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**Trouble on Screen**

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# Debunking the American Hero: The *Topos* of Intoxication in *One* A.M. (Chaplin 1916), *Wings* (Wellman 1927), *Major Dundee* (Peckinpah 1965)

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## PLAN

Intoxication and troubles on the screen
Troubled minds
The oblivion of Time
Intoxication and satire
Conclusion

## TEXTE

1 The visual apprehension of the real in films has been an issue which originated with the beginnings of cinema in debates between those who believed that the photographic reproduction of the real was strengthened by the representation of movement on screen, and those for whom cinema was a mere unreliable illusion of the real created by optical tricks. Audiences have consequently forever been divided between visual fascination answering Ruskin's dream of "a kind of primal opticality" (Crary 95) and its opposite, doubt, or "visual skepticism" (Turvey 99). In many films, spectators are able to experience this tension through identification with some characters' apprehension — or misapprehension — of the real. This contradiction between our laughter and empathy, coupled with the belief that we are wiser than the character, is embodied by the stereotype of the easily beguiled fools which cinema inherited from the theatre. Among these, one particular type of burlesque fool is that of an otherwise quite clear-sighted character who is metamorphosed into a fool by excess of drink. The intoxicated characters are shown suffering a 'loss of control' (OED) over their destiny and making mistakes in their apprehension of their environment owing to the apparent metamorphosis of their familiar world, while the film viewers are allowed

to see how wrong they are by identifying with them as well as by criticizing them. The fact that intoxication is a visual motif found in very different film genres, from classical Hollywood melodrama as exemplified in the war film *Wings* (Wellman 1927), to westerns such as Peckinpah's 1965 *Major Dundee* (see synopses below), shows the great visual possibilities of screening a character's odd behaviour, along with the weird deconstruction of the "general phenomenon of constancy" (Merleau-Ponty 365) which creates the illusion of transparent realism in classical cinema. The impression of reality by cinematic movement and the illusion of cinematic appearances are remarkably combined in scenes of a character's intoxication.

2 The choice of Chaplin's 1916 burlesque comedy *One* A.M (Tomasovic 22-45) in this paper can be explained by my belief that it was a seminal contribution to the creation of intoxication as a visual motif of trouble on the screen, when he transposed it into a 26-minute film. To begin with, because it disrupts the codes of realism, intoxication is a visual motif of great formal unity. This makes its meaning immediately identifiable whatever the genre of the film, a characteristic which allows the scriptwriter to insert such scenes independently from the progress of action, as Chaplin himself does in his feature melodrama *City Lights* (1931). In a large number of Hollywood productions (Tomasovic), a relatively brief scene of intoxication is inserted in film genres in which it would seem out of place, because of its apparent irrelevance to a diegesis which is not explicitly about the destruction of the character by alcohol. And yet, as will be argued, Wellman's and Peckinpah's films are particular examples of the important symbolic connotations which are thus added by the however brief but never gratuitous insertion of the visual icon of intoxication into the narrative.

3 The ensuing parallels between the three films will first underscore the 'trouble on screen' effect of the character's intoxication in visual contrasts between order and disorder. Secondly, it will be argued that this intoxication is also shown by the character's transgressive behaviour that reveals his troubled mind. A major point in the representation of such troubles is the fact that we are made to share the private experience of the characters in subjective camera frames, as if we were intoxicated as well. We also share the protagonists' oblivion of time, of its entropy and irreversible flow, in their unexpected experi-

ence of chance accidents occasioned by their short-sightedness. Finally, the insertion of such cinematic moments will be discussed as vehicles for a deeper satirical meaning, since these troubles on the screen emphasize a critical appreciation of the protagonist's plight, highlighting the folly of human dreams of wealth (*One* A.M.) or heroism (*Wings*, *Major Dundee*).

# Intoxication and troubles on the screen

4 The character of the tramp which Chaplin had created for the movies in 1914 was a type which enabled him to develop a narrative form on the screen different from popular slapstick numbers. With the creation of his original narrative, *One* A.M., Chaplin was able to offer moviegoers a new burlesque character, the intoxicated gentleman (Tomasovic 39-41), its novelty being the focus on an inverted mirror image of the tramp, a gentleman. Later in *City Lights* (1931), in which 'the little fellow' is contrasted with a wealthy gentleman, we recognise the earlier drunken gentleman created in *One* A.M. In this feature film, getting drunk is a privilege of the wealthy (Fawell 142–144), a satirical type which actually deconstructs the cliché of the worthless tramp and makes us empathize with him. On the other hand, the cinematographic form of *One* A.M. is remarkable for the fluidity it adds to the slapstick music hall routine, transforming an attraction number among others in music-hall series (Gunning 383) into the psychological portrait of a single character, drawing our attention on a mind which is deeply troubled. As Chaplin explains, this new narrative dimension was made possible by the cinema: "in the theatre I had been confined to a rigid, non-deviating routine [...] films were freer" (Chaplin 153). In the burlesque, but verging on the melodramatic, type of the intoxicated gentleman created by Chaplin's *One* A.M., it is the fluid continuity of movement (Bilton 78-110) and the lengthy manipulation of objects which are developed, contrary to Keaton's own use of the slapstick music hall tradition (Kral 44). As a result, the unity of the theme of a psychological crisis caused by the loss of contact with the real – by an otherwise rather lucid gentleman – makes Chaplin's character become a cultural emblem of weakness (loss of equilibrium), madness (mistaking stuffed animals for live

beasts), and failure (unable to get into his bed, he ends up in his bathtub). All these instances of the intoxication paradigm become more emotionally convincing owing to the power of film editing which, in Chaplin's film, gives his pantomime performances – one third of these have camera movement, only two thirds with a still camera (Bordat 183-187) – a continuity in space-time which can thus become equivalent with the spectator's own space-time continuum, as the following detailed study will show.

5 In this seminal film, the world of order is depicted on the screen as a foil to the chaos caused by drink (Harness 68). The first shot shows a taxicab which has stopped: it is framed frontally, a shooting angle which emphasizes the stability of the familiar urban modern world. The taxicab driver is holding out his hand while looking straight ahead, clearly expecting his customer to read the fare on the slot of the tolling machine next to his elbow. His gesture is a emblem of the standard expected behavior which is deconstructed by inappropriate gestures. When the customer sticks the stump of his cigarette in the man's hand instead of the expected coins, the whole code of familiar behavior is ruined. Inside the house, the mechanism of the grandfather clock's swinging pendulum on the landing at the top of the stairs is also an emblem of security and order which we identify as such. Its regularity and immovable stability provide a foil to the protagonist's erratic behaviour.

6 In *Wings*, the world of order is also carefully depicted on the screen by the training camp sequences where Jack Powell (Charles Rogers) and his friend David Armstrong (Richard Arlen) are to enlist in the Air Service as pilots. The camera frames the different elements of their everyday life – trucks, tents, and planes – at the camp, in a series of in-depth shots emphasizing the land's horizontality and the several degrees of verticality of a plane' flight, conditions of a stable physical world which they must learn to control in order to face German pilots in air combat. But they have to cope with catastrophe when the pilot Cadet White (Gary Cooper) crashes to his death on the airfield [28:14]. Despite this violent contrast between their belief in the regular security of flying conditions and the liability of unexpected disasters, the two friends join the American Escadrille Lafayette as 'cadets' on the French front in 1918. Within the historical reconstruction of a world well known to Wellman, an episode is inserted in

which Jack is seen on leave in Paris where he spends an evening at the Folies Bergères [1:09:60]. Like all the other customers around, he is now free to enjoy himself. But he brazenly gulps down glass after glass of champagne, and soon the subjective camera depicts a hazy and quite imaginary multiplication of bubbles around him, to the point of masking other customers at the surrounding tables. The limits of the frame are now erased as bubbles fly in and out of its periphery.

7 In Peckinpah's western *Major Dundee*, military discipline is enforced by the Major (Charlton Heston) among his unruly recruits. We discover a well-disciplined troop of horsemen, mostly paroled Southern Confederate prisoners still wearing their uniforms, who fall into a military march as they leave Fort Benlin [35 :05] on a punitive expedition against the criminal Apache chief Charriba. This disciplined group is seen on their way through a wild, boundless territory in which Charriba can attack or vanish freely. The bonds of social order are gradually disrupted, and when the cavalry is faced with the regular array of the French Army occupying Mexico at the time, disorder and defeat overrule their enterprise. The disintegration of the order of civilization begins when they illegally cross the Mexican border, and it reaches a first climax when Major Dundee is compelled to hide in Durango to cure a badly wounded leg, and yields to the temptation of gulping down long draughts of Tequila. According to the codes of the stereotype, his troubled mind is now depicted by his surroundings which appear quite chaotic.

8 To revert to the seminal model of such an erasure of the signs of order, *One* A.M., the window seems to him better than the door to get inside his home. The outstretched hide of a dead tiger ordinarily used as a decorative carpet now becomes the body of a tiger's threatening open jaws. Stroking fondly his favorite large stuffed cat's whiskers, he sees it now closing upon his leg with its paws. The secure home has turned into a wild jungle.

# Troubled minds

9 Chaplin's gentleman keeps desperately fidgeting inside his side pocket with his right hand while holding a cigarette in his left hand. The icon of the cigarette usually connotes deep thinking, but a close

shot of his eyes concentrating on some place behind us, suggests that he is hopelessly unable to lay hands on his matches. Chaplin's use of a close up on his character's troubled gaze at the camera is the means by which the filmmaker translates on the screen his earlier experience performing a state of intoxication as a stage actor by establishing contact with his audience (Kral 100-145). In the later Hollywood films deeply concerned with making the camera invisible to the moviegoer, the direct gaze at the camera was thought to be detrimental to the illusion of the real, and was no longer in use. Instead, the character's mind could be shown by the editing of subjective shots for the viewer to share in subjective camera frames, a device already used by Chaplin (Jost 65-74), in order to show his disconnection with the real world through the metamorphosis of the orderly images seen previously. The state of intoxication is therefore mostly shown in the character's failure to identify commonplace objects and their inappropriate efforts to face and adapt to 'unidentified things'. When, in Chaplin's film, the gentleman does his best to deal with flying carpets and automatic tables, in *Wings* Jake sees his old friend Mary (Clara Bow)'s elegant dinner dress as nothing but a collection of bubbles that blow up and vanish, being at once replaced by others. As to Dundee, the camera frames him gazing at himself in a mirror as if he were an unknown stranger.

10 Troubled minds are thus displayed by the disorder of the characters' reactions to their environment as they see it. If in Chaplin's film, stuffed dead animals behave like live ones, in *Wings*, when Jack is told that his leave is over, he stubbornly refuses to obey orders and remains seated, gesturing vaguely around him with his glass of champagne. Dundee who had kept unbuckling and then buckling his belt, provokingly dumping his boots on his desk, has doffed his uniform in exchange for a rather messy-looking unbuttoned white shirt. He is now seen playfully fingering his bottle of tequila and whispering to himself a song about the benefits of drink [1:44:30].

11 In addition to their disturbed dealing with the real, their body's uncertain equilibrium causes comic trouble on the screen. As a performer, Chaplin was famous for his capacity to retain his balance, as in *The Rink* (1916) or *The Circus* (1928). In the scenario of intoxication, however, the unbalance of the character's wavering body signifies a similar disorder in his mind. as anticipated by the audience's

expectation that a drunk always seems to about fall but never does. In *One* A. M., the camera cuts to a medium close shot of the gentleman's unsteady body: he is forever on the verge of collapsing. The intoxicated protagonists' inability to stand upright amidst their surroundings also shows us how badly disturbed their minds are in both war films. Just as Chaplin's gentleman must struggle to recover his balance after falling down the stairs, Jack has trouble in standing when summoned by the authorities to go back to the front line, and Dundee finds it equally difficult to stand straight when attempting to escape in the street. He eventually forgets about his lame leg, and collapses into the gutter. Confederate prisoner Colonel Tyreen (Richard Harris), who has remained sober, then has to pull him to his feet and drag him away, a gesture which emphasizes Dundee's utter loss of control over himself.

# The oblivion of Time

12 If scenes of heavy drinking and the loss of landmarks have enjoyed such a survival in cinema, from the entertainment of early attractions to the more enthralling powers of narratives (Gaudreault & Gunning 374), they must have done so because they dealt with the human mind, and thus raised more philosophical issues. In the case of Chaplin's *One* A.M., its eponymous title emphatically associates the gentleman's delirium with his oblivion of the flow of time. When inserted in both feature films, apart from their literal meaning as moral tales, the intoxication scenes within the epic narrative make the film viewer's attention shift from an emphatic adhesion to the military epic, to a critical perception of the main characters' capacity to understand the ambiguities of their behaviour. In *Wings*, in the episode of his intoxication, Jack loses all sense of the reality of war, as if he were allowed to go on a voyage in another pseudo-space-time, away from the battle-field. Similarly, in *Major Dundee*, the protagonist forgets his ideal which the chasing of Charriba signified for him by sinking into a different space-time. Both characters are thus suspended out of time by a state of total oblivion of their mission.

13 I would like to suggest that, thanks to the interplay between the diegetic level of the narrative and the ironical distance which the burlesque motif of intoxication necessarily awakens, we are able to

decipher the active presence of Time in these three films. Time's presence is actually very obvious in *One* A.M., as we see a large clock swinging its pendulum on the landing upstairs. However, instead of providing the usual help clocks are meant to give us by measuring the timing of our successive occupations, it is hampering the gentleman's plan to find rest in his bedchamber, as if punishing him for being too late, and reminding him that there is no going backwards. The failure to obey the clock shows that it is indeed the irreversibility of time, inscribed in the ruling power of the automaton, which has escaped his attention. Another time programmed automaton lies in wait for him however when, having at last successfully grovelled away from the reach of the clock's pendulum, he proves unable to press the button on the wall to set his collapsible bed in working order. Just as if it were intoxicated as well, the bed revolves upon itself, capturing him in a never-ending swirl. It eventually sets him free but crashes down without warning, nearly crushing him to death with its feet. The confusion in the time program is irrevocable, and leads him from his bed to the stillness of his bathtub, which expresses another feature of the flow of time in modern physics: entropy. Moreover, scientific time is also characterised by a third feature, contingency, an order of things which has been ruling his homecoming from the start. For example, when attempting to climb the steps of the stairs, the carpet suddenly gets loose and he is propelled down to where he started. Contingency is remarkably underlined at that moment, not only by the carpet unaccountably getting loose, but also because he lands by chance next to his drink which he had previously set aside on the floor – having managed to free bottle and glass from the maleficent power of the turning table where they sat challenging him.

14 In both feature action films, the ternary definition of time in physics (Doane 19) is dramatized throughout, and is shown to have driven the two protagonists to their final tragedy. The presence of a historical frame in both films underlines these features of time's agency, since they remind us that the unravelling of events actually took place. In *Wings*, the battle which we see is historically archived as the Battle of Saint-Mihiel. Jack's organized military time is restricted to the single sequence of military action which is determined by the confrontation between the two enemy camps facing each other across the border-line. Any pilot flying a plane towards the American airfield from the

German front is an enemy whom Jack must immediately meet in an irreversible time period, the air combat. Once engaged in the air-fight, there is no going back, even though the end must be the stillness of entropy following heat. In Jack's case, the third feature of time, contingency, is also at work, owing to a deceitful message which is dropped by a German pilot, announcing the death of his friend David. When a German plane flies in his camp's direction, he automatically attacks it. But adding to his sense of his duty, he is now blinded by hatred and revenge and cannot recognize the pilot as his friend who has escaped with an enemy plane.

15 In Peckinpah's western, the time of action also takes place at a particular moment of national history, during the Minnesota Dakota War in 1862. The historical source for the film's narrative is dramatized by a narrator's voiceover, Timothy Ryan's (Michael Anderson Jr.), whom we see writing his diary. He is also seen and heard sounding his bugle when calling for the cavalry to proceed on their journey, which gives his presence in the film the symbolic connotation of the irreversible march of time. Time is also measured when drums are played [05 :10 and 09 :23], and a leitmotiv, 'The Major Dundee March', is heard – first during the opening credits, then later when sung by the men in chorus, or whistled, as they leave Fort Benlin [35 :05]. When this leitmotiv is again heard at the film's end, echoing the epic film's opening credits, the hero is now a solitary figure moving away in the desert. Time has irrevocably gone by, history will not be re-written, and Dundee's foolish oblivion of its rules lead him to the stillness of the wilderness. Time's rule of contingency has also played a part in the unravelling of his destiny, as when an enemy arrow hits his leg in a moment of inattention when he believed he could enjoy a moment of rest in a clearing.

# Intoxication and satire

16 If these three aspects of scientific time are dramatized so clearly by intoxication as trouble on the screen in the three films under discussion, the fact that they can be found in an early silent film such as Chaplin's deserves a brief comment. As his later 1936 film *Modern Times* shows, the characteristic features of the new industrial era and the development of trains or assembly lines in factories were

popularized to the point of allowing entertainment through satire. Though chance is a traditional motif of drama under the guise of Fortune, or Fate, Mary Ann Doane argues that with the advent of the industrial era which also saw the birth of cinema, to which Chaplin contributed so importantly, chance acquires a new scientific garb, 'contingency', by its close association with the scientific concepts of irreversibility and entropy. She writes: "…the epistemology of contingency which took shape in the nineteenth century was crucial to the emergence and development of the cinema as a central representational form of the twentieth century" (Doane 19). Since the nineteenth century entropy has been seen as a general characteristic of time which could be quantified thanks to the second law of thermodynamics. And remarkably, thermodynamics had come to play a major role in the theory of time during the very period when cinema was seen to emerge as an art form. As Michel Serres writes:

> As soon as one can build them – steam or combustion, engines, chemical, electrical, and turbine engines, and so forth – the notion of time changes […] From this moment on, time is endowed with a direction. It is irreversible and drifts from order to disorder, or from difference to the dissolution or dissemination of a homogeneous mixture from which no energy, no force, and no motion can arise. (Michel Serres, *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*, 1982, p. 71-72, in Doane 114).

17 One result of such energy at work is collision, as the use of crosscutting shows. The parallel temporalities of the various protagonists in the diegesis are visualized on the screen by this cinematographic form, allowing us to follow different simultaneous actions in separate places. It becomes a mode of film discourse which is essential to a representation of time's agency in the dramatizing of collision. Interestingly, 'collision' as a phenomenon is also a concept of early cinema theory which is used to analyse the cinematic continuum, according to the belief that it is the editing of different sets of shots which creates meaning. Chaplin's gentleman is faced with sudden unexpected actions on the part of the automatons, machines which are servants intended to obey his orders. But the result of this technology is that his automatons are ruled by their own pre-regulated timing, as if they 'lived' in their own temporality. The table's clock-

work is started by touch, and therefore collides with him, catching his coat, each time he heedlessly gets near enough. The folding bed's mechanism starts its programme by his dialling, but the program has memorized a form of clockwork autonomy. In his now unfamiliar world, a set of collisions between him and his robots seems to be the rule, and when the folding bed never meets his expectations, it becomes the very emblem of contingency. Both table and bed have a common point with the huge clock on the first floor, as the swinging pendulum collides with the foolish protagonist as if such 'contingency' now punished him for having forgotten that his lifetime is ruled by time's irreversible continuum.

18 While intoxication is the cause for such collisions in Chaplin's film, when the intoxication episodes are inserted in the two feature films under discussion, they contaminate the whole film with the image of chaos which they produce.

19 In *Wings*, crosscutting makes the irreversible linear progress of time, and Jack's blindness to the reality, clearly perceptible to screen viewers. When the swift acceleration slows down to final stillness, and Jack discovers David was the pilot he killed [28:14)], the tragic collision of temporalities results in the ensuing loss of energy caused by entropy. Viewed from the perspective of the whole film, Jack's failure to recognize his friend's face despite the latter's efforts to be identified whenever the two pilots' planes draw near enough, recalls his earlier failure due to champagne to recognize his friend Mary when she was trying to tell him that his leave had come to an end.

20 We come to realize that Peckinpah's western is explicitly a deconstruction of the Western genre, when Dundee is the victim of a failure to identify the truth about his situation which is similar to Jack's blindness in *Wings*. He is driven by his obsession with pursuing the Apache chief, but the initial chase (Costa de Beauregard 232-236) suggesting the parallelism of their temporalities by crosscutting, suffers an unexpected shift when he foolishly crosses the border into Mexico, disregarding his initial plan. Unexpectedly, though in fact historically accurate, Mexico was then occupied by the French. Dundee's bewilderment at the metamorphosis of Charriba into an army recalls the mental disorder of his earlier drinking bout.

21 In scenes which insert subjective shots to depict the characters' minds, as when Jack is gazing at the dead pilot's things early in the film, or later gazing at his dying friend's face in a close-up, and when Dundee cannot recognize his proud former self in the mirror, we share their emotion. Rather than laughing at hilarious misdemeanour, the intoxication scenes paradoxically add to the epic narrative a rewriting of the narrative function of the enjoyable attraction of characters losing their wits, into a more critical stance which gives the scenes a satirical import (Esquenazi 71).

22 Looking closely at the onscreen motif of intoxication, we realize it is not only a source of entertainment, and a demonstration of the impossibility of any oblivion of the physical forces of time, but it is also a glimpse at a deeper truth, the folly of dreams. Jack is introduced to us as a dreamer who is fascinated by the possibilities of engines: his car first, which he drives madly away as if racing with some invisible competitor, and, later, his plane which he pilots proudly [1:45:23]. Dundee is clearly obsessed by ambition, and having been given the humiliating task of watching over prisoners of war, he sets up his own battalion by recruiting some of the prisoners in his punitive enterprise against a native enemy, Charriba.

23 Given these psychological characteristics, the insertion of moments of intoxication within these narratives takes place at symbolically significant moments, as ominous warnings which neither of them is able to decipher. The two characters have in common an inability to imagine for themselves a destiny other than glorious. Jack, in *Wings*, is depicted as a dreamer who allows himself a total eclipse of the real world, and the warning that war is no child's play altogether escapes him. As to the Major, having behaved with great self-satisfaction in many situations including the scene when he shows no pity for one of his men and shoots him as a traitor [1:34:30], he allows himself to get drunk on Tequila with a superior smirk at his Mexican hostess expressing his general disdain for Mexican culture, but is unable to see the progress of his psychic collapse as a wounded man in hiding. The structure of intra-textual echoes which is a rule of coherence in narrative (Maltby 416) creates symbolic parallels between these episodes of intoxication which are inserted in the general theme of the two films, and the general pursuit of personal satisfaction. The two scenes create an uneasiness for the spectator who no longer shares

any initial empathy for them, and understands that they are getting caught into some impending tragedy. If we smile at Jack's innocent wonder at flying bubbles, we cannot share Dundee's smirk.

24 If we look for such a critical distance in the silent film *One AM* discussed above, it is noticeable that the initially burlesque slapstick encounters with unexpected obstacles gradually become the origin of a form of reflection and anticipation on the part of the protagonist himself. For example, having slipped on a carpet several times, the home-comer learns to use it as a 'magic or flying carpet' by travelling with it across the room. However, one also gathers that he is not really learning anything, since this is just a new game he is playing, and the slapstick pratfalls which subvert his American middle-class world now come to signify its essentially futile artificiality. The film actually ridicules the American 'gentleman' image, as for example his delicate handling of his emblematic top hat, a top hat which is soon crushed to threads by the foot of the revolving bed as if it had a vengeful intention of its own. In Peckinpah's film, the mirror of truth which Dundee gazes at is the opportunity for the viewer to reinterpret the whole film as a deconstruction of the myth of the Western hero (Lenihan 11). In a similar manner, the scene of Jack's intoxication in Wellman's post-WWI film also deconstructs a myth, that of the war hero, since the unhappy Jack shoots his friend's plane down, tragically mistaking him for an enemy.

# Conclusion

25 To conclude, while Chaplin's intoxicated gentleman eventually exchanges his dream of an artificial world of serving robots for a plain – and empty – bathtub, the subversive figure of the 'anti-hero' emerges in both scenes of intoxication of the epic films. Wellman's film is anti-militarist in characteristic post-WWI spirit, and Peckinpah's film is a deconstruction of the classical Western in equally characteristic post-WWII disillusion. If trouble on the screen, figured in these films by the *topos* of intoxication, gives us a psychological portrait of the characters, it also caricatures the effects of human ambition when depicting the merciless mechanisation of man by his own technology and man's writing of his History of war as fratricide.

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## ANNEXE

### Synopsis of the three films

***One* A.M. (1916)**, short film, b&w, silent, early cinema. One the twelve films that Chaplin wrote, produced, directed and starred in for the Mutual Film Corporation, which formed Lone Star Studios solely for Chaplin's films. In 1932, Amedee J. van Beuren purchased Chaplin's Mutual films, added music by Gene Rodemich and Winston Sharples and sound effects, and released them through RKO Radio. *One A.M.* can be viewed on *You Tube* Accessed 17/07/2019.

A gentleman in a coat and top hat is seen in a taxi: as the taxi stops, he sticks his right hand out of the window and mistakenly attempts to use the handle outside. Eventually he does open the door but does not pay his fare properly. In front of his door he cannot find his key, climbs inside through the window, steps into his aquarium by mistake, finds his key in his pocket, climbs out through the widow again and opens the door. Once inside for the second time, he slips on a carpet, and gets entangled with stuffed animals: a tiger's open jaws and a cat's paws. He tries to catch a bottle on a table but it turns away; he jumps on the table, secures the bottle and a glass on the floor. Turning to the left stairs he steps up with an uncertain balance but once at the top, the carpet gets untied and rolls him down. But, just as unexpectedly, he lands with his head right in front of the bottle and the glass. He climbs the stairs once more but the pendulum of the clock on the landing strikes him several times. He escapes on all fours and reaches his room. His folding bed is geared to open and come down, but he at once gets caught in it as it becomes vertical again. It then pivots on its axis like a revolving door in which he remains a prisoner until he squeezes out; the bed settles but as soon as he lies down it folds and jumps up again to reach the wall; he again escapes. Then it comes down again but, because he has by then decided to lie on the floor, it comes crashing its metal feet upon him and tears his top hat to shreds. The bed mattress now overturns and gets separated from the spring mattress. He carefully cringes away and seeks rescue in his empty bathtub.

***Wings.*** Director William Wellman, producer Adolph Zukor, 1927. B &W. silent. War film.

Two friends, Jack Powell (Charles Rogers) and David Armstrong (Richard Arlen) join the American Lafayette Flying Corps in 1918 to fight German pilots on the French front. They are both in love with the same girl, but another girl, Mary Preston (Clara Bow) is in love with Jack. And she also volunteers as an ambulance driver on the French front. Scenes of air fights begin with a pilot crashing during exercises (Gary Cooper), and the two friends no longer see the exciting adventure of flying but are faced with the reality of war. They enjoy a leave in Paris during which Jack gets drunk on champagne and no longer recognizes Mary. Back on the front, they engage in air combat during the battle of Saint-Mihiel but David's plane is shot down. Jack decides to avenge him and takes to the air when a German plane is in sight above their camp. He guns the plane down and lands in order to examine his enemy. He finds his friend had been escaping on a German plane and he has shot him by mistake. He then goes home and must meet his friend's grieving parents, have his share in a triumphal parade and go back to his first occupation as a car engineer, this time agreeing to share his life with Mary, the girl who loves him.

***Major Dundee.*** Director Samuel Peckinpah (1965) dis. Paramount, colour. Western.

The action takes place in 1862 during the Minnesota Dakota War. Charlton Heston plays a federal officer, Major Amos Dundee, relegated to the command of a prison camp, who sets out to subdue a band of marauding Apaches at the head of a rag tag volunteer troop of thieves, renegades and paroled Confederate prisoners (the latter headed by Captain Benjamin Tyreen, played by Richard Harris). Charlton Heston is trading on his image of epic man of action but propelled like Wayne in *The Searchers* by racial hatred, worm-eaten by divided loyalties, and finally found wanting. He chases his enemy into Mexican territory where he is wounded and must take a rest in a Mexican house. He then gives free rein to his drinking habits by getting drunk on tequila. Eventually joining his troops with Tyreen's much needed help, he fights against the French who occupy Mexico and sees most of his men killed, including Tyreen. He leaves on his own in the last sequence of the film to an uncertain future.

# RÉSUMÉS

**English**

This paper aims to discuss the screening of trouble with our senses as spectators which is not only visual but also tactile and aural, in the topos of drunkenness. Silent cinema has interesting films on the subject, among which Chaplin's One A.M. (1916). Drunkenness is highly spectacular; space and time are altered, and things are unrecognizable. Its chaotic world is predominantly burlesque, but it also provides cinematography for a mise-en-scène of melodrama, as in Wellman's Wings (1927). Appearing in many films, as Dick Tomasovic shows, drunkenness relies on strongly contrasted moods, between extreme happiness and violent despair. In Samuel Peckinpah's Major Dundee, (1956) drunkenness goes one step further as it expresses the disintegration of one's social and psychological identity. From a reflexive point of view, such blurring of our apprehension of the real is a vehicle for an illusory escape from everyday frustrations, thus encouraging criticism of cinema as intoxication in itself.

**Français**

Cet article analyse la mise en scène, par l'ivresse à l'écran, de troubles de nos perceptions comme spectateurs, effets qui ne sont pas non seulement visuels mais aussi tactiles et auriculaires. Le cinéma des premiers temps comporte des films sur le sujet, parmi lesquels *Charlot rentre tard* (1916) de Chaplin. L'ivresse est spectaculaire car l'espace et le temps sont altérés, et les objets méconnaissables. Ce monde chaotique est d'abord burlesque, mais il permet aussi de mettre en scène le mélodrame. C'est le cas de *Wings* (1927) de William Wellman. Comme le montre Dick Tomasovic, l'ivresse est un motif écranique qui repose sur de forts contrastes d'humeurs, du bonheur absolu au désespoir le plus violent. Dans *Major Dundee* de Samuel Peckinpah (1956), l'ivresse franchit une nouvelle étape en exprimant l'effondrement de l'identité sociale et psychologique du personnage. D'un point de vue réflexif, enfin, cette altération de notre perception du réel est un procédé permettant d'échapper d'une manière illusoire aux frustrations quotidiennes, au point de rappeler la critique du cinéma lui-même comme cause d'ivresse du spectateur.

# INDEX

**Mots-clés**

ivresse, cinéma, genre burlesque, mélodrame, perte d'identité

**Keywords**

drunkenness, cinema, burlesque genre, melodrama, loss of identity

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