

MEVIT2532 – Film history

Take home exam, spring 2022

Monday 9 May at 11:00 – Thursday 12 May at 11:00

This document consists of five (5) pages and two (2) exam questions. **You must answer both question A and question B. In question B, you must answer one (1) of three (3) questions. You will find the primary source cited in question A on the last pages of the document.**

Before you start writing your exam submission, you must ensure that you have read and understood the University of Oslo's information about cheating:

<http://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/cheating/index.html>

You must use a reference style (such as Harvard, MLA, Chicago or APA) throughout your exam submission, and in the bibliography/reference list at the end of the submission. Therefore, you must also read the University's guidelines: <http://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/sources-citations/>

Exam questions

Answer exam questions A and B:

A

Write a critical analysis of this primary source (2 –3 pages). The source is a 1916 review of Lois Weber's film *Shoes* from the trade journal *The Moving Picture World*. Your analysis should include explanatory notes on the text. This includes **identifying** key terms and explaining what they mean in their historical **context**. How does the text relate to themes and topics from your readings, seminar discussions and lectures? Make sure that you make meaningful connections to the course syllabus. Note: There are several reviews on these two pages, but you are only required to discuss the review of *Shoes*.

B

Answer **one** of the following three questions (7 – 8 pages). The questions require you to refer to at least two readings from the syllabus and to discuss at least two specific scenes to support your arguments. One of the readings must be the *Film History* textbook.

1. How does the mise-en-scène in *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959) serve to communicate important themes, develop characters and organize plot? Discuss how the mise-en-scène suggests fundamental values or a particular vision of the world.
2. How do Agnès Varda and Lois Weber communicate the subjectivity of Eva and Cléo in *Cléo from 5 to 7* (*Cléo de 5 à 7*, 1962) and *Shoes* (1916)? What role does female subjectivity play in the narrative of each film?
3. How would you describe the place of Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) in film history? Is it an important part of a specific historical evolution in cinema? How does placing the film in a historical context help you understand it better or differently?

Information about the exam

You must submit your exam in English. Exams written in any other language will be marked as "not submitted".

The submitted paper may be up to 10 pages (one page is calculated to 2300 characters without spaces). The front page and reference list do not count towards the 10 pages. Use Times New Roman font in 12pt. and 1.5 line spacing.

The exam must be submitted as a PDF, or it will not be accepted by Inspera. Your front page must include your candidate number, and the name of the file you upload should be your candidate number (eg. 1234.pdf). Do not include your name anywhere on your exam submission.

All students are required to have read and familiarized themselves with the University's rules regarding cheating, found here: <http://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/cheating/>. All submissions will be checked using the University's plagiarism detection software.

Please see UiO's web site for more practical information about exams at the University of Oslo: <https://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/submissions/>

Annie Fee (anna.fee@media.uio.no) can be contacted through e-mail, and will answer questions regarding the exam submitted on Monday 9th of May by 12:00. Questions will generally be answered by the end of the day.

The exam results will be published in Studentweb within three weeks. Results will not be given by phone or e-mail.

June 24, 1916

THE MOVING PICTURE WORLD

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dead. She is discovered by the help, and a doctor is summoned. Doctor Maxwell (Ernest Maupain) restores her to consciousness, and, struck by her intelligence and refinement, persuades her to tell him the story of her life.

The story of a woman's wrongs is thrillingly told on the screen up to the moment of her attempted suicide, and once, during its recital, the pictures tell us a story within the main story, a striking instance of the flexibility of moving picture art.

It develops that Doctor Maxwell is acquainted with John



Scene from "That Sort" (Essanay).

Heppell (Duncan McRae), the woman's husband that was, and with the daughter that she had borne him before his drunkenness and brutality had driven her from her home into a cold and callous world, in which she had fared badly and sadly; and so from this point in the story until the close we watch with ever-increasing interest the contest for Diana Laska's re-instatement in her rights.

The closing scene, in which Diana's mother love forces her to renounce forever the hope of letting her own daughter know that she, and not another, is her real mother, is powerfully emotional, and sways both heart and mind by its fervid spell.

In this scene Miss Warda Howard is seen at her best in the part of Diana. Indeed, Miss Howard may always refer with justifiable pride to this fine characterization.

Duncan McRae's John Heppell is a worthy opposite to Miss Howard's Diana. There is an air of distinction about Mr. McRae's acting that stamps him an artist. He will be remembered by many as the Edison director for some time, and also as a member of several distinguished dramatic companies. He was specially engaged by Essanay to play John Heppell.

That old favorite, Ernest Maupain, adds another to his numerous photodramatic successes in the role of Doctor Maxwell.

In the final fade-out we catch sight of Diana and the Doctor seated in an old boat on the sands, in absorbed conversation. Director Brabin has been very happy in the introduction of this scene, as the thought flashes on the mind of the spectator that, perhaps, after all, there is a haven of rest and true happiness in store for the greatly wronged actress; and so everyone who sees the picture will go home with a relieved and happier feeling in both mind and heart.

The release date was June 12.

"Medicine Bend"

Signal's Five-Part Western Melodrama, Sequel to "Whispering Smith," Well Produced and of Sustained Interest.

Reviewed by Margaret I. MacDonald.

A NOVEL by Frank H. Spearman is the basis for this and a previous five-part production made by the Signal Film Corporation, entitled "Whispering Smith." In these two pictures is employed an extensive cast headed by Helen Holmes. The characterization has been remarkably well carried out and presents a bevy of types well suited to the atmosphere in which they are placed. The story is one of the most thrilling kind of western melodramas and in its continuation into its second and last period opens a struggle of fierce proportions between McCloud, the superintendent of that particular division of the railway, and the wrecking gang which has looted wrecked freight cars of thousands of dollars worth of goods. The struggle closes with the roundup of Sinclair and Du Sang, the evil spirits of the gang, who meet death thereby.

J. P. McGowan, the director of the production, is to be congratulated on the careful and artistic manner in which he has developed the story on the screen. As a melodramatic production it can be considered one of unusual power and magnetism. Whether or not the story is true to the west of to-day seems of little moment from the viewpoint of the spectator. It does not jar his bump of consistency. Its characters are red-blooded

and stirring, and easy continuous action marks every inch of the film.

"Medicine Bend" will please children as well as adults. They will be pleased with Helen Holmes as the faithful wife of the bully, Sinclair, and they will be pleased with J. P. McGowan as "Whispering Smith." Leo D. Maloney, as Du Sang, who was "as cruel as a soft bullet," will be a much admired type. Paul C. Hurst carries away laurels as Sinclair. Tony is another



Scene from "Medicine Bend" (Signal).

type that has been splendidly cast, and Thomas G. Lingham as the sheriff of Medicine Bend is not easily forgotten.

This production will be released on the program of the Mutual Film Corporation July 3.

"Shoes"

Impressive Five-Part Bluebird Production, Directed by Lois Weber, Features Mary MacLaren.

Reviewed by Margaret I. MacDonald.

PICTURING a brief chapter in the life of a girl who worked in a five and ten cent store at five dollars a week, Lois Weber has made a production that is a credit both to herself and to the Bluebird Photoplays, Inc. The picture is founded on a story written by Stella Wynne Herron, the basic idea of which originated in a book by Jane Addams. Eva Meyer, the girl of the story, after months of struggle against poverty, relinquishing her pay envelope with little complaint each Saturday night for the support of the family, which included a lazy father, is "sold out for a pair of shoes."

The production rings true, and at no moment do the players appear to be acting. It reminds one of turning the pages of one of life's unhappiest chapters. No detail of the simple little drama of life as it passed in a poor family, consisting of four children, a hardworking mother and a father whose chief con-



Scene from "Shoes" (Bluebird).

cern lay in having plenty of beer to drink and novels to read, has been forgotten. Perhaps the picture's only fault presents itself in an overanxiety to get the intention of the story "over" as it were. This will be noticed particularly in the repetition of scenes relating to the worn shoes in which Eva nightly places insoles cut from cardboard boxes to keep her tired feet from contact with the pavement. The characterization in the hands of Mary MacLaren, Harry Griffith, Mrs. Witting, Jessie Arnold and William Mong is splendidly taken care of. The

cloak of stolidity behind which Eva conceals her misery is appropriate to the character of the girl. Her final desperate plunge when she sells her virtue for a pair of shoes closes as far as we are concerned this chapter of her life without a conjecture as to what the next may bring forth. The suggestions of what she might have developed into under other conditions increase the value of the picture as a sociological study.

"Macbeth"

Sir Herbert Tree and Constance Collier Appear in Finely Artistic Adaptation of Tragedy Produced by Reliance Corporation.

Reviewed by Lynde Denig.

WITH few exceptions attempts to place Shakespeare's plays on the screen have been disappointing. There has been little Shakespeare and a dull picture. To say that "Macbeth," acted by Sir Herbert Tree and Constance Collier for the Reliance Film Corporation, is among the exceptions is too much like damning with faint praise, whereas the production deserves the heartiest and most emphatic commendation. It will win on its merits as an interesting, artistic photoplay, as a faithful representation of Shakespeare's tragedy and as a masterpiece of expressive acting that truly reflects the genius of Sir Herbert and the marked ability of Constance Collier. There has been much talk about preserving the art of great actors through motion pictures, but slight accomplishment, either because the players were lost in the new medium, or because the subjects were unwisely selected. Here we have a happy combination of actor and play, also a director competent to handle a great tragedy—John Emerson.

Students of Shakespeare who fear a desecration of a masterpiece, or what amounts to much the same thing, a mere skeleton lacking the mind, the soul and the psychology of the

phantom dagger or the pursuing ghost of Banquo. Judiciously used close-ups of his wonderfully mobile features enable Sir Herbert to reveal the ever-increasing mental torture that eats into the soul of the usurper.

The Lady Macbeth of Miss Collier is no less impressive, for she, too, possesses a rich personality perfectly suited to Shakespearean tragedy. She uses natural advantages of face and figure with unfailing intelligence to indicate emotional feeling and the hard cruelty of the relentlessly ambitious woman. In the sleep walking scene and the scenes preceding the tragic



Scene from "Macbeth" (Reliance).



Scene from "Macbeth" (Reliance).

original, will be given a new insight into the possibilities of the screen. As Mr. Emerson adapted the play and directed it, his is the credit for the production of a picture that not only visualizes the dramatic incidents completely and convincingly, but makes clear the mental processes of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Of course, he could not have done so much without actors of the first caliber, but it is equally true that Sir Herbert and Miss Collier received the most valuable sort of co-operation in making the audience understand. There is not the least excuse for missing the vital points of the drama.

In constructing a photoplay of this type the art of a director is manifested in the scenes he chooses to visualize, scenes that cannot be shown on the stage, but the meaning of which is communicated to the audience through subsequent dialogue. When such additions are made it is not altering the original, rather expressing the same things in the language of the screen, and it is this language that Mr. Emerson utilizes with fine effect to realize the true spirit of "Macbeth." The murder of the king is visualized, as are many other happenings left to the imagination in stage performances, but never once is anything foreign to Shakespeare's tragedy allowed to intrude. When speech is necessary, lines from the play are invariably used, and the arrangement of the scenario necessitates few explanatory leaders. It is a treat, indeed, to read so much of Shakespeare on the screen, even if some familiar quotations are slightly altered.

Sir Herbert is a virile, compelling Macbeth, possessed of the rare art that makes possible the communication of emotional states. Characterization with a psychological background is possible where such an actor is concerned. We see the birth of ambition after the prophesy of the witches and feel the irresistible force of temptation as Lady Macbeth urges courage that his deeds may fulfill his hopes. There is infinite variety and subtle shading in the portrayal, as Macbeth, suffering from the conscience that "makes cowards of us all," shrinks before

death of Lady Macbeth, Miss Collier reaches the high moments of a superb performance.

But it must not be gathered that the picture depends entirely upon these two characterizations. Other roles are properly presented and in the concluding reel, bringing the attack on Macbeth's castle, there is a stirring spectacular conflict handled on a large scale. From first to last the production, 7,500 feet in length, is marked by artistic lighting, tinting and appropriate settings.

"Who's Guilty?"

Fifth and Sixth of the Series Continue to Bear Evidence to the Fact That the Commonest of All Crimes Are Crimes of Circumstance.

Reviewed by Margaret I. MacDonald.

THIS series which is being made for the program of the Pathe Exchange, Inc., by the Arrow Film Co., can be likened in quality and drawing power to the "Who Pays?" series terminated some time ago. Both draw attention to the unhappiness, and oftentimes tragedy resulting from careless actions, selfish aspirations, unjust suspicions and various other causes from which others than the original blunderers suffer.



Scene from "Who's Guilty?" (Pathe).

For this reason is the series useful as well as entertaining.

No. 5 of the "Who's Guilty?" series entitled "Sold Out" draws attention to a lack of faith in human efforts. A young wife becomes discontented with the provision made for her by her young husband who is still in the throes of prospecting a mine which has shown no signs of paying. Lured away by a foolish mother the wife pays a visit to her home and meets a former lover whose every effort has met with success. A letter from his mother-in-law asking for the release of her daughter from her matrimonial tie brings the husband who has now struck it rich,