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### Cinematic Rotterdam: the times and tides of a modern city

Paalman, F.J.J.W.

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## CHAPTER 4. ANDOR VON BARSY

### § 1. the man with the camera

One of the most remarkable filmmakers who lived and worked in Rotterdam in the late 1920s and 1930s was the Hungarian filmmaker Andor von Bary (•1899-03-14, Budapest – †1965-12-24, Munich). In the Netherlands he became known for films such as the city symphony *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS* (1928) and his avant-garde short *HOOGSTRAAT* (1929). As a cinematographer, Von Bary collaborated with documentary filmmakers such as Joris Ivens, Hans Richter, Leni Riefenstahl, and Slatan Dudov. He was also the cameraman of several Dutch fiction films, among them *ZEEMANSVROUWEN* (1930, Henk Kleinman), *DEAD WATER* (1934, Gerard Rutten), and *LENTELIED* (1936, Simon Koster). For *DEAD WATER* Von Bary received the prize for best cinematography at the Venice Film Festival (1934). He was, however, reluctant to any kind of film ideal, and in general he was sceptical of the film industry; he regarded himself as someone who marched along in the margins<sup>426</sup>. But the facts suggest a different picture. In addition to the previous titles, he also shot one of the first German colour films, *DAS BAD AUF DER TENNE* (1943, Volker von Collande). For his contribution to the avant-garde fiction film *JONAS* (1957, Ottomar Domnick) he won the prize for best cinematography at the Berlin Film Festival. At that time he was also a cameraman for and advisor to the just established *Bayerisches Fernsehen*, and he helped to set up the *Institut für Film und Fernsehen* in Munich, where he became a teacher. Notwithstanding these facts, Von Bary remained a man behind the scenes.

In spite of his achievements, still little is written about Von Bary and until now he has remained a rather enigmatic figure within the history of Dutch cinema. Some data are provided by Emiel van Moerkerken, who started his career as an assistant of Von Bary for *DEAD WATER* and *LENTELIED*<sup>427</sup>. Van Moerkerken regarded Von Bary as his 'teacher'<sup>428</sup>. According to him, Von Bary was at that time technical-theoretically better grounded than anybody else in the Netherlands. Since he was twenty-six, he had already published articles on cinematographic technology in German film journals<sup>429</sup>. A similar picture is drawn by Rutten in his autobiography (1976), who compared Von Bary's work to that of a scientist and an inventor, since he made many optical instruments himself, or adjusted existing ones. Van Moerkerken described all the kinds of cameras and objectives (23 pieces in a cherished suitcase) that he used. Besides this, Van Moerkerken also considered him a teacher for many other things, like art history, philosophy (Schopenhauer) and music (Mozart). He praised his erudition and characterised him as 'admirable, courteous, sometimes haughty-ironical – he never raised his voice and he had never neurotic manners'<sup>430</sup>. In addition, he mentioned that Von Bary used to flirt with nice girls who were around<sup>431</sup>.

Other information is very little. This can hardly be explained by Von Bary's own attitude of 'walking along in the margins'. Instead, we might consider the following.

In the 1950s, the *auteur* theory championed the director as true author of a feature film. The notion was rapidly and widely accepted: for too long, particularly in the Hollywood studio system, the director had been regarded as little more than a technician. Now, however, directors increasingly provided the key impetus within the new, independent cinema movements that began to flourish internationally, following the example set by the French *nouvelle vague*. ... Today, too often in film criticism and education, and even among many practising professionals, the cult surrounding

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<sup>426</sup> 'Ich marschiere nur so am Rande des Filmgeschäftes mit', in an interview with Manfred von Conta; 'Subjektiv am Objektiv', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1957-07-26.

<sup>427</sup> Van Moerkerken, 1966; 1967.

<sup>428</sup> Van Moerkerken, 1966: 13.

<sup>429</sup> Cf. Bolbrinker, 2005: 312.

<sup>430</sup> Van Moerkerken, 1966, 15; original quote: 'Von Bary was steeds beminnelijk, hoffelijk, soms wat hautain-ironisch, verhiel nooit zijn stem en had nooit zenuwlijdersmanieren.'

<sup>431</sup> In the case of *DEAD WATER*, VAN MOERKERKEN: 1967: 54, *Lentelied*, p55.

the director means that the other arts and crafts which combine to produce a film are rarely sufficiently cherished or even acknowledged. (Ettegui, 1998: 7)

These are the first words from the book *Cinematography* (1998), written by film producer Peter Ettegui, which is the first title of a popular series called *Screencraft*<sup>432</sup>. The series, published in various languages, is a major inside attempt to call attention for the broad range of creative faculties that make a film. 'In revealing their roles in the film-making process, they will shed light on the way films evolve through a fusion of forces which at first glance might appear to be incompatible: art and industry, vision and compromise, design and accident' (Ettegui, 1998: 7). As the title already suggests, craftsmanship is brought to the fore. This is not so much about the technical skills of the cameramen, but about 'transmitting their individual, personal perspective on the language of film' (ibid, 8). The book deals with the way aesthetic devices are used to 'create an emotionally charged visual arena for the action of a film' (ibid). As such Janusz Kaminski is quoted too (ibid): 'All one's experience of life subconsciously informs every creative decision one makes. That's what makes each individual cinematographer different.' Whereas this applies to fiction films, it certainly applies to documentary filmmaking, where the attention, concentration and way of seeing of the cameraman are often of crucial importance.

In the case of Von Barys, we might have a closer look at his work for its outstanding cinematographic qualities, but also for the way it has contributed to urban image building and city branding regarding Rotterdam. Von Barys presented Rotterdam, its harbour and its industry in several films that were shown at the International Dutch Industry Exhibition 'Nenijto'. During following years he made similar kinds of productions for other big events. Through the figure of Von Barys and his work, a broad development of film in Rotterdam might get a personal shape. I will make an attempt to pay attention to his biography as well, to understand his relationships, as part of larger networks, and the general conditions that enabled him to make his films.

### **a biographical itinerary to Rotterdam**

Andor József von Barys, who inherited the title of 'Baron', was born in Budapest in 1899. His father, Adolf von Barys, worked as an artist. For the purpose of painting frescoes in churches he used a photo camera as a projection device. In this way the young Andor, at about ten years old, learnt his first photographic tricks, and started to make photographs himself<sup>433</sup>. After the early death of his father, Andor went to a military secondary school near Vienna. When he finished school at the end of WWI, the *Donaumonarchie* Austria-Hungary collapsed and Von Barys became officially stateless, for which reason he received a so-called 'Nansen-passport'. He moved, together with his mother Anna Mária Strohofer-Von Barys, to Fürstenfeldbruck, near Munich where he continued his studies at the *Staatliche Höhere Schule für Fototechnik*<sup>434</sup>. In 1923 and 1924 Von Barys followed its new programme for cinematography; within this context he made his first film, the fiction short PER ASPERA AD ASTRA (1923)<sup>435</sup>, which got a positive review in the *Süddeutsche Filmzeitung*.

The *Münchner Fotoschule*, as the school has also been called, was unique and it became internationally renowned. It attracted talents from various countries. Among them were several students from Hungary and other Eastern European countries, like the young Latvian Ortrud

<sup>432</sup> Published by Focal Press and edited by Barbara Mercer, since 1998.

<sup>433</sup> Manfred von Conta, 'Subjektiv am Objektiv', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1957-07-26.

<sup>434</sup> See: 'Münchner Fotoschule – Verzeichnis der Schülerinnen und Schüler 1900 – 2000', compiled by Barbara Stenzel for the publication *Lehrjahre Lichtjahre. Die Münchner Fotoschule 1900 – 2000* (U. Pohlmann & R. Scheutle, eds.), Schirmer/Mosel. <http://arthistoricum.net/index.php?id=1524&alph=z> (visited: 2010-02-02). Andor von Barys is mentioned as 'Barys, Andreas' (according to the custom to germanify foreign surnames). The *kinotechnische Abteilung* existed from 1921 to 1935.

<sup>435</sup> Aubinger, Joseph; 'Per aspera ad astra', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1923-10-12; see also: Conta, Manfred von; 'Subjektiv am Objektiv', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1957-07-26. The film was directed by J. Pelerin and produced by his company Pelerin-Film in Fürstenfeldbruck.

Johanna Balkin (born in Riga, 1904), with whom Von Barsy fell in love. She followed the regular photography curriculum (1922-1924), and when Von Barsy came to live with her in Munich she was selected for the so-called *Meisterklasse* (1924-1925).

Von Barsy moved to Berlin in 1926<sup>436</sup>. He was then asked to make film recordings for the opera 'Doktor Faust' (1926, reg. Otto Erhardt), which was to be performed in Stuttgart. To use film in opera, and especially to have the images synchronised with the music and the play, was still a novelty, and afterwards Von Barsy wrote an article to explain how this worked<sup>437</sup>. How he then came to the Netherlands is not exactly clear. Emiel van Moerkerken thought that Von Barsy was invited by the German filmmaker Theo Güsten, but he was not sure about it<sup>438</sup>. I will take it as a point of departure.

Güsten, who was the same age as Von Barsy, worked for the *Kulturfilm* department of the UFA in Berlin. When Von Barsy came to Berlin, however, Güsten had already moved to Paris, then to Brussels, and eventually to The Hague, where he arrived in 1926<sup>439</sup>. Güsten became friends with the young set designer Gerard Rutten, with whom he started to do some decoration work, in the late summer of 1926<sup>440</sup>. Shortly afterwards, Güsten founded the production company Germania<sup>441</sup>. Its first film was a commission from industrialists and businessmen from Rotterdam to promote their firms and the port in general<sup>442</sup>. Güsten was looking for a cameraman, in order to make a difference from Haghe Film and Polygoon, and to that end he asked Von Barsy, who came over from Berlin at the end of 1926<sup>443</sup>. The film itself has been lost, and only reviews give an idea of its imagery to which I refer in the next section. Here I will make an attempt to trace the connections that made it possible and which enabled various other films to come.

It seems that before Güsten, Von Barsy was already in touch with people in and around The Hague, among them Lajos von Ébneth, Simon Koster and Gerard Rutten – with whom he would produce various projects. The Hungarian artist Von Ébneth had studied engineering and visual arts, first in Budapest and subsequently in Munich, at the time when Von Barsy had also lived in Munich. In 1923, Von Ébneth moved to Berlin and met László Moholy-Nagy, who maintained contacts with artists in the Netherlands<sup>444</sup>. At the end of 1923 Von Ébneth moved to Scheveningen, near The Hague. He became part of a circle of people related to De Stijl, among them the Hungarian artist Vilmos Huszár. The two of them started the so-called *Mechano-Marionetten Theater* and on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February they gave a show at the *Rotterdamsche Kring*<sup>445</sup>. One month later they gave a performance at the *Groote Koninklijke Bazar* in The Hague, as part of a 'puppet- mask- and shadow exhibition' that was organised by *Wij Nu!*, an association for

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<sup>436</sup> Westhoff, 1995: 6; see also the research files of this publication at B&G (archieff Stichting Film & Wetenschap > Von Barsy); Von Barsy officially moved from Munich to Berlin at 1926-05-20.

<sup>437</sup> Op de Coul, 2004: 193-195, for the article (also mentioned by Op de Coul) see: Von Barsy, 1927.

<sup>438</sup> Van Moerkerken, 1966: 13.

<sup>439</sup> Westhoff, 1995: 24.

<sup>440</sup> Rutten: 1976: 128. Rutten mentions that he was friends with Güsten, with whom he made a decoration for the Passage cinema in The Hague, on the occasion of the screening of a Russian film. According to [www.cinemacontext.nl](http://www.cinemacontext.nl) (2007-09-29) this must have been BRONENOSETS POTYEMKIN (1925, USSR, Sergei Eisenstein), which was shown there at the 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of September 1926.

<sup>441</sup> i.e. Germania Filmfabriek; at [www.cinemacontext.nl](http://www.cinemacontext.nl) (2008-10-13) it is mentioned that D. Polak was its director (1927-1929), but no further data are available. Westhoff (1995: 24) mentions Güsten as its leader.

<sup>442</sup> A review of this film appeared in the NRC (1927-01-12); 'Een film van Rotterdam'. It is also mentioned by Westhoff (1995: 24); the title of the film is unknown; given title: FILM OVER DE ROTTERDAMSCHEN HAVEN EN PLAATSELIJKE INDUSTRIE EN HANDEL.

<sup>443</sup> The film was released at 1927-01-11, see: 'Een film van Rotterdam', in: NRC, 1927-01-12.

<sup>444</sup> Ex, 2002: 14.

<sup>445</sup> Brentjens, 2008: 148.

experimental theatre and film<sup>446</sup>. This exhibition was initiated by Simon Koster and Gerard Rutten.

Soon afterwards, Koster moved to Berlin, as a foreign correspondent of the NRC (one of the commissioning enterprises of the film by Güsten). At the same time Rutten moved to Berlin as well, after he had fallen in love with the Berlin based Latvian dancer Wy Magito, who had given a performance in Scheveningen<sup>447</sup>. Through her he got to know Berlin, where he, just like Koster, became friends with various performers, artists and filmmakers, among them Leni Riefenstahl, Curt Oertel and Walter Ruttmann<sup>448</sup>. Since Von Bary's girlfriend Ortrud Johanna Balkin came from Latvia too, we might draw a connection here. As Rutten and Koster were interested in theatre and film, the involvement of Von Bary with the opera 'Doktor Faust' might have provided another link. It must have inspired Koster to create NUL UUR NUL, for which Rutten designed the set, while Von Bary provided footage from industrial films that he would make in Rotterdam, next to studio recordings that were made by Curt Oertel<sup>449</sup>.

After all it seems that Rutten recommended Von Bary to his friend Güsten, and that Koster and Von Ébneith played a role in this exchange too. In this perspective, one might also consider a 'Hungarian factor', even though Von Bary himself was concerned little with his nationality. This is at least suggested by the presence of Von Ébneith, who was not only friends with László Moholy-Nagy and Vilmos Huszár, but with other compatriots as well, among them the architect Pali Meller<sup>450</sup>. The latter worked for the studio of J.J.P. Oud, and both of them, as well as Von Bary, would become involved with the Filmliga Rotterdam<sup>451</sup>. Various other Hungarians might be mentioned here that extend the network in different directions<sup>452</sup>. Such

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<sup>446</sup> The exhibition took place from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February till the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 1926. Von Ébneith and Huszár gave their performance at the 16<sup>th</sup> of March. See: Invitation card of the exhibition, Archive Simon Koster, Theater Instituut Nederland, inventaris 48, nr. 215. For information on *Wij Nu!*, see also: Rutten, 1976: 44. Brentjens, 2008: 146-151.

<sup>447</sup> Wy Magito was the leader of a modern dance group from Berlin that gave the performance 'Maskentänze' at the Kurhaus in Scheveningen, early 1926. Interested in masks, Rutten visited the show, and came in touch with the dancers – among them Leni Riefenstahl. He accompanied them back to Berlin, and he subsequently travelled along with them for months, on a tour through Europe, including Russia. Back in Berlin, Rutten stayed a while with Magito. Rutten recalls this history in his autobiography (1976: 45-49); he calls her 'Wu Magito', and mentions almost no dates, while the suggested chronology is not always correct. The tour took place, most likely, in 1926-1927; another reference is a performance at the *Volksbühne Berlin*, i.e. *Tanzmatinee 'Maskentänze'*, 1927-12-04, with Wy Magito, Carletto Thieben and Ursula Falke; [www.volksbuehne-berlin.de](http://www.volksbuehne-berlin.de) > Volksbühne > Archiv > Spielzeitchronik (visited: 2010-02-02).

<sup>448</sup> Rutten, 1976: *ibid* and 54.

<sup>449</sup> Mentioned on a flyer and a film production photo in the Archive Simon Koster, Theater Instituut Nederland, inventaris 48, nr. 215.

<sup>450</sup> Von Ébneith made 'reliefs' and 'constructions' that looked like architectural models (e.g. *Compositie met Haakvormen*, 1926). One of them was presented by Pali Meller in a house of J.J.P. Oud at the Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart, in 1927 (see: Ex, 2002: 45, 61).

<sup>451</sup> Smit (2005: 32) mentions Meller as one of those who originally signed the manifesto of the Filmliga Rotterdam, while Oud was its founding chairman.

<sup>452</sup> This might be exemplified by the feature film *LENTELIED* (1936, Simon Koster), for which Von Bary did the cinematography, Von Ébneith the set design, and Victor Palfi the editing – the latter was another Hungarian who had worked in Berlin before (see: Dittrich, 1987: 56), where he had met Simon Koster (together they produced a theatre play for children: *Bob und Bobby*, 1931 – Archive Simon Koster, Theater Instituut Nederland, inventaris nr. 48, p26). In a monograph on Von Ébneith, Sjarel Ex has remarked (2002: 18) that in the 1920s, Hungarian artists who moved to the Netherlands were introduced to more experienced colleagues by the Hungarian embassy. Akos Farkas was another important Hungarian cinematographer in the Netherlands, based in The Hague. He worked for different production companies, including *Monopole-DLS* in Rotterdam. He was responsible for the cinematography of two major feature films set in Rotterdam: *BOEFJE* (1939, Detlef Sierck) and *ERGENS IN NEDERLAND* (1940, Ludwig Berger). George Pal worked as an animator for Philips in Eindhoven (Kamphuis & Schepp, 1983), for which Von Bary, with Hans Richter, made a film as well: *FROM THUNDERBOLT TO TELEVISION SCREEN*, 1936). Several other names might be mentioned here, among them the cinematographer László Schäffer, who collaborated with Gerard Rutten too, and also people who maintained contacts with people in the Netherlands, in particular László Moholy-Nagy (and to some degree also László Peri and Marcel Breuer, see: Ex, 2002: 14). The Hungarian architect Alexander Bodon was also in touch with Von Ébneith, and although he was based in Amsterdam, he designed various projects in Rotterdam. Bodon, in his turn,

connections show the emergence of a network and its geographical nodes that gave rise to a broad movement that is characterised by what is alternatively called ‘swarm intelligence’, notwithstanding the existence of individual signatures<sup>453</sup>.

## § 2. functional cinematography – Transfilma

The film by Güsten and Von Barsy resulted in a cinematic tour through Rotterdam. It begins with the not yet finished railway bridge ‘De Hef’ (*Koningsbrug*), the subject of Ivens’s later film. It is followed by office tower *Het Witte Huis* and other landmarks of modern Rotterdam. The film had to promote the companies that commissioned it, among them tobacco, beer and soap enterprises, as well as the NRC. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 1927, it was shown to invited guests, at the Grand Theater, with the request to give ‘sharp comments’. A critic of the NRC replied the next day.

That criticism does not need to be very sharp, to reach the conclusion that this new film is nothing else than an advertisement for a limited number of firms, glued together with recordings of harbour and city. It is self-evident that in this way the logical connection would be lacking. An appropriate image of harbour traffic and of Rotterdam’s trade and industry is not provided by this film, and as means of propaganda it does not suit.<sup>454</sup>

The critic added that this was all the more a pity since Von Barsy’s cinematography was good, particularly the shots of the port.

Von Barsy’s talent was not left unnoticed, and so he was asked to work for the new Rotterdam-based company Transfilma (*Transcontinentale Filmfabrikatie en Handel-onderneming*). It was established by the young German baron Friedrich von Maydell, who had previously directed the film *ZWISCHEN MORGEN UND MORGEN* (1924)<sup>455</sup>. His business partner was H. von Reitzenstein, who would write the film scripts. They found residence in the *Groote Schouwburg*, the city’s main theatre, where they furnished a studio and a laboratory. The company existed for less than three years; it disappeared in the same way as it had appeared, leaving hardly any trace.

Being employed by Transfilma, Von Barsy definitively moved to Rotterdam, and started to work on a one-hour film for the coal trading association SHV, STEENKOLEN HANDELSVEREENIGING (1927), which was commissioned on the occasion of its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary<sup>456</sup>. It starts with the development of the SHV, and emphasizes that the influx of German coal has largely contributed to the growth of Rotterdam’s port. The camera moves through the port and shows its different facilities, in order to arrive at Waalhaven, where it pays much attention to the port’s rapid modernisation, with its cranes, bridges, elevators and grabs. It caused a critic to say that ‘this film will get documentary value for Rotterdam, because it contains characteristic aspects, which are already disappearing due to the rapid growth of the

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shared a studio with the Hungarian photographer Eva Besnyö, but the latter was not in touch with Von Ébnet (see Ex, 2002: 122n72), nor with Von Barsy (telephone conversation of FP with Besnyö, 2003-09-02).

<sup>453</sup> With a reference to entomology: Bonabeau, Dorigo, Theraulaz, 1999: 11; the emergence of trail networks in ants is taken to illustrate collective self-organisation, through stigmergy. ‘This does not exclude the existence of individual chemical signatures [this literally applies to cinema too] or individual memory which can efficiently complement or sometimes, replace responses to collective marks.’

<sup>454</sup> ‘Een film van Rotterdam’, *NRC*, 1927-01-12. Original quote: ‘Die kritiek behoeft niet bijzonder scherp te zijn, om tot de conclusie te komen, dat deze nieuwe film niet anders is dan een reclame film voor een beperkt aantal bedrijven, aaneengelijmd met opnemingen van de haven en de stad. Het spreekt vanzelf dat op deze wijze het logische verband geheel moest ontbreken. Een juist beeld van het havenverkeer en van Rotterdam’s handel en industrie geeft deze film niet, en als propagandamiddel deugt zij niet.’

<sup>455</sup> His name of birth was Frederich Karl Viktor von Maydell-Felks (born 1899-10-10), [www.filmportal.de](http://www.filmportal.de) > Von Maydell (visited: 2007-10-04)

<sup>456</sup> The film was made in a period of two months, and had its premiere on the 1st of April 1927; see e.g. ‘De S.H.V.-Film’, in: *Het Dagblad van Rotterdam*, 1927-04-02.

technology'<sup>457</sup>. Besides the machines the film shows the workers too, at work, and in the canteens and bathrooms. This film was furthermore accompanied by another one, on shipping on the river Rhine, between Rotterdam and cities in Germany.

SHV director Van Beuningen owned various firms, and separate films were made about them, for example on tugboat company P. Smit. This film, made on the occasion of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, shows the towing of things as different as ocean liners, docks and lock gates. In a letter of thanks to Transfilma, the company said that the film was 'not only a brilliant advertisement for our enterprise, but many of its recordings are truly works of art'<sup>458</sup>. This was also expressed by the press. It was remarked, with a reference to Güsten's film, that this film instead did not lack an overview of the activities in the port<sup>459</sup>. Very enthusiastic, even lyrical, was a critic of the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, who emphasised the speed and rhythm of the film, as well as its visual poetry and beauty<sup>460</sup>. He and other critics especially liked shots made during a storm at sea, and the departure of the American cruiser 'Memphis'. Due to its success, fourteen copies of the film were made for foreign distribution<sup>461</sup>.

The films were shown at different occasions. Besides the screenings during the anniversary celebrations, they were shown, for example, to a group of invited guests from shipping enterprises in Hamburg, the main competitor of Rotterdam, where they were enthusiastically received<sup>462</sup>. These films were also shown at the industry exhibition 'Nenijto' (1928), of which Van Beuningen was one of the main sponsors. This event, prepared since 1926, increased the demand for industrial films in Rotterdam. It is even possible that Van Beuningen, with his extensive relationships in Germany, may have encouraged the establishment of Transfilma in Rotterdam, by pointing to this prospect<sup>463</sup>. Various other firms commissioned indeed films to be shown at the Nenijto, such as Burgerhout's Shipbuilding and Engineering works, which was located next to Van Beuningen's shipyard and engineering works of P. Smit Jr. in Rotterdam-Zuid.

With Transfilma, Von Barys created films for companies in the port, for food factories, and for the municipality<sup>464</sup>. In these films, raw material is brought into the harbour, transported through the city, to the plant, where it is processed, and subsequently brought into the city again. This collection shows already the relationship between the port and the city, and how it accommodates energy and food production.

One of these films, shown at the Nenijto too, which followed such a generic script, was the feature length documentary about one of the other main sponsors, beer brewery

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<sup>457</sup> 'Een film der S.H.V.', in: *Maasbode*, 1927-04-02, cf. 'Een film van de Steenkolen Handelsvereniging', in: *Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie*, 1927-04-08. Original quote: 'De film zal voor Rotterdam documentaire waarde krijgen, daar zij tal van karakteristieke gegevens bevat, die door den snellen groei der techniek reeds nu bezig zijn te verdwijnen.'

<sup>458</sup> Original quote: 'De film is niet alleen een schitterende reclame voor ons bedrijf, maar tal van opnamen zijn ware kunstproducten.' Letter bij P. Stuiver (SHV), 1927-07-20, reproduced in an informational brochure of Transfilma (1928, p2), sent with a letter by Transfilma to Burgemeester en Wethouders, 1928-04-20, dossier 'Havenfilm van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4216: 1928, nr. 211.1, volgnr. 1., GAR.

<sup>459</sup> 'Jubileum P. Smit Jr. – Een film van het bedrijf', in: *Dagblad van Rotterdam*, 1927-07-09.

<sup>460</sup> 'Een Film van het Sleepbootbedrijf', in: *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 1927-07-11.

<sup>461</sup> 'Een film van het Sleepbootbedrijf', in: *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 1927-07-11; 'Jubileum P. Smit Jr. – Een Film van het bedrijf', in: *Dagblad van Rotterdam*, 1927-07-09; 'Het Gouden feest van P. Smit Jr. – De Jubileumfilm', in: *Maasbode*, 1927-07-09.

<sup>462</sup> 'Rotterdamer Hafenvverhältnisse im Film', in: *Schiffahrt-Zeitung der Hamburger Börsenhalle*, 1927-07-01; 'Rotterdamer Hafenvverhältnisse im Film', in: *Hamburger Korrespondent*, 1927-07-01, a.o.

<sup>463</sup> While the first Transfilma productions were made for Van Beuningen, from its beginning Transfilma had been concerned with the Nenijto, see: 'Transfilma', *Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie*, nr. 30, 1927.

<sup>464</sup> E.g. concerning food: HYGIËNISCHE MELKSTAL DE VAAN and MODELBEDRIJVEN DER VOLKVOEDING; concerning municipal companies: HET GEMEENTE ELECTRICITEITSBEDRIJF, HET GEMEENTE GASBEDRIJF ROTTERDAM (1928); director of these films: Von Maydell, cameraman: Von Barys, script: Von Reitzenstein.

Oranjeboom<sup>465</sup>. Since it was the largest industrial film by Transfilma, we may consider it representative for its productions. The film shows barley being brought into the port, which is transported through the city to the brewery. Step by step, one sees how it is processed and made into beer, and how this product is finally brought back into the city again. In this way the film explained the magic of industrial production, for consumers to trust it, and even more so, to appreciate its ingenuity. The credits of ORANJEBOOM, HET BIERBROUWBEDRIJF (1927) mention only 'Transfilma', and no specific names; the film was conceived as an industrial artefact, as an extension of the production process that it showed. However, Von Barys put nevertheless his 'signature' on it, not only by way of the cinematographic quality, including interchanges of overviews and more abstract close-ups, but also literally by way of a witty reference, when suddenly a close-up shows the text 'Hungary', written on a train wagon that delivers barley<sup>466</sup>.

While respecting the idea of effectivity, the film pays special attention to the relationship between man and machine; they are extensions of each other. Next to that, the film highlights the human dimension. There is an example of a huge beer barrel under construction. A man climbs out of it through a small opening, like a pigeon through a pigeon-hole. Remarkable is also a shot at the end of the film, when a pan of the camera portrays all the workers of the factory. It shows the social commitment of the filmmaker, who himself remains anonymous.

The film contains some experimental parts too, for example an animation made with hundreds of beer barrels that run out of the factory through a small opening, like a giant spitting mouth. And at a certain moment there is a direct reference to Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS, which was released earlier that year (1927). Within a sequence that shows the machine chamber there is a shot of 'The Great Switch-Board', as an intertitle calls it, where two men are checking the measures, while moving rather mechanically. It resembles a crucial scene of workers in METROPOLIS, handling the machines of a world under pressure that might run out of control. It illustrates the way industrial films link up to the world of cinema at large. This, moreover, also appears from the fact that Von Barys provided images of machinery from this film and others – even before they were released – to be used in Simon Koster's experimental film and theatre play NUL UUR NUL.

The next film, of one hour, was about the production of milk (1928). In the meantime the municipality, which supported the Nenijs to too, had also become interested and commissioned three films: one about its docks and ferries, one about its electricity works (GEB) and one about the production of gas. The latter starts with coal being brought into the harbour, and ends with the use of gas, which is enjoyed by two fashionably dressed women in a kitchen, by women moving elegantly in a heated room, a man with snow on his coat entering a house, and a young girl playing in a light, spacious bathroom. There is also a large bakery, a hotel kitchen, and an ironing workshop. These images either promote the idea of modern housing or show places as extensions of the factory and the continuation of the production process. The flow of energy relates all (modern) environments.

The spatial features of each level, whether it is the street, the harbour, the factory, or the house, are visualised by different movements and speeds; the camera itself is interchangingly static and dynamic, with pans and tracking shots. Next to that the spaces are articulated by contrasts in editing, through an interchange of total, medium and close-up shots. This spatial focus is characteristic for the cinematography of Von Barys. His work shows sophisticated compositions and experimental points of view. Surprising perspectives are emphasised by the editing, of overviews and details that become abstract images. In this way expressive sequences are built up, which result in a rhythmic montage.

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<sup>465</sup> See: 'Bedrijfsfilm D'Oranjeboom', in: *De Maasbode*, 1928-01-14.

<sup>466</sup> At the same time this also seems to be a reference to the president of the Nenijs to, B.C.D. Hanegraaff, who was also consul for Hungary in Rotterdam.

Movement is an important issue in the films, but the films are first of all functional: they intend to inform about the subject portrayed, which they do smoothly and in a subtle way. Yet within the attempt to show the production process as well as possible, several experiments were carried out. A nice example is to be seen in the film about the gas works; coal carts move one after another through the air by way of a monorail. Von Barsy sits with his camera in one of them, so we, the spectators, look from the perspective of the coal. The cart is swinging, and so does the camera. Carts ahead of us open their bottom doors and release the coal that falls into a container below. We know that the next cart will be ours, and then there is another image. Besides such grotesque imagery Von Barsy also finds ways to show a ‘human touch’. At the end of the same film there is an image from the gas factory that shows hundreds of all kinds of kettles with tea and coffee, brought in by the workers and put on a common stove in the canteen, to be used during the lunch. It is a sensitive image within the context of the rational production process of the factory.

Before the films for the municipality were shown at the Nenijs, they were presented at an international exhibition of film (ITF) in The Hague in April 1928, where they were enthusiastically received<sup>467</sup>. One of the organisers of this event was Luc Willink, who was also a member of the Filmliga, just like Von Barsy<sup>468</sup>. In the same circle of people we find the designer Piet Zwart, who created the design of the exhibition, including its publicity material. The connection with Zwart is of particular interest. In 1927 he started to experiment with photography, and in analogy to functionalism in architecture he spoke of ‘functional photography’<sup>469</sup>. We could similarly speak of ‘functional cinematography’ in the case of Von Barsy. This is also legitimated by the fact that Zwart himself got involved with cinema too, as he did the graphic design of a film for the PTT, which was directed by Theo Güsten<sup>470</sup>.

It is exactly for the functionalist approach that Von Barsy has remained out of focus, notwithstanding the ideas and experience that are to be found in his work. This is related to Von Barsy’s own interests and his attitude. Quoting Emiel van Moerkerken (1966: 13)<sup>471</sup>, ‘Von Barsy was not at all a cinephile..., did not pay any attention to whatever ‘film-art’ ideals, regarded the whole film business as something of doubtful character, and certainly wanted nothing else than being a ‘photographer’, a film-photographer. But as such he aimed for the greatest possible perfection.’ Von Barsy’s cinematography was a matter of finding the right approach for the purpose at issue, a matter of functional design from a modernist perspective. Although he would also apply ideas of the ‘absolute film’, as expressed by Menno Ter Braak and others, which have

<sup>467</sup> For Zwart and the ITF, see: Brentjens, 2008: 171. For Transfilma and the ITF: letter by Transfilma to Burgemeester en Wethouders, 1928-04-20, dossier ‘Havenfilm van Rotterdam’, archief: ‘Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4216: 1928, nr. 211.1, volgnr. 1., GAR.

<sup>468</sup> According to Hogenkamp (1988: 55), Von Barsy was a member of the board of the Filmliga Rotterdam.

<sup>469</sup> Brentjens, 2008: 179. At that time other designers began to use photography as well, for example Von Ébne, who made a series of photo montage advertisements for the concrete company Wernink’s Beton in Leiden; the images were selected by Piet Zwart for the film and photo exhibition in Stuttgart (FIFO, 1929, see: Ex, 2002: 122 and 134/137). Others started to experiment with film as well, among them Paul Schuitema, and Gerrit Kiljan (i.e. SCHEVENINGEN, 1930). An immediate link can be drawn here with Von Barsy and other filmmakers, especially in The Hague, among them Otto van Neijenhoff, who moved in the same circle of people in and around The Hague and Rotterdam. Van Neijenhoff, moreover, had also made a film for the Bruynzeel company (1926), for which Zwart frequently worked.

<sup>470</sup> This film, ALLE ZEVEN DAGEN (1930), is the only one mentioned by Brentjens (2008: 225) in her monograph on Piet Zwart. We might wonder, however, if Zwart has also played a role, in one way or the other, in the case of some other films by Güsten. In 1929 he made already two films for the PTT, i.e. TELEGRAAF EN TELEFOON IN DIENST and DE PTT IN DIENST VAN DE WERELDVREDE (1929). Whereas Zwart had also a steady relationship with the Bruynzeel company, Güsten also made a film for it (1928). Although this might have been an immediate result of Güsten’s well-known feature length documentary ZAA NSTREEK (1927), it could even be that in the case of the latter Zwart had played some kind of mediating role (for a filmography of Güsten, see: Westhoff, 1995: 25).

<sup>471</sup> Original quote: ‘Von Barsy was allerminst een film-enthousiast..., schonk geen enkele aandacht aan welke ‘filmkunst’-idealen dan ook, vond het hele filmbedrijf iets van twijfelachtig allooi, en wilde beslist niets anders zijn dan ‘fotograaf’, film-fotograaf. Maar als zodanig streefde hij dan ook naar de grootst mogelijke perfectie.’

dominated the historiography of the Filmliga, and that of Dutch cinema (see: Linssen and Schoots 1999), he considered first of all the aims of the films. Because of the functionality of many of Von Barsy's films, as well as the rational production processes they showed, they have not been considered as a matter of artistic expression. However, nowadays such ideas on functionality are considered as an artistic notion itself, which is the reason why many designers from that period have gained much attention in later years. In the year 2000, the BNO (*Union of Dutch Designers*) even proclaimed Piet Zwart as the most influential Dutch designer of the twentieth century. The idea of 'functional cinematography' applies to all the productions that Von Barsy made for Transfilma, including its most outstanding film, *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS* (1928).

### *The city that never rests*

During the production of various films about the port and the industry of Rotterdam, the ambitious plan emerged within Transfilma to make a film called 'Rotterdam, symphonie van den arbeid', based on a script by Simon Koster. It was inspired by, and had to become the equivalent of *BERLIN, DIE SYMPHONIE EINER GROSSSTADT* (1927). It was conceived as an 'absolute film', without intertitles. Music would be important, composed by Anton Blazer, of the Rotterdam conservatory. The first recordings were made in March 1928, when Transfilma worked on the film for the electricity works (GEB). The GEB supported this idea, especially its director, H.H. Ehrenburg, who was an enthusiast of photography and film, and as such he had already been involved with a film production for the Schoolbioscoop<sup>472</sup>. The GEB offered Transfilma the opportunity to make use of its complex at the Schiehaven – currently the heart of the audiovisual quarter of Rotterdam – where it could use the gigantic power supply of the company for spectacular nocturnal shots, while the GEB personnel moved all kinds of (staged) machines and installations according to the instructions of Von Maydell and Von Barsy<sup>473</sup>.

While this film was gradually developing, Transfilma also talked to Mayor and Aldermen about possibilities to collaborate and to sponsor it. The municipality was interested and an entirely new film resulted from it, not less ambitious, that gradually eclipsed the original plan. The new film was called *VAN VISSCHERSDORP TOT WERELDHAVENSTAD* ("From Fishing Village to World Port City") which was later renamed *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS*. Although it became a remarkable film, there are only a few film historical references to it. Film historian Nico Brederoo (1986: 201) mentions the film briefly in his study about the influence of the Filmliga, only to remark that it is less experimental than Von Barsy's *HOOGSTRAAT*. Bert Hogenkamp (1988: 21), in his turn, considers the film as a progressive step in the Dutch documentary tradition. None of them, however, have seen the original version, which remains missing to this day. Remaining today are only parts and derivatives, like the recycled films by A.V. Blum, which the German film historian Thomas Tode (1997: B8) has classified as 'a rather conventional cultural film series' (without knowing that the material originally belonged to *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS*). Instead of considering this film in terms of avant-garde, documentary, or educational film, it makes more sense to frame its purposes and conditions, and to reveal cross-connections between different fields. Moreover, the somewhat enigmatic biography of this film, and its disappearance, may be illustrative for the nature of 'applied cinema' or 'functional

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<sup>472</sup> Ehrenburg collaborated with Van der Wel on *ELECTRICITEIT EN HAAR TOEPASSINGEN* (1927); 'Een film over electriciteit', p4 in: *Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie*, nr. 23, 1927. For Ehrenburg, see: Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis > Ehrenburg, Hillebrand Hendrik; [www.iisg.nl/ondernemers/pdf/pers-0423-01.pdf](http://www.iisg.nl/ondernemers/pdf/pers-0423-01.pdf) (2008-11-04)

<sup>473</sup> See the article 'De symphonie van den arbeid', p6 in: *Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie*, nr. 36, 1928; cf. 'Nieuws van Monopole', p4 in: *Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie*, nr. 39, 1928. It was also remarked in a review on *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS*: "'Van Visschersdorp tot Wereldhavenstad", een welgeslaagde Rotterdamsche jubileumfilm', *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 1928-08-16.

cinematography'. The function determines the life of the film. What follows is an attempt to trace the history of the film that has been so important within the career of Von Barsy<sup>474</sup>.

In April 1928, after Transfilma had already produced several films for the municipality, it discussed the possibility of a port promotion film with aldermen De Groot, De Jong and De Zeeuw<sup>475</sup>. As a result of it Transfilma wrote a proposal, which was accompanied by a draft of a script<sup>476</sup>. In its letter, Transfilma argued that several harbour cities had recently made use of film as a means of propaganda; in this way, according to its own information, Transfilma had already made films about Hamburg and Lisbon<sup>477</sup>. An extra argument for Rotterdam was the celebration of its 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The intention of the film was to give an attractive impression of the city and its port and an overview of its modern facilities and possibilities, in order to gain a broad support for its development and the interest of (foreign) clients. It had to communicate industrial values and efficiency, and as such it can also be considered as a matter of Record, Rhetorics, and Rationalization (Hediger & Vonderau, 2007: 22).

The Mayor and Aldermen asked L.W.H. van Dijk, director of Gemeentewerken, for advice. In his reply he mentioned that initially he thought that the film DE HAVEN VAN ROTTERDAM (1925), made by Schoolbioscoop director Van der Wel, was sufficient, but having seen the work of Transfilma, he was convinced of the quality and the power that the proposed film would have<sup>478</sup>. The city council voted in favour of its production, and on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July Transfilma got the commission<sup>479</sup>. For the production of this film, Van Dijk became the municipality's executive.

The film had to be produced within the extremely short period of six weeks, presumably to have its premiere taking place within the period of the Nenijs exhibition. Although it was already difficult enough to make the proposed film within this short time, the Mayor and Aldermen also asked to include images of the city, so the original plan was changed, and more recordings were made. This resulted in the feature length film DE STAD DIE NOOIT RUST (THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS), directed by Von Maydell, and shot by Von Barsy<sup>480</sup>.

The premiere, for the elite of Rotterdam and a number of foreign guests, was planned to take place at the *Groote Doelenzaal* on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1928. However, a month before Mayor Wytéma suddenly died. All the activities concerning the celebration of the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary were therefore cancelled<sup>481</sup>, except for the production of this film. In the end, it turned out that there was not even a 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary, since Rotterdam received its city rights in 1340 (and not in 1328)<sup>482</sup>.

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<sup>474</sup> At the time of writing this thesis, a restoration project has been initiated by FP, which is carried out (2009) by Simona Monizza (NFM), with thanks to Mark-Paul Meyer (NFM), and Anouk de Haas (GAR).

<sup>475</sup> Letter by Transfilma to Burgemeester en Wethouders, 1928-04-20, dossier 'Havenfilm van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4216: 1928, nr. 211.1, volgnr. 1., GAR.

<sup>476</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>477</sup> *ibid.*, however, no further references to these films are known.

<sup>478</sup> Letter to Burgemeester en Wethouders by L.W.H. van Dijk, 1928-05-26, dossier 'Havenfilm van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4216: 1928, nr. 211.1, volgnr. 2., GAR.

<sup>479</sup> Letter by the 'secretaris der Gemeente' to Transfilma, 1928-07-09, dossier 'Havenfilm van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4216: 1928, nr. 211.1, volgnr. 4., GAR.

<sup>480</sup> F.C. von Maydell was its director, but Von Barsy is usually mentioned as the principle filmmaker of this and other Transfilma films, see e.g. 'Filmkritiek, Rotterdam als Film-Epos,' *Het Vaderland*, 1928-08-16; '“Van Visschersdorp tot Wereldhavenstad”, een welgeslaagde Rotterdamsche jubileumfilm', *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 1928-08-16.

<sup>481</sup> See: *Rotterdamsch Jaarboekje*, 1929 (GAR). His funeral took place on 1928-07-16, see: BEGRAFENIS BURGEMEESTER WYTEMA (1928, Polygoon); see also: NIEUWE BURGEMEESTER: MR. P. DROOGLEEVER FORTUYN (1928-10-15, Polygoon).

<sup>482</sup> In 1299, Wolfaert van Borsselen granted Rotterdam city rights, but they were soon reversed since he got killed. In 1328 Rotterdam got new privileges, and in 1340 it finally received its city rights; see: Cornelisse, 1971: 4.

Two days before the screening, the film was sent to the censor, although it was not yet finished. During these last days Von Bary went on making recordings, on location, and in the studio, where he shot animated maps, until the day of the premiere<sup>483</sup>. The film that was officially presented was therefore slightly different from the one seen by the censor, and also new to the commissioner.

The film starts with the historical growth of Rotterdam, from a fishing village to a world port. First are water and reed, and suddenly the St. Laurens tower rises into the film frame, followed by ‘an explosion of technical violence’, in the words of a critic of the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* (1928-08-16). There is the novelty of an electrical train, there are aeroplanes at airport Waalhaven, and there is the swarming traffic in the city. The camera moves through the old city, through its streets and canals and underground passages.

The facades bow away to the left and to the right; trams and cars glide along, the city swings and shakes in the frame of the white screen. Streets open up and close again; squares unfold; masses of houses burst open in dark cracks and push other streets in front of the lens; dark distances break apart and all of a sudden inland harbours full of ships lie naked. Rotterdam!<sup>484</sup>

The port is shown as a highly dynamic city in itself with ‘moving architecture’ – vessels that are the state of the art in industrial design and engineering, and barges that turn the harbour into a ‘Waterstad’. Different kinds of ships pass by. There are also ferries, with trucks on it, as well as horses. Next to them are the bridges across the Nieuwe Maas, including *De Hef*. Porters carry heavy loads, while cranes make a veritable choreography out of unloading coal, grain, timber and all other kinds of cargo.

The film, which is an instance of cartographic cinema, gives an accurate account of the city and its port: its current state, and its past and future development. It provides an overview by way of (animated) maps that indicate what is shown, and by way of aerial shots. They are followed by images of the different harbours, marked on maps too, and the activities going on there: bulk transshipment on the left bank, like grain and oil, and piece good handling on the right bank. At the end is the Merwehaven under construction, with images of dredging works. Finally there are maps showing plans for further extensions of the city and the port, including the Pernis project in the south-west, to tranship and process oil. But it is not all about big-scale imagery. Von Bary had an excellent eye for detail and the human dimension, which is exemplified by a pedlar on a victualling boat taking orders, to serve coffee and snacks, or a man washing his hair over the railing of his fast moving barge, while on the roof of it lies a bike. The critic of the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* summarised the film with the words: ‘Rotterdam from inside, from above and from under.’

Although the film was enthusiastically received by the press<sup>485</sup>, it was nevertheless changed in the next weeks, after Van Dijk and his colleagues of the department of “Public Works” had discussed it with Transfilma, and decided to change the order of some of the topics

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See also: E. Wiersum; Gedenkboek Rotterdam 1328-1928, Gemeentearchief Rotterdam, 1928, quoted by [www.engelfriet.net/Alie/Aad/privilege.htm](http://www.engelfriet.net/Alie/Aad/privilege.htm) (2008-10-19).

<sup>483</sup> Letter to Burgemeester en Wethouders by L.W.H. van Dijk, 1928-10-29, dossier ‘Havenfilm van Rotterdam’, archief: ‘Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4216: 1928, nr. 211.1, volgnr. 19., GAR.

<sup>484</sup> Original quote: ‘Naar links en naar rechts buigen de gevels weg; trams en auto’s glijden voorbij; de stad schommelt en schokt in de lijst van het witte doek. Straten openen zich en sluiten zich; pleinen ontrollen zich; huizenmassa’s breken in donkere spleten open en schuiven andere straten voor de lens; donkere verten breken vaneen en binnenhavens vol schepen liggen plotseling bloot. Rotterdam!’, in: ‘Van Visschersdorp tot Wereldhavenstad’, Een welgeslaagde jubileumfilm’, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 1928-08-16.

<sup>485</sup> Reviews in a.o. *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, *Het Vaderland*, *NRC* (all 1928-08-16) and *Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie* (1928-08-17).

and to remove some weaker parts<sup>486</sup>. The renewed film was finally released and shown at Tuschinski's Thalia cinema, during one week in October 1928<sup>487</sup>. Later that month the English, German and French language versions were ready too, which were indeed needed: immediately after the premiere the municipality received requests to show the film abroad. It emphasizes the importance of the film as a medium to promote Rotterdam and its port abroad. But also within the Netherlands it had a role to play, as was remarked by Luc Willink, film critic of *Het Vaderland* from The Hague<sup>488</sup>. He concluded his review by praising this film as a plea for labour, for showing the achievements of Rotterdam that many in The Hague tend to overlook, adding that everyone who loves his country will be touched by this film and that The Hague and the rest of the Netherlands needs this film, as Rotterdam deserves the national pride.

The film would be shown in The Hague indeed, at the Trianon theatre, which was the home of the Filmliga, with Luc Willink as an active member<sup>489</sup>. This screening, however, did not happen before the film was shown in the 1928 November programme of the Filmliga Rotterdam – actually by coincidence, as the originally programmed film was not available. With Von Barsy being a member of the Filmliga, this turned out to be a practical alternative.

### *afterlife*

In the months after the premiere of *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS*, Transfilma entered into a dragging dispute with the municipality about the expenses of the production, since the final film had become much longer. It was finally settled in early 1929 in favour of Transfilma, whose argument was supported by Gemeentewerken director Van Dijk<sup>490</sup>. Although the dispute was solved, the struggle marks the beginning of a turbulent period for Transfilma, and a curious cinematic biography that was already implied by the film's title: due to ongoing, rapid changes in the city and the port, the film was re-edited and shortened several times<sup>491</sup>. Moreover, in order to give a quick overview of the port to visitors, or as part of presentations at congresses or fairs, a short version was needed, and so the film was cut into about one quarter of the original<sup>492</sup>. What exactly has happened is hard to trace, and also who was involved.

While the film was at the disposal of the municipality, which had its own screening copies, Transfilma kept the copyrights and the right to distribute it commercially in the

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<sup>486</sup> Letter to Burgemeester en Wethouders by L.W.H. van Dijk, 1928-10-29, dossier 'Havenfilm van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4216: 1928, nr. 211.1, volgnr. 19., GAR.

<sup>487</sup> In Thalia it was shown from the 5<sup>th</sup> up to and including the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 1928. Letter to B&W by Transfilma, 1928-10-03, dossier 'Havenfilm van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4216: 1928, nr. 211.1, volgnr. 11, GAR.

<sup>488</sup> Willink, Luc; 'Rotterdam als Film-epos; Filmkritiek', in *Het Vaderland*, 1928-08-16.

<sup>489</sup> The film is mentioned under the name VAN VISSCHERSDORP TOT WERELDSTAD (but left uncredited) in the filmography compiled by Beusekom and Chamuleau in: Gunning/Linssen/Schoots (1999, 288). The film was shown at Corso by the Filmliga Rotterdam in the programme of the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1928; [www.cinemacontext.nl](http://www.cinemacontext.nl) (visited: 2007-09-20) mentions also 1928-11-16, and that it was shown in The Hague at (Filmliga) theatre Trianon (1929-03-08). [www.cinemacontext.nl/id/F009334](http://www.cinemacontext.nl/id/F009334)

<sup>490</sup> dossier 'Havenfilm van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4216: 1928, nr. 211.1, volgnr. 9-27, GAR.

<sup>491</sup> A reference to that is made in a review about the film *TUSSCHEN AANKOMST EN VERTREK: 'Een Nieuwe film over de Rotterdamsche haven,' Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 1938-05-01. Different versions of the film exist in the collections of the *Nederlands Filmmuseum* (NFM) and the *Gemeentearchief Rotterdam* (GAR). See also a letter by the director of the Havenbedrijf to the Algemeen Rijksarchief Den Haag, 1939-01-09, Havenbedrijf classification: 1938, nr. 22.50, at: GAR, archive: 'Secretarie afd. Kunstzaken', toegangsnr. 487.01, bestanddeel 6.

<sup>492</sup> A critical reference to this short version is to be found in: dossier 'Geluidsfilm van de Haven van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4247: 1931, nr. 314.1, GAR. It is not exactly clear which one is this short version, since various versions and parts of *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS* exist today (mainly at the NFM), while the original itself is missing. From all four languages parts have been cut out, so it seems that all of them have been made into the same short version.

Netherlands and abroad<sup>493</sup>. For distribution in the Netherlands it collaborated with the Rotterdam based film company Monopole, while Transfilma itself took care of its distribution abroad. It is not clear if the shorter version that the municipality used, by 1930, is the same as the eighteen minute film WELTHAFEN (1929), which was edited by the Austrian master of compilation films, Albrecht Viktor Blum<sup>494</sup>. This recycled version of THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS had passed the German censor already in March 1929, while it was still credited as a Transfilma production directed by Von Maydell and shot by Von Barsy, who must have known Blum already<sup>495</sup>. Soon afterwards Blum re-edited the film again, into a series of three silent shorts of about seven minutes each that were distributed by Prometheus<sup>496</sup>. It is remarkable that after these films were released, the original film was still to be shown in Frankfurt and Hamburg, through diplomatic exchange with the municipality<sup>497</sup>. The reason for this divergence seems rooted in the earlier dispute between the municipality and Transfilma, which was no longer bothered by the municipal bureaucracy, while it also shifted its focus (see next section).

While Blum worked on his series, he also worked for Prometheus on the feature film JENSEITS DER STRASSE (1929). This fiction film included exterior shots that were recorded in Rotterdam. According to Thomas Tode (1997: B6, F3<sup>498</sup>), they were shot by the cameraman Friedl Behn-Grund, under the direction of Blum, and this had been enabled through the assistance of Joris Ivens and the Dutch Filmliga (both Blum and Ivens were active communists). The link with Ivens also leads to Von Barsy, who at that time collaborated with Ivens (see next section). Although Blum and Behn-Grund might have recorded material themselves, it seems likely that for this fiction film they also used material from THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS. It seems that Blum concealed the course of things from the outside world; as such there appears an immediate parallel to the so-called Vertov scandal, which occurred at exactly the same time (Tode, 1997: B6): Vertov was accused of plagiarism, copying Blum, which turned out to be the other way round. The main reason had been a financial one, since the prospects for Prometheus were also not good (Tode, 2005: 549). For the time being, the Rotterdam shorts enabled Prometheus to continue its business. One year after the release of WELTHAFEN, Blum made another version of Von Barsy's film, now with a duration of twenty-five minutes, which was then credited as a Prometheus production: STADT UND HAFEN ROTTERDAM (1930, A.V. Blum). Since sound had

<sup>493</sup> Letter (1928-09-15) by L.W.H. van Dijk to alderman A. de Jong, dossier 'Havenfilm van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4216: 1928, nr. 211.1, volgnr. 13, GAR.

<sup>494</sup> These films, and the other titles by A.V. Blum, seem to be missing, according to information from the Nederlands Filmmuseum, and the Austrian Film Museum (research project 'Proletarian Cinema in Austria', 2006).

<sup>495</sup> The 18 minutes version WELTHAFEN has been credited by Tomas Tode (1997: F3) as a production of Transfilma (from Berlin !?), with Von Maydell as the director, Von Barsy as the cameraman, and Blum as the editor; the film passed the German censor on 1929-03-14, nr. B.21977 – see also: [www.filmportal.de](http://www.filmportal.de) > filme: 'Welthafen' > credits (2009-09-09). It seems that Blum (from Austria), and Von Barsy (who had also lived in Austria) knew each other directly, or indirectly through Simon Koster. The production of NUL UUR NUL (1927-1928, Simon Koster) hints in that direction. Besides recording by Von Barsy, the film included recordings that were made by Curt Oertel in Berlin, at the time that Oertel also worked on the feature film HOPPLA, WIR LEBEN (1927), for which Blum did archive film research and editing.

<sup>496</sup> The film was made into two different films that were brought to the censor again (1929-06-27): ROTTERDAM (206m = 7'30") and a shorter version of WELTHAFEN (7'30"). Additionally, Tode has remarked (2005: 549) that in the meanwhile another short was made out of the original film: KANÄLE UND GRACHTEN (for which Tode refers to *Filmtechnik*, 1929-05-25). Occasionally, Von Maydell is also mentioned as the director of the Rotterdam series: cf. [www.filmportal.de](http://www.filmportal.de) > Von Maydell (visited: 2008-06-23)

<sup>497</sup> The film was shown for example, to 300 invited guests in Frankfurt a.M., at the theatre of the Physikalischen Vereins, organised by the Dutch Chamber of Commerce and the Holland-Institut of the Universität Frankfurt (1929-07-10), and subsequently at the Deutsche Kulturfilmgesellschaft 'Urania' in Hamburg; dossier 'Havenfilm van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4216: 1928, nr. 211.1, volgnr. 28-38, GAR.

<sup>498</sup> Tode refers here (1997: B6) to *Film-Kurier*, 1929-05-10 and 1929-06-26; at the time of these publications, Blum also worked on the series of shorts mentioned in the previous note.

been introduced, he re-edited it finally all again into four short sound films (with music by Georg Fiebiger)<sup>499</sup>.

Regarding the existence of these shorts with sound it is remarkable that in March 1931 Mayor Droogleever Fortuyn (a supporter of the Filmliga<sup>500</sup>) asked the clerk's office, in the person of play writer Albert van Waasdijk, to find out if a short sound film could be made to promote the port<sup>501</sup>. Van Waasdijk thought of Ivens, had a meeting with him, and became enthusiastic. However, for the proposed film of half an hour, Ivens calculated 30,000 guilders: five times the price paid for THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS. Van Waasdijk then talked to B.D. Ochse of Polygoon, who made an offer for 10,000 guilders, while Ed Pelster of the *Centraal Bureau voor Ligafilms* (De Uitkijk), asked 26,000 guilders for a film to be directed by Simon Koster and shot by Eugen Schüfftan, both based in Berlin, which was accompanied by an ambitious plan for international distribution, whose revenues would approach the expenses.

Van Waasdijk wrote quickly a report, but rather than an informative document it became a plea for sound film. Less than three years after the release of THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS he referred to it as an outdated and lengthy silent film without much movement, except for the movement of the camera itself<sup>502</sup>. It had to be completely different, and Ivens, he argued, would be the right person to do it, in spite of the other offers. The financial committee of the municipality rejected the plan, and so did Alderman De Jong (Public Works)<sup>503</sup>. The Mayor, however, kept the idea, and in early 1932 he asked the opinion of Nicolaas Koomans, the director of the newly established municipal port enterprise (*Havenbedrijf*)<sup>504</sup>. The latter thought a film would be useful, but only if its revenues through exhibition could indeed cover the expenses. That was unlikely. Half a year later, there was a competing offer from the new film company Visie, which originated from Polygoon, with Max de Haas knowing about the plan. He proposed to make a fifteen minutes film for less than 4000 guilders<sup>505</sup>. But in 1932 the Great Depression reached rock bottom, which hit Rotterdam, and in this period, of cutting municipal expenses, the plan for a sound film still had to wait, till 1938, when Von Bary made TUSSEHEN AANKOMST EN VERTREK, as we will see. It is striking, however, that he had not been mentioned in the earlier plans and discussions. What had happened to Transfilma and Von Bary after the release of THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS?

After the Nenijs had taken place, there were less requests for industrial films, although Transfilma still produced a few of them, including one for the cooperative association *De Vooruitgang* ("Progress"), about its bakeries and milk factory. Through this contact, Transfilma made the enigmatic feature film DE MAARSCHALKSTAF ("The Marshal's Baton", 1929, see:

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<sup>499</sup> STADT UND HAFEN ROTTERDAM; ROTTERDAM, DER PULSSCHLAG DES WELTHANDELS; ROTTERDAM, WASSERSTRASSEN UND BRUECKEN; ROTTERDAM, WUNDER DER TECHNIK; and next to that Blum also made HOLLÄNDISCHE REISE – all 1930 – Tode (2005: 549) mentions these titles, which he had previously indicated (1997: F4) as silent films.

<sup>500</sup> In 1927, he was a member of the recommending committee in The Hague – promotional folder of the Filmliga The Hague, NFM 'Archief Filmliga', correspondentie 1927, 131-168, map 11, nr. 141.

<sup>501</sup> Letter (1931-03-30) by Albert van Waasdijk to A.M. van der Wel, dossier 'Geluidsfilm van de Haven van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4247: 1931, nr. 314.1, GAR. Droogleever Fortuyn had been a member of the advisory board of the Filmliga The Hague in 1927.

<sup>502</sup> It seems, however, that Van Waasdijk was mistakenly referring to the 1927 film by Güsten. In the letter above (previous note), Van Waasdijk asks the director of the Schoolbioscoop if he has a copy of THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS, and its extract, in order to see it. In his report (1931-05-11), *Geluidsfilm van de Haven van Rotterdam*, Van Waasdijk also criticises the film for respecting too much the advertisement requests of the private sponsors, which applies to the film from 1927, but not to that of 1928; dossier 'Geluidsfilm van de Haven van Rotterdam', archief: 'Gemeentesecretarie Rotterdam afd. Algemene Zaken: Raad; B&W (NSA), toegangsnr. 444.01, inv. nr. 4247: 1931, nr. 314.1, GAR.

<sup>503</sup> Letter to B&W (1931-07-14), *ibid*.

<sup>504</sup> Letter to the mayor by N. Koomans (1932-01-22), *ibid*.

<sup>505</sup> Letter to Van Waasdijk by Max de Haas (1932-08-29), *ibid*.

5.§2), which was commissioned by the union of cooperatives<sup>506</sup>. Von Barsy would be its cameraman, and, from his circle of friends, Filmliga member and critic Luc Willink<sup>507</sup>, who had been enthusiastic about THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS, was asked to be its director. The idea for this ‘applied fiction film’, presumably suggested by Transfilma itself, illustrates its ambition to produce feature films, in a serious way. It was a highly professional production, with most of the interior shots being recorded at the Staaken studio, near Berlin. However, as an applied fiction film – still a matter of ‘functional cinematography’ – it had its own distribution circuit, which may explain why the film remained unnoticed by critics and historians – to such an extent that the film is even missing today.

While Transfilma produced DE MAARSCHALKSTAF, it also continued to work on the plan for the ‘free Rotterdam film’ that was called ‘Rotterdam, Symphonie van den Arbeid’. However, since one had already made THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS, a new script was written, for a fiction film that would be called: EEN LIED VAN DEN ARBEID (“A song of labour”, 1929). The German actor Walter Janssen was asked to direct it, which was his debut as such<sup>508</sup>. The film is missing too, and even less is known about it<sup>509</sup>. An advertisement published by its (Rotterdam-based) distributor Monopole called it a ‘film of workers, workers who work with their heads and workers who work with their hands. [It is a] film of machines that act like living and struggling beings’<sup>510</sup>. It was a serious attempt to make a film that would have an international appeal, with the main characters being played by Maly Delschaft, Sybill Morel, Alexander Granach, as well as Walter Janssen, who were among the stars of German silent cinema<sup>511</sup>. According to a critic, the film was a success, not so much for the script, but especially since it was ‘a conscious attempt to let the camera speak its own clear language’, with ‘excellent cinematography’ by Von Barsy<sup>512</sup>.

The film was released in the Netherlands in August 1929. Notwithstanding the artistic success, the film brought Transfilma into financial problems, due to its high costs. The investments of Transfilma had simply been too big and the risks too high. Moreover, sound film conquered the world, which was too much of a competition for this film. Still in August, the producer and owner of Transfilma, Friedrich von Maydell, went to Berlin, where he made an agreement with distributor Mondial-Film. This film and THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS, of which Transfilma had still the exploitation rights, were turned into bills of exchange. As such, EEN LIED VAN DEN ARBEID was released anew in Germany as KAMPF UMS LEBEN<sup>513</sup>. In the case of THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS, Mondial-Film must have passed the rights to Prometheus-Film.

What exactly has happened, concerning the exchanges and transactions of Transfilma, is difficult to reconstruct<sup>514</sup>. Part of the arrangement with Mondial-Film, it seems, was that Von Maydell would collaborate on a new film as the executive producer. The production history of that film, STURMFLUT DER LIEBE (1929), is rather misty. Whatever happened, it meant the

<sup>506</sup> It was commissioned by the *Centrale Bond van Nederlandsche Verbruikcoöperaties*.

<sup>507</sup> Luc Willink was one of the founders of the Filmliga branch in The Hague, see: *Filmliga* vol. 1/3 (1927), p13.

<sup>508</sup> Walter Janssen would direct a few more films in the 1930s, but he is mainly known as an actor. In 1968 he received an honorary award for his ‘continued outstanding individual contributions to the German film over the years.’ [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) > Walter Janssen (visited: 2007-10-04).

<sup>509</sup> There is no copy of the film preserved in Dutch film collections, but there could be probably in Germany or Austria.

<sup>510</sup> *Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie*, 1929-08-30. Original quote: Film van werkers, werkers met het hoofd en werkers met de handen. Film van als levende wezens handelende en strijdende machines.’

<sup>511</sup> For more information on these actors, see [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maly\\_Delschaft](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maly_Delschaft) and [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sybill\\_Morel](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sybill_Morel) and [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander\\_Granach](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Granach) (visited: 2007-10-02).

<sup>512</sup> ‘Rialto’, in: *Het Volk*, 1930 – the article is signed with ‘P.B.’; it is part of the personal archive of Von Barsy (kept by Ruth Barsy, Munich – 2005).

<sup>513</sup> Date of censor: 1929-11-11 [www.filmportal.de](http://www.filmportal.de) > ‘Kampf Ums Leben’ (visited: 2007-10-04)

<sup>514</sup> Von Maydell signed a contract with A. Staib, as mentioned in a report on the bankruptcy of the firm (part of the research file of SFW-werkuitgave no. 9, see: Westhoff, 1995, at the archive of B&G). The transactions passed on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1929.

bankruptcy of Transfilma, late 1929<sup>515</sup>. Even the trustee in Rotterdam that had to settle the case spoke of a confused course of things that he did not expect to be resolved<sup>516</sup>. In the meantime Von Maydell left the country, without a clear destination. He ended up in Finland, where he would direct two feature films before returning to Germany<sup>517</sup>.

### § 3. a new episode

As soon as Transfilma got in trouble, Von Barsy started to look for other possibilities for work. Due to his involvement with the Filmliga Rotterdam, he was asked as a cameraman for the fiction film *BRANDING* (1929, Joris Ivens & Mannus Franken)<sup>518</sup>. Ivens subsequently asked him for his next project, the union film *NVV CONGRES* (1929, Ivens)<sup>519</sup>. Besides that, Von Barsy collaborated with director Henk Kleinman on the fiction film *ZEEMANSVROUWEN* (1930)<sup>520</sup>. It was recorded in Amsterdam, in the autumn of 1929, and it was the first attempt to make a sound film in the Netherlands, but it could not actualise this ambition in the end, for financial reasons<sup>521</sup>. Although it had some success in the cinemas, critics considered it a failure, except for Von Barsy's cinematography, which was reviewed as striking and avant-gardist, based on the 'Russian school'<sup>522</sup>.

Among the many creditors of Transfilma, Von Barsy was the main one. He was finally appointed to take over the studio and its equipment, which turned out to be a great advantage. In this way he started his own company: *Filmfabriek A. von Barsy*<sup>523</sup>. Since the Filmliga had just got its own distribution agency, *De Uitkijk* in Amsterdam, Von Barsy then decided to make the short 'absolute film' *HOOGSTRAAT* (1929), on which he worked for about three months<sup>524</sup>. The

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<sup>515</sup> (See also previous note.) *STURMFLUT DER LIEBE* was shot in Romania. The credits mention Martin Berger as its director. It is mentioned in a text about the German director Martin Berger by the German Film Institute ([www.deutsches-filminstitut.de/dt2tp0125.htm](http://www.deutsches-filminstitut.de/dt2tp0125.htm)). It says that that the film was produced by Transfilma, which is called a Dutch-Romanian film company that went bankrupt because of this film. The Dutch director Gerard Rutten has revealed a different story (1976: 68-71). Already after one day of shooting in Romania, director Berger dropped out because of blatant misbehaviour, and Rutten became the director instead (a production still with Rutten as the director is included in his book). Rutten, however, was not to be mentioned in the credits, but Berger, because of the success of his previous film. Rutten agreed with it for the reason that it was not his ideal 'first appearance'. Rutten mentioned Mondial Film in Berlin as the production company, which initially contracted him as the assistant-director, at the time that he lived in Berlin. IMDB mentions Friedrich von Maydell as the producer, and Mondo-Film-Vertrieb as the production company, whereas Mondial-Film is mentioned as the distributor (it seems that Mondo-Film was an occasional name for Mondial-Film, in order to produce this film): [www.imdb.com/title/tt0131039/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0131039/) (visited: 2007-10-04). In any case, it has been the only Transfilma-related production that was *not* shot by Andor von Barsy. The cinematography of this film was done by another Hungarian: László Schäffer, who was one of the cameramen of Ruttman's *BERLIN, DIE SINFONIE EINER GROSSSTADT* (1927), see: [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) (2008-06-19).

<sup>516</sup> As mentioned in a report on the bankruptcy of the firm (part of the research file of SFW-werkuitgave no. 9, see: Westhoff, 1995, at the archive of B&G).

<sup>517</sup> The films made in Finland are: *ERAMAAN TURVISSA* (1931, Von Maydell, Kalle Kaarna); *DIE TUNDRA* (1932, Von Maydell).

<sup>518</sup> It is mentioned by Jef Last in the article 'Het Rotterdamsche kongres van het N.V.V. door Joris Ivens en A. von Barsy', *De Nieuwe Weg*, vol. 6/2 (1931). Cf. Van Moerkerken, 1966: 13.

<sup>519</sup> Mentioned in a review by Jef Last; 'Het Rotterdamsche kongres van het N.V.V. door Joris Ivens en A. von Barsy', in: *De Nieuwe Weg*, vol. 6/2. The film was released separately, and also as a part of *WE ARE BUILDING* (1930, Ivens).

<sup>520</sup> With Kleinman he had already made a film about Amsterdam in 1928.

<sup>521</sup> In 2003 the film made a come-back; the Nederlands Filmmuseum restored it, while additionally a completely new, synchronised sound track was made by musician Hennie Vrienten.

<sup>522</sup> cf. Bishoff, 1986: 103. An example of such a critique was given by Jef Last; 'Voor de Lens, Zeemansvrouwen', in: *De Nieuwe Weg*, vol. 5/nr. 6-7 (1930).

<sup>523</sup> Located at the former Lijnbaanstraat 39a; source: *Adressenboek Rotterdam*, 1928 [for Transfilma] and 1930 [for Filmfabriek A. von Barsy] – collection GAR. Von Barsy was temporarily associated with Bedijs, but no further information is available about the latter (ref. 'De Hoogstraat', *Dagblad van Rotterdam*, 1929-12-31).

<sup>524</sup> 'De Hoogstraat: beeld van de wereld', in: *Courant van de Hoogstraatweek*, 1<sup>st</sup> week of November 1930 [personal archive Von Barsy]. See also: 'De Hoogstraat', *Dagblad van Rotterdam*, 1929-12-31. Filmliga member Henrik Scholte (1933: 36) also mentions a port film that Von Barsy made himself. It is not exactly clear if this is *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS* or a derivative of this film.

*Filmliga* magazine (1930, 3/8), which put a still from it on the cover, recommended it as an 'excellent short film', and a study based on 'absolute movement' that proceeded 'from the school of Ruttmann'. This short film is a portrait of the main shopping street of Rotterdam at that time. The camera is the actual subject of the film, like a flaneur in the city. It strolls through the street while observing the diversity of people and the way they behave. The camera also registers ordinary things that people do not normally notice, like an old shoe left on the pavement.

The film begins and ends with a small puppet theatre, as a welcome and a good-bye to the show. HOOGSTRAAT is a show about showing: the show cases of the shops, performers giving shows, the people in the street showing themselves, which all together make up the show of the city. The glass window is central to the film. It is a medium itself, because of its function of exhibition, its framing, transparency, reflections and its effect of double images and visual layers. It is also literally a medium between inside and outside, an interface between private and public, rich and poor, objects and people. The old shoe in the street is a good example of that. It is the counter stage of the new shoe behind the window; it shows the *curriculum vitae* of things. It is animated by the people that use it – the feet of the people we see in the film. Von Barsy emphasizes it furthermore by an absurd image of a 'sandwich man' who wears, upside down, a giant shoe over his head.

Searching for new ways to make a living, Von Barsy also carried out photographic commissions, including the photographic booklet *Rotterdam 1930*, which contained images just of the harbour<sup>525</sup>. It was commissioned by the municipality and a number of firms, to accompany the presentation of Rotterdam at the world exhibition. Regarding the booklet, Marlite Halbertsma (2001, 215) has remarked that the photographs were made 'in a severe New-Objective language of forms, which underlined the modern character of the port of Rotterdam'<sup>526</sup>. If the photographs can be called 'new-objective' (*nieuw-zakelijk*), so can Von Barsy's films. It supports the idea of 'functional cinematography'.

In Rotterdam, Von Barsy took photographs for various firms, among them De Bijenkorf and Van Nelle. He might have done so in collaboration with his girlfriend Ortrud Johanna Balkin, whom he finally married, in Rotterdam on New Year's Eve in 1930<sup>527</sup>.

In the meantime, Von Barsy got in touch with the Rotterdam-based advertisement agency Samson, and through them he started to make commercials for companies such as De Bijenkorf, radio factory Vollebregt, liquorice factory Gilda, Pfaff sewing machines and many more<sup>528</sup>. He was not the only one. At that time another producer of commercials, Puvabi, established itself in Rotterdam<sup>529</sup>. But rather than competing with each other, Von Barsy produced mainly commercials for firms from Rotterdam, and Puvabi for firms from elsewhere. Von Barsy continued to produce commercials over the course of the 1930s, which secured his finances.

In 1931, a big project was started. Gerard Rutten was asked to make a sound film for the Rotterdam based company Electra. In turn, Rutten asked Von Barsy to do the cinematography. As a counterbalance to NIEUWE GRONDEN ("New Earth", 1930-1933) that Joris Ivens was making about the reclamation of the Zuiderzee, Rutten proposed a 'less industrial' and 'more human' film

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<sup>525</sup> The architect of the Dutch pavilion, Th. Wijdeveld, also designed the cover of the booklet.

<sup>526</sup> Original quote: '... in een streng nieuw-zakelijke vormentaal, die het moderne karakter van de Rotterdamse haven onderstreepte'.

<sup>527</sup> This is not certain, but he would do so with his second wife, Ruth Gossert, in the 1950s and 1960s. It might be that at that time Johanna Ortrud Balkin had begun studies of medicine instead, as she worked as a physician later on (according to Monique Benning, 2005-04-11, email correspondence).

<sup>528</sup> e.g. for Maison Spaans (1930), Pfaff sewing machine (1930), Veka chocolate (1931), De Bijenkorf (1932, 1933), Vollebregt (1932, 1934), Gilda Drop (1937), Gemeentelijk Gasbedrijf (1938), which are all mentioned by Westhoff, 1995: 7. They were commissioned by advertising agency Samson, see: [www.cinemacontext.nl/id/R001136](http://www.cinemacontext.nl/id/R001136) (2007-10-02), which mentions various other titles that might have been made by Von Barsy too.

<sup>529</sup> It was directed by Jos. van Biene, see: [www.cinemacontext.nl/id/R000445](http://www.cinemacontext.nl/id/R000445) (visited: 2007-10-04). He had previously been director of UFA Netherlands and vice-president of the *Nederlandse Bioscoop Bond* (NBB), see: *Het Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie*, nr. 45, 1926.

with a similar kind of title: *TERRA NOVA* (1931-1932), on the same theme, but from the perspective of the fishermen whose lives were changing dramatically (Rutten, 1976: 78).

In order to prepare their film, Rutten and Von Barsy went to the village of Volendam, where they stayed for a while, and where they worked with the local people. Rutten was very enthusiastic about the landscape, the village, its people, their homes and especially the way Von Barsy filmed it. Rutten wrote (1976: 83):

[Andor von Barsy] was a special man. Besides him being a photographer and a cameraman, he was actually a scientist too. He calculated new lenses and objectives and he rebuilt his film camera entirely, adapting it to his special wishes. He was a magician with light. I wanted the film to be shot in a Rembrandtian atmosphere, but without too much picturesqueness. Andor von Barsy knew how to accomplish that.<sup>530</sup>

When they were finishing the film, the wife of the producer, who had an interest in the production, demanded a change in the editing, which resulted in a fight and finally the collapse of the project. Although the film was finished eventually, it did not reach the cinemas. Rutten wanted to make the film again, together with Von Barsy:

We decided, by lack of a producer, to work as a 'collective' [= *Nederlandsche Filmgemeenschap*]. Almost without payment! In Rotterdam, Andor von Barsy had a small laboratory...and a film factory, just behind the Grand Theatre. He had also a couple of spot-lights. He owned the camera! So the basis was there. And above all there was our common enthusiasm.<sup>531</sup>

The production process was repeated, and again they got the collaboration of the villagers. With the material they went back to Rotterdam, where they developed and edited it. Rutten came in contact with the 'Sound City' film studios in England, showed the work, and managed to arrange a contract. They could do the synchronisation and moreover, they were willing to do the exploitation of the film, and so they provided Rutten with the money to finish the film. But, something unexpected happened (Rutten, 1976: 84):

In the small editing room I started the job. All the negative material and the working copy lied in that space. Neatly numbered and sorted and in tin cans. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 1933 I felt ill. I decided to stay at home and to leave the work to Andor. I had a fever...influenza. Late in the evening I woke up with a shock. In front of my bed stood Andor. Clothes scorched...face full of soot. Trembling. I understood it in one second. Fire! All was burnt. The whole film...negative and positive. All gone...! And it was true. That night Andor sat at the editing table. All of a sudden the bulb light above the table burst. A piece of glowing filament fell down in a big basket full of film. At that time still inflammable film. In a blink the whole space was in flames. The film boxes exploded like grenades. With pain Andor managed to escape from that hell. // The film factory was in the Lijnbaanstraat, right behind the Grand Theatre. That night there was a play by Ko van Dijk and Else Mauhs in a Hungarian comedy 'In the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> April'. The theatre was sold out. The performance had to be interrupted because the auditorium was full of smoke.<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>530</sup> Original quote: 'Hij was een bijzondere man. Behalve fotograaf en cameraman was hij eigenlijk ook een wetenschapsmens. Hij berekende nieuwe lenzen en objectieven en zijn filmcamera was door hem geheel omgebouwd en aan zijn bijzondere wensen aangepast. Hij was een tovenaars met het licht. Ik wilde de film in een Rembrandtieke sfeer gefilmd hebben. Zonder echter te veel schilderachtigheid. Andor von Barsy wist dat te bereiken.'

<sup>531</sup> Original quote (Rutten, 1976: 83): 'Wij besloten, bij gebrek aan een producent, maar als een 'collectief' te gaan werken. Vrijwel zonder betaling! Andor von Barsy had in Rotterdam, vlak achter de Grote Schouwburg, een klein laboratorium...en filmfabriekje. Hij bezat ook een paar schijnwerpers. Hij bezat de camera! Dus de basis was aanwezig. En vooral ons gezamenlijk enthousiasme.'

<sup>532</sup> Original quote: 'In de kleine snijkamer begon ik aan dat karwei. Al het negatief materiaal en de werkkopie lagen in die ruimte. Keurig genummerd en gesorteerd en in blikken bussen. Op de 9de maart 1933 voelde ik mij ziek. Ik besloot die dag thuis te blijven en het werk over te laten aan Andor. Ik had koorts...ik had griep. // 's Avonds laat werd ik met een schok wakker. Voor mijn bed stond Andor. Geschroeide kleren...gezicht vol roet. Trillend. Ik begreep het in één

Neither the film nor the studio was insured. Only the cameras had been saved, since Von Barsy had kept them at home. They still did not give up and made the film once more, yet with another, better script, written by Simon Koster. Also the title changed: DEAD WATER, after a remark by a fisherman in Volendam during a conversation with Rutten, looking over the former Zuiderzee. The cutter of DEAD WATER became Lien d'Oliveyra, who was the daughter of the well-known producer and director Adrienne Solser, who lived and worked in Schiedam (near Rotterdam), and with their help he found a studio there too<sup>533</sup>.

DEAD WATER tells the dramatic story of two generations in the traditional fishing village Volendam that have to deal with the damming and the reclamation of the Zuiderzee. The film shows the human struggle with the impact of modernisation. The story is preceded by a long prologue that shows the plans for the reclamation, and the work that has been done to make it possible. In itself, this part seems to celebrate progress, and it does so in a constructivist mode. Featuring cranes and building activities, the imagery resembles the harbour films by Von Barsy. Part of the prologue is also an animation, for which Von Barsy collaborated with Svend Noldan and set designer Lajos von Ébneith, which has much in common with Von Ébneith's earlier shadow-plays.

The prologue forms a sharp contrast with the subtle images that follow, which show the traditional villagers and their environment. Characteristic for the cinematography is the application of *clair-obscur* techniques, on which Von Barsy published too (e.g. 1935, 1936). More than once, Von Barsy emphasised that cinema had much to learn from painting, especially from the work of Rembrandt<sup>534</sup>. Next to that are, for example, impressionist images of the sea, with water and clouds shown in all tones of black and grey. Von Barsy's first assistant was his friend Alfons Lusteck, who had been a fellow student in Munich.

The premiere of DEAD WATER was at the film festival of Venice (1934-08-15), where it won the prize for 'best cinematography'. Besides the Netherlands, the film became also a success in Germany. As a result of it, Rutten was invited to work for the UFA in Berlin, which he first accepted, but then rejected, after he understood that it had become an instrument of the Nazi regime.

In the meantime, the municipality had found Von Barsy again. For the port authorities he made the short 'port symphony', yet without sound, which he simply called ROTTERDAM (1934). This 'absolute film' – devoid of explanatory texts, can be considered as the counterpart of the short 'city symphony' HOOGSTRAAT. For ROTTERDAM he used material from THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS, which was supplemented by images of new facilities. The film starts with a map of Europe and the position of Rotterdam, followed by images of the sea at Hoek van Holland. Besides the seaport Von Barsy shows the airport, and takes subsequently an aeroplane himself to shoot the city from above, with images of the oil industry at Pernis, the Wilhelminapier with its

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seconde. Brand! Alles was verbrand! De hele film...negatief en positief. Alles weg...! En zó was het! Die avond zat Andor aan de snijtafel. Plotseling sprong er de gloeilamp boven de montagetafel stuk. Een stukje gloeiend draad viel in een grote mand vol met film. Toen nog brandbare film! In een oogwenk stond heel de ruimte in vlammen. De Filmdozen ontploften als granaten. Met moeite wist Andor uit die hel te ontsnappen. // Het filmfabriekje van von Barsy lag vlak naast de Grote Schouwburg, in de Lijnbaanstraat. Tegen de Schouwburg aan. Die avond speelde Ko van Dijk en Else Mauhs in een Hongaars blijspel 'In de nacht van de 17de april'. De schouwburg was uitverkocht. De voorstelling moest onderbroken worden omdat de schouwburgzaal vol met rook kwam.' (p84)

<sup>533</sup> Archive Simon Koster, Theater Instituut Nederland, inv. nr. 48, nr. 8. The address book under consideration (dark red / brown, on which is written: 'adressen') is from the period 1925-1933. It is updated several times. This makes it difficult to trace exact dates. It mentions by pen: 'A. von Barsy, Schietbaanlaan 56A Rotterdam [which was his home address, and with pencil is added:] tot 26 apr.', and above is written a new address: '31803 L. Nieuwstr. 87 Schiedam'.

<sup>534</sup> Von Barsy mentioned it, for example, in a lecture: 'Das Film ABC (III): Kameratechnik und Bildgestaltung', IX. *Internationales Filmtreffen*, Bad Ems, ref. Informationsdienst 1957-10-17 (archiv Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, München).

passenger terminals, up to the bridges across the Nieuwe Maas. Various kinds of ships are shown from eye-level, like the ‘SS Statendam’, through diagonal compositions and tracking shots. In a similar way there are shots of all kinds of cargo, such as coal that is unloaded by large cranes, and grain being conveyed to the extended GEM silo (arch. Brinkman & Van der Vlugt). There are tracking shots of the abstract patterns of masses of oil and beer barrels, pipelines, wooden boxes, baskets and bags. Similarly Von Barsy makes expressive compositions by moving his camera along timber supplies, which are piled up near the Van Nelle factory. The latter itself is also shown in detail, by panning and tilting shots of its façade. The film ends with ship building, people fixing the enormous screw of a ship, and finally the farewell of the passenger ship ‘SS Slammat’ that steers course.

Von Barsy also collaborated with the Bulgarian director Slatan Dudow, who had escaped Berlin and moved to Paris, on the short fiction film SEIFENBLASEN (1934). Rutten, in his turn, made plans for the feature film RUBBER (1936), on the theme of rubber plantations in Sumatra, an island of the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia).

Of course I wanted to have Andor von Barsy behind the camera again. To learn about the Sumatran landscape and so, Andor visited the ‘Colonial Institute for the Tropics’. There he found out, to his fear, that on Sumatra there were many wild animals... especially tigers. Andor decided, to my dismay, not to go along to that dangerous country. There was no way to change his mind.<sup>535</sup>

Instead, Von Barsy and Koster decided to shoot LENTELIED, in 1935, which was ready the next year – and shown in Rotterdam at Tuschinski’s Studio 32<sup>536</sup>. The film, financed by the wife of the actor Jan Teulings<sup>537</sup>, has become known for the ‘naked knee’ of actress Ank van der Moer, which the censors demanded be removed<sup>538</sup>. With Jan Teulings and Ank van der Moer lying alone in the dunes, this image was considered to be too suggestive. This incident is quite ironical, since Simon Koster had exactly addressed such a censorship in his theatre and film show NUL UUR NUL, with the enacted protest of spectators against a woman in a négligé.

The film is a love story set in nature, about two couples that change partners. The son of a rich industrialist has a relationship with a young woman whose father is also president of an industrial company. A mechanic who is fired from that company has a relationship with the daughter of a miller on the countryside (i.e. Zeeland). The love story is simultaneously a story of modernity and tradition, which is emphasised by parallel editing. There is an interchange of speed and quietness, city and countryside. In a striking montage-sequence, shot by Von Barsy’s assistant Emiel van Moerkerken<sup>539</sup>, Rotterdam is briefly characterised through a collection of images of modern buildings and the industry of the city. This associative and selective way of editing is the work of the Hungarian editor Victor Palfi. Set and setting reinforce these contrasts, as well as the perspectives and the framing of the camera. On the one hand is the idyllic image of the mill, even though its wooden machinery is dynamically framed. On the other is the harbour and the industry of the city, with large machines and the modern interior of the office of the firm’s president, designed by Lajos von Ébneth and inspired by Gispén.

In 1935 too, Von Barsy also collaborated with Hans Richter on FROM THUNDERBOLT TO TELEVISION SCREEN (1936, Richter), which was made for Philips in Eindhoven<sup>540</sup>. It is an avant-

<sup>535</sup> Rutten, 1976: 100. Original quote: ‘Ik wilde natuurlijk Andor von Barsy weer achter de camera hebben. Om zich een beetje te oriënteren over het landschap enz. van Sumatra bezocht Andor het ‘Koloniaal Instituut voor de Tropen’. En constateerde dáár tot zijn schrik dat er in Sumatra veel wilde dieren waren... tigers vooral. En Andor besloot, tot mijn schrik, niet mee te gaan naar dát gevaarlijke land. Hij was niet om te praten.’

<sup>536</sup> It was first shown at Studio in The Hague (1936-03-06) and since 1936-04-10 at Studio 32 in Rotterdam (and afterwards also at De Uitkijk in Amsterdam, a.o.).

<sup>537</sup> Rutten, 1976.

<sup>538</sup> Dittrich, 1987: 31.

<sup>539</sup> Van Moerkerken, 1967: 55.

<sup>540</sup> Hogenkamp, 2004: 43.

gardistic ‘symphony of industry’, which has remained relatively unknown. He was subsequently asked to be a cameraman of OLYMPIA (1938, Leni Riefenstahl), about the Olympic Games in Berlin (1936), for which he made the *Stimmungsbilder*<sup>541</sup>. This invitation was largely the result of DEAD WATER, which had established his name as a cinematographer. Because of his experience, Von Barsy was also invited by the director of the *Rijksacademie* in Amsterdam, the state academy of visual arts, to discuss the possibility to start a film department, but this plan still had to wait<sup>542</sup>.

In 1937 the city of Rotterdam, finally, asked Von Barsy to make an entirely new film, with sound, about the port. It resulted in TUSSCHEN AANKOMST EN VERTREK (“Between Arrival and Departure”), which had its premiere at Tuschinski’s Grand Théâtre (1938-05-28)<sup>543</sup>. It is another ‘absolute film’ about the port, which is, in terms of canvas, a refinement of the previous film (ROTTERDAM). In a dynamic way, with elaborated compositions, it gives a concise impression of its activities. Cranes are shown from a low perspective, in contrast with the sky. Oil tubes run through the film frames. Floating barges interchange with large vessels that lie at anchor. New ships are being built in the docks. The film is characterised by Von Barsy’s sophisticated compositions, and a montage of contrasts, which together emphasise the power of the harbour. There are also poetic images of the industrial areas at twilight, with picturesque reflections in the water. While the night approaches, passengers embark on an ocean liner, in order to enter another adventure. The ship leaves.

The production of this sound film was supported and internationally distributed by the Dutch-German film company Tobis-Klangfilm<sup>544</sup>. With music composed by Anton Schweitzer of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, the film was described by a critic as a ‘voluminous symphony of cranes, walk cats, tug boats and ocean liners...’<sup>545</sup>. To call it a symphony was, apart from its musical score, also a reference to the genre of the ‘city-symphony’, and the critic refers indeed to Ivens’s THE BRIDGE and Von Barsy’s HOOGSTRAAT. Moreover, there is no spoken word to explain the film. In the same review it was said that ‘Von Barsy has succeeded to transfer his own artistic vision upon the subject on to the camera, and thereby he has exclusively used pure filmic means.’ The commentator heralded the film as a good example of avant-garde film-making, expressing his relief that Von Barsy had kept to his path, unlike many others within the avant-garde. Next to that, the film was simultaneously appreciated as a good documentary that obeyed objective criteria, and as good propaganda that promoted the harbour. Objective propaganda? In those days the classifications of ‘documentary’ and ‘propaganda’ were not thought to be excluding each other. When the objective of a film is clear, one can evaluate the way it is created. It is another way to address what I have labelled as ‘functional cinematography’. Von Barsy was above all a ‘master of light’<sup>546</sup>. As such he transcended specific categories and genres.

#### § 4. after Rotterdam

After WWII had started, Von Barsy worked on a few fiction films that were directed by Rutten<sup>547</sup>, and recorded at the Cinetone Studios in Duivendrecht, where Theo Güsten had become the director. However, none of them would be completed, since Cinetone was taken over by the Germans.

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<sup>541</sup> Van Moerkerken, 1966, 15.

<sup>542</sup> Van Moerkerken, 1966, 15.

<sup>543</sup> See: ‘Dagelijkse Kroniek 1938’, *Rotterdams Jaarboekje*, 1939: XXIX.

<sup>544</sup> The film is also known as LE PORT DE ROTTERDAM and GIGANTEN DER ARBEIT. There is no English version left, but it possible that it was also shown at the world exhibition in New York (1939).

<sup>545</sup> Kijzer, P.; 1938: 124. Original quote: ‘Von Barsy is er in geslaagd zijn eigen artistieke visie op het onderwerp op de camera over te brengen en heeft daarbij uitsluitend gebruik gemaakt van zuiver filmische middelen.’

<sup>546</sup> For a short description of his lighting characteristics, see: Van Moerkerken, 1966: 13. Von Barsy wrote also an article about his methodology, titled ‘Die Grundtypen der Szenenbeleuchtung’ (*Filmtechnik*, 1936).

<sup>547</sup> IK FLUIT...IN DE HOOP DAT JIJ ZULT KOMEN; OOST, WEST, THUIS...?; DE MAGIËR VAN AMSTERDAM [on Rembrandt], all 1941, dir. Gerard Rutten.

Von Barsy stayed in Rotterdam during the first two years of the war, but there was no work for him to do anymore. In April 1942, Von Barsy and his wife moved to Baarn, a small town, where they got a large house in a green environment. It was actually too large for the two of them, and a young woman, named Amelia, came to live with them. Von Barsy had met her in The Hague, where she played the piano for a dance class. It seems that she became Von Barsy's muse, posing for his still camera<sup>548</sup>. However, he soon left for Berlin, to work there, although he rejected the Nazi regime<sup>549</sup>. His wife stayed in the Netherlands and wrote him several letters in which she asked him to come back; she did not understand how he could work in the country that so many had begun to hate<sup>550</sup>. Germany offered opportunities for him to continue his profession, which no longer existed in the Netherlands, but he refrained from working on propaganda films. He became the cameraman of the comedy *DAS BAD AUF DER TENNE* (1943, Volker von Collande), which was one of the first German colour films (shot on Agfacolor). In the same year he published the book *Raumbild-Fotografie*, a technical exposé of stereoscopic (3d) photography<sup>551</sup>, which he had started already in Rotterdam.

Up until 1945, Von Barsy remained officially a resident of the Netherlands. In November of that year he moved to Munich, while he got divorced from his wife, who stayed in the Netherlands. He continued his work as a photographer and collaborated also on various documentaries. One of them was a production on a large event for European youth, at Loreley in 1951<sup>552</sup>. During the shooting he met a twenty-two year old girl, Ruth Gossert, who attended the meeting. A complicated relationship started, since he lived with another girl, but in 1953 Andor and Ruth would marry. Assisting him, she quickly mastered the skills of photography, and for many years they collaborated on photographic projects. At the same time he worked as the leading cinematographer of the *Bayerisches Fernsehen* (1953-1956)<sup>553</sup>. Next to that he helped to set up *Das Deutsche Institut für Film und Fernsehen* in Munich (now: *Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen*), where he became a teacher<sup>554</sup>.

As the cameraman of the experimental German feature film *JONAS* (1957), directed by the avant-garde filmmaker and nerve-specialist Ottomar Domnick, he won the prize for best cinematography at the Filmfestspielen in Berlin. After *JONAS*, Von Barsy worked once more with Gerard Rutten, with whom he made the dramatised documentary *DE VLIEGENDE HOLLANDER* ("The Flying Dutchman", 1957), about Anthony Fokker. It did not become a success, largely due to, according to Rutten, the experimental soundtrack of the film, 'for which the public was not yet ready'. In 1960, Domnick and Von Barsy collaborated again on a feature film, *GINO*, called after the main character, who was a *Gastarbeiter* from Italy.

In the next years he mainly worked as a teacher, and as a photographer, together with his wife. She also drove him around in their Messerschmidt, and they often went walking in the mountains, where they loved to make stereoscopic photographs. At Christmas 1965 he suddenly died of a heart attack.

## § 5. reflections

Within the career of Von Barsy, *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS* played a key role. It accurately mapped the port, literally, which made it a successful promotion of Rotterdam. This can be related to Tom Conley's idea of *Cartographic Cinema* (2007), which says that maps appear in almost every movie, and that films are a kind of maps within themselves. 'A film, like a

<sup>548</sup> Ref. Monique Benning, daughter of Amelia Horselenberg, 2005-04-11, email correspondence.

<sup>549</sup> Van Moerkerken, 1966: 15.

<sup>550</sup> Letters in the personal archive of Von Barsy (collection of his second wife Ruth Barsy-Gossert, Munich, 2006)

<sup>551</sup> *Raumbild-Fotografie*, by Andor von Barsy, 1943, Verlag Wilhelm Knapp, Halle (Saale) – Bibliothek Carl Zeiss; [www.stereoskopie.com](http://www.stereoskopie.com) > Literatur (2008-05-27).

<sup>552</sup> i.e. *EUROPA RUFT UNS [LORELEY, BEGEGNUNG EUROPÄISCHER JUGEND]*, 1952, Willi Mohaupt.

<sup>553</sup> Kézdi-Kovács, 1996: > Barsy.

<sup>554</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung – kai*, 1965-12-30: 'Andor von Barsy †'

topographic projection, can be understood as an image that locates and patterns the imagination of its spectators. When it takes hold, a film encourages its public to think of the world in concert with its own articulation of space' (Conley, 2007: 1). Moreover, 'the occurrence of a map in a film is unique to its own context' (p5). The maps in *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS* show the places where Von Barys had been shooting, which makes it also possible to locate the films that he had shot before. Such places prompt Conley to say: *to each film its map*. 'To each its own "points de capiton," or points of stress that plot its relations with space, history and being' (ibid). This means an ontology of film beyond photographic realism and beyond the aesthetics of cinematography, editing or mise-en-scene. Such a mapping is a matter of film being part of an environment, for how it enables a film production. The maps shown by *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS* show a segment of much larger maps that plot Von Barys's itinerary, of which this film is a sediment.

Von Barys's itinerary, as far as it concerns Rotterdam, starts with the film that he made with Theo Güsten. This failure, to communicate the potentiality of the port, generated a kind of 'noise'. It became the precondition for new commissions. The next films, however, would not have been made if the Olympic Games had not taken place in Amsterdam in 1928. It was because of this event that the *Nenijto* was organised in Rotterdam, which caused Transfilma to make several films. This history exemplifies how contingent events and individual efforts can make a difference, through positive feedback. I have illustrated it by the 'social life' (or the 'rise and fall') of *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS*. After the *Nenijto* was over, Transfilma used it as an exchange to secure its finances, in order to produce fiction films. While the film started to live a life of its own, to end up in pieces, Transfilma went bankrupt in the end. An additional factor to it was the arrival of the sound film, which required another practice of production, and more investments, but credits were difficult to get, due to the international economic crisis. All of this makes up an 'atlas' of maps related to *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS* and various other films.

If Transfilma would have succeeded in its attempts, Von Barys would not have taken over the studio of Transfilma, and his career would have been a different one. He would not have made *HOOGSTRAAT*, for which he became known as an avant-garde filmmaker. This also applies to *DEAD WATER*, in which case we might add another contingent factor: the burning of his studio. Without the success of this film, Von Barys would not have worked on Riefenstahl's *OLYMPIA*, and because of that *TUSSCHEN AANKOMST EN VERTREK* would have been a different film, since it was supported by Tobis-Klangfilm. It was released in Germany as *GIGANTEN DER ARBEIT* and, together with the films that Von Barys made before, it contributed to Rotterdam's image in Germany, not the least within the higher ranks of the Nazis. The status that Rotterdam and its port established before WWII became the reason for its destruction, but also the precondition for its growth afterwards, and hence for its success as a modern city. This should not be misunderstood. There is no clear cause-and-effect as far as it concerns the films at stake. There is rather a contingency, a coincidence of things that bump into one another and that get reinforced as such.

A series of contingent events, which are characterised by trial-and-error, move things into a certain direction. In this way we might also see the diversity of films that Von Barys worked on: industrial productions, commercials, fiction films for entertainment, and avant-garde experiments. They did not oppose one another, but all helped to establish a common framework of modernity. Noise and randomness, idiosyncrasy and individual achievement, diversity and openness, allow for emergence to appear at a higher level. This, however, cannot happen if there would not be some kind of structure or regulation at the same time<sup>555</sup>.

Although it is hard to speak of creativity in terms of 'geometric functions' (Scott, 2000: 12), we still have to consider physical environments and social webs, to provide references and continuity. Concerning physical environments there are, in this case, the cities of Budapest, Munich, Berlin, and Rotterdam – through The Hague, and in respect of contacts we might

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<sup>555</sup> Cf. Bonabeau, Dorigo, Theraulaz, 1999: 10.

mention the network that linked these places, and in particular people like Gerard Rutten, Simon Koster, Emiel van Moerkerken and Curt Oertel, among others, with whom Von Bary kept in contact for many years.

Individual acts are important, but not in terms of authorship. On the one hand, one has to take into account the objectives at issue, and how one tries to achieve them, which I have addressed in terms of 'functional cinematography'. On the other hand, one should consider forces that may obstruct the course of things, interfere with them, or which change the objectives after all. Whether one tries to offer additional value to the subject matter, or when one tries to change one's orientation to find new opportunities, one has to be inventive to open up possibilities, in order to appropriate the things one encounters and the ideas and visions related to them.