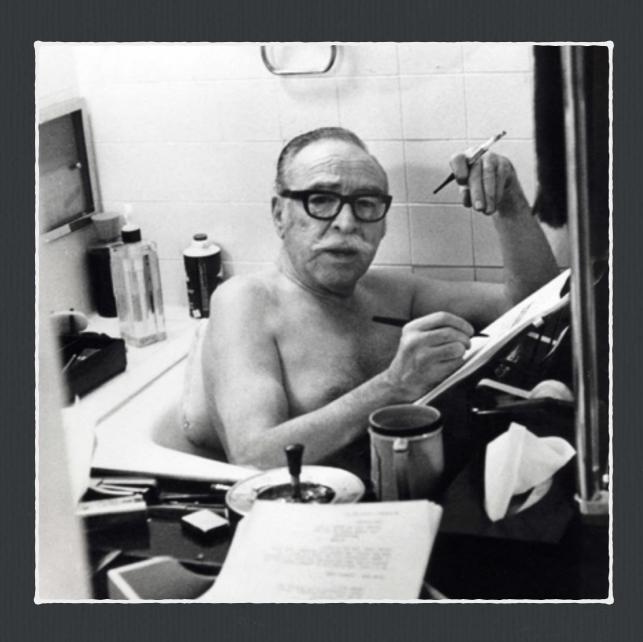
Screenwriting: Theory, History, Practice

Claus Tieber

• claus.tieber@univie.ac.at

Timetable



- ☐ Mo, 26 October, 12.30-15.45
- □ 12.30-14:00 Unit 1: Screenwriting Research/ Studies, Theory, Field, Definition
- □ 14:00-14:30: break
- □ 14:30-15:45 Unit 2: History 1: Silent Cinema
- ☐ Tue, 27 October, 12.30-15.45
- □ 12.30-14:00 Unit 3: Story Conferences, Classical Hollywood Cinema
- □ 14:00-14:30: break
- ☐ 14:30-15:45 Unit 4: Black List
- ☐ Thursday, 29 October, 9.10-12.25
- □ 9:10-10:40 Unit 4: Narratology, Screenwriting Manuals
- □ 10:40-11:00 Break
- ☐ 11-12:25: Unit 5: Discussion, recent and alternative practices

Contents

- ☐ Definition of screenwriting studies, fields, approaches, methods
- Formats and Development of screenplay
- □ mode of production
- ☐ working conditions

 \square American film history: silent film, classical Hollywood, blacklist

Goals

- ☐ filmhistorical knowledge
- \square introduction into a new field of film studies
- new approaches to screenwriting and filmmaking/ analyzing
- □ historical practice
- learn how to deal with archival material, historical documents

Methods

- □ Lecture
- □ Discussion
- ☐ Group works

Expectations

Screenwriting Studies

- □ Narratology
- □ Production Culture
- ☐ Film History, Screenwriters as Auteurs

Screen Idea

- □ Screen Idea
- □ Screen Idea Working Group

Auteur-Theorie

- ☐ Stephen Crofts:
- □ 1. " Author as expressive individual"

| 2. " | Author as constructed from film or films" |
|------|---|
| | 2.1. as thematic or stylistic properties impressionistically and unproblematically read off from film to film |
| | 2.2. a set of structures identifiable within a body of films by the same author |
| | 2.3. as a subject position within the film |

☐ 3. Author as social and sexual subject

4. Author as author-name, as function of the circulation of the film or films

Screenplay: Definitions

The script of a movie, including acting instructions and scene directions.

Oxford Dictionaries

screenplay: definitions

"The screenplay, which is sometimes known, also, as the scenario or film script, resembles the blueprint of the architect. It is the verbal design of the finished film."

Drehbuch: Definitionen

 □ A screenplay is the agreement of a group of filmmakers (SIWG) about what to shoot.

Screen Idea Work Group (SIWG)

- ☐ A flexibly constructed group organized around the development and production of a screen idea
- All those who have some direct connection with the development of the screen idea
- □ Ian Macdonald

Screenplay: Definitionen

- ☐ The basic art of the motion picture is the screenplay; it is fundamental; without it there is nothing.

 Raymond Chandler
- □ a factory friendly documentDavid Thomson

Ontology

- ☐ literary value
- □ intermedial status
- □ blueprint
- □ document of the production process

Transition to fictional fim

- □ 1886 1904: Early Cinema
- □ 1904 1917: Transitional Period,
- since 1917: Classical Hollywood Cinema

Modes of production

- □ 1896 1907 "Cameraman" System
- □ 1907 1909 Director System
- □ 1909 1914 Director Unit System
- □ 1914 1931 Central Producer System

Edwin S. Porter

- ☐ Jack and the Beanstalk (Juni 1902)
- ☐ Life of an American Fireman (Nov. 1902 Jan. 1903)

Lenght

- □ 50 feet
- □ 1900: 250 400 feet
- □ 1903: 300 600 feet
- □ 1905: 800 1000 feet

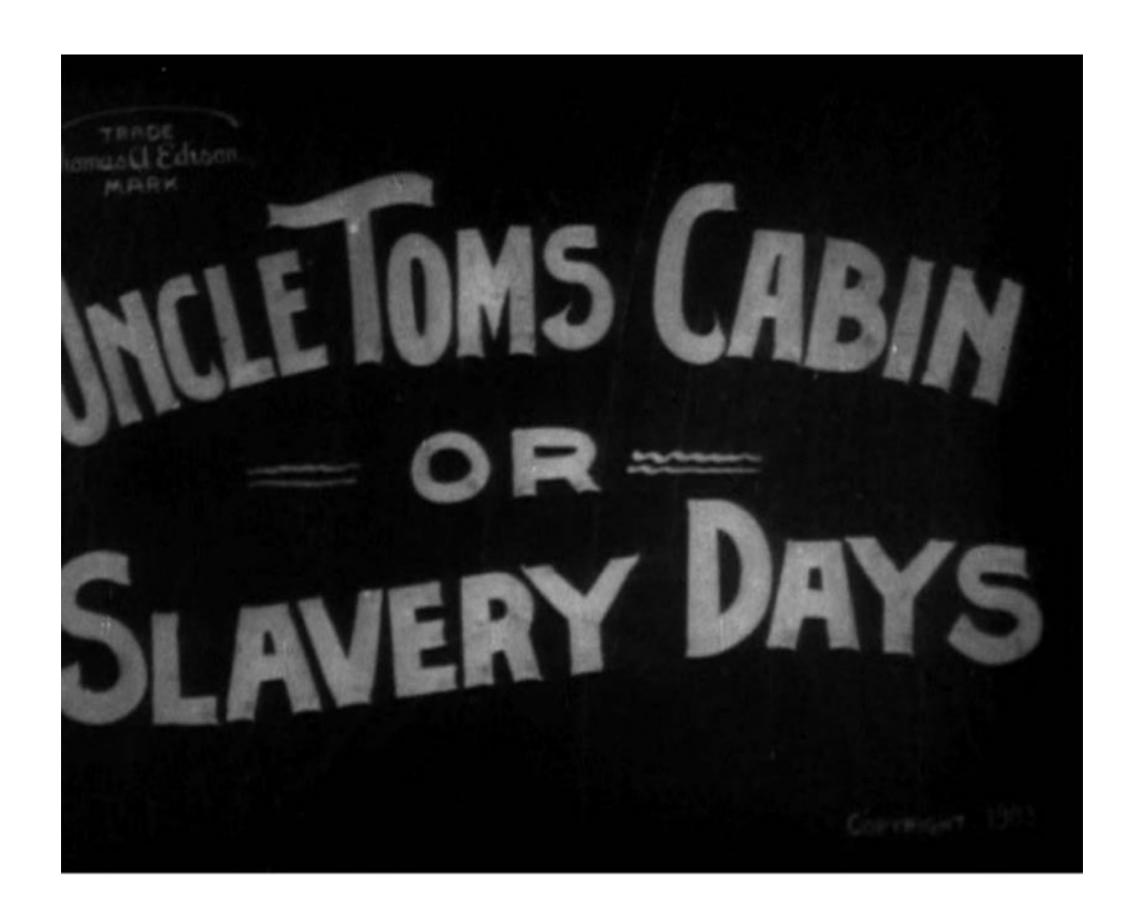
 \square 1000 feet = 300 meter = one reel

Biograph

- □ Wallace McCutcheon
- ☐ Frank Marion

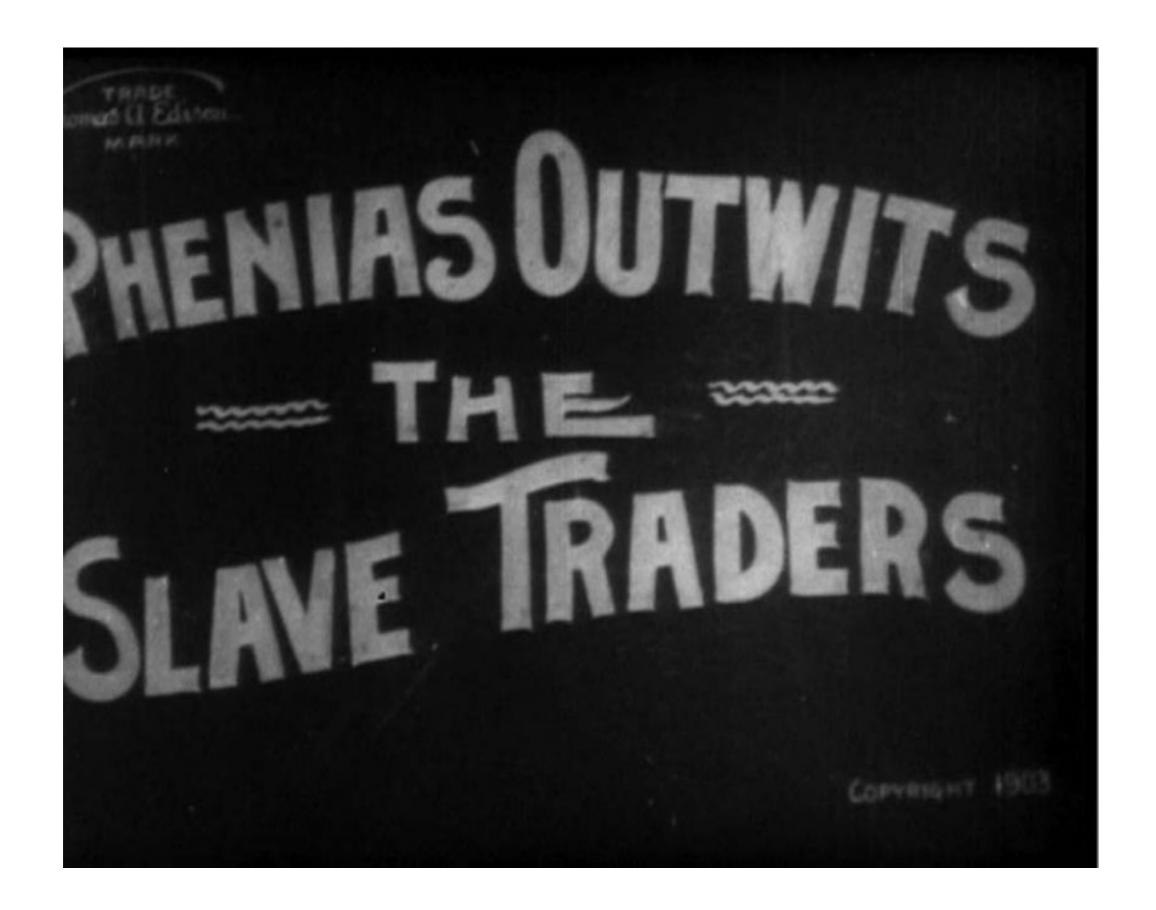
Uncle Tom's Cabin

- □ 1903
- □ Porter
- ☐ first intertitles



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screenplay formats

- □ before 1886: oral
- 1896 1904: other media (newspapers, photo stories, etc.)
- ☐ 1904 1912: theater, scenario
- ☐ since 1912: continuity script

Rip Van Winkle

☐ Thomas Jefferson 1896

OBERAMMERGAU

ners of Animated Picture Apparatus the most sublime of all subjects, THE PASSION PLAY. Playing to crowded houses at the EDEN MUSEE F. Z. MAGUIRE & CO. offer to Theatrical Managers and Ow New York. Endorsed by press, public and clergy.

READ SOME OF THE PRESS COMMENTS:

"Follows quite laintenily the dramatic representation at Oberammergan,"-NEW YORK HERALD.

"The exhibition made a decoledly favorable impression, and will doubtless attract many visitors to this popular place of attore

ment."-WORLD.
"Theorem it was done it was well done; the pictures are artistic and interesting "-EVENING JOURNAL.
"The pictures are life size, and all the action is brought out in detail."-DAILY NEWS.
"The display was in every respect interesting and held the attention of the spectators from beginning to end."-NEW YORK TIMES.

"One would prophery that those "who came to spot" will 'reveals to pray," "BROOKLYN CITIZEN

"The tableaux, in their entire", bring the factions's anothing on earth, and like sufferings, more should believe the spectator than any particular to the proposed of the series of this city, after having witnessed the representation, supermed his self-ing alterer to the management of the Buses as follows: The lesson taught by the representation brings would be not then ever below, the teachings of forigines. The Faction Flar might well be said to give these who see it a reresult and build as the distribution of the children was not I left realing the brings have been as I have make the best to the whom as I have before." "Nail, AND EXPRESS.

IN

LENGTH

SUBJECTS. ABOUT 2,200

AVERAGING 100 FEET

NOTICE. SPECIAL

These films ARE TAKEN UNDER LICENSE OF THOMAS A. EDISON, whose patents cover moving photographic films. Any other production of this subject is unauthorized by him, and parties so attempting will be vigorously prosecuted.

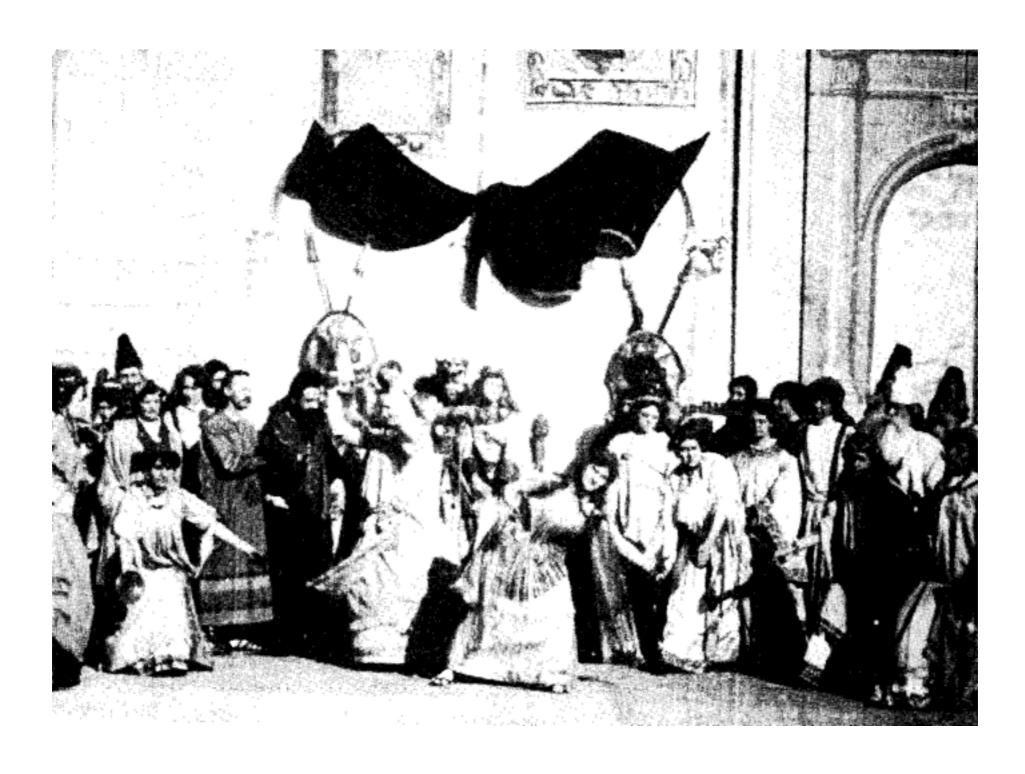
LECTURE FURNISHED FOR EXHIBITORS.

As Lent is rapidly approaching a special opportunity is afforded Hanagers and Echibitors, who can easily reap large profits during this sacred season by utilizing THE PASSION PLAY for Lenter Hatiness, etc. This production has cost a vast sum of money to produce. For particulars apply to

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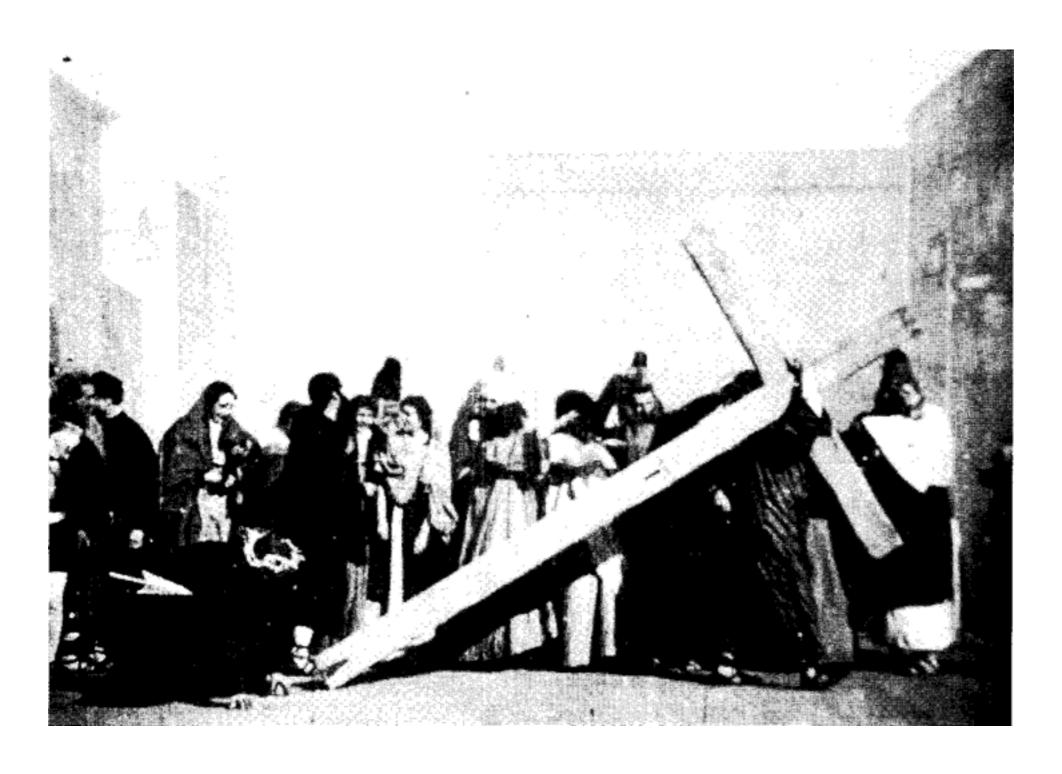
LORD'S COURT BUILDING, Williams Street and Exchange Place, New York. Selling Agents for THOS. A. EDISON.

WRITE FOR NEW CATALOGUE OF FILMS AND PROJECTING APPARATUS.





PD Mag. Dr. Claus Tieber





Narrator/Lecturer

Lectures on Notable Reels.

LECTURE DR WAURT (Two profes)

Notice is a suggested that the mass and better of the state is attacked in the state of the

Same to The crossed and largest a coulor with problems problem.

Same to The crossed and largest a coulor with fastest problems, and the fastest problems of the coulor of

Ben Hur

- □ Kalem Company
- ☐ Gene Gauntier

□ Lew Wallace

Gene Gauntier



Central Producer System

- "When I had my theatrical company" (...) I never told a director ,Go and put on a play' and trusted to his inventive genius. I selected a manuscript I liked, and he followed it. And I didn't see any reason why the same course shouldn't be a success in the motion picture game."
- □ Lloyd Thanhouser

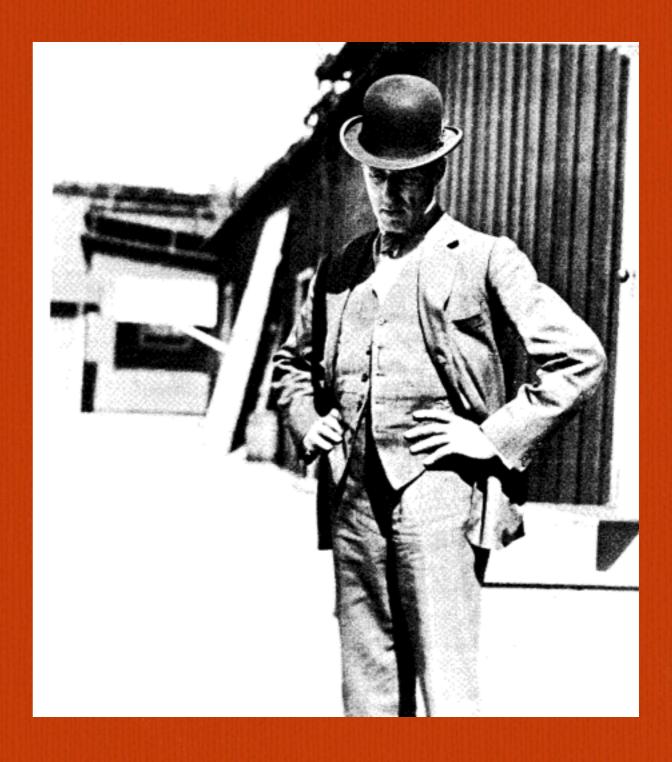
Lloyd Lonergan, Thanhouser

"When I had my theatrical company" (...) I never told a director ,Go and put on a play' and trusted to his inventive genius. I selected a manuscript I liked, and he followed it. And I didn't see any reason why the same course shouldn't be a success in the motion picture game."

Scenario Script

- "the plot of action that is no more than a synopsis of the scenes is being replaced by the full script."
- □ Eapes Winthrop Sargent

D. W. Griffith



Mack Sennett



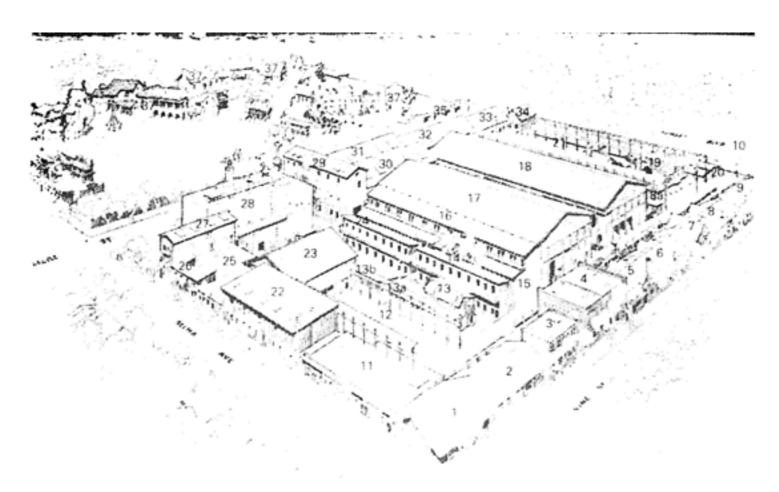
Frank Capra

"Here's the way we slave: Two men work up a story line, then all the others pitch in on gags. Sennett holds story conferences up here or down in his office. Sometimes he takes us to the projection room to see the rushes. You can scribble out your own ideas, but no scripts for the directors. You tell them the story and they shoot from memory. Got it?"

Mack Sennett

"The more money we spent on the script, on writing the story, the less money it cost us to shoot the pictures when we put the actors to work. I thought that over and made motions to get all the work possible out of my writers.

The Lasky studio 1918



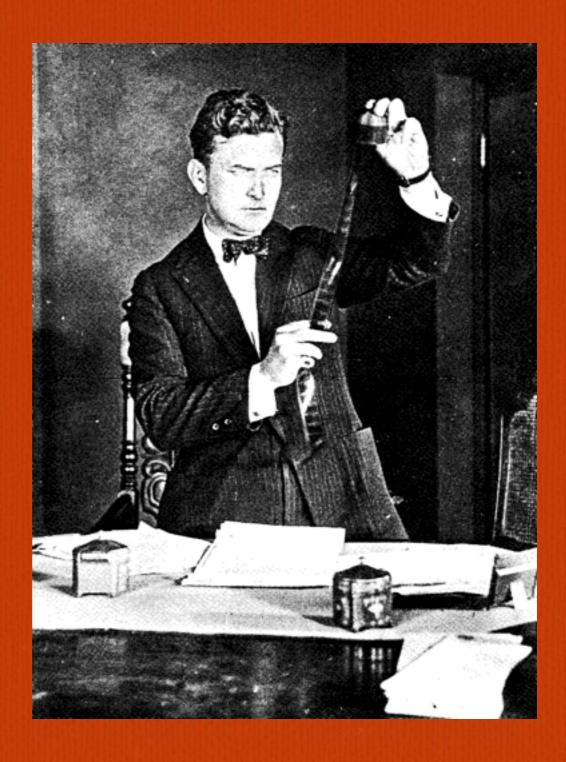
- : Property room
- Outgoing property room
 Star dressing room
 building
- 4 Wardrobe building
- Engaging department
- Executive offices
- Cecil B. De Mille's office
- Director's offices
- Scenario department
- Mary Pickford's dressing room
- :: Incoming property room
- ... Stage No. 1
- Wilfred Buckland's office

- over dressing room used by Geraldine Farrar
- 13a Title department, and printing plant, and electrical department
- 13b Projection room No. 2
- 14 Extra dressing room
- 15 Scene docks
- 16 Principal dressing rooms
- 17 Stage No. 2
- 18 Stage No. 3
- 18a Company dressing rooms, entire length of stage
- 19 Stage No. 4
- 20 Scene docks, entire length

- of Stage No. 4
- 21 Sail boat in tank
- 22 Dark stage
- 23 Small glass stage
- 24 Extra dressing rooms and hospital
- 5 Stock room
- Purchasing department. Press photographer's
- Old paint frame now upholstering and wall papering department
- 28 Laboratory. Frame building under number now

- removed and addition to laboratory erected
- 29 Paint frame
- 30 Fitting room
- 31 Carpenter shops
- 32 Planing [sic] Mills
- 33 Property construction department
- 34 Plaster shops and blacksmith shop
- 35 Garages
- 36 Douglas Fairbanks' offices and dressing rooms
- 37 Exterior sets built for productions

Thomas H. Ince



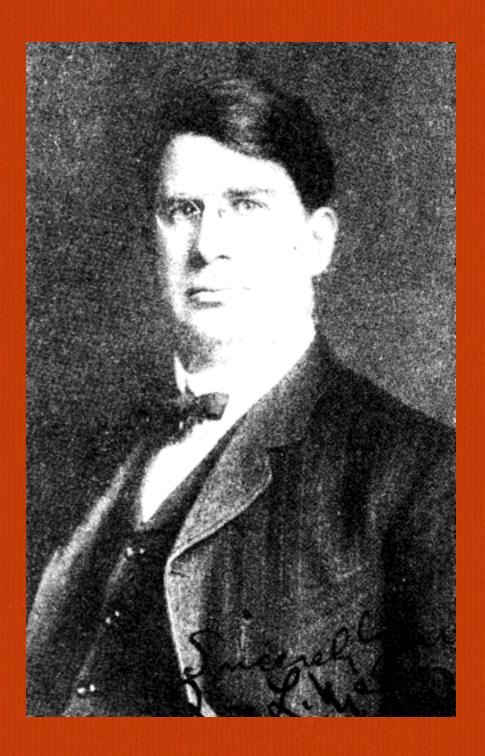
Continuity Script



Ince's Autoren

- ☐ C. Gardner Sullivan
- ☐ Monte Katterjohn
- ☐ J.G. Hawkes

Roy McCardell





McCardell's Photo-Stories



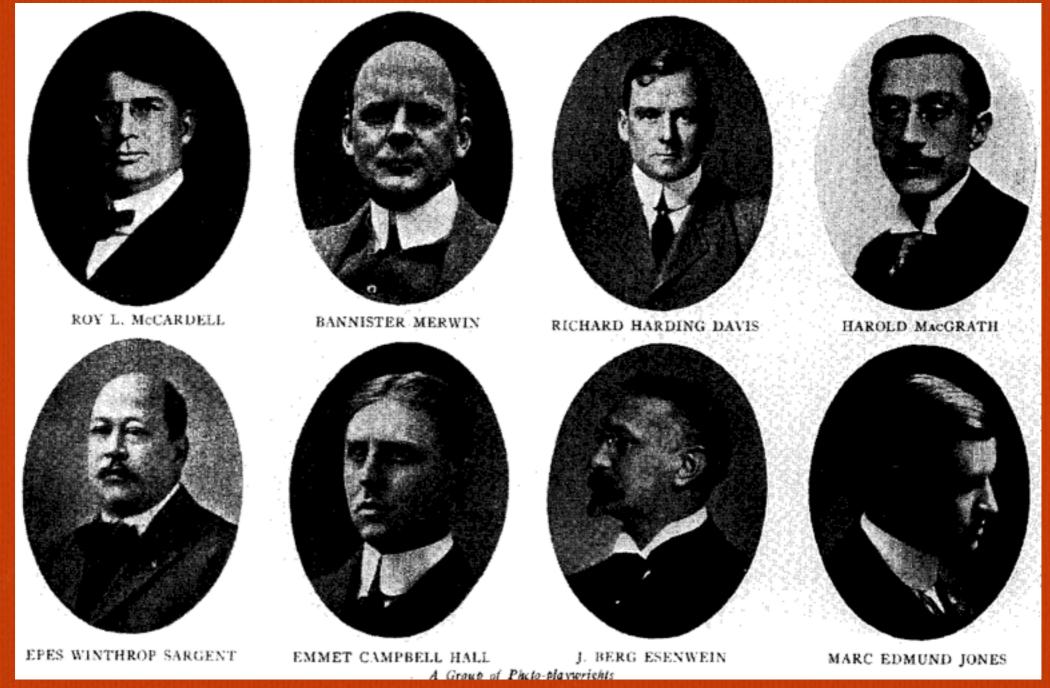
Photo-Stories

Frank E. Woods



Photoplay 1914

| Biograph wanted ,Problem stories in which effective contrast is made between the rich and the poor. |
|---|
| The American Film Manufacturing Company, can now use Eastern and Western drama, melodrama, and comedy drama. All sorts of comedy subjects and an occasional costume play are purchased. |
| The Bison Film Company recently, acquired the services of the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Company of Indians and cowboys and is in the market for high class western and cowboy scenarios. |
| The Eclair Company on the other hand did not want westerns, while Edison was more interested in ,the particular plot than the classification. |
| Kalem at this point wanted material that could be done in Southern California, and suggested writers keep in mind the personalities of their top stars, Alice Joyce and Carlyle Blackwell. Kalem did allow as how an occasional railroad subject might be considered. Kinemacolor Company of America, in an early attempt at making color films, wanted open air scenes as far as possible, while Majestic wanted rural comedies or dramas of life on the farm. |
| The Meliès Film Company was also looking for stories with Southern California settings, and were even more specific about their requirements: ,The stories must not require military scenes or anything of a spectacular order. There may be a number of riders used in the picture, incidentally, up to the number of fifteen.' |



A Group of Photo-playwrights

Scenario Fever

"TOO STUPID"

Knut Hamsun came over from Norway some years ago and got a job washing dishes in a restaurant. He was "fired." His employer told him he was "too stupid" to wash dishes. Maybe he was. Knut got a job on a Chicago street car. The superintendent "fired" him. He couldn't remember the names of the streets. "Too stupid," was the verdict.

Successively Knut became porter in a hotel, coal passer on a steamship, deckhand, and many other things. Always he was discharged and usually the boss told him he was too stupid to "earn his salt."

But Knut wasn't too stupid to write fifteen volumes of poems, which have been translated into seventeen languages, and which have delighted readers the world over. He wasn't too stupid to write novels no one can forget after reading. He wasn't too stupid to earn and receive the Nobel prize for literature, nearly \$50,000. He wasn't too stupid to become one of the world's really great writers.

Yet he was a failure as a dishwasher.

On the other hand, many a failure in literature would make a fine street-car conductor.—Editorial, Los Angeles Record.



WHO KNOWS BUT WHAT YOU ARE ANOTHER KNUT HAMSUN?

It is said that Marshall Neilan, the famous director, was a taxicab driver, and that C. Gardner Sullivan, Ince's \$100,000 a year scenario writer, was a farmer boy. People get to be famous in the motion picture business in just a short while. The purpose of the League is to give you YOUR OPPORTUNITY.

PHOTOPLAYWRIGHTS LEAGUE OF AMERICA

621-7 Union League Building

Los Angeles, Calif.

Scenario Fever

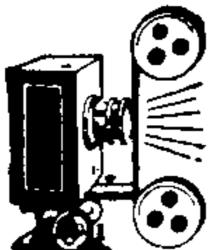
YOU can earn BIG MONEY WRITING PHOTO=PLAYS

Great demand. We teach only sure method of writing and selling photo-plays. No experience or literary ability required. Our students are selling their plays. Send for free book of valuable information and Special Prize Offer.

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Correspondence Course Not Required

Past experience and literary ability unnecessary.

DETAILS FREE

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EACH

Professions

- □ Story Editor
- □ Reader/ Story Analyst
- □ Continuity Clerk/ Script Girl



John Emerson and Anita Loos



Anita Loos

PD Mag. Dr. Claus Tieber



June Mathis



June Mathis - Valentino

PD Mag. Dr. Claus Tieber



Jeanie Macpherson



Mary Pickford Frances Marion

Frances Marion

Poor Little Rich Girl (1917) Stella Maris (1918) Pollyanna (1920) The Love Light (1921) Stella Dallas (1925) **The Scarlett Letter (1926) The Wind (1928) Anna Christie (1930)** The Big House (1930) **Min and Bill (1931) The Champ (1931)**

Frances Marion

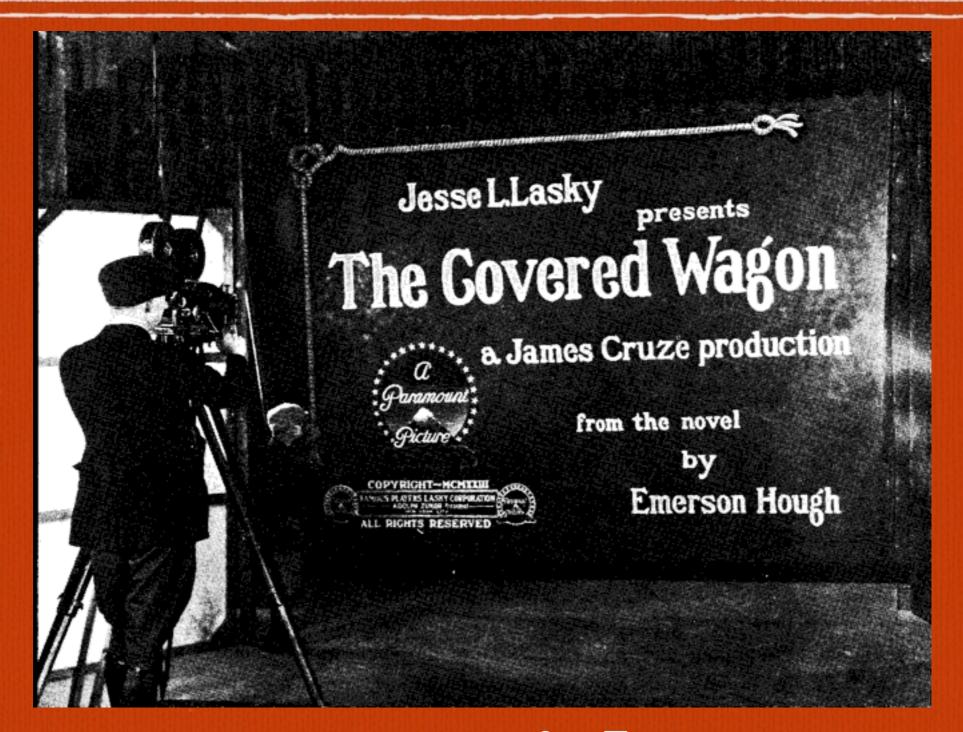
- □ Parents children relations
- ☐ rich poor, melodramatic vs. classical narration
- ☐ female characters
- ☐ Marion Pickford

Goldwyn, Eminent Authors

☐ The great trouble with the usual author is that he approaches the camera with some fixed literary ideal and he cannot compromise with the motion picture viewpoint ... This attitude brought many writers whom I had assembled into almost immediate conflict with our scenario department, and I was constantly being called upon to hear the tale of woe regarding some title that had been changed or some awfully important situation which had either been left out entirely or else altered in such a way as to ruin the literary conception."

Payment

- □ 1909: 10 \$
- □ 1914: 50 100 \$
- □ 1000 2500 /weel
- □ 10.000 25.000 \$ original story



Intertitles

Intertitles



Sound

- ☐ Central Producer und Producer Unit System
- ☐ Master Scene Script
- □ Dialogue Continuity
- economic crisis

Master Scene Script

- You just write: ,master scene,', ,cut to,' or ,close shot' which is very easy, just mix it up. The master shots and the individual shots were all shot the same way."
- □ Julius Epstein

New Screenwriters

- **☐ W.R. Burnett**
- ☐ Charles Brackett
- ☐ James M. Cain
- ☐ William Faulkner
- □ Ben Hecht
- □ Clifford Odets
- □ Dorothy Parker

Payment in Hollywood

 \square less than 250\$: 93 authors = 40,8%

□ 250-499: 52 22,8%

□ 1.750 -1.999: 3 1,3%

□ 2.500: 3 1,3%

 \square 3.000 – 3.249: 1 0,4 %

vertical integration

- □ production
- □ distribution
- □ exhibition

Will Hays



THIS PICTURE APPROVED BY THE PRODUCTION CODE ADMINISTRATION OF THE MOTION PICTURE PRODUCERS & DISTRIBUTORS OF AMERICA.

CERTIFICATE NO.

The "Seal of Approval" was initially shown full-screen before the credits. Within a year the MPPDA emblem and certificate # were made smaller and displayed at the bottom of the screen listing the production crew's credits.

PCA Seal

The Big 5 and Little 3

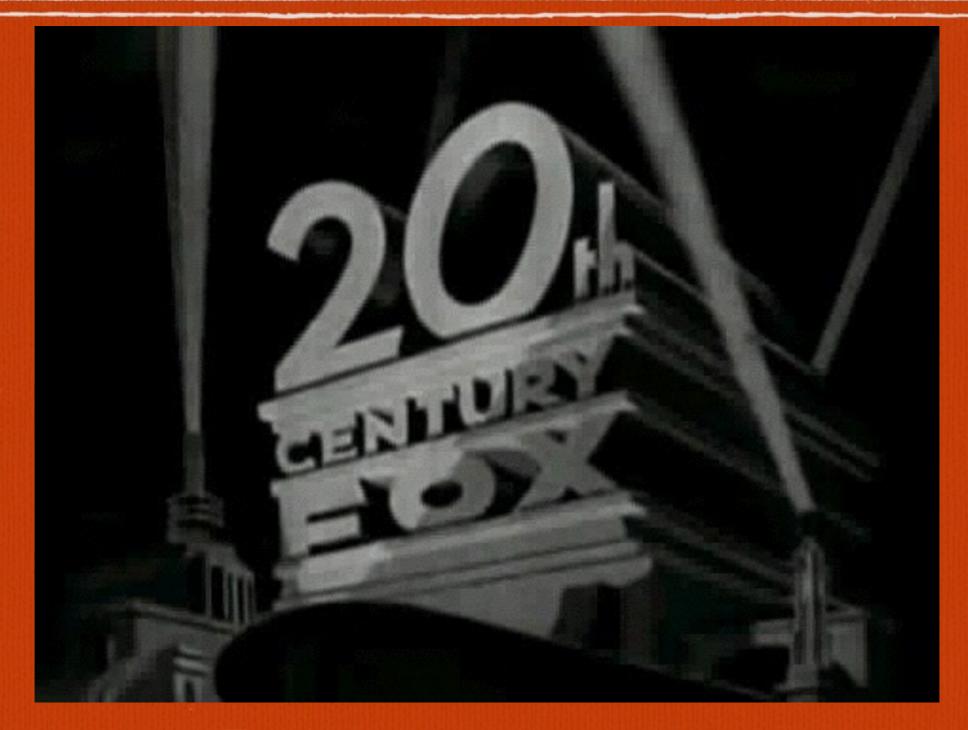
- **□** Warner Bros.
- □ 20th Century Fox
- □ Loews/MGM
- □ Paramount

Little Three

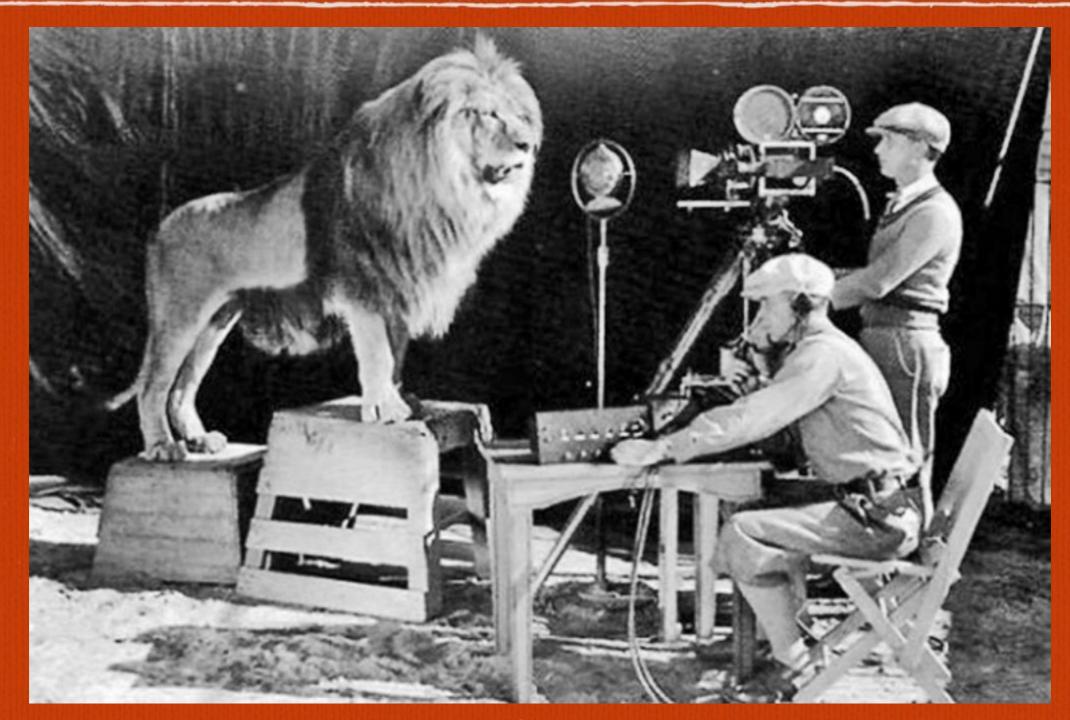
- □ Universal
- □ United Artists
- □ Columbia



Warner Bros.



20th Century Fox



MGM

Story Conference

- □ A story isn't a story but a conference
- □ Stephen Vincent Bénet

Hollywood as Destroyer

- ☐ F. Scott Fitzgerald
- □ William Faulkner

☐ If writers as individuals were rarely destroyed in Hollywood, then the profession of authorship as they knew it certainly was under attack. This was the true significance of the Eastern writer's experience in Hollywood in the 1930s.

□ Richard Fine



Irving Thalberg

PD Mag. Dr. Claus Tieber



Grand Hotel

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Grand Hotel

- □ Novel by Vicki Baum
- ☐ Play in Germany (Dir.: Max Reinhardt)
- □ Broadway
- □ Edmund Goulding

Story Conference 17.11.1931

- ☐ Goulding: "We have one hundred and fifty pages and have to cut it down to one hundred and twenty-five or thirty."
- ☐ Thalberg: "First we want to get our story and then cut it down. Have you got the play here. To me the play was so far better, Eddie. In my humble opinion."

☐ Thalberg: Over my dead body, you'll cut hat scene. I know what the audiences' reaction to this scene is -They have applaud. (...) don't destroy what is right." ", this is the scene that sells her to the audience ",

Goulding: "... there is no ground wire, no reason for it" Thalberg: "But the reaction I got from the play was marvelous. ... it was funny to the audience."

Thalberg

□ I miss the increasing tempo in these damn scenes – I'm a great believer in curtains. Work it up to a point – bang – look – fade out before an audience is up to you – while they are still wondering, "What did he mean?" Fade out.

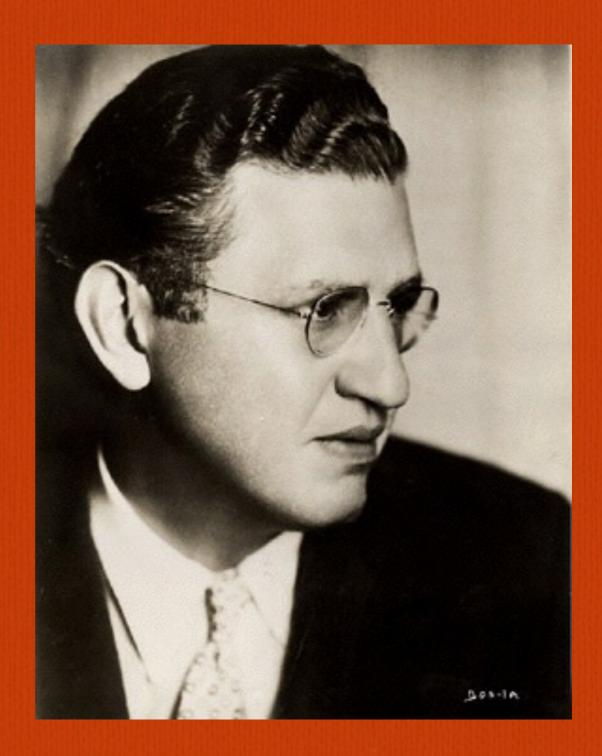
Thalberg

☐ To me this is a lousy play that only succeeded because it is lousy. It's full of life — a painted carpet upon which the figures walk — audiences love those damn things, if they are properly done.

Thalberg

☐ Eliminate her saying: ,I'm <u>so</u> tired.' Have her say ,I'm so tired.' Very simply. There are certain things that can not be over-played and be sincere. And one of them is a person feeling sorry for herself. It should be played with an understanding.

David O. Selznick



Criteria

- ☐ length of a scene, pace of the film
- ☐ Motivation
- ☐ Starsystem
- □ Dialogue
- ☐ Inter-titles, Voice-over etc.
- □ Ideology
- □ Budget



Darryl F. Zanuck

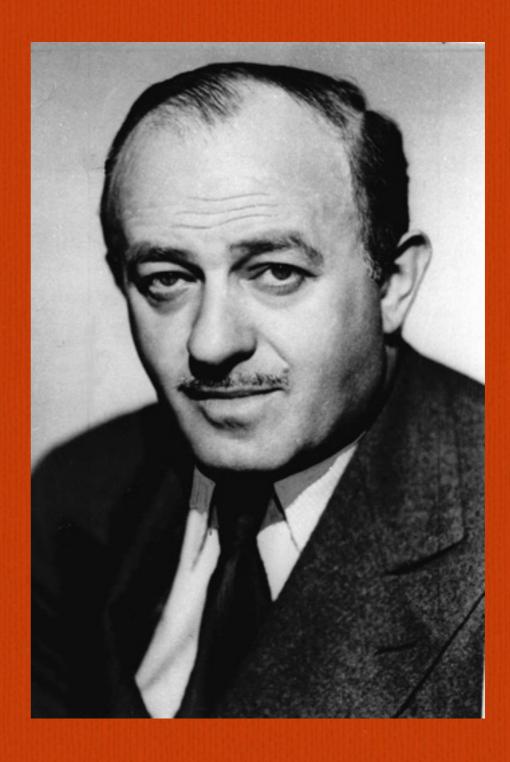
Criteria

- ☐ Movement, Development
- □ Dramatic vs. Narrative
- ☐ The storyline
- □ Personal story
- ☐ literary source
- □ Ending

Criteria cont.

- □ Planting
- □ characters
- □ verisimilitude
- □ Dialogue
- ☐ Stars
- ☐ Visual Devices
- □ practical aspects
- ☐ Ideology
- □ audience
- **□** success of comparable films

Ben Hecht



Ben Hecht

- □ Scarface (1932)
- □ Nothing Sacred (1937)
- ☐ Kiss of Death (1947)
- ☐ Spellbound (1945)
- □ Notorious (1945)

Ben Hecht

- □ self-conscious screenplays
- **□** Humour
- □ male friendship
- □ Dialogue

Hollywood in the 1940s

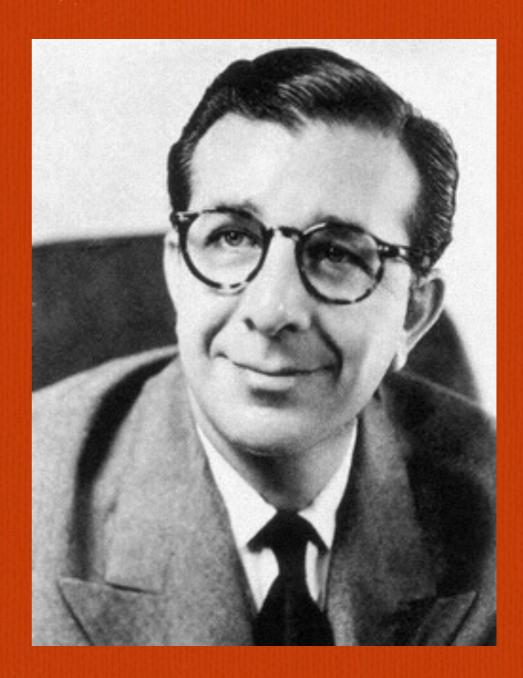
- □ Organization
- Anti-trust law suit
- □ Independent Production
- Opinion Research, Audience Research
- □ Office of War Information

Hyphenates

- ☐ Producer-Director, Writer-Producer
- screenwriters as producers: Nunnally Johnson

MGM

- back to Central Producer System
- Dore Schary



Paramount Case

- ☐ 1938 Anti-Trust law-suit
- □ Blockbooking
- □ Consent Decrees

Independent Productions

- □ Independent Cinemas
- ☐ Independent Productions
- consequences for film production and screenwriting
 - □ blacklist
 - □ Production code

Audience Research

- □ Gallup
- ☐ 1940 Audience Research Institute (ARI)

OWI

☐ Office of War Information 1942 - 45

Unions

- ☐ Screen Writers Guild (SWG)
 - \square seperation
 - □ approval
 - □ Credits
 - ☐ American Author's Authority (AAA)

HUAC

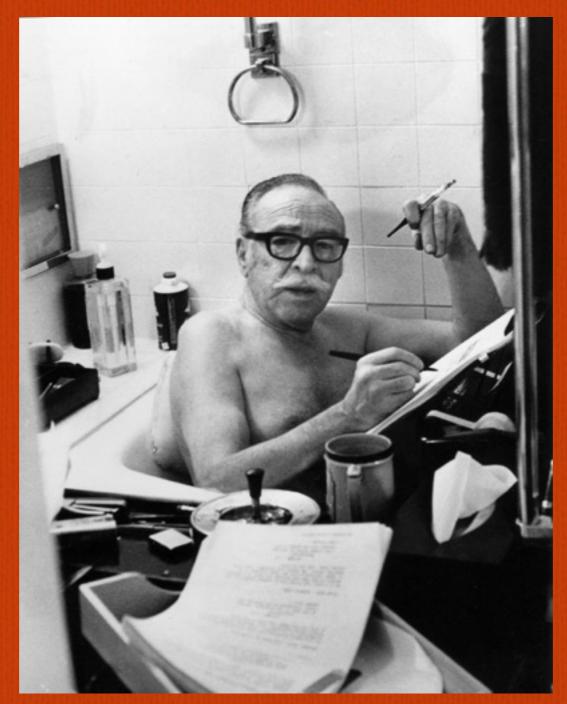
- □ House Un-American Activities Committee
- ☐ Committee for the First Amendement
- □ Waldorf statement
- □ Clearance



Committee for the 1st Amendment

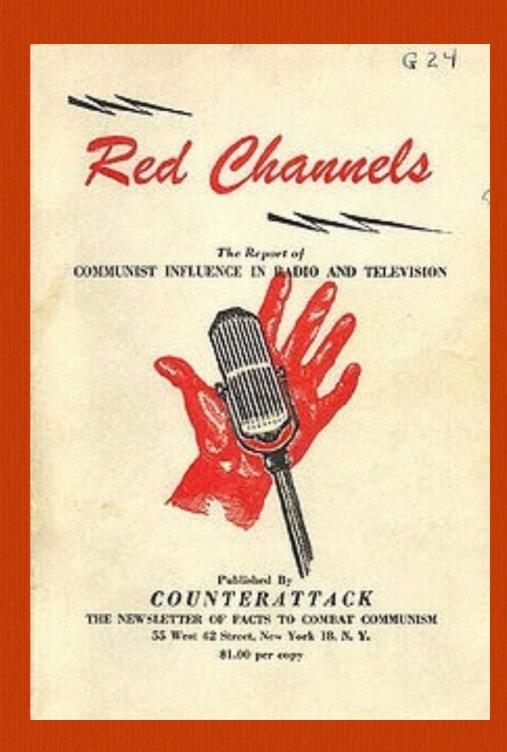
The Hollywood Ten

- □ originally 19
- \square then 11
- □ B. Brecht leaves the USA



Dalton Trumbo

the Greylist



Clearance

Black Market

- ☐ Front
- □ Pseudonym (pen-name, alias)
- since 1951 (2. wave of hearings) no chance to work for the studios
- □ independent production
- □ television

Trumbo

- ☐ last screenplay before the blacklist: 75.000 \$
- ☐ first offer an day of HUAC hearing:

3.750 \$ (Gun Crazy, King Brothers)

The End of the Blacklist

- ☐ 1957: Friendly Persuasion Michael Wilson Nomination
- ☐ 1957: The Brave One wins Oscar (Robert Rich = Dalton Trumbo)
- ☐ 1958 Bridge Over River Kwai Nomination (Carl Forman, Michael Wilson)
- ☐ 1959: Defiant Ones Nomination (Nathan E.Douglas = Ned Young)

End of the blacklist

- □ Problems with the Academy Awards
- ☐ War in Korea is over
- ☐ Vice President Nixon tells Kirk Douglas that the blacklist is an issue to be solved by Hollywood, not by the White House
- Payment for (some) blacklisted screenwriters is nearly at pare-huac level



Spartacus and Exodus

Trumbo

- □ Before 1947: Kitty Foyle, Tender Comrade, Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo,
- ☐ Blacklist: Gun Crazy, Roman Holiday, The Brave One, Terror in a Texas Town
- After the list: Spartacus, Exodus, Lonely Are the Brave,
 Sandpiper, Hawaii, Johnny Got His Gun, Papillion

HUAC Conclusion

- ☐ Why screenwriters?
- Consequences
- ☐ Films before 1947:
- \square "russian" film (Mission to Moscow, Song of Russia)
- ☐ Social Consciousness Filme: Crossfire, Grapes of Wrath,

Cont.

- ☐ Films after 1947: anti-communist films
- different content: different representation of women, working class and Afro-Americans

1950s



- ☐ television
- ☐ modification of the production code
- ☐ MCA, Lew Wasserman

Development

- □ Exposé
- □ Treatment
- ☐ First Draft
- ☐ Final Draft
- ☐ Shooting Script

□ Spec Script

Hyphenates

- □ writer-producer
- □ director-producer
- □ writer-director

other models

- □ European Art Cinema, Auteur cinema
- ☐ Television series: Head writer, writers' room

Manuals

- □ Syd Field: Screenplay
- □ Robert McKee: Story
- Christopher Vogler: The Writer's Journey

Influence of the Manuals

- ☐ Film Schools
- □ commissioning editors (TV)
- □ dramaturgs

Narratological Models

- ☐ Todorov: Equilibrium
- □ Propp: Morphology of the Fairy Tale
- □ Lottman: semantic fields
- ☐ Altman: single, dual, multiple focus

Conclusion

- \square screenplay = a means of communication
- \square screenplay = a document of communication
- ☐ more than one author
- process
- ☐ institutions, "doxa" and the author



Thank you!

Thank you!