LILLIAN GISH, TOAST OF CHICAGO AND THE WEST

BY LLOYD LEWIS

CHICAGO

LILLIAN GISH, by virtue of sixty-six weeks in "Life With Father" at Chicago's Blackstone Theatre, now takes her place beside the Lunts. Helen Hayes and Katharine Cornell as a truly national star.

She has achieved this position by merely standing still over a year at the crossroads of America, the railroad center, whereas the others had to tour arduously from Tulsa to Des Moines to Seattle to Atlanta. An amazing number of transcontinental travelers stopped off in Chicago long enough to see this Chicago company of "Life With Father," and the Pullman people say the show did a lot for midnight bookings.

But it was by automobile that the great bulk of out-of-towners came to see Miss Gish and the comedy which on May 24 ended its run after setting such record-breaking records in Chicago. Sedans carrying four or five people arrived constantly from everywhere within a radius of 400 miles. Hitchhikers were found during the year to have come 200 miles just to see the play. One woman in Chicago went thirty-five times. Hundred are known to have seen it four and five times. What was common was for men to attend during a trip to Chicago and then return some weeks later with their entire families, one of the standard nights in the audiences being that of a father sitting with his home folks and watching, from the corner of his eye, their faces as, on the stage, they saw him satirized, portrayed, "taken off." Miss Gish, to the people of the interior, was still a shimmering memory from the silent screen when she arrived in Chicago with the Crouse-Lindsay comedy in the spring of 1940. She had made brief appearances in spoken dramas during the past decade, but the plays had never been smash hits nor town long in the few large cities which they had visited. Her Ophelia opposite John Gielgud had never come West. Most of her stage fame was purely Broadway.

But in "Life With Father" she has made herself an entirely new fame in the midlands. The Lily Maid of Aostalet is no longer a dream creature in an ivory belfry, nor a flower-decked vision on a dark barge. She is now Mrs. Day, mother, wife and housekeeper. Lillian Gish has come from the unreal to the real. She has made people laugh, she has made people adore her for the simplicity and humor as well as with the truly great charm with which she has worn the manners and costumes of the past century. She has identified herself with a character, a scene and a play wholly American, wholly practical and realistic so far as atmosphere is concerned.

Midlanders talk about her now as though she had never been a fabulous, distant, legendary creature of D. W. Griffith's filmdom at all. She is now somebody everybody knows—and loves, and if she chooses, she can tour the midlands for years in this comedy, building for herself a reputation approaching that of Joe Jefferson in "Rip Van Winkle." It would take years, of course, and it is not likely she will undertake it, but on May 24 she had completed sixty-two weeks without missing a performance or a rehearsal. Some of those weeks were, indeed, rehearsals, but they meant daily work longer and harder than actual performances and must be added to the span of her tour.

"I don't know," says she, "if I should play 'Life With Father' any longer; Helen Hayes tells me seventy-two weeks straight is too long for an actress. Other theatrical people tell me that I have thus set a new American record for an actress playing a principal role. I know about this. I do know that I grew weary toward the end and only the enthusiasm of those crowds kept me going. I felt, too, that it was good for the theatre, especially in the midlands, to have a play run in one house for more than a year. That could mean the education of new thousands to the value of the drama."

After Summer's rest, Miss Gish will decide whether to appear in another play or to return to further tours in "Life With Father." It was from a balcony seat at the Empire Theatre in New York soon after the original company was launched that she first saw the play. After the first two acts she went to the business office of the theatre downstairs and congratulated the management. One of her Oscar Serlin's lieutenants then and there asked her why she didn't head a second company. Surprised

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After ‘Life With Father’ the Actress Almost Owns the Town

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AS LILLIAN GISH VIEWS ART

Are We Creating Art?” was the title chosen by Miss Lillian Gish for a special article on the film world—which she wrote for the Vossische Zeitung the other day while in Berlin consulting with Max Reinhardt concerning the details of the film in which she will play under his direction. The Berlin newspaper headed the article by the American actress, “The Most Moving Film Star on the Film.” Here it is:

“Perhaps the greatest evil afflicting the film at present is the over-enthusiasm of its champions. For they have made up their minds that the film must be ranked with the fine arts; and the film—regardless of how thankful it may be for this compliment—suffers heavily under the burden of the responsibility thrust upon it and suffers from the heroic endeavors it must make in order to show itself worthy of the good opinion of its champions.

“It seems to me that the word ‘Art’ is about the most misused in our language. Quality and beauty alone no longer satisfy the public. Some sort of big words must be attached to them; we are no longer satisfied simply to take things as they are, no matter how charming they may be, with their many-sided possibilities; we always feel the need of clothing them with unreal dignity, of elevating them, as it were, to an ‘esthetic Legion of Honor.’

“Now is the film art, or not? We can just as easily cite evidence for it as against it. But I think such citing of evidence is useless, aside from the fact that human beings are inclined more or less to measure their own work with special yardsticks and to attach greater importance to it than it really has.

“For what is art? Art is beauty idealized. And there are minutes—only minutes probably—when the film meets this requirement. And there are hours—unfortunately, many hours—when it falls quite outside the borders of this requirement, just as do drama or painting, plastic art or music. If the film is not art because of the many thousands of trashy films that are turned out, then perhaps isn’t art either because of the many thousands of ‘Greenwich Village’ trashy paintings, and music isn’t art because of the thousands of ‘Yes, We Have No Bananas’ that are produced.

“It is generally said that the theatre is art and that the film isn’t. Apparently the film is not regarded as art because it lacks the human voice—the theatre’s auxiliary. But isn’t it possible to read dramas? And, furthermore, aren’t some of the most gripping and profound moments experienced in the theatre just when not a word is spoken, those moments of silence when pain and joy, the torments or the deepest emotions of human beings, speak only through their facial expressions, through their gestures?

“On the other hand, suppose we wanted to put the drama upon the screen with absolute and clear faithfulness to the text? This is quite possible, although not customary. Then we have, or rather we would have, presented a drama with silent actors to a whole house of listeners, just as, in reading, it is presented to a single person by silent actors who appear upon the stage of the reader’s imagination. Besides, if the film lacks the third dimension, so does painting. If it has no spiritual content, then the theatre piece called the best in the world has no more. If children can find pleasure in films, they do the same with ‘Huckleberry Finn’ and ‘Mikado.’

“But let them call the film what they choose, the question is: How often, according to their own admission, does it awaken genuine feelings in the hearts and souls of sensitive persons? Not too often, I know. But you can’t judge a thing justly if you look at only its worst effects, instead of its best. Finally, every mountain in the Alps isn’t a Matterhorn.

“We must remember that the first short film-like piece, ‘The Kiss,’ appeared in 1896 and that the first real film of the sort we are acquainted with today, ‘The Great Train Robbery,’ was produced only twenty-three years ago. In these relatively few years the film has developed a hundred times more than, for example, architecture in its countless first, unoriginal centuries. So if the film cannot be called art as yet, isn’t it conceivable that it can be in the future? Isn’t a film like ‘The Last Man’ already a step along this road? Hasn’t it literal beauty, a powerful form and an impressive mental and spiritual content? Isn’t it played as well as the best theatre drama produced in the same year? Isn’t it deeply rooted in human life?

“The film, like the theatre, is not a school for morals. Just as little as the drama, is it supposed to edu-
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IMPORTANT

Oct. 4, 1953
NY Times
City Bestows Accolade On a Cheerful Miss Gish

Lillian Gish, who has criticized herself for living too much in "tomorrows," enjoyed a yesterday that she said she would remember always. "This is a tremendous honor, Your Honor," said the actress of the silent screen, smiling at Mayor Lindsay as he awarded her the Handel Medallion for achievement in the arts.

"I've never enjoyed giving this medal more," responded Mayor Lindsay, who has bestowed the honor seven times this year. Addressing the small group that had accompanied Miss Gish to his office in City Hall for the ceremony, he read the inscription on the medal: "To Dorothy and Lillian Gish, for the joy they have given to generations of Americans."

Miss Gish, who says she is "one decade older than the century," looked delicate but vibrant and full of energy. "Oh, my beloved sister," she said after hearing the inscription addressed to her and her late sister. "She was the talent in the family. I didn't have her gift of comedy."

Lillian Gish at City Hall ceremony yesterday.
Kennedy Center Honors 5 in the Arts

By IRVING MOLOTSKY
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 15 — George Abbott, Lillian Gish, Benny Goodman, Gene Kelly and Eugene Ormandy were nominated today as candidates for the 1982 Kennedy Center Honors for their contributions to the performing arts.

"In such a good company — that's a marvelous dream," said Mr. Scoggin, who nominated the names of his co-winners. "It's a gang I feel very comfortable with.

Mr. Kelly, who was cited in his award for his work as a dancer, choreographer and director, appeared by telephone near Naples, Mexico, where he is vacationing with his family, and his designation will mean his second trip this year to the White House for a meeting with President Reagan, an old friend.

This year Mr. Kelly was the host for a nationally televised performance by young dancers at the White House.

"Nothing could have pleased me more than to have been selected," Mr. Kelly said. "I was very moved and touched when informed of it.

At the age of 78, Mr. Kelly, who has retired from dancing, is the youngest of this year's recipients. The oldest is Mr. Abbott, 87.

Just a week ago Mr. Abbott announced that he would stage a revival in December at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts of "On Your Toes," a musical he wrote in 1936. His collaborators on the revival will be George Balanchine, who choreographed "On Your Toes," his first Broadway show.

Mr. Abbott's choice for the Kennedy Center Honors is the choreographer, and he is in the first group of winners in the arts to receive the award.

Mr. Abbott also has other Broadway writing credits. He directed "Three Men and a Horse," "The Boys From Syracuse," "Where's Charley?" and "Pajama Game." His plays have directed include "Sweet Charity," "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" and "Call Me Madam.

Broadway and Hollywood

Mr. Kelly's career includes movies as well as the stage. He appeared on Broadway in "The Time of Your Life" and "Paiy Joe" and in such movies as "Singin' in the Rain" and "An American in Paris.

Miss Gish and Mr. Goodman will also be making their second Washington appearance in less than a year when they accept their awards.

Miss Gish appeared at Wolf Trap recently at a screening of "La Boheme." Mr. Goodman has been seen on stage in which he played. She spoke of her long career, which included such silent movies as "The Birth of A Nation" and "Orphans of the Storm." Her modern credits include "Hamlet," "The Night of the Hunter" and "The Wedding.

In a Broadway production of "Hamlet," she played Ophelia opposite John Gielgud.

Swing and Bartok, Too

Mr. Goodman, a clarinetist who is as comfortable with a concerto by Koussevitzky as with a jazz composition by Fletcher Henderson, performed as a member of the New York Symphony Orchestra's annual concert at the Shoreton Center Hotel.

The concert, which will run through Tuesday, was described as an "opportune moment to reflect on the arts community's overall strength at a time when so many people have seemed to have come to the concert for similar reasons. Many participants were teachers of theater from high schools and colleges around the country, and had come to brush up on their own skills.

"I want to get more information from vocal training and some better ideas on how to help students do Shakespearean plays," said Betty Ruffin, who teaches theater at Southern College of Memphis. She was listening to Cicely Berry of the Royal Shakespeare Company, who is a "very important figure in the arts of drama and education."
Nichols Returning With 2 Shows

BY CAROL LAWSON

Mike Nichols, who was conspicuously absent from the Broadway scene this past season — he was Off Broadway as director of E.L. Doctorow's "Drinks Before Dinner," — is now back in the spotlight with two new shows. "Crappo's Last Tape" and "The Great White Hope," both featuring Nichols as producer and director, will open this fall.

"I am thrilled to return to Broadway," Nichols said. "I have missed the excitement of working with talented actors and actresses." He added, "I am especially looking forward to working with the cast of "Crappo's Last Tape," which includes some of the finest actors in the business."

Mike Nichols

audience. She will play the title role of a disillusioned old man — playing as a woman — in Samuel Beckett's one-character play "Krapp's Last Tape," at the Connecticut College summer festival. Miss Parsons plans to give one performance there and then return to New York on Oct. 9 for a limited run at the Off-Off Broadway Performing Garage.

"I've always identified with men's roles," said Miss Parsons, who has played the same role many times in her West End Avenue apartment. "But I have to play a woman's role," she added, "because I have always been busy tending to the road tours of 'The Gin Game,' which I have directed and produced on Broadway, and for which I wrote the book and songs, and for which I directed the cast, finding lots of little girls."

"I don't want to sound greedy," said Miss Parsons, "but I am looking for a really good role for a real woman, and I think I have found it in 'Crappo's Last Tape.'"

"I am very excited about working with the cast," said Nichols. "I have selected some of the finest actors and actresses in the business, and I am confident that they will bring a new dimension to this wonderful play."

"I am also looking forward to working with the audience," said Nichols. "I believe that this play is a powerful statement about the human condition, and I am confident that it will resonate with audiences across the country."
LILLIAN GISH, AT 83, TRANSCENDS STYLE

The New York Times

By ENID NEMY  DEC. 31, 1982

Lillian Gish has never cared more than a small hoot about fashion, but she's always loved clothes. The result is that the legendary actress is still wearing some of the things she bought three, four and five decades ago, and outshining most of the current crop of fashion strivers whenever she appears at gala events. Whether it's at Radio City Music Hall or the White House, Miss Gish looks so right that there are incredulous glances when she says that she honestly can't remember how many years the dress has been in her closet and, in fact, whether it originally belonged to her or to her late sister, Dorothy.

"I've never been in style, so I can't go out of style," she said during a recent interview in her East Side apartment, her pale gold brocade Chinese pajamas melting into the gold and green decor.

Miss Gish, who is now 83 years old, has no hang-ups about her age, and is, she said, even resigned to the fact that "no one ever gets it right."

"But it doesn't matter because I wouldn't mind if they said I was 100," she said. "It would probably make me more interesting." Her blue eyes twinkled mischievously as she continued. "You know when I was making films, Lionel Barrymore first played my grandfather, later he played my father, and finally he played my husband. If he had lived, I am sure I would have played his mother. That's the way it is in Hollywood. The men get younger and the women get older." Family's Arrival in New York

The years haven't dimmed her memory, but she has never been certain whether she was 3 or 4 years old when she and her sister arrived in New York with their mother, who soon began playing ingenue roles in the theater (the girls' father left the family shortly after their birth in Ohio). However, she does remember the family sharing an apartment with a Mrs. Smith, whom Mrs. Gish had met at a theatrical agency, and Mrs. Smith's daughter, Gladys.

'Mother would give us two nickels to go and see a Biograph film and, some time later on, when we no longer shared an apartment, we saw Gladys Smith in a film," Miss Gish recollected. "We rushed home to tell Mother and her reaction was, 'What terrible misfortune has happened to the Smith family that Gladys has had to go into films?' " Gladys not only went into films; she changed her name to Mary Pickford.
Mrs. Gish's reaction to film acting was not too different from what most people at the time thought of all theatrical folk. Lillian's stage career started at the age of 5, and Dorothy's when she was 4, and both were told by their mother that their profession was considered "a social disgrace." They were cautioned not to tell anyone that they were in the theater because other children wouldn't be allowed to play with them.

It was "little Gladys Smith" who introduced the Gish sisters to D.W. Griffith, the pioneer producer of such silent films as "The Birth of a Nation." (Miss Gish was instrumental in having a commemorative Griffith stamp issued recently.)

"The first time we saw them making a film, we thought we were in a crazy house," Miss Gish said. 'But Lionel Barrymore was there and Mother said, 'Well, if there's a Barrymore there, it can't all be bad.'"

She is constantly amused when she is asked about her training and how she made it into films. "It all just happened," she said. "The only acting lesson we ever had was to speak loud and clear. We were told that if we didn't, 'they'll get another little girl,' and they would have." Some Opportunities Turned Down

She occasionally has a few thoughts about the things she could have done and didn't. One was a film on Joan of Arc, which she was asked to do in the 1920's by Abel Gance, the director of the recently rereleased "Napoleon."

"Then Truman Capote wrote his first play for us and we didn't do it," she said. "And Tennessee Williams did his first play for me, and I couldn't do it. It was called 'Portrait of a Madonna' and he later changed it a little, and it became 'Streetcar Named Desire.' I would have had a bigger career doing the things I didn't do, than the things I did do."

With a schedule that has included three round-the-world trips since 1975, a five-year lecture tour that took her to 387 colleges in 36 states, and constant personal appearances, Miss Gish doesn't have too much time to look back. But a query about a portrait of Dorothy, hanging in her living room (Dorothy Gish died in 1968), led to further reminiscences.

"Mother didn't like that picture," she said. "She thought that Dorothy looked like an actress in it. She wanted us to go back to Springfield, Ohio, and get married. She would never come to the studio with us, except when Dorothy was making a film about Nell Gwynne in London, and she went then because Dorothy didn't have too many clothes on and she was worried."

Miss Gish's interest in clothes, not just any clothes but classic designs with meticulous workmanship, stems from her mother who, at one time, made the entire wardrobe worn by both sisters. "We Always Had Real Lace"

"We could be hungry but we always had real lace on our panties," she said. "Mother made everything - our hats, coats, everything but our shoes and
still preserved are drawers-full of embroidered crepe de chine teddys, camisoles and panties, many trimmed with real Alençon lace.

When Mrs. Gish died in 1948, her daughters discovered that she had a safe-deposit box. "We were intrigued, we thought that maybe it was full of money, but it was full of handmade Alençon lace," she said. "It's going to go to a museum."

After the sisters became stars, many of their clothes carried designer labels. One of Dorothy's coats, now at the Smithsonian Institution, had an even more noteworthy provenance. It was once owned and worn by James Madison although, according to Miss Gish, "everyone thought it was a Dior."

Miss Gish, who now wears clothes from Vera Maxwell and from what she calls "the best shop in the world - MacHugh's in Ridgewood, N.J." - was a Mainbocher customer when his atelier was a "little cubbyhole" in Paris. His evening dresses sold then for $75, and she regrets now that she gave most of them away. Another favorite designer was Valentina and she still has several of her evening dresses that she wears for special occasions.

"They've never been cleaned or changed by so much as a hook, and I get into them easily," she said, looking justifiably pleased with herself. "I'm the same size now as I was then." Wore Dress Again 50 Years Later

One of her favorites is Valentina's black cut velvet over red mousseline de soie, worn with a bolero of pink silk taffeta. She wore the dress to the opening of Radio City Music Hall in 1932 and put it on again earlier this year when the Music Hall celebrated its 50th anniversary. Another favorite is a Grecian design in a stone-colored crepe de chine, made by Valentina between 1925 and 1930.

Also still in use are the scores of evening bags accumulated through the years, shoes that have stood up to time and her Mother's Russian ermine coat. She has, as well, a Blackglama mink coat received as payment for appearing in one of the advertisements headed "What Becomes a Legend Most."

Her jewelry is almost always opals, her birthstone, and many of the pieces were acquired as gifts or as payment for personal appearances.

"When I was in Australia, they asked if I would like to be paid in opals and I said I would," she said, pointing to her opal earrings she got in lieu of salary.

" 'Place an opal on her breast and troubles and cares will lie at rest,' " she recited, but then quickly warned that opals were unlucky for anyone not born in October.

In addition to her travels, and the voluminous correspondence set off by personal appearances and the television showing of some of her movies, Miss Gish is busy writing a book on religion.
"Mother's people were Episcopalian," she said. "But Mother always told us that if we weren't working, we should go to our own church on Sunday, and if we couldn't find our own church, to go to any church. I got interested in many religions from that time on."

Although she has never been interested in accumulating possessions ("Honey, the only things I collect are books") Miss Gish has acquired a number of awards, the latest an impressive, beribboned gold-plated brass medallion from the Kennedy Center.

The ceremony, on Dec. 4 in the Benjamin Franklin Room in the State Department, was followed by a gala at the Kennedy Center Opera House and preceded by a White House reception. Miss Gish was thrilled, but it wasn't her first visit.

"I've been going to the White House since Harding's days," she said matter-of-factly. "You know, they showed 'Orphans of the Storm' there."
Lillian Gish Shines in 'All the Way Home', as She and Sister Have in Many Things

BY BROOKS ATKINSON

WHEN the curtain goes up on the second act of "All the Way Home" at the Belasco Theatre, Lillian Gish is on the stage, sitting on a sofa, as the deaf and dumb mother of a grown family, the audience applauds before the Tea Breaks.

The audience is applauding one of the pleasantest American legends. For the Gish girls—Lillian and Dorothy—have been through the whole cycle of American show business from road companies in the first decade of the century and the silent films in the second to the theatre of today.

Both of them are about a foot wide and four inches thick, erect and cheerful. Both of them loop around America and Europe, just to sell something that interests them, and they let out little puffs of enthusiasm every time they see everyone and know everyone. They are as much a part of American folklore as Jack Dempsey, Durante and Harry S. Truman. Having been consistently modern for a half century, they give their country continuity.

As one of the players in the season's most sensitively acted drama, Lillian is very busy now, changing in and out of wig and costume eight times a week, and, like the other actors, talking on the radio whenever she is bidden, "selling the product," to use her phrase. But if she were entertaining a widower on the radio for a cause, she would be busy about something else. Probably she would be putting the finishing touches to her book about D. W. Griffith. She has never been bored in her life. Years ago, when she was billed in the programs on the road as "Baby Alice" or "Baby Ann," she took her first curtain call on the shoulders of Walter Huston in a melodrama called "In Convict's Stripes" or another one called "The Gas Company." She can't remember which. In tow of her mother, May Barnard, an ingénue, she and her sister Harriett had gone down the land. They learned how to count by watching the fingers on the hands and how to read schoolbooks under their mother's tutelage in dressing rooms and daydreams.

Since her mother had a passion for going through factories, both the Gish girls have a long background in factory culture, and to this day they never pass a factory without feeling that the ought to go through it. When they were in the teens they grew "rather fond of making house." Their idea was to make a change. That's how they ventured into the wor of the silent film, eventual of which was "Broken Blossoms." Together or individually they appeared in "The Birth of a Nation," "The Fall of the Roman Empire," "Broken Blossoms," "W. Down East" and "The O- phans of the Storm," all of them regarded as film classi today.

Since there was no traction on setting, they h invent one as they went along, and they did. For or forty-five years later they are still known and recognized as the home of Walter Huston in a Moscow Art Theatre undertook to visit America in 19. She has studied some of Ditchenko studied Gish films in search of pantomime style that wou be eligible in a foreign land, as they found a style they cou use.

When Russian actors come here today they are inclined to study Lilli as if she were a monument. It is a little disconcerting a gay, incandescent lady who talks to want and listen.

If she radiates goodwill, it is because she feels it. This qualifi es her life. She does it with out worrying about her d vanity. That is because she is interested in herself as in other people, and she therefore, still learning. As one of the women who ed was she has been a read of all books of books since she discovered the intrispe world of culture in the Twenties. Being aware of the won around her, she has little to c with, but intaskell school of acting. It does n have enough interest in a audience, she thinks. Wh not do anything in the new, the new, the new of no importance, in her vie What moves an audience? As one member of a super company that includes Deewhurt, Arthur d Aline MacMahon and Jollette, she says, "If a character she plays in "All W. Home" as one figure in the delicate fabric of tallest play. Everything that does on the stage she does the play. The applause is f a woman who has always i lightened and practical for democracy.
“Do you realize that film is our only native art form?” said Lillian Gish. “There’s jazz, of course, but that came from Africa. Film is the most powerful medium of communication in the world today.”

At the age of 69, after 64 years of troupimg on stage, screen and television, the actress speaks authoritatively.

The energetic Miss Gish, who has two new projects under way, was speaking in her East Side apartment. “There’s a force and immediacy about film today,” she continued, “almost like a car wreck.”

Last night she appeared on the stage of Columbia University’s McMillin Theater as commentator for “Lillian Gish and the Movies,” a new 90-minute program of screened excerpts from silent-film classics, including highlights of her own career. Sponsored by the university’s School of the Arts, the event was a benefit for a scholarship fund commemorating D. W. Griffith, the pioneer director with whom Miss Gish was associated for nine years in such classics as “The Birth of a Nation” and “Way Down East.” She will tour with the program in the fall.

A Pair of Projects

On Sunday Miss Gish is to leave on a cross-country promotional tour for her autobiography, “The Movies, Mr. Griffith and Me,” which Prentice-Hall is publishing Monday.

At the McMillin Theater at Broadway and 116th Street last night, more than 1,200 people saw and heard Miss Gish and her film compilation. Unruffled anticipation stood in contrast to the events at the adjacent Philosophy Hall, where rebel students had taken over the premises.

In even further contrast were the springlike, bower appointments in another nearby school building where a reception was being prepared for Miss Gish. The McMillin assembly included many young people as well as older spectators, among them Katharine Hepburn, Anita Loos, Mr. and Mrs. William S. Paley, Lauren Bacall, Truman Capote and Brooks Atkinson.

A Standing Ovation

Davidson Taylor, director of the School of the Arts, introduced Miss Gish, after noting that Columbia was the first American university to offer a course in film. “We are here tonight because we love Lillian Gish,” he said.

To a standing ovation, the actress appeared on the stage. Clad in a white, long-sleeved evening gown, she sat at a stage-left lectern and conversationally read a commentary on the screen cavalcade that flickered a few feet away, spanning 1900-1928, to a muted musical recording.

Miss Gish’s comments were informal, enlightening, witty and knowledgeable, and the responsive audience was entirely hers. Most of the segments, and the array of familiar faces from the past, drew applause, and often hearty chuckles, with the actress joining in.

Of a bit from the primeval “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” when a bloodhound repeatedly whisked past, Miss Gish said, “Three cuts of the same dog—no must imagination there” and the audience laughed delightedly.

She spoke fondly of her childhood friend Mary Pickford, shown angelically in “Mender of Nets,” and indicated the technical development of her mentor, D. W. Griffith, as an actor and in “Birth of a Nation” and “Way Down East.”

These two lengthy excerpts, with the famous battle scenes and the homecoming sequence from the first, and Miss Gish’s sequence with a baby and her famous rescue from an icy river by Richard Barthelmess in the second picture, stole the show.

Like her audience, Miss Gish was carried away a bit with the realism of “Way Down East” as she hurtled toward the waterfall on an ice floe.

“Oh look,” she said, pointing, “there I am—that dark spot over there.”

After the applauded fade-out, she said, “I don’t know how Dick ever rescued me.”

More applause greeted Rudolph Valentino and Nita Naldi in a scene from “Blood and Sand.” The siren gripped the bullfighter’s “arm of iron” and the actor rolled his eyes to the audience’s uncontrollable laughter, including that of Miss Gish.

The auditorium lights brightened and Miss Gish drew another standing ovation from an audience that obviously wanted still more.

The Formative Years

At her apartment the other day, Miss Gish elaborated on how heart-stirring the events in her life had been. She grew up in a genteel, yet “wonderful” family in New York City, with a mother who was a successful silent film producer and a father who had a large new-paper company.

To cut a long story short, she and her two sisters were brought up near the family’s New Jersey farm and at the age of 11, she was sent to the famous famous drama school of Miss Cora Young. She got a part in the manager’s play and, at age 17, signed her first movie contract.

Miss Gish’s father, who later went broke, thought that his daughter was a “freakish” child and told her to get out of the movies. She ignored him, until at age 27, she was called on to play a role in the silent film “The Birth of a Nation.”

This part as the womanizing, seductive Queen of the South has formed the basis for most of her later career. She is not a “hardworking” actress, but “an instinctive actor.”

Lillian Gish in her East Side apartment. The pastel portrait of her adorns the book-jacket of her autobiography.
BELA LYON PRATT, BOSTON SCULPTOR, AT WORK IN HIS STUDIO ON A COLOSSAL STATUE FOR THE CITY OF CHICAGO.
(Photo by Central News Photo Service.)

MME. SLAVKO GROUETCH, Wife of the Serbian Premier, Who Recently Posed for Anna Coleman Ladd, Sculptor, for a Bust Embodying the "Spirit of Serbia." [Photo by Campbell Studios.]


MRS. LADD PUTTING THE FINAL TOUCHES ON THE ALLEGORICAL STATUE OF THE "SPIRIT OF SERBIA," FOR WHICH MME. GROUETCH POSED.
(Photos by Central News Photo Service.)

MME. VICTOR HORTA, Wife of the Director of the Belgian Royal School of Fine Arts, Who Has Just Organized in New York the American Aid for Homeless Belgian Children.


LILLIAN GISH IN A SCENE FROM THE NEW TRIANGLE SCREEN PLAY, "THE HOUSE BUILT UPON SAND."
THE PLAY

Miss Lillian Gish, as a Reincarnation of Lizzie Borden, Appears in "Nine Pine Street."

NINE PINE STREET, an adaptation in three acts and an epilogue, by John Colton and Carlton Miles, from an original play by William Miles and Donald Blackwell. Settings and costumes prepared by Robert Edmond Jones; staged by A. H. Van Buren; produced by Margaret Hewes. At the Longacre Theatre.

Clara Holden .......... Helen Cloire
Annie .................. Barna Costetag
Mrs. Holden .......... Janet Young
Mrs. Powell ......... Eleanor Hicks
Edward Holden ...... Robert Harrison
Effie Holden .......... Lillian Gish
Warren Pitt .......... Raymond Hackett
Mrs. Carrie Riggs ... Roberta Beatty
Captain James Tate .. John H. Morrissey
Miss Littlefield .... Catherine Abbot
Miss Rob Wilmot ...... Jessamine Newcombe
Dr. Powell .......... William Ingersoll
Lieu. Middleton .... James Hollicky
Rev. Appleton ...... James F. Houston
Ernestine .......... Roberta Beatty
Martin Lodge .......... Clinton Sundberg

Miss Lillian Gish, who of late has been known in these parts more as the lady of the camellias, became last evening "a forget-me-not in the rain." That was the phrase applied by one of those New York reporters to Effie Holden, after the trial in New Bedford. And at the hour in which "9 Pine Street" finally discharged its first audience to the street before the Longacre Theatre, that thought will do, even now. For most of what there is in the literate reincarnation of the Lizzie Borden case of hallowed memory is—well, Miss Gish.

Miss Borden was the lady of Massachusetts, and the decade that was mauve, who gave her mother forty whacks, and then her father forty-one. Out of her life, with the murders, the trial and the mystery, a series of authors have constructed "9 Pine Street." John Colton and Carlton Miles were those immediately responsible, and in the dim background of an earlier play were William Miles and Donald Blackwell. To sum up their collected work, the suggestion must remain that much of it is long, not a little is tedious, and some of it is woven nicely together. And then, of course, there are Miss Gish and a good cast to move it along.

Those blithe enthusiasts for the Gay Nineties' most sacred murders would perhaps shudder at some of the liberties that have been taken with the career of Fall River's notable. The hatchet of the jingoes and the pamphlets has given way to the lowly flat-iron, and in an epilogue the whole thing has been attached to what is called "the New England conscience." That might have been one explanation for Miss Borden's shutting herself up in her home after her acquittal, but it did "9 Pine Street" no good as a play.

But to return once more to Miss Gish. She gives a fine performance in all its varied details, and they are many, ranging as they do from love to murder. She injects into the whole of the play a feeling of sincerity, and those parts of it that seem most real are due to her. And there are others to help—Raymond Hackett, in the part of Warren Pitt; Roberta Beatty as Mrs. Carrie Riggs, who marries Edward Holden and so gets the forty whacks; William Ingersoll as Dr. Powell. Also some more.

The difficulties into which "9 Pine Street" squirms at times are due, perhaps, to the authors' effort to capture the period, and the opinions, and the thoughts and the manners thereof. They devote most of the first act to that, and it grows tedious. The Borden case—on which the play has so admittedly been based—is too fresh, even now, to require a further setting. The second act is splendid, and the third is in part very good. The epilogue appears to be only an editorial comment, and mostly bathetic. On the whole there must remain the feeling that "9 Pine Street" is not quite in the same class with its model of Fall River.

L. N.
Lillian Gish in a scene from the new Triangle screen play, "The House Built Upon Sand."
BELA LYON PRATT, BOSTON SCULPTOR, AT WORK IN HIS STUDIO ON A COLOSSAL STATUE FOR THE CITY OF CHICAGO.

(MP by Central News Photo Service.)

MME. SLAVKO GROUITSCH, Wife of the Serbian Premier, Who Recently Posed for Anna Coleman Ladd, Sculptor, for a Bust Embodying in Bronze the "Spirit of Serbia."


(Mrs. Ladd Putting the Final Touches on the Allegorical Statue of the "Spirit of Serbia," for Which Mme. Grouitsch Posed.

(Mme. Victor Horta, wife of the Director of the Belgian Royal School of Fine Arts, Who Has Just Organized in New York the American Aid for Homeless Belgian Children.


Lillian Gish in a Scene from the New Triangle Screen Play, "The House Built Upon Sand."
The Screen: "Follow Me, Boys" Opens

Fred MacMurray In the Souvenir!

United Artists

Andy Warhol's "The Chelsea Girls"

The movie is now showing at the cinema rendezvous.

Andy Warhol's "Cul-de-Sac"

Romantic comedy. Opens 29 April.

Polanski's Wild Swing!

Coming soon to a film version of Theatre of the Absurd.

"AMUSING...BIZARRE!"

"A fascinating film! Stunning! Frank! Bold and beautiful!"

"Erotic Swedish film is series of shocks. Leaves nothing to the imagination! Shows great gourmets! Flagrant abnormal sexual practices!"

Loving Couples

Regency Theatre

Garbo

Alfie

New Embassy Film Co.

Goliath

Sneak Preview Tonight 8:15

Explosively popular London hit "Down With The Man!"

Eye Witness: North West Man

Winnebago

Henry V

Curtain Call
MRS. ROOSEVELT HONORED

Lillian Gish, Grandma Moses
Also Cited by Women’s Group

The Federation of Jewish Women’s Organization held its thirty-fourth annual convention and luncheon yesterday at the Astor Hotel and presented awards to Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, and several other prominent women for achievements in the theatre, art, and social welfare.

Mrs. Roosevelt received a citation as a “Woman of Achievement.” Miss Lillian Gish was honored for her work in the theatre and Mrs. Dore Feibel for social welfare. A citation was sent to Grandma Moses, the artist, who was unable to be present.

The presentations were made by Mrs. Isaac Gilman, president of the federation.
Lillian Gish Gives a Notable Performance in Foote's "The Trip to Bountiful"

BY BROOKS ATKINSON

Everything being possible, Lillian Gish may some day give a finer performance than her Mrs. Carrie Watts in "The Trip to Bountiful," which opened at Henry Miller's last evening. But no one has a right ever to expect anything finer. For this is Miss Gish's masterpiece. As a weary old woman, homesick for her youth in the country, she gives an inspired performance that is alive in every detail and conveys an unconquerable spirit.

The play by Horton Foote is a narrative that supplies Miss Gish with material that does not take much of the burden off her shoulders. All that she has to say is that Mrs. Watts is a lonely woman who has to live with a daughter-in-law who is a slyer woman on the bus and along the way. And she has a few pleasant moments in the weed-grown doorway of her old home before her son and daughter-in-law come to fetch her back to Houston.

That does not make it a very substantial play for a whole evening. Nor does Mr. Foote make things any better by underwriting. He is a scrupulous author who does not want easy victories, and that is to his credit morally. But he might also do a little more for the theatre by going to Bountiful himself as a writer, providing his play with more substance and varying his literary style. He writes "The Trip to Bountiful" as though it were a point of honor with him never to let go. The story is thin, and the dialogue is all in one tone of deliberate flatness.

As a gallery of character portraits, however, his drama has distinction. And under Vincent J. Donehue's direction, the performance is so pitiless exact that you can hardly tell where the writing leaves off and the acting begins. Jo Van Fleet, who played Camille in "Camino Real" last season, gives another penetrating performance as the irritable old woman in "The Trip to Bountiful," while her part is well-written. By mastering his details Mr. Foote discloses the selfishness, emptiness, laziness and cruelty of a shallow woman who dominates the family by the evilness of her temper. And Miss Van Fleet acts the part from the inside out with remorseless candor.

Gene Lyons ably expresses the patience and timidity of Mrs. Watts' son, who has no strength left for making decisions. There is a sweet characterization of a soldier's wife by Eva Marie Saint whose senses of pride and sympathy are nicely balanced; and Frank Overton gives a pleasant performance of a sheriff who treats Mrs. Watts with unprofessional forbearance.

But "The Trip to Bountiful" is Miss Gish's play, and she finds all the heartbreak and gallantry that is in it. Looking frail, dressed untidily in a shapeless garment, her hair messy and her face drawn, she gives, nevertheless, an impression of indomitable strength. Her acting is keenly aware. For Mrs. Watts, lost in her private grief,
Charron Follett, Lillian and Dorothy Gish and Neil Fitzgerald in the Bagnold play to be seen starting tomorrow in East Hampton, L. I., and in subsequent weeks in Boston, Millburn, N. J., Newport, R. I., and Saratoga, N. Y.
Lillian Gish in the Theatre Guild's Production of 'The Curious Savage'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

In the days before the great enlightenment, people used to go to Bedlam to enjoy the odd behavior of the lunatics. Last evening, the Theatre Guild invited the subscribers to the Martin Beck to see the antics of the characters in "The Curious Savage."

John Patrick, who wrote "The Hasty Heart," has written this excursion into a modern Bedlam. Presumably, he has something more than sensation and curiosity in mind.

For his chief character is an elderly lady whose gaiety and genorous impulses look like lunacy to her stepchildren. Alarmed by the liberality with which she gives money away to people she likes, her stepchildren have her committed to an institution.

If you imagine that the patients in the mental institution are more amiable than the stepchildren, and that the elderly lady returns with genuine regrets and misgivings to the same world outside, you are a very experienced theatregoer indeed, and need no further instruction. Mr. Patrick's attitude is not exactly original.

Things in the theatre are criticized frequently as being in bad taste. Some people think that Olsen and Johnson are in bad taste, which seems plausible. But this column would like to suggest that "The Curious Savage" is also in bad taste, and that the delusions and crotchets of people who are mentally ill are not genuinely amusing.

Mr. Patrick has filled his comedy with bright remarks, precocious sayings and the fables of the mad. No doubt his intentions are honorable. We have "The Hasty Heart" to show that he is a man of compassion. But the writing of "The Curious Savage" is not subtle, and the performance is a lark. To at least one theatregoer, this jovial portrait of psychopathic people is embarrassing.

* * *

Although Peter Glenville has directed the performance nimbly, he cannot exorcize the spirit of the comedy. And if you are not comfortable in the company of the deanged inmates of a mental institution, you are likely to regard Lillian Gish's performance as a trifle kittenish in the part of the roughish lady who is legally sane.

Robert Emhardt gives a first-rate performance as the most cheerful of the imbeciles, finding just the right tone and emphasis to define a character. The cast also includes Isabel Elsom, Marta Linden, Flora Campbell, Gladys Henson, Lois Hall and Hugh Reilly, who give good performances in other parts. The single set of the living-room in a home-like institution has been pleasantly designed by George Jenkins.

On its own terms as polite entertainment with a faint edge of satire, "The Curious Savage" is a fairly mild play. But many theatregoers are likely to regard the whole project as distasteful. Bedlam is not so delightfully amusing as it was a hundred years ago.

The Cast

THE CURIOUS SAVAGE, a comedy in three acts, by John Patrick. Staged by Peter Glenville; production designed and lighted by George Jenkins: costumes by Anna Hill Johnstone; presented by the Theatre Guild, Russell Lewis and Howard Young. At the Martin Beck Theatre.

Florence..................Isabel Elsom
Hannibal..................Robert Emhardt
Fairy May.................Lois Hall
Jeffrey..................Hugh Reilly
Mrs. Paddy..............Gladys Henson
Titus....................Brandon Peters
Swaub....................Howard Wendell
Lily Belle.................Marta Linden
Ethel.....................Milton Gish
Miss Williams............Flora Campbell
Dr. Emmett..............Sydney Smith

Published: October 25, 1950
Copyright © The New York Times
Lillian Gish in Philip Barry's "The Joyous Season"—Opening of 'Hotel Alimony.'

Since Mr. O'Neill has described "Dawn Without End" as a modern miracle play, Philip Barry is entitled to give "The Joyous Season" the same distinction. It does not, in the program at the Belasco, where it was acted last evening, he describes it simply as "a new play." But it presents Lillian Gish in the part of a reverent sister of the Catholic faith. In three acts it shows how the radiance of the sister's spirit redeems her family from worldly melancholy on Christmas Day. It is a play that lies close to the heart of things and makes honest about tremendous matters that are seldom mentioned on the stage today. Some of it is deeply moving; all of it discloses a direct, child-like goodness of feeling. Mr. Barry is not the man to theatricize his le- son in faith. But still, in this reviewer's opinion, a religious play seems to place an impediment in the freedom of Mr. Barry's portraits. "The Joyous Season" is a testament to the joy of faith, why should it lack the luminous emotion of "The Animal Kingdom" or "Tomorrow and Tomorrow?" Mr. Barry has written with more simulation upon this theme.

The plot is simple, as becomes the theme. After having been kept apart from her family for many years in the service of the church, little Christina is briefly united with them at the Christmas season. Her mother has left Christina in her will the choice of two properties, one of which is to accept. Put that is only the framework of the play, the real problem is the spiritual apathy of her brothers and sisters. They used to be a gay family of Irish parents in the neighborhood of Boston. But now that they have become a family of distinction there is a devious satire on the family life of the Farley clan—their apathy is almost malignance. It is separating husbands and wives and poisoning the single soul of the only gay one who is left. To this Christian play Mr. Barry has given a Bostonian title: "A Joyous Season." As Francis and Margaret Gish live and bring most of them back to a state of awareness and belief—

By letting his play in Boston Mr. Barry has localized it a good deal. Perhaps it requires a Bostonian to understand how these people feel the glow of her gestures with the imagery of her gestures and are all living together on Beacon Street. Christina finds them shallow, ingrown, entrenched in pettish toward each other, their apathy is almost malignance. It is separating husbands and wives and poisoning the single soul of the only gay one who is left. In this reviewer's opinion, a religious play seems to place an impediment in the freedom of Mr. Barry's portraits. "The Joyous Season" is a testament to the joy of faith, why should it lack the luminous emotion of "The Animal Kingdom" or "Tomorrow and Tomorrow?" Mr. Barry has written with more simulation upon this theme.

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Lillian Gish, 99, a Movie Star Since Movies Began, is Dead

By ALBIN KREBS MARCH 1, 1993

Lillian Gish, the last of the great silent film stars, who performed for more than 85 years in movies, theater and television, died in her sleep on Saturday evening at her home in Manhattan. She was 99 years old.

Her personal manager, James E. Frasher, said the cause was heart failure.

"She was the same age as film," Mr. Frasher said. "They both came into the world in 1893."

Miss Gish was still performing as recently as the late 1980's. In 1986, she appeared as Alan Alda's hilariously addled mother in "Sweet Liberty," and in 1987 she was widely praised for her sensitive portrayal of an indomitable old woman in "The Whales of August," which co-starred another movie legend, Bette Davis. Advocate of an Early Start

"To become an actress, one cannot begin too soon," said Miss Gish, and she meant it, for she had made her acting debut at the age of 5.

Under the guidance of the director D. W. Griffith, Miss Gish became the pre-eminent actress in silent films, appearing in classics like "The Birth of a Nation," "Intolerance," "Broken Blossoms" and "Way Down East."

After performing in dozens of one- and two-reel silent movies (with running times of 10 or 20 minutes) and then in the longer Griffith epics, Miss Gish made a successful transition to the "talkies," and later into television.

Between film and television roles, she also worked on the stage. In 1930 she starred as Helena in Jed Harris's Broadway production of Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya," and in 1973 she appeared as the nurse in Mike Nichols's revival of the play. She made her last Broadway appearance in 1975, in "A Musical Jubilee."

Especially in her youth, Miss Gish evoked an aura of fragility, and hers was a vulnerable waiflike beauty. The renowned theatrical impresario David Belasco pronounced her "the most beautiful blonde I have ever seen." George Jean Nathan, the Broadway critic who courted Miss Gish without success for more than a decade, compared her to Eleonora Duse.

Miss Gish, though not always in excellent health, was accustomed to hard work and took a no-nonsense view of her physical attributes.
"I didn't care about being a beauty," she said in an interview in 1975. "I wanted to be an actress. When I was in the movies, I didn't care what I looked like, except for that image up there on the screen. I wanted to create beauty when it was necessary; that's an inner thing. But if all you have is a facade, it isn't interesting."

Throughout her life Miss Gish remained singularly devoted to her mother and to her sister, Dorothy, who was younger, but who became an actress at about the same time Lillian did. Mrs. Gish died in 1948 after a long invalidism, and Dorothy Gish died in 1968.

Miss Gish, who never married and who leaves no survivors, finally rejected Mr. Nathan's long series of marriage proposals, and said that a primary reason was his "seeming resentment" of her devotion to her family. She gave another reason for staying single: "Actresses have no business marrying. I always felt that being a successful wife was a 24-hour-a-day job. Besides, I knew such charming men: perhaps I didn't want to disillusion any of them."

Lillian Diana Gish, a daughter of the former Mary Robinson McConnell and James Gish, was born on Oct. 14, 1893, in Springfield, Ohio. The family moved to Baltimore, where Mr. Gish became a partner in a candy store. Before the turn of the century, he abandoned his wife and two daughters. He died in 1911.

Mrs. Gish took her daughters to New York City, rented an apartment on West 34th Street that was large enough to include two boarders, and began working in a department store. When Lillian was 5, a Gish boarder, an actress named Alice Niles, persuaded Mrs. Gish to let her take the child with her to act in a production of "In Convict's Stripes," which played one-night stands across the country. Lillian's salary was $10 a week.

At the age of 4, Dorothy joined another touring troupe; so did Mrs. Gish. The Gishes were separated at least half of each year, and life was lonely for Lillian as she traveled constantly and shared squalid hotel rooms with other company members to save money. More than once, she nearly fell into the hands of Elbridge Gerry's Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which was dedicated to protecting children who worked in sweatshop factories as well as on the stage.

When the Gishes were together in New York, they shared quarters with Charlotte Smith, whose daughter Gladys was a bit player on Broadway. Lillian won the role of a dancer, a part that Gladys had hoped for, in Sarah Bernhardt's 1905 engagement on Broadway. She Knew Pickford As Gladys Smith

In 1909, while visiting friends in Baltimore, Lillian and Dorothy dropped in to see a short film called "Lena and the Geese," and immediately recognized its
star as Gladys Smith. The next year the sisters showed up at the Biograph film
studios in Manhattan, at 11 East 14th Street, and asked to see Miss Smith.

That very day Gladys Smith, who had changed her name to Mary Pickford,
introduced the Gishes to D. W. Griffith, who at that time was churning out at
least three one-reelers a week for Biograph.

He took the sisters to a rehearsal hall, where he produced a revolver and
began to shoot over their heads. He later explained that he wanted to see how
they reacted. They evidently passed the fear test, for within hours they were
playing small roles in "An Unseen Enemy." Each received $5.

That was the beginning of an artistic collaboration between Lillian Gish and
Griffith that lasted more than a decade. During that time Miss Gish appeared
in dozens of Griffith's short films and starred in most of his critically and
economically successful longer ones.

In some films she played bit parts; in others, she played several roles.
Sometimes she was the star. All of Griffith's Biograph actors were moved
around in this way: it was not until after the success of "The Birth of a
Nation" that any received on-screen credit. One Source of Pride: Doing Own
Stunts

Miss Gish was proud of the fact that she became an accomplished horseback
rider, and performed her own stunts in dangerous scenes. She also learned to
edit film, set up lights and pick costumes, and she directed two films for
Biograph, one of which starred her sister, Dorothy.

During most of her years with Griffith, Miss Gish and the rest of the Griffith
company of actors and technicians divided their time between New York and
Los Angeles. In 1913, when Griffith joined Mutual Productions, Miss Gish,
hersister and many other artists at Biograph moved with him. Miss Gish

Securing financial backing for "The Birth of a Nation," a Civil War epic and a
milestone in the history of the motion picture, was a major battle for Griffith,
for the movie's costs constantly outstripped the budget estimates. It was said
to have cost $300,000.

First released in February 1915, under the title "The Clansman," the film ran
an unheard-of two hours and was shown at first in only a handful of road-
show theaters, to the musical accompaniment of a 30-piece orchestra.
Customers paid $2 to see what soon became known as "The Birth of a
Nation." Despite the high admission price, the picture was a great hit.

"In it I played Elsie, the sweet and virginal daughter of the family around
which the action was built," Miss Gish said in 1975. "I played so many frail,
downtrodden little virgins in the films of my youth that I sometimes think I invented that stereotype of a role."

Miss Gish’s role in Griffith’s "Intolerance" (1916) was small. Griffith had envisioned the film as his ultimate contribution to the motion-picture art, but he was forced to trim it drastically on the insistence of his creditors. Many other stars of the day, including Constance Talmadge, Bessie Love and Erich von Stroheim, made brief appearances. Propaganda Films For World War I

During World War I, the Gish sisters went with Griffith to Europe to make propaganda films, among them the immensely successful "Hearts of the World" (1918). By that time, Griffith had joined Adolph Zukor's company, which later became Paramount Pictures.

Hendrick Sartov, the still photographer for "Hearts of the World," eventually became a cinematographer for Griffith and invented for Miss Gish the "Lillian Gish lens," now called a soft-focus lens, which gives its subject a warmly blurred appearance.

In the fall of 1919, Griffith moved his entire company to Mamaroneck, N.Y., where he built his own movie studio on a huge estate. It was there, and on locations in New England, that he filmed Miss Gish's popular melodrama "Way Down East," released in 1920.

Miss Gish wrote in her autobiography that she volunteered to perform the dangerous climactic scene in that film, in which the heroine, lying on the ice floe in a freezing river, is headed for almost certain doom over a waterfall.

The frail-looking Miss Gish lay on the floe, her hair and one of her hands trailing in the frigid water. "My face was caked with a crust of snow and ice, and little spikes formed on my eyelashes, making it difficult to keep my eyes open," she recalled. "It was a delicious scene, one of my really favorites, but I remember being cold for days afterward."

"Orphans of the Storm," a French-Revolution melodrama released in 1922, was Griffith's last financially successful picture and, perhaps not coincidentally, the last Miss Gish made for him. "With all the expenses I have, I can't afford to pay you what you're worth," he told her. "You should go out on your own."

With heavy investments of her own money, she then made two successful movies in Italy, "The White Sister" and "Romola."

In the mid-1920's Miss Gish became embroiled in a long legal battle with Charles Duell, a socialite who had been her financial adviser (and, as she said in 1975, "sort of my Svengali"), over sums he claimed she owed him. Miss Gish munched carrots during the trial, and newspaper photographs of her stirred a carrot-chomping fad across the country.
Americans had become enchanted with the new artistic aristocracy, made up of movie stars like Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Rudolph Valentino and Miss Gish. Earlier, in a movie, when Miss Gish had pushed up the sides of her mouth with her fingers to demonstrate feigned happiness, the gesture became a much-copied fad. From the Silents To the Talkies

Miss Gish made the transition from silents to talkies in 1930 in "One Romantic Night," with Rod LaRocque and Conrad Nagel. By that time, she had signed a contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. "My contract called for six pictures in two years, for which I was paid, I believe, a million dollars," she wrote.

Miss Gish made a triumphant return to the stage in 1930 in "Uncle Vanya" on Broadway. In 1936 she played Ophelia to John Gielgud's Hamlet and Judith Anderson's Queen Gertrude, and in 1941 she began a record-breaking 66-week run in "Life With Father" in Chicago. In 1960, she starred in "All the Way Home" on Broadway.

As Miss Gish grew older, roles were more difficult to come by, but she played in summer stock and in an occasional movie, like "The Comedians," "The Night of the Hunter" and "The Undefeated." An early recruit to television, she appeared in "Arsenic and Old Lace" with Helen Hayes and in Horton Foote's "Trip to Bountiful."

Commenting on what was to be Miss Gish's last screen performance, in the 1987 "Whales of August," Vincent Canby wrote in The New York Times: "There's not a gesture or a line-reading that doesn't reflect her nearly three-quarters of a century in front of a camera. Scenes are not purloined when she's on screen."

Correction: March 2, 1993

A picture in some copies yesterday with an obituary of Lillian Gish, showing a scene from "Life With Father," was published in error. It showed Dorothy Gish.

A version of this biography; obituary appears in print on March 1, 1993, on Page A00001 of the National edition with the headline: Lillian Gish, 99, a Movie Star Since Movies Began, is Dead
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Lillian Gish, 99, a Movie Star Since Movies Began, Is Dead