

The Necessity and Value
of
Theme in the Photoplay

By JEANIE MACPHERSON



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*One of a Series of Lectures Especially
Prepared for Student-Members
of The Palmer Plan*



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JEANIE MACPHERSON

JEANIE MACPHERSON is a living demonstration of what a studious, sincere young woman can do in the field of motion picture production. Born in Boston, Mass., educated in Paris, France, Miss Macpherson entered upon a stage career, during which she appeared in "STRONGHEART" under the management of Henry B. Harris, and in "HAVANA" under the Shuberts. Entering into photoplay work, she acted and directed for Biograph, Edison, Universal, Lasky, and Artcraft. Among the stories that she has written or adapted are "JOAN THE WOMAN," "THE LITTLE AMERICAN," "OLD WIVES FOR NEW," "THE WHISPERING CHORUS," "TILL I COME BACK TO YOU," "DON'T CHANGE YOUR HUSBAND," "MALE AND FEMALE," and "SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT." At present and for several years past, Miss Macpherson has been personal assistant to Cecil B. De Mille in all departments pertaining to her stories, and her name stands among those who have done much to elevate the photoplay to its proper place as the eighth of the fine arts.

SUPPOSE you were asked to talk before a club, or a society of which you are a member. Your first question probably would be: "What shall I talk about?" Isn't that so?

Now, just transplant that problem into the field of your present endeavor—photoplay writing. You have decided to write photoplays. Therefore: "What will you talk about?"

And there you have hit upon the very important question of *theme*, the soul of the photoplay.

Theme may sound like a big, portentous, forbidding word. But just get a "close-up" of it and possibly you will be able to comprehend its significance more clearly.

Theme is derived from the Greek word, meaning: to set, to place.

That is simple, and sufficient. The *theme* is the setting or placing of your story characters into an atmosphere or condition under which they may enact a drama.

Obviously, if you set the characters into arm chairs, and do not permit them to move therefrom, you will have no drama, no story. But if you have them get up and begin to move about, they must *do something*. And that something which you set them to doing is the *theme* of your story.

My dictionary has this to say in defining theme:

"A subject or topic on which a person writes or speaks; a proposition for discussion or agreement; a text."

Then a little further along, in referring to *theme* as it applies to musical compositions, the dictionary says:

"A short melody worked up into variations, or otherwise developed."

These definitions, both of them, may be very aptly applied to the work of the photoplaywright. The *theme* is the subject or topic on which you intend to base your screen drama. It is also the "short melody" or *central idea* around which your story is to be woven, developed or built up.

But it is the common fault of some to regard *theme* as something in the nature of a sermon, a preachment, a proverb. Yet, to quote Mr. William Archer in his admirable text upon "Play Making," *theme* "may sometimes be, not an idea, an abstraction or a principle, but rather an environment, a social phenomenon of one sort or another."

Thus, you see, it is not necessary that you should set out with some such declaration as: "I shall write a photoplay based on prohibition, divorce, woman's suffrage, or bolshevism," as the case may be. In fact, should you begin your work with any such notion in mind, your photoplay story probably would sound much like a theological discourse, or a treatise that might go well before some mutual improvement society, but which would not likely attract the masses who go to the cinema, seeking relaxation and entertainment.

If I may be permitted, I will cite an instance of theme for a photoplay from one of my own stories, produced by Mr. Cecil B. De Mille. In "Don't Change Your Husband" I put the theme of the story into the title. Yet, "Don't Change Your Husband" was not a sermon—it was an entertainment, and was accepted as such, though there was the thread of a moral, as stated in the title, running through the entire story. A photoplay may instruct, may elevate, may inspire, and at the same time entertain. But the writer who sets out to put a sermon into a play is apt to make a sorry mess of it. When he finishes, he is unlikely to have either a good sermon or an entertaining photoplay.

Nevertheless, to get the best results—to respond to the

modern requirements of photoplay producers—there must be a theme, a sort of philosophic cement, as it were, which holds the entire structure and the characters together.

Perhaps Shakespeare consciously and intentionally set out to write a play on “youthful love crossed by ancestral hate” when he wrote *Romeo and Juliet*.” But it is more likely that he concluded to write a story, using “youthful love crossed by ancestral hate” as the basis for conflict, or drama. Hence, as he worked out the play, he did not fall into a tirade against ancestral hate, but rather exposed in masterly and entertaining style what might come of such ancestral hate under a given set of circumstances into which he placed his characters.

I saw a picture of Charles Ray’s not long ago, in which he characterized with his usual skill the small town youth who went to the city, became imbued with the notion of waking up his little home town, which had always treated him with indifference, and returned there to arouse the village from its lethargic sleep. It was fun, entertainment, all the way through. Yet it had its theme; for behind it there was the lesson that possibly we do not appreciate the ability of those around us; or that we do not take advantage of the opportunities afforded by our own little world.

Such, then, is *theme*. It is the social environment, the condition of life, the phase of human activity, or the moral principle into which we plunge our fictional characters, and order them to work out their destinies.

And if we do not give these characters some such driving force, they are likely to amble about aimlessly, getting nowhere and doing nothing. The lack of the definite theme, tenaciously and intelligently clung to from start to finish, has been the cause of failure of many a picture upon which fortunes have been lavishly wasted.

In considering the necessity of having a theme, let us turn for a moment to one of our foremost American teachers of dramatic art, Professor George Pierce Baker,

of Harvard. In his text, "Dramatic Technique," after asking what is the common aim of all dramatists, he answers it thus:

"Twofold: first, as promptly as possible to win the attention of the audience; secondly, to hold that interest steady, or better, to increase it till the final curtain falls."

Professor Baker is addressing his remarks to the writer of stage plays, but they apply equally as well to the photodramatist. In fact, these things he mentions must be accomplished much more forcefully in the picture drama than in the stage drama. For the audiences of the photoplaywright are of greater variety, and far more restless when not entertained, than the audiences of the playwright who creates for the spoken drama. The stage play usually draws those who are interested in the particular subjects upon which a play is written. The cinema drama draws everyone within walking distance of the nearest movie house!

Furthermore, the photoplaywright must bear in mind the fact that his story must be presented cinematically within one and one-quarter to two hours. The average time for running of a standard thousand foot reel of film is fifteen minutes, or one and one-quarter hours for a five-reel picture. In that brief space of time the characters must be presented, must begin to act, must develop the story, bring it to its climax, and conclude it.

How, then, may I ask, can we expect to accomplish all of this unless we set out to construct a story with a definite, concrete idea or *theme* in mind? Can we in this brief space afford to permit our characters to wander around in a series of fanciful or beautiful "shots" or scenes, all of which have nothing whatever to do with the story we intend to tell?

I have been told that one of the most successful of our American authors, the sale of whose books has run into the millions, first sits down and writes out a thesis, or

theme plot. Then, with that constantly before him, he creates his characters to fit the exposition he desires to give that theme. This man was a minister before he took up fiction writing. As a clergyman it was customary for him to write his thesis or theme upon which he based his sermons. As a writer of fiction he finds it advisable to follow the same plan, though in the latter case he makes the actions and the speeches of his fictitious characters portray the things he formerly spoke. And no one, so far as I know, has ever found this author's stories "preachy." But they have appealed to more fiction readers than those of any other living author, perhaps, because they are human, and because they do and say some definite thing.

Each human life in itself is an illustration of the necessity of theme. Consider those around you, and those characters of whom you have read in history. Are not those who have enjoyed the greatest success, who have accomplished most, the ones who had a theme, a definite purpose, upon which they based their activities? Edison had a theme, and so did the Wright Brothers, Marconi, Robert Fulton, Galileo and other notables of the past and present.

The theme of my life is to produce the best photoplay stories that I am able to create. I give my best efforts always with that basic *theme* for my life's work in mind.

Even the miserable miser has a theme—the accretion of gold. Unfortunately, in his case, his theme is an unhappy one, a theme to be avoided by those who would live wholesome lives. But it illustrates, just as do the other examples, the generality of theme in everyday life.

From this very fact it may be adduced that themes for photoplays are not difficult to find. They exist all around us. They jump before our very eyes each time we walk about the streets, visit a friend, attend a theatre, or read a newspaper. The morning paper contains the themes for

half a dozen plays every day. It is wholly a matter of selecting a theme upon which we would like to write.

And in the selection of a theme we come to the second important phase of this discussion: the *value* of theme in the photoplay.

Francisque Sarcey, whom Brander Matthews has characterized as "the shrewdest of the nineteenth century theorists of the theatre," said this:

"A dramatic work, whatever it may be, is designed to be witnessed by a number of persons united and forming an audience; that is its very essence; that is one indispensable condition of its existence. The audience is the necessary and inevitable condition to which dramatic art must accommodate its means."

And in the selection of a workable theme, the photoplaywright can well heed this excellent advice. In commenting upon this thought of Sarcey's, Brander Matthews, in his book, "Principles of Playmaking," continues:

"As it is almost impossible to gather exactly the same audience two or three times in succession, and as no audience can be kept interested for more than a few hours at a sitting, it is a principle of playmaking that the dramatist must devise a dominating action and that he must condense his story, dealing only with its most interesting moments and presenting it, shorn of all negligible details. And as the audience is a crowd, composed of all sorts and conditions of men, the dramatist must deal with subjects appealing to collective human nature, and he must eschew themes of a more limited attraction."

Let me repeat that last sentence again: "And as the audience is a crowd, composed of all sorts and conditions

of men, the dramatist must deal with subjects *appealing to collective human nature* and he must *eschew themes of a more limited attraction.*"

How aptly that definition may be applied to the work of the photoplaywright! Yet, how often has it been violated in a field where its strict observance must inevitably be demanded.

The photodrama, above all other forms that the world has ever known, is the drama of the masses. The success of a picture play depends not alone upon the verdict of Broadway. Broadway cannot make a photoplay, though it can a stage drama. The final verdict, the artistic verdict, the box-office verdict, comes from the appeal the picture makes in the little neighborhood theatre, in the movie shrine of the slums, in the cinema houses of the village and the crossroads. It is seen by millions. It is seen by millionaires, and by paupers who can ill-afford to spend a precious dime for entertainment, but who go, seeking relaxation, refreshment, and inspiration—that their lives may be made just a bit more livable.

It is a vast audience, indeed, this audience of the photodramatist. And its vastness enlarges the scope of its demand. Only those themes which are common to all human life—those thrills and joys and sorrows and perplexities which fill the days of each and every one of us—will attract and maintain the interest of this great cinematic audience that stretches around the globe.

Therefore, we see the necessity of selecting themes that will appeal to all human kind. We have been reminded that we are writing for an audience, and an audience that has paid its hard earned money for something worth while. We are not writing for our own entertainment, or our friends' delectation. We are writing to entertain and interest millions. If we cannot do that, success will never come to us in the field of photoplay authorship.

The factory hand who comes home, washes the grime of a hard day's labor from his body and goes out with

his little family to a nearby theatre, seeks not a preaching upon the world's ills: he has his own troubles. The woman who steps into a matinee at a downtown picture theatre does not go to witness someone's personal grudge against life, as projected upon the silver sheet. The youth of the world, which forms no inconsiderable proportion of motion picture audiences, is not entertained, instructed nor edified by horrible tragedy, even though the pages of life's book may be full of tragedy.

If you would make theme valuable to you in photo-play writing, make your themes understandable. Make them the kind that get to the heart and tug at its cords. Make them themes that will be just as thoroughly understandable in Chinese or Polish as in English or American. Then you can make theme work for you.

When one begins to predict the trend of motion pictures, he is treading upon quicksands. For the trend of pictures is based upon public mind and public demand. For me to attempt, in a lecture such as this is intended to be, a forecast of what the coming demand will be, might be misleading. It may safely be said, however, that the development of the cinematic art is all toward the strengthening of theme and characterization, and away from the "slapbang" plot of former days. That may be regarded as axiomatic. Strive for strength of theme, virility and humanness of characterization, and the story will follow if you possess any of the imaginative and dramatic qualities of mind.

There are some things, however, which should be impressed upon the mind of the student of picture technique, relative to the selection and the use of theme. We have begun by saying that this is a discussion of *theme*, and its *necessity* and *value*. I have endeavored at the outset to show what is meant by theme. I have then tried to impress you with the necessity of theme. Now I am going to try and tell you how to make themes work for you, how to utilize themes to best advantage, and what

sort of themes you will find welcome in the photoplay market.

Wholesomeness is essential. By that I do not mean that your story should necessarily be an epitome on optimism. I mean simply, that it is wise for the screen dramatist to forget his personal grudges, his indigestion and his own irritation over the imperfections of life when he sits down to select a theme and to write a photoplay.

View life from the eye of the aviator, not from the eye of the caterpillar. Get your nose away from the ground. And don't get it too far up in the air, either, by the way! The greatest of our playwrights, the masters of literature, all were men and women who, in spite of personal misfortune or personal failings, were able to see the things of life in their broader aspects, as they affected society, not as they affect one certain individual. They have not considered themselves above the ordinary run of mankind, and neither have they grubbed in the mire of human failures for their material.

Think back ten years in your own life. Do you remember, as most of us can, something which happened to you about that time, and which disappointed you keenly, hurt you grievously? You felt at the time, perhaps, that the world never would be right again, that your heart strings had snapped. And now you smile at the absurd seriousness you evinced at the time. Problems which you have met since were far more difficult of solution; yet, you have solved them. And those matters of ten years ago were trivialities in comparison.

That is what I mean, then, when I urge you to get the birdseye, the airplane view of that phase of life which you set out to depict for the screen. Ask yourself whether propinquity is not affecting, not warping your convictions on the subject. Make sure that it is not a matter which, after all, can be presented with wholesomeness, cheerfulness, with a note of encouragement to the world, and not a note of despair.

The advice that Horace gave to the son of a friend, when the boy showed an inclination to follow literary pursuits, may well be heeded. It was written centuries ago, but it fits the photoplaywright's problem today. Here is what Horace wrote:

The events which plays are written to unfold,
Are either shown upon the stage, or told,
Most true, whate'er's transmitted thru the ear,
To mind and heart will never come so near,
As what is set before your eyes, and each
Spectator sees, brought full within his reach.
Yet do not drag upon the stage what might
Be much more fitly acted out of sight;
Much, too, there is which 'twill be always well
To leave the actor's well-graced speech to tell.
Let not Medea kill her boys in view,—

If things like these before my eyes be thrust,
I turn away in sceptical disgust.

Motion pictures are far remote from the day and the wisdom of Horace; yet his voice comes resounding down through the ages with a bit of homely advice for those who would compel the attention of the millions through the silver sheet.

In its naturalness, in its faithful reproduction of life as we see it every day, lies the greatest strength of the photoplay. Through the all embracing eye of the camera we may reproduce life with a faithfulness of detail that will never be possible either in the printed word or upon the stage. Yet, that very realism—the tremendously interesting scope of its possibilities—may lead us into the trap that Horace so wisely warns us to avoid.

Keep away from the sordid, or at least the sordid outlook upon life. If your story requires its picturization of some of the unpleasant incidents of life, as drama often does, do not go to offensive excesses in realism. Leave something to the imagination. And leave the elevating

impression that there is hope for relief from such unfortunate conditions, true to life though they may be.

I am not advising namby-pamby photoplays, nor the handling of the vital questions of life with kid gloves. But remember that the surgeon cuts into the human body with very delicate instruments, not with buzz saws nor butcher knives. He gets to the vitals of the physical organism, but with a skill that heals, not with a brutishness that kills. So with you—if you would lay bare the ills of life, and heal them, if you would point out phases of human activity that are dramatic and compelling, remember that you are dealing in minds and hearts and souls, the most delicate and most sensitive of God's creations.

Some have criticized the realism of the scene in Hobart Bosworth's remarkable film, "Behind the Door," where he skins the villain alive. Yet it was done by suggestion only; the spectator saw merely the shadows cast on the wall from "behind the door." Even the simulation of such brutality in full sight upon the screen would have caused a revolt in every audience. "Let not Medea kill her boys in view," says Horace. You may suggest the blackest villany, the cruelest torture, but if you would avoid the censor's scissors and the audience's ire, do it with some appreciation of the feelings of others.

The drama and the photoplay of today accurately reflect the trend of modern thought—the struggle to know, to understand, to tear the veil of mystery that has hung for ages about the everyday problems of life. Hence, the photodramatist is privileged to present upon the screen problems and phases of life which are intimate and personal. But in doing so he must remember the cosmopolitan and international character of his audience, and govern himself accordingly.

In the selection of this theme or *motif* for a photoplay, we must also be sure that there can be injected into it something that is truly dramatic. For no matter how

powerful our theme may be, no matter how strong our characters may appear, they will both fail if there is not the gripping, compelling dramatic action that will gain interest immediately, and sustain it throughout the story.

As Professor Baker has rightly told us, we must first win the attention of our audience as promptly as possible, and then we must hold that interest steady, or increase it, until the end. Analyze your theme with this in view. Has it the *Punch* that will attract attention at the outset, and sustain it through five or seven or more reels? It must have drama, and truly dramatic action, if it can respond to this test.

Robert Louis Stevenson had something to say along this line of thought that is worth considering. While he was discussing drama; it applies particularly to theme, as well, He said:

“It is sometimes supposed that drama consists of incident. It consists of passion, which gives the actor his opportunity; and that passion must progressively increase, or the actor, as the piece proceeds, would be unable to carry the audience from a lower to a higher pitch of interest and emotion. A good serious play must therefore be founded on one of the passionate *cruces* of life, where duty and inclination come nobly to grapple.”

Make your theme one that will deal with one of these “passionate cruces” of life, and you will have drama; you will gladden the heart of the continuity writer, the director and the actor. For you will have given them material upon which genuine screen drama may be based. You may take the serious view, or the lighter vein, in your handling of the problem, but in either case be sure that it is elemental, compelling, sustaining.

Drama has been aptly described as “the expression of a will which knows itself.” In your Handbook you have

been properly told by Mr. Palmer that drama is conflict, struggle—the conflict and the struggle of human wills.

All dramatists recognize the law propounded by Ferdinand Brunetiere, a law upon which drama—and therefore its theme—must be based to be successful. Brunetiere has said that “it must reveal the human will in action; and the central figure in a play must know what he wants and must strive for it with incessant determination.” See that your theme is such as to afford this opportunity for struggle, striving and conflict.

Brander Matthews, than whom there is no more competent teacher of modern days, says in his book, “A Study of the Drama”:

“If we examine a collection of typical plays of every kind, tragedies and melodramas, comedies and farces, we shall find that the starting point of every one of them is the same. Some one central character *wants* something; and this exercise of volition is the mainspring of the action.”

Now these matters may seem to be more or less apart from a direct study of theme, but if we will remember that the *theme* is the *motif*, the *melody*, the *central idea* upon which we are to build our story, or characterization, our action, it will be seen that a thorough, painstaking consideration of these subjects must precede the selection of themes and the actual beginning of work on the story, if the story is to hold up after it is finished.

I have seen many a photoplay synopsis written by amateur and professional alike, which in my opinion failed because the author neglected to keep constantly in mind the central idea or theme around which he tried to weave the story. The intelligent thoughtful selection of a theme, and conscientious adherence to that theme throughout the story, is more likely to produce a photoplay that will find its way to the screen than any other phase of photoplay writing.

Have the theme well worked out in your mind before you begin to write. Test your proposed characters by the theme, to see if they conform to the underlying idea of your plot. Test your situations, your sequences, test your whole story from the standpoint of faithful adherence to theme. And I venture to predict that if you will keep to the theme you will have a more closely knit story and smoother action when you finish than you will if you permit your characters and your action to wander about, with little or no regard for the thematic backbone of your story.

Characterization is perhaps the most important phase of working the theme into the plot. Your characters must typify either the idea of the theme, or its very anti-thesis. For example, allow me to cite again the excellent one given by Mr. Palmer and Mr. Eric Howard in their *Photoplay Plot Encyclopedia*. In Jack London's "The Sea Wolf" he sought to use the conflict between materialism and idealism as the theme of his story. Wolf Larsen was the very essence of materialism, while in Van Weyden we found the highest type of idealist. There a theme was presented with two characters who gave contrast and *conflict*. It was a comparatively simple matter, after the author had firmly established these characters in his mind, to work out their struggle in a way that constantly kept the theme of the story in the forefront of action.

There is a chapter in your Handbook devoted to a discussion of some rules and some "don'ts" for photoplaywrights compiled by Mr. William C. De Mille. The importance which he attached to theme is significant for a number of his rules have a direct bearing upon the proper selection and development of theme.

His first rule in the requirements of a successful photoplay reads: "Fundamental idea of interest to the average spectator or patron." That is clear. Mr. De Mille tells you there that you must have a *fundamental idea*, and he states further that it must be one that will interest the great mass of cinema patrons.

Second, he advises that the photoplay must have "logical premises, logical sequences, logical conclusions." In order to accomplish this you must have a logical theme, logically presented and logically developed. And you cannot have a logical picture story unless you have some central idea to carry through from the introduction to the conclusion.

"Characterization and action" are demanded in the third of these excellent rules. The best characterization must obviously come from the development of a well chosen theme, one that permits of truly human, flesh and blood people. Have the proper theme and the proper characters and the action will take care of itself, if you have any talent for dramatic construction whatsoever.

Mr. De Mille also demands "beauty, harmony, simplicity and color." There can be no beauty, no harmony, no simplicity unless you have a theme to work with, something to give beauty to thought, harmony to sequences and action, and a central idea to keep your simple, direct exposition of the story always before your audience. It follows as day follows night, that if you have these three, you will have the fourth, color.

It will be well for the student to frequently consult these pages of advice from William C. De Mille. He is regarded as one of the leaders among the photoplay producers. His work is considered to be among the most finished products of the screen. Mr. De Mille's productions are invariably worthy of close study, for his attention to such matters as theme, beauty, harmony, simplicity and color is precise and inspiring.

In the field of photoplay writing, we have not had the advantages, nor the handicaps for that matter, of a tradition. The stage dramatist has precedents to guide him, he has the advice of masters from hundreds of years past. He may choose to disregard their style, their methods of presentation, but he does know—if he is an earnest student of the drama—what "tricks of the trade" have been most successful.

We of the cinema profession are still the pioneers. The "older heads" among writers and producers of motion pictures today are men and women who have been with the picture profession since it was in its swaddling clothes. And while it is undeniably true that we may draw wisdom from the experiences of stage dramatists from the days of the old Greek tragedies down to the present, it is also true that we are working with an entirely different medium, and one which has a far wider field of possibilities.

Yet the very lack of a tradition by which we may be guided should make us cautious, should engender a determination to give thoughtful consideration to every step we take in the development of a photoplay story. Thousands, and hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent upon the production of a single photoplay. Unless we, as well as the producer, are pretty certain of the logical development, the "picturability" of our work, we can expect little consideration from the men who are literally gambling fortunes in their efforts to produce photoplays that will meet with public favor.

The intelligent, successful stage dramatist would not think of building a play around a theme, locale and conditions of life with which he was wholly unfamiliar. Either through personal observation, or painstaking research, the playwright schools himself to feel perfectly at home in the atmosphere which he promises to use. Yet, not a day passes but that the scenario editor's desks are cluttered with manuscripts which reveal a total lack of comprehension of the atmosphere, locale, time and thought in the place or period around which the photoplays are written. And then we wonder why our beloved scenarios are returned so promptly, with rejection slips attached!

When we have our cult of experienced photoplaywrights more fully developed, a group of men and women whose lives and thoughts are devoted to a study of the screen, its technique and requirements, we shall have specialists in theme and style, such as the stage has had, and such as it now has.

We will have the photoplaywright who is a reporter, who reflects upon the screen, bits of life snatched from the daily maelstrom of human struggle. We will have the psychologist who, like Ibsen, deals in motives, their causes, their results—a surgeon who plumbs the recesses of the human brain, and presents his findings upon the silver sheet.

There will be the philosopher of the screen, the humorist, the satirist, the preacher. And there will also be those who will simply tell stories, men and women who are born story tellers, who invent clever tales for the sheer joy of telling them, and who could not stop their flow of screen fiction if they wished.

Each of these types of mind will have his own particular themes, his own particular brand of photoplay. The public will come to recognize them, to understand their styles and to appreciate them or dislike them. For tastes vary widely. Otherwise this world of ours would be exceedingly dull and drab. And instead of going to "the movies" as many now do, our cinematically educated public will choose with some discrimination the types of stories and the authors whose works they enjoy.

And it need not be presumed for a moment that these experts in screen creativeness and cinema technology will all be gray-headed. Nothing of the sort!

On the contrary, past experience has proved that the dramatist may win fame and fortune both from the stage and screen in the very hey-day of youth. It has been done, time and time again. For the demands of drama are the demands for originality, for inventive cleverness—and these are possessed in abundance by youth.

The best work of the novelist, on the average, comes in middle age. The literary flavor that makes a great fiction writer comes from the seasoning of experience, from youthful energy refined in the crucible of life's constant struggle; from hard, grinding work toward the goal of perfection.

But it is not always so with the dramatist of the stage, nor of the screen. The screen, particularly, traveling on the strong wings of a new art, broader far in scope than that of any other form of entertainment the world has ever known, demands exuberance of thought, daring departure from the thumb-worn rule book of the older arts. It is pioneering, and pioneering is one of the giant industries, as well as the newest art, of the age.

Not that the leaven of experience will be amiss. It is always needed—in anything. But youth as well as experience may tackle the photoplay writing profession confident that real talent and genuine ability will be recognized, regardless of age, experience or previous condition of servitude!

The pathway to success in the field of the photoplay is not strewn with roses, any more than the pathway to any other real achievement in this world. But the happiness, the honors and the satisfaction that comes with success are prizes that merit every bit of the best that is in those whose inclinations and talents lean in the direction of the cinema.

Jeanie Macpherson

