

CLOSE UP
1927–1933
Cinema and Modernism

EDITED BY
JAMES DONALD,
ANNE FRIEDBERG
AND LAURA MARCUS

Princeton University Press
Princeton, New Jersey

PART 3

The Contribution of H.D.

INTRODUCTION

Laura Marcus

I am now intensely interested [in film]... In fact am doing a little critical work for a new very clever movie magazine, supposed to get hold of things, from a more or less 'artistic' angle but not the highbrow attitude ... It is to be called, CLOSE-UP, a splendid title I think ... I feel [film] is the living art, the thing that WILL count but that is in danger now from comnerical [*sic*] and popular sources.¹

The film is the art of dream portrayal and perhaps when we say that we have achieved the definition, the synthesis toward which we have been striving.²

The eleven articles the poet and novelist H.D. wrote for *Close Up* appeared in the journal's first two years; she made no written contribution after the December 1929 issue, apart from her pamphlet on the film *Borderline*, which was published separately, and anonymously, by the Mercury Press in 1930. Her first three film articles appeared under the title 'The Cinema and the Classics'. They are investigations and celebrations of film art as a new classicism, of a 'beauty' wholly submerged by Hollywood film, but revealed in the new German and Russian cinema (of Pabst, Kuleshov, Eisenstein) which is the topic of a number of H.D.'s subsequent *Close Up* articles. 'The problem of England and the beauty of England (psychically) is never that of the Scandinavians, and technically at least it should learn and study *not* from America but in and through the Germanic and Russian mediums,' wrote H.D. in her article 'Russian Films'.³ Pabst's *Joyless Street*, which she had seen in 1925, was her cinematic touchstone, and Greta Garbo her image of a beauty destroyed when Garbo left Europe for America.

A number of the tenets expressed in the 'Cinema and the Classics' pieces echo the 'imagist' aesthetics with which H.D.'s early poetry is associated – sparseness, directness, 'restraint' – as well as the 'Hellenism' which was a central aspect of her poetics throughout her long writing career.⁴ 'True modernity approaches more and more to classic standards,' she writes in 'Restraint':

The 'classic' as realism could be better portrayed by the simplest of expedients. A pointed trireme prow nosing side ways into empty space, the edge of a quay, blocks of solid masonry, squares and geometric design would simplify at the same time emphasize the pure *classic* note. ... Beauty restrained and chaste, with the over-weaving of semi-phosphorescent light, in a few tense moments showed that the screen can rise to the ecstatic level of the poetic and religious ideals of pure Sophoclean formula.⁵

The interplay between an aesthetics of formal restraint and one of emotional, spiritual or 'psychic' transcendence, between holding back and going beyond, runs throughout H.D.'s film writings. In her review of Kuleshov's *Expiation* she explores the idea that the film goes 'too far': 'The spirit goes as far as the spirit can go and then it goes a little further'; 'The Russian takes the human spirit ... *further* than it can go.'⁶ Film can reveal, H.D. suggests, a reality as yet unrepresented in other media. She is admiring but critical of Dreyer's *Joan of Arc*, whose brutal realism is an excess which offers no visionary truth: 'Jeanne d'Arc takes us so incredibly far that having taken us so far, we are left wondering why didn't this exquisite and superb piece of screen dramatisation take us further?'⁷ Dreyer's film, in H.D.'s account, victimizes not only Joan but the spectator: 'We are numb and beaten.'⁸

The experience and the locations of film-viewing are central to H.D.'s film criticism, and, as in Dorothy Richardson's 'Continuous Performance' articles, spectacle and spectatorship are intertwined. H.D.'s account of *Expiation*, for example, opens not with the film itself but in the streets of Lausanne outside the film theatre. She deferred, she writes, entry into the theatre and the film narrative in order to prolong the experience of her own movement and vision as a form of film-making:

I so poignantly wanted to re-visualize those squares of doors and shutters and another and another bit of detail that of necessity was lost at first that I did illogically (I was already late) climb back. A boy ran obligingly across with a baker's flat tray-basket and someone else urged a cat to climb off the topmost row of a row of something that looked like the Concord grape baskets we used to have in Philadelphia. I ran up and down the scale, so to speak, of visual emotion, of memory, of visual sensation making that street and every one of its little graduations a sort of intellectual accordion from which to draw tunes, the sort of things one tries to put down sometimes (but never quite succeeds in doing) after a particularly poignant dream.⁹

'Real life' thus takes on a highly cinematic and filmed quality: the images (cat, boy, basket) are indeed central to the street-scenes in *Borderline*. Finally entering the cinema, 'when *Sühne* (*Expiation*) was about one third over', H.D. as film-viewer suggests that her preview (the act of imaginatively filming, of producing as film, the 'gay little street') was a necessary precondition for understanding the meanings of *Expiation* and the badlands in which it is set. There is thus both a striking contrast (the determined and determinate contrast by means of which 'montage' is composed) and a significant continuity between what is 'inside' and 'outside' the film. Narrating the film as she saw it – not from beginning to end, but from middle to middle – H.D. blurs the borderlines between film and vision. As she has her central character and autobiographical persona say in 'The Usual Star' (written in 1928; one of a group of short stories written during her period of involvement with film and with Macpherson): "'We have made this thing, as people make screen vision. We have projected London'"¹⁰ 'Life and the film must not be separated', she writes in 'Russian Films', 'people and things must pass across the screen naturally like shadows of trees on grass or passing reflections in a crowded city window'.¹¹

Given H.D.'s emphasis on 'vision' (spiritual and artistic) as cinema, it is not surprising that she became for a time so centrally involved with film-making, both in front of and behind the camera. She acted in Macpherson's *Foothills*, *Wing Beat* and *Borderline*, and her somewhat negative portrayal of Louise Brooks in 'An appreciation [of Pabst]' may have owed something to the fact that she had at one point envisaged the part of Lulu as her own. She must also have acquired significant technical expertise in film-making; according to her (unpublished) 'Autobiographical Notes', she and Bryher undertook the cutting and editing of *Borderline* because Macpherson was unwell. Yet it is also unsurprising that she used cinematography to 'go beyond' films into visionary consciousness.

H.D. became increasingly fascinated by the cinematic apparatus – particularly the projector. 'I myself have learned to use the small projector', she wrote in the late 1920s, 'and spend literally hours alone here in my apartment, making the mountains and village streets and my own acquaintances reel past me in light and light and light. ... All the light within light fascinates me.'¹² Many of her writings on cinema are celebrations of light: 'Light speaks, is pliant, is malleable. Light is our friend our god. Let us be worthy of it.'¹³ Her *Projector* poems – first published in *Close Up* – are invocations to Apollo, upon whom she bestows the godhead of cinema:¹⁴ in the *Borderline* pamphlet she writes that 'Art and life walk hand in hand ... take hands, twine in sisterly embrace before their one God, here electrically incarnated, LIGHT.'¹⁵ Nineteenth-century concepts of electrical energies, vitalism (here a belief in the capacity of electricity to restore exhausted energies), light and the power of light thus re-emerge in modernist consciousness and its celebration of optical technologies born of light.

Although H.D.'s approach to the cinematic is in many ways idiosyncratic, to be understood as an aspect of her broader concerns with language and symbol, psychoanalysis, mysticism and spiritualism, classicism and the celebration of women's beauty and power, her perspectives on film and her contributions to *Close Up* were nonetheless central to its project.¹⁶ In H.D.'s film-writing, indeed, a number of different strands of the journal's concerns are intertwined. She conjoins Macpherson's avant-gardism and aestheticism, for example, with Bryher's concerns with film as education, the democratization of minority culture and the evils of censorship, particularly as applied in Britain to Soviet cinema. H.D.'s articles on Russian cinema, in particular, should be read alongside Bryher's neglected study *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (1929); for both writers, representations of women in Soviet films are central.¹⁷

H.D.'s film-writing contains echoes of both Surrealism and Futurism, in their respective emphases on film as the art of dream-portrayal and, as in H.D.'s *Borderline* pamphlet, on the nexus of man and machine: 'Kenneth Macpherson, at work, is a hard-boiled mechanic, as if he himself were all camera, bone and sinew and steel-glint of rapacious grey eyes.'¹⁸ H.D.'s analogies in the pamphlet between gun and camera, gunner and film-maker, artistic avant-garde and military advance guard further recall Dziga Vertov's description of the film-maker's 'armed-eye', and his equations of film-making and warfare.¹⁹ In H.D.'s hands, the analogies become profoundly ambiguous, given her horror of war and of masculine militarism (she was haunted by the

experience of World War I throughout her life). They serve, nonetheless, to represent the risks taken by the experimental film-maker, by contrast with the conservative and conventional 'snipers' in the traditional arts, and to conceptualize film as a 'no-man's land', which is also (and here we find the concept of film as a 'universal language', discussed more fully below) 'an everyman's land'.

H.D. also shared Robert Herring's fascination with the cinema as magic. In his 'A New Cinema, Magic and the Avant Garde', Herring speaks of the 'magical ... reality of light and of movement', of 'the fact that light is of all things what we need most and respond to most', and of the 'magic' of the cinematic apparatus:

There is the screen, and you know the projector is at the back of you. Overhead is the beam of light which links the two. Look up. See it spread out. It is wider and thinner. Its fingers twitch, they spread in blessing or they convulse in terror. They tap you lightly or they drag you in. Magic fingers writing on the wall, and able to become at will ... a sword or a acetylene drill, a plume or waterfall. But most of all they are an Aaron's rod flowering on the wall opposite, black glass and crystal flowers ... Only now and again the rod becomes a snake, and whose films are those we know. ...

You need not be a chamber to be haunted, nor need you own the Roxy to let loose the spirit of cinema on yourself. You can hire or buy or get on the easy system, a projector. You then have, on the occasions on which it works, people walking on your own opposite wall. By moving your fingers before the beam, you interrupt them; by walking before it, your body absorbs them. You hold them, you can let them go.²⁰

Herring's models of the destruction of the 'aura' (the distance between spectator and spectacle) and of the blurring of a body/world division as the spectator inserts him or herself into the spectacle are characteristic of modernized vision and its altered perceptions of subject/object relationships. ('The film, by setting the landscape in motion and keeping us still, allows it to walk through us,' wrote Dorothy Richardson.²¹) His article imagines a future for cinema, an 'avant-garde', in which images would be rendered visible without the mediation of the screen, bodies and beings becoming solid projections of themselves. There is 'no reason', Herring writes, 'why [man] should not ultimately create himself in motion and speech, moving in the patterns of his creation'.

Herring's images in this article, his 'hieroglyphs' (rod, snake, flower), strikingly anticipate those of H.D.'s epic poem *Trilogy*.²² More broadly, his vision of humanity (re)creating itself in a form of virtual reality is echoed in H.D.'s claim, in her article 'Turksib', that in the great films – *Joyless Street*, *Jeanne Ney*, *Mother* – 'people moved, acted, suffered, we might also say for the first time, not parodies of people, at best ghosts, but spirits'. She writes (echoing Eisenstein, discussed below) of *Turksib*: "Thought," one wanted to shout aloud, "is here for the first time adequately projected," ... These are not images made artificially but thought itself, seen for the first time, in actual progression. These images are not projected after they have been manufactured."²³ For H.D., as for Herring, the power of cinema came increasingly to reside in the absence, or the fantasy of the absence, of technological mediation. It is a

fantasy usefully understood, and grounded, through Walter Benjamin's account of the paradoxical aesthetic of cinema in 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' (1936):

for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of equipment. And that is what one is entitled to ask from a work of art.²⁴

Herring's concepts of projection and of cinema as a 'writing on the wall' (recalling Lumière's name for cinema – 'cinématographe' – 'writing in movement') are central to H.D.'s project of 'cinematobiography'.²⁵ In *Tribute to Freud*, one of the accounts H.D. wrote of her 1933/4 analysis with Freud in Vienna, she represents her memories and dreams as moments of vision which are also moments in a history of pre-cinema and cinema: Aristotelian 'after-images'; an Archimedean construction of a burning-lens, as she recalls her brother using their astronomer father's magnifying glass to make fire – 'Under the glass, on the paper, a dark spot appeared; almost instantaneously the newspaper burst into flames.'²⁶ Most strikingly, there is the 'writing on the wall', her 'visionary' experience in Corfu in the early 1920s, which Freud apparently saw as the 'most dangerous symptom' and H.D. viewed as her most significant life-experience. She recounts, frame by frame, the inscription of hieroglyphs, images projected onto a wall in light not shadow. The first are like magic-lantern slides, the later images resemble the earliest films.²⁷ (I discuss the significance of H.D.'s 'hieroglyphics' below.) In a further memoir, *The Gift*, an account of her childhood, earliest memories appear as daguerreotypes, recent ones as films in colour.²⁸ As in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, autobiography is intertwined with a history of optics, the past is recalled by means of the *technologies* of memory, and, as Dianne Chisholm notes, child development is represented as technological advance.²⁹

For H.D., as for Bryher, cinema and psychoanalysis were closely identified projects, historically and conceptually, their connection cemented in the cinema of Pabst, whose *Secrets of a Soul* was supervised by the psychoanalysts Dr Hanns Sachs (who became Bryher's analyst and wrote three short articles for *Close Up*) and Dr Karl Abraham. In the spring of 1933, as *Close Up* entered its final year and Bryher began to commit her considerable energies and financial resources to helping the enemies and the victims of fascism, H.D. left for Vienna and for psychoanalysis with Freud, bearing the recommendation of Hanns Sachs.

Although H.D. does not refer to her work on and in film in the (published) accounts she wrote of her analysis, the poetics and the politics of cinema and psychoanalysis become, at times, indistinguishable. It is probable that Bryher and H.D. saw the sessions with Freud as a way of continuing the work of film, finding in dream and symbolic interpretation an equivalent to, and extension of, the 'language' of the silent cinema, which they invested with both individual and 'universal' significance. Although the demise of *Close Up* almost certainly came about as a result of Macpherson's withdrawal of interest in film, combined with the changing political

situation in Europe (Hitler became Chancellor in 1933) and the death of Bryher's father at this time, Bryher represented it in her memoir as a direct result of 'the collapse of the silent film'. The period between the late 1920s and early 1930s was, Bryher writes:

the golden age of what I call 'the art that died' because sound ruined its development. I have written already that we had to get away from the nineteenth century if we were to survive. The film was new, it had no earlier associations and it offered occasionally, in an episode or a single shot, some framework for our dreams. We felt we could state our convictions honourably in the twentieth-century form of art and it appealed to the popular internationalism of those so few years because 'the silents' offered a single language across Europe.³⁰

H.D.'s film-writings are less taken up with the issue of the transition to sound than, for example, those of Dorothy Richardson; her *Close Up* contributions ceased at the point at which the sound debate became central to the journal. A number of her discussions suggest that cinema's promise was for her that of a 'universal culture' (shared by, in her terms, 'the leaven and the lump') and that this was to an extent independent of the silent/sound divide. In the third of her 'Cinema and the Classics' articles, however, she focuses on the 'movietone', contrasting it (for the most part unfavourably) with the 'masks' of silent cinema which, like those of Greek drama, conceal, for H.D., a mystery and a vision destroyed by the 'mechanical', overtly automated technologies of 'movietone' sound.³¹ Her film aesthetics and her model of vision are predicated on symbol, gesture, 'hieroglyph', 'the things we can't say or paint', as she writes in 'The Student of Prague'.³² Her model of cinematic 'language' is closer to, in Freud's terms, 'thing-presentation' than 'word-presentation', with the work of writing-about-film acting as a form of translation from one to the other.³³ Her film-writing tends to provide not retrospective judgement on a film, but a performative running commentary on the processes of spectating which becomes a form of 'inner speech', acting as a screen onto which the film images can be projected.³⁴

The contrast between H.D.'s narrative rendering of 'inner speech' and 'social speech' is highlighted in her account of her emergence from the realms of the 'pure' dream-language of the film she has been watching into that of the debased, Babel-languages (English and American English being represented as effete and philistine respectively) of her fellow-spectators:

A small voice, a wee voice that has something in common with all these voices yet differs intrinsically from all these voices, will whisper there within me, 'You see I was right. You see it will come. In spite of "Gee" and "Doug Fairbanks" and "we must have something cheerful", it must come soon; a universal language, a universal art open alike to the pleb and the initiate.'³⁵

H.D.'s and Bryher's accounts of the 'universal language' of film are also closely echoed in H.D.'s writings on psychoanalysis, and, more specifically, in her gloss on Freudian dream-interpretation in *Tribute to Freud*:

The picture-writing, the hieroglyph of the dream, was the common property of the whole race; in the dream, man, as at the beginning of time, spoke a universal language, and man, meeting in the universal understanding of the unconscious or the subconscious, would forgo barriers of time and space, and man, understanding man, would save mankind.³⁶

In *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. refers to the universal language of the dream as a hieroglyph. Her lifelong fascination with hieroglyphics was further stimulated by the writings of both Freud and Eisenstein, a conjuncture of poetics, politics, psychoanalysis (particularly Freud's theories of symbolization and of the 'dream-work') and film aesthetics which is central to subsequent developments in film theory. These areas are themselves conjoined by a 'modernist' fascination with the varying relations and interactions between different entities, temporalities, images and concepts, and the exploration of an art and a politics (both left and right) of juxtaposition, palimpsestic superimposition, simultaneity, collision, dialectic.

While Ezra Pound (with whom H.D. was for a time closely linked)³⁷ pursued, in Peter Nicholls's words, 'the spectre of the truly modern by the circuitous route of early Japanese theatre',³⁸ Eisenstein found in Japanese hieroglyphs 'the acme of *montage thinking*'. The combination of two hieroglyphs

corresponds to a *concept*. From separate hieroglyphs has been fused – the ideogram. By the combination of two 'depictables' is achieved the representation of something that is graphically undepictable. ... It is exactly what we do in cinema, combining shots that are *depictive*, single in meaning, neutral in content – into *intellectual* contexts and series.³⁹

Eisenstein's account of 'intellectual montage' as thought made visible was clearly a crucial influence on H.D.'s film-writings and on her concept of 'thought projection' more generally. His model of the ideogram, and of the film frame as a 'multiple-meaning *ideogram*' in his 'The Fourth Dimension of the Kino', further recalls Freud's accounts of the workings of picture-language in the dream, of the 'rebus' composed of multiple scripts and image-systems.⁴⁰ And for H.D., as Chisholm notes, the fourth dimension of the cinematograph becomes the 'living hieroglyph of the unconscious, which some "shock" of memory can re-present and decode'.⁴¹ In *Tribute to Freud* H.D. locates the 'fourth dimension' in the fourth 'wall' of Freud's room (the wall with the double doors leading to the room beyond): 'The room beyond may appear very dark or there may be broken light and shadow.'⁴²

The broader context for H.D.'s conceptualizations of film is, undoubtedly, the concept and dream of a 'universal language' which began to flourish in the seventeenth century, was revived in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and subsequently became closely linked with the image of (silent) film as a form of hieroglyphics, a thinking in pictures rather than words. Fuelled by the discoveries and translations of Egyptologists, most notably of the Rosetta stone, in the early to mid-nineteenth century (and reawakened by the opening of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922),⁴³ a model of hieroglyphic language had taken root in North American literary culture, most influentially, as John T. Irwin has shown of the nineteenth century, in

the work of the 'transcendentalists' Emerson and Thoreau, and in Poe, Hawthorne, Melville and Whitman.⁴⁴

The dream of recapturing a prelapsarian, universal, pictographic language fed directly into early film aesthetics. Its chief North American exponent was the poet and critic Vachel Lindsay, author of the first book of film theory, *The Art of the Moving Picture*, published in 1915.⁴⁵ Here, as in his subsequent writings on cinema, *The Progress and Poetry of the Movies*, and in his poetry, Lindsay spelled out his vision of modern America (with its advertisements, billboards, newspaper photographs, sign-writings) as 'a hieroglyphic civilization far nearer to Egypt than to England'.⁴⁶ In *The Art of the Moving Picture*, in which he painstakingly analyses a set of Egyptian hieroglyphs, their Roman letter equivalents and their equivalents in 'the moving-picture alphabet',⁴⁷ Lindsay writes:

Because ten million people daily enter into the cave, something akin to Egyptian wizardry, certain national rituals, will be born. By studying the matter of being an Egyptian priest for a little while, the author-producer may learn in the end how best to express and satisfy the spirit hungers that are peculiarly American. It is sometimes out of the oldest dream that the youngest vision is born.⁴⁸

The expatriate, European-identified, anti-Hollywood, avant-garde H.D.'s models of 'universal culture' may seem remote from Lindsay's concerns with 'our America of Tomorrow', just as her habitual emphasis on hieroglyphic language as a coded, secret knowledge is apparently at odds with a model of hieroglyphics as, in Nick Browne's words, 'a mode of reading that bypasses critical judgement'.⁴⁹ There are, nonetheless, interesting links between these two poets and writers on film, not least their Swedenborgian perceptions of the power of 'light' and of the world as a 'grammar of hieroglyphs'.⁵⁰ The issue is less, however, the echoes of Lindsay's film-writing in H.D.'s. It is rather their shared, as well as disparate, relationships to the complex representations of film culture and language in the early twentieth century, and to the national, racial, democratic and commercial ideologies which these articulated – which could be gathered under, in Miriam Hansen's phrase, the 'ambiguous celebration of film as a new universal language, as a historically unique chance to "repair the ruins of Babel"'.⁵¹

In her brilliant reading of D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (a film which represents history, culture and 'race' through writing-systems, inscriptions, Babel-languages, 'writings on the wall'), in the context of early cinema and the public sphere, Hansen states: 'If *Intolerance* is proposing to recover a unity of popular and high art, it does so not by replacing writing with a superior language of visual presence, but by retrieving the common roots of both film and literature in the hieroglyphic tradition.'⁵² This also works well as a way into H.D.'s conceptual strategies. It allows us to move beyond the opposition H.D. offers in *Tribute to Freud* – the (non-)choice between 'the writing on the wall' she saw in Corfu as 'symptom or inspiration'⁵³ – and to understand her focus on inscriptions and hieroglyphs as a form of cultural theorizing, whose roots may well lie in the Transcendentalist tradition of 'American hieroglyphs' and its understanding of hieroglyphics as both esoteric script and populist communication.

Yet the 'writing on the wall' is also an understanding that the writing was indeed on the wall in Europe between the wars. In *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. powerfully represents the rise of fascism in the Vienna of the early 1930s by means of its iconography and inscriptions. First there were 'occasional coquettish, confetti-like showers from the air, gilded paper swastikas and narrow strips of printed paper like the ones we pulled out of our Christmas bon-bons'. Then there were swastikas on the Berggasse (the street on which Freud's apartment was located), 'as if they had been chalked on the pavement especially for my benefit' and seemingly leading to Freud's door: 'I did not look any further. No one brushed these swastikas out. It is not so easy to scrub death-head chalkmarks from a pavement.'⁵⁴

As she wrote in *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. was impelled towards analysis by the traumas of World War I and fear of the war to come. Throughout her writings on film we find not only claims for the new art of the cinema as a 'universal' art and the dream of a mass audience for minority or avant-garde culture, but an insistence on the role of film in bridging national differences or, at least, in allowing for a clear, undistorted perception of the terms of such differences. Her film-writings indicate the depth and strength of the political as well as the aesthetic aspirations for cinema between the wars:

For the world of the film to-day (there is no getting away from it) is no longer the world of the film, it is *the* world. It is only those who are indifferent to the world itself and its fate, who can afford to be indifferent to the fate of the film industry and the fate of the film art. ... There has never been, perhaps since the days of the Italian Renaissance, so great a 'stirring' in the mind and soul of the world consciousness.⁵⁵

THE CINEMA AND THE CLASSICS

I

BEAUTY

I suppose we might begin rhetorically by asking, what is the cinema, what are the classics? For I don't in my heart believe one out of ten of us highbrow intellectuals, Golders Greenites, Chautauqua lecturers, knows the least little bit about either. Classics. Cinema. The word cinema (or movies) would bring to nine out of ten of us a memory of crowds and crowds and saccharine music and longdrawn out embraces and the artificially enhanced thud-offs of galloping bronchoes. What would be our word-reaction to Classics? What to Cinema? Take Cinema to begin with, (cinema = movies), boredom, tedium, suffocation, pink lemonade, saw-dust even: old reactions connected with cheap circuses, crowds and crowds and crowds and illiteracy and more crowds and breathless suffocation and (if 'we' the editorial 'us' is an American) peanut shells and grit and perhaps a sudden collapse of jerry-built scaffoldings. Danger somewhere anyhow. Danger to the physical safety, danger to the moral safety, a shivering away as when 'politics' or 'graft' is mentioned, a great thing that must be accepted (like the pre-cinema days circus) with abashed guilt, sneaked to at least intellectually. The cinema or the movies is to the vast horde of the fair-to-middling intellectuals, a Juggernaut crushing out mind and perception in one vast orgy of the senses.

So much for the cinema. (Our 'classic' word-reaction will come along in due course.) I speak here, when I would appear ironical, of the fair-to-middling intellectual, not of the fortunately vast-increasing, valiant, little army of the advance guard or the franc-tireur of the arts, in whose hands mercifully since the days of the stone-writers, the arts really rested. The little leaven. But the leaven, turning in the lump, sometimes takes it into its microscopic mind to wonder what the lump is about and why can't the lump, for its own good, for its own happiness, for its own (to use the word goodness in its Hellenic sense) *beauty*, be leavened just a little quicker? The leaven, regarding the lump, is sometimes curious as to the lump's point of view, for all the lump itself so grandiloquently ignores it, the microscopic leaven. And so with me or editorially 'us' at just this moment. Wedged securely in the lump (we won't class ourselves as sniffingly above it), we want to prod our little microbe way into its understanding. Thereby having the thrill of our lives, getting an immense kick out of trying to see what it is up to, what I am up against, what we all, franc-tireurs, have to deal with.

First as I say, amazing prejudice. The movies, the cinema, the pictures. Prejudice has sprouted, a rank weed, where the growth of wheat is thickest. In other words, films that blossom here in Europe (perhaps a frail, little, appreciated flower) are swiftly cut and grafted in America into a more sturdy, respectable rootstock. Take 'Vaudeville',

for example, a film that I didn't particularly revel in, yet must appreciate, Zolaesque realism which succeeded admirably in its medium; was stripped (by this gigantic Cyclops, the American censor) of its one bloom. The stem is valuable, is transplanted, but the spirit, the flower so to speak of 'Vaudeville' (we called it here 'Variété'), the thing holding its created centre, its (as it happens) Zolaesque sincerity, is carefully abstracted. A reel or in some cases an artist or a producer, is carefully gelded before being given free run of the public. The lump heaving under its own lumpishness is perforce content, is perforce ignorant, is perforce so sated with mechanical efficiency, with whirl and thud of various hypnotic appliances, that it doesn't know what it is missing. The lump doesn't know that it has been deprived of beauty, of the flower of some producer's wit and inspiration. The lump is hypnotized by the thud-thud of constant repetition until it begins to believe, like the African tribesman, that the thump-thump of its medicine man's formula is the only formula, that his medicine man is the only medicine man, that his god, his totem is (save for some neighbouring flat-faced almost similar effigies) the only totem. America accepts totems, not because the crowd wants totems, but because totems have so long been imposed on him, on it, on the race consciousness that it or him or the race consciousness is becoming hypnotized, is in danger of some race fixation; he or it or the race consciousness is so duped by mechanical efficiency and saccharine dramatic mediocrity that he or it doesn't in the least know, in fact would be incapable (if he did know) of saying what he does want.

He learns that there is a new European importation for instance of a 'star'; this importation being thudded into his senses for some months beforehand, his mind is made up for him; she is beautiful. We take that for granted. There I agree, the leaven and the lump are in this at one. The lump really wants beauty or this totem of beauty would not be set up by its astute leaders. Beauty. She is beautiful. This time 'she' is a northern girl, a 'nordic', another word they fall for. A Nordic beauty has been acclaimed and we all want to see her. I am grateful (it was my privilege) that I, for one, saw this grave, sweet creature before America claimed her. I saw her, as I see most of my pictures, more or less by accident. At least the divine Chance or classic Fortune that more or less guides all of us, led me one day to worship. I, like the Lump, am drawn by this slogan, 'Beauty', though this particular enchantress was not particularly head-lined on the provincial bill-boards. In fact, the whole cast was modestly set forth in small type along with the producer and I thought 'well it looks harmless anyhow' and it was raining and so in Montreux, Switzerland, I happened (as it happened) to see my first real revelation of the real art of the cinema.

I am led a little afield in trying to realize in retrospect the vast deflowering that took place in at least one rare artist. I dare say it is a common occurrence but in this particular case particularly devastating. I saw 'Joyless Street' ('Die Freudlose Gasse') in Montreux, some two or three years ago when it was first 'released' from Germany to take its tottering frail way across Europe towards Paris, where it was half-heartedly received, to London, where it was privately viewed by screen enthusiasts, only last winter, at one of those admirable Sunday afternoon performances of the London Film Society. In the meantime, I had seen Greta Garbo, deflowered, deracinated, devitalized, more than that, actively and acutely distorted by an odd unbelievable parody of life, of beauty, we were efficiently offered (was it at the Capitol about a year ago?) 'The Torrent'.

Greta Garbo in Montreux, Switzerland, trailing with frail, very young feet through perhaps the most astonishingly consistently lovely film I have ever seen ('Joyless Street') could not be, but by some fluke of evil magic, the same creature I saw, with sewed-in, black lashes, with waist-lined, svelte, obvious contours, with gowns and gowns, all of them almost (by some anachronism) trailing on the floor, with black-dyed wig, obscuring her own nordic nimbus, in the later a 'Torrent'. The Censor, this magnificent ogre, had seen fit to devitalize this Nordic flower, to graft upon the stem of a living, wild camellia (if we may be fanciful for a moment) the most blatant of obvious, crepe, tissue-paper orchids. A beauty, it is evident, from the Totem's stand-point, must be a vamp, an evil woman, and an evil woman, in spite of all or any observation to the contrary, must be black-eyed, must be dark even if it is a nordic ice-flower and Lya de Puttiesque. Beauty is what the Lump and the Leaven alike demand. So 'beauty, here it is,' says the Ogre. The Ogre knows that the world will not be sustained, will not exist without that classic, ancient Beauty. Beauty and Goodness, I must again reiterate, to the Greek, meant one thing. To Kalon, the beautiful, the good. Kalon, the mob must, in spite of its highbrow detractors, have. The Ogre knows enough to know that. But he paints the lily, offers a Nice-carnival, frilled, tissue-paper rose in place of a wild-briar.

Beauty was made to endure, in men, in flowers, in hearts, in spirits, in minds. That flame, in spite of the highbrow detractors, exists at the very centre, the very heart of the multitude. It is the business of the Ogre, the Censor, to offer it a serpent for an egg, a stone for bread. It is the duty of every sincere intellectual to work for the better understanding of the cinema, for the clearing of the ground, for the rescuing of this superb art, from its hide-bound convention. Perseus, in other words, and the chained Virgin. Saint George in other words, and the Totem dragon. Anyhow it is up to us, as quickly as we can, to rescue this captured Innocent (for the moment embodied in this Greta Garbo) taking frail and tortuous veils of light and shadow, wandering in photogenetic guise that Leonardo would have marvelled at and Tintoretto radiantly acclaimed. Greta Garbo, as I first saw her, gave me a clue, a new angle, and a new sense of elation. This is beauty, and this is a beautiful and young woman not exaggerated in any particular, stepping, frail yet secure across a wasted city. Post-war Vienna really wrung our hearts that time; the cheap, later clap-trap of starving stage Vienna had not yet blighted and blunted our sense of proportion and reality. Before our eyes, the city was unfolded, like some blighted flower, like some modernized epic of Troy town is down, like some mournful and pitiful Babylon is fallen, is fallen. The true note was struck, the first post-war touch of authentic pathos, not over-done, not over-exaggerated, a net of finely spun tragedy, pathos so fine and so intolerable that after all, we can't wonder that the flagrant, Parisian, commercial 'buyers' must disdain it. London could not (being governed also by a brother to our American Cyclops) allow this performance to be broadcast. War and war and war. Helen who ruined Troy seems to have taken shape, but this time it is Troy by some fantastic readjustment who is about to ruin Helen. Little Miss Garbo (I think of her as little; I believe from the columns of 'gossip' I read dished up in various Hollywood camera news productions that 'Greta Garbo is taller than John Gilbert', a thing they seem in some subtle way to have, among many other things, against her) brought into her performance of the professor's elder, little daughter in 'Joyless Street', something of a quality that I can't

for the life of me label otherwise than classic. As long as beauty is classic, so long beauty on the screen, presented with candour and true acumen, must take its place with the greatest master-pieces of the renaissance and of antiquity.

For there is no getting over this astonishing and indubitable fact. Beauty as it has existed in pre-Periclean Athens, in the islands of the Cyclades, in the temple of Karnak, in the frescoes of Simone Martini and the etchings of Albrecht Dürer still does find expression, still does wander veiled as with dawn, still does wait for a renaissance to hail her. Miss Garbo is a symbol, was, I should say, a symbol as I saw her in 'Joyless Street'. She may again become some such glorified embodiment as flung itself in its youth and its strange, statuesque abandonment across the wretched divan of Madame whatever-was-her-name's evil house. Beauty, the youth and charm, by just a fluke, wasn't tarnished in that atmosphere. The odd thing was that this story of poverty and fervid business speculation and the lady of the world and her lovers and her pearls and the young financier and their meeting in this ill-flavoured establishment and the secret murder, wasn't commonplace, wasn't trivial, partook of the most ethereal overtones of subtlety. Tragedy rang like little bells, fairy bells almost. Tragedy didn't dare, those days, to stalk openly in its ornate purple. Not in Europe, not in London or Paris or Vienna. Murder and pearls and speculation seemed perilously a part of life in those days. Tragedy was a muse whose glory was for the moment over-shadowed with an almost mystical, hardly to be expressed quality that one might possibly define as pathos. Beauty and the warrior were at rest. For the rest of us in London and Paris and Vienna, there was something different, something too subtle to be called disintegration or dissociation, but a state in which the soul and body didn't seem on good terms. Hardly on speaking terms. So it is that this fine little Greta Garbo with her youth, her purity, her straight brows and her unqualified distinction found a role to fit her. She had, it is true, appeared, I am told, creditably in other films; it was my good fortune to meet her first in this 'Joyless Street' or, as it was billed in our lake Geneva small-town, 'La Petite Rue Sans Joie'. The theatre, I need hardly say, was half empty. The performance began with a street (will I ever forget it) and the sombre plodding limp of a one-legged, old ruffian. No appeal to pity, to beauty, the distinguished mind that conceived this opening said simply, this is it, this is us, no glory, no pathos, no glamour. Just a long, Freudian, tunnel-like, dark street. Nothing within sight, nothing to dream of or ponder on but ... the butcher's shop with its attendant, terrible, waiting line of frenzied women.

Life is getting something to eat said the presenter of this 'Petite Rue Sans Joie'. Getting it somehow, anyhow. Beauty itself must come to me, says La Petite Rue Sans Joie and one after another through sheer boredom with starvation, the 'girls' of the neighbourhood, the banal, the merely pretty, the sometimes ambitious, and the sheerly slovenly are drawn within the portals of la Petite Rue. For in the little street there is a shop that rivals even the butcher's for gaiety and distraction. It is neatly disguised, yet thinly. Clothes are bought and sold by a certain suave Madame (the performance of this entrepreneuse whose name I have forgotten, was amazing) and the little bigger of the little daughters of the proud, utterly destitute, brilliant, youngish, middle-aged professor strolls from time to time discreetly to its portal. Madame who is so suave, so kind (will I ever forget the subtlety of her make up, that suggested shadow of a mustache across her sly upper lip) one day offers the little Mademoiselle a fur coat to wear home,

she needn't pay for it yet, just wear it and keep warm, things are so hard, madame is so suave, so genuinely sympathetic. The little lady loses her job through the insidious gift. A fur coat. Everyone knows what that means in post-war Vienna. The Manager of the office is pleased, didn't know this wild-flower was a game one. He summons her, offers a rise in salary, the usual denouement, of course, she being she, can't possibly accept it. La Petite Rue Sans Joie seems perilously near to swallowing our Beauty. Helen walking scatheless among execrating warriors, the plague, distress, and famine is in this child's icy, mermaid-like integrity. Her purity shines like an enchanter's crown. We *know* nothing can happen to her, yet do we? Things happen, we ourselves have known them to happen ... one by one, our audience (already meagre) has risen, has blatantly stamped downstairs. I hear words, whispers, English. 'A thing like *this* ... filthy ... no one but a *foreigner* would dare present it.' La Petite Rue Sans Joie was a real, little street. It was a little war-street, a little, post-war street, therefore our little picture palace in our comparatively broad-minded Lake Geneva town, is empty. People won't, they dare not face reality.

And beauty, among other things, is reality, and beauty once in so many hundred years, raises a wan head, suddenly decides to avenge itself for all the slights that it has negligently accepted, sometimes through weariness, sometimes through sheer omnipotence, sometimes through cynicism or through boredom. Simonetta, the famous Medician Venus (though I don't care for her), one and one and one, all stand as witnesses that once in so often, beauty herself, Helen above Troy, rises triumphant and denounces the world for a season and then retires, spins a little web of illusion and shuffles off to forget men and their stale formulas of existence. Well beauty has been slurred over and laughed at and forgotten. But Helen of Troy didn't always stay at home with Menelaus. Beauty has been recognised and for that reason (as the world will not face reality and the ogre, the Censor, this Polyphemus knows well enough that beauty is a danger), Miss Garbo has been trained, and that with astonishing efficiency, to sway forward and backward in long skirts with pseudo-Lillian Gish affectation, to pose with a distinct, parrot-like flare for the Gloria Swansonesque. Her wigs, her eye-lashes have all but eclipsed our mermaid's straight stare, her odd, magic quality of almost clairvoyant intensity. She simpers. Something has been imposed, a blatant, tinsel and paper-flowers and paste-jewel exterior, yet it doesn't quite dominate this nordic ice-flower. Beauty brings a curse, a blessing, a responsibility. Is that why your Ogre, the Censor, is so intent on disguising it, on dishing it up as vamp charm, as stale, Nice-carnival beauty-as-we-get-it-in-a-beauty-contest? Greta Garbo remains Greta Garbo. Let us hope she takes it into her stupid, magic head to rise and rend those who have so defamed her. Anyhow for the present, let us be thankful that she, momentarily at least, touched the screen with her purity and glamour. The screen has been touched by beauty, and the screen, in spite of all the totems, must finally respond, Polyphemus of our latest day, to the mermaid enchantment.

THE CINEMA AND THE CLASSICS

II

RESTRAINT

We need, I think, next more precision, more 'restraint' in the presentation of classic themes. Such films as *Quo Vadis* or *Theodora* are excellent in their milieu and since dealing with turbulent and late periods, they are of necessity, ornate, over-crowded, over-detailed and confused. However, even this is a moot point. *Helen of Troy* was excellent in particulars. But to present the 'classic' it is not necessary to build up paste board palaces, the whole of Troy, the entire over-whelming of a battle fleet. The 'classic' as realism could be better portrayed by the simplest of expedients. A pointed trireme prow nosing side ways into empty space, the edge of a quay, blocks of solid masonry, squares and geometric design would simplify at the same time emphasize the pure classic note. There is already a stamp, a tradition. A room, in a pseudo-classic film, as a rule, reaches on and on, through doors and door-ways. The *Last Days of Pompeii* was in this particular the most excruciating. A Greek interior should be simple, cold and chaste, with one blocked in door-way, not a vista of ten; with one single fountain jet, not an elaboration of Jean Bologniaesque detail. Again with the costume. We need simple beautiful line, bodies almost naked as in the German production *Force and Beauty*. This experiment failed, of course, grievously in parts as all really broad innovations are bound to do, but there was one short excerpt of life as it should be, German classic that became almost Greek classic. Young men swing through a door way, this time consistently weather worn (why must these 'classic' interiors all smell of varnish?) across (this was excellent) strewn earth and sand down to an open circus-like palestra. In the distance there were figures wrestling in pure vase-gesture, black-figure vase pre-fifth century gesture. The men swaying forward walked as soldiers not as ballet dancers. They did not mince. There was also one exquisite naked silhouette of a woman, the famous judgement of Paris tableau. The contour of this film Aphrodite was beautiful and the setting adequate, but again simplification would have rammed in the really exquisite and inspired creation. The 'classic' as seen on the screen suggests (with rare and inspired exceptions) a rather rowdy Chelsea arts ball rather than a pre-fifth or fifth century piece of sculpture or clean line drawing. We want to remove a lot of trash, wigs in particular, Nero's wig, the blond Mary Pickford curls of the blind Nydia in Pompeii, hair piled and curled and peaked and frizzed like old photographs of our 1880 great aunts. Sweep away the extraneous.

Now this is not so difficult as it might seem. According to preconceived cinema rote (cinema tradition is mercifully young enough to be modified, to be utterly re-inspired) a classic 'set' is built up, is constructed and before it, classic figures, even the most

successful, are apt to be blurred or cheapened. Expense has to be considered and this is where the young innovator has his big chance. The true classic is not a thing of built up walls, any more than the true Elizabethan gains by elaborate stage scenery and pasteboard perspective. Streets and by-ways should be on one plane, we should be somewhere, not all over the place. We should be *somewhere* with our minds, lines should radiate as toward a centre not out and away from the central point of interest, whether that central point is an altar, a shop, a street corner, a window or a person. We should *be* somewhere, our getting on somewhere else will come in due course. The days of paste-board Rialtos is, or should be, over in the art of the stage as well as in the more subtle, though for the moment less traditionally evolved, art of the cinema. There is where our hope lies. It isn't too late to get down to dots, to begin at the beginning, to, if necessary, sweep away what has already been over-elaborated and lay fresh altar blocks. As I say our least set should have its focus of simplicity, its as it were altar block, should mean something. Should *be* somewhere. This 'somewhere' is easy to accomplish, a blank drop scene, a room, such as we live in to-day, bare of accessories. A bare square room is to-day what it was in Pompeii, what it more or less was in Athens, in Syracuse. A garden remains a garden and a rosebush a rose-bush. Laurel trees still exist outside suburbia and a classic laurel grove for instance is easy to represent; one branch, placed against a soft back drop, or against a wall of any empty room, with suitable cross-effect of shadow. The fascinating question of light alone could occupy one for ever; this edge of a leaf and this edge of a leaf; the naturalistic and the sheer artificial must merge, melt and meet. The pure classic does not depend for effect for instance, on a whole, a part has always been important, chiselling and cutting, shaping and revising. A laurel grove rises in one branch set against a plain room wall, and a figure without exaggerated, uncouth drapery becomes Helen or Andromeda or Iphigeneia [Iphigenia] more swiftly, more poignantly against just such a wall, obtainable by anyone, anywhere, than in some enormous rococo and expensive 'set' built up by the 'classicists' of Hollywood who spread Nero's banquet table with Venetian glass and put the quattrocento Romola to sleep (or to dine) in a more or less eighteenth century milieu. Not that I have any quarrel with any of the 'set' makers, with scene shifters or the general miracle-workers of such elaborate and startling effects as, for instance, the flight of the Children of Israel and the Pharaoh's chariots. Pharaoh's chariots, Pharaoh's horses were excellent, but sand and horses and excellently trained circus-riders have their place. I am concerned here chiefly with attempts at more subtle simple effects; they so often fail for lack of some precise and definite clear intellect at the back of the whole, one centralizing focus of thought cutting and pruning the too extraneous underbrush of tangled detail. Someone should slash and cut. Ben Hur drove his chariot with decorum and with fervour but ... when I would begin to criticize I am lost myself in a tangle of exciting detail, am myself so startled and amazed by certain swiftness, certain effects of inevitable precise mass movement (such as, in another instance, the crowd again crossing sand in Babylonian *Intolerance*) that I lose my own clue, become sated and lost and tired. Isn't that the danger? Satiety? Having become sated with the grandiose, can't someone with exquisite taste and full professional share of technical ability light our souls with enthusiasm over, as I have said, one laurel branch, one figure sitting sideways, one gesture (not too frigid and not too stagily static) as for example toward

a waiting enemy? Iphigenia pleading for her life against one rough edge of built-up altar, with severe wall again, and possibly (to balance the edge of altar) the slim, updarting geometric line of half an Ionic (or, correct me, Doric?) pillar. Sand and rock and sea. These are the Greek equivalent for the Roman mass of soldiery, the Prætorian formations and the vast thronging of the colosseum. You and you and you can cause Odysseus with one broken oar to depict his woefulness. You can bring Calypso [Calypso] back with violet tufts, herself placed perhaps against one single heavy rock, a thread of violets perhaps in her tight bound hair. Don't above all, let hair stream in the wind as happened (perhaps not without a certain charm) in *Helen Of Troy*. Keep slightly natural, naturalistic but formalised. If the hair must hang, it must hang heavy, like gold threads in a Crivelli altar piece, like the carved Ionic maidens of the Acropolis Museum, like the Delphic Charioteer himself, should he unloose his head-band.

Or if madness is indicated, make it a psychic manifestation done with intricate but simple fade-outs or superimposed impressions. Here the camera has it over all other mediums. Success is obtainable in representation of psychic phenomena, can be obtained, has, in certain instances, been. The pseudo-classic madness of Victor Varconi in *The Last Days of Pompeii* was banality incarnate. But, turning from madness to vision, not only can we recall men and women of antiquity, but the gods themselves. Hermes, indicated in faint light, may step forward, outlined in semi-obscurity, or simply dazzling the whole picture in a blaze of splendour. Helios may stand simply and restrained with uplifted arm. And here again no suggestion, I beg you, of drapery. If he must stand sideways let him do so, but for heaven's sake don't deface the image of god with a dish-clout! Tear away hideousness from the human form, from the human mind and from the human spirit. A perfect medium has at last been granted us. Let us be worthy of it.

You and I have got to work. We have got to begin to care and to care and to care. Man has perfected a means of artistic expression, that, I assure you, would have made Phidias turn in his grave (if he had a grave) with envy. Light speaks, is pliant, is malleable. Light is our friend and our god. Let us be worthy of it. Do not let us defame light, use and waste brilliant possibilities, elaborate material, making light a slave and a commonplace mountebank. Light has bounced on broncos, has levelled shafts at iron Indians, has burst into barricades, and has minced in crinolines long enough for one generation.

Elaborate experiment – *that* was well enough – and waste and waste and waste must inevitably precede perfection of any medium. But don't let's put up with too much of it. Here is our medium, as I say here is the thing that the Elusinians would have been glad of; a subtle device for portraying of the miraculous. Miracles and godhead are *not* out of place, are not awkward on the screen. A wand may (and does) waft us to fabulous lands, and beauty can and must redeem us.

But it must be a chaste goddess that we worship and a young goddess, and perhaps a little a ridiculous goddess. We must expect to be laughed at, must expect detractors and defamers as Athene must expect them if she strolled full armed or without arms down the Tottenham Court Road. We don't want exaggeration certainly, but modernity in dress, in thought, true modernity approaches more and more to classic standards. How many perfectly exquisite studies can be made of youth, sans drapery, or even with

slight modifications (if your youth happens to be a maiden) of its last party frock. A judicious arrangement of a simple headband, for example, may transform Mary Jones into an Isthmian Calliope or young Tom Smith into Thessalian Diomed.

This is partly what I mean by 'restraint', an artistic restraint that does not pre-visualise a Helen, an Andromeda, an Iphegenia, a Diomed, or a young Hercules as antiquated stage or ballet types done up in henna-ed wigs. Types approaching the most perfect of the pre-fifth century vase paintings and the most luminous of pre-Periclean sculpture are to be found, I am certain, among the unexploited. I have no quarrel with the professional as professional but with the professional in one art pretending to know everything about another art of whose very existence he is ignorant. Scholars should be brought in on this. Walls should arise if, for example, Troy-walls must arise, that are either exact in technical detail or else that are suggested merely, as I have earlier indicated by a few great stones. And so on. It is preconceived ideas that destroy all approach to real illumination. *What* do you know of beauty, of life, of reality should be the first questions that a manager or producer asks his scenic artist. Not what was your job in New York, Chicago, Brixton, or Hollywood. So with the costumier. Begin at the beginning. Don't begin in the muddled middle. Our classic ladies of the screen are so often reminiscent of the spirit that led the Bernhardts and the Duses of the period to appear in crinoline when playing Phædra. We want to do away with the crinolined Phædras of this latter day and get back to stark reality.

That is where the beauty of the human body as the human body should have some sort of innings, but will it? Simplicity, restraint, formalisation are all Greek attributes, Hellenic restraint and Hellenic naturalisation that never saw the human body frankly other than the body of its deity. God made man, we are taught from our earliest days, in his own image. Well, let's up then and teach our teachers, our great-aunts who heard us our catechism that we *do* believe in God and do believe in beauty. Get away from all this broncho-chest-muscle business. Why can't some girl or boy just walk on, in a fleecy peplum if you want but somehow just *be* the thing, do the thing with no exaggeration of sentiment such as we were treated to by Diotima in that nightmare (to me) *Heilegeberge (Wrath Of The Gods)*. Mountains are classic, the sea, sand, and the really charming grace and agility of Tom Jones when he leaps on a crowded City bus. Haven't you yourself noticed it? Untrained yet unsullied movement should merge with professional power and tact. The screen is the medium par excellence of movement – of trees, of water, of people, of bird wings. Flowers open by magic and magic spreads cloud forms, all in themselves 'classic'. Though, on the other hand, the most ornate back parlour crowded with gimcracks can represent 'restraint' if the mind presenting it has its own intense restrained unit of idea. Take *Greed* as an example of the classic mind at work upon ornate exaggeration of detail in a sordid modern tenement atmosphere.

Here is my point and my contradiction; the over elaborate tenement detail of *Greed* struck a far more classic note than those sentimental German slow-ups of Diotima doing bare-foot dancing on an uncomfortable slab of sea rock. The classic then, coming down to dots, is a point of view and 'restraint' is a classic virtue which means simply tact and intuition and a sense of the rightness and the fitness of things in their inter-relation. Diotima dancing on the mountains was so simply silly. With all its over

elaborate detail, the dramatization of the impulse that led an illiterate, self-educated quack dentist to die in a desert with vultures hovering over his gold-laden, dying mule was Aescyulean. It is obvious that certain self-conscious portraits of semi-naked studies must be fore-ordained banality. While perhaps some little unexpected effect of a bare arm lifted might bring back (as it does sometimes in a theatre) all of antiquity. We must work self-consciously and at the same time leave vast areas of mind and spirit free, open to idea, to illumination. I feel (though up to the present only in part successful) the only reality of this sort has come from Germany. The young men and the Paris tableau of the first instance in the *Force and Beauty* (Kraft und Schönheit) that I have mentioned and another 'throned Cytherian'; that proud simple figure curled this time on a great shell in the prologue of *Helen of Troy*. Could anything be more true, more real, more unsullied, more unstudied yet more exactly artificial, in the sense of art made reality? Aphrogenia. She is there always in my mind as an example of what art can do, what can be done and what must be done. Beauty restrained and chaste, with the over-weaving of semi-phosphorescent light, in a few tense moments showed that the screen can rise to the ecstatic level of the poetic and religious ideals of pure Sophoclean formula.

Vol. I, no. 5

November 1927

THE CINEMA AND THE CLASSICS

III

THE MASK AND THE MOVIE-TONE

The problem arises (it has been dogging us for some time) is the good old-fashioned conventionalised cinema product a more vivid, a more vital, altogether in many ways a more inspiring production than his suave and sometimes over-subtilised offspring? Our hero with sombrero, our heroine with exactly set coiffure, each in himself, in herself a mask of himself or herself, one with sleek dutch-doll painted in black cap of piquante elf like mahogany coloured hair, another with radiant curls, so many dolls, are treasures – boy dolls in sombreros – are they to be discarded, are we going to be asked to discard them for another set of boxes, containing such intricate machinery, such suave sophistication of life that we wonder if we really want them? Do we want little ivory balls for instance, pretty as they are, fitting into ivory balls, and all the intricate paraphernalia of meccano or jigsaw puzzle to tax our little minds to breaking? Don't we really want what we know, what we see, what intellectually we can aptly 'play' with? Don't we? Or do we? I mean do we really want to give up curls and painted-in dutch-doll fringes, and beautifully outlined eyes and eyelashes and doll-stuffed bodies (doing for instance

trapeze turns just like real circus people) for something perhaps 'better'? Do we really want to discard our little stage sets and all the appliances that we have grown so used to for something more like 'real' life? Well, do we or don't we? Please answer me. I am at my wits' end. Do we or don't we want to scrap our old dolls? The problem reasserted itself with renewed force at a New Gallery demonstration of the Movietone.

Here we have our little people. Here comes our heroine. Truly it is not the heroine exactly of our most most vapid romances, of our most, most old box of dolls and paper-dolls but it is the sort of toy that we are used to, a doll, a better doll, a more highly specialised evolved creation but for all that a doll (Raquel Meller) steps forward. It bows, it smiles, it is guaranteed to perform tricks that will shame our nursery favourites *but do we want it?*

The doll in question, a Spanish doll this time, done up in Castilian [Castilian] embroidery, not over exaggerated with suitable *décor* of operatic street scene and so on, steps out smiles pathetically, tragically, or with requisite pathos, familiar gestures but somehow sensitized, really our old bag of tricks. And then wonder of wonders, the doll actually lifts its eyes, it breathes it speaks – it *speaks*. This is no mechanical voice off, it is the vision itself, the screen image actually singing with accuracy and acumen, with clear voice and beautiful intonation, singing and moving, moving and singing, voice accurately registering the slightest change of expression (Raquel Meller with her *Flor del Mar* and *La Tarde del Corpus*) each tiny fall and lift of note following raised eyebrow or curl of lip or dejection of drooping shoulder. Voice follows face, face follows voice, face and voice with all their subtle blending are accurately and mechanically welded. They are *welded* – that is the catch. The catch is that the excellent actress with all her beauty and her finished acting had a voice as beautifully finished as her screen image but it was (wasn't it?) *welded* to that image. Her voice and herself moving with so finished artistry were welded not (and this seemed some odd catastrophe) *wedded*. The projection of voice and the projection of image were each in itself perfect and ran together perfectly as one train on two rails but the rails somehow functioning in perfect mechanical unison, remained a separate – separate entities, fulfilling different mechanical requirements. It seemed to me, astonished as I was at both (beauty of face and mellow finish of song) that each in some diabolic fashion was bringing out, was under-stressing mechanical and artificial traits in the other. Each alone would have left us to our dreams. The two together proved too much. The screen image, a mask, a sort of doll or marionette was somehow mechanized and robbed of the thing behind the thing that has grown to matter so much to the picture adept. A doll, a sort of mask or marionette about which one could drape one's devotions, intellectually, almost visibly like the ardent Catholic with his image of madonna, became a sort of robot. Our old doll became replaced by a wonder-doll, singing, with musical insides, with strings that one may pull, with excellent wired joints. But can we whisper our devotion to this creature? Are we all beings of infinite and pitiful sentiment? I didn't really *like* my old screen image to be improved (I might almost say imposed) on. I didn't *like* my ghost-love to become so vibrantly incarnate. I didn't like to assert my intellect to cope with it any more than I should have liked Topsy (of the old days) suddenly to emerge with wired-in legs and arms and with sewed-on bonnet and really grown-up bead bag dangling (also

sewed on) from one wrist. We want, don't we, our old treasures? Or do we want a lot of new toys, mechanical and utterly proficient?

O well, there it is. I know and see and admire. I do think it is wonderful to hear and see. 'Speaks for Itself' reads the slogan on the folder. But do we want our toy dog to 'speak for itself'? Do we really want our rag doll to stand up and utter? Don't we, like the pre-fifth peoples of Attica, of Crete, of the Cyclades treasure old superstitions (even the most advanced of us) and our early fantasies? Take away our crude upright pillar, take away our carved symbols of Demeter and our goat-herd chorus, said pre-fifth century Athenians and you rob us of our deity. Haven't we been just a little hurt and disappointed that our dolls have grown so perfect?

Well, that is for you to say and you to say and you to say. We each have an idea and a sentiment. We are all sentiment when it comes to discarding dolls for (it seems incredible) robots. Don't look so nice, and sing so nicely at the same time, I want to scream at Raquel Meller, for I seem to be about to be done out of something. *She* is doing everything. I want to help to add imagination to a mask, a half finished image, not have everything done for me. I can't *help* this show. I am completely out of it. This acting, singing, facial beauty is perfected. This screen projection is not a mask, it is a person, a personality. That is just it. Here is art, high art, but is it our *own* art? Isn't cinema art a matter (or hasn't it been) of inter-action? We have grown so used to our conventions, our intellectual censors have allowed us to acclaim such silly and sometimes vapid figures. You may fall in love said our censor with things so patently outside the intellectual scope of your realities. You may fall in love with gilt curls or a sailor doll or a brainless sombrero image. For these were masks, images of man, images of women, the feminine, the masculine, all undistressed, all tricked up with suitable accoutrements. Then we sank into light, into darkness, the cinema palace (we each have our favourite) became a sort of temple. We depended on light, on some sub-strata of warmth, some pulse or vibration, music on another plane too, also far enough removed from our real artistic consciousness to be treated as 'dope' rather than accepted in any way as spiritual or intellectual stimulus. We moved like moths in darkness, we were hypnotized by cross currents and interacting shades of light and darkness and maybe cigarette smoke. Our censors, intellectually off guard, permitted our minds to rest. We sank into this pulse and warmth and were recreated. The cinema has become to us what the church was to our ancestors. We sang, so to speak, hymns, we were redeemed by light literally. We were almost at one with Delphic or Elucian candidates, watching symbols of things that matter, accepting yet knowing those symbols were divorced utterly from reality. The mask originally presented life but so crudely that it became a part of some super-normal or some sub-normal layer of consciousness. Into this layer of self, blurred over by hypnotic darkness or cross-beams of light, emotion and idea entered fresh as from the primitive beginning. Images, our dolls, our masks, our gods, Love and Hate and Man and Woman. All these attributes had their more or less crude, easily recognised individual complements. Man and Man and Man. Woman and more and more and more Woman. Bits of chiffon became radiantly significant, tiny simple and utterly trivial attributes meant so much. Or didn't they? I mean that is what the moving pictures have done to us sometimes. We are like pre-fifth Athenians waiting for our Aeschylus, our Sophocles, our Euripides. We are being told that the old gods won't do and we know they

won't do really. We must have refinement and perfection and more intricate machinery. Now I know that this is quite right. I do know. I know and utterly appreciate for instance the immense possibilities of the Movietone in certain circumstances. If it were used properly there would be no more misunderstandings for instance (or there shouldn't be) of nations. I mean that five minutes of what I call 'bottled' America should do more for the average intelligent English mind than ten weeks on that continent. Look at 'Lindy'. Now we have all seen this charming gentleman, alighting, arising, swooping a little, crowded and pushed and pulled here and there and which way. But did we know 'our Lindy' till we saw him, till we heard him at the New Gallery Movietone performance? 'Colonel Lindberg's departure for Paris and reception in Washington' read the second number on our programme. The first bit ('departure for Paris') showed blatantly the flaws of the excellent Movietone. I mean the crowds came up in funny little squeaks and whistles and gasps. Someone whistling (I suppose at random) somewhere, cut across vital and exaggerated while more important factors of group surge and voice rhythm were blurred over utterly. The buzz and whirr of the plane wheels was excellent but we were not particularly impressed by that as we have been so long familiar with the same sort of thing adequately represented 'off' at the average cinema. The plane buzzed off dramatically but the slice 'departure for Paris' was really only the somewhat usual topical budget number somewhat more skilfully presented. But that 'reception in Washington' should teach statesmen better. I mean look and look and look at what I call 'bottled' America and look and look and look. Turn on that reel ten thousand times and then talk to me of international understanding. Does the average Englishman understand the average American (I say average) and vice versa? Can they? Do they? If you want to understand America, I feel like saying to Lord Birkenhead (who made an address, 5 on our excellent programme) go (or come) and look and look and look at this particular reel, 'and reception in Washington'. Nations should understand (but they won't, with the best of intentions, do) nations. It would make life so simple if we really wanted, really to understand anybody. Where would be our speeches and our receptions and our conferences and our gatherings? Half of life would be out of an occupation. If we could not sit up nights hating Englishmen or Frenchmen or Italians or Spaniards or American (or Americans) where, where would all our energy and our spirit flow to? I mean where would we get to? We would be, like pre-Periclean Athenians, I fear, really ready for an Art Age.

Art, art, ahrt and arrrt and AHRT age. Yes, we would be ready for an art age. Turn on a thousand times and go on turning bits of 'bottled' Germany, and 'bottled' America, kings and presidents and the reception by varied peoples of varied kings and generals and senators and presidents and we will understand each other. Nations are in turns of wrists, in intonations of voices and that is where the Movietone can do elaborate and intimate propaganda. Peace and love and understanding and education could be immensely aided by it. The Movietone outside the realm of pure sentiment, treated from a practical viewpoint is excellent in all particulars. Oh, how we could understand if only we wanted to understand, each other. Take the president's voice for instance. In it is an America (or should I say *the* America) that many of us, even through natives of its eastern sea-coast, never meet with. The words of President Coolidge cut across London mist and our Europeanized consciousness like dried brush crackling in a

desert. Arid, provincial, pragmatic and plain it held singular vitality. I mean (speaking all too personally) Lord Birkenhead, standing in a garden before a hedge of oak trees (or it ought to have been, if it wasn't, oak trees) was really bottled 'England' just as the president with his arid talk of republicanism and his 'man of the people' stunt was 'bottled' and then distilled America. The Germans, we are told, are delighted and rock with mirth at the screen aspect of the French president. Well, let us rock and scream and laugh at one another. Laughter precludes a sort of affectionate acceptance. Let us laugh but let it be in temples, in gatherings, the group consciousness is at the mercy of Screen and Movietone. Let us understand one another. Let the Movietone become a weapon in the hand of a Divinity.

UNDERSTANDING was the deity of Athens, Mind and Peace and Power and Understanding. Know thyself (we all know) says the deity of Delphi, who is Beauty and Inner Understanding (which is mantic) and more Beauty and Art in the abstract that we all hope for. This new invention seems an instrument of dual god-head. A miracle is literally unrolled before our eyes. We are too apt to take divinity for granted. Understanding, Athene with her olive wreath, another sort of understanding, Helios with his justice and his power of divination, are both eager for new neophytes. Here is an instrument of twin divinity. Tone and vision, sight and sound, eyes and ears, the gate ways to the mind are all appealed to. We are visionaries, we may become prophets. We are adepts, moving at will over foreign lands and waters, nothing is hidden from us. Apply the Movietone to questions of education and international politics and you will do away with revolutions. Well, there it all is in a nut-shell, 'bottled'. But are we ready for so suave simplification? Some of us will grow in outer and in inner vision with the help of this invention. Others will be left cold as they would be left inert before another Mons or Marathon. Yet it stands to reason that a new world is open, a new world of political understanding, of educational reform, or art (in its pure sense) even. Art, I repeat unparenthetically, may in its pure essence be wedded not merely welded to art. I felt frankly disappointed in Raquel Meller. By some ironic twist of psychic laws, it seems impossible to be luke-warm, to be 'almost good enough', Madame Meller does not lack power and personality. But some genial sub-strata of humour or humanity seemed wanting. Mechanical efficiency, technique carried to its logical conclusion do not make divinity. I felt however in Nina Tarasova and Miss Gertrude Lawrence (numbers 7 and 11 on our programme) a full-blooded vitality that nothing can diminish. Madame Tarasova registered sorrow and despair with almost oriental subtlety; though her gesture was obvious, her real artistry redeemed her curious appearance and her bulk, unwieldy as our now familiar *Chang* elephants only served by some ironic twist of circumstance to increase our appreciation. The grandeur of voice in this case seemed healing and dynamic. Madame Tarasova, magnified to the size of Big Ben almost, became as hugely interesting. One laughs, (or used to) at scientific projections, lizards like dinosaurs, beetles exaggerated out of recognition, gargantuan night-moths, flower petals that would enclose Cleopatra's Needle. We used to laugh hysterically at these things, but now take them for granted. So for the moment the spectacle of an operatic singer complete with voice strains our credulity. Voice and body beat and pulsed with what dynamic energy. We laughed of course. But as I say, didn't we used to laugh in somewhat the same fashion at the

exaggerated antics of enormous ants and hornets? We are used to nature, expanded and ennobled past all recognition, now we must again readjust and learn to accept calmly, man magnified. Man magnified, magnified man, with his gestures, his humors, his least eccentricities stressed to the point of almost epic grandeur. Art to conceal art. Is there any more damaging revelation than art revealed? Art is cut open, dissected so to speak by this odd instrument. Movietone creates and recreates until we feel that nothing can remain hidden, no slightest flaw of movement or voice or personality undetected. It is odd how damaging this double revelation is to some otherwise (we should think) unassailable artistes, while others apparently not so fine, emerge unscathed and smiling. Gertrude Lawrence for instance endured this double ordeal with wit and subtlety. The screen Gertrude Lawrence, at first sight a slim mannequin, became animated with fluid inspiration. Her gesture and her speech, in this case completely *wedded*. The pure artist perhaps cannot be assailed, and certainly Madame Tarasova and Miss Lawrence stood this trying ordeal valiantly.

There it is. We stand by our own gods, like or dislike, there is no possible strict standardization to be arrived at. We cannot weigh and measure our affections, we cannot count and label our wavering emotions. I like this, you like that, X or Y or Z like something different. Personally, though I admit the brilliance of this performance, I was not totally won over by it. I think for a long time we have perhaps unconsciously, accepted, as I said earlier, the cinema palace as a sort of temple. So I say yes to anything having to do with reality and with national affairs and with education: then the Movietone is perfect. The outer vision, yes, should be projected, the outer sound, yes, should be amplified and made accessible. Everyone should have access to great music as easily as to books in libraries. This Movietone places people and things, catalogues them. It is excellent as a recorder, as a corrective of technical flaws, or as a means of indefinitely protracting artistic perfection. Art under this magnascope can be dissected and analysed. As an instrument of criticism, yes, as an instrument of international understanding, yes and yes and yes. As a purveyor of ideas and even ideals, yes. But somehow no. There is a great no somewhere. The Movietone has to do with the things outside the sacred precincts. There is something inside that the Movietone would eventually I think, destroy utterly, for many of us. That is the whole point really of the matter. Is our temple, our inner place of refuge, to be crowded out with gods like men, not masks, not images, that are so disguised, so conventionalized that they hold in some odd way possibility of some divine animation? If I see art projected too perfectly (as by Raquel Meller) don't I feel rather cheated of the possibility of something more divine behind the outer symbol of the something shown there? The mask in other words seems about to be ripped off showing us human features, the doll is about to step forward as a mere example of mechanical inventiveness. We cannot worship sheer mechanical perfection but we can love and in a way worship a thing (like Topsy with her rag arms) that is a symbol of something that might be something greater.

We feel fearful that our world may be taken from us, that half-world of lights and music and blurred perception into which, as I said earlier the being floats as a moth into summer darkness. Like a moth really we are paralysed before too much reality, too much glamour, too many cross currents of potentialities. There is too much really for the soul to cope with, and all these out-reaching odd soul-feelers, that you and I and

Tom Jones and the shop girl and the barber and the knife boy have sometimes felt threatened with odd maladies. We want healing in blur of half tones and hypnotic vibrant darkness. Too mechanical perfection would serve only I fear, to threaten that world of half light. We hesitate to relinquish our old ideals and treasures, fearing we may lose our touch with mystery by accepting this new (this sort of Euripidean sophistication) in place of the old goat-herd and his ribald painted chorus.

Vol. I, no. 3

September 1927

CONRAD VEIDT

THE STUDENT OF PRAGUE

A small room, a stuffy atmosphere; a provincial Swiss lake-side cinema; the usual shuffle and shuffle and the unaccustomed (to the urbane senses) rattle of paper bags. Crumbs. 'Mlle must not smoke here.' Of course I might have known that, I never smoke in these places, what made me this time? Something has been touched before I realise it, some hidden spring; there is something wrong with this film, with me, with the weather, with something. The music ought, it is evident, be making my heart spring but I don't like student songs and these Heidelbergish melodies especially leave me frigid. There's something wrong and I have seen those horses making that idiotic turn on the short grass at least eight times. What is it? I won't stay any longer. The music *ought* to be all right – my slightly readjusted ears make that slight concession. I wish I had stayed at home, or why didn't I go instead to that other little place, it's better ventilated, across the way. And so on. This storm that doesn't break. I have no reaction to anything ... O *that's* what the little man is after.

For I see now. There is a rhythm within the rhythm, there is a story within the story. The little man (it is curiously he whom I personally met before in Joyless Street, disguised now out of recognition) beckons at the top of a sandy hill. The little tree twists and bends and makes all the frantic gestures of the little tree at the cross-roads under which Faust conjured devils. That's it precisely. This has something behind it, in it, through it. That little man means much more than that. He isn't an absurd little obvious Punchinello. He is a symbol, an asterisk, an enigma. Spell the thing backwards, he seems to be saying, spell it right side to or back side to or front or behind and you'll see ... his little leer means something. The horses filing again, in obvious procession, mean something. They are going to spell something, make a mystic symbol across short grass, some double twist and knot and the world will go to bits ... something is going to happen.

I have forgotten the paper bags. The music *does* fit in. I have forgotten the lilt and rise and lilt and fall of the violin that doesn't in the least know that the piano is existing. That's it exactly. The piano and the violin live in separate elements, so this and this. The

little obvious Italian Punchinello doesn't in the least mind being jeered at. He wants to be jeered at. He has opened doors to the uninitiate. *They* don't know that that umbrella tucked so ridiculously under his left arm-pit, means something. I know that it means something but I don't know what (outside the obviously obvious) it does mean. There is a world within a world, the little man gesticulates. The horses have all gone ... the music has come right.

Students sing under summer trees. Students have filed under summer trees and seated in a garden make obvious opera bouffe groups with beribboned guitars. Students sing in a garden ... grey eyes cut the opera bouffe to tatters. The student of Prague has entered.

His visage, his form, the very obvious and lean candour of him spell something different. He is and he isn't just this person sitting under a tree. The little man gesticulating at the top of a sandy hill has given one the clue to the thing. This is and isn't Conrad Veidt or this is and isn't Baldwin the famous fencer. His eyes cut the garden, the benches, the sun-light (falling obviously) to tatters. How did this man get here? Steel and fibre of some vanished lordlihood. Conrad Veidt has entered.

A gesture, a tilt of a chin, the downward sweep of a wide-rimmed student's cap and the world has altered. With the same obvious formality and the same obvious banality as the little Italian conjurer, the least hunch of shoulder of this famous artist has some hidden meaning. He is lean and wild. He is firm and sophisticated and worldly. He will break from his skin like a panther from a tight wicker box. He is tight in his personality and behind his personality his mind glints like his own steel. Conrad Veidt impersonating the famous Baldwin may not be the Conrad Veidt of *The Hands of Orlac*, or *Nju*. I have seen only this film. But I don't want to see another Conrad Veidt if it must abuse my mind of this one.

The story is obvious. The English literary critical papers accompany their 'still' of the famous mirror scene with some such explanatory blurb: this is the Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde of German legend. Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde, how apt, certainly. Doctor Jekyll however shuddered in horror at the sodden parody of himself that Hyde presented. This Jekyll and Hyde are alike elegant, alike poised, alike at home in the world of fact and in the supernatural. For by a magnificent trick of sustained camera magic we have Baldwin the famous fencer student selling his shadow, rather his brave reflection to the little obvious Italian magician of the first reel. The little Punchinello obtains it, by a trick; gold poured and poured Danae shower, upon the bare scrubbed table of the student's attic, 'for something in his room'. The student has lifted his magnificent blade ruefully and cynically has decided (as that is the only object worth a sou in the bare attic) to be done with it. It is not *that* blade that our friend Punchinello's after. He beckons with his obvious buffoon gesture toward the mirror. Baldwin regards (in its polished surface) the face of Baldwin. Tall, alert, with that panther grace, like some exquisite lean runner from an archaic Delphic frieze, Baldwin regards Baldwin. It is true there should be Baldwin upon Baldwin, Veidt upon Veidt, elegantly pursuing (across some marble entablature) Baldwin upon stripped Baldwin, Veidt upon naked Veidt. In that, the little Punchinello shows his aptitude for beauty. Such charm, such lean and astute physical intellectuality should be repeated. Gold, flowing from leather cornucopialike wallet has dripped (Danae shower) from the bare table and Baldwin has sold 'something' (not his fine blade) 'in this room' to this

mysterious little person. The bargain has been made. Baldwin regards the purchase. With elegant lithe movement, with uncomparable agility, the reflection steps forward. Baldwin on the bare floor, quivers slightly, makes one of those perfect hieratic steps to one side. But the image doesn't answer him. The image, the 'purchase' has another master. The little ridiculous Punchinello with his repellent friendliness lures it forward. As the distant horses made turn and double eights across windy grass, directed by this obvious jester, so now this rare thing. The image of Baldwin strides steadily forward and following our magician, leaves the chamber empty.

There is of course a love story connected with all this. Punchinello has promised our hero a fortune or rather an heiress and that's what the horses were solemnly about. There were making circles and double eights and abracadabra-like turns on the short grass in order finally to spill the big-boned but somehow impressive heroine into (literally) the arms of our steely hero. The hero having so fallen to the charms of this impressive, beautifully modelled lady, must methinks have clothes for his wooing, peg-top trousers, all the paraphernalia that goes with the rather 1860-ish type of get-up. Arms, legs, cloth moulds those arms, legs that were somehow out of elbow for all their statuesque divinity in the simple student. The student (grey eyes tearing tapestries, satin and old lace this time) now is able to present the lady-of-the-manor with suitable 1860-ish baskets of heavy blossoms. (His small early discarded violet-cluster and that violet-seller is another story, a leit-motive [sic] that merges and melts subtly with this other noble matter.) The real lady of his affection is affianced (I believe is the word) to a gentleman in some sort of aldermanic or diplomatic-circles, knee breeches. This person flicking our hero across the cheek bones with the usual gauntlet, is summoned for the usual purposes at dawn or sunset. Anyhow as might have been expected, the hero having been forestalled by the father of his beloved, has promised in best Prague style only to prick his adversary. As again might have been expected, owing, we are led to imagine to the machinations of the Punchinello, the wheel of the carriage bearing our hero to the rendez vous is broken by the usual lonely cross-road and Baldwin, stumbling forward to keep his appointment, his honour so being called to question, is met dramatically by his one (in the world) possible rival. Face to face under a great tree, sweeping branches, mysterious yet naturalist décor. Hyde meets Jekyll. Or Jekyll meets Hyde. It's impossible to choose between them, though at this exact moment, sympathies are with the spectre. Perhaps that is because he wears the attributes of the student fencer in which Conrad Veidt first appeared, the student cap pulled so forcefully and drastically over those steely eyes and the beautiful leather boots. However time is short. We know what is bound to happen. The spectre in all the accoutrements of the gentleman duellist, strides forward leaving the *man* gasping at his predicament. He beholds in, as it were, ambush the inevitable dénouement.

There are gaspings, now direct disapprobation, cuttings, a gentleman, as the world knows does not break his parole d'honneur and all the paraphernalia. Jekyll (or Hyde) the *man* anyhow is dropped anyhow by the vast circle that has been entertained royally in his drawing rooms. His beloved can not meet him, the murderer of her betrothed. The Student of Prague, the famous fencer Baldwin is cut by fencing companies, societies. What you will. He is thrown into the arms of the common Alma Tademesque little violet seller. Things march from worse to still worse. This is what comes of selling

one's shadow to a stranger. There is, as is obvious, the really clever stalking of the shadow and the merging and cross-currents of two images. We never lose sight of the identity of either; this too is a triumph. The spectre is the slim gaunt creature in the early student get-up, the man is the somewhat out at heels distraught discarded gentleman. The spectre grows in distinction, in power apparently. The man diminishes. The spectre remains the Student of Prague and Baldwin, his begetter, is hounded by this Frankenstein. Doors are no impediment. The spectre in triumph of film-photography glides discreetly through and into the most sacred milieu. Baldwin the man sinks into the scum of fetid cellars. The spectre and the little early mistress, the small, common, yet uncommonly pretty, violet-girl sink with him. Baldwin becomes violent, destructive. The spectre shares his evil end, gloats in it. Yet apart ... having some life outside humanity ... following, following, till we want to scream, 'strangle him get rid of him, one or the other, let this duality perish if Baldwin perish with it.'

Baldwin does so finally perish, having lured the shadow back into the frame of the mirror in the now deserted attic. He shoots the spectre only to find himself bleeding with the bullet wound. The bullet aimed so adroitly at the breast of the image in the mirror has, by some psychic affinity, entered his own heart. So dies Baldwin. Across our vision however there is something that will never die. It can't go. It lives among other things, in the haunting melody (the music finally did come right) of *du meine Herzen, du mein Ruhe*. Baldwin (before the final dénouement) has finally, in wind and storm (this might have been well pictured to the Erlkönig motif) broken into the garden and the manor of his mistress. We find her great-eyed and adequate, without charm but with some fine distinction in 1860-ish surroundings; great mirrors, heavy candelabra, the wide French windows and the sweeping of wind-blown branches. There is authentic swish and swirl of branches and has anything ever been more subtly dramatic than the entering of broken rose-petals and damp leaves with the opening of that wide door? Baldwin, the man become a shadow, stands before his Lady. We see in a moment, she is that. What she lacks in charm is supplied by the ardour of her lover. He is at her knees, at her feet. He will explain. He will and he will and he will. We know what is about to happen. He lures her to a mirror. It is not he but his missing shadow that has done this. She stares straight into nothingness. There is a dramatic pause, the ten seconds that might be ten minutes, the ten minutes that might be ten years and the lady is lying like some dramatic beautiful Niobe (fainting? Dead?) marble, sculptured on the floor. The beauty of that scene is one that must always remain, that must always come back, it seems now, with wind and wind-swept branches. The screen has purified and idealized, is a medium for purity and idealization. No one could remain unmoved before the sheer technical beauty of that interior. There are volumes of de Regnieresque subtleties on it. This on the screen. There is the intolerable beauty of the Erlkönig come (for all its apparent unrelation) true. There are the things we can't say or paint at the sight of windows half-closed in moonlight. There is the spirit of the garden, the spirit of the water, the lake, the sea, the wind, the ghost itself of all our lives come visually before us. (*Du meine Herzen, du mein Ruhe* sings the violin now and we can't for the life of us notice that it is out of key with the piano.) There is beauty and unfulfilment and the struggle of the spirit and the body and the spirit become body and the body become spirit and the constant strife between Lucifer and the angel Michael.

Michael stands before us and Lucifer. This time there is no mistaking. The spectre is an evil thing now, wishing to snatch, we see it, the living spark of divinity from the man become shadow. Baldwin has flung himself and his secret at the heart of his 'Frieden' his 'Ruhe'. *Du bist mein Grab*, we remember the song continues and we see now its application. He has betrayed the secret of the under-world to a mortal and the spectre, looking athletic and determined, has his hand on the bell rope. He will ring and the man knows that he must vanish. It is the man now who is completely at the will of the shadow.

Du meine Herzen, du mein Ruhe. Baldwin climbing back to his old poor surroundings knows that he is conquered. Baldwin the apparent man, that is. There is something indomitable left, symbolized by the little silver cross that his Lady has given him on that first dramatic meeting in the bare fields. He has saved her life (for all there was distorted magic in it) and the little cross was his reward. Tapestries, laden baskets, the minuet and ladies with lovely ankles, all that came, was swept aside by the pursuing shadow and lost simply. A vision is not so easily relinquished, says the tried soul. I have lost everything says Baldwin but not one thing. Raising himself on one elbow along the splintered glass, he realised that his death has brought him his fulfilment. More than his lady, more than his steel blade, *himself*. Baldwin, dying, clasps a broken edge of triangulated glass to his stained breast. Containing his image simply.

A tiny provincial lake-side cinema ... a small room, by luck I have got a front seat on the little balcony at the room's rear. Languages filter into my consciousness. French? German? I have been following the subtitles in these languages. A tired language, an effete language, not French, not German, is remarking, 'These Germans over-do things ... look at Faust now ... and this is just as morbid.' Another language resembling only in bare particulars that one (is it the same language?) is remarking, 'gee, why don't they have more live-stuff these days. Though they did advertise Doug Fairbanks last week.' Languages filter into me, languages and the music fanfaring away at some familiar sideshow rate and 'the show is over' is indicated by a sudden, crude blare of extravagant electricity. 'Say - you can see electricity's cheap here.' Languages ... languages ... dead languages, living languages. A small voice, a wee voice that has something in common with all these voices yet differs intrinsically from all these voices, will whisper there within me. 'You see I was right. You see it will come. In spite of "Gee" and "Doug Fairbanks" and "we must have something cheerful", it must come soon: a universal language, a universal art open alike to the pleb and the initiate.'

EXPIATION

I was precipitated suddenly, after the sinuous run along the edge of Lake Geneva, unto the cobbles of the formal irregularities of the Square of Saint Francis at Lausanne. Thence, informed that the car couldn't take the little steep down-drop of the street of Saint Francis, I was tumbled out dazed and exulted at the head of a sort of dimensional dream-tunnel. I was precipitated between so to speak, built-up and somewhat over-done little shops with windows and wares; oranges, boxes of leeks, lettuces on the pavement; bright green shutters. Dazed and re-vitalized by the run, I plunged down this little street somewhat reeling, making jig-jag to find just how those shadows cut just that block (and that block) into perfect design of cobbled square and square little doorway till I found myself at the entrance of a slice of a theatre, the Palace of Lausanne. I couldn't go in, must climb the little street again like a fanatic bob-sleigh runner in order again to run down. I so poignantly wanted to re-visualize those squares of doors and shutters and another and another bit of detail that of necessity was lost at first that I did illogically (I was already late) climb back. A boy rang obligingly across with a baker's flat tray-basket and someone else urged a cat to climb off the topmost row of a row of something that looked like the Concord grape-baskets we used to have in Philadelphia. I ran up and down the scale, so to speak of visual emotion, of memory, of visual sensation making that street and everyone of its little graduations a sort of intellectual accordion from which to draw tunes, the sort of things one tries to put down sometimes (but never quite succeeds in doing) after a particularly poignant dream. It was of course too the sudden flood of mid-March sunlight that was responsible for my heady intoxication and a bunch of somehow over-done (the whole street was preposterous) bundles of daubed-in spring flowers; yellow and blue make the grey and yellow of the street come back at one, back-fire again at one in its hectic over-done insistence on the raw reality of beauty.

Well, it was hardly fair that after climbing up the narrowest of cinema theatre stairs, I should find myself seated beside the 'others' who didn't have a breath left to gasp 'you're late you fool, you've been missing it' but one of them whispered like someone before the high altar explaining to a neophyte 'it's Russian - it's Alaska'.

Someone had apparently killed someone. I had arrived when *Sühne* (*Expiation*) was about one third over. Someone was heaving a weight of something and against an upright ledge of mud, the rain poured and soaked and ran and gorged runnels in the already over-soaked bit of bed earth. Bad lands, something wasted, wasteful, overdone and done with. Rain poured over a slab of earth and I felt all my preparation of the extravagantly contrasting out of doors gay little street, was almost an ironical intention, someone, something 'intended' that I should grasp this, that some mind should receive this series of uncanny and almost psychic sensations in order to transmute them elsewhere; in order to translate them. Rains soaked across a slab of mud, runnels bored

and jabbed and pockmarked and gusseted it. There was never an earth that could be ever again so drab, so unproductive. 'It's Russian – it's Alaska.'

Apparently there had been death in this bad land, how could there be other? But death and all its drab significance rose in its starkness to some almost Elusian note of purity. So abstract the land, so remote and symbolical the two figures of the living that dragged the two sacks or canvas sails that had been wrapped about the two long bodies of the slain, so heavy and dreary the rain, so slippery the mud, so terrible the lowering of the sky above the rain (which one sensed was there simply for the re-harrowing of these living figures) that the spirit as in the Aescuylean drama rose above it, shouted almost audibly with the elements, *the soul, the soul survives*. The soul was embodied in two figures, man and woman, if that long ungainly creature with the hair whipped about lean, gargoyle face was a woman or some intransient slip of fibrous girlhood. A girl, a child with incredibly thin legs, hurled herself on the ice and snow crusted bad earth, clung to it, like some wan and exquisite Perserphone [Persephone], crying to be buried, dragged in, taken back and back away from human consciousness, like those two others, above whom the man has already set those sort of crude identification boards that we have grown accustomed to in trenches. One realized instinctively that this was no 'grave', but some 'trench' holding victims, slain why and how one couldn't grasp till afterwards. But the intention of the story, greater than its mere plot, could not possibly be misread; death and death and death and bad lands and waste and the Aescuylean lowering of blank skies.

The two return to find the murderer half slipped out of his bonds, lying physically exhausted, practically frozen to death, beside the steps of the woodshed or cabin. They probe him back, lunge with him as they had lunged lately with those two bodies indoors. The half-dead is propped up against the log-wall, the girl guards him with a gun, the man busies himself with clearing up the remains of the interrupted dinner. Sympathy knows no dividing line, we feel alike for the dead under the mud, gone violently, in haste; the murdered, the criminal worse than dead, bound hand and foot; the slip of gargoyle of a girl who sits with gun propped across rigid almost cataleptic knees; the man himself, the one survivor of the 'company' with this care and responsibility toward this girl (his wife), the murderer (his former servant) and the elements. Rain soaks and pours and pours and soaks and the elements have these at their mercy. The ice breaks, the river rises, the hut is flooded and here in a heroic series of sequences we find the girl and the man wading about, knee-deep, in icy water while great chunks of rock-like edges of icebergs bump and grind against the frail sides of the little cabin. On and on and on. Till the Aescuylean bleak terror wears even itself out ... the tide subsides, the little house stands firm, one branch wavers outside against the grey flood and a bird from somewhere announces (as is customary) spring.

To say that spring comes is to put it mildly. The gestures of this woman are angular, bird-like, claw-like, skeleton-like and hideous. She has a way of standing against a sky line that makes a hieroglyph, that spells almost visibly some message of cryptic symbolism. Her gestures are magnificent. If this is Russian, then I am Russian. Beauty is too facile a word to discuss this; this woman is a sort of bleak young sorceress, vibrant, febrile, neurotic, as I say, almost cataleptic. She has one authentic mad scene: her mind breaks after hours of watching the prisoner with the gun placed edge-wise like some

iron bar across numbed and frozen knees. She is skeleton-like and death-like. Her face when the bird sings outside the window can hardly be called beautiful.

Her teeth protrude, her cheek bones are hollow, her skull is picked, so to speak, of its meat by misery and waiting. Her mind is on the raw edge of breaking, her eyes roll in terror and madness and numbness of misery ... a bird sings. Her face can be termed beautiful in the same way that dawn can be termed beautiful rising across stench and fever of battle ... there is no word for such things. Her mind, her soul, her body, her spirit, her being, all vibrate, as I say, almost audibly. One is beyond personal discernment. This is psychic, compelling, in a way destructive. I could not see many of these Russian films if there are others like this. This is my first. It is as poignant an experience almost as my first 'real' German film, the exquisite and now world known and discussed *Joyless Street* of G. W. Pabst. Pabst, the Austrian is the greater constructive artist, the Russian (L. Keleschow [Kuleshov]) uses the screen almost as a psychic medium, art on the high almost un-natural level of the Aescyulean (I find I can only repeat) trilogies.

Is Art religion? Is religion art? This is where the point comes. But all discussions of Art, Religion and Life are febrile and old-fashioned really. All I can know is that I, personally, am attuned to certain vibration, that there comes a moment when I can 'witness' almost fanatically the 'truth'. I knew as regards the Germans that G. W. Pabst is an artist, an intellectual, a being, a giant of realism. Yet realism for all its devastating sincerity in *Joyless Street* maintains a sort of sanity, a meaning that applies to everybody. In other words it is a work of art as we are accustomed to understand the term in all its implication. This *Sühne (Expiation)* goes as one of our party said 'too far'. Perhaps it does do. Perhaps the human mind is not yet ready to receive the 'message' the Russian has to give us, though I personally must frankly acclaim this profoundly as moving and touching a drama as I have seen on the stage or screen.

But is that enough? I have said that it was my first Russian film and I have said that it is perhaps destructive. Beauty is that. This sort of raw picked beauty must of necessity destroy the wax and candy-box 'realism' of the so much so-called film art. It must destroy in fact so much that perhaps it does 'go' as one of our party said 'too far'.

How far *can* one 'go'? G. W. Pabst the realist, takes the human mind, the human spirit acting and re-acting against the elemental human terrors of famine and erotic-neurotic impulse, as far as it can go. The Russian takes the human spirit acting and re-acting against human sub-strata of animal instinct, *further* than it can go. The spirit goes as far as the spirit can go and then it goes a little further. That is the poignant realism of *Expiation*. Rain and flood have done their worst as the three, the girl, the threatened husband (who has just escaped death in the mad frenzy of the Irish servant) and the servant. About 'Jack' formidable black Aescyulean wings are forever beating, bearing toward some incoherent expression of justice, brotherhood, manhood, human rightness due to every human spirit. The material gold that he had found on the (up to that moment) worthless property of his masters, the group of god diggers, headed by the Englishman Nelson and his wife Edith, is only a symbol. Fraternity, confraternity the old equation is here set out with a freshness that no mere republican American, no mere pseudo-republican Frenchman can appreciate. The old coinage has been debased of its spiritual value. The modern Russian says no, no

to the old but fresh coin, standardized and poignant, spiritual coinage, here it is ... three men 'masters', one man 'servant' and one woman, a sort of winged sprite, an angel and a sort of devil of remorseless justice. Flung then down in the mud, in the ice, in the water, in the fire. Every element must be drawn upon, death, decomposition, cold and heat, clouds and rain and rain *and* rain. Flung down your stamped coinage and weight it beside unstamped gold. Jack digs out gold from a furrow in the mud after the Russian and the German (the two other members of the 'company') have decided that they must pull up stakes, that the soil along the river is unprofitable. Jack having been sent to make ready the luggage, pauses beside a sort of wooden funnel-like trough: (since beginning this article I have been back to the little Palace, Saint Francis Street, Lausanne to see *Sühne* for a second time). Jack in literally pulling up stakes (a sort of wooden trough or runnel for conveying, one judges, water to wash bed-silt) bumbles on a little gleaming strata. He fills his mining basin with the mud and water turning, turning this round basin in his hands, he is turning, turning worlds; Jack is Atlas with a world of new discovery, new possibility, the new, so to speak, Russia – the new so to speak spirit and ideal wherever and however it may be found. Jack the Irishman, the servant, finds gold. There is one thing to do, faithful servant, he rushed back to his 'masters' to find them in short time so overwhelmed with the weight of their discovery that they forget, if ever they remotely realized, that it is this Jack, this loutish and uncouth camp-servant who has put them on the track of miraculous possession.

Jack one evening is a little late for dinner. The other four are in jovial spirits, spring may come soon, it must do, they will take off in separate directions (England, Russia, Germany) and forget the old trail of penury, of heart sickness and homesickness, in a new blaze of civilization and of wealth. O won't we be gay, won't we be recklessly happy, chants the Russian to his ikon, grunts the German to his muddy boots, as beside the fire, they each think of the months of labour, of the profit of their isolation, and of this lessening period of sheer physical discomfort. 'A-ee Jack' shouts the Russian as the servant lumber in 'don't you wish you were in our shoes, don't you wish you had just such a gold mine, just such possibility of power as we have?' The words are hardly spoken. Jack raises his gun and fires. The Russian is neatly punctured in the back, the German is instantly killed. The girl, the inhuman gargoyle of a woman seeing the weapon aimed at her husband, springs, wild-cat at the servant. Jack and she struggle until Nelson, half stunned for the moment leaps forward. Nelson pounds and beats the murderer, blind, himself about to expiate murder with more murder. The girl in an agony of neurotic almost epileptic strength drags off her husband. Now the story continues (where I first began it) with the uncanny ice burial.

So watching Jack through the flood months, spring comes ... but how can we, how can we hear this any longer? Twice Nelson has been about to fire on Jack, get him out of the way as Jack himself suggests, bring the thing to an end somehow. Justice, human justice, this odd gargoyle of a Pallas Athene, Edith, Nelson's wife, as often intercepts him. That would be murder she insists, we must have justice. Justice, justice cried Edith and again pity, pity. But justice is stronger than pity in Edith, she is a blighted uncouth being, a tree riven by lightning for all that lightning has somehow entered her odd spirit. Justice, justice she cries and after the pathos of the birthday incident, the

candles, the little cake, the exquisite lyrical 'confession' of Jack (I did this thing, because ... well, because I wanted to be like the rest of you and I couldn't stand you making fun of me all the time and because I wanted to take presents to *my* people at home) none of them, they all confess severally can stand it any longer. Will you, says Edith, submit to our judgement in the name of ... in the name of the Queen of England? Jack says yes. A sort of old-fashioned cheap colour print of the Queen of England is pinned up on the wall above the seat of justice. The Queen of England smiles above the heads of Edith and Nelson. The Queen of England smiles over and through it all as smug, as remote, as untouched, as relentless as a piece of pink frosting on a wedding cake. The image of the Queen of England, Victoria in her youth, is the sort of ikon justice that Edith had to re-invoke to aid her, to fill in her heart her angelic poignant pity. Tears stream down Edith's face but in the name of the Queen of England the court of high appeal decides that Jack is guilty. In all right and form, formal indictment, Jack accepts it. The Queen of England tacked on the log wall of the little cabin, smiles over Jack's head 'he shall hang by the neck till he dies'.

Reversing the process of the Elizabethan 'let mercy season justice' says Edith, beyond mercy is justice and she stalks out to fulfil the bidding of justice; Joan of Arc, all the women from Pallas Athene to Charlotte Corday that have personified some grave principle is in her fanatic gesture, in her set gargoyle posture, in her lean attenuated determination. Edith herself lunges with steel-like shoulder at the box upon which Jack is standing. Nelson must run to aid her, together they push the high box out from under Jack's boots. The boots are left swinging, struggling hardly at all, heavy pendant, swinging a pendulum stroke in the empty arctic air. Swing, swing, justice is greater than mercy cries Edith, her face twisted in an effort of unbelievably poignant acting. Edith is an angel who has lost faith in the angelic hierarchy.

Nelson drags her from the other side of the great tree, Nelson literally drags her back to the little cabin. Edith is a great locust, all legs, hardly any flesh, a sort of Flemish saint, a worn-down, sea-wind battered statue that has been rubbed raw by weather, hardly any personal significance in the figure; it certainly has gone too far. Beauty stalks, a skeleton, in Edith, in Edith rightness is robbed of all extenuating comfort. Rightness is pure undiluted suffering. Justice is sheer pain and pain and pain. Even her prayer book valiantly held against the storm clouds didn't help her. The little cross marked so forcefully on the dark surface of her prayer book is power against all evil. We know that the little cross will take Jack straight, like the dying thief, to eternity. But a voice somehow, somewhere seems to whisper, is it enough? Is religion of prayer book all so valiantly upheld, is Joan d'Arc determination toward nobility enough? Is Charlotte Corday justice enough or is smug Victorian beauty dressed in wide lace sleeves enough? Is anything enough anywhere? Here or in Alaska or in Saint Petersburg or in Mudville, South Dakota, is anything 'enough'? The Russian, in that, has the word after the last word. Too much is enough only for him, the word after the last word is spoken, the unreliability of everything, justice, injustice, beauty, ugliness. All, all, are as in the Aescuylean trilogy, subject to something greater than God even, that is Fate. Jack stalks back, standing in the rain smitten door-way to say the word beyond the last word.

The Russian, as I have said, takes the human mind and spirit *further* than it can go. 'It wasn't meant to be' says Jack, 'your rope was rotten, it broke.' He stalks in and

scrapes up a handful of gold nuggets from the table. Then he disappears into the muddy blackness.

But before going, he flings his hangman's rope upon the table. 'Take it' he says 'they say a hangman's noose brings good luck.'

Vol. III, no. 1

July 1928

JOAN OF ARC

'The Passion and Death of a Saint' is a film that has caused me more unrest, more spiritual forebodings, more intellectual racking, more emotional torment than any I have yet seen. We are presented with Jeanne d'Arc in a series of pictures, portraits burnt on copper, bronze if you will, anyhow obviously no aura of quattrocento gold and gold dust and fleurs-de-lys in straight hieratic pattern, none of your fresco that makes the cell of Savonarola make the legend of Savonarola bearable even to this day. Jeanne d'Arc is done in hard clear line, remorseless, poignant, bronze stations of the cross, carved upon mediæval cathedral doors, bronze of that particular sort of mediæval fanaticism that says no and again no to any such weakening incense as Fra Angelico gold and lilies of heavenly comfort. Why did and why didn't this particular Jeanne d'Arc so touch us? Jeanne d'Arc takes us so incredibly far that having taken us so far, we are left wondering why didn't this exquisite and superb piece of screen dramatisation take us further? Carl Dreyer, a Dane, one of the most superb of the magnificently growing list of directors, is responsible for this odd two-edged sort of feeling. His film, for that, is unique in the annals of film art. The passion of the Jeanne is superbly, almost mediumistically portrayed by Mille Falconetti. Heart and head are given over to inevitable surrender. Heart broke, head bowed. But another set of curious nerve-reactions were brought into play here. Why is it that my hands inevitably clench at the memory of those pictures, at the casual poster that I pass daily in this lake-side small town? Is it necessary to be put on guard? *Must* I be made to feel on the defence this way and why? Also why must my very hands feel that they are numb and raw and bleeding, clenched fists tightened, bleeding as if beating at those very impregnable mediæval church doors?

For being let into the very heart, the very secret of the matter, we are let out of ... something. I am shown Jeanne, she is indeed before me, the country child, the great lout of a hulking boy or girl, blubbery actually, great tears coursing down round sun-hardened, wind-hardened, oak-tree hardened face outline and outline of cheek hollow and the indomitable small chin. Jeanne is first represented to us, small as seen from above, the merest flash of sturdy boy figure, walking with chained ankles toward judges (too many) seated in slices above on ecclesiastical benches. Jeanne is seen as small, as intolerably sturdy and intolerably broken, the sort of inhuman showing up of Jeanne that from the first strikes some note of defiance in us. Now why should we

be defiant? I think it is that we all have our Jeanne, each one of us in the secret great cavernous interior of the cathedral (if I may be fantastic) of the subconscious. Now another Jeanne strides in, an incomparable Jeanne, indubitably a more Jeanne-ish Jeanne than our Jeanne but it just isn't our Jeanne. Worse than that it is a better Jeanne, a much, much better, more authentic Jeanne than our Jeanne; scathing realism has gone one better than mere imaginative idealism. We know we are out-witted. This is a real, real, Jeanne (poor Jeanne) little mountain Newfoundland puppy, some staunch and true and incomparably loyal creature, something so much more wonderful than any greyhound outline or sleek wolf-hound is presented us, the very incarnation of loyalty and integrity ... dwarfed, below us, as if about to be tramped or kicked into a corner by giant soldier iron-heeled great boots. Marching boots, marching boots, the heavy hulk of leather and thong-like fastenings and cruel nails ... no hint of the wings on the heels of the legions that followed the lily-banner; the cry that sang toward Orleans is in no way ever so remotely indicated. We are allowed no comfort of mere beatific lilies, no hint of the memory of lover-comrade men's voices, the comrades that Jeanne must have loved loyally, the perfect staunch child friend, the hero, the small Spartan, the very Telisila upon the walls of that Argos, that is just it. This is *no* Telisila upon the walls of Argos, no Athene who for the moment has laid aside her helmet for other lesser matters than that of mere courage and fidelity. This is an Athene stripped of intellect, a Telisila robbed of poetry, it is a Jeanne d'Arc that not only pretends to be real, but that is real, a Jeanne that is going to rob us of our own Jeanne.

Is that the secret of this clenching of fists, this sort of spiritual antagonism I have to the shaved head, the stares, defiant bronze-statue, from the poster that I pass on my way to market? Is it another Jeanne in me (in each of us) that starts warily at the picture, the actual *portrait* of the mediæval girl warrior? The Jeanne d'Arc of Carl Dreyer is so perfect that we feel somehow cheated. This must be right. This must be right ... therefore by some odd equivocal twist of subconscious logic, *I* must be wrong. I am put in the wrong, therefore I clench my fists. Heaven is within you ... therefore I stand staring guiltily at bronze figures cut upon a church door, at friezes upon the under-gables of a cathedral that I must stare up at, see in slices as that incomparable Danish artist made me see Jeanne in her perhaps over-done series of odd sliced portraits (making particularly striking his studies of the judges and the accusers of Jeanne, as if seen by Jeanne her self from below) overwhelming bulk of ecclesiastical political accusation. I know in my mind that this is a great tour de force, perhaps one of the greatest. But I am left wary, a little defiant. Again why and why and why and just, just why? Why am I defiant before one of the most exquisite and consistent works of screen art and perfected craft that it has been our immeasurable privilege to witness?

One, I am defiant for this reason (and I have worked it out carefully and with agony: I and you and the baker's boy beside me and Mrs Captain Jones-Smith's second maid and our own old Nanna and somebody else's gardener and the honeymoon boy and girl and the old sporting colonel and the tennis teacher and the crocodile of young ladies from the second pension to the left as you turn to the right by the market road that branches off before the stall where the old lady sells gentians and single pinks and Alpenrosen each in their season (just now it is somewhat greenish valley-lilies) are in no need of such brutality. Not one of us, not one of us is in need of this stressing and

stressing, this poignant draining of hearts, this clarion call to pity. A sort of bugle note rises and with it our own defiance. I am asked to join an army of incorruptibles to which long and long since, I and the baker's boy and the tennis champion in the striped red sash have given our allegiance. This great Dane Carl Dreyer takes too damn much for granted. Do I *have* to be cut into slices by this inevitable pan-movement of the camera, these suave lines to left, up, to the right, back, all rhythmical with the remorseless rhythm of a scimitar? Isn't this incomparable Dane Dreyer a very blue-beard, a Turk of an ogre for remorseless cruelty? Do we have to have the last twenty four hours' agony of Jeanne stressed and stressed and stressed, in just this way, not only by the camera but by every conceivable method of dramatic and scenic technique? Bare walls, the four scenes of the trial, the torture room, the cell and the outdoors about the pyre, are all calculated to drive in the pitiable truth like the very nails on the spread hands of the Christ. Do we need the Christ-nails driven in and pulled out and driven in and drawn out, while Jeanne already numb and dead, gazes dead and numb at accuser and fumbles in her dazed hypnotized manner towards some solution of her claustrophobia? I am shut in here, I want to get out. I want to get out. And instead of seeing in our minds the very ambrosial fields toward which that stricken soul is treading, foot by foot like the very agony toward skull-hill, we are left pinned like some senseless animal, impaled as she is impaled by agony. This is *not* good enough. There is some slur on the whole of human consciousness, it is necessary to stress and stress and stress the brute side of mystic agony this way. Somehow, something is wrong here. An incomparable art, an incomparable artist, an actress from whom any but praise were blasphemy ... and what happens?

I do not mind crying (though I do mind crying) when I see a puppy kicked into a corner but I do mind standing aside and watching and watching *and* watching and being able to do nothing. That is something of the antagonism I think that crept in, that is something of the something that made me feel I ought to go again, to be fair, to be *sure* what it was that upset me, perhaps cowardice on my own part, some deep sub-conscious strata or layer of phobia that I myself, so un-Jeanne-like, was unwilling to face openly. I said to myself next morning I will get this right; I am numb and raw, I myself watched Jeanne d'Arc being burnt alive at Rouen last night ... and I myself must go again ... ah, that is just it. We do not go and see a thing that is real, that is real beyond realism, AGAIN. I said I will go again but I did not go again. I did not and I don't think I failed any inner 'light', any focus of consciousness in so ceding to my own new lapse. I can NOT watch this thing impartially and it is the first film of the many that I have consistently followed that I have drawn away from. This is perhaps the last and greatest tribute to the sheer artistry and cunning of the method and the technique of Carl Dreyer. I pay him my greatest compliment. His is one film among all films, to be judged differently, to be approached differently, to be viewed as a masterpiece, one of the absolute masterpieces of screen craft. Technically, artistically, dramatically, this is a master piece. But, but, but, but, but ... there is a Jeanne sobbing before us, there is a small Jeanne about to be kicked by huge hob-nailed boots, there is a Jeanne whose sturdy child-wrist is being twisted by an ogre's paw because forsooth she wears a bit of old hard hammered unwieldy bulk of gold upon one finger, there is a numb hypnotized creature who stares with dog-like fidelity, toward the sly sophist who directs

her by half-smile, by half-nod, by imperceptible lift of half an eye brow toward her defaming answers, there is a Jeanne or a Joan whose wide great grey eyes fill with round tears at the mention of her mother ('say your pater noster, you don't know your pater noster? you do? well who taught it to you?') there is a Jeanne or Joan or Johanna or Juana upon Jeanne or Jean or Johanna or Juana. They follow one another with precision, with click, with *monotony*. Isn't that a little just it? There is another side to all this, there is another series of valuations that can not perhaps be hinted at consistently in this particular presentation of this one kicked little puppy of a Jeanne or a Joan or a Johanna. Isn't it just that? Isn't the brute side of the flawless type, the Jeanne d'Arc of all peoples, of all nations, the world's Jeanne d'Arc (as the world's Christ) a little too defiantly stressed, a little too acutely projected? I know after the first half of the second reel all that. I know all, all that. Just that round child face lifted 'who taught you your pater noster?' gives me all, all that. I do not mean to say that there could have been any outside sort of beatific screen craft of heavenly vision. I don't mean that. But Jeanne kicked almost, so to speak, to death, still had her indomitable vision. I mean Jeanne d'Arc talked openly with angels and in this square on square of Danish protestant interior, this trial room, this torture room, this cell, there was no hint of angels. The angels were there all the time and if Jeanne had reached the spiritual development that we must believe this chosen comrade of the warrior Michael must have reached, the half-hypnotized numb dreary physical state she was in, would have its inevitable psychic recompense. The Jeanne d'Arc of the incomparable Dreyer it seems to me, was kicked towards the angels. There were not there, nor anywhere, hint of the angelic wing tip, of the winged sandals and the two-edged sword of Michael or of the distillation of maternal pity of their 'familiar' Margaret. Father, mother, the 'be thou perfect' perfected in Jeanne d'Arc as the boy of Nazareth, were in no way psychically manifest. Such psychic manifestation I need hardly say, need be in no way indicated by any outside innovation of cross lights or of superimposed shadows. It is something in something, something behind something. It is something one feels, that you feel, that the baker's boy, that the tennis champion, that the army colonel, that the crocodile of English and Dutch and mixed German-Swiss (come here to learn French) feels. We are numb and beaten. We won't go a second time. The voice behind me that says wistfully, taken unawares, 'I wish it was one of those good American light things' even has its place in critical consciousness. For all our preparation, we are unprepared. This Jeanne d'Arc is sprung on us and why should it be? There is a reason for most things. I think the reason is that it doesn't link up straight with human consciousness. There is a gap somewhere. We criticise many films, sometimes for crudity, sometimes for sheer vicious playing up to man's most febrile sentiment, sometimes for cruelty or insincerity. We criticise Jeanne d'Arc for none of these things.

The Jeanne d'Arc of the incomparable artist Carl Dreyer is in a class by itself. And that is the trouble with it. It shouldn't be.

RUSSIAN FILMS

The Editor of *Close Up* has asked me to write about Russian Films. I say, I want to write about Russian Films, and then I say but why should I? One does not sit down and write about the Book of Job or about Ruth in the corn, or about the harlot Rahab. The new great outstanding Russian films are in spirit Biblical films, they do not need to be written about. They are, and they stand, and will stand as long as the sheer material medium on which they are created will endure. No ... they will endure longer than that. The drive behind the Russian film at the moment is a religious drive. The ideas that have already been hammered in are as authentic and as great (if I may be forgiven an apparent exaggeration) as those carved in lightning on the rock of Sinai. For the Russian Film at the moment deals with hunger, with starvation, with murder, with oppression, with adultery, with incest, with infanticide, with childbirth, with the very throes of childbirth itself. Many of these films will be released in Germany. Certain others will be shown only to select audiences, specialists in political economy, psychology or psychiatry.

Well ... to be practical. Why should English people see these films, why should Americans? Let us be practical by all means. Why should the average every day hard working, straightforward Englishmen or the vibrant 'go and get 'em Americans' read the Bible. They shouldn't. If your life is full, if your road is straight, if your destiny is straightforward and you see the end, the goal of your life right in your own conscience, why you should be bothered with tales of murder and rape (for that is what the Old Testament consists of mainly) or with idealistic theories of friendship and brotherhood and poetic imaginative stories about sparrows and farthings and candlesticks and lamps and lilies, as set forth in the so-called gospels. Why should you disturb yourself with the ancient internecine history of the Old Testament, why would you unbalance yourself with the mystical doctrine of the New if your life is straight and your conscience is straight and your business is flourishing and your children are well and your cook is adequate. Why, why should people be tortured, be devitalized, be discouraged, be troubled? Why? I don't for one moment want to perturb anybody or force anything down throats that are not starving. The New Testament and the Old Testament are for people who are hungry, literally, spiritually hungry. So in a sense these Russian films. Many people will not want to see them, and why should they? To many people the Bible, even though they may treat it reverently, is a boring old volume and one utterly out of the general trend of living. But on the other hand, to the specialist in warfare, in politics, in political economy, in literature, in poetry, the bible is a never ending source of pure delight, of intellectual stimulus, of poetic charm. Those who must have the best in literature, in mystic doctrine, must eventually turn to the teachings of the minor prophets and the Prophet. So those who in no way sever life from art and religion from bread and butter or, if you prefer it, bread and red wine or white wine, these

Russian productions will offer a sustenance indeed like 'that shadow of a great rock', in the very 'weary land' of international dissension and internal discord.

For the world of the film to-day (there is no getting away from it) is no longer the world of the film, it is *the* world. It is only those who are indifferent to the world itself and its fate, who can afford to be indifferent to the fate of the film industry and the fate of the film art. The industry and the art are still divorced in most of the countries of Europe and the States of America. But no, not entirely divorced. There has never been, perhaps since the days of the Italian Renaissance, so great a 'stirring' in the mind and soul of the world consciousness. The 'stirring' shows itself in little things, in the great-little people, in the very great and in the people. I was told the other day by one of the most intelligent of the English producers (in fact, by the most vibrantly intelligent mind that I have encountered anywhere in the film world) that the fate of the producers hangs for the large part not on the West End London theatre-goers, but on the provinces, and that the small town provincial box offices are demanding more and more and MORE 'thick-ear stuff'. Well, where is this leading us? Concessions have been made to the public and (I heard the same complaint from one of the great German directors) the film art, the film industry is now in a state of psychic fixation. For the 'thick-ear' has set the standard, the slight concession has become a great concession and the demand of the box office is fast becoming a command.

Give me what I can sell. Right. You are right. Say to the box office you are right. They *are* right. Goods is goods, and if the people demand laudanum in bottles and raw spirits instead of the red wine and white wine of intellectual sustenance, by all means give them laudanum in bottles and raw, raw spirits. But do the people demand this? This is what I say, *do* they, *do* they? How do we know what the people want, have the people really a voice in all this matter? *The* people, I mean not just people. How do we know what the people want until the people have seen what they may or might want. The people do not know what film art is, so how can the people demand film art? The people sickened by the scent of laudanum, feeling numbness threaten stability and integrity say in many cases, *no* films. To the people, films stand in many, many instances for poison, for dope in its most pernicious essence, for aphrodisiacs that stupefy and drain the senses and cripple the desires. Because certain inferior bottles have held aphrodisiacs and raw spirits, and even more pernicious dopes, are all the flasks, and jars and bottles in the world to be damned and smashed equally? Is Egyptian porcelain that has held the heart of a Pharaoh and the wine goblets of Felenia and the crystals of Venice and the gold chalices of the Grail and the flask of Chianti, straw-bound flasks of the Tuscan foot-hills to be damned and smashed before the contents are even so much as sampled? The pity is that it is only the connoisseur and the specialists that have, at the moment, access to this thing we must now unreservedly term film ART. It is as much a duty of the educated classes and the connoisseur, the privileged classes in all countries, to see that the great art productions of each country are made generally accessible, as it was at one time the fiery mission of certain in office to translate the Bible. There is a great work, a great mission entrusted to the enlightened and privileged. And we dare not shirk responsibility.

The art is there. The achievement is assured. The great problem, in fact the only problem is the problem of presenting this art. I have had the privilege of talking with

Russians and Germans during the last month, with great minds of both these nations. The Germans (those, needless to say, of the great generous-beyond-pettiness variety) said 'we as a defeated nation feel more and more the power and greatness of England. England before the war was first in Europe. To-day England is first.' We spoke, possibly not as the average Englishman, not as the average American when we sought to meet that humility-in-greatness half way. Our answer was final, prophetic and unassailable. It was: 'you are *not* a defeated nation.' Germany with its future before it grubs down, down to the root of things, says 'we failed here, we failed there.' England says 'we have never failed, look at Trafalgar, we will never fail.' It is the worm in the wood that eats away the mast head, not the mighty tempest. England in its greatness preparing for the tempest, is in danger of neglecting (we must say it) the very root and fibre of its greatness.

For England whose great pride is rightly its sense of fair play in sport and politics and war is apt sometimes to play unfair to itself. Is not this fear of Russian films really a fear of itself? Why should the Labour parties rise and threaten the dignity and modesty of Buckingham Palace because they see the down-trodden and age-long degraded illiterate peasants of the great Russian steppes and sordid St Petersburg slums rising and storming the over-ornate Byzantine porches of the ex-Czar's cruelly remote and indifferent Winter Palace? There is no reason for the English working classes to rise and break and tear and rend. Would it not be a stimulus to the very pride of these salt-of-the-earth English working classes to see that these Russians were a different stock and root and yet behaved heroically? Heroism is without nationality and should be without prejudice. We should not think David was a Jew, Leonidas a Greek. These are epic characters, and as long as we are citizens or subjects of the world, the vibration set up by the heroism of a David or the beauty and restraint of a Leonidas belongs to us, to each one of us individually. We grow in pride, and self-respect and divinity when we see acts of heroism, of beauty, of unqualified valour. David's courage is my courage and Leonidas' death, my death. So in facing 'mother' with her red flag, I am 'mother', a mother to these people whose martyrdom is our martyrdom and whose crown is our crown.

We are no longer nations. We are or should be *a* nation. We all know everything about the so-called Great War, that A was base, that B was good, that C was heroic, that D lost some diplomatic papers, that E was really to blame, that it was all caused really by F shooting G. We know that. We have witnessed it, died for it. Well, then let us shuffle the cards, get down and back to values. Say I *am* my brother's keeper, and if A suffers, B suffers. If C has smallpox, no doubt D will catch it and hand it on to E, and maybe F even. In succouring C I am not being charitable (that is the joke of it), I am really being selfish. For if one suffers, eventually the other must, and if one nation to-day befouls its own integrity and strikes blindly at a lesser nation, the whole world, willy (as they say) nilly must be sooner or later dragged into the fray. Men must fight, it is true, just as women must have children. But don't let's fight if we must fight, blindly, let us *know* what it is all about, nations must understand each other, then if C is fighting D, there is much more fun to be got out of it altogether. We must know, know, KNOW. One of the most distinguished women of the political non-militant suffragette period said to me (in 1914) 'I have studied the problem from every angle,

but I can dare not question our cause for going to war. If I questioned it for one moment, I should go mad.' I did not say to her then, 'well, go mad.' I would now. I would say. 'If you haven't the courage and decency to face the thing straight now and for all time you don't deserve your sanity, and I hope you lose it.' None of us in the light of later events dare slur over our mentality for the sake of any personal fear of intellectual or physical consequences. I do not for one moment doubt the justice of England's heroic move in '14. But I will say then as now there was even among the most enlightened a tendency to scrap blindly brain for sentiment.

Well ... what is this anti-Russian feeling but a sentiment? What do you know of the revolution? What do you know of the Russians? Have you studied the Problem? Do you know how the 'workers' suffered? I do not mean that I in any way question the political justice, the rigid watchfulness of certain of the authorities here in England. The Great Strike and its dramatic denouement is still a matter of wonder and admiration among all political thinkers on the Continent. But the greatness of the Moscow art productions that it was my unique privilege to see last month in Berlin, puts the question of the Russian film (I speak naturally only of these real art productions) on a plane transcending politics. These films do not say to the British or the American workman, go and do likewise. They say look, we are your brothers, and this is how we suffered. The whole authoritative teaching of *Potemkin*, of *Mother*, of *The End of Saint Petersburg*, or *Ten Days That Shook the World*, are historical and almost religiously autochthonous character. There is no outward influence ... no passing to and fro of foreign soldiers, in Russia for and about and through and with the Russians. It is putting Russia (real Russia) on the map, not handing out the saccharine opera bouffe stuff that Hollywood offers us, for instance, in Greta Garbo's *Karenina*, or in the yet unreleased *Feodora* of Pola Negri.

I do not say that *Karenina* and *Feodora* have no place in the scheme of things. They are both barley water, pink lemonade through a straw to quench naïf palates on a hot day at the fair. They are not wine red or white, they are not even poison or raw spirits, and that perhaps is one of their great dangers. They are pleasant, skilfully photographed, both of the actresses in these two cases are women of talent and undoubted personality. But Madame Baranowskaja standing before the onrushing feet of the great stallions of the Czarist's imperial bodyguard is in another category altogether. She is a figure of tradition, historical, mystical, Biblical.

The great horses rush forward. The crowds break before them. 'Mother' who has innocently given information concerning her own son (in this the unsuccessful pre-war abortive revolution) is left standing alone, clasping the discarded banner of her people ... well that is all. The horses rush on across the iron bridge, and mother is left lying in the mud, clasping her riddled banner. Is this a 'red' flag in the sense of murder and outrage and insane threats of an illiterate gutter mob? That is what 'red' stands for to so many, many intelligent and educated people. The red flag of 'mother' as she lies, a peasant woman, trampled to unsightly death at the frigid command of an aristocratic cavalry officer, is as red as any Flanders poppy. It is only one of the most crass illiteracy who could face the beauty of 'mother' and remain untouched and unredeemed.

So with *Ten Days*, so again with *The End of Saint Petersburg*. The teaching is a teaching of brotherhood, of equality in its most sane and stable form. We are hungry.

You are not hungry. We are starving, and the baby in my arms is not yet quite dead. Well ... we know all that. But *do* we know all that? Do we really know until we have seen the Russian film as presented by the great Moscow art people, not the insane outpourings of an insane group-mind, nor the saccharine washed-out and sugared over productions of a commercially proficient colony, I do not mean, by that last diatribe, altogether against Hollywood. I mean yes and yes and yes, and no and no and no. Hollywood with reservations is all right (up to a point) for America, for up to a point *it is* America, slick, quick, superficial and stylish, and oh, so, so amusing. Yes, I love Laura La Plante with her slick little mannerisms, and no one could be a more enthusiastic 'fan' of little Patsy Ruth Miller than I am. Patsy Ruth Miller is an exquisitely finished artist. As is Rod la Rocque (to name one among many), Rod la Rocque with his charm and Buddy this and Buddy that who all have a place in my affections. Certain of the productions of the foreign directors in Hollywood leave nothing to be desired; but that is America, is Hollywood, and England has other problems. The problem of England and the beauty of England (psychically) is never that of the Scandinavians, and technically at least it should learn and study *not* from America, but in and through the Germanic and Russian mediums. Hollywood has put America on the film map, certainly Germany has its representatives of giant realism in the film world, and Russia has surpassed everybody. Now where is England?

Well, here is another problem, and to state my ideas and ideals for England is hardly writing about Russia. But then it *is* really writing about Russia, for your technical problems are much the same. The Russian has taught us, for instance, the fallacy of the 'star' as stars and the idiocy of the painted drip curtain, the elaborate and false studio interior, the beauty of shadow and rain and general natural effect that achieves depth and reality and the heights of impressionistic artistry through *naturalness*. I heard an English producer say the other day 'but what we need is stars, our people get stiff before a camera.' Russia has taught us that every man, every woman and every child is a 'star'. We are all 'stars'. There is not one of us who, under skilful directorship cannot create a character, provided it is a real character and an English character, and not a diluted and febrile imitation of Hollywood being English, or Russian or Fiji Island-ish. Hollywood is Hollywood, and it is slick and it is straight, and it is American. Give me your English people and I will give you an English film tradition that will make the Germans and the Russians and the Americans green with envy. Well ... perhaps not a little hyperbole, I grant you. But give us a chance anyhow. Let the people and the directors get together. The camera men and the stars. The camera man *is* the star and the star *is* the director. Or should be.

But give us the English people and we will give you the English film. We want films of the people for the people, and this ... and this ... and this ... BY the people. The great new Russian idea is not to make star personalities, but to let personalities make stars. God has made us, and we have made ourselves and each one of us is a 'star' in embryo. Life and the film must not be separated, people and things must pass across the screen naturally like shadows of trees on grass or passing reflections in a crowded city window. The Russian has taught us that life and art are in no way to be severed and that people to be actors must first and last be people. The great German who I quote constantly said to me 'the screen cannot lie'. But the screen in England has lied constantly and

consistently about the English people, and in time foreign nations will cease to judge England by a past and vanished Trafalgar, and will expect nothing of a people who with such great wealth and with such rare and unique possibilities present so comparatively little on the screen that is really of political, sociological or artistic value. I do not mean (how could I) that all British films are rotten. One speaks naturally in extremes ... there is no time to discuss and too subtly differentiate. But I will say *for* the English films and *against* myself that one of the heads of the Moscow Art Film School said to me recently in Berlin 'I want to tell you one thing, and I want you to realize how sincerely I am speaking. I was impressed greatly with your *Dawn*. Your actress is magnificent, and your film altogether to be compared with the *best* of our Russian productions.' It will show you how weak I am in many matters, and how sometimes unreliable when I confess to you that I had to say to him, 'I have not seen it.'

Vol. IV, no. 3

March 1929

AN APPRECIATION

I was sitting in a warm corner of an exclusive Berlin restaurant just before Christmas. Our guest was late. One hardly expected him at all and had begun, as was agreed, before his arrival. I had not visited the sets of *Pandora*, but had been alive to each development and as keenly concerned as the most screen-struck school-girl over the various doings and *mots* and quaint sallies of the star, Miss Louise Brooks, who had been chosen finally after almost half a year's delay, for the somewhat problematical Lulu. 'What did Louise Brooks say to-day?'; ... 'O, she didn't say much. She was too busy complaining that the hen was a grandfather.' ... 'What hen?' ... 'Why, the lunch hen. She said it was a grandfather.' ... 'Did they get her another hen?' ... 'Certainly not. They didn't understand what she was saying. And besides, she had eaten it.' It was partly (not altogether) for this reason that our editor had an advantage over the rest of the company and learned much intimate matter about daily happenings that otherwise might have been reserved for more 'professional' converse. Perhaps, too, for this reason, I felt that I had a personal right to *Pandora*, that it personally was partly of my making, that I, too, had been introduced to the Sanctum and was on very familiar terms with the Olympians.

Also the Christmas Pudding ... 'What happened to the pudding?' ... 'Well, the dresser insisted that it was in a flat dish. I said a basin, and they brought a jelly mould. Louise Brooks said that the Christmas pudding she had had in London was not flat, but round – basin shape. That she had liked it very much, and lived on it for a week when she was dancing at the Café de Paris. She told the dresser (who had dressed people in England) that she knew or ought to know the shape of a Christmas pudding.' ... 'What happened?' ... 'I drew one on the architect's table. Pabst said "That is what I want. Round. Is it not, Herr Macpherson, round?"'

All very solemn. Herr Pabst (one feels one should write it Maestro, or Cher-Maitre) solemn, concerned, utterly 'wedded' to the least detail of his arrangement as to the last soul-shattering *dénouement*. The grain of mustard seed does not escape the eye of this almost mystically vigilant Austrian, neither does the spray of holly (and holly, Herr Macpherson?) – the immemorial symbol of some lost Druidic or Norse custom, still practised by the English-speaking races. The spray of holly became a symbol, invested with its mystery. 'WE' may be said to have assisted in the making of *Pandora*.

Mr Pabst arrived, very modest, utterly unassuming, almost 'not there'. But there he was, and we paid hardly any attention to his arrival, murmured something about 'you told us not to wait', went on eating, tried to get the waiter. The waiter arrived, people kept passing, coming, going ... Heinrich Mann, Olga Tschecchowa sweeping through in search of a table, Lee Parry ... the nordic air from the opening door shot cold winter into our snug interior, that Berlin, magnetic-north winter that exhilarates, heals, inspires.

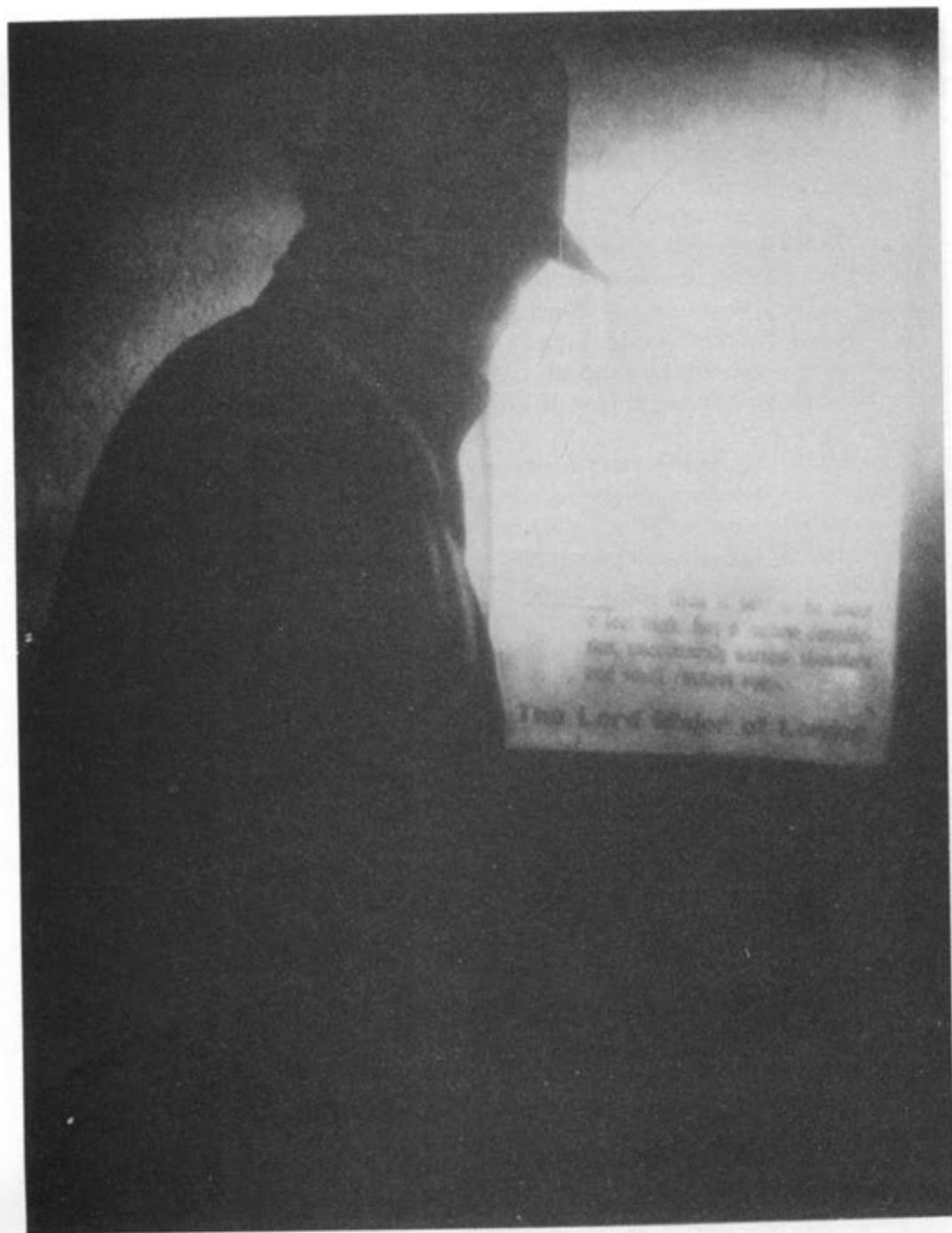
Mr Pabst said nothing. It was better to go on eating. He wanted nothing, yes; some soup, waving the waiter aside, must get rid of him somehow. Mr Pabst looked depressed. The rather wood-carved look of him, sitting with head hunched down, and shoulders hunched up, was somehow suggestive of depression. The soup arrived, he evidently did not want to talk. The soup was removed, he might have something, not much of anything. It arrived, some sort of 'hen', trusting it wasn't a grandfather. The hen was removed, black coffee ... Mr Pabst uttered. 'O, I am so unhappy.'

Unhappy? But why unhappy? Well, he was just unhappy. Did we mind if he didn't talk. Of course, there was no use, anyhow. No use of anything in Germany. What had Germany done, what had anyone done? What could anyone do? Everyone was against everything ... there was no use going on. He didn't want to smoke. Never smoked. He pushed back his coffee cup. Had Miss Brooks broken an ankle? Had the set in the London fog exploded by some process of self-combustion? Had spontaneous combustion of another sort blown up the whole of Staaken? What, anyhow, had happened? The Master uttered again. 'Now the French are doing things' ... 'Things? What things?'

The French, it appeared, had done a film called *Jeanne D'Arc*. Herr Pabst, it appeared, had just come from the early evening performance of *Jeanne D'Arc*, or *Johanna von Orleans*, at the Gloria Palast just round the corner. Well, was that it? *That* – it appeared to me – was 'nothing to write home about'. Mr Pabst thought otherwise. We were doomed, it seemed to hear nothing now of *Pandora*. The French had done a film, and that film was *Jeanne D'Arc* and no ... he lifted a priestly and solemn hand, he would hear nothing, no, nothing whatever, against that film. That film was perfect, such technique, such originality, such grandeur, such 'prickle' (does that mean sparkle or merely stickle?), such strength, such beauty, yes, beauty ... 'They have been able to make the experiment. TWO years ... France is doing that now. And we are making ...' (he quoted two current popular successes). Something no one had done in Germany, could never do, how could we expect to do it in a world of quickies? It was not so much the film that had depressed him as the fact that France was able to make the experiment, and Germany was going where it was. How could anyone 'here in Germany' expect to do anything ever?



'Lulu'. Louise Brooks in G. W. Pabst's film *Pandora's Box* (Vol. IV, no. 4, April 1929).



Pandora's Box. 'A sinister impression of Gustav Diesel as Jack the Ripper' (*ibid.*).

Now, I have written about *Jeanne D'Arc* a little spitefully and a little unharmoniously. *Jeanne D'Arc* (see, if you must, some *Close Up* or other, some twelve months back) set me out of key. It positively bullied me as no film has yet done. I was forced to pity, pity, pity. My affections and credulity were hammered. I was kicked. I was throttled. I was laid upon a torture rack. Quite solemnly I was burned at the stake and lifting eyes to heaven I had forgiven my malefactors. Yes, the magnificent technique of Dreyer did that for me. But was I moved? Was I inspired or touched? *Jeanne D'Arc*, as represented by Dreyer, illustrated for me that famous Corinthians Thirteenth:—*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned (etc., etc., etc.), and have not love I am nothing.*

I gave every sentiment of which I am capable to that marvellous demonstration of Falconetti. But one. I reserved far off, and unassailable, a sentiment that is never called forth and never inspired and never made to blossom by technical ability, by sheer perfection of medium, by originality and by intellectualism, no matter how dynamic ... that sentiment is love simply. I did not *love* the Joan of Dreyer and the 'French', as Mr Pabst must call them. I love and always will love the most modest feminine creation of this Viennese cher-maitre.

But how tell him all that? Here he is sitting over coffee, and yes, he has condescended to have just that half glass of white Rhine, it looks so gold, so he turns the stem of the wine glass meditatively. He is convinced for the moment in himself that he is nothing, he can say nothing for himself, and certainly he will say nothing for *Pandora*. Louisa (as he calls her) Brooks, yes, she has a hidden side, a strange quality. For himself there is nothing to be said. If the film is any good at all it is obvious it is going to be because Louisa Brooks has a strange quality ... 'There is another side to her.'

I must say that playing into his own hands, Mr Pabst has all unwittingly given the clue to that for which one searches. No amount of compelling clap-trap 'interview' journalese would draw just that fine phrase from him. We admit, and gladly, that the delightful elf-life spirit that remonstrated to a blandly puzzled Staaken waiter's '*was ist los?*' with the all-American '*Los?* It's not *los*, it's awful. It's a grand-father!' must have 'another side to her'. But who (I may at this moment be permitted forensically to ask) would ever discover, could ever have discovered that 'other side' but the perfectly preposterously modest director who sits facing us? 'Louisa' Brooks has another side to her. So, obviously, has Greta Garbo, Nielsen, the beautiful, more than beautiful Brigitte Helm, the calm-eyed Herthe van Walter, and the demure, delicious little Edith Jehanne.

All the women of Herr Pabst's creation, be it a simple super in a crowd scene or a waitress in a restaurant, have 'another side' to them.

At this point I bravely permitted myself to make a remark. '*Pandora* will be beautiful. Mr Macpherson says the highest, the highest things about it ... its atmosphere, its subtlety. He says the scene, for instance, of the Salvation Army in the foggy slum street is (I paused for the Gargantuan parallel) is "sheer Pabst".' I had found the right phrase, albeit the consultant on the court of last appeal for Christmas puddings had given it to me. 'This new film of G. W. Pabst is going to be (this is its highest glory) sheer Pabst.'

I write 'going to be', but last night the much-delayed *Pandora* was having its jubilant premiere at the Gloria Palast in Berlin. It is a grief to us that we could not be there, but

in ourselves we are assured that no premiere of *Pandora* could ever affect us more than our first film, our introduction, we might say, to the whole of the possibility of screen art – *Joyless Street*, seen here in Montreux some five years ago. *Joyless Street* was my never-to-be-forgotten premiere to the whole art of the screen, and G. W. Pabst was and is my first recognised master of the art.

The place of the Russians is assured, this is no moment with which to deal with them. But G. W. Pabst, being a European, is, in a way, a more subtle figure or symbol. He is, as it were, the link between the old tradition, pure art ideas of the French, of the Viennese, of (in a word) Europe and the new America and Near East. He is, in that, in a more precarious psychological position. He holds, as it were, the clue, must hold his position almost as the keystone to the vast aesthetic structure we call now unquestionably the Art of the Film. The Germans hold the key really, are the intermediaries between Russia and the outside world that still believes Red to be a symbol of murder and destruction.

The new Russians, to digress, in their ideas of humanity, of equality, of the sheltering and housing of the poor and outcast, are, it is apparent, the only government not only in Europe, but in the world, who seem literally to have considered the teaching of that much misunderstood Jew of Nazareth at its face value. 'Feed the poor,' 'Sell all that you have and give it to the poor.' 'The last shall be first,' etc., etc. There has been, to my knowledge, no effort on the part of any government nor on the part of any organised body, 'house' or 'senate', to make the film a medium for promulgation of ideas other than intellectually sterile and of moron entertainment.

This is really as a purely aesthetic critical aside, has nothing to do with politics and 'politicians', of which I know nothing and of whom I know not one. It stands regrettably to reason, however, if in some weird Utopia one should be called upon to judge a country by its aesthetic film output, one would have to acclaim the Soviet first, the German Republic second. The film, one might have said, has nothing to do with countries, education or civic reform, and certainly has nothing to do with aesthetics. But the day of that sort of talk is over. The film *is* recognised and the people and the peoples of this world are being judged, openly condemned, condoned or contaminated by their film output. We know that. We don't have to go further into it. It also seems unnecessary to add anything to the already vast bulk of technical and aesthetic appreciation of the work of G. W. Pabst. However, I cannot help adding to it ... as one cannot help looking at and appraising flowers in a garden.

For what are the creations of G. W. Pabst but growing, vivid and living beauty? They move and glow before him like sun-flowers to the sun. I have taken an almost diabolic delight in following the career of each of his stars. For no star, once G. W. Pabst had adequately placed her, seems to me to belong to any other. I know nothing of Greta Garbo personally, and it would be out of place to suggest that the curious disintegration of her screen personality has anything to do with her personally.

Let us put Miss Garbo out of it entirely and say that Greta Garbo, under Pabst, was (I quote an earlier article) a Nordic ice-flower. Under preceding and succeeding directors she was either an over-grown hoyden or a buffet Guinness-please-miss. The performance of Greta Garbo in that subtle masterpiece, *Anna Karenina (Love)*, was inexplicably vulgar and incredibly dull. It was only by the greatest effort of will that one

could visualise in that lifeless and dough-like visage a trace of the glamour, the chiselled purity, the dazzling, almost unearthly beauty that one recognised so acutely in the very-young figure of the half-starved aristocratic official's daughter in *Joyless Street*. Greta Garbo, in a little house dress, an apron and low slippers, sweeping the passage of the improvident home in *Joyless Street*, remained an aristocrat. Greta Garbo, as the wife of a Russian Court official and the mistress of a man of the world, diademed and in sweeping robes in the Palace of Karenin, was a house-maid at a carnival.

Perhaps the example of Greta Garbo is an exaggerated instance, and, I repeat, the young actress herself may have had little say in the hands of those who make her the devil in films where Gilbert is the flesh.

Take Brigitte Helm, who is always an artist. I have not seen all her films, but without question her performance of the blind girl in *Jeanne Ney* is one of her most striking – a feat that really lifted her above the realm of legitimate artists. She is almost an ‘illegitimate’ magician. ‘Brigitte Helm did not look blind,’ I heard repeated of her in Berlin, ‘she *was* blind.’

Isn't that it? G. W. Pabst is almost a magician, his people are ‘created, not made’? There is, indeed ‘another side’ to every one of his women, whether it be the impoverished little daughter of post-war Vienna or one of the extras in an orgy scene, each and every one is shown as a ‘being’, a creature of consummate life and power and vitality. G. W. Pabst brings out the vital and vivid forces in women as the sun in flowers. Brigitte Helm lifts a head like a proud Madonna lily. Her eyes in *Jeanne Ney* are the wide staring eyes of the blind, but in her blindness she is alive, aware, acute, clairvoyantly attuned to every sound, every movement, every shade of light and every shift of sun and shadow. Brigitte Helm did not look blind, she *was* blind. I was enthralled, to find in talking to Mr Pabst on my first meeting with him last summer, that I had myself gleaned the essence of her acting. I said ‘I don't feel that Brigitte Helm is acting. I feel that she is in a trance. That she has the power to throw herself into a trance and to move and speak and live a life quite outside her own personal experience.’ I thought my remark might meet with his disapproval or in some way seem over-drawn to him. But not at all. He was delighted. ‘Ah,’ he said, ‘you see. You have it. Do you know in that scene when she walks with Jeanne Ney in the streets of Paris, she was almost killed.’ ... ‘Almost killed?’ ... ‘The actor driving the taxi was not a driver really, and had had to learn. He was not very sure of his steering. Brigitte Helm walked right in front of him. I had to run before the camera to save her. Do you know why? She was blind. She simply did not see it.’ The force of vision of this acute director and the strength of spirit of Brigitte Helm had actually so transformed her. This miracle of acting had been achieved. She did not look blind, she *was* blind.

So, in a lesser degree, but in no less vivid manner, each and every creation of G. W. Pabst does not ‘look’ good or bad, happy or unhappy, wise or foolish, she ‘is’ for the time being what she typifies. G. W. Pabst, their creator, cannot realise how a thing ‘created, not made’, must forever take precedence to the most technically perfected image. I know that the image of the Maid or Orleans in the Dreyer conception is technically flawless. But to me (and not a few others) the *Jeanne D'Arc* is (I repeat it) *made*, the Image is carved and constructed.

Imagine Brigitte Helm in this role and directed by Pabst ... we scarcely dare imagine such a thing. It were out of place to speak seriously of mediums and mediumistic

ALL
AMERICANS
in
FRANCE
SWITZERLAND
ENGLAND
are printing their books
AT THE SHOP
of the
MASTER PRINTER
MAURICE DARANTIERE
DIJON FRANCE

trances ... but there are times when art so far transcends itself that we are forced into another set of symbols. The *Jeanne D'Arc* of Dreyer is art carried to its highest – wood-carving, if you will, bronze or even mediaeval silver, but it remains art as carvings on a cathedral. The life-like Image of a saint set at dusk in a cathedral causes us to cry 'magnificent', the opening of the violets in our garden touches us but causes no astonishment. We take it so for granted.

I have not taken part in the conversation that has been going on. I have not even been listening. (You will remember that we are seated in a warm corner of a Berlin restaurant just before Christmas.) There is some little stir and probably we must be going. I must say just one thing. 'Mr Pabst, I must ask you one thing' – he turned courteously from weightier matter – 'about, if you don't mind, *Joyless Street*.'

I had seen a still of a dead body, a very beautiful still of the figure of the mundane lady who, you will recall, is killed in the 'house' she went to with her lover. 'I wanted to know about that body of Madame —— ... I was wondering about it.' Mr Pabst did not wait for me to explain fully, he burst into a torrent of wailing and apology. 'O, a dead body ... a dead body ... there is no such thing as a dead body on the screen ...' One remembered an anecdote he had told, quietly and with no acumen, no hint of bitterness, of some half-dozen or more of his companions in their internment camp who, technically imprisoned and detained, had, after four hideous mutilated years of waiting, deliberately killed themselves *after the armistice*. 'The Valley of the Shadow of Death' has touched each one of us, perhaps none so poignantly as this vivid, sensitive Austrian artist, who, ignorant that war had even been declared, was seized with his companions on a returning New York passenger ship and, vibrating with his love of life and love of love and beauty, was buried dead-alive in that particular crowded barracks. Mr Pabst touched lightly enough on incidents of his companions who died there naturally (if such a word can ironically be used in this connection) during the period of war activity. He became hilarious and gay at the mention of the young French officers who (in the now credited stage and screen manner) made friends for the sake of whiling away tedium of forced inactivity and isolation. He makes more than a movie set of the young Americans who assisted the prisoners with the perilous underground tunnel from their dug-out, so that certain of their number could periodically 'escape' for an hour or two, to get warm and have a chat and, one hopes, some little snack of those then so justly famous tinned pork and beans in the friendly enemy quarters. All a game ... a somewhat grim and ironical performance (so he seems to intimate), but none to blame, not certainly that debonnaire French officer and that cluster of superficially humane Americans ... only his eyes went very strange and his face set when he spoke of his companions who saw fit to do away with themselves *after the armistice*.

We must leave that, we must leave dead bodies of heroes achieving no name on tablets set at a base of statues nor on gold-wreathed slabs set ornate and respectable above bank-presidents' mahogany roll-top desks. Our concern is not with politics or politicians, nor the housing of the poor nor the educating of the ignorant. Our concern is with screen art simply ... and with a particular still that did not match up with the cinema scene itself.

'I saw *Joyless Street* a second time. It was only last year. Then I did make a point of looking for the dead body and *did* see it. The first time I was so enchanted with light

filtering through those shutters in that half-darkened room, I was so interested in the mass effect you got with the men's thick shoulders and blocked in shapes ... is it possible that in the earlier version the shots showing the dead woman on the floor were for some reason deleted?'

'Ah,' interrupted Mr Pabst delightedly, 'I did not *mean* you to see the body of the murdered woman on the floor.'