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Outstanding among the movies appearing in Boston this summer, A Hatful of Rain presents the problem of drug addiction in a dramatic form. Johnnie, newly married, picked up the habit while in a war zone. Since then he has been borrowing money from his brother Polo in order to buy narcotics. Johnnie is now deeply in debt to a group of "hustlers" headed by a rather nasty character called "Mother." Johnnie's real mother died when he was quite young. Johnnie has not told his wife about his addiction and is in danger of losing her because he mistreats her and does not come home from work. True, he is up in the clouds, living in the dream of how he would like things to be and never seeing things as they really are. The relationship between this problem and that of a dope addict is obvious if we remember that dope has the effect of taking one away from reality. Johnnie too is up in the clouds, in contrast to his wife who is a more down to earth character since she realizes the problem and is trying to get at the root of it.

The director has developed this theme of reality visually by many camera shots of high significance (analogous to lack of reality or "up in the clouds") contrasted to shots of Johnnie's wife (analogous to a more realistic situation). The movie opens with a shot of an apartment building, the camera coming from the front of the building and then moving up to the top. When Johnnie is thinking of suicide he goes to a bridge and we see the bridge contrasted to the clouds.

The theme of reality is further developed by the title and the story behind it. Pop tells us that Johnnie is a boy, having heard that by working he can get a pocket full of money, he goes out digging in the ground and then looks in his pockets for money. It missed however, so instead of a pocketful of money Johnnie winds up with "a hatful of rain." Johnnie's lack of a realistic outlook is further emphasized by the rain, something which starts up in the clouds and comes down to earth, and by the contrast between the pocket (the body) and the hat (worn high on the body). The movie ends with a firm pan out followed by a close up when Johnnie's wife finds out about Johnnie's drug addiction and immediately arranges to have him sent to a hospital where the habit can be broken rather than listening to Johnnie and Polo who insist that Johnnie can do it by himself.

It would seem likely that a film ending with a plea for reality would indeed be realistic. A Hatful of Rain requires the complexity necessary for realism without ever becoming dull or tedious. The almost unbelievable tension is broken up with humorous scenes which never seem out of place. True, Johnnie, Mother and his gang of hooligans are far from realistic, but this fault can be overlooked since they are extremely hilarious and entertaining. It is a great compliment to the director to be able to turn out an excellent film as an example of just how artistic the film medium can be.