Next program: Monday Nov. 18th: STREET OF FORGOTTEN WOMEN (1926), a bizarre but fascinating exploitation quickie, with location work in San Francisco, and Q SHIPS (1928), one of the British semi-documentary reconstructions of World War One battles and campaigns.

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society November 4 1974

GRAND CANARY (Fox, 1934) Directed by Irving Cummings; Screenplay by Ernest Pascal from a novel by A.J. Cronin; Camera, Bert Glennon; 7 reels With Warner Baxter, Madge Evans, Zita Johann, Marjorie Rambeau, Roger Imhof, H.B. Warner, Barry Norton, Juliette Compton, Gilbert Emery, John Rogers, Gerald Rogers, Desmond Roberts, Carrie Daumery, Clyde Cook, George Reas, Chris Pin Martin, Charles Stevens.

While this is by no means the end of the seemingly inexhaustible supply of rediscovered early 30's Warner Baxter vehicles, it is, I hope, the last of those in which he plays a doctor? As with so many of the others, it is hardly cause for major excitement — but any film as well-photographed as this one, and with the lovely Madge Evans, is certainly worth at least one revival. Since no preservation work has been undertaken, other than for this one print, this may well be the only chance to see it. It appears to be a somewhat belated attempt to cash in on "Arrowsmith" — but done without any high hopes of duplicating the boxoffice success of that film. It seems aware of its limitations, and doesn't try too hard; in fact, it takes its own time getting to the heart of the story, and then finishes up rather quickly — and frankly in not too satisfying a manner. (It may well have worked much better in Cronin's original story, but here there's too much compromise with the Production Code, and too many punches pulled). However, it's an interesting addition to that prolific group of thirties films in which doctors and medicine took over from aviators and exploration (1923-32) as the most suitable salutary heroes and professions of the depression era, a cycle enlarged by the later popular literary successes of Cronin and Lloyd C. Douglas. Morally it's all a bit dubious, and medically it's absurd, but filmically it's interesting and very handsomely mounted.

ANYBODY'S WOMAN (Paramount, 1930) Directed by Dorothy Arzner; Screenplay by Zoe Akins and Doris Anderson from "The Better Wife" by Gouverneur Morris; Camera, Charles Lang; editor, Jane Loring; 8 reels With Ruth Chatterton, Clive Brook, Paul Lukas, Huntley Gordon, Virginia Hammond, Tom Patricola, Juliette Compton, Cecil Cunningham, Charles Gerrard, Harvey Clark, Sidney Bracey, Gertrude Sutton.

The current issue of "Cinema", with an interesting though typically non-informative interview with Dorothy Arzner, continues the work of establishing her as a major director, auteur and feminist filmmaker — three labels that, to me at least, seem much exaggerated. She's an interesting director, but surely no more so than many unheralded male directors — John Stahl for example — and much less interesting than many male directors yet to be taken really seriously (Robert Florey, William Seiter). True, all of her films do seem to be built around strong women and men who are either weak or at best decent, but surely that generalisation can be applied as an instinctive approach by all women directors (Leni Riefenstahl possibly excepted) and shouldn't be enlarged to auteur proportions. However, especially given its early period, "Anybody's Woman" is one of her best, and one of Ruth Chatterton's best. Despite some wild, high-blown dialogue at times, it's strong, powerful, often quite moving — though it is a little hard to accept Clive Brook, that bastion of prigish respectability, as a dissolute drunkard. Chatterton's quite remarkable performance really holds it all together, and makes even the extreme plot contrivances seem reasonably logical.

Wm. K. Everson