

SESSION 3:
A Slippery Topic:
Colour as Metaphor, Intention or Attraction?

Film programme:

DE PETROLEUMBRAND TE VLISSINGEN. EEN OVERZICHT VAN DE RUINE / PETROLEUM
FIRE AT FLUSHING. A VIEW OF THE RUINS / - ♦ The Netherlands (Pathé) [1917]
DK1343 - 11m / video 153 - 1' ♦ tinting

exerpt from: DE STAALFABRIEKEN KRUPP / THE KRUPP STEEL WORKS / - ♦ Germany
(Friedrich Krupp AG) [1916] ♦ DK1092 - 366m / video 069 - 8' ♦ tinting

DE KONING DER BANDIETEN OF HET GEHEIM DER CATACOMBEN / THE KING OF BAN-
DITS OR THE SECRET OF THE CATACOMBS / [ZIGOMAR] ♦ France (Eclair) 1911 Dir.
Victorin Jasset ♦ DK1218 - 259m / video 135 - 13' ♦ tinting, toning

BITS & PIECES NO.73 / *idem* / - ♦ [Germany or United States of America, 1915]
DK914 - 40m / video 009 - 2' ♦ tinting

PARK UND GROSSE WASSER VON VERSAILLES / THE PARK AND THE GREAT FOUNTAIN
AT VERSAILLES / LES GRANDES EAUX DE VERSAILLES ♦ France (Pathé) [1904]
DK318 - 38m / video 062 - 2' ♦ hand painting

STORM OP ZEE / STORM AT SEA / [TEMPETE DANS LE GOLFE DE GASCOGNE]
France (Gaumont) [1910] ♦ DK659 - 43m [original print length 53m] / video
027 - 2' ♦ tinting, toning + tinting

EEN BOOTTOCHT LANGS DE WATEREN VAN DE ARDECHE / A BOAT TRIP ON THE
WATERS OF THE ARDECHE / [DESCENTE EN BARQUE À TRAVERS LES GORGES DE
L'ARDECHE] ♦ France (Gaumont) [1910] ♦ DK525 - 62m [original print length
131m] / video 027 - 3' ♦ stencil, tinting + stencil

UITSTAPJE DOOR HET DAL VAN DE TARN, VAN SAINT-ÉNIMIE NAAR ROZIER / A TRIP
THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE TARN, FROM SAINT-ÉNIMIE TO ROZIER / LES GORGES
DU TARN ♦ France (Gaumont) [1911] ♦ D3980 - 139m (original print length 132m) /
video 052 - 6' ♦ black-and-white

DE PESCARA / THE PESCARA / IL PESCARA ♦ Italy (Ambrosio) 1912 ♦ DK93 - 77m
(original print length 107m) / video 144 - 4' ♦ tinting

NAT PINKERTON / *idem* / *idem* ♦ France (Eclipse) 1911 ♦ Dir. Pierre Bressol
DK375 - 200m / video 105 - 10' ♦ tinting

MOOI ZWITSERLAND / BEAUTIFUL SWITZERLAND / [LA SUISSE MERVEILLEUSE]
France (Eclair) 1913 ✦ DK301 - 70m [original print length 142m] / video 062 - 4'
toning, stencil, toning + stencil

BLOEMENVELDEN HAARLEM / FLOWER FIELDS, HAARLEM / - ✦ The Netherlands
[(F.A. Nöggerath or Alberts Frères) 1909] ✦ DK686 - 32m ✦ hand painting or
stencil

BLOEMENWEELDE / A WEALTH OF FLOWERS / - ✦ France (Gaumont among others)
[1914] ✦ DK1433 - 27m / video 224 - 2' ✦ hand painting, stencil

exerpt from: VAN BOL TOT BLOEM / FROM BULB TO FLOWER / VAN BOL TOT BLOEM
The Netherlands (Multifilm) 1931 Dir. J.C. Mol ✦ DK1677 - 1367m (original print
length 1488m) / video 266 - 66' ✦ tinting

LEER OM LEER / TIT FOR TAT / LA PEINE DU TALION ✦ France (Pathé) 1906 Dir.
Gaston Velle ✦ DK917 - 50m (original print length 100m) / video 113 - 3'
stencil

METAMORPHOSE / METAMORPHOSIS / MÉTAMORPHOSE ✦ France (Pathé) [1905]
D4951 - 65m / video 188 - 4' ✦ black-and-white

TUINENVORSTIN / GARDEN PRINCESS / - ✦ {France (Pathé) 1927] ✦ DK1432 - 84m /
video 224 - 4' ✦ stencil

PARIJSCH E DANCEUSES / PARIS DANCERS / MOULIN ROUGE DANCERS ✦ United
States of America (American Mutoscope & Biograph) [1898] ✦ D5812-XI - 11m
hand painting

exerpt from: BACCHANAAL DES DOODS / BACCHANAL OF DEATH / BACCHANAL DES
TODES ODER DAS OPFER EINER GROSSEN LIEBE ✦ Germany (Central Film Vertrieb)
1917 Dir. Richard Eichberg ✦ DK424 - 734m (original print length 1500m) / video
017 - 36' ✦ toning + tinting

BITS & PIECES NO.278 / *idem* / - ✦ {France, (Pathé) 1905] ✦ DK1919 - 60m / video
309 - 3' ✦ toning, tinting, toning + tinting

LITTLE TICH, BEROEMDE ENGELSCH E KOMIEK / LITTLE TICH, FAMOUS ENGLISH
COMEDIAN / LITTLE TICH ✦ France (Pathé) 1906-1907 ✦ D5287 - 135m (original
print length 135m) / video 254 - 7' ✦ black-and-white

Moderator Tom Gunning: I want to address a series of very specific historical questions - or rather, research problems. But theory and history are inseparable and we can't in fact talk about colour historically without thinking about it theoretically.

After coming here in May for the pre-screenings of these films, I left with a sense of both misery and exaltation. The misery was what one might call the misery of colour, particularly in silent film: I mean its fragility, its vulnerability, all the problems Giovanna Fossati addressed in Session 1, not just colour preservation problems, but the problems of looking at colour, trying to figure out what it was originally, as we look at preservation prints that more or less - often the latter - reflect the original nitrate material. Colour is in many respects one of the most tenuous things we can investigate, and that can be rather depressing. Interwoven with this is that I came to the pre-screenings having seen a lot of silent films, and feeling I more or less knew how colour operated in them. Although the screenings didn't totally contradict everything I thought I knew, they certainly shook up many of my assumptions, and I suddenly realized that the role of colour in silent film was a great deal less systematic than I'd thought.

If all these things initially depressed me, they ultimately cheered me up, not only because I like chaos, but also because they made me think about the nature of colour. The difficulties of discussing colour aren't unrelated to the very nature of colour. One of the things that I want to briefly think about theoretically is the fact that, particularly in the western tradition, colour has always been approached as a secondary quality, as something not part of the essence of things. The debate of course has gone back and forth, ranging from philosophy to art, but the general feeling, going back to Plato, has been that somehow the outline, the form of something is more essentially related to the concept and idea of the thing than colour, which seems to be temporary, secondary, seems to have more to do with instants of time and situations than with the eternally knowable. In fact, part of the joy of colour lies in inverting this model, accepting transience. Colour is indeed less intellectual, less tangible, less eternal than form. It's always somehow associated with the fugitive and the ephemeral. Nicholas Hiley pointed out to me yesterday something that comes out strongly in the films of this and previous sessions - that colour is very often represented by flowers. And this reflects not only the brilliant saturation of colour in flowers, but precisely the fact that it's temporary, that it fades. A brilliant moment rather than something that is constant. Then there's the association with fashion, reflected in the first day's screenings, and with clothing. Here, as Frank Kessler pointed out, the colour is associated with something external, ephemeral, inconstant. It's in this sense closely associated with a modern sensibility that, as Baudelaire said, is particularly attuned to things that pass. And cinema of course partakes very strongly in this sensibility. The very way that colour seems to shimmer on top of things with stencilling and hand colouring has this kind of weird insubstantial quality, is part of its joy in the silent era.

Conversely, though, there has always been an attempt to tie colour to certain meanings, associated with the theory that there's some deep essential connection

between certain colours and certain emotions. But as Jacques Aumont's study has shown, these associations, although they have certain consistencies, have many inconsistencies, too. We have to see them as cultural constructions whereby colour is associated with certain things while not absolutely tied to them. This is what we find in silent film. There are certain associations, particularly with monochrome tints, the most obvious being blue for night, red for fire, or sometimes strong yellow for interior lighting. But what we find as we watch more and more monochrome tinting is that, as Peter Delpout remarked in Session 1, the codes begin to break down. A couple of people have asked me why we chose NAT PINKERTON. One reason is that to some extent it uses the blue-for-night code, but at certain points this is totally contradicted. As Nat Pinkerton sets out to meet the bandits, the film's tinted gold. Presumably he doesn't walk for hours till nightfall, but when he gets there it's blue, and you know the meeting is taking place at night, but then the earlier shot seems oddly tinted. In many of these films, if we watch them carefully, the codes are not consistent. I'm not saying the codes aren't there, but particularly in this period there's a fair amount of free variation along with the codes. This free variation is extremely important; there are codes in this period, there are associations, but they aren't absolutely rigid and are often, in fact, applied in very surprising ways. The codes are in a great deal of flux, and this isn't just something to be decried or ignored, but the key to colour.

We talk about the narrative role of colour, but we very rarely understand what is happening because of the colour. We more often get the meaning of the colour from the narrative situation. The colour can heighten or underscore what's happening in the story at some point, but very rarely creates it. Its role constitutes an independent narrative element. Now this is one way of channelling colour toward a certain type of meaning. This aspect of intensity relates to the 'primary' quality of colour, which is precisely its intensity, the way it produces a greater emotional or sensual response. This is one of the ways filmmakers can directly contact the audience and influence them: there are all sorts of variants, but the key thing is a kind of intense sensual communication.

One way to think about this, given its enormous range from intensifying a dramatic moment to just the pure play of pleasure, is by comparing it with music, and particularly with the way music was used in the early silent era. Music has been ignored in a lot of film history, because it was felt to be external to the film text. Like colour, it wasn't considered essential - particularly in the silent era, where it might change with every viewing, every performance of a film. But we're increasingly realizing that it was extremely important to the film-going experience. Research that one of my graduate students, Tim Anderson, has been doing, looking at some of the trade-journal comments on film music in around 1909-1910, has uncovered a great deal of controversy about music being played in a way that was totally unrelated to the narrative. A recurring complaint is that the pianist is playing to the audience, instead of playing to the film.

There are strong parallels with the colour in the films we have seen so far: it directly stimulates the audience, but often in a fairly free relation to the film. Sometimes there's a very direct relationship, but sometimes just pure play, free

variation; grabbing your attention independently of any obvious code. In some films, of course, there's very little narrative to follow - films of flowers, fountains, fireworks, some of the tourist films and many of the trick films, where the colour seems to function as an attraction, a very direct visual stimulus. It's something to look at, something to surprise you, to amaze you, it doesn't necessarily carry any decodable meaning, any paraphrasable meaning, but is purely a kind of sensuous play. Significantly, perhaps, the earliest use of colour was probably Edison's Kinetoscope films of Annabel doing the skirt dance - an entertainment which not only involves these patterns of billowing cloth, but all kinds of projected light of different colours. For many people - not only vaudeville audiences, popular audiences, but also symbolist poets like Mallarmé - this total play of form and light and colour, whose most famous exponent was Loie Fuller, showed the possibility of an art totally detached from literature, from verbal meanings: just pure form and motion. What colour brings to many of these films is just this sense of colour as a pure attraction, something whose very essence is just to be constantly changing. In other words, colour had an enormous sensual impact in the silent era. We can see it being channelled, and it's very exciting to see how it becomes coded, but there's also a kind of resistance to any absolute coding. The colour very often simply indicates a change in the situation, rather than telling us what that change amounts to.

I'll conclude this rather lengthy introduction with a series of research questions, of issues that we must consider. If we now see colour as an essential part of silent film, that's just the beginning, not some conclusion. If we take the figure that has become almost canonical in the last year or so, of 80% of silent film probably having some kind of colour - we need to investigate this further but I think it's probably pretty accurate - then we have to break that figure down. What, first of all, do we mean by 'silent cinema'? Any historian thinks immediately of the many, many different things covered by that term. Most generally, what role does colour play in the various decades and half-decades of silent cinema? For instance, I very much doubt that the 80% figure holds for the period from 1895 to 1905. I'd like to know about the prevalence of colour in that first decade of cinema and then look at each succeeding decade to see how colour persists or changes. One of the most interesting questions is why it eventually disappeared. The usual explanation, and I'm sure there's something in it, is that tinting interfered with the soundtrack. However, this wouldn't completely interfere. So my guess is that in the late twenties tinting was already declining. While emphasizing the presence of colour in the silent era, we also have to explain this decline. There's no obvious reason why 80% of thirties films weren't tinted. But apparently they weren't; there was still some tinting, but it was a minor element. Why? What happened? It would also be very interesting to look at different countries. It's very clear that France, with Pathé, was a centre for colour in film, but what about other countries? Richard Abel's research has indicated that until about 1909 the United States didn't produce the amount of coloured film that, say, Pathé did; and this actually gave Pathé a commercial advantage. What about other countries, particularly smaller countries: did they use colour as much as the French? Soviet cinema, for instance, did it use

colour? How much, and how? We know about some of the colour experiments that Eisenstein did with *THE BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN* and *OLD AND NEW*¹, but it would be very interesting to know more. And we should break down the 80% figure in terms of genre: did all genres use colour equally? It seems that in farces from before World War I there's relatively little colour. Is this actually true, and what is the explanation if it is? Tourist films and *féerique* films, on the other hand, seem to have a lot of colour.

1. BRONENOSETS POTYOMKIN USSR
(Goskino) 1925; STAROE I NOVOE
USSR (Sovkino) 1929

It's also very important to make distinctions within colour itself. We have the monochrome systems of tinting and toning, we have the photographic colour of the Gaumont Chronochrome system, Prizma Color and so on, and of course we have stencilling and hand-colouring. It's very interesting to consider colour as a whole, but very important at some point to consider the differences, the relations and specificity. Another question: it's true that colour doesn't seem to provoke much comment in most of the reviews that have been reprinted. But maybe we haven't thoroughly mined the trade journals and other material from the period looking for comments on colour, because film history didn't until very recently pay any attention to colour in silent films. I have the feeling that a lot has been ignored. It's probably very significant that most reviews didn't discuss colour. What the significance is I'm not yet prepared to say, but I *will* say that there's probably a lot of information still to be found in contemporary sources.

Finally, I'd like to make a very brief point relating to some of the issues from the first two sessions. My favourite definition of history comes from an American Shakespearean scholar, Greenblatt, who saw historiography as a desire to speak to the dead. We want, obviously, to know what early audiences felt and thought about colour, how they experienced it. But equally obviously, we can't completely recreate this, it's in some ways very distant. Of course, what we're doing as historians isn't so much attempting to resurrect something that's disappeared, as expressing our desire to forge some link with the dead. Forging that link doesn't relate only to the past, it also relates to the present, and even more perhaps our sense of our future. There's no question that the reason we're rediscovering colour now is, as Nicholas Hiley pointed out, because we're interested in colour right now. That doesn't mean our project isn't historical, it obviously is. It expresses our desire to relate in a new way to an aspect of the past which has been ignored, if not suppressed. It's important to realize that our present day interests will always guide us, but that those interests are partly rooted in the past and partly invested with the future, and aren't merely subjective.

Eric de Kuiper: One thing that can teach us a lot is the use of monochrome tinting and toning in feature films, because there's a very big difference between fiction films before the First World War and after it. Before the war monochrome is used to accentuate narrative discontinuity. In a sequence of six or seven shots within the same narrative idea, each shot is coloured differently to distinguish the first shot from the second, the third, and so on. The key question is why this colouring changed after the war. In the twenties colouring

becomes less important because the editing, the language, has changed so much.

The discontinuous language of prewar narrative cinema is particularly stressed by the discontinuous use of colour. And if we consider together these three elements of the cinematic performance - colour, music and image - it's very strange to find image and colour discontinuity with musical continuity; not every shot has a different musical theme. There's some sort of dialectical interplay between the discontinuous image and colour, and the continuity of the music evoking a sort of coherent framework.

Tom Gunning: It's precisely this discontinuity that's so striking, and that seems, in fact, uncoded. It's as though the colouring turns on changes of shot, rather than changes in the story. It's a discontinuity that gets evened out, smoothed out in the twenties, as you said, with editing and the further coding of colour.

Heide Schlüpmann: Up till now we've tended to ask why there's colour in these films. Maybe it would make more sense to ask why later we get black-and-white films, because when you look at early cinema and its precedents in the exhibition context, there was always colour. Look at the magic lantern, the panorama, the variety shows with light-effects and coloured light. Maybe we should first consider the use of colour in these older traditions, because they define the context of early cinema. Watching *THE TRIP THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE TARN...* after *A BOAT TRIP ON THE WATERS OF THE ARDECHE*, I was struck by the black-and-white aesthetic. It was really emphasized by all this colour - it makes a very strong impression after all these coloured films.

In relation to this context, Peter Delpout asked in Session 2 about the difference between different colour systems. I have the impression that one key difference is the difference between colouring images and colouring light. Brush or stencil colouring seems more to do with colouring images, while tinting and toning have more to do with colouring light.

Mariann Lewinsky: Tom Gunning mentioned temporality and eternity: perhaps we could take this a little further. Watching this session's films I felt very strongly that applied colour has no temporal dimension: it's pure presence. This is true of toning and tinting too, if the colours change frequently - there's only presence. It's also true for changed or faded colours that have nothing to do with the original colour. Whether a film was made three weeks ago or a hundred years ago, we experience the colour now. In a film with fairly long monochrome sequences, and with black-and-white, you have a unity of time in the film. This means that with nonfiction you have a documentary unity, and with fiction you have a unity of diegetic time, the time of the fiction. Watching a black-and-white film nowadays, there's somehow a strong association with memory; with Bruce Conner's monochrome *VALSE TRISTE* you feel it's outside the present, either memory or fiction. But with changing colours, they're always present now, independent of time. Colour is now, it's a performing art.

Sabine Lenk: I guess, to echo Tom Gunning, that early audiences must have had a very different perception of colour. Gorki's account of his first encounter with film contrasts strongly with the first articles written by journalists in Lyons and Paris. In France they said, OK, the colours are missing, but it's wonderful to see these very vivid images of our life, to see dead members of the family coming back to life - they were delighted. But Gorki was saying that a very important part of life was missing, the essential part, colour. The two films Heide Schlüpmann mentioned, *A BOAT TRIP ON THE WATERS OF THE ARDECHE* and *A TRIP THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE TARN...*, are very good examples of this. The pastel colours of the Ardèche are very vivid, but then we see the depth of the Tarn gorges in black-and-white. I was very struck by the contrast, which exactly reflects what Gorki felt when he saw black-and-white films.

Eric de Kuyper: As for this contrast between colour and black-and-white, one has to accept that colour has something to do with vulgarity, crudeness, childishness, 'popular' taste. Let's add some colour, you say in theatre or fashion - or let's tone it down to avoid bad taste. There really is this tension between good and bad taste. Colour, measured by our cultural codes, is usually on the side of bad taste. Colours are dangerous. But I must mention something I saw last weekend in London. People were going to a royal Garden Party, and I never saw such yellows, such reds, such blues, such greens in my life. They were real colours, and these were distinguished British people going to a royal Garden Party. I'm amazed by our cultural codes of colour.

Péter Forgács: A few questions to Tom Gunning, because I was really struck by his short note about this session in the printed booklet. In his closing sentence he promised to explore some answers, rather than merely pose questions; to 'trace the intentions behind the use of colour in silent film, whether as referents, metaphors, narrative guides, or pure attractions.' We've had quite a few remarks about pure attraction, but I'm curious to hear something about the other factors, in this context of colour as a kind of cultural construction, both then and now. If colour in films was borrowed from colour in still photography, then the intention was not simply to sell colour, but in some sense to sell the still or moving image as something more than an attraction. The colour is a kind of emotional guide, not a purely visual sensation, but also a kind of subconscious feeling in the viewer. You might here talk of references or metaphors or narrative guides as a kind of naive way to influence the viewer's subconscious. Take today's television where you sometimes see some black-and-white footage in, say, music videos or documentaries. This means something, not only because of our association of black-and-white with the past, or with a document or real evidence. I see war reports from Bosnia on television with blood everywhere, but I can be more shocked by black-and-white footage from the Second World War. Maybe if photography, which began in black-and-white, had begun in colour, somebody would have had to invent black-and-white. Our problem, as Thomas Elsaesser said in the first session, is that we ourselves are at a cultural crossroads and are therefore looking

back in a new way. I'd like to hear some discussion of this question, which I find particularly interesting.

Tom Gunning: I meant the 'referents' in the teaser to my talk to be an allusion to the idea of accuracy or verisimilitude - the water was blue, so we stencil it blue. Obviously, this is one of the motivations for colouring, for stencil colouring especially. Narrative guides and metaphors are closely associated - take *ZIGOMAR*, where the explosion is completely red. It's more of a metaphorical red than a referential red, even though explosions might produce fire; with the final explosion, the shot is actually red before the explosion occurs. That may reflect practical questions of colour processing, but it wasn't a problem for filmmakers or audiences because it refers to a kind of emotion associated with the scene. One of the ways that colour becomes channelled over time in silent film, and more generally, is through a growing dichotomy between either recognizing it as making a reference to something in real life, or understanding it as a metaphor for how you're supposed to feel, how you're supposed to respond. What interests me are the limitations of this division, the trouble it gets into. The blue of the water is more blue than any water we've ever seen, so this referent becomes almost a kind of a metaphor. Likewise, the red of the explosion becomes multi-referential, taking in the explosion, the violence, the blood, the death. The confusion between reference and metaphor often produces very strange effects. What are we supposed to make of one of the very first images in *THE PESCARA*, where the water is shockingly green? Is it a metaphor for something? For what? I find this fascinating because we can't anchor any specific feeling in the image. In *THE KRUPP STEEL WORKS*, there's an almost uniform reddish, pinkish, or goldenish tint that evokes the overwhelming heat. It turns the film into the best version I've ever seen of Dante's inferno, with this overwhelming metaphor that bleeds into so many different areas.

I'm really interested in the way these things can't be controlled. The colours always resonate with all sorts of meanings and associations, which in the silent era aren't really controlled. For me this defines the use of colour in the early silent era down to, and maybe during, the First World War. It's as though the energy is allowed to expand, as though filmmakers haven't yet decided to contain it, as they later would.

Hans-Michael Bock: Can we return for a moment to the question of black-and-white? After the screening of Eisenstein's *THE BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN* in Berlin, the press specifically mentioned the red flag at the climax of the film being painted. That suggests not only that the film was shown in black-and-white, but that this was standard by that time - why else would they have paid such attention to the red flag? So the tradition of hand painting must by that time have been forgotten, at least by the reviewers. Another point we should keep in mind is that early in the twenties black-and-white stock changed from orthochromatic material to panchromatic material. In the trade papers you read that technicians had big problems colouring panchromatic material. They discussed how they could do it, but there were problems. Maybe this switch from orthochromatic to panchroma-

tic material as the main print stock changed the use of colour too: colouring must have become more expensive, and maybe this explains why it was dropped?

Enno Patalas: There was always opposition to tinting, at least in Germany, in the twenties but earlier too, among producers and filmmakers. This had to do with a growing awareness in the twenties of the photographic nature of cinema. From the very beginning this conception of the photographic nature of cinema supported the use of black-and-white, and maybe toning, but worked against tinting. Oskar Messter said that tinting had always been there just for the audience. With the growing sophistication or mastery of the photography, tinting became less important.

In Germany, however, most films were tinted till the very end of the twenties. I don't see why the change to panchromatic stock was such a problem, because although panchromatic material had to be used for the negatives, the prints could easily have been done on orthochromatic material. Once the image was on black-and-white stock, you could use orthochromatic material for the prints. But as early

- as 1920 *FROM MORNING TO MIDNIGHT*² was announced as being in black-and-white and thus true to the photographic nature of cinema. Most films were tinted during the twenties, but there was a whole series of individual films in black-and-white, like *DR. MABUSE, THE GAMBLER*³ and Murnau's *FAUST*⁴ and *THE LAST LAUGH*⁵ - films in which the camera-work was becoming more important. And the fact that became it possible to film at night or at dawn meant you didn't need blue-for-night any more, as it did in *NOSFERATU*⁶ where the night sequences with the vampire were meant to be blue. With the growing awareness of the photographic nature of cinema and a growing stress on camera movement and so on, colour
2. *VON MORGENS BIS MITTERNACHT*
Germany (Ilag-Film) 1920
Dir. Karl-Heinz Martin
 3. *DR. MABUSE, DER SPIELER*
Germany (Uco-Film) 1922
Dir. Fritz Lang
 4. Germany (Ufa) 1926
 5. *DER LETZTE MANN* Germany
(Ufa) 1924
 6. Germany (Prana-Film) 1921
Dir. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau

became less important. One aspect that needs researching is what the auteurs, the filmmakers, felt about colour? I've been through Murnau's own annotated copies of his scenarios, hoping to find something on colour. All I could find was a point in the scenario for *VOGELÖD CASTLE*⁷ where he notes:

7. *SCHLOSS VOGELÖD* Germany
(Uco-Film) 1921

Daan Hertogs: The technological explanations for the disappearance of colour at the period when sound was introduced aren't completely satisfactory. *JOHANN STRAUSS* in Session 1 was a tinted sound film. The sound - which heightens the realism - and the colour just don't seem to mix very well. As a 'historical' film it's in some sense non-realistic, and maybe this relates to something I think Ed Buscombe wrote about Technicolor being used in the thirties for non-realistic genres like musicals and fantasies.

Tom Gunning: That whole question about colour versus black-and-white in relation to realism versus non-realism is extremely vexed, because you can go through different periods of film history, and the relation switches around. Murnau's wanting the dream sequences left black-and-white is really fascinating, because you might expect the opposite. But there may be something else at work here. I recently saw *THIS IS CINERAMA*⁸, the original Cinerama film, at Bradford. Cinerama, of course, introduced the wrap-around screen as a visual effect and stereo as a sound effect, and one of the most striking things was a sequence where the stereophonic sound is really important. It begins with a shot of empty choir-stalls, then you suddenly hear voices, behind you in fact: the choristers are singing and as they come forward, you see them come in past the camera, and you hear the sound moving forward as they fill up the screen. Now, that sequence is not in Technicolor like the rest of the film, but in sepia, in monochrome. I imagine they wanted to direct the audience's attention to the sound here rather than at the beginning of the film with its roller-coaster and visual razzle-dazzle. They wanted to drain the colour so you'd be more tuned to the sound.

8. *THIS IS CINERAMA* United States (Lowell Thomas Company) 1952

The influence of panchromatic film is very interesting, even if colouring wasn't really a technical problem. With the introduction of panchromatic material, which has a greater range of contrast, you wouldn't want the tint to hide the beauty of this novelty. And with the introduction of sound maybe there's a rather similar sense of making sure people are listening, rather than distracting them with colour. I wonder if there's a sense around this time of concentrating on one dominant channel of meaning or sensation at a time. Of course, as sound itself becomes codified, the primary thing in the classical era becomes the story with dialogue - maybe this becomes so dominant that colour becomes marginalized and associated with the spectacular. There's then a long process by which colour - and we can see this in the history of Technicolor - becomes naturalized again as simply part of the storytelling rather than a spectacular element. There's a great deal of discussion about this in the thirties and forties.

Frank Kessler: Maybe we should in fact talk about the way colour is linked to the diegetic world, because stencil colouring is diegetic in the sense that the colours correspond to the colours of objects in that diegetic world, whereas tinting and toning are often non-diegetic. In explosions and night scenes the colour may well be diegetic, but need not be. The *NAT PINKERTON* example that has already been cited in this context is a very good case in point, because any reading of the colour as linked to the diegetic world eventually breaks down. The colour is sort of distanced from the diegetical world. Interestingly, in the example Sabine Lenk gave, Gorki reads the black-and-white as part of the diegetic world: that's a reading of black-and-white that disappears later on.

Heide Schlüppmann: Enno Patalas suggested that black-and-white reflected the photographic nature of cinema, but for me it's more to do with disregarding the

audience and the place of cinema in the public sphere: withdrawing to the scientific and technical side of film, withdrawing into the private sphere. People were used to photography as black-and-white in the private sphere, but exhibited images, including the illustrated papers, tended toward colour. Exhibition is intimately bound up with colour, and if you talk about photography as black-and-white, you're talking about the private experience of photography. And this withdrawal into the scientific and technical aspects, and into the private sphere, leads to films made by auteurs.

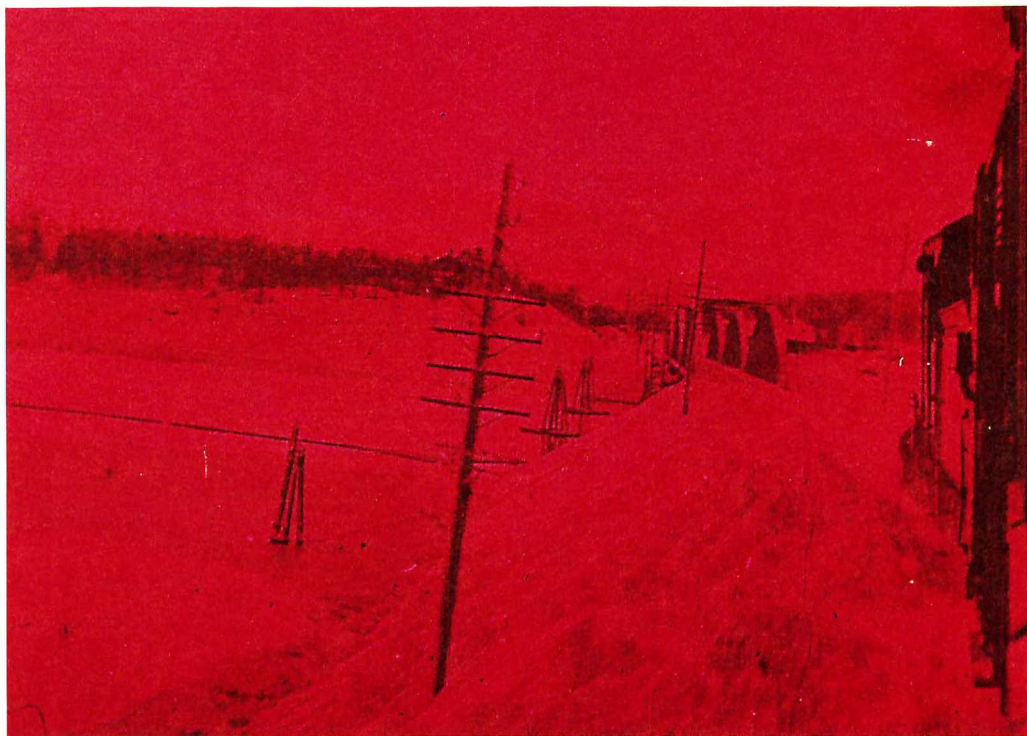
Enno Patalas: What Heide says isn't entirely true, because the development of narration also makes colour less important. And narration is hardly 'anti-audience'. I think Griffith's Biographs were already released in black-and-white. They even said in the advertisements, in the publicity, that colour wasn't needed any more, because the photography was so advanced; but it was precisely these films that developed narration. The fact that tinting disappeared in the thirties has less to do with the technical aspects of the material than with the development of narration, which relegated spectacular effects to a subordinate role.

Tom Gunning: There's actually a fair amount of tinting in the Griffith films. We don't know whether the whole production was tinted or just some prints, but there are tinting indications in a lot of the Griffith Biographs. Mainly blue for night scenes, and metaphorical uses. In the print I've seen of *THE BROKEN CROSS*⁹, for instance, I found tinting indications at every time the cross is shown. That shot had to be tinted gold to stress its emotional force.

9. *THE BROKEN CROSS* United States (Biograph) 1911

Nicholas Hiley: I arrived here, like Tom Gunning, with some very naive questions about colour, assuming among other things that it was a code you could somehow crack - that somehow blue-for-night and yellow-brown-for-lamp-light and red-for-fire were just the first part of the code to have been cracked, and that beyond that it was all equally logical. We have, at the British Universities Film and Video Council in London, the issue-sheets for newsreels. The issue-sheets for British newsreels in the twenties list every story in each bi-weekly issue, and they note the tinting for each of these stories. I thought this would be very simple to crack, that you'd have one colour for sport, say, one for industry, one for politics and so on. But I couldn't find anything like that, although I did find a fire that was tinted red. The other thing that surprised me was that consecutive stories that were entirely different in character would have the same tint. The first four stories might be tinted lilac, even if these included a sporting story, say, or a political story. I came away wondering just what sort of order there was, and thinking maybe I was overlooking something like the fact that they'd made up a lot of lilac coloured dye, and decided to use it up. At least I'll leave here with some rather more sophisticated questions.

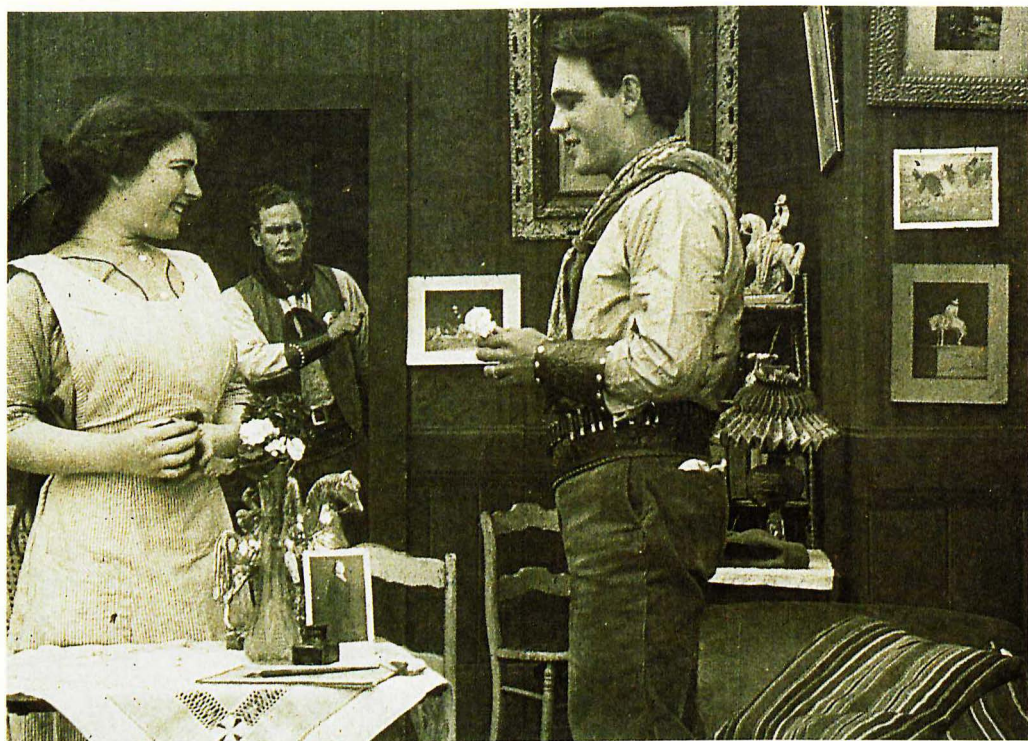
Why, for example, did colour disappear in the thirties and forties? I find this question very interesting because we have a hundred years of cinema, and most of



KIJKJES IN DENEMARZEN (Session 4) nitrate



DE LIEFDE VAN DEN BANDIET (Session 5) nitrate



DE LIEFDE VAN DEN BANDIET (Session 5) nitrate



DE LIEFDE VAN DEN BANDIET (Session 5) nitrate

it was coloured. So why was there this gap in the middle? That question leads to another: why did black-and-white disappear in the fifties and sixties? Some research has been done on this, suggesting that it was because of the competition from television, or from a domestic world which included television. The film-makers realized they were competing with this new medium, but could also sell it their old films; so if they made their new films in colour, they'd be able to sell them to the television companies after a few years of theatrical exhibition. This idea of competition may be related to what Heide Schlipmann was saying about the context in which film appeared in the 1890s and 1900s. It had to compete with media that were coloured. Not only was screen practice highly coloured, but there was a world of colourful entertainment in which the new medium had to fight for market share. It's quite interesting that at the height of cinema attendance after the Second World War, when the cinema was more popular, at least in America, than it ever had been before or ever would be afterwards, when there was no great competition, the films were black-and-white. Perhaps we're concentrating too much on the aesthetics of colour, on the representational aspects of colour, and missing the economics: here's an added value you give to film, when you're competing with something else. When you're not competing with anything you can cut your costs by taking out the colour. Maybe we should talk a little more about the economics - not less about the aesthetics, but developing these two sets of questions side by side.