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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

Nobody would believe, from a scrutiny of film conditions at this present time, that Close Up could be enjoying yet another birthday. Yet here we are, unweakened by attrition or starvation, once more going forth—kind of Zodiacal Aries—butting with horns, stamping with hooves, lacking only a dragon’s fire to scorch our enemies. This is again a happy anniversary, and Aries is growing to a big ram. His woolly head is wiser and his rounded horns have grown hard.

To-day, because it is his birthday, he is sitting quietly, with his head not far above the earth, not making many signs. If you are misled into thinking he has eaten too much birthday cake, someone—a thought-reader, shall we say—will put you right for the asking.

His mood is serious, even slightly troubled. He has much to think about, and few to confide in. For he does not take such woes as he has outside a limited family group. The thought-reader will pause here, and ask you if you wish the divination to continue. Without losing his pensive stare,
the ram will demur that if he is a little troubled it can be only on account of growing pains. And the thought-reader will continue.

If the ram is not careful he will think himself into a mood of pessimism. Forsaking momentarily diagnosis, the thought-reader will philosophise. A doubt is a fecund breeder. If you are troubled with one, ten minutes’ thought will multiply it to the point where you yourself are a point of negative consciousness, receiving vibrations of defeat, loss and suffering. The ram replies that his own heavenly sign knows no defeat. There is difference, he says, between doubts. Abstract doubt—the doubt of something you believe because of will to believe—is different from doubt that is philosophic, and, in effect, constructive preparation for what trends the future may assume.

The talking film, says the ram (for it begins from there) is a parricide. A tinny warrior from the costumier, who, making martial gestures with his papier-maché sword, steps clumsily back ten years or more, and is even now marking time on the trampled body of his parent. He is a Roman bully, dressed by a wiggery, and his ultimate culture may well attain a counterfeit of Rome’s rank swaggering.

* * *

He is, indeed, to his parent what all Rome’s clap-trap was to intellectual Greece. Cymbals, swank, the militant imperialism of the screen; for his cultural summit the engaging pathology of a Caligula. Reflect that with his new tin trumpets, every stroll will be a festival procession, noises lopping down the quiet like earliest branches. Already his
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jurisdiction is noisy like a gong or braying ass in the vanquished towns. The defeated stand behind windows, whispering; the pleasant towns are littered with damaged culture. The half-built houses are deserted. No work will be done on them, and the débris lies on discarded building stuff. None of the old machines can be heard at work any more, and there is only watching and fear. The air is full of the dust of the new jerry-buildings. Adding a voice that takes away all that people put in for themselves. Expelling imagination. The personal concept banished. The gesture that to each meant something that each alone in some way of his own created and gave to himself, must cede in favor of that to which a voice can reduce it. The accidental charm beyond a director's intention, that was imagination caught in some mesh of recognition or memory or suggestion or joy, must go before the incredible half-wit snortings that are supposed to justify the plaster trees and unspeakable potted foliage of the studio out-of-doors. We are back with backdrops and barnstorming.

* * *

So thinks the ram, for he thinks of the present, not (for the moment) of the future. The waiting, waiting. The weeping artists starved from their love and their work. These matter.

The back stepping of the tinfoil gladiator may be a balancing necessity for forward leap. The leap may be long and clean . . . . . . . . . . . . . . But certainly longer than clean. And a long time will have to pass indeed before charlatans, vulgarians and opportunists are chased from the field. For the next few years talking films mean rehash. Rehash of Somerset Maugham, of Frederick Lonsdale, of Michael
Arlen, of theatre names we had, not out of reason, expected to hear no more. Rehash of *Madame X*, of *Stella Dallas*, and the screen’s life-sentenced, worst offenders. Rehash of Pauline Frederick, Nazimova, Mae Murray—of all the stars that cooled and fell to vaudeville. Somebody’s Nemesis! They trained their talk and rehabilitate themselves with specially ground, soft-focus lenses, ready to repeat forgotten triumphs of their prime in 1902 and 1910 and 1880.

The artists wait and wait. World sales, markets, exploitation, profits, were hedging them in, closing them round, herding them, reducing and reducing their opportunity and scope, until, one by one, Sweden, Germany, France, went deeper and deeper to waste, leaving only Russia, firm in her beliefs but shaken financially and sounding the markets of the world for possible sales. The impregnable Eisenstein going and going to Hollywood. Pudovkin leading a rôle in a wholly callow and fatuous German film. Feelers . . . . indications . . . . premise. Quiet erosion everywhere. Then, like a monstrous tidal bore, the onrush of the talkie. Quiet erosion now a rapid crash and fall of land. Back ten, back fifteen years. Back to Sonny Boy and Mammie Mine and Don’t Go Down the Mine, Daddie. Back to proscenium front. Back unashamedly to Little Dorrit and East Lynne. Back to a hundred thousand Dancing Daughters, back to the bootlegger and the thug. Back to Bella Donna and Mary Dugan. Back to Methuselah. Back, in short, to front!

* * *

And the vanquished, whispering behind windows, say
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among themselves, there is no need for this retrogression, the manacled, slave-driven genius turns happily to sound, seeing already beyond the tap of feet outside to counterpoint view of an empty room, beyond firebells, beyond the dripping water-tap. Is not the fancy-dress Caesar already using the lapping of rivers, the soughing of rain . . . . .? But the genius knows there is no place for him yet. Al Jolson has still to make a greater singing fool of himself. Dolores Costello has yet to be filtered to something at least as quiet as a saw-mill. No wonder the genius weeps.

* * *

Then over this sullen sky shone one apocalyptic line of light. Erno Metzner made Überfall, and the way of the genius director was pointed. And, as quickly, the apocalyptic ray was snuffed by the censor—the one man who believes that Justice is blind and works accordingly. Überfall was a message of hope. A way out, a pass, a defile. It presented new form for the short film. And, as yet, there is nothing to be done to the meddlers who have power to forbid it.

* * *

Such are the ram’s thoughts on his birthday. Not gay, you have seen. A little too discouraged perhaps. But the thought-reader was wrong about vibrations of defeat, and the ram is not asking for silent films again, though it looks uncommonly like it. He is asking for intelligent sound films. He has seen his friends hurt, and would willingly hasten to his butting. The year ahead is already licked by war as a house by flames.
Three plans:—

1. To go on butting the censor. Reform first. Abolition when the strength is on our side.

2. International copyright law to protect directors.

3. Abhorrence of half-measures and second best, than which there is no greater subjugation.

We are not, however, done with our changes. "Natural Vision"—a stereoscopic demonstration, was recently given by R. C. A. A screen thirty feet high, fifty-two feet long—an area of 1,560 square feet of glass—showed films made by the Spoor-Berggren system. Photophone made the noises. The new camera likes to photograph scenes five miles away. Everywhere they are making the same claim—that it will do away with the necessity for close-ups. If this isn’t a catchphrase it’s a menace. Close-ups are rarely explanatory any more. They are part of (if the overworked word can bear it) psychology. However, in the near future, Hollywood directors will no doubt set their cameras on Florida beach and photograph a film directed by radio in Hongkong. An expedition through Nicaragua will necessitate no greater hazard than a ride round the suburbs or a rostrum on the roof. We shall be able to sit at our desks and photograph Titicaca and the fauna of Popocatapetl. Eisenstein won’t have to go to Hollywood. He will film it from a window of the Sovkino Leningrad studios. The close-up will vanish and the far-off will take its place. In our homes will be shilling-in-the-slot meters. We will put in our shilling, take off the receiver, and there in front of us, natural colored Lilliputians that we can if we want to stroke with
the hand, will perform for us. We may even be able to keep them as pets.

It suggests possibilities. A tap of the button in time may create a footman, a country residence, a well cooked dinner or a lover. All vanishable at will. The age of the ionised, electrically induced. Cinemas, with screens all round the walls, on floor and ceiling. Where the public can take tea or shake a cocktail with the manifestations of the stars. It looks like being a world worth living in.

* * *

The ram thanks all who have sent him birthday greeting, and hopes they will be with him always. He sends greeting to his friends and will do his best to keep them.

Kenneth Macpherson.

THE FRENCH CINEMA

Jean Lenauer, writing in the May Close Up, has said some true things which, because they are not qualified, are dangerous. To say, for instance, that to him the French have no sense of the cinema is no light charge, and, one may counter with one of two remarks: this is a prejudice and not a critical judgment, or the question, a sense of what cinema? For M. Lenauer, like his young French colleagues, is all for the American cinema. It is true that he charges
the French directors with apeing the American successes, but from every indication his cinema-mind has been formed by the U.S.A. movie. He is in this a European and particularly a Frenchman, although his nativity is Viennese. Like the young Frenchmen, he claims the movie as his and only his, and to have been born before the film or with it—as in my own case—is to be put beyond the pale. The young Frenchman delights in saying the French are without a cinema-sense. Lenauer has in the May Close-Up only repeated M. Auriol in transition No. 15, M. Charensol in La Revue Federaliste of November, 1927, and the first utterer of this condemnation, the late Louis Delluc. There are a host of others. In truth, the young Frenchman is developing a defeatist mind, and Lenauer is throwing on his little pressure.

One of the slogans of the French counter-French critic is the denial of youth in the French cinema world. Everyone I have met has complained of this, and Cavalcanti was glad to have even an inane actress in Captain Fracasse because she was young. Youth! Youth! it is a perennial cry. And what does it here signify? What does Youth claim in this instance? That the cinema belongs to it. And how does it substantiate its claim? By repeating the attitudes of the Frenchmen who first began to swear fidelity to the film. Auriol utters Soupault's adorations of the American action-film. And everyone of them echoes Canudo. Except that, typical of youth of all ages, these youngest Frenchmen are rebelling against the old cinema—of France. The Revolt of Youth? Nonsense. The Rebellion of Youth! Impatience and arrogance mostly. There is little development here in France of that salutary skepticism among intelligent young
men which includes in its scrutinies Youth. For Youth is not a fact, it is a symbol, and that symbol has no reference to the date of one's birth. It is true that art and youth are related, but it is not the youth of which Lenauer talks, but youth which means fervor. Will Lenauer say that the older Frenchmen whom he condemns are all without fervor? And am I, are we, to deny sincerity and depth of devotion to the film to all those who do not love the film in the way Lenauer says he loves it? And just how does he love it? Is it a sign of love to condemn all who challenge the beloved? That is chivalry in the wrong category. And just when did Lenauer begin to love the film? Of course these questions are not for M. Lenauer himself.* Nor do I ask for an answer. These questions contain certain implications:

I. The cinema was not born with the motion picture. It has its origins in the first experiences of mankind, and its sources are all the manifestations of life.

II. To care for the film only may be a good way to a career but it is certainly no assurance that the film will be enriched. Creation in one art, or activity in one profession,

* I am not, it is self-evident, directing my words against M. Lenauer. I am thinking of all the lovers of the cinema who cry their love aloud. I know too many parallel instances in America to be convinced too readily by the declaration: "I love the cinema." The American enthusiasts of 1923—and now—were superior to the film only a few years before their discovery of it as "art." Their interest came only as a consequence of popular enthusiasm, and an urge to be of the time. But no critical affection is worth anything unless it has grown from the visceral pleasure of childhood. Are the young Frenchmen, and young Europeans, experiencing a belated childhood? (I dwell upon the American phenomenon in an article, French Opinion and the American Movie, appearing in Du Cinema).
does not, even in this age of specialization, bar one from another art or another profession.

The cult of youth has produced some interesting conditions in the French cinema. There is no differentiation here between the amateur and the professional. And this is bad for the amateur, the beginner. The group of young men which includes Auriol and Lenauer will agree that what I say about the inflation of the amateur is true, but they will not agree that they are contributing to the very condition they mock. If there is snobbism in France, and there is, they are strengthening it by their attitude, and one of them is youth. Any number of youngsters (some of older age) put out a film deriving rudimentarily from *Rien que les Heures* (without full awareness of the principle) or *Berlin* and enter the ranks of the *metteurs en scène*, with the footnote: forgive the transgressions, they are young and they had no money. To produce a film without money always excites the professional (or better commercial) world, but it should mean nothing to the beginner—that's just how he should begin, and moreover, why should his first work be made public? In America we distinguish between the amateur and the professional, and that is the amateur's salvation. It is a part of the discipline of any artist to "be rejected" or to be ignored—that he may learn how really insignificant his infant labors are. If youth is not favoured in the large French companies, its favor in the specialized halls is certainly less creditable.

If the young Frenchman really cares about the French film, he will not heed the cry of defeat (which is really a self-inflation) but will examine the French film to learn the French idiom, which must be his. That the American film, by its
very remoteness from his own physical experience, enchants him is not enough reason for him to mistake that enchantment for the complete and sole experience of cinema. If he really loves the film, he will not show it by talk upon the influence of the movie on customs, such as gum-chewing, to which he is an addict, or physical gestures after James Murray or George Bancroft. Nor will he show it by damning the French girl for Joan Crawford or Louise Brooks. Nor by an ignorance of the past of the American film, which he so much idolizes. Nor by limiting motion to antic, action, speed. Nor by finding Victor MacLaglen a great artist, whereas that lucky Irishman has a constant (hence non-artistic) personality no matter what the film. Nor by denying the meritorious Catherine Hessling because she casually recalls Mae Murray. He will stop chattering and go to work. He will discipline himself and question his enthusiasms, or at least examine them to know where to put them. AND HE WILL STUDY THE FRENCH INTELLIGENCE IN ITS EXPRESSION IN THE FRENCH FILM, whether he likes its makers or not. His head is now stuffed with American idioms, but he will need to be re-born an American before he will make an integral film of them. The Frenchman remains a provincial all his life.

To remain a provincial is no limitation to an artist. The Frenchman's Frenchness has been one of the chief reasons for his cultural and aesthetic survival amid influences that should have long destroyed or reduced him. He creates within his own boundaries. Nowhere is this condition more apprehendable than in the cinema. The French mind shows itself constantly in the success and the failure.
The French mind is, first, a pictorial mind. The French cinematist is pictorial-minded. He is not in the least, as is the American, action-minded. This is as noticeable in the old serial thrillers, whose idiom is action, as in the absolute films of the avant-garde. Nor is the pictorial mind counter-cinema. Nothing is counter-cinema. And no people are incapable of making films. The task is to use the mind where it can legitimately function. It cannot function in police films: do not attempt police films. It functions in documentaries, films of restricted areas, films psychological and metaphysical, etc.: set it to work in these milieus. The pictorial mind can be set to work badly or well. It is daily perceived in the "grand" French films where it is resultant in a tedious, over-adorned spectacle like Koenigsmark. The pictorial mind does not lend itself very easily to "big" films. Action alone makes these supportable. That is one reason why the French cannot compete commercially with America. But the cinema is not justified by commerce, no more than Balzac's right to exist is determined by the public taste for Dekobra.

The pictorial mind succeeds best when it functions independently within limited areas. Germaine Dulac does a fascinating film in *The Sea-Shell and the Clergyman* and a charming film in *Mme. Beudet*, but when she turns to do a "large-scale" film she puts out the sentimental "poesie" of *The Folly of the Valiant*. "Poesie" is the pictorial mind forced to extend itself out of its non-literary milieu. Gance is full of "poesie." He belongs to the France of Rodin, and with Poirier, to the France of Lamartine and Hugo without their vision. The best instance of the pictorial mind rightly
From *Leprouse*, a film by Usbekgoskino.
A silk portrait of a famous Japanese movie-actor—Ziodsa Hajassi.

A Japanese movie poster.
Japanese film art. *Bamboo*, one of the only light comedies in the traditional manner. Director, J. Shige Sudzuki.
Film Psychology. Sketch by Paul Rothena. (All rights reserved.)

Interpretive sketches by Paul Rothena. This one is entitled Visualisation of short-cut sequence in studio prior to take. (All rights reserved.)
Film Continuity. By Paul Rotha. (All rights reserved.)
From *Hands*, a new film by Fama-Film of Berlin, directed by Miklós Bándy, after an idea by Stella F. Simon, photographed by Leopold Kutzleb. Music by Marc Blitzstein.
Hands has four leading roles, two male and two female as well as "other hands." It is 609 metres in length.
From *Arsenal*, the Wufku "super" film, by Dovenkof. The epoch of the struggle of the Ukrainian people in October, 1917, against the Petlyura Rada, and the insurrection of the workers of the arsenal. *Arsenal* is considered in the USSR as a great achievement of Ukrainian proletarian culture.
applied is Jean Epstein. He insists upon the image, lingers over it, penetrates it. What does it matter that *Finis Terrae* is slow? What does it mean that it does not satisfy those who wanted the subject treated *physically* instead of *psychically*? Epstein has shown how the physical material may be rendered psychical by persisting in the examination of the physical image. The pictorial mind here transcends itself.

It is in keeping with the pictorial mind that the French have made so much of the term "photogenic," that Germaine Dulac indefatigably urges the *film visuel* as against the *film anti-visuel*. It is right that Man Ray should have found his centre in Paris, and that the best short, non-narrative films should come from France: *The Octopus* of Jean Painleve as well as that early nature study, *The Germination of Plants, The Zone* of Georges Lacombe, *La P'tite Lily* of Cavalcanti . . .

This leads to a second deduction, the source of the French film is in the traditional *atelier* of French art. It is true, in the main, that the film dependent upon collective labors has a hard row in France (but, from another point of view, does it have such a good time in America?).† This is not irremediable. My deduction is not, however, made from negative conditions but conditions which are organic and positive. All that I have said before leads to the deduction,

† The collective difficulty in France is mainly the natural indifference of the French working man, and the financial closeness of the producer. As for the major collectivity, between the artists, I think, on the whole, a better *esprit* exists in France than in America. And as for the intrusion of the mercantilists into the enterprise of the author, what grosser instance than that of Hollywood?
and the most interesting films are those made from the atelier, single-artist viewpoint. This does not infer that the French film must rest in the atelier, as the pictorial mind does not infer that the French film must remain in the framed set. Not in the least. The instances of Finis Terrae, En Rade, Two Timid Souls are sufficient to gainsay such inferences. Yet these films are films with their sources in the atelier-mind and the pictorial-mind. With Epstein the atelier becomes the study, for speculation and metaphysics. En Rade is the pictorial mind providing an enveloping environment. Two Timid Souls is evidence of the pictorial mind creating comic rhetoric of the picture. Comedy in America is action. The gag in Two Timid Souls is a pictorial gag, in Harold Lloyd it is the antic gag. Chaplin makes very little of the picture.

The atelier-source does not (the word "source" is the explanation) limit the French film to the laboratory where Jean Lenauer confines it, although the experimental film will always be a French contribution. Nor does it restrict the film to its absolute forms. It means simply that the film companies must recognize the mind of the French artist and work according to it. The Société Générale des Films promised to be just that sort of corporation, allowing the director, and not the fiscal policy, to set the pace. At present the Société Générale seems to be biding its time amid the confusion caused by the talking picture. But its single-film policy is the accurate one for the French cinema. For that cinema, because of the characteristics detectable in it (which I have considered above) will not be a world's popular cinema, and no contingenment can make it that. In fact, the
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French have not, in their entertainment, the gift of the popular, whether in the revue, the vaudeville show or the motion picture.

The French need to be vigilant against two related faults: sentimentality and refinement. The French sentimentality is not moral sentimentality, as in the case of the English and the American, but aesthetic sentimentality. It is present in almost every French film, but where it is held within the boundaries of each instance it aids rather than oppresses the film. It is sensitivity in *The Sea-Shell and the Clergyman* of Germaine Dulac, and in her *Cinegraphic Study upon an Arabesque*; it is sensitivity bordering on collapse in *En Rade*; it is sensitivity avoiding collapse by larger references in Epstein; it is a diffusive and soft sentimentality in Poirier and Gance. Leon Poirier has made beautiful documents in *The Black Journey* and the second part of *Exotic Loves* where the image is the end, but in *Verdun* and *Jocelyn*, where the image refers to its sources in national and literary experience, he offends with his superfluous stresses of sentiment, and that is sentimentality, or one form of it. Gance continually associates his image with some “poetic” phrase: Violin and the lily, Napoleon and the eagle (in *Napoleon*), “the rose of the rail” (in *The Wheel*). And both enjoy the sur-impressed symbol: The Spirit of France. I have said Gance was Hugo without Hugo’s vision. That makes him the

† A signal instance of refinement applied wrongly is Renoir’s *The Little Match-Girl*, where the operetta-Russian Ballet (which is really French in its mincingness) decorative sense was exercised upon a Danish folk-theme. Decorative refinement is one of the main obstacles to the creation of a French cinema comedy.
counterpart in cinema of Eugene Sue. The French "big" film is eighteenth-century romanticism. In that it is very much the France of to-day. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century romanticism.

Of this ilk is the recently sponsored humanitarianism of the French film. Another sentimentalism. For an inclusive humanitarianism is not in keeping with the French temperament of non-projection and dispassion. Therefore it is frequently false, particularly when uttered by those who find in the slogan profit. M. Tedesco hails the "new humanitarianism" of the American film, finding that sympathy in films like The Crowd, Lonesome, Underworld, A Girl in Every Port, etc. I shall not here go into any examination of the American films. But to discover one's human experience at this level of cinema content, indicates that the discovery is hardly profound. This acceptance of American "human interest" films as human experience accords with the frequent French declaration that the movie is not an art. This is the Frenchman's justification of his affections. The whole matter of art is resolved in the levels of experience. The level at which the matter of life is experienced, determines the category of art or non-art.

The dispassion of the French keeps them, on the whole, more rational towards the love-life than other peoples. Therefore the Frenchman who declared against the need for Freud was not so much in error as Lenauer implies. But this dispassion does make it difficult for the French to project themselves into the lives of a less indifferent, more passionate people. But to say that they never project themselves into such lives is to forget that the French have been the most
persistent admirers of the Swedish film, the only fully realized passionate pictures. Here I think French critical rationality recognizes the level of tragic experience at which the Swedes have conceived their films. I do not like the way in which Sunrise was received by the French multitudes, but I must admit that the level at which it was conceived, sustained though it was throughout the enfoldment of the narrative, was a level at which it might just as easily have been rejected. For the material may have attained to the tragic, in the German conception it reached only pathos, and pathos is not far from sentimentality, emotional sentimentality. (I say all this despite my admiration of the film and its director.) The French reject emotional sentimentality, but they accept decorative sentimentality.

There have been a few French instances of approximative tragedy in the cinema, and these few instances indicate a milieu which the French have not nearly begun to exploit. I refer at this moment to the domestic tragedy, which provides immediate activity for all the French qualities of provincialism, limited locale, pictorial-mind. The film that first comes to my mind is Poil de Carotte of Julien Duvivier (with continuity, I am advised, by Jacques Feyder). The film was poignant and convincing and in every particular French. Therese Raquin belongs to the French acceptation, despite the pronounced German qualities of the exterior lighting and the acting of the two male players. (Feyder, a Belgian, is assimilative.) The French, if they but knew, would do the domestic film. Dulac gave us Mme. Beudet, sensitive in its irony carried pictorially. Nine years ago Albert Dieudonné made Une Vie sans Joie (called Backbiters in England) and
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had he ceased where the tale demanded, he would have presented to a sympathetic audience a tragic idyll. Instead he continued the film into the episode of the runaway tramway, where it looked very much like a take-off of an old French tinted film of a locomotive’s dash. Jean Benoit-Lévy and Marie Epstein have recently produced Peau de Péche. It is a melange of many themes expressed in the images and the captions. But amid this melange one detects certain promises: in the images of both the city and the country, in the characterization of the chum of Peach-Skin, and in one episode which should have been the film. The little stream which is the sustenance of the neighbourhood runs dry. The peasants have assembled to hear the radio of one of their neighbors. While they listen a cry comes from one of the lads: “The river is back!” An old man says: “Of what importance is the world to us now? We have a river back.” A monumental theme expressed in the area of a small village in the provinces. A theme that obscures the entire film. A theme that indicates a possible point toward which the French film can strive. It is a theme for Jean Epstein.

Jean Epstein is an artist the rest of the French directors might study with profit. He is, although, I believe, a Jew, born in Poland, French in his virtues and his faults. His faults are almost always rendered virtuous by an all-inclusive mind which is not far removed from French sentimentalism, but which, by nobler intention and speculation, becomes mysticism. Epstein deals with inferences, the inferences of the penetrated image. His film Finis Terrae is, I think, of highest significance to France. I can indicate some errors, like the shifting of the point of view from the boys and their
mothers to the doctor, but they do not contradict the contribution. The film is entirely pictorial-minded. It takes the natives as it finds them and builds the image of their stolid movements. I detect in this, not the snobbery Lenauer finds, but relevant intelligence. However, I do not intend speaking upon Epstein here. I reserve that for a paper wholly upon him. I wish only to indicate that here is one source for the French cinema.

And what will the French film take from Joan of Arc? It’s perfection does not mean that it does not contain the germ of propagation. It too is built of the image. True it was done by a Scandinavian. But it was done with French material and it’s method offers an opportunity for the French intelligence. Another source—and this is one out of the boundaries of France—is the Swedish film of the days of Sjöstrom and Stiller. The American film, whose "technique" so infatuates the French mind, is not a source for that mind.

Sources: that is the first investigation every artist should make. I have dwelt upon the systemic sources for the French cinema. But, since the cinema, no more than any other art, is isolated, it will find its sources, not only in itself, nor in the mind immediately referring to it, but also in the other aesthetic articulations. Dreyer went to the medieval French miniature for a source to embolden the imagery, and hence the drama, of Joan. The French theatre is full of sources of identical mind with the French cinema mind: take Gaston Baty’s production of Moliere’s The Imaginary Invalid. The pictorial mind dominates. The French cinéaste must cease his absolutes of non-accord between the theatre
and the cinema. He must look into all his experience and expressions to discover himself. He must believe he can create cinema, if he is faithful to his own intelligence, intuition and experience.

H. A. Potamkin.

SCATTER BRAINS

Hope alone remaining! The procession from this year's box of Pandora is headed by the talkies, the squawkies and Al Jolson clad in his son's pyjamas.

Enter and exit Mr. Pudovkin, at intervals, followed by the eyes of press interviewers; while Jannings, tricked out as a siren on the rocks, tries to attract their attention by creating records in india-rubber mouths.

Anna May Wong is merely a spectator, standing in a corner with upraised hands. Buster Keaton throws an occasional knife in her direction with a certain indifference.

Conspicuous in the chorus of step-dancing daughters is Joan Crawford (futurist costume), but a determined lady is attempting to duplicate her "goings-on"; her dark hair, flashing eyes and slightly damaged diadem proclaim her to be Madame Pola Negri.

Hope alone remaining!
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The circus pictures, the peep-behind-the-scenes pictures, the IT pictures, the cartoon comics. And it is still considered good showmanship to give the public an eye-full. There was that multiple exposure in Waterloo, the exposure taking the form of a fan, each section containing ranks of period mercenaries. A good deal of time and care must have been spent to secure this elaborate Abel Gancism; I heard the caustic suggestion that the only way to show such a shot would be on the ceiling! And it is still considered good craftsmanship to move crowds in opposed rhythms. In the same picture outside files march upwards and inside files march downwards, and they are all supposed to be hurrying to the same battle-field!

Ufa, the fairy godmother of the cinema’s childhood, who gave the cradled infant Doctor Caligari, rushed in with the over-laden Secrets of the East. Therefore to Volkoff the honour of the worst film to date, although I have no doubt that his comparatriot Tourjanski runs him pretty close with Volga Volga.

Then the tragedies, and we do have tragedies now-a-days and that is something. The old type was represented by Murnau’s Four Devils . . . Charles Morton, an exceptionally handsome hero, falls into bad ways because he has been associating with the exceptionally unscrupulous vamp. By trade a trapeze artist, he looses his nerve when aloft; beads of sweat on his brow catching the light. Trust little Janet Gaynor to put everything right, even if she has to fall off a trapeze to win back Charlie for a happy marriage; and now, although he presumably indulges in the same amount of petting, he thrives on it; you see, that makes such a very
good moral! . . . On the other hand *Thou Shalt Not* was unforgettable, the most rewarding picture of this July to July year.

America had plenty of groomed features like *Manhattan Cocktail*, with wonderful Lilian Tashman whom many think to be the best thing that has come out of Hollywood; and plenty of poverty stricken affairs like *Bringing Up Father*. All the American fan papers have continued to flourish; reproductions of Miss Letty Lorne in a few beads and captions underneath saying that Letty is just a nice, shy, old-fashioned girl!

I must mention *Close Up*’s efforts to grapple with the problem of censorship, a problem inevitably associated with Von Stroheim, and editing, and re-editing. People approached me at the Plaza, with mournful faces, and reminded me how much had been cut from the Stroheim masterpiece, and that I really could not, and should not, judge it in its existing condition. However, I was impressed by the fragments; by the way, the atmosphere of Vienna was subtly re-created by a cigar in the lips of powdered-haired, supercilious Maude George . . . Face half hidden by military cockade Von Stroheim considers the difficulties of his position; sitting upright on a nervous horse is nothing to the problems of debt that neither father nor mother will meet. Pushing back his hat—his passion he cannot conceal by outward dignity of cockade—Mathew Betz is proprieting to Fay Wray who wants only to see the procession, that is until she notices Von Stroheim.

Like so many of the good new American pictures (example *The Crowd*) the story is subjective. Von’s horse knocks
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down the admiring Fay; follows the pursuit of the girl, a harpist in a beer garden, by the man who is a prince in the most conventional circles. The apple blossoms, which will upset so many, the little Viennese heroine has arranged around herself. In Paul Leni’s *The Last Warning*, the grotesque characters were projected from the ominous shadow background; but in Stroheim’s picture the heroine wills the scenery into being. She is no poet, she cannot conjure up the maidens of the Blue Danube whom she longs to see, but she can visualize the obvious apple blossoms.

One of the performances of the year goes to Zazu Pitts, who as ever manages to carry off the histrionic laurels on being given the opportunity. She has the tiny part, in the massacred version, as the heiress whom Stroheim will marry for her money. She is like a holy candle; a princess with a limp. Is it too flippant to say that a holy candle should not walk?

In relation to the year’s development of colour it is interesting to record that in the coloured sequence of this picture the shadows which moulded become just another colour.

Stroheim produces so few pictures that I am not in a position to ignore anything I may be fortunate enough to see. Month after month *Close Up* has dealt conscientiously with the magnificent new Russian films, there is no need in this short review to repeat; but the importance of *The Wedding March* is that so many more people will have a chance to see it than Alexandra Chochlova’s new comedy. Although the Avenue Pavilion has done its best to make the film life of
London brighter, and deserves a hand; in spite of Backwaters, an Asta Nielsen movie into which the censor insisted on inserting Freudian complications.

My private theory is that the vogue of Von Sternberg is not unconnected with the resemblance of his name to that of the master. Highbrows lost their heads about The Case of Lena Smith; another example of Sternberg's method of telling a film by titles.

Silhouette of Pudovkin; the talkies! I heard the famous bacon sizzling in Old Arizona, and saw Pauline Frederick holding bits of tulle to her throat to hide whipcord veins while she enunciated in On Trial. It is too early yet to know whether Pudovkin has utilized the true imagery of sound, that remains for next year's survey. To quote an interview which I had with Pabst, and which appeared in The Kinematograph Weekly:

"Yesterday we were all travelling in a Blue Train, to-day we are back in the caravan fighting the Indians. Of course, the critics grumble; the talking picture has thrown us back ten years, but that is exactly what we directors love."

"Mr. Pabst is vital enough to take pleasure in fighting the Indians; although he holds that for the next decade scientific inventions will force the pace. The public will be content to go again and again to the kinema to hear each time an innovation that makes the new picture more perfect than the last. Still, when the public does crave once more for art, the brains will be there, because there is money in the talkies."

Having quickly run through all that I look back and back and seek for further sub-divisions; it strikes me that I might review the year's satires, epics, as well as the spectacles,
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tragedies, talkies and monuments. What of *Les Deux Timides, Les Nouveaux Messieurs*? It flashes up that Epstein's lovely *Finis Terrae* is showing in the tiniest theatre in Paris; that *Living Image* was released over here without anybody paying the slightest attention to it; that somebody ought to tell Mosjoukine not to play in any more pictures like *The Secret Courier*; that the Film Society has a lot to live up to in the coming season.

In fine; that, that, THAT!

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

CAMERA PROBLEMS

BY CARL HOFFMAN

(Photographer of the well-known Ufa-Superfilms *Nibelungen, Faust*, etc.)

The problems of the camera are equally the problems of the entire motion picture. Generally speaking the work of the camera carries out the pictorial expression of the dramatist's thoughts. Film is picture. The picture appeals to the eye. To use a somewhat daring comparison, it could be said, that the camera must interpret to the eye the words of the dramatist.
Despite the vast development which the film industry has experienced in America, the fact remains, that the development of the artistic film-photography originated in Germany, just as Germany deserves a lion's share of the credit for raising the artistic level of film production in general. Assisted by its vast resources, America held the fortunate position of being able to exploit these advancements in a most splendid manner.

It was a sacred principle in the early days of film-art that the camera must stand as firmly fixed as the Rock of Gibraltar. During the past ten years, however, this principle lost its rigidity more and more, and to-day the camera has become so moveable that it has almost become difficult to control her. The camera glides, slides, rises, is suspended, shifted into all corners and crevices and thus assists and supports the progress of the play. If a film were photographed to-day on old principles of photography, the audience would immediately suspect that an ancient production was being shown. Despite the unusual moveability practiced by the camera nowadays, the last word, as to the moveability of the camera, has certainly by no means been spoken. I can imagine moveability of the camera becoming perfect to such a degree, that the thoughts of the author are so plainly expressed by photography, that sub-titles will become fully superfluous. It would take me into too much detail to dwell on this phase at length.

Almost over night the slogan appeared: The silent film is dead, long live the sound-film! Does this mean that all the successes scored with the camera during these last twenty
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years are bound to disappear into oblivion? Shall the camera again become rigid as in the beginning? No, and again, No! Retrogression must be avoided by all means. Purpose of the camera must remain centred in the effort to harmonize the tone and sound expression of the talkie with the figurative expression. From what has been shown so far, it is evident that the camera is being caged in a sound-proof box. 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?

THE FILM IN ITS RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS

I am going to treat the Film from the standpoint of the Freudian Psychic Life. The other standpoint, namely that of the conscious perceptual reality, has resulted in the Optophonic Cinema.

Night dreams, day dreams, fantasies, delirium, are according to Freud direct manifestations of the Unconscious.

With these I class the direct visually-excited mass fantasy of the Cinema.
When an audience weeps, that is mass-fantasy affecting the lacrymal glands causing tears. When an audience feels Fear, that is mass-fantasy affecting another set of glands causing the feeling of fright. Intellectual processes are only partially present.

Let us examine the Dream; see if we can really apply its mechanisms to support our theory of the Relation of the Film to the Unconscious. Maybe we shall discover something new.

What gives the Dream its content, shape, and expression is a conflict between primitive psychic wishes and the sublimated (disguised) impulses. In Dream-making proper, intellectual processes are non-existent, whereas in the Fantasy, Reverie, and the Day-dream, there is a definite content of intellectual conflict with the emergent (censored) unconscious. This applies to the Cinema in so far as it is considered purely as a mass fantasy, but the whole question is one of degree.

The triteness of our phrases requires a certain amount of qualification before we may proceed.

The film is a visual reality . . . light patterns on a screen. But the content of the cinema is fantasy.

We know well that there is no need to feel sorry for the Hall Porter in The Last Laugh . . . no need to let tears of the sublimest emotion well into our eyes when the unearthly purity of the blind girl (who we know is not blind) threatens to be defiled, in Jeanne Ney. At some time or other I have repressed sorrow and tears. Pabst who understands me and you, brings them to the surface in association with the creatures of his own conception, to give me, strangely
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enough, intense joy. Pabst transforms and transmutes my complexes at will, but always into something of great beauty.

* * *

Firstly, we will speak of the "content" of the film. This I liken to the "Manifest Content" or "Dream-Narrative" of the Dream (in its wider inclusive sense).

The visual, perceptual film-narrative, obviously resides totally in the conscious ego... only to be forgotten slowly.

But manifest content is not the major importance of the "avant garde" cinema. And our theory helps us in determining what is this major importance, and in what manner... by what mechanism, is it to be achieved.

We turn then to the "Latent Content"... to something which I hold is entirely a function of the Unconscious and Pre-conscious.

There is none of this mechanism of the psychic processes about which we speak, without these two parts: manifest content and latent content, and their inter-relation. So the name of this article "The Film in Relation to the Unconscious" springs from this consideration.

Three very important psycho-mechanisms are "Condensation", "Displacement", and "Dramatization"... the same three mentioned by Freud as Dream-mechanisms.

"Condensation" is a term applied to the process whereby various elements in the latent content become fused together in the manifest content, and finds its parallel in the "mix", "composite-shot", and sometimes in the "dissolve" of the cinema.

The separate latent thoughts of the "mix" are sorted out by the unconscious (not without further complexities, let it...
be mentioned) and retained as associated yet distinct entities. Only in the manifest content is there mixture.

I suggest that a "mix" of the more directly associative elements of parallel-action is superior to rapid cutting, in that an inherent disjointedness of the latter method is avoided, and provided other features are carefully directed, the "condensation" may be of extra value as a psychological means of creating an associative tension between the separate thought-entities, far surpassing even the Russian method.

Again in the "composite-shot" I see a mechanism of abstraction that centres perhaps four or five distinct trains of thought, which run their course in the pre-conscious, into one manifest condensation in the conscious. At the same time a valuable associative complex is set up in the unconscious which can be utilised later to telling effect in the narrative.

The "dissolve" is generally badly used. A momentary condensation of a train of thought which has served its purpose with another which has not yet begun its purpose, is something which requires careful handling.

Generally it is used, this so called "lap dissolve", to associate the old with the new shot, and is in a narrow sense successful in this aim. At best elementary, there is a better use.

The material in the finished train of thought (a) should be condensed momentarily with the raw visual (manifest) material in (b) for the sole purpose of associating the latent content of (a) with the manifest content of (b). This (b) has as yet no latent content. Therefore, the dissolve should be used purely as an associative technique connecting the latent
content of narrative-reality with the symbolism of visual "imagery".

I prefer a technique more innately fluid for the purpose of purely narrative fluidity, and suggest the quick de-focus-cut-re-focus, which I have seen only once or twice, and then badly applied. There is no condensation and defective intention is avoided.

There has been much spoken about "imagery", and for me it is nothing more or less than "symbolism". It depends on the intellectual elevation of the composer whether it be subtle or merely obvious symbolism. Money-lenders always have been and always will be fat spiders to American Cinema, but occasionally a Seastrom gives us symbolism of the subtle kind seen in *Wind*.

Presently we shall consider this subject in its fuller aspect, that of the sublimation of unconscious material... the "raison d'être" of all symbolism.

"Displacement", the second mechanism, is an agent whereby psychic importance is shifted from a given element in the latent content, to another unrelated element in the manifest content. This seems to be bound up with "camera angle" and its purpose.

A film with a theme of thwarted love for its latent content, rises to a physical climax. In itself the manifest physical climax is not over impressive... but added psychic tension is brought to bear upon it by displacement from "thwarted love". Exactly how to induce "displacement" we shall touch upon later in connection with "Manifest Repression".

The third mechanism known as "Dramatization" is simple, and of greatest importance.
The visual form, a scene of action, time sequence, etc., are given to the elements of the latent content.

We have met this before under the name of "literalness". It was employed in The Street. The wayward clerk sees his wife's image going away from him . . . as he looks at his wedding ring before staking it in the gambling hall.

Symbolism? No . . . for no symbol was employed. Therefore, not "imagery" either. This visualisation was a literal translation of the latent content . . . his wife would be separated further and further away from him. An abstract mental process converted into its primary perceptions. Such indeed, is the definition of "Dramatization" in the Freudian sense.

In general, of course, manifest content is a dramatization of the latent content . . . but not invariably.

Where is the direct "dramatization" of latent content in a sequence heavily charged with dramatic irony? The irony arises from the fact of that complete variance or absence of dramatization between latent and manifest content. This point has probably never been stated in psychological terms before.

Every abstract mental process is capable of a purely visual Dramatization. Of any associated ideas connected with the essential latent thoughts, such ones that will permit of visual representation are preferred. This is definite . . . psychologically innate in man.

Therefore I contend that silent cinema is hampered in no way, and will remain superior to optophonic cinema.

The mind prefers a visualisation to anything else. Even if the latent thought is inflexible, the mechanisms we have
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reviewed are sufficient to recast it into another if more unusual visual form. When successfully recast and treated more unusually the work is called "advanced art".

The sound element will rob the film of much of its fantasy, its mechanisms will be rendered almost meaningless, and therefore, its psychological appeal will dwindle.

En passant, I do not think there is any meaning in "counterpoint" in connection with fantasy . . . but will not say definitely.

Before passing on to a discussion of Repression in the cinematic sense, we may first liken the film generally to the dream process called Regression. "The dreamer is usually looking on at the dream enactments as a spectator surveys the stage" . . . this is called Regression by Freud, we call it cinema. And the more careful use of dream-mechanism will produce the more perfect cinema.

Regression will cease when the camera acquires a personality.

"Cinematic Repression" is of the kind seen in Uberfall. The footpad's blow is vividly hinted . . . it is not seen . . . therefore, latent content is heightened by the Repression of certain manifest elements (their absence).

If the blow were to be manifest, the latent content would be resolved, there would be no Repression of a brutal thought and it would suffer from lack of psychic tension.

"Displacement" may be induced by means of deliberate repressions of this kind. Very often the psychic tension may be usefully transferred (displaced) to the symbols employed. Again: Seastrom . . . who generally transfers to some natural force which was a subtle symbol all the time.

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It was hoped that this theory of Cinema would serve as a lead and a Statement to a New English Cinema . . . one with courage in its conviction that "talkies" shall find no place in its heart . . . and moreover one with a purpose.

This brings me to Purpose. Viewed in the light which it is hoped has been cast upon it, its Purpose appears to be the Sublimation and De-sublimation of certain mass repressions, and complexes which may go to isolate the Englishman from the world.

Certainly the only instrument capable of such a forlorn task, is the instrument of mass fantasy . . . the Cinema.

L. Saalschutz.

SILHOUETTE OF A CRITIC

The collected works of John T. Rollstone consist of a single article on the cinema, published not so many years ago in the now defunct "Screen Success". Faithful readers of this kind of literature may remember the sensation caused in its day by the article which the author modestly entitled "A Thought About The Movies". In a prefatory note the editor of the publication himself takes pains to laud "this bit of philosophy which sets us right about the important thing in the motion-picture world". Another equally competent writer on Rollstone's chef d'oeuvre described it in the telling
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language of American colloquial as "a mouthful". The article in toto has been reprinted in the foremost cinema revues of America, and its author praised as "perhaps the most intelligent writer on the subject".

To rescue this delicious morsel of criticism from oblivion for the sake of its savoury wisdom, if not for its timeliness, would be service enough to a worthy cause. Add to this fact the rarer and subtler element of literary quality, sustained, terse and brilliant, creating the impression that here at last has been set down by a successful disciple of French masters of epigram, a truth, a dogma, call it what you will, and the case of an important contribution to the understanding of the subject is proved beyond doubt.

Perhaps the fragmentary nature of the work is the chief cause of timidity on the part of critics and reviewers who are too busy reading one another's opinions to give attention to an exotic piece of writing scarcely a page in length. Only a short while ago a magazine devoted to the publication of works of modern tendencies printed a poem of one line. This solitary line graces an entire sheet of the magazine just mentioned:

"Don't discuss life, people, problems. Don’t voice poverty."

After giving a sketch of the poetess's life, the editor comments wisely: "Her writings are brief and uncompromising, with brusque staccato rhythms and acid philosophical content." Although we can but disagree with the editor, that the quoted "poem" has any recognizable rhythm whatever or any content fit to be described as either "acid" or "philosophical", nevertheless, his courage in "voicing" the
"poem" is a matter of note. We are evidently entering the era of brevity in the arts. The music-halls of Paris with their fig-leaf attire are pointing the way. Poetry writing will become a popular pastime when poems need be no longer than the one "voiced" above. In the future, a mere word may suffice... First, poems, then short stories, novels perhaps, may follow suit... Happy prospects, indeed...

Of John T. Rollstone's preparation for the task of film-criticism we can but guess imperfectly. The vast range of classic plays from Euripides down to Shaw read, analysed and classified, the canons of dramatic criticism firmly in his mind, the technique of the new drama-form too on his fingertips, as it were, our future film-critic, we surmise, approached his new field of activity with the confident assurance of a master. What Rabelaisian wit he would have displayed in writing of Buster Keaton and his cow! With what Heinesque whip of sarcasm he would have flayed certain "movie" directors! What praise, too, tempered by a knowledge of the humanly-attainable he would have bestowed upon patient merit which in the cinema, as elsewhere, from the unworthy spurns takes! Unlike some of his professional colleagues who, with no more than a stock of technical terms of the cinema and a hazy knowledge of anything, rush into print, Rollstone, it is certain, would have preferred the thornier path...

As for the man's life-story, we must leave a discussion of it to a more informed pen. Whether, indeed, he is resting upon the laurels of his initial success or whether some mischance cut off his promising life at the bud, we have no means of knowing. A grateful posterity will, we doubt not, inscribe
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upon John T. Rollstone's monument the words which constitute his chef d'oeuvre on the cinema, his life-work, his all-in-all. It is reprinted here in full that, as the saying goes, they who run may read:—"Never mind the highbrow stuff! Give them beautiful girls and handsome men and watch the cash-receipts swell!"

MICHAEL STUART.

SOME BRITISH FILMS

Some films are born inane, others achieve insanity, and some have profanity thrust upon them. Let us consider awhile. And live in hope. An Empire's strength lies in its recruiting posters. And a country's films in their criticism.

Criticism in itself, is, of course, a strange word in England. Read the Sunday newspapers, the film features of which are usually written by enterprising residents of the outer suburbs, with mentalities suited to their environment. Read their verdicts and ponder them carefully. Then invert the result and stay away from the picture.

Our pet critics have forgotten most of their adjectives. "Masterful" is on the files, to be resurrected when Alfred Hitchcock's next opus is flung on the exhibitors and the Press at its trade show, "Sincere" awaits Captain
Banfield’s next epic, “Lewd” must be kept in quarantine until a Russian film staggers the Film Society, “Revolutionary” must be banished until Pudovkin revisits the British Isles.

Yes, our critics have had a poor time lately. Their superlatives are in dry dock, awaiting the next batch of Elstree trade shows, the pretty little phrases with which they dismiss Messrs. Cavalcanti and Company must lie dormant until next season.

With one or two exceptions, we have not had many British trade shows lately. The home product is feeling unwell. Rumour has it that it is busy finding its voice. One can but hope that it will die dumb. I sometimes wonder what the critics do when they have no British films to praise. Probably they begin making puns about Clara Bow. It’s a life.

As a warning to those of Close Up’s readers who are sufficiently lucky never to have seen any British efforts, I have taken seven monumental examples of our screen art and intend to review their salient features.

Chosen as fairly as possible, I really think they represent the various currents in the British School, if any or thereabouts. The discerning reader will then be able to judge that while we may be excellent fellows when it comes to growing broccoli and exporting it to France, as film makers we are scarcely as distinguished.

On the other hand, one would be a fool to condemn British production out of hand. Our stuff is getting better. There is no doubt about that. It may still be imitation American, but it is better imitation than it once was. And in the case
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of one company—British Instructional—it promises to become much more than that.

THE LOST PATROL.

A British Instructional film made by Walter Summers.  
_Patrol_ got me. I saw it three times. First by business, then by choice, then by accident. And the third state of mind was as good as the first. _Patrol_ is a typical British picture, indirectly glorifying the British soldier. But not so vicious, needless to say, as The Flag Lieutenant and similar dither.

_Patrol_ is a satisfying picture. It is almost a great one. Many people might think that it is the best thing yet done in England. Summers is one of our best directors. I saw the film before I had read the book, and, after reading it, can understand why people who had read the novel first were disappointed in the picture. It just misses the bigness it sets out to capture. But in its very failure it is infinitely more stimulating than the cabaret nonsense of the average British masterpiece.

The story is well known; a dozen men are lost in the desert during the War. One by way they are killed off like flies, ruthlessly, unfeelingly, by the vigilant tribesmen. The sergeant, the one soldier who takes militarism seriously, lasts longest. He is killed, after having accounted for one Arab for every one of his comrades who has been shot.

The picture’s value is psychological rather than cinematic. Summers is nearly always an onlooker in his pictures. But he is an intensely observant one. He treats his subject with aloofness, running back from it to give you a sense of
the pettiness of the whole tragedy against the background of war, then darting into it again to show how a demented sergeant will die, starved, parched and maddened, after cleaning his buttons as though awaiting a battalion parade.

The men are shown first in private life, then drawn together, and flung into the war drama, sent, gradually dwindling, to the oasis where the climax is reached. Through it all we see the civilians lurking beneath the tunics of the B.E.F. soldier. The jam of futility has been smeared liberally over the whole picture.

Technically, it is not so good. The flashbacks take up too much footage; the half reel devoted to amorous adventures in Venice took our minds off the real drama. Another flashback, showing the events which led up to one of the unit enlisting, was as sickly as treacle with its cheap patriotism and sentimentality.

One has to forgive much. One comes to forget the blemishes. Instead, the memory of Clifford MacLagen as the Sergeant lingers. Not, I repeat, a great film. But very nearly.

WEEK-END WIVES.

A British International Picture, directed by Harry Lachman.

Britain’s biggest bow at the boudoir box-office. Pulsing with the palpitating passion of Paramount pulchritude. Dazzling with the dubious delights of daring Deauville.

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Entertainment values: For the Provinces, who like their weekly dose of two-dimensional negligée, tremendous. For the towns, who appreciate American films, considerable. For the sophisticated, who know all about this sort of thing, fair. For the film student, none.

Lachman has potentialities. Even in this film, which possibly justifies its claim to Yankee slickness, he shows a neat sense of camera. But he ought to be given better material. As it is he merely left us in about the same state as Greta Garbo now leaves us, namely, a little less than frigid.

But then he set out to provide the masses with entertainment.

PICCADILLY.

A British International Picture, directed by E. A. Dupont.

This is the perfect British film. That means to say it was made by a German, with a German cameraman; its leading lady is an American of Polish extraction and its second lady an American of Chinese extraction; the leading man is English and the second man Chinese; the art direction is by a foreigner and the story is by Arnold Bennett, who must have had the toothache or an Income Tax paper at the time.

For the remainder, it is authentically rumoured that the great aunt of one of the men who trimmed the lights came from Aberdeen.

So you see, a typical British film.

And what a film! Take a magazine. Open it. Notice
the stories, illustrated here and there by pretty pictures. That's *Piccadilly*. It must have something like a record number of captions. But it is Art.

**ART.**

With a capital A. If Dupont wants to show two people in different rooms he pans from the attic, down the stairs, across the front room, through a brick wall or two, into the room, wanders around it and finally brings his camera to rest on his second character.

*Piccadilly* is Werner Brandes, the cameraman, first and foremost. His stuff has quality, the hard American, Paramount stuff. And here and there a lot of soft close-ups to give the art illusion.

And after Brandes? Anna May Wong, who shakes a wicked hip through most of the picture. The film, besides its captions, must contain more close-ups of legs, knees, and the like than almost any other film.

There must be something wrong somewhere. *Piccadilly* was lavishly praised by the critics. The public looked as though they paid money to see it. I thought it was one of the world's worst. Especially considering its cost. Atkinson described it as a masterpiece. There must be something wrong somewhere. And I have a feeling it isn't me.

The story deals with a restaurant owner who employs a star dancer who is his mistress. He becomes intrigued by a Chinese girl in the kitchens and gives her a part in the cabaret. Her best boy plays the organ while she twiddles a sinuous loincloth. Or something like that. Pseudo-Freudian stuff all through.

Somebody murders someone else, and the Chinese youth—
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quite a fine performance, by the way—dies on Anna’s coffin. Placards outside the London Pavilion announce the fact that the world goes on. Sardonic, that.

Personally, I wondered it had the cheek to.

BLACK WATERS.


Our first talkie. Chaucer was a much more satisfactory pioneer. Black Waters is a splendid film. It must be. The Press said so. If this is an example of the sort of talkie we are going to make, I hereby hope that all the recording sets get measles. This one sounded as though it had, by the way.


A number of people turn up on a dirty ship at midnight on a dirty night, to answer the dirty call of a dirty criminal. Evening dress is Dockland. Shiplights winking on sparkling dress-fronts. Mary Brian, oozing chiffon and sex appeal, tripping it lightly over the various dead bodies.

There is a mystery. I agree. The mystery, according to the criticisms, was—Who was the criminal? Personally, I thought it was—Where was the film?

All very sinister. A Lascar blew poison through a blow-pipe, an old salt muttered startling things through black teeth, and someone or other spouted religious tags all over the sound groove.

The direction was masterful. John Loder ran up and
down looking for the criminal, Mary Brian ran up and down looking for John Loder, someone else ran up and down looking for Mary Brian. At any moment I expected a skeleton would jump out of a concealed cupboard.

It may have done. I remembered an appointment after three-quarters of an hour of it. But I am still laying even money that I spotted the criminal in the first reel. One always does. These things are so subtle.

**WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD.**

Produced by British and Dominions, directed by Tim Whelan.

Suggested alternative title: *When Gags Were Old*. Another of the world's worst. Even for England. I saw this picture a few days after my second visit to *Week-End Wives*. The contrast was a compliment to British International.

Fantasy is one of the doors to cinema. This film, the story is too well known to be repeated, should be sheer fantasy. And it was. Fantastic fantasy. The picture, as a comedy, is about as cheerless as a carbuncle. And about as inflated. The gags are priceless. Too low to be purchased. Smelly breath and slippery banisters supply their quota. I got two titters all through it. It is too slow to be slapstick, too clumsy to be fantasy. Just idiocy.

The siege of the family castle was made on ambitious lines with car tracks running along the medieval roads. But the siege, like the rest of the film, was a rocket which has been waterlogged for a week.

Nelson Keys, who might be a good film droll if only he had the material, is like a salmon in a tin can here. Some
Le Mystère du Château du Dé, a new film by Man Ray.
Le Mystère du Château du Dé, by Man Ray.
Spring. Author-cameraman, M. Kaufmann, hero of Dziga Vertoff's *Man With the Movie-Camera*, who has also filmed all Vertoff's productions. He has now begun to work separately. This is his second film, the first being *Moscow*. 
The making of *The Ghost That Never Returns*, Alexander Room's now completed picture.

A scene from *The Ghost That Never Returns*. 

A. Cavalcanti and Catherine Hessling, who plays the principal role in his new film, *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*.

*Photo: Eli Lotar*
The perfect portrait study conception! *Little Miss London*, a British Instructional indiscretion.

Chamber of Horrors, show-case number three. *The Lady of the Lake*, a Gainsborough film. Note subtle poise of lady under tree. Anything might have happened. Note also that Jaeger worsteds were worn with nineteenth century kilts and modern haircuts. The charade troubadour is Percy Marmont.

"We find such realism a little unpleasant." More Gainsborough. *The Wrecker.* Note the draped figures. The lady emerging as from her limousine, the figure next door coming out of the window upside down, and the figure next door about to climb over the roof.

The Devil Monkey of the Amazon. From Monkeys' Moon, a film now nearing completion by Kenneth Macpherson.

The Douracouli, or Devil Monkey as he is called by the Amazonian Indians, is nocturnal in his habits. The two monkeys in this film are pets of the director.
"Sister", who adored being taken in lingering close-ups. One of Nature's film-stars. The faces are white and black, the back grey, and the breast orange.

"Sister" (right) and Bill, who hated the camera as much as she loved it. From *Monkey's Moon*, a new film by Kenneth Macpherson.
From *Foothills*, a film by Kenneth Macpherson.

From *Foothills*. 
From *Foothills*, a film by Kenneth Macpherson.
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films are born to be remembered. Others are better unborn. This is one of them.

MASTER AND MAN.

Produced by British Screen Productions, directed by George Cooper.

Really British. Another endurance test. The trouble with this one, despite its hopelessness, is that it might have been a good film. It has touches. It was probably cut to pieces, in the wrong places, after the approved English style. The scene of the rats scuttling out of a burning building is quite good for a British film.

It almost defies constructive criticism. Technique, mounting, titling and editing are awful. Direction cannot be criticised. I should like to know how much to debit to the megaphone and how much to the scissors. Story concerns a selfish employer who sacks his manager. Their respective girl and boy have been secretly married. There is a fire and a case of loss of memory; a wondering son and a divided household; a girl reading "Hints to Young Mothers," or something equally suggestive. A tactful lot, these British directors. It is all very complicated, though it might have been worth while, and one realises, on seeing it, how weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable, seem to be all the products of the British cinema.

THE RISING GENERATION.

A W.P. Production, directed by Harley Knoles and George Dewhurst.
There is an inside story about the production of this film. But there is no need to sling mud by spilling it. Nice and mixed that. It suffices to say that it gets near rock bottom. The biggest moment occurs during a cabaret scene, when we are edified by a burlesque turn by two professional dancers.

That is sufficient for the picture. If a film's highlight consists of a variety turn imported from the vaudeville stage you can guess the rest. The story of the play, dealing with a husband and wife who return from abroad and masquerade as butler and housekeeper to their own children, is sketchily drawn along impossible lines. Little effort at light relief, and the film should have been a comedy, is permitted the artistes. A fake cinema show in the middle of the picture got a laugh at the trade show. Probably because the audience wanted to justify their boiled shirts.

George Dewhurst, who cut this epic, must have had the Devil's own time with it. That he got some sort of cohesion is a tribute to his ingenuity.

You should see this film. It will be an experience.

* * *

There are the seven. Optimistic little nigger boys, not too clean, not too bright. Most of them decidedly backward. But all the apple of their makers' eyes.

We have made one or two films besides The Lost Patrol which are worthy of serious thought from the artistic angle. Tesha was good drama. But bad cinema. But seven examples, as everyone will agree, are perhaps seven more than enough.
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The thing to remember, all said and done, is that we are in a blind alley. We don’t know which way to turn. When we do we may make good pictures. Meanwhile, let us watch—and pray.

Hugh Castle.

KULTUR-FILM

THE SCIENTIFIC-EDUCATIONAL FILM.

Published by Tea-Kino-Pechat, Moscow.

(Content: Introduction by K. I. Shutko; The Physiological Foundations of Cinematography, by P. P. Lazaref; What is meant by the Politico-Educational Film, by K. I. Shutko; The Scientific Film Abroad, by K. I. Shutko; The Scientific Educational Film in the U.S.S.R., by L. M. Sukharevsky; On the Way to the Creation of the Scientific Educational Film, by L. M. Sukharevsky; Method of Constructing the Scientific Popular Film, by A. N. Tiagay; Method of Showing the Scientific Educational Film, by L. M. Sukharevsky; What is meant by a "Chronicle" Film, by K. I. Shutko; Problem of preparing a Foundational Staff of Workers for the
At the first Party Congress held in Russia on questions connected with the Cinema, a resolution was passed to the effect that: "The cinema can and must occupy an important place in the cultural revolution as an instrument of general education and of communist propaganda"; and any one who wishes to be informed as to the means which have been taken in Russia to put this resolution into practice will find this volume a mine of information. In spite of every kind of financial and technical difficulty, Russia has tackled her film problems with a zeal and intelligence infinitely worthy of admiration and emulation. The pioneer enterprise connected with the cultural film in Russia was the Gos-Kino, which in 1923 formed a special department for developing this side of its work. In conjunction with Kult-Kino, with which it afterwards became amalgamated, this department produced the famous film, Abort (abortion). Kult-Kino also produced The Truth of Life (syphilis), Life as it is (tuberculosis), as well as a number of ethnographical, geographical and other films. Among other organisations which have produced educational films are: Politkino (Electrification, The Black Death, The Great Flight, etc.); Sevzapkino (Scarlatina, Fishing, Life of a Textile Worker, etc.); Belgoskino (Prostitution) and Azgoskino (The Struggle for Life, the Oil Industry, etc.). Gosvoyenkino (State Military Kino) was founded in September, 1924, with the object of providing
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special films for the instruction of the Red Army and also films for the lay public; it’s productions include: Sport and Manoeuvres, Shooting, Boxing, the Silk Industry in Turkestan, Tanks, Aviation, the Transport of Troops on the Railways, etc. Meschrabpom has produced films on the Metric System, Alcoholism, Earth and Sky (illustrating the movements of the heavenly bodies), First Aid, The Care of the Sick, and Pudovkins’s famous film, The Mechanics of the Brain, illustrating the theories of Professor Pavlov, as well as various industrial films (cotton industry, shipbuilding, railway construction, and the manufacture of nails, boots, books, newspapers, etc.); and it has numerous other films ready or in preparation, for instance: protection against poison gas, the motor car industry, the hygiene of food, physical culture, the film industry. Sovkino has produced films on sound, alcohol, health in the factory, the development of the amphibia, the milk industry, and has also a long list ready or in preparation, including: The Sunflower Industry, The Fight for the Harvest, 10 Years of Soviet Medicine, Forest Dwellers, The Epoch of the Romanovs and Tolstoy, Sun, Air and Water, The Nobel Expedition, etc.

An aspect of the cinema that has received special attention in Russia is the study of the interests and requirements of the cinema audience, for the purpose of which three principal methods have been employed: 1. the keeping of a diary recording observations of the reactions of the spectators to various films by workers specially trained for this task (direct observation); 2. the collection of wishes and opinions by means of a questionnaire; 3. observation of some particular audience over a period of from 3 to 6 months (experimental
observation). In the case of illiterates the questionnaire method is of course impracticable and in their case and that of the less educated the method of direct observation has been found the most satisfactory, while for the more skilled and cultured class the questionnaire and the experimental method are employed in conjunction.

The promoters of the educational cinema in Russia have also been alive to the value of such technical devices as slow motion, rapid motion, reverse motion, etc., for the purpose of illustrating biological, chemical and other processes, as well as for that of scientific research. Rapid motion photography has, for instance, been used to illustrate the hatching of a chicken, the growth of a plant and the construction of the great elevator in Moscow.

It has also been realised that the educational value of the cinema can be greatly enhanced if it is associated with complementary organisations for the purpose of instruction, explanation and study. In Moscow, Leningrad and Odessa, for example, special educational cinema theatres have been organised, equipped with library, reading room and foyer, and it is planned to open many more in the next few years. Explanatory pamphlets are available in the foyer for study by the audience before witnessing the actual films; such as that prepared by Prof. L. N. Voskresensky and Pr. Doc. Müller in connection with the film, *The Food Problem*, and that by A. M. Tiagay for *Mechanics of the Brain*. Further there has been organised in Russia a body of lecturers to assist at the exhibitions of the films and either explain the pictures as they appear on the screen or give an introductory explanation before they are shown, as well as to answer any questions that
the audience may care to ask. Exhibitions are also organised in connection with certain films. In connection with the great Potemkin film a special exhibition is organised in the foyer consecrated to the events of the year 1905 and in the reading room, social and historical literature connected with this period are provided. In connection with the film, Invisible Enemies of Man a microscope is available, through which the audience may look in turn and examine, for instance, a drop of milk or water brought by themselves. Similarly a telescope is provided in connection with the film, Astronomy; and in connection with geological and botanical films special excursions are organised. An interesting article is devoted to the development of the News Bulletin Film—or "Chronicle", as it is called in Russia, and another to the training of film workers of every grade, for whom a thorough and elaborate training is provided in particular by the G.T.K. (State Technical College of Cinematography) in Moscow and the Photo-Kino-Technikum at Leningrad.

L. M. Sukharevsky also gives an interesting account of the use of the cinema in Russia for purposes of scientific and technical research, for instance, in the hydro-technical laboratory of Timiriazevskaya Academy, for studying the movements of fluids, and at the laboratory of Professor Joffe at Lesnoy for studying the distribution and transmission of heat in factory furnaces and boilers; at the latter, by means of an entirely original device it was possible to photograph the movement of the invisible heat-rays within the boiler and so to make a number of discoveries the practical application of which will entail a considerable saving of fuel.
Another interesting article by L. M. Sukharevsky is devoted to the subject of the use of the cinema in schools and other educational institutions of the U.S.S.R., as well as to the experiments now being made with the talking film by Professor Kovalenko in Leningrad and Professor Romanov and P. Tager in Moscow. In a short article it is impossible to do justice to all the varied information contained in this book, but no one after reading it could doubt what extraordinarily interesting and valuable work is being done in Russia in connection with cinematography and what a cultural loss is being inflicted on the English people by the obstacles opposed to the exhibition of Russian films in this country.

*Winifred Ray.*

**ALL TALKIE!**

Potted dialogue, canned music and shrieking cabarets have taken London by storm. "All Talking, All Singing, All Dancing, All Noise" is the order of the day. Plaza, Empire, Tivoli, Astoria, Carlton, New Gallery, Piccadilly, Regal and Rialto have all fallen for the Great God Microphone.

There is scarcely a film to be seen in London. Fortunately, I am a confirmed optimist, but really, the situation is getting
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desperate. The Empire, "from noon to midnight" vainly tries to satiate the public with Broadway Melody. On the opening night the theatre was nearly pulled to pieces, and still they come, six times a day. Anita Page is the new world's sweetheart, and Charles King's theme songs are whistled, shouted, crooned and yelled all over the place.

Show Boat, a most tedious, dismal thing, broke records at the Tivoli and a palpitating public gasps to know whether it was some extra girl or really Laura la Plante who sings (very indifferently) Old Man River.

Mary Pickford's Coquette, which was completely inaudible, and worse than the worst penny-in-the-slot machine has been replaced by Vilma Banky in This Is Heaven, which it isn't, and now we are waiting for "Carl Laemmle's Million Candle Power Picture" of bootleggers, booze and cabarets, Broadway.

Speakeasy is probably the best of the bunch so far, because it has continuous, swift movement, action, and a complete lack of those distressing conversations between characters who look as if their life depends upon their staying rooted to one particular spot for all time. Speakeasy certainly shews what can be done with sound, but nevertheless great was my joy when the Astoria included in the same programme The Girl on the Barge, a charming lyric of real cinematic beauty, and silent.

But still they come. I am assured by Mr. Fox's publicity agent, a modest man, that Fox's Movietone Follies is "the miracle of the sound screen". All Talking! All Singing!! All Dancing!!!

"A Maelstrom of Melody and Mirth".
"THE MOST DARING — DYNAMIC AND LAVISH PRODUCTION THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN OR HEARD ".

And then again:

"A SAGA OF LOVE AND LOVELINESS THAT WILL TAKE EUROPE BY STORM ".

I suppose we ought to shout "Hurrah!", but in reality, of course, Movietone Follies, which mainly consists of legs and underclothes, and which carries songs beginning "Take a Sugar Cookie", is the sort of thing which is made by half-wits for half-wits.

And after this we are to have Synthetic Sin, the story of a good little girl who wanted to be a bad little girl. Oh God, Oh Montreal!

There is, however, one bright spot on the horizon. I tremble to mention it, but—there are hopes that we may see a few Russian films. Those-in-the-know are hopeful that the Labour Government will remove the ban which in the past has mysteriously but rigidly met Soviet Russia's productions. Dozens of Russian films are lying in London, many others are easily obtainable.

With all due respect to Mr. Fox, this, to us, is news, real news. We can put up with his Follies if we can have the opportunity of appreciating Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Room. Whether the news is true or not I do not know, but what I do know, and what I do say in all earnestness, is that everyone of us has got to go all out to make it true. Otherwise, God help us and God help the Cinema!

A.W.
CINEMAPHOBIA

With the advent of the talkies there has come a fresh outbreak of cinemaphobia. It’s chief present manifestation is a fear of the influence of the "American" language upon our classic English. This phase of the epidemic appears to be particularly virulent in Great Britain, the traditional custodian of pure speech. Cultured little boys and girls will be demoralized by listening to the verbal prostitutions of Hollywood.

"Our children," declares one British protestant, "will listen to drama after drama wherein the performers, whether impersonating English peers, Russian spies, Roman soldiers or South Sea Islanders, will deliver themselves in the accents of Vermont or Kansas. Americans write English as well as we do. The trouble is they do not talk English as we want our children to talk it.

"But there is also to be considered the purely American crook film which will in effect become an American play. Can our children listen to two or three of these weekly without taking unto themselves the diction and ultimately, perhaps, the mentality of the Chicago underworld or Charleston water
front? Clearly something will have to be done if young England is to remain young England.'" 

There we have it. A typical case. A recrudescence of the same morbid alarm that spread over America and England when the movies first became popular. There would be no escaping the baneful effect of viewing the manners and behaviour of American roughnecks on the screen. Our children would all want to be cowboys and crooks and gentlemen villains, or soiled women, rich men's mistresses, or sacrificial maidens. No wonder censorship boards sprang into existence and righteous puritans rolled up their pale eyes in holy horror at the impending collapse of morals and religion.

But cinemaphobia is not confined to these extremists. In a somewhat milder form it is particularly prone to attack our intellectuals, especially those who pursue the calling of critics. It may almost be said to be indigenous to Kultur. Like the gout, it serves as a symbol of polite superiority, and accordingly whosoever would have it known that he is not of the common herd develops a spleen against the Hollywood movies.

In his cultivated way, the victim says the nastiest sort of things about them. They are vulgar, meretricious, puerile, born of stupidity, levelled to the mentality of morons—in short, altogether unworthy of genteel attention. Nevertheless,—and this is one of the peculiarities of his affliction—he continues to give them his attention. Indeed, he appears actually unable to let them alone, despite the pain they give him.

To be sure, one should not smile at the afflictions of others.
CLOSE UP

But these cinemaphobiacs sometimes remind me of the behavior of my otherwise intelligent bull terrier when an old junk man passes by in his cart. For some unexplainable reason he takes it into his head that he is being insulted, personally and designedly insulted, and forthwith his adrenal glands are stimulated and he barks himself sick in rabid protest.

It would seem as though there should be some way in which these sensitive souls who are so upset by the movies could be convinced that the movies are not intended for them; that they are made solely and explicitly for the crowd, for the common people, the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, for Papa and Mama Snooks and the little Snookses. The Hollywood producers have never had any thought of turning out pictures for the intelligentsia. They have not the slightest animosity toward them. They do not even ask nor expect them to come to the theatres. In truth, they scarcely know who or what they are; they have not the remotest interest in them, and nothing is farther from their intentions than to insult them or worry them.

Nevertheless, they insist upon being insulted and worried. Of their own free will they attend the cinemas and permit themselves to see things there that revolt their intelligence and their artistic sensibilities. It appears never to occur to them that they are no more obliged thus to torture themselves than they are to go to Coney Island or Luna Park and there gobble hot dogs and crackerjack, when they know that such things make them ill.

If they would consciously realize that the blame is theirs for indulging in a dissipation alien to their tastes and
breeding, much clamor would be averted. But they will not do this. Neither will they muster sufficient will power to let the movies alone. They will actually stand in line for a ticket. The movies have a peculiar lure for them. They detest them, along with the Yahoos and the muttonheads who frankly enjoy them, yet they cannot keep away from them. Indeed, one is sometimes led to suspect that their denunciation of motion pictures is but a defense mechanism designed to protect their patrician amour-propre against the secret pleasure they derive from this popular plebian form of entertainment.

In an effort to explain the success and the popularity of the movies, and at the same time justify their personal attitude in the matter, they declare that the general public patronizes the pictures, not because it likes them, but because it must find amusement and diversion somewhere, and the movies, unworthy and unsatisfying as they are, offer the only opportunity. In the back of their heads, of course, they know this is only talk. They do not for a moment believe it. Their own admitted superior intelligence at once convicts them. They are perfectly well aware that with automobiles and radio and phonographs and dance halls and baseball and a plethora of cheap literature the common people have plenty to divert them aside from the cinema.

And they know, too, that if the movies did not satisfy the crowds they would simply refuse to patronize them—in which respect they are measurably more sensible than their intellectual betters. The people may not know what they want, but they most assuredly know what they do not want, and make no bones about rejecting it, as many a showman has
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learned to his grief. That they continue, therefore, to flock to the pictures and incidentally support a score of movie fan magazines, to make no mention of the daily writing of tens of thousands of fan letters to their favorite actors, is unanswerable evidence that the cinema fare they are receiving meets in the main with their approval.

To contend that they would respond with equal interest to better pictures is merely to raise a fog. For what are better pictures? The critics themselves are the last persons who can be brought into agreement on this score. One of them will declare that Sunrise is an exceptional production, an oasis in the cinema desert, a striking example of a better picture; while at the same time another will dismiss it as claptrap and put forward In Old Arizona or The Last Command as an illustration of what a real picture should be; whereupon a third brother, turning up his finical nose at all such rubbish, will assure the world that until Hollywood can put out another Sorrell and Son it might as well quit making pictures.

There is simply no satisfying these ciné frondeurs, these chronic malcontents. They do not want to be satisfied. Why have a phobia if it cannot be nourished?

In the final analysis we discover that what actually underlies the cinemaphobia of our intellectuals, is not so much the movies themselves as the source of their being. Hollywood is the bête noire. Like Nazareth of old, no good thing can possibly come out of it. It is without tradition, without antecedents, without culture; a bounder, an upstart in the sacred realm of art; impudent and profane.

On the other hand, a motion picture from Berlin, from Moscow, from Budapest, whatever its lack as compared with
a Hollywood product, is assured of sympathetic reception by
the American movie scornor. It is invested with an impli-
cation of excellence, of artistry, of *savoir vivre*. That is
Europe. But Hollywood—tut, tut!

Hollywood is a phenomenon. A few years ago an un-
mapped community of bungalows scattered amid orange and
lemon groves, it to-day outranks in notoriety and popular
influence any other spot on the globe. A city sprung from an
Aladdin's lamp; fantastically rich and glamorous, inhabited
by peris and houris and imperious Midases—transformed
shopgirls and nonentities elevated to dazzling fame and
fortune. Such is the airy picture of it.

No wonder it disturbs the worshiper of tradition. He is
quite incapable of appraising it in its relation to the established
order. Like the medieval priest confronted with a prodigy of
nature, he instinctively regards it in his bewilderment as an
intrusion upon the fixed proprieties of the universe, and
seeks to cover his disquietude with noisy objurgations.

Fortunately for Hollywood, however, and the many
millions who look to it for diversion and enjoyment, the
fulminations of its critics resolve themselves into mere wind.
A review of its achievements, from the crude "flickers" of
its early days to the elaborate productions of to-day, offers
scant satisfaction to those who at first contemptuously ignored
it and later sought to belittle its accomplishments with
ridicule and detraction.

Hollywood knows its business. It has made a bouncing
success of it. So bouncing, in truth, and so glittering, that
we are sometimes tempted to believe that much of the dis-
paragement directed against it is inspired by envy. The
established centers of European art and culture, each of which in the beginning of film history had the same opportunity as Hollywood, if not even far greater opportunity, have been signally outstripped by this aggressive upstart of the Pacific coast with its Yankee genius for sensing the taste of the public and giving the world what it wants.

And now and again, while Europe has looked on agape and scornful at the talking film, Hollywood has discerned the signs of the times, has set industriously to work, and with characteristic confidence has staked its whole existence on the new order of cinema creation. That there should follow a fresh outbreak of alarm and protest from puritan and purist is quite to be expected. Hollywood merely making motions was disturbing enough; but that this forward creature should now have a tongue, presents truly a most serious situation for those who feel themselves entrusted with the guardianship of traditions and proprieties.

Clifford Howard.
COMMENT AND REVIEW

FILMS IN HISTORY.—No. 2.

_Federicus Rex_—Directed by A. V. Czerepy.

"An extremely notable German absentee is _Federicus Rex_, which must have been made nearly ten years ago, but, nevertheless, is described by those qualified to judge as undoubtably the most impressive film yet produced ".

Thus wrote the _Sunday Express_, on October the 3rd, 1927, when conducting an inquiry concerning the legion of lost films.

"Those qualified to judge " for once knew what they were judging about! The execution scene is as impressive as some of the best modern Russian stuff; so that, allowing for the year of production, we have a film worthy to rank in our cinematographic history.

There is no disfigurement of Gosta-Berlingish morality so often found in costume pictures. The tale is of a tyrant who delights more in seeing his soldiers do the goose-step than in turning Jenny Hasselquistes into Swedish snow: a part that is never overplayed. When a deputation of
generals wait for the Emperor with threatened resignations, if he persists in exacting the extreme penalty of the law from his own son, the actor behaves like a human being by accepting the situation. The tale of a despot who enjoys a sensation of power by supervising machines yet experiences only transitory satisfaction because he cannot rule non-goose-steppers (human beings).

The goose-step . . . Halt . . . Take that man to Castle Curstin for court-martial, the fifth button on his tunic has not been polished . . . Three-cornered hats must be doft three times, while intrigues are encouraged by the architecture as much as gestures by the clothes . . . Key-holes (mix), shaped like ears, must be listened at: enormous caskets stuffed with secret documents must be broken into.

A grand film, a film to be seen.

There is mental conflict behind the pageantry. The son of the Emperor wants to play the flute; none of the exaggeration of Hollywood’s aspiring playwright who wants to leave an enriched posterity, of poet pining to storm the intelligentsia (and get into transition!), but a simple boy who wants to play ephemeral tunes on the flute . . . Soldiers cannot goose-step to the flute, but Mr. Czerepy does not let the son win a competition for flutists at Atlantic City, instead he allows the martinet to be true to life.

This film, revived to-day, would make many old-timers cry, “There you are, I told you so; those were the grand days for FILMS”. As far as Germany is concerned they were.

Oswell Blakeston.
CLOSE UP

BROADWAY

Stop that parrot crying, "You haven't seen anything yet, folks."

Director Paul Fejos built a camera crane that can travel 600 feet a minute on a horizontal plane, and is capable of every possible position and cost Uncle Carl Laemmle $15,000. This little treasure operated in a set 70 feet high and a city block wide and deep—I mean if Photoplay says so, it is so! And the name of the picture, folks, is Broadway!

Now you will want to see Broadway, won't you, after all that? It is a hundred per cent. talkie too, you can hear Glenn Tryon telling Myrna Kennedy to remember "her dear old, silver-haired mother"; but Myrna does not pay any more attention to it than you do! She just acts crazy, that girl! After Uncle Laemmle had gone to the expense of colouring the last song and dance (what dire things colour did to the young man's face!) you can imagine that there was little left to buy intelligence!

The night clubs in Broadway are, as one of the characters remarks, shooting galleries. Men are shot in the back and in the stomach, and then there is a rest for supper. Detectives talk in slow, drawling voices, they are so conscious of the drama in their lives.

Little chorus girl is, although it may sound silly, "not that sort of a girl"; and the villain is, although he may look silly, "that sort of a boy". And have chorus girls got legs, Mr. Carl Laemmle, Jr.? Or did Louella Parsons ask you that in the last interview?

O.B.
A BIG BOY’S BIG SCHEME.

Mr. J. D. Williams announces a £1,000,000 scheme for building new studios near Elstree, and Mr. Williams (or Jaydee as he is known to his fellow magnates) means SOUND STUDIOS. He says:—

"Imagine a great talking film studio where, immediately after an English spoken talking feature has been made, it is able to offer its sets for the immediate shooting of the same film in every Continental language. Thus, immediately the English version is through, contingents of players and directors from each European country can take over the same sets, and shoot the same picture in their own language in record time."

But reader, gentle reader, do you understand what this means to you? Instead of seeing Falconetti in the title rôle of Carl Dreyer’s film you might see Alma Taylor, or possibly Ivy Duke might play Baranowskaja’s part in Mother!

If ever Mr. Jaydee’s scheme matures I can see back numbers of Close-Up selling for a king’s ransom at Christies.

O.B.

TWO TITLES TO REMEMBER

It is dangerous to speak of films still in production but a film directed by L. Moholy-Nagy is almost certain to be a film of exceptional interest. The author of Malerie
CLOSE UP

Fotografie Film who has been responsible for so many "advanced" studies in still photography is busy on *The Isle Of Hope*, a story of man and the ocean, which is being shot on the coast of Brittany.

Another new film, *Washerwoman*, is the German-made feature for Baranowskaja; but it is not generally known that Valeska Gert is in the cast.

O.B.

RECENT TRADE SHOW

Wilhelm Thiele directed Nikolai Kolin, Gustav Fröhlich and Natalie Lissenko in *Hurrah, I'm Alive!* If the title refers to the director or any of the artistes we cannot share the pleasure: if it refers to the silent film we can only say that it has never been more dead.

O.B.

DARTMOOR

A sequence in Anthony Asquith's new film, *Dartmoor*, which he is now cutting, was written to be played in the following way:—two lovers are in a cinema: the third member of the triangle takes a seat behind them, and observes nothing of the performance in watching them with
CLOSE UP

accumulating jealousy. In order not to have to take a film to show on the screen, the expressions on the faces of the lovers were cut in with flashes of the orchestra working up to the climax of a chase sequence, so that the type and tempo of the picture can be deduced. This cutting was to be in a gradually shortening rhythm.

Asquith, however, realised that this lent itself especially to talk-film technique, and he is going to write part of a talkie, which the lovers will be 'hearing and seeing': no scenes of this will be taken, however, the dialogue will merely counterpoint the main action. This is an extension of an obvious trick, but someone had to work it out.

R.B.

GEMS FROM THE REPORT OF THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CENSORS.

REASONS FOR EXCEPTION BEING TAKEN TO CERTAIN PRODUCTIONS.

1. "Reflection on Wife of responsible British official stationed in the East."
2. "Police firing on defenceless populace."
   Such things, of course, are never done. Not even on May Day.
3. "Incidents which convey false and derogatory impressions of the Police Force in this country."
   We remember the Goddard case . . . .
4. "Intimate biological studies unsuitable for general exhibition."
   Cosmos!
5. "Unseemly display of a woman's undergarments."
   Now, what constitutes the difference between a seemly and an unseemly display of undergarments?
   They prefer the refined sort.
7. "Women in alluring and provocative attitudes."
   Ah!
8. "Men and Women in bed together."
   Disgusting!
9. "Inflammatory sub-titles and political propaganda."
   But not The Red Dancer.

This report of the Censors should rank with the best of our comic literature. Consider the following extract, dealing with the "talkies":—"There has been no mechanical difficulty in effecting this (deletion) hitherto, parts to which exception is taken being simply cut out; but when the acting is synchronised with dialogue or music, to delete even a foot upsets the continuity of the whole of the reel".

Whereas, of course, to delete scenes from a silent film like Jeanne Ney does not upset the continuity at all. You "simply" cut out what you don't like, and nobody is any the worse!

When will this farce be ended?

A.W.
CLOSE UP

PARIS NOTES

From the 2nd to the 7th September, 1929, will be held in Switzerland at the Chateau de la Sarraz (property of Madame de Mandrot, and thanks to her hospitality) an International Congress of Independent Cinematography.

The objects of the Congress are as follows:—

To establish a permanent alliance between the independent groups (cinemas, salles spécialisées) to effect the interchange of independent films existing in various countries. Creation of groups and salles.

To prepare the organisation of an International Production Co-operation, able to produce independent films according to the directives of an international commission.

Such are the bare details of this Congress, of which the consequences could be enormous for the future of the independent cinema in Europe, and which would bring together some scores of the most noteworthy personalities of the young International Cinema.

It is the Nouvelle Revue Française which has taken this initiative, and it is to be hoped that this congress will be of greater import than the multiple congresses which have latterly taken place, and which were distinguished only by more or less interesting discussions, but which never arrived at any result of practical value.

I had the occasion to run into Jean Renoir recently, while he was playing opposite Catherine Hessling under the direction of Cavalcanti. Renoir told me of his misfortunes
with his film *Le Tournoi*, of which the montage was completely changed, to such an extent, indeed, that Jean Renoir did not wish to be known as the author of the film which circulated with his name as director. I perform a duty in reporting his griefs, the more so as I have criticised his film in *Close Up*, without knowing what I have just learnt. Under such conditions the exercise of one's *metier* as critic is somewhat difficult, for if one feels obliged to be severe toward a film, one now must hesitate for fear of doing a wrong to a director who is innocent of the jumble that is presented to you.

It seems to me useless to go on lamenting much more about this wretched and disagreeable business of cutting, of changes which the author himself does not know the importance of to the very day of the presentation, for the talking film does not permit such sabotage. You see, I am not without reason in saying that the coming of the sound film and talking film is salutary for the cinema.

* * *

Now, this still: the law of events probably willed it: several misprints slipped into my last article. One must naturally say—I am of the opinion that Pabst *did not* say that to give me pleasure, for if the contrary had been my opinion I would have attached no importance to what Pabst had said.

Later, in the Semaine du Cinéma Français, read—that 98 per cent. of French directors *should* be obliged to seek another trade, for unfortunately this decision was not yet made, as I had the air of pretending in this article.

J. Lenauer.
Mr. Lenauer, dans sa petite mise au point publiée dans le précédent numéro de Close Up, explique pourquoi il est si profondément déçu par la valeur actuelle des films français, qui ne répond pas du tout à ce qu'il s'était imaginé. "Qui aime bien châtie bien", c'est entendu, mais de là à enterrer définitivement, il y a, me semble-t-il, une nuance qui n'échappera à personne.

Je n'ai point voulu, dans ma précédente réplique, innocenter le moins du monde le cinéma français; je n'ai fait en somme, par souci d'impartialité, que relever l'étroite parenté qui existait entre les films français, allemands, anglais ou américains, au point de vue des possibilités artistiques. Or ces possibilités là sont quasi nulles dans TOUTE ENTREPRISE COMMERCIALE où l'on ne recherche avant tout qu'à clôturer un exercice avec profit. Et pour cela on s'est imaginé, un peu partout, qu'il ne suffisait que de suivre les goûts du public. Peut-être verrons-nous une réaction se dessiner à cet égard, mais, pour le moment, nous ne pouvons repérer aucun signe avant-coureur.

Qu'il y ait une sensible différence de valeur entre la littérature et le film français, cela n'est pas douteux, mais il incombe précisément aux jeunes de canaliser leur inspiration dans l'expression cinégraphique. Si quelques-uns seulement l'ont essayé jusqu'ici, c'est sans doute en raison des difficultés que présentait un début dans une telle carrière. Le monde artistique français est toujours très divisé, comment pourrait-il en être autrement lorsque les individus qui le
composent sont personnels et soucieux avant tout d'indépendance. Si chacun pouvait tourner les films qu'il entend, dans un studio commun, et que toute liberté soit laissée au metteur en scène, la production cinégraphique s'enrichirait d'un certain nombre d'œuvres de valeur. Il est des associations dans presque toutes les branches artistiques, pourquoi n'en formerait-on point entre cinéphiles, scénaristes, metteurs en scène et acteurs? De tels groupements permettraient de construire un studio, d'acquérir le matériel nécessaire, en un mot de frayer le chemin au cinéma intellectuel. Si l'on prenait des initiatives semblables, en France, et il n'est pas dit que l'on ne s'y décide un jour, je suis certain que le génie latin s'affirmerait alors par l'image aussi bien qu'il le fait en littérature, peinture, etc. Un mouvement, il ne suffit que de cela pour que Mr. Lenauer ait à exhumier un cadavre en fort bonne santé.

F. Chevalley.

BOOK REVIEWS


This book is simply a document, without pretension, and written I believe, by a man who has no connection with the cinema. But after the rather superficial opening chapters, one discovers a number of very just criticisms, the more notable because they are written with a complete absence of a
desire to instruct, which is so fashionable at the moment. I liked, for instance, the chapter in which M. Guetta states (though we ourselves doubt just a little) that the "stars" live a serious life, ordered entirely by their work and that the Hollywood "orgies" of which the fan papers are full, are only the invention of journalists void of better ideas with which to fill the magazines.

And it is delightful of this author to insist on every occasion, that above all the cinema demands laborious work and that those who derive glory and profit from it, work hard at their trade. It is a pleasure to find that the stupid legend of the fairy-like life of the stars is destroyed again, for one can never repeat often enough that the people who are so much envied, have worked longer and more arduously, often enough, than those who watch them in the cinema.

In a judicious comparison M. Guetta endeavours to find the reason for the inferiority of the French film beside the American product. It is good, but he is mistaken when he says, "the technical methods are still so insufficient that the word is really pretentious and the trade still very young." It is possible that the word is pretentious and as far as I am concerned, it is completely indifferent to me, whether the cinema is an art or not. I for myself feel it is more, it is a world. As for the trade, "still so young" I think that M. Guetta is on a false track. On the contrary the cinema has rather too much craft and not enough youth; but the author writes immediately afterwards of sound films and talkies, reproaching his compatriots with their lack of understanding for this renewal. And he himself gives an answer to "the trade's youth." No one can honestly doubt
to-day the new possibilities of talkies and sound films and it can be said that the arrival of these films was necessary to save the cinema from the danger of becoming sterile or of growing old.

J.L.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES

At the same time that Hollywood handed Emil Jannings his hat it also handed him the highest honor within its gift, the annual award of merit bestowed by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for the most notable screen work during the year. It was Jannings' performance in *The Way of All Flesh* that won him this distinction. That Hollywood should at the same time have bowed him out and shown him the way back to Germany, is but typical of the new regime. The inarticulate actor, whatever his achievements, has been relegated to the limbo of cinema relics.

* * *

Fortunately for the sake of history, *Nanook of the North* and *Moana* were filmed before the advent of the talkies. What was to have been a sister picture to these two classics, done by the same director, Robert Flaherty, has been definitely shelved. This was a film record of the tribal life of the Hopi Indians of New Mexico, one of the most picturesque and interesting of the remaining Indian tribes. After months spent among them by Flaherty and his
cameraman, Leon Shamroy, and the securing of several thousand feet of film, the enterprise was called off by the Fox Company, under whose auspices it was undertaken, and the film has been consigned to the graveyard of silent pictures.

* * *

Back of the initial eagerness and determination to satisfy the popular clamor for talking pictures lies the encouraging revelation that producers are realizing at least thirty per cent. greater profit on the talkies than they did on the silent pictures. It was at first feared that the enormous sums required for new equipment, as well as the additional expenses incidental to the producing of phonofilms, would entail a decrease in profits. That the reverse should be proving true is not only gratifying to the Hollywood adventurers, but is also making all the more certain the permanency of the audible cinema and the eventual complete extinction of the silent film.

* * *

Broadway Melody, M-G-M’s first sound picture, has been showing twice daily to capacity audiences at Grauman’s Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, since February first. At the present writing the attendance figures total nearly five hundred thousand. This is cited as typical, not only of the popularity of singing and talking films, but also of Hollywood’s interest in its own product.

* * *

Having completed his fiasco as director of Gloria Swanson’s ill-fated Queen Kelly, Eric von Stroheim is about to make his debut as an actor in a talking film. This is The Great
Gabbo, directed by James Cruze. Not in fifteen years has Von Stroheim appeared in a picture directed by anyone other than himself.

* * *

The Technicolor Company are producing a series of two-reel pictures under the general title of "Great Events." Each of them has for its subject some dramatic, colorful moment of history. The two so far completed, and released under the M-G-M banner, are Madame DuBarry and Manchu Love. The third, now in production, is Light of India.

* * *

The talkies are making possible a new form of cinema publicity by means of radio. The Fox Company recently inaugurated this new method of picture advertising by broadcasting one of their musical films directly from the theatre in which it was showing. The success of this venture has prompted other companies to follow suit, and radio programs will soon include these film broadcasts as regular features. Experience in the broadcasting of grand opera, symphony concerts, prize fights, baseball games, and the like, has demonstrated that this transmission of entertainment free of cost to radio listeners is no detriment to patronage, but, on the contrary, appears to stimulate it by inspiring public attention and interest.

* * *

Trader Horn, now being filmed in Africa by M-G-M under the direction of W. S. Van Dyke, will have as a prelude a short talk by Trader Horn himself. This unique and picturesque personality was recently a visitor to Hollywood and was induced to pose and talk for the picture.
CLOSE UP

John Barrymore's singing voice will be heard in his initial vitaphone production for Warner Brothers, General Crack. The story, adapted from a novel by George Preedy, depicts the loves and battles of a youth born of a gypsy princess and a nobleman, and promises to afford Barrymore an ideal vehicle for his finished stagecraft.

* * *

John McCormack, the Irish tenor, has signed a contract with the Fox Company for a series of talking and singing pictures. In furtherance of this he has cancelled his concert tour and will begin work on his first picture some time in August. The preliminary scenes will be made in Ireland, where he now is, and later he will come to Hollywood, to complete the film. The scenario is being written directly for him by Tom Barry, the American playwright and author of the phonofilm version of In Old Arizona.

* * *

With the selection of Winifred Westover, the former wife of Bill Hart, as the title character in the phonofilm adaptation of Fanny Hurst's Lummox, Herbert Brenon is now in the midst of his work as director of the picture. Miss Hurst is herself in Hollywood, supervising the production at the United Artists studio.

* * *

Phonofilm shots of the London water front will be incorporated in Paramount's forthcoming picture, The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu. The melodrama, by Sax Rohmer, has its locale in the Limehouse district, and dramatic color will be given the film by the bellow of fog horns, the shrill whine of police-boat sirens, the whistles of freight barges, and all
the rest of the sounds—even to the lapping of the murky waters—characteristic of the Thames and its multifarious activities.

* * *

Among the popular silent films scheduled for revival on the talking screen are Huckleberry Finn, with Jackie Coogan in the title rôle, A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur, with Will Rogers, and Humoresque, in which it is rumored that Jascha Heifitz, now the husband of Florenc Vidor, will enact the leading rôle—that of a Jewish boy who rises from obscurity to become a world-famous violinist.

C.H.
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BY THE EDITOR

Effort at universal cinema has well shown that the only approach to it is strictly racial cinema.

We have seen that the only way to understand peoples is in their essence, not—as has been tried and tried again—their compounding. Seeing that internationalism is the aim, clearly the first necessity is nations. A brotherhood between nation and nation is founded not on one nation taking over the characteristics formed from the other’s peculiar growth and development, but upon a higher understanding and respect. This in cinema above all else has been well proved. If instead of nations we have peoples imitating the diluted moral esperanto of other peoples, in the end there is neither understanding nor justification for the continuance of irrelevance.

When Ralph Forbes and Lilian Gish are cast as Austrians and directed in an Austrian scenario by an American director in Hollywood, we have neither America nor have we Austria.
Austrians go white and leave the theatre while Americans are merely sceptical, sensing rightly that this American Tragedy has taught them nothing of Austria, nor for that matter of America. When Pabst, an Austrian, opens your eyes to Vienna broken by war and war’s end, you understand so much more not only about Vienna but about casual villainy in general and much about humanitarianism. It makes you aware of Austria. And—this is important—Austria as a nation. Its story in evoking sympathy, wakes sympathy for Austria as Austria and not as something badly imitating you.

It is the same when Margaret Mann sends four Tyrolean, country boys to war. What is her "Universal Message" of motherhood (what was Poirier’s) but her director’s ability to make her look sentimentally forsaken, waving her over-ornate lads through over-ornate studio streets to studio war?

You don’t sympathise with Russia, you have no sense of international understanding, when John Barrymore postures in a Russian story with impeccable, special, ever-softening lens to gain him sex-appeal. Let one fine, honest voice—say Eisenstein’s—tell you about Russia, and supposing you are man enough not to scramble with your stocking of savings to bury in the garden; that is to say, if you haven’t got that kind of mind, you will understand that none of the world has benefited by the silly tales-told-out-of-school fired competititionally from miles of newspapers and millions of mouths through twelve years of unconscious (for that is what it amounts to) confession.

What does friend Borzage get from his attempt to put Italy on the International map? . . . . One of the all too few bright moments of the Mussolini campus—the storming of projection
CLOSE UP

room and burning of the film. Long live Italy, if you feel that way about it, though clearly aesthetic motives are not to be ascribed. I won’t tell you, by the way, which famous German cameraman considered this daubed, unedged, grey soupiness the best photography, mein kind, the world has ever seen!

Now take (since everybody else does) the negro film and decide whether you think international cinema is here going to mean a thing when a white man directs, no matter how charmingly, blacks so that they must always seem to be direfully dependent on white man’s wisdom. For all the coal black hearts in Dixie must beat to please,—meekly Uncle—Tom, pleasant, thankful serf beats. Confronted with an instability (his own) which he calls a Race Problem, the white man is always going to portray the negro as he likes to see him, no matter how benevolently. Benevolence, indeed, is the danger. Apart from being the most tricky and unkind form of human selfishness, it is often more than humbug and always less than seeing, and does to sugar coat much that is not, so to speak, edible.

Stepin Fetchit can give us more than a promise though the trouble is he isn’t meant to do as much. But watch him move and you will see what we mean. There is more than promise in the jungle, lissom lankness that slams down something unanswerable in front of what we let go past as beauty. This splendour of being is one good key to open a good many doors, all the way to our goal simply. Something has been given us here, set (if you will) in a physical symbol, though you might with equal truth call it a mind symbol or a psychic symbol. Something by which we know without any further
need to bother, that we are only at the outer edge of seeing.

Fetchit waves loose racial hands and they, like life, touch everything that the world contains. They are startling with what nobody meant to put into them, but which is all too there—histories, sagas, dynasties, Keatsian edges off things make a voiceless trouble back of the eye and the recording mind. Only afterwards you really are beset by them. They are not Fetchit’s hands, they are the big step we have not yet taken. First of all these so utterly not incantationish gestures are unselfconsciousness, perfectly inherited greatness of race and of race mind. It only begins there. We can scrap every trained toe waggle of a ballerina for the very least of these movements. Making this greatness articulate for the cinema is the fascinating pioneer work of somebody.

Ourselves we should be dubious of white man’s patronage. White man’s patronage is apt to end in credos. The negro is apt to be overlooked in the hullabaloo of me being distinguished by shaking my brief for him under your nose. Constraining, alas, people like Wyndham Lewis to be stung into Palefaced and paler gutted repudiation. And where if you please is the negro all this time, other than in his own world and among his own people, unaware he is being broken like bun in the twittering fingers of so many hundred thousand drawing room tea fights. Glory be is only your maiden aunt’s shudder the other side up. The negro is not here to be thus not understood and let go. Glory be helps him no more than nothing and solves nothing. Analysis has not begun yet.

Big issues are at once opened up. In being dazzled by the hands of Fetchit do not let us overlook the head of Fetchit.
CLOSE UP

It is the negroid in Fetchit which is most sheerly fine. Race. The national, if one may bring it in terms of our contention. Negro being white John Citizen (excuse me) can now be brought in line with what we have said about Margaret Mann and her four no more Tyrolean than I am boys. The negro does not have to come to us for civilization, culture or religion. Periodically we (the white races) are shown we are neither civilized, cultured nor religious. It would hardly be progress for those who have retained what Fetchit, the symbol, has retained, to lose it for regimented, squad-drill tactics of our minds and bodies. The negro’s civilization is capable of less pinched, less wary, less unhappy types.

No, we have not come to the beginning of understanding. Our idea of the Orient is as oriental as the cotton bedroom kimonos in any sales catalogue. Our idea of the negro is as negroid as Al Jolson and no more. We sentimentalise about the negro, we admire him, we shout hurrah, as it might be, when he is mentioned—some of us still walk out of the room when he comes in—and how far if so little we understand ourselves do we understand him?

I have seen people brace their shoulders and spit without the grace and justification of a cat at his mention in casual conversation. A boat has just brought me back from the north of the world. The most blotched of the blotched harridans from Wigan was heard to remark that the Laplanders had horrible faces. Fat folds of evil and repression sat on her funny little mouth. Her eyes were the eyes of boiled trout, steaming wanly through pince-nez. Every time the boat lurched, ungoverned, flapping knees twitched and she belched. In the faces of the Lapps was the
quiet, earthy grandeur of free little gnomes and reindeer ran among them.

Let the negro, then, film himself, be free to give something equal to his music, his dance, his sculpture—in which alone you have a clue to new visual discovery, as trenchent in its way as the first shock of what is now broadly referred to as the Russian method.

The negro documentaire of the negro. Think what might be in it. The negro as an observer of himself. As his own historian. As his own agitator. Talking films took films from us but they have given us a glimpse of him, and the momentous edge of possibility is set punkah-fashion waving, fanning something entirely and wholly new, that may expand not in the negroid alone, but throughout the whole of a rationalised international cinema.

Kenneth Macpherson.

THE NEGRO ACTOR AND THE AMERICAN MOVIES

By Geraldyn Dismond

—well-known American Negro writer.

The Negro actor and the part he has played in the development of the American movie is one of the most
CLOSE UP

interesting phases of what is now one of America’s greatest industries. Because no true picture of American life can be drawn without the Negro, his advent into the movies was inevitable; but also because of the prejudices which have hampered and retarded him since his coming to America, his debut was delayed. To be perfectly frank, the Negro entered the movies through a back door, labelled “servants’ entrance”. However, beggars cannot be choosers, and it is to his credit that he accepted the parts assigned to him, made good and opened the door for bigger things.

In order to better appreciate the attitude of the white producer toward Negro talent, we must keep in mind the change in the social status of the group. To put it briefly, at the time of the Civil War, the northern white man considered the Negro a black angel without wings, about whom he must busy himself in spirit and deed. On the other hand, the southern white man detested Negroes in general and liked his particular blacks. After the Negro had been given his freedom, there soon arose the feeling that he was an economic and social menace and we find him depicted everywhere as a rapist. Then the white dilettante, exhausted with trying to find new thrills, stumbled over the Negro and exclaimed, “See what we have overlooked! These beloved vagabonds! Our own Negroes, right here at home!” And voila!—Black became the fad.

These types of thinking have influenced the development of the Negro as part of the moving picture game. Within the remembrance of all of us and still in some pictures and stage productions, we find whites blacked up for indifferent
imitations of their dark brothers. But more and more is the practice falling into disrepute. The old cry that Negroes with ability cannot be found has not held water. In fact, it has been conclusively proven that under the proper director, the Negro turns out some of the best acting on the American screen and stage. A people of many emotions with an inherent sense of humour, and a love for play, they do not find it difficult to express themselves in action, or to bring to that expression the genuineness and enjoyment they feel. Nevertheless, excuse after excuse has been made to keep the Negro off the silver sheet and it was the servants of white stars, who as individuals, first got the breaks.

For example, Oscar Smith, who came to the Paramount Studios nine years ago as the personal servant of Wallace Reid, and at present owns the bootblack stand at the studio, has worked in two hundred pictures and has recently received a contract exclusively for Paramount talking pictures. Stepin Fetchit, who is billed as the star in the William Fox all-talkie *Hearts in Dixie* was the porter on the Fox lots. Carolyn Snowden, who played opposite Fetchit in *In old Kentucky* was also a lady's maid for a prominent star. And so it went. Another point is also true. They worked in the early days in character. By that I mean, often the star's maid went on as her maid, provided she could be made to look homely and black enough. And all Negroes, perhaps with one or two exceptions, were cast as menials and as comedy characters.

As for the exceptions, they were for the most part African chiefs and the members of their tribes. One, however, I do
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recall from my first experiences with movies. He is Noble Johnson of whom practically nothing is heard now in connection with Negroes. The last time I saw him, he was playing the part of a Mexican bandit, and rumor has it that he owns considerable stock in the company for which he works and is used for all parts calling for a swarthy skin. The other two unusual individuals are Sunshine Sammy and Farina, the two juvenile favourites of the Hal Roach—Our Gang Comedies.

Negroes in any great numbers were first used for atmosphere—for mobs, levee and plantation, native African jungle and popular black belt cabaret scenes. Griffith’s The Birth of a Nation, which, by the way, employed the old rape idea, and for that reason was so distasteful to Negroes, is an excellent example of the Negro as atmosphere. West of Zanzibar, a popular Lon Chaney film, and the Stanley in Africa pictures used large groups of Negroes for the jungle scenes.

The next move on the part of producers was evident. Isolated Negro characters and Negroes as atmosphere were combined for the Universal feature production, Uncle Tom’s Cabin, with James B. Lowe as Uncle Tom. Not all Negro parts, however, even in this picture, were assigned to Negroes. Topsy, Liza, her husband and baby were played by whites, but up to the introduction of the “Talkies”, Uncle Tom’s Cabin was the outstanding accomplishment of the Negro in the movie world.

It is significant that with the coming of talkies, the first all-Negro feature pictures were attempted by the big
companies. White America has always made much of the fact that all Negroes can sing and dance. Moreover, it is supposed to get particular pleasure out of the Negro's dialect, his queer colloquialisms, and his quaint humour. The movie of yesterday, to be sure, let him dance, but his greatest charm was lost by silence. With the talkie, the Negro is at his best. Now he can be heard in song and speech. And no one who has seen the William Fox *Hearts in Dixie*, featuring Stepin Fetchit, Clarence Muse and Eugene Jackson, or Al Christie's *Melancholy Dame*, an Octavius Roy Cohen all-talking comedy with Evelyn Preer, Eddie Thompson and Spencer Williams, will disagree with the fact that the Negro's voice can be a thing of beauty in spite of the mechanics of this new venture in the art of the movies.

Of these two Negro all-talkies which are now playing Broadway, *Hearts in Dixie* is by far the most pretentious. The story as such, is nil. Here indeed, we have the "beloved vagabond". It does embody the idea, however, that some Negroes are not superstitious and are anxious to better themselves, and is a rather entertaining picture of plantation life; but it lacks substance. You were ever conscious of the fact that the producers were not interested in the plot, but rather in the talking and singing sequence. The ensemble singing and the voice of Clarence Muse were decided contributions and well worth the price of admission. *The Melancholy Dame*, a short comedy with little music or dancing, depends principally upon its comic dialogue which is given in the best Octavius Roy Cohen dialect, for its interest. Incidentally, Mr. Cohen, himself, directed the picture.
CLOSE UP

Of course, it is generally believed that the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production, *Hallelujah*, will be the ace of the all-Negro talking pictures. King Vidor is directing. Daniel Haynes, formerly of *Show Boat*, has the principal role and is supported by Nina May McKenney of the Blackbirds of 1929; Victoria Spivey, a "blues" recording artist; Fannie DeKnight, who played in *Lula Belle*; Langdon Grey, a non-professional, and 375 extras. There are forty singing sequences, including folk songs, spirituals, work songs and blues. Eva Jessye, a Negro, who has compiled a book of spirituals and trained the original "Dixie Jubilee Choir", is directing the music. The story, which is devoid of propaganda, is that of a country boy who temporarily succumbs to the wiles of a woman, is beset with tragedy, and ultimately finds peace. It is a known fact that several studios are holding up all-Negro productions until the fate of *Hallelujah* has been pronounced.

In the meantime, *Show Boat*, a talkie using the present American *Show Boat* Company of both blacks and whites, has been made by Universal and had its première at Miami and Palm Beach, March 17th; Ethel Waters, greatest comedienne of her race, and Mamie Smith, blues singer of note, have been signed up by Warner Brothers for Vitaphone comedies; Sissle and Blake, internationally famous kings of syncopation, have been released by Warner Brothers; Christie Studio is preparing another Negro film; Eric Von Stroheim is working on the Negro sequence of *The Swamp*, and John Ford's *Strong Boy* is using a large number of Negroes.

Three by-products have resulted from this slow recognition
of the Negro as movie material—Negro film corporations, Negro and white film corporations, and white corporations, all for the production of Negro pictures. They have the same motives, namely, to present Negro films about and for Negroes, showing them not as fools and servants, but as human beings with the same emotions, desires and weaknesses as other people's; and to share in the profits of this great industry. Of this group, perhaps the three best known companies are The Micheaux Pictures Company of New York City, an all-coloured concern whose latest releases are *The Wages of Sin* and *The Broken Violin*; The Colored Players Film Corporation of Philadelphia, a white concern, which produced three favorites—*A Prince of His People, Ten Nights in a Barroom*, starring Charles Gilpin, and *Children of Fate*; and the Liberty Photoplays, Inc., of Boston, a mixed company, no picture of which I have seen. There is rumor of the formation in New York City of The Tono-Film, an all-Negro corporation, for exclusive Negro talking pictures and that its officers and directors will include Paul Robeson, Noble Sissle, Maceo Pinkard, Earl and Maurice Dancer, J. C. Johnson, F. E. Miller and Will Vodery, all of whom are known in America and abroad. So far, the pictures released by this group have been second rate in subject matter, direction and photography, but they do keep before the public the great possibilities of the Negro in movies.

In conclusion, it must be conceded by the most skeptical that the Negro has at last become an integral part of the Motion Picture Industry. And his benefits will be more than monetary. Because of the Negro movie, many a prejudiced
From *The Black Journey*, the Paramount film of the Citroen expedition.
From West of Zanzibar, a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film directed by Tod Browning.

From West of Zanzibar—a pot-pourri, including Lon Chaney.
From *Diamond Handcuffs*, a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film directed by John P. McCarthy
From *Diamond Handcuffs*, a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film directed by John P. McCarthy.
From *In Old Kentucky*, a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film, directed by John M. Stahl. Stephin Fetchit as "High Pockets."
Victoria Spivey, famous "Blues" singer, who plays the role of "Missy" in Hallelujah, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's new film, directed by King Vidor.

Nina Mae McKenney, negro dancer, who plays in Hallelujah.
Daniel Haynes, who plays lead in *Hallelujah*, King Vidor's all-negro film for M. G. M.
King Vidor, directing for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, working on the first all-negro picture made in Hollywood. Locales were chosen in the southern states. Daniel Haynes (at) plays lead.
CLOSE UP

white who would not accept a Negro unless as a servant, will be compelled to admit that at least he can be something else; many an indifferent white will be beguiled into a positive attitude of friendliness; many a Negro will have his race-consciousness and self-respect stimulated. In short, the Negro movie actor is a means of getting acquainted with Negroes and under proper direction and sympathetic treatment can easily become a potent factor in our great struggle for better race relations. And the talkie which is being despised in certain artistic circles is giving him the great opportunity to prove his right to a place on the screen.

BLACK SHADOWS

When you read a Negro book, novel or play or poems, when you hear a Negro sing (and Marion Anderson sings at this year’s Promenades), you find a new life, very rich, very swift, intense and dynamic; unlike ours, but full of things which we cannot help knowing we lack. When you go to the screen, you see objects like Anita Page, or a bit of French fun about the outskirts of Paris, or a German film in which you are led into a million rooms. You perhaps see a Russian film, and you think here it is again, life an affair to be taken and settled with and made something of. Life very new,
and something to be insisted on. You think that perhaps if there were some Negro films, they might have the same range and sweep and drive. Themes that matter are what are wanted, we know, and films made by people who dare to be big. You know that some of the black authors have the scope, and that they almost cannot help having the themes. You wonder, could there be a Negro cinema?

You don’t have to wonder why there isn’t. Big business makes that clear. And perhaps there couldn’t be in America, and France would make it chic and run these films in outhouses in the Rue Blomet with postage-stamp screens, strapontins and long, long intervals. And Germany might have, but Germany is so mixed up with making films to please other countries. It all seems very unlikely, and you go back to America, because they are, after all, beginning to make a few, though in the wrong way, and you come to the conclusion that the only thing may be that in time perhaps, among the romantic mammy pictures, one or two serious black Othello pictures may slip out. It seems that must be the only way that can happen. Quietly, one or two here and there, and not too much fuss about it.

But one wishes . . . . one wishes there were young Negroes who could and would get together and make their films, and let us in to see them perhaps, but make them anyway, and make them black. One wishes, when one turns over in one’s mind the richness laid there by Negro writers and singers, and then one looke at the screen as it is and wonders why all this world finds no place there. All this world whose speed and sensitiveness and saltness and—ironically—freedom, is locked in the word “black”.

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If you look at the films in which Negroes have figured, you will find a few travel pictures, Zeliv, Voyage au Congo, The Black Journey, Samba, and one or two German ones, and the Voyage au Liberia, which I just missed at the Vieux Colombier. None of these are as good as they might be, qua films. For the rest, your list will be limited to pictures, some stills of which appear in this issue, in which Negroes play subsidiary parts. A black band playing in the background, or a waiter who may or may not be put in for "atmosphere" or comic relief. There are some talkies. There are no really serious Negro films. Samba and Zeliv are exceptions. These were not only filmed in native country, but they enact native stories. Samba, I have not seen; but Zeliv is by no means good, though it cannot help being interesting. As to the jazz side, Josephine Baker acted in a French film, and was surprisingly good. But Josephine Baker is more an invention of Paris than an interpreter of jazz, and this film was one of those affairs in which the French run riot with le décor moderne, and neglected the make-up of the Baker so much that she was hardly recognisable from one scene to the next. So that may be called a typically French film, and not Negro. Then there was another French picture with Catherine Hessling and Johnny Hudgins. . . . But there are no really serious Negro films.

And there ought to be.

There ought to be because there are Negro novels, and plays and poems. There ought to be because the Negro is marvellously photogenic, and the cinema is equally an affair of blacks and whites. There ought to be because here is a
race which has, in short time, expressed itself vitally in literature and a consideration of that literature shows that the qualities which make it so vital are exactly those which films demand.

It is a stock phrase that novels such as *The Walls of Jericho*, *Home to Harlem* (but not *Banjo*), *Fire in the Flint*, *Black Sadie*, and so on, possesses "sense of rhythm". It is an equal cliché that the Negro possesses wonderful "emotional responsiveness", and that he can move beautifully. Well, films are a matter of rhythm, and the way these novels, and *Porgy*, and other plays, develop is rhythmic. It is not so generally recognised that the Negroes have a great sense of imagery. But if you read Hughes intelligently, and are not obsessed by self-created smart fun of the jazz rhythms there, you will see vivid and easy images. He says that a railway arch is a sad song in the air, and I ask you to look at that for a moment. And again. That is what he can do, and others can do things like it. That is what Negroes have to give, and because they have something to give, that is why there should be a black cinema, as well as an approximately white one. If Negroes had nothing more to say than what we ourselves say already, would that be very interesting? It is because colour counts that black films should be made alongside white-ish ones.

Because it is the reason why Negro books and books about Negroes have been so belatedly popular in London this spring (*Scarlet Sister Mary*, *The Magic Island*, *Mamba's Daughters*) that there is a difference of mentality. Something which we have not got, but which we may respond to. We
CLOSE UP

may not fully understand it, but we can in part appreciate it. We certainly can't reproduce it, and that is why there should be Negro films made by and about them. Not black films passing white, and not, please, white passing for black. We want no van Vechtens of the films.

The talkies have meant one thing, at any rate. They have meant the discovery that Negroes have a voice. With great courage, *Hallelujah* was made. I am afraid I don't expect much of *Hallelujah*, but it was an experiment, and other firms are rushing to make coloured talkies. Fox's *Heart's in Dixie* got very good notices, despite being hard to hear, and its dancing was grand. But these all perpetuate the way down South in the land of cotton idea, which really ought to be forgotten. All this Uncle Tom business (though that film, I believe, was the first in which an important Negro actor had an important part). If you want to know what way down South means to a Negro actor, you can read *Fire in the Flint*, and your pillow will be damp, and it won't be the ceiling leaking. Of course, it is something that films with coloured casts are being made, it is an experiment, though it should have been made long before, when Cecil de Mille first had the script of *Porgy*. But the fact that there is a slight movement, and the fact that *Porgy* and *Hearts in Dixie* were shown soon after each other in London, and *Blackbirds* one prays, will follow, makes it a good time to consider and ask what is going to be done. Now that it has been discovered that Negroes have voices, let it be found too that they have something to say.

Not too many Lenox Avenue films. The problems of the educated urban Negro, but not only Harlem joints. What
good will that do? A few are all very well, but they give a wrong impression, and there is so much else, so much that is at once bigger and the Negro's own property. Not too much race-problem either (though you can read in The American Mercury of last April on "learning to be black" and see a script waiting). I mean, if you bear in mind sufficiently that colour counts, you get, when you meet a great work, beyond colour, though colour could only possibly have made it. But you get to humanity and so on. "Just like us, really" is an insult, and who's "us" anyway?

Matters of tragedy, heaven knows there are enough, and matters of history. Has anyone ever thought of filming some Negro hero? No. Because it would be realised that here was a matter of serious expression. Yet take the story of Henri Chrstophe (if only from Black Majesty) or take some of the stories in The Magic Island. What films there would be! It is shameful to be denied them. And take the pleas which reach the Times correspondence column on the subject of our gin exportations to the Gold Coast, and read West African Secret Societies. Take these subjects, and you would have epic themes for the cinema, which dies for want of them. Negro history, which so little is known about . . . . the story of Phyllis Wheatley . . . . and not stories of mammies in coloured handkerchiefs, and not only Harlem jazz films. Serious films. The two sides which we as whites are so little sensible of, the historical and the life of the urban, educated Negro.

And why not a little better and a little more travel films? In Germany, talking about Samba, they said to me, "But why do not you, with your Empire, go out and do things
CLOSE UP

like this?’ We have gone to the Maoris, but I do not think South Africa or the West Indies have been realised for the life they contain. Not a question of flying around with Cobham, and landing and then showing what a funny way native women do their hair. But send out a well-equipped expedition, with men who know how to film and men who have studied the races they are visiting. Then there would be documents of interest to everybody. Karl Freund is in Albania; maybe Albanians are interesting . . . The best film is the perfect documentary, in which the themes and drama of the country under review is brought out and developed with as much care and sensitiveness as any studio work-of-art. These might be made by white men; I cannot see the best work in studios coming from white directors working with a coloured cast. I cannot see how they can understand them. If only in time, Negro directors and Negro cameramen could be encouraged into existence . . .

But there is a slight start, Fetchit has come into his own, and if it can be guided, and if we keep our heads in the direction of what we expect, and don’t lower them to what we are given, we shall be given something in time worth while.

It is all a question of drama and conflict on the screen, and the screen is hard up for it, whereas the Negro comes into drama and conflict at every turn, it being the heritage the white man never thought he was giving him. And when with this you get responsiveness and grace and rhythm, you see quite suddenly that if the screen doesn’t take care, the things it most wants will be put into other mediums more open to Negroes, where their presence will cause people to
say, "there's all this, why don't we get it on the screen '', and why don't we?.

We all know why, but the obstacles can't be permanent and insuperable, and surely, surely, we are all old enough to insist on our right to beauty, which is meaning, wherever we can find it? And we don't get it by blacking our faces and wearing white gloves, and I don't think we get it from real Negroes having to live down to the pleasant banjo-strumming, cotton-field singing idea we have of them. We want the real thing, always, and the cinema demands the real thing, and heaven knows there is enough reality waiting there, if black shadows might move on our screens in their own patterns, and have their own screens, too, to do it on. And not rely on white patronage to do it with. For surely they are as tired of all that as of white, yellow, white—nothing but white—films; and heaven knows I am.

Robert Herring.
A LETTER FROM WALTER WHITE

(Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, author of The Fire in the Flint and Flight, both novels of negro life, as well as much research work in negro social problems.)

As a result of the successful use of Negro themes in the American theatre and the acclaim which has come to Negro artists in the theatre, on the concert platform and through the work of Negro novelists and poets, there is now beginning to be seen a considerable activity in the world of the cinema with Negro life as the material used. Four of the biggest cinema producing companies in the United States are at present at work on Negro pictures. One of them, "Hearts in Dixie", produced by William Fox is to have its world première to-night.

From what I have heard of all of these pictures now being made none of them reaches a very high level either of interpretation of Negro life or honest presentation of genuine Negro material. All four of them are of the minstrel show, "Befo' de war", type. That, however, does not seem to me important. With the vast amount of race prejudice in America and particularly because the producers of moving pictures must depend upon a nation-wide distribution which includes the South, it is almost impossible to start off with
the presentation of anything but the old stereotyped concepts of the Negro.

Perhaps in time we may evolve to the pinot where moving picture producers and distributors may have intelligence and courage enough to utilize the excellent material contained in some of the more notable novels written about the Negro by Negro and white writers during the last few years.

Frankly, I am not hopeful of this for some years to come. Perhaps the only way such a picture could be done probably would be through its production by a European company and then brought to America with the accolade of a European success precisely as Krenek's "Jonny Spielt Auf" recently gained some attention and success in the world of opera.

If you care to do so you might run this letter as a short, hasty and, I fear, far too inadequate picture of the possibilities of the use of Negro material in the cinema.

WALTER WHITE.

A LETTER FROM PAUL GREEN

I am very much interested in your proposed number of Close Up; to be devoted to Negro art for the cinema.

There is a great field for exploration here and especially,
now that the phonofilm is an actuality, will the richness of Negro life—mime, song, dance and picturesque background—have a full chance to be exposed to the world, the white man's world as well as the Negro's. It will, of course, be some time in coming to fulfilment, but sooner or later it will be, and I for one welcome such signs as this given by your magazine. You say in your letter that your number will be devoted mainly to Negro writers and their views on the subject, accompanied by "stills", etc. Such a number ought to be of tremendous interest. As a white man who has done some writing on Negro subjects, I wish to congratulate you on this move. I shall look forward to seeing the number.

Paul Green.

(Mr. Green is the author of In Abraham's Bosom, and other Negro plays).

THE AFRAMERICAN CINEMA

The negro is not new to the American film. The late Bert Williams appeared in a film before the war. But this did antagonism. It was the film of the Johnson-Jeffries fight not get very considerable circulation due to Southern that thrust the negro out of films and created the interstate commerce edict against fight films. Sigmund Lubin produced all-negro comedies in Philadelphia before the war.
The negroes themselves have been producing pictures on the New Jersey lots, deserted by the white firms that migrated to California. These companies have starred actors like Paul Robeson and Charles Gilpin in white melodramas like *Ten Nights in a Barroom*. White impersonations of negroes have been very frequent, either in farces or in the perennial *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Negro children have in the last years been appearing in such slapstick films as Hal Roach perpetrates with his tedious and unconvincing Gang. The treatment of Farina is typical of the theatrical (variety and film) acceptance of the negro as clown, clodhopper or scarecrow, an acceptance which is also social. No objections have been raised by the solid South to Farina’s mistreatment by the white children (to me a constantly offensive falsehood and unpardonable treachery of the director), nor to Tom Wilson’s nigger-clowning.

The present vogue for negro films was inevitable. The film trails behind literature and stage for subject-matter. There has been a negro vogue since the spirituals were given their just place in popular attention. Many negro mediocrities have ridden to glory on this fad. Many white dabblers have attained fame by its exploitation. The new negro was suddenly born with it. Cullen and Hughes were crowned poets, but Jean Toomer, a great artist among the negroes, has not yet been publicly acclaimed. He first appeared before the hullabaloo was begun. The theatre took the negro up. First Gilpin and eventually came *Porgy*. Now the film. Sound has made the negro the “big thing” of the film-moment.

Of course, the first negro film in the revival had to be
CLOSE UP

Uncle Tom's Cabin. I praise in it the gaiety of the first part and the friendly, unsupercilious treatment of the negro and the general goodwill of the actors. I condemn in it the perpetuation of the clap-trap sentimentality. This is not the day to take Harriet Beecher Stowe too seriously. Uncle Tom's Cabin should have been produced as folk-composition, or better not at all. It is not important as matter or film. Sound is bringing the negro in with a sort of Eastman Johnson-Stephen Foster-Kentucky Jubilee genre, or with the Octavus Roy Cohen-Hugh Wiley crowd satisfiers, where the negro is still the nigger-clown, shrewd sometimes and butt always. And Vidor's Hallelujah with a good-looking yaller girl. As for me, I shall be assured of the white man's sincerity when he gives me a blue nigger. I want one as rich as the negroes in Poirier's documents of Africa. I am not interested primarily in verbal humor, in clowning nor in sociology. I want cinema and I want cinema at its source. To be at its source, cinema must get at the source of its content. The negro is пластически interesting when he is most negroid. In the films he will be пластически interesting only when the makers of the films know thoroughly the treatment of the negro structure in the African plastic, when they know of the treatment of his movements in the ritual dances, like the dance of the circumcision, the Ganza. In Ingram's The Garden of Allah the only good moment was the facial dance of the negro performer.

The cinema, through its workers, has been content to remain ignorant. It might have saved itself a great deal of trouble and many failures and much time had he studied the experience of the other arts. Well, what can the negro
cinema learn from The White Man’s Negro and The Black Man’s Negro in art, in literature, in theatre?

Graphic art: The Greek and Roman sculptors of black boys were defeated because they did not study the structure of the faces. In modern art, there is Georg Kolbe’s fine Kneeling Negro. There are Annette Rosenshine’s heads of Robeson and Florence Mills—elastic, lusty miniatures. And there is the vapid, external, gilded negro by Jesper in the Musée du Congo, Tervueren, Belgium. Compare. If you want to see how a principle can be transferred and reconverted, see what the late Raymond Duchamp-Villon learned from African sculpture. Relaxation among angles. Study Modigliani for transference to another medium. In painting examine Jules Pascin’s painting of a mulatto girl and Pierre Bonnard’s more stolid negro. But always the source: the sculpture of the Congo, the Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast, the bronzes of Benin, the friezes of Dahomey. Observe their relation to the actual African body, coiffure, etc., to the dance. What do you deduce?

Literature: In America I know of but one white man’s novel that has recognized the negro as a human-esthetic problem—which he must be to the artist—and not either a bald bit of sociology or something to display. I refer to Waldo Frank’s Holiday. This eloquent though monotonous book is not a bare or ornamental statement of the inter-race. Its concern is not with the culmination of the tragedy in the lynching, but with the relationships involved. The horror and the sacrifice of the lynching are certainly unavoidable, but greater and above these are the relationships, and the denial of the beauty of these relationships by the final mob
act. This is the one book I know of that has recognized the entirety as ultimately human relationship, which determines the aesthetic unity. There is not in this book the ethnographical-archaeological-sociological preoccupation that obscures the major motif in the other books. This is a novel, it is art, it is distillation, condensation, purity. Shands, Stribling, Peterkin, Van Vechten all strive to reveal their intimacy with the details of life and vocabulary of the strange folk they present. Shand's *Black and White* and Stribling's *Birthright* do free the central motif from a number of these interferences, leaving a clearer path to the culmination. But the motif should determine the book, which it does not in either case. Peterkin wishes to be genuine (but to be genuine is not to be unselective) and sympathetic and impartial. This makes her work a less questionable enterprise than Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven*, the conscience of which must be severely doubted. *Black April* is better than *Green Thursday*. The former obscures the relevant data with data on folk-idiosyncracies. It is the artist's business to evaluate the relevant data that he may be better able to know its potentialities, and not to record every detail contributing to the formation of that material. *Green Thursday* indicated no sense of the potential materials, their convertibility and relevant form. They were dark waters poured into Hamlin Garland jugs or Mary Wilkins-Freeman ewers, taking the form and conveyance of the receptacles.

**Theatre:** The film may find instructive analogies and sources in three plays: *Earth* by Em Jo Basshe, *Porgy* by the Heywards and *The Emperor Jones* by Eugene O'Neill.
Earth is an instance of a play with a concept in its theme, but no recognition of that concept perceptible in the language or human-arrangement of the play. The theme was meant to articulate the struggle with the negro between paganism and Christianity. Instead it is a struggle of personalities we witness. The theme indicates what the negro film promises in the way of experience, when the philosophic cinematist will be present. Porgy is more immediate indication. It lacks all concept. It lacks significant intention. It lacks a valuable narrative. Its tale is that of Culbertson’s Goat Alley and the old white melodrama—the wicked man, the lured girl, happy dust, the cripple, sacrifice, vengeance. But its virtue is folk, always a good source. It has caught the folk in its rhythm and whatever idea the play possesses is in this rhythm. This “rhythm as idea” makes of it a better play than Torrence’s Granny Maumee, in spite of the latter’s effort to convince us of folk authenticity. The tragedy of Porgy is no more important than the tragedy of Goat Alley. It is rendered more poignant simply because it has taken place in a folk-structure to whose rhythm the individual participants contribute. That is why the character of the crab-vendor, suggested by one of the actors and inserted into the completed play, does not obtrude. It is of the total folk-structure and easily finds its place in it. In the Theatre Guild production the play failed as a rhythmic unit, leaving us to enjoy, not the entity, but the details. This may be due somewhat to breaks in the authors’ construction. The authors and the director failed to sustain the rhythmic counterplay between Crown’s sacrilege and the Negroes’ religion in the hurricane.
scene. This was a play meant to be produced not mimetically but choreographically, and moreover—as folk—to be stylized. It laid too much stress on a bad story, the songs were not intervalled with precision, and—most serious of faults—the diction was stereotype. This last, of course, has nothing to do with the production, it is the authors' weakness. The authors confess they did not take advantage of the original Gullah dialect because it would be incomprehensible to an audience not familiar with it. Should Synge have avoided the Gaelic on the same score? Synge exploited, and converted the difficult speech, suiting it to the language of his audience, which was his language-medium, and attained thereby a tremendous eloquence. Any author, intuitively gifted and philologically and rhythmically aware, could go to the documents and records of a Gonzales, a Bennett or a Reed Smith and re-create a diction at once original, relevant, convincing—and comprehensible. Yet Peterkin and the Heywards, operating in the very environment of the dialect, could do nothing with it but run away from it. These immediately foregoing words are full of meaning to the negro film with speech.

Coming to the negro talkie, we can find no more complete entrance than by way of The Emperor Jones. In itself The Emperor Jones is not particularly negro. One may question the thesis of atavism which runs through it, as one may easily deny the too patent psychology. But it is excellent theatre, a theatre of concurrent and joining devices. It is, in fact, better cinema than theatre, for its movement is uninterrupted. The uninterrupted movement can be borne only by the film and screen, for the necessity of changing the sets obliges an
interruption in the theatre. There is a central motive of the escaping Jones. The theatre has not the capabilities to reveal the textural effects necessary to the drama, such as the increasing sheen of sweat on the bare body. Here is your "photogenic" opportunity! The theatre can never equal the cinema in the effect of the gradual oncoming dark, also a dramatic progression in the play. The ominous and frightful shadows, the spectres of the boy shot at craps, the phantom galley—the cinema has long been well-prepared for these. And now the sounds. The play is dependant on the concurrences and reinforcements of sounds. The sounds are part of the drama. The drumbeats, the bullet-shots, the clatter of the dice, the moan of the slaves, and the recurring voice of Jones, his prayer—what a composition these offer for a sound-sight-speech film! This is the ideal scenario for the film of sound and speech. Here silence enters as a part of the speech-sound pattern, and becomes more important than ever it was in the silent film! Here one can construct counterpoint and coincidence, for there is here paralleling of sound and sight and their alternation. There is intervaling, a most important detail in the synchronized structure. But all this does not end The Emperor Jones. It must be negro! How? We can switch back to my earlier words: "The negro is plastically interesting when he is most negroid . . . ." The negroes must be selected for their plastic, negroid structures. Jones should not be mulatto or napoleonic, however psychologic requirements demand it. He should be black so that the sweat may glisten the more and the skin be apprehended more keenly. He should be woolly, tall, broad-nosed and deep-voiced. The moaning
CLOSE UP

should be drawn from a source in the vocal experience of the negro, the medicine doctor's dance from a source in the choreographic experience. But beware! We do not want ethnography, this is no document. I am not asking for the insertions of Storm over Asia; I am asking for a tightly interwoven pattern. The sources are only sources. Folk, race are not complete in themselves. Dialect is not an aesthetic end. I am not asking for the duplications such as Langston Hughes writes. We shall have enough of these and they will be nothing but records, and records lacking even intelligent selection and commentary. What I have said in my remarks upon the negro in art and literature will indicate what the ideal negro-film must not be and must be. The documentary film is ethnographic. The documentary film is a source, but even in a document one cannot place everything and there must be concessions to the form. In the constructed film of the negro, the art-film let us say, the problem will always be, not the negro in society, but the negro in the film. The problem will not be that of Edward Sheldon's The Nigger, filmed years ago with William Farnum (Fox Film The Governor). That sort of play in reality omits the negro, just as A Doll's House actually gave us no woman but a thesis. We are, I hope, far away now from films about "the black peril"—although The Birth of a Nation is still with us and "the yellow peril" is a constant offering. The problem of intermarriage and inter-race is not likely to be honestly dealt with on the American screen for a long time, but I do not complain of that—the problem play has generally been dull drama, it would be even duller cinema. When the cinematists have shown that they have
intelligently examined the negro as subject-matter, that they know a great deal about him and his experiences, then the problem film of the negro can be attempted, for the problem will be comprised then, and only then, in a complete experience of a people. It is indeed reassuring that literature in dealing with the negro has become more sympathetic. The sympathy, however, has not extended as yet to the formal material, the convertible raw stuff—it is humanitarian, and that is good. But in the humanitarian sentiment one still detects considerable patronage, indulgence, condescension and an attitude hardly judicious, that of the examiner of an oddity. In the documentary films of Burbidge and the Cobham journey, the captions are frequently supercilious, and in a document of a polar trip, a bit of non-documentation is perpetrated for humor: a negro hand runs off scared upon seeing a polar-bear, safely bound, hauled upon the deck. These caucasian evidences will persist a long time and wherever they will persist, there will be no proper attitude towards the negro as subject-matter.

Then is the hope in negro films turned by negroes? That would be a hope, if the American negro had given evidence of caring for and understanding his own experience sufficiently to create works of art in the other mediums. But the American negro as graphic artist has shown very little awareness of this experience; as writer he is imitative, respectable, blunt, ulterior and when he pretends to follow negro materials, he does little more than duplicate them. Of course there are exceptions. The exceptions, I believe, will eventually create the rule. But that rule will be created
CLOSE UP

only by artists who are strong enough to resist the vogue which would inflate them. We are now entering into a vogue of the negro film. Perhaps when that is over, the true, profound, realized negro film will be produced, and perhaps negroes will produce them.

It will have been observed that my preoccupation has been constantly with relationships. I have been preoccupied with relationships only because they are constantly present. The relationship between the African dances and the sophisticated Charleston and The Black Bottom is unavoidable, the relationship between native negro song and jazz is evident. We are always what we were: that is perhaps a platitude but it is also an important truth for the negro film. It suggests a synthetic film, a composite film, in which the audience’s experience of a girl by Tanganyika becomes the audience’s experience of an idolized Josephine Baker. Folk, race dominates the world. There is a theme. And the movie with its devices for simultaneous and composite filming offers the opportunity. Someone might similarly make an incisive film deriving the hooded Ku Klux Klan from the leopard-skin-hooded vendetta of the black Aniotas of Africa. In that way lies penitence for The Clansman which became The Birth of a Nation.

HARRY A. POTAMKIN.
OF NEGRO MOTION PICTURES

The traditions of the American stage became the aphorisms of the American screen in so far as the Negro was concerned. With the single exception of David Wark Griffith's colossal spectacle—The Birth of a Nation—Negroes until very recent times were used on the screen only to provide atmosphere as servants or savages or both according to the requirements of the locale. As a spectacle Griffith's production was awe-inspiring and stupendous; but as a picture of Negro life it was not only false but has done the Negro irreparable harm. And no wonder, since it was taken from a puerile novel, The Clansman, a book written to arouse racial hate by appealing to the basest passions of the semi-literate.

The success of Porgy and Blackbirds* probably was the stimulus which hurried Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Fox into the production of all Negro pictures. I would like to think that the masters of Hollywood have suddenly come to the realization of the wealth of drama in Negro life, but this appears too good to be true. Surely, Hearts in Dixie, a talking picture recently released by Fox, justifies no such

* Which just completed a year's unbroken performance on Broadway.
CLOSE UP

high hopes. Even aside from the crudities which appear to be inherent in all of the so-called talkies, there is no real sustained story—only a series of more or less related incidents. However, there is one redeeming feature—the rich resonance of the Negro voices in speech and in song prove that in the field of the "talkie" they cannot be surpassed. Of *Hearts in Dixie*, Robert C. Benchley, dramatic critic of the New Yorker, and former dramatic critic of Life magazine, writes in *Opportunity*—a journal of Negro Life—for April: "It may be that the talking-movies must be participated in wholly by Negroes, but, if so, then so be it. In the Negro the sound picture has found its ideal protagonist."

Traditional racial attitudes in America have proven a tremendous obstacle in the way of those whose creative instincts lead them to see the beauty and pathos in Negro life. Motion picture producers will hesitate long before they attempt anything in the nature of a new evaluation of the Negro. America is conservative to the point of reaction when it comes to ideas—especially ideas on the so-called race problem. Therefore, it is probable that the screen will follow in the paths of least resistance, for on that path the box office lies.

It would appear that the history of the Negro in America might provide a rich source of dramatic material for treatment on the screen. Surely, of all the racial groups which make up this roaring democracy, none have sustained such an unremitting and colorful conflict with the forces of their environment as the Negro. From the time the first slave
ship anchored off the coast of Virginia in 1619 until the present hour, the Aframerican, as he has been facetiously designated, has been the most persistent insoluble in the chemistry of Americanization. As a result, around him have whirled the mightiest forces of American life. He has been the cause of bitter strife—the genesis of devastating conflicts—the source of endless speculation and perplexity—and the origin of much of the humor which is labelled American.

In the exploitation of Negro material the screen has lagged behind the stage—and the stage has been inexcusably tardy. For fifty years almost the stage adhered to the Uncle Tom tradition. When the Negro was dramatized, invariably he was a simple, old retainer of the Uncle Tom type with white, woolly hair and a quavering voice, extolling the virtues of Missus and Massa; or he was an ignorant, improvident scamp of the Topsy genre, although this was sometimes varied by the use of a black villain in order to provide a suitable object for the exaltation of Nordic supremacy. Even these characterizations were seldom, if ever, interpreted by actual Negroes. White men in black face, after the fashion of the once popular minstrel, were selected to depict Negroes. And as a rule they were just about as accurate in their portrayal as they were real in their racial delineation. The use of Negro themes interpreted by de facto Negroes is comparatively new to the American stage. It followed in the wake of the remarkable performance of Charles S. Gilpin as Emperor Jones in Eugene O’Neill’s play of that name. That Negro themes are capable of successful and stirring dramatic treatment, and that Negro
casts can intelligenty and sometimes brilliantly interpret these themes can now be attested by the success of Paul Green’s *In Abraham’s Bosom* and DuBose Heyward’s *Porgy*. And the number of plays*, dealing with various phases of Negro life which were produced in New York this season, indicate increasing popularity of the Negro play and the Negro actor.

*Hallelujah*, directed by King Vidor, and not yet released, may prove a surprise. It may be to the motion pictures with sound accompaniment what *Porgy* has been to the American stage. Vidor will have everything—robust and resonant voices—the panoramic sweep of great plantations, white with cotton—a carefully trained and directed cast—everything. He will only need a story. Will he sweep aside outworn traditions and get it? “Aye, there’s the rub.”

This does not imply that there will be no Negro films. On the contrary, the “talkies” present a magnificent chance for the development of short comedy reels wherein the happy vagaries of Negro life can be depicted with incidental singing and dancing and the fun making propensities of Negro characters portrayed with profit if not with accuracy. But only a motion picture impressario endowed with exceptional courage will attempt to film a great epic of the Negro in America—or will dare to find in the heroic struggle of this unfortunate people the universal human attributes of mankind. And unless he finds these things—easy for the unprejudiced eye to see—he will never

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*Goin’ Home*, *Black Boy*.
attain that height of artistry, the basis of which has been and must always be truth.

Elmer Anderson Carter,
Editor,
Opportunity Magazine,
A Journal of Negro Life.

Address: 17, Madison Avenue—10th floor,
New York City.

BLACK FANFARE

Lying in de jail-house,
Peeping th’ough de bars,
De cold rain a-falling,
And—de—

I don’t care how you orchestrate it, on a hundred boxes or a hundred silver trumpets, I want a fanfare to welcome the negro film.

I want more than negro actors in negro films, I want more than the negro’s vision of the negro; I want the negro exhibitor who will give us the negro reaction to passionless whites through selection of current releases, I want the negro critic.
CLOSE UP

Judgment’s a-coming, Judgment’s a-coming,
De dark’s guine kiver from sho’ to sho’:
And de angel wid de trumpet say times no mo’.

For judgment substitute awakening.
No longer a colour but a people! Art directors worked
on the principal of “black women and blue wine”; greased
glintings of majestic torso; black faces and white pearls and
red lips. Kaleidoscope turned gently to guard against the
spontaneous, to ensure the colour pattern. Till in Yvette
Cavalcanti tore off the black skin like a cloak, and gave it
to the Hessling to wear.

Hallelujah, hallelujah! Kingdom and Race. Hallelujah! The
tremendous fact of starting all over again, with no
ghastly traditions.

How come dis? Film journals are not the place for
enthusiasm and uppitiness; beyond that, enthusiasm is
dangerous for critical balance. In the first stage to excuse
bad acting, the conviction that the film is worth while being
cherished before it is unwound, it is hailed as quaint custom.
When the critic sees his first batch of negro films he is sure
to slip up, just as he did with the early Russian productions.
Never mind all negro creative work, in dance or in stone,
stands security for LIFE in the negro film.

Mr. Robert Herring in a brilliant article, published in one
of the most important English newspapers, pleaded with
film producers to find their material in every walk of life.
He said, “It is impossible to read in the paper that ‘two
hundred workmen have been rendered idle as the result of the
closing down of the Cum Duffryn Colliery, Port Talbot,
without seeing that there is drama behind it.” But then the cinema in America and England is dominated by—dare I use the wretched word?—the “bourgeois.” Russia had to give us the drama of the workman’s life; men like Eisenstien and Dziga-Vertoff who class themselves as workman, and sympathize and feel with workmen. Tell the average American producer that he is a workman and he will not be pleased; he is manufacturing for a middle class market and is graduating himself from the worker’s class, a would-be bourgeois! He looks round at the new world, at his neighbour catching the eight-fifteen train, at the thousands following dictates of good citizenship; he is impressed by respectability, but the instincts of the showman tell him that it is not entertainment. On the other hand the negro lives richly, even his prayer meetings become as intoxicating as a dervish dance. Julia Peterkin’s Scarlet Sister Mary depicts the passions and tranquilities, the robuster plays of Paul Green are filled with the blaze of emotion, the moments of semi-madness. Negroes need simply to live on the screen, while you cannot re-live morning bacon and eggs unless in the vein of satire which Jacques Feyder displayed in Thou Shalt Not. The point is that Feyder did not pillory himself, that the bourgeois fay cannot mock himself, but that every negro can be himself; that there is only one Feyder in a thousand (the genius who is not bound by laws and inhibitions), but that there are plenty of negroes.

Apart from the intense interest of the one and the utter boredom of the other, there is theoretical proof of the superiority of life to the artificial as screen material. Time
values of life are always progressive; we change from minute to minute, our circumstances change, the same things may happen to us again but they must have a new significance. Without time values incidents make bad cinema . . . Ivan Moskvin in The Postmaster is hurled into the street again and again; the doors fly open once more to spill out unfortunate Ivan, yet nothing new is being impressed in time, there is no mental building up. Second, third and fourth precipitations are meaningless however pretty the composition in space. (the snow falls). Having harrowed us with the sight of Ivan collapsing on the pavement after the violence of ejection (the snow keeps on falling) the director believes that he has merely to repeat the circumstances, without development or elaboration, to create the emotion.

In constructing a story time values are nearly always forgotten or ruined, in transcribing life there is no chance of falsifying these values. Of course the scenarist may reserve the right of selection, although he is forbidden construction; he may mass situations but not impose them . . First game therefore to the negro film!

For the benefit of the sceptical, who will point out that I have chosen to illustrate my point with an antiquated and obscure picture, I will quote a typical bourgeois super. Does any reader remember the care that Frank Borzage took in Seventh Heaven to establish the seven flights of steps? The camera followed Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell from the entrance hall right up the stairs to their attic (I believe that the camera was stationary, the set rising on a lift; half way
between each storey the camera would have to mix. This would require careful matching, but would not be as difficult as it sounds). The path of romance leading up from the gutter to the stars! Notice, dear reader, the "bourgeois way"! The spectator had plenty of time to study the steps, he could not very well forget them, he saw that they led from landing to landing, he may have counted them to pass the time . . . Chico dies. Diane imagines her dreams false, and so her love false. Never in this type of picture. Here is Chico pushing his way through the crowd, while the hands of the clock press on to the sacred eleventh hour. "Diane, Diane!" Long shot down the stairs. How come? This is a spiral staircase! Collapse of the dramatic moment!

The mind, functioning in space, accepts the shot down the spiral stairs on account of its striking, if hardly original, composition; but the mind, functioning in time, rejects it as preposterous. And this is what they do in a super!

It is depressing to dwell on these old-fashioned pictures; think of every second super and recall the happy endings which give distorted retrospection. A film must be a unity, it must be judged by what you think of it at the end; and the enormous kissing close-up, for the fade-out, contrives neatly to shatter time values.

Glancing back I am appalled to notice that I started with spirituals and finished with Seventh Heaven; there must be a moral somewhere.

Hearse done carried somebody to de graveyard,
Hammer keep a-ringing on somebody's coffin.

Oswell Blakeston.
CLOSE UP

LONDON AND THE NEGRO FILM

While Wardour Street has been warring with Fleet Street as to the originator of the unusual film movement the London Polytechnic has unaffectedly been creating a metier entirely its own. It has established a reputational rather than a repertory cinema that gives us, as if by the workings of a consistent policy, the life of the humanities that dwell on the outer edges of modern imperialisms.

Sometimes the fare has been straight travel stuff like "South" and the African missionary film they showed early last year. At others a more or less slender thread of narrative has woven the plain 'interest' and 'occupational' stuff into a dramatic unity. This was done with "Nionga" (which the Poly gave us about two years ago), with "Chang" and with "Zeliv". But no matter in what form the film presented has been made, it has always held a subtlety of charm which reveals an intelligence behind the choice of subjects by the Polytechnic's officers that deserves our thanks as well as our congratulations. If it has been straight travel, it has been straight travel with the something else, the something different which separates it from others of its ilk. The camera seems not only to have picked the salient architectures or the picturesque views but has clothed them in a delicate
fabric of humanity, the humanity which after all is essential to, is part of and go with them, but nevertheless is only too often left out.

If the film has been of the kind through which a thread of drama runs it is true that absolute naturalism suffers slightly as a consequence, but as in "Chang" and particularly in "Nionga" the dramatic moulding was never obtrusive enough to parody the natives' psychology and rob us of their naïvete and simple charm which has always drawn us to these films as a relief from the sexual saturation of the white man's drama.

A point of paramount importance to the moment is that the Poly has been making box-office successes of these films to the extent of record runs. Besides being several times recalled, "Chang" at one of these periods ran nineteen consecutive weeks. This is proof to the world that in London alone exists a large white public interested in the life of his coloured brethren.

It is not without a tinge of sorrow, one feels that in staking another chip on pre-releasing European's "Under the Southern Cross" the Poly has, save for pictorial and photographic beauty, missed its metier.

The film is based on a Maori legend telling of the endeavours and their consequences, to unite the warring tribes of the Ariki and the Waitai into a single powerful unit, the mise-en-scene being the grand and exquisite environs of the volcano Rua-Taniwha.

As the Maori is not a negro in the strictest sense, his presence in the May issue, perhaps, demands an apology.
From *Zeliv*, the Zulu film, shown at the London Polytechnic.
Zelio is remarkable chiefly for the physical beauty of the types.
The result of a plot against Zeliv. He is accused of casting a spell on the village and is tied to the Tree of Torture—a black Sebastian.
From *Zeliv*. Mdabuli, the heroine. Her attractiveness is evident and her buoyancy is no less pronounced.

From *Zeliv*. Nomazindela and his father plan against Zeliv to win Mdabuli.
Under the Southern Cross, a film of the maoris made in the environs of the volcano Rua-Taniwha. See article London and The Negro Film in this issue.

Photos: Courtesy of High Commissioner for New Zealand
From *Hearts in Dixie*, an all-talking Fox Movietone production, with all-negro cast. Stephin Fetchit as the lazy-man, carries off the laurels. Decidedly to be seen, if for Fetchit alone.
Stephin Fetchit in Fox's Dancing, Singing and Dialogue Picture, *Hearts in Dixie*.

*Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the first venture in Hollywood to star negroes, with James B. Lowe as Uncle Tom and Gertrude Howard as Aunt Chloe.
Pori, a recent film made in central Africa by Ufa. A robot ideal seems indicated in the dress of the three belles below.
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But as he is more negroid than anything else a certain interest that attaches to him as a victim of the white man's schemes for expansion may not after all put him quite out of bounds.

Throughout the film we are given the customs, the arts, and the frenzied dances of the two tribes, but all this fails to give us the intimacy, a sensitive appreciation of the dawning of mind in these primitive children as did "Nionga", or as was particularly exemplified in "Chang".

In "Nionga" the cruelties and torturous practices of the natives took on new meaning and human importance. Out of superstitious beliefs that had been preserved simply because they had continued to serve them well, had grown a tradition, a crude morality, a preparedness of the individual for self-sacrifice—even to death by burning—for the benefit of the tribe. Incomprehensible to most of us of different experience and different knowledge, no doubt, but no more incomprehensible than the cruel proscriptions and persecutions of our day will be to future generations.

But in "Under the Southern Cross" details of the natives' practices and customs have been taken and pieced together upon a framework of screen conventions. The significance of the "tapu"—an important thread in the theme—is negatived by the introduction of an hen-pecked male, to cite a single deviation, who is pulled by the ear for ogling lasciviously at the owner of a pair of heaving but comely hips. A phenomenon, by all the signs, he witnessed at least once every day of his life and, therefore, one which would occasion no sudden interest even if his mind were free
from the powerful influence of the tribal "tapu". Such direction cannot fail to put a false value over the whole film nor escape the inevitable consequence of reducing the granduer of the surroundings to mere decoration. Quite possibly the inspired source of such tampering is alike responsible for the Maori self-consciousness before the camera when registering an eroticism quite different from its habit. The simplicity, the charming indifference to the camera is gone, there is instead the self-awareness of very inferior screen actors possessed of an intelligent grasp of what every crank of the camera handle means.

Although the film is thus robbed of one of its most attractive ingredients, some pictorial moments, at least, are saved to us. There stands out particularly the scenes when Patita paddles across the lake in the dead of night to keep secret tryst with Miro who, as a pending bride, should, in accordance with the "tapu" remain confined to the "tapu hut" where eyes of love may not rest upon her. With the exception perhaps of a bunch of moonlit glistening ponies in "Dracula" never has the screen given us the eerie visibility of night so beautifully free from artificiality. A still from these sequences would have been a treasure, but such treasures were not to be unearthed in Wardour Street.

No amount of pictorial perfection can however, remit the unpardonable sin of tight-lacing saga and primitive folk lore into the already insufferable form of the white man's screen conventions. To prevent this sort of thing it will, probably for the first time in history, be possible to count on the box-office returns as an ally. Such is the peculiarity of appeal in
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this type of film that the hybrid offspring of such methods as, it seems, are now beginning to be applied to them, will not only have lost their raison d'etre but with it the very power to attract sufficient numbers to balance the box-office ledger.

Hay Chowl.

ELSTREE'S FIRST "TALKIE"

At midnight on Friday, June 22, in This Year of Grace, 1929, the world's greatest talking picture made its bow to the jaded journalist at the Regal Cinema, Marble Arch, London, England.

Personally, long before I went, I knew it was the most magnificent talkie ever made. A fortnight had elapsed without us having a "greatest ever," and the event was about ten days overdue.

So Blackmail, British International's first full-length talkie, made at Elstree, had an auspicious premiere. Even the poor critic received an invitation to refreshments afterwards. That, of course, constitutes the all-in-all of the English trade show.

Strangely enough, the times were not otherwise out of joint. No comets had been seen for some months, despite
furious trunk calls by the Elstree Press department; no new stars had been discovered. The Copernican theory was unaffected by the event. Einstein, speaking relatively, is said to have regarded the affair as being of no celestial importance, although it has been suggested in certain quarters that Mercury’s eccentric orbit veered slightly towards the Earth that night.

There was the usual jam, of course. At least one critic arrived, after a desperate stud hunt, to find that the best seats were filled by friends of the men who trimmed the spotlights, maiden-aunts of the supers who appeared in the artistically-focussed backgrounds, or travellers for the firm who hoped to reap a fortune from the bookings of the masterpiece.

There was a hush in the air. Time, particularly when the show was twenty minutes late, began to drag very slowly. After a grinding of needles and flickering of backcloths we were treated to an “acceptable programme fill-up” in which a gentleman in evening dress informed a lady in ditto ditto that he was hers for ever and for aye, a fact which was repeated a number of times during the singing of the lengthy ditty.

The audience applauded politely, and adjusted their ties for the more serious dish awaiting them. General managers and company promoters were observed to fidget, small part players were getting excited, assistant cameramen were ready, elbow advanced, to point out their own particular close-up to their admiring relatives.

One critic looked at his watch and yawned.

When it was all over the process was repeated. The Press
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maintaining the reputation Paramount has just given them in that direction, crowded to the Lounge, which looked like the Battle of Hohenlinden. In the background were the waitresses, like the Iser, rolling rapidly.

Flashlight photographers did their stuff, the Elstree stars obtained a due meed of publicity for waiting up half the night, the men who once walked on in a picture made fifteen years ago wrought havoc around the refreshments, the ladies who supply the loungers in our cabaret sequences grabbed the sandwiches.

A dozen critics looked at their watches and grabbed taxi-cabs.

* * *

And so to Blackmail. Alfred Hitchcock had finished the picture at the time the talkie wave broke. Frenzied conferences resulted in his re-shooting most of it and making it into a dialogue picture.

It must be said at the outset that, considering that he was toying with a medium about which we knew nothing, considering he had a finished picture to doctor into a talkie, considering his star could not speak English and had to be "ghosted" throughout, he has made a good job of it.

Blackmail is perhaps the most intelligent mixture of sound and silence we have yet seen. It is not a great picture, it is not a masterpiece, it not an artistic triumph, it is not a valuable addition to the gallery of the world's great films, it is not even, I think, a great box-office picture.

But it is a first effort of which the British industry has every reason to be proud. It is Hitchcock's come-back.
While seeing it you can hardly believe that it was made by
the man who gave us *Champagne* or *The Manxman*.

For perhaps the first time in the history of the commercial
cinema we are faced with a good film based on a dreadful
play. Usually, however low the stage, the screen can be
depended upon to go one lower.

As is usual in the more serious Hitchcock pictures, all
considerations are secondary to the Almighty German
Technique. If you shoot up a stairway you must tilt your
camera until the result looks like Gertrude Stein reduced to
a cross-word puzzle. If you want to show a Flying Squad
car in full blast you begin by showing a revolving wheel and
draw away until you run parallel to the car. Very clever, of
course. Yet Hitchcock has a way—at his best—of justifying
his weaknesses.

The first reel is silent. The dialogue is in arithmetic
progression with the speed of the picture. The story, which
is too thin from the commercial angle, and too inane from the
artistic, concerns a detective in the Flying Squad whose girl
murders an artist who attempts to seduce her. He is put on
the case, sees she knows something about it, keeps back his
evidence, and is blackmailed by a goal-bird. He rather
cleverly succeeds in making a suspect of the blackmailer who,
releasing his record, runs from the police and is killed
through falling through to the Dome of the British Museum!

The girl, by this time, resolves to confess, and goes to
Scotland Yard, where the detective, returned from turning
over the corpse, tells her everything is cleared up and butts
in very effectively on her confession. The last we see or hear
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of them is their laughter as they talk to the policeman on reception duty.

An altogether inconsequential theme for a good picture. Yet Hitchcock succeeds in wedding sound with silence. He has one sequence which, despite the way it has been glorified in the English press, gives one a clear idea of the potentialities of the medium. The girl overhears a chatterbox discussing the murder, while the memory of the knife is still fresh in her penny-dreadful mind. The talk dies down and down until only the word "knife" emerges, stabbing, hurting.

Inasmuch as that particular sequence is about the only one we have on record in which sound has been definitely instrumental in the development of the drama, the picture is worthwhile.

Hitchcock's Cockney humour adds to its appeal. A scene in the Underground Railway, satirical sequences in a Lyons Corner House, an altogether delightful portrait of a charwoman by Phyllis Monkman, give the film a vividness which makes it fascinating. A remarkably clever study of a C.I.D. man, played by an ex-detective, is a delight to watch. It passed without comment in the Press.

* * *

Within twenty-four hours of the show being over, the optimists were predicting an immediate revival in British production. Blackmail has put us on top of the world. Pudovkin is dead, Eisenstein has ceased to be. Even Carl Laemmle, a greater figure than either, is forgotten for the moment!

We shall see. 

HUGH CASTLE.

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COMMENT AND REVIEW

IN THEIR INFANCY.

Now that a few months have elapsed, and please note that it is only a matter of a few months, it may be less indiscreet to tell of an early British effort to make a talkie.

The cameraman nearly fainted when he found that he would have to shoot through glass, and he moaned about distortion and fuzziness. When somebody mentioned paning he just cried. The sound expert was distant, he asked the cameraman if he had ever heard of a glass shot. In reply he got: for a glass shot the glass is at least twelve feet from the camera, and optical glass is employed. The sound expert had provided PLATE GLASS, which is greenish. The cameraman turned his handle—after refusing all responsibility for the negative.

Would you not have thought that the cameraman and the sound expert would have talked things over before they attempted something which was at the time quite new?

Good old British films!

In those early days the sound expert had it all his own way, people were too new to the game to say him nay, and the photographers were taking close-ups with a six-inch lens!
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One of the most amazing sights I have ever seen was the removal of jambed film from a synchronized camera. The motor, which also worked the sound recording apparatus, had been powerful enough to keep the handle grinding to the end of the shot: and the timid cameraman, although he had heard suspicious noises, had been too frightened to speak and spoil everything for a false alarm. Any hard-working conjurer who had ever taken pride in removing coloured paper from a boy's mouth would have crept away to shoot himself.

O.B.

HANDS.

We arrived early for the projection of a film and somebody else was running through an American two-reeler.

Miss Stella Simon's ballet of hands is in three movements; prelude, variations, and finale. By hands alone, by hands against black backgrounds, by hands against white backgrounds, by hands moving in constructivist scenery, Miss Simon has attempted. Hands are massed in the corners of the screen, hands reach down into the picture, hands slither at the fringes of the screen, hands glide, undulate, dance formally. *Pas de deux*; fingers flirt, meet, caress. The screen is divided into odd figures. From behind shimmering curtains, HANDS.

We feel the experiment to be of interest. Why cannot our amateurs attempt instead of busying themselves with
comedies and dramas? (See the amateur page in any popular film journal). Miss Simon should be encouraged to re-make with her empirical knowledge. For instance we suggest that it was a mistake to move the dancers behind the constructivist ridges, it made us conscious of the people behind the hands. The background could be moved effectively, or the camera, or the hands themselves are at liberty to reach up and out, but the dancers should forget all but HANDS.

We were pleased and surprised that Miss Simon has not favoured double exposure. There are no tricks on the films apart from justifiable prism shots at the finale.

A short with a provocative beauty.

O.B.

FRAULEIN ELSE.

Directed by PAUL CZINNER.

Good evening, Miss Bergner! Good evening, Miss all-dressed-up Bergner! All dressed-up and seven reels to go!

Sorrow will do something to the Bergner. The pearls, the hair, and the hands are very nice, but sorrow may give us the woman; at least it will be a present for the actress.

To jump to where the film should start but does not; the evening when the Bergner has to approach Albert Steinrück because her father, Albert Bassermann, has crashed on a phoney speculation. And Albert Steinrück and Albert Basserman because Schnitzler is so far only a name on the credit titles.
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She has been snubbing the financier. She and he. Elizabeth and Albert. She and he; sorrow with promise of more to come. Her father pleads; begs; begs her to approach the financier friend for a loan. But you have read the book, you are interested only in seeing the way she tries to ask a man she has snubbed for the loan of a small fortune.

He turns, he sees her, she walks in the opposite direction. He turns to catch her following him in the corridor, in the cocktail bar, in the lounge. What is it all about? And the mother at home runs for a doctor. The father will be arrested! fear brings on a fit. He lies panting on a bed. The crumpled collar has been thrown on the floor. Telephone to my daughter. She will help me. A vision (such a dreadful vision!) of the Bergner leading her father across a bridged ravine.

After the vision the Bergner goes to a dance. She ought to go to the cinema to forget her troubles. She would love films if THAT vision impresses her.

A flower on the shoulder of a gown, a twisted handkerchief. Her father will have the money by morning if . . . . . But you have read the book, you are interested only in seeing the way she tries to live up to the vision, that dreadful vision!

The film, as I have already said, should have started here; then, if Mr. Czinner had still felt it absolutely necesary to show us the ease and pearls of her home life, he ought to have cut back. Things happen so quickly, when moments must have seemed hours of torture to a girl about to run naked into a crowded gambling room. To be driven to an act of folly, the pearls, the hands and the hair would have to begin to hate themselves.
The book conveyed the climax of each moment, this film could have done it by re-grouping of material, by flashing back and breaking up. The sense of oppression going on and on. Pick up a cloak, throw off a cloak in the gambling room, throw off a cloak to stand naked before the man who considers that a price.

There is a fine handling of big scene, of the springing to horror of the great hotel like a maiden aunt visually outraged in the rue de Lappe.

The page-boys, the porters, the retired army gentry whisper the tale in corners. It might have started here, and cut across; network of words, thoughts, deeds.

It is told far too stolidly!

Oswell Blakeston.

PARIS SHORTS AND LONGS.

We fell out of the Cinéma des Agriculteurs in Paris after we had seen Passion and Death of Joan of Arc for the second time, expecting any minute to be urged on by attendants armed with extra-spikey maces. After our mind had been so cruelly bullied we resigned our body.

The flies tortured Joan!

It was a prologue, in our evening, to a programme of shorts. Mechanical music throbbed with the same intensity during a nature film about fish. We waited for a Dreyer close-up of a fish shedding tears!
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Festivals of short films are quite everyday occurrences; the French have an appetite for documents. We found Shanghai too long, yet it was made with more thought than most topicals. The casual way it was joined together indicated the casual way one gets to know a city. Claud Lambert did good work with Voici Marseilles; although a great deal of credit is due to the town, and the architects who designed it, and the boats which pleasantly grimed it with smoke, and the men and women who achieved such dangerous looking corners.

In Togo, P. Marty has made a touching little attempt at Pudovkin cutting. He recapitulates all that he has said by flashes, giving the certitude that he wants to demonstrate his position as a jeune cinéaste rather than drive home any moral.

"These films," somebody will ask us, "are they very important?"

A great many of the new French shorts are not, but then do you, or do you not, want to be in the movement?

Souvenirs de Paris, by Duhamel, is boring, but it is classed as avant-garde because full use is made of a silver mannequin halating in a modiste’s window, and there is a ride in a métro. (See Herring in Close Up, Vol. IV. No. 5). Duhamel has made another short called Paris Express, this is owned by Studio Films, the excellent and courageous group managed by Pierre Braunberger. We have nothing but honeyed adjectives for everything that this group stands for. However, may we be allowed a few prejudices?

Rythme d’une Cathedrale, by R. Landau, has titles superimposed on the film itself; generally echoing the image with
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a tautological bang. It is quite amusing to travel about, and up, and round a cathedral while sitting in a seat, and we are getting acclimatized to the avant garde trick of turning the camera to pep upon ordinary scene; nevertheless, it could have been so much more. We are no poet, but the rhythm of a cathedral might be to us a Viking sea thundering round the ears, or etcetera.

We thank the language for that etcetera for we hate to criticize, still we definitely do not like shots which say, "Come here and look", we would rather potter by ourself in the sun and nose bits out. And there might have such beautiful imagery in the titles!

_Vie Heureuse_ is a happy document on the plage. "An indiscretion", says a title. The sunshade and two legs. Yes, but two men!

And how they hissed and shrilled cat-calls! The private showing of Deslaw’s _Parnasse_ at the studio 28 was exceptionally exciting. The old, old streets seen diagonally, the old close-ups of old dolls, the old play with advertisements, but quite a new and vigorous reception from the audience. They would stand for a section of Parnasse’s celebrities, hoping to see themselves, but the rest of the picture they hailed as the bunk.

The oppression of the day before; due to Dreyer’s insistence, was forgotten; the merry spectacle of _jeune cinéastes_ hissing was worth the pilgrimage to Paris. We wished we could have taken them on with us to see Renoir’s _Tournoi_. They would not pass in sedate silence the moustaches and beards that look as if they had been cut out from the nursery rug. (A knight in armour who wants to
sit down for a second’s rest must have been amusing even to his contemporaries!) In spite of the costumes from the local theatrical dealer *jeune cinéastes* would certainly admire the lights on the chess-board floors, and the white plumes streaking out against grey clouds.

Nobody "in the movement" would dare to laugh at *Chien Andalou*, a SURREALIST film by Bunuel. We were scandalized into attention at the outset by a close-up of an eye being gouged out by a razor. We were told that this scene was taken in a slaughter house . . . The man dressed in peculiar garb, suggesting the child combined with blinkers of a horse, rides down the street on a bicycle. He collapses outside the woman’s house. She takes him in, and unlocks his tie and collar from a box he wears across his chest.

It is difficult to follow threads consciously which are meant to appeal to our subconscious. We bridge over to symbols for purity, and homosexuality, but so much effort is spent in making the bridge that we cannot catalogue.

We recall the man looking from the window at a boy in the street who has lost a wax hand. The boy cannot move, in a nightmare, a car runs over him. The man consoles himself with the woman. He rubs her breasts and the shot dissolves to the woman nude, then to the woman’s buttocks. She flies from him. He tugs at a rope to follow. Attached to the rope are two grand pianos and two parsons lying flat on the floor.

The woman manages to close a door on the man. His hand is caught. Ants swarm over it.

The woman makes-up her lips; ants swarm from the man’s mouth.
A friend helps him by standing him punitively in a corner, a bible in one hand, a school-book in the other. The friend is shot . . . .

This picture means something individually, and we hope that the Film Society will give us a chance to see it for a third time, for we would go up to twenty times to review a real SURREALIST production!

O.B.

THREE RUSSIAN FILMS.

Dziga Vertoff's *Man with a Movie Camera*. In Paris. Can we see it? Naturally. And would you like to see *The Eleventh Year* and *L'Appetit Vendu*?

Thus we were received by Mr. Carlovitch, who looks after Russian films in Paris, and we want to thank him specially for his great courtesy and kindness.

*The Eleventh Year* opens with shots from an aeroplane; rocks and sea drifting by. Mines. Three lines of movement; men and lorries on a road, bridge, and under an archway. That is so careful there must have been a reason for taking us up in the air. Ah! we are going under the ground. Humping up into the skyline a hillock, belted with machine band of workers carrying lanterns and picks. We are going under the ground. The flapping mouth of a coal scoop swings by us. We had to go up into the air to realize what it means to go under the ground. Above the
black and white smoke from the furnaces a giant miner hammering; time that is passing but not time that is lost. These men are working for their own ideal (whether we agree with it or not), working for a land of new codes. There is something fine and beautiful, caught chronographically in the sweat gleaming arm of a stoker; indeed these machines do not ask for our opinion.

The screen is split horizontally into two long-shots; one moves away, the other is static. It is magnificently done. Men walking home; away from the mines but the ideals in their homes. They are building an electric station for their state. The black and white smoke is building. (Women and children in the hay fields are building by releasing men for the more skilled work). There are no obstacles to the willing; rocks are blasted to black and white smoke; smoke that builds.

Waters of the river rise to augment the electricity; rise by means of constructed dams. The town is seen under water; the one unifying idea. Windmill is seen under water (You remember the still?) The village that has set out with one purpose; any village of the new order.

It is surprising how long we can watch, how long we can watch the women making hay and the electrician climbing a telegraph pole with knives clamped to his boots. Perhaps we are already taking a personal interest in the village?

Then we see the factory chimneys through the corn, in case we forget the linking-up. Factory chimneys are themselves a corn field, with black and white ripples of smoke. A ballet of telegraph wire (you remember the still?) suggesting the work inside the factory.
We must not forget, either, the activity under the ground. Pit ponies are as sturdy as the heavy rafters in the roof. Change of camera angle makes the rafters wrench with the ponies, drawing the eye to the quiet workers as the beasts draw the loads. And the lifts go up, to emphasize the men who stay below.

We leave them with a man with a drill, it brings vitality and truth to the abstract arrangements of the avant-garde. Women at the pit-heads lustily wheel away the trucks.

A sub-title says, “The flag of Lenin.” Courageous workers hidden in masks. So the flag of Lenin is a bright shower of sparks. No silk to drape across Utopia of ease and content; something searing, dangerous and alive.

Watching over the workers, the sentinel.

Wake of a boat, taken romantically from sea level. Sailors. A head and rifle against the cylinder curve of a waterfall. One picture one turn shot of the sky gives shredded clouds.

A sub-title says, “The Flag of Lenin.” Light from the home and the clubs. The flag is always light, light to kindle or to welcome; never silk.

We build with golden light. That is the message of the picture. Streaked fingers of light sweeping over the factory floor. Bars of red hot metal, and coiled metal shavings doing things one finds in the work of Bruguière.

Men marching up skyline, up the hillock; and smoke from the factory chimneys balancing the corner of the composition. Where there is no smoke the tripod is tilted to give balance.

It is grand propaganda. We are quite impartial but only a stone could remain unmoved. The machinery and men
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working in harmony for something which they believe to be better. "Towards socialism", says a title. The factories, the women, the children. "Towards a world socialism", says a title. The art of the director does the rest. Final, clashing chords of a symphony. There it is, whether you like it or not.

The Man with A Movie Camera is lighter than The Eleventh Year. M. Kaufman is again the operator and Swilowa again helps with the cutting.

Berlin and Rien Que les Heures! Forget all that. To begin with here is a Russian typewriter. Russian customs and habits, that alone puts it apart. Then there is a freedom from the usual smirkiness. The birth of a child is shown without the coyness of Nature and Love. Birth and death are being contrasted; the face of the mother is cross cut with linen face of the corpse; the mother’s twitching lips and nostrils, the calmness of death. It is brought out that death is terrible and birth a conquest. It would be a joy to any new woman, not a shock.

Forget the other documents, for Vertoff has the idea of making you conscious of the camera. The lens racks out and in, the scene comes into focus; the lens racks out and in and the eye of the cameraman is in the lens. The eye of the camera, the eye of the cameraman, and the eye of the camera recording it all.

We were reminded of a scene in The Postmaster, where the daughter is dressing for a party in front of an oval mirror which the cameraman frames in the black circle of an iris: another mirror, the mirror of the screen.
An accidental effect; Vertoff’s are minutely devised. He stops the film at a certain point to show a photograph of the film, cutting to a joining girl at work on the first copy. Rolls of the scenes we have just seen glint from the neat shelves. A woman driving along the streets, petrified to a single frame in the film strip of the woman driving along the streets. Long shot from the roof of a house; a camera pans down into the picture. A cameraman climbs a girder. We see him taking a picture, we see the picture he has taken. We are frightened for his safety and frightened for the safety of the unseen cameraman. Astral projection of self!

The film is different! A doll in a shop window; so, so threadbare. Vertoff catches shadows from a tree outside which put breath into the china throat. Shutters, and views through the slats; so, so threadbare. Vertoff cross cuts with a young lady blinking sleepy-dust eyes; eyes open and shut in a twinkling, slats twinkle.

Vertoff’s first reel is devoted to people entering a cinema; to the projectionist threading up his apparatus; to seats in the cinema being occupied, one by one, by invisible patrons. A girl is asleep. There is a ring on her finger. Wind stirs in an empty cafe. The cafe where she gained the ring? She sleeps. Children sleep. Down-and-outs sleep. The town sleeps. They all have a right to sleep.

The cameraman sets out for the day. He stretches himself across a railway line. There is a thrill as the train swoops down. The woman still sleeps.

The streets are washed, the girl washes. A relaxation for the cameraman. Not for long. He rides on a fire engine. He finds an attractive fountain. Because we are constantly
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reminded of the camera we cannot complain of the contrived; for instance, of the way in which the fountain is turned on a moment after it is discovered by the eye of the camera.

As in The Eleventh Year there is a good deal of footage devoted to factories, light splashed tunnels of miners, and great chimneys blowing smoke rings.

We come back to the morning streets. Hand of policeman, hand of motor horn, in lightning cuts; mixed first, with the lens of a camera, then with a gigantic eye.

Finally, we watch the audience, watching the screen on which are scenes we saw being taken by a cameraman whom we knew was being himself taken by Vertoff's Debrie. The montage is stupendous and leaves most of the accredited masterpieces in some vague category with the Asquith person. The propaganda, without the stern beauty of The Eleventh Year, is a little too stormy, the contrasts between the wealthy woman enjoying a manicure and the manual worker being obvious and tiresome.

The work of Vertoff is no longer legendary. We have seen it, others have seen it. Everybody must fight till they do see it!

L'Àpetit Vendu is what Henry Dobb called a custard-pie melodrama. We began by wondering, "Will the Russians laugh at this?" Two men after the girl in the cafe, giving music hall twiddles to their hats and canes. Does this amuse Russians? The poor man wants to marry the girl . . . The scenario livens up when a millionaire, with bad digestive organs, offers the poor man a sum down for his stomach.

Every kind of garnished dish is offered by Folies-Bergèresque girls to the re-stomached capitalist. The
worker, meanwhile, is taken ill mysteriously in the train. He hangs out of an open door, managing to lodge his feet pretty firmly.

Exercises and doctors fail to alleviate his pains. He attempts suicide. The girl hopes to revive his interest in life by forcing him to return to his old occupation, that of a bus driver.

Four men crowd into a telephone box, the bus charges straight for it. Pedestrians dive into a fountain, a policeman continues to direct the traffic with his head half out of the water.

The peculiar end of it all is that the bus heads into a wall, the driver is killed and the capitalist dies at the same moment.

We understand that the picture has been booked for the Vieux-Colombier, we hope that some of the French critics may be able to tell us if it is a comedy, satire, tragedy, propaganda or WHAT? With the trade papers we can merely call it good entertainment.

Oswell Blakeston.

LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER.

After we had seen, and loved, Finis Terrae we could not rest until we had "visioned" La Chute de la Maison Usher. Owing to the enterprise of Mr. Stuart Davis the picture will be brought to London.

Clusters of candles burn in the halls of Usher, candles
CLOSE UP

that get outside the oneness of the picture and light it again.
The man picks up a guitar to still the draperies that billow out from the passage windows, to stay the books that float in unearthly motion from the stacked shelves. Excellent use of slow motion to create atmosphere. The music is unheard and the sounds of the house unheard but the poetry of it, and in it, is felt. That is something so much greater.
The candles are ever in the foreground, if they were extinguished one believes that the screen would blacken.
A visitor for the House of Usher. The damp greyness of the sky and the screen is as a sheet of blotting paper. One could crumple up those pools and clouds. The castle itself a model, matching in badly with the exteriors. Visitors’ feet (it is not our fault that directors are obsessed with feet) seek the castle. Puddles to be skirted, something to do besides watch the feet.
Murk and gloom in the blotting paper landscape.
Candles and through them a paint-brush. Has the hand painted the candles to light the hand painting the woman? Artistic composition is so cardinal, so exquisite, one finds it hard to believe.
The driver of the coach is riding away, and we want to see what is happening to the visitor. Good dramatic composition.
He sees the portrait of the wife, the portrait which lives while the woman (Marguerite Abel Gance) dies, the portrait which drains the life from her.
Coffin with flowing white draperies. Candles double exposed, draperies, doors round which white lace flutters, lake to be crossed, with unearthly candles and flowing
draperies. Here is a real understanding for double exposure, it is poignant. Nature takes part in the funeral. Leaves sweep out of a door.

In *Seize et demi Onze*, an early and bad Epstein from a story by Marie Epstein, Van Daele drives along a road close to the sea with Suzy Pierson, while water is superimposed in different absurd manners; but in *La chute de la Maison Usher* super-impression has a Mary Butts’ quality; the drapery in the candles fanned by the wind and the flames of the lace. Mystic intenseness.

“Not one nail,” says the man, “must be placed in coffin.”

He is led from the cave and the hammer falls.

Stars in the sky form a cross. Storm. The house of Usher is to perish. Cross of the sky marks the grave of a race. A night for the dead, a night for black magic . . . .

The magic, be it black or white, belongs to Epstein.

We scribbled these notes on the margin of a synopsis; we do not intend to enlarge on them because every *Close-Up* reader must go himself to see.

O.B.

**EROTIK.**

**Manuscript and Direction by Gustav Machaty.**

**Photography by W. Wich.**

**Sets by Borsody, Machon, Hackenchmied.**

A production by Von Stroheim’s assistant, with the title *Erotik!*

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Although it is not a talkie we can say, "That sounds good."

Young man (Olaf Fjord) gets stranded on a railway station. The station-master (S. Sleichert) invites him into the house to dry himself.

Rain against telephone wires, drip in pool, a last corpulent drop on the window pane. Rain through the night...

The details are clever. The young man opens his bag and takes out a bottle of perfume, which he applies to his lips and ears.

Struck "all of a heap" the station-master questions the expedience of perfume for young men; whereupon the young man produces a bottle of whisky about which there can be no question.

A cigarette is lit from a patent affair, thereby intriguing the simple station-master. The young man presents it to his host, a generous action which secures—and was intended to do so—an invitation for the night.

A simple station-master intrigued by patent lighters, harbouring a young man with sophisticated scents in his bag, is bound to be the father of a cinema daughter, and Ita Rina makes an attractive job of it.

The father is called away on some kind of night duty.

"Don't," says the girl, "forget anything, father."

He does not forget to take the bottle of whisky with him.

To even things up the boy forces the perfume on the girl, who practises with it in the secrecy of her chamber. Nobody troubles to tell her that the name of the perfume is Erotik!

The seduction scene is astonishingly well done. Big-heads; severed noses, mouths, eyes. We are all fond of
chocolates but we cannot eat them because they make us sick, but Mr. Machaty uses these chocolate-box close-ups so that they really become erotic.

The film stales. The girl’s child is born dead. She drifts to the city where the man has many mistresses. Humour of the Menjou brand to eke it out.

"Where have you been?" splutters enraged husband.

"With my lover," says the woman gaily.

The husband roars with laughter, and the audience is expected to compete as they have been allowed to see the woman, half an hour earlier, holding out her arms to the indifferent young man.

Machaty is soaked in Hollywood tradition (there is a cabaret sequence) but . . . . there is that BUT.

This native picture from Prague was exhibited at Stuttgart.

O.B.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

"The Devastating Power of Gossip" has been awarded the grand prize of a thousand dollars in the Cecil de Mille prize contest for the best idea for a talking picture. The author of this homely, yet pregnant suggestion is Marie Loscalzo, of New York. The contest excited widespread interest and resulted in the submission of many thousands of ideas—each limited under the rules to two hundred and fifty words. Several minor awards were made; two of them
going to foreign contestants—Heather McCleary, of Edmonton, Canada, and Spitzer Jeno, of Budapest.

* * *

The Actors Equity Association, a union of stage players, has been seeking to unionize the Hollywood screen actors. The attempt appears to have been prompted by the fatuous belief that the talkies cannot succeed without the established thespians of the stage, who have recently been flocking to Hollywood in great numbers. The leaders of the film colony, while welcoming these recruits to the screen, very emphatically resent their effort to impose the restrictions of the stage union upon cinema production. Film work has its own highly specialized and peculiar conditions, and is not in the main amenable to the rules and impositions applicable to stage work.

* * *

C. Sil-Vara, the European playwright, is one of the latest of Hollywood’s acquisitions. He has arrived here from London, under contract with M-G-M, to write talkie plays directly for the screen.

* * *

Hereafter United Artists pictures will be released through the Paramount-Lasky distribution system. This means that the Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, Norma Talmadge and Gloria Swanson pictures, as well as the D. W. Griffith and Samuel Goldwyn productions, will henceforth enjoy a much wider outlet than heretofore, while at the same time Paramount’s prestige will be increased. Preceding this arrangement, plans had been under way for a merger of United Artists and Warner Brothers; but
mutually satisfactory terms could not be agreed upon, and
the contemplated merger was abandoned.

* * *

*Three Live Ghosts* is under way at United Artists studio. The picture (a talkie, of course) is based upon Max Marcin's popular stage play, depicting the adventures of three men who escape from a German prison and return to their former haunts in London, to discover themselves officially dead in the eyes of the government. The character of the shell-shocked "Spoofy" is portrayed by the English actor Claud Allister. The other two "ghosts" are Beryl Mercer and Charles McNaughton, both of whom have also been identified with the London stage.

* * *

The marked success of M-G-M's *Broadway Melody*, their initial talking-and-singing picture, has inspired them to a second like effort under the title of *The Hollywood Revue*. This is a far more elaborate and ambitious production than the first, with all of the elements of popularity emphasized. *Broadway Melody*, in Hollywood alone, enjoyed a continuous run of six months, with two showings daily.

* * *

Maurice Chevalier's *Innocents of Paris* is to be followed by *The Love Parade*. This musical extravaganza will be directed by Ernst Lubitsch. The story is based upon the European play, *The Prince Consort*, by Leon Xanrof and Jules Chancel, and, according to the announcement of its producers, Paramount-Lasky, will bring a new type of musical entertainment to the audible screen, as well as
CLOSE UP

optical nuances in the shape of ultra-modern settings and unique camera effects.

* * *

The Brazilian Southern Cross Productions is one of Hollywood's newer film companies. Its first picture, The Soul of a Peasant, has an incidental personal interest in the fact that its featured player, Lia Tora, of Brazil, is the author of its story, and that her husband, Vicomte Julio de Moraes, directed the film.

* * *

Warner Brothers' On With the Show, their first all natural-color talkie, has proven so popular, that they are preparing to follow it with several others done in the new Technicolor medium. This newly developed color process presents pictures in very soft, life-like tones, with a much more restful effect on the eye than has heretofore been attainable in color films. Song of the West and Gold Diggers of Broadway are the two pictures at present under way at the Warner studios employing this recent chromatic innovation.

* * *

Hollywood has been advised by the Federal district government of Mexico City, that beginning in September no films may be shown in Mexico with English titles. They must all be in Spanish. The order makes no mention of talking pictures; but trouble in exhibiting English-speaking films is expected, in view of the opposition already being waged against them, in anticipation, by certain influential Mexican newspapers, on the ground that such pictures will
have a tendency to induce the abandonment of Spanish in favor of English.

The announced intention of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks to film a talkie version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, has inspired other producers to contemplate Shakespearean audible screen productions. Among them is Cecil de Mille, who is said to have *Hamlet* in mind. Former attempts in this field, with the silent films, proved consistently unpopular. Which would seem to indicate that Shakespeare, with his bare plots, minus the spoken word, would have proven an unsuccessful scenario writer.

The suave, debonair Adolphe Menjou of the silent pictures is to make his talkie debut in *Fashions in Love* for Paramount-Lasky. In this film he will not only speak, but will also display his talents as a singer and a pianist.

Paramount-Lasky have engaged John Galsworthy to write the dialog for the screen version of his *Escape*. Basil Deane, the British stage producer, who will come to Hollywood to direct the film, is collaborating with Galsworthy on this phase of the production. Clive Brook, another Englishman, who has already established himself in Hollywood, will be cast in the leading rôle.

And speaking of Englishmen—James Whale, recently in the public eye as the director of the London stage play, *Journey’s End*, has arrived in Hollywood to join Paramount’s scenario staff as an expert dialog writer.

C.H.
An interesting display of old English and American films, supplied by Mr. Leslie Wood of Apex Motion Pictures, was given by the London A.C.A. on June 19th.

Exhibit No. 1 was a 1904 Cecil M. Hepworth one-reeler, entitled *Dumb Sagacity*. This film, one of the earliest made in England, dealt with the heroic exploits of a dog, who, with the aid of a horse, rescues his young mistress from drowning when the tide comes in and leaves her stranded on a rock.

Exhibit No. 2 was a very old one-reeler made by the Cines Company of Rome, and recounted the adventures of one, Judith, who chops off the head of a tyrant, to the great joy of the assembled populace. Considerable merriment was caused by the dramatic appearance, about every half minute, of a super-imposed angel, who apparently urged the fair Judith to perform the foul deed. This film was made on an out-door set, and contained no sub-titles.

Exhibit No. 3 was the great hit of the evening, a 1909 D. W. Griffith American Biograph thriller, called *Her Wedding Bell*. Blanche Sweet was the heroine, H. B. Walthall the villain, and Mary Pickford appeared as an extra. Parallel action was used by Griffith in this one-reeler, and suspense was worked up to a terrific pitch, but unfortunately the end of the film is missing, so we do not know whether the hero arrived in time to save his bride-to-be from being blown up by the bomb, or not. If *Intolerance* tells us anything, he did, so we hope for the best.

The *Mother Call* was Exhibit No. 4. This was a real high-pressure domestic drama, bringing in a drunken husband, a wicked baronet who loves another, a dastardly plot...
to change babies, and so forth. The producers, the old Kineto Company of England were apparently fond of sepia tinting.

Last, but by no means least, we had a two-reel drama called *A Slice of Life*, produced by the American Film Company about 1910-11. Points of interest were the parallel action, a lengthy cut-back, some excellent mixes, and the inclusion of the names of the players. The heroine, Winifred Greenwood, distinguished herself by appearing in every scene armed with an enormous bunch of roses which she distributed to all and sundry. The late Arthur Johnson played juvenile lead.

This collection of films is unique, and credit is due to Mr. Wood for obtaining and preserving them. To an amateur, especially, they afford material of great value.

A.W.

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**ROBERT HERRING GIVES**

Four Points about *Hearts In Dixie*

The first and the second are Stephin Fetchit. His face, his dancing, his personality and his voice, which I am sure would have been very interesting if I had been able to hear more of it. Maybe the Astoria is not good on its acoustics, maybe I was sitting too near (I found the same thing in the corresponding seats at the Empire, where my experience of *BROADWAY MELODY* was that I was dozing in a traffic
CLOSE UP

block), and maybe that the microphone cannot do justice to the Negro inflections, but the fact remains that Fetchit and the others were only intermittently intelligible the night I went. It ought not to be the recording, because Jimmie Rodgers and a host of others come over well on gramophones. The women were better (the two leading women were in all ways excellent) and so were the children. It was the men’s voices that blasted, and I think the intonations of Fetchit must be too subtle for talkies as yet.

For those who may in consequence have been disappointed in this first Negro talkie, I would make the third point; the film had a sentimental enough story, and the Negroes (one felt they were told to be "darkies") had to sing plantation songs, but, with the exception of these songs, it all came over so naturally and so free from hypocrisy, that one found one was for once watching a talkie free from sentimentality, which was very queer. They didn’t call each other "regular guys" or "troupers;" they acted on it, quiet. In fact, the casual way things happened and the Negroes went on living their life, though it wasn’t inspired, was attractive.

The fourth point. A matter of talkie technique. Fetchit does nothing about the house, and goes off dancing when his wife is ill. The grandfather sits up with the baby, crooning to it. You hear him crooning, and through the window you also hear the noise from the dancing, coming in. I liked that quite. But the real success was in the scene where the mother dies. She has been looked after by a Voodoo woman, but at last the grandfather gets in a white doctor. The doctor comes in, draws back the sheets and we hear him say "Why she’s been dead three days! All the time we see
his face. Then his words cut across, “she’s been dead three days.” Now in a silent film, the visual thing would have been broken. The doctor’s face wouldn’t have been before us all the time. There would have been cutting, more or less skilful, and perhaps a subtitle. We shouldn’t have had the face held, and the voice, and then again the face of the grandfather as he said “We didn’t know, we didn’t know. “This was the odd spectacle of talkies assisting visual continuity.

There was also, this isn’t a point, just a coda, there was also a gang plank which drew up as the ship taking a boy away drew out, filling the screen and blotting out the old man who saw him off. This wasn’t great, but I can remember how we should have hailed it in silent days.

It was interesting to see how the audience at THE MAN I LOVE completely missed a similar silent point (it was one here) because they were so intent on talking. Richard Arlen, a boxer taken up by Baclanova, arrives at her house in a lounge suit. Dressed in white, she says he is so late, and he carefully says there is an hour before dinner. They disappear round a corner, and next shot are coming down stairs, she in black and he in a dinner jacket. At once the audience murmured “How did he change?” Felt very spry at noticing, and missed something that was very akin to the famous collar of THE WOMAN OF PARIS. Arlen kept his clothes in that house; surely, you would have thought the implication would have been grasped?

But people are losing their picture sense in following talk. People must be careful.
CLOSE UP

HENRY DOBB GIVES

Variations on the Same Theme.

Doubtless "Hearts in Dixie" is sincere. Sincere as is possible with the state of mind that puts the Negro behind the floodlights with the ball shying booth at Coney Island and the Femmes au Plat in the Jardin d'Acclimitation. But it is built on illusions, illusions that have enwrapped us since the lachrymose myths of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" span a web of sobbing sympathy around an antimacassared world.

Superficially we might have advanced since the mountebankery of "One Exciting Night," though Stepin Fetchit's rôle in the still warm "The Ghost Talks" is directly in the tradition of the American Vaudeville stage and Moore and Burgess. But the literary loud speakers of the Learned and Reverend Dr. William Fox still shriek with a more barbaric clangour than nineteen "Blackbirds" and double that number of Washboard Beaters that the Negro is something to clown and weep for us, something to do his stuff as the hamadryads on Monkey Hill. The Negro, in short, for all his humanity, is still behind the bars of the cage, a cage flooded with the glare of publicity and intoned with the "haunting strains of negro spirituals." How far are we with our Collection Paul Guilliame, and our penchant for Gauguin and the Benin head in the British Museum, from this state of mind? Is our belated cult of the coloured so removed from William Fox?

So granting that Paul Slone's film is as honest as ourselves how far do we get? How far with such illusions? For it is obvious that Slone has not yet emerged from that state of
mind which conceives of the "Hearts in Dixie" as leaning towards open necked shirts, bandanna hats and the melodic charms of "Old Black Joe" and "The Lonesome Road." Whereas those who have studied the business will assure you that they are notoriously given to Stein Bloch suitings, Dobbs Hats, "Digga Digga Doo" and "I Must Have That Man."

Nor can serious consideration be allowed to that indiscriminate ethnology, not confined to Fox Films which embraces under the category of Negro, Australian Aboriginals, Pacific Islanders and blueys from St. Anns, Jamaica.

Yet there are a few kicks to be got from the film. With coloured performers of the calibre of Stepin Fetchit and Clarence Muse that was inevitable, for despite the tinsel and the gawdiness, the pathos and mountebankery to order of tradition, there is such dynamism inside them, such fires to break through that one forgets the paint and is conscious only of the power. That volcanic energy that breaks forth in the dance in the moonlight is flavoured with the intoxication of the Bal Negre of the Rue Blomet, and is abbreviated by propriety all too soon. There for once one deplored the sound on film system. With a disc it would have been all or nothing.

The Voodoo sequence too, despite its Pears Annual resemblance to the Modern Group flavour of "Porgy" has in it a hint of reality. Such are the moments, moments made magical by the puppets themselves, magical in spite of the hands that dangle the strings, that arrange this pattern of popular entertainment with its heart appeal and its sobs, its "roustabouts crooning thrilling melodies," its "beautiful
CLOSE UP

panorama of life along the levee and in the cotton fields” (I quote from Mr. Fox’s loud speaker), according to the conception not of the negro but of the box office.

The tragedy is not the tragedy in the film, but the tragedy of the film: the tragedy of these untainted folk strutting their stuff to the required pattern, playing their parts as the white man likes to believe they do. The Negro and all his coloured brothers are not museum specimens. Nor are they mountebanks. If they are blessed with a more than human power of music and speech, of rhythm and colour then they have it over us mere whites. But if “Hearts in Dixie” is a specimen of coloured expression under the aegis of the White Thaumaturgists of Hollywood let us next time hand the whole process over to themselves. Whether the Negro Film Company now being initiated by Wm. Foster will suffice remains to be seen. For we have tainted the coloured man and he will find it hard to remove himself from the economic advantage of expressing not so much himself as the fellow we expect. Then the Stepin Fetchits will release themselves from that inertia which is symbolic of something more than mere physical laziness.

Then the dawn will come and we will find that maybe Stepin Fetchit and Charles (Buddy) Rodgers are brothers under the skin. What a consolation!
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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

What wars there are!
What a duckpond, what a chicken-run!
The panic phase dissociated but left floating—vague rubble in a lake of rather rubbley men left floating also.
Phase of mental thumb-biting, save-me-first-ishness.
Klang, Phototone, Tobis, Movietone, Naturetone, Vitaphone, Kinophone . . . . . . and how much more etcetera. Robust, good, vowelly names to gong assertiveness. Beat twenty gongs, raise twenty voices in dissent, and your assertiveness is chicken-run and duckpond cackle.
Whose system shall we use? The answer is who’ll boycott whom if we use who’s who’s?
The cool, collected onlooker can giggle and caw. Men saving themselves are no heroic spectacle. Men saving their money somehow are. Kind of inverted heroism. Money is their most radical conviction and they will fight for it as for no white-haired mother. Recruiting authorities are
offered this as a tip for the next war. Conferences at the Hague and elsewhere illustrate quite well the point.

Yes, the sound film war has its heroism. Human nature snaps back to virility when fortunes are at stake. The one pity, perhaps, is that the motivation should remain at a constantly so unresolvent level.

And under one war, as usual, another. The American bank rate not so long ago was raised. You remember the millions of dollars instant depreciation of securities that was so many fortunes lost, and the next day’s quick recoveries? This may have had nothing to do with talking films, and nothing to do, perhaps, with bankers’ decisions, but the fact remains that almost at once we heard that the bankers behind the American producing firms were ordering cuts in talkie overhead—orders which affected most of the big studios and most of the big combines.

A clue, perhaps—well, let us pry!

Talkie production—had you not read it yourself—was so cheap. We had heard it as well as read it. Fewer sets was one of their reasons—a reason only too readily to be apprehended. As many sets, shall we say, as scenes in any three-act play. Much cheaper.

Fewer cameramen. Less film in consequence exposed. Less montage. Less tentative in taking. Less waste, re-shooting. The Stroheim ten-feet-used-and-a-million-scrapped already in the history book among quaint customs of our ancestors. One cameraman as glass encased and stolid as the waxest fruit of a past epoch, grinding scenes of which the four hundred feet limit of his film is only at the first strangled sob in the heroine’s speech to her sweetie.
CLOSE UP

The newer method is a strong, silent case of felt which the appareil wears like a top-coat. This ponderous box is supposed to make it possible to lift the camera about again. It might have led to a recurrence of superfluous footage and cameramen, but the weight of this 100 per cent silencer plus, say a Bell and Howell, suggests it would be easier to lift the Nelson column. Renewal of mobility, unlikely.

Limitation of space—another money saver. Honolulu sprouts (or would do) in the studio now. Its balmy breezes fanning palm leaves made by the studio hand which gently shakes the branch. Do you remember Hungarian Rhapsody? Excuses if you are trying to forget it, but there, in a film that was virtually silent, though meant as a motif undertone for tzigane Hungarian airs, Hoffman, the great, magnificent master, allowed somebody to shake leaf shadows over Dita Parlo’s close ups in one scene. Apart from the fact that they were very badly shaken, the master did not trouble to repeat them in the semi-shots. Which is just the kind of thing that happens when you take your outdoors indoors. But you must not say this to a director of talkies. It is surely bad enough for him, his operator, stars and staff, that all free holidays in sunny lands are at an end. Can you blame them if the foliage flicks like whips? But, all the same, remember, money saved. And money saved is money earned, they say.

Simplification of method. Days now not weeks to finish up those supervisor-hunted, out-of-schedule shots.

Good reasons, these, for cheapness. Then why the Wall Street ultimatum?

"SLASH!" (see Cinema. August 12th.)

The answer might be "Slush."
Slush, the cheat, losing men their bankers' backing. Slush, the revenue boomerang, missing the box office by the whole of a public's contempt.

Turn back to your *Cinema*.

Though, (it states) there have been wholesale claims from the studios that the making of talking films is less costly than that of the old silent product, this is now proved to be an illusion, mainly by reason of the hurried methods of the executives in the race for big names . . . . . . . the balance has been heavily weighted by the high prices paid to stage stars, big name directors, boosted writers and famous orchestras. The eleven top-line producing concerns have recently enlarged their contract players by almost 100 per cent., most of these demanding and getting colossal salaries. Paramount, Fox and M-G-M- have swelled the total of directors by 100 per cent. These, too, are augmented by a great number of song writers, score composers and lyricists, as well as star musicians.

Elsewhere in the same article we read that the general cost of talking pictures has increased by 30 to 35 per cent.

How funny it is!

"High-priced stars will be told where to get off at." This was what was being written when talkies began. When every company was more or less on the verge of bankruptcy, when every resolution was a cutting down of needless expense and inflated salaries. The talkies were going to accomplish everything. Capturing world markets was only part of the idea. Getting back to normal costs was going to be the first big change. What were talking films not going to do?
CLOSE UP

And now, rather pathetically, rather worse off than ever before, the big men of the west are seeing once more those Wall Street bludgeons—maces of the magnate monarchs. Talking pictures a flop?

No, there is great virtue in not leaping to conclusions. In a civilized world survival is rarely of the fittest. Talking pictures may quite well live. And this need not be disappointing, for they are not the rich relative whose every going to rest you hope may be his last. They are, in fact, very poor.

A specialist could diagnose them, perhaps make them fit to be the friends of man. Close Up would offer its services for a very high fee. But that’s just what they want to avoid.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

PHASES OF CINEMA UNITY III

Very little, if any, attention has been paid to light as unity. The fact that the quality of lighting or filtering in a film is not uniform has generally called forth criticism of what people call technique. But uniformity can be judged only from the viewpoint of unity. Similarly, diversity of light-quality, of tone and pitch, is the concern of unity. Technique permits weaknesses that unity declares injurious. For instance, take the common practice of inserting frames from
an old newsreel into a film, so generally employed in war-sequences. These portions are certainly authentic, but since they do not participate in the quality of light or the temper of the light arrangements, they are intrusive and unreal. The reality of the established light-unity has been contradicted.¹

Of course, it is possible to incorporate different light-qualities—a variety of tones and pitches—into a single film. It is possible to incorporate, and the incorporation is the proof. But a film must be light-planned to achieve such incorporation and the alternations must be intervalled and timed in duration in the total rhythm of the picture. I have not seen many films that succeeded in doing this. Feyder’s Thérèse Raquin was a contradiction—very delicate and to most eyes imperceptible perhaps—between the construction of two lightings not alternated nor balanced in the intention of a single organization: German studio lighting and the usual French interior light. In France, it is worth noting that unities of lighting are most often achieved by men who are originally painters: Alberto Cavalcanti and Man Ray.²

No one, so far as I am aware, has yet dwelt upon the unity of the absolute film. I shall here only record a few indications. The key to the unity of the absolute film is

¹Or refer to Epstein’s Six and a half x Eleven. The inconsistencies of lighting seriously disturb the continuity of pattern and flow. Bad studio equipment may have produced this.

²Another phase of light as unity is the relation of the lighting to the nature of the film. I include in the matter of light the tone of the raw-stock too. Frequently the use of a brown stock is antipathetic to the mood of the film. But in Clair’s The Italian Straw Hat the stock provides just the period color-tone which coincides with the entire attitude of the film.
its absoluteness. The lesson of the films of Richter and Man Ray's first picture to the makers of films of machine sequences should be: the construction of a suitable material. Will not some absolutist construct the machine whose visual-motor rhythm he is to re-create on the pellicule for projection upon a screen? As it is, most machine films remain documents and not completely absolute rhythms. For while the screw and bolt of a machine are essential to its original function, they may not serve the film. We have by now documented enough machine movements to create an absolute machine as material for the absolute film. It will not, finally, be a working-machine, but may take the form of human semblance and find its source in those interesting sculptures of the German, Rudolf Belling, where human portraits are modelled upon machine-analogies. In the machine film, as in sculpture, spaces between solid parts are portions of the structural design. Belling is the sculptor who has best used actual hollows in the total design of his portrait.

Nothing so interferes with the unity of an absolute film as the presence of a human figure not arranged into the entire absolute structure. It may be true, as one critic has observed, that the appearance of a human figure into a film of non-human contents relieves the spectator's tension. But that very relief is intrusion.¹ The absolute film of all films makes

¹In one of the most pleasing of the machine films, Deslav's The March of the Machines, at one point a man is visible behind the machinery. The austerity is broken for the moment and the mind needs to re-construct the absoluteness.
no compromise with the spectator's prejudice and habit of mind. Its unity is its only determinant.\(^1\)

In these days unity must pre-occupy itself mainly with the unity of compounds. Most objections to the sound film—though the objectors themselves seldom know it—are assertions that the sound or talking film contradicts unity. In the journal issued by Charles Dullin, "Correspondances", a writer dwells upon the nature of this contradiction. The article is not written with the film in mind, but the view expressed pertains to the cinema. The view is this: we are single-minded, and compounds of our senses achieve no singleness because one sense or another dominates. If this is true, then a movie can be seen only and not seen-heard simultaneously and equally. But I am not sure that the writer is correct. Indeed, I am sure that he is not. It may be true that we have not until now apprehended multiple articulations because these have not been aimed in harmonized concurr-ences. It may be true that one sensory medium has been so emphasized that it was predominant. But I think this is not

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\(^1\) I have omitted certain major concerns of unity, especially important to the absolute film. They are the direction of a movement, the texture and the volume. I may take as an example of all three Mme. Dulac's *Arabesque*. The texture and the movement here are not sustained nor are they patterned exactly. The play upwards of the water-hose annoys the forward horizontal movement, and, because it is a concentrated slender force occupying only a portion of the screen interrupts the crystalline texture occupying a major part of the screen. The use of the woman as part of the *Arabesque* intrudes two distractions: one of a human subject not sufficiently impersonalized into an objective detail, and of a detail differing in volume or solidity. But this *Arabesque* was offered by Mme. Dulac as a tentative in design endeavoring to utilize a variety of details. It is most instructive.
CLOSE UP

absolute or unavoidable. To create an operative unity in the cinema certain cares will need to be taken.

If the writer referred to above is not entirely correct in his assertion, still within his statement there is discoverable the point of view for the compound film. The compound picture will need to be *preconceived* on the basis of one sense. That one sense will in itself be no simple sense. The film is not simply a visual medium: this needs to be said again and again. The film is visual-motor. The rhythmic pattern of the sound film will be conceived, as is the silent film (ideally), upon a visual-motor graph. Time and space are its structural elements. Upon these bases are imprinted the emphases of pitch (light sound), distribution (color-values, sonal tones), etc. Time and space, visual-motor fundamentals, determine, however, the placements of these emphases. They comprise within themselves: scale, duration, alternation, counterpoint, simultaneity, climax . . . The film contains also elements that are visual and that are visual-tactile (textural), as well as—in the sound film—those that are sonal; but these elements must be submissive to the visual-motor. In this way, may I call for Mr. Betts? The film remains a film—but that isn’t really so very important.¹ What is a more important cosmic

¹Mr. Betts still waxes courageous against the sound film. What he still attacks is the stupid uses of the sound film to date and the unjustifiable suppression of the silent film. And shews thereby he condemns the compound film. When suddenly he says: “They (the Russians) are experimenting on different lines and putting sound in its proper place, as an adjunct to the film instead of the film being an adjunct to the sound.” Then Mr. Betts is in favor of sound properly used? He goes on to entomology, with that cute irrelevance of English thinkers: “If the fly as it moved on, uttered a little squeak, do you imagine it would become more of a fly in consequence? No, it would become more of a nuisance.” Is Mr. Betts implying that the silent film is nuisance enough?
implication is that man may be on the verge of experiences that, though they are multiple in their origins, will be singular in their apprehension (by man).

Movement: that, we are told by the cinema critics, is the key to the nature of the film. Or it is visual drama. Another will say: dynamics. And still another: fluid rhythm. In brief, all of these characterizations are both too generic and too fragmentary. Movement yes, visual drama certainly, dynamics indeed, fluidity and rhythm positively. One contains the other and all are but terms until we re-associate them, separate the association into its several functioning parts (parts, that is, that are immediately usable). It is best, therefore, that we set down first several simple laws to clarify the nature of the terms.

The authentic perception of movement, to quote Jacques Dalcroze, is not of the visual order, but of the muscular order. (Visual-motor).

Movement is not succession of motions. In cinema movement no motion may actually take place, but an interval may occur, an interval of time, between two images and that is movement too. In other words, movements are two: the actual movement of a body, and the constructed movement attained through time and space-successions (in montage).

The movement of a film is not cinematic unless it is plastic. There must be balances and contrasts. Repetitions, repetitions in variation, "the progressive deformation of a theme": altogether rhythm, which practically includes:

- Time, space and pitch durations:
  - Of a scene, of a sequence.
  - Of an image, of a tone.
Mr. Matthew Josephson, an American writer and erstwhile film-enthusiast of the late "Broom," saw in the American western film his ideal of film-movement. This was an enthusiasm generated by the French dadaists, and it is still being uttered in England—as yet, a decade behind in its film-judgments—by a writer in a weekly periodical. The movement of the American film has been movement, it is true, but the movement only of an object and not of the integral film. To clarify my meaning, I should like to refer again to Carl Dreyer and Jeanne d'Arc. Mr. Dreyer believes now that in the latter portion of his film he should have graded the bold images in first, second and third plans: the head first, then head and torso, then full body. This may have reduced the dramatic psychological attack upon the spectator which was so powerfully effected by the succession of first plans, but—and this is a first rule of a unity!—the film and not the spectator, determines the structure of the film. The succession and alternation of first, second and third plans are part of the aesthetic organization of the film, its plastic, rhythmic movement. Dynamics is just another name for the climacteric construction and organization of these various elements. It refers to the accumulative forward march of the film. The drama refers to the narrative source (the literary experience) which the spectator receives in its final converted form through the repetitive, alternating, varying procession whose elements I have briefly considered above. There is no single kind of motion, no one sort of dynamics, no only form of rhythm, no one and only category of film.

I have thought it necessary to consider, if only for a moment, these inclusive film-terms to protect the film from the glib
repeaters of old phrases who would circumscribe the cinema with these phrases. I say here that it is the creator of films who tells us how many kinds of films there are, and not the critic. Indeed, the studious and serious critic of the film will never say, on looking at Jeanne d'Arc, as did one young American journalist, that though that film moved him strongly, it was not cinema, which is, according to him, naught if not the movement of shadows. Again, you see, a rudimentary observation inflated to a final determinant.

The most casual observation of motion in the film should have indicated to the glib young commentators that the capture on the negative of a thing in motion is not the ultimate of cinema motion. A reference to the physical basis of cinema and to the final organization of the positive for projection should have elucidated the principle that the film is not merely a report but a construction. In the introduction to "Filmregie und Filmmanuskript," Pudovkin attacks the viewpoint of the "turning" of a film, "the shooting." A film is built, he says. This building is montage. Montage is the construction of the unity. As such, it is no mere assembling of film-strips, but is pre-conceived in the initial conception of the theme. The montage is worked towards from the beginning, just as in the final act of montage, the entire film from its first definite expression in the film manuscript is included. Therefore, there is a montage of the manuscript. So long as montage is understood as an inclusive creative (constructing) unity, it is the valid vantage-point of film aesthetics, but the moment it shifts to the mere job of cutting or, as it frequently appears in the work and utterances of the Russians, a device for effecting the spectator,
From the Meschrabpom film 120,000, directed by Chernyak. The profile belongs to A. Orlivoy.

From *Spring*. A Wufku Production. Author-Operator: M. Kaufmann.

*Caba*, produced by the Goskinprom, Georgia. Directed by Taurel. Theme: The struggle against drunkenness among workers.
From *New Babylon*, the Konsintzoff and Trauberg masterpiece.
*Un Chien Andalou*, a Studio Film of surrealism by Louis Bunuel.
Below: P. Batcheff.
Paul Guevedo in *Vous Verrez la Semaine Prochaine* . . . a short burlesque by Alberto Cavalcanti.
Catherine Hessling in *Vous Verrez la Semaine Prochaine* . . . .
Yvette Guilbert in *Manque de Memoire*, a new film by Henri Chomette.
CLOSE UP

without regard to the level of the theme as experience, it is contradictory of unity.

The motion picture has been too occupied with the spectator. This shifting of the concern from the intrinsic film to what is fallaciously called communication has been one of the chief causes for the non-establishment of a film unity. It is true that a film is meant to be experienced by some one other than the creator of it. But experience—the systemic, ideational experience of art—is never a product of the intentional effect. That is a consideration out of the intrinsic work. But if the artist is faithful to the highest demands of his subject-theme, as articulated in the construction, experience is the result. That is purity. That is unity. That is the aesthetic as against the rudimentarily psychologic, which, in the film construction, is a physical attack. The film, on the whole, remains no more than a physical attack, and the talking film, as it is produced to-day, has further lowered the level of this physical attack. The view of filmmaking as effect makes for passive (even apathetic spectators), the view of filmmaking as the strict realization of the intrinsic makes for active, completely participating spectators.

The film, because it does not dwell upon itself, does not realize itself. In all lands it disdains idea. Therefore, it does not achieve complete conversion into a final form, therefore does not achieve unity—hence not the experience that is art. The entire mind of internationalism, whether it is the large sale of the American commercial viewpoint or the propagandistic reduction of the Russians, thwarts this penetration of the intrinsic theme and its re-making into the form of the film. The film to-day, only very, very seldom attains
to more than a manner or a style—an aim discarded by every serious and earnest artist as spurious, specious and non-propagating—and almost never to form, which is the unity informed constantly by the thematic-philosophic intention. Without this intention, of course, there can be no form.

Unity, more than ever before in the history of the film and the history of mankind, challenges the consciousness of the artist. The film is alive at the very moment when the multiple-unit is being attempted in painting and in literature and in music (in the realm of the mechanical), when artists are endeavouring to create entities of diverse utilities. Very little more than simplisms have been achieved through these endeavours, for an alien attitude prevails, an attitude which still is worried about effects, which thinks of purity as reduction, and the conglomerate as the inclusive. It is time a criterion was established, for without it the artist wallows in a morass. The experience of the artists in these mediums should prove most valuable to the artists working in the compound cinema. That literature, painting or drama is not the cinema does not mean that literature, painting or drama cannot by their experience clarify the intention and method and viewpoint (philosophy) of the cinematist. Not exclusiveness, but inclusiveness, is the valid mind for the artist.¹

¹ I read that the olfactory film is an actuality, as is the tactile and the stereoscopic. The conglomerate mind is working. Confusion! Several months before the natural vision film was shown in America I heard from Spoor of the Essanay Company as to the depth film they would soon be urging on a public too easily persuaded. I saw, as I had already suspected, that those commercially interested in this three-dimensional movie would never recognize that it was a distinct form needing considerable study, and not another realistic effect. To take a hint from painting, perspective as a means of simulating reality has been a betrayal of painting. Perspective as a device for plastic organization is a major utility of painting.
To provide a basis for his film's unity, the film-maker must select his relevant sources and select from them. Is the French absolute film the source for the Dutch and Belgian artist? Compare the work of a Kirsanoff (a Russian, French-tutored) in *Mists of Autumn* with Joris Ivens' *Rain* (which I saw in Amsterdam, before its final mounting) and of which the idea and continuity are the work of M. Franken, *Rain* is the purer of the two because it is less troubled by effecting a mood upon the spectator, that is, it is less sentimental. Yet it creates a sense of the persistent melancholy. In *Rain* there is detectable a temper which, if it is perceived by the Dutch cinematists, can be further extended into a permanent Dutch cinema attitude. Contrast this temper with the *perpetrated* mood of the Kirsanoff film and you will detect in it the unsentimental perception of a uniform tone in a definite condition of nature. If this germ can be placed into the apprehended experience of the Dutch people (as the film will reveal), Holland will create an autochthonous and original cinema, contributing richly to the experience of the world. That the Dutch cinema-adventurers have felt the necessity for working with the indigenous life of Holland is whispered by the presence of the film made by Franken and Ivens, *Breakers*. But strangely, what the phototechnician Ivens put into *Rain*, is not discoverable in *Breakers*. And Franken, who directed the film, did not understand that the mere statement of a relationship is not the relationship. By simply stating the relationship of the three persons and the analogy with the dunes and sea—and not developing this relationship nor this analogy by insistence upon the evidences of sea-temper or the numerous other opportunities afforded, the sub-
ject lacked assertion, fullness and culmination. The analogy demanded the speculative mind, such as Epstein exercises upon phenomena, but so far as I was able to detect, this speculative metaphysical mind is not yet a portion of the Dutch film attitude, nor am I sure that the Dutch mind enjoys such effete practices as Epstein employs. *Finis Terrae*, I was told in Amsterdam, is a wretched film, and all that is good in it is here and there a physical device. Yet *Finis Terrae* should have meant something to the Dutch practicians as a study in the utilization of natural tempers and in the exploitation of native types. They might even avoid Epstein’s speculative treatment to see his structural employment of bodily parts. I think it would be well for the Dutch cinematists to remain concerned with the physical evidences of *folk*. They have at hand a rich source in their graphic art. They should go, not necessarily to their greatest artists (though Rembrandt can teach every cinematist much about tones) but to those of their artist, or Flemish or German artists, who have remained most folkish: an Abel Grimmer, for instance. Or for grander employments of folk activities to the paintings of the Brueghels and to Bosch—these are full of the kinetic. The galleries in Antwerp, Brussels and Amsterdam are replete with sources. I refer this examination to the cinematists of Belgium too. In Antwerp, the Flemish Cinema Club has produced a film *Leentje van de Zee* (Peggy of the Sea), which I went to view thinking here might be the rudiments of a folk-film, if not a realized folk-film. The Dutch film *Breakers* possessed a dignity and seriousness of effort. But this film of amateurs with its ancient story of childhood love, the drunkard foe, the false accusation of
murder, the crippled idiot’s devotion and martyrdom was hilariously stupid. Nothing to redeem it, not even an honest intention. Yet for as little an expenditure these amateurs might have produced a document of some Flemish village which might have taught them just what material they possess. And by studying their graphic artists they might have learned something of tones and textures and stylizations. Carl Dreyer did not disdain the sources existent in graphic art. He found such sources in the medieval French miniatures, in Flemish art (the blood-letting scene), in Brueghel (the fair scene, the mob explosion, after the explosion the poignant prayer scene at the drawbridge), etc. The Dutch and the Belgian cinematists will do well if they study their folk-painters, look into their folk-writers, watch their folk-movements and remain folk for a while. Whereas in the lands of more ambitious cinemas of longer history, the fullest cinematic achievement will be attained if folk is utilized only as film-history. That is, Germany and America have done enough folk filming, now they must transcend folk. Germany has done this, for instance, in Hans Behrendt’s film, Die Hose—the German comedy here leaves behind the redundant Harry Liedtke folk film, like Wochenendezauber (a jolly local picture), or the Fritz Kampers picture Semkes sel

1 It is true that graphic knowledge may injure the cinegraphic, but such injury proves only the incapability of the injured. Murnau believes—if he has been quoted correctly—that the cinematist should leave other mediums out of one’s ken, yet Sunrise is certainly enriched by paintings (the peasant and his wife at the table laid with heavy earthenware above which a lamp is tilted). There is a difference between paintings being copied into film (De Mille’s King of Kings) and the structure of paintings incorporated into a film. The latter is a fusion of basic attitudes, the former a confusion of false attitudes.
Witwe. *Die Hose* has left these behind but has its roots in it. America as yet has not extended beyond its folk-bases. These have accumulated for America a mythology which should, when the right artist comes, create a grand and gorgeous cinema. The western film remains a folk-myth. Had there been the mind for creation when Fred Thomson did *Jesse James*, there would have evolved a film as great as *Quixote*—or at least a film of broad and racy references. I shall, however, speak of these national cinemas later. My reason for bringing them into these paragraphs upon unity is summed up thus: in the unity that is the aesthetic problem of all film artists, there are the details of unity which in each land take on different necessities.

HARRY A. POTAMKIN.

(Our readers who have enjoyed and profited by Mr. Potamkin's excellent articles which have appeared frequently in *Close Up*, will be gratified to learn that we have been able to avail ourselves of his services as New York correspondent. Mr. Potamkin is just concluding a prolonged stay in Europe, and the majority of his essays which have appeared in our pages have been the fruits of his experience of European cinema. Mr. Potamkin’s demand for cinema at its source, and his ability to go to the source for his investigation have made those fruits of exceptional worth. We are certain that our readers will share our pleasure that we shall have for our New York critic (where perhaps the most significant developments of cinema in the future will take place) the one man, perhaps, most perfectly equipped to undertake that by no means uncomplicated role. Ed.)

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THE "TALKIE" MELODY

The time has come, the oracle said, to talk of many things; of talkie films and chorus girls, and Broadway's movie kings. This is the Siren Age. We have passed from Iron to Steel, and now to the blare of the saxophone's wicked moan as reproduced by a battery of loudspeakers. I sometimes wonder what Carl Laemmle buys, one half so "precious" as the goods he sells.

The talkie has come to stay. Jesse Lasky told me so himself. Yes, I have held converse with the mighty. All the twelve tribes. Will Hays predicted it a year ago. Jack Warner thinks the silent picture is dead. He should know. He helped to kill it.

Colonel Bromhead has an opinion about it somewhere. But he has never told us.

We can only bow to the decision of High Finance and agree that the talkie has come to stay. Shakespeare, who is nearly as well known by this time as Clara Bow, predicted it in one of his plays. Biblical references to the matter are somewhat obscure, but I don't doubt you could find them if you wish. Old Khayyam has a stanza in which he mentions the "Potter's shoulder-knot a-creaking." Western Electric
have forestalled him. Only the talkies could bring the Persian Muse to life like that.

By now, the best writers on the subject agree, the talkie has evolved from the experimental stage. Those we are now enjoying, those which are now being lapped up so readily by the public, those for which some of us are sufficiently silly to pay hard-earned money, are indicative of the entertainment of the future. A sobering thought, brothers.

Until America decides to knock all the world's Quotas and all the world's industries sideways by introducing sound, that is. Meanwhile, it is better to be merry with the fruity dialogue than sadder after none or third-rate silent pictures. In course of time, no doubt, we shall evolve a medium which will combine sound with shadow, will develop some composite means of expression in which the various elements can be blended to produce a thought. Up to the present we have merely combined to produce the front legs of the chorus and the hip-flask of the bootlegger. Broadway, as all students of the talkies know, is a place where policemen in evening dress rub shoulders with gentlemen in fancy dress, dressed as policemen.

But we cannot logically expect the talkie to continue in the way it is going. Even granting that full many a murder is born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the provincial screens, we must at least admit that the population of the Bowery is declining so rapidly through the exploits of the Hollywood gunmen that in decency to themselves producers will have to branch out into something new.

Another sobering thought. Welford Beaton, editor of the Hollywood Film Spectator, who has as sound an inside
knowledge of the Film Colony as any journalist, informs us that within a year we shall have a return to honest-to-goodness sob-stuff. Once more we shall be able to gaze upon the sorry spectacle of Mammy left at home crying her eyes out while the Prodigal Son wastes the family mortgage making dates with the latest thing in show girls.

However, this may be, and whatever the trend of the commercial talkie, and further disregarding the development of the sound picture as an art medium, those specimens to which the public are subscribing super-profits are worthy of analysis. If you are an industrious collector of Press cuttings, you have no doubt already learnt the fact that Broadway Melody is the sweetest little tinkle the box-office has ever known, and that the Singing Fool is the greatest contribution to modern art since Ethel M. Dell wrote The Way of an Eagle and Marie Corelli told us everything we ought to know about the things about which we knew nothing. If, as I say, you have learnt these facts about the talkies, the appended remarks will not be of the slightest interest to you. But if—awful thought:—you are one of those rebels who regard Sonny Boy as an excellent soporific and Home Towners as a first class box-office bet for Saint Dunstan’s, you may find spiritual solace therein.

BROADWAY MELODY. (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).

About 700,000 people paid to see this picture at the Empire, London.

There are pictures and pictures. This is neither. It was my privilege to see it in company with a dear old lady who suffers from a slight deafness. She missed all the jokes. As
I didn’t notice any it came to the same thing. *Broadway Melody* is the perfect 1929 talkie. It is the answer to the showmen’s prayer for a successor to *Ben Hur* and *The Big Parade* (vide an M-G-M advertisement in a trade paper).

It deals with the million lights on Broadway and the fate which awaits chorus girls who make dates with rich men. Enter the Censor, dancing a polka, waving a petticoat on high, and blushing painfully. It gives us an inspiring insight into the various processes through which the show girl passes in order to undress for the evening’s entertainment. Exit the Censor.

But it is realistic. Yes. It fairly shrieks realism. Horns honk, automobiles put on the brakes with a shrieking of whatever it is which sounds so indescribably ghastly, feet patter, doors are made to knock on, and leading players lisp all over the picture.

There is a new technique in Filmland nowadays. Once upon a time, when the world was young and the earth was desolate and movie-less, you showed a man knocking on the door by shooting a close-up of his hand. That told the audience what they wanted to know. At the present stage of the talkie you show the fist, and your R. C. A. expert faithfully records the knock. The audience thus knows that it is a real man and a genuine knock.

Subtle, that.

Someday a man will think of shooting the door from the inside leaving the sound to convey the act of knocking. Then we shall have what will be known as talkie technique, and, if it is Maurice Elvey who thinks of it, the papers will clamour about the brilliance of the English school of talking pictures.
CLOSE UP

Raspberries.

Broadway Melody has another attribute which stamps it as a great talkie. The light relief is supplied by a gentleman with a bald head and a stutter. There is something extremely funny in a man who stutters. Particularly when he can enunciate the word he requires by whistling for it. I wonder who thought of that gag. He will probably get a special Hell to himself, in which fifteen million bright and breezy Broadway will roar their traffic and their stutters to him. It will serve him right.

As a film—I apologise, a slip of the pen. As a two-dimensional musical comedy Broadway Melody has some brilliant tunes. One of them deals with the fact that I belong to you, and that you, curiously enough, belong to me. I endured it that far. But when the leading man continued with the words "Angels sent you from on high," I decided to lodge a complaint as soon as I got there. A joke's a joke.

There is a sequence in the picture all in colour. A sequence in which the faces of the players remind you of the colour of milk chocolate and their limbs have the appearance of that delightful old gentleman who exhibits part of his nudity in a case in the British Museum. Shelley said something somewhere about life being a multi-coloured sphere. Maybe he would have liked Broadway Melody.

The Observer's film critic, of whom I candidly expected better things, considers that this film has rhythm. It must have been very subtle if it did.

Having entered the Empire while the show was on, I saw it backwards, so to speak. One line of dialogue particularly
impressed me. "You can't trust these rich guys," the hero wailed to the heroine. "They're only after one thing."

So was I. My hat. I reached it and scrambled to the nearest exit.

**BROADWAY.** Universal. (Trade shown at the Carlton, London).

There is only one *Broadway* and Universal has it, read the synopsis of the film at its trade show. Well, that's something to be thankful for, anyway. No, this sort of thing will get us precisely nowhere. *Blackmail* is still the only passable talkie I have seen.

In *Broadway* you find the mixture as before. Only more so. Speak-easies and murders, chorus girls and limb. But it has technique. Universal assured us of that in advance. In its production they employed a travelling crane for the first time in the history of the cinema. At least, I think it was a travelling crane. It may only have been a revue chorus. What amused me about it, though, was the fact that this much praised technique was silent picture stuff. The film bore all the earmarks of having been partially completed before the wave broke, and having been switched over to the sound studio while actually on the floor. All the while the characters are running about, they are usually silent. The moment the drama develops we drift back to the good old stage grouping.

Mind you, in parts it is not so bad. There is movement in *Broadway*. It has what perhaps only two other talkies have. Space. But the talking parts are cramped and "staged." The opening sequence, in which the camera follows a man on
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a tour of an expensive night club is to all intents and purposes a silent picture.

Broadway was made by Dr. Paul Fejos, who, as you know, directed Hollywood's magnum opus, The Last Moment. Carl Laemmle, Jnr., was production supervisor of this Universal Super Talking Special. The more we are together, the merrier we will be.


As this film developed I really thought. . . . Yes, I thought, but only thought, that at last I was to see a good talkie. But it was merely a fool's paradise. Within ten minutes the film had straightened out into the Great White Way and the bootleggers were hi-jacking and the chorus kicking as much as ever.

The Perfect Alibi features a cast of stage players who get their lines over and act quite well along the familiar track of melodrama. It has one central problem, according to its advertisements. And that problem deals with the fact that Chick Williams is wanted for murder.

We have here, as the trade Press reviewers would say, the story of a boy who, released from a New York prison, murders a policeman during a raid. He marries the daughter of another policeman, and is suspected of the crime. The young wife tries to get him an alibi, and is amazed at learning that he is the murderer. He is cleverly trapped with a detective whom he shoots WITH THE UTMOST HEARTINESS.

The death scene, in which

A CHOIR OF VITAPHONE SYMPHONY ANGELS

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do their stuff off-stage while the drama rolls on behind the scene, ending up with a saxophonic dirge as the detective kicks the bucket, is one of the highlights of a production which, by reason of its power and the fidelity of its portrayals, the sweeping panorama of its emotions and the realistic and attractive night club settings, should most certainly please the popular patron with a taste in realistic melodrama.

A word should be added, as the reviewers would continue, on the excellence of the recording, the perfect synchronisation—as when a revolver is fired and the sound-groove emits a loud explosion at the identical moment, and the time when a car travels down a street with the amplifiers doing overtime—and the general purity and realism of the reproduction.

Well, well, well. Next please.


This picture is interesting. No one, except the Fox Publicity Department, could call it good, but like Broadway Melody it is indicative of a definite trend in screen entertainment. Broadway Melody was a musical comedy reduced to the screen; Movietone Follies is a two-dimensional revue. Some of it is in colour.

In America, Warner Brothers are now showing a talkie-revue that is in colour throughout. It would seem that, when stereoscopy makes its debut in practical form, we shall have films which will merely be catalogues of the leading stage hits.

This picture, as a picture, is a revue. No more. No less. It cannot be called a film; it cannot be judged on film
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principles. If you like the sort of revue which gets good notices in the small-town papers you will like Follies. Especially if you realise it is a pioneer effort and forget the mediocrity of many of its numbers. If it has rhythms, they are the snappy, quick change rhythms of the chorus, its tempo is the hasty get-a-move-on tempo of the vaudeville stage. Its numbers are just the same.

For the life of me I cannot see why people should pay to see a thing like this when they can see a first-class revue on the stage, even aside from the novelty value of the cinema show. The Provinces may make money out of it, but in the big town it deserves to flop. When you compare it with such a brilliant piece of work as Noel Coward's show, This Year of Grace...

Yet, with the acquisition of good authors and men who can write the sort of music which makes a success of musical comedies, the time is near when the screen revue will knock the stage version backwards. The additional power of the camera over the eye will give the screen a tremendous start over the stage. Size, depth, colour, movement, will be no object. When we get a screen revue that is snappy, colourful, tuneful, and vast, in the stage sense, we shall be able to dictate to Equity.

As a pioneer effort, therefore, Movietone Follies is interesting. It gives some idea, however small, of what is to come, however much we may regret its coming.


On second thoughts, no. Some things are best left unsaid.
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There may be some good points in this talkie. If so I never noticed them.

* * *

The tour is concluded. Let us worship at the shrine of the talkie. It is so clever. The dialogue is always so resourceful. And it sums up popular taste to a nicety. I confidently predict that when we get the first war "talkie" we shall have the Angels of Mons doing the Charleston, while the hero watches some gun-runners in the enemy trenches.

The talkie is drifting. Clever journalists in the English press have noticed the way of the drift. My handkerchief. A little weeping now and then, is tonic to the best of men.

We have seen the world's greatest talkies. Which they all are.

Ladies and gentlemen, in the words of Mr. Blakeston, the door!

HUGH CASTLE.

MECHANISMS OF CINEMA II

We have explored the serious possibilities of the new technical developments of cinematography . . . we have analysed a recent abstract film in relation to these mechanisms . . . the time has now come to launch something new.
Further developments of the experimental film interest us intensely. I have in mind the abstract film . . . that perfectly constructed *visualisation* of an abstract set of thoughts. Has it yet been achieved? Has anything yet come up to this definition? Abstract ideas have been evoked by visual impressionism, but has there been self analysis? By self analysis I mean Dramatization.

I spoke before of what has become, for me, the classic example of Dramatization: the "*literalness"* of a certain passage in *The Street*. The wayward clerk sees his wife's image going away from him, as he looks at his wedding ring before staking it in the gambling hall. He is considering his wife's "*nearness"* . . . not materially, spatially, but in the abstract sense of conjugality. The abstraction has already been evoked (in us) by facial expression, but here is the introspective mental process itself in dramatic form: spatial nearness being destroyed.

Another and perhaps the most beautiful example ever conceived, is from *Nemesis*: the musical visualisation in the insect sequences. Here, however, visual impressions of floating music did not quite come into focus . . . they struggled but faded away again.

Actually, I am unable to describe these optical forms . . . one must see them to appreciate.

Dramatization is never *quite* the abstract meaning, neither *quite* symbolic . . . something near and infinitely expressive, and above all visual.

In the new experimental film then there must be Dramatization. The aim of cinema is to be visual and the abstract-film must visualise its abstractions in their
primary perceptions. The man in the street will understand and learn something . . . obscurity and mystery must be abolished.

Having swept away certain things, we may ask, is a film which satisfies these conditions really abstract? My answer is yes . . . also it is really cinematic. For are not many of us against the unevoked abstraction which must be artificially introduced by a caption, sound, or other means? Is not the whole trend of cinema proper towards visual resolution of latent import? So with abstract-cinema, for all cinema is the same, fundamentally.

* * *

The most beautiful and at the same time most powerful mechanism of abstraction is the "mix." I seem to be repeating my previous article . . . everywhere replace "latent" by "abstract" . . . the two are synonymous . . . the repetition then becomes clearly understandable. We seem to have formulated something fundamental about all cinema so that there is bound to be repetition in ultimate analyses which return to the same elementary theorems. I will therefore, not repeat the analytic reasons for this, but will content myself with the generalised statement.

* * *

Only when we discuss the remaining cinematic mechanisms in the construction of abstract-films is there cause for deeper analysis.

In dealing with abstract ideas, in general the subject matter will be devoid of personal relations . . . no human actors . . . therefore no apparent cause to use Displacement (camera angle in particular) to transfer psychic effect from character
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to audience. Those moments when the camera acquires the
personality of one of the actors will as a rule be absent.

But how fascinating to displace from some inanimate thing
to the audience . . . when camera becomes (abstractly) the
"eye" of some dead object, "perceiving" relativistically.
Surely as legitimate as the autobiography. Imagine, if you
can, the autobiography of a penny in film!

... born in the mint with the ring of a gentleman . . . into
pockets . . . into gas meters . . . into children's sticky hands
... burning holes in pockets . . . relegated to the money box
for misconduct . . . a devil-may-care-penny deciding at a toss
the fate of its master . . . a bad penny and the hell of the
crucible which awaits it . . . and of course the 'good-old'
penny pensioned into somebody's collection.*

* * *

There is a leaning in recent cinema towards new "displaced"
experiences which merge onto the abstract in significance.
Thus, in The Spy, it seems we actually become the train
hurtling along over rhythmically knocking rail joints . . .
you remember: "thirty-three one three three"—"thirty-
three one three three . . ."

Who else (or what else) in that narrative as it stands, could
be perched on those axles about two feet from the ground?
Let us be cautious before we dismiss peculiar camera angles
as absurdities, but also let us be quite definite in our

*(The Adventures of a Ten Mark Note,—that despised and rejected
fragment, now heavily dated,—worked this idea, occasionally with
charm. The ultimate effect was, however, trite, the displacement of
values soon tilting the plane of action into a constant malappropriate
sermonising and false emphasis.—Ed.)
intentions in such cases. The now well-known Asquithian limitations may also set a limit to the penetrative depth of cinegraphic introspection. Against this we are pledged to fight.

* * *

We now come to analyse the form of the abstract-film... La Marche des Machines was without commas or colons... its form seemed to be merely a matter of sensed sequences rather than definitely punctuated ones. Cinema has its means of punctuating its narrative content, to which latter is attached, by the bye, the primary significance of punctuation as essentially a mechanism of narration. There appears therefore no "a priori" reason for omission.

Pedantic criticism of so delightful a work as La Marche des Machines is to be deplored... still, it serves a purpose without unduly detracting from a cold beauty which may, for that matter, set its own conventions.

* * *

The future of the abstract-film is not necessarily pointing in a direction "non-commercial." On the contrary, it may be expected to achieve a wider interest as time and experiment proceed.

* * *

Later I hope to discuss the Documentary-Film and Comedy, before which latter I am already beginning to quail. I hereby definitely dissociate myself from the "technically amusing" comic, also I refuse to further its progress by discussions of any such technique. Still, I shall probably have something to say.

L. Saalschutz.
THE IMPLICATIONS OF REVUE

Lots of quite intelligent people sniff at revue. It means to them white leg-traffic, ostentation, and (if they don’t like it) jazz. As usual with a thing that is only a quite-good thing, it is the essential that is overlooked. Revue is primarily entertainment. That is why it is the only form of English stage presentation to-day with any kick in it. It’s not tied down and hasn’t any business about art, and what people thinks is art, to contend with. It is enough if it entertains (and how much more it does that than our drawing-room plays and our “contributions to serious dramatic Art”). It entertains all right, because there is something behind it; if you’re not entertained, you don’t get through to that, you don’t reach the behindness, and you stay tangled up with the silk curtains and the wet-whitened legs, which of course you hate. A whirl of girls. Revue is awful. I like revue, because I’m intensely serious. It is almost the only kind of stage presentation I go to, it’s certainly the only kind I get anything from. And what I do come near to getting from any other form is always something, that, in the long run, approximates to revue... a personality, a sketch, a type. And the great thing to me about revue is that, though part of
a method of representation that is maddeningly tied down, in one respect it is free. It isn’t tied down to time. It roves. Place to place. It flies, flits, lands here, flies off again there—a butterfly, to use a revue metaphor, handing you a bunch of flowers.

And each flower it lands on, it really does give you, essence and all. Not a Clarkson imitation. A good revue sketch gives you suddenly, easily, slickly, a person, or a way of thinking or a way of noticing that thought, quite straight. Are the living, vivid and alert characters, if any, that you have drawn from the London stage since the war, those depicted, by Tempest, Cooper, Forbes-Roberston, or are they Lillie, Gay, and, though I don’t really like him, Sonnie Hale? Braithwaite of course is living, is hard and real, better than she knows and better than she’d dare to be if she knew what it is she is to us. But her plays aren’t hard and real. *Silver Cord* was just her talking, in the same line as Gay talking, in *The Old Lady Shows Her Muddles*. Tallulah is a revue without music; and with not much intelligence. And it isn’t really worth going to plays for personalities when you have Nellie W. and Lily Morris on the halls, though personalities are almost all the plays give you. When they give more, what happens? Have you ever seen a good war-play that was as good as a good war-film? What did that *Silver Cord* do that hasn’t been attained more directly in plenty of revue sketches? Haven’t schools been “got” a thousand times more subtly, with less pretension, than in *Young Woodley*? You see, the middle-class don’t go to revue, consciously. So revue doesn’t have to cater for them. It did once, at the Hippodrome and during the war,
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but now there are only Cochran and Charlot, and the bourgeoisie simply don’t get them. They have the Co-Optimists, Dalys and lately Drury Lane putting on elaborately constipated plays. Yes, there must be a play as well. Something to think of, they call it, but it’s really a drug to soothe spiritual indigestion. To ask our happy homes to get on to the speed and stamina of a revue, real revue, is too much—after dinner. Wake up and dream. No, they can’t do it, so revue needn’t bother and in consequence avoids being half-dead.

If you are half-dead, you can’t cope with revue’s freedom in time. You call it jerky. It exhausts you trying to follow it, panting along behind, and finding yourself pitched back to another song and dance after a ballet you never understood. What was the use of trying to follow, if you had to come back again. You call revue “disconnected”, when what it has done, under its girl-show cover, is to co-ordinate time, time here and time there, and use it and not be awed by it. And so use something bigger than is possible to other forms.

But time has been as far as it could get. Being stage production it couldn’t use space. This is where it links on with films. Films are free in time and space. O yes, and so is poetry, hold that. Up to now we have had to find our cinema equivalent of revue in light but polished Paramount pictures, glittering Arzners and so on. But talkies naturally meant that people would see the profits of talkie musical-comedy, a mixture as dreadful as you can imagine. If you don’t like talkies, and you don’t like musical-comedies, what could be worse than Broadway Melody and The Singing Whatever-he-was?
Which perhaps explains why so many people did not see *Movietone Follies*. And also why the word ran round from those who did that it was worth seeing. I suppose "follies" is a bad word. At any rate, lots of people did not go. They might have heard the music in the gramophone stores, and found it was quite pleasant and reserved the film for one of those nights when all one wants is moving image and a saxophone flowing over one. But I suppose lots of people don't care about jazz. This revue isn't lost, however; it's not generally released till October. But it had a long pre-release at the New Gallery and then was on at the Astoria after that.

I trailed in, suspicious but unexpectantly acceptant, because I was wanting that night just what any big cinema gives, irrespective of the film; the kind of thing so many writers for *Close Up* are so good in describing about visits to movies. A sob-stuff with Louise Dresser was on. The lady who does not act unless the part has real artistic interest. This which had pleased her to appear in was *Not Quite Decent*. One registered this film also was *Fox*. Dresser, who always understands more than all and pardons nearly all of it, pretended to get tight, in order to rescue a goil from a hang-out. Then, mother-love embrace and "just a baby . . . . just a little tiny baby". This was a silent film. I saw just this much of it twice and I enjoyed just this much of it tremendously. She is a mammy-singer, and it all ends with her weeping into her make-up as the two Young Things leave her, stretching out a pair of half-blacked hands and covering a half-smeared face. Which is a very good beginning for the Fox talkie revue.
CLOSE UP

Yes, it is a revue. Not entirely yet, but the nearest thing we have had and sufficiently near to make us hope they will go on like it. That is why I am writing about Movietone Follies; which so many people didn’t think worth seeing. It got awful notices of course, after Broadway Melody. Opening shot, a man fitting a theatre with the name-signs of a revue, fading to lobby, porter dusting, getting ready for the opening night. Young man arrives, because his girl is in the show. The porter is Fetchit and was on his plantation. The porter says if he can’t get him into the show, no one else will get out. In Fetchit’s voice. So now we can be taken into the theatre.

The revue is being rehearsed. There is a story, of course. The financiers are bankrupt and beset with creditors. The young man wants to get his girl out of show business, so he goes into it himself, buys the show . . . in order to be able to fire her. She won’t be fired, and all between the scenes of the revue there is back-stage back-chat. The lead won’t go on, so this girl takes her place, and is a great success. Together with Fetchit, who also goes on to fill a gap and does some marvellous dancing, she makes the show. So that the financiers buy the young man out again. This story was reviewed as “slight” and probably that it “held up the action”. You know that tag. Well, it is slight, that is why it doesn’t matter and doesn’t interfere with this being a revue. It is a pity we have to have a story, but there is much less story here, and a simpler one, than we have had in other musical talkies, so it does not bother us. As to holding up the action, it doesn’t if you see it as part of the action. If you see it as part of the revue, only another turn, it
doesn’t hold up the action at all. And why shouldn’t you see it that way? You like it then, and you presumably don’t go to the film to crab it if you possibly can. Besides, don’t you think that this story, which is so slight, has been deliberately simplified? It’s such a silly little story, it couldn’t possibly be meant to hold our attentions, and when the revue itself has been so intelligently directed by Marcel Silver, mightn’t someone have been responsible for intelligently subordinating the story until it could be slipped in here and there as just another scene in the revue? This seems, at any rate to me, to relate the show to what is going on.

The revue, anyhow, is quite intelligently directed. The actors are introduced in revue style . . . Fetchit, the porter knocking them up in their dressing rooms with opening-night bouquets. Then the opening chorus. To get the flavour. You know opening choruses. Whoops, and lots of girls and the orchestra. Silver does this by bits . . . “legs” chant the girls, and legs aren’t seen all at once in rows. There is a pair of legs; another fades in higher up on the screen, the leg part of the chorus song has gone on, this is just the chorus, but our legs on the screen go on, moving in patterns, seen in close-up, sometimes far away, black and white, fully realised in their patterning. Then one reminiscent of Emak Bakia. One above the others in squares, several pairs, moving in different speeds, doing different things. The same happens when the chorus is on. “. . . eyes . . . hips . . . lips . . .” None of this is intellectual; it is the opening of the revue, and reaching out and not stereotyped. Mightn’t it be called experimental if it were in a small film? Then the whole chorus leap on the stage,
we don't know where these legs were before, in someone's imagination simply. We get the dance from a number of well-cut angles, as we never could on the stage. It is the same later, in Breakaway, we get more than usual, in this film revue.

The next turn is a song by a typist who looks longingly at the mannequins she would like to be like. The stage is a shop window with one or two posing, and she stands by the side. Then she wanders along, window after window. We realise after a little that this stretch of windows could not be got on to a stage, and there has been no scene shifting. It is continuous. She is simply walking along a street, and it is a street seen in a film and so, since the theatre is a theatre seen in a film, and we are taking it as real, the street is real. You couldn't use a real street in a stage revue. This moving along in unbroken setting of street is revue moving in space. Film revue is evidently going to mean moving in space as well as in time. Such revues as London Calling and This Year of Grace have a unity of theme and outlook which keeps the time together; the film revue as yet can only do this by means of a slight story, but it need not be thought that it will have to always. This scene prepares us, if you look at how the film is made, for this discovery about space. After this scene, the revue swings freely, where it will. The girl firm-set at first in a theatre, leads us along and leads us out of the confines of a theatre, so that when a man later sings Walkin' with Susie, we are prepared for the things that occur on the screen. It begins, a series of round out of focus objects, the camera moving away. They gradually crystallise into a man. Then we get him semi-close-up,
singing. It would be dull to have him simply singing. What we have is half of him, looking at us, and other halves radiating from his head all over the screen. All the heads merge, I think there are six of him, one actual and five trick ones, diagonal and upside down. As he sings and sways all these sway, so that the screen is filled with a rhythm of white gloves, black shiny hat, and teeth moving. A visual as well as a sound rhythm. We have not had a song treated like that before have we? His hands are prominent, beating time to the song, so we accept the image of a music-stand which swims up, blotting out, and letting us only see through the bars. It follows, in every sense. When it clears, what we have been seeing through the bars is a Harlem scene, Negroes walkin' with Susie,—but all the time once more the blacks and whites are relating to the pattern in which the song was originally put across. Also of course, there is what I wrote of in the last number. . . . realization that the screen is equally a matter of Blacks and whites. After some ordinary black-tail numbers, we have Negroes in white clothes; reversed harmony. And a snappy scene full of spirit.

The same thing happens with Big City Blues. This says "just to think to-night is Thanksgiving; everybody's going somewhere. Nobody knows that I'm living," etc. How would you put a Blues across? You've words and scene. Which will you use? You won't use both, of course. I mean, no one has thought of it. But you know what watching songs being sung on the screen is like. That is why you didn't go at first to Movietone Follies. Remember the singing numbers in the early Vitaphone days at the Piccadilly?
CLOSE UP

And seen Estelle Brody singing *Mean To Me* before *Blackmail* at the Capitol? My God!

Marcel Silver *does* use both, however. Primitively, but having used them both, he or someone else may develop it. We have the girl just going on from the wings, with the tune being played. We hear it and see . . . . a crowd of high people, singing and shouting rather mistily. To-night is Thanksgiving. Something catches your eye as a little smaller and a little brighter than the rest. As you watch, you see it is a lamp-post smaller than they are and as you get that, you notice they have faded, away. The girl is there, singing by the lamp post. When clarinet and saxophone do their stuff, the figures swoop back. It isn’t taken nearly as far as it ought to be, but even if it isn’t taken at all, I’ll allow you that it is picked up and not left a heavy lump on the ground.

These are the obvious things you discover and hear about the film. The cutting is very ingenious in preserving and getting the rhythm of the music in the sound, and the angles enrich our idea of revue. We see what a dance is. It isn’t an elaborate show. You can spot the same dresses worn again and again, and can you beat that? There is one colour ballet, which is better than most colour ballets. The theatre in which the revue is supposed to be given is not the biggest ever built . . . . and do watch how the lady in the light dress fills up a space as she walks down in the interval. The back-stage and dressing room scenes were surely done in the plain studio itself. When you look, it can’t have been a very expensive show. Sue Carol and Stepin Fetchit are the only names. It’s not ostentatious. But it has a funny
kind of sparkle about it. It doesn’t attempt to satirise or “get” as Lillie “gets” waitresses, concert singers, char-ladies and revue actresses. There is no Bus Rush, and the one sketch misses fire because you can’t hear Fetchit’s last line, on which it depends. But look at the backstage bit, and there is a lot “got” there. A nice sketch, if you can only see it that way, of the ballet slipper man. And Fetchit’s treatment of the girl who got no flowers: “Did anyone send you any flowers to-night miss?” “No.” “That’s right then, you didn’t get none.” It’s not complete as a film nor complete as a revue. It is one of those you find bits in and piece together in your mind with bits from other films. But it has more bits in it than most. It shows how the camera can express the idea of revue, and how images do help sound to form new revue patterns. It doesn’t come up to Cochran level, but it’s the first one that gives any idea of the kick and sparkle some of us find in revue. See the revue sequence in The Perfect Alibi and see this, and see which is nearer to being right. And what I mean is this. If revue can be got by talkies, there is the hell of a lot more that can be got. It is the thread of ideas that make up a revue, which, in short, is an affair of imagery. And that, you see, is what a poem is, and I mean, having realised that you can with talkies get a thread of ideas, vocal but unlimited to time and place, it seems to me that even you who didn’t see this at first in talkies, ought to see now what a lot is open to you. Lyrical filming, aery poems that must have speech and must have visual pattern which words can’t do. There is masses. Masses and masses of things we had not known we could film and now simply because a revue
can be made, surely we know what else can be made? Yes.

By way of coda, Ethel Waters, the great Negro singer, is singing in *On With The Show*, and Cochran is making a talkie revue in England, and won’t somebody else do something? The fact that they’ve got Albert de Courville to direct another one, means that my wonderful country is trying its best to make a middle-class talkie revue. So won’t someone else do something? Won’t it occur to them to do a good abstract this way? I like good abstracts; I have seen so many of the other kinds. An abstract is a revue, and you can go so much further with a talkie abstract. If you want to go anywhere.

Robert Herring.

THE TALKING CINEMA IN THE USSR

The problem of constructing equipment for a talking cinema was at first introduced in the USSR in 1926, by the young physicist, P. G. Tager. Since then, three scientific research workers continue their experiments: Tager, Dgiguit, and Shishov. Very soon this work will be completed.

The first part of the work consisted in an experimental testing of the principles which are laid down in the
apparatus. At the close of the first stage of the work, on March 9th, 1927, was demonstrated the transformation of the sound waves into electrical current and then into light and reversely, the transmitting of light waves into electrical current and again into sound.

The second part of the work consisted in constructing a laboratory model of the apparatus, which would fix the sounds upon a photographic film and reproduce them anew. Besides, it had to determine the conditions under which such photographing should take place. It was shown that of all the methods of registering sounds optically upon a cinematographic film, as learned in the laboratory process, the best fitted theoretically as well as experimentally, is the system in which the modulation of light is based upon the phenomenon of a double breaking of the rays in the dielectric which is fixed to the electric pole (electrostatic phenomena of Karr). The registering of the sound is received in the form of a number of parallel lines of various width and intensity. This part of the work was also completed by a demonstration on March 4th, 1928, in the presence of many representatives of Sovkino, of the scientific technical Administration of the Supreme Council of National Economy, of the People's Commissariat of Education and of a number of other organizations and institutions, to whom the talking film was demonstrated.

The great amount of experimental and theoretic material forthcoming, permitted immediate construction of such models of talking cinema apparatus as would permit the technical exploitation of these apparatus in the factories of the USSR.
Her Way, a Sovkino film directed by Pitrizyak and Poznansky.
Mertegh, from the book, by D. Furmanov, of the same title. A Sovkino production directed by P. I. Moshenko.
The Black Sail, a Sovkino film directed by S. Yutkevich, concerned with the problem of co-operation among the fisherman.

The Black Sail. Operator Matrov. The artist is Boslavsky.
Monkeys’ Moon, an adventure of two douracouls, or nocturnal Devil monkeys. Special interest is added in that these owl-faced beasts are extremely rare in captivity. A “Studio Film.”
The Fall of The House of Usher, Epstein's film from the sombre fantasy by Poe, which is being eagerly anticipated in London at the Avenue Pavilion.
The Fall of The House of Usher, Jean Epstein’s film.

A British Amateur Film. From Waitress!, a film by Orlton West for the Film Guild of London. Miss Allan takes the part of the waitress, whose illness and inexperience lead to a tragedy on the first day of her employment.
The Ghost that Never Returns, Alexander Room’s film for Sovkino.
CLOSE UP

Soon the first sets of equipment for the talking cinema will be put into use. The whole equipment is constructed in the USSR with the exception of a few parts of it, manufactured in Germany. It should be noted that the mass production of talking cinema equipment will be soon made possible in the USSR also, including the few parts now imported.

The construction of the equipment for the talking cinema is carried on in Moscow, at the All Union Electrical Institute, belonging to the Scientific Technical Administration of the Supreme Council of National Economy.

The first sound films of the USSR will be Eisenstein’s *General Line* and Pudovkin’s *To Live is Good.*

P.A.

CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE

*Dialogue in Dixie.*

Meekly punctual, clasping our prejudices in what might just possibly prove to be a last embrace, we entered the familiar twilight: the softly-gilded interior twilight, the shared, living quietude, still fresh and morning-new in their strange power. We could not be cheated altogether. We might be about to enter a new kingdom. Curiosity joined
battle with fear and was winning when upon the dark screen appeared the silent signal: the oblong of rosy light, net-curtained. In a moment we were holding back our laughter, rueful laughter that told us how much, unawares, we had been hoping. For here was fear to match our own: the steady octopus eye, the absurdly waving tenacles of good salesmanship. The show was condemning itself in advance. We breathed freely, we grew magnanimous. We would make allowances. We were about to see the crude, the newly-born. We grew willing to abandon our demand for the frozen window-sill in favour of a subscription for a comfortable cradle. Ages seemed to have passed since we sat facing that netted oblong, ages since the small curtains had slid apart to the sound of a distressingly animated conversation. We had wandered, moralising; recalled the birth of gramophone and pianola, remember that a medium is a medium, and that just as those are justified who attempt to teach us how to appreciate Music, and the Royal Academy, and Selfridge's so most certainly, how certainly we had not until later any conception, must those be justified who attempt to teach us how to hear Talkies. We remembered also Miss Rebecca West's noble confession of willingness to grow accustomed to listening to speakers all of whom suffer from cleft-palate...

Cleft-palate is a fresher coin of the descriptive currency than the "adenoids" worn almost to transparency by the realists. Nevertheless adenoids, large and powerful, at once mufflers and sounding-boards, were the most immediate obstacle to communication between ourselves and the semi-circle of young persons on the screen, stars, seated ostensibly in council over speech-films. Their respective mouths opened
CLOSE UP

upon their words widely, like those of fish, like those of ventriloquists’ dummies, those of people giving lessons in lip-reading. And the normal pace of speech was slowed to match the effort. The total impression was strong enough to drive into the background, for clear emergence later, our sense of what happened to film upon its breaking into speech, into no matter what imagined perfection of clear speech. For the moment we could be aware only of effort.

The introductory lesson over, the alphabet presumably mastered and our confidence presumably gained by the bevy of bright young people with the manners of those who ruinously gossip to children of a treat in store, we were confronted by a soloist, the simulacrum of a tall sad gentleman who, with voice well-pitched—conquest of medium?—but necessarily (?) slow and laboriously precise in enunciation, and with pauses between each brief phrase after the manner of one dictating to a shorthand-typist, gave us, on behalf of the Negro race, a verbose paraphrase of Shylock’s specification of the claims of the Jew to be considered human. He vanished, and here were the cotton-fields: sambos and mammies at work, piccaninnies at play—film, restored to its senses by music. Not, this time, the musical accompaniment possessing, as we have remarked before, the power, be it never so inappropriate provided it is not obtrusively ill-executed, to unify seer and seen and give to what is portrayed both colour and sound—but music utterly lovely, that emerged from the screen as naturally as a flower from its stalk: the voices of the cotton-gatherers in song. Film opera flowed through our imagination. Song, partly no doubt by reason of the difference between spoken word and sustained
sound, got through the adenoidal obstruction and, because the sound was distributed rather than localised upon a single form, kept the medium intact. Here was foreshadowed the noble acceptable twin of the silent film.

The singing ceased, giving place to a dead silence and the photograph of a cotton-field. The gap, suddenly yawning between ourselves—flung back into such a seat of such a cinema on such a date—and the instantly flattened, colourless moving photograph, featured the subdued hissing of the projector. Apparatus rampant: the theatre, ourselves, the screen, the mechanisms, all fallen apart into competitive singleness. Now for it, we thought. Now for dialogue. Now for careful listening to careful enunciation and indistinctness in hideous partnership. A mighty bass voice leapt from the screen, the mellowest, deepest, tenderest bass in the world, Negro-bass richly booming against adenoidal barrier and reverberating: perfectly unintelligible. A huge cotton-gatherer had made a joke. Four jokes in succession made he, each smothered in sound, each followed by lush chorus of Negro-laughter, film laughter, film-opera again, noble partner of silent film.

And so it was all through: rich Negro-laughter, Negro-dancing, of bodies whose disforming western garb could not conceal the tiger-like flow of muscles. Pure film alternating with the emergence of one after another of the persons of the drama into annihilating speech. Scenes in which only the natural dramatic power of the actors gave meaning to what was said and said, except by a shrill-voiced woman or so and here and there the piercing voice of a child, in a way fatal to any sustained reaction: slow, enunciatory, monstrous.
Perhaps only a temporary necessity, as the fixed expressionless eyes of the actors—result of concentration on microphone—may be temporary?

But the hold-up, the funeral march of words, more distracting than the worst achievements of declamatory, fustian drama, was not the most destructive factor. This was supplied by the diminution of the faculty of seeing—cinematography is a visual art reaching the mind through the eyes alone—by means of the necessity for concentrating upon hearing the spoken word. Music and song demand only a distributed hearing which works directly as enhancement rather than diminution of the faculty of seeing. But concentrated listening is immediately fatal to cinematography. Imagine, to take the crudest of examples,—the loss of power suffered by representations of passionate volubility—the virago, the girl with a grievance, the puzzled foreigner—if these inimitable floods of verbiage could be heard . . . . In all its modes, pure-film talk is more moving than heard speech. Concentration upon spoken words reveals more clearly than anything else the hiatus between screen and stage. In becoming suddenly vocal, locally vocal amidst a surrounding silence, photograph reveals its photographicity. In demanding for the films the peculiar attention necessary to spoken drama all, cinematographically, is lost; for no gain.

The play featured the pathos and humour of Negro life in the southern States and was, whenever the film had a chance, deeply moving; whenever these people were acting, moving, walking, singing, dancing, living in hope and love and joy and fear. But the certainty of intermittent dialogue ruined the whole. When it was over the brightness of our
certainty as to the ultimate fate of the speech-film was the brighter for our sense of having found more in a silent film—seen on the pot-luck system the day before—that happened to be in every way the awful irreducible minimum, than in this ambitious pudding of incompatible ingredients.

The photography was good to excellent, Actors all black and therefore all more than good. A satisfying, sentimental genre picture—genuinely sentimental, quite free from sentimentality—might be made of it by cutting out the speeches which served only to blur what was already abundantly clear, and substituting continuous obligato of musical sound.

If the technical difficulties of speech are ultimately overcome, the results, like the results of the addition to silent film of any kind of realistic sound, will always be disastrous. No spoken film will ever be able to hold a candle to silent drama, will ever be so "speaking."

"As we were going to press," the August Close Up came in and we read Mr. Herring’s notes on Hearts in Dixie. Mr. Herring bears a lamp, a torch, electric torch kindly directed backwards, as boldly he advances amongst the shadows of what is yet to be, for the benefit of those who follow rallentando. We respect his pronouncements and are filled, therefore, with an unholy joy in believing that for once-in-a-way we may blow a statement of his down the wind, down a north-easter, sans façon. One does not need to temper winds to lambs with all their wool in place. Therefore: As a fair-minded young Englishman Mr. Herring is for giving the Talkies their chance and their due even though his conscience refuses to allow any claim they may make for a place in the same universe as the sound-film proper. He has taken
CLOSE UP

the trouble to consider their possibilities. One of these he finds realised in *Hearts in Dixie* at the moment when the white doctor, having drawn the sheet from the body of the mother who has been treated by a Voodoo woman, and bent for a moment, scrutinising, stands up with his declaration: "All the time," says Mr. Herring, "we see his face. Then his words cut across, 'she's been dead three days' Now, in a silent film, the visual thing would have been broken' and he concludes his remarks on the incident by describing it as "the odd spectacle of talkies assisting visual continuity."

We do not deny the possibility here suggested, but if this incident is to stand for realisation then the possibility is not worth pursuing. For though not quite the stentorian announcement of the guest-ushering butler, the doctor's statement inevitably had to be announcement, clear announcement in the first place to us, the audience, and incidentally to the sorrowing relatives to whom, in actuality let us hope, he would have spoken rather differently. The shock got home, not because its vehicle was the word spoken with the tragic picture still there before our eyes, but by virtue of it unexpectedness. It would have lost nothing and, relatively to the method of carefully-featured vocal announcement, have gained much by being put across in sub-title. But since Mr. Herring objects that sub-title would have interfered with visual continuity, we must remind him that the right caption at the right moment is invisible. It flows unnoticed into visual continuity. It is, moreover, audible, more intimately audible than the spoken word. It is the swift voice within the mind. "She's been dead three days" was dramatic, not cinematographic, and the incident would have gained
enormously if the white doctor had acted his knowledge of the unknown death, if he had reverently replaced those sheets and shown his inability to help. To be sure we should not have known about the three days. What matter?

DOROTHY M. RICHARDSON.

AUTHOR AND TALKIES

The talking picture is a prodigy. A sport. A mutation. The movie contained within itself no apparent latency of speech. Its ingenerate muteness, its lack of any rudiment of vocality, was accepted as the very basis for the development of cinema art. But now like a bolt from the silent blue it has squawked forth into speech and song. The effect has been almost as disconcerting as if an oyster had suddenly opened its shell and declaimed in unearthly tones, “My name is Norval.”

And to no one has this prodigy been more momentous and bewildering than to the scenario writer. Trained to think and to work in terms of pictures, of pantomime, of silent expression, he finds himself of a sudden confronted with a distinctly different set of conditions. Under the old regime to which he had laboriously adapted himself he was at best offered precious little encouragement. His chances of successfully running the gauntlet of the requirements, the
vagaries, the prejudices, the exactions of a Hollywood producer were about one in five thousand. And now with the advent of the talkies, with all that this departure implies of new specifications and technique, he does not know for the moment where he stands nor what his chance may be, if indeed, he has any at all.

This perplexity is strikingly reflected in the present marked falling off of submitted scenarios. There has been a drop of not less than fifty per cent. in the number of scripts received by the various Hollywood studios since the inauguration of audible films. The voluntary contributor, the man or woman on the outside, seeking to write for the vocal screen, is in the situation of a wanderer lost in a fog. He does not know which way to proceed.

Nor are the editors and the producers themselves in much better shape. They are likewise befogged with uncertainty. In their groping confusion attendant upon the novelty of the audible film they are on the one hand blindly discarding all material that had been accepted or was under consideration for the "dummies", while on the other hand they declare they are in the market for material, but at the same time do not desire that any of it be submitted in form for a talking play. Which is to say they are still adhering to the restriction of the dummy era, in inviting from the stranger nothing more definite or finished than mere plots, outlines or ideas. Their staff scenarists in conjunction with their recently hired dialog writers will attend to whipping such sketches into spoken photoplays.

There is, of course, no encouragement in this for the aspiring photodramatist. The submitting of a mere skeleton
outline for a spoken play is as empty of artistic profit as it is irrational in its requirement. No chance here for a budding Shakespeare. He must be content with offering the boiled-down plot of a *Hamlet* or a *King Lear* and leave the writing of the lines to a dialog expert.

In their anxiety to meet the unfamiliar and novel situation that now confronts them, and in the absence of any guiding precedent, the producers are availing themselves of the expedient nearest to hand—the conscripting of established playwrights, both American and European, ensconcing them in studio cubbyholes, and bidding them under the persuasion of fat weekly pay-cheques to manufacture so many feet of dialog for a given scenario. Also, when not immediately engaged on this hack work, they are expected to hammer out original masterpieces for the speaking screen. The public must be served. Some immediate and dependable means must be employed for fulfilling the year’s schedule.

This is not said in any spirit of disparagement. The producers’ lot is not a happy one. A studio, like a factory, must be kept going. Whatever time is needed for developing and perfecting conditions and meeting new problems must be snatched in the midst of current manufacture. Hence, the ambitious outside dramatist with visions of the possibilities of the speaking screen must bide his time. He must not be impatient with the caterpillar in his eagerness to secure the butterfly.

Even now, if he is so minded, he may submit a photodrama in full play form; with dialog and business all carefully worked out. No studio would reject it out of hand for that reason alone. If it should prove attractive and happen to
meet the immediate needs of a company, it would probably be accepted and at a price in excess of what a mere plot sketch would command.

But this would be a remarkably exceptional circumstance. So exceptional, indeed, and so unlikely, that no unestablished writer would be justified in expending on such an effort the time and labour it would involve.

Moreover, it must be constantly borne in mind that intrinsic merit alone is not sufficient to insure success in the marketing of literary wares in Hollywood. Nor must this be wholly attributed to lack of appreciation on the part of cinema editors and producers. Thousands of recognisedly excellent literary productions—novels, stories, dramas—are conscientiously and deliberately discarded in the ever eager search for available screen material. Considerations of which the outsider has no adequate conception enter into the selecting of such material, quite aside from any question of its artistic merit.

These considerations involve questions of studio policy, cost of production, timeliness, public taste, screen personalities, censorship, box-office demands, foreign markets, and a score of others of like general character. They far exceed in number and weight any similar business considerations governing the decisions of magazine editors, book publishers or stage producers.

The captious and disgruntled author, with his commendable ideals, needs constantly to be reminded that Hollywood is a commercial institution. It exists and continues to thrive because of its ability to make pictures at a financial profit; and it has learned through experience and a shrewd understanding what type and sort of pictures appeal to the masses. Art,
ideals, culture, education, are but incidental or secondary considerations.

In other words, the author must take Hollywood as he finds it. He cannot expect to hold it to the standards and conventions of other institutions or traditions. He may scorn its methods, its attitude, manners; but such scorn only reacts to his own irritation. It affects Hollywood not in the least.

Whether Hollywood will ever again, following its earlier practice, offer a welcome to the unknown free-lance scenario writer is highly problematical. Writing for the screen, preparing a story for the director and the camera-man, is not only essentially collaborative, but is also of a nature requiring an intimate knowledge of film conditions, an acquaintanceship with the technicalities of picture making, and personal contact with the studios. And the advent of the talkies has accentuated rather than minimised these restrictions.

The author's approach to the screen must continue to be through the published book or story or the produced stage play. And if he thus succeeds in coming within hailing distance, he may be invited to Hollywood. No one can do any direct scenario work away from Hollywood. And once here he may be set the task of lending a hand—but no more than lending a hand—at photodramatising his own work; or "doping out" an original screen play; or sitting in on story conferences with the production boss and his literary carpenters; or supplying the spoken lines for somebody else's inarticulate creation; or he may be asked merely to make himself generally useful around the story department of the shop.

But he must not expect under any circumstances to be given
a free hand to create from beginning to end a finished scenario complete in all its details. That sort of solo work passed out a decade ago. Strictly speaking, there is to-day no such profession as scenario writing—that is, in the sense that we speak of writing a novel or a play, wherein an author prepares a finished work directly for presentation to the public. Jeanie Macpherson, Cecil de Mille's scenarist, is the only remaining member of the one-time flourishing profession of scenario writing. She alone continues to write directly and completely for the screen, beginning with the originating of the story and following through in every detail to the writing of the final "Fade-out" of the continuity.

Despite the obvious facts to the contrary, we hear it perennially stated that the day of the original screen writer is dawning; that the Shakespeare of the screen is about to make his advent. It sounds learned and prophetic and serves to hearten the trusting outlander. But it is merely one of those handy clichés that do service in a pinch for the want of something wiser to say. It has had a special revival since the advent of the talkies, due to the confusion of ideas created by the seeming correspondence between the speaking photoplay and the stage drama.

Time will very clearly demonstrate that such correspondence is only suppositious, or superficial at most. Intrinsically there is no identity or dependency between these two forms of dramatic expression. Their respective media distinctly differentiate them. And this differentiation will grow and become increasingly evident as the talkie develops.

There will never be a Shakespeare of the photodrama, for the simple reason that it is essentially a composite and
collaborative creation. It must necessarily be so, to meet the inherent complexities of cinema production; and the addition of speech has now added one more complexity and still further removed the possibility of personal unification of creativeness.

It has already called into being another specialist, a further addition to the coterie of minds and specialised talents required in the building of a scenario. Together with the plot originator, the story fabricator, the treatment writer, the title writer, the continuity writer, the gag man, the supervisor of production, the editor, the production manager, the technical director, the art director, the research director, the censorship expert, and the picture director, the dialog writer has now his special part as a contributor to the finished whole.

Only by a thorough realisation of the complete uniqueness of the photodrama can the author view the situation complacently. So long as he persists in appraising the screen by the norms and refinements of the world of letters, just so long will he continue to be disquieted and resentful, and regard Hollywood as hopeless. But once he is properly oriented and becomes conscious of the fact that the cinema is a world apart, he will either leave Hollywood alone or accept the conditions as they necessarily there exist.

If he sells the film rights to his book or his play, he must not expect to see his work translated to the screen in its original version. If he deceives himself with any other expectation it were better for his peace of soul that he refuse to accept the twenty-five thousand dollars and content himself with a snap of his artistic fingers.

Or, if he be lured to Hollywood to write for the screen, let
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him at once abandon all thought of being lionised or accorded the attention and amenities that attach to authorship in the cloistered realm of literature. Hollywood knows nothing about such traditional niceties, and cares less. Its manners and outlook are those of the frontier—practical, utilitarian, democratic, self-assured, aggressive. A writer here is merely "one o' them writin' fellers." He simply has his place in picture-making along with the electrician and the make-up man. If he cannot tolerate this, cannot adapt himself to it, let him take warning in time and remain at home. Hollywood will not miss him.

Clifford Howard.

SUR LES ECRANS GENEVOIS

Il n'est peut-être pas inutile, à l'heure où le cinéma sommeille et où le public, lassé, déserte les salles obscures pour retrouver la vie palpable, de faire un petit examen rétrospectif de la saison 1928-1929. L'événement en fut la projection libre, enfin! des films russes, saluée par les clameurs apeurées de quelques-uns exploitée aussi, il faut le dire franchement, parle parti socialiste.

Menace pour ceux-ci, stimulation pour ceux-là... il ne restait guère de place pour le cinéphile désireux de jouir en
paix des qualités esthétiques des bandes de Pudowkine, Preobrashenskaja ou Ozep. Le public, en général, n’apprécia guère le style impitoyablement cru, le pessimisme, si objectif pourtant, de LaCarte Jaune, du Village du Peché. Il apprécia moins encore la sobriété, la simplicité des faits exposés, des attitudes. La profondeur réelle n’est pas plus son fait que ne l’est l’analyse poussée du caractère humain. Le public, de façon générale, veut de la distraction facile, des spectacles qui ne requièrent qu’une attention minime, des sujets légers comme aussi de légères toilettes. De là la vogue, pourtant atténuée aujourd’hui, des “plats doux” américains.

Il serait injuste pourtant d’englober tous les spectateurs dans cette première catégorie car nombreux sont aussi ceux qui appréciaient le film soviétique, non pour son caractère politique, je le répète, mais pour les richesses visuelles qu’il contient. Les paysages, les ciels en particulier, de F. Ozep plongèrent plus d’un spectateur dans un ravissement d’extase. La vérité si intense du jeu des acteurs fut une autre source d’étonnement et de joie, tout comme les parallèles de pensées et d’images chers à Pudowkine. Citons encore, parmi les films russes projetés en séances publiques : Tempête Sur L’Asie Le Feu Sur la Volga et Le Cadavre Vivant... et en séances privées : Dura Lex et Potemkin.

Les Russes abandonnent déjà les motifs propagandistes... et c’est un bien car ainsi nous ne serons plus partagés entre deux camps politiques, et l’art cinégraphique ne souffrira aucunement d’une orientation nouvelle.

Puisque nous sommes si sévères à l’égard des films américains, n’hésitons pas à blâmer ceux qui, dans la même production, peuvent réaliser de fort belles choses comme La...
CLOSE UP

Toison D’or, La Foule, L’Aurore, Solitude, Une Femme Dans Chaque Port, à côté d’innombrables romans-feuilletons pour concierges. King Vidor et Paul Féjós, auteurs respectifs de La Foule et de Solitude, ne sont plus autorisé à produire autre chose que des œuvres fortes, d’inspiration virile. Craignons seulement que les sonorités filmées noient à tout jamais ces premiers tentatives honorables des techniciens d’Outre-Atlantique.

De France, nous sont venus Thérèse Raquin, Jeanne d’Arc, l’Equipage , Le Chapeau de Paille l’Italie, que nous pouvons classer sans hésitation parmi les meilleurs films de 1928. Qui donc pourrait douter de l’avenir du cinéma français et du talent des Jeunes cinéastes qui, à Paris, gagnent à peine leur vie, il est vrai, mais dont la persévérance triomphera finalement de l’indifference, de la mauvaise volonté même des financiers du film. L’on s’apercevra bien, un jour, Dieu veuille que ce soit le plus tôt possible; que ces jeunes-la sont les seuls susceptibles d’entretenir la vitalité du cinéma français et de lui permettre de tenir tête aux avalanches de pellicules américaines. Il faut surtout, pour cela, que toute liberté leur soit laissée au studio et pour le choix des scénarios.

L’Allemagne, elle, nous envoie ses spécialités techniques signées presque exclusivement Fritz Lang : Metropolis, Les Espions. Si le sens de la mesure n’est pas toujours suffisamment observé, si l’on affectionne trop souvent une certaine obscurité, ce n’est pourtant pas aux dépens de l’effet général des films. Le moins qu’on puisse en dire est qu’ils sont construits solidement, étonnent par leurs proportions massives et ne manquent jamais d’impressionner fortement
l'imagination des spectateurs. Bien différents de ceux-là sont les films de Pabst, d'origine viennoise il est vrai. Crise; Jeanne Ney se font valoir par leurs finesse. Le dernier, surtout, est réellement transcendant.

Pu nombre des meilleurs documentaires, citons: Chang, qui tint l'affiche assez longtemps et revint sans lasser le public, Perdus Au Pole, Expedition de Sauvetage du Krassine. Et tout dernièrement, Berlin, de W. Ruttmann, qui, dans une modeste salle, doubla le cap de la semaine.

Freddy Chevalley.

PLASTIC DESIGN

Whatever you may think of Erich Pommer's supervision, (remember he is paid to make money, not lose it), and Hans Schwartz's powers of intelligent direction; whatever your criticism (it will be personal) of Brigitte Helm, Lederer, and Warwick Ward, you will agree that the architecture of Nina Petrovna, better known as The Wonderful Lie, is worthy of record. Art-direction such as this does not come your way every day. In those souvenir programmes, almost useless, we remain unacquainted with the designers. Set design, according to Messrs. Gaumont-British, who are the English distributors, and therefore responsible, is of no importance. There was no credit title.
CLOSE UP

But from the knowledge of our memories we supply the names of the pair of designers in German studios who have achieved so much in the past. Of Herren Walter Röhrig and Robert Herlth's early history and apprenticeship I know little, save that Röhrig, together with Herman Warm and Walter Reimann, was an art-director to Robert Wiene on Caligari, and that is some time ago.

Of their combined work in Faust, Mr. Macpherson, your editor says "... effects of pure Dürer-esque engraving touched up with Breughel ... . Dürer was in the interiors ... ." He is referring in particular to the camera, but unconsciously, I hazard, to the settings, and the amazing mediaeval and yet modern atmosphere created by them.

In 1925, with Tartuffe, their work came to be noticed. Later, here in London, it was discreetly referred to by the critics who matter. For instance, in The Architectural Review of January, 1929, we read, "... the simple but baroque setting, the air of elegance, the domestic ornaments, the draperies ... ." and it is spoken of with unstinted praise, but the names of their creators are omitted. To those who have shellacked a floor (S.X. board), or erected a handrail (old stock), in England, the tone of this design, (Tartuffe), the exquisite beauty of its detail, the moulded plasterwork so typically German, (it is done on the floor and not in the plasterer's shop, and therein lies the difference) the carefully wrought ironwork, the properties which harmonise even to the smallest detail, (remember Elmire's ring) these are all something worth while. They are design, knowledge, architecture, tone, modernism, plastic value, and TASTE. Röhrig and Herlth do not imitate the eighteenth century.
They look at it from a twentieth century viewpoint. Contrast, for a moment, Madame Pompadour and Tartuffe and you will realise.

I pass over Looping the Loop and come to Nina Petrovna and stop. Those travelling shots of Hoffmann, with the camera almost realising Mr. Blakeston's suggestion of human personification, nosing into every corner (pity poor Brigitte) would have nothing but mere technical accomplishment and mechanical dexterity to support them if it were not for the creative minds of Röhrig and Herlth. The layout of the sets, they are not easy to diagnose with a travelling shot and the camera turning on itself, was designed entirely around these moving camera evolutions.

In the fat bulging cornices and rich swelling mouldings, we perceive the work of Röhrig and Herlth. We find it again in the twist of the staircase in Petrovna's house, (how could Schwartz mistake his shooting angles?) the struggling cherubs on the newel post, the curtains festooned over the doorways, the curving astricles of the panels on the door behind the Helm's head (close up), the massive but eminently suitable furniture (plaster) in and about the bedroom and boudoir. Once more in the night-club, or wherever the loose virtue congregated in pre-war Russia, a curving staircase, so apt for Warwick Ward to descend, and a plashing fountain, so near and yet so far from the early Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer period, (forgive me, Mr. Coward.) These, and a lot more are the work of Röhrig and Herlth. I decline to answer if they were responsible for the wicked painted backcloths.

I do not know the workings of Röhrig and Herlth, their
CLOSE UP

plans, their elevations, their methods, their carpenters, and their plasterers, but I do know the results and I know that they are good. Confusion may surround the building of their sets, as it does in every studio, but creative designing will come through the mire and triumph. Despite circumstances, Alfred Jünge achieved something at Elstree. Did you ever see his music-room for Piccadilly? Go and look again, then.

Röhrig and Herlth are not content with one drawing for a set design. They conceive hundreds, of every little corner, of the action, of the movement, of the lighting; nothing is left out and every detail is considered. What did they think of Elstree? I cannot tell you but they constructed models for Robison’s Informer. The rest is being done there. But not by them. Good luck to it.

Paul Rotha.

BITS AND PIECES

The London cine Amateurs are disorganised into bits and pieces. They have half a dozen individual clubs in London alone, and the smallness of their size generates a bunch of problems which retards progress.

In each club there is a mere handful of members of widely different intelligences, and there are not enough of them to
fall naturally into units who would produce films suitable to their own stage of advancement. The one or two most energetic people who *do* get going, seem to be overcome with delight at being at the helm of the ship, and hatch ambitious five reel stories which, normally would require only a few players, but actually have to accommodate the remaining members of the club, who would otherwise be at a loose end for 'something to do'. Such a state of affairs unbalances the most cool headed story, and the resulting scenario progresses like a car on five wheels.

The small club has small finances. Film negative is scarce, with the result that a film normally occupying five reels has to be squeezed into two reels of animate tableaux. The nett result is a waste of time.

I have noticed a fine photographer in club A, a good director in club B, and a tip-top scenario writer in club C. We might see results if they would only get together, but, usually, they have not even met each other. As it is, the poor photographer has to do almost everything, including some of the acting. The unfortunate director was also at his wits' end last time I saw him. It is too bad to have to direct a scene fraught with Freudian complexes, while bullying a consumptive arc into an occasional splutter!

It is true that improvement would follow more efficient organisation within even the smallest clubs, but, if such organisation should exist, how far would it be useful to so small a unit. Much of the energy of the organisers, which might have beneficial effects on a wide circle of people, would be frittered away upon a small community.

Amalgamation will solve many problems of the amateur.
CLOSE UP

The many members of one London club would naturally shake down into stratas. The handful of adventurous leaders would each become a sign post to which would be attracted members at their own stage of progress. The resulting team competition spirit would introduce one of the strongest urges towards progress.

In two clubs I know of, the beginners often feel unhappy. They find everything in the hands of one or two noisy people, and are frightened away, because they do not find enough folks like themselves to generate the team spirit.

But a National Convention of amateurs is planned to take place in the late autumn in London. I hear that the response to the idea is very encouraging indeed. This is great news. All praise be to Mr. T. J. Wilson, secretary of the Amateur Cinematographers Association, who is taking a leading part in organising the Convention. It is going to be a big job fitting the bits and pieces together, and it seems that many would-be useful pieces will stay apart for some while yet.

Really constructive competitions are being arranged, and it is hoped to lay the foundations of a central organisation, including a library (films and books), studio, club rooms, etc.

Now we are getting a chance to move. Will it be taken? Orlton West.
COMMENT AND REVIEW

Films in History.—No. 3.

"La Petite Marchande d'Alumettes."

Directed by: Jean Renoir.
Settings by: Eric Aes.

Mme. Rosemonde Gérard and M. Maurice Rostand took the matter to the High Courts. They told the Bench that Jean Tedesco, in producing La Petite Marchande d'Alumettes, had infringed the copyright of a play they had written. M. Tedesco said, that possibly M. Renoir had been influenced, but by Andersen rather than Rostand. In catty manner (his film has been held up a whole year on account of legal proceedings) he further opined that Rostand had found some of his ideas at the same source.

The picture is quite a charming fairy tale.

Catherine Hessling fails to sell a match, she dare not go home. She shelters behind a loose plank resting against a house. After shots of the tumble-down shack, which does duty for her home—the chimney pot draped in mid-air—we feel that she has not done so badly for herself. In the elfin
tradition of Catherine Hessling she peeps out from behind the plank, half an eye and a pouting mouth.

She walks along in bedroom slippers, she tucks her arms under her arm-pits.

The handsome hero nearly buys a match-box and the Hessling’s Hesslingisms. Rich friends drag him into a tea-shop. Frost on the glass rubbed off and the Hessling sees a lap-dog being fed on expensive cake.

She has a dream in the snow. She splits up, divides into two, dances with herself in the avant-garde manner; dances into the land of toys.

The camera is kept very low on the ground and speckled tops spin in the foreground. Catherine rolls away a coloured ball, rockets Jack from his box, makes the wooden soldiers believe that they have been engaged for the Chauve-Souris, sets the dancers dancing and the prince courting, hangs stars and moon in cardboard heaven.

It is dangerous to play with toys; they disappoint or break. Jack has a row with the prince. Ears of the woolly dog fall down. The fairy tale, as it takes us behind the scenes, gives inside dope on why the sturdy dolly falls to pieces in nurse’s gentle hand. The callous child does not realize that dolly may be committing suicide on account of unrequited love. So it is dangerous to play with toys; it gives life to them and life means. . . . . For a moment we thought that we were writing the titles for the film!

Catherine shatters her toyland. Line of nine-pin soldiers fall down. The prince is chased by Jack-in-the-box. Across the clouds, reeling and spinning, the prince falls to land. A rose tree covers the grave of Catherine.
To make the event of greater historical importance René Clair might have joined in; his *Voyage Imaginaire* has analogies. Clair introduces satire. Characters from a provincial bank let loose in an enchanted palace, crawling on ceilings. Balloons straining upwards, truly dreamlike. But Clair has got no shots of the Hessling lighting matches to warm herself in the snow; symbol of her personality which flashes up to warm what exhibitors call our "heart."

Oswell Blakeston.

(Mr. Stuart Davis has booked this film for the Avenue Pavilion. *Ed.*)

**Films in History.**—No. 4.

*L’Homme Du Large.*

Directed by: Marcel L’Herbier.
Made: 1920 in June and July.

For once I would change it to *History of Films. Le Torrent, El Dorado, Don Juan and Faust*; the early L’Herbier films did make a difference! *L’Homme Du Large* was one of the best.

The white streets and hats call for a frame; old Dutch masters. There is no overflowing of the picture, no running beyond the edges of the screen and mingling of character and drama with the spectator.

Walking through a classical picture gallery one is struck
CLOSE UP

by the way in which so many artists see everything dead-on. Instead of using angles, L’Herbier experimented with fancy iris effects to break away.

The vow of the man who will have nothing to do with the world is the vow of the man who belongs to the sea. He educates his child himself, but the boy is recreant. Stealing money from the saintly sister, dancing while the orchestra plays funeral music for his mother, he behaves none too well; and his father, to show his disgust, finally half strangles him and turns him adrift in an open boat.

There is much that strikes home in the shots of the cockleshell boat, rustling out into shavings of a metal sea.

Jacques Catelain is said to have given his best performance in this picture: it is arresting.

The story is told pleasantly in successive tablaux. L’Argent probably cost twelve times as much and is more than twelve times worse. Even from a box-office angle it fails. A dramatic point of the story shows an aviator starting on a long-distance flight. The man in the street—the man in the street in the cinema—is expected to become excited about the results of the expedition. Will he get there? Will he crash? A shot of an aeroplane travelling in the clouds. He is there! Now is that value at the box-office? The audience knows that he has not made the flight. If the aeroplane had crashed, in “firework manner,” it would have been box-officely cinematic but the other is simply the bunk.

It would be an excellent thing if some directors went to see their contributions to film history, and they might find some entertainment after the carking hours of rushes.

Oswell Blakeston.
A FILM THAT SHOULD BE MADE FROM A BOOK.

Mr. A. Zwemmer of Charing Cross Road has just issued an English edition of a sensational book dealing with Art forms in Nature.

The book contains a series of photographs by Professor Karl Blossfeld with an introduction by Karl Nierendorf. The photographs consist of greatly magnified reproductions from plant life and were expressly taken to show the amazing relationship which exists between all art forms and natural phenomena.

Renger-Patzsch stressed the aesthetic pleasure to be derived from symmetrically grouped petals and leaves, and Professor Blossfeld has caught with his camera wonderful white mists spaced out with star-shaped foliage, thistles which might have been transferred to the paper from the silk of a flag so balanced are they in detail, and primly bunched rosettes from the Art and Craft shops.

But with unparalleled care and patience the professor goes further. He shows that "In the blade of grass, in the tree-trunk, in the flower, lives and works the same structural urge as in the brain, the nerves and the hands of mankind."

Prototypes of every style of historic ornament can easily be recognized. A fern, before it is fully unfurled, suggests a bishop's crosier; pods on a long stem have the rhythmic quality of a classical dance-group; a segment of a stalk, drained of its sap, might be the crown of a king; a close up of a branch reveals characteristics of a totem pole, two
CLOSE UP

strangely comic faces adorned by bulbous noses and fantastic head-dresses; fluted growths might be Chinese pagodas or sugar cakes, others have a more monumental quality; there are leaves as formally designed as any church window.

Modern art is represented by a mandrake which recalls the gestures of a dancer, by poppy heads like futurist lamp-shades, and by a cork-screwing vine tendril which is related to the wire sculpture of Alexandra Calder.

British Instructional Films, who have given us so many magnificent documents of plant life, ought to feel inspired by such a book to attempt the decorative side of Nature, only such a film must have the motivation which holds together Professor Blossfeld’s lovely collection of stills.

Oswell Blakeston.

DIE WELT IST SCHÖN.

Albert Renger-Patzsch exhibited at Stuttgart. A book of his has been published under the title, Die Welt Ist Schön.

In an introduction we are told that Renger-Patzsch is not a portrait photographer. “But,” the writer asks ingenuously, “are not animals and flowers more interesting than men?” The same writer picks out for special praise a picture of steps, which might suggest sea waves, leading to a suspension-bridge at Dresden; and a magnification of the heart of a plant which is strangely architectural.

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We should have chosen the tiny, snow-laden branches of pine trees, the Chinese-puzzle snake, the three sick apes, some of his groups of frying pans and tiles, or the hands clasped in prayer.

We may be misled by the selection in the book, but we should say that the two things which mark out the work of Renger-Patzsch are: a hatred of stunts and double exposure, and a peculiar trick of weaving his background into his foreground. Apart from some trees, stereoscopically grouped, his landscapes deliberately pattern on to one surface.

Most of the things which Renger-Patzsch makes us examine we know already to be beautiful (fox-gloves, tigers, negro children), but after inspecting a hundred photographs under one cover we felt cheered and grateful.

O.B.

SECOND THOUGHTS ON PUDOVKIN AS ACTOR.

Publicity departments do not trouble much about highly charged word mechanisms. The Living Corpse was produced by the GREAT Ozep and featured the WONDERFUL Pudovkin (vide synopsis). The information was also thrown in that Mr. Pudovkin had directed many Russian pictures including Potemkin!

On the whole we did not feel inspired to rush into print, the picture did not come to us as a thyndwrckxpz (thank you Mr. Joyce) on the other hand we want to give every encouragement to Pro Patria who are presenting this film as the first of a series of Russian subjects.

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Rumours had reached Close Up many months ago that the morality of this picture was a little dated, so let us be content with a hint that Ozep is not quite so great in this one, or Pudovkin so wonderful.

O.B.

ON LOOKING AT BRIGITTE HELM.

One can go to see the pictures or one can go to see Brigitte Helm. This is forced on one because of the pictures in which the Helm now appears.

The Society Scandal would not have made critics leave home had the Helm been saved from one of those film star dances which set a whole audience clapping, although they make the real audience motherly or mad, and given a part worthy of her beauty.

We cannot believe that the Helm could starve, could be a victim of all these male villains. It is so obvious that the girl could make herself economically independent by going on the pictures.

There was the old father in the Banky's talkie who wailed because he had no money to give his daughter, and all the time we wanted to say to him, "You silly fool you could make a fortune doing that on the pictures." But it is terrible that these short-sighted supervisors should be treating the Helm like this.

O.B.

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THE EPSTEIN BOOM.

The cinéastes have been twittering about Finis Terrae, The Fall of the House of Usher and the great Mr. E. who made them both.

Without any notice an Epstein was shown in the heart of London at a little cinema. It was called The Lion of Mongolia.

A prologue introduced the East which makes us at once think of the West. It became visible when the hero prince was pursued by pursuers through a forest (not far from Paris) decorated with rosettes pinned to homely oaks and spruce firs. Some of the dresses, however, were fanciful but spoilt by photography as hard as it could be without cutting the screen.

The story concerned a film company. They used a Pathé. The villian ran the show and said. "I'll get him, damn his soul, I'll get him." At least his expression was equal to it. Ivan Mosjoukine and the Lissenko looked older than one could have imagined they will look in ten years time.

Now if it had been, that which we are always urging a film should be, something from life, it might have technically dated but it would have kept a value as history of fashion, thought, custom: but it is a feuilleton, it not only dates it bores.

Oswell Blakeston.
CLOSE UP

"METROPOLIS" IN WOOLLIES.

Life in 1940.
If only they had paid more attention to sound recording in 1940 we might have been spared the effects of actors in need of throat pastilles.
We could go through this picture giving a documentation of the absurdities and failures in imagination of the art department and production staff, but we do not think High Treason is worth the space.
There is one attempt to show that Potemkin has been heard of: the sequence of CLOSE UPS after the bombs have been let loose on the head-quarters of the Peace Mission. Blood streaming from the mouths, and all the rest, but the same old extras instead of Mr. Eisenstein's types.
O. B.

A THOUGHT ON THE "MYSTIC MIRROR" AND BIG SCREENS.

"With Magnafilm the director will be able to complete his action without breaks, which will be especially valuable in musical pictures where the additional screen area will also be a tremendous asset in picturing ensemble numbers."
Could you imagine quick cuts on an enlarged screen?
We thought just how much Magnafilm will change the art of the director when we were watching Carl Hoffman's Mystic Mirror at the Avenue Pavilion... The great names
in the cameraworld, Freund, Wagner, Hoffman, they understand how to make use of the limitations of the silver sheet. Look at the groups of heads, the trees, and the lonely rushes in the Mystic Mirror. To amplify one example there is a shot of the servant girl pushed into a room where the master of the castle is conducting an orgy. Fritz Rasp has not seen the girl before, he bends right forward and up (we know that it is to keep him in the picture with the girl at the door), and he looks like some gargoyle springing from the wall, which is in this case, the edge of the screen. The whole composition would be too bloated on a big surface, so would most of the angles that are arresting.

We welcome the new but we point out there will be a change. Sweeps of staircase and tiny figures might be most effective on the new canvas.

O. B.

ONE SWALLOW.

We have at last turned out a picture that can be looked at and listened to without wondering why we paid money to come in to see the damned thing. And the British cinema world will not let us forget it. Each time they are boiled by the Press for some fresh indiscretion they will say in a pained way: “But how can you have forgotten that Blackmail was a British film?”

There are nice things in Blackmail and not all of them are in sound, or in the gossip of the lady who keeps on saying
CLOSE UP

KNIFE. For example the heroine is stealing from the house where she has stabbed her would-be seducer the camera mixes from the interior to the exterior in such a way that she is facing herself, opening the door on herself. The suspense of the scene is can she get out without being seen? When the door opened and the girl, in a slow mix, peered at herself, at least one old dame near us cried UUUUH! If only we could all go ahead and forget that we had made one fair film. Perhaps it would be a good thing if a general reference were made to the British stills in July’s Close Up.

O. B.

BOOK REVIEW.

A BLUE BOOK OF NON-THEATRICAL FILMS.

The publishers of Educational Screen have sent us a little book cataloguing, with a certain amount of selection, films which can be hired in America by owners of private projectors.

Both films of 35 and 16 millimetre are included.

Some of the descriptions, which are printed after each title, have a humour of an unintentional kind.

For example:

“Working for Dear Life. Compares necessity for giving automobile regular overhauling to man’s need for periodic health examination.

“Sniffle Snuffles. Simple facts about the common cold: told with living silhouttes and cartoon animation.
"The Last Rose of Summer. Tom Moore's immortal masterpiece pictorized."

Still it is in every way an admirable effort and it should be paralleled in England. There is far too much uncertainty in Wardour Street about which pictures belong to which firms. We know of one vault stacked with possible finds, and the owners cannot tell you what films they own, or what films they are supposed to own, or even definitely say whether they have a smuggled copy of Potemkin amongst the debris! ("Well, old man, you know we might. Can't say for sure. Difficult to keep track of stuff, old man.'')

One Thousand and One Films is sold for 75 cents a copy and can be obtained from 5, South Wabash Avenue. Chicago.

O. B.

NO INDULGENCES.

The cinema world had the nearest approach to a pretty scene that has occurred in London since the showing of the Pudovkin films, when it was announced a few minutes before the actual time of screening that Martin Luther could not be trade-shown. A number of clergymen had gathered, plus wives, plus families and surrounded the excellent and elegant commissionaire who, in mufti, they mistook for the manager. Outside, a film-camera turned. A lady with a red "Workers of the World Unite" peace-badge became
CLOSE UP

eloquent on the subject of censorship millstones in connection with drowning, and various hissing complaints rose from black-coated gentlemen about "The Italian Mission", "Cardinal Bourne" and "utter want of freedom". "They don't want the truth shown" said someone with the air of discovering something. "They" may be anyone, but the rather antique variety of the pronoun represented by the censorship certainly don't, even whatever is in *M. Luther*: it is pleasant to think that one section at least of the, or a, Church have come to blows with the censor. Many films are cut or forbidden for being irreligious: of the reverse, we have had *Joan*, for one thing, not shown, and we now have *Luther* banned on other grounds. The Taj Mahal film is supposed to have caused offence in India; it may have been banned there. It hasn't been here, I don't know if it has been booked. It is a British film.

Now *Luther* isn't a great film, but it has received, as bad books do on being suppressed, a great deal of publicity. So has the Avenue, which is embarking on a season of French works, with the films of the two serious Frenchmen, Epstein and Clair: Germaine Dulac’s picture of the shell and the clergyman will probably also be seen by hundreds of clerical visitors who were made acquainted with their existence by this morning's wait in the foyer. So, "everything turns out for the best—or nearly everything." As *Luther* was not passed in time. *The Living Corpse* was put on, but that has no connection with the previous sentence.

R. H.
PHOTO-GENESIS.

A collection tracing all man’s efforts to depict movement is for sale in London. It is that famous collection formed during the last thirty years by Will Day, who by dint of having scouts active for him almost everywhere has succeeded in running to earth many pieces of early apparatus that would otherwise have jerked into rust on junk-heaps. The famous animal on a cave wall in Spain (isn’t it?) with many legs given it by an artist trying to show it running . . . a Chinese shadowgraph of the year 200 . . . a Thaumotrope . . . . . . pictures taken by row of cameras with threaded shutters . . . many Friese Greene relics . . . . and one of those many pieces of the First Film (how long it must have been). Films occur too, but are not an important part of the collection, which deals with the means by which the illusion of movement is given, and so concentrates on apparatus.

It is an exciting thing that Mr. Day has done, and it was even more exciting if you think what the cinema was then, when he began it. Most of us weren’t conscious and a disgusting number of those who were weren’t movie-conscious. Quite a lot of us mightn’t have been, either. Consider the reception given to the invention of talkies—the invention, not the almost always abominable product.

The collection is to be sold in one lot by Messrs Harris and Gillow, who estimate it at a quarter of a million pounds. But though it would have this value to film-students, it can hardly be expected to have it for the kind of person who buys firsts of Alice in Wonderland and will probably go for several less thousands, which alters our opinion of Mr. Day’s 248
CLOSE UP

interesting foresight and gallant collection not one whit. It doesn’t seem a bad chance for the British Empire Film Institute to distinguish itself; that body must do something to restore its dignity after collecting Sorrell and Son on account of its beautiful English scenery . . . . and what else? R. H.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

Universal Company have acquired the film rights to All Quiet on the Western Front. Five or six other Hollywood companies submitted bids for the book, which has created as great a stir in America as it has in Europe. Preparations for its filming are already well under way, with a view to completing the picture before the end of the year.

*   *   *

George Arliss has completed his vitaphone production of The Green Goddess for Warner Brothers and is now in the midst of the filming of his most celebrated stage play, Disraeli. Mrs. Arliss, as she did on the stage, plays the rôle of Disraeli’s wife. The cast includes also two other British players—David Torrence (in the character of the manager of the Bank of England) and Anthony Bushnell, a recent acquisition to Hollywood’s foreign colony.

*   *   *

The Thirteenth Chair, directed by Tod Browning, is a forthcoming M-G-M mystery play. Its locale is Calcutta,
CLOSE UP

and an added touch of realism is given to the picture by the inclusion in its cast of Lal Chand Mehra, a nephew of Swami Pranavenanda, and a member of the family of Prince Raj Kumur, of Sahaspri. In addition to taking part in the picture he is acting as technical adviser in its production.

* * *

Experience has shown that phonofilm comedies require careful timing to allow for the laughs of the audience. This is by no means an easy task, as reactions vary in different audiences. A joke that may produce prolonged laughter and applause in Boston or New York may evoke only a titter in Los Angeles or Chicago. The best that can be done in anticipation of such variations is to strike an approximate medium of time lapse in the dialog. To this end Paramount-Lasky, in their Two Black Crows comedy film, try out each play in rehearsal performance before the picture is shot, with two different sets of auditors, each made up of several hundred movie extras. The effect of each joke or gag is carefully noted as to time, and this is used as a guide in the filming.

* * *

Warner Brothers are planning to add to the long list of revues already filmed. This is The Show of Shows, and as its title indicates is intended to be the crème de la crème of this type of picture. One of its striking features will be the appearance in it of all of the company’s leading actors. These will include John Barrymore, George Arliss, Al Jolson, Irene Bordini and others of equal stellar magnitude.

* * *

The “camera cloak” is replacing the sound-proof booths for shielding the noise of camera cranking. This consists of 250
CLOSE UP

a heavy felt covering and offers the advantage of permitting
the camera-man to be in closer touch with the scenes he is
shooting than has heretofore been possible with the unwieldy
booth.

* * *

Paramount Lasky are filming the operetta, The Vagabond
King. Ludwig Berger is directing it. The leading rôles are
played by Jeanette MacDonald and Dennis King, both
recruited from the musical stage.

* * *

The rights to La Bataille de Dames have been purchased by
M-G-M, and this celebrated European play will shortly go
into film production.

* * *

Lionel Barrymore is directing John Gilbert in his forth-
coming M-G-M picture, Olympia, adapted form Ferenc
Molnar's play of the same title.

* * *

Hollywood has discovered through a recent careful analysis
of public taste, that there are five major themes of popular
interest in pictures. These, ranked according to their degree
of popularity, are Love, Mystery, Music, Disaster, Adven-
ture. The advent of the talkies has brought the mystery
photodrama well up to the front, and there is not one of the
large studios that is not turning out thrillers, to the enjoyment
of the crowd and the financial profit of the producers.

* * *

Lon Chaney, who, with Charlie Chaplin, has signed a
pledge never to do a talkie, will next be seen, but not heard
in a picturization of Major Zinov Peckhoff's The Bugle
Sounds. It is a story dealing with the Foreign Legion, in North Africa. George Hill, the director, sometime ago made a special trip to the actual scenes of the book and secured many thousands of feet of atmospheric shots. The actual picture, however, is being made at the M-G-M studios and on location in Arizona.

* * *

The "symphonies under the stars" in the Hollywood Bowl have become one of the established institutions of Hollywood. Largely financed and patronized by the film colony, these out-of-door symphony concerts given during the summer weeks are nightly attended by large crowds, ranging in numbers from fifteen to twenty thousand for each concert. The Bowl is an enormous natural amphitheatre in the hills immediately back of Hollywood. The conductors during the present season have been Bernardino Molinari, of Rome, Eugene Goosens, of London, and Bruno Walter, of Berlin.

C.H.

NEW EDUCATIONAL FILMS FROM UFA.

SECRETS OF THE EGG-SHELL ON HELIGOLAND.

Dr. Ulrich K. T. Schulz, photographer P. Krien and Miss Hertha Jülich, the microscope expert of the Ufa Kultur Dept., are staying on the island of Heligoland to take a number of interesting pictures of biological processes at the
CLOSE UP

State Biological Institute. First of all a number of important nautic-biological pictures will be taken for the new Ufa educational-super Secrets of the Egg-Shell, showing the development of various North Sea fish beginning with the egg. Pictures will also be taken for another educational, entitled Development in a Round About Way, showing the various phases of development of the sea-urchin, the crawfish, the lobster and other sea-creatures.

* * *

“BOBBY” ON THE SCREEN.

“Bobby,” the only orang-utan baby living in Europe, plays the leading part in a new Ufa-educational What Animals Can be Taught, which has been produced by Dr. Ulrich Schulz at the Zoological Garden of Nuremberg. “Bobby” is the only orang-utan baby which has been successfully raised in Europe, every other effort having so far failed in the European climate. Although “Bobby’s” mother died soon after he was born, “Bobby,” lived on to become a great screen star.

Some very interesting pictures were also taken at the Nuremberg Zoo showing the life and activities of sea-lions with a slow-motion lens. The opportunities were unusual as Nuremberg has the largest collection of sea-lions in Europe.

* * *

DR. ULRICH K. T. SCHULZ FINISHED HIS 100TH EDUCATIONAL.

The Ufa Kultur Dept. has completed another educational entitled City-Animals. This picture portrays the interesting
life and behaviour of many semi-wild animals still living amidst highest civilization in the world’s largest cities. Squirrels, wild-ducks, sea-gulls, singing-birds, swallows and many others, all dwellers in the German capital, are not generally observed in the turmoil of metropolitan traffic life, yet they are there and may be seen in this highly interesting and fascinating film. Dr. Ulrich K. T. Schulz and Wolfram Junghans directed this picture, which is the hundredth educational production completed by Dr. Schulz during his long experience as an Ufa-educational expert.

* * *

Games and Dances in the Animal Life.

Wolfram Junghans is taking a number of interesting shots for the new Ufa-educational Games and Dances in the Animal Life, at the Ufa-Kultur-Studio at Neubabelsberg, where Siamese fighting fish are brought before the camera during their fighting and mating season.

* * *

First UFATONE-Educational.

The first UFATONE-Educational Transparent Creatures has just been completed at Neubabelsberg. Transparent Creatures will be first picture of the Ufa-Kultur-Department to reproduce real sound-film recording. The picture shows a series of especially rare species of deep sea animals and their living conditions. Most of the material was obtained by the Ufa-Messina-Expedition. Simultaneously with the screening of the picture, Prof. Dr. Berndt of Berlin University, a noted zoologist, delivers a lecture explaining in detail all the minute activities of these mysterious creatures on the screen.
CLOSE UP

DEATH OF THE ARTIST V. P. VOGEL.

Vladimir Vogel died on the 8th of June. Vogel was a very brilliant cinema actor.

The beginning of his work dates from the first years of the development of the Soviet cinema industry. He had not been a professional actor. In the year 1921 he entered the State School of Cinematography, and then, with a number of companions formed a separate group which joined the Kuleshov company.

By his persistent educational, experimental and methodological labours, under the guidance of Lev Kuleshov, Vogel, who was a trained sportsman, soon began to take a prominent position, and in a number of studies proved his serious significance as an actor. During the period of existence of the company and the school, Vogel worked both as an instructor and as an actor.

Together with the company he embarked on productive work (in GOSKINO and then in MESCHRABPOM-FILM, where he worked until the end of his life). Here he found abundant opportunity for experimenting and for reinforcing his skill. He gave great attention to the working out of methods. He did not confine himself to acting, but, taking advantage of specific cinematographic methods, attained an extraordinary variety and depth of experience. This variety is not a casual characteristic; in the course of his life Vogel consciously traversed definite stages.

From Mr. West and The Death Ray—(a seasonable tribute to Americanism, where he tried to depict the male-factor) to Miss Mend—the beginning of the comedian
tendency, which was subsequently developed almost to a living buffoonery on the pictures, *The Girl with the Box*, and *The House on Trubnaya*, and in the direction of satire in the picture, *The Doll with the Millions*. In sharp contrast with these and completely individual was his part in the film, *According to the Law*, which is powerfully dramatic. In addition to these pictures, Vogel played a responsible part in a number of productive labours, inventing a special form for each one. He was photographed in the films: *Z-ya Citizen, The Land in Bondage, What sort of a man are you? Chess Fever, The Apple*, and finally, in *Salamander*, containing the memorable portrayal of the Fascist forger.

From the moment of his engaging in productive activity, Vogel worked without interruption on picture after picture for 7 years, being concerned often in several films simultaneously. The excessive strain affected his health. In the year 1928 he began to suffer from nervous disorders.

He was on the road to a complete recovery when, in a fit of nervous depression, he committed suicide.

By the death of Vogel, Soviet cinematography has lost an exceptionally talented worker. His importance as an actor was appreciated not only in Russia, but also throughout the world.

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CLOSE UP

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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

Those who have mentioned Blackmail in Close Up have left much to say about it. We are not burning to make a written orderliness of its implications, but we are interested to do so, because it is a film of essentially an examinable nature, and of a nature that, once examined, is far and away the most significant determinant to unification of sound-sight deliberately and sustainedly that we have yet had. Blackmail, I want to establish, is the first sign of a comprehension of the relationship of techniques. I have seen most of the talking films. Without exception any power they may have had to hold us was fragmentary, accidental—purely and wholly accidental. Bouldery jumble without inter-relation or any specific plan, without architecture and without mortar, the object of which must be considered to be served if it can get its story told.

Long before the word montage was ever heard, a film had served its purpose if it adequately illustrated its sub-titles.
In those days it might have been likened to magazine illustrations. “Overcome” said the subtitle “with remorse, Felicitas determines to be revenged upon her betrayer, and that night . . . .” In those days Felicitas would then have been shown on the usual tinted stock creeping exhibitionistically to the assassination. Mr. Hitchcock, supposing that such a title were possible in these days, with a more modern technique would show a curtain billowing, fingers running mediumistically down the handle of a knife, then cut to Big Ben, and help his montage with a scream.

There now, wait here.

Montage. Mr. Hitchcock is quite the first to have realised and profited by the fact that the talkies we all go to see are using a crassly naïve and retrospective manner which differs from the cinema’s genesis only in that spoken dialogue now illustrates the picture-text instead of pictures illustrating written text. I think Mr. Hitchcock began to see, and is probably working it out in his mind now, and will use it well in his next film, that sound is not an accessory to lolllop clumsily beside a film leashed in a twin harness, but a direct spur and aid to simplification, to economy. Accoustical montage, in short. Take this instance from *Blackmail*, it is a good one. I said Mr. Hitchcock would help his montage with a scream, which, in fact he did do. You remember Anny Ondra after the murder pacing the streets. You remember her obsession with the flung back, trailing hand of the murdered artist. At the end of her trudging, when she must have been, incidentally, very exhausted, the sight of a sleeping beggar with outflung, trailing hand, brings forth a scream. There is an immediate cut to the screaming face
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of the old woman who finds the artist's murdered body. This is neat and dramatic. It is important, because it is the exact use of sound in its right relation. Part of the building. It is suave and polished, but more important than any of these, it is intensely significant. I say it is part of building, and until sound and film are built in one, grafted, and growing together, not much is going to be done. The scream that was both the girl's scream and the concierge's scream banished a lot that we can well do without. Picture this silent. You could not very well leave Anny Ondra screaming there. The beggar would or would not wake. She would hurry on. This would probably have to be shown. At the point of her hurrying on there could be a cut to the bed curtain being pulled back and then the old woman's face screaming. That is to say, that at least there would have had to be three additional un-dramatic shots needful to continuity, but causing a sagging of dramatic moment. Three at least. When you think of films you see, it is possible the script would have called for the old lady knocking, entering, pulling up the blind, going over to the bed, and so forth. Two shots and one sound did all this a hundred times better. There were the three shocks in sheer dramatic unity (in its Potamkin sense) piled in one. The effect could not but have been, as it was, ideal.

The far more obvious, though quaintly touching, bird song accompanying, in the best Pudovkin manner, contrapuntally the dazed, and in the circumstances, excusably meagre toilet of the heroine, should have its mention, as should, for just the same reason, the artist's words, "I live right up there at the top" (or words to that effect) at which
we look, as we would, not at his lips, but where he is directing our attention, namely up the stairs toward the top.

Here, by the way, although I did not like the Seventh Heaven mounting of the stairs, Hitchcock built very deftly his atmosphere of chilly squalor. The intentions of each and their knowledge of the implications had a power that reminded me of Pabst at his best but in slower tempo. The way in which slight contacts gave out under pressure of everything that makes contacts give out when you go to a new place for the first time, the augmenting distrust, were dwelt on carefully, with conscious, sustained slowness. The murder I did not like, but this is not relevant to the point I am making, that Blackmail appears to me to deserve our most serious attention, not as a story, not necessarily for its recording, which, by the way, a British Phototone product, was excellent, and very free from the bangs, roars and reverberations that sooner or later we shall have to accustom ourselves to if we can. Blackmail deserves our attention, as I have already said, because it has a conscious effort to bring technical thoughtfulness to bear on its own construction. The instance I have used of the scream I do suggest should be thought over as a clue. We just do not want sound as an accompaniment, and, if I may say so, neither do we want it solely as a counterpoint. We want it as part of the film, spliced on to it and inseparable. Not to slow the film, but to speed it. Let me proffer another hint from the Knife, knife, knife scene. "Aren’t you feeling yourself?" Anny Ondra’s father asks her. A small screaming clang begins, which gets louder and louder, and bursts like a shell. Meanwhile you are watching Anny Ondra’s face, very drawn,
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half stupified. Her father says "another customer". The clang-scream was the shop bell. Phobia has translated it thus to her, meaning psycho-analytically that through that door may come the police. The door bell has become unconsciously a thing of terror. This again is worth thinking of. You might call it cinematic sound. It is not sound only, it gives you a picture of a mental state, as well as having its rightful place in the narrative.

Both these instances are given as indicative of the way we must begin to think of sound if we are to do anything with it. I was touched and amazed to find it thus in a British film, far and away the best talkie we have seen. I had meant this to be an article of sound with Blackmail as something to evolve something else out of. Since I have considered it more objectively than that, let me add a word of praise for Joan Barry's ghosting for Miss Ondra's voice. The overlayer of "refainment" on Cockney was superb. Donald Calthrop's more traditionally elocutional manner became good if you decided soon enough that there was a down-and-out actor, though no indication was given of the fact. The story condensed to a study in fear was excellent. If you preferred its more obvious, objective presentation it was a weak story, full of old clichés. After all, the heightened conduct and heightened impasse conventionally demanded of drama are not limitless, and to-day's innovation becomes to-morrow's cliché, and the day after to-morrow's joke. The story, however, (and it's after all the crux of every argument on story value) was not beneath psychology. Everything was accountable, and it dealt largely with minds. The established statement that it's not the story but the way you
handle it that matters can be accountable only after you have established several other conditions. The psychology possibility is one of the most important of them.

People have not yet begun to speak, far less to think, of sound in the same way as they think now and write in Close Up and elsewhere of vision. They must. The theory of sound and sound-vision is just as complicated, and in many ways similar. Sound must never be thought of alone. It must now be inseparably and forever sound-sight. The construction of sound-sight aesthetic must be taken in hand. An illusory amplification of reality is not achieved by adding odd effects haphazardly whether they be a third dimension, clairvoyance or every sound that the world contains. The silent film at its best has already shown that unquestioning credence can be tapped. In other words, any medium that can take you where it wants to and make you credulous is complete. If you are taken there is no further demand that can possibly be made of you. The film silent or forever sounding can be complete or not in the exact degree in which it is able to render you a participant, non-existant, obliterated and believing. If sound jangles you into self-consciousness, into any awareness, it is sound wrongly used, and the film would be better without it. Consider, after all, sound. Very few of the million noises surrounding us every second of our lives are received in the portentous, acutely self-aware manner in which they are thrust upon us in the cinemas. Sound of motor cars, for example, react differently on different nervous systems. Here Hitchcock's method of the bell clang-scream is significant. Sound is more like this. And sound is not one isolated, reedy noise filling a whole
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auditorium. It can only be rendered symbolically always. The million sounds you hear have a special timbre, rhythm, sound-sight significance. What a complicated, vast, never-ending science the investigation and psychology of sound is going to present to us, and some of us already are beginning to say that talkies are an art. When you think, nobody has translated sound, except into music. It has remained an unclassified, unqualified, imminent and unresolvable substance over and around us, without symbolic form; without, let us say, the fierce lines of sculptured metal that somebody might submit as a shape for it—without any art form. And before we can use it as trimming or sewing thread even, we must set it an area, find terms for it and text books, know what sound is and what it does and what we do with it. And that will need a science more than medical, therapeutical, psycho-analytical, mechanical or philosophic. Till then, gee, honey, ah’m jes crazy ’bout yu, and I don’t mind telling the world I miss the sound now in a silent film, and you’ll be with me.

Kenneth Macpherson.
THE INDEPENDENT CINEMA IN BELGIUM

It seems a little strange that Belgium should not by this time have developed a local film industry and her own school of cinematography on a considerable scale. All the necessary elements are to hand: method and the capacity for teamwork so essential to cinematographic enterprise, intrepidity in business undertakings and, what is even more important, those particular characteristics, to be observed in the work of Feyder of Brussels, which give her artists a peculiar sensibility to rhythm and to the plastic in people and things. But historic circumstances we need not here specify in detail have decided against her and Belgium, where the film industry is conspicuously prosperous, is still dependent upon the outside world for the filling of her screens.

And, since she has no organised film production, she has no studios fitted with first-class appliances, no nucleus of experienced actors and interpreters. Therefore, the independent artists who keep going in spite of everything, carry on their work in the face of the gravest difficulties and the vanguard of clubs and cinemas are able to show their films only by dint of constant appeals to foreign companies and producers and are often defeated by the demands of one or other of these.
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I propose in this article to deal with two aspects of the independent cinema in Belgium: production, and the activities of the specialised cinemas.

First, as to production. Incontestably the leader of the Belgian school is Charles Dekeukeleire. He is a native of Brussels, of Flemish descent and about twenty-five years of age. His artistic education has been achieved haphazard and he is, as I have often remarked, a lover of plastic form and particularly of music. His love of music should be underlined, for it helps us to understand a certain exaggeration in his manner.

His first essay was made in 1927: Combat de Boxe. It is difficult to give a just idea of the scenario of this film. Each detail is important and significant, each image has its own proper value and its value in the lyrical continuity of the whole: which is a series of rhythmical impressions, alternately objective and subjective. Two themes: primarily the prize-fight in itself, with its successive phases and its final ferocity, incidentally the reactions of the crowd, attentive, agitated and at last tumultuous.

It is in the subordination of one theme to another that we must look for justification for the use of crowd-images and the close ups of the referee in negative. This is a particle of cinematographic syntax that so far has been very little employed even by the most adventurous and that certainly conveys a highly complex impression whose full significance is to be grasped only by a subtle process of reasoning for which the generality of spectators have neither inclination nor ability.

The distinctive quality of Dekeukeleire's work is the
rhythm informing it from first to last. This, as we know, has been intelligently, patiently and laboriously worked out. The result is most striking and we must admit that never, save perhaps by the conclusion of Pudovkin's *Storm Over Asia*, have we been more impressed by the importance of the part to be played by rhythm than in the showing of *Combat de Boxe*. This rhythm, particularly towards the end of the film at the moment when the two boxers are exchanging the blows which will leave one victorious and the other lying prone and vanquished upon the floor of the ring—blows whose swift images force us to be aware of their gradual relaxation—is so significantly and lyrically constructed that it creates an indefinable anguish, to be dissipated only at the moment of the appearance upon the screen of a black fist, the fist of the conqueror, in a final gesture, and the crowd—now the principal theme and suddenly appearing in positive—acclaims the victory.

This film has been shown in Paris, at the *Ursulines*, in Germany and in Belgium, with a certain measure of success. After a fruitless effort to produce, in collaboration with the *Vlamchs-Volks Toonel*, an adaptation of a Flemish legend, *L'enfant Jésus en Flandre*, Dekeukeleire a few weeks ago completed *Impatience*. It is a species of cinegraphic poem and again is primarily an essay in visual rhythm. Here, as in the *Combat de Boxe*, there is a leading theme, whose "exponents" are a road, a motor-car, moving shapes and a woman. To the central theme, the course of the car, the secondary themes, the surrounding landscape and the reactions expressed by the face and hands of the woman, add little by little their rhythm accelerated by impatience.
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until it reaches a sort of frenzy justified only by its visual value: thus is achieved the triumph of the abstract, and a fourth theme is introduced by means of the evolution of the geometric forms which lead the film to the culmination of its "orchestration".

The work, taking forty minutes to project, is rather long. It is unequal too, and is an example of what a Belgian critic of high standing, Mr. Paul Werrie, has called "the musical mishaps of the cinema". Dekeukeleire is too exclusively pre-occupied with the visual music of images and leaves their composition to a too summary inspiration. The result is a destructive lack of equilibrium between his values. Nevertheless, this second effort of his amply justifies the interest he has aroused. This young experimenter has given the sense of speed a fresh expression. To explain my meaning: when a producer sets out to cinematise speed he has so far, more or less ably, with a greater or less degree of talent, established a relationship between movement and immobility, between for example a car and the road over which it moves, or has shown us some part of the car that directly expresses speed, say the wheels, Dekeukeleire disdains all such methods. He imposes the sensation of speed solely by the trepidation of cylinders or of the indicator. His end is attained with force and precision that cannot be imagined by one who has not been subjected to the suggestion. Exactly in the originality of his expression of speed by a motionless object do we sound the incidental possibilities of the personality of Dekeukeleire the seeker.

* * *

In sharp contrast to the producer of Impatience is Gussy
Lauwson whose talent is much less vigorous and who takes but little account of rhythm. He, like Dekeukeleire, had no opportunity before risking the production of his first effort, of learning how to overcome the difficulties of handling his material with the help of a first-class scenarist. His first film, Reflets, is nevertheless interesting. It is dominated by a single idea, Life is nothing but illusion, a dream, death alone is real, developed thus:

"From infancy onwards, man follows a chimera of one sort or another if only that which is produced by the desire for greatness. Then comes maturity. The early illusion vanishes giving place to another which in its turn disappears and makes way for its successor. Illusions vary according to age, circumstance character and will. For the weaker sort there is nothing for it but to create an illusion, unfounded moreover, by annihilating both senses and will. Others seek illusion in the imaginative fantasies of cartomancers and fortune-tellers. For all of us illusion may be generalised as representing the desire for happiness sought by everyone according to his particular moral predisposition: love, wealth, work, oblivion, travel. Illusion is a see-saw that comes and goes, a whirling roundabout, a pendulum swinging too and fro, a light that gleams, grows, prevails and disappears, a poem, a romance; in reality a lie to be revealed only by the inevitable presence of death."

Thus, as I have already noted, while it is rhythmic construction that triumphs in the case of Dekeukeleire, for the producer of Reflets and a young scenarist Carlo Queeckers who has just given us Kermesse Flamande and is now at Antwerp finishing l’Emigrant, the principal considerations
Some of the very lovely Lapthorn posters designed for the *Living Corpse*, and recently on view at the Avenue Pavilion.
Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks in their latest joint venture, *The Taming of the Shrew*—a talkie. We are a little dismayed at the costume details, but you know what films are . . .
From *The Movietone Follies*—Fox’s. Part of the sequence during the singing of *Walkin’ With Susie*.
Blackmail, Alfred Hitchcock's latest film. John Longden (left) as the detective, Annie Ondra and Donald Calthorp.

The murder in Blackmail.

Old and New (The General Line) which Eisenstein took recently to Berlin. Martha Lapkina, the star.
Old and New. The bull Tomke, one of the heroes of the film.
Old and New (The General Line) by Eisenstein and Alexandroff. The peasant’s spring.
are composition and originality of image. Gussy Lauwson appears to ignore cadence in the succession of his scenes. And even though in a part of his work our attention is attracted by what appears to be an animating movement, in reality this movement is not the result of deliberate handling but is incidental to the given material: the sea, the round-about. On the other hand his treatment of light and shadow and his choice of the angle of vision are always remarkable and there are scenes in Reflets such as that of the young woman at her toilet and the waves beating upon the dunes, whose relief and tonality are really astonishing. For these we may forgive Gussy Lauwson certain scenes in which he indulges in the worst kind of symbolism in the manner of Gance. It is interesting to note that the first two producers to appear in Belgium are sharply contrasted both in character and personality and in their views on the art of the cinema.

* * *

Let us glance at the activities of the independent cinema. The first serious attempt in the direction of establishing a centre for the reproduction of classics and the showing of works by young producers who are also innovators dates from 1926. This successful effort was inaugurated by my friend Albert Valentin, the eminent critic and one of those who knows the most about the Belgian cinema. For a year he held the directorship of the Cinema Club which then passed into my hands. It is a heavy task. So far I have acquitted myself with an unfailing enthusiasm that will not, I hope, be vanquished by fresh difficulties. Since last year the Club has been housed in a small hall, accommodating about three hundred, in the grandiose Palais des Beaux Arts,
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built by the architect Horta in the centre of Brussels. The setting is modern and is incontestably the most beautiful in Europe at the disposal of the independent cinema. Those who are able to compare it with the French halls, the Vieux Colombier, the Ursulines and Studio 28 have expressed to me their surprise and their admiration. During the latter part of last winter the evening programmes presented at this hall were all drawn up in accordance with the ideas of the Cinema Club. And this propaganda on behalf of good films will not have failed to bear fruit. The most conclusive testimony I can give as to the recent work of the Brussels Cinema Club, whose example has been followed by the Ostend Cinema Club numbering last year well over six hundred members, is to enumerate from the lists drawn up at the time of performance some of the films shown during a single season. My selection is made at random: Charlot à la Mer, Rien que les Heures, by Cavalcanti; Théâtre, by Dupont; Puzzle, by Paul Léni; L'Exode, by Cooper and Schoedsack; Fièvre by Louis Delluc; Way Down East, by D. W. Griffith; La Puissance des Ténèbres, by Wiene; Les Grenouilles demandent un Roi, by Tsarevitch; La Flamme, by Ernest Lubitsch; Moana, by Flaherty; La Coquille et le Clergyman, by Germaine Dulac; Maître Samuel, by Sjöstrom; L'Opinion Publique, by Charles Chaplin; Crainquebille, by Feyder; Raskolnikoff, by Wiene; Les Gens du Warmland, by Stomberg; Les Déshérités, by Lamprecht; Premier Amour, by Joseph de Grasse; Le Cercle du Mariage, by E. Lubitsch; Classe Paresseuse, by Chaplin; Hollywood, by James Cruze; Le Chat et le Canard, by Paul Léni; Le Combat de Boxe, by Charles Dekeukeleire; Les
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*Trois Lumière*, by Fritz Lang; *Le Signe de Zorro*, by Fred Niblo; *Eldorado*, by Marcel l’Herbier; *Lichtspiel*, by Walter Ruttmann; *Jazz*, by James Cruze; *La Quatrième Alliance de Dame Marguerite*, by John Brunius; *Histoire de Chiens*, by E. Woods; *Au Royaume des Glaciers*, by J. Robertson; *La Ruée vers l’Or*, by Chaplin; *Le Fantôme du Moulin Rouge*, by René Clair; *Toison d’Or*, by J. K. Howard; *Emak Bakia*, by Man Ray; *Nathan le Sage*, by Manfred Noa; *Nanook l’Esquimau*, by Flaherty; *l’Inhumaine* by Marcel l’Herbier; and *Le Diable dans la Ville*, by Germaine Dulac. There were also included a number of pre-war films, amongst them a fantasy by G. Melies. This comprehensive programme is a happy blend of films that have already become classics and those that are the work of the advance guard. We were hoping to follow the same plan in the coming winter, when the appearance of the sound and speech film obliged us to postpone the drawing up of our programme for the season now at hand. What is to be our ultimate attitude towards the revolution brought about by the *Chanteur de Jazz*? Doubtless we shall contrive to do for the sound film and the speech film what so far we have been doing for its silent forerunner. But we are assailed by severe technical and financial difficulties. We must hope that the congress of the independent cinema at La Sarraz will have helped to solve them.

CARL VINCENT.
“GOING TALKIE”

I see that another cinema in Birmingham has just "gone talkie", and that one of the big circuits has ordered no less than forty-five sets of talkie apparatus. Production of sound mechanism has been so "speeded up", according to one of the experts, that by 1930 it will be possible to have ten thousand theatres electrically westernised. In Chelsea, the centre of our sinful cinema, we are not quite so advanced. Sound and silence are having a fight, for a flag has been waving outside one cinema with the words "The Talkies are Coming" inscribed upon it. But outside the other cinema are the words: "Silence is Golden", so that the populace (at the time of writing) is still "in a state of chassis".

To my mind, "going talkie" is so disagreeable a business that it is a marvel how people can be so blithe about it. The phrase "gone talkie" is itself offensive. It suggests, most aptly, a plague. "I met Jones just now. He's gone talkie, poor chap. No; only a mild attack. But you never know how these things will develop."

You don't. The hypnotism of the thing is overwhelming, and it is getting more potent every day. Even the original *Singing Fool*, packed with Warner brotherliness, reduced the 4,000 first nighters at the Brixton Astoria a few weeks
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ago to tears. By now, practically the whole of Brixton must have "gone talkie". The willingness of Brixton, of Hammersmith, of Croydon, of London, Greater London, Middlesex, England, Europe and the world, to be seduced from its former loyalties is shocking. But not surprising; for to be uprooted so violently is to be dramatically entertained.

And I perceive now that I have contracted symptoms of the same disease, though I am hoping to throw it off, for in nearly every talkie there are hints of what might be done if the film producers had a definite talkie sense, which is no more to be acquired in a few weeks than road sense, flying sense, or a sense of words. The view that the talkies are here, whatever happens, so what is the use of objecting to them, may be logical enough, but it can also be applied to wars, scarlet fever and mosquitoes. This is a strictly trade or professional view, and if I had a cinema of my own, no doubt I should employ the same argument. I would embrace the officials of the great film companies and worship the sound they fed on.

But unfortunately I do not own a cinema and there is no reason why I should go talkie in a hurry, especially with the large number of excellent silent films mentioned in the pages of Close Up every month. The exhibitor mind repeatedly exemplifies on a grand scale the "state of chassis" into which Chelsea has fallen. It produces a sort of mob law. If I "go talkie" it will be first, because, under the stress of this jurisdiction, there is no other place to go to, and secondly, because a time is evidently approaching (animated by a fear that public opinion will
change) when the exhibitor will as calmly accept a reduction of the sound element in his films as he accepted speech, sound and song in the first instance. And the fact is, that if one has any respect for sound, it is utterly impossible to go talkie at once—to pack up all one’s views of silence and hurl them into oblivion. And the more deliberately, discriminatingly and critically one arrives at an acceptance of the new position, the more firmly will one be rooted there at the last, with infinitely more conviction and pleasure.

This talk about the gramophone having reached perfection and offering a parallel hope for the cinema is enough to drive a sane man mad. Have you ever heard a gramophone which could reproduce, for example, Brahms’s First Symphony to perfection? Of course not. It is admirably recorded, but if you are a real lover of music you go and hear Brahms at the Queen’s Hall, returning afterwards for a colourable imitation on your own gramophone. You are, as they say, “educated” by the gramophone, but you are inspired by the orchestra, by Brahms himself; and whereas the results of popular education of this kind are disputable, you cannot quarrel with a man’s inspiration, even if he is inspired to commit murder like Raskolnikov, or at the other end of the scale to paint “The Philosopher,” like Rembrandt.

I am told by experts that in the course of time artistic perfection in sound as applied to motion pictures will be achieved, and that we shall have film music and voices and orchestras in films which are undistinguishable from their originals. On that day I will be willingly received into the new talkie faith, (without renunciation of my “silent”
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beliefs) and indeed, a stage in this initiation was reached when I heard Miss Fay Compton in *Fashions in Love*. Her voice was charmingly that of a human being. We had passages of dialogue from Mr. Menjou which almost made us believe that Mr. Menjou was three dimensional; and when he put on his coat we heard the little swirl of noise as his arms went into the sleeves. It was an extraordinary pleasure. In *Wanted*, I remember, there was a further sequence of audible excitement. The voices of the girls being chased in the snow by Bill Boyd and the detectives were astonishingly realistic. They had the effect of planting us right into the middle of the action and making us feel, when the accident happened, that we might be drawn irresistibly by a shout into hauling somebody out of the ice. Voices heard "off" like this are always more effective than those which we can follow from the mouth of the speaker, because there is nothing to interfere with the free play of one's imagination. However natural it may be, however dramatic or appealing, the sound from the screen constantly challenges one's experience of the thing heard. Comparisons rise up like solid reference points to which the ear can at once apply its tests, and no doubt much of the pleasure found in the talkies is due to this universal faculty by which the least intelligent spectator becomes an experienced critic of his own entertainment. But in proportion as we are delighted when a song, an exclamation or a noise, truly announces itself—in pitch and delivery the perfect echo of the original—as much are we offended when it falls short of perfection. For example, the imitation of trains clanking and hissing into railway stations, does not seem to me to
represent the grandeur and fuss with which trains do, in fact, arrive, and having a great liking for trains and a respect for their movement, their magnificence, and their noise, I resent the want of realism in their sound portraiture. Nor have I heard a door slam or effectively knocked for an answer, whereas doors and their long faces, the way in which so much of life is hinged upon them, require to be given full value, vocal and pictorial, for their part in the drama of everyday life. I cannot "go talkie" before a front door which closes like a piece of cardboard, and gives me no sense of the castle it defends. No can I be moved, except to laughter, by the sobs of a heroine who sounds as though she has been ducked at Margate by a playful holiday-maker determined to be manly and jolly. One could infinitely expand the list of sounds, human and abstract, which fail to reproduce themselves faithfully at points along the film route. The interest they create is one of simple, gaping curiosity, in which the audience wonders whether Mr. Douglas Fairbanks' laugh in sound terms will resemble the roar of Mr. Fairbanks himself. The snoring of the negro in Al Jolson's dressing-room in The Singing Fool was clearly designed to demonstrate that a mechanically perfect snore was not beyond the resources of Hollywood. The incident in itself was entirely unrelated to the rest of the action. Are we to be snored, ducked, hooted (as in The Cocoanuts) mooed, growled and sneezed into talkie acceptance? Not unless these sounds are an indispensable element in the dramatic fabric, and so far this claim has not been justified. In no case, except possibly in Blackmail, has sound been economised so as to intensify or proportion out its force, and
in most of the films I have seen the sound has been poured into the action until it is bursting with rash eloquence (Desert Song, Broadway Melody, etc.) And what sound! Who can hear these songs and savage hoots without squirming? Well, I cannot, and I do not try, except as a professional duty. I enjoy Adolphe Menjou, Carol Lombard, George Bancroft, Donald Calthrop, Cyril Ritchard, Jameson Thomas, Fay Compton and a few others. I enjoy the sound of sea-gulls at St. Ives, of running water, wood-chopping, violins, sentimental songs, and all the truthful echoes of "recorded" things. But I remain unmoved at the prospect of 200 or 2,000 cinemas being "wired" for talkies except as it foretells an advance in talkie technique, which will eventually eliminate its present faults. Nor shall I become talkie "mad", (if such a condition were desirable), until somebody produces a film in the manner suggested by Pudovkin and his school, where sound is consigned to its due place in the film structure and not allowed to dominate, like a toast-master, the whole of the proceedings. The only other way of becoming talkie mad is to buy a large block of talkie shares and watch the little fellows fluctuating on the Stock Exchange. I must see what can be done, for in one form or another, everybody seems to be doing it.

Note: Since the above was written I have heard Mr. Meisel's sychronised rendering of The Crimson Circle. This places one in great danger of talkie conversion, and I have instructed my broker to delay his operations on the share market.

Ernest Betts.
I am writing this time of a term that suddenly came to me. As things do. On a bus for instance, shaving, talking to someone about one thing and not really conscious one is thinking of another. On a bus, rather bored . . . . wishing it was over . . . . since it is made to move, why must it keep stopping . . . . and there’s not much the end of the journey, anyway . . . . that person is an inverted teapot. There! Suddenly. Someone whom you have known for years is an inverted teapot. Now you know. You have got it. You can get on. Or you are talking to someone over a drink . . . . you find you know at last why you were never really satisfied by that author, who is not entering into the conversation at all . . . .

I was showing some people an abstract film. It was a night on which the projector worked. They hadn’t seen abstract films, and I was trying to explain why it was right that such and such a set of images should be followed by another set in just that way. Why it satisfied the eye and the mind, and why the mind had to be satisfied first. I was floundering round with words like “important” and “design” and “continuity” which meant nothing to them, and suddenly I hit on it. Visual rhyme. That explained
it, and we got on. That is why I give it you now (severely copyrighted, knowing these professionals, who pick your mind under guise of "getting together"). Visual rhyme. What would it be?

And then, what happens when an image follows another one so satisfactorily that you are exalted?

Take any of the films which we say give intelligent pleasure, although their content is nix. The Spy, Manhattan Cocktail, The First Kiss; take the scene in Movietone Follies I wrote on last month, the singing of "Walkin' With Susie". Things follow things in a way that is immediately and inexplicably right. We feel it. It's right. Why? I suggest visual rhyming.

If there isn't any, the film is a broken disjointed affair, telling a story, and being what all those who don't go to films often enough to pick up the approach to them, say films are. So snappy, why is she going into that room now, she was coming out of it last time, where is this garden, what is happening, I always say films are so confusing. Now, Gloria's latest lamentable-film is broken and disjointed. There is not one scrap of rhyming in the sound or the pictures. One scene ends, another begins, and they only end and begin because the story says so. No visual connection, none at all. Gloria hears her "protector" is dying. She calls for her wrap and flies off. We are plunged from this into a remarkably naïve few feet of film showing a car's bonnet going along a road with attendant noises. Next scene, Gloria arrived at sick man's house. Have we experienced any sense of travelling with her? We have not. And do we know what she felt in that car? We do not.

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Whereas if we had seen her leaving all in a state and arriving even more so, we should at least have had dramatic continuity. If we had seen her flying out of her apartment, and then rushing upstairs in the other house, we might have had a visual continuity, had stairs and figure been balanced rightly and connectedly. But it would have been accidental, because this film is directed as badly as it is written and reproduced.

But take The Spy. The scene of the tea party between the spy-girl and Willy Fritsch. As she moves to offer him something, he pulls her hands down and as she is drawn to him, Lang cuts to a shutter coming down over a shop. We are told that the party has gone on late for tea, and also have a visual rhyme, which is continued by shot of a boy with an evening poster, downwards as the arm and the shutter; having been made aware of time and other things, we cut into the room and see them surprised to hear the evening papers being called, which we already knew was happening. The matter is related, and the way the incidents which express it are shown is made to rhyme visually. It is the same with a later sequence. After the man has left, the girl, a devout Russian, goes to a prie-dieu, and her fingers lift a plaque, which is a bookmark. They mix, I think, into the same fingers holding the same plaque in a taxi, which is taking her to a cabaret, where she is to sup with the young man. Or the young man may have the plaque, it is nearly a year since I saw the film. But the main point is that this taxi, unlike Gloria’s, links on the two things. The circle of the plaque is rhymed with a boxing ring, surrounded by dancers. We do not see them at first, but the camera retreats.
and we find we are in the cabaret, there are dancers. And among the dancers, in the next shot, are the spy-girl and Fritsch. This is dramatic continuity, but it is exciting because it is visual rhyming. The way moving things, which in moving tell the story, fit into each other.

These images are caused by the story. Plaque, taxi, boxers, dancers are part of the story. So are the things, they are no more than things in Gloria’s film. But in The Spy they are assembled pleasantly, and so they win. We are satisfied by their juxtaposition. This is a thing in itself. It adds its part to the expression, it embellishes and heightens what would otherwise be plain statement. The Trespasser is plain, bald statement. And how bald. Rhyming like this comprehends everything. Angles, cutting, light, length of shot-distances. And it must be conceived beforehand. How often you find in cutting a film that the arrangement you thought would tell your story right fails because it is visually unpleasing. You muck around, talking to yourself about flow and diagonal design, when the term “visual rhyme” would show you how to reach what you do not know you want.

Everything in cinema comes back to the eye. You are appealing to brain through eye. Or if you hold that art is expression, not communication, you are stating what you saw through your eye and subsequent reactions. The eye MUST be considered all the time. Purely technically, it must be kept ready to see for as long as possible. If your changes from long shot to semi-close up, from left to right action, from dark to light tone-predominance, are awkward, the eye is prematurely wearied. That is bad manners, and the eye
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retorts by refusing to take in any more. A change from a scene in which the blacks predominate to one in which the great mass is white may make all the difference, because it will make all the difference to your audience feeling tired, to their feeling that they want to see more, which is dependant on their being physically able to see more. It is the same with the depth of your scenes. There must be some larger connection than the dramatic between your close-ups and your long shots. The enlargement of an object enlarges the event. The enlarging of events means that they are surrounded with circumstance, are given their place not only in one scene, not only in one film, but in the life, the world, which otherwise that film does not express. It means that a sense of the infinite is reached. But you cannot swing wildly from the infinite to the confined, to the particular, just because the plot wants a glove emphasised at one point. You have to know what enlarging that glove will do to the eye and to the whole film, which is designed for the eye. You have to know whether it will upset the balance.

Balance is made up of previous and forthcoming depth of scenes, of change from near to distant shots, of tone values, and of the manner in which any thing is made to appear on the screen, from the point of angle or of action. The cause of action and the angle of entrance. Whether from left to right, whether moving across, towards or away from. Study Berlin for an elementary example of this care in this kind of composition. Since films deal in movement, I should say it was the angle of entrance and direction of motion that was your first concern. Having settled this, before you cut of course, you must consider how the light-unity.
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will be affected. You will have learnt something of that from Mr. Potamkin. Then you may have to re-arrange. Your light may be all uneven and meaningless, though the rest is right. Then you re-arrange.

A symphony of speeds, of images moving left to right, followed by circular rotation slowing to right to left, will be nothing if the blacks and whites that are contained are all clashing. They need not correspond, anyone can see. You can have great games with your motion doing one thing, your tones another. But they must all be in one kind or another of harmony. I shrink from the word "contra-puntal", in the very act of offering you another catch-phrase! There must be no breaks, unless you want breaks. Speed must rhyme with speed and if it does'nt it must switch over to rhyme with tone. The two can mix, meet, separate. You see why images which have nothing to do with each other and are images of totally dissimilar objects can link on in a film, and perfectly dovetail, and thrill you.

You perceive now why certain Hollywood films are called pleasant—because they are poems of images meeting in light and detached, if you have the wit, from the follies of the tale. Not only objects, symbols, "images" readily grasped, but a gesture, a smile, a way of walking, a way of brushing the hair which shows when the plot makes the head bend down . . . . all these are called for, it is true, by the plot, but are finally nothing to do with it. Those downward-looking glances of Gary Cooper in The First Kiss and almost half of good old Gloria in her shorter films. I always think that she, incidentally, would make a wonderful theme in an abstract, with that quite wonderful face not having to do
anything but recur. She has a most recurrent face, emitting man-rays. See what Cavalcanti (who one discovers, still goes on) can do with the Hessling.

In the film I was showing that night, a train came out of a tunnel. The camera had been tilted so that the train came uphill from the bottom right-hand corner towards the left. Halfway across, cut to a man packing, pulling a suit case on to a bed. White rails of bed after steel lines in the sun. Case drawn across, from sunlit window-glow, after train from dark tunnel. The train had cut when it had been about to reach the centre of the screen, and the case was drawn across in immediately-following shot to middle of screen, meeting one's idea of where the train then was. I said "You see, they rhyme". Goethe said music was frozen architecture. He would have said what I propose to say in his place, that film is melting architecture. But he would have had a better word than "melting". Fluid, perhaps. For film deals with mass, and insists on the innate relationship of things. The sense of unity, that is, which is clamped by rhyme. And don't shout 'what about free verse?' at me, for rhyme is there too, if less obviously and cheaply.

Ting-ti-ti-ting. We know that though nothing remains stationary on the screen, nevertheless, the film can attain a form. Image gives way to image and in the manner of giving way, builds up the form. We have, through rhythm, harmony of speeds and through image-in-light, harmony of tone. These combine to create an architecture which is none the less architecture for not being only in space, but in time. We cannot see the component parts all together, we have to bear the impression of one while a new one takes it place.
Thus is something built in time. We are able to bear the impression in proportionate degree to the rhyming of the parts, the dovetailing of the images. That is the connecting rod, the stalk to the flower, the axle to the wheels, the cup, not the cream, to the coffee. That is why "visual rhyme" seemed to me to have got somewhere. At the end of a film, we have a conception of the film as a whole, a piece of flowing architecture. But the harmony which has gone to the making of it must be controlled as much by the way the screen is filled as by the speeds with which it is filled. Rhyme is as important as rhythm. That is what I am saying. I have always been saying that the selection of images and their order is important. These are your bricks. Place them. You work in mass. For God's sake, work on something mass-ive.

Robert Herring.

LACHMAN AND OTHERS

Let us now praise famous men. From Adolph Zukor to Napoleon, and William Fox to Cecil B. De Mille. Having hitched our wagon to the sublime at the thought of Joe Schenck let us proceed to carry out the corpse, singing together.

Wardour Street is worried. Its oracles are off their lunch.
On the one hand the public don't want talkies; on the other they are ready to eat them up. Hollywood reports no more silent pictures. British studios are as silent as the grave. The experts predict an immediate boom in British production. Others say it's dead.

It is. But it won't lie down.

Meanwhile, doubt not that there is a banking account which shapes our balance sheet, distort it how we will. The past few weeks have seen the rise and fall of the usual meteors, have given birth to the usual twaddle. A prominent critic, according to a gossip writer, has a brother who is a grocer. Our sympathies are with the grocer. The typical American Girl, via Fox Movietone News, was introduced to the great cinema public. Our sympathies are with the Typical American Man. The talkies are still here to stay. The silent picture is not dead. The third-dimension is upon us. D. W. Griffiths, in his next picture, aims at a fourth dimension. Maurice Elvey no doubt has a fifth in mind. Colour is about to descend on the screen.

Meanwhile, London is inundated with talkies. One or two are fair, more are interesting, still more are appalling, while yet more are ghastly. The public like a hero with a cave-man voice. And the best heroines have voices like the bleating of a distant goat.

Out of the riot of saxophones, motor horns, fire alarms, telephones, typewriters, revolver shots, kettle drums, and mammy songs there emerge three pictures which are extremely interesting, three pictures which indicate the trend of the new entertainment, which, by reason of their very shortcomings, help the producer in keeping to the right road.
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These are the three: Under the Greenwood Tree, a British picture made by Harry Lachman, Gentlemen of the Press, a Paramount film, and The Cocoanuts, also a Paramount concoction.

The first is an effort—only an effort mark you—to make a SOUND FILM. The second is a successful attempt to reduce a fairly intelligent play to the screen. The third is an unquestionably successful reproduction of a musical comedy theme.

Of the three, the Lachman picture is the most likely one to be questioned. Anyone considering that Cocoanuts is not a satisfactory rendering of the trivialities of musical comedy should contrast it with such rubbish as The Desert Song. The alleged newspaper film has no competitor against which it can be offset.

The merits and demerits of the trio deserve analysis. Let me say at once that I consider none of them great pictures. That need hardly be said. But there is in each something which makes them more interesting than the other growlies, something upon which producers can work in their march to sound-cinema.

* * *

I detest institutions, old and new. Edgar Wallace and the Pilgrim's Progress, psycho-analysis and Vitamin A, Charles Dickens and The Daily Mail. In consequence I know nothing of Thomas Hardy. He is generally considered by English critics to have been a great writer. That rather handicaps him in my opinion. However, we will give him the benefit of the doubt.

If Hardy was a great writer, then, he must have had an
attack of George Meredith when he wrote *Under the Greenwood Tree*. The book, when I read it a few weeks ago, struck me as a severe pain. *The Evening Standard* described it as a ‘lyric masterpiece.’

But as film material it is bluntly impossible. No company should ever have bought it. Whatever virtues it has are in its literary treatment. Its story, a silly feuilleton spineless sort of thing, deals solely with the romance of a school teacher and the pretty boy who leads the village church orchestra.

Granting that the story should never have been produced, Lachman has made an heroic job of it. As was only to be expected, however, the Elstree cutters have methodically pulled the picture to pieces. I hesitate to use the word *montage*. It is almost an institution these days; but this picture bore traces of a rhythmic flow, a building up of sequence, which has previously been gloriously absent from any British picture. Enter the scissors, snipping and dancing. Sequences are sliced, cut, chopped, hacked.

The result is JERK. The picture not only loses its smoothness, but it loses any chance it might have had, despite its story, of being a good picture in the artistic sense. It is further handicapped by being jammed up with singing sequences. It remains as a tribute to Lachman’s resourcefulness that he did give *reasons* for the singing. He tried to disguise the fact that he was dragging music in to pad the footage. But we are too used to the game to be blinded.

*Under the Greenwood Tree* has perhaps the best direction yet produced from a British studio. The camera is a camera, the players are types, and not small part masters. The
scenes are layed out with an eye to composition. The pictorial values are sound, if of the picture-postcard type. This is a candy-box picture. As such it is a sound piece of work. The sound, too, is used quite neatly. It is not dragged in to remind the audience that the orchestra are on the dole. It helps the so-called story.

A curious picture. A difficult piece of work to sum up. It proves, first and foremost, the imbecility of letting one man make a picture and another cut it. The day will come when the professional editor is unknown in our studios. When that happens we may make commercial pictures which don't insult the intelligence of a whelk. But we shall have to get some more good directors, first.

Secondly, it proves the fact, where the commercial or propaganda cinema is concerned, that you can't make bricks without straw. Whoever selected Hardy's book as a film story ought to be politely pensioned off by some well organised charity.

Lachman once made a short film called Wine and Water. A simple, elementary piece of work, it was shown at the Film Society, where it proved highly popular. It showed an eye for types, real types, a sense of camera, and an ability to make entertainment without a story but with one solitary idea. One day British International will give him a story. He will then produce a picture. Until then he will continue wasting good touches on silly material.

Under the Greenwood Tree is a picture to be seen. It teems with faults, but the direction transcends them.

Gentlemen of the Press is as different from the Hardy film as any two pictures could be. The one is an attempt to make
something cinematic out of the sentimental banalities of a 'lyric masterpiece,' the other is a serious effort which seeks to produce an intelligent stage play as a film.

The commercial talkie, generally, falls into two groups. The musical and comedy group, and the serious, photographed stage play. Of the two, the latter is by far the more dangerous. Few people will have difficulty in seeing through the screen musical comedy. They are not likely to confuse it with cinema. But the screen play, with studied dialogue, and a real theme, is likely to be mistaken for a talking film.

*Gentlemen of the Press* is an example. It has the theme of the self-sacrificing life of the newspaper man. It weaves a cynical way through the New York world, reducing it to terms of front page stories, finding a gossip par in every street, showing the eternal dissatisfaction of the newshound, showing at the same time that curious attraction which journalism has, the grip by which it keeps its disciples fast. Sentimentalised for dramatic purposes, it builds a solid stage story around the paper game, shows the rise of a night editor, tells how he quits the racket in order to make more money as a publicist, only to return to the typewriters in the end.

Its dialogue is sound. It isn’t brilliant. One can’t expect the Millennium. But it has brains. Its atmosphere, though dramatised, is the newspaper atmosphere. A sequence in which a publicist flings a Press party is glorious. Only a Pressman could appreciate its delightful satire. It is doubtful, indeed, whether the Great British Public will appreciate the picture. They probably won’t understand it. After all, it is difficult to believe that the people who pay
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money to see *Broadway Melody* could enjoy a plot which virtually turns on the difference between a good news story and a bad.

But it is not cinema. Not in the remotest degree. There is nothing cinema in it.

Except the words, "It’s a Paramount Picture."

People come in front of the camera, mouth their lines, make their exits. Stage. From beginning to end. Not the silly London West End stage. A little better than that. A stage which is trying hard to be intelligent.

And therein lies the danger. It is easy enough to ridicule the *Singing Fool*. We know exactly where we are when seeing it. *Broadway* presents no difficulties. *The Glad Rag Doll* we know to be made of nothing but sawdust. Particularly mentally. There can be no deception there.

But it will be a thousand pities if *Gentlemen of the Press* is to be the forerunner of more of its type. We shall have to become dramatic critics on the spot. Happily, the danger is unlikely.

It is much too subtle for the paying public.

Lastly, *The Cocoanuts*. Here, in my opinion, we have entertainment par excellence. Not cinema entertainment, necessarily, but the sort of entertainment which makes you see the show twice. If you have the capacity to laugh *Cocoanuts* must be practically irresistible. It is more than funny. It is riotous. The gags follow so quickly that you miss the second through laughing at the first.

*Cocoanuts* is the best effort to date to make a screen musical comedy. Its species is clearly defined and no one is
expected to call it cinema, despite the fact that Florey's touch is plainly noticeable here and there.

Most of the future of the talking cinema can be found in the picture. Its clowning is stage clowning, its patter stage patter, its production is undisguised Shaftesbury Avenue. But it gives an intimacy with the players which the stage can never give. When they can do a show like this in natural colour, with something which is not a third dimension but which looks like it, we can begin making pictures to please ourselves. And then show them on the quiet to a steadily decreasing patronage.

I wish I could think the reverse. But contact with the box-office makes pessimists of us all.

* * *

Meanwhile, Wardour Street continues worrying. Its family life has been tried in the balance and the Sunday papers and found wanting. Although what's a family or two between friends! The producers, according to the Press, have not made up their minds as to whether they should be gentlemen or merely act like them.

Universal have bought the film rights of All Quiet on the Western Front. It will probably be dedicated to the United States Marine, and prove to be All Noisy on the Western Electric.

Gloria Swanson was mobbed by 5,000 fans at the New Gallery. I was glad to see it. A relatively unimportant man named Pudovkin was given quite as much publicity. The number of tears shed at the Empire during the run of Madame X would have filled a swimming bath. And then some. Broadway is packing them in at the Regal. I made
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a joke about the fact that there is only one Broadway, last
month, unfortunately.

A British masterpiece called High Treason is doing curious
things at the box-office. According to Gaumont publicity,
the scenes at the pay-box reminded the manager of
Metropolis. They may have done. The picture didn’t.

John McCormack is reputed to be getting £80,000 for his
Fox talkie. Carl Brisson didn’t get that for his performance

The Film Society’s coming programme has left the trade
unmoved.

Hugh Castle.

A TRAGEDY

It happened in Regent Street, London, on the morning of
August 27th, 1929. But it had been developing for months.
It developed at the core, from that queer device which hit
London in the projection box more than a year ago. The
device by means of which every silver screen was, in future,
to be heard as well as seen.

For five or six years, the people who really make fortunes
out of films had fought against the idea. Everything had
been running in well defined grooves, but the extra trouble
connected with the new device was seen as a check upon the
smooth running of the machine and likely to ruin the financial harvests. To support them in their determination they even took heed of those who said there was an art in silence; and immediately made a big noise about it.

But the folks who made larger fortunes out of watts and wireless than the film folks had made out of films, saw that there was a limit to the market even of megohms for the millions. So, as a cause of progress behind which to throw their weight, the equipping of cinemas and studios for sound-films was weighed and found good. There was the opposition to overcome, of course. But money talks sure enough. And as the larger sum talks loudest, finally the films were talking too.

As if darkness had suddenly lifted, the film folks now saw clearly that they had been quite wrong about the art of silence. They occupied every available square inch of print in which to make their confessions by pointing out that the new idea was a progressive step towards the realisation of the complete art.

Alone again, the intelligent critics were in despair. For submerged beneath a flood of new interest they were, after all their struggles, again without a public. It was difficult to know what to do. Those who continued to be intelligent were called "reactionary". And there was a lot to be said for the argument that it was useless to write intelligently if the people one wanted to get to merely called one "precious" and took no further heed.

When the three Russian gentlemen who knew a lot about making silent films, and the mid-European musicians who had composed a lot of very fine scores for them, issued their
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favourable pronouncements on the sound-film, the situation for the critics was eased. Such voices lent prestige to the new idea, and enabled one to step back into the arena with less ill grace. Like straw to the drowning, the now well-worn "counterpoint" became the new means of support.

But to clutch at an idea and espouse its cause without the aid of deep rooted conviction leads into difficulty and danger. Tragedy began to develop. The astute Russian analysis of the three periods of development—particularly, it seems, the "terrible" second period—was either forgotten or completely overlooked. Every moment in a film when what was heard differed from what was seen was a moment of possibility; and possibilities were diligently sought for in every commercial release. One after another the critics began to affect us with their enforced fever and sent us hopping like carrion to pick morsels from the bodies of otherwise worthless films. Here a cadenza of street noise tracing the rhythm of opening and closing doors, there a pattern of legs developed in counterpoint to a song in jazz. Here, again, diminutive figures in long-shots and voices faint with distance; and there, space... movement... and the microphone picking up the sound of it all. And this trifling nonsense was hallowed in the name of sound and visual imagery.

There was none of the accustomed analysis of whether and what the film gained from all this trickery. Still less were there evidences of the intrinsic qualities of the film itself. Crook plays and cabarets, follies and speakeasies, there was not a vital idea in any one of them. Where once imagination had been demanded of the silent film there was ecstasy
whenever the sound-film triumphed over the shackles of the microphone and recovered some of the movement and flexibility of old. In truth, there was a greater richness of idea and wealth of imaginative meaning in a thug film like *The Racket*, than in all of these.

When the word went round that Herr Edmund Meisel, the mid-European pioneer of counterpoint sound and sight, had finished synchronising *The Crimson Circle*, and that it was soon to be shown in London, one was relieved to think that the critics were soon to be restored from a temporary lapse. It was awaited with eager impatience.

At last, on the morning of August 27th, *The Crimson Circle* was to be shown at the New Gallery, to the Trade, the Press, and members of the Film Society. Publicity literature on the subject explained that each character and each salient detail of the film had a musical motif written round it. Detective Yale, a "Yale" motif; the Crimson Circle, a "Crimson Circle" motif (threatening, haunting); a love scene between Thalia and Jack, "Thalia" and "Jack" motifs (contrapuntal) and so on: which would be interwoven into musical patterns in harmony with the dramatic conditions under which they severally appeared together on the screen.

In print, it all seemed fraught with imaginative possibilities. The house was filled with guests, including some whose enthusiasm brought them in off the street without the formality of an invitation. All felt mildly excited when the lights went down.

The film opened with a scene of detective Yale in his study, seen as if by a dog lying on the hearth-rug. So far no one has discovered why.
The "Yale" motif is heard, strange, expectant; rather like a gramophonne running at the wrong speed. Inspector Parr is announced. "Parr" motif, then "Parr" and "Yale" motifs interwoven in conversational undertones, but still in the strange timbre of a gramophone turning too fast. This oddness was persistent. It was disconcerting too. One listened and forgot to see clearly. Brief moments were reminiscent of Stravinsky's scorings for the ballet, there were others operatic in complexity, but still strangely "sharp". In the theatre and cabaret scenes the gramophone effect was most strongly marked. It was like playing with a split needle. I was uneasy and felt responsible for it all as when the soprano "cracks" or an utter stranger rises to make a speech and collapses in the first sentence. I did my best to cling to the memory of "Berlin" symphony but was reminded only of Paul Whiteman and Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue".

Neither were the "effects" dramatic nor impressive. When someone is seen typing and tapping noises are heard, whether it is the typewriter itself or "composed" tappings that are heard; substantially, it is hearing what is seen. And that, I understand, is taboo in the best counterpoint circles. Even that would not have mattered had the result been effective.

At another moment Yale leaves Barr and an assistant, and enters the next room. We hear him fall heavily. Parr rushes to the locked door and shouts "Yale! ! " Swifter than an echo a "composed" shout follows which sounds like the intake gasp of an old type motor-horn. This is repeated. The effect is something like a 'still' in which the sitter has
moved. Its objective purpose in the film is beyond conception.

None the less if, taken as a whole, the manner of the film had been enriched by its tonal embellishments, one would treat these details as dull facets of a brilliant gem; and even condone the Edgar Wallace quality of the matter on which the manner had been lavished. But it had not. In fact, quite an opposite effect had been achieved. The screen had parted with its hypnotic magic, for attention was divided between listening and looking. Where once we rejoiced in the harmony of silence and shadow, disunity now prevailed.

*Hay Chowl.*

**HEAVY STUFF**

From the very beginning heavy stuff has drawn intellectuals into the cinema to scoff, and they have found it so amusing that they have stayed to scoff further. The spectacle of Jannings, as the cuckold sobbing Janningsquely in the arms of guilty Gary Cooper is something for which everyone is the sadder for having missed.

Memory as a projector in the mind, snaps back to *Waterloo*, with the mock-heroics of the general postponing preparations for a decisive engagement in order "not to
alarm the ladies”, and the drummer-boys dying in the arms of wounded warriors. To recall the menace which the extras put into the movements of their swords before they engaged in battle (fighting Chinese fashion and attempting to vanquish the enemy by pulling horrid faces) is to re-enjoy a hearty laugh. Blücher had brought the almost forgotten art to perfection and could manipulate his eyebrows in the most incredible undulations.

In the same picture there was a vamp who stole a much sealed enemy document; she read it every alternate second and occupied the rest of her time in staring into the lens with half closed eyes.

We are grateful to Henny Porten for romping through a love scene in Love in a Cowshed with a warehouse, full of most useful but somewhat shy-making domestic utensils, as background!

To return to Jannings and Gary Cooper; for, as we are no respecter of persons, we would like to show what The Film Arts Guild has done for America, apart from putting wise-crack titles into Warning Shadows!

Lewis Milestone was lucky to have been instructed in Swiss local colour by an optimist. All the inhabitants of his village retain national costume on which everlasting snow falls softly. (Special effect for the sonorous film?) Gary Cooper, as an artist from Vienna, has a fur coat. Esther Ralston falls for Gary, or the fur coat, but is forced by relentless parents to marry the Mayor.

Young Gary, faithful to his promise, returns to claim his bride on the day the picturesque village is celebrating nuptials for Jannings and Esther. Camera moves down the
CLOSE UP

festive table. Male extras are imitating the great tragedian; wiping beer from moustaches with coat-sleeve, winking eyes smugly at females. Oh! Mr. Jannings, that they should steal your stuff is unprofessional and a dirty trick BUT it is shattering to see a chorus of Janningses going through a routine as slickly as the Tiller girls; a sight to be treasured!

Goldylocks, our heroine, changes her wig from plaits to shingles; moreover, we can tell that time has elapsed from the presence of two youngsters who use pea-shooters on papa. Gary comes back every year, for Esther's birthday party, specially to draw the inscription on the birthday cake. (We fear that Mr. Cooper could not have been much of an artist; we saw his effort in close-up!)

Soft music. Why did you come back? I could not help myself, something stronger than I, etcetera. You must never come again. But to-night is still left to us, let us be happy to-night!

They steal the toboggan from the two children, under the eternal grown-up pretext of joining in the game. They crash! Gary is mortally wounded, Esther is dead.

Of course all the men at the birthday party try to dance with the girl who brings the news; Jannings himself cuts a few capers with her before the cigar falls from his mouth and the guests leave in silence, with bowed heads. Esther is laid on her death-bed, the children burst into the room to wake mother up. Wurlitzers, chocolates stuffed with pink cream, and handkerchiefs with Quelques Fleurs.

Dear, dear, dear, all these excitements cannot be good for such an old man, think, also, of what Jannings went through in The Street of Sin; when he almost raped a Salvation Army
Ombres et Lumieres, a film by Gussy Lauwson. See The Independent Cinema in Belgium by Carl Vincent in this issue.
Impatience, a film by the young Belgian artist, Charles Dekeukeleire.

Combat de Boxe, by Charles Dekeukeleire. See The Independent Cinema in Belgium in this issue.
Impatience, by Charles Dekeukeleire.
**Turksib (Turkestan Siberian Railway)**, a Russian film directed by Turin. Below, the Kirghis are admiring the first auto car they have ever seen.
The Wufku studios at Kiev, recently very greatly enlarged and re-equipped.
Monkeys’ Moon, a POOL film in the Studio Films series by Kenneth Macpherson, which will be seen in England during the winter.
Under the Greenwood Tree, a British International Sound film by Harry Lachman. See Lachman and Others, by Hugh Castle in this issue.

The Rails are Sounding, one of the new Sovkino films, the theme of which is the development of a railway system.
The beginning of a film. A mysterious effect during the building of sets for *Under the Greenwood Tree* at the British International Studios.
CLOSE UP

lass. (He always was too slow about this sort of thing to make a success of it!)

The plot calls for further demonstrations. Searching through his wife’s clothes he discovers a letter from Gary calling on Esther to break the news to her husband that one of the boys is illegitimate. Gary, it appears, wanted to take his own son to Vienna and give him the chance to get a fur coat!

Imagine how that gives Jannings a fresh start for mouth and eye acrobatics! Yes, we did not tell you that this picture is called Betrayal, we thought that might spoil your surprise!

Off to the hospital where Gary is dying. A nurse makes no effort to stop the ensuing scene, the excitement of which precipitates the patient’s end. However, she wears a quaint pointed cap which lends interest to the composition. You see this is a Jannings picture, an art picture, the sort of thing The Film Arts Guild has been advocating; the story may be a little silly but the ART creeps into the background, into the angles and all the rest. The Film Arts Guild went to such a lot of trouble to snap up the story of Joyless Street because they discovered so much ART in the unusual settings of war-shattered Vienna!

The reader can guess the rest of the story of Betrayal; how Jannings nearly hurls a child from the top of a studio mountain, and how the love of a trusting innocent, etc.

January, 1930, will see the general release of a Russian picture, Ivan the Terrible, which contains some high pressure records; all forms of torture are photographed richly amidst beautiful fabrics. The art is in the background, without
question; and, although the picture is not great, it is exciting. In spite of the exceptionally heavy sadistic stuff we were never moved to disrespectful laughter. There is a scene when Ivan has blinded a tiresome clown with scalding soup, and the jester's cap lies, where it has rolled, at the foot of the throne. Ivan has the idea of humiliating a boyard by forcing him to don the cap. Had Mr. Milestone directed the picture it would not have mattered who had been chosen as the victim of the little prank; it would have been vitriolic Ivan whose head the cap fitted.

In other words intellectuals are welcome to their mirth, we film-lovers are entitled to it ourselves, for it is not the fault of the cinema that Waterloo, The Street of Sin, Betrayal, and the rest of the ordinary heavy stuff is such pleasant material for scoffers.

Oswell Blakeston.

EPOCH

The first tele-talkie has been produced by Capt. Baird. By fives we went into a little room: were lined up, shortest in the front, tallest to the rear, and told to stare at a mahogany box with a screen about as large as a magazine page. Method was sound on film: matter was assorted stills of His Majesty, The Prince of Wales, and animated
CLOSE UP

pictures of various performers. By craning, a duet could just squeeze their heads into the frame. Actually the film was being relayed from another room, but we were told that fifty miles would present no difficulty, and that the screen could be enlarged to the size of a door.

Sound and synchronisation pretty nearly technically perfect; images quite distinct, and curiously plastic owing to high chiaroscuro, but very yellow in tone.

We were, in effect, back in that penny peep show which Edison tried to endow with phonograph synchronisation. Prophecy in these circumstances is excusable. Television itself suggests the time not far distant when the radio performer will appear—in colour and stereoscopy, no doubt, unless there is another Flood—on the home screen. That does not affect the cinema at all, because the essence of the cinema (or one essence) is that it is made in many different places and at many different times before being assembled. A stage play may be televised, but it will not be cinema or anything like it: it would aim no great blow at the cinema as an art or an industry. Nor would the contemporaneous exhibition of a battle in China, or a New York murder trial.

But we must consider next the televising of a full talking-colour-stereoscopic film made in the normal way in a normal factory. This does not affect the art of the screen at all: only the economics. From some central tower a master copy of the film will be relayed to a big cinema, to a chain of provincial cinemas, and to a million private homes. Expense of receiving sets will slightly limit the number of the latter, and desire for company will still bring people to the public hall. Perhaps the programme will be diversified
by televised variety, acted at the same moment: certainly the theatre will have to give many new attractions to bring folk from the fireside. The precise effect of this on renters, showmen and producing companies is, of course, still too obscure to make prophecy valuable. It is probable, however, that broadcast film will be national in sentiment. One sees government monopolies. Who will be the first Minister for Films?

R. d'E. Burford.

POUR LA DEFENSE DU CINÉMA ARTISTIQUE

Récemment encore, nous singalions, ici même, la nécessité d'une entente entre cinéphiles et metteurs en scène indépendants, pour permettre aux uns comme autres de sauvegarder l'intérêt du film personnel. La constitution de clubs privés dans bon nombre de villes européennes était un premier pas dans cette voie. Le principe d'association demeure à la base de toute activité fructueuse et l'on a constaté avec satisfaction que de telles initiatives furent généralement bien accueillies. Les effectifs de ces groupements d'amateurs de films de qualité, assez minces au début, se grossirent bientôt de tous les esprits curieux de formules d'art nouvelles. Mais la liaison n'était pas assurée de façon
rationnelle entre les divers clubs constitués, entre ces clubs et les artistes indépendants du film, aussi. Aux puissantes organisations des producteurs de films industriels il fallait opposer un bloc défensif et pour cela rassembler les foyers épars du cinéma artistique et indépendant, créer une centrale de location, où viennent converger les essais isolés des auteurs de mérite. Assurer à la fois une plus grande facilité de composition des programmes des séances de clubs privés et encourager, rétribuer même les efforts des artistes indépendants, voilà ce que permettra une telle organisation. Est-il besoin de dire qu’elle était d’élémentaire nécessité!

Sur l’initiative de Mr. Robert Aron, de Du Cinéma, un Congress International Du Cinéma Indépendant a été convoqué à La Sarraz, dans le pittoresque château de Madame de Mandrot, qui siègera du 2 au 7 Septembre. Son but : atteindre aux objectifs signalés ci-dessus. A ce jour, le Congrès a déjà réuni les délégations de 12 pays différents. Signalons, au nombre des personnalités éminentes du monde cinégraphique qui nous occupe : Cavalcanti, René Clair, Moussinac, Hans Richter, Ruttmann, Lupu Pick, Eisenstein, Marinetti, Prampolini et Alberto Sartoris, déjà présents. Une petite Société des nations, comme on le voit, dont les décisions seront, aux yeux des cinéphiles, pour le moins aussi importantes que celles prises à Genève par les gouvernements. Mais tandis que ces derniers songent à désarmer sans hâte ni conviction, à La Sarraz c’est d’armement qu’il est question, armement rapide et minutieux, mobilisation générale de toutes les unités agissantes, préparation de plans de campagne définis en vue d’assurer au film artistique sa place au soleil et aux gourmets des salles.
obscures un régal, au moins, par semaine. De toute évidence, les pionniers de l'art cinégraphique, réunis dans l'austère demeure de Madame de Mandrot, ne traiteront pas à la légère les questions à l'ordre du jour. On y fera de bon travail, n'en doutons pas, si l'on ne s'abandonne à des discussions byzantines.

Freddy Chevalley.

THE INDEPENDENT CINEMA CONGRESS

An international congress of the independent cinema was held from the second to the seventh of September at the chateau of Madame de Mandrot at la Sarraz.

S. M. Eisenstein was present as delegate from Russia. He came at the last moment (the other two delegates not having been able to obtain the Swiss visa) accompanied by his assistant G. Alexandroff and his cameraman E. Tisse. Alberto Cavalcanti, Leon Moussinac, Janine Boussounouse, J. G. Auriol and Robert Aron (who was president of the congress) represented France, Walter Ruttmann, Hans Richter and Bela Balazs came from Germany (Pabst was prevented from being present) J. Isaacs and Ivor Montagu from England, Montgomery-Evans from the United States, F. Rosenfeld from Austria, Prampolini and Sartoris from Italy, M. Franken from Holland, Moituro Tsuytja and Hijo
CLOSE UP

from Japan, Caballero from Spain, and from Switzerland Guye, Schmitt, Kohler and Masset.

There were several difficulties at the beginning. The nature of the independent film (formerly avant garde film) was not understood in the same way by different members of the Congress. Thus, for example, Hans Richter was rather perturbed that Pabst had been invited, for, said he, Pabst made "spielfilms", that is films with plot and action, with professional actors. It was clear that Richter understood that only absolute and abstract films could be denominated independent films.

It has often enough been pointed out that the absolute film is definitely a genre of cinema interesting in itself, but at once an error if it is considered as the only possible manifestation of cinema, that is to say as soon as cause and effect are confused. It seems to me negligible and of secondary importance whether a film is made with living or inanimate objects if it has its own integrity.

At last a basis was found. And practical discussion became possible. The results of this discussion are the creation of an International League of Independent Cinema and of a co-operative of production. The League will have for its principal aim distribution among the already existing clubs (such as the Film Society or Film Liga) and the creation of films of note. Naturally the films produced by the co-operative will be contained in the programmes of these clubs. The League will also distribute current films which for one reason or another could not be released in the commercial theatres, on the condition, of course, that their cinegraphic value justifies the idea.
Most important, though not always of the most practical value, is the contact of various groups all over the world whose aim is the furtherance of good films.

It was decided also to send a petition to the Institut International Intélléctuel at Rome, asking for favourable conditions in respect of censorship and quota for films of the co-operative and those which the League will distribute; a justifiable demand, since these productions will be confined to a public already educated and intelligent, and able to furnish sufficient guarantee of moral responsibility.

The big event was the arrival of S. M. Eisenstein, who the next day made a little film, in which all members of the congress played a rôle, a short comedy which will incidentally be the first production of the co-operative.

The enthusiasm of Eisenstein was so infectious that all the serious minded were tempted to forget their dignity and do as he instructed.

I shall not speak here of Eisenstein himself, who so greatly changed the aspects of the congress, but I should in any event like to proclaim my admiration for this splendidly youthful man who has to his credit Potemkin, Ten Days and The General Line.

We must now wait for the results of the congress. But in spite of a vivid scepticism which I maintain always toward any sort of congress, very little was said (which is well enough, since it at least prevents the usual bêtises) and it is to be hoped that the goodwill of all these different beings, who all more or less pursue the same ends, will lance itself strongly enough to be a real creative force.

Jean Lenauer.
NEWS OF THE SOVIET CINEMA

The operator, Valenty, has set to work to photograph a full-length chronicle (news) film, *The Country of the Soviets*. The purpose of the film is to reflect the face of the country, its natural treasures, its achievements since the Revolution and its current organisation.

For the purpose of the actual photography Valenty will visit about 80 different districts in various parts of the U.S.S.R. At each of the various points where filming will take place, Valenty will get into close touch with the local organisations of the Society of Friends of the Soviet Kino. On the one hand, he will in each town have a technical cinema consultation with the local organisation of the Society of Friends of the Soviet Kino; and, on the other hand, the Society will give him information regarding the local life and discuss with him the choice of the material for the photographs. This work represents an important experiment, which, if it is successful, will be introduced into the system of Soviet cinema production.

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The Soviet of People’s Commissars of the R.S.F.S.R. have accepted a resolution in regard to the supply of educational films to the masses of the people.

Over the whole territory of the Р.S.F.S.R. free hire and marketing by the producing, government and social organisa-
tions (trades unions, co-operatives, etc.)—and, in particular, by the cinema-organisations—are allowed.

By educational films are understood only films of a political-educational, scientific-educational and of a scholastic or chronicle (news) character. The purpose of these films must be to convey to the spectators information regarding some branch of knowledge of social, political and cultural life. The hiring and sale of the educational films will be effected by the corresponding organisations under the general supervision and control of Sov-Kino.

The so-called CHICHERIN courses of foreign languages are making an attempt to utilise the kino for the purpose of teaching foreign languages. In the ARTES cinema the film Nanook was exhibited, with specially prepared captions in the English language. The captions are drawn up in such a way that the spectator—if he had the very slightest knowledge of the language—could, comparing them with the pictures shown on the screen, grasp the meaning of the words.

The text of the captions will also be read aloud by the teacher conducting the courses, in order that the audience may master the correct pronunciation.

Exhibitions of this nature will be organised regularly every week by the director of the courses.

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VOSTOK-KINO (East-Kino).

In the desert of Karakum in the country of the Turkomans the Cinematographic Group of the director, Y. Raisman and
the scenario artist S. Ermolinsky are conducting at high speed the photographs of nature for the picture, *The Earth is Athirst*. The staging of this picture is being effected in collaboration with Meschrabpom-Film.

The scenario of the film illustrates the problem of transport in Central Asia. The action takes place in our day. The services of Turkomans have been enlisted as consultants in connection with this work.

Another series of private governmental and social exhibitions of the picture *Turksib (The Steel Road)* has been arranged. The author and director was V. A. Turin.

The picture was shown to the Pan-Federal Congress of Soviets, and met there with unanimous approval.

On June 15 of the present year, Vostok-Kino sent an expedition to the peninsula of Yamal. The route of the expedition is as follows: Archangel—Island of Kolguef—Nova Zembla—Sharapovy Koshky on the peninsula of Yamal—Lake Yarro-Togor—Obdorsk—Tazovaya Guba—city of Turukhansk—city of Krasnoyarsk. From Archangel to the peninsula of Yamal, the expedition proceeds on a small trading schooner of the polar type. From Yamal to Obdorsk the journey is across what is in the summer marshland. From Obdorsk to Turukhansk the reindeer transport of winter will be used. Finally, from Turukhansk to Krasnoyarsk, reindeer, dogs and horses will be used.

The total length of the journey will be about ten thousand kilometres. It is calculated that the expedition will cover a period of seven months. The expedition will take photo-
graphs showing the life of the natives of these extreme northern regions of the Soviet Federation.

The following will take part in the expedition: director and operator V. Bluvstein, who had a share in the photography of the film, The Krassin, and the literary assistant, N. Shapnov—author of the book, Through the Ice for Italy.

*   *   *

PRODUCTION OF FILMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

At the VUFKU film-factory at Odessa, the multiplicator, T. Weissmann, is working at a children’s multiplicative picture, The Adventures of Boris Malyachuk (scenario by G. Ivanova). Theme: the adventures of a pioneer, accidentally finding his way into an aeroplane.

At the Vufku film-factory at Kiev, the director, K. Bolotof (operator: P. Gorbenko) is organising a children’s film The Pest, dealing with the subject of the struggle against hooliganism in the school. In the picture will be shown teaching in the school in accordance with the complex method and an excursion of the pupils.

The director, Shtrizhak, with the operator, Ya. Kulish, is setting to work on a children’s film, The Boy from the Camp (scenario by Sharansky) dealing with a Soviet Children’s Colony.

A film Komsomal ("Communist League of Youth") is being staged by Ya. Pechorin with the operator, D. Seda. The photographs will be taken in Kiev and the surrounding
CLOSE UP

district. The picture is concerned with the jubilee of the Communist League of Youth.

A full-length artistic film for young people, The Girl Student, based on the life of women students, will be staged by director A. Kapler, in accordance with the scenario of I. Bakan.

The scenic workshop of the Kiev film-factory is working at the artistic scenario for the film Contact, based on the life of the Communist League of Youth, in accordance with the theme furnished by V. Okhramenko. The film presents the problem of due contact between the old and the young workers in industry. The story is concerned with the mutual relations between the young pioneer and the old workman who does not want to disclose the secrets of his trade.

The mounting of an artistic picture The Fatal Loop, is being completed; it is the work of the director A. Poregud. The picture describes the life of Soviet aviators. The principal parts are played by: V. Vishnevskaya, S. Magaida, P. Masokha.

The author-operator, M. Kaufmann, who took the Vufku pictures, The Eleventh Year and The Man with the Movie Camera and who staged the picture The Creche, is finishing the mounting of the full-length artistic film Spring, which will show this season of the year in all its aspects.

In the Snowdrifts. Director: Paul Dolina. The picture will show the Ukraine in the year 1918. On this background the drama is unfolded of a peasant girl, who is a red partisan. The chief parts in the picture are played by Z. K ordumova and S. Svashenko (hero of the films, Zvenigora and Arsenal).
PICTURES IN PREPARATION BY THE KIEV VUFKU FACTORY.

_Suburban Quarters._ Author, M. Bazhan. The foundation of the film is the struggle with anti-semitism and Hebrew nationalism in family life. The picture shows the life of a small town and of the Communist League of Youth.

_The Valley of Miracles._ Author, A. Ruter. An anti-religious artistic film concerned with the theme of the "miracle" in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

_The Three Brothers._ Author, K. Koshevsky. Cinema poem about the class-struggle in the Ukraine.

_Adventures of a Soviet Khlestakov._ Full length comedy of adventure. Author, V. Okhrenenko.


_The Secret of Rapit._ The positive type of Soviet manager. Author, M. Maisky.

_The Forest Song._ A country film. Struggle for collectivisation in the pottery industry at Polis. Author, N. Yatno.

* * *

CONSTRUCTION OF NEW CINEMA THEATRES.

The management of Vufku have decided to construct in the course of the next two years 15 new cinema theatres, fitting them up in such a way that it will be possible to use them for the demonstration of sound films. The possibility
of introducing sound-films will also be kept in view in connection with the construction of village-clubs.

With this end in view Vufku is working out some plans for standard cinema theatres of the town and village type.

The management of Vufku intends to despatch one of its workers to America for the purpose of studying the problems of the sound film.

In the course of the present year 5 sound-film apparatuses will be purchased for the cinema-theatres in the Ukraine.

The director, Dovjenko, author of the films Arsenal and Zvenigora, is about to stage a film The Earth, with his own scenario.

* * *

THE STATE CINEMA INDUSTRY IN GEORGIA.

In preparation.

Saba (director Chiarily, operator Polkevich, artist L. Gudiaashvily, scenarist Alkhazishvily and Aravsky). This picture has been approved by the Soviet of Arts and is being issued for hire in the cinemas of Tiflis. The theme of the picture is the decline of a working family as a result of the drunkenness of the father—a workman. It is based on the life of the tramway workers in Tiflis; the local press and the workers who have witnessed it have recognized the artistic achievements and the social significance of the picture.

* * *

CENTRAL SOVKINO FACTORY.

An expedition has set out from the Sovkino factory, headed by the director Ivanov Barkov and the operator Giber, to
Kuban and the Mikhailovskaya desert, with a view to taking photographs for the anti-religious picture, *Juda*. This picture will include photographs of the ancient monastery "Rostov Veliky".

The director of the Sovkino factory, Poznansky (who acted as co-director on the film *Her Way*) has set to work on the photography for the picture *Needless Enmity*. The subject is the entry of women into the ranks of skilled workers and the needlessness of competition between men and women workers in industry.

* * *

At the Leningrad Sovkino factory experiments have been carried out with sound photography. Records were made of a speech, singing and orchestral music. The results obtained were entirely satisfactory.

At the present time the first speaking film is being photographed at the Leningrad factory.

* * *

VSEVOLOD MEYERHOLD AND MESCHRABPOM-FILM.

Vsevolod Meyerhold has set to work at the Meschrabpom factory on the staging of the picture *Eugene Bazarof*, based on Turgenev's novel, *Fathers and Children*.

The idea of the film is to exhibit Bazarof as the first Russian materialist.

* * *

V. I. Pudovkin, jointly with the scenarist A. Pzheshevsky,
CLOSE UP

has finished his director's work on the setting for *Life is Good*.

In connection with the fact that this picture will be the first sound-film produced by Meschrabpom-Film, the director, L. Obolensky, who belongs to the V. Pudovkin group, is at the present time making experiments in regard to the application of the sound-kino to the Vey apparatus constructed by the engineer, P. Tager.

* * *

Meschrabpom-Film is putting into effect the order of the Government in regard to the free hire of educational films. During the present year the hiring of educational films will be considerably extended.

In consideration of the fact that the market for the hire of educational films has up to now been insufficiently organised and that its further development depends entirely on the activities of the clubs and organisations which directly control the enterprises for the showing of films, Meschrabpom-Film has forwarded to these organisations a notification that it is prepared to give the maximum of support to all such organisations and clubs as are giving their attention to the hiring of and organisation of the market for cultural films.

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For the film *2 Buldi 2*, the director, Lev Kuleshof is taking photographs for Meschrabpom-Film in a special large-scale circus decor constructed in the courtyard of the factory.

The decor by the artist Ballyuzek reproduces an actual circus with an arena and large accommodation for spectators and for the orchestra. Four operators are to take simultaneous photographs of the acrobatic numbers, "Trio
CLOSE UP

Okeanos'', the clowning of Williams Truzzi with 20 trained horses, etc.

At the Pan-Federal Congress of Rabis, V. I. Pudovkin was elected a member of the Central Committee.

At the first session of the new presidium Pudovkin was elected chairman of the Central Committee of the Art Soviet of Sovkino.

* * *

ENCOURAGEMENT OF YOUTH.

With a view to closer contact with the State Technical School of Cinematography and to the utilisation of youthful talents, Meschrabpom-Film has entrusted the students who have completed their courses with the staging of a number of short-length pictures.

P. A.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

A RUSSIAN FILM.

Now that The Waiter's Daughter is to be shown in England a short note may have topical importance.

War is suggested by photographs, with one shot of men in snowed-in trenches.
CLOSE UP

Proprietor of the restaurant inspects the shoes of his waiters to make certain that they have rubber soles, which will not annoy the clients. Of course THE waiter has immense holes in his shoes.

All the Wardour Street of Moscow dines at this restaurant if one is to judge by the types. That includes the villain and the general. And the waiter does all the wrong things, and looks pathetic because they curse him.

At the end of a banquet he steals some of the fruit for his daughter, while he maintains his kittenishly pathetic appearance.

His daughter plays the violin, his wife . . . well, she married him. Cat plays with a ball of wool; the news arrives that the son has been killed in one of the snowed-in trenches. The son whom we have seen, and cannot worry about as we fear he may be like his father.

The flavour is that of a Stephen Leacock version of a Russian novel.

Mother falls in a fit. The waiter drops all the plates. His wages are stopped. He loses the chance to acquire a note for 500 roubles. Wife dies. Daughter is expelled from the Academy of music . . . Even in a Russian film this is full value for one's money.

Mr. Protozanov, who directed, keeps up the misery with stolen documents, and a would-be raper of the fair daughter. Spider and the fly. You will know me by the orchid in my buttonhole, etc. Malinovskaja is the girl, Tchekhov the waiter.

O. B.
A NEW FORCE IN THE BRITISH CINEMA.

"There is a difference between a cameraman and a photographer."
"Criticism is all very well, but one must start sometime to make films oneself."

Such are the deracinating remarks of Mr. J. Grierson, who has made the best, and most Russian, British film.

The swish of the sea, and the pulling in of nets; two short beats, one long. White houses; seamen with white parcels under their arms; white seagulls; the white light house, temple of white light; the high seas and white breakers.

Two miles of nets; the sky darkens.

What adventure in the words "mizzen" and "spanker", words from the boys' books of adventure. And one man keeps watch till dawn. A slumbering boy is roused, in the most unaffected manner, to take his part in the labour of pulling in the nets.

Dog-fish and congers, destroyers, move between the shoals. (Sequence taken in a tank with several exposures. All the fish pour in one direction except a few, in the last exposure, and this clever piece of production gives the sensation of speed.)

Storm. More steam for the straining winch. How pleased we are for these sailors, so natural in their close ups, when this monotonous task is over.

If we cannot learn it from Eisenstein, from Mr. Grierson, let us learn that working men are the best actors.

Visual metaphor, a whale. Heavy, sludgy.

Full speed ahead, through the storm seas to get first
CLOSE UP

to the market. Seas crash over the bows; men downstairs take food, the stoker gives himself a light from the burning coals.


Drifters will make Mr. Grierson's reputation throughout the world, he needs no puff. We would rather keep our breath for shouting "Hurrah".

O. B.

TWO EXHIBITIONS.

At the International Exhibiton of the London Salon of Photography there is an advertisement for Sunkist, which shows a hazy liquid matching the crinkles in a beaten tray; there is a screen effect with a parrot's shadow; there is a study of a receding wave in mournful tones of flat sepia; there is a corrugated sunshade with sleek balloons; there are black luminous ducks on luminous water; there is a design, by Hiromu Kira, of small black shafts against white mass; there are ambery lights in a print of some earthenware pots; there are the beaded droppings from a guttering candle; but there is nothing to compare with the vital modernisms in controlled light, which are familiar to everyone in touch with the art movements.
That we are not exaggerating can be proved by the fact that the plates of Cecil Beaton are considered "freak". We wonder if the critic, who used this word in a West End paper, ever heard of Francis Bruguière, or is acquainted with the work he did several years ago?

The omission of several names is perturbing. Surely we could have been spared the old stuff with the nude girl and the fan, or the little sun of light? And is a portrait really interesting because a girl holds a tray behind her head? And when are we to see the end of the snap-shots of oil, reflections, speckled black and white halation, deep set backgrounds, steps broken off, modern houses looked up at, scaffolding, squared light behind a sitter's head, heads of old men with one lamp cast upwards on the sweating brow, certain aspects of a roof? Is it terribly clever to take a picture of Elsa Lanchester's arm-pit, or somebody else's feet in a boat?

We believe that photography is an art, closely allied to cinematography; but, the light must be controlled. It is mere journalism to take an arrangement of oil drums on a wharf, or a pile of herrings. The journalist is not responsible for the grouping or the lighting. Moreover, the nudes and curves of cardboard are not the best subjects for the seeker of better things.

P. Dubreuil's jazz studies should be mentioned but they are not of importance.

The Annual Exhibition of British Photography is still more disappointing. A polite Japanese student told us that he found it a good way to pick up English, consult the catalogue and look at the photo. There is certainly no
attempt to baffle the public. There are countless heads of "Bobby", "Joan", and "Carol". There are wishy moons and smudgy nothings. There are the properties of threads of garlands, flower bowls and all the rest of the bunk. Madame Yvonne, however, has a pleasant innovation. She joins the profile of two sitters in quite an attractive manner. The advertising work of Howard Coster has vitality, and he makes use of the trick of cutting out his heads and pasting them on a careful mount.

Oswell Blakeston.

LIGHT AND SHADE.

AN ABSTRACT FILM BY GUSSY LAUWSON

This is one of the many avant garde shorts which Mr. Stuart Davis is bringing to the Avenue Pavilion. There are virile groupings of white cubes and cones rotating in light, there is the sudden movement of a varnished ball catching a high-light, there are time patterns with circular objects, and giddy effects with bars and streaks. It is, in a way, terribly smart, terribly à la mode, yet cute. I should like to see it again to be able to give fuller details as it well deserves less cursory attention. Two stills are in this issue.

O. B.
THE MYSTERY OF THE CASTLE OF DICE

I have a suspicion that the inspiration of Man Ray's new film is social rather than cinematic.

I have no doubt that the guests of the Vicomte de Noailles were entertained by Man Ray's clever photographs. His moving shots, inside the house, show us the interior of this really up-to-date villa far more fully than *Vogue* has been able to do.

The Comtesse de Montgomery, Mlle. Orlowska, M. Deshoulières, and M. M. Raval seem to enjoy lying on concrete floors and letting bars of shadow cross their faces. Other celebrities amuse themselves by wearing masks made from silk stockings.

Of course the cinematic side is not completely forgotten: I mean Mr. Ray has remembered to insert a piece of negative and to join in a sequence upside down!

A drive in a car is a little too jerky, or a little too *avant-garde*, to be pleasant.

O. B.

BOOK REVIEWS.

*Motion Pictures with Sound*. By James R. Cameron. (Cameron Publishing Company. Manhattan Beach, New York.)

In a foreword William Fox says that Fox Movietone has graduated from fact to fiction. Oh, yeah?
CLOSE UP

I know of film lovers who are awed, at moments, by the talkies. They felt quite happy about silent Pudovkins, they knew how silent films tried to deceive the public, but not, of course, them: now, when listening to a gentleman say “I can’t go on”, they are troubled with a doubt, a deadly doubt that they are as much in the dark about this new form of the art of light as their neighbour. After reading Mr. Cameron’s manual they will be freed from inhibition, in fact they will feel an itch to run behind the scenes and help the operator in times of stress.

It is all rather matter of fact, but the four hundred pages give the reader a real line-up. The history of the talkie began to be hectic in 1873 when Willoughby Smith demonstrated, to the world of Science, the properties of selenium; which alters its resistance to an electrical circuit as light fluctuates on it. He exhibited, also, that varying heat in light rays, falling on such a substance as lamp black, caused alternate expulsions and absorptions of gas. Professor Bell stepped into the dim limelight, which haloes the heads of those in the world of Science, with his “Singing Arc”. It was Ruhmer who first applied these discoveries to the cinema, although, as Mr. Herring might say, that sentence has nothing to do with the rest of the article.

The beginner will be grateful to Mr. Cameron for giving the schoolroom laws of sound, a most forthright section which follows the history. The difference between longitudinal waves and transverse waves (well, you’d be surprised); telegraphy and telephony; the common vacuum tubes; light sensitive cells, as the photoelectric cell, by means of which common print can be read to the blind, the
actinic electric cell, and the photovoltaic cell; are all docketed neatly. Elementary laws of acoustics are sketched in; for example: one can learn, or remind oneself, that walls closer than 50 feet can give no echo, and that l=v/n. I admit that Mr. Cameron has the honour of being the first to explain television to me so that I could begin to cultivate a bored attitude of superiority towards it after reading his words once only.

A lot of space is devoted to studio technique. At the Fox joint the inner walls are made of 4-inch solid gypsum blocks, 1 inch of hair felt, 3 inches of air space, and another layer of 4-inch gypsum blocks. The outer walls are made of brick and masonry and are about 24 inches in thickness. A double ceiling, concrete plaster separated by a 3 inch air space and 1 inch of hair felt, is supported from roof trusses. Floors are covered with soft carpets, inner walls are draped with Celotex, and heavy Monk Cloth is hung perpendicularly to the walls and ceiling so that it can be raised or lowered to meet the degree of resonance required. The air is changed every 8 minutes. Boy, they don't do these little things by half measures, in other words they look after their barrels of tar and hope that the pounds . . . . . but that sentence ought to have nothing to do with the rest of the article.

The monitor is the important new technician in the sound studio.

He looks down on the set, through three thicknesses of glass, and controls the sounds from a switchboard; he can tone down a violin and tone up a drummer when both are playing in the same orchestra.
CLOSE UP

There are special microphones for the women.

Mr. Cameron passes on to the incandescent lights, commenting on the best makes. All that the reader can extract from this admirable analysis makes the book worth its weight in fan magazines. The problems that faced the engineers were ignored by the producers; the fact that light reflectors will reflect sound, and the 6-inch piano convex condensing lenses, used in front of the bulbs to eliminate "ghosts", were not thought of over an afternoon tea.

The cameras had to be brought into line without the necessity of scrapping the existing equipment. The steel gears had to be changed for gears of formica. The drumming noises in the magazines were cut out by holes in the metal case which interrupted the sound waves. An endless fabric belt removed the danger of "Clicking".

Rival methods of reproducing and recording sound are sifted: the R.C.A. projector, the Vitaphone, the Movietone, the Cinephone, the Phonofilm, the Simotone, the Bristolphone. Some of this was a little too heavy, and I skipped, yet without feeling cheated of any of my money. (I borrowed my copy from a kind colleague!) I picked up from the mass of information the surety that the ear needs a lot of discipline to catch up with the eye; and this in spite of the fact that the eye does not detect contrasts under 2 per cent., and the photoelectric cell recognises variations of 0.1 per cent. Therefore, technically, the stock for recording sound has to be free from the blemishes of the stock used for light recording. "In telephonic terms everything at a level one TU below full moderation will be free from distortion, and the peaks will be substantially perfect."
Still, the ear of the spectator is not ready for the nuances that the eye will welcome. Sensibly Mr. Cameron does not waste time with these psychological problems, but gets on with his job.

Operators will swear by his book, and at a system of entertainment which demands that they shall regulate tonal volume of sound reproduction by the number of patrons in the theatre. The lay mind is struck by the way a sound film must be rehearsed, if the best results are to be obtained, by each operator, much as a play must be rehearsed at each theatre.

Sound tracks on the film are synchronized and the band can be treated like silent positive, but records would drive a saint to the depths of a character in one of Warner Brothers’ underworld dramas. Splicing film with sound track is bad enough, for the join can be heard unless it is covered with a triangular patch of black lacquer, whose frequency is below audible range. The screens can no longer be opaque, the microphones are adjusted behind the screens, so that the sound will reach all parts of the house, and the fabric must be porous. Screens in use to-day, with loose threads forming a fine fuzz, are unsatisfactory because of their poor power of initial reflection, and because the interstices collect dust, rendering the fabric unfit for use in six months.

I hope that I have given some idea of the vast amount of data in Mr. Cameron’s work, which ranges from remarks on film speed indicators to the information that the central portion of the positive crater of an arc is the only steady fragment of the illumination.
CLOSE UP


For those who like a record of a film in book form as well as for those who enjoy historical novels, this book will be an excellent addition to the library shelves. The story is too familiar to need repetition here, but the volume, uniform with Carl and Anna, is convenient to handle and eminently readable. These editions of Peter Davies, Ltd., suggest an excellent means of permanent reference which might prove of value in the history of films. We would welcome a further series devoted to great films which are not necessarily based upon already existing fiction.

The Romance of the Talkies. By Garry Allighan. (Claude Stacey, Fleet Street, London).

This is more likely to prove popular than the opus of Mr. Cameron; for one thing it only costs a shilling, and, for another, it contains anecdotes about penguins which squawk and a chapter of chat on the stars.

It is odd to see the evolution of talkies explained as the desire of the showman for novelty, no credit being given to the growth of an art form. It is, also, strange to find Mr. Allighan discussing British converted sound studios.

What a lot of fighting there is going to be amongst the inventors. This book mentions names which Mr. Cameron ignores, those, for example, of Czermac and Blake. And then the whole matter of speakies was brought to a head by a relative of Professor Bell losing her larynx and the determination of Mr. Warner to combat the vaudeville invasion of the cinemas. Mr. Allighan says so.
There is some new ground. Amateurs are given a section, and sound on steel is explained. (A ribbon of steel wire is magnified in fields of different intensity.)

It has been worked out that, in a "cheapie", words cost two shillings each, and in *Show Boat* about five pounds each. Other scraps of useful information, which, in a note, the author acknowledges that he principally culled from the *Kinematograph Weekly*, the *Biосорое* and other authoritative journals, merit reproduction here.

Every technician, on the floor, wears a permanent telephone set, which enables him to communicate from one silent booth to the other, simply by plugging in his telephone to the nearest terminal. Clive Brook says that you can't float about in speakies, as the rate of turning is twenty-four to the second. The director must control his artistes by means of signs, he must place himself in the position of the conductor of an orchestra. Art directors must think of sets in terms of perfect tunnels. It is impossible for cast or director to do creative work on the sound stage, all must rehearse on a silent stage. As the higher frequencies are the ones which give "brilliance" to music, heavily padded studios sound "dead". The soil on which a studio is to be built should be considered, clay should be replaced by a mat of sand. The demands of newspaper men are forcing the perfection of television. The Bell Laboratories have a department whose function is to make a study of the human throat and ear, as these are the organs used in telephony; therefore they have a staff of fifteen of the most famous ear and throat specialists in America. Sound acoustics can
CLOSE UP

be improved in an auditorium by using heavily upholstered seats.

That is a little peptonised, Mr. Allighan. It is well worth paying a shilling to get more of it. The "dirt" about Gang War is worth the price of the whole book. "A Maine exhibitor had to eliminate the word 'Damn' in his Sunday showings, because the word was on the film."

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

WHAT A RED HELL.

The British film industry once had ideas. It thought it could make films. We have just had The Plaything, based on a play, Life's Pretty Much the Same. It might be said, after viewing it, that our films are still pretty much the same.

An now To What Red Hell, perhaps the most perfectly named picture there has ever been. It started at midnight recently before an enthusiastic audience, and ended up at nearly two thirty before a house as limp as the leading players. Described as the greatest talking picture ever made, it was directed by a gentleman named Edwin Greenwood, who showed no reason why he should ever make another picture.

Its story concerns an epileptic youth who murders a prostitute during a seizure, watches another man be sentenced to death for the crime, only to confess and commit
suicide in time to save the wrongly-accused boy friend. It could have been made into a fair picture, but for the delightful way in which the director made all the players go through their stuff in the best Elephant and Castle manner, flinging their hands about and shaking their heads as though they were playing to a couple of love-birds at the back of the gallery.

But, it has sound technique. Nearly all the long shots are silent picture material, and the "100 per cent. dramatic dialogue" consists of close-up cuttings. The delicious way in which a noisy jazz band is synchronised with the inevitable long-shots, only to be completely cut out from talking close-ups of people supposed to be sitting on top of the dancers, is too funny to miss. Mr. Greenwood assured the Press, incidentally, that his was perhaps the only film for which the music had been specially written in, line for line, scene for scene. We can only hope they never let it occur again.

To repeat the dialogue would be asking for trouble. It has to be heard to be believed. At the end of the picture—as we thought—the madman's father is acquainted of the fact that his son has just stolen his pistol and has taken it into the garden. "You hear that, James?" he repeats to his brother, "he has a revolver." Maybe it was not James. No one really cared.

Nearly 12,000 feet, and the greatest talking picture ever. Hugh Castle.
CLOSE UP

PHASES OF CINEMA UNITY.

If Mr. Potamkin flatters me by quotation in his third article on the above subject, why doesn’t he do the thing properly and complete the quotation? In saying that a fly, with sound apparatus attached would be less of a fly and more of a nuisance, no doubt I implied that the silent film can be “nuisance enough.” Of course it can. I have seen hundreds of silent films that were an intolerable nuisance, either from lacking what they needed or from having what was needless. To my illustration of the fly I added: “The fact is, a fly knows its own business and keeps its movements quiet, and in its own way it is the most perfect thing that ever existed.” Film or fly should contain neither more nor less than its function demands.

Mr. Potamkin says that by attacking the “stupid uses of the sound film to date and the unjustifiable suppression of the silent film,” I am condemning the compound film. What I am really condemning is the stupid and the unjustifiable. But Mr. Potamkin and I are really out for the same things, and I therefore grant him absolution.

Ernest Betts.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

An overhead railway for the transporting of stage sets has been completed at the Lasky-Paramount studios. It has a total length of two miles. By its use large sections
of sets are easily and quickly carried from the carpenter shop to the various stages. Heretofore this work has required large corps of men and huge trucks.

* * *

Al Jolson's current vitaphone film, *Say it with Songs*, is to be followed by *Mammy*, a singing picture which is now in production at Warner Brothers' studio. Both the story and the music are by Irving Berlin, the popular American song writer.

* * *

Universal Company have recently announced the winners in their $2000 prize contest for the best letters in answer to the question, "Why do alluring women love homely men?" This is illustrative of the methods employed by Universal in furtherance of their policy to maintain as close a personal relationship as possible with their film patrons. Each week their national advertisement, in the form of a personal letter from the president, Carl Laemmle, invites comments and suggestions from the public, while at intervals during the year cash prizes are offered for picture titles or for answers to questions such as the one above quoted.

* * *

*Romance of the Rio Grande*, a Fox movietone, has been especially adapted for Warner Baxter from Katherine Gerould's novel, "Conquistador." Baxter's charming portrayal of the gracious Mexican bandit in Fox's first outdoor talking picture, *In Old Arizona*, brought a widespread demand for his further appearance in that type of picture. The locale of the *Romance of the Rio Grande* is in northern Mexico, and the exterior scenes are being taken on the spots
CLOSE UP

actually called for in the story. A cattle round-up is one of the spectacular features of the picture—a ranch containing forty-five thousand head of cattle having been leased for this purpose by the Fox company. Al Santell is directing the production.

* * *

The English celebration of Primrose Day, April 19th, in commemoration of the day of Disraeli’s death, has been recorded on a special Vitaphone reel and will be shown in connection with George Arliss’ film version of Disraeli, recently completed at Warner Brothers’ studio.

* * *

Greta Garbo’s forthcoming M-G-M picture is from a story written especially for her by her present director, Jacques Feyder. Like her current production, The Single Standard, it will be a silent film. Her first talkie, Anna Christie, will follow next.

* * *

Animated cartoons have now been taught to speak and sing. By using what is known as the Cherniavsky system, developed at the Universal studio, the artist of these animated drawings is able to match them perfectly with sound effects.

* * *

Paramount-Lasky sound experts have perfected an "explosion-proof" microphone, which is being used for the first time in George Bancroft’s new picture, The Mighty. Normal microphones and sound tubes are shattered by the explosive vibrations produced by gun fire.

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An Arabian orchestra of five natives, imported directly from Morocco, will be seen and heard in the forthcoming M-G-M screen version of Major Zenovi Peckoff's novel of the Foreign Legion, The Bugle Calls, directed by George Hill.

* * *

The Jade Box, the first talking-picture serial, is in production at Universal. It will consist of ten weekly episodes, of two reels each.

* * *

Golden Dawn, the Hammerstein operetta, is being prepared for the screen by Warner Brothers. A section of the Los Angeles river and its environs will serve as the African locale of the libretto. Alice Gentle and Walter Wolf have the leading rôles, supported by several other equally well known operatic singers. A chorus of two hundred negroes will constitute a unique and impressive feature of the film.

* * *

The Fox Company's recently announced policy of discontinuing the making of silent films has been amended. The inability of thousands of exhibitors throughout the country to secure sound equipment for their theatres has induced the company to resume the making of silent versions of their movietone productions. And this they will continue to do until at least seventy-five per cent. of the theatres are equipped to show audible films. At present not more than twenty-five per cent., or a little over five thousand, are thus equipped.

* * *

At the present writing the title of Norma Talmadge's forthcoming first talkie is New York Nights. It was
CLOSE UP

originally Tin Pan Alley. Not the least of Hollywood's problems is the selecting of picture titles. Experience has taught the film producer that Shakespeare's airy opinion of the value of a name has no place in the picture show business.

* * *

Not to be outdone by the Warner Brothers in their all-star Show of Shows, Paramount Lasky are preparing a like stellar production, headed by Elsie Janis. The title and the theme of the picture have not yet been announced. So far the studio managers have contented themselves with the impressive announcement that the production will not only include every star and feature player under the Lasky banner, but will also call for the co-operation of all the directors, all of the writers and all of the technical experts of the organization.

* * *

La Marseillaise is the title of a "super-production" under way at the Universal studio. The story deals with the life of Rouget de Lille, the composer of the French national anthem, and the circumstances surrounding the birth of the song. The music for the picture has been written by Charles Wakefield Cadman, one of America's foremost composers. Paul Fejos is directing the picture.

* * *

The actors' strike, ordered by the Actors' Equity Association has been called off. Disaffection among the ranks of the association itself and the uncompromising stand on the part of the producers are responsible for the defeat of this attempt to unionize the picture industry. While the
strike caused some inconvenience to the producers, it at no time seriously interfered with the casting of their pictures or the maintainance of their production schedules.

* * *

United Artists studios announce that D. W. Griffith is planning to film a life of Abraham Lincoln. Griffith himself, in commenting upon the project, says, "I regard the opportunity of bringing the story of the real Lincoln to the talking screen as a sacred trust, and if I am in any way successful in doing justice to the character of the greatest man in American history, I shall have accomplished the greatest ambition of my life."

* * *

*Tiger Rose,* a forthcoming Warner Brothers’ picture, contains a novelty in the form of a completely dark scene—the interior of an unlighted room. No camera was used. The scene was "shot" wholly with microphones and consists only of the voices of two men talking in an unseen adjoining room.

C. H.

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A new creative group has been formed in New York, called Excentric Films, which devotes itself solely to the experimental in Film Art and plans to release its films through the little film art theatres in America and in Europe.

The initial production now under way, is a two reel satire,
CLOSE UP

What's Wrong Now? (tentative title), from a story by Lajos N. Egri, Hungarian playwright whose expressionistic drama, Rapid Transit was produced in New York by the Provincetown Players. The film has been adapted for the screen by Herman G. Weinberg who is also assisting in the capacity of assistant director and who was heretofore connected with various little "art" theatres in New York, The Fifth Avenue Playhouse, The Carnegie Playhouse, etc.

Direction and sets are by Robert van Rosen (formerly scene designer for Maurice Schwartz's Yiddish Theatre, the Provincetown Playhouse and others). The settings will be in the expressionistic vein, there are to be no titles and several new photographic (or rather, cinematographic) innovations are promised.

The story is a satire on feminine idolatry in America and judicial methods there and will be projected through the medium of grotesque fantasy and stylized acting—much of the "slip action" hearkening back to Freud's notebooks, since it is of course, impossible, because of stringent moral censorship in New York, to achieve complete "realism" where the story's exigencies demand it.

A set of "stills" will be forwarded CLOSE-UP for exclusive release on the Continent as soon as they are available.

Simultaneously, another film, a one-reel study of New York, styled, Cosmopolis, by Herman G. Weinberg is also being made and will be released at the same time. Stills from this film will also be sent to CLOSE-UP.

Excentric Films marks the first avant-garde production unit in America.
LUCKY STAR.

A NEW BORZAGE GAYNOR-FARREL SLAPSTICK.

Perhaps the funniest film of the year. Charles does not point the waif’s wee nose to the stars, but washes her “inside and out”. But you have to hear the Gaynor say it to get the chuckle. Photography rotten. You know those studio exteriors, country lanes and such. When anybody moves a million half shadows, spread like a starfish, follow the movement shamelessly, but don’t suggest a million suns shine on these quiet countrysides. Ophthalmic goitre would do as much if you wanted to see things that way.

THE CRIMSON CIRCLE.

British Internationalizing Edgar Wallace.

Musical Effects by Edmund Meisel.

Somebody once spoke of noises “Meiseling” themselves into the subconscious. We lauded this happy discovery in happier memory of Potemkin, Berlin, Hoppla, Ten Days. The man, then, who had given us “effects” for the world’s best films was now to give them for the worst. Or, be kind, and say near-worst.

The programme told us a lot about a method that cannot have existed, and if it had, would have given only one kind
CLOSE UP

of effect—one of permanent yawning. The programme told us, for instance, that every character had a distinctive motif, was also given a musical rendering by means of appropriate instrumentation. (This blah rang no new bell. Shige Sudzuki had once told us much more clarid ideas concerning character instrumentation on a small railway platform near the German Staaken studios). Example of appropriate instrumentation: man talking angrily (boombedeboom)—woman speaking anxiously (peckpeckpeck). Wurlitzers had done it for Felix.

"The music for each scene composed to convey its atmosphere; each picture on the screen has sound in rhythm —expressing the 'soul' of every situation."

The soul of every Edgar Wallace situation!

It was not as bad as that. We should remember how Mara comes into a room and sits down to read a letter, all to the tune of a highly rhythmetised tango. That was worth a lot when you consider Mara—which Meisel helps you to do—in this light. He Meisels her into your subconscious. Nothing else could. Remember too the typewriter's cute tappetytap, and specially a harpsichordish con brio tinkling round the somberer noises of a business interview.

Why do we put a man like Meisel on to a man like (with respects due) Edgar Wallace? Left to ourselves we would certainly accompany Potemkin with Moonbeams in a Chinese Temple Garden. Still, there it is. Tremolo luv motif and all. With fugitive, sly moments of the Meisel we know and care about.
FOUR FEATHERS.

Tense, sporting mothers brought their bowler-hatted off-spring. Remembah, this is England's glory. Cooper and Schoedsack in a flurry of splenetic National Anthematising. The animals were nice. Their animals could not be otherwise. But the rest was not really very funny, though the bowler hats rose like brodericks on bayonets in a military three cheers. It was preceded by the world's wittiest film. A synchronised cartoon entitled *When the Cat's Away*. We'll say no more as Mr. Herring has promised to write on it next month. But, in the meantime, see it if you can.

It is interesting, in spite of the bowler hats of Young England, to take a look at the recently published Educational Survey, from the Secretariat of the League of Nations. This contains the interesting result of an enquiry conducted by Mrs. C. N. Wilson into the child's reaction to war films. This enquiry was set in the form of a *questionnaire*, which asked:

1. What War films have you seen?
2. Write down the name of one of these films.
   (a) How long ago did you see it?
   (b) What do you remember best?
   (c) What do you think of our side?
   (d) What do you think of the other side?
   (e) What did the film make you think of war?
CLOSE UP

This questionnaire was submitted to 4,022 children from 76 schools in Bradford, and to 4,000 children from schools in Kent, Lincolnshire and Oxford, and in every case teachers were asked to do nothing to prejudice the replies one way or the other.

The replies revealed an overwhelming anti-war majority. 95 per cent. of all the cases examined were anti-war. The remaining 5 per cent. were in varying degrees pro-war. From these established facts it is evident enough that war films such as we have seen give to the child mind an impression of distaste and horror.

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We thank Herrn Wolfgang Ertel-Breithaupt and Herrn Hans Walter Kesselmaier, editors of Filmkünstler und Filmkunst, for sending us some copies of their interesting German magazine. (Verlag: Berlin W 30, Rosenheimerstrasse 13). It calls itself a contribution to the history of contemporary films and talkies. We like the fresh and courageous criticism of this paper which does not shrink from honest judgment. Criticism of film production in general, of films, of certain societies and individuals.

There is an article about film-morality that holds the attention. Question of Censorship again, but this time stated from another point of view looked at as the shadow of film morality: there is a lack of responsible men in the broader circles of film industry, speculation instead of creation, business instead of art.
It is a good sign, that the recognition of the bad quality of the average film becomes more and more popular; that an increasing number of people rebel against it. And I hope, too, that there will be a day when a huge majority of good and moral films will make censorship an entirely superfluous institution—instead of its being a hindrance to the few good films that exist to-day.

A good "cultural review" of the talkies endeavours to explain the exceedingly involved state of the matter and to keep us up to date with regard to the latest German and international productions.

Not only film-art but also film-artists are in the scope of this nicely illustrated magazine and we find a lot of photos, drawings, and articles on the leading actors, directors, critics and cameramen.

So that everyone who likes the cinema will find many rewarding features in this monthly review.

Trude Weiss.

Mary Fields, director of non-fiction subjects for British Instructional Films, is completing Deferred Payment, a drama, for The British Social Hygiene Association. The story is of a purser who, on becoming engaged to a girl, reads a leaflet which sends him to a herbalist. He spends a lot of money, and thinks he is cured. At first all is well, but, after the baby, the girl develops his disease, and the second baby is blind. The film has been made with all the technique and polish of an ordinary production, and Miss
CLOSE UP

Fields believes that it is unique among British or American propaganda films in that there is no villain, and that the 'message' is not defeated by over emphasis. The 'other side' is not made a martyr of, and the foolish young man is a very charming personality.

The difficulty in making English propaganda films is (a) small allocation of money—the Government allows about a third per reel of the amount allowed in Germany, and (b) the refusal of most public and private societies to allow an interesting story, or a subtle means of approach.

The Secrets of Nature Films, for which Miss Fields is responsible, are to be synchronised. It will be possible to listen to the bean as it runs, and the process will be explained by voice instead of by sub-titles.

R. d’E. B.

The World League for Sexual Reform arranged a showing of the early Russian film Abortion. It is difficult to comment on it from a cinematographic point of view. It was not, as was announced, the Russian version but a censored German copy, so scratched that it was sometimes difficult to distinguish the images. The projector and the film broke constantly. It would have seemed worth while to hire a portable projector for the evening.

To the intelligent individual it is difficult to understand why the film should not have been shown to family audiences at the Polytechnic. It had much in common with the Little Victorian moral stories nurses used to read to children on
Sunday afternoons, broken by somewhat alarming diagrams in what seemed to be a quite irrational manner.

It was convincing proof however that science and entertainment value have nothing in common, and as compared with *Mechanics of the Brain* or *Bed and Sofa*, this film must be regarded as a failure, at least in the form in which it was presented the other night. We are also becoming convinced that the specialized presentation of such films to small audiences serves little purpose. They were made for the young and the workers and where neither are represented in the audience there is only the impression that a great deal of fuss has been made about a point which intelligent people accept without question. A purely scientific film which offered fresh data of medical value would be valuable and of great interest; to show a censored story and a few diagrams merely builds mystery round a straightforward situation.

**AN AMATEUR FILM OF DISTINCTION.**

*The Gaiety of Nations*, stills of which are included in this issue, is a remarkably good essay in creative imagination produced by two members of the London A.C.A., Mr. J. H. Ahern and Mr. G. H. Sewell. The entire film, 350 feet in length, was made, with the exception of one or two shots, in a room 15 feet by 11 feet, and models were mainly employed.

The life of a city—any city—in Europe is suggested—
CLOSE UP

cafes, streets, skyscrapers, newsboys, electric signs, traffic. A politician is assassinated, war is declared, the people are whipped up into a fever of patriotism, panic breaks out on the Stock Exchange. Then, the scenes of war—battlefields—tanks going into action—explosions—men dying in agony, followed by graveyards—the financial chaos—the triumph of the American dollar.

The models used (mostly cardboard) were simple but extraordinarily effective, as also were the close-ups and silhouettes of human beings in a number of scenes. Realistic shots of battlefield explosions were achieved by the use of tin reflectors.

For the success of a film of this character nearly everything depends on the lighting and the cutting, and both are excellent. Yet the producers worked throughout with only two “Kodalites”! The cutting based on the Russian method, was very good. Some shots were reduced to a matter of frames.

Produced on 16 mm. stock, Gaiety of Nations sets a standard which every amateur should study closely. Some amateurs seem to aim at imitating the large scale productions of the professional studios. Such methods are almost bound to result in failure, for obvious reasons. The function of amateur cinematography should be to create, and not to imitate, to bring something new to the Cinema, and not to copy old methods. Messrs. Ahern and Sewell have shewn what can be done, and how it can be done, and the example they have set should result in nothing but good for the amateur film movement in Britain.

A. W.

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German films (Export brand) used to flutter something in the hearts of those who once had vaguely heard that films were art. The flutter persisted long after Germans themselves had seen the decapitated head of their industry whisked off by that Salome (surnamed Hollywood) who upset all conventions, party politics and first tentatives of international concord, by singing for her somewhat gruesome supper like a chirpy, rather undersized and rather ratty schoolgirl. As is usual in cases of insufferable precocity, people said: "Oh, the little one, Oh, the paragon!"—and came to adore.

So the Germans said: "We too shall have a Little One."

And they did.

And his name was Connie-Boy.

Now, I don’t think you would ever believe that the theme of a shipload of virgins sailing expectantly to Australia in the ’nineties to be married off by ballot to a pack of males
they have never seen in that Land Without Ladies*, could be anything but farce.

It couldn’t. But, for some strange reason, not one of them saw it.

So here we are. How rude and rough and He-Man the beginning! Here in the Land Without Ladies, men are MEN—meaning ferocious nit-wits as usual. To prove it you have to see them enjoying a lynching, all the licking of lips, and all that, in front of a camera that meanders round like a lop-sided and inquisitive old goat.

Contrast with this the tender picture of the cattle-ship—excuse me—the big boat with the ladies, sighingly singing Manchester Spirituals and dreaming, each and every, with her newspaper interview in her hand.

One interview says under the picture, “I want gold”. Another wants children, and a third will keep her man happy. You are shown the lady in order to marvel at humanity’s blind faith. She has the spiritual conception of companionate marriage, and some poor devil has to have her. But hush! This is our heroine we are thoughtlessly criticising. Covered with blushes, let us return to our camp.

These boys, now aren’t they just too happy waiting for the good times coming? Hear us out in front of the screen guffawing away, as we always will, at the barely low-brow, indeed quite browless antics of the fat man scenting woman! And the great big camera keeps turning!

But, look you here, the fat is in the ruddy fire! (We are being He-Man, aren’t we?) There’s a dame too few! Another ballot, and number 68 becomes the odd man out,

* Das Land ohne Frauen.—Conrad Veidt in his first German talkie.
CLOSE UP

and number 413 hops in his place. Well, you know who 68 is don’t you? Try to guess while I tell you more.

Here’s the dock. And just look at those boys. And all this dainty flutter and twitter and holding up of cards. Numbers dwindle. The big blue eyes of Connie-Boy grow rounder and rounder, and still rounder.

The animals come in two by two, as of old, and the busy parsons mop their brows. Tobis with a tin-can orchestra makes sentimental noises. Rings strung on spikes grow fewer. At the end there’s Connie-Boy, and there’s the last bride, one ahead, already married off! And what’s to be done?

The fat man in the bar does surely smell. So the lads, in celebrating mood, wash him at least to the waist with soda syphons. Laughter, dwindling to Connie’s laughter. They stare at him uneasily. He is good at hysterics. But they have a bereft and clinical flavour amid the other kind of hysteria that is mounting in the audience.

When he is told that he was originally 68, and that 68 has the woman that was rightfully his, his eye says trouble ahead, and 68 is Clifford McLaglen. And the woman is the Companionate, which is perhaps one reason why Clifford is in such a hurry to go off after gold, bearing a camel who has the microphone to himself for the whole of five minutes.

The jealous Connie breaks into the Companionate’s room, and is found there, and there’s your reason for the Big Scene.

Night and the shadows falling, and the camera now fondly believing in mass-rhythm from choice rather than understanding, the men turn out, and the cry goes forth: “Lynch the . . . (when you say that, smile!)” and Connie is frog-
marched off to be broken on the wheel, and succeeds in getting becomingly stripped in the process. Someone had heard of "Russian Method," so giant faces, glistening with sweat, grin enragedly into the lens.

Meanwhile, as they say, when they meant a cut-back, the American doctor—who also loves the Companionate, but like a real gentleman, at her request darts in, and using the weight of his presence cries halt. "The man is mad. This cannot go on." And ensues a moving pieta with the victim’s lolling head supported in his arms. And the great big camera keeps turning!

Follows (1) Connie’s return to his white-haired mother.

(2) Clifford fighting his companion for the gold they have found together.

(3) Connie’s recovery, and new job as telegraph operator.

(4) The camel putting his foot through the last water carrier.

(5) Beginning of sand storm.

(6) The exhausted men tottering across the desert leading in this crisis of life and death the camel, which, one understands, is more generally used for riding on.

(7) Their reaching the last, outpost telegraph pole, and sending a wire which Connie takes down.
CLOSE UP

(8) Their total collapse.
(9) Sand whistling.
(10) Connie realising from whom the S.O.S. comes.
(11) Torn fragments of S.O.S. falling in waste-paper basket.
(12) Rain. Torrents of it.
(13) Gradual recovery of McLaglen.
(14) Last and first great renunciation-in-favour-of-honour scene between American Doctor and Companionate.
(15) Return of McLaglen, at last using camel to ride on.
(16) Doctor's honourable suicide.
(17) Companionate's escape through back door to doctor's.
(18) Her return home when she finds out what he meant when he said good-bye.
(19) Clifford singing to his wife, "The Girl I Left Behind."
(20) Connie running along the railway track, into the embrace of the midnight express, calling it happily "Eveline".

As for "Connie-Boy", I'm not responsible. Berlin got there first. Why talk of images, of light, of form, of unity, of content and intention, rhythm, montage—all that bunk?—It's dated. There's nothing like that about Connie Boy.
And remember . . . . this is Berlin of the New School. You will know what to expect.

Now, as to Berlin of the Old School, if you can bear it any longer, stay with me awhile.

The title is all too suitable.

It is called *The Diary of a Lost One*.

Pabst directed it, Sepp Algeier was the cameraman, Louise Brooks was the star, and Valeska Gert outshone her. If you care for the whole story, sets were by Erno Metzner-Emil Hasler, and Mark Sorkin assisted together with Paul Falkenberg.

Certainly Margarete Bohme’s popular romance did not seem ideal content for a Pabst film. You must either, it has been shown, be cynical about a Lost One or sentimental. If you are impersonal simply, you are going to get into trouble with the censor. That Pabst remained considerably so is perhaps borne out by the fact that the film we see is his minus several hundred metres.

It is partly on this account that it does not cohere. However, though not good as a whole, indeed far from it, it does give us some of the finest work he has done. The best is that which deals with the routine of life in a reformatory for Lost Ones. These astounding scenes, dominated by Valeska Gert, have all the epigrammatic wrath, so to speak, that almost Delphic quality which Pabst alone possesses.

The perception that has built these scenes of riotous, monotonous, remorseless speed into one hair-raising, monstrous quietude, has given all that can be given. This is Pabst. A knowledge of minds, of motives, a beyondness of seeing that spills no honey-flavour over what he has to
**CLOSE UP**

offer. There is life—mean, angry, consummately cruel, gay, endearing, triumphant. You either have to swallow it or get up and walk out*.

Here is something complete, and perhaps to itself a masterpiece of cinema. The story is simply the placing of Thymian (Louise Brooks) by family-decree in the Institution, where meals are eaten at a long table, at the head of which, in black and a ponderous crucifix, sits Valeska Gert wearing a look of sadistic benignity and commanding the rhythm of the soup-spoons with a baton. Bang, bang, bang. The rise and fall of spoons offers good rhythm too for the camera and for the cutting.

* The technique of this would require an analysis too involved and too long for the space at my disposal. It is, of course, concerned primarily with immediate plunge to essentials. As long as you are dealing with essentials only—essentials of scenic composition and explicitness, essentials of timing, of incident, of dramatic or aesthetic progression, of utmost visual significance—of image force, in other words; of rigid textural and atmospheric parallel, of psychological mathematics, finding the least common denominator for the utmost individual recognition: as long as you are discarding any tendency to fuss, to over-ornamentation, to casual experiment, redundancy, haphazard camera embroidery, uncertainty of dramatic, rhythmic, visual, mental, psychic ultimateness—then you are in possession of the first requisite faculties of a regisseur. Need I say that few possess these qualifications?

That, however, is only the beginning. These things by themselves are only the machinery, the motive force. The operation of the motive force is efficient according to the director’s culture, sensitivity and understanding. It stands to reason that nothing can be great that he does not feel as great. The greatest directors forget all these phrases. For mind is better cinema than any screen. They think no more of latent content than any author worthy of the name thinks of his grammar primer. It is the unfortunate critic who remains the grammarian, and the surer his knowledge the greater his assumption. The regisseur and the critic have little in common when each gets down to his job.
Gert's ferocity might be mistaken for some vague soulfulness, so completely does it rest her. Pabst caught this in *Joyless Street*. At one moment there she leaned on a table, selling Garbo to a butcher, rather dazed and wan and immobile. There was something devilish about it. The same devilishness is here.

After their supper the girls file to bed. They undress in rows beside their bunks. At the top of the room now instead of the table Gert now presides with a gong instead of a baton. Bang, bang, bang. Every stroke a movement—every movement rhythm, every rhythm a new camera analysis. Gathering tempo. Speed, riot, some demented ritual. Sweat bursts from her forehead. Eyes flashing vulturine and ecstatic.

Lights out mean a furtive candle. At last there is a natural re-grouping. Thymian's friend, Erika, jumps up and sits on her bed. The Diary of the Lost One is brought out and they discuss it. Erika's ankle swings, making a natural handle to be grasped, and the gleaming face of the Gert makes a suitable target to be kicked with it. There is a moment's panic. Out goes the candle. In the dark a scamper for the Diary. Chased by Gert, tossed like a ball from girl to girl.

Rebellion begun, takes flame. The tyrant is seized, pummelled, mobbed. Her face howls from the screen. With the gong, on a topmost bed a girl beats out a joyous tempo for the punishment. Erika now has seized the keys and signing to Thymian, the two escape unseen. Bang, bang, bang. The punishment grows wolfish. The audience roars and stamps participation.
CLOSE UP

Pabst's camera is like a busy eye. It plucks at a million details. Not here and there, dissociated parallels or comments—sheer avid detail builds a raging, intimate riot; one vast co-ordination—conditioned-reflex, if you like. You have been bullied in that house, you have sat in your seat unable to help, and at last you are freed, and you fight, and when the gong beats over all, you stamp and cheer, you are part of the torrent of fists and falling bodies.

That is Pabst as I know him. That is cinema as I know it. And because of it, the film is important. But now, the other aspects.

(1) There is a specious and irrelevant sequence of low comedy in which Sigfried Arno in a false beard spoils the screen for nearly ten minutes. It was not funny, nor bawdy, but false as the beard he wore, and had no place in narrative, in time or space. I cannot imagine why it was not cut entirely out.

(2) If you are dealing with a Lost One, either you must deal with her or leave her alone. It doesn't make an atom of difference that she faints each time she is about to get what's coming to her—and faint she does, four times, and if that's not excessive, spare me from something that is. Indeed, on one occasion, when she faints while dancing and is waltzed by her partner through a suite of rooms and literally on to the bed, there is simply nothing to be done about it. The most avid spectator could hardly bother to go on looking for so long.

(3) The story is worthless. It points nothing, except a finger of wrath and scorn at the Institution, as such, and at
the lower middle class family life which supports, and in consequence, fills such places; and this would be quite enough if it were a theme, but it is only an incident—one of Pabst’s few chances to state something, and state it he does. The rest is the decay of a young woman who does not, in fact decay, but remains as charming in the end as she was in her confirmation dress. In any event, the life of a Fallen One, as such, is surely of interest only to very young people who are not sure of exactly what it implies.

The reader will gather that it was a very uneven film. It was. Louise Brooks looked beautiful enough, but she had nothing to do. She did cry once, some rather collegiate, sophomore tears, but they were not the kind of tears they were meant to be. Laurels go to Valeska Gert. To Fritz Rasp and to Sybille Schmitz, who had a small part in the beginning and was quite wonderful in it. I would, myself, have given her the leading rôle. She would have been much better.

This is the material Pabst is given. And he is one of the few masters of the screen. Of course, if he were given material worthy of his talents, it would inevitably be censored.

This gives me an idea for a film plot. Let us take a story, some rather sexy story, and let us have two directors each deciding how to make the film. Let one construct with an eye to the censor, and the other with honest, explicit truthfulness. Show the results in parallel, scene by scene, and watch which the censor rejects.

There’s a capital scenario. But of course, it would be censored.

Kenneth Macpherson.
MECHANISMS OF CINEMA

(Continued).

When each new development of cinematography is technically perfected, its “trick” aspect is exploited.

Somebody has said this before, still, it is so important to my theory propounded in a previous Close Up, that here it is again.

Mechanisms of cinema—in the abstract sense—retain a significance for us when the “trick” novelty has worn off.

* * *

In general an identity theorem is almost axiomatic . . . and is an evident-proposition which, like the exasperations of Euclid, bears a purely intuitive truth difficult in the extreme of logical proof. In fact to prove something I feel intuitively is true, IS TRUE, is very often far more trying than the proof of something not so superficially self-evident.

So I felt when I wrote “The Film in Relation to the Unconscious” and started off with the (summarised) statement:—the content of cinema is visually excited mass-fantasy, having two planes of psychic activity—the conscious and the unconscious—between which is interposed a set of psychic-visual mechanisms identical with those of the Freudian Dream Theory.
This is my identity theorem.
Technical developments pass through the trick stage, and emerge as "technique".
Let us revert to this discussion for a brief space.

* * *

Although technically spontaneous, the material of a dream is drawn from the Unconscious, therefore its latent sources are unknown to the dreamer... exactly like the work of someone else.

We go to see the "work" of others and call it "cinema"... are moved quite irrationally to pleasure, or fear, and most of the emotions springing from these.

When we have learnt that these "irrational" emotions are those of another fellow using the same body and nervous system as our own, we are on the road to a right understanding of one of the outstanding wonders of conscious life. Impressionism in its fullest development, is what I call it... and the "other fellow" is the scenario artist.

In this connection I have something to analyse if it is not rather late... *La Marche des Machines*... the only abstract I have seen.

* * *

Deslaw is difficult to follow... so start with me at the beginning. I wanted to understand him and this is how I interpret his work:—

A sheaf of railway lines flying towards me... railway lines which become only *lines* in the abstract because they are no longer like any railway lines I have seen... they are above my head! I feel I am rapidly approaching somewhere until I am shocked by a second dimension of motion... a
From a Soviet animated cartoon film by H. Ivanoff’s group for Sovkino.
The Stump of an Empire (See article in this issue), a new Sovkino (Leningrad) film, directed by Ermler, which the Russians call their "All Quiet on the Western Front."—Death and crucifixion on the front line.
The Stump of an Empire. The factory dining room. The slogan says—"Against kitchen slavery—for the new life of woman."
From *Drifters*, a New Era film by John Grierson. See *Making a Film of the Actual*, by John Grierson in this issue.

Valeska Gert, as the Governor's wife is mobbed by the girls in the Reformatory. The Diary of a Lost Woman.

Louise Brooks in the Reformatory and Andrews Engemann as the Governor. The Diary of a Lost Woman.
The beginning of the dormitory fight in *The Diary of a Lost Woman*, a new film by G. W. Pabst. Edith Brooks as Thymian and Edith Meinhard as Erika.
CLOSE UP

composite motion pattern of great beauty formed by a super-imposed ("condensed") mirror image of the overhead sheaf of lines.

Now, what or where am I approaching? With two dimensions of rapid forward motion presented to me, relativity steps in. I must re-orient myself mentally. I fail to feel either of the motions. Something earthbound in me is responsible. Much of the perspective effect has vanished, for "parallel" sheaves of lines perspectively viewed, cross where they should converge only. There is no depth... no space to rush forward into!

Before I was in motion (mentally) so now I feel a queer sensation of mental "inertia", for I must come to rest.

Something similar is quite a common experience: a long railway journey... a brief pause in a station... another train draws in on the next line... stops... then the strange thing happens. Yes!... we are off at last... see! we are passing the carriage windows of the other train. In a moment the mental impression of motion is shattered... the other train has drawn out, and beyond is the station kiosk! We are not moving, and have not moved. The ensuing momentary impression is one of "pulling up quickly"... inertia... which may actually throw one forward gently.

Exactly this I felt.

Surely I have arrived? Before I was in motion. Now I have stopped... felt the inertia on ceasing to "move". Yes, I have arrived in this land of beautiful machines in movement; watch them march, polished and sleek, balanced and balancing.
Here is the strange optical illusion of the revolving perforated drum. Crudely, an optical illusion... significantly, a clever psychological "displacement"... a purely mental distortion... for the perforations have become the things at which I look. Speed increases. The spots dance.

The have materialised. The rest of the drum has gone! Again relativity.

And so my responses are played upon, always through visual impressionism. How heavy that bucket seems, drawn up by the steel rope slowly... lowered faster... drawn again slowly. And how satisfying when it is going down... how tiring its upward movement. I would have been psychically tensioned to tiredness if it had not finished on the down stroke. A study in gravitational force.

Then consider the nasty toothed creeper with its slow sickening motion yet beautiful lozenge pattern... the hideous machine which claws with 'hands of Orlac' into an empty bowl as though for ever seeking something fleshy to murder. Now clutching upwards, now down... practising!

The crane-grab which grabs and swings and is balanced by its own image, is still a crane grabbing and swinging in that other dimension where all white is black, and black is white. Deslaw has shown us the exquisite beauty of negative images in motion. There was profound innermost meaning in those brief negative shots which defies exact analysis in this dimension of black on white paper. Something terrifically fundamental, as though animate bas-relief had been turned into intaglio from whence it was moulded.

Rhythmic noise has a sequence to itself. The mechanical
CLOSE UP

forge: the shaping of bars of metal the manifest content . . . noise the latent content. And how successfully was latent content "condensed" (to use the new Freudian terminology) by the visual mechanism of the "mix" into succeeding shots of cams and tappets higher up on the machine? The noise-rhythm was ever present in that sequence.

I am in doubt as to whether this noise-rhythm constitutes real "counterpoint".

Very well, here surely should be sound? But I say not. Why demand a real sound counterpart any more than a real wetness counterpart to a rain-storm scene?

The last thing was, quite fittingly, the exhaust of gases from a tube . . . still pulsing rhythmically . . . the breathing of the machines as they march. Suggestively, the tube was away from the face.

* * *

In this film the camera revealed itself through the medium of its limitations. Certain motions were not of suitable rhythm for cinema. In one shot a flying weight governor stood still because its rhythm was a simple multiple of sixteen per second. This was observable partially in other shots also.

* * *

Are we then to conclude that Deslaw has addressed us primarily on a sort of "mind-dynamics" . . . presenting a series of impressions of mind-motion, inertia, balance, relativity, and what not, far more vital and understandable (to most) than the incomprehensibilities of the practical mathematician? I think so.

What a field there is opened for more work of this kind!

L. SAALSCHUTZ.

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Of course, we are all familiar with Mr. Silverspan’s likeness which is reproduced from time to time in that most “exclusive” of fashionable periodicals, *Smart People*, where in common with Jimmy Petrikin, Irving Booth, and that sensation of our advance guard literature, Nana Noos, the superproducer finds a place of honor in the magazine’s “Hall of Fame” as “the man who has made more dollars out of the movie-game and has given more pictures with sophistication, punch, and real art to the world than anyone we know.” That aquiline nose and those sharp eyes, “denoting”, we are informed by a gentleman of the Press, “shrewdness and genius in business affairs”, “that heavy chin”, to quote the same authority, “characteristic of born leaders of men” are revealed unmistakably even on the printed page.

And although in these scanty lines we may but trace, as it were, the footprints of the great man on the sands of time, leaving the weightier business of fathoming the profundities of his life history to the mighty pen of Billy Doran, the former butter and egg ad. man, (that Boswell, we may add in parenthesis, born again and born greater), nevertheless, movie-fans who know a “hero” when they see him will, it is certain, discover for themselves some moral, some lesson, something, even in the casual crumbs of wisdom fallen from the table of the great.
CLOSE UP

It is but a sign of Billy Doran's ripened powers as biographer that in his masterly life of Silverspan which took the country by storm, The Yacht that Nickels Built, he follows to the limit Schiller's dictum that art consists also in knowing what to omit. To speak of the superproducer's inauspicious beginnings at the bottom as a "pants maker", to reveal the fact that while in his cups the gentleman is not what you might term "safe for democracy", laying upon occasion, as a matter of fact, a heavy hand on his own better half, (a moral trait which the forgiving Press now describes as the delightful eccentricity of a mondain) is not at all Billy's method who uses artistic restraint, discretion, and a refinement of taste not discoverable in writers of meaner powers.

The future historian examining the records of the dark ages, so to say, of Silverspan's sartorial existence will be in a position to speak more freely than any contemporaries who often write of the movies with a view to a little contract or so.

The eager world always clamouring for news of its truly great men, must be content to know Silverspan only in moments when he shares with the public the burden of his thoughts. Climbers to the top sometimes take the bottom with them. However, in the case of our "hero", time and intercourse with professionals have bestowed among other virtues that sometimes go with money making that "aplomb and savoir faire", to borrow another gem from Billy Doran, which give weight to every utterance of his. It is at a momentous period in the history of the drama that we discover him on board of a transatlantic liner besieged by members of the Press always willing to gather the manna from Silverspan's lips unburdening himself on a topic of
universal interest. "Well, boys," he addressed on that famous occasion the assembled reporters, eagerly pencilling down each precious syllable of the famous man’s utterance, "I suppose ye’re waiting for me to tell you something about the 'talkies.' You can tell the world for me we’ve got the goods. It’s great, great business, great dramatic stuff, great money-maker. Mark my word, the 'talkies' will sweep the four corners of the earth. Everywhere there’s a colossal demand for them. Yes," and here the great man paused to flick off the ashes of his aromatic Havana, "and don’t you forget for a moment, I’m going to stress this point for the benefit of some cranks, there’s plenty of art in the 'talkies' for everybody’s taste. Let me give you a single example. You fellows write, so you will get right away what I mean. Here, at the opening of a scene are several people playing cards in a hotel-room, a private house, or wherever it may be. Well, all of a sudden, mind you, while everything is nice and quiet, out comes a yell out of nowhere ‘MURDER’ . . . Imagine the effect on the audience. That’s what I mean, boys, that’s what I mean . . .” he dismissed the overawed gentlemen of the Press with a triumphant smile and a wave of his cigar-stub.

Again the deft hand of the master-biographer "seizes" his subject at a moment of addressing a large assembly of ambitious college students listening to the successful be-diamonded person, not without the secret hope of emulating his great career. "Now, boys," Silverspan began his famous speech (partly republished here), "if I’m going to bother giving you a few valuable hints on this little Drama
business of ours, it's because I've been aching for a long, long time to give a piece of my mind to some of you educated fellows, writers and others. Oh, yes, yes, you've got the knowledge, college degrees, Latin, and all that, but you have not got all the brains in the world, as may be some of you "intellectual" folks will realize some day. Go into my offices sometimes and see for yourself: they're full of college graduates working for a man who's never seen the inside of an institution. Let me tell you the meaning of all this: 'Where a man's purse is, there his heart is'. No matter what your business is, watch out where the dough comes in from. What's a man making shoes for? What's a prize-fighter getting his inside all busted up for? What's all the boys and girls trying to get a job in the movies for? For CASH is the answer. Say," and here Silverspan warmed up to his breathless audience, "look at all these highbrow English, Scotch, and other foreign writers whose books we've made into movies, the Kiplings, Barries, and the rest of them. Why, we trim their work to suit ourselves, and they dance to our tune, because money talks, always has and always will be. (Applause). Now I never read any books; I have more important things to do. But I know that Shakespeare and those other old boys are full of hokum that any writer working in my plant can do as well and better. Proof? Look at the cash receipts. Perhaps you see now that I do know something about my Drama business. Well, one of these days maybe, when I can take some time off for myself, I'll put it all between covers for you young folks to read. Remember, my first principle of the Drama is: 'Give the public what it wants'. And always remember too that
in our business we make MEN as well as good shows." Silverspan ended on a high moral note.

As has been intimated, the biographer is not at all backward in painting the picture of his "hero's" virtues. "Personality", "sophistication", "executive ability", "stick-to-itiveness", are with him the four cardinal virtues, and "personality" is, of course, the greatest of these. Nevertheless, whether out of modesty or superabundence of material, the writer omits to mention that in the intimacy of his office-room, especially, after a drink or so, Silverspan was wont to unburden himself of his weightier thoughts from which posterity, if it cares to, may learn a great deal. It is thus from as yet unpublished records that we are permitted to acquaint the world with Silverspan's theory of the Drama when he unlocked the mysteries of his soul to Jimmy Perkins, the winner of the National Scenario Contest, the author of The Canadian Patrol, newly enrolled among the elite of Silverspan's scenario writing intelligentsia. Jimmy Perkins requires a chapter all to himself. Suffice it to say now that never has any man had a more attentive or more worshipful audience than Silverspan had in Jimmy Perkins.

"Do you know," the grand old man of the movies groaned thru clouds of smoke, "what's put the business on its feet? Well, sir, I'll bet you a nickel you'll never guess. Give you three guesses. D'ye give up?—Pie is the word. The great old, American institution, the apple pie, the custard pie, the cream whipped pie that every comedian in the country threw around for years till he was blue in the face. The dear public was cool, shy of the business, until some clever boy, I think they ought to put up a monument
CLOSE UP

to him, saw the light and gave them PIE. And how the people did flock to the shows, you know all about it. We’ve all bought ourselves yachts and limousines out of that first pie-money. Well, of course, pie is not à la mode any more, you might say, need a different class of show nowadays. But there’s one staple article that the movies will always use, and never mind who says ‘no’. ‘Legs, legs, and some more legs’ is what I’ve been preaching to my directors and writers ever since I’ve been in the business. The men come for the legs, the women for the costumes and for the handsome fellows. That’s that, and John Rollstone says it mighty well in that whale of an article he wrote once. (See Close Up for July ’29). Give them an undress show, as the police lets you and watch the mob at the ticket office, reverends, censors, good people and all.

“Well, sir, you may not be too old to remember that after the pie and the falling downstairs business came the Vamp. And the vamp has come to stay, no matter what they say to the contrary. Our stars keep us well posted about their correspondence. You’d be surprised to hear that a great many women write to say that they wish they were in the vamp’s place. It’s the women who make up most of the vamp’s fans, get that straight. A sex appeal picture will usually make more money than a ‘crook’ picture a ‘mystery’ picture, a Russian picture or a Jewish comedy. Occasionally, when we have a colossal genius like that German actor we can put over something big without sex appeal. But the general run of picture always leans towards ‘sexy’ stuff. Any girl who has ‘it’ is welcome to my business, but they’re not to be found on a vacant lot.’”
CLOSE UP

"That's what I say," Perkins reports as having ventured to say.

"I'm telling you, Buddy," Silverspan continued, "I've got the whole Drama business classified, from A to Z. First in the lot come the 'sex' pictures, and that includes the sheik stuff, the gold diggers, the sophisticated society play, the Broadway picture, the 'Clown with the Broken Heart' movie, practically the cream of the industry. Next to this staple article is the 'mystery' or 'crook' picture, because the dear public likes almost as much a good crook picture with some shooting in it as they do a leg show.

"Of course, we've got a few side lines that are always big money producers. Kentucky troubles always go over big. South seas, Jewish comedies, Russian Aristocracy, all about those naughty counts and dukes who fall in love with our girls, Canadian Patrol, Chinatown stuff, and Parisian sin are all good market articles. And if a picture is a grand success, it don't hurt to repeat it under a different name. Let's say, if Broadway Flappers is a money maker, then we change the plot around a bit and call it Broadway Jazz, and there you have another knock-out. There you have the whole thing in a nutshell, you might say, the whole drama business that all these wiseacres write about without knowing the first principle. Short and sweet, take it or leave it.

"You may wonder, perhaps, why we took your Canadian Patrol picture in preference to a lot of other mighty good scenarios in the National Contest. What I want in my business is a lot of young fellows who are willing to learn, none of your highbrows that are eager to tell me what to do. Not that I can't appreciate originality like when you make
CLOSE UP

the crook in your picture hide in a tree. I could see the point right away. We'll buy out any man's original ideas whether he calls himself Shakespeare, or Jimmy Perkins. Well, that's why you are here to-day under contract, my boy.''

"Well, old top," he indicated the end of the audience by a shifting of the chair, "I'd better be moving, got a lot of hard work ahead of me yet. Pete Heineman, my director, Rosa del Oro, and myself are going for a yacht trip to frame a movie that's going to take the world by storm. Between me, and you, and the telephone pole, Rosa is a peach of a girl, some personality, she can soak her socks in my coffee any day."

And Jimmy Perkins went out into the air, the faint aroma of a Havana cigar lingering about him like the august memory of the Presence he had just quitted. And like the seers of old, foretasting future bliss, he saw himself in his mind's eye mounting rapidly that ladder of SUCCESS which leads from the bottom of twenty-a-week pay envelopes, dirty press rooms, sneers of "superiors" to that desirable heaven where Publicity Agents attend with baited breath the steps of Majesty, where left-handed affairs with "girlies" are considered by broad-minded, truly Christian Gentlemen of the Press but as pardonable extravagances of supersophisticated geniuses, and the society of princes, counts, millionaires, "beauties", politicians, bootleggers, short story world champions, and adoration, and adulation, and "parties", bank accounts, and more bank accounts are but in the daily round of life . . .

And he saw all this and it was good. MICHAEL STUART.
THE STUMP OF AN EMPIRE

(Production of the Leningrad Sovkino Studio, 1929).

Director—F. ERMLER.
Scenario—CATHERINE VINOGRADSKAYA.
Operator—E. SCHNEIDER.

Why The Stump of an Empire, and what does the film tell? What are the questions it raises, and what the replies it suggests?

The Stump of an Empire tries, most acutely and earnestly, to total the tremendous constructive work accomplished in the USSR after the October Revolution. And, first of all, it speaks of the achievements attained by the workers.

In the turmoil of our every-day work, whirled away by the powerful tempo of the day, we have lost perspective on actuality. We must fall back for a spell that we may perceive how much of the new and unusual there is hidden for the brain, the ear and the eye of an outsider (a kind of "Stump of an Empire") in terms by now, conventional for us, like—Factory Committee, Labour Protection Committee, etc.
CLOSE UP

You will find in this film numerous episodes and numerous slogans which are of the greatest importance and are exactly a reflection of the modern Soviet ideals.

The Stump of an Empire is permeated by the most acute political problems of the moment. These include questions of Socialist construction, of culture, of production relationships, of labour discipline, Socialist competition and, finally, the "General Human" problem of love and marriage. All these tasks, these problems, are linked up, moulded together within the main theme of the film.

The subject of The Stump of an Empire is quite simple... At a certain railway station, so far away that it is lost in the endless steppes, toils a former soldier, who, as a result of a contusion received during the 1914-18 war had lost his memory. He is Filimonoff, an ex-N.C.O. (Trains hurl by. Before his sleeping memory life is passing, rushing with all speed). And suddenly, through the window of a train he sees a face. A face which is familiar, which has been near and dear to him. In vain he tries to recall the face, but his memory slumbers on. Only a miserable debris of it can he catch, and this too is easily distracted, even by a cigarette box.

The train has left. Nothing has happened.

Filimonoff had been a hosier by profession. The tap-tapping of a sewing machine aids him to reconstruct, mentally, his past life. The tap-tapping of the machine—as the cracking of the machine-gun. The machine-gun, the front... In the depths of his slumbering memory flash, suddenly, tiny sparks, tatters of recollection... The battle
front, blazing streaks of swiftly moving searchlights, crucifixions on the fields of Galicia and that calm Cyclops—the Tank—crushing fallen bodies with cold relentlessness . . . Filimonoff has remembered . . . He jumps into a cattle-car bound for Leningrad (which still is "St. Petersburg" for him) to seek his wife.

Here begins a story picturing the re-birth of a man who has returned from a dark, a blind existence as Non-commissioned Officer Filimonoff, to a consciousness of his power and the all-powerful triumph of his victorious class.

The main perception of this man lies in his feeling of class interest concerning all that goes on about him. The makers of the film do not lead Filimonoff to stop in ecstasy before the pathetics of our day, but thrust him boldly into the clash of social conflicts where he finds his full recognition of social consciousness. It is characteristic that his first conscious idea—reminiscence of the war—brings home sharply his class relation to war. The film is, in this respect, the first and most powerful production of the working class with an international point of view. It's our own Soviet Remarque and our point of view of the war.

A new relationship to labour brings about and dictates new social forms of relations between chiefs and subordinates, between men and women, between Red Commander and private. A series of shocks brings the hero to the problem which must have appeared fundamental to his still immature labour psychology.

"Who is the boss?"

And the film replies:

"The working collective is the boss".
CLOSE UP

Only when the man has mastered this problem does his psychology begin to grasp and unravel other problems.

Seeing his neighbour working on the next bench drinking Vodka, he cries: “And you are boss? You’re a rogue!”

The Stump of an Empire ends with the following sub-title: “We have still much work to do, comrades”. This ending is particularly significant as the Film is deeply rooted in the social and political life of the Soviet country. It calls, not to sentimental self-worship, but to indefatigable, tireless work and frank admittance of errors and difficulties.

The Film was produced and mounted in 14 months. The location scenes were shot in Odessa, Leningrad and Kharkov, but all scenes taken in these cities have been mounted as though belonging to one city; by this it is desired to point out that it was the aim of director F. Ermler to give the general aspect of this newly constructed country, a synthetic portrait of socialist construction.

The Stump of an Empire is only the fifth production of Ermler and his group. A film made by him is known in Europe: Katka—the Paper Ranet (They who Live by the Street—in German: Die Von der Strasse Leben).

P. Attasheva.

Moscow, October, 1929.
OVER THE MOON

It was the cow that did it first, and Fritz Lang followed. Forgive me, please. What an extraordinary world it was. Why did the cow jump over the moon? Did she feel drawn to it by dairy-associations with cheese, and did she with one fell hoof kick the (milk) bucket and jump to a dimension where the only cheese was dead, and inorganic moon? Then again, why is the cat always credited with interest in the fiddle, and not the dog? The dog, you will remember, only barked—to see such fun. But the cat went with the fiddle, perhaps in an effort to improve its voice, foreseeing the days of a synchronised Felix, but in any case, who knows? The fun the dog liked was nothing he saw in the cinema, in those days, and if we wished to have this absurd series of events pan-chronised, what kind of a kingdom would it be? The movies leave it alone. "The screen is the window of fantasy ", but this special fantasy and all it means, if anything, and what it did to us, a lot, has the blind pulled over it. We say, a man of imagination should do this for us. A man of imagination should bring wit and amusement to the screen, and we get Lotte Reiniger, which isn’t quite the same. And Robert Florey isn’t really "witty ". And then again, we don’t want wit that is the intellectual substitute
for humour, we want wit that isn’t a substitute for anything, but a dash in the way of serving, a smile in the way of looking, a satire and sympathy, and we can go on talking like this, and projecting our own selves over a metaphysical moon, until we fail to notice what is happening at our feet. And I am very fond of what my feet are in touch with.

I meant to write flatly on sound imagery, and I have begun saying hey-diddle-diddle, and got struck, thinking how often critics present the spectacle of moon-jumping cows. For the moon is a good way out of it when you are confronted with something new on earth, taking the moon as exotic symbol. Confronted with some new growth, which needs trouble and inward-delving to understand, and, perhaps of more immediate importance to you, fresh vocabulary to write with . . . confronted with a forest of unblazed talkie-trees, it is easy to fly to the moon and dig up a bit of old cheese (historical value), growing, alive—O, yes, but the wrong way round. Jump over the moon and return with some Griffith gorgonzola or a piece of Camembert Chaplin. Everyone will believe you if you write about the revolutions Chaplin wrought, even if they think his films the worst argument you could possibly adduce, even if The Circus seems to them a danse macabre of daguerreotypes. Again, you can gnaw bits off the moon when there is nothing else, you imply, worth your attention. Write about an exotic actor, detect (laudibly, but a trifle lavenderishly) hints of Russian, O, damn that word, cutting in an old Essanay, and miss, just because they are ordinary, the exciting things that are happening on nice-smelling earth.
CLOSE UP

It is well that people should keep alert their Diogenes lamp and light up the odd corners of the screen (though I always had an idea he brought a few cobwebs out of his tub); it is well to have everything dug up and recorded, Glozel as well as Luxor, but it is a pity to be so engrossed in moon-jumping that you miss the cat with its fiddle, three times daily, on earth. You are so likely to because this cat isn’t photographed or silhouetted, is just a comic drawn cat. But it actually is comic, adjective from comedy, not from music-hall. Yes, don’t miss the cartoon shorts because you only go in for the big picture. I have seen them lately at the Carlton, the Capitol, Mme. Tussaud’s (let us now praise Mr. Ogilvie). When the film was bad, they saved my life; when the film was good, what an excellent cocktail they were!

I went in to see *Four Feathers*. Annoyed, angered, I-knew-it-ed. Good things, of course, good things, but some would have been excellent if they’d been let alone, not dolled up with a story and actors who, though among the pleasantest maybe in Hollywood, were here distasteful by their inappropriateness. But before, there had been a Micky Mouse Cartoon that I laughed at and liked. I don’t remember laughing so much or being let down so little after one funny bit, since talkies were in. I have always liked the cartoon films, despite the name. The French, in this, manage this better; they call them “dessins animés”, and the Tribune Libre once had a seance consecrated to them. Felix and Krazy Kat, even Inkwell Imp are my friends, and here and now I would like to stake a protest against using Felix to typify popular entertainment with a sneer. He is
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one of the most intelligent ideas on the screen, as I shall suggest why.

I make a point of seeing these curious black drawings in their transit across the screen, but this one at the Carlton happened to be the first one synchronised that I really registered. I saw a Krazy Kat in Paris, Beaches and Scream; it was a very good one. I had seen it silent, and its mechanical music made it no better. Then some British dog was shown at the Tivoli with barks and noises which were quite literal and wrong for a flat drawn dog. Sound was here misused, and it was a very common little dog. It didn't even raise the problem, why was it no better. It was a British film, and bad British films just make one shudder and withdraw, close-in in self-defence against so much muddled violation of truth and technique and taste. One never succeeds, though one has enough practice, in extracting any problems from a bad British film, whereas a bad American one bristles with points. The British pup meant nothing, and I let it go, without being stirred to think of sound in the future applied to animated drawings. There was so much else to consider about sound, the synchronised cartoon as a problem only cropped up among the Four Feathers, cropped up, I suppose, because I was ready to consider them.

The Carlton had When the Cat's Away. One saw the cat go away. Not very imaginative so far. But already funny; one heard the tunes, and the tune had the same burlesque emphasis of the essentials as the flat broad jumps of the cat. It locked its door, clatter-ping-click. Took out a bottle and drank, gurgle-splash and "Little Brown Jug". All serious, as regards the technical synchronising. That is part of the
joke, that the score is really not so crude as whatever it was
they dished up for The Godless Girl. The cat then hopped
over the hills, to the obvious tune; the absurdity of drawn
cat going so solemnly away underlined by the music being
what a score-scratcher would naturally think suitable; "far
away" indicated on the film, therefore that tune in the script,
no matter what may be the circumstances or status of the
person going far away. The mouse now appears and now
we have fun in the cinema. Another one pops up, and is
made into a key with which to unlock the door. Body
elongates, and tail is twisted into a handle. Mice multiply
as if by magic, and indeed it is by magic; there were two
standing there, and they go in, and yet the same two, or as
like as makes no difference, hop up again, and another same
two and another. Two of whom leap at the piano when they
enter the cat's house. They hop on the keys, and we hear
what they do. There is a piece of music on the piano, and
they play it by hopping out the chords; other mice rush up
and down the stops of the saxophone. It is funny to think
of mice playing pianos this way. We think how funny it
would be if they did. I knew a rat that used to come out
and perch on my editor's table, sitting on the blotter to
nibble his notepaper, after we had left. It would have been
a pretty picture. I never saw it, but I knew the rat. I know
these mice, and I see them doing things like that rat did.
I see, whereas with the rat I had to imagine. I see mice
doing what I had to imagine. I also hear them doing what
I imagine, and that is not so easily brought about usually.
You can always draw or write what you see in your mind's
eye, but it is not so easy to impart to people in sound the
CLOSE UP

noises you hear in your mind’s ear, with your ear’s mind. To see mice playing a piano by dancing on it we have been used to; we would have liked to have heard them too, but we have not been able to, so we have suppressed it, and half the laughter that greets these sound cartoons is due to release. That is what leader-writers call “responding to a novelty”.

At the end of the piece, they bow, and turn over another one. “Lieber Augustin” followed by “Listen to the Gentle Mocking Bird”. One of the mice does a barlet to it, and being rather vain and getting out of time through indulging in solo turns and balancings, is frowned at by the other mouse, who stops this particular turn when the piece is over. He sees that the piano is a pianola. There ought to be some rolls. It is the privilege of these films that they decided early that whatever ought to be, should be, being in this way at once pre, or post, and super-Eden. There are no rolls, but there is a nice piece of Gruyere cheese. The audience no sooner sees the cheese than it recognises the studded holes and associates them with the perforations of the pianola rolls. You couldn’t get this immediate response any other way. When you think what has been done in this small piece of association, you will admit it is remarkable. The cheese is placed in the pianola, and plays gaily along. Where there is a string of holes close together, we hear a delicious trill (which startles the mice). The effect on the mind of a piece of cheese in a drawn pianola producing real, heard notes, is complex. The cheese comes unfixed, and flops down, boom, boom, boom, boom, on the keys, until the resourceful mouse pins it down, and
we proceed to watch the others, but first consider to ourselves what we have really watched. Some records are found.

It would dismay most people to find first a pianola with no rolls and then some records about, with no machine. They would "talk nasty" about fate. But these creatures are their own fate, and the most fated of them squats down, is twisted round and round by the tail until he may be considered wound up, and in the process has his neck made nicely spiral. The record is then put on his upheld nose, and as he spins round, another mouse plays it with his tail. All of this is made possible, made into a coherent world because the artist back of it is noticing. He notices what things are like, and when he has half an actual thing, he supplements it with something like it, and so by degrees and without knowing it, invents a world of metaphysical mice, using associational symbols. The record cracks, the mouse winds down, and peculiar noises ensue. The sound is as funny and un-actual as the event, and for once in a film is as funny as the picture.

There is a mouse jazz-band, and mice dancing. A marvellous burlesque of screen tango, and wholly amazing close-ups of the jazz-band which, for sheer getting there, are so much more unkind than the actual close-ups of semi-erotic inanity brayed out by half-cast ill-breds in over-done misfits. If it is absurd for mice to stamp and sway as if they were mad, how much madder, we suddenly think, must these aforementioned gentlemen be. Mouse-head hey-heying is the last comment on Vitaphone shorts and Broadway attitude, and big business in its O how off-moments.

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At the Capitol, a cat got its tail caught in a mouse-trap. Whereupon its intended victim leapt aboard, careering round as a surf-rider. At Tussaud's, before The Glad Rag Doll, which there is no reason to stay away from, I saw The Opry House. This is the animals' vaudeville show. To appreciate it, you must have the mouse angle on life in your mind. Realise that the cat is always what one is up against, the mouse's race-problem, as it were. Moreover, these films are the mouse's relief from life, rodent relaxation. If mice had the motion-picture habit, they would enjoy these films. And since it is you who are seeing them, you must approach as nearly as you can to the correct mouse outlook. Then you will understand why it is natural to have, instead of a row of bells, a set of cats sitting on a shelf. When the band wants a chime of bells, a mouse just pulls all their tails quickly. One after another, kitten, small cat, cat, big cat, mother, father, patriarch. Yi, yu, yow, YOW. Cat-calls are the sweetest music to a mouse's ear.

The show begins and one plays the piano. When two of the notes will not do what he wants, he punishes them. He ties them together in a knot. The piano resents him, and turning its front legs into paws, it sends him flying. Then it curves its new-found hands up from underneath and plays itself itself. You see the chain; legs, paws, hands. This is most natural. A piano has legs, so it is given leg-properties. These are its front legs, so they are given front leg properties, and front legs being equivalent to hands, it plays the notes. Later, thinking that its keyboard is really rather like a set of teeth, the artist gives it a mouth, and lets it take its curtain smiling and bowing. This freedom of
imagery has always been one of the delights of the cartoon film. There was Felix's tail, which could become anything from a state of mind to an implement, hook, rope, or wheel. I always wanted Mr. Ogilvie to revive some of the Felix films; I hope the new series will be as good.

In *Beaches and Scream* there was one sequence which was so rare, that I will describe it although I have already written of it before. Krazy Kat bathes. The sea is cold. He jumps out, encased in a block of ice. The sea is therefore cold. You have been told it quite simply, but with very little connection. He jumps into water, and jumps out in a block of ice. There is no simile or slow approach. It is quick, as if you were to say he turned on the tap and drove icicles into his face. People would at once say that if the tap was running, there could be no icicles. So you are stopped a lot of fun, and cannot say this sort of thing as quickly as you think it, which always seems to me a pity, and why do we write, I should like to know, and when we can't do that sort of thing, **WHY** do we write?

The next thing is that the sea should be warm. So The Kat lights a fire under it. The sea is foamy at the edge, like a fringe. But we have no need to insert that word. The sea simply has a fringe, and therefore is a carpet, and can be lifted up. But still being sea, it is displeased and fringes being fingers, it is a hand that leans out to smack the cat.

The simple high spirits take you up with them so much that you don't notice the significance of what is being done, the extremely abstract quality of the film, the complete reliance on imagery. You don't see, unless you have learnt
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to, that you are watching, in this cat cartoon, a complicated succession of thoughts, feelings, reactions in a wild but controlled rush of imagery. You don’t get that you are seeing something expressed for once exactly as your mind works. It isn’t made simpler, or linked up more, or less quick in its transitions. Half of this is due to the fact that it is drawn cat and a drawn mouse. They never existed, save in the author’s mind, and so they are untrammeled and unrepresentational. The screen here really is the plate of the author’s mind. We are watching what has never happened anywhere else. Watching it absolutely clear, as he drew it. Not people who did not exist acted by people who exist differently, but mouse that never was expressing mouse that never was. Essence of mouse, free to move as swiftly and peculiarly as the mind. And all the time to be quite clear to everyone as to what they mean, which is so remarkable. Of course, if you told people what they were going through when they saw Micky Mouse, they would be confused and no longer able to enjoy him. As it is, they accept him quite readily and naturally, mind in the fauteuil responds to mind back of the screen.

Where else, in what other way, could you make your tail not only a bottle when you are thirsty, but a corkscrew as well? And then, when you begin to “see things”, convert it into a telescope to see them with, and, finally, still have it ready as an exclamation mark to express your surprise, which is so like a comet that you at once ride off on it, to be seen again, as the iris closes, next week, tea and chocolates in the interval?
This imagery is as real as that which talks of the "sea-horses" or, up in the Arctic, calls some goddess of rough weather, "Bloody Haired". And here strangely, sound is perfectly in key with this kind of imagery. Sometimes it is literal, working across the idea of the picture, and that is funny; sometimes it is literal when the picture is literal, when a tub is a tub, and when the tub has become a gasometer, it is still tub-music, which is adding to our state of mind, giving it layer. Sometimes the sound is imagery when the picture is not, and sometimes it is plainly comic, as when a goat plays his beard when his violin breaks. You can never tell how the dog will break or what sound the cat will make with the fiddle, but the film itself knows. Mouse-dance to straight human music is funny when that mouse-dance is also burlesque of human dance. And it is funny, and releasing too, to hear weird new noises, the sound of a mouse at play or the triumph of a mouse-group, yowls and honks and new distortions. These films are the first to be generally made and shown as a matter of course in which sound is used as it should be, and the result it not just a film with funny music attached, but all the powers of association heightened by the combining of picture and sound; together they make something neither could have made alone, a more potent inroad into our consciousness.

Being drawings, everything happens under our eyes; piano legs turn to Paderewski hands, sea to carpet, crowded train to sardine tins, all conceived in movement. It is not only that they are full of action, but that everything that goes on in the minds of the animals is seen as it goes on, in moving imagery. And being drawings, what the mouse
CLOSE UP

imagines is seen in the same dimension, of the same world as the mouse itself. Drawn, and so equally real. Sea turning to dragon does not turn to a plaster or even a Hollywood tame one, but to a real drawn dragon, as real as the sea which is drawn.

The creator of the Micky Mouse sound films is Walt Disney, and he works for Paramount. For myself, whenever I find these on, I find ten minutes of real cinema, sound and silent . . . . but they are slight films, shorts, not to be elevated and cultivated. To be taken for what they are, with a certain amount of realising that they are more than you may think, and not to be missed because “I only go in for the big picture, I really couldn’t sit through a whole dreadful programme.”

ROBERT HERRING.

KINO AND LICHTSPIEL

There is a similarity between the German film and the French. It is the similarity of the studio and the atelier. But the similarity ceases very soon, for the French cinematist takes his atelier outdoors; the German cinematist puts his outdoors into the studio. The German film has never left the
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studio. That is one of the gravest limitations in the German kino. It thwarted a film like Homecoming, made the entire rendering of Asphalt false. Certainly the studio structure is essential to some films: it was the success of The Last Laugh. But if the Germans insist upon their studio filming, they must be willing to omit certain themes and contents from their consideration.

The problem, however, is larger than this. The German mind, as revealed in the film, is the mind for the principle. The Germans have given the cinema some of its major principles, but have seldom been the ones to realize these principles. To the world's cinema the German film has been most important. But to itself it has contributed only formulas in theme and construction. Therefore the German kino has really never developed. In brief, in Germany it is the artisan-mind that prevails, not the artist-mind. The principle-mind, not the creation-mind.

The principles the Germans have given to the cinema are:

(1) The integration of light, decor, performer . . .
(2) The thematic narrative . . .
(3) The cinema pre-plan . . .
(4) The effective submission of the actor . . .
(5) The camera as a major instrument . . .
(6) In sum, control and discipline . . .

As details or stresses of these principles one may include: the maturity of the actor, the constructed, in place of recorded-cinema, the film as uninterrupted visual imagery, and so forth. It is apparent that the German contribution is most tremendous. But how far have the Germans gone in the realization of these principles? Take certain
examples: *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari, Torgus or The Coffin-Maker, The Last Laugh, The Last Fiacre of Berlin, The Wax-Figure Cabinet, The Street...* Take the work of Ernest Lubitsch, Paul Leni, Lupu Pick, Arthur Robison, Ludwig Berger, Fritz Lang, Georg Pabst... *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari.*

It will seem sacrilegious on my part, to many enthusiasts, were I to say that this is not a great film. Indeed I shall say with Leon Moussinac that it is not a work of art, but a film date. You will find that the enthusiasts are usually painters or people who think and remember graphically, never cinegraphically. Gilbert Seldes, the American journalist, writing in the new volumes of *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, speaks of the film thus:

"Without immediate effect on public or producers, this film is memorable because of its effects on the critics; it may be said that Caligari created motion-pictures criticism in England and America. French critics hold it in low esteem because of its elaborate scenario; yet even they allow its chief virtues: that it worked chiefly through the camera (although the subtitles in the American presentation were lengthy and frequent) and broke entirely with realism on the screen... Caligari means that the motion picture must be created not photographed..."

Mr. Seldes has said nothing in his commentary to indicate the merit of the film itself as realization. He has indicated the principle or principles which it exemplified. Nor is he

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1 This is not altogether true, and I shall have something to say of this in a later paper. What Mr. Seldes may mean is that it made movie criticism for Mr. Seldes.
correct in asserting that the objection of the French critics was to the elaborateness of the scenario. The objection of the absolutists—Leger for instance—was, at that time, to any scenario at all, any narrative scenario that is. *Caligari* was, if anything, naively simple in its content. Indeed, one of my objections is the general objection I have to the simplism of German fantasy, of which I shall speak later. But the major objection to *Caligari* was and still is that, while it intended integration of light, decor, performer and mood of narrative upon a defined sequence, its structure, its quasi cubist-expressionist structure, was that of the stage-illustration. That, in fact, with its infantile non-realism, was its appeal. Of *Torgus* I have spoken in an earlier article. *The Last Laugh*:

Seldes says of this film:

"Films without subtitles had appeared before; the distinction of this one was that everything the picture had to say, and it said some subtle things, was said by the means of the camera. What is more, the correlation of scenes was perfect, the separate sequences held together, and needed no connection or explanation." This is rather elementary discovery. The importance of *The Last Laugh* is multiple and more transcendant than Mr. Seldes indicates. It set down the first form of the cinema: the simple universal theme without complexity of narrative details. *And* it realized, as well as articulated in intention, the principle of constructed, unvacillating environment converging upon the character in relief. It is, to my mind, the only German film I have ever seen that, working upon an inclusive principle
and a definite preconception, has realized itself. That is why F. W. Murnau remains for me the most effective of German directors, although for philosophic sincerity I look elsewhere: perhaps to Paul Czinner.

An exception. I think here of Vanina, made by von Gerlach, who died prematurely. I leave this film out of the consideration of German films. It is the film of films which indicated the path of plastic fluidity the cinema should have taken but never took. Its rhythmic structure is not German, nor has it been apprehended as a pivotal source by the land where it has been most appreciated, France. Perhaps there have been attempts to follow Vanina, but those films which may have been such ventures (as I detect the likely ones) seem to be following its faults rather than its rhythmic precept. Indeed most directors of Paul Wegener seem to remember Vanina for Paul Wegener rather than von Gerlach.

Karl Grune made The Street.\(^1\) It too was admirable in its reduced statement of the pathetic adventure of the man. It too emphasized the organisation of the light in the mood. But it did not maintain its mood nor its temper of pathos. I think this is due to two traits exhibited by most German directors: the infidelity of their emotional concern, and their unawareness of the difference between the structure of melodrama and that of tragedy. I should go on to say that these two traits are the same and they are closely related to the artisan-outlook of the German director and his affection for the studio.

\(^1\)The failure of both Vanina and The Street before the tribunal of American movie critics indicates the absence of any instinct for first laws in that high body.
I have never seen a German film that attained beyond tragi-pathos. What is a most frequent literary source for the German film? The writings of Sudermann. Certainly Sudermann was not a writer of the tragedy of man. He was a fabricator. He has the episodes of Lagerlof, of Hardy, of Ibsen, but not their cumulative exposal. Or similarly Frank Wedekind. He compiled social dramas. His works were fabrications too. Therefore Pabst’s Lulu is a fabrication. The film, (I am speaking generally) like water, never rises above its source. That is a first law of art. The entire German cinema, with several notable exceptions, turns toward the fabricated. That is the artisan-mind, the studio-mind, the mind that delights in virtuosities, in camera sketchings, in fringe-filmmings rather than penetrations. This mind is as apparent in Pabst as in Leni. This is the mind that is not concerned with the material at all, but only with the instruments. Pabst works over the surfaces of his films, along the edges. Never does he look into an object, as does a Jean Epstein.\(^1\) It is significant that the word, photogenic, is French in origin and not German. When Jean Epstein sketches and moves up and down a line or an object, I recognise the intention as speculative, even though

\(^1\) (Mr. Potamkin makes so definite a statement that we feel impelled to intrude on his space to point out that his “Never” is in relation to Mr. Potamkin’s perception of Pabst; a point of view, in short, which differs fundamentally from our own—that of Pabst’s major virtues, the gift of penetration and exploration is among the first to be apprehended. His intuitive and psychic awareness is self-evident and helped to expression by a technique whose fault would lie perhaps in super consciousness rather than in the irrelevance and non-assertiveness that are “the artisan’s experiment”. . . . . This, too, remains a point of view. Ed.)
From *Arsenal*, Dovjenko's acclaimed masterpiece for Wufku.

From *The Sold Appetite*, a film by N. Ochlopkoff, based on Lafargue's novel.

Mr. Bob Stoll and Mrs. Schlichter in Erno Metzner's film.

Photos: Hans Casparius
The Royal Borough of Kensington, a film of actuality by H. P. J. Marshall for the Film Guild of London.


The old professor saved from starvation. Klaus Pohl (Professor Manfeldt) in *The Girl in the Moon*. 
Suffocation in the Rocket journeying to the Moon. Gustav von Wangenheim (Windegger), Willy Fritsch (Wolf Helius) and below the Professor (Klaus Pohl). Fritz Lang's new superfilm for Ufa. *The Girl in the Moon.*

A Lunar landscape. Reminiscent of the Icelandic solfaturas are these spitting Lakes, wonderfully constructed for *The Girl in the Moon.*
the result is sometimes only tentative. That is the philosophically experimental. When Pabst uses his camera non-assertively, I see no such relevant intention, it is something apart—and what is apart in a film purporting to reveal a human adventure, is unscrupulous. That is the artisan's experiment.

This same unscrupulousness is present in Ernst Lubitsch, in Paul Leni, in Fritz Lang. Lubitsch with his "pictorial repartee" (high-school sophomore brand) and his "touches" (see also von Stroheim "the master" and Charlie Chaplin of A Woman of Paris), Leni with his decorator's camera-play and smart-boy comics, Lang with his big-scale insipid architecture: the same concern with trivia. The wastes of able craftsmanship in Berger's The Burning Heart, in Kurt Bernhardt's Die Frau nach der man sich sehnt: what is the cumulative intention here?

The German film pretends to tragedy and that accentuates the falsity. Instances are Dupont's Variety, and the numerous moral films of Germany, such as The Woman's Crusade (Must She Go On?) The German penchant for the moral further burdens the pretension. The effect is generally ludicrous, as in the Ucicky film dealing with sterilization, the many "flaming youth" pictures... The law of art has not here been understood or even, I fear, suspected: the conversion of the material, which includes the moral idea. Never is the moral intention as offensive as it is in the French film, of a L'Herbier or a Benoit-Levy, for in

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1 I am not now referring to the important contribution of the Chaplin film, but to its gratuitous intelligence.
the German film we sense the honesty of that intention, whereas it is only an *etiquette* of decorative sentimentality in the French film. But the Germans have never learned to embody the moral idea in the unfolding motion picture, as have the Swedes of the great Swedish film period.

Yet in this affection for the moral I find a hope for the German film, once it learns to wed the moral intention with its first victory, the simple theme of general reference (*The Last Laugh, The Street, etc.*) The success is just beginning to expose itself in the stories of children and young folk. The films of children are as yet superior to those dealing with young folk, simply because the problem of the latter is more ponderous. But the fact that the Germans, of all people, care for their children *en masse* promises genuine films of the lives of the children. Max Mack’s *Der Kampf der Tertia* is an excellent indication, and the sensitivity of Hans Behrendt’s *The Robber Band* is another indicator of hope. The American films of children are most wretched, from *Our Gang* to *The Innocents of Paris*. Childhood is made egregious in them. The French film of children is usually the film of a child and the reference is seldom far-extending (*Poil de Carotte, Gribiche*). Moreover, the French have little sense of the child as child. The Germans, I think, have shown they are best fit to deal with childhood. The group-mind of the German comprehends the child as group-individual and this is fortunate for both the verity of the performance and its cinematic effectiveness, as well as for the child participating (but this is a matter beyond this essay).

There have been accumulating in the German kino for
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years local, domestic films of Berlin low-life (Liedtke in Wochenendezauber and Kampers in Lemkes sel. Witwe) which should long ago have provided the folk-basis for a great German film comedy. But only recently have we been favoured with the first instance of this awaited comedy, in the film rendering by Hans Behrendt of Carl Sternheim’s Die Hose, with its blend of grand burlesque and satire, its infusion of the extraordinary—in the person of the court poet—into the ordinary—gloriously done by Werner Krauss. The film made from Hauptmann’s The Beaver Coat might have been another transcendent comedy, had its director understood the law of the conversion of material, with its two divisions: the retention of the essential narrative and the creation of cinematic correlatives in the performance. Hans Behrendt has understood these two demands adequately.

Two promises remain with the German film. First, the rise of new directors, with the hope that the studio-mind will be modified or new uses will be found for it. Second, the maturity of the German actor. The latter has been constant amid the fluctuations, even non-development, of the German kino. Werner Krauss, Fritz Kortner, Heinrich George, Hans Schlettow, Bernard Goetzke, Wolfgang Zilzer—Asta Nielsen, Grete Mosheim, Henny Porten, numerous others whose names escape me for the moment, performers who fuse with the cinema. The performance of a Grete Mosheim as a backfisch reveals what intelligence and talent might do for Clara Bow. These German actors have kept the German film from perishing in the hands of the artisan. If there has been any fault to find with these artists it is that they have
been too submissive to the director, although frequently I have felt Werner Krauss setting the pace for his regisseur. It is very likely that the German actor will elucidate for the director his legitimate art, by clarifying for him the nature of cinema performance. The German director has been, like the German schoolmaster of the past, the sort of disciplinarian who believes in getting the most out of his pupil. He demanded Mehr, mehr! So that very often the actor became apoplectic. Jannings and Veidt are typical instances. Fortunately, in The Last Laugh the co-ordination and convergence of the environment upon Jannings served as a rein and Jannings was brought back into the film and a powerful unity was preserved.

In this consideration, I mentioned at several points the bluntness of German presentations as revealed in their moralizations, in their fantasies, etc. I assemble these evidences of bluntness under the general head of simplism. It is a term I have used many times in these pages, and which, I believe, my readers will understand by connotation. If we take the fantasy of Caligari and compare it with that of Die Hose we will note the difference in the categories. Caligari's narration contains no intricacy, no larger reference . . . it is Peer Gynt without the philosophy and the poetry of the Ibsen drama. Am I stretching my comparison? Certainly, deliberately. I wish to indicate where the Germans have gone for their experience of the fantastic. To Torgus. These fantastic narratives—these fantastic films, ended with themselves. Epstein's The Fall of the House of Usher rises to a sense of universe-torment. Stiller's The Treasure of Arne was the poignancy of the primitive. Yet

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The Treasure of Arne was a very simple film, its intricacies were in its transcendental references, in its experience.¹

In Die Hose we find a very simple narrative, but the references save the film from the simplism which is the tale only and nothing more. The secret lies in the unconcern of the German directors for the experience of the unit, the theme and its references. Again we may compare with The Treasure of Arne a German film, made from Sudermann’s The Cat’s Bridge. All the appearances of tragedy but no tragedy in this latter film. Or the film made from another Sudermann, Dame Care. What is the meaning of these films? What do they intend? That they intend no peculiar experience is evident in their impurity. The film is constantly blemished by parts of the narrative that have no place in it. If the film cannot rise above its source, it certainly can fall below it. An instance of this decline is the Zelnik cinematization of Hauptmann’s The Weavers. Captions alone cannot make a film universal. What did Zelnik intend here? What was his social apprehension of the theme, and what form should this apprehension take in the film? There is no evidence that he asked himself these questions. This was another film-job.

The German film-directors who have gone to America have

¹ Further studies in simplism German-style are: The Three Wax-Figures, Warning Shadows, Secrets of a Soul, and The Man with the Tree-Frog. I especially include the other as an evidence of German bluntness. Here is a mystery-play where the mystery is not introduced until the film is well-nigh ended, and immediately solved. In other words, here is a mystery-play without a mystery. Which is mystery enough, I suppose. Murnau’s Tartuffe is an instance of a great idea gone stodgy because of simplism.
brought with them this job-mind. That is why they have not found Hollywood detrimental. The job-mind is adaptive. Not so with the Swedish directors. Their minds are experience-minds. The level between the work of a Sjostrom or a Stiller in Sweden and his work in Hollywood tells the story I'm after. I regret the presence of a Lubitsch in Hollywood. His sophistication was not our need. The job-mind only abets the American job-mind. Leni may have interested some American directors in objects, but that is enough: he interested them only in the movements of objects, not in their quality. The Americans know enough about literal movements, they need to learn analysis for quality. Murnau might have taught our directors some necessary things. Vidor might have learned something from him in the way of ordered rhythms. But what the Fox Pictures seems to have learned from the Germans is only the rising mist of the atmospheric photography. The presence of an Emil Jannings has, I believe, helped toward emphasizing, if only a very little, the right of the mature actor, a Jean Hersholt for instance. Handsomeness is no longer the only criterion. We have not yet, in America, attained to a wish beyond the one-type performer, the caricature. It is significant that we have imported no Werner Krauss and no Fritz Kortner. But that is an American story.

Harry A. Potamkin.
FREUD ON THE FILMS

Far away back in April (1929) Close Up welcomed Metzner's Uberfall, and described it as "a beautiful flow of images without break or jerk, catching the essence of Freudian nightmare." Later, L. Saalschutz, in a most interesting article, discussed the film in its relation to the unconscious. There remains Germaine Dulac's The Sea-Shell and the Clergyman.

When Mr. Stuart Davis, the enterprising, had it brought hopefully to London, we hastened to investigate.

Now that so many stage plays are being screened it was good to see a psychoanalytical exposition of thought, for the stage cannot show the layers upon layers of simultaneous consciousness. The stage cannot acquire the mobility of the subconscious, or put over as effectively the utter grotesqueness, so essential to dream states, which trick photography can capture on the screen. Piscator, and others, have tried by splitting the proscenium into sections, but the results have always been ponderous, they lack this flow, this ebb, this rhythm of the cinema.

Germaine Dulac's picture begins with a door, a high and narrow slit of a door, casting a shaft of light on to the floor of blackness. Here is the same lesson that I found in The
Eleventh Year (Close Up, Vol. 5. No. 2.), that light is creating, that light is doing something on the screen. All put, in cinematic terms, very neatly. See, there is a square door and a round pool of light. How you have to watch for the little things in this kind of picture! There are no laws in this fourth dimension, just light doing things. Square door, round pool.

The clergyman sits at a table pouring liquid, from a shell, into a series of retorts, which, after he has filled, he throws to the ground. Symbolism, obvious.

Smoke flows over the fragments of the glass.

A man appears in the cell, he comes through a gaping door; an intruder wearing a uniform, standing for Authority. He arrests the cleric in his monotonous actions. The setting of the cell makes it clear that these are the things the clergyman has shut away in his mind, and Authority, or Public Opinion, forbids him to dwell on them. The unfortunate falls to the floor. He creeps about feeling so much less than the others, he has his vow of celibacy.

Startling change form the studio set, he is crawling down a real street. In his life, as distinct from his suppressed desires, he feels inferior.

Houses are placed over one another by quick mixes.

The groveller notices Authority driving, in a cab, with a woman. It infuriates the clergyman to think that this man may have, lawfully, that which is denied to him by his vows. He chases the couple, and tracks them down in a church. In slow motion, the movement of a dream state, he approaches. This is his territory, the church.

Always the woman's face is shown as a chocolate-box type.
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She gazes on vaguely while the clergyman strangles her partner.

A close up shows the face of the attacked. Threads of blood trickle down the nose; threads that become wires to pull the face into two parts. Nightmare. Poetical waters of horror fill the screen. The clergyman is revealed with the other floating in his arms. (Under the water sensation).

A great quarry. The clergyman on the skyline. His old enemy appears at his side, frenzied he hurls him to destruction in the waters beneath.

The water motif over, space is bridged with the rapidity of the unconscious. Back in the church the clergyman tears the clothing from the woman's breasts. Shells appear to cover her breasts.

Men and women dance crazily in a room; the candelabra spins madly. Authority and the woman enter and mount a throne. Materializing from space the clergyman, who is holding a shell in his hand, watches the dancers embracing. Hurling the shell to the floor he sees it explode in smoke.

The tails of the clergyman's frock grow into flowing trains: his rank, his vows.

Down corridors, and by a stream he pursues the woman. The woman turns and jeers. She puts out her tongue.

Lights in a crystal globe remind of lights in the retorts. He beckons to the woman to come and look in the globe, she refuses. Symbolism, obvious.

He has a key in his hand. He swings the key in a complicated figure. Opening door after door he finds the rooms empty.

At rest in a hammock, while Authority sits in a warehouse,
the clergyman yet manages to watch the woman materializing from the sky. There are no laws of time and space. Now the clergyman feels that he could kill the capricious woman. Between his hands models of houses and castles are superimposed: symbols of his burning wishes for domestic happiness. Follows pure imagery. Ships, with beautiful sails, float on a sea so still that only the imagination could see it. Silver curtains, ships.

Maids clean the floor. Starting a new phase. The crystal stands in the room. Men enter. The clergyman is married to the woman by Authority dressed as a parson. Castles, houses, boats, and silver nets. The crystal grows larger, crashes to the floor. In the wreckage the face of Authority.

The scenario was written by Antonin Artaud. If one could do it justice in mere words it would not be such a good film.

Oswell Blakeston.

MAKING A FILM OF THE ACTUAL

A PROBLEM IN FILM CONSTRUCTION.

(Reprinted from The Clarion).

The editor asks me to say something about a film I completed two or three months ago. It is not for a producer to
talk too solidly about his own work, so I shall tell you about the job itself rather than the result. The film will be going its own rounds presently, and whoever of you wander down the back streets may judge for themselves. They will, I hope, find it among the westerns and the other proletarians. There it belongs.

It is about the sea and about fishermen, and there is not a Piccadilly actor in the piece. The men do their own acting, and the sea does its—and if the result does not bear out the 107th Psalm, it is my fault. Men at their labour are the salt of the earth; the sea is a bigger actor than Jannings or Nitikin or any of them; and if you can tell me a story more plainly dramatic than the gathering of the ships for the herring season, the going out, the shooting at evening, the long drift in the night, the hauling of nets by infinite agony of shoulder muscle in the teeth of a storm, the drive home against a head sea, and (for finale) the frenzy of a market in which said agonies are sold at ten shillings a thousand, and iced, salted and barrelled for an unwitting world—if you can tell me a story with a better crescendo in energies, images, atmospherics and all that make up the sum and substance of cinema, I promise you I shall make a film of it when I can.

First Essentials.

But, of course, making a film is not just the simple matter of feeling the size of the material. If that were so every fool who fusses over a nondescript sunset or bares his solar plexus to the salt sea waves on his summer holiday, would be an artist. I do not claim the brave word, though I would
like to, but I think I know what it mostly means. It has very little to do with nondescript enthusiasm, and a great deal to do with a job of work.

In art, as in everything else, the gods are with the big battalions. You march on your subject with a whole regiment of energies: you surround it, you break in here, break in there, and let loose all the shell and shrapnel you can (by infinite pushing of your inadequate noddle) lay hands on. Out of the labour something comes. All you have to do then is to seize what you want. If you have really and truly got inside, you will have plenty—of whatever it is—to choose from.

So in this rather solid adventure of the herring fishery I did what I could to get inside the subject. I had spent a year or two of my life wandering about on the deep sea fishing boats, and that was an initial advantage. I knew what they felt like. Among other things they had developed in me a certain superior horsemanship which was proof against all bronco-buckings, side-steppings and rollings whatsoever. I mention this because the limiting factor in all sea films is the stomach of the director and his cameramen. It is a super fact, beyond all art and non-art. Of my cameramen one also was an ex-seaman. The other, for all his bravery, was mostly unconscious.

In this matter I was altogether to blame. What I know of cinema I have learned partly from the Russians, partly from the American westerns, and partly from Flaherty, of Nanook. The westerns give you some notion of the energies. The Russians give you the energies and the
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intimacies both. And Flaherty is a poet. The net effect of this cinematic upbringing was to make me want a storm: a real storm, an intimate storm, and if possible a rather noble storm. I waited in Lowestoft for weeks till the gale signal went up, and I got it. So did the cameramen. The wild Arabian breeze of a drifter's bilges did not help matters.

The Energies.

Taking the film as a whole I got the essentials of what I wanted. I got the most beautiful fishing village in the world—I found it in the Shetlands—for a starting point. I staged my march to the sea, the preparations, the procession out. I ran in detail of furnace and engine-room for image of force, and seas over a headland for image of the open. I took the ships out and cast the nets in detail. As to the rope over the cradle, the boy below, the men on deck against the sea; as to the rhythm of the heaving, the run on the rollers, the knotted haul of each float and net; as to the day and approaching night; as to the monotony of long labour. Two miles of nets to a ship: I threw them in a flood of repetition against a darkening sky.

The life of Natural cinema is in this massing of detail, in this massing of all the rhythmic energies that contribute to the blazing fact of the matter. Men and the energies of men, things and the functions of things, horizons and the poetics of horizons: these are the essential materials. And one must never grow so drunk with the energies and the functions to forget the poetics.

I had prepared against that as best I knew how. Image for this, image for that. For the settling of darkness, not
darkness itself, but flocks of birds silhouetted against the sky flying hard into the camera: repeated and repeated. For the long drift in the night, not the ship, not the sea itself, but the dark mystery of the underwater. I made the night scene a sequence of rushing shoals and contorting congers. For the dawn, not a bleary fuss against the sky (which in cinema is nothing), but a winding slow-rolling movement into the light. Then a bell-buoy. Then a Dutch lugger rolling heavily into the light. Three images in a row.

You can never have your images too great, and I think there are none of us poets enough to make cinema properly. It is in the end a question of suggesting things and all the example of Shakespearian metaphor is there to tell you how short we stand of the profundities.

The most solid scene, I would say, was the spectacle of the hauling. Camera and cameraman were lashed on top of the wheelhouse, and the nets came up through the heavy sea in great drifts of silver. We got at it from every angle we could and shot it inside out with the hand camera; and, put together, it made a brave enough show. But even then the fact of the matter, however detailed, however orchestrated, was not enough. The sea might lash over the men and the ship plunge, and the haul of the nets tauten and tear at the wrists of the men: it was still not enough. This business of horizons had to be faced over again. By fortune a whale came alongside to clean the nets, and I used it for more than a whale. I used it for a ponderous symbol of all that tumbled and laboured on that wild morning. It adds something, but it is possible that some-
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thing else, had I but felt it properly, would have carried the scene still further to that horizon I speak of. Images, images—details and aspects of things that lift a world of fact to beauty and bravery—no doubt half a hundred passed under my nose, and I did not see them.

Processions and Images.

So through the procession into harbour, and the scenes in the market place at Yarmouth—fact joined to fact and detail to detail. But here, of course, because of the size and variety of the scene, rather greater possibilities in the matter of orchestration. The gathering procession of buyers and sellers on the quayside, the procession of ships through the harbour mouth: the two processions interwoven. The selling itself, the unloading the carrying: mouth work and shoulder work interwoven, made complementary to each other, opposed to each other as your fancy takes you. Rivers of fish, being slid into a ship’s hold, cartfuls of baskets, girls gutting, barrels being rolled: all the complex detail of porterage and export dissolved into each other, run one on top of the other, to set them marching. It is the procession of results. Cranes and ships and railway trains—or their impressionistic equivalents—complete it.

The problem of images does not arise so plainly here, for cinematic processions, if you bring them off, are solid affairs that carry their own banners. Two, however, I did try. As the labour of the sea turned to the labour of the land, I carried forward a wave theme. It is played heavily for accompaniment as the ships ride in; but as life on the
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quayside takes charge of the picture, it is diminished in strength till it vanishes altogether. Through breaking waves the buyers and sellers go to their business. Count that, if you will, for an image of opposition. It is a far cry from the simple and solid labour of the sea to the nep-man haggling of the market place.

The last was of a similar type. As the catch was being boxed and barreled I thought I would like to say that what was really being boxed and barreled was the labour of men. So as the herring were shovelled in, and the ice, laid on, and the hammer raised to complete the job, I slid back for a flash or two to the storm and the hauling. The hammer is raised on mere fish: it comes down on dripping oilskins and a tumbling sea. This notion I kept repeating in flashes through the procession of barrels and the final procession of railway trucks. The barrels of the dead pass for a second into the living swirl of a herring shoal, in and out again; the smoke in a tunnel dissolves for a moment into the tautened wrist of a fisherman at the net-rope.

I cannot tell you what the result of it all is. Notions are notions and pictures are pictures, and no knowledge of cinematic anatomy can guarantee that extra something which is the breath of life to a picture. If I raise this matter of images it is rather to give you some idea of how the movie mind works. It has to feel its way through the appearances of things, choosing, discarding and choosing again, seeking always those more significant appearances which are like yeast to the plain dough of the context. Sometimes they are there for the taking; as often as not you have to make a journey into a far country to find them.
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That, however, is no more difficult for cinema than for poetry. The camera is by instinct, if not by training, a wanderer.

John Grierson.

(Mr. Grierson’s film, Drifters—a New Era production—will be shown together with Potemkin at the first performance of the Film Society in London, on November 10th. Ed.)

LOSS AND PROFIT

Back of many a big Hollywood success lies a record of prodigious failures. Partly these failures may be due to circumstance, but chiefly they are the result of that naïve incompetence which is one of Hollywood’s astonishing charms. It is never a cause of any serious worry. Whatever troubles, setbacks, disappointments or financial losses it may involve, Hollywood always presents a smiling face to the world. And well it may, for it has learned the secret of making the world pay for its mistakes.

Let a picture cost five times more than it reasonably should have cost, and Hollywood, instead of bewailing the waste of time and money, optimistically turns it to account by putting the picture on the market as a “super-production.” Its tremendous cost is frankly blazoned on
the billboards. And the world, instinctively assuming that a picture which involved an outlay of two million dollars must necessarily be better than one made for a beggarly four hundred thousand, responds with proportionately increased patronage.

Hollywood is a past master of human psychology. Hence its unfailing optimism. It has created the only business in the history of man wherein failure, blunder, incompetence, and inefficiency are transmutable into assets.

Any number of outstanding pictures whose costs have averaged over a million dollars each, might be cited in illustration of the success of this pragmatic optimism. *Ben-Hur*, perhaps, is as interesting an example as any. At all events, it is one of the most striking, in that it continues to hold the record for expensiveness of production.

In the first place, a small fortune in cash was paid for the picture rights to this great story of Lew Wallace's, in addition to a royalty contract calling for fifty per cent. of the revenues from the film. And this for the chief purpose of putting the famous chariot race on the screen. The rest of the story was regarded merely as so much ballast.

For some reason never yet explained, a large company of players, writers, technicians, cameramen and assistants, together with a vast amount of impedimenta, was dispatched to Rome to film the picture. After a year's work there, characterized chiefly by delays, obstacles, and misunderstandings, and during which the original director and scenario writer, as well as several of the leading players, were replaced and ordered home, the entire outfit was
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brought back to Hollywood (that is, Culver City, to be specific).

The chief purpose of this expensive trip to Rome had been to film the chariot race in the great circus described in the novel. The reason for returning without having accomplished this purpose may have been the discovery on somebody's part that this circus was located in Antioch. Perhaps the oversight had been due to the fact that the civilized world in the time of Christ was commonly referred to as Rome, and as Hollywood producers are too busy creating history themselves to be mindful of the work of others in this field, they may innocently have assumed that the scenes of Ben-Hur were laid in the only Rome with which they were acquainted.

At any rate, that is where they at first thought it proper to film the picture, notwithstanding that no single incident in the story is laid in the city of Rome. By the time they changed their minds and brought the company back, a cost of two or three millions had been charged against the picture, with little or nothing to show for it. The greater part of the Roman film was discarded, and the pièce de résistance of the picture, the Antioch circus, was built in Culver City at a cost of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and the great chariot race put on there, with seventy-five thousand citizens of Los Angeles playing the part of holiday onlookers, each being provided gratis with appropriate costume and make-up. And this having been successfully accomplished on home territory, the picture was subsequently completed in and around the studio.

Four million dollars is the advertised cost of Ben-Hur.
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With proper preparation, foresight, and knowledge it might easily have been made for less than one-fourth that sum. As a picture it lacks any of the elements of greatness. Its one redeeming feature is the spectacle of the race, which is undeniably a masterpiece of cinematic craft. And this, together with a clever exploiting of the stupendous cost of the picture, has “put over” the film and made it a success.

Why, then, be critical of Hollywood extravagance? On the contrary, its exploitation as a means of turning a deficit into an asset—of raising a mediocre picture to the rank of a superlative production—cannot but challenge our wonderment and admiration, if not our envy.

As already stated, Ben-Hur is not an exceptional case, save for the actual amount of extravagance and incompetence involved. Cinema history abounds in these examples of waste and prefatory failures in the filming of eventually successful pictures.

Nor have the talkies, despite their inherent demand for more careful preparation, brought about any appreciable modification of this basic characteristic condition. Some time next year the world will be regaled with a colourful musical production, under the probable title of The King of Jazz. It will be built about Paul Whiteman and his famous jazz orchestra. According to schedule, it should have been completed by this time. As a matter of fact, it has not yet started and has already cost its producers, the Universal Company, not less than three hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

The terms of Universal’s contract with Whiteman offer an interesting example of the extent to which producers will

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financially obligate themselves in their desire to secure a popular feature for film production. In the present instance these terms include a cash payment to Whiteman of fifty thousand dollars upon the signing of the contract; another fifty thousand upon his arrival at the studio; still another fifty thousand upon the completion of the picture; and yet another fifty thousand on the day of the picture’s release. Also, a salary of five thousand dollars a week during the two months he was scheduled to be at the studio, with a supplemental eight thousand a week for his men. And as a further recognition of his value as a public attraction, the contract stipulates that he is to receive forty per cent. of the picture’s profits, in addition to the various cash payments already recited.

The contract was signed last November, and in preparation for the making of the picture, which the contract stipulated should begin on the 21st of June, Universal spent much ready cash. This included a big price to two authors for a collaborated story to fit the already selected title, *The King of Jazz*, and an expenditure of ninety thousand dollars for the building of a vast futuristic set called for by the scenario—a set, which, like many another before it, is said to be the largest ever constructed on a studio stage. Besides, as a matter of gratuity and a show of good will, the company prepared a sound-proof bungalow for Mr. Whiteman’s personal accommodation, in which as part of its elaborate equipment were installed a special cooling system and a five-thousand-dollar grand piano. Also, a special lodge was built on the studio lot for the accommodation of the orchestra members.
When Mr. Whiteman arrived at the studio—incidentally receiving fifty thousand dollars for so doing—he glanced over the scenario that had been prepared for him, and promptly rejected it—a right accorded him under the contract. In a feverish effort to please the jazz maestro, the best Hollywood story talent was called in and ordered forthwith to write something that would fit Mr. Whiteman, as well as the ninety-thousand-dollar futuristic set and the publicly announced title of *The King of Jazz*.

But all in vain. There was no satisfying Mr. Whiteman; and after gracing the lot for the time called for in the contract, he and his men picked up their saxophones and other weird instruments and hied them hence, with a hundred and thirty thousand dollars in their collective pockets as salary for doing nothing.

According to the present understanding, Mr. Whiteman will return in November and look over the stories which will be prepared for him in the meantime, and if any one of them appeals to him as worthy, the making of the picture will proceed from that date. And when it is released we may look for some superlative announcements in praise of it, with special emphasis on the cost of this mammoth and peerless production.

Life in Hollywood is not all roses. Much there is of thorny trouble and worriment which the finished picture never reveals. The public must be served, and the producers are never unmindful of their duty on this score, whatever the cost. That a little more system, a little more thought and calculation, a little more intelligence might obviate many of their worries and expenses, is neither here nor there.
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Hollywood is as it is. With its perennial optimism and its skill in converting losses into profits, it needs neither our sympathy nor criticism.

Clifford Howard.

FINDS

If "seeing's believing", it is easy to imagine that every scene which flashes or flickers across our line of vision at the local cinema, has not necessarily been studied from the point of view of balance by the Producer. Otherwise we should have been spared a great deal of mental anguish.

On the other hand, considering this, it is astonishing how from time to time, a perfectly lovely sequence is evolved in a film, which in every other respect is unworthy of exhibition.

These scenes, infrequent as they may be, are due to nature rather than art, it usually must be admitted. In the average woolly west drama the plot is negligible, the acting hardly equivalent to that of a church amateur dramatic society, and details of acting, make-up, etc., are cheerfully ignored by all concerned. If it is your hard lot, therefore, to have to sit through one of these efforts, it is generally possible to learn a useful lesson from the scenery of the "great, open spaces".
Perhaps the scene is a rocky pass, barren of vegetation and having only a couple of men or horses in the foreground. Uncompromising? Very. But there are sermons in stones and you will probably find that the jagged outlines of the rocks make an ideal background for the flowing, easy movements of the horses. The contrast in forms unconsciously serves to feed the mind’s eye, apart from any action which may be taking place in connection with the plot, and is strangely reminiscent of modern interior designs used in some German films, which have taken a good deal of thought for their rhythmic design.

Another instance can be found in a typical slapstick comedy. Here there has obviously been no attempt at creating a well balanced picture. The object of the film is amusement of a particularly unsubtle type. Yet once again—“Good in Everything.” Observe the wreckage of the room round which the fat man has been chased by the little man with that funny moustache. Curtains torn from their hangings fall in folds which would have delighted an old master. The wreckage of the dresser and china forms a heap which would, in all probability prove an inspiration to a Russian poster designer. The abandon of the attitude of the fat man who has now been stunned by the chandelier falling on his head, is a study in unforced and easy lines which contrasts pleasantly with the stilted “art” interior in which the action has been staged.

Or, if you are compelled to suffer in silence through the seven reels of a soul-stirring drama which has obviously been produced in a hurry and with an eye to economy, instead of fuming and fretting, devote your attention to
admiring the shadows which fall away from the amazing moon-lit spot in which the action is taking place. More often than not, you will find their soothing lines a relief from the exaggerated poses of the players.

If the scene is taking place in a haunted house, forgers’ den or fog-bound docks—these things always happen at night—there is usually the unaffected and unpremeditated beauty of those shadows, for the action is sure to be enlivened and emphasized by a lantern or street light glowing through the gloom.

By watching for these little acts of grace it is possible to extract a certain amount of—well—interest, even from the worst of films, and there is rather a thrill in appreciating something which probably no one else in the theatre has discovered.

Perhaps, however, you can go to a cinema which does not show that kind of film, in which case, you will have been spared the agony of sitting through an indifferent programme filler for the sake of watching a really good "big" picture. All the same, you will have missed my thrill of discovery.

D. L. H.
“THIS MONTAGE BUSINESS”

The Film Guild of London, an amateur organisation, is suffering from a bad attack of "this montage business". The phrase in quotes is not mine; one of the members of the Guild aptly but thoughtlessly employed it at their meeting last month when several recent productions of the Guild were screened.

Chief among these was *Waitress*, produced on 9 mm. stock by Mr. Orlton West. *Waitress* is a bad film, very bad. Originally it was made as a one-reeler, but after he had made it Mr. West went to the Continent and saw the work of Vertof. He was so impressed with Vertof’s montage that he came back, added another reel to his film, and endeavoured to cut the whole production in the Vertoff manner.

Now cutting, or montage as some people prefer to call it, is something more than clipping every possible shot to a couple of frames. Cutting should be composed, and Mr. West has neither composed his film nor his cutting. The result is a striving after effect purely. If the director had paid a little more attention to his lighting and photography (which were terribly poor), and to his story construction, and less to stunts, *Waitress* might have been a better film. The very long and almost unintelligible double exposure sequence which attempts to express the mental collapse of the girl in
the cafe could well have been dispensed with, or, at least, shortened considerably.

This desperate endeavour to be clever in order to be different also spoilt *Fade Out*, a first effort by Miss Norah Cutting. (The name is quite genuine, I believe!) This short has possibilities, but again is almost ruined by "this montage business". Its climax, when the man who is helping an amateur company on location falls from the tree and dies, is killed by a rapid succession of closely cut shots which the mind positively refuses to follow. The weather conditions under which the film was made were obviously bad, and this should have been taken into consideration when *Fade Out* was edited. If Vertoff had been working under similar conditions, he would never have attempted to do what the director of *Fade Out* has done. Film Guilders, please note!

In case I be misunderstood, let me say that the members of the Film Guild are honestly endeavouring to do good work, but they are afflicted with an attitude which can best be described as posing. Everybody recognises the difficult conditions under which the British amateurs have to work to-day. But these difficulties cannot always be used as an excuse for careless work. Carlessness is impermissible in amateur production.

The Guild is certainly working towards something, and most of its work is experimental, but in doing so it is wasting a terrible amount of time and energy. *Gaiety of Nations*, an amateur film reviewed by me in *Close Up* last month took over six months to make, and it was worth it. I am not suggesting that every amateur film should take a similar
length of time, but the lesson to be learned from *Gaiety of Nations* is that adequate care, thought and attention must be given to all amateur productions if the British amateur film movement is to compete successfully with similar movements on the Continent and in the U.S.A.

Hastily conceived and shoddily constructed work will only bring discredit.

R. Bond.

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**VOIR ET ENTENDRE!**

Le film sonore n'est plus un mystère pour les cinéphiles genevois. L'Alhambra vient de projeter successivement *Le Chanteur de Jazz, L'Escadre Volante, La Paiva, Les Nouvelles Vierges et La Divine Lady*, avec diverses attractions sonores: concerts de jazz, extraits d'opéras chantés par Martinelli, duos d'instruments divers. Comme partout, enthousiasme déhérant du public pour *Le Chanteur de Jazz* qui inauguraient à Genève l'invention de la Western Electric. L'on applaudit à tout rompre et ce d'autant plus facilement que le film s'applaudissait lui-même avec une énergie tout américaine. Chacun ouvrit toutes grandes ses oreilles pour saisir tout ce que pouvait bien chanter ce brave Jolson à sa *little Mammy*, sur un air à la fois déchirant et irrésistible. Si le sens des paroles échappait à la majorité des spectateurs,
aucun doute, cependant, n’était possible quant aux sentiments qui devaient agiter le chanteur de jazz. Deux ténors chantèrent, dans la même soirée, un fragment des *Pecheurs de Perles*, de Bizet. On ne peut, en vérité, rien imaginer de plus ébouriffant! Devant un décor de petit théâtre de province, deux hommes chantent, ma foi fort bien, en gesticulant de grotesque façon. On pose la main sur son coeur, on tend le bras droit vers l’horizon, on roule des yeux furibonds... le spectateur gêné par ces naïves démonstrations, ferme les yeux ou laisse tomber son regard sur une photogénique voisine. Passons!

Le vrombissement des moteurs de *L’Escadre Volante* fut une diversion qui enchanta tous ceux qui n’estiment pas suffisant le vacarme des klaxons, des panatropes, des sirènes d’usines et du haut-parleur de la concierge. Ramon Novarro retint pourtant assez longtemps quelques spectatrices; elles endurèrent patiemment le bourdonnement des avions pour contempler leur cher *Ben-Hur*.

*La Paiva* est de Griffith; c’est déjà plus rassurant et si l’on veut être impartial, il faut reconnaître que la prise de vues est très bonne. Les mélodies larmoyantes de Lupe Velez émurent et plurent beaucoup, encore que l’amplification déforme le son et provoque ici et là quelques vibrations défectueuses de la voix.

Un titre scabreux comme *Les Nouvelles Vierges* ne pouvait manquer d’attirer une foule de curieux. Voir et entendre, c’est sûrement plus échauffant encore. On vit Joan Crawford, Dorothy Sebastian et Anita Page, mais on ne les entendit point. Et au nombre de ces nouvelles vierges, que de petits cerveaux acquis à la morale la plus intransigeante. *Our
Dancing Daughters n’aurait pas dû être traduit de la sorte. Enfin La Divine Lady, avec Nelson et Lady Hamilton, Varconi et Corinne Griffith. Passe encore Varconi qui donne de Nelson une figure assez satisfaisante, mais qui aura pourtant un oeil de trop pour incarner, sur le tard, le Baron du Nil. Mais Corinne Griffith n’entre guère dans la peau de son héroïne. Corinne Griffith a trop souci de sa “respectability” pour cela. Elle chante ici et là, comme par hasard, joue de la harpe, se fait accompagner d’un pianiste qui tire de son instrument . . . ô merveille des harmonies de violoncelle! Quand les matelots de Nelson, très échauffés, poussent de frénétiques hourras, l’on se représente assez bien ce que doivent être les ovations qui honorent, après un match de base-ball, les vainqueurs.

Nous n’avons eu encore que des Warner Brothers; que seront les talkies anglais, allemands et français, l’avenir nous l’apprendra. Pour le moment du moins le film sonore n’a pas acquis une forme réellement intéressante. L’on s’étonne, à bon droit, de n’entendre que chanter. Les textes subsistent comme par le passé, et les quelques bruits que l’on s’est plu, jusqu’ici, à insérer dans l’accompagnement musical, ne parlent qu’à l’oreille.

Pour juger équitablement un film dit sonore, nous devons encore dégager l’image de la parole, du chant et des bruits. Ce faisant nous constatons que la mise en scène est moins soignée qu’auparavant, que le scénario est généralement peu fouillé . . . et que les scènes de plein-air ont presque totalement disparu. Recul technique évident, donc, du film muet utilisé comme instrument sonore. Quant aux sons, il nous paraît que ce fameux synchronisme n’a pas toute l’importance.
CLOSE UP

qu'on lui accorde. C'est là une affaire de mise au point, un détail technique qui, une fois réglé, ne subit aucune variation. Personne, en conversant, ne s'inquiète du synchronisme, et l'on ne prête attention qu'au sens et à la portée des mots. Le synchronisme réalisé, l'instrument perfectionné, reste l'utilisation. Et tout dépend, ce me semble, de ce que l'on veut montrer, faire entendre. Là encore un éclectisme éclairé est nécessaire, là encore il faut savoir laisser de côté l'insignifiant et se borner à ne reproduire que ce qui peut enrichir le sujet visuel. On use actuellement du film sonore comme un violoniste débutant use de son instrument : avant de se livrer à l'étude du solfége, l'on s'essaie à en tirer les accents les plus divers et les moins harmonieux, l'on gratte, l'on égratigne les oreilles du voisin, l'on s'assure que les cordes rendent bien un son différent. Patience, l'on grattera bien encore quelque temps, mais le diable serait qu'une harmonie ne finisse par en sortir.

F. CHEVALLEY.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

FILMS IN HISTORY.—No. 5.

Blind Husbands. A Von Stroheim Production.

Von Stroheim always has a good story to tell: Stroheim is a good story.
In his first picture, *Blind Husbands*, his cigarettes are not so long and exotic, nor his uniforms as upholstered; but Stroheim’s atmosphere of condescending to appear in the flicks, his wonderfully kept-up Court-of-the-Emperor bearing, proves itself an enduring receipt.

The public has to tire of seductions by moonlight, of Stroheimesque seductions in orchards laden with blossoms or in palatial chambers, before a Stroheim picture can be sent to the destructor.

Scenes in the Tyrolean Alps are quite thrilling. We know, more or less, what will happen; that never was any argument against a movie situation.

A pretty wife who is neglected by her noble, honourable, (what do you know about that?) upright husband; an old friend of the husband, with unshaven face, carved German pipe, and a habit of spitting each time the scenario calls for atmosphere; and Stroheim *personally* appearing in the picture and *personally* directing it. Stroheim putting the scent behind his ears, kicking a dog which gets in his way (or perhaps not in this one), and watching a religious demonstration. Then Stroheim, the wife, the husband, the faithful friend, all on the mountain. And what more could you want? or rather, what more could Stroheim want? Not, I hope, the titles about mountains, and men’s souls, and the purity under the beast’s clothing.

In ten years’ time the Shaftesbury Avenue Pavilion might revive it again: the years will certainly add to its value as history.

Oswell Blakeston.
CLOSE UP

TALKING STILLS.

Some people have been apt to set a little too much importance on stills. They do, unquestionably, mean a lot. From the stills of *The Rose of Pu Chui* one could get the quality of the film, the Chinese way of fitting their architecture, customs, and dress to their faces.

The danger is to forget the time progression, and to stress the purely sculptural qualities.

Remember, at the beginning of *Storm Over Asia*, the Mongolian ancient squatting in some slumberous form of a primitive cart? Superficially the old man seems to be ornamental, an introduction of the people of the land after the scenery. One could, quite profitably, analyse the composition from this angle. One might find a rhythm of planes in the lines of the draperies, culminating in the wrinkles of the faces. Really though the important point, the Pudovkin point, the building in time, is that a sequence illustrating the joys of the chase has just closed. The calm of the philosophic ancient is a visual comment on the active excitements of the chase.

With talking pictures greater care must be exercised in judging stills. Will, in future, all stills carry the words of spoken dialogue written under the picture? And when a film has one of these sound-noise-dialogue-music scores of Meisel, will a few bars of the music be added at the side? At first glance it is not a bright future for stills which do not give us movement or sound.

O. B.
THE SCREEN FINDS ITS TONGUE.

BOOK REVIEW.

The Screen Finds Its Tongue. By Fitzhugh Green. (Putnam’s. 10/6.)

And they multiply. Mr. Green’s contribution is much more of the novel than the other talkie text books. There is a seesaw interest. Will the Warner Brothers make the grade? Will they? They made The Jazz Singer.

Now that the Brothers Warner have taken the old place of D. W. Griffiths it is interesting to see their photographs.

Who would have thought that Jack Warner, at the age of fifteen, sang songs in Newcastle (Pennsylvania) for the illustrated slides projected by one of the family? But, to quote Mr. Green, “Jack, though very young at the time, was soon to prove the more temperamental, artistic one of the four. He shared with Harry a sense of the drama: he was a born showman.”

Need I add the italics are mine?

O. B.
Ivor Montague's pamphlet "The Political Censorship of Films" (Gollancz—One shilling) is a valuable and much needed compilation of facts. In Britain, the Laws governing the exhibition of uncensored films are so complicated and so manifestly unfair that the mere documentation of them will serve to strengthen the demand for their revision.

The pitfalls in the path of anyone who seeks to give performances of worth-while films which have not secured the approval of the Board of Censors are almost without number. Whereas a theatrical performance not licensed by the Lord Chamberlain can be given privately without hindrance, an uncensored film cannot be shown, even privately, in any Cinema without the express sanction of the local licensing authority, and such permission, especially in London, is extraordinarily difficult to secure.

Incidentally, it is worth recalling that the London Film Society, which has been instrumental in exhibiting a number of productions which otherwise would probably never have been shown at all, only secured permission to exist from the London County Council by a majority of six votes.

The Board of Censors, to whose decisions all the local authorities adhere, is, on the surface, an unofficial body, appointed and supported by the Trade. But, as the author of the pamphlet points out, the Board is distinctly susceptible to the wishes of the Government. Dawn was a case in point. So was Mother; in the case of this film the President of the Board of Censors expressed the view that while he had no particular objection to its presentation, "He could not
disguise from himself that his own view was not shared by many members of the population, nor by the Government " (How Potemkin received the perfectly illegal attention of the Special Branch of Scotland Yard is well known).

For the individual who wishes to give public performances of uncensored films, the only way out of the impasse, under the existing Laws, is to obtain non-flam copies of the films, and hire premises which do not hold a cinematograph license. But his troubles will not end there. If he wants to accompany the films with music (as, of course, he will) he must apply for a music license, which can be refused. In this event he can give only one public performance; additional performances must be in private.

No sooner has our high-minded individual got over these little snags than he comes up against the 1927 Quota Act, which lays it down that if his performances are not entirely private he must arrange to shew a certain proportion of British films!

Enough has been written to indicate the monstrous and crippling effects of the existing Laws. It is intolerable that such conditions, conditions that apply to no other Art, should prevail, but prevail they do, and Ivor Montague is justified in suggesting that every loophole afforded by the Laws should be exploited in order to demonstrate practically the stupidity of the whole business.

R. Bond.
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"LUIS TRENKER ERZÄHLT . . . ."

Verlag "Filmkünstler und Filmkunst ", Berlin W 30.
(RM 0.80).

The first volume of a series of film-booklets has been recently published by the editors of "Filmkünstler und Filmkunst," "Luis Trenker erzählt . . . ." is the title of it. Luis Trenker, a German actor well known for his mountain films tells us about the interesting expedition to the ice-sea in the far north, where the Hom-Film Der Ruf des Nordens was turned. It was not an easy task for all of them who took part in the expedition: heavy storms, piercingly cold temperatures, icebergs. But as reward the wonderful midnight sun of Spitzbergen, the beautiful and serene atmosphere of the lonely ice-fields. Funny adventures too, of course, for instance, the fight with a beautiful polar-bear, who unfortunately always appeared in the moment when all the cameras would not work (a disaster well known to many a cameraman in similar exciting situations).

But nearly all the members of the expedition were brave and courageous and fulfilled their duty under the most difficult circumstances in their curious studio 10 degrees from the north-pole.

A short and well written sketch of the rather dramatic film Der Ruf des Nordens, a story of two rivals who search for a lost polar-expedition, and beautiful stills make up this cute little booklet.

Trude Weiss.
To the Editor of Close Up.

Sir,

I have just seen a very, almost unbelievably bad film, a fact that in itself is not perhaps surprising, but there are some points about this film which cause me much anxiety, by which I am completely nonplussed. I ask leave for space in your journal, therefore, in the hope that my mystification may be somewhat enlightened by one of your many readers.

The presentation of this very bad film was attended by a large audience, composed of the gentlemen of the press and those very important people, the exhibitors, who brought their friends and their wives. Now during the unfolding of this film, at times indicated by themselves, these persons broke out into bursts of unstinted praise and admiration and clapping and such things that indicate pleasure, instigated by the scenes they were observing on the screen and the sounds to which they were listening.

I herewith would like to be made acquainted with the secret of their enjoyment, so that I, too, may laugh and clap and applaud. I feel that I am missing something which is good, that is too subtle for my weak intelligence. So I have gone to some trouble, (for I am interested in these things) to tabulate my thoughts on this very bad film, so that they can be compared with those of these other persons.

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The Theme.
A story, adapted from an Eden Philpotts novel set in the days of the Napoleonic Wars; a story of a pretty lady, a curly-headed hero, a dark-haired villain, (there is no end to’t), and a money-borrowing father. There are prisoners, sailors, soldiers, lots of villagers, a witch, a captain, etc., etc. A conventional story, with plenty of action, not entirely without cinematic properties.

The Scenario.
There is no apparent scenario-organisation. No continuity; no balance of incident; no design; no construction. The dialogue is without wit, fire, imagination, or repartee. Sentences trail off into third rate banalities worse than Elephant and Castle. The scenarist is one who has been “at it” for years.

The Direction.
Straightforward in all senses. Old fashioned, probably just post-war school. The Glorious Adventure was better. Every shot taken from the same level. Incident considered of more importance than individuals. No atmosphere, no subtlety of presentation, all dramatic content approached from the same point of view. Almost complete ignorance of such methods of dramatic expression as camera angle, panning, travelling shots, pictorial composition, movement of players, etc., etc.

The Acting.
Negligible. Very bad make-ups and melodramatic acting. The leading lady can act if necessary, for she has been seen under other direction.
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The Camerawork.

Undistinguished. Interior lighting of the all-over variety; exteriors poor, with no attention given to the wonderful possible landscapes of Dartmoor. Some jerky panning in one place, overlooked because of small mercies. Many opportunities lost, such as the prison vaults, the prison market. The cameraman says he photographed Ben Hur.

The Design.

Architecture on the whole good, but unrevealed by narrow-minded direction. Little scope for imagination, but where opportunities arise, they have been taken. The costumes are appalling in every sense. The period offers much scope, but it is to little avail. Practically no attention is paid to the delightful hairdressing of the date. No feeling of form or line or tone values.

Assemblage.

No regard given to length of shot or sequence. Time-lapses between one sequence and another conveyed by black screen. Complete loss of continuity and latent dramatic content resulting. No use made of dissolves or mixes. No variety of cutting. The whole disjointed and unpleasantly uneven.

The Recording.

Quite good of its kind.

Conclusions.

One is left at a loss, for one does not mean to be unkind to the people who made this film. One is only sorry for
them that they ever started. It can only be said, that of the resources of the cinema they know nothing. Of the use of the film for dramatic expression of a fiction-story in order to give *entertainment*, they are unaware. Either they have never seen a film in their lives, which is unlikely, or they are hopelessly incompetent. They obviously have no idea of film psychology, camera angle, editing, cutting, pictorial composition, symbolism, indirect suggestion, continuity, style, form, etc., etc.

It is a pity, for it is things like this that get the film a bad name in England. Particularly when it is made there.

* * *

I am, sir, still anxious to know why those persons applauded, so, that I, too, can shout . . . . "More . . . more . . . please, it's great . . . . the greatest ever . . . ."

Yours, etc.,

"Average Filmgoer."

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**HOLLYWOOD NOTES.**

*Devil May Care* is to be Ramon Novarro’s first talking picture. The story, which is laid in France during the period of Napoleon’s first exile, provides for the introduction of a number of songs. All of these have been especially written for the film and will be sung by Novarro, who is credited with an excellent operatic voice. (Credit is right.
The Pagan has shown up the great big overdraft. Ed.
The picture is being directed by Sydney Franklin for M-G-M.

* * *

Berthold Viertel, as director, with a company of Fox players headed by Paul Muni, and accompanied by movietone equipment and technicians, recently repaired to France to secure some scenes at the Chantilly race course for incorporation in Seven Faces. Upon their return to Hollywood it was discovered that not sufficient shots had been taken. Accordingly a duplicate of the race course was built on one of the big studio lots and the necessary additional scenes thus obtained. If it be asked why this was not done in the first place and the expense of a trip abroad avoided, the answer is simply, that that is the way Hollywood does things.

* * *

King Vidor's next picture for M-G-M will be Dulcy. This is a wide departure from his Hallelujah; being a smart comedy of social and political life. The featured player is the mimetic comedienne, Marion Davies.

* * *

The Swan will be Lillian Gish's first appearance on the talking screen. This Molnar play was selected for Miss Gish only after an intensive search for a suitable vehicle for her; one offering a departure from her traditional type of rôles and at the same time providing a characterization in harmony with her distinctive personality. United Artists feel that in the rôle of the princess in this drama the desired object has been attained. The picture is being directed by.
**CLOSE UP**

Paul Stein, and the supporting cast includes Conrad Nagel, Rod La Rocque, and Marie Dressler.

* * *

Scarcely a month passes that some company does not announce the building of the largest set ever erected on a motion-picture stage. The latest to claim this distinction is Paramount-Lasky. The palace garden set for their all-color musical romance, *The Vagabond King*, is declared to occupy 18,750 square feet, with a painted sky backing of fifteen thousand square feet. The set requires three hundred and ninety lights for its illumination.

* * *

As a rival to this Paramount-Lasky immensity, Warner Brothers are announcing that their forthcoming mammoth production, *Show of Shows*, is employing enough curtain and drape material, consisting largely of velours and gold and silver cloth, to cover four acres. By way of impressive illustration, it is stated that if the bolts from which this material was drawn had been placed end to end they would cover a distance of over ten miles. Furthermore, allowing three yards as the average amount of goods required for a woman’s dress, fifty-four thousand women could each have one dress from the fabric used in the *Show of Shows*. While this has not the slightest bearing on the merit of the picture as a picture, it offers an interesting and significant illustration of the artifices employed by Hollywood for enlisting the attention and the interest of the public, in its productions.

* * *

Songs and theme music for Universal pictures are hereafter to be selected by vote of a special committee. This
committee will consist of a representative of every department of the giant studio, from the common labourer to the highest executive. The committee will meet once a week, to pass upon original songs and music submitted by the general director of music, David Broekman. Because of its diversified personnel, it is believed that this committee will fairly represent a cross section of the general public, and that their selections will accordingly be in consonance with popular taste.

* * *

The Hurdy Gurdy Man is William K. Howard's forthcoming movietone picture for Fox. As a setting for this production a complete Italian village, bordered by vineyards, was constructed near Montrose, California. The picture is starring George Jessel.

* * *

United Artists are the latest producers to undertake a musical extravaganza. The tremendous popularity of M-G-M's Hollywood Revue and Fox's Movietone Follies has inspired the undertaking of like ventures by all of the big studios. Fanny Brice, the popular stage comedienne, will have the leading part in United Artists' production, which is starting on its way under the working title of The Champ.

* * *

Isle of Escape, a stirring adventure story of the Malaynesian Islands, is under way by Warner Brothers. Monte Blue has the leading rôle. Unlike his former picture of this type—White Shadows in the South Seas—this film is not being made against the actual backgrounds of the
CLOSE UP

story, but on the Warner Brothers ranch near Hollywood. Here, amid natural, resemblant scenery, a head-hunters’ village has been constructed, as well as a white settlement typical of the tropical isles. Hollywood Hawaiians are employed in the rôle of natives.

* * *

In Paramount-Lasky’s Behind the Make-up, talkie enthusiasts throughout the world will be permitted to go on the forbidden sound stages and see how talking pictures are made. For the first time since the inauguration of talking pictures, the operations carried on behind closed and guarded doors will be made public. Devotees of the cinema will see the warning red lights, the suspended microphones, the prop boys and the electricians at work, the script girls, and the directors giving their silent signals, with the camera men encased in their sound-proof boxes. The story relates the experiences of a young man seeking and eventually finding a job in the Hollywood movies.

* * *

The Halperin Brothers, of Tech-Art Studios, are filming a fantastic paleontological picture under the title of Creation. The chief actors will be the monster prehistoric reptiles—brontosaurs, pterodactyls, triceratops, and their various uncouth relatives. These creatures will not only be built life size and made to move about, but will also be provided with voices and such sounds and cries as imagination can devise for them. The picture will resemble in general character the film made from Conan Doyle’s story, The Lost World, which was produced several years ago and created no little interest because of its novelty and ingenuity. C. H.
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WORKERS' FILM SOCIETIES.

In order to bring Russian and other working-class films to audiences that cannot afford Film Society fees, and generally to arouse working-class interest in films of special importance, it is proposed to form a number of Workers' Film Societies in industrial areas. A London society will be the first to operate (first show November 17th), but correspondents have been found in Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford, Newcastle, Edinburgh and Glasgow, who are prepared to form local societies on the same lines. People in other towns are being approached.

Preparations for the supply of films, mainly Russian, are in hand, and no difficulty is anticipated in making up programmes of useful films passed by the Censor, even if difficulties arise in connection with uncensored films.

In order to develop the scheme, a central office is necessary, (the National Association), and a National Council. The National Council will have very little work to do, as each local society will have its own Committee; but the Secretary of the National Council will help in the formation of local societies, arrange or suggest programmes, etc. As the scheme develops, the central office will be financed by the local societies; but for the first six months a central fund must be raised. Some has already been promised, and as soon as a provisional council is formed a wider appeal can be made.

Draft rules for the national association and for the local societies are being worked out and will be circulated later.
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THE FILM GUILD OF LONDON: AIMS AND EXPERIMENTS.

The films we have shown are all the work of Members of the Film Guild. Amateurs working under all sorts of difficulties. Of Time—we all earn our livings 5½ days of the week and try to snatch from the rest as much as we can to experiment with films. Difficulties of Space—in the case of Waitress, the interiors were done in a low basement of a cafe "equipped" with four antique Klieg arc lamps, that spluttered and extinguished at odd and unexpected intervals! The editing, cutting and splicing of films done in odd rooms of private houses (often under fire from the family) have cost hours of beauty sleep, but we think they’re worth it!

We regard our efforts purely as experiments—exercises in the study of the most complex of all arts—the cinema. The making of these productions has taught us very much indeed, has developed individualities and discovered unexpected talents in all branches, and weaknesses as well! But now we are conscious of them and that’s the way to elimination.

Our efforts are now tending more in the direction of the unacted non-theatrical film, for therein are no limitations of persons, space or time. The film of actuality can be made by a single person or by the co-operated efforts of thousands. And wherever the amateur has his cine-camera there will he find the raw material for a film study or an epic. And THEREIN WE ARE BEGINNING TO REALISE IS THE FUTURE OF THE AMATEUR AS ARTIST.
Neurasthenia. Sovkino. Culture Film. Professor Suchareoski.


By a lucky chance and thanks to the courtesy of the Sovkino agents in Berlin, I was able to see both these films on the same morning. They afford an interesting comparison because they show two utterly different ways of living and because they are typical of the thoroughness in which Russia is making films of every branch of scientific investigation.

The first was made to show the causes and effect of Neurasthenia and the necessity of having it cured as soon as possible in the Soviet Institution for that purpose. Not a very promising theme. But Professor Suchareoski has made a most exciting film. I particularly liked the jagged-cutting of the opening pictures of hectic traffic in Moscow, and the chaotic life of an overcrowded office. The patient is the head of some department. Incessant noise, incessant cigarettes, drugs and patent medicines, but no sleep. You begin to feel on edge yourself. Finally he comes to the institute where after treatment of baths and dietetics he is completely cured. When he is being examined we see diagrams of sound and unsound reflex and nerve actions. They are all that a diagram should be, simple, explicit and complete. Professor Suchareoski who told me that he is completely satisfied with the film has made a short film of real distinction. He is a master of 'Physiology without tears.'

The *Men of the Wood* are a Mongol tribe, in number 440.
CLOSE UP

about a thousand, which was until a few months ago, entirely unknown. The film is a document of their life, made by two young explorers, A. Litvinoff and C. Arsenjeff.

The photography is clear and the cutting shrewd, but not sufficiently rapid. You can’t really criticise a film like that. Only after the six reels you feel that what you don’t personally know about the tribe is not knowledge. The mountains and woods, hunting and fishing are magnificent. The fight with the bear is simply terrific; probably rather “stark” for an English audience, and the native dancers are suitably mysterious. For a geographical or Ethnological society the film is a godsend, and like all the Russian culture films, it is easy to obtain, even in England.

Andrew Wordsworth.

Achtung, Liebe—Lebensgefahr (Where’s Love There’s Danger).

Erno Metzner’s new film for Mr. Bob Stoll of Stoll-Film, was shown to us in Berlin. Mr. Metzner himself told us: “I like to make such a film once, but not more than once.” It is a sensation film of motor racing; and those who have seen Uberfall will be able to visualise the method by which the thrill and terror of speed are conveyed to the spectator. We would hint, however, that to us the real sensation of the film was Grace Chiang. Words would be inadequate to describe the astonishing artistry of this new-comer to the screen. Her manner has been likened to that of Lillian Gish, and, indeed, it is possible to detect similarities, not
so much in method as in mannerism. One might say of Miss Gish that her method is a little too mannerised—or better still perhaps, her mannerism a little too methodical. At least it is apt to be if you have seen her many times. There is a too deliberate whimsicality perhaps, a kind of insistence on porcelain delicacy, some piece of Meissen, with the eternal threat of porcelain that it can be so easily broken. Grace Chiang goes beyond this. She is less capturable, less static. There is always a something behind the something that you see. She is like blue smoke, and not to be broken, as Miss Gish insists she is to be, but blown away, and nobody would ever know quite where.

You feel she was not meant to steal the picture, but steal it she does. The arch concessions of Anna May Wong are shown up at their true value. Musk, snake-hips, almond eyes. Grace Chiang could go among the Asta Nielsens, for her ability of expression has that purity that lacks all callowness or cant, to be found only among the chosen few.

The story as a thriller, does thrill. Not sustainedly perhaps. Mr. Bob Stoll acts a dual rôle, and if he is a little too obvious as the villain of the piece, he is winning enough as the hero. There is one terrific accident that makes the heart leap into the mouth—a little masterpiece of cinema craft. As we have said, those who have seen, and will see Uberfüll, will be able to conceive what happens to us when this frightful, shrieking, flaming mass catapults into our very midst!

_Frau im Mond (The Girl in the Moon)._ 
Fritz Lang's film had quite an amazing reception at its
CLOSE UP

premiere. Mr. H. G. Wells described Metropolis as the world's silliest film, and this is another. But, like Metropolis, if you accept the Jules Verne aspect, there is considerable entertainment to be drawn from it. The most curious thing about Lang is his utter inability to progress. The technique of his first film is the technique he uses to-day. We still have the same strutting instead of acting, the same wide-flung, over-emphatic gesture, the same mammoth ponderousness.

There are some excellent sequences, as there always are; some magnificent photography, as there always is; and an absence of all logic that would be perfectly baffling if it had not always been the same!

Quite the best scenes are those preparatory to the rocket leaving for the Moon. Crowds, searchlights, radio. The giant missile, sleek and polished, slowly wheeled from its hangar. And, here an excellent technical idea, maintained in equilibrium by partial immersion in a giant tank of water. This, being pre-supposed, as a necessity for controlling the send-off. Suspense is easily gained here, for this much of it is credible, possible, and the massive, portentous style of Lang well suited to the massiveness of the subject.

A roar and the comet is off. Cheers greeted this at the premiere, and indeed, it was very good. Then we are switched to the interior of the rocket, a rather lovely thing, so brightly polished and decorative. Gasping for breath brings them all to death's door until the world's atmosphere with its gravitational pull are passed. And now, in the realm of pure imagination, imagination is not so pure after all. When liquid poured out, floats in bubbles that can be
Caught in the hand and rebottled, it is a small thing and delights us. But when at the approach to the moon the ship trembles so that no one can stand up, why does every fixture, every spring, the blankets on the beds, remain as still as the air before a cyclone?

But these are not the questions it is necessary to ask. We don’t ask to be credulous. But we might have asked for more imaginative treatment of the lunar landscape. Here, if anywhere, was opportunity for sublime grotesqueness of decor. The only thing that came near it was the vicious lake of solfaturas. Backgrounds had large labels “Studio Prop,” pasted all over them.

However, great praise or great damnation would count little. Everybody will want to see the film, and they should certainly do so.

* * *

French Season.

Mr. Stuart Davis has done a very wise and a very clever thing in his arrangement of a French season, which is now having so great a success at the Avenue Pavilion. An arrangement of national seasons is quite obviously the most clear and orderly manner not only to help film students to comprehend the salient characteristics of film consciousness in different nations, but to bring the public to an understanding of methods consistently different from the methods to which they are accustomed—an understanding that could not possibly be arrived at through casual mixing of programmes. Congratulations must go to Mr. Davis for his astuteness of taste, and his cleverness in obtaining so satisfactorily a representative collection from the significant
artistic productions of that country. The organisation of such a scheme is more than simple hard work; it needs devotion and punctiliousness. This significant Season has come about without any "blah" or beating of drums—a testimony to its soundness. There is none of the pious ostentation that can be found among groups in Europe and America noteworthy, alas, less for their artistic inviolability than their assumption of it! The French Season comes from orderly and conscientious interest. We hope sincerely that it will be the first of a series of equally successful national seasons of the same representative impeccability.

G. W. Pabst is at work on a scenario for a war-film which promises to be of great interest. It will be throughout a sound film, and will embody the three different points of view of war-time Germany, France and Great Britain. The French episodes will be based on a work by Barbusse, and it is probable that the English will be taken from a play by Miles Malleson. Each nation will speak in its own language. It is said that it will have a strong anti-war appeal.

Owing to a misunderstanding, the film Light and Shade described in last month's Close Up was ascribed to Gussy Lauwson, the Belgian director who has made a film of that name. That alluded to was the Light and Shade of S. Sandy, which will be shown at the Avenue Pavilion during the French Season.
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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

To the retrospective mind, the end of a year that gave us Stuttgart, La Sarraz, as banners to the avant garde—that strange platoon forever marking time—that saw the dawn of montage consciousness, not altogether unlike the angry weal of an insect sting, and sent or promised a thousand and one mixed blessings, talkies überall; needs some recapitulation, some winnowing thoughts to shape its varying developments for future benefit.

Perhaps the wide screen is upon us, and all our theories to date will go before the new, strange shape that cinema will assume. If we are like children now, soon we will be infants again, all of us together, starting again, none cleverer than the rest, all equally unsure, and, without any doubt, all equally determined to be first to see the new path, and to point it out tirelessly to the still bewildered sucklings, perhaps not (to be candid) in the hope that they will follow, so much as acclaim. We are all very tribal really, and self is the
first animal law, really, and all the conflict of the world might cease or become rational in the recognition of the first physical law of the jungle, the veldt, the steppe, the forest, the prairie, the ice world—I am. I am, I am—or I am not. If I am not, then you darn well won’t be either. Or some such formula.

But this, perhaps, carries us a little (only a little, if we look closely) from our subject. The more one dabbles in theory, the more mythical, evanescent and intangible does theory become. Not in the sense of unattainable divinity, but in the sense of sheer invalidity. Theory, made too precise, can only impoverish. Perhaps because each of us is a theoretician to himself alone, and the assimilation of theory from an outside source chokes up original perception with induced perception, which can have no richness or native element in us. If I see things this way and am told I must see them that way, it spoils my chance of seeing them any way at all. I become self-conscious about my reaction. That is the primitive definition. And what has been removed is psycho-surgical. I have been deprived of the initial purity of visual experience. And in being deprived of spontaneous visual experience I am being deprived of something much deeper—the psychic balance of wish fulfilment. To-day it is commonly known that what we see is not necessarily what is in front of us, but only that part of it to which we react visually-mentally-emotionally. Unless I assume that my mental-emotional-visionary experience is identical with that of others, in making deductions and constructing a summarised and at best fragmentary postulation, I am seeking to impose something which must instantly refute
CLOSE UP

itself, something which becomes a lie. Yet man is never satisfied until his text-books de-educate an assimilative world.

The future is going to bring new and always greater problems. Let us understand at least what we have been working at until now before we attempt to cope with them. We are fortunate, says Pabst, to have had the silent film first, for without it our eye would not have been trained to see. As it is, there exists a tradition of fluidity to which the talking film is trying to work back. If sound had come first there would have been none of it, no philosophy of visual exploration. The link with stage would have been too suggestively apparent to have been swept aside for tentative and dubious experiment.

We are fortunate to have had the silent film first if we are going to understand it and make use of its essential references for the new technique of sound-sight. But few people, directors included, have grasped the fundamentals of film building. The whole theory of it (individual theory, don’t forget) has been left too unarranged, unguessed or overlooked. The arrival of arbitrations from the USSR, instead of clearing away some of the muddle, seemed only to puff away the last remnants of simplicity and craft on a wind of superstition—an uninvestigated obeisance that seems to have permanently damaged the style of many who had been able at least to tell their story with modesty and reserve. The dread word montage ran like a plague. Few could cope with it, most succumbed. Then talking films, we learnt in the press, dated it. Certainly montage was no more, except whipped to and fro, a storm in a teacup, up and down the ranks of the avant garde and among ambitious damnateurs.
Those who had seen the good Russian films were right in acclaiming their richness. But none too many recognised the difference between admiring them and understanding them, between exploration of their inferences and imitation of their method without any inferences at all.

The Russian method was taken to mean montage and nothing more, and montage was taken to mean nothing more than tilting the camera and snipping away much needed footage. The fact that the montage of the films that so fired inspiration had been adopted primarily to convey the necessary implications of the stories they were telling, was not taken into account, and, indeed, the startling anachronism arose that montage, which is continuity, was emphatically not continuity. Only the more spectacular manifestations of this particular craft were taken into account, those surcharged passages that swept the films to climax; and these were seized upon as a clue to entire reconstitution of technique, although it would have seemed obvious, even from the start, that tremendous speed must achieve power mainly through its relation to quietness and the pause. Quietness and the pause, however, were out of favour. The result was a garrulous and snobistic falsity. Simple subjects became fussy abominations. Witness Czinner's Pola Negri film, witness L'Argent—intolerably bumptious frauds. The most rudimentary inferences of the methods that excited them had been utterly unsuspected. Cameras sloped, tottered, tilted, rushed, fell and toppled, all for no reason. And Czinner and L'Herbier are not the weakest of their kind.

If only they would get down to source, source, source. The source for which H. A. Potamkin asks continually. If
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they would only forget the half-baked theories, and think what they want to express, what they want to reveal, they themselves as life-witnesses, seeing life with their own eyes, in their own way. You would think that we hardly need to be told that the only expression for the implied is the physical. But have even Czinner and L'Herbier recognised this? Movement is not enough, we must know what movement itself implies. We must go to psycho-analysis to understand that action is the modified outgiving of interacting conscious and unconscious adjustment. I repeat that in cinema it is by action we are to judge primarily. With the advent of sound will come in time sound imagery too. I pointed out in an article on Blackmail that in one instance at least, Hitchcock made use of the associative symbolism of sound. To an overwrought girl, guilty of murder, the sound of the shop bell becomes a clanging crescendo ending in a kind of scream. You might call that inferential. But it is physical, too. The sound has come through her ears and has been translated to her but (equally to us, who are accredited with the super-power of being able to see and hear her unconscious) as the warning blare of danger. "Through that door may come the police". It is because of us, because we have to be enlightened, that film can never be purely expressive. What we are seeing is what has been turned to us, not unlike, in primary intention, the theatre method of setting the stage and everybody on it to face the audience. We are not watching something happening to somebody else, we are experiencing our own reaction to something which has been dissected and spread out for the precise purpose of our comprehension, and unconscious participation. Film is, in
other words, a process of explanation—the simplest form of which is action. The film of riding, racing, flying, and so on. The highest form is not the film of inference and suggestion, though that, evidently, is far above the film of simple movement, but the film of imagery and action—psychology and physiology, or, better still, psychology through physiology. But here we are getting into deep water, though I shall hope to be able to navigate it in some forthcoming issues.

Come with me to the rudimentary principle of expression. Eyes opening wide will explain that the person we see is in terror. But terror means nothing to us, it is not dramatic, nor melodramatic, until we have looked for and discovered the cause. It is then a matter of our decision as to whether the cause would (and therefore by simple displacement does) terrify us too, or move us to contempt or laughter—whether we are induced to associate or identify ourselves with the terror we are witnessing, or whether we scorn it, and associate ourselves in a friendly (if sadistic) alliance with the cause of it.

In Dreyer’s film of terror, Joan’s terror is not our terror because the cause of it is too blatantly (to be unkind) Comedie Française, too traditionally and elaborately theatre. We have to reject the cause of it—the posturing, grimacing militant ecclesiasts, as Joan herself would have rejected them, knowing well enough from the armoury of her visionary over-world experience (or unconscious divination) how to deal with them. If Dreyer had indicated, as I have said before, that Joan was a victim of law and order and justice as impersonal as you can reasonably expect from an arbitration of formularised tentatives, the collapse of her consummate
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diplomatic, economic and political resources (apart from the consideration of which particular plane of consciousness they derived from) would have brought home to us a real sense of doom and pity. The sensational collapse of Joan remains throughout history a contemporaneous idea for every age, our own included. Dreyer's film of Joan bore no hint of the illuminating references it might have contained. This, however, is a little apart from the point. Our deduction for now is that this intensive film of physiological onslaught failed as a tragedy through lack of associative self-surrender in us—for lack of the physiology of psychology.

Mother remains as one of the most immediately recognisable examples of physiology and inferential psychology well balanced. From the obvious imagery of the rising mists to the final impact of bloody violence, from the stormy blowing of the mother's flag (inferential imagery of intensely spiritual insistence) to the drunken death of the father, we can deduce a finality of concentric and indivisible connections.

Metronome montage is to vision what squad drill is to movement. Making multiplication tables of your frames should be considered valid only for scenes that are ruled, so to speak, by the company sergeant major. Robot rhythms. Purer movement can so much more accurately be felt with the brain, with the eye, with the finger tips, with the measuring rod and the metronome of psychic experience. If you have the gift of vision. If you have the gift of vision. Purer movement can be felt more purely. A simple, elementary rhythm can well, and even to advantage, be controlled by the measuring rod. Free movement must be free,
controlled movement should be checked mechanically—left, right, left, right, left, right.

Theory, theory. There is the theory that builds theory. And the theory that explodes theory. Remember, your theory is more valid, more valuable to you than any you can borrow. Remember, action came first, theory afterwards. There was more unity to Mother than there was to The End of St. Petersburg, and more unity to The End of St. Petersburg than to Storm Over Asia. Theory had evolved a surer mechanism, but something had been lost. Even understanding had to some extent been lost. The tendency pointed toward watchfulness, towards preciousness. The bigger sweep was finally mindful of some convention, keeping approved pattern. Atrophy was not altogether absent.

I do not say do not have theory, I say have your own theory. Mr. Potamkin is right to insist on source. Know where your source is, realise the uses of your experience. Remember the only real kino-eye is your own eye. What it sees is your cinema. Build cinema as vision, your own vision, and you will build something worth while.

Kenneth Macpherson.
EXHIBITION IN STUTTGART, JUNE, 1929, AND ITS EFFECTS

The initiative of planning film-exhibitions is by no means new. Its practical execution is a failure nearly every year, always in a different country, always in a different place; though mostly big, powerful organisations and official experts would participate. In spite of which the result has been mostly—in the best cases—a representative show of advertisements or of cinema-apparatus, and sometimes also a mass-performance of films. Apparently without a clear aim, or a system according to the material, and without being convincing. At the end the critics had already begun to believe that film was a matter scarcely fit for exhibition. It was only the non-prejudiced who recognised that the principal mistake of all such attempts was that they had tried to show the commercial side before all and left the nucleus of the craft in the shadows of the background.

As it is—in the beginning of this year the news of another film-exhibition was received with mixed feelings. Besides the principal experience (already hinted at) the new proposal seemed especially to have many probable negative qualities and only a few doubtful positive ones. Stuttgart, the place that had been taken in view for this purpose, though one of
the most intensively developing cities of Germany, seemed much too far away from the significant film activities, which are concentrated in Berlin. The arranging Deutsche Werkbund is esteemed as an organisation that goes in for honest work and good quality in all spheres; but its contact with film could hardly have been considered sufficient.

The general question was, whether the gentlemen of the Werkbund in Stuttgart with all their enthusiasm for what is good, would be able to muster sufficient knowledge to recognize the specific value that lies in the sphere of film, to keep out the original tastelessness of fashionable innovators, and to fight the hindering tradition of cinema-business. At the end of all these questions one shook one's head in resignation and with a rather tired gesture passed over the rare signs of the elementary preparations. Only when in the middle of the floating events the final programme was made public did one listen with increasing interest. And he who did not shirk the long trip from Berlin or somewhere else, saw different things that—from the German situation at least—had the value of being new.

Though not a film-exhibition par excellence, but in the first respect a very intensive collection of modern photography (and in connection with it the regular performance of the work done till now by those young and detached ones, who call themselves within and beyond the frontier the Avant-garde), the spectator was won by the sympathetic endeavours of Herrn Gustav Stotz, commercial leader of the Württembergische Arbeitsgemeinschaft des Deutschen Werkbundes to whom the whole thanked its existence.
Not only because of its importance the photographic exhibition must be remembered, but also, and principally because of the valuable recognitions by which the Stuttgart photographs led to conclusions for films.

From Germany, England, France, Holland, Austria, Russia, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and the United States one saw the collected work of those who assert themselves to belong to photographic production that is consciously modern. Before one reached the pictures grouped after their original countries and personalities, one went through a room created by Prof. L. Moholy-Nagy that represented the development since Daguerre and the spheres of scientific, reporting and advertising photography, in large, distinct lines; the final conclusion of the whole is that the task of photography of today is to devote its specific technical means to the active service of the present time, by immediate, unembellished catching of true impressions of life.

The truth of this sentence can then be tested by examples given in the exhibition, in an interesting way. It becomes clearly apparent, that the most characteristic and strongest impression is given by pictures that unveiledly aim at a certain purpose (as the photos of material by Paul Outerbridge, New York; the photos of fashion by George de Hoyningen-Huene, Paris)—or by those pictures that give an unfaked reproduction of situations (war-photos of the Reichsarchiv Potsdam; criminal - photos of the Württembergisches Polizeipräsidium, Stuttgart)—that vitally catch physiognomies (women-photos by Otto Umbehr, Berlin; mens'- photos by Helmar Lerski, Berlin)—immediately discovered objects (photos of architecture by Renger-Patzsch, Harzburg;
animal-photos by Hedda Walter, Berlin; flower-photos by Imogen Cunningham, California; photos of oysters by Edward Weston, California).

But everywhere, where one had got too far distant from the purpose, and approached the artistic modification of the object (portrait-photography by Cecil Beaton, London)—where the decorative treatment is in the foreground (material-photos by Hans Finsler, Halle) where original perspectives are sought for but for their own value (genre-photographs by L. Moholy-Nagy, Berlin)—where black-and-white contrasts are noisily elaborated (photos of scenery by Sascha Stone, Berlin)—where an intermediate state becomes the function of a result in an original way (negative-photos by Andreas Feininger, Dessau)—where the interest for the object is replaced by shrewd composition (abstract-photos by Francis Bruguère, London)—where optic distortions reach for laughable effects caricature-photos by Werner Gräff, Berlin)—where scraps of pictures are cut and made up for a unit (photo-cuttings by Hanna Höch, The Hague)—where abstract lights on the plate attempt to substitute concrete idea (photogramms by Man Ray, Paris)—there, yes, there the new photography distinguishes itself from the old one only by a trick, that bluff to-day as well as it will be surpassed to-morrow. If one rises immediately against "anticompositions" that treat lines, against decorative still-lifes, and impressionistic landscapes, if one stands up against manual procedures, technical tricks and plays of art-craft, one must not forget that photogramms, photocutting and modified optical drawings move in the same sphere.

It is fascinating to witness the crystallization of young
Mutiny. A Sovkino film directed by Timoshenko.

Two Friends, One Girl and an Invention. A Sovkino comedy, directed by A. Popoff.
*The Rails are Sounding*, a film made by a young director, Leontieff, who has just graduated from the State School of Cinematography. Meschrabpom-Film.
**Stampede**, a British Instructional Film of African life, made by the Court Treatt expedition and acted throughout by natives. Above, the heroine with the young giraffe whose capture is an important part of the film. Below, waterbuck at the water-hole.
Stampede. The chief and elders marvel at the capture of a water-python. This British Instructional Film has only a modicum of story, dealing with the efforts of the chiefs to secure living for the tribes constantly threatened by famine and drought.
Stampede. Mazumu and her baby, Boru.

Stampede. Boru, who grows up to be the hero of the film.
Two stills from a rediscovered film, *La Voyante*, in which Sarah Bernhardt appeared near the end of her life. Her part in this film was limited to these tragic, masked close ups.
Grace Chiang, whose amazing and poignant acting in Erno Metzner's film, *Achtung, Liebe—Lebensgefahr (Where's Love, There's Danger)*, has earned her a place in the front rank of the few great artists of the screen.

From I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside, a Studio Film by Oswell Blakeston.
technical methods at first, for they are always a sign of development and so also of liveliness. It is also instructive to watch how these must die off, if they are overbred as an expression of themselves, instead of finding the way to lasting contents by suppression of their own. The expression, technics, is civilisation, life of the body and consequently mortal. The contents, the art, is culture, life of the soul and so perhaps immortal.

* * *

These sentences have been perhaps deliberately bumptious, if one considers that it is film that is going to be spoken of. I have got a little bit afraid, too, and so I look into the pages of the programme of both the Stuttgart cinemas that showed the selection of the film-exhibition from the 13th to the 24th of June. What about the immortality there?

But let us leave this difficult word aside and be content with the search for durability. One will surely not find the most permanent works of the film done till to-day, as their collection on one spot for a certain time still must meet the most complicated and most ridiculous difficulties of film-business. But still we find some titles announced in the list, which can be considered as fitting without any discussion. At first I am going to speak only about play-films already known from regular performances. As follows:—Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari by Robert Weine; Varieté by E. A. Dupont; Geheimnisse einer Seele by G. W. Pabst; Dirnentragödie with Asta Neilsen—of German origin. Johanna von Orléans by C. Dreyer—of French origin. Zehn Tage, die die Welt erschütterten, by S. M. Eisenstein; Die letzten Tage von St. Petersburg by W.
Pudovkin; Arsenal by Dovjenko—of Russian origin. Zirkus by Chaplin; Chicago by Frank Urson—of American origin.

From a collaboration so to speak between industrial organisation and modern artists arose the following pictures, some of which can be called documentary films: The Kiphoberbefilm and the Kreuzworträtselfilm by Guido Seeber; Prinz Achmed by Lotte Reiniger; Die Symphonie einer Grosstadt by Walter Ruttmann; Inflation and introduction to Ariadne by Hans Richter; Kreislauf des Wassers by Robert Blum; Die Wunder der Kamera by Dr. Edgar Beyfuss; Kuddelmuddel by Alex Strasser—of German origin. Leben in Wassertropfen, Würmer und Seerosen, by Mol—of Dutch origin. Der Florentiner Hut by René Clair and L’Isle de Paris by Lacombe—of French origin. Lenins Wahrheit, Das elfte Jahr, Der sechste Teil der Welt, Kinoauge, Der Mann mit dem Kinoapparat, by Dziga Vertov; and Pamir of Russian origin.


It would take too much space, should I try to speak about all of these films single and detailed. The first mentioned
biggest films are presumably generally well known. And the non-German work of the smaller ones is not unknown to the readers of this paper.

The Russian Work of a more recent date will probably make an exception. Such as the monographic pictures cut from old weekly shows by Esther Schub, which leave an interesting impression of their object but only a grey one of their quality as a film. Vertoff's art of reporting, wilful and based only upon the rhythm of cutting would deserve a special analysis sometime. It is Dovjenko, who seems to be the most original and at the same time the most valuable; he transfers Russian naturalism from a symbolic play into power restrained by quietness. It will be possible to come to a conclusion only after all his work stands before us as a whole; Stuttgart only showed cuttings.

Some words still about the German Films shown. Already the director of the first of them, Viking Eggeling, was originally a Norwegian painter, who only lived in Germany and made its Diagonalsymphonie there. It represents the first attempt at a radical abstract picture. In the way of ornaments of diagonal lines changing in the movement; a play, whose charm is perceivable only in single moments, and that does not touch us otherwise. Quite different the abstract films of Walter Ruttman, that seem even now in a distance of eight years to be the strongest products of their kind. Possibly because the abstraction of those pushing, flashing and sliding geometrical bodies is no more abstraction for it reveals distinct associations with contents. As a third Hans Richter coming too from the painters' circles whose optical picture-combinations and distortions were allowed to serve as introductions
and intermezzis for industrial playfilms. In contrast to him—who searched for an eventual expression of technical means, without being able to rule out of them his antecedent—Guido Seeber has found shrewd variations for advertising films rising from technics which he playfully commands. Robert Blum cuts strange landscape-pictures to a unit of comprehension. Alex Strasser finds talented ideas in feuilletonistic contemplation of everyday life for the weekly show. And Dr. Beyfuss chooses examples for different kinds of camera-work out of foreign documentary films and weekly shows.

The most striking thing for the contemplator of these films is the fact that they incline towards industrial manufacture in the course of time in an increasing scale. While in America a too vehement film industry suppresses a too weak Avantgarde and in France a too vehement Avantgarde overpowers a too weak industry; in Germany—and it is similar in Russia—a mid-heavy industry seems to mix with a mid-heavy Avantgarde. Here one often likes to grumble about the commercialized production of the German film, which hinders the rising of new ideas and new men; and yet—if we look upon it from the perspective of to-day—it must appear that just in the most brilliant period of film-Germany (between 1921 and 1925) the experimentors, who in other countries had to deal with small and smallish work here found rich opportunity to transfer their revolutionary ambitions into work of greatest style. I not only think of the above-mentioned pictures, Caligari, Variété, Geheimnisse einer Seele, but also of formerly popular films by Lubitsch, Lang, Pick and Murnau.

The German Avantgarde of these times has found also new contents for new technics, while the French had been
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forced to discover new technics, without their contents ever turning up. The French waited for tasks that never came. They practised for a work which they have expected in vain. They have made reclaimsions already in every sphere; they searched in all the streets and cul-de-sacs without finding ways, and before all without seeing an aim. They played—sometimes carried by enchanted moods—the most difficult studies. And somebody just passing by in the street also sometime or other caught an ingenious accord, surrounded it by a couplet and became rich. The neighbourhood, the environment, the audience however, got nervous, grumbled and shut its windows, for one could not listen to studies and scales for a long time, even if a Paganini played them. And a Paganini of film does not even exist; and film itself is by no means a violin.

Twelve hours express train—from the train directly changed into a little Stuttgart performance room, in which people who believe themselves Paganinis, play their films and film-studies for hours and hours. Can you wonder now that somebody staggering back into the street with a somewhat dizzy head at dawn had to come to the following conclusions?

It is to be considered as a great merit of the leaders of the Stuttgart Exhibition that they took the great trouble of showing a considerable part of international Avantgarde work in this demonstration, revealing a sectional view. On this occasion one could see, that in the film beyond industry there is as much stuff as in the film within industry,

One perceived how much temperament, spirit and craft had been invested and split up in these little films. One saw that the Avantgarde could claim more right of existence if it
was connected with a whole army behind it—practically or only theoretically. One saw that outpost struggles can be a cute thing, but if they want to fulfil their purpose they need a system, a plan. Which is lacking to-day.

A. Kraszna-Krausz.

VERTOFF,
HIS WORK AND THE FUTURE

As one of the most significant events of the year there comes to my mind Frankfurt and Dsiga Vertoff at a matinée explaining the theory of the Kinoki, (the kino-eye) of which he is the inventor, not in words alone, but with the help of clear and beautiful examples of his work amply demonstrating his ability to translate his theory into practice. Kinoki is unposed, unplayed film, independent both of actors and of studio. Vertoff watches human expressiveness, gestures, incidents, and when he succeeds in surprising these at their characteristic moments he registers them and produces results that are extraordinarily valuable.

But this is not enough for him. In his last film, The Man with the Movie-camera, he shows us the ropes of artistic creation. When he has aroused our emotions and carried us away with a powerful scene, he shows the operator filming the scene or the montress joining the strips of film.

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One might imagine that his films can be no more than intelligent reporting. They are nothing of the kind. They are complete creations. And Vertoff, moreover, in what he calls Radioki, (the eye of the radio) presented sound before speech-films had been heard of. He has some remarkable ideas as to the future of the cinema: foreseeing the time, which he believes not far distant, when films will be presented not only in colour and relief and with the odours proper to what is shown, but also telepathically. A film thought, for example by Vertoff himself, would appear simultaneously upon all the screens in the world, probably by that time installed in private apartments rather than in public cinemas. The forecasts of this genius (I am chary of the word but in this instance its full meaning is applicable) seem fantastic until we take the trouble of considering them carefully, when the possibility of their realisation becomes undeniable.

Vertoff will have nothing of films he classes as theatrical, that is to say films acted either by professionals or others.

The ingenuity of his method is worthy of illustration by an example of his work. On one occasion he was taking shots in an all-night cabaret. Naturally anxious to disguise his operations he explained to the clientèle the presence of strange lamps by telling them that the management wished to experiment with a fresh lighting system and that later on a film would be taken. While the many "experiments" were being made his camera-men were at work. One was in the street just outside a window, another concealed in the roofing and a third, using an automatic camera, pretended to help the electrician to shift the lamps, and registered
everything indicated by Vertoff. When at last the company supposed a picture was about to be taken, Vertoff and his assistants made off. He had secured all he wanted. The possibilities of this method are immediately evident and I need not insist upon the vital sincerity of the resultant strips. Vertoff is, moreover, a past master in the art of the angle of vision, partly no doubt because the nature of his work moves him to take almost unconsciously exactly the right, intelligible point of view. And upon this I would lay stress because for some time past all the incapable film directors have been gleefully on the look-out for interesting angles; an absurdity the more irritating for the pretentiousness of its origin. One is reminded in this connection of G. W. Pabst whose camera angles are ruled by rigorous necessity: by the logic of the action. Hence the enchanting, magnificent power of his films.

In the evening I was glad of the opportunity of talking to Vertoff, for my sincere admiration of his ideas does not exclude certain reservations. His films, in my opinion, must necessarily be limited. There are, for example, certain emotions which his method, repudiating artifice, is incapable of handling. I suggested to him the following scene: a woman in a darkened room at night, tormented by her thoughts. How, without special lighting, could such a scene be registered? After a brief hesitation he extricated himself: "I cannot discuss all my methods. They would be imitated by other producers." This, I fancy was a jest. Vertoff knows that such a scene could be produced only in a studio. He admitted besides that the emotional film does not interest him. So be it. But the limitation is incon-
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testable. The problems and conflicts which we call "emotional" are of enormous importance in our lives and no form of artistic expression can ignore them.

Vertoff is wrong in setting these aside. His method is that of a formidable genius and his ideas for the future of the cinema are consistent and, in my opinion, logical and matter-of-course. Nevertheless he is mistaken in inferring that the set scenes and deliberate contrivances of to-day are on the wrong track and that producers will sooner or later accept his formula for cinematic creation. His attitude is understandable when one realises the difficulties he has encountered and still encounters in the way of driving home the importance of his idea. His work is surrounded by an uncomprehending silence. Hardly anyone outside Russia has yet seen his films. And I am convinced that when he is free to pursue his ideas to the uttermost he will at once recognise that his system can never be the sole means of visual creation. As it is he is forced to some extent to be unfaithful to his own theory in so far as he uses projectors and montage. For montage at least introduces the personal element, wilful interference with the raw material. Moreover, the direct, unacted film is a simplification deriving from literature, and Vertoff rejects the literary cinema.

But of more importance than all the battles of the theorists is the fact that a cinematic genius of the first order is at work in Vertoff. The suppleness of his technique is simply stupefying, his sense of montage and the rhythmic value of images is perfect. The silent film, apparently at the end of its resources, has much to learn from him though I will not go so far as to say that his films shake my confidence.
in speech-films; and he himself is waiting only for the evolution of a reliable apparatus for registering sound to give us a speech-film for which we may well wait in all eagerness—not only for the pleasure to be derived from it, but for the tremendous forward impetus it will give to the conception of the uses of sound in film.

Jean Lenauer.

A TALK ON TECHNIQUE

A.B.C. OF THE NEW CINEMA.

Commercial cameramen still refuse to regard need as opportunity. Lights have to be changed for close ups: lamps are pushed in.

A director, under the influence of Eisenstein's visit to England, might be encouraged to alter his camera angle for each flash, but, if his cameraman is the usual commercial harridan, unenterprising lighting will place a patina over the montaged reels. There is only one man, working in England, who is alive to the fact that each time the camera is moved there is a chance for a new lighting effect. Without levitation, or delphic inspiration, he is carrying out some really excellent work. He is interested in his job, that is his whole secret.

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Maculose fragments of print, worn out by eager fingers, show some careful light-painting in close up. The usual spotlight plays on the back of the hair, but not with that alarming halo effect, and a spotlight on the ground, screened by the back of the actress herself, catches a high light under a cheek bone. Another spotlight, covered with a silk, is trained on the right side of the face, and re-enforced with "inkies" spread in a semi-circle so that the intensity of light on the face becomes appreciably less towards the mouth and nose. To break up the shadows a fourth spotlight, also silked, shoots over the camera, catching the glint in the eyes of the woman and faintly illuminating the left side of the face, which, otherwise, is in shadow. This one example proves individual lighting, which means thought and results in a sculpturally moulded piece of portraiture, the graded shadow giving a remarkably stereoscopic appearance to the pose.

Mr. Basil Emmott is one of the few personalities in the world of British cinematographic photography. He flew with Cobham to the Cape; he was the first to use incandescent lighting seriously in this country, apart from "inkies" on close ups; he went to America to study all the methods, systems, innovations connected with the future of the coloured, sonorous, and stereoscopic cinema. Such varied, and distinguished, experiences have made him a man of value to film directors, journalists and brain-picking amateurs.

"If," Mr. Emmott said to me, "England wants to make a conquest of the world’s film market, LABORATORIES must be built. The Americans believe that the money is in the negative—and so it is—and they treat it with respect."
In an almost frenetic manner he denounced the dust holes which, in most cases, do duty for laboratories in this country. As an immediate solution he suggested that all studios, over here, pool their resources and build something up-to-date, something to equal the marvellously efficient Consolidated Film Laboratories of New York where seven and a half million feet of stock are developed, and printed, each week.

As far as the mechanics of production are concerned Mr. E. believes England could hold her own. He witnessed several films in production in U.S.A., that is he noticed several leading ladies sitting on directors' knees!

"England's special failing is mental stinginess. Many of New York's supers are four times the size of our latest "atmospheric", yet the seating capacity, in most cases, is no larger. People don't tread on your toes at the Roxy. And do you know that the factory of General Electric gives work to twenty-three thousand hands?"

All very impressive, and not a word about New York's skyline, iced water, or central heating, not even a quotation from Beverley Nichols. Maybe he was too anxious to tell me how America was going to get away with colour before England had time to say G. K. Atkinson.

Ideas of splitting the film into two or three sections, for natural colour processes, are, he holds, unsatisfactory. When a fourth of the screen is enlarged, to fill the whole area, the grain becomes correspondingly magnified. Wider stock, would, of course, present a solution but immolate thousands of small exhibitors. Sometimes the small men are willing to buy, seldom to scrap.

Then, reaching for intelligence, I asked him about arc
lights, long shots, the resultant heat of incandescent lighting. "America is going back to arcs. Flood lighting and small effects, like splashing a small lamp across bricks to raise them from the wall, are the legitimate employment for the modern "inkies", back lighting calls for economic arcs."

The commutator hum, which occurs across an arc, can be removed by means of suitable chokes, each being fitted separately to the lamp according to the voltage.

Anyway, he is using arcs on his new talkie, and he does not expect trouble. He was the first to have the courage to abolish telephoto lenses, shooting talkies in continuity and thereby obtaining the correct level of voices of the actors, so a little of this sort of thing is expected of him!

O. B.

SECOND-RATE SEX, SEPTEMBER, 1929

A report on ABORT, by Norma Mahl.

Hark, Mr. Douglas—here’s a tub for thumping!
Fie, other bats! Why sleep with belfries bumping?
How can the Book Club breathe when now so near
Free-thinkers rip all London holds most dear,
And in her chastest hall, given to recitals,
Probe at her heart, her blood, her very vitals?
Yes, softly, quietly, at the Whigmore Hall
Talkers deliberate. Sure, it’s the Season’s fall!

It is, quite literally. Dull foliage flies,
And trees, themselves again, greet clearing skies.
So, just as eagerly as leaves, there caper
Experts in sex to this staid, draper-
Hid, library-smothered hall,
Blowing up leaves . . . . that anyway would fall.
Leaves of convention, clogging man’s clean roots,
Taking the sap from free gonadic shoots.
Lectures, discussions—then a film to show.
We feel that’s right. We link. And so we go,
Thinking film-conscious bodies can’t be so
Pompous as we may feel; a screen-sense means they know.

We go, quite earnest; not to leer, but learn,
And if as yet we love not, still we yearn,
And though we mayn’t believe, we hope and pray
With them that every dogma’s had its day.
So to confront the night of ignorance, we creep
Waving old beacons lit by twilight sleep,
Dreaming on earth for a terrestrial heaven
Where life’s clock no more stands at sex to seven.
Sure, we agree. The League must win our thanks,
Who see a good case can come from its planks.
Gravely and bravely, we run dinner to tea;
For the good cause, set psycho-sail to see.

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Much secrecy. The film cannot be shown. (Ordinary precaution might this much have known. Why do the people we would most exhort Burn, for enthusiasm, elementary thought? Can they be, then, in touch, with this to learn Of english censors? Ssh, it’s we who learn) Much secrecy. A film behind closed doors, Reached by a flying squad of free conspirators. We’d heard the trouble, felt the frill of fuss And seen by Marble Arch, a private 'bus Taking them forth to Revelation’s screen, Ambushed abortively in West Fourteen.

We follow, are arrived. A studio Mentally "little Art" ... orange, you know. Figure in car outside says "to the left" (Like thugs in thalking thilms of thin and theft). A famous specialist greets us, dress-reformed; Once more into the breeches we have stormed.

A flaxen female, stressed in red foularde, Proves you can still be feminine and hard. We notice spinsters, busy making hay From withered grass none cut while it was May. Phyl, who wed Will, would float around with Sidney, Who’d find love free, but for a floating kidney; Next her, an Indian, who’d love all with freedom If they would only recognise his he-dom; Scrawny old men, devoid of sex at all, But thinking this should let them lead the ball,
And angry Workers who see one more luxury
They’re bound to miss, in all this love and uxor-y.
Doubtful unwillingly, we crane our necks
To find some other sons to light up sex.
Alas, alas, for ardent aspiration . . . .
Hirschfeld himself would find but perspiration.
There’s no electric thrill, no central heat;
A few cold shoulders and some frozen feet.
They look unhappy—cannot be the best,
Surely? How can one fight if one’s repressed?
They’ve never had a sexual life at all,
With libidos a kitten-ravelled ball
Played with inside a buttoned, hook-nosed lip;
Their utmost stride, we feel, is but a slip.
Ssh, don’t let’s generalise. Let’s wait and see.
These may be grim for battle. They may be—maybe.
But why DO those whose programme is “Be Free”
Use the imperative always of “to be?”
There should be more than these; the thing is right,
Sex must be freed from its pre-Shavian night,
And so on, so on—all the things we find
We’ve held and practised years long, undefined.
But then, of course, we aren’t the ones to reach;
It’s the great masses all this talk must teach.
Why aren’t they here, then? Why not THIS or, that,
The cream or daily bread. Not this lean ham, pressed flat,
Trying to live ’twixt the two these represent?
It’s all this play at pioneer I so resent.
All this loose energy, with a different name,
That makes sex just another amateur game

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For those who once joined groups for plehs and pomes
Now to produce, haphazardly, hormones.
Regard our prophets. Half in shorts and shirts,
The rest in evening bows and last-train skirts,
Neither at home in either. Ah, well, here’s for your hopes!
Love laughs at Goldsmith—he who’d conquer, Stopes.

The lights dim prematurely. Ssh, that word!
It’ll stamp you regressive if you’re heard.
The lights go out. This time they’re meant to. Here
Is the Abortion film, so raise a cheer.
A chair? No! No, ABORTION. Can’t you hear?
“Not very well . . . heredity . . . in one ear”.
The film starts, after a Russian doctor’s said
It shows the harmful way to bring to bed
But not the right, Germany won’t allow it
(And it’s a German copy). Why, then, show it?
Rather confusing shots of factory hands
Reading a notice. No one understands.—
It’s out of focus. Don’t let’s ask too much
(How we repress ourselves here!). Ah, one expert touch
Has brought the frames right. Something. Still it’s
queer . . .
But that a girl’s expectant is quite clear.
She leaves the table, holding handkerchief. Feels sick.
Expert in audience, “nausea”. Rather quick?
And can’t we guess it? Is this what we learn?
Ever heard this then . . . in fainting, feathers burn.
You know it already? Shame, then! Turn him out,
He’s only come to put us all to rout.
Girl buys a book, where diagrams proclaim
The flowering of the fruit that was Eve's shame.
One has not come to look at something pleasant
But surely these would wound an adolescent,
Put him off any sex-life? Visual probes,
These large, cold diagrams; they'd set up phobes.

The woman thinks, and pays a midwife visit
And all's all right or . . . . wait a moment . . . . is it?
This is a russian film they keep repeating
(And that means auto-love for them at the first meeting.
One must love russian films, one has been told,
And pass the faults, because it's six years old;
Also must murmur "it's a german copy" . . . .
Prattle's a drug more potent than red poppy).
Midwife again. Illegal operation.
Borne to the hospital in consternation . . . .
Desperation . . students round like flies . . . .
And while the case is told them, patient dies . . . .
A student finds a handkerchief and cries . .
CAN this be russian. Film breaks, amid sighs.
Lights please. The screen's moved. Really, what's more
free
Than move an entire screen when you can't see
As this strange woman did, while we all wait?
An expert explains. "Emulsion on the gate".
He's kidding us? O, no. Kid liver oil . . .
Where was I now? O, yes, the goil.
She's dead, through ignorance and kiss.
Really! We ask, what do we learn from this
CLOSE UP

We haven’t learnt before? Think of The Son, Der Gelbe Pass, Village of Sin, that other one, Trois dans un Sous-sol, Bed and Sofa here . . . We ask it seriously, shunning the easy sneer. What do we see we haven’t seen before? Why give these babes on jerries this encore? These tedious views of children being dressed! Why in this film, when they’re in all the rest? Did they take feet and feet of this and put it in Whenever any film was looking thin? Why bring it over here, when there’re these others So much more modern, teaching more to mothers Of every class? Are we just snobs, to lord We who have seen the new ones, when they can’t afford To visit Berlin (it is SO expensive?) Maybe. But freedom is extensive, And they who would set forth to re-chart sex Should sail new ships, not fit out the old wrecks. If we’re reforming, let us get the best To push our point, not have to be confessed As being amateur, behind the times . . . . Slack out-of-dateness is, of modern crimes, The worst to those who in the vanguard work; To skim the ground you’d till is but to shirk And seeds that should be sterile all you sow If you refuse to take the time to know.

Even Theresa does a greater thing, And old Potemkin takes it in its wing, Covering it by its attitude of mind:
One knows, there, what in everything to find.
What do they find here? What's their attitude?
*They laugh at semen, not to think it rude,*
*And when a plan shows how the midwife slipped*
*A smothered shriek comes forth from thin-lipped*
*(And full-lipped, too) who knew—that's why they came—*
*What they might think they'd see. Think of the name, ABORTION.*
Let us pretend it's over, let us go
Before we lose what we already know.
We have learnt nothing. Still our instinct's right . . .
We KNEW before, all we have seen to-night.
AND we've seen films before; we get no kick
Watching a hand projector fail and flick.
No film that's real film, knowledge. Therefore what,
In the name of sexiness, have we got?
Pictures of spinsters (Radclyffes or with hair)
Waving a torch they flyblow, in the air,
Feeling they're full, if not of do, of dare.
Already they're "arrested". Why then care
For all this dignified discomfort? Spare
Us from freedom with its rusty "must";
Rather let laws tell us some loves are lust,
Rather still let us "sin" beneath the rose . . .
There's ample shade beneath for one who knows.

The film of sex-reform is this and nothing more.
The screen's no window, but a shabby door
With students, spinsters staring through the hole
At what, if they were useful, they'd see whole.
CLOSE UP

Students and specialists, earnest in their way,
Thinking a peasant’s pamphlet’s meant for such as they,
Accepting this, because they do NOT know,
As the best the educational film can show.
They’ve got their magic lantern, and like the marm
They’re out against, don’t see that it can harm
If it’s allowed to teach its lessons badly.
Brain—brain reform is what is needed, sadly.

But no, perhaps not. If this is what they do,
It’s something brain and taste must not go through.
Reform’s a form of canning. Sex is tinned,
Free and preserved, but stale. We need the wind
And earth between it (leaves in season’s Fall)
And life to embrace it, not a concert-hall.
“Love’s better as it is”—that from the Co’gress.
Giggly? No, giddy, dear. We’ve made SUCH progress.
Norma Mahl.

"THE AMATEUR CONVENTION"

The National Convention of Amateur Cinematograph Societies which was held in London at the end of October achieved certain positive results which should materially help in strengthening and developing the amateur movement in Britain.
Chief among the decisions arrived at by the delegates was the resolution to establish a central body to which all amateur societies can affiliate. Each affiliated society will have one or more representatives, according to strength, on the General Council of the central body.

An immediate plan of work was arranged for the central organisation. It was decided to establish a film library, each society which places one film at the disposal of the library receiving one film from every other society doing the same. In this way every local society will be able to study the work of all the other amateur societies.

Under the control of the central body a technical bureau is to be formed, which will advise and help the affiliated societies on all technical matters relating to their work. Other decisions arrived at were to establish *Amateur Films* as the official organ of the movement, to make the National Convention an annual event, and to organise a national scenario competition. The convention also decided to commence a campaign aiming at the exclusion from import duty of all films on sub-standard stock.

Delegates from some twenty societies were represented at different stages of the Convention, including representatives from a number of provincial societies. The programme of the Convention was interesting and useful. After the delegate sessions in the morning demonstrations of different kinds of apparatus, film stock, etc., were given, followed in the evenings by papers and discussions on various aspects of the amateur movement, and the projection of amateur productions.

The greatest fault of the Convention, however, was
its failure to work out a definite function for the amateur movement. What path is the amateur movement to tread? Is it to imitate Hollywood? Is it to follow blindly the box-office ideas of the professional studios? Or is it to work out a theory and practice of its own which will be as different from the average professional conception of the Cinema as chalk is from cheese?

In other words, will the amateur regard the Cinema as a toy or as a serious, intelligent art?

These are questions which the Convention did not satisfactorily answer. In so far as they were answered by the films submitted for the competitions, the prospect is not encouraging.

Three films may be taken as illustrations. First, The Rejuvenation of Reggie, by the Newcastle Society. Here was a perfectly futile production with baronial halls as the background, and the people who are supposed to live in them as the characters. And yet Newcastle is right in the heart of the Durham and Northumberland coalfields, and surrounded by shipyards and engineering factories. A giant industrial district, affording an enormous wealth of human material which the professional never dreams of tapping. Yet the Newcastle Society apparently ignores all this, and has to waste good film stock on material which is valueless. They have for their work a field rich in possibilities, and they don't take it.

The Emperor's Sapphire, by the Southport A.C.A. is yet another example of what not to do. Three perfectly good reels of film wasted on the sort of blood-and-thunder stuff Hollywood did ten times better ten years ago. Similar
criticism could be levelled at the five reel Thanet A.C.A.
production, *The Secret of the Tunnel*, in which the customary
story of dope fiends, dope smugglers, shots in the dark, secret
service agents and detectives is chosen. While all praise is
due to much of the astonishingly good lighting and photo-
graphic effects—particularly in the interior sets—does the
Thanet A.C.A. really think that *The Secret of the Tunnel*
will help the amateur movement in any way at all to do some-
thing really worth while?

The decision of the Convention to organise the scattered
forces of the amateur was all to the good; so also was the
growing realisation that the amateur must aim at working
with standard instead of sub-standard stock; but of greater
importance than these is the imperative necessity for the
amateur societies to sit down and think what they are going
to do.

Stolen sapphires, dope smuggling and train wrecks are not
the sum total of mankind’s experiences. These are trivial
occurrences. But, there are a million unemployed in Britain;
there is intense poverty and vast wealth existing side by side;
there are appalling slums and luxurious mansions; there are
gigantic social conflicts; every other week or so (as Mr.
Herring once pointed out) we read of pit disasters which
shatter the lives of men and women. Do these things mean
nothing to the amateur?

Go to any mining village, go to the textile centres in
Lancashire and Yorkshire, to the slums of Glasgow, to the
docks and wharves in the East End of London, and there you
will find raw, human living material, material for countless
cinema epics.
CLOSE UP

Here is a field for the amateur which will make him the equal of the professional, despite the financial and technical wealth of the movie trusts.

R. Bond.

A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

We bought an English Newmann Sinclair camera and twenty-four pounds' worth of film, in London. We held English passports. And we sailed from Immingham on an English steamer, bound for Iceland and Spitzbergen.

We did not sleep one night away from the boat during our entire trip so that we might almost claim technically not to have left British soil. But we photographed some Icelandic seals and the coast line of Spitzbergen. So if we had declared our film in the ordinary manner on our return to Immingham, we should have had to pay roughly fifty pounds in duty on the twenty-four pounds' worth of negative.

So we applied for a certificate of approval.

It will never happen again. I always disliked smuggling, but I have had my lesson. Honesty does not pay.

It took two letters, a personal visit to the Customs department, the production of evidence that we were British citizens and several telephone calls, to obtain the certificate before
sailing. (Warning: at least ten days should be allowed for the task.)

Our film was packed, sealed, and a mysterious sealed envelope handed to us, to be given to the Customs officer before sailing.

The first hitch occurred when he could not be discovered and we almost lost the boat, looking for him.

We cruised North and exposed the film. Then we return to England.

The Customs official was there when we landed. He could not be persuaded that we had not bought the film in Norway. He confiscated our certificate of approval and the film and we came to London with the foolish hope of securing a commercial success by showing two reels of "ICE" in a heat wave. It was on July 25th.

Between July 25th and September 11th the following incidents occurred:

1. We wrote ten letters to the shipping agents handling articles for the Bonded Warehouse.
2. Gave a bond for £137 0s. 0d., which they estimated was the value of the film. Actually, as we had no contract for exhibition, it was worth only twenty-four pounds the cost of the negative.
3. Filled up three forms.
4. Gave full particulars of our life history and a cheque for expenses to the shippers of £1 2s. 7d.
5. Were told it would be sent to the Bonded Warehouse, who would notify us in writing of its arrival.
6. Waited ten days.
CLOSE UP

7. Telephoned Bonded Warehouse who first reproached us for not having claimed it previously and then refused to move further in the matter until the certificate of approval was forthcoming, which they admitted had been lost at the Customs. After we had waited still another four days and written once more to shippers it was discovered.

8. We were ordered to attend at the Bonded Warehouse with two householders.

9. We looked for two householders (not an easy job when attendance had to be made during business hours) and arrived at Bonded Warehouse.

10. The two householders each gave a bond for thirty-five pounds that we were not habitual criminals and would not steal the film during process of development.

11. We were sent to Camden Town from Endell Street to pay one pound at the office there as fee for attendance of officer to break seals before the film could be developed.

12. We returned to Endell Street, deposited passport photographs as proof of identity and were permitted to take the box of film in a taxi to the developing firm. This was an agonising journey for we were warned as we left the Bonded Warehouse that if the seal got broken we should be liable, together with the householders, for heavy fines or imprisonment. The taxi seemed more reckless and the seal more fragile every minute of the trip. We suggest it as ideal material
for a comic—or a tragic—scenario. It is not, however, to be commended for the nerves of the actors.

13. Telephoned attendance officer at Charing Cross Road that film had been developed and made arrangements that film had been deposited and made arrangements

14. We were notified that the film had been developed and returned to Bonded Warehouse.

15. We attended at Bonded Warehouse and were sent with a paper to Camden Town.

16. Paid the duty at Camden Town of three pounds one shilling.

17. We returned to Endell Street with receipt and paid eleven and sixpence warehouse charges.

18. We were then permitted to remove film on September 26th, exactly two months after we had landed at Immingham.

The reason given for all these elaborate precautions was that we might have hired an American star to come from Hollywood and be photographed in a bathing suit against Icelandic cliffs.

We were told that most of the English film companies, even when entitled to a reduction of duty, pay the full amount rather than deal with the unending complexities of a certificate of approval and it is even rumoured that a cameraman who accompanied an English explorer, spent so long in getting his film released at the finish, that the explorer had made another journey, so that the film was no longer of topical interest.

But it seems absurd for English people to have to pay the full rate of fivepence a foot (which gives immediate
CLOSE UP

possesion of the negative) on film bought in England and brought back to be developed. And it must surely be harmful to the industry. There are, for instance, some excellent English cinema cameras, but who is going to buy one when it can never be taken abroad? The big film companies pay the full duty and take what they want away. It is the scientist making a record of little or no commercial value who is penalized by these petty regulations.

If it is required to retain them, why cannot they be simplified? Why cannot the smaller rate of duty be paid immediately by those travellers in possession of a certificate of authority, at the port of landing. Or if the film must be seen at the Bonded Warehouse, why cannot it be sent direct from the port to a firm for developing without the six or seven weeks delay, while it is sent from Customs to Customs? And again, why cannot all payments be made at Endell Street, instead of having to take each paper to Camden Town and back?

Without organisation little is possible but this is surely a matter for all film societies in England. There is a movement to obtain exemption from duty of sub-standard stock. But standard stock is essential for the scientist and the experimental film society and while it may be necessary to impose a small duty (though this is questionable) at least steps should be taken to make the payment of it immediate and to obviate, in the interests of the industry in general, as well as of the traveller, these annoying and hampering restrictions and delays.

Bryher.

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TURKSIB

One could say "here is a beautiful film" but would that answer? One could say "here is slickness, invention, innovation, carried to its logical conclusion". One could add "plus ingenuity". There would still be left untabulated the chief ingredient. Take slickness, ingenuity, invention, innovation—polish them. At one time you might have achieved a Venus with a silver belly, at another period of innovation, a German helmet. Take the two; melt, smelt, re-weld. You get something quite new, quite different, a new form, not so much growing out of the old, as projected from it, not so much the fruit of the blossom as some new substance that is neither fruit nor blossom yet indissesverable from both fruit and blossom and the original tree stock. Take the new art-form. It has nothing to do with sculpture nothing to do with music. Take Turksib.

I like Turksib.* Turksib is the name of a railway, Turkistan-Siberia, or the name of a particular engine if you prefer it. Turksib anyhow has personable dimension. Take any railway, from time immemorial and recall what you can of it. For myself, there is a series of deplorable mid-Victorian images, the little blue engine stamp that appeared on one’s grandfather’s old letters, a print of a gentleman in

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*A Vostik-Kino film, directed by V. Turin.
CLOSE UP

peg-top trousers and a lady in a crinoline, a deplorable toy engine steaming out from somewhere, toward something. Modernized, this becomes Buster Keaton and The General. Buster Keaton and The General humanized the railway, made personifiable a certain railway and a particularized 1860 (or to be exact 1864ish) sort of engine. The General made us laugh—so much for The General. The General emerged, a personified engine, a character, standing out among countless meaningless memories of film engines that crash and smash, that swerve, and curve, that creak and break, that jug-jug-jug across prairies and the veldt, and puff-puff-puff obligingly into stations to crash, for instance, into the mild-eyed Greta Garbo with the somewhat unrecognisable attributes of Anna Kerenina.

There was another engine into which Conrad Veidt also walked the other day, speaking actually into its very nose. "Emmeline" was what he was saying (or "Eveline"). With the exception of The General these engines oddly had no personality in spite of or because of the very "engines of wrath" which they presumably symbolised. Anna Kerenina wronged her engine, so did Conrad Veidt his, actually having the temerity—a talkie—to address it. Yet "Emmeline" after all, when one comes to think of it, is not at all a bad sort of name for that particular sort of maligned film engine.

Humanity has been maligned, so why not, you may well ask, an engine? Well, why not? Perhaps we never realised how badly humanity in general had suffered at the hands of the film-producers until we saw it dignified, humanised, rehabilitated in our first "real" films. There is no use going
back to *Joyless Street*, certain phases of *Jeanne Ney*, and the first prodigy of *Mother*. We know there that people moved, acted, suffered, we might almost say for the first time, not parodies of people, at best ghosts, but spirits. Living spirits moved with a suavity and despair that no stage since has ever given us. We saw decisively that the stage had crippled vision.

Take thought. Take thought for its own sake. Say “I will personify, I will dramatise.” The cube projected, the flight of fancy that inverts the skyscraper and balances the sardine tin in pseudo-geometric frenzy on a superimposed series of translucent shoe-horns, is not (obvious truism) a symptom so much of dimensional as of demented psychology. Yet we had to have shoe-horns, had for a time to accept the beauty of the parallel planes of the sardine-tins, had ourselves to gyrate and jibber thus-wise just to see how things looked upside down and to convince ourselves we weren’t missing anything. Take *Turksib*.

We have here what we knew all the time was here. We knew of course as well as anybody that the sardine-tin wasn’t final. We knew the shoe-horn didn’t mean anything, wasn’t even a personable shoe-horn. We knew as well as anybody that eventually the Pickford must shear her curls, like any Iphigenia, on the altar of her immolation.

Well, East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet, did and had to do (like the fabulous, romantic Pickford Golden Fleece) for an older generation. But “all things flow,” we are told. Thought is never static. It creeps, it seeps, it crawls in just where you don’t expect it. Why Russia, you may well ask, why Soviet Russia?
A beautiful example of photographic art, by Hans Casparius, taken during the filming of Pabst's *White Hell of Piz Palü*, a film made in conjunction with Dr. Arnold Fanck in the Swiss mountains.
Another *werk-photo* by Hans Casparius, from the *White Hell of Piz Palü*.

A Hans Casparius composition, taken during the filming of Metzner’s *Where’s Love There’s Danger*. 
A new Man With a Movie Camera. Hans Casparius again is responsible for this vigorous study of Eduard von Borsody. In our next issue we will devote an article to the work of Casparius in photography and film.
The Glittering Sword (see Comment and Review)—a film new made by Ronald Gow with the boys of Altrincham School.
Turksib (Turkestan-Siberian Railroad). See article of that name in this issue.

A corner of the property room of the Sovkino Leningrad studios, containing a collection of the parade regalia of the former ministers and nobility,—to be found now only in the property rooms of studios and theatres.
Nanicher. One of the Tunghi. A Siberia-Kino production, directed by Bolshintzoff.

The Rose of Pu Chui. One of the striking posters designed by Lapthorn, who uses a method of "pictorial criticism." Her work has aroused considerable attention, and has gained the wide admiration it deserves.
A "pictorial criticism" of Broadway. By Lapthorn.
CLOSE UP

Thought was ever the liberated, it never acted, never functioned except in freedom. It is permeable, permanent, (like lists in the old Orphic Hymn, one could go on almost forever) indivisable, indestructable. That personified Lady stands (or stood) outside the portals of Delphi in the old days. Stood there, for artistic creation is nothing, no "acceptable sacrifice" without intellectual habiliments. Take Turksib.

Just why? Well, we have subtlety, innovation, polish, real and singular cool beauty—Turksib, a railway, an engine, seems a being almost in this film, god or goddess, having power to inspire awe, love, a subtle innovation, the very silver belly of Venus and the helmet of modernized Mars, welded, a thing of destruction, of creation. Not created, just adequately made, healing our avid, overstrained nerves (appearing after that terrible Aescuylean "creation" Arsenal) with exquisite finality. Here you have a film of a railroad, of the making of an engine, perfect in nuance of superimposition, drawing-board traceries, abstraction of T-square and ruler and numerical statistics, dotted lines. "Thought," one wanted to shout aloud, "is here for the first time adequately projected," just as one wanted to shout aloud in Joyless Street, "here for the first time are people". These are not images made artificially but thought itself, seen for the first time, in actual progression.

These images are not projected after they have been manufactured. We watch thought itself, thought-progression, not man's thought truly, but the subtle silver-thought of some Hellenic trickster.

Hermes tricked, lied, hid, flew, walked, played a flute and
a lyre. He was not primarily an artist, not the fiery creator, not the suave physical creator, but a trickster, a daemon. Silver and cold and beautiful . . . . . we seem to be watching the super-thought of some such god, throughout this film, from the first breaking up of the ground in the deep hot low plains of Turkestan back to the draughtman's board, again to the desert and the mountains. Desert and mountains merge into the cool poise of a master-pencil, pen, map and transparent paper, dotted lines, geometric abstraction, wheels of the future line of carriages, bits of metal in precise pattern, again fields and caravans. Sledges of the far divergent Siberian frontiers of the same plan, the snow and the sledges melt in exquisite superimposition on to apparently the same dazzling silver-white, but here, desert-sand. Vision sweeps, we move, invisible, are ourselves gifted with invisibility and wear about our worthless ankles the very sandal straps of the god Messenger. We are ourselves almost too deeply involved with the beauty and the miracle of sheer thought transfiguration to realize what a stride forward art has taken, film art if you wish to deride and to deify that much maligned abstraction.

H. D.
MOVIE: NEW YORK NOTES

I shall not speak of Hollywood in these notes, except as it refers to my province, New York. I believe it is time the movie found other locales. Perhaps the talkie will help that. Paramount has a studio at Astoria on Long Island, within greater New York, and Mr. Monta Bell, who was educated with Charlie Chaplin, is director. That is still Hollywood in derivation, but Mr. Rouben Mamoulian, who directed Porgy for the Theatre Guild, has made a film at Astoria, Applause, and Mr. Mamoulian may be included in our New York school.

Not only I have felt the need for another school than Hollywood. Sven Gade, returning to Europe from the western Paradise, declares: "That just as it was inevitable that the movie should have sought the sun of California, it is now essential that it return to the east. It is now too far from the cultural, critical center of American life." You may read the full story in Der Querschnitt, January 1929.

I have not yet seen Applause, but in subsequent Notes I shall tell you what I think of it. In the meantime I am quoting from the words of Mr. Monta Bell the supervising director of the studios, and from those of Mr. Rouben Mamoulian, director of the film itself. The comments of the
two men are very interesting and very enlightening, if not entirely novel to the readers of Close Up, who have not just begun to hear about the contrapuntal organization of sound and sight in the "audible film," as our New York reviewers now call the talkies. But these observations coming from America may promise something. Therefore, I take the trouble and liberty of quoting them.

Monta Bell writes in the Motion Picture (September) number of the Theatre Arts Monthly on "The Director" in relation to the new compound cinema. He says: "I feel like an amateur in my own business. . . I believe that the director of silent pictures is far in advance of his brother director of stage-productions, as we both approach his new medium. . . At the time I came East I did not like talking pictures. I do not like them to-day. . . If some one company had the courage—perhaps it would have taken a very rash courage—to hold aloof from the hysteria that brought these things about so rapidly—to produce only silent pictures during the year, I am not sure but that they might have found a considerable market for these same silent pictures. However, that is past. Talking pictures are here and here to stay." Mr. Bell came East though he disliked sound—not a happy confession, but most talkies seem to have been made by people who disliked them—and Mr. Bell had several theories: that a talkie was still a movie, that sound and speed used to enhance the movie was the right way for the talkie. He quotes from an article written a year previously for The North American Review, which he is all the more convinced is accurate. In that article he said: "... that which the eye sees is the chief attraction of the
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screen." An image held too long for the sake of sound is tedious; the screen should be made "continuously interesting." Directors are recognizing this. Bell suggested a year ago a number of devices now being used whose intention is not the synchronization of the sound with the issuer of the sound, but of sound from one source with an image not issuing the sound: in other words, non-coincidence of sound and image. He points out in his current article that directors now know it isn't the thing to have too much speech. He points to Applause as an instance of the correct compound: no unnecessary speech, dialogue and sound effects for the movement of the film. Bell sees the director as a writer, making his own transcription; and the writer who can manage people, he recognizes as a potential director.

Rouben Mamoulian has this to say about his film Applause: "The picture that you will see is an example of the perambulating camera along with the ordinary use of the microphone, an instrument that is not as yet a selective earpiece... I lifted the sound-proofed camera off its feet and set it in motion on pneumatic tires. Scenes moved out of one room and into others without halt. I tried to introduce what I call counterpoint of action and dialogue." (This idea will not be new to the readers of Close Up, however novel it may seem to readers of The New York Times.) "The camera flew, jerked, floated and rolled, discarding its stubborn tripod-legs for a set of wired wheels that raced over the studio floors.

"The camera here becomes descriptive in a new sort of way. Where a break in the ordinary film to allow for a close-up has been the modus operandi. I now guide my
lens along a straight and continuous line, without breaks in continuity, without needless explanatory speeches and also sans the printed subtitle.

"As in music, I have tried to attain counterpoint in the film. Not alone in the action on the screen, but in sound. For example, when the mother bends over the child singing it to sleep . . . the camera leaves her for a moment and goes to the head of the child, who . . . whispers her prayer. . . . Two unconnected sounds heard at the same time, that form a melodious whole.

"I have also tried to keep design in mind. There is always one force in motion played against another, and the camera rises and falls to catch the decorative element whether still or in motion.

"The camera then becomes an invisible spectator.

"By carefully timing the sequences and exercising stopwatch precision in rehearsing the cast, I believe I have a completed film that needs but a minimum of cutting."

Gilbert Seldes, our critic emeritus of the movie-as-art, writes in Harper's for September on "Talkies Progress":

"Not one of the talkies shown by midsummer, 1929, is worth a minute of any intelligent person's time. In themselves, that is. A number of them are good enough entertainment because they are transpositions to the screen of good stage melodrama or of good musical shows; some are good entertainment in the accidental moments when they remain movies. But as a self-contained, self-sufficient form they are wholly negligible and are worth consideration only because they are beginning to show signs of knowing what direction they want to take. Up to the present they have
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lived on borrowed material; and the trouble with living on the energies or emotions of others is that one doesn’t live.’’ The general sense of Mr. Seldes’ epitome is accurate even if the analogy in the last sentence is amiss. If the sound film finds something that can be borrowed and incorporated that is its prerogative. Mr. Seldes objects to the early practice of focusing the camera on the throat or gullet of the speaker; he objects to it as unpleasant—why so finicky? —and because it doesn’t permit us to see the voice’s effect on the other characters. He says that now directors know they do not need to locate the voice by isolating the speaker. Seldes, like the logician that he is, says that in the nature of the instruments lay the answer to the problem—the stability of the microphone, the activity of the camera. But the microphone need not be immobile. The points upon the talkie which Mr. Seldes makes I have previously considered and presented in these pages. These points refer to the apparent non-synchronization, surmountable (though the writer does not say so) by the very camera-concentration to which he objects. As to the aesthetic necessities that “the art of cutting the new films has yet to be developed,’’ and “a convention of speech must be effected.’’ I must say that Mr. Seldes sounds like a weathercock. I have myself in Close Up, not merely expressed the needs for these instruments of the compound film, but have recorded tentative methods for the realization of the needs. And more await publication in these pages. It is true, Mr. Seldes says some theorists have expressed possible methods, but his summary is at this date a little behind times.

Simultaneous with this article of Mr. Seldes appears his
book on *The Movie and the Talkies*. It is of necessity a brief book, and one must acknowledge that the author has done a good job. Indeed, I know of no one else who could remember to say as much as he has contained in the volume.* It is a pocket critical-history of the American film, despite tangential references to films elsewhere. Mr. Seldes might have carried out the work even more effectively had he placed stresses (in the sense of length of passages) more judiciously. He begins: “The moving picture is an illusion. It is also an industry.” He spends a number of pages on the evidences of the illusion, implying that the illusory nature of the cinema differentiates it basically from the other arts. But—is not painting an illusion? Is not literature an illusion? Is paint any more a reality than the static image? Is a picture formed of paint any more a reality than a motion made of static images? But beyond this is another question: the illusion that becomes the reality of art (the reality of imparted experience) is not the illusory physical basis of the medium, but the organization which we call performance.† Mr. Seldes has tried to concentrate into his slim volume the movie's technical foundations, its commercial history (which he might

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* This little book is crowded with the various phases of the motion picture. At times Mr. Seldes is eloquent in his condensations, viz: “. . . the movies can annihilate space and show the aggressors, the victims and the rescuers; it can subdivide time and multiply suspense; it can give the maximum of threat and of fear and hold them to the last fraction of intensity before it gives the maximum of joy.” This arises out of a reference to an early Griffith film.

† The confusion here is of the illusion of the origins with the illusion of the expression. The latter, while it relates to the former, is in a category, not isolated, but singular. That is, it does not depend solely nor—after being created—much upon its origins, it has its own peculiar
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have packed into a couple of lines—"It was born in the laboratory and reared in the counting-house."), and the aesthetic development and principles. There are films made strictly upon the physical basis of the film: the animated cartoon, etc., but these are not the most important of the cinematic forms. Montage is, in a rudimentary sense, this physical basis of the film. But to build up a syllogism leading to a law of cinematic aim upon the premise of the film's illusory nature is to make the mere material rudiments the complete aesthetic experience. This has been an American error among the aesthetes of the cinema. Mr. Seldes does not make, however, the full mistake of being literal as was Mr. Matthew Josephson. He recognizes the American blunder that saw action as motion. I have put it before in these words: Cinema movement is not simple recorded motion, it is organized motion (rhythm). Seldes is wise enough to observe that the American folk-film is rudimentary but not realized, and the reason for this is not the crass and stupid commercialism—which Seldes rightly indicates has proven its ignorance before the tribunal of actual developments, which has vindicated the aesthetician experience to impart. Mr. Seldes, by his reasoning from the illusory basis of the cinema, concludes that the chief error has been the "over-emphasis of the actual side," that the cinema's "essential quality has been put aside in favor of an incidental." Still, the "actual"—the incidental, the factual—has been a source for the development of the essential: the newsreel and the romantic documentary, for instance; the newsreel and the Russian montage-film; the newsreel and Potemkin. The essential quality of any art subsists and survives against odds. These odds are the materials—obstacles if you will—to be mastered and converted. All art is victory and every artist, despite his beliefs, must be an optimist in so far as his art is concerned.

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—but the congenital rudimentary and literal-mindedness of the American cinema, too expressive of the American non-creative mentality. It is because of this bred-in-the-bone-and-blood limitation that I urge a New York cinema. The Hollywood film-colony is a vested interest community of phlegmatic imaginations and a circle of imitations. When I think of the reader of Mr. Seldes' book, I accept Mr. Seldes' reiterations of erstwhile axioms which by now are platitudes. No one in America—or very few—read serious critiques of the cinema. People have had to be told that the movie is not a hybrid, despite reference to other arts. Still, Mr. Seldes might have stressed certain qualifications such as: while the movie is not a mobilized sculpture or painting, and while it was a confusion that considered the movie an "electrical theatre," the unawareness of other mediums is no guarantee of a unique motion picture art. This qualification should further stress that no longer do we need to think of a particular theme as cinematic or not, if there is the artist who can convert it into cinema. The entire experience of mankind belongs to the film as it belongs to every other art, and mankind's graphic experience (painting and sculpture) can inform the structure of the motion picture. I repeat myself to the readers of Close Up, because this statement of "sources" is most important in a land whose cinema is literal and matter-of-fact.

It is this literal mind which explains the fact that Mr. Seldes correctly states: there has been no development beyond Griffith in composition. Only the American comedy has got to any distance beyond rudiments. It is not Chaplin alone who extended the rudiments. Indeed, it can barely be
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said that Chaplin is the extension of the American movie. Though he derives somewhat from Mack Sennett and—Seldes forgets—Max Linder, he is more validly the extension of the English music-hall and, to an even greater extent, the development of himself. Much nearer to America in structure and temper are films like: Hands Up! with Raymond Griffith, and A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court, from the Mark Twain novel. Chaplin the personality is perfection, but he is not the sole realization of performance in the cinema. For the actor is not the achievement of the film—Mr. Seldes will agree to that, I know. If in America the film has not been fully realized it is only because the director has been unable to realize it, and this goes as much for Chaplin as director of his own comedies (yes, and of A Woman of Paris, too) as for Griffith and Sennett and the lesser men, including Mr. Seldes’ favourite King Vidor.‡

Seldes very soberly and with some courage meets the Russian film and is not rhapsodic over it. But he fails to name its cardinal fault: it is a perfection and elaboration of the American physical method, a thousand times superior

‡ Mr. Seldes wishes his text to culminate in two queries, the first of which is: Why has no figure comparable to Chaplin in slapstick comedy appeared in any of the other types of the movie? I have answered this query in my own way above but I wish to add, that if Mr. Seldes means: figures comparable in their understanding of the nature of film performance (and that should be the question, not degree of excellence), I offer Werner Krauss, Asta Nielsen and the maligned Catherine Hessling. If he means directionally, I submit the Victor Seastrom of Swedish Biograph, Eisenstein, Dreyer. Frankly the “cult of Charlie Chaplin” needs some investigation. As for Mr. Seldes’ enthusiasm for Vidor, it is not so exacting as his judgment usually requires.
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to the latter, but unsuited to a material more inferential, more social-minded, more profound than the usual American content. With all his urge to transcend the literal, Griffith was also held back by the experience of the American impact-film and as ultimate experience his films never attained to more than sententiousness and a "poesie" which was reflected in the false and tedious restraint of a Lillian Gish or a Mae Marsh, whom Mr. Seldes sentimentally remembers.

Mr. Seldes does not venture into a discussion of categories of the film which might lead him to consider forms out of the immediate range of the American experience. He does not treat at all of the future film, the psychically intensive, whose first and probably archetypical utterance is Dreyer's Jeanne d'Arc. He repeats the objection he has contributed to the Encyclopædia Britannica to the close-up, confusing its banal and sentimental effect-use in the American film with its intrinsic offering as a rhythmic employment or bold imagery for intensiveness (where it ceases being a close-up). He will not talk of the stereoscopic film—because he has not seen one—save to condemn it as false realism. Of course, it need not be that any more than sound is only extraneous duplication, simply because the practicians have no minds beyond the literal.§

* * *

§ He blunders somewhat rankly in referring to rhetorical uses of instrument as "tricks." And a correction: Entr'acte is usually accredited to René Clair and not to Man Ray, as Seldes assigns it; and the film of Chomette's was sponsored, not made by de Beaumont. A last tribute: Close-Up is referred to twice in the little book (which by the way costs $1.00), once as "fascinating." Dorothy M. Richardson is quoted.

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The New York movie has individual articulation in the work of a few independent artists. The first of these whose film I have seen are Watson and Webber. They have made a short cinematization of Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. It is done under the impetus of the French school of the multiple-image, with prismatic multiplication of an image, gelatinous construction, limpid movements, sustained fluid rhythms. The technique of it is quite professional, but the effect is broken by two intrusions: first the amateurishness of the players (fantastic stylization is the severest test of the player) and the presence of solid forms in a contained structure of gelatinous, obscure, impersonalized, sheer, non-solid forms. Solidity defeats the mood and the visual apprehension of the digits in the film’s collective symbolism. This is a film too brief and too intense to permit of a dual structure. The characters should never appear as human entities in a world of solid affairs, such as food. There is no quotidiend reality in the transparency of this Usher-world as Watson and Webber establish it and the establishment of such a non-human world denies (particularly since the unit is so brief) anything beyond it that can be seen with morning-eyes through no intermediate eye of gelatine and collapse.

The film is creditable, but we must not exaggerate its achievement. It is important as a capable independent effort, and as an indication of an interest in the non-literal in America. But how important will such enterprise be to the realization of a new American movie? To me the new cinema will build with the healthy rudiments of the film we
have so far effected. We have our mythology, our legend, our lore, our folk-film. That is our source.

I suppose the question will be asked: how does this film compare with Epstein’s Usher-film? I say first: there is no similarity. Then I say: Epstein’s is more profound, it achieved a complete and precise sense of universe-torment. The American film remains with me as an excellent achievement in physical materials. It does not impress as a psychical experience. I feel no transcendence in the use of the physical materials. The enthusiasm for it—and it deserves disinterested praise—is due to the weariness among appreciative sensibilities of the world of the American film which will not venture in the sheer nor in the more delicate utilization of the film’s instruments.

One critic has preferred the American Usher-film to the French and has dismissed the latter as using age-old (as age goes in cinema history) devices like rising mists. And why not, pray? Devices like words are determined by their affiliations in a definite unity. The mists are integral in the Epstein film and they allow his penetrating camera the scrutiny his film demands. A new device does not make a new film; an old device does not make a film out-of-date or trite.

* * *

The readers of Close Up will recall my words on the olfactory cinema. I discover in the September 3rd, 1917 Arclraft Advance, issued by the Arclraft Pictures, a division of the Paramount at that time, these words by Douglas Fairbanks: “There is now on foot a scheme to suggest sentiment or emotions by odours and perfumes. There is
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an odour for every emotion if it can only be discovered. A certain Italian is now working on a symphony of odours. You know how you associate an odour with some place. Heliotrope for instance has a wonderful effect on me. Should a symphony of odours be scientifically developed we may get as much from it as from sight. They will be able, in conjunction with what you see on the screen, to shoot out an odour into the auditorium which will produce the same effect as sad music such as Beethoven used to play. Belasco tried it when he used incense in the *Darling of the Gods.*"

* * *

Mr. Ralph Steiner is a New York artist of photography. He has made a film, \( H^{20} \), which has won the Photoplay amateur prize. I have not yet seen the film but I hasten to record this victory which may be significant of further independent films. Or may not. Still, that an American may be willing to film such an untypical (from our fans' standpoint) subject, one so pictorial, as water, is no small evidence of a new attitude. Or is it an old attitude? Is this the influence of Paris upon a mind essentially graphic in its interest? Therefore, the Paris influence—traditional in American, and the world's graphic art. But, you say and I agree, hadn't I better wait until I see the film? I assure you, my friends, I bear it no prejudice. Only—I am remembering Philippe Soupalt's good advice of some six years ago, that the American film must not go aground the "antiquated novelties." It has its own character to consummate.

Harry A. Potamkin.
DENTAL DILEMMA

I have come back from the Chair again; from the Dental Chair sublime. From the forceps' way, and the gimlets' way; with cocaine at a guinea a time.

Gaps; and the toothache's ended. It may have been mere apprehension that did it. ("I am not going to hurt you; much.") Or it may have been the fact that I had just been initiated into Big Business and had lunched with a film magnate. Will gossip writers please note? The lunch in itself was an unqualified success. The talkies were here for good. Soon we should have colour. And the Grandeur Screen. The Big Man's company had the greatest line-up of stars and directors ever assembled in a motion picture studio.

Everything was for the worst in the worst of all possible worlds.

Later, after reading stale magazines in the Waiting Room I was in the Spirit. The inside dope on Hollywood, spilt by the Big Man in direct ratio to the number of oysters which he swallowed with a noise like the last pint of bath water running out, formed symphonies of headlines in the old grey cells, ran along the live wires of a number of vicious molars, and formed themselves finally into a large pair of forceps which
were photographed in three dimensions, four natural colours and five crazy camera angles.

While in the Spirit, I dreamt, not unnaturally, that I dwelt in marble halls. Sitting back comfortably in what at first seemed to be a Sedan chair, but which afterwards associated itself more definitely with the lethal chamber, I was transported through the several realms of bliss, finally reaching an immense hall, in which were seated hundreds of prominent picture personalities, all looking more dignified, more pious, than they usually look on earth.

Not quite aware how I got there, I found myself at the same desk as Cecil B. De Mille, who was studiously reading Pudovkin in the original. Nearby was Frank Borzage, pretending to study a ponderous book while really reading a novelette secreted under the ledge of the desk.

A studious class room. The British directors, in particular, were diligently applying themselves to the task of learning something about cinema. I noticed that despite the general air of philosophic deliberation the class had its naughty boys. Rex Ingram was studying a photograph of himself in a fan magazine, and Lionel Barrymore was glancing through his collection of Press cuttings.

Perhaps the most significant thing about the assembled immortals, however, was their extreme innocence. Man Ray, devoid of his earthly bulk, was leaning spirit-like over a collection of geometric objects, continually experimenting with their positions, something like a youngster being initiated into the mysteries of building blocks.

The general hubbub of the Spirits, which emanated chiefly from the German quarter, where E. A. Dupont and Richard
Eichburg were arguing as to whether or not *Piccadilly* was real cinema, subsided as a white-clad figure wearing horn-rimmed glasses took up his position on the lecturing platform.

In readiness for the intellectual struggle awaiting them gum was slipped into spirit-mouths, mouths which knew not the acquaintance of forceps. Speaking with a voice remarkably like Western Electric sound-on-film, the oracle commenced to deliver his address. His tonsil tantrums stabbed the air, for all the world like a hypodermic syringe on an aching gum.

"At this point in the stream of causation, children," he began, for there was obviously no morning or afternoon in this lecture-hall, "I want you to consider the fundamentals of cinema. Later, we will come to their application, but before we can do that we must have a clear idea of the medium with the use of which we have been graciously entrusted."

F. W. Murnau shuffled, a faint, spirit-shuffle.

"Now, children," continued the tonsils, "who can tell me what cinema is?"

A thousand spirit minds were working furiously. Halos of inspiration appeared and disappeared around the ghostly heads.

"Please, Teacher," cried Carl Laemmle, Jnr., suddenly, "I know. Box-office."

A distant roar, which might have been either the Last Trump or a Heavenly traffic-block, sounded in the hall.

"The cinema," continued the oracle, warming into his stride, and taking occasional sips of luke-warm nectar from a glass at his elbow, "is the oldest of the arts. It is so old,
so mixed up with the primitive attempts at expression on the part of pre-D. W. Griffith man, that people naturally assume it is a new art. You will find, children, that people, particularly critics, have an unfortunate habit of looking at everything upside down. That explains the success of Ben Hur.'

"Now for a definition of cinema..." The oracle paused. All oracles avoid definitions. "Well, that is to say, well... Cinema may briefly be defined as a synthesis of light, shade, and movement, a construction postulating these three entities." The lecturer took a long gulp of nectar and looked pleased that he had passed the first hurdle. "That definition, children, may mean something; I leave it to you to find out. Write to the papers about it. They should know.

"Having successfully decided upon our definition, children, we have to consider the relationship each part bears to the other, and in turn, to the whole. And what part the whole bears to each other. And to the other part of the whole. After which we may dwell lightly on the relationship of the other part of the whole to the remaining part of the part of the whole.

"I take it that was quite clear? Let me repeat... Did you fully understand that, King Vidor? Hitchcock, stop looking at those marble pillars as though you want to run a camera all the way up them. It isn't done in the best circles."

"Now, the synthesis of a picture, the building up of its sequence, the visual relationship of its separate shots, the calculated tonal and structural relationships of its individual
compositions, and the relationship of those qualities with the film as a whole, is called montage.

"Montage is the bête noire of the commercial cinema. For the translation of that passage see the glossary at the end of any popular dictionary. The actual word "montage" is of French origin, meaning, literally, mounting. According to the number of pages any English journalist may fill in describing the meaning of the word, so he is considered to be mounting the intellectual ladder which leads ultimately to irate news editors, low-brow letters about high-brow critics, and the dole. You follow me?"

The Sage's discourse was suspended for awhile in order to permit the feebly protesting ejection of a number of American film magnates, who indignantly declared that they had never heard of the word.

"Once upon a time there were a number of sensational pictures made in Russia. They altered the face of the film world, they shattered the fair idol known as Ufa. And earnest people following in their wake mistook their means as their end. Montage, with apologies to the British studios, occupied the thoughts of the film-makers.

"But the result, unfortunately, was generally unhappy. Their arose a circle of enthusiasts who mistook montage for its spectacular constituent, quick cutting. There arose a school, whose coat of arms was a pair of scissors, snipping. More celluloid was wasted through Russian imitators endeavouring to be clever than was ever wasted in Hollywood.

"At a meeting of a certain film group, for example, a young man who should have known better, presented a
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picture, which shall be nameless, and introduced it to the audience with the remark that he added the montage after making the picture. He seriously thought snip-snap cutting and reverse printing gave him montage.

"More than that, he mentioned casually that the printers had accidentally reversed the negative in the wrong place, but added that he did not think it affected the balance of the picture.

"He was right, children. It didn't."

Some consternation was caused at this juncture by an alarming clanking noise, not unlike the clatter of surgical instruments on enamel trays. It transpired, however, to be nothing more sinister than the arrival of Lon Chaney, disguised as a money-box. He was thereupon surrounded by a number of half-starved British producers.

"Having decided upon the things that make FORM in a picture," drawled the Voice, hissing slightly like a disc system in full blast, "we have to consider subject matter. Here opinions differ. The commercial cinema and the avant garde—the latter being a curious collection of unwashed animals who live in Chelsea, and the outskirts of all big cities—can never agree."

"Hollywood and Elstree, the places where they make motion pictures, employ people who write what are known as film stories. That means to say, they take the one eternal story of the movies and twist it into a form they fondly think is new."

"The eternal story is simply this; the Farmer's daughter loves the Milkman, but the dirty Squire has a Mortgage on the old farm. He demands the hand—well, perhaps not
exactly the hand—of the daughter in return for the deed. Father, a weak fellow, who has never recovered from the shame his Daughter's Mother brought on the Family, gives in. But the Milkman turns up at the critical moment, waving a £10,000 cheque won in an illegal Football Competition. The Squire dies of drink and his bones turn into particularly nasty maggots. The loving pair live on, and thoughtlessly reproduce their species *ad infinitum.*

"That, children, is the one and only commercial film story. It contains all the ingredients of Box Office, and has been moulded a thousand thousand times in the furnace. It has everything; Father-love, Mother-love, romance, comedy—and how!—pathos, and S.A. (South Africa, children, South Africa)."

"Now, for those of you who have been nurtured in Hollywood I have a somewhat painful surprise. Understand," (here I was vaguely aware that I was sitting back stiffly and yawning inelegantly) "I am not going to hurt you; much."

"The Ideal film story is not literary-representational in the conventional sense. The crazy idea that a film is only a film by reason of its plot and counter-plot is as out of date as the dental surgery of the 'one hand on the tongs and one foot in the patient's chest' school."

"If you analyse the great pictures of the world you will find they contain no plot, little incident, and only a threadbare sequence of events. Even in the commercial cinema this dictum holds true. Witness the box-office success of *The Cock-Eyed World*, a film with no story, but an alleged theme."
Mr. Raoul Walsh here rose and repeated the most famous oral gag from his picture. He was promptly offered a plate of fruit by an attendant dressed as a United States Marine.

"The film with little literary value enjoys great advantages over its more rigid rival. It has a cinematic freedom denied in the narration of a conventional plot. But such films do not succeed."

Mr. Stuart Davis here cried "Shame!"

"They do not succeed because they baffle their audience, and audiences—particularly the British Audience—hate being baffled. When people for the first time meet something which they can't understand, but think they should be able to understand, they get angry. Their sense of defeat vents itself on the work which has defeated them. Give an old lady a copy of Joyce's *Ulysses* and see what she says. Particularly if she happens to open it at the last page."

"It does not do to anger the box-office, nor does it do to infuriate the critics. Nobody really reads the critics except the people whose names are mentioned favourably in the criticism, but there is a popular opinion that they are demons to be feared."

"This matter of story-less picture making is much more important than it appears at first sight. I shall make it the subject for the next Earth-lesson, which I expect you to film very carefully on nice, clean negative. And anyone not doing his Earth-lesson will have to bring a note from his executive saying why he hasn't done it."

Gravitational forces were pulling; zig-zag. Twisting downwards, just like a tooth coming out.

"That, children, will be all for to-day. Mr. Pudovkin,
you shouldn’t put your books away like that, so soon. You may be head of the class, but it’s very bad manners. Remember what the English Press said about you when you visited London. You may have a reputation to live up to in that direction, but don’t indulge in it here.”

There was a sharp downward tug, and the Celestial Film School grew dim.

Glancing round hurriedly before the Spirit entirely left me I caught a glimpse of Cecil B. De Mille, and heard him telling William Fox that this montage business was the bunk, anyway, and that he personally believed in bedroom scenes.

A white-clad figure, wearing horn-rimmed spectacles, was chattering away amiably.

“This new injection is remarkable stuff,” he was saying.

“So soothing to the nerves.”

Hugh Castle.

L’ESPRIT MOYEN ET LE CINEMA

Levraut, en parlant de Molière, disait déjà : En effet, les applaudissements des délicats ne suffisaient point à l’auteur, il lui fallait aussi les pièces blanches du parterre pour faire vivre sa troupe de comédiens.

Primum Vivere deinde philosophari, et pour vivre, le cinéma organisé commercialement doit atteindre avant tout
l'esprit moyen. On ne saurait donc trouver à redire aux tendances banales des scénarios, à l'usage fréquent d'expressions populaires.

Peu à peu, cependant, attirés par ce qui, dans quelques films, trahissait un talent incomplètement standardisé, séduits par certains effets esthétiques, voulus ou non, les esprits cultivés, de toutes classes, vinrent au cinéma. Ces adeptes nouveaux, au même titre que le "tout-venant" ont droit certes à quelques égards; il serait bon que, de temps à autre, surgisse une bande à leur portée, qui fortifie leur foi naissante. Pour mieux satisfaire leurs goûts, ces amateurs de substance cinégraphique se groupent ici et là en petits clubs privés. La création de ces associations n'est pas toujours commentée en termes agréables, car le commun aime à blâmer qui s'écarte de lui pour faire bande à part. On accuse ces cinéphiles de faire parade de sentiments élevés, mais après un triage préalable des snobs et des oisifs, les Ciné-clubs se trouveraient encore composés d'excellentes natures qui ont cent fois raison de vouloir bien faire confiance au cinéma, au vu de promesses latentes. Ce n'est pas à dire, vraiment, que les spectacles ordinaires ne révèlent jamais de films réellement intéressants, et, sous ce rapport, l'on constate certainement une amélioration sensible de la qualité des films projetés habituellement. Il ne faudrait pas non plus s'imaginer que toutes les bandes présentées en séances privées soient des chefs-d'œuvre d'inspiration artistique... loin de là. Dans ce domaine, comme dans les autres, s'immiscent aux produits de la meilleure imagination ceux dont certains esprits plus ambitieux d'étonner, d'ahurir le bourgeois que d'exprimer avec sincérité, accouchent sans
effort. Et s’il est nécessaire de se garder des films creux ou infiniment soporifiques, il n’est pas moins indispensable de condamner les élucubrations de ceux qui, par le moyen des pellicules, donnent libre cours à un lyrisme du plus douteux acabit.

J’en arrive au cinéma pur, ainsi dénommé parce qu’il exclut l’idée continue et se borne à éveiller des sensations visuelles. Si ces sensations étaient elles-mêmes génératrices d’idées, le cinéma pur serait, à n’en pas douter, la chose par excellence de l’amateur cinéphile. Mais prenons La Coquille et le Clergyman, La Marche des Machines, La Nuit Electrique, Symphonie D’une Grande Ville, Étoile de Mer. Que constatons-nous ? Le premier est un salmagondis de visions originales, certes, mais ne renferme aucun motif dont, non seulement l’esprit, mais l’œil, puisse raisonnablement se satisfaire. Le produit d’une imagination personnelle, c’est vrai, mais où le naturel de l’impression fait place à une recherche d’expressions curieuses et inédites dont l’auteur seul apprécie l’objet. It n’est pas douteux qu’une lente investigation des signes visuels ne puisse aboutir à une forme idéale de la représentation figurée de la vie, et, à cet égard, Madame Germaine Dulac ne saurait être blâmée de vouloir libérer l’image du scénario conventionnel pour ne la faire servir qu’à suggérer intuitivement le sens de tels mouvements, tels groupements de formes. Mais le caractère abstrait de semblables procédés, s’il prête volontiers une physionomie et des possibilités nouvelles au film, ne se peut guère imposer tout au long d’un spectacle. Quand Ozep ou Preobrashenskaja, pour illustrer mieux la pensée, ont recours aux parallèles, aux symboles, l’on saisit instantanément que

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les "recettes" cinégraphiques, non plus constamment exploitées comme dans Jeanne d'Arc, de Dreyer, par exemple, mais savamment mises à profit, concourent puissamment à l'harmonie et à la signification plus profonde de l'action filmée. Les travaux d'avant-garde ne sont fréquemment que d'arides concentrations de moyens et d'intentions personnels dont il serait aisé, sans contredit, d'extraire de précieuses indications, mais qui, pour les besoins de l'attention, ne possèdent ni la variété, ni l'homogénéité nécessaires.

Deslaw, lui, enregistre la course des bielles, le va-et-vient des pistons, impressionne l'emulsion de ses films des lueurs nocturnes des boulevards. Ce n'est là que l'A.B.C. du métier, les rudiments de l'expression cinégraphique, mais il n'est pas sans intérêt de commencer par là; tant d'autres, délaissant le langage des choses, s'en vont accumulant les productions sans relief, persuadés qu'à eux seuls le sourire de Dolly et l'uniforme d'Ivan suffiront à produire le charme d'une narration pressée d'en finir.

La Symphonie D'une Grande Ville serait une chose excellente si l'on en supprimait le tiers et par là je veux dire les multiples visions qui n'apportent aucun élément frais de curiosité visuelle. Et l'Etoile de Mer, quoi qu'on en dise, piétine sur place.

Poète ou philosophe, peintre ou analyste, le cinéma, sous ces quatre aspects, se doit avant tout de n'exprimer, au moyen des images, que des idées, des sentiments personnels. Il se doit surtout d'éviter la banalité et de ne s'emparer des êtres sensibles qu'en poursuivant, à travers la
forme, la sincérité d'émotion. Cette sincérité là est proprement artistique. Nous ne pouvons attendre du cinéma aucune révélation qui ne soit la manifestation d'une personnalité, d'un caractère, et moins encore devons-nous espérer de la production dite internationale. Béranger aimait déjà qu'un Russe soit Russe et un Anglais, Anglais. Nous irons plus loin, en disant qu'il est nécessaire que ce Russe, cet Anglais là, s'abstiennent de tourner la manivelle s'ils n'ont rien à dire. Il est grand temps, n'est-ce pas, qu'à la teinte neutre du film commercial se substituent les colorations propres à chaque individu, nation, race. L'esprit moyen du cinéma, passe-partout commercial, que le sonore aurait pu condamner, gagne encore du terrain grâce à cette invention. Nous aurons le film polyglotte qui s'en ira vulgarisant d'un pôle à l'autre un synchronisme franco-américain ou germano-russe, nous aurons .... mais au fait pourquoi prophétiser.

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

COMMENT AND REVIEW
ADVANCED PICTURES ON VIEW.

One cannot help talking about the Shaftesbury Avenue Pavilion, because it is the one silent house. Mr. Stuart Davis is always on the look-out for something new.
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Londoners will be able to see The Lamp-posts of Paris, and The Colour Symphony.

Certain elements, in commercial scenarios, repeat like onions. There is, at present, a tendency to make "theme songs in plastic light": short pictures, based on simple stories, which are much in favour because Anthony Asquith, or Widgey Newman, said that only the treatment of a film matters.

I hate artificial cinema respiration; I hate waxworks, things which look alive and are not. Ugh!

A little actress, Mireille de Severin, plays four leading rôles in The Lamp-posts. Her face has something of the Mabel Poulton in it. She is a school girl who refuses to buy flowers from herself as a starving outcast. In turn she becomes the "woman of luxury", by blacking her eyelids and wearing artificial pearls, who furiously chases away herself as the flower girl, who, finally, manages to sell a single bouquet to herself as a young, love-struck seamstress.

Such a complicated day, as one can well imagine, is too exhausting for the poor thing.

Children skip with a rope tied to a lamp-post. Feet, of the flower girl, tread the cobblestones of the night-deserted streets. The neglected rope swinging on the lamp-post. An orientation of the camera to give the view point of Mr. Moon. Feet dangling lifelessly, shadow on the wall, flowers washed down the gutter...

It is a theme song in light, the kind of thing Al Jolson sings in the weepies, but it is presented seriously with the question, "Is it cinema?" always in the mind of the director. Mr. Potamkin could tell them about unity: theme
and treatment must correspond. It is no use for the director to be smart aleck when the story demands a man of deep insight.

Lamp-posts are supposed to link together the episodes, for the somewhat childish reason that most of them take place under a street light. When a character walks down a street the film switches to the heads of lamp-posts, framed in an iris, whizzing by very smoothly. Had the scenario been conceived in a more poetical way the director might have shown us faces like moon-lit flowers, types, moods, the sea on land: something too big for the stage as we know it.

If walls could speak! The camera can make them, can make lamp-posts tell of life, instead of singing four verses of a sentimental ditty.

It is worth seeing. In due course, when it is presented, I advise readers to look out for it, if only for the glimpses of old Montmartre, and for the promise it gives that, one day, someone will tell the story which was hinted at by the lamp lighter in Jannings' *The Last Laugh*.

*The Colour Symphony* is another film of promise. The camera is more limited than we think, and capable of greater things than we dream. It cannot make a sugar story convincing, but it could have developed the secondary motif into something impressive.

We have had visual rhyme (severely copyrighted), sound imagery, counterpoint, and Kino Eye-wash; isn't it time we had colour innuendo? As a cult it needs prophets, severely to copyright it, as well as a few smiles of encouragement from our advanced amateurs, or, better still, a code of film renter's grips and Wardour Street passwords.
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The Colour Symphony puts all sorts of notions into one’s head: what the avant-garde can do with colour, what ought not to be done with colour, and what everyone is trying to do with colour. If the literati do not approve of this little film, when it is shown, I shall still keep my notions—possibly keep them dark!

For years theatrical colours have tempted many to play with the idea of a film on the lines of this American effort. The coloured sheets of gelatine, which the stage electrician slips in front of the spot lights, create a whole world of the artificial. Pure photography, as Francis Bruguière always said, is a matter of controlled light. The photographic artist of to-day should be able to boast that his pictures are his own, not a record of nature’s own. Thus these theatrical colours offer a chance to the cinematographer in particular, to make something beyond the imitative. A world can be suggested: from the surge of an angry mob to the collapse of a child’s gaudy toy.

Colour photography is sound photography. Colour music. Everyone has heard of colour music, everyone has heard colour. The scale of the musician parallels the colours of the spectrum: some notes are ivory white, others flame ruby.

In the experiment, under review, there is a flow of kaleidoscopic patterns. There is no cutting; in its place a constant merging, melting, and splitting of figures. Prisms are employed, the patterns being symmetrical. The centre is displaced, now to one side, now to another. A circular basis can be found for all the compositions, even the expanding stars seem to be formed from the overlapping of four circles. Occasionally there is a sense of depth, while
some of the groups have a whirlwind force, seeming to be sucked into the central web. Towards the end of the picture a shape, resembling a lighthouse in silhouette, makes its appearance, and, in a strange way, radiates brilliantly tinted curves.

What is so surprising, and important, is the dramatic power of juxtaposed colours. A red that suddenly explodes, a soft green infusing the screen after a wash of scarlet, black stars that unfold from a sea of gold: all react on the spectator in a definite, psychological manner. An audience can be thrilled, soothed, startled, by a transient colour glimpse. A chain of emotions could be inspired by points of luminous shades, growing, converging, sinking back. So that an author-artist could build up a situation from a crescendo of light, colour and form.

There are clearly marked limits to the things which can be done. In The Colour Symphony there are moments when one is reminded of an animated drawing-room carpet, or a wishy-washy imitation of Vogue. Severe eye-strain is caused by the intense demands of following the figures of mauve, vermillion, sapphire, lavender, all at the same time.

The field is a new one. Who will be in the vanguard with colour innuendo?

Oswell Blakeston.
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SA TÊTE.

NEW FILM BY JEAN EPSTEIN.

Mr. Epstein’s trees planted along a low horizon. A farmyard. Mr. Epstein has been looking at the stills of the *Ballade of a Duck*. The old mother does not know what is happening. The spectator does not know what is happening. A church, as if to say, “Don’t worry.”

The hero, with his young lady, having his fortune told. Told by Mr. Epstein and not the fakir. Suggestion of a guillotine, of a love affair. Frances Dhélia at the fair, holding down her skirts. Even if the camera does not know what is happening the public must be occupied. Attraction. The hero thinks of his girl’s employer, rich employer at the bank.

Telepathy: rather nice. The boy thinks of the old man, who is shown going to his house. He reaches a decision as the old man reaches the house.

The girl gives him money to pay for the swings and the round-abouts.

The boy is arrested. The mother does not know why. A cocoon of a film. One sees something; next day one sees paper about the affair. So the mother tries to read the paper, waiting for the trial. For the first time she reads in the paper that her son is accused of murder of the wealthy banker. Plastic interest in the inserts of the paper; different sizes of shots and movement. Epstein compositions of small figures on the bench. One begins to know what is happening, one begins to know Mr. Epstein.

Magnesium ribbon; photograph of mother. The press
knows what it wants, a good murder story. Mr. Epstein is doing his best. The rhythm is more assured.

Now that the spectator knows what is happening he begins to impose himself on the film, to form a false idea. The chauffeur who saw the boy entering the bank; the brother who saw the boy near the director's room; the timid boy.

It all would be more effective with sound, which, at the moment, is dangerous, and there is a peculiar evolution of film technique depending on film technique. Large close ups jump to long shots in such a way that one feels Mr. Epstein is thinking of the position of a trolley at the end of a travelling shot. This makes smooth cuts for the audience fed on America's moving cameras, but it is a tiresome subterfuge for the critic.

The mother makes friends with the girl. Compare the mothers making friends in *Finis Terrae*. They turn as the door of the court-room opens; things are not going well with the boy.

The Church. Villagers do not understand. They throw stones at the mother’s cottage.

Cigarettes; boredom of slick brother who knows too much.

The characters begin to bore the spectator, who knows this much too much, that the boy will get off in the end and go away with the girl. He begins to tell himself stories about them. The mother, in her bonnet, makes him hum the refrain, "Don’t have any more, Mrs. More."

A cruel touch at the end; the village rejecting the mother.

Pudovkin would find all the moral lessons that Russian films (please note, film critics) DEMAND.

Oswell Blakeston.
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PEHOUA.

A NEW NEGRO DOCUMENT.

Natives climbing onto a white boat: white men climbing onto the black land. Why will they insist on the whites? Are we not tired of them? More than whites, a white story. The new agent who is astonished at the civilisation of the natives. I hope the negro people get some fun out of the primitiveness of the whites.

When is a document not a document? When it is a French one. The natives are shown at their tasks, and the silly little agent trots into the picture to watch them. I feel as annoyed as if my neighbour stuck his head, every few minutes, into the beam of the projection apparatus.

There are some pretty magic rites, there are some lovely heavy skies, some good dances. What does our hero do when he gets to the native village? Does he try to vibrate with the rites, skies, dances? He puts on a phonograph, he reads an inane French comic paper.

The comedy with the little boys is either very charming or very forced, it depends on the time of day, before or after a good lunch.

Our hero wants a servant. He is married to a black girl. Her black lover hopes to win her back. He becomes the victim at the Feast of Flagellation, exposing himself to the terrific blows. This is really exciting; a record of a true ceremony carried out perfectly seriously. The actor was beaten thoroughly for the sake of the avant-garde cinemas. Interest is spoilt by shots of the white man watching.
The white man leaves, in a native propelled chair. After fetiches, trials by poison, the black girl is married again to the black man. While her marriage drums beat she... cries. Not even for purity, but for a white man’s film (if any one still remembers Michael Arlen).

O. B.

FOYLE FOR FILMS.

A man played a gramophone. Stopped playing. Went behind the scenes to project The Magic of Books.

Pastoral books bring to you the magic of the country-side. Books superimposed over meadows. Tales of the sea bring to you adventure. Books superimposed over ships. Then, all in one title, a reminder that there are essays, memoirs, panegyrics, sermons, dramas, comedies, text-books, etcetera. A super superimposed effect? Cleverly loopholed by a view of book shelves.

Sir Walter Scott talks to Dickens in Epping Forest. (Somebody declares that Shelley is Harpo Marx). The literati of yesterday decide to journey to the new building of Messrs. Foyle, in Manette Street, and congratulate the proprietors.

This is one of the most determined efforts to use films for advertising. There are two doses of continuous projection, in Foyle’s private theatre, each day. The pity is that they use an advertising film.

O. B.
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POE AS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE CINEMA.

Epstein began *Usher* in an almost conventional manner: villagers gossiping in the inn, and the stranger who wants to go to Usher. The villagers refuse, to a man, to act as guide. Usher, in the world, but on the fringe of it. Not an impossible, but a different castle.

The much vaunted amateur production of *The Fall of the House of Usher* opens with overlapping shutters being withdrawn to show the tiny figures under cardboard pillars.

The lady is dressed, in the American version, as a typical vamp. She is very rude about her food: makes faces at it.

Optical trickery, with prisms, is not psychic atmosphere, especially when the composition is sloppy.

O. B.

FROZEN ULRIC.

*Frozen Justice*. Lenore Ulric in her first talkie. The vamp of Broadway. Theme song: Broadway, Broadway... We went.

Dog packs pulling sleighs, and men pushing the sleighs and dogs. It's a hard life in the North. Men are men, and Lenore Ulric is the star. She waits for the Great Chief, her husband, in a lace shawl. Frozen North. "What," she cries, "is the use of being beautiful if there is no man to see?" The audience is watching.
Model of a ship collapses to rhythmic wind machines. Escape, with the captain, to a town of low bars. Dance, dance little lady. And she wants to go back to the Great Chief: works herself into such a passion that she forgets she is playing in a film and pulls too fiercely at a property drawer. Her efforts to steady the furniture, without spoiling the take, are as funny as the lady having difficulty with her music at the Russian pierrots.

Husband asks the camera if he will ever again find his wife? We’ll see the producer about it.

Chase over the ice. Two characters point out how dangerous it is. Two characters point out how the ice broke in 1884 on such a day. Two characters make it all nice and easy for the popular patrons.

Back in the town Louis Wolheim’s clothes are soaked in blood. The good-hearted prostitute dashes into the room, and asks him if he is hurt.

Sound is used very cleverly in the playing of a phonograph. Deliberate distortion, the patent of Mr. Pudovkin, is hinted at.

O. B.

THE GLITTERING SWORD.

This is—I am told—Mr. Ronald Gow’s fifth film effort with the Altrincham School boys. A week was spent among them constructing and painting the sets, and a further three weeks in the actual shooting of the scenes on the locale of
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a single hill just outside Dartmouth. Wigs and thirty of the costumes were hired, the remaining 150 or so having been made by the boys' relatives.

All this means nothing, of course, unless a film is the outcome. Well, to use Mr. Gow's own words, *The Glittering Sword* is neither a box-office nor an avant garde proposition. But it would be interesting to school audiences and amateur production societies, and worthy of a word in *Close Up*.

In the form of an allegorical legend, the film is a call to youth in the future to decide for themselves upon either War and World Power or Peace, Bread and Life. But neither the allegory nor the significance of the various symbols come out with sufficient clarity and strength. The gamble for souls between Death and the Devil, should have been nearer the beginning of the film. It would have made an arresting opening scene.

Youth finds the silver sword, but when the stupid populace choose that it shall bring them Power through War, youth casts it into the sea. This scene might, with advantage to its conviction, have symbolised the future casting out superstition and aged tradition, and choosing reason and wisdom to guide its own strong right arm.

Mr. Gow should makes his puppets move with a greater sense of rhythm, especially as he has to make up for the natural inability of schoolboys to develop any degree of characterisation.

Hay Chowl.
BOOK REVIEWS.


This book is particularly valuable on account of its fine illustrations. Richter's text is well considered but short, and it is admirably supplemented by a great variety of photographs chosen from films that have brought new ideas to the cinema.

Richter sees the salvation of the cinema through collective work and the creation of a group system. Although the workers from director to assistant camera-man have not equally important work, at least they should share the responsibility in part of its creation.

These questions are illustrated by stills from the best of the advanced films, and there is much satisfaction to be derived from an examination of the pictures.

The question of sound films is treated and Richter tries to show that the sound film does not need to repeat the faults of the silent cinema, but that it should free itself as rapidly as possible from the danger of assimilation. The sound film must establish its own laws, perhaps not yet even visualised, and must use to the full its own methods. Will the commercial world understand this point?

The English translation of the title is Film Opponents of To-day, Film Friends of To-morrow.

J. Lenauer.
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RED LETTER DAY.

Three new German books: sensation for the London cinéphile.

Film Photos Wie Noch Nie is a most friendly book. There is not a page, of the copious illustrations, which assaults the eye. The patchwork grouping is just made for slow gloatting. One can find so many old friends: Yvette, Emak Bakia, Expiation, and films with the Nielsen, with the Bergner, with THE Porten. The book approaches in form to the film, rather than to the conventional film book.

Some of the pages are made up with a star’s best rôles, other pages have Passion, Grace, or The Happy End as title if not justification. Anna May Wong found her way onto the Grace page!

Hans Richter’s Filmgegner von Heute, Filmfreunde von Morgen is a serious work, with a message: a message to cinemagoers to squeal for better films. Richter begins his work by showing that film is taken on emulsion coated celluloid. By excerpts he shows how motion can be speeded up, retarded, reversed, burlesqued. He shows the soft focus and the out of focus, distortion, different ways of moving the camera, and so forth. To those who are still groping it is essential. The montage, and cross cutting is explained by morsels of film. There is an explicit diagram revealing how the expression, of a young man, appears to change as he is juxtaposed to a plate, a dead man, and a nude woman. Detail, rhythm, and motion are all demonstrated in the
montage way. There are sections devoted to: actualities and educational pictures, visual metaphors, visual wit, Hans Richter, film poetry, and what has been achieved in the past.

Werner Gräff, in *Es Kommt der Neue Fotograf*, wants to get still photographic apparatus modified to suit modern requirements. He takes the old laws and proves them worthless. You must not light the hands of a sitter more strongly than the face, you must not have a line parallel to the border of a print, you must not have the horizon in the middle of the picture, you must not have a barren foreground, meeting points of thirds are the strong positions, the head of a model must be in the middle of the picture, the photographer must not cast his own shadow... All must-nots, to Werner Gräff, are equally absurd. Attention is paid to possibilities of lighting-out a nose, of taking pictures with beams of light shining into the lens, of magnifying small sections of an object to bring out the texture of the whole. Above everything the shape of the print, and the width of the white border, is proved to be a vital consideration: a subject which is completely neglected in England.

Oswell Blakeston.

*Beyond This Point*, by Sieveking and Bruguiere. Duckworth. 15s.

One of those books that seem rich in possibility from the moment you see it. The publisher tells us it is an experiment
in an entirely new form. The text is inseparable from the photographs, each are integral parts of the other. This might inspire mistrust if the format were not so assuredly attractive. One glimpse inside will bring you to the Bruguiere photographs that touch all that the unconscious contains, thrilling abstractions........how proud you are of

Cannot! Cannot! Cannot!

Then we know that all is well, we are not coveting "fairy gold", text and photographs are indeed one, and a new layer of consciousness is indeed lifted. A mysterious, enchanted vision has risen like a sun....And all our yesterdays have

lighted fools

There are rare pages, plunging a straight finger through the infinite. It might have been such a chi-chi book, but it "comes off". Three fundamental crises in human experience—Death, Jealousy and Ruin. Essentially a book to be taken up at odd quiet moments, otherwise sombre subjectivity will tire a shaken mind. Because the vision is distinguished, inevitably there are passages that in contrast seem laboured or trite. "The earth spins on through space, and time, unflagging. . . ."

Well, our concern is the cinematic angle. If Sieveking and Bruguiere have not been able to gladden the heart, to pour out thought, to enrich, the fault lies not with them, but with the graceless cinéphile.
RE-APPEARANCE OF JEANNE NEY.

The book of Ilya Ehrenbourg which gave its name to one of the most discussed, most lauded films ever made, *The Love of Jeanne Ney*, has now been published by Messrs. Peter Davies Ltd., in what appears to be an excellent translation from the Russian.

It is nearly a year since the film had its release (in restricted form, of course). The issue of the book, then, at this time is happily somewhat belated, happily, because an earlier publication, whether prior to or concurrently with the exhibition of the film, would doubtless have given rise to futile questions as to the extent to which adaptation is morally permissible.

The film's the thing, and if it suits the film to turn the book inside out, there is no ground for complaint. If weary critics come to the film carrying with them the associations derived from the book, that is their misfortune.

The only valid question, apart from that relating to the motives (which are always suspect) for alteration or transformation, is surely whether the film has lost or gained in the result.

There need be little hesitation in recommending this astonishing book which can perfectly well stand alone, without looking for any reflected glory from Pabst's piece. For that reason alone, perhaps "astonishing" would be an apt expression.

Perhaps it is not altogether fortunate that Henning, when he fell in love with Jeanne Ney, was not like Andrew, a married man, or responsible for the shot which closed the
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career of Jeanne's father. Those particular conflicts and their solution were within the implications of the whole film, and if the omission of any reference to the marriage was the director's own choice, the other alteration may well have been impelled by a different line of argument. In Pandora's Box (not the French travesty the "Oeuvre moralisatrice qui pourrait s'intituler le Rachat d'une Ame") Lulu is the murderer of her lover's father, so there is a parallel (and doubtless a moral) to be found there.

The film realisation of the characters common to book and film shows the most penetrating and almost incredible insight, and it was cleverer, perhaps, of Pabst to translate Jeanne into Jehanne, Andrew into Henning, and above all to create Rasp-Halibieff, than to convey in terms of the screen the Paris of the Rue Morillon and the Rue Thiboumery, where a combination of smells of smoke, oil and urine passes for fresh air, and the hotel in the Rue Odessa, where they don't ask about your papers.

The scene to which Mr. Macpherson refers in his article in Close Up (Dec. 1927) of the (Bourgeois) wedding debauch, is not in the book, and possibly may have compensated for the impossibility of commenting on the love of Jeanne and Andrew, by reference to the incidents in the remaining 17 rooms of that infamous hotel.

The so-called happy ending was an improvement on the story in which Jeanne has to submit to the insults of Halibieff while Andrew is executed for the murder. Horror is piled on horror, and finally loses its effect.

The film avoided this (probably it had no choice in the
matter) and the emotional value of the last scene was quite negative.

It should be emphasised that while the film was in very many respects a realisation of the book, it remained an intensely individual creation; perhaps as much because the director found the material on which he had to work peculiarly adapted to his ideas as on account of the difference in the medium.

Margot’s dramatic visit to the blind girl is described on page 130: “At the door stood the heroine of the finest film in the world, the reckless Margot, who was a cocaine addict”. Well, actually Edith Jehanne was the heroine, still.

HOLLYWOOD’S IDEA OF REVUE.

They get Maurice Chevalier out to Hollywood, they put him in a film and they find that the only way in which they can show people his stuff is to let him sing his songs at a rehearsal which takes place during the film. They get Sophie Tucker and they put her into a masculined Al Jolson film. Universal get Paul Whiteman and find they can’t put him in any film . . . . but they go on paying him a salary just the same.

Then Metro-Goldwyn, bless their little hearts, decide to make a revue. Much simpler. No need to bother about a story. Just a lot of people doing their stuff, and probably cheap in the long run (I am guessing here) because no one
CLOSE UP

artist does very much. Anyway the public flocks to see Bessie Love, Charles King (do they?), Marie Dressler, Marion Davies, Joan Crawford, Gilbert, Lionel Barrymore, Ukulele Ike, and so on. But is it a revue? No, sir! They don't know what a revue is. They get a lot of turns, and they use two stars to introduce them, and they put the whole lot behind footlights and give us a filmed stage-show, but it isn't a revue. How could it be?

There's no focus, no connecting link. Nothing but a lot of turns. Some of them are good. Some bad. Few of them are fresh or high-spirited. Gags awful. Still, Marie Dressler is great when she first comes on as the Queen, bowing. This is because she is a screen actress. But her lines are dreadful. And an Edwardian trio she does with Moran and Love is like a London freak party with the inhibitions left out. The chorus is dull, not used filmically at all, and dressed . . . well, dressed about as right for revue as Hollywood's smart women are well-dressed. Exaggerated in the wrong places and for the rest, we hope this is what's done. A nice mock-magic turn; an amusing Keaton cross-dressed snake charming dance with a string of sausages; some good tunes. A neat dance by Love. What else? Nagel looking pretty throughout, does that count?

For the rest, Crawford not nearly as snapped up as in her dancing films. Looks as though she'd reduced too hurriedly. Davies a flop . . . where are her impertinances, and no chance for Norma Shearer to be slick. A Ballet of Jewels number about as new as the earliest Folies Bergere.

"Lavishly staged" but not a bit interesting or luscious to look at. What we want in film revues is revue made by
the camera. Twenty-five stars are just odd bits, to be welded into patterns by the camera. There is no welding here, and there aren’t any patterns. The nearest attempt at unity is having the turns introduced. I ask you. But we DID have patterns and roving camera and syncopated light hinted at in *Movietone Follies*, and we had Stepin Fetchit, who was the real focus. It’s a pity, because they are interesting people, and if they’d built them up round Soph, who’s a centre if ever there was one, what you might call a street refuge . . . well, round her, there might have been a pretty pattern of whirling lights and stars and songs. But, as I say, they put her in mother-love and they pour twenty-five stars on to a studio floor and hope they’ve got a revue. Whereas revue is . . . . something much more intricate and satisfying. Not that *The Hollywood Revue* isn’t fun, but it’s so disappointing and silly.

R. H.

**HOLLYWOOD NOTES.**

*Madame Satan* will be Cecil de Mille’s next production. Differing radically from anything DeMille has heretofore done in films, this to be a musical comedy. This type of production, however, will be neither an experiment nor a novelty for him, as in his pre-cinema days he was identified with musical stage shows both as an actor and a producer. Jeanie Macpherson is credited with the authorship of the story
CLOSE UP

of Madame Satan, with the dialogue to be written by someone else, and the music to be written by still another somebody.

* * *

Universal was the pioneer company to exhibit talking pictures on trans-oceanic liners, and now, keeping step with progress, it is showing its pictures on trans-continental airplanes. For this purpose 16mm. film is used in conjunction with a Duograph projector weighing but nine pounds and operated by a dry-cell battery. A special daylight screen is also part of the equipment, thus making it unnecessary to darken the cabin for the showing of the films.

* * *

Hold Everything, a forthcoming Warner Brothers’ all-colour vitaphone film, features Georges Carpentier, the popular French prize fighter. Naturally, the story of the picture revolves around a prize fight, in which, also naturally, Carpentier proves the hero. The ringside set required nearly the entire space of one of the large sound stages, while nearly a thousand extra were employed as spectators of the fistic battle between the hero and his antagonist, Tony Stabenau.

* * *

Lillian Gish, who is completing her first talking picture, an adaptation of Molnar’s The Swan, shares with Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks, the distinction of averaging but one picture a year. In these swift moving days of change and shifting public taste, this distinction carries with it a marked popular tribute of esteem and loyalty. It remains to be seen, however, what the public’s reaction will be to Miss Gish’s forthcoming rôle—
an ultra-fashionable worldly young princess, as contrasted with her heretofore wistful and demure characterizations.

* * *

The Lone Star Ranger, a Fox movietone, is the first old-time "Western" to be produced for the talking screen. It features George O'Brien and Sue Carol, against a background of three-thousand extras and the wilds of Arizona. If it meets with popular approval, it will undoubtedly signalize the return of the "Western," which for the past few years has been conspicuous by its absence from the screen. Tom Mix, who for nearly two decades was the leading hero of this type of cinema drama, has been giving exhibitions in a travelling circus since the decadence of the Wild West picture; and it is now not improbable, despite his fifty years, that he may again be seen on the screen in his dare-devil exploits.

* * *

Broadway Vagabond is the title selected for United Artists first musical comedy. A novel feature of its preparation was the use of skeleton sets for rehearsals. As the term indicates, the sets, for purposes of rehearsal, were merely outlined on the various stages; thus avoiding the expense of building and maintaining the actual sets ahead of production, while at the same time familiarizing the players with the layout of the scenes. Among the featured players in this film is Juliette Compton, well-known in England for her work on the London stage and in British made pictures. The director is Ted Sloman, who a few years ago attracted international notice by his masterly directing of His People.

* * *
CLOSE UP

Among recent technical improvements perfected at the Paramount-Lasky studios is a device for eliminating the noise of arc-lights, thus making possible their use in the production of talking pictures. Since the advent of sound, carbon arc-lamps have been discarded in favour of incandescents, because of the humming and high-pitched whistle of the arcs. Their photographic value, however, is much higher than the others; and the new sound-deadening device will, therefore, now not only again permit their use, but will also save the threatened scrapping of a vast and expensive equipment. Besides this invention, there has also been brought to perfection a high-speed colour-photography process, by which the most rapid motions can be successfully photographed. This new process is being put to its first practical use in a picture now under way at the studio—Pointed Heels.

* * *

Warner Brothers are preparing to produce various language versions of many of their one and two-reel pictures. Already, by way of preliminary experiment, they have made for the French market Dans Culo Americain, and for the German market Echtiger Americkaner. Others will follow in Spanish and the various Scandinavian languages, and are intended for showing not only in the countries indicated but also in the various foreign settlements of America.

Lasky-Paramount are following suit to the extent of producing two language versions of Maurice Chevalier's new picture, The Big Pond—one to be in English and the other in French.

* * *
Following the acquisition of theatres throughout the country by the leading Hollywood producers, as a development of the cinema business, the producing of stage plays promises to be the next step in the expanding of Hollywood's activities. As a start in this direction M-G-M have entered into a deal with Edgar Selwyn, one of America's leading theatrical producers, to put on plays in New York. The now close relationship between the stage and the talking screen makes this move a natural one, and if it should prove successful will give the Hollywood producers the combined profits of stage and screen plays, for the ultimate purpose is, of course, to adapt each theatrical production to the screen after it has had its stage run.

C. H.

_Silberkonder über Feuerland._

A film by Gunther Plüschow.

This film is an extremely interesting document and should be popular, especially with children, for it is a real adventure story in pictures, of a trip made from Germany south across the Line in a sailing boat, down to Brazil (where there is a sequence showing the wild tribes shooting with bows and arrows) from there to Patagonia, das Feuerland, (Tierra del Fuego). The ship is shown at anchor in a fjord full of drift ice and penguins, where glaciers and mountains rise above
CLOSE UP

the trees, and flowers. A reel follows of mysterious landscapes taken from the air, that seem to belong to a lunar or undiscovered continent, very bleak and wild. The flight and landing of the aeroplane have not lost their adventurous quality in the photographs.

The film ends with wind, the rounding of Cape Horn, riding across grass, sea elephants off the coasts of Chile, and guanacos hiding behind bushes. To most people the southern edge of the South American continent is a blank. This picture shows that blank to be a land of storms and perilous, almost Antarctic landscapes. The photography is excellent. It is certainly (in spite of an occasional overemphasis on the nationalistic side) one of the best travel films shown this year.

The White Hell of Piz Palu...

A Sokal-Film production for Aafa-Sonderverleih.
Directed by Dr. Arnold Fanck and G. W. Pabst.
Sets by Erno Metzner.
Featuring Gustav Diessl, Leni Riefenstahl, Ernst Peterson.

"If people are such fools as to go climbing impossible heights and get into difficulties, that is their own look out."

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A common objection, this, to the film of mountaineering. Yet it is something of the same spirit that sent Hannibal over the Alps, that sent out the Mayflower, indeed, that mapped the world. If man had never set foot on a hill, most certainly much of the world would be uninhabited. To-day, it is true, climbing is rarely associated with discovery, but that it has its old appeal is proved by the thousands who yearly scale the summits—not necessarily fools, but adventurers. Those who admit the lure of the sea might well realise that mountains have their call. If a pleasure-boat goes down we do not say “if people are such fools as to go on a boat for nothing better than pleasure, that is their own look out”. The chances of accident have to be taken. Death comes more frequently to the careful town-dweller walking in the streets. Therefore, a film that concerns the rescue of some perfectly accomplished climbers, who fall into mischance, is not a film dealing with “fools” and their selfishness, but as symbolically pertinent as any story of human conflict and alliance.

Some will accept this idea instinctively. Others will never accept it. It will be their loss, in this instance, at least, for here, as never before, is the living spirit of the mountains, vivid, rarified, terrifying and lovely. Other mountain films we have had, but we have never had mountains—almost personifiable, things of wild and free moods, forever changing. The glorious rush of avalanches punctuating silence, warnings of greater, more terrible torrents. Snow blown up in a bright fringe on the ridges. Sun, cloud, the never ending revelations of light. Nobody who loves the hills could fail to be held by this tribute to their splendour.
CLOSE UP

For the hero Diessl, the "Alleingänger"—with a commanding sullen beauty, and heroic attributes. For the heroine, Leni Riefenstahl, renewed and unexpectedly fresh, unexpectedly charming. A flowing free rhythm, breath-catching beauty, genuine alarm. Not blatant or manufactured, but sensed with authenticity. The star remains the mountains. No greater success has been accorded to a German film.
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