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VILION, CLAREMONT.

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of the Brotherhood.
In the cast in support of
Edna Murphy, Myrt
McDowell, Car
and J. V

Film CRITICISM in Cape Town 1928-1930

If you like to laugh, if you like to enjoy good acting, if you can appreciate a marvellous cast, go to the Globe Theatre to-night and see "The New Commandant," Robert T. Kane's initial picture for First National. It has all of the above and much more besides.

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for life.
promised to become
rather than submit
darkness he returns
name.
"The Dark Angel
brings happiness to
darkest hour of hi

**HIS MA
MUIZ**

Michael Eckardt



Film Criticism in Cape Town 1928-1930

An explorative investigation into the Cape Times and Die Burger

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MICHAEL ECKARDT

FILM CRITICISM IN CAPE TOWN 1928-1930

**An Explorative Investigation into the
CAPE TIMES and DIE BURGER**



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PREFACE

This study is the revised version of my thesis, submitted at the University of Stellenbosch to obtain the degree Master of Philosophy of Journalism. The decision to publish this thesis stems from various recommendations because of the significant lack of fundamental studies concerning early South African film history. Conducted as an attempt to provide contextual background for a more comprehensive study on the reception of German films in South Africa in the years 1928 – 1933, the study aims to provide further research with the necessary basic data and a general statement on the use value of film reviews in newspapers. The only way to avoid the danger of using the few secondary sources over and over again was the return to the original film reviews published in the daily newspapers *Die Burger* and the *Cape Times* in the period under discussion. The result is a list of film titles which is supposed to give an unabridged overview of the films screened in Cape Town 1928 to 1930.¹ Due to the functionalist character of this survey, the given conclusions remain rather descriptive, sometimes speculative, and point out the necessity for more probing studies. In the present case, this study presents itself as an invitation to others to use the collected material as one possible point of departure for further investigations.

**Michael Eckardt,
Stellenbosch 2005**

¹ Because of its extended size, the complete data base is not part of this publication. A copy of appendix II (pp. 151-184) from the original thesis can be requested from the author (michael.eckardt@web.de) or from one of these institutions: Department of Journalism/University of Stellenbosch, Private Bag XI, 7602 Matieland; G.S. Gericke Biblioteek/Universiteit van Stellenbosch, Privaatsak X 5036, 7599 Stellenbosch or any other institution holding a copy of the original thesis.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

An investigation into the development of film criticism in Cape Town's daily press in the 1920s and 1930s requires research to focus on two related fields: film history and press history. When dealing with press history relating to film and cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, the existence of two dominant groups of readers/viewers and their newspapers needs to be taken into account: white Afrikaans-speaking versus English-speaking South Africans. The divergence in social and cultural traditions between the British and the Afrikaner communities was faithfully reflected by the publications which catered for, and spoke for, these two groups (Kitchen 1956: 42). The early stages of the domestic film industry in South Africa witnessed a decline; from its heights in 1916 of 14 productions in a single year, it dropped to zero productions during the period of 1926-1930 (Le Roux/Fourie 1982: 205ff). Nonetheless, South Africa had the best-developed entertainment industry in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was directly connected to "System Hollywood" via African Theatres Ltd. and the Schlesinger Organisation (Fawcett 1928: 34; cf. Cartright 1960; cf. Stodel 1962). The decline of the domestic film industry in the light of the steadily prospering entertainment sector raises questions and demonstrates the need for future research along these lines.

Considering the numerous English and the few Afrikaans newspapers in the period under discussion, it is necessary to narrow down the general research interest to a well-defined point of departure in order to provide future researchers with necessary core information. Such an investigation needs to address several broad themes: periodization, the relation between press and cinema, and the state of film criticism at the time, particularly within the South African context.

The question of periodization:

Major technological, economic and cultural shifts

The historical development of film and film criticism in the first decades of the 20th century certainly faced several changes. Before distinguishing between the economic, technological, aesthetic, psychological and sociological aspects of film history (Mikos 1993: 157), one has to take the unique conditions in South Africa into account. From a socio-economic point of view, this period of South African history can be clearly identified as the systemic period of British imperialism and the political and economic hegemony of the English establishment: +/- 1890 - 1948 (Terreblanche 2002: 239ff).

A period of more than fifty years is quite broad for an exploratory investigation; therefore it needs to be narrowed down to focus on the particular points of interest. The first forms of South African cinema coincided in 1910 with the formation of the Union of South Africa. In contrast to Britain's waning political power, the 'industrialisation' of

moving pictures intensified the domination of English imperial culture. Britain further exploited the popularity of films in South Africa by establishing hegemonic structures of film distribution, and built and owned what are conceived to be the most viable cinema houses (Masilela 2000: 61). Culminating in the Imperial Conference in October 1926, British hegemony influenced the South African entertainment industry at an administrative level. In order to protect domestic capital against American competitors, the British administration also devised various campaigns to combat US dominance over Commonwealth countries, e.g. restricting blind and advance booking or introducing a quota system (cf. Fisher 1926 and Seabury 1927).

Another outcome of British imperialism on the social structure was the mass migration of landless Afrikaners from rural to urban areas as a delayed consequence of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) in the mid-1920s. The British-controlled mining industry often refused to employ unskilled Afrikaners in the mines because they demanded higher wages than African miners (Terreblanche 2002: 268). These impoverished white farmers, who became urbanised virtually overnight, became a steadily growing prospective audience.

The technological shift

The development of film and cinema began in the United States of America with Thomas Alva Edison's Kinetoscope machine in 1889. France and Germany both started with the first film shows in 1895 – the Lumière brothers in Paris and Max Skladanowski's film screenings in Berlin. At the same time, the Italian Filoteo Alberini patented his Kinetografo Alberini machine for screening moving pictures (Kreimeier 1996: 9-10 and Mikos 1993: 155). Since the beginning of the 1930s films in full colour have dominated the screen. In the late 1940s the introduction of drive-in cinemas started and Cinemascope projection introduced the idea of three-dimensional motion pictures to the audience. Throughout the world and even in South Africa newspapers and journals were reporting about technical inventions, pointing out the differences between silent and sound film, and since the mid-1920s commenting in their reviews on the progression in film technique and style.² To form a well-defined framework for this investigation, a closer look at the technological development is necessary. At this point the problem of an appropriate time classification arises again. Following the rather broad outline of Wigston (2001), we can divide the period into two:

- 1910-1926: The era of silent films; and
- 1926-1939: The arrival of the talkies (Wigston 2001:75f).

One point of reference is therefore the shift from silent to sound film and its reflection in the reviews. But a brief chronology of film history is by no means sufficient, as it fails to consider the unique South African circumstances (which were coupled with the

² E.g., in 1923 the German periodical *Lichtbild-Bühne* was turned into a daily newspaper with an edition of more than 3000 copies. In South Africa most of the regional daily newspapers (e.g. *The Natal Advertiser*, *Die Burger* etc.) had an entertainment section; some special interest journals e.g. *Stage and Cinema*, *Die Huisgenoot* or *The Sjabok* regularly reported on film and cinema as well.

technical development in the USA and Europe, but were subject to delayed implementation). Similarly to Wigston, the chronology of Louw and Botha (1993: 161f) separates the years from 1920 to 1929 (silent film) and 1930-1939 (sound film) according to what they see as the change from silent to sound film. These apparently contradictory periodizations demand some explanation. The first full-length sound film produced in South Africa was the Afrikaans *Moedertjie* in 1931. The predecessor of the modern sound film, the De Forrest-Phono Films,³ appeared for the first time in South Africa in 1928.⁴

The addition of sound to film had a dramatic impact on the industry, not only in the United States and Europe,⁵ but also in South Africa. The technical shift from silent to sound film also had economic implications. The required capital for new studio equipment and higher post-production costs led to an enormous concentration process in the film industry and only some major companies survived this struggle (E.g. UFA in Germany and Warner in the USA). The addition of sound to film also caused some initial problems for South African theatres, as they could not secure local franchise for the new films (Wigston 2001: 76). A discussion on this difficult situation cannot follow the simplistic technical distinction of Louw/Botha. The technical shift was followed by an economic shift, which in turn was followed by a shift in the critics' reception:

While it made necessary a reassessment of formal means in the context of the sound film, its more immediate impact on critics was a growing concern with the process of economic concentration and what was perceived as betrayal of the cinema's original mission as a democratic, international art for the masses (Hake 1993: XI).

Some uncertainty remains about the dates of the invention of sound film and of its initiation. Sound film was first publicly screened in 1922 in Berlin and utilised the Tri-Ergon sound process. The German twenty-minute fairy-tale *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (*The Little Match Girl*) premièred on 20 December 1925, but was not commercially successful because of its poor sound quality (Bock/Töteberg 2002: 134). The first commercial success of a talkie was *The Jazz Singer*, released in October 1927. For this film the needle-pickup sound process invented by Western Electric and applied by Warner Brothers was used (Kreimeier 1996: 178).

Situated thousands of kilometres away from Berlin and Hollywood, South Africa did not witness the arrival of sound films before 1928. Therefore the dates referred to by Wigston and Louw/Botha are estimates. In South Africa the complete shift from silent cinema to sound film did not occur until 1930. For this study I take the advent of the first sound issue of the newsreel *African Mirror* in 1930 as the decisive breakthrough of

³ De Forrest-Phone-Film system was a combination of a film-projector (for the pictures) and a synchronised record player (for the sound).

⁴ The advert for *The Ghost Train* in *Die Burger* indicates that this film was a De Forrest-Phono Film. *Die Burger*, 26.11.1928, 6.

⁵ Cf. Die deutsche Filmindustrie und der Tonfilm. *Der Deutsch-Afrikaner*, 9(1929)23, 31.

the “talkies”.⁶ The new technique was only fully established as silent cinemas finally disappeared after 1930 (Gutsche 1972: 229).⁷

The economic shift

In his study *Capital and Ideology in South African Cinema 1885-1980*, Keyan Tomaselli (1983) subdivides the 1920s and 1930s from a Marxist and political-economic point of view, which supports Terreblanche’s (2002) broad frame. He distinguishes between

- concentration of capital (1913-1926);
- protection of national capital (1926-1930);
- penetration by international capital (1930-1931);
- co-existence between national and international capital (1932-1938).

Tomaselli’s economic analysis can be summarised as the shift from a monopoly market to an open market and back again. In 1927 the newly established company, Kinemas Ltd., entered the South African entertainment market and became a serious rival of the monopoly holder, African Theatres. After an intense fight for audiences until 1931, the monopoly was re-established when the two companies merged.⁸

As has been explained so far, the period under discussion therefore contains at least two major shifts or, according to post-modernist terminology, several discontinuities, namely technological and economic. After many tumultuous technological and economic disturbances, a state of equilibrium brought about the third and final significant shift.

The cultural shift

Summarising the aesthetic, psychological and sociological aspects of film under the broad category cultural, one can focus on the impact and effects that cinema had on a particular audience at a particular time. Surveying Tomaselli’s main references, one comes across Thelma Gutsche’s historiographic work *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa 1895-1940* (Gutsche 1972).⁹ Her detailed study (originally a doctoral thesis presented in 1946) divides the 1920s and 1930s into the following periods:

- the last years of silent cinema – the emergence of a national entertainment industry 1919-1927;

⁶ African Mirror Sound Film. *The Natal Advertiser* 02.05.1930, 10.

⁷ E.g., in Cape Town, the Grand was the last cinema to obtain sound technology (November 1930). See: Die Laaste Bioskoop Sonder Geraas, *Die Burger* 22.11.1930, 8. In Durban the last silent cinema, the Cinema Lounge, was cabled in January 1933. See: Last Silent House, *The Natal Advertiser* 06.01.1933, 9.

⁸ The consequences of the advent of new competitors in 1930 such as MGM and United Artists emerged later and this issue is therefore not pursued further.

⁹ The book is based on her Ph.D. thesis in history, submitted to the University of Cape Town in 1946.

- the ending of the ‘monopoly’ by Kinemas and their introduction of ‘talkies’– the formation of African Consolidated Theatres and Films Ltd. 1927-1931;
- the impact of sound in film and the “atmospheric” theatre;
- the advent of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Union Theatres Ltd;
- the penetration of the cinema into the social structure 1931-1937.

Taking both technical and economic changes into account, Gutsche sums up her argument with the social and cultural implications of film and cinema in South Africa. These influences are most noteworthy and require attention. As a reflector and a creator of public opinion, the press transmits the audience’s attitudes towards films and serves as a dynamic mirror of cultural and social life. It is not surprising that Gutsche used newspaper reviews more than any other source for her analysis. Unlike in Europe or the United States of America, a theoretical discussion of screened films was widely lacking in South Africa. Gutsche based her research mostly on material from newspapers, even with all the difficulties involved (Gutsche 1972: 383f).

Another critical study, mentioned in Tomaselli (1983: 70–78) and in Louw/Botha (1993: 159), takes a radically different approach to film history. In *Die bioskoop in diens van die volke*, Hans Rompel (1942a and 1942b) criticises the Anglo-American dominance on South African screens as “die Hollywoodse bril,” a form of cultural imperialism (Rompel 1942a: 114). He addresses the history of film reception, as well as its cultural implications, in a less chronological manner and distinguishes seven overlapping periods from 1895 to the 1940s:

1. Die oertyd (<1895) [The pre-film era]¹⁰
2. Begin-tyd (1895-) [The beginning]
- 3.a Die “Klassieke” tyd (1907-) [The classical era]
- 3.b Die Knoeityd [The blunder era]¹¹
4. Jeugbloei (1911-) [The juvenile blooming]
5. Amerika tree in (1915-)[The entry of America]
6. Europese opbloei (1918-)[The European blooming]
7. Die Klankprent (1929-)[The era of the sound film]

Considering that Rompel’s is the only other serious study covering the 1920s and 1930s, it is surprising that Gutsche mentions him only in passing, namely, as the production supervisor of the film *’n Nasie bou koers* (1938) and as the founder of the amateur film production Reddingsdaadbond-Amateur-Rolprent-Organisasie (RARO) (Gutsche 1972: 263 and 344). More importantly, Rompel was also *Die Burger’s* first press photographer and, as a film critic for *Die Burger*, *Die Huisgenoot* and *Die Brandwag*, he had an extensive knowledge of, and a deep insight into, film and cinema.¹² He played an outstanding role in the shaping of South Africa’s alternative film industry that favoured Afrikaner nationalism (cf. Rompel 1940; Louw/Botha 1993: 159 and Tomaselli 1983:

¹⁰ Unless otherwise cited, translations of quotations in the text are mine [M.E.].

¹¹ The most appropriate translation seems to be the German “Puschzeit”.

¹² For some biographical details see: Hans Rompel. In: *Afrikanerpersoneregister 1942*. Johannesburg: Voortrekker-Pers, 224 and Pretorius 1947.

116–150). One also has to note that Rompel, a conservative Afrikaner critic, shared the same ideas about US screen dominance as his left-wing colleagues in Europe. In Germany, for example, such Americanisation was hypercritically observed:

The number of people who see films and never read books is in the millions. They are all co-opted by American taste, they are made equal, made uniform (...). The American film is the new world militarism approaching. It's more dangerous than Prussian militarism. It doesn't devour individuals, it devours masses (Ihring in Kaes 1987: 21).

Combining the periodizations suggested by Wigston, Louw/Botha, Tomaselli, Gutsche and Rompel, one arrives at the following frame, indicating important technological, economic and cultural cornerstones for the late 1920s and early 1930s. They are all interdependent and can be seen as a web of cause and effect influencing the development of film and cinema in South Africa:

Year	Technological shifts	Economic shifts	Cultural shifts
	- <i>Louw/Botha (1993)</i> - <i>Wigston (2001)</i>	- <i>Tomaselli (1983)</i>	- <i>Rompel (1942)</i> - <i>Gutsche (1946/1972)</i> - <i>Masilela (2000)</i>
1927	silent film	monopoly held by African Theatres	total Hollywood domination
1928	silent film	breaking the monopoly by Kinemas	arrival of continental productions
1929	silent film/sound film	full market competition between the two leading distributors	strong competition between “American sensationalism” and “European classicism”
1930			
1931	sound film	re-establishment of the monopoly; merger of the two former rivals to African Consolidated Theatres	rise of Afrikaner nationalism; demand for alternative films caused by resentment of Hollywood; negative effects of “Jingoism”; imitation of American slang in public etc.; new censorship legislation

Table 1.1: Major shifts in South African film history 1927-1931

The relation between press and cinema

In the period under discussion the press in the western part of the Cape Province can be seen as a relatively constant factor (cf. Morris/Barrow 1947). There were some minor technical innovations, but most importantly, the ownership of the Cape's press did not witness any important changes. Among the English-speaking press the

powerful Argus Company, which owned the *Cape Argus*, was competing with independent newspapers like the *Cape Times*. The leading Afrikaans-newspaper in the Cape, *Die Burger*, established in 1915 and owned by Nasionale Pers, was defending and entrenching the Afrikaner way of life long before the initiation of the rise of the Afrikaans press in the 20th century.¹³ In the Cape Province, unlike in Natal, the number of newspapers did not change significantly.¹⁴ One fundamental difference between the English- and the Afrikaans-language press can be seen in their news content. Whereas the English papers paid equal attention to domestic affairs and overseas news, there was a clear preoccupation with domestic issues in the Afrikaans press (Kitchen 1959: 42). It may be interesting to see how this difference affected film criticism. Dealing mainly with domestic issues, the Afrikaans press may have focused more on the reception of films and their effects on the Afrikaner community in general. Reporting on international developments, the English press may have provided its readership with more background information on film and cinema and its progress, and with more comparisons. The second main difference is the level of political involvement of both newspaper groups. Considered to be the more liberal of the two, the Cape-based English-language press strongly supported the Unionist government, and was more interested in showing profits than in operating as a party instrument (Sacks 1937: 23 and Tomaselli 1989: 100). In contrast, the Afrikaans-language press later had several cabinet ministers on their editorial boards and maintained a symbiotic relationship between party and newspaper (Kitchen 1959: 43 and Giliomee 2003: 383).¹⁵ The polarisation of Afrikaans newspapers into radical northern (Transvaal)¹⁶ and modest southern (Cape) components occurred only later (Muller 1989: 120f and cf. McClurg 1987). Newspapers like *Die Vaderland*, *Die Volkstem* and *Die Suiderstem* were supposed to support the United Party government, while *Die Burger* and *Die Volksblad* were seen as staunch supporters of the new Nationalist Party and to a very considerable extent shaping its destiny (Jonker 1937: 26). Bearing that in mind, criticism against the clear Hollywood dominance which was created by the import preferences of African Theatres is more readily found in the Afrikaans press (Willink 1931: 120f).¹⁷ The conflicting opinions of the two newspapers with regard to the effects of the new censorship law, introduced in 1930 and altered in 1931, reflect the high political importance of this matter.¹⁸

¹³ A limited number of Afrikaans newspapers was published before the mid 1930s, e.g. *De Zuid-Afrikaan/Ons Land* (1830-1930), *Die Volkstem* (1873-1951), *Het Westen/Die Volksblad* (1904-), *Die Vaderland* (1915-) or *Die Afrikaner* (1886-1932). The Afrikaans press experienced a rise in the later 1930s, e.g. with the founding of *Die Transvaler* (1937) in Johannesburg (see: de Villiers 1976: 411-439ff).

¹⁴ In Natal the Afrikaner community lost its voice as *Die Afrikaner* ceased publication in 1932 (Picton 1969: 72).

¹⁵ E.g. the first prime minister of the Nationalist Party, D.F. Malan, was the founding editor of *Die Burger*; *Die Vaderland* had the Minister of Finance N.C. Havenga as managing director; *Die Transvaler* was founded in 1937 and edited by H.F. Verwoerd, who became prime minister in 1958.

¹⁶ E.g. Dr. Verwoerd, in the words of a High Court judge in 1943, turned *Die Transvaler* into a “tool of the Nazis,” and to this day it is seen as spokesman for the most extreme wing of the party (Ainslie 1966: 46).

¹⁷ Cf. Die Toneelkuns in ons dae van “Kougom-Kultuur”. *Die Burger* 08.02.1930, 9.

¹⁸ Cf. Ban the censor board. *Cape Times* 26.06.1931, 8.

Film criticism

The general idea behind, and value of, film criticism is that discourse about the cinema can be seen as its “third machine”: after the one that manufactures the films (production), and the one that consumes them (perception), it is the one that vaunts them (reception) and that valorises the product (Metz in Hake 1993: IX). Only one of the studies mentioned above concerning film and cinema in South Africa - that of Thelma Gutsche - remarks on film criticism. But it is revealing that Gutsche mentions film criticism only under the heading “Miscellaneous” (1972: 383f). Only one-and-a-half pages are devoted to some general statements concerning largely uncritical film descriptions as reviews and the undeniable commercial liaison between cinema advertising and the quality of the reviews. She states further that the only cinema shows reviewed fairly were those staged by independent exhibitors. This means that a study of the development of film criticism should focus especially on those cinemas. To satisfy the reader’s demand for impartial reviews as well as the cinema proprietor’s needs for undamaging reviews, journalists developed a so called “back-door” method. This revealed the real quality of a film only to the initiated reader, e.g. by naming the film reviewed as good but not reaching the standard set by another production. Gutsche does not explain how this “method” was practised or whether only the English-speaking press applied this style of film criticism. By referring to the film critics “Baton” (C.H. Parsons) from the *Natal Advertiser*, R.A. Nelson and “Treble Violl” (Olga Racster) of the *Star* she has put some names on the map (Gutsche 1940b: 17), but she leaves the much more important Afrikaans critic Hans Rompel out of consideration.

Hans Rompel, a film journalist for *Die Burger*, *Die Huisgenoot* and *Die Brandwag*, offers a general reflection on film criticism and comments on the screened films in his book *Die Bioskoop in Diens van die Volke* (Rompel 1942a and 1942b). He even came up with ideas of a prospective independent Afrikaans film industry (Rompel 1940). It is difficult to say whether Rompel was *Die Burger’s* main film critic or whether reviewing films was a rotating job, as Gutsche assumes (Gutsche 1972: 384).¹⁹ As an exception, one elaborate review of the German production *Soll und Haben* was published in *Die Burger*, written by someone with the initials “H.R.”.²⁰ Taking this into account, one can identify a major figure in the field of film criticism in addition to Gutsche. The existence of only two relevant studies on the chosen topic – one in English, the other in Afrikaans – indicates that the field of early South African film history has been rather poorly investigated.

Nevertheless, the advantage of this situation is that these two studies give an insight into film criticism from the perspective of the dominant cultural groups and their film experts. Gutsche’s work uses material mainly from South Africa’s English-speaking press, which suggests that she thought the Afrikaans press did not match the quality of newspapers such as the *Cape Times*, *Rand Daily Mail*, *Natal Mercury* (Gutsche 1972: 394). Rompel’s articles and his book give a different impression and place serious doubts on

¹⁹ Rompel himself states that he was the drama critic for *Die Burger* and that he made a study of the film’s aesthetic basis. Pretorius 1947: 43.

²⁰ *Die Burger*, 05. 09. 1929, 9.

Gutsche's method. The question as to why Gutsche did not use Rompel's writings is probably related to their different occupational backgrounds. Gutsche was employed from 1939 to 1945 by the State Bureau of Information as film adviser and later, from 1947 to 1959, she worked as head of the Educational and Information Service of African Consolidated Films Ltd. (Verwey 1995: 89). Thus one could interpret that as her support of the position of the United Party government and also as appreciative of the effects of Imperial monopoly capital exercised by the Schlesinger Organisation (Gutsche 1940a). On the other hand, Rompel was member of Afrikaner organisations like the Reddingsdaadbond and with their help founded RARO – (Reddingsdaadbond-Amateur-Rolprent-Organisasie). The aim was to break Schlesinger's monopoly by establishing a genuine Afrikaans film industry to promote the ideas of the oppositional National Party (Rompel 1940 and le Roux 1942).

The current state of South African film history

In her short overview of film studies in South Africa, Jacqueline Maingard (1997) states that film studies would not be regarded as a study subject in its own right, within studies concerning contemporary television receiving all the attention (Maingard 1997: 190f). This clearly signifies the preoccupation of South African researchers with more current issues than historical ones.²¹ Another way of assessing film studies in South Africa is in terms of research and publication output. According to Maingard, South African film history is captured mainly in three books: Thelma Gutsche's *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa* (1972), Keyan Tomaselli's *Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South Africa* (1989) and J. Bignaut and M. Botha's *Movies-Moguls-Mavericks: South African Cinema 1979-1991* (1992). For Maingard there is no doubt that Gutsche and Tomaselli stand out as the foremost works.

As stated above, Gutsche's book is virtually the only reference for all studies dealing with South African film history from its beginning until the Second World War. This highly elaborate masterpiece can with every right be called a pioneering study, even though its publication was delayed by a quarter of a century (Nilant 1972: 207). But the reassurance of referring to this respected study on every occasion leads to the danger of an unconsidered transmission of her arguments and data into subsequent studies. Apart from the fact that she largely disregarded the Afrikaans press, one might ask what other omissions may come to light upon careful scrutiny.

Gutsche's bibliography clearly shows that she mainly used English newspapers, English secondary sources on film theory and history, a few Afrikaans dailies and weeklies, but also Dutch, French and German literature. The fact that she even used a German daily newspaper for her research is intriguing. The reader might consequently expect accurate information on especially the German films mentioned in her study. She states that among the continental films which were shown with a consistent frequency in 1928, the

²¹ The comment of Bickford-Smith (1996) and Haasbroek's study (2001) demonstrate the variety of disciplines dealing with film history.

German UFA productions were usually the most successful (Gutsche 1972: 218). Of the 17 titles she gave as German, *Königsmark*, *The Way of All Flesh* and *The Last Command*, were not of German origin. Citing *The Trial of Donald Westhoff* (1929) and *Atlantic* (1930) as outstanding films of those years, she forgets to indicate that the former was German and the latter, a British/German co-production (Gutsche 1972: 228f). She also does not say what the criteria are for the “outstanding films of each year” that she lists at the end of every chapter. Considering the fact that *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa* was submitted as a PhD thesis in 1946 and was published in 1972, one might have assumed a correction of the mistakes in the first draft. It is troubling to read in the book that Leontine Sagan, director of the German film *Mädchen in Uniform* (1931), which was later shown on South African stages as a play, was born in Klerksdorp, Transvaal (Gutsche 1972: 338 and 389), while her dictionary entry under ‘Theatrical History’ in another reference work stipulated that Sagan was born in Europe (Gutsche in SESA Vol. X[1974]: 479). This is irritating, because Leontine Sagan and Thelma Gutsche knew each other since the late 1930s and were close friends (Eckardt 2004).²²

In listing these few examples, I do not intend to devalue Gutsche’s work, but would like to point out the necessity of a critical revision of her book, which has become a standard source of reference. According to Masilela, Gutsche’s idea of South African film history is that:

... South African cinema is not constituted by the totality of films made by South Africans on aspects of South Africanness, but rather, in the early decades of its inspection, by the impinging of foreign films on the imagination of South Africans as well as the cultural and social institutions that made this possible. In other words, Gutsche approaches the making of South African cinema as a historian of social and cultural institutions, rather than a film historian of artistic processes or from concern with aesthetics of form (Masilela 2000: 50).

Interpreting modern concepts of film history as a history of reception and the effects of film and cinema (Mikos 1993), Gutsche’s project serves to order the cultural space of the cinema, in other words to arrange chaotic forms into a rational order and other cohesive structures (Masilela 2000: 53). The advantage of her monumental work is the striving for a nearly comprehensive history of South African cinema until 1940. But does she unveil her methods and sources so that one can verify or repudiate her results? As demonstrated with the German films, her project needs to be completed from the perspective of descriptive film history.

One aim of the present study is therefore to register the films screened in the period under discussion so as to get an overview of feature film supply in the Cape. Subsequent surveys should be able to access further information like origin, genre, actors, directors, etc. of the screened films by taking this list as a basis. More descriptive than interpretative, this scheme does not intend to theorise according to any specific

²² Cf. University of Cape Town Library (archives and manuscripts division), Thelma Gutsche Papers (BC 703), correspondence Gutsche-Sagan D 49 – D 50.

school of thought, but to provide data that may serve as raw material for such theories. The method applied involves compiling a film database by looking at the reception of films in the print media of the dominant cultural groups. Apart from Gutsche's untheorised stance on how to deal with the social significance of motion pictures, her method does not consider the different segments of the audience in the context of their cultural background. She explains the significance of "going to the movies" in South Africa, but by treating all South African cinema-goers as a "mass audience", she might have overlooked the changes after the major technological and economic shifts that influenced reception and preferences.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s South African society faced the intrusion of economic and political concerns into all aspects of cultural life. In particular the cities, with their cinemas, played an extraordinarily important role in shaping the cultural imagination of modernity (Masilela 2000: 53).

It is hardly acceptable to take Gutsche's study as the only master narrative on early South African film history because of its dead ends and highly selective sources. Contrary to Masilela's view, one has to admit that scholars of early South African film history (from the beginning in 1895 until the outbreak of the Second World War) orientated themselves for too long according to Gutsche's thesis and her conception of cinema only. Being shackled to her "scholarly thoroughness," South African film history was beset with the structural problem of depending entirely on her studies, and researchers were unable even to think about a "deconstruction" of this master narrative, as desired by Masilela (2000: 50ff).

The second reason for the poor state of affairs in the field of South African film history is that other main sources, such as the works of Hans Rompel and of other Afrikaner critics like him (see the section on cultural shifts) are largely neglected. As expected, Rompel's book *Die Bioskoop in Diens van die Volk* (1942a and 1942b) is not found in Maingard's list (1997). Evaluating this and other Afrikaans sources should be part of a study of South African film history. They would fill exactly the gaps in Gutsche's work and offer another view on perception as well as reception of the medium. The awareness of the influences and effects of film and cinema on the Afrikaner communities was well developed and given much attention. The role of film and cinema as serious entertainment and their gradual integration (or disintegration) into middle-class culture could be visible in the film reviews.

An inquiry into the audience's preferences could help to identify how a particular national cinema with specific characteristics and issues was perceived and whether it was desired. Therefore, this analysis has to focus firstly on the collection of the necessary data, and secondly on reception as well, in order to identify for which opportunities this material can be useful. The questioning of national identity in a time of the emergence of a working-class culture and attendant concerns about mass culture, cultural hegemony and the existence of a proletarian public sphere (e.g. in Germany), also influenced the film reviews:

Critics responded to these challenges by making the cinema the basis for a new folklore or a proletarian public sphere, or they tried to eliminate the tension between the masses and the nation by calling for a strong national cinema. In all cases the critical reference points were of a social and cultural nature, even when such influences were denied in the attempt to replace politics with aesthetics (Hake 1993: XII).

The third reason for the poor state of film history in South Africa is the difficulty of accessing domestic scholarly works on film history. Besides his book *Cinema of Apartheid*, Keyan Tomaselli's voluminous doctoral thesis *Capital and Ideology in South African Cinema 1885-1980* (1983) is one of the most valuable studies (see the section on economical shifts), but published only in part and not in its entirety (e.g. Tomaselli 1985a, 1985b, 1986). Bearing a strong input of early 1980s Marxist theories, Tomaselli's study touches on economic, political, technological and sociological aspects of film in South Africa but largely disregards the receptional side. Focusing more on the post-World War II period, he also used Gutsche's work as standard reference and contextualised her overall narrative by explaining the economics of distribution and exhibition in relation to the phases of technological innovation. Being ahead of most other scholars, Tomaselli also mentions Rompel's ideas and efforts to establish independent Afrikaans film and to found an indigenous film production with a strong undertone of Afrikaner nationalism (Tomaselli 1983: 71-78). There are various unpublished dissertations on different periods, but dissemination of their interesting results was limited to the university where the thesis was submitted and mainly discussed there (e.g. Druker 1979; Basson 1982a; Wheeler 1988; Maingard 1998; Gainer 2000; Binedell 2000).

The most recent and also easily accessible publication on film and cinema in South Africa is *To Change Reels. Film and Culture in South Africa*, edited by Isabel Balseiro and Ntongela Masilela (2003). It offers a good insight into current studies concerning past, present and future of film and cinema in South Africa. Edwin Hees's contextualisation of *De Voortrekkers* (1916) frames opportunities for research on early South African film history (Hees 2003), Ntongela Masilela's examination of available sources - namely the newspapers - on early film culture in South Africa (Masilela 2003) is very useful as well. The chapters in this book are written by a circle of outstanding scholars of South African film studies, half of them based in South Africa, the other half overseas. This book is a promising step towards achieving Jacqueline Maingard's aim, stated above (Maingard 1997: 191). At the same time, it provides evidence that this topic is attracting more attention from overseas (the book has a US publisher) than from local institutions.

Another helpful source is Adrienne Udemán's compilation *The South African film industry, 1940-1971* (Udemán: 1972). However, its usefulness is limited due her unintelligible and inconsistent style of referencing. Udemán's compilation is a poorly executed exercise in copying references unchecked from the *Index to South African Journals* for the years 1940-1970. The period of her compilation (1940-1971) was simply determined by the availability of these indexes; in other words, it seems that to look for material from

previous periods was too much of an effort. The starting point of South African film production, *The Great Kimberley Diamond Robbery* from 1910/11, (Gutsche 1972: 125), Joseph Albrecht's D.W. Griffith-influenced *De Voortrekkers* (1918) (Wigston 2001: 76), *Moedertjie* (1931) as first film in Afrikaans (cf. Faure 1931) or *Die bou van 'n nasie* (cf. de Waal 1938) were cornerstones in South African film production – not so the year 1940 with an output of zero South African films (le Roux/Fourie 1982: 205-207). The small domestic production was overshadowed by large quantities of imported films. This clearly led to more reception-based writings. An inclusion of the 1920s and 1930s in Udemann's compilation would have provided not only a platform for discussions about different audiences and their reception (cf. Arliss 1928), but also first-hand historical overviews of film and cinema (cf. Collins 1928), as well as reflections on the technological shifts and their implications (cf. Rompel 1929; cf. Willink 1931).

The South African scientific community also needs a more effective discussion forum to promote scholarly work related to film and cinema. There is the well established journal *Critical Arts* (based in Durban), where current research in cultural and media studies is discussed. The findings of masters or doctoral dissertations remain mostly unknown to researchers working in other disciplines. A step in the right direction is the "research forum" in the journal *Communicare* (official publication of the Southern African Communication Association, based in Johannesburg). Here a summary of theses relating to media and communication studies is published. The two Stellenbosch-based journals *Ecquid Novi* and the *South African Theatre Journal* focus mostly on studies in journalism or drama and performance studies. Their articles sometimes deal with topics related to film studies (e.g. film criticism as part of arts journalism or the competition between film and stage, etc.), but these are not their major concern. All these journals are published bi-annually, limiting their scope in terms of current relevance and possible feedback. The papers presented at the First International African Film and History Conference in July 2002 (in Cape Town) promise to stimulate scholarly discussion; they are partly published or available online.²³

To give an understanding of the sources used for this investigation, namely film reviews in daily newspapers, I shall give a short explanation on the function and character of film criticism in the 1920s and 1930s in the following chapter.

²³ Cf. Film and History in Africa; theme issue of the *South African Historical Journal* 48(2003)1 and <http://web.uct.ac.za/conferences/filmhistorynow> (06.04.2004).

CHAPTER II

Remarks on the Function and Character of Film Criticism in general and in the Period under Discussion

Today, even the smallest town has its own cinema and every average film gets brought close to the masses via millions of channels. What idea is transmitted by a film to this audience and in what sense does a film influence those masses? These are precisely the major questions which the responsible onlooker has to address towards film (Siegfried Kracauer 1932: 10).

After the literature review and an account of the state of research in the field of early South African film history, a general note on the function and character of film criticism is necessary. To place into context the specific situation of film criticism in the 1920s and 1930s in South Africa, one can compare it with similar developments in Europe during the same period. Such a comparison seems appropriate because South Africa had a well-developed press with strong ties to Europe.²⁴ It happened regularly that films which had been shown earlier overseas were promoted by using positive comments from overseas media. It was the role of South African critics to contextualise their tenor; they often compared the domestic audience's reaction with the response from overseas. This allows one to make certain assumptions about the possible nature of writings on film in South Africa. The aim of this comparison is to list specific categories of film criticism which will be applied to the material found in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* in the period under discussion.

Film criticism in newspapers is a specialised form of journalism, as is criticism of books, TV, art, culture, music, politics, records, radio or theatre. In the case of film criticism one can generally distinguish between two types: academic/artistic and journalistic criticism. With this classification, two kinds of critics are often identified in the literature: the ("real") critic and the reviewer (Basson 1982a: 202; Titchener 1998: 1ff). The latter does not necessarily need to focus on social or aesthetic categories, but has to be familiar with the modes of production of the work in question and its specific presentation to the public (Haacke 1969: 237). According to Titchener, the critiques are more likely to be found in larger daily newspapers, weeklies or special journals, whereas reviews appear more often in smaller daily newspapers (Titchener 1998: 1ff). There is no doubt that the journalist as a professional can deal with either form of criticism. It is interesting that the above-mentioned fundamental distinction between critic/criticism and reviewer/review was recognised relatively early, in the 1920s (cf. Siemsen 1927).

²⁴ E.g.: Dutch-born Frederik Rompel (1871-1940), working for *Die Volkstem* (Pretoria) and later for *Die Burger* (Cape Town) as foreign news editor, started his journalistic career in Holland at a social democratic weekly in Amsterdam (cf. Dentz 1945/46). The *Cape Times* looked to London for their example, and for a long time for their editors and senior staff (Ainslie 1966: 41).

The model that distinguishes two forms of film criticism is not limited to a particular historical period or national press; it has often been applied in different periods and is certainly useful for current research like this investigation (cf. Kracauer 1932; Rohde 1954; Haacke 1969; Basson 1982a; Titchener 1998).

Reviewing as a sub-discipline of journalism has mainly the function to provide information on a cultural work or performance of interest to the public, and to evaluate it for potential audiences (Hohenberg 1987: 266). Depending on the importance of the event, a journalist will report on it either in the form of a notice, review, or criticism. Journalistic writing should aim to report on a film in a way that informs an uninitiated reader in a factual manner. Additionally, the writer's opinion is included. Evaluative journalism like this shares two characteristics that distinguish it from persuasive or opinion writing: 1.) the immediate news function of presenting basic factual information about a current or forthcoming event or object, usually before it has been experienced by audience members; and 2.) a simultaneous personal evaluation of the quality of the execution of the event or object (Wyatt/Badger 1990: 360). Journalistic film reviewing usually starts like a report, listing concisely the facts such as the title, the story, the actors, the director, lighting, the plot, camera, etc. The main difference between review and critique can be described as the differing proportion of news content and personal evaluation. As a form of mediation between object and public, a review is turned into a critique because of the journalist's ability to select, classify and judge on behalf of the public (Haacke 1969: 239). The media usually report on artistic events (e.g. film screening) concisely, like in the style of a newsflash. Depending on its cultural-political importance and its aesthetic quality, a further classification will be applied to either the première, new version or repetition (Haacke 1969: 241).

Following the historical development of film criticism in general, one can identify three categories (or styles) of writing about film in newspapers (Rompel 1942b: 79; Rohde 1956: 96f; Haacke 1969: 244; Rössler 1997: 182):²⁵

First – a **film preview** or **advance**, which repeats the information given by the distributor or the producing company. It usually gives only a short comment on the film's content, refers to statements by other media and transmits a high degree of advertising to the target group. The preview is mostly published before the screening of a film and contains, because of its origin (e.g. from news agencies or public relation firms), information mainly in an unedited form (Titchener 1998: 7ff).

Second - a **film review**, intended to inform the prospective audience about the qualities of the film, focusing strongly on the story told, adopting journalistic standards and being mainly of a descriptive character. The film review appears during the screening of the film and seldom reflects more than an overnight reaction to a particular film show (Titchener 1998: 2).

²⁵ Hans Rompel distinguished as follows: *rolprentnuus*, *rolprentbeskouing* and *rolprentkritiek* (Rompel 1942b: 79). Manfred Rohde names the three categories similar to Rompel: *Filmkurzbesprechung* = film short report; *Filmbesprechung* = film review; *Filmkritik* = film critique (Rohde 1956: 97).

Third – the **film critique**, containing the same features as a film review, complemented by remarks on the social context, the ideology conveyed, as well as comparisons, personal ideas and judgement from an often artistic or academically trained critic. A film critique can be seen as the evaluation over time of an artistic effort to decide on the ultimate value of the events on the screen (Titchener 1998: 2).

These categories, as given above, show similarities with Haacke's widely respected standard reference *Publizistik und Gesellschaft*²⁶ (Haacke 1970). They provide insight into the structure of film criticism from a traditional, print-media-orientated point of view. The three fundamental types of writings on film correspond largely with the three phases of film criticism (Haacke 1970: 290ff):

First - **the attraction phase**. Turning an advertisement into a "pseudo-review", the film preview is often designed to imitate a film review with the aim of replacing real criticism through undamaging recommendations.

The recent development in film journalism has shown that this phase has experienced a massive boost, producing so-called "media hype". The media's focus on events has been followed by a shift towards the "what" rather than the "why" of arts and entertainment. In other words, the taking place of a certain artistic event has become more important than its content (Giger 1999: 24f).

Second - **the judgement phase**. Leading newspapers and journals published reviews after the screening which contain an evaluation of the film's qualities. Serious reviews expressing a good or bad judgement are often responsible for the commercial success or failure of a film. Professional reviews provide the public with an orientation of whether the film is worth seeing or not.

A critic's rejection of a film need not automatically lead to a box office failure. Sometimes a negative review is taken by a certain part of the readership as a positive statement about a film's quality (Rössler 1997: 194).

Third - **the phase of appreciation**. A final judgement on the success and quality of a film after its screening allows critics to comment on the social, ideological, political, and economic context of a particular film. The critique can compare the film with others of a similar theme and can place the techniques applied in respect of the aesthetic standards of the film into the broader context of developments in cinematography in general. From an ex-post perspective, the particular and often personal appreciation of critics of selected films can get transferred into film history, because in this third phase economic and other constraints do not bias criticism as strongly as in the other phases. For these critics the real or eternal artistic value of a film attracts the highest attention here.

Undoubtedly, the third-phase film critiques are the ones that researchers value most. It is also clear that such reviews are seldom found in a daily newspaper because of the limited space and time available for elaborate critiques and the demand for strictly

²⁶ Engl. *Journalism and Society*.

topical reviews. Haacke's opinion, namely that a particular film is acclaimed as a work of art because public opinion follows that of the film critic's (1970: 294), reflects his traditional, print-media-orientated point of view. The situation has changed in the past twenty years, weakening the status of the critic/reviewer fundamentally (Basson 1982b: 57). Is it no longer the case that only critics mediate between the artistic work and its audience. Because of the pervasive presence of the electronic media in the so-called "information society", the audience is confronted with an oversupply of competing opinions and discourse. The reader or viewer is exposed to a much broader variety of opinions from different sources with sometimes hardly comparable backgrounds and an unequal level of quality. Although it may be questionable whether these sources are authentic, objective and original, they nevertheless offer a substitute for professional criticism in traditional media. The result is an erosion of the reviewers' power in influencing opinion (cf. Wasserman 2003).

In the era before the world wars as well as the inter-war years (1918-1939), the daily press was one of the most influential factors in forming public opinion. It was the film critic's task to transform journalistic expertise into public knowledge, mediating between the film author and a pleasure-craving public. This is precisely the core function of film criticism (Haacke 1970: 295).

One can therefore summarise that the process of reviewing a film is at first a journalistic, not an artistic or academic, exercise where the object (film) and the subject (film critic) enter into a special relationship. The critic needs to replace the pictures with apt words which make the film re-appear in the reader's mind. The film critic is supposed to show his expertise in a way that makes the reader aware of his knowledge about film history, film aesthetics, cinematography, etc., and at the same time has to focus on the public's demand for objective reporting. The ideal film critique comes from the "all-round educated writer, the critical man with life experience and artistic sensitivity, the man who knows what to demand of film, technically as well as artistically" (Kossowsky in Hake 1993: 120). An appropriate film critique does not need to have the suspense of a short story or the mood of a newspaper's feature pages. A journalistic film critique is far removed from being a film analysis in the scholarly sense. But like the analyst, the journalist can refer to a specific ideological message or 'Weltanschauung'²⁷ in the film, the film's position in a cinematographic or general sense as well as in its current or historical context (Botha 1993: 30).

A comparison of film criticism in Europe and in South Africa

After clarifying the relationship between the object (film) and the subject (the film critic) of a film review/critique, some explanation of the media and their relation to the film public is needed. In this case the media refers to two daily newspapers in the Cape. This investigation takes a strictly functionalistic approach. That does not mean that

²⁷ German for something like "world view" but including a very strong philosophical-ideological notion.

ideological implications are left aside; they are mentioned as they emerge, but only to provide future investigations with potential starting points.

As mentioned in Chapter One, analyses on early South African film and cinema are scarce, being limited to those from only two personalities: Thelma Gutsche and Hans Rompel. Fortunately, both of them were active film critics and Rompel was even active in the period under investigation (cf. Rompel 1965). One can assume that either one or both of them gave a personal opinion on film criticism in general and their status as film critics. Because of Gutsche's later involvement in film criticism (from the late 1930 onwards), she gives a more general overview and does not confine herself to the late 1920s and early 1930s. Gutsche states that the initial wonder that characterised descriptions of pictures that moved on a screen was very soon replaced in South Africa by a comparative negligence on the part of the press (Gutsche 1972: 383). One reason for that may have been a lack of experienced film journalists, because

...cinema reviews in the cases of even the largest and the most responsible newspapers became a most haphazard affair dealt with by any member of the reporting staff who happened to be available. Films were frequently reviewed by sports and crime reporters who sometimes did not find it necessary actually to attend performances. The report of a morning paper was sometimes diametrically opposed to that of an evening paper (Gutsche 1972: 384).

It seems that the practice of regarding film criticism as a rotating job among the editorial staff of South African newspapers has a long tradition. The situation mentioned by Gutsche (Gutsche 1972: 384) was perpetuated in the 1940s (Dommissie 1945: 6f) and was still the case in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as Tomaselli points out (1989: 100f).

In the European press film criticism was initially placed in the local news section of a newspaper. It moved into the feature pages in the early 1920s, although still lacking clear conceptualisation. The task of reviewing films fell into the hands of theatre critics who regarded film with the eye of a drama and play expert (Haacke 1969: 243). In South Africa the results, after the first loquacious reports of each film and little comment on their quality, were columns devoted to minute descriptions of the films. Only rarely did a note of cynicism intrude. Thelma Gutsche concludes that the increasing profusion of cinema entertainment finally succeeded in taking the edge off criticism. And the swift and frequent changing of programmes comprising scores of films inevitably led to perfunctory reviewing. From the establishment of permanent cinemas onwards, cinema reviews consisted largely of uncritical descriptions of the films shown and only rarely would individual critics (...) remark fairly and squarely on the merits of a film (Gutsche 1972: 383).

On the other hand, Hans Rompel provides an idea of film criticism from an Afrikaner point of view. As academically educated and active film critic working for the Afrikaans daily newspaper *Die Burger* and later for the influential weeklies *Die Huisgenoot* and *Die Brandwag*, he shows his theoretical insight and expertise in an elaborate article comparing the film press in the USA with that in Europe and discussing their influence

on South Africa. Even in later periods Afrikaans newspapers appear to have a higher representation of academically inclined critics (Tomaselli 1989: 101). In Rompel's article *Rolprentpublisiteit* (cf. Rompel 1933), he sharply criticises Hollywood-style reviews which were distributed by the influential Quigley Press syndicate, which offered nothing but the same cheap amusement as the US movies. Their obsession with sensationalism, scandals, love stories, rumours, jokes, etc. leads to reports merely about the "film stars" as celebrities rather than about the "stars" as actors or about the films. This turns the reviews into pure entertainment or further advertisement for the film industry. According to Rompel, American film reviews overemphasise the attraction phase of film criticism because the US film industry is a purely profit-driven enterprise and do not contain any trustworthy information for the audience. Even in South African newspapers the practice of naming every main actor a "famous" Hollywood or Continental film star was copied from American reviews. For Rompel independent criticism is only practised in European film journals like *Close-Up* (England), *Liga* (Holland) or *Avant-Garde* (France). The uniqueness of the German press is expressed in Rompel's appreciation of the coexistence of fan journals and critical film journals there. He states that

Daar is natuurlik suiwer "Fanjournals," ("Film-Freund Zeitungen" noem die Duitsers dit) soos "Filmwelt", maar daarteenoor staan ander tydskrifte wat wel deeglik, in twee of drie bladsye, alles meedeel wat die "fans" wil weet, maar tegelykertyd in hul artikels oor sterre, oor produksies en produksie-moeilikhede, oor tegniese ontwikkelings en bo alles in onverbiddelike kritiek, die ernstige bewonderaar van die filmkuns materiaal gee wat geen belediging vir sy intellek is nie. Daar word dan ook geen skandaaltjies uitgebuit nie: die publisiteit is eerlik en noukeurig, en die koerante getuig van 'n gesonde self-kritiek. Een Duitse tydskrif wat ek ken, was selfs nie bang om "F.P.1," Ufa se grootste prent van 1932, ongenadig uitmekaar te skeur, met opgawe van redes en 'n noukeurige ontleding van die foute in regie, opname en spel – 'n hele waagstuk, daar die ganse Hugenberg-pers die roem van die prent uitbasuin het (Rompel 1933: 61).²⁸

While mentioning critiques against the powerful Hugenberg press in Germany²⁹, he clearly sees the advantage of reviews/critiques from newspapers of various political

²⁸ There are obviously some pure fan journals like 'Filmwelt' ('Filmfreund-Zeitungen' it is called by the Germans), but there are also journals that supply in two or three pages all the information that the fans want. At the same time these journals provide information about stars, the production, its difficulties, technical innovation and above all, an inexorable amount of criticism, giving the serious film enthusiast information which is not an insult to his intelligence. Petty scandals are not taken advantage of and these newspapers provide honest and meticulous publicity and a healthy amount of self-criticism. One German journal I know did not even refrain from mercilessly criticising 'F.P.1.', Ufa's greatest film in 1932, giving its reasons and a meticulous analysis of the flow in the script, recording and play -- quite a risk after the whole Hugenberg press had trumpeted its praise.

²⁹ Alfred Hugenberg, magnate, press tycoon and right-wing politician, controlled the August Scherl newspaper group. This trust with its numerous daily newspapers and journals included, among others, the oldest and widely respected film journal *Der Kinematograph*. The Hugenberg press was one major player in

backgrounds. A set-up like that seems to deliver more honest and accurate criticism for the benefit of the audience as well as for the producers.

Being aware of the different focus groups of film criticism, namely the film industry, the film critics, the film public (Dunger 1978: 129), he approves of non-Hollywood-style critiques:

Die Amerikaanse pers strooi sand; die Engelse film-pers skrywe vir lesers wat hulle vir imbesiele skyn aan te sien. (...) Alleen in Duitsland is daar 'n intelligente film-pers. (Altyd afgesien van vak-blaaie, natuurlik: sulke blaaië is alleen bedoel vir lede van die bedryf en is somtyds min of meer eerlik: baie somtyds en baie minder as meer!) (Rompel 1933: 63).³⁰

Rompel stresses that a large proportion of all stories, scandals, etc. about actors are made up in the publicity departments of the Hollywood producers and are therefore far from the truth and not worthwhile reading. Rompel is clearly in favour of the Continental and especially the German film press. In his opinion film criticism in general should try to match their standard. It is his experience as a film critic that even in South Africa a large part of the public wants real film criticism:

Dat daar plek vir hierdie beter, meer besadigde en meer opvoedende soort rolprentnuus, rolprentkritiek en rolprentbeskouinge is, bewys die gewildheid van die skrywer se rolprentbydraes in “Die Huisgenoot” en “Die Brandwag” oor die loop van die afgelepe twaalf jaar (Rompel 1942b: 79).³¹

His insight into international and in particularly into German film criticism leads to questions about the structure and characteristics of the German film press and its criticism in the 1920s and 1930s. As Rompel respects the German film press as a role model, one can assume that he would like to see similar structures and styles in South Africa. A short comparative analysis of the concepts of film criticism in the Weimar Republic gives an idea about what sort of criticism was practised in the different newspapers in the period under discussion. Because of the scarce research on this topic in South Africa, an overview of German film criticism instead seems to be appropriate to get a general idea about the opportunities and limitations of film criticism in this particular era.

Film criticism in the Weimar Republic was a flourishing business, sometimes evolving into a literary genre in its own right with questions which reached far beyond the

influencing public opinion in Weimar Germany (Kracauer 1995: 144). For more about Hugenberg see Kreimeier 1996: 158-172 and Bock/Töteberg 2002.

³⁰ The American press scatters sand; the English press writes as though their readers were imbeciles. (...) Only in Germany does one find an intelligent film press. (Of course always with the exception of trade journals: those merely serve the industry and are only sometimes more or less honest: very much sometimes and very much less than more!).

³¹ That there is space for the better, more calm and more educational kind of film news, film criticism and film reviews is shown by the appreciation of the writer's [Rompel's, ME] articles about film in “Die Huisgenoot” and “Die Brandwag” in the past twelve years.

domain of the cinema (Hake 1993: 126). The press of the Weimar Republic practised multifaceted film criticism with a variety which was never reached in Germany again (Haacke 1970: 300). The public sphere was dominated by the national-conservative Hugenberg Press trust, liberal-democratic publishing houses like Ullstein and Mosse, and the organised proletarian press, including the party instruments of the communists and the social-democrats. This variety guaranteed a protected place for the various parts of the public and their representatives in which to utter their opinions, needs and ideas (Dunger 1978: 128). Conservative and business-orientated newspapers tended to publish more neutral and proprietor-friendly reviews because of the money they made from publishing cinema adverts. The leverage on the side of the film distributors effected an appeasing undertone in the “critiques”, which essentially read “Thank you Mr Cinema-Owner!” between the lines.³² Contrary to that, religious and political dailies remained faithful to their ideologies (Dunger 1978: 124).

The moderate to conservative press defined its criticism in terms of aesthetic categories and in evaluating film used criteria similar to those they would have used judging literature and dramatic production. This evaluation was characterized by its reference for a “timeless” concept of art and was concerned with broad, “human” values and truths. These critics generally agreed that a film may call attention to social problems, if this is not done in an obvious or political manner. Nevertheless, their definition of art was that it should transcend any immediate, “tendentious” relationship to social reality; it should be essentially apolitical (Schulte-Sasse 1982: 51).

The addressees of a film review/critique can be roughly divided into two: the one is connected to film production and the other to its consumption (Holicki/Krcho 1992: 361; cf. Austin 1989). As part of the cinema system, film producers and distributors generally use the press to promote their product. In times of economic pressure, e.g. in the late 1920s with the beginning of the Great Depression and a drop in the number of spectators, the industry did not, more than ever, want sales to be damaged by reviews. The production side was only interested in the press’s function to start a public discussion, which was sometimes provoked by a critique tearing the film to pieces. Advice concerning production techniques or artistic styles was usually not wanted. Sometimes film criticism gave attention to the latter, forecasting trends and current developments. The only reason the industry took a keen interest in getting information about the public’s taste was to avoid financial losses (Haacke 1970: 302). It was more like a desire of the intellectual critic that “He who loves film, disciplines it. Those under criticism, the studio bosses, should have an even stronger interest in independent, brutally honest criticism than the critics themselves” (Siemsen 1927: 147). The intellectual critic’s commitment was idealistic, while the industry mostly regarded it as a threat.

³² Cf. e.g.: HED (abbreviation) (1956): Filmkritik oder “Danke schön Herr Kinobesitzer”. Betrachtungen eines nachdenklichen Lesers. *Zeitungs-Verlag und Zeitschriften-Verlag*, 53(1956)1, 58-59 and Haacke 1970: 287.

In the period under discussion, and even today, the reader or the prospective audiences are certainly the main focus for film criticism (Tesser et al. 1988: 444). The spectator cannot sample only a part of a film show; going to the movies is an all-or-nothing decision. Thus the reader expects guidance from the film critic, who is an authority on film and cinema (Holicki/Krcho 1992: 361). Compared to today, where print and electronic media compete and the critic's influence is weakened, newspapers of the 1920s and 1930s played a far greater role in guiding and educating the audience. The media in which the film review appeared indicated to the reader what kind of film criticism to expect. As mentioned above, film criticism is influenced by the religious, political or cultural background of the media. The reviewers focused sometimes on aesthetic categories or analytical reviews, containing statements about the social or ideological importance of the particular film. Because of film's origin as a fairground attraction, film reviewers were worried about the public image of the new profession of being a film critic, but they tried to find a position between the sensationalism associated with the film world and the dignity of informed, responsible cultural criticism (Hake 1993: 119). For the situation in the Weimar Republic, one can clearly distinguish between the formal criteria for criticising film applied in the moderate to conservative press, and the ideological criteria in the liberal to left-wing press.

Newspapers from the extremes of the political spectrum often opposed the idea of separating social and artistic issues. The constant search and demand for recognisable tendencies in a film soon became the trademark of film reviews in left-wing newspapers in Weimar Germany. The criteria employed in these media closely resemble those of Marxist literary theory, which identifies three views that literature may have of reality: it may affirm society as it is; it may criticise society; or it may juxtapose a critical portrayal of society with a positive alternative (Schulte-Sasse 1982: 48). Critics writing for those papers were eager to differ in principle from the usual film reviews. They wanted a political or social analysis of the story, critiques which expose the hidden ideology in every film. They showed a clear tendency to do so in their reviews. In terms of a Marxist definition, all art is inherently political in nature and the distinction between "pure" and "tendentious" or political art is an illusion (Schulte-Sasse 1982: 48).

The attitude of the moderate to conservative press toward film is more difficult to determine, since this part of the press avoided considering film as the open expression or weapon of a defined ideology (Schulte-Sasse 1982: 51). The latter part of the press used the term "tendentiousness" as a negative one, to describe any film it considered less than art, since its qualities were allegedly not eternal, but relevant only to the moment or to a given social situation. These critics by no means condemned all socially engaged films as tendentious; they in fact praised some for transcending this state. The frequency with which the term "tendentiousness" appeared reflects an attitude that art must be detached from everyday social issues, that it must be reserved for the "universally human" ones (Schulte-Sasse 1982: 54). A certain set of criteria unites these critics, however. These criteria may be summarised as follows: good films are "art," which means they were concerned with the "human," the "individual," the "universal" – terms appearing constantly in film criticism. Artistic films are by no means tendentious, too concerned with immediate problems within specific segments of

society, and not about issues that “no one will care about in ten years” (Schulte-Sasse 1982: 55).

If film has the general function and effect of informing, educating, entertaining and guiding its audience (Erasmus/Pelser 1973: 14ff), it is likely that reviews reflect aspects of these functions and effects as well. This typically functionalist approach includes the aim to educate and guide the audience – functions which are comparable to the ideological approach towards film and film criticism. The main difference between the two is the emphasis on selected, as opposed to all, aspects. To focus primarily on the functional or formal aspects does not mean that ideological aspects are less important. When newspaper critics handle too superficially the function of educating and guiding but were accurate on form and aesthetics, the ideological statement is hidden between the lines. Using absolute aesthetic categories has the danger of not only avoiding political reality, but also of supporting the status quo. Considering the range of non-socialist periodicals from the relatively liberal to the extreme right (in the Weimar Republic as well as in general), it would be unfair to accuse all of equally representing conservative or regressive political views, whether overt or disguised by aesthetic argumentation. It is important to recognise various sets of criteria by which art can be evaluated and that no criteria are eternal and universal, but that they are historically and socially determined – and many indirectly support a specific social structure. By accepting this, one does not only gain a more critical view of ideological trends in past eras such as the Weimar Republic, but of those in present culture as well (Schulte-Sasse 1982: 58). The descriptive level of this study recognises the tension between analysing the found material in an ideological and functionalistic manner, but will focus more on the latter to provide future researchers with the necessary basic information to come up with their own conclusions.

Influential critics in the 1920s and 1930s, such as Berthold Brecht, condemned critics for their concern with the “how” (aesthetic form) of art, rather than the “what” (ideological content). He stated that this “human” factor the press love so much, the how (usually distinguished with the word ‘eternal’) appears today by the standards of the masses as petty bourgeoisie and nothing else (Brecht 1931: 170).

By demanding a direct effect, the predominant aesthetic view demands that the art work appear to bridge the gap between all social and other differences. On the basis of ‘universal human’ qualities which all listeners have in common, the audience becomes a collective *as long as the aesthetic experience lasts* (Brecht 1932: 1062f).

The journalistic approach towards film criticism was a more practical one, compared with the sophisticated style of academic film criticism in the feature pages. As a result European film critiques placed more emphasis on the function of educating, informing and guiding the audience. One reason for this can be seen in the output of the European film industry. From the beginning European film production was out to satisfy the tastes not of the mass audience, but rather those of the educated classes. Instead of giving entertainment to the broad public, German producers had competed

with the theatre and aimed for the applause of those who by virtue of background and education preferred the stage to the screen (Hampton 1931 in Kreimeier 1996: 125).

The danger of placing too much of a demand on film to inform and educate was realised by the moderate to conservative press, but was sharply criticised by intellectuals from the opposite side. Brecht calls the distinction between the terms entertaining and educational “purely bourgeois”. He defined the function of learning in bourgeois society as the “purchase” of knowledge useful for material gain, and as a prerequisite for entering professional life (Brecht 1932: 1068ff). This view, according to Brecht, renders learning to the “sphere of immaturity.” It degrades learning, since it excludes pleasure, as well as degrading pleasure, which excludes learning. The bourgeois, he said, associate learning with unpleasant memories of knowledge being drummed in during youth, and abhor a continual process of learning as a return “to the school bench”. Ideas like this sometimes resulted in over-intellectualising film criticism, turning the reviews into self-centred essays which often lost touch with their object – the film. Left-wing intellectuals like Brecht used to attack the moderate to conservative press for its aversion to pedagogical aspirations in art, which it reflected in its disparagement of “tendentious” or “propagandistic” films (Schulte-Sasse 1982: 58). In the Weimar Republic many of the chronically underemployed but brilliant intellectuals earned their money from working for the press. Writing about film allowed those intellectuals to express their opposition to bourgeois culture and to contribute actively to the discourse that constituted towards the creation of modern mass culture. The association with film enabled them to overcome their social isolation as intellectuals and establish closer contact with the masses, if only writing about mass cultural phenomena (Hake 1993: 126). Berthold Brecht often criticised intellectuals for isolating themselves and claimed they are not fit to educate the masses. In his statement that “the bad taste of the masses is rooted deeper in reality than the taste of the intellectuals” (Brecht 1931: 165), he blamed them for not realising that the problem of the masses is not their lack of taste, but their lack of strength (Schulte-Sasse 1982: 58). People like Siegfried Kracauer, Alfred Kerr, Walter Benjamin, Hans Siemsen or Herbert Ihring centred their reviews/critiques in general around the sophisticated academic approach towards criticism:

Criticism originates in the inner need to analyze the laws of an art form. Criticism means to experience the work of art through its distinct elements, and thus means instinctive confirmation of the productive, and instinctive rejection of the unproductive elements (Ihring in Hake 1993: 121).

Writing about film and cinema was one strategy of many intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s to gain more influence on the development of cultural matters to compensate for their political marginality. As in Germany, South African Afrikaner intellectuals (e.g. D.F. Malan, H.F. Verwoerd, C.L. Leipold, Gustav Preller, J.D. du Toit, N.P. van Wyk Louw, etc.), compensated for their political marginality by emphasising the importance of their indigenous language and culture as an opposition to the hegemony of the

English establishment in the press (Giliomee 2003: 401).³³ The media utilised for these attempts were the Afrikaans-speaking daily and weekly newspapers, which had strong ties to politically active Afrikaner organisations (cf. Chapter One and Muller 1990). Dealing with daily newspapers like the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* in the late 1920s and early 1930s, one has to look for similar potential factors of influence, e.g. their religious, political or economic backgrounds. As mentioned in Chapter One, the *Cape Times* spoke mainly for the prosperous liberal white and English-speaking community of farmers, merchants, skilled and professional South Africans from the Cape (Ainslie 1966: 44), whereas *Die Burger* was the mouthpiece of the Afrikaner-nationalists under D.F. Malan. D.F. Malan was one of those typical Afrikaner intellectuals who supported their political efforts with intensive journalistic activities. As the first editor of *Die Burger*, D.F. Malan was respected in intellectual circles as someone who wrote about the political agenda almost as a theologian-philosopher (Giliomee 2003: 374). Like many newspapers which were not situated in the liberal centre of the political spectrum, *Die Burger* had a strong sense of mission and can be compared with the more non-conservative and non-liberal press in Weimar Germany. Under the influence of D.F. Malan, who had earlier made the demand “Raise the Afrikaans language to a written language, let it become the vehicle for our culture, our history, our national ideals and you will also raise the people who speak it” (Malan in Pienaar 1964: 175), *Die Burger* did much to give Afrikaans an intellectual and social respectability.³⁴ The *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* were politically strongly opposed to each other. Therefore we can expect different judgements on films touching social or political issues. Considering the fact that Hans Rompel later switched from *Die Burger* to its associated weekly *Die Huisgenoot*, which saw itself as the “people’s university”, often publishing scholarly treatments of history, one can assume that there is some deeper-going concern about film in his early writings for *Die Burger*.

Using the state of the film press and the role of the critic in Weimar Republic as a comparative base, one can conclude that it is not unlikely that one of the two identified types of film criticism practised in Germany was also applied in South Africa. What we can deduce from this little information is that the average South African film critic was more likely to be a reviewer than a critic, who listed the facts like actors, director, etc., and mainly left his personal views aside. The chosen newspapers *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* suggest that the more politically controlled *Die Burger* used ideological criteria for judging films while the apolitical, business-orientated *Cape Times* (Ainslie 1966: 41) published merely film reviews following formal journalistic criteria. This assumes that the *Cape Times* as a commerce-orientated newspaper was subjected to stronger pressure from the film distributors. To secure the lucrative business of publishing large-scale cinema advertisements in the entertainment pages of the *Cape Times*, its journalists could have concentrated more on undamaging reviews than on critiques. *Die Burger* on the other hand, essentially a political instrument of the Afrikaner nationalists in the

³³ E.g. support organisations like the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations (FAK) were founded in 1929.

³⁴ Cf. Steyn, J.C. (1986): Die Rol van die Afrikaanse Pers in die Taalstryd van die Jare 1930. *Ecquid Novi* 7(1986)1, 4-16.

Cape, could have included more ideological criteria and evaluation in their film reviews/critiques. From the comparison to film criticism in the Weimar Republic, the following matrix can be drawn up to show the possible character of film criticism practised in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger*:

Characteristics	<i>Cape Times</i>	<i>Die Burger</i>
comparable classification (“Weimar scheme”)	“moderate-conservative”	“left-wing”
focus group	English-speaking	Afrikaans-speaking
focus groups orientation	liberal	national
focus group’s main interest besides news	commerce, imperial issues	politics, domestic issues
assumed focus of film criticism	information, entertainment	education, guidance
assumed general character of film critiques	descriptive, formal, functionalistic	evaluative, ideological, sense of mission

Table 2.1: Comparable classification (“Weimar scheme”)

These assumptions will be investigated in the empirical part of this study. The matrix developed for this part of the study will be explained in the third chapter.

As the two examples from Thelma Gutsche and Hans Rompel have shown, there are only a few statements on early South African film criticism available, therefore the state of film criticism can so far only be described in general terms. These limitations limit an investigation into South African film criticism to a very basic level.

Finally, ideal film criticism can be defined as follows:

Film criticism means reviewing a film from an artistic, technical, ideological, sociological, psychological point of view. Film criticism contains form and content of the film. Film criticism has to show and to investigate, which essential modes of expression and design in the film can get identified from the film critique and how those modes got applied and what content got expressed (Reinert 1946: 197ff).

Film criticism is a critique of film; it attends to the inherent organisation and aesthetics of films. In addition, film criticism also refers to the use of film to criticise the modes of perception, including sociological and ideological issues, promoted by the cinema. The main difference between film criticism and scholarly research on films is perhaps that the latter allows or even demands in writing about film a consideration of the limitations of personal cinematic perception.³⁵

³⁵ The author is deeply indebted to Dr. Ute Holl for a fruitful discussion about the specific functions of film criticism. The given conclusion derived from the interchange of numerous arguments. Thank you, Ute.

CHAPTER III

Notes on Aim and Method of the Investigation

The extensive remarks on the character and function of film criticism in the previous chapter are now followed by a detailed explanation of the applied method. This is necessary in view of the multifaceted set of questions emerging from the various suppositions. The aim of this chapter is to develop step by step a matrix of certain criteria to compare critiques of selected films, reviewed in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* in the period under discussion.

The General Frame

To get an overview of the structure of the entertainment sector in Cape Town from 1928 to 1930, the very first task is to list the existing cinema chains and the theatres belonging to them. As mentioned in Chapter One, there are several reasons to choose the period from 1928 to 1930 for this exploratory investigation. In 1927 the entertainment market in South Africa faced the emergence of a new competitor, Kinemas Ltd., which was founded with the aim to compete with monopoly holder African Theatres and the independent cinemas. Without owning their own motion picture theatres, Kinemas started to screen their films in rented public venues like city halls or leased buildings, e.g. King's Hall in Durban (Gutsche 1972: 200). The advantage of the new competitor for the public was that Kinemas screened the newly invented sound films, the so-called De Forrest-Phono Films, for which they bought the exclusive distribution and exhibition rights in South Africa. The attempts to establish their own circuit continued and at the end of 1927 the first plans for new buildings circulated in the press (Gutsche 1972: 200). The popularity of the shows given by Kinemas enabled them to carry out their ambitious plans:

The continued success of this enterprise which already held leases and options on a large number of theatres, made it clear that the film "monopoly" operated by African Theatres and African Films for nearly fourteen years had at length been broken. Kinemas continued their policy of expansion apparently without limit and both organisations entered on (*sic*) a phase of competitive development which was to provide South Africa with some of the best cinema entertainment ever presented (Gutsche 1972: 201).

In 1928 Kinemas was firmly established and progressed with their building programme and the extension of an already large circuit. At the end of 1928 sixty bioscopes from Cape Town to Nairobi were owned by Kinemas and they planned to open more in the

future.³⁶ Kinemas established themselves as an equal among their competitors and the newspapers started to report about Kinemas' shows on a regular basis. To be able to give a judgement on the development of film criticism in a particular period on a comparative basis, one has to focus on those reviews that were published regularly. Film shown in town halls or other temporary cinema-like venues for just one weekend do not qualify for the comparison. The advantage of more than one review of a film before, during and after its screening is that it offers a better insight into the structure of film criticism in the particular newspaper as well as in general. Therefore the shows given by Kinemas before the opening of the Astoria Kinema in Cape Town in 1928³⁷ are left aside because of their singular occurrence.³⁸ The same goes for the Railway Institute, which screened films over the weekends, as well as plays and similar entertainment.

Because of the lack of secondary data for the period 1928 to 1930, this study lists the cinemas' advertisements in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* and assigns them to the competing organisations. As mentioned earlier, the motion picture theatres belonged either to African Theatres, Kinemas, or they were independent enterprises.

Table 3.1 clearly demonstrates the dominant position of African Theatres. In 1928 only three of the listed cinemas were not under the control of African Theatres: Astoria Kinema and the two independent houses, Wolfram's Bioscope and Markham's Bio Café. The adverts in the newspapers do not indicate the exact location in the city or in the suburban area. From the extra columns allocated for suburban cinemas in the entertainment pages of the newspapers, one can assume that the cinemas Alhambra, Royal, Grand, Markham's, Tivoli and Wolfram's Bioscope were situated in the inner city. A cross-check with the cinemas listed in Cape Town for the period 1945 to 1960 supports this assumption (Gainer 2000: 81f).

The growing competition between Kinemas and African Theatres resulted in Kinemas opening more theatres and African Theatres renovating and upgrading theirs. African Theatres' new flagship in Cape Town, the Alhambra, was re-opened in November 1929. The old Alhambra building was renamed "The Royal" and the old Royal closed down.³⁹ During the reconstruction of the new Alhambra (approximately from 18 November 1929 to 2 December 1929), the new releases were screened at the Royal which took over the role of African Theatre's first-circuit cinema for this time. Kinemas added to their chain the Muizenberg and Wynberg Kinemas in 1929, the Metropolitan Kinema (city) and the Adelphi Kinema (Sea Point) in 1930 to extend their circuit. By 1930 Kinemas was able to exploit the market like African Theatres by running first- and second-circuit houses.

³⁶ Opening of Astoria Kinema, *Cape Times* 23.10.1928, 10; Kinemas Ltd. Share Prospectus 1929.

³⁷ The Astoria Kinema was officially opened on 22 October 1928. The first film screened there was the British phono-film *The Rat*, *Cape Times* 23.10.1928, 10.

³⁸ Kinemas showed the silent film *The Somme* at the City Hall in Cape Town from 3 to 9 January 1928, *Cape Times* 06.01.1928, 6.

³⁹ Die Nuwe Alhambra, *Die Burger* 03.11.1928, 8.

Cinema	Proprietor	Location
		<i>urban area</i>
Alhambra	African Theatres	city
Royal	African Theatres	city
Grand	African Theatres	city
Tivoli	African Theatres	city
Wolfram's	independent	city
Markham's	independent	city
		<i>suburban area</i>
Astoria Kinema	Kinemas	Woodstock
His Majesty's	African Theatres	Muizenberg
Marine	African Theatres	Sea Point
Regal	African Theatres	Wynberg
Pavillion	African Theatres	Claremont
Premier	African Theatres	Rondebosch
Palace	African Theatres	Salt River
Lyceum	African Theatres	Observatory
Globe	African Theatres	Woodstock
Olympia	African Theatres	Kalk Bay

Table 3.1: Cinemas in Cape Town 1928

To evaluate the status of the particular cinema in terms of being a first-, second- or later circuit cinema, one has to determine which cinema showed the most topical films. It is very likely that the inner city houses were the first-circuit cinemas and the suburban theatres were limited to the second, third or later circuits. A comparison of four films selected randomly for the years 1928, 1929 and 1930 shows the following:

Screening dates	Run (days)	Cinema
21.-30.05.28	9	Alhambra
04.-05.06.28	2	His Majesty
01.-03.10.28	3	Royal
05.-06.10.28	2	Marine
08.-09.10.28	2	Globe
11.-13.10.28	3	Palace
22.-23.10.28	2	Pavillion
29.-30.10.28	2	Lyceum
31.10.28-01.11.28	2	Premier

Table 3.2: Circuit of the film *Metropolis* in Cape Town 1928

Screening dates	Run (days)	Cinema
26.-31.03.28	6	Alhambra
02.-04.04.28	3	His Majesty
21.-22.12.28	2	Marine
31.12.28-01.01.29	2	Pavilion
07.-08.01.29	2	Royal
11.-12.01.29	2	Premier
21.-22.01.29	2	Palace
30.-31.01.29	2	Olympia
15.-16.02.29	2	Lyceum

Table 3.3: Circuit of *Faust* in Cape Town 1928/29

Screening dates	Run (days)	Cinema
31.12.28-05.01.29	6	Alhambra
07.-08.08.29	2	Recreation ⁴⁰
14.-15.08.29	2	Royal
16.-17.08.29	2	Marine
19.- 20.08.29	2	Lyceum
23.-24.08.29	2	Premier
28.-29.08.29	2	Globe
02.-03.09.29	2	Palace

Table 3.4: Circuit of *The Last Waltz* in Cape Town 1929

Screening dates	Run (days)	Cinema
17.-22.02.30	6	Royal
27.02.30-01.03.30	3	His Majesty's
03.-05.03.30	3	Marine
10.-12.03.30	3	Globe
17.-19.03.30	3	Regal
19.-20.03.30	2	Premier
21.-22.03.30	2	Pavillion
24.-25.03.30	2	Lyceum
28.-29.03.30	2	Palace
16.-17.07.30	2	Wolfram's

Table 3.5: Circuit of *The Last Command* in Cape Town 1930

⁴⁰ The Recreation was an African Theatres' cinema in Stellenbosch.

These four examples show the circuit of the named films in the African Theatres chain. They imply that films shown at the Astoria Kinema or Wolfram's Bioscope are usually not included in their circuit. The first appearance of a film in the circuit and the duration of the film show indicates the preferred first-circuit cinema. The first three examples clearly show the Alhambra as African Theatres' preferred house for première shows. After the shows at the Alhambra, the Royal and His Majesty's, the second houses followed with their showings of recent films. The suburban cinemas followed with some delay and a shorter run of their films. That the Royal was first to show the silent film *The Last Command* in 1930 was because the new Alhambra was equipped with sound technology and therefore was reserved for talkies. Until the middle of 1930 the Alhambra was African Theatres' only cinema for sound films; the suburban cinemas were still showing silent movies.

Cinema (African Theatres)	First talkie screened
Marine	28.04.1930 ⁴¹
Regal	21.07.1930 ⁴²
Lyceum	04.08.1930 ⁴³
Royal	24.08.1930 ⁴⁴
Recreation	14.10.1930 ⁴⁵
Palace	18.11.1930 ⁴⁶
Grand	08.12.1930 ⁴⁷

Table 3.6: Suburban cinemas equipped with sound technique

The assumption that the change from silent to sound film took place on a large scale only after 1930 justifies the periods suggested in Chapter One as well. The reason for this presumably was the immense capital outlay for upgrading all cinemas from silent to talkie houses. The first-circuit cinemas in the city were usually equipped sooner with sound technology; suburban cinemas followed after some delay. From a socio-economic point of view, the allocation of first-circuit cinemas (including the houses equipped with sound technology) to the city and second- or third-circuit cinemas to the suburbs, leads to the question of who supported the urban and the suburban houses. The question whether only wealthier European Capetonians patronised the first-circuit houses, because the cinemas were closer to "white" residential areas and whether suburban cinemas were attended by mostly Non-European⁴⁸ residents from the

⁴¹ *Cape Times* 29.04.1930, 7.

⁴² *Cape Times* 22.07.1930, 7.

⁴³ *Cape Times* 05.08.1930, 7.

⁴⁴ *Cape Times* 22.08.1930, 7.

⁴⁵ *Cape Times* 09.10.1930, 7.

⁴⁶ *Cape Times* 12.11.1930, 7.

⁴⁷ *Cape Times* 09.12.1930, 7.

⁴⁸ In this study, the term 'European' is used to designate South Africans of European descent or 'Whites'; 'Non-European' refers to all groups that do not fall into the above category.

suburbs, will not be discussed here due to the limited scope and the empirical focus of the study.

A reason to limit this investigation to the period before 1931 is the emerging discussion of film censorship, triggered by the announcement of a new censorship bill in 1930 (Gutsche 1972: 297f).⁴⁹ Even if it was unlikely that reviewers demanded any censorship, the existing discussion of the new law was followed by editorials or letters to the editors which did not reflect the ordinary kind of film criticism. Film criticism of 1930 and relating to this new, stricter censorship law is discussed elsewhere (cf. Druker 1979) and needs its own survey for this particular period.

An interesting point in Table 3.5 is that Wolfram's Bioscope also showed *The Last Command*, a film that was distributed by African Theatres. Being at the bottom end of African Theatres' circuit and only acquiring a film after it had been shown in their circuit could mean that the position of the independent cinemas weakened in 1930 because of the fierce competition between the two major chains. One reason for this could be the fact that the circuit was fixed for the whole year for both cinema chains. If we take into account that African Theatres was a chain with strong ties to the American film industry (partly financed with US capital and under control of I.W. Schlesinger, who was a US citizen), one can assume that their distribution policy was similar to the one in the United States. The circuit there was structured as follows and had an influence on the situation in South Africa:

...the picture-houses throughout the country are divided into three groups, the "A" circuit, the "B" circuit, and the "C" circuit. The whole of the programme for the year is determined for each circuit in New York at the beginning of the film-year (September), and no programme can be altered. It is almost impossible for any South African independent to book a picture from America. (Fawcett 1927)⁵⁰

Wolfram's Bioscope as an independent cinema may have faced exactly those problems. Unable to obtain more recent productions because of African Theatre's privilege, Wolfram's had to wait until African Theatre's circuit was completed. To fill the gaps between these forced periods of waiting, Wolfram's showed older films and changed their programme every two days. The later entry of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Union Theatres in 1931 (Gutsche 1972: 232ff) made it even more difficult for the smaller ventures to remain independent. One possible effect of this struggle could have been that *Die Burger* stopped publishing reviews of shows at Wolfram's Bioscope at the beginning of 1930. One reason could be that it became increasingly expensive to purchase new releases. Therefore it is very likely that Wolfram's was screening older productions which had been reviewed already and were therefore no longer attractive

⁴⁹ Gutsche explains in detail the confusion about the announcement, introduction, withdrawal and reintroduction of the new censorship bill (Public Entertainment Ordinance). The new act finally came into effect as Act No. 28 of 1931 on the 15th July 1931. Cf. Statutes of the South African Union 1931. Cape Town: Government Printers, 132-142.

⁵⁰ The Art of the Screen: Fawcett, L'Estrange (1927): Films: Facts and Forecasts (book review). *Cape Times* 07.04.1928, 13.

for the journalists.⁵¹ Wolfram's Bioscope was subsequently taken over by African Theatres (Stodel 1962: 62). This is the first outcome of this survey so far. Thus my attempt to focus specifically on programmes offered by cinemas such as Wolfram's, because "the only cinema shows that were fairly reviewed were those staged by independent exhibitors" (Gutsche 1972: 383), was unexpectedly stopped in its tracks.

It was certainly not a coincidence that Kinemas opened their new cinemas close to the established houses of African Theatres. The disadvantage Kinemas had with their major cinema was that the Astoria was situated in Woodstock and not in the city centre. This problem was soon solved by opening the Metropolitan Kinema⁵² as direct competitor of the inner city cinemas Alhambra and Royal. To gain patrons from the Marine Cinema at Sea Point, Kinemas opened the Adelphi at Sea Point⁵³, African Theatres' suburban cinemas Regal (Wynberg) and His Majesty's (Muizenberg) were matched by the Capitol Kinema in Wynberg⁵⁴ and Muizenberg Pavilion Kinema, respectively.⁵⁵

The tables do not contain all cinemas mentioned above. This is due to the fact that not all of them advertised regularly in the *Cape Times* or *Die Burger* (e.g. Markham's, Olympia, Recreation or the Tivoli). The Tivoli, as vaudeville venue with an often mixed programme of dance, circus, film and other stage entertainment, is a special case (cf. Stodel 1962). The journalists' practice to review not only one particular film per cinema, but the whole night's programme resulted in very mixed reviews for the Tivoli. To get comparable data for the empirical analysis, the Tivoli cannot be included in the survey. Some of the gaps in the circuit of African Theatres may be caused by this.

The latter circuit cannot be discussed in detail here. A forecast by David Gainer of the development in a later period seems to be useful. For the development in the 1940s and 1950s, he mentions an appropriate example of the life cycle of Hollywood movies in Cape Town:

In January 1946, Hollywood's smash romantic musical *Anchors Aweigh*, with Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra, played at the Plaza in downtown Cape Town for three weeks. Four months later it was at ACT's (African Consolidated Theatres, ME) Empire in Muizenberg; in late May it was at the Non-European National in District Six;⁵⁶ in June it appeared at the Grand in Maitland; and in July it played at

⁵¹ For a detailed discussion about the film circuit in South Africa in a later period see Gainer 2000: 114-148 (Chapter IV).

⁵² The New "Metro" Kinema. Last Night's opening by the Mayor, *Cape Times* 07.12.1929, 11.

⁵³ *Die Burger* 26.09.1930, 9.

⁵⁴ *Die Burger* 13.07.1929, 6.

⁵⁵ *Die Burger* 07.12.1929, 8.

⁵⁶ National Theatre, William Street, District Six, opened on the 13th December 1905 as Theatre of Variety and Plays. Situated at the time in the Jewish Quarter of Cape Town, it enjoyed popularity, especially with Jewish plays. Harry Hanson was one of the earliest managers and he came back thirty years later to manage it again as the first picture-house for Coloureds (Stodel 1962: 171). "African Theatres Ltd., have spared no expense in turning it into a well-equipped modern talkie house. It has new seats and decorations, and, as far as the actual talking equipment is concerned, it can be favourable compared with the new Alhambra." *Cape Times* 03.06.1930, 7. It was not possible to find adverts or reviews for shows of the National Theatre.

the Olympia in Kalk Bay. Two years later, in April 1948, the film had become a Saturday morning feature for children at the Empire in Muizenberg, then it moved on to the Adelphi for a morning show in October. In January 1954, *Anchors Aweigh* was revived at ACT's second-run cinema in Sea Point, the Marine.

First, it played at the largest European-only cinemas in central Cape Town. Then, after 3-6 months on the circuit, the film returned to Cape Town to play in the second-run European cinemas, the first-run Non-European cinemas, and the suburban cinemas. After another 6-12 months on the circuit, the film returned to Cape Town's smaller Non-European cinemas, third-rate European cinemas, and if appropriate, to a Saturday morning children show (Gainer 2000: 114f).

Even if the circuit was different during the period from 1928 to 1930, a comparable pattern seemed to be in place. Because these structures did not fall out of the blue, but had their own history for social and economic reasons, one can assume that the circuit Gainer refers to evolved from foundations laid in previous periods. The focus on the development of film criticism prevents me investigating this particular case in more detail. The needed demographical study to examine these facts is beyond the scope of this study. An investigation into the correlation between non-first-circuit cinemas, the area where those were situated and their audience for the period under discussion, would be highly appreciated by the scientific community. We can conclude that the new releases were probably first shown to a European middle-class audience and later to non-European South Africans with a working-class background.

As demonstrated above, African Theatres' first-circuit cinema was the Alhambra, Kinemas had the Astoria and Wolfram's Bioscope was the best established (and the oldest) house among the independent proprietors. Therefore only the three named cinemas are included in the survey to discover which topical films were screened in the years 1928 to 1930. A list of the films sorted by date, day of the week and cinema should indicate which day was the preferred première day of the particular cinema.

Definition criteria for the empirical matrix

The focus points mentioned below are now applied to the collected data. These listed criteria are adapted to suit the integrated character of this survey.

1. After identifying the first-circuit cinemas, the next step is to list all films screened at the Alhambra, Astoria and Wolfram's by year, date and duration of the show. Additional to that, the table is completed by listing the date of the reviews in *Die Burger* and *Cape Times*, counting the reviews' length (number of lines). The films shown in the three named cinemas serve as the sample for the empirical survey,

It is difficult to say whether that has something to do with the National Theatre's status as a "Non-European" cinema. Further studies have to include other newspapers and especially those for the coloured community to locate reviews of the National Theatre. For this reason the National Theatre cinema is not included in my study.

representing Cape Town's whole circuit. The data taken from the newspapers may sometimes be incomplete, because sudden changes in the theatre's programmes were not always published in time. The accuracy of the collected data is approximately ninety percent, so it is safe to say that the results of the survey are representative and sufficient.

2. The total number of films screened in the years 1928 to 1930 is compared by cinema to give an indication of which chain dominated the market and its development over the years.
3. To get an overview of the state of film criticism in the period from 1928 to 1930, the number of films reviewed is listed by year and cinema. Because of the differing length of the reviews, a classification scheme is applied and the number of reviews having a certain length is listed by percentage. The scheme follows the method suggested by Peters (1960), dividing the review length by 15 and developing scale ranges of 0-14, 15-29, 30-59, 60-119 and more than 120 lines. One of Peters's main arguments is that most of the writing on films in newspapers is not longer than fifteen lines, and film critiques of less than fifteen lines cannot be considered as serious.
4. The quantitative development of film reviews is described on a comparative basis for the years 1928 to 1930, indicating which review length was the most common. The findings for both newspapers are compared for differences and similarities over the given period. The aim was to find cinemas which received shorter reviews as well as cinemas which received more detailed reviews.
5. To ascertain whether the writings on film were previews, published before the actual screening of a film, or reviews, published during or after the screening of a particular film, one has to compare the publication date of the preview/review with the dates of the screenings.
6. Comparing the results of step 4 and step 5, the total number and the percentage of reviews/previews and their length gives a first insight into the style of film criticism practised.
7. If the reviews published during or after the screenings are supposed to be reviews or critiques in the real sense, one must select those films/reviews for further investigation. From this selection, the films which were reviewed in both newspapers with equally long reports make up the sample for the next step.
8. If one considers that shorter reports are more likely to be short reviews and the longer ones to be critiques, it seems an advantage to focus more on the latter. The preference for longer reviews in this study reflects a more academic approach towards film criticism. It can be called "elite orientated," because of the expected readership of more elaborate critiques (academics, intellectuals), but this approach does not devalue the journalistic exercise of reviewing film at all. The average-sized review certainly reflects film criticism's standard for this period and for the selected newspaper.
9. The results from the above-mentioned criteria form the set of parameters with which to select reviews that qualify for a qualitative content analysis on a

comparative basis. Therefore the focus of this study requires special attention to the more elaborate reviews. From the list of qualified films and their reviews, selected film reviews were subjected to a brief, qualitative content analysis to verify or falsify the assumptions about the character of film criticism in the particular newspaper mentioned in Chapter Two (moderate-conservative vs. left-wing press; formal/functional vs. ideological reviews; descriptive vs. evaluative character of reviews etc.).

The aforementioned steps (1 to 9) constitute the descriptive part of this survey. The analytical part is to investigate the selected examples for each year according to specially defined criteria which will be explained later.

CHAPTER IV

Film Reviews in *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* 1928-1930: An empirical Exploration

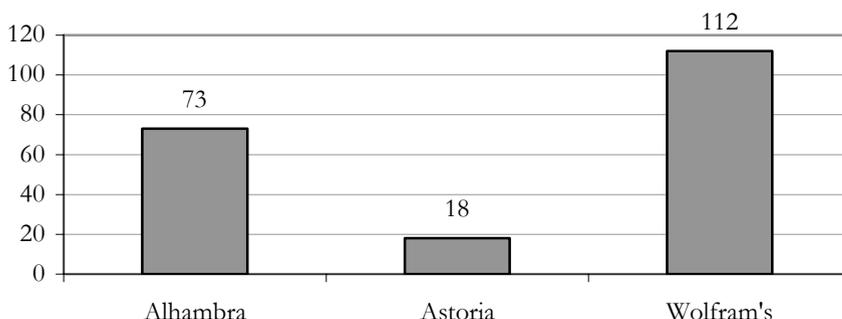
The criteria developed in Chapter Three are now applied to the collected data. The list of films screened in Cape Town from 1928 to 1930 in the cinemas Alhambra, Astoria and Wolfram's with all the details, like start date, end date, duration, date of review (for both newspapers), length of review, length category, etc. is attached as appendix. The films shown in the three named first-circuit cinemas function as the sample for the empirical survey, representing Cape Town's whole circuit. The tables and figures are based on the data in the appendix. All are followed by an explanation to contextualise the results. The problem of sometimes inaccurate data from the newspapers, because of programme changes after publishing, may bias the results. Nevertheless, one can assume that the accuracy of the collected data is approximately ninety percent. So it is safe to say that the results of the survey are sufficient and representative, even with the possible bias reflecting the general tendency of the development.

Films in Cape Town in the period from 1928 to 1930 for the selected circuit

For the first-circuit houses (or circuit "A"-cinemas) Alhambra, Astoria Kinema and Wolfram's Bioscope, the films screened in the period from 1928 to 1930 are counted and their numbers compared. The comparison is done on a yearly basis.

Cinema	Films	Proportion
Alhambra	73	36%
Astoria	18	9%
Wolfram's	112	55%
Total	203	

Table 4.1: Selected circuit in Cape Town 1928



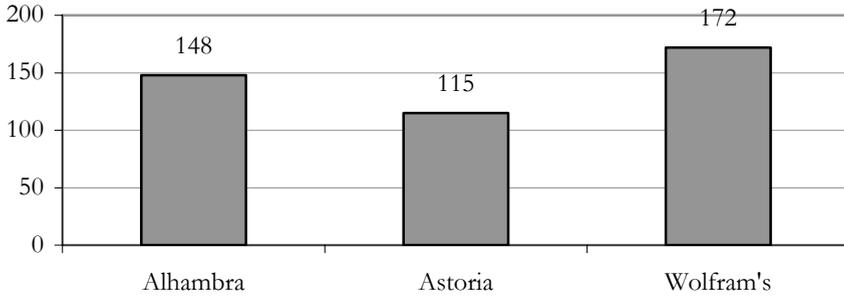
Graph 4.1: Number of films in Cape Town 1928

The year 1928 was the first time that the Astoria Kinema was able to compete with the other two cinemas. The more than ninety percent dominance of the established cinemas looks clearer than it actually was. The Astoria Kinema opened relatively late in 1928, on 22 October. The showing of 21 films in only two months indicates Kinemas' strong efforts to establish the Astoria as an equal competitor. The Astoria Kinema and Wolfram's Bioscope showed approximately nine to ten films per month; the Alhambra had a lower frequency, showing approximately only six films per month. The higher frequency at Wolfram's Bioscope means that the run of the films was shorter there than in the two other cinemas.

Cinema	Films	Proportion
Alhambra	148	34%
Astoria	115	26%
Wolfram's	172	40%
increase 1928-1929		+114%
Total	435	

Table 4.2: Selected circuit in Cape Town 1929

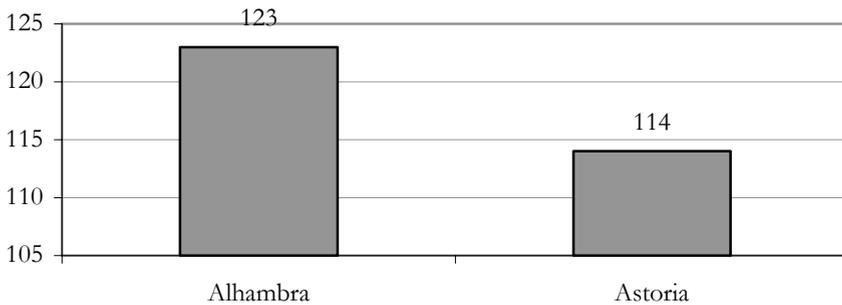
In 1929 all three competitors screened significantly more films than in the year before: the number of films in the selected circuit increased by 114 percent, more than doubling the number of films shown in 1928. The Alhambra and Wolfram's shared almost the same percentage of the market, while the Astoria still had to catch up. The frequency of film shows in the particular cinemas equalled that of 1928. Wolfram's changed the programme more often per week than the other two cinemas.



Graph 4.2: Number of films in Cape Town 1929

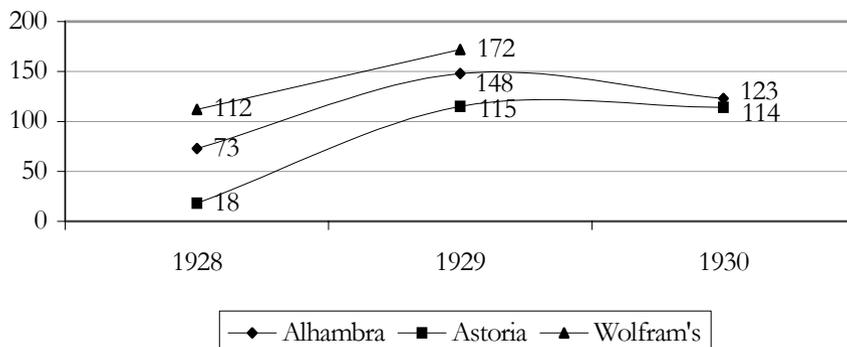
Cinema	Films	Proportion
Alhambra	123	52%
Astoria	114	48%
increase 1929-1930 ⁵⁷		-10%
Total	237	

Table 4.3: Selected circuit in Cape Town 1930



Graph 4.3: Number of films in Cape Town 1930

⁵⁷ Because of the exclusion of Wolfram's Bioscope, only the total number of screenings at the Alhambra and Astoria Kinema in 1929 (263) is compared with number of films in the circuit in 1930.



Graph 4.4: Films screened in the circuit 1928 - 1930

Because *Die Burger* did not include reviews for screenings at Wolfram's Bioscope from early 1930 onwards, only the Alhambra and the Astoria are compared for 1930. Both cinema chains and their flagship houses screened approximately the same number of films. The market share was almost equally distributed. The decrease of ten percent in the number of films in the circuit from 1929 to 1930 indicates a normalisation of the market competition. It seems that both chains entered into a phase of consolidation, forming a joint oligopoly on the supply side. The former third competitor, the independent cinemas (represented in this case by Wolfram's Bioscope) were driven out of the first-circuit competition and considered as serious competitors for the second- or third-circuit houses only. To summarise the results from the tables above, the following graph shows the change over the years from 1928 to 1930.

It is obvious that there was a significant increase in the number of film screenings from 1928 to 1929 in all cinemas. From 1929 to 1930 the number of screenings at the Alhambra decreased slightly, while the number of screenings at the Astoria remained the same. One can conclude that the competition increased sharply during 1928 and 1929, whereas in 1930 a point of saturation seems to have been reached. In 1929 the Astoria cinema gained a bigger market share at the expense of Wolfram's Bioscope. Until 1929 all three cinemas seemed to be competing equally for the audience's attention. The fact that the independent Wolfram's Bioscope screened more films than the other cinema chains is surprising and raises the question of which chain dominated the market. The absolute figures could falsely indicate a dominance by Wolfram's Bioscope. If one takes the development in 1930 into account, the sudden change from market domination to a weaker position of Wolfram's Bioscope does not make much sense. The higher frequency of programme changes at Wolfram's Bioscope necessarily required more films. The disappearance of reviews for Wolfram's Bioscope in *Die Burger* in early 1930 supports the assumption that independent proprietors were strongly affected by the film industry's distribution policy. To compensate for the lack of topical releases, they showed older productions, but for shorter periods. It is very likely that

the pressure from the major companies with their annually fixed circuit left the independent cinemas without a choice, accepting the major companies' offer to function more or less as the bottom end of their circuit. A further investigation should search for the original release dates of the particular films at Wolfram's Bioscope to get a clear picture of the situation.

The latter facts could also have influenced the practice of reviewing films. Older productions usually had been reviewed already and did not qualify for longer reviews. We will analyse these possible connections in the following part of this survey.

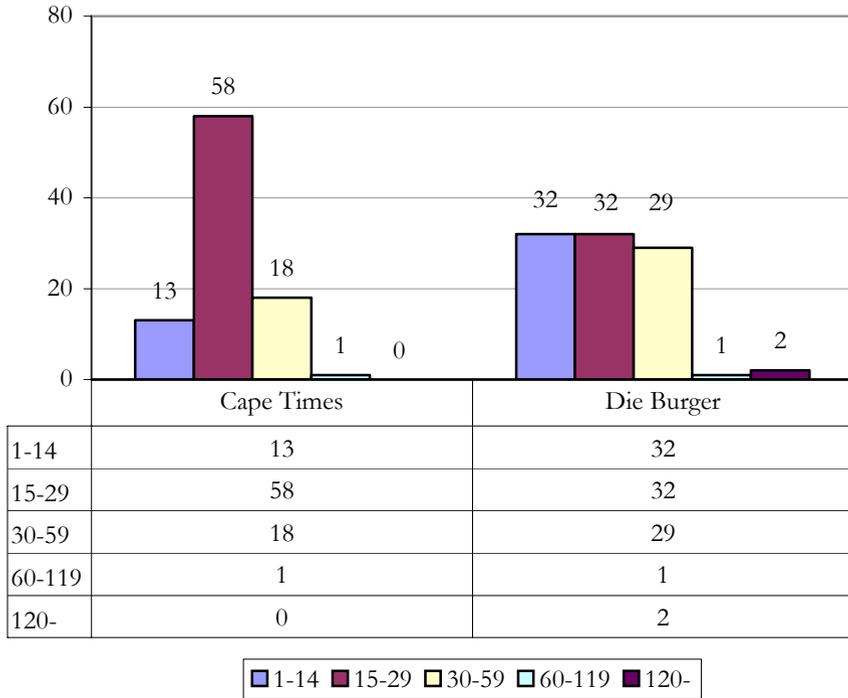
Film reviews for the selected circuit 1928 to 1930

The first step in obtaining a general overview of the development of film reviews in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* from 1928 to 1930 is to list the number of reviews and their length per year and selected cinema.

1928	<i>Cape Times</i>		<i>Die Burger</i>	
	number	proportion	number	proportion
1-14	36	13%	46	32%
15-29	91	58%	47	32%
30-59	29	18%	43	29%
60-119	2	1%	9	6%
120-	-		1	1%
Total	158		146	

Table 4.4: Reviews in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* 1928

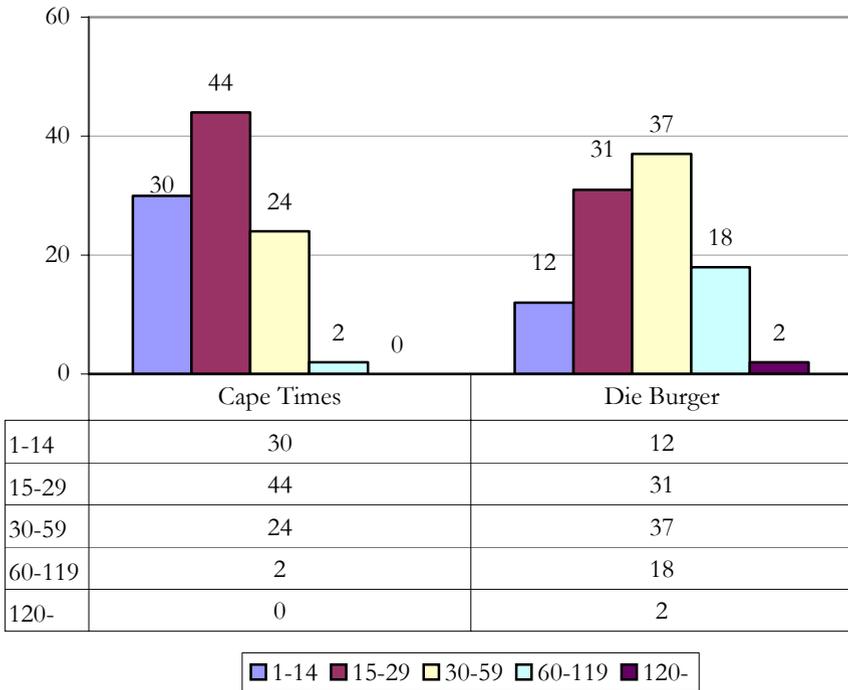
The year 1928, with its equal starting conditions, offers a good point of reference for this comparative analysis. The total number of reviews was almost equally distributed. Table 4.4 shows a marked difference in the allocation of space for film reviews between the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger*. Whereas *Die Burger* published reviews equally distributed among the first three length ranges (1-14, 15-29, and 30-59 lines), the *Cape Times* clearly favoured the second length range (15-29 lines). Reviews longer than 120 lines were very rare; only *Die Burger* occasionally published longer critiques.



Graph 4.5: 1928, length allocation of reviews in percent

1929	<i>Cape Times</i>		<i>Die Burger</i>	
	number	proportion	number	proportion
1-14	110	30%	21	12%
15-29	158	44%	53	31%
30-59	87	24%	62	37%
60-119	8	2%	31	18%
120-			4	2%
Total	363		171	

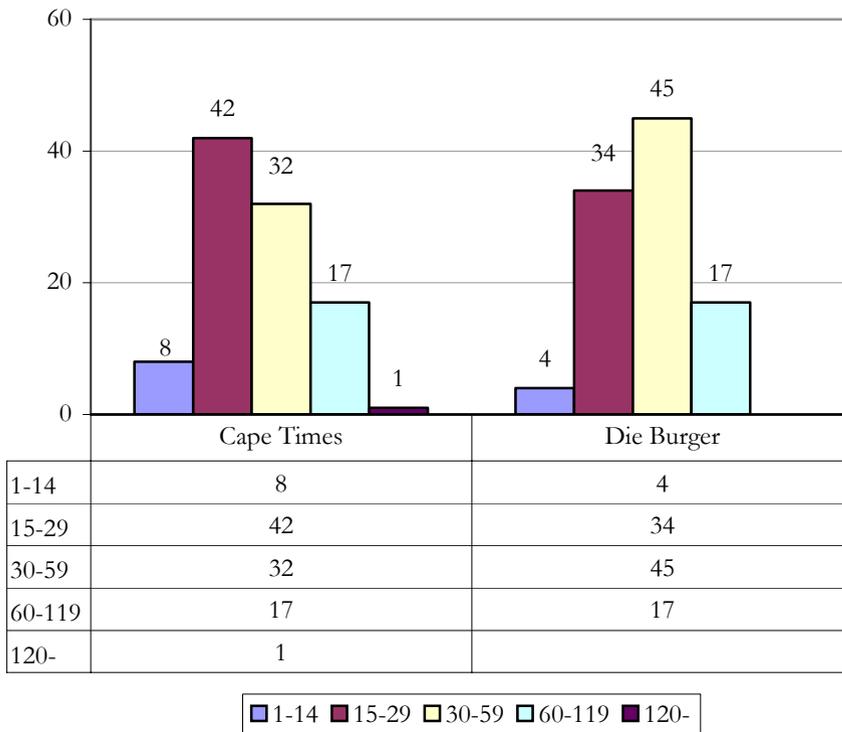
Table 4.5: Reviews in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* 1929



Graph 4.6: 1929, length allocation of reviews in percent

The first difference between 1928 and 1929 is that while the number of reviews in the *Cape Times* doubled, the number of reviews in *Die Burger* increased only moderately. The majority of both newspapers’ reviews appeared among the first three ranges of the scale. The *Cape Times* was still in favour of the second length range. *Die Burger* changed their mode of reviewing and placed more emphasis on second and third length range reviews. Another difference is that *Die Burger* published significantly more long reviews (especially in the 60-119 lines range as well as two reviews longer than 120 lines) than the *Cape Times* (no reviews longer than 120 lines).

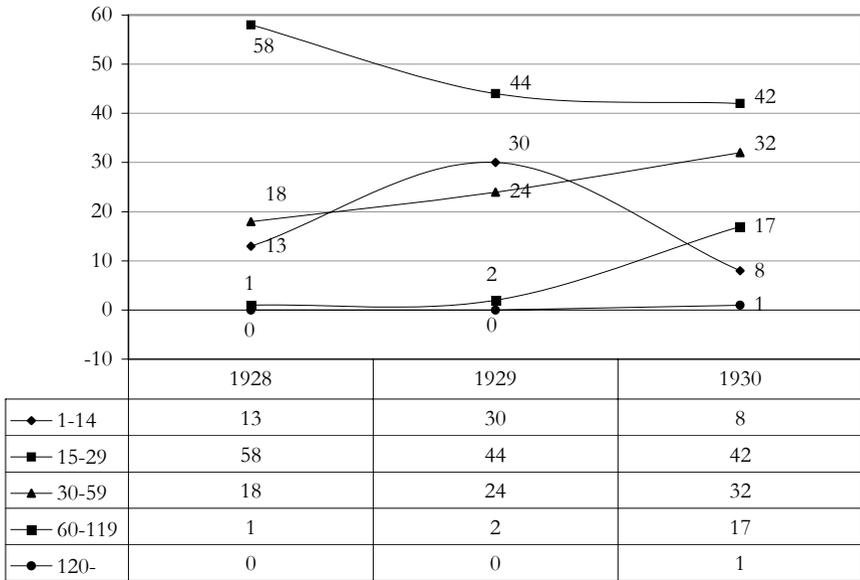
In 1930 the total number of reviews decreased in comparison to 1929. This decrease is biased due to the exclusion of the shows at Wolfram’s Bioscope for this year because of the difficulties mentioned earlier (no reviews in *Die Burger* from early 1930 onwards). If we subtract the reviews for shows at Wolfram’s for the years 1928 to 1930, we still get a similar trend (reviews in total by year [*Cape Times*/*Die Burger*] 1928: 88[71/17]; 1929: 257[145/112]; 1930: 237[123/114]). Even so, the decrease is more obvious for *Die Burger* than for the *Cape Times*. For the year 1930 the preferred review length in the *Cape Times* was the 15-29 range and in *Die Burger* the 30-59 range.



Graph 4.7: 1930, length allocation of reviews in percent

1930	<i>Cape Times</i>		<i>Die Burger</i>	
	number	proportion	number	proportion
1-14	19	8%	3	4%
15-29	99	42%	28	34%
30-59	76	32%	37	45%
60-119	41	17%	14	17%
120-	2	1%		
Total	233		82	

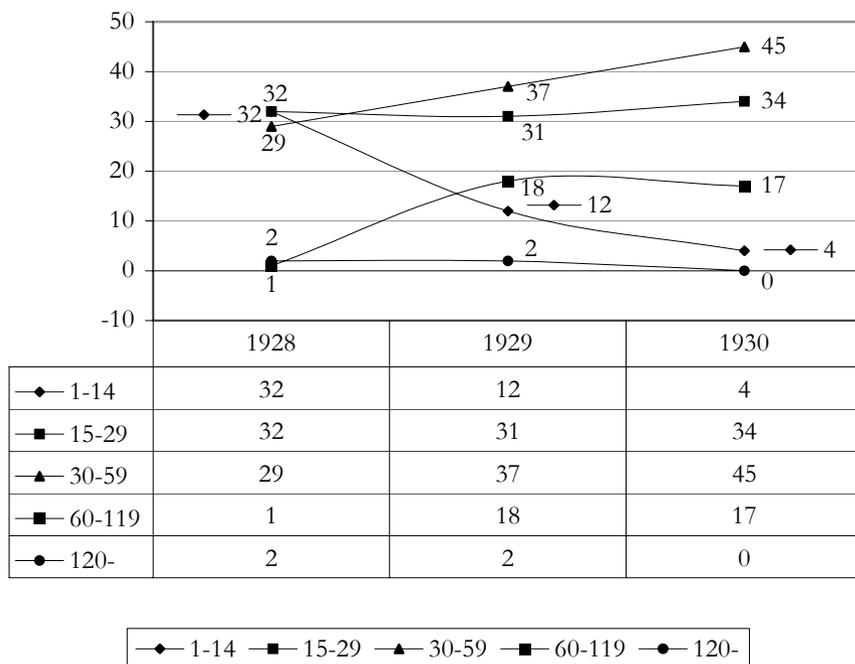
Table 4.6: Reviews in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* 1930



Graph 4.8: Preferred review length in the *Cape Times* 1928-1930

The following figures summarise the situation:

As can be seen in the figure above, the most often published review length fell into the 15-29 lines range. Even when the number of reviews decreased from 1928 to 1930, this was still the most favoured size for a film review in the *Cape Times*. The general tendency was towards an extended size for reviews as is evident in the steady growth of reviews in the third range (30-59 lines) and fourth range (60-119 lines). The number of first range reviews (1-14 lines) increased only until 1929. After that their number decreased significantly. One can summarise that in the period 1928 to 1930 the *Cape Times* published more reviews in total as well as a growing number of elaborate reviews.



Graph 4.9: Preferred review length in *Die Burger* 1928-1930

The most visible trait for film reviews in *Die Burger* 1928 to 1930 is the substantial decrease of short reviews (1-14 lines). Occupying nearly one third (32%) of all reviews in 1928, their number decreased by a factor of eight to only four percent. The number of reviews of the second length range can be characterised as very stable, varying only by three percent over the whole period. The third length range experienced an increase from approximately one third (29%) in 1928 to almost half (45%) of all reviews. The main characteristic of the 60-119 lines length range is the considerable increase from only one percent in 1928 to seventeen percent in 1930. The growth of second and third range reviews seems to be directly related to the decline in 1-14 line reviews. We can conclude that *Die Burger* published fewer reviews in total from 1928 to 1930, but increased the number of longer reviews significantly.

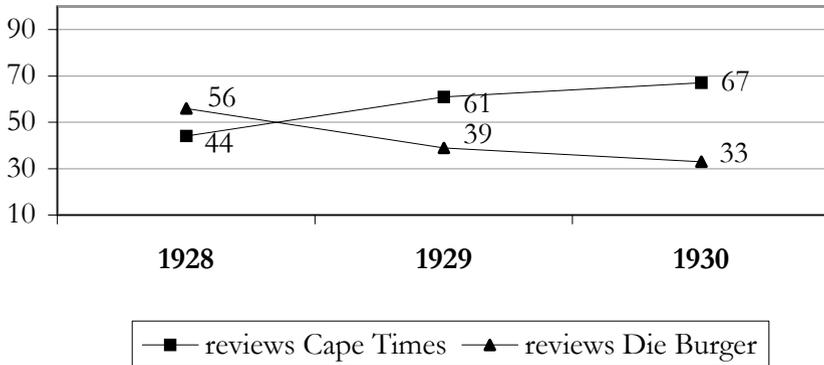
After clarifying the development of film reviews in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* for each year as well, as the tendency over the whole period, a closer look at the film criticism for the selected cinemas seems necessary. The charts and tables list the following attributes for each cinema: the number of films per year, the number of films reviewed/not reviewed, the number of reviews in total and the number of reviews in the *Cape Times* as well as in *Die Burger*. In addition to the number of films reviewed and

the number of film reviews, the percentage of those numbers related to the films and reviews in total is also listed. The proportion of reviews in the *Cape Times* and in *Die Burger* to the reviews in total is included as well.

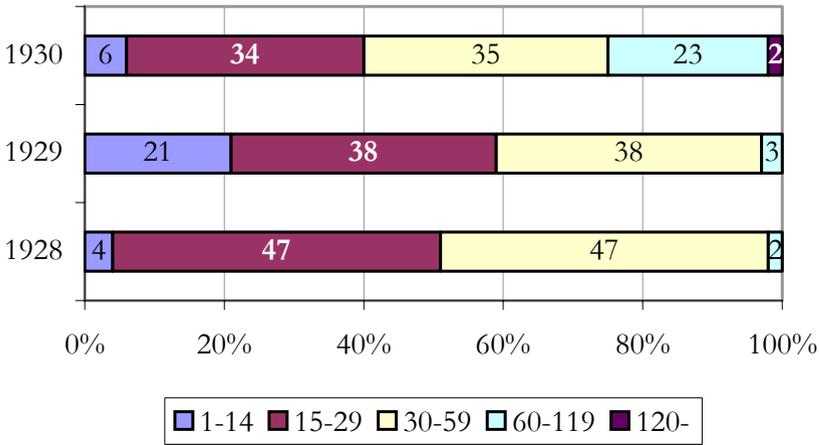
1. The Alhambra

The Alhambra	1928		1929		1930	
Films in total	73		148	+103%	123	-17%
Films reviewed	71	97%	145	98%	123	100%
Not reviewed	2	3%	3	2%	0	0
Reviews in total	115		223		179	
Reviews <i>Cape Times</i>	51	44%	137	61%	120	67%
Reviews <i>Die Burger</i>	64	56%	86	39%	59	33%

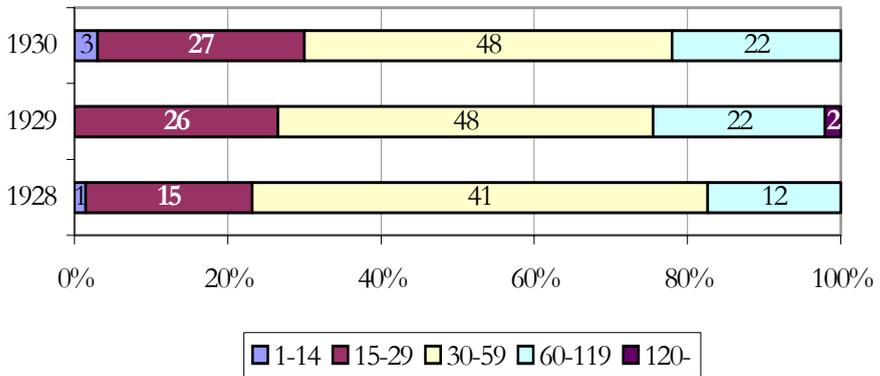
Table 4.7: Film reviews for the Alhambra 1928 to 1930



Graph 4.10: Reviews for the Alhambra 1928-1930



Graph 4.11: *Cape Times*: allocation of review length for screenings at the Alhambra 1928-1930



Graph 4.12: *Die Burger*: allocation of review length for screenings at the Alhambra 1928-1930

The tables and figures above clearly show the contrasting development of film reviews for the Alhambra cinema in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger*: While there was a nearly

equal distribution in 1928 (56%: 44%), the *Cape Times* increased the number of their reviews in 1930 to account for two thirds (67%), *Die Burger* decreased the number of their reviews for only one third (33%). This development reflects the general trend of the *Cape Times* in responding to the growing number of films until 1929 with more but shorter reviews (range of 1-14 lines). The decrease in the total number of film reviews in 1930 was followed by an increase in the number of longer reviews (60-119 lines; for the first time reviews longer than 120 lines appeared). In 1930 the *Cape Times* reviewed nearly every new release in this first-circuit cinema, preferring lengths in the ranges of 15-29 lines and 30-59 lines.

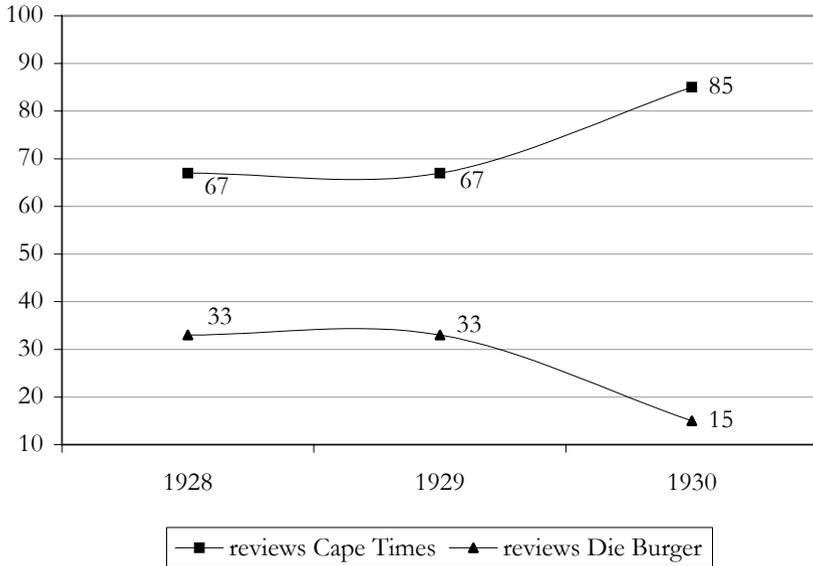
The opposite can be said for *Die Burger*. More film releases were responded with fewer but longer reviews. They preferred the 30-59 lines range for their reviews; the range of 60-119 lines increased in 1929 by nearly fifty percent and stayed at the same level until 1930 inclusive. The number of longer reviews (60-119 lines) in 1928 in *Die Burger* was higher than in the *Cape Times*. It stayed at the same level (22%) for the years 1929 and 1930. The *Cape Times* caught up in 1930 and raised the proportion of longer reviews (60-119 lines) to 23 percent. One can conclude that the reviews for the Alhambra in *Die Burger* over the years 1928 to 1930 stayed almost at the same level, generally favouring longer reviews (30-59 lines and 60-119 lines). The allocation of reviews in the *Cape Times* was less rigid, the ranges of 15-29 lines and 30-59 lines were usually equally distributed. Only in 1930 did the number of longer reviews (60-119) increase significantly.

2. Astoria Kinema

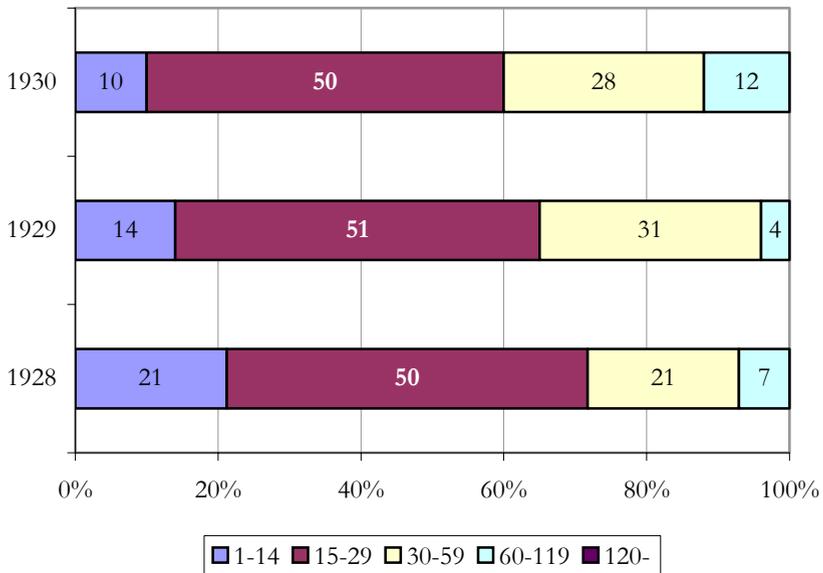
Astoria Kinema	1928		1929		1930	
Films in total	21		113	(-) ⁵⁸	114	+1%
Films reviewed	18	86%	112	99%	114	100%
Not reviewed	3	14%	1	1%	0	0
Reviews in total	21		162		146	
Reviews <i>Cape Times</i>	14	67%	108	67%	124	85%
Reviews <i>Die Burger</i>	7	33%	54	33%	22	15%

Table 4.8: Film reviews for the Astoria Kinema 1928 to 1930

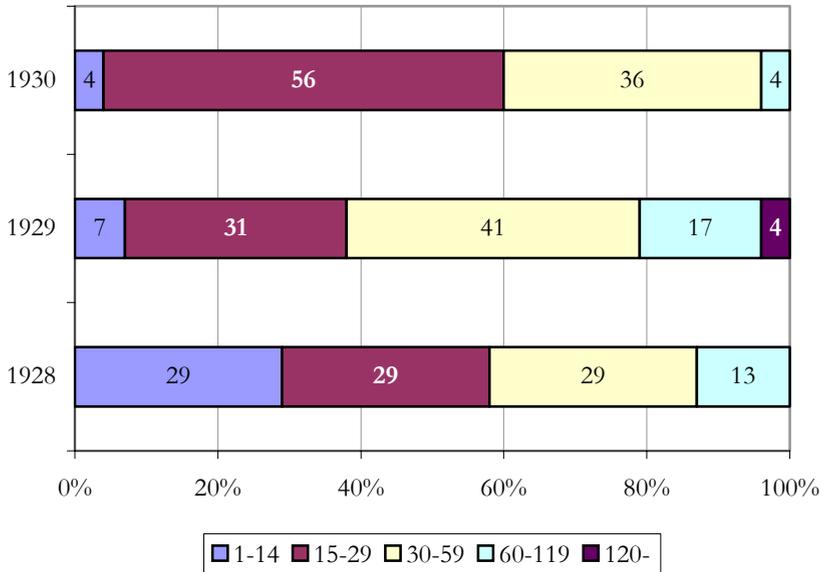
⁵⁸ The Astoria Kinema (as venue) opened relatively late in 1928 (22 October). Therefore the massive increase in the number of films screened 1929 is not directly comparable with the number of films screened in 1928.



Graph 4.13: Reviews for the Astoria Kinema 1928-1930



Graph 4.14: *Cape Times*: allocation of review length for screenings at the Astoria Kinema 1928-1930



Graph 4.15: *Die Burger*: allocation of review length for screenings at the Astoria Kinema 1928-1930

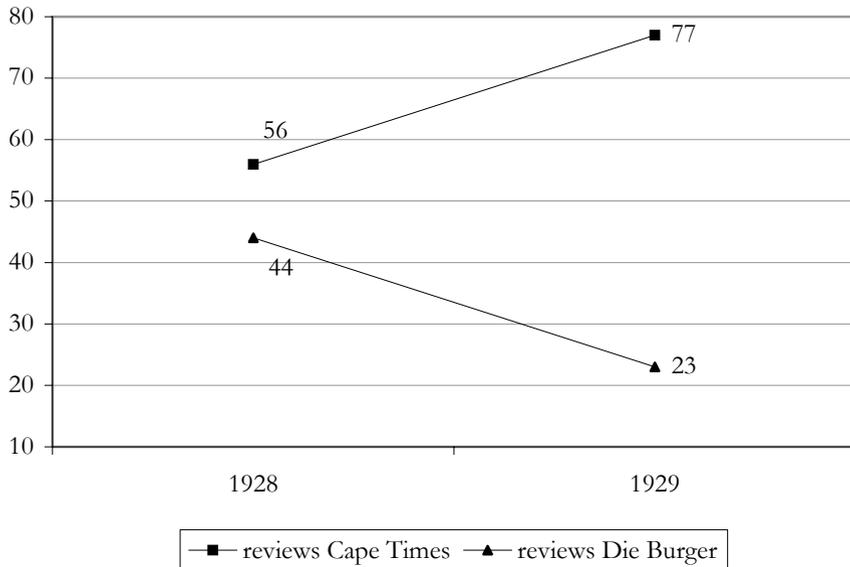
The situation for the Astoria Kinema was slightly different compared to that of the Alhambra. From the beginning the *Cape Times* reviewed twice as many films (67%) as *Die Burger* (33%). The rate of development from 1928 to 1929 was very stable and stayed at the same level. The number of film reviews in the *Cape Times* increased by a quarter from 1929 to 1930. The preferred review length in the *Cape Times* over the whole period was the 15-29 line range. *Die Burger* cut in half the number of reviews from 1928 to 1930, finally reviewing only 15% of the releases at the Astoria Kinema. *Die Burger* started in 1928 with an equal distribution among the first three length-ranges for their reviews. The review coverage of the films in 1929 stayed at the same level as in 1928. In 1929 reviews generally became more elaborate (mainly 30-59 lines). In 1930 *Die Burger* switched back and gave preference to reviews of 15-29 lines. Over the period of 1928 to 1930, *Die Burger* did not have as rigid a pattern for their reviews as did the *Cape Times*. The tendency of the preferred review length was not as obvious as e.g. for the reviewed films at the Alhambra.

3. Wolfram's Bioscope

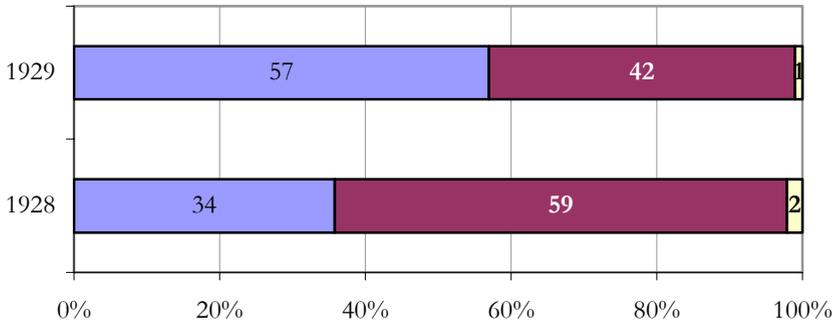
Because *Die Burger* stopped reviewing films screened at Wolfram's bioscope in early 1930, only the years 1928 to 1929 form part of this overview.

Wolfram's Bioscope	1928		1929	
Films in total	112		172	+54%
Reviewed	100	89%	125	73%
Not reviewed	12	11%	47	27%
Reviews in total	165		154	-7%
Reviews <i>Cape Times</i>	92	56%	119	77%
Reviews <i>Die Burger</i>	73	44%	35	23%

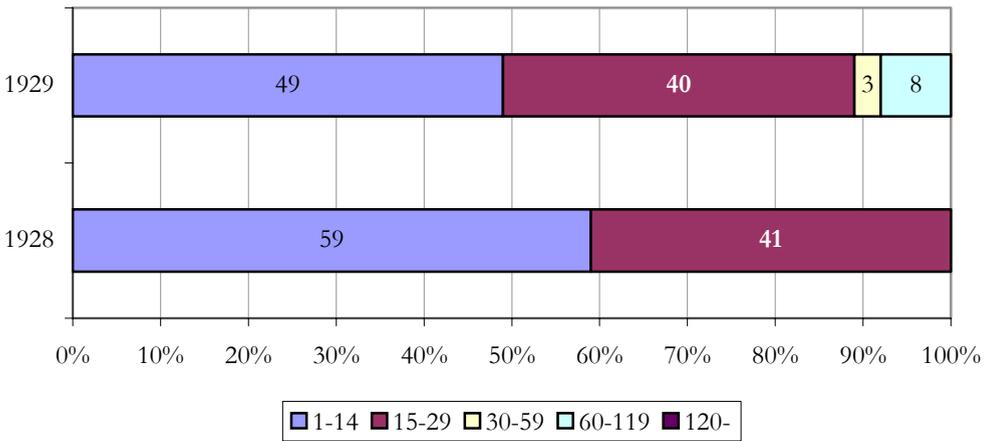
Table 4.9: Film reviews for Wolfram's Bioscope 1928 to 1929



Graph 4.16: Reviews for Wolfram's Bioscope 1928-1929



Graph 4.17: *Cape Times*: allocation of review length for screenings at Wolfram's Bioscope 1928-1929



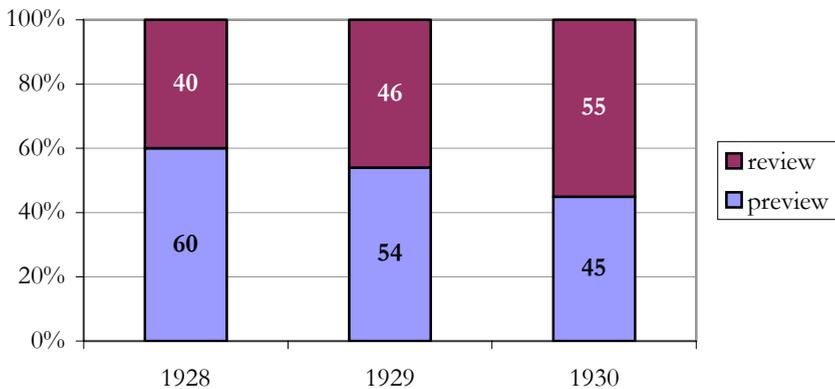
Graph 4.18: *Die Burger*: allocation of review length for screenings at Wolfram's Bioscope 1928-1929

The number of films screened at Wolfram's Bioscope increased by more than fifty percent from 1928 to 1929, whereas the number of reviews in total decreased by about seven percent. In 1928 both newspapers published about half of the reviews for screenings at Wolfram's Bioscope. The situation changed fundamentally in 1929, when *Die Burger* reduced their reviews by fifty percent. The result was a clear seventy-five percent dominance of the *Cape Times* for reviewing films at Wolfram's Bioscope. As mentioned earlier, *Die Burger* stopped reviewing films at Wolfram's Bioscope in early 1930 completely, while the *Cape Times* continued. Another significant aspect for

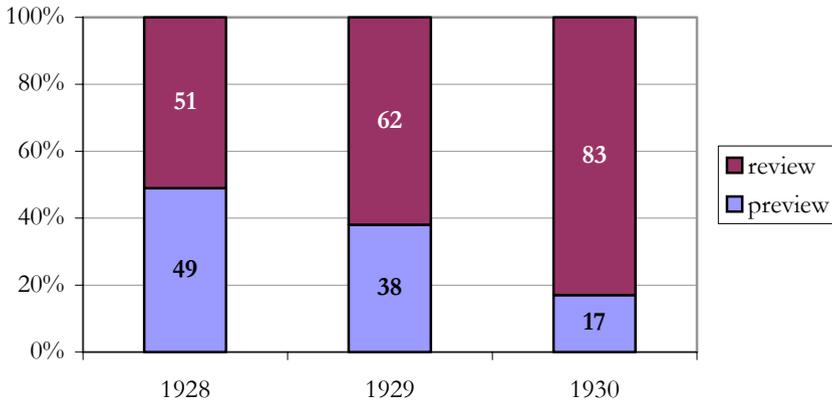
Wolfram’s Bioscope is the allocation of the review lengths in both newspapers. In 1928 more than ninety percent of all reviews in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* were allocated among the first (1-14 lines) and second (15-29 lines) ranges. Whereas the *Cape Times* preferred the second length-range in 1928 (59%), the situation reversed and short reviews dominated in 1929 (57%). The reviews in *Die Burger* followed a different development. The majority of reviews in 1928 were short reviews (59%), second length reviews occupied forty-one percent. In 1929 the number of 15-29 line long reviews remained almost the same (40%). The number of short reviews decreased to forty-nine percent. Differing from the *Cape Times* in 1929, *Die Burger* published longer reviews, occupying eleven percent in total, at the expense of short reviews. Compared with the two other cinemas, Wolfram’s Bioscope received the highest number of short reviews from both newspapers. Short reviews were clearly over-represented among the reviews for screenings at Wolfram’s Bioscope and more elaborate critiques were largely marginalised.

One can conclude that the length of film reviews was not only determined by the particular newspaper but also by the selected cinema. The *Cape Times* tried to cover all film screenings with reviews and thus preferred smaller critiques (15-29 lines). *Die Burger*, on the other hand, decreased the number of reviews but published more elaborate critiques and preferred longer reviews (30-59 lines).

After giving an quantitative overview of films and their reviews by newspaper and cinema in the period under discussion, one still has to distinguish between previews or reviews (according to the criteria in Chapter Two). As mentioned in Chapter Two, we can assume that reviews published before or at the same day as the actual screening of the film were previews, all the other critiques can be considered as reviews. To get comparable film reviews, one has to establish whether both newspapers published reviews about one particular film and whether these reviews had a similar size.

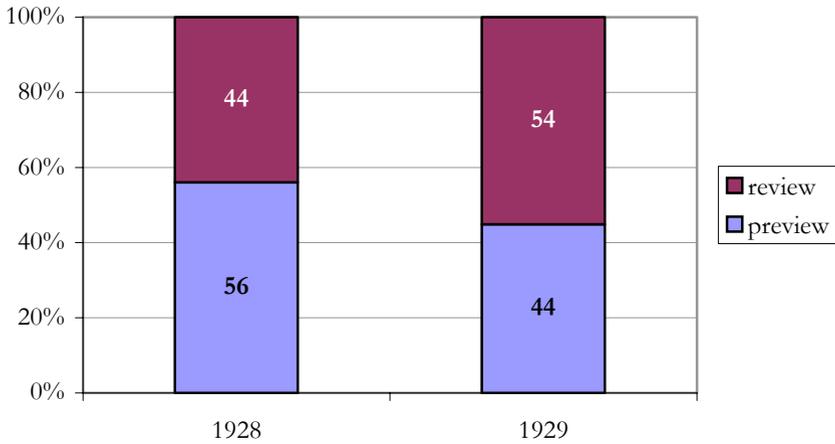


Graph 4.19: *Cape Times*: proportion previews/reviews 1928-1930

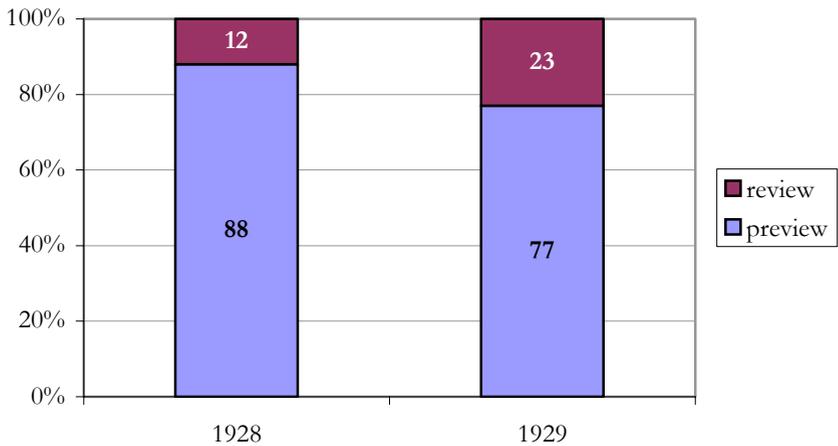


Graph 4.20: *Die Burger*: proportion previews/reviews 1928-1930

Graph 4.19 shows that the proportion of previews and reviews published by the *Cape Times* from 1928 to 1929 changed only marginally; more previews than reviews were published. In 1930 the situation changed. The *Cape Times* favoured reviews instead of previews. *Die Burger* published a steadily growing number of reviews from 1928 to 1929 (graph 4.20). The result was a clear majority of reviews in 1930. The tendency towards reviews instead of previews in *Die Burger* is much clearer than in the *Cape Times*. If one bears in mind that the previews/reviews for screenings at Wolfram's Bioscope in 1930 were excluded from the survey, it seems useful to explore whether there is a link between ratio of reviews to previews for 1929 to 1930. Therefore the proportion of previews/reviews in both newspapers for screenings at Wolfram's Bioscope is of special interest.



Graph 4.21: *Cape Times*: proportion previews/reviews 1928-1929 for Wolfram's Bioscope



Graph 4.22: *Die Burger*: proportion previews/reviews 1928-1929 for Wolfram's Bioscope

The proportion of previews to reviews for Wolfram's Bioscope in the *Cape Times* also reflects the general trend (of slightly more reviews than previews). One can conclude that the allocation of previews and reviews in the *Cape Times* did not change dramatically from 1928 to 1930; a state of equilibrium was maintained. The proportion of previews to reviews for Wolfram's Bioscope in *Die Burger* was completely different. The number of reviews increased from 1928 to 1929 but the previews for Wolfram's Bioscope were still clearly over-represented. It is obvious that shows at Wolfram's Bioscope mostly received previews and not reviews.

Taking the results above into account, the last step of this empirical exploration is to list films which were reviewed (publishing date after the first show) by both newspapers before starting with a comparison-based content analysis. The average film review in the *Cape Times* (CT) and *Die Burger* (DB) had the following characteristics:

1928		
Alhambra CT 30-59 lines DB 30-59 lines	Astoria CT 15-29 lines DB 15-29 lines	Wolfram's CT 15-29 lines DB 1-14 lines
1929		
Alhambra CT 30-59 lines DB 30-59 lines	Astoria CT 15-29 lines DB 30-59 lines	Wolfram's CT 1-14 lines DB 1-14 lines
1930		
Alhambra CT 30-59 lines DB 30-59 lines	Astoria CT 15-29 lines DB 15-29 lines	--

Table 4.10: Characteristics of average-size reviews

This table indicates that, with the exception of reviews for Wolfram's Bioscope in 1928 and the Astoria Kinema in 1929, both newspapers preferred the same length range for their average reviews. Because the preferred length range for reviews screened at the Alhambra did not change from 1928 to 1930, one is free to decide from which year to take the examples. Therefore a selection of films with similar sized reviews in both newspapers is supposed to be the best choice for this comparison and the content analysis. In applying these criteria, the following list is produced:

Year	Film Title	Cinema	Run	Length
1928	<i>The Battle of Coronel and Falkland Islands</i>	Alhambra	5	60-119
	<i>The Eagle</i>	Alhambra	5	30-59
	<i>The Black Bird</i>	Alhambra	5	30-59
	<i>When a Man Loves</i>	Alhambra	5	30-59
	<i>The Country Doctor</i>	Alhambra	5	30-59
	<i>Closed Gates</i>	Wolfram's	2	15-29
	<i>Clancy's Kosher Wedding</i>	Astoria	5	15-29
1929	<i>Piccadilly</i>	Alhambra	5	30-59
	<i>Seventh Heaven</i>	Alhambra	8	30-59
	<i>The Kid Brother</i>	Alhambra	5	30-59
	<i>The Merry Widow</i>	Alhambra	5	30-59
	<i>Resurrection</i>	Alhambra	5	30-59
	<i>Submarine</i>	Alhambra	5	30-59
	<i>Two Arabian Knights</i>	Alhambra	5	30-59
	<i>The Million Dollar Collar</i>	Wolfram's	1	1-14
	<i>High Treason</i>	Astoria	15	30-59
	<i>The Water Rat</i>	Astoria	7	30-59
	1930	<i>King of Jazz</i>	Alhambra	5
<i>Movietone Follies</i>		Alhambra	14	30-59
<i>Cocoanuts</i>		Alhambra	5	60-119
<i>Just for a Song</i>		Alhambra	2	30-59
<i>Dance Hall</i>		Astoria	5	60-119
<i>Balalaava</i>		Astoria	4	15-29
<i>Río Rita</i>		Astoria	45	15-29

Table 4.11: Films which received reviews of an equal size from both newspapers

A closer look at this list reveals that only films screened at the Alhambra or Astoria fulfilled the criteria for this compilation; only two films were shown at Wolfram's Bioscope. The reviews for films at Wolfram's Bioscope are again a special case and do not represent either newspaper's typical film criticism. For these reasons it is better to focus on the Alhambra and Astoria only and leave Wolfram's Bioscope aside.

If one compares the criteria in Table 4.10 and the selection in Table 4.11, it becomes clear that there were no films at the Astoria in 1929 which fulfil the set criteria, because the average review length for this particular cinema differed in both newspapers. To continue with the selection according to the set guidelines, it was occasionally necessary to skip one of the defined parameters. To broaden the focus of this survey and to provide the qualitative analysis with suitable material, another step needed to be taken.

To identify the style of reviewing film practised by both newspapers (see Chapter Two, Table 2.1 “Weimar scheme”), longer reviews for selected films were subjected to a content analysis as well. To include qualitative elements in this study, the films screened for an above-average period are selected to get an insight into the audiences’ preferences (see Appendix I). A ranking of those films which got the most reviews would look very similar. One can consider longer reviews as more suitable for a content analysis at this point, because the identified characteristics of film reviews (see Chapter Two) are more likely to be found in elaborate critiques.

To get a well-balanced cross-section for the qualitative analysis, a combination of the mentioned criteria is applied. What follows in the next chapter is a list of selected films and a content analysis of their reviews. The empirical data from this chapter are subjected to a content analysis to characterise the style of film criticism practised by both newspapers.

CHAPTER V

Content Analysis of Selected Film Reviews

The data collected in the previous chapter are now used for the qualitative analysis. The applied method is to select from the list of comparable films and their reviews (film: average season, review: average length) a representative sample to start with a content analysis. According to Peters, we can exclude the short reports on films because they are not considered as a serious kind of film review (Peters 1960: 6). Therefore, the medium-sized reviews (15-29 and 30-59 lines) are considered as film reviews, exhibiting especially the judgement phase of reviewing a film (Haacke 1970: 290-295). Assuming for the moment that the length of a review is an indicator of its sophistication, one has to look for special criteria which are very likely to be reflected in these reviews.

The following selected films, with average-size reviews in both newspapers, qualify for the content analysis:⁵⁹

Year	Alhambra	Astoria Kinema
1928	<i>The Eagle</i>	<i>Clancy's Kosher Wedding</i>
1929	<i>Sunrise</i>	<i>The Water Rat</i>
1930	<i>Movietone Follies</i>	<i>What a Man</i>

Table 5.1: Selected films with average-sized reviews

The following scheme for the content analysis is a further development of Haacke's and Titchener's suggestions mentioned in Chapter Two (cf. Haacke 1970: 296 and Titchener 1998:41ff) and focuses on the key questions in Table 5.2.

These criteria form the general frame for the content analysis to illustrate the use and benefit of the database which has been compiled. Each review is analysed in accordance with these guidelines. The analysis includes:

1. the core data (date, page, review/preview, size);
2. listing the common features;
3. the differences; and
4. a conclusion.

⁵⁹ The fact that none of these films was listed as an outstanding film by Thelma Gutsche confirms the assumption that strictly average films were selected (cf. Gutsche 1972: 228-230).

Criteria	Focus
Content	<i>Is the story explained (detailed, superficial description etc.)?</i>
Individuals	<i>Are the persons involved, like actors, director, camera men, etc., mentioned?</i>
Genre	<i>Does the review state whether the film was a comedy, western, etc.?</i>
Cinematography	<i>Are any media-specific elements (photography, sound etc.) emphasized?</i>
References	<i>Are other films by the same director, with the same actors, etc., or reports from other media mentioned?</i>
Tendency	<i>Does the review in general focus on functional or ideological aspects?</i>
Audience	<i>Was the cinema well-visited and were the audiences' reactions reported?</i>
Judgements	<i>Did the journalist personalise his writing?</i>
Recommendation	<i>Does the review indicate whether the film is worth seeing or not?</i>

Table 5.2: Key questions for the content analysis

The Eagle (*Alhambra*), season 13.-18.02.1928

1. *Cape Times* 14.02.28, 13, review, 39 lines;
Die Burger 14.02.28, 8, review, 45 lines
2. Both newspapers focus on the popular main actor, Rudolph Valentino, and explain the story of the film around him. His female counterpart, Louise Dresser, is mentioned as well, the genre is clearly defined as romantic drama (“liefdestoneel”). The acting of Valentino and the cast is described as superb, even if it was an unusual role for Valentino. Both newspapers draw attention to the fact that Valentino passed away recently.
3. Only the *Cape Times* refers to the classic Russian novel “Dubrowski” by Alexander Pushkin on which the story is based and to the “pictorial beauty” of the film. *Die Burger* calls the story trite (“afgesaagd”), but Valentino’s and Dresser’s acting prevents the movie from getting boring. The cinema was crowded and the audience satisfied (*Cape Times*); some of the story’s characters could have been depicted with more artistry (*Die Burger*).
4. The reviews give the impression that the film is an average production with a strong main actor, a good cast and good photography. None of the reviews is personalised, there is no visible tendency, the review functions strictly as information source, the *Cape Times* is more in favour of the film than *Die Burger*, but both write positively about the film. Both reviews can be described as story-centred.

Clancy's Kosher Wedding (*Astoria*), season 12.-17.11.1928

1. *Cape Times*, 13.11.28, 10, review, 24 lines;
Die Burger, 13.11.28, 8, review, 26 lines
2. The reviews refer to *Clancy's Kosher Wedding* as comedy-drama and mention especially the emotional ("laughter and tears") aspects of the story.
3. *Die Burger* spends half of the review explaining the additional programme of the evening (newsreels), is unable to spell the film's title correctly (*Clanaj's Kosher Wedding*) and characterises the film as naïve humour ("naïfe geestigheid"). The *Cape Times* mentions a packed house and that the detailed story of the film is its best feature.
4. Neither reviews provides any statement on the cast, cinematography, references, a tendency or any other form of journalistic editing. The review functions as a neutral recommendation (because there is no negative description), but it appears rather as a film short-report (advance) than a film review.

Sunrise (*Alhambra*), season 02.-07.09.1929

1. *Cape Times*, 03.09.29, 7, review, 48 lines;
Die Burger, 05.09.29, 9, review, 40 lines
2. Both reviews start by stating that *Sunrise* received much praise elsewhere and that this praise was absolutely justified. "Outstanding" is the shared comment on the film, followed by a short explanation of the story and broad space for the filmic qualities. The main actors, George O'Brian and Janet Gaynor, are acclaimed for their excellent performances. The film is described as a "nightmarish tale, fantastic and real" (*Cape Times*). Both newspapers maintain that *Sunrise* is definitely worth seeing.
3. *Die Burger* mentions that the film is based on a story by Hans Sudermann and that the whole film is an example of German exactness and thoroughness.⁶⁰ The film's German director, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, is mentioned in the *Cape Times* only, as is the artistic handling of unusual camera angles and vivid shots.
4. There are no statements on the audience or any tendency, but the entertainment aspects of the film are clearly reflected in the review. *Die Burger* with its clear recommendation is more personal in the review than the *Cape Times*. Both reviews are good examples for film-centred reviews.

⁶⁰ *Sunrise* was not a German production but was directed by the German director F.W. Murnau. He directed popular films like *Faust* and *The Last Laugh* (both featuring Emil Jannings), which were also screened in South Africa.

The Water Rat (*Astoria*), season 23.-30.09.1929

1. *Cape Times*, 24.09.1929, 7, review, 30 lines;
Die Burger, 26.9.1929, 8, review, 33 lines
2. One of the first features mentioned in both reviews is that *The Water Rat* is a UFA production (a German-based film company) and that it fulfils what is expected from those productions (“wat in die meeste opsigte die goeie naam van die produsente eer aandoen”, *Die Burger*).⁶¹ The high standard of the criminal play’s photography, especially the atmosphere of the harbour scenes, was also emphasised.
3. Only the *Cape Times* explains the story briefly and gives some statements about the leading actors (Willy Fritsch and Jenny Hugo). The review in *Die Burger* demonstrates how a critic can unveil and question improbabilities of the plot without tearing the film to pieces. Even with this high amount of criticism, *Die Burger* ends its critique with a recommendation.
4. The reviews differ fundamentally, but both include positive judgements. The audience is not mentioned, the tendency is functionalistic, the critique in *Die Burger* focuses strictly on the plot. The way of questioning the plot of a film and recommending it at the same time, as was done by *Die Burger*’s critic, is rarely found in the reviews and a good example of a criticism-centred film review.

Movietone Follies (*Alhambra*), season 13.-27.01.1930

1. *Cape Times*, 14.01.1930, 9, review, 56 lines;
Die Burger, 21.01.1930, 8, review, 29 lines
2. *Movietone Follies* is described as a musical comedy and a talkie. The combination of dance, song and costumes to create effect is the movie’s main feature. The *Cape Times*’s and *Die Burger*’s comments on some of the songs are critical of their strong American dialect. The film will “keep the Alhambra full for many nights” (*Cape Times*) and is suitable “vir ’n someraand”⁶² (*Die Burger*).
3. The reviews differ not only in their length, but also significantly in style. *Die Burger* articulates its difficulties with too many bad talkies in general and spends fifty percent of the review on the rest of the evening’s programme at the Alhambra. The *Cape Times*’s focus is clearly on the entertainment aspects of the movie, the plot is a minor matter. *Movietone Follies* is called an average musical comedy, but because of its music and dance parts it is seen able to challenge the theatre. Some of the shots are compared with the photographic qualities of the UFA production *Vaudeville* and the movie as a whole explains why talkies like this fill the London theatres. Even if the production is not of the highest class, its faults do not undermine the success of this musical comedy as first-class entertainment.

⁶¹ ...what in most cases adds to the good name of the producers.

⁶² ...for a summer evening.

4. The review in the *Cape Times* is an excellent example of a genre-centred review. No statement on the story or the cast is given; the reference (“UFA-like photography”) confirms the unimportance of the plot and favours the entertainment value of the song and dance scenes. The review in *Die Burger* with its meagre comments does not recommend or condemn this film; it stays more or less neutral and gives the impression that this movie is only cheap American amusement.

***What a Man* (Astoria), season 29.09.-08.10.1930**

1. *Cape Times*, 07.10.1930, 7, review, 20 lines;
Die Burger, 01.10.1930, 6, review, 25 lines
2. The talkie comedy *What a Man* was well-liked by the audience, and the management of Astoria Kinemas Ltd. decided to extend the season for three more days. The story with its happy ending was described briefly in both papers.
3. The *Cape Times* gave a comment on the delightful performance of the leading actor (Reginald Denny), whereas *Die Burger* mentions that he symbolises the sentimental element in this movie and provides a contrast to the humorous story.
4. There are no statements on the filmic or photographic qualities of the film, no visible tendency and no personal point of view of the journalists, except for a recommendation to see this movie. The review functions as an information source, highlighting the entertainment value of the movie. The context-deficient description in both reviews shows that they only attain the minimum journalistic standard of a film short report or advance.

To summarise the results of the content analysis of the reviews of these six selected films, one could assume that the length range (15-29 and 30-59 lines) probably sets an effective limitation to the journalistic efforts. The possible variety of average reviews is reflected in the existence of pure film short reports like the reviews for *Clancy's Kosher Wedding*, story-centred reviews like for *The Eagle* and also film-centred reviews like the writings about *Sunrise*. Most of the reviews can be described as fairly neutral, but as seen in the ones for *What a Man*, *Movietone Follies* and *The Water Rat*, they differ in the way of recommending the film. An exception is *Die Burger's* critique on *The Water Rat*. The film is not rejected at all, but the plot is sidelined by intelligent questions about its improbabilities. All selected reviews contain only functional or formal statements, additional information on ideological or social matters are consequently left aside. *Die Burger's* way to handle films of lower quality seems to be a “selected ignorance strategy”, writing a meagre report and mentioning only a few neutral aspects of the film. The *Cape Times* tried to promote all films, emphasising the strong parts of a film to compensate for its obvious weaknesses. In the reviews of this particular length, both newspapers practised a similar style of criticism: function-based, in general offering criticism only as a journalistic exercise, and avoiding damaging reviews for the sake of a steady placement of adverts. Neither newspaper personalised (using “I” for their opinion etc.) or initialised these reviews.

As can be seen so far, it is very difficult to identify any tendencies in the film reviews by analysing average-sized reviews only. None of the possible criteria from the “Weimar scheme” (see Chapter Two, Table 2.1) was identifiable in the *Cape Times* or in *Die Burger*. The only trace of an underlying criticism is that both newspapers mentioned their dislike of songs with a strong American accent in reviewing *Movietone Follies*. The questioning of the plot by *Die Burger*’s critic in the review for *The Water Rat* gives an idea of possible focus points with which to characterise the film criticism as practised by these reviewers. The criticism there was obviously functional; the critic’s disappointment with improbabilities of the plot was recorded and appropriately expressed in the review. The comments on the American slang were part of the “taalstryd” in the Afrikaans-press in the 1930s as well as part of the efforts of the English-speaking press to protect South Africa from “Jingoism” (Gutsche 1972: 224 and Tomaselli 1986). This can be taken as the only noticeable but hidden ideological position emerging in a review.

There are two ways to continue with this survey to fulfil the proposed aim. On the one hand, a genre-based analysis, as was practised by Gainer (Gainer 2000: 116-137), could offer an insight into the general tendency of film criticism in both newspapers. The task of defining each film’s genre and analyse those screened in Cape Town 1928 to 1930 would demand another detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis, which is beyond the scope of this study.

On the other hand, from the analysis of the average-sized reviews three possible focus points emerge which could serve as basis (in addition to the “Weimar scheme” in Chapter Two) to investigate the more elaborate reviews. These focus points are:

- improbabilities of the plot;
- the change from silent to sound film;
- criticism towards American slang in talkies.

Because the positive and promotional statements in most reviews hide all tendencies in the reviews other than functionalistic ones, a way to overcome this problem could be a “negative selection”. One could look specifically for disputed features and differences like the above-mentioned ones to unveil possible tendencies in the reviews. Therefore a selection of films which were screened longer than the average period and which received more elaborate reviews form the basis for the last part of this study.

This list is also highly selective and raises questions about the mode of selection. Each of these films and their reviews have some atypical characteristics: they were either screened for an exceptionally long season (e.g. *Rio Rita* for 45 days) or the newspapers published extra-long reviews about them (e.g. *Metropolis* with a 186-line review). Both criteria qualify them for further analysis. The identified focus points for the “negative selection” (questioning the plot, the talkie as such and the language discussion) are taken into consideration and are applied. The majority of the analysed reviews approximate what was defined earlier as film critiques. To avoid terminological confusion, these critiques are still termed reviews, because only after analysis is it clear whether they were real critiques or not.

Film	Type	Season (days)	Length	
			(lines)	
<i>Rio Rita</i>	talkie	45	CT 117	DB 79
<i>King of Jazz</i>	talkie	12	CT 81	DB 80
<i>On with the Show</i>	talkie	12	CT 106	DB 59
<i>Atlantic</i>	talkie	12	CT 80	DB 49
<i>The Donovan Affair</i>	talkie	11	CT 48	DB 101
<i>The Way of All Flesh</i>	silent	10	CT 26	DB 67
<i>Metropolis</i>	silent	9	CT 25	DB 186
<i>All Quiet at the Western Front</i>	talkie	8	CT 135	DB 82

Table 5.3: Selected films for the content analysis

Rio Rita

Rio Rita in those days was the movie with the longest season ever⁶³ and was screened twice in 1930 at the Astoria Kinema (see also Storm 1962).⁶⁴ It was estimated that it had been seen by 94,000 people in Cape Town after 97 performances in the first round.⁶⁵ Nevertheless *Die Burger* published only one elaborate review,⁶⁶ whereas the *Cape Times* kept on advertising and praising it with a constant frequency during the whole season.⁶⁷ Both newspapers state that *Rio Rita* exceeded all expectations and was in all aspects the most remarkable sound movie so far. The combination of song, dance and play in this talkie (half of it in colour) was said to be an equal competitor to the musical stage, powerfully demonstrating the talkie's ambitions, even if talkies were still in their infancy.⁶⁸ The very personal review from the *Cape Times* correspondent in Johannesburg about the first screening of *Rio Rita* is so full of superlatives that the journalist had to admit that he had exhausted his vocabulary of praise. *Die Burger's* critic is equally enthusiastic and states "... derhalwe kan ons ons lesers met die grootste vrymoedigheid aanraai om nie hierdie geleentheid te laat verbygaan nie."⁶⁹ There is no complaint about any improbabilities of the plot or a too strong American accent in the musical performances. *Rio Rita* was seen as the perfect example of a sound film, showing the high entertainment potential of a well-produced talkie. Any other than

⁶³ Jack Stodel estimates that it ran for approximately 13 weeks (Stodel 1962: 71).

⁶⁴ 19.02.-05.04.1930 and 07.-16.07.1930.

⁶⁵ *Cape Times* 05.04.1930, 11.

⁶⁶ *Die Burger* 19.02.1930, 6.

⁶⁷ *Cape Times* 24.01.1930, 11; 15.02.1930, 11; 17.02.1930, 7; 19.02.1930, 7; 20.02.30, 9; 24.02.1930, 7; 25.02.1930, 7; 03.03.1930, 11; 06.03.1930, 11; 10.03.1930, 7; 17.03.1930, 7; 14.03.1930, 7; 31.03.1930, 7; 01.04.1930, 7; 05.04.1930, 11.

⁶⁸ *Cape Times* 24.01.1930, 11.

⁶⁹ ... that is why we can frankly recommend to our readers not to miss this opportunity. *Die Burger* 19.02.1930, 6.

formal-artistic aspects are omitted in the reviews; the discussion of sound in film is the overall theme.

King of Jazz

For the first time in the *Cape Times* the review for the *King of Jazz* is indicated as written “By the Film Critic”.⁷⁰ The good musical and dance parts are mentioned by both newspapers, besides that it is “niks anders as ’n varieté-vertoning nie wat op kolossale skaal ingerig is.”⁷¹ “The Critic” of the *Cape Times* was pleased with the Mexican, Spanish and Russian music, but declares “Apart from these factors, I was compelled to feel that the world would not have missed so very much if Paul Whiteman [the band-leader in this movie; ME] had kept his scrap-book to himself.” Besides these personal dislikes, the reviews do not contain any other statements in addition to the musical qualities of the movie.

On with the Show

The review in *Die Burger* makes it clear from the beginning that, although it is a well-made sound film in full colour, it is by no means brilliant.⁷² The film’s plot is not meritorious; the defect of the film is its lack of depth. The good performance of the cast is emphasised and the average audience is recommended to see this movie. Similarly to *Die Burger’s* review, the *Cape Times*⁷³ points out that the popularity of the films is attributable to their construction in accordance with approved box-office formulas, many scenes are obvious platitudes, but therefore have an universal appeal. Even if *On with the Show* was the first full-colour talkie in Cape Town, the critic makes the critical point that “Colours, like sounds, lose much of their individual quality, blur into one another and acquire an artificial glitter.” The story is briefly explained as one of those American back-stage stories one knows so well. The interweaving of the two distinct themes (the music revue and the back-stage story) comes across as a little strained, but this is mitigated by some unexpected twists. The critic of the *Cape Times* writes in a very personalised way and even declares his disappointment with the exaggerated praise (“Cochran’s world famous success”) in the advance publicity he was using. There were critical comments on colour, sound and plot. No grudge against American slang was mentioned.

⁷⁰ *Cape Times* 02.12.1930, 7.

⁷¹ ...it is nothing but a vaudeville-show arranged on a gigantic scale. *Die Burger* 02.12.1930, 9.

⁷² *Die Burger* 27.05.1930, 9.

⁷³ *Cape Times* 27.05.1930, 7.

The Donovan Affair

The review in the *Cape Times*⁷⁴ tells of *The Donovan Affair* that many famous actors from silent movies appear in it and that this thriller benefits a lot from the addition of sound. Half of the review relates to the fact that in contrast to many other actors, the main actress, Dorothe Revier, is not worried about talkies. She prefers talkies to silent movies because she finds it simpler to act when she has something to say. *Die Burger* explains in detail the story and plot of *The Donovan Affair*, emphasising the excellent acting of the whole cast and the constant thrill of this “geheimsinnige drama”.⁷⁵ Special attention is paid to the fact that the film is a sound film from beginning to end. Although sound technology still needed some improvement, imagining *The Donovan Affair* without sound was simply impossible. The sound was fairly clear and the audience able to see and hear the events. The remark on the sound in film is the only one from the above-mentioned focus points.

Metropolis

The difference between the reviews found for *Metropolis* in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* could not have been more significant. *Die Burger* published the longest review (186 lines) in the years 1928 to 1930⁷⁶ about this particular film, the *Cape Times* an average review of standard length.⁷⁷ The review in *Die Burger* can be regarded as a film critique par excellence. It starts by explaining the contemporary context of this fantasy film and names the director and some of his films, the scriptwriter and the production company. A general description of setting and plot is followed by a detailed outline of the story, including statements on the cast and their acting. The filmic details like photography, light, direction, symbolism and film architecture are all mentioned and praised for their magnificence. The review’s last paragraph sounds like the confirmation of the assumptions made earlier for the “negative selection”:

Waar bly, by die diepgaande kuns van hierdie film, by die dringende waarskuwing wat dit ons bring, by sy Duitse minagting van oppervlakkige effek – die Amerikaanse rolprente met sy oppervlakkige “Human interest,” sy ewige “Love Appeal” an sy oopenstapel van meganies-geproduseerde scenario’s?⁷⁸

With the exception of a statement on sound (because *Metropolis* was still a silent film), all focus points are precisely matched and expressed (dislike of US productions and logic of the plot). On the other hand, the *Cape Times* refers to the American and British press, which have acclaimed it to be the greatest screen achievement ever seen, but fails

⁷⁴ *Cape Times* 25.01.1930, 11.

⁷⁵ *Die Burger* 29.01.1930, 9.

⁷⁶ *Die Burger* 22.05.1928, 8.

⁷⁷ *Cape Times* 21.05.1928, 5.

⁷⁸ *Considering the art contained in this film, the urgent warning that it conveys, and the disregard of superficial effects by its German producers, where does it leave American films with their shallow “human interest”, their eternal “love appeal”, and their accumulation of mechanically produced scenarios?*⁷⁸

to give more than a very general description of the film's plot. The latter review is more like an advance publicity notice than a real film review. In addition to the first sophisticated critique, *Die Burger* published a second longer review to explain the story and the context in more detail.⁷⁹ It is further stated that this film can hardly be described and that seeing it is a must. From the overview given in Chapter One and the state of film criticism in those days, one is tempted to ascribe this much elaborated review to Hans Rompel.⁸⁰

Atlantic

The British-German co-production *Atlantic*, dealing with the sinking of the Titanic, received an enthusiastic review by the *Cape Times*, stating "by something more than patriotic approval, I was almost inclined to regard it as a masterpiece."⁸¹ The German director Ewald André Dupont created this bilingual sound film with a German and an English cast at the British Elstree studios, a fact that was emphasised by the *Cape Times*, which called it a "big British film, explaining the superiority of Elstree over Hollywood, Berlin and Paris." The plot, setting and the story are carefully described, pointing out that the superb acting depicted the characters as ordinary human beings. In contrast, Hollywood would probably have depicted frantic, screaming women and men quivering with animal cowardice. Instead, director Dupont conveyed the same impression by cleverly selecting personalities who combine a rare talent for realistic acting as well as beauty to perform in this impressive drama. *Atlantic* is constantly hailed for its excellence in all aspects and the review concludes by stating:

"Atlantic" is, indeed, a forceful film that commands interest, which is dramatic enough to be mentally exhausting. One leaves the theatre feeling stunned at a production beyond description."

Die Burger's review starts with judging *Atlantic* as brilliant and colossal ("skitterend, kolossaal"), explaining its context (disaster of the Titanic), naming the producing company (British-International Productions) and some members of the cast.⁸² The description of the plot is followed by describing the photography, including the very realistic setting, as superb ("onoortreflik"). The sound has only few shortcomings, the thrill in *Atlantic* does not stop until the film is over and the audience can certainly enjoy this "talking film" ("spreekprent"). *Die Burger's* critic voices his personal opinion that *Atlantic* will make history because it is one of the best films he has ever seen. The critic recommends readers to see this film and does not forget to tell the prospective

⁷⁹ *Die Burger* 23.05.1928, 8.

⁸⁰ Cf. Rompel 1929a, Rompel 1942a: 100 and Rompel 1937.

⁸¹ *Cape Times* 26.06.1930, 7.

⁸² *Die Burger* 01.07.1930, 10.

audience that “Die saal was gisteraand tot oorloopens toe vol en dit sal die hele week so gaan.”⁸³

The excellence of this film is further expressed in two longer reviews in *Die Burger* during the season of *Atlantic*.⁸⁴ Both reviews emphasise the artistic handling of the sound in *Atlantic* and its very realistic portrayal of happenings in the Titanic disaster. Surprisingly, the film’s German director and the German-British co-operation are not mentioned in the reviews of *Die Burger*. An additional short notice about *Atlantic* mentions the German-British co-operation and states that the German influence had some positive effects on the acting of the English cast. German actors generally play their roles in a more realistic and unexaggerated style, a style which was copied by the English actors to great effect in *Atlantic*.⁸⁵ Even a film critique in its scholarly sense, discussed in Chapter Two as the phase of appreciation of reviewing a film, was published about *Atlantic*.⁸⁶ In this article a very sophisticated reflection on the development of sound in film is given which culminates in praising the handling of sound in *Atlantic* as a model for talkies to come. Uncertainty still remained about whether the long review for *Metropolis* was written by Hans Rompel or not. For the later film critique of *Atlantic* one can clearly identify Hans Rompel behind the pseudonym “Silentium”:

Onder die skuilnaam “Silentium” behandel ’n bekende krietikus in ons land, wie se artikel oor rolprente in *Die Huisgenoot* baie die aandag getrek het, enkele punte in verband met die klankprente.⁸⁷

The Way of All Flesh

Die Burger published two longer story-centred reviews about *The Way of All Flesh*.⁸⁸ The role of main actor Emil Jannings is explained in detail, the movie is described as dramatic and deep. The second review is essentially a shortened version of the first, as some phrases seem to have been taken over and repeated in it.⁸⁹ This silent movie was highly recommended, foretelling that the audience would leave the cinemas deeply impressed after seeing this movie. The *Cape Times* published their usual standard-size reviews, which made clear from the beginning that it is Emil Jannings only who makes an impression; the plot is simple and the settings are good without being remarkable.⁹⁰

⁸³ *The auditorium was filled completely yesterday evening and this will continue the whole week.*

⁸⁴ *Die Burger* 03.07.1930, 8 and 09.07.1930, 8.

⁸⁵ *Die Atlantic-rolprent, Die Burger*, 02.07.1930, 8.

⁸⁶ “Silentium” (pseudonym) (1930): “Atlantic” as ’n Volmaakte Klankprent. *Die Burger* 06.12.1930, 8.

⁸⁷ *A well-known film critic in our country, whose articles on films in “Die Huisgenoot” have attracted a great deal of attention, writing under the pseudonym “Silentium”, deals with some aspects of sound film. Die Burger* 08.11.1930, 8.

⁸⁸ *Die Burger* 19.03.1930, 8 and 21.03.1930, 8.

⁸⁹ E.g. “Die slot is effens geforseer en word ’n bietjie te veel aan die verbeelding van die toeskouer oorgelaat...” (19.03. 1929) and “Die val kom onvermydelik, soos gesê is, maar kom miskien ’n klein bietjie te plotseling en verg, ’n bietjie te veel van die verbeeldingskrag van die toeskouer.” (21.03. 1929).

⁹⁰ *Cape Times* 15.03.1929, 11.

The *Cape Times* veils further criticism in stating that “critics have declared that the thing most impressive ... is its dramatic simplicity and the vividness of the central character.”⁹¹ This recommending statement gets repeated and the reviewer states that “The settings in this drama were of the simplest, yet the film as a work of art has been called great.”⁹²

A highly unusual event occurred after ordinary reviewing stopped with the last screening. The *Cape Times* published a vitriolic leading article about *The Way of All Flesh* a couple of days after its season.⁹³ The film is labelled as one of the most awful in the whole history of cinematography. The reporter claims not to understand at all why it became such a success and received so much attention from the public. The extended season came to an end with some screenings at the City Hall, including a performance by the Municipal Orchestra for the film’s music. The storyline of the film is briefly repeated, but the reviewer does not hide his opinion that “perhaps a third of its entire length is given over to such an orgy of depraved sentimentality as has rarely been seen in an American film.” For the first time the *Cape Times* critic leaves the superficial level of criticising cast and story to touch the deeper layers of cinematographic art. He says about a good actor’s capabilities:

The great artist can present terrible and pitiful things, not only without offence, but even to the profound tragic exaltation of the beholder, because they transmute the crude realism of the actual into the pure metal of the expressive. They take up the formless matter of emotion, mould it into organic shape, and articulate it so that it turns from passivity into activity of the conscious mind. In a word, they make it mean something. From “The Way of All Flesh” this process is entirely absent. What it presents is a mere copy of actuality, untreated in any way. It therefore has no meaning beyond the meaning of the actual which it copies.⁹⁴

If one recalls the criteria for film criticism of the moderate to conservative newspapers in the Weimar era, their aesthetics-based concept of timeless art and their avoidance of any contemporary tendencies, it is safe to say that some of these criteria are reflected in the comment about *The Way of All Flesh* cited above. Within the disapproval of presenting actuality lies the notion that precisely this topic is judged so badly because of its lack of artistry and its treatment of topical problems that “no one will care about in ten years” (Schulte-Sasse 1982: 51). The critic goes further and calls the treatment of this matter “the very method of pornography, from which it differs in respect of subject-matter alone.” In answering the question “What’s to be done?” the critic is in favour of educating and guiding the audience because he believes that they are able to distinguish clearly between good and bad films. Of course, the film companies measure popularity in terms of box-office success, but even they should be able to show “good” popular films rather than equally popular “bad” films. Unfortunately, he does not

⁹¹ *Cape Times* 16.03.1929, 11.

⁹² *Cape Times* 19.03.1929, 7.

⁹³ A Nasty Film, *Cape Times* 06.04.1929, 12.

⁹⁴ Cf. footnote above.

unveil his criteria for judging a film, giving only the example of *Vaudeville* as a good film in contrast to *The Way of All Flesh*. In the critic's opinion, Emil Jannings's performance in *Vaudeville* revealed him to be a distinguished actor, but his work in *The Way of All Flesh* is ruined by the triviality of the theme and the vulgarity of its treatment. The critic demands that artistic merit should not become indifferent for the sake of "box-office popularity".

The root trouble seems to be that bioscope managements, while they know pretty well what is likely to be popular, are extremely hazy as to what is bad, and even hazier still as to what is good.⁹⁵

These highly normative statements in favour of the critic's ability to judge on behalf of the public was promptly answered by the *Cape Times* readers. A letter to the editor reminds the critic that judging a film as good or bad is his very own business as long as he is not indicting the public of lacking his sense of taste.⁹⁶ Because his taste differs from that of the public, it does not necessarily mean that the public's taste is bad. The letter to the editor expresses serious doubts as to whether the critic's haughty taste is a safer criterion of good and bad than the vulgar taste of the multitude. The writer of this reply, James G. Taylor, puts the question,

Does he consider the people who enjoyed "The Way of All Flesh" – many of them readers of your journal - to be mainly morons and imbeciles that he should take it upon himself to instruct them in what they are to enjoy and what their souls are to revolt against? I submit, sir, that the public is capable of doing that for itself.⁹⁷

It is obvious that the attempt by the critic to educate and guide the public was not appreciated generally. To alleviate the situation and to back their critic, the *Cape Times* on the same day published another letter to the editor, supporting the critic's opinion, which was "fully endorsed by the great majority of those who witnessed this film".⁹⁸ The discussion ends with a third letter to the editor, giving some ideas about the differing perceptions expressed in the critique and its comments.⁹⁹ The first half of the film was passable in the writer's opinion, but

The second half was so inartistic and so sickly sentimental that one can only come to the conclusion that it was conceived for the edification of the "hicks" of the Middle West. I do not regard Cape Town audiences as morons as Mr. Taylor suggests, but I do think they are lacking in discrimination and take everything

⁹⁵ Cf. footnote above.

⁹⁶ A Nasty Film, *Cape Times* 09.04. 1929, 8.

⁹⁷ Cf. footnote above.

⁹⁸ The Opposite View, *Cape Times* 09.04. 1929, 8

⁹⁹ The Way of All Flesh, *Cape Times* 10.04.1929, 10.

given them without disapproval. They have been fed on the American film for so long that they have lost their critical faculty.¹⁰⁰

The debate around *The Way of All Flesh* is an interesting exception from the usual practice of reviewing film. The reviews published in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* during the screening do not differ fundamentally, but the aftermath makes a big difference. There is no further discussion of the questionable parts in *Die Burger*. Their critic was impressed by “die nietigheid van die mensdom en sy swakheid wanneer die versoeking kom”¹⁰¹, a topic which was described in the *Cape Times* as “depraved sentimentality”. Because of the very different nature of the reviews in *Die Burger* and the discussion in the *Cape Times*, a direct comparison does not seem appropriate.

All Quiet on the Western Front

The filming of Erich Maria Remarque’s novel *Im Westen nichts Neues* impressed Cape Town’s audience – the spectators remained in their seats after the performance and were not able to talk, the frightening thrill of this war film remained for a while.¹⁰² The visual conversion of the novel lacks the book’s glimpse into the future, but is nevertheless an outstanding production. The film is deemed a faithful reconstruction of the incidents in Remarque’s novel. The story is carefully explained in the *Cape Times* review, delivering the full horror of the book to the movie audience. Opposed to the vulgar sentimentality that, for instance, made the mother in the American film the irritating absurdity that she is, the role of the mother in *All Quiet on the Western Front* is characterised as finely played with only the deep pathos that is permissible and appropriate to the part. The story-centred review considers the film a magnificent attempt to illustrate the futility and the horror of war. *Die Burger* starts with a deep and personal review, written by a journalist with the initials F.R.¹⁰³ He knows that there are more vivid war dramas, but none reaches the psychological qualities of Remarque’s novel. The reviewer regards the challenge to depict a soul destroyed by war a very difficult task. The danger of overstressing violence and misery in a war film was carefully avoided in *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The simplicity of the film does not match the complexity of the book but the plot and its setting repeat the tragedy of war in a touching manner. The authentic acting in the film made it nearly impossible to distinguish between play and reality, containing a level of cruelty that is hard for a sensitive viewer to bear. The external battle against the enemy is matched by an internal battle that queries the reason for all the killing. The cinematography is of a high standard; the only complaint is that the film is too long. Nevertheless, in the reviewer’s opinion the book is much more impressive than the film.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. footnote above.

¹⁰¹ ...impressed by the human vanity and its weakness against temptations?. *Die Burger* 19.03.1929, 8.

¹⁰² *Cape Times* 11.11.1930, 7.

¹⁰³ *Die Burger* 11.11.1930, 9.

The second review in *Die Burger* is an accurate journalistic exercise. It criticises the film as a good American war film rather than an accurate filming of Remarque's novel.¹⁰⁴ He argues that the actors with their strong American accent are somewhat out of place when compared to the original characters in Remarque's book. The film is a remarkable sound film; the realistic battle scenes are brilliantly filmed and enriched with sound. A disappointment is the end of *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The depiction of the young men under the age of twenty, innocent and lacking any knowledge of war strategy, gunned down before they had even started their action, is missing. The sketching of the senseless, unnecessary, irrational waste of lives during the war is one of the highlights in Remarque's book. Unfortunately the film does not portray this to the same extent. The film is recommended as compulsory viewing and the review ends with a strong pacifist statement:

Dit is 'n rolprent wat almal behoort te sien, moet sien: jonk en oud – die kinders sodat hulle die wêreld vir die toekoms teen 'n herhaling van dieselfde afgrypslikheid kan vrywaar, en die ouers sodat hulle kan sien waarheen hulle krete van: "Veg vir die Vaderland!!" hul kinders voer.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ *Die Burger* 14.11.1930, 8.

¹⁰⁵ *This is a film which everybody should, must see: young and old –the children, so that they may save the world from a repetition of war's cruelties in the future; the parents, so that they can see where the insistence to "Fight for the fatherland!" might lead their children.*

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

The aim of this final chapter is to summarise the results from the quantitative survey in Chapter Four and the qualitative analysis in Chapter Five. The set of criteria from Chapter Two for reviewing film in general as well as in a historical perspective are compared with the tendencies found in the newspapers under discussion. From this data it should be possible to draw a picture of the character of film criticism in the *Cape Times* as well as in *Die Burger* for the period 1928 to 1930.

Market conditions after the introduction of sound in film

As can be seen from the cinema adverts in both newspapers, the African Theatres chain owned most of Cape Town's cinemas in the selected period and was clearly dominating the market in 1928. The entry of Kinemas (with their own exhibition venues) in late 1928 challenged this situation and the competition became stronger in 1929. Both chains screened significantly more films in their houses, and the independent cinemas (in our case Wolfram's Bioscope, for instance) had to compete with both chains. From 1929 to 1930 Kinemas opened increasingly more cinemas in Cape Town to gain patrons from African Theatres. In 1930 each chain had at least their first- and second-circuit cinemas, pressurising the independent cinemas to gain market shares at their expense. A first result of this competition was that *Die Burger* stopped reviewing films screened at Wolfram's Bioscope in early 1930. The increased number of new releases in 1929 and the will to inform the reader about those releases forced the newspapers to concentrate on topical films only. Whereas Wolfram's Bioscope sustained its own "circuit" until 1929, the situation worsened in 1930 and Wolfram's found itself at the bottom end of the African Theatres distribution chain (see Table 3.5). It seems that the independent cinemas lost the competition and had to enter into contracts with the dominant chains, functioning merely as extensions of their second or third circuit. The absence of new releases at Wolfram's could have resulted in *Die Burger* focusing strictly on the public's interest to get informed about new movies, and leaving aside films screened at Wolfram's Bioscope.

The advent of sound in film 1929/1930 also did not strengthen the position of the independent proprietors. Whereas Kinemas broke African Theatres' monopoly because of the public's interest in the new sound films for which Kinemas obtained the distribution rights, the independent cinemas lacked the necessary capital to follow the technical development. It was much easier for the major chains to equip their first-circuit houses with sound technology, while the already circulating silent movies were relegated to the lower-rated cinemas and continued to play a role in their income. The uncertainty about whether the talkies were to stay did not last long, but forced the

independent cinemas to wait while the major chains took the risk and invested in sound technology. In December 1930 (see Table 3.6) most of African Theatres' non-first-circuit cinemas were able to screen sound films, a similar development among the independent cinemas cannot be verified. An assumption is therefore that only old films or films of inferior quality ran at Wolfram's Bioscope, thus limiting the chances of getting reviewed by the *Die Burger's* journalists, who focused more on topical releases. This seems the only possible explanation why films screened at Wolfram's Bioscope were not reviewed by *Die Burger* from early 1930 onwards. On the other hand, the *Cape Times* continued with their reviews for Wolfram's Bioscope, giving the impression that *Die Burger* must have had more than one reason to stop their reviews for this independent cinema. We can summarise at this point that the advent of talkies had a dramatic impact especially on the independent cinemas, forcing them out of the competition among the first-circuit theatres. Only the Alhambra and the Astoria Kinema remained equal competitors in the fight for the audience's attention. That was one result of the development over the years 1928 to 1930 which can be called a part of the concentration process in the entertainment industry.

Consequences for the practice of reviewing film

The practice of reviewing film in the period under discussion also faced several changes. In 1928 both newspapers published about the same number of reviews (see Table 4.4). The main difference between the reviews in both newspapers was the allocation of the length ranges. The *Cape Times* preferred the second length range (15-29 lines), in *Die Burger* the first three length ranges were allocated equally. A closer look at the particular reviews shows that the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* had a fixed number of columns for their film reviews. The *Cape Times* had two different places for their reviews: on Mondays they gave an overview of the films to come, but during the week they reported about the previous night's shows. *Die Burger* dedicated the column "In die Skouburge" for their reviews. Both dailies distinguished between cinema, opera and other stage plays. *Die Burger* preferred Mondays and Fridays for their reviews, the *Cape Times* Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays. While comparing the placement of the reviews, one must notice that *Die Burger* had a fixed page for the reviews (usually page eight or ten), whereas the *Cape Times* was not that strict. Both newspapers apparently tried to review the films of those particular cinemas which placed adverts in the newspapers.

In 1929 the competition among the cinema chains reached its height. The number of films screened increased drastically in all three cinemas under discussion; the newspapers, however, found different ways to deal with the new situation. The *Cape Times* doubled the number of short reports (1-14 lines) and reduced the number of second length-range reviews (15-29 lines). Surprisingly, they increased the number of 30-59 line reviews. *Die Burger* dealt with the new situation in a contrary way. They decreased the number of reviews in relation to the massively increased number of films in 1929. In doing so *Die Burger* published more longer (30-59 lines) and elaborate (60-119) reviews. Both newspapers distributed their reviews fairly among the films screened at the Alhambra and Astoria Kinema alongside their strategy to deal with the increased

number of films 1929. A different treatment was given to those films screened at Wolfram's Bioscope. The number of films screened there increased in 1929, but the number of film reviews dropped. *Die Burger* halved their number reviews for Wolfram's Bioscope and stopped reviewing them altogether in early 1930. The *Cape Times* also reduced the number of reviews for Wolfram's, but not as dramatically as *Die Burger*. The allocation of reviews with the defined length ranges for Wolfram's Bioscope differed fundamentally compared with the Alhambra or Astoria Kinema. The *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* covered the films screened there more or less exclusively with film short reports or reviews of the second length range (15-29 lines). Another characteristic of reviews for Wolfram's Bioscope is that in the years 1928 to 1929, *Die Burger* published mostly previews instead of reviews (preview: published before the screening; review: published after the screening). The tendency to neglect the independent cinemas and instead to provide them with the lowest standard of film journalism (previews in the style of a short publicity report) is more obvious in *Die Burger* than it is in the *Cape Times*. The *Cape Times* also continued reviewing the films screened at Wolfram's.

After the independent cinemas lost the fight for audiences against the two major chains, the latter entered into a phase of consolidation, and a point of saturation seemed to have been reached. In 1930 the number of films decreased by ten percent and the number of film reviews also dropped. With the decreasing number of films, the *Cape Times* increased the number of third and fourth length range reviews, but their preferred review length remained the 15-29 line range. *Die Burger* maintained their practice of covering fewer new releases with more elaborate reviews (30-59 lines). Film short reports (1-14 lines) nearly disappeared in 1930 in *Die Burger*. The placement of the film reviews in the *Cape Times* experienced a change; a fixed column "Bioscope" was placed on the same page as the advertisements for the films, filling the space next to the columns "Entertainment" and "Music". The weekdays for the reviews became less fixed. They were often published on Saturday (page 11) and Tuesday (page 7), and additional irregular reviews during the week were also common. The *Cape Times* still tried to comment on all films screened, generally allocating the longest reviews to the first-circuit houses, while the films at second and third circuit houses received mostly film short reports. *Die Burger* continued with their relatively fixed placing of cinema advertisements (daily on page six) and reviews. They became slightly more flexible, but published the reviews mainly in the beginning of the week. The general tendency over the period 1928 to 1930 for the first-circuit houses was that the percentage of films reviewed increased and in 1930 the review coverage finally reached 100 percent. Over the defined period the *Cape Times* published approximately half of their comments on films as previews, the other half as reviews. *Die Burger* started similarly in 1928, then increased the number of reviews steadily, and ended up with a clear dominance of reviews in 1930.

One can conclude here that the *Cape Times* used a unique strategy to deal with the changing pattern of film supply in the period 1928 to 1930. More films were reviewed with more but shorter reviews. The aim was clearly to review as many films as possible. One could characterise this strategy as a "quantitative strategy". The growing volume of cinema advertisements in the *Cape Times* also resulted in more reviews, usually only of a

descriptive character. *Die Burger*, on the other hand, followed another tactic to handle the situation which can be characterised as a “qualitative strategy”. The response to the growing number of films was fewer but more elaborate reviews. The number of reviews dropped even as the number of films decreased in 1930. The tendency over the whole period was clearly to favour longer reviews over film short reports.

If one looks for possible reasons for the different strategies, the economic situation of both newspapers may suggest an answer. It was mentioned earlier that the commercially-orientated *Cape Times* served the needs of the well-established English-speaking South African from the Cape, making it the ideal medium for advertisements such as cinema adverts funded by African Theatres. The placement of those adverts for nearly all cinemas owned by African Theatres in Cape Town (urban as well as suburban) created a steady income for the *Cape Times*. Probably to protect this commercial liaison, the *Cape Times* covered the majority of African Theatre’s cinemas with reviews, often openly recommending these films. The danger of losing advertisement-related funding after publishing damaging reviews was something all newspapers feared. Cinema proprietors often used their influence in this way (Siemsen 1927: 145f). One could argue that this pattern may have limited the opportunity for fair criticism from the beginning. The decrease of film short reports as well as the increase of longer reviews in the *Cape Times* during the set period does not support this assumption. To avoid rushed judgements, the limitations of an empirical survey have been taken into consideration. These problems are explained later when the general character of film criticism in both newspapers is described.

It is very likely that *Die Burger* faced a similar situation and similar constraints. The non-existence of purely Afrikaans cinemas or films in Afrikaans had the result that *Die Burger* published the same advertisements on behalf of African Theatres, Kinemas or the independent cinemas as the *Cape Times* did. One difference was that not all cinemas owned by African Theatres advertised their programmes. The target group was of course the Afrikaans-speaking South African, e.g. openly expressed in adverts for shows at the Recreation cinema in Stellenbosch (owned by African Theatres).¹⁰⁶

The “qualitative strategy” of *Die Burger* could have been a result of economic constraints too. If one compares the space for cinema adverts in both newspapers one notices that the *Cape Times* allocated more space for their adverts and reviews than *Die Burger* did. There was also not such rigidity placing the adverts on a particular page like in *Die Burger*, the *Cape Times* seemed to be more flexible. A comparison between the number of pages in the single issues of both newspapers reveals one reason for this difference. The *Cape Times* published at least 16 pages per issue from 1928 to 1930, the Friday issue contained 20 pages, the Saturday issue 24 pages as well as a weekend supplement. On the other hand, *Die Burger* usually published ten to twelve pages per issue in the years 1928 to 1930.¹⁰⁷ Also, the layout of both newspapers differed. Whereas the layout of the *Cape Times* appeared more modern, flexible and enhanced

¹⁰⁶ *Die Burger* 10.06.1929, 6.

¹⁰⁷ The sample was randomly selected from the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* 1928-1930; third week of August.

with photographs, *Die Burger*'s layout looked old-fashioned, with only very few pictures and locked to the limited number of pages per issue.¹⁰⁸ The absence of pictures in *Die Burger* can be seen as an indicator that they did not have access to more advanced printing technology because of their rather poor financial backing (Ainslie 1966: 46). The *Cape Times*, on the other hand, were part of a commercially viable press that found the capital to expand and to introduce the new techniques of newspaper production being developed in Europe (Ainslie 1966: 41).

The limited space in *Die Burger* forced their journalists to handle the task of reviewing films differently. Instead of covering all advertised films with shorter previews or film short reports, *Die Burger* selected particular cinemas and published longer and elaborate reviews after the screening of films. Besides the limitations of every empirical survey (descriptive rather than evaluative) we can assume from the collected data that it is justifiable to call *Die Burger*'s strategy a "qualitative strategy" because they published more longer reviews than previews.

To summarise common features and differences in the reviews of both newspapers, the aim of the following section is to characterise the film criticism practised in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* to show the development of this particular form of criticism in the period under discussion. The identified criteria of judging film criticism in general (see Chapter Two) are included in this overview to verify or falsify the set of assumptions.

Characteristics of film criticism in the *Cape Times* for the years 1928 - 1930

The assumption made on the basis of the "Weimar Scheme" (Table 2.1) were that the *Cape Times* was a moderate to conservative newspaper, politically fairly liberal, commerce-orientated, serving the English-speaking Capetonian with information and entertainment, and probably providing functionalistic descriptions of the films screened.

The "quantitative strategy" of the *Cape Times* tried to review all films screened in the cinemas of the three identified groups of proprietors (African Theatres, Kinemas and the independent cinemas). The increase in the number of films was coupled with an increase in the number of reviews, resulting in more but shorter reviews. There was almost no selection mode to distinguish between films that were worth seeing and those that were not, the reviews usually did not contain opinions, and the obligation of advertising films was clearly expressed in the "quantitative strategy".

The film reviews themselves were placed close to the cinema adverts from 1929 onwards. There was a preference for previews (advance publicity) and film short reports in the beginning (1928-1929), but with fewer films to review (from 1930) slightly longer reviews were given preference. The tendency to maintain the review

¹⁰⁸ Only rarely did *Die Burger* publish entertainment-related articles on any other page than the entertainment pages, whereas the *Cape Times* was more flexible on occasion.

coverage for all cinemas that advertised in the *Cape Times* is indicated by this preference as well. It makes sense, even with the greater space available in the *Cape Times*, that the latter focused more on shorter reviews to inform the readership as well as to satisfy all advertisers. As one has seen in the analysis of selected average-sized film reviews, the tendency in the reviews was generally positive, and from an economic point of view the *Cape Times* supported throughout the decision “to consume an artistic event” as a commercial transaction. One can argue that journalists see external reality as a set of disparate and independent events, each of which is new and can therefore be reported as news (Gans 1980: 167). The result, as Tomaselli points out, is that

(F)ilm criticism is generally reported in a news framework where the dramatic is singled out, highlighted and made more important than the mundane social processes within which they repose and which may be considered as non-news (Tomaselli 1989: 99).

The information in those reviews did not touch on any issue other than the suitability of news judgements or the entertainment value of the film; the descriptions were always formal, functional and sometimes almost sterile. Considering the strong news orientation of both newspapers and taking the limitations of this descriptive survey (only touching upon ideological implications) into account, one could concur with Tomaselli (1989: 99):

News is pre-packaged ideology assuming a consensus about values and practices. The social order, and the national leadership maintaining that order, are overriding values. For the Afrikaans-language press, this means the institutionalization of the National Party (...); for the English press, the protection of the capitalist mode of production and the present class structure....

The longer and more elaborate reviews of specially selected films were included in this analysis to find answers to the above-mentioned questions. Again the commercial aspects seemed to play an important role as seen from the extensive short review coverage for *Rio Rita*. The service function of the film review was clearly dominant, the more elaborate ones served to attract and to inform the audience, the shorter reviews during the season simply to secure the public’s attention. The *Cape Times* sometimes included tendentious comments in the longer reviews; they did not devalue the film’s quality, but let the audience know that there is a distinction between “good” and “very good” films (e.g. films according to “box office approved formulas” vs. “the superiority of Elstree”). It is safe to say that comments like these formed part of what Thelma Gutsche called the “backdoor method” (Gutsche 1972: 384), putting neutral and strictly positive statements together to indicate weaknesses or dislikes. A visible change from the all-positive reviews did not take place in the *Cape Times* in the period 1928-1930. It is no surprise that a newspaper like the *Cape Times* had several film reviewers or that the task to review films was a rotating position.

The reviews for *The Way of All Flesh* (1929) and its consequences support this assumption. Whereas the reviews were neutral in their evaluation, in a feature article the

film was torn apart, questioning the public's sense of taste. This was one of the rare occasions where film criticism emerged in its own right in the *Cape Times*. The film short reports (attracting phase) and the reviews (judgement phase) in the *Cape Times* displayed the structure outlined by Haacke (see Chapter Two). The debate about *The Way of All Flesh* followed Haacke's pattern as well (phase of appreciation), even with its negative point of departure. The example of the reviews for this film demonstrate the possible stages of reviewing film perfectly (the three-stage categorisation and the three-phase scheme according to Haacke (see Chapter Two of this study)). The newspaper tried to maintain a neutral position in publishing the positive previews and reviews, the negative feature as well as the three letters to the editor, thereby supporting both sides and giving an explanation of the different opinions. The *Cape Times's* inherent status as an institution for film criticism was not questioned. The status quo was maintained by publishing the letter to the editors and blaming the oversupply of American movies for the public's decline in good taste. A debate like this was not seen in 1928; therefore one must notice a qualitative development in writing about film in the *Cape Times*. Unfortunately, as demonstrated with the consequence of this debate on *The Way of All Flesh*, the economic pressure group, namely the triumvirate of film distributor / cinema proprietor / publisher, usually won the fight (suppressing freedom of speech by economic measures, e.g. threatening with a withdrawal of adverts, etc.) against the critic (Rohde 1956: 100) and secured the continuance of all-positive reviews. Even on this very rare occasion of real film criticism, the *Cape Times* did not focus on the social or ideological implications depicted in the film, the plot, the US tendency towards kitsch-sentimentality or the lack of an artistic treatment of the whole story. The points of criticism were merely the formalistic criteria employed by the moderate to conservative press according to the "Weimar scheme". It was written about the film that it "has no meaning beyond the meaning of the actual which it copies"¹⁰⁹, expressing clearly the favour for the "universal", "human" or "individual" values in film as art. These criteria were considered to form only one aspect of film reviews in the moderate to conservative press in the Weimar Republic (Schulte-Sasse 1982: 55). The *Cape Times* demonstrated their criticism potential with a debate such as the one about *The Way of All Flesh*, but this was an exception; there were no similar critiques in the period under discussion where a similar depth was reached. As seen in this debate, the difference between the reviewer and the critic was the distance to the object (film) as a purchasable commodity. The economic pressure from the triumvirate film distributor / cinema proprietor / publisher limited the efforts of the reviewer and was answered by critiques in the style of the "backdoor" method or totally positive reviews.

The attempt to criticise a popular movie was also regarded as criticism of the public's taste; therefore the reactions from the public (the letters to the editor) were equally vitriolic and influenced the newspapers critiques to come. If strong criticism on films was perceived, as was the case in the letters to the editor, the publisher and the film reviewer were probably not tempted to continue with similar comments on other films. Especially in this case but also in general, the editor too may function as a critic, even

¹⁰⁹ A Nasty Film, *Cape Times* 06.04.1929, 12.

without commenting on the matter directly (Miles 1930: 380). The impression that criticism like that was not desired by the public stopped the journalists from further attempts. Another characteristic of film reviews in the *Cape Times* was the high level of references to critiques from Great Britain. A success or a controversy over a film in London was taken as a sign of quality; reports about new releases in London appeared regularly in the *Cape Times*.¹¹⁰

The equal number of previews/reviews in the *Cape Times* supports the assumed commercial orientation and the practice of “pseudo-reviews” invented by the publicity departments of the film distributors. The column “Film News from the Rand” in the *Cape Times* was not a preview, but another example of prefabricated film journalism. Sometimes signed as “From Our Correspondent”¹¹¹ or more or less a compilation of comments from other newspapers,¹¹² this special column reported on new films screened in Johannesburg to attract attention in Cape Town for the season to come. This can be seen as part of pooled journalistic and technical facilities: in order more effectively to compete, some morning newspapers decided eventually to co-operate by sharing news and feature material, correspondents abroad and certain technical services. The *Cape Times*, the *Rand Daily Mail* and the *Natal Mercury*, together with the *Sunday Times* first embarked on a programme of exchanging material and they were joined by the two main Eastern Province (Cape) papers, the *Eastern Province Herald* and the *Evening Post*, Port Elizabeth (Ainslie 1966: 45). This practice supports the assumption that the circuit in South Africa started on the Rand, where African Theatres and Kinemas had their headquarters.¹¹³

The identified concerns from the average reviews (“negative selection”: improbabilities of the plot, the change from silent to sound film and the annoying slang in US-American sound movies) were sometimes expressed in the more sophisticated reviews, the change from silent to sound film received the highest attention. The all-positive reviews in combination with the “quantitative strategy” prevented discussion on improbabilities of the plot; the criticism of American slang was not openly expressed as it was in the Afrikaans press. The pros and cons about sound in film were included in the reviews, but discussed in more detail outside the ordinary film reviews.¹¹⁴ The intensive debate about the “talkies” was orchestrated by the *Cape Times* with a public

¹¹⁰ E.g. Definite Advance in “Talkies”. *Cape Times* 11.05.1929, 11.

¹¹¹ E.g. *Cape Times* 13.08.1929, 7 or 26.09.1929, 7.

¹¹² E.g. *Cape Times* 18.09.1929, 7.

¹¹³ Tomaselli states that Cape Town was the entry port and first screening opportunity for many films, therefore the first Bioscope Advisory Committees were established there (Tomaselli 1983: 345). This situation may have changed in the late 1920s; otherwise a special column with “Film News from the Rand” in the *Cape Times* would not make much sense.

¹¹⁴ E.g. The Advent of the Talkie Film. Has it Come to Stay? Keenly Discussed in London, *Cape Times* 01.10.1928, 9; First Full “Talkie” in London. Hostile Criticism from the Press, *Cape Times* 27.10.1928, 13; Terror of the Talkies. Ugly Voices Which May Ruin Careers, *Cape Times* 10.01.1929, 7; Talkies: A new Art Form, *Cape Times* 06.03.1929, 9; The First Long “Talkie”. Shown Last Week at the Rand, *Cape Times* 09.07.1929, 7.

competition.¹¹⁵ The readership/spectators were asked about their views, asking for a “general comparison of the two vehicles of motion-picture entertainment”.¹¹⁶ It is interesting to note that the answers had to be addressed to “The Film Critic” of the *Cape Times*, who made the final decision together with the editor. It seems that in 1930 the function of reviewing film for the *Cape Times* was somehow institutionalized in “The Film Critic”. The commercial liaison between the *Cape Times* and African Theatres was not hidden. Entries to this competition had to be accompanied by half of an admission ticket to both the Alhambra and the Royal dated for a performance of *Blackmail* or *The Last Command* to “ensure that every entry shall be a considered opinion based on first-hand observation.”¹¹⁷

As can be seen so far, the *Cape Times* practised a very cinema proprietor-friendly kind of film criticism. The style of their reviews was similar to the ones which were identified according to the “Weimar Scheme” as characteristic for moderate to conservative newspapers. The general tendency was towards recommending or giving neutral comments on films, damaging reviews were unlikely, real criticism happened only occasionally and did not influence the style of further reviews. The “quantitative strategy” favoured shorter previews and reviews to cover all screened films. The strict functional orientation of the reviews supports the assumption that the *Cape Times* practised the particular style of film criticism which was typical for liberal or moderate to conservative newspapers. The economic pressure can be seen as the main factor for the undamaging and advertisement-like film reviews. The *Cape Times*’ film criticism adopted largely journalistic standards; an ideological or political undertone was completely absent.

Characteristics of film criticism in *Die Burger* for the years 1928 - 1930

One can again repeat the assumptions of the “Weimar Scheme” and classify *Die Burger* as closer to the politically non-centre (left-wing or right-wing) newspapers, supporting Afrikaner-nationalism, mainly interested in domestic affairs, supplying the “white” Afrikaans-speaking Capetonian with film criticism which included political tendencies, statements on the social context of the films and an underlying ideology (see Chapter Two).

Compared with the *Cape Times*, *Die Burger* followed a different route to deal with the changing pattern of film supply in the Cape from 1928 to 1930. In 1928 *Die Burger* published approximately the same number of film reviews as the *Cape Times*; both papers tried to cover all films screened with reviews. The reviews in *Die Burger* 1928

¹¹⁵ “The Cape Times is offering a first prize of 10 pounds, a second prize of 3 pounds and a third prize of 2 pounds, and, as consolation prizes, 25 double tickets available at either the Alhambra or the Royal for the best answer to the question.” *Cape Times* 01.03.1930, 11.

¹¹⁶ Silent Film or Talkie? Cinema Industry’s Vital Problem, *Cape Times* 26.02.1930, 9.

¹¹⁷ Cf. footnote above.

were equally allocated among the first three length ranges, with very few longer reviews were published (only seven percent). With the massive increase of films in 1929, *Die Burger* had to change their total-coverage strategy to what one can call a “qualitative strategy”. The total number of reviews increased, the number of film short reports was cut in half; two thirds of all reviews were of the second (15-29 lines) and the third (30-59) length range. Longer reviews (60-119 lines) were published more often as well. After the zenith of cinema competition was reached in 1929, the number of films decreased in 1930. Part of the “qualitative strategy” was to stop reviews for films screened at Wolfram’s Bioscope. As explained earlier, the limited space on *Die Burger’s* entertainment page was reserved for new releases and the circuit of the two major chains. The “qualitative strategy” in *Die Burger* resulted in films which were supposed to be older or of lower quality receiving film short report-styled previews, the lowest category of film journalism.

Die Burger placed their film reviews on a different page to their adverts. The entertainment page was not entirely reserved for “Vermaaklikhede” and the column “In Die Skouburge”. The page also contained short foreign news reports,¹¹⁸ general announcements and short comments on everyday life. The preference for reviews instead of previews increased steadily to a clear dominance of reviews in 1930 (about eighty percent). The general tendency of the reviews in *Die Burger* was that second and third length range (30-59 lines) reviews dominated the years 1928-1930. The “qualitative strategy” made perfect sense if one considers the limited space available as the most limiting economic factor. *Die Burger* avoided film short reports and focused strictly on topical releases. The average review contained a description of the story and genre, mentioned the cast and gave a judgement on the film’s quality. The majority of the reviews had, for the same reasons as reviews in the *Cape Times*, a positive, recommending character. The aim to inform the readership whether the film was worth seeing or not was emphasised more clearly than in the *Cape Times*. The “backdoor” method for criticising films was also applied by *Die Burger*. It seems that the economic pressure to publish undamaging reviews to ensure revenue from advertisements set the most powerful limit to film criticism for *Die Burger* as well.

One often practised method in *Die Burger* to express the dislike of a film was to write more about the newsreels, the supporting programme or the orchestra performance than about the content of the film itself. The “qualitative strategy” focused strictly on the journalistic approach towards film criticism, namely to give a judgement about a film and to guide the audience by applying and disseminating the reviewer’s knowledge (Haacke 1969: 239). Because *Die Burger* did not clearly distinguish between the distinctive phases of reporting about film (namely the attraction, judgement and appreciation phases, Haacke 1970: 290-295), the “qualitative strategy” required including the different phases in one review or critique. The positive or negative judgement about a film was determined by the predominance of one of the phases. Most reviews were fairly neutral in their judgement; the difference between good and mediocre films was expressed in the level of praise for the film. The three defined focus

¹¹⁸E.g.: The column “Van alle Kante” was managed by Frederik Rompel, Hans Rompel’s father.

points for the longer reviews in Chapter Four (improbabilities of the plot, the change from silent to sound film, American slang in US talkies) were more openly expressed in *Die Burger*. Using the “backdoor”-method as a disguise, the critics only questioned unrealistic stories and compared good and better talkies. An example of this is the wish in the review of *All Quiet on the Western Front* to depict the main actors more according to the book. That meant the “German soldiers” speaking in American slang destroyed the otherwise perfectly expressed realism of this war film. Besides mentioning an unrealistic plot or weak photography of a film, the complaints about the American slang in talkies remained only informal in the reviews analysed. The two other focus points fall under functionalist criteria to provide the prospective audience with information about the quality of a film. The included judgement is merely based on these facts. The annoyance with an American slang in sound films was constantly mentioned, even if the rest of the film was praised completely.

It is very likely that *Die Burger* had more than one critic to deal with the task of reviewing.¹¹⁹ It is hard to say if it was a rotating task, as Gutsche assumed, but there were different styles of reviews which could have been influenced by the individual journalist responsible. The less strong commercial liaison (as opposed to the *Cape Times* with strong commercial ties), did not prevent *Die Burger* from publishing neutral and advertisement-like reviews, but the self-imposed task to inform and guide the audience produced a broader variety of reviews or critiques. As an example of film criticism which was exercised in *Die Burger* but not in the *Cape Times*, the film *Broadway Scandals* (screened at the Alhambra) was taken apart by *Die Burger*'s critic:

“Broadway Scandals” is ’n tipiese inhoudlose Amerikaanse revue wat eenvoudig sonder enige moeite en poging van die kant van die regisseurs op die klankprent oorgebring is, ’n revue wat die Broadway-skouburgpubliek self sekerlik nie op die eerste sport van die toneelleer sal plaas nie.¹²⁰

The whole review (30-59 lines range) continued in a similar fashion. It even emphasised the higher quality of the supporting programme (newsreels, etc.). Reviews like these were rare but possible. As demonstrated here, there were other ways to deal with criticism than the “backdoor” method, the peg to hang on was clearly the very American conception of the screened film. Not only did the critic not recommend this film, he also openly rejected African Theatres. Reviews like the one for *Broadway Scandals* or *All Quiet at the Western Front* did not aim to show the entertainment value of the particular films; the focus was more on guiding and educating the audience. The critical comments on US films continued; Afrikaner critics like Hans Rompel observed the influence of these movies and came to the conclusion that:

¹¹⁹ E.g. it was Hans Rompel under the pseudonym “Silentium” who wrote an article about talkies in general. *Die Burger* 08.11.1930, 8

¹²⁰ “*Broadway Scandals*” is nothing but a typical contentless American revue, transformed into a talkie by the directors without much effort; a revue the Broadway audience would certainly not consider as being first class. *Die Burger* 12.08.1930, 10.

Ons, in Suid Afrika, is meer of min gebonde aan sekere Engels-Amerikaanse maatskappye en sien geen ander apparate en films hier nie, as dié wat hulle voorstaan. Gevolglik word ons oorstroom met Amerikaanssprekende en Engelssprekende films wat ons hele daaglikse lewe beïnvloed en allerlei uitheemse lewensopvattings propageer (Rompel 1942a: 114).¹²¹

The dominance of US movies and the questioning of their cultural influence (as part of the “taalstryd”) were the only direct reflection of ideological concerns in the reviews of the Afrikaans press.¹²² The lack of a debate like the one in the *Cape Times* about *The Way of All Flesh* does not necessarily mean that *Die Burger’s* criticism potential was exhausted by taking a film apart, as in the review for *Broadway Scandals*. While focusing strictly on the reviews for the screened films, discussions about films still to come were left aside. For example, the filming of *All Quiet on the Western Front* was accompanied by various reports in *Die Burger* prior to the first screening in Cape Town.¹²³ The theme of the film was picked up later in an article about the current political situation in Germany. The news report of demonstrations for and against screenings of this film was used to explain the opposing political tendencies in contemporary Germany.¹²⁴ The change from silent to sound film was one major topic in the era under discussion. While it was always included in reviews about talkies, a deeper discussion also took place outside the reviews.¹²⁵ The opportunities of promoting Afrikaner culture with the help of the talkie was outlined as well.¹²⁶

The institutionalisation of film criticism in *Die Burger* also changed over the years 1928 to 1930. Whereas in 1928 film reviews were anonymous, in 1929 two sophisticated reviews (for the German film *Soll und Haben*¹²⁷ and the US movie *Two Arabian Knights*¹²⁸) were signed with the initials “H.R.”; in 1930 one review for *All Quiet on the Western Front* was signed “F.R.” As we revealed earlier that “Silentium” was Hans Rompel’s pseudonym, one can assume that the initials “H.R.” stood for him as well.

¹²¹ *We in South Africa are more or less bound to certain Anglo-American companies and do not have any other apparatus or films at our disposal than what they advocate. The result is a flood of films in American and English which influence our daily life and propagate various foreign ideas of life.*

¹²² Thelma Gutsche mentioned more moderately that “sufficient slang remained to propagate it [i.e. American slang, ME] among local audiences and to accelerate the incorporation of “Americanisms” in both English and Afrikaans, a process completed by the “talkies” (Gutsche 1972: 177).

¹²³ E.g. Nuwe Sukses vir die rolprent. Erich Remarque se Boek op die Doek Gewerp. *Die Burger* 11.06.1930, 6; ’n Merkwaardige Nuwe Rolprent. “Aan die Westelike Front alles still.” *Die Burger* 12.07.1930, 9; “Alles Stil.” *Die Burger* 15.12.1930, 6.

¹²⁴ “Alles Stil.” *Die Burger* 15.12.1930, 6.

¹²⁵ E.g.: Klankfilms vir Suid Afrika. Wat is Hul Toekoms? *Die Burger*, 14.05.1929, 8.

¹²⁶ ’n Afrikaanse Klankprent, *Die Burger* 28.06.1930, 8.

¹²⁷ *Soll und Haben*, *Die Burger* 05.09.1929, 9.

¹²⁸ *Two Arabian Knights*, *Die Burger* 06.09.1929, 9.

Some other very elaborate but anonymous articles about talkies also appeared in 1929.¹²⁹ A comparison with Rompel's books (Rompel 1942a; 1942b) and the facts explained in the articles lead to the assumption that it must have been Rompel who wrote these insights. Similar to the debate about *The Way of All Flesh* in the *Cape Times*, *Die Burger* had both kinds of critics, the reviewer and the critic (Basson 1982: 202 and Titchener 1998: 1ff). Whether they were the same person or not does not really matter, the opportunity to deliver different types of film reviews (film short reports, film reviews and film critiques) was given. One can conclude that there was a visible development in film criticism in *Die Burger*, which gained a higher level of quality promoted by the discussion about the arrival of sound films as well as by the "taalstryd" and animosities towards American slang in talkies (Gutsche 1972: 177 and 223).

The question whether the general state of film criticism was the subject of systematic discussion in newspapers and opinion journals at the time is difficult to answer. Besides occasional comments and letters to the editor, general reflections on the position of the critic were rare. The statements that were found (with the exception of Rompel 1933) were made either in a later period¹³⁰ (cf. Dommissie 1945), or were targeting a rather limited focus group (cf. Miles 1930).

Summary and prospect

The point of departure of this study was the opinion that the very few studies about early South African film history need to be supplemented by other fundamental studies to promote research in this so far poorly developed field. The literature review revealed that most studies about early South African film history rely entirely on the works of Thelma Gutsche (cf. Gutsche 1972). It was also discovered that another equally valuable source, the works of the Afrikaner critic Hans Rompel (cf. Rompel 1942a, 1942b), was generally neglected or forgotten. The lack of available sources led to the assumption that an investigation into the only existing source, the daily newspapers, is the best way to obtain necessary core data. The focus was narrowed by selecting the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger* as competing media in one particular area in a set period (1928-1930).

The first step was to set up a database which holds the titles of the screened films and additional information like season, published reviews, etc. The second step was to find comparable criteria to characterise the style of film criticism and its development. For this reason the function and character of film criticism in general and in the period under discussion were described by using the press in the Weimar Republic as a comparable example. The characteristics of film criticism there were applied to the

¹²⁹ E.g.: As die Spreekprent na Kaapstad Kom. Stil Rolprent in Ere Gehou, *Die Burger* 03.09.1929; Ontwikkeling van die Spreekrolprentbedryf, *Die Burger* 30.11.1929, 10; Die Spreekprent Wys 'n Nuwe, Goeie Rigting aan, *Die Burger* 07.12.1929, 10.

¹³⁰ Cf. Cub Critics. *Cape Times* 24.04.1931, 10 and "General Crack" of Film and Book. *Cape Times* 29.04.1931, 7.

situation in South Africa to set up certain assumptions about the possible character of film criticism in South Africa in the period 1928 to 1930.

To focus on the development of film criticism as a process, the changes over the set period were of a special interest. To find useful data, the collected reviews were used in an empirical survey to establish the quantitative changes in the period under discussion. The main criterion was the number of lines of every review. The qualitative characteristics of the different types of film reviews as postulated by Haacke and others (film short report, film review, film critique; Haacke 1969: 244 and Rohde 1956: 96-97) were assigned to selected length ranges to combine quantitative and qualitative criteria. To select comparable data, the preferred review length for both newspapers, the selected cinemas and the particular years were identified. From these groups, a list of films which received average-sized reviews from both newspapers was compiled. These films and their reviews formed part of the qualitative analysis; the six best comparable films were selected and a content analysis was done. To get a broader basis for the set of assumptions, the combination of two criteria (over average season of the film and over average size of the review) was introduced to achieve a second list with popular films which received more elaborate reviews. These reviews were analysed according to the findings from the average-sized reviews.

The outcomes of the combined descriptive and analytical survey were the following. The *Cape Times* followed a “quantitative strategy” for the film reviews, trying to cover all films screened with reviews and generally tended to prefer shorter reviews of a descriptive character. *Die Burger* followed a “qualitative strategy”, reviewing only selected films and publishing more elaborate reviews revealing a slightly higher degree of critical analysis. Both newspapers focused strongly on functionalistic criteria to judge films; the change from silent to sound film and the language question were the only occurrences of criticism containing an ideological undertone. *Die Burger* as Afrikaans-speaking newspaper was concerned with the latter problem more so than the *Cape Times*.

The limits of this exploratory investigation were determined by the empirical survey as the basis for this study. The focus on the reviews only had to exclude contextual writings about related topics in both newspapers. A particular tendency in the reviews of both newspapers was detectable but rarely articulated (*Cape Times*: formal and advertising reviews; *Die Burger*: formal but more critical, ideological undertones in connection with the “taalstryd”). The assumptions from the highly selective analysis have been verified (*Cape Times*: commerce orientated, formal reviews, no ideological judgements; *Die Burger*: politics orientated, more critical reviews, few ideological undertones) but have to be investigated in greater detail in further studies to reach conclusive judgements about film reception and cinema culture in South Africa in the 1920s and 1930s.

Film criticism in Cape Town’s press underwent a visible development in the period under discussion. The various aspects of reviewing film as a journalistic task were incorporated; an intellectual discussion about film, its function, effects and implications

did not directly take place in the reviews, but additional debates (e.g. the one about *The Way of All Flesh*) were generated from time to time.

The compiled data for the rather short period give an impression of the amount work necessary for the study undertaken by Thelma Gutsche, covering the much longer period of half a century (1895-1940). The systematic approach of the present study has the advantage of accessing the used data (film reviews in the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger*) in a way that secures the option to trace back the particular result to its source of origin. The combined methods of the empirical survey and the descriptive content analysis provide the opportunity to start further qualitative studies from an elaborated point of departure. The strictly descriptive treatment of the matter has the aim to save future research from depending on already biased information from rather normative interpretations. *Die Burger's* reviews, with their "qualitative strategy" in writing on film, proves that the Afrikaans press during 1928 to 1930 is as good a source for early South African film history as their English counterparts.

As mentioned right in the beginning, Ntongela Masilela's wish to re-read or "deconstruct" Gutsche's study was one starting point of this study. The high value of newspapers as source for research about South African cultural history (to which film history certainly belongs) was again impressively confirmed. From the listed results, tendencies, assumptions and speculations of this study, South African film scholars should be able to follow Jacqueline Maingard's call for assessing film studies in South Africa with an increasing number of publications and research projects (Maingard 1997: 190-191). The public discussion about the film's future after the change from silent to sound film, the emerging debate about the coming new censorship law, the competition between African Theatres and Kinemas, the status of cinema in the Afrikaner-communities, the "taalstryd op die silwerdoek"¹³¹, the role of Hans Rompel for writing South African film history and his plans for an Afrikaans film industry in the future – all these themes can use material in this study for more detailed investigation. The attempt to demonstrate that early South African film history is worth further investigations and still can produce interesting results beyond Gutsche's studies needs more verifications than this study. The audience's reactions, the public's likes and dislikes remain the most difficult part to investigate. The questions as to whether and how film and cinema had an impact on modern mass culture and on the shaping of modernity in South Africa need be addressed in further studies dealing with film history from various perspectives (e.g. economic, social, ideological, technical, etc.).

This study on *The Development of Film Criticism in Cape Town 1928 - 1930* can be seen as a starting point to explore the emerging questions. To remove any doubts about this challenge, the last hopefully irrefutable words belong to Thelma Gutsche:

In South Africa, where the entire population, regardless of colour, race and creed, is avid for cultural influence, the cinema has a far more powerful effect than elsewhere (Gutsche 1941: 15).

¹³¹ "the language struggle on the screen"

To look for the reasons why this should apply more to South Africa than elsewhere could be the task of future research concerning early South African film history.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I Films with an above-average run (>5 days); starting with the longest

Title	Year	Run (days)
<i>Rio Rita</i>	1930	45
<i>Q Ships</i>	1929	35
<i>High Treason</i>	1929	15
<i>Movietone Follies</i>	1930	14
<i>Bulldog Drummond</i>	1930	13
<i>Wings</i>	1929	12
<i>King of Jazz</i>	1930	12
<i>In old Arizona</i>	1929	12
<i>Flight</i>	1930	12
<i>Woman to Woman</i>	1930	12
<i>The Singing Fool</i>	1929	12
<i>The Great Gabbo</i>	1930	12
<i>On with the Show</i>	1930	12
<i>My Man</i>	1929	12
<i>The Vagabond King</i>	1930	12
<i>Atlantic</i>	1930	12
<i>The Trespasser</i>	1930	12
<i>The Delightful Rogue</i>	1930	12
<i>The Love of Robert Burns</i>	1930	12
<i>Blackmail</i>	1930	12
<i>The Cuckoos</i>	1930	12
<i>Three Live Ghosts</i>	1930	12
<i>Syncopation</i>	1929	12
<i>Splinters</i>	1930	12
<i>The Donovan Affair</i>	1930	11
<i>Beau Geste</i>	1928	11
<i>The Way of All Flesh</i>	1929	10

Title	Year	Run (days)
<i>Shiraz</i>	1929	10
<i>Metropolis</i>	1928	9
<i>The Circus, Stella Polaris</i>	1929	9
<i>Girl of the Port</i>	1930	9
<i>The Triumph of Scarlett Pimpernel</i>	1929	9
<i>What a Man</i>	1930	9
<i>The Jazz Singer</i>	1929	9
<i>Puttin' on the Ritz</i>	1930	8
<i>All Quiet at the Western Front</i>	1930	8
<i>Seventh Heaven</i>	1929	8
<i>The Water Rat</i>	1929	7
<i>Nr. 17</i>	1929	7
<i>The Spy</i>	1929	6
<i>Black Waters</i>	1930	6

Appendix II List of films screened in Cape Town 1928 to 1930

This list is an extract of the database used for the empirical survey. The films screened at the first-circuit houses (Alhambra, Astoria Kinema and Wolfram's Bioscope [1928-1929 only]) and their run is compiled.

1928, Alhambra

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>Roses of Picardy</i>	1928/01/03	1928/01/07	4
<i>The Love of Sunya</i>	1928/01/09	1928/01/14	5
<i>The Cobens and Kellys</i>	1928/01/16	1928/01/21	5
<i>The Missing Link</i>	1928/01/23	1928/01/28	5
<i>He Who Gets Slapped</i>	1928/01/30	1928/02/04	5
<i>The Torrent</i>	1928/02/06	1928/02/11	5
<i>The Eagle</i>	1928/02/13	1928/02/18	5
<i>Nell Gwyn</i>	1928/02/20	1928/02/25	5
<i>The Eagle of the Sea</i>	1928/02/27	1928/03/03	5
<i>Michail Strogoff</i>	1928/03/05	1928/03/10	5
<i>Behind the Front</i>	1928/03/12	1928/03/17	5

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Greater Glory</i>	1928/03/19	1928/03/24	5
<i>Faust</i>	1928/03/26	1928/03/31	5
<i>Fine Manners</i>	1928/04/02	1928/04/07	5
<i>The Ring</i>	1928/04/09	1928/04/14	5
<i>The Battle of Coronel and Falkland Islands</i>	1928/04/16	1928/04/21	5
<i>The Country Doctor</i>	1928/04/23	1928/04/28	5
<i>Girl Shy; The Gorilla Hunt</i>	1928/04/30	1928/05/05	5
<i>Blonde or Brunette?</i>	1928/05/07	1928/05/10	3
<i>Her Night of Romance</i>	1928/05/11	1928/05/12	1
<i>The Black Bird</i>	1928/05/14	1928/05/19	5
<i>Metropolis</i>	1928/05/21	1928/05/30	9
<i>Kiki</i>	1928/05/31	1928/06/02	2
<i>Marriage</i>	1928/06/04	1928/06/06	2
<i>Poppies of Flandres</i>	1928/06/07	1928/06/09	2
<i>Don Juan</i>	1928/06/11	1928/06/16	5
<i>We're in the Navy Now</i>	1928/06/18	1928/06/23	5
<i>The Winning of Barbara Worth</i>	1928/06/25	1928/06/30	5
<i>The Barrier</i>	1928/07/02	1928/07/07	5
<i>Children of Divorce</i>	1928/07/09	1928/07/14	5
<i>Chang</i>	1928/07/16	1928/07/21	5
<i>The Temptress</i>	1928/07/23	1928/07/28	5
<i>Midnight Lovers</i>	1928/07/30	1928/08/04	5
<i>Sparrows</i>	1928/08/02	1928/08/04	2
<i>Prince of Adventurers</i>	1928/08/06	1928/08/11	5
<i>The Magician</i>	1928/08/13	1928/08/18	5
<i>The Trump Call; The Rough Riders</i>	1928/08/20	1928/08/25	5
<i>Barbed Wire</i>	1928/08/27	1928/09/01	5
<i>Beau Geste</i>	1928/09/03	1928/09/14	11
<i>Sparkling Youth</i>	1928/09/15	1928/09/15	1
<i>When a Man Loves</i>	1928/09/17	1928/09/22	5
<i>The Dove</i>	1928/09/24	1928/09/29	5
<i>Bardelys the Magnificent</i>	1928/10/01	1928/10/06	5
<i>Old San Francisco</i>	1928/10/08	1928/10/13	5

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Volga Boatman</i>	1928/10/15	1928/10/20	5
<i>The Road to Mandalay</i>	1928/10/22	1928/10/27	5
<i>Sons of the Sea</i>	1928/10/29	1928/11/03	5
<i>Underworld</i>	1928/11/05	1928/11/10	5
<i>Hotel Imperial</i>	1928/11/12	1928/11/17	5
<i>Prince of Tempters</i>	1928/11/19	1928/11/24	5
<i>The Arab</i>	1928/11/26	1928/11/29	3
<i>The Woman on Trial</i>	1928/11/30	1928/12/01	1
<i>Sorrows of Satan</i>	1928/12/03	1928/12/08	5
<i>The Cobens and the Kellys in Paris</i>	1928/12/10	1928/12/15	5
<i>The Show</i>	1928/12/17	1928/12/21	4
<i>The Gaucho</i>	1928/12/24	1928/12/29	5
<i>The Last Waltz</i>	1928/12/31	1929/01/05	5

1928, Wolfram's Bioscope

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>Rainbow Raily</i>	1928/01/02	1928/01/04	2
<i>The Country Beyond</i>	1928/01/03	1928/01/04	1
<i>Closed Gates</i>	1928/01/05	1928/01/07	2
<i>Hoodoo Ranch</i>	1928/01/09	1928/01/11	2
<i>What Happened to Father</i>	1928/01/12	1928/01/14	2
<i>The Circle</i>	1928/01/16	1928/01/18	2
<i>Man of the Forrest</i>	1928/01/19	1928/01/21	2
<i>Play Safe</i>	1928/01/23	1928/01/25	2
<i>His Secretary</i>	1928/01/26	1928/01/28	2
<i>Two Girls Wanted</i>	1928/01/30	1928/01/31	1
<i>Set Free</i>	1928/01/30	1928/02/01	2
<i>The Flying Horseman</i>	1928/02/06	1928/02/08	2
<i>Redheads Preferred</i>	1928/02/09	1928/02/11	2
<i>Blazing Days</i>	1928/02/13	1928/02/15	2
<i>The Lone Wolf Returns</i>	1928/02/16	1928/02/18	2
<i>The Arizona Streak</i>	1928/02/20	1928/02/22	2
<i>The Wreck</i>	1928/02/23	1928/02/25	2

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Great Love</i>	1928/02/27	1928/02/29	2
<i>Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl</i>	1928/03/01	1928/03/03	2
<i>The Boob</i>	1928/03/05	1928/03/07	2
<i>The City</i>	1928/03/08	1928/03/10	2
<i>Wedding Bills</i>	1928/03/12	1928/03/14	2
<i>My Own Pal</i>	1928/03/15	1928/03/17	2
<i>Paradise for Two</i>	1928/03/19	1928/03/21	2
<i>The Phantom Bullet</i>	1928/03/22	1928/03/24	2
<i>The Exquisite Sinner</i>	1928/03/26	1928/03/28	2
<i>Don Mike</i>	1928/03/29	1928/03/31	2
<i>Wild Justice</i>	1928/04/02	1928/04/04	2
<i>Fate gave me 20 Cents</i>	1928/04/05	1928/04/07	2
<i>Going Crooked</i>	1928/04/09	1928/04/11	2
<i>The Mysterious Rider</i>	1928/04/12	1928/04/14	2
<i>Special Delivery</i>	1928/04/16	1928/04/18	2
<i>Grinning Guns</i>	1928/04/19	1928/04/21	2
<i>Too Many Crooks</i>	1928/04/23	1928/04/25	2
<i>Tony Runs Wild</i>	1928/04/26	1928/04/28	2
<i>30 Below Zero</i>	1928/04/30	1928/05/02	2
<i>The Ladybird</i>	1928/05/03	1928/05/05	2
<i>A Reno Divorce</i>	1928/05/07	1928/05/09	2
<i>Silver Comes Through</i>	1928/05/10	1928/05/12	2
<i>Stage Madness</i>	1928/05/14	1928/05/16	2
<i>Fangs of Justice</i>	1928/05/17	1928/05/19	2
<i>A Kiss in a Taxi</i>	1928/05/21	1928/05/23	2
<i>Sailor Izzy Murphy</i>	1928/05/24	1928/05/26	2
<i>The Broncho Buster</i>	1928/05/28	1928/05/30	2
<i>Under Western Skies</i>	1928/05/31	1928/06/02	2
<i>The Telephone Girl</i>	1928/06/04	1928/06/06	2
<i>The Snarl of Hate</i>	1928/06/07	1928/06/09	2
<i>The Sailor's Sweetheart</i>	1928/06/11	1928/06/13	2
<i>The War Horse</i>	1928/06/14	1928/06/16	2
<i>Paris</i>	1928/06/18	1928/06/20	2

FILM CRITICISM IN CAPE TOWN 1928-1930

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Man in the Saddle</i>	1928/06/21	1928/06/23	2
<i>Hard Fists</i>	1928/06/25	1928/06/27	2
<i>Casey the Bat</i>	1928/06/28	1928/06/30	2
<i>The Transcontinental Limited</i>	1928/07/02	1928/07/04	2
<i>A Regular Scout</i>	1928/07/05	1928/07/07	2
<i>The Heart of Salomé</i>	1928/07/09	1928/07/11	2
<i>The Western Rover</i>	1928/07/12	1928/07/14	2
<i>Drums of the Desert</i>	1928/07/16	1928/07/18	2
<i>Where Trails Begin</i>	1928/07/19	1928/07/21	2
<i>The Fighting Failure</i>	1928/07/23	1928/07/25	2
<i>Arizona Bound</i>	1928/07/26	1928/07/28	2
<i>The Fighting Gob</i>	1928/07/30	1928/08/01	2
<i>Wolves of the Underworld</i>	1928/08/02	1928/08/04	2
<i>Savage Passions</i>	1928/08/06	1928/08/08	2
<i>The Test of Donald Norton</i>	1928/08/09	1928/08/11	2
<i>Desert Valley</i>	1928/08/13	1928/08/15	2
<i>A Dog of the Regiment</i>	1928/08/16	1928/08/18	2
<i>Say it with Diamonds</i>	1928/08/20	1928/08/22	2
<i>Arizona Nights</i>	1928/08/23	1928/08/25	2
<i>The Warning Signal</i>	1928/08/27	1928/08/29	2
<i>The Great K & K Train Robbery</i>	1928/08/30	1928/09/01	2
<i>The Masked Angel</i>	1928/09/03	1928/09/05	2
<i>Winning the Futurity</i>	1928/09/06	1928/09/08	2
<i>The Last Outlaw</i>	1928/09/10	1928/09/12	2
<i>Blue Blood</i>	1928/09/13	1928/09/15	2
<i>Rubber Heels</i>	1928/09/17	1928/09/19	2
<i>Blarney</i>	1928/09/20	1928/09/22	2
<i>Burning Gold</i>	1928/09/24	1928/09/26	2
<i>The Return of Boston Blackie</i>	1928/09/27	1928/09/29	2
<i>Husband for Rent</i>	1928/10/01	1928/10/03	2
<i>The Texas Streak</i>	1928/10/04	1928/10/06	2
<i>Whispering Sage</i>	1928/10/08	1928/10/10	2
<i>Driven from Home</i>	1928/10/11	1928/10/13	2

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Temptations of a Shop Girl</i>	1928/10/15	1928/10/17	2
<i>The Canyon of Light</i>	1928/10/18	1928/10/20	2
<i>Hazardous Valleys</i>	1928/10/22	1928/10/24	2
<i>Wild Geese</i>	1928/10/25	1928/10/27	2
<i>Were All Gamblers</i>	1928/10/29	1928/10/31	2
<i>The Runaway Express</i>	1928/11/01	1928/11/03	2
<i>A Streak of Luck</i>	1928/11/05	1928/11/07	2
<i>Senor Daredevil</i>	1928/11/08	1928/11/10	2
<i>The Devil Horse</i>	1928/11/12	1928/11/13	1
<i>Tip Toes</i>	1928/11/14	1928/11/15	1
<i>The Buckaroo Kid</i>	1928/11/16	1928/11/17	1
<i>Tangled Herds</i>	1928/11/19	1928/11/20	1
<i>On Ze Boulevard</i>	1928/11/21	1928/11/22	1
<i>Stark Love</i>	1928/11/23	1928/11/24	1
<i>The Cross Breed</i>	1928/11/26	1928/11/28	2
<i>The Crimson City</i>	1928/11/29	1928/12/01	2
<i>3 Miles Up</i>	1928/12/03	1928/12/04	1
<i>Life of an Actress</i>	1928/12/05	1928/12/05	1
<i>The Broncho Twister</i>	1928/12/07	1928/12/08	1
<i>Shootin' Irons</i>	1928/12/11	1928/12/11	1
<i>The Little Snob</i>	1928/12/12	1928/12/13	1
<i>American Pluck</i>	1928/12/14	1928/12/15	1
<i>Good as Gold</i>	1928/12/17	1928/12/19	2
<i>War Paint</i>	1928/12/20	1928/12/22	2
<i>The Devil's Cage</i>	1928/12/24	1928/12/25	1
<i>Fast Fighting</i>	1928/12/27	1928/12/27	1
<i>The Prince of Broadway</i>	1928/12/28	1928/12/29	1
<i>The Drifting Kid</i>	1928/12/31	1929/01/01	1

1928, Astoria Kinema

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Rat</i>	1928/10/22	1928/10/24	2
<i>The Further Adventures of the Flag Lieutenant</i>	1928/10/25	1928/10/28	3
<i>The Blue Danube</i>	1928/10/29	1928/11/03	5
<i>The Constant Nymph</i>	1928/11/05	1928/11/07	2
<i>Breed of the Sea</i>	1928/11/08	1928/11/10	2
<i>Clancy's Kosher Wedding</i>	1928/11/12	1928/11/17	5
<i>Love's Crucifixion</i>	1928/11/19	1928/11/24	5
<i>The Ghost Train</i>	1928/11/26	1928/12/01	5
<i>Magic Garden</i>	1928/12/03	1928/12/05	2
<i>Flaming Waters</i>	1928/12/06	1928/12/09	3
<i>Carry On</i>	1928/12/10	1928/12/13	3
<i>Moulders of Men AK</i>	1928/12/14	1928/12/15	1
<i>King of the Turf</i>	1928/12/17	1928/12/19	2
<i>The Arcadians</i>	1928/12/20	1928/12/22	2
<i>Somehow Good</i>	1928/12/24	1928/12/25	1
<i>The Bohemian Girl</i>	1928/12/27	1928/12/29	2
<i>Easy Virtue</i>	1928/12/31	1929/01/01	1

1929, Alhambra

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>Les Miserables</i>	1929/01/07	1929/01/12	5
<i>The Farmers Wife</i>	1929/01/10	1929/01/11	1
<i>A Gentleman of Paris</i>	1929/01/14	1929/01/16	2
<i>Venus of Venice</i>	1929/01/17	1929/01/19	2
<i>Hula</i>	1929/01/21	1929/01/26	5
<i>The Melody Master</i>	1929/01/21	1929/01/26	5
<i>The Jazz Singer</i>	1929/01/28	1929/02/06	9
<i>Camille</i>	1929/02/07	1929/02/09	2
<i>Twelve Miles Out</i>	1929/02/11	1929/02/16	5
<i>Resurrection</i>	1929/02/18	1929/02/23	5
<i>Oh Baby, Under Arctic Skies</i>	1929/02/25	1929/03/02	5

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>A Little Bit of Fluff</i>	1929/03/04	1929/03/09	5
<i>Butterflies in the Rain</i>	1929/03/11	1929/03/16	5
<i>The Way of All Flesh</i>	1929/03/18	1929/03/28	10
<i>The Ringer</i>	1929/03/28	1929/03/30	2
<i>The Night of Love</i>	1929/04/01	1929/04/06	5
<i>Serenade</i>	1929/04/08	1929/04/13	5
<i>Pleasure before Business</i>	1929/04/08	1929/04/13	5
<i>Q Ships</i>	1929/04/15	1929/05/20	35
<i>Captain Salvation</i>	1929/04/22	1929/04/27	5
<i>Three Hours</i>	1929/04/29	1929/05/04	5
<i>Mr. WU</i>	1929/05/06	1929/05/11	5
<i>Wife Savers</i>	1929/05/13	1929/05/18	5
<i>Easy Pickings</i>	1929/05/13	1929/05/18	5
<i>The Circus, Stella Polaris</i>	1929/05/20	1929/05/29	9
<i>The Fire Brigade</i>	1929/05/30	1929/06/01	2
<i>The Merry Widow</i>	1929/06/03	1929/06/08	5
<i>Manon Lescaut</i>	1929/06/10	1929/06/12	2
<i>The Three Sinners</i>	1929/06/13	1929/06/15	2
<i>The Kid Brother</i>	1929/06/17	1929/06/22	5
<i>The Forbidden Woman</i>	1929/06/24	1929/06/29	5
<i>Seventh Heaven</i>	1929/07/01	1929/07/09	8
<i>Name the Woman, The General</i>	1929/07/10	1929/07/13	3
<i>Beau Sabreur</i>	1929/07/15	1929/07/18	3
<i>Volga, Volga</i>	1929/07/22	1929/07/27	5
<i>The Certain Thin</i>	1929/07/26	1929/07/27	1
<i>Red Hair</i>	1929/07/29	1929/08/03	5
<i>Sorrell and Son</i>	1929/08/05	1929/08/10	5
<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>	1929/08/12	1929/08/17	5
<i>Tempest</i>	1929/08/19	1929/08/24	5
<i>Piccadilly</i>	1929/08/26	1929/08/31	5
<i>Sunrise</i>	1929/09/02	1929/09/07	5
<i>Two Arabian Knights</i>	1929/09/09	1929/09/14	5
<i>Simba</i>	1929/09/16	1929/09/21	5

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Patent Leather Kid</i>	1929/09/23	1929/09/28	5
<i>Sadie Thomson</i>	1929/09/30	1929/10/04	4
<i>Submarine</i>	1929/10/07	1929/10/12	5
<i>La Boheme</i>	1929/10/14	1929/10/19	5
<i>The Unknown</i>	1929/10/21	1929/10/26	5
<i>Wings</i>	1929/10/28	1929/11/09	12
<i>Flesh and the Devil</i>	1929/11/11	1929/11/16	5
<i>Fazil</i>	1929/11/18	1929/11/23	5
<i>Ramona, The Circus, Tempest</i>	1929/11/25	1929/11/30	5
<i>The Singing Fool</i>	1929/12/02	1929/12/14	12
<i>In old Arizona</i>	1929/12/16	1929/12/28	12
<i>My Man</i>	1929/12/30	1930/01/11	12

1929, Wolfram's Bioscope

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>A Little Journey</i>	1929/01/03	1929/01/03	1
<i>Outlaws of Red River</i>	1929/01/04	1929/01/05	1
<i>Border Justice</i>	1929/01/07	1929/01/08	1
<i>The Tragedy of Youth</i>	1929/01/09	1929/01/10	1
<i>Nevada</i>	1929/01/11	1929/01/12	1
<i>Hills of Peril</i>	1929/01/14	1929/01/16	2
<i>The Pioneer Scout</i>	1929/01/17	1929/01/22	5
<i>On the Go</i>	1929/01/22	1929/01/23	1
<i>A Race for Life</i>	1929/01/24	1929/01/26	2
<i>California</i>	1929/01/28	1929/01/29	1
<i>The Pilgrim, The Pony Express Rider</i>	1929/02/01	1929/02/02	1
<i>The Silent Rider</i>	1929/02/04	1929/02/05	1
<i>The Side Show</i>	1929/02/06	1929/02/07	1
<i>The Fighting Sheriff</i>	1929/02/08	1929/02/09	1
<i>White Gold</i>	1929/02/11	1929/02/12	1
<i>His Dog</i>	1929/02/13	1929/02/14	1
<i>A Prince of the Plains</i>	1929/02/15	1929/02/16	1
<i>Life's Mockery</i>	1929/02/18	1929/02/19	1

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>Riding Rivals</i>	1929/02/20	1929/02/20	1
<i>The Flaming Forrest</i>	1929/02/21	1929/02/23	2
<i>Wolf's Trail</i>	1929/02/25	1929/02/26	1
<i>Gold and Grit</i>	1929/02/27	1929/02/28	1
<i>Ransom</i>	1929/03/01	1929/03/02	1
<i>Singed</i>	1929/03/04	1929/03/05	1
<i>Pay as you Enter</i>	1929/03/06	1929/03/07	1
<i>Tumbling River</i>	1929/03/08	1929/03/09	1
<i>Cowboy Courage</i>	1929/03/11	1929/03/14	3
<i>The Gay Retreat</i>	1929/03/13	1929/03/14	1
<i>Winners of the Wilderness</i>	1929/03/15	1929/03/16	1
<i>Chain Lightning</i>	1929/03/18	1929/03/19	1
<i>Almost Human</i>	1929/03/20	1929/03/21	1
<i>The Clean-up Man</i>	1929/03/22	1929/03/23	1
<i>The Circus Ace</i>	1929/03/25	1929/03/27	2
<i>Ham and Eggs at the Front</i>	1929/03/28	1929/03/30	2
<i>Babe Comes Home</i>	1929/04/01	1929/04/02	1
<i>Heaven on Earth</i>	1929/04/03	1929/04/04	1
<i>His Greatest Battle, No Noise</i>	1929/04/05	1929/04/06	1
<i>Somewhere in Sonora</i>	1929/04/08	1929/04/09	1
<i>Sand</i>	1929/04/10	1929/04/11	1
<i>Go West</i>	1929/04/12	1929/04/13	1
<i>Black Jack</i>	1929/04/15	1929/04/16	1
<i>Mrs. Brown from Chicago</i>	1929/04/17	1929/04/18	1
<i>For the Love of Mike</i>	1929/04/19	1929/04/20	1
<i>The Ice Flood, The Grand National</i>	1929/04/22	1929/04/24	2
<i>The Fortune Hunter</i>	1929/04/25	1929/04/27	2
<i>Lola</i>	1929/04/29	1929/04/30	1
<i>The Rush Hour</i>	1929/05/01	1929/05/02	1
<i>Under the Tonto Rim</i>	1929/05/03	1929/05/04	1
<i>Speedy Spurs</i>	1929/05/06	1929/05/08	2
<i>Pleasure before Business</i>	1929/05/09	1929/05/10	1
<i>By whose Hand</i>	1929/05/10	1929/05/10	1

FILM CRITICISM IN CAPE TOWN 1928-1930

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>Her Primitive Mate</i>	1929/05/13	1929/05/15	2
<i>The Last Trail</i>	1929/05/16	1929/05/18	2
<i>Tillie's Punctured Romance</i>	1929/05/20	1929/05/22	2
<i>Rinty of the Dessert</i>	1929/05/23	1929/05/25	2
<i>Caught in the Fog</i>	1929/05/27	1929/05/29	2
<i>The Dessert's Toll</i>	1929/05/30	1929/06/01	2
<i>Pyjamas</i>	1929/06/03	1929/06/04	1
<i>Easy Pickings</i>	1929/06/05	1929/06/06	1
<i>The Overland Limited</i>	1929/06/07	1929/06/08	1
<i>The Midnight Taxi</i>	1929/06/11	1929/06/11	1
<i>The Boy Friend</i>	1929/06/12	1929/06/13	1
<i>The Devil's Saddle</i>	1929/06/14	1929/06/15	1
<i>The Arizona Wildcat</i>	1929/06/17	1929/06/19	2
<i>The Denver Dude</i>	1929/06/24	1929/06/25	1
<i>Framed</i>	1929/06/26	1929/06/27	1
<i>Her Wild Oat, Dr. Quack</i>	1929/06/28	1929/06/29	1
<i>Doomsday</i>	1929/07/01	1929/07/03	2
<i>Jesse James</i>	1929/07/04	1929/07/06	2
<i>Fangs of Destiny</i>	1929/07/08	1929/07/09	1
<i>Fools for Luck</i>	1929/07/11	1929/07/13	2
<i>Blood will tell</i>	1929/07/15	1929/07/17	2
<i>5&10 Cents Annie</i>	1929/07/18	1929/07/20	2
<i>The Prince of Head Waiters</i>	1929/07/18	1929/07/19	1
<i>The Perch of the Devil</i>	1929/07/22	1929/07/24	2
<i>Gun-land Garrison</i>	1929/07/22	1929/07/24	2
<i>Open Range</i>	1929/07/25	1929/07/27	2
<i>Sky High Saunders</i>	1929/07/29	1929/07/31	2
<i>Home Made</i>	1929/08/01	1929/08/03	2
<i>The Million Dollar Collar</i>	1929/08/05	1929/08/06	1
<i>The Fighting Marine</i>	1929/08/07	1929/08/08	1
<i>Taxi-Taxi</i>	1929/08/09	1929/08/10	1
<i>Running Wild</i>	1929/08/12	1929/08/14	2
<i>Back to God's Country</i>	1929/08/15	1929/08/17	2

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Poor Nut</i>	1929/08/19	1929/08/21	2
<i>Dress Parade</i>	1929/08/22	1929/08/24	2
<i>Emerald of the East</i>	1929/08/26	1929/08/28	2
<i>Unknown Cavalier</i>	1929/08/29	1929/08/31	2
<i>The Racket, The Valley of the Giants</i>	1929/09/02	1929/09/07	5
<i>The Sunset Derby</i>	1929/09/09	1929/09/11	2
<i>The 50-50 Girl</i>	1929/09/12	1929/09/14	2
<i>The Wizard</i>	1929/09/16	1929/09/18	2
<i>Down the Stretch</i>	1929/09/19	1929/09/21	2
<i>Silver Valley</i>	1929/09/23	1929/09/25	2
<i>Say it with Sables</i>	1929/09/26	1929/09/28	2
<i>Cold Nerve</i>	1929/09/26	1929/09/28	2
<i>Say it with Sables</i>	1929/09/26	1929/09/28	2
<i>A Woman against the World</i>	1929/09/30	1929/10/02	2
<i>Through Thick and Thin, 3 Naval Rascals</i>	1929/10/03	1929/10/05	2
<i>Hey! Hey! Cowboy</i>	1929/10/07	1929/10/08	1
<i>Three's a Crowd</i>	1929/10/09	1929/10/10	1
<i>The Big Killing</i>	1929/10/11	1929/10/12	1
<i>The News Parade</i>	1929/10/14	1929/10/15	1
<i>The Winning Wallop, The Road to Mandalay</i>	1929/10/16	1929/10/17	1
<i>Bachelor's Club</i>	1929/10/18	1929/10/19	1
<i>Finnegan's Ball</i>	1929/10/21	1929/10/22	1
<i>Hold 'em Yale</i>	1929/10/23	1929/10/24	1
<i>The White Spider</i>	1929/10/25	1929/10/26	1
<i>Judgement</i>	1929/10/28	1929/10/29	1
<i>A Thief in the Dark</i>	1929/10/30	1929/10/31	1
<i>The Wagon Show</i>	1929/11/01	1929/11/02	1
<i>The Lone Wolf</i>	1929/11/04	1929/11/06	2
<i>Rookies</i>	1929/11/07	1929/11/09	2
<i>Gallagher</i>	1929/11/11	1929/11/12	1
<i>Mr Wu</i>	1929/11/13	1929/11/14	1
<i>Daredevil's Reward</i>	1929/11/15	1929/11/16	1
<i>All Aboard, Honour Bound</i>	1929/11/18	1929/11/20	2

FILM CRITICISM IN CAPE TOWN 1928-1930

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>Burning Daylight</i>	1929/11/23	1929/11/27	4
<i>The Lookout Girl</i>	1929/11/25	1929/11/27	2
<i>Kit Carson</i>	1929/11/28	1929/11/30	2
<i>Catch as Catch Can, Come to my House</i>	1929/12/02	1929/12/04	2
<i>The Cavalier</i>	1929/12/05	1929/12/07	2
<i>The Down Grade, Nameless Men</i>	1929/12/09	1929/12/10	1
<i>Beau Sabreur</i>	1929/12/11	1929/12/12	1
<i>Gun Gospel</i>	1929/12/13	1929/12/14	1
<i>When Danger Calls</i>	1929/12/16	1929/12/18	2
<i>Wings of Death</i>	1929/12/17	1929/12/19	2
<i>The Shepherd of the Hills</i>	1929/12/19	1929/12/21	2
<i>Skyscraper</i>	1929/12/23	1929/12/25	2
<i>The Overland Stage</i>	1929/12/26	1929/12/28	2
<i>The Tigress</i>	1929/12/30	1929/12/31	1

1929, Astoria Kinema

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Dancer of Barcelona</i>	1929/01/03	1929/01/05	2
<i>One of the Best,</i>	1929/01/07	1929/01/09	2
<i>Wall Flowers</i>	1929/01/14	1929/01/16	2
<i>Vortex</i>	1929/01/17	1929/01/19	2
<i>The Rolling Road</i>	1929/01/21	1929/01/23	2
<i>Jake the Plumber</i>	1929/01/24	1929/01/26	2
<i>The Harvester</i>	1929/01/28	1929/01/30	2
<i>The Spy</i>	1929/01/31	1929/02/06	6
<i>Mademoiselle Parley-Voo</i>	1929/02/07	1929/02/09	2
<i>Show Life</i>	1929/02/11	1929/02/16	5
<i>The Ware Case</i>	1929/02/18	1929/02/23	5
<i>Shiraz</i>	1929/02/25	1929/03/07	10
<i>Life's Circus</i>	1929/03/11	1929/03/16	5
<i>The Physician</i>	1929/03/18	1929/03/23	5
<i>Fear</i>	1929/03/25	1929/03/27	2
<i>The City of Pleasure</i>	1929/03/28	1929/03/30	2

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Triumph of Scarlet Pimpernel</i>	1929/04/01	1929/04/10	9
<i>The Passing of Mr. Quinn</i>	1929/04/11	1929/04/13	2
<i>The Trial of Donald Westhof</i>	1929/04/15	1929/04/18	3
<i>The Chinese Bungalow</i>	1929/04/18	1929/04/20	2
<i>Chance the Idol</i>	1929/04/22	1929/04/27	5
<i>Apaches of Paris</i>	1929/04/29	1929/05/04	5
<i>Monkey Nuts</i>	1929/05/06	1929/05/11	5
<i>The South Sea Bubble</i>	1929/05/13	1929/05/18	5
<i>The Fugitive Lover</i>	1929/05/20	1929/05/25	5
<i>Palais de Danse</i>	1929/05/27	1929/06/01	5
<i>Freckles</i>	1929/06/03	1929/06/08	5
<i>At the Edge of the World</i>	1929/06/10	1929/06/11	1
<i>Looping the Loop</i>	1929/06/17	1929/06/22	5
<i>The Murder in the Red Barn</i>	1929/06/24	1929/06/29	5
<i>Paradise</i>	1929/06/27	1929/06/29	2
<i>The Perfect Crime</i>	1929/07/01	1929/07/06	5
<i>Ghost of the Night</i>	1929/07/08	1929/07/13	5
<i>Little Devil-May Care</i>	1929/07/15	1929/07/18	3
<i>Virginia's Husband</i>	1929/07/19	1929/07/20	1
<i>Tommy Atkins</i>	1929/07/22	1929/07/27	5
<i>The Triumph of the Rat</i>	1929/07/29	1929/08/03	5
<i>Bondage</i>	1929/08/05	1929/08/10	5
<i>The Silent House</i>	1929/08/12	1929/08/17	5
<i>The Cage of Death</i>	1929/08/19	1929/08/24	5
<i>Hell Ship Bronson</i>	1929/08/26	1929/08/31	5
<i>Mr. Smith Wakes Up</i>	1929/08/26	1929/08/31	5
<i>Homecoming</i>	1929/09/02	1929/09/07	5
<i>The Alley Cat</i>	1929/09/09	1929/09/14	5
<i>The Bondman</i>	1929/09/16	1929/09/21	5
<i>The Water Rat</i>	1929/09/23	1929/09/30	7
<i>Dancing Vienna</i>	1929/09/30	1929/10/05	5
<i>The Wonderful Lie</i>	1929/10/07	1929/10/12	5
Nr. 17	1929/10/14	1929/10/21	7

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>Temptation</i>	1929/10/21	1929/10/26	5
<i>The Yacht of Seven Sins</i>	1929/10/28	1929/11/02	5
<i>The Lost Patrol</i>	1929/11/04	1929/11/08	4
<i>The Woman in Flames</i>	1929/11/11	1929/11/16	5
<i>The Secret Courier</i>	1929/11/18	1929/11/22	4
<i>High Treason</i>	1929/11/22	1929/12/07	15
<i>Street Girl</i>	1929/12/09	1929/12/14	5
<i>Syncopation, Mickey the Mouse</i>	1929/12/16	1929/12/28	12
<i>Blockade, Karnival Kid</i>	1929/12/30	1930/01/04	5

1930, Alhambra

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>Love in the Dessert</i>	1930/01/13	1930/01/18	5
<i>Movietone Follies</i>	1930/01/13	1930/01/27	14
<i>Love in the Dessert</i>	1930/01/13	1930/01/18	5
<i>Movietone Follies</i>	1930/01/13	1930/01/27	14
<i>The Donovan Affair</i>	1930/01/28	1930/02/08	11
<i>Lucky Boy</i>	1930/02/10	1930/02/12	2
<i>Blackmail</i>	1930/02/17	1930/03/01	12
<i>Conquest</i>	1930/03/03	1930/03/08	5
<i>The Fall of Eve</i>	1930/03/10	1930/03/15	5
<i>Through Different Eyes</i>	1930/03/17	1930/03/22	5
<i>Masquerade</i>	1930/03/24	1930/03/29	5
<i>Bulldog Drummond</i>	1930/03/31	1930/04/13	13
<i>Broadway Hooper</i>	1930/04/14	1930/04/19	5
<i>The Great Gabbo</i>	1930/04/21	1930/05/03	12
<i>Iron Mask</i>	1930/05/05	1930/05/10	5
<i>Flight</i>	1930/05/12	1930/05/24	12
<i>On with the Show</i>	1930/05/26	1930/06/07	12
<i>Queen of the Night Clubs</i>	1930/06/09	1930/06/14	5
<i>Wanted</i>	1930/06/16	1930/06/21	5
<i>The Grand Parade</i>	1930/06/23	1930/06/28	5
<i>Atlantic</i>	1930/06/30	1930/07/12	12

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Desert Song</i>	1930/07/14	1930/07/19	5
<i>This Thing Called Love</i>	1930/07/28	1930/08/02	5
<i>The Glad Rag Doll</i>	1930/08/04	1930/08/09	5
<i>Broadway Scandals</i>	1930/08/11	1930/08/16	5
<i>Alibi</i>	1930/08/18	1930/08/23	5
<i>The Awful Truth</i>	1930/08/26	1930/08/30	4
<i>Kings of the Khyber Rifles</i>	1930/09/01	1930/09/06	5
<i>Cocoanuts</i>	1930/09/08	1930/09/13	5
<i>The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu</i>	1930/09/15	1930/09/20	5
<i>Lucky in Love</i>	1930/09/22	1930/09/27	5
<i>Paris Bound</i>	1930/09/29	1930/10/04	5
<i>The Vagabond King</i>	1930/10/06	1930/10/18	12
<i>Ladies of Leisure</i>	1930/10/20	1930/10/25	5
<i>Innocent of Paris</i>	1930/10/27	1930/11/01	5
<i>Loose Ends</i>	1930/11/03	1930/11/08	5
<i>All Quiet at the Western Front</i>	1930/11/10	1930/11/18	8
<i>Just for a Song</i>	1930/11/10	1930/11/12	2
<i>Why Bring That Up?</i>	1930/11/24	1930/11/29	5
<i>King of Jazz</i>	1930/12/01	1930/12/13	12
<i>Broadway</i>	1930/12/15	1930/12/20	5
<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>	1930/12/22	1930/12/27	5
<i>No, No Nanette</i>	1930/12/29	1931/01/02	4

1930, Astoria Kinema

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Wrecker</i>	1930/01/13	1930/01/27	14
<i>Three Brothers</i>	1930/01/20	1930/01/25	5
<i>Woman to Woman</i>	1930/01/27	1930/02/08	12
<i>High Treason</i>	1930/02/10	1930/02/12	2
<i>Half Marriage</i>	1930/02/13	1930/02/18	5
<i>Rio Rita</i>	1930/02/19	1930/04/05	45
<i>Three Live Ghosts</i>	1930/04/07	1930/04/19	12
<i>Splinters</i>	1930/04/21	1930/05/03	12

FILM CRITICISM IN CAPE TOWN 1928-1930

Film title	Start date	End date	Run
<i>The Trespasser</i>	1930/05/05	1930/05/17	12
<i>La Traviata</i>	1930/05/15	1930/05/15	1
<i>The Delightful Rogue</i>	1930/05/19	1930/05/31	12
<i>Rookery Nook</i>	1930/06/02	1930/06/07	5
<i>The Vagabond Lover</i>	1930/06/23	1930/07/05	12
<i>Río Rita</i>	1930/07/07	1930/07/16	9
<i>Black Waters</i>	1930/07/17	1930/07/23	6
<i>Love at First Sight</i>	1930/07/24	1930/07/26	2
<i>The Great Night Parade</i>	1930/07/28	1930/08/02	5
<i>Love Comes Along</i>	1930/08/04	1930/08/09	5
<i>Jazz Heaven</i>	1930/08/11	1930/08/16	5
<i>The Rampant Age</i>	1930/08/18	1930/08/23	5
<i>Rookery Nook</i>	1930/08/26	1930/08/30	4
<i>LummoX</i>	1930/09/01	1930/09/06	5
<i>Dance Hall</i>	1930/09/08	1930/09/13	5
<i>Tanned Legs</i>	1930/09/15	1930/09/20	5
<i>Blaze O' Glory</i>	1930/09/22	1930/09/27	5
<i>What a Man</i>	1930/09/29	1930/10/08	9
<i>Taxi for Two</i>	1930/10/09	1930/10/11	2
<i>The Cuckoos</i>	1930/10/13	1930/10/25	12
<i>The Crooked Billet</i>	1930/10/23	1930/10/25	2
<i>Second Wines</i>	1930/10/27	1930/11/01	5
<i>Girl of the Port</i>	1930/11/03	1930/11/12	9
<i>Balaclava</i>	1930/11/13	1930/11/17	4
<i>Puttin' on the Ritz</i>	1930/11/22	1930/11/30	8
<i>The Love of Robert Burns</i>	1930/11/24	1930/12/06	12
<i>At the Villa Rose</i>	1930/12/08	1930/12/13	5
<i>Love finds a Way</i>	1930/12/15	1930/12/20	5
<i>Worldly Goods</i>	1930/12/22	1930/12/22	1
<i>Last Hour</i>	1930/12/29	1931/01/02	4

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the picture
and in a terrific
this clever dog carries his
to heights of reality. It is a film
should attract crowded houses.

MARKHAMS.

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This book examines the development of film criticism in Cape Town's daily press from 1928 to 1930, using film reviews from the newspapers the *Cape Times* and *Die Burger*. The character of film criticism in the period under discussion is explained by describing the general function of film criticism as well as comparing the local with the international film press. The basis for the comparative analysis is a list of films screened in three selected cinemas in Cape Town. Part of the analysis is an empirical study to examine the quantitative development of film reviews and a qualitative part, analyzing the content of selected film reviews. This book demonstrates that newspapers are the most valuable source for research concerning early South African film history. The existing standard reference, Thelma Gutsche's *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa 1895-1940* can be fruitfully complemented by using Afrikaans newspapers, as well as Hans Rompel's book *Die Bioskoop in Diens van die Volk* and other writings by this influential Afrikaner film critic.

Michael Eckardt (*1974) studied Cultural, Media and Communication Studies in Weimar (Germany), Vienna (Austria), Durban and Stellenbosch (South Africa), gaining a degree in Cultural- and Media Studies from Bauhaus-University Weimar (Diplomkulturwissenschaftler) and graduated as Master of Philosophy (Journalism) at Stellenbosch University. His PhD-project aims to investigate the reception of Weimar Republic cinema in South Africa in the period 1928-1933. Michael Eckardt is a visiting scholar at Stellenbosch and Goettingen University.

of a troupe
including a talking
ever dainty Olive Borden in
ar role. Jacques Lerner plays
t of the monkey that talks, and
tally he created the original
the Paris stage play.
mond Hitchcock, star of a dozen
way successes, is cast as Lorenzo,
Don Alvarado is in the role of
the lover. Ted McNamara,
colm Waite, Jane Winton and
ust Tollaie have roles of import-
There is a great deal to re-
cm to every type of
ary, comedy

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has been holding
and killing the money ma-
the driver.
The change of programme for
nesday and Thursday is "Get
Quick Wallingford" drama,
"Dinky Doodly" and "Robinson
soe" cartoon.

MARINE, SEA POIN

Innumerable pictures have
to the heroes of the
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