THE FILM TILL NOW

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THE FILM TILL NOW
A SURVEY OF THE CINEMA

BY

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PREFACE

NOBODY can tell any one else *how* to accept a film. And, because a film should be the result of a director's outlook on life and an expression of what he sees therein, it is obvious that rules and regulations cannot be laid down as to how a film should be made. That is not the aim of this book. We can, however, criticise a director's methods of expression; his conception and his use of technical devices peculiar to the cinema.

Criticism of films is as difficult as criticism of music. To describe adequately the emotions aroused by Pudovkin or Pabst is as impossible as description of the feelings evoked by Mozart or Wagner. In fact, I am tempted to quote that, like poetry, film criticism is 'emotion remembered in tranquillity.'

Throughout this book I have endeavoured to draw a clear distinction between a film and a movie. At the same time I have remembered that it is perfectly possible to admire the best in *The Love Parade* and to be affected deeply by the drama of *The General Line*. But whereas the former picture produces no effect after its time of showing, the latter leaves a profound impression on the mind, giving rise to certain ideas and starting trains of thought of lasting value. Unfortunately, the general public is always more inclined to applaud the appearance of merit in a film than the merit itself.

In short, therefore, I am concerned in these pages primarily with the film *as a film*; as a valuable medium of dramatic expression rather than as a superficial entertainment; as a mental stimulant rather than as an amusement.

The theories and reactions set down in this survey are the natural outcome of a period of some years devoted to the close observation of films and film production. They have been instigated by time spent in public cinemas, in private projection rooms, and by experience of studio work. I have thought fit to divide the result of my observations into two parts, the Actual and the Theoretical, each being dependent on the other for support. Firstly, I have put on record

facts, information, and brief criticisms of such films, produced up till the date of writing, as I consider of interest, together with notes on their directors. The aim here has been partly to substantiate my theoretical deductions and partly to provide a source of reference for students of the cinema. It must be remembered that the life of a film is short. It fades into the past with rapidity and is only to be seen again with difficulty. Moreover, reliable data about even quite well-known films is scarce and sometimes unprocurable. Secondly, I have attempted to investigate the film as a means of expression; to catalogue its attributes as evidenced till now; and to speculate upon its potentialities as suggested by its course of development.

At the risk of redundancy, I wish to draw attention to the important part played by the emphasis of detail in filmic representation, a factor which I have stressed in my theoretical chapters. This significance of detail is characteristic not only of modern cinema but of all contemporary art. And in particular I refer to the recognition of the value of the inanimate. Although this feeling for detail is prevalent, for example, in the novel of to-day, it is also the foundation of the emotions created by the work of Zola and Dostoievski. I am convinced that the former's 'La Débâcle' and the latter's 'Crime and Punishment' contain the fundamental (non-technical) basis of the Soviet cinema. Of equal importance to-day are Arnold Zweig's 'The Case of Sergeant Grischa,' and Herman Hesse's semi-autobiographical 'Steppenwolf,' both of which probably suggest the power of the cinema far more vividly than my own expression. It is in the film's unique faculty for the collective representation of detail that lies its primary claim to being the greatest of all forms of expression. There exists practically no object outside the range of the camera and the microphone which cannot be brought in terms of contrast or similarity to emphasise, both visually and aurally, filmic argument. I suggest that it is the power of *selecting* the most expressive detail for emphasis of purpose that distinguishes the good film director from the bad.

In the light of current events, I realise that I have laid myself open to serious attack by refusing to acknowledge the cacophonous omnipresence of the dialogue film. But, after renewed consideration, provoked by the appearance of *Hallelujah!* and *The Virginian*, I maintain the opinion subsequently expressed. As a mechanical invention the dialogue film is doubtless marvellous, and by the aid

of clever showmanship it is successful in catching the temporary attention of the masses. Nevertheless, all dialogue films are simply reductions to absurdity of the attempt to join two separate arts, which, by their essential nature, defy synchronisation. Employed judiciously as a *sound* adjunct to the visual image, the microphone will add value to the camera, but as a means of 'realism' its place is non-existent.

In the discussion of any semi-technical subject the employment of technical terms and phrases is inevitable. But in order that there may be as little confusion as possible, I have included a glossary of cinematic terms in the appendices, to which I would refer the reader. With regard to the illustrations, it will be appreciated that a static reproduction, however good in itself, cannot adequately present the *cinematic* aspect of a film. No still-photograph can convey filmic meaning. At its best it can but serve as a reminder, or suggest the character of the film from which it is taken. The selection embraces films of all varieties; the arrangement has been governed by terms of contrast and comparison.

Finally, I desire to express my warmest gratitude to Mr. F. Gordon Roe and Mr. Osbert Lumley, without whose counsel and assistance this book would never have been written.

PAUL ROTHA.

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Most of the illustrations are reproduced by kind permission of the following firms, to whom I am also indebted for information: In London, Messrs. Bernhard-Tiffany, British Instructional Films, British International Film Distributors, British International Pictures, Film Booking Offices, First-National-Pathé, Graham Wilcox Productions, M. P. Sales, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, New Era, Paramount, Pro Patria, United Artists' Film Corporation, Universal, W. & F. Wardour. In Berlin, Messrs. Prometheus, and Universum Film A.G. In Paris, Messrs. Albatross-Sequana, Alliance Cinématographique, Aubert, and Pax.

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The wrapper of this book is composed of film strips from *Drifters*, *A Cottage on Dartmoor*, and *Light Rhythms*, which were kindly

supplied to me by the directors of the films, Messrs. John Grierson, Anthony Asquith, and Oswell Blakeston respectively.

My sincere thanks are due to Mr. H. Percival for the kindness he has shown in placing at my disposal his remarkable collection of film data, and to the many others who have helped in this manner.

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PAUL ROTHA.

TO THOSE
AMONG CINEMA
AUDIENCES
WHO WONDER WHY
AND THINK HOW

THE FILM TILL NOW

PART ONE

THE ACTUAL

I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FILM

THE development of the film may be regarded from three different points of view: the Scientific, the Commercial, and the Æsthetic.

The first is concerned with the mechanical advance of the instrument and its technicalities, dealing with the workings of the projector, the intricate mechanism of the camera, the various methods of sound reproduction by discs or sound-strip [1] on film. These it is not proposed to consider, except where the actual machinery of the instrument has direct bearing on the expression of the theme which the film is unfolding.

The second covers the amazing growth of the film as an industry, which here will be briefly recorded.

And the third views the progress which the film has made since its birth as a medium of dramatic expression, including its limits and its delimits. It is with this æsthetic aspect of the cinema that this survey is primarily concerned.

Except historically and technically, the birth and early years of the cinema are neither interesting nor particularly brilliant in æsthetic achievement. Accounts of financial successes and failures in tawdry commercialism are depressing. It suffices to mention a few salient facts and dates in order to gain a perspective of the position to-day without undue tedium.

(*a*) *The Commercial Development of the Film*

It seems generally agreed that, for all practical purposes, Edison started the ball rolling in 1887. Having perfected the phonograph, he desired to supplement the sound images with another mechanical device which would present visual images alongside those of sound. It is extraordinary to observe that this ambition of Edison,

[1] For definitions of these and other technicalities, such as montage, sound or visual image, etc., see the Glossary in Appendix II.

which brought the film into being, is precisely the opposite to the aim of the present-day producer, who attempts to supplement his visual images with their recorded sounds. This astonishing fact is worth serious consideration. The visual film was thought necessary to accompany the sound record. Fifty years later, sound is deemed necessary to accompany the visual film. . . .

Edison's first efforts apparently resulted in pictures of microscopic size in spirals upon a cylinder, somewhat similar to the early gramophone record. Some time later, strips of film were made out of collodion and experiments were also carried out with celluloid, but it was not until samples of the first Eastman-Kodak film, constructed on a nitro-cellulose base, were obtained by Edison in 1889 that the original cinema machine came into being. This was called the Kinetoscope. Experiments proceeded in Edison's laboratory at West Orange, until at length it was possible for one person at a time to look through the peephole of the machine and to see a series of pictures, some fifty feet in length, representing a person in movement – jerky and interrupted, perhaps, but nevertheless *movement*. It is said that the first actual cinematic record was that of a sneeze, performed by an assistant in the laboratory, one Fred Ott, whose name surely will go down to posterity on this account alone. Mr. Ott's sneeze is symbolical of the contagious influence of the film business.

In 1894 the Edison kinetoscope was presented commercially to the New York public and hundreds of these machines were sold in the open market. The subjects of Edison's films made at his laboratory were chiefly boxing-matches, dances, and variety turns, all of which were suitable to show off the capabilities of the new invention on account of their movement. But the limitation of these films being viewed by only one person at a time gave rise to a demand for a machine like a magic lantern, which would project the pictures on to a screen so that they could be seen by a whole roomful of people. Edison, however, disliked the proposal, believing that collective showings would rapidly exhaust the market, and he omitted even to patent his device in foreign countries.

Meanwhile, other experiments were in progress in Europe, all of them aiming at a combination of Edison's kinetoscope with the magic lantern, for the projection of the film on to a screen. A year later, in 1895, Woodville Latham gave public demonstrations in America

of a projector using the kinetoscope film pictures, but the process was crude and unsuccessful. About the same time, both Robert Paul in London and the Lumière brothers in Paris, inspired by the exhibition of Edison's device in their respective cities, brought out projectors; Paul exhibiting his at Olympia and the Alhambra in the following year.[1] The principle upon which the modern projector is based, however, is that of Thomas Armat's machine, which was shown publicly for the first time at the Cotton States' Exposition at Atlanta, Georgia, in September of 1895. Armat's Vitascope, which was illegitimately coupled with Edison's name for box-office reasons, was then shown on Broadway and was an immediate success. It was not long before several other projectors were put on the market, with the inevitable result that in a short time there was turbulent conflict and litigation over patents, which was to last for several years in America and thus to hinder progress. A disastrous damper on the young industry was experienced also in Europe, for at a charity bazaar in Paris, in 1897, one hundred and eighty members of Parisian society were burned to death in a marquee, the cause of the fire being a cinematograph machine. This calamity had a depressing effect on the whole of northern Europe, and it was years before many people would countenance the presence of the diabolical engine.

Gradually the fifty-feet lengths of film used in the kinetoscope lengthened until, in 1897, eleven thousand feet of film were shown by Enoch Rector in America, being a cinematic record of the Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight at Carson City, Nevada. Exceptionally dull as this enormous length of film must have been, its novelty was probably astounding. During the same year a film version about three thousand feet long of the Oberammergau Passion Play was made by Richard Hollaman. This was not a genuine reproduction of the real spectacle, as was advertised, but was manufactured on the roof of the Grand Central Palace – a fact, however, which did not worry the public when they became aware of the deception. Presumably this affair has a vague claim to be the first attempt to photograph a story in pictures, but actually it was a mere photographic record, with no attempt at narration. About this time also, some wonderful trick effects of fade-outs, dissolves, and other photographic devices

[1] Several of these early instruments, of historic and scientific interest, are included in the Will Day Collection of cinematograph equipment, which is housed at present in the Science Museum, South Kensington, London.

now familiar were attained by taking pictures of magic conjuring by Georges Méliès at the *Théâtre Robert Houdin* in Paris. Méliès actually had his own studio, which was constructed in 1896, and amongst other films produced a version of Jules Verne's *Trip to the Moon*. This 'primitive' was revived by the Film Society on 5th January 1930, and about the same time there were various revivals of Méliès's work shown in Paris.[1]

Although these novelties were widely successful, it was not until 1903 that the first real attempt to tell a story by moving pictures was made. This event was achieved by Edwin S. Porter's sensational *The Great Train Robbery*, eight hundred feet in length, with Mae Murray as the leading lady in what must surely have been the first cabaret on the screen. This film was rapidly succeeded by many other 'story-pictures,' as they were called, of a similar type, such as *The Great Bank Robbery* and *Trapped by Bloodhounds, or a Lynching at Cripple Creek*. Thereafter, for some years, there set in an orgy of one-reel melodramas.

The arrival of the story-picture almost at once gave rise to the need for suitable places in which to project these efforts, which resulted in the famous nickelodeon or five-cent theatre. The first of these was opened by Harry Davis, of Pittsburgh, a real-estate operator and the proprietor of a stage theatre. This excellent showman opened his nickelodeon in 1905 with *The Great Train Robbery* as the first stupendous attraction, much in the same way as exhibitors in 1929 specialised in opening with *The Singing Fool* as soon as their cinemas were equipped with transmitting apparatus. The immediate success of Davis's house inspired speculators all over the States to start similar shows, and it was not long before these nickelodeons sprang up everywhere. They were particularly remunerative in the big labour centres, where the universal language of the film appealed equally to mixed nationalities. It is of interest to note that Zukor, Laemmle, Fox, and Marcus Loew, all men of reputation in the producing industry at a later date, ran and made big profits out of nickelodeons.

In Europe, story-pictures continued for the most part to be shown in concert halls and variety houses and at such places as the London Polytechnic Institute. During this time there had come into being the famous Hale's Tours, which were conducted with great success

[1] See also page 60.

for some years, between 1903 and 1909. These consisted of panoramic and travelling shots of scenes in various countries, projected on to a screen at the end of a room which was arranged like the interior of a railway carriage. The spectators were given the illusion of a tour through some distant land, the screen variously showing the railway track and spectacular views of well-known 'beauty spots.' Effect was added to the performance by the whole carriage being rocked to one side whenever the screen showed the train rounding a curve. This may perhaps be regarded as the first attempt to achieve atmosphere; certainly the carriages may be looked upon as the forerunners of the vast 'atmospheric' cinemas of to-day. The outside of the place was made to resemble the end of a carriage, with two rails, and an attendant dressed as a railway-guard. The gilded, whiskered walruses who guard the portals of London's Empire and New York's Roxy would scorn to recognise their predecessors in these pseudo railway-guards, attracting attention by a screaming phonograph.

Out of the nickelodeons, music-hall shows, and Hale's Tours there developed the first cinemas, which carried on the profitable business and caused an increased demand for story-pictures. This led to the erection of film studios and the forming of stock companies of actors and actresses by the picture-makers. From the one-reel melodramas and slapstick comedies there emerged the longer story-films; and there grew up around the latter many names which were to become world-famous. In 1908, David Wark Griffith, a stage actor, was engaged by the American Biograph Company of New York as a scenario-writer and actor, and his great influence on the film was to manifest itself during the next ten years. About this time also, numerous one-reeler 'westerns,' with their cowboys and Indians, were especially popular with the ever-increasing film public.

From 1911 to 1914 the industry developed with astounding rapidity. The film, hitherto a thousand feet, grew in length. But the most sensational pictures now began to come from Europe, and had considerable influence on the American producers. In England, the Hepworth, the British and Colonial Kinematograph, and the London Film Companies were all creating a demand by the good quality of their steady output. France, with her national leanings towards spectacular pageantry, produced historical films of considerable length, the most renowned being Louis Mercanton's *Queen*

Elizabeth, with Sarah Bernhardt in the title rôle. This picture created a sensation wherever it was shown and was bought for America in 1912 by Adolf Zukor (then an exhibitor in New York) in conjunction with Edwin S. Porter, Daniel Frohman and others. From Italy came a series of big productions or 'feature films,' as they were known, including a version of Homer's *Odyssey*, *The Fall of Troy*, *Faust*, *The Three Musketeers*, and *The Sack of Rome*; but greatest of all, the forerunner of every spectacle film since, was *Quo Vadis?*, a veritable mammoth production of 1913, eight thousand feet in length. This also was bought and shown by George Kleine in America, where to that date the most pretentious effort had been *The Life of Buffalo Bill*. Since the day when American producers first saw *Quo Vadis?*, cinema audiences of the world have been presented with super-spectacle after super-spectacle. From *The Birth of a Nation*, Griffith's reply to the Italian picture at the end of 1914, through the years of *Intolerance*, *The Ten Commandments*, *Robin Hood*, *Ben-Hur*, *Noah's Ark*, *Metropolis*, *Secrets of the East* and *Casanova*, super-films abounded, developing to-day into *Broadways*, *Hollywood Revues*, and *General Cracks* of the singing, dancing, and talking variety. In the few years just before the war the feature film sufficed to build up the industry (increased audiences meant bigger film studios and larger cinema theatres), and in 1914 the opening of the Strand Theatre on Broadway marked a new era in the history of the cinema. The way was open for the position as it is to-day.

*

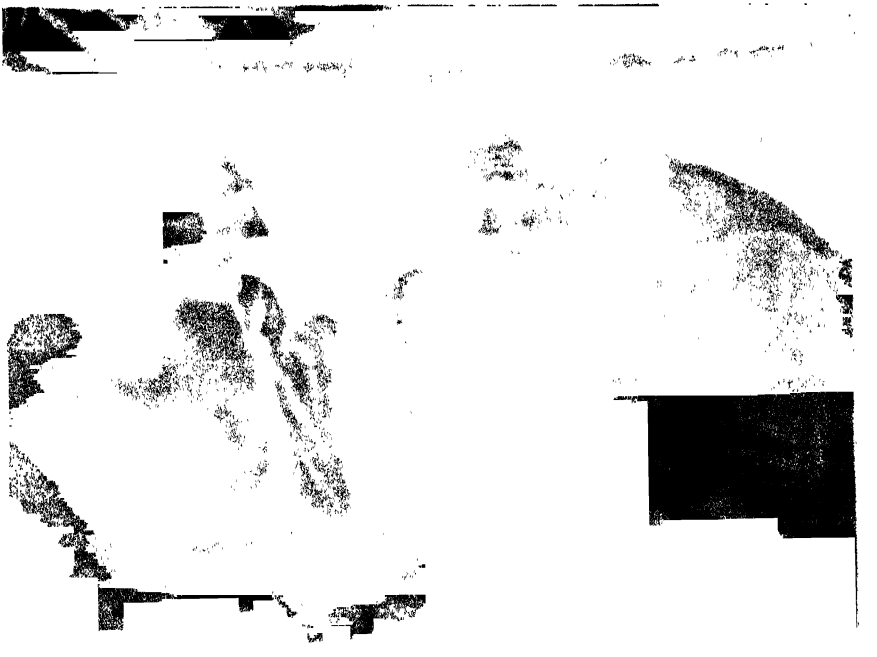
With the outbreak of war in 1914, film production naturally came to an end in Europe. The road was left clear for America to secure for herself the supreme commercial control which she still holds. It was simply a matter of circumstance of which the Americans were quick to take full advantage. That they made the best of their opportunity is only to their credit. But all was not easy for their producers. Financiers were at first reluctant to put their war gains into the film business. Great sums of money were lost, serious risks taken, and wild speculations made in those early days before the monied men of America realised the vast financial profits waiting to be reaped from the movies.[1]

[1] The reader is referred to the enthralling accounts of early struggles in Samuel Goldwyn's *Behind the Screen*, Terry Ramsaye's *A Million and One Nights*, and D. W. Griffith's *When the Movies were Young*.

german uta

NINA PETROVNA

called in England 'The Wonderful Lie,' by Hans Schwartz, under the supervision of Erich Pommer. Brigitte Helm and Franz Lederer 1929



Once started, however, the American producing firms made astonishing progress. Throughout the whole war period their output increased yearly until 1918 found them completely dominating the world market, with interests in foreign producing companies and theatre controls that extended into England, France, Germany, and the Far East. In England, their acceptance was widespread, simply because there were no other films available, and because their shallow, superficial nature appealed to the post-war state of mind of the masses. British companies found it more profitable, and far less of a responsibility, to rent American films than to make their own. Moreover, American companies soon opened their offices in Wardour Street and on the continent for their own distribution, and remain there still. A few attempts to produce were made in England but the lack of both experience and capital rendered the resulting pictures unworthy of presentation. America continued with characteristic facility and slickness to make picture after picture of a hard, scintillating type. By her natural business methods she kept the standard up to a certain level, calculated to appeal to the lowest grade of intelligence. England and Europe were littered with these glittering, metallic movies, whose chief appeal lay in their sex and salaciousness, until the time came when marketing pictures by one's and two's began to be ridiculous, and Hollywood took to selling a whole year's output to foreign exhibitors and renters before the films themselves even were made. By this means she tightened her hold on the foreign market. The 'star-system,' catchpenny titles, scandalous publicity, and a hundred other tawdry schemes were devised to sell the goods to the European public. Business being business, without honour or morals, these movies were taken by British exhibitors, and the public flocked to them because of the cheapness and accessibility of the cinema. By degrees, the masses became saturated with pictures of the worst type. They did not know that others existed. They do not know now that many others exist, nor are they given the opportunity to know. Rarely is any foreign film (save an American) afforded a fair chance of success in this country. As then, the movie is rampant; the film is dormant.

There is no denying the logic that the Americans would have been foolish to loose their hold on the world market; and the method they adopted for retaining that hold was the disposing of their films *en masse* to British exhibitors. They devised a simple but clever system

of selling their second and third-rate productions by means of their super-films. For example, if an English exhibitor wanted a big picture – a spectacle film – which would be a certain box-office draw, then he had also to accept a number of poor pictures to show during the off-season. This was all there was to it, except that, as the method spread, the exhibitor began to book pictures before he had seen them, and probably before they were made, either on the strength of promises that they would be good or else by sample. It will readily be seen how this system led to the abominable practice of making films to type, encouraged of course by the evils of the star-system. If, for instance, Raymond Hatton and Wallace Beery made one comedy, the exhibitor was then coaxed to book five similar films to show during the next two years. Many examples of this stranglehold on both stars and directors are apparent, *viz.* the polished, drawing-room pieces of Adolphe Menjou; the Emil Jannings *Way of All Flesh* type of film; the Clara Bow comedies; and the backstage and adapted stage-plays of to-day. All of these are *per recipe*. Such a mechanical method of making films is bound eventually to kill individuality in director and star. Obviously there can be no creative effort in pictures produced in this manner.

But it was not only by these means that the Americans assumed control of the industry. It became popular at an early stage to rent big theatres for the premier run of a film in order to secure prestige. A 'premier' at a large cinema in London, Berlin, Paris, or New York is all-important to a film. In England the provinces are unquestionably influenced by the London reception. It is the Press reports after the first night which count the highest. Thus it became customary to launch any big new picture at a prominent theatre, and it will be remembered that numerous American films had their first run at London theatres. This idea developed into the acquisition of theatres for premier runs, not only in capitals but in the key-cities throughout a country. Competition led to the taking over of whole chains of cinema houses, which meant of course that any film a company liked to produce could be shown at every one of the houses on their chain, the box-office profits being taken direct. Nearly every big producing concern now owns its chain of theatres, or is associated with a company owning theatres, while most of the smaller film companies distribute their pictures through the larger firms. In London alone, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer own the Empire;

Paramount (the distributing side of Famous-Players-Lasky) the Plaza and the Carlton; Fox are building a new cinema in the Haymarket; Provincial Cinema Theatres own over one hundred and twenty houses, including the New Gallery, the Tivoli, the Capitol, and the Astoria, as well as being associated with the Gaumont-British chain who control the Marble Arch Pavilion, Shepherd's Bush Pavilion, Avenue Pavilion, and many others; Universal own the Rialto in London and the Rialto in Leeds; and so on. Thus the control of a chain of cinema theatres, with a 'shop-window' in London and the advantages of group advertising, is one of the most important assets for a producing company. There is little doubt that the larger concerns will concentrate more and more in the future on enlarging their existing circuits.

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The struggle in Europe to break down American domination has been hard and long fought; but although much of the European output (Germany and France) has been superior to the Hollywood film, the vast organisations so liberally equipped financially have presented an insuperable barrier. Possession, one recalls, is nine points of the law. In order to gain real profits, a film made in England, Germany, or France must secure a showing in America. This at present is almost impossible. A great deal has been said by smooth-tongued publicity men about the Americans wanting British films, but there is little doubt that the Americans are definitely hostile not only to the British but the continental industry. They do not want foreign films in America, except as occasional curiosities, and do not intend to have them. Why should they?

After the war, the predominant country in Europe to attempt producing pictures on anything like a big scale was Germany. (For the moment it is as well to leave Soviet Russia out of the matter, for although she started to build up an industry at an early date she was not concerned with the outside market. She made films with a purpose for her own people.) Superb as many of the early German productions were, they failed to appeal to a public saturated in American flashiness. Scarcely any of the early German films were financially successful, and few made money outside their country of origin, where the box-office receipts were not sufficient to warrant production of fresh pictures. Added to which, Germany, like most other European countries at that time, was financially poor,

and to build up a film industry almost unlimited capital is needed. Germany turned to her Government for support, and the response was praiseworthy. But even with State help, bank subsidies, and, later, loans from American companies, the German industry was in a constant state of fluctuation. Her films, although far better than the American output, failed to secure adequate returns, and Hollywood, quick to recognise the brains behind these productions, began to rob Germany of her directors, players, and technicians, and to turn them to her own commercial uses. Some years later many of these returned the worse for wear, and are now in their own country. Recent German productions tend to be Americanised, although some attempt has been made by Erich Pommer to combine Hollywood commercialism with the remnants of the great German school of 1919–25.

In Sweden and in France the same story can be told. For some time Sweden tried gallantly to make films of good quality, but again financial failure was the result. One by one her best directors and players drifted across to Hollywood, where their work steadily deteriorated. France, although spasmodically producing interesting but isolated films, has never succeeded in sustaining a continued output. In England also, much the same situation developed, the Americans acquiring the most promising players for their own productions, leaving British directors to do the best they could with the remainder. British directors are supposed to be renowned for their lack of intelligence – and what were they to do when even the pretty faces were snatched from them?

Thus, although four countries made every effort to produce films in the face of the Hollywood movies, these pictures and their makers were doomed to eventual failure, with the inevitable result that the brains were imported into America. Instead of remaining persons of individual taste they became cogs in the great movie machine. I cannot recall one example of a European director who, on going to Hollywood, made films better or even as good as he did in his own surroundings. For example, Murnau's *Four Devils* and *Sunrise* were not comparable to *Tartuffe* and *The Last Laugh*; Lubitsch's *The Patriot* came nowhere near *Dubarry* in dramatic power; Leni's *The Man Who Laughs* was a travesty compared to *Waxworks*; Dupont's *Love Me and the World is Mine* is not generally associated with his name; Seaström's *Thy Soul Shall Bear Witness*

is preferable to *Name the Man*. Among players, contrast Emil Jannings in *The Street of Sin* with Jannings in *Faust*; Conrad Veidt in *A Man's Past* with Veidt in *A Student of Prague*; Greta Garbo in *A Woman of Affairs* (better photographed, it is true) with Garbo in *The Joyless Street*; Pola Negri in *The Flame* with Negri in *The Crown of Lies*; Lya de Putti in *The Scarlet Woman* with Lya de Putti in *Manon Lescaut*, and so on. There are few conclusions to be drawn from these comparisons. Perhaps these directors, when given *carte blanche* and the wonderful technical resources of Hollywood, lost their sense of values. Perhaps the attempt to make good films with accepted Hollywood box-office ingredients was distasteful to European artists, who decided to bluff the Americans by including a few facile camera tricks which the magnates would consider high art. Or perhaps, and this is probably nearer the mark, it was impossible to produce let alone conceive any work of real æsthetic value when surrounded by the Hollywood atmosphere of dollars and unintelligence, where culture and sincerity seem to be unknown qualities. The finest picture is not painted by an artist who has small boys to light his cigarettes, perfected mechanical appliances to mix his paints, canvases which have been specially primed at exorbitant cost, brushes made from the hairs of a strange and rare beast in the Himalayas at twenty pounds a hair. Nothing but hothouse virtuosity can come out of that environment. Sincerity of purpose and surroundings bring out good work. Transfer the painter from his disordered studio into a luxurious apartment with every new fangled contrivance to hand and he is at a loss. Thus, for instance, Paul Leni producing *Waxworks* with little money, the goodwill of three great actors, handicapped by lack of lights, studio space and time, bound down by limits, was forced to use his ingenuity and to extract the utmost value from a sheet of paper.[1] But Paul Leni directing *The Man Who Laughs*, with millions of dollars to spend, a cast of thousands, with the flattering knowledge that he had only to ask for a thing and get it, became slack, drivelling, slovenly, and lost all sense of decoration, cinema, and artistry. This may be applied equally to a hundred other films made under the same circumstances, even by Americans, as was the case with Josef von Sternberg's *The Salvation Hunters*, a much over-praised film, which

[1] The last episode, of *Jack-the-Ripper*, was made with the barest essentials of scenery and lighting, owing to lack of finance.

contained a few elementary ideas of cinema, ideas that Sternberg has failed to develop since Paramount elevated him to a directorship.

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It is important to note that there had been little attempt at combination or working in common interests in the American side of the business, although various producing concerns were well advanced on the road to prosperity. Despite the fact that, in 1915, the Motion Picture Board of Trade was formed in New York, followed two years later by the National Association of the Motion Picture Industry, neither of these boards had much status with the trade and the public. In fact, it is said that not until there had been repeated abuses of the trade, salacious productions, and several disastrous scandals involving leading personalities on the screen and the executive staffs did the formation of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America Inc. come into being (1922). This high-sounding organisation was distinguished by having for its figure-head Mr. Will Hays, who specially resigned from the Post-Master Generalship of the United States to take the position. The powers exercised by the Hays organisation extended over a wide area, embracing the selection of movie subjects, general trading in films, international dealings with companies, the relations of the general public to the film industry, censorship, and taxation. Mr. Hays himself looks after the general interests of the cinema with loving kindness, by taking a hand in almost every affair and a large salary. From time to time strong worded edicts are issued from the great man's office, which lend suitable dignity to the concern but have little real meaning or effect. It was Mr. Hays who so shrewdly decided that Somerset Maugham's play 'Rain' should not be made into a film subject unless it were renamed *Sadie Thompson*, thereby displaying great moral sagacity.

In 1925, the international aspects of the cinema began to cause endless trouble, both politically and industrially, to governments and the Press. Europe suddenly awoke to the fact that the American control of the screen, with its steady flow of propaganda for the American people, their life and work, was exerting an influence on world trade. Americanisation not only of Europe, but of Asia, Africa, and Australia was being furthered through the entertaining medium of the cinema. Agitations arose in all countries, and, after

heated discussions between the trade and their respective Governments, quotas were fixed. America herself tried to disguise the whole matter by importing foreign stars and directors so as to give the film an international appeal, and by sending her own production units to work abroad. In this way she hoped partially to evade the quota regulations and to retain her hold on the world market. She has been successful.

Quota restrictions on American films encouraged European production, and determined attempts in England, Germany, and France were again made to build up an industry. Many companies both large and small, some with negligible financial backing, made their appearance, and after a few months a number of passable films were available for exhibition. Few were really satisfactory, however, partly because the public was still saturated with flashy American pictures of low standard, partly because British films were inferior to even the American movies. This was due to the lack of organisation, the scarcity of intelligent directors, and the unsuitable type of people of which the executives in British studios were composed. In 1924, a publicity campaign was launched to help the British film. This campaign was perhaps the worst thing that could have happened. By continuous articles from eminent hands in the Press, by debates in both Houses, by libellous accounts of foreign methods, by reported scandals about American stars, by a tremendous stirring of agitation amongst the masses, the public was browbeaten into a state of receptivity for British films. For months the Press told the public how good the British films then in the making were going to be. After all this publicity, with the public hypnotised into readiness to applaud the worst picture in the world because it was British, the promised films came, one by one. Upon this shamefully false foundation the present industry in England is largely based.

The British Government's film bill of 1927 decided that every distributing firm and exhibitor should show a five per cent. quota of British films, no matter what the films were like. Similar but more severe restrictions were passed in Germany and in France, where, however, the position was slightly different. The German and French publics would rather see a second-rate film made in their own country than an imported movie. Moreover, German and French films made to supply exhibitors with their quota were of much better standard than the British product. In England, the home-made

film was often so inferior than an exhibitor lost money while showing it, and had to make up the loss on next week's American picture. Some exhibitors actually decided to ignore the quota and pay the resulting fine, which they could well afford to do out of the profits from American programmes.

After a time most of the smaller British companies collapsed, and the remaining big firms concentrated on producing a considerable number of pictures, with both English and foreign directors and players, which would bring in returns sufficient to build up their business on a sound basis. Such was the position when Hollywood chose to exploit the dialogue film. Four out of the numerous British firms (British International, Gaumont-British, British Instructional, and Gainsborough Films) had gained a small footing in the home market by imitating American movies and American methods. This was also taking place on the continent, where players and directors, who some years previously had drifted to Hollywood, were reappearing in their home countries. Hollywood was being left in the lurch, and, moreover, there was evidence that the public was at last tiring of the perpetual movie. Something fresh had to be devised to whet their jaded appetites.

How the dialogue film struck the industry in every country like a bombshell is recent history. How Warner Brothers, not knowing which way to turn in order to continue with their production, decided to gamble on the talking film and how they achieved an astounding success; how all Hollywood rapidly followed in their wake; how the talking film hit the nascent British industry; how law-suits and injunctions took place over infringed patents of reproducing apparatus; how the coming of the 'talkies' was Britain's great chance; how British films have died three times; how the unrepentant masses flocked to the novelty of *The Singing Fool*; how the Americans keep their control of the world market – all this and more is scattered in the daily Press and is on everyone's lips.

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The first British dialogue film of any merit, *Blackmail* (produced by British International Pictures and directed by Alfred Hitchcock), was shown to the Press and the trade in America. The New York critics generally agreed that it was well up to their standards. But nobody ***bought*** the picture in New York; nobody wanted it; and in order to present the film publicly the British company rented a

theatre. Now *Blackmail* may not have been a particularly good film, but it was infinitely superior to any American dialogue picture of the same time. But the opposition it met with was a hard blow to British International Pictures. Even the Dominions cold-shouldered it. Censorship authorities in Australia at first prevented the picture from being shown, but later withdrew their ban. Such are the difficulties a British film has to meet.

Meanwhile, it is said, America is thinking beyond the dialogue film, beyond even the colour and stereoscopic film; that she is scheming quietly for complete control of the entertainment industry of the world; and that she intends to achieve this by means of television.

At the moment of writing (October 1929)[1] there are two forces that count in America – the Radio Corporation of America and the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. These two gigantic concerns own and control everything that matters in the entertainment industry. Their present power is due to an outcome of mergers, tie-ups, and combinations that have been taking place for some years. They are rivals in the war for complete control, but it is likely that their rivalry will culminate in amalgamation.

The Radio Corporation of America, who have the immense financial backing of the General Electric Company, are allied with the Pathé film producing concern and have recently organised their own film company on a big scale – Radio Pictures. They own a large number of cinemas, having purchased the vast Keith Albee circuit of theatres and variety houses. They are associated with the Victor Gramophone Company, the *alter ego* of His Master's Voice. They own also an invention for stereoscopic films, called the Stereopticon, which, it is said, is ready for the general market and will make television a certainty. Finally, they are extremely efficient in the making of dialogue film apparatus, the R.C.A. process being used both in British studios and cinemas.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company are rich in their association with film producing concerns, being allied to Warner Brothers, Paramount, United Artists, Fox, Universal, First National and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. It is reported that through these firms they can control half of the total number of cinemas in the United

[1] For much of this information I am indebted to the *Morning Post*, in whose columns there is steady antagonism to American domination of the film industry.

States. They are connected with the Columbia Gramophone Company and through them are constructing the second largest chain of radio stations in the world. Warner Brothers have bought up all the leading publishers of light music, including the best-known firm in London, Messrs. Chappell. The Fox Film Company are also financially interested in the Gaumont-British Company of England, who, as has been stated, own a large chain of theatres in this country. Five representatives of the Paramount Film Company have joined the board of the Columbia Broadcast Company. The Western Electric recording apparatus, which is being installed in many cinemas in England with great speed, is a subsidiary concern of the American Telegraph and Telephone Company.

These are the two firms whose united objective will be the entire control of the entertainment of the world. Through the means of the film, the gramophone, the radio, and television will America dominate the earth.

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Wheels within wheels, tie-ups and mergers, quick and quiet shifting of interests, acquisition of small companies in foreign lands, chains of theatres and cinemas increasing by one's and two's, defiance of quota acts – these are the ways of the commercial film.

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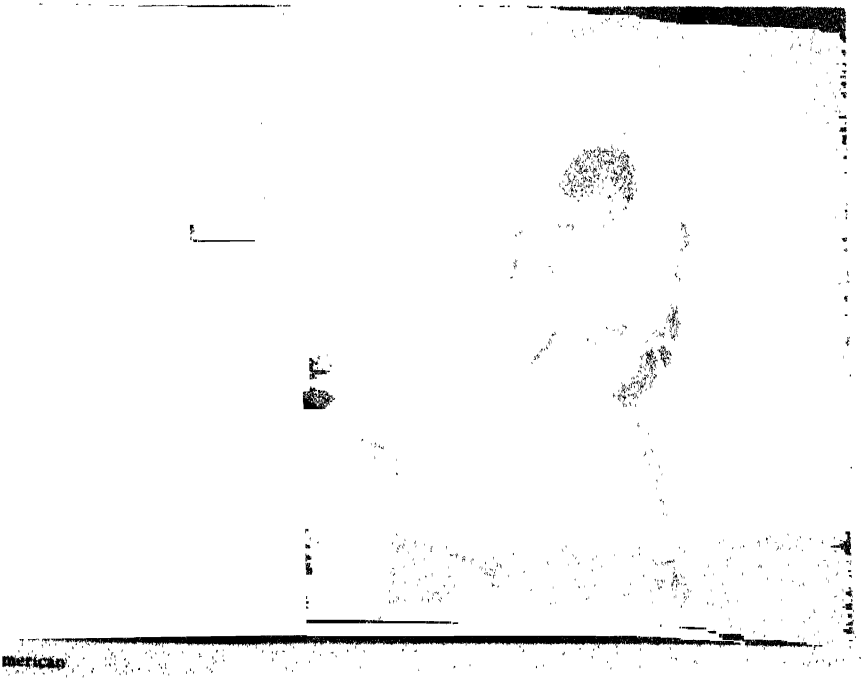
Yet another difficulty to be encountered by the progress of the cinema is the acute problem of film censorship. As is generally known, copies of films differ according to the demands of the censorship regulations in the country of presentation. Whereas a critic in Berlin may applaud the editing and cutting of a certain sequence of Herr Pabst's new film, this sequence may have been re-edited or completely deleted in the copy of the same film seen by a critic in London. That the æsthetic value of the film suffers thereby as a whole is, of course, obvious to all but the Press and the censorship committee itself, but even this latter body must at times realise the havoc it causes to films by deletions for so-called political and moral motives. Those interested in this aspect of the subject are referred to Mr. Ivor Montagu's valuable pamphlet, *The Political Censorship of Films* (Gollancz, 1929), but it would seem that unless all forms of censorship are either abolished or subjected to drastic revision there is no solution to the problem. The fault, however, lies equally with the producers and the directors. If they make films in which

american bernhard-tiffany

LIGHTNING

a western, by James McKay. An instance of America using natural material Contrast with lower photograph. 1927



merican

there are certain sequences that wilfully infringe the censor's rules, they must obviously expect them to be severely edited before leave for public exhibition is granted. The root of the trouble lies really in the different rulings laid down by each country. Nevertheless, the present censorship of films in England undoubtedly needs stringent reform, for its ban on many harmless pictures is detrimental to the progress of the British film industry.

Apart from this, frequent exception can be taken to the official reasons given for the rejection of a film. A case in point arose in connection with Germaine Dulac's *La Coquille et le Clergyman*. According to the Film Society's programme for 16th March 1930, this was banned from public exhibition by the British Board of Film Censors because it 'is so cryptic as to be almost meaningless. If there is a meaning, it is doubtless objectionable.' Firstly, to confess ignorance of the significance of a film, and then to suggest that it is 'doubtless objectionable,' reveals a standard of criticism that is truly Gilbertian!

Mr. Kenneth Macpherson, writing on the sore subject of the destruction of films by the censor authorities, cites the case of *The Joyless Street*. The film was made in thirty-four days working at sixteen hours a day, and when completed it was ten thousand feet in length, about the same as *Ben-Hur* or *The Big Parade*. France accepted the film, deleting two thousand feet and every shot of the 'street' itself. Vienna extracted all sequences in which Werner Krauss appeared as the butcher. Russia turned the American lieutenant into a doctor and made the butcher the murderer instead of the girl. After having run a year in Germany, an attempt was made to censor it. In America it was not shown at all, and in England once, at a private performance of the Film Society. That is the history of a creative work which contained less harmful matter than *Our Dancing Daughters* or *Hot for Paris*, and it gives some idea of the censorship's power to destroy the qualities of any film.

There is no reason at all why many of the forbidden Soviet films, for example, should not be shown to special audiences of persons connected with the film trade and the Press, who might perhaps realise the shortcomings of their own work in this manner. Economically, also, foreign methods of production might be studied with advantage from some of these suppressed films.

(*b*) *The Development of the Film as a Means of Expression*

When considering the commercialism which surrounds the producing and exhibiting of any film, the unscrupulous dealings and double-crossing which occur when a production is launched, it is surprising to discover how far the cinema has really advanced as a medium of dramatic expression. It has been seen how the film began its career and how it became popular with the public, but it is well to remember that the child-film was nursed by a company of 'fur-dealers, clothes-spongers, and grocers' (to use the words of Mr. Messel [1]) in whose hands it could hardly have been expected to rise above the lowest form of entertainment. Moreover, and the fact must be stressed, the primary aim of film producers is to make the maximum of financial return in the shortest possible time, a method hardly congenial to so intricate an art as the cinema.

The later part of this survey will show the real functions, capabilities, and potentialities of the film as a medium of expression considered apart from any commercial point of view save that of general appeal, which surely is the only proper outlook. It is the aim here to preface these theories by actualities, to reinforce the possibilities of the cinema by analysis of the progress of the film until now, examining influences and estimating their worth, selecting some tendencies and rejecting others.

It is essential in the first place to assert that the film is an independent form of expression, drawing inspiration with reservation from the other arts. Furthermore, it should be remarked that the attributes of the film are derived from the nature of the instrument itself, and not from other matters of subject, story-interest, and propaganda. It should also be remembered that the film is essentially *visual* in its appeal, any dialogue being detrimental to this appeal; and that light and movement are the two elements employed in the creation of these visual images. As I shall demonstrate later, the abstraction of the absolute film is the nearest approach to the purest form of cinema, far removed from the commercial film, and descriptions will be given of their simplist methods of psychological appeal through the eye to the mind of the spectator. Following this there will be determined the other lower forms of cinema, descending in æsthetic significance through the epic and art film to the ordinary narrative film and the singing and dancing picture.

[1] *Vide, This Film Business*, by Rudolph Messel (Benn, 1928).

The scientific and mechanical advance of the cinema has developed with marked rapidity as compared with the æsthetic tendency, which has been either backward or, in all but a few studios, absent. I have yet to explain that perhaps the greatest handicap imposed on æsthetic progress was the camera's misleading faculty of being able to record the actual. At an early stage, it was found that the camera was capable of registering a credible record of real scenes and events, thereby becoming a valuable asset to education, a reliable means of historical reference, and a potential method of discovery in the sciences. When put to these uses the realistic properties of the film were good. Even to-day, the news-bulletin and topical budget are always welcome events in the evening's programme, especially when heightened in effect by sound. It must be emphasised, however, that no narration of story or expression of dramatic theme has place in this form of cinematic record. The appeal is purely *interest*. The audience is not asked to participate in the emotional feelings of stout gentlemen in top hats launching liners, or His Majesty opening a new home for destitute orphans. The audience watches the incidents with interest and listens to the dialogue in much the same way as it reads the evening paper. But when the camera came to be employed for the telling of a fictional theme, its realistic photographic powers were used instead of the creative imagination of the director, who failed to express the story *through* the camera. The latter almost at once became an instrument of photographic realism rather than a medium for the expression of creative imagination. Its real powers of distortion, by means of exaggerated angle, slow-motion, and masking,[1] and of transposition were completely neglected in the hasty striving after the obvious goal of realism. The power of the camera to record the actual on a screen coaxed the audience into believing that their sole pleasure lay in the recognition of familiar things. Thus, at the outset of the story-picture, the film began its career on a false basis, and, it hardly need be stated, has continued along these wrong lines (with a few notable exceptions) until the present day, when the dialogue film is further extending the desire for realism, as are also the stereoscopic screen and the colour film. The exact replica of an object, accurate in every detail and measurement, cannot give the same emotions of pleasure as the real object.

[1] The reader is referred to the full analysis of camera properties in Part II, Chapter III.

THE ACTUAL

A photograph of a person is a very poor substitute for the actual being. It lies in the hands of the creator to utilise his imaginative powers in the creation of the replica, which is his impression, expression, or mental rendering of the subject. Because a picture is 'lifelike,' it is not necessarily an exact rendering of the original. It is rather the artist's interpretation of the original, in which he has emphasised the salient characteristics. The spectator at once seizes upon the latter and recognises them as being akin to his own thoughts about the subject, which perhaps have been subconscious in his mind until the picture has brought them into sudden understanding. Further, the artist's conception may suggest thoughts about the original of which the spectator had no previous knowledge. This is particularly applicable to the film in its power of emphasis by the close up. The very presence of commonplace objects takes on a fresh meaning when shown enlarged on the screen, when emphasised as playing a part in the whole pattern of life. And, above all, it is essential to remember that a picture can be a non-representative as well as a representative record of an object.

But it will be understood that actual progress of the film along its proper path has been slow, and is only defined in a minute percentage of the many hundreds of productions realised up till now. Mr. Charles Marriott has suggested that 'art is a matter of the medium in which it is executed and a just balance between using that material in the imitation of nature and of abstraction, the degree of naturalism and the degree of abstraction being limited by the material.' This matter of 'the medium in which it is executed' cannot be stressed too much with regard to the cinema, for only on rare occasions is the film used rightly as its nature demands. The pleasure of film appreciation lies in the recognition of small developments, which do not often comprise the whole. It is rare to find a film that is in itself a step forward. Indeed, sometimes it is a reward to find one single shot in a movie which suggests an advance in the film's capabilities. However discouraging the present position of the film may be, unconsciously the worst director may put forward a fresh idea of interest. Someone has got to go on making movies, even if they do not stop to ask themselves whether progress is being made.

With the production in 1903 of *The Great Train Robbery*, the story-film was launched on its long and prosperous career and the incident or action of the film became of first importance. An

excellent example, which shows clearly how mistaken were the ideas of the pioneer directors, was to be seen in the *Comédie Française* films of 1908. Members of this celebrated institution were persuaded to perform famous scenes from several of the French classic dramas, including episodes from *Tartuffe* and *Phédre*, and to act them as they would on the stage, exaggerating their gestures into the lens of the camera. It was calculated by the promoters of the scheme that the appeal of the well-known scenes coupled with the popularity of the celebrated actors and actresses would achieve a wide success. The fallacy of the idea is obvious, of course, and the result was quite ineffectual. But it suggested to Adolf Zukor the great possibilities of famous plays and famous players, which, as is now well-known, developed into Famous-Players and later into the Famous-Players-Lasky Film Corporation, one of the biggest producing concerns in the world. From the time of the *Comédie Française* effort onwards, it became a natural course of events to appropriate subjects and persons hallowed by public approval, with complete disregard of their suitability, and to adapt them to the screen. This process is as common, if not commoner, to-day as it ever was. Stage stars are filling the film studios because of the dialogue cinema; any best-seller novel is bought for the screen; any name that comes into the public eye is snapped up for the movies. What of Elinor Glyn, Aimée Macpherson, Philip Yale Drew, and in the past Jack Dempsey, Georges Carpentier, and Steve Donoghue?

Gradually the acted story became the *raison d'être* of the film. Stage technique was modified, the gesture still being used in relation to the spoken word, and 'acting' became one of the necessary talents of the movie star. Upon this type of stagey performance, good photographic looks and the power of suggesting sexual passion has the infamous star-system of America grown up, a system that has been slavishly copied in this country. Quite frankly, this sort of thing is not film at all but merely 'living photography.'

Despite all opposition, the natural tendencies of a medium inevitably assert themselves, and, in the case of the film, some of its simpler resources began to show at an early stage. This was not due, however, to any deep thinking on the part of the 'fur dealers and clothes-men,' but to a natural course of development. They were to be found principally in the slapstick comedy, the melodramatic

thriller, and the spectacle film. Of the three young tendencies, slapstick is the most interesting, for it utilised the fantastic capabilities of the cinema. It brought to the screen things that were unreal and impossible, but verified them by actual vision. All the devices of the camera, such as slow-motion, ultra-rapid motion, abrupt cessation of movement by camera stopping, and distortion have their direct use in slapstick for achieving comic effect. This has now been augmented by the introduction of sound, which is capable of adding largely to humorous effect. In particular, reference may be made to the *Mickey Mouse* cartoon films, perfect examples of the sound and visual cinema. In an exceptionally early fragment of film prior to 1900, which was included recently in a souvenir film, *Royal Remembrances*, a motor car ran over a policeman, who was smashed by the impact into small pieces which subsequently rejoined themselves. This may be taken as an early example of consciousness of the capabilities of the medium. Years later, the same trick of breaking an object into pieces and assembling the fragments into a whole again was used for dramatic purpose in Eisenstein's *October*, where the gigantic symbolic statue of the Czar fell and crumbled only to come together again with the assembly of the Kerenski Provisional Government. In devices of this kind, the mind of the audience is held between the fact that they know the incident which they are seeing is in reality impossible, and the veritable fact that there it is in actuality before their eyes. A wonderful state of mind to conjure with! The great asset of the melodramatic thriller was its movement, prevalent in the chase and escape element, which displaced literary story-interest. The emotions of the audience when witnessing these melodramas of speed were roused to excitement by the action and not by the meaning of the story. It was this call for movement that developed the faculties of the scenario-writer, who learnt to employ the film's capacities for parallel action and 'last-minute-rescues.' The value of the high-spot climax was appreciated and was led up to by the chase. It was from these melodramas and westerns, with their essential fast movement, that the Americans learnt their slick flashiness which is the hall-mark of their movies to-day. On the other hand, this feeling for movement has led to the false assumption that American films have tempo in comparison with the early German and Swedish productions. It must always be stressed that movement of actors and material is only one form of cinematic movement.

The function of editing is infinitely more important as the intrinsic essence of filmic creation.

Thus, in the middle of the striving for photographic realism, came the first real advance in the cinema. One year after the war, the first genuinely imaginative film made its appearance amongst the hundreds of formulated movies. This break in the monotony, this gleaming ray of light, deserves our closest attention.

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Like a drop of wine in an ocean of salt water, *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* appeared in the profusion of films during the year 1920. Almost immediately, it created a sensation by nature of its complete dissimilarity to any other film yet made. It was, once and for all, the first attempt at the expression of a creative mind in the new medium of cinematography. Griffith may have his place as the first employer of the close up, the dissolve, and the fade, but Griffith's contribution to the advance of the film is negligible when compared with the possibilities laid bare by *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*. Griffith and his super-spectacles will disappear under the dust of time, if they have not already done so, but Wiene's picture will be revived again and again, until the existing copy wears out. In ten years this film has risen to the greatest heights, as fresh now as when first produced, a masterpiece of dramatic form and content. It is destined to go down to posterity as one of the two most momentous advances achieved by any one film in the history of the development of the cinema. *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* and *Battleship 'Potemkin'* are pre-eminent.

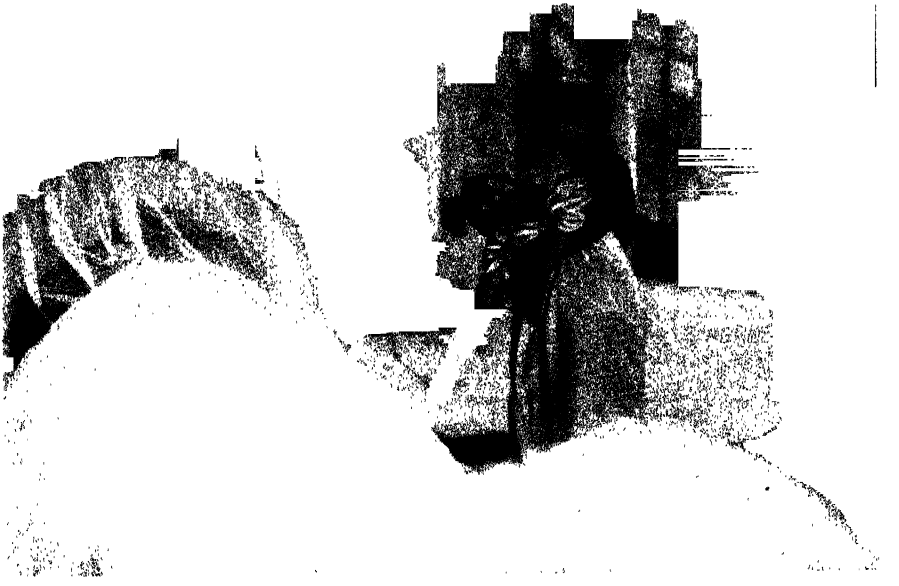
Made for the Decla producing firm by Dr. Robert Wiene, of the Stürm group in the Berlin theatre, during 1919 (a period, it will be remembered, when expressionism and cubism were the doctrines of the advanced schools of the drama, the novel, painting, and sculpture in Germany, France, and Russia) *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* was released in March of the following year. It was handled in this country at a later date by the Philips Film Company, now extinct. Wiene, himself an enthusiast for expressionistic theories, was almost an amateur in film production. The architects or designers, Walther Röhrig, Herman Warm, and Walther Reimann, were three artists absorbed with ideas of cubist and abstract art. It is only natural to assume that their intelligence saw in the making of a film an adventure in a new medium, a form of expression which they must have realised

was wider and more receptive than the static stage and canvas, but an expression which to them at that date bore a distinct relationship to the other arts.[1] It is not surprising, therefore, that *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* is in some places more theatre than film, and that there is a distinct tendency throughout to illustrate the titles with pictures. These faults, apparent now with a heightened knowledge of the film's capabilities, must be allowed for in the appreciation of the meaning of this remarkable picture. In technical accomplishment of camerawork the film made little real progress. The photography, by Willi Hameister, revealed no new suggestion of camera angle, all the scenes apparently being taken from a normal eye-level. Dramatic mood was achieved by contrasted lighting effects and by the nature of the settings. Long shots and medium shots predominated, masked close ups occasionally being used, and the old iris-in and iris-out method of beginning and ending a sequence was adopted throughout. The latter camera device was notably used for emphasising important matter, by opening or closing on to a face or a light, or (in the example cited on page 285), on to the revolving roundabouts. These openings were not always circular in shape, for the view of *Holstenwal* was discovered to the audience by a diamond-shaped iris, suitable to the twisted and angular houses of the distorted town.

The progress lay, rather, in the tremendous problem of how the camera was to be used, and the result of Wiene's thought was sufficient to stagger the film production of the two continents out of its comfortable peace and calm.

In 1919, *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* put forward to the world these dominating facts, which have lain at the back of every intelligent director's mind to this day: that, for the first time in the history of the cinema, the director had worked through the camera and broken

[1] The following information, if reliable, is of considerable interest: 'When the scenario for *Caligari* was first handed to Wiene the manuscript specified none of the style that appeared in the production. In form, the original scenario was conventional. But Wiene saw an opportunity of getting away from the customary by giving the scenes in *Caligari* settings and forms which intensified the thought and emotions of the characters and established a very positive relation between them and mimetic action. The authors did not want expressionistic acting and decorations. To this day they do not understand why the picture had success. Mayer, one of its authors (who later wrote the scenario for *The Last Laugh*), has come round to Wiene's attitude; the other (Hans Janowitz) still insists that Wiene should never have handled the production of *Caligari* in the abstract style he gave it. (Excerpts from several articles by Barnet Braverman in *The Billboard*, in November, reprinted in *The Film Year Book*, 1926, New York).



german decla

THE CABINET OF DR CALIGARI

by Robert Wiene Conrad Veidt, as Cesare steals the body of Jane, Lil Dagover . note contrast of black and white 1919

german decla

THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI

with realism on the screen; that a film, instead of being realistic, might be a possible reality, both imaginative and creative; that a film could be effective dramatically when not photographic; and finally, of the greatest possible importance, that the mind of the audience was brought into play psychologically.

As a film, *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* asked everything of its audience. They were to take part and believe in the wild imaginings of a madman. They were to share his distorted idea of the professor of the lunatic asylum in which he (the lunatic) and they (the audience) were confined. The theme and the conception were absolutely remarkable.

The scenario was written by Karl Mayer and Hans Janowitz, and even now contains brilliant and absorbing story-interest. The continuity, although a little difficult to follow, was well constructed and flowed with adequate smoothness. It is curious to note that after witnessing *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, it is the story, and its remarkable unfolding, which principally holds the imagination.

The settings, which were almost entirely composed of flat canvas and hanging draperies, furnished with such simple objects as ladder-back chairs and stuffed horse-hair sofas, were painted with two intentions in mind: primarily to emphasise the distortion of the madman's mind through whose eyes they were seen, and secondly to provide interesting decorative values of tone, varying from rich velvety blacks to the purest whites. Wherever possible, the design and layout of the set enhanced the dramatic content or meaning of the scene. In the linear design of the painted floors, for example, the prominent, usually straight lines of pattern led the eyes of the spectator direct to the figures or objects of significance. The walls of the prison cell were arranged and painted in tall perpendicular planes, emphasising dejection. The prisoner, seated crossed-legged on the floor, was the point to which all lines of the painted floor-pattern converged. Again, the warped and angular branches of the trees in the landscape strengthened the dramatic escape of *Cesare* bearing away the body of the unconscious *Jane*. The stool upon which the official-bound *Town Clerk* was seated was at least six feet high, symbolising both bureaucracy and the difficulty that *Caligari* had in obtaining attention. These are but a few examples of the emphasis of dramatic content by means of pictorial composition and settings.

The lighting, also, was arranged from this point of view, in complete co-operation with the architects. When the murder of the *Town Clerk* was discovered, a magnificent scene was shown of a darkened room, its walls sombre and angular, with the single source of light directed on to the beautifully grouped draperies of the white bed linen. No corpse was visible, only the motionless figures of the policemen in the half-light, but there was no shadow of doubt as to the content of the scene. Although the *décor* was largely angular, at times contorted and twisted arabesques, Matisse-like, aggravated the scene, as when *Cesare* made his nocturnal entry in *Jane's* bedroom.

Of the acting there is not a great deal to be written, for the parts did not call for any great emotional skill beyond melodrama. This type of acting, together with heavy make-up, was characteristic of the atmosphere of the film. The titles, in accordance with the feeling of the whole, were irregularly lettered and strangely set out.

It may, perhaps, be asserted that this film has dated. Technically, as regards camerawork, stock, lighting, this is correct and naturally inevitable. But in meaning, content, suggestion, treatment, and above all entertainment, *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* is as convincing to-day as when seen years ago. It is true, also, that surrealism and neo-realism have superseded expressionism in the minds of the *avant-garde*, but this does not alter the fact that expressionism plays a large part in the film, and we are not concerned here with the whims of the intelligentsia. Nevertheless, it is curious to remark that although *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* was a revolution in cinematic tendency, it has never been directly imitated or copied. *Raskolnikov*, directed by Wiene in 1923, and based on Dostoievski's novel 'Crime and Punishment,' was assisted in dramatic emotion by Andrei Andreiev's cubist architecture, but could hardly be called an imitation. Rather was it an essay by the same director in a similar vein to an earlier success.

Comparison has also been falsely drawn between *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* and *Aëlita*, a film made in Soviet Russia about the same time by Protasanov. This is a delusion, for the sets and costumes of *Aëlita*, on which it is assumed the comparison is founded, were designed fantastically in order to express an imaginary idea of the planet Mars, and *not*, as in *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, to emphasise the thoughts of a distorted mind. The cubist setting for

Wiene's film was used purely because the audience were asked to imagine themselves thinking a madman's thoughts.

As a document of cinematic progress, the value of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* increases year by year. Since its first showing, over ten years ago, it has been mentioned and referred to, criticised and revived, times without number. It has become celebrated. Practically all those who were connected with its production have become famous. There is no need to trace their course and recent successes, for they are too well-known. Only one word need be added, Robert Wiene has never repeated his achievement. It is his sole work of genuine merit.

*

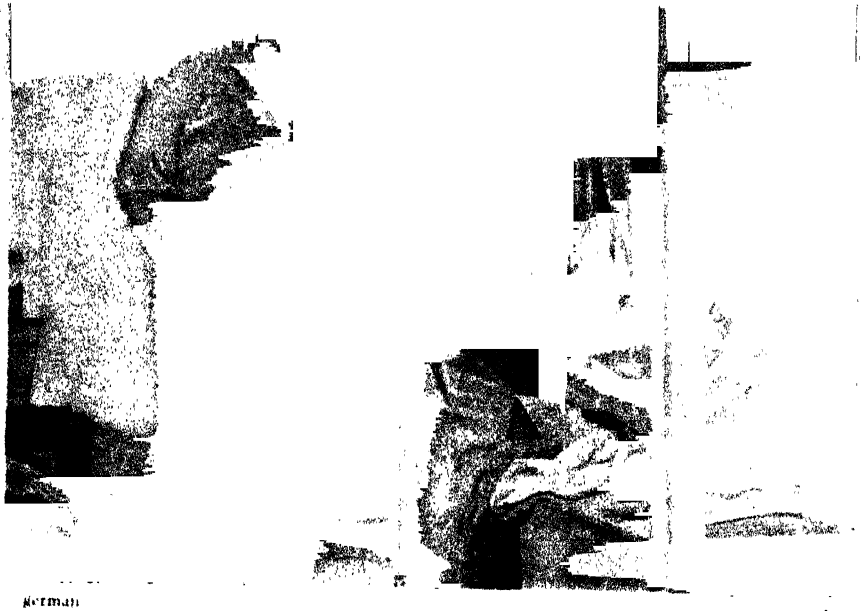
Although the appearance of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* set working the brains of people both in and out of the film industry, and although it was a clear finger pointing the path for the cinema, one film, however great, cannot change the output of vast producing concerns. With its new ideas on the use of the camera as an instrument of expression, Wiene's film certainly influenced some of the more advanced American directors, but taken as a whole the productions of Hollywood remained on their former level. What *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* did, however, was to attract to the cinema many people who had hitherto regarded a film as the low watermark of intelligence.

Not until 1925 did a film appear which wholly justified the position of the cinema. During the intervening period many remarkable films were realised, chiefly in Germany and in Sweden, which evidenced that brains were at work in Europe, but these were of less significance than would first appear. They naturally have their place in the gradual development and will be found dealt with more fully at a later stage. In 1925 *The Last Laugh*, the joint product of Murnau, Mayer, Freund, and Jannings, definitely established the film as an independent medium of expression. Unlike *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, it had nothing in common with the theatre, but made full use of the resources of the cinema as known at that date. It was a remarkable example of filmic unity, of centralisation of purpose and of perfect continuity. It was made without titles, with the single exception of a director's note, which changed the natural sad ending into a happy one, a superbly handled concession to the public. Everything that had to be said in this thematic narrative of

an old hall-porter was said entirely through the camera. Not a written or spoken word was necessary to the correct unfolding of the theme. By psychological understanding every action suggested a thought to the audience, every angle a mood that was unmistakable in meaning. *The Last Laugh* was cine-fiction in its purest form; exemplary of the rhythmic composition proper to the film. It is reported that it was hissed off the screen in a certain north country town, which goes to suggest that the great general public is at fault after all.

After this date, the German cinema, to which intelligent people were looking for further progress, began to decline, largely on account of the general exodus of Teutonic talent to Hollywood. The art film (decorative in treatment and enveloped in an architectural environment of studio structures) for which Germany had built herself a reputation was a commercial failure. The superb efforts of German creative directors drained the coffers of the industry, an unfortunate but indisputable fact. An argument for the failure of these films is the knowledge that the cinema is essentially modern, and modernism is above all things anti-romantic and experimental, reflecting as it does the spirit of the age. The German decorative films were for the most part romantic and spectacular, with a natural tendency towards the German love of the theatrical and the splendour of pageantry. Their tone was on a grand scale, at once serious minded and splendid, far from the superficiality of the movie to which the masses were accustomed.

About this time, between the appearance of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* and *The Last Laugh*, the wide-felt influence of psycho-analysis, which had swept over the post-war school of painting and literature, was making its mark on filmic treatment. Many films, both from France and Germany, bore traces of psycho-analytical research, particularly those by directors who were striving after naturalistic methods, such as Lupu Pick, Karl Grune, and G. W. Pabst. There will be seen in the later section dealing with film psychology the important part played by the 'ineptitudes' of life in the revealing of inward phenomena. An early example of this groping idea was found ludicrously in *Doctor Mabuse*, but unfortunate as parts of this melodrama were, there is no doubt that Fritz Lang was feeling along the right lines. During this stage also, the machinery complex which had occupied the Vorticists before the war re-arose in a glut of



german uta

VAUDEVILLE

by E. A. Dupont, with the supervision of Erich Pommer. Lead: Jannings and Lya de Putti in the carnivan sequence 1926

german uta

composite shots of trains, trams, factories, and all types of machinery. At one time it was almost impossible to see a film without a double, triple, or quadruple exposure shot of wheels. For some years, expressionism also had its sway with the German film, despite an occasional breakaway into isolated individualism. The expressionists were interested in man in general and not in the individual. Although they made use of the representation of characters, the result was not regarded as personal experiences but as the essential experiences of humanity. Thus, it was usual to find themes woven around the Man and the Girl, as in Grune's *The Street*, Pick's *New Year's Eve*, Czinner's *Nju*, Lang's *Destiny*, with additions in the form of Death the Stranger, and The Prostitute. It is of importance to note that nearly all these films were entirely studio-made; whole palaces and streets being built; providing a feeling different to the open-air films taken on the exact location.

Some time later, the theme interest seemed to have been focussed on individuals again and their peculiar characteristics, as with Pommer's jewel thief and policeman in *Asphalt*, and the two men and the wife in *Homecoming*. This was a swing round to the partial admission of the star-system, a feature of the Americanisation of the German studios. Very different in texture, for example, was *The Hungarian Rhapsody* in comparison with the moral seriousness of *The Wild Duck*. There was a tendency towards individualism in the new German film and a feeling for a more mechanical spirit, which was progressive. The first may be said to have been due to America; the second to the influence exerted by the Soviet films in Germany.

In contrast with the heavy morbidness and slow methods of the Swedes and Germans, the French school was marked chiefly by its directors' nineteenth-century delight in classical compositions and its continuous leaning towards spectacle. French films were roughly divided into two classes: the *avant-garde* of the *jeune cinéastes* and the commercial film on the lines of *L'Atlantide*, *Michael Strogoff* and *Casanova*. Whereas the Germans had sought to gain their effects by a theatrical, traditional form of acting in conjunction with an environment of studio structures, the French experimentalists attempted the creation of atmosphere by a series of succeeding exterior compositions, usually of great pictorial beauty but non-dynamic. Nevertheless, although many of the *jeune cinéastes* toyed

with the cinema as their fathers had dabbled in their *ateliers*, several developed into directors of remarkable talent, as for example René Clair, Jean Epstein, and Jacques Feyder, whose work must be considered apart from the usual *avant-garde* kindergarten product.

Meanwhile, it must not be forgotten that America was producing films in vast quantities during the years that the cinema was discovering its æsthetic qualities in Europe. The American cinema as a whole naturally demands wide investigation, which will follow at a later stage, but at the moment it is important to mention two outstanding tendencies that had grown up in Hollywood. A school of light, domestic, drawing-room comedy, displaying a nicety of wit and intelligence, had developed, to be carried eventually to as high a degree of perfection as this lighter side of film allowed.[1] It had its origin in Chaplin's memorable satire *A Woman of Paris* (1923), as well as in Ernst Lubitsch's brilliantly handled *The Marriage Circle*, made in the following year. It was probably the result of a fusion between the existing school of Hollywood bedroom farce and the imported Teutonic talent, the latter being exemplified primarily by Lubitsch. Along these lines the majority of America's clever young men worked with a superficial skill, to produce many effervescent comedies and farces, sparkling and metallic, which provided light entertainment for the audiences of all nations.

In contrast with this movement in the studios, there had appeared a small group of directors who showed a preference for constructing their films around natural incidents and with real material; a tendency that had possibly grown out of the early western picture. Robert Flaherty, Ernest Schoedsack, Meriam Cooper, Karl Brown, William Howard, and W. S. Van Dyck formed the nucleus of this group, to whom there should be added James Cruze, John Ford, and Victor Fleming, by reason of their isolated pictures which fall into this category. To Flaherty, however, must be given the full credit for the first film using natural resources, the inspiring *Nanook of the North*, in 1922, followed later by the beautiful *Moana*, in 1926. Other remarkable pictures characteristic of the naturalistic movement to be noted were *Grass*, *Chang*, *Stark Love*, *White Gold*, and *Aloysius Horn*, all films that stood out sharply from the common run of American movies.

[1] The supreme example to date is Ernst Lubitsch's *The Love Parade*, a brilliant combination of sophisticated, witty direction and perfected technical accomplishment.

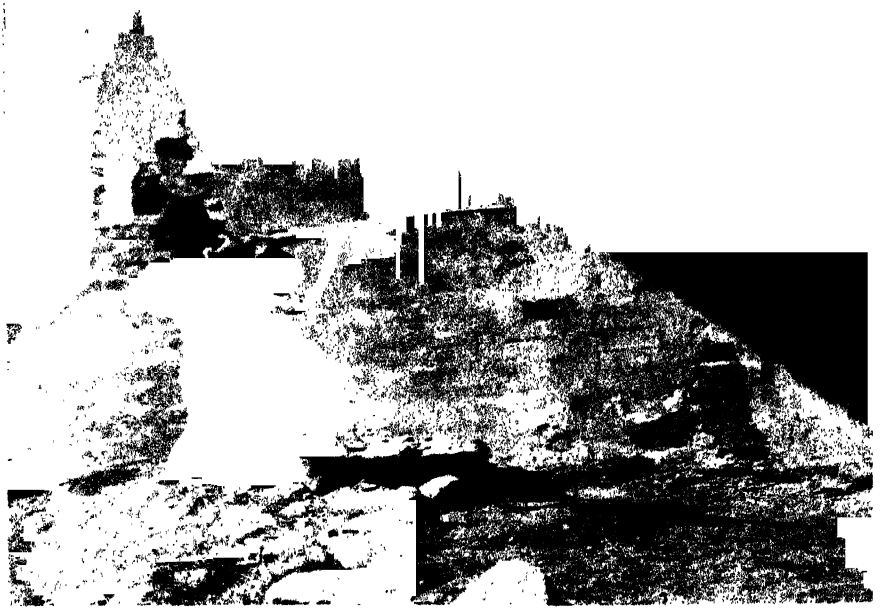
Apart from these two tendencies, only the work of Erich von Stroheim, King Vidor and Henry King, and the individualistic films of Chaplin and Fairbanks, projected with real seriousness from the mass of machine-made movies up till the time of the dialogue film. Investigation of these, together with less interesting work, will follow.

Acknowledging the theoretical excellence of Pabst, the importance of Karl Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, Clair's delightful comedies, Feyder's impressive *Thérèse Raquin*, and the domestic comedies of the American school, the most momentous advances of the cinema during recent years have manifested themselves in Soviet Russia. Although the value which the Soviets attached to the resources of the film and which they have developed with such skill is constantly stressed in these pages, it must not be forgotten that the intensity of purpose so predominant in the Soviet film has been brought about by changed social conditions and historical events since the revolution in 1917. Early Soviet pictures, such as *The Postmaster* and *The Marriage of the Bear*, contained little of the filmic compilation of the present productions. When analysing the contemporary Soviet film, it has firstly to be understood that a production is seldom launched unless the theme contains some definite sociological or political meaning; for the Soviets have realised more than any other country how powerful an instrument of propaganda is the cinema. It is partly out of the desire to express these contained ideas with the utmost possible conviction, and partly out of the exceptionally brilliant intelligences of the foremost Soviet directors, that the modern state of technical perfection in the science of the film has been reached. There has been a tendency in England and elsewhere, however, due to the always hasty enthusiasm of the intelligentsia, to call any film coming from the U.S.S.R. a masterpiece. This is very far from being the case, for actually there are not more than about half-a-dozen really capable film directors in Soviet Russia. There are, of course, many second and third-rate directors as there are in Germany or America, but it has become customary to raise their work to unusually high standards in London. The whole situation is rather reminiscent of that when the intelligentsia 'discovered' Russia in the first decade of this century; when it became the fashion to read Tchekov, Dostoievski, Gogol, Gorki, and Turgenev without discrimination as to their merits; when no studio was complete

without its samovar and ikons were all the rage for interior decoration.

Every Soviet film is, to put it crudely, a picture with a purpose, and it is the duty of the Soviet director to express that purpose as clearly, powerfully, and vividly as possible. Added to which, it must be remembered that the cinema in Soviet Russia has been fortunate in having the whole-hearted support of the Government, whose leaders have at all times fully recognised the value of the film for spreading their principles. Lenin regarded the theatre as a potential microcosm of the whole theories of Bolshevism and determined to build a new theatre in Russia which would serve as a practical model for the people to learn from and to copy. The cinema, by reason of its limitless range and commercial superiority over the theatre, lent itself to the same idea. It will be recalled for example, that the Government commissioned several films to be made in order to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Soviet *régime*. *The Ten Days That Shook the World* (renamed later, *October*) and *The End of St. Petersburg* were two of the results. Out of their efforts to meet this demand, Eisenstein and Pudovkin built up a form of film technique that is now unequalled for dramatic intensity. The same applies to more recent directors, to Ermler, Raismann, and Turin.

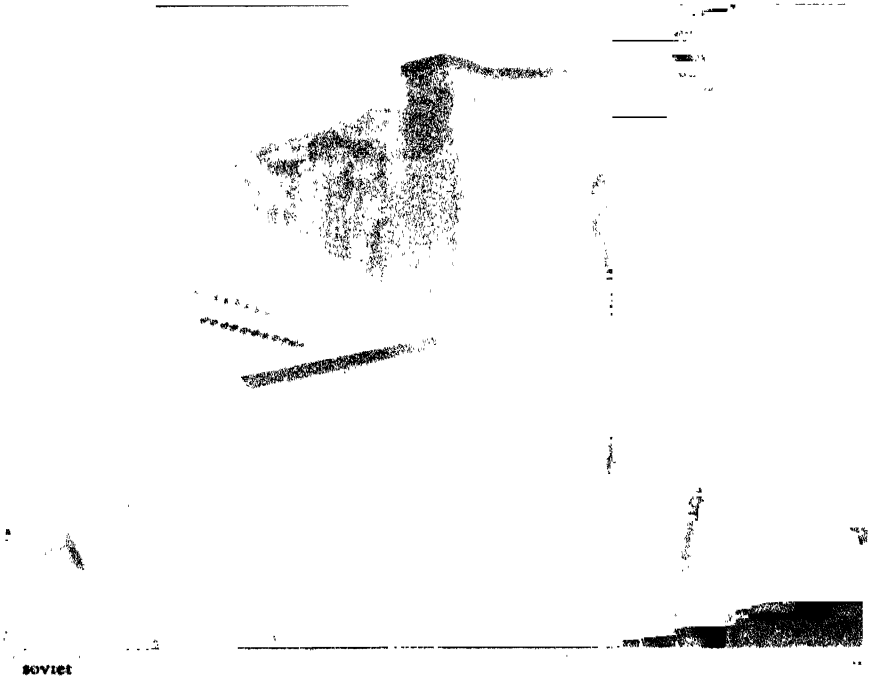
It is certain that the first experiments in film construction, employing strips of celluloid as the basic material, which is the foundation of almost all Soviet film technique, were due to Lev Kuleshov, an instructor and film director in Moscow. From his original theories regarding the relation and inter-relation of pieces of film, which we may place about 1922, there have developed the principles of constructive editing. Pudovkin, having studied for a while with Kuleshov, carried the idea further by devoting himself to using raw material as the foundation for his filmic working; whilst Eisenstein, having made his first mass film, *The Strike*, in 1924, proceeded to enlarge on his ideas of intellectual cinematography. To these directors must be given the credit for the most advanced forms of contemporary cinema and their theories are to be seen reflected in the work of almost all the lesser-known Soviet directors. From 1924 onward, therefore, the most interesting developments in the cinema have taken place in the U.S.S.R. and it is to this newly-constructed country that we must turn for modern tendencies towards progress.



soviet mejrabpom-rus

MOTHER

by V. I. Pudovkin, note naturally contrasted lighting. 1926



soviet

Of the film to-day, I find it hard to write, let alone to tell, for the unbalanced state of the whole industry, together with the sweeping tide of the noisy dialogue film, are movements which strangle at the outset any attempt at progress in the cinema. To find the proper film it is necessary first to brush aside the sweepings from America and England, dissect the films from France and Germany with an open eye for second-hand virtuosity, and regard the new Soviet pictures with reservation in case they may be resting on their past successes. Of the wedded synchronised sound and silent film, co-ordinated into a filmic whole, there is as yet no concrete example, though one waits in anticipation for Pudovkin's *Life Is Beautiful*. It is possible only to watch the dialogue film and utilise one's imaginative power. Of the true silent film but few examples come laggardly to England, often enough to be hidden away unseen. Occasionally a few of these may find their lonely way to the Film Society or the affectionate screen of what is at the moment of writing London's only loyalist, the Avenue Pavilion.

Of the feeling prevalent on the continent it is difficult to say, for news is rare of the silent film, and words and static photographs are inadequate to realise the intensity of film technique. The dynamic theme, the relation and inter-relation of thought expressed in moving images, is too elusive to be captured in print. It is, perhaps, only possible to sum up by disconnected statements of ideas, reactions, and observations.

The predominant characteristic of the proper film to-day is the growing tendency to find filmic expression by means of climatic effect. This process of image construction is the basis of Soviet continuity, and has spread with rapidity into the minds of the more advanced German and French directors. There seems, moreover, to be a distinct striving after some form of arithmetic or geometric progression in the arrangement of visual images during mounting, in the relation and inter-relation of film strips. There is also a tendency to shorten the approach to a scene by the elimination of the long shot and the increased use of the close up. The psychological effects made possible by the introduction of varied cutting by the Soviets is in the process of being carried to an advanced stage. Cross-cutting and inter-cutting are being utilised more as a method of insistence on the main object than as the old-fashioned even distribution of dramatic suspense of the 'last-minute-rescue'

variety. Symbolic inter-cutting is being employed as an aid to the emphasis of the central theme, as with the statue of Peter the Great in *The End of St. Petersburg*. It is a dual theme of symbol and individual, connected mentally by association of ideas and visually by similarity of the shooting angle. It is being found that emotional effect is to be more easily reached by an intercut comparison to a like emotional effect.

There seems prevalent in the film of to-day a more sensitive feeling for the association of ideas, which is finding filmic expression in terms of contrast and comparison, mental and visual. There are directors, who, in their work seek to establish by suggestion, contrast, and comparison, what may perhaps be called a continuity of human thought. One is emotionally conscious that the content of a theme is constantly ranging over more than one idea at the same time, a double purpose of meaning for the expression of which the natural resources of the film are admirably suitable. This affinity of ideas is marked by a connecting link, which may be said to be, in its terms of contrast and comparison, the essence of filmic treatment, both in the mental association of ideas by symbolism and by the actual visual likeness of one thing to another.

Contrasts appear to take on various aspects. The contrast of space, between the interior and the exterior; between the close confinement of walls and the spreading horizon of a landscape; between the occupied and the unoccupied; between the full and the empty. The contrast of size, between the thick and the thin, the long and the short. The contrast of shapes, between the square and the circle, between a top hat and a cloth cap. The contrast of likenesses, so well exemplified by Vertov's gas mask and skull. The contrast of extremes, between the worker underground and the top of the factory chimney. There is an association of ideas between the mouth of a bugle and the muzzle of a gun. There is a comparison of likeness between the poise of athlete and the balance of a horse. There is a similarity of motion between the stroking of one's hair and the stroking of a cat. There is the comparison of form, used so much for easy transference of thought in dissolves and mixes. All these factors make themselves apparent in the uses of cross-cutting for reference. They are filmic methods of strength, emphasis, enforcement of meaning by the association of ideas.

To be considered further but not necessarily to be accepted, there

are the new theories of montage construction that have been put forward by Eisenstein. These embrace an entirely fresh method for the determination of the relation that lies between the film strips in the assembling of a picture from its contributory lengths of frames. Eisenstein seems concerned with the disposal of the old, orthodox principles of editing (*i.e.*, according to the time lengths of shots, the relationship of shapes, the association of ideas, etc., all of which produce sensations in the minds of the audience, ranging from sudden shock to smooth transfusion according to the will of the director) by the adoption of a new method which will be governed by the physiological sensations produced by over-tones of the visual and sound images. He is experimenting with the arrangement of shots, scenes, and sequences according to their degrees of emotional pathos by creative impulse, calculating to disturb the nervous reflexes of the spectator into responsiveness. He believes that instead of an audience seeing and hearing a film they should sense it; sense being the clue to the fourth dimension or over-tone, to be found in the beats of music and in the interval that exists between one visual image on the screen and another. On the assumption that both visual over-tones and sound over-tones are magnitudes of the same dimension (time) and that both are physiological sensations, he proceeds to new methods of filmic construction by a process of tonal and over-tonal montage. Naturally one awaits practical expression of his theories with interest before offering comment; other, that is, than those made manifest by certain portions of *The Old and the New* (*The General Line*), which were not concerned with sound reproduction.

In actual production there is a welcome tendency towards the use of real material in place of studios and professional players. The cinema shows distinct signs of becoming film instead of theatre. Outside the U.S.S.R., Jean Epstein, Walther Ruttmann, and Hans Richter are seeking subjects in the commonplace instead of the artificially constructed, and there are also the few natural resource films in America. But these examples of the real film are but drops in the ocean of the movies of the world, overshadowed and dwarfed by the menace of the dialogue cinema.

*

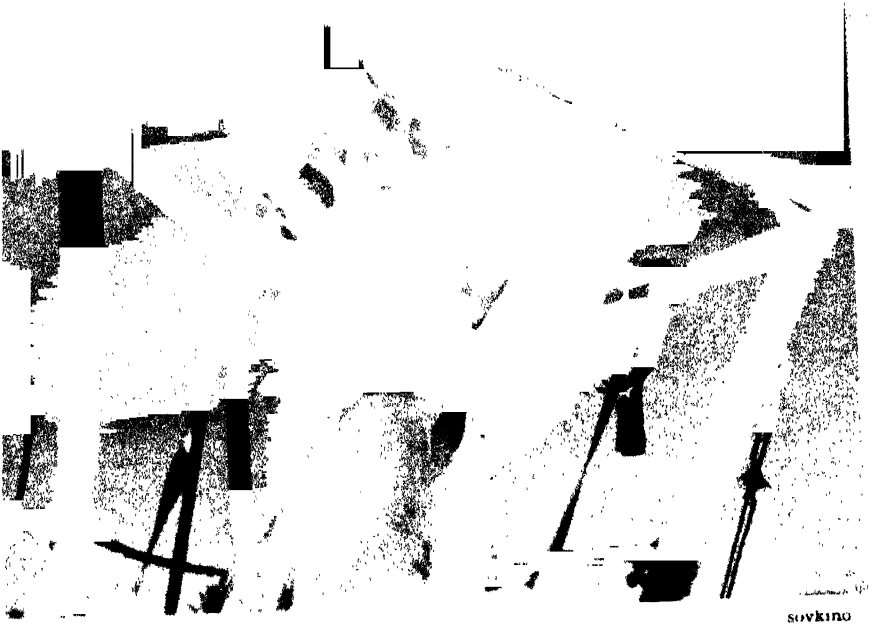
Ridiculous as it may seem in the short span of life during which the film has existed, the process of misuse of the medium is repeating

itself. General tendencies at the present moment show the misconception of the film to be greater and more difficult to unlearn than ever before. Directors as a whole are still only beginning to understand the potentialities of the film as a medium in itself. Its limits and delimits still present a broad field for investigation. It is just being realised that mime and gesture and the consciousness of the inanimate transmit an international idea; and that the pictorial meaning of the film is understandable to all according to their powers of sensitivity. But the main object to-day appears to be the synchronisation of the sound of the human voice with the photograph of the moving lips and to reproduce the sound of visual objects in order to make them seem more real. That this is the desire of the American producers and directors is apparent from their advertisements. In brief, the introduction of the human voice merely relieves the director of his most serious obligation, to convey meaning to the mind by means of the resources of the visual cinema. The act of recording dialogue is *not* a further resource, as some theorists like to imagine. The dialogue film at its best can only be a poor substitute for the stage. From an æsthetic point of view, sound can only be used to strengthen symbolism and emphasise dramatic action, and experiments on these lines will be successful and justified.

On the heels of the usurping dialogue film comes the introduction of the stereoscopic screen and the colour film. Both of these inventions, wonderful though they may be in themselves, seek to achieve the realism so antagonistic to an imaginative medium. The cinema, with the addition of these new inventions, will degenerate into theatrical presentation on a large and economic scale. The true resources of the film will be swept aside in the desire for a straighter and more direct method of story presentation. The duration of time that a visual image is held on the screen is already becoming longer. As Mr. Eric Elliott has so truly written: 'given a large stage scene with three dimensional effect, combined with colour and oral dialogue, it is tempting authors and producers to "put across" the sustained dramatic situation of the theatre proper.'[1]

Thus, there are few films which stand alone as achievements of real cinema, whilst there are many that miss greatness because of the negligence of the director or the obstinacy of the producer. Rare indeed is it to meet with an intelligent and sympathetic film producer;

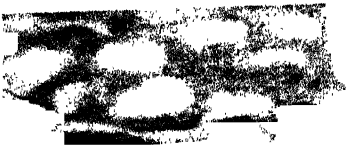
[1] *Vide, The Anatomy of Motion Picture Art*, by Eric Elliott (Pool, 1928).

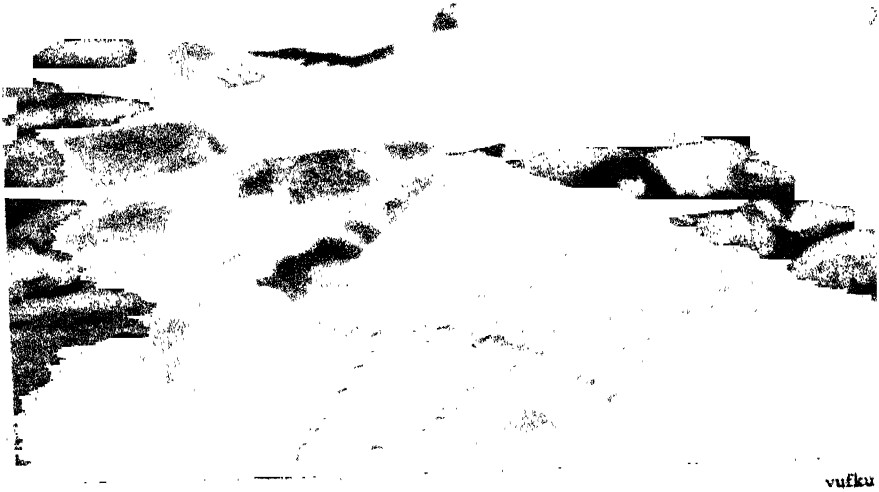


soviet

sovkino

THE OLD AND THE NEW
by S. M. Eisenstein and G. V. Alexandrov. Montage shot
of movement or material, from low level angle 1927





vufku

frequent indeed is it to meet upstart producers who make illegitimate claim to a knowledge of the film, riding roughshod over the conceptions of the director. If a film is to be a unity, clear cut and single-minded, the director alone must preconceive it and communicate its content to the audience through groups of interpreters of his vision, under his supreme command. The construction of a film from the first conception to the final product must be under the absolute control of the director. This is unhappily far from being the case.

But great films have been produced and great films will be produced in the future, although the opportunities to-day are more remote. Was it not René Clair who said that the zenith of the film was passed a few years ago? And yet, in Bryher's *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (Pool, 1929), Pabst is said to have observed that 'Russia has taken one road and America has taken the opposite, but in a hundred years both will meet. England has taken neither, but will work out her own salvation independently, and in the end she will arrive at the same result.' This may be so, but I find it hard to agree when considering the present circumstances. Again, Mr. Chaplin has written that '. . . it has been from the film itself, a device offering constant provocation to the imagination and senses of rhythm and colour that the sheer strength and crude grandeur of the motion picture industry have come. A giant of limitless powers has been reared, so huge that no one quite knows what to do with it. I, for one, am hopeful that Mr. Wells shall settle the question for us in his next novel.'[1]

Mr. Wells has written that novel, but the question is no nearer being answered. 'The King Who Was a King' was full of a thousand ideas, gleaned from a scrutiny of the output of Germany and America, but there was precious little in the book that had direct bearing on the position of the film itself. I believe that Mr. Wells saw and realised the greatness of the film, but did not know quite what to do about it. And in any case his outlook was literary and not filmic.

For the most part the cinema still lies in the hands of those who desire to make it the means of the greatest possible financial return in the shortest space of time. One looks, therefore, to those in whose

[1] In the foreword to *Films: Facts, and Forecasts*, L'Estrange Fawcett (Bles, 1927).

power it is to keep steady the direction of the advance of the film. To Chaplin, Fairbanks, and Flaherty in America; to Soviet Russia; to Pabst, Richter, and Pommer in Germany; to the young men of France; for with their whole-hearted and enthusiastic support the film can be diverted from the abyss towards which it is heading.

II

THE VARIOUS FORMS OF CINEMA

BEFORE proceeding to a detailed investigation of the product and personalities of separate film-producing countries, it is essential to define the several forms of cinema. In this way it will be found that such tendencies as choice of theme and employment of real or artificial material for the camera, existing in individual countries, can be more easily classed or contrasted with tendencies in other producing centres. For this reason, therefore, the various known forms of cinema may be grouped briefly as follows :—

(*a*) *The Abstract or Absolute Film*

The abstract film, like Ruttmann's *Operas*, Richter's *Rhythmus*, and the late Viking Eggeling's *Symphonie Diagonale*, is as far removed from the commercial fiction film as is surrealism from the Royal Academy. The abstract film is a primary example of unity of filmic purpose. Briefly, it seeks to produce simple psychological reactions in the mind through the eye by the variation in rapidity of groups of abstract forms in movement, and by the relations of geometric figures changing their proportions, dissolving and displacing each other, thereby making visual abstract patterns. The result on the mind produced by the abstract film may be compared with that produced by the word patterns of the post-war school of poets, to certain forms of literature such as the work of James Joyce, and to music without melodic interest. For example, a series of disconnected words may suggest an incident and by the welding of these disconnected sentences a complete whole can be built up having a psychological value.

The film with its cinematic properties of rapid movement, contrast, comparison, rhythm, expansion and contraction of form is admirably suited to present a series of abstract visual images to the eye, capable of causing strong emotional reactions. A sequence of

swift impressions, of little interest singly, but arranged in relation one to another, has powerful psychological meaning.

A more recent form of the abstract film is the pattern film, which often uses machinery in motion or at rest, or architectural motives, as its material basis. Most successful in this manner have been Eugène Deslav's *La Marche des Machines*, Richter's *Vormitaggspuk*, and Joris Ivens and Francen's *Pluie* and *Le Pont d'Acier*.

The late Viking Eggeling was one of the pioneers of the absolute film and an excellent description of his method is given by Mr. Ivor Montagu in *Close Up* (vol. i, no. 6). 'The basis of his work is line, and his patterns are mainly the varying positions on a two-dimensional plane, the screen, of his one dimensional figures, in contradistinction to the patterns of Richter and Ruttmann which are usually two-dimensional forms moving in three dimensions. The screen is a blackboard to Eggeling and a window to Richter and Ruttmann.' In contrast to this, Deslav's abstractions are patterns of photographic reality pieced together to make rhythmic unity.

The definite similarity existing between the absolute film and the early melodrama is significant, for the psychological appeal to mind and eye is identical. As Mr. Eric Elliott has pointed out, everything the cinema has so far actually demonstrated, and all its possibilities as they are seen now, should theoretically have been obvious the moment it became practicable to project a series of animated images in scenes on a screen. It is curious to note how far the directors in those primitive days realised the resources of the new medium (such as the rapidity of the chase) in order to fulfil their ideas and it is interesting to watch, for instance, Georges Méliès' *Trip to the Moon*, made in 1897, in which were used projected negative, double-exposure and 'magical' effects equal, if not superior, to those employed in Fairbanks' *The Thief of Bagdad* in 1923. Any form of art, however, that may have developed out of these crudities was extinguished when the centre of film production shifted from Europe to America at the outbreak of war in 1914.

It is impossible to give here an exhaustive list of abstract films, but amongst those of more than usual interest, apart from already mentioned examples, were *Filmstudie* and other works by Hans Richter; *A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles* (1924-25) by Henri Chomette; *Le Ballet Mécanique* (1925) by Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy; Eugène Deslav's *Montparnasse* and *Les Nuits Eléctriques*; Sandy's

Light and Shade; Francis Bruguière and Oswell Blakeston's *Light Rhythms*; and works by Marcel Duchamp and Maurice Sollen.

At the time of writing, no abstract film has been shown in England incorporating sound as well as visual images, but the possibilities of sound co-ordinated with visual patterns for abstract effect are limitless.

(*b*) *The Cine-poem or Ballad Film*

Of this type of cinema there is little to be written for experiments in this direction have been few. Occasionally a single sequence in a full-length film stands out alone as a cine-poem, as a pure creation of a simple mood or atmosphere, based possibly on literary inspiration, which can be lifted direct from its surrounding sequences and be shown complete in itself. Most notable is, of course, Walther Ruttmann's fascinating *Dream of the Hawks* in *Siegfried*, the first part of Fritz Lang's *Nibelungen Saga*. The sequence, which was extremely short, purported to show *Kriemhild's* dream in which she was forewarned of *Siegfried's* death and of her own fate. This was done by means of the silhouettes of two black hawks and a white dove circling in beautiful rhythmic actions against a grey background, the whole maintaining a moving decorative pattern. Man Ray's short film, *L'Étoile de Mer*, was a filmic expression of Robert Desnos' poem and was of merit by reason of its transient light forms and movement. Much of it was photographed through mica masks, producing a soft effect of mistiness. Of *Emak Bakia*, Man Ray's earlier picture, he says himself: '. . . a series of fragments, a cine-poem with a certain optical sequence, make up a whole that still remains a fragment. Just as one can much better appreciate the abstract beauty in a fragment of a classic work than in its entirety, so this film tries to indicate the essentials in contemporary cinematography.'

In this section must be included such short films as Alberto Cavalcanti's *La P'tite Lili*, a delightful burlesque of a traditional song of 'La Barrière,' in which an effect of a sampler was obtained by the use of coarse gauzes in front of the lens of the camera. Kirsanov's *Brumes d'Automne*, a simple representation of the mood of a girl after a tragic occurrence, was moving in a slow, sentimental way, much of the mental state being suggested by throwing the lens of the camera in and out of focus. Silka's fable film, *La Ballade du Canart*, although crude in technical execution, may be called a cine-poem in conception and deserved better treatment.

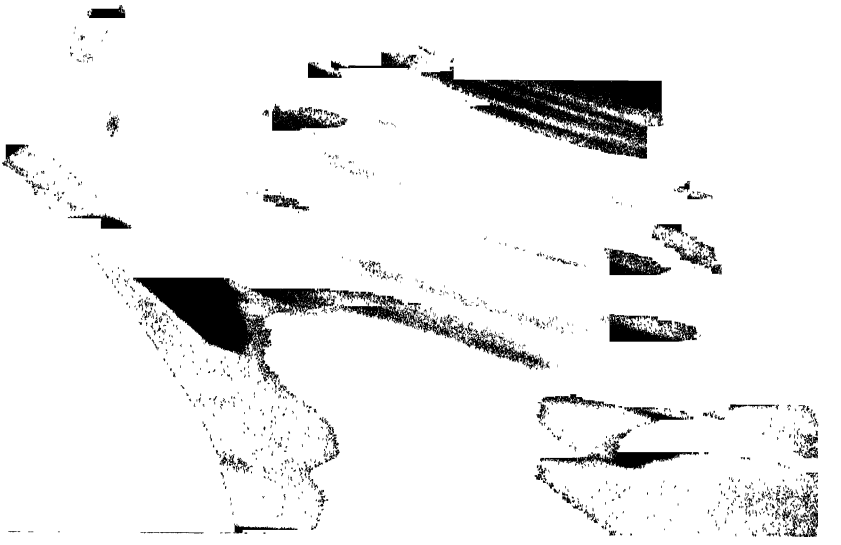
(*c*) *The Cine-surrealist Film*

This type of film is as yet represented by a few isolated examples only, though there are traces of surrealism in some Soviet films that have been seen, such as the opening sequences of Barnet's comedy *The House in Trubnaya Square* and portions of Dovjenko's *Zvenigora*. The appeal of the surrealist film is necessarily limited and production is due entirely to private resources. I believe, however, that there is something to be learnt from its manner of treatment, which can be applied on a wider scale in fiction films. Although the essential character of Louis Bunuel's *Le Chien Andalou* prevented it from being shown except to a restricted audience, there was much astonishing matter to be gleaned from it. Realising the primary aim of the surrealist movement to be the expression of dreams and thought tangents of an imaginative person provoked by material surroundings and placed on paper or canvas, it is natural that the film lends itself to an expression which demands 'imaginative velocity and moral nonchalance, unlimited risibility, and a sensitivity to the fantasy of the commonplace.' Bunuel's film, whilst containing some unpleasant material, was one of the most dynamic I have seen. It had an intensity of expression unknown in most examples of cinema, an intensity gained from the material and not from technical assembling. There was a fluid continuity that was amazing in its swift transference of thought, and mention should be made of the extraordinary gestures of Pierre Batcheff.

Germaine Dulac's brilliant *La Coquille et le Clergyman* was also surrealistic in tendency, being a series of expressions of states of mind strung together with a beautifully defined thread of continuity. At moments it rose to great heights of dramatic intensity, due to the cleverly chosen angles, whilst the photography throughout was of the best quality. It was to be taken as an extreme instance of the domination of ideas over the irrelevance of situations. Neither of these films has been generally shown in England; but that of Dulac was presented to the Film Society on 16th March 1930.

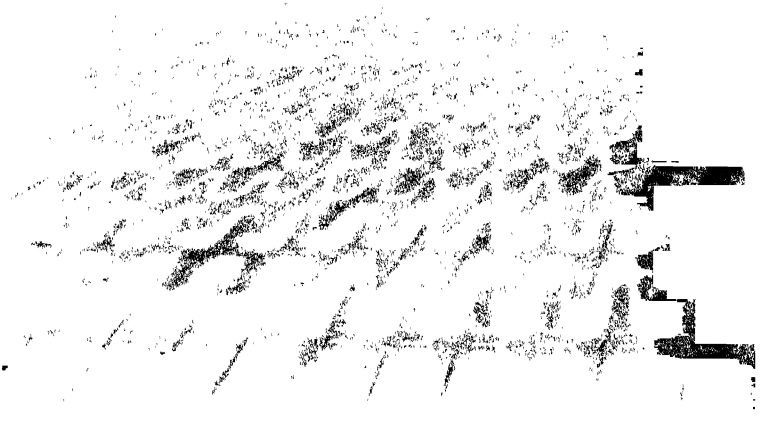
(*d*) *The Fantasy Film*

The possibilities of the film in the realm of fantasy are unlimited and are to be found hidden away in practically every side of general production. The especially fantastic nature of the cinema at once



ÜBERFALL

called in England 'Accident', by Erno Metzner. Mirror distortions used to depict the subconscious **1928-29**



suggests a hundred ideas which are impossible of being expounded in any other medium. Notable instances which immediately occur to the mind are the charming silhouette films by Lotte Reiniger, of which mention can be made of *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* and *Cinderella*. There have been several imitations of Lotte Reiniger's work, but they can be detected with ease by their inferior craftsmanship. Another fantastic type was to be seen in Stanislas Starevitch's model film *The Magic Clock*, in which good use was made of the 'magic' qualities of the camera. Whilst this type of fantasy cannot be called strictly cinematic there is nevertheless room for much development.

Coming to the full-length fantasy film one recalls, of course, Ludwig Berger's exquisite version of *Cinderella* in 1923, with its superb *Baroque* architecture by Rudolph Bamberger. I find this chiefly memorable for the marvellous battle of the witches, perhaps the best example of film magic ever made. Flashes of fantasy appeared in nearly all the films of the middle German period, notably in *Siegfried*, *Destiny*, *Faust*; in the early Russian *Morosko*; in Dovjenko's *Zvenigora*; in the spectacular Ufa production, *Secrets of the East*; in Fairbanks' *The Thief of Bagdad*; in Renoir's *La Petite Marchande d'Allumettes*; and in Clair's *Le Voyage Imaginaire*. There remains much to be accomplished, however, in this vein, particularly in the manner of Hans Andersen and the Brothers Grimm. The consummate ease with which magic can be achieved by double exposure and freak effects on the screen suggests the wide range of material waiting to be utilised.

(*e*) *The Cartoon Film*

The cartoon element goes back to an early stage in the development of the cinema, arising probably in the first place out of the humorous strip in the American newspapers. Although the laborious draughtsmanship, necessarily entailed in the production of the hundreds of small drawings needed as material for smooth movement, has naturally limited the output of these animated cartoons, nevertheless those artists who have specialised in this form of cinema have nearly always achieved success. In the past the appearance of *Felix the Cat*, *Mutt and Jeff*, and *Æsop's Fables* were always greeted with enthusiasm.

But it is not until the recent Walter Disney cartoons of *Mickey Mouse* that the full value of such work has been realised. In point

of fact, the Disney cartoons are not only funnier and better drawn than their predecessors, but they are far more filmically conceived and have the added advantage of mechanically recorded accompaniment. The possibilities afforded by the incorporation of sound with the drawn cartoon film are unlimited, and, without showing ingratitude to the creator of *Mickey Mouse*, one foresees a wealth of imaginative material lying at the hands of the creative draughtsman of the future, particularly with the employment of flat colour.

To many writers at the moment, the Disney cartoons are the most witty and satisfying productions of modern cinema. Their chief merit lies in their immediate appeal to any type of audience, simply because they are based on rhythm. They have been compared to the early one-reelers of Chaplin, and the way in which they appeared unheralded gradually to achieve an international acceptance is not unlike that of the great comedian's early work. The real importance of *Mickey Mouse*, however, lies not so much in the clever draughtsmanship and amusing wit of Walter Disney as in the full advantage that is taken of synchronised sound. Whilst film theorists in every country have been fruitlessly arguing over the merits and demerits of sound images and their employment in counterpoint, Disney has put into use all the properties to be gained from synchronisation. In the burlesque accompaniment of distorted sounds that is wedded to the ever-moving figures of *Mickey Mouse* and his associates there are to be discovered all the intrinsic qualities of sound in combination with visual images. The essential characteristics of the Disney cartoon films, where distorted linear images are matched with equally distorted sound images, are those of the visual-sound film of the future. In his earlier cartoons it was noticeable that Disney divided the appeal equally between the screen and the sound, both matching but neither governing the other. In his later pictures (*Springtime* and *Jungle Rhythm*) there is a tendency to fit the linear images to a definite melody, which is detrimental, for it impedes the free flow of the draughtsmanship. It has been suggested, also, that there is a feeling of vulgarity in the more recent examples, but that is a matter outside the range of this survey. As the best of Disney's work I would choose without hesitation *Mickey's Choo-Choo* and *The Jazz Fool*, both masterpieces of combined wit and humour expressed in terms of patterned draughtsmanship and sound, revealing a sense of cutting and of angle.

(*f*) *The Epic Film*

Like fantasy, the power of the epic film is still but partially exploited, and, again, where experiments have been made in this direction they have been remarkably successful. The film is capable of showing the movement of masses better than any other medium, but it is necessary to differentiate between the epic and the mere spectacle film. By the film's control of space and time, it is possible to portray by massed movement the feelings and psychological reactions of a race. The epic film conceives collective life as an end in itself or with, perhaps, an individual of more than ordinary significance emerging from the crowded background.

The greatest examples of the epic mass film were the world-famous *Battleship 'Potemkin'* and *October* by S. M. Eisenstein. It seems incredible that a person drawn from any class or any part of the civilised world could witness these films without obtaining a full realisation of the spirit of the Russian people. They were political in that portions of them dealt with political events; they were propaganda in the same way that the *The King of Kings* (that essence of hypocritical nonsense) was propaganda for the Christian religion. On the score of their epic quality as apart from their propagandist intention they deserve to be shown freely throughout the world.

Contrasted with these mass productions, Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg*, which dealt roughly with the same events as *October*, was an example of individuals moving against a crowded background, of an epic theme seen through individuals. By circumstance of the scenario narrative a peasant boy was made to project from the masses, but was suggestive only of their mental state.

It is necessary also to include such films as *Grass* in this category and to a very much lesser extent *Martin Luther*, which was, or should have been, epic in conception, as well as Abel Gance's vast picture *Napoléon*.

(*g*) *The Documentary or Interest Film, including the Scientific, Cultural and Sociological Film*

This type of cinema has been recently explored with great success on the Continent and especially in Soviet Russia, where the interest picture has been made in great numbers. Films on how this thing is made and how that functions are often to be found in the average

programme in England. Moreover, the treatment of these films is rapidly improving, as for example in Edmond Greville's fascinating picture of the making of watches at Tavannes in Switzerland, *The Birth of the Hours*. Instances of the various forms may be taken as: (*a*) Geographic: *Pamyr*, *With Cobham to the Cape*, *Turksib* and *Pori*; (*b*) Scientific: *The Mechanics of the Brain*, and many short films of surgical operations, etc.; (*c*) Sociological: *The Expiation*, and, of course, most of the ordinary Soviet films. In England, special mention should be made of numerous nature films produced by British Instructional Films, all admirably directed, as well as John Grierson's recent epic of the herring fleet, *Drifters*.

(*h*) *The Combined Documentaire and Story-Interest Film*

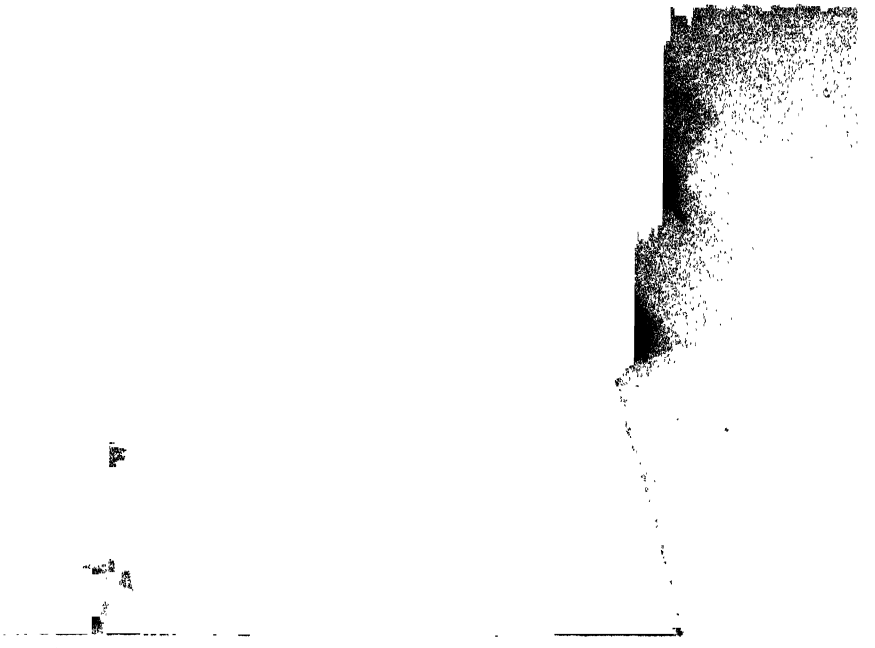
The growing desire to photograph reality rather than structural studio representations has rendered this form of cinema exceptionally popular of recent years and many outstanding pictures have been made on these lines. The aim of combining story-interest with real material is altogether good and opens up vast and hitherto untouched material as subject matter for scenarios. Prominent examples in this vein have been: *The Heir to Jenghiz Khan*, *White Shadows*, *Finis Terræ*, *Nanook of the North*, *Moana*, and *Chang*.

(*i*) *The Cine-Eye and Cine-Radio Film*

With the school of the cine-eye and the cine-radio one immediately couples the name of its founder, Dziga-Vertov, and of his brother and cameraman, Kauffmann. The group is a branch of the Vufku-kino organisation of the Soviet Ukraine and so far has worked alone in the development of its theories. The Vertov theory, in brief, assumes that the camera lens has the power of the moving human eye to penetrate every detail of contemporary life and its surroundings, to an accompaniment of sound. Particular use is made of the scientific resources of the cinema, and all such technical devices as slow and rapid motion, abrupt cessation of movement, double and triple exposure, together with all the orthodox principles of montage as understood by the Soviet cinema, are included in its work. It has been aptly termed *la cinématographie sans jeu*; its limitations are at once obvious.

(*j*) *The Cine-Record Film*

(*a*) The representation of modern fact, without the introduction of



DRIFTERS

John Grierson's epic of the herring-fleet a detail shot of the fishing vessel The one outstanding British film. 1929

story-interest, is to be found chiefly in topical news-reels, both sound and silent, as distinct from the Dziga-Vertov theories and Walther Ruttmann's *Berlin*. For this purpose, the advent of the sound film has increased the appeal beyond measure. British Movietone News, Paramount News, Fox Movietone News, etc., are all excellent uses of good camerawork and sound reproduction. To be mentioned also in this group are the numerous reconstruction films of war events, a feature of British production some years ago (*Zeebrugge*, *Mons*, *The Somme*, *The Battles of Falkland and Coronel Islands*, '*Q*' *Ships*, *etc.*).

(*b*) The representation of past fact, without the introduction of fictional story-interest, is an attempt to put on record the actual happenings of some past event. Karl Dreyer's film *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* can well be cited as an example of this extremely difficult accomplishment, as well as Czerepy's production of the life of Frederick the Great, *Federicus Rex*.

(*k*) *The Decorative Film and Art Film, as Distinct from the Cine-Fiction Film*

This form of cinema is now almost obsolete, for the cost of production is inevitably greater than the returns from such a picture, if it is to be well done. No firm which has to satisfy its shareholders can afford to produce an art film for the sheer prestige of having done so. Nevertheless, some notable and splendid examples of purely decorative films exist, most of them having been made during the early and middle periods of the German cinema. Perhaps the greatest picture of this kind is the first part of *The Nibelungen Saga*, *Siegfried*, made by Fritz Lang in 1923. No expense was spared on this magnificent film, which stands practically alone as an example of simplified decoration. On a smaller scale, Paul Leni's *Waxworks* deserves mention if only for the fine architecture, but it is to be understood that this type of cinema is more related to the theatre than to the film. A number of small, one and two reel art films have been made from time to time, but most of them, like Robert Florey's *Loves of Zero*, are insignificant. Fairbanks' *The Thief of Bagdad*, although negligible after the greatness of *Destiny*, may be ranked as a pseudo-art film.

(*l*) *The Cine-Fiction Film*

This form of cinema naturally constitutes the bulk of the world's film output and may be subdivided into three sections:

(*a*) Modern comedies, farces, satires, and dramas, etc.

Typical examples of these may be taken at random as: *A Woman of Paris*, *Thérèse Raquin*, *The Crowd*, *The Love of Jeanne Ney*, *Piccadilly*, *The Spy*, *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, *Vaudeville*, *Foolish Wives*, *The Virginian*, *The Kiss*, *etc.*

(*b*) Unrealistic costume and historical romances and dramas, etc., as *Tartuffe*, *The Patriot*, *Le Capitaine Fracasse*, *Forbidden Paradise*, *New Babylon*, *The Student of Prague*, *Scaramouche*, *Schinderhannes*, *Le Collier de la Reine*, *The Golem*, *Rosenkavalier*, *etc.*

(*c*) Spectacle films, without apparent decorative motive, instanced well by *Ben-Hur*, *The Viking*, *Noah's Ark*, *The Ten Commandments*, *La Marseillaise*, *General Crack*. These mammoth productions are usually of negligible æsthetic value, serving only as advertisements on a large scale for their producing firms, who scatter wholesale propaganda as to the number of persons taking part, how much timber was used, the average weight of the cast, etc. They generally originate from Hollywood, for no other producing centre has the immense amount of money needed nor the time to waste.

(*d*) Pure comedies, including slapstick, as distinct from the drawing-room comedies indicated above. All Chaplin films come into this group as well as those of Lloyd, Keaton, and the lesser comedians; and such films as *Moscow that Laughs and Weeps*, *Hurrah! I'm Alive*, *Rookery Nook*, *Les Deux Timides.*

(*m*) *Musical, Dancing, and Singing Films*

These, usually on a large scale, have only been made possible by the advent of sound and dialogue reproduction. Already there have been outstanding successes in *The Broadway Melody*, *Fox Movietone Follies*, *Rio Rita*, *Broadway*, *Sally*, *The Hollywood Revue of* 1929, etc. There is little doubt that this type of light entertainment will be produced widely in the future to meet the constant demand for musical comedy, and with it will come the all-colour film and wider screen.

III

THE AMERICAN FILM

By sheer ubiquity, American movies compel attention. Although they are, together with their British and German prototypes, the lowest form of public entertainment, their very number prevents their being ignored. In every country of the world where cinemas persuade both the hardworking and the rich to part with their money at the grille-hole of the box-office, there is to be found celluloid of Hollywood origin. Indeed, so far has the influence of the movie spread that its presence is noted not only in the cinema but in the wireless, the theatre, the Press, and in all matters of advertising. The star-system alone has penetrated to the inner regions of every servant-girl's heart, influencing her likes and her dislikes, her ideals and her dreams. Movies are a part of drawing-room gossip and dinner-table repartee. They have superseded the novel and the play as a topic of fashionable conversation. The first night of some movies may almost be as important a social occasion as the first night of an opera.

Nine out of ten newspapers notice movies in their columns and at least ninety per cent. of those mentioned are American. The cinematic terms of close up and star are incorporated in the vocabulary of the English-speaking peoples, as well as being used all over Europe. One in ten poster hoardings displays cinema programme bills. A vast majority of the titles displayed are American. Except for a handful of home-made movies (demanded by the quota regulations) and a sparse sprinkling of foreign films, the programmes of British cinemas are composed of Hollywood movies. Moreover, the film industry is said to be the fourth largest in the United States.

After some consideration, I have ultimately decided (with a few notable exceptions) to regard Hollywood much as I would a factory, managed and owned by a few capable business men, who seek only large financial returns from the goods that they manufacture. Among

the employees of these great firms are undoubtedly a number of artists, sincere in their aims, who sacrifice their intentions for the sake of a living, for which they are hardly to be belittled. It follows that the bigger the profits made by the owners for themselves and their shareholders, the vaster the business expands and the more pictures are manufactured. It has already been seen that American producing concerns, beginning in a small way by making one or two reel story-pictures, gradually developed the trade until, taking advantage of the situation offered by the war, they eventually assumed control of the world market.

Now the vagaries of public taste are well known, and it has been the constant occupation of the film producer to gauge that taste and to keep abreast with its fluctuation. But, not content with pandering to the public taste, the film producer has also set out to create public likes and dislikes by clever advertising and world-wide distribution of certain classes of films. In a business-like way, the film men of Hollywood have experimented with the appetite of the public, and they are not to be blamed from a commercial point of view for having turned out stereotyped productions when the masses have shown their acceptance of such forms. When any new type of film comes from Hollywood and is successful, there quickly follows a swarm of similar but inferior pictures, trading on the reputation of the first.

To the shrewd observer of the cinema, the difficulty lies in differentiation between films demanded by public taste and movies deliberately foisted upon the masses. The public does not by any means choose its own players. If a big American firm wish to put over Miss —— as a leading lady, they can and will do so, by systematically presenting movies at their own chain of cinemas with that particular young lady in them. In time, seduced by an exhaustive publicity campaign, by press photographs of the young lady in her pants and underclothes, and by repeated appearances of the new star, the public will sit back in its tip-up plush seat and believe that it has discovered a fresh favourite; whilst the producing firm will sigh with temporary relief and set about keeping the young lady where they have put her. The whole matter resolves itself into the problem of gently persuading the public that it likes a certain player in a certain type of picture, without the public becoming aware of the fact that it is being persuaded. There is, perhaps, a touch of Dziga-Vertov about it.

Actually, it is simply the basic principle of advertising. Several players could be named who are stars simply because they appear with monotonous regularity three times a year. Obviously, in order to retain the 'popularity' of their stars all over the world, no scruples have been spared by American producers in devising new methods for keeping their public and for the furtherance of constructing, packing, and selling their goods. There are practically no lengths to which a Hollywood firm will not go to sell a film.

At this point, it is of interest to sketch briefly the relationship of the public to the American cinema. From the early period of the first story-pictures until a year or two after the war, the American movie progressed in quality. It found constant support in the public primarily because of the novelty of the cinema itself. During the whole of this period, producers were assured of the loyalty of the masses, which was continually on the increase. To many people the film was still an innovation. They went to the cinema because it *was* the cinema, and not for any other reason. Nearly every big production converts more people to the ranks of the cinema-going public. *The Birth of a Nation*, *Intolerance*, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, *The Big Parade*, and *Ben-Hur* all created new film-goers. In the same way, one single showing of *Battleship 'Potemkin'* and *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* gains believers in the film proper. During this period, therefore, from about 1912 until about 1920, the very marvelling of the general public, watching every new film with mouths agape, was sufficient for the studios to become established on a practical basis, capable of mass production. To this golden era belongs the best work of Griffith, Thomas Ince, and Mack Sennett, together with the sincere efforts of William S. Hart and Douglas Fairbanks. These pictures had a roughness about them, an intensity of feeling and an air of honesty that have long since vanished in the up-to-date slickness of the Hollywood movie. It may, perhaps, be said that the first indications of the star-system were making themselves shown, but although individual personalities were gradually being connected with separate pictures, there was no wide exploitation of the fact. *He Comes Up Smiling* and *Reaching for the Moon* were seen because they were cinema. They were invigorating and they were stimulating. They had not yet begun to be Fairbanks.

But from this stage the American cinema began to succumb to the

personality process, resulting in the tyrannical reign of the star-system, the super-film, and the publicity bluffing campaigns, all of which were to develop to such an extent that they strangled themselves. The producing companies made their great mistake when they decided to cater for the taste of the music-hall patron. The enthusiasm of the real public had already fallen off when directors tended to repeat themselves. The standard of films had reached a rut; a groove out of which it had to be jolted if big business was to be continued. Some new weapon was needed to stir the public out of its apathy.

The Americans decided to recapture the attention of the masses by the wholesale exploitation of stars, a process, if such it may be called, which was in its embryo with the success of films in which Chaplin, Fairbanks, Pickford, Swanson, etc., played. The film business of Hollywood was to become one big game of bluff. Obviously, those who bluffed hardest (and no nation in the world is so accomplished in the art of bluffing as the American) made the most money. The film men began to work (and some of them realise it now) to the detriment of the prestige of the film. The cinema lost a public who loved it for itself and what it meant to them. They had no liking for vaudeville, for star turns on a big scale. In the place of the old film-goer there arose a new type of audience, a vacant-minded, empty-headed public, who flocked to sensations, who thrilled to sensual vulgarity, and who would go anywhere and pay anything to see indecent situations riskily handled on the screen. Of such types are the audiences of to-day largely composed.

America exploited the star-system for all the crooked business was worth. Competitions were organised; beauty contests arranged; vast correspondence 'fan mails' worked up; widespread campaigns of personal publicity launched; marriages and separations arranged; whilst a public of the lowest and worst type responded with the eagerness usually found in such people. They began to write letters to their favourite stars; how old were they; how much were they worth; how much did they weigh; what sort of face cream did they use; why were they married; what were their children like (if any) and so on. This was encouraged and fanned by the publicity men. In contrast to the audiences of early days, people now went to the cinema to see films because of the stars who were in them. They cared nothing for the films themselves, so long as they were shown

american

allied artist

SADIE THOMPSON

by Raoul Walsh from Somerset Maugham's play "Rain."
Gloria Swanson in the same part 1927

close ups of their idols.[1] The star became a fetish, inasmuch that such a demand was created for movies that producing companies were unable to make them quick enough. Naturally the stars themselves commanded tremendous salaries that waxed larger year by year. They grew bloated and puffed up by their world-wide publicity. They took to playing three, four, and even five parts in the same film, achieved by means of double exposure. Audiences exulting and thrilled, feasted their eyes and thoughts on the form of the star. Many famous names occur at this time, names that rose up and were forgotten. A few stayed, but they were exceptional. The Talmadge sisters, Wallace Reid, Rudolph Valentino, Pauline Frederick, the inimitable Mae Murray, Nita Naldi, Richard Dix, Thomas Meighan, Tom Moore, Dorothy and Lilian Gish, Viola Dana, and scores of others, all possessed manufactured screen personalities. The ideal type for the film star was the blank-minded, non-temperamental player, steeped in sex and sheathed in satin, who was admirably suited to movie 'acting,' which called for no display of deep emotions, no subtlety, no sensitivity, no delicacy, no guile. All through her career Norma Talmadge has achieved success by looking slightly perplexed and muzzy about the eyes. But audiences worshipped her (they still do); wrote to her for signed photographs; hung them over their beds and got a thrill out of them; and told their friends how great an actress she was. The Rudolph Valentino affair was worked with such success that, after his death, a guild was actually formed of people who had never set eyes on him to perpetuate his name. The publicity departments played the handsome Italian, with the cauliflower ear and the hundred per cent. sex, so well that anything became possible. It was even rumoured that Pola Negri's playing in *Hotel Imperial* was due to the emotions she was undergoing at the time because of the death of her beloved Valentino! Is it to be wondered that no sane-thinking person could see anything at all possible in the vaunted æsthetic value of the cinema?

With the gradual ascendance of the star-system, Hollywood became the playground of beauty, of youth, and of good looks of both sexes. Sleek, slim, slit-eyed, scarlet-mouthed women infested managers' offices. All over the world, in fact, girls left home . . . for they were certain that only their stupid, vacant, but beautiful faces

[1] Incidentally, one shudders at the gross abuse of the technical resources of the medium, in particular the misuse of the close up.

mattered in the film world. That is why Miss ——, now the well-known film star, was once a shop-girl or a typist or something else.

The star-system achieved for Hollywood and the cinema in general an unenviable reputation. It called forth denunciations and castigations from conservative constitutions and religious bodies, which, of course, it thoroughly merited. Not, that is to say, from a moral, but from a film point of view, for the morals of a film star are entirely his or her own affair. It was the star-system that should have been attacked; not its victims, but its sponsors, the American producing concerns. The star-system was nothing more or less than a flagrant prostitution of creative intelligence and good film material.

As has been indicated, bound up with the task of public acceptance of the star-system, there arose vast publicity campaigns organised by producing concerns to 'get across' their own particular stars and pictures. America fights half her film battles with publicity campaigns. At least two-thirds of the film writers in the United States and in England are mere gossip writers, who retail more or less scandalous news that is sent to them from the studios. There are not twenty critics in this country who know the first thing about films save what the publicity sheets issued from the studios tell them. Every company floods critics and editors of newspapers and periodicals all over the world with ready-made press propaganda, until the journalists lose all sense of values. During the height of the star-system every available detail, the more personal the better, was published about American film stars. Papers were deluged with highly coloured matter from big firms, each exaggerating the talents of their individual stars. These descriptions were typical of the hypocrisy and dissimulation of Hollywood. But producing firms realised as well that the tone of their publicity must be given the appearance of purity. From the public's outlook, it was the halo round the star that mattered. It was imperative to keep it unbroken. Both publicity departments and the Hays organisation took every care to hide up any scandal or misbehaviour that should occur in Hollywood. Quite obviously, if scandalous accounts were circulated about some hard-faced, smoothly-shingled young virgin who played sweet innocent heroines, the general public were apt to become dubious as to whether they were having their legs pulled or not. This, however, does not prevent temporary scandals and movements

in the divorce market from receiving current publicity. To counteract this, some thousands of photographs are circulated yearly of well-known film stars in familiar and entirely creditable attitudes. The public are saturated with this sort of propaganda, and believe it all. A typical story is cited by Walter Kron, who quotes from a criticism by a woman journalist, Louella Parsons, as follows: '. . . his work as Lord Nelson in *The Divine Lady* proved what a really fine artist he is. With an arm missing and blind in one eye, he still managed to have sex appeal.' Another favourite method of retaining public esteem is the personal appearance. 'Miss —— travels specially to London for the opening performance of her new film,' and so on.

The continued forcing of the star-system inevitably called for new faces and fresh talent, and before long producers were raking the world for suitable aspirants to film fame. This, in due course, led to the distressing habit of 'discovering' likely persons in countries thousands of miles from California, transporting them, buoyed up by false promises, to Hollywood where, after a few months of exaggerated publicity, they were forsaken without so much as making one film appearance, being left to find their way home as best they might. Although less guilty in this respect, English studios have tried the same devices of beauty competitions and the like. The chances are remote that the winner of any film contest has any cinematic talent whatsoever beyond an insipid, pretty face. All these disreputable methods of finding film 'talent' are of no use to the progress of the cinema.

As time went on, the haloes of existing stars in Hollywood began to pale visibly. Producers were continually forced to find new stars. Fresh names began to replace the old favourites, and stars of the calibre of Dolores del Rio, Sue Carol, Lupe Velez, and Joan Crawford appeared, dragged from remote corners of the stage or studio crowd work. Productions became more and more costly. The spectacle film, which for some years had lain low, developed into the super-film, and once more casts of thousands costing millions were employed to attract the public. At the same time, hundreds of feature-films were made to type; and one became accustomed to whole groups of movies of the same variety. There was a craze for war films, aviation films, underworld films, mother-love films, night-life films, backstage films, Spanish films, costume films, etc.

At this juncture, it is felt necessary to retrace the years, in order to appreciate the influence of talent imported from Europe in American studios. Shortly after the war, as has been seen, both Germany and Sweden gave plentiful evidence of the genius and technical brilliance that lay in their studios. The magnates, astute as ever in their business outlook, realised that German and Swedish intelligence had delved down much further into the cinema than had that of the superficial directors of Hollywood. They recognised, moreover, that England and France admired the æsthetic qualities of the German film, and they determined to flavour their own movies with some of this evidently 'artistic' talent. Not only this, but the increasing necessity for the *international* cinema to quiet the suspicions of commercial influence, made the installation of the foreign element in Hollywood desirable. American producers, therefore, sought to refresh their shop-worn productions by the influence of German and Swedish film technique, followed later by importations of both French and Hungarian players and directors. From then onwards, American firms acquired talent from Europe as soon as it made itself apparent. The tale of English actors who have made good in Hollywood is too old a wound to be re-opened.

The German and Swedish element in the Hollywood studios marked a new era in American film output. It is significant that although the majority of German films failed outside their country of origin, two were successful in the United States. *Dubarry* (renamed *Passion*) and *Carmen* (renamed *Gypsy Love*) both directed by Ernst Lubitsch, with Pola Negri, were well received. As a result, Miss Negri went to Hollywood, to be followed shortly by Lubitsch, and it was not long before the remainder of the Europeans deserted the sinking ship and settled down in California. The list is too long to be given in full, but pre-eminent among the exodus were Emil Jannings, Conrad Veidt, Lya de Putti, Greta Garbo, Camilla Horn, Karl Mayer, Lars Hanson, Nils Asther, Greta Nissen, Dimitri Buchowetzki, Paul Leni, Fred Murnau, Ludwig Berger, Erich Pommer, E. A. Dupont, Victor Seaström, and the late Mauritz Stiller. Yet not one of these directors or players, having been bought by dollars, but fell into the Hollywood groove of living. The movie kings housed and fed these valued importations like prize cattle, and succeeded after some struggling in taming them for their needs. A few

broke loose after a time and returned to the European fold, where they have for the most part failed to regain their former status. So strong is the dollar influence of Hollywood that it is necessary to consider the works of these directors in two phases, the pre-Hollywood and the American period. For example, on the score of appearances, I find it impossible to accept the Murnau who made *Faust* and *The Last Laugh* as the same man who later made *Sunrise* and *The Four Devils*. Some link between the two pairs of films is sought in vain. They seem the work of separate persons: the first of an artist, working with sincerity under harmonious surroundings; the second of a pseudo-artist muddling under extreme difficulties.

Of the individual influence of the Europeans on the American movie more will be said later, but it is to be remembered that their work was to set examples for the younger Hollywood school of directors to imitate. Lubitsch's *The Marriage Circle* and *Kiss Me Again* type of film served as a copy-book to a dozen of the young directors. Monta Bell, Mal St. Clair, Victor Heerman, Frank Tuttle, Harry Beaumont, Roy del Ruth, William Wellman, and all the rest of these clever young men have modelled their work on a mixture of Lubitsch and Chaplin. It was the era of a new type of comedy, not the slapstick of Lloyd or the ludicrous style of Keaton, but a suave, polished, slick, slightly-satirical, sexual comedy. It was a fusion, perhaps, of the American *flair* for brilliance and the German tendency towards the psychological. It was to produce the *Man, Woman and Sin*, *Sex in Fetters*, *Broadway After Midnight* type of movie. It was a new quality in the American film, quite different from the natural western element and the spectacle picture, and has been tremendously successful. It is found to-day in the plentiful adaptations of Lonsdale and Somerset Maugham plays to the dialogue film. *Charming Sinners*, *Interference*, and *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney* are cases in point.

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It is not illogical that such an industry as the American movie, possessing an aim of the maximum amount of profit from the minimum *necessary* expenditure of time and labour, should be constructed on an extremely well-organised basis. Whatever may be said against American methods, it cannot be denied that they have developed their system of working to a highly perfected state. No man finds employment in a Hollywood film studio unless he knows his

job. That job is his business and he manages it as such. That is where the Hollywood studio differs from the British studio. The American film man knows nothing whatsoever about the æsthetics of the film, its possibilities or its development, and he cares less. He is out for his daily money, and the making of movies happens to be the way he is doing it. He might just as well be engaged in a chemical factory or coal-mine, except that the movie life is a pleasant one. Cine-organisation of studio work, about which so much is written in the second part of this survey, has been carried to excess in Hollywood. Each studio works according to its own plan. No fresh production is started without careful pre-consideration as to its type, the selling methods to be employed with the completed picture, and the mentality of the people to whom it is to appeal. A schedule of production for a year's output is the result of much deliberation. No reasonable period of time or amount of money is spared on a movie. Every official in every studio has his allotted time and a definite amount of money for his particular job. In fact, he is simply a cog in a highly-efficient organisation, manufacturing pictures according to formula. Moreover, the Americans are perfectly serious-minded in their movie methods. They thought of them; they developed them; and they have profited by them. That is quite sufficient.

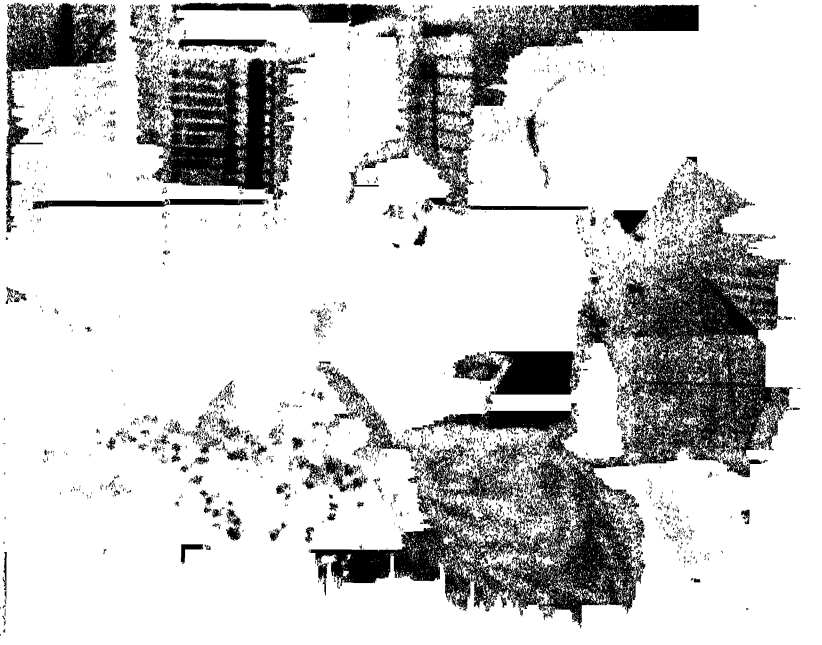
The American film man is amazingly hard-working. His heart is thoroughly in his job. He understands the business so long as it remains business; as soon as it becomes something more, entailing appreciation of beauty, subtlety of wit, psychology of emotions, then he is as good as finished. He takes refuge in calling it modern, artistic and what is even worse, highbrow. The only highbrow films are those made by dilettantes and intelligentsia (*e.g.*, the American *Fall of the House of Usher*; Florey's *Loves of Zero*; Len Lye's *Tusylava*). No pure film is futurist, *avant-garde*, highbrow, or precious. No Soviet film is advanced or 'artistic' or even difficult to understand. It is, on the contrary, made for the simple peasant mind. But the Hollywood film man would call *October* or *Mother* an art film, for the reason that they are a more natural state of cinema than the sophisticated movie to which he is accustomed. *The Last Laugh* was an example of the primitive use of cinematic technique, yet the film man of Hollywood and Elstree will avoid discussing it. He is afraid of it. So also is the average film critic. If he sees any new film which he

american

metro-goldwyn-may

THE CROWD

King Vidor's great psychological film James Murray as the boy friend in a moment of depression 1928



does not immediately comprehend, he will call it 'highbrow' and leave it severely alone instead of analysing its properties. When the famous Soviet film, *Battleship 'Potemkin'* was shown in London last November, not one of the regular newspaper critics was able to give a clear, intelligent, broad-minded criticism of its properties. They shirked it by weakly calling it Soviet propaganda. They were ashamed to admit that their microscopic knowledge of the functions of the cinema did not allow them to analyse this powerful film. The average American film man can speak of nothing but movies. In Hollywood they talk films, make films, and live films, entirely from a business point of view. The average British film man knows little about films. He knows all about golf and football, but he has seldom seen a recent production.

All the big but not necessarily good films have come from Hollywood, simply because no other country has the money to make them, and even if they did, they would not know what to do with them. In America, the more money expended on the production of a film, the greater it is in the eyes of the producers and also the public. How often has not the eternal slogan of the cast of twenty thousand players and the film which cost two million dollars been seen on London poster hoardings?

Moreover, Americans appreciate the value of perfected technical accomplishment, which British executives will not realise. Hollywood companies know well that the public will be the first to complain of bad lighting, inferior camerawork, indifferent settings, and badly-designed dresses. They recognise the importance of the *real thing*, and they appreciate the public's liking for appearances. If silk brocade is needed for a curtain, the Americans will not use cheap satin, because they know that the fake will be noticeable. They will go to interminable lengths to get things right. If the scenario demands, they will build London in Hollywood or go to Italy to film *Ben-Hur*. They would buy the suit off the King's back if they could get it, or failing that, have an exact replica made of it. The American movie producer and director is immensely painstaking, and that is to his eternal credit. On the other hand, he will make mistakes about the simplest and most ordinary things. *What Price Glory?* was notorious for its military discrepancies. Money for new mechanical apparatus, up-to-date camera devices, newly invented lighting systems or intricate laboratory appliances is never wanting. The Americans

know the value of these necessities. Two-thirds of the movies 'get across' in England solely because of their good dressing. Technical accomplishment plays a large part in the polish of the Hollywood movie. The quality of the photography is usually faultless. Moving shots and camera panning are always beyond reproach, no matter whether æsthetically they are being used rightly or wrongly. It is rare to see an American extra badly made up. An American movie star's clothes are always exquisite. Cheapness and shabbiness are unknown in the Hollywood studios. For this reason alone the American movie is always successful. The general public, judging largely from outward appearances and knowing little of the cinema itself, welcomes its glitter.

And, as is to be expected, Hollywood movies are slick, facile, and well-finished. At the same time, they display an absence of good taste, of intelligence, and, if the term is allowable, of culture. These qualities, so essential to the cinema, are lacking in the American film director and producer. It is these which they have tried to buy with dollars from Europe, which they have gradually found to be an impossibility. They are qualities that no amount of money in the world can buy. The American movie has not got them and never will have them. The futility of the situation is extraordinary.

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There is found, then, at the close of the pre-dialogue period of the American film, a mixed selection of productions being made according to formula. They have been well-named committee-made pictures. In most cases, the director is not his own master, being under the control of the producing board, the sole desire of which is to turn out a certain number of standard pictures during the year. Directorial talent has been subdued and shaped into a single quality, the *raison d'être* of every Hollywood director worthy of his name, PICTURE-SENSE. This, it may be added, has nothing whatsoever to do with *cinematic* sense, a quality peculiar to the European film. Picture-sense controls the choice of theme, the treatment, the players, and the presentation. Hollywood has rigidly schooled herself into looking at every film from a picture-sense angle. The ingredients of a successful film, conceived from a picture-sense point of view, may be said to be: a strong, powerful theme (preferably sexual); a highly polished, quick-moving technique, employing all the most recent discoveries (usually German); a story-interest that will carry

the sex, at the same time allowing for spectacle and at least two high spots; and a cast of international players. Of such a type were *Flesh and the Devil*, *The Last Command*, *The Patriot*, *Wild Orchids*, and *The Kiss*. Hundreds of pictures based on this formula were being produced just prior to the general adoption of the dialogue film. The same idea was being carried out in England with *Piccadilly* and in Germany with *Volga Volga*.

American pictures are filled with people, for prominent among the movie beliefs of Hollywood is the misconception that the general public is more interested in people than in things. Seldom is a landscape or a piece of architecture used in an American film for its own beautiful sake. (The work of Henry King and Robert Flaherty may be taken as exceptional.) Only as a background to people does the American producer allow nature to interfere. Typical of this belief is the film *White Shadows*, in which even the hard hand of Hollywood, personified in the haggard Monte Blue and sex-charged Raquel Torres, could not subdue the waving palms and mountainous cumulus clouds of the south seas, which Van Dyck's cameramen succeeded in photographing so well. In all probability there are a few directors in Hollywood who would, if given the opportunity, make films of sincerity, but they are continually manacled by the one great obstacle, picture-sense or box-office. They cannot afford to break away and attempt to produce on their own. The combines are far too strong. Only the star-producers of the Chaplin, Fairbanks, Pickford, and Swanson group work alone and pursue their own methods, but even they are afraid of the demands of the distributors. Perhaps Chaplin only is in the position to make films as he really wishes, but even he cannot afford to make another *Woman of Paris*. Fairbanks and Pickford are to be sincerely admired for their efforts to create better American films. They realise, at least, that they are lacking in some of the essentials of good cinema, and are not afraid to go to the source for the benefit of learning.

The mentality of the American film magnate is perplexing. His futile mistakes and brilliant successes are a continual source of wonderment. The Americanisation of Emil Jannings is typical of Hollywood methods. In reviewing the position, it may be recalled that Paramount-Famous-Lasky secured the 'world's greatest actor,' the man who shook the audiences of the entire cinema by his powerful performances in tragedy and comedy. In early days, he became known

in *Peter the Great*, *Danton*, *The Loves of Pharaoh*, as Louis XV in *Dubarry*, as Henry VIII in *Anne Boleyn*, in *Sumurun*, etc. This was Jannings, the repertory player, with the stage and Reinhardt uppermost in his mind. From this came Jannings the film actor, finding his bearings in the fresh medium, dropping the old theatrical ideas and finding new filmic ones. During this period he did his best work, in *Waxworks*, *Nju*, *The Last Laugh*, *Faust*, *Tartuffe*, *Vaudeville*, in both comedy and tragedy. And then Jannings in Hollywood, with the picture-sense men running round him in circles, crying 'what shall we do with him, now we have got him here?' like so many pet dogs round a bull. They looked at all his past films, diagnosed the successes, noted the powerful bits, rehashed them for stock, and decided to construct individual masterpieces based on small incidents in his former triumphs. The public would never recognise old wine in new bottles; they would be too occupied in acclaiming the world's greatest actor now starring in American productions. Thus *The Way of All Flesh* was a clever reassembling of *Vaudeville*, the white-haired old man and all. Compare, also, *The Last Command* and *The Last Laugh*, with bits of *Vaudeville* thrown in to make up weight. Look again at *The Sins of the Fathers*, *The Street of Sin*, *The Betrayal*, and they will all be found to be reissues of the European Jannings. The transposition was, of course, well done, and the public acclaimed Jannings to be greater than ever. The ovation accorded *The Patriot* was unprecedented, and yet it was a very banal performance, in nauseating bad taste. Publicity from the Paramount studios lent glamour to the position. At one time, a London film journal actually printed a statement that Jannings, having had two reels of *The Last Laugh* shown through to him in Hollywood, sat back and deplored the bad acting. This, it is to be admitted, is clever publicity. Later, they sent Jannings back to Berlin, 'on holiday,' for he was considered of little use in the dialogue film. In order to cover up the injustice of the act, they presented him with the highest honour, the annual award of merit bestowed by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for the most notable screen work during the year. They actually dared to present this to him as he left Hollywood, with his dismissal in his pocket! Universal's mishandling of Conrad Veidt was of a similar nature. It was almost unbearable to watch Veidt's painful striving with the impossible rôle of *Gwynplaine* in *The Man Who Laughs*, when comparatively fresh in the mind

was his exquisite performance in *The Student of Prague*. Imagine Universal, with 'Uncle' Carl Laemmle and all, murmuring thus: 'Here is this great emotional actor, who plays with such intense force that his mind appears warped, portraying on his narrow face the inner conflict of self with terrible truth, under contract to us. What part shall we put him over in? How can we make him greater still? Let us take away the use of his mouth, and make him act with his eyes and hands. Let us give him a permanent smile and then make him play tragedy. Think of the sensation . . .'

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Searching for the true characteristics of the American film, as distinct from European influence, it is found that youth, vitality, space, and movement are the chief attributes of the movie. American traditions, generally speaking, date back only to the time of the civil war, and, as in her literature, many of her movies, especially those of the early war-period, carry themes relative to that event. Both politically and socially America has been far too busy to devote any sincere attention to the arts, with the result that there is no contemporary school of American painting recognised in Europe, and her literature is marked only by isolated achievements. The average American citizen has more sympathy with a mechanic or an engineer than with an artist or a writer. Painting or composing is a dilettante profession, pursued only by the rich. Rudolph Messel in his analysis of the American mentality has traced the development of the cowboy mind from the days of the great gold rush into the modern day healthy American with money as his sole aim.[1] Much of the American mind is occupied with a primitive instinct for fight and possession, an instinct that is the basis for many movies (*viz.*, the early westerns, with their gunmen and hard-riding cowboys; the recent vogue for underworld crook stories, with gangsters, etc.). Out of this primitive animal mind comes also the strong sexual feeling, particularly in the dynamic American girl. Nearly every movie is saturated in sex stimulant; a quality that is increasing with the dialogue film, and is uppermost in almost every director's and producer's mind, not only in Hollywood, but in England, France, Germany, and even Russia. The most popular stars in Paris are Joan Crawford and Victor MacLaglan. Every girl chosen for a part in a British film is judged by her amount of sex, according to *outward* appearances.

[1] *Vide, This Film Business*, by Rudolph Messel (Benn, 1928).

Yet one of the most sexual pictures ever produced was Alexander Room's *Bed and Sofa*, which contained the applied theme of man's selfish and bestial attitude towards women, a state of affairs which Room tried to counteract. Bound up with this sexually primitive, fighting, self-possessive state of American mentality is a warped sense of religion and a false pride of patriotism, both of which find expression in the movie. *The King of Kings*, *The Godless Girl*, *What Price Glory?* and *The Big Parade* emphasise this point.

Sexual youth is one of the essentials of the American film. In the studios there is ever a search for youth, for with it go the vitality and dynamicism that are inseparable from the true function of the movie. Youth and movement were the keynotes of *Our Dancing Daughters*, *The First Kiss*, *Wings*, *The Legion of the Condemned*, *Beau Geste*, and countless others of the same brand. Clara Bow, Fay Wray, Charles Rogers, Richard Arlen, Nancy Carroll, Anita Page, Sue Carol are all symbols of the American drama of youth.

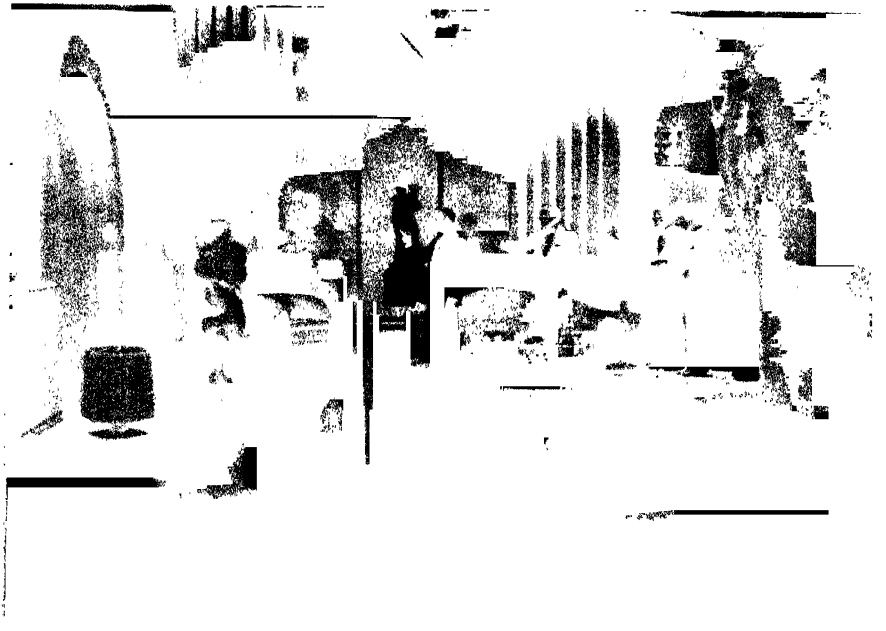
Pace, together with the combined motives of sex, youth, and spaciousness, is the chief reason for the success of the American movie. It was the vitality of movement in such films as *The Broadway Melody*, *Hollywood Revue*, *Ben-Hur*, *Beau Geste*, *College Days*, *The General*, *The Black Pirate*, and *Wings* which made them popular, as well as the underlying factors of publicity and star-system. One rarely observes a European film with such pace as was contained in these movies; but this pace is only movement of *material*, a distinction which is explained on page 251. Pace of material reaches back through the years to the silk-legged Mack Sennett slapsticks, to the fast-moving westerns, where it touches the feeling for spaciousness. Every audience delights in the vast spaciousness of the western cinema. The cowboy films with their valueless stories, their lean riders and flaxen-haired rancher's daughters in gingham frocks, brought to the screen a sense of unlimited horizons, of far-reaching desert. But the western is gradually fading from the American cinema. Instead there is the spaciousness of rooms; great, tall, ceilingless rooms; and of cities, with buildings reaching into the sky. Only on rare occasions is a small set seen in an American movie. To the Hollywood director, a dining-room must stretch away into infinity, with doors running up out of sight, and polished, reflecting floors. . . .

But space, sex, vitality, and youth are but material from which the

american paramount

THE VIRGINIAN

Victor Fleming's dialogue film. Contrast the spaciousness with the photograph below. One of the few American naturalistic films. 1929



film director constructs his work. The pace of the American movie is not the pace of *film*. It is in the construction of the film, in the best use of the resources peculiar to the cinema, in the employment of the properties and the attributes of the screen, that the Americans fail. They have no knowledge of the *rendering* of their material. They are unable to contrive its assembling, its relationship, its meaning with any degree of sincerity. In the filmic treatment and composition of this rich material the American allows business to overcome the proper functions of the cinema. For this sense of filmic representation, for this real use of the cinema, it is imperative to turn to other countries whose traditions and culture make possible a better understanding of the values of the film as an instrument of expression.

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Of the dialogue film period I do not propose to write at length for three logical reasons. Firstly, because the medium of the film as understood in this survey does not allow the reproduction of spoken dialogue in conjunction with the visual image of the speaker; secondly, because I do not believe that the dialogue film has any permanent value in the development of the film; and thirdly, because the dialogue movie will be superseded by the sound-and-visual-image cinema, of which there is yet no actual unified instance. In the general interests of this book, however, the events and brief tendencies of this illegitimate phase of the cinema may be mentioned.

The dialogue film became an actual commercial certainty when the Warner Brothers' producing concern, on the verge of financial collapse as a result of the failure of their silent programme, decided to exploit the Vitaphone, a talking film apparatus on the disc method for which they held the rights. The whole affair was a matter of chance, a shot in the dark, with a well-known variety artist as the box-office appeal. The gamble succeeded. To the general surprise of Hollywood, who had little faith in the dialogue film, the public of America received the novelty of the speaking and singing entertainment with open arms. It offered a reaction to the machine-made movie. Immediately a stampede took place among the producing firms, for within a short time Warners were making tremendous profits out of their venture. There was a rush by the companies to secure equipment, to convert their silent studios into sound-proof ones, to build new stages, to find suitable subjects, to test the voices

of their stars, and to buy from the theatre all the adjuncts of the voice. Hollywood turned yet another corner in her amazing career. She threw aside all the ideas and processes by which she had built up her vast industry; she risked the adaptability of her directors to this new device; she chanced the success of her established stars, now that their voices were to be heard. She discarded all her well-tried systems and staked her opportunities of further success on the novelty of a new invention.

The results were not in the least surprising. The reaction of the public, who were taken unawares, was inevitable. They were as eager to hear this new invention as they had been to see the kinetoscope. Up till the present moment, the general interest of the public remains held by the dialogue film, but there are tendencies to show that the first craze is subsiding. There is a feeling of uncertainty abroad.

Of the types of dialogue film as yet observed, there are roughly four varieties: the adapted stage play, an obvious source to which producers immediately turned for ready-made dialogue; the thriller, being an extension of the old crook melodrama, with slang, bangs, and every conceivable noise; the sentimental, individual-appeal picture, which relies on the personality of one star; and the musical comedy, the backstage type of movie with a slight story-interest serving as an excuse for colour and syncopation.

In the first category may be placed *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney*, *The Doctor's Secret*, *Madame X*, and *Charming Sinners*, all of which were adapted stage plays, notable for their slow theatrical development, their sparkling dialogue and their uncinematic quality. In, the second are such pictures as *The Perfect Alibi*, *Bulldog Drummond*, and *Dr. Fu Manchu*, being entertainment along popular lines but without any value. In the third, the sobbing performances of Al Jolson in *The Singing Fool* and *The Jazz Singer*, and the charm of Maurice Chevalier in *The Innocents of Paris*, being remarkable only for their variety elements. While in the fourth is the descendant of the super-spectacle film, with dancing and singing and colour, such as *The Hollywood Revue*, *The Fox Movietone Follies*, *On With the Show*, and *The Broadway Melody*, all of which suffer from their lack of camera movement and other filmic properties, being successful because of their musical numbers and chorus work.

There have also been individual experiments along the lines of

Gloria Swanson's *The Trespasser* and the Pickford-Fairbanks' *Taming of the Shrew*. Both these productions have obvious merits, but neither can be considered within the range of the proper cinema. I have only seen two American dialogue films that have had true quality, King Vidor's *Hallelujah!* and Victor Fleming's *The Virginian*, and these only because of the use of sound for dramatic emphasis.

Mention has already been made of the use of sound in the accompaniment of the animated cartoon film. The *Mickey Mouse* cartoons have definitely achieved the beginnings of the wedded sound-and-visual-image film, which will be developed in the course of time.

IV

THE AMERICAN FILM (*continued*)

AMONG the countless movies born in Hollywood are many which demand inclusion in this survey, and investigation of their qualities had best be made through an examination of their individual directors, placing the productions in their allotted groups as they occur. It must be stated that whatever good and harm American directors and producers have done to the cinema, there are certain developments originating in Hollywood for which she must be given credit. For example, the Americans were the first persons interested in the cinema to discover that the film-play possessed functions peculiar to itself. Although the original use of the camera as an instrument of creative imagination is not found until Wiene's *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, Griffith certainly determined that the capabilities of the film were not to make a simple record of the material placed in front of the lens of the camera, but that they consisted in the reproduction of that material on a screen by a process peculiar to the film alone. Griffith at an early stage in the history of the cinema was the first director with the intelligence to attempt to organise the scenario-manuscript; to make dramatic use of the close up, the fade-in and the fade-out, being technical devices of the camera instrument which, although discovered before Griffith used them, had not been utilised as a means of dramatic effect.

The films of Griffith are to be regarded as well-constructed models of contrasted tension, achieved by the gradual narration of consecutive incidents, with the action planned in such a manner that the dramatic tension of the film rises to a powerful climax at the conclusion. This climactic ending to the Griffith pictures found outlet in what is popularly called 'the last-minute-rescue.' Actually, this was simply a working-up of excitement towards the final sequence of action, thereby making a satisfactory rounding-off to the film. The continuity process of parallel action will be mentioned later in

this connection. Griffith, moreover, was not only content to construct his climax from the actions of his characters, but he contrived the story so as to intensify the final struggle of the theme by using the conflicting elements of nature, of rain, snow, storm, and ice. This use of atmospheric environment heightened the Griffith climax to an almost indescribable pitch of emotion, well seen in the snowstorm, the melting river of ice and the awe-inspiring waterfall of *Way Down East*. It will be remembered that the elements increased in intensity towards the final struggle. In this example from *Way Down East*, Griffith used not only the available natural resources, but heightened the thrill of the rescue from the waterfall by the capabilities of the camera itself by contrasting two streams of movement. In this sequence of events, the snowstorm, the ice-floes, and the waterfall, each increasing in strength, formed a comparative background to the increasing despair of the characters themselves in the narrative. Love followed in the footsteps of despair. As a contrast to this turbulence of natural resources may be taken the gradual atmospheric changes in *America*, of twilight and of morning. Griffith is a master of natural effect; and his influence is seen in many Soviet films.[1] It will be found, also, that in his earlier and better films, Griffith always chose his characters from the normal stream of life, and developed their fictitiously constructed lives in a world quite normal to them. (*Isn't Life Wonderful?*, *The Birth of a Nation*, *Way Down East*, *America*, etc.)

The 'last-minute-rescue,' such a prominent feature of the Griffith film, had been used at an early date in *The Life of an American Fireman* (1903) and has been in constant employment since then. The girl at the guillotine; the knife about to fall; the approaching riders flourishing the pardon; the little details that hinder the fall of the knife; the arrival of the riders at the last moment; these are the factors, so well used in *Orphans of the Storm*, familiar to all audiences throughout the world. Griffith improved the tension created by parallel action by addition of the close up. He interspaced the alternate motives with a close up of the hooves of galloping horses; the keen edge of the blade; the girl's neck bared; the excitement on the faces in the crowd; tears in the eyes of Miss Gish—

[1] Recall the mist scenes at Odessa in *Battleship 'Potemkin'* and the death of the 'Partisan' leader in *The Heir to Jenghiz Khan*, both instances of natural atmospheric effect in the Griffith manner.

and so on. Perhaps Griffith's cleverest use of the close up was in the trial scene of *Intolerance*, an instance of subordination of the general to emphasis of the particular. The woman was hearing the sentence of death passed on her husband, whom she knew was innocent of the crime. On her face a subdued, anxious smile was half-hidden by tears. This was shown in close up. Suddenly, a flash was seen of her hands gripped together in anxiety. Not once was her whole figure shown to the audience, but her emotions were rendered doubly dramatic by individual close ups of her face and hands.

Griffith was at one time an actor and play-writer. He apparently wrote a film manuscript of Sardou's 'La Tosca,' had it rejected, but was engaged as an actor to play in a one-reeler, *The Eagle's Nest*. Against his own will, he started directing, being induced to make *The Adventures of Dolly* in 1908, which was followed shortly by *The Lonely Villa*, *One Avenging Conscience*, *The Sheriff's Baby*, and many others. His real work, however, was not until 1914, when *The Birth of a Nation* was produced as an answer to Italy's 'super' film *Quo Vadis?* of the year before. It was decided that *The Birth of a Nation* was to be the world's greatest film, in twelve reels with many thousands of extras. In the customary manner of Griffith, a theme on a large scale was selected, based on the result of the enfranchisement of the negro, with added high-spot interest in the war of the North and the South and the Ku Klux Klan vendettas. Financially, the picture was a success, although much was said at the time about it being anti-colour propaganda. Nevertheless, propaganda or not, all America and later the rest of the world went to see it, and if it achieved nothing else, it certainly placed the cinema as an entertainment and as a provocator of argument on the same level as the theatre and the novel.

The Birth of a Nation relied entirely on the cinema for its success, for it carried no well-known names as a box-office attraction. It stood alone as a film; and as a film it was triumphant. The chief faults to be found with the construction were in the slow, meaningless opening; the realistic replicas of Abraham Lincoln's study and the theatre in which he was assassinated; and the badly handled, insufferably dull battle scenes. Nevertheless, the importance of the film lay in its achievement of attracting the notice of serious-minded people to the expressive power of the cinema. Its merits are to be appreciated, not individually, but as a whole.

For his next picture Griffith again chose an immense theme, so vast that the film became unwieldy and depressing, and thereby defeated its own purpose. He sought to convey the idea that intolerance pervades the spirits of all peoples, from past to present, dragging with it despair, murder, and ruin. The immensity of the idea (which would be turned down with scorn by any scenario department of to-day) was Griffith's undoing, for he was forced by the limits of time alone to treat the theme generally. *Intolerance* did not set out to tell a narrative; instead, it utilised four separate historical incidents, divided by centuries of time, to express one central theme. It has been said that *Intolerance* was the first attempt to use the film in its correct manner. The four incidents chosen by Griffith to illustrate his theme were the fall of Babylon; the intolerance of the world and the Pharisees towards Christ; the massacre of St. Bartholomew; and a modern story of capital and labour, set in an atmosphere of misunderstanding, vicious gambling dens and corrupt orphanages. These four separate stories were connected by a link, supplied by Walt Whitman's lines 'out of the cradle endlessly rocking,' which manifested itself in the form of Lilian Gish aimlessly rocking a cradle, and appeared at regular intervals throughout the course of the film. The four stories were developed slowly, gradually working up into a Griffith crescendo, with quadruple action in the climactic ending, rounded off by a touch of symbolism. The Persians approached Babylon; Christ was crucified; the Huguenots were butchered; but the young man in the modern story was saved by a miraculous 'last-minute-rescue.'

Intolerance was, and still is, the greatest spectacular film. Its ingredients, the sumptuous feast of Belshazzar, the wild attack on the massive walls of Babylon, the scene at Golgotha, the struggling horde of extras and the vast sets, have been at the back of every American producer's mind ever since. They are the urge and comfort of Mr. de Mille. They are indirectly responsible for the many imitations – *The Ten Commandments*, *Noah's Ark*, and the Hungarian *Sodom and Gomorrah*, all of which failed because they lacked the fierce intensity of purpose of Griffith. *Intolerance* had the makings of a great film but failed because of its own immensity. A film, even in twelve reels, cannot embrace the width and depth of a theme such as *Intolerance* sought to carry, without the elimination of detail. Under these circumstances the theme at once becomes

superficial. The theme carried no power because of its *general* treatment. At the time of production, *Intolerance* had the reputation of being the most expensive film ever produced; the high reputation of Griffith from *The Birth of a Nation*; an air of mystery, for it was made under a veil of secrecy; but it was a failure because of its own intolerance. The American people were puzzled by its name, by its meaning, and by its hugeness. They took a dislike to it.

Of Griffith's later films there is not a great deal to be written. It is well-known that he did not live up to the promise of his first two achievements, that he brooded in the darkness, and tried to repeat his successes in a different guise. *Broken Blossoms*, inspired by a short story by Thomas Burke, is of interest because it was the forerunner of the sordid, dilapidated slum theme that has been present in the cinema ever since Griffith suggested it. The film succeeded for only one reason; it had no other asset to carry its weight across to the audience save the direction. Lilian Gish, despite her earlier playing, was not yet considered in the ranks of stardom; Richard Barthelmess was unknown; and the story was simple, tragic, and sordid, with no call for the spectacle of Griffith's earlier work. Yet *Broken Blossoms*, with all its morbidness, was a success. As a film it achieved great emotional power, due entirely to the strong direction. It created many things, the most significant being the establishment of Lilian Gish as a tear-stained slum girl, which she has been on and off ever since; it founded the school of dirt and depression among dirty plates and unswept rooms; and it influenced Stroheim in the making of *Greed*. Moreover, it showed producers that a simple, human story, without the box-office attractions of silk legs and spectacle, could be made successful if handled by an intelligent director. *Broken Blossoms* relied on the cinema for its expression.

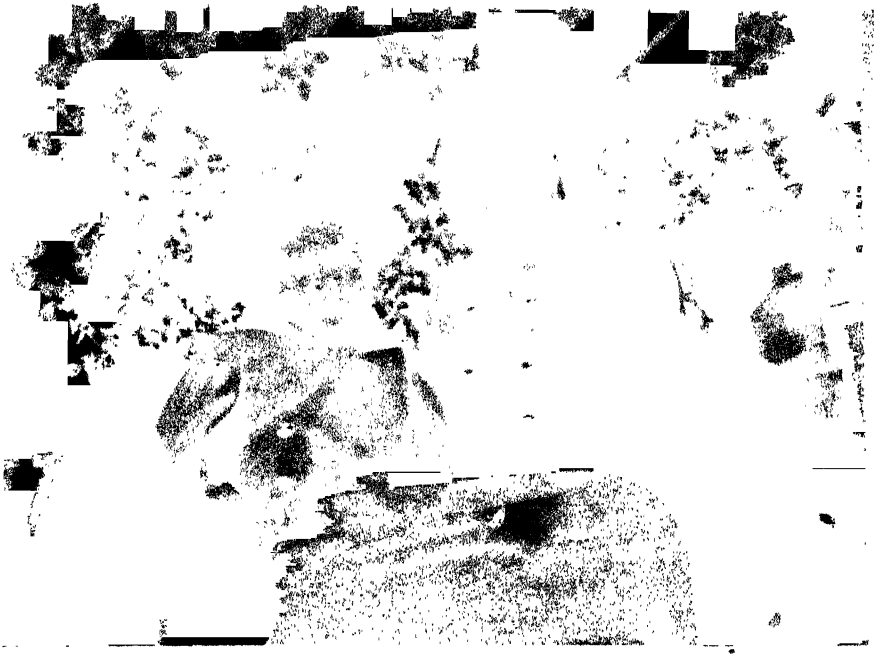
Orphans of the Storm, with its setting in the popular French Revolution, was another new undertaking for Griffith. It was historical costume film technique as distinct from the reconstruction of the ancient world of *Intolerance*. Financially, the orphans were peculiarly pleasing, especially when it is remembered that costume films are usually considered to be failures before they are even made. They secured over a hundred thousand pounds in this country alone, being advertised as based on Carlyle's 'French Revolution.' Actually, it was Hollywood's French Revolution, with little of the real Griffith, save in the construction of the 'last-minute-rescue' at the guillotine.

But Griffith was beginning to repeat himself. He seemed forced to go back over his ground and it became tiring to watch the rescue of Miss Gish, however strong Griffith's sympathies for her may have been. *One Exciting Night*, a thriller that excelled in thrills but nothing else; *America*; *Isn't Life Wonderful?* and *Sally of the Sawdust Ring* were all reiterations of early Griffith methods. *Isn't Life Wonderful?*, an essay on the food shortage problem in post-war Germany, was meant to express an idea. But when he made this film, Griffith appeared not to have appreciated the progressive movements of the whole cinema around him. He was, as it were, simply Griffith wrapped up in a parcel and tied round with string by Griffith. Later, he was forced to climb down from his fence of independence, join the Famous-Players-Lasky Company, and under their supervision made *Sally of the Sawdust Ring*, a crude, sentimental picture of circus life which was financially successful. Since then he has continued to make a series of uninteresting pictures of unequal merit, among them being *Drums of Love*, *The Sorrows of Satan*, *The Battle of the Sexes*, (notable for the playing of the talented Phyllis Haver and Jean Hersholt), and *The Lady of the Pavements*, with the vivacious Lupe Velez. He is now engaged on a dialogue version of *Abraham Lincoln*.

In general, the work of Griffith is notable for the expression of one central idea, a single theme carrying the film through from start to finish. This unity of purpose has been lacking in his recent films. Round this idea he constructs his scenario action and his characters, placing them in their natural surroundings, and finds players suitable for their sincere characterisation. It will be observed that once Griffith has moulded an actor or an actress into the desired shape, he seldom continues to use that player. Having employed them with great success for the expression of one or two of his films, he gives them to the smaller directors, by whom they are made into stars. As far as possible, Griffith works with raw material, and in this respect he resembles the Soviets. Lilian Gish is admittedly an exception to this theory, but she is perhaps the prototype of the Griffith heroine. Griffith nearly always creates his parts on the same characteristics. In particular the tear-stained, sobbing young woman, with or without child, smiling behind the misery with a wistful smile is recalled. Griffith's important work may lie in the past, in the early days of the spectacle film when theories on continuity and rhythmic construction were young, but he is a power in the

American cinema that must be stressed. There is much to be learnt to-day from his early ideas, and his influence on the more eminent of Hollywood directors is marked. Both King Vidor and Erich von Stroheim learnt their early cinema from Griffith. Although his ideas are sentimental, his technique elementary, and his construction of the old type, it is upon them that much of the best of modern film treatment is built.

On turning to the work of Erich von Stroheim a barrier is at once found to the true appreciation of his artistry by the fact that he has gained for himself (chiefly on account of his masterly bluffing of the American producers and by his display of meaningless magnificence) the status of a genius. It will frequently be found that when argument is broached about a Stroheim film, this powerful word is solemnly pronounced and further analysis, if any has been made at all, is impossible. I suggest, however, that just as Stroheim has bluffed Hollywood with such admirable neatness, it is equally possible for him to have deceived the intelligence of his ardent admirers among the *jeune cinéastes*. It is not denied that Stroheim has made one exceptionally interesting and powerful film in *Greed*, but on the other hand it is asserted that his filmic knowledge is inadequate. He seems incapable of recognising the limits and delimits of the cinema. The fact that *Greed*, in its original form, was twenty reels in length and that two hundred thousand feet of film were shot when making *The Wedding March*, indicates neither the mind of a genius nor a great film director, as so many of his disciples seem to believe. On the contrary his obvious incapability to express his ideas adequately in ten thousand feet of film shows clearly his lack of understanding of the resources of the medium. Added to which, Stroheim has unfortunately earned for himself the reputation of gross extravagance and so great is the faith of Hollywood in vastness on any scale that, if Stroheim ceased to squander money on his productions, he would no longer be called a genius. Whilst fully appreciating the fact that a director must have freedom in order to express his ideas, it cannot but be admitted that if he has to take nearly twenty times the amount of film actually used in the final copy, he has no idea of what he wants or how he is going to achieve his desired result, the two elementary qualifications of a director. Stroheim's greatest faults are his love of excess and his failure to express his mind filmically. He labours his points and repeats his



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THE WEDDING MARCH

by Erich von Stroheim Cherry blossom time in Vienna, with Fay Wray and the director 1926-29

arguments to the limits of boredom, losing thereby any subtlety or meaning that they might convey. Typical of this was the painful gold colouring in *Greed*, which very nearly wrecked the film, and the superfluous cherry blossom in *The Wedding March*. Both these attempts at atmospheric emphasis lost their effect by their redundancy. Instead of becoming suggestive they became irritating. Quite certainly they were Victorian.

Stroheim's best work is to be seen in small pieces. There are many sequences in his films that stand out alone for their extreme beauty and sympathetic feeling. This in itself suggests the lack of unity and central purpose of the Stroheim film. Frequently it is declared that he is hampered in his realisation by lack of money, but in consideration of the extraordinary licence allowed him in the past, this argument for his failure is hardly convincing. If Stroheim is the filmic genius he is said to be, then he will express his purpose under the limited conditions of film-making.

Admittedly, this awkward predicament of having to spend money in order to keep up appearances is regrettable, but Stroheim has no one to blame save himself. If it were possible to see Stroheim in small, separate sequences, it would then be correct to call him a superbly talented experimentalist. One of the most beautiful sequences realised in the history of the cinema was the short hospital scene in *The Wedding March*, exquisite alike in feeling, acting, simplicity, and lighting. Photographically, it was magnificent, the range of tones shimmering from deep velvety blacks to dazzling gauzed whites with perfect gradation. But the fact remains that if Stroheim suddenly dropped his pose, became serious, ceased his expensive bluffing campaign, and made a film of normal length, with a normal amount of money and in a normal space of time, producers would believe that they had been cheated out of their money, and the film would be regarded as a joke, whilst actually it would be a masterpiece.

It is said that Erich von Stroheim has led a stormy life in Hollywood trying to combat commercialism with artistic temperament. Perhaps it would be more truthful to say that Stroheim has commercialised his artistic temperament. No producing centre in the world save Hollywood would have accepted Stroheim's whimsical fancies. His ideas are always made to look as if they are conceived on a great scale, calling for vast financial resources, and naturally

when he carries them out, strict executive eyes are watchful of his movements. But Stroheim, carried away by his 'genius,' enlarges and extends his ideas as he puts them into realisation, far beyond original specification. As is only to be expected, trouble ensues between the two parties. It is remarkable that, despite Stroheim's failings, producing companies still continue to place their faith and money in him. The case of *The Merry-Go-Round* is almost too well-known to be cited. Report has it that Stroheim spent so long in showing a squad of soldiers how to salute in the Stroheim manner that the producers finally grew tired of the game, ejected Stroheim and put in Rupert Julian to finish the picture.

Stroheim was at one time an officer in the army of Franz Josef of Austria (whom God and Stroheim have preserved in *The Wedding March*). Later, he came to New York to live alternately as gardener, ostler, dish-washer, etc., all of which are excellent occupations for a potential film director, for they breed an understanding of reality. He arrived in Hollywood about the beginning of the war, found work as an extra, and played the Pharisee in Griffith's *Intolerance*. His first achievement, however, did not come until after the war, when he directed and acted in *Blind Husbands*. Stroheim's acting as the superior, smart, salacious Austrian officer on holiday, with just sufficient power to seduce any woman he happened to meet, was outstanding for its truth. The film had a good reception, and he proceeded to make *Foolish Wives* in the same way. Once more he acted and directed, adding touches to the lascivious Austrian officer, and proved himself capable of progress. *Foolish Wives* will always remain an extraordinary film. It was subtly sexual and provocative. Old-fashioned in technique when seen by modern eyes, it nevertheless still retains much of its force and dramatic power. Following this came the disastrous affair of *The Merry-Go-Round*, with Norman Kerry and Mary Philbin, which was left unfinished by him. Soon afterwards, Metro-Goldwyn gave him the production of *Greed*, adapted from Herbert Norris's novel 'McTeague,' and Stroheim made the film on which his reputation stands to-day. Why and how Metro-Goldwyn came to give Stroheim the opportunity to make this picture still remains a mystery, for the theme of *Greed* was the last possible form of box-office appeal for Metro-Goldwyn, always a firm of showmanship, to be interested in.

Stroheim set out to show the loathsome effect of a human being's

passion for money; how it affected the woman whose passion it was; and how it reacted on the persons with whom she came into contact. The action was woven around a wedding and a double murder, with death in a torrid desert by thirst and exposure. *Greed* was the essence of sordidness, the depth of depression and the horror of distorted human nature. But it was sheer, undiluted truth; the essence of reality expressed in the powerful terms of the cinema. Not one ray of light, of warmth, of cheer disturbed its meandering length. It was the concentrated dreariness of life. From its opening among the tree-clad hills which surrounded the gold mine, through the depths of the dark squalor of middle-class life, to the murder of the wife and the final sequence in the valley of death, it was disturbing. The people who saw it loathed it, yet were fascinated. Americans frankly disliked it; its moral that money is worthless either roused their consciences uncomfortably or was passed by unseen. They could not believe that someone had made a film about a man who murdered his wife because she had hoarded money. It was too near to life, too damning in its truth, too frank in its rightness. Stroheim's days as a dish-washer had shown him too much.

In *Greed*, more than in any other film, Stroheim strengthened his theme by insistence on detail and by the consciousness of inanimate objects. Stroheim knew the value of the camera's faculty for the selection of the particular. He used it as it had never been used before in the establishment of psychological atmosphere. The dingy wallpaper, the automatic piano, the dirty dishes, the unmade bed, the unemptied wash-basin, the brass bedstead, the soiled handkerchief, all these details insignificant in themselves were used to build up an effect of squalor. It was from *Greed* that Sternberg acquired his talent for using sordid material. There is also an affinity in the use of detail between Stroheim and Pabst. Both directors are aware of the consciousness of the inanimate. Both use objects rather than persons to create atmosphere. It is possible to see *The Joyless Street* (1925) and *Greed* (1923) on the same level. The opening scene of *Jeanne Ney*, most of *The Salvation Hunters*, and portions of *The Docks of New York* have distinct relationship with the bedroom of *McTeague* in *Greed*. The final sequence in the desert, with the sense of space, the blazing sun, the cracked sand, the shot mule, stands alone as a superb rendering of environment. *Greed* was Victorian, but it was cinema. Despite its faults, the gold coloration,

the too sudden development of the wife's character, the ridiculous make-up of Gibson Gowland, this was Stroheim's greatest picture. It is interesting to note that Stroheim's explanation for the length of *Greed*, said variously to have been anything from twenty to a hundred reels in its original version, was that he used no more film than was absolutely necessary for the filmic expression of the theme. This is an evasive statement typical of Stroheim, to which there is no answer. Nevertheless, the copy generally shown, about ten thousand feet in length, left much to be desired in editing. The film fell evenly into two halves. It is assumed that the transition period after the wedding was eliminated, an unfortunate act that took weight from the otherwise brilliant performance of Zazu Pitts as the hoarding wife. Her acting, under the control of Stroheim, has never been equalled by any other American actress at any time.

The next Stroheim picture was a reaction to the reality of *Greed*. It was a movie version of a popular musical comedy in the Ruritanian manner, complete with princesses and monocled lieutenants, flashing sabres and pink roses. *The Merry Widow* was as much a story movie as *Greed* was a thematic film. Occasionally, amid the welter of crown princes and chorus girls, a stagey duel and a coronation in the true Hollywood manner (colour), there came a flash of Stroheim technique, a sparkle of wit akin to the *Forbidden Paradise* of Ernst Lubitsch. To his credit, Stroheim at least made the synthetic Mae Murray do something else than mince, and he handled John Gilbert as he has not been handled since. But despite this, the picture was nothing more than a typical Metro-Goldwyn adaptation of a musical comedy, with tuneful music and Parisian humour. Because it had been successful in the theatre, the producers calculated that *The Merry Widow* would be a successful, money-making movie. But why give it to Erich von Stroheim, the maker of *Greed*, to produce?

Stroheim pursued his luxurious way, passed into the hands of Paramount-Famous-Players, and began *The Wedding March* in June 1926. He finished the picture in the late spring of 1927. He spent over twelve months in trying to edit his vast mass of material into some unified whole, calmly suggesting to Paramount that he should make two films out of it, until finally they lost their temper, and gave the bins of celluloid to someone else to cut. The successor, however, did no better than Stroheim, and the assembling was turned over to yet another professional cutter, who succeeded in

condensing the original matter into about ten reels. Eventually, it was shown in England early in 1929, three years after it had been begun, and, as was only to be expected, was disjointed, erratic, and uneven in quality. Von Stroheim, of course, wished it to be clearly known that he entirely disclaimed the version shown to the public, and washed his hands of the whole matter. Without prejudice, he had only himself to blame. In the copy presented to the public, *The Wedding March* was lacking in unity, uncertain in treatment, and crudely interspaced with cheaply written titles, but, for the student of the cinema, it contained some beautiful passages. Like other Stroheim films, the setting was Vienna; with a background of falling cherry blossom; sentimental beer gardens that were out of joint with some topical-news shots of the city at the beginning; a scandal-mongering and poverty-stricken court; and a coloured procession with a lifelike replica of old Franz Josef. It was burdened with little story-interest, being concerned chiefly with the tragic love of a prince for a poor but charming girl, and the fatal circumstances that compelled the former to do the will of his parents and marry according to his status. It was pathetic, appealing, and wistful; sentimental, charming, and Victorian. One recalls it now by a few isolated sequences. *Prince Nicki's* first meeting with the girl, when he is on parade and is unable to speak to her; the hospital sequence which has been mentioned; the delightful interplay between Stroheim and Maude George, as his mother; and Zazu Pitts's exquisite playing of the lame princess, the compulsory wife of the unwilling *Prince Nicki*. Notable, also, was the use of heavily-gauzed photography for the love scenes, in contrast to the sharp, clear-cut camerawork of the butcher's scenes. Although the public version stopped short with the unhappy marriage of the prince and princess, to the grief of the poor but charming girl, the original conception continued the theme to a hunting trip in the mountains and the death of the limping princess. From an examination of the still-photographs of this latter, unshown part of the picture, it seems of greater interest than the first. Although it is improbable that the second half of *The Wedding March* will be presented on account of its silence, there is perhaps a possibility of it being shown as a curiosity at some future private performance.

After his retirement from the Paramount concern, Stroheim started the direction of Gloria Swanson in *Queen Kelly*, in which

Miss Swanson played the part of a prostitute. The film was apparently finished and in cutting stage when the dialogue film made its unseemly intrusion. It was deemed unwise to attempt the synchronisation of the picture owing to its unsuitability as a talking vehicle for Miss Swanson. Instead, she went under the direction of Edmund Goulding in *The Trespasser*, while Stroheim went into *The Great Gabbo*, under James Cruze. Of this latter film I find it hard to write, for so cluttered up was it with infernal singing, dancing, talking, backstage, musical comedy stuff, that Stroheim was given no chance with his part. Added to which, he was obliged to wear bad uniforms and was overpowered by the worst coloured sequences ever seen in the history of the cinema. Once more, *The Great Gabbo* was of merit here and there because of Stroheim's quiet, masterful personality, but its values went no further. It added in no way to the reputation of James Cruze, to the value of dialogue film as a means of expression, or to the accomplishment of the 'genius' of Stroheim.

Stroheim, as a director, has given much to the cinema in an indirect and obscure manner. Stroheim as an actor is always a source of interest. Stroheim as a cinematic genius is not to be countenanced.

Charles Chaplin's greatest asset is his deep understanding of human nature; an understanding that has not been reached without contact with the low, depressing, morbid side of life; a contact with underclasses, the poor and the hungry. Chaplin, like Stroheim, Pudovkin, Eisenstein and other great directors, bases his sense of reality on his years of poverty and insignificance. Without the circumstances of his days of struggle, Chaplin would never have reached the heights to which he has attained. The financial profits of his pictures have meant nothing to him, save that they were a proof of the success of his message to the world, and that they have prevented him recently from the necessity of working for a firm other than his own. No man has made Chaplin what he is to-day save Chaplin himself. He believes in two things: himself and the cinema.

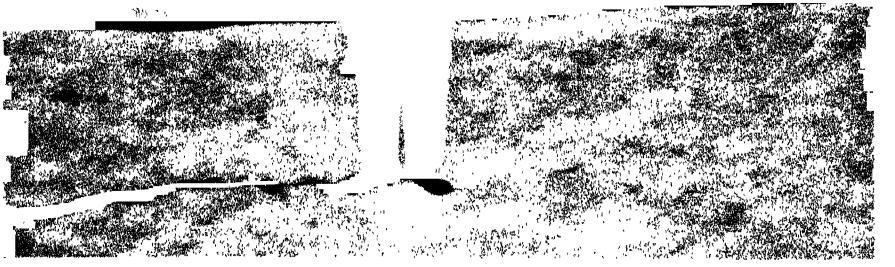
For his own films, Chaplin claims nothing but that they have amused and lightened the hearts of millions. If he hears that they are badly shown, with harsh musical accompaniment, he is irritated because the carelessness of others is destroying his purpose. For this reason, he welcomes the mechanically synchronised musical score. There are moralists who say that Chaplin should be happy

because he gives happiness and joy to others. But Chaplin, I believe, is an unhappy, disconsolate, and lonely man. He is constantly overwhelmed and saddened by the immensity of life. As an artist, Chaplin lives apart from the rest of humanity. What artist, who ever fulfilled the expression of his thoughts, was every happy? For to realise them he has had to suffer, to experience bitter loneliness, and to endure the aching pain of loveliness. He has, too, to live in unrest. With Chaplin, I suspect, it is all this, for it is to be seen in his films. An artist such as Chaplin can live only and have interest alone in the work upon which he is engaged at the moment. This work demands intense concentration, as indeed does that of any real film director. When Chaplin is conceiving and producing a film, it is disastrous for him to have any thoughts but those related to that film in his mind. That is why the divorce affairs and legal matters which enveloped him some time ago were so unfortunate. Despite general criticism to the contrary, however, his genius overcame these mundane calamities.

Chaplin conceives every gesture, every scene and every sequence of his films from every possible point of view. He possesses a tremendous power of visualisation, and a valuable knowledge of the psychological effect of the visual image. He was one of the first directors to realise the camera's capability for recording detail and movement. The language of Chaplin, like that of acrobats and clowns, is international, for it is visual in gesture and universal in theme. The idea behind every Chaplin film is easily understood by every one, according to their powers of receptivity. Chaplin realises that the camera records personal movement far more closely than the eyes of a music-hall 'house.' Miming before a camera lens is very different from gesturing before an audience. The projected image on the screen enlarges and enhances the smallest of movements. Like other great directors, Chaplin makes supreme use of camera emphasis. Little movements mean big things in the Chaplin film, and, moreover, his invention of detail is amazing. Three memorable instances occur to the mind. The unforgettable roll dance in *The Gold Rush*; the inimitable crooked finger, suggestive of the maggot in the apple, in *The Circus*; and the magnificent pantomime scene of the David and Goliath sermon in *The Pilgrim*. These three incidents show with immeasurable force the marvellous sense of filmic detail possessed by Chaplin. He is a genius in the art of suggestion.

In any other medium but the film his genius would be negligible. There is nothing in a Chaplin film which has not been put there for a purpose and the effect of which has not been calculated. He preconceives the psychological effect on an audience of every small strip of film. For this reason his work is never littered with lavish display. It is his faculty for discovering expressive detail, as distinct from his individual personality, which renders Chaplin the supreme artist. *The Circus* alone showed how, by his unique inventiveness of mind, he transmuted the traditional methods of fun into real uproarious humour under the eyes of the traditionalists themselves. This was in the rehearsal episode – the William Tell act and the Barber's Shop business. Chaplin has never excelled the brilliance of this scene.

Chaplin has reduced misfortune, trepidation, disillusion, and suffering to emotions of laughter. His adventures are against the hard-hearted, the oppressors and the selfish, for he knows the smug complacency, the hypocrisy, and the injustice of this world. He is continually fleeing from the angry arm of the law, which wants him for some misunderstood or unconscious offence. Blows, insults, and abuse are heaped upon him, and yet the audience roars at his discomfort. Deprived of all that he holds dear, companionship, food, happiness, Chaplin remains a figure of fun to the masses. To others, perhaps more sensitive, he is pathetic, for in some way he is themselves, their lives and their emotions. *The Circus* was one of the greatest tragedies in the history of the film and yet it was magnificently funny. With his alert, sensitive, illimitable resourcefulness, his well-meaning, misunderstood kindliness, Chaplin stands alone in the cinema. It is the resolution of the man which secures the affections of the public to him. There is no comparable effect to the feelings roused by the closing sequence of a Chaplin film; that final defiant gesture of every picture when, buoyed up with eternal faith and hope, Chaplin fades into the distance, into, as it were, the opening of his next film. There is a definite link between all of the Chaplin comedies. When he is seen afresh, after a lapse of time, he appears to have just come round the corner from his last film, to mingle with another crowd of idlers. Although his productions are now separated by years, there is still that link, a continuity of idea between one film and the next. Despite this, Chaplin is not a type; he is not an actor; he is an individual searching for a satisfaction



american allied artist.

THE GOLD RUSH

the finest of the Chaplin films. The lone prospector 1925

which he will never discover. For this reason alone, if dialogue is introduced into a Chaplin film; if there is the slightest concession to the public taste created by the producers, by the Warners, the Laskys, the Zukors, the Foxs; then the Chaplin film as it is known, universally appreciated and adored, will cease to be.

Each of Chaplin's pictures is a theme woven around one character. He is naturally aware of his remarkable individuality, for it will have been noticed that as the years have advanced, he has been gradually eliminating the caricaturish element from his pictures. With his own development the characters with which he peoples his stories have become more reasonable and more real, until, in *The Circus*, they were quite natural. It is interesting to compare the supporting cast in the latter film with that of *Shoulder Arms*. The flowing false moustaches, the big noses, the stout stomachs, the ridicule, the slapstick are gone. Actually, it will be remembered that Chaplin began as a 'funny man,' evolved through these knockabout comedies a distinct personality and eventually epitomised not only the down-trodden under-dog, but the disappointment and discouragement of the whole world. It is of point, for a moment, to recall Chaplin of *The Kid's Auto Races*, *The Immigrant*, *Sunnyside*, *The Kid*, *The Gold Rush*, and finally, *The Circus*, tracing the development of the leading lady and cast as well as of Chaplin himself.

By way of example, the treatment of Myrna Kennedy in the last-named film was evidence of Chaplin's interest in feminine personality; a facet of his character which was largely responsible for the subtlety of *A Woman of Paris*.

As is now well-known, Chaplin was originally engaged for film work by Adam Kessel, who happened to see the young comedian when he was touring far from his London home, in a pantomime-revue affair called 'A Night in a London Club.' Kessel signed Chaplin for a year's work at Los Angeles, beginning in November of 1913, the pictures being made under the direction of the inimitable Mack Sennett. These comedies are usually known as the Keystone period, that being the name of the producing firm. Their character was pure slapstick with the customary ingredients – throwing of custard pies, falling down, hitting of people on the head and being hit back. In nearly all these early one or two reelers, Chaplin was not the pre-eminent member of the cast, with the exception of the first, the already mentioned *Kid's Auto Races* (1913), wherein he merely

became funny by continuous repetition of the same motive. The film was without story and scenario, and is of interest merely because it represents Chaplin's first appearance in the sphere which he was to make so peculiarly his own. Of this period, also, is *The Fatal Mallet*, in which Chaplin and Mack Sennett alternately hit one another on the head in their rivalry to embrace Mabel Normand, who disconcertedly sat aside until Chaplin struck her in the rear with the toe of his boot. A year later, Chaplin supported Marie Dressler, at that time a well-known stage actress, in *Tillie's Punctured Romance*, together with Mack Swain, Mabel Normand, and Chester Conklin. This comedy was made in six reels, a hitherto unprecedented length, and took fourteen weeks to prepare as compared to the customary one week for a single reeler. To this period, also, belonged *The Face on the Bar Room Floor*, one of the two attempts at burlesque by Chaplin, with Edna Purviance and Chester Conklin. From these crudities, Chaplin continued into the Essanay period and a series of comedies in the true slapstick manner followed, such as *Champion Charlie*, *Charlie the Perfect Lady* (in which he played without a moustache, again with Edna Purviance and Chester Conklin), *Charlie at the Bank*, *Carmen*, *Shanghaied*, *Charlie at the Show*, etc. Many of these contained the dream element, being his fond imaginings whilst dozing over his work, and in them all he was beginning to assert the individuality of the later pictures. So successful were these from a financial point of view that, in 1916, Chaplin signed a contract with the Mutual Film Corporation, for whom he made many films, including *Easy Street*, *The Floorwalker*, the individual effort *One A.M.*, *The Fireman*, *The Rink*, *The Pawnshop*, *The Cure*, and many others, in all of which he was supported by Edna Purviance. Later, he made the famous Million Dollar Chaplins for the First National Company, including *Sunnyside*, *A Dog's Life*, *Shoulder Arms*, *The Kid*, *A Day's Pleasure*, *Pay Day*, *The Idle Class*, and *The Pilgrim*, the last two of which prepared the way for the Chaplin of to-day. Though conceived in terms of travesty, they were all excellent in their construction and their unification of Chaplin's personality. Not, however, until the United Artists' productions of *The Gold Rush* and *The Circus*, of 1925 and 1927 respectively, was there to be found the true realisation of the artist. Both these films were superb examples of cinema; their composition and continuity was flawless; their exposition of the genius of Chaplin

unrivalled. Recollection of them makes it necessary to re-state Chaplin's rare faculty of exact timing. Like the Soviets, he is aware, to the nearness of a frame, of the precise length for which a shot should be held on the screen. Although his filmic knowledge may not express itself in the same technique as the Soviet school, nevertheless it is unique in American film production.

Quite apart from his contribution to the cinema as a self-directed actor, it is of importance to recall Chaplin's single essay in the serious direction of others. Just in the same way as *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, *Greed*, and *Battleship 'Potemkin'* are landmarks in the development of the film, so *A Woman of Paris* was the founder of a type of film-movie that has flourished in Hollywood since its production in 1923. Chaplin wrote the scenario and directed the picture himself, and, as with the later comedies, it was well-balanced in tension and actional sequence, the continuity flowing with an admirable smoothness. He chose a simple, natural theme of a boy's love for a girl; a misunderstanding; the development of their separate lives, the girl as an intelligent *demi-mondaine*, the boy as a temperamental creative artist; their re-meeting and the boy's resultant suicide at the discovery of his lover's way of living. The actual story-interest was of little value; it was the thoughts and mental reactions of the characters that gave rise to the action which were of interest. But what mattered most was Chaplin's treatment. He not only introduced the audience to a cultured prostitute and an exquisite *roué* in a drawing-room setting of flowers and gilt furniture, but he dug deep down into motives so that beneath their superficial actions could be discerned the quick workings of their minds. By subtle direction he laid bare the reasons of their petty quarrels, their jealousies and contrary complexes. He attacked both man and womanhood in this unforgettable film. He showed an understanding of the machinery of human mentality that hitherto had been merely suspected from his own comedies. He was reminiscent, if the comparison may be allowed, of the wit and skill of Wilde. The joy of watching *A Woman of Paris* unfold its length was only equalled by that of *Bed and Sofa*. With both films the spectator experienced an inward sense of irresistible delight, due, I believe, largely to the design and balance of the continuity. This is not, of course, to suggest for a moment that Chaplin and Room have any similarity, save in an understanding of the principles of continuity.

A Woman of Paris marked the first appearance of Adolphe Menjou in the suave, cynical, elegant, slightly humorous man-about-town rôle which he has so often repeated with inferior direction. The original part, under the genius of Chaplin, was inimitable in its fascinating, attractive, inscrutable, gentlemanly behaviour. Only on two other occasions has the *svelte* Menjou been so clever – in a modification of the Chaplin part in Lubitsch's *The Marriage Circle* and *Forbidden Paradise*. With due respect to the artistry of Lubitsch, his handling of Menjou lacked the knowledge of human nature possessed by Chaplin. With an estimable sense of gratitude and recognition for her long support, Chaplin gave the leading rôle of this brilliant satire to Edna Purviance, a gesture that was typical of the man's character and suggestive of his idealisation of women. He himself appeared anonymously for a brief moment in the guise of a French railway porter.

Significant in Chaplin's direction was the use of the close up for emphasis of detail. He was able on several occasions to suggest the atmosphere of a scene by the visual image of a single character. No one will forget the immovable face of the *masseuse* during the beauty treatment of Miss Purviance, her mechanical procedure with her job whilst the girl friends called in to chatter. Chaplin here was treading on the ground of Eisenstein, but, it will be recalled, was treading unconsciously. The brilliance of this film is remembered by its small incidents. The delightful episode of the rope of pearls; the miniature saxophone (an instance of Chaplin's inventiveness); the box of chocolates; the pocket handkerchief; a napkin full of holes; these were the memorable details of this amazing film. Mention is also to be made of the great scene of the *demi-mondaine* at the bed of the dead artist; the breaking to the mother of the news of her son's suicide; the boy seated alone on his bed, distraught, with a flood of white light on the bedclothes dazzling out of the blackness of the room. These are episodes unforgettable for their dramatic treatment.

A Woman of Paris inspired Lubitsch's *The Marriage Circle*, and, following in its wake, a hundred other movies from the hands of the young men of Hollywood. As is generally the case, the imitations lacked the sparkle, the wit, and the intelligence of the master film.

Both Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford are to be regarded with the sincerest admiration, for they are vital forces in the cinema. In the first place, neither of them is an artist; nor, in the second place,

can either of them be said to have any idea of the values of acting. Yet they have both, in their own way, climbed from obscurity to the heights of universal popularity. Through years of hard work, they have become stars; but, paradoxically enough, it is not fitting to call either of them products of the star-system. Neither Douglas Fairbanks nor his wife have become what they are now by aid of their respective producing companies. Like Chaplin, they have made themselves.

It is to the credit of Fairbanks and Mary Pickford that they are fully conscious of their limitations and capabilities in the expression afforded by the film. Fairbanks, one feels, realises only too well that he is not an artist or an actor in the accepted understanding of the terms. He is, on the contrary (and of this he is fully cognisant), a pure product of the medium of the cinema in which he seeks self-expression. But knowing his own limits and those of Hollywood, he will surround himself with persons who make claim to artistry. He will bring from France Maurice Leloir, a specialist in historical costume, to supervise in Hollywood the designs for *The Man in the Iron Mask*. He knew well, in this case, that no American designer had either the knowledge or taste to reconstruct with any faith the costumes of seventeenth century France. In the same way, Fairbanks saw the German films *Destiny*, *Waxworks*, *Sumurun*, and *Siegfried* and realised their value as examples of fantasy then unknown in America. He determined to learn from continental intelligence. *The Thief of Bagdad* was a poor film, badly designed and conceived with false artistry, but nevertheless it is impossible not to appreciate the motive that underlay its production. Fairbanks made a definite attempt in this film to do something better, to step out of the Hollywood groove. He is to be admired for his courage, for there were few others in California willing to essay the chance. *The Thief of Bagdad* was not a financial success; it was not a good production; but its presence lies to the credit of Fairbanks. Curiously enough it is in this wish to encourage the 'art' of the cinema that Fairbanks strikes the wrong note. His most recent films have not had the rough power, the intensity or the vigour which made his earlier pictures such good examples of cinema. Of late years there has been too much of the ulterior motive, too much lavishness and too little Fairbanks. Disregarding the obvious advance in technique, due to mechanical progress, *The Mark of Zorro* was a very much better example of the

filmic properties of Fairbanks than either *The Gaucho* or *The Man in the Iron Mask*.

It may seem ridiculous to claim that Fairbanks, an acrobat who is unable to put drama into his gestures or emotion into his expressions, is one of the few outstanding figures in the whole world of the cinema. Yet, by reason of his rhythm, his graceful motion and perpetual movement of acting material, Fairbanks is essentially filmic. He has, it is true, no other talent than his rhythm and his ever-present sense of pantomime, save perhaps his superior idea of showmanship. It is certain that he sees in every situation of the past and of the present a foundation for rhythmical movement. Just as Chaplin learned to walk a tight-rope for the making of *The Circus*, so Fairbanks has learnt to fence, to wield a whip, to throw a lariat.

At first glance, these gestures may be explained by the Fairbanks enthusiasm, but they are to be attributed to more important reasons than the sheer love of doing things right. He saw in those accomplishments some basis for filmic actions other than mere acrobatics. He realised that the actions were superbly graceful in their natural perfection, as indeed are any gestures born out of utility. He delights equally in the swing of a cloak, the fall of the ostrich feather in his hat, the mounting of his horse, the hang of his sword, the slender form of his doublet. One remembers the prologue to that early film *A Modern Musketeer*, a small gem that could be shown by itself. In all his costume pictures, Fairbanks took the utmost pleasure in the romanticism that the clothes of the period offered to him. In *The Black Pirate*, *The Three Musketeers*, and *Robin Hood* he made every possible play with the details of the period. He delighted in *D'Artagnan's* duels, in the *Earl of Huntingdon's* tournament, in the Spanish Main romanticism of the pirates. The *Petruchio* of *The Taming of the Shrew*, jackboot on head and apple-core in hand, was a symbol of the romance of Fairbanks. It needed a great man to carry off that costume with grandeur. I can think of no other personality in the cinema who could have so displayed the courage of his convictions. In the same way that Chaplin is the centralised character of his work, so is Fairbanks the sole *raison d'être* of his pictures. Despite the presence of his wife, he dominated *The Taming of the Shrew*. Although none of his films has been nominally directed by him, he is nevertheless the underlying mind behind every detail, however paltry. The spirit of Fairbanks is at the base of every factor

in his productions; behind every movement, the design of the sets, the choice of the cast, the lay-out of the continuity, the construction of escapes and situations, the making of the costumes, the technical perfection of the camerawork, the drama of the lighting. The mind of the man governs the architecture of the whole.

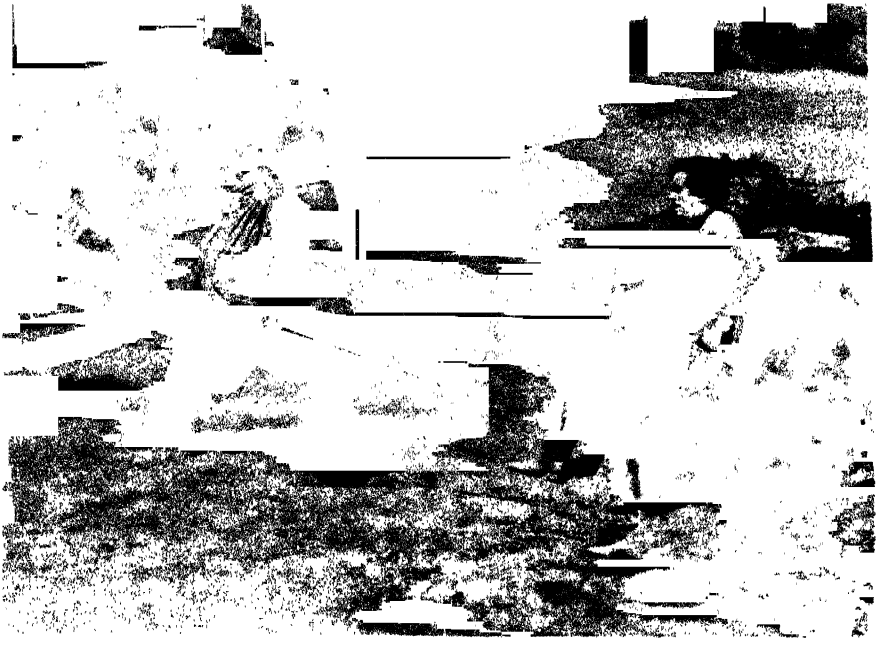
I have complained that this personality of Fairbanks, this love of complete supervision, has recently superseded his actual playing. This 'art' complex has ousted the Fairbanks of youth and energy. Not for one moment is the control of the man regretted, nor is his love of detail to be discouraged, but nevertheless, I believe that this feeling for magnificence has dwarfed the roughness of the original Fairbanks spirit. The bandit of *The Gaucho* was tame in comparison with the cowboy of *Heading South*. There is no question that in his last three films the production has been in advance of the actual screen work of Fairbanks. The individual motion, the defiant gesture and the swinging stride have been belittled by the splendour of the environment. There has been a tendency towards top-heaviness. There has been too much Fairbanks the producer and too little Fairbanks the acrobat. In the concentration upon his love of costume, of romantic sets, he has limited the actions of his own playing. He has failed to justify the heroism of his own existence. In order to appreciate the full meaning of Fairbanks, it is necessary to return to his earlier work, where his own movement and grace ran through every foot of the film. One recalls *The Mark of Zorro*, the latter part of *Robin Hood*, portions of *The Three Musketeers*, and particularly *The Lamb*, *The Matromaniac*, *A Modern Musketeer*, *Knickerbocker-Buckeroo*, *Arizona*, and *Heading South*. It is true that after *The Thief of Bagdad*, he made an attempt to return to the real Fairbanks in *Don Q*, but the old spirit was absent.

In all the early Fairbanks films his overwhelming personality dominated the pretensions of a story and the elaboration of spectacle. The film sufficed in that it was always the exuberance of Fairbanks that held the audience. The stories were always composed around the same familiar structure, the inevitable hero, heroine and villain. They were located in different countries in order to retain the freshness of atmosphere, through which moved the ever-restless figure of Fairbanks; the essence of enthusiasm, good spirits, adventure, disreputableness, chivalry, and courtesy. The one aim used to be good-heartedness, to be attained by effortless energy. One recalls in

this respect, the Artcraft series, *Reaching For the Moon*, *He Comes Up Smiling*, *Down to Earth*, and, later, *Mr. Fix It*. These moral uplift films were quite distinct from the adventure themes, the open-air romanticism of *The Lamb*, *The Man From Painted Post*, and *Arizona*, which culminated, after the war, in *The Mark of Zorro*. Briefly, it is perceived that Fairbanks has come from the moral uplift, *Say, Young Fellow* type of film, through the cowboy and the bandit to the costume romanticism of *Robin Hood*, and the other personal productions on a large scale. With the exception of *Don Q* and parts of *Robin Hood*, he has cloaked the full meaning of his vigour under the mantle of his own desire for magnificence.

It is apparent that the motion peculiar to Fairbanks could not possibly be conveyed by any other medium but the film. Fairbanks could not be theatre or literature. All the attributes of the cinema go to help the movement that envelopes his productions. The properties of the camera, its device of slow-motion, add grace to his sweeping curves of action. I find it curious in this respect that Fairbanks, who is usually said to keep well abreast with current film production, has not shown more interest in the mobility of the camera. There was, it is true, a long travelling shot in the opening of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and another at the end, but these were purely atmospheric and not in any way attached to Fairbanks himself. It is possible, perhaps, to visualise the rhythm of Fairbanks being followed by the smoothly swinging path of Fritz Arno Wagner's camera, as one remembers the latter's work in *Jeanne Ney*. In such wise could the Fairbanks motive be most powerfully expressionistic. I visualise a renascence of the soft-toned ranches of southern California, Spanish in their design, with great tree shapes looming against a deep panchromatic sky. I visualise Fairbanks once more the rapid *Zorro*, caught by the eye-lens of the German cameraman. But such things are for the imagination.

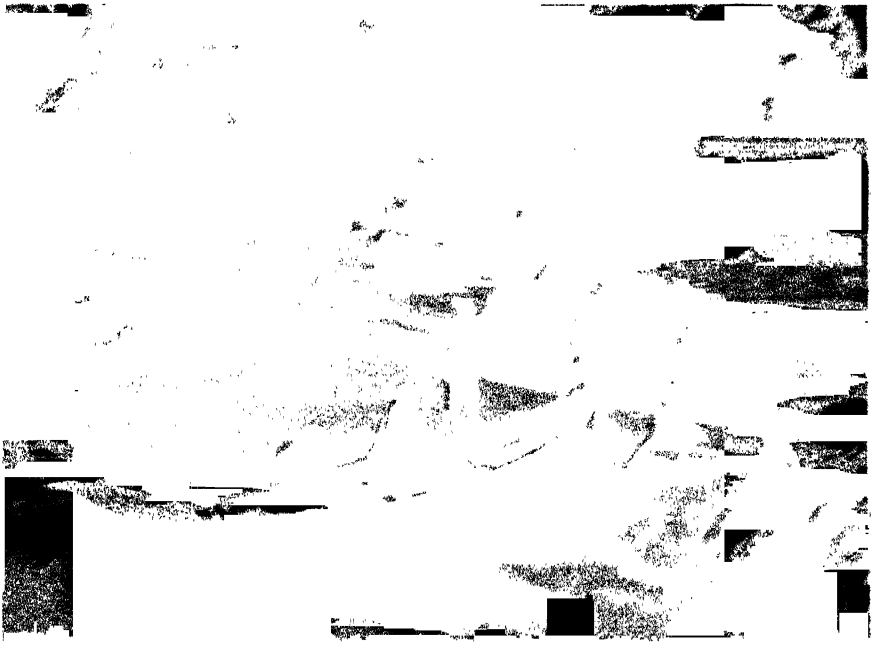
Nevertheless, I earnestly hope that Fairbanks will make some return to his old outlook, when his movement stood for all that was good in the material cinema. The 'art' and 'moral' influence with which he has tried to imbue his big productions has not been acceptable, even though set in a background of William Cameron Menzies's structures. Not too easily can *The Thief of Bagdad*, with its chocolate box minarets and ludicrous winged monsters, be forgotten; the wasted situations of *The Gaucho* still rankle; and *The*



THE BLACK PIRATE

the colour film, with Douglas Fairbanks and Anders Randolph

1926



Man in the Iron Mask was a false conception of romanticism, despite the Leloir designs, with a prologue and epilogue that were among the worst things ever seen on the screen. *The Taming of the Shrew*, for all its splendid entertainment and its exposition of Fairbanks, lacked the fire of the earlier films. Alone, *The Black Pirate* stood out as a brilliant film. Taken for what it was, a glorious collection of impossible situations in delightful settings, it was as good as anything that Fairbanks has ever done. It was rapid in pace, strong in feeling, and, above all, it was stimulating. With *The Mark of Zorro*, it is his best work.

With the coming of the dialogue film, it became a commercial necessity for both Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford to divert their talent along fresh channels. Miss Pickford went ahead of her husband and made *Coquette*, a film that raised much controversy, but Fairbanks hung back, contemplating presumably the needs of this new mechanical invention. For some time there had been suggestions that these two famous persons should appear in the same film, a dangerous and perhaps disastrous undertaking. But if ever a suitable occasion arose for their dual picture, then it was in this new species of cinema. Thus, the only way in which a proper appreciation of *The Taming of the Shrew* could be obtained was by regarding it from a business point of view. It was a superb piece of showmanship. The choice of a Shakespearean play was astute, for it meant that the dialogue was safe from criticism. True, people would complain at the prostitution of the play, but criticism could not be levelled at the lines themselves. That it was Shakespeare's play mattered not one jot. It was a commentary upon husbands and wives; it afforded a chance for spectacle; it was in all ways an admirable vehicle for the two personalities to be launched in a new manner. As a film, it was excellent entertainment, but it could not be considered as a proper cinematic exposition of the talent of either Douglas Fairbanks or Mary Pickford.

Of Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks I find difficulty in writing, for there is a consciousness of vagueness, an indefinable emotion as to her precise degree of accomplishment. In vain she has been described as the Cinderella of the screen, with an air of innocence that touches deeply the chords of the strongest heart. She is said to be 'the sweet young girl that every man desires some day to have for himself.' This may well be, but Mary Pickford as a business woman, acutely

aware of the selling power of her sweetness, is the more interesting personality. The breakaway from the stereotyped part has been difficult for Mary Pickford. She tried, it will be remembered, once before with Lubitsch's *Rosita*, but the public apparently preferred the *Little Annie Roonies* to the Spanish singing girl. Nevertheless, it was clear that she could not continue to play the child of fifteen, and *Coquette* was a perfectly justified appearance. In *The Taming of the Shrew* she was swept off her feet by the tempestuosity of her husband, which was after all precisely what the story demanded. One hankers inevitably after the Pickford of *Human Sparrows* and *Daddy Long Legs*, but the commands of time are to be obeyed. The future of Miss Pickford will be troublesome.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks are extremely serious about this film business. They realise their severe responsibility. They are both of extreme importance to the cinema. With Chaplin, Stroheim, and, to a lesser extent, Griffith, they are the outstanding figures in the American cinema. It would be wise not to underestimate the value of their work. They have separately and jointly given much that is good to the film. One feels also that they both have much left to give in the future, but it is dubious whether this will be by way of the dialogue film. Rather they will achieve even greater significance, perhaps, by a careful research of their past work and a study of the methods of the continental directors.

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The importation of European talent into the studios of Hollywood has been briefly remarked upon, and it is important to observe the developments of these foreigners in their new surroundings and their indirect influence on the American film. The coming of Ernst Lubitsch into the fold of Hollywood directors marked a definite era in the standard of the movie, and his artistry, together with that of his *confrères*, left a distinctive Germanic strain in the younger American school. It is to be remembered that despite apparent faults, the love of lavish display and the concession to salacious appeal, the American movies were at that time (1920 to 1923) at least popular throughout the world. They were being produced, moreover, with a high degree of technical accomplishment, and were distinguished for their hard, metallic nature. Germany, on the other hand, had developed a type of film utterly different to the movie, a heavy, slow-moving, darkly lit, studio film, bordering on the one

side the psychological, and on the other the fantastic. It has been seen that the Americans, instead of regarding this European child as a rival, took it as an ally, and the majority of the Germans, only too precariously placed in their own fluctuating industry, were not slow to accept the proffered contracts from Hollywood. The result of this fusion has been some extraordinary films, notable for their mixed tendencies.

In Europe, Lubitsch had directed several films, most notable being *Dubarry*, *Sumurun*, and *The Flame*, with Pola Negri, and *Anne Boleyn* with Emil Jannings, when he followed Miss Negri across to California. He was an extremely efficient director with a leaning towards spectacle, a subtle sense of wit peculiar to himself and a definite feeling for the dramatic in the manner of Reinhardt tradition. Lubitsch in America developed into a curious unknown quantity, who combined flashes of dexterous artistry, imbued with cunning, with much rather dull and boyish sentimentality. He started his American period in a bad vein, being given Mary Pickford and Raoul Walsh to direct in a Spanish film, *Rosita*, in which his Germanic mind was in opposition to the star value of Miss Pickford. He had no idea of Hollywood production methods and became confused in his outlook. Save for a few scenes of pictorial beauty, the film was best forgotten. His next picture, however, was much more the true Lubitsch, for following in the path of Chaplin's *A Woman of Paris*, with a hint of the James Cruze domestic comedies, he made *The Marriage Circle*, a witty, superficial, amusing, intimate commentary on modern life in Vienna and Paris, as Hollywood knew them. Lubitsch contrived to continue where Chaplin had left off, leaving out the cynicism and inner meaning and concentrating on the lightness of the framework. With this frippery, Lubitsch set off all the young men in Hollywood in the same vein, making himself from time to time several other comedies of a similar nature, such as *Three Women*, *Kiss Me Again*, *Lady Windermere's Fan* (from the Wilde play) and *So This Is Paris*, all delightful, effervescent movies of a good type. In between these sweetmeats came Lubitsch's one really brilliant film, a satire on Hollywood so subtle and so crafty that to this day many Americans cannot perceive wherein lay its sting. In the first place, *Forbidden Paradise* was conceived by Famous-Players-Lasky as a rollicking, Ruritanian melodrama, with good opportunities for spectacle and a reliable box-office appeal.

Ernst Lubitsch, however, for once forgetting that he was being clever on an American salary, treated this farce, in a moment of inspiration, in such a manner that it satirised with a nicety of wit the entire American movie system. The scenario was adapted by that admirable scenarist, Hans Kraly, from a play called 'The Czarina,' which dealt with the amorous intrigues of Catherine of Russia, but Lubitsch brought the thing up-to-date, putting it in a Ruritanian setting. The amorous moods of the queen, the fiery revolutionary disturbances suppressed by handy cheques, the delightful ins-and-outs of the court intrigues, were handled by Lubitsch with a perfection of satire. The continuity was pleasingly smooth and he employed deft touches in the use of the particular to reinforce the general that have never since appeared in his work. The Lubitsch of *The Student Prince* was a dull dog when compared with the witticisms of *Forbidden Paradise*. He chose for his players, Pola Negri, whose talents he knew well and whose playing of the impassioned queen, exquisitely regal when in the presence of the court and sexually alluring when alone with her favourite lieutenant, has never been surpassed in its kind; Adolphe Menjou, of Chaplin's schooling, magnificently subtle – his wide-hearted acceptance of the decorations that emblazoned the breast of the young lieutenant and the French ambassador will not be forgotten; Rod la Rocque, the essence of dashing lieutenants, innocent, good looking and slender; and Pauline Starke, angelic as the virginal lady-in-waiting.

He had built the vastest of palaces in which to house his regally passionate queen, with shining floors, massive columns, and great sweeps of drapery that seemed to hang from heaven. He had the roundest of full moons; the most luscious of roses; the blackest of velvet for the Negri's imperial dresses, with trains that swished across the mirrored floors; and an exquisite chorus of uniformed officers and bearded revolutionaries. Beyond being a commentary on the frailty of women (in particular of queens), on sly chancellors and gallant officers, *Forbidden Paradise* was a most satisfying exposure of the false glamour in which Hollywood lived.

Of Lubitsch's other and more recent Americo-German work, there should be mentioned that extremely popular and successful film *The Student Prince*, and *The Patriot*, a return to the historical spectacle, in co-operation with his early actor Jannings. The first-named picture was calculated by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to be a

really great film, lavish in spectacle, superb and smooth in direction, splendidly photographed, with Norma Shearer, Ramon Novarro, and Jean Hersholt as the players. *The Student Prince* was typical of the Americanisation of Lubitsch. It was a meaningless, superficial exposition of sexual sentimentality, rendered acceptable to the public by a perfection of technical accomplishment that has rarely been equalled. (For this reason it was voted by the general public as 'the film of the year.') It was an example of the keeping up of appearances. In reality, tearing aside the veil of glamour, Lubitsch's famous subtlety had degenerated into a lot of men all taking off their hats at the same moment and the interplay of opening and shutting doors. Of old Heidelburg, where the action was set, the film told not a thing, for the atmosphere was that of the second-class property rooms. As an instance of sheer undiluted picture-sense, *The Student Prince* was to be appreciated. As a film, in the development of Lubitsch's career, it was worthless.

Like *The Student Prince*, Lubitsch's *The Patriot* was hailed as the world's greatest film, with the world's greatest actor, made by the world's greatest director, with a cast of twenty thousand. As a matter of fact it was none of these things, which were due to Paramount's highly imaginative publicity department. It was a ridiculous travesty of Russian history; a mauled version of Alfred Neumann's play; an absurd, melodramatic, bestial display of bad taste. It is, of course, well-known that Jannings is a great actor in the theatrical manner, with much gesturing, mouthing, gibbering, and eye-rolling as his assets. That much is apparent from his early historical films, *Danton*, *Anne Boleyn*, and later, from *Tartuffe* and *The Last Laugh*. But the Paramount-Lubitsch-Jannings merger was nothing if not ludicrous. Whereas, in his earlier German work, Jannings put sincerity, force and meaning into his gestures, in his Hollywood period there was nothing but a bare framework. Jannings as the mad *Paul the First* succeeded in being ridiculous, unnecessarily lascivious, and, to an admirer of his better work, merely pitiful. It was sad to see good material put to such prostitution. Lewis Stone, on the other hand, always a quiet, restrained actor, played the difficult part of the treacherous *Count Pahlen* with dignity, reserve, and self-control, due not to Lubitsch or Paramount, but to his own personality. In short, *The Patriot*, despite its natural leanings towards cinema, was a mishandled, highly theatrical, over-acted,

rather pathetic instance of Americo-German tendencies. It lacked not only unity, but sincerity, purpose, style, and power. Some persons, judging by the reception accorded the picture (it was showing in London during the fortnight when the *Evening Standard* was running a public competition for postcard film criticism), mistook the capering of Jannings for these qualities. It was yet another example of the subordination of talent, possibly artistry, perhaps genius, to the demands of the box-office mind.

Lubitsch is a director of interest, if only because he is always an unknown quantity. He makes such films as *The Flame* and *Sumurun* in Germany, *Forbidden Paradise* and *The Marriage Circle* in America, and completes the enigma by *The Student Prince* and *The Patriot*. For appreciation of his cinematic knowledge, it is necessary to untie the Hollywood wrappings and peer inside to discover the intelligence he once possessed.

The undoing of Fred Murnau has been much the same as that of Ernst Lubitsch, save that the process has been quicker and is manifest in a lesser number of films. Murnau, of Germany, is associated with *The Last Laugh*, *Tartuffe*, *Dracula*, and *Faust*, films of value which showed their director to have a well-defined knowledge of the resources of the cinema, summarised in particular in the much discussed *Last Laugh*. Murnau went to Hollywood at the invitation of the Fox Film Company, who gave him *carte blanche* for his productions in their name. Mr. Fox was all out to buy 'art' for his second-rate productions. With Murnau went the celebrated Karl Mayer, the scenarist of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, *Tartuffe*, and many other German films, and together they devised the manuscript for *Sunrise*, based on Suderman's 'Trip to Tilsit.' Murnau, taking the bull by the horns, took full advantage of Mr. Fox's generous offer. He built a city. He employed Charles Roscher, so that he could use his name, as a cameraman, and chose (or was it Mr. Fox's doing?) Janet Gaynor and George O'Brien as his players. Herr Murnau was all set to make Mr. Fox a big picture. Brer Rabbit!

I am at a loss to describe the groanings and rumblings of the machinery as the 'rhythm' of *Sunrise* unfolded. Firstly, it must be understood that *Sunrise* was 'a new conception of the function of the motion picture; a new outlook on the depth of human nature.' Secondly, 'When you see *Sunrise*, you will see what can be done with new, untried material, when controlled by the hands of an artist.'

Thirdly, '*Sunrise* has a new technique.' Although these announcements, issued with the severest gravity, were probably due to Mr. Fox's new 'art' film publicity department, they are significant of the price that Murnau and Mayer had to pay for their Hollywood engagement. The theme of *Sunrise* was meant for intelligent people; it was very successful with housemaids and their boy friends. The picture itself was well done. The city looked really well. The technique was clever. Mr. Fox was perfectly sincere when he said that the picture was a masterpiece. It was. A masterpiece of bluff, insincerity, unsubstantial nonsense. To those who had read the lesson in the American work of Lubitsch, *Sunrise* was not a disappointment. A little foresight showed that Hollywood would dismember Murnau, just as she had Lubitsch, Seaström, Buchowetzski. *Sunrise* turned out to be exactly what had been expected. At the same time, many London film critics bleated restlessly over the 'rhythm' of the great picture. . . .

Murnau's second picture for Fox was *The Four Devils*, a 'story of the circus ring,' which was (save for some moving camerawork) an uninteresting film. *Sunrise* was at least meritorious if only in a small way; but this second film, with its puling sentiment, its little boys and girls, its wicked men and sensual vamps, was Mr. Fox in his post-war days of white-haired mothers carrying baskets over the hill. The German director has made another film for Mr. Fox, but as yet it is in the future. In the meantime, I wait to hear of Herr Murnau's return to Berlin, where perhaps it will be possible for him to pick up the threads of cinema where he laid them down after *The Last Laugh* and *Faust*.

Erich Pommer, whilst not strictly a film director, is nevertheless a supervisor, and the productions which have resulted from his control are all of considerable note. He left Germany after the making of *Vaudeville*, which was directed by E. A. Dupont, and supervised by Pommer. Exactly what the supervision of Erich Pommer amounts to is hard to ascertain with any degree of certainty, but the fact remains that there are directors, who, whilst working under him make excellent pictures, but are disappointing when alone. Dupont is a case in point. *Vaudeville*, from all standards, was a brilliant film and, on the strength of it, Dupont went to Hollywood to the Universal Company. There he made an unmentionable picture, *Love Me and the World Is Mine*, which is not remarked upon by any

film man for fear of incurring the anger of Herr Dupont. His later work in England, *Moulin Rouge*, *Piccadilly*, and *Atlantic*, although of more merit than the Hollywood picture, still lacks the vitality and strength of the film supervised by Pommer. When Pommer reached Hollywood, on the other hand, he sat alone and demanded this and that; supervised Mauritz Stiller making *Hotel Imperial*, and afterwards *Barbed Wire*; and returned to Berlin to control Hans Schwartz on *Nina Petrovna* and *The Hungarian Rhapsody*, and Joe May on *Asphalt* and *Homecoming*. It is evident, from a consideration of the above-mentioned films, that Herr Pommer's supervision accounts for a great deal.

Hotel Imperial, although not a great film, was nevertheless one of the best productions that have come from America. The story was of an Austro-Russian war type, set in a captured town on the Galician front in 1915, and Pola Negri and James Hall played spy parts with distinction. It was opened with skill with the entrance of the Austrian officer into the captured town, an opening of deserted streets in the cold dreariness of dawn. Miss Negri was a servant girl in the hotel where the officer took refuge, and her playing in this first sequence was her best individual work in America. The whole of the first reel was superbly done, the empty streets, the deserted hotel, the girl about to begin her day's work, her hiding of the officer, his raving delirium. This was Pommer using his greatest skill. The remainder of the picture, especially the orgy scenes with George Siegmann as a drunken Russian general, were in the true Hollywood debauchery style which they manage to do so well.

Technically, the production was of interest, for it was one of the first to be made on the composite set method. An eye-witness description of the sets is given by Mr. L'Estrange Fawcett, and deserves repetition.[1] 'Some may remember the use made of travelling camera in *Hotel Imperial*. The stage accommodating the hotel was one of the largest in existence, and eight rooms were built complete in every detail, four leading off each side of the lobby, which ran the length of the building. . . . Suspended above the set were rails along which the camera, mounted on a little carriage, moved at the director's will. Scenes (shots) could be taken of each room from above from every point of view. . . . There were two objects – first, to enable Erich Pommer to experiment with angle photography, representing

[1] *Vide, Films: Facts and Forecasts*, by L'Estrange Fawcett (Bles. 1927):

impressions of scenes taken from the point of view of a character watching the others. . . . Secondly, the story could be filmed in proper sequence. In *Hotel Imperial*, an attempt was made to build up a cumulative dramatic effect by following the characters swiftly from one room to another, by means of several cameras and rolling shots.' Pommer succeeded in giving to the film an air of intimacy that is lacking in most pictures. On this method, many films are made in German studios to-day, and the same idea was adopted by Edmund Goulding when making the dialogue version of *The Trespasser*, no fewer than fifteen cameras being used to pick Miss Swanson up at every different angle. To return to *Hotel Imperial*, it was to be ranked along with *Forbidden Paradise* as one of the best productions from the Paramount Company. Not only was it the come-back of Miss Negri, but it was the triumph of a star in a rôle that asked no sympathy.

Mauritz Stiller continued, without the controlling hand of Erich Pommer, and made at a later date that most extraordinary of all movies, *The Street of Sin*. This was a picture from a scenario by von Sternberg, with Emil Jannings, Olga Baclanova, and Fay Wray. No expense was spared on its making. The script was well balanced; the continuity good; the setting natural. Yet, for some obscure reason, it was one of the worst films ever done. Most curiously, it defied analysis. It was made just previous to Stiller's death in 1929.

Victor Seaström, a Swedish director who travelled to Hollywood soon after the war, has a series of uneven films to his name, but, with the sole exception of *The Scarlet Letter*, has made little of the material given to him by his producers. *Confessions of a Queen*, *Name the Man*, and *The Tower of Lies* were dull pictures, and not until the woodland sequence of *He Who Gets Slapped* did any of the old Seaström poetry come to the surface. This sequence of the two lovers in the sunlight, away from the circus ring in which most of the story took place, was the only redeeming incident in an otherwise uninteresting heartbreak affair of Lon Chaney. Seaström's *The Scarlet Letter*, from the Nathaniel Hawthorne story, was of greater power but was unfortunately rendered farcical by the false morality of the producers. It was remarkable, however, for the playing of Lilian Gish as *Hester Prynne*, a very different woman to the Griffith young lady, and for the appearance of Lars Hanson, at that time (1926) just come from Sweden. The theme of *The Scarlet*

Letter was gloomy, but Seaström raised its gloom to moments of great beauty. It was a film made in one key, for even the humorous relief of the stocks and the ducking-stool were fitted into the pattern of sorrow. Seaström's sweeping sense of landscape, so evident in his early Swedish pictures, was expanded and gave an enchanting atmosphere to the first love scenes between Miss Gish and Lars Hanson. A later picture by the same director, *The Wind*, was of less interest, but there was again evidence of his lyricism. This feeling for depth and width was common to all the Swedish directors in their pre-American work. It was found in Stiller's *Arne's Treasure*, *The Atonement of Gosta Berling*, in Brunius's *Charles XII*, in Seaström's *Thy Soul Shalt Bear Witness*, in *Love's Crucible*, and in the work of Benjamin Christiansen. With Seaström it manifests itself in his shots of landscape, his feeling for the presence of the elements, his love of wind, sky, and flowers. Perhaps it is in accord with the dusty desert of the American westerns and the chimneys and smoke of the Soviet workers' films. Perhaps it is due to the natural Swedish tendencies towards the beauty of nature and the rhythm of poetry. Seaström took this reality of nature with him to the mechanised studios of Hollywood, and it blossomed even in that hot-house atmosphere. It was to be felt in *The Tower of Lies*, in *The Wind*, in *The Scarlet Letter*, and in the short gem-like scene in *He Who Gets Slapped*. Nearly all the themes of Seaström are connected with the struggle of human beings against the common mass of humanity. He is concerned with individual persons and their relationship to their environment. There was *Hester Prynne* set against the narrow-mindedness of the conventional people in *The Scarlet Letter*, and Miss Gish striving in *The Wind*. In the latter, the wind itself was an outer emphasis of the inner struggle; a sort of Griffith-like use of the elements. So also did the flowers and tree roots help the lovers in *The Scarlet Letter*. But Seaström has ceased to develop. He remains stationary in his outlook, thinking in terms of his early Swedish imagery. He has recently made little use of the progress of the cinema itself. *The Divine Woman*, although it had the Greta Garbo of *The Atonement of Gosta Berling*, had none of the lyricism, the poetic imagery of the earlier film. It is true, however, that he rendered the Scandinavian less of a star and more of a woman than in any other of her American films. The lyricism of Seaström, of the Swedish film itself, with its snow, its wind, its trees and flowers,

its depth and width of landscape, cannot remain unblemished in the American factory.

Of other continental directors who have had their fling in Hollywood, Dimitri Buchowetzski has not been successful. In Germany he made several dramas of the historical costume type, with plenty of blood and thunder, such as *Danton*, *Othello*, and *Peter the Great*, with Emil Jannings. In America his pictures have been of little value, and number among them *Men* and *The Crown of Lies*, with Pola Negri; *The Midnight Sun*; *The Swan*; *Graustark*, with Norma Talmadge; and *Valencia*, with Mae Murray. Among others, Ludwig Berger, who directed the exquisite *Cinderella*, has made *The Sins of the Fathers*, with Jannings; Benjamin Christiansen, *The Devil's Circus* and *Sorcery*; Alexander Korda, a Hungarian, *A Modern Dubarry* and *The Private Life of Helen of Troy*; Lothar Mendes has strung together *The Four Feathers*; and Michael Courtice, having made the semi-spectacle picture *The Moon of Israel* in Europe, went to Hollywood and joined Warners to direct *Noah's Ark*.

Quite recently, Jacques Feyder, the Belgian, who in Europe is associated with the brilliant realisation of Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* and the political satire *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, made his first picture for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, *The Kiss*, in which he skilfully combined intelligent direction with the necessary percentage of picture-sense. His treatment of Greta Garbo was more subtle than that usually accorded to this actress by American directors, but it did not bear comparison in texture with his handling of Gina Manés in the Zola picture. But there was a freshness about *The Kiss* that raised it above the level of the ordinary movie and a use of camera angle which was reminiscent of Feyder's earlier work. One queried, however, why the film should have been set in France, when the atmosphere and types were so obviously American? Why does a firm take the trouble to transport a French director to Hollywood and then give him a picture with a French locale to direct? It seems odd.

V

THE AMERICAN FILM (*concluded*)

THERE are certain American directors of lesser standing than Griffith, Erich von Stroheim, and Chaplin whose work, if not altogether brilliant from a filmic point of view, is at least of more intelligence than that of the common run of movie directors. One assumes, also, from certain flashes of cinematic knowledge in their films, that these directors would in all probability make better use of their intelligence if they were not entangled in the net work of studio system, and dominated by the drastic demands of the production committees for whom they work. The pictures of King Vidor, Josef von Sternberg, Rex Ingram, James Cruze, and Clarence Brown are, generally speaking, of more than passing interest. In their work there is an idea, an experiment, a sense of vision, a use of the camera, a striving after something that is cinema, which is worth detailed analysis for its æsthetic value. But we must remember that these men are employees of large manufacturing firms and have perforce to incorporate in their films at least two-thirds of that picture-sense quality so dear to producers. In the remaining third, there may be found some indication of the director's real opinion of the film subject.

King Vidor is probably the outstanding director of the young American school and he has already shown remarkable versatility in the satirical, the mock-epic and the psychological film. His best known and most commercially successful work was the notorious *Big Parade*, although preferable from a filmic point of view were *The Crowd*, *The Politic Flapper*, and *Hallelujah!*. *The Crowd* has been hailed in intelligent film circles as a great film. In Paris, it is considered the greatest if not the most successful film to have come from Hollywood, although recently this belief has been rather forgotten under the novelty of *White Shadows*. Nevertheless, whatever lavish praise may be accorded *The Crowd*, it was not by any means the film that it was said to be. It failed for several significant

reasons. Primarily, it was a literal and not a cinematic expression of a theme, although the original conception was cinematic. Vidor's theme was vast in its breadth; a man's ineffectual struggle against the hostile indifference of the masses; a young man's hopeless striving against the convention, the unsympathy and the brute selfishness of the everyday people who surrounded him. The film should have been the spirit and the humanity of the crowd. It was called *The Crowd*. Instead, it concentrated attention on the human interest of a single individual. As the film stood, it should in all senses of self-justification have been called *The Man*. The relation between the man and the crowd was ill-defined and slurred over. There was, afterwards, no clear-mindedness as to either the man or the crowd. At times there was a tendency to become interested in the individuals; the crowd became meaningless and uninteresting. All through the film there was a feeling of detail and no sense of the breadth of the conception. It was easily possible to pay attention to the small actions of James Murray and Eleanor Boardman, and hence, to lose contact with the theme because of their mannerisms. *The Crowd* was not a unity. The interests were divided and subdivided instead of being bound together into a forceful, filmic whole, such as *The Last Laugh*. I have suggested that *The Crowd* was filmic in its original conception and literary in its treatment. It demanded the complete elimination of all sub-titles. It should have been treated from the same angle as Murnau's film, but from a mass and not an individual outlook. Not one of the ironical titles infused into the film were of cinematic value. The manuscript should have been conceived and written by King Vidor and not by a scenarist. Added to this, the opening sequence of the man's boyhood and the death of his father were painfully unnecessary; the film should have opened on a broad scale with architecture. The psychology of the separate characters became twisted and inconsistent as the theme developed. The ending, for which presumably Vidor was not responsible, was beneath contempt. The treatment when considered apart from the theme (which is absurd) was good. It was Vidor's misfortune and lack of direction that the players were the film and not the theme. *The Crowd* was a sincere attempt on the part of Vidor to do something well; it was a failure because of his misconception of the theme and the regrettable picture-sense of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

The question raised by *The Big Parade* was a big one, and it

successfully occupied the British Press whilst Metro-Goldwyn's picture was playing to record audiences at the London Tivoli. Somehow or other, during the premier presentation of this film, a rumour arose that it was a big American publicity stunt. It was propaganda to the effect that it showed how America won the war. Whether this was so or not is no concern of these pages, but in any case the propaganda (if any) can hardly have been effective with any intelligent Briton. Like all war films manufactured in Hollywood, *The Big Parade* carried little of the real spirit of war. The film story had been written by Laurence Stallings, and the picture was given by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to King Vidor for direction. Apparently Vidor was not attracted to the idea, regarding it in the first place as 'just another war story.' The picture was made and it seemed as if it would be an ordinary programme feature, until after it had been run through for a pre-view, Irvin Thalberg, of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production heads, suddenly decided that it could be made into a great, stupendous, super film. It would be America's patriotic part in the Great War. It would put America on the map of Europe. Vidor, fired with this new impulse, remade the complete film from start to finish from a new angle. The result was overwhelmingly successful. Despite the detail discrepancies and the weakness of the ending, there is no doubt that *The Big Parade* was a most remarkable picture. Its power lay in the opening sequences, where an immense feeling that hundreds of thousands of people were being howled into war, none of them knowing its meaning, the women regarding it as a thing of romance, the young men as a chance of gallant heroism, was dramatically spread across to the spectator. King Vidor handled these scenes with a nobility not usually associated with the American cinema. But perhaps the most memorable part of the film was the departure of the men from their billets in the French village for the front line. The long line of rattling lorries, the convoy of aeroplanes overhead, the cobblestones giving way to the straggling forest, this was magnificently handled. I shall not attempt to decide whether *The Big Parade* epitomised war as it really was or war as Hollywood and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer imagined it to be. It is like comparing the naturalness of 'Journey's End' or 'The Case of Sergeant Grischa' with the many novelettes written about brave officers and nasty Germans. From a purely personal point of view, however, the short sequence in Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg* told far more

vividly of the reality of the front than all the eleven thousand feet of *The Big Parade*. The latter film, nevertheless, succeeded in showing with sincerity the folly of the thing, if only from an American standpoint.

Vidor was seen in a more happy, less problematical vein of mind in that brilliantly clever satire, *The Politic Flapper*, and later in another picture of the same type, *Show People*. In the former particularly, Marion Davies was given the opportunity to show her versatility and her vivacity, and for pure enjoyment both these slight pictures were high among the American output of recent years. Of Vidor's earlier efforts it is unnecessary to write at length, for they were merely the training ground for his later proficiency. Among his work there may be mentioned *The Sky Pilot* (1921); *Peg o' My Heart* (1922); *His Hour* (1924); *The Wife of the Centaur* (1925); *La Bôhéme* (1926); *Bardelys the Magnificent* and *Proud Flesh*. He has recently completed a dialogue and sound production, *Hallelujah!* one of the many negro pictures to come from America. It was a film of great lyrical beauty, filled with the spiritual feeling of the South, and may be ranked, with parts of *The Crowd*, as being Vidor's best work. Although from a cinematic point of view the film was too divided into separate sequences with little conjoining continuity, there was no question that it carried with it a sincerity of faith emblematical of the coloured peoples. Most of the picture was taken on the Southern cotton plantations near Memphis, and all the minor players were chosen from the cotton workers.

Josef von Sternberg rose rapidly to directorship by the making of *The Salvation Hunters*, a dreary film which Hollywood thought exceptionally intelligent. Sternberg succeeded in making this picture independently of the big producing concerns, no mean feat, and credit must be given on that account to his enterprise and courage. Chaplin is declared to have greeted *The Salvation Hunters* as a great film, a masterpiece of Human Realism; listened awhile at the following chorus of praise instigated by his grave announcement; and then given out that he was only pulling their legs. Nevertheless, whether this was true or not, the picture was bought by Allied Artists. Its drab monotony of dock-life, its symbolic dredger, its squalid doorways, and its sudden, ineffectual ending are going down to posterity as a masterpiece. It is rather like the dustbins and garbage of Alberto Cavalcanti. In fact, it seems that if one can make a picture so dreary,

so dull, and so depressing that it defeats criticism, then one will be hailed as a genius. The pseudo-success of *The Salvation Hunters* left an uncomfortable mark on the work of Sternberg. His apparent desire to appear clever often hinders him from becoming so. Sternberg gives the unfortunate effect of always trying to be great. His films are always self-conscious. They are *Sternberg* films.

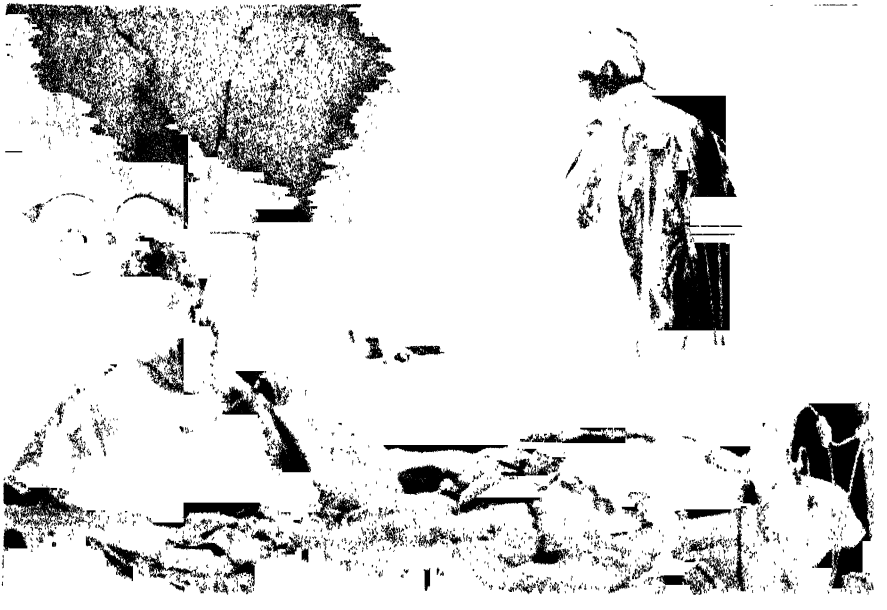
Paramount-Famous-Players secured the services of this little man, and for them he wrote some scenarios (*The Street of Sin*) and made some pictures. Amongst his clever qualities, Sternberg has acquired that necessary faculty of picture-sense. Nearly all his pictures for Paramount have been successful. *The Last Command*, *The Docks of New York*, *Thunderbolt*, and *Paying the Penalty* were good films, but not one of them conveyed the filmic intelligence with which he is usually credited. *Paying the Penalty* was one of the best of the underworld pictures so popular a short time ago, before the same idea was adapted to the dialogue and sound film. It held the spectator by a slow development, gradually increasing to a tremendous climactic thrill, a sort of Sidney Street encounter with the police. Sternberg showed here a feeling for pictorial values, a definite interest in filmic suspense, but the continuity, especially the flash back sequence, was weak. *The Last Command* was probably the best of the Sternberg-Paramount pictures, but, as has been written, was virtually a reissue of the earlier Jannings films of the late German period. This film may be taken as another instance of the committee-made picture of the pre-dialogue era. It was a cleverly blended mixture of the elements of Hollywood picture-sense with a Germanic use of the camera. The story was dramatic and powerful, necessitating the use of crowds and the Paramount property rooms. It had a cast of international appeal; Jannings (German), Evelyn Brent (British) and William Powell (American). It was handled in a direct, polished manner, with a tragic ending, for Jannings must be tragic. The camera was used with a pleasant freedom, notably in the opening scenes in the studios. The setting had a double interest, for at that time 'Imperialist Russia' (*à la* Hollywood) was in the vogue and the general public always likes to see the inside of film studios. The whole picture was turned out with the efficiency of a fifty-shilling tailor, an efficiency that the astute film observer has come to associate with the Paramount studios.

Sternberg has some sense of the dramatic and he never fails to

american metro-goldwyn

GREED

by Erich von Stroheim, probably the first depression film Zasu Pitts in her remarkable playing of McTeague's wife. 1923



exploit this in a heavy way. He used Bancroft in the same way as Jannings, but with considerably more success. Perhaps he was not quite so awed as by the great man. *The Docks of New York* was a distinguished film, although superficial in treatment and pseudo-filmic in character. Taking shots through hanging iron chains did not establish the atmosphere of a place, although it may have created pretty pictorial compositions. Sternberg seems lodged in this gully of pictorial values. He has no control over his dramatic feelings (*The Street of Sin*) and very little idea of the filmic psychology of any scene that he shoots (*The Docks of New York*). He has, however, some feeling for the use of women. His contrast of Betty Compson and Olga Baclanova in the latter film was good. Despite all his faults, Sternberg will perhaps one day make a really interesting film, if, that is, he forgets that it is a Sternberg picture.

Rex Ingram as a film director is doubtful. Ingram as an artist is negligible. His work displays a certain feeling for theatrical cinema, a leaning towards the drama of individuals, and a rather low-minded *flair* for American showmanship. Just as Sternberg is too much the director of the Sternberg picture, Ingram saturates his films with 'artistic' nonsense. Occasionally, in isolated sequences, Ingram forgets his artistry and quite by chance directs a really moving scene. Of such a nature were the shooting of Alice Terry as the spy and the drawing of the submarine commander's character in *Mare Nostrum*. These two scenes were handled with a sympathy, a value of suspense remote from the Ingramish direction of *The Three Passions* and *The Garden of Allah*. The picture with which Ingram secured his name and a long term contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer was, of course, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. From a technical point of view, in consideration of its date (1921), *The Four Horsemen* was extremely accomplished. Ingram set out in this epic picture to make Valentino a hero, and the Germans the vilest brutes, who killed for the sheer love of killing. He spared no effort in doing this, and successfully painted black white and white black, with no neutral tones to break the jar. Ingram showed the popular conception of war. *The Four Horsemen* arrived at a most opportune moment. It was exactly what the public wanted to see about the war. It was precisely what the Press had been writing about with so much enthusiasm. Ingram was an opportunist; so also were Metro-Goldwyn; the result was unprecedented in *The Four Horsemen*. Ingram did everything to

make that picture popular. He raked up spiritual references from the Bible, and made his horsemen flit about in an eerie manner in the sky. He caused Valentino to slink around with a cigarette dangling from his lips, and established him as an international hero by letting him dance a tango with his natural grace. Above all, by doing these things with an eye to public appreciation, he established himself as a great director in the opinion of the public, of Hollywood, and of himself. From that time onwards it was simply a question of Rex Ingram productions.

Some time after the world-wide reception of *The Four Horsemen*, he made *The Prisoner of Zenda*, and thereby reached the highest stage of intelligence that he is ever likely to achieve. He used Lewis Stone, Alice Terry, and Ramon Novarro for his acting material, and he creditably dragged the utmost out of them. The theme was sentimental, as all Ruritanian themes are, but sweetly so, with scope for gentle handling. To-day, perhaps, when held against modern achievements, *The Prisoner of Zenda* seems dull and old-fashioned. It was far from being so when first shown in this country. It is memorable now chiefly for the clever acting of young Ramon Novarro as the dashing *Rupert*. Novarro, before his days of stardom, was refreshing and stimulating. His playing in *Zenda*, against the reserved dignity of Lewis Stone, was beyond reproach. Rex Ingram's direction was capable, in a straightforward manner. His next outstanding success was an adaptation of Sabatini's costume romance, *Scaramouche*, and this also he handled with competency. He remembered Griffith's *Orphans of the Storm* and outdid the French Revolution in its own roguishness. This time he made Lewis Stone the villain, Novarro the smiling hero, and his wife again the heroine. As a costume melodrama, of no weight or pretensions to being anything else but pleasant spectacle, *Scaramouche* was with the best of its kind. It was lavish, crowded, brutal, charming, and amusing all at the same moment. To-day, it is almost forgotten. Of Ingram's other American productions, none was outstanding, but for reference may be mentioned *Hearts Are Trumps* (1921); *Trifling Women* (1922); *Where the Pavement Ends* (1923) and *The Arab*, after which he transported himself and his wife across to the shores of the Mediterranean. *Mare Nostrum*, a melodrama of espionage, with dastardly Germans and some good submarine shots, was uneven but of better technique than the Hollywood films. *The Magician*, with Paul

Wegener, was a bad adaptation of Somerset's Maugham's novel, and is memorable only for an operation scene which was handled in the best Ingram manner. *The Garden of Allah*, save for some beautiful panchromatic photography at the end of the picture, was drearily done in the true Ingram tradition of a story straightly told, with flashes of humour in the choice of crowd types. This curious mania for eccentric types is typical of Ingram. He seems to take delight in searching out the most ugly of mankind, making them useful in a close up. One recalls the man with the bomb in *The Prisoner of Zenda*; the revolutionaries in *Scaramouche*; the crowd in the bazaar in *The Garden of Allah*; the hunchback in *The Magician*. Later, *The Three Passions* was an effortless picture, distinguished only for Shayle Gardner's character study of a ship-builder. The film as a whole was one of the worst of Ingram's artistic attempts. Perhaps it is possible that this director will regain his old skill, but he will have to jolt himself out of a deep rut. Perhaps he, like Griffith, does not keep abreast with the current films of the world. Perhaps he, like so many other directors, has exhausted his knowledge of the film.

Clarence Brown is another American director who has shown short flashes of cinema in between long stretches of picture-sense. Some time ago, in 1925, his clever handling of *The Goose Woman* and of Louise Dresser aroused some interest. During the first portion of this film, while Miss Dresser played the drink-sodden prima donna who had fallen beside the way, Clarence Brown's direction was remarkable. He made her live in the filthiest squalidity with gin bottles and geese, and at night she would hunch up her back over her precious book of press-cuttings, to read over the reports of her glorious days. So far the film was excellent, handled with sympathy, but the latter half was quite ridiculous, Miss Dresser, the direction, and the film going to pieces. Among the many films credited to Clarence Brown were *The Light in the Dark* (1922); *The Eagle*, with Valentino at his best; *Smouldering Fires*, with Pauline Frederick, in 1925; and *The Trail of '98*, a film that was meant to be an epic, but succeeded in being a first-class super film, without interest to the intelligent-minded. *Flesh and the Devil*, however, made in 1926, was a film of more than passing cleverness. It was, it is true, another example of the committee-produced picture, with John Gilbert, Lars Hanson and Greta Garbo as the star appeal, but it contained short sequences that strengthened Clarence Brown's claim as a

director. The copy shown in this country was maltreated, either by the censor or by special English editing, but it sufficed to show that in its original version *Flesh and the Devil* had some pretensions to be called a good film. The theme was sheer, undiluted sex, and Brown used a series of close ups to get this across with considerable effect. Notable also was his use of angles, different indeed from either the customary German or American method, and the happiness with which he settled the characters in their environment.

The work of John Ford has been uneven, but there are to his credit two good films, *The Iron Horse* and *Three Bad Men*, made in 1924 and 1926 respectively. The former purported to tell the story of the laying of the first railroad across America in the teeth of the opposition of nature and the Indians. It was the type of film that America can make well if she sets her mind to it. It ranked on the same level with the epic quality of *The Covered Wagon*, and combined the best elements of the western school with the more sophisticated direction of the Hollywood feature film. *The Iron Horse* was vast in its conception, and John Ford, despite the hindrances of a story-interest, handled it with a high degree of talent. It was not popular in this country, where audiences have no enthusiasm for railways being thrown across trackless wastes, but as a film it was fit to rank with any in the class of recorded fact. I remember with feeling the long line of railwaymen's camps on the progressing track; the spirit and adventure of the pioneers; the clever rendering of the manœuvres of the encircling Indians; and above all, the far-stretching landscape across which the steel track was to run. Ford's other film, *Three Bad Men*, was conceived in the same open-air spirit, dealing with the dramatic episodes of the gold rush in 1877. In many remarkable scenes the incidents of this extraordinary event were brought out with reality. The dance hall, its oddly assorted patrons, the would-be-rich settlers, the pastor and his ruined chapel, were pieces in a pattern that Ford blended together with clever direction. The great moment of the picture was the astounding stampede, the mad, on-rushing race of the donkeys, mules, race-horses, and oxen, jogged forward by their lashing drivers towards the hidden gold. Through the whole film moved irresistible camaraderie, the likeable badness of the three disreputable companions, each of whom met their death by holding the real bad men at bay. The playing of Frank Campeau, Tom Santschi, and Farrell MacDonald was excellent.

Henry King, I feel, is one of the most sincere of American directors, whose work seldom receives the attention it deserves. He is to be numbered among those directors in Hollywood who, if they were allowed the chance, would make a film to compare with the product of any of the better European *cinéastes*. All his productions contain points of definite interest, demanding a detailed examination for which there is not the space in these pages. To his credit must firstly be placed what was at its date the finest film America had produced, *Tol'able David* (1922), which was followed later by *Stella Dallas*, *Romola*, *The White Sister*, *The Winning of Barbara Worth* (a sophisticated western), *The Magic Flame*, and the better parts of *The Woman Disputed*. In *Tol'able David*, King expounded his theme with a delicate use of detail and a sympathetic employment of landscape for the emphasis of atmosphere. The material was distributed with a nicety of feeling rare in the American film; the continuity was balanced to perfection and flowed with admirable smoothness; and the characterisation, notably in the case of Richard Barthelmess in the name part, revealed a depth of character that has not been noticed in any later film by the same director. King robbed Griffith of all that was good, combining the spoil with his own filmic knowledge. The real value of *Stella Dallas*, a brilliant and deeply emotional film, was superficially destroyed in this country by the cheap and contemptible publicity that it received. It was diversely said to be 'the greatest mother-love picture ever made,' and that 'Mr. King had focalised in it all the creative artistry of his great career,' all of which was an attempt to put over Samuel Goldwyn's appreciation of the 'art' of the cinema. It implied, on the contrary, not only the strangeness of Mr. Goldwyn's mind, but the negligible amount of appreciation he possessed for the work of his own directors. The story of *Stella Dallas* was not of unusual interest, but it gave scope for a consistent character development over a space of time, and lent itself to delicate touches of direction. Its lesson lay in the superb handling of acting material, notably in the cases of Belle Bennett and Lois Moran, and also in Jean Hersholt's masterly rendering of the coarse riding-master. It was one of those rare films that rested on its treatment alone, a type of film not usually connected with America. Sympathy and delicacy are the two salient characteristics of Henry King's work, exemplified strongly in *Tol'able David* and *Stella Dallas*. He is a misunderstood and mishandled

director; a man of deep cinematic mindedness, who struggles in vain against the overpowering and crippling demands of picture-sense.

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Notwithstanding the plethora of movies of the man, woman, and sin variety, with which one is generally accustomed to couple the label of Hollywood and which constitute the greater part of her output during film history, there are a few naturalistic films that are to be considered apart from the fiction film. They are to be differentiated, also, from the work of the directors who have just been discussed, with the exception of John Ford and James Cruze, who happily combine a sense of this *plein air* school with their cine-fiction.

In the first place there was the western film, a form of cinema in which America excelled; and secondly, the more recent arrival of the south-sea island picture. The western was perhaps America's nearest approach to real cinema. It was perfectly natural. It was, practically speaking, the Americans being themselves. Distinct from the sexual interplay of the drawing-room movie, the western had its birth in the early days of the one and two reelers, and rose to its zenith towards the end of the post-war period about 1922 or 1923. Since then, it has degenerated into a more sophisticated form, as with *The Winning of Barbara Worth* and *In Old Arizona*. It has almost been displaced by the steel-girder and the office eye-shade, the dance frock and the dumb-bell, together with the products of America's dancing youth. There is, it is true, some indication of the revival of the western in the dialogue cinema. Its natural scope for the use of synchronised sound, of horses' hoof-beats and of gun-shots, was the basis of Paramount's *The Virginian*, directed by Victor Fleming. The use of American natural landscape and types in this picture was highly creditable, and, despite the limitations imposed by dialogue, I have no hesitation in saying that it was amongst the best (if not the best) pictures to come from Hollywood since the opening of the dialogue period. *The Virginian*, because of its wonderful open-air atmosphere, lifted Victor Fleming in my estimation out of the rut of second-rate directors, although credit must also be given to J. Roy Hunt for his superb exterior photography.

During their day the westerns were widely successful, for the cowboy spirit and dust of the desert are inborn in the true American of the old school. In its middle period of William S. Hart, the

Farnum brothers, William and Dustin, William Russell, Tom Mix, and Hoot Gibson, the western film had an air of sincerity in its open stretches of sand, its fleeting horses, its smell of sage and gunsmoke. Not that I suggest that Americans once behaved precisely as did these rustlers and gunmen, but there was nevertheless some element of fact in the idealised cowboy. The spirit of openness seemed to have come quite naturally to the westerns, and was in itself eminently suited to the functions of the cinema. It will be recalled that the story-interest of these fast-moving pictures was usually negligible; all that mattered was the hard riding, the spreading horizon of the desert, the crumbled *cañon* walls, the dusty hooves of cattle and mustangs, the heat and the cold, the rain and the wind. It was something that the Americans understood. It was captured by the cinema with remarkable faith, very different to the studio reconstructions of 'Imperialist Russia' and 'Mediæval England.'

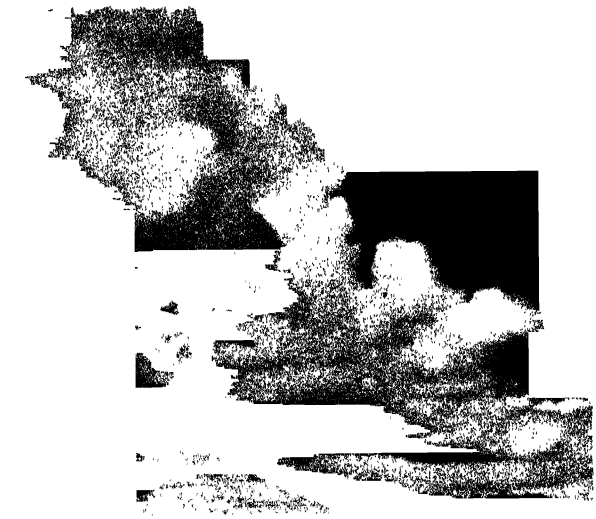
From time to time the western film was stripped of its fictitious trappings and was raised to the standard of an epic. It lost its story and became a reconstructed record of some great past achievement. Two examples of this have been mentioned, John Ford's *The Iron Horse* and *Three Bad Men*, but the pinnacle was reached in Cruze's *The Covered Wagon*. This was a film that combined the essence of the western with the cinematic knowledge of Hollywood; a film of the men and women who set their faces and their wagons to the west in the giant trek across the plains. The production of this film was all the more remarkable in that its makers were the Famous-Lasky Company. It was an odd link in their tradition. It was their first breakaway from the drawing-room movie, a step that has since been followed up by *Old Ironsides* (*Sons of the Sea*), also directed by Cruze, and the *Chang* and *Four Feathers* type of picture. It was a direct development from the crude western, but approached in an epic spirit; a sincere attempt to reconstitute past fact.

James Cruze, up to that time a maker of domestic comedies and since then of pseudo-dramatic movies, must be commended for having accomplished his task with distinction. It was known at the time that he had some cinematic skill in direction, but his handling of space in *The Covered Wagon* was unsuspected. In the dream sequence of *Jazz* and in *To the Ladies*, Cruze was interesting. In *The Covered Wagon* he demanded serious consideration. He first

learned his knowledge of the cinema in the early serials, a fact which is probably responsible for the open-air direction of this epic. Of his other pictures, all of which are worth notice, will be recalled: *The City That Never Sleeps*, *The Pony Express*, *Hollywood*, *The Beggar on Horseback*, *Merton of the Movies*, and *The Goose Hangs High*. His recent attempt at straight drama in *The Great Gabbo* was inferior to this earlier work, but some allowance is to be made for the superfluity of song-and-dance stuff, which was obviously added to ensure box-office appeal. It is hoped that Cruze will return to the space and truth of *The Covered Wagon*. He is a director who essentially needs fresh air. He is misusing his intelligence in the factory.

Of recent years, there have sprung up in Hollywood occasional but admirable attempts to use the natural resources of the American cinema. The western has been partially replaced by the travel film which, although to a large extent experimental and only financed by the big companies if well-known stars are allowed to share the natural beauties, has the most prominent claim for the attention of the American industry to-day. These outstanding examples of the real use of the cinema are to be regarded as distinct from the advances made by Lubitsch, Chaplin, and Stroheim in the pure cine-fiction school. If they are not the direct development of the western, then they are at any rate in relationship to it. They can be connected also with similar movements in Soviet Russia, Germany, and France.

The first American step in this manner was made by Robert Flaherty, who happens to be an Irishman, and was the result of a film financed by Révillon Frères, the Paris furriers, as an advertising venture. *Nanook of the North*, the Eskimo film, although not entirely sincere in that it purported to be what it was not, marked the starting-point of the American interest picture, without plot or story but simply the continuity of a theme. Actually *Nanook*, which set up to be a film of the Eskimo in the far north, was made on a latitude level with Edinburgh. The same theory of thematic continuity was found in Flaherty's other film, the beautiful *Moana*. Each in their own way, *Nanook* and *Moana* were supreme examples of the pure visual cinema. In form they were alike, opening with a quiet sequence that established the characters in their normal environment, emphasising only the swing of the bough of a tree or the slope of the snow. With an unwinding thread of continuity



american metro goldwyn mayer

WHITE SHADOWS

the film of the South Seas, with cameawork by Ben Roberts
An instance of the beautiful decorative values obtainable by panchromatic stock 1928

each progressed without a litter of titles; the one telling of the warm, dark-skied south with its rich foliage and crystal water; the other of the bitter cold and ice, with the wind sweeping across the snow fields. Both films ended on a note of rest. *Moana* with the betrothed pair swaying in their dance against the sinking sun; *Nanook* with the moaning wind and the howl of the sleigh dogs. Each film told of the immensity of living; the urge to live; the width and breadth of the universe. Of the two, *Moana* was perhaps the finer. It had a warmness, not physical but spiritual, in handling that was missing in the coldness of *Nanook*.

Each of these superb films was made by Flaherty with private finances, but in order to continue producing pictures he was forced to accept a contract from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. It is said that he was to have had the making of *White Shadows in the South Seas*, but reasonably enough rejected the offer on account of the inclusion of a story and two stars. Instead, it was made by W. S. Van Dyck. To Flaherty must go the credit then, of inspiring the new movement in the American cinema that gave rise to such films as *Grass*, *Chang*, *Stark Love*, *White Gold*, *White Shadows*, and *Trader Horn*.

Van Dyck is of secondary importance to Flaherty. *White Shadows*, good as it was in places, cannot be compared to the quality of *Moana*. If Flaherty had made the former, there is little doubt that he would have surpassed *Moana*. If it were possible to consider *White Shadows* apart from the nonsense of the acting interest, a badly faked model of a shipwreck and a moral of white men ruining the sanctity of the islands, there remained some very beautiful landscape scenes. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that the cameraman for this film was also Flaherty's cameraman on the shooting of *Moana*. It is interesting to recall, moreover, that Van Dyck at one time was making westerns, being responsible for a series of Buck Jones's pictures, *The Desert's Price*, *Hearts and Spurs*, and *Ranger of the Big Pines*. There would seem some reason, therefore, to place the credit for the best parts of *White Shadows* to Bob Roberts, leaving the blame for the story handling to Van Dyck. Who made the film does not matter very much, but it was significant, on the other hand, that Flaherty was contemporaneously kicking his heels at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's expense in Culver City, that suburb of Los Angeles. *White Shadows*, despite its cheapness of story, will remain memorable for its liquid sunlight, its gently swaying palms, its white clouded skies, its

far-reaching stretches of hot sand and beach. It ranks with *The General Line* as being a perfect example of the beautiful decorative values of panchromatic photography.

Following up the success of *White Shadows*, Van Dyck attempted to repeat himself with *The Pagan*, a film made ridiculous by the intrusion of a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer contract star. Mr. Ramon Novarro may be popular with nursemaids when he is practically in the all-together, but he had definitely no place (singing on his back in the water) in this purely pictorial picture. Is it possible to imagine the *Moana* of Flaherty as played by Mr. Novarro? Van Dyck has recently been sent by his company to Africa, complete with studio equipment, including not only generators and lights, but sound-recording apparatus for obtaining the noises of the jungle. The film is based on the experiences of Trader Aloysius Horn, and will again be made against natural settings.

In this same group of natural resource directors must be included Shoedsack and Cooper, Howard and Karl Brown. Ernest B. Shoedsack and Meriam C. Cooper first achieved recognition by their film *Grass*, which was made among the Baktyari tribe of North-West Persia, during 1925. The picture was a vivid record of the almost insurmountable difficulties that faced the tribe when they migrated twice yearly in their trek for grass. One watched with suspense the extraordinary manner in which this band of half a million men, women, and children surmounted the snow-covered mountain range, and forded the roaring torrent that barred their way. The film was a marvellous photographic record, spoilt in this country by the insertion of irritating and fatuous titles, written by a Paramount writer called Richard P. Carver. After the success of *Grass*, the same pair were sent to the jungle country of Northern Siam, where they spent two years in taking records with the camera. Eventually *Chang* was capably mounted into a story form, and credit was due to the editors who worked up the theme to a highly emotional climax, which, as has been mentioned at a later stage, was rendered even more dramatic by the use of the magnascope. *Chang* told the story of the family of *Kru*, a Lao tribesman, who built beyond the village in a clearing in the jungle, and of his struggle not only against the encroaching jungle but the beasts that lived therein. Not one sequence of this admirable film dragged, the element of suspense being brilliantly handled. Moreover, the spirit of the jungle was captured

in such a manner that the audience seemed to live in it themselves. When the jungle awoke at the close of *Kru's* hard-working day, a wonderful feeling of stirring, of undergrowth moved by unseen forms, of branches swinging by other forces than those of the wind, spread into the spectators. Thus the film continued until, suddenly, as if by magic, the magnascope flooded the whole of one end of the cinema with the massed stampede of elephants. The emotional power of this climax was so strong, so overwhelming in its size and movement, that I have little hesitation in calling it one of the most brilliant ever devised. Akin to the case of *Grass*, the titles, written specially by Achmed Abdulla, the novelist, were inclined to be absurd.

Satisfied with the phenomenal success accorded to *Chang*, Paramount sent Shoedsack and Cooper to the Sudan for the purpose of taking further camera records. But at this point, unfortunately, the producers remembered their picture-sense. Wishing to add to the success of *Chang*, which to all intents and purposes was a film of pure natural resources, Paramount decided to blend Shoedsack and Cooper's records in the Sudan with an adaptation of A. E. W. Mason's novel, *The Four Feathers*, adding for the sake of *entertainment* several stars and a pro-British moral. The resulting picture, a hotch-potch devised by Lothar Mendes, was put out to the public as being by the makers of *Chang*. Those who remembered the natural quality of the latter film were dismayed to find in *The Four Feathers* a devastating attempt to cut in a few shots of hippopotami charging and baboons escaping from a bush fire with a Hollywood movie of the worst type. The animal shots, nice enough in themselves, were totally out of place, having no relation to the rest of the picture. In this way does picture-sense spoil the only good work done by American directors. Producers have the entirely fallacious idea at the back of their heads that they are catering for the public taste. The situation is rendered the more significant by the preceding success of *Chang*, which stood on its own merits without the aid of Hollywood. This deplorable habit, popular with big producers, of incorporating a few excellent but irrelevant shots in an otherwise cheap movie, is typical of the picture-sense mind. They calculate that the public would not go to a film entirely composed of animals; but they will see the animals if smoothed down by Messrs. Clive Brook, William Powell, Richard Arlen, Noah Beery, and misty-eyed

Fay Wray. *Wings*, whilst dealing with the air, was good; but when it descended to earth, to Clara Bow and the boys, it was unbearable. On these occasions, the intelligent public must take the bad with the good. It is the way of Hollywood.

Of other films to be added to this group of *plein air* productions, mention must be made of William K. Howard's *White Gold*, which attempted to appeal to two types of audience, the intelligent and the rest; and Karl Brown's excellent picture, *Stark Love*, with Helen Munday, Forest James, and Silas Miracle. Howard's film was made in the so-called continental technique, meaning that he paid more attention to atmosphere than to individuals. Instead of the crowded dance-hall, only the shadows were shown; in place of a shot of the corpse, the hero looked behind the door and drew back with horror plainly written in his face. Howard also tried the repetition of single word titles with some success, but the film as a whole was inclined to be laboured. He was also the director of some early westerns, like *Light of the Western Stars* and *The Border Legion*. Karl Brown's film, which was financed by Famous-Players-Lasky, was taken during 1927, among the primitive descendants of pioneers in the Appalachian mountains of North Carolina. The director had been the cameraman on Paramount's *The Covered Wagon*, and *Stark Love* was a reminder of the grandness of the pictorial beauty of the earlier film. The acting material was raw nature; the story-interest simple and convincing; the direction straightforward with a sense of dramatic value. The film was to be ranged on a level with Flaherty's *Moana* and Jean Epstein's *Finis Terræ*.

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Returning to the ranks of the ordinary movie directors, there are found a large number of second and third rate film men. Much of their work is of little save passing interest, and does not call for further comment than that usually accorded to it in the Press. Most of these secondary directors are like popular dance tunes – they only tell for a short time. Movies are easily made, and just as easily forgotten. On rare occasions one of their films contains some little device, some twist of the camera that is interesting, some odd close up which for the moment holds the spectator, but for the most part they are dull. Even as it is characteristic of big directors to convey a great deal in a few shots, so, on the contrary, these small directors tend to photograph much and say nothing. It is these film

men who make a steady stream of pictures with which to fill the cinemas of the world. None of these movies is wholly good or wholly bad. Each is saturated with mental sob-stuff, high-spot thrills, alluring sexual positions, false patriotic motives, spectacular settings, and ravishing clothes. All are turned out with a polished, facile, slick technique. They are conceived, taken, and presented with one purpose in mind – picture-sense. Most of these directors have been in the business some space of time. They may be relied upon to turn out an average picture in a given length of production time, with any given star and any given story.

Herbert Brenon has been making pictures ever since he staggered America with the Annette Kellerman film, *The Daughter of the Gods*, in 1916, for which production he diverted a river from its course and altered the face of a landscape. Brenon, therefore, started his directorial career in the best tradition. Since that date he has produced a continuous flow of movies, mostly of the mock-sentimental kind, including versions of Barrie's *Peter Pan* and *A Kiss for Cinderella*; *The Side Show of Life*; *The Alaskan*; *The Little French Girl*; that very successful, popular film, *Beau Geste*, the forerunner of many similar pictures; and more recently, an adaptation of Warwick Deeping's *Sorrell and Son*, a film of guaranteed appeal, but little filmic content. Brenon principally lacks imagination. His sense of pictorial values is sound, but his cinematic interpretation is negligible.

Raoul Walsh has made a curious assortment of films, showing at rare intervals a feeling for cinema and always a strong motive of picture-sense. Chief among his work ranks *Sadie Thompson*, an adaptation of Somerset Maugham's brilliant short story and play, 'Rain.' In this film, some three years ago, Gloria Swanson made her come-back to the screen and Lionel Barrymore acted with distinction. Walsh did his best to tell the story of the fugitive from San Francisco, and the professional reformer who persecutes her until he himself is obsessed with sexual desire; but the contrived happy ending, which may have fitted in with Allied Artists' idea of picture-sense, was mediocre. Nevertheless, Gloria Swanson's performance was remarkable, and succeeded in placing her as an actress of talent far above the usual Hollywood standard. Walsh's second-best picture was one of the war films so prevalent a few years ago, and as such was singularly unsuccessful. Despite its mock-heroic character, *What Price Glory?* was directed with some degree of vigour, and was,

of course, satisfactory from a commercial point of view. Like the other American war films, it said nothing of the war itself except for a few sequences of blood and thunder. At an earlier date than this, Raoul Walsh had revelled in attempted fantasy, for he was responsible for the ice-cream mixture of *The Thief of Bagdad*, and others of an Arabian texture, such as *The Lady of the Harem*. To his credit, also, are to be placed the Negri film, *East of Suez*, *The Wanderer*, *The Loves of Carmen*, and *The Monkey Talks*.

Cecil B. de Mille is likewise to be reckoned among this group of directors, and although his work cannot be accepted with sincerity, he is nevertheless a curiosity. Briefly, one thinks of de Mille as a pseudo-artist with a flair for the spectacular and the tremendous; a shrewd sense of the bad taste of the lower type of the general public, to which he panders; and a fondness for the daring, vulgar, and pretentious. His productions number many, all of which by reason of their magnitude and publicity are well-known. In particular, he is responsible for *The Ten Commandments*, *The Volga Boatmen*, *The Road to Yesterday*, *The Golden Bed*, *The King of Kings*, and *The Godless Girl*, none of which demands further investigation.

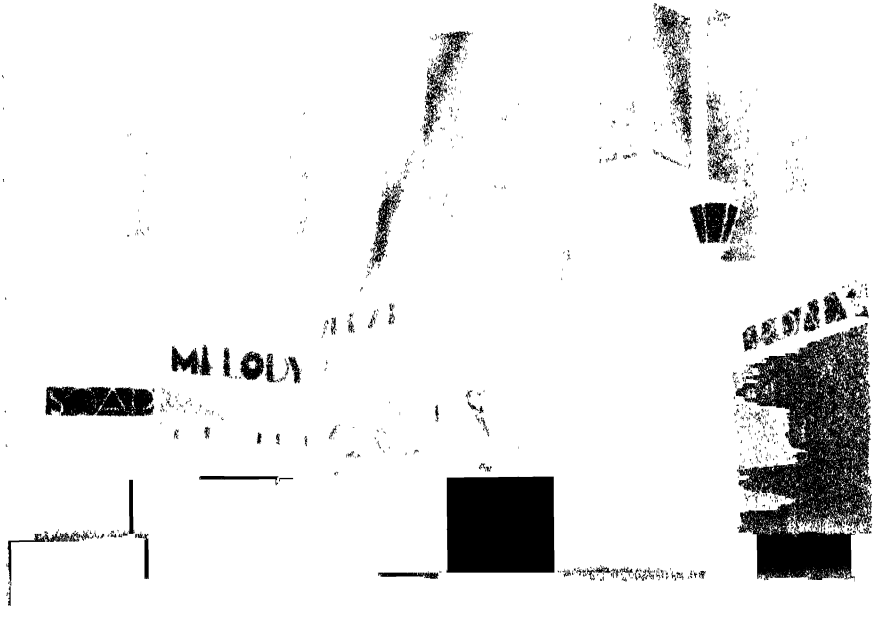
Donald Crisp is a director of the good, honest type, with a simple go-ahead idea of telling a story. He has made, among others, one of the best of the post-war Fairbanks films, *Don Q*, and Buster Keaton's *The Navigator*. In the same class are to be reckoned such men as Fred Niblo, who made the spectacle of spectacles, *Ben-Hur*, as well as *The Temptress*, and Fairbanks' *Mark of Zorro*; Victor Fleming, who 'handled' Emil Jannings in *The Way of All Flesh*, made *Mantrap* with Clara Bow, a pseudo-epic in *The Trumpet Call*, *Lord Jim*, and *The Virginian*, for which last, however, he deserves warm praise; Rupert Julian, who directed *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Hell's Highroad*, and completed *The Merry-Go-Round* when Stroheim left off; and Alan Crosland, maker of *Bobbed Hair*, *Three Weeks*, and that abominable costume picture with John Barrymore, *Don Juan*, followed by another as bad, *The Beloved Rogue*.

The leader of the sentimentalists and gauzed photography school is, of course, Frank Borzage, who makes pictures for Mr. Fox. He is principally known for that 'film of the year,' *Seventh Heaven*, which he followed later with similar eye-wash, *The Street Angel*. Both of these pictures are generally considered as being beautiful,

american paramount

WINGS

the 'epic' of the air, by William Wellman, note artificiality of trees and 'corpses' 1927



superb, artistic, and superlative in every way, but their titles are all that need be recorded of them.

George Fitzmaurice directs movies like *The Dark Angel* and *Love Lies*, about which there is nothing to say; Marshall Neilan takes the credit for the unfortunate *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Diplomacy*, and *The Venus of Venice*; Sam Taylor has a knowledge of rough slapstick, and has made some of the Harold Lloyd comedies, Mary Pickford's *My Best Girl*, and lately, the dialogue version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Tod Browning once made a film which was reputed to be of interest, *The Unholy Three*, and later *The Blackbird*, *Under Two Flags*, and *The Mystic*; Rowland V. Lee directed *The Man Without a Country*, *Havoc*, said to be the best American war film, and *The Outsider*; whilst Allan Dwan made *Tin Gods* and *The Music Master*.

Among those whom I should class as better directors are to be recorded such men as Lewis Milestone, who made an excellent comedy in *Two Arabian Nights*, and has since directed a clever melodramatic film of the bootlegger type, *The Racket*, with Louis Wolheim. Milestone is well aware of the right use of half-lighting, of well-chosen camera angles and of contrasted motives of tension with unexpected movement of material. Victor Schertzinger is another director who has done notable work, prominently in that excellent film, *Forgotten Faces*, where, although he was inclined to misuse his moving camera shots, he built up some dramatic situations. He has many pictures to his name, amongst which are *Man and Maid*, *The Wheel* and *Thunder Mountain*. E. H. Griffith was the maker of a sincere film, *Judgment*, a dramatic theme of a man's cowardice, and has also to his credit *Headlines* and *Bad Company*. Harry Hoyt will be remembered for his competent version of Conan Doyle's extraordinary story, *The Lost World*, a film in which Lewis Stone, Bessie Love, Wallace Beery, and Lloyd Hughes played with distinction.

Dorothy Arzner is a clever woman director who at one time wrote scenarios, took up cutting (*The Covered Wagon*) and finally made a picture called *Fashions for Women*. Lois Weber is another woman director, who made that excessively dull movie, *The Sensation Seekers*.

To this long list are to be added the names of some of the older school, like Thomas H. Ince, Ralph Ince, King Baggott, Clarence Badger, Herbert Blache, Charles Brabin, Edwin Carewe, John

Conway, Irving Cumings, William C. de Mille, Joseph Henaberry, Frank Lloyd, Sam Wood, and Edward Sedgwick.

There are many young men in Hollywood who, having had their schooling as scenario-writers and assistant-directors to already well-established film makers, are taken on and launched by the big firms. The majority of their work is best described as being modelled on the Lubitsch-Stroheim-Chaplin style: a well-assorted medley of ideas gleaned from *The Marriage Circle*, *Foolish Wives*, and *A Woman of Paris*. It is quite unnecessary to analyse such movies at length, for they nearly all conform to what has already been described as the formula of man, woman, and sin. They are slick, facile, flashy, well-photographed pictures, displaying here and there touches of Germanic influence in their camera angles. They are always rapid in pace, being briskly cut, with what are usually termed 'snappy' titles. It will suffice to mention: Mal St. Clair (*Good But Naughty*, *The Show Off*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, etc.); Monta Bell, assistant to Chaplin on *A Woman of Paris* (*Broadway After Dark*, *Man, Woman, and Sin*, *Pretty Ladies*, etc.); William Wellman, who must be given praise for making *Wings*, although that film's merit lay in its fifteen cameramen, and *You Never Know Women*, from Ernst Vadja's story; Victor Heerman (*For Wives Only*); Sidney Franklin (*The Duchess of Buffalo*, with Constance Talmadge, and recently *Wild Orchids*, with Greta Garbo); Paul Bern, who wrote the script for *The Beloved Rogue* and made *Grounds for Divorce*; Frank Tuttle, scenarist for Allan Dwan's *Manhandled*, with Gloria Swanson, and director of *The American Venus* and *Blind Alleys*; James Flood, (*Three Hours*); Roy del Ruth, whose *Wolf's Clothing* was far above the average movie; and H. d'Abbadie d'Arrast, Chaplin's assistant on *The Gold Rush* (*A Gentleman of Paris*, *Serenade*, and *Service for Ladies*, all with Adolphe Menjou).

The titles of the above movies clearly indicate their subject and trend. They may be summed up, perhaps, in the three names, *The Popular Sin*, *The Waning Sex*, and *Blonde or Brunette*.

In the last eighteen months, there has arisen a number of new film directors who, owing to the dialogue film, have migrated from the stage. Many of the old silent film directors have also adapted their technique to the new demands of sound. In this group are to be found such men as Harry Beaumont, maker in the past of *Glass Houses*, *Gold Diggers*, and *Our Dancing Daughters*, and more

recently of *The Broadway Melody*; Charles Reisner, who years ago directed Sydney Chaplin in *The Man on the Box*, and made *The Hollywood Revue* and *Chasing Rainbows*; and Marcel Silver, director of *Fox Movietone Follies*. With the dialogue period opened what may be called an era of new names as well as an era of new values. The introduction of this usurping mechanical achievement has rendered the old attributes of a film director no longer applicable.

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Apart from the comedies of Chaplin it is necessary only to mention the more recent work of Buster Keaton and the expensive knock-about contraptions of Harold Lloyd. Keaton at his best, as in *The General*, *College*, and the first two reels of *Spite Marriage*, has real merit. His humour is dry, exceptionally well constructed and almost entirely mechanical in execution. He has set himself the task of an assumed personality, which succeeds in becoming comic by its very sameness. He relies, also, on the old method of repetition, which when enhanced by his own inscrutable individuality becomes incredibly funny. His comedies show an extensive knowledge of the contrast of shapes and sizes and an extremely pleasing sense of the ludicrous. Keaton has, above all, the great asset of being funny in himself. He looks odd, does extraordinary things and employs uproariously funny situations with considerable skill. The Keaton films are usually very well photographed, with a minimum of detail and a maximum of effect. It would be ungrateful, perhaps, to suggest that he takes from Chaplin that which is essentially Chaplin's, but, nevertheless, Keaton has learnt from the great genius and would probably be the first to admit it.

The Harold Lloyd comedies fall into a lower class, but are usually amusing. In my estimation, at least, Lloyd is not funny in himself and has none of the attributes of Chaplin or even Keaton. His comedies are fast moving, vigorous in action of the material, being entirely contrived out of a series of comic situations. Lloyd movies are excellent examples of the gag comedy. Many minds contribute to the nonsense of the escapes and chases and ingenious escapades that go to make up *College Days*, *Safety Last*, and *For Heaven's Sake*. There is no centralisation about a Lloyd comedy as there is in the Chaplin film. There is no unity of character; no building up of personality. The Harold Lloyd pictures are good fun. They may always be relied upon for amusement of a harmless, light and

thoughtless nature. They are essentially physically stimulating. They serve their purpose in that no audience is left dull or depressed after seeing a Lloyd comedy.

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From this brief survey of some of the more important American films, it will have been seen that most of the output is ephemeral in value. Seldom will a Hollywood film bear reiteration. It passes through the hands of the story-writer, the selection committee, the scenario editor, the treatment writer, the scenarist, the gag-man, the production committee, the director, the cameraman, the art director, the players, the title-writer, the professional cutter and the film editor, until eventually the finished product is launched on to the massed audiences, who are lured to see it by all manner of persuasive advertising, exploitation stunts and suggestive attractions. The life of a movie is precalculated and preorganised from the beginning to the end. Nevertheless, despite these conditions of manufacture, the mass production, the obstinate committees, the uncreative directors, the horrors of the star-system and the corrugated iron environment, there are occasions when a single film, the creative work of one man's mind, makes its appearance. There are in Hollywood, fortunately, men of intelligence whose very personality over-rides the machinery. With wisdom and discretion they use to full advantage the organisation of Hollywood and its excellent technical resources. From Chaplin, Stroheim, Griffith, at one time Fairbanks, Lubitsch, and Vidor, there have come films that are of the highest merit. *The Gold Rush*, *A Woman of Paris*, *Greed*, *Broken Blossoms*, *The Black Pirate*, *Forbidden Paradise*, and *Hallelujah!*. In another category, produced under different conditions from those controlling the making of cine-fiction, there has been the individual work of Flaherty, Karl Brown, Shoedsack, and Cooper:- *Moana*, *Chang*, *Grass*, *Stark Love*, and *Nanook*. These were films of great excellence that will endure and be studied in the future. On the whole, however, America's greatest achievements have been in her westerns, her relatively few natural resource films, and her polished, satirical comedies. Due to the fusion of Chaplin and Lubitsch influence, the best of the cine-fiction films have been the domesticated comedies and the subtly pointed bedroom pieces; films of the *Wolf's Clothing*, *So This Is Paris*, and *Serenade* variety. They comprise the lighter side of film conception and have been developed to a state of perfection far beyond

the dramatic tragedy of *The Way of All Flesh* school. In the dialogue film, the adaptation of stage plays by such writers as Somerset Maugham and Frederick Lonsdale indicates a tendency to continue along these lines.

Hollywood, before the coming of the dialogue film, was a factory of skilled workers, all of whom were able to produce films with a technique that had become polished by experience and efficient organisation. These men are adapting their practical knowledge to the new processes demanded by the visual and aural cinema along the line of least resistance. They are foolishly attempting to combine the widely divergent techniques of the stage and the film. But the masses, many of them fresh to the cinema, support the new process in their love of novelty, sensation, and realism. Our filmic knowledge triumphs with ease over the past and the future evils of the cinema; but the present evils of dialogue and realism triumph over our knowledge to-day by reason of their commercial strength.

VI

THE SOVIET FILM

THERE is always a tendency to exaggerate the discovery of a new invention, a fresh philosophy, or an original theory of painting; similarly, the significance of the Soviet film has been largely overrated by enthusiastic *cinéastes* in this country. Perhaps the primary reason why the discovery of the Soviet cinema has been more momentous in England than on the continent is because, until comparatively recently, all productions from the U.S.S.R. have been withheld from public exhibition by the British Board of Film Censors. In consequence, fanned by eulogistic descriptions from abroad, there has risen a heated demand from the circle of film writers and experimentalists in England for the wholesale acceptance of Soviet films. Officially discountenanced, the forbidden productions have assumed gigantic importance as 'works of art' in the minds of the British intelligentsia. All Soviet films are hailed as the supreme examples of modern cinema; all Soviet directors as filmic geniuses; with the result that the cult for Soviet films (still in great part forbidden) has become slightly hysterical and more than a little tedious in its parrot-like cry.

Actually, the product of the Soviet film industry is to be received with the strictest reservation. It is to be accorded the severest criticism, for it has been born of remarkable circumstances during a span of twelve eventful and restless years. Moreover, it should be remembered that the present state of the Soviet cinema has been made possible only by the social and political events that have taken place in Russia since the October revolution of 1917. But this is not to assume, as is often done, that a similar progression of events would produce a cinema such as that of the Soviet in England.

The Soviet cinema is immensely powerful. Its films carry social and political contents expressed so emotionally and with such a degree of technical perfection that the content may be swallowed in

the temporary admiration of the method. This has unfortunately been the case with the numerous over-young and over-enthusiastic *cinéastes*, which is suggestive of their lack of balanced critical faculties. Because of its full use of the resources of the cinema, the Soviet film to-day is in the position to influence an attitude of mind and an outlook on life. It is, as a matter of fact, produced for that very purpose. On this account, therefore, acceptance of a film produced in the U.S.S.R. as an example of filmic exposition must be guided by rigorous and careful deliberation. In hasty admiration of perfect technique, it is easy to accept content, theme, and meaning without thought as to their full intention.

It will be recalled that among the proposals of the Soviet Government, when they assumed control in 1917, was the suggestion that all forms of expression to the public, such as the cinema, the theatre, the Press, and literature, should be under the guidance of the State. The aim was, of course, that the new ideas and concepts of the Government should be widely circulated in the outlying districts as well as in the industrial centres. The theatre essentially was to become a unified form of drama, arising out of the social necessities of the masses. This aim has to some extent been successful, having evolved, during the process of rebuilding, a technique such as exists nowhere outside Soviet Russia. Incorporated in this constructive policy for the theatre was a similar but wider aim for the cinema. Originally, I believe, only a few of the Soviet leaders realised the capabilities of the film as an instrument of propaganda, considering the theatre the more powerful. But they have since become aware of the vast superiority of the cinema over the stage, both for economic reasons and for its greater breadth of representation, until now it is the principal medium of expression for the Government. The initial aim of the Soviet film was to reflect and interpret a new social civilisation in the making, as conceived by Marx and realised by Lenin, which resulted in a form of cinema demanding an entirely new scale of values. Lenin intended the theatre to be a microcosm of the complete theory of Bolshevism, to be admired and copied by the masses. But it was Lenin also who declared that 'of all the arts the most important for Russia is, to my mind, that of the cinema.'

The nationalisation of the Soviet film did not take place until 1919. But two years earlier, in December, a special Cinema Commission was held in Leningrad by the People's Commissariat of

Education to lay down a future policy. The complete control of film production and distribution, however, soon passed into the hands of the Government and there began the development of the cinema along the lines of Lenin's policy. From that time onward, films were produced according to carefully laid plans, with certain types of films for certain audiences. The new cinema depicted the general policy of the Government and of the people; of construction and of creation. Further, all profit derived from the exhibition of films went to the realisation of better and bigger productions. Theoretically, it was an admirable state of affairs for the nurturing of a new form of dramatic expression.

Even as in literature themes are developed, ideas propounded, and problems solved beyond the mere exercise of writing and style, so the Soviet directors contrived to employ the visual images of the cinema to express, not, as in other countries, mere thrilling episodes and acrobatic sensations, but the spirit and heart of mankind. Under the new policy a film was considered worthless unless it elucidated some new idea for the stimulation of mass thought. On principle, every film presented a problem or a theory which was definitely connected with the everyday life of the persons for whom it was made. A content of sociological importance was the basis of all productions; and around this was woven a narrative story-interest. Added to which, numerous pictures were made which depicted the events of the revolution and life under the Czarist *régime*, both of which were, as was to be expected, considerably distorted to suit the Government's purpose. (The exclusion of Trotsky, for instance, in Eisenstein's *October*, renders it valueless as an historical document. One remembers, also, the distortion of historical events in the French Commune film, Kozintsev and Trauberg's *New Babylon*.) Commercially, æsthetically, and politically the cinema was the ideal medium for the glorification of the Soviets.

We are to understand, then, that the Soviet film such as has been produced in increasing numbers as the years have progressed, is designed to instruct, to develop, and to connect up the thought and conditions of the outlying villages with that of the big towns; so that each man, woman, and child in every district shall be made aware of the social, scientific, industrial, and political progress of the State. And in order to stimulate the interest of the masses in the film industry, production is taken into their lives so that they have

soviet sovkino

OCTOBER

renamed 'The Ten Days that shook the World,' by S. M. Eisenstein. One of the several films commissioned by the government for the tenth anniversary of the soviet régime.
1927-28

opportunities to participate in realisations, to write scenarios,[1] and to vote approval or disapproval of a film content before production takes place. There are said to be organisations for the close co-operation between producing companies and the people, so as to enable subjects of significance to all classes to be represented. But, it must be remembered, Russia is a vast country with great spaces of thinly populated land in the agricultural districts where villages are separated by many miles. In order to secure exhibition of films in these districts, therefore, there are travelling cinemas, each of which takes a monthly route, visiting about twenty villages. When it has completed its round, it begins again with a new programme. Thus even the most isolated villages are kept constantly in touch with movements in the towns. Each of the latter has, of course, its cinemas, and statistics show a rapid increase in theatres during the last few years. The distribution of films takes place almost exclusively through Government channels; films carrying different contents being sent to various parts, according to the State's calculation of the needs of the populace in each district. In this way, the cinema reaches and influences the minds of the workers, the tradesmen, and the citizens in the towns, as well as the peasants in Siberia and the tribesmen in Turkestan.

Hence, the content of every film is its *raison d'être*, whether of social, heroic, epic, historical, romantic, human, or national importance. Moreover, it is out of the desire to express this content with the greatest amount of emotional effect on the simple minds of the masses that the cinematic technique of Soviet directors has developed to a state of efficiency equalled by no other film-producing country in the world.

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Soviet films fall into various classes, each made for a special purpose, and these are roughly as follow:

(*a*) General subjects dealing with life before, during, and after the revolution, including satires, dramas, comedies, melodramas, etc. The usual aim of these pictures is to show the tyranny and oppression under the Czarist *régime* and the benefits derived from Bolshevik control. The subject is approached through various channels *viz.*,

[1] Léon Moussinac in *Le Cinéma Soviétique* gives the following information that, in 1927, the Sovkino received no fewer than 2,000 scenarios from the public; whilst the Vufku-kino, in the same year, had more than 1,300.

the *mass* or *epic film*, of comparatively contemporary interest, showing the masses challenging the old-established authority (*October*, *Battleship 'Potemkin,' The Strike*); the *individual film*, depicting the effect of the revolution on a single person, or group of persons (*Mother*, *The End of St. Petersburg*); the *historical* or *monumental film*, dealing with past historical events of massed revolt (*New Babylon*, *S.V.D.*, *Revolt in Kazan*); the *reconstruction film*, portraying life under the advantages of the Soviet *régime*, the rebuilding of the New Russia and the formation of the Worker, the Citizen, and the Peasant, etc. (*The Fragment of an Empire*, *Life's Roads*, *The Peasant Women of Riazan*, *Pits*, *Moscow that Laughs and Weeps*); and such films as Eisenstein's *The Old and the New*, which showed the State laying economic foundations for mechanical agriculture; Dziga-Vertov's *The Eleventh Year*, which reflected the commercial and social development of the Ukraine under ten years of Soviet control; and *Turksib*, Turin's superb film, of the construction of the Turkestan-Siberian railway.

(*b*) The educational, scientific, and cultural film, which is a form of cinema that the Government has developed to a vast degree. Instructional films are made about every conceivable subject: industrial, medical, geographical, ethnological, etc., and are shown widely with a view to better education. Special films are made, for example, for the technical instruction of engineers and electricians, and for the officers and men of the Red Army, on field manœuvres, aerial defence and attack, etc.

(*c*) The news-reel, which, as in other countries, is a survey of the events of the week. It is, of course, largely used to popularise and advertise the leaders of the proletariat.

(*d*) The children's film, both cine-fiction and educational.

For each of these groups there exists in every producing company separate scenario departments and information bureaux, which are capable of dealing with the various stages of scenario treatment. This highly developed organisation for the classification, cataloguing, and sorting of the film scenario is an important feature of the Soviet cinema. In no other film-producing country is so much attention paid to the construction of scenario work. Under the control of the central bureau is the selection of themes for the year's output, so that the films may accord exactly with the aim of the Government, politically, socially, and financially. There exist also other departments

which deal with the scenarios and manuscripts sent from the people, and with the examination of literature, documents, etc., published in Russia and abroad that would make possible film material. The realisation of the films, once the subjects are chosen, is again a matter of close collaboration. The production units are allotted, according to their characteristics, to deal with such subjects as are deemed suitable to them. The workers in every studio (directors, cameramen, scenarists, architects, etc.) are all catalogued and labelled, so to speak, with regard to their individual qualifications. In this way the achievement of perfect collectivism is attempted in film production.

The majority of the technicians and acting personnel go through special courses of training before assuming their positions in the studios. As is well-known, there exists the Moscow State School of Cinematography, which was founded in 1919 for the intensive training of workers in all branches of the industry. There are also several other schools throughout the country, in Leningrad and in the Ukraine. All producing firms have to give a certain number of positions in their studios to graduates from the State schools. In the latter, every section of film production is included, so that before entry into a studio a worker has some knowledge of film technique, acting, psychology, dramatic literature, make-up, acrobatics, dancing, etc., as well as his specialised skill in his particular job, be it scenario work, assistant-direction, photography, lighting, set-construction, or in the laboratory. There exists also the Feks group, at Leningrad, for the sole purpose of experiment and *avant-garde* work. All the State schools are regularly visited by the better-known directors and technicians, who lecture and instruct on theory and on their practical experience of production work.

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Briefly, then, the cinema is the main medium of the Commissariat of Education for the instruction of the masses; and thus, we understand that the primary aim of the Soviet Government is to carry the principles of Bolshevism by means of the cinema, not only throughout Russia, but to the farthest corners of the world. If the intellectual classes of foreign countries find their æsthetic ideal in these films (as is the case) then so much the better for the Soviet, since it will render it easier for their content to be absorbed.

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It may be suggested that such an ideal state of conditions for film production cannot exist without some flaw in the pattern. The complete organisation, co-operation, and harmony of working conditions appear to be the dream-paradise of the *cinéaste*. There is, however, a serious drawback in the apparent happiness of the Soviet film industry; it lies at the root of the organisation, actually in the policy of the Government itself. There is a certain inward antagonism between the Government and the production units. The cinema is controlled by Bolshevist minds, whose sole aim is the spread of their faith; whilst the realisation of the best films is in the hands of the workers, who are also by way of being artists. As a result, the film director, who for some years past has been training his mind and has been contented with the policy dictated to him in his work, now finds himself in the position of being unable to realise his æsthetic principles if they do not conform to the wishes of the Government. He can only make a film of a subject approved by the controlling State bureau.

Although he has freedom of expression in actual technical representation, his æsthetic progress is limited by the demands of the production committee. Unless he is a true Bolshevik, his work will become stultified by the eternal theme of propaganda. It is ridiculous to suggest that the Soviet Government produce films for the sheer love of the medium. They do indeed make 'art' films, but only for export in order to secure the appreciation of foreign intelligentsia. I have no hesitation in saying that the Soviet film director is as impeded in his self-development as his *confrère* in Hollywood is bound by the capitalistic ideas of picture-sense and star-system. Neither is free to develop his knowledge of the cinema along a natural, instinctive course. The Soviet director, it is true, has the benefit of being able to realise his own ideas of technical expression (*viz.* editing and cutting) which the German, American, and British director has not; but they are each equally prevented from progress in the realisation of their philosophic, spiritual, and creative conception of the film as a means of self-expression.

The two Soviet directors, S. M. Eisenstein and V. I. Pudovkin, have achieved during their evolutionary period the enviable position of being the most eminent directors in the world. They have been satisfied with State control over their themes and concepts whilst they have been otherwise interested in the perfection of their technique. But they are now in the extraordinary position of possessing

soviet sovkino

REVOLT IN KAZAN

a picturesque historical film by Yoan Tarasch. *1927-28*

a marvellous degree of technical accomplishment and of being unable to employ it freely to express their personal attitude towards life. Either they must continue to be good Bolsheviks, content to remain making films for the purpose of propaganda, or they must leave their native country and seek employment elsewhere. It is certain that if they are true artists, with the inevitable international outlook of an artist, they will never be allowed free expression of their minds in Soviet Russia under the present system of State control.

This remarkable condition of affairs can only be applied at the moment to the few eminent directors of the U.S.S.R. (Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and possibly Kozintsev, Trauberg, Turin, Dovjenko, and Ermler) for the majority of Soviet *régisseurs* are mechanical in their outlook and will be easily persuaded to manufacture a steady output of State-controlled films. The position will be rendered more acute, however, when the film schools produce further creative mentalities. Even the iron rule of a Soviet *régime* cannot suppress the birth and development of an instinctively creative mind.

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As might be expected from an industry organised under a system of bureaucracy there is a network of producing companies in Soviet Russia, each employing its individual directors and units. The principal concerns are: the *Sovkino*, with studios at Leningrad and Moscow; the *Mejrabpom-Russ*, with studios at the same cities; the *Vufku-kino*, at Kiev and Odessa, in the Ukraine; the *Goskinprom*, at Tiflis in Georgia; the *Belgoskino*, at Minsk in White Russia; the *Turkmenkino*, in Turkmenistan; the *Vostok-kino*, at Baku; and the *Armenkino*, in Armenia.

The Sovkino, which came into being in 1925, employ many directors, of whom the most important are S. M. Eisenstein, Lev Kuleshov, Alexander Room, Kozintsev and Trauberg, Ermler, Olga Preobrashenskaia, Youri-Taritch, Popoff, Sefir Choub. They are the sole distributors of Soviet films abroad and the only importers of the foreign product. To the Mejrabpom-Russ (a collective word meaning the International Workers' Relief) are attached V. I. Pudovkin, Y. A. Protasanov, Fiodor Otzep, Konstantin Eggert, V. Obelenski, Jeliabuski, Boris Barnet, V. R. Gardin, etc. The Vufku-kino, in the Ukraine, claim Dovjenko, Dziga-Vertov, Kauffmann, Georgi Stabavoi, Raismann, Kavaléridze, etc. Many other directors of scientific and documentary films, as well as of cine-fiction,

attached to these and other companies, are far too numerous for inclusion.

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Until 1925, when the production of Eisenstein's *Battleship 'Potemkin'* marked a new era in the technique of the cinema, numerous films were realised by various producing concerns in Moscow and Leningrad – by the Sevsapkino, the Kino-Sever (Kino-North), the Goskino, and the Mejrabpom-Russ companies. Few of these pictures, however, have been shown outside Soviet Russia and the possibility that they will be seen is remote. In any case, I do not believe that they were of great value save as a training ground for the directors of to-day, nearly all of whom were engaged in some minor capacity during this early period. Pantelev, Doronin, Viskovski, Kuleshov, Gardin, Protasanov, Razoumni, Jeliabuski, and Barski were some of the principal directors of that time; such men as Otzep, Nathan Zarkhi (later scenarist to the Pudovkin films) and Youri-Taritch being employed as scenarists. Pictures of some interest to be connected with this era were *Palace and Fortress*, a large scale historical production, by Ivanovski; *The Adventures of Octobrine*, a political satire, by Kozintsev and Trauberg; *The Executioners*, a big production dealing with political events from 1905 to 1918, by Pantelev; *The Death Ray*, by Kuleshov, from a scenario by Pudovkin; *The Adventures of Mr. West Among the Bolsheviki*, a comedy of manners, also by Kuleshov; *The Cigarette Merchant of Mosselprom*, a comedy by Jeliabuski; and *The Tailor of Torjok*, by Protasanov. During this transition stage several art-films, theatrical in technique, were also produced, some being shown in England at a later date.[1] Of these may be mentioned *The Postmaster*, from the novel by Pushkin, scenario by Otzep and direction by Jeliabuski; *Morosko*, a folk-lore film by the same director; *Polikushka*, from the Tolstoi novel; and a melodrama, *The Marriage of the Bear*, directed and played by Konstantin Eggert, from a script by Lounatcharski. These were produced by the Mejrabpom-Russ company and members of the first Moscow Art Theatre took part in their realisation. To them is to be added the big decorative production of *Aëlita*, directed by

[1] Mr. F. A. Enders, of Messrs. Film Booking Offices, London, was responsible for the handling of *The Postmaster* and *The Marriage of the Bear* in England. He also held several other films from the U.S.S.R. at that time, including the celebrated *Potemkin* and *Aëlita*, but was unable to show them owing to censorship regulations and commercial reasons.

Protasanov, from the play by Count Alexei Tolstoi. This was an extraordinary Martian fantasy, combining the events in Russia during 1917 and 1918 with a fictitious story on the planet; it was notable for its wonderful massed grouping of crowds and for the cubist settings and costumes designed by Isaac Rabinovitch and Madame Alexandra Exter, of the Kamerny Theatre, Moscow. It has not been shown in England. The influence of the stage, in setting, lighting, and acting was strongly marked on these 'art' films, there being no trace of the dynamic filmic properties that were later to become the characteristics of the Soviet cinema.

The first experiments in film construction, using strips of celluloid as the basic material, which are the foundation of Soviet film technique appear to have been due to Lev Kuleshov. He was the director of several productions, including *On the Red Front*, *The Death Ray*, *Expiation*, and recently made *The Gay Canary* and *2 Buldi 2*, as well as being the founder of a school of cinematography. Kuleshov tried many experiments in the arrangement of pieces of film in different orders, finding that he could obtain remarkable effects by the relation, inter-relation, and juxtaposition of the various lengths. He logically maintained that in every art there was, firstly, a material and, secondly, a method of composing that material according to its nature; further, he determined that in the cinema the material was the film strips of photographic record, and the composing was the act of editing or piecing those strips together. His famous experiment with the actor Mosjukhin and the plate of soup, the coffin, and the little girl is probably too well-known to be repeated. Some time later, Pudovkin, who at that time was working on scenarios, became interested in the experiments of Kuleshov, and in 1923 they formed together a production unit and made *The Adventures of Mr. West Among the Bolsheviki*. This was followed later by Pudovkin's film, *The Chess Player*, in which José Capablanca was made to appear to play a part merely by the cutting and composition of film strips. Thus it is from the original experiments of Kuleshov and Pudovkin that the modern school of advanced editing and cutting has developed. It is of interest to note that Pudovkin suggests as a probable reason for the progress of editing among the Soviet *cinéastes*, that in the early days there was a shortage of film stock, and that whilst they were unable to find fresh film for their cameras, the Soviet technicians had ample time to evolve cinematic theories. Not only this, but

they were forced to utilise what stock they had with the greatest care in order to get the best effects, which provided a contrast to the chaos and haste so characteristic of the studios of Hollywood and England at that time.

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The directors generally included in the left-wing, or most advanced school, of Soviet film production are S. M. Eisenstein, V. I. Pudovkin, G. Kozintsev and L. Trauberg, Lev Kuleshov, and to a lesser extent, Dovjenko, Turin, and Ermler. The work of Eisenstein, who was at one time trained as an engineer and an architect, is known by four productions. He has particular leanings towards the drama and comedy of the Japanese theatre and an immense interest in the work of Sigmund Freud. His early experiences were varied. He worked in the Russian army as a designer of field fortifications; he painted camouflage and propaganda on the sides of cattle-trucks and trains; he was employed as a decorator in the workers' theatre in Moscow; he joined Meierhold, but was unable to agree with him; he studied Leonardo da Vinci and the reflexological school of Pavlov at one and the same time; and he has a fondness for the melodramatic thrillers of Eugêne Sue. In 1924, he made his first mass film, *The Strike*; in 1925, *The Battleship 'Potemkin,'* which was originally planned as a section only of a larger film, *1905*, the latter idea being abandoned and the section being shown separately. In 1926, he began work on *The Old and the New*, known also as *The General Line*, but discontinued production in order to make *October*, originally called *Ten Days that Shook the World*, one of the several films commissioned by the Government in connection with the tenth anniversary celebrations of the revolution. Upon completion of *October*, he returned to *The Old and the New*, finishing it in 1929. In all his films he has been assisted by G. V. Alexandrov, with Eduard Tissé as his principal cameraman. I find it of significance that Tissé was originally employed in news-reel work, and thus is admirably suited to Eisenstein's impulsive method of working.

In his first three films, Eisenstein has been interested in the representation of the mass mind, in particular the mass challenging the established authorities. He has sought to express the spirit of the people and not of the individual, and for this reason his work is to be placed on the epic scale. The theme of *Battleship 'Potemkin'* is familiar. It concerned the revolt of the crew of a battleship against

their officers on account of the bad food; the warm reception of the rebel ship by the townspeople of Odessa; the attack on the latter by the local military; and the final meeting of the battleship with the remainder of the Russian fleet. *October* was a representation of the events that followed the establishment of the Provisional Government in 1917; the flight of Kerenski; the attack on the Winter Palace; and the triumph of Lenin. Both of these films were supreme examples of advanced cinematography in that they were a synthetic combination of the emotional, the documentary and the absolute film.[1]

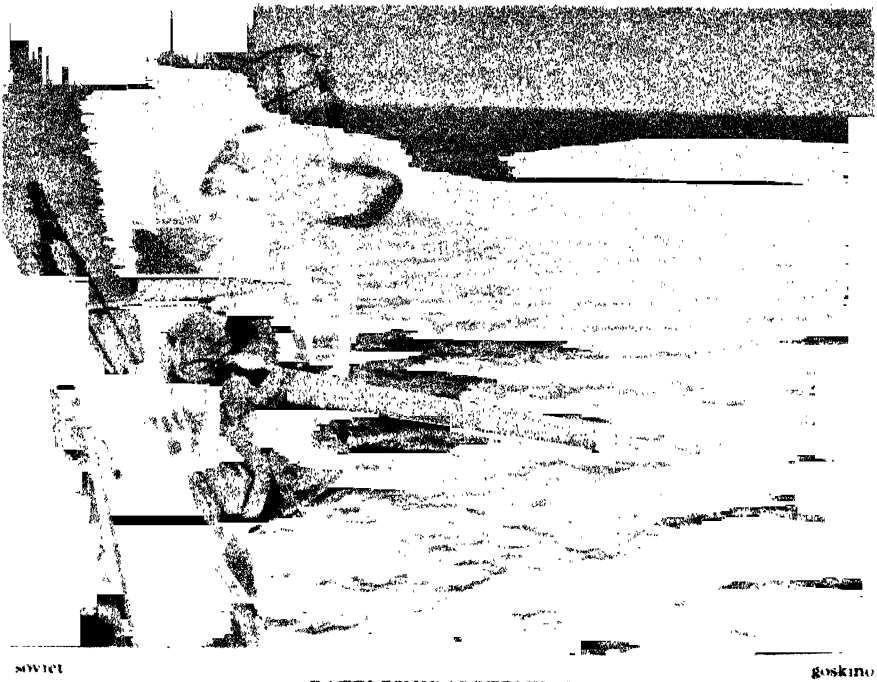
The intense dynamic vitality that is the keynote of Eisenstein's personality is the dominating feature of his cinematic expression. His films are unparalleled examples of ruthless, throbbing, vigorous direction. With absolute faith he remains true to the central aim of his theme. He does not seek help from outside sources, from irrelevant but symbolic references as does Pudovkin, in the expression of his content. There are no isolated characters, no individual mannerisms or personal developments in his films. He works with broad vision, with the central theme of revolt as his one tremendous purpose. It was the collective spirit of the sailors in *Battleship 'Potemkin'* and the feelings of the mass in *October* that gave those films their grand, sweeping, awe-inspiring quality. Throughout the former, it was the *line* of guards, the *twirling* parasols, the *breadth* of the lapping waves, the *sails* of the yachts, the *architectural rotation* of the steps, the *flapping* of the tent on the quay, the *wind under* the sheet that covered the captive sailors, the *mass-suspense* of the rebel crew as they waited for the fleet, that were significant. Similarly in *October*, it was the gigantic *statue* which guarded the streets, the *architecture* and *chandeliers* of the Winter Palace, the *floating* pamphlets in the river, the *banners* of the crowd, the *rifles* of the guard, that were the main factors of expression. Added to which, Eisenstein has a wonderful sense of pictorial composition and a unique feeling for the constant movement of his acting material. The lighting of his scenes is always so arranged and contrasted that the images never fail to convey their meaning at the first flash. He has, in company with Griffith and Abel Gance, an amazing sense of the pure visual image, apart from any interest in human character. It is from his images,

[1] The reader is referred to Eisenstein's Article, 'The Fourth Dimension in the Kino,' published in *Close Up* (Vol. VI. Nos. 3, 4), in which is propounded his theory for the 'ideological film' and the evolution of 'intellectual cinematography.'

expressive only of collective spirit, that he constructs his main, vibrating theme.

Eisenstein is essentially impulsive, spontaneous and dramatic in his methods. He does not work from a detailed manuscript like Pudovkin, for he has not the deliberate, calculating mind of the latter. He prefers to wait until the actual moment of production and then immediately seize upon the right elements for the expression of his content. It is of note to recall that neither the steps sequence at Odessa nor the misty shots of the harbour were included in the original manuscript for *Battleship 'Potemkin'*; but as soon as Eisenstein reached Odessa and found these features, he at once altered his script to include them. He is thus a brilliant exception to the theory of complete preconception which is dealt with elsewhere in this volume.

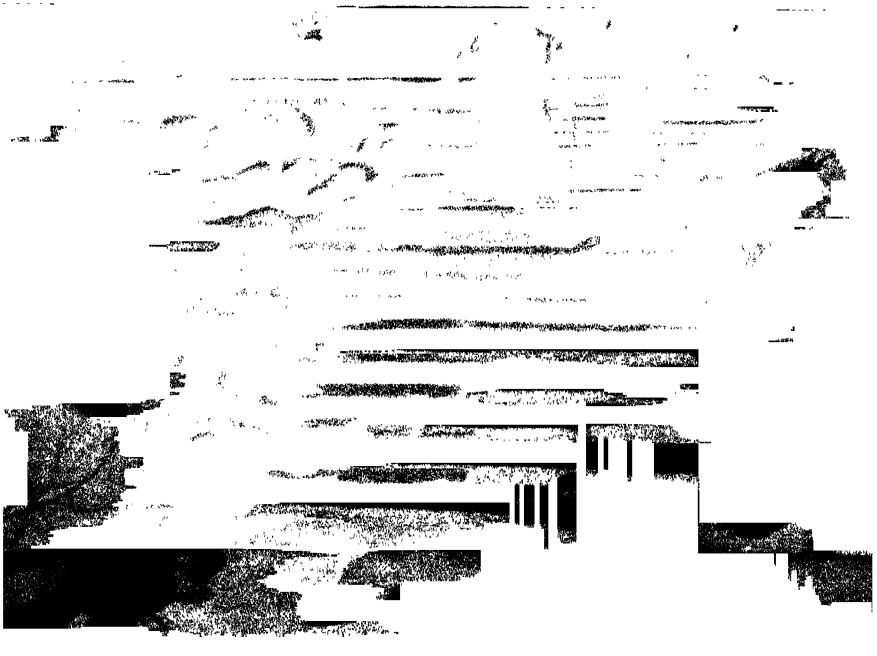
He builds with a remarkable process of cutting, an overlapping of movement from one shot into the next that filmically gives double strength to his images. He seldom uses images without movement of material, unless it is to convey atmosphere (as in the shots of the gods and architecture in *October*), which he overlaps, thus emphasising the content. For example, the raising of the bridge in *October*, with the dead horse and the girl's hair as details, was so overlapped and shot from every available angle that the actual movement was synthesised into at least a dozen filmic movements. It is the *insistence* so produced that gives the work of Eisenstein such extraordinary strength. His films can only be described as producing the sensation of throbbing, pulsating, and prickling like that of a purring piece of machinery. The spectator is conscious solely of the insistence, the astonishing urge of expression. These are the characteristics of the Eisenstein film that Edmund Meisel incorporated in his musical scores for *Battleship 'Potemkin'* and *October*, thereby rendering the presentation of these films doubly emotional. The key to the power of Eisenstein's direction is the relation that lies between the cutting and the material content, utterly different to the constructive editing of Pudovkin. The rhythmic cutting of Eisenstein is governed by the physiology of material content, whereas the editing of Pudovkin is controlled by the constructive representation of the elements of the scene, governed by the psychological expression of the content. In the words of Moussinac: *'un film d'Eisenstein ressemble à un cri; un film de Poudovkine évoque un chant.'*



soviet goskino

BATTLESHIP 'POTEMKIN'

by S. M. Eisenstein The drowning of the officers. 1924-25



In his most recent work, Eisenstein seems to be divided in his outlook, his mass concept being split by the character of an individual. Throughout *The Old and the New* there was a division of interest between the character of Lapkina, the peasant girl, and the sociological content of the theme. It was, of course, a film definitely created for the purpose of instructing the agricultural classes, to persuade them to adopt modern methods of machinery instead of their primitive ways, and from this point of view was probably successful. Cinematically, it was of interest in sequence construction and the rhythmic placing of titles, as well as in the superb beauty of the pictorial compositions. The individual types of the peasants, the great stretching shots of landscape, of wind, of storm, of clouds, were magnificent. The opening was conceived on a vast scale representing the immensity of the area of Russia and its millions of illiterate peasants. The whole conception was an enormous undertaking, and, taking into allowance the period of interruption for the production of *October*, Eisenstein may be said to have succeeded far beyond expectation in his task.[1]

As will have been gathered, Pudovkin is essentially the constructive director, more interested in the method of expressing his themes than in the themes themselves. His films contain more study, more deliberation, more calculation, more esoteric intellectuality than those of Eisenstein. Just as the themes of the latter are expressed through the collective spirit of people and things, so are Pudovkin's individual characters expressed through the themes. Pudovkin is scientific and architectural in his outlook; the builder of a film composition from small pieces, essentially psychologically dramatic. He is less spiritual and less physical than Eisenstein. He is more methodical and less visionary.

By profession originally a chemical engineer (a fact not without significance), he first became interested in cinematic representation through the experiments of Kuleshov, as we have seen. He has made five films to date, *viz. The Mechanism of the Brain* (1925), in collaboration with the professors of Pavlov's laboratory at the Academy of Sciences, Leningrad; *The Chess Player*, an experiment in cutting (1926); *Mother*, from the story by Maxim Gorki (1926); *The End of St. Petersburg*, one of the several films commissioned by the Soviet Government in connection with the tenth anniversary celebrations

[1] Cf. Eistenstein's new theories on tonal and overtonal montage, pages 55, 293.

of the revolution (1927); and *The Heir to Jenghiz Khan*, frequently referred to under the translation of the German title, *Storm Over Asia*. He has also recently completed a sound film, *Life is Beautiful*.

The key to Pudovkin's direction lay plainly in *The Mechanism of the Brain*, for it gave an exposition of the methods which he employs for the selection of his visual images, based on an understanding of the working of the human mind. But most important of the Pudovkin films was undoubtedly *Mother*, for in its brilliant realisation were found not only the elements of his constructive process, but a clue (in the opening scenes) to his future development in the phase of non-political cinema. It is to the treatment of the opening scenes in *Mother* that, I understand, Pudovkin has returned in the production of *Life Is Beautiful*. In *Mother*, we discovered the scientific method of the decomposition of a scene into its ingredients, the choice of the most powerful and suggestive, and the rebuilding of the scene by filmic representation on the screen. In this respect, I recall the sequence of suspense at the gate of the factory; the gradual assembly of the workers; the feeling of uncertainty as to what was to happen. This was the result of extraordinarily clever construction of shots and of camera position in order to achieve one highly emotional effect. It may, perhaps, appear the simplest of methods, the basis of all filmic representation, but it needs the mental skill of a Pudovkin to extract such dramatic force from a scene. I recall, also, the scene with the falling of the clock; the discovery of the hidden fire-arms under the floorboards; the trial, with the judges drawing horses on their blotting pads; the coming of spring; the escape from the prison; and the final crescendo ending of the cavalry charge. It is impossible to describe the emotional effect of this film. Without hesitation, I place it amongst the finest works in the history of the cinema.

The primary weapon in the building of scenes is Pudovkin's use of reference by cross-cutting. In *Mother*, there was the constant inclusion of landscape, of nature, noticeable in every sequence. It was not symbolic, as with the porcelain figures in *The Living Corpse*, but the sheer use of imagery to reinforce drama. The shots of vacant landscape in the opening; the trees and the lake cut in with the boy in prison; the breaking ice, rising by cross-cutting to a stupefying climax in reference to the cavalry charge. It is this breadth of reference that builds up the Pudovkin scene with such force.

The End of St. Petersburg, although a brilliant example of the methods of Pudovkin, had not the intense concentration of *Mother*. It had not the compelling force, the contact with reality that made the latter so great. The content sought to express the events of the war years, the overthrow of the Czarist *régime*, and the final establishment of the Lenin Government. It was in other words, the transition of St. Petersburg to Leningrad. There were two subsidiary themes to the main purpose; the coming of the peasant boy to the city in search of work and his experience in the war; and the story of the Bolshevik and his wife. Above all was the overwhelming triumph of the Soviets. It was an astonishing film, composed with the full power of Pudovkin's filmic mind, at once overpowering and unconvincing. There were many memorable sequences: the peasant and his companion looking for work, coming to the Palace of Justice, the approach through a maze of columns to the base of one great column; the amazing scenes of hysteria at the outbreak of war, the fluttering banners and flowers; the shots of the front cross-cut with those of the stock exchange; the attack on the Winter Palace. Every sequence was a wonderful example of construction, of the values of cutting and of dramatic camera angles, but the film had neither the unity nor the universal understanding of *Mother*.

With *The Heir to Jenghiz Khan*, Pudovkin rose to the height of his career in some sequences whilst in others he lost the thread of his theme by interest in local environment. The whole effect was one of unevenness. In company with the two preceding films, it was a masterpiece of filmic construction, of referential cross-cutting, and of the representation of mixed mentalities. It opened with a series of landscape shots of distant hills, of small round huts, of great storm-clouds; and from the distance the spectator was taken nearer by approaching shots. The whole of the first part up to the visit to the *lamaserai* was magnificent. Thereafter, the theme inclined to wander, to be interested in local detail rather than in the significance of that detail. There were moments of great power, however, as when the soldier took *Bair* to be shot; the witty cross-cutting between the scenes of the general's wife dressing and the preparation of the *lamas* for the festival; and the terrific storm scenes at the close. These were Pudovkin at his best and most emotional, but the film as a whole was broken up and over-long.

As is well known, Pudovkin prefers, whenever possible, to work

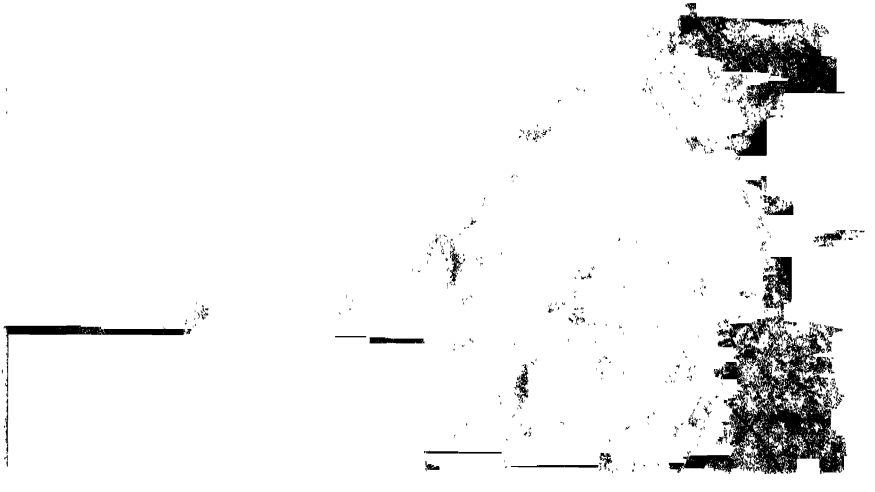
with raw material, building it in terms of filmic representation to achieve his desired result. Consequently he has filled his pictures with the most remarkable types of all nationalities. *The Heir to Jenghiz Khan*, for example, in its scenes of the fur market and the festival of the *lamas* brought material to the screen that had never before been photographed. The types were as amazing as those of the peasants in Eisenstein's *The Old and the New*. Pudovkin has been very successful in his results with these naturalistic methods till now, and I believe that working on similar lines he will achieve even greater success. I am convinced that his principles of filmic construction, at once scientific, rhythmically structural, philosophic, and architectural are those calculated to achieve the most emotional results.

To be included among the advanced Soviet directors are two men of the younger school, G. Kozintsev and L. Trauberg, who have in collaboration realised several films, including *S.V.D.* (which in translation means *A Great Work*), *The Devil's Ring*, *The Adventures of Octobrine*, and *Shinel*, from the story by Gogol. They have, at the expense of their Government, studied film production in Paris and Berlin. Their principal interest, however, lies in their recent production *New Babylon*, a film based on the events of the Paris Commune. Unlike other directors of the left-wing, who are chiefly concerned with the naturalism of their material content, Kozintsev and Trauberg favour a form of costume melodrama, stylised and slightly romantic. For the expression of this heroic romanticism they employ the recognised advanced forms of editing and cutting, as originated by the theories of Pudovkin and Kuleshov. *New Babylon*, although somewhat loosely composed and lacking the closely woven pattern of Pudovkin's early work, was conceived and realised with emotional skill. The environment of the opening, cross-cut from the interior of the emporium to the *café*, was well established, as was the capture of the guns on the hill. The film suffered principally from over-length and a straggling continuity of narrative towards the end. It was, however, a progression from their earlier work, in particular from *S.V.D.*, which was a cloak and sword melodrama set in the Decembrist period, about the second decade of the nineteenth century. It was notable for its lovely scenes of the military in the snow-fields and an ice carnival. The chief merit of the direction of these *régisseurs* lies in their brilliant handling of crowd work, of constant movement among turbulent pictorial compositions.

soviet sovk

NEW BABYLON

a film of the French Commune by G. M. Kozintsev and L. S. Trauberg. The dregs of capitalism 1928



Of particular interest also among the younger school is the work of Dovjenko, one of the directors for the Vufku-kino, of the Ukraine, who, although not strictly of the left-wing group, is outstanding for his individuality of vision. In many peculiarities, Dovjenko is unique, not only in the cinema of Soviet Russia, but in that of the world. He has primarily an extraordinary faculty for adapting the characteristics of writers and poets as well as those of other directors, welding them with personal touches into his themes. He has no sense of completeness, little conception of a film as a unified whole, but he contrives nevertheless to charge his work with ideas that are universal. His two films, *Zvenigora* and *Arsenal*, were filled with occult mysticism and magic, and were almost supernatural in their wild vagueness. He combines the mystical feeling of Dostoievski, Hofmann and Gogol in his ever-wandering imagination. His ideas are disjointed and his filmic expression is as yet immature, for he has but limited knowledge of the exposition of his imagination in constructive cinematic terms. He has, however, a definite sense of the devices of the camera, instanced in the slow-motion opening to *Zvenigora*, and the abrupt cessation of material movement in *Arsenal*. His mysticism is fascinating. For example, in the latter film, a man lit a candle for his ikon; the features of the saint grew disdainful; he leaned down from his picture and blew out the candle in the man's hand. Again, the soldiers were racing from the front with a sleigh on which was a coffin; in the village the widow waited beside a grave which was already mysteriously dug; the soldiers urged the horses to go faster; one of the animals turned its head and said: 'All right, we are going as fast as we can!' But, admirable as was the conception of this incident, it was not sufficiently effective in cinematic expression. It called for a dozen quick flashes of the horses and a title split among them.

Both *Zvenigora* and *Arsenal* were erratic but impulsively created with a combined æsthetic and spiritual mysticism. Actually, even to the northern Soviets, much of Dovjenko's work is unintelligible, for he seeks to express legends and folk-lore peculiar to the Ukraine and illogical to a spectator unversed in the traditions of the locale. For this reason, *Zvenigora* was poorly received in Moscow and Leningrad, and I am informed that much of its curious incident, such as the placing of the bomb on the railway lines and the extraordinary dream sequence, was only understandable to a Ukrainian gifted

in party politics. Memorable were the scenes of the old man on the grassy hillsides, wrapped in his magic visions; the digging for the imaginary treasure; the spirit of the trees and the slopes; the enchanting beginning of the Cossacks riding in slow-motion; and the passages in the woods with the brigands and the old man's evocations of hidden treasure.

It is my belief that in Dovjenko, Soviet Russia has a director of unprecedented vision, of wonderful imagination and of rare freedom of mind. If it is possible for him to learn through experience the right filmic exposition of his astonishing concepts (and he seems on the correct path in the use of camera devices), Dovjenko will develop into a cinematic artist of unique genius. With the exception of the work of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, and Turin's *Turksib*, Dovjenko's two films are the most stimulating to the mentality yet realised in the U.S.S.R.

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In contradistinction to the work of the left-wing directors, whose principal interest lies in technical methods of construction and expression of content, the characteristic of the right-wing is the sociological purpose of their productions. Predominant in this group is Alexander Room, who is a psychologist director interested in the exposition of the interplay of emotions between an intimate group of persons. He is inclined to approach the narrative situations in his films through the reactions of the participants, bringing their inner thoughts to the attention of the spectator by a careful photographic selection of their small, possibly insignificant, outer actions. He suppresses the environment of the narrative, except where it can emphasise the human relationship, and employs external objects only when they are of direct consequence to his characters. It will be seen that, in this detail, Room is in direct opposition to the methods of the left-wing. His direction is extremely simple and straightforward, relying almost entirely on the acting values of his cast and narrative material for emotional effect. Each of his films has carried a strong sociological content, of personal, domestic, and contemporary importance. From a psychological point of view, Room seems primarily absorbed in the mental and physical attitude of men towards women. This was the thematic basis of his best-known film, the notorious *Bed and Sofa*, which has met with approval in most countries, though it was refused public

exhibition in England, even after certain deletions had been effected. It was, however, shown privately to the Film Society, April 7th, 1929.

The sociological theme of *Bed and Sofa* was in sympathy with the general movement to raise the social level of women by the frank realisation of masculine selfishness. Room took a narrative of a husband, his wife, and another man, of universal consequence, and placed it in an environment of Moscow during the housing shortage problem. Out of the peculiar circumstances arising from the nature of the environment, he contrived situations that lent themselves to an expression of his motive. He carried the first two-thirds of his treatment of the eternal triangle with almost perfect direction, until at that point at which a decision had to be made in order to carry the moral content, he descended to a sentimental and banal motherhood feeling on the part of the wife, thereby destroying the intensity of the drama, but achieving his sociological motive. Moreover, it was apparent that this sudden discrepancy, providing a weak conclusion to an otherwise brilliant film, was due to a concession to the policy of the producers, to wit the discouragement of abortion in the U.S.S.R. Æsthetically speaking, it was neither the logical nor natural ending for the first two-thirds of the film. Had *Bed and Sofa* been finished from the opposite point of view, I believe that it would have been one of the greatest films ever made. The mental understanding that controlled the direction of the earlier portions was amazing. The emphasis of contrasted moods, of space and compression, of sense of humour and depression, was conveyed to the spectator with tremendous psychological knowledge. There was no gesture, however small, on the part of the characters (admirably played by Nicolai Batalov, Luidmila Semenova, and the late Vladimir Fogel) which had not supreme significance in revealing the inner working of their minds. The construction of the situations was perfectly contrived, the continuity having a smooth fluidity that enveloped the spectator. The balance of the scenario and the arrangement of the alternating incidents were masterly. Technically, the cutting was so good as to be almost unnoticeable. I suggest that, despite the failure of the concluding sequences, *Bed and Sofa* was an unequalled instance of pure psychological, intimate, cinematic representation of human character.

Room's first film, *The Death Ship*, was made a year previously, in 1926. It was of interest as the early work of a clever director, but

was primitive in many respects, lacking the construction of *Bed and Sofa*. It is not worth detailed comment, being notable chiefly for the sparkling quality of the landscape environment in the Black Sea district. He has since made *The Pits* and *The Ghost that Never Returns*, from a story by Henri Barbusse. The former was again uneven in texture, certain passages of intense emotional feeling between the girl and her lover in her squalid room being upset by the propaganda scenes in the workers' club and in the children's nurseries, as well as by the enforced 'glory of motherhood' motive. From a pictorial point of view some of the scenes in the glass factory where the men worked were of great beauty, but the melodramatic ending in the workers' theatre was poorly contrived. Once again, the spectator experienced the overthrow of what might have been a good film by the stressed introduction of propaganda, without which the film would never have been produced by the Government. It is impossible to ignore the purpose of such films, or not to appreciate their aim, but while it is understood it is also deplored. From a sociological point of view, both *The Pits* and *Bed and Sofa* were probably admirable; but from the cinematic outlook, their emphasised moral motive was regrettable.

In the right-wing group is to be included also the work of Olga Preobrashenskaia, whose film *The Peasant Women of Riazan* has been much praised in intelligent film circles. Actually, however, when judged by the work of Room or the left-wing directors, Preobrashenskaia's direction lacks power and insight, although this picture was superior to the average American or European output. Olga Preobrashenskaia has three assets: a feeling for movement of material; a deep sense of natural beauty; and an idea of pictorial composition. But, as has been pointed out, these qualities are to be found in almost every Soviet production. She lacks conception and has a leaning towards the theatrical both in lighting and in acting, but the principal reason for the weakness of *The Peasant Women of Riazan* was once again the sociological propaganda. The concluding scenes with the children's welfare home and the 'new spirit' were indifferent. There were certainly passages of great beauty, notably those of the waving ear-heads of corn, the scenes of the spring festival and the wedding of *Ivan* and *Anna*, but the film as a whole lacked dramatic value. Several other pictures have been made by the same woman director, including some for children which she should have

done well, and she has recently completed *The Last Attraction*, a circus story, which is again said to be uneven and inferior to *The Peasant Women of Riazan.*

A further film of the same type was Eugenij Cheriakov's *His Son*, which began in a maternity hospital and ended in an ambulance. It was yet another theme of child welfare work, and, according to accounts, the spectator was entertained by shots of babies eating, washing themselves, and sleeping, with a funeral and a 'last-minute-rescue' as the high-spots.

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The virtuosities of Dziga-Vertov and his group of the cine-eye have been called the *avant-garde* of the Soviet cinema. Actually, I suggest that, with the possible exception of Kauffmann, the group is going round in circles without being able to find a way out. Dziga-Vertov has instanced his theory of the cine-eye, a theory upon which he has based all his films and which the workers of the cine-eye group of the Vufku-kino organisation of the Ukraine attempt to develop year by year, as follows:

'. . . It is the evening performance at a cinema in a little village near Moscow. The local picture-theatre is filled with peasants and workmen from the neighbouring factory. A film is being shown without musical accompaniment. The only sound that breaks the stillness is the whirring machinery of the projector. An express train flashes across the screen. Then a little girl appears, walking slowly towards the audience. Suddenly, there is a startled scream in the house. A woman rushes forward towards the image of the little girl on the screen. She weeps and clasps a child in her arms. But the image on the screen has passed away. A train again flashes across the screen. The lights in the house go up. The woman is being carried out, for she has become unconscious. "What has happened?" asks a visitor to the workman next to him. The latter turns slowly to look at him, and replies, "Ah, that, my friend, is the cine-eye. The girl whose image you saw on the screen fell ill some time ago, and recently she died. That woman who cried out and ran towards the screen, she was the girl's mother. . . ."'

The cine-eye group specialise in the progress of what they call in Soviet Russia the 'film without joy,' which can be associated in a mild way with the interest picture. Briefly, the idea of the cine-eye is the cinematography of actual incidents and objects of everyday

life. Vertov watches human expressions, mannerisms, and small incidents everywhere, photographing them at their most characteristic moments. He has no interest in films acted by professional players, which he considers theatrical. The method is a scientific, experimental study of the visible world. It seeks to collect and to catalogue for our pleasure and edification the actualities of contemporary life. It sorts out the pertinent from the irrelevant and places it on the cinema screen.

The object of the cine-eye is to build an international language of the cinema. The ordinary cine-fiction film already achieves this to a certain extent, but in most cases it is a false rendering of fact. A record must be made and kept and shown of all that happens around us, apart from news matter which is adequately dealt with in the news bulletin. The lens of the camera has the power of the moving human eye. It can and does go everywhere and into everything. It climbs the side of a building and goes in through the window; it travels over factories, along steel girders, across the road, in and out of trains, up a chimney stack, through a park . . . into the houses of the rich and poor; it stands in the street, whilst cars, trams, 'buses, carts flash by it on all sides . . . it follows this person down that alley and meets that one round the corner. . . .

The workers of the cine-eye made their first manifesto in 1923, published in a paper called 'Lef.' But before this, from 1918 to 1922, Dziga-Vertov worked alone as the pioneer and experimenter of the cine-eye, until between 1923 and 1925 a small group was formed, numbering among them Kauffmann (Vertov's brother) and Kopaline. Since that date, the output of the group has increased, until now it may be said that the cine-eye group of the Vufku-kino is at the head of the documentary section of the Soviet cinema. The workers of the group rejoice in the name of the *kinoki*, and of their work may be mentioned *The Struggle under Czarism*, *The Truth of Lenin*, *The Sixth Part of the World*, *The Eleventh Year* (one of the several films commissioned by the Soviet Government in connection with the tenth anniversary celebrations of the revolution), *The Man With the Camera*, *Spring*, and *The Cradle*.

The cine-eye makes use of all the particular resources of the cinema, of slow-motion, ultra-rapid motion, reversed movement, composite and still photography, one turn – one picture, divided screen, microscopic lens, etc. It uses all the forms of montage in assembling

soviet

vufk

THE MAN WITH THE CAMERA

by Dziga-Vertov, with camerawork by Kaufman. The pre-eminent film of cine-eye school, note texture of the skin.
1928

and presenting its facts in a coherent order out of the chaos of modern life, and it seeks to establish a level of distinction among the thousands of phenomena that present themselves on all sides to the mind of the cine-director. All this was set down at length in a manifesto by Vertov in 1919.

The whole of the theories of Vertov were summed up in *The Man With the Camera*, which, although a fascinating exposition of the resources of the cinema and a marvellous example of technical accomplishment, was totally devoid of dramatic value. Throughout the film the spectator was constantly being reminded of the camera, for it was continually being brought before the eye on the screen. The film was regularly punctuated by the interruption of a close up of the lens of the camera, the camera itself, and the eye of the cameraman. We travel along watching a cameraman photographing a lady in a carriage. We see on the screen what the camera of the cameraman is taking. We see the cameraman as the lady in the carriage sees him. We are alternately the camera and we see what the camera sees; then we are seeing the camera seeing what we saw before. At that point, we cease seeing the camera and we see what we have just seen being developed and mounted in the studio-laboratory. 'Ah,' we say to ourselves, 'that is the cine-eye.'

Vertov was over-fond of cross-cutting for the purpose of comparison. From streets being washed to a girl washing herself; from motor-horns to a policeman holding up the traffic and back again; from the soft beds of the rich to the hard benches in the park; his cutting was generally short and staccato. He was over-inclined to flash a series of two-frame shots before the audience and blind them. Vertov in practice ran away from Vertov in theory.

The Eleventh Year was a record of the construction of the Ukraine during the ten years of Soviet *régime*. Its theme was man's attempted control over nature; of civilisation over the primitive. Where before there was waste ground now there are towns. Water that was useless now supplies the electricity for hundreds of homes. Thus the film went on with mines and pits and chimneys and smoke and workers. Kauffmann's picture *Spring* attempted to show the gradual transition from the Russian winter to the first signs of spring; the awakening of new life. It was admirably photographed and well composed into a beautiful pattern of shots.

With the coming of the sound film, the cine-eye theories expand

to embrace the cine-radio. The camera becomes the ear as well as the eye. The *kinoki* become the *radioki*. They seek now to express their material in terms of cine-eye-sound, in the form of radio-vision. Eventually they will come to the simultaneous montage of visual and sound facts, sensitive to the touch and capable of being smelled.

The work of Dziga-Vertov and his *confrères* is necessarily limited. There are bounds to the amount of reality available even to his cine-eyes and cine-ears. He cannot, for example, record emotional scenes, except when taken out of doors and then they must be natural. By rejecting all forms of studio work, he sets inevitable barriers to his progress. Although from a technical standpoint I have full admiration for the pictures of Dziga-Vertov, I am convinced that he has been proceeding up a *cul-de-sac*, and that he is already at the end. His last film, *The Man With the Camera*, was a wonderful piece of virtuosity, of montage, of material and of cutting, a perfect exposition of the cinematic values available to the director, but little else. Outside Russia his theories and films are only just becoming known, hence their enthusiastic reception by the intelligentsia and amateur film groups, but in his own country he is not considered to have achieved anything since the publication of his early manifestos. He is, in fact, rather out of date.

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In Soviet Russia, as in other countries, there are many second and third rate directors whose films, in comparison to those of the left and right wings, are not of unusual consequence. Their work, however, has met with considerable approval amongst the film litterati, and it is usual to find their merits have been largely overestimated. Typical amongst this group I would place such men as Georgi Stabavoi, Fiodor Otzep, Boris Barnet, Y. A. Protasanov, and Youri-Taritch.

Stabavoi works for the Vufku-kino, having realised for them *The Man in the Forest*, *Calumny*, and *Two Days*, the last being his most important picture. He is a heavy-handed, darkly psychological director, capable of utilising dramatic situations to some effect, but is not considered of much importance by the Russian school. Otzep has made three films, *Mess Mend*, *The Yellow Pass*, and, in conjunction with Messrs. Prometheus, of Berlin, *The Living Corpse*, from the play by Tolstoi. He was originally well known as a scenario writer, being responsible for the manuscripts of *The Postmaster*,

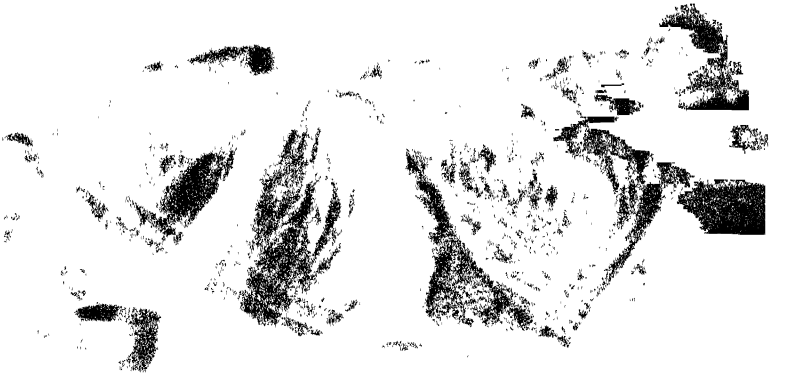
Polikushka, and *The Cigarette Maker of Mosselprom*. He is not a director of any standing, his work being uneven and lacking in dramatic quality. *The Living Corpse*, which was one of the few films exemplifying Soviet technique to be generally shown in England, was of interest principally for the playing of Pudovkin as *Fedya Protasov*, and for the editing, which was in the hands of the latter. It was obviously the product of a unit working in unaccustomed surroundings. Barnet is a director of comedies, usually of amusing incident and notable for an employment of trick effects. Two of his comedies have been seen, *Moscow that Laughs and Weeps*, and *The House in Trubnaya Square*. Both were humorous as light entertainment, but not of cinematic importance. The latter contained all the elements of slapstick, being a burlesque on middle-class life in a block of flats in Moscow. There was a delightful Ford car that did tricks, an amusing election procession, and some comic theatre scenes. It was, moreover, a clever burlesque on many Soviet films. There was more than a gentle dig at Eisenstein's crowds and Dziga-Vertov's tramcars. Protasanov is a director of the old school, in company with Youri-Taritch, Gardin, Dolinov, and Pantelev. He was the director of the big Martian fantasy, *Aelita*, of *The Three Thieves*, *The Waiter's Daughter*, *The White Eagle*, and *The Forty-First*, none of which was of more than average merit. Youri-Taritch has made two big spectacle films, *Ivan the Terrible* and *Revolt in Kazan*. Both were historical costume pictures, for the Russian loves his historical film, and were excellent pictorially. The list of directors in this class could be extended considerably, but their work, as a rule, is not worth detailed comment.

There are, however, three recent Soviet films that demand inclusion, *The Fragment of an Empire*, *Prison*, and *Turksib*, for their directors, Ermler, Raismann, and Turin, will be of future significance. The first is a member of a group of experimenters attached to the Leningrad Studio of the Sovkino, and *The Fragment of an Empire* was their fifth production. This film was the epitome of the Soviet sociological propaganda cinema, realised with an extraordinary skill of technical achievement. Its theme was the expression of the constructive work accomplished in Soviet Russia since the October revolution, and its aim was to sum up the achievement of the workers and to reflect the ideals of the modern Government. It contained problems of cultural reform, of discipline among the workers, of

friendship, and of the eternal universal question of love and marriage. The film was a complete document of the social and political life of contemporary Russia. The exterior scenes were taken in various towns, but were filmically composed into one great city, Ermler presumably desiring to express a universal concept of the newly constructed country. The narrative interest concerned a N.C.O., who was wounded and lost his memory in 1917, and regained it ten years later. He returned to St. Petersburg to discover Leningrad. In place of all that he knew in the past, he became involved in the new country of the Soviets. From a psychological point of view, the direction of Ermler was amazing. The subconscious process of the man's mind, particularly in the return of his memory through an association of latent ideas, was portrayed with extraordinary power. From death to emptiness; from emptiness to perplexity; from perplexity to understanding, the changing mental states were subtly revealed. As a representation of mental images, of reactions, of subconscious thought, the film was unequalled. The employment of technical resources was admirable; the cutting swift and slow in perfect modulation; the pattern closely woven. It is undoubtedly the outstanding film of the Soviet cinema after the two last productions of Eisenstein and Pudovkin.

Raismann's film of a mutiny in a prison, although less interesting than Ermler's compelling picture, was nevertheless a clever piece of cinematography. The opening was on a grand scale of clouds and architecture in slow dissolve shots, followed by the wind in a Siberian prison, and a dramatic escape. There succeeded the life in the prison under the new governor, the revolt that failed, the scene of prisoners at the church, the governor's party, and the release of the prisoners because of the revolution. It was, in fact, the old theme, but directed with a high degree of skill, with contrasted lighting and clever cross-cutting.

Victor Turin's magnificent film of the building of the Turkestan-Siberian Railway was shown during March 1930, by the London Workers' Film Society. It was primarily a remarkable example of the organisation of material. The film was divided into parts, each dealing with a certain phase of the great undertaking. Thus the opening reels expressed the urgent need for the railway in order to link up the vast territories of the north and the south, showing the difficulties of the old, primitive methods of transport and irrigation.



soviet vufku

THE FLOOD

by Kavaleridzé : note theatrical lighting to emphasise the luxury and magnificence supposed to exist under the old régime 1928

These were followed by scenes of the first surveyors, the assembly of the material needed for the task, the gradual pushing out of the railroad into the barren wastes, the first giant locomotive to make its appearance amongst the camels and horses, the triumph of man and machinery over nature, leading up to a final crescendo of the promise that the line would be open in 1930. The theme was handled with astonishingly skilful editing, the audience being worked up to an intense emotional crisis by the sheer brilliance of technique. Individual scenes of strong dramatic value abounded in every part, but especial mention may be made of the sand-storm in the desert, the coming of the water from the mountains to the land below, and the race between the first engine and the tribesmen mounted on their ponies and oxen.

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A predominant feature of the Soviet cinema is the wide development of the interest picture and travel film for educational purposes. There is practically no subject, whether scientific, geographical, ethnological, industrial, military, naval, aeronautical, or medical which has not been approached by Soviet directors. It is quite impossible in a short space to give any idea of the vastness to which this side of the cinema has attained in the U.S.S.R. I can only mention a few films that were outstanding in each group, so as to indicate the range of the material covered. Firstly, there seems to be almost no essential part of the territories of Russia that remains photographically unrecorded. There has been a constant succession of production units leaving the various studios for the purpose of making film expeditions. In this section there was the wonderful *Pamyr*, the film of a joint expedition organised by the Leningrad Academy of Sciences and the German Notgemeinschaft; *The Heart of Asia*, taken in Afghanistan; *The Trail of a Meteorite*, made in the Siberian marshy forests; *The Way to India*; *Sea Warrens*, dealing with the migration of birds and the vegetation of the steppes, during spring and autumn, along the coast country of the Black Sea; *Comet*, a film of Tartar life; *The Men of the Wood*, an expedition into N.W. Siberia; *The Rails Go Ringing*, made by Leontiev in the engine sheds at Tiflis; and many others. Industrial and agricultural sections include such films as: *The Sunflower Industry*, *The Fight for the Harvest*, *Chaos and Order*, *Soviet Fordism*, *The Campaign for a Crop*. Medical and hygiene films have been plentifully made, *viz.*, *Ten Years of Soviet*

Medicine, The Morning of a Healthy Man, Mother and Child, Malaria, etc.

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It is difficult to write freely about the pre-eminent films of the Soviet cinema, for however much one may admire their technical excellence and acknowledge their unquestionable superiority to the product of any other film-producing country, it is impossible to ignore their primary social, political, and often anti-religious influence. The whole existence of the Soviet cinema has come about through the urgent desire to express vividly and with the utmost effect the policy of the Soviet Government and development of the principles of Leninism. Elsewhere in this survey I have written that the primary aim of the film at the present moment is entertainment. This statement must be qualified by the functions of the Soviet cinema, which have caused the film to be considered as a dominant factor in the social and political organisation of a country. Hence it is that the finest examples of the greatest form of dramatic expression in the contemporary world are rendered unacceptable to a country of intelligence, culture, and deep-rooted tradition. The situation, which is obviously of the greatest consequence to the future development of the cinema as a whole, is without practical solution. I do not deny that there are many Soviet films that could be generally exhibited in England without resultant harm, but I am equally certain that there are a great number of others which, by reason of their brilliance of execution (and thus, persuasiveness), could not be freely circulated without detriment to the constitution of this country. On the other hand, I can see no logical reason why the best products of Soviet cinematography should not be shown by special arrangement to restricted audiences of people in personal contact with the British film industry. In this connection, the London Film Society and the Workers' Film Society are to be congratulated warmly for their enterprise, since it is only through their channels that it has been possible in England to examine the most interesting expressions of the Soviet effort.

VII

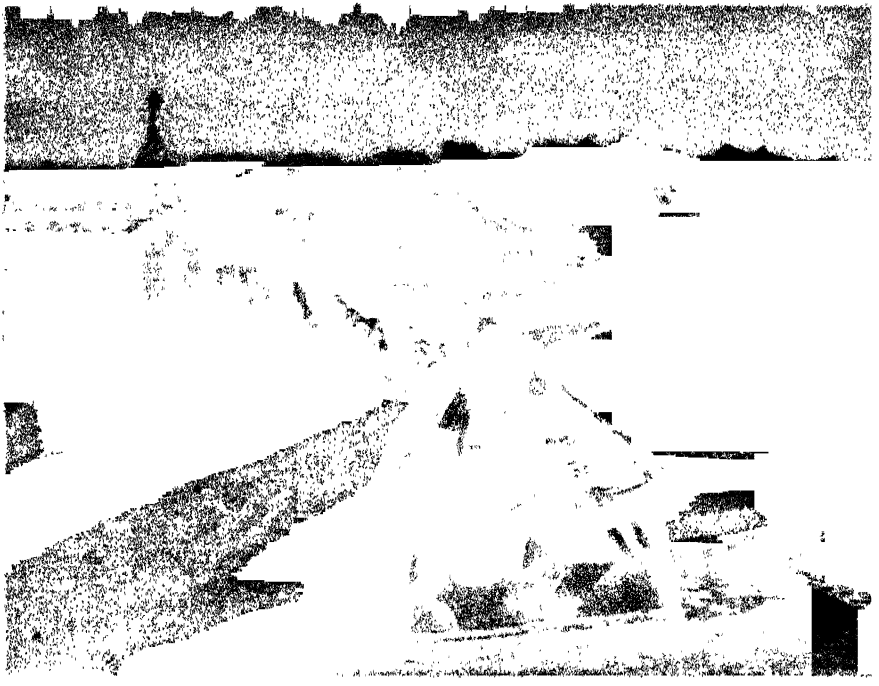
THE GERMAN FILM

NOT so long ago, it was general to look to the German cinema for the real uses of the film medium. A single German production meant a promised relief from the twenty American metallic movies which shouldered its London presentation. The simplicity of the German cinema then indicated that the intelligence and artistry, the creative imagination and craftsmanship, so essential to the production of a unified work of art, lay in the studios of Neubabelsburg and Staaken. It became natural to believe that a film coming from a German studio, made by a German director, cameraman, architect, and actors would be of certain interest. During that period of the German cinema which culminated in *The Last Laugh* and *Tartuffe*, this was the truth. So far as was known at that time, the Germans were the only producers of intelligent films in the world, with the exception, perhaps, of a few isolated examples of the early French school and the heavy pictures of the Swedes. Germany was wise in that she put her best talent into the creation of an industry, subsidised by the Government; but she reckoned without the influence of the American movie on the audiences of the world. The Germans were unable to realise that, outside their own country, few people of intelligence and good taste ever went to the cinema. We know that the general public had become saturated with the artificiality of the Hollywood movie. It was quite unable to cope with the meaning that the serious-minded German contained in his film. The masses had little, if any, experience of the cinema as a means of dramatic expression. They were shocked at and did not fully comprehend the sombre, darkly lit, intensely powerful German film. They knew nothing of psychology, of decorative beauty, and of the intrinsic reality of the cinema. They continued to show interest in the movie.

The German film flourished awhile, sparkled with individual efforts, developed technical resources to a pitch of perfection and

brought new conceptions to light on the support of her own intelligent people and those of France and lesser Europe. But the German film languished for want of wider support. The ideas of these films were conceived on a grand scale, demanding large finance for their realisation, but the returns were small. The true German film died quietly. Many of its creators went to America, whilst those who remained joined with fresh commercialised minds in the complete reorganisation of their industry on American principles. Hollywood took interest in her rival, nourished her, but stole her talent. The German cinema became American in its outlook and its characteristics became those of Hollywood.

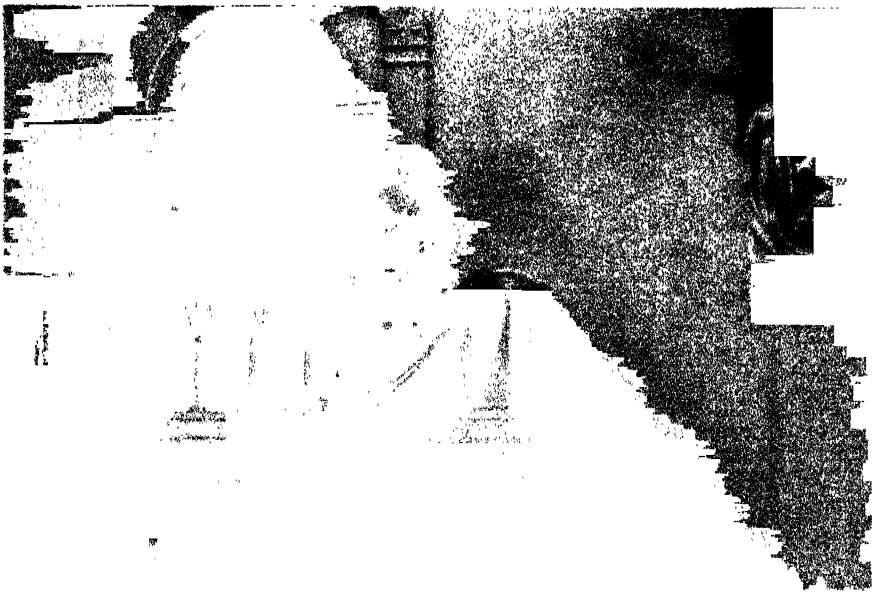
The films which Germany produced in the years following the war were no more saleable outside her own country than those of the Swedes and the French. The position of her film industry was founded upon an uneconomic basis. It must be recalled that film production in Europe was grievously hampered by the lack of sufficient financial resource; whereas America was preposterously wealthy. Whilst money was the last worry of Hollywood producers, in Germany (as later in England) it was the first. The German Government, realising that the showing of her films abroad would bring about advertisement after her ignominious war defeat, helped the industry with whole-hearted support. It induced the Deutsches Bank to finance the biggest company, the Universum Film, A.G. (known to the world as Ufa), and then brought into play the *Kontingent* law, which drastically required every German distributor to buy one home production for every American film he handled. This ruling certainly encouraged the production in the studios, although it meant, on the other hand, that there was a chance of quality being flouted by quantity. But despite this subsidy the German cinema continued to flounder, constantly becoming bankrupt, borrowing money from American firms, and taking twice the scheduled time to make a film. Interchange of studio personnel and players was adopted freely in order to keep the trend of production international. Many British and French stars are better known in Germany than in England. Recently, German directors have been working in English studios; failing to understand British temperament and trying to intermix German psychology with British *bourgeois* unintelligence. British firms produced in Germany and even with the technical resources available failed to justify their existence. All



german

THE STONE RIDER

by Dr Arnold Fanck An example of german decorative studio craftsmanship, note all the mannerised erections. 1923



along there has been a slavish imitation of American methods. Germany finds it difficult now to produce a film that is German.

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In surveying the German cinema from the end of the war until the coming of the American dialogue film, the output may roughly be divided into three groups. Firstly, the theatrical costume pictures; secondly, the big middle period of the studio art films; and thirdly, the decline of the German film in order to fall into line with the American 'picture-sense' output. These three periods naturally overlap one another, and there have been isolated exceptions to the general trend. Such pre-eminent films as *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, *Torgus*, *Vanina*, *The Last Laugh*, and the films of G. W. Pabst, stand apart from the general run of production, in certain cases being advanced examples of the type of film to come in the future.

The easily distinguishable characteristics of the earlier German films were their feeling for studio representation, for simplicity of story and treatment, for a consciousness of camera presence, and for a dramatic, psychological understanding of events. The German film was born and bred in an atmosphere of studio structure, for seldom did the German director go outside for his exterior material. The outstanding feature of all the greater of the early German films was their decorative sense of architecture. At an elementary stage in their cinematic development, the Germans revealed a strong and not unwanted tendency towards filmic craftsmanship. An instance of this is the perfection to which German cameramen have taken the technical qualities of their photography. It was in Germany that the camera first learned to be free of its tripod, that it first assumed the movement and life of a human being. But although they used their camera to its full capacity, the Germans still largely retained the studio-mind, approaching at times the artificiality of the theatre. They seemed unable to accept the possibility of the free spirit of the cinema, which is so marked in later Soviet and French productions. Germany was unable to produce an *En Rade* or a *Battleship 'Potemkin,'* but she did bring to light *The Student of Prague* and *The Love of Jeanne Ney*. There is little doubt, however, that the studio-mind, with its love of craftsmanship and structural work, imposed limitations on the choice of theme and treatment, restrictions that have damaged the recent films of Erich Pommer,

Nina Petrovna, *Homecoming*, and *Asphalt*. While it is admitted that studio architecture is absolutely necessary for certain incidental situations, which cannot be achieved on actual location (such as the creation of special streets and landscapes), nevertheless this artificiality is in opposition to the real aim of the cinema. Material that serves for filmic creation in the process of constructional editing has need to be the nearest approach to reality, if not reality itself.

The German film has contributed many valuable attributes to the cinema of the world. From the studio film there has been learnt the complete subordination of acting material, revealed so well in *The Student of Prague*; the pre-organisation of studio floor-work, including the composite set which allows for the taking of scenes in their correct sequence [1]; the unification of light, setting, and acting material (the central part of *Tartuffe*, and *The Last Laugh*); and the freedom of the camera as an instrument of expression, assuming the status of an *observer* and not of a spectator. The German cinema has taught discipline and organisation, without which no film can be produced as a unified whole.

The importance of the realisation of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* has already been dwelt upon at some length. To reiterate, it was the first significant attempt at the expression of a creative mind in the new medium of cinematography. It broke with realism on the screen; it suggested that a film, instead of being a reality, might be a possible reality; and it brought into play the mental psychology of the audience. There has been a tendency of late to look back with disdain at the theatrical character of Wiene's film. It has been objected that *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, in its structural co-ordination of light, design, and players, in its cubist-expressionist architecture, was pure stage illustration. It needs but little intelligence to utter this profound criticism, but it must be realised that *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* was produced under extraordinary circumstances. It is simple to look back now and diagnose the crudities of Wiene's work, with the most recent progress of the Soviet film and the American 'compound' cinema fresh in mind, but in 1919 all theory of the cinema was extremely raw. It is only *through* such experiments as that of Wiene, *Warning Shadows*, *The Street*, and *The Last Laugh*, that advance has been at all possible. The narrow-minded cine-journalists of to-day blind themselves to the traditional development

[1] See description, page, 118 of composite set used in *Hotel Imperial*.

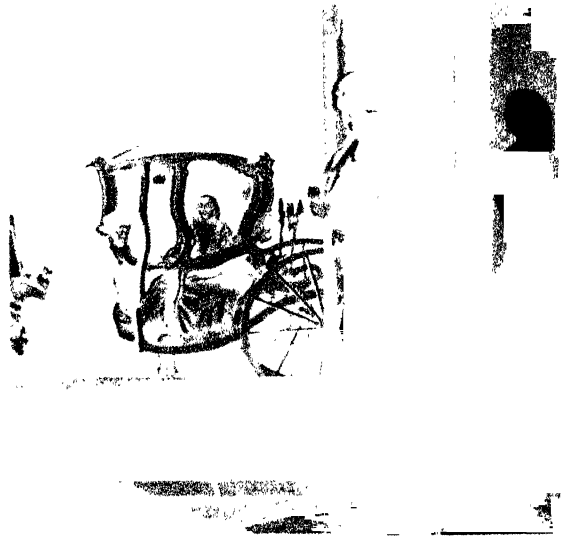
of the cinema. They seize upon Dziga-Vertov and deny the existence of Karl Dreyer; they saturate their minds with the sound film and forget the intrinsic structure of visual images. It has been said that the admirers of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* are usually painters, or people who think and remember graphically. This is a mistaken conception, for the true *cinéaste* must see and realise the importance of its realisation as well as that of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, *The Last Laugh*, *Tol'able David*, *Finis Terræ*, *Jeanne Ney*, and *Turksib*. Each of these films is related, each overlaps in its filmic exposition of thought. It is absurd to deny their existence on the grounds of theatricalism, expressionism, individualism, or naturalism. Without the creation of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, much that is admired in the cinema of to-day would be non-existent. It bore in it a suggestion of the fantasy that was to be the prominent characteristic of the art film. Some short time later, Kobe's *Torgus*, or *The Coffin Maker*, again with expressionist architecture, was another indication of the mystical fantasy which was to be the underlying motive of *Warning Shadows*, *The Student of Prague*, *Waxworks*, and others of a similar type.

The essence of the middle German film was simplicity of story value and of actional interest that eventually led to a completeness of realisation fulfilled in *The Last Laugh*. Many of the themes were simple experiments in film psychology. Karl Grune's *The Street* was a reduction of facts to the main development of one character during a short period of time. It obtained its mood by the co-ordination of light and camera psychology rather than by the acting, which was crude and mannered. Arthur Robison's *Warning Shadows* was again a simplification of detail, a centralisation of incident into small units of space and time, decorated by a fantastic touch. *Waxworks* was yet another example. Nearly all these films contained the fantastic element. They were seldom wholly tragic or wholly comic. They were often melodramatic, as in the case of *Doctor Mabuse*.

Earlier than this middle period of simplicity and fantasy there had been a wholesale production of theatrical costume films that made use of the German's natural love for spectacle and the property room. These served as a foundation for the stylised school of German film acting. At all periods of the German cinema, the actors have exerted a stabilising influence on the fluctuation of the various types

of films. Their restraining presence helped towards the establishment of the film as a whole. One recalls, in this respect, the numerous films of Conrad Veidt, Emil Jannings, Alfred Abel, Werner Krauss, Bernard Goetzke, Julius Falkenstein, Albert Steinrück, Alexander Granach, Asta Nielson, Henny Porten, Lydia Potechina, etc., in which the actors themselves steadied, and even in some cases controlled the direction.

With the German feeling for studio-craftsmanship came the decorative architecture and freedom of camerawork that were brought to a head in the big production of *Faust*, foreshadowed by Lang's *Destiny* and *Siegfried*, Robison's *Warning Shadows*, Murnau's *Tartuffe*, and Ludwig Berger's *Cinderella*. The decorative setting, based on traditional design with modern fantastic motives, played a large part in the middle German period. These fantastic productions began and ended with themselves. They carried no universal meaning, as did Karl Grune's *The Street* or *At the Edge of the World*. To this completeness, already partially achieved by the maturity of the traditional acting material, the splendid settings of Walther Röhrig, Robert Herlth, Otto Hunte, Erich Kettlehut, Karl Vollbrecht, Albin Grau, Rudolph Bamberger, Herman Warm, and others, added a final binding force. Their plastic columns, bulging mouldings, great flat expanses, simply decorated architecture formed an admirable background, never obtruding, for the acting material and simplicity of treatment of the period. It is of the utmost importance to grasp the significant part played by the architect in the development of the German cinema. Indeed, it may be said without detriment to their directors that two-thirds of the æsthetic success of *Warning Shadows*, *Siegfried*, and *Cinderella* lay in their design. The first part of the *Nibelungen Saga* has never been equalled for sheer decorative beauty; the complete charm of *Cinderella* came from the decoration of Rudolph Bamberger. *Destiny*, *The Golem*, *Sumurun*, and *Waxworks* were equally superb in their creative architecture. This natural feeling for decoration, for simple but rich design, in the Düreresque and *Baroque* styles, was the real basis of the German studio-mind. Even in films of a popular type this wonderful sense for good design was prevalent. Unlike other countries, the experimentalists in the German cinema were able to embody their revolutionary ideas in films of general practicability. There was almost no German *avant-garde* school at that time, for the most advanced



german uf.

CINDERELLA

the delightful fantasy film by Ludwig Berger, with architecture by Rudolph Bamberger - note beautiful lighting contrast 1923

filmic intelligences were working in the commercial studios. This accounted to a large extent for the superior æsthetic value of the German film in relation to the rest of the world's output.

Towards the gradual decline of the decorative film, brought about by its own completeness, there arose a new type of cinema, less fantastic and more inclined to reality, but incorporating even more strongly the psychology of human emotions in the thematic narrative. This new form had been heralded to some extent by the appearance, in 1922, of von Gerlach's *Vanina*, adapted from Stendahl, with Asta Nielson, Paul Wegener, and Paul Hartmann. In consideration of its date, *Vanina* was unique in its un-German feeling for fluidity of thematic conception. *Vanina* had breadth and space outside the customary studioisms of the period. Three years later there came *The Last Laugh*, which, as has been stated earlier, laid down the elementary principles of filmic continuity. It was, perhaps, an unequalled example of the co-ordination of production personnel. Murnau, Freund, Mayer, and Jannings worked collectively to produce a film that was a complete realisation in itself. It expressed a simple, universal theme, unrelieved by incidental detail and cross purposes. It was a centralisation of environment, of setting, of atmosphere, of players, to one dominating purpose. It had a plastic fluidity that was made possible by a titleless continuity. It had a completeness that for once was achieved by the architecture of the studio. It was the final outcome of the German craftsman's studio-mind. In the same year, as well as *The Last Laugh*, there was to come Dupont and Pommer's celebrated *Vaudeville*, Grune's *The Two Brothers*, Lupu Pick's *The Wild Duck* and *New Year's Eve*, and Pabst's *The Joyless Street*. With the exception of the last, these were all films with moral themes, close to the reality of modern life, treated with a new technique of moving camerawork and unusual angles of viewpoint. *Vaudeville* was, of course, the outstanding film that staggered the American producing companies when shown to them in the States. It was *Vaudeville* that took Pommer, Dupont, and Jannings to Hollywood.

Speaking broadly, for there are several notable exceptions, the German film entered into a decline after that date. The new productions, having lost the spirit and craftsmanship of the best German period (from 1921 to 1925) were constructed along the box-office lines of the American cinema. They were in the nature of a reaction from the work of the highest filmic intelligences in Europe at that

time, for Soviet Russia was then but an unknown quantity, experimenting with theatrical pictures. There followed for some years a great number of second and third rate German movies made to supply the *Kontingent* law, directed by such men as Richard Eichberg, Joe May, and Willi Wolff, with players like Harry Liedtke, Paul Richter, Mady Christians, Ellen Richter, Harry Halm, Liane Haid, Willy Fritsch, Lia Maria, Lilian Harvey, Jack Trevor, and Jenny Jugo. Many of these did not reach England, which only imported the best of the German output, but even from those which did it was obvious that they were lacking in the inventiveness of mind and originality of conception that had distinguished the earlier productions.

During recent years there has been an increased commercial co-operation between Germany and other European film-producing countries. The technical studio organisation of the German film industry was realised to be the most efficient in Europe, if not in the world, and both England and France interchanged production units with Germany. Many foreign firms were anxious to combine in joint productions realised by German technical resources. These pictures were an attempt to rival the constant flood of American picture-sense movies. Amid this heterogeneous mass of German films, however, there were still several individual works by pre-eminent directors who retained some intelligent interest in the cinema. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* and *The Spy*; G. W. Pabst's *Secrets of the Soul* and *Jeanne Ney*; Fritz Wendhausen's *Out of the Mist*; the films of Elizabeth Bergner's Poetic Film Company, *Donna Juana* and *The Violinist of Florence*; and Walther Ruttmann's *Berlin*, were evidence that there still remained progressive *cinéastes* in Germany.

But generally speaking, German film production was rapidly becoming like that of Hollywood in external appearances. Many of the big pictures of 1928, for example, might have been the product of American studios. They were made for an international appeal, and little of the old German feeling for psychology and simplicity of treatment remained. Erich Pommer, on returning from Hollywood, attempted to combine the merits of the old German school with a new outlook of international picture-sense. Of his four pictures recently produced, *Nina Petrovna* and *Homecoming* were of better quality than the average American or German movie. They were not, I admit, good films in the sense that they were masterpieces of filmic expression, but they contained certain aspects of camerawork

and architecture that were reminiscent of past achievements. There has been a tendency also towards the filming of melodramatic thrillers, light and artificial in mental value, but constructed with a great deal of technical skill. Of such may be mentioned Fritz Lang's excellent *The Spy*, perhaps one of the best pictures of its kind; and Tourjanski's *Manolescu*. Pabst's *Jeanne Ney*, also, was melodramatic in action. There have also been a number of good, middle-class comedies made, of general entertainment value, such as *The Bold Sea Rover* (in England, *Hurrah! I'm Alive*), with that delightful comedian, Nickolai Kolin, and *Love's Sacrifice*, a light, polished picture of youthfulness, directed with admirable skill by Hans Schwartz. The old fondness for the spectacular historical film, which seems ever present on the continent, has resulted in the large but quite unconvincing production of *Waterloo*, directed by Karl Grune, originally a simplist director; the same director's ill-conceived *Marquis d'Eon*; the sensational and theatrical film of *Martin Luther* (which revealed clearly the fallacy of the pageant picture); Ludwig Berger's version of *The Meistersingers*, a late example of the studio-mind; and *Schinderhannes*, made by the young director, Kurt Bernhardt.

The problem of the sound and dialogue film came to Germany in much the same disastrous way in which it stupefied France and England. For some time German producing companies and directors stood aside to watch the procedure of events, until from month to month they issued announcements of forthcoming sound films. At the time of writing, no German film with mechanical reproduction of dialogue has reached this country, but several units are at work on productions. The situation of sound recording has been rendered difficult in Germany by reason of a patent war that exists between the Western Electric Company of America and the Klangfilm-Tobis-Siemen Co. of Germany, a conflict that alternates in victories and losses. The necessity of making bi-lingual dialogue films in German and English will assuredly place the production of intelligent films in a precarious position, for the Germans must needs meet the foreign market demands. So long as dialogue films are supplied by America, Germany must also adapt herself to their production which is yet another step away from the German film of national characteristics.

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I have not the space at command to analyse in full the work o

Germany's many directors, but some notes may be written on the characteristics and technique of her most significant *régisseurs*.

I complain elsewhere that Pabst is theoretically the great director, but that he has failed to justify fully his immense reputation since his first and fifth films, *The Joyless Street* and *Jeanne Ney*. Although this is adverse criticism of a director who has given many instances of his rare knowledge of the probing power of the camera, nevertheless, I feel that there is a general tendency to over-estimate any and every instance of Pabst's undoubted ability. But Pabst at his best, unhampered by limitations, uncut save by himself, is perhaps the one genius of the film outside Soviet Russia approached, though in an entirely different manner, by Karl Dreyer, Chaplin, and René Clair. Both æsthetically and technically, his work is of the first importance to the European cinema. Investigation of his methods is difficult, complex, and hard to express in words. Pabst possesses a power of penetration into the deepest cells of human behaviour, and succeeds in psychologically representing the traits of his characters by filmic exposition. He is principally concerned with the development and understanding of the intricacies of the minds of his characters, and lays open their mentality by employing every resource available to the medium in which he works. It has been written in criticism that Pabst delights in the sheer use of technical accomplishment, as if he were simply a Monta Bell or a Mal St. Clair, but no more unwarranted statement has been uttered since the beginning of film journalism. It is impossible to witness the showing of a film by Pabst without marvelling at his unerring choice of camera angle for the expression of mood, or his employment of moving camera to heighten tension. Pabst, probably more so than any other director (outside the Soviet cinema), understands the complete value of his instruments. *Jeanne Ney* has already been cited as a superb example of the uses of the camera as a means of dramatic expression; *Crisis*, although not revealing Pabst to full advantage (I have only seen the cut English version), was exceptionally interesting in its use of reverse shots and camera mobility.

Before he became absorbed in the cinema, G. W. Pabst was engaged in the theatre, and it was not until 1923 that he opened his film career with the tempestuous and badly received *The Joyless Street*. Since that date he has made seven films, *Don't Play With Love*, *Secrets of the Soul*, *Jeanne Ney*, *Crisis*, *The Box of Pandora*,

German

THE LOVE OF JEANNE NEY

by G. W. Pabst with cinematwork by Fritz Wagner. With Fritz Rasp as the émigré in the opening sequence. 1927

The White Hell of Pitz Palü, and *The Diary of a Lost Girl*. Of these, the two last named have not at the time of writing been shown in England, where the work of this remarkable director is not generally known.

The history of *The Joyless Street* (the reader is referred to p. 37) has already been described, but the film which caused this extraordinary reception has not yet been approached. It seems poor enough to write that *The Joyless Street* succeeded in showing the devastation that war conditions wreaked on the inhabitants of a small dark street in post-war Vienna, for there have been so many films which have dealt in similar circumstances. But with the genius of Pabst this film was different, for it tore away the American glamour, destroyed the romanticism, and exposed the stark reality of hunger and passion under distorted conditions. No film or novel has so truthfully recorded the despair of defeat and the false values of social life that arise after war as *The Joyless Street*. With unerring psychology by which he caused the smallest actions of his characters to carry meaning, Pabst brought to his picture moments of searing pain, of mental anguish, of sheer unblemished beauty. His extreme powers of truthfulness, of the understanding of reality, of the vital meaning of hunger, love, lust, selfishness and greed, rendered this extraordinary film convincing. Like *Greed*, its significance went below the artificial surface of everyday life, turning up the deepest emotions. It was, perhaps, too true for the comprehension of the masses. Like *Greed*, it was too real, too devastating in its truth. It is recorded that Pabst himself once said, 'What need is there for romantic treatment? Real life is too romantic and too ghastly.' Mention has already been made of Greta Garbo in this film, for it is by this that one theorises on her beauty and nature. In Hollywood this splendid woman has been wantonly distorted into a symbol of eroticism. But Greta Garbo, by reason of the sympathetic understanding of Pabst, brought a quality of loveliness into her playing as the professor's elder daughter. Her frail beauty, cold as an ice flower warmed by the sun, stood secure in the starving city of Vienna, untouched by the vice and lust that dwelt in the dark little street. Not only Greta Garbo, but the other players in this film were fascinating. I recall Asta Nielson, superb as the woman who murdered for her lover, slowly realising the horror of her action, her eyes expressing the innermost feeling of her heart; Valeska Gert, the

blatant, avaricious woman, who, under the thin guise of a milliner, kept the house patronised by the *nouveaux-riches*; Werner Krauss, the sleek-haired, wax-moustached butcher, secure in his pandering to the wealthy, with the great white dog at his side; Jaro Furth, the intellectual *Councillor Rumfort*, unable to understand the new conditions; Robert Garrison, the vulgar little speculator; and the others, Agnes Esterhazy, Henry Stuart, and Einar Hanson. When re-seen quite lately, the technique and technical qualities of *The Joyless Street* seemed faded (it was made in 1925), but the vital force of Pabst's direction was still present.

Of Pabst's psycho-analytical film, *Secrets of the Soul*, I can write but indifferently, for the copy reluctantly shown in England was badly damaged in order to meet censorial requirements. Insomuch that its continuity straggled, gaps and interruptions that could not possibly have occurred in the original copy being painfully apparent. It had little story to relate, but was a simple demonstration of the theory of psycho-analysis. It was, for those sufficiently interested, a key to the working of Pabst himself. From the doctor's treatment of the patient with the knife-complex, and from the dream sequence, it was possible to discern the manner in which Pabst himself dissects his film characters. The picture was beautifully photographed, and was of interest for the scene when Werner Krauss recalled his thoughts and actions of the previous day, the incidents being isolated from their local surroundings and placed against a white background.

It took several years for the value of *The Joyless Street* to be appreciated, but when *Jeanne Ney* made its dramatic appearance in 1928, there were those who were eager to receive this new film by Pabst. It was, it is true, badly mutilated in England, and actually presented by the English renters, Messrs. Wardour, under the absurd title of *Lusts of the Flesh*. *Jeanne Ney*, which was based illegitimately on the novel by Ilya Ehrenburg, was produced by Ufa, of Berlin, and apparently Pabst had difficulty in making the film in his own way. It was the time when the Americanisation of the German studios was in progress, and Pabst was told to make the picture 'in the American style.' Fortunately, Pabst had courage, and in *Jeanne Ney* he made a more subtle, a swifter, less tragic, and more dynamic film than *The Joyless Street*. At first glance, *Jeanne Ney* was a melodramatic spy story of communists, adventurers, a

typist, a blind girl, with a murder and a diamond robbery. It is curious, at this point, to remark that all the stories chosen by Pabst are melodramatic, almost novelettish in incident. *The Joyless Street* was adapted from a serial story by Hugo Bettauer, in the Vienna *Neue Freie Presse*, and the narrative incident of *Crisis* was not much better. Instead, however, of this being detrimental, it proves only too conclusively how important is filmic treatment in relation to story value. The interest of *Jeanne Ney* was not in its actional incident, but in the individuals concerned, their thoughts, emotions and reasons for behaving as they did. From the superb opening sequence of the orgy, beginning with a close up of the *émigré's* shabby boots, and the camera slipping away and tracking into every corner, *Jeanne Ney* developed from sequence to sequence with breath-taking power. Mood succeeded mood, each perfect in its tension and its understanding. The shooting of the consul, *Jeanne's* father, the restless curtains caused by the draught from the opening door, the quick-cut reverse shots; the inimitable, likeable kindness of the smiling Communist *attaché*, with his kippers, and the wan smile of *Jeanne*; the parting in the drenching rain, the mud, the anguish of the farewell, the stark trees; the superbly conveyed atmosphere of the detective bureau, the types of the sleuth hounds, the disike of *Jeanne* for her new work; the reunion of the boy and *Jeanne*, in the warm sunlight walking through the poor streets of Paris, the flowers, the sheer beauty of love and youth; the brilliant scene where little bald-headed *Raymond Ney* counted his imaginary money, the murder; the tremendous scene between the blind girl and the murderer; the hotel, its sordid shabbiness overcome by the love of *Jeanne*, the peace of their night, unsoiled by the contagious atmosphere of the house. . . .

The cutting of *Jeanne Ney* was executed with such skill that it seemed unnoticeable. Every cut was made on some movement, so that at the end of one shot somebody was moving, and at the beginning of the next shot the action was continued. The eye was thus absorbed in the movement and the actual transposition from one shot to another became unnoticeable. Instinctively one recalled the overlapping cutting of *The Battleship 'Potemkin,'* and realised the similar aims of Eisenstein and Pabst in this respect. For this reason it will at once be seen how disastrous can be the effect of the censor's scissors. Pabst cut *Jeanne Ney* to a definite length; every frame had its place

and meaning. The removal of a foot of such a film damages its balance, design, and *emotional* effect.

The photography of *Jeanne Ney*, by Fritz Arno Wagner, has been emphasised elsewhere, and it is sufficient to add that technically, for smoothness of panning and travelling shots, and for perfectly natural light values, it has never been surpassed. At Pabst's will, Wagner's camera nosed into the corners and ran with the players; photographed from below eye-level and down stairways; yet not once was the instrument misused. Every curve, every angle, every approach of the lens was controlled by the material that it photographed for the expression of mood. Sadness, joy, uplift, depression, exuberance, fear, morbidness, delight were achieved by the position and mobility of the camera. Its viewpoints were regulated by the logic of the action. *Jeanne Ney* was a unified individual work. From start to finish it was conceived, controlled, and created by one sensitive but dominant mind – Pabst.

As a film, after the brilliance of *Jeanne Ney*, *Crisis* was a disappointment. As the expression of the character of a woman, a single individual, it was of interest. The story was a conventional plot of a misunderstood marriage; many of the same type have been manufactured in Hollywood. It is understood that once again the English version was considerably cut, whilst in Germany, Pabst refused to put his name to the production because of the editing. The film, as shown in this country, lacked stimulus. The direction again revealed Pabst's brilliancy for angles and pictorial composition, occasional moments rising to heights of intensity. The wife's hysterical collapse in the night club; the discovery of her brooding husband when she returned home; the vicious undercurrents of atmosphere that lay behind the cabaret scenes; were handled with a technique that was equal to *The Joyless Street*. The centre of interest, however, was the compelling fascination of Brigitte Helm's *Myra*. Pabst was the first director to reveal the rare side to this actress, a quality that was not apparent in *A Daughter of Destiny*, *Metropolis*, *At the Edge of the World*, *L'Argent*, and her other pictures. In *Jeanne Ney*, Pabst was interested in the playing of Brigitte Helm as the blind girl. In *Crisis*, he came absorbed in the personality of Miss Helm herself. He succeeded in making her every movement exciting. Her strange latent power and underlying hysteria were here given their freedom. Her vibrant beauty, her mesh of gold hair, her slender, supple figure

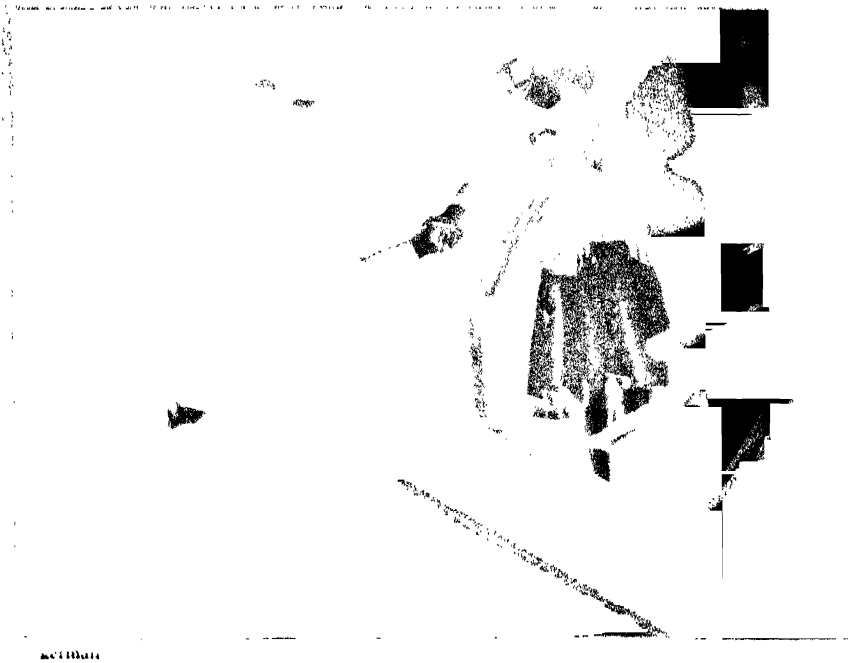
were caught and photographed from every angle. The intensity of her changing moods, her repression and resentment, her bitterness and cynicism, her final passionate breakdown in the Argentine club; these were constructed into a filmic representation of overwhelming dynamic power. Pabst analysed and dissected the remarkable character of Miss Helm and built up out of the pieces a unified, plastic personality. Her curious, fascinating power has never been exploited with such clarity. Gustav Diessl as the husband was beyond reproach, his whole outlook being enhanced by the low-level camera angles; while Hertha von Walther, as the dissipated girl friend, was strangely moving, her attractive smile at once understanding and scornful.

In each of his films, with the sole exception of the psycho-analytical essay *The Secrets of the Soul*, Pabst has been concerned with some aspect of the character of woman. His stories have been but a framework of incident on which to wind the theme of feminine character development. Every woman of Pabst's synthetic creation has had a curious, unnameable and hopelessly indefinable quality about her. He seems in the building up of their filmic personalities to be able to bring to the surface the vital forces of their being. Each actress employed in the work of Pabst assumes a new quality, not actually but filmically. He contrives by some unknown force to invest his characters with a quality of intense feeling, with strangely complex sexual or mental significance. In each of his succeeding films he has sought more and more to express the motives that lie behind a woman's impulsive thoughts and actions. He appears to have the power of discovering a hidden quality in an actress, whatever her career may have been before she came under his control. Like Greta Garbo – Asta Nielson, Edith Jehanne, Brigitte Helm, Hertha von Walther, and Louise Brooks are almost ordinary when appearing in other films under scattered direction. But Pabst has an understanding, an appreciation of the intelligence, perhaps of culture, that builds the actual personality into a magnetic, filmic being.

It was, it seems, this hidden quality, this deeper, hitherto uninvestigated, side of feminine nature that persuaded Pabst to choose, after long searching, Louise Brooks to play *Lulu* in *Pandora's Box*. *Lulu* was the theme of Wedekind's two tragedies, 'Erdgeist' and 'Die Büchse der Pandora,' one being the sequel to the other, around which Pabst built his concept. *Lulu* was the final essence of the sexual

impulse of woman; charged to the fullest extent with physical consciousness. The spring of her life was the satisfaction of this insatiable impulse, and the power of man was the possible means of that satisfaction. She loved spasmodically but with the strongest sensuality, until, sickening of her exhausted companion, he was indifferently destroyed. She was unable, moreover, to comprehend the ruthlessness of her devastation in her search for sexual satisfaction. She loved for the moment the man to whom she surrendered her body, but that love died like a flash when his exhaustion was complete. Her sentiment was hardened by the monotonous recurrence of the events which she had caused. She remained untouched by the death of her masculine stimulants. She had no interest in the vastness of life save sexuality and its accompaniments. She was childlike in her centralisation of material purpose. She was the essence of youth, with the eyes of a child, beautiful in appearance, and utterly attractive in manner. Her ultimate and only possible ending was her self-destruction by the passions which she aroused, killed by the lust-murderer, *Jack-the-Ripper*, in London.

In Louise Brooks, known to the public only by her American work (*The American Venus*, *Evening Clothes*, *The Canary Murder Case*), Pabst believed that he saw the hidden quality that could be filmically synthesised into *Lulu*. His judgment must undoubtedly, in view of his career, have been correct, but he failed to realise that in the transference of *Lulu* from the stage to the silent screen, he was to lose a link that vitally connected the external *Lulu* to her inner self. Wedekind caused *Lulu* to become a possible reality by the contrast of her outward appearance to the hard, naïve, passionate sentences that she spoke. By reason of her unaffected utterances in combination with her innocent appearance, *Lulu* became the essence of woman, the despoiler. In brief, *Lulu* was an impossible reality without the speech that Wedekind gave her. In the medium of the film these words were absent; *Lulu* became vacant and unconvincing, even under the direction of Pabst. The audience was unable to connect the appearance of *Lulu* with the magnetism that attracted men to her. The mistake lay in the visual representation of a literary figure. It was an attempt, basically at fault, to translate into a medium of visual images a character that was originally expressed by literature. It was an attempt that proved conclusively the difference that lies between two entirely different forms of expression. A character



PANDORA'S BOX

by G. W. Pabst, a film woven around Wedekind's 'Lulu,' with Louise Brooks and Gustav Diessl; note camera angle. 1928

can be, and has been built many times by visual images. So also has a character been formed by the use of words and sentences. The latter may, perhaps, serve as the inspiration for the former, but never can one be transcribed in terms of the other. Pabst conceived *Lulu* as a literary concept, living possibly in his imagination, but failed to express that concept filmically. It will be immediately suggested that the speech so vital to the exposition of *Lulu* might have well been supplied by the mechanical reproduction of dialogue. Such a consideration is worthless, since by reason of its æsthetic impossibility it would have only added a further load to the imperfections of the cinema. Thus, having taken into consideration the basic fault of *Pandora's Box*, we may be permitted once more to admire the excellence of the cutting, of the use of detail, of the chosen angles; of the introduction of the fog at the end of the film to emphasise the increasing thematic tension as the character of *Lulu* approached its fulfilment; of the unfolding of the incident in seven essential scenes, each built with clever montage.[1]

Neither of Pabst's last two pictures has been generally seen. The one, *The White Hell of Pitz Palü*, with its series of mountaineering catastrophes, is set in the Alps; the other, *The Diary of a Lost Girl* concerns the revolt of a number of girls against the rigid rules of a reformatory. Both are stated to be notable for the camerawork of Sepp Allgeier, and they both have settings designed by Erno Metzner, who made *Überfall*. The former film is co-directed by Arnold Fanck and Pabst; the first-named director being remembered for his superb mountain film, *The Wrath of the Gods* and for *The Stone Rider*. Each is said to be interesting, but then so is any film until it has been shown.

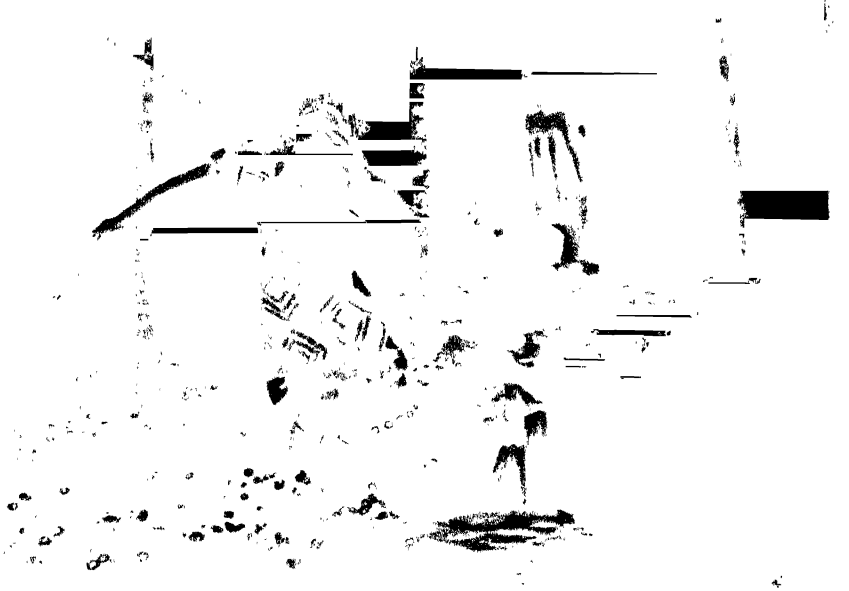
There is a tendency, obscure but nevertheless real, to regard Fritz Lang as a more intelligent Rex Ingram, for they are both expert showmen. But whereas Ingram's faculty never rises above a certain level of American picture-sense, Lang has definitely produced work that is of value. *Destiny*, *Siegfried*, and *Metropolis* were sufficient evidence of the fertility of his imagination and his sense of decorative design. Lang is further to be admired for his bigness of outlook and his power of broad visualisation. Both *Metropolis* and *The*

[1] The 'specially arranged' English copy was a travesty, for the whole meaning of the picture as well as its technical qualities were destroyed. The significant part played by Alice Roberts in the German version was omitted.

Woman in the Moon were magnificently big cinematic conceptions, realised with every technical perfection of the cinema. It is impossible not to admire Fritz Lang in this respect. On the other hand, one regrets his entire lack of filmic detail, of the play of human emotions, of the intimacy which is so peculiar a property of the film. Only on rare occasions, notably in the tea-party scene between Gerda Maurus and Willy Fritsch in *The Spy*, has Lang revealed interest in human beings as such. As a rule his characters are meaningless men and women (heroes, heroines, and villains) swept hither and thither by the magnitude of his conception. And yet he has an instinctive feeling for types, for there is seldom an individual part in his films that is not distinctive.

Lang is accustomed to utilise the best film technicians in Germany for his vast studio conceptions. Karl Hoffman, Freund, Fritz Arno Wagner, Gunther Rittau, the cameramen; and Otto Hunte, Erich Kettlehut, Oscar Werndorff, Karl Vollbrecht, the architects, have worked in the Lang production unit. All Lang's scenarios have been conceived and written in collaboration with his wife, Thea von Harbou.

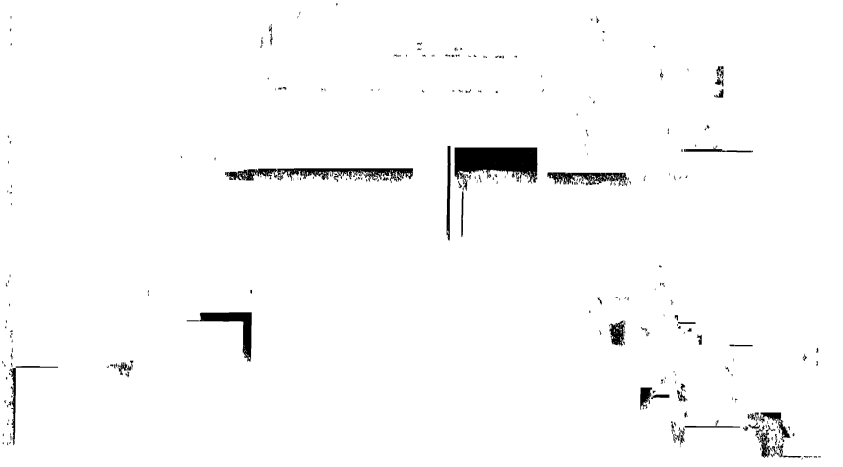
Both *Destiny* and *Siegfried* were supreme examples of the German art film. They were entirely studio-made, and in each the decorative value of the architecture was the binding force of the realisation. They were fantastic in that they were concepts of the imagination; they were decorative in that they employed a series of visual images designed in black and white and intervening tones of grey in a two-dimensional pattern. For sheer pictorial beauty of structural architecture, *Siegfried* has never been equalled, for no company could afford to spend money as did Decla-Bioskop in 1922-23. No expense can have been withheld on that extraordinary production, but, in comparison to the cost, little money could have been made in return. *Siegfried* was far from being pure film, far from the naturalism of the Soviets or the individualism of Pabst, but it was restrained, simplified pageantry, rendered with a minimum of decoration to gain the maximum of massed effect. Who can ever forget the tall, dark forests; the birch glade, bespattered with flowers where *Siegfried* was slain; the procession of *Gunther's* court, seen distantly through the mail-clad legs of the sentinels; the calm, silent atmosphere of the castle rooms, with their simple heraldic decoration; and above all, the dream of the hawks, a conception by Ruttmann mentioned at an earlier



german **decla-bioskop**

SIEGFRIED

by Fritz Lang. Paul Richter in the name part. A remarkable studio reconstruction filled with poetic lyricism. *1923*



stage? *Destiny*, also, was finely created, using every contemporary resource of trick photography and illusionary setting. Unlike *Siegfried*, which was a straightforward narration of facts, *Destiny* was an interplaited theme of three stories, 'the three lights,' each connected symbolically to the main modern theme of the two lovers. The film was magnificently conceived and realised; played with unforgettable power by Bernard Goetzke as *Death, the Stranger*, Lil Dagover as the *Girl*, and Walther Janssen as the *Boy*. It was a production that has been forgotten and deserves revival.

Lang has made also two melodramatic thrillers of spies, gamblers, disguises, crooks, and police. *Doctor Mabuse, the Gambler*, was produced in 1922; *The Spy*, an improved version on the same lines, in 1927-28. In its original form, *Doctor Mabuse* was over seventeen thousand feet in length, and was issued both in Germany and in England in two parts. It was the first German film to reach this country (about the same time as Lubitsch's *Dubarry*, renamed *Passion*) and was regarded as remarkable in film technique by the American-influenced minds of British audiences. The story was of the usual *feuilleton* type, with murders, a Sidney Street defence of *Mabuse's* house against the police and the army, and fainting women, with a strong spell of hypnotism and psycho-analysis. The action, unlike Lang's other work, was rapid in pace, and startling in incident, and was therefore preferred by some critics to his slow-moving pageant films. In certain respects it was interesting also as linking the pre-war long shot and chase elements with the tentative methods of the newer school. Six years later, Lang repeated his success twofold in *The Spy*, a story, not unlike *Doctor Mabuse*, of an international crook, with secret papers, a railway smash, complex disguises, and another final street battle. It was all splendid entertainment, superbly done. It was quick moving, thrilling, and dynamic. Lang took again as his criminal genius the versatile Rudolf Klein-Rogge, who improved on his early *Mabuse* part. Technically, the production was amazingly efficient, notably in Wagner's brilliant camerawork. In minor incidental effect, Lang had pilfered from far and wide. An excellent scene on diagonal steel-girder staircases was taken from a Soviet film, but his 'plagiarism' was justified.

Of *Metropolis*, more wilful abuse has been written than praise, partly because the version shown in this country was unhappily edited, many sequences being deliberately removed. The English

copy was arranged by Channing Pollock, author of 'The Fool.' The film, when it made its London appearance, was not enthusiastically received. H. G. Wells, amongst others, damned it as 'quite the silliest film . . .' As a matter of fact, *Metropolis* was very remarkable, based on a brilliant *filmic* conception, and, had it been shown in its entirety, would have afforded a wonderful exposition of cinematography. As with all of the German studio-films, the binding keynote of the picture was its amazing architecture. It is not until we compare *Metropolis* with a British picture on the same lines, Maurice Elvey's *High Treason*, that it is possible to realise its value. There is not one member of the production units or executive committees; not one critic or film journalist in this country, who can afford to sneer at Fritz Lang's conception. *High Treason*, with its arts-and-crafts design by Andrew Mazzei, revealed only too clearly how poorly England produces a film of this kind. Though neither a great film nor an example of pure filmic expression, *Metropolis* contained scenes that for their grandeur and strength have never been equalled either by England or America. Who, for example, could have handled the sequence when *Rotwang* transfers life and the likeness of human form into the steel figure with such brilliant feeling as Fritz Lang? *Metropolis*, with its rows of rectangular windows, its slow-treading workers, its great geometric buildings, its contrasted light and shade, its massed masses, its machinery, was a considerable achievement. Its actual story value was negligible; the architecture was the story in itself.

Lang's recent production, *The Woman in the Moon*, a film purporting to show the journey of a rocket to the moon and the adventures of the crew there, has not yet been shown in England. From its still-photographs and conception, it appears to be quite as remarkable as the other productions. It is simple, perhaps, to call Fritz Lang a showman, but he is to be reckoned also as a man of decided film intelligence, of broad views, of rare imagination, of artistic feeling, who is not afraid to put his amazing conceptions into practical form, using every technical resource of the studio to do so. Lang is to be admired and studied for his courage and self-confidence. He has not, it is true, any knowledge of constructive editing, nor yet any real idea of cutting, but he has initiative and a sense of bigness. His work is primarily architectural, essentially the product of the film studio.

german

THE SPY

Fritz Lang's melodramatic thriller, Lien Deyers and Lupu Pick 1927

The names of Paul Czinner and Elizabeth Bergner are closely associated, for until recently, when Herr Czinner came to England to direct Pola Negri, they have been interested in the joint productions of the Elizabeth Bergner Poetic Film Company. Czinner and Bergner's first film, however, was the now famous *Nju*, for the Rimax Film Company in 1924, in which the two other parts were played by Emil Jannings and Conrad Veidt. It has not been generally shown in this country. *Nju* was the essence of story simplification, of contrasted human emotions without irrelevant matter. It came during the transition period from the decorative to the naturalistic productions. Jannings was convincing as the humbly married office-man, childishly innocent and delightfully in love with his wife. She was attracted by the smart young man. She was found out; a dramatic scene; she left the husband. The young man refused her and she threw herself into the river. The husband followed, not understanding. The young man stood alone in the room where the wife had been; the old charwoman swept round him with her broom. He went out.

There was something extraordinary about this film; an indescribable atmosphere of emptiness, of fatality. Elizabeth Bergner, Jannings, and Veidt simply stood about; Czinner caught the interplay of their thoughts. It was a direct representation of facts as they were; there was little attempt to tell a story. One felt that it happened, and was recorded as it happened. It was marred only by the final child-interest, to comfort the bereaved husband. *Nju* left a feeling, rare in the usual completeness of a German film, that things would still go on. It was an incident that would be left behind by the lover and the husband in the continuation of their lives. It had a feeling similar to that evoked by the last shot in *Vaudeville*, the wide open prison gates and the sky.

The second Paul Czinner-Elizabeth Bergner film was *The Violinist of Florence*, made for Ufa (released in England under the ludicrous title of *Impetuous Youth*), and was outstanding for its lyrical beauty and poetic grace. It revealed an Elizabeth Bergner utterly dissimilar to the Bergner of *Nju*; a small, elf-like child, with queer, wide-open eyes, watching and wondering; a child whose subtle emotions were revealed by Czinner's tenderness. Czinner began this film by presenting the reactions of the child to her father (superbly played by Conrad Veidt) and to her stepmother; a tangled mass of human emotions sorted out by the brilliant psychological

direction. With the deepest interest one followed this child's thoughts; the scene of the flowers at the dinner-table; the mixing of the drinks; the scene at the boarding-school when she received the letter from her father; her joyous attempts to cross the frontier when she ran away from school; her wanderings in the hills, the cattle by the roadside – all this was most beautifully and truthfully done. Suddenly, about this point, the film achieved sheer Elizabethan cross-dressing comedy. *Renée* was mistaken for a boy and taken to Florence by an artist and his sister. Admittedly, in themselves, these latter sequences were delightful, but they were isolated from Czinner's opening and the main body of the film. It has even been suggested that they might have been a portion of another film, so different was their feeling. Nevertheless, despite this inconsistency, *The Violinist of Florence* deserved more appreciation than it was accorded. The third Czinner production, *Donna Juana*, made for the newly formed Elizabeth Bergner Poetic Film Company (in association with Ufa for distribution), was a light, romantic costume film, adapted from some old Spanish sketches by Tirso de Molina. Following the cross-dressing motive of the last portion of *The Violinist of Florence*, this film was typically Shakespearean, Elizabeth Bergner playing a sort of *Viola* rôle, fighting a duel with her lover, and so forth. The poetic atmosphere of Spain, exquisitely photographed by Karl Freund, pervaded this new work of Czinner, which was utterly charming in both conception and realisation. Miss Bergner was again supported by Walter Rilla, who played in the former film, and by the delightful Erna Morena. Following *Donna Juana*, Czinner directed his own adaptation of Honoré Balzac's 'Duchesse de Langeais,' for the Phœbus Film Company, renaming it *L'Histoire des Treize*. Miss Bergner again played the lead, whilst Hans Rehman and Agnes Esterhazy supported her. Once more Czinner revealed his genius in direction, although as a whole the film was not of equal value to the earlier productions. Before coming to the Elstree studios to direct Miss Pola Negri for the Whitaker production unit, Czinner made a version of Arthur Schnitzler's *Fräulein Else*, his last film with Elizabeth Bergner. This, like *Donna Juanna* and *L'Histoire des Treize*, has not been shown in England. Czinner may be reckoned as a director of considerable distinction, quite un-German in character, who, like Pabst, has an interest in natural individuals. His touch is light, fragile, and essentially poetic.

Much has already been written regarding the work of Murnau. Of his earlier films, *Phantom*, adapted from Hauptmann's story, and the pirated version of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* are known. The latter, produced in 1922, was possibly crude in its melodramatic acting, but nevertheless it contained much of considerable interest. There was a very definite feeling for camera angle in the establishment of a macabre mood, and effective use was made of projected negative and one-turn—one-picture camera devices for the suggestion of eerieness. Fritz Arno Wagner's camerawork was notably good, particularly a scene of frightened horses in the twilight and the close ups of the architecture of the Count's castle. Murnau's *The Last Laugh* has been discussed earlier, and his *Tartuffe*, a production by the same unit, is memorable for its superb simplicity. The scenario was again by Karl Mayer; the camerawork by Karl Freund; and the architecture by Walter Röhrig and Robert Herlth.

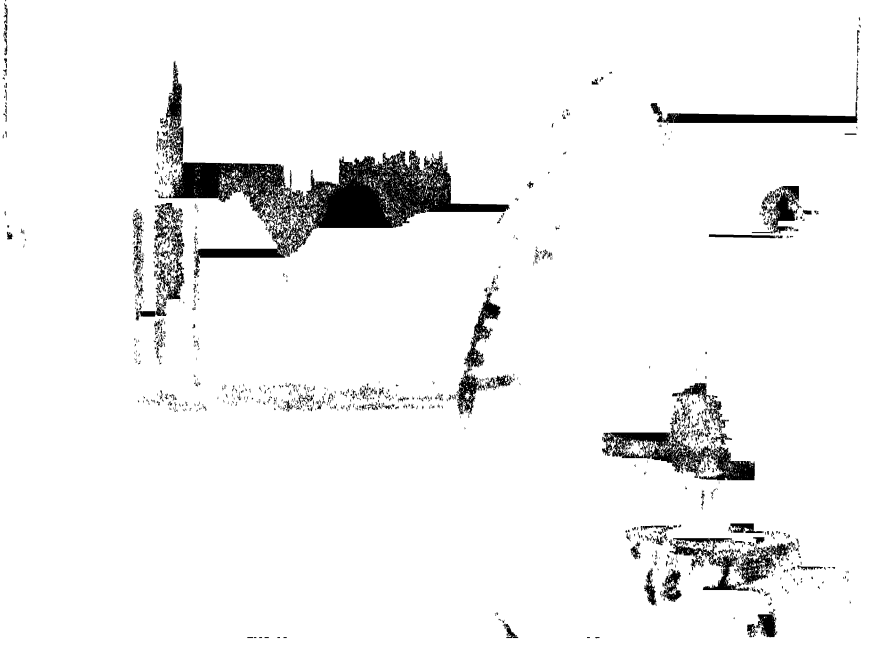
From the acting standpoint *Tartuffe* was a remarkable example of harmonious talent, typical of German completeness. The spectator felt that there was an underlying current of humour running throughout each sequence, a humour that was not without its vital dramatic moments. One recalls the crystal tear of *Elmire* that fell like a liquid pearl on the miniature of *Orgon*; the relationship of the figures one to another; the symbolic black figure of *Tartuffe*, with silhouetted thin ankles and clumsy square-toed shoes; the exquisite subtle beauty of *Elmire*, with curled wig, fragile dress, and gentle mien. Clever contrast was made between the closely held Bible of *Tartuffe*, its minute size symbolic of his hypocritical nature, and the open frankness of *Orgon*. *Tartuffe* constituted Janning's third portrayal of comedy (former occasions being in *Waxworks*, in the final part of *The Last Laugh*, and later, of course, in *Faust*). It is difficult to forget *Tartuffe* descending the curved staircase – *Tartuffe* espying the image of *Orgon's* reflection in the teapot – *Tartuffe* listening, watching, suspicious, leaning on the handrail. The *Elmire* of Lil Dagover was fragrantly beautiful. I recollect her seduction of *Tartuffe* on the first occasion; her very gestures were fragile. Werner Krauss was as good as he can at times be bad. His portrayal of *Orgon* was all that was necessary, and was probably one of his best parts.

The atmosphere that surrounded the characters enveloped the spectator. It was an atmosphere of simplification, of graceful curves,

and gorgeous detail of plaster and ironwork. There was no customary over-decoration. Unnecessary detail was eliminated to the better effect of the mass. I remember the beauty of the lace *négligé* in the final bedroom scene; the pattern of the bed covering; the porcelain clock on the fireplace; the reality of the square-toed shoes; the emphasis given to them in the scene of the hammock (a touch of genius); the design of *Orgon's* ring, and a hundred other points. All these were in perfect harmony, perfect taste, and of the highest tone. Every detail and every mass was the result of creative forethought. It was this tone that was spread over the whole. No matter where the characters moved or how they gestured, the composition remained perfect. Molière, Watteau, Boucher, and the French engravers of the eighteenth century were embodied in the spirit of this film, which was only marred by the unnecessary modern prologue and epilogue.

Herr Murnau's last film in Germany before he accepted the Fox contract in Hollywood was a realisation of *Faust*. This film may again be taken as a consummate example of German craftsmanship. Every detail, every mass, every contrast of light and shade, emphasised the mediæval atmosphere. Mention will be made later of Murnau's use of the art of Dürer and of Bruegel in his psychological establishment of the period. Again, Karl Freund's photography was superb, and the production was a notable instance not only of trick camerawork but of the Scheufftan process of illusionary architecture. The *Mephisto* of Jannings was completely delightful, the essence of refined, subtle humour, of mischievous trickery and inimitable devilry; the *Marguerite* of Camilla Horn, pure and flower-like; the *Faust* of Gosta Ekman, a Swedish actor, thoroughly competent; whilst Yvette Guilbert's playing as *Marguerite's* aunt was an ever-memorable piece of sheer artistry. The drinking scene between Jannings and Yvette Guilbert stands as one of the finest sequences of humour in the history of the screen. That such an artist as Murnau should have gone to Hollywood to devote his filmic, philosophic mind to such banalities as *Sunrise* and *The Four Devils* is infinitely regrettable.

In the two architectural productions of Murnau, *Tartuffe* and *Faust*, his direction was closely bound up with the design of Walter Röhrig and Robert Herlth, the acting of Jannings and the camera craftsmanship of Karl Freund. In the same way, the four outstanding films by Dr. Ludwig Berger – *Cinderella, A Glass of Water,*



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DRACULA

by F. W. Murnau. The pirated film made in 1922. A double exposure shot of Max Schreck as the dying Count Dracula

The Waltz Dream, and *The Burning Heart* – were the realisation of the Ludwig Berger – Rudolph Bamberger unit of workers. Herr Bamberger was also the architect to Berger's version of the Meistersingers, *The Master of Nurnburg*, a Phœbus production, with Rudolph Rittner, Max Gulstörss, Gustav Fröhlich, Julius Falkenstein and Elsa Wagner in the cast. It is by *Cinderella*, however, that Ludwig Berger is best known. Made in 1923, when the German cinema was at the height of its middle and best period, *Cinderella* was a film of the most beautiful fantasy, delicately conceived and realised with a perfection of decorative pictorialism. The touch of Ludwig Berger seemed magical, so completely entrancing was the subtle fabrication of this exquisite work. Bamberger, for his design, centred his theme around the charm of southern *Baroque* art, making full use of the plastic moulding in which the German studio workers seem to excel. Technically, the magic in this film was brilliantly accomplished, for it was essentially cinematic. It was curious to note that Berger's design of pictorial composition was nearly always symmetrical throughout this picture – for he obviously centred his movement of acting material round a feature of the architectural composition. Thus it was observed that doorways, windows, gateways, alleyways, etc., were always set in the centre of the screen, the remainder of the composition moving about them. In the same year, Ludwig Berger made *A Glass of Water*, a film that nominally concerned Queen Anne of England, but actually there was no idea of historical accuracy for that would have been antagonistic to the decorative motive as well as to the environment of the picture. Once more Rudolph Bamberger's setting was in the spirit of South German *Baroque*, whilst Helga Thomas, Mady Christians, and Lucie Höflich were again in the cast, with Rudolph Rittner and Hans Brausewetter. Although not realised with the charm of *Cinderella*, this film was nevertheless pleasing, tending perhaps to over length. Berger's later picture *The Waltz Dream*, made in 1926, was one of the few German films to meet with success in America. It ran in New York for several weeks, appreciated by American audiences as 'something different.' Actually, it was a charming comedy – as one would expect from Berger – sentimental and harmless, but not to be compared with the earlier *Cinderella*. Again, Mady Christians played with graceful comedy, supported by Willy Fritsch, who was at that time practically unknown, whilst the soft photography of

Werner Brandes and the subdued richness of the Bamberger settings contributed to the atmosphere which Berger sought to realise. This director has made yet another German picture with Miss Christians and Bamberger, *The Burning Heart*, which has recently been synchronised, whilst in Hollywood he has directed *The Sins of the Fathers* with Emil Jannings, and a version of the operetta, *The Vagabond King*.

The name of Arthur Robison is at once coupled with that of *Warning Shadows*, a film that by now is well-known to all familiar with the development of the cinema. Actually, the credit for this unique work should be given equally to all the production unit, to Fritz Arno Wagner, the cameraman; to Albin Grau, the architect; to Rudolph Schneider, the scenarist; and to Dr. Robison; as well as to the brilliant playing of Fritz Körtner, Gustav von Wangenheim, Ferdinand von Alten, Fritz Rasp, Max Gulstörss, Alexander Granach, and Ruth Weyher. To cite a familiar fact, the film was made without the use of titles, save at the opening for the introduction of the characters, but several quite ridiculous and totally discordant captions were inserted for its English presentation. At the time of production, in 1922, *Warning Shadows* was a remarkable achievement. Its purely psychological direction, its definite completeness of time and action, its intimate ensemble were new attributes of the cinema. It was a rare instance of complete filmic unity, with the possible exception of the unnecessary roof-garden scene. The continuity of theme, the smooth development from one sequence into another, the gradual realisation of the thoughts of the characters, were flawlessly presented. It carried an air of romance, of fantasy, of tragedy. Every filmic property for the expression of mood, for the creation of atmosphere, that was known at the time was used with imagination and intelligence. Its supreme value as an example of unity of purpose, of time, of place, of theme cannot be over-estimated. Of Dr. Robison's other pictures, mention need be made only of *Manon Lescaut* (1927), *Looping the Loop* (1928) and his recently completed work, *The Informer*, for British International Pictures of Elstree. For the production of *Manon Lescaut*, faithfully adapted from the immortal romance of the Abbé Prevost, Robison had the advantage of the design of Paul Leni, better-known as a director. The acting material was well chosen, no easy task with a costume picture of this type, the *Manon* of Lya de Putti and the *Chevalier des Grieux* of

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WARNING SHADOWS

Arthur Robison's vitiated him. Memorable for its simplification of treatment. Fritz Kortner as the suspicious assistant. Ruth Weyher as the wife. 1922

Vladimir Gaiderov being admirable, whilst the supporting cast, particularly Sigfried Arno, Frieda Richard, and Lydia Potechina, were exceptionally competent. Robison succeeded in establishing an air of intimacy, of dramatic relationship between one character and another, of the deep passion that linked the two lovers, by a continual use of close ups. The decorations of Leni gave to the film a reality that is lacking in the vast majority of costume pictures. His tendency to continue scenes through doorways and along passages lent a depth that prevented artificiality, a customary characteristic of such productions. The costumes, designed with a wealth of accurate detail that was fully revealed by the close penetration of the camera, were more faithful to their period, both in cut and wear, than any others that have been seen in historical film reconstruction. On the other hand, *Looping the Loop*, a curious contrast to Robison's earlier work, was a circus film – an environment which was popular at the time. It was not of especial interest, being a straightforward rendering of the usual circus story; a clown with a broken heart, a girl's flirtations, and an unscrupulous philanderer. The photography of Karl Hoffman was good; the settings of Walter Röhrig and Herlth consistent; and the acting of Werner Krauss as accomplished as usual. In brief, the production unit was worthy of better material. I have been given to understand, however, that the original negative was destroyed by fire and that the copy generally exhibited was made from an assembly of left-over 'takes.' Of Robison's British picture, *The Informer*, a Sinn Fein story of gunmen and betrayal, it is hard to write, for although it obviously contained the elements of an excellent film, the silent version shown to the public was so badly edited that little of Robison's technique could be appreciated. In order to meet market requirements at the time, a version with added dialogue sequences was presented, but this does not enter into consideration.

Karl Grune has made one outstanding film, *The Street*, and a number of others that will be forgotten in the course of time. Made in 1923, Grune's *The Street* was again typical of the German studio-mind. Its chief value lay in its unity of theme, its creation of mood by contrasted intensities and movements of light, and its simplicity of treatment. Apart from these significant features, it was acted with deplorable melodrama, and its studio structure setting was hardly convincing. Nevertheless, for its few

moments of filmic intensity, such as the celebrated moving shadow scene in the opening and the cleverly handled game of cards, it must rank as important. Grune's other films include *The Two Brothers*, with Conrad Veidt in a dual rôle; *Arabella*, with Fritz Rasp; *Jealousy*, with Werner Krauss and Lya de Putti; *At the Edge of the World*, an unconvincing pacifist theme, distinguished only for the settings by A. D. Neppach and the playing of Brigitte Helm; *Marquis d'Eon*, a depressing historical film, with Liane Haid badly miscast as the chevalier, notable only for the camera craftsmanship of Fritz Arno Wagner; *The Youth of Queen Louise*, a Terra production with Mady Christians; and *Waterloo*, the Emelka tenth anniversary spectacle film, badly staged at great expense, foolishly theatrical and lacking conviction. Karl Grune may have made *The Street*, but he has failed as yet to develop the cinematic tendencies displayed as long ago as 1923, becoming a director of the ordinary type. The same may be said of Robert Wiene, who will, of course, long be remembered as the director of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, but who, since that achievement, has done little to add to his laurels. *Raskolnikov*, made in 1923 from Dostoievski's 'Crime and Punishment' with a band of the Russian Moscow Art Players, was an essay in the same vein as *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* but less successful. The following year, Wiene made *The Hands of Orlac*, with Conrad Veidt, for the Pan Film Company of Austria; a singularly dreary, melodramatic film, interesting only because of a few tense moments of Veidt's acting and some cleverly contrasted lighting. Wiene has also made, in direct contrast to these heavy and slow productions, a light version of the opera *Rosenkavalier*, a delicate film of little lasting value.

Henrik Galeen is yet another director who has to his credit but one pre-eminent realisation, *The Student of Prague*. Galeen was first associated with the cinema as a scenarist, having been connected in this capacity with Paul Leni's *Waxworks*, Wegener's *The Golem*, and Murnau's *Dracula*. It will have been noticed by those interested in films of the past, that very frequently it is difficult to discern who exactly was responsible for the merits and demerits. Galeen, for example, probably had a great deal more to do with *The Golem* than the scenario, and similarly the complete production unit of *The Student of Prague*, including Herman Warm, Gunthur Krampf, and Erich Nitzchmann, all well-known technicians, should receive credit.

This remarkable film, almost un-German in its realisation, stands out during the transition period, when the decorative art film was being succeeded by the naturalistic film. Expressionist themes and cubist settings, so marked in the first German period, had developed into motives of mysticism and *Baroque* design, to give place again to the naturalness of the street, the town, and the individual. *The Student of Prague* combined both of these two latter periods. It had open spaciousness and dark psychology, wild poetic beauty and a deeply dramatic theme. Beyond this, it had Conrad Veidt at his best; a performance that he has never equalled either before or since. It was, possibly, theatrical – but it was, also, filmic in exposition. From the beginning of the students' drinking scene to the final death of *Baldwin*, this film was superbly handled. The conflict of inner realities; the sadness and joy of changing atmosphere; the storm emphasising the anguish of *Baldwin*; the rendering of the depths of human sorrow and weakness; the imagination and purity of treatment; the intensely dramatic unfolding of the theme: all these entitled this film to rank as great. The interior design was admirable, lit with some of the most beautiful lighting I have observed. As a film that relied for its emotional effect on the nature of the material, the lighting and pictorial composition, it was unparelleled. Two other productions go to the credit of Galeen, *Mandrake* (*A Daughter of Destiny*) and *After the Verdict*, a British production; but little can be said in praise of them, although it is only fair to add that the English version of the former film was completely mutilated in order to meet the censor's requirements.

Paul Leni's *Waxworks* was a typical example of the early decorative film, revealing, as would be expected from an artist of this character, a strong sense of painted, rather theatrical, architecture. As is probably known, the film purported to tell three episodic incidents of three wax figures in a showman's tent, developed by the imagination of a poet, the figures being *Ivan-the-Terrible*, *Haroun-al-Raschid*, and *Jack-the-Ripper*. The parts were played by Conrad Veidt, Emil Jannings, and Werner Krauss, respectively; the only occasion on which these three celebrated actors have appeared together in the same film. Their individual performances were magnificently acted in the theatrical manner. Leni's decorations were simply conceived, but *Waxworks*, whilst certainly being a film of exceptional interest, was not by any means great from a filmic point of view.

Its significance lay in its exemplary methods of simplicity both in treatment and in design. Leni made also *Prince Cuckoo*, a film about which there is little on record and, as already mentioned, designed the settings for Robison's *Manon Lescaut*. His career in Hollywood, where he went in 1926, developed into two good melodramatic thrillers, *The Green Parrot* and *The Cat and the Canary*, which he followed with a travesty of cinematic methods, *The Man Who Laughs*. He died last year, having just completed an all sound and dialogue picture for his American employers, Universal.

The work of Lupu Pick has tended to become over-praised and over-estimated. He played, it is true, a part of some importance in the gradual dawn of the German naturalistic school, with the production in 1923 of *New Year's Eve*, but this film itself was dreary. It was over-acted, in the worst German manner, by Eugène Klöpfer, a stage actor who knew little of the film, and it was made without titles. Pick's direction is principally characterised by a slow, deliberate development of plot and character, depending wholly on the acting value and narrative situations for dramatic effect. Apart from *New Year's Eve* (the English renaming of *Sylvester*) he is known chiefly by his dull version of Ibsen's *Wild Duck*; *The Last Cab*, in which he played the lead; *The Rail*; and *La Casemate Blindée*. He came to Elstree in 1928, and made for the Louis Blattner Film Corporation, *A Knight in London*, a light comedy with camerawork by Karl Freund. His interest, therefore, really lies in the transitional nature of his earlier films. Dr. Arnold Fanck is associated principally with an early cubist production, *The Stone Rider*, typical of the decorative film, with constructed open-air sets, gloomy atmosphere and distorted environment, in which Rudolph Klein-Rogge and Louise Manheim played. He is better remembered, however, by that superb mountain film, *The Wrath of the Gods*, a picture of great pictorial beauty. Recently he joined G. W. Pabst in the Alpine realisation, *The White Hell of Pitz Palü*.

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Returning to the first period of the German film, that is the era of theatricalism and later the beginnings of the expressionist and art film, a brief note should be included on the Lubitsch productions, and others of a similar type. Apart from *Anne Boleyn* and similar historical pictures, Lubitsch directed a meritorious film, *The Flame*, with Pola Negri, Alfred Abel, and Herman Thimig; as well as the

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THE STUDENT OF PRAGUE

by Henrik Galeen. A marvellous atmosphere of calm and quietude achieved by grouping and lighting. *1925*

Arabian night fantasy, *Sumurun*. To the Buchowetski historical pictures should also be added a version of Dostoievski's *Brothers Karamazov*, whilst mention must be made of Richard Oswald's *Lucretia Borgia* and *Lady Hamilton*, as well as the same director's *House in the Dragonerstrasse*, with Werner Krauss. More recently, Oswald has directed a spectacular French film based on the adventures of *Cagliostro*, with Hans Stüwe in the name part, and a war film, *The Fugitive Lover*, again with Hans Stüwe and Agnes Esterhazy.

In 1923, there was made the big Neuman production of the life of Frederick the Great, played with distinction by Otto Gebühr, with Erna Morena as *Queen Christine*. *Federicus Rex* was of great length, so much so that a copy has long lain in London for lack of proper editing. By those who have seen the film in Germany, it is said to be a remarkably faithful representation of historical fact. The direction is diversely attributed to Karl Lamprecht and A. V. Czerepy. Another big historical production was the Cob Film Company's *Martin Luther*, with Eugène Klöpfer in the name part, a film which recently caused some sensation in London by the British Board of Film Censors' ban upon its showing. The sensational ban was duly removed after some slight alterations had been made and the Board had perceived the foolishness of their action. Despite the publicity it received, however, the film proved to be not only dull but without any filmic justification. It was directed by Hans Kyser, a former scenarist to Murnau's film, *Faust*. Among other films of an early date, mention must be made of Karl Fröhlich's *Maternity* and *Tragedy*, both typical of their period; Leopold Jessner's *Hintertreppe*, made in 1921, from a scenario by Karl Mayer, with Henny Porten, Fritz Körtner, and Wilhelm Dieterle; and Frederick Zelnig's *Les Tiserands* and *The Blue Danube*.

With the later period of naturalism and reality there arose a number of directors nearly all of whom are of significance, including Berthold Viertel, Fritz Wendhausen, the late Bruno Rahn, and Kurt Bernhardt. Viertel, who had at an earlier date made *The Wig* (with Otto Gebühr) and *Nora*, claims attention by reason of the *Adventures of a Ten-Mark Note*. This was a badly titled and poorly edited film, but the basic idea and some of the direction were noteworthy, despite unnecessary distortion of camera angles. Werner Fütterer was the outstanding member of the cast. Wendhausen, who has also to his credit *The Trial of Donald Westhof*, is chiefly notable for his

brilliant film, *Out of the Mist*, with Mady Christians. This was a theme of German agricultural life, of a wayside hostelry, of a sawmill, with a climactic ending of torrential floods. The direction was simple, going straight to the motive of every action that made up the narrative situations. The atmosphere of the woods, of the fairground, and of the sawmill was created with the greatest skill, Wendhausen realising the close relationship that lay between the people of the village and their land. The interior settings were exquisitely lit and the photography throughout was beautiful. As well as Mady Christians, Werner Fütterer was again in the cast, together with Lia Eibenschutz and Karl Klock.

Before his untimely death a short time ago, two pictures of the 'street' type were associated with Bruno Rahn, the first being *Kleinstadtsünder* (*L'Auberge en Folie*) and the second, *The Tragedy of the Street*, which was shown in an abbreviated form in this country. Rahn followed on the lower-class reality that was started by Grune's *The Street*, and continued later by Pabst and Lupu Pick. *The Tragedy of the Street* was an intensely moving, deeply realised film of the *street*; the feet that walk over its stones; and of the people to whom those feet, high heels and low heels, belonged. Asta Nielson, that actress of erotic characterisation, played the elder of the two prostitutes; Hilda Jennings, the younger, who had dreams of escaping from the life she was forced to lead. To many, no doubt, the theme was sordid, possibly unpleasant, but Rahn infused its sordidness with a glimpse of happiness, a sudden appearance of all the sentiment of love and joyousness on which the woman had turned her back. Asta Nielson has never been greater than in this film; every moment of her slow acting was charged with meaning; the basin of black dye and the toothbrush; the buying of the confectionery shop with her savings; the final, overpowering tragedy. Throughout, all things led back to the street; its pavements with the hurrying, soliciting feet; its dark corners and angles; its light under the sentinel lamp-posts. Rahn's *Kleinstadtsünder*, made just previous to *The Tragedy of the Street*, was a lighter theme than the latter, again with Asta Nielson, Hans von Schlettow, Hans Wasmann, and Ferdinand von Alten. The pictures were produced by the Pantomin Film Company, both being superbly photographed by Guido Seeber. Kurt Bernhardt is a director of the young German school, who achieved rapid acclamation by his film, *Schinderhannes*. He has also to his credit, *Torments of the Night*,

a modern theme with Alexander Granach and Wilhelm Dieterle. *Schinderhannes* contained a narrative placed in the year 1796 – when the French army occupied the left bank of the Rhine – of a band of outlaws who opposed the *régime* of the French military. It was a difficult theme to treat with conviction, but Bernhardt, aided greatly by the camerawork of Gunthur Krampf, succeeded in making an extremely moving film out of its intricate incident. He attempted to develop the theme outside national feeling, to realise the characteristics and atmosphere of the period, and the sequence of events flowed smoothly to the finale of *Schinderhannes'* death as a national hero.

Among the more pretentious of the recent German productions, it is necessary to include the work of Hans Schwartz, Joe May, Tourjanski, and Volkoff. Schwartz was the director of an admirable domestic comedy, *Love's Sacrifice*, in which there played a new German actress of great charm, Kate von Nagy. He has a light touch, almost artificial at times, and a pleasing smoothness of handling. Under the supervision of Erich Pommer he made *The Hungarian Rhapsody*, a film obviously inspired by Soviet influence (Preobrashenskaia's *Peasant Women of Riazan*) that was hardly successful, but more recently directed Brigitte Helm and Franz Lederer in *Nina Petrovna*, a picture of considerable merit with elegant settings by Röhrig and Herlth and some clever camerawork by Karl Hoffman. Joe May, who is connected at an early date with such films as *The Hindu Tomb* (with Bernard Goetzke) and *The Japanese Dagger*, has also worked recently for the Ufa Company under Pommer's control. *Asphalt*, a good conception made unpractical by studio structure, and *Homecoming*, a bad realisation of Leonhard Franck's great novel, 'Karl and Anna,' distinguished only by Gunther Rittau's photography, were Joe May pictures. Tourjanski, a Russian *émigré*, was responsible for the Anglo-German spectacle, *Volga-Volga*, a film of interest solely for its exterior photography; and Nicolas Volkoff, who is associated with musical comedy spectacles (*Casanova* and *Michael Strogoff*), made for Ufa the well-staged but Americanised *Secrets of the Orient*. Of the lesser-known German directors, those whose names and work must be mentioned are Jaap Speyer (*Conscience*, a powerful film with Bernard Goetzke and Walter Rilla); Wilhelm Thiele (*Hurrah! I'm Alive*, with the inimitable Nikolai Kolin); Erich Washneck (*Jackals*, an excellent film with Olga Tschechowa

and Hans von Schlettow; *A Society Scandal*, with Brigitte Helm); Willy Reiber (*Stürmfleet*, a well-realised theme of the sea); Max Glass (*Homesickness*, with Mady Christians and Wilhelm Dieterle); Willi Wolff (*Kopf Hoch Charley*, with Ellen Richter); Gerhard Lamprecht (*Under the Lantern*, an underworld picture with Lissi Arna); and A. W. Sandberg (*The Golden Clown*, with Gosta Ekman and Mary Johnson), together with Max Mack, Rudolf Meinert, and Manfred Noa.

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The German has been a great cinema. It has produced principles and processes that have been all-important contributions to the cinema of the world. From its individual development there have come the freedom of the camera, the feeling of completeness, and the importance of architectural environment as part of the realisation. These have been brought about by the national aptitude for craftsmanship, for structure, for studioism. They have been a means to an end, that in itself has not yet been discovered. It has been well said that the German film begins and ends in itself. This, with certain reservations, is true.

In recapitulation, it has been seen how the years immediately after the war gave rise to the historical costume melodrama, commercial products of the property room and Reinhardt (*Dubarry*, *Anne Boleyn*, *Othello*, *Merchant of Venice*). There was then *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, with its decorative environment and its use of psychology, to be followed by other expressionist films, *Torgus*, *Raskolnikov*, *Dracula*, and later, *The Stone Rider*. From these there developed the architectural film, increasing in pictorial beauty to the culminating *Faust* (*Siegfried*, *Waxworks*, *Destiny*). Then began the feeling for reality, still by studio representation, with *Vanina* and *The Street*, followed in time by the work of Lupu Pick, Murnau, Czinner, Pabst, Dupont [*New Year's Eve*, *Last Laugh*, *Nju*, *Joyless Street*, *Vaudeville*, and *Baruch* (1924)]; later by Rahn and Bernhardt; until there came the surrender to the American cinema – resulting in commercial melodrama, to be relieved only by the isolated films of Pabst, the magnitudinous studio-films of Lang, and the childlike psychology of Hans Behrendt's *Robber Band* and *Die Hose*. Finally, there is the crisis presented by the advent of the dialogue and sound film, the result of which has yet to be seen.

VIII

THE FRENCH FILM

FRENCH *cinéastes* have the discouraging habit of denying the existence of the French film despite ever-constant proof to the contrary. But then the French *cinéaste* is a tiresome fellow, who is always dissatisfied with everything that takes place and is burdened with a mind that chases itself in circles. Added to which, we are frequently given to understand that the failure of the French cinema is due entirely to its being French.

Apart from so devastating a national outlook, few writers in this country appreciate the significance of the French cinema, and even those who do have only reached that intelligent frame of mind with the recent importation of *avant-garde* productions into London. The reason for this lack of appreciation in England of the French product seems to be due to three causes: firstly, because much of the French cinema, save for the grand spectacular films, has been experimental in nature, and therefore a closed book to British film writers; secondly, because production in France has always been spasmodic; and thirdly, because there has been comparatively little opportunity for the close examination of the French film in England, except at the performances of the London Film Society.[1]

In short, then, the general ignorance as to the salient characteristics, influences, and tendencies of the French cinema is singularly profound, a fact that is all the more remarkable in that the French film is of extreme importance, not only to the cinema of Europe, but to a proper understanding of the cinema as a whole.

As stated above, the French *cinéaste* has strangely little regard for the capabilities of his self-created cinema. He appears to be always

[1] Gratitude is to be accorded Mr Stuart Davis for his enterprise in presenting at the Avenue Pavilion, London, a three-months season of French productions during the autumn and winter 1929-30. This provided an excellent opportunity for the examination of some of the outstanding examples of the French school.

too interested in the films of other countries to take part in his own productions. In post-war days he was the most appreciative critic of the German and the now extinct Swedish film; this, later, being displaced by a reaction to the constructive methods of the Soviets; whilst the whole time he has had a sneaking fondness for the American movie, first in its action, and now in its sex. The position is rendered the more curious in that several of the qualities which the *cinéaste* admires in the American cinema are indirectly derived from his own. Despite its increasing prevalence, the reason for this idolisation of Hollywood is hard to discover. The sole aim of the average French director seems to be to go to Hollywood, which surely is the last place in which to find an intelligent understanding of the cinema. But, notwithstanding all logic, the *cinéaste* has a constant craving after the metallic glitter of the movie, with its movement of acting material and mock-humanitarianism. The fully charged sex-appeal movie is the fetish of the French *cinéastes*. The natural acting material of France (Pierre Batcheff, Maurice de Féraudy, Philippe Hériat, Jim Gerald, Gina Manés) is suppressed in the fervent worship of Sue Carol, Florence Vidor, and Joan Crawford, and the physical mannerisms of George Bancroft and Victor MacLaglen. They will deny the presence of the capricious Catherine Hessling in favour of Lupe Velez. They will ruthlessly condemn Epstein and Dreyer, but enthuse over von Sternberg and von Stroheim. *The Wedding March* is considered preferable to *En Rade*; *Our Dancing Daughters* to *Thérèse Raquin*; *White Shadows* to *Finis Terræ*. They will accept the *décor* of Cedric Gibbons and forget that it is almost wholly derived from the *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs*, held at Paris in 1925. It is this ridiculous state of artificiality that strangles the French cinema to-day, that prevents it from progressing along its natural course of development. There are fortunately, however, a few directors who have sufficient independence and are sane-headed enough to stand above this childish attitude of self-condemnation, such as René Clair and Jean Epstein, and it is to these men that we must look for the future of the French cinema in its purified form.

Meanwhile, the young *cinéaste* perpetually calls for youth in the film. The dynamic vitality of the American girl is his schoolboy downfall. He is incapable of achieving a true perspective of the cinema as a whole, of its widespread developments and traditions. He has,

french — société générale de films

FINIS TERRÆ

by Jean Epstein, the film taken on the island of Ushant 1928

french — albatross-sequana

THE ITALIAN STRAW HAT

the brilliant satirical comedy by René Clair, with Olga Tschechowa. A masterpiece of wit and sophistication. 1928

in fact, lost his sense of values when he calls *The Crowd* the great achievement of the American cinema.

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In contrast to the cinema of the Soviets, collectivism in film production is practically unknown in France. This, it would seem, is partly due to the haphazard methods of the producing companies and to the natural disinclination of the French for co-operation. Nearly every film of interest which has originated from France has been the product of an individual artist-mind. This characteristic is to be found equally in the experiments of the *avant-garde* and in the bigger realisations of Clair, Feyder, Epstein, and Dreyer. But perhaps the basic reason for this single-mindedness is that it is the natural outcome of the painter's studio so inherent in French tradition. One has but to recall the last two decades of the nineteenth century, when the marble-top café table bred the environment in which the *camaraderie* of Seurat, Lautrec, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and the rest had its origin. This group habit, so typical of Parisian intellectualism, has given rise to the cinematic artist and photogenic experimentalist, personified in Duchamp, Chomette, Deslav, Gremillon, Man Ray, etc., and which is so well instanced in their absolute cinematics, *L'Etoile de Mer*, *Montparnasse*, *Fait Divers*, *A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles*, and others.

Much has been said to the detriment of the French *avant-garde* film, but, on the contrary, I believe that it constitutes an excellent grounding for the young film director. We know that it is the fashion for any young man of intelligence to borrow a few hundred francs and a camera and to make an abstract, absolute film of Paris, selling it afterwards (if he is fortunate) to an advertising firm. But this is an admirable way for that young man to develop his filmic instinct, if by any chance he should possess any. In themselves, experimental films are of little significance, being mere object-lessons in cinematic values and the various uses of the resources of the cinema. They are a testing ground for the instruments of the film, and hence should be of the utmost interest to the big scale director. In all experimental films there are to be found a dozen uses of camera devices and trick photography, which, with modifications, can be employed in the commercial film. René Clair's *Entr'acte*, made in 1923, may be cited as a typical example. It was realised from a scenario in the dadaist manner by Francis Piçabia, and purported to be an exposition of

the cult of the spontaneous dissociation of ideas. It exploited the theory, now obsolete, of the irrelevance of material events and consequently was entirely antagonistic in conception to the essential organisation, selection, and construction of the cinema. Contained in its realisation, however, were various camera devices, now familiar, of slow-motion, the reversal of pictorial composition from left to right of the screen, and photographing a ballet dancer from below through a sheet of glass. Henri Chomette's *A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles* (1924) was also in this category, the material content being entirely composed of light and speed, the human element being absent from the film save for the cine-portraits of Man Ray. It was an attempt at pure emotionism. The environment of the *cinéastes* is completed by the cine-journalists, with their ephemeral outlook and easily persuaded minds, who are ever busy in criticism and filmic theory. And behind them lies the group of little cinemas, which specialise in the presentation of *avant-garde* work and intelligent films from other countries – the *Studio* 28, *Studio des Ursulines*, *Studio Diamant*, etc.

The experimental contribution of the French cinema will ever be present in Paris, which is a fitting locale for an *avant-garde* movement. The short capricious films of Germaine Dulac, Eugène Deslav, Georges Lacombe, Rouguier, Man Ray, Kirsanov, Gremillon are always mentally stimulating in that they seldom end with themselves. They are continually suggestive of new ideas, new shapes and angles, that may be of significance to the cinema proper. On the other hand, it is ridiculous to accept the *avant-garde* movement as the æsthetic zenith of the film, as so many of the intelligentsia seem to do. The experimentalists in the abstract and absolute film are interesting in their right place, which is the private cinema, but any attempt to thrust their work on to the masses is merely absurd.

Developed from the experimental groups there are a number of directors of some maturity, who have come to realise that a considerable amount of money is necessary for the production of any film of significance. Clair, Epstein, Cavalcanti, Renoir have all had their training in the *avant-garde* before making larger pictures. Thus has come into being the principal characteristic of the French cinema, the single-minded production with the director or the cameraman, as the case may be, as the sole *metteur-en-scène*. Hence, Gance is the single creator of *Napoléon*, Clair of *Le Chapeau de Paille*

d'Italie, and Feyder of *Thérèse Raquin*; whilst on a lower scale are Deslav's *La Marche des Machines*, Dulac's *La Coquille et le Clergyman*, and Kirsanov's *Brumes d'automne*.

But this constant stream of experimental work does not mean that France's sole contribution to the cinema will remain in an empirical state, as so many like to assume. On the contrary, it suggests that France should possess a number of distinguished directors grown up through stages of experiment. There is, however, a wide gulf between the French director and the French producer, well instanced by René Clair's relationship with Albatross-Sequana. With the exception of the Société Générale de Films, there exists no producing company in France who recognises the artist-mind of the French director. Producers seem unable to realise that instead of organising their industry on an American basis, they must adapt their production schedule according to the directors whom they employ. This would result in a permanent policy of individually realised films, each with its controlling source in the artist-mind of the director. As mentioned above, this policy has been adopted by the Société Générale de Films and has resulted, to date, in two outstanding productions, *Finis Terræ* and *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. The production plans of this enterprising company have, however, been temporarily suspended, owing to the problem raised by the dialogue film.

But it is useless to believe that this natural outcome of the French cinema, even if widely adopted, will ever flourish on a big commercial scale. The market for the French 'artist' production must necessarily remain limited, for the French have not any idea of the entertainment of the masses. The appeal of such films as *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* is naturally restricted, but it is sufficient to ensure further production if unhampered by the side-issues of the dialogue film. The French cinema as a whole is incapable of competing with the vast commercial product of Hollywood, and no amount of *contingent* regulations will make it possible. The opportunity of the French producing companies lies in the public which the American and British companies are creating by their steady stream of indifferent talking films. This public is definitely hostile to the dialogue product that is being thrust upon it from Elstree and Hollywood, and would be receptive of good silent films from any country. The French commercial development is gradual but sure, and if a better understanding could be reached between producer and director,

and the companies would be content with small profits, there waits a public in this country which will receive their product. If the dialogue film invasion continues, and by reason of American commercialism it should do so for some time, the film public will quietly divide itself into two audiences, sufficient to support both the silent and dialogue production companies.

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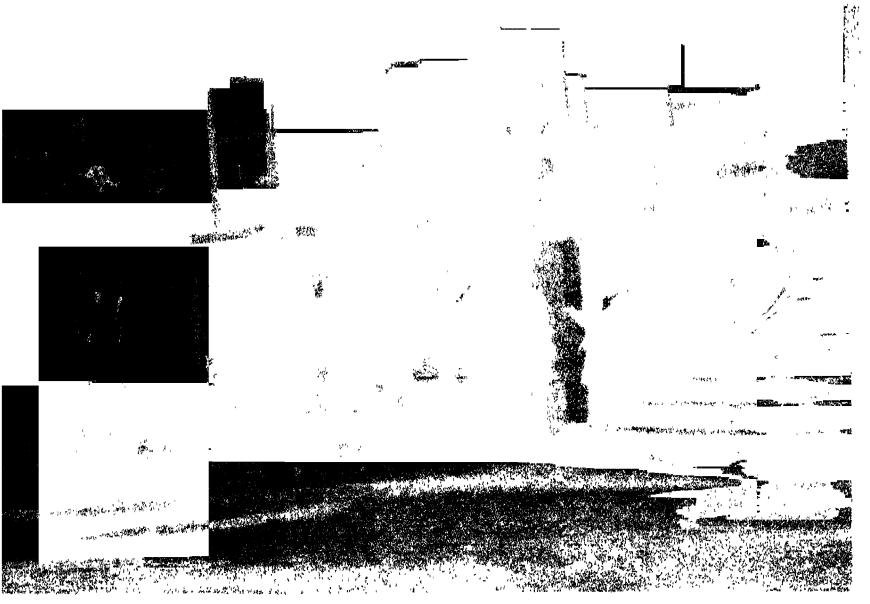
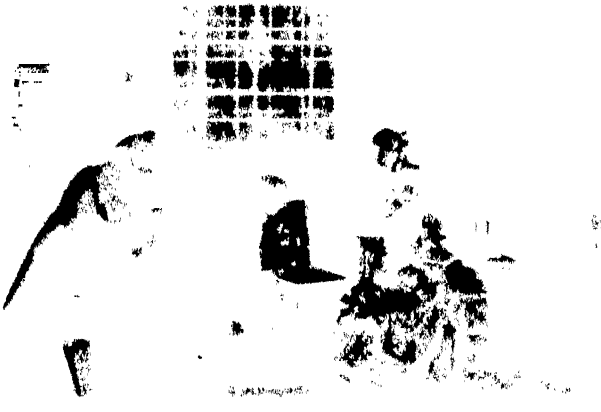
Directly associated with the rise of the French film director from the environment of the artist's *atelier* and the marble-top table of the *boulevard* is his delight in the perfect composition of the visual image. The *cinéaste* has first and foremost a pictorial outlook, which is as discernible in the *avant-garde* films as in the large scale spectacle productions of the French commercial cinema. In contradistinction to the slow, morbid psychology and emphasis of dramatic acting values that mark the early German and Swedish film, the French cinema has always been characterised by its directors' love of classical compositions, almost in an early nineteenth-century manner. It is an outlook that bears comparison to the classicism of the painters Chavannes and David. The French director frequently sets out to create an environment solely by a series of succeeding visual images, often of great pictorial beauty in themselves but usually non-dynamic in material. There have been many attempts to establish thematic atmosphere with the barest framework of narrative content. Such was the intention of Cavalcanti's *En Rade* and Epstein's *Finis Terræ*, as well as numerous of the *avant-garde* films, *Menilmontant*, *La Zone*, *Tour au Large*, *Le Tour*, etc. Of recent years, with the interest shown by the *cinéaste* in the Soviet cinema, principles of cutting have been infused into the values of pictorial composition. But quite unlike the constructive policy of the Soviet director, the *avant-garde* seem to believe that material can be photographed anywhere and anyhow as long as the images themselves are of interest, and that by simply joining them together, according to their form and shape, a complete film will result. This fallacious idea is, of course, strictly antagonistic to the constructive principles of editing and cutting as understood in Russia. Instances of the chaos produced by this irrelevant method were to be seen in Silka's *La Ballade du Canart*, Man Ray's *Le Mystère du Château de Dé*, and Eugène Deslav's *Montparnasse*. Only one example occurs where constructive editing has been rightly incorporated with beautiful visual images:—in the often quoted *Finis Terræ*.



french — société générale de films

NAPOLEON

A [illegible] historical film [illegible] in [illegible] historical treatment as to style — *1924-28*



french — éclair

LE COLLIER DE LA REINE

a historical film by Gaston Ravel, with Pierre Bachelet and Kotula at the cameras, typical of French pictorialism — *1928-29*

With the exception of the two recent comedies of René Clair, the French director has little real feeling for movement of acting material. It is on these grounds that the cine-journalist rightly attacks his own cinema, holding up for example the American action film, formerly in the western and later in the underworld thriller. It is this failure to utilise movement of acting material that causes the French *grand* films, such as *Koenigsmark*, *Monte Cristo*, *Michael Strogoff*, *Casanova*, and *Le Joueur d'Échecs* to be unconvincing. Although pictorially the big realisations seldom fail to please, their paucity of action often renders them depressing. The spectacle films, which are so typically French in their pageantry and pomp, are conceived in the latent spirit of eighteenth-century romanticism. Despite the fact that they are almost always extremely well done from a historical and visual point of view, the perfection of pictorialism does not prevent them from becoming frequently tedious and often exceptionally dull, as in *Le Miracle des Loups* and *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*. For actual detail in reconstruction of settings and costumes the French are unparalleled for good taste and accuracy, but these *grand* films are negligible cinematically. On this account, therefore, despite their shallowness and entire absence of good faith, the American costume spectacles, such as *Ben-Hur*, *General Crack*, and *The Beloved Rogue* are preferable filmically to their French counterpart and certainly more commercially successful. This fact is all the more deplorable when one recalls the brilliant costumes and settings, so perfect in spirit and taste, of such a film as Gaston Ravel's *Le Collier de la Reine*.

The supreme example of the pictorial mind was instanced in that most remarkable of all films, Karl Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, where the very beauty of the individual visual images destroyed the *filmic* value of the production. Every shot in this extraordinary film was so beautifully composed, so balanced in linear design and distribution of masses, so simplified in detail that the spectator's primary desire was to tear down each shot as it appeared on the screen and to hang it in passe-partout on his bedroom wall. This was in direct opposition to the central aim of the cinema, in which each individual image is inconsequential in itself, being but a part of the whole vibrating pattern. In Dreyer's beautiful film the visual image was employed to its fullest possible extent, but employed graphically and not filmically. But more of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* later. Alberto Cavalcanti (who, it will be recalled, was an architect

before a *metteur-en-scène*) is another example of the pictorial but non-cinematic mind. *En Rade* was composed of numerous lovely compositions out of which was built an atmosphere of ships and the sea, but the film was definitely lacking in the dynamic vitality of the cinema. But in Epstein's *Finis Terræ* the visual image was constructively used. Every shot was of interest; firstly, psychologically in the filmic manner, and secondly, from a pictorial standpoint. Epstein worked with a cinematic, constructive mind, keeping the graphic visual design of secondary importance. The same cinematic relation between image and content was found also in Feyder's *Thérèse Raquin*, in which the influence of Germanic psychology was strongly marked in the arrangement of the images, Feyder also employing with subtle skill the contrast of light intensities to emphasise the expression of the dramatic mood.

Indirectly related to the French delight in the harmonious composition of images is a leaning towards the decorative, artificially created environment, which is again non-cinematic in its semi-theatrical artistry. This tendency towards sweetness of decoration I were almost inclined to describe as artistic embellishment, if I had not so great an admiration for French graphic art in its proper surroundings. The creation of the artificial environment, especially when inclined to become sentimental in the French film as compared to the expressionist and fauvist character of the early German pictures, is hostile to the proper aim of the cinema, which is primarily concerned with the representation of reality. In the French film, as in the German, this environment may at first sight be taken for a degree of fantasy. Actually, however, it is nothing of the sort. It is the syrup of sentimentality, destructive to the forcefulness of purpose of the cinema. It was seen at its worst and most decadent in the fairyland settings of Clair's *Le Voyage Imaginaire* and in Renoir's *La Petite Marchande d'Allumettes*, where it was strongly reminiscent of the Russian ballet and the decorations of the Chauve-Souris. Moreover, beyond setting, it spreads into spiritual themes until there is found the 'Spirit of France' in *Napoléon*, with its fluttering eagle, the 'Rose of the rail' in *La Roue* and in Poirier's *vision d'histoire*, *Verdun*. It is a type of poetic symbolism, essentially nineteenth-century in feeling, of spiritual sentimentality that is uncongenial to the architectural, contemporary essence of the cinema.

Of the present directors in France it has been said that the most significant are Jean Epstein, René Clair, Abel Gance, Karl Dreyer (a Dane who has recently worked in France with French material) and Jacques Feyder (a Belgian, who has directed in Germany and who is now in Hollywood). The first two of these have developed from the *avant-garde* movement.

Epstein, who is of Polish origin, is characterised by his philosophy of outlook and his essentially cinematic mind, which has recently been influenced by the constructivism of the Soviet cinema. Amongst his early experimental work, usually conceived with a sense of mysticism and expressed by a variety of trick camerawork, mention may be made of *Mauprat*, *Le Cœur Fidèle*, *L'Affiche*, *La Glace à Trois Faces*, and *Six et Demi x Onze*. It was with his version of *La chûte de la Maison Usher* that he first claimed serious attention. He succeeded in this somewhat theatrical production in creating an atmosphere of macabre mysticism rather after the manner of Murnau in the earlier *Dracula*. Chiefly notable were his uses of flying drapery, of low-lying mist, of gusts of wind and of the imagery of guttering candle flames, with which he emphasised the literary value of Poe's story. Regrettable were the poor model shots, clumsily contrived, which were destructive to the poetic atmosphere of the whole. Epstein was hampered by the interpretation of a literary theme in terms of the cinema. Utterly different, however, was his next work, the realisation of *Finis Terræ*. This was a film with practically no narrative content, taken with actual material on an island off the coast of Brittany. The theme concerned an injury to the hand of a fisherman, who was one of four gathering a harvest of kelp on the island of Bannec, and a quarrel that resulted from the accident. The value of the content rested on the interplay of the emotions and reactions of the characters to the incidental events. For the first two-thirds of his film, Epstein built the theme in preparation for a final climactic ending. In the last third he lost control, and by changing the location from the fishermen on the island to their mothers and the doctor he failed to retain the unity of the earlier portion. Nevertheless, despite this glaring mistake in thematic construction, Epstein made a film of great strength, of powerful psychological and pictorial value, that may be placed almost on the level of Flaherty's *Moana*. He has recently completed *Sa Tête*, which, although conceived on the same lines as the earlier film, is said to be more artificial in psychological construction.

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The two best comedies realised in France have come from René Clair, who is perhaps the most delightfully witty and ingenious director in Europe. He has, moreover, that quality of employing movement of material which is absent from the work of other French directors. He has learnt freely from the American cinema, from Mack Sennett and from Lloyd, but his idol, of course, is Chaplin. Clair manipulates his adaptations with a degree of refinement that renders them peculiarly his own. His films, especially the two most recent examples, *Le Chapeau de Paille d'Italie* and *Les Deux Timides*, are more completely French in spirit than any other productions. He has an extraordinary skill in combining satire, comedy, sentiment, and fantasy. Originally a journalist on *L'Intransigeant*, he later took up acting, eventually becoming an assistant to Jacques de Baroncelli. His early films were all experimental in form, beginning in 1922 with *Paris qui Dort*, followed by the already-mentioned *Entr'acte*, *Le Fantôme du Moulin Rouge*, *Le Tour*, and *Le Voyage Imaginaire*. Few of these were of much consequence in themselves, but during their realisation Clair learned a thorough knowledge of the resources of the cinema, which was to be of great avail in his more ambitious productions. In 1925 he accepted a contract with the Albatross-Sequana producing firm, and for obvious commercial reasons his work became bridled and less wild. This limitation, however, brought out the best in Clair, for he was forced to extract the utmost out of the material provided for him by his firm. In *La Proie du Vent*, although hampered by an uninteresting scenario, he made a competent picture, with a few individual sequences of exceptional merit. Two years later he produced his best work, *Le Chapeau de Paille d'Italie*, a brilliant comedy deep in bitter satire of middle-class French life, and realised with a high degree of intelligence and cinematic skill. Around a simple dual theme of a man who was a little hard of hearing and the destruction of a lady's straw hat, Clair wove a film that was not only exceptionally witty, but a penetrating commentary on the pettiness and small-mindedness of the *bourgeoisie* who constitute such a large proportion of the French populace. For this reason, the film was not a commercial success, the public being partially aware of its exposure and righteously indignant, with the result that Clair remained idle for a year, although still under contract to Albatross-Sequana. Finally, he was allowed to make another comedy, *Les Deux Timides*, which though less

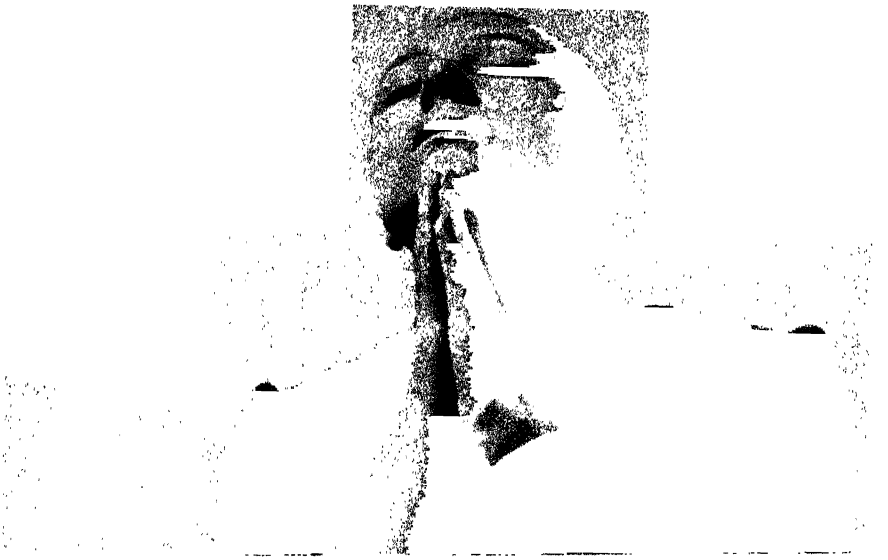
brilliant than its predecessor was nevertheless of considerable note. His fire and wit were not given the freedom that had rendered *Le Chapeau de Paille d'Italie* so amusing, but, for use of technical trick-work in order to achieve funny effect, it stands almost alone. Clair's fervent admiration of Chaplin is apparent throughout all his work, but that is not to say that he is in any way an imitator of the great comedian. Probably *A Woman of Paris* has had more influence on his outlook than the actual comedies of Chaplin. There is no question that Clair has very definitely his own individual sense of cinema and a mentality that I do not hesitate to place alongside that of the other big directors in the cinema for its refined wit and intelligence. I certainly suggest that *Le Chapeau de Paille d'Italie* is the most brilliant satirical comedy produced in Europe, to be grouped with Lubitsch's *The Marriage Circle* and Chaplin's *A Woman of Paris*.

Although Karl Dreyer's great contribution to the cinema lies in the production of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, his work at an earlier period was distinguished by a simplicity of handling and an understanding of psychological values in the development of character. In 1924, he made *Heart's Desire* for Ufa, with a thematic narrative based on an artist's love for his adopted son and the latter's ingratitude. It was slow moving, unfolded with careful deliberation of detail, Benjamin Christiansen playing *Zoret*, the artist, and Walther Slezack, the boy. Some time later he made *The Master of the House* (*Le Maître du Logis*), a Danish production telling the story of a lower middle-class flat occupied by a man, his wife and three children, and the complications that ensued owing to the selfishness of the husband. The direction was quite straightforward, with scrupulous attention paid to detail and without any variety of angles or lighting. Yet it was powerfully done, intimate and compelling. It had little success in any country save France, whither, on the strength of it, Dreyer went in 1927 to make the immortal *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*.

It seems ungrateful to level adverse criticism at this beautiful film, for it was so moving and so intense that hostile opinion appears ridiculous. Nevertheless, despite the admiration evoked by the visual and spiritual meaning of this representation of the last moments of the agony of *Jeanne d'Arc*, cinematically Dreyer's film was not great. Its overwhelming fault of the isolation of the visual images

from the dynamic content has already been explained, and further comment on its lack of filmic texture is considered superfluous. But it remains to record that Dreyer deserved the highest praise for his marvellous representation of environment; his terrible and strong use of camera angle and camera movement for the close establishment of an intimacy between the characters and the audience that has rarely, if ever, been equalled; and for his splendid subordination of detail in settings and general atmosphere. He insisted that no make-up of any sort should be used by his acting material, with the result that the faces looked like burning copper with finely wrinkled textures against the stark white backgrounds. A strange power, an unprecedented insistence was given to the characters by this lack of artificial make-up. Across the screen spread great close ups of eyes, a leer, the corner of a mouth, a smirk, a delicately marked hand, revealing with tremendous force the inward thoughts and emotions of the crowd, the judges, the monks, the soldiers, and above all the expressions of *Jeanne* herself, hesitating, perplexed, enlightened, anguished, ever fascinating. For once there was no concession to public convention, no star, no high-spot, no box-office appeal, no 'last-minute-rescue,' nothing but the dominating direction of Dreyer. From a pictorial point of view the selection of visual images in this film has never before or since been approached in any production from any source whatsoever. There is no question that *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* was extraordinarily powerful. From the opening to the closing shot it held, swayed, staggered, overwhelmed and tore at the spectator. It somehow contrived to get underneath and round the back of one's receptivity. It demanded the complete concentration of the audience from start to finish. I have no compunction in saying that it was one of the most remarkable productions ever realised in the history and development of the cinema, *but it was not a full exposition of real filmic properties*.

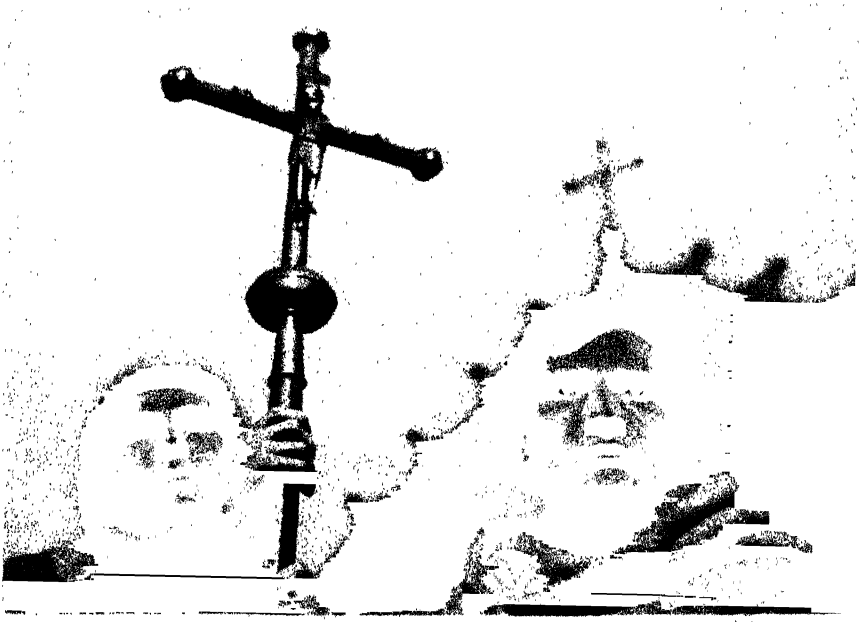
Dreyer's employment of the psychology of human emotions and reactions was profound. His sense of atmosphere was superbly expressed. The greater portion of the film was taken in close ups from high and low level angles, the screen being constantly flooded with compositions so completely pleasing in themselves that they ceased to be contributions to the concatenation of shots. The greatest praise should be given to the whole production unit and the extraordinary playing of Mme. Falconetti as *Jeanne*. Eighteen months



french société générale de film

LA PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC

Karl Dreyer's film. Mme. Falconetti as Joan. Camerawork by Rudolph Maté and Kruta 1927-28



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LA PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC

the superb film by Karl Dreyer. Antonin Artaud: note texture of photography and beauty of detail. 1927-28

were spent on the film for the Société Générale de Films, and despite its demerit the film will ever be memorable.

The style of Jacques Feyder, who is a Belgian, appears to change with each of his interesting productions. It would seem he is naturally assimilative. He has adapted from the Germans and from the Swedes, but he has always adapted correctly and with sincerity. In his list of films are to be found, *L'Image* (from a scenario by Jules Romains); *L'Atlantide*; *Gribiche*; *Crainquebille*, from the Anatole France novel; *Visages d'Enfants*; *Carmen*, with Raquel Mellor; *Thérèse Raquin*, from Zola, and a comedy, *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*. It is, however, in the two latter films that Feyder demands attention. He is essentially a director of dramatic situations, of heavy conflict between disturbed emotions, and for such handling the material of Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* was admirable. It was made in German studios for the Défu firm, and its lighting and treatment were typically Germanic. But pre-eminent was Feyder's remarkable direction of Gina Manés, an actress who can be as good (as in *Thérèse Raquin*) or as bad (as in Molander's *Sin*, from the Strindberg play), according to the mind controlling her playing. Feyder's treatment of *Thérèse*, her inner mind, her suppressed sex, her viciousness and her sensuality was an amazing example of dramatic direction. By the smallest movement, by the flicker of an eyelash, by a sidelong glance at *Laurent*, by her partly opened mouth, by her calm composure at the *Raquin* home, and by her passion in the studio of her lover, the spectator was forced to share the mind of this remarkable woman. In the handling of Wolfgang Zelzer, as *Camille* the husband, with his adjustable cuffs and cheerful bonhomie, Feyder was equally brilliant, bringing to the surface the pitiful desolation of the little man's life. Feyder built his film by the use of selected detail, by indirect suggestion, and by symbolism into a strong emotional realisation of a dramatic theme. He was inclined, it is true, to exaggerate the melodrama of the closing scenes by too heavy a contrast in lighting and by a sequence of double and triple exposure which disturbed the smooth continuity that was so well achieved in the first two-thirds of the picture. Nevertheless, *Thérèse Raquin* was a great achievement of dramatic direction, an example of the use of emphasis of detail to reinforce the content. The following Feyder picture was in direct contrast to the depression of Zola, for *Les Nouveaux Messieurs* was a comedy of politics adapted from a stage play, demanding satirical

direction utterly divorced from the sombreness of *Thérèse Raquin*. It was not surprising that this film caused a flutter in the French political dovecote; that feeling at first ran so high that the censor intervened and prohibited it being shown in its country of inception, although later the ban was removed. The dominating feature of *Les Nouveaux Messieurs* was its biting humour. The foibles of the rival politicians were mercilessly exploited in a mute appeal to the intelligence of the spectator as a silent protest against the childishness of political strife. Technically, it was interesting for some competent camerawork, with frequent use of low-level angles and clever composite photography, as in the confusion of thought in the telephone scene at the Trade Union Headquarters. The outstanding impression given by these two Feyder films, *Thérèse Raquin* and *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, was the astonishing versatility of their director. Both, in their kind, could scarcely have been more brilliant. Feyder's first film in Hollywood for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer was *The Kiss*, which has been mentioned in the American chapter at an earlier stage as a clever mixture of picture-sense and filmic intelligence.

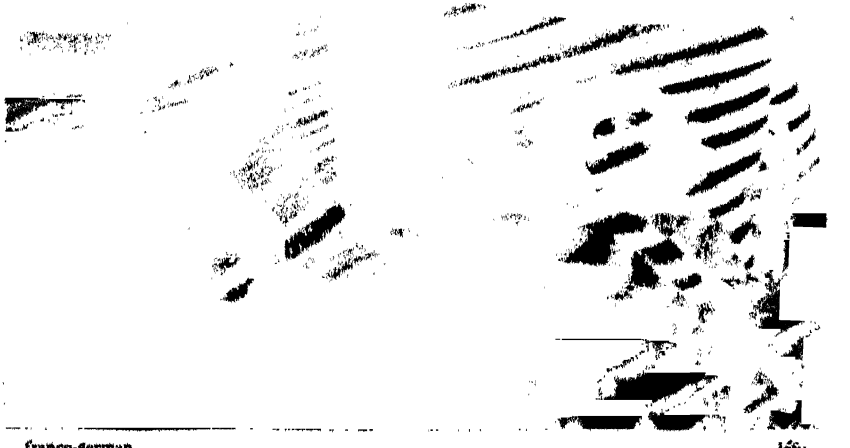
Marcel l'Herbier is the supreme technician of the French cinema, his films at all times revealing a high degree of technical accomplishment. His work suffers, if one may be allowed the term, from over-intellectuality. He is essentially the cinematic æsthete rather than the film director. His technique is too brilliant to be convincing, too clever to be of purpose for dramatic expression. His recent film *L'Argent*, from Zola, with its refinement of setting and forced acting, was evidence of this sensitive intellectualism. Of the many pictures to his credit, there may be mentioned for reference *L'Homme du large*, in 1920, typical of the first *avant-garde* movement; *Don Juan* and *Faust*, in 1921, with Jaque Catelain and Marcelle Pradot, a curious mixture of Velazquez pictorial influence and the expressionism of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*; *El Dorado*, notable at its time for distorted camerawork; *Le Marchand des Plaisirs*, again with Catelain; *Le Vertige*; *L'Inhumaine*; *Le Diable au Cœur*, with Betty Balfour and André Nox; *Le Feu Mathew Pascal*, from Pirandello, with Ivan Mosjoukine and settings by Alberto Cavalcanti; *L'Argent*, with Brigitte Helm, Alfred Abel, and Marie Glory; and *Nuits de Princes*, with Catelain and Gina Manés. L'Herbier is a prolific director, always of interest, but seldom producing a picture of complete merit.

franco german

défu

THÉRÈSE RAQUIN

by Jacques Feyder, with Gina Manès, Wolfgang Zelzer, Jeanne Marie Laurent and Hans Schletton note beauty of lighting and grouping of figures 1928



franco-german

défu

THÉRÈSE RAQUIN

by Jacques Feyder, from Zola's novel, with Gina Manès and Wolfgang Zelzer as the husband and wife. 1928

Apart from his artist's appreciation of pictorial beauty, Alberto Cavalcanti is not a director of cinematic films. His selection of visual images and his delicate sense of environment are sincere, but his expression of theme and content is not filmic in texture. He has but little idea of camera position except for pictorialism and none at all of constructive editing for dramatic effect. These faults and virtues are apparent in all his work, in the *décor* for l'Herbier's *L'Inhumaine* and *Le Feu Mathew Pascal*, and the realisations of *Yvette*, *Rien que les Heures*, *En Rade*, and *Le Capitaine Fracasse*. His most interesting work was in the burlesque cine-poem, *La P'tite Lili*, in which he touched a true note of poetic sentimentality. Although his themes are littered with garbage and depression, they are always sweet natured. *Rien que les Heures*, made in 1925, was similar in aim to Ruttmann's *Berlin*, but whereas the latter film was an impersonal selection of images taken during a day in a great city, Cavalcanti's handling was more intimate. Among a pattern of shots of Paris, interspaced at regular intervals by close ups of a clock marking the hours, he followed the movements of an old woman and a young girl. Cavalcanti is not interested in the usual devices favoured by the *avant-garde*, being generally concerned with the slow unfolding of a human being's life. *En Rade*, set among the quays and ships of Marseilles, was a praiseworthy example of centralisation of environment, beautiful pictorially, but negligible cinematically. His last picture to be seen was a costume romance adapted from Gautier, *Le Capitaine Fracasse*, rich in seventeenth-century detail and atmosphere, but unfilmic in form. He has recently completed *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*, with Catherine Hessling.

Jean Renoir, son to the famous painter, is recalled principally by three films, *Nana*, *La petite Marchande des Allumettes*, and *Le Tournoi*. The first was based on the Zola novel, with Werner Krauss and Catherine Hessling in a mixture of the *can-can*, Lautrec back-stage and Offenbach; the second was a charming, sentimental realisation of the Hans Andersen story, notable for the fascination of the irresistible Mlle. Hessling and a wilful, artificial setting already commented upon; while the third was a costume romance, in the best French historical manner, scrupulously accurate but quite unconvincing.

Abel Gance is the *grand maître* of the French cinema, theoretically the apotheosis of great directors, but in practice always out-of-date

with ideas. He spent five years on the production of *Napoléon*, a theme so vast that it defeated its own, Abel Gance's and everybody else's purpose. It was filled with imagination, technical devices, and ramifications of complicated scenario work, needing three screens on which to exhibit its lumbering bulk. It was tediously cumbersome and hopelessly overweighted with symbolic reference. Gance is essentially the employer of the symbolic image, with the 'Spirit of France' perpetually at the back of his mind. Solemnly we observe the eagles in *Napoléon*; the rails, wheels, and signals in *La Roue*; the parks and terraces in *La Zone de la Mort*; and the lily in *J'Accuse*. Mention should be made of his early films, *La Xe Symphonie* and *Mater Dolorosa*, both outstanding at their time of realisation. He has now embarked on another stupendous theme, *The End of the World*; the year of presentation has not yet been calculated.

With the pre-war period of the French cinema I have little concern. It is mostly to be summed up in the characteristic productions of the Gaumont, Pathé, and Aubert companies, marked chiefly by their theatrical conception, stylised acting and the attention paid to story value. One of the most ambitious efforts was a several reel version in Pathécolor of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. The domestic comedies of Max Linder, whom I am tempted to describe as a prototype of Adolphe Menjou, may also be recalled. Similarly, I do not intend to catalogue the many films produced during the early post-war years in France by various directors, but, if occasion arises, reference may be made to the work of the late Louis Delluc (*La Fête Espagnole*, in collaboration with Germaine Dulac, in 1920; *La Femme de Nulle Part* and *Fièvre*, both made in 1921); of Jacques de Baroncelli (*Le Carillon de Minuit*, *Le Père Goriot*, *Pêcheur d'Island*, and *Réveil*, with Isobel Elsom); of Severin-Mars (*Le Cœur Magnifique*); and of Jules Duvivier (*La Tragédie de Lourdes*).

To these may be added Nicolas Volkoff's *Kean*, a film of considerable merit made in 1924; Léon Poirier's *Jocelyn*, *Verdun*, and *La Croisière Noire* (an admirable interest picture); Marc Allegret's travel film, in conjunction with André Gide, *Voyage au Congo*; the amusing work of Germaine Dulac, *Arabesque*, *Mme. Beudet*, and *La Coquille et le Clergyman*; and the many short films of the *avant-garde*, too numerous for inclusion.

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From this some slight estimate of the significance of the French

cinema may be gained. That it is important is very clear despite the efforts of the *cinéaste* and the cine-journalist to prove the contrary. Of the future of the French cinema it is impossible to write, for each step will depend on the precarious position of the dialogue film. Various experiments are being made with sound reproduction in France, but at the time of writing, no serious realisation has been seen, although several full-length dialogue films are said to have been completed.

IX

THE BRITISH FILM

THE British film is established upon a hollow foundation. Perhaps it would be more significant to write that it rests upon a structure of false prestige, supported by the flatulent flapdoodle of newspaper writers and by the indifferent goodwill of the English people. Inasmuch that a film emanating from the studios of this country to-day is at once enshrouded in a haze of patriotic glamour by the public, who feel that the product (with one or two notable exceptions) is unworthy of its esteem.

The whole morale of the modern British cinema is extravagantly artificial. It has been built up by favoured criticism and tolerance of attitude. If a few critics had consistently written the bitter truth about the British film, if they had criticised it ruthlessly and stringently according to its deserts, I am convinced that this country would have revealed at least half-a-dozen thoroughly capable, intelligent film directors and a group of perspicacious, courageous producers. Well-merited castigation would have laid bare, and therefore more easily remedied, the root of the evil. Instead, there have been British film weeks and national film campaigns which have nourished the cancer in the industry. As it is, the British film is spoon-fed by deceptive praise and quota regulations, with the unhappy result that it has not yet discovered its nationality.

The British film has never been self-sufficient, in that it has never achieved its independence. Léon Moussinac writes: '*L'Angleterre n'a jamais produit un vrai film anglais*,'[1] a remark that is miserably true. The British film lacks conception. It has no other aim than that of the imitation of the cinema of other countries. For its obscure source it goes firstly to the American, and secondly, but more remote to discern, to the German film. Of one thing I am assured, that the British film will never prosper, save as the child of the American

[1] *Panoramique du Cinéma*, Léon Moussinac 1929.

cinema, until our producers bring themselves to recognise the value of experiment. Only on exceedingly rare occasions does a producing firm in this country countenance a new form of technique, a development of outlook, or anything that is alien to their traditional methods of working. British studios are filled with persons of moderate intelligence who are inclined to condemn anything that is beyond their range. Producers, directors, scenarists, cameramen, art-directors, and their *confrères* are afraid of any new process, in case their feeble mentality is not sufficiently clever to grasp its significance. We are slow to learn from other film-producing countries, but we are always quick to imitate. But the danger lies in the disastrous fact that we generally imitate without understanding, without probing to the base of the ideas that we adopt (as for example, the mixed technique of Asquith's *Cottage on Dartmoor* and the ill-designed *décor* of Elvey's *High Treason*). For this reason there has never been any school of *avant-garde* in England. I do not suggest that an advanced school of cinematic experimentalism is essential, but I believe that it would stimulate the directors of the commercial cinema. There is, moreover, no school of thought for the furtherance of filmic theory, such as is found in other countries. There is none of the *enthusiasm* for the progress of the cinema which is so prevalent in France, Germany, Soviet Russia, and even America.

On occasions, our studios burst into a flare of latent modernism that is usually deplorable. In such a vein was the already mentioned Gaumont-British film, *High Treason*, which was made by a director with over fifty productions to his credit. It is not, moreover, as if British studios were insufficiently equipped or inadequately staffed. On the contrary, the technical resources of Elstree, Welwyn, Islington, and Walthamstow are as good as, if not better than, those of almost any other country in Europe, a point upon which every foreign visitor will agree. The trouble lies in the way in which these excellent resources are employed. A good film and a bad film pass through the same technical process. The amount of good and the amount of bad in each depends upon the minds which control the instruments.

It need scarcely be reiterated that England is the most fertile country imaginable for pure filmic material. Our railways, our industries, our towns, and our countryside are waiting for incorporation into narrative films. The wealth of material is immense. When recently visiting this country, Mr. Eisenstein expressed his astonishment

at the almost complete neglect by British film directors of the wonderful material that lay untouched. Why advantage had not been taken of these natural resources was exceptionally difficult to explain to a visitor. Oxford, Cambridge, Liverpool, Shrewsbury, Exeter, the mountains of Wales and the highlands of Scotland are all admirable for filmic environment. Nothing of any value has yet been made of London, probably the richest city in the world for cinematic treatment. Grierson alone has made, under Soviet influence, the film of the herring fleet, the epic *Drifters*. This film, good as it was, is but a suggestion of that which waits to be accomplished. But what English company is willing to realise these things? British International Pictures, it is true, have made *The Flying Scotsman* under the direction of Castleton Knight, but what of it? Anthony Asquith made *Underground*, but became lost in the Victorian conception of a lift-boy, in place of the soul of London's greatest organisation. Instead, our studios give forth *Variety*, *Splinters*, *The Co-optimists*, *Elstree Calling*, *A Sister to Assist 'Er*, and *The American Prisoner*.

What has been done with the Empire? It is well, first, to recall Epstein's *Finis Terræ*, Flaherty's *Moana*, Turin's *Turksib*, and Pudovkin's *Heir to Jenghiz Khan*. The material lying unused in all parts of India, Kenya, Nigeria, Malta, Cyprus, is vast. There have been made *A Throw of the Dice*, *Stampede*, and *Palaver*, but what did they tell of those rich countries, save a superficial rendering? Without proper methods of film construction, without a knowledge of the capabilities of the cinema, it were best for this wonderful material to be left untouched.

*

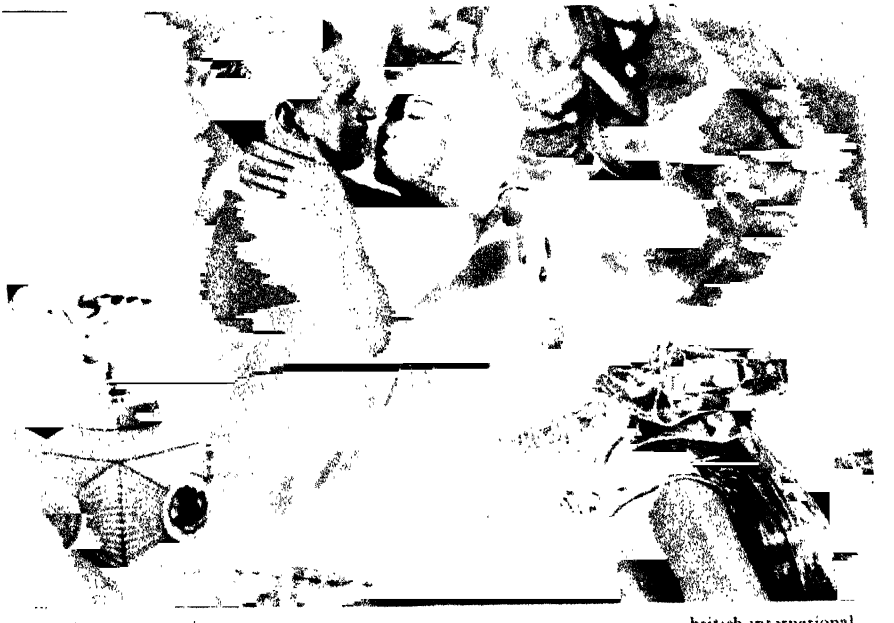
The root of the trouble in this country lies in the conservative and narrow-minded outlook of the producing executives. There are not the men of broad vision, receptive of new theories and progressive ideas. (I do not here refer to the general adoption of the dialogue cinema, for that was a position forced upon British companies by American domination.) When the industry suffered a revival some years ago, after a decline period of inactivity, British producers seriously considered that it was more necessary to erect studio-cities than to train the young men who were to work in them. Every effort at that time was concentrated on making the masses believe that Elstree was the new Hollywood; but the public shrewdly reserved

british new-era

DRIFTERS

John Grierson's first production. A herring fleet, admirably constructed with the object of showing England.

1928



british british international

PICCADILLY

by E. A. Dupont, one of the best films made in this country on American pattern. Anna May Wong and Jameson Thomas.

1927

its judgment until it should see the product of this studio-city.

Not only this, but producers lack the courage of their own convictions. When the dialogue film swept into England by way of the American-owned theatres in London, several directors in British studios were just beginning to grasp the rudimentary principles of film construction. They were groping and slowly developing for themselves some ideas on the theory of the cinema. But the whole studio organisation of this country was thrown into chaos by the American revolution of the dialogue film. If only one firm had remained level-headed when the tidal wave came, I am convinced that the best intelligences in British studios would have stood with it and would have acted independently of the dialogue innovation. If one company had been content with small profits and a gradual increase of its output, developing its knowledge of the silent film, there would have been some tendency, some initiative, some independence in the British cinema of which to write. As it was, the studios tried to transform their inadequate knowledge of film-making into 'the new technique,' and continued with their slavish imitation of the American cinema.

The importation of foreign talent did not have the same influence in British studios as it did at an earlier date in Hollywood. It will be remembered that the work of Lubitsch, von Stroheim, Pommer, and Seaström had serious effect on the minds of the younger school of American directors. But in England, Arthur Robison, E. A. Dupont, and Henrik Galeen, three directors of talent, have had no effect on the British school. On the contrary, their ideas were totally misunderstood and unappreciated in our studios. Foreign directors failed to discover in England the collectivism and team-work so vital to film production. They were unable to understand our idea of picture-sense and we were at a loss to interpret their filmic outlook. (*E.g.*, Robison's *The Informer* and Galeen's *After the Verdict*; yet these directors had earlier been responsible for *Manon Lescaut* and *The Student of Prague*. The conclusion to be drawn is obvious.) Dupont alone attained to some measure of success in *Piccadilly*, but only because he employed a German cameraman and architect. The importation of foreign talent was due to the eternal craze for a picture of *international* appeal. Producers were convinced that the inclusion of a foreign star would

give a film an instant attraction in other countries. For this reason, Lya de Putti, Lars Hanson, Hans von Schlettow, Anna May Wong, Olga Tschechowa, Gilda Gray, and others have played in this country, but the advantage is somewhat obscure, save that it has been successful in the suppression of natural British talent.

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Analysis of the output of British studios since the war is impossible in the same way as has been done with that of other countries. Nor, on the other hand, is it proposed to give even a brief survey of the commercial development, for that has been lightly touched upon at an earlier stage. I am unable to discern a realistic, expressionistic, naturalistic, decorative, or any other phase in the development of the British cinema. Added to which, there are no tendencies to be traced, for British films do not have tendencies, unless allusion is made to the prevalence of cabaret scenes and war themes. I propose, therefore, to examine several isolated productions and the work of a few individual directors, who demand some notice.

Without hesitation, there is one production that is pre-eminent in the British cinema, Grierson's film of the herring fleet. As far as I am aware, *Drifters* is the only film produced in this country that reveals any real evidence of construction, montage of material, or sense of cinema as understood in these pages. Admittedly, Grierson was influenced in his work by the rhythmic construction of Eisenstein's *Battleship 'Potemkin,'* but, as has been pointed out elsewhere, he gave to *Drifters* something that was lacking in the celebrated Soviet film. As is now well-known, Grierson was connected with the preparation of the American version of the Soviet picture, and had, therefore, every opportunity to analyse the work of Eisenstein at close contact. Although Grierson failed to understand completely the construction of *Battleship 'Potemkin,'* he nevertheless contrived to build a film of great strength and beauty in *Drifters*. Like Epstein's *Finis Terræ* and Ford's *Iron Horse*, the theme of *Drifters* was pure in filmic texture. The ships that sailed out at night, the casting of the drifting nets, and the climactic race home to give their haul to the markets of the world was splendid film material. The film was filled with the beauty of labour and a sense of ships. It lacked, possibly, a universal idea of the sea by its concentration on detail, but it was so far in advance of normal British productions that to write unfavourably of it would be ungenerous.

There are several directors in and around British studios who in my belief would realise interesting films were they afforded the means. There are also, on the other hand, many directors who have failed to make use of ample opportunities when they have had them. And again, there is a large number of second and third-rate directors on whose spasmodic work it is impossible to comment in a book of this nature.

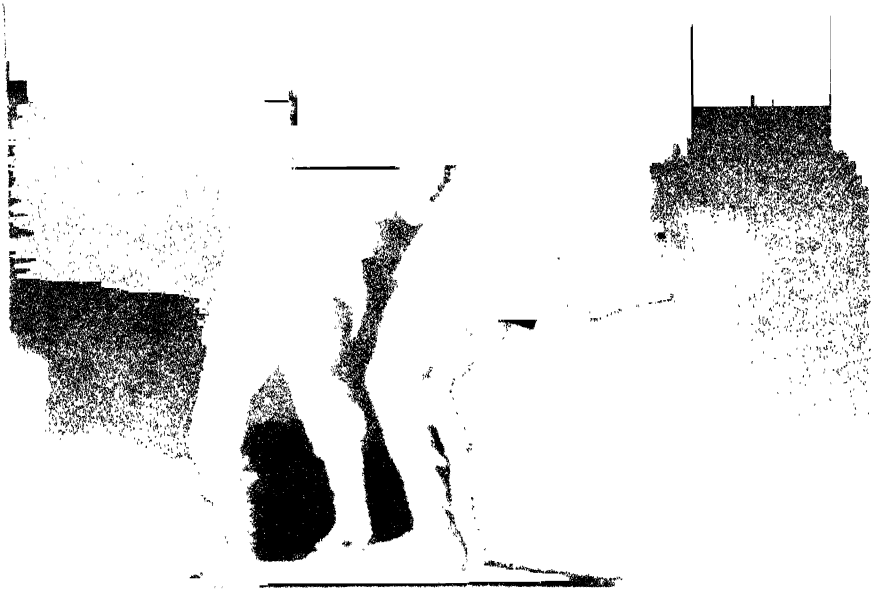
Although Miles Mander has been connected principally with acting, he has made one film that provided evidence of his wit and intelligence in filmic expression. *The Firstborn*, made at Elstree two years ago, was almost entirely the product of Mander's creative mentality; the story, scenario, direction, and principal rôle being his individual work, supported by Madeleine Carroll. In the copy of *The Firstborn* shown to the public, however, the merits of the direction and the continuity were rendered almost negligible by the poor assembling of the material by the distributing firm. It is understood that the film was mounted without the control of the director by a professional cutter, and hence much of Miles Mander's original conception was destroyed. As a light commentary on married life, flavoured with an environment of semi-political domestication, *The Firstborn* was conceived with a nice subtlety of wit. The treatment, especially of the eternal arguments and the dinner party, was sophisticated and clever. Mander has obviously a shrewd knowledge of feminine mentality and succeeded in transferring this into his handling of Madeleine Carroll. Had the film been well assembled, according to the original manuscript, I believe that *The Firstborn* would have been a unique instance of an English domestic tragi-comedy in the cinema. ,

Probably Anthony Asquith is the most fortunately situated of British directors. He has certain ideas on cinematic representation, and he is happily able to put them into realisation. He has been concerned with four productions till now, *Shooting Stars*, *Underground*, *Princess Priscilla's Fortnight*, and *A Cottage on Dartmoor*. That he possesses a feeling for cinema was proved by all these films, but that he is still groping and undecided in his mind as to how to find expression for his ideas is equally plain. He has learnt varied forms of treatment from abroad, but has not as yet fully understood the logical reason for using them. He has studied the Soviet and German cinema, but has failed to search deep enough. His technique

still remains, after four productions, primitively on the surface. In his last picture, for example, there were several instances of quick cutting and symbolic reference, but they were employed because of themselves and not as a contributory factor to the film composition. For this reason, Asquith's work appears that of a virtuoso, whilst in reality he is undecided in his mind as to what to do next. He is legitimate in borrowing from superior directors only if he comprehends that which he borrows and why he has borrowed it. His films seem principally to lack centralisation of purpose. This was exemplified in *Underground*, which, instead of being a direct exposition of the spirit of an inanimate organisation (and what superb material) degenerated into a movie of London 'types.' All his work has been unbalanced and erratic, and it is essential for him to lose his Victorian sense of humour (described, I believe, as 'Asquith puckishness') before he can favourably progress. He has, on the other hand, some feeling for the use of dramatic camera angle, some ideas on dissolve shots, but an uneven sense of pictorial composition. He needs to receive a course in architectural construction in order to appreciate proportion; and to realise the relation that lies between the visual images and the expression of the theme.

The accredited pre-eminent director of the British school is, I suppose, Alfred Hitchcock, whose first dialogue film *Blackmail* has been generally accepted as the best of its kind. I believe, however, that Hitchcock's most sincere work was seen in *The Lodger*, produced in 1926 for Gainsborough. In this thriller melodrama, he displayed a flair for clever photographic angles and succeeded in creating an environment of a London fog with some conviction. He continued with a series of unpretentious pictures, *Downhill*, *Easy Virtue*, *The Ring*, *The Farmer's Wife*, and *The Manxman*, but did not develop along the lines indicated by *The Lodger*. The production of *Blackmail*, although handicapped by poor narrative interest and the inevitable restrictions of dialogue, nevertheless showed Hitchcock in a progressive mood. His much commented upon use of sound as an emphasis to the drama of the visual image was well conceived, but inclined to be over-obvious. Incidentally, the silent version was infinitely better than the dialogue, the action being allowed its proper freedom.

Although not strictly the product of British studios, Dupont's *Piccadilly* was undoubtedly the best film of its type to be made in



british

british instructional

A COTTAGE ON DARTMOOR

by Anthony Asquith, one of the few films to use natural material in England, memorable for its exterior photography. 1928

anglo-german

gainsborough-greenbaum

THE RING OF THE EMPRESS

by Erich Washneck, with Lil Dagover and Vera Baranovskaia, notable for its delightful costume designs. 1929

amusing comedies directed by Ivor Montagu, *The Cure*, *Day Dreams*, and *Bluebottles*, from stories by H. G. Wells, with the ever-delightful Elsa Lanchester, were the best instances of comedy burlesque that I have seen. And the numerous nature films, made by British Instructional, have always been admirable in conception and execution. They are, in fact, the sheet-anchor of the British Film Industry.

X

FILMS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

THERE has been frequent mention in these pages of the Swedish cinema, which is now almost non-existent. During the years immediately following the war, Sweden produced a number of films that had great influence on the cinema of France and Germany. They were realised with exceptional visual beauty, being characterised by their lyrical quality of theme and by their slowness of development. For their environment, full use was made of the natural landscape value of Sweden, whilst their directors were marked by their poetic feeling. The themes were for the most part tragically conceived and treated from a heavy psychological point of view, two qualities that were chiefly responsible for the half-hearted acceptance of the Swedish cinema by foreign exhibitors and renters. In fact, it may be said truthfully that the Swedish film declined and died a natural death by reason of its national characteristics of poetic feeling and lyricism. Of the directors, most of whom have gone to Hollywood, mention must be made of Victor Seaström (*The Phantom Carriage*, *The Tragic Ship*, *The Exiles*), Mauritz Stiller, who died in Hollywood in December of 1928 (*The Atonement of Gosta Berling*, *Arne's Treasure*), and John Brunius (*Vox Populi*, *The History of Charles XII.*).

Both Italy and Spain are producing films, though, so far as I am aware, few of their recent productions have been shown outside their country of origin up till the time of writing. Before the war, however, Italian films were not unfrequently presented in England, ranging from comedies to historical subjects. Of the latter, the most memorable is *Cabiria*, a classical theme from a scenario by Gabriele d'Annunzio. With its extensive cast and elaborate sets – such, for instance, as the Temple of Moloch which anticipated the sequence of the Heart Machine in Lang's *Metropolis* – this super production was a remarkable feat for 1913, even though its cinematic properties were not pronounced. Hungary, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia have also

entered the field of the film industry, but here there is as yet little to record.

By way of contrast, there is at the moment a flourishing film industry in Japan, where it is said that over five hundred productions are realised yearly by some ninety directors. This high rate of production, however, has only been reached of recent years, having come about through the national urge to overcome the American domination that took place during the war. Before the outbreak of war, Japan relied on France and Italy for supplying her programmes, but as was the case in all other countries, America took control of the market when the European industry was suspended. Directly after the war, Japanese production began to develop and it was not long before several companies were formed.

Until the present, the Japanese cinema has been too closely allied to the traditions of the theatre for there to have been any individual cinematic tendencies. For a long time the film was regarded as inferior to the stage, suitable only for the entertainment of the lower classes. For subject-matter, also, the cinema relied largely on traditional costume plays, resulting in a large number of stylised, historical films adapted from conventional pieces of the past. These were notable for their beauty of setting and their excellent photography, being of particular interest as reconstructions of old Japanese customs and traditions. Moreover, another reason for the predominance of the historical film is the vigilance with which the censorship observes all pictures dealing with contemporary moral or social matters. Despite this, however, there are a certain number of modern themes produced, especially comedies, dealing with the peasantry and the lower middle classes.

The two prominent producing companies are the Nikkatsu and the Soetsiku, and although the latter was formerly the more important, it has now been superseded by the Nikkatsu. As in Soviet Russia, each concern has its own set of production units and players, there being little interchange of personnel. The Nikkatsu is said to employ the best acting material, having also at its command experts in Japanese antiquity and historical matters to supervise the traditional subjects. The Soetsiku, on the other hand, is more modern in its outlook and attempts to produce films of the naturalistic type with contemporary material, several of its technicians having learnt their trade in Hollywood studios. The chief studios are at Kamata, with a

staff numbering about a thousand (including fifty directors), where only films on modern subjects are realised. The speed of production is astonishing, a full-length picture being completed in anything from a fortnight to a month, as compared to the usual six weeks or two months in Europe and America. This high rate of production is due to the Japanese desire to break down any attempt at American domination, a lesson which England might well learn from this courageous nation.

In India, also, there are a great number of films realised by purely native production units. Although the indigenous product is technically far inferior to the American and European films shown in India, nevertheless the former finds more favour with the vast Indian public. The majority of pictures are versions of well-known tales of Hindu mythology and religion, clumsily put together with many long-winded titles in several languages. The average length of a film seems to be about ten thousand feet, the audience being apparently willing to sit through any amount of film so long as it deals with a favourite subject. Moreover, owing to the differences of religion, the censor authorities have great difficulty in granting permission for exhibition in the various districts. There have also been a number of Indian pictures made by European producing companies, but most of these are singularly uninteresting (*Nuri the Elephant*, *Shiraz*, *A Throw of the Dice*).

PART TWO

THE THEORETICAL

I

THE AIM OF THE FILM IN GENERAL AND IN PARTICULAR

ANALYSIS of the film is, perhaps, more difficult than that of any of the other arts. Since its beginning in the days of the Lumière brothers and Friese-Green, the film has grown, retraced its steps, sprung in different directions at the same time, been hampered and impeded on all sides, in the most remarkable way, without any real stock being taken of its properties and possessions. Its very nature of light revealed by moving form defies systematic cataloguing of its capabilities. Its essentially mechanical basis is apt to lead the observer and the student up blind alleys. No medium of expression calls for such a wide variation of technical accomplishment as does the film. In literature, it is possible to check and to investigate new developments with comparative ease in contrast to the cinema; and as Mr. Arnold Bennett has pointed out more than once, it is an insuperable task to keep abreast with modern literature. But even in literature, works in libraries or in one's own possession can be consulted, whereas when a film has had its limited access to it for examination or reference is a difficult matter. So few facts are actually put on record concerning current films that it is quite conceivable that a time may come when such important pictures as *Mother* and *Metropolis* will be but names at which future generations will wonder. Little record, even now, remains of some of the earlier German films made shortly after the war, whilst copies themselves become scarce as time goes on, either through wear or through accident.[1] Personal experience, also, is necessarily restricted and seldom put on record. El Greco's 'Agony in the Garden' may be

[1] For example, there is, I believe, only one *complete* copy of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* in existence, and certainly only one copy of *Dracula*, which is never likely to be shown unless privately. Of *The Peasant Women of Riazan* there is only a limited number of copies, the master negative being destroyed by fire. The same applies to *The Golem*, *The Mystic Mirror*, and *Destiny*.

consulted at almost any time with convenience, but in the case of a film it is only possible to rely on memory for reference, a precarious method of analysis.

Furthermore, even to see a film is not necessarily to observe all its values, as Mr. Eric Elliott has remarked.[1] Scientific tests have shown that only sixty per cent. of a film is seen by an observer. What then of the remaining forty per cent.? The difficulty has, of course, been intensified by the introduction of the synchronised dialogue film and its accompanying sound. The loss to the visual image whilst the audience is trying to understand the dialogue must be great. It follows naturally, as in criticism of painting and music, that the better the dramatic construction of a film the more difficult it becomes to analyse that construction. The critic himself is inclined to fall under the power of the story and another and more impartial viewing is necessary in order to appraise the numerous technical values.

A tremendous handicap is also experienced in illustrating filmic argument. It is possible only to suggest the different methods of film technique, of montage and of continuity, by giving examples that have been actually observed, taken from productions of all dates. In some cases the quoted instances may have been seen by others, but when the total film output for one year alone is considered, chances are against this. Furthermore, mere verbal descriptions are totally inadequate to convey the emotions excited by a film. It is, perhaps, to a certain extent possible to analyse the cause of these emotions, and from this point of view must examples be approached. For instance, it is beyond the power of literary description to convey the mental reactions to sequences of short-cutting and cross-cutting in Eisenstein's *October*, but one is able, I think, to explain the use of the method, how and why it was employed, and its place in the continuity and rhythmic structure of the film as a whole.

At a comparatively early stage the cinema presented a range of values far beyond the complete understanding of any one human mind. For all intents and purposes a bad film passes through the same mechanical processes of studio, camera, and laboratory as a good one. The technical resources available to the film director when he is making his picture are without number. He can choose between rolling shots and direct cutting, between panning and flying cameras,

[1] *Vide, The Anatomy of the Motion Picture*, by Eric Elliott (Pool, 1928).

between slow and ultra-rapid motion. He has available every conceivable means for the exposition on the screen of his selected theme. So wide are the resources in technical devices that theoretically there should be no reason for the making of bad films save the sheer incompetence of the director. He has gangs of (in most cases) willing workmen to fulfil his orders, and in some studios almost unlimited money to spend in order to achieve the desired effect. Yet a survey of the film output since the war shows that the percentage of films in which full use has been made of technical resources is very small indeed. The reason probably is that before the child has learnt the power of his new toy, he is presented with another by the kind technicians. Moreover, there is no one to instruct him in the use of this fresh device. He can only experiment, and watch out of the corner of his eye how other people are using it. A director is given a camera tricycle with which to play, and finding he can travel his camera all round the set, proceeds to do so in the film he is making at the moment, until he is interrupted by some more technicians who have brought along another device. Seldom does a director realise the absolute advantages to be derived from a new form of technical accomplishment and employ them with restraint in the right place and with the greatest effect. Instances of such virtuosity are innumerable. Travelling shots were employed for the first time in a German film, and almost immediately they became inevitable. They were used on every occasion, with total disregard to the nature of the action portrayed. Karl Freund once used a flying camera for a certain scene in *Metropolis*, because the upward flying movement of the instrument emphasised the struggle which Gustav Fröhlich and Brigitte Helm were experiencing in escaping *upwards* from the flood of water. A few months later, flying cameras swooped like locusts around Hollywood. Patient audiences were whirled across the room to look at a boot, because Lewis Stone looked at it in *The Patriot*. More recently, directors have been given the golden opportunity to let their players speak. The babel that ensues at the moment is appalling. It only remains for the stereoscopic screen and the all-colour film to come into general use for the director to have no excuse at all for producing a bad film. But there will be more bad films made than ever before, because all the technical resources of the cinema will form one great bundle of virtuosity, out of which only a few balanced minds will be able to pick the good from the bad. Chaos will

be even greater than it is now, if such a state of affairs is conceivable.

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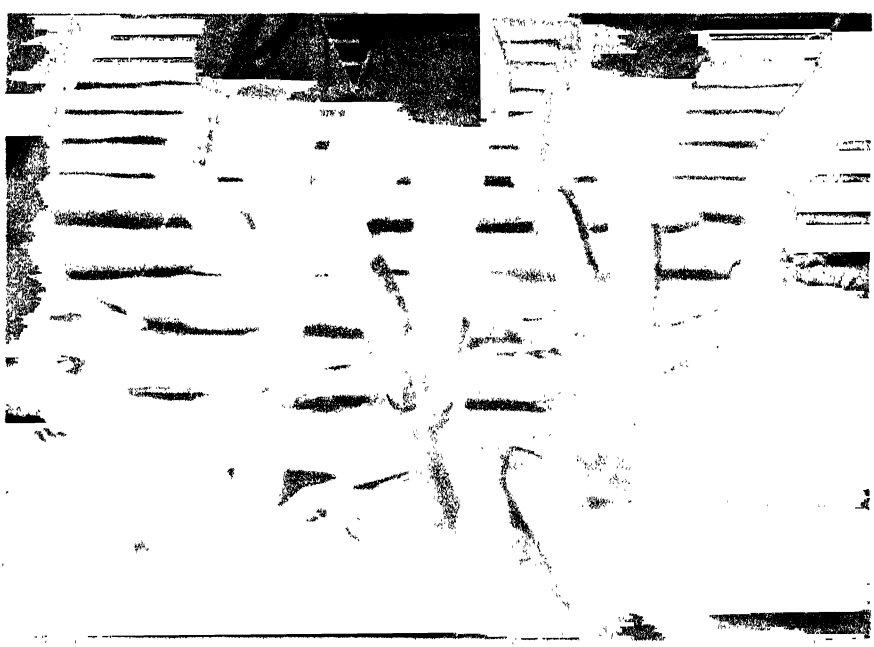
During the last few years there has been much diversity of opinion as to what constitutes cinema in its purest form. Many believe that the presentations at the Avenue Pavilion in London used to represent true film art; others vaguely suggest Soviet films but call them Russian. Some talk loftily of the *avant-garde* of the French film and the numerous little Paris specialist cinemas; a few recall the great middle period of the German cinema. Whilst on all sides, from those who know, comes the mixed thunder of so many *Potemkins* and *Tartuffes*, *Bed and Sofas* and *Chien Andalous*. Nothing is very clear, which after all is quite understandable when we consider the almost hopeless tangle of ideas which strangles the arts as a whole at the present time. Conflicting opinions alternately cancel one another out; groups propound theories quite enigmatical to any save themselves; whilst advanced schools of thought are found in almost every country. That there is a new spirit moving in the theatre, in literature, in painting, in architecture, and in the other arts is evident. It has scarcely touched England at all, and is at its strongest in Germany and Soviet Russia. But that it exists and is to be found in some aspects of the cinema is beyond doubt. The film is inclined to reflect the backwash of all these developments, holding up a mirror, as it were, to the current theories of art, sociology, and culture. Occasionally the spirit bursts forth into an outstanding and remarkable film, as in the case of Bunuel's *Le Chien Andalou* and Ernö Metzner's *Überfall*, but more often the cinema reflects the ideas of some two or three years earlier, such as the American and British pictures which have interior decoration taken direct from the *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs* of 1925 (*e.g.*, the *décor* by Cedric Gibbons in *Our Dancing Daughters* and that by Hugh Gee for *Tesha*). But it is perhaps possible to clarify the air by retrospection and to establish some sort of idea as to the present position of the film in relation to its surroundings.

It has been admitted that the silent film is essentially an independent form of expression, drawing inspiration from the other arts. With choreography it shares the power of movement; and with painting, mental communication through the eye. The recent dialogue film suggests comparison with the stage and its power of

german

THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI

by Robert Wiene A remarkable angular pattern on the roof tops ; note white line emphasising the course of Cesare 1919



soviet

mosfilm

BATTLESHIP 'POTEMKIN'

by S. M. Eisenstein. Detail shot of the famous scene on the steps of Odessa. 1925

speech. Æsthetically, dialogue is in direct opposition to the medium, unless pure sound as distinct from the human voice is utilised from an expressionistic point of view.

But all art, whether painting, sculpture, music, poetry, drama, or film, has at base the same motive, which may be said to be the creation of a work in the presence of which an observer or listener will experience either pleasure or pain as the mood of the work demands. Moreover, it has been suggested that these reactionary emotions are aroused in the mind of the observer or listener by rhythm, either harmonic or discordant, which is determined by such manifestations of the various media as linear design, contrast in light and shade, metre, colour sensation, variations in light intensities, counterpoint, editing and cutting. Whether the spectator be high-brow, lowbrow or mezzobrow, provided the creator of the work has expressed himself clearly in his medium, the appeal is the same though its power must vary in accordance with the mental receptivity of the spectator.

In the case of the film, it is this receptive power of the audience *en masse* which the Americans and the Soviets, the Germans and the French are trying to calculate, in order to render a work of art a commercial success. That their methods should be different is naturally obvious when their respective national temperaments and the circumstances which govern production are considered. It has been seen that whilst Hollywood relies chiefly on the star-system and sex-appeal, Soviet Russia attempts to rouse the emotions of her own public by having in her films a definite applied purpose, preferably of contemporary social importance, and by the creation of rhythm – the basic motive of reactions – by means of a highly developed process of cutting.

It has been written that 'in theorising about the cinema there are certain points which must be borne in mind and which should form the basis of all constructive criticism. In the first place, the cinema is dependent for its life on the good opinion of the public, and the average citizen is æsthetically indifferent.' (Vernon J. Clancey writing in *The Cinema*, 4th September 1929.) This may be true, but it should be remembered that the resources of the cinema, by which good directors seek to gain their effect on the minds of the audience, act unconsciously. An average citizen is naturally not expected to appreciate, or even become conscious of the montage of shots that

appear before him on the screen, but he cannot help himself reacting to their content if they have been employed correctly. Soviet films, for instance, are made primarily to appeal to the mind of the working man, the labourer, and the peasant, and are in most cases constructed with the essence of simplicity. We know that it is only because Soviet Russia has evolved her own theories of cinematography that she has learnt how to use the properties of the film in their correct manner and to extract the utmost out of them. I find it hard to believe that any audience exists, taken at random in any cinema, which would not react immeasurably to the double-exposed, interrupted cutting of the machine gun in *October*. The reaction, however, would not be caused only by the dramatic value of the machine gun and the scattering crowd, but by the *cinematic treatment* of the incident. It would thrill and hold any audience with tremendous intensity. By way of contrast, it is only necessary to refer to similar scenes in such films as *What Price Glory?*, *The Big Parade*, and *Poppies in Flanders*, to realise how Eisenstein relied on the subconscious mental qualities of the audience, qualities which he preconceived when cutting this incident in the laboratory. Only by such means as these, arising out of the attributes of the medium, can an audience be really stirred from its accustomed lethargy.

There has not been as yet, however, any scientific inquiry into the emotional effect produced by films on the public. It is well known that the simplest effects on the human mind connote the most subtle causes, being much more difficult to achieve than complex effects. Nursery rhymes and limericks, for instance, need as much if not more trouble to compose than a lengthy piece of heroic verse. Chaplin alone is a superb example of the individual appeal to the public. He has taken the trouble to think how and why audiences throughout the world react to his individuality. All Chaplin films are brilliant instances of timing that has been effected only by analysis of the human mind, in the same manner as the Soviets' investigations and Pabst's absorption in psycho-analysis.

'Art,' said the post-impressionists, 'is not truth, it is not nature; it is a pattern or rhythm of design imposed on nature.' The analogy to the film is at once apparent.

A film is primarily a dynamic pattern or rhythm (achieved by the editing and cutting) imposed on nature (the material taken, preferably the reality). It is governed pictorially by the use of light and move-

ment in the creation of visual images, and mentally by psychology in the creation of mental images. Music and synchronised sound, used in counterpoint and contrapuntally, heighten the emotions of the spectator aurally and subconsciously. This dynamic mental pictorialism is, I claim, the most powerful form of expression available to-day to a creative artist.

In this theoretical portion of the survey we shall be concerned primarily with two comparatively simple aspects of film creation, to wit: the choice of a theme, which is to be a film's argument, its *raison d'être*; and the two steps in the expression of that theme, firstly, by scenario representation in literary form, and secondly, by the numerous orthodox technical methods peculiar to the cinema for the transference of the matter contained in the scenario on to the screen. This last step may be called the grammar of the film, arising out of its self-developed properties, and will be the subject of the two succeeding chapters. Investigation has already been made of a great number of films and their individual directors, but admittedly we have examined little more than the themes (or thematic narrative interest) of the films in question and the methods adopted for realisation by their directors. We have, as yet, to understand that there lies something beyond a theme and its technical expression, namely, the conception, attitude of mind, or *creative impulse* of the director himself.

It is fairly apparent that differentiation can be made between the methods of expression employed by separate directors. For example, it would not be difficult to distinguish between a film made by Lubitsch and a film made by Pabst, although the theme in both films was identical. It would simply be the matter of a distinction between temperaments. Further, we know that Eisenstein constructs his films by a process of impulsive editing (based on complex forethought), according to his judgment of the material as being expressive of his principles of tonal and over-tonal montage. That is to say, we acknowledge that he selects his shots and determines their screen-length by the physiological-psychological sensations gained from their visual qualities and not (as does Dziga-Vertov) by a purely metric process of the number of frames to a shot. These are merely niceties of expression which are capable of being appreciated by every intelligent observer who is familiar with the principles of filmic representation.

But when we see and hear a film, or rather when we *accept* a film, we are conscious of something beyond its theme and technical expression. We become aware of the director. Our acceptance of the director's creative impulse, however, is governed by our degree of sensitivity, for we may or we may not be receptive to his inner urge of expression. We are possibly going to achieve contact with his creative impulse, whereby we shall appreciate his work to the fullest extent, or we are possibly only going to receive his theme by the simple technical methods adopted by him. In this way, we must distinguish between, on the one hand, a theme and its filmic expression and on the other, the creative impulse of a director. It is one thing to accept *The End of St. Petersburg* and *October* as themes and examples of film technique, but quite another to accept *through* them the creative mentalities of Pudovkin and Eisenstein.

In this respect, therefore, it is clear that we are concerned not with the collective acceptance of a film by a number of persons, which is a matter of technical expression, but with the appreciation, according to degrees of sensitivity, that arises in the individual spectator. This is and must always be a matter of personal acceptance, governed by our own state of intelligence.

*

A film demands that a theme – either personal, impersonal or inanimate – shall be presented to the mind through the eye by the flowing relation and inter-relation of a succession of visual images projected on a screen. It further requires the theme to be emphasised by the full range of cinematic resources: by the use of the intimate to reinforce the general at a similar moment or in development; by the instantaneous pictorial vision of more than one idea at the same time; by symbolism and suggestion; by the association of ideas and shapes; by the varying high and low tensions caused by rhythmic cutting; by variation in the intensities of light; by the contrast and similarity of sounds; by all the intrinsic properties peculiar to the medium of the film. The film possesses the power of expanding and contracting the centre of interest, and of comparison by rapid change of the relationship of the trivial to the essential. By these means may the audience be compelled to accept the dramatic meaning of the theme and to realise its continually developing content.

Added to which, it is imperative that a film should be distinguished by a unity of purpose and should be single-minded in intention.

british

british instructional

THE FROG

a nature film by Percy Smith. Young tadpoles about to emerge from spawn. One of the best of the 'Secrets of Nature' Series. 1925

soviet

SPRING

directed and photographed by Kaufmann, showing the transition from winter to spring in Russia. 1929

According to the treatment of the theme, the dramatic incidents of the narrative may not be of primary interest to the audience, but rather the effect of these incidents on the characters who have provoked them by their behaviour. Again, the theme may be inanimate, recording the soul of some great organisation or industry, or indicative of some vast undertaking. And again, it may develop the intimate personality of a single being by plaiting together as a unified whole a continuity of selected incidents, which singly are of little significance.

In this manner, by utilising the means arising out of the nature of the medium itself, the film sets out to be a form of expression, presenting persons, objects, and incidents in a way entirely different from any other medium, and utilising resources unavailable in other means of artistic expression. It will be seen also that such values as 'acting' and sets become but raw material for assembly in the final film construction. The complete insignificance of the star-system in this respect is obvious. In fact, I even suggest that there is no such thing as 'film acting.'

Provided that it is conceived in a filmic sense, the subject-matter of a film may be derived from anywhere. Every human thought, every incident of life or imagination can inspire a theme. The history of the world is a storehouse from which themes may be drawn at will. Choice can only be governed by sociological reasons; whether it be of interest or of no appeal to an audience. In the case of the fiction film, it is necessary for the plot to be well balanced and well constructed. Most good films are marked by the simplicity of their themes and their logical development of action. The theme may be found in a play, a novel, a magazine, a novelette, a newspaper, a history book, a memoir, an encyclopædia, a dictionary or a fifteenth-century incunable. Better still, in the case of the semi-fiction picture, it can be found in the street, in the trains, in the factories or in the air.

There is a wealth of cinematic inspiration, for instance, in the paintings of the Flemish and early Dutch painters. For *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, Dreyer went to the best possible source of inspiration in the mediæval French miniatures, whilst in his crowd scenes there was the influence of Bruegel. The atmosphere of Murnau's *Faust* was gained through an intimate knowledge of the work and feeling of Dürer, of his grand pictorial value, whilst again there was a hint of Bruegel in the types of the townspeople in the plague-stricken

city. Bosch, the Van Eycks, Lucas van Leyden, Hans Baldung Grein, and particularly the beasts of Lucas Cranach, have a definite filmic feeling that may be sensitively used for inspiration. El Greco, Goya, and more especially Honoré Daumier are rich in influential matter. The amazing types in Eisenstein's *The Old and the New* and Turin's *Turksib* recall the heads of Dürer and Holbein in their rich quality. In the film, it is possible to use such wonderful wrinkled features and twisted beards with great dramatic effect. Nearly all Soviet films are noted for their beautiful close ups of striking heads, perhaps held for only a flash on the screen. But, as has been pointed out elsewhere, this influence of painting and engraving does not in any way signify the *transference* of a picture on to the screen. The illustrious Mr. de Mille showed his sublime ignorance of this in that travesty, *The King of Kings*.

It is obviously quite unnecessary to commission a celebrated author to write a story 'specially for the screen.' In all probability the celebrated author has not the least conception of the cinema, being chiefly concerned with the writing of novels, which he undoubtedly does very well. Again and again the lament of novelists is heard that their books have been ruined by adaptation to the screen. In many cases, they claim to fail to recognise their own characters and say that the plot has been distorted beyond redemption. This is due, firstly, to the absolute necessity to transpose the theme of any novel from literary into cinematic terms; and secondly, to the deplorable habits of wealthy producing firms, which frequently buy best-sellers at random without any consideration of their filmic value. Three outstanding instances of this pernicious habit may be found in: Universal purchasing the rights of *All Quiet on the Western Front*; Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer trying to make *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* into a film; and *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* being bought and given to Herbert Brenon, a *sentimentalist* director, to make. Yet another example, somewhat different, was Ufa's complete metamorphosis of the psychological situation in Leonhard Franck's 'Karl and Anna,' a book that was already filmic, into a film called *Homecoming*. The greater number of film adaptations from literature are failures simply because scenarists attempt to embody a large amount of literary material in the relatively small space of a film.

THE AIM OF THE FILM IN GENERAL

When it is said that the visual images from which a film is built are light revealed by moving form, it is perhaps wise to qualify this statement. It is clear that there are at least four different movements present in the cinema, each of which has a definite bearing on the construction and preconception of a film. These may be said to be:

1. The actual *movements* of players, animals, and things (such as trains, motor-cars, trees, lifts, shadows, clouds, smoke, waves), being the *movements of the material* photographed in a single shot and which are the elements of the pictorial composition of the visual image on the screen.

2. The *movement* or mobility of the camera itself, being such movements as *panning*, *travelling*, and *flying* shots.

3. The *movement* existing through time and space between one visual image and the succeeding one in the progression of shots on the screen, by which may be understood the term *continuity* or fluidity of the development of the thematic narrative. This may alternatively be called the *theory of intervals* existing between one frame of film and another in direct cutting; giving rise to varying reactions from sudden shock to smooth transfusion in the spectator. By this means of *assembling* or *mounting* is the complete film composition constructed.

4. The *movement* of the screen itself, as has been publicly seen in the *magnascope*, or enlarged screen, and in the *triptych*, which is the ordinary central screen with a flanking screen on either side.

Each of these movements plays an important part in the expression of the dramatic content of the theme and in its construction.

Moreover, it should be understood that every visual image that appears on the flat screen, on which a film is projected, is governed by contrasted intensities of light. The screen itself has no real interest, except in the final form of cinematic movement indicated above. Light on the cinematograph screen is rendered significant by means of form. It is form (*i.e.*, the subject-material which is photographically recorded on strips of celluloid by the camera) that gives variations in intensity to the projected light. By means of such visually satisfying images their content or meaning is conveyed to the mind of the spectator through the eye. From a filmic point of view, the significance of form of the subject-material does not lie

in its own properties but in its capability to reveal the variations of the intensity of the projected light.[1]

These principles of movement and intensity of light are the fundamental properties of the cinematic medium. Each will be found considered at length as it arises in the sections that follow on the medium as a means of expression of dramatic content. It is imperative, however, to establish such degrees of movement and principles of light before a general examination of the other properties of the film is possible.

[1] An admirable example of this was provided by Francis Brugière and Oswell Blakeston's film *Light Rhythms*, in which the material consisted of static designs in cut paper over which various intensities of light were moved. The appeal of the film lay in the changing light values, which were revealed by the cut paper patterns.

II

THE PRECONCEPTION OF DRAMATIC CONTENT BY SCENARIO ORGANISATION

A FILM is essentially characterised by a unity of purpose and a singleness of idea which is present from the first to the last visual image projected on to the screen. This unity of idea or central purpose is unfolded shot by shot, sequence by sequence, and may be called the theme, or in the case of the cine-fiction film, the thematic narrative.

It is strictly necessary for an entire film to be preconceived in almost exact anticipation of every detail, except in such cases where sudden conditions (such as rain or mist) should occur during shooting, when some alteration in the scenario is justified in order to take advantage of natural occurrences. No single shot or individual sequence may be regarded as an isolated fragment, but must be reckoned as part of the moving pattern of shots and sequences out of which the film is built as a unity. Every shot of the one, two or three thousand that go to make up a complete full-length film vibrates in harmony with the preceding and succeeding shots, so that the complete film vibrates rhythmically.

A film is built, and the process of building has well been called *montage*.[1] This act of montage is present in the cinema in three forms, being bound together into a whole by means of cine-organisation. The process of film construction is arithmetical in its precision. It may be compared to building with a box of bricks. The unity of a film is achieved by the combination of the three acts of montage. Montage may be understood as the inclusive, creative, and constructive unity that is present from the birth of the first gleam of idea in the mind of the scenarist to the final act of assembling the film strips by constructive editing and cutting. A film is brought into being by the development of the

[1] Literally = putting together, mounting.

preconceived theme by cine-organisation of the three forms of montage, thus:

(*a*) The *assembling* of the *thematic narrative*, first in the mind; secondly, in *treatment* form; and then in the shape of a *scenario-plan*; including the reasoning employed in the choice of theme out of the countless available (as indicated in the previous chapter).

(*b*) The *assembling* of the *material* (as dictated by the scenario-plan) that is to be photographed in the studio or on location, based on the power of observation and understanding of human nature possessed by the director, and its expression by the use of the full resources of the medium.

(*c*) The *assembling* of the *strips of film* bearing upon them the photographic images, in variations of length, light, movement of material, and intellectual values calculated to produce the greatest effect on an audience.

Cine-organisation is thus to be reckoned as the dominant factor of film production, for it controls the three acts of montage which create the film, make it a reality, and invest it with emotional power. A film is not significant as a dramatic expression unless the three acts of montage have been completely welded together.

The director is the sole controlling mind that organises the forms of montage. It is he who commands the fulfilment of cine-organisation. If a mistake should occur during any process of the three acts of montage, then the whole composition of the film will be thrown out of order. The director is to be considered as the central organiser of a number of workers (the scenarist, cameraman, architect, etc.), all of whose actions are in direct fulfilment of his wishes. The team work of a production unit is a natural outcome of the characteristics of the medium of the film. Although the construction of a film usually takes the following order of processes, *viz.*:

(*a*) The choice of theme, the treatment of theme, the scenario-plan.
(*b*) The selection of types and acting material.
(*c*) The erection of studio structures and location of exteriors.
(*d*) The shooting of the material as indicated by the scenario-plan.
(*e*) The laboratory work on the material taken.
(*f*) The assembling of material (*i.e.*, the strips of celluloid) by constructive editing and cutting, as indicated in the scenario-plan,

it is not possible to divide this construction into independent stages, as is frequently done in large commercial studios. The work of each stage is directly contributary to the whole film composition, being controlled, as stated above, by the director. Thus absolute collectivism is an essential of efficient cine-organisation.

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Examination may now be made of the first act of montage, that is to say the assembling of the scenario. It has been seen in the preceding chapter that the variety of themes available to the director, scenarist or producer, is almost infinite, and that choice can only be governed by sociological or political reasons, or, in cases of the general commercial film, by whether a selected theme will be of interest to a large number of persons. For the simplification of argument, therefore, it may be assumed that a theme has been chosen. This theme is to be reckoned as the root-basis of the scenario. It is the motive for the realisation of the film and its entire justification as a means of expression, other, that is, than the creative impulse of the director. The theme indicates action, by which its meaning will be propounded. The action of the scenario is built up from a number of incidents and situations brought about by the characters and the relationship that exists between them. This, obviously, is determined by the imagination of the scenarist or director, being either a creative product or an adaptation from a literary work. The actional interest of the theme is set in an environment, which is either suggested by the nature of the theme or is chosen as being suitable by the director. The general colour or atmosphere of the film is determined by the environment, and must be present in the film from beginning to end. Even a landscape, a piece of architecture, a natural condition of the weather, is to be bound into the developing action. The action and the environment are, in fact, inseparable.

At this stage, with the theme, the action and the setting decided, it is possible for the treatment to be written. This will consist of a descriptive narrative of the visual potentialities of the theme. Although written in purely narrative form, it will suggest clearly the filmic possibilities of the idea. It will not, however, be divided into terms of sequences or shots, which is strictly a matter of the organisation of the detailed shooting-manuscript, or plan. This latter is the final stage of the scenario-organisation and [illegible] from which the director will work.

In order that the completed film composition may be a unity, the entire expression of the theme as it will eventually appear on the screen is preconceived in the mind of the scenarist, and is set down by him shot by shot, scene by scene, sequence by sequence, in the form of a scenario-plan. This preliminary literary expression of the concept contains the style, that is, the method of realisation, which the director will adopt during the taking and editing of the material. The film manuscript is thus built out of at least a thousand separate shots, each dependent for effect on the other. By means of this composition of shots (eventually consummated by the editing, or final act of montage) the film is caused to vibrate as a whole, thus giving rise to various emotional reactions in the mind of the audience.

The qualities needed for this literary expression of the theme in filmic terms, the importance of which cannot be over-emphasised, are intense concentration and clarity of perception and visualisation. Preconception of the film shooting-manuscript makes exhaustive claims on the creative mentality of the director or scenarist. In a novel, a writer develops his theme by written descriptions; in a play, an author makes use of dialogue and stage directions; but a film scenarist thinks and works in terms of externally expressive visual images. A scenarist must always visualise his thoughts in terms of images on a screen in a cinema; he must, moreover, be able to control, select, and organise the imaginary images as does a writer his words. He must be continually aware that each shot he describes and includes in his manuscript will eventually assume visual form on the screen. It is, therefore, not his words which are of importance, but the visual images that they define for the use of the director. The assembling of the film manuscript is, perhaps, the most exacting form of expressive writing. It demands without question even greater powers of concentration than the writing of a novel or the painting of a picture. Comparison may well be made to the composing of a symphony.

The director-scenarist [1] has, firstly, to create his theme in the

[1] Theoretically, the only possible writer of the film manuscript is the director, who alone is capable of transferring to paper the preconception of the film he is about to make. The theme, action, and environment may, however, be suggested to the director, who will transpose them into his own terms of filmic expression. The combination of director-scenarist is rapidly becoming customary. The special scenario departments for the mass production of films that are to be found in all big studios are ignored here. Their work can only consist of sorting and cataloguing possible material for themes, and the reader is referred, in this respect, to the scenario-bureaux of the Soviet cinema.

form of mental imagery; then to express those images in literary terms in the form of a treatment; and finally to compose them in the scenario-plan by employing every resource peculiar to the film for conveyance of dramatic content to the spectator. It is essential that the director-scenarist should have the fullest knowledge of filmic methods of expression, with which he can only acquaint himself by the study of other films and by experiment. Every property of pictorial composition, symbolism and suggestion, contrast and similarity in the association of ideas and shapes, the drama of camera angle, the rhythm achieved by various processes of editing and cutting, the technical accomplishment of camera mobility, trick devices, and the possibilities of studio architecture, must be in the mind of the director, to be utilised in the right place, so that the dramatic content of the theme may be expressed with the greatest possible emotional effect. For the expression of every concept, there are a thousand shots at the disposal of the director, and it is assumed for the purposes of argument that there is no angle or position from which an object, person or scene cannot be photographed, both terminals of the shot (the object and the camera) being either static or in motion. It is the duty of the scenarist to select from the infinite number of shots in his imagination, those which are the most vividly expressive, in order that they may bring out the full significance of the scene, as required by the theme. The procedure of the shooting-plan is the preliminary representation on paper of the eventual visual images on the screen. Both the director and the scenarist should think of all material, wherever they may happen to be, in terms of visual images, from which they can select according to their skill in filmic creation. It must be remembered that the camera, by means of visual images, digs deep into the inner reality of life; it penetrates the underlying currents of human emotions; it brings what I have called the consciousness of the inanimate to the spectator. The whole power of the film lies in the representation of themes and motives, presenting them filmically for the pleasure or boredom of the spectators, according to their degree of sensitivity.

In the preparation of the scenario-plan, the director shall be assisted by the cameraman and the architect, who are able to supplement his technical knowledge with their specialised experience of the capabilities of the camera as an instrument of expression and

of the designing of sets calculated to emphasise dramatic content. I believe that the incorporation of draughtsmanship in the film manuscript is of the greatest importance in perfecting the representation of visual images. The scenario is not only to be written but is to be drawn. In the first place, purely architectural diagrams of the lay-out of sets, travelling shots, panning shots, etc., should be included in order that a clear visualisation of the action of the characters in relation to the mobility of the camera may be possible. Added to this, the shooting angles and set-up of the camera, as dictated by the imagination of the scenarist and the technical experience of the cameraman, are to be indicated. Secondly, it is possible to emphasise the literary description of the selected visual images by means of drawings, which will be clues, as it were, to the actual shots on the studio floor or on location. At this point, a difficulty arises, for the literary descriptions in the scenario are usually concerned with movement of the acting material, which it is difficult, if not impossible, to convey by means of a drawing, the nature of which is essentially static. For this reason, therefore, the drawings should be in the form of footnotes, pictorial indications of the actual realisation, whilst the necessary movement of the players and the camera can be indicated by diagrammatic plans. The scenarist or director, as has already been stated, visualises the complete film in his imagination before it ever enters the studio to be fixed on strips of celluloid. It is only logical that there are many aspects of the visual images, such as pictorial composition and contrast of masses, that he cannot describe in his script by text. It is when the literary medium fails that the scenarist should be helped to a clear expression of his ideas by the draughtsmanship of the architect. When in the studio, the director should be able to work from drawings as well as from words in the realisation of the theme.

It will be understood, therefore, that three persons should have the organisation of the film scenario in their control – the scenarist-director, the cameraman and the architect. By means of their collective talent, there will result the nearest *absolute* approach to a complete film preconceived and set down on paper. Both visually and textually, the scenario will indicate the exact course of events in the studio, on exterior and in the cutting room. The textual description will still remain the prominent feature of the scenario, the draughtsmanship serving to augment the written description of

visual images. It follows that with the aid of plans, diagrams, lay-outs, and descriptive text, the three composers of the film manuscript will be able to select more easily the best possible shots for the representation of the scenes which express the dramatic content of the theme. Moreover, the manuscript composers must continually be conscious of the varying relations of the visual image lengths (*i.e.*, the length of time that each shot is held on the screen), for it is their rhythmic tension which ensures the increasing or decreasing concentration of the audience. This detailed shooting-plan will render more simple the two further acts of montage, already sufficiently complicated in themselves.

It is to be remembered that when shooting a film, a director is seldom able to take shots or scenes in their consecutive order of appearance. He cannot, for obvious practical reasons, begin by taking his first shot and proceed according to his scenario. For this reason alone, therefore, a well-organised scenario-plan is absolutely vital for the final assembling of the film strips in the cutting room during the last stage of montage. If the scenario-plan be indefinite, if every problem raised by the theme has not been filmically solved in terms of constructed shots, then the resulting film will be without composition and form. It must be clearly understood that a scenario-plan is built up from sequences; the sequences from scenes; and the scenes from shots. Conversely, shots are edited into a scene; scenes into a sequence; and sequences into a unified filmic composition. The drawings included in the film manuscript are clues to the progressive movement of the film itself. They are a graphic commentary on the unfolding continuity of visual images. The basis of film construction is the plastic welding of visual images, or shots, into a complete vibrating whole. Each separate shot indicated in the scenario becomes a strip of celluloid; out of these strips, conjoined in varying order and length according to narrative and rhythm, is built the film composition.

In every way, efficient scenario montage eliminates surplus expenditure of time and money during the making of a film. With preconceived knowledge of exactly what material is desired, only a limited amount of footage of film need be taken. By competent scenario organisation, twelve thousand feet of film is the maximum amount that need be taken for an eight thousand feet picture. Furthermore, it is obvious that for a film to be produced with any

commercial security, it must be constructed on a proper cine-organisation basis.[1]

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A film, in developing its theme, attains dramatic effect by a series of visual images on the screen that succeed one another in a constant forward movement from the first shot to the last. This dynamic unfolding of the dramatic content of a theme by *continuity* may well be described as being the course of the narrative from incident to incident, from situation to situation, from mood to mood. Further, continuity may be said to be the psychological guidance of the mind of the audience to the different threads of the developing action of the thematic narrative. The continuity of a film is quite independent of the æsthetic value of any one scene. The development of the theme must be continuous. Not for one moment during the showing of a film can continuity possibly become exhausted. Although, as will be seen, actual time continuity may be suspended for the purpose of including shots of comparison, for parallel action or for reference to a scene that has gone before (so as to heighten the effect of the central theme), the continuity of the film continues to flow forward without cessation.

There exists no definite rule or form of control as to the order of appearance of visual images on the screen, save the principles of constructive editing and cutting. The importance of the last shot of a film may well depend upon the image seen in the three-hundred-and-forty-fifth shot. There is nothing but the mind of the director-scenarist to put the shots in their right place and in their most effective order of showing. This is preconceived in the manuscript and takes material form in the final assembling work. It is a generally accepted fact that David Wark Griffith originally determined that the development of incident need not necessarily be unfolded in the chronological order of happening. Continuity may be compared to the unfolding of a plot of a novel. A close analogy is to be found, in particular, in the style of Conrad. Generally speaking, however, the change from one sequence to another is intended to indicate to the audience the progress of the plot of the narrative, though this can by no means be taken as a hard and fast rule. The arrangement of the order in which sequences are shown depends entirely on constructive editing.

[1] In passing comment, there is little doubt that the weak spot in the British film industry is the inefficient organisation of scenarios.

The length of each shot (*i.e.*, the duration of time that it will be held on the screen until cut or faded into the succeeding shot) may be taken approximately as varying from one-quarter of a second for five frames of film (three and three-quarters of an inch) to twenty seconds for four hundred frames (twenty-five feet). The time length of shots should be roughly indicated in the scenario-plan, such estimates naturally being based on observation, since the time length of every shot is controlled by the mood of the dramatic content of the scene in question. This variation in time length of a shot is the basis of the rhythmic cutting, and such familiar processes as short, long, and medium cutting are governed entirely by the required mood. It may be well to add that this method assumes individual acting to be of secondary importance; primary consideration being given to achieving effect by image montage. Where acting is the only means of conveying the mood of a scene, a shot may be held on the screen for a considerable length of time, thus becoming akin to the stage. This, of course, is the predominant characteristic of the dialogue film, where images are controlled by speech.

The continuity of time in the theme of all films is that of filmic and not actually recorded time. That is to say, the imagination of the spectator is very largely brought into play in the acceptance of the narrative from incident to incident.

The differentiation between filmic time and actual time constitutes the whole basis of cinematic representation. When it is grasped that the formation of a scene or situation in a film is purely a matter of the constructive editing of visual images, then it will be seen that the film director creates his own time, as well as his own space. A scene is built up from a series of separate shots, taken from various angles, and, with the pieces of celluloid on which the shots are recorded, the director constructs the scene as it will appear on the screen. The very fact that the scene has been composed from various separate shots proves that it is not a direct record of the actual, and is therefore alien to the stage. The material with which the film director works is not real in the sense that it is actually recorded time or space, but is a number of pieces of celluloid on which real actions have been recorded. By altering the relations of these strips, filmic time is constructed. It will be remarked that between an actual event and the *filmic representation* of that event on the screen there is a wide difference; the camera, at the director or scenarist's bidding,

picks out only such significant portions of the event as are necessary for its screen representation. This, in other words, refers back to the scenarist's selection of the best visual images for the expression of a scene. Suggested by the scenarist, recorded by the camera, created by the director in editing, there comes into being an element peculiar to the cinema – filmic time. This filmic time is controlled entirely by the three composers of the film manuscript. Further, it is clear that every situation in a narrative is characterised not only by its duration of time, but also by the space in which it takes place. It is perfectly possible for the ingredients of a scene to be taken by the camera in several places remote from one another, but when that scene is filmically composed, the various places will appear to be one and the same.[1] By editing, preconceived in the film manuscript, there will have been created filmic space as well as filmic time.

Thus, the material from which a film is built consists of photographic images of persons, objects, and structures, either static or in motion, which can be assembled in whatever manner the scenarist likes, in order to express his theme. The elements of real persons, objects, and structures, with their temporal and spatial conditions, are recorded photographically, to be altered according to the desire of the scenarist by the filmic process of editing. Actual time becomes filmic time; actual space becomes filmic space; actual reality becomes, on the screen, filmic reality. To quote Pudovkin: 'The film assembles the elements of reality to build from them a new reality proper to itself; and the laws of space and time that, in the sets and footage of the stage are fixed and fast, are in the film entirely altered.' (*Pudovkin on Film Technique*, Gollancz, 1929.) Thus it will appear that filmic space and filmic time are the principles that primarily govern the continuity of the scenario beyond narrative interest.

In the construction of continuity, it is of interest to examine various methods of bridging a lapse of filmic time between the end of one sequence and the beginning of the next. There are several known methods of suggesting or representing this passing of time, the most usual being the fade-in and the fade-out. The former represents a dark screen, upon which the visual image gradually assumes shape; the latter is the reverse process. It is common to end a sequence with a fade, indicating a slow, restful departure; the screen remaining dark until the first image of the succeeding scene

[1] Cf. Ermler's *Fragment of an Empire*, page 172.

is introduced. The speed of the fade is naturally controlled by the mood of the scene upon which it opens or closes. Another process is the dissolve or chemical mix.[1] This may be said to be the gradual fading of one image into another by the process of overlapping, so that the forms of the last shot of one sequence become lost in the emerging forms of the first shot of the next. It would be possible, for example, to dissolve from a long shot of an object into a medium shot and from the medium shot into a close up. This method of approach (or retreat) can be very beautiful, and I would give as an instance the opening sequence of *The Heir to Jenghiz Khan*. It is not uncommon for the dissolve to be centred on a form of some object or person common to both sequences, so that the bridging is less harsh to the eye. This is a use of the association of like shapes. It is permissible, for example, to dissolve from a person dressed in sports clothes sitting on a chair, to the same person wearing evening clothes sitting in an identical position in another chair in a fresh environment. A definite lapse of time and change of sequence is conveyed simply and restfully to the spectator in such a way. A dissolve is never harsh or exciting. Its mood is smooth and harmonious to the eye, involving a slow rhythm. It causes an instantaneous *mental* dissolve in the mind of the spectator. This has been very well described as the momentary condensation of a train of thought into another that has yet to serve its purpose. The aim of the dissolve is to associate the old with the new in the mind of the audience.

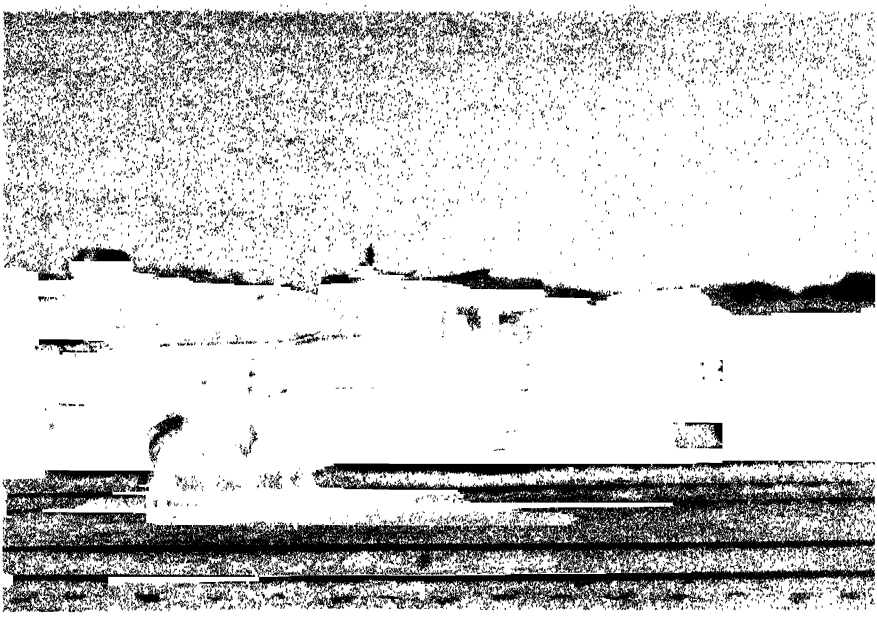
The customary method of dissolving has been explained as the gradual fading of one pictorial composition into another, but it has been rightly suggested that a process of rapid de-focus, cut, re-focus, from one sequence to another would be more harmonious both to the mind and to the eye. This would be the association between the latent thought of the one sequence and the symbolism of the visual imagery of the sequence about to appear on the screen. (Mr. L. Saalschutz writing in *Close Up*, July 1929.) With this in mind, I would refer to a scene in a film edited by Pudovkin, *The Living Corpse*, where an experiment was made in using both dissolves and direct cutting as a means of expressing the content of a scene. A company of gipsy girls was dancing to the music of a band of guitars and mandolins.

[1] See glossary in Appendix II for strict differentiation between a dissolve and a chemical mix.

Pudovkin took a number of short flashes of the girls dancing, cutting direct from one flash to another. He interspersed these with some double-exposure shots of hands plucking at the strings of the instruments, but dissolved from one shot into another instead of directly cutting. This meant that when flashes of human movement were being shown, it was permissible to *cut* from flash to flash, since the mood was that of dancing; but when flashes of the musical instruments being played were in question, the mood was melodic and hence the *dissolve* was more suitable than the cut, for the latter would be antagonistic to such a mood. It would not have been æsthetically possible to cut visually from sound to sound, so the smoothness of the dissolve was required. A rhythmic combination of these two types of changing shots produced its own music in the imagination of the spectator.

Other technical methods for bridging the lapse of time are the employment of a written title, a direct cut from one scene to another, or by the rare method of drawing the visual image itself across the screen and following it with the next. This latter form was well seen in Cavalcanti's *Rien que les Heures*. Titles employed for the purpose of connecting sequences are, as would be supposed, usually termed continuity titles. Their purpose is to give the audience an explanation, a connecting link between one situation and another, simply but effectively. There are also many familiar literary devices, usually symbolic, such as those of showing candles burning, calendar dates changing, full bottles dissolving into empty bottles, cigarettes burning in an ashtray, etc., all of which are stock methods that appear again and again, indicating lack of resource on the part of the scenarist. As an example of almost perfect continuity and complete fluidity of development, *The Last Laugh*, with a scenario by Karl Mayer, was outstanding. Other films which can be mentioned in this respect were Henry King's *Tol'able David*, Room's *Bed and Sofa*, and the films of Eisenstein and Pudovkin.

The main continuity development of the theme set down in the first place by the scenarist is, as has already been explained, entirely controlled by the constructive editing. But it is clear that its course may be interrupted by certain episodes and sequences which help to emphasise the whole effect of the content. Certain incidents and scenes may be re-introduced, suspending the actional progress of the main theme in order to explain, perhaps, their appearance at an earlier

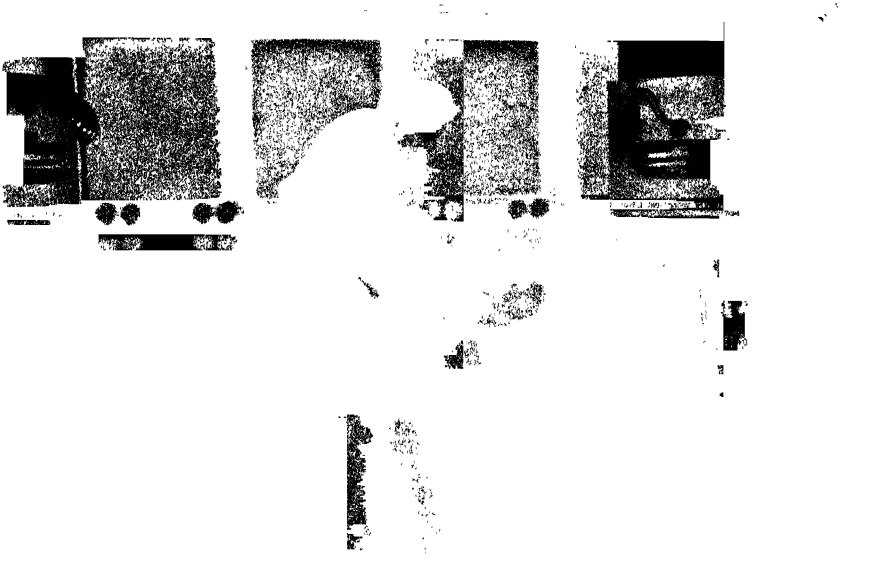


american

paramount

THE VIRGINIAN

directed by Victor Fleming with dialogue. An example of American naturalism of real material 1929



british

british instructional

UNDERGROUND

by Anthony Asquith. The final climactic scene in the power

stage in the continuity. There are various principles of relational development, such as contrast and simile in the association of ideas, which are commonly employed to heighten dramatic tension. The exact meaning of the action taking place in the opening sequence of a film may not be made clear to the audience until the film is half-way through, when a comparison is made by a flash-back. A familiar method also is to emphasise dramatic suspense by means of parallel action. Shots from two different scenes may be shown alternately, though they are both of the same sequence and are developing to the same end. This is a favourite method of drawing a film to an exciting climax. The hero is on the point of being hanged. The riders approach carrying his pardon. Alternate shots are shown of each. The suspense as to whether the hero will be saved or not is enhanced by quicker and quicker cutting, until at the moment he is to be dispatched, the pardon arrives. The two sets of shots are mingled into one and all is well. It is to be found in every western film and in such old friends as *The Orphans of the Storm* and *Don Q*.[1] The same effect can be gained equally well by composite shots on the same screen.

From this it is but a step to the various other forms of interrupted development of the theme by means of shots, or even whole sequences, for the purposes of comparison, either for direct contrast or for simile. It must, however, be clearly understood that although these methods of comparison cause the suspense of filmic time continuity in order to heighten dramatic effect, the continuity of the development of the film itself still progresses.

Many examples of direct similes occur in the work of the Soviet directors and in the early films of Griffith.[2] Pudovkin is fond of building an effect by comparing the content of a scene to some object or person quite irrelevant to the narrative except symbolically. A scene of love and happiness, for instance, is interspersed with quick flashes of Sèvres porcelain groups of shepherds and shepherdesses, symbolic of the lightness and fragility of the love *mood* of the scene. In direct contrast, some shots of waving trees and sunlit country are cut in with a scene of combat and turmoil. Time continuity for the moment is interrupted, the dramatic effect of the combat is

[1] Cf. page 88 *et seq.*, 'The last-minute-rescue.'

[2] Elliott's *Anatomy of Motion Picture Art* analyses the films of Griffith well in this respect.

strengthened, and the actual continuity flows forward. Mention has been made at an earlier stage of Pudovkin's referential editing.[1] It is of point to remember that the drama of a thing lies not so much in the thing itself, as in the comparison of it with other things. An empty room is not so dramatic in itself as the thought of what that room was like before it was empty.

Similarity of content recurring at intervals throughout a film also appears as a form of comparison, but is strictly more connected with the actual plot of the narrative than with the continuity of the development. For instance, the recurrence of the same characters in a similar situation, so well handled in *Bed and Sofa*, was a matter of story construction. The exact balance of the recurring situations was a matter of continuity. The plot demanded that three people shared a room; a husband, his wife, and another man. The sleeping accommodation was confined to one bed and a sofa. In the first part of the film the other man had the sofa; in the middle of the film the situation was reversed; and in the end the problem was solved. There was a nicety about the presentation of the changed situations that suggested careful balance and distribution in the continuity of development.

Firstly, in his treatment and secondly, in his scenario-plan, the scenarist has always to develop his action according to a design of varying degrees of tension. It is this variance in tension, ranging from high, exciting emotions to low, sad, and depressing emotions, that forces the mind of the audience to follow the unfolding of the film with interest. This attraction between the visual images on the screen and the mind of the audience is governed not only by the dramatic situations of the narrative (such as suspense, mystery, explanation) but also by the purely filmic methods of construction, *i.e.*, editing and cutting. The use of crowds, of rapid physical movement, of dramatic situations, is in itself emotionally exciting, but this material is rendered doubly powerful by its filmic representation. Thus, the arrangement of high-spots at suitable intervals throughout a film is determined in the scenario organisation. Sequences of high dramatic emotion (high-spots) must be balanced by sequences of low emotion (low-spots). Exciting incidents are to be modulated by sad incidents. Balance in the design of the film must be preserved in order to establish rhythmic structure. Incidents of varying

[1] Cf. pages 160, 161.

dramatic intensity (or *mood*) must be distributed throughout the film in terms of contrast. High-spots are to be related to low-spots. Emotions are to be aroused in an up-and-down fluidity. Sequences are to be arranged according to their dominants or moods. It is possible to plot a graph of the dominants of a film, showing the inter-relation between the points of high and low emotion. The plotting of the graph of a film may be included as a further stage of scenario montage.

III

THE METHODS OF EXPRESSION OF DRAMATIC CONTENT BY FILM CONSTRUCTION

It is proposed, for the purpose of simplification, to divide the processes by which the dramatic content of the theme of a film is conveyed to an audience into two separate sections. The first will deal with the construction of the silent film by means of visual images on the screen. The second will reason the uses of a combination of sound, dialogue, and visual images on the screen. Although these two processes may be considered as entirely opposite forms of cinema (believing, that is, the dialogue film to be spurious), certain properties are common to each and in places will be found to overlap. For example, although visual images are employed in both cases, basically different ideas lie behind their conception. An intermediary stage has further been added, deliberating on the advantages to be gained from the use of recorded sound (as distinct from the recorded voice) as a resource of filmic exposition.

Although æsthetic principles render the silent film, reasonably reinforced by symbolic sound accompaniment, the only acceptable form of cinema, it is not to be denied that the dialogue film as seen and heard to-day is a low form of cinema, its novelty and freakishness being commercially lucrative to American and British producers, and to those continental firms which take the same outlook. Beyond this, there must be visualised in the near future the stereoscopic and wider screen, the colour film, and the projection of coloured slides or secondary films on to the walls and ceiling of the theatre, all in combination with synchronised dialogue and sound, in an effort to establish what has been called the compound cinema. That these mechanical 'developments' will come into general use there is little doubt, and in all probability they will be supported by a certain section of the community who applaud novelty entertainment. I am equally certain, however, that these new forms will never destroy

the original and highest form of cinema, the silent, flat film with synchronised or orchestral accompaniment, which is indisputably the most effective medium for the conveyance of the dramatic content of a theme to the mind of an audience.

Examination may first be made, then, of the visual cinema.

(I) The Process of the Visual Cinema

The silent film, in developing the continuity or progress of a theme, attains dramatic effect on an audience by a series of visual images on the screen. Long shots and close ups, straight views and angular views, combine to demonstrate the character of the content of the theme. Only those images which have a definite bearing on this content are shown, and these are represented by means of carefully selected photographic angles, wholly or partially pre-conceived and indicated in the scenario-plan. The greatest possible emotional effect can be achieved in the smallest amount of time by the arrangement of these visual images, the selection of which is governed by various principles of image montage. This arrangement is also included in the scenario-plan, being carried out in the final act of assemblage. Complete freedom may be exercised in the choice of photographic angles and in the length of the shot (*i.e.*, its number of frames). A film is not, by any stretch of imagination, a mere succession of scenes taken at random, which can be described either singly or consecutively. Rather it is the relation, inter-relation and juxta-position of these varying lengths of scene which, when combined into a whole, produce filmic effect.

Further analysis of these methods of expression of a theme may be divided into five sections, a sixth being added to consider the advantages, if any, to be derived from the stereoscopic screen and colour film. These sections can be described thus:

(*a*) *Film Psychology*, being the expression of inner reality by outward phenomena.

(*b*) *The Expressive Capabilities of the Camera.*

(*c*) *The Pictorial Composition of Visual Images.*

(*d*) *Constructive Editing and Cutting.*

(*e*) *Titles*, and the placing thereof.

(*f*) *The Visual Addition of Colour* and the *Stereoscopic Screen.*

(*a*) *Film Psychology*

The dramatic content of a fiction or semi-fiction film may be described as being the psychological reactions and emotions of the characters in a theme, resulting from narrative situations which arise from the actions of the characters themselves or other material incidents.

The inner reality of the characters, their thoughts, desires, lusts, and emotions, is revealed by their outward actions. It is, furthermore, these outward phenomena which the camera photographs in order to recreate and transfer to the mind of the audience the inner reality of the characters in the theme. It is by the subtle arrangement of the visual images (*i.e.*, the editing) which photographically record these phenomena that the dramatic content is conveyed clearly to the audience. The camera itself is unable to penetrate the world before it, but the creative mind of the director can reveal in his *selection* of the visual images this intrinsic essence of life by using the basic resources of the cinema, *viz.*, editing, angle, pictorial composition, suggestion, symbolism, etc. And, in particular, it is the camera's remarkable faculty for the representation of detail that makes it possible to build up situations and events by putting their exact ingredients before the audience. Guided by the mind of the scenarist and the director, the camera eliminates from the screen everything but material absolutely significant to the exposition of the dramatic content of the theme. Every visual image on the screen registers an impression on the minds of the audience, as also do the intervals that exist between the visual images, and out of a moving series of impressions is the whole effect composed. Hence, the complete attention of the audience lies at the director's will, and, therefore, in actuality the camera is the mind of the spectator. In this respect, there will be noticed the relevance of the Dziga-Vertov theory of the cine-eye.[1]

It is not unnatural then that the principles of psycho-analysis play a large part in the conveyance of dramatic content to the audience. It will be shown later, for example, in dealing with pictorial composition, that the smallest movement on the screen is immediately magnified in importance and becomes at once a source of interest to the spectator. From this it will be realised that the so-called symptomatic actions of Freud, the small, almost unnoticed and insignifi-

[1] Cf. pages 66, 167 *et*

cant actions of behaviour on the part of a person, are highly indicative of the state of his mind, and are of the utmost value, when magnified on the screen, for establishing an understanding of that state of mind in the audience. For this reason alone, it will be seen how essential it is for a film player to be his natural self, and how detrimental theatrical acting is to film purposes. It is the duty of the director to reveal the natural characteristics of his players and to build these, by means of editing, into a filmic exposition of a personality, as required by the scenario. That is why, when approached from this point of view, the use of actual types is generally consi[illegible] preferable to professional actors, a method of working adopted by the naturalistic directors. (Eisenstein, [illegible]udovkin, Flaherty, [illegible]urin, and Epstein in his later period.)

Moreover, there is no limit to the depth of cinematic introspection. There is no state of mind which cannot be fully revealed by the resources of the film. The expression of such content may be said to be governed by the location of the camera when the shot is taken; and the relation between the length of this shot (when shown on the screen) and that of the other shots which make up the whole sequence, and finally the film as a unity. It should be remembered also that both these two factors have been preconceived in the scenario-plan.

Added to which, there is to be considered the very important part played by the presence of objects and things in the construction of a scene. An object in itself is an immensely expressive thing. It will possibly be symbolic. For instance, an aeroplane or a motor-car is immediately suggestive of speed; a rifle or gun of death; and so on. By reason of the camera's capacity for bringing detail to the attention of the audience, inanimate objects assume a dramatic significance in the establishment of mood. Their use is, of course, controlled by the editing. (Recall the Sèvres figures in *The Living Corpse*; the dirt and litter in *Greed*; the gallery of gods and the detail of architecture in *October*.) The film, more so than any other medium, forces the spectator to realise the consciousness of the inanimate.

It is, therefore, the mood or tension of a scene created by the characters which is to be transferred to the audience, or better still, in which the audience itself is going to participate. The existence and emphasis of this mood is established by the natural resources of the film.

Emphasis of mood is to be gained largely by contrast of light

and of space, by angle, by symbolism, and by indirect suggestion. A remarkable example of the contrast of space was to be found in *Bed and Sofa*. The story was placed in Moscow at the time when there was extreme shortage of housing accommodation. Out of this state of affairs and rendered possible by them, arose the story. It was necessary, therefore, to emphasise this shortage of room throughout the film, in order to substantiate the incidents of the story. Most of the action took place in a small room, too cramped for two let alone three persons. But the atmosphere of this confined space was not to be achieved only by shots of the litter and discomfort in the room itself. One of the three persons went out to work. He was seen working on the top of the roof of the Opera House, surrounded on all sides by space. The width and breadth of the sky provided a powerful contrast to the small room, where the three fell over each other in an effort to keep out of the way. The director in this film took advantage of natural circumstances to emphasise the content of his film, and to render it logical to the audience.

As already indicated, a dramatic feeling of uncertainty, of perhaps slight fear, is to be obtained by emptiness. Long, deliberate shots of an empty room or corridor, after there has been a sustained sequence of vigorous, highly emotional action, produce a strong suggestion of tense atmosphere. Contrast of light and shade accentuates the mood of such a scene. In *The Joyless Street*, in a room lit only by the feeble rays of light filtering through the slats of a venetian blind, the presence of the murdered man was at once established although no corpse was to be seen. Atmosphere was conveyed by contrasted light; the mood of the dramatic content was achieved by indirect suggestion. Many similar scenes appeared in *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, and, of course, in the often quoted opening sequence in Karl Grune's *The Street*.

Throughout the course of Feyder's *Thérèse Raquin*, the audience was aware of the content of the narrative by subtle indirect suggestion. *Thérèse* went to see her lover *Laurent* in his studio. She leaned back on the couch; he sat brooding at her feet; the scene was charged with tension. On the wall behind them were pinned carelessly some of his drawings from the life, such sketches as are found lying about in so many artists' studios. There was nothing uncommon in their presence. But their meaning, although the direct effect on the spectator may have been unconscious, showed clearly the sexual

reason for the meetings of these two. It was an example of the use of the incidental to reinforce the general, instigated by the intelligence of the director. In *Greed*, the central theme was the demonstration of the horror of a human being's intense passion for gold. This was emphasised by the presence of gold in every detail throughout the film. From the grinding mill in the opening sequence, to the bars of the canary cage, the teeth stoppings and the gilt picture frames, the keynote of the film was gold. Unfortunately, in this case, it was over-emphasised by the use of part colorisation, causing the effect to be blatant.

It is then, by the flicker of an eyelash, the dropping of a cigarette end, the relation of one thing to another, the association of ideas and objects, that mood partially is suggested, emphasised and made apparent.

(*b*) *The Expressive Capabilities of the Camera*

The capabilities of the camera as an instrument of expression are almost unlimited. There exists practically no object or person that cannot be photographed. The appeal of the film lies in a transient series of visual images, presented to the eye on a screen flooded with light in a darkened place. The camera is the actual medium, the eye through which all movement and all phenomena are captured. The camera swings here and there, catching unseen incidents and unnoticed aspects of life. This was well instanced by the cine-eye methods in *The Man with the Camera*. Flowers are observed to bloom; insects to crawl; birds to fly. Every movement, however fast or slow, in every direction, is recorded by the camera's eye. It noses into every corner, ferrets out information, returns to a normal position, and suddenly swings round on its own axis to observe the fresh movement of another person.

The camera as an instrument of expression in itself may be considered from four aspects: (*a*) the position of the camera and consequently the angle from which the shot is taken; (*b*) its power of distortion and of duplicating movement; (*c*) the movement of the camera in order to include other objects in its range, without change of scene by cutting and without movement of the actual position; (*d*) the mobility of the camera in that it approaches, retreats or encircles the object that it is photographing.

In the early days of the cinema all shots were taken from a standard

distance away from the object, the influence of the stage still being uppermost in the mind of the director. It was deemed impossible to show a portion of a person on the screen. The actors were made to remain discreetly in the background, and gestured into the camera, adjusting themselves to it, as it were, and being extremely conscious of its presence. Griffith is claimed to have been the first director to have broken down this barrier, being rightly convinced in his own mind that facial expression was the all-powerful interpretation of the thoughts in the actor's mind for the purposes of film drama. This, as is well known, led to the introduction of the close up, an element which altered the whole conception and outlook of the film. It was not until much later, however, that the real use of the close up was appreciated, not so much for the dramatic expression on an actor's face as for the fact that it was a form of emphasis. Close ups of objects and things became as important as the close ups of a face. It was the idea of using the close up to draw attention to a certain object that first threw a new light on film direction. An early instance of this was the shot of the galloping hooves of the horses cut in with shots of the riders themselves in the 'last-minute-rescue' of *The Birth of a Nation*.[1]

It was not until after the war, however, that Germany realised that practically anything, when lit from the right source, was more dramatic if taken from a position different to the usual eye-level. From that day onwards the camera developed its independence, to be used rightly by a few directors for the strict emphasis of mood and wrongly by many for the sake of sheer virtuosity. Even now, there are lamentably few directors who have any real knowledge of the use of camera angle, of when and how to employ it in order to achieve dramatic effect. Of those few, so that reference can be made to their work, mention may be made of Pabst, Pudovkin, Eisenstein, Feyder, Clair, and Dreyer.

The first capability of the camera to be recognised, beyond the obvious fact of its taking the picture, is its power of distortion. Camera distortion is significant, for, by the very fact of throwing the pictorial composition of a scene out of perspective, it emphasises the mood of that scene. The angle from which a shot is taken must be controlled by the image that is being visualised and *not by the position of the camera*. The mood of the shot determines the position

[1] *Vide*, R. P. Messel's *This Film Business*, p. 92 (Benn, 1929).

of the camera; not the artistic mind of a director who thinks the set would look well if taken from the ceiling. The examples of misuse of camera angle, both for freakish and exotic reasons, are countless, and can only be compared to the abuse of the camera's own movements. They are present in nearly every American and British film. There is, moreover, little excuse for the use of freak camera angles. The choice of an angle cannot be a disputed point or even a matter of opinion. Provided the mood of an image and its connection with the sequence is clearly indicated by the scenario-plan, there is only *one* position in which the camera can be placed in order to render that shot most expressive of the mood required.

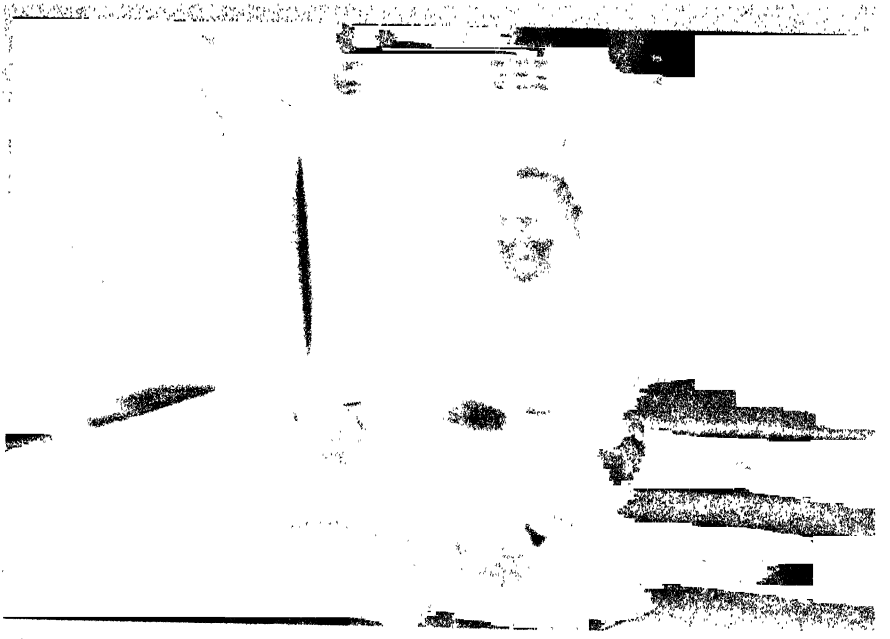
The camera, moreover, possesses the faculty of concentrating the eye of the spectator on some important detail on the screen, by narrowing down the field of vision on to the centre of interest. An old method was to mask over gradually the whole screen with the exception of one particular detail; or to begin a sequence by the iris-in method, starting on the most important object in the composition. This was freely used in *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* and *Doctor Mabuse*, and other early films. Camera mobility and the recognition of the values of cutting have disposed of these methods, which were clumsy at their best. It is common now to start a sequence on a close up of some small object, the camera travelling away from it, round the set, finally picking up the chief source of interest. Hoffmann exploited this idea in *Nina Petrovna* until it became wearisome and smacked of virtuosity.

There are various properties of the camera, apart from the matter of its position, which are valuable for the emphasis of dramatic mood. The device of throwing a scene deliberately out of focus in order to denote the misty state of mind of a character (and, of course, the audience) is familiar. I have previously mentioned that several effects of photographing through mica masks have also been attempted with successful results. In American films the employment of gauzes for softening the effect of lighting is not generally used so much with the desire to emphasise the mood of the scene as to make it look pretty. It is an offensive habit, and is to be found chiefly in sentimental films of the calibre of *Seventh Heaven*. It was an unfortunate feature, also, of *The Wedding March*, but there at least it was used to create atmosphere. The use of mirrors is also known,

being seen at its best in Metzner's *Überfall*, for the brilliant representation of a man's subconscious thoughts.

Another form of pure cinematic resource is the projection of negative film on to the screen, which gives an effect of reversed values to the ordinary projection of positive. Instead of the screen image being in terms of black on white, the result is white on black. This was well used by Murnau in the rare version of *Dracula*, in order to convey the macabre atmosphere of the dark woods surrounding the Count's castle. A curious feeling of lifelessness is obtained by the use of negative in this way, due probably to the suggestion of the skeletons of the objects being photographed. Its effect in the case cited above was sinister; the gaunt, white branches of trees standing out in a ghostly manner against the black sky. It is a camera device frequently used by the French experimentalists, and in particular I recall it in *A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles*, *La Marche des Machines*, and *Le Mystère du Château de Dé*. In *Dracula*, also, was found the use of one-turn – one-picture, a device which produced an effect of erratic, jerky movement, giving the phantom coach a bizarre appearance as it moved through the woods.

Other devices of the camera connected with movement but expressive of mood are slow-motion, ultra-rapid motion, and the abrupt cessation of movement. Slow-motion is often to be seen employed in topical films to reveal the graceful actions of athletes and racehorses. Its place in dramatic themes is more interesting. Perhaps the best example was the opening sequence of Dovjenko's *Zvenigora*, a scene which showed a band of cossack brigands riding through some luxuriously foliaged countryside. Slow-motion was used during the scene, the effect being peculiarly beautiful as well as suggestive of the laziness, heat, and dust of the afternoon. It had also the asset of deliberately concentrating the attention of the spectator on the slowly moving horsemen, with their graceful, fascinating actions. Fairbanks has employed slow-motion in order to give his leaps and bounds added grace (in *Don Q*), but this can hardly be classed as emphasis of mood. Ultra-rapid motion and the abrupt cessation of movement, producing a petrified effect, have been well used in some Soviet comedies (*e.g.* Barnet's *House in Trubnaya Square*). For the extraordinary effects obtainable by cessation of movement, one remembers in particular Dovjenko's film, *Arsenal*, where its use was intensely emotional. It will be appreciated that



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EN RADE

by Alberto Cavalcanti, with Catherine Hessling. *1928*

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THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

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the effects of these devices cannot well be described in words. They are utterly cinematic in texture.

Having considered the expressive properties of the camera at rest, it is permissible to examine the capabilities of the camera in movement. The mobility of the camera is an important factor in filmic representation that has only come to be used to its full capacity during recent years. But no sooner has the camera achieved its independence than it is again curbed by the advent of the dialogue film, which demands that the instrument be enclosed in a booth or box of some considerable dimensions, seriously limiting its power of movement. Some experiments are being made to remedy this by enveloping the camera in a velvet cloak to keep out sound, but there is no question that the dialogue film has thrown the recently liberated camera back once more into slavery. Karl Hoffmann's lament: 'Poor camera, alas, no more of your graceful movements, no more of your happy-go-lucky shifts? Are you again condemned to the same bondage and chains which you commenced breaking ten years ago?'[1] is a stab at the dominant commercialism of the American dialogue cinema.

At the time of the production of the first dialogue film, the camera had just established its freedom. It must be put on record, also, that the *principal* developments in the capabilities of the camera took place in Germany, despite claims to the contrary by smart American film writers. Practically every photographic device which is used to emphasise the dramatic power of a theme saw its origin in German studios. It was Fritz Arno Wagner, Karl Freund, Karl Hoffmann, Gunthur Rittau, Guido Seeber, Gunthur Krampf, and their *confrères* who gave the camera its independence from the hampering tripod. Assisted by her unlimited finance and unparalleled capacity for annexing any new development, Hollywood exploited this freedom of the camera without any regard to its limits or correct uses. It is seldom that camera mobility is used for any purpose other than sheer virtuosity in American movies.

Camera mobility is completely justified in any direction and at any speed so long as the reason for its movement is expression and heightening of the dramatic content of the theme. Its motion can be forward and backward, from side to side, or up and down. It can

[1] 'Camera Problems.' Karl Hoffmann. *Close Up*. July 1929. Hoffmann photographed, among other films, *Siegfried*, *Nina Petrovna*, *Doctor Mabuse*, *Looping the Loop*, and *The Hungarian Rhapsody*.

move horizontally, perpendicularly, diagonally, circularly and in combinations of these actions in curved or straight movements. In *Jeanne Ney*, Wagner's camera was in motion practically throughout the film. So strongly was the dramatic content brought out, however, that the spectator was scarcely conscious of the movement. In Paramount's *Forgotten Faces*, a camera took flights round a room whilst a hold-up raid was in progress. A fine view of the wallpaper was obtained, but the drama of the scene was non-existent. The same applied to certain shots in Vidor's *The Crowd*. In such wise must sheer artistry be distinguished from shallow technical accomplishment.

Many instances of correctly used camera motion occurred in *Moana*, where the camera swung to follow the swaying movement of a tree; in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, where the quick, pulsating, backward and forward motion denoted the hesitant trepidation in *Jeanne's* mind; and in *Metropolis*, where a similar movement followed the hammer of the great gong calling the workers together.

Obviously, the dimensions of the material forming the pictorial composition on the screen change in relation to the movement of the camera; but it must always be uppermost in the mind that the material governs the motion of the camera. Furthermore, there is a close relationship between the movement of the camera and camera angle, both being controlled by the mood of the material being photographed. All the properties of the camera itself, such as slow-motion and masks, as well as camera angle, which have been considered previously, have direct bearing on camera mobility. It should be remembered that the camera can approach an object from a low angle, gradually rising as it gets nearer, at the same time altering its course; arrive at the object and encircle it; and photograph the whole time in slow-motion. Each of these movements is justified, if it is emphasising the mood of the object and its bearing on the dramatic content of the theme.

As has been made clear, the expressive powers of the camera may be considered from four points of view; the first two with the camera at rest, the last two with the camera in movement. It is necessary, therefore, to differentiate between the two forms of movement. The first is that in which the camera position does not change, but the camera itself swings either laterally or vertically, to include fresh objects in its range. The second is that in which the camera moves

its position as a whole in order to approach or to retreat from the object being photographed.

The first of these actions, when the camera pivots on its own axis laterally or moves in an up-and-down motion, is generally termed *panning*, the obvious reason being that this action produces on the screen a panoramic view of the set or location in which the camera is placed. Its customary use is to connect two persons or things on the screen which are some distance apart, without entailing a separate shot. The movement must necessarily be fairly slow if it is not to offend the eyes of the audience, and hence it will be apparent that panning from a person standing at one side of a table to a person at the other, takes a greater length of time than would a direct cut from one visual image to another. A pan shot tends to slow down the action of a scene; cutting tends to quicken the pace. The only clue as to whether panning or cutting should be used in a certain concatenation of shots lies in the mood of the scene. If the nature of the latter is to be quick and staccato, then panning will be useless to convey this tempo, cutting being the desirable method. If, on the other hand, the action is slow, dragging, and sad, panning slowly from one person or object to another will produce the required emphasis of mood. Like every other form of camera movement, panning is justified only by the mood of the scene being represented. These remarks apply equally to the perpendicular form of panning, which is more rarely used than the lateral. Both the merits and demerits of panning were apparent in Werner Brandes's camerawork, at Dupont's direction, in *Piccadilly*. Several highly dramatic moments in this film lost their effect on the audience because the camera dawdled in its panning, in the very place where direct, quick cutting should have been used. It may be added that the technical accomplishment of the camerawork in this film was of a high standard and it was regrettable that it should have been misused.

The movement of the camera as a whole, in approach to or in retreat from the material being taken, is usually known as a *rolling* or *travelling* shot, or simply as *tracking*. Actually, the camera is mounted on a trolley or a camera tricycle, which enables it to be moved forward or backward or in an arc, as desired. Various apparatus attached to the tricycle permit the camera to pan at the same time as it is moving across the ground; thus almost any form of movement in any direction is attainable.

Great care should be exercised by the director in the use of a travelling shot, for the movement is apt to make the audience conscious of the camera's presence, *which is absolutely undesirable.* The shot should always be seen on the screen with the camera in motion the whole time, and not, as is usual, with the camera first at rest and then in movement. This beginning (or ending) of movement immediately makes the spectator conscious of the camera. There were many instances of both good and bad travelling camerawork in *The Patriot*, where the audience was never quite sure if it was intended to be the camera (which was also Herr Jannings) moving through the palatial corridors of Paramount Palace, or whether it was just an onlooker who trailed after Herr Jannings as he wandered about in a half-witted absent-mindedness, in order to show the audience the artistic reconstruction of Imperialist Russia (Hollywood version).

This problem inevitably raises the complicated question of camera personification. Is the camera (as Chaplin insists) to be used as an unconscious observer, a hidden eye, or is the camera to take on the viewpoint of a character in the theme? When the camera moves across the room and ends in a close up of a picture on the wall, is the audience to understand that it has itself moved across the room and is looking at the picture; or that the camera is personifying one of the characters going across the room; or yet again, that the camera may have followed an actor across the room, looking over his shoulder. This is a problem on which each director has (or should have) his own or somebody else's theory. Actually, it can only be settled by the dramatic content of the scene once more. Camera personification is to be used in certain shots where the dramatic content (according to the director) demands its use without the risk of the audience becoming camera-conscious. It is justified, for example, where the screen is showing the thoughts of a character in order to explain his actions. In most cases, however, it is preferable to adopt the unseen eye theory, and therefore assume that the camera is able to see anything anywhere without hindrance.

(*c*) *The Pictorial Composition of Visual Images*

In considering the problem of the pictorial composition of visual images seen on the screen, it should be remembered that a scene is

only photographic in its reproduction. That is to say, a certain arrangement and composition is necessary before an object or group of objects or persons, as the case may be, can be photographed. This arrangement (which is in the hands of the director and *not* in those of the 'art-director,' as is commonly believed) can only take place in the studio or on location, when the material is capable of being actually composed. It can, however, and should be indicated by the draughtsmanship in the scenario-plan. In cases where real material of landscapes is used, it is the task of the director to compose much in the same way as does a painter. It is as well to recall, in this respect, the creation of filmic space made possible by constructive editing. Although the principles of linear design that are generally accepted in regard to static composition in paintings and drawings do not strictly apply to the cinema (where the material is in almost constant motion), they are nevertheless invaluable in filmic composition for presenting forms, not only in a pleasant manner to the eye, but for purposes of insinuation and suggestion in the expression of dramatic content.

When a film is projected in a cinema, the visual image on the screen represents a rectangular space which the camera has isolated from all other possible points of view. Objects and persons within the limits of this picture plane (formed by the four sides of the screen) should be composed harmoniously so that balance and design are maintained. Irrelevant matter is to be discarded and the remaining important material is to be arranged with regard to its significance, as demanded by the dramatic content of the scene. As with a static composition, little things should be employed to lead the eye of the spectator to big things. Attention should be drawn to the significant object or person on the screen by the linear design of the composition, as well as by contrast in lighting. This is of particular importance in the conception and designing of studio settings, for the leading lines of a set should emphasise and support the dramatic content of the action taking place in it. *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* was an object-lesson of this co-operation between the film architect and the director.

Relation between the pictorial composition of visual images and the dramatic content that the scene carries must in all cases be insisted upon. There is a definite connection between the form of the composition and the dramatic content of the scene. Pictorial

composition in the film connotes the maintenance of a balanced composition that is both in constant motion and in constant connection with the ever-changing dramatic content of the theme. Just as continuity has to be sustained in the concatenation of shots and sequences, so has the balance of pictorial composition to remain in constant harmony.

Paradoxically enough, although it should be the aim for the visual image to be beautiful in design, nevertheless that design should never be allowed to dominate the dramatic content of the image. It should always be remembered that a single visual image is but one of the great number which compose the whole filmic pattern; and that effect is not gained by *one* shot but by a *combination* of shots. A visual image is present on the screen primarily to express a meaning; the quality of that expression is aided by the design of the pictorial composition of the image. It will be recalled that the damning fault of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* was, strangely enough, the beauty of the visual images, which were so pleasing in themselves that they were detrimental to the expression of the theme. In other words, I remember *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* as a series of very beautiful compositions, but not as a film.

When one separate visual image is seen on the screen there is usually movement present in some form, either of one or several objects or persons, taking place at the same time or in rotation. There are cases, however, when a series of purely static compositions succeed one another in order to build up a solid atmospheric or psychological effect.[1] In these instances, the common rules of two-dimensional linear design govern the visual composition; whilst their order of appearance on the screen is a matter of assembling indicated by the desired mood.

The attention of the spectator is drawn to the meaning of the dramatic content of a theme principally by movement and contrast of light and shade. It is common knowledge that a moving object is apprehended by the eye very much quicker than a stationary one. In a scene of complete rest, a single small movement immediately attracts the attention of the spectator. Interest is at once aroused in the mind as to *why* the movement is taking place, *what* is its direction

[1] Refer to section of this chapter dealing with constructive editing and cutting, and note examples cited in *The Living Corpse*, *Camille*, *October*, *New Babylon*, etc. A series of static landscapes is also a favourite method of opening a film, *e.g. The Heir to Jenghiz Khan*, *Turksib*, and *A Cottage on Dartmoor*.

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LA PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC

by Karl Dreyer. Mme Falconetti as Jeanne: an instance of natural panchromatic photography, without make-up. 1928

soviet — mejrabpom-russ

THE HEIR TO JENGHIZ KHAN

called also 'Storm Over Asia,' Pudovkin's film of natural, raw material, flippantly referred to as a 'western.' 1927-28

and speed, and what *bearing* has it or will it have on the other objects in sight or whose presence is known? When we realise that the spectators are focussing their whole attention on a rectangular space, placed in the most advantageous position and the only conspicuous thing in a darkened house, it is obvious that the slightest movement on the part of an object or person on the screen at once compels the spectators to watch it, fascinated by curiosity as to what is about to happen.

The movement of the acting material that makes up pictorial composition has been likened to the movement of the ballet. The ballet demands simplified physical movement, both in balance and in contrast. A dancer's first knowledge is that of rhythm. Rhythmic movement of gestures is essential in the maintenance of the harmonious pictorial composition demanded by the film. The ballet has been described as the 'art of flowing movements.' A close analogy is to be found in the cinema.

Perhaps the simplest, and incidentally the most impressive form of movement in pictorial composition is a single repetitive motion. Its limited and monotonous repetition has immediate fascination. The knowledge that the movement can stray no further than its given path holds the mind of the spectator. A typical instance of this can be found in the motion of a crankshaft; a single allotted path which is followed again and again. Confined movement of machinery has been used with great power in many films (*Berlin*, *Pits*, and, of course, *La Marche des Machines*). The constricted course and rhythm of a machine is not only compelling to watch but symbolical, also, of infinite though controlled power.

American movies have become especially notorious for their 'movement.' They certainly contain a great amount of movement of material itself, but there the claim ceases. Fairbanks is the individual hero of the movement school, for his amazing acrobatics charge his films with a sense of speed. Movement is prevalent, too, in all films of chase and pursuit, such as the westerns and the touch-and-run comedies. Movement of this kind is stimulating and invigorating, which accounts for the wide success of such types of film.

In movement of pictorial composition, the eye of the spectator follows the direction of objects or persons in the space bounded by the margins of the screen. Pleasure is obtained by watching the moving objects or persons rhythmically changing their positions in

relation one to another. Simple examples of this abound in the various abstract films of geometrical shapes, such as Sandy's *Light and Shade*.[1]

When there are two or more moving units in a composition, then the relative movements of these units as well as their individual motion have to be considered, either in terms of contrast or symmetrical balance. Two converging streams of movement naturally emphasise the point of convergence. Symmetrical balance may be obtained by circular movement, such as a ring of prisoners walking slowly round a sentry, who is perhaps the centre of the circle, a fact which is stressed by his being placed on the apex of a triangular shadow, which stretches across the prison yard. This example was observed in *Mother*; a similar instance was found, but with lesser effect, in *Vaudeville*. A more complicated form of circular movement was seen in Murnau's *Four Devils*, where the camera itself was moving in an elliptical path following a horse round a circus ring.

Direct lines of movement across the screen are affected by the same principles of two dimensional design. The co-ordinated movements of the crowds in that remarkable film, *The Golem*, have often been cited in this respect. Seen at times through a window, the crowds moved along narrow streets in straight lines and intersected straight lines across the screen. The fact that their direction was restricted and indicated by the walls of the streets added emphasis to their destination and intent. Probably the finest examples of streaming movement on various planes removed from the spectator were to be found in *Battleship 'Potemkin.'* Eisenstein's use of crowd movement is almost too well-known to be quoted again. It is sufficient to recall the procession along the quay, balanced by the movement of the small boat; the townspeople of Odessa when they came in their hundreds to file past the dead body of the sergeant *Waluckchuck*; the scene of the three streams of movement, the crowd passing across the bridge in the distance at the top of the screen, the crowd on the right coming down the steps diagonally, and the crowd in the road in the foreground ; and many shots of simple one-directional movement repeated again and again on the flight of steps. One recalls, also, how Eisenstein achieved co-ordination between pictorial

[1] The value of movement, both simple and complex, is always well seen in absolute films, hence one of the reasons why they should be closely studied by directors, and not dismissed, as is usually the case, as mere 'highbrow' fripperies.

composition and overlapping of movement by cutting (see page 158). It is of passing interest to compare the unforgettable scene on the steps of Odessa with the procession in *Martin Luther*. The comparison shows more clearly than words the value of movement in the hands of an intelligent and competent director.

Repetitive movements on more than one plane were well used in *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* to establish the mood of the fair scene. The units of movement were the two whirling roundabouts placed at the same angle but at different distances from the audience, who were introduced to the scene by a small vignette, the screen gradually lightening in a circular movement to reveal the whole. The isolated vignette of the moving roundabout, however, definitely suggested the nature of the scene, preparing the audience for the more important action that was to follow.

The film is capable of representing movement of material in the most beautiful and stirring manner in order to establish and enhance atmospheric drama. Choosing at random, I remember the wind-swept clouds and the quivering branches of the solitary tree outside the cottage where Kean lay dying, in the film of that name. The storm scene in *The Student of Prague*, when Veidt as *Baldwin* raved into the night to meet his second self at every turn, was filled with the tortured bending of trees, symbolical of the anguish raging in the student's mind. Again, the swaying earheads of corn, the hair of the reapers blowing in the wind, the rhythmic movement of the scythes, and the excited rush to the village at the sound of the bell, suggested the power and movement of nature in *The Peasant Women of Riazan*.

There are plentiful instances, also, of mood being emphasised by contrasted movement in light and shade, the most celebrated being in *The Street*. The bourgeois lay on the sofa in the darkened, motionless room, fascinated by the flickering shadows of the passers-by, indicative of the life and thrill that existed beyond the walls of that dull chamber. The use of light and shade in *Warning Shadows* is too classic to be recapitulated.

In the composition of large, heavy masses on the screen, it is more difficult to maintain balance than in the handling of direct lines of movement. The motion of a large mass may be considered both as an individual action, indicated by the dramatic content, and as a movement which alters the pattern of light and shade of the

whole screen area. These two results of one action must be allowed for in the maintenance of the balance of the whole. The movement of a heavy mass in one portion of the screen immediately produces an unbalanced effect, which must be checked by a reciprocal movement of another mass, or masses, in other parts of the screen composition. Elementary examples of this are again to be found in experimental pattern films, such as those of the late Viking Eggeling. Movement of small masses, particularly when aggravated by light, produces emotions of excitement and action; whereas corresponding slow movements of large masses, notably when in shadow, produce emotions of depression, despair, and sinister dejection. The effect of these movements is heightened and lessened, as the mood of the scene demands, by the speed of the movement. With this in mind, it is significant to recall the effect of Emil Jannings's broad back and Pudovkin's use of sparkling points of light on running water.

Certain properties of the camera, such as the distortion created by angle and concentration, have direct bearing on pictorial composition. These peculiarities of the instrument should be reckoned with in the arrangement of the material being photographed. It has been understood that camera angle is used to emphasise and reveal dramatic content. There is, moreover, a relationship between the choice of angle and the arrangement of the pictorial composition, both of which are governed by the dramatic content of the theme. For example, the opening shot of the film *Blackmail* will be remembered by all. It was a close up, taken directly in elevation, of the hub of a revolving disc-wheel. Circular motion covered the whole screen area. There was little effect of movement. (People have complained since that they thought it was a gramophone disc.) Now this shot was intended to convey the feeling of speed, of the flying squad with which so much of the narrative of the picture was concerned, and the film was begun on this high note presumably to emphasise this. But the shot was ineffectual, for the reason that firstly, there was no contrast to the circular motion of the wheel; and secondly, there was no suspicion of dramatic angle. The shot was taken flat. Had the director pre-visualised the meaning of that shot and its supreme importance as the high-spot beginning, he would surely have taken it from an angle slightly above the wheel, showing the fast-moving tyre on the road as well as the fleeting edge of the curbstone. Thereby, he would have presented two contrasted

movements in the one composition, emphasised by the dramatic position of the camera, which would have immediately suggested speed and its meaning to the tense audience. Compare, for instance, Fritz Lang's tremendously effective opening shot in *The Spy* with the example cited above. The case of the *Blackmail* opening shot was yet another instance of an enthusiastic director getting hold of a good idea, and, in his enthusiasm, failing to extract the utmost possible effect from it. It may be argued that a small shot such as this does not make much difference one way or the other. But these separate shots go to make up the whole, and in this particular case, the shot in question was the keynote to the drama of the important opening sequence. It was imperative for it to have been as effective as possible. It is in these small matters that the work of the greater directors, such as Pabst or Pudovkin, is flawless. Instinctively, they select the most expressive and the most vividly dramatic angle. Once more, it is a question of the wide difference that lies between artistry and virtuosity.

When considering the mobility of the camera, we have found that pictorial composition on the screen changed in relation to the movement of the instrument, and further that the camera's movement was governed by the material being photographed. Obviously, when the camera travels up to an object, the latter increases in size, altering thereby the pictorial composition. The reverse effect takes place when the camera is in retreat. An effect of growth and diminution in size is thus obtained, the whole screen composition altering in proportion.

Conclusion may be made, therefore, that as with other cinematic resources, pictorial composition is controlled by the dramatic content of the scene which it expresses. It will be evident, also, that dramatic effect during this second form of montage (*i.e.*, the assemblage of the material to be photographed) is obtained by the use of movement in pictorial composition and camera position, as well as by camera angle and the consideration of film psychology.

A further point which may be raised in connection with pictorial composition of succeeding visual images on the screen is the unity of light throughout the length of a film. Degrees of light values naturally differ with the nature of the scene, but the quality of light should remain of equal intensity throughout a sequence, unless a change is dramatically indicated, such as by the switching off

of an electric light or the fading rays of the sun. It is common to find that light values differ from shot to shot, which does much to impair the desired effect of emotional completeness. This is sometimes due to the practice of inserting lengths of news-reel for atmospheric effect or for crowd scenes, as well as for purposes of cross-reference by cutting (see, *A Cottage on Dartmoor* and *High Treason*). This practice seriously interferes with the uniform intensity of light, which should be present equally in a long shot and a close up during the same sequence. Powerful emotional effects, on the other hand, can be achieved by the subtle interplay of light values, by increasing and decreasing the intensity in accordance with the dramatic content. (*Thérèse Raquin*, *New Babylon*, *The Old and the New*, and *En Rade* were good examples of this nicety of light expression.)

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Indirectly concerned with pictorial composition is the movement of the screen itself, a function that is as yet only in an experimental stage. From results already obtained, the *magnascope* may be reckoned of greater importance than a mere good advertising trick out of the bottomless box of the American showman. It has been called 'a form of close up,' but although this is hardly correct it is certainly a legitimate form of emphasis. To date, the magnascope has been used in London on four occasions: for the elephant stampede in *Chang* and for the sailing vessels in *Old Ironsides*, both at the Plaza Theatre during 1927; for the exciting aeroplane sequence in *Wings* and for the final desert fight in *The Four Feathers* at the Carlton Theatre in 1928 and 1929, respectively. It may be added that these were Paramount films shown at Paramount theatres, and that the process exhibited was invented by Glen Allvine of the Famous-Players-Lasky Company, which is, of course, the *alter ego* of Paramount. The idea consisted of a supplementary lens on the projector which magnified the scene from the ordinary screen area on to an additional enlarged screen, so that the images almost appeared to emerge from the screen on to the audience. Apart from its unquestioned aid to the dramatic high-spots of a film, the magnascope involves no fresh principles of pictorial composition, being merely an enlargement of the ordinary visual image. Its use, however, is severely limited, for the change from the ordinary to the larger screen necessitates a complete re-focussing of the eyes of the spectator; whilst the change back from the large screen to the small

is a sharp anti-climax, requiring several minutes for the eyes to become accustomed to the different scale. From this it will be seen that the device becomes permissible only before an interval, or immediately before the ending of a film, in order to avoid the change. Another demerit of the magnascope is that it causes the *frame* of the screen to become noticeable, which is undesirable, for it is the opening and closing movements of the screen margins which make the device possible. The fact of the screen altering its size during the progress of a film not only interrupts the concentration of the audience, but makes them conscious of the screen itself, instead of the visual images upon it. The probable outcome of the magnascope will be the general adoption of larger screens in the majority of cinemas, for a larger screen area than that at present in use will undoubtedly give an enhanced stereoscopic effect.

The triptych screen which has been seen only at the London Tivoli for the presentation of Abel Gance's *Napoléon*, was not on that occasion particularly successful. The effect was too overwhelming for the receptive power of the audience and tended to confuse rather than to impress the mind. For this device, the film is projected in the normal way on to a central screen. When a high-spot is reached, two side screens flanking the centre one are brought into play, and two other films are projected in synchronisation with the main film. For example, one instance depicted Napoleon reviewing his armies. On the centre screen appeared a stream of soldiers on a large scale, whilst on the side screens were two further processions, the scene on the left being the same as that on the right, but reversed. The troops at first formed three separate scenes, but later they mingled, forming one great river of the *Grande Armée*. The effect was dramatic but confusing.

I understand that this multiple screen theory is being developed in New York, but I suggest that this 'progress of the cinema' is far from achieving the unity of purpose demanded by a film. For normal intents and purposes, the simple flat screen of customary proportions is all that is necessary. It would be more satisfactory if these enthusiasts spent their leisure in improving their knowledge of the film itself rather than in evolving complicated methods of presentation. Mr. Harry Potamkin writes of a compound cinema, in which the rational centre screen is used for the projection of the main film, whilst slides or minor films are projected on to the walls and ceiling

of the theatre to enhance the atmosphere of the main theme on the audience. The idea is admittedly novel, but it is doubtful if it tends to establish the film as a unity.

(*d*) *Constructive Editing and Cutting*

When analysing the final act of montage, which is the assembling of the various strips of film on which have been recorded photographically the incidents and material as indicated by the scenario-plan, we can put aside all the resources of filmic representation that have so far been discussed. Camera angle, pictorial composition, movement of material and of camera, etc., have played their essential parts in the transference of the dramatic content on to strips of celluloid. It may be assumed that the content of the thematic narrative has been expressed to the fullest possible advantage by the resources of the film already utilised up to the time the picture leaves the studio floor, or the exterior location, as the case may be. There remains now the task of sorting out these strips of film and assembling them in an order of continuity of dramatic content. But it is essential to realise that a desired emotional effect cannot be gained by the mere indiscriminate chopping of bits of celluloid. The content that is photographically recorded on these strips must have been borne in mind by the director from the origin of the manuscript. Thus far, this final act of assemblage has been kept in view throughout the whole procedure. Amongst the hundreds of lengths of film that wait to be assembled, there will be many meaningless bits that are useless in themselves, but each will play its part in the building of the whole. Frame by frame, shot by shot, sequence by sequence, the film as a unity will be constructed. This final relation, inter-relation, and juxtaposition of the varying lengths of film will produce cinematic effect on the audience, causing them to be roused in the most emotional degree.

It has been made clear that constructive editing is the matter of arranging strips of film in an order that expresses the dramatic content of the theme with the greatest reactionary effect. The strength and mood of these reactions on the audience is affected by the methods of cutting, by variation in number of frames [1] of each separate length of film and by the rhythm of material.

[1] For purposes of assembling, a strip of film should always be considered in terms of frames.

The elementary principles of editing are as follows. Firstly, it should be the aim of the director never to show a shot on the screen more than once if it has been taken from the same angle of vision, unless he should desire to emphasise a particular mood. The material will thus be kept constantly fresh and interesting to the audience. To show a thing more than once from the same angle is to invite monotony. The means whereby this choice of angles is calculated are determined by the changing dramatic content of the theme. (Reference may here be made to the earlier section of this chapter dealing with camera capabilities, in particular to the subject of camera angles.) Secondly, a shot should be held only long enough on the screen to be taken in by the audience during a medium tension of emotion. The spectator should only be allowed sufficient time to realise the significance of the image, which has been aided by the pictorial composition. Thirdly, short cutting (being the use of small strips of film varying from two or three to nine or ten frames, usually close ups, but not necessarily so) should be employed to create high and exciting emotions, by a succession of short flashes in rhythmic order on the screen. Fourthly, long cutting (being the antithesis of short cutting) should be used for obtaining sad and soothing effects, which can be deliberately intensified by the time-length of images on the screen. By varying combinations of these two extreme methods of cutting, together with the practice of cross-cutting by relation and contrast, almost any emotion of the human mind can be reached and made to react.

The power of cutting in the hands of a capable director is unlimited. By a proper understanding of the method he can cause any audience to be sad, thrilled, pathetic, joyous, angry, sympathetic, etc., according to his will, and thus compel them to take interest in the content of the theme that he is expressing on the screen. It is the greatest resource of the cinema for stirring and holding an audience *en masse*. Its force is not, perhaps, generally appreciated. A notable instance was seen at the first presentation of Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg* at the Film Society on 3rd February, 1929. At one portion of the film, the theme was worked by gradual short-cutting to a crescendo with the title 'All power to the Soviets!' at the peak of emotion. The audience was observed to start gradually stirring, then muttering, until eventually many persons rose to their feet, cheering and clapping. I do not believe that the word 'Soviets'

was of real importance, for had it been 'Royalists' or 'Monarchists,' the effect would have been the same, due entirely to the emotions raised by the cutting. Much the same course of events took place among a working-class audience at the showing of Victor Turin's *Turksib*, at the Scala Theatre on 9th March 1930. The spectators in London were just as eager for the railway to be opened as were the peasants in Russia! This advanced process of editing and cutting, together with a remarkable use of the other properties of the medium, renders Soviet films the most emotionally powerful in the world.

Pudovkin claims that every object, taken from a given viewpoint and reproduced on the screen in the form of a visual image, is a *dead* object, even though it may have movement, for this movement is that of material and not that of film. The object does not assume life until it is placed among other separate objects; until it is presented as being part of a synthesis of separate visual images. Every object brought upon the screen in the form of a visual image has not photographic but *cinematographic* essence given to it by editing. 'Editing is the creative force of filmic reality. Nature provides only the raw material.' (*Vide*, *Film Weekly*, 29th October 1928, translation by Ivor Montagu of the preface to Pudovkin's *Manual of Film Direction*, and later published in *Pudovkin on Film Technique* [Gollancz, 1929].)

This, then, is the relation between the film and reality. An actor at his best is but raw material for his future composition in visual images when edited. He is only the clay with which the director works. A landscape is but a mere photograph until it assumes its place in the organisation of visual images. The extraordinary truth of this shatters at one blow the whole idea of the star-system. Where now is Clara Bow's 'it,' and Carl Brisson's sweet smile? In brief, therefore, we are to understand that the film director works with actual material, creating out of it a filmic reality. He composes, it will be remembered, filmic time and filmic space out of real material. The true aim of the film director is not realism, as is generally but erroneously supposed, but a reality of his own construction.

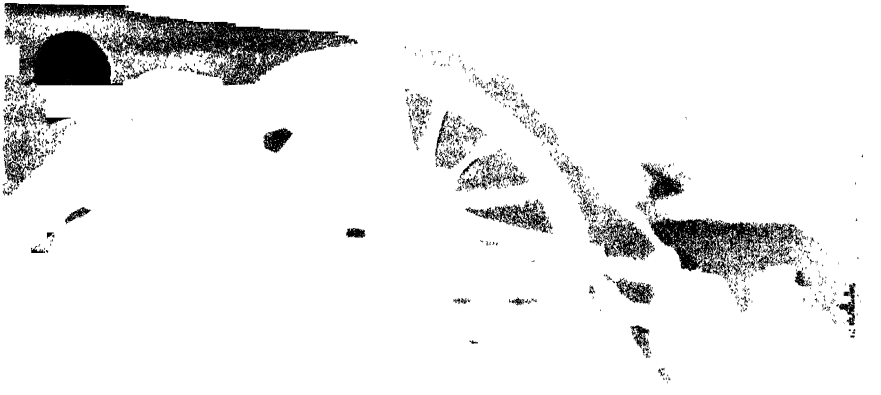
Lev Kuleshov, it will be recalled, logically maintained that in every art there must be, firstly, a material; and secondly, a method of composing that material arising out of the nature of the medium.[1] In the case of the film, we are now able to grasp fully the fact that

[1] Cf. pages 52, 155.

soviet sovkino

THE OLD AND THE NEW

called formerly 'The General Line,' by S. M. Eisenstein and G. Alexandrov, renowned for its montage construction. 1928-29



soviet sovkino

OCTOBER

by S. M. Eisenstein; note angle and lighting emphasising dream sequence. Camera-work by Edward Tissé. 1927

the material is on the strips of film and the composing is the act of editing, which has been relegated in this present survey to the final act of montage.

In the assembling of the different strips of film, it has been seen that it is necessary to be able to manipulate the number of frames that make up each separate shot, for the combination of these varying lengths creates the vibrating rhythm by which the film as a unity achieves life and breath, slackening and tightening the attention of the audience.

In brief, cutting resolves itself into the act of placing one strip of film bearing certain photographic images upon it alongside another strip recording either the same material seen from a different angle or entirely fresh material. Two simple factors may be brought to bear on this relation between the two strips, each based on the recognisable external characteristics of the pieces. Firstly, film strips may be joined together according to a formulated scheme or metre, in harmony perhaps with the beats of synchronised music. Changing effects may be achieved by variations in the number of frames to a length, the balance of sequences (and consequently the whole film) being maintained by a repetition of the metre. The assembling may therefore be said to be a metric process of piece lengths, achieved by 'tape measurement.'

From this elementary metric method it is but a step to assembling according to the movement of the screen material (*i.e.* the movement of the players, objects, etc., recorded on the film strips). The assembling determined by the metric process may be strengthened by a rhythmic relation of material movement between the separate piece lengths. The movement contained in one shot may be continued into the next. Further, the predominant movement in a series of shots may be carried into the predominant movement in the succeeding series (*e.g.* the rhythmic movement of the soldiers descending the steps of Odessa in *Battleship 'Potemkin'* merging into the rhythmic movement of the perambulator; the rhythm of the waving corn stalks in *The Old and the New* becoming submerged by the downward movement of the rain. Cf. also the bridge scene in *October*, page 158, and the cutting of *Jeanne Ney*, page 187).

Beyond such assembling of shots by rhythmic and metric relations, further factors may be applied to the conjoining of film

strips. For example, in a given sequence of shots, as well as there being an increase (or decrease) in movement of screen material and a formulated scheme for assembling according to numbers of frames, there may also be increase (or decrease) in the intensity of light values (from light to dark, or *vice versa*, as the sequence unfolds), as well as increase (or decrease) in intellectual values (as in the gallery of gods in *October*, which were arranged in the order of a descending intellectual scale.)[1] Moreover, as Eisenstein has pointed out, there is no difference between the physical movement expressed by simple metric or rhythmic assembling in a sequence and the movement of the intellectual process within that sequence, save that one results in a physiological effect and the other a psychological effect on the audience.

Although each frame is one of a number, which in succession produces movement in a shot, it is possible also to use purely static shots to build up effect with cutting. A series of shots, each one static, achieves an emotional effect quite different in feeling to a succession of shots showing movement. For example, Eisenstein in *October* brought all the religions in the world to bear upon a certain point, simply by a succession of 'still' shots of religious symbols, such as the Buddha, the Cross, and savage heathen fetishes. It was, so to speak, the director's comment on the action of the context, exemplary of 'intellectual cinematography.' Again, when establishing the environment of tradition and pompous imperial taste in art at the Winter Palace, in St. Petersburg, he used a series of static shots, taken from dramatic low-level angles, of cornices and capitals, column-shafts and chandeliers – a solemn comment on wasted magnificence. A sudden realisation of disgust was raised in the mind of the spectator at this luxury, so useless and so meaningless, by a simple, slow succession of silent, still, visual images. More recent examples of this method were seen in Kozintsev and Trauberg's *New Babylon*.

The effect of movement in cutting may be measured by contrast with a stationary object, just as dark is given value by light. This form of contrast may frequently be achieved by means of the process of cross-cutting from a moving object to a stationary one, and repeating the procedure. An admirable example may be taken in a cavalry charge. In order to gain the greatest effect of this action on

[1] See pages 158, 271.

an audience, alternate close ups are shown in rapid succession of the hooves of the horses in fast movement over the cobble stones, and of the still, bronze hooves of an equestrian statue. The alternate cross-cutting from swift action to static rigidity, when repeated, achieves remarkable dramatic intensity, far more powerful in every way than a conventional shot of the charge as usually employed, as for example in *Balaclava*. Many other examples of cross-cutting abound. In the night-club scene in *Crisis*, Pabst wished to arouse in the mind of the audience the emotions created by syncopation and jazz. He obtained this by taking a shot, with his camera travelling backwards, of a pair of exhibition dancers coming forward with typical rhythmic movements, cutting alternately from close ups of their heads to close ups of their feet. In this way he achieved a cinematic result impossible with a straight shot of the pair. During the opening sequence of *Berlin*, Ruttmann wished to express the rhythm of an express train. He intercut short flashes of the wheels, of the telegraph wires and of the rails with one longer shot of the coupling between two of the coaches. Thereby he obtained an effect of 'three shorts and a long,' as it were, causing the audience to visualise an emotion that they had experienced themselves in reality. Similar effects of cross-cutting to achieve rhythmic movement were found in the railway scenes of Room's *Bed and Sofa*, and in Dziga-Vertov's telegraph wire sequence in *The Eleventh Year*. Much of the secret of arousing these feelings in the audience lies in the subtlety with which emotions latent in their minds are awakened. Often it is not desired to stir fresh emotions but to recreate old ones by stressing the rhythm, which was probably unrecognised by the observer before it was seen on the screen.

By constructive editing it is possible to convey the dramatic content of an occurrence without even showing the actual happening. Pudovkin gives an instance of an explosion, which he used in *The End of St. Petersburg*. In order to render the effect of this explosion with absolute fidelity, he caused a charge of high explosive to be buried and had it detonated. The explosion was terrific, but filmically it was quite ineffective. So by means of editing, he built an explosion out small bits of film, by taking separate shots of clouds of smoke and of a magnesium flare, welding them into a rhythmic pattern of light and dark. Into this series of images he cut a shot of a river that he had taken some time before, which was appropriate owing to its

tones of light and shade. The whole concatenation when seen on the screen was vividly effective, but it had been achieved without employing a shot of the *real* explosion. In another instance, in *Mother*, he obtained effect by symbolic intercutting. The son was in prison. He received a note, passed to him surreptitiously, informing him that he was to be set free on the following day. The task was to show his joy filmically, and to make the audience participate in it. The mere photographing of the boy's face lighting up with joy would have been ineffectual and banal. Pudovkin showed, therefore, the nervous play of his hands and a big close up of the lower half of his face, his lips faintly twisting into a smile. With these shots he cut in others of a brook, swollen with the rapid flow of spring, of the play of sunlight broken into points of light on the water, of birds splashing in the village pond, and finally, of a laughing child. By composing these into a whole it was possible to give the emotions which that boy felt in prison when he knew that he was to escape. But it is, of course, to be realised that this constructive editing of material is primarily a matter of preconception in the film manuscript. The extension of the method is apparent and it will be appreciated how wide is the scope opened up by its potentialities.

An interesting point which arises in the rhythmic conjoining of film strips, is the overlapping of movement of the material from one shot into another. It is customary to find that when one visual image succeeds another on the screen, both showing an object moving in the same direction but each viewed from a different angle, the movement in the second shot begins where the movement in the first left off. But there may be an overlapping of movement, in that the *same* piece of action is in reality seen twice by the audience from different viewpoints. This is not by any means to be taken as an instance of bad joining. On the contrary, it emphasises the movement of the pictorial composition and enhances the dramatic effect of that movement. Allusion has already been made to the fact that the line of guards in *Battleship 'Potemkin'* descended over many steps more than once when seen on the screen. The same effect was experienced when the statue of the Czar fell to pieces and then came together again in *October*, and also in the famous scene of the raising of the bridge. It was seen again in the felling of the trees in Turin's *Turksib*. This practice of overlapping movement

encourages and makes use of latent dramatic content in the mind of the spectator. It serves to weld the images into a firm whole by a process that can only be described as dovetailing. Its neatness and precision is both comforting and stimulating. It adds, as it were, a sort of double-kick to the movement.

In such pattern films as *La Marche des Machines* and *Skyscraper Symphony*, it is common to find an effect of balance built up by a series of succeeding shots, with the weight distributed diagonally on alternate sides of the screen in each image. For example, a shot is shown of a steam shovel on one side of the screen, followed by the same shot reversed so that the steam shovel is seen on the other side. This, in turn, is followed by a double-exposure shot combining the two preceding shots, one top of the other, so that the steam shovel appears on both sides of the screen simultaneously. The same has been done with shots taken of a building from below, the roof first cutting the screen diagonally from left to right and then from right to left. It is a matter of balanced design. The same method can equally well be applied to movement. A shot showing an object moving across the screen from left to right may be succeeded by a shot showing the reverse motion. This will reveal the close connection that exists between editing and the pictorial composition of the visual images. The use of dissolves and mixes in cutting in sympathy with the mood of the content has been considered earlier, and the reader is referred to the example taken from *The Living Corpse* cited on page 263.

It will have been observed from these remarks on the building of a unified film that every frame and every shot is of the utmost significance to the composition of the whole. It can be understood, therefore, how deep a resentment is felt by a director when many shots and even sequences are removed from his completed film in order to meet a censor's requirements. Theoretically, the removal of one frame from a complete film throws out the unity of the balance, even as pieces of stamp-paper stuck over the nude parts of pictures in the National Gallery would destroy appreciation of them as whole compositions. The outcry in the Press at such an act of vandalism can well be imagined; but few realise to what an extent a film may be damaged by an official board. It is not to be wondered that the only course left open to the director so affected is to disclaim his own work, a film on which he perhaps spent weeks of care and toil. Nor

is the injustice easier to bear when the crass absurdity of many censorial restrictions is made known.

(*e*) *The Placing of Titles*

The literary value of *titles* or *sub-titles* (frequently miscalled 'captions') is strictly a matter of scenario montage. It has been seen that a title is employed in a film to connect sequences in smooth continuity and also to introduce characters to the audience. When it is not mere superfluity, the general use of titles is mostly due to an insufficient employment of the resources of the medium. Theoretically, the use of a title from a literary point of view is unwarranted if the full cinematic properties of the medium are utilised by the director. That this is so has been conclusively proved by *The Last Laugh*, *Warning Shadows*, and *New Year's Eve*. Titles are only really justified in the cultural and educational film for explanatory purposes.

A title should be visual as well as literary. Its place among the concatenation of visual images must be decided by pictorial qualifications as well as by meaning. A well-titled film is one in which the titles harmonise with the visual images so perfectly that their presence *as titles* is not remarked. The length of a title must be considered in ratio to the speed of the scene in which it is inserted. Quick, exciting action needs short, succinct titles, at times simply a single word flashed at the audience. For this reason, the Soviet directors use split titles and repetitive wording. Slow, deliberate action, on the other hand, demands slow, deliberate titles.

Titles may be used as a means of preparing the audience for a scene by suggesting in advance the dramatic content that is to be unfolded. A perfect example of this was quoted by Mr. Sergei Nalbandov (writing in *The Cinema*, 7th August 1929) from the film *Mother*. A title 'Waiting' preceded a shot of a cavalry platoon, which was awaiting the coming of a procession towards a prison. The meaning of this title was bound up with the close ups which succeeded it on the screen, of the hoof of a horse pawing the ground and a rider adjusting the buckle of his straps.

A title is often to be rendered more potent by splitting it into sections among a series of visual images. A title begins with a few words; it is cut to a series of visual images; the title continues; again it is cut to a series of relevant shots; the title finishes; it is succeeded

by a further flow of images. Greater stress of meaning, of pictorial rather than of literary value, is gained by this division. A case in point was to be found in the introduction of the workers in the early part of *The End of St. Petersburg*.

Simple repetition of a title at spaced intervals is also found to be dramatically effective by its very rhythmic insistence. The same title may punctuate a film at given moments, driving home not the meaning of the title, but the meaning of the sequence and the whole meaning of the theme. This was used with much feeling with the title 'Mother,' in the film of that name, and was also a conspicuous part of the construction of *October*, *New Babylon*, and *Turksib*. This fact may be given support in that when I saw for the first time a copy of *Battleship 'Potemkin,'* the titles were in Russian, a language incomprehensible to me, and yet their pictorial quality added greatly to the drama of the film.

An appreciation of the titling of Victor Turin's *Turksib* appeared in the *Sunday Observer*, for 23rd March 1930, and is worth citing: '. . . I have been waiting a great many years to see a film in which the titles would play a definite part in the visual and emotional progress of idea. . . . In *Turksib* the titling is inseparable from the sweep of the film. . . . I cannot describe the curious assault on the senses of those moving arrangements of letters, the cumulative effect of the final titles with their massive cadences. The words of *Turksib* are images; integral, triumphant, menacing. They are symbols of disaster and determination, fear and terrific jubilation. They have no longer sound or aural meaning – they are eye-images, mute, rapid, and wrought from the emotional fibre of the film itself.' This criticism is all the more interesting in that it comes from the pen of an advocate of the dialogue film.

Other interesting experiments with the placing of titles have been attempted, notably by Pudovkin, who makes a practice of inserting spoken titles at the moment of utterance but not in conjunction with the visual image of the speaker.

It may be remarked that the design and word lay-out of a title should be as simple as possible. The quietest form of lettering should be used; the wording should be of the briefest and clearest nature; the ground should be dark, with the lettering a dull grey. The customary title is positively sparkling, with white scrawly lettering jumping about on an imitation leather background, which is

the exact opposite to the requirements of a visual title. Various devices exist for the expansion of lettering, and may be used in accordance with the dramatic need of the title.

(f) The Visual Addition of Colour and the Stereoscopic Screen

The novelty of colour has always been a trick out of the showman's big box, and has been produced from time to time as an attractive selling addition to a super film. The advent of the dialogue and sound film is considered by some persons to make colour and stereoscopic effect a necessity. It depends entirely from what point of view we regard the cinema. The coloured stereoscopic film will give, when combined with sound and dialogue, a sense of realism. This, as has been explained more than once, is in the opposite direction to the proper aim of the film, which is reality. At the present moment, the marvellous decorative values that result from the use of panchromatic stock are more than sufficient for the needs of a director whose ambition is to convey dramatic content. It is necessary only to recall the beauty of *The Old and the New*, *White Shadows*, and *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* to realise this. But colour as an asset to showmanship is a different matter altogether.

In the history of colour films an episode in bright tones has often provided a novel attraction to jaded audiences, and its inclusion has generally been a concession to the taste of the masses. It will be remembered that Griffith used colour for certain of the sensational portions of *Way Down East* in 1920, but as Mr. Eric Elliott shrewdly observes, he had the discretion to restrict these coloured sensations to irrelevant pieces of action that were of little dramatic value, such as the dress parade (*vide*, *The Anatomy of Motion Picture Art*, Eric Elliott [Pool], 1928). In 1922, Stuart Blackton made *The Glorious Adventure* with the glorious Diana Cooper in colour, achieving, I believe, considerable commercial success. A year later, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's *Toll of the Sea* in technicolour, with Anna May Wong and Kenneth Harlan, is said to have presented colour in almost acceptable tone values; and later still, Stuart Blackton repeated his success with *The Virgin Queen*. America produced *The Wanderer of the Wasteland* and France a gaudy *Cyrano de Bergerac*. After a time, it became fashionable to include a colour sequence, as often as not the high-spot of the picture, and in this patchy vein are numbered parts of *Ben-Hur*, *Michael Strogoff*, *Casanova*, *The Fire Brigade*,

soviet — sovkino

THE PEASANT WOMEN OF RIAZAN

by Olga Preobrashenskaia. Noted for the beautiful camerawork of K. Kusnetsov, note low level camera angle. 1925

german — ufa

PORI

an interest film of the African jungle. 1928

The Sea Beast, *The Merry Widow*, and *The Wedding March*. Douglas Fairbanks's *The Black Pirate*, which was entirely in colour, was more successful, but it is understood that he will not repeat his experiment. Since that date, colour films have been produced plentifully, but I have seen none which has been satisfactory.

Although, up to the present, colours glow and pale at alternate moments (reds are revolutionary, yellows are dirty, greens are sickly, grass like that in fruiterers' shops, skies like aluminium, and flesh tints jaundiced), there is definite promise that the mechanical process will be soon perfected and generally on view. Assuming the possibility of perfect colour reproduction, however, it is hard to see where its use is of more value than the already existing beauties of panchromatic stock. It certainly holds out no advantages for the purpose of enhancing dramatic values. On the contrary, the most serious objection to be levelled against the colour film is its tendency to submerge the admirable photographic qualities of the visual image on the screen and hinder it from fulfilling its proper functions. The curious softness that will be produced by correct tone values all over the screen area will lack contrast and will immediately deaden dramatic effect, despite any resulting stereoscopy. Furthermore, it will be an intense strain to distinguish the presence and movement of separate objects in the coloured composition. Attempts will be made to imitate the drama contained in static paintings, which will fail miserably in the essentially dynamic medium of the film. There will be a sort of pre-Raphaelite dullness about the colour film which will deaden general appeal. The crispness of black and white, with intervening tones, is eminently desirable for the dramatic expression of filmic content. In the monochrome film of to-day, the natural tendency of the eyes of the spectator is to flow from the dark parts of the screen to the light. In the coloured screen composition, the eyes will wander aimlessly over the various forms without discrimination. Colour will tend to slacken the concentration of the mind of the audience. Spectators will easily be led away from the centre of interest by colour emotions, peculiar to each person. No two people see the same colour alike. The effect will be chaos instead of unity. Finally, it is impossible to believe that colour will improve, either dramatically or pictorially, films of the calibre of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, with its terms of contrast; *Siegfried*, with its wonderful striped and spotted decorations, its mists and black tree trunks;

La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc, with its detailed textures and shimmering backgrounds; and *Thérèse Raquin*, with its subtle intensities of light values and sparkling points on the dress of Jean-Marie Laurent. Practically the whole dramatic and decorative effect of these works, perfect in their own class as they stand, would be lost by the use of colour, granting every possible perfection of the technical process.

The use of amber or blue-tinted stock, which produces a pale colour tint evenly over the whole screen area, is another matter for consideration. This method of tinting the whole scene is justified in that it enhances the dramatic effect, provided, that is, the tone is kept even with the volume of light throughout the whole sequence in which it is used. Both blue and amber tones are capable of helping the atmosphere of night and sunlight. All-over colour tints are also used to good advantage in certain silhouette films, where their inclusion has been a part of the decoration in the same way that colour is part of a book decoration. The use here is not to attempt either realism or reality, but for the purpose of pure decoration.

In the past, apart from, say, the early Pathécolor films which were clumsily tinted all over with various hues, there have been some curious experiments with colouring certain portions of a visual image, such as a fiery cross or a blood-stained dagger. The idea seems crude in the extreme and wholly unnecessary.

With the general adoption of perfected colour films will also come the use of the stereoscopic screen, which purports to give visual images three, instead of two, dimensions. Beyond promising to present an illusion of solidity, without either advantage or disadvantage to the pictorial composition, it is difficult to see quite what asset, beyond novelty, the stereoscopic screen will possess. Its harm to the general conception of the film will, on the other hand, be great. Firstly, it must be realised that three dimensions will not enhance the pictorial value of the visual images except by suggesting an illusion of depth, which the screen already possesses in the movement of camera and players. Actual solidity of objects will tend to enhance realism. Secondly, the stereoscopic screen is of much larger dimensions than the customary screen,[1] and this will influence directors to adopt a more theatrical form of technique. There will

[1] It is understood that the Spoor-Bergen process, which uses a film half an inch wider than the present standard one and three-quarter inch material, demands a screen forty feet wide, enabling a right illusion of depth to be given, and will eliminate the close up. One more nail in the coffin of the real cinema!

be a tendency to hold the duration of a scene on the screen longer and longer, already the pre-eminent characteristic of dialogue films. Gradually the powerful resources of cutting and editing will be forgotten and instead there will be long scenes lasting for minutes. There will be movement of players, but there will be no movement of film, a characteristic that already marks the American film. The real functions of the resources of the film will no longer be possible with the colour-stereoscopic-and-dialogue film.

I believe that, year by year, realism will usurp reality in the cinema. Less and less imagination in the mind of the audience will be called for by this 'progress.' As Mr. Elliott observes, 'An imaginary depiction of a scene gives more reality in drama than does actual presentation.' The realistic effect aimed at by the colour-stereoscopic-and-dialogue film destroys the pictorial, symbolic, psychological, and imaginative properties of the film. Obviously the stereoscopic screen is capable of presenting remarkable effects, but these will be catch-penny and sensational as distinct from the function of the film as a medium of dramatic expression. The new forms of the illegitimate cinema will, of course, be heavily financed by America, who includes these commercial opportunities in her vast scheme for capturing the entertainment market of the world. On these lines will the film retrace its steps, becoming a mechanical means of the theatrical presentation of spectacles superior commercially to the stage.

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These, then, comprise the means of expression of the dramatic content of a theme by the visual form of the cinema. The natural properties of the film, arising out of its limits and delimits, have been considered at length. The projected addition of colour and stereoscopic effect have been investigated for any value they may bring to the cinema. It remains now to analyse the qualities of the dialogue and sound film, both as an integral part of the visual images on the screen and as an accompaniment in the form of the synchronisation of mechanically reproduced sound.

(II) The Visual and the Audible Cinema

In the preceding sections it has been seen that a film is built by the process of cine-organisation. This process has been divided simply into three forms of montage. To recapitulate briefly, the first act of

montage is the assembling of the scenario by the preconception of the selected theme, as it would be expressed by the resources of the cinema. The second act of montage deals with these methods of expression during the actual process of taking the film photographically, as indicated by the scenario-plan. The third and final act of montage consists in the assembling or mounting of the pieces of film bearing the photographic images, welding them in various lengths and positions in relation to one another in order to form a united whole. These three acts of montage are the means by which a story or theme is translated into a succession of visual images on the screen; which is capable of producing considerable emotional effect on any given audience of people in any part of the world.

Further, a supplementary section was added in order to consider the possible advantages that might be derived from two mechanical inventions, the colour film and the stereoscopic screen, with a view to adding them to the already existing forms of cinematic expression. For the purpose of argument, perfection was assumed in the mechanical process of these inventions, and it was found that neither contributed in any degree of value to the powers of expression already belonging to the film.

It is of urgent importance now to estimate the value, if any, of synchronised sound and dialogue reproduction as a means of expression of the dramatic content of a theme. Again, for all intents and purposes, perfection of the mechanical device is to be assumed.

General agreement has been reached by writers and theorists on this exceptionally interesting new invention, that the sound-dialogue-visual film must be considered as a form of expression quite separate from the silent visual film with which these pages are principally concerned.[1]

It is necessary first to show, then, why this separation of the so-called two techniques is impossible; secondly, why the combination of the two techniques, when including direct reproduced dialogue, is equally unfeasible; and thirdly, how, with the use of synchronised *sound* alone, it is possible to conceive a film as a unity, employing

[1] The number of articles, arguments, discussions, lectures, manifestos, conversaziones and debates on the merits and demerits of the talking and silent film has been positively amazing. The general public have had ballots; the Press have had columns; and the atmosphere in the studios themselves has been unprecedented. Probably no other invention for public entertainment has had so much free publicity as the 'talkie.'

sound as a resource of the cinema, and incorporating it in the three forms of montage out of which a film is built.

(*a*) *The Sound-Dialogue-Visual Film*

It will be agreed that the aim of the sound-dialogue-visual film is the same as that of the silent visual film with musical accompaniment. To wit, to express cinematically the dramatic content of a theme or story so as to produce the greatest possible emotional effect on the mind of an audience.

The silent film seeks this effect by means of a succession of visual images on the screen. The sound-dialogue-visual film seeks the same end by means of a series of visual images on the screen *combined* with the reproduction of the voices and sounds of those images. In the first case, the appeal of the film lies absolutely in the vision of the images on the screen, soothed and emphasised by a musical accompaniment. In other words, the mind of the spectator is appealed to through the eye, the music being a subconscious supplement that by its apparent sympathy aids the smooth reception of the images. In the second, the appeal of the film is divided jointly between the sight of the images on the screen and the reproduction of the spoken dialogue and sound of those images. Screen and dialogue are seeking reception in the mind of the audience through the eye and ear.

Now it is an accepted and established fact that illumination of the mind by *visual* impression is practically instantaneous, whilst the *literary* meaning of speech requires an appreciable amount of time to produce its effect. The sensation caused in the mind by a visual image is not only sharper, but more apprehensible and more lasting than that caused by sound or speech. The eye is capable of associating ideas very much quicker and of creating a more definite impression in a given period of time than the ear. But when a visual image is seen on the screen and dialogue is synchronised to its action, although the visual image is received quicker than the dialogue, the latter commands more attention, for it is *literary* and non-imaginative. There results immediate confusion in the joint appeals of the *reality* of the visual image and the *realism* of the dialogue. Continual adjustment and readjustment of the senses occurs, which is an inconceivable state of mind for the sympathetic reception of the dramatic emotions of a film as a unity. Dialogue and the visual

image cannot thus be divided in their appeals if dramatic effect is to be achieved. They can only be considered as a unity.

But it has been decided that the most dramatic possible method of telling a story is by a succession of pictures. No power of speech is comparable to the descriptive value of photographs. The attempted combination of speech and pictures is the direct opposition of two separate mediums, which appeal in two utterly different ways. If the two are wedded, one must be subordinated to the other, and at once division of appeal will occur. For this reason a silent visual film is capable of achieving a more dramatic, lasting, and powerful effect on an audience by its singleness of appeal than a dialogue film, in which the visual image is, at its best, a photograph of the voice. *Blackmail*, one of the so-called good dialogue films, will be completely forgotten in a few months by those who have seen it. *Battleship 'Potemkin,'* seen four years ago, is as vivid in the mind now as it was then. Immediately a voice begins to speak in a cinema, the sound apparatus takes precedence over the camera, thereby doing violence to natural instincts.

A theory, not without considerable interest, has been advanced that any compound which relies on the joint appeal of the two senses of sight and sound must utilise to the full the powers of its component methods. The balance between sound and sight will vary with the power of each to interpret the progressive development of the dramatic content of the theme. The synchronised film is to vary between sight accompanied by sound or silence, and sound accompanied by sight.[1] But this again is directly opposed to the interests of the film as a unity. If any sort of consistent dramatic effect is to be made on an audience, division of appeal between sound and sight is simply courting disaster. It has been evidenced over and over again that a film *must* be a single united whole in order to achieve strong emotional effect, and the moment that both eye and ear are brought into conflict the success is negatived.

Of the resources of the cinema that are used during the process of cine-organisation and out of which a film is built, it has been clearly seen that the final act of montage (the assembling or mounting) is the dominant factor of the construction. For the further progress of the film, therefore, the only factors that need be taken into consideration are those capable of emphasising the cinematic

[1] Mr. Vernon J. Clancey, writing in the *Cinema*, 4th September 1929.

result produced by the assembling. With the advent of the possibility of utilising synchronised dialogue and sound, it is necessary to consider how these new values affect the assembling.

It will have been understood that the final act of montage attains its desired effect by the conjoining of pieces of film into a whole. That is, no single piece of film is of value without its surrounding context. Now the addition of sound and dialogue to the visual image on the screen will tend to emphasise its isolated significance by reason of the fact that, as the sound and dialogue take longer to apprehend than the visual image, the duration of time that the shot is held on the screen will be determined by the sound and dialogue *instead of by the assembling*. Dialogue, by very reason of its realism, represents real time and *not the filmic time* of the visual image. Obviously this is in direct opposition once more to all the dominant factors that have been proved to achieve emotional effect by visual images.

At once, it will be observed that synchronised sound and dialogue impose severe restrictions on the process of film construction, whereas before there was none. Moreover, it is quite impossible to entertain the prospect of a film in which visual images play a part without their being organised by montage. Added to this, dialogue imposes such restrictions on the director that all forms of cutting and cross-cutting become impossible. In fact, as has been realised by 'Mercurius' in the *Architectural Review* (June 1929): 'The significance of symbolism and (visual) imagery, the stimulating and sedative effect of short and long cutting, the interplay of the personal and the inanimate, the contrast between the general and the particular; in short, practically all the attributions of the silent film which make the reality of cinematic art are forced into subjection by the illusion of synchronised speech.'

Again, it is found that the reproduction of dialogue demands almost stationary action in its accompanying visual image, which prevents freedom in the development of the action during any sequence. Thus action has to progress step by step, destroying, as it jerks forward, both rhythmic continuity and harmony.[1] It is no longer a film. It has returned to the early photo-play, of theatrical tradition. Moreover, it is to this state of retrogres-

[1] Heart-rending evidence of this was clearly instanced in what must be one of the worst films ever produced, *The American Prisoner*.

sion that the stereoscopic screen and colour film are forcing the cinema.

There can only be one legitimate use for the dialogue film and that is the topical-news and gazette reel. Here the appeal to the mind is quite different, for there is no aim at dramatic effect in news-speeches. They are simply a record in which the interest lies more in the speech than in the visual image. They are not constructed films seeking to achieve the dramatic effect of a story. They are an elementary form of the cinema 'without joy,' and, considered as such, are only of casual and historic interest.

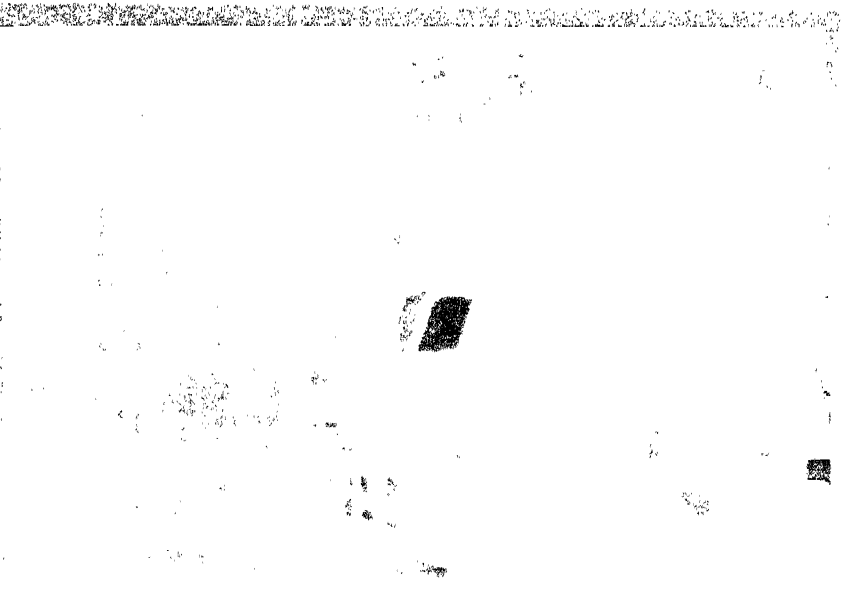
It may be concluded that a film in which the speech and sound effects are perfectly synchronised and coincide with their visual images on the screen is absolutely contrary to the aim of the cinema. It is a degenerate and misguided attempt to destroy the real use of the film and cannot be accepted as coming within the true boundaries of the cinema. Not only are dialogue films wasting the time of intelligent directors, but they are harmful and detrimental to the culture of the public. The sole aim of their producers is financial gain, and for this reason they are to be resented. Any individual criticism that may be made of them may be considered as having no connection with the natural course of the film. This, as will be seen, lies in the plastic moulding of sound and visual images.

(*b*) *The Sound and Visual Cinema*

The mechanical reproduction of sound, considered apart from the audible properties of speech, is an added resource to the already existing factors of filmic representation. Sound is to be included among these factors, having its place in all three acts of montage, and assuming final position as the basis of the musical score which accompanies the film.[1]

Generally speaking, a musical accompaniment to a film is considered desirable and has been customary through the years. It is essential, however, for the musical score to be a part of the construction of the film, and not simply an arrangement of popular pieces suited to the theme by the leader of the orchestra in a cinema-house. Certain

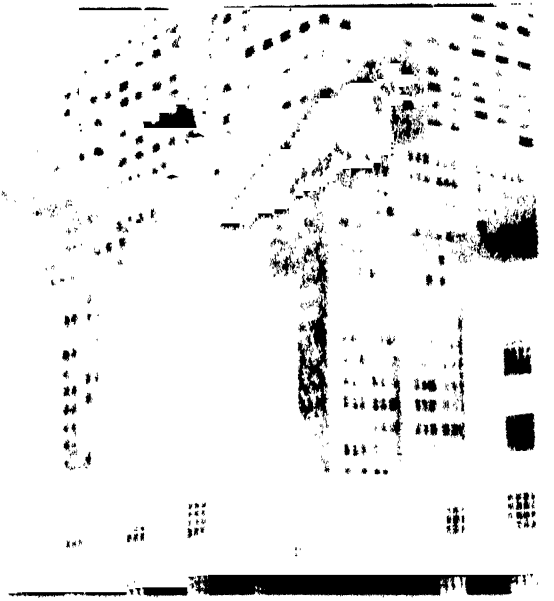
[1] Some indication of what will be possible is apparent from Arthur Honnegger's musical composition, 'Pacific 231.'



british international

PICCADILLY

the music room. A beautiful set design by Alfred Jünge for Dupont's sophisticated movie 1928



ufa

METROPOLIS

by Fritz Lang, the film of the future. A marvellous model shot giving illusion of great spatial dimensions 1927

attempts have been made during the last few years to meet this requirement of a specially composed score, notable instances being Edmond Meisel's music for *Berlin*, *October*, and *Potemkin*, and that by Darius Milhaud for l'Herbier's *L'Inhumaine*. Herr Meisel has also written a score for mechanical reproduction, *The Crimson Circle*, which was a moderately successful experiment. The obvious difficulties of circulating music for orchestras and the varying quality of the latter have rendered these attempts limited, except in the cases of the theme song, which was considered a part of the popular appeal of a movie and has been exploited widely by American firms. The mechanical reproduction of the sound film, however, admirably fulfils this desire for a specially composed score, and on this count alone is to be welcomed as a definite step forward in the advance of the film. Assuming the perfection of mechanical reproduction the synchronised score is better suited in every way to the presentation of a film than the orchestral accompaniment of the past.

Sound, then, has to be considered as a means of dramatic expression of the content of the theme, in conjunction with the succession of visual images on the screen. It must be realised, however, that in the case of the sound film, the combination lies between sound and sight, and not, as in the dialogue film, between speech and sight. The differences are apparent. Sound has not to be understood *literally* as has dialogue, and does not interfere with the visual appeal of the screen. On the other hand, it inclines, if used rightly, to emphasise and strengthen the meaning of the visual image. It is essential to realise the importance of this difference between the sound of objects and the sound of speech, for therein lies the essence of the advance or the retardment of the cinema. It is to be clearly understood, also, that the question of filmic time and actual time, so damaging in the dialogue film, does not enter into the matter of the sound film. Sound is the result of the action seen in the visual image, which is not lengthened or altered in any way to suit the sound, as must be the case with reproduced dialogue.

Thus, although built into the construction of the film, sound does not interfere with the visual reception of the images. There are now *sound images* as well as visual images, each of which will express the *same* dramatic content in harmony, or in contrast, one with another. Sound images that are recorded during the taking of the visual

images will be an integral part of the composed musical score, if they have any significance as regards the visual image. Both sound and visual images build up the same effect. They are united in their appeal.

The wealth and richness of sound material available for dramatic emphasis is almost unlimited. The sounds of the world are to be combined with the sights of the world. Already Pudovkin has spoken of the whisper of a man, the cry of a child, the roar of an explosion. 'It will be possible to combine the fury of a man with the roar of a lion.' There is the sigh of a multitude to be heard in contrast to the dropping of a pin. The sound of the wind and the sound of the sea. The sound of rain, leaves, animals, and birds; of trains, cars, machines, and ships. These are to be woven into a unity in counterpoint with their visual images, but never in direct conjunction with them. Even as the camera's power of distortion is used for dramatic emphasis, so will the distortion of sound be used. In the same way as an effect is built out of pieces of film by the act of montage, so will little portions of sound be built up into new and strange noises. The process of short cutting in visual images will be paralleled in the mixing of sounds. Even as visual images mix and dissolve one into another so will sound images mix and dissolve, according to the nature of the scene and as indicated by the scenario montage. Similarly, in the same manner that overlapping of movement is used in editing for strengthening and deepening effect, so will sound images be overlapped with both melodic and discordant effect, as the mood of the dramatic content of the scene demands.

Contrast of sound will be used in the form of the relationship of sound volumes. It will not be possible, except in rare cases, to cut direct from one sound to another as with the visual image, unless there is a background of music to soften the contrast. For instance, it will be possible to cut from the loud, angry sounds of a turbulent crowd to the sound of the crowd when hushed, and to strengthen that contrast not by the silence of the crowd, but by the shuffling of one man's foot.

In order that the powers of editing and cutting may be used with absolute freedom, the scenario-organisation must be arranged so that the sound images may be synchronised, if desired, after the taking of the incident. The sound images are to be fitted to the visual images in the final act of assembling. Both are controlled by the one

aim. This indicates that it is essential for the sound images to be included with the visual images in the preconceived scenario-organisation.

Only in this way can synchronised sound images be wedded to the concatenation of visual images on the screen in such a manner that both go to build a film as a unity with a singleness of mind and a centralisation of purpose. Thus will it be possible to construct a film as a plastic composition, capable of achieving unprecedented emotional effect on any given audience. By cine-organisation of the three forms of montage; by use of the true resources of the cinema which have arisen out of its nature; by preconception of the result and the power of being able to achieve that desired result by means of the film's capabilities of dramatic expression; by these means will a film be made.

*

In retrospect, it has taken roughly twenty-five years (1900-25) to discover the fundamental basis of film creation in the work of Kuleshov and the Soviet directors. During this time, the film has developed attributes and properties peculiar to itself; has become completely alienated from the hampering traditions of the theatre; and has succeeded in establishing itself as an independent form of expression utterly representative of the spirit of the twentieth century. From 1925, there have been realised practical examples based on the filmic theories of Kuleshov and his fellow-workers, resulting in the most momentous achievements of the cinema. And now, in 1930, the film has returned to its original ideas; has become in still closer relation to theatre; and aims once more at realism and photographic representation. The advent of the sound and dialogue film marks the opening of the second cycle in the history of the cinema. Discoveries that have taken twenty-five years to evolve are being thrown aside in the interests of showmanship and commercialism; magnificently the film neglects its proper qualities and returns to the confines of the theatre. But just as in the primitive days the film developed despite the misconception of producers and directors, so am I confident that the offending dialogue will pass as soon as its showmanship possibilities become exhausted, and the way will be left open for the great sound and visual cinema of the future.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

THE PRODUCTION UNITS OF SOME OUTSTANDING FILMS, WITH THEIR PLAYERS

Although every attempt has been made to check the authenticity of the following data, no guarantee of absolute accuracy can be vouchsafed. The author would naturally be grateful for any additions.

An asterisk (*) denotes that the film referred to has not been shown for public exhibition in this country.

* *ABSOLUTE* and *ABSTRACT* films

A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles. (French.) 1924–25

Production	Comte Etienne de Beaumont.
Direction	Henri Chomette.
Cine-portraits	Man Ray.

Operas 1, 2, 3, and 4, made by Walther Ruttmann. (German.) 1923–25.

Symphonie Diagnole, made by Viking Eggeling. (German.) 1917–18.

Rhythmus, made by Hans Richter. (German.) 1922.

Filmstudie, made by Hans Richter. (German.) 1928. Camera by Endréjat.

Vormittagspuk, made by Hans Richter. (German.) 1928. Camera by Reimar Kuntze.

Rennsymphonie, made by Hans Richter. (German.) 1928. Camera by Otto Tober.

Inflation, made by Hans Richter. (German.) 1928. Camera by Charlie Métain.

Abstract, made by Marcel Duchamp. (French.) 1927.

(Several of these studies have been presented by the Film Society.)

* *ADVENTURES OF PRINCE ACHMED*, The. (Silhouette film.) (German.) 1926

Production	Comenius Film.
Made by	Lotte Reiniger.
Direction	Karl Koch.
Magic and Scenery	Walther Ruttmann, Berthold Bartosch, Alexander Kardan.

Inspired by a musical theme by Wolfgang Zelzer. Shown to the Film Society, 8th May 1927.

* *ADVENTURES OF A TEN MARK NOTE*, The. (German.) 1928

Production	Fox-Europa.
Direction	Berthold Viertel.
Camera	Helmar Larski, R. Baberski.
Design	Walther Reimann.

With Werner Fütterer, Imogene Robertson, Walther Frank, Anna Mieller.

* *AËLITA.* (Soviet.) 1919–20

Production	Mejrabpom-Russ.
Direction	Y. A. Protasanov.
Design	Isaac Rabinovitch, Alexandra Exter.

With Igor Ilinski, Konstantin Eggert, Solntzeva, and players of the Moscow Art Theatre. Based on the novel by Count Alexei Tolstoi.

* *ARSENAL.* (Soviet.) 1929

Production	Vufku (Ukraine).
Direction	O. Dovjenko.
Scenario	Müller, Spinel.
Camera	Demutzkij.

AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD. (German.) 1926

Production	Ufa.
Direction	Karl Grune.
Scenario	Karl Mayer.
Camera	Fritz Arno Wagner.
Design	A. D. Neppach.

With Brigitte Helm, Albert Steinrück, Wilhelm Dieterle, Jean Bradin. Distributed in England by Gaumont-British Films.

ATONEMENT OF GOSTA BERLING, The. (Swedish.) 1923–24

Production	Swedish Biograph.
Direction	Mauritz Stiller.

With Lars Hanson, Greta Garbo, Jenny Hasselquist, Mona Martenson. From the story by Dr. Selma Lagerloff. Distributed in England by the Philips Film Co.

* *BATTLESHIP 'POTEMKIN,'* The. (Soviet.) 1925

Production	1st studio, Goskino.
Direction	S. M. Eisenstein.
Assistant direction	G. V. Alexandrov.
Camera	Eduard Tissé.
Assistants	A. Antonov, M. Gomorov, A. Levskin, M. Shtraukh.

Musical score composed by Edmund Meisel. Shown to the Film Society, 10th November 1929. Held in Great Britain by Film Booking Offices.

* *BED AND SOFA.* (Soviet.) 1927

Production	Sovkino.
Direction	Alexander Room.

With Nickolai Batalov as the *Husband*, Luidmila Semenova as the *Wife*, and Vladimir Fogel as the *Friend*. Shown to the Film Society, 7th April 1929.

BERLIN. (The Symphony of a Great City.) (German.) 1927

Production	Fox-Europa.
Direction	Walther Ruttmann.
Scenario	Karl Mayer.
Camera	Supervision by Karl Freund; Reimar Kuntze, Robert Baberski, Lazlo Schaffer.

Musical score composed by Edmund Meisel. Distributed in England by Wardour Films.

BIG PARADE, The. (American.) 1925

Production	Metro-Goldwyn.
Direction	King Vidor.
Scenario	Harry Behn.
Camera	John Arnold.

With John Gilbert, Renée Adorée, Karl Dane. Based on the play by Laurence Stallings. Distributed in England by Jury-Metro-Goldwyn.

BLACKMAIL. (British.) 1929

Production	British International Pictures
Direction	Alfred Hitchcock.

Camera . . . . . Jack Cox.
Design . . . . . Wilfred Arnold.

With Anny Ondra, Donald Calthrop, and John Longden. A dialogue production. Distributed in England by Wardour Films.

BLACK PIRATE, The. (American.) 1926

Production . . . . Allied Artists.
Direction . . . . Alfred Parker.
Scenario . . . . Lotta Woods.
Camera . . . . . Henry Sharp.
Design . . . . . Karl Oscar Borg.

With Douglas Fairbanks, Billie Dove, Donald Crisp. In Technicolour Process. Distributed in England by United Artists' Corporation.

BROKEN BLOSSOMS. (American.) 1919

Production . . . Famous-Players-Lasky.
Direction . . . . D. W. Griffith.
Camera . . . . . Hendrik Sartov.

With Lilian Gish, Richard Barthelmess, Donald Crisp. Based on a short story by Thomas Burke. Distributed in England by Film Booking Offices.

CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI, The. (German.) 1919

Production . . . . Decla Film.
Direction . . . . Robert Wiene.
Scenario . . . Karl Mayer and Hans Janowitz.
Camera . . . . . Willy Hameister.
Design . . . . . Walther Reimann, Herman Warm, Walther Röhrig.

With Conrad Veidt as *Cesare*, Werner Krauss as *Caligari*, Lil Dagover as *Jane*, Hans von Tvaradovski as *Francis*, Friedrich Feher as *Alan*. Distributed in England by the Philips Film Co.

CHANG. (American.) 1927

Production . . . . Famous-Players-Lasky.
Direction and Camera. . . Meriam C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack.

Taken in the northern jungles of Siam. Distributed in England by Paramount.

* *CHIEN ANDALOU*, Le. (French.) 1929

Production	Private.
Direction	Louis Bunuel.
Scenario	Louis Bunuel, Salvador Daly.

With Pierre Batcheff, Simone Mareuil. A surrealist production.

CINDERELLA. (German.) 1923

Production	Decla-Bioskop.
Direction	Ludwig Berger.
Camera	Gunthur Krampf.
Design	Rudolph Bamberger.

With Helga Thomas as *Cinderella*, Frieda Richard as the *Fairy Godmother*, Paul Hartmann as the *Prince*, Herman Thimig as *Baron Neverich*, Mady Christians and Olga Tschechowa as the *Ugly Sisters*, Georg John as the *Coachman*. Distributed in England by Wardour Films.

CIRCUS, The. (American.) 1927–28

Production	Allied Artists.
Scenario and Direction	Charles Chaplin.
Camera	Jack Wilson, Mark Mariatt.
Design	Charles D. Hall.

With Charlie Chaplin, Myrna Kennedy. Distributed in England by United Artists' Corporation.

COVERED WAGON, The. (American.) 1923

Production	Famous-Players-Lasky.
Direction	James Cruze.
Scenario	Jack Cunningham.
Camera	Karl Brown.
Editing	Dorothy Arzner.

With Lois Wilson, J. Warren Kerrigan, Ernest Torrence. Distributed in England by Paramount.

CROWD, The. (American.) 1928

Production	Metro-Goldwyn.
Direction	King Vidor.

Scenario	King Vidor, John V. A. Weaver, Harry Behn.
Camera	Henry Sharp.
Design	Cedric Gibbons, Arnold Gillespie.

With James Murray, Eleanor Boardman. Distributed in England by Jury-Metro-Goldwyn.

DESTINY. (German.) 1921

Production	Decla-Bioskop.
Direction	Fritz Lang.
Scenario	Thea von Harbou.
Camera	Erich Nitschmann.

With Bernard Goetzke as *Death, the Stranger*, Lil Dagover as the *Girl*, Walther Janssen as the *Boy*. Distributed in England by the Philips Film Co.

DEUX TIMIDES, Les. (French.) 1928

Production	Albatross-Sequana.
Direction	René Clair.
Camera	Batton and Nicolas Rondakoff.
Design	Lazare Meerson.

With Pierre Batcheff, Maurice de Féraudy, Jim Gerald. From the story by Eugène Labiche and Marc Michel.

DOCKS OF NEW YORK, The. (American.) 1928

Production	Famous-Players-Lasky
Direction	Josef von Sternberg.
Scenario	Jules Furthman.
Camera	Harold Rosson.

With George Bancroft, Olga Baclanova, Betty Compson.

DOCTOR MABUSE. (German.) 1922

Production	Decla-Bioskop.
Direction	Fritz Lang.
Scenario	Thea von Harbou.
Camera	Karl Hoffmann.
Design	Otto Hunte, Stahl Urach.

With Rudolph Klein-Rogge as *Mabuse*, Paul Richter as *Edgar Hull*, Bernard Goetzke as *Inspector van Wencke*, Alfred Abel as *Count Todd*, Georg John as *Peter*, Hans von Schlettow as *Mabuse's Chauffeur*, Lydia Potechina as a *Losing Lady*, Aud Egede Nissen as *Cara Carozza*. Distributed in England by Grangers.

* *DONNA JUANA*. (German.) 1927

Production	Elizabeth Bergner Poetic Film Co., in association with Ufa.
Direction	Paul Czinner.
Camera	Karl Freund.
Design	Erich Kettlehut, Leo Pasetti.
Costumes	Leo Pasetti, Edith Gluck.

With Elizabeth Bergner, Walther Rilla, Hertha von Walther, Hubert von Meyerinck, Elizabeth Neumann, Max Schreck. From the novel by Tirso de Molina, *Don Gil of the Green Trousers*.

* *DRACULA*. (German.) 1922

Production	Prana Film.
Direction	F. W. Murnau.
Scenario	Henrik Galeen.
Camera	Fritz Arno Wagner.
Design	Albin Grau.

With Max Schreck as *Dracula*, Gustav von Wangenheim as *Harker*, Alexander Granach as *Renfield*, Greta Schroeder as *Mrs Harker*. Shown to the Film Society, 16th December 1928. A pirated edition based on Bram Stoker's novel.

DRIFTERS. (British.) 1929

Production	British Empire Marketing Board.
Direction	John Grierson.
Camera	Basil Emmott.

Distributed in England by New Era Films.

DUBARRY. (German.) 1919

Production	Decla-Bioskop.
Direction	Ernst Lubitsch.

With Pola Negri as *Madame Dubarry*, Emil Jannings as *Louis XV*.

* *ELEVENTH YEAR*, The. (Soviet.) 1928

Production	Vufku (Ukraine).
Direction	Dziga-Vertov.
Camera	Kauffmann.

One of the several films commissioned by the Soviet Government in connection with the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Russian Revolution.

* *EMAK BAKIA*. (French.) 1927

A cine-poem by Man Ray.

END OF ST. PETERSBURG, The. (Soviet.) 1927

Production	Mejrabpom-Russ.
Direction	V. I. Pudovkin.
Scenario	N. A. Zarkhi.
Camera	A. N. Golovnia.
Design	S. V. Koslovski.

With Vera Baranovskaia as the *Wife*, A. Tchistiakov as the *Bolshevik*, I. Tchuvelev as a *Peasant Boy*, V. Obolenski as *Lebedev*. One of several films commissioned by the Soviet Government in connection with the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Russian Revolution. Shown to the Film Society, 3rd February 1929. Distributed in England by the Atlas Film Co.

EN RADE. (French.) 1928

Production	Néofilm.
Direction	Alberto Cavalcanti.
Scenario	Alberto Cavalcanti, Claude Heymann.
Camera	Jimmy Rogers.
Design	Erik Aess.

With Catherine Hessling as the *Kitchen Maid*, Nathalie Lissenko as the *Laundress*, Georges Charlia as her *Son*, Philippe Hériat as an *Idiot Boy*.

* *ENTRA'CTE*. (French.) 1923–24

Production	Ballet Suédois de Rolf
Direction	René Clair.

Scenario . . . . . Francis Piçabia.
Camera . . . . . Jimmy Berliet.

With Jean Borlin, Erik Satie, Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, etc. Shown to the Film Society, 17th January 1926.

* *ÉTOILE DE MER, L'.* (French.) 1928

Direction and Camera . . Man Ray.
Assistant Camera . . . J. A. Boiffard.

With Alice Kiki, André de la Rivière, Robert Desnos. Based on a poem by Robert Desnos. Shown to the Film Society, 3rd February 1929.

* *EXPIATION.* (Soviet.) 1926

Production . . . . Sovkino.
Direction . . . . L. V. Kuleshov.
Scenario . . . . Schklovsky.
Camera . . . . Kusnetsov.

With Fred Forell as *Jack*, S. Komarov as *Fred Nelson*, A. Choklova as *Edith*, P. Podobed as *Martin*, P. Goladshev as *Fedor*. Based on a novel by Jack London.

FAUST. (German.) 1926

Production . . . . Ufa.
Direction . . . . F. W. Murnau.
Scenario . . . . Hans Kyser.
Camera . . . . . Karl Freund.
Design . . . . . Walther Röhrig, Robert Herlth.

With Emil Jannings as *Mephisto*, Gosta Ekman as *Faust*, Camilla Horn as *Marguerite*, Yvette Guilbert as *Marguerite's Aunt*. Distributed in England by Wardour Films.

FINIS TERRÆ. (French.) 1928

Production . . . Société Générale de Films.
Direction . . . Jean Epstein.
Camera . . . . J. Barthé.

FLESH AND THE DEVIL, The. (American.) 1927

Production . . . . Metro-Goldwyn.
Direction . . . . Clarence Brown.

Scenario	Benjamin Glazer, Hans Kraly.
Camera	William Daniels.
Design	Cedric Gibbons.

With Greta Garbo, John Gilbert, Lars Hanson. Distributed in England by Jury-Metro-Goldwyn.

FOOLISH WIVES. (American.) 1922

Production	American Universal Jewel.
Direction and Scenario	Erich von Stroheim.
Camera	William Daniels, Ben Reynolds.

With Erich von Stroheim, Miss Du Pont, Maude George, Mae Busch. Distributed in England by Universal.

FORBIDDEN PARADISE. (American.) 1924

Production	Famous-Players-Lasky.
Direction	Ernst Lubitsch.
Scenario	Agnes Christine Johnson, Hans Kraly.
Camera	Charles Van Enger.

With Pola Negri, Adolphe Menjou, Rod la Rocque, Pauline Starke. From the novel *The Czarina*, by Lajo Biro and Meynhert Lengyel. Distributed in England by Paramount.

FORGOTTEN FACES. (American.) 1927

Production	Famous-Players-Lasky.
Direction	Victor Schertzinger.
Scenario	Howard Estabrooke.
Camera	J. Roy Hunt.

With Clive Brook, William Powell, Olga Baclanova. Distributed in England by Paramount.

FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE, The. (American.) 1921

Production	Metro Films.
Direction	Rex Ingram.
Scenario	June Mathis.
Camera	John F. Seitz.

With Alice Terry, Rudolph Valentino. Based on the novel by Ibañez. Distributed in England by Metro.

* *FRAGMENT OF AN EMPIRE*, The. (Soviet.) 1928–29

Production	Leningrad Studio, Sovkino.
Direction	F. Ermler.
Scenario	Catherine Vinogradskaia.
Camera	E. Schneider.

With Nikitin as *Filimonoff*, an ex-N.C.O.

GENERAL, The. (American.) 1926

Production	Allied Artists.
Direction	Buster Keaton.
Scenario	Charles Smith.
Camera	Clyde Bruckman.

With Buster Keaton. Distributed in England by United Artists' Corporation.

* *GHOST THAT NEVER RETURNS*, The. (Soviet.) 1929

Production	Sovkino.
Direction	Alexander Room.
Scenario	W. Afen.
Camera	Feldman, O. Jisneva.
Design	M. Shtraukh.

From the novel by Henri Barbusse.

GOLD RUSH, The. (American.) 1925

Production	Allied Artists.
Direction	Charles Chaplin.
Scenario	Charles Chaplin.
Camera	Jack Wilson, Roy Totheroh.
Assistant Director	H. D'Abbadie d'Arrast.
Technical Director	Charles D. Hall.

With Charles Chaplin, Georgia Hale, Mack Swain. Distributed in England by United Artists' Corporation.

GOLEM, The. (German.) 1920

Production	——
Direction and Scenario	Henrik Galeen, Paul Wegener.

Camera . . . . Guido Seeber.
Design . . . . . Hans Poelsig, Rochus Gleise.
With Paul Wegener. Distributed by Film Booking Offices.

GOOSE WOMAN, The. (American.) 1925

Production . . . . Universal.
Direction . . . . Clarence Brown.
Scenario . . . . Melville Brown.
Camera . . . . Milton Moore.
With Louise Dresser. Distributed in England by Universal.

GRASS. (American.) 1925

Production . . . . Famous-Players-Lasky.
Direction and Camera . . Meriam C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack.
Made in North-West Persia, among the Baktyari Tribe. Distributed in England by Paramount.

GREED. (American.) 1923

Production . . . Metro-Goldwyn.
Direction . . . . Erich von Stroheim.
Camera . . . . Ben Reynolds, William Daniels, Ernest Schoedsack.
Editing . . . . June Mathis.
With Gibson Gowland, Zazu Pitts, Chester Conklin, Jean Hersholt. Based on the novel *MacTeague*, by Herbert Norris. Distributed in England by Jury-Metro-Goldwyn.

HANDS OF ORLAC, The. (Austrian.) 1924

Production . . . . Pan Film.
Direction . . . . Robert Wiene.
Scenario . . . . . Ludwig Nerz.
Camera . . . . . Gunthur Krampf, Hans Andreschin.
Design . . . . . Stefan Wessely.
With Conrad Veidt, Fritz Körtner. Based on the story by Maurice Rénard.

* *HEIR TO JENGHIZ KHAN*, The. (Soviet.) 1928

Production	Mejrabpom-Russ.
Direction	V. I. Pudovkin.
Scenario	O. Brik.
Camera	A. N. Golovnia.
Design	S. V. Koslovski, Aronson.

With V. Inkishinov as the *Mongol*, A. Tchistiakov as the *Partisan Leader*, L. Dedintsev as the *Commandant*, Anna Sujakevitch as *His Daughter*, L. Billinskaia as *His Wife*. Based on a story by Novokshenov. Known also as *STORM OVER ASIA*. Shown to the Film Society, 23rd February 1930.

HOTEL IMPERIAL. (American.) 1926–27

Production	Famous-Players-Lasky.
Direction	Erich Pommer, Mauritz Stiller.
Scenario	Jules Furthman.
Camera	Bert Glennon.

With Pola Negri, James Hall, George Siegman. Distributed in England by Paramount.

* *INHUMAINE, L'*. (French.) 1923–24

Production	Cinégraphic.
Direction	Marcel l'Herbier.
Scenario	Georgette Leblanc.
Camera	Specht, Roche.
Design	Mallet-Stevens, Alberto Cavalcanti, Fernand Léger, Claude Autant-Lara.

With Georgette Leblanc, Jaque Catelain, Philippe Hériat. Shown to the Film Society, 13th February 1927.

ITALIAN STRAW HAT, The. (French.) 1928

Production	Albatross-Sequana.
Direction	René Clair.
Scenario	René Clair.
Camera	Maurice Désfassiaux, Nicolas Rondakoff.
Design	Lazare Meerson.

With Olga Tschechowa, Albert Préjean, Jim Gerald. From the play by d'Eugène Labiche and Marc Michel.

* *JOYLESS STREET*, The. (German.) 1925

Production	Sofar Film.
Direction	G. W. Pabst.
Scenario	Willi Haas.
Camera	Guido Seeber, Oërtel, Lach.
Design	Söhnle, Erdmann.

With Greta Garbo, Asta Nielson, Werner Krauss, Valeska Gert, Robert Garrison, Agnes Esterhazy. Adapted from a story by Hugo Bettauer. Shown to the Film Society, 16th January 1927.

KEAN. (French.) 1922

Production	Albatross-Sequana.
Direction	Nicolas Volkoff.
Scenario	Volkoff, Mosjoukine, Foss.
Camera	J. Mundviller, F. Bourgassoff.

With Ivan Mosjoukine as *Kean*, Kenelm Foss as *Lord Melville*, Nicolai Kolin as *Solomon*, Mary Odette as *Anna Danby*. Distributed in England by Pinnacle Films.

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN. (American.) 1925

Production	Famous-Players-Lasky.
Direction	Ernst Lubitsch.
Scenario	Julien Josephson.
Camera	Charles van Enger.

With Ronald Colman, Bert Lytell, Mae MacEvoy, Irene Rich. Based on the play by Oscar Wilde. Distributed in England by Paramount.

LAST COMMAND, The. (American.) 1928

Production	Famous-Players-Lasky.
Direction	Josef von Sternberg.
Scenario	John F. Goodrich.
Camera	Bert Glennon.

With Emil Jannings, William Powell, Evelyn Brent. Distributed in England by Paramount.

LAST LAUGH, The. (German.) 1925

Production	Ufa.
Direction	F. W. Murnau.
Scenario	Karl Mayer.
Camera	Karl Freund.

With Emil Jannings, Georg John, Emile Kurz, Mady Delschaft. A film without titles. Distributed in England by Wardour.

LOVE OF JEANNE NEY, The. (German.) 1927

Production	Ufa.
Direction	G. W. Pabst.
Scenario	Leonhardt.
Camera	Fritz Arno Wagner.
Design	Herman Warm.

With Edith Jehanne as *Jeanne Ney*, Fritz Rasp as *Count Zinajev*, Unc Henning as *Andrew Lobov*, Vladimir Sokoloff as *Zacharkevitsh*, Brigitte Helm as *Gabrielle*, Sigfried Arno as *Gaston*, Hertha von Walther as *Margot*, Jack Trevor as *M. le Blanc*, E. A. Licho as *Raymond Ney*. Based, without authority, on the novel by Ilya Ehrenburg. Distributed in England by Wardour Films.

* *MAN WITH THE CAMERA*, The. (Soviet.) 1928

Production	Vufku (Ukraine).
Direction	Dziga-Vertov.
Camera	Kauffmann.

A film of the cine-eye.

MANON LESCAUT. (German.) 1926

Production	Ufa.
Direction	Arthur Robison.
Camera	Theodor Sparkuhl.
Design	Paul Leni.

With Lya de Putti as *Manon Lescaut*, Vladimir Gaiderov as the *Chevalier des Grieux*, and Sigfried Arno, Theodor Loos, Lydia Potechina, Fried Richard. Based on the celebrated romance by the Abbé Prevost. Distributed in England by Wardour Films.

MARCHE DES MACHINES, La. (French.) 1928

Production and Direction	Eugène Deslav.

MARRIAGE CIRCLE, The. (American.) 1924

Production	Warner Brothers.
Direction	Ernst Lubitsch.
Scenario	Paul Bern.
Camera	Charles van Enger.

With Monte Blue, Adolphe Menjou, Florence Vidor, Marie Prevost. Based on the novel *Only a Dream*, by Lothar Schmidt. Distributed in England by Warner Bros.

* *MECHANICS OF THE BRAIN*, The. (Soviet.) 1925

Production	Mejrabpom-Russ.
Direction	V. I. Pudovkin.
Camera	A. N. Golovnia.

A documentary film illustrative of comparative mental processes Under the supervision of the workers in Professor Pavlov's laboratory at the Academy of Sciences, Leningrad.

* *MENILMONTANT*. (French.) 1926

Production and Direction	Dmitri Kirsanov.
Camera	L. Crouan.

With Nadia Sibirskaia. Shown to the Film Society, 30th May 1926.

METROPOLIS. (German.) 1926

Production	Ufa.
Direction	Fritz Lang.
Scenario	Thea von Harbou.
Camera	Karl Freund, Gunthur Rittau.
Design	Oscar Werndorff.

With Brigitte Helm as *Mary*, Gustav Fröhlich as *Erik*, Rudolph Klein-Rogge as *Rotwang*, Alfred Abel as *John Masterman*, Fritz Rasp as *Slim*. Distributed in England by W. and F. films.

MOANA. (American.) 1926

Production	Famous-Players-Lasky.
Direction	Robert Flaherty.
Camera	Bob Roberts.

Taken in the South Seas. Distributed in England by Paramount.

* *MOTHER.* (Soviet.) 1926

Production	Mejrabpom-Russ.
Direction	V. I. Pudovkin.
Scenario	N. A. Zarkhi.
Camera	A. N. Golovnia.
Design	S. V. Koslovski.

With A. Tchistiakov as the *Father*, Vera Baranovskaia as the *Mother*, Nickolai Batalov as the *Son*. Based on a story by Maxim Gorki. Shown to the Film Society, 21st October 1928.

* *NEW BABYLON.* (Soviet.) 1929

Production	Sovkino (Leningrad Studio).
Scenario and Direction	G. Kozintsev and L. Trauberg.
Camera	A. Moskvin.
Design	Y. Yenei.

With E. Kuzmina as the *Midinette*, D. Gutman as the *Boss*, P. Sobolenski as the *Soldier*, S. Gerasimov as the *Journalist*, A. Arnold as the *Député*, A. Kostrichki as the *Shopwalker*. Shown to the Film Society, 5th January

NEW YEAR'S EVE. (German.) 1924

Production	Rex Film.
Direction	Lupu Pick.
Scenario	Karl Mayer.
Camera	Guido Seeber, Hasselmann, Wolff.
Design	Robert Dietrich, Claus Richter.

With Eugène Klöpfer as the *Husband*, Edith Posca as the *Wife*, Frieda Richard as the *Mother*.

NIBELUNGEN SAGA. Part I.–*SIEGFRIED.* (German.) 1923

Production	Decla-Bioskop.
Direction	Fritz Lang.
Scenario	Thea von Harbou.
Camera	Karl Hoffmann, Gunthur Rittau.
Design	Otto Hunte, Karl Vollbrecht, Erich Kettlehut.

With Paul Richter as *Siegfried*, Margarete Schoen as *Kriemhild*, Theodor Loos as *Gunthur*, Hanna Ralph as *Brunhilde*, Bernard Goetzke as *Volker*,

the Minstrel, Frieda Richard as the *Reader of the Runes*, Hans von Schlettow as *Hagen Tronje*, Gertrude Arnold as *Queen Ute*, Georg John as *Mime, the Armourer*, and *Alberich, King of the Nibelungen*. Distributed in England by Graham Wilcox Productions.

NINA PETROVNA. (German.) 1929

Production	Ufa.
Supervision	Erich Pommer.
Direction	Hans Schwartz.
Camera	Karl Hoffmann.
Design	Walther Röhrig, Robert Herlth.
Architecture	Alexander Arnstam.
Costumes	Renée Hubert.

With Brigitte Helm as *Nina Petrovna*, Franz Lederer as *Lieutenant Rostov*, Warwick Ward as the *Colonel*. Distributed in England by Gaumont-British Films.

* *NJU*. (German.) 1924

Production	Rimax Film.
Direction	Paul Czinner.
Camera	Alex. Graetkjaer, Reimar Kuntze.
Design	G. Hesch.

With Emil Jannings as the *Husband*, Elizabeth Bergner as *Nju*, Conrad Veidt as the *Stranger*. Shown to the Film Society, 14th February 1926.

* *NOUVEAUX MESSIEURS*, Les. (French.) 1928

Production	Albatross-Sequana.
Direction	Jacques Feyder.
Camera	Maurice Désfassiaux, G. Périnal.
Design	Lazare Meerson.

With Gaby Morlay, Henri Roussel, Albert Préjean. From the story by Robert de Flers and Francis de Crosset.

* *OCTOBER*. (Soviet.) 1927–28

Production	Sovkino.
Direction	S. M. Eisenstein.

Assistant Direction . . . G. V. Alexandrov.
Camera . . . . . Eduard Tissé.

Musical score composed by Edmund Meisel. One of several films commissioned by the Soviet Government in connection with the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Russian Revolution. Known formerly as *THE TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD.*

* *OLD AND THE NEW*, The. (Soviet.) 1926–29

Production . . . . Sovkino.
Direction . . . . S. M. Eisenstein, G. Alexandrov.
Assistant Direction . . M. Straukh, M. Gomotov.
Camera . . . . Eduard Tissé.
Design . . . . K. Burov, V. Kovrigin.

With Martha Lapkina as the *Peasant Girl*. Known formerly as *THE GENERAL LINE.*

PANDORA'S BOX. (German.) 1928

Production . . . Nero Film.
Direction . . . . G. W. Pabst.
Camera . . . . Gunthur Krampf.
Design . . . . Andreiev, Hesch.

With Louise Brooks as *Lulu*, Gustav Diessl as *Jack-the-Ripper*, Fritz Körtner as *Dr. Schön*, Franz Lederer as *Alwa Schön*. Based on the two plays by Wedekind, *Erdgeist* and *Die Büchse der Pandora.*

PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC, La. (French.) 1927–28

Production . . . Société Générale de Films.
Direction . . . Karl Dreyer.
Scenario . . . Karl Dreyer, Joseph Deltiel.
Camera . . . . Rudolph Maté, Kotula.
Architecture . . . Herman Warm.
Costumes . . . Jean and Valentine Hugo.

With Mme. Falconetti as *Joan*. Distributed in England by Alpha Film Corporation.

* *PEASANT WOMEN OF RIAZAN*, The. (Soviet.) 1927

Production . . . . Sovkino.
Direction . . . . Olga Preobrashenskaia.

Scenario
Camera . . . . . K. Kusnetsov.
Design . . . . . D. Kolupajev.

With R. Pushnaia as *Anna*, E. Zeseerskaia as *Wassilissa*, E. Fabtrebitski as *Wassily*, M. Savelieff as *Nickolai*, C. Babynin as *Ivan*. Portions shown to the Film Society, 16th March 1930.

PICCADILLY. (British.) 1928

Production . . . British International Pictures.
Direction . . . E. A. Dupont.
Camera . . . . Werner Brandes.
Design . . . . Alfred Jünge.

With Jameson Thomas as *Valentine*, Gilda Grey as *Mabel*, Anna May Wong as *Sho-Sho*. Based on a story by Arnold Bennett. Distributed in England by Wardour.

PILGRIM, The. (American.) 1923

Production . . . First-National.
Direction . . . Charles Chaplin.

With Charlie Chaplin, Edna Purviance.

POLITIC FLAPPER, The. (American.) 1928

Production . . . . Metro-Goldwyn.
Direction . . . . King Vidor.
Scenario . . . . Agnes Christine Johnson.
Camera . . . . . John F. Seitz.
Design . . . . . Cedric Gibbons.

With Marion Davies, Jane Winton, Marie Dressler, Lawrence Gray. Distributed in England by Jury-Metro-Goldwyn.

POSTMASTER, The. (Soviet.) 1924

Production . . . . Mejrabpom-Russ.
Scenario . . . . Fiodor Otsep.
Direction . . . . Jeliabujski.

With Ivan Moskvin as *Simeon Vyrin*, W. S. Malinovskaia as *Douana*, and B. Tamarin as *Lieutenant Vladimir Minsky*. Based on the novel by Alexander Pushkin. Distributed in England by Film Booking Offices.

* *RASKOLNIKOV.* (German.) 1923

Production	Neumann Film.
Direction	Robert Wiene.
Camera	Willi Goldberger.
Design	Andrei Andreiev.

With Grigor Chmara as *Raskolnikov,* Maria Krishanovskaia as *Sonia.* Based on Dostoievski's *Crime and Punishment.* Shown to the Film Society, 20th December 1925.

RIEN QUE LES HEURES. (French.) 1926

Production	Néofilm.
Direction	Alberto Cavalcanti.
Camera	Jimmy Rogers.
Design	M. Mirovitch.

With Nina Chouvalowa, Philippe Hériat, Clifford MacLaglen.

ROBIN HOOD. (American.) 1923–24

Production	Allied Artists.
Direction	Allan Dwan.
Scenario	Lotta Woods.
Camera	Arthur Edeson.
Design	Wilfred Buckland.

With Douglas Fairbanks, Enid Bennett, Sam de Grasse, Paul Dickey. From a story by Elton Thomas. Distributed in England by United Artists' Corporation.

* *SCHINDERHANNES.* (German.) 1928

Production	Prometheus Film.
Direction	Kurt Bernhardt.
Scenario	Bernhardt, Karl Zuckmayer.
Camera	Gunthur Krampf.
Design	Heinrich Richter.

With Hans Stüwe, Frieda Richard, J. Kowal Samborski, Lissi Arna, Albert Steinrück, Oscar Homolka.

* *SEASHELL AND THE CLERGYMAN,* The. (French.) 1928

Production	Private.
Direction	Germaine Dulac.

Scenario . . . . Antonin Artaud.
Camera . . . . Paul Guichard.
Shown to the Film Society, 6th March 1930.

SHOOTING STARS. (British.) 1928

Production . . . British Instructional Films.
Direction . . . Anthony Asquith, A. V. Bramble.
Scenario . . . John Orton.
Camera . . . . G. Harris.
Design . . . . Ian Campbell-Gray.
With Anette Benson, Donald Calthrop, John Longden. Distributed in England by Pro Patria Films.

SPY, The. (German.) 1928

Production . . . Ufa.
Direction . . . Fritz Lang.
Scenario . . . Thea von Harbou.
Camera . . . . Fritz Arno Wagner.
Design . . . . Otto Hunte, Karl Vollbrecht.
With Gerda Maurus as *Sonia*, Rudolph Klein-Rogge as *Max Hagi*, Willy Fritsch as *No. 326*, Lupu Pick as *Dr. Matsumoto*, Lien Deyers as *Kitty*, Craighall Sherry as *Miles Jason*, Fritz Rasp as *Colonel Jellusic*, Hertha von Walther as the *Countess von Stiller*. Distributed in England by W. and F. Films.

STARK LOVE. (American.) 1927

Production . . . . Famous-Players-Lasky.
Direction . . . . Karl Brown.
Camera . . . . . Karl Brown.
With Helen Munday, Forest James, Silas Miracle. Distributed in England by Paramount.

STREET, The. (German.) 1923

Production . . . Stern Film.
Direction . . . Karl Grune.
With Eugène Klöpfer, as the *Man*, Aud Egede Nissen as the *Prostitute*. Distributed in England by Artistic Films (now the property of F. Alfred, Esq.).

STUDENT PRINCE, The. (American.) 1927–28

Production	Metro-Goldwyn.
Direction	Ernst Lubitsch.
Scenario	Hans Kraly.
Camera	John Mescall.
Design	Cedric Gibbons, Richard Day.

With Ramon Novarro, Norma Shearer, Jean Hersholt. Distributed in England by Jury-Metro-Goldwyn.

STUDENT OF PRAGUE, The. (German.) 1925–26

Production	Sokal Film.
Direction	Henrik Galeen.
Camera	Gunthur Krampf, Erich Nitschmann.
Design	Herman Warm.

With Conrad Veidt as *Baldwin*, Werner Krauss as *Scapinelli*, Agnes Esterhazy as the *Countess*, Elizza La Porte as the *Flower Girl*, and Ferdinand von Alten. Distributed in England by Film Booking Offices.

SUNRISE. (American.) 1927

Production	Fox Films.
Direction	F. W. Murnau.
Scenario	Karl Mayer.
Camera	Charles Roscher, Karl Struss.
Design	Rochus Gleise.

With Janet Gaynor, George O'Brien, Margaret Livingstone. Based on a story by Sudermann, *A Trip to Tilsit*. Distributed in England by Fox Films.

TARTUFFE. (German.) 1925

Production	Ufa.
Direction	F. W. Murnau.
Scenario	Karl Mayer.
Camera	Karl Freund.
Design	Walther Röhrig, Robert Herlth.

With Emil Jannings as *Tartuffe*, Lil Dagover as *Elmire*, Werner Krauss as *Orgon*, Louise Hoflich as *Dorine*. Based on the celebrated play by Molière. Distributed in England by Wardour Films.

THÉRÈSE RAQUIN. (French.) 1928

Production	Défu Film.
Direction	Jacques Feyder.
Scenario	F. Carlsen, Willi Haas.
Camera	——
Design	A. Andreiev.

With Gina Manés as *Thérèse Raquin*, Wolfgang Zelzer as the *Husband*, Hans von Schlettow as *Laurent*, Jeanne Marie Laurent as *Madame Raquin*, Paul Henkels as *Monsieur Grivet*. Based on the novel by Emile Zola. Distributed in England, as *THOU SHALT NOT—*, by First-National-Pathé.

THIEF OF BAGDAD, The. (American.) 1925

Production	Allied Artists.
Direction	Raoul Walsh.
Scenario	Lotta Woods.
Camera	Arthur Edeson, Kenneth Maclean, P. H. Whitman.
Design	William Cameron Menzies.

With Douglas Fairbanks, Julianne Johnson, Anna May Wong. From a story by Elton Thomas. Distributed in England by United Artists' Corporation.

TOL'ABLE DAVID. (American.) 1922

Production	First-National.
Direction	Henry King.
Camera	Henry Cronjager.

With Richard Barthelmess. Distributed in England by Western Import.

TRAGEDY OF THE STREET, The. (German.) 1928

Production	Pantomin Film.
Direction	Bruno Rahn.
Camera	Guido Seeber.
Design	C. L. Kirmse.

With Asta Nielson, Hilda Jennings, Oscar Homolka, W. Pittschau. Based on the book by William Braun. Distributed in England by Cinema Exclusives.

TURKSIB. (Soviet.) 1929

Production	Vostok-kino.
Scenario and Direction	Victor Turin.
Camera	E. Slavinski, B. Srancisson.

The film of the building of the Turkestan-Siberian Railway. Shown to the London Workers' Film Society, 9th March 1930. Distributed in England by the Atlas Film Co.

* *ÜBERFALL.* (German.) 1929

Production, Direction and Camera . Ernö Metzner.

Known in England as *ACCIDENT.* Shown to the Film Society, 5th January 1930.

VAUDEVILLE. (German.) 1925

Production	Ufa.
Supervision	Erich Pommer.
Direction	E. A. Dupont.
Scenario	Leo Birinski.
Camera	Karl Freund.
Design	Oscar Werndorff.

With Emil Jannings, Lya de Putti, Warwick Ward. Distributed in England by Wardour Films.

WALTZ DREAM, The. (German.) 1926

Production	Ufa.
Direction	Ludwig Berger.
Scenario	Robert Liebmann, Norbert Frank.
Camera	Werner Brandes.
Design	Rudolph Bamberger.

With Mady Christians, Willy Fritsch, Lydia Potechina, Julius Falkenstein. Distributed in England by Wardour Films.

WARNING SHADOWS. (German.) 1922

Production	——
Direction	Arthur Robison.

Scenario	R. Schneider.
Camera	Fritz Arno Wagner.
Design	Albin Grau.

With Fritz Körtner as the *Husband*, Ruth Weyher as the *Wife*, Gustav von Wangenheim as the *Lover*, Alexander Granach as the *Showman*, Fritz Rasp as the *Man Servant*, Ferdinand von Alten as the *Second Cavalier*, Max Gulstörss as the *Third Cavalier*. A film without titles. Distributed in England by Pinnacle Films.

WAXWORKS. (German.) 1924

Production	Viking Film.
Direction	Paul Leni.
Scenario	Henrik Galeen.
Camera	Halmar Lerski.
Design	Paul Leni, Alfred Jünge.

With Wilhelm Dieterle as the *Poet*, John Gottowt as the *Showman*, Olga Belejeff as the *Daughter*, Emil Jannings as *Haroun-Al-Raschid*, Conrad Veidt as *Ivan-the-Terrible*, Werner Krauss as *Jack-the-Ripper*. Distributed in England by Cinema Exclusives.

WAY DOWN EAST. (American.) 1921

Production	——
Direction	D. W. Griffith.
Camera	Hendrik Sartov, G. W. Bitzer.

With Lilian Gish, Richard Barthelmess.

WEDDING MARCH, The. (American.) 1926–29

Production	Famous-Players-Lasky.
Scenario	Harry Carr.
Direction	Erich von Stroheim.
Camera	Hal Mohr, B. Sorenson.

With Erich von Stroheim, Fay Wray, Zazu Pitts, Maude George. Distributed in England by Paramount.

WHITE GOLD. (American.) 1927

Production	Producers' Distributing Co.
Direction	William Howard.
Camera	Lucien Andriot.

With Jetta Goudal, Kenneth Thompson, Clyde Cook, George Bancroft. Distributed in England by Producers' Distributing Co.

WHITE SHADOWS IN THE SOUTH SEAS. (American.) 1928

Production	Metro-Goldwyn.
Direction	W. S. Van Dyck.
Camera	Bob Roberts, Clyde de Vinna, George Nagle.

With Monte Blue, Raquel Torres. Taken in the South Seas. Distributed in England by Jury-Metro-Goldwyn.

WOMAN OF PARIS, A. (American.) 1923

Production	Allied Artists.
Direction	Charles Chaplin.
Scenario	Charles Chaplin.
Assistant Direction	Monta Bell.
Camera	Jack Wilson, Roy Totheroh.

With Edna Purviance, Adolphe Menjou. Distributed in England by United Artists' Corporation.

* *ZVENIGORA.* (Soviet.) 1928

Production	Vufku (Ukraine).
Direction	O. Dovjenko.
Scenario	Iohansen, Yourtic.
Camera	Kosmatov.
Design	W. Kormardenkov.

With Nicolas Nademski as the *Old Man.*

APPENDIX II

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN CONNECTION WITH THE FILM

ARCHITECT. – The technician in whose hands lies the design, erection, and furnishing of sets in the studio or on the lot (an outside set in the studio grounds). He is frequently misdescribed as an art-director, a term indicating that he directs the 'art' of a film. This, of course, is absolutely incorrect, except possibly when applied to the art films of the middle period of the German Cinema.

CAMERA ANGLE. – The viewpoint from which a scene is photographed, the position of the camera being governed by *mood* of the scene. Normal angle is generally reckoned as being four feet six inches above ground level. The position of the camera is always controlled by material composing the scene which is being photographed.

CLOSE UP. – A detail shot of emphasis, taken at close range to the material.

COMPOSITE SHOT. – Either several shots taken on the same strip of negative or one scene taken through a prism.

CONTINUITY. – The development of the thematic-narrative from point to point during the showing of a film. In other words, the psychological guidance of the spectator.

CUTTING. – The action of a cut is to change direct from one visual image on the screen to another in immediate succession; actually it consists in the joining of one strip of film to another bearing a different photographic image.

DIALOGUE FILM. – The attempted synchronisation of the visual image on the screen with its accompanying speech, the sound either being recorded on a strip at the side of the frames, on discs, or by other technical methods.

DIRECTOR. – Actually, the creator of the film, the central organiser who has complete control over the realisation of the theme.

DISSOLVE. – The transition from one visual image on the screen to another by a process of the first slowly disappearing as the second appears in its place, *through* the first. A dissolve, as distinct from a mix, is effected in the camera, although the results of both are almost similar.

DOUBLE. – An extra used to impersonate a leading actor for the purpose of some hazardous action, or for other reasons.

EDITING. – To be understood as the complete constructive building of the film, through all the three stages of cine-organisation (the three acts of montage).

EXTRA – A player employed by the day for crowd work.

FADE-IN. – The gradual appearance of a visual image on a dark screen, usually marking the opening of a sequence.

FADE-OUT. – The reverse process to a Fade-in.

FLASH. – A short strip of film, of a few frames, resulting in a rapid visual image on the screen.

FLAT. – A piece of scenery, usually of three-ply wood, braced by stouter struts, made in stock sizes, out of which the walls, etc., of a set in a studio are built.

FOCUS. – The concentration of a light.

FRAME. – In connection with a strip of film, one single picture recorded photographically on the celluloid, which eventually enlarges when projected in the cinema to fill the screen area. On the film strip, a frame is three-quarters of an inch high by one inch wide (normal stock). These sizes are, of course, considerably affected by allowance for the sound strip in the case of synchronised reproduction. Various movements are also on foot for the use of larger-sized stock in connection with the use of larger screen areas.

GLASS-SHOT. – A shot taken partly of a constructed set and partly of a representation of the desired effect on a sheet of glass, which is placed in front of the lens of the camera so as to coincide with the perspective of the built-up set.

INSERT. – A slang term for any written or printed matter in a film other than a title, such as letters, posters, newspapers, etc.

IRIS-IN. – The two-dimensional effect on the screen of an opening circle, revealing a visual image.

IRIS-OUT. – The reverse process to the Iris-in. (Both these methods are old-fashioned, being displaced by the fade.)

LOCATION. – An exterior site outside the studio grounds indicated by the scenario.

LONG-CUTTING. – The use of long strips of film during editing for the building up of a long, soothing or sad effect on the audience. A series of visual images succeeding one another in slow deliberation.

MASK. – A vignette of gauze or metal placed in front of the lens of the camera, isolating a certain portion of the visual image on the screen.

MIX. – Or Chemical Mix, causing the same visual effect as a dissolve, but chemically constructed in the laboratory, in distinction to the dissolve being a pure camera process.

MONTAGE. – The act of assembling material, whether of scenario, of

material in the studio or on location, or of the strips of celluloid bearing photographic images during the editing.

ONE TURN – ONE PICTURE. – A single picture for every complete turn of the camera handle, instead of the usual number. Consequently, certain movements of the material are not recorded, and when the film is projected on to the screen an effect of jerkiness is obtained.

PAN. TO – The horizontal and vertical movement of the camera, the actual position of the camera not altering.

PANCHROMATIC STOCK. – Film sensitive to larger range of light than ordinary stock.

PICTORIAL COMPOSITION. – The picture plane provided by the screen, bordered by the margins of same, on which material is grouped according to accepted standards of linear design and cinematic principles of movement.

POSITIVE FILM. – Film on to which negative is printed, and which is projected on to the screen.

PRODUCER. – The managing director of the producing company; the controller of the policy of the picture.

REEL. – One thousand feet of film, taking approximately twelve to fifteen minutes to show on the screen, according to speed of projection.

RUSHES. – The day's 'takes' of film in the studio projected in the studio theatre for examination on the part of the director, etc.

SCENARIO-PLAN. – The manuscript of the narrative in terms of shots, scenes and sequences, from which the director works on the studio floor or on exterior. It should contain, beyond a complete literary description of the visual images that compose the pattern of the film, plans and drawings of the sets and of the camera positions.

SEQUENCE. – A natural division of the narrative incident into sections; a series of shots dealing with one phase in the development of the narrative.

SET. – A structural erection of a room, a street, etc., in studio or on exterior, specially built to meet the requirements of the scenario. The building and furnishing of the set is under the supervision of the architect, whose sole duty is to fulfil the needs of the director.

SHOOTING-SCRIPT. – See scenario-plan.

SHOOT, TO. – The act of taking the film, whether in the studio or on location. It is customary to refer to material being shot, meaning photographed.

SHORT-CUTTING. – The use of short strips of film during editing for creating a quick, stimulating effect on the audience. A series of quick flashes in rapid succession.

SHOT, A – One separate visual image on the screen, its time length being governed by the number of frames of film as determined in the editing.

SOFT-FOCUS. – A picture taken through varying thicknesses of gauze or focus disc, giving on the screen a soft, misty effect.

SOUND FILM. – A film composed of visual images and titles that has a mechanically recorded accompaniment of sound images and music, either in counterpoint or contrapuntally arranged in relation to the visual images. It is imperative to differentiate between the use of *sound* and the use of recorded *dialogue*.

STILL-PHOTOGRAPH. – A static photograph of some separate shot in a film, either taken during production or enlarged afterwards from the film itself. Examples may be seen in the photographs with which this book is illustrated.

SUPERIMPOSE, To – Two or more scenes photographed on the same piece of negative.

SYNOPSIS. – A brief description of a proposed film in narrative form, setting down for the approval or disapproval of the producer the potentialities of the theme as a film subject.

TITLE OR SUB-TITLE. – The textual matter included in the film, either in the form of dialogue between the characters or as a continuity title to explain the course of the narrative.

THROW. – The distance between the screen and the projector in a cinema.

TREATMENT. – A descriptive, literary rendering of the film, in narrative form, indicating the full visual potentialities of the scenario as a cinematic subject. Although suggesting the manner in which the subject should be handled, the treatment does not include the concatenation of shots, which is strictly a matter of the succeeding detailed shooting-script. The treatment stage of a scenario lies between the brief synopsis and the shooting-script.

VISUAL IMAGE. – A single shot on the screen, governed visually by the principles of film pictorial composition and temporally by the act of editing.

APPENDIX III

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