



Singin' in the Cave: *Singin' in the Rain* and Hollywood's Sparkling Shadows

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Abstract

The cinema, the seventh art, offers a reliable representation of reality more than any other art form. However, the cinematic image is created with the mediation of an always present mechanism. In other words, the promise of fulfilling the Aristotelian aspiration for mimesis (imitation of life), can be reached only with the use of artificial machinery. Following that, this article discusses the cinematic medium with the analysis of the film *Singin' in the Rain* (Donen & Kelly, 1952) using the writings of Plato, Jean Baudrillard and Christian Metz. It raises insights regarding the dialectics between silent and talking films, the musical as a cinematic genre, the role of sound and music in the cinematic medium, the gap between the image shown on screen and the reality that it wishes to reflect and the significance of the cinema and the influence it has on its viewers.

Keywords: Singin' in the Rain; Sherlock Jr.; Plato's allegory of the cave; simulacrum; the coming of sound; musical films



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Singin' in the Cave: *Singin' in the Rain* and Hollywood's Sparkling Shadows¹

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The Entire World a Stage

Singin' in the Rain opens in a premier of *The Royal Rascal*, an internal silent film, starring Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly) and Lina Lamont (Jean Hagen). After the premier Don Lockwood, the star of the film, escapes his fans and jumps randomly into Kathy Selden's (Debbie Reynolds) car. When Kathy identifies him as Don Lockwood, the movie star, she relates to his profession as a film actor, arguing that movies are mass entertainment, and that all films are nothing but the same repeating pattern ("If you've seen one, you've seen them all,"). She herself is a "real actress" on stage, while he is nothing but "a shadow on film".

Despite Kathy's harsh monologue against the film industry, she tries to enter it, and gets cast in a small part in one of Don's films. During their lunch break Kathy refers to the tabloids' information about the so-called affair between Don and his co-star, Lina Lamont, and the connection between Don's image and Don the man. During their lunch break, Don separates his life and his image as a movie star and tells Kathy that this image results from untrue gossip made up for sales promotion, an image that does not reflect his personality and his life.

The conversation between Don and Kathy echoes a former dialogue between Don and

Lina, who confuses false gossip with real life. She sees the virtual romance between Don and herself, which is created for publicity purposes, as a reality rather than a marketing scheme, and quotes fan magazines when he confronts her about this. Later in the film, when they are playing lovers in one of the internal films, she sees his acting as a testament of his love to her, even though he continues to say it is not so.

Nevertheless, despite the separation that Don makes between his stardom and his personality, he is unable to separate the actor from the person he is – he flees from his fans in the same way the characters he plays flee their enemies, and he fails in a basic human situation: he tries to tell Kathy that he loves her, but cannot find the words to express his love. He tells her that he wants to tell her something, but he needs the proper setting for that. He cannot fulfill his love as a man, without the setting he needs as an actor.

Don leads Kathy to an empty hangar, and builds the ‘proper setting’: scenery boards simulate a sunset, a wooden ladder turns into a balcony, a smoke machine creates a mysterious mist, a fan makes a soft summer breeze, and a purple projector stands-in for soft moonlight. Don accepts the representation as actual reality, just as an actor is required to do, and tells her how beautiful she is in the moonlight, which is nothing but the light of a projector. He does not simply tell her that he loves her, but sings what is in his heart and express his feelings with the

song 'You were meant for me'- accompanied by instrumental music. When he stops singing the music continues, and they start dancing. This scene ends when Don concludes his feelings in a last musical sentence, telling Kathy that she was sent to him by angels.





Figure 1-3: Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds in Singin' in the Rain

This love scene in the empty hangar seems reasonable within the fictional world of the film; *Singin' in the Rain* is, after all, a Hollywood musical and, therefore, a romantic love scene would naturally be accompanied by music and singing in a harmonious sunset. The uniqueness of this love confession, unlike love scenes in other movies, results from its choice to reveal the cinematic mechanism. More than any other art form, the cinema portrays a reliable representation of reality. Nonetheless, the realistic representation is based on a technical mechanism. The conceptual illusion that tries to hide this mechanism, leading viewers to believe that what they see is reality rather than a fictional representation of it, is revealed. *Singin' in the Rain's* viewers understand that when they watch romantic love scenes they are

actually watching an image that occurs in a studio, and what they believe to be moonlight is nothing but a stage projector. They become aware of the cinematic mechanism.

In his book *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard*

Robert Stam defines this scene as a cinematic seduction:

Singin' in the Rain plays on the tension, common in musicals, between "high" elite art and popular "low" art.... Kathy Selden initially scorns the "vulgarity" of the movies. The voice of both theatrical superiority and cinematic reflexivity, she dismisses Lockwood as "nothing but a shadow on film." Her high-art snobbery is debunked, however, when she is seduced by Lockwood and his medium, the seduction taking place, appropriately, on a sound-stage. Lockwood leads Kathy onto an empty stage, preparing it as if for a film. He animates the fog and wind machines and paints an electronic sunset as background for a love ballad (1992, p.90).

In other words: this love scene between Don and Kathy stands not only for their romantic love, but also for their love of films. Don's love for Kathy is bound to his love of films, and more precisely – his love for musical films. He reveals his feelings and at the same time seduces Kathy not only romantically, but also seduces her with his medium – popular musicals. Kathy accepts his love in both levels – romantically and cinematically, and joins his cinematic and romantic vision by dancing with him.

However, this love confession scene also contains a reflective aspect relating to the making of the film *Singin' in the Rain*. Gene Kelly's character, Don Lockwood, generates the scene when he leads Kathy to the empty hangar and directs her and the set. This love scene is

a product of his own vision, and he is its director and its star, just as Gene Kelly is the star and the director of *Singin' in the Rain* who turns the empty hangar to a magical set. In other words, Gene Kelly in his persona of Don does on the screen the same things Gene Kelly the director does behind the scenes - he directs the set and Kathy Selden/ Debbie Reynolds and stars in his own artistic vision. Alternatively, it can be argued that the film photographs itself at the moment of directing. As soon as it occurs, the film becomes somewhat of a live medium.

A Hollywoodish Cave

The awareness to the cinematic artificiality and manipulations, alongside the illusion of realism it encounters, engages in a dialogue with Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave'. The cave allegory tells the story of prisoners bound from childhood to the walls of an underground cave-like structure. They cannot see their friends or their bodies, but only what is on the wall in front of them. They do not see things as they are, but only the shadow that rises from a fire that is not visible to them. Since they do not know any other reality, they acknowledge the shadows and the echoes as the real thing. The change occurs when an outsider comes in and tries to release one of the prisoners. The prisoner resists the release, but eventually released from his restraints, freed from the cave and goes out into the sunlight. The former prisoner enjoys the sunlight, sees things as they are, and understands that the images he saw before were mere shadows.

Nevertheless, the liberated prisoner is required to go back into the cave and free his fellow prisoners, despite the risks and difficulties of the task (1991, p.26-30).

Like these prisoners, Don does not experience life substantially. He is accustomed to the reality of musicals, trapped in a Hollywoodish cave. His perception of reality consists of sparkling images as oppose to the pale shadows that the prisoners in Plato's cave see, but parallel to their indirect and false perception. Just as Kathy told him at the beginning of the film, he is 'a shadow on film', and he is living in a Hollywood dream.

While the previously stated goal of the theater and the movie was to create mimesis, imitation of reality, the situation described here is the complete opposite, when a man tries to imitate the film and to adjust his life according to the cinematic representation he grew accustomed too. It seems that Don, who criticized Lina for believing false gossip, is detached from reality just like her, and lives in a bubble of his own generated image.

Hence, Don, like the stars, creators and even the viewers of the Hollywood film industry, who see movies as a reliable representation of reality, is nothing but a prisoner trapped in his own ignorance. The film *Singin' in the Rain* holds up a mirror in front of its viewers. It breaks the cinematic illusion, and offers its viewers' amnesty from the Hollywoodish cave that trapped their minds, making them aware of the mechanism that enables the illusion.

Following the Allegory of the Cave, Stanly Donen and Gene Kelly, *Singin' in the Rain's* directors, are in the sunlight, seeing things as they are. They are prominent directors in Hollywood, aware of the cinematic apparatus and manipulations made to create the cinematic illusion. They descend into the cave when they create a popular and colorful musical, accessible to all, while integrating complex messages about Hollywood, and the grasp it has on viewers' minds. They are trying to liberate the viewers who are bound by chains to the glittering Hollywood cave and let them know that not all that glitters is gold, by exposing the mechanism behind the illusion. The Hollywood image remains in the minds of the viewers, not as an impossible dream, but as a critical object of reflection.

Sherlock Jr.

Another example to a film that relates to the gap between reality and the cinematic representation can be found in the film *Sherlock Jr.* (Keaton, 1924), directed and starred by Buster Keaton. In this silent film, the protagonist is a projectionist who falls asleep in the cinema. His dream is a simulation of what is shown on the screen: his dream-film is a glittering fantasy in which he turns into a brave cinematic hero, solving crimes, defeating the bad guys and getting the girl. The internal film presented here confronts the cinematic illusion achieved by the cinematic mechanism, by using extreme models. In his dream-film, Buster moves from desert to ocean, from the mountains to urban streets without moving. He is "trapped in the

universe of cinema, which operates according to spatial and temporal laws unknown to physical reality" (Mast and Kavin, 1992, p.126).





Figure 4-6: Buster Keaton in Sherlock Jr.

When Buster wakes up from his dream-film, he discovers that, contrary to his heroic aspirations, the girl he courts is the one who solved the mystery and implicated the bad guy. The contrast between the protagonists in the film *Sherlock Jr.*, to the hero of its internal film raises a question about reality and its cinematic representation, and the place of the polished cinematic images in everyday life. Just as the love confession scene undermines the automatic acceptance of Hollywood's love scenes, this movie undermines the automatic acceptance of 'bigger than life' hero films. Through the radicalization of the unwritten cinematic conventions of bravery, Keaton allows the viewers to recognize that cinema tricks, featuring superhuman abilities, are actually a technique of film-montage.

Like *Singin' in the Rain*, *Sherlock Jr.* is a reflexive film that deals with the essence of the cinematic medium. In this film, just as in the love confession scene, the cinematic mechanism allows the protagonist to fulfill his fantasy, designed by Hollywood images. The film *Sherlock*

Jr. demonstrates, back in 1924, how movie viewers shape their lives and self-image according to cinematic conventions. It presents the Hollywoodish apparatus as an illusion, an extreme reflection of reality that makes people view their lives as “dull and bland” as expressed years later by Cesare Zavattini, one of the senior neorealism theorists (1978).

Nonetheless, despite the linkage between movies and reality, the boundary between life and films is maintained. When the protagonist in *Sherlock Jr.* imitates the heroic character in the internal film, he does so with an awareness that stems from the desire to emulate cinematic representations that he grasps as a better form of life and reality. There is a barrier, although slight, between the protagonist and his fantasy role model.

In his book *Reflexivity in Film and Literature* Robert Stam connects between *Sherlock Jr.* to Christian Metz’s theory, presented in his book *The Imaginary Signifier* (1981). Metz argues that before we can identify with the cinematic characters, we must first identify with the camera’s act of seeing. This “primary identification” makes possible “secondary identification” with the characters, just as the primordial identification with the self makes possible subsequent identification with others. Following Metz, Stam declares that:

Sherlock Jr. turns the tables on this spectatorial self by putting Buster, our delegate in the fiction, literally in the places where the camera went. Buster physically accompanies the camera into deserts and icy wastes, rather than mentally identifying with it from a sheltered place in a movie theatre. Keaton collapses the

transcendental and empirical subject. Whereas the transcendental subject customarily follows the camera within the sanctuary of his or her mind, here the character is made empirically subject to the space of the image and the time of the editing (1992, p.39) .

Sherlock Jr.'s protagonist wishes to be a hero. He is a projectionist who projects his fantasies on screen. However, as Stam points out, his dream-film does not make him an inspiring hero, but rather a victim of the cinematic mechanism.

Following Stam, it appears that Christian Metz's cinematic theory can also shed a new light on the character of Don Lockwood in *Singin' in the Rain*. Metz parallels between the cinematic medium to the Lacanian mirror stage, referring to the cinema as the 'other mirror'.

According to Metz:

Thus film is like the mirror. But it differs from the primordial mirror in one essential point... one thing only that is never reflected in it: the spectator's own body ... In the mirror the child perceives the familiar household objects, and also its object par excellence, its mother, who holds it up in her arms to the glass. ... Thus the child's ego is formed by identification with its like, and this in two senses simultaneously, metonymically and metaphorically: the other human being, who is in the glass, the own reflection which is and is not the body, which is like it. The child identifies with itself as an object ... Thus, what makes possible the spectator's absence from the screen - or rather the intelligible unfolding of the film despite that absence - is the fact that the spectator has already known the experience of the mirror (of the true mirror), and is thus able to constitute a world of objects without having first to recognize himself within it (1981, p.48-49, emphasis in the original).

Following that, it appears that for Don the cinema is not 'the other mirror', but rather the first mirror: a mirror that reflects his image and his life environment. As such, Don identifies with his cinematic mirror reflection: his persona as a film actor. Don's mirror is not a mere

looking glass, but rather the cinema's screen. Parallel to the Lacanian mirror stage, Don identifies with his cinematic reflection and prefers it to his own physical existence.

This observation echoes the writing of the philosopher and cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard, who phrases four phases of an image:

1. It is the reflection of a basic reality.
2. It masks and perverts a basic reality.
3. It masks the absence of a basic reality.
4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum (1988, p.169).

Following Baudrillard, the cinematic image in *Sherlock Jr.* can be viewed as the third phase, where the image masks the absence of a basic reality. It is not a complete simulacrum, since the protagonist is still aware of the gap between his life and the cinematic images. With that, he is not fully aware to the fact that these images are unattainable illusions.

The love confession scene in the film *Singin' in the Rain*, however, presents a pure simulacrum, "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyper-real" (Baudrillard, 1988, p.166). Hyper-real is a situation where the representation of reality perceived as more actual than reality itself, a situation where "it is the map that precedes the territory ... it is the map that engenders the territory". It is not mimetic cinema that wishes to imitate life, but rather a situation where life wishes to imitate the Hollywoodish illusion.

It seems that for Don there is no concrete origin: cinema is life, and life is cinema. He does not want to imitate films consciously. The borders between life and cinema are blurred, and he cannot separate the cinematic representation from his actual life. Contrary to Keaton, who separates the protagonist in the film from the character in the internal film that he aspires to imitate, the love confession scene presents a situation in which the protagonist does not imitate the cinema, but lives it. The cinematic mechanism allows Don to fulfill his fantasy, and not just dream about its implementation.

In other words, Don is not aware that he is living the Hollywood dream, while Buster wishes to turn his life into a Hollywood dream, and to have a 'bigger than life' life. Both films observe the viewers and the filmmakers, and refer to the one-way gaze of the viewer on the screen, as opposed to the bi-directional gaze of the viewer-actor on stage. Moreover, the two films, created in different periods, describe different concepts of the cinematic medium. While Keaton reduces the cinema in its early stages to an unattainable fantasy, *Singin' in the Rain* illustrates how cinema assimilated itself within the mind of its viewers.

Thank You for the Music – From Silent Films to Musicals

As stated earlier, *Singin' in the Rain* opens in a film premier of the internal silent film *The Royal Rascal*. When the stars, Don Lockwood and Lina Lamont, finally arrive, they march onto the red carpet accompanied by screaming and fainting from the audience. After introducing

the movie stars, the internal film is shown at the theatre, telling the story of two young lovers fighting for their love.

The change in the routine is the result of the success of the film *The Jazz Singer*, the first talking film. Accordingly, the studio manager decides to change the current film the studio is working on, originally planned as a silent film, into a talking film, instructing the cast dismissively, “you do what you always do; you just add talking to it.”

However, the transition to from silent to talking films is not as simple as the studio manager implies since it requires adaptation to a new artistic language. The film *Singin' in the Rain* displays the twisting road of creating a new artistic language in tandem with the technological development that allows it. The film shows the difficulties in formulating the language of this new medium: the practical and technical problems in operating new devices and the difficulty of recording using an isolated microphone, as well as the aesthetic shortcomings that result from the difficulty of formulating a new cinematic genre.

The greatest hardship, however, comes with the internal film's release. The exaggerated gestures that were so typical to early motion pictures look ridiculous, and the primitive sound system creates endless comic situations; delicate movements, such as a pat on the shoulder or fingers passing through a pearl necklace, make roaring sounds that make them appear clumsy

and grotesque. Additionally, Lina Lamont, the star of the film, faces significant difficulties in adjusting to the microphone and, as a result, misses every other line when she tilts her head. Ultimately, the horrific sound reaches a peak when the sound and picture become unsynchronized, and the movie becomes a mockery of itself.

The bitter feeling raised by the pre-premiere leads to a sharp change. *The Dueling Cavalier* becomes a musical called *The Dancing Cavalier*, a transition made possible thanks to a technical development: the primitive recording equipment is replaced with modern equipment, which enables substituting Lina Lamont's strident voice with the far more pleasant voice of Kathy Selden. The stinging mockery and discordant failure of the *The Dueling Cavalier* pre-premiere is then replaced by cheerful applause from the viewers of the movie *The Dancing Cavalier*, that surpass even the applause received during the premier of *The Royal Rascal*, the internal silent film shown at the beginning.

Singin' in the Rain presents three internal films: a silent film, an 'all talking' film and a musical, each of which includes a similar love scene with the same actors. The silent film, *The Royal Rascal*, ends with a lovers' kiss, after Philip, the main character, defeats his enemies. In the musical *The Dancing Cavalier*, Pierre, the film's protagonist, lies motionless on the floor while his anxious lover asks him to speak to her as a sign that he is alive. As is customary in

musicals, he replies by singing his love for her, a substitute for the lovers kiss at the end of *The Royal Rascal*.

The love scene in *The Dueling Cavalier* is ridiculous not because of any technical shortcoming. In this scene Don, who plays a leading role simply says repeatedly “I love you”, and gets ridiculed by the audience (“did somebody get paid for writing this dialogue?!”). Contrary to what one may expect, this scene seems more artificial than the love scene in the silent film, that included background music and exaggerated gestures, and from the love scene in the musical in which actors communicate by singing accompanied with non-diegetic music.

During the making of *The Dueling Cavalier* Don approaches the director: “You know the scene’s coming up, where I say: ‘Imperious princess of the night’? I don’t like those lines there, is it alright that I do what I always do: ‘I love you, I love you, I love you’? “. The director replies: “Sure, anyway it’s comfortable, but into the bush! [where the microphone is placed]”

Don’s request seems somewhat of a paradox: he asks the director to do what he always does, which is to say ‘I love you’ over and over, while this is his first talking film. His words, that had no meaning in the silent film era, do not fall into place in the talking film. The director, from his part, does not attribute any meaning to the words being said, as long as they are being said into the microphone.

The focus in *The Dueling Cavalier*, the all talking film, is the new technology and not the film's artistic qualities. The making of the film was mostly adjusting to the presence of the microphone, and it was marked as 100% all talking film, highlighting the new medium and not the content of the film itself. Eventually, it is technology that leads the film to an abysmal failure, when the sound is distorted out of proportion.

This notion echoes Jane Feuer who points out that:

In *Singin' in the Rain*, we see the technical difficulties involved with filming and projecting *The Dueling Cavalier*, including Lina's battle with the microphone and the failure of the film when its technological base is revealed to the preview audience. *The Dancing Cavalier* in contrast, springs to life effortlessly. The film shows an awareness of this opposition between the foregrounding of technology in *The Dueling Cavalier* and the invisibility of technology in *The Dancing Cavalier* (1977, p.317).

Feuer argues accordingly that “the myth of spontaneity suggests that the MGM musical is not artificial but rather completely natural” (1977, p.324). The artificiality of the musical genre, in which people communicate with songs and music, seems natural within the fictional world of *Singin' in the Rain* as the proper way to convey one's emotions.

Moreover, the love scene in *The Dueling Cavalier* stands in sharp contrast to the love confession scene at the stage hanger. In this scene Don conveys his love for Kathy by singing and dancing. However, despite the so-called artificiality of this scene, it is much more reliable than the scene in which Don's character simply says ‘I love you’.

Peter N. Chumo II relates to the love scene in *The Dueling Cavalier* arguing that “the words he says, particularly his seemingly endless repetition of ‘I love you’ sound silly ... The proper words for him will be song lyrics” (1996, p.42).

Don expresses his love with songs. He cannot simply tell Kathy that he loves her, but rather sings his love for her. Song lyrics are the proper words for him, on and off the screen, through which he conveys his love both as a man and as an actor.

Furthermore, contrary to the *The Royal Rascal* and *The Dancing Cavalier*, the ‘all talking film’, *The Dueling Cavalier*, does not include music. While in the silent film the plot was advanced by music and subtitles and in the musical by songs, *The Dueling Cavalier*’s plot is advanced and supported by dialogues between the characters. Ostensibly, the film embodies the great promise inherent for realistic cinema and offers its viewers a movie without the artificiality of the musical or the silent film. However, the desire to create a mimetic film, a talking movie, results in the complete opposite, and the film becomes a cinematic parody.

While both the silent film and the musical use wisely the tools at their disposal, the all talking movie, which tries to reach complete realism, eventually becomes a cinematic parody. In other words, while the silent film and the musical did not try to eliminate the artificiality of the cinematic representation, the all talking movie’s goal - to reach absolute mimesis - is

doomed to fail because the film's mechanism is an all-present system. The cinematic medium is built upon mechanic manipulations and, therefore, any attempt at complete realism is impossible.

This notion corresponds with Don's love confession at the empty hanger. While the love confession scene brings the cinematic manipulations to the audience's awareness, the launch of these three internal films and the comparison between them accept cinematic manipulations as an integral and inevitable part of the medium's language.

The musical, which turns out to be a great success, fulfills the ambition of the 'all talking film' to maximize the use of sound. The musical, the only cinematic genre created with the invention of the talking film (Preminger, 1995, p.111), is presented as the epiphany of the new cinematic language and the heir of the old medium of silent films.

Singin' in the Rain presents three internal films: a silent film, an 'all talking' film and a musical. The gradual transition between these three films and three different cinematic genres shows the development of cinematic language. This coronation also serves to elevate the status of the film *Singin' in the Rain*, as a musical that deals with the end of the silent film and the transition to the talking film, thereby emphasizing the importance of the musical genre. *Singin' in the Rain* presents the musical as the fulfillment of the promise inherited in talking sound films,

and offers a musical eulogy: the silent film comes to an end with the harmonious sounds of the musical, its successor.

A Cinematic Musical Union

After the pre-premier of *The Dueling Cavalier*, the all talking internal film, Don feels that his cinematic days as movie star are over. His long-time friend, Cosmo Brown (Donald O'Connor) offers him jokingly to “go back into vaudeville”:

Cosmo: Or worse still – go back into vaudeville. (He sings and dances a few lines of "Fit as a Fiddle").

Don: Too bad I didn't do that in *Dueling Cavalier*. They might've liked it.

Kathy: Why don't you?

Don: What?

Kathy: Make a musical.

Don: A musical?

Cosmo: Sure. Make a musical. The new Don Lockwood He yodels, he jumps about to music.

Following that dialogue, Chumo argues that “The “new” Don Lockwood is the old Don Lockwood about to find his true self through the musical; specifically, he is reminded of his musical roots through his vaudeville experience with Cosmo” (1996, p.44).

These resolutions echoes Don and Kathy’s first conversation when Kathy accused Don that being a film actor he is “a shadow on film”, while she is a real actress on stage. Following that, it is Don’s theatrical past that enables him to transform from being ‘a shadow on film’ – a silent film star, to a musical actor.

As opposed to Don, Lina, who lacks any theatrical experience, cannot adjust to the new medium of talking films. According to Chumo:

She cannot talk properly, let alone sing, and, more importantly, her movements, far from those of a dancer, are static poses. While the other characters communicate with their bodies, that is, find an ideal discourse through dance, all Lina can do is rely on her studio contract and the publicity stories she has planted in the newspapers (1996, p.55).

The character of Lina Lamont, as Chumo states, is trapped in the genre of silent films.

With that, as opposed to Chumo, who claims that Lina's inability to adjust to the era of talking films is mostly due to her frozen body language, this article argues that Lina cannot succeed as a movie actress after the transition to talking films not because of her body language or physical inflexibility, but rather due to her strident and squeaky voice and her lack of musical talent. As such, the internal musical, *The Dancing Cavalier*, turns out to be a great success despite the fact that Lina plays a leading role in it. Her visual presence does not harm the movie's success (artistically or commercially), and she wishes to continue to appear on screen with her voice dubbed by Kathy.

Furthermore, after the premiere of *The Dancing Cavalier*, when the fraud is revealed, and the audience realizes that Kathy is the voice behind the character of Lina, Don announces: "that's the girl whose voice you heard and loved tonight, she's the real star of the picture - Kathy Selden!". Crowning Kathy as the star of the movie, although she did not appear on the screen

but “only” dubbed it, demonstrates the creators’ of *Singin’ in the Rain* point of view about the importance of sound in the movie industry. Lina, who appeared visually on the screen, is not the star of the movie, but rather Kathy, who was present vocally (Alon, 2017).

After Don’s announcement, Don and Kathy sing a duet on the stage of the movie theater, a duet that echoes the love confession scene. With that, the love confession scene takes place when Don is a well-known movie star and Kathy is a young aspiring actress, searching for her path. As such, in the love confession scene Kathy joins Don’s romantic and cinematic vision: he designs the set and sings his love for her, and she accepts his love by dancing with him. As opposed to the love confession scene, the duet at the movie theatre occurs after Kathy is “crowned” as the star of the musical. Don announces that Kathy is “the real star of the picture” and the audience applauds.

Hence, when Don and Kathy sing together the song ‘You are my lucky star’ on the stage premier they are both movie stars. Kathy, who did not join Don’s singing in the love confession scene, sings a duet with him. She finds her voice both as a musical actress and as Don’s beloved.

This observation echoes David Bordwell who points out that a classical Hollywood narrative contains two plotlines: One revolves around a heterosexual romance, while the other one arises from action occurring in the public sphere (1985, p.157). Following this notion,

Singin' in the Rain portrays a romantic plotline: a love story between Don and Kathy, and a public plotline that deals with the coming of sound and the creation of musical films. With that, viewing the film up closely, it appears that these two plotlines are bound together. Don and Kathy's romantic love goes hand in hand with their love for the musical genre. As such, they unite on the stage premier, when they sing a duet that expresses their feelings.

As stated earlier, the love confession scene expresses not only Don's love for Kathy, but also his love of musicals. Don confesses his love for Kathy and seduces her with the medium of musical films. Following that, it is the musical that unites them: *Singin' in the Rain* ends when Don Lockwood and Kathy Selden are both movie stars, singing a duet, and afterwards kissing in front of a billboard in their image. Their union is complete romantically, musically and cinematically.

Conclusions

Singin' in the Rain is a colorful and enjoyable musical. At the same time, it enfolds profound insights regarding the very essence of the cinematic medium in general and musical films especially. *Singin' in the Rain* does not formulate absolute determinations, but rather tries to raise awareness within its audience. As such, it seems that while the presentation of three internal films accepts cinematic manipulations as an integral and inevitable part of the medium's language, acknowledging the cinematic technology as an always present mechanism,

Don and Kathy's love scene at the empty hanger completes the viewers' understanding of the cinematic illusion by accepting these manipulations on the one hand, and on the other hand brings them to the audience's awareness.

Singin' in the Rain explores the transition from silent films to sound films, illustrating how the development of sound technology opened up new possibilities, gave rise to a new cinematic genre, and necessitated the creation of a new filmic language. Cinema is an evolving art; however, changes in the dramatic structure do not occur at the same pace as the industry's technological development. It appears that, nowadays, as the cinematic medium undergoes substantial technological advances (such as 3D film theaters and computer-generated images), the coming of sound and its resulting impact can offer a new perspective on the changes occurring today, both technically and artistically.

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ENDNOTES:

¹ [Editor's note]: There have been some classic studies on *Singin' in the Rain* such as Buzzer (1988), Wollen (2012) and (Honig (2023). Talya Alon-Altman's fresh look on the realism and sound-mage from a philosophical perspective offers a fresh look at this ageless classic.