



西津·21世纪英美文学与文化系列教材

美国电影概览

顾悦主编

American Cinema: An Introduction

东南大学出版社

美国电影概览

American Cinema: An Introduction

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前 言

看电影是大学生普遍的爱好的,看英文原版电影也是轻松地学英语的捷径。如今,越来越多的人认识到电影对于学习英语、深入了解英语国家文化背景的帮助,一些高校也开设了相关的课程。遗憾的是,目前国内尚缺乏适合英语专业以及大学公共英语课程的关于美国电影的系统性教材。本书便试图填补这一空白。

电影是大众传媒的重要组成部分,是一国文化的标志。美国是世界第一电影大国,好莱坞电影是美国的文化名片。在电影诞生一百余年之后,我们得以站在历史的高度审视美国电影发展各个时期里各种题材的兴起与繁荣,观看银幕上的悲欢离合,并穿越时空隧道与各个时期的导演、编剧、演员以及观众对话。为什么一些影片催人泪下?为什么一些影片历久弥新?本书致力于重现各个历史时期电影界所关注的文化主题,结合特定的历史背景、文化思潮、社会环境等方面,分析“经典”背后的深层原因,以探讨贯穿于全书写作的一个核心问题:电影作为一种叙事手法是如何反映并塑造着美利坚民族文化的?本教材帮助学生探寻电影背后的深层机理与模式,为电影欣赏提供文化语境,也为语言学习提供鲜活素材,更希望为思索人生提供话题与线索。本教材契合了《高等院校英语专业英语教学大纲》对教材的时代性、实用性的要求,对学生综合能力培养的强调,以及对新兴媒体与科技的重视。教材试图做到保证学术性但不流于说教,轻松活泼但不缺乏洞见,深刻细致但不有损全局。

全书依据美国电影史的几个主要阶段划分成四部分,各部分开篇文字对这一阶段进行宏观介绍,帮助读者系统理解美国电影的发展轨迹以及主要风格与流派等。在各部分内,我们以文化题材为导向编写各章,每章选录两部经典电影,并分成几个具有内在联系的小模块。Introduction(引言)部分介绍电影的历史文化背景,为解读提供指导性提示。为了不影响学生观看电影时的兴趣,我们避免过多描述电影情节,以免有“剧透”嫌疑。Film Details(电影资料)提供每部影片的基本信息,资料性丰富,可供学生查找影片使用。值得注意的是,这部分提供了每部电影的分级以及分级的具体依据,可以帮助我们了解美国电影的分级制度,并为我国未来在这一领域的探索提供借鉴。Classic Clips(电影经典选段)选取每部电影的经典片段,加以语言点注释,旨在提高学生的鉴赏能力,帮助学生欣赏电影的语言艺术,学习地道口语,也可以帮助学生进行电影配音、短剧表演等活动。Selected Readings(主题阅读)为该单元影片配备了大量相关阅读材料,并加入文化注释。这部分不仅有欧美一流评论家撰写的影评,也有介绍相关文化背景的文章,题材与形式多样,其中不少是美国文化史上的经典文字,既有富兰克林、爱默生、梭罗、朗费罗、迪金森、兰斯顿·休斯、塞林格、希斯内罗丝等著名作家的作品或作品选段,也有鲍勃·迪伦、保罗·西蒙等音

乐人创作的歌词。这部分的设立旨在帮助学生更为深入地理解影片,并借此更好地理解美国的历史文化。Topics for Empathic Understanding and Critical Thinking(讨论话题与活动安排)是本书的一大创新之处。这部分吸纳了近年来国内外教育学的最新进展,为教师课堂教学与学生课后活动精心设计了丰富有趣、形式多样的话题,旨在鼓励学生的批判性、创新性思维,提高学生的情感智慧(emotional intelligence),同时培养学生的沟通能力、跨文化交际能力、团队合作能力以及独立研究能力。Film Encyclopedia(电影百科)介绍了美国电影的基本知识以及美国电影史上最具影响力的艺术家。Internet Resources(网络资源)提供该单元影片的相关网站,为学生查找网络资源提供帮助,顺应了新世纪网络教学的趋势。书后配以附录,为了解美国电影提供更多资料。

本书所选的都是美国电影史上的经典影片,重点收入反映与影响了特定历史时期美国社会、文化、政治、经济、思想的电影。我们注意到学生的观看兴趣与习惯以及语言学习的需要,因此,本书更多选取了战后尤其是八十年代之后的电影。本教材可供一学期的课程使用。在实际教学过程中,教师可以安排学生在课后观看电影,课堂主要用于组织学生围绕影片进行讨论以及安排表演、配音等活动。每章的两部电影可以重点讨论一部,亦可两部兼顾。本教材着力打造以学生为中心的教育模式,通过语言和文化的学习努力培养学生的综合素质,充分发挥每位学生的潜力。我们的愿望是,经过本教材的学习,学生不仅能够对美国电影有系统性、理论性的认识,学会更好地欣赏电影作品,同时通过观看电影提高自身的语言实际应用能力,也能够深刻地思考电影背后蕴含的思想与文化,全面理解美国的政治、经济、社会、历史等方方面面,并能够学会清晰流畅地用英语表达自己的观点与感受,为成为全球化时代的优秀人才打下坚实的基础。

本书是国内较为新颖的一部适合英语专业本科生、研究生的美国电影教材,不仅可以用于美国电影课程,同样可供英语专业的美国社会文化、美国文学、美国历史、英美概况、视听说、高级英语听力等课程选用。本书也适用于高校公共英语课程,并且可以作为广大英语学习者、电影爱好者以及英语教师的理想读物。

本书由顾悦负责总体策划、设计以及统稿、校订。顾悦编写了本书的第二、五、七、八、九、十一、十二、十三、十四、十六章及第六章的部分内容,蒋怡编写了第一、三、四、十、十五章及第六章的部分内容。本书是相关领域教材编写的一次新尝试,疏漏之处还望各位读者海涵。

顾悦

2011年于南京大学

Contents

前言	(1)
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PART ONE THE RISE OF HOLLYWOOD(1891—1931)

Chapter 1 Silent Films	(3)
<i>The Birth of a Nation</i> 《一个国家的诞生》	
<i>City Lights</i> 《城市之光》	

PART TWO THE CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD(1932—1959)

Chapter 2 Haven in Hardship	(14)
<i>Gone with the Wind</i> 《乱世佳人》	
<i>The Little Princess</i> 《小公主》	
Chapter 3 Classical Romance Films	(28)
<i>Casablanca</i> 《卡萨布兰卡》	
<i>Roman Holiday</i> 《罗马假日》	
Chapter 4 Individual Talents	(45)
<i>Citizen Kane</i> 《公民凯恩》	
<i>Rear Window</i> 《后窗》	

PART THREE POST-CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD(1960—1989)

Chapter 5 Turbulence and Rebellion	(61)
<i>The Graduate</i> 《毕业生》	
<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i> 《飞越疯人院》	
Chapter 6 Confusion and Reflection	(76)
<i>The Deer Hunter</i> 《猎鹿人》	
<i>Apocalypse Now</i> 《现代启示录》	
Chapter 7 Yearning for a Return	(93)
<i>Kramer vs. Kramer</i> 《克莱默夫妇》	
<i>Ordinary People</i> 《普通人》	

Chapter 8 To Something Beautiful	(109)
<i>Amadeus</i> 《莫扎特传》	
<i>Dead Poets Society</i> 《死亡诗社》	

PART FOUR THE CONTEMPORARY CINEMA (1990—2010)

Chapter 9 Imagining the Past	(126)
<i>Forrest Gump</i> 《阿甘正传》	
<i>Cold Mountain</i> 《冷山》	
Chapter 10 About the War	(145)
<i>Schindler's List</i> 《辛德勒的名单》	
<i>Saving Private Ryan</i> 《拯救大兵瑞恩》	
Chapter 11 Confronting the Catastrophe	(160)
<i>Fahrenheit 9/11</i> 《华氏9·11》	
<i>World Trade Center</i> 《世贸中心》	
Chapter 12 A Hope Restored	(170)
<i>Facing the Giant</i> 《面对巨人》	
<i>Evan Almighty</i> 《冒牌天神II》	
Chapter 13 Suburban America	(182)
<i>American Beauty</i> 《美国丽人》	
<i>Juno</i> 《朱诺》	
Chapter 14 Diversity and Discord	(195)
<i>The Joy Luck Club</i> 《喜福会》	
<i>Babel</i> 《巴别塔》	
Chapter 15 The Land of Innocence	(205)
<i>The Lion King</i> 《狮子王》	
<i>Finding Nemo</i> 《海底总动员》	
Chapter 16 American Production, Global Market	(222)
<i>Titanic</i> 《泰坦尼克号》	
<i>Avatar</i> 《阿凡达》	

Epilogue: After Avatar 《阿凡达》之后

Appendix I: Best Picture Winners of the Academy Award (历届奥斯卡奖最佳影片)	(241)
Appendix II: All-Time USA Box Office (全美票房总排行榜)	(244)
Appendix III: All-Time Worldwide Box Office (全球票房总排行榜)	(246)
主要参考文献	(248)

PART ONE

THE RISE OF HOLLYWOOD

(1891—1931)

对于活动影像的热爱贯穿了人类的历史。早在 2000 多年前,古希腊哲人柏拉图的《理想国》中就有了“洞穴影像”的记载。在古埃及,在阿拉伯,人们都乐于探索活动影像的放映,而中国古老的皮影戏也是一种活动影像的艺术。到了十七八世纪的欧洲,放映幻灯片成为一种时髦的娱乐。我们今天看到的电影,则是现代科技的产物。

1891 年,美国发明家托马斯·爱迪生(Thomas Edison)研制出一种可供一人观看活动影像的“电影视镜”。两年之后,爱迪生发明了电影放映机。1894 年,爱迪生制片公司成立,开始致力于活动电影放映。也是在这一年,他们在纽约进行了世界上第一场商业电影放映。而在大洋彼岸的欧洲,法国的卢米埃尔(Lumière)兄弟于 1895 年 12 月 28 日在巴黎一家咖啡馆的地下室里,用他们研制的“活动电影机”公开放映了十一部活动电影,震撼了到场的观众。这一天也被永远载入了史册。

早期电影都是无声电影,由钢琴师在放映现场伴奏。当时的电影大多数是实况拍摄,常常表现杂耍、魔术抑或火车进站、消防员救火等场景,重点在于展示影像,长度也只有十分分钟左右。随着电影的发展,故事片开始逐渐占据主要位置,电影的长度也逐渐增加。早期的美国电影主要以“镍币影院”(nickelodeon)的形式放映。这种小型影院往往设在店铺中,每位观众只要花一枚五美分的硬币就可以观看电影。“镍币影院”获得了巨大成功,无数劳工在辛苦工作之余,花上一枚硬币,就可观看一场滑稽夸张的闹剧,用廉价的娱乐缓解身心的疲惫。到 1910 年,全美的电影院数量激增至 10000 余家,平均每周观众约有 2600 万人次。随后,电影行业开始提升电影院的档次,满足更多中产阶级观众的需要。到 1915 年,每周看电影的人数达到了 4900 万人次。

“好莱坞”是美国电影的代名词。电影诞生之初,美国的制片厂主要集中在纽约附近,20 世纪初,制片厂渐渐搬迁到自然条件更好的好莱坞。好莱坞位于美国加利福尼亚南部的洛杉矶市郊外。南加州地区得天独厚的地理位置为电影拍摄提供了绝佳的环境;那里气候宜人,日照时间长,几乎终年都可以进行户外摄影,并且地貌多样,各种迥异的景色之间相距很近,摄制组转换场地十分方便,可以免去长途跋涉的麻烦,又可节省拍摄费用。1911 年,好莱坞成立了第一家制片公司,在此后的数年时间内,好莱坞成为美国电影的中心。

早期好莱坞最伟大的导演是格里菲斯(D. W. Griffith),他也是最早来到好莱坞拍电影的导演之一。这位被誉为“现代电影之父”、“电影界的莎士比亚”的大师执导了《一个国家的诞生》(*The Birth of a Nation*)(1915)、《党同伐异》(*Intolerance*)(1916)等 400 余部影片。在格里菲斯之前,电影拍摄中并没有导演的地位;拍电影只是摄影师的工作。格里菲斯改变了这一切。他对电影艺术进行了大胆创新,采用了特写镜头、远镜头、近镜头、长镜头、摇镜头等拍摄手段,使用各种剪辑手法,并巧妙地在电影中运用了蒙太奇效果,丰富了电影的

叙事结构,并赋予了电影深刻的文化思想内涵。《一个国家的诞生》是格里菲斯最著名的代表作。这部划时代的电影长达三个多小时,获得了上千万美元的票房,赢利近十倍,成为美国电影史上第一部大片。格里菲斯认为,一部电影要想成功必须具备四个因素:真实背景、爱情故事、道德标准、大团圆结局。这样的理念也大大影响了之后的好莱坞电影。

1914年,第一次世界大战爆发,欧洲国家相继卷入战争,欧洲的电影业受到很大冲击,制片厂纷纷倒闭。外来影片的锐减,使得美国影片几乎没有竞争对手;美国电影也从此大规模打入国际市场。到了1920年,美国电影约有三分之一的收入来自海外市场。同时,阿尔弗雷德·希区柯克(Alfred Hitchcock)、让·雷诺(Jean Renoir)等欧洲导演以及大量欧洲演员也离开了战火纷飞的欧洲,来到美国,为美国电影注入了新鲜血液。

喜剧片和西部片是默片时代最受欢迎的两个片种,尤其是前者。查理·卓别林是默片时代最伟大的电影艺术家之一。他一生共导演并主演了《淘金记》(*Gold Rush*)(1925)、《城市之光》(*City Lights*)(1931)、《摩登时代》(*Modern Times*)(1936)、《大独裁者》(*The Great Dictator*)(1940)等八十多部影片。卓别林在电影中着力关注小人物的命运,反思现代社会的弊端,表现人性的美好、爱与温情,在滑稽幽默中透出深深的伤感,常常让人边笑边流泪。

电影业对于商业与技术的要求促使电影的制作日趋专业化。20世纪20年代,好莱坞开始形成制片厂制度(studio system)。经过激烈的竞争,最后只剩下八家大的制片公司,即米高梅(MGM)、派拉蒙(Paramount)、华纳兄弟(Warner Brothers)、20世纪福克斯(Twentieth Century Fox)、雷电华(RKO)、联美(United Artists)、环球(Universal)和哥伦比亚(Columbia),其中前五家(米高梅、派拉蒙、华纳兄弟、20世纪福克斯、雷电华)被称为“五大”。这八大主要制片商几乎垄断了整个美国电影业,并且实施纵向一体化战略,每个公司都全面涉及电影的制作、发行与放映。制片厂采用类似于工厂的流水线方式制作电影。制片人在制片厂制度中扮演了举足轻重的作用;他们不仅控制影片的拍摄费用,也对影片的拍摄过程实施影响。因此,一部影片不仅受到导演风格的影响,同样也会受到制片人风格的影响。制片厂制度中,人员的职责有精细的分工,服装、特技、录音、布景、美工等部门各司其职。这种制度虽然有利于以统一的规格大量生产标准化的影片,但同时也在一定程度上约束了导演和演员的创造性。与制片厂制度同时诞生的还有“明星制”。电影刚刚诞生时,观众并没有太多注意演员。随着“特写镜头”(close-up)的出现,演员开始在电影中扮演越来越重要的角色。电影公司发现明星的魅力对票房的巨大影响之后,在电影制作过程中开始突出演员的作用,并促使演员定型化,某位演员会固定出演某一种类型的角色,制片人会聘请编剧为明星编写量身打造的剧本。

Chapter 1 Silent Films

Silence is more musical than any song.

—Christina Rossetti

Introduction

The Birth of a Nation 《一个国家的诞生》(1915)

City Lights 《城市之光》(1931)

电影诞生之初,由于技术上的限制,使得影片只有画面、没有声音,情节的发展全赖剧中人物的动作姿态以及字幕来传达,而音乐都是由现场的钢琴师、管乐师或是管弦乐队演奏。然而,技术的简陋并不会掩盖艺术的光芒。早期的无声影片对于当代观众来说,依旧有很高的观赏性。在没有言语交流的条件下,电影是纯粹的表演艺术。

法国著名导演让-吕克·戈达尔(Jean-Luc Godard)曾说:“所有关于电影的文章都不得不提格里菲斯。这一点大家都同意,然而却经常忘记。”^①D·W·格里菲斯被誉为“剧情电影的鼻祖”;在他的电影里,电影的基本叙事语言走向成熟,如多线索的平行叙事、“闪回”的插入叙事、全景—中景—近景/特写的镜头模式等。格里菲斯有着深厚的文学修养,爱好诗歌、戏剧和小说,多次把文学经典搬上荧幕,这也使他能借鉴文学技巧来革新电影语言。从他的鸿篇巨制《一个国家的诞生》(*The Birth of a Nation*)(1915)中就能看出查尔斯·狄更斯小说《双城记》(*A Tale of Two Cities*)的痕迹。在《党同伐异》(*Intolerance*)(1916)里,格里菲斯进一步挑战传统模式;影片风格新颖,刚推出时并不被大众所接受,他还一度因此背上沉重的债务。后来人们发现,这部电影是那个年代美国电影艺术的巅峰。

《一个国家的诞生》改编自小说《同族人》(*The Clansman*),是美国电影史上第一部史诗巨作,放映时间长达3个小时,记录了南北战争(American Civil War)以及战后重建时期(Reconstruction Era)两个家族的变迁。由于影片反映的白人优越主义以及对3K党(Ku Klux Klan)的英雄化,它从放映至今一直备受争议。电影摄制者在影片的开头宣称:“我们不畏惧审查……我们只是拥有展示错误黑暗面的权利……这一艺术自由的权利源自圣经和莎士比亚的作品。”^②格里菲斯来自肯塔基州,南北战争中,他父亲在南方军队中担任上校,整个家庭在战争中破产了,格里菲斯不得不很早步入社会,干各种各样的零工。《国家

① “I think one should mention Griffith in all articles about the cinema: everyone agrees, but everyone forgets none the less.”

② “We do not fear censorship, for we have no wish to offend with improprieties or obscenities, but we do demand, as a right, the liberty to show the dark side of wrong, that we may illuminate the bright side of virtue—the same liberty that is conceded to the art of the written word—that art to which we owe the Bible and the works of Shakespeare.”

的诞生》中黑人被描述成盲目的奴隶、愚蠢的罪犯,这种种族偏见在格里菲斯长大的南方社会中根深蒂固;但与此同时,格里菲斯痛恨白人间的欺压,反对工业文明的虚伪以及对人的物化。虽然这部电影招致各方的道德政治抨击,但是它的艺术创新性却不容抹灭。“历史的叙述者都是战争中获胜的一方”;^①格里菲斯想用他的方式叙述他了解的历史,只是无意间冒犯了获胜那方的历史。

头戴圆顶礼帽,脚穿豁口大码皮鞋,身穿紧绷的上衣和肥大的裤子,手持竹杖,迈着企鹅步,还蓄着一撮乌黑的小胡子——查理·卓别林的这一小流浪汉形象诞生于1914年,那年他24岁。卓别林扮演的小流浪汉精致伶俐、心地善良,有时活脱脱像个滑稽的小丑,却保持着绅士般高贵的内心;他看惯了穷富悲欢、世态炎凉,却始终乐观积极地生活。这个小流浪汉形象深入人心,并且成为喜剧电影的象征、人类社会的一个文化符号。

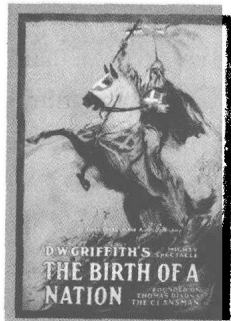
卓别林生于英国伦敦,1岁时父母离异,跟随身为表演工作者的母亲过着紧巴巴的生活。不幸的是,没过几年,母亲在一次表演中突然失声,而且在失去工作后精神错乱,数次被送入精神病院治疗,因此,一家人的经济更加拮据。小小年纪的卓别林不得不靠舞台表演谋生。在一次随团前往美国演出时,当时已为名导演的麦克·塞内特(Mack Sennett)相中了他,与他签下了合同。此后,卓别林开始了他的好莱坞电影生涯,代表作有《淘金记》(*Gold Rush*) (1925)、《城市之光》(*City Lights*) (1931)、《摩登时代》(*Modern Times*) (1936)、《大独裁者》(*The Great Dictator*) (1940)等。卓别林是喜剧大师,他的作品具有独创性,包含深刻犀利的思想内涵。《淘金记》中把靴子煮了吃,《当铺》(*The Pawnshop*) (1915)里把时钟当做病人,这一系列对观众感官构成的蓄意挑战以及操纵体现了他喜剧哲学的现代性。然而,纵使一部部影片的成功使卓别林声名大噪,但是渴望观众与害怕观众的矛盾始终主宰着他的内心。1952年的《舞台生涯》(*Limelight*)被认为是卓别林最具自传色彩的电影,描述了名利双收的主人公突然之间失去了观众,恐惧、无助……该影片设置在1914年,那年对卓别林意义重大:他导演了第一部影片,初尝了成功的甜头;也是在那一年,一战摧毁了他熟悉的英国爱德华时代(Edwardian Era)……

影片《城市之光》是卓别林最后一部无声电影。虽然当时有声影片强有力的势头使得无声电影的产量锐减,这部电影在推出之后还是获得了很大的成功。一部成功的喜剧,不仅需要逗乐观众的笑点,还需要内在的深切感情,这一点在《城市之光》中有很好的体现。卓别林通过其擅长的即兴哑剧,用滑稽搞笑的肢体表演,向观众传达了细腻复杂的感情;同时,小流浪汉对卖花女的真情更是使该部影片成为较早的爱情影片经典之作。影片中弥漫着淡淡的哀愁——小流浪汉已消失在卖花女的世界中许久了,然而某一天,他们突然街头偶遇,恢复视力的卖花女触碰到了小流浪汉的手,终于明白他就是一直帮助自己的人——最后这一幕把浪漫爱情的哲学发挥到了极致。卓别林是浪漫主义者,他偏爱年轻貌美纯洁的少女。不过,他虽向往传奇的浪漫爱情,也极易坠入爱河,却不懂得经营爱情,以至于前三次婚姻均以失败收场。50年代,卓别林受到“麦卡锡主义”(McCarthyism)的迫害,不得不离开美国,与第四任太太定居瑞士直至去世。

^① “Only a winning side in a war ever gets to tell its story.” (D. W. Griffith)

Film Details

The Birth of a Nation



Release Date: March 3, 1915

Genre: Drama, History, Romance, War

Director: D. W. Griffith

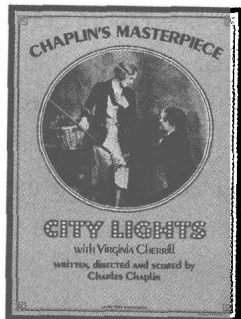
Writer: Thomas F. Dixon Jr. (novel and play)

Cast: Lillian Gish, Mae Marsh, Henry B. Walthall, Miriam Cooper

Running Time: 190 minutes

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

City Lights



Release Date: March 7, 1931

Genre: Comedy, Drama, Romance

Director: Charlie Chaplin

Writer: Charlie Chaplin

Cast: Charlie Chaplin, Virginia Cherrill, Florence Lee, Harry Myers

Running Time: 87 minutes

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Selected Readings

Reading Task 1:

Revered and Reviled^①: D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*

Eric M. Armstrong

The epic *Birth* adapts Thomas Dixon's novel and play *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*, chronicling the rising racial, economic, political and geographic tensions leading up to and including the Civil War, *The Emancipation Proclamation*^②, Abraham Lincoln's assassination^③ by John Wilkes Booth, and the tumultuous Southern Reconstruction

① *revere*: v. 尊敬, 崇敬。 *revile*: v. 痛恨, 痛斥。

② *The Emancipation Proclamation*: 《解放黑奴宣言》, 由林肯总统于 1862 年颁布, 主张南方叛乱各州的黑人奴隶享有自由。

③ *assassination*: n. 暗杀, 刺杀。南北战争结束后, 林肯总统因解放黑人而被南方奴隶主贵族所痛恨, 于 1865 年 4 月 14 日在华盛顿福特剧院遇刺身亡。

period that was the genesis of the Ku Klux Klan. The dramatic saga of two star-crossed families hewn asunder^① by the bloodiest of America's wars, the Camerons from South Carolina, and the Stoneman's from an unnamed North, anchors the narrative.

Given the film's astonishing success, one might draw the conclusion that the wretched blood of racism was still coursing through America's veins like a raging river a mere half-century after Lincoln enacted the *Emancipation Proclamation*. Undoubtedly, but the film's subject matter likely had little to do with its success. The awfulness of its message can be matched only by the genius of its production. The unchallenged master of his craft, D. W. Griffith is single-handedly responsible for codifying the language of cinema and shattering the world's notions of what a film could be. Griffith invented an impressive array of shooting, editing and narrative techniques that gave birth to cinema as we know it today. His innovation in alternating close-ups^② and long-shots^③ from varying angles for emphasis, implementing deep focus^④, jump-cuts^⑤, refining tracking shots and color tinting, and engineering emotional responses through calculated editing techniques, i. e. , more dramatic scenes contain more cuts, and his unique employment of "iris shots"^⑥ to concentrate focus on a particular area of a shot, and back-and-forth quick-cuts to imply the simultaneous occurrence of separate events, combined to create an artistic cinematic experience unlike any audiences had ever seen. Griffith didn't invent all of these techniques, but *Birth* was the first time they had all been used in the same film to create a cohesive narrative—a feat he accomplished in only nine weeks with a single camera and two lenses.

Filmmaker and historian, Kevin Brownlow, described Griffith as, "the only director in America creative enough to be called a genius." Few silent-era film scholars would disagree. But still in question in some circles, remarkably, is whether Griffith's work is sufficient to indict him as a racist. So ingrained were his prejudices as a 19th century Kentucky native that he was genuinely oblivious^⑦ to his film's disquieting moral construct. Apparently horrified upon finally understanding the terrible implications and effects of *Birth*, Griffith attempted to atone for his sins with his next film, 1916's *Intolerance*, which portrays blacks in a positive light, and is regarded as a landmark film in its own right. Though, however sincere he may have been, few observers were convinced, or at least willing to forgive the damage caused by *Birth*.

The Director's Guild of America, which established the D. W. Griffith Award in 1953 with the aim to honor only the most accomplished filmmakers including Stanley Kubrick, Akira

① hewn asunder: 被分开。

② close-up: *n.* 特写镜头。

③ long-shot: *n.* 远镜。

④ deep focus: *n.* 深焦。

⑤ jump-cut: *n.* 跳接,将影片中两个或两个以上的镜头不按照时间顺序连接起来。

⑥ iris shot: 圈入圈出镜头,无声影片中常用的一种技巧,一个黑色圆圈越来越小,以此结束一幕戏。

⑦ oblivious: *adj.* 不注意的,不以为意的。

Kurosawa, Ingmar Bergman, Alfred Hitchcock, and Cecil B. DeMille^①, went so far as to strip the award of Griffith's namesake in 1999 explaining that the director "helped foster intolerable racial stereotypes." This decision raises all kinds of ethical questions. Can we still appreciate talented artists of the past that don't conform to modern ideals? Is it ethical to retroactively apply our morals to them? Should Griffith be held to the same standards of today? Is it okay to overlook Griffith's unprecedented contributions to the art form because of inherent prejudices? Should the film still be regarded as a masterpiece despite its disgraceful thesis? Should art be fettered by specific moral constructs? And if so, who decides what these are and when does art lose its right to be called art?

Some have even suggested that the sins of *Birth* should eliminate it from scholarly discussions of history's "great films," arguing that *Intolerance* is Griffith's true masterpiece, offering as much, if not more, to the birth of cinema as an art form than its predecessor without the stain of racism. This argument is not without merit, however, it implies that skating an honest examination of history because we have condemned moral relativism in modern society is justified in our quest for universal equality and progress. No, we must accept *The Birth of a Nation* in all its magnificence and repugnance. It is as much a part of the fabric of cinema history as its subject is in the annals of America. For better or worse, every film made since owes a great debt to D. W. Griffith and *The Birth of a Nation*, revered as it is reviled.

Excerpted from *The Moving Arts Film Journal*, February 26, 2010.

◆ Reading Task 2:

Beneath the Mask: Witty, Wistful, Serious Is the Real Charlie Chaplin^②

Grace Kingsley

Away from the Cooper-Hewitts it's a very human, natural, lovable Charlie that greets you. A Charlie with flashes of drollery^③, and moments of wistfulness, too, such as you see in the pictures. A Charlie of unexpected vanities, and of equally big humilities concerning himself and his achievements. A shrewd Charlie, who is saving his money toward the time when he may do big things. And a Charlie, above all, who takes life and himself seriously, and wants you to take them seriously, too.

Maybe it's the background of the poorhouse that makes him serious. You know, when he

① Stanley Kubrick, Akira Kurosawa, Ingmar Bergman, Alfred Hitchcock, and Cecil B. DeMille: 著名的电影导演,依次为斯坦利·库布里克、黑泽明、英格玛·伯格曼、阿尔弗雷德·希区柯克、塞西尔·B·戴米尔。

② 1914年,卓别林的小流浪汉初次登上银幕,随即吸引了众多观众,所以1916年即本文写作之时,卓别林已为赫赫有名的明星。

③ drollery: *n.* 稀奇古怪的幽默(言语等)。

was a little boy, Chaplin, his brother and mother were thrust into an English workhouse. If it hadn't been for the poorhouse, and certainly if it hadn't been for a certain large curly dog, maybe there never would have been anybody in the world earning six hundred and seventy thousand dollars a year and the world would have been out a lot of laughs besides. It was the big curly dog of Chaplin's workhouse period that pulled Charlie out of the river one day when the embryo comedian was in bathing and had got beyond his depth.

Chaplin's present ambition—that for which he is saving? Nothing less than appearing in high comedy on the speaking stage—comedy as high as Pinero^① or Shaw^② or Wilde^③.

One believes that he will achieve it, too, even though you smile at the idea that, in the very midst of a funny fall, Charlie may be delivering a Shaw epigram, or that he may be murmuring a Wilde bon mot all the while he is kicking the fat man!

“When I arrive in the morning I'm usually gloomy,” said Charlie, as he led us out on the big stage, “especially when I haven't any idea of what I'm going to do in a scene, as is often the case. Tears bedew my eyes as I put on my make-up, and I weep sadly as I step out on the stage. And as for these gray hairs”—indicating those about his temple over his right ear—“I got them all the other day trying to be funny in a ballroom scene. I think any comedian who started out to be funny in a ballroom would have his career blighted at the outset.”

Charlie is given to spells of moody melancholy. One night he was particularly low-spirited, and, when he chanced to meet the joyous Tom Meighan, the latter proposed a slumming party to chase away the glooms. They went down to the old “Mug” saloon on Winston Street.

“The proprietor was suspicious of us from the beginning,” said Chaplin. “Maybe our clothes were too good. He asked all sorts of questions. ‘Do you work on the docks at San Pedro?’ ‘No, not at San Pedro,’ I assured him. After we had spent upwards of thirty cents buying him drinks, he openly voiced the opinion we weren't there for any good. Finally our evidence of overwhelming wealth—we had spent six bits by that time—caused him to decide that such reckless spenders must be from Alaska. After a while, though, he began to look at me closely. A look of amazement stole over his face. ‘You ain't—it can't be Charlie Chaplin!’ he cried. ‘Pshaw,’ I answered, ‘of course not. I'm a traveling man.’ ‘I'll bet you are Charlie Chaplin!’ he insisted. But when I coyly admitted I was indeed that very person—

“Aw, no you ain't,” he veered around. ‘No man that made six hundred and seventy thousand dollars a year would come to a dump like this!’ And no amount of persuasion or proof could convince him.”

① Arthur Wing Pinero: 亚瑟·威格·比奈罗(1855—1934),英国剧作家,擅长通俗剧和滑稽剧,代表作有《第二位坦克雷夫人》(*The Second Mrs. Tangueray*) (1893)等。

② George Bernard Shaw: 萧伯纳(1856—1950),爱尔兰杰出的剧作家,是世界著名的擅长幽默与讽刺的大师。

③ Oscar Wilde: 奥斯卡·王尔德(1854—1900),19世纪与萧伯纳齐名的剧作家,擅长风俗喜剧,语言俏皮尖锐。

Oftentimes he goes to the theater to listen to comments of his audiences.

“And when I hear some of the criticism, I walk off quickly,” he says.

For, strange as it may seem, as sensitive to criticism as a child is this famous comedian, who has created a guffaw that is heard around the world, a ripple of laughter that ceaselessly encircles the globe.

Excerpted from *Charlie Chaplin: Interviews*, ed. Kevin J. Hayes, University Press of Mississippi, 2005, pp. 17–21.

Topics for Empathic Understanding and Critical Thinking

1. Since the moment of its release, *The Birth of a Nation* has triggered as much dispute as one could possibly imagine. Even today, people are still denouncing its blatant racism while honoring its cinematic achievements. Can a film be racist and classic at the same time?
2. What do you know about the American Civil War and the ensuing Reconstruction Era? Is there any difference between what *The Birth of a Nation* says and what you have in your mind about this period of history?
3. Which do you think is more suited to represent the past, history or fiction?
4. Since its release, *The Birth of a Nation* has engendered various protests. Do you think censorship is a wise idea to crash down different, or politically incorrect, opinions? What’s the best way for the authorities to deal with contentious films like this one?
5. Some scholars believe that racism in *The Birth of a Nation* has helped entrench the idea of white supremacy in the society. Do you think a movie could have such a great power? What kind of function are films wielding here?
6. Grace Kingsley’s article revealed many anecdotes of Charlie Chaplin as an artist and as a man. What do you like about Chaplin and why?
7. Are there any symbolic meanings in the title “City Light”?
8. What do you think of the ending in *City Lights*? Does it signify that the flower girl and the Little Tramp will become lovers and live happily ever after?
9. Which funny episode in *City Lights* appeals to you most? What do you think is Charlie Chaplin’s secret of humor?
10. When *City Lights* came out in 1931, talkies had been all around. Charlie Chaplin went against the tide to make such a silent movie and it was well accepted. Do you prefer the Little Tramp remaining silent or talking eloquently on the screen?

Film Encyclopedia

Montage(蒙太奇)

When film made its debut on this planet Earth during the late 19th Century, it was not so

different from dramas in a theater as it is now. The Lumière Brothers simply fixed the camera in a place and shot the whole scene without interruption. It was hard to imagine that, if people had stuck to the old method, a film that tells the story of the whole life of a man within two hours, like *Citizen Kane*, could have ever come to the world. Luckily, it was not long before people found out that films could be processed, namely, cut and glued together, which means film-makers could edit the film, choosing their favorites and discarding the unnecessary. It enabled film to become an independent art. Then, some people tried to put cameras in different places, shooting scenes from different angles and distances, and then put different shots together through editing. This is the embryonic montage at work. Montage in filmmaking is used to refer to the film technique that combines different short shots according to whatever sequence that film-makers favor. More often than not, it is used to show the passage of time.

The theory of montage style made its great strides in Soviet films from 1924 to 1930. After the victory of the Russian Revolution in 1917, the government attempted to nationalize private property, which film companies resisted. One result was that some producers fled abroad with their equipment. A cinematic movement, led by a few young filmmakers, was developed out of these difficult conditions. In 1924, Lev Kuleshov presented *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*, showing that montage style could be so applied to make films entertaining. Sergei Eisenstein released *Strike* and *Potemkin* in 1925, which won acclaims from both home and abroad. These young directors and theoreticians agreed that “a film does not exist in its individual shots but only in their combination through editing into a whole.” Their systematic application of montage into filmmaking supported by theories enabled them to stand out in the whole world. Of course, voices of opposition never cease to exist, but we all can't deny that montage is the basis of film art. Since then, filmmakers have been testing montage and long takes (uninterrupted shot in a film that lasts longer than the conventional). Alfred Hitchcock, a strong follower of the montage technique, experimented with long takes, as long as 10 minutes, in his film *Rope*, but it did not come out well.

Internet Resources

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Birth_of_a_Nation

<http://www.filmsite.org/birt.html>

(Detailed information about *The Birth of a Nation*, its historical importance, production, techniques, working staff, etc.)

<http://www.charliechaplin.com/biography/4>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_Lights

(Information about the production, off-stage stories, cast, acceptance of *City Lights*)