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# Alice Terry

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## Also Known As:

Alice Taafe, Mrs. Rex Ingram

## Lived:

July 24, 1900 - December 22, 1987

## Worked as:

co-director, extra, film actress

## Worked In:

United States

## by Heidi Kenaga

Alice Terry is probably best known to silent cinema historians in relation to the men with whom she frequently worked—Rudolph Valentino, in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) and *The Conquering Power* (1921); Ramon Novarro, in *Scaramouche* (1923) and *The Arab* (1924); and her husband, Rex Ingram, who directed Terry in all of these films as well as eight others. “Rex and His Queen” were one of the more celebrated director-actress teams of the 1920s, but there are indications that performing was only one dimension of Terry’s contribution to their work together. The most concrete acknowledgment of this behind-the-camera labor is found in their last film, *Baroud* (1932), in which she did not appear but for which she received on-screen co-directorial credit.

Trade and publicity materials suggest that around 1915 Alice began working as an extra to help her family financially. The general tenor of the publicity narratives after her sudden success in *Four Horsemen* was that she had been a “shy little extra,” nice but not terribly ambitious, attractive but not especially talented, and interested primarily in steady work to support her family rather than in becoming an actress. She had even been interested in other motion picture jobs, considering work as a script girl or a cutter behind the camera as preferable to performing in front of it. Terry’s status began to change after meeting Ingram, who promoted her to small parts in his early Metro Pictures films in the late teens. He also directed her physical transformation, encouraging her to wear a blond wig over her own auburn hair, overseeing a program of weight loss and dental repair, and creating “Alice Terry”—both the name and the image—as his protégé.

The trade and fan press promoted Rex Ingram’s authority over all his productions and considered Alice to be part of them, referring to her as “pliant clay” in the hands of her director, soon to

become her husband. Terry herself disclaimed any agency for the new direction of her career, both in contemporary materials and upon subsequent recollection, as in the 1958 interview with George Pratt, and in fact it was this very lack of self-promotion that distinguished her persona. As *Picture Play* commented in a 1924 article, she was set apart by “her unrestrained enthusiasm for her husband, her unqualified praise for his work, with absolutely no mention of her own minor but definite achievements.” Further, “under his competent direction she will doubtless continue to acquit herself creditably... [As such] there is no valid reason for her to head her own company” (104).

In a sense, however, Terry already did head things up. A sensitive reading of publicity materials as well as anecdotal evidence suggests more agency on Terry’s part, as the de facto manager of the productions of the acclaimed director Rex Ingram. As she wryly commented to *Photoplay* in 1924, “[it] takes all my talent to play the successful actress and successful wife” (104). After World War I, Ingram experienced a succession of emotional vicissitudes, apparently the result of a physical injury he received while briefly serving in the Royal Canadian Flying Corps in late 1918. According to Anthony Slide, who interviewed Terry in later years, the actress was well equipped to handle such episodes and understood, perhaps better than Ingram himself, the commercial imperatives of studio filmmaking. After years in the business, Slide notes, the former extra had learned “many aspects of the creative process,” which proved invaluable when she had to complete Ingram’s work. As Slide describes the situation: “Ingram became incapacitated and too moody to work... [then] she would take over direction of his features” (2002, 380). Thus, although Terry is only given on-screen credit for *Baroud*—a sound film made after Ingram’s heyday and outside the US studio system—it is possible she also codirected some parts of Ingram’s motion pictures between 1921 and 1929.

Only in a 1932 article in *New Movie* entitled “Presenting Rex Ingram in ‘Baroud,’ Directed by Alice Terry,” does the dynamic of the relationship become public. Journalist Herbert Howe explores the turnabout for comic purposes, depicting Terry as authoritarian while Ingram wails about her “cracking the whip.” The article even includes a production still of Terry directing Ingram, who looks annoyed. Yet, when Rex is called to London for a few days, he promptly “turn[s] the production over to her” without a second thought (107). To a degree, then, Howe corroborates Slide’s description of Alice Terry’s behind-the-camera work on Ingram’s silent era films. The Howe article also offers a rather frank discussion of the couple’s growing differences as reflected in their domestic arrangements, revealing that they kept separate villas while on location. Such discourse seems to imply that changes in their public, artistic relationship had created a schism in the personal, domestic sphere, as if Terry’s appropriation of a directorial role could not be commensurate with that of “a successful actress and a successful wife.” Yet it may well have been Terry’s public performance of the latter that helped secure Ingram’s status as the “master of the silent cinema”—perhaps another dimension of women’s agency in the industry during this period that historically has been obscured. Although it is now clear that there were many husband and wife collaborations in the silent motion picture industry, the Alice Terry-Rex Ingram relationship was quite unique.

# Bibliography

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Beach, Barbara. "Rex and His Queen." *Motion Picture Magazine* (Jan. 1922): 22-23, 102.

Howe, Herbert. "Presenting Rex Ingram in 'Baroud,' Directed by Alice Terry." *New Movie* (March 1932): 37-39, 107-198.

Johaneson, Bland. "Alice and Miss Terry." *Photoplay* (Jan. 1924): 41, 104.

Kingsley, Grace. "Romances of Famous Film Folk." *Picture Play* (Dec. 1921): 31-33, 99.

Manners, Dorothy. "Old Friends Talk of Alice Terry." *Picture Play* (Sept. 1925): 89, 100.

Oettinger, Malcolm. "Should a Wife Tell?" *Picture Play* (March 1924): 84-85, 104.

O'Leary, Liam. *Rex Ingram: Master of the Silent Cinema*. Barnes & Noble, 1980.

Pratt, George. "If You Beat Me, I Wept': Alice Terry Reminisces About Silent Films." 1958. repr. in *"Image" on the Art and Evolution of the Film: Photographs and Articles from the Magazine of the International Museum of Photography*. Ed. Marshall Deutelbaum. New York: Dover Publications and International Museum of Photography, 1979. 181- 86.

## Archival Paper Collections:

Alice Terry scrapbooks, 1920-1927. [Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library](#)

# Filmography

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## A. Archival Filmography: Extant Film Titles:

### 1. Alice Terry as Actress

*The Valley of the Giants*. Dir.: James Cruze, sc.: Marion Fairfax (Famous Players-Lasky Corp. US 1919) cas.: Alice Taaffe, Wallace Reid, Grace Darmond, si, b&w, 5 reels, 4,625 ft. Archive: [Gosfilmofond of Russia \[RUR\]](#).

*The Conquering Power*. Dir.: Rex Ingram, sc./adp.: June Mathis (Metro Pictures Corp. US 1921) cas.: Alice Terry, Rudolph Valentino, Eric Mayne, si, b&w, 35mm, 16mm, 7 reels. Archive: [Cinémathèque Française \[FRC\]](#), [George Eastman Museum \[USR\]](#), [UCLA Film and Television Archive \[USL\]](#).

*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Dir.: Rex Ingram, sc.: June Mathis (Metro Pictures Corp. US 1921) cas.: Alice Terry, Rudolph Valentino, Pomeroy Cannon, si, b&w, 35mm, 16mm, 7 reels. Archive: [Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée \[FRB\]](#), [Cinémathèque Royale de](#)

[Belgique \[BEB\]](#), [George Eastman Museum \[USR\]](#), [Museum of Modern Art \[USM\]](#), [BFI National Archive \[GBB\]](#), [Cineteca Nazionale \[ITN\]](#), [Instituto Valenciano de Cinematografia \[ESV\]](#), [Filmoteca Española \[ESM\]](#), [Jugoslovenska Kinoteka \[YUB\]](#), [Lobster Films \[FRL\]](#), [Library of Congress \[USW\]](#).

*The Prisoner of Zenda*. Dir.: Rex Ingram, sc.: Mary O'Hara (Metro Pictures Corp. US 1922) cas.: Alice Terry, Lewis Stone, Barbara La Marr, si, b&w, 10 reels, 10,467 ft. Archive: [George Eastman Museum \[USR\]](#), [Gosfilmofond of Russia \[RUR\]](#).

*Turn to the Right*. Dir.: Rex Ingram, sc.: June Mathis, Mary O'Hara (Metro Pictures Corp. US 1922) cas.: Alice Terry, Jack Mulhall, Lydia Knott, si, b&w, 35mm, 8 reels, 7,703 ft. Archive: [George Eastman Museum \[USR\]](#).

*Scaramouche*. Dir.: Rex Ingram, sc.: Willis Goldbeck (Metro Pictures Corp. US 1923) cas.: Alice Terry, Ramon Novarro, Lewis Stone, si, b&w, 10 reels, 9,850 ft. Archive: [Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique \[BEB\]](#), [George Eastman Museum \[USR\]](#), [Gosfilmofond of Russia \[RUR\]](#).

*The Arab*. Dir./sc.: Rex Ingram (Metro-Goldwyn Pictures Corp. US 1924) cas.: Alice Terry, Ramon Novarro, Max Maxudian, si, b&w, 7 reels, 6,710 ft. Archive: [Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique \[BEB\]](#), [Gosfilmofond of Russia \[RUR\]](#).

*Mare Nostrum*. Dir.: Rex Ingram, adp.: Willis Goldbeck, ed.: Grant Whytock (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corp. US 1926) cas.: Alice Terry, Antonio, Michael Brantford, si/ sd., b&w, 35mm, 11 reels, 11,000 ft. Archive: [Instituto Valenciano de Cinematografia \[ESV\]](#), [UCLA Film and Television Archive \[USL\]](#).

*The Magician*. Dir./adp.: Rex Ingram, ed.: Grant Whytock (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corp. US 1926) cas.: Alice Terry, Paul Wegener, Michael Powell, si, b&w, 7 reels, 6,960 ft. Archive: [George Eastman Museum \[USR\]](#).

*The Three Passions*. Dir./sc.: Rex Ingram (United Artists US 1928) cas.: Ivan Petrovich, Alice Terry, si, b&w, 35mm. Archive: [Lobster Films \[FRL\]](#).

## **2. Alice Terry as Director**

*Baroud*. Prod.: Rex Ingram, dir.: Rex Ingram, Alice Terry, sc.: Rex Ingram, Peter Spencer (Gaumont-British Corp. UK 1932) sd., b&w, 35mm, 7242 ft. Archive: [BFI National Archive \[GBB\]](#).

## **B. Filmography: Non-Extant Film Titles:**

### **1. Alice Terry as Actress**

*A Corner in Colleens*, 1916; *Not My Sister*, 1916; *The Bottom of the Well*, 1917; *Strictly Business*, 1917; *Wild Winship's Window*, 1917; *A Bachelor's Children*, 1918; *The Brief Debut of Tildy*, 1918; *The Clarion Call*, 1918; *Love Watches*, 1918; *Old Wives for New*, 1918; *Sisters of the Golden Circle*, 1918; *The Song and The Sergeant*, 1918; *The Trimmed Lamp*, 1918; *The Days She Paid*,

1919; *The Love Burglar*, 1919; *Thin Ice*, 1919; *Hearts Are Trumps*, 1920; *Shore Acres*, 1920; *Where the Pavement Ends*, 1923; *Any Woman*, 1925; *Confessions of a Queen*, 1925; *Sackcloth and Scarlet*, 1925; *The Great Divide*, 1925; *The Garden of Allah*, 1927, *Lovers?*, 1927.

### C. DVD Sources:

*The Conquering Power*. DVD. (Grapevine US)

*The Prisoner of Zenda*. DVD. (MGM US 2011)

*Scaramouche*. DVD. (Warner Archive Collection US, 2009)

*The Magician*. DVD. (Warner Archive Collection US 2011)

*Rudolph Valentino: The Great Lover*. DVD. (Delta Entertainment US 2006) - contains *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921)

*Baroud*. DVD. (Lobster Films France 2017)

### D. Streamed Media:

[Scaramouche](#) (1923) is streaming on Amazon Video

[The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse](#) (1921) is streaming on Amazon Prime

[The Prisoner of Zenda](#) (1922) is streaming on Amazon Prime

## Credit Report

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Alice Terry was credited under her birthname, Alice Taaffe, on all films before 1919. While numerous sources mention Alice Terry working as an extra for Thomas Ince on *Civilization*, 1916, she does not appear in the actual credits, nor in the AFI database, FIAF's Treasures of the American Film Archives or Paul Spehr's American Film Personnel and Company Credits, 1908-1920. Denise Lowe's *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Women in Early American Films*, claims Terry worked as an extra in *Alimony*, 1917 and *The Devil's Passkey*, 1920, but this too cannot be confirmed through AFI, FIAF or Spehr. *Mare Nostrum* was cut to 10 reels; 9,894 ft. for release. *Baroud* was released in the U.S. in 1933 as *Love in Morocco*. It is difficult to establish a complete filmography for Alice Terry since there seems to be another actress named Alice Terry (also known as Alice Rodier) who also worked in the silent film industry. The latter was a Vitagraph actress, while Alice Terry (Alice Taafee) says that she never worked at Vitagraph, according to an interview with DeWitt Bodeen. Further research is being done in order to verify a more complete/concrete filmography for the Alice Terry featured in WFPP.

## Citation

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<<https://wfpp-test.cul.columbia.edu/pioneer/ccp-alice-terry/>>