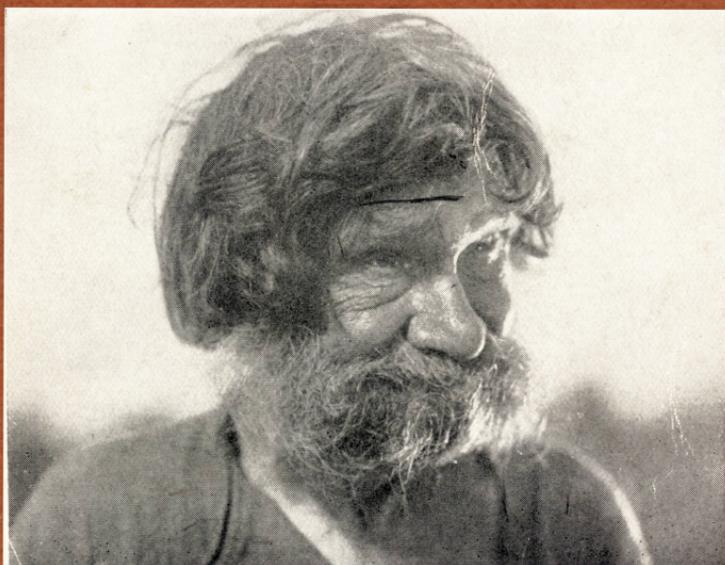


CLOSE UP

*The Only Magazine Devoted to Films
as an Art*



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“ VARIETES ”

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A valued tribute from S. M. Eisenstein, maker of
film-history.



To K. Macpherson -
Editor of the Closest
Up to what cinema
should be
with heartiest wishes

S. M. Eisenstein

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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

We wish the film public a Happy New Year. We wish, somewhat dubiously, our readers a Happy New Year of films. We wish ourselves, even more dubiously, the same. Because what we are really wishing is that we had managed to catch the sound of a few good resolutions floating around. But the only things to hear, apparently, are the talkies. God bless the Merry Gentlemen who let nothing them dismay, but it comes rather hard upon us—the neurasthenic wrecks left over from all the noises-off of battle pictures, storm-at-sea pictures, aeroplane pictures, and all the pops, groans, whistles, smacks, hisses, grunts, creaks, hoots, whines, yowls and yelps that punctuate musical scores.

We are assured that it is premature to talk this way. That talkies have a great and artistic future. They are, for instance, making the *Desert Song*, so that clearly the films will soon be able to take their place beside the Drama, and even rise to the dignity of musical comedy! Well . . . perhaps it is premature to talk yet, both for me and the films, but it is not premature to think, and what one thinks is, God said let there

be muddle and there was talkies. What will come of it is yet impossible to conjecture. It may be that we will *all* be waving our hats in acclaim as the years roll by, but looking too far ahead has as little value as not looking anywhere at all. Our job, at any rate, is to keep track of the present. Talkies here, stereoscopy coming, color and television all but ready, programmes broadcast to all the homes of the world—these bright and glittering prospects fill the view. Let us not worry ourselves unduly over the fate of the silent screen. We do not have to pledge faith like Christians flung to the lions. There may be much to be said for films broadcast into our own sweet homes. If not, we shall all say it just the same, and film producers will have a new electric sign to superimpose on their night-life City Symphonies—namely, *The House of Silence*, which sounds a little like a Parsee mortuary, but will not be anything more dead than Giving the Screen to Screen Lovers, or emulating the Wise Old Owl who sat in the oak—“The more he heard the less he spoke.”

Is it not strange that in spite of all these threats or promises—depending on a point of view—and in the midst of all these changes, we seek, as Herr Kraszna-Krausz remarked last month, to fit films into an arbitrary set of valuations, like a suit too small, which as soon as made must be out of date?—or burst at the seams? There are whole battalions of people who go about using expressions that may do well enough for Botticelli or George Sand, but have as much to do with films, and are about as pert, as the interference of law with literature. That is to say, they employ words like form, balance, construction, as their sole limits of examination. A film judged on any and all of these qualities alone might quite conceivably

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be impossible to sit through. And, to be just, which is always unwise, probably they do have silent valuations for story or psychology, though we never hear about them. Indeed, form, balance, rhythm, pattern, construction, become—if I may again borrow Herr Kraszna-Krausz' simile—like the graduations along their critical rulers; a system of geometry and mathematics which at its most expansive could create nothing richer than an architect's plan. And an architect's plan is only a beginning. To the onlooker it is the girder swinging up on the crane that has the interest. And when all that is done it is only a building until people go and live in it.

Landscapes, that Mr. Herring talks about further on, were criticised as beautiful, rich in tonal quality, amazingly delicate, or dull and under-exposed until panchromatic film came along and revalued them. But nobody said anything about that, and new landscapes with rolling cloud and beauties for rain and wind are still criticised as rich in tone or under-exposed. "Sense of form" and "pictorial sense" go, too, without challenge or change, but that was to be expected. It would appear that the pictorial sense in an early-ish Griffith had nothing less to it than the pictorial sense of a late-ish Eisenstein. And to look back at what was said of *Caligari* we would certainly think it better than *Ten Days* had we not recently seen *Caligari* in Berlin, and been driven out by boredom half-way through.

Analysis of method is interesting and rewarding, too, provided it is not made the basis of all critical judgment. Thus to discover that one good director does this or that and then to say that no film is well directed unless the director

does this or that is certainly an error, and one into which many critics fall.

In criticism of the cinema, as in all criticism, it is better to forget the method until you have found the meaning. Then only can criticism begin. The method of Alexander Room could be rent to tatters if his meaning were not so startlingly clear. Yet for this very reason his method has its value and its justification. A consideration of method alone would lead the critic to thinking he was a careless worker. A realisation of his meaning would prove the reverse. With the cinema, at least, and I think with every other art, too, the meaning matters most. If the meaning is clear, then the method, no matter how open it is to criticism in itself, has been actually successful and is entitled to respectful consideration.

Storm Over Asia, for instance, could be criticised in many ways. Some scenes are too long, one might say, there is too much weight here, too little there. Actually nothing greater has yet been made. Its strength is towering. It is entirely true to life. You remember it has pictorial beauty and rhythm and flow and pattern all the time, but these factors are overlooked or overlaid because the *meaning* never confuses or fails. To find out how much one depended on the other could be finely analysed, but would produce in the end what is evident from the beginning, that a film is bound to gain or lose what is vital by its method. Not the whole of what is vital, by any means, but something which is, nevertheless, vital. To discover what this is would be no excuse for trying to fit it into a *cliché* for use in permanent criticism. It would be for *Storm Over Asia* alone, or for any one film which was

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being analysed. Thus as criticism of a film it would have profound interest, but as criticism of *cinema* very little or none.

Cinema swings forward when it leaves theatre behind and takes *life* by the throat. Not when it takes over a new technique. To use *Potemkin's* method on *The Street Angel* would not be even a quaint experiment. It could not be done, since *Potemkin's* method is part of *Potemkin's* meaning, and each is vital to each, just as the murk and Schufftan dimness of *The Street Angel* is method and meaning made one.

Perhaps, then, it is because they do ward off the danger of criticism becoming static and values fixed, that we can nod and smile to the future developments of the screen. It is no time yet for rule of thumb and dry as dust grammar grades and etymology. Sometimes we feel that writing about it at all is like trying to tie a collar on it. It would certainly be so if we said cinema is this, cinema is that. The fact is what we are really trying to do is to open the gate and let it out over the hills with the rolling cloud that critics will call composed or well constructed.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

HAVEN'T SEEN ANY PICTURES

Haven't seen any pictures for a long time. Certainly not for six weeks. I retain vivid memories of *Mother*, shown by the Film Society not long ago, I remember with disappointment *The Circus* (for the second time), I remember that shocking piece of work, *Confetti*, with its soft, rainy name. And I saw the other day a demonstration of Moviecolour—some of the most magnificent colour photography tacked on to some of the rustiest, most asthamatical sound accompaniment ever heard.

So my horizon is clear. Periodically, I am convinced, one should wipe the screen clean of all images, that the appetite may not sicken with what it feeds on. The strain of "keeping up" with the pictures is terrific. Can't be done. Nobody can do it. And, indeed, the only way to view pictures with detachment is not to be attached to them.

With one or two exceptions writ large in the books of the film renters, criticism of the pictures seems to me to be lower than that of any of the other arts. There is such haste everywhere! Such an infinity of developments! The news and progress reported in a single issue of *Close Up* is enough to drive a man mad. Who will edit and disentangle this colossal

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volume of labour? Who will be stern and unflustered and remote from its fatal coils?

Well, guilty though one feels, it is an immense pleasure to close one's eyes to the films for a time and to study the thoughts and reported advances, the significant echoes, from the world's film studios. It is like wine to read this little bit from Kraszna-Krausz on the European Kino-Congress (forgive this second puff to *Close Up*):—

“ The commercial production of films, unless its methods are changed, is on its last legs. It is now demonstrably clear that the Film is an art-form whose every connection with industry requires restriction.

“ I believe that the aimlessness and pettiness of the trade houses is the primary restriction of cinematography.”

These are revolutionary words and no doubt they are an exaggeration. But they contain a *belief* (quite sufficient to start a revolution in 1928), and they proceed from the assumption of Mr. Bernard Shaw that the amount of attention paid to a piece of criticism is in strict proportion to its indigestibility.

I do not know what it is that makes a film so easy to rave about and so difficult to reason about, nor why the first so consistently sprawls over and suffocates the second. For that is what occurs, and although it is clear enough that a film æsthetic is emerging from the overwhelming practice of cinematography, it is true also that we have been overwhelmed ever since we took film-making seriously. Truth and falsehood are still interlocked; the untruth of commerce striving alongside the truth of art.

And since I am reclining on the oars of reported speech, listen to what D. W. Griffith has been saying on this particular matter:—

“When motion pictures have created something to compare with the plays of Euripides, that have lasted these two thousand years, or the works of Homer, or the plays of Shakespeare, or of Ibsen, or Keats’ ‘Ode to a Nightingale,’ or the music of Handel and Bach and Wagner, then let us call our new form of entertainment an art, but not before. So far all our pictures, I believe, have been written on sand. The medium is perishable; the medium is far from being equal to the medium of words. . .”

Thus speaks the man whom Mr. Messel, in his recent book, described as the first artist to enter the film world. Yet there is no doubt in the mind of Griffith that criticism has been more completely taken in by the deep conjuring of the film directors than by any of the film’s sister arts. We do not sufficiently pause on these pronouncements—probably because there have been so many which are obviously inspired by the money makers. I wonder how much attention has been paid to Eisenstein’s statement on the function of the sound film? Judging by the activities of the film companies, absolutely none. Just as films began in their silent form upside down, with all the weight of finance at the top and all the intelligence and imagination a pin-point at the bottom, so they are beginning, in spoken and orchestral form again. Here is a noise: let us make it attractive and the money will pour in.

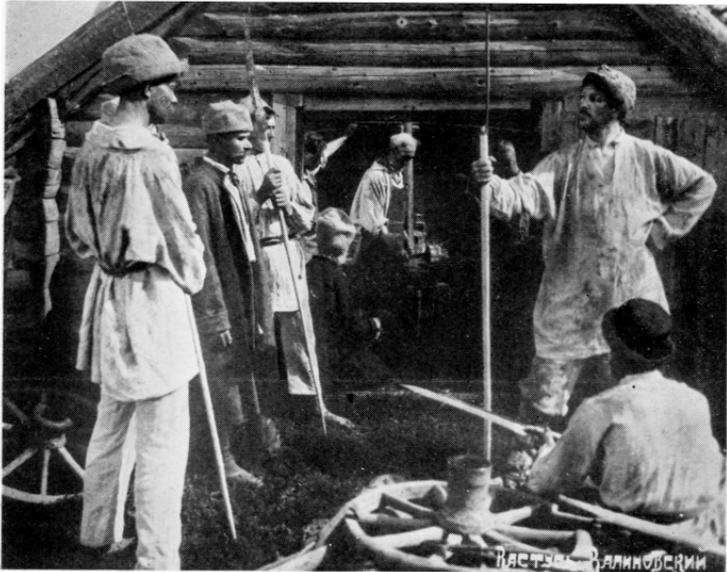
I read a remark of Nietzsche’s the other day that those who are good lovers are also good haters. It is the lover of the



From *Brand in Kasan (Revolt in Kasan)* a new Sovkino film, directed by J. Taritsch. Interesting contrast to Schufftan or glass-painted backgrounds of same type.



From *A Human Being is Born*, a new Meschrabpom-Film, directed by Jurij Sheliabushski, and featuring I. Moskvina and N. Tichomirova.



From *Kastus Kalinowski*, a Belgoskino film directed by Vladislav Gardin, one of the new Russian films scheduled for German release.



From *The Arsenal*, a new Wufku film by Dovjenko, director of *Zvenigora*.

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film who is distressed, infuriated, by the onrush of production for the sake of production and for no other reason. He is not content to go on patiently appreciating films which he knows in his heart to be nonsense. But if he is content to go seeing films of all kinds continuously his reaction will become mechanical and an insidious softness undermine his taste. Rather than see too many he should see too few, preserving the freshness of his approach and the quickness of his eye. I need not point out that the whole luxurious organisation of the industry is against him in this endeavour, helping him to be comfortable rather than critical. And if one has a feeling of guilt at not having seen any pictures for a long time it is simply that one has been disloyal towards the object of one's love and that this brings a penalty. Or the thing loved has been a failure and there is a natural revulsion from it. Such was my experience on seeing *The Red Dancer of Moscow*, to which the only reply is "Rule Britannia"! After that first title, "Russia . . . Land of cruel hatreds, foul treacheries . . ."—the exact words I do not remember, but oh, what a Russia was this!—after these words I knew I must just sit it out in silence and that it would be some time before I should want to go to the pictures again. Yet a great many people thought this a moving and delightful film. And that is the devil of it. You cannot think about films while you are looking at them. They inhibit thinking. There is something treacherous about it. We need a few hard-hearted, matter-of-fact, disinterested persons to utter the truths about films such as I have quoted above, and we need other people to reflect upon them and carry them further, one by one, a few at a time, but steadily and relentlessly into the stream of film

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practice. Let the eyes rest a little and the mind go about its business of unhurried judgment. This is what everybody would like to do and what nobody is doing. There would be shouts of joy if we could, even for a week, say, fling aside the *business* of film-making, the killing professionalism, and get down to fruitful, quiet, inactive survey. But it's no good. The world is too much with us, and though man is born free I see that he has just chained himself to the production of over a hundred British pictures all at once! And I dare say they will be criticised in packets of ten!

ERNEST BETTS.

FILM IMAGERY : SEASTROM

You do not mean a view when you say "landscape". You do not mean a cleft in rocks, you do not mean a tree, but rocks themselves and trees. Woods even more than valleys (not so much one valley) rather than rocks. And if there are clefts, it is so that the rocks will stand out the more, because of the difference in their aspect the gash will cause, breaking up the light. And if there are rocks, it is so that the valley will stand out the more.

You cannot play tricks with a landscape, any more than you can "fold a flood and put it in a drawer". You cannot make it a Balkan kingdom or the edge of the world. It isn't

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detached, it relates always to something bigger. A man who likes landscape and is at his best in dealing with it is not a man who likes tricks. He likes it for its sweep, and though he can, of course, choose it, he cannot just make it a background. He can choose which he will have, but he cannot choose what it will be. It is that already, even though what it is depends on his having chosen it. There is a sweep about the word: "horizon" leaps to mind at once. There is a sweep about Seastrom. The names of many of his films show their elemental characteristics . . . *L'épreuve du Feu*, *Vaisseau Tragique*, *Charrette Fantôme*, *The Wind* (I quote from the books and countries, English and French, in which I found them. If you saw *Les Proscrits* at the Ciné Latin last spring, you think of it as that, without bothering to give it yet another foreign title in English, and I can't help that).

Similarly, when it comes to people, a landscape-man will deal with people in the larger emotions. The rocks and trees and the horizons of their characters more than the flowers in the crannies and the rabbit-warrens in the roots. But because he deals with the flood, he will deal also with any attempts to put it in a drawer, and continuing the bad habit of quoting, he will do so by relating not only the wind but the cedar floor to it. The eddies of the current may not interest him, but the depths will.

This is not specially Seastrom's, and what is Seastrom's is the lyricism which makes his landscapes lyrical landscapes. It is a Scandinavian quality, and finds itself in the films of Brunius, of the regretted Stiller (especially in *Arne's Treasure*), and even in *Molander's Marriage* there was more of the background, more pervasive influence, in consequence

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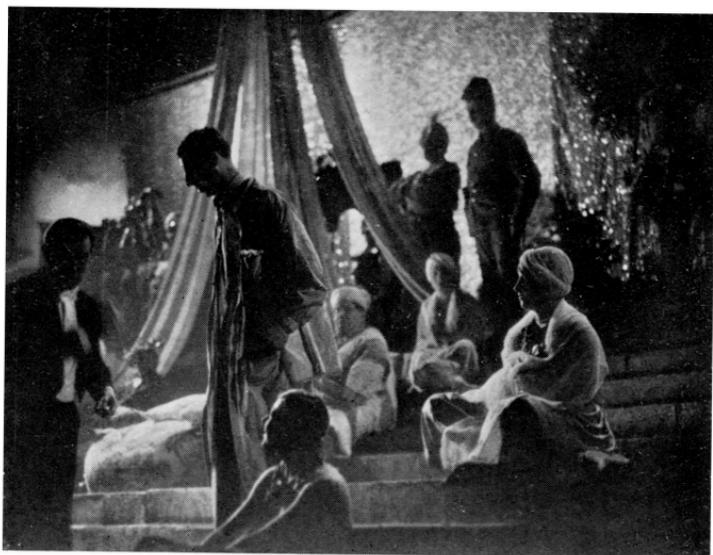
more many-sidedness in one side than in American, German and most French films. And *Marriage* was late, not of the good period, not even a good film. But the apprehension was there. The only American films in which you get this landscape coming into its own are the Westerns. Here the earth has life. It is not for nothing that clouds of dust follow the flying hooves; the earth is exerting its parentage. The men are not rooted, but they are still related . . . earth is there, itself, alone in American films. Reality, of course. The Westerns are the nearest America has to an equivalent of the reality of the Russian films, and the reality comes from the fact that in these cowboy stories, fights with floods and fire and struggles to live, America is dealing with something of her own she knows about and not trying to pass off a life she has grafted on to herself. These *were* struggles to live.

And so are the stories of which the Swedes make their films. They are sagas, if that word helps you at all. Stories of men who *had* to live, *had* to get a living from an earth that provoked that necessity. Swedish films deal at once, simply, with the living and with the earth. They're bound up. There is no saying "this will look better in a mountain background", no going on location to the South Seas or building a studio sandstorm—mentally, at any rate. The mountains, as I once before observed, aren't a background. The people are offshoots of them, another form of life. Look at the Swedish films you know. What you think of is the dragging of the chest across the SNOW in *Arne's Treasure*, the REINDEER stampeding in *Herrenhofsage*, the TORRENT in *Les Proscrits*, the wolves across the SNOW in *Gosta Berling*. Sweeps of country which, as Moussinac says, become "un des éléments

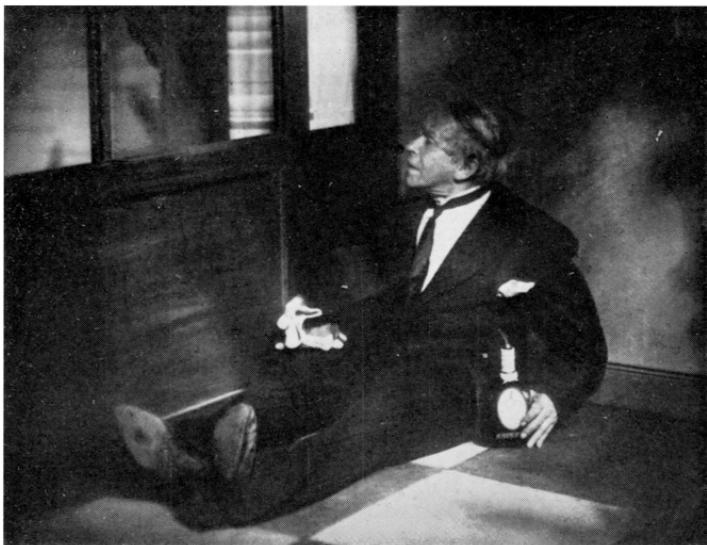


From *Pandora's Box*, G. W. Pabst's forthcoming film for Nero-Film
At top Louise Brooks as Lulu.





Pandora's Box. Above, Louise Brooks as Lulu.



Pandora's Box.





Pandora's Box. Top, Gustav Diesel and Louise Brooks.
Under, Franz Lederer and Fritz Kortner.





From *Sex in Fetters*, a Nero-Film reviewed in the December *Close-Up*, a frank document revealing the corruptive influence of artificial confinement.

Photos: Nero-Film G.M.B.H.





From *Freie Fahrt (Free Trip)*, a film made by Erno Metzner for the German Social Democratic Party. See review elsewhere.



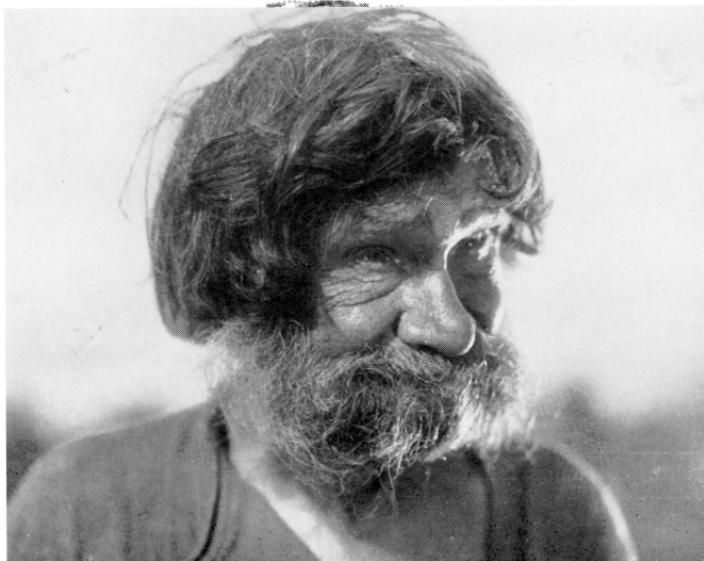


From Erno Metzner's film *Free Trip*.





From *The General Line*, Eisenstein's new Sovkino film.



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actifs du conte". And because of the expanse, there is the natural result that the human life in it is much more intimate, firm and close-knit. Out of protection. It has not been conserved, concentrated. It has to offer compactness for "the great common task, the preservation of mankind against the supremacy of nature". Which is its parent. Against which it rebels. So along with the capacity to deal with expanses, and lyrically in the case of Seastrom, there is also the ability to show ordinary, domestic hedged-in life with extraordinary grace and intimacy. Power—and also delicacy. This is because the living is bound up with general life. When Seastrom made *The Tower of Lies* in Hollywood and his landscapes were reduced to softened orchards, and smooth hills, life in the house was still as living, still almost as Swedish, in the way details exteriorised the main theme as much as ever, even though to my taste the theme was poor.

He has made a great number of films, including *He Who Gets Slapped*, *Name the Man* and *Confessions of a Queen*, in America; but it is unfair to judge him too much by his American productions, his talent is clearly folded in a drawer here, and the most we can do is to look for some hints in them of what his Swedish films have shown us. The chief of these is that his mental landscapes are large, elemental—conflicts. In *Les Proscrits*, in the (American) *Scarlet Letter*, people are against the community in which they live, solely because of their finding themselves in it. His people are trying to stand up against the storm, and the film resolves itself into whether, in face of the storm, they will bend or break, oak or willow. A slight cynicism limits their endeavour to those two alternatives. If you succeed, you

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compromise, with the corollary that if you compromise you don't succeed for long. You grow tired of that kind of success you are having.

In *The Tower of Lies*, a woman came back, "soiled", from the city. Where did she get those clothes? But though the home and the village and the community were against her, her old uncle (I think it was) had to be spared. She was his beautiful white queen, or something like it, and the myth he had of her must be kept. And it was this or nothing. But the village stormed and stormed, the storm grew; one could only bow to it—the girl left, went back to the city, and the old man, rushing down to the quay, following the boat with his eyes and all of him in his eyes, ran over the end of the pier. He drowned, but the myth was kept. I am not sure if anyone told him the girl was a whore, but I am sure that if they did, he denied it. In any case, my point is illustrated. If he had discovered, he would have died of a broken heart. It wasn't, forgive me for saying as if I were a movie star being interviewed, death that mattered, but the keeping of an idea. So Swedish, I venture to think that here was a theme as universal as that of *Sunrise*, though when I saw the film, under the title of *The Emperor of Portugalia* at the Film Society, it is true that I was not affected by the ending to anything but quiet laughter. It did not get away with it because the actual whole cumulation of the film had been *simplesse* instead of the intended simplicity to my perhaps more sophisticated mind. There is a certain *naïveté* about fundamentals in these Scandinavian films which is always a stumbling-block, but it should not be allowed to hide the terrific sincerity of their makers.

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In the film which was generally released in London in October, there was Lillian Gish against *The Wind*. Against a destructive force. Against the type of life it produced, the type of men the life produced, and the woman she would be if she stayed, married to one of the men. The storm in her mind is produced by the storm of the wind. Inner and outer conflict, the outer in this case serving to throw up the inner. Like a chord or a subsidiary colour, an image. The wind is an image, the fields of snow are images, the roads and woods of *The Scarlet Letter* are images. Landscape is image in *Seastrom*.

All being set, consider then his imagery. But all being set, be careful not to jolt it. The landscape is not only a mauve to throw up a blue. It is a darker blue itself. It is of the same colour, it is the same mood; as that colour or mood it brings into prominence. What I said of *The Wind* shows this. Wind causes the psychological stress, but that stress is in terms of wind. It is in this, though it is used rationally, as psychological as Dr. Sachs showed the beetle to be in *Mother*, and *that* was used psychologically. *Seastrom's* landscapes are used psychologically, but they connect logically. They could never be mistaken for "visual subtitles" as the spring shots in *Mother* have been.

He achieves this by a very subtle adjustment between conception and execution. In the first place, he sees the wind, or some other element or surrounding, as responsible for the states of mind of his characters. BUT, the characters having been treated as influenced by these, these things in their turn have to be treated to relate to the people's minds, in order to bring it all out. In order to express what they are,

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Seastrom makes them be something else. But they have to be themselves too. And because of this, because they are fact it is not always seen that they are image too. They have to partake of something of what they have caused for us to see that the results visible in the people were latent in them. In fact, " there is a blending of the two sets of images, the apparent and the real ".

There is a scene in *The Scarlet Letter* where Hester and her lover are lying in a dell. " The feeling of threatened and short-lived peace so evident in this Seastrom landscape is built up by a number of small touches; rocks, sharp flags pricking up at the lovers, who are themselves at the edge of the water, and a background whose roots and undergrowth call to mind the conventions which have the lovers in their grasp " (Herring, *Films of the Year, 1927-1928*). That was thought fanciful at the time. We may have progressed since then, but in any case there is this instance from *The Wind*. Lars Hansen, who has married Gish, has tried to kiss her. She has registered loathing, after he has won, with a new and sudden expression that completely renovates the incident (Seastrom nearly always gets the unsuspected out of his casts). He flings out of the room, and she, shut up, with the wind outside, starts pacing up and down. Hansen, outside, strides about. Gish is facing things and both are working something out. We only see the boards of the floor and the feet. But the boards seem to matter most. They are not quite alike, because they are run in different directions, the angle is different, so, through noticing this, we get the fact that they are both boards much more. They are there, impassively, while the feet walk about and work things out above them.

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Gish, of course, knows it can't go on much longer, she is, after all, married to the man, and the man is damned if he sees why it should go on much longer, since she is, after all, married to him, and what is marriage for? He took her in a mug of cocoa when she arrived. The cup lies on his floor. The hopes he had, the kindness he was prepared to pay her. Here, drink this, I made it myself. The cup lies on the floor. Of course, he kicks it. The alternating rhythms on the still floor are broken. The act follows the mental decision, and the kicking of the cup is the visual expression of the decision and preparation for what he has decided. He goes into her room, through a door, onto another set of boards. We scarcely notice that he has left his room, because the continuity of the action has been set up in our minds by the boards. The feet meet, Gish's draw back. Well, how important the floor has been.

I mentioned the intimacy of Seastrom in home scenes. The birth of the calf was not good in *The Tower of Lies*, but in this newer film, Gish is at work with the people she lives with, and the woman is ripping a carcass. Everyday stuff. But watch the way Gish draws her skirts as she passes the carcass to fetch an iron. You find that for the first time in weeks at a London cinema, you have a state of mind pure before you. Gish, of course, moves beautifully, even under Fred Niblo's direction in *The Enemy*, and Seastrom, of course, understands motion and the waves of motion, notice the way the dance stopped, and the floor emptied and the people swept down to the cellar in *The Wind*, while one or two waited on the empty floor busy barricading the door and the typhoon hung over the town outside—to return, more or less literally, to the

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mutton ; when the children came home, they ran to Gish, and the mother was left with blood on her hands and the knife; she put it down but it made no difference. The children were instinctively repelled, and no one knew it but she and them. When her husband came home, she smeared the blood away, but he greeted Gish over his wife's shoulder, and she was jealous, and the carcass hung there. She could not help having to slice and scrape it. But the children turned from her, from the blood and knife part of her.

Very simple. Three images and only small incidents. They were allowed to be small, they were not in the least Germanic, not *Lupu-Pick-Wild Duck-ish*. They were not piled up till by their accumulation they became significant, as do the incidents in Czinner films. They were rather the turning over of the whole which reveals these facets as it turns. You tell a whale by the water it spurts, yet there is water all round. It isn't the whale that makes Whale evident, but the water it has taken in from the surroundings and then spurts up.

When Gish is alone in the house, there is another instance of the peculiarly simple and potent use Seastrom makes of his imagery. Turning it over as if he were looking at it and would be very surprised but quite pleased if you noticed it too. The wind comes. It breaks a window pane. She stuffs a coat in. She makes things fast. The shelves sway. A lamp is knocked over, it sets fire to the tablecloth. These are little things, results of the wind. To put it out she has to take the coat out of the pane. Then the wind comes in again. All this is actual, but it is one of those rare occasions when actual representation gives us state of mind more

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clearly than purely psychological interpretation would. Tricks, dissolves, all that. Here, we follow her, we run round, doing hopelessly small things against the wind, wondering how long it will be before the shelves fall, wishing the dog would stop barking, till we are terribly in the girl's state of mind. But in *Manhattan Cocktail*, a nice light film, a girl is told that 5,000 dollars will bail her young lover out. She walks down the street and, of course, sees everything in terms of that sum. It beats in on her brain. Dorothy Arzner, usually intelligent, uses tricks so that the figures swim before her eyes. This is all right once, but we do not want them to merge on every fur coat, on every pearl collar she passes. We are there before, that is it. Seastrom knows this, and the windstorm is done by actuality, the room just sways a bit, that is all. At the same time, since this is not an appreciation of Seastrom, he is never very interested in tricks. There was good technique in *Charrette Fantôme*, but *The Divine Woman* shows very little use of recent improvements, which I use deliberately, because if you have a firm conception, *truquages* will not hurt it, and it is foolish not to avail yourself of anything that gets you there most cleanly. Now, Seastrom uses old tricks, but not new ones. He uses the ones that were new when he was developing. Now he is quite capable of outdated clumsy visions in *The Divine Woman* and emphasises the new lover treading on the cap of a former that has fallen to the floor. In *The Wind*, Gish was against Nature. In *The Divine Woman*, what is Garbo against? Her own nature? You have to consider. It is true that you see most of a Swedish film after you have seen it. You see then something different, something underlying.

Whereas in Eisenstein or Preobrasenskaja, you see more intensely. You hold in your hand what you had grasped before with the Russians. The first thing that you get from consideration of *The Divine Woman* is cynicism. At first it has seemed an ordinary film (and it never becomes a very extraordinary one) of a girl who loved a soldier, became an actress; became the mistress of a producer to go on being an actress; and gave up being both in order to settle down with the soldier. But simply because Seastrom has earned respect, you look more closely, and that rewards you. For one thing, there is the shape, as I tried to show in giving the plot. Then, the way the girl got what she wanted, and, as the action swung between actress and love, the director's emphasis swung between "divine" and "woman". Was it by mistake that the divinity was so very tinsel? Then again, it was remarkable that for once Seastrom was so little occupied with his background. The stage, furs, flowers, receptions . . . you would have thought all this would have been seized on. God knows, it has been often enough.

Well, the furs and the chrysanthemums are there, but they're not insisted on, not even stressed dramatically, certainly not relished visually. They ARE background. Miss Arzner brings her backstages to life, but here Seastrom suddenly concentrates on the woman. He concentrates on the effect of the furs and flowers on the woman. In his old habit, but it is not in his habit to show only the woman. I do not think this is because the woman is Garbo, a star, because Garbo is handled much less as a star than she has been in America. He is not too impressed by her importance or her beauty, which is good for all of us, and Garbo becomes amus-

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ing, and gets laughs as a laundry-girl and does Bébé Daniels' stuff. None of this is because this is a picture Seastrom did not bother about. When the great actress breaks down she cries, "I can't go on. Oh, God, I'm done for. I hate it all"! And in all the numbers of times we have seen an actress break down on the screen, we have never heard one say quite this. It may not have been Seastrom's, but the way it fitted into the spirit of the picture, and the fact that there was a spirit, was Seastrom's. A logical sequence; consider the placing of the "I hate it all", at the end. Realising *why* she is done for. One is done for if one hates it. Swedish and Seastrom. The best things in life are free; that is flung at us in most films, what would Queen Pickford have had for a motto without it? But here they are free, they are the best, because one has paid for the worse things.

The director felt cramped with this story and its setting, especially, why not? the setting. So he took the most elemental thing, the woman, and did what he could. I have dealt with it like this, because it will be possible to see it in England (think of that!), and it may seem a contradiction of what I said about landscape and background.

Naturally, there is not very much imagery in it. Plenty of symbols. The most clear image is the soldier's cap, which runs through. It is through his first dropping it that he met Garbo, and when he is arrested it is left behind. It is an image, different from the clothes he steals for her while she is trying on better ones at the theatre. There are more symbols than images because the film progresses dramatically, but the use of the cap has interest, because as an image it links past and present, and the past scenes in a film are the

horizon. The cup in *The Wind* did the same. It was on the floor from another scene, which it led back to. It took the place of that scene and held it visible while another one went on. Seastrom's images do this. They carry on. They represent the whole while a larger part of it than themselves is filling the attention. Stones in the foreground, rolled down from the rocks at the back. They show the scale, and however dramatically important, they remain in themselves small. His imagery rarely has close-ups. It has to be looked for. It is part of the atmosphere, the unemphasised, limpid, clear air we breathe, whose effects we feel after. There is nothing startling about it. It is either the whole background, or a feature in the foreground that relates back to it.

His films progress dramatically, which is the thing that prevents him ranking among the few. The thing that prevents Swedish films from being, save in part, among the few great films. Seastrom's outlook is primarily dramatic. Swedish films are primarily dramatic. Their use, and the use they make, of stories shows this. "Leurs films restent des contes populaires auxquels le metteur en scène a communiqué une part d'émotion personnelle et assez largement humaine pour que nous ne la subissions pas impunément. Une telle formule ne répond, certes, pas aux fins vraies et idéales du cinéma, mais elle n'en est pas moins une des premières formules complètes." (Moussinac; *Naissance du Cinéma*.)

But it is because they are Swedish that they have "atteint à un lyrisme large, inconnu jusqu'alors à l'écran, si ce n'est pas dans quelques films d'Ince : calme tragique, sérénité noble et puissante de quelques scènes . . . des *Proscrits* . . . Je ne sais rien de comparable à l'intimité de leurs intérieurs

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‘reconstitués’ avec une simplicité étonnante. . . Il n’y a presque rien et tout y est . . . Ils ne craignent pas d’éliminer impitoyablement tout ce qui pourrait encombrer l’action et nuirait à l’ensemble. . .”

This lyricism, this force of “nuances du sentiment exteriorisé par une geste ou la lumière d’un regard”, this broad landscape, these torrents that sting so, this air that cuts—all this make up their gift to the screen, bringing these things to us as they are, giving them their importance. The Swedish cinema may not be true, pure cinema; but the cinema there is in them is pure, and their own, which is why they breathe a nobility unlike any other films’ nobility—the spectacle, to quote Freud, “that men can offer when in the face of an elemental catastrophe they awake from their muddle and confusion, forget all their internal difficulties and animosities, and remember the great common task, the preservation of mankind against the supremacy of nature”.

ROBERT HERRING.

“PROPAGANDA”

When Pudowkin’s *Mother* was shown by the Film Society it set London agog for a week. The weekly ration of film news in every paper was largely taken up with Russian films and their producers. Some openly praised the film. Most

others did so inadvertently with faint and rather inept damns. But the really amazing thing was the almost total agreement that it was robbed, on account of the propaganda in it, of greatness and its title to art.

Now the objection to propaganda in art has an ancient sound. Its revival, adapted to the occasion, of course, smacks more of an old prejudice than a reasoned conclusion honestly reached. One is attracted less by the cogency of its promoters than by their naïve admission to the cinema's art status. But the point needs to be treated.

In the circumstances it will be better to sheer away from hoary dogmas, from green-room and art club metaphysics, and let the merits of the new art advance its own cause.

If we could conceive of a version of the film purged of its propaganda and yet retaining qualities at all worth while it would be an excellent method. But it is beyond conception. And this is its strongest advocate. But there is an even more convincing way. To compare the achievements of *Mother* with those of other outstanding films generally regarded as propaganda-less.

Leon Poirier's *Verdun* suits the purpose admirably. First because of its general recognition as a non-propagandist film. Second because it could be seen while the impressions from seeing *Mother* were still hot in our brains.

It will be necessary to stand off from personal attitudes towards political hues or moralist bias if we are to get the correct slant. We must objectively regard them as parts of a whole. We are obliged to do so, for we knew it is impossible, even for a moment, to imagine the films with these components expunged.

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As a film *Verdun* had much to it, yet there is no gainsaying that in something vital it was lacking. Some potent power to move and sustain emotions as did *Mother*.

No absence of beauty can account for this. Beauty was in one as in the other. Perhaps in *Verdun* pictorial beauty was the greater. Poirier's sense for it was notably strong. His use of cinematography suggesting sustained heavy gunfire and widespread joy of armistice bells spoke of his knowledge and sympathetic grasp of the expressiveness of modern technique. These things so far were good.

Where, then, the lack? Sincerity? We think not, for we know that no danger and no sentiment was spared to effect realism and exactitude. Sincerity was present to a fault. In all these salient things Poirier's work paralleled that of Pudowkin's *Mother*.

Like the Russian he, too, was fired with an idea. And to be so moved by an idea as to represent it via some art medium is to invest that medium with life. But it is propaganda, too. Even if *Verdun* did not impress us as such it cannot be taken that the intention was not there. An early caption tells of Poirier's conviction that the story of Verdun would redound to the everlasting glory of France. This conviction was as real as Pudowkin's allegiance to determinism, and was exactly that which made the story worth the filming.

But by a strange contradiction the French producer here, at least, revealed that he was a greater believer in realism than he was a realist. The greatness of his faith was that having stated his case in a caption the very truth and realism of events would themselves bear him out. So realism became the end rather than the instrument. And beauty and realism

notwithstanding, it was a pictorial record we were given, not a moving dynamic art. We were allowed to look on, but we were not made to feel.

We were spectators of a strange humanity going through the monotony of the daily round, having destruction for its task in place of building; laying waste, the chosen alternative to tillage. Come day, go day, a hopeless fortitude. A situation without origin, without objective. A confusion to which sub-titles often added instead of giving it clarity and coherence.

With *Mother* it was otherwise. Pudowkin soon swept us from our seats and forced us into becoming emotional participants. Nor were we allowed for one moment to retire even to the curbstone complacently to look on. We were on one side or the other. For or against.

Whether or not normally we share his morality or dissent from his politics, for the time being we are his. In his determinism there is no place for the realism of the onlooker, only for the reality of the participant.

To him human motive is an affect of causation. Until we not only meet but join his characters it is his object to recreate causation in us. Then we can no more withhold our sympathy than if we were reacting to personal experience. Thence their life is ours and we are carried along with them. Always he is insistent, knocking and rousing; knocking and stimulating. Making our objective inevitably alike to theirs.

All known technique is made to subserve this end. When that fails the ceaseless pressure of his necessity mothers the inventions that make Pudowkin's technique his. There were hints by some who disliked the propaganda in *Mother* that the

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greatest good, if any, that might come from the film was the lessons in technique it had to offer to American and European producers. This is sheer inability to appreciate the vital thing about it. Without the same intentions blind copying would prove as abortive as mere imitations of Pabst. Angle, cut-back, dissolve or mix are sterile mechanics when not enforcing some objective significance.

In this light realism and reality have a different import. No clearer expression of this difference can perhaps be found than Pudowkin's own words (too long to quote here) in the preface to his manual of " Film Direction and Scenario Writing " on editing an " Explosion " and " Prisoner's Joy ".

To talk of How or of What is done is digression, except that it serves to illustrate the creative force behind it. His technique is not the product of innate genius. It is the outcome of a deep feeling and firm conviction which has lighted on the cinema as the medium to express it. And it is the measure of his propagandist desire that he cut, experimented and edited; and above all even eschewed that which, however pictorially real, did not express his meaning, and express it exactly.

We had to feel and thoroughly know what freedom from prison would mean to *us*; to experience the terror of an explosion bursting over us. It is not enough to witness betrayal. We must betray or be betrayed.

But we were not made to feel the glory of remaining in a fort from which there seemed no escape, or that there was tangible reason for the daily dodging or delivering of decimating gunfire.

Had this been done with insistent cinematography *Verdun* would have sprung to life, have had meaning, and have become creative art. But it would have expressed viewpoints and have become propaganda. What alternative? Proportionate to the forceful stressing of its theme is a film's coherence, unity and completeness.

Without these there could be no complete art. Factual truth and realism are indispensable touchstones, too, but without thematic unity they have no more creative art than an illustrated guide book or a casualty list. But we have seen that thematic unity is saying something, stressing it, and forcing it home, in other words, is propaganda. In varying degree this is just as noticeable in European and Hollywood as well as Russian productions.

Meanwhile we have *Verdun* without propaganda; an artifice unresolved and languid. In *Mother*, propaganda undoubtedly, but something alive and whole.

You take your choice.

HAY CHOWL.

THE COMPOUND CINEMA

Leon Moussinac, that excellent French critic, has called the film the first of the cinematic arts.

But the youngest critic establishes his viewpoint by exclusions.

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The youngest critic says : " The film's idiom is silence. Silence is a cosmic virtue."

The youngest critic says : " The film's frame is the film's circumscription. The flat film in silence is the supreme film."

The youngest critic is absolute, but never exact.

The inference to be drawn from Moussinac's words is the complete answer : " There are a variety of possible forms in the cinema. The flat silent film is but one form."

The flat silent film without prismatic distortion is the first form of the cinema : Murnau has said as much. Within this category itself there are numerous subdivisions, according to content, sequence, harmonic organization, performance, attitude. There is the genre film, the poster film, the film of social commentary direct or comic . . . from these derive the films of various stylizations, of complex organization, and eventually the film of graphic or cinègraphic distortions. There is the film built on counterpoint, simultaneous or sequential counterpoint.

Counterpoint is an indicator to the compound cinema. In relation to the sonorous film this has been already stated in different terms by Kliesler and the Russian directors. Kliesler did not fully or definitely state the contrapuntal or balance basis for the compound cinema, but he did suggest a union of various ingredients towards the end of an opto-phonetic art. He relegated speech to television. This was in August, 1928. On May 26th, 1928, there appeared in *The Billboard* an article by me on " Radio Entertainment ", which said : " Television is the speech-sight medium. The medium of direct imparting and impermanence. The movie

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is the art of silent visual plastic fluidity. Speech is a monstrosity in the movie. . . Television is the sight medium which stresses speech." I wish to modify this. The present cinema, known as the *movie*, is the art of silent visual plastic fluidity. But I must also modify Mr. Kleisler. If speech may not be stylized for the cinema, utterance may. The explosive utterances: Oh, ah, or sounds like Te-te-te, which the remarkable Jewish Theatre of Moscow has used as a rhythmic detail in one play by contracting into T'T'T' and expanding into Taa-Taa-Taa. I give these as instances. To utilize sound the principle of rhythmic fluidity must be exercised, or, as the Russians have expressed it tersely in the October *Close Up*, counterpoint. I have developed that viewpoint in two essays written some time ago, awaiting publication in two American journals: *The Arts* and *The Musical Quarterly*. As an hypothesis, consider a film so arranged: beginning in silence and a black screen it enters optically or visually into a graphic moving composition to which follows a counter composition of sound, unaccompanied by the screen (except perhaps by a linear equivalent to the music), to a simultaneity of sound and sight. . . This is a simple illustration which may indicate the new optophonic composition and scenario. It may suggest the utilization of the color-organ to create *fluid* color equivalents. This is making of the fault of the sonorous film, namely that it tends rather to separate sound and sight than to synchronize them, a virtue.

ε The objection to sound cannot be absolute. It can be only an objection to the compounding of it with a form intrinsically silent, the first form. In the typical confusion of the cinema entrepreneurs (a confusion typical of mankind), a not fully

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realized form is being thwarted, and a new form is being prevented. The new optophon film needs another viewpoint than the optic film. Yet why are we just now raging about the imposition of the talking picture? Was not speech always present in the film, and is it not still present in the films of the very directors objecting to the talking picture? What logic was there ever in lip-movements imitating speech? If the movie needed or wanted naturalism, it had its own instruments to obtain it. Every one has contributed to the confusion present in the movie, inventor, investor, impresario . . . actor, audience. . .

Premature compoundings were attempted from the first, deliberately or in unawareness : in the musical accompaniment which attempts to render every point in the film, in the lecture-movie combination (Alexander Black thus introduced the motion picture), in the German kino-oper, in the American presentation, etc. Max Reinhardt has suggested that possibly the presentation indicates a compounding of stage and film. Why not, if the compounding is planned as a unit with one harmonious end in mind, a rhythmic pattern? The combination is hybrid now, because two separate units are being used. Such combination was used as a vaudeville act by Hobart Bosworth in "The Sea Wolf" years ago. American vaudeville has known it long as a "stunt". Piscator and Meierhoff have used it more pretentiously. The Russian Ballet has suggested the film's use in the dance. It is as yet only a possibility as a singular pattern of the cinema or stage.

The Russian directors expressed a disinterest in the stereopticon and color films, but is it not possible that depth and

color (as differing from the present tone or color-value film) may create their own mountings? I cannot see how this can be opposed. It is like an objection to sculpture because it is not painting, or to a painting because it is not an etching. The depth film provides its own category, the color film its own. If the color film could achieve fluidity, it would be at once on its way to singularity. There are certain things that cannot be combined, harmonized or crossed. The confusion of the evolving silent movie with sound is an instance of this reciprocal hostility. But certain other things permit crossing—the abstract frieze, for instance, and the sculptural mask accept paint.

The handicap to the creation of independent forms in the cinema is largely literalness. It is evinced in a film like *The Crowd*, which demanded a less chronological and a more patterned production. It is evinced in speech-mimicry. Literalness is the absence of concept. It is matter-of-fact, cautious and fears organization on a plastic basis. It has kept the so-called epic film from being epic, and it is at the source of the inability of directors to incorporate the inferences of the subject-matter of films into the treatment. Alexander Bakshy has stated this well as the failure of *The Crowd*.

Literalness has kept the movie from utilizing its possible rhythms, to be found in the movements of the cinema, which, as Mr. Bakshy has said, are four: the film or pellicule, the camera, the player, the screen. Only now is the screen as an instrument beginning to be used, in the magnascope or phantom screen, in the triptych. Several years ago Mr. Bakshy offered a plan to use for symphonic, contrapuntal pictures of scope a screen within a screen, a multiple screen

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receiving its images from one camera, not three cameras, a screen subdividing and blending the action for dramatic and rhythmic effects. Nothing has come of it as yet. Nor is the enlarged screen being utilized for its dramatic and rhythmic effects. Eric Elliott calls it a close-up. That is its present use. But considered as a movement, not of the camera, but of the screen, it offers magnificent plastic opportunities in its gradual enlargement and diminishing, with the illusion of advancing and receding movements.

These are a few possible compoundings of cinema. There is the possibility also of color and animated cartoon for stylized ballet-like films. The projection of slides on the side-walls of the Studio 28 in Paris suggests a fanciful possibility : a film which will move not on one screen, but will utilize a moving projection-machine projecting the film in a rotating movement within the reach of eyes following the rotation. This may be a method for the stereopticon cinema.

HARRY A. POTAMKIN.

STORM OVER ASIA—AND BERLIN !

Storm Over Asia, Storm Clouds Over Asia, or the Heir of Genghis Khan, as it is severally called, at the time of writing is being prepared for the Berlin cinema. This is the new film of Pudovkin, and is to be the big sensation of the winter season.

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The story of *The Heir*, or, better by far, *The Storm*, is, we gather, to be considerably modified for its German release. I therefore count myself extremely fortunate in having seen it, by kind courtesy of the Soviet Photo-Kino Abteilung of Berlin, in Pudovkin's own original version.

Storm Over Asia, following *Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg*, as it is but will not be, is an astounding and stupendous thing. All that Pudovkin had, and all that we mean when we think Pudovkin in *Mother* and *St. Petersburg*, are here made still more perfect, and still more convincing. The unfathomable thing that we call the Pudovkin method (in the same way that we talk of the Eisenstein method, or the Hollywood method), a thing that is not style or mannerism, but a state of mind or soul—a kind of permeation we call typical—reaches here its classic zenith. In this film, extraordinarily long and involved and inter-woven, we have, first of all, a masterpiece, and then we have Pudovkin. In his meticulous statement of a great, impersonal theme, he has also caused us to say, "Ah, this is the real Pudovkin completely revealed". It is important, this, because it does several things at once. By achieving something almost superhuman, the very human quality is stressed. *Mother* was Pudovkin, so was *St. Petersburg*. You found out from these a great many things about Pudovkin. But in the end it was Pudovkin that evaded you and the films that remained, whereas with *Storm Over Asia* you feel you have traced something, and that you have the clue to the way Pudovkin's mind works. I mean that when you think of *Mother* and *St. Petersburg* you can think of them as apart from their maker, like flowers or countryside, whereas with *Storm Over Asia* it is

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more like some new, strange building, you say how wonderful, and then you wonder who built it. This may be, and perhaps is another way of saying, that the gigantic conception of the film is actually superhuman, and that Pudovkin is, for all his greatness, human. And that for this reason the mesh is here and there a little loose and we are able to peep through.

I will say now that nothing greater has yet been achieved. Until *Storm Over Asia* I weighed that in the end nothing greater and more stark than Eisenstein's *Ten Days* would be accomplished. I think I stated originally that *Ten Days* and *St. Petersburg* were equally great, although in this I differed from most critics, who preferred *St. Petersburg*. Seeing both films several times I differed even more, and chose for its towering ice-pure hardness *Ten Days*. *St. Petersburg* was more rarified, and therefore softer. Pudovkin focussed on two peasants. Eisenstein on fifty—a hundred—a thousand human faces, caught for a second by his camera in some action that gave them to us as poignant and real.

Pudovkin's "human-interest" was a concession, a gesture to guide people to compassion. Eisenstein recorded, not as a reporter, which people have said, but like some superfine instrument of science for measuring wind or the weight of clouds.

Now comes *Storm Over Asia*, and however they quieten it and calm it down, it will remain Storm, with lightning and thunder and rain and wind and fury.

The first shots are of sky. Long, leisurely shots of angry cloud. Then of land with small bare hills, and great distance. Pudovkin's new experiment is to reveal things to you

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in three stages. Far off, nearer and then near. It is sometimes very successful, sometimes too slow. Once at least he reverses it, showing you first of all a woman standing by a hut watching her son ride off. The second shot, further off, is the same, with distance between, so that remoteness begins, and the quiet undulations of the land. The last has only the now familiar miles of empty, barren-looking hillocks, and far off the tiny block of the hut, and the even tinier figure, hemmed in and enclosed by loneliness. This is clever and poignant, but two or three times in one film is enough. And sometimes the camera was oblique for no reason. Which is very like trying to be clever, proving one maintained critical coolness. Certainly the mesh was loose now and then, and certainly one was able to peep through. It would be pert or narrow to allow this to take importance. The fabric, as a whole, is something that matters so vitally. It is, indeed, an amazing thing to plunge from the half-lewd idiocy of the average film to this. The contrast is a kind of crevasse over which there is no bridge. The average film concerns itself with things that don't matter happening to people who don't matter, set in a treaclely irreality of sex-charged commonness. This mildly pernicious grime is spread out in ever-thickening layers until finally, if something—some storm over Europe—does not invade the cinema manufactories, sweeping it away like the invading army on the hurricane in Pudovkin's film, it will choke every one of us.

I see that *Storm Over Asia* will be considerably modified for Berlin. The "invading army" is probably not stressed there as British, the commander's scare-crow, well-bred wife will be allowed to be a vaguer symbol. I have a feeling,

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though I may be wrong, that the young Mongolian will not be marched out alone to a bleak and lonely spot to be shot down as even animals should not be shot. And certainly the grim and ghastly scene of rescuscitating the same Mongolian will not be allowed to pass.

It is anti-British, they told me. But what forcibly occurred to me was that if the film were cut so that it was not seen that sympathy were with the Mongolians, and were then shown to a British audience, certain sections of the audience would assuredly say, " that's the stuff to give 'em ". This is not vindictiveness on my part but another way of saying what probably nobody else will say, that Pudovkin has been no harsher than that class deserves. The film is by no means anti-British. It is certainly and definitely anti-militaristic, and therefore not particularly kind to the classes that seem to go on caring nothing about war and living their lives in readiness for it. In this, at bottom, it is entirely pro-British, and any Briton worthy of the name might well have been proud to have made it. Naturally, it would be forbidden here. Even more so than *Potemkin*. But what would happen if it were shown would certainly be far less impartial than my comments.

The action, says the synopsis, is located in Mongolia, whose insurgents fight for their independence against foreign troops, who have forced their way into Mongolia with the object of conquest. That is what you might call tactfully worded.

The film begins in the already mentioned hut, where Bair, the young Mongolian huntsman, has a valuable arctic fox fur which he intends to sell in the town for as high a price as

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possible to help his invalid mother. The cupidity of others there leads to a fight, during which a small holy charm is dropped. The old woman picks this up, and when Bair goes off to the town she gives it to him to wear.

In the town the traders bring in their scuts of fur tails and receive in exchange a few coppers. Bair enters and his fox fur is produced. The official recognises it as an extraordinarily fine specimen, but throws Bair only a few coppers, flinging the fur down with the pile of cheap tails.

Bair's indignation rises. The shocked faces of his fellow-countrymen who have seen the shameful transaction, stare at him, wondering what he will do. He is thrown out for violence, but comes back to fight, and the official is killed there.

By a coincidence, says the same synopsis, he is witness of a fight between insurgents and the intruding enemy. While the fighting is going on the British commander and his wife are getting dressed to attend a Mongolian festival. The analogy made between the preparation of the commander's wife and the devil dancers, both donning absurd trinkets, absurd head-dress, absurd clothes and absurd masks, is obvious, and because it is Pudovkin, not obvious. It is, apart from anything else, a consummate piece of pure cinema. The rhythm and tempo of these scenes of preparation are to be compared only with the greatest moments of great films.

Bair has joined the insurgents. The festival drags on and on, incantation, incense, gongs, cymbals, dances, incense, cymbals, gongs. The commander's wife, in her Patou gown and tiara, wearing her set, tired smile, sickened by the fumes

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and exhausted at the protractions, stands by her husband's side, "doing her bit", going on with her smile, and quick, furtive glances. This is all wonderfully achieved. It is not the direct thing that is emphasised. Pudovkin uses more the undercurrents. The amiable faces are all watching. The commander's wife becomes a classic symbol—a symbol shown-up. Her silly "good-breeding" is the thing she clings to, sensing the hostility and the exotic oppositeness of what is going on around her. Messages come from the war zone.

They are delivered with smiles and in whispers while the ceremony is going on. They are whispered to the commander and both he and his wife smile. Everybody smiles. His adjutant goes out, and Mongolian faces stare round, and there is slight nudging among the Mongolians. The dance scenes which follow—authentically filmed for the first time, and for this reason alone of absorbing interest, do undoubtedly, however, unbalance the composition. To talk this way, as I have stated in my editorial, is quite wrong and misleading unless it is carefully explained what is meant. And what is meant here is that the dances took up too much time and diverted attention from the story. A useful parenthesis, which overstepped its legitimate limit. Alone and for itself alone this sequence was very fine, full of movement and mysticism and speeding up; capturing the orderly abandon and the crescendo of the dance. The accompaniment of cymbals certainly needed no sound synchronisation. The rhythm of the cymbals here can be compared only to the now famous machine-gun sequence of *Ten Days*. So one goes, peeping between the mesh where it is loose, and bit by bit

there is nothing that is not extremely fine. It is then a question of final balance, of unity.

Riding home across the gaunt, desolate country, the commander and his wife are pursued by horses. The woman, who is tired out, bursts into sobs. The car stops. It is their own forces come to take care of them, for trouble is feared.

In the subsequent fights Bair is taken prisoner. The next sequences may not be allowed to stand, where a British soldier is instructed to take him out and shoot him. The two go out together. It is very clever here the way in which the complete barrier of language makes the two men like strange objects to each other out of another world. Bair's hands are tied. The English soldier is won by his bright and confident smile, that has all the courtesy of the East in it. He offers a cigarette. Bair cannot take it, as his hands are not free, and is unable to explain that he does not smoke. The soldier strikes a match. Bair then shakes his head, still smiling, and the cigarette falls. The soldier stares at him in surprise until the match burns his finger. He feels now that he has been merely foolish, and thrusts Bair forward. It is raining. The country is deserted. He commands Bair to walk forward. Takes aim and shoots. Bair turns, wounded, but unable to believe. A second bullet doubles him up, and he falls headlong down the steep, wet slope.

Returning, the soldier's puttee comes undone and strolls through the puddles. He stoops to do it up again. Indoors they have searched through Bair's belongings, and found the sacred charm his mother gave him—the same which had fallen from another man's pocket during the first brawl for the fox

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fur. Inside this are papers proving—apparently—that Bair is a direct descendant from Genghis Khan, and that he has therefore a right to the throne of Greater Mongolia. They immediately conceive the idea to present a monarchy in Mongolia against the “red influence”, as this would not only consolidate their own position, but assure also the support of friendly foreign powers. But the order for Bair’s assassination has already been carried out. They rush out and meet the soldier in the street doing up his puttee. Bair’s body is brought from the swamp into which it has fallen, and eminent surgeons operate to save his life—perhaps the most grim and bitterly ironical scene that has ever been filmed, and one, which ironically also, will quite certainly be clipped out by the censors. The tidings of the new prince fly through Mongolia, and people, men and women, come to peep at the body which seems more than dead and more than at their mercy.

Bair recovers. People come to sit and look at him. He no longer smiles. They dress him up in absurd silk clothes. Fussy, tittle-tattling parties take place, and at last Bair, propped on his stick, is put into a Western evening suit and brought to a large gathering as the Prince of Mongolia. One of the guests, a young woman, is wearing the familiar fox fur. His eyes blaze. He tears it off her neck. She goes into hysterics. There is confusion. It is the first thing that Bair has done, the first sign of rebellion he has made since he became the plaything of the monarchists. Finally, with the same consummate irony, the man who in the beginning had lost the sacred charm, the real heir to the throne, is pursued into Bair’s house, where upstairs Bair is being dressed by the ladies in flowing robes.

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He is shot by the military like a rat in a corner. Bair is seized then with mad rage. He tears off the robe, snatches a sword, and cuts his way, possessed and demoniacal through the house, wrecking everything. When the astounded people come to their senses and try to follow, the same possessed fury carries him through them, and he jumps from the window. The army is attacking. Bair is on a horse leading the insurgents. Storm begins. And with it, symbolism begins, overmastering the end of the film. Storm rises and becomes cyclone. The invading army is swept back. Trees with it, men rolling, guns blown over. Bair and his followers ride triumphantly behind, following. The film ends wrongly and suddenly on a wild crescendo of storm and wreckage and the triumphant ride of the Mongolians. It was not a rounding off, nor was it successful symbolism. The suggestion of supernatural intervention, the general wild firework display had nothing very suggestive in it. The end was rather a pity. According to the synopsis it ends with Bair riding into the distant steppes. This would be better, because the problem dealt with through the film is not resolved by a hurricane at the end of it, which was meant to say that this was dealing with the problem and this was the end of it. The problem remains, and Bair riding into the steppes would indicate this.

Storm Over Asia is not, however, a film to criticise, but for the starved lovers of film art, to be devoured greedily and gratefully. It will last forever.

K. M.

PREJUDICES

That the prejudices against which we have to fight are legion is scarcely a matter for complaint. For those who approach the art of the film in a state of prejudice (and do immeasurable damage amongst the reading public that is looking for a leader amidst the maze of conflicting opinions) are, unfortunately, not aware of their condition.

One of the most redoubtable of the prejudices recently beginning to put forth blossoms is that which favours the drawing of parallels. All of us, it would seem, are more or less instinctively inclined to seek a standpoint from which it is possible critically to survey a work of art: a method of judgment justified perhaps in regard to those branches of art that can look back upon hundreds and thousands of years of development, but, in relation to the films, entirely out of place.

As an art-form the film can scarcely be said to have a past. Or, if one holds that such a past exists, it becomes necessary to realise that in the end it is relatively unimportant and meaningless. For everything that has been prepared to date is preparative work, temporary work, or, if you prefer, work that on technical grounds is destined to be relatively short-lived. (Neither must it be forgotten that at the end of about thirty years almost nothing remains of a negative.) So far

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we do not even know whether we have a film-style, and the few works that to-day are described as classics will probably in the course of a few years, in face of what ought to come and what *must* come, be cast aside and forgotten. If, even now, we look back a little, we can clearly see that work which a few years ago was regarded as setting a standard is to-day considered mistaken and almost useless. In so saying I do not, of course, mean to suggest that such work has actually been useless. On the contrary, it has powerfully supported the development of film art. But we ought not to make the mistake of criticising freshly created work in relation to what is past. By each small technical innovation the art of cinematography is so fundamentally influenced that at once new possibilities arise, new paths are opened up of which hitherto we had not dreamed.

We must also bear in mind that the film, since it owes its strength to the multiplicity of its possibilities, becomes tedious and uninteresting the moment it exhibits a tendency to uniformity. It is unfortunate that the majority of people, insufficiently equipped to face the unfamiliar, and preferring, therefore, what they know by heart, are unable to meet fresh developments with clear eyes and minds. Why should it be demanded of a director who has once produced a film of a certain kind that he should go on reproducing his success for a life-time? Do not suggest that we make no such demand, for we do make it, without being clearly aware of the fact, and in a way that does not betray itself at the first glance. The result is a kind of serialisation which, no matter how perfect it may be, is found presently to be wearying us by reason of its uniformity. The film should be as various as life.



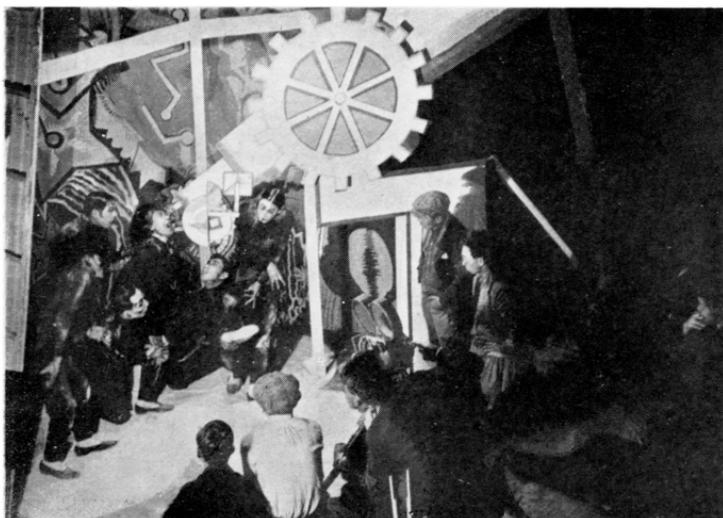
From *The Flame in the Fog*, a Japanese film directed by J. Shige Sudzuky. Nearly the whole film—concerned with Japanese Chinatown—was made in fog, as seen in the above illustration.



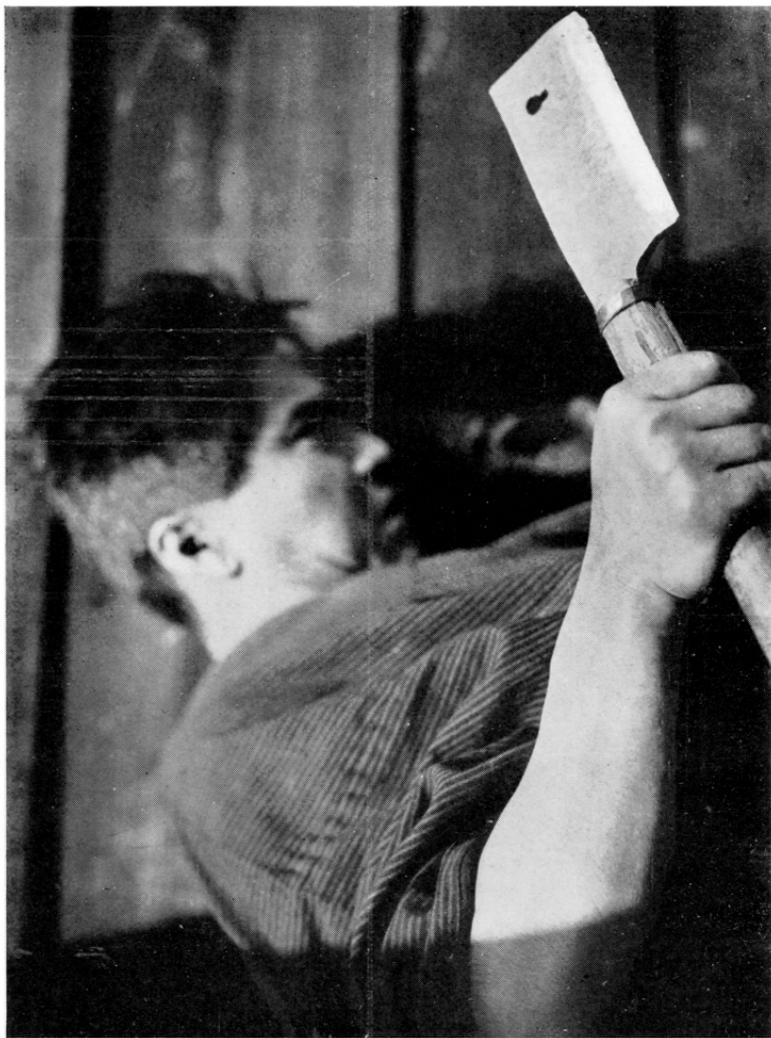
Bantsuma (Tsuma Saburo-Bando) one of the most famous of Japan's character actors in two roles from films by J. Shige Sudzuky.



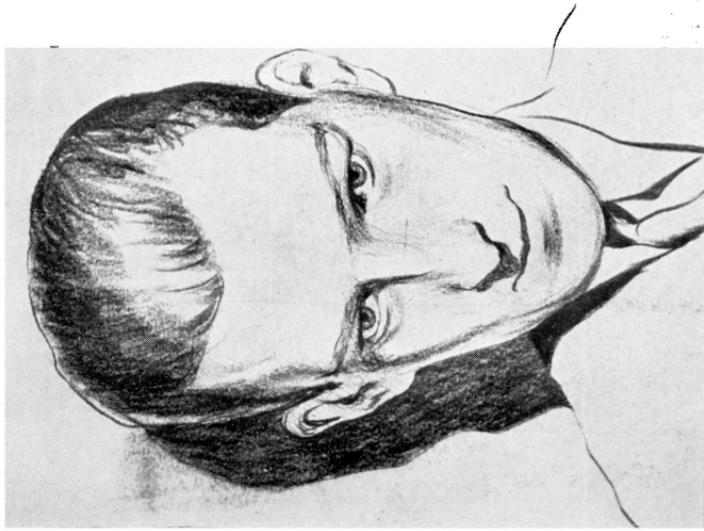
From *Bamboo*, a comedy made for Universal in Japan by J. Shige Sudzuky.



Planet, the first impressionistic film made in Japan. Story, designs and direction by J. Shige Sudzuky. Unlike *Caligari* the actors are made up to blend with the *décor*.



Capital Punishment, by J. Shige Sudzuky from a play by Oshimoto.



Eugen Deslaw, the young Ukrainian director of *La Marche des Machines*, who has now made a new abstract film entitled *La Nuit Electrique*.



Joris Ivens taking a scene for his new film *Pluie (Rain)*. Photo : *Germaine Krull*.



Henry Victor and Marie Glory in a scene from *l'Argent*, Marcel l'Herbier's film for Cinétromans.



Alfred Abel and Marie Glory in a striking *décor* from *l'Argent*.



Photo: Albatros-Sequana
Preparing the scene below from *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, Jacques Feyder's film for Albatros-Sequana, which has been banned by the French Government on account, it is said, of a tendency to ridicule the Chamber of Deputies.



Photo: Albatros-Sequana
The scene above as it would have appeared on the screen, with Albert Préjean in front.



Photo: Albatros-Sequana
Albert Préjean in *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, Jacques Feyder's film
which has been banned by the French Government.



Photo: Albatros-Sequana
Albert Préjean on the platform in *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*.

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For although it is said that there is " nothing new under the sun " I still believe that life transforms itself daily and seldom puts the same menu upon the table a second time.

The worst sufferers are the so-called " big " directors. Faced with their productions one feels impelled to launch out with one's whole intelligence which, as often as not, has not the smallest pretext to engage itself, and the cleverest of the critics do not escape the danger of singling out the weaknesses of the new film which, it is alleged, were not present in an earlier work—always forgetting that the same reservations, in another form, were made with regard to the other films. So long as these criticisms are purely personal opinions they are permissible. For every one has the right to prefer the film of the year X to the film of the year Y. But it is a great mistake to assert that the former is the more valuable. No creators of films who are to be taken seriously will pretend to have produced immortal works. They aim solely and singly at showing the way. And the way changes almost hourly in an art which is still ignorant of its rules, which does not yet even know whether it has any rules.

Why, for example, is it incessantly demanded that Dupont shall repeat his *Variety*? The scenario and the idea of *Variety* are alleged to be superior to those of *Moulin Rouge*. In what way? The one scenario was built up, like the other, upon an incident so common-place as to ensure, at the hands of an indifferent director, a complete failure. Has any one of those who draw comparisons between *Variety* and *Moulin Rouge* taken the trouble to-day, in 1928, to see *Variety* again? And if he has, can he honestly and without prejudice declare that it is the better film? Hardly. Of *Variety*, loved years ago,

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we have only a memory—and memory is a powerful intensifier—hence the enhancement of past experience and error in regard to the new film.

Is it perhaps desirable that Pabst should repeat his *Joyless Street*, Paul Leni his *Waxworks*, René Clair his *Entr'acte*, Cavalcanti *Rien Que Les Heures*, James Craze *Jazz*, and Griffith *The White Sister*.

Is it not better to patronise their new films, revealing fresh possibilities, and, forgetting what they have done to date, concentrate our interest upon their latest works in order to draw from them what they have to impart? For when it comes to the point what is it that we have to do? To go forward! That our path may be a mistaken one is not the point. If it brings us something new, and with art it always will, we should assent rather than go on talking about “the good old times”. Such an attitude is justified by the artists themselves. For if one asks them what they feel with regard to this or that earlier work they will answer almost without exception: “It no longer interests me; what matters to me is the film upon which I am now at work.”

And the critics, those who wish to lend their support to the evolution of the film (the others we may regard as negligible), should possess this sense and only this, the sense of renewal. All other critical work, since it is fruitless, is condemned to death from the outset, must die through sheer lack of sap. The art of the film, in particular, needs the powers of those who look forward only. We can abandon the business of reminiscence to the other arts.

JEAN LENAUER.

CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE

PICTURES AND FILMS

“ American films, sharp as steel, cold like the poles, beautiful as the tomb, passed before our dazzled eyes. The gaze of William Hart pierced our hearts and we loved the calm landscape where the hoofs of his horse raised clouds of dust.”

Quite so. True, true, perfectly true. Something, at any rate, *did* pierce our hearts, and we *did* love the calm of the landscape whereon the wild riders flew, the dust-clouds testifying to their pace. Just those things and as they were, unrelated to what came before and after. And to whatever it might be that had preceded, and to whatever it was that might follow, the splendid riding in the vast landscape gave its peculiar quality. We were devotees of the vast landscape and the wild riding and all the rest passing so magnificently before our eyes.

But however devout our feelings it did not occur to us to express them quite so openly and prayerfully. And, I *beg* of you . . . has not the quoted tribute a strange air? An air at first sight of being an extract from an out-of-date hand-book

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on the year's pictures, part of whose compilation had been entrusted to a youth with literary ambitions, and a somewhat exotic youth at that, and therefore a youth who properly should not have been the prey of the wild west film? And yet here most certainly is *cri du cœur*, with no question of tongue in cheek.

But young Englishmen of no period, and under no matter what provocation, are to be found gushing in these terms. Gush they may. But not quite in these terms. A young Englishwoman, then? An aspiring and enthusiastic young Englishwoman writing to suggest to other aspiring and enthusiastic young Englishwomen exactly what they think about the movies, and well understanding the heart-piercing and the adoration of the landscape,

But though the sentiments may be thus accountable, the expression of them remains a little mysteriously not an English form of expression until—turning the page to discover in whose person it was that *The Little Review* at any point in its thrilled and thrilling career should have waxed lyrical over the movies in their own right, as distinct from their glimpsed possibilities—one finds the signature of a French writer, one of the super-realists who had hoped the war would have rescued art from romanticism, had been disappointed and, having enumerated the few artists who in Europe were giving the world anything worth the having, looked sadly back upon the movies in their pristine innocence.

With the strange unsuitability of the English garb to the sentiments expressed thus cleared up by the realisation that the article was a literal translation, one could give rein to one's delight in the discovery of this genuine feeling of the day

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before yesterday, even though immediately one was forced to reflect that this wistful young man, given the circumstances and the date, could not possibly have seen any FILMS.

Accepting, therefore, its French reading, I have set down this tribute in the manner of a text, first because with an odd punctuality it came to my notice immediately on my return, from a first visit to London's temple of good films, to get on with the business of extracting forgotten treasures from a packing-case, and also because its sentiments chimed perfectly with certain convictions floating uninvited into my mind as I talked, on matters unrelated to the film (if, indeed, at this date any matters can be so described), with a friend encountered by chance on my way home from The Avenue Pavilion.

I had seen, in great comfort, and from a back seat whose price was that of the less valuable portions of the average super-cinema, *The Student of Prague*. This film, I am told, though excellent for the date of its production, a good play, well acted and likely to remain indefinitely upon any well-chosen repertory, has been out-done and left behind by films now being shown in Germany and in Russia. It is approved by the film intelligentsia, including psycho-analysts who delightedly find it, like all works of art, ancient and modern, fuller of wisdom than its creator clearly knows. And it was most heartily approved by a large gathering of onlookers, revealed when the lights went up, as consisting for the most part of those kinds of persons to be seen scattered sparsely amongst the average cinema crowd.

For me, personally, and before the human interest of the drama began to compete with whatever conscious critical

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faculty I may possess, it joined forces with the few "good" films I have seen at home and abroad in convincing me that the film can be an "art-form". There is much in it I shall never forget, and that much was supported and amplified in a way that no conceivable stage setting can compete with. The absence of the spoken word was more than compensated. Captions there may have been. I remember none. Clear, too, was the rôle of the musical accompaniment, though this was now and again a little obtrusive, and one grew intolerant of the crescendo of cymbal-crashing that accompanied *every* great moment instead of being reserved for the post-script, the final discomfiture of the wonderful devil with the umbrella, surely one of the best devils ever seen on stage or film? The same uniform cymbal-crashing did much, a week or so later, to spoil the revival of Barrymore's Jekyll and Hyde, first seen in England to the tune of the Erl-könig, itself a work of art and fitting most admirably to Barrymore's achievement.

But the rôle of the musical accompaniment was clear, nevertheless, its contribution to the business of compensating the absence of the spoken word, its support and its amplification that joins the many other resources of the film in deepening and unifying and driving home all that is presented. Conrad Veidt on any stage would be a great actor. Conrad Veidt moving voiceless through the universal human tragedy in surroundings whose every smallest item "speaks to the occasion", has the opportunity that at last gives to pure acting its fullest scope.

I left gratefully anticipating such other good films as it may be my fortune to see. Yet within and around my delights there were, I knew, certain reservations at work waiting to

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formulate themselves and, as I have said, taking the opportunity, the moment my attention was busy elsewhere, of coming forward in the form of clear statement.

The burden of their message was that welcome for the FILM does not by any means imply repudiation of the movies. The FILM at its utmost possible development can no more invalidate the movies than the first-class portrait, say Leonardo's of the Lady Lisa, can invalidate a snap-shot.

The film as a work of art is subject to the condition ruling all great art : that it shall be a collaboration between the conscious and the unconscious, between talent and genius. Let either of these elements get ahead of the other and disaster is the result, disaster in proportion to the size of the attempt.

The film, therefore, runs enormous risks. Portraits are innumerable. The great portraits produced by any single nation are very few indeed. And the portrait that is merely clever or pretentious, be its technique what it will, is no food for mankind. But the snap-shot, and the movie that offers to the fool and the wayfaring man a perfected technique, is food for all. It can't go wrong. It is innocent, and its results go straight to the imagination of the onlooker, the collaborator, the other half of the game.

The charm of the first movies was in their innocence. They were not concerned, or at any rate not very deeply concerned, either with idea or with characterisation. Like the snap-shot, they recorded. And, when plot, intensive, came to be combined with characterisation, with just so much characterisation as might by good chance be supplied by minor characters supporting the tailor's and modiste's dummies filling the chief rôles, still the records were there, the snap-shot records that

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are always and everywhere food for a discriminating and an indiscriminating humanity alike. "Sharp as steel, cold like the poles"; of landscape calm or wild, of crowds and all the moving panorama of life, of interiors, and interiors opening out of interiors, an unlimited material upon which the imagination of the onlooker could get to work unhampered by the pressure of a controlling mind that is not his own mind.

I was reminded also that the Drama, for instance, the Elizabethan drama, became Great Art only in retrospect. Worship of Art and The Artist is a modern product. In the hey-day of the Elizabethan drama the stage was despised, the actor a vagabond and a low fellow.

It may be that the hey-day of the film will come when things have a little settled down. When the gold-diggers, put out of court, shall have ceased to dig, when the medium is developed and within reach of the vagabonds and low fellows, when writing for the film shall no longer offer a spacious livelihood. Then, by those coming innocently to a well-known medium, the World's Great Films, the Hundred Best Films, will be produced. And, since history never repeats itself, they will probably be thousands, some of which, it would seem, have already been made in pioneering Russia.

But the movies will remain. The snap-shots will go on all the time. And there will always be people who infinitely prefer the family album of snap-shots to the family portrait gallery. And this is not necessarily the same as saying that there will always be irresponsible people, people who are happy merely because they are infantile. Much has been said, by those who dislike the pictures, of their value as evidence of infantilism. It is claimed that the people who

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flock to the movies do so because they love to lose themselves in the excitements of a dream-world, a world that bears no relationship to life as they know it, that makes no demand upon the intelligence, acts like a drug, and is altogether demoralising and devitalising.

Such people obviously know very little about the movies. But even if they did, even if they cared to take their chance and now and again submit themselves to the experience of a thoroughly popular show, it is hardly likely that they would lose their apparent inability to distinguish between childishness, the quality that has of late been so admirably analysed and presented under the label of infantilism, and childlikeness, which is quite another thing. The child trusts its world, and those who, in all civilisations and within all circumstances, in face of all evidence and no matter what experience, cannot rid themselves of a child-like trust are by no means to be confused with those who shirk problems and responsibilities and remain ego-centrally within a dream-world that bears no relation to reality.

The battles and the problems of those who trust life are not the same as the battles and problems of those who regard life as the raw material for great conflicts and great works of art. But only such as regard the Fine Arts as mankind's sole spiritual achievement will reckon those who appear not to be particularly desirous of these achievements as therefore necessarily damned.

DOROTHY M. RICHARDSON.

INTERVIEW WITH CARL FREUND

“ A year ago,” said Carl Freund, “ I should have spoken to you about panchromatic; to-day I shall speak about colour.”

I was not very anxious to talk about colour, a subject on which I have very definite views, but Mr. Freund was enthusiastic and he has a gift of communicating his enthusiasm.

“ I saw,” he continued, “ a Movietone, and I said to myself this must have colour; then I saw a beautiful seascape in colour and I said this must have sound. It is a new art; colour and sound. A new generation of directors and cameramen will be drawn into the films to deal with the new problems; the men without culture will HAVE to go.”

A few feeble and stereotyped protests were brushed aside. He asked me to think of *Chang* in natural colours with sound; of the herd of infuriated elephants thundering into the camera.

“ Surely,” he asked, “ that is not theatre? The difficulty is that no one has seen colour on the screen; modern colour processes are all crude. Colour, when it is introduced into full-length features, will have to be perfect; but there will still be black and white pictures just as there are etchings and paintings. As for sound—please notice that I don't say speech—I felt the need of it myself when I was making *Berlin*. During the first presentation I put ten men from the orchestra

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in the gallery, and distributed another ten men in the boxes so that there was in the auditorium the actual sensation of being surrounded by sound. In fact, I may claim that *Berlin* was almost the first of the sound pictures."

Tired by his eloquence, Mr. Freund finished: "You do see that colour and sound do not mean stage, don't you? And anyway, you must admit that it will be interesting."

I made Mr. Freund assure me that he would be as satisfied with his lighting effects in colour. I even brought up Mr. Elliot's argument that the eye is trapped by colour, and does not travel as it does from black to white. He retorted that so often you do not want the eye to travel, and you have to put the background out of focus to ensure the eye being held.

Then Mr. Freund asked me a question. What films did I like best? I determined to be quite honest and told him that Russian films seemed to me to be the most significant.

Mr. Freund beamed.

"I like the Russian films best also. They convey atmosphere in one shot, and the German film takes hundreds of feet of film to do it. Russian films are a question of angles and cutting; the camera work is 'topical', but I like it. I am longing for the day when I can work 'on the spot', like a journalist who scribbles on his shirt cuff; for the day when there will be no studio and no lights."

What an amazing statement from Carl Freund, one of the greatest experts in the world! I wanted him to elaborate, so I asked: "Don't you feel that studio shots, which you have lit yourself, are more your own than exteriors?"

"That is what they tell me in Germany. When I say I want no studio, and no lights, they think I am mad. . . . But,

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Mr. Freund, one light, just one? . . . I hold that what you see is yours, much more than what you make."

"How," I thought, "he must have loved working on *Berlin*."

"Yes," he continued, "I admire the Russians; they have groups of educational experts, dramatic critics, cameramen, lighting technicians, who discuss the films. What we want in moving pictures is more of the architect, of discussion and thought. A picture should be cut before it goes into production."

I brought the conversation round to America. I suggested that he might like to go there.

He shrugged his shoulders. American films were improving, but they put such a severe handicap on the cutting by using well-known stories. Perhaps when they had seen a few more Russian films in Hollywood . . . (another shrug). Only the other day he had seen an American film in which a girl was rescued from the water with *wet* clothes; that was an advance! Of course, if one must sell oneself, it is better to do so to the American commercialist, who paid so well.

"A good film is not a national thing," he pointed out; "we have had *Potemkin*, *Verdun* and *Chang*."

I felt that it was time to introduce a personal note, so I questioned him on his own films.

"*Tartuffe*, photographically, was quite interesting. The beginning and the end I took in the modern style, allowing the artists no make-up, and using 'angles'; while the middle section is soft focus, gauzed and artificial. *Berlin* was photographed without one person seeing the camera. I would go into a public house, three or four days before I intended to

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shoot, and bribe the management to instal some powerful lights. After a day or two patrons accepted the lights and ceased to comment. My camera, electrically driven, I would hide in another room, while I sat in a chair in the bar itself and pressed an electrical contact. I always contrived that an electrical fan should be placed near the camera to drown any faint sound that might reach idle ears. Using hypersensitive stock, I managed to get everything that I wanted."

Other pictures, Mr. Freund intimated, did not bring such pleasant memories.

"What of the Society, Mr. Freund, that you founded for the absolute Film in Berlin?"

"There was not sufficient support; we had to give up the performances. Myself, I am a purist, I am not sure that I like all these absolute films, so many of them are drawing. Film is celluloid coated with silver emulsion, and should be used to record light and shade. I think of all the experimenters I prefer Man Ray."

"But you approve of individual amateur experiment?"

"Certainly; I believe that there ought to be a flourishing amateur club in London. It is the way to make directors. There ought to be a competition, and then a show at the New Gallery attended by all the directors, cameramen and critics."

His enthusiasm made it impossible to doubt that he was genuinely interested.

During our conversation Mr. Freund hinted that he had an idea for a film. I do hope one of our Wardour Street magnates lets Mr. Freund make this film in England; it is exactly what is needed to save (or win) the prestige of the British film.

O. B.

UNE POIGNEE DE FILMS NOUVEAUX !

1^{re} Décembre, 17 heures. Dekobra ou Ciné-Club? Fâcheuse coïncidence. Le public genevois éprouve une perplexité bien compréhensible car il n'est pas accoutumé à pareille abondance; ces situations-là se produisent rarement dans notre ville où les manifestations de réel intérêt se succèdent à intervalles assez courts, il est vrai, mais ne provoquent pas aisément des embouteillages.

Ciné-Club a fait un louable effort en vue de rendre ses séances plus abordables, aussi voit-il avec plaisir le public affluer à ses guichets. Les cartes d'adhérents réduites, pour la nouvelle saison, de frs.14.— à frs.5.—, trouvent un écoulement rapide, et le supplément de fr.1.— qui sera perçu à chaque séance n'épouvante personne, aussi la jolie salle de l'Etoile sera-t-elle assez coquettement garnie lorsque, avec un notable retard fort excusable d'ailleurs, Ciné-Club fera précéder sa première séance de l'allocation d'usage.

Cinq films composent le programme, ce sont :

Préméditations—Le Cabaret épileptique—

Cinq minutes de cinéma pur—Photogénie de l'or
Zvenihora (fragment)

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dont Ciné-Club a pu heureusement disposer grâce à l'obligeance de Mr. de Jarville. Cinq films de métrage très court, dont la projection ne dure pas longtemps, mais qui paraissent d'inégale longueur en raison de leur intérêt. " Le Cabaret épileptique " et le fragment choisi de " Zvenihora " offrent des répétitions qui ne renforcent ni ne confirment les premières impressions, tandis que " Photogénie de l'or " doit à sa nature probablement l'extrême brièveté de son passage à l'écran. " Cinq minutes de cinéma pur " ne paraît pas son âge, et seul " Préméditations ", qui est, nous semble-t-il, le meilleur des cinq films, offre à la fois loisir et intérêt tout au long de ses simples images. Le thème en est heureusement conçu : Un écrivain est à sa table, prêt à noircir tout un lot de belles feuilles blanches. Il n'écrit pas encore, l'inspiration est pénible. Que diable ! il ne manque pas de sujets, mais dans quel milieu situer l'action de ce nouveau roman ? Au fait, il lui vient une idée, il évoquera la Bourse, la fièvre de la spéculation, le financier aux prises avec le hasard. Quel thème magnifique ! La plume court, alerte, sur le papier, mais bientôt elle ralentit—l'écran évoque la Bourse, le tableau qui accuse la dégringolade des cours, le financier cossu qui consulte ses cotes, fait l'inventaire de ses espèces étalées au sein d'un coffre-fort robuste, et songe comment il pourrait faire pour engager cet argent, qui n'est pas à lui, mais à la fillette dont il a chargé des intérêts . . . la plume s'arrête pour de bon, l'imagination de notre écrivain dérape sur un sol trop lisse . . . boulette de papier sur le plancher. Froncement de sourcils, ah ! quel métier que celui d'écrivain ! Mais voici surgir une autre idée : parler de misère noire, complète, irréductible . . . la plume repart, et à nos yeux

apparaît le plus parfait des vagabonds, sordide et misérable à souhait, qui n'a qu'un banc pour litière et les poubelles en guise de garde-manger . . . mais il paraît que ça ne va pas non plus, car une seconde boulette de papier tombe auprès de la première, sous la table de l'écrivain. Alors quoi ! Notre homme accouche encore d'une idée, il va évoquer les braves qui assurent le maintien de l'ordre public, souligner l'appétit de gloire qui les soutient dans l'exercice de leur fonction . . . un agent de police prend place sur l'écran, prototype du corps tout entier des défenseurs de la loi. Il reste immobile à l'angle de la rue, fier de ses larges moustaches et de son uniforme, et dard ses yeux soupçonneux dans les allées obscures . . . cela paraît marcher tout seul, lorsque notre écrivain plante là son roman et froisse la dernière feuille de papier qui va s'aligner avec les autres. Harassé, il s'endort sur la table. Le rêve, heureusement, seconde l'imagination en combinant les idées premières, et c'est ainsi qu'il s'empare du financier, du pauvre diable et de l'agent de police pour se livrer à ses ébats. Le choix semble prédestiné tellement il est heureux. Le financier songe à éluder ses difficultés en faisant disparaître la fillette gênante, ce qui lui donnerait la jouissance de l'argent, le vagabond est là derrière la fenêtre, qui regarde avec avidité le coffre et réalise mentalement le coup magnifique qu'il pourrait faire. De son côté, l'agent s'est approché, flairant quelque occasion intéressante de se distinguer. Chacun prémédite l'avenir à sa façon et les images traduisent rapidement les pensées. Après une suite d'hésitations, de confiance et de crainte, tout se dénoue de la façon la plus heureuse . . . le financier jette à terre le verre contenant le poison qu'il allait faire boire à sa petite protégée,

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le pauvre diable rentre son revolver et de même l'agent de police. Adieu fortune, bonne chère ou croix d'honneur, le financier retrouve ses soucis, le pauvre son banc et l'agent regagne philosophiquement son coin de rue. " Préméditations " est un film de réelle originalité.

" Le cabaret épileptique " présente des passages très réussis, mais l'intérêt de cette bande faiblit au fur et à mesure de sa projection. Il y a trop d'insistance, ici et là.

" Cinq minutes de cinéma pur " explique parfaitement ce qu'on est convenu d'entendre par " cinéma pur ". Il s'agit là, essentiellement, de jeux visuels et l'enchantement n'y étant soutenu que par la nouveauté, il est de toute nécessité d'éviter les répétitions et les longueurs, condition qui semble avoir été remplie ici. La luminosité changeante du verre, des pierreries et des bijoux y est à merveille exploitée par une série de fondus et de mouvements rotatoires. La projection de négatifs de passages ajoute au caractère spécial de cette bande.

" Photogénie de l'Or ". . . force nous est de convenir qu'il s'agit moins ici, en réalité, des qualités photogéniques de l'or que de celles du corps féminin. Si l'or a ses propres réverbérations, attendons le film en couleurs qui en fera ressortir la richesse, mais là encore d'autres métaux moins précieux ferent sans doute le même effet. La petite bande ci-dessus n'en constitue pas moins une succession de tableaux fort réussis, ce grâce aux mouvements rythmiques exécutés.

Le fragment projeté de " Zvenihora " ne donne pas précisément la note qui distingue la production soviétique. Il a probablement été choisi parce qu'il forme à lui seul un épisode complet, et non en vertu de sa valeur propre, car les

qualités de l'acteur Nademsky qui interprète le vieillard sont, dans cette partie, imperceptibles.

Un nouveau journal vient d'être lancé à Genève : La LORNETTE, et c'est avec grand plaisir que nous en signalons l'apparition. Consacrant ses colonnes aux sujets aimables et souriants, il peut être considéré, de ce fait, comme indispensable au public genevois ! Le cinéma y a sa large part, et la rédaction de cette rubrique importante a été confiée à Mr. Arnold Kohler, de Ciné-Club. Les vues personnelles de Mr. Kohler, en matière d'art cinématographiques, valent par leur originalité, leur sincérité et leur absolue indépendance. Les lecteurs de " la Lorgnette " auront donc le privilège de lire, deux fois par mois, une chronique fort intéressante des films.

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

THE CINEMA IN PARIS

Two films have been shown to us recently : *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, of Jacques Feyder, and *Les Deux Timides*, of René Clair, two films which may be discussed together because both are the work of two great directors, and both, alas ! have been equally disappointing.

Feyder's even more than that of René Clair. For in my opinion it was a grave error to adapt a play by Robert de

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Flers and Francis de Croisset for the screen, thus making a film that was witty and intellectual but not cinematographic. It would be easy, for instance, to recount Feyder's film by the details alone and yet provoke not a single laugh. It is intelligent and delicate, but not at all "cinema" from any point of view.

Furthermore, it is aggravated by Feyder being essentially a director of dramatic films, a fact easily to be observed in his last film, where there are several tragic scenes toward the end which succeed in a remarkable and moving manner. Evidently he must suffer from the incompatibility of being obliged to make a comic film when clearly he is more suited to dramatic films.

It is the failure again of the want of insight of French producers. To make use of the extraordinary capacity of a man like Feyder to film utterly uncinematic adaptations proves that it has not yet been understood what the cinema owes to us. For Feyder is a director who will make—I am certain—very good films in America, where he now is, and then only will France know what it has lost.

Technically the film is well photographed, without, however, attaining perfection. The cutting lacks a certain consistent force, which is explained probably by the anti-cinematic requirements of the scenario. His direction of Henri Roussel and Gaby Morlay is perfection; especially in the later scenes, where he makes his personality felt very strongly in a splendid and moving manner.

It transpires, however, that the censor has refused to pass Feyder's film, since there are several scenes in the Chamber,

treated actually in a fantastic and sufficiently charming manner. It is not very astonishing; these gentlemen of the French censorship are completely lacking in a sense of humor and understanding, and it is a rare thing that a film which departs a little from the popular run of mediocrity is not forbidden or cut by the French censors, who are unfortunately by no means at the end of their tether in making themselves ridiculous in the eyes of the world.

Les Deux Timides, the film of René Clair, taken also from a play by Labiche, as was *La Chapeau*, as regards the scenario, reveals the fault that the subject matter is not sufficiently fertile in excitement or amusement, some scenes are over long while others seem quite empty. But this is certainly not the fault of René Clair, but of his producers, who have probably forced him to make a film of normal length instead of letting him turn out one of those charming and short "bandes" which he is able to evolve with that perfection that is part of his own mordant and satirical whimsicality. This film has lost just a little of the cinematic strength so clearly evident in his preceding films.

It becomes more appreciable and less important when one understands that the great satirical quality of René Clair was not allowed full liberty.

The acting of Pierre Batcheff is worthy of the greatest commendation. This actor has at last found a director who knows how to direct him, and it is a great pleasure to see his rôle of a timid man in which he is astonishingly natural.

The cutting is very good. I like the photography less, which at moments is rather flat, especially in the interiors. There is, and this is quite natural with René Clair, a crowd

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of surprises and gags which reveal the rich inventiveness of his brain, and I believe that it is the most important French film of the year.

Eugen Deslaw has shown his experimental film, which he modestly calls *La Nuit Electrique*. It is a kind of documentaire on the lighted advertisements of large cities, Berlin and Paris. With great economy of means Deslaw attains a real forceful mobility. There is great progress to be observed from his previous film, and he has succeeded in giving to these apparently cold advertisements a sense of life.

I met Joris Ivens (the technical director of the Film Liga of Holland) a few days ago, who spoke of the work he has already accomplished and also of his projects.

He has finished *Pont d'Acier*, a cinema poem on a moving bridge near Rotterdam, and has just signed a contract with the Studio 28, where the film will be shown from January 15th.

He is now cutting his film *Duel*; the first Dutch film from the original scenario of Last, of which the mise-en-scene was directed by H. Franken, with Ivens in charge of the photography and cutting. This film, which is almost a thousand metres long, will cost little, and from several documents Ivens showed me, I think will be very lovely. There are no professional actors, and the collaborators have contrived to make their people act as well as if they were professionals.

"I have used," he said to me, "a new method of expression with regard to nature. I wanted to express nature subjectively, that is, as the person in the film should see it, according to his state of mind. I think I have secured the effect I wished."

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He is now finishing a film *Pluie* (Rain), an abstract of cinematic rhythm. I have seen several fragments from it of a powerful beauty. Here is such a film as Holland ought to make, for Holland assumes in rain aspects of a quite personal beauty, a beauty, moreover, which can only be called photogenique.

The Film Liga has already shown Feyder's *Visages d'Enfants* and Germaine Dulac's *La Coquille et le Clergyman*, this year. Next month René Clair is to show some fragments from his work and there is a chance that Ruttman and Pudovkin will also go to Amsterdam.

This tiny country that has no cinema industry shows a serious interest in the film that many larger countries might well envy.

Edmond Greville, a young director who has already given us proof of his cinematic capacity, is at work on *Minuit*, from his own scenario. Vanda Vengen, a Norwegian actress, will be the star.

JEAN LENAÜER.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

FILM CURIOSITIES.—No. 1.

Dracula—Produced by Murneau in 1920.

They say that *Dracula* was produced without the consent of Mrs. Bram Stoker, who afterwards took legal action to prevent the film being exhibited, and even went to the length of ordering that all copies should be burnt. In Paris they call the film *Nosferatu le Vampire*; perhaps that is meant as a disguise. As a curiosity it is not without interest and it has often been quoted; but to-day we expect so much from our films (*The Peasant Women of Riazanj* had sociological as well as great dramatic importance). . . .

The film opens with the beautifully composed pictures typical of Murneau (one spot light on the hair, now turn the face slightly and another spot light . . .). But this! Is this overacting, or is it my fault for not entering into the spirit of the story? It is unquestionably a faithful transcription of the book; vampires sink back into coffins of cursed soil, bats hang in dark rafted corners, Alfred Abel (Count Dracula) wears a fearsome mask adorned with jagged fangs, while Margaret Schlegel (poor heroine) faints repeatedly.

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Murneau wanted to give the public a thriller, and when a slow procession of coffins winds out of the town, preyed on by the undead it is thrilling, but a glimpse of the Count himself brings a smile to the lips. "That's a vampire," one thinks, "and isn't he funny?" If Dracula had been a little less determined with his teeth and nose, had looked more or less normal, one might (given the right mood and a romantic temperament) have thought: "Well, most devils do look like men", and indulged in an orgy of shivers.

The "kick" of the picture is a series of shots of a vampire-haunted boat. One by one the crew fall victims to the strange malady and die. The mate commits suicide by throwing himself over the side; the captain ties himself to the wheel. Then the boat cuts through the water without any guiding hand; the sails billow out in the breeze. Lonely vessel cutting through the phosphorescent waters of the night. Of course that is right! I have always felt that these wonderful ships with their intricate sails had a life of their own, it may be in the power of the undead, but, freed from the attentions of the living, it lives by itself.

I must confess that certain shots in Dracula's castle, and the fly-eating lunatic gave me a tiny shudder, but the shudder came principally from memories of the novel read surreptitiously by candlelight at the age of ten.

Werner Krauss is in the cast.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

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A RUSSIAN FAIRYTALE

At the Grafton Cinema in Tottenham Court Road the Society for Cultural Relations with Soviet Russia presented *Morosko* to a select audience. Some years ago the film was given a West-End presentation at the Polytechnic, and I believe that this film could be rented privately by *Close Up* readers should they feel that they would care to see an early production of Mejrabpom-Rouss..

It is a Russian fairy story and was directed by Jeliaboujski; but a rather curious fairy story. The legend tells of "Old Father Frost", who likes to spend his cold evenings in the company of pretty village maidens. Sub-titles tactfully refer to the maidens as "brides" of *Morosko*, the Spirit of Winter; but to minds educated under the auspices of the British Board of Film Censors and the *Sunday Express* it might all be easily mistaken for gentle propaganda for Mormonism.

There is the peasant mother who spoils her slut of a daughter, and wakes up her step-daughter with a savage kick so that she may start at sunrise to draw water, chop wood and wash clothes. She is a lovely character, this peasant woman. First her head is on the right, then her head is on the left; determined to avoid looking directly towards the camera. In real life one has met these women who never look one in the face, whose gaze is painfully shifty; they pour out luke-warm tea in suburban drawing-rooms. The peasant woman has a little pig and a goose in her living room, but true to type, her husband is kept well in his place. His only recreation seems to be scratching the pig (large close-up)!

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Ugly daughter, however, sits stiffly in a chair and fills her cheeks with Polish nuts, spitting the thin shells on newly-cleansed floor, so, of course, the mother wants to know why the beautiful step-daughter has not swept away the litter. Useless for the industrious maiden to explain that she left everything spick and span before she went to draw water from the well. With broom of twigs she restores order and returns to the pails of water. She crosses the snow. Someone next to me said "Look at her shadow." How impressive it is to see shadows on the snow, the white sheet seems spread for an immense cinematograph show of its own. Have I just been blind in the past, or have the American dramas of the snowy regions really never given us these shadows?

In fairy stories the ugly and bad, although they can see for themselves just how dull a time the beautiful and good are having, invariably suffer pangs of jealousy; and the mother, who forgets that she is sacrificing the wielder of the broom of twigs, commands her step-daughter to prepare for a long visit. The daughter packs her trunk, and in an authentically domestic scene shares a last meal with her father, who is to drive the sleigh.

"Now," says the mother, "take her out and give her as a bride to Morosko."

Tears do not soften her heart, and the entreaties of her husband are met with blows from a whip. It is evident that Morosko has a bad name in the neighbourhood, for the mother does not expect to see her step-daughter alive again. Indeed, when her father leaves her in the middle of the forest (harlequin costume of shadows as they pass under the trees) the beautiful one sinks to her knees in absolute despair. But

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Morosko turns out to be a veritable Santa Claus, with the agility of Douglas Fairbanks, who conducts the preliminary flirtation from the top of a tree; neither does he forget to show his appreciation of the maiden's gentleness. The father arrives in the morning to discover the ex-bride of Morosko decked in pearls and surrounded with treasure chests.

The mother is considerably "taken-back", but resourcefully dispatches her own daughter to seek the favour of the generous Morosko; while the beautiful, but I am afraid no longer so virtuous, step-daughter cooks the evening meal in silks and jewels.

A dog tells the mother that her daughter has not found favour with Morosko and has been chilled into death.

In passing it is interesting to note that it is a perfectly legitimate touch to make a dog talk in a fairy story, and that it is a successful one, but what on earth would it be like on the talkies?

The village gathers to examine the frozen body of the idle daughter, at the same time taunts the mother, who finally reconciles herself to her step-daughter. The film ends, as all fairy tales end, with a grand wedding of the heroine to an eligible suitor; who presumably is not told about Mr. Morosko. To my mind the picture of married life depicted in the early part of these fairy-tales gives a nice cynical twist to the so-called happy endings.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

BOOK REVIEWS

Parnassus To Let. By Eric Walter White. Hogarth Essays. Second Series. No. XIV.

While leading (let us hope) a pleasant life at Oxford, Clifton and Potsdam (see last page), Mr. Eric Walter White has contrived to write a little essay on (I suppose) rhythm and the cinema. I am not very definite about it because I received my copy from a friend who had read it twice in an effort to review it and found no enlightenment beyond the fact that Mr. White considers Walt Whitman to be the forerunner of the cinema.

The first few pages tell us that with the invention of print, literature is no longer a temporal art, a preparation for one of Mr. White's clever sayings, which may excuse the irrelevancy. To explain the so-called obscurity of modern poetry, he says: ". . . at first reading the poem is unintelligible, in fact, it cannot be understood until the last line has been read, the complete circle described, and the poet's image recreated three-dimensionally in the reader's mind."

Quite a satisfying thought, but Mr. White then remembers that he has proposed to write about the cinema; and his reflections on the cinema are so muddled that I am not surprised that any fourth-rate person should find them unintelligible.

"It was impossible that the cinema should continue to take orders from Lady Literature and live below stairs." Excellent. But Mr. White goes on to tell us that the cinema has cast off the shackles of literature because the recent Charlie

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Chaplin films have been made without scripts. It looks very much as if Mr. White does not realize the difference between a novel and a script. A modern script is the film, cut and finished. Again, when tackling the subject of rhythm, Mr. White confounds the reader by mixing up in an alarming manner, without any apparent discrimination, "examples" of rhythm IN the film, as a succession of lighted oblongs thrown by a train on a station wall, and rhythm OF the film, as a sequence of villagers hurrying to a marionette show crosscut with close-ups of the show man's drum.

I must confess, too, that I do not care for Mr. White's notion of regarding the cut as a caesura; I never think of a cut as a pause, but a pounce. However, there are many excellent thoughts to be disentangled. Mr. White points out that the value of the abstract film lies in the abstract shot, that such films as *Emak Bakia* become more valuable when looked on as pages from an artist's note book.

On page nineteen I find the sentence: "But although during the last few years the cinema has drawn forth a host of ephemeral literature . . .":

The sentence still stands.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES

Hollywood is accepting with keen satisfaction the reported indifference of European producers toward vocalized films. This lack of interest is not only eliminating the fear of foreign competition, but is serving also as a spur to the activity of the Hollywood producers. Convinced now of the permanence of the spoken photodrama, they are bending all their efforts toward perfecting it and controlling the market before the European producers are ready to recognize the advent of the new cinema era. The situation suggests that history is about to repeat itself. Years ago, while Europe was debating the worthwhileness of the silent drama, Hollywood was busily at work, and when the world awoke to an interest in the movies, Hollywood, fully equipped and established, alone was in position to dominate the market and adequately supply the demand for the new form of popular entertainment.

* * *

Talking pictures are not only creating many radical changes in established producing organizations, but are also bringing new companies into the field. One of the latest of these, and one of the most important, is the Sonoratone Corporation. Its special purpose, aside from entering into direct competition in the American market with established companies, is to produce films for the German and French markets. By means of a recently perfected invention, foreign-language dialog will be synchronized with the action of the pictures. It is reported that Warner Brothers are also preparing to use this device for invading the foreign markets, which will include Italy and Spain as well as Germany and France.

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The first of the year will see no less than seventy full-length phonofilms in various stages of production by the different Hollywood companies, in addition to those already released. Paramount-Lasky alone will have twelve complete-dialog pictures, besides ten containing singing and spoken sequences. The schedules of several of the companies include the filming of musical productions. Warner Brothers are doing *The Desert Song*, one of the recent musical hits of the American stage. United Artists are preparing an original phonofilm production of the same general character, written by Irving Berlin. Fox has a "Follies" photophone picture under way, directed by Edward Royce, long identified with the famous Ziegfeld Follies.

* * *

Educational Pictures, an organization which has heretofore specialized in two-reel comedies, is preparing to make a series of phonofilm revues. These productions are designed for use by film exhibitors as prologs or *entr'actes*, to give variety to their regular picture programs.

* * *

Lionel Barrymore, veteran actor of the stage, and who made his talking-picture debut in *The Lion and the Mouse*, has now assumed the rôle of director, under the M-G-M banner. *Confession* is the title of his first directed phonofilm; and in addition to himself, in the stellar part, the cast includes Christiane Yves and Yvonne Stark, two French actresses; Carrol Nye, and Robert Ames, a popular stage favorite. Mmes. Yves and Stark do not speak English, but as their

rôles in the talking picture are those of French women speaking their native tongue, they are appropriately and congenially cast.

* * *

Typical of the many changes resulting from the inauguration of talking films, is the reopening of a number of the abandoned New York studios belonging to some of the older Hollywood companies. This has been brought about by the demand for experienced stage actors, singers, and musical performers, whose regular engagements keep them in New York. The three-thousand-mile distance between Hollywood and the eastern metropolis has now been reduced in time to about two days, through the use of airplane transportation, so that the inconvenience of sending players, directors, writers and others back and forth from Hollywood is almost negligible as compared with that of the earlier days when picture production for a time was divided between the two coasts, pending the final decision as to the permanent location for the industry.

* * *

The speaking-film version of Barrie's *Half an Hour*, directed for Paramount-Lasky by William de Mille, has been released under the title of *The Doctor's Secret*. It will be recalled that Barrie's *Admirable Crichton* experienced a like titular change in its film translation; appearing on the screen as *Male and Female*. Why the picturization of his *Peter Pan* was not called *After Dark* or some other equally titulating alias has never been explained. However, movies are made for the masses, and while *Half an Hour* has drawn its thousands to the theatre, *The Doctor's Secret* will draw its tens of thousands to the cinema.

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Napoleon's Barber, a one-act stage play, has been phonofilm by Fox. The character of Napoleon is played by Otto Matiesen, whose previous screen work has been especially notable in several art films, including *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Last Moment*. Natalie Golitzin plays opposite his Napoleon as the Empress Josephine. Frank Reicher is cast as the barber, Helen Ware as the barber's wife, and Phillippe de Lacy as the son. The picture was directed by John Ford and marks his twenty-fifth production for Fox.

* * *

William de Mille has severed his connection with Paramount-Lasky and is now associated with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

* * *

The success of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's *White Shadows in the South Seas* has prompted these producers to undertake another picture in the same locale. The story chosen for this second venture is John Russell's *The Pagan*. Ramon Novarro will enact the leading rôle. Others in the cast are Renee Adoree, Donald Crisp and Dorothy Janis. Under the direction of W. S. Van Dyke, who did the other South Sea picture for M-G-M, the players are at present in Tahiti, and their work on the picture will probably keep them there until the latter part of January.

* * *

Students representing the University of Sydney, Australia, recently held a debate on the subject of motion pictures with students of the University of California. The question was, Resolved that the world would be better off without the films.

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The Australians took the affirmative and based their arguments on the contention that motion pictures have led adolescents and women into anti-social conduct by creating a demand for excitement; that picture titles are written in slovenly English and are therefore subversive of good speech, and that the films' portrayal of life is false, exaggerated and misleading. The debate was held in the auditorium of the Los Angeles campus of the University of California and was largely attended by the student body and the public. The decision on the merits of the debate was left to the audience, which rendered its verdict in favor of the Californians, who defended the negative side of the question.

C. H.

The film made on board the *Krassin* of the expedition to rescue some of Nobile's party was to be shown in Berlin, at the Mozartsaal, during Christmas week. It is said to be not only of extreme "documentary" interest, but also remarkable for its photographic quality. It is to be hoped that it will be shown also in London.

The response to the forms included in *Close Up* asking for a modification of the censorship of films in England has been very gratifying. But in view of the continuous encroachments upon the intellectual right of the individual to decide upon what he shall see and read, it is necessary to make even

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greater efforts. The February issue will be devoted largely to the question of censorship in different countries, and we hope that many well-known directors, authors and scientists will contribute their views. We request especially, therefore, that all those readers of *Close Up* who have not yet signed the form of protest will sign and forward it immediately to the London office. *Blank forms for signatures can be forwarded to readers upon request.* This is a very definite way for you to help the cause of cinematography. Before you read the rest of the magazine sign and send in your form, collecting as many signatures as possible on the back. The more signatures the wider and more powerful the protest. Remember this has been planned in order that *you* may be able to see and enjoy the serious and important films which in present conditions are kept from you by an unnecessarily arbitrary and only semi-official organisation, whose need to reorganise is fast becoming the gravest crisis the film has yet known. *If something is not done and swiftly, the cinema as an art will perish!*

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