Film and Theatre: The Situation of Theatre Today[1]

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Cinema's fortunes have brought theatre no competition on an artistic level. On another level, however, film is an invincible rival—as distraction industry. Coming out on the wrong end of this battle has dried up theatre's financial wellspring, because theatre has always lived off its production of distraction and amusement. Cinema, which began to exploit the masses' need for distraction with entirely new means, has in this respect largely overtaken theatre and will continue to take the upper hand to an ever greater degree. This is where the true contest between stage and screen is unfolding, not between so-called art films and traditional theatre. For there can be no competition between two art forms: has music ever been the rival of painting? Such a contest for the public's favour can unfold in the field of distraction, however, because distraction is merchandise and can be created in various ways, all of them working towards the same goal.

Our impassioned quest for distraction and diversion is the expression of an imperative human yearning and a reaction to tension and to one-sided and overworked mental effort. The greater and more one-sided our concentration and attention and the higher the level of tension in business dealings, the more people will thirst for excessive activities and the more our psychic system will vehemently demand compensating activities and respite

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[1] Originally published in *Esprit* 20 (Paris, May 1934): 254–69, in a French translation by Raoul Audouin, believed to be from the German. The original manuscript is presumed lost. The present English version of this essay, then, is a translation of a translation, with all the difficulties and dangers this implies. For a brief previous discussion of the article see the translator's comments in André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Montreal: caboose, 2009), 11–13 and 301–05. Some passages herein vary slightly from the English translation found in that volume. The present translation has eliminated a footnote by the French translator but is faithful to the French version of the text in every other respect. All notes to the text are by the present translator.

from this fatigue. The mere state of consciousness may require our psychic system to expend force; modern-day psychological research holds that consciousness is not possible when the subconscious is suppressed or sublimated. The laws of our unconscious mind—or, if you prefer, of our subconscious mind—are completely different from those of our conscious mind, where logic reigns. Casting off logic and abandoning oneself to an association of subconscious images appears to be the only method capable of making them known to us.

Our sources of information about the psychology of the subconscious are the child's mind, the primitive mind and the mind of the crowd (an incorrect term which obviously means the psychology of the individual in the crowd). Schools of thought still argue over the extent to which we can compare the mentalities of children, primitive peoples and individuals in the crowd. They agree, however, on the parallels to be found in the structures of these three very different phenomena. The only thing dividing these schools is their view of the extent to which we can consider them alike. There is no doubt that a large part of the emotional life and way of thinking of 'individuals in the crowd' is similar to that of children who, in turn, think in a manner broadly similar to that of primitive peoples. What these schools are trying to determine is whether in the case of crowds, for example, suggestion (another obscure term) prompts individuals to act out primitive qualities foreign to them or whether, because of the loss of conscious checks, they return to a primitive stage of sensations and thought. In other words, whether they find themselves in a state that is latent in all of us and simply hidden by our conscious mind.

These debates between schools of thought are of no concern to us here. It is interesting to note, however, that when psychology began to examine these questions seriously for the first time, film, with extraordinary commercial intuition, was already putting them to practical use. To demonstrate this, I must briefly sketch the history of cinema.

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This history is not long, and we can survey it with relative ease. It is nothing other than a concise image of the history of the greed for material gain.

Film did not arise out of theatre; the shrewd and profit-hungry merchants who were able to foresee its future were entirely lacking in cultural traditions and completely ignorant of theatre's age-old heritage. They

were businessmen and nothing more. The problem they set out to solve, and did so in a masterful manner, was this: how to use people's need for distraction to invest their capital advantageously? This problem, posed without preconceptions of any kind, was solved fearlessly, without doing battle with any convention. Cinema's founders had no special love for their new craft; their goal was to make money, and they would just as readily have employed any other means seen to be good at doing so.

Cinema was born during the first flowering of prosperity in the United States, a new country without traditions. It was a time of frenzied mechanisation and industrialisation, an environment tailor-made for the quick and easy success of a commercial product. The need for distraction also had to be rationally exploited. This could only be done by founding a new industry, the film industry.

This era coincided with the declining influence of the old puritanical morality. For the first time, after many years of hard-fought combat and an incredibly brutal economic struggle, Americans began to reap the fruits of their labour and become relatively well-off. Their new problem was leisure time, made abruptly available without any traditional manner of spending it.

The lamentably human need to turn way from work requiring effort, attention and fatigue must be satisfied, physically and mentally. Two means exist to meet this need: sports and film.

Cinema's clientele was extremely disparate. It was drawn from the most varied lands, spoke the most diverse languages and was made up of the greatest variety of races. This clientele's need for distraction had to be commercially exploited, a common denominator to their diverse yearnings found. With a shrewd logic that would be the envy of schools of psychology, film producers sought and found the formula for satisfying the most dissimilar peoples' need for distraction. The 'crowd mentality', which psychology had identified only through arduous abstraction and patient experiment, was put to use at a stroke by cinema's applied psychology. For a long time now we have known that a film's success depends on the regression of the individual in the crowd to the child stage. The demands a successful film makes on its viewers' thoughts and emotions provide a precise idea of the kind of intellectual discharge of which a crowd, any crowd, is capable. Any crowd because the crowd is one of the tools which make possible a levelling of differences in intellectual outlook among a wide

variety of individuals. This levelling does not go so far as to do away completely with all boundaries: uniformity is achieved mostly at the lower levels of the intellectual scale of the individuals who make up the crowd.

Films are thus constructed purely and simply out of the yearnings of the crowd. As a result, they are nothing other than a relatively faithful mirror of the intellectual level of the mass.[2] Any inclination beyond the mass's horizon, any attempt to confront its demands with a personal and original work, or one which required sustained attention, would naturally be a financial risk for the producer. This is a risk of great concern and, on the few occasions it has been taken, has led to financial failure.

I am not speaking here of the isolated experiments of an avant-garde or of the daring attempts to make film an artistic instrument.

These most stimulating endeavours, so worthy of recognition, announce nothing less than a path towards the future, one which will try to tear itself from the grip of capitalist cinema's mercantile principles and educate the masses. But the enormous success of cinema today is due to the fact that it carefully seeks out and exploits the pleasure we experience when we descend from the level of conscious and logical thought to a prior—in both an ontogenetic and a phylogenetic sense—infantile and primitive stage. And yet, and this is the prime reason for its success, film is able to bring about this lowering to primitive thought so skilfully that the resulting pleasure is not spoiled by an overly critical consciousness.

The fable of the average distraction film (and is there any other kind, apart from the few exceptions named above?) is astoundingly analogous to the fairy tales found in the fanciful literature of long ago. These fairy tales are so well suited to the needs of our children's imaginations that modern psychology has no difficulty in using them to understand children's minds.

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[2] Throughout the French translation of this essay the author employs at times *la masse* and at others *les masses*. In *The Motion Picture in America* (in John Anderson, *The American Theatre* [New York: Dial Press, 1938]), an abridged, revised and uncredited translation of René Fülöp-Miller's book *Die Phantasiemaschine* cited in note 4 below, this distinction is expressed as the 'mob' and the 'masses', terms the present translator has declined to adopt, preferring the standard translations 'mass' and 'masses' found, for example, in English editions of the work of Siegfried Kracauer.

The role of illusion is well known: it is the counterbalance to exhausting reality, a place to escape the reach of insistent conflict and to satisfy the desires frustrated by reality. Film has taken on this function of the imagination. It has set itself the goal of satisfying today's unconscious desires using a relative reality that seems to most people to be more objective than the fantasies of their own imagination. This is the source of a film's 'realism', a realism which depicts the world just accurately enough—and this is indispensable—to clothe the satisfaction of our unconscious desires in an objectivity that succeeds in masking its dream-like quality.

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What are the repercussions of this illusory satisfaction of the needs of our imagination? Any action is basically only the enactment of a prior concept. The imagination, the motivating force of our actions, is the language our inclinations speak to the directing force, our intellect. This is why an image precedes an action, why the imagination must first of all reveal the concept and why an action unfolds according to the model provided.

The less satisfaction a depiction provides, the more it spurs us to take action, to realise the image. The intensity of the depiction and its value as subjective reality are inversely proportional to the activity it liberates. If a desire thus obtains imaginary satisfaction as intensely as it does in the pseudo-reality of cinema, activity is paralysed.

Film, as I mentioned above, was created with utter disdain for preconceived ideas. Taking wing on the powerful capitalist drive for profit and power, it discovered the unconscious yearnings of the crowd. It had no false 'literary' shame in seeking out these yearnings and their satisfaction, wherever they might be found, and in exploiting them at their source without qualm.

First, it studied sanctioned popular distractions and turned their essence to account. It studied what the mass read most frequently and willingly and chose its topics from sources ranging from serial novels to the Bible. It exploited everything from the sadism of boxing matches to the 'romanticism' of the 'Mob'[3] and 'moon over the water' cheap colour prints, which bring a tear to the eye of the common viewer. It wasn't particular

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[3] I.e. the Mafia.

about how it went about this, taking what it could find from what had already been proven to work effectively upon the mass.

Thus, just as the immense success of the serial novel pointed cinema in the direction of topics for its scripts, the settings for its films were provided by humble people's infatuation with luxurious lifestyles—not, of course, with the real lives of the rich, but with these lives as imagined by the lower orders. And just as children know in advance that a happy ending will conclude a nursery tale, a happy ending is an absolute necessity for film audiences.

Similarly, the hit film's conventional, black-and-white presentation of its characters (lacking intelligence, children initially employ quantitative differences before using qualitative ones) and its identification of the good and the noble with beauty and of the detestable with deformity are derived from the childish mind and are an unvarying part of its success.

In short, we can identify the following aspects:

Film is a purely commercial enterprise. As a result, it must make its products attractive to the largest possible mass. Its merchandise is distraction, a distraction which must be marketable on a vast scale: what reality serves most of all is to satisfy longings.

To please the masses, a film must satisfy the shared unconscious longings of the greatest possible number of different individuals. It accomplishes this by rooting itself in the primitive level of thought and sensibility, a level which is latent in all of us and which comes to the surface, moreover, when individuals, caught up in the crowd, cast off the superficial layer of civilised thought.

On a commercial level, film follows the law of supply and demand: it adapts its output to the mass's need for distraction.

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What was theatre's response to the birth of cinema? How did it react to this rivalry? Looked at in this light, we can see the essential features of the situation theatre finds itself in today.

If we were to define film in just a couple of words, we would have to borrow René Fülöp-Miller's description of it in his remarkable book *Die Phantasiemaschine*: as *ready-made entertainment*.[4] In contrast, we could describe

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[4] René Fülöp-Miller, *Die Phantasiemaschine, eine Saga der Gewinnsucht* (Berlin, Vienna and Leipzig: Paul Zsolnay, 1931). The expression found in the French translation of Rozenkranz is *spectacle de confection*, where 'confection' refers to ready-made

theatre as *hand-made entertainment*, thereby giving concrete expression to a difference which enables us to place the clash between theatre and film within the framework of the overall evolution of capitalism.

This conflict is thus, quite simply, a particular aspect of the battle between industry and the quality work of craftsmen. Of course, as I remarked at the outset, the term 'ready-made' can be applied quite naturally to the entertainment industry.

During film's early years, theatre contemptuously refused to have anything to do with it, in the same way that manual labour for a long time categorically refused to take new-born industry into account. Film was not taken seriously. Its first actors did not have successful stage careers; theatre actors thought it unworthy of them to get involved in such a common business. For this reason, film recruited its personnel from every other possible branch of the entertainment business, in particular within those circles in closest contact with the public and thus familiar with its tastes in distraction.

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Theatre engaged in battle with film only at a very late date, when it became impossible, even with the best will in the world, not to see it as a rival. Acknowledging film as a serious adversary was itself a grave blow to theatre's prestige.

This prestige is an important element of theatre's publicity, for it enables it to give its audiences the illusion of surplus value, even in the case of the most insignificant work of pure fantasy. We shouldn't forget that in the mind of the mass, theatre is and remains the most profoundly traditional temple of culture, the consecrated home to Racine, Molière, Shakespeare and Goethe. We should not take this prestige too lightly, even as, to theatre's

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manufacture, most commonly of identical garments in the clothing industry ('ready-to-wear' or 'off-the-rack' as opposed to tailor-made or haute-couture clothing), hence 'ready-made entertainment'. Fülöp-Miller, in his book, uses expressions such as *Konfektionierung der Gefühle* (a chapter title)—the mass manufacture of ready-made sentiment. In Fülöp-Miller's *The Motion Picture in America* (see note 2 above) the term 'ready-made' is sporadically employed, while Kracauer, in his essay 'Film 1928', uses the expression 'ready-made manufacturing technique' (*Konfektionstechnik* in the German) to describe the film production process. See Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 312–13.

great distress, it is gradually falling away. This same prestige reduces to silence the critical consciousness of the theatre crowd, enveloping it like a cloud of incense and making possible pleasure without a second thought, even in the face of an entirely routine production.

I know from personal experience that some theatre owners, certain of losing money, consciously sacrifice a 'classic' on the altar of their theatre with the sole goal of patching up their business's façade of culture and to be able to say once again to their customers: 'You see? We're an artistic institution!'

There is nothing surprising, therefore, in the fact that theatre, in its battle with film, entrenched itself in this 'artistic' position. It relied upon tradition—which before film came along was an asset—and the superior quality of its performers. It was theatre, not film, which first sought out stars. It tried to hang on to its audience by attracting big names and by means of the 'flesh and blood reality' of famous performers, calling film a 'shabby mechanical image-peddler' and a 'dead copy of living beings'.

In fact, the challenge to theatre's long-held artistic monopoly worked to its advantage in certain circles, amongst those whose critical sense and censoriously repressed instincts are still somewhat keener than in others. These are the quarters in which emotions, repressed by conformity and hemmed in by an exacting morality, have sought release in the fashionable malady of the day: neurasthenia.

In the theatre, the most priggish bourgeois audience can satisfy its taste for the obscene, its unconscious pleasure in the primitive and its desire for sadism, all of which are kept in check by mortification in their conscious lives. Theatre satisfies these desires in a way more easily disguised than in film, one that does not touch this audience's moral concepts. For them, theatre is still culture's holiest of holies.

Cinema, however, was quick to defend itself against theatre's offensive. With its enormous financial resources, it was easy for it to make its performers much more popular in a wider arena than the glories of the stage. Already, back in film's earliest days, Sarah Bernhardt was tempted by a small fortune to 'shoot' her only film, *Queen Elizabeth*—a complete failure, as was Adolph Zukor's entire 'Famous Players' series.[5] Yet despite these financial

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[5] *Queen Elizabeth* (*Les Amours de la Reine Élisabeth/Les Amours d'Élisabeth, reine d'Angleterre*), a 1912 French-British-American co-production directed by Henri Desfontaines and Louis Mercanton, was filmed in London and based on Émile

setbacks a goal was achieved: bourgeois audiences became interested in film when a gigantic advertising campaign hammered home the following argument: 'You see, even your favourite stage actors are on our side!'

In its battle with film, theatre tried the most diverse methods.

We have seen that the illusion of reality is a fundamental aspect of film, and that this illusion serves, above all, to satisfy the imagination. Theatre adopted this principle of complete illusion, but soon had to abandon implementing the new technical possibilities employed by film.

Theatre tried to achieve a degree of illusion whose results fell far short of the money it spent, which outstripped its resources. A single, typical example might be mentioned here: that of Piscator. The result of his experiments, apart from the artistic debacle they engendered, was the largest financial loss ever seen in theatre. Piscator's experiments were interesting for being one of the few attempts to place film in the service of the stage, to append and tap it.[6]

Moreau's play *La Reine Élisabeth*. Contrary to Rozenkranz's assertion, the film enjoyed great success and the play, in which the film's star Sarah Bernhardt, the most renowned stage actress of the day, also appeared, was a flop. In fact the film reaped such enormous profits for its American distributor Adolph Zukor that it enabled him to launch his 'Famous Players in Famous Plays' series of films, starring well-known theatrical talent. *Queen Elizabeth*'s distribution and publicity manipulated the distinction made here by Rozenkranz (and taken up by André Bazin throughout his article 'Theatre and Film', cited in note 1 above) between 'flesh-and-blood' actors in the theatre and film actors: the film was booked into legitimate theatres and the publicity for it led some viewers to believe they were buying a ticket to see Sarah Bernhardt 'in the flesh'.

Rozenkranz also errs in identifying this as Bernhardt's only film; she appeared, in one form or another, in nearly a dozen films right up until her death in 1923, including starring roles in major productions such as *Tosca* and *La Dame aux camélias*. Her first appearance on screen, curiously enough given the nom de plume of the author of the present essay, was in the role of Hamlet in a short film dating from 1900, *Le Duel d'Hamlet*, directed by Clément Maurice.

[6] Beginning in 1925, but especially in his 1927 production of Ernest Toller's *Hoppla, wir leben!* (*Hoppla, We Are Alive!*) Erwin Piscator incorporated film, other forms of modern communications technology and elaborate stage machinery into his work. Throughout the 1920s in Germany he also had difficulty raising funds for and attracting a stable paying audience to his increasingly expensive productions.

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Another of theatre's concessions to film—or, to be more precise, another encroachment of cinematic principles on theatrical techniques—is the ever-growing influence of the director.[7]

What, precisely, is the film director? Nothing less than the personification of the audience.

The director is someone who must lower his[8] critical faculties to the level of the crowd of viewers. Someone who, even before the work is presented to the public, must put himself in the public's shoes and point out to the actors the places where their acting is ineffective, correct or mistaken. The role this figure has taken on in film is well known.

Until now, the theatre director had played a quite minor role. In times gone by, he simply acted as a referee between the actors. He never thought to influence the performance or to act in the name of the audience. For, back when theatre had no rivals, its performers were also authors. They imposed their acting on the audience, which had to understand and assimilate it, in much the same way as consumers in the Middle Ages were obliged to accept

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[7] The term in the French version of this text is *régisseur*, which translates as 'production manager' (or 'stage manager' in the theatre), not 'director' (a *metteur en scène*). Because 'director' is clearly indicated by the context, the use of *régisseur* in the French text would appear to be a translation error. The German term used was undoubtedly *Regisseur*, a borrowing from the French which shifted the term's meaning to that of a film or theatre director. A *régisseur* in French, in the early years of the twentieth century, did occasionally encompass the meaning 'film director', in what appears to have been a borrowing back from the German. This sense was not common by the time of Rozenkranz's article, however, and the French translator could have avoided all confusion simply by employing *metteur en scène*, the correct and unequivocal translation of the German *Regisseur* in both film and theatre. See Jean Giraud, *Le Lexique français du cinéma des origines à 1930*, Paris: CNRS, 1958, 173–74; and *Le Grand Robert de la langue française*, vol. 5, Paris: Robert, 2001, 1810.

[8] The English translator has made every effort to render this essay in gender-neutral and at the same time natural-sounding prose. At times, however, such as in this section, doing so would have been too cumbersome, and the introduction of expressions such as 'his or her' anachronistic. Here the French version's gender-specific language, less contentious than it is in English, has been preserved, incidentally serving as a reminder of a not-too-distant past when our intellectual and cultural life was almost completely dominated by men.

merchandise in the form in which the master craftsman, protected from competition by his guild, consented to deliver it.

But the moment the theatre, like cinema, became a purely commercial enterprise, criticism had to be made unequivocally commercial and the independence of the stage curtailed. The life of the theatre had to be fitted to viewers' tastes.

The director is like a thermometer, put in the building to predict the audience's reactions.

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Film, especially in the beginning, was too coarsely and cynically modelled on the instincts of the great masses not to run up against the resistance of 'cultivated spheres' of the public.

Culture required a more thorough concealment of the instincts, and theatre did a better job of this than film. In the first place because of the veneer I spoke of above, and also because of its production methods, the same way that 'hand-sewn' is superior to 'mass-produced', to employ the terms with which I defined cinema's mentality above.

Theatre always had its own distinct audience.

It was local, or at most national. In this way the observance of local prejudices and the boundaries of moral traditions and conformism could regulate the individuality of its particular audience. It was custom-made entertainment, not assembly-line entertainment.

This quality is clearly apparent in the efforts by provincial German theatre companies which, apart from the fact that in many towns they can lay claim to a very long tradition in each case distinct from that of their neighbours, have entered the fray against film's encroachment on their parochial nationalism. This theatre's harmony with the particularism of its audience serves as advertising. It thus announces 'home-town actors', discovers and extols authors 'born within our city's walls' and gives pride of place to repertoire in the local dialect, 'the language of our forefathers'.

Commercially speaking, theatre has an advantage in this respect over film which, turned towards mass production, cannot adapt to this kind of particularism.

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Theatre's hopes were betrayed on other points as well. It had initially viewed film as a purely 'popular' entertainment which drew its audience from the

lowest rungs of society. This was true at first, because the cultivated bourgeoisie kept its distance and remained faithful to the theatre. All of theatre's hopes were pinned on this audience and its program was adapted to its tastes. In the process, it lost the business of the petty bourgeoisie.

As a direct result of its reaction to film, theatre made great concessions to its remaining audience, the 'cultivated sphere'.

The result was numerous so-called 'psychological' works: the same topics that cinema had first exploited were put on stage with more complex characters, a better-constructed psychological plot and a text that met a certain standard of quality by borrowing from old masterpieces. In short, in keeping with the higher level of its educated audience, a theatre was born which met that audience's most exacting demands by more skilfully disguising the primitive basis of its topics.

Theatre, however, was inconsistent in the specialisation of its clientele. Even as it narrowed its sphere of activity in the way I have described, it set out, in large measure, in search of mass success like before. Once again in competition with film, it added to its personnel and staged mega-productions, thereby investing more capital in its ventures. It thus found itself obliged to amortise the money invested by increasing the number of viewers, or pay interest on it. The result was that it was once again obliged to lower the level of its work to that of the great mass.

Theatre's plant and personnel alike are thus powerless against film's gigantic machinery. It speculates instead on the 'vivid realism' quality of its shows, as I discussed above. In other words, it is attempting to hang on to its clients by means of an even greater realism than what cinema is able to provide. 'A hundred half-naked dancing girls on screen are and will remain shadows, but a hundred half-naked showgirls on stage may, through their flesh and blood presence, create an even greater force of attraction': thus reasons the theatre, fearlessly. But here too it is gravely mistaken. In the end, it has understood nothing about the mass viewer's 'realist' demands.

I have already described how the 'reality' required of film must be coarse enough to enable the viewer's emotive imagination to find something to hang onto in order to become aware of itself. By this I mean that in the majority of cases viewers' desires are not yet at the stage of conscious images.

For creating a clear image of human longings is already a rare talent in itself, a special gift not found in the great mass. Film's task is to see to this

aspect of satisfying the needs of the imagination. It puts the mass's obscure and unformed desires into images and fulfils them in its own fashion on-screen.

Film must thus ensure that viewers relate this satisfaction to themselves, that the chain of events passing before their eyes liberates their own desires. This result is achieved by what is called the process of identification, one of the most primitive processes of the workings of our psyche and already present from an early age in children. Viewers' longings are satisfied, especially, through identification with the hero. What the hero experiences, realises[9] and suffers the person who identifies with them will experience and realise as well. At the same time, the identification of a number of individuals with the same thing is one of the ways in which emotions are made uniform, thereby creating a crowd mentality. As in algebra, where two variables are equal to each other if each is the same as a third, we might say: if two individuals identify with a third, they identify with each other.

Screen entertainment is much closer to the world of the imagination, longings and dreams than the so-called physical reality of the stage. Film's much greater independence from time and place than that of the stage; its mobility; its rapid succession of images in keeping with the spontaneity of our association of ideas; its obvious two-dimensional quality; and its play of light and shadow are some of the phenomena which tie it to the emotive life of dreams much more than to reality or to the stage.

The viewer's situation with respect to the film is thus entirely different than his attitude towards reality. Reality requires one to take sides and develop an awareness of the contrast between the world and the individual, but film asks us only to let ourselves go and to follow the hero's path.

Because identification is carried out by means of a process of analogous reasoning, one of the most primitive mechanisms of our psychology, this reasoning has a far stronger grip on an imaginary object than on an entirely real one. We naturally identify with characters on screen, while we are mentally dissociated[10] from those on stage, because their real presence

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[9] In the sense of to 'carry out' or 'achieve'.

[10] The French term used here is *opposition mentale*, wherein 'opposition', in the view of the present translator, should be understood in the sense of *éloignement* ('distancing' or 'estrangement' in English) given by the French *Robert* dictionary (vol.

gives them an objective reality and because, in order to transpose them into the subjects of an imaginary world, we must actively intervene and disregard their physical reality. This disregard is the fruit of a process of the intellect which can only be asked of a fully conscious individual, not of individuals caught up in the crowd and whose mentality is dragged down to that of the mass.

Let's return to our example of showgirls on stage and on screen.

4, p. 2184) and not the more common renderings 'opposition' or 'contrast'. The former term ('mental opposition') was employed by Hugh Gray in his translation of the article in which André Bazin quotes Rozenkranz, obscuring the expression's meaning in English (pp. 98–100). Understanding *opposition* as *éloignement* gives us, quite plausibly, 'mental distancing' or 'mental estrangement' in English, thereby immediately evoking the spectre of Bertolt Brecht and his theories of spectatorial 'alienation', 'distancing' or 'estrangement'—albeit put to a use here by Rozenkranz which Brecht would surely not have approved, that of the rudimentary contrasting pair theatre = estrangement and film = identification.

Curiously, however, if we follow this path from *opposition mentale* to mental distancing or estrangement and read it in the context of Rozenkranz's comments about 'identification' (the same term in English and French, unproblematically translated from German), we do, in fact, arrive at a broadly Brechtian conception of identification and estrangement. While estrangement practices can be found in Brecht's theatre from the mid- to late 1920s, it would appear that in this 1934 article Rozenkranz has outlined a concise theory of identification and estrangement earlier than Brecht himself. As John Willett points out in his notes to Brecht's writings (*passim*; see the index entry for 'alienation'), Brecht did not introduce the terms *Entfremdung* and *Verfremdung* into his writings until well after leaving Germany in 1933. *Verfremdung*, a quasi-neologism translated by Willett as 'alienation', was Brecht's definitive choice and the root of his expression *Verfremdungseffekt* or 'V-Effekt', translated by Willet as the 'A-effect'. Throughout the 1920s, Brecht groped towards these concepts using terms such as *befremden* (to disconcert) and *Fremdheit* (strangeness).

It would be tempting but extremely hazardous to speculate on the German term (*geistige Distanzierung*?—'mental dissociation') used in the original version of Rozenkranz's essay, now presumed lost. Or was it a German term? Willett (p. 99) speculates that *Verfremdung* may have been Brecht's translation of Victor Shklovsky's Russian expression *priem ostrannenija* (or *priem ostranenie*), a 'device for making

On screen, they satisfy unconscious sexual yearnings, and when the hero comes into close contact with them he satisfies the viewer's desire to the same extent as the viewer identifies with him.

On stage, showgirls arouse the viewer's senses the same way they would in real life, such that no identification with the hero takes place. He becomes instead an object of jealousy and envy. When he draws near the showgirls, the objects of desire, the viewer becomes vexed. In the theatre, the man in the stalls remains a viewer; in film he participates in the action. Film appeases viewers and theatre excites them.

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strange', which Willett suggests Brecht first heard (and believed he saw a living example of in the form of a performance by the Mei Lan-fang theatre company) in Moscow in the spring of 1935, giving rise to his famous essay 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting', published in English in 1936 and in German only in 1949. Willett suggests—and this is corroborated by the account given by Brecht's associate Bernard Reich (pp. 371–73) but now often contested by modern-day Brecht scholars (for a discussion of the debate which is unsympathetic to Willett—and makes no mention of Reich—see Peter Brooker, pp. 191–95)—that Brecht was introduced to the term by Sergei Tretyakov while in Moscow in the spring of 1935, one year after the publication of Rozenkranz's article. René Fülöp-Miller, it should be noted, co-authored a very early study of Russian theatre in 1928, a volume on Bolshevism in 1926 with a chapter on Russian theatre (but not Russian film) and a volume on Rasputin in 1928, which coincidentally Brecht and Piscator consulted while preparing the latter's production of a play on the topic in 1929. Something of a liberal free thinker who denounced Bolshevism after visiting the Soviet Union and interviewing Lenin (he had previously interviewed and denounced Mussolini), Fülöp-Miller was fully conversant with the country's cultural and intellectual life and familiar with its major figures. Tretyakov and Shklovsky, for example, figure briefly in the books on Russian theatre and Bolshevism.

For our purposes here, and in light of the importance Brecht's theories came to have in the theory and practice of twentieth-century film and theatre, projecting 'estrangement', 'alienation' or 'distancing' back onto Rozenkranz's *opposition* could be misleading and anachronistic. In order not to force a 'Brechtian' reading of this expression, therefore, while at the same time pointing out in the present note the seeming similarities between Brecht's and Rozenkranz's theories (hindered as always by the absence of the German text of Rozenkranz's essay), the present translation renders *opposition mentale* (subsequently shortened to *opposition* in the French text) as 'dissociation'. (The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the verb 'dissociate' in a general sense as 'to severe or disunite' and the past participle

Thus film, like dreams, has an appeasing quality. It allays conflict and paralyses the active carrying out of inclinations.

The principal force of theatre, however, lies precisely in the dissociation to which it gives rise.

Theatre could become aware of its great mission if it could recognise that it creates no identification with its characters on the part of the viewer, no passive participation in the action depicted.

This mission is to spur men on in a direction that the great dramaturges must indicate to their times. From a psychological point of view, we could say that painful reactions (and seen in this light, isn't all thought painful?) have a much more lasting effect than satisfaction and that theatre has a completely different ability than film to produce lasting influence on the viewer, because it is clear that the painful emotions felt by our motor force—the mind—bring with them reflection and an analysis of their object.

Film acts upon the viewer in a way similar to dreams, theatre in a way similar to reality. Film creates a collective mentality in its viewers as a whole, transforming the individual, as I have described, into a member of the crowd. Theatre, to a certain degree, even when it appeals to our basest instincts, prevents such a crowd mentality from taking shape. It isolates individuals

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'dissociated' in a psychological sense as 'the disjunction of associated mental connections or the disaggregation of consciousness' ['disaggregation': 'the separation of component particles of an aggregated mass'].) This translation also has the benefit of retaining Rozenkranz's psychological perspective. 'Dissociation' as a translation of *opposition* was suggested by Michael Taylor in his translation of Christian Metz, who quotes Bazin quoting Rozenkranz (p. 9). (That Metz did not read Rozenkranz himself is evident in the fact that he repeats Bazin's mistaken spelling of Rozenkranz's name and his misdating of Rozenkranz's article.)

See André Bazin, 'Theater and Cinema', part two, *What is Cinema?*, vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). Bertolt Brecht, 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting', *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964). Peter Brooker, 'Keywords in Brecht's Theory and Practice', *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, eds. Peter Thompson and Glendys Sacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* (Paris: Robert, 2001). Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974 [1968]). Bernard Reich, *Im Wettlauf mit der Zeit: Erinnerungen aus fünf Jahrzehnten deutscher Theatergeschichte* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1970).

and forces them to remain outside the work being performed, as if it were unfolding in reality. It requires them to exert mental labour. It unequivocally impedes collective representation in a psychological sense because it demands of the viewer an active individual consciousness, while film asks only that we follow passively along.

<div align="center">*</div>

All that remains is to speak of theatre's last possible response to film. Film denies this response in principle and tries consciously to keep its distance from theatre. I need not point out that no one is questioning cinema's right to existence as such, or that I am unaware that cinema can obtain considerable results of great value within its own discipline. We must simply draw a logical dividing line between these two fundamentally distinct branches of entertainment, recognise their respective fields of action in the field of human psychology and, above all, preserve theatre's autonomy.

The necessary conditions of this autonomy are financial independence, which was only possible in bygone days, and the abandonment of popular success. In this way theatre will free itself from cinema's fundamental principle, that of adapting the work to the needs of the mass. These are the conditions that are indispensable to a truly educational theatre that spurs audiences to action.

The path that theatre should thus follow will be determined by the ideas our era must bring to fruition and by the means the independent minds of our age can show us. In this way theatre could resume its role as a servant of the mind, expressing its dramatic affliction in the proclamations of the true poets of our times.

Here, however, begins another chapter: that of the individual mind acting contrary to the mass mind, that of the mind which must fight to preserve the personality of its countenance.

As long as theatre is subjected to capitalist commercial principles, however, it will be condemned to conform to the tastes of the mass and to battling cinema and the industrial trust which manufactures entertainment—not to improve the mind, but for profit.

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Translator's post-script

Who was Rozenkranz? I don't know. For those interested in pursuing the question and willing to listen to me think out loud for a spell, I can offer the following observations based on my own superficial investigation. More research needs to be done, but making an English translation of this text available will enable others to participate in the discussion and, for those of us in the field of cinema studies, begin to throw light on its influence on André Bazin.

The original edition of this essay, published in French translation in 1934 (bibliographical information for the essay is given in note 1 above; for all other work cited, it is found at the end of this post-script) gives the author's name on the first page as it appears here, 'M. Rozenkranz', but then alters it slightly on the last page, where it also appears, to 'M. Rosenkranz'. 'Rozenkranz' or 'Rosenkranz' would be German spellings of the name, and 'Rosenkrantz', as André Bazin renders it in his essay 'Théâtre et cinéma' (translated as 'Theatre and Film' in the 2009 caboose edition of *What is Cinema?*) the French or Danish spelling. Given the spelling of the author's name on the *Esprit* article but especially its cultural references, it is presumed that the author was German (or German speaking, for example Austrian).

No trace of any theatre, film or cultural critic of any sort working in the late 1920s or early 1930s named Rozenkranz, Rosenkranz or Rosenkrantz —French, German or otherwise—has been found. With the possible exception of the prolific and popular Danish novelist and playwright Palle Rosenkrantz (1867–1941), who it would appear did not have the critical or intellectual temperament to write an article such as our Rozenkranz's, nor is there anything linking him to *Esprit*. It is unlikely that anyone would have produced an article of this sophistication out of the blue, with nothing else of its complexity to their credit before or after it—unless subsequent political events in Germany led to the silencing of the author, whether because of censorship within Germany, the extremely limited possibilities for publishing in German outside the Reich during Nazi rule or because a more tragic fate befell its author.

In my notes to the article by André Bazin mentioned above, I indicated that I had stumbled upon Rozenkranz's text in the course of routine research to document Bazin's sources a few short weeks before the publication of a volume of his work in translation. Based on my initial reading of the text, and hindered by the peculiar problems posed when examining a translation for signs of authorship, I nonetheless suggested that Rozenkranz may have been Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966), who was living in France in exile at the time of the essay's publication. If this were the case, it would be one of Kracauer's most developed statements on cinema, his only extended discussion of theatre and the only known point of contact between these two theorists of cinematic realism. While Rozenkranz's ideas, and even some of the language and phrases used, bear a striking similarity to Kracauer's work (this will be touched on below), further examination, hindered this time by my rudimentary familiarity with the German language and Weimar thought and the need to search for textual evidence across three languages, points to another possible author. As seemingly conclusive as some of the evidence in favour of this second author may at first appear, various obstacles, I believe, stand in the way of such a conjecture. I will thus outline a third possibility.

As fascinating and perplexing as the question of the authorship of this article is, we should also not be completely sidetracked by it and lose sight of the intrinsic interest of the text itself and its relationship to both Weimar cultural thought, of which it is a belated part, and the highly volatile and complex French intellectual milieu of 1934. No matter who its author, the article is also of special interest to film scholars because of the way it demonstrably and unexpectedly introduced Weimar thought in general and arguably the ideas of Brecht and Kracauer in particular into the work of André Bazin, a hitherto unexplored topic in the field which I hope to examine in a separate article in the near future.

Who, then, is the other possible author I allude to? The culprit may be hiding in plain sight in the article itself: the Austrian author René Fülöp-Miller, whose 'remarkable' 1931 book *Die Phantasiemaschine* Rozenkranz quotes (and which, incidentally, Kracauer reviewed in the German press twice in 1932 and once in January 1933—his final published article in the German press before leaving the country in February of that year). If Fülöp-Miller is Rozenkranz, quoting himself to throw those curious about the author's real identity off the scent worked initially in my case at least: as I

pondered the author's identity over a few brief weeks, it simply didn't occur to me that it might be someone quoted admiringly in these same pages.

Fülöp-Miller (1891–1963), Kracauer's exact contemporary, was a prolific Viennese author of a score of books on a wide variety of topics, from an early study of Soviet theatre and a 'psychology' of Bolshevism published in Germany in the 1920s to a book on the Jesuits and others on topics as diverse as Russia's Rasuptin and medical advances in pain management to a novel and a Hollywood film script. Despite his protean output and apparent literary success (he was repeatedly published in translation by major English-language publishing houses such as Viking even before he left Austria after Nazi annexation in 1938 to settle in the United States, where he remained until his death), his name is virtually unknown today and practically no published scholarship on his work exists in any language. A few words of introduction are thus required. An undated literary agency biography credited to his British literary agent Wilson Vance (much of it must surely have been written by Fülöp-Miller himself) and printed in Vienna on the eve of his departure for the United States paints the picture of a Malraux-like figure, a heroic intellectual of his time who interviewed Mussolini and Lenin, the former ostensibly in his office just days before his March on Rome in 1922 to seize power as bullets whizzed by in the street outside; who travelled the world influencing and conversing with great thinkers, including George Bernard Shaw, Romain Rolland, Bertrand Russell, Thomas Mann and Sigmund Freud; and who somehow negotiated the European rights to unpublished writings by Tolstoy, Chekhov and Dostoyevsky, ingratiating himself with the Soviet government and the deceased authors' families.

Fülöp-Miller's 1931 volume *Die Phantasiemaschine* was a 170-page essay on mass culture and American cinema; it was published in a truncated and revised English version in 1938, the year of the author's exile (the publication must have been in preparation before his actual departure from Austria). The textual similarities with Rozenkranz's essay, both large and small, are seemingly conclusive and too numerous to itemise here. Even the English version, stripped of most of the speculative language found in the German edition, displays a vast number of similarities with the French essay on the level of vocabulary, sentence fragments, themes, etc., visible even across the barrier of their respective translations from the German. How and why Fülöp-Miller would publish pseudonymously in French in *Esprit*, however,

remains a mystery. Although Kracauer was living in Paris in 1934, Fülöp-Miller was not. By 1934 he was already an old hand at having his work published abroad in translation, but mostly in English, although his 1929 book on the Jesuits, translated into English the following year, was published in French by Plon in 1933, the year before Rozenkranz's article, possibly putting Fülöp-Miller in contact with the religious thinkers around *Esprit*. Unlike Kracauer, however, he was not in the habit of publishing in journals.

In the notes to my translation of André Bazin's *What is Cinema?*, I mentioned in passing a few reasons why Kracauer, setting out on a long period of exile in 1933, might have wished that an article such as this, in a journal such as *Esprit*, be published anonymously. Fülöp-Miller's need for a pseudonym remains unclear, unless it was merely to allow himself the luxury of quoting himself in glowing terms, coupled with uncertainty as to whether this—and extensive plagiarism of Kracauer, as we shall see—could pass undetected in his native language and country.

There are serious obstacles to viewing Fülöp-Miller as the author of Rozenkranz's article, however, despite the large number of textual similarities between it and Fülöp-Miller's published work. The biggest stumbling block to seeing Fülöp-Miller as Rozenkranz is that none of the former's published writings that I have quickly perused displays this degree of complexity, subtlety or seeming originality. In the light of his published work, it is quite simply hard to picture Fülöp-Miller as Rozenkranz. He was an author who took up the big topics of his day—religion, revolution, mass culture—and bent them to a master narrative in an expository tone quite unlike a Malraux or a Kracauer—or a Rozenkranz. His grand account of early-twentieth-century political movements, for example, with the world's political figures neatly divided into '*Leaders, Dreamers and Rebels*', was just the sort of weighty tome that Viking would be interested in publishing in translation in 1935 after it was published in German the same year as Rozenkranz's essay. More precisely, Fülöp-Miller brought to these volumes none of what we might broadly describe as the dialectical thinking of a Malraux or a Kracauer: their quest to turn our commonplace conceptions on their head and invent whole new categories of thought, from the intellectual montage of the 'imaginary museum' to 'distraction' as the operative dynamic of nascent mass culture.

In Fülöp-Miller's two works on cinema, for example, the German *Phantasiemaschine* and its approximate English version, whose publication dates straddle Rozenkranz's essay by three and four years respectively, terms and concepts central to Rozenkranz's argument such as 'distraction' and 'tension' are entirely absent. So too *opposition mentale*, the bedrock of Rozenkranz's essay, appears nowhere in either text by Fülöp-Miller (although 'identification' appears in each, as it does in Kracauer and no doubt in the work of many other figures of the period). In short, while Fülöp-Miller's psychological template and much of his vocabulary and turns of phrase are abundantly present in Rozenkranz's essay, the key concepts and a certain style of writing and manner of thinking found there are nowhere to be seen in his work, including his early half-volume on Russian theatre, an ultimately dismissive and unsympathetic survey which advances no original argument and bears little resemblance to the speculative nature of the present essay on the theatre.

What of Kracauer? I mentioned that he was living in Paris at the time of the publication of Rozenkranz's essay and, like Rozenkranz, expressed admiration in print—on three occasions—for Fülöp-Miller's book *Die Phantasiemaschine*. More significantly, a number of key textual references point in his direction. These are fingerprints of a different order than those seemingly left by Fülöp-Miller: virtually every major concept in the essay, save the elusive *opposition mentale*, can also be found in Kracauer. Some of these may lean more towards commonplaces of Weimar thought than to proprietary idea, but then this further justifies my sense that Rozenkranz's essay, no matter who its author, is a pastiche of Weimar cultural criticism, from Brecht to Kracauer and no doubt others in-between.

In my notes to the Bazin volume, where I first raised the possibility that Kracauer was Rozenkranz, I did not provide my reasons for thinking so. Now would be a good opportunity quickly to pass in review a few of the terms and themes common to both, before mentioning a couple of more fundamental similarities found in their work. Most of my examples can be found in *The Mass Ornament*, an English translation of a selection of Kracauer's Weimar-era writings. A great many more texts appear in the German-language complete works, particularly in three recently-published volumes made up entirely of as yet-untranslated occasional film criticism from the 1920s and 30s, of which only a tiny fraction is available to English

readers in *The Mass Ornament*. I have skimmed these volumes just enough to observe that many of the terms and themes I mention below appear throughout Kracauer's writings and to realise that much more work will have to be done by someone more proficient in German and Weimar thought for this examination of Rozenkranz's text in light of Kracauer's writings to be thorough. In the meantime, some of the intriguing points of overlap I have discovered between the two authors are as follows (relevant instances of overlap with Fülöp-Miller are also noted in passing):

• 'Girls': Rozenkranz's concept *opposition mentale*, the centrepiece of his essay, is constructed around a discussion of (male) audience reactions to showgirls on stage and screen. One of Kracauer's key essays on mass culture, 'The Mass Ornament', takes the 'Tiller Girls' as its starting point and leitmotif (pp. 75ff.). (Fülöp-Miller, for his part, mentions in passing Mack Sennett's 'Bathing Beauties' [1938, p. 120]).

• In that same essay (p. 75), Kracauer refers to 'distraction factories' (*Zerstreuungsfabriken*). Rozenkranz speaks of the 'distraction industry' (*industrie de distraction*) and of distraction as 'merchandise'. Distraction, of course, was Kracauer's signature concept for thinking about mass culture, and he refers to film as merchandise (*Ware*, translated by Thomas Y. Levin as 'commodity') in the essay 'Film 1928' (p. 307). The term 'distraction' appears sixteen times in Rozenkranz's essay (and nowhere in Fülöp-Miller).

• Again in 'The Mass Ornament', Kracauer makes mention of fairy tales (p. 80), and in the essay known as 'Film 1928' discusses the 'happy end' (in English in the original, p. 317). Both appear in Rozenkranz—and in Fülöp-Miller.

• Rozenkranz, Kracauer and Fülöp-Miller, and no doubt many other Weimar authors as well, all refer to film as a 'ready-made' entertainment. Kracauer uses the term *Konfektionstechnik* (pp. 312–13 of 'Film 1928'), translated by Thomas Y. Levin as 'ready-made manufacturing technique'. Rozenkranz describes film as an *industrie de confection* wherein *confection*, as I describe in note 4 above, refers to a 'ready-made' or 'ready-to-wear' consumer product. Like distraction, this concept is fundamental to Rozenkranz's argument—and unlike distraction also appears in both editions of Fülöp-Miller's book on cinema, in the German edition in the form of terms such as

Konfektionsindustrie (which gives us *industrie de confection* in French, one of the several dead-ringer correspondences which seem to point to Fülöp-Miller as the article's author) (pp. 18ff, 31, 36, 152ff), *Konfektionierung des Lachens* (the 'ready-made manufacture of laughter', p. 94) and *Konfektionierung der Gefühle* ('the ready-made manufacture of sentiment', a chapter title) and in the English edition as 'ready-made dream-pictures' (p. 147).

• Kracauer, like Rozenkranz, remarks that his comments on the products of the film industry do not include the avant garde. It is worth comparing Thomas Y. Levin's translation of Kracauer's German and my translation of Rozenkranz's French on this point. Kracauer: 'The abstract films cultivated primarily in Paris are an eccentric breed that is not at issue here' ('Film 1928', p. 318); Rozenkranz: 'I am not speaking here of the isolated experiments of an avant-garde'.

• Also in 'Film 1928', Kracauer discusses the requirement that film, as a commodity, satisfy consumers' needs (p. 307), a key theme in Rozenkranz. This theme is explored in more depth by both authors through the concept 'tension' (the term appears nowhere in Fülöp-Miller). Here I will quote from Kracauer and Rozenkranz at greater length. Kracauer: 'Certainly, the addiction to distraction is greater in Berlin than in the provinces, but the tension to which the working masses are subjected is also greater and more tangible; it is an essentially formal tension, which fills their day fully without making it fulfilling. Such a lack demands to be compensated [*nachgeholt*, 'made up for'], but this need can be articulated only in terms of the same surface sphere that imposed the lack in the first place. The form of free-time busy-ness necessarily corresponds to the form of business' ('Cult of Distraction', p. 325). Rozenkranz: 'The impassioned quest for distraction and diversion is the expression of an imperative human yearning and a reaction to tension and to one-sided and overworked mental effort. The greater and more one-sided our concentration and attention and the higher the level of tension in business dealings, the more people will thirst for excessive activities and the more our psychic system will vehemently demand compensation [*contrepartie*, which can mean a counterbalance or compensation; the German term may have been *ausgleichen*, which can mean both balance out,

particularly in a mechanical sense, and compensate] and respite from this fatigue'. Here is evidence that Rozenkranz, whoever he was, had yellowing six-year-old German newspaper clippings of Kracauer's writings close at hand when he wrote his text. We might also wonder, however, whether Kracauer's singular ideas had been re-packaged by a less subtle mind: in Rozenkranz the notion that release from tension can only occur in the same 'surface sphere' which created it is lost.

• At times one senses a similar logic or rhetorical device at work in the two authors. This is often an expression of Kracauer's and Rozenkranz's shared taste for the paradoxical and their predilection for turning conventional wisdom on its head, a quality quite lacking in Fülöp-Miller. Speaking about the social and political criticism found in films aimed at the discontented lower classes (and how this criticism does not 'threaten the foundations of society'), Kracauer remarks in the essay 'The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies' that 'the films made for the lower classes are even more bourgeois than those aimed at the finer audiences, precisely because they hint at subversive points of view without exploring them. Instead, they smuggle in a respectable way of thinking' (p. 291). Rozenkranz, describing not the lower classes' discontent and the films made for them, but the morality of the bourgeoisie and the theatre designed for it—a quite *à propos* shift in focus with respect to the concerns and entertainments of the different classes under study—remarks that '[i]n the theatre, the most priggish bourgeois audience can satisfy its taste for the obscene, its unconscious pleasure in the primitive and its desire for sadism, all of which are kept in check by mortification in their conscious lives. Theatre satisfies these desires in a way more easily disguised than in film, one that does not touch this audience's moral concepts'. Politics for the working classes, morality for the bourgeoisie; film for the former, theatre for the latter. Each thwarts the very transgression it evokes. Similarly, on one of the rare occasions Kracauer mentions the theatre, he remarks that the phenomenon of the cinema palace marks a desire to return to the 'sacred' and 'organic' quality of live theatre ('Cult of Distraction', p. 327). Rozenkranz makes the argument that theatre recurrently attempts to model itself on film.

• A couple of examples, finally, from a Kracauer essay not concerned with film, on the philosopher Georg Simmel (1858–1918). Simmel, who died before Kracauer began his professional writing career, was his absent mentor, and this essay makes clear the extent to which Simmel's thinking influenced Kracauer's methods and assumptions as a cultural critic. Kracauer's espousal of Simmel's views on the place of the individual within the 'mass' (p. 244) and his understanding of phenomena as interrelated, enabling totality to be seen through the individual (p. 238), are echoed throughout Rozenkranz's essay. At one point, Kracauer discusses Simmel's work on analogy, a rhetorical device preferred by Kracauer over metaphor. Kracauer remarks: 'If two objects, *A* and *B*, stand in a relation of analogy to each other, this means that both *A* and *B* are subject to the same general rule, the same general law' (p. 236). Rozenkranz writes: 'As in algebra, where two variables are equal to each other if each is the same as a third, we might say: if two individuals identify with a third, they identify with each other'. And just to make all this wackier than it already is, Fülöp-Miller, sounding every bit like Rozenkranz, quotes Simmel—the German caricaturist and cartoonist Paul Simmel (1887–1933)—to the effect that the point 'on which a great number of individuals meet [must] lie very close to the level of the lowest among them, since the most elevated can descend but not every lowest can come up' (1938, p. 145; the quotation marks are Fülöp-Miller's around the remark he ascribes to Paul Simmel).

Before concluding, it would be worthwhile to note a couple of more general similarities between Kracauer's and Rozenkranz's methods and ideas. One such striking and fundamental similarity is Kracauer's seemingly Simmel-inspired tendency to read cultural phenomena through the prism of the class make-up and response of its audience, a tendency vividly exemplified by the article 'The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies'. In 'Cult of Distraction', Kracauer takes this a step further and remarks: '[The so-called educated classes] are being absorbed by the masses, a process that creates the *homogeneous cosmopolitan audience* in which everyone has the *same* responses, from the bank director to the sales clerk, from the diva to the stenographer' (p. 325; emphasis in the original). Consider Rozenkranz in the following passage, which appears to mimic Kracauer, until the moment when he

introduces the idea of a cleavage between the classes: 'The demands a successful film makes on its viewers' thoughts and emotions provide a precise idea of the kind of intellectual discharge of which a crowd, any crowd, is capable. Any crowd because the crowd is one of the tools which makes possible a levelling of differences in intellectual outlook among a wide variety of individuals. This levelling does not go so far as to do away completely with all boundaries: uniformity is achieved mostly at the lower levels of the intellectual scale of the individuals who make up the crowd'.

Rozenkranz speaks consistently about 'common denominators' and film satisfying the longings of the most varied peoples, even as he posits a fundamental cleavage between theatre and film and between bourgeois and working-class film audiences. In the passage quoted above Kracauer obliterates any such distinction between film audiences with a rhetorical flourish which belies the assumptions of his own work, starting with the idea of facetiously examining shop girls' responses to films, which he implicitly acknowledges will be different from those of a higher 'social level' (Kracauer's term). In Kracauer there remains an overwhelming sense of cultural phenomena read through the particularities of its audience's social class and class behaviour. Like Rozenkranz, he appears most concerned with the position of the individual within the crowd, and any number of passages could be quoted by both authors to this effect.

Given the frequency with which entire sentences from Fülöp-Miller appear in Rozenkranz's essay, however, it appears that I may have been overly hasty in suggesting that Kracauer may have been its author, unless he was hurriedly popularising his own ideas for a French audience and making his task easier by lifting passages from Fülöp-Miller, whose book he clearly appreciated. Nevertheless, I believe that the examples given above easily demonstrate that Kracauer has a strong presence in it, no matter who its author. Also present in spirit at least, as I argue in note 10 above, is Brecht and undoubtedly other Weimar thinkers. Fülöp-Miller's work is unmistakably visible in Rozenkranz's piece in a more immediately identifiable way, but obstacles exist to naming him its author, including the fact that if this were the case it would mean he engaged in blatant plagiarism, self-quoting and self-praise at the height of his career, something for which he seemingly had little need.

It is thus quite possible, given the uncanny textual and thematic resemblances to both Kracauer and Fülöp-Miller, that the article's author was a third party liberally plagiarising each. Whether this author was another well-known German (-speaking) author or a shooting star named Rozenkranz we may never know for certain. The glowing reference to Fülöp-Miller's book in the article would thus not be a case of self-quoting, but rather the plagiarist simply tipping his hand and pointing us to the source of many of his ideas, no doubt secure in the knowledge that few French readers of *Esprit* would discover his misdemeanour. It would be surprising if an author such as Fülöp-Miller, however, wishing to remain anonymous because of the plagiarism of Kracauer and perhaps other reasons, would run this risk by quoting himself and providing the reader with the title of the book which would reveal his identity by means of a little comparative reading between it and the Rozenkranz essay.

We might therefore see the article as a pastiche or belated summa of Weimar thought on mass culture by an anonymous author drawing on a variety of published sources, sources I have begun to identify here well enough to make this perhaps the most plausible account of its authorship. And, as I argue in note 10 to the text above, we might also see in Rozenkranz and his signature concept *opposition mentale* the influence of an as-yet unpublished source, that of Bertolt Brecht's theatre practice, which was theorised in writing only after Brecht's exile from Germany—a project begun with his move in late 1933 to Denmark, a fitting stopover for a playwright for whom Shakespeare's *Hamlet* held a lifelong fascination. Certainly Rozenkranz, in his comments on Piscator's work of the mid-1920s, demonstrates that he had been a keen observer of German theatre for some time, and while Brecht's (and Piscator's) theory of spectatorial estrangement was not yet set down in writing in 1934, it was evident in their theatrical productions of the period.

With all his plagiarism, it is hard to credit Rozenkranz with such a bold, pioneering stroke, even if it was inspired by existing theatrical practice —and yet there it is in the text, a clear and unequivocal discussion of spectatorial estrangement *avant la lettre*, one which, moreover, ties it to the task of rousing the viewer—or the masses—to some sort of action. In the essay in which he quotes Rozenkranz's article, André Bazin describes it as 'profoundly original for its day'. Strictly speaking, its is more pastiche than

original, although it *does* seem seductively original in a sense, even when one becomes more familiar with its sources: it bears the sound of an original voice (one quite unlike the voice of Fülöp-Miller) and makes startling connections among the material it pillages. From the French perspective, in any event, given the limited exposure of Weimar thought in France before 1933 and its invisibility there after the war, Bazin was correct: nothing like it had been voiced in French film or cultural criticism—in which Brecht, for example, was largely absent until the late 1950s. Bazin's remark was particularly true of *opposition mentale*, precisely the one original concept in Rozenkranz and the one that Bazin seized on in his own work. For film studies scholars all this has special significance, once again, because of the hitherto unexplored influence of Weimar thought on Bazin's writings and, more generally, because of the role broadly Brechtian discussions around identification and estrangement came to have in post-1958 film theory and practice.

The role of *Esprit* in this semi-hoax and the manner in which the article's publication venue might inflect our understanding of it are also intriguing and worthy of investigation. Until more research can be conducted into this and other aspects of the article's publication, it is with *Esprit* that I would like to conclude this more speculative discussion. When I first read Rozenkranz's article, with all its talk of the corrosive influence of capitalism on culture and the need to stir the masses to action, I instinctively assumed that it had been written from a left-wing perspective. Later I wondered at what appeared to be the incongruity of proposing, a year after Hitler's consolidation of power in Germany, various strategies for the renewal of German theatre at a time when its talent was fleeing the country and the Nazis' severe censorship and racial and ideological purification of the cultural milieu had begun. Rozenkranz's concerns, it would seem, were no longer those of the progressive German cultural and theatrical community, recently thrown into upheaval like the rest of the country. Perhaps, I thought, the article, whose author I presumed to be a German in exile, had been written before 1933 and was being taken out of a drawer, or a suitcase, for belated and on closer examination anachronistic publication in translation abroad in 1934. On this score, incidentally, it is hard to imagine Kracauer in Paris, or Fülöp-Miller in Vienna, proposing these prescriptions for German theatre at such a juncture unless they were simply disposing of an old text that could no longer be published in Germany.

Another possibility exists, however: what if Rozenkranz were not a left-wing German in exile, or even the high-brow liberal humanist Fülöp-Miller, safe for the moment in Vienna? What if the article were written from a different perspective, that of someone living in Germany in 1934 and intending to remain there? Much of the article's language—its fierce criticism of capitalism, its talk of using the theatre to provoke individual reflection and carry out mass education—would appear to the casual reader today to be an obstacle to such a reading. The choice of *Esprit* as publication venue, however, opens the text to precisely this kind of interpretation. Founded in the fall of 1932 by Emmanuel Mounier, the journal for which Bazin wrote many of his best pieces after the war was, at precisely this moment in 1934, in the throes of a profound search for identity outside the normal philosophical categories and political labels 'right' and 'left'. It was a time when expressions alien to the contemporary reader's ear such as 'revolutionary Catholic' and 'left-wing fascist'—uttered for the most part quite earnestly and non-pejoratively—were commonly heard in France and especially in the intellectual circles around *Esprit*. In addition to being self-styled non-leftist social revolutionaries, the journal's principal figures were also deeply conservative Catholics, albeit highly renegade in the eyes of the Church. Articulating a new religious ethos was a central part of their mission. At the same time, the journal had an intense fascination with political developments in Germany and, to a lesser extent, Italy, and became something of a French forum for debate about European and especially German fascist politics; in its own quest for a political, economic and social alternative to capitalism and left-wing socialism, German National Socialism briefly exerted a powerful attraction. (As I pointed out in my previous note to this article in the Bazin volume, Rozenkranz's text appeared in the same issue of *Esprit*—on the pages immediately following it—as the final instalment of a controversial series of four long essays on German politics in the wake of Hitler's rise to power by Otto Strasser, one-time leader of a dissident 'left-wing' faction of National Socialism who opposed Hitler's leadership and in 1934 was living in exile in Vienna.)

Whatever Rozenkranz's true identity, there is little doubt that his article found its way into *Esprit* because of the journal's keen interest in German society and politics and close ties with German political and intellectual figures—and not those belonging to Germany's sizeable pre-1933

Left. These ties were cultivated by members of the *Esprit* inner circle such as Denis de Rougement, for example, a widely-travelled and widely-read Germanophile. (It is believed that the French translator of the original *Esprit* essay was living in Belgium at the time of its publication; whether the article came to him through Paris or rose up through one of the many study and support groups the journal had established in Belgium and several other countries is impossible to tell.) Rozenkranz's caustic critique of capitalism and its effects on the individual and on elite culture mimics *Esprit*'s own rhetoric of these years to such an extent that its author could not have been anything but intimately familiar with the editorial line of the journal. Just as no two scholars today can agree on the correct, inevitably compound label for *Esprit*'s pre-war political and social ideology, precisely at the time of Rozenkranz's article the journal's virtually impenetrable and indecipherable political ideology had led it to be assailed by the Left as 'fascist' (without the redeeming adjective 'leftist') and by much of the Church, with which it was much more interested in maintaining a harmonious relationship, for the extent it had strayed from Church doctrine.

In light of the perplexing mystery of Rozenkranz's identity, the ideological unorthodoxy of *Esprit* and the political turbulence of 1934 in France and the rest of Europe, the question of the author's politics must be posed. Read in light of *Esprit*'s own language of the day, Rozenkranz's article reveals nothing that would oblige us to view it *a priori* as left-wing. It uses a language which today is associated almost exclusively with the Left but which at the time was equally employed—by *Esprit* (and early National Socialism) first and foremost—as part of a reactionary or even fascist program to undo the ravages of modern capitalism on European society. Given the fraught political atmosphere of the day, just a year after Hitler's sudden and unexpected consolidation of power, and in light of the volatile mix of ideologies at *Esprit*, one thus has every reason to wonder about this German-speaking author's political allegiances and his article's political agenda. (The literature on *Esprit*, Mounier and his credo of Personalism is vast, in both French and English. For a thirty-year-old but still compelling introduction to the French intellectual climate of the early 1930s and the evolution of the journal, the reader is referred to a volume by my one-time political science professor John Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left 1930–1950*, especially the chapter 'The Fascist Challenge'.)

From this perspective, could the article's anti-capitalist rhetoric, its insistence on theatre's 'mission' and the need to create an audience of individuals not swept up in the crowd, be the work of someone within Germany, or a sympathetic observer in France? Someone who, while not necessarily a supporter of National Socialism on every score, saw in Hitler's rise an opportunity to re-establish the pre-eminence of high culture, to be done with the leftist experiments of a Piscator and to renounce the mistaken Weimar fascination with cinema, a mere distraction fostering passive identification. In this sense, the reforms Rozenkranz proposes might be seen not as anachronistic and out of touch with the reality of German cultural life, but as a quite apposite strategy for a 'new', post-1933 German theatre. If this were the case, it would be a telling example of the ideological morass and transactions of the day, its seemingly leftist rhetoric employed by a German who 'chose to stay behind' and appearing in a French philosophical journal seeking an alternative on the Right to the established capitalist order.

With his emphasis on individuality, his politically ambiguous attacks on capitalism and his dread of the 'mass', Rozenkranz took up *Esprit*'s concerns and mirrored its contradictions. In a Europe about to witness forced transnational migration on a vast scale, the obliteration of nation states and the 'massification' of social life in at least two of the three competing European political blocs, the interest of Rozenkranz's text far surpasses the mystery of its author's identity, although his anonymity is crucial to our approach to the text and its time. For who was Rosenkrantz? I refer not to the author's real identity this time, but to the theatrical identity the author chose to adopt. Shakespeare's Rosencrantz, in *Hamlet*, was a sycophantic agent in the service of a foreign power, a minor character in an international intrigue. Killed off by the end, he has scarcely an interesting line in the entire play, in which questions of individual identity and international statecraft merge. It was a bizarre choice of pseudonyms, as perplexing to us today as the rest of the article. Perhaps, however, we might view it in retrospect as uncannily *à propos*: isn't Shakespeare Europe's only major modern literary figure whose authorship is in dispute? The name Rozenkranz, which in modern Europe could be German, French, Danish, etc., can evoke in this context little other than Shakespeare's play—and is there any other early modern European cultural artefact more about estrangement in all its manifestations, and alienation in all its meanings, than *Hamlet*? And just as Brecht, after the war,

read forward Shakespeare's drama of European geo- (and psycho-) politics as an allegory of twentieth-century Europe's conflicts and the disjunction between the mind and the actions we are called upon to take (pp. 201–2), Rozenkranz, writing as those conflicts began to unfold, examined the disjunction between our conscious and unconscious mind in the realm of distraction, that other twentieth-century battleground, from a position of stateless indeterminacy.

Our Rozenkranz, fittingly for his purposes and ours, is without nation or place of residence. More to the point, his highly political essay is nonetheless devoid of a clear ideology. His ideologically indiscernible pastiche of a recently extinct school of criticism, written in German, published in French and taking as its starting point and leitmotif Kracauer's key concept, distraction, when that concept no longer had a home, belatedly illuminated all the latent political ambiguity of that concept while introducing to French thought the contrary Russo-Germanic concept estrangement. The question 'Who was Rozenkranz?' with which I opened this post-script thus spills well beyond the mere question of authorship, inviting us to view the present text not just as the work of a pseudonymous or plagiaristic individual crafting a pastiche of a school of thought only recently severed from its social context, like a plant from its roots, but as a document, appropriately anonymous and without nationality, that embodies the political confusions and 'culture wars' of a now-fractured Europe. Left-wing, this rootless plant? Perhaps the opposite. Transported abroad under suspect circumstances, it lay dormant for a generation, finding no echo in pre-war France, until André Bazin, in the rubble of post-war Europe, chanced upon it and planted it—in new soil, yet in the very field Rozenkranz denigrated: cinema. That, however, is the topic of another discussion.

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