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vorgestellt von... Marguerite Engberg

■ Asta Nielsen: **Breve 1911 - 1971 (Letters 1911 - 1971)**. Udvalg foretaget af Ib Monty (Selection made by Ib Monty). Gyldendal, København 1998, 197 Seiten
ISBN 87-00-333-18-2, 250 kr.

The Danish film actress Asta Nielsen was all through her life a great letter writer. Many of her letters still exist. Some are preserved by Det Danske Filmmuseum, some by the Royal Library of Copenhagen, others in Germany, others again with private collectors. Ib Monty, the former director of Det Danske Filmmuseum, has made a selection of her letters. It consists of 77 letters and two speeches held by her and 20 letters addressed to her.

This selection offers us a chance to learn the person Asta Nielsen more closely. Already the first letter from November 8th 1911 is a brilliant example of her caustic pen. It is an open letter to the Swedish film censors, who once more had taken steps against one of her films. This time the censors had not only deleted parts of her film, as they did with *Afgrunden (The Abyss / Abgründe)* and *Den sorte Drøm (Der schwarze Traum)*, but had banned the whole film. The film in case was *Im großen Augenblick* from 1911, her first film for the film company of Union. Asta Nielsen turned so furious that not only did she write this letter, but she went up to Stockholm to show the film to the Swedish authorities, so that the banning should be annulled. She did not succeed in her plan, but her action caused one of the censors to withdraw from his post.

A letter from October 19th 1920 also deserves mentioning. Ernst Lubitsch is the author of this letter. He had just finished directing *Rausch*, after August Strindberg's drama „Brott och brott“. In this film Asta Nielsen held the female principle part. Lubitsch's letter was caused by a statement of Asta Nielsen, in which she said that Strindberg's drama had not been properly treated. Moreover she had complained that a close-up scene with her had been shortened from 5 to 2 meters. Lubitsch's answer to these attacks clearly demonstrates that this was a case of two artists with quite opposite ideas about film art. The result of this quarrel was for Asta Nielsen the unfortunate one that Lubitsch no longer wanted to direct a film with her.

From a letter dated October 19th 1924, written in Berlin to Clara With Pontoppodan, a girl friend and colleague in Copenhagen, we get an impression of Asta Nielsen's sentiments on the modern German film. She writes: „There are no longer any directors here, and my interest in film has gradually reached the freezing point.“ Thus she writes at a time when among many others Lang, Murnau and Pabst were active as directors. Not surprisingly did she have great troubles with the producers.

One might have wished for more letters by her from the twenties, but not many are apparently preserved from that period.

Her last letter from Berlin in this selection is written to Olaf Fønss, a Danish actor and friend. He had worked in Germany and was well known for his title part in the serial *Homunculus*. The content of this letter is pessimistic, as she writes: „Here in Berlin foreigners have no chances at all. Silent films are no longer produced. (...) But life does not consist of film and theatre only. Personally I am dead tired of both.“ In De-

ember 1930 she rejected an offer from Max Reinhardt. As his son later on said, Asta Nielsen was the only person who ever rejected an offer from his father.

In 1937 she returned to Denmark. Here she spent a long odium. For that is how to express her life from 1937 until her death in 1972. We treated her badly. She was unappreciated to say the least. Neither the theatre nor the film, nor later on television did employ her. Only once, in 1939, did she have a minor part in a play at a theatre of Copenhagen. She became bitter, which her letters from her years after the war demonstrate. Surprisingly her unsentimental sense of humour did not quite disappear.

At the age of eighty eight she fell in love with a man whom she married. The very last letters of the selection are beautiful love letters between her and her husband, Christian Theede. (Vgl.: A. Nielsen und C. Theede: *Liebe mit Achtzig. Briefe*. Hg. vom Filmmuseum Potsdam und A. O. Hagedorff. Berlin: Jovis Verlag 1997) These letters are in a strong contrast to all her earlier correspondence.

vorgestellt von... Jeanpaul Goergen

■ Corinna Müller, Harro Segeberg (Hrsg): *Die Modellierung des Kinofilms. Zur Geschichte des Kinoprogramms zwischen Kurzfilm und Langfilm (1905/6 - 1918)*.

(= Mediengeschichte des Films, 2). Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München 1998, 411 Seite, Abb. ISBN 3-7705-3244-0, DM 78,00

Nun liegt der zweite Band dieser aus einer Vorlesungsreihe der Universität Hamburg hervorgegangenen „Medienschichte des Films“ vor. (zu Band 1, vgl. FILMBLATT 5) Beabsichtigt war „weniger eine Geschichte des Films in Auszügen als vielmehr eine Geschichte des Mediums Film, so wie es sich in der Wechselwirkung mit anderen Medien herausgebildet, verselbständigt und auf diese Medien zurückgewirkt hat.“ (S. 7) So schlüssig sich dieses Konzept darstellt, das vorrangig die Interdependenzen der konkurrierenden Medien untersuchen will, so überrascht, daß viele der 12 Autoren dieses Sammelbands kaum auf diesen medienkomparatistischen Aspekt eingehen. Auf eingefahrenen Forschungsschienen lassen sich eben neue Weichenstellungen nicht so schnell bewerkstelligen.

Über ein Ärgernis sein vorneweg geklagt: es ist die selten schlechte Qualität der Abbildungen. Kein Verlag, der ein kunsthistorisches Buch herausgibt, könnte sich dies erlauben - bei einer filmwissenschaftlichen Publikation legt man offenbar andere Maßstäbe an.

An dieser Stelle ist eine generelle Anmerkung zum Thema Abbildungen in filmwissenschaftlichen Büchern angebracht. Leider stößt man allzu häufig auf die immergleichen Filmfotos, die zudem meist nur einen indirekten Textbezug haben. Hier sollten die Autoren insgesamt gezielter vorgehen und sich nicht nur um ihren Text, sondern auch um das entsprechende aussagekräftige Bildmaterial bemühen. Das ist mit Arbeit verbunden und mit Kosten, aber es gibt doch Spezialisten, die aus den Filmkopien wunderbare Abzüge herstellen können. Das ist nicht nur ein Service gegenüber dem Leser (und dem Käufer), sondern derart ausgesuchtes Bildmaterial ist eine wichtige mediale Ergänzung insbesondere zu Einstellungs- und Szenenanalysen.