go down the elevator together. When we remember that one day Grandpa himself just left his office, went down the elevator, and never returned, the visual symbol takes on added significance. In the second-to-last scene of the film, Kirby himself, after riding up to the most important meeting of his career, looks at the people congregated to help him close the deal, then orders the attendant to take him down. The next scene is his duet with Grandpa: Kirby, too, has opted to go down on the elevator. His physical descent is a moral ascent.

The harmonica is the second visual symbol. Grandpa Vanderhof plays one because he likes to; it thus represents Grandpa's conviction that a person must do what he wants, no matter how ridiculous or frivolous it might seem to others. As the film unfolds, we learn that Kirby was a champion harmonica player when he was young. But since he has become a businessman, he has no time for such childish antics. (Note that here too the Capra hero is portrayed as childish and naive.) Just after he has scolded Kirby in the jail cell, Grandpa feels ashamed of his outburst and slips his new harmonica--a birthday gift from Alice--into Kirby's coat pocket. Later, just before his crucial meeting, Kirby sits alone, thinking at a table, and pulls the harmonica out of his pocket. As he considers his future while turning the harmonica in his hands, we can see the influence of everything Grandpa represents. The harmonica duet thus serves

as a significant conclusion to the film, a recognition that the sources of conflict are truly reconciled.

The final visual symbol, the Home Sweet Home sign, suggests the happiness which stems from a united family. The sign hangs near the front door of the Vanderhof home, and whenever someone slams a door, shoots off a firecracker, or creates some other jolt, the sign topples. Someone always puts it back into its cherished position. Its safe place on the wall indicates that all is well with the family. But after Alice leaves the city and the press publicizes the broken romance, the family's happiness is threatened. Grandpa sells the house and one of the last objects to be packed into the van is the sign. When Kirby decides to play a song with Grandpa, the family is once again reunited and the Home Sweet Home sign again is put back in place. All three objects--the elevator, the harmonica, and the sign--play important roles in the development of the film's meaning.

Thus, in <u>You Can't Take It with You</u> Capra again displayed his ability to challenge the values of material striving, egotism, and class pretension through his unique blend of screwball comedy and social re-formism. What Capra was combatting was the selfish and unrestrained individualism that he saw evident in many areas of American culture in his day. After the values of the genteel tradition had been challenged and rejected in the twenties, many people sensed a moral vacuum in the culture that was almost

almost intolerable. Capra's goal was to present a new core of values to the American that was affirmative, in contrast to the prevailing negativism, fatalism, and pessimism implicit in much art and social theory in the twenties. Because he saw the evils in American culture as stemming from the upper classes, urbanism, cynicism, and egotism, Capra was developing a new sort of religio-humanism based on common people, the small town, faith, and selflessness. That this new vision of America, which we have been calling the American Way of Life, had an almost irresistible appeal is evident even from watching the film today. You Can't, in which even the villain converts to goodness, thus becomes perhaps the brightest film in the Capra oeuvre, a film which nearly justified the common critical view of Capra as an undiscriminating optimist, a Pollyanna of filmmakers. As we shall see, however, Capra came more and more to realize the challenges to his vision as the country became more aware of the threats of foreign war.

II

In You Can't Capra put words in Grandpa Vanderhof's mouth which prefigured what was to become a dominant thrust in Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. In that speech Grandpa suggests that Penny write about "ismania" to get her character Cynthia out of the monastery. When Penny asks what "ismania" is, Grandpa answers:

> You know--Communism, fascism, voodooism. Everybody's got an ism these days. . . . Only give Cynthia Americanism. Let her know something about Americans: John Paul Jones, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, Washington, Jefferson, Monroe, Lincoln, Grant, Lee, Edison, Twain. When things got tough for those boys they didn't go around looking for isms. Lincoln said, "With malice toward none, with charity toward all." Nowadays they say, "Think the way I do, or I'll bomb the daylights out of you."[8]

Grandpa's conviction was that the American tradition certainly offered all that was needed to solve our problems. Like Deeds' speech at Grant's Tomb, Grandpa's words reveal his patriotic spirit.

This appeal to national traditions as a source of strength, subordinate in Capra's earlier films, became the dominant motif in Capra's 1939 morality play, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. The film is based on a novel called The Gentleman from Montana. Though Capra was interested in filming a story about Chopin after You Can't, he was alerted to the Smith story by an assistant when the plans for the Chopin film fell through. If we remember Capra's 1938 vow to make films that would be his way of giving thanks to America, as well as the patriotic atmosphere that was being created in the country in 1938 and 1939, Capra's enthusiastic decision to make Smith quickly becomes understandable.

Before finishing the script, Capra went to Washington with his screenwriter, Sidney Buchman, his cameraman, Joseph Walker, and his assistant director, Art Black. There they explored Washington, getting a sense of the environment, shooting some backgrounds, and taking some stills to capture the details of the Senate chambers that would later,

with the help of Press Gallery Superintendent Jim Preston, be used to create an exact replica in the Columbia lots. Just before leaving, Capra visited the Lincoln Memorial in an attempt to build up the courage needed to make a film about Washington politics in a time of world crisis. According to Capra, he left the Memorial with a growing conviction that "the more uncertain are the people of the world, the more their freedoms are scattered and lost in the winds of chance, the more they need a ringing statement of America's democratic ideals."[9] Viewing the increasingly chaotic and threatening state of world affairs, Capra, inspired by the memory of an American hero, was gradually working out a strategy of symbolic action that would eventually become one of his finest films, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.

The action of the film is simple. After a senator from a western state dies, the governor appoints for the remaining two months of the term a leader of a boy's group named Jefferson Smith. Senator Paine, the senior senator of the state, and James Taylor, the corrupt head of the statewide political machine, decide they can keep the fledgling senator from learning about their money-making dam proposal buried in a government-aid bill. When Smith first reaches Washington, he is overcome by the monuments and patriotic sites in the nation's capitol. After deciding to sponsor a bill of his own that would establish a summer boy's camp on Willet Creek, he comes into conflict with Paine and

Taylor, who want to build the dam on the same site. Smith's idealism is challenged and gradually worn down as he learns of the corruption and power of James Taylor. After being betrayed by Paine, Smith decides to filibuster in order to take his case to the people before being unseated by the Senate. With the aid of his secretary, Saunders, Smith filibusters for a day and a night before Senator Paine cracks and admits his complicity in the graft. Smith's faith in American ideals is thus presumably restored.

If the plot sounds familiar, it is no surprise. To an extraordinary degree, Smith is patterned almost exactly after the sequence of events in Deeds. Though there is a notable difference between Robert Riskin's vernacular slang dialogue and Sidney Buchman's patriotic effusions, the structures of the two films correspond almost exactly:

Deeds	Smith
Semple dies	Senator dies
Deeds given money	Smith named Senator
Mandrake Falls sendoff	Banquet sendoff
Betrayal by Babe, news humiliation	Betrayal by Saunders, news humiliation
Challenged by depression farmer	Challenged by Taylor's deficiency bill
Arrested by greedy interests	Framed by greedy interests
Silence and crisis in mental ward	Silence and crisis at Lincoln Memorial
Courtroom scene	Filibuster scene

Not only are the structures very similar, but the whole formula is as pure in Smith as it was in Deeds. Like the postcard poet Deeds, Jefferson Smith is a prototype of the Capra hero. Whereas Deeds came to be associated with a whole

cluster of values related to the small town, Smith represents additional values surrounding political idealism and patriotism. Even his name--the first drawn from a hero of the American past, the second one of the most common American surnames--immediately connects Jefferson Smith to issues and ideas larger than himself. As with Deeds, Smith has an innocent, nearly childish adherence to the political ideals of democracy and liberty. The childish nature is particularly emphasized: he is a leader of the Boy Rangers, a group patterned after the Boy Scouts (when the Scouts would not allow Capra to use their name). The paper published by Jeff's boys is called Boy's Stuff (Boy's Life); it, significantly, is the medium which carries the truth to the people of Jeff's state, even though it has nothing but the energy of childhood allowing it to compete with the corrupt Taylor-owned chain of papers. Even the bill that Jeff introduces, which would establish a boy's summer camp allowing city boys to go out into nature to learn about political ideals, emphasizes Jeff's own childlike qualities. His wide-eyed belief in these "childlike" ideals (Saunders calls him "Don Quixote"), coupled with his inexperience in dealing with the realities of political corruption, gives him a vulnerability that is central to the audience's identification with the hero. Perhaps the most crushing blow that Smith bears comes when he learns that Senator Paine, a trusted ex-colleague of his father, was involved in the graft surrounding the Willet Creek Dam proposal.

But besides his Adamic innocence, Jefferson Smith is also associated, like Deeds, with Christ and Abraham Lincoln. Satan's temptation of Christ is paralleled in Smith when James Taylor confidently tries to buy off Jeff, assuring him success in any job he chooses if he will only play along. This comparison to Christ is further emphasized when Senator Paine, like Babe and Corny in Deeds, chides Taylor for "crucifying the boy."

More important than the Christ image, however, is that of Lincoln. As a film about the gap between ideology and action, thought and practice, in the political arena, Smith draws its inspirations from the compassionate figure of Abraham Lincoln. When Jeff first arrives in Washington, he takes a tour of the city, ending at the Lincoln Memorial, where he is joined by an aged black man, a young boy, and the boy's immigrant grandfather. Later, after Jeff has been betrayed by Paine and has almost decided to leave Washington, he visits the Lincoln Memorial again, this time at night. Jeff's difficulties are obviously paralleled to Lincoln's, just as Lincoln's grace, courage, and strength in the face of crisis are comparable to Jeff's solitary vigil in defense of political honesty at the end of the film. Capra was developing a conclusive talent at creating heroes whose meaning and destiny were clearly representative of much larger issues than simply one man's fate. Where Deeds seemed to represent small-town life, Smith became a more general symbol of the patriotic American idealist. By Meet John Doe,

Capra's hero had become even more massive--the symbol of the common man, the average American. Though this expansion in the hero's significance gave the Capra films an added immediacy, an increased topicality, it also made the hero seem less a moral man than some grand figure who, because he represents every national value, has lost his appeal as a single, idiosyncratic human being. Capra's commitment increasingly took him into complex topics that he was unable to handle intellectually. Not until his films shed some of their conscious topicality and "relevance" did Capra again present in George Bailey the warm and engaging hero he was capable of creating.

In Smith, Jeff's heroine is Clarissa Saunders, a working woman who shares many characteristics with Babe Bennett (Jean Arthur played both roles). Like Babe, Saunders is from a background that instilled in her a degree of idealism and warmth for other people. Though she grew up in Baltimore, her father was a doctor who was concerned more with "ethics than with collections." In spite of her urban upbringing, moreover, Saunders shows her belief that life in the small town, close to nature, is superior to city life when she listens thoughtfully to Jeff's talk about the Willet Creek area.

Like Babe, however, Saunders has become hard and cynical by her dealings with newsmen and politicians as a secretary to a senator. When we first see Saunders, she is talking to Diz Moore, a newsman, about how she is "fed

up with politics" and ready to quit her job. Then she meets Jeff, who has just returned starry-eyed from his bus tour. After she gets him settled, we see her in a bar with Diz, complaining about the "infant with little flags in his fists." She suddenly gets the idea to betray Smith (for some World Series tickets), sending the inexperienced Jeff up against the press alone. The resulting newspaper montage is predictably ridiculous with pictures of the new senator doing birdcalls, swinging an ax, and making a fire, Boy Ranger style.

After Jeff decides to sponsor the bill to establish a summer camp, Saunders begins to sympathize with him. She sees that he will inevitably run up against Senator Paine and Jim Taylor. At first, when she foresees the confrontation, she decides to leave Washington to avoid witnessing the pain it will cause Jeff. Later she returns, encouraging him on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to stay and fight for his ideals. Then, just as Babe Bennett used her connections as a newswoman to line up support for Deeds at the trial, Saunders alerts the press and uses her knowledge of Senate protocol and parliamentary procedure to help Jeff fight for his cause. Her conversion is complete, and the film ends with the implication that Smith and Saunders have not only a political victory but also a romantic future.

This element of conversion, crucial to the heroines in Deeds and Smith and to the villain in You Can't, affects another key character besides Saunders in Smith. Senator

Paine is a good/bad man (or as Capra calls him, a villain/hero),[10] a former idealist and fighter for "lost causes" who, because of circumstances, has gradually worked himself into a position of power that has forced him to compromise his former moral purity. When Paine was a young lawyer, he knew Jeff's father, a small independent newspaper editor. Together they fought against a monopolistic mining company until Jeff's father was murdered while fighting for his "lost cause." Later, Paine's rise to power was aided, perhaps even made possible, by the help of James Taylor, until Paine finally became the "White Knight," a leading candidate for his party's presidential nomination. But after Paine helps to frame Jeff by saying that Jeff had bought the land around Willet Creek for his own personal gain, his conscience begins to work. While filibustering, Jeff challenges Paine, calling on the memory of his father, and Paine finally cracks. He is finally converted from his "realism," his belief that ideals must necessarily be compromised if one is to serve successfully in politics, back to his earlier conviction that the most authentic calling in life is to fight tirelessly for the lost causes. Jeff's pure idealism and his skill at defending his values convincingly are the catalysts that help to bring about Senator Paine's conversion.

As has already been suggested, Smith also follows the ritual Capra pattern of exposition-humiliation-victory. When Jeff first comes to Washington, Saunders turns him

over to the wolves of the press. The next morning's paper humiliates the new young senator, just as Deeds was derisively tagged the Cinderella Man. Smith fights against the first humiliation by deciding to write a bill, just as Deeds concocted his land-sharing plan. But when he learns how much Paine has become a pawn for the ruthless and powerful Taylor, Smith undergoes an internal crisis, nearly deciding to leave Washington and to deny the importance of his ideals. Only after Saunders supports him on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial does Jeff reaffirm his ideals. His filibuster in the Senate chamber parallels Deeds' defense at his trial. Throughout the filibuster, Smith is supported by the Vice President, who presides over the Senate. His warm smiles, offered when Smith is under great pressure to yield the floor, constitute another example of the myth of benevolent authority which we have previously noticed in the judges in Young Mr. Lincoln, Deeds, and You Can't. Finally, when Senator Paine cracks, admitting that he did in fact participate in the political graft that Smith sought to expose, the Capra hero emerges victorious, his ideals vindicated and remaining intact.

Though Smith follows the formula that Capra first worked out in its pure form in Deeds, the content working within the formula has developed. Politically, Deeds was, as we have seen, a reformist film whose driving impulse was based on small-town values and a belief that a return to an agrarian way of life was one important way in which those

values could become realities in the social world. Smith does not challenge the point of view of Deeds; it builds upon it. If the focus in Deeds is on the goodness of the small town, in Smith the central thrust is on the importance of political idealism and nationalism.

Of course, Jefferson Smith himself--the man who quotes Washington and Jefferson from memory and who is shocked almost beyond belief when he learns that some people base their actions on a quest for wealth and power rather than on well-defined ideals--represents this idealism and nationalism most clearly. But the bill he decides to present to the Senate also throws light on Smith's political orientation. After being humiliated by the press, Smith decides he must make himself useful by drawing up a bill. His idea is to establish a national boy's camp in his state which will allow boys to spend summers living close to nature and learning about American ideals. Congruous with Capra's belief that good people rather than governments create worthwhile ways of living, the boy's camp is not to be funded by the government, but is to be paid for by a loan from the government to be repaid by the contributions of children. As he said when he first faced the press, the government has too much to worry about already.

Capra says that Smith was intended to be a "ringing statement of America's democratic ideals." The primary democratic ideal mentioned in the film is liberty, the freedom of thought and expression. When he tries to

describe the "spirit" of his bill, Jefferson Smith says to Saunders, "Liberty is too precious a thing to be buried in books, Miss Saunders. Men should hold it up in front of them every single day of their lives and say, 'I'm free, to think and to speak.' . . . Boys oughta grow up remembering that." Jeff Smith's conception of education is thus to teach children to appreciate traditional American ideals.

But the nationalism of Smith is not only evident in details of plot and dialogue. It is also reinforced through visual symbols. Just as the harmonica, elevator, and Home, Sweet Home sign came to represent a certain constellation of values in You Can't, so do a series of images in Smith come to stand for the values of patriotism and idealism. The first and most obvious of these visual symbols is the Lincoln Memorial, and more particularly the statue of Lincoln Jeff concludes his tour of Washington early in the film by staring reverently up at Lincoln, the greatest of his political heroes. And of course, it is near one of the huge pillars supporting the Memorial that Jeff has his psychological crisis, finally deciding to remain in Washington to fight for his ideals.

The Capitol dome, which Jeff sees from a train station window when he first arrives in Washington, is a second visual symbol. Capra uses it to represent not only the traditions associated with the Senate, but the broader political traditions in America as well. When Jeff is trying

to dictate his bill to Saunders, he glances out his window at the Dome, telling her that he wants to make the traditions represented by the Dome "come to life for every boy in this land." Like the statue of Lincoln, the Capitol Dome stands for something more than its mere physical appearance.

The most striking visual hymn to American traditions, however, is the documentary montage of Jeff's Washington tour. More than any single element in the film, it reveals the state of American nationalism in 1939. After Jeff steps on the bus , Capra gives a long series of dissolves, including almost every patriotic monument one could ask for. Flashed before our eyes are the Supreme Court Building, the White House, Congress, a statue of Jefferson, pictures of the Declaration of Independence, Samuel Adams, Alexander Hamilton, shots of the Liberty Bell (imported for the occasion, we assume, from Philadelphia), the Washington Monument, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Arlington Cemetary, eagles, and, of course, double exposed throughout much of the montage, a flag waving in the background. The tour finally ends at the Lincoln Memorial, where Jeff sees the young boy read from the Gettysburg Address as Lincoln stares down with inscrutable and sympathetic wisdom. The montage, a clear mirror of the American mind in 1939, emphasizes the intensity of cultural nationalism in America after foreign threats began to seem more menacing than domestic economic problems.

The public and critical response to Smith suggests how near it came to presenting the values which Americans wanted in their films in 1939. The highly popular film, though it depends on stars, publicity, and critical response for much of its popularity, is nonetheless a unique cultural mirror and lamp: it reflects cultural values and it sheds a light that reaffirms or creates cultural values. After Gone With the Wind, Smith was the top money maker in 1939, grossing nearly $300,000 in its first three weeks in New York and over five million for the year.[11]

From the day of its opening, Smith aroused the same type of controversy that The Great Dictator was to generate the following year. The premiere, sponsored by the Washington Press Club, was held at the D.A.R. Convention Hall on October 16, 1939. The audience--made up largely of politicians and newsmen--failed to be convinced by Capra's patriotism, instead lashing out critically at the portrayals of cynical newsmen and politicians controlled by powerful industrialists. Senator James Byrnes (Democrat--South Carolina), after viewing the film, called it "outrageous . . . exactly the kind of picture that the dictators of totalitarian governments would like to have their subjects believe exists in a democracy." Variety hinted a week after the premier that the film had given new impetus to the passage of the Neely anti-block-booking bill, which would have prohibited the film producers and distributors from requiring exhibitors to buy films in pre-selected groups. Some

columnists, including Pete Harrison, suggested that the Neely Bill was necessary to give exhibitors the right to reject a film like Smith "which may offend the sensibilities of the American public."[12]

But when the film had its general release, it received--with few exceptions--a positive response from critics and the public. For Frank Nugent, Smith was "one of the best shows of the year." The Nation thought it the best film of 1939, while Commonweal judged it to be "a sure-fire hit." As might be expected, Time praised Smith for its patriotism, saying it was as funny as Deeds but "much more than just another top rank Capra film." One dissenter, however, argued that the evil was too extreme and thus unrealistic. Another, Otis Ferguson, went against the current patriotic grain, calling it "a naive but shameless hooraw for the American relic--Parson Weems at a flag-raising." In spite of these criticisms, however, the film was, as we have noted, a tremendous popular success in America and even, as Capra mentions, in occupied France until the Nazis banned American films.[13]

This varied and furious response to a story about a wide-eyed idealist learning of and fighting against corrupt realities suggests a good deal about American culture in 1939. The harsh reaction of American political leaders suggested an official attitude of intolerance toward critics of America (and of themselves), an attitude that was to become more pronounced in World War Two and the decade

following. The public, at least, had the good sense to realize that Capra was not unduly criticizing America but was seeking to re-form America, to bring her back to her traditional political ideals. The film may have been Parson Weems at a flag raising, but that was precisely what Americans wanted and paid to hear and see. In times of crisis and uncertainty, minds search for certainties and reaffirmation of challenged values. Capra's return to the words and images of American political traditions, presented as a morality play pitting a naive idealistic patriot against a ruthless political boss, provided the certainties and reaffirmations that Americans sought. That Boss Jim Taylor remained unregenerate at the film's ending seemed to bother no one.

III

Because of the ritual--and often improbable--happy endings in such films as Deeds and You Can't, critics have often disparaged Capra films and refused to consider them as anything but simple-minded entertainment. For them, Capra's vision was a "fantasy of goodwill," and he was a clown who would do anything for a laugh. Capra himself has encouraged a view of himself as an irrepressible optimist by aligning himself with what he has called the "gee whiz" school of filmmakers, the kind that critics call Pollyannas, sentimentalists, and unrealistic happy enders. When he was making Meet John Doe he told an interviewer: "The people are right. People's instincts are good, never bad."[14]

Though there is a good deal of this hopefulness and optimism in Capra films, though he does nearly always seem to be searching for the affirmative, we might do best to follow D. H. Lawrence's advice to trust the tale, not the teller. Capra was not a Pollyanna. Especially between 1936 and 1941, as his period of social commitment progressed, he became increasingly aware of the strength and challenge of evil in the world. In fact, as William Pechter has pointed out, even the ritual happy ending in Capra's films, when studied closely, is "curiously quarantined" and often "strangely perfunctory."[15] From the lawyer Cedar to Anthony Kirby, James Taylor, and Doe's D. B. Norton, a representative of evil, always challenges the Capra hero, and though some endings are resolutely happy, others are almost totally unconvincing.

Meet John Doe has the most unconvincing conclusion of all Capra's films, perhaps because in it he questions the validity of the values he had been advocating since 1936. Thus, it is a fascinating study of Capra's own inner doubts and uncertainties. Some critics have usefully compared Capra to Mark Twain; in many ways Meet John Doe is Capra's Connecticut Yankee, a work which begins by trying to affirm democratic values and the good of the common man, but ends in stalemate by proposing an alternate image of the "human muck" that Twain destroyed in the Battle of the Sand Belt. All of Capra's previously unquestioned faith in the little man, the average American, is challenged in Meet John Doe.

As usual, Capra chose a topical social issue with which to challenge his hero: domestic fascism. From the popularity of Huey Long and Father Coughlin in the mid-thirties to the activities of the Christian Fronters and the German-American Bund later in the decade, domestic fascism and anti-Semitism had been in the newspapers. William Dudley Pelley's Silver Shirts, patterned after the Nazi SS, supposedly represented "the cream, the head and flower of our Protestant Christian manhood." In February, 1939, over 22,000 supporters of the German-American Bund gathered at Madison Square Garden. Four years after Sinclair Lewis portrayed a fascist takeover in America in It Can't Happen Here, people began to feel, uncomfortably, that fiction could become fact.

Capra got the idea from a story written by Robert Presnell and Richard Connell. After Smith, which fulfilled his contract with Columbia, Capra left to form his own independent company with screenwriter Robert Riskin. The two made a financial arrangement with Warner Brothers whereby Warner's would advance production costs and Capra would be free to handle the story, cast, and even the budget. After thinking about filming Cyrano de Bergerac or doing a life of Shakespeare , Capra was offered the John Doe story. He bought it on the spot.[16]

By his own admission, Capra made the film to satisfy the critics, to prove he could deal with harsh themes of social reality without lapsing into wishful sentimentality.

"Riskin and I would astonish the critics with contemporary realities," he wrote, "the ugly face of hate . . . and the wild dark passions of the mobs."[17] As Richard Glatzer has noted, Meet John Doe presents Capra at the height of social mythmaking; it was the most expansive and ambitious film he had made. Whereas the actions of Deeds and Grandpa Vanderhof affect the people of a city or a community, and the filibuster of Jeff Smith affects the welfare of a whole state, John Doe comes to influence the whole nation through his speeches, his tours, and the organization that springs up around him.

That Capra was unable to conclude Doe successfully gives us an indication about his situation in 1940. In his autobiography, Capra tells how he felt he had a masterpiece for seven-eighths of a film, but shot five different endings, previewed each of them before audiences, and found none of them really satisfactory. Try as they might, Capra and Riskin were unable to conclude with a joyous victory for the Capra hero that would convince the audience. And as we have seen, audience satisfaction was among Capra's top priorities.

This failure to find an appropriate ending rests, I think, on the fact that Capra scrambled up the conventions of his formula. He changed the conventions because he was honestly trying to grapple with the changing historical situation, a situation that was challenging the values he had portrayed in his films since his "conversion" to social consciousness before Deeds. But the change in conventions

in effect ruined the Capra formula: though many elements in the story followed the usual Capra pattern, certain key elements--most crucially the makeup of the Capra hero--were so altered that the formula could no longer work. The tension between alternative value systems that had been resolved in favor of the Capra hero in earlier films remained unalterably opposed and unresolvable in Doe. The film is an immensely interesting example of an artist struggling with himself, or, in Kenneth Burke's terms, of an artist devising a symbolic strategy in response to a changed situation.

It was fortunate that Capra worked with Warner's on Doe. The harsh, documentary quality of the images in the film--most graphic in the stadium scene near the end--owes something to the Warners' style perfected in their gangster and prison films in the early thirties. Likewise, the opening shot in the film prepares us for the confrontation between traditional democracy and modern fascism: a jackhammer obliterates a sign on the outside of a newspaper office that reads "A Free Press Means a Free People." In its place is substituted a new slogan: "A Streamlined Paper for a Streamlined Era." Inside the news offices, the editor Connell is firing employees at the request of the new owner, D. B. Norton. One of the displaced employees, columnist Ann Mitchell, played by Barbara Stanwick, writes a fake letter in her last column from a man who vows to jump off City Hall on Christmas Eve to protest against the

state of civilization. Though such a vague protest supports our suspicion that the fact of commitment was often more important than its content in the thirties, the column nonetheless generates such controversy that the following day Ann persuades Connell to rehire her and to choose a real John Doe who will say he wrote the letter. They find a John Doe in the person of Long John Willoughby, an ex-baseball pitcher with a glass arm who is traveling with his friend, the Colonel, to the Columbia River country.

With Ann writing feature articles on John Doe, interest in his case grows. D. B. Norton arranges to have him speak on radio and hires Ann to write the speech. After Long John gives the speech, he flees with the Colonel out the back door of the studio, tired of the whole business. The next day, however, he is recognized in a nearby small town, Millville, and learns that the town has started a John Doe Club. With the same kind of clubs springing up all over the country, Long John is persuaded by Ann and Norton to go on a tour promoting the John Doe Clubs, much to the Colonel's chagrin. On the evening of his climactic speech at the John Doe Convention, to be delivered at a baseball stadium, Long John learns that he is expected to endorse Norton as a third-party John Doe candidate for president. He tries to explain Norton's devious plan at the stadium, but Norton has newspapers denouncing Doe distributed, criticizes him publicly, then has the electric wires to the P.A. system cut. The crowd turns against Doe, and the

Colonel rushes to the stage to lead him away from the outraged mob.

Weeks pass, and on Christmas Eve, Ann, Connell and the Colonel all worry about Long John's returning to carry out the John Doe threat. So does D. B. Norton, who, after spending Christmas Eve alone without friends, goes to the roof of City Hall with the mayor and two others. As the clock strikes midnight, Long John walks onto the roof, goes over to a railing and smokes a last cigarette. Just as he prepares to jump, Norton steps out and tells him not to, that his body will be picked up immediately and buried in potter's field. Long John still readies to jump but Ann rushes up to him and embraces him, begging him not to. The Colonel, Connell, and three John Doe Club members from Milville also appear and tell him not to jump. John finally agrees not to die--Christ has already done so, says Ann--instead rededicating himself to the idea of the John Doe Clubs. As John's friends leave, Connell turns to Norton and says (echoing Ma Joad), "there you are, Norton--the people--try and lick that."

Though the dramatic tension is as high at points of Meet John Doe as in any of Capra's previous films, it does not--because of the reshuffled formula--resolve itself with the usual convincing affirmation of the hero's value system. First of all, the Capra hero in Doe is not a product of the usual naive and morally pure mold that created Deeds, Tony Kirby, and Jeff Smith. Instead he is a drifter, a man with

no certain ideals other than the ideal of survival. A world of difference separates the clean-shaven and wide-eyed Jeff Smith from the gaunt, hungry, tattered man who enters Connell's office at the start of the film, looking for a job. The role was perfect for Gary Cooper's rawboned angularity--he had aged five years since Deeds, and the part demanded it. The hero represents the common American in the broadest sense--he is an ex-baseball pitcher, he orders hamburgers and apple pie when he gets hungry, and he even takes on the name of the American everyman, John Doe. However, as we have noted, the Capra hero is not usually the average American; rather he is a man unusually articulate and capable of defending a set value system in which he firmly believes. Long John, however, is neither moral nor immoral, but amoral. He willingly agrees to play John Doe for some months, even to pretend that he will commit suicide in protest against the world's problems. One can never imagine Deeds, Conway, or Smith agreeing either to pose as someone he was not or to die in protest against social ills. Each of these earlier heroes was too secure in his social system and in his sense of values to participate willingly in such a deception for the profit of a newspaper.

Because Long John lacks the sense of traditional values rooted in a family and community experience, Capra tries to give that to him through his working woman, Ann Mitchell. Not only does Ann convert in the process of the film, but so does the Capra hero. Supporting her mother and

two sisters, Ann devises the John Doe scheme to save her job. She is not as cynical and disillusioned as Babe Bennett or Saunders, but more like the fast talking Hildy Johnson in Hawks' His Girl Friday. She does, it is true, gradually fall under the influence of D. B. Norton, selling her ideals for money, but in the end defends John when she learns the true nature behind Norton's paternalism.

Ann provides Long John with a stable system of traditional values when she writes the first radio speech. After working long and hard over the speech and being unable to come up with anything good, Ann consults her mother. Mrs. Mitchell is a good Capra altruist, having given away most of Ann's recently earned money to a needy family. She suggests that Ann forget about the "doom and despair" she has been writing about, instead concentrating on "something simple and real, something with hope in it." To inspire Ann, Mrs. Mitchell gets out her late husband's diary. Mr. Mitchell, like Saunders' father, had been a selfless doctor; his thoughts as recorded in the diary become the basis for the values espoused in Ann's speech. By reading those words to the radio audience, Long John is himself connected to traditional values of good neighborliness, which Capra attributes to Christian love and democratic respect for the worth of every individual. Through this speech and the general influence of Ann, Long John develops a sense of values that the other Capra heroes possessed from the start.

Though the Capra hero is less talented and ambitious in Doe, the villain is even more powerful and threatening. The first shot of D. B. Norton shows him sitting on a horse, overseeing his D. B. Norton Motor Corps as they practice precision motorcycling. When he goes into his mansion, the camera catches the bust of Napoleon on his desk, recalling the bust that Adenoid Hynkel had in his office in The Great Dictator. Clearly Norton, with his imperious and haughty behavior, is a man accustomed to holding power and greedy to obtain more. When he chances to glance into the kitchen and sees the tremendous response of his servants to the John Doe speech, Norton's devious plan to use Long John's rhetoric for his own evil plans is underscored by Capra's extreme closeup of Norton's calculating face. He believes the American people need an "iron hand," and his control of the press, his access to other media, his private security troops, and his wealth and power make his plans even more cosmic and threatening than those of all the previous Capra villains together. As Hitler's power grew in the late thirties--by the time Doe was released, Germany had occupied France--so did the power of the Capra villain. When a film in 1940 or 1941 portrayed a power-hungry villain like D. B. Norton, the parallel to Hitler could never be far from the viewer's mind.

Not only did Capra begin to tip the scales more in favor of the man of power and wealth than of the common man in Doe, but he also seemed to be more ambivalent about the

innate goodness of his cherished common man. Certainly Capra continued to believe that the average person was capable of showing kindness. In the mayor's office in Millville, the townsmen are lovingly portrayed as Bert, the soda jerk, tells how they all began to gain by showing kindness to Sourpuss and the elderly Delaneys.[18] When Bert, his wife, and Sourpuss drive through a snowstorm on Christmas Eve in hopes of saving John Doe's life, they are also displaying Capra's conviction that common people are capable of genuinely altruistic acts, however improbable their actions seem in the context of the story. The same idea was to be used much more effectively at the conclusion of It's a Wonderful Life, where the small-town context and the goodness of George Bailey make the actions brilliantly convincing and emotionally moving.

But Capra also displayed some serious doubts about his average Americans. In John's radio speech, he calls the common man "the world's greatest stooge and the world's greatest strength." Just before, the publicity seekers have posed John with two midgets, symbolic little people who suggest an implicit satire by Capra on his vaunted common man. More important and serious than the gag with the midgets, as Richard Glatzer has pointed out, is the petty and widely variant behavior exhibited by the common folk in the film. Human nature is not innately good in this film, as Capra in his earlier films had suggested; it is wildly plastic, wavering back and forth in response to the messages of the

media. After John Doe's radio speech, a John Doe Club springs up overnight in Millville, and the common people are considerate and kind to their neighbors. At the John Doe Convention, however, after Norton makes his P.A. denunciation of Long John and has his newspapers delivered, the crowd turns against Long John as rapidly as they turned to him earlier, their moods as dark and chilly as the cold rain falling on the spectators. Only the Colonel, an avowed cynic, befriends Long John in his time of trouble. The rest of the common people have swayed with irrational haste.

In fact, the Colonel summarizes better than anyone else the dark side of Capra's attitude toward the common people. Convinced that the "world's been shaved by a drunken barber," the Colonel warns Long John about the dangers of becoming a striving and greedy "heelot," a person caught up in the endless middle-class struggle for material acquisition. (The Colonel translates "heelots" as "a lot of heels.") That the cynical Colonel is the only character to offer Long John his friendship consistently--he stresses that he never reads the paper or listens to the radio--becomes a damning indictment of the good-neighborliness of the common man. Is the common man innately good or a "heelot"? The people's uncritical and malleable response to the mass media clearly suggests the latter, in spite of other evidence to the contrary. Capra had impaled himself

on the horns of an aesthetic and moral dilemma that he could not resolve.

Thus, the classic structure of the Capra formula was altered. As we have seen, the hero in Doe has to be converted before he can defend the correct system of values, a process that is (at the earliest) completed only with his meeting with the Millville residents at the mayor's office. The stadium scene, which normally would have been the point at which the Capra hero received a public support for his values parallel to the courtroom scenes in Deeds and You Can't, instead becomes a rejection of the hero because of his own moral weaknesses, the villain's control of the media, and the gullibility of the John Doe Club members. As we look back, this denial of the hero was prefigured by the abrupt ending of Smith, where Jeff was able to convert Senator Paine but certainly not, so far as we can guess, able to challenge seriously the ubiquitous wealth and power of Boss Jim Taylor.[19]

Neither does Doe have a sympathetic figure of authority like a judge or vice-president to defend the hero. The nearest character in the film is the editor Connell, a man who--like the Colonel--is an avowed cynic with a heart of gold. It is Connell who warns Long John in a bar just before the hero is to give his speech at the stadium. In a magnificent performance by James Gleason, the drunken Connell tells John of how his son died in World War One, how he is a "sucker for the 'Star-Spangled Banner' and a sucker

for this country," and how John is in danger of being an unwitting stooge for the evil political designs of D. B. Norton. For Connell, Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln are "lighthouses in a foggy world," heroes who set an example that Long John should follow. In the final scene, as we have mentioned, Connell again defends John and the John Doe movement, daring Norton to try to defeat the people. Unfortunately, this figure of authority is not the final arbiter of disputes like the judges of earlier films; instead, he is an employee of Norton, the editor of the Bulletin whom Norton has jailed on the evening of Long John's convention speech.

How then, precisely, did Capra resolve the difficulties that the John Doe story created? Stating it most simply, we might say that he relied on God and Country to pull himself out of his stalemate. Once again, the Capra hero becomes Lincoln and Christ, the patient and wise advocate of democracy and the suffering martyr who dies that others may live. The aims of the nation and the aims of God become one, and the American political ideals are infused with a religious zeal. John Doe, the representative of all common men, is about to commit suicide on Christmas Eve. But as he prepares to jump so that the John Doe movement "will be born all over again," Ann pleads with him not to throw his life away. "If it's worth dying for, it's worth living for," she cries. Christ--"the first John Doe"--has already died for the John Doe idea 2,000 years ago. After

her impassioned, nearly hysterical, speech, and after Bert tells Long John that he still believes in the idea and that the movement needs him alive, Long John--to the strains of Beethoven's Ninth--chooses life and a commitment to the continuation of the John Doe idea he was willing to die for. Only by going to the extremity of identifying national purpose with religious righteousness was Capra able to end Meet John Doe. But the ending was facile, even dangerous. Capra was right: the film is--at best--seven-eights of a masterpiece.

Because of its ending, Meet John Doe suffered at the box office, despite Capra's reputation and the film's topical appeal. It was not a total flop, but it did do poorly on its first runs compared to Smith, then picked up somewhat when it was released at popular prices. According to Variety, it grossed 1.8 million dollars in 1941, compared to Smith's more than 5 million in 1939.[20]

Critically, it was less an unqualified hit than Capra suggests in his autobiography. Time gave it a cover story featuring Gary Cooper, saying the film "will doubtless accent for millions the virtues of neighborly compassion." Bosley Crowther of the New York Times also endorsed the film as "a glowing tribute to the anonymous citizen." Commonweal praised Capra "for his superb craftsmanship which results in outstanding entertainment and for his brave protest against the state of civilization." A number of other reviewers were not so kind. Otis Ferguson liked the film more than

Smith, but still objected to the facile patriotism: "there is nothing Americans so like to be told today as that they are Americans." After noting Doe's "muddled and mawkish sentiment," the Nation concluded that whatever message it was meant to deliver remained a complete mystery. The New Yorker's reviewer, John Mosher, rather cynically noted that "Capra's love for the common man, the average man, the dope, the punk, passeth all understanding" and that the film suffered greatly from its types and clichés. The broken Capra formula failed to impress the critics.[21]

Thus, by Pearl Harbor, Capra had begun to question the cultural values that he had been explicitly proposing since his committed period had started with Deeds. As Richard Glatzer has noted, Doe does not deal with the happy middle-class world of Deeds and Smith, but rather with "the underside of that image--with all of Capra's doubts about democracy and the American people."[22] Allegedly setting out to impress the critics, Capra in Doe created a fascinating failure, a work less successful as a unified work of art than as an intriguing indication of how an artist grappled with his times and his art.

IV

After experiencing so many problems in Doe, Capra quickly shot a film version of Arsenic and Old Lace, starring Cary Grant, before enlisting in the armed forces. It was a low-budget affair, with little connection to

Capra's committed films of the previous six years, and was not released until 1943 after the play closed on Broadway. Once the war had begun, Capra (with most other Americans) accepted John Doe's assertion that the little people would prevail in the name of freedom if only they could all pull together. Requested by General G. Marshall to do a series of documentary films explaining the American version of why we entered the war, Major Capra responded with the Why We Fight series, called by one critic "not only the best group of films to come out of the war, but also the best film record of the reasons behind the war."[23]

Then, after the war was over, Capra returned to civilian life, organized a production company called Liberty Films with Sam Briskin, and proceeded to begin work on the film that was to become his magnum opus: It's a Wonderful Life. Though the film falls outside our period of study, it is necessary to say a few words about it, largely because it is the film that best united form and content to express the Capra formula successfully. By making several alterations in the formula, Capra was better able to express what he had been trying to say since his committed period had begun.

First of all, Capra set his story in a small town, Bedford Falls. Though small town values were clearly expressed by Longfellow Deeds (and endorsed apparently by Capra), Capra never used a small town as the primary setting for any of his films after 1936. In addition, by the time

of Doe the small townsmen of Millville were as capable of evil and as easily swayed by the media as their city counterparts. With It's a Wonderful Life, Capra finally realized that his formula had immense possibilities if he allowed his hero to fight evil from his home base, the small town.

Second, after experimenting unsuccessfully with a down-and-out hero in Doe, Capra returned to the selfless, innocent and articulate spokesman of community values in George Bailey, played brilliantly by Jimmy Stewart. By creating a character who subordinates his own dreams and desires to the well-being of others in the community (George Bailey becomes the president of his father's Savings and Loan Company), Capra built a strong emotional bond between the hero and the audience. The identification between audience and Capra's innocent heroes, William Pechter has suggested, stems from the way they remind us "of the ways and degrees to which we have failed" to live up to the image of our innocent childhood selves.[24] As the good-humored and moral humanitarian, George Bailey drives home our failures more successfully than any previous Capra hero.

In addition to changing the setting and reinstituting his innocent and moral hero, Capra turned to a fantastic ending, a deus ex machina, paradoxically the only logical ending for the Capra formula. In It's a Wonderful Life, more than any of his earlier films, Capra became a religious artist. Whereas he had consistently made his heroes into

Christ figures after 1935, only Life has an ending that relies solely on faith. After contemplating suicide, George Bailey is visited by his comic guardian angel Clarence and given the chance of seeing what the world would have been like had he never been born. George first denies his life, then (after experiencing the fantasy), affirms life, praying to God that he might live. Capra first creates excruciating pain as George Bailey becomes the victim of merciless fate, then follows it with soaring jubilation as George, after asking again for life, returns to his home (appropriately enough, on Christmas Eve). As he joyfully embraces his family, neighbors and friends stream into his home, as in the courtroom scene in You Can't, to contribute the money that will save him from scandal, financial ruin, and prison. Only by separating religion from nationalism and by focusing on such an elemental human theme as the gift of life was Capra able to achieve, with the help of his extraordinary craftsmanlike skill at telling a story on film, the triumph of his career. Life displays, in the words of one observer, "the theology of comedy" which Capra had been approaching since Deeds.[25] By subordinating his social commitment of the thirties to a "leap of faith," by turning from social cinema to personal cinema, Capra finally perfected his formula.

In concluding our study of Capra, we must center on the relationship between the drift of his art and the drift

of American culture from 1936 and 1941. As we noted in the introduction, the recurring patterns in a director's work provide a starting point for identifying the connections between art and culture. In Capra's case, we found that the recurring character types and plot structures were so evident from film to film--due in large part to Capra's artistic freedom and his collaboration with Robert Riskin--that we were able to define a formula that Capra consistently used with varying degrees of rigidity. Implicit within each of the five films developed in Capra's committed period was a rather clearly defined and consistent code of values based on the Golden Rule and American nationalism. Using a formulaic combination of social moralism and comedy, Capra became the most consistently popular director in the late thirties.

It is crucial to note that an artistic form does not become popular unless it answers some deeply felt need of a specific time and place. The Capra formula was popular, appealing to a broad audience, for at least two reasons. First, the ritual humiliation of the Capra hero and his eventual triumph over adversity had a particular attraction to many middle-class adults in the decade. One of the dominant psychological reactions to the economic dislocations of the thirties was a sense of shame. A psychiatrist who did some field work on the unemployed in the thirties remembered:

> They gave each other solace. They were loath to go home because they were indicted, as if it were their fault they were unemployed. A jobless man was a lazy good for nothing. . . . These men suffered from depression. They felt despised, they were ashamed of themselves. They cringed, they comforted one another. They avoided home.[26]

This sense of personal shame, together with the fear of losing a job and being subjected to that same shame, was a psychological state common to many Americans in the thirties.

The Capra formula provided a perfect outlet for the frustration engendered by shame. As we have seen, the Capra hero is regularly humiliated--often by the press--and sometimes is betrayed by those he has most deeply trusted. In spite of these challenges to the hero's self-worth, however, he is able through native wisdom and strength to overcome the forces that challenge him. Thus the cruel humiliation of the Capra hero responded to a definite cultural need. In one critic's words, "rather than simple escape it provided a special kind of identification for those whose self image had become less than favorable."[27] It is not surprising that the three films most closely following the humiliation/victory formula--Deeds, You Can't, and Smith--were also the most successful with the public. Through popular art, many moviegoers received a soothing antidote to their frustrations.

But Capra's formula--and many screwball comedies, it could be argued--fulfilled another crucial cultural function in the late thirties, helping to resolve temporarily a

fundamental contradiction in American life that goes back at least to the day of Cotton Mather. A central premise of the American Puritans was that their society was to become a "City Upon a Hill," a model harmonious community based on the covenant between man and God. The Puritans also stressed the importance of hard work, of striving toward wealth, until gradually the accumulation of wealth became a sign of favor from God. If wealth was a sign of God's favor, the opposite was also true. In John Cotton's words, "poverty is a great affliction, and Sin the cause of it."[28] This conflict between competition and community, individual success and social welfare, did not become severe until orthodox beliefs began to lose their strength as Boston commercial interests began to thrive at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

In 1710 Cotton Mather, noting how his society had increasingly become characterized by competition, the open market, and calls for civil freedom, and decreasingly by religious orthodoxy, responded with a treatise called Essays to Do Good. As an antidote for the noxious changes brought about by the struggle to accumulate, Mather called for a piety on the part of individuals that would restore community wholeness. "Instead of contriving everyone to enlarge his own Little Party," Mather wrote, "would Good Men unite in promoting that Piety which all good Men in every Party confess to be the main Interest, the World would soon feel the Blessed Effects of such associations."

In the effort to subordinate politics and business to a society based on piety, Mather's Essays were, in Perry Miller's words, "a prophecy of Protestant, small-town Middle Western culture of the nineteenth century."[29]

In his own peculiar way, Frank Capra dealt with this same conflict between acquisition and social good. In his reform comedies, including the more serious ones (Smith, Doe, and Life), Capra contrasts the greed and struggle for wealth that derives from freedom and competition as opposed to the morality or (if you will) piety that stems from living and acting in a harmonious community. At a time when the collapse of the American economy virtually closed off upward mobility, the obvious response of people would be to seek fulfillment through "piety," a belief that morality carried out in human community was superior to money accumulated by hard work. If the urban industrial America of the thirties did not offer those communities, the next best hope for fulfillment was through the fantasy world of art.

Capra's films fulfilled this yearning, placing piety over the perverse struggle for wealth and power. The Capra hero and the community values he represents consistently win out over greedy figures like Cedar or Anthony Kirby, Sr. One hero, Robert Conway, is even given a chance to live in the model community, a society characterized, significantly, by the absence of struggle and the single dictum, "be kind." If Cotton Mather's Essays pointed forward to the 19th-century American small town, Capra's films--as more than one critic

has noted--look backward to the same society to find humane values.[30] Whether the Capra hero goes from Mandrake Falls to New York or remains rooted in Bedford Falls, he remains true to the values he learned as a boy living in a small town, often close to the inspiration of benevolent Nature. If money (Deeds) or power (Smith) are thrust upon him or if he has earned a measure of wealth himself (Grandpa Vanderhof), the Capra hero remains uncorrupted by wealth and power, always assured that adherence to piety is superior to the struggle to possess and that piety has the strength to convert men of power, wealth, and prestige into humanitarians. Because this contradiction between individual struggles for success and the desire for social welfare remains unresolved in American culture, the Capra comedies maintain their appeal to middle-class audiences even today.[31]

All of what I have been saying about the ascendance of piety over the struggle for wealth and power was particularly true of the Capra films through You Can't. Though it is not true, as some have alleged, that these films always reconciled all the actors into a perfect American unity,[32] they did respond to the challenges against the American social structure by assuring the audiences that the system itself was sound if only people would work hard to bring back the virtue of social piety.

It is important to note that Deeds, Lost Horizon and You Can't were released in the years after the New Deal's

major welfare legislation had been passed and after the beginning of the Popular Front period. If we were to ask whether these Capra films were reflecting or creating the dominant cultural mood, it would be most accurate to say that national optimism predated these three films and that this optimistic presentation of small-town values, while undoubtedly conservative in nature, was more reflective than creative. Capra's commitment, which might be viewed as his conversion to what we have termed piety, was a result of his interaction with American culture, specifically with the anonymous man who chided Capra's arrogance while he was playing sick. In his first films after commitment, Capra reflected the cultural mood, reaffirming those values that were helping to glue together the American social system.

The situation changed with Smith and Doe. In those films Capra went on the offensive; consequently, the films became as much creators of new responses--the American Way of Life--as reflectors of old ones. By the time Smith was released in late 1939, serious challenges to the American social structure by domestic radicals had nearly disappeared. In place of domestic reform, the country was turning its attention to the threats of foreign totalitarianism. Smith was a transitional film, combining the faith in small-town piety with a strong patriotic attitude which presented America as the supreme example of human liberty. Doe continued that powerful nationalism. In that film, the Capra

formula was disarranged because of Capra's doubts about the usefulness of small-town pieties in an age dominated by the power of the mass media. Nonetheless, to dispel those doubts, Capra concluded by equating the cause of America with the cause of God. With Smith and Doe, Capra played his part in creating an atmosphere of nationalism which at its worst set up a Manichean world divided between total good (America) and complete evil (our enemies), all made more believable by the images of small-town piety that so appealed to American popular audiences in the thirties.

This Manichean division became official Hollywood policy during the Second World War. Though this use of movies certainly helped to mobilize a cautious nation for war--hence the creative cultural function of Capra's films and others like them--the cumulative effect of this persistent world view on postwar American values is incalculable. The roots of our Cold War attitudes as well as our firm postwar conviction of American righteousness thus reach back before World War Two to the persuasive nationalism in films like Smith and Sergeant York.

The images of a Capra film like Smith are so appealing that it is difficult to separate the American ideals they espouse from the American reality. One has to look closely at the Capra formula, for example, before one realizes that Jefferson Smith's appealing ideology of American liberty means liberty primarily for white males. That group comprises the total membership of the Senate,

while the few blacks seen in the film are porters in the train station or servants for the Paines and the central woman character is a stenographer who would glady, we suspect, trade her job for a wedding ring. Indeed, the woman heroine ready for romance and marriage was central to the Capra formula.

This is not to argue that Capra was intent on deceiving or subverting the public--he was a sincere artist--but rather that the images and social hierarchies expressed in his films were, as one critic put it, "an accurate reflection of American society."[33] From the Capra villain whose wealth and power give him control over the lives of others to the Capra hero who seeks to re-form but ultimately to preserve the system through a return to social piety, Capra projected on the screen that accurate reflection of the American social structure. But because of his sensitivity to middle-class values, Capra presented America filtered through a distinctly middle-class vision of reality. By affirming small-town piety, Capra was reflecting that culture. By championing the national cause in films like Smith and Doe, he was helping to create a new emphasis in the culture's view of reality. However complex the relationship between film and culture, the critic cannot help feeling, with Andrew Bergman, that to view Capra's films from the late thirties "is to learn more about a nation's image of itself than one has any right to expect."[34]

CHAPTER VII

ORSON WELLES: AMERICAN MAVERICK

> The constant recourse to Shakespeare, a familiarity with the Italian baroque, and also a certain natural tendency toward contemplation: in short, a profound vision of things linked to a certain culture naturally turned a very gifted young man quite rapidly into this errant patriarch.
>
> --Alexandre Astruc, 1959

Orson Welles, as he so accurately analyzed himself in 1975, is indeed a man of "contrarieties," a man whose love of luxury is matched by his understanding of how wealth corrupts, a bold innovator with a nostalgia for the past, a harsh critic and ardent defender of American culture. One film historian has gone so far as to call Welles the American cinema's "first major radical, its first serious critic of society" whose early films "explore facets of the native mind and emotions with a greater complexity than all save a handful of American novelists."[1]

Yet Welles--as we might reasonably expect--has never appealed to a widespread audience as have Chaplin, Ford, and Capra. Nonetheless, Welles has expressed admiration for the work of Chaplin and Ford. In the case of Chaplin,

Welles seems to honor and respect the other major actor-director to work in American cinema. Of Ford, Welles has been more explicit. When asked which directors influenced him, Welles replied: "The old masters. By which I mean John Ford, John Ford, and John Ford . . . . With Ford at his best, you feel that the movie has lived and breathed in a real world." Reportedly, Welles viewed Ford's Stagecoach forty times to learn an approach to filmmaking after he was hired by RKO in 1939. Though Welles has never expressed his opinions on Capra's work, Capra, as we might surmise, given his conviction that the object of the movies is primarily to please an audience, has publicly expressed his dissatisfaction with Welles' films.[2]

Because of the wide differences separating Capra's and Welles' conceptions of filmmaking, we might benefit from F.O. Matthiessen's suggestion that art both reflects and illuminates its culture.[3] As we have seen, Capra's films, because of his desire to create films that audiences like, reflect to a remarkable degree American middle-class values of the late depression. It might be better, on the other hand, to view Welles' films as a filmmaker's attempt to illuminate the workings of American culture through the artist's innovative control of the film medium. By looking at his first two films, Citizen Kane and The Magnificent Ambersons, we can see how Welles' vision of America as expressed in these films illuminated elements of the culture in which he worked.

I

When an interviewer commented on the liveliness of the confrontation between the actor and the camera in his films, Welles added that such liveliness "corresponds to my vision of the world: it reflects that vertigo, uncertainty, lack of stability, that melange of movement and tension that is our universe."[4] Certainly in watching a Welles film, one experiences that same sense of uncertainty about the hero and the world he inhabits. Compared to a typical film of Capra or Ford, which more often presents a clear resolution of the conflicts developed in the film, a film like Citizen Kane or Ambersons seems ambiguous, complex, or simply confused, depending on one's personal preferences and predispositions toward Welles. Only in rare scenes--Muley's flashback in Grapes of Wrath or the stadium scene in Meet John Doe--do Ford or Capra begin to approach the "vertigo" endemic in the Wellesian world view. This difference between the world of Welles and the world of these other two directors is fundamental. By noting some important elements of the world in which he actually grew up, we can begin to understand the roots of the American visions portrayed in the early films of Orson Welles.

Born in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on May 6, 1915, George Orson Welles is nearly twenty years younger than Ford and Capra. In addition, his upper-middle-class background contrasts with the boyhood poverty of Chaplin and Capra and the middle-class Maine childhood of Ford. Welles' father,

Richard Head Welles, was a wealthy inventor, and his mother, Beatrice Ives Welles, was a concert pianist and suffragette who knew Ravel and Stravinsky. During his early years, Welles spent much of his time in Chicago. According to one source, he could read at age two and by seven was able to recite from memory any speech in King Lear. Agnes Moorehead told Charles Higham that when she met the five-year-old Welles, he already seemed like an adult intellectually.[5]

When Welles' mother died in 1923, he traveled widely around the world with his father. After spending a single term at a grade school in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1925, Welles enrolled in the Todd School in Woodstock, Illinois, where he became active in theater. His first appearance on stage had been at age three, as Madame Butterfly's love child. Under the supervision of Roger Todd, Welles acted in and directed about thirty plays, including Julius Caesar, Richard III, and a shortened version of the Falstaff plays, which he later filmed as Chimes at Midnight.

After Richard Welles died in 1927, a Chicago physician, Dr. Maurice Bernstein, became Welles' guardian. Four years later, Welles graduated from Todd School and began traveling with inherited money, crossing Ireland on a donkey cart and learning the bullfight in Spain.

Unlike most child prodigies, Welles continued to astound people, continually proving himself to be a talented innovator in the arts and the mass media until he conquered Hollywood in Citizen Kane. Besides magic--he met Houdini

in Europe--Welles' first love and area of accomplishment was the theater. After his experience at Todd, Welles acted for the Gate Theater in Dublin after telling Hilton Edwards in 1931 that he was a star from New York's Theatre Guild. The story was false. After returning to America, Welles had difficulties breaking into the theater until Thornton Wilder recommended him to Katherine Cornell. Welles toured with Cornell's troupe in 1933 and 1934, then broke into New York theater circles in her production of Romeo and Juliet in 1934. His next great stirs were his WPA production of Macbeth with an all-black cast two years later and his formation of the Mercury Theatre with John Houseman in 1936. Their first production, Julius Caesar, with Welles directing and playing Brutus, used modern dress to emphasize parallels with the contemporary Fascist threat. It was from the Mercury players that Welles assembled much of the cast for Kane and Ambersons. Though the last Mercury theatrical production was the 1941 adaptation of Richard Wright's Native Son, Welles continued to act and direct plays after World War Two, most often doing such Shakespearean plays as Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth.[6]

Not long after he began acting in New York, Welles started a career in radio. His first experience in broadcasting was with NBC's March of Time radio series in 1934-5. Later he played Lamont Cranston in The Shadow series for CBS. In 1938, he adapted, narrated, directed, and acted in the First Person Singular series, which later changed

its name to Mercury Theatre on the Air. Besides the now famous "War of the Worlds" broadcast, Welles adapted such classics as Hamlet, Jane Eyre, and The Pickwick Papers. When he worked in 1939 and 1940 for the CBS Campbell Playhouse, he presented--among many other shows--Ambersons and Mr. Deeds, working with actors and actresses as various as Katherine Hepburn, Paulette Goddard, Bette Davis, Walter Huston, Lionel Barrymore, and Jack Benny. He did political broadcasts during World War Two and worked intermittantly in radio until 1953.[7]

Despite these real achievements in other fields, Welles will probably be most remembered for his unique contribution to film. Though Kane was his first feature film and most lasting masterpiece, Welles did make two short films in the thirties before he went to Hollywood. The first, a short silent called The Hearts of Age, was done with William Vance at the Todd School in 1934. Though Welles told Joseph McBride it was simply "a Sunday afternoon home movie" meant to parody the surrealist school, McBride says that in the film Welles plays an old man and that "a few of the shots are eerily prophetic of Kane." Besides that first film, Welles made another, Too Much Johnson (1938), which was originally to be shown as a frame around the Mercury production of the same play. But because of lack of funds, the project was disbanded and the film never edited or shown publicly. The only copy of the film was destroyed in a fire at Welles' Madrid villa.[8]

In 1939 Welles made a bargain with RKO studios, largely because of his fame stemming from the "War of the Worlds" broadcast, to make a film with complete creative control. Though he planned for a time to make Heart of Darkness, he discarded the plans and began to work on a script about an American business tycoon with Herman J. Mankiewicz. The result, of course, was Citizen Kane, a work as fresh and provocative today as it was in 1941. After Kane, Welles went to work on adaptation of Booth Tarkington's The Magnificent Ambersons, which was shot beginning in October, 1941, and was released in early 1942. In the interim between Kane and Ambersons, however, the administration of RKO changed hands and the absolute creative control Welles enjoyed in Kane was wrested from his grasp. He was not permitted to edit the film, and the result is a film more than a half hour shorter than the original rough cut. After that film, Welles never again was given free access to the technological tools of Hollywood. His recent (1970) comment about the nature of film--"movies should be rough"--was one hardly endearing to a studio executive interested in clear narratives aimed at the consumer's d dollar.[9]

Nevertheless, Welles has continued to make films, some on American life (Lady from Shanghai, A Touch of Evil), some adaptations of Shakespeare (Macbeth, Othello, Chimes at Midnight), and others. Dominating most of these films is the looming physical presence of Welles himself, whether

he plays the wealthy Kane, the naive Mike O'Hara, the truculent policeman Quinlan, or the ebullient but ultimately tragic Falstaff. It is no surprise that Welles has several aimes adapted Shakespeare. Much of vision of the world is influenced not by the early Shakespeare of the romantic comedies, but by the later Shakespeare of the dark and powerful tragedies. Throughout his career Welles has been interested in depicting the fate of powerful, wealthy, ambitious, or successful men. The way he works out his ambivalent attitudes toward his heroes goes a long way toward explaining the center of his films.

Charles Foster Kane was the first of his powerful men. Because Kane's parallels with William Randolph Hearst raised a good deal of political clamor when the film was released, perhaps it might be proper to say a few words about Welles' political orientation in the thirties and early forties before going on to a discussion of Kane and Ambersons.

Unlike Capra and Ford, who matured in the teens and early twenties, Welles came to his political maturity in the days of the early depression and, later, of the popular front. After working with the Federal Theatre Project, he seemed to reflect the decade's concern with commitment on the part of the artist, especially with his productions of Macbeth and Julius Caesar. Though never a Marxist, Welles shared the popular front antifascist attitudes throughout the war. The Mercury Theatre itself

was influenced by the leftward movement of the New York theatre in the thirties, but it never became as political as the Group Theatre, preferring its radicalism to be expressed aesthetically rather than politically. Similarly, in Kane, the stylistic innovations were much more radical (compared to Hollwood's standard fare) than the film's political position.

The most accurate label--if label we must--to describe Welles' political stance is liberal individualist. During World War Two he wrote for Free World, a magazine which defended individual freedom and the development of a United Nations organization after the war ended. Welles wrote articles challenging America's racial bias, arguing for the moral responsibility of using one's talents for the public interest, and praising President Roosevelt. In an interview in 1965, Welles suggested that "the ideal American type is perfectly expressed by the Protestant, individualist, non-conformist," adding that unfortunately the type "is in the process of decline."[10] Welles comes closer to fitting the label of 20th-century individualist whose energies are oriented not, as in the 19th century, toward material accumulation, but toward creating an artistic vision of man and society.

Because of his unique experiences and undeniable talent, Welles was just the type of person capable of making a creative contribution to the art of talking motion pictures. Not only did he have experience with

lighting, sets, and acting in the theater, with sound effects in radio, and with illusions in magic, all of which contributed to his complex perception of what the movies might be capable of doing, but he had also gained the laurels of success, lost his childhood innocence earlier than most people, and had wide experience both in world travel and in the complex world of Shakespeare's tragedies. His was just the type of experience, talent, and vigor to create a lasting examination of the American business magnate and his 20th-century milieu.

II

An important characteristic of a true film masterpiece, one could argue, is its ability to generate interest and stir controversy long after it is made. Most movies, after their general release and sometimes second runs, are relegated to the storeroom and heard of no more, except possibly for an occasional appearance on the late show. Few films have been able to retain their freshness and to excite new generations of audiences and critics.

Judged by this criterion, Citizen Kane is undeniably the American masterpiece of the studio era, a culmination of many currents developing throughout the thirties and a work whose innovations have influenced subsequent film history. One would only have to point out the recent partisan debate about the authorship of Kane to underline the film's capacity to stir passions even today.

The polemics arose after Pauline Kael wrote a lengthy article, "Raising Kane," for the New Yorker, later published with the shooting script and cutting continuity of Kane as The Citizen Kane Book. Besides giving general background and a consideration of the film itself, the essay had two major goals: 1) to discredit the idea that Welles, and not Herman J. Mankiewicz, wrote the script, and 2) to argue that Kane is not a classic of film art but rather "kitsch redeemed."[11]

One familiar with Kael's ability to elicit outraged responses to her work would not be surprised at the result. Among the most damaging responses to her piece were essays by Andrew Sarris, Peter Bogdanovich, and Joseph McBride. Sarris, whose critical quarrels with Kael were already strong in the early sixties, charged that her article said more about her fear of and distaste for the auteur theory than it did about the actual making of the film. Bogdanovich, who at the same time was working on a book about Welles, drew up an impressive and I think convincing list detailing the flaws in Kael's research. Among the most glaring weaknesses in Kael's approach, according to Bogdanovich, were a failure to talk to Welles and to note that Welles had publicly given credit both to Mankiewicz and cameraman Gregg Toland for their contributions, as well as an overreliance on sources who, like John Houseman, had had notable feuds with Welles. Finally Joseph McBride, whose excellent study of Welles' films has since been published,

also disputed Kael's essay on the basis of the research he was doing on Welles and Kane.[12]

Though the issue of who wrote which parts of the Kane script will likely never be settled, both the authorship issue and the film itself are very much alive more than thirty years after the made. But the film was almost never made, and then--once made--almost never released. When Welles finally accepted an offer from RKO to make a film--he had already refused several offers--he hoped to make a film of Heart of Darkness. Soon that project was abandoned as too expensive. So was an adaptation of C. Day Lewis' The Smiler with the Knife that Welles had been working on, this time because the right leading actress could not be found.[13] In the meantime, however, Welles had become excited about doing a story loosely based on William Randolph Hearst, an idea suggested to him by Herman J. Mankiewicz. After reading a preliminary outline drawn up by Manckiewicz, Welles asked him to develop it into a screenplay. Mankiewicz did so with the aid of John Houseman.

The film was shot from June 24 to October 23, 1940, then edited by Welles, Robert Wise, and Mark Robson for several months. Because of the parallels between Kane and Hearst, the film raised a furor in Hollywood about whether it would even be released. Before the film opened, Louella Parsons demanded to preview the film to see if indeed it did slander her employer. She finally did see it, then

reported to Hearst that it presented him in a bad light. As a consequence she tried to pressure RKO's president George Shaefer into junking the whole project. According to Bosley Crowther, Louis B. Mayer also tried to block Kane, offering to buy the negatives for the cost of making the film. Later, the Radio City Music Hall refused to book the film, even though they often had shown RKO films before. It was not until some independent theaters in New York and Los Angeles agreed to release the film that resistance slowly broke down.[14]

It is true that one of the most exciting elements of the film to 1941 audiences was the Kane-Hearst resemblance. Like Hearst, Kane was born in 1863 and expelled from Harvard. Both were wealthy from childhood due to the discovery of rich mines on their parents' property, and both used their millions to establish a chain of yellow-journalism newspapers, which they operated successfully until the financial chaos of the depression caused them to close some of their papers. Kane's attempt to make his second wife, Susan Alexander, into a successful opera singer parallels the actions that Hearst took to make Marion Davies into a successful film star. There are also general parallels in the developing political attitudes of Kane and Hearst from a progressive reformism in the first decade of the century to an incipient fascism in the thirties.[15] Kane's Xanadu, of course, recalls Hearst's San Simeon.

Welles denied that Kane is a critique of Hearst. Before the film was released, he wrote a response to a Friday magazine article by Parsons, asserting that "Citizen Kane is not about Louella Parson's boss. It is the portrait of a fictional newspaper tycoon . . . . The portrait of a public man's private life." Besides denying it publicly, Welles and Mankiewicz made sure that fact and fiction were enough mixed to protect them from libel suits. Many of the details of Kane's life differ from Hearst's, and a number of American business tycoons are suggested by the plot details. The opera house built for Susan, for example, seems patterned after the activities of Samuel Insull, who built the Chicago Opera House. Another mogul mentioned was Harold McCormick, whose wife became a famous opera star. Charles Higham summed up the Hearst controversy well when he wrote that "Mankiewicz, though he knew Hearst well, had produced a plot as eclectic as the film's style."[16]

In addition to its topical attraction, which alone would not make a lasting film, Kane owes much to the fact that Welles was given complete control over the production by RKO. As Kael noted, "it is one of the few films ever made in a major studio in the United States in freedom--not merely in freedom from interference but in freedom from the routine methods of experienced directors."[17] Having learned much from his experience in radio and theater, Welles came to filmmaking without the trained eye of the experienced director, and hence was willing to experiment

with camera, lighting and sound in a way that someone with more experience would have rejected not simply as unconventional but as impossible.

This freedom enabled Welles to work with the most talented and enthusiastic people he could find. Most of his actors were drawn from the Mercury Theatre and had no previous film experience. Nonetheless, the excitement of making a good first film seems to have pervaded the set.[18] Besides these new actors, Welles chose a number of experienced people to work on the film, including Mankiewicz, composer Bernard Herrmann (whose experience had been in radio), and cameraman Gregg Toland.

Mankiewicz was the older brother of Joseph, a Hollywood director, and the son of a professor of education. He was also the father of Frank Mankiewicz, former press secretary of the late Robert Kennedy. Born in New York City in 1897, Mankiewicz graduated from Columbia and was a newsman and dramatist in the twenties before going to Hollywood in 1926. From then until his death in 1953, he worked on over seventy movies in various capacities. In 1927 and 1928 alone he did titles for at least twenty-five silents, mostly modern comedies starring such flappers as Clara Bow and Bebe Daniels. In the early thirties he produced some Marx Brothers comedies, but after 1935 his credits began to taper off as his drinking problems grew. When he was not courting the bottle, however, he was one of the sharpest wits in Hollywood.[19] While writing the

script for Kane, Mankiewicz was laid up with a broken leg, working with Houseman for twelve and a half weeks early in 1940 at an isolated ranch away from Hollywood parties and the lure of alcohol. Writing with occasional advice from Welles, Mankiewicz fashioned one of the finest screenplays a director was ever fortunate enough to work with.

Bernard Herrmann followed Welles to Hollywood after working as the composer for Welles' radio programs. Kane was the first film that Herrmann worked on, but he was given extraordinary creative opportunity to do the sound track. Not only was Herrmann allowed to work on the film as it was being cut (most sound tracks had been added to the finished film before that time), but he was also given twelve weeks to do the score instead of the two or three weeks that composers were usually given. In addition, Herrmann also deepened the quality of the sound track by using "radio scoring," a method by which sound is used as a transitional element just as cuts, dissolves, or wipes serve as visual transitions. Thie use of sound as an added editing device, quite new to movies, was long established in radio. Finally, besides using a whole gamut of musical forms from the scherzo and ragtime to the waltz and aria, Herrmann used two recurring motifs: Kane's power motif, played by the brass, and the Rosebud motif, played on the vibraphone. According to Herrmann, both are heard throughout the film in various guises and are closely related to thematic aspects of the film.[20]

Finally, Welles was able to work with Gregg Toland, already noted as a cameraman for his work on Dead End and Wuthering Heights and, as we have seen, on Grapes of Wrath. Toland's contribution on Kane was his ability to experiment, to try to capture on film the innovative visual effects that the unconventional Welles sought. The major effect that Toland achieved in Kane was an increased depth of field. In most Hollywood films before Kane, the action was focussed at one point, with everything in front of or behind the focus of attention blurred out. By using the fastest film then available, lenses coated with a solution to eliminate refraction, and arc-broadside lamps, Toland was able to stretch the focus, giving the viewer a clearer, more realistic image on the screen. In addition, Toland and Welles arranged to have ceilings on the sets, again adding realism but causing more lighting problems for the cameraman. Another camera effect used successfully in Kane was the slow dissolve from one scene to another, as when a shot of the old Jed Leland dissolves to the famous montage of Charles and Emily Kane's deteriorating marriage. These innovations, together with the masterful use of light and shadow and the extensive use of angled shots and reflected images on mirrors and windows, make Kane one of the most consistently interesting visual films in the history of the cinema.[21]

Though each of these contributions was tremendous, it remained for a man in charge to make sure they were

brought together into a unified whole. And young Orson Welles, the man who generated so much enthusiasm among the people involved in making the film, was also the person who synthesized all the elements into a stylistic tour de force. In fact, William Pechter has argued that the foremost contribution of Kane, over and above its angled shots, deep focus, and structural complexity, was "its discovery of a style in the use of sound, one in which image and language are imagined to work together in not simply an additive but truly integral combination."[22] A perfect example of how image and language are synthesized in Kane is provided by the juxtaposition of the reporter Thompson's dialogue with the final shots of the film, of which we will have more to say later.

Though one could go on endlessly about the stylistic virtuously of Kane, one must go back to the structure to get to the core of the film. Briefly, the structure is one of multiple perspective, six different versions of who Kane was (two are minor, four are major). The film opens, after a slow series of shots from the No Trespassing sign on a Xanadu entrance gate to Kane's bedroom window, with the dying Kane mouthing the word "Rosebud," then dropping a crystal glass ball with a cottage inside which creates a snowy landscape when shaken. Then a newsreel flashes on the screen, showing the major events of Kane's public and private life. From there, a news editor assigns Thompson to do a series of interviews with people who knew Kane,

all in hopes of finding out what Kane meant by Rosebud. After being refused by Susan Alexander, Thompson in turn visits the memorial library of Kane's guardian Thatcher, Kane's business manager Bernstein, his college friend Jed Leland, his second wife Susan on a return visit, and his butler Raymond. With the introductory newsreel and Raymond's short concluding section serving as a frame, the bulk of the film consists of the four central perspectives on Kane: those of his banker guardian, his loyal employee, his romantic idealist male friend, and his second wife. A single event is often described in two or three different sections, thus even giving variant interpretations of the same event experienced by Kane and perceived by others.

This use of multiple perspective and flashback to describe a man's life was not new. In literature, Faulkner used nearly the same strategy in reconstructing the story of the Civil War colonel Thomas Sutpen in Absalom, Absalom! (1936). By using four narrators, only one of whom actually knew Sutpen, Faulkner told the story of this wealthy and powerful 19th-century American in piecemeal fashion. In doing so, he created a character of tragic proportions whose life and death serve not only as a study of Southern history and its destructive roots in slavery, but also as a critique of the 19th-century conception of individualistic success.

Neither was the flashback structure of Kane new to movies. It had also been used in The Power and the Glory

(1933), a film directed by William K. Howard and scripted by a friend of Mankiewicz, Preston Sturges. Like Kane, Power opens with the death of the hero: the first scene is of the funeral of railroad magnate Thomas Garner, who died by suicide. From then on, the film tells Garner's story by flashback, with one of his trusted assistants telling his wife the story. Besides lacking the "prismatic" approach that Kane has, Power also fails to achieve the stylistic quality, the sharp irony, and the psychological density of Kane.[23]

Kane develops the picture of its hero with a much deeper and more consistent structure. The News on the March section, which abruptly follows Kane's death, plays on the decade's stress on documentary as a way of getting the facts. Obviously patterned after the March of Time series, the newsreel of Charles Foster Kane's life mixes many short shots of his history and surroundings with the authoritative statements of the announcer, delivered in the jumbled syntax for which Time magazine had become known in the thirties ("For forty years appeared in Kane newsprint no public issue on which Kane newspapers took no stand").

The content of the newsreel stresses the outline of Kane's life, especially his qualities as a representative powerful American, "America's Kubla Khan." Besides his role as newspaper tycoon and public spokesman, the newsreel covers his childhood, his affair with Susan, and his declining later years. As one title reads, "FEW PRIVATE

LIVES WERE MORE PUBLIC." Though Susan and Thatcher, Kane's second wife and his guardian, are introduced, Bernstein and Leland, his closest newspaper associates, are not.

The composite picture given by the newsreel is of a man who was powerful, wealthy, and capable of eliciting from others either strong loyalty or passionate dislike. Rather than summarizing who Kane really was, instead it underlines the fact that he was all things to all people. Testifying before a congressional investigation, Thatcher charges that Kane, "by the dangerous manner in which he has persistently attacked the American traditions of private property, initiative and opportunity for advancement," is a Communist. In the next shot, a leftist speaker on a platform at Union Square calls him a fascist, "a menace to every working man in this land." From there, the newsreel cuts to a title quoting Kane himself: "I am, have been and will be only one thing--an American." Later, in the longest single shot of the newsreel and the only shot in which we hear Kane's voice, he reiterates this view. Asked if he is glad to return from his European trip, Kane says, "I'm always glad to be back, young man, I'm an American, always been an American."

When the newsreel winds to an end after a picture of Kane's declining years and his death, however, the reporters watching it are unsatisifed. "All we saw on that screen was that Charles Foster Kane is dead," says Rawlston. "How did he differ from Ford, Hearst--for that

matter--or John Doe?" In an attempt to patch up the holes left by the newsreel, Rawlston send Thompson to talk to those who knew Kane well in hopes of finding what he meant by his dying words.

After Susan Alexander refuses to see him at her night club in Atlantic City, Thompson visits the hallowed and echoing halls of the Walter Parks Thatcher Memorial Library in Philadelphia to go over Thatcher's unpublished memoirs. There he is met by a prim secretary who warns him that he must restrict himself to reading only those portions of the manuscript having directly to do with Kane. The echoing of their voices and footsteps, along with the massive barrenness of the marble study room in which Thompson reads, not only personifies the rigid propriety of the wealthy Thatcher, but also provides one example of why Welles' style is so often referred to as "baroque."[24]

As the Thatcher section unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that Kane is not simply about a big American, but more precisely about how significant people in Kane's life viewed him from their own special perspectives. In watching Kane we learn something about the personalities of the tellers as well as about Kane himself.

The central issue of Thatcher's section, because Thatcher was first and foremost a reliable financial advisor, centers on the relationship between Kane and money. As we saw in the newsreel, Thatcher's main values are the American principles of private property and economic

opportunity--it is thus only natural that his memoirs should deal with the way that Kane handled money. Thatcher's section opens with Charles' parents turning over their son to the guardianship of Thatcher so Charles can get an education and training adequate to his newly acquired wealth and status. The depth of field photography is particularly effective here. As Mrs. Kane and Thatcher sign the papers in the foreground, Mr. Kane protests ineffectually in the near background, and Charles plays in the snow, seen through a window, at the far end of the house. In answer to Jim Kane's protests that he, too, should have some say in Charles' future, Thatcher replies in the only way he knows how: since Mrs. Kane owns the property (it had been expressly given to her in payment for a boarding house debt), she has the right to decide her son's future. When they go to meet the boy outdoors, Charles attacks Thatcher in protest, hitting him with a sled. Thus the boy's toy, symbol of childhood joy and innocence, is used to attack the representative of material wealth and power. But despite his resistance, Charles goes along with Thatcher. His sled is left behind, slowly covered by a pile of snow.

Besides this picture of Kane as a child, the Thatcher section shows Kane as a young journalist and as an economic victim of the depression. Thatcher sends him a letter of his holdings--"extensively cross-indexed"--when Kane is old enough to have them turned over to him, and Kane replies in

a letter that nothing interests him except the newspaper that he had taken over in a foreclosing: "I think it would be fun to run a newspaper." After a montage that shows Thatcher reading about how Kane was calling for trust-busting and slum clearance, Welles cuts to Thatcher visiting the Inquirer offices in 1898 to complain. There Kane tells him to remember he's dealing with two people. As Kane the property owner, he is willing to contribute a thousand dollars to run the other Kane out of town. But as the newsman and publisher, he is responsible for protecting the hardworking people of the state from the powerful money-eyed interests. When asked how long he can deep up a paper losing a million dollars per year, Kane blithely replies, "you know, Mr. Thatcher, at the rate of a million dollars a year, I'll have to clo s e this place in sixty years."

Finally, Thatcher remembers when he had to take financial control of Kane's papers during the economic failure of 1929. Sitting behind his desk as Kane paces to a distant window and back, he tries to console Kane: "There's always a chance you'll die richer than I will." But to the Kane that Thatcher remembers, money is no central goal. "I always gagged on a silver spoon," he tells Thatcher and Bernstein. "If I hadn't been very rich, I might have been a really great man." The composite image of Kane that we get from Thatcher is that of a patrician radical willing to spend his money for causes (useless causes, in Thatcher's view), a man energetic and active

in his youth while somewhat despondent and reflective in his old age. From watching the Thatcher section, one gets the sneaking suspicion that Thatcher, though he was never too close to Kane and thoroughly despised his spending habits (frugal old wealth versus spendthrift new wealth), actually had an amused admiration for the boy raised by a bank.

The next visit Thompson makes is to Bernstein, Kane's loyal business manager, now board chairman of the Kane newspapers. Bernstein's office, like Thatcher's library, reflects his personality. It is a comfortable business office with plenty of window space and a ticker tape. Above the fireplace behind his desk is a huge portrait of Kane, signifying Bernstein's continued allegiance to his late employer. The Kane of Bernstein's section turns out to be an engaging, talented and vibrant newspaper publisher, a man of ideals, showmanship, and verve. Of the four central perspectives, Bernstein's is the most glowing and positive tribute to the memory of Charles Foster Kane.

To add to the complexity of the multiple-perspective approach, Bernstein, after learning that Thompson has been to the Thatcher library, tells Thompson that Thatcher "was the biggest darn fool I ever met." Clearly a new perspective of Kane is hinted at. The Bernstein section treats exclusively the young Charles Foster Kane, from his first day on the Inquirer until he builds it up to become New York's biggest newspaper, visits Europe, and becomes

engaged to Emily Monroe Norton. Besides being a rosy picture of Kane as drawn by an obvious admirer, Bernstein's section also gives a perspective of Jed Leland that prepares us for the following section.

The opening scene--a comic rendition of the first day that Kane, Leland, and Bernstein come to the Inquirer offices--sets the tone for the remainder of Bernstein's section. The elderly, stodgy Inquirer staff, personified by the blustering editor Carter, is contrasted to the youthful vigor of the new arrivals, whose first action is to move--literally, bed and all--into Carter's office. On the front page of the first paper he edits, Kane prints his declaration of principles:

> 1)I will provide the people of this city with a daily newspaper that will tell all the news honestly.
> 2)I will also provide them with a fighting and tireless champion of their rights as citizens and as human beings.[25]

Bernstein, we believe, is convinced of Kane's idealism.

After the circulation begins to rise, Welles gives a perfect visual metaphor showing the rise of the Inquirer. As Kane and Bernstein look at a photograph of the rival Chronicle's excellent staff and Kane ponders how long it took to assemble that staff, the camera moves closer, then the shot dissolves to another of the same men, seated as before, only this time posing for a photographer in the Inquirer offices, their new home.[26] Kane is holding a party to celebrate his acquisition, which took six years. When a group of girls come in to dance, a vaudeville singer

accompanies them. The lyrics of his song--in contrast to Kane's rather forced good humor--sums up Bernstein's attitude toward Kane:

> Who loves to smoke?
> Enjoys a joke?
> Who wouldn't get a bit upset
> If he were really broke?
> With wealth and fame
> He's still the same . . . .
> Good old Charlie Kane.

The only sour note in the party is Leland's. He and Bernstein sit at the end of the table, near a window. As the image of Kane dancing reflects off the window, Leland asks Bernstein if the Inquirer just stands for the same thing as the Chronicle. Bernstein answers that Kane will change his new people into his kind of newsmen, but Leland, unconvinced, says, "There's always a chance they'll change Mr. Kane . . . without his knowing it." In the next scene, which takes place in a roomful of statues Kane has shipped back from Europe, Leland says he didn't go with Kane because he wanted him to have fun. When he asks Bernstein if he is a "stuffed shirt" and a "New England schoolmarm," the loyal Bernstein answers: "Yes. If you thought I'd answer you very different from what Mr. Kane tells you, well, I wouldn't." From Bernstein's perspective, Leland is a little too genteel to be able to function with Kane; loyalty, not idealism, breeds success in Kane's world.

After a short scene showing an embarrassed Kane returning from Europe with a moustache and a wedding announcement, we return to Bernstein and Thompson. Bernstein

confesses he can't help Thompson about Rosebud. "Maybe it was something he lost," he speculates. "Mr. Kane was a man who lost almost everything he had." He suggests that Thompson go to see Leland, even though he and Kane "didn't exactly see eye to eye," especially concerning the Spanish-American War. After Thatcher's picture of the financially irresponsible young reformer, Bernstein's is one of a talented journalist with a flair for the spectacular. The introduction of Leland's doubts about Kane prepares us for the increasingly dark picture of Kane that will dominate the rest of the film.

Thompson moves on to visit Jedediah Leland, Kane's ex-dramatic critic and college chum, who is in a dreary hospital. Leland had come from a wealthy family that had lost their money overnight. In some ways he was Kane's conscience, his closest friend and confidant, the man who inquired about the morality of Kane's actions. Though Leland's section is the least consistent "prism" in the film's structure, it centers on the relationship between Kane and love.

A number of events in Leland's section could not have been witnessed by Leland. At the start, for example, Leland describes the dissolution of the Kane marriage, Kane's meeting with Susan, and the showdown among Emily, Susan, Boss Jim Gettys, and Kane on the eve of the election. Though before one of the scenes, Jed prefaces his account by saying what he describes is "according to Charlie," it

nonetheless remains a fact that Jed could not have been present at the events he describes. Unlike the Bernstein and Thatcher sections, which were more consistent, the Leland section suffers in credibility as a result.

The Leland section discusses Kane's marriages and his action in politics. Leland's view of Kane is summarized in his statement to Thompson: "He married for love. That's why he did everything. That's why he went into politics. It seems we weren't enough. He wanted all the voters to love him, too. All he really wanted out of life was love. That's Charlie's story. How he lost it." This statement is corroborated by the confrontation between the disillusioned idealist Leland and Kane after the election is lost. Leland, who had believed deeply in Kane's sincerity, begins to see that "you don't care about anything but you. You just want to persuade people that you love them so much they ought to love you back. Only you want love on your own terms." In granting Leland his desire to go to Chicago to work, Kane offers a toast "to love on my terms. Those are the only terms anyone knows." Later, after his marriage to Susan, Kane's selfishness is reiterated when he tells a reporter that "we're going to be a great opera star."

Two other scenes in the Leland section are crucial. In the first, in which Susan invites Kane up to her apartment, he tells her he is on a "sentimental journey . . . in search of my youth," going to pick up his mother's effects at a warehouse. When Susan mentions her mother had hoped

she would be an opera star, adding "you know how mothers are," an immediate link between Kane and Susan is formed. To emphasize the link, one of the decorations on Susan's shelves is a glass crystal ball with a snowy scene inside, the same ball that Kane salvages from Susan's room after he destroys it and the same one that is broken when he dies. The whole scene develops a number of implications about the theme of Rosebud and Kane's lost life.

The second important scene is the confrontation between Gettys and Kane at Susan's apartment. One of the most complexly composed and dramatically convincing scenes in the film, it shows Kane choosing his political career over his marriage. Toland's deep-focus photography is at its most effective as Emily, Susan, and Gettys talk in the foreground while Kane, standing in shadowy isolation at the background, ponders his response to Gettys. His decision is consistent with Leland's view of Kane as the hollow man incapable of love. Rather than thinking about the pain that the scandal would cause Emily, his son, and Susan, Kane growls, "There's only one person in the world to decide what I'm going to do, and that's me." Obsessed with gaining the love of the voters, Kane allows the scandal to be publicized, thus bringing a divorce from Emily, breaking his friendship with Leland, and even losing the election.

The last scene and the return to the present complicate matters. In the final scene Leland--drunk--awakens in his Chicago office to find Kane finishing the bad review

begun by Leland of Susan's premiere. Kane fires him, an action which throws added light on Leland's picture of Kane. Is Leland's picture biased from bitterness or does it remain accurate? When Leland tells Thompson that he did not even bother to answer a letter from Kane a few years earlier, we are led to suspect that he harbored no tender feelings for Kane. Nonetheless, the picture of Kane's failed love affairs in marriage and in politics inexorably moves us toward the conclusion that Kane was not simply the buoyant and charismatic figure that Bernstein and Thatcher described. When in Susan's section Leland's actions lead us to believe his idealism is sincere (he returns a $25,000 check to Kane with the original declaration of principles), that conclusion is reempahsized.

The final major section, described by Susan, settles the questions raised by the Leland section. If Leland's motives are possibly suspect, Susan's are not. Though she tells Thompson she still feels sorry for him, her version of Kane is the most grotesque and forbidding of the four. The Kane that Susan knew was a completely selfish person. "Everything was his idea," she tells Thompson, while nursing a drink in her second-rate Atlantic City night club, "except my leaving him." Unlike Leland's section, Susan's is entirely consistent, moving from her singing lessons and opening performance, through her excruciating opera tour and attempted suicide, to the isolating <u>ennui</u> of life at Xanadu until Susan finally decides to leave.

Welles and Herrmann use the carryover of Susan's voice to edit aurally the transition from her practice to her opening night. By showing Bernstein napping and Leland shredding his program, Welles visually comments on Susan's lack of talent. The most telling moment in the scene, however, is when Kane applauds almost alone after the curtain drops, his claps echoing conspicuously. Immediately following, Susan berates Kane in their hotel room about Leland's negative review. When a messenger gives Kane a letter from Leland bearing a torn-up check for $25,000 and the original copy of Kane's declaration of principles, a number of matters are clarified. As we have mentioned, this revelation gives added credence to Leland's picture of Kane. In addition, the return of the declaration of principles shows us either how far Kane had strayed and degenerated from his original intentions or how hypocritical and opportunistic he had always been.

The picture, however, darkens further. Kane forces Susan to continue singing. A montage documents her tour, which ends with a flashing light switching off and music dying, as if the plug of a phonograph had been pulled. This darkness and silence prefigure Susan's suicide attempt. Indeed, the next shot is a closeup of a bottle and a glass with a spoon in it, with Susan's bedroom in the background. When Susan regains consciousness, her face perspiring and pale, she says: "Charlie--I couldn't make you see how I

felt . . . . You don't know what it means to feel that the whole audience doesn't want you." Kane, though, knows exactly how it feels: it is becoming increasingly clear that his affliction is his inability to love, to live and to act in some human group.

Though he allows Susan to quit her singing, their life in Xanadu is no better. Susan plays with jigsaw puzzles before a huge baroque fireplace and dreams of New York social life. Kane, after Susan complains about having nothing to do, demands to have a party at the oceanside. At it he stays along with Susan inside a tent, where she challenges, "Oh, sure, you give me things, but that don't mean anything to you . . . . It's just money. It doesn't mean anything." Outside a black jazz musician sings woefully, "It can't be love." In the final scene, Susan packs her bags to leave Kane. The final comment on his utter inability to get outside of himself are the words he speaks to Susan as she readies to leave: "You mustn't go. You can't do this to me." As Kane stands in the doorway of Susan's room, whe walks down a hall, away from the camera, out of Kane's life.

Back with Thompson, Susan tells him that things have not been so tough for her, that she has just lost her money. Though she has no hints on Rosebud, she suggests that Thompson talk to Raymond, the butler at Xanadu. Thompson, the searcher, tells Susan that despite Kane's

actions, he feels a little sorry for him. Susan--whom Kane once described as "a cross-section of the American public"--looks up in surprise and says, "Don't you think I do?" As she drains her glass and comments on the approaching dawn, the camera pulls up and away, focussing finally on the sign atop Susan's night club.

Dissolving to the iron K on the entrance gate to Xanadu, Welles moves to the final section, in which Thompson gets some help from Raymond, then tries to place everything in perspective. In contrast to the opening newsreel, which placed Kane's life in its most public perspective, Raymond's short section shows the most private part of Kane's life. When Thompson asks him about Rosebud, Raymond tells about Kane's actions after Susan left him. The scene begins as the camera catches a cockatoo in the foreground screeching and flying away, then cuts to Susan walking out of her bedroom, thus picking up where Susan's story left off.

The dramatic tension is raised as Kane stands, alone in Susan's dollhouse bedroom, in utter disbelief that Susan would leave him. The sound track is silent. Then, slowly, Kane begins to tear apart the bedroom in a powerful frenzy, throwing out Susan's suitcases, ripping down the bed canopy, overturning furniture, sweeping ornaments from wall shelves. Finally, after successfully dismantling nearly everything in the room, the staggering and isolated Kane picks up the small crystal ball that we saw earlier in Susan's

apartment, whispering, "Rosebud," as tears well up in his eyes.

Outside the room, Raymond and the Xanadu staff stand watching with a mixture of horror and pity. Kane, ignoring them, walks stiffly by. Then in one of the most brilliantly conceived and executed shots of the film, Kane walks down a hall past two mirrors that reflect one another's image. As he slowly and painfully passes the mirrors, the camera catches multiple images of him reflecting deep into the screen. Not only is the shot a striking visual effect, but it also carries a symbolic comment on the man who has lost all hope of achieving a meaningful loving human relationship. Just as Kane's image is probed and reflected by the mirrors into infinity, so is Kane himself finally turning inward, painfully reaching the tragic conclusion that his wealth can never buy him love. In essence, as Kane begins to approach death alone, he is confronted with the same possibility which Major Amberson ponders in Ambersons, that "all his buying and building and trading and banking . . . was all trifling and a waste beside what concerned him now." Rosebud, which in part represents to Kane the innocence and infinite possibilities of childhood, offers him no solace in the present. Memory, instead of being the source of fulfillment in the life of an old man (as in How Green Was My Valley), has become a curse for Kane, simply the way of reflecting on lost possibilities in the past.

Back in the present Raymond tells Thompson that Kane also said "Rosebud" on his deathbed as he dropped the crystal ball. When he learns that his train will pick him up soon, Thompson prepares to leave Xanadu with his colleagues, the camera focussing on the accumulated possessions of Kane. Besides the crated statuary, the camera shows Mary Kane's stove, the loving cup that Inquirer employees gave Kane on his return from Europe, and one of Susan's puzzles, thus recapitulating elements from the film. Thompson, who says he, too, has been playing with a jigsaw puzzle, tells his colleagues that he never learned what Rosebud meant:

> Mr. Kane was a man who got everything he wanted and then lost it. Maybe Rosebud was something he lost. Anyway it wouldn't have explained anything. I don't think any word can explain a man's life. No, I guess Rosebud was just one piece in a jigsaw puzzle, a missing piece.

Then, to comment on Thompson's conclusion, we see workmen throwing useless items into a burning furnace. One of the objects is Kane's old sled from Colorado, the famous Rosebud. As it burns, the inscription becomes clearer in the flames, then begins to discolor. The secret of Rosebud is thus turned to ashes and smoke.

Much has been written defending or attacking the Rosebud ending. Welles himself has called the ending "dollar-book Freud,"[27] but I would argue that Rosebud is more important to the film as a structural device than as a source of the film's "meaning." Some would say that the

ending explains Kane's later inability to love by going back to that moment when Rosebud and his loving mother were taken from the youthful Charles by Thatcher. But I would prefer to take Thompson's statement, that Rosebud is "just one piece in a jigsaw puzzle," as a more accurate assessment. Rosebud provided a rationale for Thompson's quest but was not intended as the sole key to unlocking the film.

What comes after Rosebud is most often neglected. From the burning sled, Welles cuts to a low-angle shot of Xanadu's exterior, where the smoke generated from the burning sled pours from the chimney. The camera pans up, following the smoke, then pans down, capturing the entrance gate and, significantly, the sign reading NO TRESPASSING that was included in the first shot of the film. This is followed by a dissolve to the K on the entrance gate with Xanadu in the background. As Joseph McBride has noted, the juxtaposition of the sign with the K on the gate "forces us to acknowledge that although Kane's dilemma has been illuminated, the evidence is still open to consideration, and the mystery remains." The conclusion that Welles and Mankiewicz seemed to intend, and that the final shots effectively convey in visual terms, is stated more explicitly by Thompson in a speech from the screenplay that was excluded in the film. When a girl asks Thompson what he learned from his interviews, he was to comment ironically:

> Well--it's a very clear picture. He was the most honest man who ever lived with a streak of crookedness a yard wide. He was a liberal and a reactionary.

> He was a loving husband--and both of his wives left him. He had a gift of friendship such as few men have--and he broke his oldest friend's heart like you'd throw away a cigarette you were through with.[28]

In short, Kane was a man of complexity and contrasting emotions, a man about whom no simple conclusions are possible.

As I hope is clear by now, Kane is one of the most complex, innovative, and fascinating films in American film history, surely a culmination of the talking pictures that had been developing from 1927. Not only did Welles, with the assistance of people like Toland and Herrmann, break through the stylistic conventions of Hollywood, but he also broke through its conceptual structures. One need only contrast the complexity and depth of Kane with the more shallow characterization of another man of wealth and power treated in the same year, D.B. Norton, the fascist publisher and millionaire in Capra's Meet John Doe. Capra, as we have seen, created a Manichean world in his films by contrasting the good but vulnerable hero with the evil political or financial ogre. D.B. Norton, the cold, cunning, and calculating villain, is a sinister man without a humane bone in his body. He is an ideal symbolic portrayal of what leftists of the popular front considered a foe to progress, an enemy of the people.

The picture of the wealthy man in Kane breaks down these progressive (or popular front) structures into a more complex view of people, one which suggests that human

conflict is not always between people, but just as often inside of one person. Peter Cowie has summarized in simplest terms the two mutually opposed forces at work in Kane's consciousness: "Kane's megalomania drives him forward to new experiences, triumphs, and disasters; while an intimate longing for what Welles might term the 'lost paradise' of his childhood applies a brake to his headlong progress."[29] Though Kane did, through its portrayal of the unloved and hollow man of wealth and power, share something with the popular front, it also took a step forward. Through its deep-focus photography, its innovative use of sound, and its structural incorporation of multiple perspectives, Kane did much to go beyond the simple liberal faith in progress and "the people." Though it remains a liberal film, its liberalism rests on the belief that good and evil are inextricably entwined in every person's being, that the liberal must recognize the complexities of all people before he develops a formula for social change. The vision of Kane is not the conventional vision of popular art, but the inventive vision of some creative artists; and it is no surprise that after others began to reassess their liberalism of the late thirties during the war years, the complex vision of man as presented in Charles Foster Kane became dominant among America's "chastened" liberals in the postwar era. The difficulties and frustrations of the American Left in the late thirties demanded

a reassessment of mental catagories. Among its many other achievements, Kane provided just such a reassessment.

Perhaps because of its innovation and intellectual complexity, Kane was well received critically but a disappointment to RKO officials at the box office. The Nation, the New York Times, Commonweal, the New Yorker, and Newsweek all had high praise for the film. The most searching examination was provided by Otis Ferguson in the New Republic. In two reviews of the film he pointed out a number of weaknesses, praised the boldness of the production and the stylistic excitement, but argued that it did almost nothing to stir the emotions. His was one of the few dissents; but even so, he did give the film two reviews.[30]

Despite the incredible publicity over the Hearst controversy, Kane did only adequately with the public. Though it did well in New York, it was only average elsewhere, as people were flocking to see topical films like Sergeant York, Caught in the Draft, or The Great Dictator. At the end of the year it was not among the ten top-grossing films, bringing in slightly over a million dollars compared to 1.8 million for Meet John Doe (which was poor for a Capra film) and over four million in the U.S. and England for The Great Dictator.[31] With a production budget of over $800,000, the financial powers at RKO were not too pleased. Their displeasure became clear in Welles' next filmmaking venture.

III

In contrast to Kane, which derives at least a part of its fame from the fact that its director was granted complete control from studio officials, The Magnificent Ambersons is probably most often remembered as the potentially great masterpiece that was destroyed by studio interference. In many ways, Ambersons is an apt film for us to consider last. Not only does its dark, beautiful, and ambiguous content seem to signal the end of popular front optimism and relative simplicity that had influenced so many committed artists in the thirties, but the very fact of studio interference might also symbolize for some the beginning of the decline of the studio era. Throughout this study we have emphasized how four directors, each of whom in his own way was able to make his films with little studio interference, developed coherent and creative social motifs in his work. It is becoming more and more clear as time passes that among a number of other factors, one reason for Hollywood's decline in the late forties was its refusal to grant talented directors enough creative freedom to make films.[32]

Certainly Welles' problems with studio officials began with Ambersons. About halfway through the shooting of the picture, Pearl Harbor was bombed. At the same time RKO was in the midst of a power struggle which ended in the firing of George Schaefer, Welles' foremost defender in

the upper echelons of power. While Robert Wise edited Ambersons, Welles flew to Rio to shoot footage for a film called It's All True, to be made as a contribution to the war effort. When studio officials were dissatisfied with previews (the long film was probably previewed after an audience had already sat through another feature), they demanded that Ambersons be cut, but would not let Wise go to Rio so that he and Welles could cut the film together.

The result is well known. In Welles' words : "About forty five minutes were cut out--the whole heart of the picture really--for which the first part had been a preparation. . . . The film has a silly ending . . . just ridiculous . . . . It bears no relation to my script." Cut from an original 131 minutes to 88 minutes, Ambersons was released on the lower half of a double bill with a Lupe Velez comedy, Mexican Spitfire Sees a Ghost. Predictably, it was a critical and financial disaster. The New York Times critic seemed to speak for most Americans when he wrote:

> In a world brimful of momentous drama beggaring serious screen treatment, it does seem that Mr. Welles is imposing when he asks movie-goers to become emotionally disturbed over the decline of such minor-league aristocracy as the Ambersons represented in the late Eighteen-Seventies.[33]

Even though the film did not cater to the taste of the filmgoing public after we entered the war, it remains, for the first half at least, a beautiful example of filmmaking and of Welles' complex vision of the world. Though ravaged by studio meddling, like Stroheim's Greed, it is

nonetheless a fascinating and perceptive study of the changes in American life around the turn of the century. If Kane was primarily a psychological study of the contrary pulls within one person, Ambersons is more completely a sociological study of class mobility and change in industrial society.

The film is based on Booth Tarkington's novel of the same title, a book that Welles much admired. In some ways Welles' boyhood resembled George Amberson Minafer's. Both were gifted sons of wealthy parents, brought up in respectable Midwest society in the waning days of the genteel tradition. In addition, according to Joseph McBride, "the doomed romance between Eugene and Isabel Amberson, and the subsequent orphaning of her son, strongly reflects [sic] Welles' own childhood."[34] Welles may also have been attracted to the book because his father, like Eugene Morgan, had been an inventor.

Before working on the film, Welles had done a radio broadcast of Ambersons with Walter Huston on October 29, 1939. After Kane, Welles wrote the script for Ambersons in days, no doubt aided by the radio script. Shooting lasted from October 28, 1941, to January 22, 1942, after which Welles left for Rio and his problems with the studio began.

An earlier adaptation of the novel, called Pampered Youth (1925), had been directed by David Smith. The novel itself was published in 1918, the middle of Tarkington's loosely conceived trilogy called Growth (the other two

novels were The Turmoil, 1915, and The Midlander, 1923). Tarkington had long been one of the most popular genteel novelists, both of children's and of adult fiction. Ambersons became an immediate success upon publication, winning the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1919.

The film follows the novel quite closely, using dialogue directly from the book and recreating descriptions faithfully. Nonetheless, the film leaves the viewer with a different impression from the one he gets from the book.[35] Instead of emphasizing growth in epic terms, Welles' version--due in part to the film's unique style--stresses the ambiguity of social change and develops a complex attitude toward each of the major characters. By looking first at the style and then at the thematic development, we can see how Welles achieved this differing, complex point of view.

One of the most striking elements of Ambersons from an aesthetic point of view is its photography. After Toland's creative work in Kane, Welles was fortunate enough to have Stanley Cortez do an equally effective job on Ambersons. Cortez, who had worked for several portrait photographers in the twenties before becoming a cameraman, was chosen by Welles because of some of his work at Universal. After being asked over the phone on a Friday to come to Hollywood, Cortez left New York on a Sunday, arrived in California and met Welles on Monday, and began work on Teusday morning. The first scene he shot, Eugene Morgan's speech on automobiles at the Amberson dinner table, was

such a success that Welles immediately developed a rapport with Cortez.[36]

The two most important aspects of Cortez' photography are the depth of focus--building on Toland's work--and the intricate lighting. Though the depth of focus is important in many shots, two of the most striking examples are at the end of the ball, where Isabel and Eugene dance in full view as Lucy and George sit together at the base of the stairs, and again in the long kitchen scene where Fanny, George, and later Uncle Jack discuss family matters. Though these two scenes are also subtly lit, another shot stands out as an example of the careful lighting. It occurs when Isabel Amberson is on her deathbed and a lace curtain makes an intricate webbed pattern on her face. As the nurse asks George to leave, she pulls the curtains more closely together, and Isabel's face becomes even darker. Taken as a whole, the indoor shots of the Amberson mansion exhibit a rare technical skill on the part of Cortez and Welles.

This visual technique, however skillful, also is more than technique. Paraphrasing Sartre, Andre Bazin has argued that all technique in art refers back to a metaphysical conception.[37] The most important element of the Wellesian style, he feels, is the depth of focus, which added an entirely new conception to the language of film. By allowing the audience to see clearly objects and characters both in the foreground and deep in the background, Bazin argues, depth of focus created a new type of editing.

This "editing in depth," as he calls it, is in direct contrast to the montage theories of Eisenstein. Instead of using montage, by which the director has the audience focus on those images he wants them to see (which Capra as much as Eisenstein used), Welles used this editing in depth, which consisted of shots lengthy in duration and full of activity within the frame.

According to Bazin, three aesthetic consequences result from editing in depth. First of all, the spectator is brought into a "relation closer to that which he enjoys with reality." Second, arising from the first principle, editing in depth presupposes both "a more active mental attitude on the part of the spectator and a more positive contribution on his part to the action in progress." In other words, the director using deep focus presents a variety of actions to which the spectator is exposed. Depth of focus thus demands a more active and attentive spectator. From these two psychological principles stems a third one one which Bazin calls "metaphysical." Instead of presupposing but one interpretation of any dramatic event, as did montage, "depth of focus reintroduced ambiguity into the structure of the image."[38] Because long takes and deep focus present many actions that no one person can entirely encompass, the result is a film whose content is ambiguous. If we consider both Kane and Ambersons, in particular the ambiguity surrounding Charles Foster Kane, George Amberson Minafer, and Eugene Morgan, one can not help but agree with

Bazin's suggestion--which seems bold and untenable at first glance--that technique refers back to metaphysical conception. It is clear that the style of both films is organically suited to the complexity and ambiguity--in short, the contrarieties--of Welles' world view.

The sound track reinforces that ambiguity, in part by becoming more realistic. One of the outcomes of deep focus photography was that it became more realistic by more nearly approximating what the human eye can focus upon. In the sound track of Ambersons, the same principle is invoked at times when the microphones pick up several conversations at once, all in varying volume. The most notable example occurs when Eugene and Lucy Morgan leave the Amberson ball early in the film. As Uncle Jack and George talk in the foreground, Eugene and Isabel are saying goodbye in the middle ground, while Aunt Fanny and Lucy exchange pleasantries in the background. The effect is similar to the buzz of conversation one hears in a busy restaurant. Such conversation surely comes closer to reproducing what the ear hears in everday life; it also creates ambiguity because the listener must choose to devote his attention to one conversation or another. Because the ear, like the eye, must fasten on one perspective, the Wellesian sound track in Ambersons at times helps to underline the ambiguity central to the film.

The action of the film traces the decline of a Midwestern aristocratic family at the turn of the century, due

largely to the rise of industrialism and the social changes it engenders. As the camera dwells on an ornate Victorian house and a horse-drawn street car in the opening shot, Welles narrates: "The magnificence of the Ambersons began in 1873. It lasted through all the years that saw their Midland town spread and darken into a city." After some amusing shots tracing the fashion changes over the years and introducing Eugene Morgan, Isabel Amberson, and Wilbur Minafer (whom Isabel marries), we see young George Amberson Minafer, Isabel's son and a "holy terror," ride down Main Street on his pony cart, hair in curls, harassing workmen and fighting other small boys. George is a representative of the third-generation wealthy, a boy who wantonly squanders the fortune earned by his grandfather, Major Amberson. After townsmen, acting almost as a Greek chorus, express their hope that George will get his "comeuppance," Welles cuts to an older George, now in college, riding down the street in a carriage, but just as recklessly.

When George returns for the holidays during his sophomore year of college, a ball is held in his honor. "This . . . pageant of the tenantry," intones Welles, "was the last of the great long-remembered dances that everybody talked about." This ball sequence that follows is one of the most poetic and beautifully nostalgic sequences in the history of the cinema, with its depth photography, its tracking camera, its complex choreography of character placement, and its totally appropriate music. Here the

characters are introduced: Lucy Morgan catches George's fancy, Eugene once again courts Isabel, Fanny shows pleasure at Eugene's nominal attentions. In one precisely composed shot, in which George and Eugene are introduced, the two men are on either side of the screen, while Isabel, the character who is later to be torn emotionally between love of her son and the marriage proposal of Eugene, stands strategically in the center. Throughout this sequence, George proves his arrogance as he tells Lucy about the inferiority of all the "queer-looking ducks" at the party. Unbeknownst to George, Lucy's father is one of the objects of his scorn. During this opening part of the film, the Ambersons are still magnificent.

That magnificence continues for one more sequence, during which George gives Lucy a sleigh ride while Eugene tries to prove to Isabel, Fanny, and Uncle Jack Amberson that his automobile can travel even in snow. At the start, Lucy and George ride along without trouble, sleigh bells jingling, while Eugene struggles to get his stalled car operating again. Suddenly, George upsets the sleigh and his horse, Pendennis, drags it empty toward home. With the help of George's halfhearted pushing, Eugene gets his horseless carriage running and all ride home together. To signal that the decline of the Ambersons is about to begin Welles focusses on the car moving away in the distance, closing with an iris shot that first circles the car, then engulfs it in darkness.

This much of the film Welles claims credit for. Indeed, its alternation between the narrator's overview, the comments of the townsmen, and the actions of the main characters themselves provides a balanced and varying perspective on the family and "their" town. The pace--particularly in the ball scene--is leisurely and graceful, a perfect flow that itself recreates nostalgia.

From this moment on, however, actions move with a forced rapidity in following the decline of the Ambersons. First, from the iris shot of the traveling automobile, Welles cuts to the door of the Amberson mansion, where a wreath hangs to note Wilbur Minafer's death. Then follows the long kitchen scene, comprising only one shot, of George teasing Fanny. Jack enters and after Fanny leaves weeping, Jack scolds George for teasing her. Welles then cuts to Morgan's car factory, where Eugene is giving Fanny, Isabel, and George a tour. Eugene's affection for Isabel is becoming more clear. The next scene, which includes a long tracking shot, starts with Morgan's car going by, followed by George and Lucy in George's carriage. He is frustrated in his plans to marry Lucy because he won't adopt a profession. Then, after the camera allows George's carriage to pass by, it captures the Major and Jack in theirs, talking about how the Major's wealth is shrinking due to George's spending.

At the dinner scene at the Ambersons, the conversation turns to automobiles. When George blurts out that

"automobiles are a useless nuisance," heads turn in response to the challenge. Eugene, responding calmly, gives a speech taken almost verbatim from the novel:

> I'm not sure George is wrong about automobiles. With all their speed forward they may be a step backward in civilization. May be that they won't add to the beauty of the world or the life of men's souls, I'm not sure. But automobiles have come and almost all outward things are going to be different because of what they bring. They're going to alter war and they're going to alter peace. And men's minds are going to be changed in subtle ways because of automobiles. It may be that George is right . . . that in twenty or thirty years from now, if we can see the inward change of men by that time, I should not be able to defend the gasoline engine but would have to agree with George, that automobiles had no business to be invented.[39]

Eugene then excuses himself and leaves. This scene, by making the conflict between George and Eugene explicit, foreshadows the conflict in their subsequent attempts to win Isabel's favor.

The rest of the film presents George's frustration of Isabel's love for Eugene, leading her to an early death, and the steady decline of the Amberson fortunes. After Fanny tells George in one of the striking staircase scenes that the townspeople are gossiping about Eugene and Isabel he first charges to a neighbor's house for proof, then turns away Morgan at the front door of the mansion. When Morgan writes to Isabel asking her not to reject him a second time, she lets George read the letter. Again he refuses, then goes with Isabel on a world tour. Upon their return, the weak and pale Isabel dies almost immediately after

Eugene is again denied a visit, her face enshrouded by the shadows of the lace curtains.

The final scenes, taken out of their original sequence with the ending changed, move with nearly ridiculous speed. Major Amberson dies, leaving a worthless estate. Jack says goodby to George at the railway station. In the Morgan's garden Lucy and Eugene stroll, Lucy renouncing George by telling a parable about Chief Runs-Down-Everything. After Fanny hysterically tells George that she has lost all her money through bad investments, he goes to Lawyer Bronson's office, telling him that he must give up plans of becoming a lawyer. A montage of the ugly face of the city follows as George walks despondently home, then prays for forgiveness at his mother's bed. Next, George is injured in a car accident, which seems to be immediate punishment for his misdeeds. In the novel George works four years as a nitroglycerin expert before he is hit by the car, and in the original ending the accident more sensibly follows Lucy's renunciation scene. When Lucy and Eugene read of the accident, first Lucy and then Eugene leave for the hospital. In the final shot, Eugene comes out of George's hospital room and while walking with Fanny down the hall, says that George asked for forgiveness that that he (Eugene) finally felt as if he had been true at last to his one true love. The conclusion, accompanied by upbeat romantic chords and a closeup of Fanny smiling, is

ludicrous. Welles planned to have Eugene visit Fanny at a boarding house, talk over George and Lucy's impending marriage, then get into his car and take a last look back at Fanny with the skyline of the changed city in the background.[40]

One of the most skillful visual strategies in the film was Welles' use of Eugene's automobiles and George's carriages to portray the rise of industrialism that accompanies the decline of the Ambersons. The first automobile seen in the film is the primitive contraption that the young Eugene mounts after being turned away by Isabel at the opening of the film. As we have seen, George's first entrances are with horse and carriage: first the child's pony cart, then the young man's riding carriage. Except for Eugene's vehicles, only carriages are seen on the streets during the early part of the film, and each character becomes closely identified with his type of conveyance and the values it represents.

The snow-riding scene places the sleigh and auto in direct contrast. At first, the car is stalled and Pendennis easily pulls the sleigh on the snowy road. The tipping of the sleigh, which makes George ride back to town with Lucy and the others in the car, however, foreshadows the increasing reliance upon the automobile during the rest of the film. In the long tracking scene down Main Street, it is significant that the automobile goes first and only later do George and Lucy follow by carriage. After Eugene courts

Isabel in part by taking her on a tour of his car factory (a strange form of courtship!), it is apt that George should develop the intense animosity toward cars that leads to his outburst at the dinner table. But as Eugene says, "automobiles are here to stay": in the scene where Lucy and George walk down the street before George's trip, three cars are reflected in store windows for every carriage that passes. When George is finally injured by a car collision, the industrial age has officially come, just as the Amberson fortunes have hit rock bottom.

As important as the car-horse conflict is the visual presence of the Amberson mansion. At the beginning of the film, its ornate woodwork, glittering chandeliers, massive rooms, and exquisite furnishings establish just how magnificent the Ambersons actually were. Decorated during the ball, it almost becomes a character itself. As the film progresses, a number of key scenes are held either at the front door (where Eugene is denied access to the house by George) or at the stairway (where Fanny prods George and where Eugene is again rebuffed after Isabel's return from Europe). By the end of the film, the Amberson fortune is gone and the family's demise is symbolized by the increasing shabbiness of the house. When Fanny tells George of her financial state, they walk together through four rooms of the house, the furniture covered with sheets, awaiting sale to pay off the Major's debts. As the family fortunes go, so goes the house. According to Charles Higham, this

visual decline of the Amberson mansion was originally to have been stressed even more by having the Major sell lots on his estate (as he does in the novel) and by including several scenes where the Ambersons sit on their front porch discussing the fortunes of the family and the growth of the city.[41]

Because so much of Welles' original film has been edited, it is difficult to know what his point of view toward the film really was. In some ways Ambersons is Welles' How Green Was My Valley, his study of the historical change from the recent past to the present. Unlike Ford, however, Welles does not rely solely on memory and nostalgia. Nor does he, like Tarkington, endorse the blackening of the city and the decline of the Ambersons as a necessary but temporary stage in American economic progress.[42] Rather, it would be more accurate to say that, as in Kane, Welles took an ambiguous and complex stance toward his subject, recognizing that no simple answers to familial and technological change could be given.

We have already seen how the introduction of deep-focus photography contributes to such an ambiguity. So too does the multiple perspective of the film. The interaction between characters provides one perspective, while the comments of the townspeople (as in O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra) and the omniscient narrative of Welles himself contribute other perspectives.

Though probably no one will ever be able, because of studio interference, to know precisely what Welles intended in Ambersons, it is clear that his vision of industrial change was much darker than Tarkington's. On the other hand, he refuses to bask in nostalgic memories like Ford. The ambiguity in his attitude is apparent in the mixture of disdain and later sympathy with which he treats George. In addition, though Eugene is sympathetically drawn from the start, Welles seems to ask why Morgan continues to manufacture automobiles if they will possibly be a "step backward" in civilization. If one can visualize mentally the montage of George walking through the city, which was much longer in the rough cut of the film, and the original final scene of Eugene getting ready to drive off in his car with the despoiled city in the background, one gets the sense of the complexity with which Welles viewed his subject. True, the old times were gone, but the new times, Welles seemed to be saying, have brought on completely new and possibly more difficult problems. Thus Welles' is a distinctly modern vision, involved as it is with the issues of the American love of the automobile and the ravaging effect it has on the environment.

F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote that "the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind, at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." By accepting the inevitability of social change while at the same time questioning its

consequences, by both criticizing his characters and retaining a sympathy for them, by holding a curious nostalgia for the past and yet realizing the inadequacy of nostalgia, Welles displayed this type of first-rate intelligence rarely found in the American cinema of the thirties.

IV

As should be evident by now, the social vision presented by Welles in Kane and Ambersons represents a distinct departure from the images and myths expressed by Capra, Ford, and even Chaplin. In part because of his youth and social background--he was born after Ford and Chaplin came to Hollywood and was the only child of an upper-class family among the four directors we are examining--Welles saw the world very differently from Ford and Capra, who both were socialized in middle-class values through their formal education and their constant attempts to create popular film entertainment. Welles, in contrast, had very little formal schooling, did a lot of traveling even as a young boy, and was so prodigiously gifted that he flew from success to success as an actor, theatrical director, and radio broadcaster before entering Hollywood. Coming to intellectual maturity in New York during the depression, Welles was influenced by the aesthetic experimentalism and political radicalism of the New York theater culture.

It is no surprise, then, that Welles would create a work so completely different from the conventional

Hollywood product as Citizen Kane. In that film, as Richard Pells has suggested, Welles "managed to transform the themes and techniques of the era's films into a genuinely 'radical' work of art--if not in the sense of politics or ideology, then in the way one's customary perceptions of the world might be shaken and revised."[43] By unifying stylistic and structural innovations with a fresh and vivid story of an American tycoon, Welles created a lasting and provocative film monument .

Both the psychologically-oriented Kane and the sociologically-oriented Ambersons presented disturbing views of America and of human nature that failed to draw the necessary customers. Pells has argued that Welles, like Lewis Mumford, Reinhold Niebuhr, and James Agee, "was offering Americans an unfamiliar and uncomfortable view of their world at precisely a time when they hungered for whatever seemed tranquil and routine."[44] And as we have seen, Americans in 1941 and 1942 were seeking the complacent affirmations and uncomplicated courage of characters like John Doe, Sergeant York, and Mrs. Miniver, not the enigmatic complexity of a Kane or the humbled arrogance of George Amberson Minafer.

Thus the recurring trends and patterns in Welles' work--the stylistic innovations, the complex characters, the ambiguous, almost detached, perspectives--do not lead us to generalizations about middle-class values, as they did for Capra and Ford, except negatively. The Wellesian

social vision tells us more about what the mass audience did not want than about what it did.

First of all, the middle-class audience did not want the ambiguity inherent in Welles' deep-focus style. Both Kane and Ambersons use this stylistic device, which, as Bazin noted, challenges the idea that an event has but a single meaning and demands that the viewer become an active participant in analyzing the film's meaning. As the war began, Americans were becoming more accustomed to the settled definition of the American Way of Life and were happier to see it clearly defined and then victorious over the forces of evil in films.

The question of evil leads to a second Welleisan pattern that audiences had difficulty accepting. Instead of presenting the conflict between good and evil as one between clearly definable groups and value systems (Oakies-landowners, Grandpa Vanderhof-Kirby, Barber-Hynkel), Welles found both good and evil within one character. Charles Foster Kane, for example, appears at times to be a humanitarian voice of the people, but we later learn that his benevolent social impulses may only have been his way of getting the love he could acquire in no other way. In Welles' own words, Kane was "selfish and selfless, an idealist, a scoundrel, a very big man and a very little one."[45] This view of divided people, created at a time when one was either antifascist or fascist, for or against

the people, was predictably puzzling and unsettling to audiences.

Finally, Welles' distinct view of American society and social change was stillborn at a time when American audiences wanted to praise, not critically analyze, their industrial and urban nation. The picture of America emerging from Kane is one in which the wealthy and powerful have a disproportionate sway over the lives of their fellow citizens, even though they may be unfulfilled and spiritually hollow. The heterogeneity of the culture is stressed by having a diverse group of people reconstruct the story of Charlie Kane's life. In Ambersons Welles focusses specifically on the drift from a small-town and rural America to an urban industrial nation. Recognizing that nostalgia was an inadequate response to the problems wrought by technological change, Welles could provide no solutions, but only a gloomy presentation of telephone wires, shabby tenements, and towering smokestacks spewing forth their noxious waste, all necessary byproducts of industrial "progress." Though the war had begun, Welles was too much a realist to believe that America's problems would end when foreign enemies had been subdued. This bleak view of American industrial society, like the recurring ambiguity engendered by editing in depth and the complex characters in his films, makes Welles' work fascinating, provocative, and distinctly unpopular.

This is not to say that Welles was actively scornful of popular audiences. Rather, as a newcomer to Hollywood, he tried to continue the innovative verve that had made him a success in New York during the thirties. There is a measure of playful humor in Kane, as when Bernstein and Leland move Kane's belongings into the Inquirer office, or in Ambersons when George tells Lucy he wants to be a yachtsman. There is a measure of truth, then, in Pauline Kael's suggestion that Kane is the culmination of the "thirties comedy."[46] Nevertheless, Welles was less concerned with making popular Hollywood films than with developing on film his own perception of the world.

Rather than judging Welles in terms of the mass filmgoing audience of the thirties, it is much more profitable to see how his vision of complexity, ambiguity, and irony compares to currents of thought among American intellectuals during World War Two and its aftermath. Particularly in terms of American social and historical thought, Welles' social vision seems to ge a forerunner of later developments. As John Higham has pointed out, from the American Revolution to World War Two, most American historians "assumed that the underlying movement of American his tory was in the direction of improvement or betterment, not only in wealth but in freedom or happiness."[47] This unrelenting belief in social progress, rooted in the Enlightenment, seemed tenable until well into the 20th century.

As we have seen in the chapters on Ford, however, the persistance of anomalies--particularly the breakdown of the economy, the problems posed by urban industrialism, and fascist threats--began to throw doubt upon the fundamental assumptions of the progressive paradigm. In the case of Ford, whose films reflected many of these progressive categories, the anomalies were apparent in his treatment of past and present America: they were optimistic when dealing with the past (Drums) and pessimistic about modern America (Grapes). By World War Two it had become apparent that social progress throughout history was not inevitable.

Rather than accepting the progressive categories, Welles developed in his first two films a point of view which resembles what Gene Wise has called the "counter-progressive" paradigm. As a response to the increasing world tensions, the counter-progressives abandoned simple notions of progress and of conflict between clearly defined groups. In their place, they suggested that human existence was a much more complex affair. By developing a psychological approach, the counter-progressives focussed on the conflict within one man's mind rather than the conventional progressive notion of conflict between contending groups. In addition, some counter-progressives, notably Reinhold Niebuhr in The Irony of American History, stressed that much of human activity is ironic, that good intentions can often bring evil consequences, while evil intentions may even lead to good consequences. The major and most

enduring achievement of the counter-progressives was to develop a scheme that took into account the complexity of the human mind.[48]

It is easy to see how Kane and Ambersons reflect a vision of the world similar to that of the counter-progressive paradigm. Charles Foster Kane is himself a man torn within himself, a man of contradictory thoughts, emotions, and impulses. In Ambersons, Fanny Minafer displays the same sort of complexity, at some times selfishly undermining the relationship between Isabel and Eugene, at others trying to promote their love. Also in Ambersons, Welles calls into question the idea of social progress: Eugene Morgan's speech on the effects of automobiles, as well as the increasingly polluted urban environment, clearly call into question that primary progressive assumption.

One might even profitably compare Welles' stylistic innovations, particularly his editing in depth, to the new conceptual framework developed by the counter-progressives. Andre Bazin has argued that the contrasting styles of Ford and Capra on the one hand, and of Welles on the other, display their drastically different views of the world:

> The world of Ford and Capra . . . can be defined on the basis of their scenarios, their themes, of the dramatic effects they looked for, the scenes they chose for inclusion in any given film. For Orson Welles, on the contrary, editing with depth of field becomes an integral part of the screenplay . . . . With this technique, cinema moves one step further away from the theatre, becoming less of a spectacle and more of a narrative; as in the novel, in effect it is the language that confers meaning.[49]

This change in style, this new development in the language of the cinema, contributes to a radically different perception of the world. In the same way, the new counter-progressive conceptual models of analysis, by taking into account the complexity of the human mind and of necessity rejecting simple notions of progress, were accompanied by fundamentally different interpretations of American history. Both Welles and the counter-progressive historians were responding to the uncertain world of economic depression, leftist disillusionment, and Nazi atrocity.

The world of Orson Welles is thus not the world of the American popular audience in 1941 but rather, as he has said, a world of "vertigo, uncertainty, and lack of stability." Much more similar to the thought of many postwar American intellectuals, the twice-born, chastened liberals, the Wellesian social vision had little chance of popular acceptance in 1941 among the American moviegoing public, despite the energy and vitality with which he presented it. Though Welles was accused by die-hard leftists of abandoning his liberal principles, just as many postwar American intellectuals were charged with capitulating too easity to Cold War "realism," their responses to the times judged from an historical perspective, are understandable. Welles deserves the criticism less than many historians, and Kane remains a lasting monument in American film hisremains a lasting monument in American film history, both summing up past achievements and pointing forward to new

ones (most particularly to the film noir genre that flourished in the decade after Kane). One who views these ironic and ambiguous early films of Orson Welles, with all their portrayals of morality and opportunism, their quest for power and desire for love, their nostalgia for the past and future ambitions, their material splendor and spiritual hollowness, will likely agree with Joseph McBride that "if Welles is to be defined at all . . ., it will be in terms of his contradictions."[50]

In creating this new perception of the world through a bold and innovative style, Welles was carrying on the tradition of the self-reliant American individualist. If he didn't know it then, he seems recently to have become conscious of the fact. Perhaps the best way to conclude our analysis of Orson Welles is to note some of his comments from his recent AFI Life Achievement Award acceptance speech:

> There are a few of us left in this conglomerated world of ours who still trudge stubbornly along the lonely rocky road and this is, in fact, our contrariety.
>
> We don't move nearly as fast as our cousins on the freeway. We don't even get as much accomplished, just as the family-sized farm can't possibly raise as many crops or get as much profit as the agricultural factory of today.
>
> What we do come up with has no special right to call itself better. It's just different. No, if there's any excuse for us at all it's that we're simply following the old American tradition of maverick. And we are a vanishing breed. This honor I can only accept in the name of the mavericks.[51]

FILMS, FILMMAKERS, AND CULTURE

> The film is an art evolved from the spiritual foundation of technics and, therefore, all the more in accordance with the problems in store for it.
>
> --Arnold Hauser

After surveying the travails of the tramp, the harmonious families of Ford, the articulate and humane Capra hero, and the bold innovations of Orson Welles, we have one step left. In the Preface we noted that the auteur theory could be most enlightening if it had a broader historical and sociological base and took into account the concept of culture. By viewing the films of an effective director as products of a man growing up in and influenced by a particular way of life, and as imaginative narratives aimed at a popular audience, we suggested that it would be possible to make more careful observations about the relationships among a film, its maker, and the culture in which he worked. In this final chapter I shall attempt to make more explicit the relationship between the films of Chaplin, Ford, Capra, and Welles and American culture between 1936 and 1941, as well as to suggest how these directors compare with several contemporary American directors in their attempts to make sense of and comment upon life in their modern industrial society.

To identify the connections between art and culture is no simple task. The roots of the idea that art and society are interrelated lie in the nineteenth century, particularly in the work of Taine and Marx. Taine approached a work of art as a product of "race, moment, and milieu": that is, of national character, the age or period, and the general social climate. In a more comprehensive idea, Marx argued that all products of culture (law, politics, art, religion, philosophy, education), which he called the superstructure, were determined by the particular means of production in society, the base. Though there are indications that Marx himself qualified that formulation in regard to literature, the base-superstructure division has led to a good deal of simplistic, reductionist Marxist literary criticism. Practiced by such American critics as Granville Hicks and Joseph Freeman in the thirties, this criticism judged art on the basis of its political tendencies, making heroes of Philip Freneau and Jack London for their democratic sympathies, castigating Poe and Henry James for their elitism. In both England and America the simplicity of Marxist criticism in the thirties was quickly overshadowed by formalist methods (the "new criticism"), which isolated the work of art, studying it as an object apart from "extrinsic" factors. The more complex understanding of the work of art itself displayed by formalist criticism set back criticism of the work in its broadly cultural context until political and social controversies in the sixties

reopened an interest in the relationship between culture and art.

Recently, in an essay criticizing the Marxist notion of base and superstructure as applied to literature, British cultural critic Raymond Williams made some useful theoretical distinctions in attempting to work out the relationship between art and culture more systematically. The primary assumption for the cultural critic is that "in any society, in any particular period, there is a central system of practices, meanings, and values, which we can call dominant and effective." This dominant effective culture is comprised of basic commonly held assumptions about man and the world, about the nature of reality, and about actions which result from these meanings and values. In terms of the sociology of knowledge, the dominant effective culture corresponds to the official "symbolic universe" of any society, the definitions of reality that legitimate the existing order. It is important to note that the dominant culture is a process, continually changing and adjusting over time.[2]

In addition to the dominant culture, Williams postulates that every society also has residual and emergent cultures. A residual culture is a set of meanings and values that cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture, but "are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue--cultural as well as social--of some previous social formation." A fundamentalist religious group in a modern society is one example of a residual

culture. In contrast to the residual culture, which looks backward in time for its definition of reality, is the emergent culture, which looks forward. The emergent culture is "the new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experiences" that are continually being created by people in their interaction with environment. The literary modernists in the early 20th century might be called emergent artists. Both residual and emergent values and meanings may be incorporated into the dominant culture or be expressed in terms of alternative or opposition cultures.[3] As Williams notes, however, the modern industrial state since World War Two, because of the powerful social character of labor, communications, and centralized decision making, increasingly incorporates emergent and residual forms of culture into the effective dominant culture.

With these distinctions in mind, the cultural critic must first identify and explain the meanings, values, and practices that make up the dominant culture. Realizing that a culture is a social totality, he will know not only that the arts of writing, creation, and performance are related to the dominant culture, but also that they often "contribute to the effective dominant culture and are a central articulation of it."[4] Finally, when he approaches a work of art, he treats it not as an object, but as a practice, a symbolic response of a person or a group living and acting in society. By analyzing both the active

composition of the work and the conditions of its composition, the cultural critic will be able to place it in its cultural context, whether it expresses dominant, residual or emergent meanings and values.

Though America is one of the most heterogenous countries in the world and has a number of identifiable subcultures, it is still possible to identify certain characteristics of the effective dominant American culture by referring to work done in American national character. That dominant culture is the expression of American middle-class values, rooted in the white Anglo-Saxon (one might add, male) traditions. It is also influenced by the facts that America lacked the feudal tradition which Europeans had to contend with, that it derived its liberal political ideals from the Enlightenment philosophers, and that it possessed a large area of free land and abundant natural resources that represented a challenge and opportunity for ambitious citizens.

Though it would be impossible to give a full exposition of the dominant American cultural values in a short space, one might posit that nearly all of them relate to Calvinism or to Enlightenment political thought as altered to fit American circumstances by the Founding Fathers, most notably by Jefferson. As we have seen in the chapter on Capra, one of the legacies from Calvinism was the stress on hard work, which led gradually to a strong success ethic and a high value placed on material wealth (though not on

wanton expenditure; that was to come with Veblen's leisure class). A second and contradictory value, which developed as a way for the clergy to keep a level of social control over wealthy merchants, was the importance of social piety, of humanitarian concern of the wealthy for the rest of society. Finally, the Puritans had strict sexual mores which have been widely shared by many Protestants throughout our history.

From the Enlightenment American culture received most of its political ideals and much of its faith in science, technology, and social improvement. Among the values listed by Robin Williams in an attempt to isolate the central American value-orientation were beliefs in the unique worth of every person, equality of opportunity, freedom, democracy, science and secular rationality, efficiency, and progress. In addition, nationalism or patriotism has become a strongly held value periodically throughout our history.[5]

These are the <u>ideal</u> values of the dominant American culture, those which are proudly expressed and accepted, at least intellectually. Every culture also has <u>operative</u> values, however, those which are actually practiced and which at times contradict the professed ideal values. In American life, racism and nativism--the systematic exclusion of racial and ethnic groups from full participation in the society--have often been the operative values contradicting the ideal values of equal opportunity and democracy. In addition, the professed value of freedom

has often either been rendered meaningless or at least been frustrated by the operative value of conformity (and coercive pressure forced on those who refuse that conformity). Finally, as we have noted, the values inherited from Calvinism contain an inner contradiction: a man is trained by the Calvinist ethic to work aggressively, then is implored by the Christian humanitarian ideals to curb that same competitive spirit.[6] In spite of these contradictions, the typical outlook of the dominant middle-class American culture has been one of optimism, pride in national ideals and goals, and a feeling that society is gradually progressing to a better state through reason and freedom.

As Raymond Williams noted, an effective dominant culture is active, constantly altering and shifting as a response to changing historical conditions. This was particularly true in the late thirties. Some values--the stress on hard work, material accumulation, success and acnievement--had to be downplayed in many quarters as the economic collapse made the fulfillment of these values virtually impossible. In contrast, the values of democracy and freedom (loosely defined) and especially of nationalism became much more pronounced in the thirties, in part as a response to challenges posed by foreign totalitarianism, in part by a concerted effort by many to rediscover America's past. Many of the declamations about freedom and democracy remained on the ideal level as blacks particularly suffered in the depression and black soldiers

remained segregated from whites throughout World War Two.

By using Williams' distinctions of dominant, residual, and emergent cultures, we can more precisely relate the films of Chaplin, Ford, Capra, and Welles to American life in the late thirties. As we have already seen, Ford and Capra owed much of their success as directors to their ability to create images and myths that appealed to the mass American audience. Their styles were unobtrusive, always subordinated to the themes and stories they were intent on portraying. Certainly their films for the most part expressed meanings and values that were a part of the dominant American culture. But as he have also seen, the Ford and Capra films were critical of certain elements in American culture. In Grapes of Wrath the villains were those who tore the Joads from their agrarian existence, thus permanently disrupting their way of life. Throughout Capra's films about America, the forces of evil were those of the greedy, the egotistic, and those who relentlessly sought wealth and power. Against that group--which represented elements of the dominant American culture which stood on shaky grounds in the thirties--Capra posed his hero, who stood for community, good neighborliness, idealism, and kindness, all apparent virtues of the American small town in the 19th century. Because both Ford and Capra portrayed an ideal that was based not on 20th-century industrial urban society but on 19th-century agrarian

society, it is apparent that their visions were part of a residual culture that was easily incorporated into the effective dominant culture.[7]

What this means in practice is that Capra and Ford, though they for the most part preferred things as they used to be and believed they could be re-formed again in that same way, both refused to challenge the basic goodness of the system. For example, the most harmonious society in the Ford films we observed was the pioneer community in Drums Along the Mohawk. When that way of life was shattered, as in Grapes of Wrath and How Green Was My Valley, Ford's solution was not to alter the society but to find fulfillment in memories or to trust the resilient ability of the people to survive through hart times. Likewise, the source of Capra's most fulfilling values were the small town (Deeds), the personal integrity of the father of the Capra hero (Smith) or heroine (Doe), the spontaneity of a grandfather (You Can't), or the sagacity of a 300-year-old Catholic priest-turned-guru (Lost Horizon). In some ways, Capra was more explicitly a traditionalist than Ford; his solution for dealing with the greedy villains was to convert them to the American humanitarian tradition. Though both Ford and Capra at times protested, like Doe, against the "state of modern civilization," neither felt strong opposition to the dominant culture, the one into which they were socialized and in which they succeeded. One might conclude that Capra and Ford both recognized the overt

values of the dominant culture, many of which were residual values first formulated for an agrarian society. Though Ford in his historical films laid a greater stress on progress and hard work (especially in Drums) than Capra, it was basically the traditional values of American political ideals, nationalism, and small-town humanitarianism that both expressed in their films.

In the case of Chaplin and Welles, however, we are dealing with two artists who were much less attuned to the dominant American culture. Whereas Capra and Ford were popular artists who derived much of their appeal by presenting dominant values in attractive packages, such was not the case with Chaplin and Welles. Neither had the middle-class upbringing or the public education which would have more fully socialized them into the values of the dominant American culture, and Chaplin was not even born an American. Though it is true that Chaplin was an extremely popular artist, it should be remembered that his early popularity as often as not was with lower-class audiences who found the tramp's irreverent attitude toward "respectable" culture highly amusing. Another reason for Chaplin's popularity was his tramp's contradictory appearance, which, coupled with his graceful, almost acrobatic carriage, made his appeal much broader than to one single class or one constellation of values. Welles, as we have seen, was not a particularly popular artist at all. His first two films drew much less than expected, largely

because he was not concerned with presenting the best in the culture, but instead with analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the dominant culture itself.

A good case could be made that both Chaplin and Welles expressed new values and meanings in their films of the late thirties, those which Williams would call emergent. In this regard both artists could be placed in the traditions of 20th century modernist art, an art which normally poses the authentic artist against the constricting society, the bohemian versus the bourgeois.[8] To explain more fully, Chaplin's films of the thirties reveal an artist seriously involved with his culture's most difficult problems. In Modern Times his tramp tried to succeed by the rules of the game--hard work, achievement, conformity--but failed as factory worker, shipbuilder, night watchman, and even as singing waiter. Because his most peaceful and relaxing time was his prison sentence, the tramp tried to get rearrested, then eventually rejected society, opting instead for an anarchic community of two. Though the final speech in The Great Dictator revealed the influence of contemporary democratic ideology, Chaplin was primarily interested in studying and satirizing the megalomaniac leader, the brutal human whom people had allowed to grasp social control. It is clear, however, that more than Modern Times, The Great Dictator shared many of the antifascist political values of the dominant culture.

Welles was more clearly a modernist artist, creating emergent values and meanings while sharing several root assumptions of the dominant American culture. He shared, as we have seen, the ideals of an American type, the "maverick" who values individualism, (artistic) freedom, and non-conformity.[9] However, Welles' individualism was oriented toward artistic innovation and creativity, toward piercing through the shrouds of the dominant culture to a critique of its contradictions. Citizen Kane, for example, challenged the notion that the ultimate goals of American culture--wealth and prestige--bring happiness. Though Capra and Ford would probably have agreed to that stance, they offered in their films pictures of fulfilling communities whose members were motivated by national pride, images which certainly reflected the dominant culture. Welles, however, refused to fall back upon the attractive but often simple-minded myths of community and patriotism. His emergent values stem in part from his refusal to use these pat nationalistic slogans in Kane and Ambersons.

Besides criticizing the hollow man in Kane, Welles also shared the modernist view that character is complex and extremely difficult to pin down: by the use of multiple perspective, Welles stylistically suggested the complexity of Charles Foster Kane in a way that approached the complexity and ambiguity of the central character in Absalom, Absalom![10] Added to these virtues was Kane's picture of the broad variety and texture of American life, rare in films

up to 1941. In Ambersons, Welles refused to portray happy families like the ones in Ford films, but instead showed the declining, neurotic aristocratic family. Not only did he view its members with mixed feelings, but he also dared to question the sacred American belief in progress through technological advancement. Because of its fragmentary character, it is difficult precisely to know Welles' point of view in the film, but it is certain that the montage of George's last walk home through the "befouled, darkened" city suggests a less than optimistic attitude toward the processes of industrialism. Because of its intellectual, critical, and innovative character, and because it refused to portray the warm, middle-class humanitarian values (both his early films are generally cold emotionally), Welles' work is best seen as an emergent vision which doesn't so much challenge the system as lay bare its contradictions.

In broadest terms Welles criticized the dominant American culture of the thirties, while Capra, Ford, and Chaplin (in The Great Dictator) helped to reaffirm some of its values and emphasize others which the culture itself began to adhere to more closely as time passed. From 1936 to 1941, the dominant American culture stressed humanitarianism to a greater degree, leading to fairly wide acceptance of the welfare state. It also, at least until the economy recovered, downplayed individual competitiveness in favor of group commitments. Though the belief in inevitable progress continued a steady decline in the thirties

which has persisted to the present day, Americans began formulating a definition of the American Way of Life which stressed democracy, freedom, superior material comfort relative to other societies, and (above all) nationalism and patriotism. To allay the fear that progress was not inevitable, many Americans compensated by defending more vociferously the ideal values of the American Way of Life without acknowledging the culture's less desirable operative values, its glaring disparities between professed values and actual behavior. Nonetheless, the values of the American Way of Life succeeded in gluing the culture back together again, providing an adequate sense of reality that the society had lacked since the breakdown of the genteel tradition in the twenties.

Yet even this new altered dominant culture had its flaws, as to all "symbolic universes." And despite the contributions of Capra, Ford, and Chaplin to the flowering of American nationalism in the two or three years before Pearl Harbor--a nationalism that was to become increasingly arrogant and self-righteous after World War Two--all four directors also displayed in some parts of their work an uncertainty about life in an industrial society. Each sensed, perhaps unconsciously, what John Dewey in 1939 viewed as a central challenge to American culture, the fact that "an agricultural and rural people has become an urban industrial population." "The view," wrote Dewey in Freedom and Culture,

> that love of freedom is so inherent in man that . . . it will produce and maintain free institutions is no longer adequate . . . . Economic developments which could not possibly have been anticipated when our political forms took shape have created confusion and uncertainty in the working of the agencies of popular government, and thereby have subjected the idea of democracy to basic strain.

As a result of the changes stemming from the increasing industrialization and bureaucratization of American economic life, wrote Dewey, "the ratio of impersonal to personal activities in society has enormously increased."[11] As a consequence, many people were beginning to doubt that man's increased reason would lead to greater freedom, as Enlightenment thought posited.

Twentieth-century sociologists have agreed with Dewey that one of the most critical questions in contemporary industrial society is how human freedom is to be achieved in a highly organized industrial society. Social thinkers from Weber to Mannheim to C. Wright Mills have suggested that new economic structures directly challenge traditional catagories of freedom and democracy. The paradox of modern life, as Mills has written, is that "great and rational organizations--in brief, bureaucracies--have indeed increased, but the substantive reason of the individual at large has not. Caught in the limited milieux of their everyday lives, ordinary men often can not reason about the great structures--rational and irrational--of which their milieux are subordinate parts." In Mill's view, <u>rationality</u> was leading to the development of a mass

society, while the decline of reason was destroying the concept of the public--of an active and intelligent citizenry--upon which the Jeffersonian concepts of democracy, reason, and freedom rest. Many modern intellectuals and artists alike have felt with D.H. Lawrence that modern industrial society is "a steady sort of Bolshevism; just killing the human thing and worshiping the mechanical thing."[12]

In different ways and with varying degrees of understanding, Chaplin, Ford, Capra, and Welles presented in some of their films a sense that this transition of America from an agrarian to an industrial society was posing difficult new problems for the dominant culture. In doing so they were dealing with covert issues in the dominant culture with few really understood at the time.[13] Ford and Capra only rarely suggested the depth of the dilemmas becoming apparent in modern society, preferring most often to rely on accepted traditional verities as solutions to their problems. Nonetheless, in the flashback sequence of Grapes of Wrath, where Ford shows Muley being ordered off his land and the bulldozer destroying his house, the inability of faceless bureaucracies and impersonal corporations to deal with important human problems is painted in graphic and severe tones. Similarly, when Capra shows in Meet John Doe how easily those in control of the mass media manipulate the attitudes and emotions of the common citizen, he not only questions his own faith in the average

person but also implicitly suggests that liberty and freedom are in danger because of new technological developments. Neither director, however, fully realized the impact of his doubts. After presenting the difficult issues, they both resolved them by reaffirming dominant or residual cultural values.

Chaplin and Welles saw the problems of modern industrial society in clearer focus and approached them more directly in Modern Times, Citizen Kane, and The Magnificent Ambersons. One of the major achievements in American film history, Modern Times depicts the difficulties of achieving happiness in a machine society, the splits between private and public lives that such a society demands, and the impersonality with which bureaucratic agencies, represented by the orphanage officials, handle sensitive human problems. The machine's symbolic devouring of the tramp remains a central image of the film, indicating the inability of people to find happiness when caught up in the organizational and technical structures of modern life. Unable to survive within the bounds of industrial society, the tramp and the gamin opt to "light out for the territory," rejecting--if they can--the demands of society.

For the most part, the most creative responses to the problems of industrial society raised by the depression were made in the early thirties, when men like Lewis Mumford, Sidney Hook, Edmund Wilson, and John Dewey made thougtful and provocative attempts to deal with the

problems of reason and freedom in the modern age. Modern Times fits into that tradition. The Great Dictator, on the other hand, is more completely a product of the late thirties, as Americans lost some of their zeal for social reform and began searching for a definition of the American Way of Life. Responding to the fascist challeng, Chaplin constructed his film largely in popular front terms, for a time sharing a number of political values with the dominant culture. Capitulating to the demand that he make talking pictures, Chaplin destroyed both his tramp and, for one film, much of his satirical approach to American values.

Though Citizen Kane was made shortly before the U.S. entered the war, it shared much of that bold inquiry more common in the early thirties. Challenging the popular front categories of good and bad people, Welles presented a man full of psychological complexity. Charles Foster Kane was not one person, but many, all depending on one's perspective. The insight that people were not simply good or bad, but often divided within themselves, was one which thirties' radicals for the most part failed to perceive, and one which later radicals would have to take into account in their desires for social justice. Though after World War Two this picture of man's mental complexity led some intellectuals to the conclusion that all social conflict could be explained away in psychological terms, it was an insight that deepened our understanding about the nature of man

and society, consciousness and culture.

In The Magnificent Ambersons, Welles continued to challenge the common assumptions of the dominant culture, particularly its belief in social progress and its conviction that scientific innovation and technological expertise would inevitably bring us a better world. In some ways the story of the Ambersons' decline and the Morgans' rise is a rather traditional treatment of social change in society. But the way that Welles stressed the rise of the automobile--even today the ideal symbol of America's dependence on and love for technology--and the simulatneous ruination of the natural environment made the film a challenge to many deeply rooted values of the dominant culture. The fact that Welles noted the contradictions of the covert culture of his day, thus becoming truly an emergent artist, is emphasized by the fact that his groping insights about the mixed blessings of industrial development did not become overt in American culture to any great degree until the late sixties.[13] Then, after environmentalists began to suggest how water, air, and noise pollution would increase exponentially if steps were not taken to curb wanton industrial and consumer waste, the lessons taught by Ambersons slowly began to sink into the American view of reality. But the broad filmgoing audience did not pay to see critical films that lacked at least some fulfilling gestures toward nationalism or democracy or humanitarianism, toward the evolving definition of the American Way of Life. Thus

America's most promising and perceptive filmmaker could no longer make films as he wanted to make them in Hollywood.

Today the situation has, to some extent at least, changed. For a number of reasons, the studio system began to decline after World War Two, and the demand for five hundred feature films a year fell so precipitously that today fewer than one hundred are made by the seven major studios each year. The business of articulating the meanings and values of the dominant culture, done in the thirties by motion pictures, has largely been taken over in the past two decades by television.[14] After a good deal of uncertainty about what audience to seek, Hollywood began in the sixties to settle on the one age group that still seemed interested in film as entertainment and art, young people from 18 to 35. Since that age group had not shared the optimism of the American Way of Life during World War Two and instead had grown up during the era of multiple assassinations, Vietnam, and Watergate, its members were much more willing to accept films that criticized and explored the workings and contradictions of the dominant American culture.

Since the late sixties, at least three American directors have notably attempted to observe and portary the workings of American culture in their films: Arthur Penn, Robert Altman, and Francis Ford Coppola. Penn's first major film, Bonnie and Clyde, worked within the gangster genre to delve into the complex issue of violence in America. Released during a period of sharp social unrest, the film

stimulated intense controversy, pro and con.[15] Penn followed the film with Alice's Restaurant and Little Big Man, both of which presented cultures opposed to the destructive ways of the dominant culture. In sympathetically picturing the youth culture and the American Indian culture against the greed and violence and mindless legalism of white adult society, Penn won a receptive youth audience. In these last two films, however, Penn's vision seemed much like Capra's, one which divided the world into two groups, good and bad. Unlike Capra, however, Penn saw that the evil culture was also the one with the power and the will to destroy systematically the culture with a truly humane (but indefensible) way of life.

Robert Altman's first popular success was M.A.S.H., a comedy about military incompetence at a medical base during the Korean War. Its black humor and attack on the senselessness and suffering of war drew predictable support from a generation of college students strongly opposed to the Vietnam War. His major work, McCabe and Mrs. Miller, attacked traditional conventions of the West as the place where American progress and civilization successfully met the threat of savagery. Instead, the West was pictured as a place where an enterprising man like McCabe could for a time realize the American dream but was eventually destroyed by the combined pressures of corporate power and technological advance. In addition to its innovative use of sound and its striking visual style, McCabe shared on a more

explicit level some intuitions about the transition to industrial society that Welles had been hinting at in Ambersons. Other films by Altman, though less provocative than McCabe, nonetheless remain interesting. Both Brewster McCloud and The Long Goodbye explore national myths within the boundaries of conventional formulas, while at the same time parodying elements of the police and detective genres. Images (another beautifully shot work) explores the psychological complexities of a schizophrenic woman within the frame of a suspense film, while Thieves Like Us follows closely the pattern established by Bonnie and Clyde. In California Split, Altman turns to modern society, studying two men and their compulsive urges to gamble.

Finally, Francis Ford Coppola is a director who seems to combine the rare talents of the popular filmmaker and the cultural critic of modern society. His most notable films to date have been The Godfather and its sequel, Godfather II, both adaptations from Mario Puzo's novel. In the first film, Coppola presents the Corleone family in a favorable light. Though they use violence at times, it it is not wanton destruction, but an attempt to create at least a modicum of justice for themselves and their friends in a corrupt and evil society. As young Michael Corleone is gradually drawn into the affairs managed by his father, he learns that the only way to achieve a degree of fulfillment in an unjust society is to defend and protect one's family, even by using violent means if necessary.

But in the second film, Coppola broadens his horizons by tracing Don Vito Corleone's rise to power in the first decades of this century as well as the disintegration of of Michael's family in the present. This second film even destroys the justifications for Michael's violent methods in the earlier film. By habitually using violence to achieve justice, we learn, Michael has been merely countering the evil powers of the rest of society. But his use of violence and his position of power so harden him that he is estranged from his wife, who cannot tolerate his actions, and after the death of his mother, he has his brother murdered. The last shot of the film, of an aging and pallid Michael sitting alone outdoors contemplating the ruins of his life and remembering a moment when he struggled against family values, reminds one of nothing so much as the scene in Citizen Kane where Kane himself, standing alone in Susan's ravaged bedroom, holds the crystal ball of his lost innocence as tears of despair and emptiness well up in his eyes. These two films, along with The Conversation, a suspense thriller dealing with the moral conflicts of a surveillance expert, have established Coppola as one of the major American talents working in American film today. Still only in his mid-thirties, Coppola will hopefully deepen and extend his piercing examination of American culture.[16]

It is clear from contemporary developments that the American film, while less widely appealing than the

Hollywood feature film in the thirties, has yet remained a popular art form, a forum for the treatment of national myths and symbols, and has increasingly become in the hands of our most effective directors a means of exposing and criticizing the dominant American culture. If TV has become the chief vehicle for the expression and elaboration of our dominant national values and meanings, films have been to take over some of the functions traditionally associated with the novel--the critical examination of the social manners and morals in American life. Along with this development have appeared a number of talented writers and directors who--like Chaplin, Ford, Capra, and Welles--have earned a large degree of creative control over their films and have proven their ability to create stories on film that audiences find worthwhile to watch.

In this study I have tried to suggest that a cultural approach to film and to the auteur theory can give us a different perspective and hence a broader understanding of American cultural history during a specific period. It may also help us to define more permanent cultural patterns in any industrial society and to see how a popular artist responds to his changing milieu within the framework of aesthetic conventions and financial constraints. If this study has provided some groundwork in how we might move in these directions and has encouraged others to refine some of the preliminary categories and approaches I have proposed, it

it will have accomplished what I set out to do. The developing and provocative art of film--a form that seems particularly attuned to the problems and prospects of the modern age--demands and deserves our serious consideration.

FOOTNOTES

PREFACE

[1]The classic work on film and society is Siegfried Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler (Princeton, 1948). Alson interesting is Andrew Bergman's We're in the Money (New York, 1971), a study of film cycles in the American depression. Though both studies are helpful, neither had the stress on director as filmmaker that I sought.

[2]Edward B. Tylor, Primitive Culture (Vol. I, London, 1913), 1. See also A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions (Cambridge, 1952); Kenneth Boulding, The Image (Ann Arbor, 1961); and Leslie White, with Beth Dillingham, The Concept of Culture (Minneapolis, 1973).

[3]Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form (Rev. ed., Baton Rouge, 1967), especially 1-20. See also Gene Wise, American Historical Explanations (Homewood, Ill., 1973), 141-175.

[4]Truffaut's comment is from his Hitchcock (New York, 1967), 13. The foremost auteur critics writing in English are Andrew Sarris and Robin Wood, though practitioners are numerous. See especially Sarris' The American Cinema (New York, 1968). For the historical development of the auteur concept, see Raymond Durgnat, "Auteurs and Dream Factories," in Films and Feeling (Cambridge, 1971), 61-86, and Peter Wollen, Signs and Meanings in the Cinema (Rev. ed., Bloomington, 1972), 74-80. Wollen also has an interesting reading of Ford and Hawks. Finally, for a good critique of excesses in French auteur criticism in the fifties, see Andre Bazin's "Les Politiques des Auteurs," in The New Wave, ed. Peter Graham (New York, 1968), 137-55.

[5]Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (New York, 1967), 98 and 95-104, passim.

[6]Ibid., 104-128. This section on universe maintainence treats the question of alternate symbolic universes.

I. America and Hollywood, 1936-1941.

[1]Quoted in Warren Susman, ed., Culture and Commitment (New York, 1973), 2.

[2]See Henry May, The End of American Innocence (New York, 1969) for a discussion of the genteel tradition and the challenges to it in the years before World War One. In

[3]William Leuchtenberg, FDR and the New Deal (New York, 1963), 38-40.

[4]Ibid., 231-8, 244-56.

[5]James D. Hart, The Popular Book in America, (Los Angeles, 1963), 256.

[6]Helen and Robert Lynd, Middletown in Transition (New York, 1937), 489.

[7]Warren Susman, "The Thirties," in The Making of an American Culture, ed. by Stanley Coben and Lorman Ratner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.), 1970.

[8]"America's Coming of Age," in The Early Essays of Van Wyck Brooks, ed. by Claire Sprague (New York, 1968), 83.

[9]Oliver Larkin, Art and Life in America (Rev. ed., New York, 1960), 416.

[10]Edmund Wilson, "Brokers and Pioneers," New Republic, LXX (March 23, 1932), 142-5.

[11]See Richard Pells, Radical Visions and American Dreams (New York, 1973), 96-115. This is the most comprehensive history of social and cultural thought in the thirties, a required text for anyone seeking to understand America in the thirties.

[12]See Daniel Bell, Marxian Socialism in the United States (Rev. ed., Princeton, 1967), 135-6.

[13]Leuchtenberg, 282.

[14]Lewis Coser and Irving Howe, The American Communist Party (Boston, 1957), 341. Two representative novels treating American traditions from a radical point of view are Howard Fast's Two Valleys (1933) and Conceived in Liberty (1939).

[15]Coser and Howe, 319-55; and Pells, 292-329.

[16]Robert Skotheim, Totalitarianism and American Social Thought (New York, 1971).

[17]See Pells, 310-19, and Charles Alexander, Nationalism in American Thought: 1930-1945(Chicago, 1971), especially 25-137.

[18]William Stott, Documentary Expression and Thirties America (New York, 1973), 18.

[19]Walt Whitman, "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads," in Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. by James E. Miller (Boston, 1959), 445.

[20]Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds (Rev. ed., New York, 1956), viii, 378.

[21]On the importance of the new media during the thirties, see Susman, "The Thirties," 190, and Pells, 263-8.

[22]Stott, 83-91.

[23]Ibid., 93-118.

[24]Stott discusses all these documentary types. For a more detailed look at documentary filmmaking, which Stott neglects, see Richard Barsam's Non-Fiction Film: A Critical History (New York, 1973). Among others, Barsam discusses Joris Ivans, Lorentz, the March of Time Series, Frontier Films, and Williard van Dyke.

[25]Stott, 240.

[26]Ibid., 237, 90.

[27]Pells, 313.

[28]James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (New York, 1966).

[29]The comparitive figures are in Gerald Mast, A Short History of the Movies (New York, 1971), 272.

[30]Andrew Bergman, We're in the Money (New York, 1971), xii.

[31]Roy Chartier, "The Year in Pictures," Variety, CXXV (January 6, 1937), 10.

[32]Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg, Hollywood in the Forties (New York, 1968), 7.

[33]Mast, 274.

[34]John Baxter, Hollywood in the Thirties (New York, 1970), 19-94; Bergman, 92-109.

[35]See John Chaplin, "Hollywood Goes Closed Shop," Nation, CXLII (February 19, 1936), 225-6.

[36]The letter is treated in Margaret Thorp's America at the Movies (New Haven, 1939), 143-4.

[37]Louise Tanner, "The Celluloid Safety Valve," in The Movies: An American Idiom, ed., Arthur McClure (Cranbury, N.J., 1971), 104.

[38]J.C. Holmes, "A Decade of Coming Attractions," in McClure, 104, 116.

[39]Bergman, xii, and chapters 1-5.

[40]Arthur Knight, The Liveliest Art (New York, 1957), 240. A "cycle" of films is a group similar in form and content that appear over a period of several years after one movie of that type becomes a financial success and spawns a number of imitations.

[41]Bergman, 77-8.

[42]Bell, 153.

[43]Harold Clurman, The Fervent Years (New York, 1967), 159, 188.

[44]Leo Rosten, Hollywood (New York, 1941), 133-62.

[45]Ibid., 145-53.

[46]Knight, 242.

[47]Variety, CXXI (January 1, 1936), 4.

[48]Variety, CXLV (December 31, 1941), 1, 20.

[49]Bergman, 163.

[50]Ibid., 120-22.

[51]See Frank Nugent, "Hollywood Waves the Flag," Nation, CXLVIII (April 8, 1939), 400

[52]Ibid., 399. On the blossoming of the western in 1939, see Andre Bazin, "The Evolution of the Western," in What is Cinema?, trans. Hugh Gray (Vol II, Berkeley, 1972), 149-57.

[53]Lewis Jacobs, The Rise of the American Film (New York, 1939), 531.

[54]Roy Chartier, "The Year in Pictures," Variety, CXLI (January 3, 1940), 5, 32.

[55]Thorp, 274, 276.

[56]Ken D. Jones, Introduction to Hollywood at War (New York, 1973), 17.

[57]Ibid., 18.

[58]Higham, 97-99.

[59]Jones, 16.

[60]Jacobs, 538.

[61]See note 26.

II. Chaplin: The Tramp Turns Social

[1]The earliest serious article on Chaplin, "The Art of Charles Chaplin," was by Minnie Maddern Fiske in Harper's Weekly, LXI (May 6, 1916), 494. It is included in Donald McCaffrey, Focus on Chaplin, (New York, 1971), 69-70. McCaffrey also has a selected bibliography of books and articles on Chaplin and his films. Another helpful bibliography when starting research on Chaplin--or any major film figure--is Frank Manchel's Film Study: A Research Guide (Rutherford, N.J., 1973). 178-80.

[2]On Chaplin as composer, see Theodore Huff, Charlie Chaplin (New York, 1951), 235-41.

[3]Huff, 10-11. Huff's biography, supplemented by Roger Manville's Chaplin (Boston, 1974), provides the best biographical information on Chaplin. Also available and helpful are : Gerith von Ulm, Charlie Chaplin: King of Tragedy (Caldwell, Idaho, 1940); Peter Cotes and Thelma Niklaus, The Little Fellow (New York, 1951), 13-94; McCaffrey, 11-26; and Charles Chaplin, Jr., My Father, Charlie Chaplin (New York, 1960). Finally, Chaplin's own My Autobiography (New York, 1964) is good on his early life but too sketchy on the thirties and forties.

[4]Manville, 48-9; Parker Tyler, Chaplin: The Last of the Clowns (Rev. ed., New York, 1972), 21-2: "This part of Charlie's life can be used for only one purpose: to fill out the patterns self-evident in the great epos which he has

contributed to the history of the clown and to help substantiate what may seem more or less theoretical in this epos as I shall reveal it. So: there was a gentle, music-loving father who died of drink when the lad was about five." (The age, according to Manville, is wrong.)

[5]Chaplin, 10-12.

[6]Ibid., 19-35; Huff, 11.

[7]Huff, 12, 18; Chaplin, 102-8.

[8]Huff, 21; Cotes, 26-7.

[9]Cotes, 30-44.

[10]Chaplin's film persona has been variously referred to as the tramp, Charlie, the little fellow, along with many others. In this chapter I shall usually use the term "tramp" to refer to that persona in Modern Times and the "barber" in The Great Dictator, since the transitional nature of that persona is one of the key elements in Chaplin's films of the thirties and forties; Andrew Sarris, The American Cinema (New York, 1968), 40.

[11]Chaplin, 150.

[12]Henry Bamford Parkes, The American Experience (New York, 1947), similarly compares Chaplin and the 19th-century heroes. He also cites a study that found "Americans living in an old-fashioned agrarian community do not find Chaplin funny" but instead "just silly. The unconscious appeal of Chaplin's bum is less powerful to Plainvillers than to city folks, and the tensions which this strange vagabond purports to ease are less intense with Plainvillers" (250).

[13]Robert Warshow, The Immediate Experience (New York, 1972), 208. Manville concurs; Modern Times, he wrote, derived its conception "from the increasing social conscience which Charlie had been developing from his wide reading, his discussions with men and women involved in political and social studies, and his travels and intuitive emotional response to the society of his day" (140).

[14]Cotes, 23; Huff, 243-6.

[15]Tyler, 175.

[16]Otis Ferguson, New Republic, LXXVI (February 19, 1936), 48. The review is also reprinted in Alistair Cooke, ed., Garbo and the Night Watchman (New York, 1937),

273-6. This book collects the criticism of nine American and British film critics working in the mid-thirties, and has a final section exclusively on reviews of Modern Times.

[17]Huff, 116-7.

[18]Ibid., 117.

[19]Gerald Mast, The Comic Mind (New York, 1973), 65.

[20]Chaplin, 274.

[21]Von Ulm, 3.

[22]Chaplin, 275. For an intelligent discussion of editing devices, most of which Chaplin doesn't use because they tend to be obtrusive, see Rod Whitaker, The Language of Film (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), 49-58.

[23]Huff, 256.

[24]Chaplin, 372, 409.

[25]Ibid., 415-6.

[26]Newsweek, VII (February 8, 1936), 19; Literary Digest, CXX (November 2, 1935), 26-7.

[27]Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams (New York, 1931), 382.

[28]Thorstein Veblen, The Instinct of Workmanship (New York, 1964), 311-2.

[29]See Frederick Hoffman, The Twenties (New York, 1962), for a discussion of how artists confronted the machine in the twenties.

[30]Lewis Mumford, Technics and Civilization (New York, 1934), 434. Recently the problem of how machines may be used to serve man instead of vice versa has been treated in Ivan Illich's Tools for Conviviality (New York, 1973).

[31]This is, of course, a generalization with many exceptions. Aristophanes, for example, was less sympathetic to social conventions than to an individual's integrity, while an early Chaplin short like Easy Street has the tramp become a respectable policeman to win the

girl. But modern comedy by Shaw, Brecht, Ionesco, Beckett, Bunuel, and Heller has been distinctly sympathetic to the rebel.

[32]See Daniel Aaron, "Literary Wars in the Early Thirties," Writers on the Left (New York, 1961), 231-68; on Marxist criticism in the thirties, see Walter Sutton, Modern American Criticism (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963), 54-70.

[33]Von Ulm, 270-1.

[34]The ambivalence of the tramp is well illustrated by The Idle Class where Chaplin plays two parts, the tramp and the millionaire. For a time the tramp, in love with a wealthy girl, aspires to respectability, but in the end he gives the girl's father a swift kick and hits the road again. Besides this internal conflict of spontaneity versus respectability within the tramp, the external contrast between the millionaire and the tramp points forward to the tramp and millionaire in City Lights and the barber and dictator in The Great Dictator. This recurring pattern seems to be related to Chaplin's own conflict between the helplessness and poverty of his youth and the wealth and success of his adult life.

[35]Molly Haskell, From Reverence to Rape (New York, 1973), 71.

[36]Ibid., 71.

[37]Besides such Tracy-Hepburn films as Woman of the Year, Adam's Rib, and Pat and Mike, Hollywood never seems too interested in (or capable of) creating equal male-female relationships that also have a measure of vitality. In fact, this seems to have been true of much of American fiction. Leslie Fiedler has argued that the major American writers have been unable to create any convincing love relationships in their work owing to peculiarities in American values and the American experience.

[38]New York Times, X (September 29, 1935), 5: B.Z. Schumiatsky, head of the Russian film industry, said after viewing the film that "the humor of the film is filled with fearful accusation. It shows the starvation of the unemployed, their lodgings; it unmasks capitalist rationalization." On November 17, 1935, (IX, 5), the Times carried an article that said the film laughed at any form of government. Forsythe's review is in New Masses, LVII (February 18, 1936), 35. Modern Times was not a hit in

Moscow. Huff (256) mentions that workers had just been given a general speed-up on the production line when the film came to Moscow. No wonder.

[39]Huff, 252; Chaplin's gradual capitulation to sound will be treated in the next section.

[40]Cotes, 113, mentions that Chaplin played Napoleon in childhood games and at least before City Lights had thought about doing a film on Napoleon; Chaplin, 424-5.

[41]Huff, 262.

[42]New York Times, IX (October 13, 1940), passim.

[43]Ibid., (October 15, 1940), 1.

[44]A more detailed discussion of the plot is in Huff, 265-9.

[45]Ibid., 219.

[46]Robert van Gelden, New York Times, VII (September 8, 1940), 8.

[47]This is based on a study of the box office receipts mentioned in Variety between the October and December 4 issues. The film had a long run of 24 weeks in New York. For the rest of this study, all mention of a film's popularity will be based on Variety box-office figures.

[48]New York Times, IX (October 20, 1940), 5. See also Crowther's earlier review on October 16, 1940, 29. For a discussion of Crowther's approach to film criticism, see Frank Beaver, Bosley Crowther: Social Critic of the Film: 1940-1967 (New York, 1975).

[49]Catholic World, CLII (December, 1940), 333; Saturday Review, XXIII (November, 1940), 80-1.

[50]New York Times (October 16, 1940), 29; Newsweek, XVI (October 28, 1940), 60; Nation, CXXXI (October 26, 1940), 401; Commonweal, XXXIII (November, 1940), 80-1.

[51]Hannah's speeches occur after she has clobbered two storm troopers over the head with her frying pan, and later when she sits in the barber chair and dreams of a better world.

[52]Bazin, vol. II, 111.

[53]Susman, "The Thirties," 181, argues that the thirties provided virtually no political ideology of consequence. Coser and Howe (see note 14, ch. 1) even argue that the popular front was really a culture, a way of life for people, rather than any clearly defined and rigid ideology.

[54]The speech is quoted by Chaplin, 433-4.

[55]On Chaplin's politics, see Huff, 287-92; Chaplin, 442-9; and Terry Hickey, "Accusations Against Chaplin for Political and Moral Offenses," Film Comment, V (Winter, 1967), 44-56. Hickey concludes that the evidence proves that Chaplin was a victim of negative publicity from the press and the hostile political atmosphere of the late forties and early fifties.

[56]Chaplin, 411-2.

[57]Ibid., 412-3

[58]Ibid., 416.

[59]Ibid., 426.

III. John Ford: The Historical Films of 1939

[1]Biographical information on Ford is scanty. Scattered information is available in Peter Bogdanovich, John Ford (Berkeley, 1968); John Baxter, The Cinema of John Ford (New York, 1971); Toby Mussman, "Shades of Feeney," Portland Telegram (November 1, 1970), 50.

[2]Mussman, 50.

[3]Lindsay Anderson, "John Ford," Cinema, VI (Spring, 1971), 23.

[4]Bogdanovich, 36-7.

[5]Benjamin Hampton, A History of the Movies (New York, 1931), 41.

[6]Anderson, 24.

[7]Portland Express (January 31, 1948); on Ford's silent and early talking films, see William K. Everson, "Forgotten Ford," Focus on Film, VI (Spring, 1971), 10-18,

and Martin Rubin, "Mr. Ford and Mr. Rogers," Film Comment, X (January/February, 1974), 54-6.

[8]Frank Capra, introduction to Directors in Action, ed. Bob Thomas (New York, 1973), vii.

[9]Anderson, 27.

[10]Richard Schickel, "Good Days, Good Years," Harper's (October, 1970), 49-50; Robert Parrish, quoted in Bogdanovich, 14.

[11]Andrew Sarris, ed., Interviews with Film Directors (New York, 1967), 195; Bogdanovich, 99; Thomas, 136, 166.

[12]Bogdanovich, 64-5.

[13]See Variety (September 5, 1973), 4, 20.

[14]Jeffrey Richards, "Ford's Lost World," Focus on Film, VI (Spring, 1971), 22.

[15]Malcom Cowley, "The Puritan Legacy," New Republic, LXXXVII (August 26, 1936), 80.

[16]Alexander, 73.

[17]Larkin, 408; see also Kazin, 378-406; Pells, 310-19; and Alexander, 67-84, 135-38.

[18]Thorp, 188-9.

[19]Frank Nugent, "Hollywood Waves the Flag," Nation, CXLVIII (April 8, 1939), 398, 400.

[20]Bogdanovich, 72; the Duff Armstrong case, held in Beardstown, Illinois, on May 7, 1858, is described in Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years (New York, 1926), 53-7, and in William E. Barton, The Life of Abraham Lincoln (Indianapolis, 1925), 310-18. It is also interesting to note that Edward Eggleston's short story, "The Graysons," also sets this trial early in Lincoln's life thus helping to promote legend over fact. The Rutledge legend is discussed in Dixon Wecter, The Hero in America (New York, 1941), 231-3, who notes that Ann was engaged to a man other than Lincoln when she died and that virtually no evidence has turned up supporting the "romance."

[21]Two works on the western deserve a note. John Cawelti's The Six-Gun Mystique (Bowling Green, n.d.) is an attempt to develop an interdisciplinary method of interpreting the cultural significance of the western. For a brief

historical survey of the western film, see George Fenin and William K. Everson, The Western: From Silents to Cinerama (New York, 1962).

[22]An exception is 1936, when King Vidor's The Texas Rangers and DeMille's The Plainsman both appeared. Though Bergman (88-91) argues that the western was being renewed in 1936, that renewal was nothing compared to what happened a few years later.

[23]For details about the planning and shooting of Stagecoach, see the wealth of information in Thomas, 139-73.

[24]Variety, CXXXIII (March 1 and 8, 1939), CXXXIV (March 15, 22, April 19, May 10, 1939).

[25]Sarris, Interviews, 197.

[26]Bazin, vol. II, 149.

[27]Orson Welles once said, "John Ford is a poet. A comedian" (Bogdanovich, 30-1). Ford's care in composition is also evident in his long shots or medium shots of people, notably in Stagecoach when Curly, Ringo, and Dallas stand together all looking left at the smoke signals (see the picture in Nichols and Ford, 75); Bogdanovich, 108.

[28]Ford's dislike for pinched "uplifters," who try to dictate values to classes below them, recalls two Griffith films--The Reformers and The Mother and the Law--that also criticize the same types of Puritan moralism.

[29]See the picture in Nichols and Ford, 38.

[30]Collected in Jay Boyum, Film as Film (Boston, 1971), 366-7.

[31]Compare Andrew Sarris' comment in Cinema, 45: in the thirties "even an Irish-Catholic like Ford could be mistaken for a progressive force."

[32]Haskell, 121.

[33]Mast, A Short History of the Movies, 298-300.

[34]Kazin, 394.

[35]See Wecter, 225-72, for a treatment of Lincoln's status as American hero. Robert Merton also has summed up

the traits that have made Lincoln the ideal American cultural hero. For Merton, Lincoln was "thrifty, hard-working, eager for knowledge, ambitious, devoted to the rights of the average man; and eminently successful in climbing the ladder of opportunity," from Antioch Review (Summer, 1948), 199.

[36]Variety, CXXXV (June 14, 21, 28, July 5, 1939).

[37]Bogdanovich, 72.

[38]Sergi Eisenstein, "Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," in Film Essays and a Lecture, ed. Jay Leyda (New York, 1970), 140.

[39]Of the scene Ford told Bogdanovich, 74: "That was another of those things we had to make up on the spot. There was a real thunderstorm, so I said, 'let's have him walk away, then we'll dissolve to the statue at the Lincoln Monument.'"

[40]Herberg relates this to the fact that the clergy in Ireland were virtually the only educated people in the community and that the aristrcracy were usually non-Catholics with no strong allegience to Ireland. The Irish respect for the clergy, Herberg continues, is much different than the more "relaxed" attitudes toward the priesthood in England and on the Continent. Protestant, Catholic, Jew (Rev. ed., New York, 1960), 146.

[41]There is yet another, more pervasive and lasting reason for the myth of benevolent authority. In the popular arts abstract ideas like the law need to be made more human. Creating a kind and folksy judge is the best way of doing just that.

[42]I am not arguing that a single film will cause one's view of reality to change in major way. But I do suggest that a dominant political and social tone pervasive at a point in time in any culture will have a strong social effect. Lest one argue that the mass media won't have powerful effects in a "pluralist" society, I will cite media researcher Joseph Klapper: "Monopoly, or very nearly monopoly propaganda, is exercised in the U.S. not only in such national interests as a war effort, but also in regard to those social attitudes which govern the audience's daily life and social interaction....The major source of this monopoly propaganda is the entertainment content of the mass media; its goal and main effect seems to be the maintainence and affirmation of the status quo." "Mass Media and Persuasion," in Wilbur Schramm, ed., The Process and Effects of Mass Media (Urbana, 1955), 300-1.

[43]Otis Ferguson, Collected Film Criticism, 258, 277; Time, XXXVIII (November 29, 1939), 40.

[44]Variety, CXXXVI (November 8, 15, 22, 29, 1939).

[45]"The Novel of the American Past" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1953), from abstract; Edmonds, Drums Along the Mohawk (New York, 1936), xi.

[46]Pechter, Twenty-Four Frames a Second (New York, 1971), 232.

[47]It would be profitable to compare Ford's good and bad Indians to Cooper's in The Leatherstocking Tales--the conceptions seem quite similar.

[47]Bogdanovich, 86.

IV. John Ford: The Family and the Modern World

[1]Ford's comment is from Jeffrey Richards, Visions of Yesterday (London, 1973), 285. Between Grapes and Valley, Ford also directed The Long Voyage Home, a fine sea film based on several O'Neill one-act plays, and Tobacco Road, an adaptation of the Erskine Caldwell novel which develops an agrarian theme similar to Grapes, though it is set in the South and contains more humor. Mitry's comment is in his John Ford (Paris, 1954), 62.

[2]I have relied for information about Zanuck largely on Mel Gussow's biography, Don't Say Yes until I've Finished Talking (New York, 1971), 5-105, and Warren French's excellent Film Guide to "Grapes of Wrath" (Bloomington, 1973), 16-20.

[3]Ibid., 91.

[4]Bogdanovich, 73; Gussow, 92.

[5]Gussow, 93-4.

[6]Baxter, 87.

[7]Two helpful collections relate to these issues: Warren French's Companion to "Grapes of Wrath" (New York, 1963) has three major sections dealing with the background, reception and reputation of the novel; Agnes McNeill Donohue's A Casebook on "The Grapes of Wrath" (New York, 1968) collects a series of essays considering Grapes as

social document and as literature. Bluestone's judgement is found in his Novels into Film (Baltimore, 1957), 168-9.

[8]Edmund Wilson, Classics and Commercials (New York, 1950), 35, 43.

[9]Quoted in George Sadoul, Dictionary of Filmmakers, trans. and rev. by Peter Morris (Berkeley, 1972), 251.

[10]"She Wore a Yellow Ribbon" accompanies the highway montage and Connie sings a folk song about the travails of the poor called "I Ain't A-goin' to be A-treated This A-way."

[11]Muley's personal account of the eviction, handled effectively by flashback in the film, is dealt with by one of the interchapters (five) in the novel. The film's method is much more dramatic and effective.

[12]New Republic, CII (February 12, 1940), 212. Bluestone talks similarly about the novel's structural problems on pages 165-7.

[13]See Dudley Nichols and John Gassner, eds., Twenty Best Screenplays (New York, 1941), 371.

[14]Gussow, 92, reports that Zanuck was proud of having written the final speech, but his pride is at least partly unjustified. In the novel,(New York, 1939), 383, Ma Joad gives virtually the same speech. Gussow is simply mistaken when he says that the speech is not in the book.

[15]New York Times (January 25, 1940), 17, and IX (February 4, 1940), 5; Life, VIII (January 22, 1940), 21-2; Nation, CL (February 3, 1940), 137-8; Commonweal,XXXI (February 9, 1940), 348; and Saturday Review, XXI (February 10, 1940), 16.

[16]See Variety box office sections in issues of January 31, February 7, 14, 21, 28, March 6, 13, and 20, 1940. Another factor hindering its success was the fact that it played in New York a full month before it was released around the country.

[17]Malcom Cowley, Think Back On Us (Carbondale, 1967), 349.

[18]Pells, 216.

[19]Baxter, 87.

[20]See Chester Eisinger, "Jeffersonian Agrarianism in Grapes of Wrath," University of Kansas City Review, XIV (Winter, 1947), 149-54.

[21]Knight, 242.

[22]Freud's concept of the compulsion to repeat is relevant here. In seeking to relate art, games, and other forms of symbolic activity to psychological determinants, Freud argued that certain unresolved impulses stemming from parent-child relationships will constantly remain unresolved in the child's life and thus must seek resolution in symbolic forms--dreams, fantasies, games, or art--if the person is to maintain mental balance ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in Standard Edition [Vol. 18, London, from 1953], 1-64.) Cawelti, Six-Gun Mystique, 11-12, suggests that conventional and widely popular narrative types derive their appeal from the fact that they enable people in a culture temporarily to resolve psychic conflicts common to many in that culture.

[23]Richard Schickel, The Disney Version (New York, 1968), 210.

[24]Thomas Cochran, Social Change in Industrial Society (London, 1972), 126-39.

[25]For example, in the novel, Owen and Gwilym leave the town twice, once after Gwilym's wife dies and the second time, to go to America. In the film, neither is ever marries and each leaves only once, to live in America. Another change was Angharad's wedding, which takes place in London in the novel, but in the town in Ford's version. In the film, Huw never becomes a carpenter after being laid off by the colliery, as he does in the novel.

[26]New York Times, IX (June 1, 1941), 3; and Idwal Jones, "Village for Sale," New York Times, IX (September 7, 1941), 4.

[27]For a number of representative treatments of Ford, see Sarris, The American Cinema, 243-9 ("Irish-Catholic conservative"); Jeffrey Richards, Visions of Yesterday, 270-85 ("optimistic populist view of history and society"); Lindsay Anderson, "John Ford," Films in Review, II (February, 1951), 5-16 ("one of the last Romantics"); and Wollen, 74-105, passim.

[28]Haskell, 121, has written: "The honor [Ford's women] inspire is inseparable from the urge to

return home that figures so much more notably in Ford's heroes than in the protagonists of other Westerns."

[29]Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination (New York, 1957), xi; Charles Foster, "The Theonomous Analysis of American Culture," in Robert Meredith, 49-68. Whitman's words are from Miller, ed., 469.

[30]By progressive, I do not refer to the political party; instead I refer to the ideology of 19th-century liberalism which held that one changeless historical principle was the gradual improvement and perfection of mankind.

[31]Wise, an intellectual historian, noticed that Progressive historians like Turner, Parrington, and Beard all were optimistic about America's past and pessimistic about the present. Compare his chart of Parrington's progressive dichotomies (256) to the contrasts in Ford's films in the late thirties. Their strong resemblances suggest a definite web of cultural values. On the intellectual climate of the late thirties and forties, see William Lee Miller, "The Rise of Neo-Orthodoxy," in The Paths of American Thought (Boston, 1963), 326-44; Donald Meyers, The Protestant Search for Political Realism: 1919-1941 (New York, 1960); John Higham, Writing American History (Bloomington, 1972), 59-72, 138-56; and Walter Sutton, Modern American Criticism (Englewood Cliffs, 1963), especially chapters three and four. My entire discussion of Ford and the progressive paradigm owes a good deal to Wise's application of Thomas Kuhn's theories to American intellectual historians. See Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (2nd ed., Chicago, 1970), 52-135.

[32]The patriotism of Ford's films, if they were atypical of the period, would not likely have changed the cultural attitudes of anyone. However, if they were representative of the prevailing cultural tone of the late thirties--which they seem to be--their collective effect on the American consciousness would be significant. Pauline Kael, in an essay on the anti-Communist films of the early fifties, argues similarly that the political attitudes in a popular cycle or genre become part of "the national political tone," and that the attitudes have a political effect even if they are not believed but simply accepted. See Kael, I Lost It at the Movies (New York, 1965), 290. Ford's cavalry trilogy deals with the immigrant experience in the West (among other issues); Sargeant Rutledge, with a black man; and Cheyenne Autumn, with mistreatment of Indians. The ending of Ford Apache, along with the whole of Liberty Valance, suggest the growing richness and complexity

of Ford's social vision. Marvin Olasky, who is at present working on a study of the American western film from 1948 to 1962, has found that Ford became more liberal in some ways after World War Two.

V. Frank Capra: Filmmaking and Commitment

[1]The epigraph is from David Zinman, Fifty Classic Motion Pictures (New York, 1970), 225. The Ford and Capra quotations about one another are in Name Above the Title (New York, 1971), ix-x, 246. Hereafter it will be cited as NATT.

[2]Richard Glatzer and John Raeburn eds., Frank Capra: The Man and His Films (Ann Arbor, 1975), 127. This anthology grew out of the Frank Capra Festival held in Ann Arbor February 5-12, 1973. It was a complete sellout every night. Gerald Mast, The Comic Mind (New York, 1973), 259.

[3]For anyone interested in Capra's life and work, his autobiography and the Glatzer and Raeburn anthology provide a solid introduction. The anthology includes the best of Capra criticism, as well as a useful selected bibliography.

[4]NATT, 7.

[5]NATT, 16; Geoffrey Hellman, "Thinker in Hollywood," New Yorker, XVI (February 24, 1940), 23-8, reprinted in Glatzer, 7; Griffith, Frank Capra, New Index Series No. 3, (London, 1951), reprinted in Glatzer, 50; Saturday Evening Post comment quoted in Bergman, 134.

[6]Glatzer, 31.

[7]NATT, 23-30.

[8]On Langdon and Capra, see Richard Leary, "Capra and Langson," Film Comment, VIII (November-December, 1972), 15-7. NATT, 79.

[9]Glatzer, 15; NATT, 266-72.

[10]See Warren Susman, "The Thirties," as well as Gilman Ostrander, American Civilization in the First Machine Age: 1890-1940 (New York, 1970), especially "The New Nationalism."

[11]Capra was born two years later than Lewis Mumford and Edmund Wilson, a year later than Dos Passos and Fitzgerald, the same year as Thornton Wilder and Faulkner, a year before Malcom Cowley, and two years before Hemingway.

[12]Richard Corliss, "Capra and Riskin," Film Comment, VIII (November-December, 1972), 18.

[13]NATT, 172-9, 185, 186.

[14]Robert Sklar, "The Imagination of Stability," in Glatzer, 123.

[15]John Cawelti, "Notes Toward an Aesthetic of Popular Culture," in Popular Culture and the Expanding Consciousness, ed. Ray Browne (New York, 1973), 114.

[16]It could be argued as well that Chaplin developed his own formula. In the period that we are studying, however, the Chaplin formula, based on the tramp character, was breaking down. His films were becoming less formularized and more creative with each film. Ford, on the other hand, never had enough control over story to create his own formula, as we use the term. Browne, 117-8.

[17]Bergman, 30-41 and 132-48; see also Donald McCaffrey, The Golden Age of Sound Comedy (New York, 1973), 149-58. McCaffrey quite properly places Capra's comedies between 1936 and 1939 under the category of middle-class sentimental comedies, mentioning also the comedies of Will Rogers, Shirley Temple and Mickey Rooney (as Andy Hardy). He suggests that Capra was really a master of the type, which stressed reformation or mild change in values: "It was generally an embrace of the status quo or a move to somewhat moderate middle-class values" (156-7). In the Capra comedies, the career woman is usually the most important character who is won over from cynicism to the hero's values.

[18]The Age of Energy (New York, 1971), 417.

[19]In an interview with James Childs, Film Comment, VIII (November-December, 1972), 23, Capra described his films this way: "They're entertainment and they're fantasy and they're comedy, but throughout the fantasy and the comedy is woven the idea of 'you dirty bastards, get off our necks.'" I have reduced the key elements to comedy and middle-class reform.

[20]Browne, 115.

[21]Anthony Channell Hilfer, The Revolt from the Village (Chapel Hill, 1969), 220.

[22]Opera Hat (six parts) in American Magazine, CXIX: 4-6 and CXX:1-3 (April-September, 1935).

[23]NATT, 179.

[24]NATT, 139-40.

[25]Sklar makes a similar point in Glatzer, 133.

[26]Glatzer, 127. This is not true of Lost Horizon, where Dmitri Tiomkin's score consists entirely of background music. Glatzer, 127.

[27]NATT, 186. Capra once agreed to an interviewer's comment that Smith and Deeds were the films most indicative of his philosophy of life (Childs, 22).

[28]See Haskell, 124-52, for a discussion of the active woman in the late thirties' films.

[29]Deeds' situation, it might be pointed out, was much like Capra's. Where Deeds had money thrust upon him, Capra had fame thrust upon him after the huge success of It Happened One Night. Like Deeds, It's a Wonderful Life seems also to contain strong autobiographical elements.

[30]The Crazy Mirror (New York, 1970), 124-5; NATT, 344-6.

[31]Time, XXVII (April 27, 1936), 36; New Republic, LXXXVI (April 22, 1936), 316; Spectator, CLVII (August 28, 1936), 343; Nation, CXLII (May 13, 1936), 624.

[32]Variety, CXXII, issues of April 15, 22, and 29, 1936.

[33]New Masses, XIX (April 28, 1936), 29.

[34]New York Times, IX (July 26, 1936), 3; NATT, 190.

[35]New York Times, IX (June 21, 1936), 3; NATT, 197-8.

[36]The headlines include: "Conway Found Alive in Chinese Mission," "Conway Suffers Loss of Memory, Unable to Recount Experiences of an Entire Year," "Lord Gainsford Abandons Pursuit of Conway," "Lord Gainsford Arrives in London." The next scene is of Lord Gainsford telling the story of how Conway eluded him to members of the Embassy Club. The last shots are of Conway struggling to the entrance of Shangri-La.

[37]In the Lynd's Middletown, a poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, printed on the Middletown Club's program, is reprinted:

So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
While just the art of being kind,
Is all the sad world needs (403).

Capra's suggestion that kindness will solve the world's problems seems to be shared by the sentiments of other middle-class organizations. In fact, the American Way of Life, of which we will speak later, seemed to suggest just this sort of secular religion, stripped of doctrine, reduced to the principle of being nice. As my fifth-grade teacher endlessly repeated, "If you can't say something nice, don't say it at all."

[38]NATT, 443, 375. Capra was talking in this second passage about Wonderful Life, his favorite film.

[39]New York Times (March 3, 1937), 27, and IX (March 7, 1937), 5; New Republic, XC (March 17, 1937), 168; Commonweal, XXV (March 26, 1937), 612; New Masses (March 16, 1937), 27-8.

[40]Griffith, 23.

VI. Frank Capra and the American Way

[1]The epigraph is on the back cover of Glatzer and Raeburn's anthology. According to Leo Rosten, Hollywood, 292, Capra made $294,166 in 1938. W.S. van Dyke was second with $216,750, and John Ford fifth with $196,791. Capra's picture on the cover of Time is reprinted in NATT, 239. Capra's comment is in NATT, 240.

[2]Otis Ferguson, New Republic, XCVI (September 21, 1938), 188.

[3]See Broadus Mitchell, Depression Decade: 1929-41 (New York, 1947), 369-72. In December, 1939, the Federal Reserve Index of Industrial Production finally rose above the peak level of 1929. In July, 1940, Congress allocated $12 billion to defense spending; nine months later it was up to $35 billion.

[4]Variety, CXXXIII (January 4, 1939). Commonweal, XXVIII (September 16, 1938), 534; New Republic, XCVI (September 21, 1938), 188; Time, XXXVIII (September 12, 1938), 44-5; New Masses, XXVIII (September 13, 1938), 29.

[5]Greene, in Glatzer, 114-5.

[6]Alexander, 164-9.

[7]NATT, 241.

[8]About a month after You Can't opened at the Radio City Music Hall, Harry Warner of Warner Brothers made a speech against the reliance upon foreign "isms." According to Variety (September 29, 1938), 2, Warner Brothers was making up 150,000 copies of the speech for distribution to newspapers and exhibitors.

[9]NATT, 254-60.

[10]NATT, 241-2.

[11]Variety, CXXXVI, issues of October 25, November 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29, 1939, and CXXXVII, issue of January 1, 1940.

[12]NATT, 287; Variety, CXXXVI (October 25, 1939); New York Times, IX (October 29, 1939), 5. Capra has a vivid account of his experience at the preview and the days following (274-93).

[13]New York Times (October 20, 1939), 52; Nation, CIL (October 28, 1939), 479; Commonweal, XXX (October 27, 1939), 14; Time (October 23, 1939), 52; Washington Post (October 21, 1939), 16; New Republic, C (November 1, 1939), 369; NATT, 293.

[14]NATT, 138; Hellman, in Glatzer, 5.

[15]Pechter, in Glatzer, 180-1.

[16]Pelley's comment is in Leuchtenberg, 276; NATT, 294-6.

[17]NATT, 297.

[18]On the mayor's wall, pictures of Washington and Lincoln are prominantly displayed.

[19]Capra did shoot an ending to Smith which showed the dismantling of the Taylor machine, but discarded it when he found it seemed anticlimactic.

[20]Variety, CXLII, issues of March 19 and 26, April 2, June 7, 14, 21, 28, and July 4, 1939, CXLIII, issues of July 11, 18, 25, 1939, and CXLV, December 31, 1941.

[21]Time, XXXVII (March 3, 1941), 78; New York Times (March 13, 1941), 25; Commonweal, XXXIII (March 28, 1941), 575-6; New Republic, CIV (March 24, 1941), 405; Nation, CLII (March 24, 1941), 390; New Yorker, XVII (March 22, 1941), 64.

[22]Glatzer, 146.

[23]Richard Barsam, in Glatzer, 154.

[24]Glatzer, 180.

[25]The phrase is from some notes on Capra lent me by Neal Gabler. Further development of Gabler's idea of Capra as religious artist will appear in an essay, the notes of which he was kind enough to share with me.

[26]Terkel, 229. See also the comments of another psychiatrist: "In those days everybody accepted his role, responsibility for his own fate. Everybody, more or less, blamed himself for his delinquency or lack of talent or bad luck. There was an acceptence of the fact it was your own fault" (102).

[27]From Susman's short mention of Capra's films in Culture and Commitment, 11-12.

[28]Quoted in Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Province to Colony (Cambridge, 1953), 396.

[29]Miller, 414, 411.

[30]Three critics in the Capra anthology--Raeburn, Pechter, and Sklar--point to his 19th-century, small-town picture of America.

[31]Raeburn suggests that Capra's appeal to college students today stems from his ability to give middle-class life a sense of vitality and style(xii).

[32]Bergman (133) makes this argument about the screwball comedy and perfect unity.

[33]Sklar, in Glatzer, 130.

[34]Bergman, 147.

VII. Orson Welles: American Maverick

[1]Astruc's comment is in the appendix of Maurice Bessy, Orson Welles (New York, 1967), 157-8. The American Film Institute acceptance speech is reprinted in Films in Review, XXVI (May, 1975), 291-2. Charles Higham, The Art of the American Film (New York, 1973), 207-8.

[2]Bogdanovich, 22. Capra (in Glatzer, 39), when asked if he admires Welles' work replies: "No, not particularly. I wouldn't put him with the people I've mentioned at all /Ford, McCarey, Hawks, Wellman/. First of all, he hasn't made enough films to stamp anything. As a director, he's made very little beyond Citizen Kane and The Magnificent Ambersons. I know that Citizen Kane is supposed to be the nearest thing to the second coming of Christ, but I don't think so."

[3]F.O. Matthiessen, American Rennaisance (New York, 1941), ix-x.

[4]Ronald Gottesman, ed., Focus on Citizen Kane (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971), 11.

[5]For biographical information on Welles, I have relied mainly on Joseph McBride, Orson Welles (New York, 1972); Charles Higham, The Films of Orson Welles (New York, 1970); Peter Cowie, A Ribbon of Dreams (New York, 1973); John Houseman, Run-Through (New York, 1972); and Bessy. Cowie, 14.

[6]For a complete chronology of Welles' stage career, see McBride, 182-5.

[7]See Ibid., 185-7, for Welles' radio history.

[8]Ibid., 26.

[9]Ibid., 16.

[10]Ibid., 189-90. Gottesman, 18.

[11]Orson Welles, Joseph Mankiewicz, and Pauline Kael, The Citizen Kane Book (New York, 1971). Kael, 74.

[12]On the Kael-Kane controversy, see Sarris, The Primal Screen (New York, 1973); Bogdanovich, "The Kane Mutiny," Esquire (October, 1972), 99-105, 180-90; Joseph McBride, "Rough Sledding with Pauline Kael," Film Heritage (Fall, 1971).

[13]Higham, Films, 9-10.

[14]Thomas, Directors in Action, 11. The same book includes remembrances of the making of Kane by actors, actresses, and technicians involved with the film (6-11). Higham, Films, 18-19; Bosley Crowther, The Hollywood Rajah (New York, 1960), 257-60.

[15]For a larger list of comparisons, see W.A. Swanberg, Citizen Hearst (New York, 1961), and Higham, Films, 21-4.

[16]Gottesman, 67-8. Higham, Films, 18.

[17]Kael, 3.

[18]Thomas, 9. Ralph Hoge, Toland's assistant, added, "Everyone was eager to succeed"; and Agnes Moorehead said, "It was exciting to work with Orson. Ther was no one quite like him to create excitement. While we were making Citizen Kane, we felt that excitement."

[19]See Kael, 8-39.

[20]See Herrmann, "Score for a Film," in Gottesman, 69-72. The opera in Kane is a fake one written by Herrmann. called Salammbo, a misspelling of the Flaubert novel Salaambo. Higham, Films, 14-16, has a good short section on Herrmann's score.

[21]See Toland, "How I Broke the Rules in Citizen Kane," in Gottesman, 73-7.

[22]Pechter, 310.

[23]Tom Shales, "Antecedents to Citizen Kane," in The American Film Heritage (Washington, D.C., 1972), 127-34.

[24]Sarris' essay, in Gottesman, 102-8, is titled "The American Baroque." Higham, Films, 22, suggests that Thatcher is Mankiewicz's caricature of J.P. Morgan.

[25]As McBride (45) suggests, this is one of the two times that Kane uses the word "citizen." The other time is in his campaign speech when he tells of defending the "decent ordinary citizens." McBride argues that citizenship--effective connection with other humans--is central for Kane, a goal for which he strives in vain.

[26]Higham, Films, 22, says this scene suggests Hearst's raiding of Pulitzer's New York World staff for his Morning Journal.

[27]McBride, 44.

[28]Ibid.; Welles and Mankiewicz, 292.

[29]Cowie, 37.

[30]Nation, CLII (April 26, 1941), 508; Times (May 2, 1941), 25; Commonweal, XXXIV (May 5, 1941), 68; New Yorker, XVII (May 3, 1941), 79; Newsweek, XVII (March 17, 1941), 60; New Republic, CIV (June 2 and 16, 1941), 760-1 and 824-5.

[31]Variety, CXLV (December 31, 1941).

[32]See Ezra Goodman, The Fifty-Year Decline and Rise of Hollywood (New York, 1967). In chapter four Goodman argues that one of the reasons for the decline of the studio system stems from the fact that directors were not given the right to make films as they saw fit.

[33]McBride, 55; Times (August 14, 1942), 13.

[34]McBride, 52.

[35]Richard Shale, "The Magnificent Ambersons" (unpublished essay, University of Michigan, 1973).

[36]On Cortez and Ambersons, see Charles Higham, The Hollywood Cameraman (Bloomington, 1970), 104-9.

[37]Bazin speaks about editing in depth in two places. One is in Bessy, 153, the other in his "The Evolution of the Language of the Cinema," What is Cinema? I, 33-7.

[38]Bazin, I, 33-7.

[39]Booth Tarkington, The Magnificent Ambersons (New York, 1918), 139.

[40]See Tarkington, 242; also McBride, 80-1, to compare the present ending with Welles' original plan. Higham, Films, 195-7, describes the cut material, including this final scene. It might be added that the present ending as it stands is nearer to what Tarkington's ending is like. Welles' projected ending, stressing the sociological theme, would have constituted a more substantial, albeit more perceptive, change.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Though Tarkington was a genteel small-town progressive in the early part of the century. he was understandably enough strongly opposed to FDR's policies in the depression. Had he written Ambersons in the thirties, it probably would have sided more strongly with the Amberson family and stressed the importance of genteel character, which its author saw declining in the thirties.

[43]Pells, 287.

[44]Ibid., 291.

[45]In many of Welles' films, the main character is divided between a Faustian urge to dominate and control, and a human need to feel wanted and loved. It could be argued that this conflict stems from Welles' recognition of the same impulses working in his own being: the conflict between the dominating massiveness of his physical presence and the liberal tolerant ideology of his official statements. Gottesman, 68.

[46]Kael, 10, 14-20.

[47]John Higham, Writing American History, 141.

[48]Gene Wise, 89-93, 296-300. Among other counter-progressive scholars, Wise mentions David Noble, Louis Hartz, Richard Hofstadter, Perry Miller, R.W.B. Lewis, Henry Nash Smith, and Leo Marx.

[49]Bessy, 153.

[50]See Daniel Bell, "The Once-Born, the Twice-Born, and the After-Born," in The End of Ideology (New York, 1960), 299-305. McBride, 13.

[51]See note 1.

VIII. Films, Filmmakers, and Culture

[1]Hauser's comment is from his Social History of Art (Vol. II, New York, 1951), 956. Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Criticism," New Left Review, no. 82 (November-December, 1973), 3-16.

[2]Williams, 10, 11.

[3]Alternative and oppositional cultures both find a different way to live. The alternative wants only to be left alone by the dominant culture, the oppositional wants to change it.

[4]Ibid., 10

[5]Robin Williams, American Society (2nd rev. ed., New York, 1960), 397-470.

[6]On operative and ideal values, see Robert Berkofer, A Behavioral Approach to Historical Analysis (New York, 1969), 109-15. On the contradictions in the American value system, see Francis Hsu, "American Core Value and National Character," in Michael McGiffert, ed., The Character of Americans (Rev. ed., Homewood, Illinois, 1970), 231-249. Hsu attributes the contradictions to an American core value--self-reliance.

[7]This tendency to find satisfactions in rural values is not limited to America. Raymond Williams has found in an in-depth study of English culture, "even in the twentieth century, in an urban and industrial land, forms of older ideas and experiences still remarkably persist." The City and the Country (London, 1973), 2.

[8]See Caesar Grana, Bohemian versus Bourgeois (New York, 1964). Grana traces the developing political and economic hegemony of the middle class in France in the 19th century and the responses of three modernist artists (Stendahl, Flaubert, and Baudelaire) to it. Among other things he concludes that the rise of the middle class has brought a great stress on the importance of social efficiency and productivity in society with a resulting alienation and gloom on the part of artists and intellectuals.

[9]From Welles AFI speech (note 1, ch. 7).

[10]Irving Howe has written that "character for modernists is . . . a psychic battlefield or an insoluble puzzle, or the occasion for the flow of perceptions and sensations." He adds that in modernist art "value and power are radically dissociated," which throws light not only on Kane but on Modern Times as well. Irving Howe, ed., Literary Modernism (New York, 1967), 34.

[11]Freedom and Culture (New York, 1939), 8, 7, 61, 57.

[12]Mills, The Sociological Imagination (New York, 1959), 168. Weber's theories about the tendencies of bureaucracies to function efficiently but not to adapt to changes are well known. Mannheim, attempting to account for the failure of increasingly organized societies to produce rational citizens, distinguished between "substantial" rationality and "functional" rationality. The first is an act of thought which reveals insight into the interrelations of events in a situation. In contrast, functional

rationality, common in industry and bureaucracy, is a series of actions organized to fulfill a previously defined, functional goal. It is easy to see how functional rationality, as defined, leads the social thinker to a definition of mass society. See Weber, From Max Weber, ed. and trans. by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York, 1946), 196-244; and Mannheim, Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction (New York, 1940), 51-60. Grana, 208.

[13]I use the term "covert" advisedly, guided by the definition in Bowren, Marx, and Rose, "Literature and Covert Culture," American Quarterly, IX (Winter, 1957), 377-86. The authors see covert culture as those "commonly learned attitudes and behavior patterns" that people tend to ignore or repress. Some especially sensitive members of the society (or outsiders) may, however, locate these repressed and often contradictory attitudes and behavior patterns and express them imaginatively. Welles, in noting in Ambersons the conflict between industrial development and ideas of inevitable progress, was noting a contradiction that other artists have noted throughout our history, though it has never been widely shared by the culture's members until perhaps the last few years. See Leo Marx's Machine and the Garden (New York, 1963).

[14]Variety, CCLXXVII (January 8, 1975), 74.

[15]See John Cawelti, ed., Focus on Bonnie and Clyde (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1973).

[16]See Marge Rosen's interview with Coppola in Film Comment, X (July-August, 1974), 43-9; also John Cawelti, "Myths of Violence in American Popular Culture," Critical Inquiry, I (March, 1975), 521-41.

APPENDIX I

CREDITS

Chaplin

MODERN TIMES (1936) United Artists
Director, Screenwriter, and Music: Charles Chaplin. Assistant Directors: Carter De Haven and Henry Bergman. Photography: R.H. Totheroh. Musical Direction: Alfred Newman. Cast: Charles Chaplin-the tramp; Paulette Goddard-the gamin; Henry Bergman, Chester Conklin, Stanley Sanford, Hank Mann, Louis Natheau, Allan Garcia, Richard Alexander, Heinie Conklin, Lloyd Ingraham, Edward Kimball, Wilfred Lucas, Mira McKinney, John Rand, Walter James, Dr. Cecil Reynolds.

THE GREAT DICTATOR (1941) United Artists
Director, Screenwriter, and Music: Charles Chaplin. Assistant Directors: Dan James, Wheeler Dryden, and Bod Meltzer. Photography: R.H. Totheroh and Karl Struss. Musical Direction: Meredith Willson. Cast: Charles Chaplin-the barber and Adenoid Hynkel; Paulette Goddard-Hannah; Jack Oakie-Benzino Napolini; Grace Hayle-Madame Napolini; Reginald Gardiner, Henry Daniell, Billy Gilbert, Carter De Haven, Maurice Moscovich, Emma Dunn, Bernard Gorcey, Paul Weigel, Chester Conklin.

Ford

STAGECOACH (1939) United Artists
Director: John Ford. Screenplay: Dudley Nichols, from story "Stage to Lordsburg," by Ernest Haycox. Photography: Bert Glennon. Music: Richard Hageman, W. Franke Harling, John Leipold, Leo Shuken, and Louis Gruenberg. Editors: Dorothy Spencer and Walter Reynolds. Assistant Director: Wingate Smith. Cast: John Wayne-the Ringo Kid; Claire Trevor-Dallas; John Carradine-Hatfield; Thomas Mitchell-Dr. Josiah Boone; Andy Devine-Buck; Donald Meek-Samuel Peacock; Louise Platt-Lucy Mallory; Tim Holt-Lt. Blanchard; George Bancroft-Sheriff Curly Wilcox; Berton Churchill-Henry Gatewood; Tim Tyler-Hank Plummer; Chris Pin Martin-Chris; Elvira Rios-Yakima; Jack Pennick-Jerry the bartender; Joseph Rickson-Luke Plummer; Francis Ford-Billy Pickett.

YOUNG MR. LINCOLN (1939) 20th Century-Fox
Director: John Ford. Screenplay: Lamar Trotti, based on the life of Abraham Lincoln. Photography: Bert Glennon. Music: Alfred Newman. Editor: Walter Thompson. Cast: Henry Fonda-Abraham Lincoln; Alice Brady-Abigail Clay; Marjorie Weaver-Mary Todd; Arleen Whelan-Hannah Clay; Eddie Collins-Efe Turner; Pauline Moore-Ann Rutledge; Richard Cromwell-Matt Clay; Ward Bond-John Palmer Cass; Donald Meek-John Felder; Spencer Charters-Judge Herbert A. Bell; Eddie Quillan-Adam Clay; Judith Dickens-Carrie Sue; Milburn Stone-Stephen A. Douglas; Francis Ford-Sam Boone; Fred Kohler, Jr.-Scrub White.

DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK (1939) 20th Century-Fox
Director: John Ford. Screenplay: Lamar Trotti and Sonya Levien, from the novel by Walter D. Edmonds. Photography: Gert Glennon and Ray Rennahan. Music: Alfred Newman. Editor: Robert Simpson. Cast: Claudette Colbert-Lana Borst Martin; Henry Fonda-Gilbert Martin; Edna Mae Oliver-Widow McKlennar; Eddie Collins-Christian Reall; John Carradine-Caldwell; Dorris Bowdon-Mary Reall; Roger Imhof-General Nicholas Herkimer; Francis Ford-Joe Boleo; Ward Bond-Adam Hartmann; Chief Big Tree-Blue Back; Jack Pennick-Amos.

THE GRAPES OF WRATH (1940) 20th Century-Fox
Director: John Ford. Screenplay: Nunnally Johnson, from the novel by John Steinbeck. Photography: Gregg Toland. Music: Alfred Newman. Assistant Director: Edward O'Fearna. Editor: Robert Simpson. Cast: Henry Fonda-Tom Joad; Jane Darwell-Ma Joad; Zeffie Tilbury; Grandma Joad; John Carradine-Casey; Charlie Grapewin-Grampa Joad; Dorris Bowdon-Rose of Sharon; Russell Simpson-Pa Joad; O.Z. Whitehead-Al; John Qualen-Muley; Eddie Quillan-Connie; Ward Bond-policeman; Frank Faylen-Tim.

HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY(1941) 20th Century-Fox
Director: John Ford. Screenplay:Philip Dunne, from the novel by Richard Llewellyn. Photography: Arthur Miller. Music: Alfred Newman. Editor: James B. Clark. Narrator: Rhys Williams. Choral Effects: Eisteddfod Singers of Wales. Cast: Walter Pidgeon-Mr. Gruffydd; Maureen O'Hara-Angharad; Donald Crisp-Mr. Morgan; Sara Allgood-Mrs. Morgan; Roddy McDowall-Huw; John Loder-Ianto Morgan; Barry Fitzgerald-Cyfartha; Patrick Knowles-Ivor Morgan; Morton Lowry-Mr. Jonas; Arthur Shields-Mr. Parry; Richard Fraser-Davy Morgan; Anna Lee-Bronwen; Evan S. Evans-Gwilym; Rhys Williams-Dai Bando; Lionel Pape-Old Mr. Evans; Marten LaMont-Iestyn Evans; Mae Marsh-Miner's wife.

Capra

MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN (1936) Columbia
Director: Frank Capra. Screenplay: Robert Riskin, from the story "Opera Hat" by Clarence Budington Kelland. Photography: Joseph Walker. Editor: Gene Havlick. Cast: Gary Cooper-Longfellow Deeds; Jean Arthur-Babe Bennett; George Bancroft-MacWade; Lionel Stander-Corny Cobb; Douglas Dumbrille-John Cedar; Raymond Walburn-Walter; H.B. Warner-Judge Walker; Warren Hymer-bodyguard; Ruth Donnelly-Mabel Dawson; Arthur Hoyt-Budington; Jameson Thomas-Mr. Semple; Mayo Method-Mrs. Semple; Walter Catlett-Morrow.

LOST HORIZON (1937) Columbia
Director: Frank Capra. Screenplay: Robert Riskin, adapted from the novel by James Hilton. Photography: Joseph Walker. Music: Dmitri Tiomkin. Editor: Gene Havlick. Assistant director: Art Black. Aerial Photography: Elmer Dyer. Cast: Ronald Colman-Robert Conway; Edward Everett Horton-Alexander Lovett; H.B. Warner-Chang; Jane Wyatt-Sondra; Sam Jaffee-High Lama; Margo-Maria; John Howard-George Conway; Thomas Mitchell-Barnard; Isabel Jewell-Gloria; Hugh Buckler-Lord Gainsford; David Torrance-Prime Minister.

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU(1938) Columbia
Director: Frank Capra. Screenplay: Robert Riskin, adapted from the play by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart. Photography: Joseph Walker. Music: Dimitri Tiomkin. Editor: Gene Havlick. Cast: Jean Arthur-Alice Sycamore; Lionel Barrymore-Grandpa Vanderhof; James Stewart-Tony Kirby; Edward Arnold-Anthony P. Kirby; Mischa Auer-Kolehkhov; Ann Miller-Essie Charmichael; Spring Byington-Penny Sycamore; Halliwell Hobbs-Mr. DePinna; Samuel S. Hinds-Paul Sycamore; Donald Meek-Poppins; Dub Taylor-Ed Charmichael; Mary Forbes-Mrs. Anthony Kirby; Lillian Yarbo-Rheba; H.B. Warner-Ramsey; Harry Davenport-the judge.

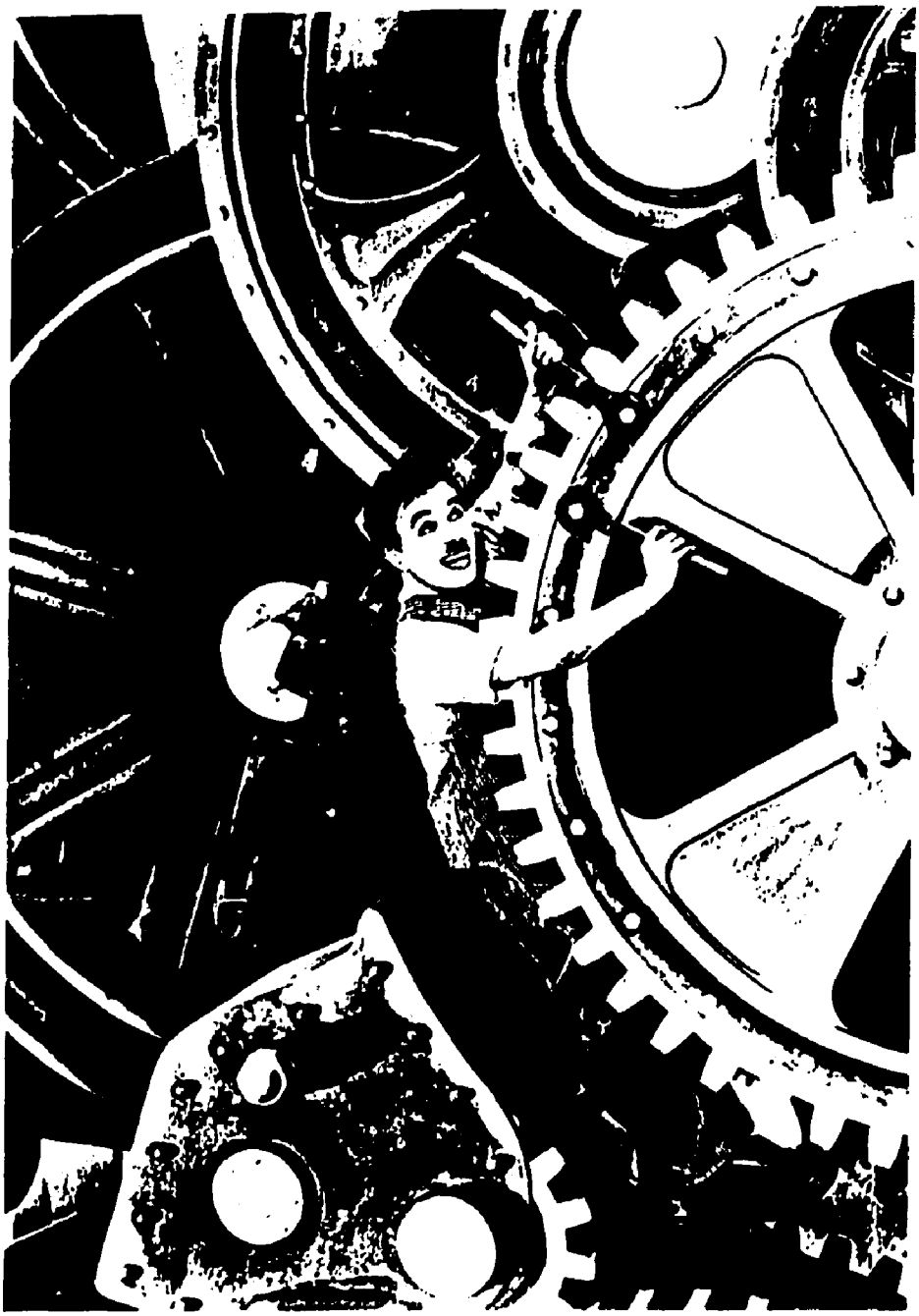
MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON (1939) Columbia
Director: Frank Capra. Screenplay: Sidney Buchman, adapted from a story by Lewis R. Foster. Photography: Joseph Walker. "Montage": Slavko Vorkapich. Music: Dimitri Tiomkin. Editor: Gene Havlick. Cast: Jean Arthur-Saunders; James Stewart-Jefferson Smith; Claude Rains-Senator Joseph Paine; Edward Arnold-Jim Taylor; Guy Kibbee-Governor Hopper; Thomas Mitchell-Diz Moore; Eugene Pallette-Chick McGann; Beulah Bondi-Ma Smith; H.B. Warner-Senate Majority Leader; Harry Carey-President of the Senate; Astrid Allwyn-Susan Paine; Ruth Donnelly-Mrs. Hopper; William Damarest-Bill Griffith.

MEET JOHN DOE (1941) Warner Brothers
Director: Frank Capra. Screenplay: Robert Riskin, adapted from a story by Richard Connell and Robert Presnell. Photography: George Barnes. Music: Dmitri Tiomkin. Editor: Daniel Mandel. Cast: Gary Cooper-Long John Willoughby (John Doe); Barbara Stanwyck-Ann Mitchell; Edward Arnold-D.B. Norton; James Gleeson-Connell; Walter Brennan-the "Colonel"; Gene Lockhart-Mayor Lovett; Regis Toomey-Bert; Spring Byington-Mrs. Mitchell; Rod La Rocque-Ted Sheldon; J. Farrell Macdonald-"Sourpuss" Smithers.

Welles

CITIZEN KANE (1941) RKO
Director: Orson Welles. Screenplay: Herman J. Mankiewicz and Orson Welles. Photography: Gregg Toland. Music: Bernard Herrmann. Editors: Robert Wise and Mark Robson. Assistant director: Richard Wilson. Cast: Orson Welles-Charles Foster Kane; Joseph Cotton-Jedediah Leland; Everett Sloane-Bernstein; Dorothy Comingore-Susan Alexander; Ray Collins-James W. Gettys; William Alland-Thompson; Agnes Moorehead-Mary Kane; Ruth Warrick-Emily Monroe Norton Kane; George Coulouris-Walter Parks Thatcher; Erskine Sanford-Herbert Carter; Harry Shannon-Jim Kane; Paul Stewart-Raymond; Georgia Backus-Curator of Thatcher Library; Buddy Swan-Charles Foster Kane, aged 8; Sonny Bupp-Kane, Jr.; Philip Van Zandt-Rawlston.

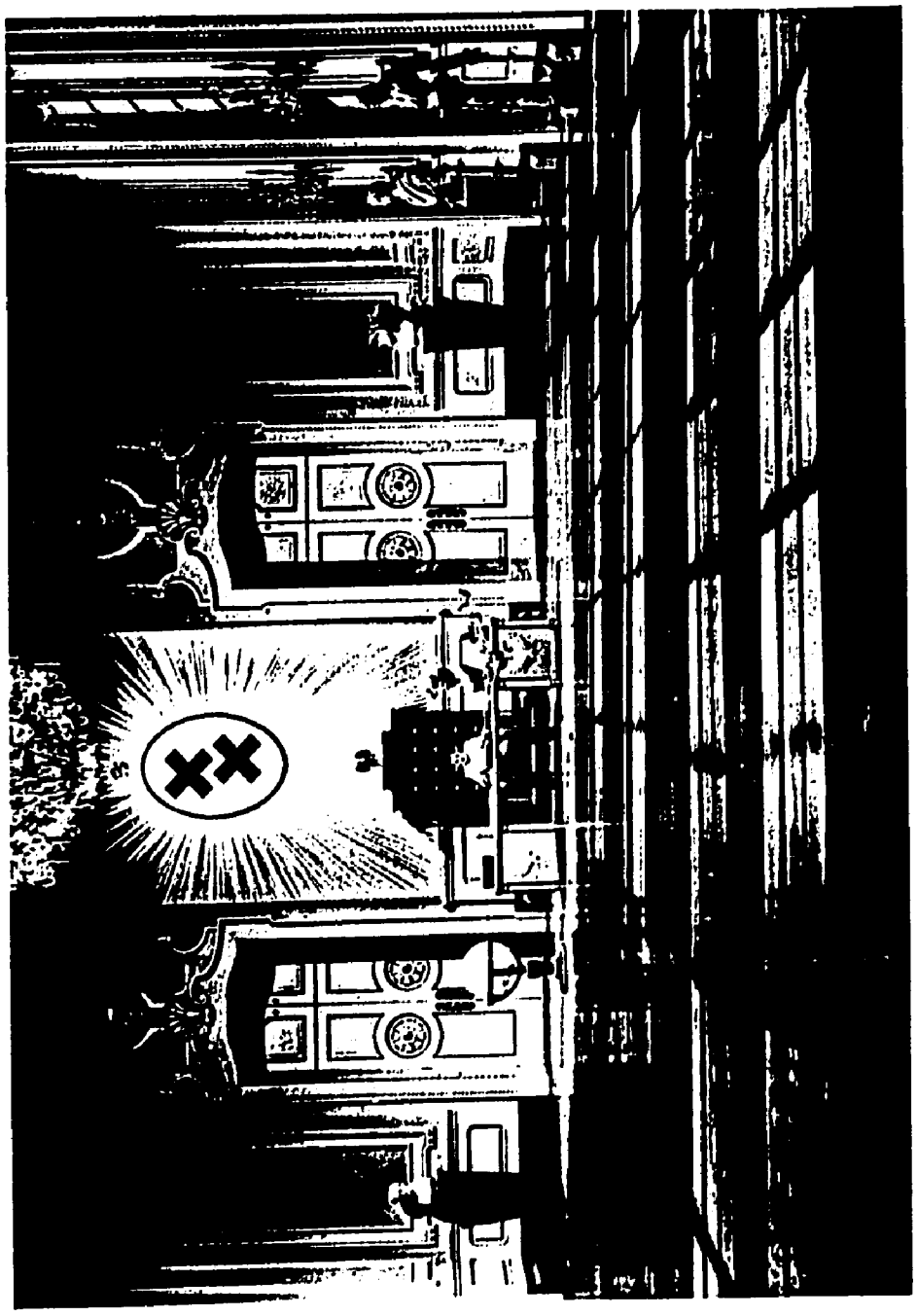
THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS (1942) RKO
Director: Orson Welles. Screenplay: Orson Welles, based on the novel by Booth Tarkington. Photography: Stanley Cortez. Music: Bernard Herrmann. Editors: Robert Wise, Jack Moss, and Mark Robson. Assistant director: Freddie Fleck. Cast: Tim Holt-George Amberson Minafer; Joseph Cotten-Eugene Morgan; Agnes Moorehead-Fanny Minafer; Anne Baxter-Lucy Morgan; Delores Costello-Isabel Amberson Minafer; Ray Collins-Uncle Jack Amberson; Richard Bennett-Major Amberson; Don Dillaway-Wilbur Minafer; Erskine Sanford-Roger Bronson; Louis Johnson-Sam; Bobby Cooper-George as boy; Gus Schilling-drugstore clerk.



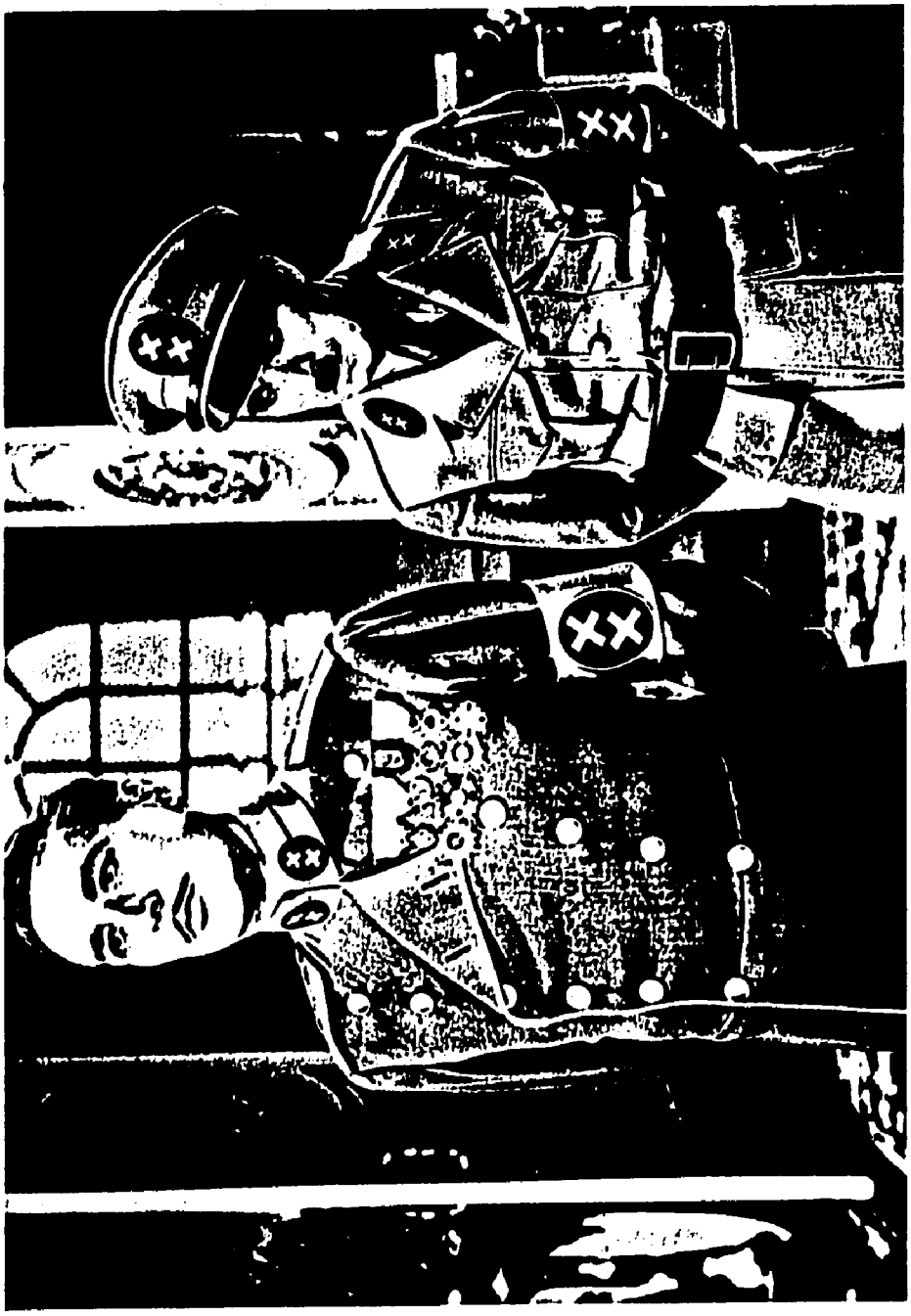
MODERN TIMES--The tramp confronts the machine



MODERN TIMES--The tramp inadvertantly picks up a red flag and leads a protest parade



THE GREAT DICTATOR--Adenoid Hynkel's palatial headquarters



THE GREAT DICTATOR--Hynkel glares at the "traitorous" Schultz



THE GREAT DICTATOR--The barber and Hannah watch his shop burn from the rooftops



STAGECOACH--A motley group of travelers arrives in Apache Wells



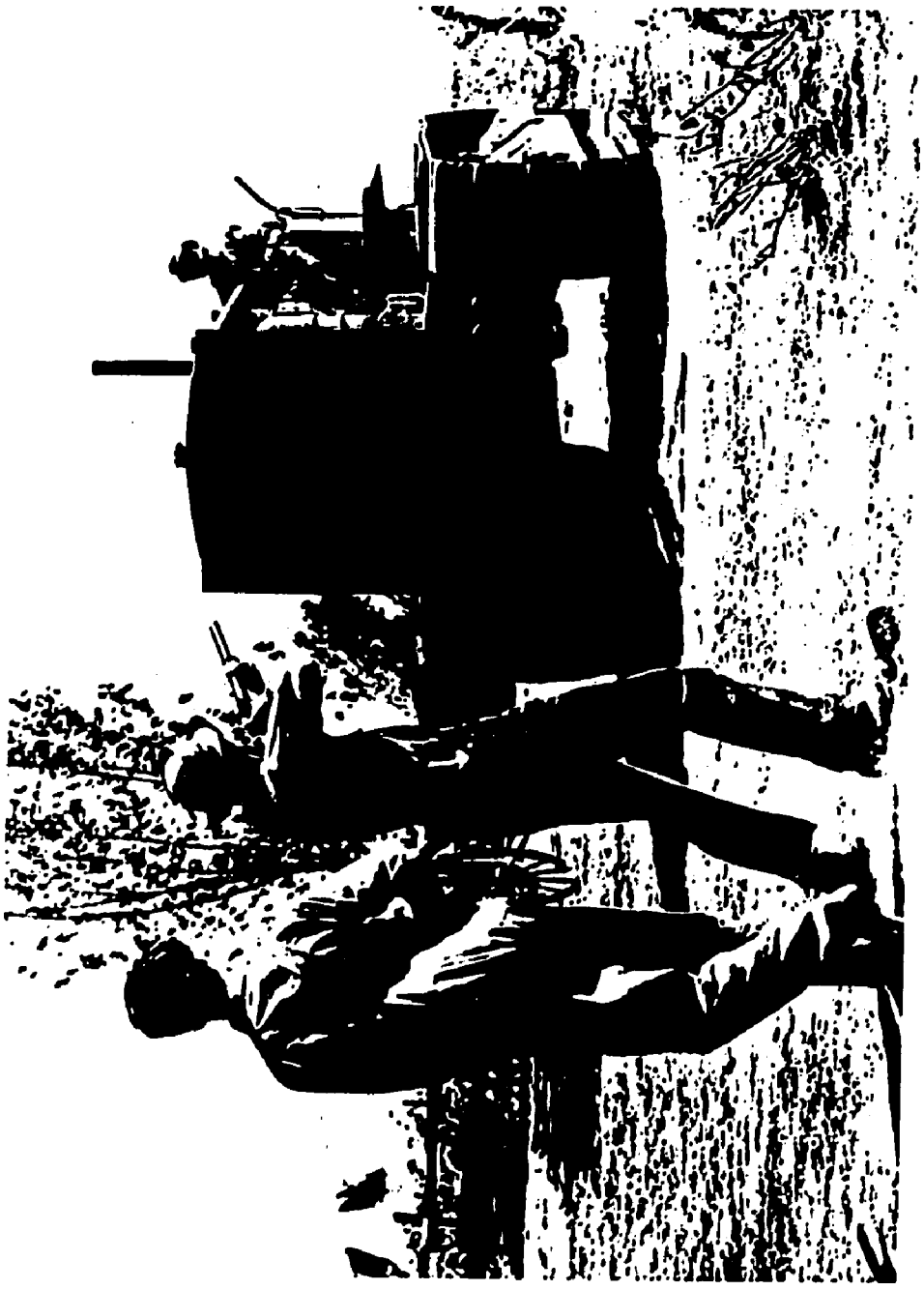
YOUNG MR. LINCOLN--Abe talks down a lynch mob at the door of the town jail



DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK--British and Indians burn a homestead. . . . Note the typical Fordian panorama



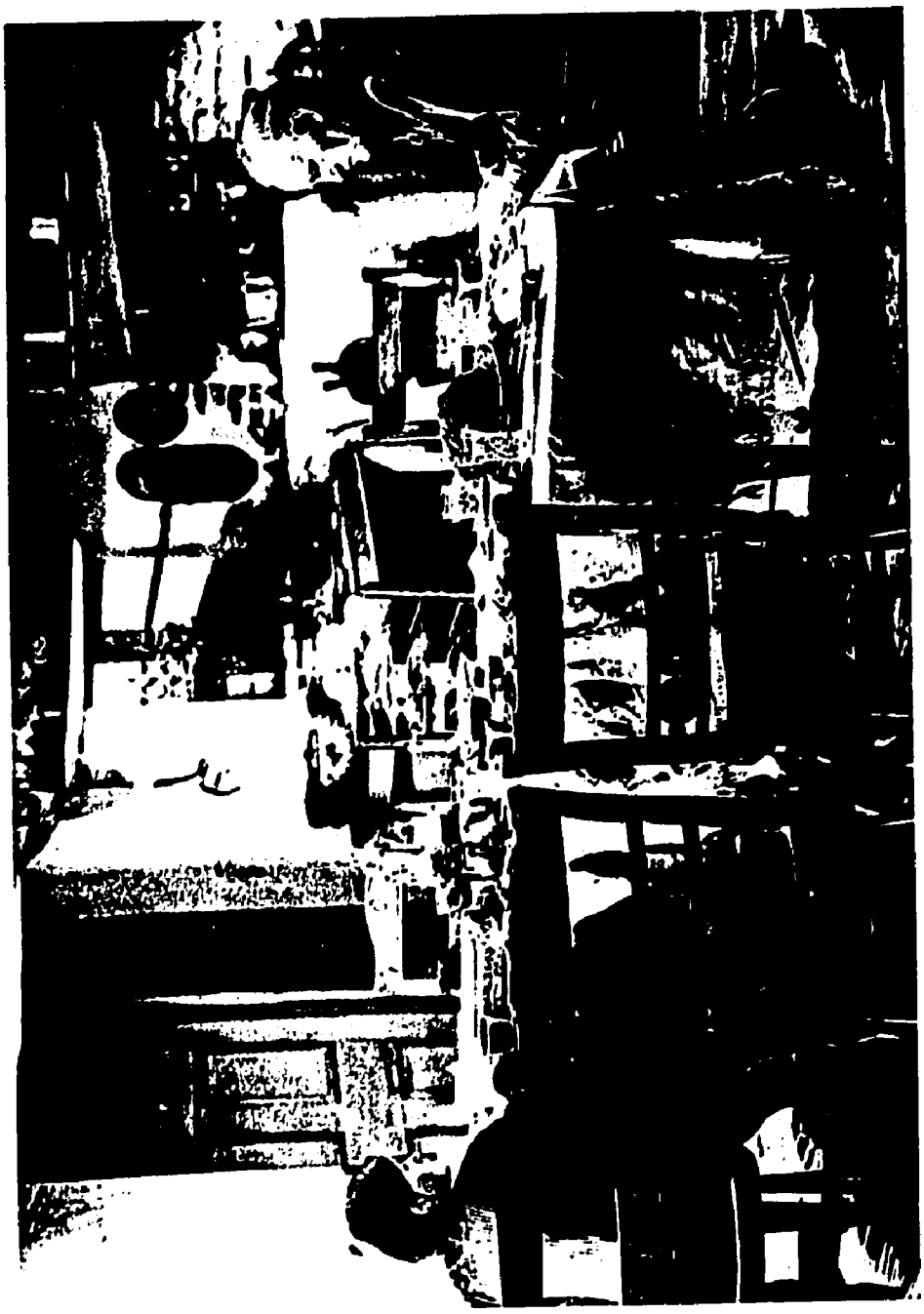
DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK--Gil and Lana Martin join in on a community celebration



GRAPES OF WRATH--Muley and his son try to counter the powerful caterpillar



GRAPES OF WRATH--Grandpa Joad's funeral, Tom writes in the family Bible



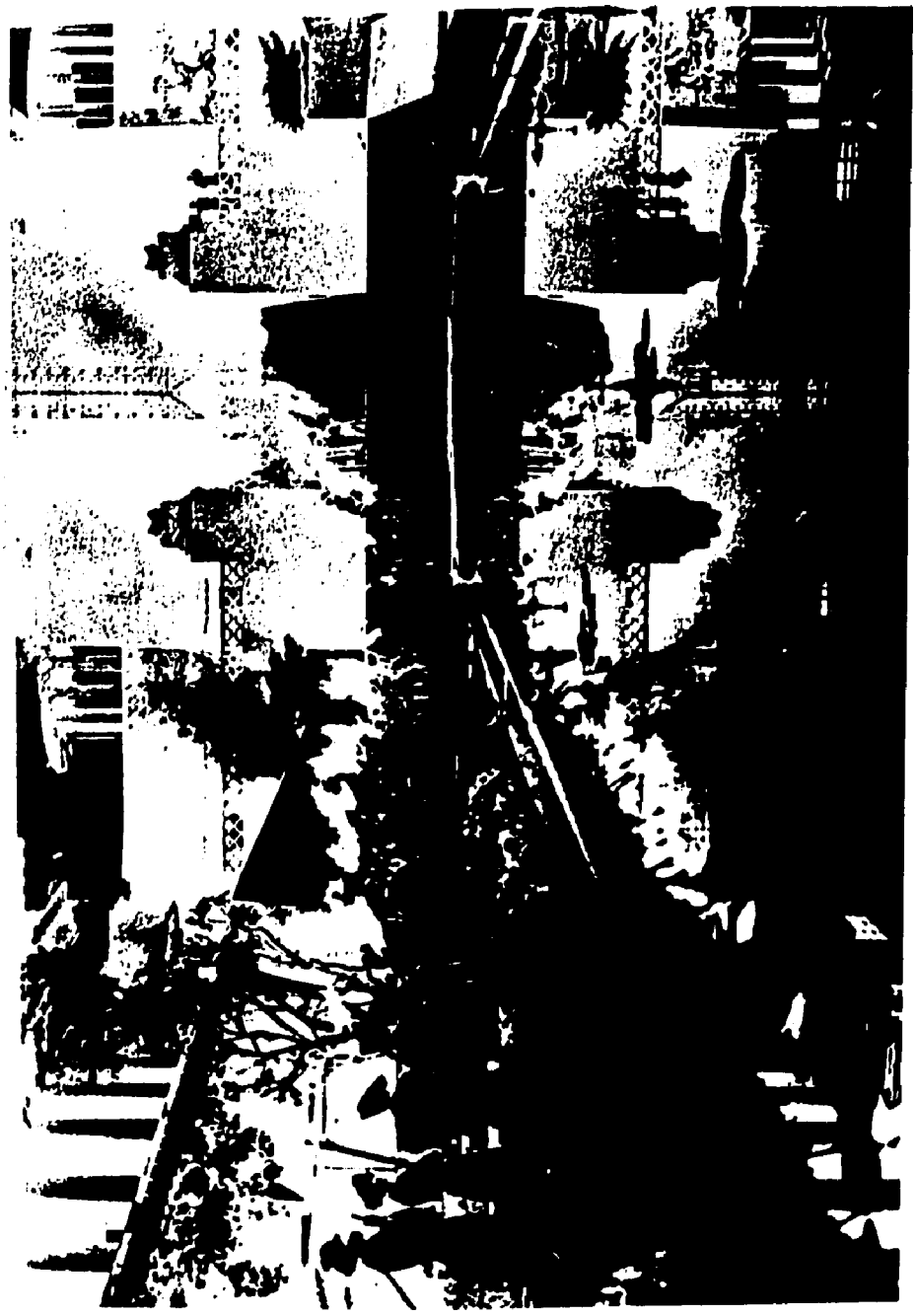
HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY--Huw and Mr. Morgan alone at the table after the other sons are ordered out of the house. . . . Note lighting and composition



MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN--Longfellow Deeds plays the tuba during his sendoff . . . . A warm Capra small town



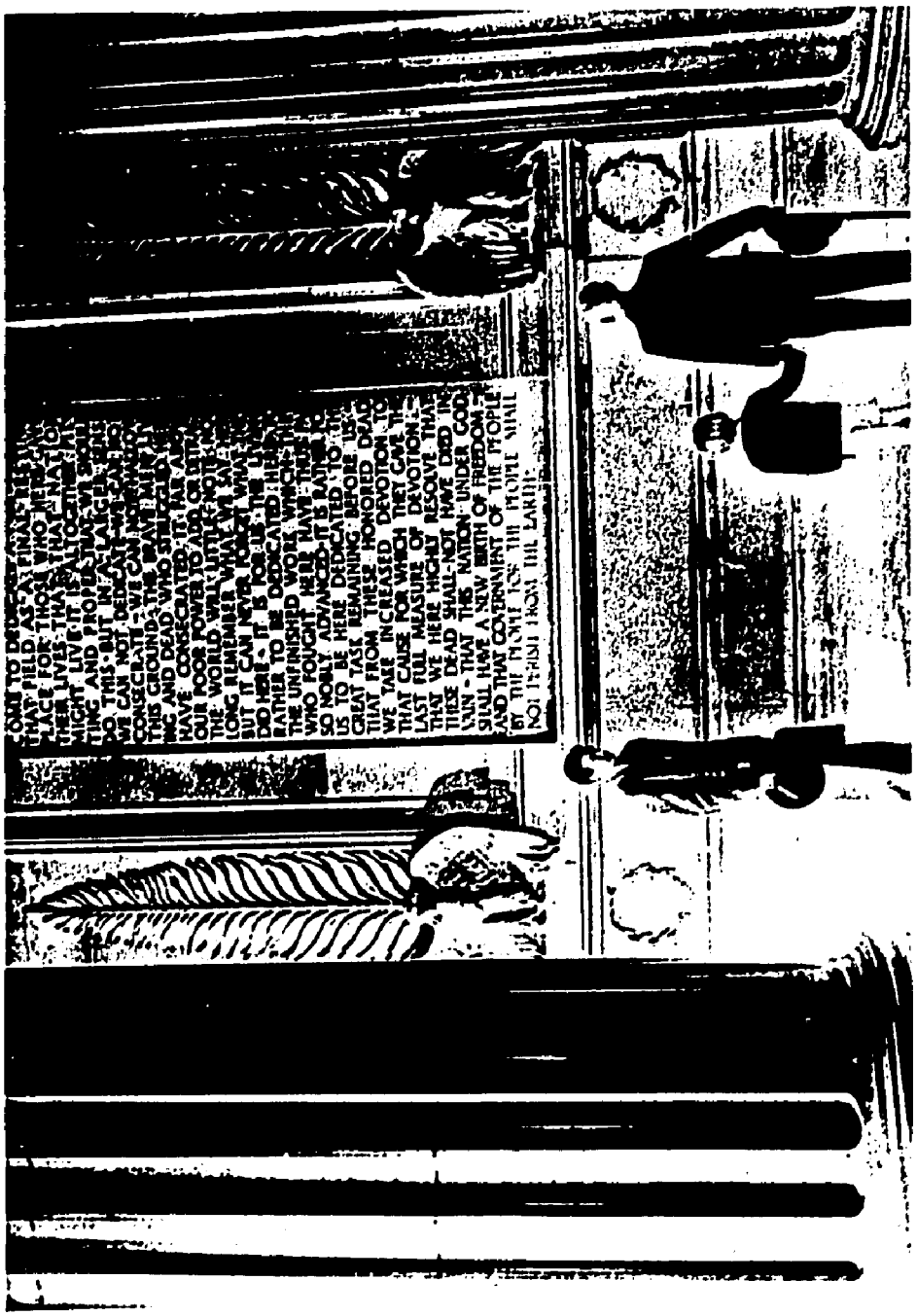
MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN--Betrayed and despondent, Deeds silently ponders his fate in a mental ward



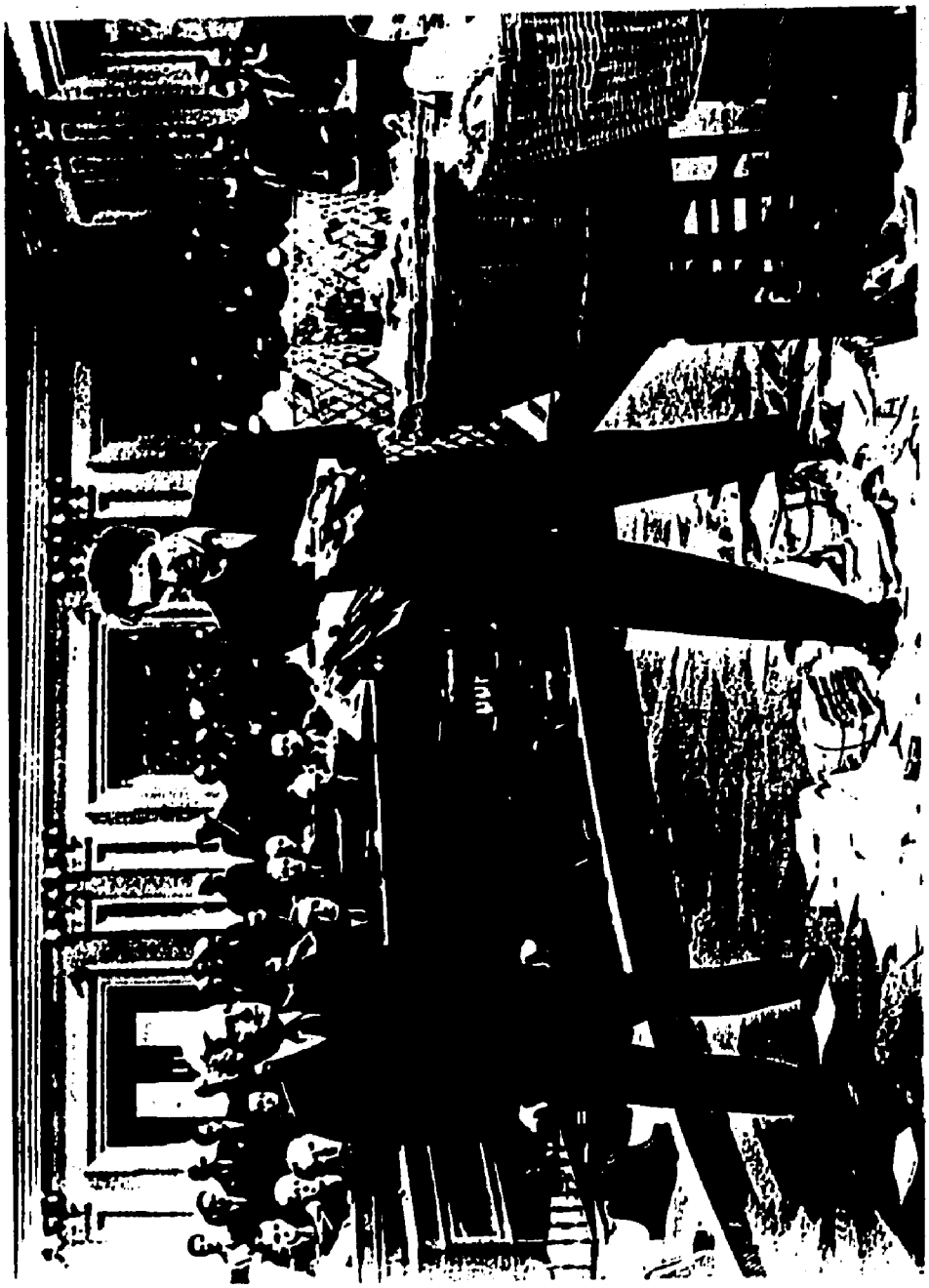
LOST HORIZON--Capra's spectacle. . . . Monks walk to the High Lama's funeral



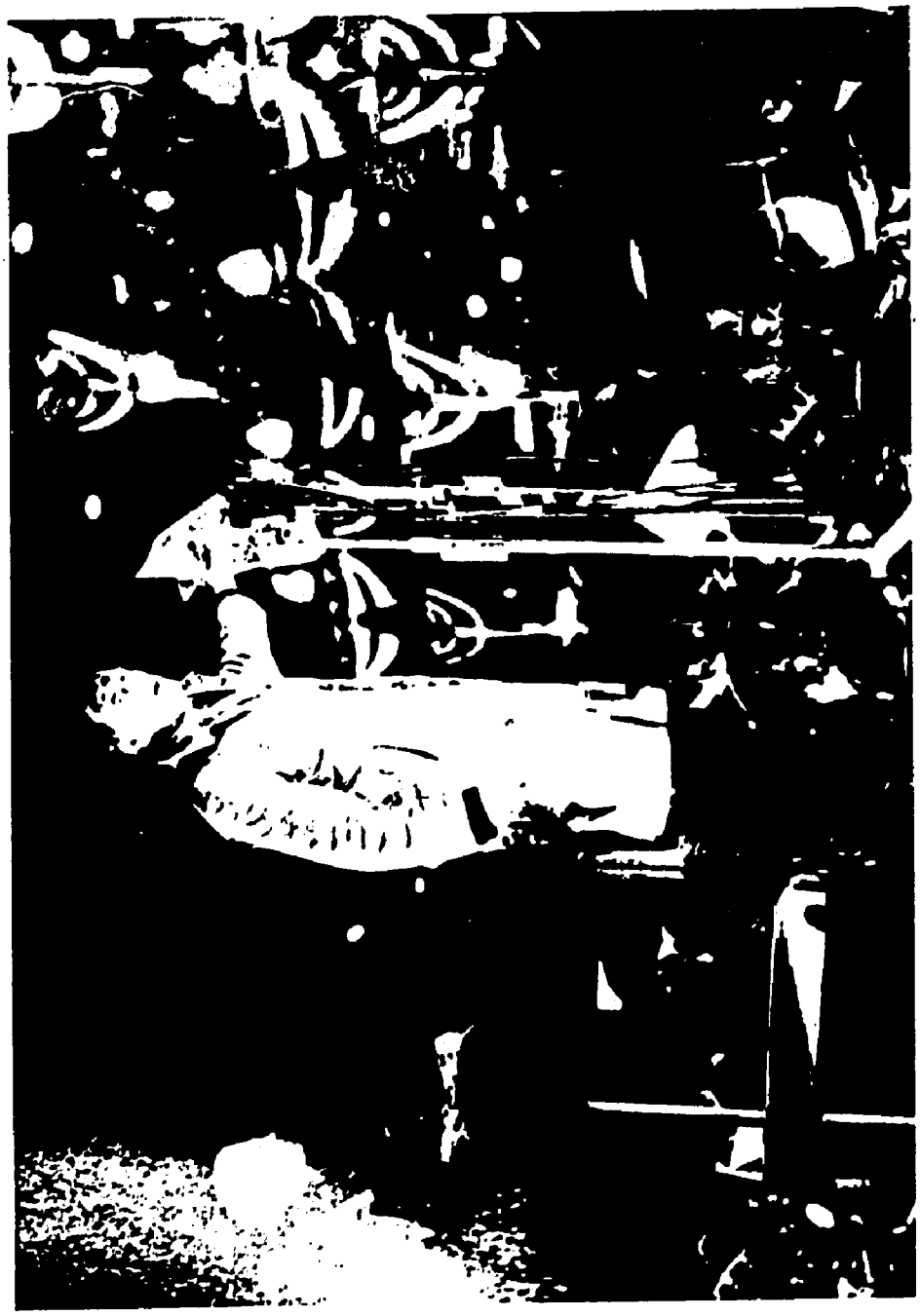
YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU--Grandpa Vanderhof scolds Kirby as Tony and the common people look on



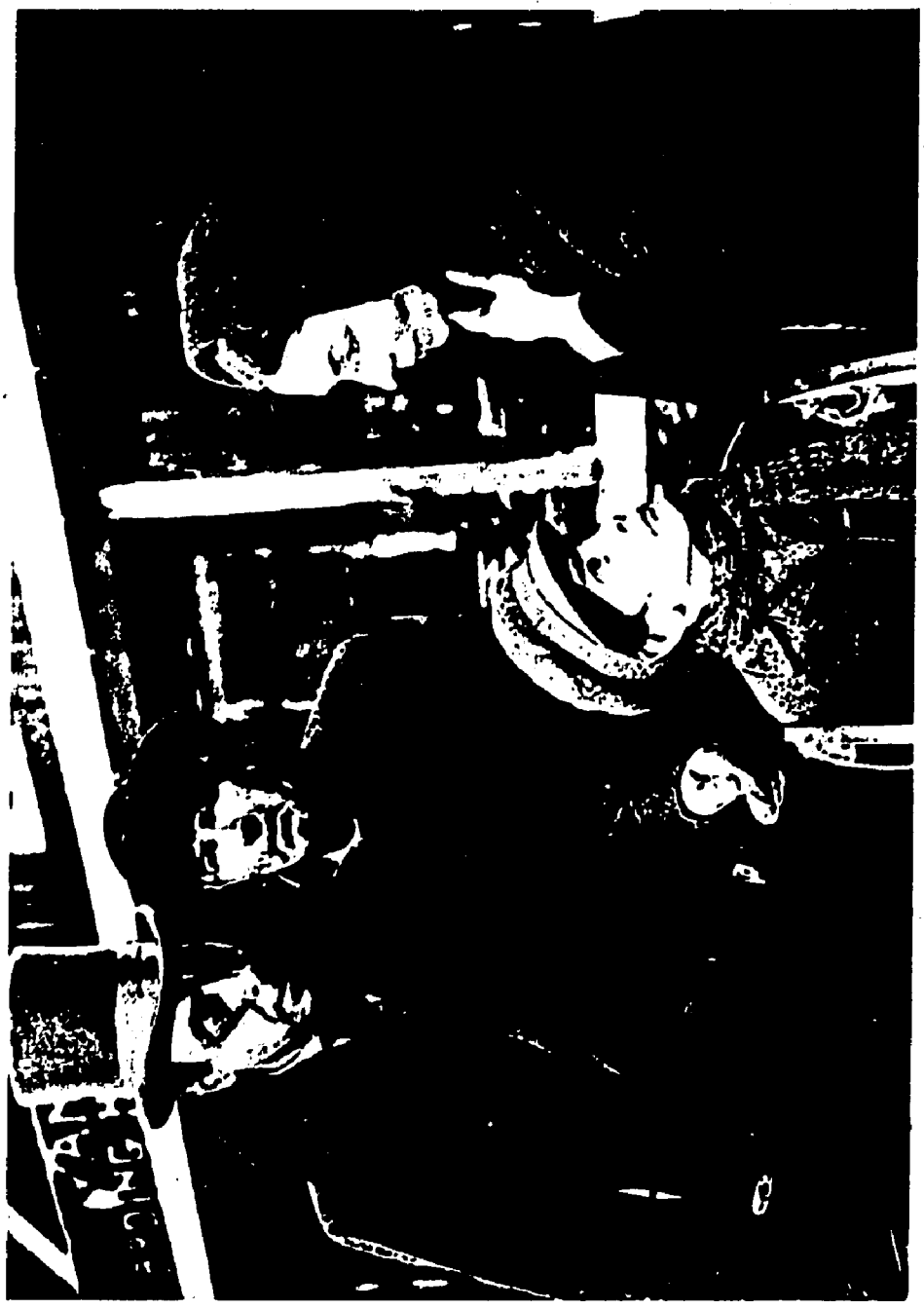
MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON--Jeff Smith visits the Lincoln Memorial as a boy reads from the Gettysburg Address



MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON--Betrayed by Senator Paine, Jeff reads the distorted and manipulated news from his home state



MEET JOHN DOE--Long John Willoughby helplessly watches the crowd turn against him at the John Doe Convention



CITIZEN KANE--The young Charles Kane turned over to Thatcher, separated from Rosebud



CITIZEN KANE--The archetypal American tycoon as political candidate



THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS--Isabel and Eugene dance as Lucy and George look on as the ball ends. . . . Note the deep focus photography and the ornate mansion



THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS--Fanny and George clash as Uncle Jack looks on.

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