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THE SUN SHINES BRIGHT

Reviewed by Lindsay Anderson

In a moment of discouragement, no doubt, John Ford remarked two years ago that *The Quiet Man* would quite likely be his last picture. Happily, though, his spirits seem to have revived. Of the three films he has made since then, *The Sun Shines Bright* is the second, and the most entirely his own. *"I didn't make it for the critics"* he said of it, *"or for the public. I made it for myself."* And personal feeling, personal statement—those qualities which seem each year to grow rarer in the American cinema—are implicit in every foot of it.

Budgeted modestly and shot fast, the film has its rough edges. Visually, it is somewhat lack-lustre: Archie Stout (the cameraman also on *Fort Apache* and half *Rio Grande*) is not one of Ford's more distinguished collaborators, and though the images have all the forcefulness, lucidity and power of suggestion that one would expect, their lighting is rather

"I Bambini ci Guardano".

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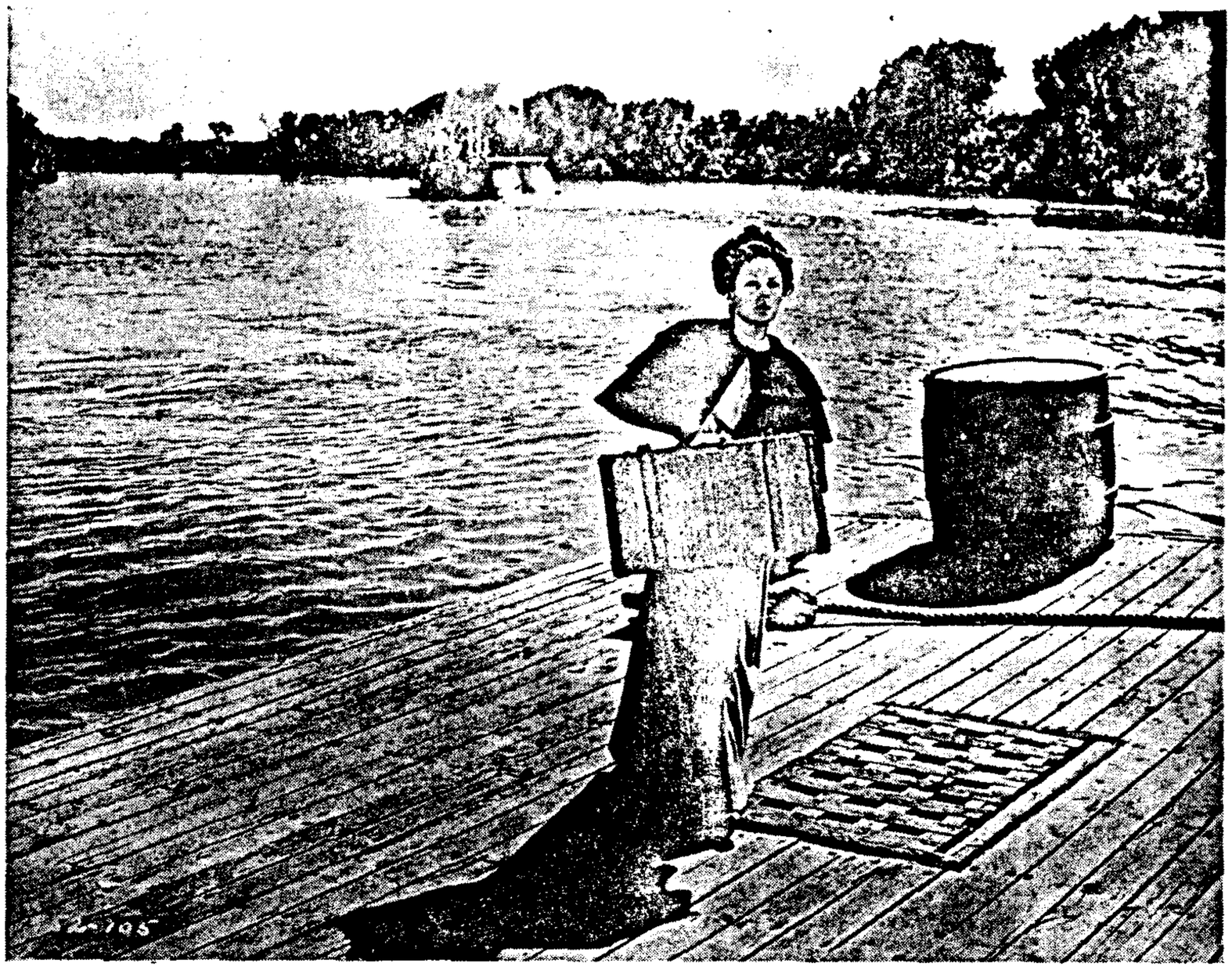

A scene from "The Sun Shines Bright", with Dorothy Jordan.

harsh. There are signs too of Ford's impatience nowadays with the exigencies of exposition. Frank Nugent, who has written most of his recent films, has reported that he and Lawrence Stallings had to fight violently to get Ford to shoot what they felt was a key scene, from the story point of view, in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*—and even then he cut it out of the picture. *The Sun Shines Bright,* which is based on three short stories, must have set Stallings quite a few problems of this sort, and one suspects that in his efforts to weld this material into a continuous narrative he became involved in a number of similar arguments with his impatient director. It is obvious who won. The first half of the film is not without its puzzling moments; and I am still not sure what relation the girl was to the old General.

But you might as well criticise Niagara. Ford made *The Sun Shines Bright* to please himself, and as a result it has all the mellowness and familiarity of one of his really personal films. The world of these Judge Priest stories is one to which he has turned back with delight, affectionately nostalgic for their Deep South setting, relishing their ripeness of characterisation, brilliantly juggling their unabashed sentiment against their wry and earthy humour. The Judge himself, that affable compound of courage, humanity and the wariest opportunism, first figured in a Ford picture in 1934, when Ford directed Will Rogers in *Judge Priest.* Two years later he said to an interviewer: *"I remember a few years ago, with a Judge Priest picture, putting in an anti-lynching plea that was one of the most scorching things you ever heard. They happened to cut it, purely for reasons of space . . ."* Clearly that plea, which had to be abandoned on the cutting-room floor, remained in Ford's mind; for here it is in *The Sun Shines Bright,* reinstated and still glowing, and preceded with a masterly little sequence of panic among the Negroes, shot with the same impressionist brilliance and shock-power as the flashback to the boxing-match in *The Quiet Man.* Ford believes rather in the relaxed approach now; but when he wants to stun, he certainly has not forgotten how.

With its homespun comedy of small-town snobberies and politics; its sentimental-humorous reminiscences of service in the lost cause of the South, its old-time songs and feudal atmosphere, *The Sun Shines Bright* is a film that Ford has enjoyed making all the way through. But one episode has challenged and intrigued him above the rest—the climactic one of the prostitute's funeral. This is a magnificent tour-de-force, with its emotional conviction supported by a sharpness of definition that shows the hand of a story-teller of genius: the ornately-caparisoned hearse followed by the single figure of the Judge; the lonely barouche full of prostitutes, half proud, half scared at their own temerity; the raw crunch of wheels on gravel; the shocked and silent bystanders; and, in ones and twos, the generous-hearted ones who have courage above convention, and who step deliberately out into the road to join Judge Priest behind the hearse.

It is impossible not to wonder at the way Ford has managed to preserve so freshly, all these years, this power to move and to delight, this *poésie du coeur.* The phrase is Cocteau's; it evokes precisely the kind of positive poetry, full of faith and love of life, which Ford continues to create, alone. How glad we should be that he decided not to make *The Quiet Man* his last picture.

JULIUS CAESAR

Reviewed by Gavin Lambert

It would be interesting if this film could appear in London at the same time as Orson Welles' *Othello,* for they represent basically opposed approaches to Shakespeare on the screen. Welles, as we knew earlier from his *Macbeth,* is the great advocate of "cinema", and his two Shakespeare films suggest, almost, a pitched battle between two arts—the greatest mound of dead being formed by Shakespeare's lines, mowed down and piled up one by one in the cause of the director's own images. In *Othello* this style exists at its most brilliant, and the rich surface of the film hypnotises, its rhythm is original and daring. Yet there seems to me no doubt that the new *Julius Caesar* (produced by John Houseman, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, for M.G.M.) is not only better Shakespeare but, paradoxically, the more complete film in its own right. If you had never seen or read "Othello" before going to Welles' film, *you wouldn't know what it was about;* in human terms, in terms of character, of shifting and developing relationships, of the style of dialogue and construction, it

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