

Bratří Capkové /Brothers Capek/: Biograf /Biograph/  
Karel a Josef CAPKOVÉ /Karel and Josef CAPEK/: Filmová libreta  
/Film Libretti/ Pavel Taussig and Jiri Opelík, eds.  
(Odeon, Praha, 1989)

The modern audience has been given a new stage: a luminous quadrangle projected on a vertical wall. Motion is enclosed in this quadrangle: there are people, walking and acting, trees are bending under the wind, animals are crawling or galloping and all nature, be it live or not, is moving here with all her physical acts. Movements ~~are arranged in dramas or farces:~~ <sup>create dramas and</sup> here people jerk about tragically, escaping from someone or pursuing somebody else, they throw themselves into water, from rocks, into danger, they fight for their lives, overcome the most terrifying obstacles, hurry, win, or die. The reality is the milieu: bamboo groves, cities, castles, sea and land, everything here is a physical reality with the most palpable predicates and suggestive details except for color. How could anyone not believe in such a perfect, rich and mobile reality? <sup>Will be</sup> Is there <sup>would not be astonished and</sup> anyone who ~~is not~~ (surprised and) convinced by the optical and aural reality of future, <sup>sound</sup> perfected, ~~cinematophasis,~~ where each movement will be accompanied by sound, each blow by a stroke, and each movement by an acoustical proof? Then the <sup>power of</sup> suggestion will be insurmountable and the illusion quite complete: a play of shadows will seem to be more true than the

acting of real, material actors.

That is because the other quadrangle, the old hieratic stage, is exhausting its last possibilities in planks, canvas and mock-ups. For almost four centuries that which is called theatrical technique has been developed, applied and perfected. Four centuries long is the struggle for reality on the stage and illusion in the audience. And now, in the course of some four years the biograph has overtaken those four centuries and has seized the entire reality, it has taken hold of the illusion, it has seized the comical and tragical, it has seized forms and movements and dramatic character of forms and movements, and in the future it will also seize those of word and music.

There is no doubt that the theatre has a new and very ruthless competitor in the cinema: will the stage engage in a competitive match with the projector? Such an excessively unequal struggle will hardly take place: the theatre and the cinema are much more likely to divide their rights to existence by an unspoken agreement. The shadows will not have a human heart forever; the shadows will always write only the external outline of man and the outer minting of tragedy and fate; they will not feel, suffer, love and have passions; the shadows of people will not be dynamic, they will be merely kinetic. The theater perhaps shall limit its optical realism, its decorative attempts: the stage will be simplified, enlarged and more severe, everything excessively visible shall make way for what

can only be felt; it is on such grounds that great internal feeling or suffering humanity shall appear.

In the meantime, the biograph shall take the road of unlimited possibilities. Perfect combinations of films placed one over the other, retouching, deft arrangements, quick exchanges of objects and scenes shall remove the limit between the physically possible and impossible. There is nothing impossible for the cinema. Here, objects that are not alive become free, they move and act; a little figure drawn by a child's hand becomes alive and starts running around the world; pursued by fate, it may live and die tragically; lions surge out of their cage and run around the city; a bottle can become alive; it can turn into a man or a dog and then vanish again in the luminous square; and people appear here and become prey of the most tragic or most grotesque destiny. For the cinema there are no natural laws of gravity, motion, impenetrability and possibility.

What is most remarkable is that everything and anything that happens here, all that is absurd, impossible and nonsensical, is seen here as a physical and undeniable reality, controlled by the eyes, and in future also by the ears. The most eccentric action takes place so thoroughly and gradually, with such a number of matter-of-fact and determining details, that no skeptic can be so clairvoyant as not to be surprised, shocked, and able to feel this most nonsensical of powers over this

refined and nonsensical reality.

Provided with all these technical possibilities, full of hope for its entire freedom without limits, the cinema is awaiting its genius. Then we shall see supremely cruel and tragic stories, dreamt up by the most perverse fantasy and realized with satanic precision and delight: we shall then be tormented by entirely new horrors and new powerful impressions: all the cruelty of the most refined literature shall be ~~exceeded~~ <sup>surpassed by</sup> by ~~an entire~~ <sup>a new</sup> reality. After all, we shall be looking at new miracles, at new magic, surpassing all physical laws. No age, even the most infantile and superstitious, ever dreamt about such eccentric and extreme wonders as we shall see, and something approaching a modern fairy-tale for adult and perverse people shall come into being. We shall also see a new and unusual comedy able to avail itself of all the impossible and inventive. In future cinematographs we shall live to see before us, almost physically, <sup>what we see -</sup> ~~once~~ only fantastically and nonsensically invented fables. ~~It will possible~~ that <sup>non</sup> animate world will speak to us, words that were never heard. Thus a totally new grotesqueness will be able to come into being: the most eccentric acoustic grotesqueness. Perhaps we shall ~~to~~ see the day when plucked roses shall cry, when stones shall sing, when horses will begin to preach and people will speak in the most beautiful cornet voices. What else is still possible here? The luminous projection square of the bioscope has the capacity of

becoming not only a new stage but also a new world, unlimited by material possibilities and laws of this world.

In the first place it has the capacity of becoming the ground for a certain new fantasy, that is, for a certain new art, if we shall live to see the bioscope earn the right to call itself art.

1910