

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC

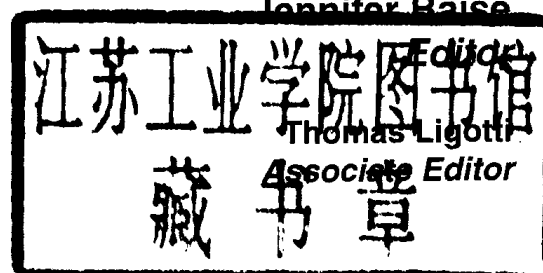
89

Volume 89

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1960,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**

Jennifer Baise



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Preface

Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities, and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." *TCLC* "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many libraries would have difficulty assembling on their own."

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1960 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey of an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topic entries widen the focus of the series from individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, which reprints commentary on authors now living or who have died since 1960. Because of the different periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*. For additional information about *CLC* and Gale's other criticism titles, users should consult the Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series preceding the title page in this volume.

Coverage

Each volume of *TCLC* is carefully compiled to present:

- criticism of authors, or literary topics, representing a variety of genres and nationalities
- both major and lesser-known writers and literary works of the period
- 6-12 authors or 3-6 topics per volume
- individual entries that survey critical response to each author's work or each topic in literary history, including early criticism to reflect initial reactions; later criticism to represent any rise or decline in reputation; and current retrospective analyses.

Organization of This Book

An author entry consists of the following elements: author heading, biographical and critical introduction, list of principal works, reprints of criticism (each preceded by an annotation and a bibliographic citation), and a bibliography of further reading.

- The **Author Heading** consists of the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If an author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the real name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Also located at the beginning of

the introduction to the author entry are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose languages use nonroman alphabets.

- The **Biographical and Critical Introduction** outlines the author's life and career, as well as the critical issues surrounding his or her work. References to past volumes of *TCLC* are provided at the beginning of the introduction. Additional sources of information in other biographical and critical reference series published by Gale, including *Short Story Criticism*, *Children's Literature Review*, *Contemporary Authors*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, and *Something about the Author*, are listed in a box at the end of the entry.
- Some *TCLC* entries include **Portraits** of the author. Entries also may contain reproductions of materials pertinent to an author's career, including manuscript pages, title pages, dust jackets, letters, and drawings, as well as photographs of important people, places, and events in an author's life.
- The **List of Principal Works** is chronological by date of first book publication and identifies the genre of each work. In the case of foreign authors with both foreign-language publications and English translations, the title and date of the first English-language edition are given in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.
- Critical essays are prefaced by **Annotations** providing the reader with information about both the critic and the criticism that follows. Included are the critic's reputation, individual approach to literary criticism, and particular expertise in an author's works. Also noted are the relative importance of a work of criticism, the scope of the essay, and the growth of critical controversy or changes in critical trends regarding an author. In some cases, these annotations cross-reference essays by critics who discuss each other's commentary.
- A complete **Bibliographic Citation** designed to facilitate location of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Criticism is arranged chronologically in each author entry to provide a perspective on changes in critical evaluation over the years. All titles of works by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type to enable the user to easily locate discussion of particular works. Also for purposes of easier identification, the critic's name and the publication date of the essay are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the journal in which it appeared. Some of the essays in *TCLC* also contain translated material. Unless otherwise noted, translations in brackets are by the editors; translations in parentheses or continuous with the text are by the critic. Publication information (such as footnotes or page and line references to specific editions of works) have been deleted at the editor's discretion to provide smoother reading of the text.
- An annotated list of **Further Reading** appearing at the end of each author entry suggests secondary sources on the author. In some cases it includes essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights.

Cumulative Indexes

- Each volume of *TCLC* contains a cumulative **Author Index** listing all authors who have appeared in Gale's Literary Criticism Series, along with cross references to such biographical series as *Contemporary Authors* and *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. For readers' convenience, a complete list of Gale titles included appears on the first page of the author index. Useful for locating authors within the various series, this index is particularly valuable for those authors who are identified by a certain period but who, because of their death dates, are placed in another, or for those authors whose careers span two periods. For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald is found in *TCLC*, yet a writer often associated with him, Ernest Hemingway, is found in *CLC*.

- Each *TCLC* volume includes a cumulative **Nationality Index** which lists all authors who have appeared in *TCLC* volumes, arranged alphabetically under their respective nationalities, as well as Topics volume entries devoted to particular national literatures.
- Each new volume in Gale's Literary Criticism Series includes a cumulative **Topic Index**, which lists all literary topics treated in *NCLC*, *TCLC*, *LC 1400-1800*, and the *CLC* yearbook.
- Each new volume of *TCLC*, with the exception of the Topics volumes, includes a **Title Index** listing the titles of all literary works discussed in the volume. In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale has also produced a **Special Paperbound Edition** of the *TCLC* title index. This annual cumulation lists all titles discussed in the series since its inception and is issued with the first volume of *TCLC* published each year. Additional copies of the index are available on request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the following year's cumulation. Titles discussed in the Topics volume entries are not included *TCLC* cumulative index.

Citing Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume in Gale's literary Criticism Series may use the following general forms to footnote reprinted criticism. The first example pertains to materials drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books.

¹William H. Slavick, "Going to School to DuBose Heyward," *The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined*, (AMS Press, 1987); reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, Vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Garipey (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 94-105.

²George Orwell, "Reflections on Gandhi," *Partisan Review*, 6 (Winter 1949), pp. 85-92; reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, Vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Garipey (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 40-3.

Suggestions Are Welcome

In response to suggestions, several features have been added to *TCLC* since the series began, including annotations to critical essays, a cumulative index to authors in all Gale literary criticism series, entries devoted to criticism on a single work by a major author, more extensive illustrations, and a title index listing all literary works discussed in the series since its inception.

Readers who wish to suggest authors or topics to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to write the editors.

Acknowledgments

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Thomas H. Ince

1882-1924

(Full name Thomas Harper Ince) American filmmaker.

INTRODUCTION

A prolific director and producer of the silent film era, Ince is regarded as a pioneer in the motion picture industry and generally credited with streamlining the modern method of studio filmmaking. He is principally noted for his introduction of very detailed, written "continuities"—later known as shooting scripts—into the filmmaking process, an innovation that greatly improved efficiency and quality in Hollywood films. Also among his accomplishments, Ince is thought to have elevated the film genre of the Western to the level of true art with his production of *The Aryan*. While Ince personally directed many of his features at the beginning of his career, including his early triumph *The Battle of Gettysburg*, and produced hundreds more, he is generally remembered for his work as the executive producer and creative force behind a multitude of motion pictures, including the antiwar film *Civilization*.

Biographical Information

Ince was born in Newport, Rhode Island on 6 November 1882. His father was a comedian, and from his youth Ince took acting jobs in vaudeville and stage dramas. Later he defected to the new medium of film, performing for Carl Laemmle's Independent Motion Pictures (IMP) Company and others. Ince directed his first motion picture, entitled *Little Nell's Tobacco*, for IMP in 1910. After completing several more films for Laemmle and agreeing to direct a series of movies starring Mary Pickford, Ince signed on with the New York Motion Picture Company in late 1911, and began making pictures, mostly Westerns, in Los Angeles. With some hundred shorter films to his credit, Ince began work on his first full-length feature, *The Battle of Gettysburg*. After completing the film in 1913, Ince ceased the work of direction himself for all but a few projects, delegating this responsibility to such notables as Reginald Barker, Fred Niblo, Lambert Hillyer, William S. Hart, Roland Lee, and Frank Borzage. In 1915, Ince and his business associates formed their own production company, Triangle. The success of his works with Triangle, including *Civilization*, allowed Ince to build a large studio complex at Culver City in 1916. Ince departed Triangle in 1918 to form his own production company. He eventually joined Associated Producers, Inc. in 1919 and continued to produce a great number of films for the next several years after Associated Producers was absorbed by First National in 1922. In November of 1924, Ince attended a party on the yacht of newspaper mogul Wil-

liam Randolph Hearst. He was carried off the boat and died of heart failure two days later amid unsubstantiated rumors of scandal and foul play.

Major Works

Critics have found Ince's contribution to the motion picture industry somewhat difficult to evaluate. From 1910 to 1913, when he was still directing his films, he created a series of popularly successful, realistic Westerns, most notably *War on the Plains* and the well-regarded Civil War picture *The Battle of Gettysburg*, a film that no longer exists. A collaborator for the majority of his career, Ince's credit on most of his later films is as executive producer. Fulfilling this role, Ince insisted that his directors follow strict shooting scripts, which included detailed commentary on sets, costumes, camera angles, and the various other minutiae of filmmaking, factors which are generally left in the hands of individual directors. Ince is also generally credited with the technical innovations of such films as *The Bargain*, which features a series of powerful exterior shots of a picturesque Arizona canyon. Again as a producer, Ince is said to have infused the genre of the Western with the grandeur of legend in *The Aryan*. Considered Ince's greatest production, the propaganda film *Civilization* dramatizes the evils of war in grandiose spectacle. A submarine commander unwilling to torpedo a passenger ship, the hero of *Civilization* opens the way to mutiny and precipitates the destruction of his sub. Following his death, his soul travels to Purgatory and to Heaven, where he is redeemed by Christ.

Critical Reception

In the early days of film, many of Ince's motion pictures were immensely successful and lucrative ventures. In the years since his death, critical speculation as to Ince's legacy in the history of film has been the source of considerable contention. Scholars in America have generally acknowledged Ince's business acumen, eye for talent, and innovative systemization of the filmmaking process. A contingent of European film historians, however, have taken a broader view. Led by the influential French critic Jean Mitry, European commentators have viewed Ince as an original artist whose influence rivals that of filmmaker D. W. Griffith. Mitry has remarked, "If Griffith was the first poet of an art whose basic syntax he created, one could say that Ince was its first dramaturgist. His experiments, in fact, were based on the composition of original themes, on the expression of ideas. . . . He was able to guide and discipline his collaborators only because, like them, he was a director, and superior to them."

***PRINCIPAL WORKS**

Little Nell's Tobacco (film) 1910
A Manly Man (film) 1911
The Aggressor (film) 1911
Artful Kate (film) 1911
Behind the Stockade (film) 1911
The Dream (film) 1911
The Fisher-Maid (film) 1911
For Her Brother's Sake (film) 1911
Her Darkest Hour (film) 1911
In Old Madrid (film) 1911
In the Sultan's Garden (film) 1911
Maid or Man (film) 1911
The Message in the Bottle (film) 1911
The New Cook (film) 1911
The New Cowboy (film) 1911
The Silver Dollar (film) 1911
Sweet Memories of Yesterday (film) 1911
Their First Misunderstanding (film) 1911
The Winning of Wonega (film) 1911
A Double Reward (film) 1912
Across the Plains (film) 1912
The Battle of the Red Men (film) 1912
The Colonel's Ward (film) 1912
The Crisis (film) 1912
Custer's Last Fight (film) 1912
The Deserter (film) 1912
For Freedom of Cuba (film) 1912
The Hidden Trail (film) 1912
The Indian Massacre (film) 1912
The Invaders (film) 1912
The Law of the West (film) 1912
Lieutenant's Last Fight (film) 1912
On the Firing Line (film) 1912
Renegade (film) 1912
War on the Plains (film) 1912
When Lee Surrenders (film) 1912
A Shadow of the Past (film) 1913
The Ambassador's Envoy (film) 1913
The Battle of Gettysburg (film) 1913
Bread Cast upon the Water (film) 1913
The Boomerang (film) 1913
Days of '49 (film) 1913
The Drummer of the Eighth (film) 1913
The Mosaic Law (film) 1913
The Pride of the South (film) 1913
The Seal of Silence (film) 1913
With Lee in Virginia (film) 1913
A Relic of Old Japan (film) 1914
The Golden Goose (film) 1914
The Last of the Line (film) 1914
Love's Sacrifice (film) 1914
One of the Discard (film) 1914
The Despoiler (film) 1915
The Aryan [producer] (film) 1916
Civilization [producer] (film) 1916

*Ince collaborated to some degree on nearly all of his films. The Principal Works list includes only those works (except for *Civilization* and *The Aryan*) for which he is named as the principal director.

CRITICISM

Peter Milne (essay date 1922)

SOURCE: Chapter XV and Chapter XVI, in *Motion Picture Directing: The Facts and Theories of the Newest Art*, Falk Publishing Co., Inc., 1922, pp. 136-51.

[In the following excerpt, Milne describes Ince's strict film production process and lists several studio directors who successfully used his methods.]

As a general rule there is no love lost between directors and scenario writers. This is particularly the case in the big producing companies where directors work more or less on a schedule, an elastic schedule to be sure, but nevertheless a schedule. In these companies a director seldom has a chance to co-operate with the scenario writer on the construction of a continuity. Sometimes he has complaints on it which are never taken up and discussed due to lack of time. As a result the director blames the scenario writer for the mistakes in the finished picture.

With the case of the directors who have proven themselves in an artistic way, it will be found that the majority of them have much to say about the handling of their stories in continuity form. They either actually co-operate on the writing of the continuity from which they are to work or they claim to discard continuities altogether and work from notes, a brief synopsis or—from the head.

Both the De Milles have much to say about the writing of continuities from which they work. As a consequence when it comes to the actual task of directing they are dealing with their own ideas. It has been related how D. W. Griffith prefers to work without a continuity and his reasons therefore. Frank Borzage is a champion for the continuity synopsis, a running account of the plot, undivided into scenes. Many other directors prefer this method, dividing their pictures into the desired and natural number of scenes during actual work. All such directors claim that to follow a scene numbered continuity through directly results in a mechanical picture. Like the De Milles they claim that to produce such a picture well, they must also have a hand in the writing of the mechanical continuity.

On the face of it the arguments of these directors seem sound. But it is easy enough to take the other side of the question and riddle the arguments completely. The stand can be taken that the motion picture director performs no other functions than those performed by the stage director. And many and many a stage director has turned out productions of artistic worth by merely following the author's manuscript. Few stage directors decline to direct a Shakespearean production for the reason that they didn't have a hand in the writing of the play.

Which brings up the methods employed by Thomas H. Ince, probably the most successful producing-director in

the entire field of motion pictures. Mr. Ince is at the head of a number of producing units. He has a certain number of directors making pictures for him. Over the work of these men he exercises an actual supervision. And when a director works for Mr. Ince he does what Mr. Ince tells him to do.

Mr. Ince is one of the veterans of the picture producing craft. He has developed more stars, perhaps, than any other man in the field today. William S. Hart, Charles Ray, Dorothy Dalton and Louise Glaum are the brightest of those he has brought out. And the secret of Thomas H. Ince's greatness, whether he admits it himself or not, is the minute attention he pays to the matter of preparing the continuities of the pictures from which his directors work.

Probably Mr. Ince pays more attention to this preparation of a continuity than does any other producer. In his opinion the greater part of the work of producing a picture has been completed when the continuity is in final shape to hand to the director.

Equipped with the power of visualization to a remarkable degree Mr. Ince and his production manager thoroughly scrutinize the continuity when it is handed them by a member of the scenario department. Every point in the story, and every point in its development at the hands of the continuity writer is discussed. As a rule when the continuity is returned to its author there are a number of alterations and changes to be made. And when these are made Mr. Ince goes over the script again. Sometimes this interchange of ideas is carried on between Mr. Ince and his scenario department for six or eight times before the continuity is in final shape for the director.

Then when the director finally does receive the manuscript he finds some such order as this stamped across its face: "Produce this exactly as written!" This, however, is not the arbitrary demand of an autocrat. If the director sees a place where a change will work some good to the story he has the privilege of placing the matter before Mr. Ince himself. But for the most part the Ince continuities are so thoroughly gone over before placing them in the hands of the directors that few if any changes for the better suggest themselves.

Therefore when the Ince director starts to work on the picture he is carrying out the ideas of the continuity writer and his chief to the most minute detail. His is the business of directing the picture, not of creating it in the broadest sense of the words.

Now according to other directors who insist that such a method of procedure produces mechanical results, is responsible for a work lacking in inspiration and all the finer qualities that go to make a picture, and degrades the director into the position of a mere clerk, Mr. Ince's pictures would be the worst the art has to offer. The fact that they are the most consistently meritorious that the art has to offer would seem to refute the arguments brought up by these others completely.

So what is the answer? Griffith produces good pictures after his method. Borzage and a number of others produce good pictures after the same methods, or methods practically the same. And Mr. Ince, hands his director a continuity divided strictly into scenes, each camera angle is numbered and for a purpose, for the director to go out and make all these camera angles, these scenes, just as Mr. Ince ordered him to.

The answer is, after all, quite simple. Mr. Ince has capabilities matched by no other director in the producing art. One of his capabilities may be matched here and there but never all of them by another individual. Thus Mr. Ince and his scenario department are the creators of Ince pictures. The directors he employs carry out his ideas. And these directors, while the above argument may prove them mere automatons, are in reality skilled men, artists for the most part, versed in all the niceties of picture producing. The fact that the majority of them, when they have left Mr. Ince's fold, have succeeded on their own separate accounts, is proof of that.

The matter, therefore, simmers down to this simple problem. Can a producing organization turn out better pictures than an individual director? The solution of the problem is in the following qualified statement: Yes, when the producing organization is headed by Thomas H. Ince.

Mr. Ince's qualifications for such leadership are manifold. To begin with, he is, naturally, a born leader of men. If chance had led him into the business world instead of the art of motion picture producing he might well be a bank director or a railroad official. He would know his business thoroughly whatever it was and then would proceed with the utmost confidence in his own knowledge. Of course he would make mistakes even as he has made some few mistakes in picture producing but more often the reverse from mistakes would be the case.

Anyone familiar with Mr. Ince will talk for hours on his magnetic personality. It is a personality that few, if any, seem able to resist. Thus he is able to give orders and have them carried out to the letter without giving offense. It seems that giving orders without accompanying them by a modicum of offense is a pretty hard thing to do. Dozens of men in the craft of picture producing would trade almost anything they've got for this ability of Mr. Ince's.

On top of these qualities, invaluable from whatever angle of business or art that they are approached is Mr. Ince's thorough knowledge of making pictures. This knowledge is not confined to one department of production, nor does he specialize in a single department of production. He is conversant with every department and is able to consider each one in its proper light, to value it properly, particularly with its relation to the others.

Still there are the individualists that oppose Mr. Ince and belittle his methods. He doesn't bother about them often

as he employs directors who are willing to work into his scheme of production and these for the most part have been richly rewarded.

There is an interesting story in connection with one individualistic director, whose name shall be kept a secret for his own sake, and the Ince organization. It appears that Mr. Ince had signed this director to a contract without inquiring into his willingness to work along the prescribed Ince lines.

The continuity of a comedy-drama was handed him shortly after his arrival at the studio and he was told that everything was in readiness for him to begin work.

The director read the continuity and addressed himself to Mr. Ince somewhat as follows: "You don't expect me to produce this, do you? Why this continuity is so bad that it couldn't possibly turn out to be a good picture. I won't make it!"

Mr. Ince, with the director's name fastened on the end of a contract, is alleged to have replied with a certain degree of forcefulness: "You will produce it."

The argument went back and forth. The director wanted to work but he didn't want to work in the Ince manner. Mr. Ince's pride and temper were undoubtedly stirred and he insisted that the director produce the picture along the lines prescribed by him.

Finally an agreement was reached. The director condescended to produce the picture on condition that when it was produced his name was to be left off it as director. Mr. Ince acceded to this demand.

To do the director credit he then went about his work sincerely. Mr. Ince watched him carefully and realized that he was doing his best, though still believing the cause was hopeless. The director, when he finished work, was dismissed from whatever further terms were contained in the contract.

And so the picture was put before the public without the individualistic director's name upon it. It was one of the most successful pictures ever released. It was an irresistible comedy-drama and everyone who saw it fairly revelled in it.

The director when he realized how he had talked himself out of credit for one of the art's best pictures must have fretted and fumed considerably. Equally galling must have been the large advertising bills he received for pointing out the fact to the motion picture trade in large announcements that he had directed the picture. For Mr. Ince had lived up to the agreement to the letter. He had not only left the director's name off the picture but had removed it from all advertising as well.

Mr. Ince had his little joke.

And probably the director doesn't care much now anyway. He is a success with another company and is still

saying that he can't make good pictures from a continuity on which he didn't work himself.

.....

Those who cry down the methods employed by Thomas H. Ince with respect to the directors who work in his studio often state that the Ince school of directing snuffs out any original ideas that a director may possess and makes him a mere picture mechanic, capable only of turning out mechanical and uninteresting pictures.

And lest it be thought that sufficient proof hasn't been offered to counteract this argument some few of the directors who started under the early Ince regime and left to make their marks as individualists elsewhere are mentioned here.

There is Reginald Barker, long on the Ince staff, who until recently was employed at the Goldwyn studios and who was entrusted with the direction of many of their most important stories and stars. The facts and records point to only one conclusion, that Mr. Barker has directed some of the most successful pictures made by the Goldwyn company and is one of the most reliable men in the field today.

There is Fred Niblo who after a short session at the Ince studio turned his energy elsewhere. Mr. Niblo happens to be the man who directed Douglas Fairbanks in the highly successful *Three Musketeers*. No one, within or without the field of motion pictures, has once stated that *The Three Musketeers* appears to be the work of an automaton.

There is R. William Neill, who, since he left the Ince school some several years ago has been hard put to it to accept all the positions he has had offered him. Other picture producers are not in the habit of seeking a man to fill the responsible position of director when he can only carry out the definite orders of his superior.

There is Jerome Storm who while with the Ince organization made a big name for himself by directing many of the pictures in which Charles Ray appeared. Mr. Storm left Mr. Ince when Mr. Ray left him. Mr. Storm directed Mr. Ray's first independent picture. Mr. Ray, since he has been directing his own pictures, shows sadly the lack of Mr. Storm's guiding hand. And Mr. Storm has had various positions since leaving Mr. Ray—in fact, has had quite as many as he could well take care of.

There is Victor Shertzinger who while with Mr. Ince also made some very good Charles Ray pictures. With the Goldwyn company he made an enviable reputation for himself as a director of light comedy and proved more successful in handling Mabel Normand than any other director with the sole exception of Mack Sennett himself. Mr. Shertzinger is now at the head of his own producing company. A difficult post for a man to achieve who is no more than a mere mechanic taking orders from a producing genius such as Mr. Ince!

There is Lambert Hillyer, who with this writing is back with Mr. Ince after several years in the service of William S. Hart, directing and writing the majority of that star's pictures. Mr. Hart would hardly pick a mechanical nincompoop to direct his screen efforts which are considerably important both to Mr. Hart and the public at large.

There is Frank Borzage himself who was with Mr. Ince a long time as an actor and who had ample opportunity to absorb his system of directing. And Mr. Borzage, as has been previously stated, is quite a worthy director.

There is Roland Lee, one of the younger directors, developed by Mr. Ince who only recently left him and who immediately made a name for himself directing some Hobart Bosworth pictures and who at this writing is with the Goldwyn company handling the directorial end of some of that company's most important pictures.

This is an array of directors rather difficult to match. And if it was tried to match it from a list of directors turned out by any other producing-director or any other producing organization, the poor fellow who tried would find himself in for a life's job.

To work in the Ince school of directing is, indeed, the luckiest thing that can befall a director. Instead of making him an insignificant employe, merely carrying out the work mapped out by the man higher up, it teaches him thoroughly all branches of picture directing so that when he strikes out for himself he is far better able to approach the excellence achieved by his former superior than he would be without such schooling.

Thomas H. Ince (essay date 1925)

SOURCE: "The Challenge for the Motion Picture Producer," in *The First Film Makers*, edited by Richard Dyer MacCann, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1989, pp. 110-14.

[In the following essay, originally published in 1925, Ince expresses his desire for clarity, continuity, intensity, and above all realism in motion pictures.]

We are living in an age when the white light of criticism is turned upon accepted and established standards in all phases of life. The old order of things has passed, and all over the world worn-out traditions and methods are toppling. We are in the grip of another renaissance, a revolution of ideals. Like the phoenix of mythology, the new world order is rising out of the ashes of the old.

The picture of yesterday fulfilled its mission, giving way to the newer and higher standards demanded of the picture of today. And because some of the modern productions are now reaching such a high standard, the public has learned to expect even greater achievements. Picture-goers have shown their faith in us, and by that very faith they have thrown us a challenge to produce bigger and

better pictures. Are we going to accept that challenge and make the picture of tomorrow take its rightful place in the onward march of progress? I, for one, pledge myself to this task.

The demand for better pictures is universal. On that point we all agree. But that demand brings up the question, 'What constitutes better pictures?' This question must be answered first by the producer and finally by the public itself, for in the final analysis it is the public who is the court of last appeal on the merits of a picture. It is in their hands to make it or break it.

But the producer with insight and a real desire to perfect his art, can and must feel the pulse of the vast American audience, and anticipate its desires and demands.

I hold it not only a duty but a privilege to study carefully the reactions of various types of pictures on the average audience, for only in that way can I reach my conclusions and give my interpretation of what constitutes better pictures.

The really successful photodrama of today, and I believe tomorrow, is one that catches the interest and holds the eager attention through sheer force of HUMANNESS AND FIDELITY TO DETAIL OF LIFE. The day has long since passed when our characters move like marionettes across the screen.

The public demands, and justly so, the faithful portrayal of life as it is lived by real flesh and blood people in all its various walks. They demand true characterizations, that they may see themselves reflected on the screen. The problems of human existence vary only in degree. Basically they are identical and fundamental. Therefore a picture with forced dramatic situations and emotions does not ring true. It is based upon a false premise and the audience leaves the theatre unsatisfied and unconvinced.

But a picture that is written and produced by those who are close students of human nature—and who portray faithfully the problems and desires of the human family—holds up the mirror of life to us and we see ourselves in circumstances and surroundings that are familiar to us. But that is not all. Seeing those everyday things of life worked out on the screen to successful or non-successful issues, as the case may be, we will get a new angle, perhaps, on how to handle our particular problems. Seeing real characters with real problems to solve, which parallel our own, we will get reactions that, in many instances, will give us courage to meet our own problems, our own successes and our own heartaches, and to handle them to our own satisfaction.

Nor do I mean by that, that the screen must preach. That is not its mission. It must entertain and give us the form of amusement that relaxes and at the same time stimulates. But it must do this through the portrayal of life as we know it, and it must give us something that will enhance the value of our own lives, which are too often drab and colorless.

It makes no difference whether the story is a comedy, a tragedy, or a straight dramatic exposition of life, so long as it rings true and gives us life as we know it, and something to take away with us that is finer and bigger than what we may have had before.

A striking instance of this comes to mind which had just that result. A play was put on the stage several years ago which was a brilliant comedy. I use that term in its finest sense. It was not a frothy farce. It was a story which dealt with one of the accepted tragedies of life, and would have been treated as such by nine playwrights out of ten. But this particular playwright chose to treat his theme as a comedy.

The principal character was played by a woman of perhaps forty who had been jilted by her lover on the eve of her wedding, twenty years before. Instead of accepting this condition as a tragedy and allowing it to cloud her life, she overcame it and developed into a woman of poise, charm, and power, handling her life with that light touch that laughs at grim tragedy, and handling all whom she contacted as she would handle pawns on a chess-board, bringing them all to her feet as willing victims of her charm and beauty of nature.

It is not the story that I wish to dwell upon in this instance, but the effect that it had upon the audience. At the end of the first act, the middle-aged people in the audience were sitting up with a new sense of their own power and importance. At the end of the second act there was a sparkle in the eyes of those who had felt that life was slipping into the background. When the curtain fell on the last act, which was the final triumph of the jilted lady, there was a tumultuous applause, and in the faces of the audience that left the theater, old and young, men and women, there was a look that bespoke a new lease on life and a courage to handle each individual problem that was uppermost in their own lives.

That play was a slice of life, faithfully portrayed. There was not one action that did not ring true, not one characterization that was false, and its effect crashed across the footlights and found a response in the hearts of all who saw it.

When pictures were in their infancy, which was but a few short years ago, the one idea seemed to be to make something happen on the screen. Action, and more action, with little thought of making that action portray the emotions and true experiences of life.

Action is absolutely essential to the successful photoplay. Without it there would be no screen drama. But it must be action which conveys the coordination of mind, heart, and body, rather than meaningless action alone. Because of this a distinct technique of creating screen material has developed and is in the process of larger and fuller development.

In the last few years there has been an enormous demand for rights to the published story and the successful play,

but the field for that type of material is becoming exhausted. Furthermore, producers are realizing that the published story and play are not always adapted to the screen.

Stripped of the brilliant, intense, and humorous lines which have put a play over, or the literary style of a published story, there is, in many cases, very little left to carry five reels of plot and action on the screen. In other words there is not enough meat in the plot itself.

Therefore the producer is compelled to pad it, or to entirely rebuild the story, and when it is finished it has either lost its spontaneity or is so unlike the original that the public is disappointed. It is not a new story and it is not the one that they know and love. It is neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring.

This is not necessarily true of every published story or play, however. It is the exception that proves the rule, and in some instances a producer procures the rights to a Broadway hit or a best seller which is admirably adapted to the screen and then we have a double hit.

But for a sustained and consistent source of photoplay material the screen must develop its own writers, men and women who possess insight into the lives and emotions of their fellow beings, and who are able to depict the characterizations about them with sincerity and simplicity.

The theme or keynote of the story must be *REAL*. It must be based upon a fundamental principle of life, something which every man and woman knows in common with his neighbor—some underlying basis of human existence which touches the lives of the laborer or the capitalist, the show girl or the queen. The theme must be a universal language—love, greed, sacrifice, fear, or any emotion which is generally known to the human family.

Building on the theme, the plot should be no less one of sincerity and simplicity. It should have one clearly defined logical plot thread running unbroken through the story, with the counter plots converging to the main thread of the story and never distracting the attention from it.

Plots should be constructed UP, not DOWN. Situations and episodes should be gauged to lead to a climax that will accentuate all preceding scenes. The climax should be strong, virile, picturesque, colorful—redolent of life's passions.

Sequences should be arranged with strict attention to coherency and continuity of action. Each situation should be better and stronger than its predecessor, almost independent of its forerunner, so far as quality and story values are concerned.

Many writers have fallen short of their mark because they opened their plot with a crash, so to speak, and depend-

ing on this intensity at the start, allowed interest to lag, through failure to provide subsequent situations and climaxes of real dramatic merit. The successful photoplay is one that is well balanced throughout, always leading on and on, stimulating imagination and preparing for the ultimate finale which appeases and satisfies the expectant spectator.

It is a mistake to pile in many complications to force the action. This distracts the mind of the audience from the main story plot and is confusing. After such a picture has been viewed, it is almost impossible for the average person to relate the story in any logical sequence, and the result is that their brains are muddled and the reactions they get are a hodge-podge of complications and forced action.

The situations which carry the plot to its climax must be the everyday experiences that happen in the lives of the human family. Nor does that destroy the dramatic values of the story.

A dramatic scene portrayed on the screen will thrill an audience with its intensity even though that same scene lived in a Harlem flat or on a Texas ranch would impress those who were living the episode as commonplace or at least pleasant or unpleasant as the case may be. They would fail to realize the dramatic value of their own lives.

That is the art of the screen, as I see it, and the secret of better pictures: to hold up the mirror of life and show us to ourselves.

The stories that are going to lead to better pictures must be deeply human, expressed in such a way that every ounce of pathos, humor, characterization, and dramatic quality is felt by the audience, without forcing these elements to an illogical point or permitting imagination to make inroads upon truth.

George Mitchell (essay date 1960)

SOURCE: "Thomas H. Ince Was the Pioneer Producer Who Systematized the Making of a Movie," in *Films in Review*, Vol. XI, No. 8, October, 1960, pp. 464-84.

[In the following essay, Mitchell details Ince's life and career as a film director-producer.]

Thomas H. Ince, one of the more important of the pioneer filmmakers and one of the most interesting of the early producers, was only 43 when he died, suddenly, in 1924.

Today film historians are divided in their estimates of him. Some dismiss him as merely a *commercial* producer, who contributed nothing of lasting significance. Some praise his contributions to scenario construction and film editing, which, they say, did much to elevate the motion

picture in its formative years. In France Ince has even been called "the equal, if not the master" of D. W. Griffith.

He was neither, but he nonetheless deserves a prominent place in film history. It was he who systematized the production methods, inaugurated by J. Stuart Blackton, which are the standard operating procedures of the motion picture industry today. In doing this Ince made his greatest contribution to motion picture technique: he proved that filmmaking is better, as well as more economical, when a scenario is complete to the last detail before shooting begins.

Ince was a demanding man, but he could do, and often did, the things he demanded of others, including altering a script, directing a scene, and editing a final negative. Indeed, in his heyday he was often called "the doctor of sick film." For he was also a showman, and his flair for ballyhooing a picture, and himself, accounted for much of his commercial success, and for much of the reclame which still attaches to the pictures that bear the legend: "Thomas H. Ince Presents."

He was born on November 16, 1882, in Newport, R.I., but not in one of the millionaire mansions of that famous resort. He was christened Thomas Harper Ince by parents who earned a precarious living on the stage. His father enjoyed something of a reputation for his ability to "impersonate Chinese," and later became a theatrical agent in New York, where he was known as "Pop" Ince. Sidney Olcott, one of the important early motion picture directors (see *Films in Review*, April '54) was one of the young actors placed by "Pop" Ince.

There were two other Ince boys—John, three years older than Tom, and Ralph, five years younger. [Both acted in, and directed, many motion pictures. John entered the movies in '13, directed for most of the early companies, notably Pathe, Lubin and Metro, returned to acting in the '30s, and was often used by Warners, Columbia, Mascot and Fox. I believe he is still alive. Ralph impersonated Lincoln in Vitagraph's *Battle Hymn of the Republic* ('12), and in '15 directed one of that company's finest films, *The Juggernaut*, starring Earl Williams and Anita Stewart. He was well thought of as both actor and director at the time of his death in '37.] All three went on the stage early—Tom at the age of six. At 15 he appeared with Leo Ditrichstein, and shortly thereafter had a part in the Broadway production of *Shore Acres*. He barnstormed through Canada with the Beryl Hope Stock Company, and worked in vaudeville as a song-&-dance man.

In the summer of 1902, while working as a lifeguard at Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, which was more fashionable then than now, he became convinced money could be made by staging vaudeville acts in the Highlands' seaside pavilion on summer nights. He saved enough the following winter from his salary as the half-wit in *The Ninety and Nine* to lease the pavilion. But the venture was not lucrative.

He returned to Broadway, in both drama and musical comedy, and while appearing in *Hearts Courageous*, a drama of the American Revolutionary War starring Orrin Johnson, he became friends with William S. Hart, who had the Patrick Henry role. After *Hearts Courageous* closed he and Hart and Frank Stammers, an actor-musician, roomed together in the old Hotel Harrington on Broadway at 44th street. They were on short rations and often out of work and for recreation in the winter of 1903-04 Stammers would play his cello and Hart would tell stories of the Old West, especially of the Sioux Indians, whom he had known as a boy in the Dakota Territories. The Ince-Hart friendship was to last for many years.

In 1905 Ince promoted a stock company of his own, but it was not successful. Then, after appearing with William Thompson in *The Bishop*, he got a featured part in a musical comedy success, *For Love's Sweet Sake*, which lasted two years. During the run of this show, on October 19, 1907, he married a member of its cast, Eleanor Kershaw.

The next few years were precarious and in the fall of 1910 Ince was standing on Times Square "trying to figure out how to keep the proverbial wolf from the door of my Harlem flat," when a big, flashy automobile pulled up to the curb. He was surprised to see descend from it an actor named Joseph Smiley, with whom he had worked in vaudeville. Smiley greeted Ince warmly, invited him to lunch, and revealed that his prosperity was the result of working "in the movies—for the IMP Company." Although Ince had always thought only actors who couldn't make the grade on the stage went into the movies, he asked if there was any chance for him at IMP. Smiley replied: "Why, yes, there should be. You're an actor, aren't you? There may be something there this afternoon."

The IMP studio was then on 56th Street and resembled, according to Ince's later recollection, "the dreadful tank-town theatres I had played in on tour." However, a 1-reeler was being directed that afternoon by Harry Salter, whom Ince had known on the stage. Salter gave him a small part and paid him \$5. A few days later IMP offered him a job as a stock actor.

After several weeks at IMP Ince accepted the part of the heavy in Biograph's *His New Lid*, starring Lucille Lee Stewart, the wife of his brother Ralph. It was a 1-reeler and was directed by Frank Powell, formerly an actor in Griffith's stock company at Biograph. *His New Lid* was released on November 24, 1910.

By this time Ince had become interested in directing movies, and believing there was no chance of doing so at Biograph, he returned to act for IMP when Tom Cochrane, the studio manager there, promised to make him a director at the first opportunity.

This happened sooner than either expected. One of IMP's regular directors suddenly quit and Cochrane handed

Ince an amateurish script based on an old poem called "Little Nell's Tobacco." Ince rewrote the script and shot the 1-reeler in record time. Cochrane was impressed, but to make Ince a permanent director he needed the OK of Carl Laemmle, the head of IMP. Laemmle agreed to look at the picture and did so in a nearby nickelodeon, where it was playing. Ince accompanied him and called each favorable manifestation by the audience to Laemmle's attention. Result: Ince was hired as a permanent director, to the chagrin of jealous IMP actors and technicians.

Laemmle, who had originally operated movie theatres and a film exchange in Chicago, was at that time embattled with the Motion Pictures Patents Co., which, he charged, was a "trust". In 1910 he had lured Mary Pickford from Biograph to his Independent Motion Picture Co. (IMP) and had been sued by the MPP Co., of which Biograph was a part, for patent infringement. In '11 he had sent Ben Turpin, later famous as the cross-eyed comedian in Mack Sennett comedies, to scout out a location in California free from the reach of the "trust". Turpin reported there was no such place. So Laemmle decided to make movies in Cuba.

He sent a company of 72 there under the supervision of his production chief, C. A. ("Doc") Willat, who, curiously, was the son-in-law of W. R. Rock, of Vitagraph, one of the companies licensed to use the Edison patents controlled by the MPP Co. Among the 72 were Mary Pickford, Owen Moore, King Baggott, Jack Pickford, Mrs. Charlotte Pickford, Lotte Pickford, Hayward Mack, Charles Westen (property master), Tony Gaudio (cameraman), Joseph Smiley, and Ince, who was put in charge of the films starring Mary Pickford. Smiley headed the unit that made the films starring King Baggott.

The Cuban hegira was a series of misadventures. Trouble began when Mrs. Pickford discovered that Mary had secretly married Owen Moore. The MPP Co. did what it could to gum things up. Willat couldn't get enough raw film. The climate didn't agree with some of the key technicians. An irreconcilable personality clash developed between Ince and Owen Moore. In her autobiography Mary Pickford says the climax was reached when an assistant of Ince's, a man named North, insulted her and Moore beat him up and North called the police. To prevent Moore's arrest Mrs. Pickford got him and Mary out of Cuba.

Despite the misadventures, movies were produced and Ince gained valuable experience. So much so that he soon tired of making for Laemmle such 1-reel chromos as *Their First Misunderstanding*, *Artful Kate*, *Her Darkest Hour*, *The Empty Shell*, *Message in the Bottle*, *The Dream* and *Sweet Memories*. When he heard that Adam Kessel, Jr., and Charles O. Bauman, the heads of the New York Motion Picture Co., were looking for a director to take charge of their West Coast studio, Ince went to see them.

Kessel and Bauman were an interesting pair. They were former bookmakers who, in 1909, promoted themselves