
“Don’t Be Frightened Dear ... This Is Hollywood”: British Filmmakers in Early American Cinema

Ian Scott



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/ejas/8751>

DOI: 10.4000/ejas.8751

ISSN: 1991-9336

Publisher

European Association for American Studies

Electronic reference

Ian Scott, ““Don’t Be Frightened Dear ... This Is Hollywood”: British Filmmakers in Early American Cinema”, *European journal of American studies* [Online], 5-4 | 2010, document 5, Online since 15 November 2010, connection on 08 July 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/8751> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.8751>

This text was automatically generated on 8 July 2021.

Creative Commons License

"Don't Be Frightened Dear ... This Is Hollywood": British Filmmakers in Early American Cinema

Ian Scott

- 1 "Don't be frightened, dear – this – this – is Hollywood."
- 2 Noël Coward recited these words of encouragement told to him by the actress Laura Hope-Crews on a Christmas visit to Hollywood in 1929. In typically acerbic fashion, he retrospectively judged his experiences in Los Angeles to be "unreal and inconclusive, almost as though they hadn't happened at all." Coward described his festive jaunt through Hollywood's social merry-go-round as like careering "through the side-shows of some gigantic pleasure park at breakneck speed" accompanied by "blue-ridged cardboard mountains, painted skies [and] elaborate grottoes peopled with several familiar figures."¹
- 3 Coward's first visit persuaded him that California was not the place to settle and he for one only ever made fleeting visits to the movie colony, but the description he offered, and the delicious dismissal of Hollywood's "fabricated" community, became common currency if one examines other British accounts of life on the west coast at this time. From P.G. Wodehouse to Aldous Huxley, from David Niven to Laurence Olivier, the English penchant for being under-whelmed by the extravagance of it all has been well-documented. Wodehouse was particularly dismissive of the industry's methods and he wrote his first satirical piece about Hollywood in 1929, the year he and Coward both arrived. "Slaves of Hollywood" mocked the transformation of writers into scenarists and artists into artisans as talkies were taking off and business interests began to dominate. The article first appeared in a December issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*, much to the annoyance of those touting for his services.² Yet for all their suspicions Wodehouse, Coward and many others did keep returning – or stayed in some cases – in one form or another for the next thirty years, because the British, whatever their reservations, could never quite shake the glamour and fascination of Hollywood out of their system.

- 4 Coward's particular brand of caustic and witty observation is only one of many funny and evocative stories told in perhaps the best of the assembled accounts of Anglophilia in America's film community: English critic Sheridan Morley's book, *The Brits in Hollywood* (originally published as *Tales from the Hollywood Raj*). In weaving a tale of British emigration to the west coast in the early part of the twentieth century, Morley concocts along the way a proper Englishness for his subjects, which has them in equal parts humoured, shocked, and repulsed by the film community that grew up in California's southland. "The British went to California much as they had once travelled to the far outposts of their own empire, and for many of the same reasons," he writes. "Some went to seek a fortune, others to escape a failed career or a mistaken marriage back home, or just because the weather looked better and there seemed to be a lot going on."³ In a similarly understated way when it came to his subjects, much of what Morley details in his book was exaggeration, many of the stories apocryphal, but quite a lot of it true also.
- 5 If nothing else these initial observations serve as reminders of two things that have become accepted wisdom when talking of the British in Hollywood. Firstly that the acting contingent in particular, more than any other group, have often been the focus of retrospectives; and second that the "British invasion" – if that is what it amounted to – really only happened from the late 1920s. Yes there was Chaplin and Laurel and one or two other names earlier but it was with C. Aubrey Smith, George Arliss and then Leslie Howard, Cedric Hardwicke and David Niven, so the argument goes, that the British presence was truly felt.
- 6 And it is with these slightly lesser known characters, Arliss, Smith and the likes of Hugh Walpole and Elinor Glyn, that Morley stakes a claim for some quintessential piece of England living in the hills of Los Angeles. Indeed he makes the not unreasonable observation that what these figures imported into America in the 1920s was not the industrial England of slum-housing and Jarrow marches, but a half-century reversal back to the Empiric days of Victoria and Kipling.⁴ When Charlie Chaplin returned to Britain to promote his film *City Lights* in 1931, he reputedly yearned to see the North of England and experience the simple pleasures of the provincial working man, a character he felt was wrapped up in his iconic portrayal of the "little tramp" on screen. What he found – in London's East End rather than the dales of Yorkshire or small cotton towns of Lancashire – was grinding poverty and rigid class intolerance.⁵ Chaplin retreated back to Hollywood, horrified by what his homeland had become, but it was a sobering experience that highlighted the gap between social reality and Hollywood re-imagination. In *Strangers in Paradise*, John Russell Taylor observed the British behaving like "colonists in some far-flung part of the empire, retaining their old country interests, however inappropriate they may have been to the new circumstances."⁶ And indeed, far from the reality of post-war, post-Edwardian Britain, what many of the expat actors who went to California did create on screen and off, Chaplin included, was this pervasive caricature, a construction of the British "type," although a mightily convincing one at that.
- 7 And it has been this duality, an Anglo invasion from the late 1920s coupled with a stratified personification of the British character that has predominated when it has come to appreciations of these British emigrants to the west coast. Together these features seemingly created little artistic input into the American cinematic tradition, as Taylor concludes: "Beyond their mere presence and maybe a kind of speech-model they

provided, they had little creative contribution to make to Hollywood. If the British actors had any ideas of their own or criticisms to offer, these would seem to have been remarkably ineffectual."⁷ But what I want to argue here is that not only was that personification and presumptive creation of the Hollywood/British era from the late 1920s onwards not the whole story on offer but that an earlier British emigration had already established a set of principles and a working pattern that highlighted the influence and creative contribution of an under-appreciated set of British writer/directors rather than actors who set to dictating the pattern of classic Hollywood filmmaking for most if not all of the studio era to come.

- 8 The distinction between the two cohorts is actually very important too. Many appreciations of the British influence beginning in the late '20s rose with the stock invested in the above-named characters that made a larger-than-life impression on Hollywood. When west-end actor Arliss was offered the part of Benjamin Disraeli in Alfred Green's 1929 bio-pic of the Prime Minister, Douglas Fairbanks would later comment that: "Arliss was really where the whole Hollywood English thing started ... the image was tremendous and in those days the image was all that mattered."⁸ Following in the footsteps of the legendary English thespian, Sir Herbert Beerbom Tree, who actually arrived for a short spell in Hollywood as early as 1916, the image Fairbanks referred to was what Tree and Arliss specialized in: the ability to make themselves seem like a living embodiment of British spirit and endeavour, stereotypical or otherwise. As Morley suggests, Arliss's strength lay in remaining as English as he could possibly be, not least in respect of his employers. "By regarding himself as visiting royalty bestowing some immense favour on Warners by allowing them to photograph him in one of his most celebrated roles," Morley writes, "he rapidly persuaded the Warners personnel to regard him in that light too."⁹ Green's picture was an enormous success, helping to cultivate the impressive British grandeur that took Hollywood by storm in the inter-war years. Nominated for three Oscars including Best Film, it made a star of Arliss who then went on to replicate his Academy Award-winning performance of Disraeli for other historical figures, from Voltaire to Alexander Hamilton, but almost literally without redefinition.¹⁰ He did not need to appreciate the subtle nuances of each historical character because the characters actually took on a piece of George Arliss when he played them.
- 9 If Arliss was the one who *created* the "whole Hollywood English thing," however, C. Aubrey Smith was the actor who *personified* the "Hollywood English thing" as it unfolded throughout the 1930s. One of the industry's most influential writers of this period, Philip Dunne, credited Smith with introducing him to that most alien of sports for Americans, and at the same time persuading him to join Smith's principal social organization, the Hollywood Cricket Club. Dunne, who wrote historical epics such as *The Last of the Mohicans* (1936), *Suez* (1937), and *Stanley and Livingstone* (1939), saw in Smith a common internationalism that he admired, but also a one-man effort to relay British history to the world in the multitude of parts he played in what might be termed Hollywood's "British Empire epics." In *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935), *Lloyds of London* (1936) and *Sixty Glorious Years* (1938), as Dunne famously observed, "the sun, in effect, never set on C. Aubrey Smith."¹¹ But while these later, larger-than-life characters established a new colonial routine for some of the English, other filmmakers *in situ* had already cultivated a very different kind of aura.

Sons of Pioneers

- 10 The British came to California for opportunity certainly, whether they had any pedigree in film or not. Liverpool-born Charles Brabin began working for Edison's film company in 1908, got into acting first off as Abraham Lincoln in *His First Commission* (1911) and then later became associated with the films of Theda Bara, a screen goddess of the time whom he subsequently married. Brabin directed Bara in only one film, but, like his contemporaries, it was one of the few that returned to the British Isles or Ireland at least, in both form and content. For in *Kathleen Mavourneen* (1919), Bara played the eponymous heroine in a bitter-sweet Irish family drama, from a play by Dion Boucicault.
- 11 When Brabin returned home to Britain in 1913 to make a series of films for Edison, the inadequacy of British facilities and technology was put into perspective. He and a small crew travelled round the country on location shoots but found recruiting extras, maintaining and obtaining pieces of equipment, even the British summer weather, rarely up to the standards required. Brabin never ventured beyond Hollywood after that and as World War I intervened, the British film industry, such as it was at this time, fell even further behind its American counterpart.
- 12 But with his early silent pictures, Brabin set a pattern for British filmmakers working in the fledgling industry. He had acted in early classics, notably *Romance of the Cliff Dwellers* and *The Strike at the Mines*, both made by the incomparable Edwin S. Porter. Quickly establishing a reputation for himself as something of a raconteur and sociable party-goer, Brabin's films contained a similar free-spirited, lyrical turn and a "rich sense of imagery," the beautiful gothic presentation of which reached its height with *The Mask of Fu Manchu* in 1932. Described in a *Film Dope* profile of the 1970s as archetypal classic 1930s horror, the film conceivably stood up handily in comparison with, for example, fellow Brit James Whale's output at the same time.¹²
- 13 Colin Campbell was a Scot who found himself in America and later Hollywood making films for Selig and Mutual long before war in Europe broke out. He is remembered as a character actor, having appeared in hits like *The Man of Stone*, *The Road to Singapore* and *Alice in Wonderland*. But Campbell was a prodigious and accomplished director too, already in his fifties in fact by the time he took the helm of his first film, the ironically titled *His First Long Trousers*, in 1911. Before his death in 1928, he had directed, written and acted in more than 170 features during the silent era.
- 14 These were two filmmakers who helped establish the art and credibility of Hollywood almost before anyone was willing to take the place seriously, and confirmed the limited opportunities on offer if they had stayed in Britain. But two further formative writer-directors are perhaps the most significant in manufacturing a pattern of British influence and a trans-national perspective for the industry that occurred long before the end of the '20s. Together with his father, Reginald Barker made his way from Scotland to California in 1896, aged just ten. Young Reggie made his stage debut just five years later, writing, producing and starring in the play, *Granna Uile* in Los Angeles.¹³ Before long he had joined forces with the influential producer Thomas Ince and began "outdoor" filming from behind, rather than in front of, the camera. By 1914, at just 28 years of age, Barker was already directing the legendary William S. Hart in westerns like *On the Night Stage* and *The Bargain*, both made in that year.¹⁴ The prodigious rise of the young Scottish-Canadian sounds like the kind of folklore Hollywood was only too

happy to engage in. The truth was slightly more prosaic. Barker had no knowledge at all of movie-making when he first met Ince. It was one of the company's other directors, Raymond B. West, who took the wide-eyed and raw Barker under his wing and gave him a four-week crash course in the ways and wherefores of motion pictures. Small one and two reel films such as *True Irish Hearts* and *The Romance of Erin* (both 1913) quickly followed, an association with Japanese actor Sessue Hayakawa produced the hit film, *The Typhoon* as well as *The Wrath of the Gods* and *A Relic of Old Japan* (all 1914), the last of these starring the soon-to-be-famous director, Frank Borzage; and then came Hart and the western tradition that Barker did so much to cultivate as one of Hollywood's pre-eminent genres.

15 In a short appreciation of his career, George Geltzer describes Barker as "one of the unsung heroes of the early American silent days – a director of some of the best Thomas H. Ince productions."¹⁵ But therein lay a nagging issue at the centre of the relationship between the two, and a reason as to why early recognition for such pioneers was often hard to come by. Barker directed for Ince, but Ince took almost all the credit for his studio's work, whether he had been directly associated with the making of a picture or not. When he, D.W. Griffith and Mack Sennett formed the Triangle Company in 1915, Barker's career in silent Hollywood was assured but his legacy was not. Probably the most famous collaboration that he and Ince embarked upon followed. The film was called *Civilization* (1916), and it was dubbed the greatest production of modern times. With a scenario by C. Gardner Sullivan who went on to work with Barker many times over the next few years, here was a story that weaved the events of World War I into an allegorical fable about faith, humanity and world peace. But the film had as many as seven different directors working on it at any one time and Barker's contribution, as it was for many films that followed, was quickly lost. The *Variety* review of the film from 1916 cited only Barker's mentor, Ray West, as director, and lavished praise on Ince's spectacular producing role. Barker himself was never mentioned. It was not an unfamiliar scenario over time. *The Motion Picture Studio Directory* for 1918 described Barker as the highest salaried director in Hollywood, but then dropped in the caveat that this of course excluded directors who were also producers; in other words the people who were the appointed leaders in their field, people like D. W. Griffith and, naturally, Ince.¹⁶

16 And yet Barker became the cornerstone of Triangle's operations in the 1910s. *The Coward* (1915) was the very first production for the studio and it offered a template for the way he often managed to obtain the best stories, actors and scenarists to work with, and became responsible for the company's most successful forays into drama, action and adventure, usually with a social message. The film told the story of a young southerner, who, when called to join up at the start of the Civil War and follow in the footsteps of his illustrious father, finds himself too scared to contemplate fighting in battle. But, when his home is occupied by invading Union forces, he hides in the attic, happens upon a blueprint for the North's latest attack on the Confederate forces nearby, and daringly steals the plans and makes for the frontline. Ironically his father, old, infirm but too loyal to the cause not to join up, spots the son on horseback riding into Confederate territory while on patrol, assumes he is the enemy and shoots, wounding his son making his bravest attempt in life to redeem himself. With clever and original camera set-ups, a fast-paced and moving denouement, and acting that was more realistic, observed and grounded in character, not stilted and theatrical as the tradition had largely been up to this point, Barker's credits run all through the picture.

This film went on to make a star of its central protagonist, Charles Ray, who became a silent era icon, and in the same year, *The Iron Strain* and *The Golden Claw* both cemented Barker's reputation. But it was with the sensationalized *War's Women* in 1915, later re-edited and re-released as *The Awakening* in 1920, that Barker established his credentials as a filmmaker willing to take risks, and explore the boundaries of the new medium. *War's Women* was in effect banned because of its perceived attitude toward sex and sexuality but it was as much a film sending out a message about female liberation and social, political and cultural freedoms about to come, as it was a movie designed purely for titillation. Barker followed this up with *The Criminal*, a film in a similar vein "which skyrocketed Clara Williams to stardom."¹⁷

- 17 In 1918 Barker left Triangle just as its financial situation was worsening and Ince's mercurial touch was beginning to desert him in the increasingly competitive marketplace of the burgeoning Hollywood. Barker found himself at the Goldwyn Company where he directed seventeen films in a four year period. Six of the films were for the actress Geraldine Farrar who struck up a rapport with Barker, so much so that all of her Goldwyn output bar one film was with the director. Interestingly enough, that one film was *The World and its Women* directed by another up-and-coming young Brit, Frank Lloyd. Throughout this era the pattern of social involvement allied to scandalously entertaining pictures was a conscious effort on Barker's part to raise the status of cinema as an artistic medium from the very beginning. As early as 1916, he made it clear that he saw this fledgling industry as a force for serious and profound story-telling, not for simple risk-free entertainment.

- 18 "It is very significant," Baker remarked,
that the new art of cinema is attracting so many eminent men from the stage ... And men like these will make real plays for the screen, plays that will live – just as they have for the stage. And some basic standards hold good in both cases, real plays must get under the skin of things, must search the soul, and ring true to the highest aspirations. It is part of the photoplay director's task to see that his work fulfils these demands."¹⁸

- 19 Barker lived up to this creed for most of his career. In-between deft action sequences, his films managed to make some particularly acute observations about American history and society. His 1925 film, *The White Desert*, for instance, featured spectacular outdoor shots of the Rockies – including the filming of an avalanche sequence in the Continental Divide in Colorado – but also maintained a critical observation in regard to the struggles and dominance engendered by the railroad companies cutting a swathe across the American west in the late nineteenth century. In 1927, he directed what Geltzer has described as an "unusually historical" western, *The Frontiersman*, starring Tim McCoy and Claire Windsor, a movie suggesting more than a hint of complexity about the unfolding relations between Native peoples and the American pioneers infiltrating their lands.¹⁹

- 20 Barker was joined in his pursuits by the most well-known if not influential of these early pioneers, the aforementioned Lloyd. Frank Lloyd was born in Winnipeg but raised an honorary Scotsman, who made his way to California via the English stage and Canada, before carving out a career in acting, writing and directing that would span forty years. Like his fellow émigrés the demand for short features during the silent era saw Lloyd put his name to a hundred films before sound arrived, the most famous of which is possibly *Madame X*, Lloyd's adaptation of the stage drama by Alexandre Bisson. But even after that, his output continued almost unabated for a further fifteen years.

During this period, it was films like *Cavalcade*, written by Noel Coward, *Berkeley Square* (both 1933), and *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935), that saw Lloyd's credit rise (at the time he was the only three-time Academy Award winner) and the British influence multiply among the Hollywood back-lots as the craze for all-things English intensified.

- 21 What is of particular interest in analyzing the careers of Barker, Campbell, Brabin and Lloyd, however, is that, with the exception of the last director here, these were filmmakers never tied to producing anything that could be solely described as "British-Hollywood" movies. The "Hollywood-English thing" that had so intoxicated Arliss, Smith and others was not so apparent in the writer-directors that emerged a decade beforehand. They did not arrive in Hollywood and were not recruited by the studios or individuals because they could make homespun pictures, even though they could and did on rare occasions. Even Lloyd, who went on to direct some renowned "Hollywood British" pictures in the 1930s, was a filmmaker who made his name with dramatic and comedic shorts that had little in the way of an Anglophile bent to them.²⁰ Certainly a sense of assimilation into the medium as well as American tastes in movie-watching could explain how their respective careers developed. Directors were also called upon to make so many films in such a short space of time that opportunities for carving out some kind of individual vision – drawn from their native past or not – were few and far between. Nevertheless they were early examples of a breed of filmmaker who came from Britain and quickly translated their talents into the required Hollywood pattern, and that was never as easy as it might have seemed.
- 22 Reginald Barker went on to direct sixty films in a career that took him well into the mid-1930s and the sound era. But it was with silent pictures that his direction, under the tutelage of West and the patronage of Ince, really prospered. Apart from westerns he was adept at melodrama, comedy, and even historical epics as his and Ince's Civil War movies admirably demonstrate. Barker's long list of credits also confirmed the position of a British émigré who rarely returned to his roots. The most conspicuous exception to this trend was the film he produced as well as directed in 1921, *Bunty Pulls the Strings*, about the inhabitants of Lintlehaugh, a small Scottish village hiding all sorts of secrets and unusual characters. The eponymous heroine was played by Leatrice Joy, a gifted comic actress of the silent era who found fame with her bobbed hair and sophisticated society girl roles. The *New York Times* was effusive in its praise of the film, stating that, "Barker brought a good deal of the Scotch flavor of Graham Moffat's play to the screen and Leatrice Joy in the role of Bunty is charming and, what is more, intelligent."²¹
- 23 *Bunty Pulls the Strings* was in effect *Brigadoon* without the music of Alan Jay Lerner to accompany it, but it was also a brief return for Barker to the Scotland of his childhood, wrapped as this film was in a misty nostalgia for the old country. Yet this sort of cinematic recollection was rare – at least in the silent era – not just for Barker but many of the fledgling British filmmakers coming to California. More found themselves conditioned to subject matter that was purely American in its social, cultural and historical outlook than they revisited British stereotypes. In the 1930s, of course, this imbalance would redress itself somewhat, but by then even American directors were adapting British stories and settings, let alone the ex-pats who had found a home for themselves in Hollywood. The reason that American settings and stories predominated up until that point was a combination of factors, often practical – scenery and location being the most obvious – but not without an ideological resonance also.

- 24 What Barker and then Lloyd became a part of was an industry growing at an exponential rate in the 1910s. Even as early as 1920, as Paula Cohen states, "the United States had emerged as the unrivalled centre of world filmmaking."²² That industry had been boosted by a wave of immigration into America in the last decades of the nineteenth century, by the promise and unlimited opportunities of moving out west to California, and by the devastation of World War I in Europe. But, in Cohen's eyes, these developments were only contributory fragments in America's growing love affair with the moving image. For her, cinema in the early twentieth century did what the American myth dating back to Tocqueville, Crèvecoeur, Jefferson and Winthrop had done: it conceived of America as the beginning of something, as a new start in the history of mankind, and as a chance to dictate the future direction of the world. More than this, film offered up the opportunity, as photography had already done, of (re)creating the "reality" of America and presenting it back to itself. As Cohen stresses, the American fascination with photography in the nineteenth century highlighted a democratic impulse in the nation to document the "real." Photography in its infancy, it was argued, uncoupled the intentionality of the person taking the picture (and did not insert it back in until the popularity of "art" photography grew at the turn of the century) and left a factual template for the observer, the viewer, to contemplate. As everyone from Edgar Allen Poe, through Lincoln, Whitman and on to Supreme Court justice Oliver Wendell Holmes agreed, photography documented truth and America demanded fact; not for her the showy, artistic license of the "old world."²³
- 25 So it was when film first arrived. In America as in Europe, the moving image began by "documenting" events but as it passed over into narrative, character and form, that documentation rendered a nation reborn on film in real time. Hollywood quickly adopted a genre like the western as standard in its cycles of production. Location shooting was easy, adventure beckoned in the tales, and notions of "good" and "evil" could be quickly translated into the emerging medium. But a genre like the western also told a story of America, a mythic tale of hope, triumph over adversity and, more troubling and pernicious, of conquest. The western like other stories unveiled a history of the United States to its people, but the filmmakers caught up in its early evolution became torchbearers of that past, however contrived and artificial it became on film. And where you came from hardly mattered in this culture industry; the ability to shape the American past or present on film became a sign of one's ability in the new medium, mastering the art form was like mastering the "untamed west" that the sons of pioneers had come to inherit.

Conclusions

- 26 This outpost of possibilities in Southern California was the industry Reginald Barker, Frank Lloyd and others discovered and shaped in Hollywood's initial period. Barker's association with Thomas Ince and William Hart made his inculcation into the western a smooth passage, even though, just like Lloyd, he could lay no claim to it as a genre he knew or understood. But that did not matter, for Hollywood, in the spirit of its own recreation, made these two Scotsmen a master of this and other genres indeed, on their own terms.
- 27 Later histories of the studio era focused on the director as the mainstay of artistic and even business operations, none more so than Andrew Sarris's groundbreaking study of

the 1960s, *The American Cinema*, which famously borrowed from European critics the notion of directorial authorship – *auteurism* – as a key to unlocking the structure and routines of the Hollywood industry from the 1920s onwards. Auteurism, by its very definition, sought to separate the wheat from the chaff; to laud the artists who had transcended the system while merely acknowledging the presence of the artisans who contributed to it, the *metteurs-en-scène*. But, as Thomas Schatz makes clear in his equally famous study, *The Genius of the System*, the “routine contract directors” had much to offer also in creating art and establishing styles that were copiously imitated, and often referenced, but styles that Schatz insists were the product of a blend of stars, producers, designers, photographers and directors; in other words, the work of a studio. British director James Whale, who followed in the wake of these early exponents, was one such figure who, as Schatz points out, moulded his style and aptitude for horror pictures with “the resources and regimented production process” of his studio, Universal.²⁴

- 28 Where did the early British pioneers fall in this line of succession, artistic pedigree and control? Somewhere in the middle most likely. Brabin, Campbell, Lloyd and Barker never established a canon that could hold its own beyond their own era, as Hitchcock later did, and the weight of their trans-national British influence was somewhat diluted, at least in film historians’ eyes, by the overwhelming presence of Chaplin. And then there was the little matter of quickly fading influence, followed by swift and early obscurity, even before the ‘30s had been played out.
- 29 Although he adapted the Wilkie Collins story, *The Moonstone*, in 1934 and directed Ralph Bellamy, Karen Morley and Mickey Rooney in *The Healer*, Barker’s career regressed quickly in the early ‘30s. By 1935 he was retired, at the age of just 49, and left the movie business altogether to run a small gift shop in Pasadena. Barker’s death in 1945, only two weeks after he had married his third wife Katherine McHugh, met with little reaction in Hollywood; indeed for a number of years his passing was erroneously reported as having taken place in 1937.²⁵ Here was a classic example of a figure quickly discarded in the turnover of studio personnel and the fleeting effects of power and influence that Hollywood built and destroyed increasingly swiftly. And yet Reginald Barker, like his immediate Anglo-contemporaries, was one of the fundamental early characters who created Hollywood in the image it came to perceive itself. His career was prodigious and more influential than many at the time and since have acknowledged, but he also showed the way for a British sense of hard work, imaginative creation, and artistic flexibility. These were character traits that would be much in evidence as the more recognisable émigré community blossomed in the later 1920s and the British cinematic spirit began to infuse the studio routine.

NOTES

1. Sheridan Morley, *The Brits in Hollywood: Tales from the Hollywood Raj* (London: Robson, 2006), 83.

2. Brian Taves, P.G. Wodehouse and Hollywood: Screenwriting, Satires and Adaptations (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2006), 84.
3. Morley, *The Brits*, 2.
4. Morley, *The Brits*, 5.
5. John Baxter, *The Hollywood Exiles* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1976), 90.
6. John Russell Taylor, *Strangers in Paradise: The Hollywood Émigrés 1933-1950* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 91.
7. Taylor, *Strangers in Paradise*, 105.
8. Morley, *The Brits*, 91.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Richard Griffith comments that screen biographies of the decade largely meant George Arliss tinkering around with the course of history while playing the same character in different costumes. See Morley, *The Brits*, 92.
11. Philip Dunne, *Take Two: A Life in Movies and Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 18.
12. Markku Salmi, "Brief Biography of Charles Brabin," *Film Dope* no. 4 (March, 1974): 40-41.
13. George Geltzer, "The Complete Career of Reginald Barker," *Griffithiana* no. 32/33 (September, 1988): 245.
14. Larry Langman, *Destination Hollywood: The Influence of Europeans on American Filmmaking* (London: McFarland & Co, 2000), 126.
15. Geltzer, "Complete Career": 245.
16. "Biography of Reginald Barker," *The Motion Picture Studio Directory* (4th Edition), 1918: 231.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Geltzer, "Complete Career": 247.
19. *Ibid.*: 250.
20. The Mexican's First Raid was only the second picture Lloyd directed in 1914, but was a western set on the Texan border which he also happened to star in with the actress and director Cleo Madison.
21. Gelzer, "Complete Career": 248.
22. Paula Marantz Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5.
23. *Ibid.*, 6-8.
24. Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 6.
25. Gelzer, "Complete Career": 251.

ABSTRACTS

British visitors to Hollywood from the late 1920s onward have captured the attention of writers as importing a particular view of their home country in a succession of "British-Hollywood" movies. This article argues, however, that there was an initial wave of such trans-national pioneers – writer-directors Charles Brabin, Colin Campbell, Reginald Barker and Frank Lloyd – who not only did *not* demonstrate such "Britishness" in their work but instead made a crucial contribution to the development of classical Hollywood filmmaking. At times, they also offered a

more nuanced view of social and historical complexities of the American past than many US-born directors.

INDEX

Keywords: British writer-directors, Hollywood, Hollywood British Films, silent film, the western, trans-nationalism

AUTHORS

IAN SCOTT

University of Manchester, United Kingdom