

imagine what Henry James might have done with a set-up like that."

The incentive of a production to an author also cannot be underestimated. Mr. Whitehead had started out with the idea that an acting company working on a very small budget could operate this season in workshop and possibly perform the fifth production in the series which would have been by one of the writers working with the group. Unfortunately, not even the small amount necessary was available, and the project had to be shelved.

President Dowling, who as a solid New Yorker also professes a fondness for the ANTA permanent acting company idea, nevertheless feels that such a company is not essential and must take a back seat to the servicing functions ANTA performs to theatre groups all over the country. He doesn't think that ANTA should request a subsidy from the Government, because Government subsidy would lead inevitably to political influence. As a man long experienced in fund-raising, he estimates that it will be at least five years before the private donations to ANTA might make a permanent acting company possible.

It is Mr. Whitehead's contention, however, that a permanent acting company would do more to stimulate the theatre all over the country than any other thing ANTA could do. "It would become the spine of the whole American theatre, something that would inspire theatre workers everywhere. Helping to establish it would change the play series from a chore to a mission," he says softly but with a low-pitched fervor.

WHILE Mr. Dowling and Mr. Whitehead differ on the urgency of a permanent acting company, they and Helen Hayes (whom Whitehead describes as the most skilful actress and finest person to work with in the theatre he's ever come across) are tremendously respectful of each other's ability to get things done. "Many people," says Mr. Whitehead with a bitter smile, "think the theatre is a lot of talking, theorizing, and picking at things. Actually, if it's professional, it has to be damned hard work. Mr. Dowling is a wonderfully energetic hard worker, and whenever we've run into a crisis in the play series he's been the one who has acted and gotten results." Conversely the fifty-six-year-old Mr. Dowling looks on Mr. Whitehead with the same benevolence that Horace Stoneham looks on Leo Durocher. "When a man wins pennants for you like Mr. Whitehead has, you back him to the limit," says the huge realtor.

The limit is apparently somewhere

short of an immediate permanent acting company, unless ANTA decides to conduct a separate money-raising campaign on behalf of such a project. The probability is remote, but those close to Mr. Whitehead say he never gives up on an idea once he comes to believe in it..

—HENRY HEWES.

Drama Notes

THREE FAMOUS PLAYS. By Ivan Turgenev. Translated by Constance Garnett. Scribner's. \$3. Turgenev, the playwright, has always been somewhat obscured by Chekhov, whom he foreshadowed and whom he resembles in his stress on the inner tempests that jiggle the lid of an overcivilized teapot. While a reading of the late Constance Garnett's translation of three of his plays does not have you doubting the supremacy of the later dramatist, it does leave you with a heretical suspicion that Turgenev's dramatic compositions may be even more playable for modern audiences than those of the illustrious Anton.

For whereas Chekhov sometimes confuses by spreading your interest evenly over a great variety of characters, Turgenev tends to focus more on one with whom the audience can identify itself. In "A Month in the Country," it is Natalia, tortured by jealousy and unrequited love. In the one-act "A Woman of the Provinces," it is Darya, who, unlike Chekhov's three sisters, actually finds a way to get from the country to St. Petersburg. And in the two-act "A Poor Gentleman" (known in an earlier translation as "The Family Charge"), it is Tropatichov, a pathetic old man who is humiliated by his smug benefactors to the point where he reveals that he is the illegitimate father of the fashionable young wife of one of them.

Broadway obviously doesn't share this opinion, as the last Turgenev production here was in 1930. Maybe this new edition will stimulate some thinking on the subject and at least a few Little Theatre revivals of these plays.

I AM A CAMERA. By John Van Druten. Adapted from "The Berlin Stories" by Christopher Isherwood. Random House. \$2.50. The text of the play which has been awarded the Drama Critics Award as the best American play of 1952. In the voting it received this department's wholehearted support. Mr. Van Druten wrote the play at the suggestion of playwright Dodie Smith, to whom he has dedicated the book.

—H. H.

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SR Goes to the Movies

CONRAD'S FAR EAST, STRINDBERG'S GLOOM

ONE way of describing the literary excellences of a work of fiction is to say that, ineluctably, it defies transference to the stage or screen. I came across an encomium of this sort in an essay that H. L. Mencken wrote on Joseph Conrad, published at a time when movie audiences were thrilling to the tribulations of Lillian Gish in "Broken Blossoms." Mencken saw no possibility for Conrad's stories and novels to get beyond the bounds of the printed page. Of "An Outcast of the Islands" he had this, in particular, to say: "The world fails to breed actors for such roles, or stage managers to penetrate such travails of the spirit, or audiences for the revelation thereof." A silent movie, "Lord Jim," and a talking version of "Victory" subsequently seemed to prove Mencken all the more right. Nevertheless, forces were working, all unbeknownst to Mencken, to prove him wrong. For at the time of writing the above declaration young Carol Reed had reached the age of ten, Ralph Richardson at fifteen was still far from his knighthood, Robert Morley was a little fellow of eight, and Trevor Howard had not yet learned to walk.

The new movie that Carol Reed has done is called "Outcast of the Islands" (Lopert). It is pure Conrad, surprisingly close to the original novel both in event and spirit. What is left out Conrad might very well have wanted left out at a later date, for in this early work he provided three separate climaxes. Reed has chosen the one that is most ironic and most appropriate. Conrad also included some fairly uninteresting intrigue between the Arab and Malay settlers of Sambir, where the redoubtable Captain Lingard established a trading post on his "secret river." Only enough of this has been left in to make the essential story clear. What has resulted is a steamingly alive movie, strikingly photographed (much of it "on location" in Ceylon), wonderfully acted. The very first moments of it make you aware that you are in firm, sure hands, that your trip to the Malay straits is both necessary and worthwhile. This is not only the best that Carol Reed, already the possessor of a stunning reputation as a director, has yet done, but it represents something of a new departure for him. "Outcast of the Islands," which he has produced as well as directed, shows him moving

into a more serious and rewarding phase, something quite different from the crime and thriller movies with which his name is usually associated.

"The Third Man" and "Odd Man Out" showed his fondness for atmospheric effects, and this same fondness may have determined his attraction to a writer who filled his works with them. The novel was drenched with atmosphere; Conrad himself called it the most "tropical" of his Eastern tales. In the movie the atmosphere hangs just as heavy: a dirty, muddy river; the rocky reefs at its mouth that prevent entrance of any but Lingard's schooner; the native huts on poles sunk into the mud-banks. You might think that Reed and his photographer had found the very river that sparked Conrad's imagination, even though its exact geographical location is never made fully clear in the book. The movie doesn't make it clear either; it's merely tropical and Far Eastern. The time is probably the later 1800's, when there was some fierce rivalry between the British, the Dutch, and the Arabs for the trade of the East Indies, and before "a great pall of smoke had been sent out by countless steamboats." Within this generality Reed has created his specific details lovingly, seeming to search for those that are particularly Conradian. Conrad's Far East, it must be admitted, is sometimes regarded as slightly mythical. One does not get a feeling of a period, but rather of a tale-like atmosphere—one altogether real during the time of the telling and, in the movie, of the viewing.

"An Outcast of the Islands" was Conrad's second novel, written, so he tells us, in response to his editor's suggestion, "Why not try another?" The question seems to have had magic properties, for Conrad immediately began work on what turned out to be a curious sort of sequel to his first

book, "Almayer's Folly." Captain Lingard and Almayer had already been introduced in that book; so had Babalatchi, the scheming native. The new book went back in time to show how the prosperity of Lingard and Almayer, the peacefulness of Sambir, had been disrupted by a strange romance between Willems, a protégé of Captain Lingard, and Aissa, a native girl, half Arab and half Malay. The book actually turned out to be a study of the disintegration of a once proud man, and it is on this decline and fall of Willems that the movie concentrates.

This theme, it occurs to me, is a hardy perennial, one that most writers seem unable to avoid when dealing with exotic neighborhoods. It became very new and shining in the hands of Conrad—the melodramatic trappings are only on the surface of his works—and it has lost no luster in the hands of Carol Reed. There is nothing stereotyped in this movie, no Dorothy Lamour wandering around in a sarong. There is, however, someone infinitely more attractive, a young Arab actress called Kerima, who plays the part of Aissa. The fact that she has no lines to speak somehow emphasizes all the more the libidinous nature of Willems's relationship with her. She, it can be said, seems to have stepped right out of the book, and so have others, to loom before us, alive and engrossing.

For this Carol Reed had the help of a fine, authentic screenplay by William Fairchild, and some splendid acting. Ralph Richardson's performance as Captain Lingard is superlative; equally so is that of Robert Morley as Almayer; both give the impression of having been specifically bred for their roles. Perhaps the hardest job, though, fell to Trevor Howard as Willems; he had to make clear the successive stages of degradation, and the final, self-loathing that is left to Willems as retribution for his betrayals of Captain Lingard. Wendy Hiller is seen to advantage, but not very often, as Almayer's wife. Conrad devotees may notice a few changes in race and coloration in some of the minor characters, but these are hardly consequential. Multitudinous audiences "for the revelation thereof" are surely owing to "Outcast of the Islands"; it is a beautiful and intensely absorbing film, made possible by a rare amalgam of cinematic and acting talents.

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Space is lacking, unfortunately, to go into the many merits of a new Swedish movie, "Miss Julie" (Trans-Global Pictures), that opened in New York recently. It is based on the Strindberg play of similar title, and

