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**SCENES  
OF  
INSTRUCTION**

THE  
BEGINNINGS  
OF THE  
U.S. STUDY  
OF FILM

**DANA POLAN**

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# 1 First Forays in Film Education

## *The Pedagogy of Photoplay Composition at Columbia University*

Where is the quiet and study essential to the study of art to be had? In the dark silence of motion-picture theaters.

FRANCES TAYLOR PATTERSON, instructor for Photoplay Composition, Columbia University, *Scenario and Screen* (1928)

Among the handful of letters between Will Hays, head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA), and Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Butler in the university's archives, the very last one, from 1945, is particularly amusing.<sup>1</sup> Hays and Butler maintained over the years a correspondence that was simultaneously professional and somewhat personal: for example, in 1920, Butler asked if he might receive tickets for himself and his family to the Republican National Convention (of which Hays was chairman), and Hays wrote back with his willingness to oblige. The correspondence also offers an ongoing glimpse of the busy life of the university president in a period when institutions of higher learning increasingly were being run as veritable big-business bureaucracies (and lamented as such by such cultural commentators as Thorstein Veblen). The modern university had evolved into a massive operation in which responsibilities for individual programs and projects were ever more frequently delegated to subunits, such as individual departments, in the institutional hierarchy. Presidents did not have time to keep track of everything: they were just too busy fund-raising and serving as symbolic beacons for the university. Throughout the years, Butler would take an interest, both academic and personal, in the movies, but he did not always have time to commit himself to film culture in extended fashion.

The November 10, 1945, letter is revealing in its image of a busy college president for whom running the university has become an all-consuming responsibility. The letter came from R. B. Parker, Butler's personal secretary, and was written to Will Hays to thank him for sending the president a copy of Raymond Moley's official history of the Hays Office. President Butler, Parker recounted, was very grateful to have the volume. He would, Parker promised, "have it read *to him* at the very first opportunity" (my empha-

sis). The image here is of the university president as overly occupied and preoccupied administrator—not so unlike our typical image of the classic Hollywood producer on several phones at once—who can get by only through what we now term *multitasking*. Butler might from time to time take an interest in the movies and the business behind them, but he too had a business to run, and the movies could demand only so much attention from him.

Delegation of responsibility and benign indifference to local decision making at the departmental level became necessary to the workings of the modern university as it entered the twentieth century. With the increasing fragmentation of divisions and the increasing diversity of functions any one campus performed, there was no way the administration could keep track of every component, and there was a concomitant need to let individual units proceed in relative autonomy from direct supervision. Units could generally do as they wished as long as they did not stray too far from basic assumptions about what the university mission was or open themselves up to scandal. At the same time, university administrators in the twentieth century increasingly began to ignore the academic projects on campus in large part because their administrative energy had turned elsewhere—to public relations, to fund-raising, to the cultural image of the university in the world at large.

University presidents, for instance, ceased to be academic figures primarily—the titular leaders of their faculty—and instead turned into figureheads who lobbied for the university with nonacademic publics (e.g., trustees, donors, parents, journalists, and legislators). Tellingly, one of historian Laurence Veysey's own descriptions of this new outward-oriented activity of college leaders uses a metaphor from film: "For their part, university administrators (whose deeper sympathies more frequently lay with the marching feet [i.e., the publicly attractive activities of campus athletics and parades]) took pride in the accomplishments of their faculties, even if they did so in the manner of the neighborhood theater owner who never watches the films he books but keenly knows the drawing power of the actors."<sup>2</sup> In like fashion, in 1932, the secretary of Columbia, Frank D. Fackenthal, used a film metaphor when he wrote on President Butler's behalf to turn down an invitation to a screening from Adolph Zukor (for Paramount's movie *The Man I Killed*): as Fackenthal explained, "He [President Butler] is sort of a motion picture himself these days and does not seem certain that he can stop long enough to drop into the Criterion."

It is no doubt risky to read too much into a few letters in a (perhaps incomplete) archival file. However, the anecdote of President Butler engaged

in other activities while one of his minions reads him a film book can serve as a fitting allegory for one destiny of early cinema pedagogy in the Ivy League context. Early in the twentieth century Columbia flirted with film, but it was not central to the university's overall mission—such that there might still be one singular mission in an age of increasing academic compartmentalization—and the specific activity of film pedagogy seems to have found its way into the curriculum less because it mattered to anyone high up than because, quite the contrary, it did not make a splash and passed quietly under the radar. Starting in the fall of 1915, Columbia would begin offering a pedagogy in Photoplay Composition in its adult-education extension program and then in its home-study (i.e., correspondence school) program, and this course would continue to be offered for several decades. From a single item in the curriculum, the course would expand into multiple sections and multiple levels (from beginners to advanced). It would come close to spawning a spin-off production course at the beginning of the 1920s, and would almost be absorbed at the end of the 1920s into a broader, more ambitious attempt at Columbia to create a full degree-granting program in cinema. Through all this, however, film teaching just moved along—not much fanfare, but also not much outcry. One searches in vain for administrative notice—positive *or* negative—of this first pedagogy of film. From our vantage point within the established discipline of today's film studies, we would like perhaps to look back and imagine that things were more exciting and more heroic, and that the "birth" of the field was an event of high drama. When writing the history of a discipline, it is easy to get so caught up in the local efforts that marked the trajectory of the field that one imagines that everyone in the university setting (and even perhaps persons beyond the ivy walls) must have felt a sense of momentousness and followed the story with close attention. But the modern university had become such a massive and fragmented space that it would be hard for any new pedagogy to do more than quietly find its own little corner.

Offered in the nether region of extension programs, noncredit lecture series, and professional divisions removed from the mainstream humanistic mission of institutions of higher learning, the first film courses slipped stealthily into the academic context and, in some cases, endured most likely by exploiting the benign neglect that frequently resulted from bureaucratic ignorance.

That the researcher does not find documents concerning the history of a discipline does not always mean they have disappeared; it can also mean they never existed to begin with. That is, what we might take to be an interesting or even exciting history that everyone must have been comment-

ing on at the time can turn out to be part of an initiative so local or minor it was absorbed into the running of university affairs “as usual,” and thereby merited no special attention or extended commentary. Silence and a lack of documents represent the other face of benign ignorance.

Take, for instance, a series of letters in the Wills Hays folder at Columbia that went back and forth in late 1926 between President Butler and several figures in the film industry (not just Hays alone): Butler wrote to Hays admitting that he (Butler) did “not know anything about the motion picture industry” but had been wondering if his book *Building the American Nation* might form the potential basis for a motion picture; Carl Laemmle at Universal wrote to invite Butler to a screening of an adaptation of Jules Verne’s *Michael Strogoff* (Butler declined); and in yet another letter Laemmle asked him to be one of the judges for a high school photoplay contest in honor of Victor Hugo (Butler accepted). The correspondence is sparse, but nonetheless it has several intriguing aspects. First, we might wonder why letters to or from Carl Laemmle ended up in a file supposedly devoted to Will Hays. Of course, it could be an after-the-fact accident of filing: someone in Butler’s office may have simply put all letters relating to the film business together. At the same time, it is worth noting that Hays, as we will see in more detail, seems to have been an important behind-the-scenes figure in a number of enterprises around film in higher education, and it might well be the case that Hays actually instigated the various attempts by Laemmle to forge contacts with Butler and his university.

There is yet another intriguing aspect to the letters from 1926. One learns from other documents at Columbia and from Will Hays’s own papers that *concurrent with* the bits of tentative contact evident in these letters between Hays, Laemmle, and Butler, there had already been fairly advanced discussions between industry officials *and* Columbia administrators and faculty regarding the development of a degree program in film study at the university. Butler did not directly take part in the discussions about the program, but he knew of them and gave them his imprimatur and close attention. Later I will discuss details of this project, which was given its greatest elaboration in 1927. For now I only want to register the fact that none of Butler’s correspondence with industry figures like Laemmle alluded to the curricular project in film in any way. Hays and Butler talked about the idea of a Hollywood adaptation of the college president’s book without any mention of the initiative (in which they were both involved) to bring film study to Columbia. Likewise, Hays made no mention of the project in his letters to Laemmle. Perhaps some of the discussion of the program occurred out-

side of letters (e.g., there may have been unrecorded telephone conversations). Perhaps the film activities that Butler was being asked to involve himself in, such as the Victor Hugo contest, were ways of establishing social contacts and opening channels of communication so that the curricular idea could then be examined. But it is again interesting to see the extent to which these bureaucrats could so compartmentalize their concerns that their letters on one topic seem to engage in a sort of deliberate ignoring of their own activities in other, complementary areas.

In this respect, it is additionally striking to note that the 1926 discussions between film industry officials and the Columbia administration regarding the creation of a degree program in film gave minimal recognition to the fact that for about ten years Columbia had already been offering film courses—namely, the series of classes starting in 1915 on photoplay composition that had been offered through the university's active extension program. The instructor who taught the photoplay course, Frances Taylor Patterson, was not mentioned in any documents about the new film curriculum proposed in 1927; neither was the man who had taught it before her, Victor Freeburg. Patterson served on no committees geared toward implementation of that curriculum, and she appears not to have been consulted for her views on a film major. As we will see later, Freeburg's and Patterson's courses were vaguely alluded to by planners of the new program but merely as existing offerings that could easily be absorbed into the proposed curriculum. There was little sense that Patterson's own views on the topic of course development in film mattered in any way. Her photoplay composition pedagogy, at best, was something taken for granted and, at worst, something ignored.

Nonetheless, the photoplay composition courses that began at Columbia in the mid-1910s represent, as far as we can tell, the first academic offerings on film in the United States, and for that reason they matter to the historian. One reason for their marginalization in the university's consciousness is that they were offered through various branches of Columbia's extension program, and to a degree, the lack of attention paid them reflects the low intellectual status granted by higher education to extension study overall. To be sure, universities saw advantages to be gained from their extension programs, but these were not always imagined by administrators and regular faculty as *intellectual* benefits. From the late nineteenth century on, a number of elite institutions of higher learning had begun programs in adult or extension education, and their reasons were not always scholarly: adult education made for good public relations, it fit in with the ameliorative spirit

of the Progressive age, and with efficient organization, it could be a new source of revenue for the institutions. Indeed, Columbia seems to have been driven by a number of these factors, especially as its "rival to the south," New York University, seemed to be getting all the glory of extension education. Additionally, as we will see later, extension programs also functioned in some cases as laboratories where courses could be tried out in a low-risk environment before being proposed as for-credit offerings to the regular body of matriculating students.

Few extension programs offered their courses for credit. At Columbia specifically, *no* extension courses were allowed to fulfill regular curricular requirements. (However, one newspaper story reported that a student in the photoplay course, who was a regular matriculating Columbia undergraduate, was able to petition successfully to have the course count toward his major.) Even though some of the extension courses were taught by regular Columbia teaching staff who simply offered noncredit adult-education versions of the same courses that matriculating Columbia students took from them for credit, the administration insisted that extension courses not be considered a regular part of the university's curriculum. Fundamentally, early American adult education instituted a division between the regular university curriculum, considered to represent the real core of the university's educational offering, and another track of courses imagined as serving very different needs. To the various constituencies involved in both kinds of curriculum—not only students but also teachers, administrators, and the general public—the courses on either side of the divide were imagined to entail a range of pedagogical advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, President Butler seems to have wanted to assign extension courses a lesser status, not really a part of genuine university education and not really for the elite college student. As he put it bluntly in 1926, "It is almost as important to keep certain young men and young women from going to college as to induce others to do so."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, in a 1923 report, James Egbert, the head of Columbia's extension program, boldly pictured his division as so fully meeting the requirements of a rigorous commitment that it often surpassed many degree-granting programs in terms of seriousness of education. These, he argued, rested on their laurels and were often little more than socializing clubs for degree-seeking students more interested in useful contacts and the prestige of a diploma than in real learning. In Egbert's words, "The opinion exists in the minds of many that colleges throughout the country are being regarded by students and by people in general as athletic and social clubs primarily and not as educational institutions. The students in University Extension attend for the pur-

pose of obtaining an education, and are not drawn aside from this goal by the allurements of athletic sports or social engagements."<sup>4</sup>

Was extension learning an entertainment that sold out the real educational mission of the university? Conversely, did it offer the seriousness that the university system was all too often lacking in its social-club undergraduate programs? Did its seriousness tip too often into an overly pragmatic emphasis on a teaching of vocational and practical skills that itself betrayed the university mission of liberal education? Such questions about university initiatives in adult education were replayed in specific ways with regard to the photoplay composition courses at Columbia. These courses, as we will see, hovered between several identities: for example, they alternately (or simultaneously) were a light pastime for New York culture mavens, a form of vocational training, and (at least in the rhetoric of the instructors in charge) sites for deeper liberal uplift through aesthetic education in a new modern cultural form—the art of cinema.

Columbia began its extension program early in the twentieth century with courses offered on the university campus itself and at various sites throughout the metropolitan New York area. In 1913, the Institute of Arts and Sciences was added as a subsidiary part of the extension program. Where the extension program overall offered courses that generally would run for the whole semester and might involve homework and class assignments (since students could get certification for successfully completing the courses even though they could not use such courses to matriculate at the university), the Institute of Arts and Sciences was conceived as a place for more punctual public events such as lectures, concerts, recitals, and performances of various sorts. Many of the events at the institute were artistic. For example, there was a series of very successful choir performances, which evidently helped in legitimating an eventual for-credit track in choir at the university. But the institute also involved lectures or demonstrations with a more practical orientation: for example, "how-to" sessions on this or that topic of practical training. And there were also lectures with a broader mission of civic uplift: for instance, at the same moment that Photoplay Composition began to be taught through the extension program, the institute's bulletin announced lectures on such topics as "The New Prison System," "Food Preparation," and a series of three talks on "Women Who Helped Mould England." Whereas the extension division director, James Egbert, came from the regular faculty at Columbia, the first appointed head of the Institute of Arts and Sciences, Milton J. Davies, had been educational director of the Central Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association, had previously been involved with the Chautauqua Institution, and had also

served as supervisor of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. In this background, we see very clearly the concern with the transmission of cultural uplift through public outreach.

The general educational efforts of the extension program, and its more specifically artistic offerings through the institute, were complemented in 1919 by the creation of a home-study program in which students could take courses, often similar to those offered on-site in extension, by mail. Importantly for our concerns, all three programs—general extension, the Institute of Arts and Sciences, and home study—offered instruction about film.

A 1916 budget breakdown for the extension division offers an immediate sense of the place of Photoplay Composition in the overall scheme of things. In that year (the second in which Photoplay Composition was given), the total budget for the extension division was \$130,516, with \$10,850 allotted to English, a very successful track in terms of enrollment, while a mere \$350 was designated for what was termed the film “department.” Other documents from the time, such as an interview with the first photoplay instructor, Victor Freeburg, in the *New York Times* in 1917, also referred to a “department” but it cannot have been imagined with any great ambition, given its meager allotment within the extension division.

Through the first years of the 1920s, the photoplay course had a steadily increasing enrollment, although it was never overwhelming in number. By the middle of the decade, it seems to have stabilized at around fifty students.<sup>5</sup> We can make some tentative guesses about the place that Photoplay Composition may have occupied within the extension curriculum by extrapolating from a statistical study of Columbia’s home-study program conducted in the mid-1930s by a philosophy student, George Baxter Smith, for his Ph.D. thesis, published as *Purposes and Conditions Affecting the Nature and Extent of Participation of Adults in Courses in the Home Study Department of Columbia University, 1925–1932*.<sup>6</sup> By analyzing enrollment patterns and student interest as indicated on registration cards they filled out, Smith set out to examine the areas of greatest popularity in the home study courses and the needs they were expected to fill. Smith’s study looked at 5,700 registration cards (one-tenth of the total) from the Columbia home-study program between 1925 and 1932 and performed a number of statistical analyses on them.

From his 10 percent sampling, Smith examined those home study courses that had more than fifty persons enrolled in sessions during his sample period. Of all the areas of study, courses in English—which is where Photoplay Composition was located in the home-study catalogs—ranked highest overall in enrollment numbers, with classes in commercial subjects

(i.e., accountancy, secretarial training, business methods) coming in second. Utilitarian motives seem to have governed the majority of enrollments in English: the top-ranked English courses were not in literary appreciation or literary history but in such areas as grammar, composition, and business English. For these preferred courses, students tended to cite cultural motives, such as a desire for general education, much less frequently than purely vocational concerns as their reason for enrollment.

Given the high ranking for these other forms of professional writing, then, it is perhaps worth wondering why Photoplay Composition did not fare better in enrollments. Of course, there may have been contingent factors we are not aware of: for example, it may have had a word-of-mouth reputation as not being particularly helpful for those seeking a writing career, and there may have been specific campaigns to build enrollments for rival courses (just as today some professors advertise their courses through glossy flyers). Additionally, it is clear from her interviews and writings that Frances Taylor Patterson, who taught the home-study course on the photoplay, imagined the course to concern broad questions of aesthetic appreciation and critical discernment as much as practical technique, and this may have discouraged students who wanted directly beneficial training in screenwriting. In other words, her very attempt to establish film as an art rather than as just a professional path may have dissuaded students who wanted career training from their English division courses.

One possible explanation for the relatively lower ranking of the photoplay course compared with vocational writing courses is suggested by another of George Smith's statistics: he found that 80 percent of the sampled enrollees either already had some background in their chosen course of study or indicated they had some prior sense of the practical issues and applications of the vocation they wanted to study. Thus, students taking a class in short-story writing might feel they already had some sense of what it was like to write a story. Insofar as students would not have had a previous background in photoplay writing, the writing of photoplays might have appeared as an imposing new activity where students had no existing skills to build on. The short story or magazine article, to name two forms of writing that *did* lead to high-enrollment classes, did not seem to undergo a substantial change from the written page in one's home to printed words in publication, whereas the words of the photoplay underwent a mysterious transformation as they were taken over by the machinery of film production. It may have been less apparent to students that they could have success in this field. Additionally, the increasing length or complexity of feature films from the mid-1910s on may have given students the impression that photoplay writing, in contrast

to, say, short story production, was not a minor vocation to be conducted during breaks from full-time employment in another arena. Short stories or magazine articles might easily be knocked off in one's spare time, but not perhaps a feature-length scenario. (Revealingly, in her courses, Patterson actually tried to teach students not to assume that a sample full-length original screenplay was the necessary ticket into the film industry: better to work on synopses that would have more chance at getting read. In other words, she tried to lower the ambitions and expectations of her students in order to make their effort more effective.) For those students who imagined that entrance into the world of writing for the film industry should be easy, perhaps the many privately run schools and correspondence programs that promised quick paths to success might have seemed more inviting and less imposing than a somewhat formalized course of study from a major university. To the extent that we can extrapolate from Smith, we can conclude simply that the writing courses that students most desired were ones that had vocational intent, often as training in a secondary profession to be pursued in one's spare time. For whatever reason, the home-study writing courses that had highest enrollments did not include Photoplay Composition. To the attitude of benign neglect the university administration displayed toward its film offering (which was then overdetermined by the low intellectual status that administration granted to extension study overall), we must add neglect by an adult student population that did not flock to the course and may have felt that it was not sufficiently utilitarian.

With such caveats in mind, we can proceed to an examination of the course itself. A short piece by Arthur Leads in *Writer's Monthly* offered a useful early notice of the class:

Columbia University has a course in photoplay writing. . . . The course is in charge of Professor Victor O. Freeburg, who has for years been interested in the drama and who has a book on the Elizabethan drama just off the press. Feature films will be run in the classroom and in discussing the picture twelve questions will be put to students, among which are: "Is it novel, and why?" "If it isn't novel, what does it remind you of?" and "Why was this scenario bought by the producer?" . . . [I]n offering this new course Columbia University shows that recognition is being given to one of the most popular literary forms in the history of authorship, and I hope that Professor Freeburg's pupils may eventually be able to turn out some scripts that will make jaded scenario editors sit up and take notice.<sup>7</sup>

As this article indicated, the first instructor in Photoplay Composition was Victor Oscar Freeburg (1877–1953). Freeburg had recently received a

Ph.D. in English for his study "Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama" (i.e., that dramatic genre whose narratives revolve around characters who disguise and then unveil themselves at dramatically consequential moments). A 1917 *New York Times* discussion of connections between Freeburg's general aesthetic position and his photoplay course pedagogy offered a colorful biography of the pedagogue: "His own career has been somewhat of a movie. Raised on a Western ranch, has served a year at the United States Naval Academy, spent two summers in Europe and captured three degrees from Yale and Columbia. He has also written a standard book on the Elizabethan drama. He has been actor, playwright, dramatic coach, stage director, and college professor."<sup>8</sup>

It is hard to know just how Freeburg came to teach the course. It is risky to accept a newspaper account at face value, but it is worth noting that the *New York Times* profile on Freeburg implied that he was *selected* for the course rather than initiating it himself, hinting that the decision to offer a photoplay class derived from curricular interests at a higher level of the university hierarchy. (Perhaps the impulse came from extension division director James Egbert, who seemed over the years to have ambitions for a film pedagogy.) As the article puts it, "When Columbia decided to open her academic gates to the movies, Dr. Freeburg, still in his thirties, *was called upon* to take up the work" (my emphasis).

Indeed, based on research for his New York University dissertation on early film archives and collections, film scholar Peter Decherney argues that Columbia may have had very practical and pecuniary reasons for founding a film course.<sup>9</sup> Decherney found evidence of shared ventures involving film industry representatives and Columbia University around the time that the photoplay course started, and it may well be, as Decherney posits, that the university undertook the course itself as a means of solidifying relations and taking advantage of financial offerings from the industry. As we will see in the following pages, the development of cinema studies tracked the geographic situation of the film industry. In the 1920s, for instance, production was centered in Los Angeles while administrators stayed in New York, and the bifurcated placement of film study in universities on both coasts reflected this division. In the prior decade, while the split was still under way, the industry had found its home in New York; it was perhaps inevitable that an academic institution there should seek some sort of alliance with an important film company.

In particular, as Decherney shows, the Lasky studio was looking for a place to archive its films, and Columbia seemed a likely prospect. The university would offer not only facilities but also intellectual and cultural pres-

tige if it housed the collection. Decherney shows that Lasky and Columbia University explored additional joint ventures that would accompany the foundation of the archive, and he believes that the photoplay course itself was one of these studio-sponsored activities. In fact, within a month of the beginning of the first photoplay course, the Lasky Company announced a scholarship for the best story idea to emerge from Freeburg's course. In virtually identical language (obviously from a press release), *Moving Picture World* and *Motion Picture News* described the scholarship:

To further encourage the study of the art of photo-dramatics among the students of Columbia University, which announces that it has just opened a special course of lectureship on motion pictures and their making, the Lasky Feature Play Company, through its executive head, Samuel Goldfish [i.e., Goldwyn], has offered a scholarship to the university. It has been accepted by Victor O. Freeburg, professor in charge of the new department, and the student who, in the opinion of William C. de Mille, chief of the Lasky scenario staff, writes the best original photoplay during the college term, will receive, all expenses paid, a trip from New York to the Lasky studios at Hollywood, Cal., and return. If suitable for commercial production the play will be produced by Lasky with a star in the leading role and released through Paramount Pictures Corporation. Equitable compensation will be made to the author. The decision of Columbia University to start a photo-dramatic department under the direction of Dr. Freeburg is of great interest to the industry. Through the efforts of Professor George Pierce Baker of Harvard, many talented young dramatists, including Edward Sheldon, Percy Mackaye, Frederick Ballard and others, have trained to write for the legitimate field. Mr. Goldfish in his letter says that the photoplay producers of the future will look to the colleges [for material].<sup>10</sup>

In the event, the winner of the competition was Robert Ralston Reed, a New Jersey physician. After a reworking by Margaret Turnbull, a professional screenwriter, his story was adapted into the Paramount release *Witchcraft* (1916).

It may well be, then, that Lasky was a sponsor for Freeburg's course and that Egbert or others saw it as one way of procuring money from an industry (or at least one studio) that seemed to be seeking the prestige of academia. We can only guess at why, if indeed the course originated not with Freeburg himself but with higher-ups, it was in fact Freeburg who was picked to teach it. Certainly, seemingly pliable junior faculty often are requested to undertake new projects desired by the university administration, and Freeburg had just begun as an instructor in English at Columbia. He had taken up his post in June 1915 and immediately taught a literature

course in the extension division's summer session. The very next teaching he did was the photoplay course. That Freeburg started his instructorship by teaching in the extension program may suggest that he was "on the radar" of the extension administration and represented an easy or obvious choice for the photoplay class. Perhaps his interest in drama was viewed as parallel to the concerns of photoplay study.

It is hard to know the extent to which Freeburg had any special or deep knowledge of film, or whether he regularly had followed the critical literature on the subject. In another short piece about Freeburg in *Writer's Monthly*, Arthur Leads lauded Freeburg's knowledge of film practice, but that may have just been hype. Freeburg, Leads said, "is a very sincere, earnest worker with a real faith in the future of the photoplay. Moreover, in his teachings at the college, he is at all times essentially practical. . . . He knows the inside workings of the studios, and understands very completely the technique of writing for the camera. He will shortly bring out a book on the photoplay which, I know, will be a distinct and valuable addition to the worthwhile volumes that have already been written."<sup>11</sup>

For what it is worth, the book version of Freeburg's doctoral thesis, *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama*, which came out just as he started teaching Photoplay Composition, made no reference to films even in contexts where they might have seemed the perfect example to adduce as the modern embodiment of the dramatic and theatrical strategies Freeburg was examining.<sup>12</sup> For example, at one point Freeburg noted that the new theatrical realism of the early twentieth century had made it harder for the legitimate stage tradition to convey the somewhat excessive and often implausible narrative upheavals of the disguise plot, but he suggested that such sensationalist entertainment as the disguise story might still find contemporary life in more low and popular theatrical forms such as melodrama, detective stories, or farce and light comedy. A reference to film melodramas and farces of the time, which often involved disguises and unveiling of concealed identities, would have seemed obvious here, but Freeburg made no mention of the movies. Perhaps the exigencies of writing a dissertation in what was still, after all, a fairly traditional field, devoted to literary canons, required Freeburg to eschew any reference to modern mass cultural forms. Or perhaps he was not yet a fan or scholar of the movies.

In any case, Freeburg appears to have taken his new pedagogical task to heart. During his time at Columbia, for instance, Freeburg helped found the Cinema Composers Club, which continued after he left the university. The club obviously built on his photoplay course but appears to have had a separate existence as a venue in which students could meet to talk about film and

even have contact with film production activity. (A short piece in the *New York Times* for April 2, 1922, reports that twenty-four members of the club had had bit parts in the Fox production *A Stage Romance*.) Even after he completely gave up teaching at Columbia in 1919, Freeburg continued to take an interest in film and in 1923 published a second volume on film, *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen*, to follow his first, *The Art of Photoplay Making*, which he had written under the immediate influence of his photoplay pedagogy.

Freeburg taught Photoplay Composition until 1917, when he enlisted in the navy, where he served as a lieutenant during the war. From his employment record on file at Columbia, it appears that he returned one last time in 1919 to teach Photoplay Composition and then left academia to edit the *Swedish-American Trade Journal* (later named the *American-Swedish Monthly*). Given his interests in understanding film as an art of—in large part—pictorial beauty, it is perhaps amusing to note that upon his retirement to Rockport, Massachusetts, he became a regular participant in local art associations as an amateur painter (evidently of landscapes primarily).

During the Freeburg years of the course, there were two levels of photoplay instruction—elementary and advanced—with classes meeting weekly and individual sessions varying from one hour to an hour and a quarter in length. Eventually, the elementary class was divided into two sections. (Perhaps this was in response to increasing enrollments: the *New York Times* reported that registration numbers went from sixteen students the first time the course was offered in the fall of 1915 to sixty by spring 1917, although the latter figure seems inflated.)

The description for the elementary course reads as follows:

This course is concerned with the methods of preparing dramatic plots, old and new, for the motion pictures. The photoplay is studied as an independent art of dramatic expression, in some respects inferior, in others superior, to the stage play. Special attention is paid to the art of arousing and maintaining interest, the proper dramatic arrangement of incidents and situations, the various methods of delineating character, the effective use of mechanical devices, and the pantomimic and pictorial qualities of a good photoplay. Films will be exhibited and analyzed before the class, and visits will be made to the studios of first-class motion picture companies. Each student is required to write finished, technically correct scenarios of at least one adaptation and one original photoplay.

The following is the description of the advanced course:

This course is open regularly to those who have completed successfully the work in the elementary course, and to any others who can present evidence of equal training. It is designed to give a limited number of

scenario writers an opportunity for development of individual genius and for a general study of the finer problems and possibilities of the photoplay. There will be discussion of such topics as the psychology of dramatic characters, symbolism, allegory, the spectator's imagination and the dramatic use of settings. Each student is expected to write one complete feature photoplay or several shorter works of equivalent total length during the Session. Students must consult the instructor before registering for this course. [This last sentence does not appear in all listings for the advanced course across the years.]

In the foreword to *The Art of Photoplay Making* (1918), Freeburg specifically declared this first film book of his to be a distillation of concepts he had presented in the photoplay classes (as well as in other venues), and in this respect it is useful to look at the volume for what it might tell us about the content of Freeburg's pedagogy. Above all, the book clarifies the extent to which Freeburg intended the notion of "composition," which remained in the title of the course over the decades, to refer to more than just the mechanical activity of screenplay construction. For Freeburg, the potential photoplay creator was a veritable composer, weaving together both narrative elements of story and visual elements of *mise-en-scène* to create a unified work of pictorial and dramatic impact alike. (*The Art of Photoplay Making* concentrated most on the structure of effective narrative, whereas his follow-up book, *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen* [1923], tended to look more carefully at issues of visual design. Ultimately, however, Freeburg argued that the dramatic and visual levels of film were necessarily linked, and any critical emphasis on one or the other was merely heuristic.)<sup>13</sup>

Even as he argued for film's uniqueness among the fine arts and its concomitant right to its own pride of place alongside them, Freeburg found cinema's nature to lie in a hybridity of artistic influences: cinema was an art both of plot and of pictorial arrangement, an art both of image and of story, as well as rhythm (Freeburg frequently analogized cinema to the flows of music). A full appreciation of—and training in—the art of cinema had to respect all its aesthetic dimensions, as well as understand how they might work together in the fully composed cinematic work. In this context, the photoplay writer could not act as if his or her stories were not going to take on visual form but had to make their visual embodiment part of the very planning of the photoplay. That is, the writer would have to include precise indications of the look of the film—both the design of its sets and the composition of its images—in the original photoplay.

Already in *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama*, Freeburg had given glimpses of a aesthetic position based on a notion of the unification of vi-

sual style and narrative content. In that volume, Freeburg assumed that the strongest writers for a performed visual art, such as theater, were those whose scripts detailed not only the narrative structure but also its best means of being enacted in a concrete form that would be as much visual as verbal. Freeburg reacted against those critics who separated the words of the Elizabethan dramatists from their embodiment in an art of staging. Such critics, he said, “imply that the dramatist, soaring loftily in the heights, condescended reluctantly to mere devices of stage representation.” For Freeburg, what happens corporeally on the stage was in large part something that the playwright could—and, more important, should—determine by integrating staging suggestions organically into the script. As he went on to assert,

But the voice, mimicry, pantomime, and external physical auxiliaries, or technically speaking, the tricks of reading and impersonation, costuming, stage business, setting and stage properties, all of which perished with the performance, were by no means scorned by the poets, for they were playwrights, too. The evidences that the Elizabethans did everything in their power and knowledge to make stage representations realistic to eyes and ears, are palpable to the scholar, and should not be ignored when discoursing on the poetic drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, the successful playwright needed to imagine how his or her film would look on the screen and, to that end, write a photoplay that would provide as much guidance toward that visualization as possible.

Anticipating the auteur theory of later film studies, but also turning it on its head, Freeburg argued that one person—and one person alone—should ideally be in charge of the total expressive design of a film both in the story it told and in the look of the images it offered, and he asserted that the photoplay writer most deserved this creative responsibility. This did not mean simply that directors had to respect the stories offered them by writers, but that writers had the responsibility to learn enough about cinema as *visual* art that their photoplays systematically would incorporate instructions regarding the film’s pictorial look. The important point here is that Freeburg was doing more than granting the screenwriter status as the primary creator of a film’s narrative. Importantly, he was expanding the province in which he claimed the screenwriter should make essential contributions. Freeburg contended that the photoplay writer, or cinema composer, should be the primary figure in the design, both visual and narrative, of the film work. The writer should be responsible for more than a well-constructed plot. As Freeburg put it in *The Art of Photoplay Making*:

[S]ome scenario writer might say, "Why should I worry about all this? It is the business of the photographer and the director to produce pictures. I only produce plot." To him we must reply, If you are a cinema composer at all, if you are endeavoring to compose a play in pictures instead of in words, then you must conceive, see clearly, and enable the director, actors, and photographer to actualize adequately the pictures, that is, the materials, which constitute your play. . . . If the cinema composer hopes to achieve art he must become the master of his medium. Furthermore, he must become the master of his servants, his workmen. He must command, advise, and supervise the director, the actor, the photographer, the joiner, these workmen who are endeavoring to put into physical form the picture-play which he, the cinema composer, has conceived and developed in his imagination. . . . [I]f we all strive together we will some day bring about the state of affairs where the author is master of all the forces which he mobilizes in expressing himself to an audience.<sup>15</sup>

This meant that the budding photoplay writer had to be instructed not only in techniques of dramatic construction but also in visual aesthetics and the psychology of perception. Even though Freeburg's book militated for recognition of the irreducible specificity of film among the arts, he imported concepts from fields like painting to explain how the writer needed to understand tonality, balance, effective composition, and so on. Freeburg's pedagogy, then, would set out to train students not only in the nuts and bolts of photoplay writing but also in the creative refinement of an art.

We might suggest at least a double meaning to the title of Freeburg's *Art of Photoplay Making*. On the one hand, in keeping with an emphasis on art as human-made artifact with teachable compositional techniques, "art" could refer to the talents necessary to the elaboration of successful film compositions. In this respect, it spoke of a quality to be possessed by the makers—in this case, the photoplay writers as total cinema composers—of potential aesthetic objects. Art, then, was a sort of special human skill in creativity. On the other hand, there was also a reference to the "art" that such photoplay writing made, the Art of cinema that was its object and its result. Writers learned an artful skill and learned how to make Art from it.

Central to this argument, of course, was the assumption that the cinema indeed was, or could become, an art. Writing on film at an early point in its history, Freeburg took the aesthetic potential of the movies as a given—not so much in the sense that cinema was by nature an art but in his belief that, with proper training of producers and consumers, it could well turn into one.

Admitting that film was rooted in photographic reproduction, Freeburg

asserted nonetheless that cinematic art came into being when the mere givens of such reproduction were transcended. Trick effects, visual symbolism, allegorical narratives, and so on all gave cinema the ability to imply meanings and mysteries beyond the everyday world reproduced on the screen. To take just one example, in a central chapter of *The Art of Photoplay Making*, aptly titled "The Appeal to the Imagination," Freeburg examined how objects distant from the camera and filmed with less sharpness than close-up objects exuded hints of a "beyondness" that exceeded mere worldliness. In his words, "[T]he magic of distance throws the spectator into a momentary reverie, when his imagination weaves beauties which would depreciate or disappear if brought close to the searching lens of the camera" (95).

Significantly, Freeburg posited that plot too was a form of imaginative-ness that transcended the merely photographic image. If pictorial beauty was one form of transcendence (analyzed in detail as such in the later *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen*), *The Art of Photoplay Making* attended to the ways in which the forward movement of story—and the suspense-driven guesses made by audiences regarding where that story might be going—also went beyond the photographic image. The forward movement of the narrative, for Freeburg, projected a film beyond the present in ways that were not merely emotive, since spectators had to employ higher reason in their guesses about plot outcome. Narrative spoke to the spectator's imagination but also went beyond it in appealing to processes of intellection.

But for all his emphasis on visual and narrative form as aesthetic transcendence of photographic reproduction, Freeburg's formalism was in no way a modernist valorization of stylistic free play or of avant-garde experimentation. For him, the formal transcendence that art offered had to do with classical virtues of balance, harmony, grace, ease, and so on.

In *The Art of the Photoplay Composition*, Freeburg spoke, for instance, of the proper work of art as encouraging "contemplative repose." We might contrast this with Walter Benjamin's valorization of cinema as an art of modernity that encouraged reflection through a series of shocks that move the spectator away from calm contemplation. Thus, if Benjamin expressed some admiration for the surrealists and their actively disruptive yanking of images out of the easy continuum of everyday life and into vibrant juxtapositions, Freeburg eschewed all pictorial juxtapositions that might not find a harmonious interweaving of elements. None of Lautréamont's chance encounters of the umbrella and the sewing machine on an operating table for him:

[W]hatever the setting be, whether palace or hovel, shop or club house, church or saloon, pathway or street, brook or waterfall, field or forest, mountain or sea, it, too, must satisfy the demands of beauty. . . . Thus

for any one photoplay the materials multiply until the problem of arranging them into a pictorial composition is by no means easy of solution. It cannot be solved at all unless the subjects chosen are suitable for the composition desired. For example, let us conceive an extreme case; a Roman centurion, a skating rink, and a lady's fan may be separately pleasant or picturesque to the eye, but they do not lend themselves to composition, because the moment we think of them as parts of the same picture they become mutually repellent. (35–36)

Within the modernity of the early twentieth century, Freeburg would seem to belong, then, to that countertradition that the American studies scholar T. J. Jackson Lears has analyzed as modern “anti-modernism,” the attempt by a number of cultural critics and artists in the period to use the new arts of modernity to attempt to return to experiences that had seemingly not yet known the ravages of technology, industry, and urbanism.<sup>16</sup> Freeburg took one of the most industrially and scientifically developed technologies of modernity—the cinematic apparatus—and looked for ways it could restore an ease of living not (yet) alienated by the age of the machine.

It is noteworthy that when Freeburg did talk about those subjects within the image that could encourage repose, many of these tended to be images drawn from nature, from the rural—in other words, from realms ostensibly untouched by technology. His primary example of an appealing image was that of the gently rippling rings created when one throws a stone into the water. A list of other instances in which the viewer might take enjoyment from the graceful contemplation of visual form included “the pouring rush of a waterfall, the rhythmic undulations of the sea, the fan-like spreading of a sky rocket, the slow curling of smoke from a factory funnel, the varying balance of a bird in flight, the steady forward thrust of a yacht under full sail” (12). (It might seem as if the mention of a factory would put us squarely back in the context of modernity, but it is important to note that what Freeburg enacted here was a sort of “aestheticization” of the factory: it would be appreciated for the formal beauty of the smoke that wafted out of it. Its own role in industrial life was elided.)<sup>17</sup>

The assumption that cinema became art when it offered images and stories of a harmoniousness that transcended the givens of worldly experience would guide Freeburg's pedagogy. Photoplay writing would be taught not just as one craft among the many that humans are capable of but as a special and privileged skill capable of producing those supreme objects of human achievement that are Works of Art. While *The Art of Photoplay Making* included practical advice—especially in its last chapter, titled “Commercial Needs”—that film industry executives might pressure pho-

toplay writers to observe, the bulk of Freeburg's conceptualization in his book had to do with the elaboration of an aesthetic and, in large part, with the ways in which the responsible and well-trained photoplay writer could contribute to the elaboration of that aesthetic. Art mattered too much for pedagogy about it to be reduced to mere pragmatic concerns. Against utilitarians who argued that the intrinsic nature of movies was to make money, and not to offer the uplift of Art, Freeburg answered that it was necessary to militate for the art of cinema precisely because it was too important an art to be ignored or debased and made subservient to mere pecuniary consideration. If the public did not demand better films, Freeburg contended, it would continue to be deluged with substandard works by a callous, money-driven business.

Importantly, Freeburg argued the value of photoplay study not just for prospective writers planning careers in the industry but for all citizens, who should care about the role of art in democratic society. If the properly trained photoplay writer could have an impact on aesthetic potential at the point of production, the properly instructed everyday spectator might have an indirect, yet no less powerful, effect at the point of consumption. The box office was a sort of ballot box in which spectators voted for quality by supporting films they preferred and eschewing the rest. Like other reformers from that time who advocated cinematic uplift through education, Freeburg assumed a sort of feedback loop in which production and consumption were linked and in which pedagogy was the mediating force.

One bit of advice about moviegoing that Freeburg offered in his *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen* can stand as a pithy example of his sense that consumption could be made to influence business practices (in this case, those of distribution, exhibition, and, indirectly, production):

Go to the movies. Whenever you find that you enjoy the films thoroughly do not stop to analyze or criticize. If you enjoy any particular film so much that you are sure you would like to see it two or three times every year for the rest of your life, you may be happy, for you have discovered one of the classics of the screen. Do not analyze that film either, unless you are in the business of making pictures. But if a film makes you uncomfortable, if it is so bad that you are quite disgusted with it, then, though you must become a martyr to it, please stay and see it again. Compare the good parts of the film, if there are any, with the bad parts; study it in detail until you see where the trouble lies. And when you have discovered the real causes of ugliness in that film, wouldn't it be a public service to express your opinion in such a way that the manager of your theater might hear it?<sup>18</sup>

It is worth noting Freeburg's argument here that not all acts of moviegoing necessarily served as an occasion for pedagogy. In particular, the spectator who already had reached a higher level of aesthetic refinement could rely on that acquired taste to enjoy great films without the need always to analyze them. Pedagogy was as much a negative activity—teaching audiences what to dislike and to formulate that in aesthetic principles—as a positive one, confirming them in their higher sensibility. There was even the risk that too much pedagogy in the case of “classics” and good works might interfere with spontaneous enjoyment.

To a large degree, then, Freeburg's pedagogy involved liberating spectators from unrefined modes of spectatorship. Effectively trained spectators could achieve a “spontaneity” of honest response in which the classics would clearly separate themselves off from the bad works that currently dominated the cinematic scene. Conversely, the untrained spectators' seeming spontaneity of response really was inadequate, unrefined, and too easily accepting of the junk that the industry foisted upon them.

But in formulating a conception of uplift in this way, Freeburg's pedagogy opened itself up to two tensions. First, it was not always clear if audiences had an innate, albeit submerged, capacity to sense and seek the valuable work of art or if their innate inclination rather was toward a wallowing in the bad from which they had to be forcefully weaned. In the former case, the film industry would be guilty of misleading audiences and diverting them from the true course of art. In the latter, there could be a veritable blaming of the audience for its own bad taste.

In fact, Freeburg was not free of an elitist fear of the mass's inherent lack of refinement. In “The Psychology of the Cinema Audience,” the second chapter of *The Art of Photoplay Making*, he contrasted his notion of the proper reception of film, which most likely would come only through an activity of training and education, with the inadequate consumption he felt most films received from the mass audience. He posited the spectator's reception of art as taking place at several levels or stages. Each stage would be more refined than the previous one, and the goal of education would be to help spectators attain the highest of levels. The role of instruction in spectatorship was to aid the audience in a salutary transition from “primitive” forms (his term) to advanced ones. Freeburg contended, for instance, that “three classes of appeal exist in every film that tells a story. They are: first, the sense appeal to the eye; second, the emotional appeal; and, third, the intellectual appeal” (11). It was the first that Freeburg characterized as “primitive,” the basic delight taken in pleasurable sensations and immediately striking forms, a “delight experienced by every spectator whether he be an

infant or a mature man of culture . . . a delight in the subject itself" (11). For Freeburg, spectatorship of this sort was at best superficial and at worst dangerous, since it denied the human capacity for imagination and intellectual progress. As he put it, the response to sensation alone was one that would be experienced by the sort of spectator "who might be too stupid to understand the story and yet might thoroughly enjoy the picture" (11).

And if each individual had inside him- or herself some degree of primitive response, that response was all the more likely when individuals assembled as a crowd and let themselves be swayed by mass psychology. As Freeburg put it,

It must never be forgotten that the theatre audience is a crowd. A crowd is a compact mass of people held together by a single purpose during any period of time whether long or short. . . . The close contact gives the crowd a peculiar psychology. The individual in the crowd is not the same as when alone. He is subconsciously influenced by his companions or neighbours until his emotions are heightened and his desire or ability to think is lowered. . . . In the crowd, he is more responsive, more demonstrative, more kind, more cruel, more sentimental, more religious, more patriotic, more unreasoning, more gullible than when alone. A crowd, therefore, is more emotional and less intellectual than its members were before they came together. (7–8)

Freeburg's description of crowd psychology is a familiar one. From the nineteenth century—with such key works as Gustave Le Bon's book *The Crowd*—and on into the twentieth, the mass psychology of crowd behavior had provided a common theme for cultural analysis, often with a fear of the moral consequences that would arise when individuals formed into an aggregate. The crowd was imbued with a life and energy of its own, one that removed individual differences and brought everyone, no matter their individual knowledge, down to a common level governed more by passion than by intellect, rendering people malleable and less able to make decisions based on individual discernment. Predictably, the flip side of this suspicion of the crowd was often the valorization of an *educated* public that supposedly rose above the mind of the mob. In Freeburg's words:

While the crowd is single-minded the public is many-minded. The public may be looked upon as a vast web-like association of unified groups, families, cliques, coteries, leagues, clubs, and crowds. A crowd can never exist as such for more than three or four hours at a time, or while the close contact is maintained and the single interest is held. But a public may have space between its units and time between its sessions. Furthermore, the public is permanent in its existence. Its groups come in contact, though not simultaneously; views are exchanged, discussions

are carried on, letters are written, until as a result of all this reflection a deliberate expression is arrived at. This deliberate expression is called public opinion. (8)

Freeburg did not assume the spectator came to art automatically equipped with all the tools for refined understanding. Even in cases where the spectator did possess those tools, crowd psychology could be so overwhelming that the individually discerning spectator might be induced to regress to ever more primitive, or even stupid, responses. It was here that the educator could step in to provide spectators with mechanisms of aesthetic reception strong enough both to resist base emotional appeal and to enable them to appreciate deeper, more intellectual qualities of art. Freeburg's aesthetic posited the existence of gaps between the work of art and its correct consumption, and it granted education the power to surmount such gaps. In this respect, it is noteworthy that a number of the qualities Freeburg attributed to effective "public opinion" in the preceding quotation approximate an ideal of what is supposed to happen *in the classroom*: exchange of views, the conducting of discussion, a recourse to writing as a means of articulating an argument—all these activities encouraging "reflection" and culminating in "deliberate expression."

The beneficial feedback loop between educated spectators and properly motivated producers that Freeburg hoped for required as an initial step the transformation of naive consumers (the crowd of spectators) into a discerning public. One key agent of this transformation was the pedagogue, that cultural mediator I referred to in my introduction and whose role Freeburg was positing for himself by teaching his course and by writing his film aesthetics. As Freeburg put it at the end of the first chapter of *The Art of Photoplay Making*:

[T]here can be no fair appraisal [of the potentials of an art form like the new art of film] without knowledge. There can be no helpful criticism of a new art without sympathetic insight into its special scope and its unique possibilities. What the photoplay world needs at present is more definite canons of criticism. It needs critics of taste and training expressing themselves in the periodicals and newspapers; it needs careful studies in book form; it needs photoplay leagues; it needs to be protected against the inartistic no less than against the immoral; it needs most of all something which will in time result from the constructive criticism of specialists, a general knowledge and understanding on the part of the public of just what it is they would rather see on the screen than the inanity and hodgepodge that now so often claim their attention. (5–6)

But here a second tension in Freeburg's philosophy of uplift could arise, since it fails to necessitate that only through *formal* pedagogy does amelioration of taste occur. In other words, if the classroom pedagogue was a likely source of beneficial instruction, it was also possible for such education to occur by means other than that of the cultural mediator who offers lessons in a classroom to students. One did not need to be in a classroom with a teacher at the front in order to learn about movies. The very fact, for example, that Freeburg indicated that spectators could learn what was wrong with a bad film simply by repeated viewings implies that the literal presence of an official educator was not always essential to the pedagogical process.

Freeburg even imagined the widespread distribution of home movie projectors that could allow spectators to see films again and again, and he clearly viewed this domestic and analytic possession of the film as a veritable form of study. Pedagogy would enter the home. As Freeburg put it in an interview with the *New York Times*: "When a motion picture that can be exhibited repeatedly at will and *studied* at leisure is possible, the photoplay writer will have a tremendous incentive for careful creation. It will be profitable and necessary for the cinema composer, as I like to call him, to exert his utmost efforts to achieve artistic and lasting excellence."<sup>19</sup>

This perhaps was the paradox of extension education (and of educational outreach more generally) in the Progressivist age of reform: if the pedagogue succeeded in his or her instruction, the lessons would become so democratized and so internalized by ordinary citizen-students that they would no longer need the official help of the mediator. They would be able to parse their culture by themselves: Freeburg, for instance, trusted the newly refined spectator not to need to analyze the classics but simply sit back and watch them work their ameliorative effect. By internalizing the lessons of Photoplay Composition, students transformed some part of their own faculty of judgment into a personal "cultural mediator" that allowed them to judge which works were good for them and which were bad, and eventually dispense with the need for a teacher in a classroom setting. It appears almost a logical consequence of the promise of ordinary spectators' internalization of rules that Photoplay Composition should soon become part of the newly established extension program's home-study branch where students were assumed to be able to master a subject by mail.

When Freeburg left Columbia and the Photoplay Composition course to go into military service in 1917, he was replaced by Frances Taylor Patterson, a young woman who in 1914 had received a bachelor's degree in English from Trinity College, Connecticut. In several extension program catalogs, Patterson's husband, Rowland Patterson, who worked in the public

schools in areas of health education and athletics, was also listed as teaching some sections of Photoplay Composition, but it is clear that Frances was the primary figure in the development of the course. University records and journalistic notices indicate that Frances Patterson regularly taught the Photoplay Composition course until at least the late 1930s. In the 1920s, she also taught versions of the photoplay course through the home-study program as well as in the classroom. For this correspondence version of the course, Patterson followed standard practice in the home-study program, preparing extensive week-by-week breakdowns of topics and assignments (many of which were keyed to her first book on film, *Cinema Craftsmanship* [1920]) and evaluating material that students sent in from afar.

Vassilios Koronakes, a former Rutgers student who tried a few years ago to track down information about Patterson, suggests (in an unpublished seminar paper) that Frances Patterson was a student of Freeburg's, but I have not found confirmation of this.<sup>20</sup> In the foreword to her *Cinema Craftsmanship*, she did, however, acknowledge the influence of the famous drama professor Brander Matthews, who was also Freeburg's dissertation adviser. Thus it may be that there was a circle of influence around Matthews that included both Freeburg and Patterson.<sup>21</sup> It is perhaps revealing that the last part of Patterson's book reproduced the scenario for *Witchcraft* as a model of efficient photoplay writing and proper manuscript formatting. We should remember that the original story for *Witchcraft* had been written in Freeburg's first photoplay class five years earlier and had won the Lasky studio writing prize. It is almost as if by including *Witchcraft* in her own pedagogical material Patterson was confirming the continued importance of Freeburg's original teaching to her own ongoing effort to promote the art of photoplay writing in the course she had inherited.

Certainly, in taking over Freeburg's course, Patterson offered a pedagogy in keeping with some of Freeburg's aesthetic impulses. For example, a section of *Cinema Craftsmanship* on the need for pictorial beauty in film (61–63) reads as if inspired by Freeburg's investigations of the requirement for the well-composed photoplay to establish unity between visual style and narrative construction. Likewise, a quick discussion of disguise plots in drama and film (27–28) might be indebted to Freeburg's own book on the disguise plot in Elizabethan drama (although in that book, as I noted earlier, Freeburg himself never extended discussion of the genre with film examples). But Patterson also appears to have made the course her own and, as we will see in more detail later, let her own aesthetic inspire it. Although the differences should not be overemphasized, Patterson's aesthetic of film appears (at least on paper) to have diverged in several ways from Freeburg's.

She emphasized plot construction and character over pictorial beauty, and she clearly saw her role as instructing writing students to craft effective narrative more than to create visual pleasure (not that she ruled out the latter; she simply gave it much less priority than Freeburg). She was in no way a mere acolyte of Freeburg. In this respect, although there is not enough in her writings to make us imagine her as a trailblazing feminist who stood up for her own rights, it is worth noting that in her second book, *Scenario and Screen*, Patterson made an assertion of women's independent spirit: "Such nonsense is the idea that there is sex in character. . . . In the past women may have shown certain similar group reactions, but these may be traced to training and tradition more than to any inherent characteristics or instincts. . . . Women are throwing off their man-given character cloak. . . . The new freedom allows them to break the yardstick of tradition and take their own measure."<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, Patterson clearly set out to develop her own approach to film study in her pedagogy for Photoplay Composition. For example, she was quite active in bringing guest lecturers to the class: thus, the 1924 sessions included talks by writers Rupert Hughes, Clara Beranger, and Paul Bern and directors Rex Ingram and William de Mille, among others. Likewise, her 1920 book, *Cinema Craftsmanship*, referred to a class visit by Thomas Ince, the important producer and director (58), and included the transcript of a 1919 lecture by a Lasky studio continuity writer, Eve Unsell. Patterson also worked to incorporate new pedagogical technique into the course. In 1924, for instance, she seems to have been instrumental in getting the university to equip an auditorium with analytical projectors so films could be studied in detail. Even more ambitiously, her desire to get her students to appreciate the details of filmic construction and the cinematic employment of specific formal devices appears to have led in the early 1920s to the production of a film that she apparently commissioned for training purposes. In the words of the *New York Times*:

Scenes from photoplays which show the various uses of the iris, the fade-in and fade-out, double exposure, the dissolve, the close-up, the semiclose-up, the long shot, the panorama and other cinematographic devices have been incorporated in a film to be used for purposes of instruction in Mrs. Frances Taylor Patterson's classes in cinema composition at Columbia University. Pictures of studio interiors, directors at work and laboratory methods are also included, as well as identical strips of positive and negative film. . . . To compose a photoplay that has any character of its own, a person must think in terms of moving pic-

tures, and to think in terms of moving pictures, a person must have an easy command of these pictorial idioms. So it is encouraging to learn that the students at Columbia are studying cinema composition with the aid of this graphic film, which, incidentally, the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation has prepared for them.<sup>23</sup>

Patterson clearly had much ambition for Photoplay Composition. Another piece in the *New York Times* provides a sense of the broader activities of the course:

Mrs. Frances Patterson's course in Photoplay Composition at Columbia will begin its sixth year. . . . The field work of the course, it is announced, will be considerably extended, arrangements having been made for the students to study lighting, the construction of sets, developing, tinting, cutting, titling, etc., in the studios and laboratories in and near New York. In addition, scenario editors and directors will address the class and Mrs. Patterson will exhibit for purposes of analysis, "Nanook of the North," "Sir Arne's Treasure," "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," and "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse."<sup>24</sup>

Over the years, Patterson put a great deal of effort into her photoplay class. She appears to have used various trips to Hollywood to collate information about the industry to convey to her students. She built up documentation on the film business—especially on manuscript submission procedures at the studios—and worked to keep her students abreast of developments in film industry protocol. Evidently, the materials she accumulated were made available to the students through a mini-library that she referred to over the years as a "Photoplay Museum." In addition to listings of studios to which students could submit photoplays, the "Museum" included magazines, books, stills, actual photoplays, and "famous paintings" so that students could see classic examples of visual composition (thereby suggesting a connection to Victor Freeburg's concern with pictorial beauty in cinema).

To the extent that we can trust journalistic reports, several newspaper accounts of Patterson's efforts for her photoplay course suggest that she diligently put more than a fair amount of time into course research and preparation. For example, a 1930 *New York Times* article on the photoplay class quoted Patterson to the effect that she assembled a great deal of data as background for the course. In her words, she had "for many years been conducting what might be termed an independent research bureau of the screen. I have been watching the trend of motion pictures from year to year and drawing my own conclusion. I have been comparing productions, visit-

ing studios, consulting with authors."<sup>25</sup> Likewise, a short piece in *Variety* in 1938 reported, "A survey of the conditions facing writers who desire to turn their attention to photoplay writing has been completed by Frances Taylor Patterson, who has just returned from Hollywood, where she interviewed producers and writers on the lots of the major companies. Mrs. Patterson is in charge of motion picture work at Columbia University and the survey is intended for the use of students in the course which is to be held on Monday evenings during the academic year beginning Oct. 2."<sup>26</sup>

Patterson herself offered commentary on her course in an article she wrote for *Photoplay* in January 1920. Undoubtedly, much of what she asserted about the class must be taken with more than a grain of salt as promotional plug for the course, but it is still worth quoting some of her description.<sup>27</sup> Here, for instance, is what she said about the makeup of the class sections:

The students range from the veriest amateur who has rosy hopes of writing a photoplay in three lessons . . . to the blue-stocking who is going in for a Ph.D. degree and plans to use the science of aesthetics as applied to a comparative study of the photoplay and the drama for her thesis. . . . There are young women who feel they ought to be able to form bright and new opinions upon the latest photoplay as well as the latest books or the latest plays or the latest turns in the political situation. A dramatist came in to adapt his play to cinematic form. . . . Short story writers have come for the same reason. . . . Teachers of English come that they may find out which plays can be used as objective illustration in teaching the classics. . . . One man high up in the world of advertising was sent by his firm to learn more about photoplays the better to advertise them. There have been actors and actresses in the class who were ambitious to write stories as well as to act them. One young director, who had a "movie star" for a wife, was eager to prepare himself to write the vehicles in which she was to be starred. . . . Then there are college students who want the course as a necessary part of a liberal education in this day and age when there is scarcely anyone, "highbrow" or "lowbrow," whose pleasure and recreation does not embrace at least a "movie" or two a week. There is the young reporter who has learned that a part of the course is devoted to the development of cinematic criticism which will be more analytical and more adequate than much of the so-called criticism that is being offered at the present time.

Perhaps more significant than this undoubtedly hyped-up description of her course was the hint she offered in the same article that the original impetus for the course came from the university's broader desire to institute

film instruction and that she was simply responding to administrative directive when she took over the course:

Columbia has the distinction of being the first college or university to recognize the tremendous possibilities of the gentle art of story telling by means of *pictures*, to realize that the photoplay in its highest form is essentially artistic, and that wielded by trained and skillful writers its power is illimitable. Columbia felt that a day would come when there would be a demand for scenario writers of culture and undisputed ability, and in addition there was the immediate need to teach people the appreciation of the finer things in the photoplay, which appreciation will eventually result in a demand for better plays on the part of the public.

Just as the *New York Times* profile of Victor Freeburg from 1917 had implied that he was picked to teach the course rather than having come up with the idea himself, there is the suggestion here that Patterson assumed a task that the university administration itself had devised. But like Freeburg, Patterson appears to have taken her assignment to heart.

In fact, even more than Freeburg, Patterson became actively involved, once she started teaching film, in the general cinema culture of the time, and she used that larger effort as a source of insights for her course. She also used her activities in the field of film at large as an occasion to open up her instruction to a broader public. For example, she initiated a series of screenings of art films, open both to her students and to the general public, along the lines of the Little Theatre movement of the time, with its concern to present less commercial works of aesthetically experimental ambition. As a brief notice in the *New York Times* announced, "Under this arrangement there will be shown certain films of outstanding merit, including exceptional foreign productions which may not have been released in this country. There will be lectures by well-known directors, scenario writers and producers."<sup>28</sup> At Columbia, Patterson actively organized events at the Institute of Arts and Sciences. For example, one syllabus for her courses mentions an institute lecture, open to the general public, by film theorist (and poet of the people) Vachel Lindsay, which she had organized under the auspices of the Cinema Composers student club. Likewise, a series of postcards she sent out in 1928–29 shows that she organized several symposia on film through the university's Writers Club, and that these meetings included figures from the film business such as story editors Bertram Bloch and Albert Howson, de Mille Productions general manager John C. Flinn, and Roxy Theatre impresario S. L. Rothafel, as well as such experts on cinema aesthetics as theorist Alexander Bakshy.<sup>29</sup>

From the beginning of the 1920s, Patterson served as a member of various committees of the National Board of Review (NBR), the film-betterment and reform organization, and also was a regular writer for the NBR's monthly magazine. Throughout her career, she was quite concerned with encouraging higher quality in photoplay scenarios. (Thus, as noted by Richard Koszarski, she put together what can be considered the first university press book on film, *Motion Picture Continuities*, which reproduced several scenarios as models for the well-constructed film.)<sup>30</sup>

Patterson is even credited with a produced script for the Yiddish film *Broken Hearts*, an adaptation of a famous play. Jim Hoberman describes the film's production history in his classic history of Yiddish cinema, *Bridge of Light*, and it would seem that the film's somewhat domineering director, Maurice Schwartz, had as much creative input as the scriptwriter, if not more. In this case, it is ironic that the one film written by Patterson, who always militated for the screenwriter as the fundamental auteur of a movie, was an adaptation directed by someone who clearly saw himself as in control.<sup>31</sup>

Patterson wrote regularly on film for specialty film journals but also for more general culture-related publications such as the *New Republic*, the *North American Review*, and the *New York Times*. Here, she called for recognition of the independent art of cinema (especially in relation to the live stage), railed against incomprehension of this independence on the part of Hollywood producers (whom, she felt, overestimated the contributions theater could make to film), and promoted those films that she felt best signaled cinema's artistic potentials. Significantly, the films that the *New York Times* indicated that she assigned her class to analyze in depth—namely, *Sir Arne's Treasure*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, and *Nanook of the North*—were all works that she specifically lauded in her published writings. Clearly, her efforts as a writer brought her into contact with works of cinematic art that she then considered important to introduce to her students.

Through her occasional writings, Patterson gained some influence beyond the classroom. For example, on at least one occasion the *New York Times*, which regularly reported on her course, turned to her for commentary when its own reviewer could not cover an important art film. In a column from December 25, 1921, the *Times* film reviewer, after offering praise to a recent Hollywood production (William de Mille's *Miss Lulu Betts*), admitted to not being able to see all new releases and deferred to Patterson, who had sent in a long missive, which the newspaper cited in toto, in praise of the Swedish film *Sir Arne's Treasure*, directed by Mauritz Stiller.<sup>32</sup> Pat-

erson's comments did not merely reveal much about her overall value system for film—for example, she thought the film offered a unity of pictorial form and dramatic function—but also showed her to be an active champion of film art, particularly of those works (European ones, for example) that might not get attention in a culture dominated by Hollywood product.

Nonetheless, it does seem less productive to set out to extrapolate a general aesthetics of film from Patterson's writings, similar to that found in Freeburg's volumes on the art of cinema. First of all, if our goal is to imagine the content of Patterson's pedagogy, we do not need such an extrapolation. More than with Freeburg—who left behind little that explicitly touched upon his course other than brief catalog descriptions, several notices in professional writing journals, and a few comments in one *New York Times* interview—there exists a great deal of very specific material describing what Patterson did in her course, even on a session-by-session basis. Not only do we have Patterson's books and numerous articles, but the Columbia University archives include two fairly detailed syllabi for her courses from early on in her teaching. One—for a home-study version of the course in 1920—is quite specific, as would be expected for a document to be mailed to students who would have little or no contact with the instructor and little to go on other than what was sent them. Called a syllabus, it is in fact twenty-nine pages long and stands as a veritable mini-manual on the art of photoplay writing. The other syllabus appears to be from around the same time and seems an in-class (rather than at-home) version of Photoplay Composition. Although it is also termed a syllabus, presumably for a single course, it actually includes detailed lists of topics for *three* levels of instruction—elementary, intermediate, and advanced. Both of these syllabi offer a wealth of information about Patterson's course itself and render hypothetical extrapolations from her broader writings less essential.

At the same time, it seems that Patterson's general writings are much less geared to the elaboration of a general philosophy of film than was the case with Freeburg. Although there was some practical detail in Freeburg's books, his greater interest appears to have been in aesthetic rumination. While he did acknowledge prior aesthetic ventures such as Vachel Lindsay's and Hugo Münsterberg's books on film published just a few years before his own explorations, Freeburg had little else to go on in militating for an independent art of cinema. Presenting her own books and essays just a few years later than Freeburg's contributions, Patterson, in contrast, could both rely on a larger sweep of prior writings—thus, *Cinema Craftsmanship* provided three pages of bibliography on the literature of film—and take a much

less militant, much less explicitly conceptualizing approach to the art of film.

Indeed, there is a greater sense in Patterson's writings that even if the local battles to enable specific films to be deemed art have yet to be fought, the larger struggle to even consider cinema as a potential art form has been brought to positive fruition. The sheer possibility of cinematic art is now assured even if individual works do not always achieve that ideal. Thus, Patterson's writings could go in more practical directions than Freeburg's—more critical engagement with specific films, more advice on immediate issues of narrative form, more discussion of concrete aids in the achievement of film art, and so on—and bracket out broader questions of film aesthetics. Patterson's books on film were practical guides rather than broad philosophical manifestos, and significantly, they paid much more attention to the everyday workings of the film industry than Freeburg's ever did. It is as if Patterson was admitting that the extent to which individual films might not achieve the status of art had to be explained concretely in terms of direct institutional impediments that could be pinpointed and that practical advice could lead one to avoid in the future. On one side lay the higher realm of cinema as art, on the other lay all the day-to-day workings of a film industry that restrained easy access to that realm, and between these were the individual films that dwelt in the tension between art and business.

Nonetheless, even Patterson's most utilitarian suggestions as to the paths to cinematic art rested on a broader conception of what Art was, and to this extent we can find in her writings the rudiments of a general aesthetics of film. In her books especially, Patterson was a particularly strong advocate of the position that took film essentially to be a storytelling medium in which effective narrative unfolding relied on a logical and tripartite structure that moved by means of intervening complication from initial exposition to final resolution. In *Scenario and Screen*, she even went so far as to recommend that students read John Stuart Mill's *Logic* in order to appreciate coherence of structure in narrative construction.

Ironically, within a storytelling framework, Patterson's books exhibited a greater openness than Freeburg's to specific works that we would qualify as part of cinematic *modernism*. The irony here is that Patterson's strong sense of story as highly organized structure led her to treat modernist works from within an aesthetics of narrative clarity and of legibility. To the extent that she valorized the logic of storytelling, Patterson was able to accept modernist efforts if she could read them as essentially narrative. A film might eschew Hollywood style for, say, pictorial distortion (e.g., *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*) or frenetic fragmentation through montage (*Potemkin*)

or a deliberately slow pace (*Sir Arne's Treasure*), as long as these stylistic choices were keyed to narrative necessity. Thus, the potentially weird and unrealistic decor of *Caligari* was, in Patterson's reading, appropriate to the film's narrative meaning rather than in excess of it. Even works that might seem pictorially or stylistically nonclassical could achieve classical status through coherent narrative construction and a harmonious unity of form and content. For all their efforts in the elaboration of cinematic form, films like *Caligari* and *Potemkin* still fit a simple narrative model in which a confrontation between the protagonist and opposing forces led to meaningful resolution. *Potemkin*, in this reading, was not just a film of vibrant montage but one in which such montage told a stirring tale. Patterson's criticism was reserved not for modernist art per se but for those works—modernist or not—that engaged in a loosening of narrative logic or a reveling in formal play for its own sake. Thus, on the one hand, she heaped great opprobrium on serial films for breaking one unified story line into a multitude of narratives, some of which petered out or went nowhere. As Patterson put it in *Cinema Craftsmanship*, "The serial can have no future as an art form. Dramatically, it is a sort of hundred-headed hydra. It has as many struggles as there are episodes, and sometimes even more. It is as easy for the serial to possess dramatic unity as it is for a sentence with fifteen subjects and fifteen predicates to possess the flavor of literary excellence. The serial is never a single entity, never an organic whole. The main road of the theme is cut by frequent cross-roads which lead to nowhere" (179). On the other hand, Patterson inveighed against the use of splashy technique in cases where she felt it had no integral, organic connection to narrative. For example, she was a vociferous critic of the use of color in film, believing that it often became a stylistic effect for its own sake and detracted from film's essential vocation of storytelling.

At the same time, Patterson would also disdain those storytellers who maintained tight narrative structure but in ways that had become tired or formulaic and therefore devoid of deeper and consequent *human* implication. More so perhaps than Freeburg, for whom the meaning of narrative emerged from its formal qualities (an end that logically responds to the beginning as in the perfect structure of the disguise plot), Patterson tended to feel that successful narratives should offer uplifting content—stories that mattered because their subject mattered. It is appropriate that she had an important role at the National Board of Review, since that reform organization took as one of its central commitments the improvement of the kinds and quality of story that the cinema offered. For Patterson, to be an art, cinema must tell stories but of a certain depth, richness, and value. Thus,

Patterson would exhibit reservations vis-à-vis D. W. Griffith, who, in her mind, offered gripping stories but ones that sacrificed profundity for mere emotional effect. For example, in *Way Down East*, suspense and excitement became the overriding goal of the narrative to such a degree that any higher purpose was lost: as she asserted in *Cinema Craftsmanship*, "'Way Down East' is another example of over-sustained suspense. . . . The laws of volume, pressure and gravitation demand her death [i.e., of Lillian Gish on the ice floe], but the happy ending demands that she be saved, and Mr. Griffith needs prolonged suspense to shore up his climax. The three are mutually contradictory. Mr. Griffith prefers to sacrifice artistry to the excitement of the moment" (*Cinema Craftsmanship*, 31). Likewise, *Broken Blossoms* "shows the touch of a master hand" (164). Nonetheless, formal play for the purposes of cheap thrills was privileged over the higher commitment to film as vehicle for deep thought: "Mr. Griffith made the story over into a surprisingly beautiful play. . . . But the play was somewhat of a commercial failure for all its marvelous techniques. It had no message. . . . [T]he photoplay accomplishes nothing. It makes us sad without holding out any strength through that sorrow, the touchingly sweet nature of the little girl is drowned in tragedy. We are overwhelmed with pity for her, and that is all" (164).

Patterson's critique of Griffith helps us identify several key points in her aesthetic of film. First, despite her relative openness to modernist cinema, Patterson had little respect for works of ambiguity, of confusion, or of that ineffable mystery that, for Freeburg, lay beyond the reality of the photographed frame and that was alluded to in filmic works of art. For Patterson, there was little value in such mystery: cinematic works must have a meaningful clarity in their narration (which, to take just one example, *Caligari* could be argued to possess, despite its weirdness of look). Whereas Freeburg most wanted films that made one marvel and wonder (and here his emphasis on pictorial beauty was of a piece with such a philosophy of art), Patterson most wanted films that made one think. As she puts it in *Cinema Craftsmanship*, "A photoplay, then, *ought* to have some sort of a message, a *raison d'être*, something that is ennobling, something that will awaken thought, something which will make the audience better for having seen it" (166; my emphasis). Griffith, in this context, would be branded negatively as a director of confusion, lack of unity, and an absence of salutary meaningfulness.

Second, as the notion that films *ought* to do something (in this case, have a message) suggests, Patterson's aesthetic was an evaluative one with a clear sense of what, for her, constituted proper achievement in cinematic art. Cin-

ema had less an essence, given to it once and forever, than a potential, and the history of cinema was the development of this potential. Cinema had moved, first, from mere pictures of reality to crude if structurally sound narratives lacking in profundity, to richer narratives with the ambition to make cinema into an art of beauty and reflection. Griffith's problem, then, was that he lagged behind his times, his supposed experiments with form actually exhibiting a retrograde fascination with the armature of thrilling narrative but not pushing the cinema to do any more than offer cheap thrills in mindless fashion.

If the cinema for Patterson did not have an achieved essence, it did have an ideal to strive *toward* (and retrograde figures like Griffith served to remind the prospective scenario writer of the dangers of regress one could fall into along the way). While her philosophy of film's history did not take artistic essence as given to cinema from the start, neither did it rule out the possibility that with proper instruction filmmakers could achieve art by their efforts. This is why we can read Patterson's very practically oriented manuals for professionals as works of aesthetics too: her advice gave an indication of the paths to avoid or to follow on the way to art. In particular, the film industry needed to be understood in detail insofar as it confronted the budding writer with a set of concrete and contingent factors (such as studios' lack of respect for the profession of the screenwriter) that could either facilitate or impede cinema's progress toward its ideal. Writers must be trained in the workings of this industrial context both to steel themselves against its risks and to take advantage of its positive features. The cinematic ideal for Patterson was meaningful narrative, but nothing guaranteed in advance that this form would win out against the historical contingencies of the studio system.

Now that I have established some sense of Patterson's overall position on film art and its relationship to her concern for practice-oriented instruction in photoplay composition, we can examine more directly her course offerings themselves. As noted earlier, Patterson eventually taught three levels of Photoplay Composition, and the available syllabus usefully offers breakdowns of topics for all three. In the elementary course, there were sessions on, in order, screen values, adaptation, dramatic appeal, plot structure, plot sources (the basic plots that the narrative arts had passed down over time), scenario technique, photoplay devices, classroom discussion of plot ideas submitted by students, classroom discussion of the scenarios submitted by the students, screen comedy, final classroom discussion of student scenarios, the author's outlook, and commercial needs. Additionally, there were weekly writing assignments: a critical analysis of a current film, a synopsis

of some nonfilmic narrative work, an analysis of narrative crises in that work, a synopsis of a proposed adaptation of it (along with an analysis of its narrative in terms of “premise, complication, and solution of the plot”), two ideas for original plots, the first-reel and then second-reel continuity for the adaptation, and the first- and second-reel continuity for an original plot.

In many ways, the course stands as a fairly straightforward pedagogy of script writing: the photoplay process proceeds from the inspiration of an initial premise (and, even prior to that, the influence of other arts and existing narrative formulas) to its elaboration into a narrative, and then its translation into proper photoplay format (from synopsis to detailed continuity script). There is some attention to dramatic appeal, but that tends to take a backseat to a more textually focused attention to formalities of narrative construction itself. There is a bit of concern with genres—comedy, for instance, is singled out as a narrative form requiring a pedagogy particular to its structural values. Finally, there is recognition of the concrete context of the industry and the needs of the market.

The intermediate course—which the syllabus indicates could, with the instructor’s permission, be taken simultaneously with the elementary course—extends the attention to plot construction. There is now, for instance, further genre delineation, with comedies distinguished from “action plots.” But the course also moves in new aesthetic directions that go beyond attention to narrative construction by placing greater emphasis on audience psychology and especially on the pictorial aspects of film. For the former concern, Hugo Münsterberg’s classic *The Photoplay* is assigned, and for the latter, Lindsay’s *Art of the Moving Picture* and Freeburg’s *The Art of the Photoplay* are required readings (although Patterson assigns only two chapters from Freeburg). But even as the readings add attention to visual design and audience taste to the course, the trajectory of assignments still is keyed, with one exception, to instruction in *narrative* construction, from initial inspiration to final elaboration in the form of detailed continuity scripts. In contrast to the elementary course, many of these weekly assignments in narrative construction and elaboration involve Patterson assigning specific narrative premises to the students rather than their creating them on their own. For example, it is indicated in session 9 that, “At this lecture the instructor will assign a character around which every student must build a plot to be handed in [at a later session].” Such assignments appear to echo the practical experience of script production in the studios, where, after all, so much of the work would have been undertaken at the direct behest of others. In this respect, the intermediate course seems much more geared to instructing students in the procedures and constraints of the

scenario-writing *business* than the elementary course, which focused more on individual expression and initiative, and which may have appeared more as a course in personal fulfillment through creative writing than one in business practices. By establishing stringent and frequent due dates in the intermediate course, it is almost as if Patterson were making the student feel the pressure of studio work, where one had to finish assignments quickly and on time.

The one exception to the practical focus of the assignments on creative work in narrative comes in week 12, where Patterson appears to have given the students a choice of assignments: "Writing a special article on photoplay subjects" or "Composition: A synopsis of the plot built around the character assigned at recitation IX." The first of these options may be in keeping with a somewhat expansive aspect of Photoplay Composition that we have already encountered: while it tended to prioritize hands-on work in photoplay writing, the course was also designed to be valuable for those students who did not intend to become photoplay writers but had simply elected to learn the intricacies of plot construction in order to become better viewers or critics of the movies. Indeed, the choice of Vachel Lindsay's and Hugo Münsterberg's nonpractical philosophical ruminations on film art as textbooks for the course might also be in keeping with a desire that this more expansive intermediate course deal directly with issues of artistic *value*.

The advanced course, finally, has a seemingly eclectic feel. For this course, limited to ten students, there was no week-by-week schedule, just a list of topics. These, the syllabus indicates, would include the following:

The Business of Continuity Writing; The Use of Light and Color in Motion Pictures; Music and Outside Aids to Motion Pictures; Educational Films; The National Board of Review—its scope, its membership, its powers; The Use of Animals in Motion Pictures; Escapes and Disguises in Photoplay Plots; A Study of the Photoplay Market: The Producer's Point of View; The Serial in the Motion Pictures; The Field for Special Articles and Journalism; Analytical Exhibition of Films; Observation Visits to the Studios; Completion of Extended Synopsis of Three Original Photoplays.

Certainly, it seems difficult, at first glance, to deduce any general philosophy of film or any focus on plot construction—and of the ways these should be taught—from this disparate set of topics. The list starts to make more sense, however, when we take a look at Patterson's volume from 1920, *Cinema Craftsmanship*, which she used as a textbook in many of her courses. All the topics in the advanced course are, in fact, ones treated in Patterson's book. Despite the extent to which *Cinema Craftsmanship* offers, above all,

a theory for the construction of resonant narratives, the book is marked in fact by a curious digressive quality in which Patterson meanders into whatever seems to preoccupy her at the moment, whether or not it bears on her central theme of narrativity. To take just one example, a discussion of color intrudes suddenly into a chapter on adaptation: in the midst of discussing Rex Ingram's *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* as an example of a praiseworthy adaptation, Patterson suddenly launches into a fairly long diatribe against two moments where the film switches to color and, to her mind, "violates the unity of the tonal effect" (71). At the very least, we might wonder what this has to do with a discussion of the principles of adaptation.

The sheer amount of detail in the home-study syllabus for Photoplay Composition (twenty-nine pages!)—necessary for students who would have no face-to-face contact with the instructor but would be doing their course by mail—obviously is quite useful for providing a direct sense of Patterson's pedagogy and its relation to her attempts, in a work like *Cinema Craftsmanship*, to elaborate a general aesthetics of film. For the home-study course, in fact, *Cinema Craftsmanship* was the sole textbook, although she advised students to look at other sources listed in that volume's bibliography, and the pedagogy was based on the students being directed to read selected chapters and then reflect on questions that Patterson posed about the arguments contained therein.

The home-study syllabus begins with a foreword in which Patterson sets out some central principles of her philosophy of cinema. For example, she declares, "In following the course in photoplay composition laid down in these pages the student must bear always in mind that the photoplay is fast passing through the period of transition and has already taken upon itself a technique of its own. This technique varies slightly according to the methods of the different producing companies, but there are certain standardized principles which must be learned by every aspirant to photoplay composition." On the one hand, here Patterson offers practical advice—"The student must bear always in mind," "standardized principles which must be learned"—which indicates a pedagogy that works to foster an accurate and productive assessment of the photoplay market. On the other hand, beneath the practicality one can read elements of an overall philosophy of film: cinema has, for instance, a history in which there is a "transition" through less refined forms to a contemporary situation in which the specific identity of film qua film has been achieved. As even this practice-oriented syllabus suggests, there was for Patterson a notion of the cinematic ideal—an ideal of medium specificity that film achieved as it moved through its history and cast off impure influences—for example, the influence of literature. (How-

ever, Patterson did teach the craft of adaptation, since that sort of screenwriting practice met market needs. But she tended to persist in feeling that adaptations fundamentally betrayed the independent art of film.)

In the foreword to her home-study syllabus, Patterson spoke of the lessons that could be derived from the course itself, which she says would “furnish the student with that fundamental equipment without which success in his elected profession is impossible,” but she also indicated that the course alone was inadequate to give a full education in film. Part of this reservation had to do, no doubt, with her sense that a home-study course could do only so much, but it also seemed to derive from a deeper conviction that the concepts conveyed in a pedagogy needed to be grounded in a concrete contact with the actual workings of the art form. Throughout her career in film, Patterson called repeatedly for both prospective photoplay writers and general viewers interested in what cinema could do at its best to study not just the principles of film art as they might exist in the abstract but, rather, concretely in the existing range of actual cinematographic production. The student of film should view as many works as possible, as many times as possible, to understand in direct terms their material accomplishments and their failings. For her home-study course, then, she declared that to the contributions her syllabus and book could make should be added “[t]he supplementary equipment [that] must come through a careful study of the entire photoplay field: the frequenting of the motion picture theaters where representative photoplays are shown; the thoughtful analysis of these plays; the reading of all available literature on the photoplay and its allied subjects, and the daily practices of this art.” As the quotation that began this chapter indicates, Patterson felt that, with proper training, the informed spectator would make of the movie theater a site of pedagogy that might even dispense with the need for classroom contact with a teacher. If Victor Freeburg could imagine a pedagogue-less pedagogy wherein viewers would use at-home projection devices to study the art of cinema on their own, so too did Patterson not assume that students needed to be in the physical presence of a professor. Hence, her willingness to teach Photoplay Composition in the home-study program. But hence, conversely, her unwillingness to let viewers imagine that any act of viewing whatsoever constituted a form of learning. As the reference to the supplementary benefit of independent spectatorial activities confirms, Patterson felt that such spectators could be left to their own devices *only if* a prior instruction, whether in the classroom or in the form of a textbook plus a twenty-nine-page manual, had prepared the way by inculcating a set of firm principles and practices.

If Patterson thus underwrote her own pedagogical role, even in cases

where she was not physically present to the students, a second move in the foreword to her home-study syllabus provided further justification for her pedagogy. Here, the strategy involved her making a distinction between the student amateurs and the professionals that were already succeeding in the industry. On the one hand, Patterson warned the prospective photoplay writer that the field of film writing was a highly competitive one that might not appear to provide easy entry for the amateur. On the other hand, she advised the untrained neophyte to take heart from the fact that being an amateur ensured that one had not yet been filled up with wrong-headed knowledge about the cinema. For instance, there was every chance that the amateur had not internalized the mistaken notion that the proper way to conceive a photoplay was in terms of literary works and the laws of fiction writing. Not having been trained to think of film as a form of literature, the amateur had the advantage of not basing film on the adaptation of prior models and could instead realize it as the independent art it was ultimately capable of becoming. Patterson posited that there were a number of narrative arts, but that they were irreducible each to each other in that they each had kinds of stories and modes of narration appropriate to them. Film and literature both told stories, but each in their own way. As Patterson put it:

His [the amateur's] advantage lies in the fact that he can learn to write directly for the screen. He can train himself to present a story through the medium of pictures alone. He can cultivate the visual appeal without being hampered by a technique with which he has become all too familiar. Not having become skilled in the narrative art [of literature] he does not have to unlearn its principles. He does not have to replace a facility for [literary] story telling by a like facility for picture telling. He is among the pioneers in a new art in which he has an opportunity to make himself a specialist. To do this he needs a pictorial mind, a sense of the dramatic, that he may create situations and crises.

Photoplay Composition, then, promised a pedagogy that avoided the mistakes of the professionals already ensconced in the studio system (a system too caught up in inappropriate or even retrograde conceptions of film such as literary adaptation) while providing a path whereby amateurs could enter into a professional realm and usher cinema into its appropriate future as medium-specific storytelling art.

Having thus asserted the indispensability and unique value of its own brand of pedagogy, the syllabus for the home-study version of Photoplay Composition could then devote the rest of its pages to the content of its instruction—what it actually took photoplay writing to entail. After a list of

requirements for the course—for example, a discussion of the format in which manuscripts should be typed and the manner in which they should be submitted (namely, by mail to the home-study office)—the syllabus provided a breakdown for fifteen weeks of instruction. But before looking at some of the topics, it is worth noting one interesting aspect of the requirements. Significantly, these indicated that students would have to write criticism and film analysis as well as original photoplay creation, but that they could substitute a full scenario for critical writing. Patterson was again showing that her course targeted at least two constituencies—photoplay writers *and* critically informed spectators—and that these were not always imagined as identical.

Despite Patterson's suggestions in her books that creativity in photoplay writing would flourish most when the writer also had training in critical analysis—and despite the larger sense in which one goal of the Columbia courses was to suggest that better understanding of photoplays would lead generally to an improved cinema at the point both of consumption and of production—we can find in the idea of scenario writing being allowed to substitute for a critical writing requirement an early intimation of the division of film studies into the sorts of tracks that would remain with the discipline throughout its history: there will be those who write creative works and those who write criticism (and each will try to get out of the requirements for the other). Certainly, this division echoes Patterson's own practical sense of the varying career options open to the students who took her sort of course. But it also can be seen as a first embodiment of the diverse destinies of film pedagogy caught, as it later often would be, between practical instruction in aspects of film production and critical study geared more to analysis and evaluation of finished products and their sociocultural consumption. At the extreme, some programs set up a sharp division between creative and critical work in film: to take just one example, historically, New York University split its film courses between two separate units at the university, with various institutional barriers working against extended collaboration between them.

It is interesting nonetheless to note that Patterson did at least devote one week of the home-study syllabus to what she termed "The Critical Angle," even if she allowed budding photoplay writers to get out of critical writing assignments. It may be significant that the syllabus entry for the week on "The Critical Angle" is the only one to offer background on the topic rather than to just pose questions and assign exercises. It is as if Patterson were admitting that criticism required the particular elaboration of principles rather than just practical advice. Specifically, she explained the importance

of distinguishing between destructive criticism and a more constructive mode:

Destructive criticism may also be called negative criticism, that is, it points out the faults in a composition. . . . Constructive criticism, or positive criticism, goes a step further. It not only breaks down the structure in order to show its shortcomings, but it rebuilds it according to the best judgment of the critic. It is not sufficient to say that a certain photoplay lacks suspense. . . . [T]he critic must supply a remedy for the defect; he must offer a means whereby the needed suspense can be obtained in that particular play, for instance by introducing a certain character earlier in the plot, or by withholding certain information until later in the plot, or by eliminating certain irrelevant episodes or incident, etc., etc.

But it might be noted that this brand of constructive criticism itself has practical craft elements: the critic judges but also imagines the properly composed photoplay that could have been. Clearly, such a form of criticism could be of assistance to the creative writer. Patterson granted a special place to critical activity, while implying that criticism would often usefully lose its independent status in order to be collapsed back in the fundamental profession of photoplay creation.

For most sessions of the home-study course, the syllabus assigned this or that chapter from *Cinema Craftsmanship* and posed questions geared to it for the reader to ponder and derive practical lessons from. For example, the third week's entry, devoted to "The Principles of Adaptation" and based on chapter 5 of *Cinema Craftsmanship*, asked the student to think about questions and issues such as the following:

What place does adaptation occupy in the art of photoplay making?

In what ways does narrative material have to be altered for the screen?

What is meant by making the action cinematic?

Every photoplay composed for the screen ought to possess five basic values:

a. It should have plot, i.e., a struggle, a complication, a problem which arouses suspense in the minds of the audience.

b. It should have pantomime value, i.e., the ideas should be capable of being expressed in terms of action.

c. It should have pictorial value, i.e., it should be capable of beauty in composition and the pictures should intensify the climactic moments of the play.

d. It should contain dramatized physical movement, i.e., action which has been given a particular significance in the working out of the plot.

e. It should have acting value, i.e., it must offer possibilities for interesting interpretation by a good actor or actress.

Are these values present in the story you have just read? Is the story good screen material? State reasons for your decision.

Many of the sessions also offered exercises for students to engage in on their own. For example, the lesson on adaptation required students to make their own synopses of the literary work on which a film currently in release was based, then compare their synopses with the official adaptation and analyze any differences. Likewise, for a session on plot construction, students were directed to see a photoplay, leave after the first reel, imagine how the story would be resolved, and then go back to see the rest of the film in order to pinpoint how narrative unfolded as "logical complication and solution."

Patterson's home-study course covered topics such as the nature of the photoplay as creative form (with attention to the specificity of film among the arts); the critical angle; adaptation; plot; character delineation (with attention to the relationship of character types to the stars currently working in the field); setting (with particular attention to its role in the elaboration of plot); the technique of photoplay writing (with examination of specific cinematic devices and the means by which their utilization could be incorporated into a photoplay, and with practical instruction on the concrete details of manuscript format); synopsis writing; comedy and its particular traits; the photoplay market (with attention to tensions between art and commerce); copyright, plagiarism, and submission procedures (including specific information on how to mail off a photoplay); and the usefulness or not of having an agent (Patterson was against it). A final section of the syllabus offered more general lessons on overall attitudes the enterprising writer should adopt to approach the market with confidence: the photoplay writer should be courageous and strong-willed enough to not be hurt emotionally by rejection; should learn that expressions of resentment over rejections could only give one a bad reputation with the studios; and must cultivate humility in the face both of rejection and of requests for revision and resubmission.

Frances Patterson would remain the instructor for Photoplay Composition over several decades. She appears to have taken off from teaching (perhaps to go on trips to Hollywood, as several newspaper pieces about her indicated). Extension program bulletins from the early 1930s briefly list two other instructors for Photoplay Composition; in some semesters, these may have been substitutes for Patterson while she was on leave. The two additional instructors were Horace C. Coon, an English department professor

who would later write the standard history of Columbia University, and Mack Gorham, a drama instructor who had had a play performed at the university. Neither of these two substitutes appear to have had any special interest in film, and they did not teach it for an extended period. One suspects that they were assigned in expedient fashion to make sure the course was offered and continued to bring in revenue. Perhaps revealingly, Coon, in his standard history of Columbia, *Columbia: Colossus on the Hudson*, made little mention of the university's extension program and did not even indicate that he taught there.<sup>33</sup>

My guess is that Patterson did her best to imprint Photoplay Composition with her views even when other instructors came in to teach it. But during the period of her course, there were other initiatives for film pedagogy at Columbia that went beyond Patterson herself. First, early in the 1920s, the extension program attempted to offer a course in *filmmaking*, although that enterprise does not appear to have lasted very long. Certainly, one should not give this failed venture too much attention, but in the interests of the historical record it is perhaps worth presenting what information we do have about it. A first official mention seems to have been in the "Annual Report of the Director of University Extension" of 1922, where division director James Egbert asserted that motion picture production was one "of the many special branches to which University Extension was giving its attention." As he elaborated:

Motion pictures have assumed so important a part in the educational, industrial and dramatic world that they deserve consideration and recognition in institutions of learning. University Extension has for several years offered courses in photoplay composition. In the past two years attention has been given to the study of the operation or execution of pictures. The position of general director or that of technical or art director calls for the broadest kind of training. It is our purpose as rapidly as possible to develop both of these branches of instruction as motion pictures are destined to play an important part as a civilizing influence in the modern social world.

It is worth noting that several newspaper articles on Patterson's course suggested that she herself was attempting to have her pedagogy deal with aspects of production and hands-on areas of the film business beyond photoplay writing alone. That is, although her course was focused on the writing aspect of film creation, it increasingly gave some attention to other parts of the production process from story to screen. For example, one article, "The Rebel Cry," by Elizabeth Clark, reported that the course would include "such diverse subjects as reviewing, studio mechanics, camera angles, light-

ing, continuity, history, sculpture, painting, design, drama, comedy and literature."<sup>34</sup>

From its beginnings in Freeburg's original conception, effective photoplay composition had always been assumed to necessitate an awareness of all aspects of film production: for Freeburg, and for Patterson after him, film was a total art in which there should be concerted effort to have every aspect of production work together to create a unified, overall effect. Ideally, the photoplay writer would be the auteur of the film, composing scripts that outlined story and pictorial values together in such a way that other participants in the production process (including the director) became mere executants of the writer's plan. If the photoplay writer was indeed to be given such creative control, he or she necessarily would need to know about camera work, staging, set design, editing, special effects, and so on so that these elements could be incorporated into the photoplay from the start. In the 1920s, however, Patterson's version of Photoplay Composition seemed increasingly to recognize that not every student would go into the film business to become a writer, and that the existing mode of Hollywood production would not always allow the writer to be the total auteur. There needed, then, to be training in professional tasks that went beyond photoplay composition instruction alone. On the one hand, in gaining knowledge about diverse aspects of production, one might improve one's chance for employment in other branches of the creative process if one was not successful as a writer. On the other hand, insofar as the bosses of the industry probably would not let photoplay writers serve as total auteurs, but would use them merely as the first participants in a long chain of creative work, the photoplay writer might establish productive, collaborative relationships as a result of a more comprehensive knowledge of the entire filmmaking process. Not for nothing did Patterson's book *Scenario and Screen* (1928) include chapters on the work of the cameraman, the director, the producer, and the editor, and end with a glossary of film terms—many of which were on-set technical terms. It was as if the book were informing prospective writers that they certainly might have important roles to play in filmmaking, but that they also needed to learn their relative place in a production process that would delegate equally important roles to other kinds of talent. The "humility" that Patterson had instructed photoplay writers to cultivate vis-à-vis their own scenarios was also a humility they needed to adopt toward the other creative personnel they would likely be working with (if not under).

But even as Patterson began to incorporate a more expansive sense of the production process into her photoplay course, the film curriculum itself ex-

panded with the broader filmmaking course that James Egbert had announced. Rowland Rogers, who had worked at the Bray Studio (animated films) and at Paramount and Goldwyn, and who more recently had been involved in areas of educational film, was assigned to teach the production class.<sup>35</sup> It seems that he did teach one installment in the spring of 1922, since a brief piece in the *New York Times* reported on the visit of screenwriter Rupert Hughes to his class.<sup>36</sup> There appears, however, to have been no catalog description for this spring 1922 course, which may have been added at the last moment to test the waters for its suitability for the extension program. The following year, the course made it into the 1923 catalog and was described as follows:

A practical course which applies in studio and "on location" the principles which underly the production of motion pictures for entertainment, for education, and in industry. This includes planning the picture and the operation function of production by director, technical director, cameraman, title writer and editor.

Students have practical experience in [the] studio and an opportunity, if they desire, to appear in a picture. They also plan and produce a single 1 reel picture each term.

Experts on various subjects as direction, camera work, making raw film, developing, lenses, etc., address the class and supplement the instructor's presentation.

Films produced in various studios including Famous Players-Lasky, Fox and others are shown each week. Students are invited to prerelease showings of many pictures.

The aid [*sic*: "aim" is probably meant] is to have the course [be] a practical preparation to enter the motion picture profession.

The Columbia archives also include a brochure that advertised the production course and offered additional details beyond those in the extension program catalog. The brochure, for instance, referred students interested in production also to Photoplay Composition, confirming the extent to which the courses were considered paired offerings. We learn also from this brochure that the course had a thirty-two-dollar fee attached to it and, as befitted an extension course, met in the evenings (Tuesdays, from 7:45 to 9:45, in the journalism building). Interestingly, given Rogers's background in educational film, the introductory part of the brochure emphasized educational forms of filmmaking at least as much as entertainment. (Perhaps this was due also to the need to give respectability to the course and not make it seem as if it was promising easy entry to entertainment feature filmmaking). The brochure presented the course as follows:

Motion pictures are deservedly winning a larger field of influence. As entertainment, they affect the lives, habits, and culture of millions of people who see them mostly during their leisure hours each day. As a means of expressing ideas in other fields they are rapidly proving their worth. Banks, insurance companies, railroads, public service corporations, farmers, merchants and manufacturers use them for a wide variety of uses. Daily they become more useful as a tool or agency in education, in industry, in the church, and in the home. The public schools of thirty-four cities . . . are using them for classroom instruction. The United States Government advocates their use in foreign trade. Motion pictures in the church are an accomplished fact today; movie pictures in the home will be here tomorrow.

Within a year, however, the production course disappeared from the catalog. It is hard to know why. An extensive list in the brochure of promised topics and activities suggests one very likely possibility: Rogers's course may simply have been too ambitious an undertaking, especially for an extension program attempting to cater to evening students. According to the brochure, there was to be training in location versus studio filming and in myriad areas of production, from direction and cinematography to titling and editing (and even subsidiary areas such as makeup). There would be background lectures on optics and the chemistry of film stock and developing. A variety of cameras would be studied. There would be instruction in several forms besides live-action filmmaking, such as trick photography, animation, color cinematography, and microscopic cinematography. There would be visits from filmmaking professionals, and each class session was to include screenings of both feature films and other film forms.

It may simply have become obvious that there was not enough time or resources to undertake all this. Certainly, start-up costs for a new course in film production can be expensive; this may have been an issue for the extension program, which had constantly to prove itself to the general university administration and not be a drain on resources. Note, for instance, the attitude of President Butler in a memo of June 3, 1927 (a few years after Rogers's course died, in other words), to extension director James Egbert: "Home study, important as it is, nevertheless is a department of university endeavor which can only be continued and justified if it more than pays its way." Throughout its history, the extension program seems to have been seen by the administration as a source of revenue, not as something to divert major resources to, and acquisition and maintenance of film equipment for evening students may have seemed an outlandish expense.

But it also may have been the case that this one extension program

course in filmmaking was not seen as ambitious enough. In fact, as the 1920s moved on, President Butler himself began making expansive plans for film study at Columbia and imagined the possibility of a bona fide degree-granting undergraduate film curriculum in place of the series of adult education courses marginalized in the extension division. If the extension version of film production never really got going, there would soon be yet another initiative at Columbia to create a practical curriculum in filmmaking as part of the newly envisioned degree program. At the end of 1926, Butler put together a committee to investigate the possibility and desirability of creating a "School of Moving Picture Technology," and a far from insignificant effort was expended in negotiating such a school with film industry luminaries. The intent was to construct a multitrack degree program in film. The initiative seems, however, to have died early on, and, unfortunately, traces of it are sketchy.

It is not clear how the idea for a "School of Moving Picture Technology" at Columbia came about, although there is every likelihood that it got as far as it did because of the support of Will Hays at the MPPDA, who was militating during the period of the coming of sound and of the increasing rationalization of the film business for professional programs that would build on resources at select universities to give practical training in the film industry. In a letter of June 24, 1927, Hays wrote to Frank Woods, executive secretary of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, to report on efforts to bring professional film study into academia.<sup>37</sup> Hays noted he had been to Occidental College in eastern Los Angeles and had discussed with its administrators the possibility of instituting a "school, or courses, of motion picture technique" there. But he also indicated to Woods that he quite preferred the plan he had been working on with Columbia University. Columbia, he explained, had the advantage of a strong graduate program and a New York location, which meant it was near both the Hays central office and the home offices of the various production companies. He also lauded the resources of the university's library and the existing strengths of divisions that he assumed could contribute to a film curriculum, such as the departments of architecture, industrial chemistry, physics, engineering, and design. Hays was unclear whether the program of study should deal with the business of film or the manual work of production. In his words, "The subject matter soon divided itself as between men who would go into the executive and administrative parts of the industry and those who would be actively engaged in production as it is represented by the scenario departments and studios." If the former path was chosen, Hays suggested that there be courses in economics, accounting, advertising, salesmanship, busi-

ness administration, corporate finance, and theater management. If the latter, Hays thought there could be concentrations in screenwriting, camera work, and architecture.

Hays undoubtedly had been in contact with President Butler about such a plan as early as 1926 and probably had floated to Butler his various ideas for diverse tracks in film practice. At some point in 1926, Butler appointed a committee to investigate the possible establishment at Columbia of the School of Motion Picture Technology, and this group submitted a report to the president on November 30. On December 29, 1926, Butler duly passed the report on to Hays. Intriguingly, the rhetoric of Butler's letter presents the idea of the program as originating elsewhere than with his university or with Will Hays: as Butler put it to Hays (quite enigmatically for our historiographical purposes), there had been the "suggestion [from whom?] that there should be established in connection with our engineering and technical schools systematic instruction and research in the field of moving picture technology" and that "[t]he matter came to our attention in so interesting a fashion that I appointed a University committee to study the matter and to report upon what might be practicable." At the same time, it is worth noting that little more than a week later—as if he had already taken charge of things—it would be Hays who hosted a luncheon for Butler, the members of the university committee, and several important figures in the film industry to discuss the initiative. In fact, by the beginning of 1927, when both he and the university had enough faith in the project for letters to be sent out to the industry for feedback, Hays's involvement was made explicit: the cover letter for this survey was in the name of both Columbia *and* the Hays Office, and *the latter* revealingly was given as the place to which feedback about the project was to be sent. Even if Columbia had come up with the idea, much of the fact gathering for it would now be conducted by the Hays Office.

One possible answer to the question of where the initiative for the Columbia program originated may be contained in the opening to the committee report that Butler had commanded: "[T]he cinema people, in general, are much interested in the establishment of such a school and would be inclined to favor it in every possible way. . . . Mr. [Adolph] Zukor believes that the time is ripe for a large number of high grade educational pictures which could be best furthered by a school connected with a great university." Perhaps Zukor, the head of Paramount, was the one who brought up the idea of a Columbia curriculum "in so interesting a fashion," as President Butler's letter to Will Hays had put it (and what was so "interesting" about it, we might surmise, was perhaps the promise of money behind the idea).

The committee report itself is rich in information about the sort of program that was being envisioned. The initial committee appears to have been composed of James Egbert from the extension program and two scientists, James P. C. Southall from physics and Daniel D. Jackson from chemical engineering. (The report, in fact, was written on Department of Chemical Engineering letterhead.) At the luncheon Will Hays hosted at the beginning of 1927, the list of professors involved had expanded to include faculty from architecture, electrical engineering, and civil engineering, and these, along with Frank D. Fackenthal, secretary of the university, became the final university committee for the project. Clearly, as the affiliations of the faculty members suggest, a primary concern for the potential curriculum was that it emphasize scientific and technical hands-on aspects of film. The report also announced a subcommittee of several important industry figures who were expected to advise the university on the project, including Zukor and William Fox. A Hays Office interdepartmental memo from February 1927 indicated that Hays himself ended up chairing this industry subcommittee.

As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, it is perhaps noteworthy that there appears to have been no consultation with Frances Patterson in *Photoplay Composition* and no attempt to include her in the committee work. (Perhaps this says something about the lowly status of instructors from an extension program compared with regular professors.) Nonetheless, the report briefly mentions her courses: in outlining the current resources at the university that could be drawn upon for a new and expanded film curriculum that might include screenwriting as one of its tracks, the report noted, "We apparently have the talent for cinema writing already developed."

One assumes it was extension director James Egbert who imparted this information, and it is worth wondering why he had been assigned to the committee. After all, Columbia was now thinking of a degree program in film, one that would be very different from the random noncredit film offerings in Egbert's division. One possible reason for the inclusion of the director of the extension program in the planning of a new degree-granting curriculum is suggested in a point made by historian John Angus Burrell in his 1954 history of adult education at Columbia. Burrell notes that there were occasions where Columbia used the noncredit courses of the extension program as a sort of laboratory in which new classes and curricula that were being considered as possible additions to the regular degree-granting programs of the university could be tested out in the safe environment of noncredit pedagogy. Columbia's Business School, for example, began as a series of noncredit extension courses before becoming a regular program for

degree-seeking Columbia students once it was clear that there was student demand and that business could be taught in serious fashion. Perhaps, likewise, the idea for the cinema curriculum was to start it as a nondegree program and see how it developed. Perhaps the earlier failed course by Rowland Rogers on film production had been one of these experiments. (That might explain why it was instituted without fanfare and then disappeared after a year.) In any case, Egbert must have been considered essential to the ongoing efforts to build a degree program in film: just after the January 10, 1927, luncheon hosted by Hays, Butler appointed Egbert chairman for the committee to undertake further investigation of a degree-granting cinema curriculum.

The committee report submitted at the end of 1926 had indicated that the goal was a full-fledged degree program at the undergraduate and graduate level: as the report explained, "It is the consensus of opinion that at least two years of college work should be the pre-requisite for entrance to such a school, and that two years more might be given, leading toward a bachelor's degree. There are many advanced courses in Physics, Chemistry, Architecture and Journalism which could be chosen for a year's post-graduate work, leading to the master's degree."

Within the undergraduate and master's degrees in cinema, three tracks were envisioned: cinema architecture, cinema photography, and cinema writing. The report implied that some of the decision for which tracks to implement and develop came from an assessment of existing resources at the university. In the words of the report, "In an examination of the various curricula throughout the University it has been found that only a few additional courses would be necessary to start such a school." But other factors may have led to the specific three-track structure. For instance, the writers of the report noted that in their interviews with the Hays Office the personnel there had offered advice about the three tracks: "[Hays Office administrator] Governor Milliken suggested that our School of Architecture would be of very great benefit in furnishing courses which would make better and more accurate sets, and that our courses already given in cinema writing would be useful. Mr. De Bra [Will Hays's secretary] stated that they already have in their organization quite a number of men who came from our original Signal Corps School of Photography, established at Columbia during the War, and that in spite of the short course which they had at Columbia, they had been extremely useful."

The Will Hays Papers from 1927 contain a copy of a survey to members of the film industry signed by James Egbert and Carl Milliken that offered a "tentative list of courses and subjects" for the curriculum and asked for in-

dustry feedback. The courses that Egbert and Milliken indicated seem very clearly to have taken into account existing offerings at Columbia. Proposed for the *architecture* track (which in the Egbert-Milliken survey had now been slightly renamed as “architecture and design” and included areas such as costuming) were the following courses: Elements of Design; Shades and Shadows; Architectural Drafting; the History of Ancient Architecture; Analytic Geometry and General Physics; Perspective; Cinema Set Design; Descriptive Geometry; Architecture Design and Oriental Architecture; Modeling; Theatre Design; Life Drawing and Composition; the History of Renaissance and Modern Architecture; and Costuming and Designing.

The *photography* track courses were Developing, Enlarging and Reducing; General Chemistry; Printing; Still Photography; Physics; Motion Picture Camera; Retouching and Splicing; Posing and Lighting; Cinema Studio; Photo Chemistry; Artistic Expression; Light; Composition; Optical Instruments; Physiological Optics.

Finally, the *scenario* track courses included English Composition; Comparative Drama; English Literature; Screen Adaptation; Dramatic Arts; Play Writing, Ancient and Modern; Photoplay Composition; Dramatic Criticism; History of Drama; Title Writing; Continuity Construction; Plot Construction; and Screen Syntax.

It is hard to discern whether some of the visible absences in the curriculum—such as directing, editing, acting, and music composing or scoring—were the result of the assessment of Columbia’s strengths and existing resources or of industry input on areas in which it did not feel it needed university training, or of other factors or influences. In one bit of information useful to this question, Carl Milliken at the Hays Office wrote on June 24, 1927, to Frank Woods at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to describe the new Columbia initiative. He explained that one area where they had decided *not* to pursue courses was acting because “Here in the East this aspect of training is well provided for at Yale University.”

An early draft letter to accompany the aforementioned industry survey had suggested that the questionnaire should be targeted primarily to those people in the industry actively involved in the three emphasized hands-on aspects of production: “We wish your suggestions as to the practical value training in these subjects [i.e., architecture, photography, scenario writing] would be for individuals coming into the industry for the first time. It will be particularly helpful to have suggestions from your Directors, Camera Men, Scenario Editors, Architects, Electricians and others of your professional staff, both as regards the general plan and the scope of study.” At the same time, the version of the survey that ultimately ended up being sent out

to the industry shows that there had been a decision to include some areas of business practice (however, these did not end up in the final articulation of the tracks). For instance, a preface to the survey described the purpose of the school as at least dual in nature: "to serve those now in the industry and to provide some technical elementary training for those who will subsequently engage in administrative departments or the studio work of the industry."

In the survey, industry respondents were asked to comment on the courses, to suggest others, and to speculate on the role film courses might have or could have had in preparing them for their own careers. Unlike the extension program course on photoplay composition, with its admission open to a general pool of motivated adults, the new motion picture school was presented as more selective: "From the first, it has been apparent that the student personnel of the school must be definitely limited. It is hoped that the curriculum and set-up may be made so attractive that a selection of only those students showing particular aptitude and with adequate educational qualifications or their equivalent in experience, will be practical." Nonetheless, the survey acknowledged a certain academic rigor that would make the program more than vocational (this, after all, was Columbia University, and there had to be some deference to liberal arts respectability): "It is our hope to organize the school on practical rather than theoretical lines. It is, however, to be a school of technology rather than a trade school. This can be accomplished if persons familiar with the various phases of production can supplement the theoretical instruction of the classroom."

In the files of the Hays Office, two responses to the survey can be found. One came from a screenwriter, Carey Wilson, at First National Productions. Wilson indicated overall support for the program of study as long as it complemented theory with practical instruction "by accepted authorities in each branch. . . people who have done things—and who know how to explain how they have done them." He followed this suggestion with a quite detailed, four-page outline for a possible course in scenario writing. The other letter came from the secretary of the New York office of Universal Pictures and did little more than offer an explanatory list of various positions and their duties in the business side of the firm. No other replies to the survey are to be found in the archives, and it is hard to know if this indicates lack of response to the idea at the time or poor record keeping over the years.

There appears to be no other extant material on the proposed course at Columbia, and the plan seems to have died quietly. We can only guess at the reasons. Anyone in academia is aware of the extent to which curricular initiatives often are announced, greeted with enthusiasm, and vaguely under-

taken, only to disappear as scholars and administrators find other projects to devote themselves to. Individuals in the film industry may be aware of the extent to which industry officials can pay lip service to institutional support of academic ventures only to drop out when the commercial payoff becomes unclear. (In the 1980s, for instance, the American Film Institute was notorious for making overtures on a regular basis and with great fanfare to academic organizations such as the Society for Cinema Studies, only to back out of the initiatives and offer no follow-through.) Perhaps administrators at Columbia ended up feeling that they did not have sufficient resources for the program: in fact, President Butler's letter in December 1926 to Will Hays about the initiative, when it was still in the early phases of its planning, had warned, "It probably goes without saying that the University, staggering as it is under almost impossible financial burden, could not now enter upon any new field that involved even a contingent financial obligation on its part."

There is yet another possible hypothesis that, if correct, would have interesting resonances for this study. It may have been that, far from having no interest in fostering academic development of professional programs in film, the industry was so interested that it hedged its bets and simultaneously was encouraging several different initiatives at several different universities. That a number of schools were, as we will see, developing courses in film at virtually the same time may be a coincidence, or it may be a planned reaction by the industry to overall historical forces (e.g., the coming of sound certainly would have encouraged a concern for increasing professionalization of the film industry and for the training of personnel). Recall, for instance, that Hays had almost simultaneously sought out Columbia University *and* Occidental College to see if, in their proximity to the film industries on both coasts, either might be a likely venue in which to develop a professional film curriculum.

Like the proverbial Hollywood producer who puts several screenwriters to work independently on the same script and then chooses the best results from among them, Hays may have encouraged a number of universities to develop plans for film instruction at the same time and in almost parallel fashion. It is, as we will see in chapter 4, intriguing to note the resemblance of the three-track Columbia curriculum to that proposed at the same time by the team of the University of Southern California and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Likewise, it is striking to realize that during the same period when negotiations were under way for the Columbia curriculum, key industry executives—a number of whom were serving on the Columbia subcommittee—were traveling to Harvard to lecture in its

1927 film course, which Will Hays also had had a key role in setting up. For instance, Universal Picture administrator Robert Cochrane had written to Hays to suggest that the Columbia program include business courses, noting that he had spoken *the previous day* at the Harvard School of Business, and it may be that his interest in business topics within a film pedagogy was concretized by his Harvard experience.

While the Columbia administration was putting some energy into its abortive but ambitious bachelor's and master's programs in film, Frances Patterson soldiered on in the shadows with her Photoplay Composition course. She retained the expansive goal of inscribing specific instruction in photoplay writing within a broader pedagogy addressing all the phases of film production, and in 1936 she and her husband, Rowland, offered a more ambitious version of the original course.<sup>38</sup> The new course, entitled Motion Pictures—Scenario Writing and Production, still had photoplay writing as its primary focus but linked this one craft to the rest of the filmmaking process. It was described as follows:

An inquiry into the nature of the motion picture for the profit of those who intend to write original screen stories, to secure staff positions with the film companies, or to enter the field of motion picture reviewing. The course will follow the workshop plan, allowing for individual writing projects. There will be lectures, conferences and seminars, some of which will be conducted by representatives of the industry. Exercises will be assigned in the writing of story treatments, continuity, screen dialogue, plot building, character delineation, the dramatization of setting, and comedy methods. A library of professional scripts and stills has been assembled for the use of the class.

But just as the 1927 plan for film degree programs had kept Patterson out of the loop, she was about to be sidelined again. At the beginning of the 1930s, a new director, Dr. Russell Potter, had been appointed to head the Institute of Arts and Sciences in Columbia's extension program, and he clearly saw his enterprise as more solidly intellectual than his predecessors. (For example, he was the first director to write annual reports on the institute's cultural accomplishments.) In 1937, extension director James Egbert again got the bug for a more expansive program of offerings in film, and he and Potter established the Division of Film Study, to be run through the institute. In a 1938 report commenting on the first year's activities, Potter both explained the guiding mission for the Division of Film Study and outlined its accomplishments. The mission, he explained, had been

to further in every possible way the development of motion picture study and appreciation—to arrange talks and illustrated lectures, to

present special showings of films, to coordinate such work in the field of the motion picture as is now being done in various parts of the University, and to act as a clearing house of information for those departments and to cooperate actively with other organizations and groups both academic and non-academic that have similar aims.

To this end, the Division of Film Study organized several activities in its first year: an evening of amateur movies, a series of six evening screenings of pre-sound American cinema, and a dinner in conjunction with the Hays Office in honor of Cecil B. DeMille at which President Butler spoke on the topic "The Motion Picture Comes of Age." It had also initiated discussion regarding an educational film rental library with national scope and a 16 mm filmmaking unit to produce educational films according to the needs of various departments on campus. Most important, the Division of Film Study had sponsored two new courses. One, entitled "Motion Picture Parade," was in keeping with the glitzy events-oriented side of the Institute of Arts and Sciences and involved a subscription-based series of film showings accompanied by a prestigious series of speakers such as Robert Edmund Jones, Gilbert Seldes, J. B. Priestly, Terry Ramsaye, Mark Van Doren, Mortimer Adler, and Paul Rotha. The other course, "Fine Arts of Motion Pictures," was, in Russell Potter's words, "an academic course limited to thirty students selected for their serious interest in and knowledge of motion pictures," who "had the privilege of hearing rather technical problems discussed by such authorities as King Vidor, David O. Selznick, Paul Rotha, [set designer] John Koenig, and others." Significantly, the course site was not at Columbia but at MoMA, where its conveners were John Abbott, director of MoMA's Film Library, and Iris Barry, the library's curator. The films for this class came from the MoMA collection (as did those for "Motion Picture Parade") and provide a clear example of how MoMA's new venture in film was clearly influencing university film pedagogy in the post-1935 period. Potter certainly was pleased with the MoMA collaboration and indicated in his report a desire "most earnestly to continue to enlarge this association." By the time of his 1939 report, Potter was hoping to develop an ambitious program of academic courses in film. As John Angus Burrell describes them in his history of the extension program, "Three courses were elaborately outlined: the first, the history and development of the motion picture; the second, present-day methods, techniques, and organization; and the third, production. In addition, there would be other courses, more specialized, in scenario writing, acting, directing, lighting, sound, cutting, montage, etc."

Ultimately, nothing came of the plan. In Burrell's explanation, "The uncertainty of the world in 1939, the outbreak of war that Fall, and then Pearl

Harbor two years later made the whole program for the time impossible. When open hostilities ceased and the University was deluged with G.I. students, there was neither time nor opportunity to organize courses and teaching staff to do a first-rate job in this field."<sup>39</sup>

The Division of Film Study seems to have paid little attention to the ongoing efforts of Frances Patterson to promote the art of film over the many years before MoMA came into the picture. But for an allusive mention in Potter's 1938 report that "the motion picture as a cultural and educational tool had not been ignored at the University," the plan for an expansive (and ultimately abortive) curriculum in film at Columbia at the end of the 1930s operated, like the 1927 initiative, in virtual and, it might seem, deliberate ignorance of Patterson's endeavors. She was not included, for instance, in the committee to advise Russell Potter on film study at the university.<sup>40</sup> Patterson continued diligently and quietly to do her job and teach her extension classes. The last records show her teaching in the adult education program as late as 1958. Perhaps she wearied of trying to do more for film than simply teaching in unassuming fashion to a nonacademic public. Throughout the 1940s and on into the 1950s, mention of her diminished in the press, and she faded from attention. It is no small irony that the last public notice of her appears to have come in her husband's *New York Times* obituary of May 25, 1954, where she was mentioned as his survivor. (No notice of her own demise seems ever to have been published.) One of the first pedagogues of film, Patterson was again relegated to the margins of a history that felt it had more important things on its mind.