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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Angry Silence* by Guy Green, Richard Attenborough and Bryan Forbes

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Source: *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Autumn, 1961), pp. 41-43

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1210565>

Accessed: 04-03-2018 11:41 UTC

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The fact is, he is at home in a world of his own which precludes a too direct confrontation of contemporary Argentine life; this even shows in his way of working. He does not like open-air shooting very much, and says "I feel a lot more at ease on the set, with the actors." There are many directors like him; but in their own countries they are usually the exception rather than the one-man rule. Faced with primitive-

ness and artificiality, he started by creating a refined language far in advance of his surroundings; this, although it is too readily taken for granted by foreign critics, is so far his biggest achievement. But, from our point of view, he should not be content with a brilliant international role. Perhaps there is another way to put it: he badly needs company—in his position, he is too much alone.



Film Reviews

IN GENERAL RELEASE

THE ANGRY SILENCE

Director: Guy Green. Producers: Richard Attenborough and Bryan Forbes. British Lion. With Richard Attenborough, Pier Angeli, Michael Craig, Bernard Lee, Geoffrey Keen.

This is a film about an industrial dispute in an English town. Much of it was shot in a real factory, though a rather antique one. But so oddly is it made that one can forgive Paine Knickerbocker of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, usually the West Coast Bosley Crowther, for thinking that the local union chairman was the foreman. (There are no foremen in the plant, only a works manager.)

The film is new-wavy in some ways; one is encouraged by the suitably drab photography in many sequences, the occasional frank language ("Do you expect to get it the first time?")

asks a beautiful blonde), the occasional sharp sense of milieu. But as the reels go by these pleasures recede, and one realizes that they are only devices, window-dressing. Fundamentally, the film is a studio-concocted piece of fluff, as falsely "dramatic" as any family picture.

The makers of *The Angry Silence* have not learned anything since Lindsay Anderson, in *Sight & Sound*, wrote his definitive analysis of what was wrong with *On the Waterfront*. The new film shares the obliqueness, and perhaps the dishonesty, of the earlier work. As *On the Waterfront* raised a real and grim social problem, the corruption of dock unions (and companies), and then reduced it to a personal problem that could be "resolved" by a moral gesture, so exactly does *The Angry Silence* reduce the problems of democracy in unions to a matter that can be dealt with through a beating and a speech.

Kazan's film has a certain arty appeal; the personal problem there is handled with grace and poetry, and a great actor was at work. *The Angry Silence* tries to be ingratiating, and leaves a bad taste. This is because its realistic surface attempts to cover a preposterous handling of a situation that could have been painfully real.

The workers in the factory are extremely peculiar. They number about sixty men, and in long shots they appear to be ordinary British workers. Yet they are supposed to be mesmerized by the chairman, an affable sort, and by a mysterious bespectacled agitator, presumably a Communist, who comes down from London to disrupt the plant. The men never talk about what is said to be "the real issue," establishment of a closed shop; they do not carry on the backchat and chaffing of shop talk, except about women. And when the film moves in on individuals they are characterized, except for the hero and his buddy, solely as sheep-like idiots on the one hand and sinister juvenile delinquents on the other. With such personae, the alleged conflict is doomed to be a farce. The hero refuses to go out when a strike vote is taken. He is ostracized by his fellows. Violence ensues; newspapermen arrive. The explicit villains include not only the agitator

(whose conversations on the telephone exactly parallel the TV-watcher shots in *On the Waterfront*) but also the irresponsible and sensation-seeking journalists.

The side-issues of this situation are sometimes neatly done. Pier Angeli as the hero's wife is excellent. There is a frightening sequence in which their son has been beaten up in the street. But these are, of course, precisely the sensational elements sought out by journalists; and the film, in the end, is itself that same kind of journalism.

This is too bad not only because it makes for a confused film, but because the underlying issue is a real and important one: the extent to which men in labor-management conflicts should be coerced by their fellows *vs.* the extent to which they should be allowed to go their own way even if it means harming the interests of their fellows. No easy sentimental answer can be given to this problem. And in this case no real illumination of the dilemma occurs at all, because the film makes the central conflict totally irrational on both sides. Even the hero cannot put his own position cogently; to us, and indeed to himself, he seems to be resisting his mates' pressure merely on emotional grounds; and no one in the shop ever states any of the cogent arguments that have brought the closed shop into existence or caused unions to seek it.

Now this kind of failure results, I suspect, because the film-makers could not imagine dealing directly with the actual kinds of events involved in any situation central to their "problem." These events are the interaction of numbers of men, who have worked with each other in a shop for some time, who have complicated relationships with their leaders and with the management. They involve rational calculation as well as emotion; and they involve immense amounts of talk about what is to be done. The usual hero approach to plot construction is dismally and obviously impossible as a means of coping with such events.

Why spend so much time on such a film? Because it is bad in an especially instructive way. On other occasions I have expressed the

wish that film-makers would deal sometimes with the industrial lives which, after all, most of us live, and broach the conflicts that circulate through the factories and offices and stores as well as the *Executive Suites*. This kind of subject must be "gone out to" as much as, or more than, the lives of bushmen or fishers on the Ganges, if our cinema is to preserve its vitality. Not because of a need for tracts (the bargainers at the table don't need them, on either side) but because there too are men and women caught up in our special human condition. The challenge of coping with it is a challenge to create new forms.—ERNEST CALLENBACH

DON QUIXOTE

Director and producer: Grigory Kozintsev. Screenplay: E. Schwartz, based on the novel by Miguel de Cervantes. With Nikolai Cherkassov, Yuri Tolubeyev. Lenfilm; released by MGM.

There are so many different ways of looking at Cervantes' masterwork that there is probably a sense in which the film Kozintsev has arranged from it can be said to be a valid shadow of at least one of them. But to say even that much is to take his *Don Quixote* more seriously than it deserves, for its complete refusal to develop any semblance of an imaginative cinematic style makes respecting it as difficult as watching it is dull. It was one of the early wide-screen films, and Kozintsev never cuts if he can help it: the camera sits in awe before so much painstakingly framed theatrical splendor, and the actors expect it to admire them. It is possible, of course, to justify anything, and in his dreary manifesto in the Summer-Autumn 1959 *Sight & Sound* we found Kozintsev writing: "The *Potemkin* technique is obsolete. . . . Quick-changing *montage* effects [are] an imitation of something that could never return. It is good to think back affectionately to one's youth, but not good to fall into the ways of

second childhood." Well, maybe. As Quixote said before dying, never look for this year's birds in last year's nests. But one needn't even doubt that they *are* last year's nests to submit that at least second childhood would be more interesting than the lumpy proficiency with which this film, lacking both sunrise passion and twilight mellowness, must finally make do.

Rosinante sadly sloping along the screen to kneel by the Don after his final defeat; a window blowing open above Quixote's deathbed to reveal a branchful of blossoms—obligatory might-have-been images like these suggest the clean visual design one expected from a *Quixote* film, and, beyond that, the tensions between fact and dream it might have created, conceding jesting Pilate's dead-serious question its proper place at the center of Cervantes's world. But much of the plasticity of that world has vanished in Kozintsev's earthbound film, whose few penny-dreadful excursions into Quixotic fancy number a shoddy series of ghostly voices and ghastly double-exposures, as well as dancing wine-skins to taunt Quixote at the inn: though why we see them dance while we see the windmills as windmills, Kozintsev alone may be presumed to know. Movingly enough, his Quixote is a man who attempts Good Deeds and, the world being what it is, is crushed in the process. But *were* they Good Deeds, and if they were, was that the point? Don't look here, either, for those clear glimpses of con-

Nikolai Cherkasov's DON QUIXOTE.

