

## = The Restless Spirit =

The Restless Spirit is a 1913 American silent short drama film written and directed by Allan Dwan , featuring J. Warren Kerrigan and Pauline Bush . The film is based on Thomas Gray 's 1751 poem , Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard , and tells the story of a man who wishes to be a conqueror . The Dreamer heads out into the desert and is nursed back to health by the Desert Flower . A series of illusions follows which shows the futility of conquest when he cannot conquer his own community . He returns and eventually becomes respected by the community that once ridiculed him . The film makes use of numerous dissolves which were technically difficult to execute , and reportedly sent the cameraman to the hospital due to stress . The film may have been the last unbilled appearance by Lon Chaney , and was released on October 27 , 1913 by Universal Film Manufacturing Company under the Victor label . The film is presumed lost .

## = = Plot = =

The film begins with the Dreamer , a restless and disappointed dreamer who has a wife and child . He gazes at his hands and dreams of becoming a conqueror , but laments that no chance comes to him and continues to dream . The Dreamer becomes the subject of ridicule and his wife becomes the subject of pity by the community . The Dreamer decides enter the world of men and abandons his wife leaving her to seek refuge in her father . Her father wishes for her to marry a wealthy gentleman who is also a stranger in the town . The Dreamer heads into the desert and wanders until exhaustion takes its toll . A woman , " The Desert Flower " , finds him and takes him to her hut in the desert . There the woman spends her time looking over the garments of the man who courted her , the same stranger now attempting to marry the Dreamer 's wife . The woman learns of the Dreamer 's story and shows the dreamer the futility of conquering worlds unknown when he cannot conquer his own small corner of the world . The Dreamer sees himself in the roles of great conquerors , but each vision ends with death . The Dreamer 's wife has been kicked out for refusing to marry the stranger , and is reunited with the Dreamer on the edge of the desert . The stranger is sent out into the desert and the Dreamer and his wife return to the town . In time , the Dreamer becomes respected by the community .

## = = Cast = =

J. Warren Kerrigan as the Husband / The Dreamer  
Pauline Bush as the Wife  
Jessalyn Van Trump as The Desert Flower  
William Worthington as the Stranger  
George Periolat  
Lon Chaney as Russian Count / Prince

## = = Production = =

The groundwork for The Restless Spirit began when Allan Dwan visited Universal 's offices in New York in late July 1913 . Frederic Lombardi believes that it was during this meeting that Carl Laemmle offered Dwan 's colleagues double their pay from Flying A if they would come to Universal . In the following weeks , J. Warren Kerrigan came to Universal and the two would work together in the production of The Restless Spirit . Dwan credits the idea to adapt and produce a film on Thomas Gray 's Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard as a betting challenge . Dwan also claimed to have studied Gray 's poem and dream about the production before accepting the challenge . Frederic Lombardi , author of Allan Dwan and the Rise and Decline of the Hollywood Studios , writes that Dwan may have been emboldened after the production of the Pickett Guard and the lack of structure in Gray 's poem . Since the poem had no " real story " , Dwan could formulate his own allegorical plot . Dwan was also able to convince his employers that the work would be a box office

success and intended to use the film a prestigious multi @-@ role vehicle for Kerrigan 's debut at Universal . Lombardi writes that Dwan was subject to produce overtly artistic films , but these tendencies were kept in check by Dwan 's more practical inclinations .

The film 's ethereal aspects and double exposures were performed in the camera because the ability to create the effects in lab did not yet exist . Dwan made 24 dissolves in the film , each required precise control by the cameramen and that the counts had to be exact otherwise the shot would be ruined . Lombardi notes that the cinematographer , Walter Pritchard , was the man who had to go through the ordeal and that Universal said he was one of the company 's oldest men . Dwan would claim that Pritchard would end up in the hospital from the production . In *The Parade 's Gone By* , Brownlow instead gives the number of dissolves as 25 and adds to the story by Dwan claiming that the audience could not figure out the effect was done . Dwan also claimed that by the time 15 dissolves were done that the cinematographer was so nervous that the it would keep him up at night and cause his hands to shake so greatly that an assistant would have to reload the film at the right spot before shots . This production may have been the last unbilled movie credit of Lon Chaney . The discovery of Lon Chaney 's role was through Chaney having marked his appearance in a still with an X above his head . Chaney wrote " This is me just below the X sign . Here I am a Russian Prince . " on the back of the still . The image still in particular leaves no question that it comes from the *The Restless Spirit* because it also appears on the cover of *The Universal Weekly* for October 23 , 1913 . The second image found on the estate depicts Lon Chaney in the role of a wildman , which Mirsalis attributes to a fantasy sequence in the film .

= = Release = =

On September 6 , 1913 , *Motography* reported that J. Warren Kerrigan would star in the upcoming picture known as *A Restless Spirit* with a reference to Kerrigan 's transfer to Universal . Alternate names for the film such as *His Restless Spirit* and *A Restless Spirit* .

It is unknown if the film was initially planned or if it was mere assumption , but it was reported that it would be a two reel production in September 1913 . Newspaper accounts change to reference the film as having three reels by October 3 , 1913 . As details spread in the newspaper , the film 's working title continued to be referenced as *A Restless Spirit* in various papers . Newspaper references began to reference the final title on October 24 , 1913 . The film was released on October 27 , 1913 by Universal Film Manufacturing Company under the Victor label .

With the film 's release on October 27 , it was of minor note that the Alcazar of Atlanta , Georgia would show the film until November 1 , 1913 . The film would be a special for the week at the Hippodrome in Leavenworth , Kansas . Some theaters , such as the Alamo of El Paso , Texas would only show the film for a single day . The Unique theater , also of El Paso , would show the film on October 29 due to a " slip @-@ up " with Universal 's New York office . The advertisement would also mention Kerrigan 's popularity in the area in otherwise apparent contrast to the Alamo 's single day run . Another advertisement noted the film 's artistry and that it is one of the best three @-@ reel films released , but the film would play for only a single day . The film received play in various theaters until at least July 1914 .

= = Reception and fate = =

Advertisements would state the films artistry or that it was one of the best three @-@ reel films released . Lombardi cites a single review from *The Moving Picture World* in his text and suggests that other reviews may have been more tepid , but the result was that Dwan would not produce any more films of " such experimental nature " at Universal . The film is now considered to be lost . It is unknown when the film was lost , but if it was in Universal 's vaults it would have been deliberately destroyed along with the remaining copies of Universal 's silent era films in 1948 .