

Difficult Questions

People are going to the movies less often. If they watch more television, however, they want to see movies. They want cinema without wanting to go to the cinema. This is a familiar correlation of wanting to have and not wanting to do. This should divide the audience into a cinema proletariat and a small-screen bourgeoisie, yet it is but a dream to hope that such a split could revolutionize the history of cinema. Instead, the cinema film has become a phantom.

TV sets are found in the home, the home is important in life – small families are divided into life and home. Given that television means home, going to the movie theater can mean being without home. This principle is illustrated most vividly by homeless people when they visit a cinema to sleep there. Travelers are separated from their families and homes and may go there just to kill time which could otherwise exhaust them. Young people go to the movies in order to spend time away from the family or because they don't yet have an apartment with a little family of their own. If at some later date they do have them, then they will also have a television set on which they will want to see movies.

The word "cinema," implying time to roam, traveling, and youth, is used to transform the image on the TV screen into a counterimage of the viewer's own life. Someone appreciatively watching a cinema film on TV is less concerned with the strangers' lives on the screen and more with the imagined phenomenon of being a stranger in front of the screen. Furthermore, in the (imaginary) movie theater one is nameless, whereas apartments have names at the entrance and people watching TV together know each other by name.

When cinema could still believe that it was fighting against television, its invisible enemy included everything to do with television. Primarily this meant the home or apartment which in turn affords room for storing almost all consumer goods. As a result cinema found itself at odds with food producers, electrical goods manufacturers, the furniture industry, and clothes makers – but couldn't even have taken on the makers of detergents. In victory, television first bought up cinema

films and later cinema production itself. Television did not buy up the movies in order to close them down, but rather in order to ensure its continued existence. In the same way, the superpower U.S.A. pays Israel and the superpower U.S.S.R. pays Cuba precisely because Israel and Cuba do not wish to implement the superpowers' policies. By paying small countries and thus ensuring their survival as independent states, the superpowers attempt to assimilate them. Those purchased are to show obedience by their very resistance.

The bought film industry is prepared to shine with all the qualities ascribed to it, "emotionality," "directness," "figurativeness," "risk-friendliness," "commerciality," and more – it just demands better payment. Many movies are already 100 percent financed either by television or by its trailblazer, the state, and some producers have started asking for 120 percent. They are demanding an extra 20 percent so as to continue their own phantom existence, so that it remains possible for a film to pass through the cinema machine and thereby become a cinema film. Now that we already have subsidies for scripting, production, distribution, and even for the food and drink consumed by the movie crowd while discussing all this, there is talk of subsidizing the audience too. This is not a ridiculous thought. It would have to be done so as to succeed in maintaining a certain rump-audience to act as representatives for those remaining at home. "City magazines" try to sustain the figure of the "moviegoer" by successfully demonstrating that he is a part of the business.

When people used to see a beggar, a couple kissing, a fight on the street, or a similarly vivid scene, they used to ask whether a film was being made. Today the question to ask would be: is life being played out here, in order that we can regard the city as being a place where a cinema is conceivable whose auditorium is filled with a conceivable audience, sitting and watching an imaginary film? Is life being played out so that at the end of this long chain of imagination movies remain imaginable? These are difficult questions.