

**Miklós Marsovszky**

## **New Art: The Film (1924)**

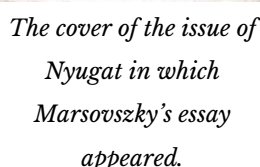
### **Absztrakt**

The essay takes on the task to examine more closely the premises and consequences of the statement according to which the matter of cinema is movement. This is done by speculating on the ideal form of cinema and by integrating cinema in the system of aesthetic thought, although this is possible only by rethinking its master concepts.

### **Szerző**

**Miklós Marsovszky** is a relatively unknown writer of whom we know nothing else than he was a law student in 1919 in Budapest. As part of the editorial politics of Ernő Osvát to promote young and unknown talents in *Nyugat* (the leading literary journal of Hungarian aesthetic modernism, issued between 1908 and 1941), the journal published 32 writings by Marsovszky, mostly reviews and criticism and another important essay entitled *Nature and the image* in 1926.

It is hard to lead the tired man off the beaten track, to drive him into the thicket. If we would like to deal with film, however, this is precisely what we have to do. Film is the new direction, the new possibility of the human spirit: an organizing principle, yet untested, which emerged unexpectedly on occasion of the invention of a machine in order to bring a new order into the chaos of the world. The depicting possibilities of the cinematograph tear a new type of matter out of chaos, a new matter that technically was impossible up to this point to make directly perceptible. This new matter is movement.



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Thus movement has not yet figured in a depiction as a form-building factor. A few words are enough to show this. Visual arts – given their essence – strive to validate the equilibrium of things depicted; the building block of all literary forms, the word results in a mechanical delimitation, arrested movement. We could interpose that form itself is delimitation, arrest. This arrest, however, is independent of the moving or still character of the depicted, because it does not happen on the plane of depiction, nor in the perception of the depicted, but in its own spiritual sphere.

All the same, all depictions until now have been constructed out of still elements; in this way their forms are arrested forms even on the plane of immediate perception. But in all of them arose a great disquietude engaged by their inner essence due to their inability to make movement perceptible. This disquietude is particularly strong in the arts employing the word. The word and the sentences which bind words into judgments are essentially static, but they strive irrepressibly and industriously to become animate, to branch out into time.

Intermediate forms are born testifying to this great inner disquietude of the intellect bursting out of its own boundaries; at first sight, it seems that the building principle of the epic and the drama could be movement itself. But in drama there is action, in the epic there is event: they consist of the rational clash of human actions (drama), or of plastic and picturesque situations (epic). Drama registers the motifs of action in human consciousness, the epic is constituted by the succession of the static results of movement, a succession aspiring to the rhythm of the situations. For movement, in its sensory continuity, is undepictable through the medium of the word.

We are well aware that these few words are not the full story, and we should say more to map the inner meaning and human importance of drama and narrative. But here we are dealing with these problems in only one respect and up until the extent to which the questions at hand are clarified. We only wanted to state that the cinematograph brought with it the first opportunity to depict movement directly, therefore that it tore new matter out of chaos. What was up to this point unrealizable, now can become reality; nonetheless, he who yearns for the redemption of form must penetrate a vast thicket if he wants to build from the newly explored matter.

## II

A new art can only be built from new matter. This new substance, in the case of film, is immediately apparent. And yet still entirely in a raw state. Like the block of marble out of which the first statue was carved. But could we say that the raw marble block is the material of the statue? The statue is carved elsewhere, and the marble is only the embodiment of this carving done elsewhere. Nonetheless, the marble is the beginning and the end of the statue's story. This story lasts ever longer, its beginning and end falling ever further from each other.

The first carving was not yet a statue: it was made of curiosity or play – perhaps fear, perhaps

frantic despair. Matter cracked along its natural breaking points under the battering blows of the human hand; it realized its own formal possibilities of form without resistance. The first carvings were material in an abstract way, and only retrospective reflection inaugurated them as statues.

But matter gradually relented of its rigidity, softened and became transparent, revealed its inner structure, produced desires, initiated dialogue with man. The raw block developed into a rich and complexly textured evolution in order to become material in the hand of the artist. It broke away from the world perceivable by the senses, mixed with the intentions of the formative human will, but at the same time kept its own will: its acts of resistance became animated and spoke in human tongue. It became a wholly spiritualized and transparent element of reality which, on the one hand, revealed matter's natural possibilities of form, and on the other hand, made manifest the trajectories of movement that the formative human will had marked in it; every new statue inscribed its contours in it over again, making it more and more rich in possibility. This richness, however, eventually proliferated into an increasingly impenetrable jungle, and the raw block stood ever further from the statue.

The material of every art develops in this way. This material does not appear ready-made or relevant once and for all, unalterable and immobile, but as a living, moving reality always in transformation, which shows different aspects at different times of its history. The artist always takes into his hands such a historically determined, living and developing material, and he fights his battle for the rest of the form in this rich, immaterial matter of many potentialities. And then during work, all of the sudden, light bursts into human consciousness, the jungle clears, chaos dies away, muddled writings fade.

In the unfolding of the new statue, matter once again becomes a simple, embodied existence. The story of the statue begins and ends with the raw block. Its human significance lays between these two limiting phases. For what happens in raw material can never be in its deepest essence humanized: the clarity of form always emerges from the depths of the matter to be formed, as in every true work of art the dormant potentialities of form awaken in isolated chunks of newly dehumanized matter.

Thus if it is true that the human soul seeks form in matter in order to make visible its own ancestral contents, the problematic of every art is this: is it possible to make an occurrence that takes place essentially independently of and beyond man to express humanity? We do not know yet if we will find a satisfying answer to this question, but this is clear to us: the domain of the different arts is marked off by differences in their raw material, and the ultimate question of the form can only be answered by unveiling this raw material's inner structure.

### III

Film's raw material is movement. This material, singularly realizable and available to only film, introduces film as an autonomous terrain within the great empire of arts. This simple, self-evident

statement should first and foremost inscribe itself into the body of all workers of film art. If this is done, many mistakes will disappear, much pointless labour will be eliminated. However, it is difficult to lead someone away from the beaten track, and it is hard to overcome the idle force of habit. Film workers have not till now tried to step onto the new, untrodden path, although only this one can lead to art.

They have taken all the old paths one by one. They wrote film dramas, film epics, film pantomimes, they photographed magnificent black-and-white paintings. A great number of them have seen nothing else in film but the cheap popularization of other arts. For these, film was good business and nothing else. Their work entertained the audience and filled the movie theatres at night. Directors were exclusively preoccupied with their films becoming increasingly spectacular. Each new special effect yielded a fortune. Everyone was satisfied: the contractors and the audience alike. Only a few obstinate intellectuals wrote crushing critiques of the cinema, but even these only saw one film, after which they made an effort to avoid movie theatres.

But what happened in the meanwhile? Film embarked on these false paths with massive, nearly unprecedented development. Direction became increasingly artistic, the exhibition of plays increasingly luxurious, film studios began to organize expeditions to all parts of the world in order to photograph their actors in increasingly varied settings and fitting themes; they perfected the techniques of photographic recording based on exhaustive research, they dressed up thousands of extras and reconstructed an authentic milieu for historical plays, whole cinema-cities were built. Film increasingly became good business, although now it made conscious artistic efforts. The contemptuous, intellectual disbelievers gradually fell silent: they began to pay attention.



*Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios in  
the 1920s*

Almost without notice, film developed a face of its own. Man had never dealt with a more impatient and wilful material. It constantly stood out in compositions meant for other materials, it demolished foreign forms, and it grew into a visually, sensorially perceptible reality. Only here and there and for a short time – because its vigilant handlers soon nabbed it and put it on a leash. And yet these short liberations invoked, albeit unconsciously, the true and material film art of the future in each movie-goer's imagination.

## IV

The story of the statue begins and ends with the raw marble block. Let us try to illuminate the block out of which the film art of the future will be carved. This raw material block is, as we have stated, movement.

As the immediate and unbroken continuity of our bodies, and as the ceaseless sensation of all our senses do we perceive the world lying outside us. And yet we cannot grasp its essence with words. Because this essence is of a unified, simple and indivisible stuff, an elementary given, which can only be named or circumscribed, but not defined. We have many a time tried to approach it intellectually. We never succeeded. On account of its structural qualities, the intellect conceives of movement as departing and arriving, as cause and effect, and this conception leads to the primitive mechanization of the world artificially diminishing a principle of life which in reality is of an inexhaustibly rich fantasy.

Muscles stretch and bring the leg in motion, I set forth toward a determinate and attainable goal, but when I have reached it, I go further; all at once I am playful and cheerful, I wave my arms, I hasten my steps, I am thirsty, I stretch my arm toward a full glass, the goals come to an end, the movement persists: for its own sake, or for who knows what? What is this perpetual, restless zigzagging through space, this perpetual change of tension in our nerves? Can this knotted heap of lines, hurled into space by the limbs of a million of lives be untied, and made intelligible? And could the traversed space and time measure the movement? Do we know, could we know in what direction stretches and strains the great universal disquietude which can only be named and circumscribed? Where is the true dimension, goal, arresting-point of movement; not of my own but of that which I must perceive perpetually in and outside of me as soon as I open up my senses? We could hoard together many words, but this will never grasp the mystery of movement.

The intellect has only two paths to take to this mystery: the first one takes its final destination in the madhouse, the second leads to the primitive mechanization of the world. As for this last solution, humanity already has a richly equipped storehouse of commonplaces.

As long as it could not be depicted in perceptual continuity, the human spirit did not have possibility to render movement in its immediacy and entirety in its own realm which precisely for this reason was ruled over by a great and uncanny stillness – this was the main, decisive difference between the world created by God and man. It is for this reason that man was not able to bear this difference for long; he could not passively listen to the stiffening silence of his world, and so he tried with every possible ploy to create the illusion of movement within his own creatures; hurling his creatures from cause to goal on artificially built paths, he declaimed, gesticulated and yelled to overpower disbelief in his own creative powers and his great inner dissatisfaction. All in vain! He was never able to realize movement. Bewildering documents testify to this fruitless, Luciferean struggle. Seemingly (perhaps not just seemingly) splendid architectures were built.

And because it appeared in the realm of human consciousness and was hence domesticated, things in their loss of movement showed such a different facet from those of the world created by God that man easily mistook them as his own and shepherded, arranged and adjusted them with presumptuous self-conceit and without any real resistance: he could potter and play with them to his liking. And meanwhile he could become intoxicated by his own power. Is it really so? Do we conclude that the accidental invention of a machine could change everything all at once?

We could have said things differently from what we did – perhaps more, perhaps less. However, we are building a thought right now to which we need to seek in ourselves all possible objections. The raw material of film is movement. Not the dissected, conceptualized, humanized and rationalized movement, not the experimental one which till now man could produce only artificially, following trajectories between reason and purpose, but the ancestral movement without reason and purpose, ungraspable and unstoppable that does not endure the brakes of reason and of intellect, the great unconquerable mystery in front of which we cast down our eyes, but of which we remain aware in the stretching of our muscles, in our unappeasable anxieties; and when we look out from within ourselves, we can see nothing else but it. And now, all at once, it has become possible to liberate this great elusiveness in its sensory plenitude from the empirical world and depict it without the help of the intellect.

So, the great struggle now begins. Because the moving empirical world is at the same time rational and irrational; how we see it depends only on point of view, and it is up to our liking to choose the one that is most comfortable. But the movement liberated from the empirical world as raw material is something that, in its essence and immutability, is irrational independently of viewpoint. And the question again arises with yet greater force: is it possible to make an occurrence that takes place essentially independently and beyond man to express humanity? This question only arose retrospectively, along the territories on which the human formative will moves by contemplating the completed form and by speculative thought. The artist of the film, however, will arrive at form only if before the enactment of the formative gesture his body is filled with this question. Because this question must already be posed by the sheer intuition of the

film's raw material. Much more faith and courage will be needed for this work here than that elsewhere.

## V

All we said before is so simple and clearly apparent. The question should therefore arise: how is it possible that so few have recognized till now the true importance of film in the history of the human spirit, and that only so few have glimpsed the startling and dizzying new perspective opened up by the possibilities of film? As we said before: film began its development taking false paths. We ask again: how is this possible when the true path unfolds before us in sunlit and pleasing clarity?

There are two answers to these questions. The first one becomes clear from what was said before. Is it a wonder that the human spirit tries to escape from the terrible task it inherited from its accidental discovery of a frightening new material? That it got scared, seeks means of evasion, and does not want to accept its task? The second answer interprets the faults of film makers as unsuspecting misunderstandings. We have to say a few words about these misunderstandings.

Earlier we named the main directions taken by misunderstandings. All of them resulted from the non-recognition of film's true material. The film drama, the film epic, the film pantomime, the black-and-white paintings are all appropriations of foreign materials. Let us examine these misunderstandings one by one.

### **The film drama**

As on stage, actors in film also play within a field determined by the square of the screen. As soon as we adopt this viewpoint, we head toward the theatre drama. From here, the film drama is nothing other than the projected theatre play. The material of the theatre drama, as we have said, is the plot. The plot is the fullest and the most consistent intellectualization and registration of movement in human consciousness. It is essentially a composition of words, and as such, given the purity of the idea, it is completely independent of the stage. Its staging is basically nothing other than man's desperate struggle to effect the complete illusion of life on an already-completed form. Actions in the theatre drama develop out from preformed and artificially fixed characters of great consistency and strict linearity. Every completed stage composition can be delineated almost graphically in a determinate system of lines. (We cannot speak here about the human importance and meaning of the composition.)

Because the organ that embodies linear development is the word, the composition that is inscribed in space and is essentially timeless can through the medium of the word swing back into time. The written word is not able to perform this transfer and it therefore needs the animating

suggestiveness of the temporally immersed body of the actor. Reality has no fixed characters, and neither is the actor such; drama's strict development is always destabilized on the stage, something irrational flashes around the living mouth that utters words: the illusion of an entire life is conferred onto the complete form. What has happened: the actually proper thing – that which was intended as essential – has become degraded to a melodramatic accompaniment of the actor's movement. Herein lie the incurably deep problems of the stage.

In the film drama, these problems have somewhat subsided. Words here necessarily become pushed into the background while the actor appears in the foreground. This change in position resulting from technical necessity was the reason for the different facets of the film drama and the theatre drama from the beginning. Nevertheless, the pillars of its composition remained the word, and consequently the continuity of movement became constantly interrupted for the sake of interpretative intertitles. Moving from intertitle to intertile, then, the film had to be set in motion by wordless moving bodies, and it was in these moments that the film otherwise meant to be a drama broke away from its intellectual scaffolding and lived its own life for a few minutes. To sum up in short: the raw material of film is living, continuous movement, set free from every type of intellectual paralysis. It is impossible to build a drama from this raw material. Consequently the film drama is a *contradictio in adjecto*.

## The film epic

The epic yields a wider perspective onto the world's affairs than the drama. It does not work with fixed characters, and man is not its only hero. It is not tied to space or time. It is more humble and pious than the drama. Man becomes contemplative, *which softens the process by which he hardens into an individual*. In an epic attitude, the human soul becomes interested by the many-coloured and variegated things of the world in their totality. The shaping of epic form requires such an attitude of universal interest. The raw material of the epic is the flowing of the world's affairs from one distance into the next. From boundless remoteness to boundless remoteness: in this way, it is necessary that epic vision get rid of the categories of reason and purpose. It follows from this logically that the epic is only available to man as a form of the worldview, while it remains forever unattainable as an art form. Once we have said this in the following way: the only novelist is God.

Still, man perpetually desires and pursues this impossibility. The intellect continually makes efforts to burst open its own forms, but this struggle is ultimately useless: shone through the medium of the intellect, the light of the epic can never body forth form. The stream of things becomes obstructed, solidifies into situations: the words can depict only in a static manner. The most they can achieve despite convictions to the contrary and only through heroic struggle, is to leave these situations stand as documents of the flow, not building them into conceptual entities.

As we have seen, the raw materials of the epic and the film are strongly related to each other. For a moment, we are almost inclined to think that the two are one and the same: the moving existence

of the world's affairs. Even if this were true, the cinematograph tears into this material elsewhere and in a different manner. The great flow becomes intelligible to the epic attitude; even if not through the categories of reason and purpose, the epic attitude still grasps the completeness of things, bringing to living, enlivened life the affairs of the world, stemming from an almost religious sentiment that comprehends and accepts the contours of the visible world, perceiving and presenting the intelligibility of things' flowing movement in the slow, gradual delineation of precisely these contours.

The cinematograph only grasps motion and loses its hold on existence, it is a machine, it does not have a world view, and it achieves complete and perfect abstraction. Movement isolated in this manner speeds up and makes its own way. Film's raw material is the movement separated from the existence of things in its full terribleness and inhumanity. And the epic, as a man-made-form continues to remain an unreachable dream.

## The film pantomime

We hope that the critique of the film pantomime will take us several steps further along our way. Pantomime eradicates the word from the stage, and with this eliminates the most powerful and dangerous obstacle that has always stood in the way of film. The thought that we discover the possibility of grasping the form of film's material in pantomime lies close at hand.

Pantomime also achieves definite abstraction: it forces the actor's body into allegorical gestures in order for this body to express an already complete story without failings or the help of the word. How is this possible? Merely by reducing the actor's living body to a simple writing instrument that fills the limited area of the stage with juxtaposed, easily legible, attractively drawn figures of movement. Of course, in reality this can never be carried out completely, and at this point we could repeat all the things we said about the drama. However, in this case we have a slightly different story.



*Pantomime scene from Children of Paradise (Les enfants du paradis, Marcel Carné, 1946)*

The organ of pantomime is the wordlessly moving body, but movement here becomes a simple illustration of words, it takes on the nature and the function of the word, in other words, it totally casts off its essence. The moving body could live its own life in the drama, its task being to move this life parallel to the line drawn by the diction. And even this was only an ideal condition that was mitigated by reality: the actor only periodically had to connect his body to diction.

In pantomime, however, the moving body itself becomes diction. And while drama conceptualized movement only on the level of words, pantomime coerces the living body. Once again: pantomime is the kind of dramatic composition that is based on gestures instead of words. Due to its necessities of form, however, dramatic action can only progress discontinuously; thus the gestures belonging to a pantomime do not resemble the emphatic stresses of a continuous movement; they can only artificially erect delimitations because only in this way are they able to realize the jolting progression of dramatic action in the place of words. The minute that gestures merge into a continuous movement, pantomime loses its dramatic form.

Thus the main difference is this: film breaks away movement from life, while pantomime separates off only gesture. We can therefore see that film can borrow the form of pantomime even to a lesser degree than the form of the drama, because its realization would be rendered impossible even in furtive and brief form.

However, there is another, for us more important potentiality of pantomime that is likewise built on gesture, but that seemingly merges individual gestures into continuous movement. This second potentiality of pantomime is dance. The gestures of dance act like the rhythmically bound accents of a continuous movement, but movement here figures as a medium transporting gesture-accents to their proper place rather than as a formative agent.

Dance is essentially a completely abstract gesture-ornament, movement in this case merely fills space, that is to say it is only the illusion of movement since its constituent dimension, time, is missing – that is not chronometric time, but time as the reality of maturation. The movement of dance does not develop in time, but instead spreads out over space, and the body of the dancer ceases to be a human body, because it becomes the body of an abstract ornament. The dancer perhaps does not even know it, for in realizing the ornament he feels distinctly human affects: happiness and pain, fear and ecstasy. The dancers perhaps believe that they simply depict this affect; it is easier for them to believe this than that the most wonderful transubstantiation takes place in their body. What we said here will be taken up again before we put an end to the thought at hand.

## The pictorial film

The first artistic ambition of film directors was the following: to photograph neatly and distinctly with the right shade-division. We ourselves prefer good photography to bad; the imperfectly photographed film is just like playing on a piano off-key. But the untuned piano can only disturb the pleasure of hearing, for a Beethoven sonata remains the same even if it is played off-key. It is impossible not to notice that the appeal of a necessarily beautiful photograph is one of the greatest dangers to the film that is still searching for its form.

For a perfectly artistic photograph can only be achieved with a pictorial composition. The form of the image, as we have seen it, is composed of elements fixed already on the plane of direct perception. It is precisely the spaces of a film that are the most emphatic that the filmic tableaux stiffen into motionlessness, whereas the material of the film is continuous, uninterrupted motion.

According to this conception, the tableau and the film are irreconcilable enemies. The image constitutes a state of equilibrium fixed once and for all, an equilibrium which does not endure division. And yet in film, this is precisely what has to happen. Nonetheless, every motionless, fixed background builds up a real space, and the true film does not possess a space. Space in film is merely an auxiliary tool of depiction, only an imaginary space, which does not and cannot have reality. For the constituent dimension of movement is not space, as we have said; space is simply the medium of the empirical visibility of movement. And movement separates off from existence when it denies and demolishes space. As we have seen, the raw material of film is precisely this movement separated off from existence. Therefore space does and cannot have a formative agency in film.

## VI

The tableau is a profound symbol whose expressive power, although of different orientation, is equal in dynamism to movement. The tableau is a complete form that, with its exemplary visibility, folds man into an embrace with all that is outside and above him: homecoming, redemption, tranquility. The teachings of the picture have inscribed themselves deep in man, and there is not one act of forming that, transposed into its own representational means, would not want to realize these teachings.

Thus we should therefore reconcile the tableau with the film: it was in dealing with the problem of the pictorial film that the first and yet indistinct vision of the film form occurred to us. Consequently, the moving elements of the film strive toward equilibrium, to strike a definitive and valid balance, to come to a rest as an image. Although not as complete form, this image emerges on the flickering flow of the film as a distant, uncertain possibility; and yet the

diabolically charged, unrationalizeable movement in itself always overcomes this dimly emerging possibility. The tableau draws closer and moves away, but never realizes itself completely; and yet this movement of the tableau from near to far lends rhythm to these lines of movement drawn in time, each of which has a definite direction, tempo and dynamics. Direction, rhythm, tempo and dynamics: these four attributes of inexhaustible potential give life to the lines of movement: they embrace and they break apart. The two phases of deceleration on the screen would make out the beginning and end of the film play; in other words, the beginning stands for an unbinding and the end, a hardening of the tableau.

We put it this way, because we are not trying to conceal that this conception is not yet complete, that it is still tailored to man. Nevertheless, we still feel that every life dissolved into movement gains a new face and a new meaning for us by way of this conception.

## VII

In dealing with the previous questions, the thought of music occurred in all of us. Tempo, rhythm, dynamics: these are also attributes that bring to life, color and carry the line of melodies. And if we would pursue this line of thought, we would discover more and more analogous directives. Films are projected all over the world to musical accompaniment. It would be almost evident that film is the music of movement. The two things are essentially one and the same, and the reason for their simultaneous appearance is that, together, they sound fuller than separately.

No matter how appealing and logical this conclusion appears, however, we should discard any notion of essential and profound connection between film and music without hesitation. The building block of music is sound, a total escape from the categories of space and time and a total undoing of empirical reality. Music presses powerful affects out of the human body, but as soon as music leaves the lips its storm blows over. Man wants to retrieve this magical lull, this perfect redemption of the ineffable by actualizing it in music. That is why man forced sound back into time. But time is a simple medium of music's perceptibility, and no real movement can come to life in its ether. Sound takes off, disappears, the body pounces to capture it and hold it back, but it can only reach it if it becomes weightless and gets untied from itself completely; dance and music relate to each other powerfully and directly.

Anybody who has seen a film knows well that film cannot exist together with music; the viewer's entire conscious perception fixes onto the lit square of the screen and he acknowledges the music in a completely tangential and only minor way. For it is not the music which is important here; music is a mere accompaniment to the film, a means of relieving the otherworldly terribleness of silent movement. Music breaks away sound from life, resonating these broken-off sounds in regularly determined groups. In this way is harmony born.

What can be borne of broken-off movement? Movement demolishes only space, remaining within time. It can therefore be reached; it can be embodied through the human body. Film is

precisely this movement, as it is embodied and made visible through the human body. Broken-off movement and the human body retroactively reunite in film. Their retroactive reunification can occur in several modes and on several levels. We believe that these modes and levels will delineate the different types of films.

One of such delineated types is the American slapstick. Here the unification of the human body and movement is still wholly external. The human body in slapstick is only a mass that movement grabs a hold of and carries away with itself. Although this mass's inertia counters movement, its capacity for resistance is not yet animated, so that slapstick remains only a game, a playful fancy without deeper human meaning, and yet nonetheless an important chapter of film history. For slapstick is the first experiment in the consistent outlining of a line of movement. The irresistible force of gaiety that it releases from viewers testifies to the entirely unique expressive possibilities of the new material.

Slapstick is an extreme case in the wide range of possibilities that will unfold through the development of a materialist film, in order – it is our belief – to carve out symbols of fate of a power never before seen for humanity at the other extreme.

## VIII

In the course of our discussion, we have always called movement a raw material, film's raw material. We stated, moreover, that this raw block has to undergo a rich and complexly textured evolution before it becomes material in the artist's hands; thus the block can be fully shone through not by the lamp of reason, but by this natural course of development. We have said that film set off along false paths toward still unprecedented development, and yet that its own face nonetheless took shape. It is probable that this face was triggered in us by an empirical film-experience, too. Vague and unsettling visions took shape. And we felt that it was time for the human spirit to make its first methodical efforts to distil these visions into ideas. For we see in film not the product of Western culture's decay, but a new chapter in the history of human spirit...

We wanted to say a few words about the dancer before finishing the architecture of the thought set as our task. We repeat once more that the dancer draws an ornament in space with his animated body. This is the ultimate justification and significance of dance. The ornament is the most awesome, most inhuman and most clearly transcendent form of forms that have materialized in the medium of human existence up to this date. The dancing body nevertheless is filled during its dance with human affects, ancestral and simple affects: agony and exaltation, pleasure and fear. From the perspective of the dancer's consciousness, his own art is nothing else than the depiction of these affects.

Every shaping of form makes the human body gradually more sensitive to its own ultimate potential, and every form – before breaking off from the human body – fills with a purified, monumentally simplified humanity. Every form, even the most abstract and transcendental thus

becomes man's lit mirror.

Perhaps a resolution could be found to the great problem that, with regards to film, has received a particularly overwhelming and unsettling actuality: can an occurrence taking place essentially independently of and beyond man express something singularly human? The frightening inhumanity of film will dissolve and become human in laboring hands. How so? The story of the statue begins and ends with the raw block. What comes in between? We have merely vague and distant visions. However, we are not prophets.



*The Navigator. Donald Crips – Buster Keaton, 1924*

## IX

We considered the false paths one by one. We tried to show why none of them can lead to form. Throughout our work, the problem took firm and merciless shape; we grabbed hold of it, we brought it into our consciousness, we became imbued with it. Is there someone to be found who will feel capable of carrying through such an inhumanly difficult and great task? If a problem emerges, there is no longer any release for humanity. There is no escape!

Great, serious and demanding work follows now. Work with clean and false starts, meanderings in the dark and sudden clearings. The work of not of one man, but of us all. The raw block of material that it is our duty to labor over lies before us in austere and frightening strangeness. Its darkness had begun to be dispelled by the light of reason, but we could not have succeeded in piercing it through to transparency. Nevertheless, we have seen its placement and the way that leads up to it.

And we strongly believe that a new art is to be born, a new path and formal possibility of the human spirit. This path is different from all those up until now; it is no wonder that man takes

fright and hesitates to step on it. But now he has no choice. A new path: who knows to where it leads. If we knew, it would mean that we had already taken it. And yet we have not yet stepped on it.

[The essay entitled *Új művészet: a film* was published in the journal *Nyugat* in 1924 (no. 13-14)]

Translated from Hungarian by Izabella Füzi and Eszter Polónyi

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