Film History, Volume 22, pp. 453–462, 2010. Copyright © John Libbey Publishing
ISSN: 0892-2160. Printed in United States of America

Spectacles of Conspicuous Consumption: Picture Palaces, War Profiteers and the Social Dynamics of Moviegoing in the Netherlands, 1914–1922

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In the Netherlands, the novelty of moving pictures was introduced in the late 1890s in vaudeville houses. But it was even more widely popularized by travelling showmen, who toured the country with mobile theatres during the fairground season (Spring-Fall) and sometimes set up semi-permanent shows during the winter season in café-restaurant establishments and meeting halls. The first permanent *bioscoop*-theaters opened in 1906.[1] Their diffusion was very slow. By 1 January 1908 the total number had only increased to seven permanent venues. Six of them were located in the four largest cities: Amsterdam (2), Rotterdam (1), The Hague (3) and Utrecht (1). These cities had a combined population of 1.2 million people. By comparison, the German city of Hamburg, which had around one million inhabitants, counted at least 40 permanent cinemas by January 1908, while the Belgian capital Brussels had almost 50 movie theaters for a population of circa 760.000.[2] We could add more comparative data, but the fact remains that whereas most countries in Western Europe witnessed a boom of permanent cinemas from 1905 onwards, nothing on the same scale happened in the Netherlands.

Substantial growth did not begin until 1910, with peaks in 1911 (+51 per cent) and 1912 (+ 81 per cent). However, the year 1913 already showed the first signs that growth was slowing down (+43 per cent). By 1914 there were just over 200 movie theaters in the Netherlands. In a population of circa six million, this is a staggeringly low number.[3] Yet,

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both the number of venues and their distribution across the country (a high concentration in the major cities in the Western provinces) was not unusual for the Netherlands. Other segments of the entertainment industry were equally underdeveloped, notably vaudeville and popular melodrama.[4] Some historians explain the lack of interest in theatrical amusements by stressing the Calvinist nature of mainstream Dutch culture.[5] We prefer to emphasise the fact that in the Netherlands the "culture of domesticity" was deep-rooted in all strata of society. During the nineteenth century, the principles and practices of domesticity developed into a national ideology, largely blocking the entertainment revolution that took place elsewhere in Europe and which paved the way for the rise of the cinema as a popular site for going out. As a result, the majority of the Dutch population, including parts of the working classes, shunned the cinema, considering moving pictures to be a fairground entertainment (*kermisvermaak*) that lacked respectability.[6]

Construction boom of picture palaces

During the First World War, the number of movie theatres in the Netherlands declined from 212 to 168. This decline was compensated for by the fact that the movie theaters which opened after 1915 were larger than their predecessors, indicating an overall increase in cinema attendance. To be sure, a wide range of evidence confirms that the film exhibition business flourished as never before. In the late 1910s, the growing popularity of moviegoing led to a construction boom of picture palaces, although again on a "Dutch scale". The most famous picture palace was the Tuschinski chain's Amsterdam theatre, which took more than three years to complete, finally opening in 1921. The building stood out for its un-Dutch luxury and exuberant over-the-top art-deco style. A monument of the picture palace era of moviegoing, one could easily take it for granted that the Tuschinski Theatre was built to enhance the respectability of movies and attract a better class of patrons. However, a closer look at the other picture palaces that Tuschinski and his competitors opened in the late teens and early twenties strongly suggest that their aim was not primarily to cater to the established bourgeois audience but to satisfy the increased demand for motion picture entertainment among the lower classes and *nouveaux riches*.

Ten picture palaces were built in the Netherlands between 1916 and 1922. Table 1 shows their seating capacity, opening date, and location, revealing the dominance of Rotterdam in this segment of the Dutch film exhibition market: five picture palaces were situated there. Moreover, the Tuschinski Theater in Amsterdam was founded and operated by the Rotterdam-based film exhibitor Abraham Tuschinski. Hence, we will focus more particularly on large-capacity and upmarket film exhibition in Rotterdam.

Table 1: Picture Palaces in the Netherlands, 1916–1922.

Theater name	Opening	Seating capacity	City
Nieuw Olympia	Oct 1916	900	Rotterdam
Luxor	Dec 1917	1200	Rotterdam
Rembrandt	Sept 1919	1200	Amsterdam
WB-Theater	Nov 1919	1500	Rotterdam
Rembrandt	Nov 1919	1200	Utrecht
Theater Tuschinski	Oct 1921	1620	Amsterdam
Asta	Dec 1921	1200	The Hague
Ooster Theater	Dec 1921	1025	Rotterdam
Cinema Royal	Feb 1922	1400	Amsterdam
Grand Théâtre	Dec 1922	1600	Rotterdam

In the early 1910s, Rotterdam counted two movie theatres that aimed at a better class of patrons, as suggested by their stylish advertisements in the press and the fact that they each marketed themselves as an *elite bioscoop* (elite cinema). However, they were a far cry from the early picture palaces that had been opened outside the Netherlands. Despite its name, the Cinema Palace had the size of an average nickelodeon.[7] Its competitor, the Elite Bioscope Cinema Royal, could accommodate just over 400 people. Jean Desmet built this venue in 1913 in the backyard of an apartment building situated on a thoroughfare that was designed to become a grand boulevard in Parisian style and the heart of the new city centre – but the entrance to the Cinema Royal did not have any real grandeur. On the eve of World War I, the largest movie theatre in Rotterdam – the Cinema Imperial – could accommodate up to 600 people.[8]

The first large-capacity cinema in Rotterdam was built by Abraham Tuschinski. It was the 900 seat

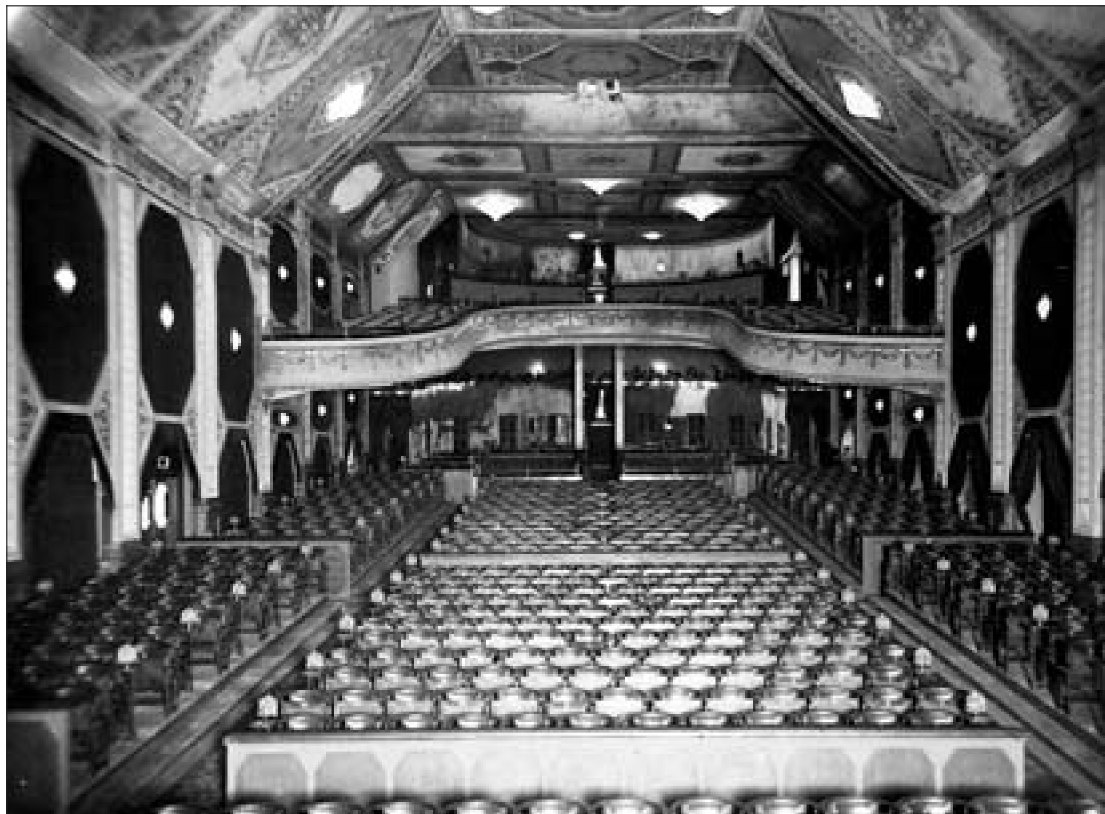

Fig. 1. Interior of the WB-Theater in Rotterdam, 1919. [Courtesy Spaarnestad Photo Archive.]

New Olympia Theater, which opened in October 1916. In his autobiography, Tuschinski describes the New Olympia as a place where "the petit bourgeoisie could enjoy beautiful films, first-class vaudeville and good music at popular prices".[9] Marked by the strong drive for respectability and desire for recognition that characterize his entire autobiography, the description is somewhat misleading.[10] An examination of the advertisements in local newspapers reveals that the programme consisted primarily of sensational melodrama, westerns, and other action movies, in combination with rather coarse live entertainments, including performances by boxers and wrestlers. Memoirs of patrons and employees repeatedly emphasize the proletarian character of the audience and their behaviour. According to one of the musicians, "it was a truly popular movie theatre that catered primarily to men, especially during the matinee shows. At night there might be some couples." Fighting in the auditorium was not unusual, he remembered, while roaring with Leo the Lion, the MGM mascot, became a tradition which the regulars greatly cherished.[11]

The New Olympia did very well and its profits allowed Tuschinski to venture into the Amsterdam market.[12] His main competitors and a number of newcomers also opened larger theatres in Rotterdam. By 1920, purpose-built cinemas with 1200 or more seats had become the standard. In addition to these new buildings, existing large-capacity halls with no previous history as film exhibition venues were temporarily converted into makeshift cinemas, including the city's main legitimate playhouse – a stronghold of bourgeois and elite culture since the late 1880s. Only the Grand Theater (1600 seats) and the smaller Thalia Theater (900 seats) bear comparison with picture palaces outside the Netherlands in terms of their interior and exterior architectural splendour. The other newly-built cinemas in Rotterdam were large but relatively plain buildings, and little money was spent on interior decoration, although the suggestion of luxury was effectively created by using ready-made decorative elements of plaster and *trompe l'œil* paintings. For instance, the 1500 seat WB-Theatre, which opened in 1919 in the outlying western quarter of the city, consisted of a spacious, box-shaped hall, built on the inner yard of an apartment block on an ordinary shopping street. While the

Fig. 2. Cartoon showing war profiteers in a fancy restaurant, asking the waiter for sauce to go with their oysters. From Siegfried Granaat and Jan Feith, *Uit Tijden van Oorlogswinst* [1918].

entrance lacked extensive ornamentation, the auditorium was richly decorated, but with inexpensive techniques. Decorations consisted primarily of painted art deco patterns on walls, balustrades and ceilings. Nevertheless, to the working-class and lower middle-class patrons who formed the bulk of the regulars in this neighborhood palace, the theater evoked a sense of luxury and artistic sophistication that they rarely encountered in everyday life.[13]

The film exhibition business was not only booming in Rotterdam but in all major cities.[14] In Amsterdam, cinema attendance figures for January 1917 were 22 percent up compared to January 1916. In Utrecht, the sales of cinema tickets rose 12 percent during the first six months of 1916 compared to the year before. No statistics are available for The Hague, but the local authorities characterized cinema attendance in 1915 as "very high".[15] For the industry, the sudden surge in ticket sales was a welcome change from the earlier years of permanent movie theatres, when cinema going in the Netherlands lagged far behind that in neighbouring countries. In retrospect, however, we know that it was only a brief period of prosperity. Movie tickets sales started to decline again during the recession of 1921.[16] All in all, the cinema would never gain a firm foothold in Dutch culture. We will first look at the economic rationale behind this war-time boom in cinema attendance and then discuss its reception in the press.

High wages, cold winters

How to explain the sharp increase in cinemagoing during the war years? Government sources give us a number of clues. In February 1917, the Ministry of Economic Affairs carried out a national survey in order to assess the impact of the War on the Dutch economy. One of the developments that caught their eyes was the fact that expenditures for commercial entertainment had mounted to unprecedented levels. Investigators found that two factors stimulated the demand for entertainment, both of them related to wartime effects on the national economy. Since the beginning of the Great War, there had been a significant rise in youth wages. The Netherlands remained neutral throughout the conflict, but it did mobilize its army of conscripts. Hence the majority of able-bodied men older than 18 years were taken out of the work force and partly replaced by younger people. Since there were fewer young workers available than there were vacancies, youth wages went up significantly. A good deal of this extra income was spent on entertainment. According to the government, cinemas profited most from the increased spending power of teenage workers because youngsters made up the bulk of the movie theatres' regular clientele.[17]

The second factor that led to the increased spending on entertainment was less age-bound and even less specific to the film exhibition business. It was the shortage of coal, which was at the time the

most widely used combustible material for heating and cooking in the Netherlands. The coal mines in the south of the country could not supply enough to cover internal demand completely. Hence the Dutch had to import substantial quantities of coal. As all belligerents considered coal to be a strategic materiel, this turned out to be difficult as well as expensive, especially as the war lingered on. To deal with the shortage, coal for private use was strictly rationed in February 1916. In addition, the government decided to reduce the production of electricity (power stations used coal). Thus most Dutch homes remained cold and dark during the winter months. Subsequently, the government reported in a 1917 survey that social life in the private sphere had come almost to a halt: "families no longer visit each other, especially during the winter". Instead "they flocked to the theatres".[18] Clearly, many people preferred to spend their evenings in playhouses, cinemas, cafes, restaurants and concert halls, where the presence of a crowd and at least some heating and lighting would make them feel more comfortable than at home. All segments of the entertainment industry profited from the lack of heating and electricity in private homes, but low-brow and middle-brow amusements benefited more than the high end of the market.

It is important to underline that the widespread participation in commercialised public entertainment meant a radical break with traditional recreation patterns in the Netherlands. Dutch families typically spent their evenings in the domestic sphere – sitting around the stove. The "hearth" was the physical and ideological centre of the home. If the Dutch went out, it was usually to visit relatives or friends or to participate in non-commercial, semi-private entertainments such as amateur singing clubs, poetry societies and debating clubs. Now suddenly the Dutch went to the movies *en masse*. Family-oriented cinemas that offered a combination of movies and live entertainment in a respectable but informal, homey setting (*gezellig*) fared especially well during the war years.[19]

The survey by the Ministry of Economic Affairs failed to mention another war-related factor that contributed to the increase in cinema attendance. Reports in the trade press indicate that, in addition to the growth in the major cities, tickets sales also went up significantly in rural regions where Dutch troops were located and in small towns with camps for Belgian refugees.[20] Soldiers on leave and refugees both looked for any opportunity to amuse themselves while waiting for the war to end, thus considerably augmenting the regular clientele at local cinemas. Moreover, Belgians were used to going to the movies more often than the Dutch, and by the early 1900s the cinema had already been well-integrated into the cultural infrastructure of Belgium.[21]

War profiteers and the crisis of bourgeois culture

While the Dutch government showed a keen interest in the economic aspects of the entertainment boom, the contemporary press offers us insight into the social dynamics and cultural tensions that accompanied the growing popularity of the movies and other commercial amusements. Time and again the newspapers discuss the transformation of leisure that occurred during the First World War in terms of a collapse of legitimate bourgeois culture. Traditional bourgeois society was said to be falling apart in the face of the blatantly vulgar lifestyle and spending habits of a new generation of *nouveau riches* who owed their wealth to the war.

Supply shortages, rationing, import and export regulations – characteristic features of a war-time economy – created ample business opportunities for black-marketeers, smugglers, hoarders, etc. Huge fortunes were made in coal, fish, meat and vegetables. Rotterdam was a perfect location for more or less shady businessmen as it was a "neutral" hub on the shipping and trading route between Germany and the rest of the world.[22] With a keen sense of where quick money could be made, a number of major war profiteers reinvested their profits in the entertainment industry. This booming sector offered ample opportunities for investment – not least because banks and established investors were unwilling to provide loans to finance its growth. Thus, war profiteers and successful entrepreneurs in the leisure business found one another.

Cornelis Blad, for instance, the owner of a large business in canned vegetables, backed the expansion plans of the Tuschinski chain by investing half a million guilders in the development of the Tuschinski Theater in Amsterdam. During the war, Blad was accused of stockpiling vegetables on a large scale to create shortages, which then enabled him to make massive profits on his canned products.[23] Speculative practices like these led to a general "vegetable crisis" in Amsterdam during the summer of 1916. When the Tuschinski Theater opened its doors in 1921, few inhabitants realised that they had helped

TUSCHINSKI NIEUWS

Uitgave: Publiciteits-Bureau LOUIS CATS, Rotterdam–Amsterdam

Bureau voor Redactie: THEATER TUSCHINSKI AMSTERDAM / Hoofdredacteur: MAX TAK

1e JAARGANG | No. 1 | 21 JANUARI 1927

A. TUSCHINSKI

Fig. 3. Abraham Tuschinski. Front cover of the weekly *Tuschinski Nieuws*, 21 January 1927 (first issue).

to build this lavish movie theatre by paying too much for canned carrots and beans. Perhaps inspired by the success of Blad and his like, veteran film exhibitor Jean Desmet invested in two fishing boats, hoping to make big profits in the herring trade, another sector where prices went up tremendously during the war.[24] Contemporary observers and later historians have overlooked the financial involvement of war profiteers in the entertainment business. Although hard evidence is rather difficult to find because transactions were often done by "straw men", there are enough indications to suspect that money from (semi)-criminal trading activities fuelled the rapid expansion of the amusement industry during and after the war.

Many war profiteers liked to show off their new fortunes rather than remaining behind the scenes. Again the entertainment industry was a natural ally, because restaurants, cabarets, dance halls and theatres constituted an ideal arena for conspicuous consumption. Hence it is not surprising that in the public discourse the entertainment business became strongly associated with the practitioners and practices of war profiteering. The stylish restaurants where war profiteers indulged in the luxury of champagne, oysters and cigars were the principal and most criticised instances of this conspicuous life style. Especially visible in the public sphere and a favourite object of derision by the defenders of good taste were the upwardly mobile among the war profiteers – those who had risen from the lower ranks of society. From the viewpoint of the vested elite, many of whom fared equally well from the war but spent their fortunes in more subtle ways (buying art for example), these *nouveau riches* did not know how to behave "properly." As exemplified by contemporary cartoons, war profiteers were typically portrayed as people who had rapidly climbed the social ladder thanks to their money, but lacked the cultivation that was the genuine sign of belonging to the middle and upper strata of society.[25]

Movie theatres were less suited for eye-catching public displays because a large part of the show took place in the dark. The popularity of the cinema was nevertheless seen by the nation's cultural authorities as yet another war-time extravagance and a symptom of consumer culture getting out of hand. The combination of film stars, wealthy moguls and picture palaces framed the cinema in terms of unparalleled opportunities for upward social mobility and a widespread democratization of consumer culture – developments that undermined the existing hegemonic order. Abraham Tuschinski, an Eastern European Jewish immigrant of humble origins, fashioned around the cinema an image of luxury and affluence, both in terms of his own public persona and by building a million guilder picture palace for the masses. He frequently appeared in public to promote his shows, very well groomed but somewhat self-conscious because he was short and spoke broken Dutch, which highlighted his status as *nouveau riche* and made him an easy target for bourgeois snobs. Looking back at the war years, the Dutch journalist Charles Cocheret remembered:

> [L]uxury was no longer the rightful domain of a small number of privileged people. War profiteers, swindlers, and shady business agents

> bought castles, manors and aristocratic titles. They built cinemas like cathedrals, and harem-like dancing halls.[26]

When the Tuschinski Theater in Amsterdam opened, his "Kino-Palast" was heavily criticized in the bourgeois press for its "colossal lack of taste".[27]

As the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has taught us, aesthetic judgements are never a mere matter of taste but also reveal power relations between different strata of society.[28] Hence, we would argue that this bourgeois bashing of commercial leisure culture hints at much deeper anxieties about changing power relations between the classes. Within a few years, the rapidly expanding low-brow entertainment business had given rise to a public sphere that challenged the vested bourgeois culture and jeopardised the institutions for respectable leisure, as both the legitimate theatre and the opera suffered from increased competition. Many members of the old middle and upper classes were profoundly disturbed by this "degeneration" of public life, which was recalled well into the 1950s as a defining characteristic of the war-time period. In the words of Cocheret, "those were the days of war profiteers and cinema palaces".[29]

German decadence and American commercialism

The conjunction of conspicuous consumption, low-brow taste and war profiteering had, by the end of World War I, seriously harmed cinema's prospects of becoming a respectable entertainment medium suited for all classes. After the war, cinema's position within the Dutch cultural field further deteriorated as it became entangled in an intellectual discourse that opposed entertainment to art, and increasingly positioned the film industry as a money-grubbing business that was solely interested in satisfying the needs of the "sensation-seeking masses".[30]

Anti-Americanism marked much of the debate about the cinema from the mid-1920s onwards.[31] Initially, however, most of the criticism was directed at the German film industry. While some German films were praised for their artistic quality, their reception was overshadowed by the negative coverage of the so-called *Aufklärungs*-films. Launched in 1917 by the German Ministry of War to warn the population against the dangers of venereal diseases, the production of *Aufklärungs*-films about sexual taboos and social problems, such as drug addiction, boomed soon after the war as a result of the abolition of censorship in the early days of the young Weimar Republic. Among "respectable" Dutch citizens, German cinema earned itself a highly controversial and ambiguous reputation because of these "educational films", which many considered pornographic. Until censorship was reintroduced in the mid 1920s, the German film industry flooded the market with this genre, not to educate the audience but purely for commercial motives.[32] A good number of these sensational melodramas about sex and drugs became box-office hits in the Netherlands. Some of them enjoyed highly publicized long runs in picture palaces – a short-sighted marketing strategy that undermined any serious ambition to improve the status of the cinema. The nation's cultural critics, who continued to be obsessed by the alleged degeneration of bourgeois culture that had taken root during the war years, now blamed Germany for further corrupting the nation. From their perspective, Dutch society was slipping further and further downward as a result of German cultural and economic imperialism:

> Where opera and serious drama once ruled, operetta and vaudeville now dominate. Where once operetta and vaudeville were in office, we now find ... the cinema. And it is here, in the movie theatres, that we find another plunge downhill. It is said that German capital is behind some of the big new movie theatres. We don't know if this is true, but when you look at their programmes, you have to conclude that there is indeed a German mentality in the movie theatres – the mentality of post-war Berlin, from where we receive repeatedly in our newspapers such alarming news. The announcements and descriptions of the programmes provide irrefutable evidence of mental decadence and moral breakdown. Sexual problems, *Aufklärungsfilms* and similar works exploit the low mental and moral taste of a part of the audience – and with great success.[33]

The widespread rumours about German capital taking over Dutch cinemas were not unfounded. Even before the end of the war, the UfA had begun to acquire movie theatres and expand its distribution activities in the Netherlands by way of a local subsidiary, the Neerlandia Company. In addition to several smaller venues, the UfA managed to gain control over three picture palaces: the Luxor Theater in Rot-

Fig. 4. Advertisement for the opening night in Rotterdam of the Aufklärungsfilm *Mogen wij zwijgen?* (*Es werde Licht!)*, 2. Teil, 1918. *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 27 February 1918.

terdam (1918), the Rembrandt Theater in Amsterdam (1919) and finally the Asta Theater in The Hague (1921). In other words, three out of ten picture palaces were flagships for German films. In the press, the *Aufklärungs*-films and the UfA expansionism were condemned time and again, often via cultural, social and economic concerns. Fearing that such negative publicity would harm their business, the national organisation of cinema owners and film distributors blocked the distribution of *Hyänen der Lust* in 1919. A year later, they launched a campaign to promote the artistic qualities of the movies. Tellingly, the industry's new weekly trade paper was baptized *Kunst en Amusement – Art and Entertainment*.[34]

For a brief moment in the early 1920s, the industry's drive for respectability and its efforts to put an end to the medium's long-standing link with fairground amusements seemed to pay off. The cultural elite began to take up the issue of "film as art" and film as a means to elevate the taste of the masses – partly inspired by the popular success of German expressionist films, especially *Die Nibelungen* (1924). "The era when the cinema was only for maids and commonplace people is gone. Still, we have to continue the fight against prejudice, stubbornness, disdain, and contempt", *Kunst en Amusement* noted in 1924.[35] The reputation of German cinema rapidly improved, but entrepreneurs in the Dutch film industry hardly profited from the transformation in the critical discourse, as this soon gave way to a new and even more vigorous crusade against the low-brow character of the cinema and its core audience. From the mid-1920s onwards, "Americanism" became the object of relentless criticism by left-wing intellectuals, as well as the defenders of bourgeois taste and morality. In 1927, they organised themselves into the Dutch Film League (Nederlandsche Film Liga), an association committed to propagating "true film art" and fighting everything that kept the cinema from realising its full artistic potential. In its founding manifesto, there was little room for subtleties or consideration for the film exhibition business:

> *The Nibelungen, The Big Parade, Potemkin, Mother, Ménimoltant, Variety*.... At stake is the film. One out of a hundred times we see: the film. For the rest, we see: the bioscope. The mob, the commercial regime, America, Kitsch. In this stage the film and the bioscope are each other's natural enemies. [36]

As the Dutch cultural elite embraced the Film Liga and its discourse, commercial cinema (the *bioscoop* as opposed to film as art) was relegated for good to the bottom-end of the cultural hierarchy and the margins of middle-class sociability.[37]

The emergence of the picture palace is usually seen as a symptom of the ongoing bourgeoisification of the new film medium. Film scholars may disagree about the rate and pace at which picture palaces conquered the middle class entertainment market both in Europe and North America, but all in all, the consensus is that these large and lavish cinemas helped to make the movies respectable among middle-class audiences, while at the same time encouraging working class audiences to adopt a more middle-class life style. The picture palaces certainly added a new dimension to the spectacular realities of everyday life in the age of consumer capitalism, offering an arena for class-transcending conduct and self-fashioning.

To some extent, this was also the case in the Netherlands. However, if in the Netherlands the picture palace came to be seen as a symptom of the bourgeoisification of the cinema and its audience, it was the wrong kind of bourgeoisification. That is: the ascendance of a vulgar, new bourgeois life style that threatened the hegemony of the established middle class and its cultural institutions. This made the picture palaces a source of socio-cultural polarization, rather than a means to facilitate cinema's integration into the cultural mainstream. Hence, we conclude that due to the social dynamics of moviegoing during the First World War, neither the "old" middle classes nor the nation's cultural elite embraced the picture

palace as a respectable entertainment venue. This may well be one of the main reasons why movie attendance in the Netherlands remained far below the European average.

Notes

1. Earlier venues were only semi-permanent. Our statistics are based upon the online Cinema Context Database (www.cinemacontext.nl), which stores thousands of pieces of data about film exhibition in the Netherlands from 1896 to the present. Despite some inconsistencies and incomplete information, the data are reliable enough to show the most important trends. In addition, we have corrected some data on the basis of our own research. In the number of cinemas, we excluded vaudeville theatres because their mixed-bill programmes were dominated by live stage acts.

2. Michael Töteberg, "Neben dem Operetten-Theater und vis-à-vis Schauspielhaus. Eine Kino-Topographie von Hamburg 1896–1912", in Corinna Müller and Harro Segeberg (eds) *Kinoöffentlichkeit (1895–1920). Enstehung, Etablierung, Differenzierung* (Marburg: Schüren 2008), 87–104; Guido Convents, *Van Kinetoscoop tot café-ciné. De eerste jaren van de film in België 1894–1908* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2000), 302–320.

3. Karel Dibbets, "Het taboe van de Nederlandse filmcultuur: Neutraal in een verzuild land", *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 9.2 (2006): 46–64.

4. On the nineteenth and early twentieth century history of popular theatre in the Netherlands, see Jacques Klöters, *100 jaar Amusement in Nederland* (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1987) and Rob Erenstein (ed.), *Een theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996).

5. See, for instance, Jan Hes, *In de ban van het beeld. Een filmsociologisch-godsdienstsociologische verkenning* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972); Jaap Boter and Clara Pafort-Overduin, "Compartmentailsation and its influences on film distribution and exhibition in The Netherlands, 1934–1936", in Michael Ross et al. (eds), *Digital tools in media studies. Analysis and research. An overview* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2009), 66–67.

6. On Dutch domesticity, see Anton J. Schuurman, "Is Huiselijkheid Typisch Nederlands? Over Huiselijkheid en Modernisering", Berichten en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden 107 (1992): 745–759; Els Kloek, *Vrouw des Huizes. Een cultuurgeschiedenis van de Hollandse huisvrouw* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2009).

7. Cinema Palace's managing director was Augustin de Ruyffelaere, a Frenchman, who ran a travelling show before starting his first permanent cinema in 1908. Rotterdam Municipal Archive, local police, access number 63, item 3380, aliens registry 1904–1910, reference number 194.

8. Ivo Blom, *Jean Desmet and the Early Dutch Film Trade* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 115–116. *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 9 January 1913.

9. Abraham Tuschinski, "Vijftien jaar van mijn leven", installment X, *Tuschinski Nieuws*, 25 March 1927: 8–10.

10. For a detailed analysis of Tuschinski's autobiography, see André van der Velden, "Life Writing, Marketing, and the Construction of Cinema History. On the Ghost-written Autobiography of Dutch Film Entrepreneur Abraham Tuschinski", in Arianne Baggerman, Rudolf Dekker and Michael Mascuch (eds), *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2010).

11. Quoted in Herman Romer, *Oude Binnenweg toen en nu. De geschiedenis van een Rotterdamse straat* (Zaltbommel: Europese Bibliotheek, 1993), 39.

12. On the history of Tuschinski's cinema chain, see Henk van Gelder, *Abraham Tuschinski* (Amsterdam: Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 1996); Nelleke Manneke and Arie van der Schoor, *Het grootste van het grootste. Leven en werk van Abraham Tuschinski (1886–1942)* (Capelle aan den IJssel: H.A. Voet, 1997).

13. For a detailed description of the WB-Theatre, see *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 21 November 1919. See also Henk Berg, *Over stalles en parket: Rotterdam en het witte doek* (Rotterdam: Ad. Donker, 1996), 24 (photograph).

14. Karel Dibbets, "Het bioscoopbedrijf tussen twee wereldoorlogen", in Karel Dibbets and Frank van der Maden (eds), *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse film en bioscoop tot 1940* (Houten: Wereld Venster, 1986), 245; *Verslag van Rotterdam, 1914–1919*, Staten van opbrengsten der plaatselijke belastingen en heffingen; *Het Centrum*, 18 May 1917.

15. "Nota betreffende de economische toestand", *Handelingen der Saten-Generaal*, Bijlagen 1916–1917, nr. 440–2, 27–28; K. Dibbets, ibid., 245.

16. In its issue of 25 June 1921, the trade paper *Kunst en Amusement* referred to the situation in the exhibition business as one of "general malaise".

17. "Nota betreffende de economische toestand", *Handelingen der Staten-Generaal*, Bijlagen 1916–1917, nr. 440–442, 27–28.

18. Ibid, 12.

19. The notion of *gezelligheid* has no equivalent in other languages, but it hints at a feeling of informal *home-*

liness that is considered typical of Dutch culture by the Dutch population, as well as by foreign visitors.

20. Reports on the effects of mobilisation, the outbreak of war and the influx of Dutch refugees on the film exhibition business in the Netherlands were regularly published in the Dutch film trade press. See *De Bioscoop-Courant*, and *De Kinematograaf*, volumes 1914–1918. See also Ivo Blom, "Business as usual? Filmhandel, bioscoopwezen en filmpropaganda in Nederland tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog", in Hans Binneveld et al. (eds), *Leven naast de catastrofe. Nederland tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 130–131.
21. Convents, *Van Kinetoscoop tot café-ciné*.
22. Paul Moeyes, *Buiten schot. Nederland tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog 1914–1918* (Amsterdam and Antwerp: De Arbeiderspers, 2001), esp. chapters 5 and 7.
23. *Tuschinski Nieuws* (22 April 1927), 3; *Het Volk* (19 July 1916).
24. Blom, *Jean Desmet*, 317–318.
25. On war profiteers and their lifestyle, see Moeyes, *Buiten schot*, 302–307 and Harry van Wijnen, *Grootvorst aan de Maas. D.G. van Beuningen (1877–1955)* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2004). For a collection of cartoons on war profiteers, see Siegfried Granaat and Jan Feith, *Uit tijden van oorlogswinst* (Amsterdam: Van Holkema & Warendorf, 1918).
26. Ch. A. Cocheret, *Openbare vermakelijkheden. Een Rotterdams tijdsbeeld 1875–1925* (Rotterdam: Ad. Donker, 1955), 117.
27. Argus, "Bioscopen ... van binnen en van buiten," *De Groene Amsterdammer* (20 August 1921). See also *NRC* (29 October 1921).
28. Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979).
29. Cocheret, *Openbare vermakelijkheden*, 117.
30. Menno ter Braak, "Problemen eener Filmaesthetiek", *De Groene Amsterdammer* (10 April 1926): 16.
31. Ansje van Beusekom, *Kunst en Amusement. Reacties op de film als een nieuw medium in Nederland, 1895–1940* (Haarlem: Arcadia, 2001), 145–146.
32. On the history of German *Aufklärungs*-films, see Malte Hagener, *Geschlecht in Fesseln. Sexualität zwischen Aufklärung und Ausbeutung im Weimarer Kino 1918–1933* (München: Cinegraph Buch, 2000).
33. *Het Centrum*, 17 October 1919.
34. Blom, *Jean Desmet*, 309–301. Dibbets, "Het bioscoopbedrijf tussen twee wereldoorlogen", 254–255. Ansje van Beusekom, "Film als Kunst? Opvattingen over film en filmkunst in Nederland (1918–1927)", *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis* 1 (1989): 88.
35. "Goede film", *Kunst en Amusement* 5 (1924), nr. 43.
36. "Manifest Filmliga Amsterdam," in *Orgaan der Nederlandsche Film Liga* 1, reprinted in *Film Liga 1927–1931* (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij, 1982), 34. Similar views circulated widely in intellectual circles; see for instance Johan Huizinga, *Mensch en Menigte in Amerika* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1928), 121–122.
37. On the history of the Dutch Film League, see: Céline Linssen, Hans Schoots and Tom Gunning, *Het gaat om de film! Een nieuwe geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Filmliga, 1927–1933* (Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen / Filmmuseum, 1999). See also van Beusekom, *Kunst en Amusement,* chapter 5.

Abstract: Spectacles of Conspicuous Consumption: Picture Palaces, War Profiteers and the Social Dynamics of Moviegoing in the Netherlands, 1914–1922,

by André van der Velden and Judith Thissen

This article examines the sharp increase in cinema attendance in the Netherlands during the First World War and its long-term impact on Dutch film culture. The authors argue that a rise in youth wages, a coal shortage that forced people to look for entertainment outside the private sphere, and the emergence of a new upwardly mobile class of *nouveau riches* which had made their fortune with war profiteering, were responsible for the sudden popularity of the cinema in the Netherlands. Rather than a drive for respectability on the part of cinema owners, it was this growth in demand that accounts for the construction of picture palaces, which were partly financed by war profiteers. Because of their association with war profiteers and *nouveau riche* taste, picture palaces were criticized and shunned by the nation's cultural elite and vested middle classes, who continued to see the cinema as a fairground entertainment. Hence, in contrast with developments elsewhere in Europe and in the United States, the emergence of picture palaces in the Netherlands did not facilitate but rather hampered cinema's integration into the cultural mainstream.

Key words: Motion picture exhibition (Netherlands), picture palaces, social distinctions, bourgeoisification, World War I – profiteering, Abraham Tuschinski, Aufklärungsfilms

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