

Edgar G. Ulmer in his Yiddish period: *Light Ahead* (1939): the singular space which a blind orphan inhabits through her sense of touch

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概要

エドガー・G・ウルマーのイディッシュ期の映画『ライト・アヘッド』(1939)を論じる。これまでこの映画に関しては、文化的側面とフィルムテキスト的側面の差異がさして意識されることなく調和的に論じられてきた。本論では、これまで論じられてこなかった、この側面に焦点をあて、この映画の登場人物である盲目の孤児により触知される空間の観点から論じる。それは、この映画におけるセット空間とロケーション空間がいかに特異なものであり、見る者はそれを、盲目の孤児が触知するように触知しなければならず、その触知の強度に応じて映画内の或る言説の読解はアレゴリカルなものとなることを示すことになるであろう。最初に、この映画『ライト・アヘッド』の製作経緯と最後のシーンにおけるロケーション撮影の魅力とアレゴリーを見る(第1節)。次に、この映画のフィルムテキストを分析し、特異なセット空間(書割のようなチープなセット、表現主義の刺激、「ハシディック・ゴシック」、「詩的表現主義」)、特異なロケーション空間(J・ルノワールへの敬愛など)が触覚的に触知されねばならないこと、およびそれら様式の衝突を見る(第2節)。最後に、この映画の登場人物のその後、この映画のその後の盲目の孤児性に触れる(第3節)。

"dear little child, oh I please, / pray for the hunchbacked
dwarf together!" (Clemens Brentano = Walter Benjamin).¹

Introduction

Edgar Ulmer's perspective is understood through S. Grisseman's

first monograph, published in 2003. Ulmer has long been known as “the king of the Bs,” but his various cinematographic journeys, which were known only fragmentarily, are now described in connection with his perspective. In other words, people other than cinéphiles now know that Ulmer produced minority films, including Yiddish films, as well as B movies.

Attention to the Yiddish film can be dated back to the past despite small drifts. And several important researches have been done (we have already referred to the outline for researches of Yiddish films in another article, so we want to omit it here). Certainly, any of them is important, but they contain harmonious discussions without revealing the consciousness of differences between the cultural aspects of the film and the filmic text aspects.

In this article, we focus on these aspects, which have not yet been investigated. In particular, this article examines the film *Light Ahead* (1939), created by Ulmer in the Yiddish period, from the perspective of the space which a blind orphan inhabits through her sense of touch. A close examination of this film reveals how peculiar its space is; shot both on set and on location, this film asks viewers to feel through the sense of touch like a blind orphan. The first chapter will investigate the filmmaking process and the charm of shooting on a location, as well as looking at the allegory in the last scene. In the second chapter, we analyze the filmic text in detail to show that its unique sense of space is constructed through the sense of touch. In the last chapter, we will turn to historical issues, asking what became of both the film and its cast in the decades following its release.

1. The process of producing *Light Ahead*, the charm of shooting on location, and the allegory in the last scene

1-1. The process of producing *Light Ahead*

Light Ahead as produced from spring through summer in 1939, at the same time that Austria and Czechoslovakia were incorporated into the Third Reich in Europe and approximately 800,000 Jews lived under rule of the Nazis; Hitler was about to declare war on Poland. Ulmer finished directing the Ukrainian film, *Cossacks in Exile* (1938), after having finished production of his second Yiddish film, *The Singing Blacksmith* (1938), then started to direct this third Yiddish film (Goldman 119-22). The original work upon which this film was based was *Di Klyatshe* (*Fishke der Krumer*), written by the grandfather of Yiddish literature, Mendele Seforim (originally S. Y. Abramovich), from 1869 through 1888. The script for the film was written by Chaver-Paver, who was a journalist with the Yiddish newspaper *Freiheit*, and an author known for his children's book and many dramas.² Chaver-Paver not only provided a script for the film (Ulmer's wife Shirley cooperated in writing the script), he also cooperated with Josef Green in making the film in 1938. The cameraman was J. Burgi Contner of the New Jersey Studio, who had worked on the first Yiddish film, *Green Fields*. In addition, Isidore Cashier, who played the part of the father in *Green Fields*, played the part of Mendele and taught aspects of performance. Roles he coached included the role that Baratoff and Ben-Ami played in *Green Fields* (1937) and *The Singing Blacksmith* (1938), respectively. This film became Ulmer's third Yiddish film and he had grown somewhat accustomed to the genre. However, David Opatoshu, who played a character in this film, described the work as follows: "It was Isidore Cashier who instructed actually." Though Ulmer finally directed it,

Isidore Cashier coached the performances. The only thing that Ulmer told the actors was the difference between acting in a stage drama and acting in a film.

1-2. The story of *Light Ahead*, apart from the tradition of Yiddish film

The story unfolds as a love story between a blind orphan woman, Hodel, and a lame man, Fishke. The setting is a Ukrainian ghost town. Though they live proudly despite their disabilities and love each other deeply, they cannot marry because of poverty. However, fate brings an unexpected turning point for them. The evil of cholera attacks the village. The village elders, seized by convention, make them marry in a graveyard at midnight as a ceremony to ask for the mercy of God, and then drive them from the village (1:27:28).

Not only Ulmer's Yiddish films but also other Yiddish films are full of many scenes of ceremonies like the wedding. Such an ethnographic scene is in this film as well, and the camera position and movement in the wedding scene prescribe the meter in the filmic text in this scene (Krohn 1983:64).

The Judean religious tradition is described as convention to torment a person in this Yiddish film by Ulmer. Therefore, the village is called Glubsk, that is, Foolstown (Brook 79). However, judging from the tradition of Yiddish film, a Judean religious tradition being represented as a convention to torment a person is heretical.³ Therefore, about Ulmer having deviated from the tradition of Yiddish film with this film, critics have said that Ulmer left the idyllic myth world and went to depict the universal pain of the Jew. Seen from this perspective, indeed, although Ulmer was born and raised in the Jewish world of Eastern Europe, he was

not tied to its culture and tradition, but displayed a resonance with the posture to go out of such a closed territory. On this point, he showed the posture of the "non-Jewish-Jew."

1-3. Charm of shooting on location, allegory of the words of the old man in the last scene

Though a detailed analysis of the filmic text of this film appears in the second section of this article, one attractive scene is contributed by shooting on location. The scene referred to is the last scene (1:29:15). The man and woman (Fishke and Hodel) leave the village and arrive at a field that deviates from the center of the town with the old man (Mendele) sends them away. Then, three people disembark from a carriage and engage in an impressive parting conversation ahead of Fishke and Hodel's departure. Hodel says, "I see your good hearts" while grasping the old man's hand. The old man replies, "You see? You're not blind, because you're happy" (1:30:55, fig.1). This last scene is impressive not only in respect of the story, but also in respect of shooting on location. That is, this scene is really splendid and impressive with respect to the filmic text. The old man gets off the carriage first, and the man who sits down beside the woman helps her get off the carriage. In this scene, as she stands up, the fixed camera tilts up, and the sky appears in the upper part of the screen. In addition, the scarf and shawl she wears flutter in the wind. In this scene, the existence of the wind is caught on film wonderfully (1:29:42,



fig.1



fig.2

fig.2, we will explain the significance of this scene in detail in the second section, comparing location shooting to shooting on a set).

Afterward, two people leaving the village disappear into the field creating the backdrop (1:32:36 fig.3); the field inclines gently, and the scene is composed in the way they go climbing.



fig.3

In addition, the old man who stays with the carriage mutters to the horse. Then, as the glance of the old man is directed to the beholder, he seems to murmur to the beholder. The old man says, "See how the lame leads the blind. Wonderful people of Israel. With their eternal hope and belief in a better dawn. May it bring joy and peace to all Fishkes and Hodels. And to all mankind joy and peace." Indeed, here, it may be possible to interpret that the figure of the Jews in the United States who escaped from Europe were in reality out of the film and the figure of the two people who are chased from the village and leave for Odessa with hope in this film are overlapped.⁴ In addition, Odessa referred to here was a place with a more accepting atmosphere for the culture than in the Jewish domiciliation area. However, Odessa was also known as the place where the worst pogrom occurred, that is, more than 300 Jews died there, several thousand were hurt, approximately 600 children were orphaned, and approximately 40,000 people hesitated in the roadside (Gitelman 2001:26, 47). Furthermore, we referred to, "With their eternal hope and belief in a better dawn" above, but generally speaking, the mental posture not to lose hope while being hit by such extremely severe hardship may be specific. However, it is possible to think that the things depicted as characteristics of the Yiddish culture in the United States may be

incorporated into this film: (i) "the sense of humanity based on the thought of good human temperament," (ii) "accepting hardship as a fact of the lives," and (iii) "double reaction for such situation (humor and philosophical submission) or optimistic pessimism" (Erens 1984:8). Furthermore, if the situation is seen optimistically, the light ahead, referring to the title of this film, is too optimistic, and if the situation is seen pessimistically, this title is ironic (Rivo 115, Brook 71f.). Therefore, an original interpretation tinged with a great variety of hues may be given to this film, depending on the parameters. We want to clarify the difficulty of seeing this film being equal to knowing this film by the sense of touch (e.g., seeing "light ahead" = knowing "light ahead" by the sense of touch) in the intensity of the filmic text in the following paragraphs.

2. Analysis of the filmic text - the specific space on a set and the specific space on a location-

The following are characteristics of this film: (i) the device of light and shade, (ii) the atmosphere of expressionism that reminds viewers of *The Black Cat* (1934), and (iii) the superficial resemblance with the Gothic mode generalized in *Dybuk* (1937) of the script by Morris Schwarz (Hoberman 1995:300). In addition, various tracking shots, which are not seen in Ulmer's other films in the Yiddish period, are prominent in this film. Thus, one can argue that this film is the most visually interesting, most stylish, and most complete of Ulmer's Yiddish films. In the following paragraphs, we will detail aspects of the specific space on a set (a cheap set using a backdrop, the stimulation of expressionism, "Chasidic Gothic," "poetic expressionism") and the specific space on a location (including respect and affection for Jean Renoir) in this film. We

will see the collision of both styles (the specific space on a set and the specific space on a location), after confirming that both styles must be known not by the visual recognition (the recognition of the outline of things through moderate distance), but by the sense of touch.

2-1. Opening dialog scene of old men - long take with a fixed camera

1-

In the opening scene, we see a waist shot of two old men by an endless long take; we also see this in other films in Ulmer's Yiddish period (4:01-). Viewers will find it difficult to continue watching this film, with an endless long take from the beginning.⁵ After this, the scene of the conversation among two old men and another old man follows. In this scene, shot-countershot is eliminated wonderfully, too. Though the position of the camera is changed, the waist shot of the three people is presented with a fixed camera. Furthermore, an old man and a youth, Fishke, who had returned home from Odessa, begin to talk after this. The waist shot of two people by a long take with a fixed camera is presented in this scene, too.

Afterward, the scene changes with Wagner-like music, and two women appear (one of them is the blind woman, Hodel). This shot is presented with a fixed camera. Only the position of the camera is changed. First, the knee shot of a figure sitting down is presented, and then a bust shot is inserted (16:41).⁶ Next, the blind woman talks to another woman, and while the conversation continues, there is no shot-countershot, and even if any, the scene is constituted in a way that both people calm down on a screen.

2-2. The dialog scene between Fishke and Hodel - the evasion of shot-countershot, an impressive kissing scene, and the finger which is as sensitive as the lip-

Few shot-countershots are seen in this film in the normal sense. However, this has meaning. The woman who is the chief character does not stare at her talking partner, because of blindness, when she has a conversation. Indeed, a close-up shot of her exists. In addition, the shots of her are inserted variously from the front and side. However, the shot of the object at which she looks is not presented. Therefore, viewers are left with an unstable situation, without being given the stability that the constitution of shot-countershot brings. Indeed, the character cannot see. However, she can feel. For example, there is the scene described below.

After the acquaintance leaves, the blind woman, Hodel, sits in front of the wall of the small house, and a young man, Fishke, appears again, and their conversation begins. The composition of the two people is constituted by a long take with a fixed camera, from the front basically (23:44, fig. 4, however, the bust shots of the two people are inserted appropriately). However, after this, the blind woman goes into the house, and on this occasion a camera moves after her, which is unusual in this film (28:05, fig. 5).⁷



fig.4



fig.5

A shot with such a moving camera is unusual in this film. *Light Ahead* was produced in 1939, and a moving camera was almost not used in the filming even though camera movement in all directions was possible at

the time. Therefore, the composition (or the movement of the camera) is more impressive than the story in this film (Hoberman 1995:303). Furthermore, the following scene exists. The man gives an apple to the woman chief character, and a conversation begins (46:28-, fig. 6). This is



fig.6

the scene where the woman sits in front of the house. The scene is composed of three kinds of fixed shots: the shot of her sitting in the background of the house, the shot of her from the front, and the close-up shot of her from the front.

Indeed, in this scene, she does not turn toward the man who is near, and this scene is not composed of shot-countershot, either. The two characters have a conversation with each other, and she seems to see something on this occasion as if felt tactilely (we may interpret it as light, the light ahead). Furthermore, in this scene also, the camera moves only twice, shaking delicately as if it mirrors the fluctuations in her delicate feelings. In addition, this camera movement with the delicate fluctuation is remarkable, in contrast to the tranquility of that following scene constituted with a fixed camera (which we will explain in detail in 2-3. In the scene, several men, sitting at the table in the shop, have a discussion among themselves). In this scene, the female character feels space as if letting her hand swim. Probably her finger is as sensitive as her lip. For example, we can see the following impressive scene. The chief female character (Hodel) has heard about Fishke's bad reputation from his friend, and she has trouble with him (53:48-). However, she reconciles with him and kisses him impressively. A normal kiss would be a lip-to-lip kiss. However, in this scene, she puts her forefinger, which she took to her lip, on his lip and then their fingers

intersect. This shot is presented to show a face shot of the two people on a slant (56:18). The man who can feel like Hodel, who cannot see, is Fishke, who can see but has a bad foot. In addition, if the thing she can see is the "light ahead," she feels and sees it tactilely in an original space. Therefore, if viewers see "light ahead," they will be asked to see in this way (we discuss the aspects of the original space of this film which asks viewers to feel tactilely in 2-4ff.).⁸

2-3. The scene of men talking at a table in the bar - long take with a fixed camera 2 -

We referred to the tranquility constituted with a fixed camera above, and now we will examine it in detail. In this scene, several men sit at a table in the shop and talk. The scene uses a long take with a fixed camera, which continues for a while. There is a table in the center of the screen, and the old man (Mendele) is in the depths of the bar; several men are at both sides (30:15, fig. 7). A candle stands on the table. There is a white wall in the depths, but it is not clear, probably because the bar is dark. The position of the camera is changed. Afterward, a close-up shot of the old man continuing to talk is presented for a long time. The following shot is of the people at the table from another different camera position. Afterward, the shot of dialog (about God) between two men sitting at a different table is presented, and in this dialog scene, shot-countershot is eliminated, and the bust shot with a fixed camera from the front is presented. The characters open a book on a table, and the candle burns. Their shadows are reflected on the white wall. The old man appears there, and a shot of



fig.7

three people using a fixed camera is presented. The men sitting at the table are at the left of the screen, and the old man is at the right. Furthermore, after this, a conversation occurs between the old man and Fishke, the chief character, and this scene, continuing for several minutes, uses only two camera positions. One is a face shot of a seated Fishke taken from the front. The other is a shot of the old man standing near a table and Fishke. There is a table in the center of the screen, and the old man is at the left side and Fishke is at the right side. Also, the following scene, where the old man continues to talk to himself about God as he looks out the window, is presented by an endless long take from one angle. There is a window in the left side of the screen (the house's thick wall and the window sash are impressive), and the old man is in the right side of the screen; the flame of the candle that the old man has in his hand below the window shakes.⁹

In this way, we see the calm space comprising an endless long take with a fixed camera in 2-3 and, in contrast, the space filled with the fluctuation of delicate feelings in 2-2. The blind woman feels the space tactilely because she cannot see. Accordingly, in the scene (i.e., the crooked space constructed by the expressionism set, which we will describe in detail in 2-5), her sense of touch should have touch feeling that is heterogeneous with touch feeling in the space by shooting on location (i.e., the space in the style of Renoir, which we address in 2-4). Also, viewers do not merely see the specific space but rather feel it (i.e., feel visually and tactilely). Then, the scene makes viewers feel unnatural, generally and visually (e.g., the continuation of the fixed shot is too long, and the unnatural and deserted feeling because of absence of shot-countershot). However, these are not unnatural at the level that her hand will feel tactilely. Viewers must understand the

duality to catch the spatial connection of the shot at this level. We will discuss the space created by shooting on location (2-4) and the crooked expressionism space (2-5) in the following paragraphs.

2-4. Charm of shooting on location, tactile hypersensitivity required because of blindness, respect, and affection for Jean Renoir

In this film, the feeling of outdoors that is brought by the transition from shooting on a set to shooting on location is splendid. In one scene, the female chief character receives an invitation from her girlfriends to come to the river that flows through the neighborhood to play with water (59:18-). This scene is clearly shot on location, and the atmosphere of the outdoor picnic is inscribed on the film. However, it is important to feel such slight things tactilely (Ulmer considered the space on a set to be stupid, and the exit from that space to shoot on location to



fig.8

be emancipation. It is important to see the exit not only at the level of its meaning but also at the level of the filmic text. In addition, as mentioned earlier, we cannot know the exit by merely seeing, and we are required to feel it tactilely.) Also, Fishke, the chief male character, runs out of the town made of a set toward a field to tell Hodel about the danger of contracting cholera by playing with water in such a place. In this scene, the camera chases Fishke, who runs at full speed across the field with a parallel montage from left to right. Before long, he comes to Hodel, who is playing in the river. Here, the feeling of outdoors is inscribed on the film with natural light documentarily and wonderfully. Furthermore, in the shot, the characters converse about the beautiful flowers at the

river's edge (1:01:33, fig. 8). In this shot, the composition is as follows: The characters are in the center of the screen and the wave of the river drifts from right to left. Light is also inscribed in the film wonderfully. The waviness captured through light (white and black contrast) is in the left side of the screen and, by contrast, the waviness with no light is in the right side. Also, light is reflected in the characters faces, and we can see the shadow of light and shade (1:01:46).

This outdoor shooting hints of Jean Renoir. The texture of this film is organized delicately, though it may not have as soft a feel as Renoir's. Of course, it goes without saying that this texture reminds us of the feeling of the texture of the film *Menschen am Sonntag*, produced in 1929 by Ulmer and others. From this, viewers must have contact with the grain of the film, *Light Ahead*, tactilely above all else.

Ulmer's daughter Arianne remembered her father Edgar as follows: "Dad always had a light meter and frame tool around his neck. On the set he was always designing the set up. In real life he did the same. Loved Renoir father and son. He was a landscape artist. His love of the land (like Ford / Murnau) is always present. He made a huge painting of the shot in *Green Fields* of the man tilling the land with his plow and hung it in our living room over the couch. That is how much he loved the image. The peasant. The working man. Ulmer was never a Communist but he was part of the socialist revolutionary beliefs of his European era" (Gallagher 2001). The image of green fields is presented from the viewpoint of the old man in a carriage at the beginning of *Light Ahead*, as well, and a farm village-like motif is adopted in the same way as in *Green Fields* (6:42, fig. 9). In addition, when it comes to Ulmer and Renoir, Francois Truffaut said, for example, "His



Nature in all its glory.

carefree humor and pleasant manner, his tenderness toward the characters he depicts remind us inevitably of Jean Renoir" (Truffaut 1975:180, 1980:156). Therefore, *Light Ahead* reminded us of "the lively game" in the films by Renoir. Renoir knew to appreciate the infinite various possibilities that rusticity and coarseness have in his rural story, as did Ulmer (Grisseemann 109).

2-5. The cheap set such as the setting scene, the stimulation of expressionism, "Chassidic Gothic," "poetic expressionism," collision of two styles

As for the constitution of the indoor space in contrast to the space on location, referred to in 2-4, something strange gradually becomes clear. One is the cheap look of the sets. The sets, including Hodel's house in the scene where she sits on the bench, are cheap sets that were made quite simply (this was also the result of severe budget restrictions as well as the PRC (Producers Releasing Corporation) period). Fishke comes along from the downtown, singing in front of the house. In this scene, the houses of the cityscape in the background are the sets without the expense of money or time.¹⁰ However, seen in

detail, these are not simple random sets. Indeed, the streetlight inclines, and the crosspiece of the house's window runs diagonally (17:47, fig. 10). In another scene, the windows of the surrounding houses are warped, too (59:06).



fig.10

However, this is totally intentional. Adding an angle to a horizontal plane and using a trapezoid-form are also intentional. In the later scene, the grill partitioning the window into four panes is twisted, the form of the window becomes triangular, and the

line does not take an orderly direction. The angle of the roof is inclined, and the sash runs diagonally. In this way, the shtetl which is familiar to them, and conventional, and seems to bring forth an unlucky nightmare is milded, in contrast to Odessa, for which they are going to leave (alchemy-like molding from a severe low budget). The stimulation of expressionism is seen in this device used in such a style.¹¹ Therefore, one can argue that *Light Ahead* is the most expressionistic of Ulmer's Yiddish films (Hoberman 1995:303, Wood 1997:27). Indeed, the style, including the placement of the window, is expressionistic. Therefore, *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari* (Roberto Wiene, 1919) may be taken into consideration. The style was called "Chassidic Gothic" (Hoberman) and "poetic expressionism" (Grissemann) (Grissemann 134). Also, this was Ulmer's target. In an interview by Bogdanovich, Ulmer said he was not going to do what Maurice Schwartz did, and he was not going to do the cheap things that Molly Picon did. He was going to have his own dignified style, not dirty with beards where the characters look like madmen. Ulmer's decision was the same decision which the writer Sholem Asch made and which the painter Marc Chagall made (Bogdanovich 578f.). In addition, as mentioned earlier, when Ulmer represented the village of Glubsk, meaning Foolstown, referred to 1-2, in contrast to the open space on location, his expressionistic style such as a streetlight put up diagonally, a sash turned in various directions, and the use of shadow are apparent. In the film *Black Cat* (1934), the collision between expressionism and the Bauhaus style is seen; we can read the criticism of the expressionism style, and it is possible to think allegorically that the criticism is leveled by giving an expressionistic style to the component of the village in *Light Ahead*.

As we mentioned earlier in this section (see 2-4, 2-5), the collision of

two styles can be seen in *Light Ahead*. One style comprises documentary-like shots, where something almost real is presented (2-4). The other is the expressionistic style, where reality is deformed to a form that totally differs from the reality (2-5). Indeed, the coexistence of the different styles is seen in many films, but it is a bit strange to use these two styles at the same time. Both styles have the reverse direction rather than the same direction, and careless coexistence of both styles can disturb the balance in the constitution. The unique unification of these styles is exquisite in *Light Ahead*. However, in fact, the unique unification that is accomplished here is achieved by using both specific styles at the same strength. In other words, documentary-like footage from a location is not provided by only turning a camera to the subject, but is devised, as seen above. In addition, the indoor shooting does not occupy the space of a naïve set but rather the thing that is devised and recalls an expressionistic style.¹² Also, the unique unification is enabled by the balanced strength of both styles. The reading of statements in the story becomes allegorical, depending on being able to feel the originality of both styles tactilely, and we have seen the originality in this film.

3. Conclusion - David Opatoshu, the discovery of the film like an orphan -

It was Helen Beverley who played the part of the blind girl Hodel in this film. She later married the actor Lee J. Cobb. In addition, David Opatoshu, who played Fishke and costarred with Helen Beverley only in this film, was the son of well-known Yiddish writer Josef Opatoshu and had experienced the stage of Yiddish drama. However, this was his first experience in film. He starred in two films (*The Naked City* (1948), *Thieves' Highway* (1949)) by Jules Dassin, who was his art companion,

after participating in group theater. It was Jewish communists who really supported the Yiddish popular culture in the late 1930s, at least in New York. This was related to the culture influenced by communists of the popular front. Opatoshu and Dassin were put on blacklists and chased from the United States in the same way as the characters of this film were chased from their home (Hoberman 1995 : 305-25).

This film is said to be the most complete of Ulmer's Yiddish films, but it experienced a bad box office when it was released in 1939. People thought the film was too dark, and it reminded viewers too much of reality. In addition, what Yiddish film audiences demanded was a dream into which to escape from their oppressive reality. In any case, this film received little attention at its release. The previous two Yiddish films, *Green Fields* and *The Singing Blacksmith*, were mentioned in *Variety*, but this film was not. Furthermore, though the film was produced for release in Europe, its release was limited by the outbreak of war. In addition, the release in New York was for a short period. The warehouse which stored the negative of the film suffered a fire several years later, and the negative was lost. The print of the other Yiddish films might have fallen into the hands of a personal collector and distributor until about 1950. However, unfortunately, no copy of this film has been discovered. The collector, Herman Axelbank, saw this film at its first screening in 1939 and was quite moved by it. He spent several thousand dollars and traveled to five continents to find this film: "It was the first and only time that I was moved to tears watching a Jewish picture." He discovered the film like "a blind orphan" in the suburbs of Amsterdam and Goldman, who interviewed him later, saw the film, which he discovered in 1975. After Axelbank's death, a film archive in Boston, the National Center for Jewish Film, cooperated with the American Jewish

Historical Society and inherited the film from Axelbank's son in 1981. In addition, new English subtitles were attached by the National Center and a restored print was produced. However, when the film was first shown in 1939, its running time was approximately 2 hours, 30 minutes, and this differs significantly from the running time (less than 95 minutes) of the current restored print. The omitted part is the wedding ceremony in the graveyard in the last scene (Moeller 45). The restored print was shown as part of a special retrospective at the 1982 New York Film Festival and in New York City theaters several months later. This was 43 years after it was first shown publicly in 1939 (Goldman 121f.).

As this film was released, the Russia-German nonaggression treaty was signed between Hitler and Stalin on August 23, 1939, and the atmosphere of Jewish society changed completely. The connection of antifascism between non-political Jews and the activists who were affiliated with the Communist Party disappeared overnight, and the collapse of the whole community followed. Afterward, Germany invaded Poland, and the second market for the Yiddish film was lost. With the outbreak of war, the number of Yiddish films produced decreased rapidly, too. In addition, Israel, newly founded after the war, did not have a place of Yiddish film, either. Ulmer also left the world of Yiddish filmmaking in his next Yiddish film, *American Matchmaker* (1940).

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Notes

1 Benjamin 1977:430, 1971:114. Benjamin quoted the words in a folk song "Das Buckliche Männlein" settled in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1805-1808), co-edited by Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim.

2 In 1869, Mendele Seforim (1836-1918) published the story, *Fishke der Krumer* (the first edition), which had a Jewish beggar as a chief character. However, the content created antipathy with the Jewish rulers, and he had to leave his place of residence. Afterward, he wrote the book *Di Klyatshe*, which pictured a Jew as a formerly magnificent roadster that had turned into a decrepit workhorse, as a minute allegory, while he studied with a Torah scholar near Zhitomir. At the age of 45, he became principal of the Jewish school in Odessa and revised most of his former works there. Afterward, Chaver-Paver (1901-1964) mixed elements of *Fishke der Krumer* and *Di Takse*, adopting only the title and the metaphorical influence from *Di Klyatshe*, and wrote a scenario for a film while adapting his unfinished stage drama, *Fishke der Krumer*. Chaver-Paver had a relationship with Artef (Arbeter Teater Farband (Worker's Theater Group)), that is, the theatrical company performing Yiddish drama. Artef, for example, translated *Awake and Sing!* by Clifford Odets. Artef planned to stage *Fishke der Krumer* by Chaver-Paver in 1936-1937 first, but the plan came to a dead end. Afterward, Ulmer obtained the rights to *Fishke der Krumer* by Chaver-Paver and started shooting in the spring of 1939, after completion of *Moon Over Harlem* (Hoberman 1995 : 300f). For more about Mendele Seforim, see Liptzin 38-45.

3 The critical perspective on the idea that the Yiddish tradition torments people is seen in the original by Mendele Seforim, as well. The following describes the writing by Mendele Seforim: "He subjected the shtetl to a scathing exposé and presented its traditional culture as deeply flawed; and yet he also managed, as an artist, not to remain at a distance from the object of his aesthetic exploration and to allow the shtetl to speak for itself, to use its own authentic voice, to project its own inherent priorities, values and fantasies" (Miron viii, Isenberg 2004:23).

4 For example, "Though the Jewish people live in hardship, they will surely endure and ultimately triumph over it" (Belton 2009:34).

5 The shooting on the basis of the long take with a fixed camera in this film was forced by production conditions such as low-budget and production shortages, and the shooting depended on the chief character played by David Opatoshu. David Opatoshu (1918-1996) began his career in Yiddish stage drama; afterward, he became a film and television actor (Hoberman 1995:149); his first appearance in a film was in *Light Ahead* (1939) and his second appearance was in *The Naked City* (1948). Therefore, he performed on the stage exclusively until 1939 and did not perform in film until then. In other words, the performance that he was familiar with was the performance for the stage, and he was familiar with long-take shooting with a fixed camera in film.

6 A small child passes unsteadily in front of two women in the third scene. Two old men make a big gesture to raise a fist in the first scene. These scenes remind us of *Mauvais Sang* (1986) by Leos Carax. In particular, the former scene in *Light Ahead* reminds us of the scene in *Mauvais Sang* that is the quotation from and the homage to Chaplin's film on image and sound.

7 The rare use of camera movement is seen here. When families are eating, the camera approaches the food container on a table and retreats. Such camera movement is rare in this film.

8 It is asked by the director Ulmer, but the director Ulmer referred to here is

the director Ulmer as the characteristic writer found as a result of the specific grain of the filmic text.

9 After this scene, the followings scenes use a long take with a fixed camera. In a series of scenes, an old man and another friend sell books or candles in a street. Afterward, the middle-aged man and woman in a couple relationship beg on the street. Afterward, the following scene is presented using a long take with a fixed camera: Hodel, the chief female character, and her mother receive the report that her friend has died of cholera because they continued playing in the river despite Fishke's warning. Afterward, the shot where her mother bursts into tears in front of a gravestone is presented by an endless long take with a fixed camera, too.

10 To begin with, the opening of the film is strange. In the first shot, an old man lying in the carrier of a carriage appears to be dead. As we come to know from developments in the story, he is alive, but we are made to think that he is dead at first. Such a scene has the audience feel B-mind and heartwarming.

11 Günter 58-59. In addition to Murnau, Frank Borzage of *Street Angel* and *Seventh Heaven* can be listed (Belton 2009:32).

12 Indeed, this may not be called "a fusion of the tear" (Gilles Deleuze), but is different from the integrated whole (Deleuze 1985:351, 1991:343, 1989:268).

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