'The leaven, regarding the lump': Feminism and Cinematic Spectatorship in H.D.'s Writing on Film

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Katherine Elizabeth Hopewell

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Abstract

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The poet and novelist H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) published eleven essays on the cinema in the film journal *Close Up* between 1927 and 1929. This thesis analyses H.D.'s writing on film from a feminist perspective. It also explores the connections between her commentary on film and the feminist aspects of some of her fictional works. Largely based upon archival film research, this thesis incorporates a much greater amount of film history than has yet been brought to the study of H.D. Placing her within the cultural context of the time, it also represents the first extended examination of H.D. in relation to popular culture.

The thesis is structured in three parts, each comprising two chapters and considering H.D.'s writings on film from a different viewpoint. In the first part, H.D.'s cultural position as a woman and film critic is debated. In assessing the impact of gender upon H.D.'s construction of a public, critical voice it is argued that the association of the feminine with popular forms of entertainment led H.D. to exaggerate her difference from the mass of cinema spectators. Evidence of H.D.'s contradictory position is found in the discrepancies between the high-culture stance adopted in her film writing, and in the feminist themes and implied authorial positions in her novels *Bid Me to Live* (written in 1939) and *Her* (written in 1927).

In the central section, H.D.'s critique of women in film is examined in the context of representations of women in silent cinema. Her commentary on film is found to contain astute remarks on the commodification of women on the screen, as well as a sophisticated and sustained attempt to theorize the position of the feminine in the visual economy, which bears comparison with contemporary feminist film scholarship. It is argued that H.D.'s feminist critique of the cinematic gaze re-emerges in the subversive narrative strategies of two novellas: *Nights* (1935) and 'Kora and Ka' (1935).

In the third part, the focus narrows to analyse H.D.'s response to one particular film actress, namely Greta Garbo. The extent to which H.D.'s continuing re-evaluation of the cultural significance of the figure of Helen of Troy was inspired by Garbo's star image is deliberated. From the first encounter with Garbo's image on screen recorded in *Close Up* in 1927, to the meditations on a Garbo-like figure in *The Usual Star* (1934) and finally in the reworking of the myths of Helen in *Helen in Egypt* (1961) it is suggested that Garbo's screen career provided H.D. with a prototype on which to base increasingly complex ideas about women, narrative and identity.

The strategy adopted in each section is to establish the feminist issues raised by H.D.'s essays on film, and then go on to explore these same issues as they arise in her fictional texts. Repeatedly, it is found that H.D.'s fictional work takes up a question treated with relative simplicity in *Close Up* and develops it into a complex meditation on the inter-relation between gender, power and art.

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Kathy Hopewell, Bangor, 2003.

Introduction.

Many studies of the work of H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) have appeared over the last thirty years, finally dispelling the view of her, which was current during her life and for some years after, as 'associated mainly with an escapist classicism' (Friedman and Du Plessis, 1990, xiii). Feminist literary scholars in particular have helped to establish H.D. as central to the study of both modernism and of women's writing, studying her poetry, fiction and essays from biographical, psychoanalytic and textual approaches (amongst many others). This thesis is an investigation of the culturally and historically specific factors in H.D.'s response to film, and is motivated by the desire to place H.D. more completely within the cultural context of her time than such scholarly work has yet done. One aspect of my approach in particular represents a new departure for H.D. studies; namely the examination of the relationship of H.D. to the popular culture of her time. This shift of emphasis is offered as one more possible approach in the richly plural field of scholarly writing on H.D., and as part of the collective project to establish perspectives from which to assess the significance of her life and work.

H.D.'s writing spanned a great number of genres, of which film reviewing was only one. As a poet she came to prominence with short lyric poetry published under the Imagist label in the 1910s, and her later poems, including the epic sequences of *Trilogy* and *Helen in Egypt*, date from the 1940s and 1950s respectively. Susan Friedman and Rachel Blau Du Plessis have described these texts as 'defining works of modernity' (1990, xi). H.D. was also engaged in the modernist project of experimentation with new strategies in prose narrative, and produced full-length novels such as *Her* (1981/1984d) and *Bid Me to Live* (1960/1984a), and several novellas during the late 1920s and early 1930s (which

are of particular significance for this study, coming as they do immediately after H.D.'s exposure to film) such as 'Kora and Ka' (1934/1991) and *Nights* (1935/1986). H.D.'s oeuvre also comprises some important translations from the Greek (primarily the works of Sappho and Euripides) and a group of memoirs including *Tribute to Freud* (1956/1985b) and recollections of Ezra Pound in *End to Torment* (1979).

Prior to the 1960s, H.D. was known, if known at all, for the early Imagist lyrics, but feminist literary criticism inspired (and continues to fuel) an interest in H.D.'s oeuvre as a whole.[1] As part of the project to reconsider modernism from the perspective of gender, H.D.'s importance has steadily grown, and many full-length studies of her work have now appeared. One of the earliest was an analysis of H.D. and Freud (Friedman, 1981) and considerations of H.D. and the psychoanalytic have continued to appear (such as Buck, 1991). The 1990s began with Susan Friedman's second major study of H.D., this time concentrating on her prose in the context of modernism and poststructuralist readings (Friedman, 1990). This decade saw the appearance of monographs placing H.D. in the different contexts of Decadence (Laity, 1996), classicism (Gregory, 1997) and lesbianism (Collecott, 1999). By comparison, H.D.'s writing on film is only just beginning to attract widespread critical attention, and this interest was accelerated recently by the re-publication of eight of the eleven essays and reviews she wrote for the journal *Close Up* (Donald, Friedberg and Marcus, 1998).

H.D.'s essays on film were published between 1927 and 1929, but her interest in film dates from at least 1920 and probably earlier when she was an avid

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[1] See Friedman and Du Plessis (1990, xi-xvi) for an account of the development of H.D.'s critical reputation.

cinema-goer.[2] Her active involvement in writing about cinema and in film-making as screen actor and film editor, occurred in the late 1920s, all in the space of a few years. *Close Up* was founded in 1927, and was produced and funded by POOL, the film and publishing company owned by H.D.'s long-term partner Bryher. It was co-edited by Bryher and Kenneth Macpherson. *Close Up* was the first British publication to examine film as an art form but did not restrict itself to what would now be considered part of the European, alternative cinema tradition. Indeed, in her own essays, H.D. touches on many different films, ranging across avant-garde and commercial cinema, including comedy, epic spectacle, documentary and melodrama. There is an impressive range, also, in terms of the number of references made. H.D. alludes to twenty-five film actors and over thirty films by name, usually demonstrating first-hand knowledge of them and their significance. Equally, there is a broad sweep in terms of the time period covered: the earliest films mentioned by H.D. date from around 1915 and the most recent film is *Pandora's Box* (1929).

H.D.'s short, privately-financed career as a film actor occurred concurrently with the writing and publication of the *Close Up* essays. She appeared in two films which now only survive in fragmentary form: *Wingbeat* (1927) and *Foothills* (1929) both produced by the POOL company. Around this time, H.D. was also involved (almost certainly as a member of the cast) in a lost film, directed by Oswell Blakeston, entitled *I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside* (1927), which mocked the pretensions of highbrow critics.[3] H.D.'s experiences in front of the camera culminated in her appearance in the feature length film

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[2] See Bryher (1962) and Brown (1988).
[3] Deke Dusinberre (1980, 37) briefly discusses this film in his essay on the British avant-garde tradition and states that the only remaining copy was destroyed by fire during World War Two.

Borderline (1930), also a POOL production. *Borderline* was directed by H.D.'s lover Kenneth Macpherson, and featured Paul Robeson and his wife Eslanda. H.D. wrote a pamphlet (1930/1998b) to encourage the sympathetic reception of *Borderline* (an experimental film with inter-racial sex as its subject). The film was unsuccessful with audiences in Britain but won the much-prized admiration of the respected Austrian director G.W. Pabst. H.D. is also known to have been involved with editing the film, a fact not mentioned in the pamphlet which is taken up almost entirely with praise for Macpherson's rare gifts as director, cameraman and artist.

Recently, studies of *Borderline* have begun to appear which place the film, and H.D.'s part in it, in the context of European avant-garde film and cinema culture, including articles by Jean Walton (1996) and Annette Debo (2001). However, as already indicated, no critical studies of H.D. have yet fully historicized her commentary on the cinema, although the following brief account of the variety of approaches taken during the last thirty years to H.D.'s connections with film will demonstrate what work already exists in this area.

In contrast to my primary aim, which is to gain insight into H.D.'s positioning as a critic and as a spectator, many previous studies of H.D. have deployed H.D.'s references to film solely to illuminate her literary output. This is the goal, for instance, of an early piece by John Peck, who, in a study of neoplatonism in H.D.'s work, cites her description of Greta Garbo in *Close Up* as one example among many of her employment of the concept of the eidolon (1975). Appearing a few years later, Charlotte Mandel's article 'Garbo/Helen: the self-projection of beauty by H.D.' (1980), was the first to analyse H.D.'s film writing at length, once again placing it alongside her poetry and prose fiction. She

describes H.D.'s involvement in film as a 'vital transitional clue' in explaining the apparent lacuna between her early Imagist lyrics and the later, long epics. In another article, 'The Redirected Image,' Mandel proposes that H.D.'s poetic practice is informed by cinematic phenomena, and she identifies 'poetic techniques which correspond to the film editing practice' in *Helen in Egypt* (1983, 37). Thus, Mandel uses the essays to illuminate the rest of H.D.'s oeuvre, positioning the film writing as subsidiary to the 'creative' work.

The same approach is found in an article of the following year entitled 'H.D. and the Film Arts' by Leonard Diepeveen. He turns to the *Close Up* articles in search of an account of the guiding aesthetics behind H.D.'s poetry and prose, and finds that H.D.'s religious or mystical attitude to film is an expression of her general views on art and the sacred. Equally, the film image is identified as an analogy of the spiritual in Adalaide Morris's article, 'The Concept of Projection: H.D.'s Visionary Powers,' which also appeared in 1984. Morris weaves together the many instances and connotations of this suggestive trope in H.D.'s writing, and places it within the various contexts of a spiritual understanding of vision, psychoanalytic transference, alchemical transmutation and Imagist aesthetics, as well as the cinematic.

In contrast, Anne Friedberg's work places H.D.'s film writing in the context of writing in *Close Up* as a whole. Friedberg proposes the phenomenon of *Close Up* as a valuable but forgotten precursor to the movements within film theory during the 1970s and 1980s, pointing out that issues which were discussed in the pages of *Close Up* such as 'interest in alternative exhibition and distribution, political questions about representation, concerns about the economic domination of first-world national cinemas, theorizations of the role of the

spectator, psychoanalytic theories of the cinematic apparatus and debates about censorship' all re-surfaced in the later period (1998, 7).

In 'On Woman, History, Recognition,' Friedberg asserts 'H.D. is *not known* for her fascination with the cinema,' (1982, 28) and expands upon the conditions of this erasure of H.D.'s involvement in film from a feminist perspective. She warns that a revisionist history of the cinema which seeks merely to instate H.D. in her rightful place leaves the premises and mechanisms of the writing of cultural histories unchallenged, and proceeds, with due care, to assess H.D.'s achievements. Friedberg identifies four strands in what she calls H.D.'s 'film work': her involvement in the POOL films; her writing on the cinema; her use of cinematic metaphors in prose and poetry and her commitment to the idea of projection as access to deeper truths which were closely connected to her hallucinatory experiences in Corfu in 1920.

Friedberg was personally responsible for the preservation of fragments of the shorter POOL films and for the initial promotion of interest in *Borderline*.[4] In 1988, a parallel desire to marry the literary aspects of H.D.'s legacy with material, celluloid, artefacts led Chris Brown to set out the terms on which archival film research on H.D.'s essays might be carried out, in the small circulation *H.D. Newsletter*. Brown makes an excellent start to the difficult task of first identifying the films to which H.D. refers, expressing frustrations which I have come to share about the scarcity of information and the low number of extant films from the silent period. Brown poses the question, 'can one appreciate the way H.D. refashions and responds to the material of the films in her reviews without

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[4] Friedberg describes her restoration of the POOL films in the *H.D. Newsletter* (1987).

viewing the films, without becoming acquainted with conventions and material conditions of the silent cinema?' (1988, 19). To this my answer is firmly in the negative, and indeed the present study constitutes (in part) a response to Chris Brown's challenge.

As a result of the growing emphasis upon the visual in studies of H.D. (including, for instance, a consideration of H.D.'s private use of photomontage by Diana Collecott, 1990), Susan Friedman's major work on H.D.'s prose, *Penelope's Web* (1990), places the writing on film as central to the formation of H.D.'s modernism. Friedman is disquieted by H.D.'s identification of certain forms of visual modernity with masculinity, particularly in the *Borderline* pamphlet. However, H.D.'s political stance in her film writing and film-making practice is adjudged by Friedman to be progressive in terms of race and nationalism, and this view (which is shared by Chris Brown also) is examined in my own study.

Rebecca Egger, in her doctoral thesis of 1995, approaches H.D.'s film essays as an early attempt to formulate feminist film theory, and I have sought to continue this project in my own work. Egger debates the issues arising from the involvement of modernist women writers in cinematic spectatorship and commentary and considers the writing of both Dorothy Richardson and H.D. While she highlights the opportunities of the new art form as a forum for women's critical voices, Egger argues that the significance of Richardson's and H.D.'s approach to film-viewing lies precisely in a form of abnegation of power, since their film criticism rejects a position of omniscience. Important questions about the cultural conditions governing women's entry into the discourse of film

criticism are raised and debated in Egger's study, and I have drawn substantially on her analysis.

Visual paradigms and technologies are increasingly prominent topics in modernist studies, and H.D. is only one author among many, including D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, to be considered in this light.[5] Interest in the subject of H.D. and film shows no signs of abating. Rachel Connor (2000) has considered H.D.'s literary deployment of the visual, and in particular the image, stressing aspects of the visionary and raising questions of race and politics in the context of the visual economy. Most recently, Jean Gallagher (2002) has examined the role of lesbian desire in H.D.'s aesthetic of stasis, with reference to the *Close Up* essays and models of female spectatorship.

My own study builds on this growing body of work on H.D. and film but frequently departs from the methodology of many of the authors mentioned. Primarily, I take the short pieces published by H.D. in *Close Up* as my central focus. Deeming H.D.'s essays on film to be of equal importance to the rest of her creative output, and not merely useful as a gloss on the filmic elements or spectatorship scenarios in her fictional work, I have avoided treating the *Close Up* pieces as merely potential source texts, while at the same time remaining alert to the many connections between the reviews and the rest of H.D.'s oeuvre.

Issues of gender have informed the approach of this thesis throughout. The questions that have interested me most are in the broad area of the representation of women, and the problematic position of women as cultural producers and commentators, as well as spectators. I shall be arguing that H.D.'s commentary

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[5] See Linda Williams (1993) and Pamela Caughie, ed. (2000).

on film can be illuminated by comparison with a wide range of discourses relating to women and film in the 1920s, such as fan magazines, early tracts on group psychology and also contemporary cultural statements about the cinema as a feminized arena. I shall suggest that H.D.'s insecure position as a woman intellectual necessitated a certain tone and range of reference which would distinguish her from the movie fan as a derided female type. Although I would not go so far as to agree with Rebecca Egger that H.D. 'creates for herself a transcendent, unmarked subject position' (1995, 151) she is indeed wary of presenting herself as a typical female fan of the movies and continually stresses her qualifications as a classicist, an Imagist and an intellectual.

In addition to a discursive analysis of the *Close Up* essays, another main aim of this thesis is to compare H.D.'s critique of women and film with recent feminist film theory. H.D.'s writing for *Close Up* anticipates many aspects of the work of film feminist theorists of 'second wave' feminism (roughly post-1960s), since her commentary on film contains a sophisticated and sustained attempt to theorize the position of the feminine in the visual economy and features astute remarks on the commodification of women on the screen. In the same way that the contemporary context of H.D.'s articles with regard to gender is a new area of investigation for H.D. studies, the similarities between H.D.'s film writing and the theories of second wave feminists, has not been examined at length before.

A further, fundamental, difference of my own research from that of previous considerations of H.D. and film is that here the *Close Up* reviews are studied with regard to the particular films they discuss. Archival research underpins this investigation and the analysis of H.D.'s writing on film has been conducted wherever possible with direct reference to the films themselves.

Therefore, in making direct and extensive reference to the films that H.D. reviewed, this thesis incorporates a much greater amount of film history than has yet been brought to the study of H.D.'s connections with the cinema. For example, my thesis contains the first in-depth analysis of the significance of Greta Garbo's screen career for H.D.'s writing.

By placing H.D.'s critique of the films to which she alludes alongside the wider cultural assessments of genres and directors, studios and stars, her aesthetics and cultural positioning comes into sharper focus. Furthermore, a familiarity with the films featured in the reviews has made it possible to propose that certain images, narrative situations and references in H.D.'s poetry and fictional prose are filmic in origin. For instance, my discussion of H.D.'s meditations on a Garbo-like figure in *The Usual Star* (1934b) is the first consideration of this novella to be made in the light of Garbo's screen performances.

This thesis crosses many disciplinary boundaries, demonstrating the continued vitality of interdisciplinary feminist scholarship. I have taken my primary materials from a wide range of sources, sometimes combining disparate discourses such as classical texts and popular journalism. For instance, I set Homeric literature beside film fan literature. Hence, in the process of examining gender and modernism in the context of popular culture, this project connects textual artefacts which have rarely been considered together.

My theoretical approach is drawn equally from feminist literary and feminist film studies. In seeking to compare literary and film texts, I have developed my methods by deploying terms and strategies from both feminist film studies and narratology. Thus, by combining theories of the male gaze and the

concept of focalization, I produce a feminist narratological reading of 'Kora and Ka' (1991). Similarly, in comparing the operations of the frame narrative in H.D.'s *Nights* (1986) with comments on gender and definition I draw on debates within film studies about cinematic spectatorship.

This study is structured in three parts, each comprising two chapters and considering H.D.'s writings on film from a different perspective. In the first part, (chapters one and two) I discuss H.D.'s location as a cultural critic; the central section (chapters three and four) examines H.D.'s critique of women in film, and in the third part (chapters five and six), I prioritize the study of the cinematic as a source for H.D.'s fictional work by assessing the relationship between H.D. and the figure of Greta Garbo. The strategy adopted in each section is to establish the feminist issues raised by H.D. in *Close Up*, and then go on to explore these same issues as they arise in H.D.'s fictional texts.

Chapters one and two argue that the association of the feminine with popular forms of entertainment led H.D. to exaggerate her distance from the mass of cinema spectators in her essays for *Close Up*. H.D.'s position in *Close Up* was thus a defensive one, necessitated by the contradictions of her location as a woman intellectual. However, in *Bid Me to Live* (1984a), the separation of the writer from the masses is not at all as extreme as that in *Close Up*. Equally, in *Her* (1984d), the exercise of racial and cultural prejudice based on the denigration of women, of which H.D. is certainly guilty in her essays on film, is exposed as ill-founded and actually damaging to the aspiring woman writer. Hence I argue that H.D.'s film writing must be examined in the specific contexts of high-culture modernism, contemporary cultural commentary and of the film industry itself, and that it is only by taking into account the descriptions of the dilemmas of the

woman intellectual contained in H.D.'s fictional works, that the elitist aspects of H.D.'s essays for *Close Up* can be accurately judged.

H.D.'s disgust with the commercialism of Hollywood was shared by the other contributors to *Close Up*, but H.D. is particularly sensitive to the feminist implications of the Hollywood style, and in chapters three and four I assess H.D.'s remarks on women in film in Hollywood and also European productions. In chapter three, I consider H.D.'s feminist analysis in the context of the representation of women in silent film. H.D.'s film writing is compared with feminist theories of spectatorship in chapter four. In particular, the relationship between H.D.'s film criticism and psychoanalytic theories of the male gaze is debated, and I argue that H.D. continues and extends her critique through the narrative strategies of her fictional prose.

In the final two chapters, my focus narrows to analyse H.D.'s response to one particular film actress, namely Greta Garbo. H.D.'s casting of Garbo as Helen of Troy in her first essay for *Close Up* was part of a lifelong project to re-conceptualize the legendary figure of Helen, which began in a short lyric of 1923 and culminated in the complex, epic-length poem of 1961, *Helen in Egypt*. Looking at the strategic points in her writing career when H.D. returned to examine the cultural significance of the figure of Helen of Troy, I deliberate the extent to which these meditations were inspired by the star image of Greta Garbo.

Apart from the many instances described in this study in which filmic references illuminate H.D.'s creative practice and themes and her position as a woman within modernism, her writing on film also has value as a data source in the study of women's responses to the cinema. For H.D.'s extraordinarily comprehensive commentary as a woman cinema-goer in the 1920s is itself a

resource for feminists interested in the gendered reception of film, although, as my conclusion will discuss, this presents some important methodological problems. It seems incredible that, as Rebecca Egger writes, feminist film theory has expressed 'almost no interest in such modernist literary forebears as H.D. and Richardson (or, for that matter, the more canonical Woolf and Stein)' (1995, 11). The puzzling neglect of H.D. as a feminist precursor writing on the subject of film is something that this study aims to correct.

Chapter One: Highbrows and Savages: H.D., the Cinema and the Masses.

H.D.'s essays for *Close Up* and the cultural status of film.

In this chapter I examine H.D.'s essays on film in the context of debates about high culture and the mass audience in the 1920s, in order to determine the extent to which H.D. placed herself as part of a cultural elite in opposition to the masses. It is broadly accepted that modernism presupposes a distinction between high and mass culture, which might be summarized in the following way: mass forms of culture are ephemeral, collectively produced and designed to be received uncritically by an unsophisticated audience. In contrast, the genuine work of art is valuable, universal and timeless, and is the product of the exceptional individual addressed to an educated elite. Andreas Huyssen's study of 1986 referred to this distinction as the 'great divide' and proposed that the modernist position was itself constructed in opposition to a concept of the masses.[6] Contentiously, John Carey's work on this subject, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (1992), drew parallels between the elitist attitudes of some modernist writiers and fascism.

Perhaps the most representative statement of the position of the modernist artist or intellectual toward popular culture is to be found in F.R. Leavis's pamphlet of 1930, *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*. Leavis set out the terms which have, to this day, conditioned the ongoing debate on high versus mass (or low) culture by elevating certain works of literature to form a canon of

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[6] Huyssen (1986, viii) distinguishes modernism from the avant-garde. Forms of the latter, for example Dada or surrealism, do not share the high culture emphasis of much canonical modernist literature.

excellence and denigrating mass cultural forms including the cinema, radio and newspapers. The first issue of *Scrutiny* (the journal later edited by Leavis) contains an example of just such a high-handed dismissal of cinema. In an article entitled 'The Art Form of Democracy?' William Hunter claimed that 'no film yet produced can justify the serious critical approach demanded (for instance) by a good novel or poem' (1932a, 65). Hunter elaborated on these views in a book entitled *Scrutiny of Cinema* (1932b). In this book he targeted *Close Up* by name, complaining that:

> the customary tone of the more pretentious criticism of today (e.g. *Close Up*) is to speak of *Storm Over Asia* as if it were on the level of King Lear, of Eisenstein as a second Leonardo Da Vinci, of Chaplin as 'that mighty genius of the film world' and so on (1932b, 12 –13).

In contrast, H.D.'s project in *Close Up* was to recuperate certain films for the category of high art, thus challenging the dominant reactionary discourse of modernism and its relegation of film to the low status of a mass cultural form. In H.D.'s writing for *Close Up*, a sub-division of film operates in a similar manner to the broader division between literature and film made by Leavis. H.D. claims certain films and aspects of film as high art and exempts them from the low status of film generally. Keen to make distinctions between films, H.D. tends often (but not always) to align films of the European tradition with the precepts of high art, and to identify the commercial products of Hollywood as worthless, standardized, escapist and trivial products.

Thus, H.D. uses the same terms of debate as Hunter in her first article for *Close Up*, 'Beauty' (1927/1998c), although for entirely different ends. In 'Beauty' (the first of three essays entitled 'The Cinema and the Classics') H.D. focuses on two early performances by Greta Garbo, who in 1927 was on the verge

of international stardom. The first of these is *The Joyless Street* (1925) a grim piece of realism set in post-war Vienna and directed by G.W. Pabst which came to represent for H.D. the highest achievement of which the cinema was capable (see figure 1). The other film discussed by H.D. in 'Beauty' is *The Torrent* (1926), Garbo's first feature for Hollywood after she moved to America and signed a contract with MGM studios. *The Torrent* is a commercial costume melodrama about an opera diva and encapsulated for H.D. all that was despicable about Hollywood, in particular Hollywood's treatment of women.

H.D. argues that Garbo's performance in *The Joyless Street* can be set alongside masterpieces such as the temple of Karnak, the frescoes of Simone Martini and the etchings of Dürer. Therefore, like Hunter and Leavis, H.D. measures film against canonical works of the high art traditions. However, she does this in order to prove that the cinema (as for instance in the case of Pabst's film) can aspire to be the equal of the great masterpieces of the past. In other words, while Hunter and Leavis use the canon to denigrate film, H.D. invokes great works of art in order to elevate film to a similar level of cultural value.

H.D.'s articles contribute directly to *Close Up*'s project of including film as an art according to modernist cultural distinctions. Although Anne Friedberg has warned of the dangers of making generalisations about the journal's aesthetic and political position in view of the many, very different, contributors (1983b, 23), it is fair to say that part of *Close Up*'s implicit task was the analysis and categorisation of the new art of film according to the modernist principles of high versus low art, and that H.D.'s articles were part of this process.

There was, as Friedberg notes, a precedent in France where film journals such as *Le Film*, founded in 1914 and subsequently edited by Louis Delluc, had

Figure 1 Greta Garbo in *The Joyless Street* (1925)

established a 'tradition of literary respect for the cinema' (1998, 12). However, as Friedberg also points out, (1982, 10) *Close Up*'s most direct antecedents were the modernist literary magazines of the period, for example *The Dial*, *Broom* and *transition*. Through these publications, the various modernist revolutions in the arts were disseminated to the knowledgeable and sympathetic few. Hence *Close Up*'s projected readership might not have been aficionados of the film *per se* but would be in sympathy with the latest trends and developments in literature, painting and so on. *Close Up*'s community of readers was therefore defined by the exclusion of the wider public, and it sought to distinguish itself from such popular discourses as fan magazines by advertising the journal as:

> THE ONLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO FILM AS AN ART [...]
> THEORY AND ANALYSIS NO GOSSIP
> (*Close Up* 3.4, October 1928, cover wrapper).

This statement perfectly fits Andreas Huyssen's characterization of the modernist position as 'constituted [...] through a conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of contamination by its other: an increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture' (1986, vii).

Integral to this division between high and mass culture is the alignment of mass culture with the feminine, and this subject will be explored more fully in chapter two. Huyssen observes that 'political, psychological and aesthetic discourse around the turn of the century consistently and obsessively genders mass culture and the masses as feminine' (1986, 47). The quotation above shows that the cultural credentials of *Close Up* were indeed supported precisely by a rejection of the feminine, namely the repudiation of 'gossip,' which has been perennially associated with women. In this way, *Close Up* demonstrates the abiding division between feminine mass cultural forms and publications related to

modernism by restating the position that a literary/modernist discourse is by definition not feminine.

H.D.'s comments on film are akin to attempts by the film industry itself to raise the cultural status of the cinema. Hollywood publicity agents, in particular, tried to attract a 'better' class of person than the working class and immigrant individuals who were thought to form the majority of the early cinema audience. By placing H.D.'s essays in the context of the cultural politics of the history of film, it is possible to assess H.D.'s aesthetic elitism in relation to the emphasis on class superiority adopted for commercial reasons by the film industry.

By the 1920s, some thirty years after its birth, film had attained maturity as an art form and the institutional structure of the industry was in place. In the decade prior to the launch of *Close Up* in 1927, particularly significant changes had occurred. This short period had seen the consolidation of cinema-going as a respectable middle-class leisure activity, and this was indicated (among other things) by the replacement of the nickelodeons and storefront venues with lavish 'picture palaces.' In the early twenties, the irresistible rise of the Hollywood studio system ensured the dominance of the world market by American formulaic films and star vehicles. The late 1920s marked the high point of the 'golden era' of silent film but also coincided with its end, due to the introduction of sound. The coming of sound also hastened the demise of *Close Up* (which ceased publication in 1933), since the journal was closely allied to the concept of film as a universal art form transcending national languages.

Among the many indications that the commercial cinema was striving to attain respectability and recognition were the 'movie palaces' that began to appear in the U.S. from around 1913. These large purpose-built movie theatres, with

uniformed ushers and large orchestras, were often designed to mimic Egyptian temples or Chinese pagodas. Similarly in Britain, 'picture palaces' replaced the music halls, fairgrounds and penny gaffs where movies had been shown up until about 1911. Although prices were kept low, the attempt to attract a 'better' class of person was explicit, and an important line was crossed, therefore, when $2 was charged at screenings of D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* in 1915, since this was equivalent to the price of a ticket to a Broadway show. The unprecedented entrance fee reflected the industry's confidence in Griffith's own status as a creative artist with a background in the theatre. Equally, it was during the late teens that the 'attractions' or short films of the early period gave way to the format that remains dominant to this day, namely the feature-length film, which shares an obvious ancestry with that quintessentially bourgeois genre, the novel.

Establishing artistic credibility for film by borrowing actors or plays from the stage was another strategy in the gentrification of the cinema. The actresses Sarah Bernhardt and Eleanor Duse both appeared in films (Bernhardt in 1912 in *Queen Elizabeth 1* directed by Louis Mercanton in France and Duse in *Ashes*, an Italian production of 1916). Interestingly, H.D. mentions both of these actresses in the essay 'Restraint' (1927/1998e), and it is perhaps significant that the only two stage actresses to be mentioned by name in H.D.'s writing for *Close Up* were the best known stage performers to have appeared on the screen in this early period. It is tempting to conclude from H.D.'s reference to these grand theatrical figures, that the attempts on the part of the early film industry to associate film with the more established tradition of the theatre had been entirely successful in H.D.'s case.

By the 1920s, then, the cinema had long left behind its origins as a 'peep show' attraction, but H.D. finds it necessary to situate her discussion of the cinema in relation to this past. For example, the opening passage of 'Beauty,' H.D.'s first review for *Close Up*, written in 1927, refers to conditions of cinema-going current some twenty years before the review was written. H.D. writes that the word 'cinema' might conjure up the following associations: 'crowds and illiteracy and more crowds and breathless suffocation and [...] peanut shells and grit and perhaps a sudden collapse of jerry-built scaffoldings' (1927/1998c, 105). These details seem to refer to the nickelodeons in America or similar shop-front venues in Britain and Europe, which began appearing in the early 1900s, but by 1927 would have been a thing of the past.

The cinema experience described by H.D. matches film historian Roberta Pearson's sketch of the nickelodeons as venues involving: 'inadequate seating, insufficient ventilation, dim lighting and poorly marked, often obstructed exits' (1996, 36). These conditions did indeed pose serious hazards, and Pearson writes that 'regular newspaper reports of fires, panics and collapsing balconies undoubtedly contributed to popular perceptions of the nickelodeons as death-traps' (1996, 36). H.D.'s remarks refer not only to practical hazards but also 'danger to the moral safety' reflecting the widespread concern amongst middle class commentators, church groups and reform groups about the cinema's corruption of the young and of women. The moral dangers were perceived to reside in both the content of films and in the opportunities for physical proximity in the nickelodeons (where sexual contact might occur or diseases spread).

At the very beginning of 'Beauty,' H.D. identifies herself and her imagined readership as belonging to a shared social and educational group of

'highbrow intellectuals.' 'Highbrow' was a term increasingly in general usage at the beginning of the century, the origin of which is pejorative, of course. F.R. Leavis described the word as 'an ominous addition to the English language' (1933, 38) detecting in it a growing hostility towards the educated or creative elite. In H.D.'s essay the term 'highbrow' is used to refer to discerning but sometimes badly-informed individuals with an active interest in the arts. To such highbrows as herself, writes H.D., the word 'cinema' conjures up 'old reactions connected with cheap circuses, crowds and crowds and crowds and illiteracy' (1927/1998c, 105), and although H.D. is aiming to dispel this impression, the description that follows of the base commercial motives of Hollywood and the degraded mass of the cinema audience, perpetuates exactly the conception of the cinema that H.D. claims to attack.

In a highly significant passage early in 'Beauty,' H.D. characterizes her relationship to the massed audience for popular films as that of the 'leaven, turning in the lump.' She explains:

> The leaven, regarding the lump, is sometimes curious as to the lump's point of view, for all the lump so grandiloquently ignores it, the microscopic leaven. [...] 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 (1927/1998c, 105).

H.D.'s claim to a position of cultural authority is attended by the knowledge of the indifference of the general public to critical opinions such as her own, and by the awareness that the pose she strikes might be interpreted as arrogant, for she swiftly attempts to dissociate herself from the snobbish implications of her metaphor by stating that she is 'wedged securely in,' rather than 'sniffingly above,' the 'lump.' In Anne Friedberg's view, this does little to mitigate the

elitism of her remarks. Friedberg comments that 'H.D.'s rhetorical gestures are that of a high-brow critic, slumming' (1983b, 77), and it is certainly true that H.D.'s separation of herself as intellectual leaven from brutish lump appears to bring her into line with Leavis's position in *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* in which he claims, 'it is upon a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends' (1933, 13).

Nevertheless, H.D.'s elaboration of the metaphor of the yeast within the dough allows her to position to be understood as simultaneously part of and at the same time superior to, the general movie-going public. For while the leaven is fully incorporated within the lump, it is distinguished by its particular active properties, properties which suggest a reference to a superior aesthetic sensitivity. H.D.'s aim, as a critic, is to be the agent which raises the awareness of the mass (a cultural equivalent to the leavening of bread). She proposes to begin this by becoming immersed in the mentality of the movie audience, and in this way find "what I am up against" (1927/1998c, 105). What she does find, in fact, is that the masses are the victims of the Hollywood film industry which is able to use crass but effective marketing techniques to convince the audience to accept inferior films, and also of censorship bodies that prevent the public from seeing genuinely excellent films in the form intended by the film makers.

H.D. gives the publicity machine and production values of the Hollywood film industry a collective identity as an Ogre or Cyclops, referring, of course, to the single-eyed man-eating giant of Greek legend, encountered by Odysseus and his companions in book nine of Homer's *Odyssey*. Thus in 'Beauty,' the Cyclops or Ogre personifies the brute commercialism and narrow prejudice threatening to destroy film art even before the full range of its technical advances can be

explored by the creative talents of the day (such as Pabst). H.D. exhorts 'every sincere intellectual' to rescue the nascent art of the cinema from this monster (1927/1998c, 107).

In the procession of vivid metaphors that carry the argument of 'Beauty' the Cyclops is particularly resonant. As an archetypal figure of barbarism, brutalism and stupidity, the image of the monstrous and predatory Cyclops is aptly chosen by H.D. to represent the film industry because it at once invokes both the single eye of the camera and the narrowness and prejudice of the movie moguls.[7] H.D. goes on to argue that the Ogre of Hollywood deprives the public of true art and successfully cheats the audience into the belief that the films they see are the only existing examples of cinematic art:

> The lump heaving under its own lumpishness is perforce content, is perforce ignorant, is perforce so sated with mechanical efficiency, with whir and thud of various hypnotic appliances, that it doesn't know what it is missing (1927/1998c, 106).

The object, therefore, of H.D.'s attack in 'Beauty' is the film industry itself, including the Hollywood producers and censorship boards responsible for determining the diet of the massed cinema public. Drawing on Biblical rather than classical imagery, H.D. refers to the parable of the father who responds to his child's requests for good food as told by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: 'If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?' (Luke 11.11). Unlike the benign parent of the parable H.D. claims that the Ogre does indeed offer cinema audiences 'a stone for bread' (1927/1998c, 107) by which she means shallow,

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[7] James Joyce uses the same figure to represent bigotry in chapter twelve of *Ulysses*.

banal entertainment instead of spiritually nourishing art. Nonetheless, the terms in which H.D. describes the betrayed mass audience are demeaning and alienating (I discuss the racist elements of the characterisation below), and serve to emphasise the distinction between the fine sensibilities of the intellectual and the tragically deceived masses.

H.D.'s primary aim in her first article for *Close Up* is to address her fellow intellectuals, for she wishes above all to demonstrate that there are examples of such overwhelming aesthetic value (namely *The Joyless Street*) that highbrow intellectuals should overcome their prejudices and regard film as potentially great art. H.D.'s essay urgently calls for the cinema to be wrested from the base, commercialist elements presently endangering it as an art ('to rescue this capture Innocent' 1927/1998c, 107) and laments that even such a consummate artist as Garbo can be 'bought' and degraded by Hollywood.

The Joyless Street was indeed a very different type of film to the standard Hollywood product. From the outset cinema was broad-ranging and, as well as commercial or popular films, there were certain genres which aspired towards high artistic expression or avant-garde experimentation. In other words, film already contained a distinction between high art and vulgar entertainment, although, as James Donald writes, it had not yet 'congealed into the constraining categories of film history (and niche marketing): entertainment cinema, art cinema, avant-garde cinema' (1998, 30). During the period in which *Close Up* appeared, Hollywood's monopoly of both American and foreign markets was challenged by the European national cinemas of German Expressionism, French Impressionism and Soviet montage. These movements are often grouped together under the heading of art cinema, and the majority of H.D.'s writing for *Close Up*

(and indeed the greater part of *Close Up*'s content as a whole) focuses on films drawn from this category, especially the work of Sergei Eisenstein, G. W. Pabst and Carl Theodore Dreyer.

H.D.'s responses to film, however, can not be predicted on the basis of the distinction between Hollywood movie and European art film. For instance, in 'Joan of Arc,' (1928/1998h) an essay on Carl Dreyer's film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) which belongs firmly in the art film tradition, H.D. recognizes the artistic integrity behind the intent of the film and its director, but condemns it on the basis of its impact on the audience. In the essay H.D. pays a great deal of attention to the social background of the audience present with her in the Swiss movie theatre and the emotional reactions of the cinema audience are placed in the context of class. H.D. is adamant that the cinema audience shares her own outraged reaction to the film's portrayal of Joan's torture and humiliation:

> 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 on the left [...] are in no need of such brutality (1928/1998h, 131).

In her thesis examining the film writing of H.D. and Dorothy Richardson, Rebecca Egger has contended that this passage is evidence of H.D.'s rejection of an enforced, temporary membership of the working class. Egger writes:

> the object of H.D.'s censure is not so much the brutality of Dreyer's film but the inclusivity of its address. [...] H.D. is troubled to find herself responding to Joan of Arc in the same way as this theater full of baker's boys, maids and gardeners (1995, 150).

Although I am broadly in agreement with Egger, I depart from her conclusions here. In 'Joan of Arc,' H.D. asserts a commonality of response across heterogeneous audience members, pointing out that the film offends many other

individuals from different walks of life as well as the sensitive intellectual (i.e. herself). H.D. thus makes an inclusive gesture towards the massed cinema audience. In asserting the common response of the intellectual and the motley crowd of baker's boys, gardeners and maids, 'Joan of Arc' negates the differentiation of leaven and lump in the earlier essay, 'Beauty.' Indeed, even in 'Beauty' H.D. admits that an intellectual such as herself is emotionally susceptible to Garbo's exceptional beauty as is the 'lump,' ('I, like the Lump, am drawn by this slogan "Beauty" ' 1927/1998c, 106) and in this way brings the two groups together by acknowledging a common ground between them.

All in all, however, and despite the complexity of H.D.'s stance, I am forced to conclude that H.D.'s approach to film is more usually that of the superior and detached intellectual. H.D.'s deliberately exaggerated sketch of the nickelodeon is meant to demonstrate an erroneous conception of the cinema of the present day, but the tone of the review suggests that H.D. herself found it hard to shake off the idea that, as she puts it, the cinema is a thing to be 'sneaked to at least intellectually' (1927/1998c, 105).

Commercialism, excess and the Ogre of Hollywood.

As with the broader issue of elitism, I will compare H.D.'s approach to the commercialism of film with the more orthodox modernist position, gauged from various sources. In *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* the principles of individual, unique, disinterested creativity found by Leavis in great works of art are identified by contrasting them with the commercial aspects of the mass media industries. In Andrew Higson's words, this position is characterized by the view that mass culture is 'standardised, artistically impoverished, trivial and escapist' (1995, 14). During the 1920s, the Hollywood companies, with their vertically

integrated system of production, distribution and publicity, created the conditions for America's unassailable dominance of the market for film. H.D. decried the Hollywood industry as a vulgar commercial enterprise from which she, as a connoisseur of art, wished to distance herself. She believed that the great commercial success of formulaic productions by the Hollywood studio system was evidence of the regrettable capitulation of the art of the film to the demands of industrial profit.

Interestingly, in his first, introductory, piece for *Close Up* in July 1927, Kenneth Macpherson took the opposite view, and proclaimed 'really good art IS commercial' (1927/1998, 38). Macpherson states that 'the mob has a curious nose for what is good' (1927/1998, 38). However, by the end of *Close Up*'s life, Macpherson's faith in the 'mob' and in the intrinsically commercial potential of art films was destroyed by the disappointing reception of *Borderline*.

Regardless of the group's idealistic hopes that it might convert the British public to an appreciation of the avant-garde, there was no need for *Borderline* to be commercially successful. For the film was, like *Close Up* itself, free of the need to compromise content for profit since it was independently funded (via POOL) by Bryher's money from the Ellerman shipping fortune. From this privileged position, many contributors to *Close Up* vociferously expressed their disgust with the commercialism of Hollywood, and there was in the pages of the journal, in James Donald's words, 'a pervasive hostility towards its mediocrity' (1998, 28). The blatant capitalist approach to the film as an economic product was condemned as the antithesis of art and the question of whether the commercial aspects of film-making and distribution disqualified film from being a

genuine art form was one that preoccupied the writers of *Close Up*, including H.D.

In 1928, Clifford Howard, who was the magazine's American correspondent, attempted to end the tiresome game of deciding if film had the right to be called an art. He tries to dismiss the debate by explaining in detail the creative process of making a film and concludes that cinema is not an art (although, some exceptional films may turn out to be works of art purely by accident). Howard's view was that because the process of filmmaking is collective, the result cannot be art since he, like Leavis, defines creative art as 'essentially individual' (1928, 14). He complains that 'any amount of good print and much precious intellectual energy are daily being wasted in discussing the movies on the assumption that they are art. [...] Motion pictography is an industry — a business — a trade' (1928, 13). Howard's view cannot be said to be typical of *Close Up* as a whole; after all, the publication existed as a forum precisely for the discussion of film as art. Nevertheless, the view that the greater the evidence of an individual's creative control and input, the greater the artistic value of the film, was certainly typical of H.D.'s approach and in particular she congratulated Pabst as an auteur who stamped his artistic signature on his films (see 'An Appreciation' 1929/1998a).

Economic factors impinged upon the exercise of creativity in all aspects of film in the 1920s. In particular, European and avant-garde directors and film-makers had to contend with America's near monopoly of the world market for films. Hollywood's aggressive export policies made it hard for other national cinemas to develop films and film traditions of their own. As already mentioned, 'Beauty' is H.D.'s central statement on the evil effects of the Hollywood ethos.

The essay is a paean to the 'lost' beauty of Garbo, changed out of all recognition into a travesty of her former self by the Ogre of Hollywood. H.D. first saw Garbo in *The Joyless Street* and the film remained for her the ultimate example of cinematic perfection. In this film, Garbo was for H.D. a symbol of beauty itself, and her review describes the effects of the 'evil magic' of the Hollywood star system upon Garbo's subsequent appearances and acting (1927/1998c, 107). H.D. is shocked and unwilling to believe that the Garbo of *The Joyless Street* is the same woman as in the later film, *The Torrent*.

Only in her more relaxed moments could H.D. concede that 'Hollywood with reservations is all right (up to a point) for America, for up to a point *it is* America, slick, superficial and stylish, and oh so, so amusing' (1928/1998i, 138). Indeed it is sometimes easy to forget when reading H.D.'s articles for *Close Up* that she was herself American. For instance, in the discussion of the possibilities of better understanding of national character in 'The Mask and the Movietone,' there is no explicit indication of her own country of origin (1927/1998d, 117). It is only in 'Boo: Sirocco and the Screen' (in which she discusses Noel Coward's depiction of the American flapper) that H.D. does declare her identity to be that of a North American (1928a, 41).

The quintessential American genre was the Western film, and was one of the earliest and greatest successes with the nickelodeon audiences. H.D. expresses her dislike of these films on more than one occasion, making a glancing reference to the first Western star of the screen, the Essanay cowboy Broncho Billy, who was played by G.M. Anderson from 1908 in over 300 films. H.D.'s rejection of the genre appears to depend upon her recognition of the exaggerated masculinity that it celebrated: in 'Restraint' she pleads, 'get away from all this

broncho-chest-muscle business' (1927/1998e, 113). The reference is brief, but suggests that H.D. objected to the aggression and machismo of the cowboy figure, and understood it to be a symbol of anti-intellectualism.

The identification of America with Hollywood and hence with, at best, the slick and amusing and, at worst, the most inane and insidiously sexist representations of women, was something from which H.D. clearly preferred to distance herself. H.D. was, however, occasionally prepared to concede excellence in Hollywood cinema; for instance, she greatly admired the Hollywood blockbuster, *The King of Kings* (1927). It would be hard to find a more perfect example of a film designed to have mass appeal than this epic from the movie mogul Cecil B. De Mille. In her review (1928a) H.D. argues that the performance of the central actor, H.B. Warner, elevates the film from its genre. Equally, while she panned the tawdry and misogynist Hollywood production, *The Torrent*, we have seen that she also condemned Carl Dreyer's avant-garde production *Joan of Arc* as voyeuristic and sadistic. At the screening of Dreyer's film, H.D. finds herself agreeing with an audience member overheard to say 'I wish it was one of those good American light things' (1928/1998h, 133).

So, although H.D. was scathingly critical of the artistic quality of most Hollywood films, she made some important exceptions. In common with the more relaxed attitudes of French cineastes such as writers for the journal *Le Film*, H.D. sometimes appreciated Hollywood comedy actors. The years from 1926 onwards, were in Joel Finler's words, 'the crowning era of American silent comedy' (1997 144) with Harry Langdon, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton at their creative peak. H.D. was impressed by Keaton in *The General* (1927), both in his comic achievement and in his benign presentation of

the interaction of human and machine, a favourite subject in silent comedy. As she puts it in 'Turksib,' 'Buster Keaton and *The General* humanized the railway' (1929, 489).

It must be said, however, that when H.D. does praise a Hollywood film, there is usually a factor that makes the film untypical. For example, in the case of *Greed* (1924), a film upon which she heaps admiration in her article 'Restraint' (1927/1998e) there was a European inspiration provided by the director Erich Von Stroheim. Stroheim was one of the many European exiles welcomed by Hollywood in the post-First World War period. For, as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith explains 'where Hollywood did not lead from its own resources it bought up artists and technical innovations from Europe' (1996, 3). The supreme example of this was *Sunrise* (1927) directed by F. W. Murnau who was brought over from Germany. The combination of European artistic direction and lavish Hollywood funds created in *Sunrise* one of the masterpieces of the silent era (and it is somewhat surprising that H.D. never commented upon this film in *Close Up*).

In summary, H.D.'s opinion of Hollywood commercial productions was not uniformly poor, and ranges from outright condemnation to mild tolerance and, occasionally, praise. Neither was she elitist in her actual viewing habits, for the breadth of H.D.'s references to Hollywood stars such as Laura La Plante or the matinee idol, Rod La Rocque, shows that she was an omnivorous consumer across the whole spectrum of popular film. In 'Russian Films,' H.D. accepts that Hollywood entertainment films have their place, like 'barley water, pink lemonade through a straw to quench naïf palates on a hot day at the fair' but in the end these confections cannot compare with the work of acknowledged giants of

the screen, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein, which is in 'another category altogether' (1928/1998i, 137).

H.D.'s judgements of films yield further significance when placed in the context of modernist, and specifically Imagist, aesthetics, for the association of excess with vulgarity is the implicit basis of H.D.'s critique of Hollywood. When she finds herself admiring the Hollywood studio product she is suspicious of being taken in by cheap tricks designed to entertain the masses. In her description of the famous chariot race sequence of Fred Niblo's 1926 epic *Ben Hur*, H.D. finds her critical faculties overwhelmed by sheer spectacle, and this makes her uncomfortable:

> Ben Hur drove his chariot with decorum and 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 [...] that I lose my own clue, become sated and lost and tired (1927/1998e, 111).

Thus in 'Restraint,' H.D. carefully goes on to explain her theory of excellence in cinematic art as a craft of subtraction. As Leonard Diepeveen has pointed out, the terms used by H.D. recall the Imagist principles for poetry expounded by the likes of Pound and T.E. Hulme (1984, 60). For instance, in 'A Few Don'ts By an Imagiste,' Pound exhorts modern poets to 'use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something' (1913, 200).

Consistently, H.D.'s highest accolade for film is 'classic.' This designation marks out certain films as qualified to join the already established canon of great works of art by virtue of their supreme perfection of form, and thus was part of her attempt to elevate film as an art form in the eyes of its detractors. In 'Restraint,' she calls for the 'cutting and pruning' of the 'too extraneous underbrush of tangled detail' in order to achieve the classic quality in film

(1927/1998e, 111). H.D. offers a complex theorization of the classic in 'Restraint,' and paradoxically puts forward the over-elaborate tenement detail of Erich Von Stoheim's Hollywood production of *Greed* as a prime example of this elusive classic quality. The classic, writes H.D., 'is a point of view' which means 'tact and intuition and a sense of the rightness and the fitness of things in their inter-relation' (1927/1998e, 113).

In 'Restraint,' H.D.'s principal theme is the representation of antiquity and mythological subjects in feature films. By 1915 the feature film had become the norm, proven to have a commercial future by the enormous success of D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, which was twelve reels long (a running time of three hours). Initially, the Italian film industry had pioneered the feature film, with lavish spectacles such as *Quo Vadis?* in 1913 and *Cabiria* directed by Giovanni Pastrone in the following year. The 1908 Italian production of *The Last Days of Pompeii* was an early example of the European rage for the costume drama often set in antiquity. These Italian productions, like French *films d'art* (meaning films on literary or historical subjects) such as *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise* (also 1908) were profitably exported to America where a high proportion of films screened at that time were European.

In 'Restraint,' H.D, refers directly to three Italian films: *Quo Vadis?*, *Theodora* and *The Last Days of Pompeii*. The three Italian spectacles H.D. discusses were most probably remakes from the earlier, more successful wave of films during the rise of the epic feature film between 1908 and 1915. No dates are given in the review, and only in the case of one of the three, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, is it absolutely certain that H.D. refers to the 1920s remake, since she names the actor in the production of 1926 (Victor Varconi). With regard to the

other two films, *Theodora* was remade at least four times between 1909 and 1927 and *Quo Vadis?* was remade in 1925 with a script written by the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, and it is therefore entirely probable that H.D. refers to the later versions. Furthermore, other examples of the classical epic included in 'Restraint' are definitely of the later period. H.D.'s discussion of *Helen of Troy*, almost certainly refers to the production directed by Alexander Korda in 1925, *Force and Beauty* was a German film also from 1925, and *Wrath of the Gods*, was made in 1926.[8] It therefore seems safe to assume that the three Italian epics to which H.D. refers, date from the 1920s and not the 1910s.

H.D.'s rejection of the excesses of the epic genre partakes in a topical debate of the 1920s. For, by 1927, the massed throngs of extras, earthquakes and sets constructed on a huge scale were no longer fresh or exciting. H.D.'s comments about the decadence of the genre accord with the contemporary weariness with the historical spectacular film or epic, and show her preferences to be in accord with the predominant views of the time. This intervention into a contemporary debate gains an added significance with regard to H.D.'s creative practice. She clearly preferred the more current deployment of grand historical or Biblical scenes as a prologue or parallel to a modern narrative, as is the case with the story of Moses in *The Ten Commandments* directed by Cecil B. De Mille (1924) and also D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916). For, as Anne Friedberg has suggested, the chronological scheme of H.D.'s novel *Palimpsest* (1926/1968) is strikingly similar to the plot structure of *Intolerance* in interspersing episodes from different time frames (1983b, 86).

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[8] *Wrath of the Gods* is H.D.'s translation of the German title *Heilegeberge*. The film featured the young Leni Riefenstal.

The Italian epics of the teens had been designed in the particular pre-war climate of threatened conflict and to promote the cinema by associating it with the highest ideals of nationalism and religious values. H.D. praises one early Italian epic, namely the 1916 film *Christus,* directed by Giulio Antomoro, in the course of her review of De Mille's *The King of Kings*. She compares the somewhat bungled scene of Christ's temptation by the devil in *The King of Kings* with the equivalent scene in *Christus*, in which the scene is sparse and symbolic 'the devil offers simply a crown, reaching a bare arm from some subterranean cavern' (1928a, 28). Again using the terms of Imagism, H.D. applauds the restraint and minimalism in cinematic art demonstrated in the Italian film, contrasting it to the wealth of unnecessary detail in the later Hollywood production. Tellingly, once again, H.D.'s preference can be interpreted as a response to the industry's attempts to elevate the cultural status of film, for both *Christus* and *The King of Kings* were visually modelled on famous paintings, allowing them to borrow a sense of cultural legitimacy from fine art.

As a concomitant to H.D.'s rejection of the popular, vulgar genres of film, it might be expected that she would embrace films of the most extreme strand within the non-commercial film of the 1920s, known as 'pure' cinema. This term refers to experimental, avant-garde films by artists such as Hans Richter and Man Ray. However, this group of films is scarcely noted by H.D., in contradistinction to the emphasis upon it in *Close Up* as a whole. H.D.'s neglect of 'pure' cinema is surprising, given the close connections between its advocates and the modernist artistic movement of which H.D. might be said to be a part.

In general, she was by no means convinced of the value of innovation for innovation's sake. In her review of the Russian film *Turksib* (directed by Victor

Turin in 1929) she pronounces the seemingly up-to-the-minute modernism of the presentation of objects treated as abstract geometric shapes as out-of-date, associated perhaps with the worship of the mechanistic and the militaristic by some avant-garde movements, such as Vorticism, before the First World War:

> The cube projected, the flight of fancy that inverts the skyscraper and balances the sardine tin in pseudo-geometric frenzy on a superimposed series of translucent shoe-horns, is not (obvious truism) a symptom so much of dimensional as of demented psychology (1929, 490).[9]

Conversely, Cecil B. De Mille's blockbuster about the life of Christ, *The King of Kings*, which is diametrically opposed to the conceptions and aims of the avant-garde in its inclusiveness and broad commercial appeal, was upheld by H.D. as quintessentially modern. The unexcised version of *The King of Kings* concludes with an industrial landscape onto which are superimposed the words 'Lo, I am with you always.' H.D. argues that 'by drawing the Christian tale and poetic drama right into line with the most modern minute-after-next modernity, Cecil B De Mille has flung it back spiritually into its own setting' (1929, 23).

Some of the most advanced ideas about film aesthetics came from the genre of documentary film. In particular, the documentary tradition was very strong in the Soviet film industry of the 1920s. The work of Dziga Vertov and his group was a politically motivated attempt to explore the possibilities of representing modern, industrialized life with the aid of the 'camera eye.' Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929) aimed to catch life unawares but also presented some of the paradoxes of the act of filming 'real' life. Vertov's work was very influential but had no recorded impact on H.D. The Hollywood studios

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[9] The film or films referred to here have not been identified, and it seems more likely that H.D.'s target was the general trend towards abstraction in avant-garde film, such as in the work of Hans Richter.

contributed to the documentary genre, in the form of Paramount's production *Chang: A Drama of the Wilderness* (1927), in which elephants are depicted as awesome monsters marauding through a jungle village in Siam. In 'The Mask and the Movietone' (1927/1998d) H.D. does comment upon this film, but only to make a throwaway reference to the elephants as 'our now familiar Chang elephants' (1927/1998d, 118) since for her there was no shock value at all.

Turksib, however, did make an impact on H.D. The film takes as its theme the building of the Trans-Siberia railway, and H.D. was particularly impressed with the representation of the railway engine as a symbol of human innovation and god-like swiftness and beauty:

> Turksib, a railway, an engine, seems a being almost in this film, god or goddess, having power to inspire awe, love, a subtle innovation, the very silver belly of Venus and the helmet of modernized Mars, welded, a thing of destruction, of creation (1929, 491).

Here, even when dealing with a documentary about a prosaic industrial phenomenon, H.D. uses classical references which, although not entirely appropriate to the subject, were natural to her. Therefore, whether or not the impression was deliberately cultivated, such allusions mark her out as a member of the educated elite, and lend a high-culture ambience to her commentary on the commercial enterprise of cinema, as well as shoring up the authority of her own critical persona.

Raw spirits and flat-faced totems: politics and hypnosis in H.D.'s theories of audience reception.

Issues of class politics are highly pertinent to H.D.'s discussion of cinema, and it is therefore necessary to outline the broadly political aspects of the distribution of film and the political content of relevant films in the Russian and

German traditions. In Britain in the 1920s, access to view certain films was in effect determined by wealth and privilege. Hollywood's dominance of the distribution market, combined with draconian and randomly applied censorship laws, made it difficult to access those Russian and European films recommended so passionately in the pages of *Close Up*. Censorship in Britain in the 1920s was particularly haphazard and inconsistent, and was based on the 1909 Cinematograph Act that related to safety. At the time of this legislation, films were on 35mm nitrate and did indeed pose a severe safety risk. When 16mm stock on 'safety' film came in, it was outside the law. Thus, even if a film was banned on 35mm it could still be shown on 16mm with permission from local councils or if it was to be screened to the members of a private club (i.e. not to 'the public').

The London Film Society was one of the largest film clubs. It was founded in 1925 by Ivor Montagu and others, and showed films from Russia, Germany and France, including abstract and avant-garde film. H.D. mentions in 'Beauty' that *The Joyless Street* was 'privately viewed by screen enthusiasts [...] at one of those admirable Sunday afternoon performances of the London Film Society' (1927/1998c, 106).[10] The society played a significant part in raising the status of film in Britain and helped to create a (small) public for 'serious' film. Socialist workers' film clubs were also set up across Britain, beginning with London, making Soviet and other films available for a small, monthly subscription. These societies found that obtaining permission to show films to working class audiences was considerably more difficult than it was for the

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[10] For a contemporary account of the extreme mutilations of *The Joyless Street* by censorship bodies in various countries, see 'As Is' by Kenneth Macpherson (1927, 7-8), and for further details including the continuing repercussions, see Patrice Petro (1989, 213 – 218).

London Film Society, which was backed by such luminaries as Lord David Cecil. George Bernard Shaw and Dame Ellen Terry.

In practice, therefore, the ambiguous provision of the 1909 Act allowed for censorship along the lines of class. Don Macpherson in *Traditions of Independence* (1980, 108-112) documents a notable instance in which the London County Council granted permission to the London Film Society to screen Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* but not to the London Workers' Film Society. The difference in subscription between the London Film Society (twenty-five shillings) and the London Workers' Film Society (one shilling) meant that Eisenstein's inflammatory film could be shown only to those least likely to respond to its revolutionary message.

In 'Beauty,' a specific example of censorship is discussed by H.D., namely the censored version shown in America of the German film *Vaudeville* (1925) directed by E.A. Dupont. In the original version, Emil Jannings plays a man who leaves his wife for another woman and they become circus performers. When the two team up with a famous trapeze artist, the woman betrays the Jannings character with the trapeze artist. The jealous man kills the trapeze artist, and serves a prison term for his crime. The version shown in the U.S., entitled *Variety*, omitted all of the opening sequences set in a seedy dockside area. It also changed the 'other woman' to Jannings' wife by erasing the original wife from the plot. Thus the contrast between the character's former life of poverty with his wife, and his liason with Bertha (played by Lya de Putti) in the glamorous world of show business, is lost. Amazingly, the film was also halved in length, by increasing the pace, so that, for instance, as William Everson explains, 'if there

were three reaction shots of Jannings in the original, they would be cut down to one in the American prints' (1978, 319).

Everson's view is that, in some respects, this cavalier handling of the German film, much noted for the innovative camera work by Karl Freund, actually improves the viewing experience for the modern-day film viewer. He confesses that 'it is difficult to sit through the ponderous German original [...] while the lightning-paced six-reel American version seems to gain in narrative cohesion what it loses in occasional subtlety' (1978, 319). H.D.'s opinion was entirely different: she is unequivocally opposed to the cuts.

To make her point, H.D. introduces the metaphor of grafting, derived from horticulture, and (rather over-ambitiously I feel) combines it with her personification of unenlightened film censors as Ogres. She writes that 'the stem is transplanted,' but in the process the film is 'stripped (by this gigantic Cyclops, the American censor) of its one bloom' (1927/1998c, 106). This precious bloom is the film's 'Zolaesque realism' (which I assume refers to the cut opening sequences) of *Vaudeville* and is, in H.D.'s estimation, 'the thing holding its created centre' (1927/1998c, 106). It can be inferred, therefore, that for H.D. much of the value of the original film lay in its willingness to address the question of women's adultery and that censorship threatened the artistic freedom of film-makers to explore and represent gender issues. In other words, the censor, figured in the terms of Homer's Cyclops, is a brutish philistine who habitually devours the products of the artists' vision.

Germany's film industry (unlike that of France, Sweden and Denmark) had not been completely stifled by American imports. The Allied blockade during the First World War had led Germany to supply its own domestic market.

In 1917, the majority of Germany's film companies joined together to form a conglomerate (Ufa) which created a streamlined industry. In a similar way, the isolation of Soviet Russia led to a distinctive and state-supported national film industry. The German film emerged with recognizably unique characteristics and was, according to Jill Forbes and Sarah Street, alone in presenting a significant economic challenge to Hollywood in the aftermath of the war (2000, 6).

There were two main strands in the German art film tradition, namely the fantastic film and the film of social realism. The first was inaugurated in 1920 when *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, directed by Robert Wiene, appeared on the international scene and established a distinctive German film style. The characteristics and themes which were to become most closely associated with the German tradition, such as distinctive *mise-en-scène*, and themes of the supernatural and the double, were all present in this remarkable film which had its origins in Expressionist stage drama. Films such as *The Golem* (1920, directed by Paul Wegener), F.W. Murnau's transposition of the Dracula story, *Nosferatu* (1922), and Goethe's *Faust* (1926) were part of this rich tradition of films dealing with the soul and alienation. Fritz Lang's futuristic *Metropolis* also belongs to this tradition, containing as it does the animation of an inanimate robot and the doubling (unusually, of a woman) into good and evil duplicates.

The frequency of themes of the double and of the damned soul in German films of the 1920s has been interpreted by film historians such as Lotte Eisener and Siegfried Kracauer as evidence of a deep malaise in the German nation and a predisposition to accept the dictatorship of the Nazi years.[11] Thomas Elsaesser,

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[11] See *The Haunted Screen* and *From Caligari to Hitler* respectively.

however, approaches the fantastic film genre in terms of cultural politics. Elsaesser's contention is that the motifs of the fantastic film are borrowed from a basically middle-brow folk culture and were taken up as a commercial decision as well as to foster a national cultural identity by foregrounding German writers such as Goethe, Hoffmann and so on (1996, 141). H.D. chose to devote a whole review (1927/1998f) to *The Student of Prague*, a film in the fantastic tradition directed by Henrik Galeen in 1926.[12] *The Student of Prague* had a literary pedigree since the tale was taken from the Edgar Allan Poe's story of 1839, 'William Wilson,' although H.D. chose to emphasize instead the similarity of its theme with Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). I shall be arguing in a later chapter that the doubling of the narrator in H.D.'s novella of 1934, 'Kora and Ka,' may well have been influenced by the cinematic representation of the *doppelganger*.

The second strand of German films included a group known as 'street' films. These films depicted the social degeneration of urban existence in post-war Europe. Prostitutes, gamblers and black-marketeers were all presented in grimy realism as the nightmare that might easily become a reality for the middle classes in the highly unstable years following Germany's defeat. *The Joyless Street* is one of the bleakest and most powerful of these street films and an example of the 'New Objectivity' (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) in its portrayal of urban realism. It was somewhat ironic, therefore, that it was in Garbo's interpretation of the role of Grete in *The Joyless Street* that H.D. found her ideal of beauty and classical perfection.

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[12] This was a remake of an earlier film. A version was filmed in 1913 directed by Stellan Rye.

The film depicts the fortunes of two women from different class backgrounds struggling with the day to day impact of inflation in post-war Vienna. Grete and her working-class counterpart Maria are left with seemingly no option but prostitution in order to ensure their families' survival. H.D. does recognize the film's attempt to face harsh realities. She notes that there is 'no appeal to pity [...] no glory, no pathos, no glamour' (1927/1998c, 108). But, while H.D. undoubtedly grasps the basic harsh message of the film ('life is getting something to eat'), her paean to the film's loveliness and her reference to 'tragedy' in its 'ornate purple' ringing like 'fairy bells,' sit oddly with the film itself, which is unremittingly dour and grim. H.D. argues that the film transcends its subject: 'the odd thing was that this story of poverty [...] wasn't commonplace, wasn't trivial, partook of the most ethereal tones of subtlety' (1927/1998c, 108). In effect, therefore, H.D.'s lauding of *The Joyless Street* elides its radical socialist message in favour of an aesthetic analysis.

As Anne Friedberg explains, 'Pabst and Eisenstein were the two heroic — if theoretically incommensurate — figures the *Close Up* writers thrust into their critical limelight' (1998, 23), and by and large, of the two, H.D. was more attracted to the complex psychological films of Pabst (who was also a personal acquaintance). Nevertheless, her written responses to Eisenstein's films such as *Strike* (1924) *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *October* (1927), which exploited a highly developed montage technique to depict the events in the birth of the Soviet Union with direct emotive affect, were of genuine awe and admiration. She also praises Pudovkin's film of 1926 about the raising of the Russian revolutionary consciousness, *Mother* (or more particularly its principal actor, the mother herself, played by Vera Baranowskaja).

However the Russian film which had the greatest impact on H.D. was not one of the genre often labelled 'historical revolutionary epic' but a film which provided a comment on the revolution by analogy, namely *By the Law* directed by Lev Kuleshov also in 1926. H.D. examined this film in depth, devoting to it an entire essay entitled 'Expiation' (1928/1998g).[13] *By the Law* is adapted from a story by Jack London, and tells the harrowing tale of Nelson, his wife Edith, and another man, Jack, who become stranded in a remote location in Alaska. At the beginning of the film, gold is discovered by Jack and commandeered by his superior, Nelson. Jack, enraged, murders the two other members of the party, and becomes Nelson and Edith's prisoner. As winter privations worsen, all three suffer hunger and delusions. Edith sentences Jack to death, and only Nelson's ineptitude prevents Jack from paying the penalty for his crime.

As Judith Mayne has argued (1989), the film's underlying theme is the reality of class inequality and exploitation in Russia, since Nelson and Edith clearly represent the bourgeoisie and Jack the proletariat. However H.D. responds primarily not to the political issues raised but to the film's uncompromisingly stark visual style. H.D. was particularly impressed by the portrayal of Edith, played by Aleksandra Khokhlova, as a symbol of the extremity of human endurance. [14] H.D. writes, 'her teeth protrude, her cheek bones are hollow, her skull is picked, so to speak, of its meat by misery and waiting' (1928/1998g, 127). Despite the anti-capitalist message of the film, H.D. instead chooses to respond to Edith, the prime representative of the class system, as an icon of beauty: 'Beauty stalks. A skeleton, in Edith, in Edith rightness is robbed of all extenuating

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[13] 'Expiation' is French translation of the Russian title.
[14] In the viewing copy at the British Film Institute, the name of the actress is anglicized to Chochlowa.

comfort' (1928/1998g, 129). H.D.'s definition of beauty, which was also the core of her argument for *The Joyless Street*, is not by any means a conventional, feminine construction. She writes of Edith in Homeric terms, stating that 'her face can be termed beautiful in the same way that dawn can be termed beautiful rising across stench and fever of battle' (1928/1998g, 127).

At one stage in the essay, H.D. begins to approach the political import of the film by claiming that in it 'fraternity' is exposed as a corrupt currency and replaced by a 'fresh coin' that reveals the true relationship between individuals to be that of master and servant:

> Confraternity the old equation is here set out with a freshness that no mere republican American, no mere psuedo-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 (1928/1998g, 127 – 8).

However, in the quote above, H.D. places the figure of the female ("one woman") outside of the political relations between males as masters or servants, and ultimately, instead of fully recognizing the challenge to the system of class privilege contained in *By the Law*, H.D. locates her discussion of the film in terms of universal issues. She casts Edith ('a sort of Flemish saint') as justice itself, an abstraction or ideal; one of the women 'from Pallas Athene to Charlotte Corday that have personified some grave principle' (1928/1998g, 129). Finally, H.D. maintains that the film itself recognizes a higher authority than human values, since all the 'justice, injustice, beauty, ugliness [...] are as in the Aescuylean trilogy, subject to something greater than God even, that is Fate' (1928/1998g, 129).

H.D. takes a yet further apolitical position in 'Russian Films.' She argues that the historical revolutionary epic films (or Moscow art films as she calls them) are 'on a plane transcending politics' (1928/1998i, 137), and maintains that the message contained in these works, about the relations between classes and between nations, is a spiritual rather than a political one. She writes, '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' (1928/1998i, 137). H.D. denies that the message of the Russian films is an incitement to class war, and urges the spectator to respond to them as transcendent truths. She suggests that the death of the mother in Potemkin's film, killed by the Czarist cavalry, is 'as red as any Flanders poppy' (1928/1998i, 137), and thus ought to move the British spectator as deeply as the tragic deaths of British First World War soldiers. Chris Brown notes that H.D.'s film reviews address the rise of fascism in Europe directly, and argues that the 'spiritual, the aesthetic and the political' in her film writing 'find expression in terms of one another' (1988, 24).

'Russian Films' also contains a direct reference to the censorship of Soviet films in Britain. In the wake of the 1926 General Strike in Britain it is hardly surprising that a film promoting revolutionary insurrection such as *Battleship Potemkin* was banned from public showings (the ban was not in fact lifted until 1954). H.D. bravely argues for the removal of censorship of Russian films, but her liberalism is founded on the fact that she did not think Eisenstein's films would inflame the workers of Britain to rise in revolution, because she could see no cause for them to do so:

> 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 (1928/1998i, 136).

Socialist activists attempting to deploy film in the class struggle took a dim view of the avowedly apolitical position of writers such as H.D., objecting in particular to the privileging of psychoanalysis. Indeed a consuming interest in psychoanalysis marked *Close Up* as a publication, and Pabst, one of *Close Up*'s most revered subjects, was among the earliest film-makers to refer directly to Freud's theories of the unconscious in his film of 1926, *Secrets of a Soul*. In *Close Up* psychoanalytic concepts were promoted as central to the creation and affect of the new film art.

Huntley Carter, writing in 1931 in the Marxist monthly magazine *The Plebs*, attacked cinema aesthetes as reactionaries. He targets the writers of *Close Up* directly, by a punning allusion to the sexual premises of the psychoanalytic approach, attacking critics who were:

> busy talking through their Freudian 'Clothes Up' sheets about technique, 'montage' and the 'cinema mind' and obscuring the socialism in films and loudly despising all films that need no technical tricks to make their socialist message clear. (1931/1980, 140).

Perhaps Carter was unaware of Bryher's book on Russian film, *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (1929) which is incisive and provocative in its analysis of the political background to this group of important films. Equally, H.D. sought to learn hard truths about the modern world by attending to the stark revolutionary films of Eisenstein and Pudovkin. She rejected the sentimentalized and sanitized versions of Russia on film contained in the 'saccharine opera bouffe stuff that

Hollywood offers us' citing Garbo playing Anna Karenina, in *Love* (1927) and Pola Negri as 'Feodora' (1928/1998i, 137).[15]

Without doubt, H.D. did recognize the worth of films depicting the unpleasant realities of modern urban life as indicated by her recognition of the value of the uncut *Vaudeville*. However, her profound commitment to the personally transforming potential of great art was conducted primarily on aesthetic terms, and political questions were often subsumed within this by being appropriated as timeless and universal. Because of this, it is impossible not to see H.D. as belonging to a tradition of 'vanguard modernism' described by Friedberg as being 'less directly allied with political action than with experimentation in aesthetic form' (1998, 9).

In the final section of this chapter I will situate some of the aspects of H.D.'s attack on the masses in 'Beauty' in relation to writing by early social scientists and theorists of 'mob psychology.' Michael Tratner writes that in the first two decades of the twentieth century, 'a whole subgenre of sociological-political treatises purporting to analyse the mass mind emerged all over Europe' (1995, 1). Notably, Sigmund Freud's work 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' (1921/1955) quoted at length from a standard text of mob psychology, namely Gustave Le Bon's work of 1895, *The Crowd*, and it is highly likely that H.D., as an avid reader of Freud, would have been familiar with this summary of Le Bon's argument.

Freud translates Le Bon as follows: 'by the mere fact that he forms part of an organised group, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization.

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[15] In H.D.'s review, the unreleased film starring Negri is unnamed, but it seems safe to assume that this was *The Woman from Moscow* (1928) in which she plays the Princess Fedora.

Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian — that is a creature acting by instinct' (1955, 77). Returning once more to H.D.'s description of the mesmerized audience in 'Beauty,' one passage is particularly striking, for the terms of the description of the massed audience seem to be drawn directly from such theories of the mob mind:

> 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 (1927/1998c, 106).

As suggested earlier, in 'Beauty' the primary target is the movie moguls who deprive the masses of true art and create the conditions leading to the degeneration of the masses. Therefore, although H.D. would appear to derive her analogy between the massed audience and primitive savages from the reactionary theories of Le Bon, her argument is based on a different premise. Her contention is that, as a result of the commercial motives of the Hollywood producers, the audience is deprived of the opportunity to view the highest quality films and as a consequence is reduced to a position of ignorance and dependence, comparable to that of uncivilized savages.

H.D. also employs the concept of mass hypnosis. In 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,' Freud shows himself to be highly impressed by Le Bon's analysis of the submerging of the individual will in the crowd or group, and writes that 'in a group the individual is brought under conditions which allow him to throw off the repressions of his unconscious instinctual impulses' (1955, 74). Freud likens the effect of becoming part of a group to that of hypnotism 'the conscious personality has entirely vanished; will and discernment are lost' (1955, 76). In other words, as Tratner explains, 'when a crowd forms, a whole new kind

of mentality replaces the conscious personalities of those in the crowd' (1995, 1 – 2). This process can be seen at work in H.D.'s depiction of the masses, in which a totem (for instance a film star) is constructed by the collective interests of the Hollywood film industry and operates as a powerful force overcoming the discrimination and independence of mind of the individual:

> 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 (1927/1998c, 106).

In a similar way, F. R. Leavis notes with contempt that films 'involve surrender, under conditions of hypnotic receptivity, to the cheapest emotional appeals' (1933, 21). In complete contrast to both of these is the view found in the film criticism of Iris Barry, and I shall be looking more closely at her position in the following chapter. Barry describes the hypnotized state of the cinema spectator in a positive way: 'we come out of the pictures soothed and drugged like sleepers wakened, having half-forgotten our own existence, hardly knowing our own names' (1925/1972, 31). She asserts that the cinema,

> is not intended to edify, it is not designed to instruct, or move, or thrill. It is primarily something to banish care, even reflection, even consciousness. The cinema is a drug. [...] It is not designed to be an art, but a comforter (1972, 53).

H.D. would have been strenuously opposed to this recommendation of the use of cinema as a benign narcotic.

Freud's analysis goes on to consider the role of a leader in swaying the masses, and he derives from Le Bon the idea that 'a group is an obedient herd, which could never live without a master' (1955, 81). This view is inimical to H.D., for her polemic in 'Beauty' argues for the liberation of the masses from the

dictatorship of the Ogre of Hollywood. Her aim is to ensure the wider distribution of good films so that the public is able to see them and her comments in *Close Up*, especially in the later essay, 'Russian Films' (1928/1998i) maintain a belief in the possibility that the masses will respond to great art if it is available to them. In 'Russian Films' H.D. contends that, if presented with good art instead of the unrelenting diet of Hollywood movies, most people will exercise innate good taste:

> 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 people demand this? [...] 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? (1928/1998i, 135).

On the contrary, in the case of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis, extreme disgust at the supposedly irredeemable philistinism of the masses, led on to a declared allegiance to fascist dictatorship. This process can be seen at work in the following statement by Pound:

> modern civilisation has bred a race with brains like rabbits, and we who are heirs of the witch-doctor and the voodoo, we artists who have been so long despised are about to take over control (1914, 67–8).

Here, Pound recommends that artists should form a dictatorship on the basis that the masses are without intelligence. In contrast to H.D.'s bemoaning of the film industry's reduction of the masses to the level of savages, Pound's conviction of the general public's incurable stupidity ('brains like rabbits') leads him to recommend that artists such as himself take on the role and function of the witch-doctor as appropriate to the lack of civilization of the masses. The figure of the witch-doctor can be compared to the medicine man of H.D.'s essay. While Pound

wishes to enslave the savage masses by assuming the role of the tribal leader, H.D. argues against the cynical use of a kind of mass hypnotism by the producers of Hollywood film, and wishes to restore dignity and choice to the members of the mob.

Thus, despite the criticism that I have levelled against her for elevating her artististic sensitivity above the common run, H.D.'s attitude towards the masses never approached the extreme fascist position of Pound. Indeed, H.D.'s reference to the danger of a 'race fixation' has been cautiously identified by Anne Friedberg as an oblique comment on the 'already existing rhetoric of the Nazi party' (1983b, 79). Therefore, in contrast to an expression of idealistic and rather naïve hopes for understanding between all nations through the universal language of the cinema in 'The Mask and the Movietone,' this passage provides evidence that H.D. was aware of the cinema's powerful potential for harnessing the herd-like mentality of the masses to promote fascist propaganda. Unfortunately the passage describing the 'race consciousness' of the massed cinema audience is one of her least clearly written. I would agree with Friedberg that H.D.'s possible allusion to Nazi propaganda is, regrettably, 'buried in the confusion of images' (1983b, 79).

A more serious issue is raised by the fact that H.D.'s attacks on the massed cinema audience have recourse to rascist stereotypes, for H.D.'s argument in 'Beauty' is couched in racist language. Her description of African tribesmen in a zombie-like state, hypnotized by the drumming of a medicine man, and unquestioningly accepting whatever 'totem' is set up for them to worship, relies upon the contemporary colonialist view of African people as 'savages' or 'primitives.' Implied in H.D.'s description of Africans as backward, unthinking and even threatening, is the racist discourse of Social Darwinism: the idea that

other races represent a previous and superseded stage of human civilization when compared to the West. In fact, the analogy of the cinema audience or the masses with less evolved human specimens was not unique to H.D. and this is demonstrated by the fact that Virginia Woolf also makes the association of the massed audience with primitives or savages in her essay 'The Cinema':

> People say that the savage no longer exists in us. [...] But these philosophers have presumably forgotten the movies. They have never seen the savages of the twentieth century watching the pictures [...] no great distance separates them from those bright-eyed naked men who knocked two bars of iron together and heard in that clangour a foretaste of the music of Mozart (1926/1966, 268).

It has been often noted that comparative myth derived from anthropological study appears in much modernist poetry, most famously in T.S. Eliot's poem of 1922, *The Waste Land.* Elleke Boehmer describes the way in which the modernist conception of the savage represented a more enlightened position in comparison to Social Darwinism because it recognized the possibility that 'the European self might have certain characteristics *in common* with the Other' (1995, 123). However, as Boehmer observes, the white modernist enthusiasm for the exotic primitive Other continued to privilege the European perspective. H.D.'s characterization of the members of the cinema audience as evolutionary throwbacks recognizes no commonality between them, but rather encodes a fear of becoming one with the abjected Other, and is in this way closer to the theories of Social Darwinism than to the premises of comparative myth. In short, the analogy of the cinema audience with primitive tribesmen in 'Beauty' is deployed by H.D. primarily to denigrate the masses.

In conclusion, and returning to the main question of H.D.'s elitism, we have seen that in 'Beauty,' H.D. repeatedly protests against Hollywood's

reduction of the mass audience to a impressionable, hypnotized state, and yet in 'The Mask and the Movietone,' H.D. celebrates the phenomenon of the suspension of the will, or Eleusinian trance-like state, in front of the cinema screen.[16] 'The Mask and the Movietone' examines H.D.'s own ambivalence about relinquishing the soon to be out-of-date performances of silent film.

On the whole, she rejects the new forms of attention required by the sound film and seeks to return to the rapt worship of the archetypes of the silent film. She likens the actors of the silent film to a child's old rag dolls and contemplates with uncertainty the loss of the sense of mystery caused by the coming of sound. H.D. was unsure if she wanted the 'mask' of the silent film actor to be 'ripped off' by the introduction of sound (although she welcomed it as appropriate to documentary film). H.D., though not as vehemently opposed to sound as some of *Close Up*'s contributors, found that the most exciting and valuable aspect of film was its power of suggestion and that the use of sound produced a blatantly mechanical effect. She writes, 'we want healing in blur of half tones and hypnotic vibrant darkness' (1927/1998d, 120).

It must be said that the hypnotized visionary state described in 'The Mask and the Movietone' bears a strong resemblance to the mesmerized surrender of the primitive and regressive savages of 'Beauty' to the hypnotic rhythms of Hollywood:

> We moved like moths in darkness, we were hypnotized by cross currents and interacting shades of light and darkness. [...] We sang, so to speak, hymns, we were redeemed by light literally. We were almost at one with Delphic or Elucinian [*sic*] candidates, watching symbols of things that matter, accepting yet knowing those symbols were divorced utterly from reality (1927/1998d, 116).

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[16] The term refers to the mysteries of Eleusis, an ancient Greek cult associated with the figure of Demeter.

Therefore, even though the films which create the possibility of a sacred redemption by light in the sophisticated viewers of 'The Mask and the Movietone' might be of a higher quality to the Hollywood productions consumed by the crowds in 'Beauty,' and the Delphic initiates of 'The Mask and the Movietone' retain a grasp of reality which the tribesmen of 'Beauty' have lost, the nature of the religious transportation of the sensitive artist and the mesmerized state of the vulgar masses strike me as being in essence very similar. Thus, ultimately, H.D.'s self-portrayal as an 'initiate' in the temple of the cinema, and as one who is immune to the blandishments of Hollywood, allows her to claim her own hypnotized condition as superior to that effected upon the masses.

Chapter Two: 'Fighting the Sex Jinx': H.D., Gender and Cinema.

H.D.'s film writing in the context of other film discourses by and about women.

Having established some of the factors at work in H.D.'s critical position in *Close Up*, this chapter will extend the debate to discuss ways in which gender intersects with the division between high and low culture and its relevance to H.D.'s writing. Specifically, I will examine how the dynamics of gender and cultural elitism are played out in H.D.'s essays on film and also in two of her novels: *Bid Me to Live* (1984a) and *Her* (1984d). In these two novels, the dominant theme is the situation of the woman writer, and they illustrate the difficult and contradictory position in which H.D. found herself as a female creative artist and cultural commentator in the 1920s. For, while the *Close Up* essays represent H.D.'s successful adoption of a confident public critical voice, the emphatically intellectual pose taken in them indicates that to claim such a position was fraught with similar problems to those encountered by the women writers depicted in her novels.

First of all, H.D.'s gender placed her in an ambiguous position because, although the role of the objective and authoritative film critic did offer her a position within the cultural elite, as a woman she found that she was herself positioned within the consuming, feminine masses. In particular, Hollywood addressed women more consistently and explicitly than men, pitching publicity, fan magazines and early product tie-ins at them.[17] Melvyn Stokes (1999), in the

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[17] On this subject see Jane Gaines (1989). The subheading of my chapter is taken from an article by Frances Clark in *Photoplay*, which is discussed below.

context of a rare attempt to consider the difficult question of the responses of actual women viewers (as opposed to the theoretical female spectator), describes Hollywood as an industry that was female-directed in many respects. Stokes writes, 'the movie industry of the 1920s and early 1930s was clearly oriented towards serving (and therefore making a profit from) a dominant female audience' (1999, 44). Estimates published in newspapers and trade magazines show that the film industry perceived women to be the major component of the audience. This was not necessarily so, but, as Stokes argues, 'whether women really formed a considerable majority of the cinema audience [...] may actually be of less importance than the fact that Hollywood itself assumed that [...] they were its primary targets' (1999, 44).

Stokes goes on to outline the extent of Hollywood's commercial interest in marketing not just films but a whole range of items, to women:

> [the Hollywood studios] set out to sell a range of commodities to women movie-goers. These included goods (clothes, cosmetics) designed for women's own use, as well as more general household products (for example, appliances) [...], story-lines were frequently created or amended to facilitate tie-ups (1999, 44).

Likewise, popular films were connected with women in other ways. For instance, sentimental Hollywood melodramas were often adapted from popular romantic fiction, a genre strongly associated with women to this day. Stokes writes, 'a high proportion of 20s films were female-centred melodramas and romances. They were often written by women scriptwriters, frequently adapting material from popular fiction also written by women mainly for women' (1999, 44).

Also, although the brief hey-day of the Hollywood women directors was gone (see Antony Slide 1977/1984) women were centrally involved as scriptwriters in the production of films, and Stokes also points out that female

stars outnumbered male luminaries at this time. Furthermore, and in addition to the presence of individual women in the production process, films were strongly orientated towards women's perceived needs and interests. The mechanism by which women's desires acted as the motivating force behind the dreams and goods packaged by Hollywood is contentious, of course, and never more so as in the case of the cult surrounding Rudolph Valentino. The idea that Valentino's image was manufactured and imposed upon the female audience by a male-controlled industry is questionable, for, as work on this subject by Miriam Hansen and Gaylyn Studlar demonstrates, the Valentino craze was also driven by his genuine appeal for women (see Hansen, 1991, 245-294 and Studlar, 1991).

Notably, Valentino's biggest success was in a film adapted from the 'women's genre' of sensational romance: *The Sheik* (1921), based on E.M. Hull's novel of 1919. In her later novella, *The Usual Star* (1934b), (which will be discussed in the final chapter of this study) H.D. displays her amused contempt for the interdependence between popular fiction and Hollywood film, and her awareness of the way in which both served to promote consumer goods (especially clothes) to women. H.D.'s film essays often focus on those aspects of Hollywood's appeal designed to seduce the female spectator, namely women's fashion and make up. Her articles pay repeated attention to the issue of the gender stereotyping of women on the screen, and the way in which femininity is marketed as a commodity through the female star system.

The transformation of Garbo from a vision of beauty in *The Joyless Street* to a scarcely recognizable version of her former self in *The Torrent* is due to the addition of all the accoutrements of feminine fashion. H.D. stares in horror at the new incarnation of Garbo, 'with sewed-in, black lashes, with waist-lined, svelte,

obvious contours, with gowns and gowns, all of them (by some anachronism) trailing on the floor, with black-dyed wig' (1927/1998c, 107) (see figure 2). The crimes that have been perpetrated upon Garbo as an artist and the betrayal of the impressionable cinema audience which is presented with her commercialized image, are recognized by H.D. to have a wider context in cultural attitudes towards women and femininity, while the final responsibility for the transformation of Garbo into a stereotypical object of male desire is placed squarely at the feet of the Hollywood system.

Referring to another, equally blatant attempt by Hollywood to turn Garbo into a walking advertisement for glamorous and plentiful clothing, H.D. describes her performance in *Love* (1927), (a dramatisation of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*) as 'inexplicably vulgar and incredibly dull' (1929/1998a, 144). H.D. remarks on Garbo's 'lifeless and dough-like visage' in comparison to the 'chiselled purity' of her unadorned face in *The Joyless Street* (1929/1998a, 145). Consumerist motives lie behind the representation of Garbo in *Love*, in H.D.'s view, and the addition of rich clothing and jewellery has instead cheapened her:

> 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 mistress of a man of the world, diademed and in sweeping robes in the Palace of Karenin, was a house-maid at a carnival (1929/1998a, 145).

The relentless and tasteless accumulation of unnecessary clothing and decoration by Hollywood's costumiers leads H.D. in 'Restraint' to appeal (rather impractically) for the opposite; 'bodies almost naked,' as she has seen and admired in the 'simple, beautiful line' of the scenes depicting the classical world in *Force and Beauty*' (1927/1998e, 110).

Figure 2 Greta Garbo in *The Torrent* (1926)

Equally, in 'The Mask and the Movietone,' the introduction of sound to film is likened by H.D. to the unwelcome intrusion of current fashion trends, because it spoils the universal symbolism of figures on the screen and brings film actors into the modern world: 'I didn't really *like* my old screen image to be improved (I might almost say imposed) on [...] any more than I should have liked Topsy [a doll of H.D.'s childhood] [...] suddenly to emerge with wired-in legs and arms and [...] really grown-up bead bag dangling [...] from one wrist' (1927/1998d, 115-116). In 'Restraint,' as at several other points in the essays, the over-elaborateness, or over-profuseness of women's hair ('hair piled and curled and peaked and frizzed,' 1927/1998e, 110) is the mark both of artistic failure and the insidious designs of the consumer industry upon women.

H.D.'s critique of the commercialism of mainstream film is thus ultimately conditioned by the question of the social construction of femininity. H.D.'s awareness of this issue, and its inclusion in her writing on the aesthetic possibilities of the new art of film, indicates the conflict caused by her membership in the high-culture camp of modernism, and as one of the 'crowd' of women. For H.D., a creator and arbiter of high culture, was also addressed (or hailed), by virtue of her gender, by popular forms of culture and specifically by the discourse of consumerism directed at women. Aware that she was the victim, like all women, of Hollywood's attempts to sell the dream of ideal femininity, H.D.'s rejection of the commercial aspects of film was therefore all the more vociferous. For instance, the star system, which was such an integral part of the Hollywood industry, called forth some of H.D.'s most vitriolic criticism. In 'Beauty' she satirizes the process involved in the creation of the star:

> He [the movie-goer] learns that there is a new 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. (1927/1998c, 106).

Notably, the masculine gender is used in the quotation, and H.D. does not separate the genders in her attack on the massed audience. However, other members of Europe's intelligentsia were much readier to associate the credulity of the massed cinema audience with women as a group. For instance, at around the same as H.D.'s essays in *Close Up* were appearing, Siegfried Kracauer was publishing a series of contemptuous vignettes describing how (he believed) working class women in Germany (whom he referred to as 'the little shop-girls') were easily taken in by the reactionary messages embedded in films of the day. In 'The Little Shop-Girls Go to the Movies' (which appeared in 1927) Kracauer writes, 'the Little Miss Typists model themselves after the examples they see on the screen' (1995, 292). He believed that many popular films were designed to preserve the unequal status quo and absorb the dissatisfaction of the working class by the processes of narrative identification and vicarious wish-fulfilment. Kracauer's sweeping, sexist attack on the supposed gullibility of women spectators is deliberately extreme, and, even taking into consideration the satirical tone in which it is written, makes unpleasant reading.

Kracauer's attack builds on the tendency of early sociologists to feminize the masses. Elitists such as Gustave Le Bon did not merely associate the masses with women, but actually conceived them to be by nature feminine, arguing that: 'crowds are everywhere distinguished by feminine characteristics' (cited in Huyssen, 1986, 52). Moreover, Andreas Huyssen points out that the hysterical attribution of feminine characteristics to the masses had an equivalent and more tangible concomitant in the discrimination against women from membership of

the high cultural elite. He writes, 'the universalising ascription of femininity to mass culture always depended on the very real exclusion of women from high culture and its institutions' (1986, 62), and an awareness of this form of gender prejudice would conceivably have led H.D. to distance herself from the masses. Thus, in her guise as a 'highbrow' commentator on the cinema, her continuing recourse to the tenets of Imagism and her choice of classical terms shores up the deliberate impression that she was not a typical target of Hollywood's publicity machine. This was clearly more than just a pose or performance on H.D.'s part, since it is clear that she never for a moment considered that she might be one of those duped by the commercial 'hard sell' of the film industry.

Social discourses which feminized mass culture, such as the marketing ploys of popular cinema that established connections between film and an audience consisting of women consumers, are important to bear in mind when assessing H.D.'s position as a woman film critic. In order to gain a yet broader perspective on the gender issues at work in H.D.'s position as a film critic, I will now briefly compare her essays with statements on film by other, Anglo-American, women commentators writing in the 1920s. By giving a very brief overview of the standpoint taken by a small selection of women connected to modernist groupings, and also giving some indication of the stance towards women as viewers and towards the representation of women on the screen found in the popular press, I hope to provide a more complete and meaningful context for H.D.'s approach to questions of gender and the movie industry.

Firstly, I will return to Virginia Woolf. As a woman writer engaged in journalism and one who addressed in her work many of the same conflicts central to the situation of H.D., Woolf provides a particularly illuminating comparison.

In contrast to H.D.'s much larger output and personal investment in the cinema, Woolf's direct involvement in film was slight, however, and she declined Kenneth Macpherson's invitation to write for *Close Up*.[18]

Woolf's essay 'The Cinema,' as well as resembling 'Beauty' in appearing to draw from the same discourse of mob psychology (as I have already suggested), bears further striking similarities to H.D.'s piece. In the same way that H.D. opposes the commercial motive driving the Hollywood production of *The Torrent* to the greater artistic integrity of Pabst's film, *The Joyless Street*; Woolf compares the sentimental and commercial aspects of a recent Hollywood adaptation of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* with the poetic qualities of the quintessential art film *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* (1919). [19] Thus, despite Woolf's elevation of at least one film (*The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*) to the level of art, the Leavisite separation of high art from mass culture (including the vast majority of films) remains unchallenged. Equally, Woolf's main contention in 'The Cinema,' namely that film, in its present state of development is of lesser cultural value than the literary tradition, has been defined as 'strengthen[ing] the position of the elite' by Leslie Hankins (1993, 176).

Woolf's original intention to submit 'The Cinema' for publication in *Vogue* is extremely interesting in terms of Woolf's own position in relation to female consumerism. In the first and second decades of the twentieth century there was an enormous growth in the number of mass circulation periodicals directed at women. One of the most successful was *Vogue* magazine, which

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[18] See footnote 47 in Donald, Friedberg and Marcus (1998, 325) in which Anne Friedberg quotes from Woolf's letter of refusal.

[19] The date of Woolf's essay (1926) rules out the possibility, however, that she, like H.D. in 'An Appreciation,' refers to Garbo's appearance in the version of *Anna Karenina* entitled *Love* (released in November 1927).

began publication in 1892 and was re-launched by Conde Nast as a fashion magazine in 1909. As Jane Garrity explains, *Vogue* was a much more eclectic publication in the 1920s than it is today, carrying literary reviews, articles on psychoanalysis and including contributions from figures such as Aldous Huxley and Dorothy Richardson. Nevertheless, it was primarily a women's fashion magazine, carrying advertising for corsets, antiperspirants and the like. Thus the magazine was constructing and supplying a recognizably 'feminine' niche in the market. Woolf in fact referred to her journalistic work for *Vogue* as 'whoring,' (*The Letters of Virginia Woolf* 1975 – 1980, Vol. 3, 200). It is significant, therefore, that Woolf is concerned to identify herself in the article as a sophisticated observer of the cinema rather than one of the savages captivated by the screen. In other words, she was a 'highbrow' artist and not a 'lowbrow' female consumer.

In the first part of this study, my primary emphasis is on H.D.'s location as a cultural critic, and Woolf tackles this difficult issue explicitly in many of her essays. In 'Middlebrow' (written in 1932) Woolf argues for an alliance between highbrow artists and lowbrow proletarians against the mediocrity of the middlebrows. Significantly, Woolf chooses cinema audiences to represent 'lowbrows':

> These lowbrows are waiting, after the day's work, in the rain, sometimes for hours, to get into the cheap seats and sit in hot theatres in order to see what their lives look like. Since they are lowbrows, engaged magnificently and adventurously in riding full tilt from one end of life to the other in pursuit of a living, they cannot see themselves doing it. [...] And the highbrows, of course, are the only people who can show them (1942, 114-5).

In this passage, Woolf maintains a strict (although satirically expressed) division between the producers of art, such as herself, and the consumers of art, who were

prevented from creating art themselves by the pressures of day to day existence. In this way Woolf glosses over the vexed issue of a lack of sensitivity in the broad mass public that H.D. implies and Leavis asserts.

Finally, with regard to Woolf, Leslie Hankins points out that film theory in the 1920s was not yet dominated 'by authorities or a weighty past' (1993, 159). The lack of set aesthetic criteria or an historical tradition in film allowed Woolf, according to Hankins, to regard film theory as a 'free space' (1993, 159). It would appear that H.D. also found the cinema to be a relatively 'free space,' since her essays for *Close Up* represent her most sustained attempt to develop a public persona as a cultural critic and to make authoritative, published, statements on questions of aesthetics and the politics of art. However, H.D.'s approach to the cinema, like that of Woolf's, was conditioned by the desire to advance the concept of a 'great divide' between high art and mass culture (although she cherished the belief that great art might one day come to be appreciated by the masses through the unique medium of film), thus testifying to the need for the woman intellectual to be identified with the masculine elite, in contradistinction to the feminized crowd. Therefore the freedom of the new arena of film criticism was still, to some extent, restricted by the male-dominated traditions of criticism in the more established arts.

The second figure I have selected to provide a foil to H.D. is Iris Barry, whose views on the cinema as a salve for the working population have already been quoted (see p. 50 above). Barry was connected to the same modernist circles as H.D. She was the lover of Wyndham Lewis (with whom she had two children) and an acquaintance of Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and Edith Sitwell. Barry was a film critic for The *Spectator* until moving to work for the *Daily Mail* in 1925, and

was one of the group responsible for setting up the London Film Society at around the same time. Also in 1925, she published a book derived from her journalism entitled *Let's Go to the Pictures*. She is best remembered today, however, for her important archival work at the Museum of Modern Art's Film Library beginning in 1935.

Barry's writing on film is refreshingly free of the high culture ethos found in much of H.D.'s writing for *Close Up*. In *Let's Go to the Movies* (the American title of her book) Barry breezily denies the charge that cinema 'is not and never can be high-brow' (1972, 166). She claims that both Charlie Chaplin and *Felix the Cat* are 'very sophisticated' as well as being highly popular. These examples prove to Barry that films can be both commercial and highbrow, and she thereby attempts to reclaim the word highbrow by ridding the term of its elitist connotations. Barry displays her awareness of the supposed vulgarity of the cinema and realizes that her admission of enjoying films and attending the cinema regularly might reflect badly on her as a member of the educated classes. But she categorically declares in the opening pages of her book that 'going to the pictures is nothing to be ashamed of' (1972, viii). Barry includes herself among the many urban working people who seek repose and entertainment after the working day:

> After the feverish activity of a modern day, which includes catching buses, trains or tubes, manipulating typewriters or telephones or lathes or the machines that make clothing and nails, a rest in the picture-house with all its flattering dreams is far better for one than the more disturbing experiences of the theatre (1972, 31).

Compared to the unself-conscious and generous opinions of Iris Barry, H.D. seems locked into the position of the mandarin aesthete. Far from joining the crowd of weary workers, who are grateful for the restful and undemanding pleasures of the popular cinema, H.D.'s reviews instead record a struggle between

the self-appointed guardians of culture (with whom she aligns herself) and the uncultured masses. In 'Russian Films,' she deplores the fact that:

> Small town provincial box offices are demanding more and MORE 'thick-ear stuff.' [...] Concessions have been made to the public [...] the 'thick-ear' has set the standard, the slight concession has become the great concession and the demand of the box office is fast becoming a command (1928/1998i, 135).

According to H.D., the role of the intellectual in relation to the masses was to determine what was artistically valuable in the new art of film and campaign for the unhampered distribution of the best examples. Indeed, she sounds at times positively evangelical:

> It is as much a duty of the educated classes and the connoisseur and 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 (1928/1998i, 135).

This paternalistic role depends upon the modernist, elitist conception of an artistic vanguard in advance of the 'ordinary' people; an effort on the part of the minority to raise the masses to their level of sophistication. In contrast to Barry's solidarity with the working masses, H.D.'s exaggerated detachment from the 'thick-ear' mentality of the cinema audiences suggests a deliberate identification with the masculine artistic elite.

The question of gender and the cinema audience is frequently placed at the forefront in articles on film by Dorothy Richardson, a fellow contributor to *Close Up*. Richardson was the author of the pioneering work *Pilgrimage*, a multi-volume, fictional autobiography which deployed the stream-of-consciousness technique in a new and sustained manner, and with the aim of depicting a specifically feminine awareness. Her contribution to *Close Up* was extensive,

consisting of over twenty articles.[20] Unfortunately, I do not have the space available to examine Richardson's film criticism in detail, apart from one aspect of it which is especially interesting in relation to H.D.'s writing. Richardson is an acute observer of the behaviour of women watching films and draws on the gender of the cinema audience as a significant factor in a way that is absent from H.D.'s essays. Furthermore, Richardson notes that women in particular use the cinema (both in terms of a physical space and an aesthetic experience) in active ways, in contrast to the very passive portrayal of the massed audience described by H.D.

A particularly relevant and appealing passage by Richardson in this respect occurs in her inaugural article for *Close Up*, the first of many published under the general title 'Continuous Performance' in which she gives a vivid impression of the women in the cinema audience:

> It was a Monday and therefore a new picture. But it was also washday, and yet the scattered audience was composed almost entirely of mothers. [...] Many of the women sat alone, figures of weariness at rest. Watching these I took comfort. At last the world of entertainment had provided for a few pence, tea thrown in, a sanctuary for mothers, an escape from the everlasting qui vive into eternity on a Monday afternoon (1927/1998a, 160).

Richardson also notes that the cinema provides a public space into which women can go unaccompanied. In 'The Increasing Congregation' (1927/1998b), she marks a young girl in a cinema, crying. She writes, 'that charming girl [...] would no more go to an entertainment [by which Richardson means a theatrical performance] alone than she would disrobe herself in the street. But this refuge

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[20] See Friedberg (1983a, 7) for a complete list. Most of Richardson's articles are reprinted in *Close Up* 1998, ed. Donald et al.

near her lodgings opens its twilit spaces and makes itself her weepery' (1927/1998b, 171). The different and more liberal arena of the movie house is depicted by Richardson as a space in which women can express themselves and find companionship (although Richardson records that she is frequently irritated by the loquacity of women during film performances, see 'Continuous Performance VIII' 1928/1998c).

Once again, space does not permit a full analysis, but it is interesting to note in passing that Bryher's writing on film also provides an illuminating contrast to H.D.'s. Both share similar tastes, and in particular an extravagantly expressed admiration for the work of Pabst, but it is Bryher who takes up the question of the cinema as a public arena for the debate of women's social position. Particularly in her excellent book on Russian film, *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (1929), recognizably feminist issues are discussed. For instance, Bryher comments on the issue of abortion and the way it is treated in the 1927 film about a state-imposed *ménage à trois*, *Bed and Sofa* (1929, 73). H.D.'s (admittedly brief) reference to this film, ('there is mystery in the light and flicker of *Joyless Street*, of *Bett und Sofa*, of odd portions here and there of *The King of Kings*' 1928a, 48), avoids any engagement with the controversial content of the film and remains instead on the plane of abstract, poetic sensitivity.

In drawing the comparison between H.D. and Bryher, (and with Barry and Richardson) my intention is not to arraign H.D. for the omissions in her writing but to provide a context, and to point out that issues directly relevant to women as spectators were debated in film journalism by her peers. Thus the absence of these controversies from her commentary is remarkable and significant. I shall be going on to examine H.D.'s critique of the representation of women in film in the

following chapter, in which I find her views to be progressive in a feminist sense, but it is striking that her writing on film fails to differentiate between male and female cinema-goers. Furthermore, H.D. lacks an awareness of the potential of women viewers to derive alternative textual meanings (what is now referred to as 'reading against the grain') or to use the cinema as an enabling social space.

It would be useful to be able to confirm or disprove the varying beliefs about female cinema-goers propounded in the journalism of the women writers mentioned so far. However, establishing how actual female audience members regarded the cinema and interpreted films in the 1920s is extremely difficult since very little information gathered from women film viewers themselves exists from the 1920s (or indeed other decades of the century).[21] In addressing this problem, Stokes considers one of the few existing sources of data: a survey of movie-goers carried out by Herbert Blumer of the University of Chicago in the late twenties, (the results of which were published as *Movies and Conduct* in 1933). From this evidence, Stokes finds that the much vaunted 'identification' by women film fans with female movie stars, for instance, was confirmed by the respondents of Blumer's questionnaire but also characterized by 'great complexity and much ongoing negotiation' (1999, 53).

The complex and negotiated nature of female viewers' responses to film and film stars is certainly consistent with the contemporary conceptions of Hollywood fans in popular film magazines, as I shall go on to show, but in connection with studies such as Blumer's, it must be remembered that ethnographic research, even today, when both the epistemology and methodology

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[21] Jackie Stacey's *Stargazing*, is a notable exception.

of data collection are highly theorized, can often be unreliable or flawed. In any case, the actual reactions of the wide variety of women who attended the cinema during the silent period is not of primary importance to my own study, since my focus is on H.D. and on her assessments of films and film audiences, in the context of other discourses about film. I do not propose, in other words, to compare H.D.'s comments with those of a 'typical' female viewer, even if such a person existed. On the other hand, it is productive to compare H.D.'s approach to film with popular writing on the cinema and in order to do this I shall draw on research into film fan magazines of the 1920s by Gaylyn Studlar (1996).

Studlar writes 'the female subjectivity that is inscribed in fan magazines of this era is hardly over-identificatory, passive and mindlessly consumerist, but distanced, skeptical and active' (1996, 269). Perhaps surprisingly, therefore, Studlar's findings suggest that, in contrast to H.D.'s position, fan magazines assumed that spectators would engage in a negotiated and analytical approach to films and conceived of viewers as active and resistant to the imposition of dominant values. Indeed, my own research has confirmed this. In a very brief survey of articles about the screen vamp in the fan magazine *Photoplay* (an American magazine with a huge female readership, which was established in 1911) I found H.D.'s dismissal of the screen vamp as a purely male construct with only one possible significance —the masculine belief in the evilness of female sexuality— to be unnecessarily simplistic in comparison. In the articles I surveyed, there was a relatively sophisticated approach to the cinematic codes governing female appearance and behaviour in the movies, and the analysis of the figure of the vamp was often considered from the point of view of a cynical and worldly-wise female cinema-goer.

For instance, in a *Photoplay* article of 1926, entitled 'The Real Sirens of the Screen,' feature writer Agnes Smith explains what a siren (or vamp) is and how to recognize one:

> A siren, as any child or censor knows, is a lady with sex appeal. And sex appeal, according to the same authorities, is a quality made manifest by mascara-ed lashes, jet black hair, spangled gowns, rouged lips and a gift for holding in the clinches (1926, 28).

By (ironically) citing the chief authorities on the vamp as two groups supposedly immune to their charms (children and members of censorship boards) Smith neatly avoids giving her own opinion on the typecasting of women on screen. Her wry, sarcastic tone, however, suggests that she finds the whole business ridiculous. With tongue in cheek, Smith outlines the immutable laws governing the representation of women in Hollywood: 'all little girls born with light hair and blue eyes are little angels' and 'all little girls born with black hair and snapping black eyes are little devils' (1926, 28-9).

H.D.'s comments on the screen vamps in 'Beauty' are in some ways similar to Smith's, in that she also highlights the preposterousness of the notion that a woman's hair colour is a correlative of her moral or sexual nature:

> A beauty, it is evident, from the Totem's standpoint, 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 (1927/1998c, 107).

However, H.D. appears to believe quite seriously that film audiences will accept the vamps at face value and wishes to censor such images. In comparison to the shared knowingness and humour of Smith's approach, H.D. enacts the role of paternalistic guardian of the vulnerable masses.

In another *Photoplay* feature entitled 'Fighting the Sex Jinx' (1927) Frances Clark asks 'why are the sirens doomed for only brief reigns on the

screen?' Clark undertakes an analysis of the phenomenon of the screen vamp which is more complex than that of Agnes Smith's and, it must be said, more sophisticated in many ways than H.D.'s in 'Beauty.' Using the new buzzword for sex appeal coined by Elinor Glyn, ('IT') Frances Clark explains how actresses must strive to strike exactly the right note in terms of presenting sexuality on screen if they wish to prolong their popularity with audiences and that this is a delicate balance to achieve. Addressing 'Mrs Glyn,' Clark outlines the problem: 'if you have too much IT you are promptly put in your place as a brazen and obvious huzzy, with no ability,' but, 'if you have too little IT, you are labelled a colorless prig with a cold heart' (1927, 26).

Clark goes on to propound some theories about why women go to see vamp movies and credits audience members with far more intelligence and independence of thought than does H.D. in 'Beauty.' Clark suggests three reasons why women will go to see a vamp picture : 'first, for the vicarious experience denied to them in life. Second, to get helpful hints in the art of man-stealing. Third, to enjoy a feeling of superior virtue' (1927, 36). However, Clark speculates that the women in the film audiences have the good sense to realize that imitating the vamp in real life would lead to ridicule and she deduces that women find them 'seldom sympathetic enough to be credible' (1927, 36). Therefore, compared to H.D.'s polemic, Clark's examination of the reception of the screen vamp is subtler and more closely attuned to gender differences in the audience, since H.D.'s insistence in depicting film audiences as a unified mass erases differences of sex, as well as class, race and sexual orientation.

On the subject of the star system, it is significant that Studlar's research found that fan magazines of the 1920s 'regularly published letters that spoke

openly with resentment of the 'manufacture' of stars and with disgust for the industry's transparent promotional ploys' (1996, 273), and that for the magazine writers, 'the lack of veracity of Hollywood publicity and the constructed nature of the star system became the object of tongue-in-cheek satire, amused tolerance, and occasional denunciation' (1996, 273). In contrast to this, H.D. believed that cinema audiences in America, as the victims of the publicity machine, have no option but to submissively accept the 'totems' (including film stars) set up for it by the film industry. In H.D.'s view, this leads to a situation in which the audience does not know its own mind:

> 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 (1927/1998c, 106).

However, the fan magazines adjudged cinema-goers to be discriminating and critical. For instance, a caption to a picture of Lya de Putti in Smith's article for *Photoplay* ('just another furrin' vamp, says the public with a yawn,' 1926, 28) makes it clear that the writer is aware of the jaded appeal of the vamp. Indeed, by the mid-twenties, actresses such as Nita Naldi, Lya de Putti and Pola Negri who, like Theda Bara, were routinely cast as vamps, were falling out of favour, to be replaced by Colleen Moore and Clara Bow who portrayed upbeat, independent working woman or flappers. The waning popularity of the vamps suggests (if one accepts that films are driven by market forces) that audiences were tired of the sex siren or man-eater stereotype and instead responded to a more modern conception of womanhood. In lamenting the continued presence on screen of the vamp, H.D. appears unaware that the stereotype was no longer taken seriously by an increasingly sophisticated audience.

Consistent with her denigration of the popular audience in her essays for *Close Up*, H.D.'s aim is to distinguish herself from the ordinary female filmgoer. In 'Beauty' H.D. confesses that she does in fact read fan magazines, but condemns their sexual politics, giving as an example the obsessive attention to Greta Garbo's 'unfeminine' height (1927/1998c, 107). In H.D.'s view, mass culture promulgates values that are oppressive to women and her place is with the individualism of the avant-garde. An exception to this rule occurs at the beginning of 'An Appreciation,' an article which appeared in 1929, in which H.D. playfully aligns herself with those women who avidly read the movie magazines for personal details of their favourite star (in this case Louise Brooks):

> 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 doing and *mots* and quaint sallies of the star (1929/1998a, 139).

The tone of the review is charmingly whimsical and the fact that it is slightly later in date than the stern and critical 'Beauty' suggests that H.D. felt more secure in her role as a public commentator. In any case, the context of H.D.'s admission in *Close Up* to a schoolgirl infatuation with Louise Brooks is an account of her dinner with the director, Pabst, and their intellectual conversation about film aesthetics. In general, therefore, H.D. was concerned to present herself as anything but an easily seduced, sentimental movie fan, and only on one other occasion in *Close Up* does she strike the pose of an 'ordinary' fan of the movies. In 'Russian Films,' she writes: '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' (1928/1998i, 138). It is hard to judge the tone here, but the affectation of ardent worship of

these two Hollywood stars strikes me as satirical, especially in the context of the article's elevation of Russian masterpieces at the expense of the 'saccharine washed-out and sugared over productions' of Hollywood (1928/1998i, 138).

The voice of the critic and Screen Beauty in *Bid Me to Live*.

As already demonstrated, an outright repudiation of the feminized masses such as that expressed by Kracauer, and shared by modernists such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, was more complex for H.D. and her female contemporaries. Jane Garrity has argued:

> For a writer like Woolf, whose allegiances were divided between her upper-class affiliation, her desire to make a living at journalism, and her identification with women as a subordinated group, the relation of mass culture to femininity is necessarily more ambivalent and vexed that it is for her male counterparts (2000, 189).

In the same way, competing allegiances, and identification with different groups, underlie the contradictions of H.D.'s film essays. In the following pages I trace the appearance of these same conflicts in the themes of two of H.D.'s novels and find that the central female characters in the fictional works take up very different positions to that adopted by H.D. in her role as cultural commentator.

Bid Me to Live (written in 1939 and first published in 1960) is unique in H.D.'s fiction in including a subjective account of viewing a film as it unfolds on the screen. The novel is set in London during the First World War and the protagonist of the novel, Julia Ashton, finds her way through the bombed city streets to a cinema. There, amidst a crowd of uniformed soldiers she watches a film set in Italy, apparently a romantic melodrama. When the heroine of the film appears, Julia's reaction is overwhelming: 'this was the answer to everything, then, Beauty, for surprisingly, a goddess-woman stepped forward. She released

from the screen the first (to Julia) intimation of screen-beauty' (1984a, 124). Both the experience and the language used to describe it, recall passages in H.D.'s essay 'Beauty.' H.D. describes witnessing Garbo on screen for the first time in almost identical terms. She writes, 'so in Montreux, Switzerland, I happened (as it happened) to see my first real revelation of the real art of the cinema' (1927/1998c, 106). It would seem then, as Charlotte Mandel has already pointed out, that the scene in H.D.'s novel *Bid Me to Live* is a fictional reconstruction of H.D.'s first sight of Garbo (1980, 132). (Cassandra Laity also links these two texts together, see 1996, 145 – 147).

The recurrence of a similar reaction to a screen icon in both a fictional and a critical text provides an important opportunity to compare the relative approach taken toward film by H.D. in her essays for *Close Up* and in her creative prose. In comparing the essay and the scene in the novel, I am particularly interested in the operations of gender and class, and of elitism and the concept of the artist as a person apart, in the two texts. I want to propose that, while the fictional text can in no way be judged as an uncensored expression of the author, it might in this instance provide a more permissive arena in which to raise issues about constraints on the woman writer. Thus the difficulties encountered by Julia in the novel provide a gloss to illuminate the excesses of H.D.'s anti-populist stance in *Close Up*. I do not intend to imply, however, that the thoughts and emotions of the character Julia can necessarily be assumed to be those of H.D.'s (although *Bid Me to Live* has generally been regarded as an autobiographical novel).

The relationship between the 'Screen Beauty' scene in *Bid Me to Live* and the meditation in 'Beauty' on Garbo's appearance in *The Joyless Street* is highly complex. For a start, strictly chronological elements prevent the scene in the

novel from qualifying as autobiographical in any straightforward sense. H.D. lived in London through the First World War like her fictional counterpart Julia, but did not see Garbo in *The Joyless Street* until 1925 (the year of the film's release). In *Bid Me to Live*, H.D.'s wartime experiences and her revelation of Garbo many years after the end of the war have become fascinatingly intertwined.

In 'Beauty,' H.D. is deeply affected by Garbo's portrayal of a woman in the midst of the repercussions of war, but in *Bid Me to Live*, it is Julia and not the actress on the screen who is in the midst of war. Instead, the theatre in which the film is shown is itself the arena of war, packed with 'all the soldiers in the world,' (1984a, 122) contemplating their own annihilation as they watch a dangerous motoring scene on the screen. The cinema full of soldiers in uniform is a metaphor for a world transformed by war, militarism and hyper-masculinity, and into this hellish swarm of khaki in the movie house comes a healing revelation of the beauty of art: a 'goddess-woman' on the screen. The appropriate analogy, therefore, is between Julia, located amid the khaki-clothed thousands in the cinema, and Garbo, placed against a backdrop of privation and war in *The Joyless Street* (as described in 'Beauty').

H.D. characterizes Garbo in the film as 'a beautiful and young woman [...] stepping, frail yet secure across a wasted city' (1927/1998c, 107). In a similar way, Julia goes to the cinema though the ruined city. She is in a state of mental turmoil, trying to adjust to the wartime situation and its effect on sexual relationships including her own. Her husband Rafe has declared that although he still loves her, he desires another woman and Julia watches helplessly, even abetting her husband's unfaithfulness to her. The war has transformed Rafe from a sensitive poet into a stereotypical British 'Tommy' and for Julia, the distress of

his infidelity is compounded by his disillusionment with the value of literary art. On the same night that Julia is told of the beginning of Bella and Rafe's relationship, she witnesses Rafe kicking volumes of poetry across the floor, and it is hard to say which of these represents to Julia the greater betrayal. In the bohemian circle of artists to which Julia and Rafe belong, a writer named Frederico inspires her creatively, but rejects her sexual advances, despite the explicit encouragement of the relationship by others in the group including Frederico's wife Elsa. It is with Vane, another prospective partner from this circle of artists, that Julia makes the journey to the cinema through the unlit, war-ravaged city.

Julia's situation thus encapsulates H.D.'s retrospective understanding of her own experience during wartime, an understanding that was made possible by the cathartic experience of seeing Garbo in Pabst's bleak film. In some subtle way, H.D.'s own pursuit of art and reverence for beauty during a time of war when the dominant values were militaristic and jingoistic, was vindicated by the revelation of Garbo; a symbol of transcendent beauty in a wartime setting. Also, in *The Joyless Street*, Grete is faced with the stark choice of prostitution as the only means of survival and although no such choices were forced upon H.D. herself, her novel describes the way in which Julia finds all of the pre-war sureties about sexual relationships, including that within marriage, are unmoored by the social upheavals of wartime. Thus in both *The Joyless Street* and in *Bid Me to Live*, the advent of war causes women to be revealed as particularly vulnerable sexually. Julia concludes that it is only in the role of artist that the possibility of escaping the limitations of socially constructed femininity, resides:

> for women, any woman, there was a biological catch and taken at any angle, danger. You dried up and were an old maid, danger. You drifted

> into the affable *hausfrau*, danger. You let rip and had operations in Paris (poor Bella), danger.
> There was one loophole, one might be an artist. Then the danger met the danger, the woman was man-woman, the man was woman-man (1984a, 136).

The passage suggests that the dual identity of the artist as 'man-woman' extends the range of possibilities available to women. Instead of the limited roles of 'old maid,' '*hausfrau*' or the woman tainted with the shame of abortion, the woman artist can claim the larger potential of a creative vocation, a possibility often reserved for men, and by so doing negate gender divisions. In the same way, perhaps, the professional position of the commentator, like that of the creative artist, promised for H.D. an escape from the confining aspects of gender role definition.

Despite many aspects that seem to endorse the generally accepted notion that Screen Beauty is a fictional portrait of Garbo in *The Joyless Street* a puzzling inconsistency remains. This anomaly has come to light due to the particular approach I have taken to research into H.D.'s writing on film, namely to identify, locate and view as many of the films mentioned by H.D. in *Close Up* as possible. My research has revealed that none of the details of the film described in *Bid Me to Live* actually correspond to the genre, style or narrative of *The Joyless Street*. Surprisingly, on the other hand, there are details which do correspond to *The Torrent*; the film that was reviled at length by H.D. in 'Beauty.'

Most of these correspondences are visual motifs. Firstly, in *The Torrent* there is repeated use of a 'halo effect' to transform flowers into soft crosses of light, and I was informed by the film historian Kevin Brownlow that this was

achieved by using a specially ground lens in the filming.[22] The film Julia watches includes the same effect: 'the garden was tapestried in quatrocento leaves and flat flowers. The flowers were large (magnified under a glass) in her hands, Persephone in Enna' (1984a, 124). And, later, 'one sees the flower-scattered rain-drops on her face. The camera swerves, the flower-tears have vanished and she lifts, as if in replica, to replace them, a diadem of brilliants' (1984a, 125). Also, the film in the novel includes the same climatic events as *The Torrent*, in which a great storm causes a river to break its banks. Screen Beauty is described watching through a window as 'outside, rain twists the branches of palm trees. A stone pine stands immovable through the tempest' (1984a, 125). Further correspondences can be found, such as the setting of a garden with a 'flagged-walk' and a scene set at dawn, both of which occur in H.D.'s novel as well as in *The Torrent*.

However, there are disparities. For instance, the tempest in *Bid Me to Live* duplicates the torrent in the Hollywood film, but the impact of the floods upon the respective heroines is different. Screen Beauty is described soaking and dripping with water: 'she emerges; drowning, she staggers toward her mirror' (1984a, 125). Garbo's character Leonora in *The Torrent*, on the other hand, remains safe and dry while the hero risks his life to rescue her (thus providing a comic moment when he is amazed to finally discover her quietly reading a book in her bedroom). It would appear that while the images of wet and drowning people were retained by H.D. from her viewing of *The Torrent*, the description of Screen Beauty 'drowning' as she approaches her own mirror reflection is instead drawn from the emotional content of one of the last shots of *The Joyless Street*. Grete's need for money finally forces her to perform on stage in a brothel wearing a revealing

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[22] Letter to the author, December 11th, 2000.

dress. Just before the performance is due to begin, she looks at her own reflection in horror and self-disgust, 'drowning,' as it were, in shame. In this instance, the emotional tone of the novel is drawn from Pabst's film but the motif of dripping garments recalls *The Torrent*'s most dramatic sequence.

All in all, I am convinced the film described in *Bid Me to Live* does not correspond to Pabst's masterpiece in any straightforward sense. Most evidently, there is an obvious mismatch between the genre of the film described in the novel, a romantic Hollywood melodrama set in Italy, and Pabst's grim street film of the essay. I am advised by Kevin Brownlow that the film Julia watches is not any one film but an amalgamation of elements of romantic films of the silent period.[23] There are, however, some suggestive (although not conclusive) similarities between the film watched by Julia and *The Torrent*, as I have shown. Astonishingly, therefore, *The Torrent*, the film H.D. derides the most in her *Close Up* essays, could be just as much a source for the important Screen Beauty scene in *Bid Me to Live* as the film till now assumed to be the main inspiration, *The Joyless Street*.

From the suggestive details of the Screen Beauty scene, the visual elements of *The Torrent* seem to have made a greater impression on H.D. than she was prepared to admit in *Close Up*. In the light of this, the division between modernism and mass culture which has been generally assumed in studies of H.D. and her modernist contemporaries, appears to be unnecessarily fixed. For while a rigorous opposition to Hollywood melodramas is H.D.'s most characteristic pose in the essays for *Close Up*, her artistic practice would appear to be influenced by

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[23] Letter to the author, February 2nd 2002.

films of the genre she publicly derided. Why then is H.D. so intent on dissociating herself from the 'lowbrow' productions of Hollywood in her guise as film critic? I would argue that H.D.'s attack on *The Torrent* in *Close Up* has the effect of increasing H.D.'s cultural standing by damning the common enemy of highbrows, namely Hollywood, while a more indulgent approach to the feminine-identified genre of the sentimental Hollywood melodrama would have compromised H.D.'s credibility within the modernist circles that constituted *Close Up*'s projected readership. In this way, questions of gender have enormous importance by excluding certain forms of artistic production in the process of constructing modernist positions.

I will now return to *Bid Me to Live* to compare the attitudes towards film contained in H.D.'s essay with her depiction of Julia's reactions to the cinema. For a start, Julia's reaction to the movie house is much less snobbish than H.D.'s approach to cinema-going in 'Beauty.' The massed soldiers are indeed alien to Julia and express the situation of war in an abstract way that certainly denies their individuality (Julia sees 'the thousand uncovered heads, all alike, smoothed back, here and there a white arm in a sling,' 1984a, 126), but the impulse behind this is not denigration but pity, for crowd of soldiers in the movie house in *Bid Me to Live* is tragically condemned and the theatre itself is re-envisioned by Julia as a purgatory. Both of the crowds, however, display the group instinct described by Le Bon and elaborated by Freud (see pp. 48-50 above). The 'totem' controlling the soldiers is patriotism, represented by the repeated snatches of the popular song 'Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag,' and, like the passive, hypnotized members of the audience described in 'Beauty,' the spectators in *Bid Me to Live* are in a dream-like state: 'the pit beneath them [Julia and Vane] was filled with

the smoke of countless cigarettes that wafted a cosmic brew, a sort of narcotic dope of forgetfulness' (1984a, 122). In *Bid Me to Live* the masses are compliant with the forces of war in much the same way that the lump in 'Beauty' collaborates with the Ogre's intent to pervert and destroy film art. In *Bid Me to Live*, the terror and destruction of war is the antithesis of the sacred values of art, as in 'Beauty,' the commercial incentive of Hollywood is inimical to creativity and beauty.

A significant difference, however between these two scenarios is that unlike H.D.'s self-differentiation from the 'lump' in 'Beauty,' the revelation that redeems the hell-pit of war in *Bid Me to Live* is a collective experience. For Julia, catharsis occurs as part of a group and depends upon the collective aspect: 'Julia was part of this, part of the teeming crowded theatre, one of the audience, one with them' (1984a, 126). In *Bid Me to Live*, even though the cinema audience are 'lumped together' in a way similar to the denigration of the masses in 'Beauty,' all of those present in the movie house (not just the intellectual 'leaven') experience the cathartic and transcendent effects of the vision of beauty on the screen. In other words, in the cinema scene of *Bid Me to Live* all are initiates in the sense defined by H.D. in 'The Mask and the Movietone.' In the face of war, class distinctions are erased temporarily and the common experience of Julia and the massed British soldiers recalls the temporary alliance formed by H.D. with her working class audience in 'Joan of Arc.'

Notably, in the version given in 'Beauty,' the audience is untouched by the revelation of Garbo's beauty. Those present in the cinema in Switzerland at H.D.'s first viewing of *The Joyless Street* were apparently philistine and moralistic; the English members of the audience being the worst offenders of all.

H.D. describes the poor reception of the film: '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" ' (1927/1998c, 109). Conversely, the fictional version of Garbo's appearance on screen in *Bid Me to Live* accomplishes the hopes expressed by H.D. in the closing lines of 'Beauty' for Garbo's future, namely that Garbo will spurn Hollywood, and, as the mermaid Galatea enchanted the Ogre, Polyphemus, enchant the ignorant masses with her 'purity and glamour' (1927/1998c, 109). In the novel, Screen Beauty is also described as 'a mermaid' (1984a, 125) and the condemned soldiers gratefully receive the transcendent vision.

The cinema scene in *Bid Me to Live* occupies a crucial position in the narrative and thematic development of the novel. The experience at the cinema affords the chance for Julia as a woman and an artist to find a voice and a position from which to reassert the value of art in the midst of war. Julia struggles to rise above the false, theatrical pantomime of partner-swapping, and her feeling of being reduced to a counter in a sexual game. In this vulnerable and distraught state she experiences her revelation of beauty and the insight leads her to find the courage to escape from the failures of her life in London. Julia goes with Vane to Cornwall: a healing place away from the degraded and suffocating charade of her marriage and the pervasive atmosphere of sexual competitiveness. In Vane's house in Cornwall, where she has (literally) a room of her own, she is able to continue with her creative work.

Julia is also fleeing restrictions placed upon her as a woman writer. Rico, the representative of liberated sexual morals and advanced, experimental writing, wishes to confine Julia to writing from a feminine perspective. He objects to her

imaginative identification with Orpheus and exhorts her in a letter to 'stick to the woman speaking. How can you know what Orpheus feels? It's your part to be the woman, the woman vibration. Eurydice should be enough' (1984a, 51). On every front, then, from the machismo of warfare, the bogus freedom of sexual liberation and the reactionary attitudes towards gender beneath the new literary modes, Julia has to fight for the validation of her own perspective. Ultimately, in *Bid Me to Live* the experience of the cinema and the figure of screen beauty are enabling for Julia: the vision of screen beauty reaffirms Julia's commitment to her own vocation as a writer and the confidence to make her own independent judgements.

In a similar way to the development of Julia's creative independence, it appears that H.D. gained sufficient confidence in her own critical response film to be able to state authoritatively what is and is not 'real art' in the public forum of *Close Up*. While the novel makes clear the specific barriers that existed for aspiring women writers of fiction, the conditions governing H.D.'s expression in her essays for *Close Up* can only be inferred from her tone, the approach she takes, and the omissions that become clear when her critique is compared to other discourses on film. Nonetheless, if the portrait of Julia can be assumed at some level to 'be' H.D., as she sat in front of the cinema screen when Garbo appeared as a vision of spiritual beauty and revelation, the extent to which this primary experience was re-formulated in *Close Up* is a strong indication of the impact of gender on H.D.'s construction of a public, critical voice.

'The Master uttered again': Masculine authority and feminine creativity in H.D.'s *Her* and accounts of the production of film.

Like *Bid Me to Live*, H.D.'s posthumously published novel *Her* records a woman's struggle to claim a voice and to circumvent the feminine social roles that

come into conflict with her needs as an artist. H.D. began writing *Her* in 1927, at the same time as she began to contribute essays to *Close Up*. The novel contains no scenes specifically set in a cinema, neither does it refer directly to film, but connections can be drawn between it and H.D.'s writing on film in the broader area of gender and cultural authority. In *Her*, the young artist figure, Hermione Gart, engages in a battle with her fiancé, George Lowndes, over the right to proclaim what is most valuable in the literary and cultural tradition, and the novel depicts Hermione's struggle to establish the validity of her own point of view in opposition to George's masculine authority. In this way, the novel dramatizes the complex interrelationships between cultural hegemony and the feminine that I have argued are implicit in H.D.'s essays for *Close Up*. Plus, I shall be examining the paradoxes at work in the way in which the definition of creativity as a masculine quality is shown to hamper Hermione's progress in the novel, while the designation of the artist (in this case the film maker) as male, is celebrated in the *Borderline* pamphlet (1930/1998b).[24]

The most pertinent aspect of the novel to this study is the description of Hermione's attempts to develop aesthetic criteria of her own, attempts which are constrained by her need to defer to George, who tries to dictate to her what works of art are worthy of veneration. Hermione's free exercise of judgement is also further compromised by her romantic attachment to George, who, although acting as a mentor and encouraging Hermione's first attempts at poetry, is primarily interested in Hermione as a beloved muse figure. Hermione realizes that there is a ready-made identity available to her as the future wife of George, and that

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[24] The pamphlet was issued anonymously but its authorship by H.D. has never been seriously questioned.

accepting this would relieve her of the burden of self-definition: 'she wanted George as a little girl wants to put her hair up or to wear long skirts. [...] She wanted George to define and make definable a mirage, a reflection of some lost incarnation, a wood maniac, a tree demon' (1984d, 63). In fact, George Lowndes is agreed to be a portrait of the young Ezra Pound, to whom H.D. was engaged to be married for a time, and Pound did indeed write love poems to H.D. in which he addressed her as 'Dryad' (a tree spirit) and pictured her as a tall poplar tree, swaying in the wind. These poems of Pound encapsulate the tradition of courtly love in which the woman is idealized and objectified, a silent and beautiful muse. H.D.'s appropriation of the tree as image of her young self underlines the way in which the voice of the silent muse is finally heard in this, H.D.'s novel, as a direct challenge to Pound's attempt to suppress her artistic voice.

In the novel, as marriage to George draws closer, Hermione finds herself slotted into various roles. She imagines herself as Hermione out of Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale* or a typical college girl of the period with her young fiancé. George says that she looks like a Greek goddess (or more precisely, 'like a Greek goddess or a coal scuttle,' 1984d, 64). For Hermione these imposed identities alienate her from herself, and the use of a third person pronoun as a name for her female protagonist underlines the sense in which Hermione/Her is divided against herself and defined by others. Hermione watches herself become, temporarily, what others want her to be: not an individual but a type, in the same way that 'Beauty' records a similar transformation wrought by Hollywood on Greta Garbo.

In the context of these articulate protests against the constraining effects of male definitions of women in *Her*, and in 'Beauty,' H.D.'s remarks in another piece for *Close Up*, are strikingly inconsistent and perverse. In 'An

Appreciation,' H.D. glamorizes the view of actresses as raw material moulded by a gifted director in a way completely at odds with the description of the burdensome and limiting effects of being a muse figure in *Her*. In the essay, the miraculous transformation of the actresses who have been directed by Pabst is celebrated in ecstatic language:

> For what are the creations of G.W. Pabst but growing, vivid and living beauty? They move and grow before him like sun-flowers to the sun. I have taken an almost diabolical 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 (1929/1998a, 144).

Here, H.D. describes G.W. Pabst as a benign Svengali: he is 'almost a magician' (1929/1998a, 145). In her description, Pabst is a godlike sun, the source of light and energy bringing his female actresses to a full expressiveness, and the extraordinary talent of the director is described as the creative power able to shape the actresses as if they were passive, malleable material. It could easily be concluded from H.D.'s attitude here that she had, in the more public forum of the journal, suppressed her own understanding of the implications of male domination, for a similar example of oppressive male mastery is described and examined from a highly critical stand point in her novel *Her*. Resolving this discrepancy by suggesting that H.D. observed a division between the more permissive arena of literary writing, in which personal experiences and views could be disguised as fiction, and the more direct expression of the film review which is cast as personal statement is too simple, however, since the comments of 'An Appreciation' also stand in contradiction to H.D.'s devastating critique of the objectification of women by the Hollywood production companies in 'Beauty' and in other articles in *Close Up*.

It is possible that H.D. was engaged in self-censorship in 'An Appreciation,' but on this occasion, it is biographical information that appears to hold the key to unravelling H.D.'s contradictory statements, for the comments that H.D. makes in this piece regarding Pabst's hypnotic power and his gift of bringing out 'another side' to his actresses, read somewhat differently when understood as a meditation on an experience that at one stage H.D. might have contemplated as being her own. When H.D. states that she felt she had 'a personal right' to Louise Brooks as an avid fan of hers, most readers of *Close Up* would not have been aware that Kenneth Macpherson, for one at least, had considered it likely that H.D. would be chosen for the part that was finally played by Brooks in *Pandora's Box* (that of the free-spirited Lulu) (see Friedberg, 1998, 22). With this in mind, it becomes possible to understand the ambiguity in phrases by H.D. such as 'the Master uttered again' (1929/1998a, 140). H.D. was perhaps both relieved not to have undergone exposure and transformation under the magician Pabst, and at the same time fascinated and drawn to an experience that might have been her own. Likewise, a similar ambivalence marks Hermione's responses to George's flattery, because, while the role of wife jeopardizes the pursuit of an artistic vocation, being cast as a Greek goddess is certainly seductive.

The fact that the role of creative artist is less available to Hermione than to George on the grounds of gender, is strenuously protested in *Her*, but in the *Borderline* pamphlet, the role of filmmaker is constructed as exclusively masculine (as Friedman, 1990, 17, amongst others, has pointed out) and glamorized in precisely these terms. In a list of items detailing what qualities are required to be a film maker, biological masculinity is included: 'an advanced and intellectual film-director must be mechanic, must be artist, must be man, must be

warrior' (1930/1998b, 226). Specifically, the pamphlet idolizes the gifts of Kenneth Macpherson as the director of *Borderline*. After first dealing with the fact that cinema is generally regarded as a 'present-day gutter offshoot of the stage' (1930/1998b, 224) in a way that is reminiscent of the defence of film art in 'Beauty,' the essay piles metaphor upon metaphor, developing a comparison between Macpherson and Leonardo da Vinci. Macpherson's approach to filming is described as the equivalent of da Vinci's dissection of corpses for the purposes of accurate representation. Thus, in a series of aggressive, invasive and terrifying analogies Macpherson is described as a director who 'sculpts literally with light. He gouges, he reveals, he conceals' (1930/1998b, 227).

Borderline certainly represents a significant achievement, and is unusual in being an avant-garde silent film financed and made by a British company and one which bears the strong influence of the European traditions of Soviet montage and German Expressionism. The film was shot in Switzerland and depicts the borderline existence of a white couple, Thorne and Astrid, (played by Gavin Arthur and H.D.). Thorne has become sexually involved with a black woman named Adah (the part taken by Eslanda Robeson) and the narrative recounts the final reconciliation between Adah and her partner Pete (played by Paul Robeson). The film attempts in a sincere manner to address the issue of racial prejudice, for Pete is publicly blamed for the murder of Astrid, when in fact it is Thorne who is responsible, and is hounded out of town. The racial politics of the film, and its depiction of homosexuality are perhaps ultimately the more interesting aspect of the film today, for the montage techniques, though often beautiful and striking, seem derivative.

The black characters are described in the pamphlet as also 'borderline' but their status as such is on a different footing to the complex, sexually ambiguous white figures in the ensemble. Thus Jean Walton argues that the pamphlet depicts the role of creative artist as reserved not just for males, but for white males by the association of repression with creativity. The terms of the pamphlet reflect the representations in the film itself, in which the black couple, Pete and Adah, are considered to have a 'natural' and unrepressed (hetero)sexuality in comparison with the tormented and neurotic white characters, Thorne and Astrid. Walton writes that the POOL group's 'racial application of [a] primitive/civilized binary,' is demonstrated by the fact that 'while the black characters seem "immune" to neurosis, they are also barred from creative achievement' (1996,101).

It is astonishing to find that the subtle exclusion of certain groups from creative ability in the pamphlet is also repeated in the omission of the truth of the extent of H.D.'s own creative input to the film. Susan Friedman is one of several scholars of H.D. to point out that there is evidence to show that when Macpherson fell ill, H.D. and Bryher carried out the editing of the film themselves. Therefore the extravagant praise for Macpherson's masculine-identified, Leonardo-like achievements in cutting the film were in fact accomplished by the two women.[25] The same need to uphold the creative process as male-defined found the pamphlet occurs in 'An Appreciation.' In the same way that the performances of actresses in Pabst's films are accredited solely to the director's gifts, H.D. suppresses her own creative involvement with *Borderline* and promotes Macpherson's solitary achievement.

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[25] See *Penelope's Web*, 16.

Unless it is allowed that the extreme bias toward the masculine provides evidence on which to question H.D.'s authorship of the pamphlet, the extreme discrepancy between the pamphlet's presentation of the artist as male and the feminist attack on this same position in *Her* (and in many other instances in H.D.'s work) indicate a level of censorship in H.D.'s writing on film that is even more extreme than I have yet suggested. Indeed, the maintenance of a masculinized public sphere is very noticeable in the pamphlet, for, in a way that was common at the time but which occurs in none of H.D.'s *Close Up* essays, the readership of the pamphlet is clearly addressed as male: 'have any of you gentlemen tried to use a camera?' (1930/1998b, 225). H.D.'s impersonation of the masculine, modernist elite is in this piece, complete, but the core arguments of the novel that was under composition at this time critique precisely this hegemony.

Gender divisions are debated in *Her* on the basis of vulgarity and genuineness in art, and as I have shown, the issue of mass commercialism is also prominent in H.D.'s discussion of films in *Close Up*. In the novel, however, these issues are placed explicitly in the context of gender, and also of race. For instance, George, insecure in his newly established literary reputation, claims his cultural credentials by denigrating provincialism in others. A pivotal sequence in the novel occurs when Hermione attends a cultural evening of music at an academy in Philadelphia. George accompanies Hermione unwillingly, all the time stressing his own superior taste and sophistication. He says, 'its so unlike you Hermione not to have more discrimination' (1984d, 133). In response, Hermione tries to emulate George's cultural elitism, denigrating works of art by associating them with women and racial others:

> there was a picture of a naked woman on a seashell [...] the upstanding rather dumpy form of the upstanding dumpy woman was too white, like cheap mother-of-pearl handles to little showy cheap knives, like the mother-of-pearl top to a workbox Mandy had, that Mandy loved — that sort of thing's all right for Mandy (1984d, 136).

In this passage, Hermione strikes the same elitist pose adopted by H.D. in 'Beauty' and enacts the Leavisite division of discriminating minority versus uncultivated masses.

As in H.D.'s denunciation of the vulgar excess of many Hollywood productions, the painting hanging at the academy is, in Hermione's view, overdone and cheapened by the lack of restraint in the execution of the work. Mandy is the Gart family's black servant and Hermione's comparison between the colour in the painting with Mandy's workbox supports the association of inferior art with feminine tastes which is operative in H.D.'s writing on film. Furthermore, Hermione's estimation of this unnamed painting demonstrates the same slippage from vulgar populism to racial stereotype as that committed by H.D. in 'Beauty.' Hermione declares: 'that sort of woman standing on a sea shell sort of art is simply negroid' (1984d, 136).

Ironically, H.D.'s stance in *Close Up* is typically that of the superior and detached intellectual, and yet this same pose is eventually critiqued and exploded as snobbery in *Her*. In the novel there is a strong implication that H.D. has a censorious (or simply amused and patronising) attitude to Hermione (especially as she is a thinly veiled portrait of the author as a young girl). It is clear that H.D. as author is critical of Hermione's prejudices and imitative behaviour. However, in a moment of clarity, Hermione does see beyond George's cultural elitism. Hanging on the wall near to the woman on a sea shell is another painting, of Perseus, that Hermione has also been inclined to mock. She then overhears two men discussing

the painting of Perseus with affection and a sense of ownership, and concludes that:

> those really sophisticated two men [...] had been perceptive toward the really awful Perseus, had seen the Perseus as not so awful, bringing what he stood for into some sort of affectionate realm of recognition (1984d, 139).

Here, H.D. shows her fictional creation to be capable of appreciating that certain types of 'lowbrow' art had a valuable function and were meaningful to specific groups. This position is strikingly more liberal than H.D.'s habitual uncompromising dismissal of popular Hollywood films in *Close Up* which she judges by the criteria of high culture alone.

From the very beginning of the scene in the academy, Hermione is resistant to George's despotic attitude towards her. In a rare instance in this novel of reported thought cast in the first person, Hermione asks herself, 'why couldn't George ever let me alone to see things in my own way, to enjoy things even if they are provincial?' (1984d, 133). Hermione is already alert to the intellectual snobbery of Nellie Thorpe and her group from Bryn Mawr, and is especially critical of their affectation of superiority by flaunting their familiarity with European countries and works of art, to the detriment of America. George shares the same prejudice. At the academy he orders Hermione to ignore the American paintings on the walls: 'don't look at those things,' he says, but Hermione is non-compliant: 'if this is what Europe does to people, Hermione thought, I don't want Europe' (1984d, 135). It is interesting to note the contrast between the meanings of America in the *Close Up* essays and in *Her*. In *Close Up* America is identified closely with the tawdry and commercial nature of Hollywood in opposition to the artistic integrity demonstrated in much of the European film tradition. But in *Her*

a high opinion of Europe finally represents decadence and America comes to stand for individualism and honourable endeavour (despite its provincialism).

In the course of the academy scene, Hermione completely revises her aesthetic criteria, cutting loose from George's authoritarian influence, and eventually she redefines the term 'negroid:'

> The woman at the end of the hall was negroid art. That was negroid art and when one sees a thing it goes click into place, it becomes by the very act of its so falling with its click into its right perspective, great. Everything is great seen in its right perspective, but George will never see that (1984d, 138).

It is interesting to note here that Hermione's formulation of good art echoes H.D.'s own formulation of the 'classic' in 'Restraint,' namely 'a sense of the rightness and the fitness of things in their inter-relation' (1927/1998e, 113).

The bonds of love and affection are eventually revealed to Hermione as more valuable than the empty, snobbish standards that are so superciliously applied by George (and formerly by Hermione in reference to the woman on a sea shell painting). In a crucial scene in which George pronounces judgement on Hermione's poetry, he also pours scorn on her mother's painting. She protests that her mother was motivated by love in her creative work but George persists in using the work of the amateur woman to act as the foil to real art: 'love doesn't make good art, Hermione' says George and then, turning to Hermione's poems, 'I tell you *this is writing*' (1984d, 149). In other words, for Hermione, the price of acceptance as a fellow artist by George is to disparage and disown femininity, because he has defined amateurism in these terms.

In conclusion, in H.D.'s novels the position of creative artist is recognized to be in conflict with gender roles, and to occupy a cultural space which is explicitly defined as the non-feminine. However, in her writing on film H.D. did

not feel able to challenge masculine dominance. The disparagement of the movie industry was, as I have shown, an integral part of H.D.'s self-construction as a serious intellectual in her writing for *Close Up*, and the association of the cinema with feminine superficiality and consumerism was an important factor in this. The strident denunciation of the film industry, as well as the derision of credulous movie fans in the *Close Up* reviews, confirm and enact H.D.'s membership of an intellectual elite which is conceptualized in opposition to the feminized arena of the movies.

Thus, the modernist high culture ethos set the terms for H.D.'s discussion of the gender issues of film-viewing, meaning that H.D. was placed in a contradictory position by her allegiance to the modernists' denigration of mass culture as feminine, and her own identity as a woman. This led to the omission from H.D.'s writing on film of debates about women and the cinema as a public sphere which were being raised in other discourses, including the popular press. However, H.D.'s anger was aroused by the stereotypical representations of women on screen (as I shall go on to discuss in the following chapter) and her sense of outrage prompted her to undertake a feminist critique of cultural images of women, even if her aspiration to belong the artistic elite prevented her from identifying herself with the millions of women who went to the movies every week.

Chapter Three: 'Intolerably sturdy and intolerably broken': H.D.'s critique of representations of women in film.

The figure of the girl-child in the *Close Up* reviews.

In H.D.'s writing for *Close Up* the issue of the (mis)representation of women is forcefully and frequently addressed, and the present chapter will examine the terms of H.D.'s critique of women on screen, before moving into an analysis of the recurrence of the topic of gender, representation and the visual in two prose works of the 1930s in chapter four. One of the most sustained of H.D.'s attacks in *Close Up* upon the representation of women in film is to be found in 'Joan of Arc' (1928/1998h). This is a review of *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, a recently released film which was directed by Carl Theodore Dreyer. In her review essay, H.D. records the enormous impact that the film had on her, causing her to describe agonies more appropriate to the experiences of Joan of Arc herself than to those of a spectator safely ensconced in a cinema auditorium:

> '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 (1928/1998h, 130).

The quotation above demonstrates that, in a somewhat similar way to that of the historical Joan by her inquisitors, H.D. finds herself prevailed upon by the masculine authority of the filmmaker to surrender a deeply held belief: her faith in Joan of Arc as a potent and heroic symbol of defiant female difference. For, to her horror, H.D. finds that in Dreyer's film, Joan is depicted solely as a victim ('intolerably sturdy and intolerably broken' 1928/1998h, 130). This portrayal of Joan of Arc as a childlike and poorly-educated peasant girl, contradicts all of

H.D.'s beliefs about the nature and significance of Joan both as a saint and as a woman. However, at the same time, she is forced to admit that the film represents Joan of Arc with astonishing realism and technical skill, and for this reason she finds it almost impossible to discount. Thus, H.D. describes her feelings about the film as 'two-edged,' and the review records the ensuing mental struggle caused by Dreyer's authoritative but nonetheless unacceptable representation.

H.D.'s anger at the particular representation of Joan as a helpless, hopeless victim, can perhaps be partially explained by the fact that Joan of Arc was one of the most common icons of the suffragette movement and was identified by Christabel Pankhurst of the WSPU as 'our patron saint' (see Tickner, 209). Her image was embroidered on banners, and processions were often led by a woman in armour riding astride a white horse impersonating Joan. H.D. does not refer to the links between the image of Joan and the demand for women's suffrage in her review, nonetheless, Joan was a powerful contemporary emblem of women's rights, and H.D. could hardly fail to be aware of this. In a statement published in 1929, Dreyer makes no reference to Joan's symbolic significance for women's suffrage and instead highlights her canonisation in 1920 as the event that 'drew the attention of the public-at-large' (1929/1973, 47).

Joan of Arc also features in H.D.'s novel, *Asphodel* (1992), which was written in 1922 (six years, therefore, before Dreyer's film). The description and significance of Joan in this early novel provides many clues about the meanings that were at stake for H.D. in the Dreyer's filmic representation of the saint. The action of the novel is mostly set in London, and the novel opens in 1911: a time when, as Deborah Anne Moreland points out, 'the British suffragettes had for three years aggressively developed a propaganda agenda' (1995, 246). In the

novel, as in the later review, Joan's connection with the suffragette movement is not made explicitly, but Joan is nonetheless a powerful feminist figure, symbolizing, in Susan Friedman's words, both 'the spirit of female rebellion and the martyrdom of female difference' (1990, 173). Indeed, the significance of Joan in the novel is similar to Lisa Tickner's analysis of the meanings of Joan for the suffragette movement: 'the paradigm both for female militancy and for its persecution' (1987, 210).

Asphodel centres on Hermione, an American who has embarked on her first trip to Europe, travelling with her lover Fayne and Fayne's mother, Clara. They come first to France and visit Rouen, where Joan was burnt at the stake in 1431. The stream of consciousness narrative takes us into Hermione's mind as she meditates on Joan of Arc's life and death. She realizes that Joan's fate is a warning to women who dare to transgress:

> And they had caught her [Joan]. Caught her. Trapped her with her armour and her panache and her glory and her pride. They had trapped her, a girl who was a boy and they would always do that [...] break them for seeing things, having 'visions' seeing things like she did and like Fayne Rabb (1992, 9).

For Hermione, Joan is a heroic warrior fighting the constraints of gender definition, in taking up arms, in wearing male clothing and in trespassing on the religious authority of men by 'seeing things,' and her martyrdom represents the punishment of women who exceed their gender role.

It is notable that Hermione interprets Joan as 'a girl who was a boy,' and, as the novel progresses, Joan comes to stand for the lesbian desires of Hermione and Fayne. The wearing of masculine clothing, in the context of sexology in the 1920s, indicated a specific sexual identity; that of the invert. Joan of Arc, as Marina Warner's edited transcript of the trial shows, was adamant in her choice of

male clothing, and her refusal to renounce it contributed to her being sentenced to death by the ecclesiastical court, since it is forbidden by the Bible. Although Joan's refusal to comply with the request to wear female clothing was typical of her firm rejection of the court's authority, her reasons appear to have been to do with the appropriateness of male clothing for waging battle (and an oath made to God). Warner suggests that Joan's refusal of female clothing signified her 'abjuration of the weakness of femininity, both physical and spiritual' (1996, 27). Although the interpretation in *Asphodel* of Joan's male attire as a sign of lesbianism is clearly anachronistic, it might provide a clue to the reason for the extreme, personal sense of outrage contained in H.D.'s own, later, reaction (as a bi-sexual woman) to the presentation of the experiences of Joan in Dreyer's film.

In the course of the meditation on Joan which occurs near the start of the novel, Hermione considers Joan's fictional status as a constructed figure from history ('it was only a story' 1992, 8), but following this, moves into a visionary state in which the execution of Joan seems to take place in a cinematic fashion in front of her eyes: 'the English soldier was crossing the two sticks and the thin saint's hand was reaching for the cross. [...] The witch was very tired and sick with all the noise and sweat of people' (1992, 9). The competing versions of the story of Joan; the 'horrible long pages of French history' vying for truth with Hermione's own visions of the saint's last moments, anticipate the central opposition of the later review which documents H.D.'s conflict between an officially sanctioned history of Joan in the form of Dreyer's filmic representation, and her own radically different picture of the saint.

In the review of 1928, the central clash between conflicting definitions of the nature of Joan is embarked upon at much greater length than in the short

passage in *Asphodel*. For H.D., the qualities that made Joan an extraordinary and charismatic leader were her heroism, her intelligence, and her visionary gift, but all of these, in her opinion, are omitted from Dreyer's film. Instead, Joan is represented as a childish, pitiable figure, the victim of forces she is too dim-witted to understand. Painfully aware that the film diminishes Joan, H.D. was at the same time convinced that the film was a masterpiece (an opinion shared by many to this day). Significantly, she commends the actress chosen for the part, Maria (sometimes named as Renée) Falconetti, and acknowledges that 'the passion of the Jeanne is superbly, almost mediumistically portrayed by Mlle Falconetti' (1928/1998h, 130). It is almost as though Falconetti, like the historical figure of Joan, has been subjected to a 'sort of inhuman showing up' by the deliberate malice of the director (1928/1998h, 130).

H.D.'s opinion of the film is by no means secure, as her mental torments attest, and she explains that the sheer power of Dreyer's achievement has forced her to consider the unsettling possibility that his Joan might in fact be the correct one, thus invalidating her own conception of the saint. 'Another Jeanne strides in,' she writes, 'indubitably a more Jeanne-ish Jeanne than our Jeanne' (1928/1998h, 131). Therefore, although the image of Joan put forward by Dreyer is the antithesis of her own (and, she surmises, of the majority of those who watched the film in the cinema with her) H.D. has to concede that Dreyer's version is 'a better Jeanne, a much, much better, more authentic Jeanne than our own Jeanne' (1928/1998h, 131). This, the central dilemma of H.D.'s review, has a direct parallel in the approach of feminist film critics of the 1970s, such as Marjorie Rosen and Molly Haskell. Their protest that filmic images of women are

often sexist misrepresentations of real women is similar to the view put forward by H.D. in her diatribe against Dreyer's Joan of Arc.

The crux of the matter for H.D. lies in the film's failure to depict Joan's angelic visions. She believed that the motive behind Dreyer's portrayal of Joan was an attempt to deny the saint's visions in just the same way as did the judges in the actual trial of Joan, and argues that omitting to represent Joan's visions on screen is unjust and indefensible. H.D. makes it clear that she does not wish to see an unequivocal visual representation of Joan's angelic visions, but laments the lack of 'something behind something.' In fact, the omission of a spiritual dimension, according to H.D., makes nonsense of Dreyer's film on the grounds of plot and motivation alone: 'if,' argues H.D., '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' (1928/1998h, 133). In other words, in omitting the visions which inspired Joan, and made it possible for her to resist the temptation to recant and save her own life, Dreyer's portrayal of the saint lacks a rationale.

Even so, H.D. struggles to resist Dreyer's authority, and to overcome her feeling of being 'put in the wrong' by his portrait which is, on the face of it, so right, credible and realistic. 'Scathing realism,' writes H.D., 'has gone one better than mere imaginative idealism' (1928/1998h, 131). Indeed, it might be said that H.D. argues for a distinction between authenticity and truth. She attacks Dreyer on account of the realism of his film, which had in her view, denied the truth of its subject. Thus, in the context of this review, H.D. rejects realism because she believes that in this case the impulse towards authenticity has been translated into

a sadistic display of Joan's extreme vulnerability. In the review, the guiding ethos behind Dreyer's realism is identified by H.D. not as artistic integrity but the perverse enjoyment of the spectacle of the brutalization and tortured death of a helpless woman. The overwhelming emotional effect upon the spectator of the presentation of Joan as a victim erupts in an almost hysterical passage of the review in which H.D. states unequivocally that the filmmaker is motivated by 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? (1928/1998h, 132).

In Carl Dreyer's defence it should be noted that he was in fact striving to represent Joan's spirituality, but tried to do this precisely by emphasizing her physicality and humanity. In the statement written at the time of the film's first release, Dreyer expressed his desire to achieve through the film 'a hymn to the triumph of the soul over life' and his stated aim was to present 'realised mysticism,' a term, it could be argued, with much resonance for H.D.'s own ambitions for cinematic art (1973, 50). Dreyer wrote,

> In order to give the truth, I dispensed with 'beautification.' My actors were not allowed to touch make up and powder puffs. I also broke with the traditions of constructing a set. [...] I let the scene architects build all the sets and make all the other preparations, and from the first to the last scene, everything was shot in order (1973, 50).

Dreyer's prohibitions and innovations accord nicely with H.D.'s preferences for simplicity and pared-down *mise-en-scène* as expressed in 'Restraint' but the

film's visual style elicited no praise from her, instead she castigated it as 'remorseless [...] medieval fanaticism' (1928/1998h, 130). From the statement already mentioned, it would appear that Dreyer was sincere in his desire to faithfully reconstruct the last days of the saint's life, but it is troubling to consider the impulse behind this re-enactment when Dreyer goes on to praise Falconetti as 'the martyr's reincarnation' (1973, 50). It could be suggested that the purpose of such painstaking realism on set was to re- enact the persecution of Joan upon Falconetti. As the long quote given above demonstrates, H.D. was aware of the voyeuristic implications of such a detailed and thorough reproduction on screen of Joan's torture and death, and I shall go on in the following chapter to explore her comments in the context of feminist film theories of the male gaze.

Dreyer's designation of Joan as a 'shepherd girl' (1973, 47) would seem to indicate that H.D.'s assessment of Dreyer's private view of Joan as a simple, childlike figure was essentially correct. Much of the review focuses on H.D.'s outrage that Joan has been belittled in the film. She writes: 'I am shown Jeanne, she is indeed before me, the country child, the great lout of a hulking boy or girl, blubbering,' (1928/1998h, 130). Dreyer's Joan is 'a small Jeanne about to be kicked by huge hob-nailed boots [...] a Jeanne whose sturdy child-wrist is being twisted by an ogre's paw,' (1928/1998h, 132), a naïve and under-educated peasant girl, 'whose wide great grey eyes fill with round tears at the mention of her mother,' (1928/1998h, 133). This unrelenting emphasis on Joan's childish vulnerability erases the heroism of Joan's life as a leader so that there is, H.D. complains, 'no hint of the memory of lover-comrade men's voices,' instead, Joan is 'an Athene stripped of intellect' (1928/1998h, 131). In addition to the reprehensible infantilisation of Joan by Dreyer, H.D. registers her outrage at the

belittling representation of her heroine through metaphors of dogs or puppies. For instance, Dreyer's Joan is, 'a numb, hypnotized creature who stares with dog-like fidelity' (1928/1998h, 132). Instead of the visionary woman of H.D.'s personal mythology Dreyer's Joan is a 'kicked little puppy' and 'the very incarnation of loyalty' stupidly clinging to her delusions (1928/1998h, 133, 131).

In summary, then, the aspect of Dreyer's characterization of Joan that most offends H.D. is that of immaturity. The figure of woman as child is a cultural concept with a particular significance in the context of representations of women in silent film, as I shall be going on to discuss. However, H.D.'s recognition of the child-woman as an offensive image is, rather surprisingly, not consistent throughout her writing on film. In fact, H.D.'s negative use of the women-as-child metaphor in 'Joan of Arc' is countered by a positive application of the concept in other reviews, most notably in 'Expiation,' in which H.D. uses the woman-as-child paradigm to praise instead of condemn the representation of a woman on the screen.

'Expiation,' appeared two months earlier than 'Joan of Arc,' and (as mentioned in chapter one) is a discussion of the Russian film *By the Law*. 'Expiation' contains some of H.D.'s best writing about film. Interspersed with vivid memories about the circumstances of her first viewing of the film, H.D. conveys the severe, otherworldly atmosphere of *By the Law* through a series of wide-ranging metaphors, and some of the most ambitious (and occasionally outrageous) of these refer to the performance of Aleksandra Khokhlova as Edith, one of the three main protagonists in the film. H.D. describes Khokhlova as a 'long ungainly creature,' with a 'lean, gargoyle face' (1928/1998g, 126). Her gestures are 'angular, bird-like, claw-like, skeleton-like and hideous'

(1928/1998g, 126). She is a 'wild-cat,' 'a blighted uncouth being,' 'a tree riven by lightning,' 'a sort of winged sprite' (1928/1998g, 128) 'a great locust,' (1928/1998g, 129), anything, it seems, but a human being.

When H.D. does describe Khokhlova in human terms, it is almost always as a girl or child rather than a woman: she is 'some intransient slip of fibrous girlhood,' or 'a girl, a child with incredibly thin legs' (1928/1998g, 126). H.D.'s emphasis on Edith's youth ('a sort of bleak young sorceress, vibrant, febrile, neurotic [...] almost cataleptic' 1928/1998g, 126) sits oddly in the context of the adult actions of her role in the film. For example, Edith intervenes to end a potentially fatal physical conflict between two men, presides over a trial, imposes a death penalty, and takes an active part in attempting to carry out the sentence. H.D.'s sensitivity to the paradox between the youthful and slender form of Khokhlova and her role in the story as an agent of death, results in such arresting images as 'the slip of gargoyle of a girl who sits with gun propped against rigid almost cataleptic knees' (1928/1998g, 126). The juxtaposition of the slight girlish figure and the phallic gun exist in creative tension, and H.D.'s emphasis on Khoklova's childishness serves to increase subversiveness of the image of the woman as killer.

In a similar way to the lauding of Khoklova, H.D. repeatedly uses the word 'little' in 'Beauty' to characterize Greta Garbo in her performance as Grete in *The Joyless Street*, all the while insisting on the tragic gravity and classic stature of the part. Diminutives include 'the little lady,' 'the little Mademoiselle,' and 'the professor's elder, little daughter' (1927/1998c, 107, 108, 109). On the other hand (as already mentioned), H.D. breaks off during the review to note that, in the 'columns of gossip' in the 'various Hollywood camera news productions'

(i.e. trade magazines) that she reads, Garbo's physical stature provokes in the columnists' minds uncomfortably non-feminine associations and that Garbo's height is 'a thing they seem in some subtle way to have against her' (1927/1998c, 107). Directors were also uncomfortable with the fact that Garbo was often taller than her leading men, and this led to shooting horizontal love scenes in order to disguise what was considered a discrepancy.

This is indeed a curious form of double-thinking, for H.D., although clearly aware of the sexism of denying Garbo's physical proportions, herself uses adjectives of smallness and infantilism, such as 'little Miss Garbo' and 'this child' to describe Garbo (1927/1998c, 107, 109). H.D. appears to collude with those who would diminish Garbo, while in the same piece protesting against the injustice of such an attitude. Thus, as in the case of 'An Appreciation' discussed earlier (see pp. 88-89 above), the forum of the journal appears to have had the effect of regulating and partially censoring the expression of H.D.'s feminist outrage.

Feminine smallness is again invoked in 'Boo,' H.D.'s discussion of female representations in Noel Coward's stage play *Sirocco* (this was, of course, slightly incongruous, for *Close Up* was a film, and not a theatre, journal). In the review, she examines the contemporary figure of the flapper. For H.D., the American flapper girl is 'an embodiment of the child-like naïf joy, a sort of sprite or little mountain spirit' (1928a, 44). This she celebrates, but expresses the view that Coward has missed the opportunity to ennoble the main female character, Lucy (an English woman who has an adulterous affair with an Italian man), by comparison with the superficial flapper: 'Lucy should have been a goddess, in scale with the little flapper who was a mere little nymph or naiad' (1928a, 44).

H.D. wishes for Lucy in *Sirocco* to be ennobled but in general, maturity or bulk in women on the screen is somewhat undesirable in H.D.'s scheme of things. For example, she recoils from the portrayal of Countess Margaret (played by Agnes Esterhazy) in *The Student of Prague* (1926) as 'the big-boned but somehow impressive heroine' (1927/1998f, 122). By the end of the film, H.D. has in fact been partially won over and admits that 'what she [Esterhazy] lacks in charm is supplied by the ardour of her lover' (1927/1998f, 123). It is certainly the case that youth and modernity are associated with each other by H.D., whereas the matronly Countess in *The Student of Prague* is associated with old-fashioned Victoriana of 'great mirrors, heavy candelabra' (1927/1998f, 123). The opposing female representation, forming the other principle of the ubiquitous virgin/whore dichotomy is a violet-seller with whom the hero seeks sexual solace having been frustrated in his desires for his pure Lady. The violet-girl (never named by H.D. in the review), although awarded the generally positive label of 'small' is lamented as vulgar both in terms of class ('common') and artistically, by association with the tradition of bourgeois salon painting ('Alma Tademesque') (1927/1998f, 122).[26]

Of the female roles remarked upon at length by H.D. in *Close Up*, only Vera Baranowskaja as the eponymous 'mother' of Pudovkin's film escapes characterization in terms of size. She is defined first as transcendent: 'Madame Baranowskaja standing before the onrushing feet of the great stallions of the Czarist's imperial bodyguard [...] is a figure of tradition, historical, mystical, Biblical' and subsequently by her class alone, 'a peasant woman, trampled to unsightly death' (1928/1998i, 137).

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[26] The violet-girl was called Lyduschka, and played by Elizza La Porta.

Evaluating H.D.'s feminist critique by attending to her distinctions of size and youthfulness amongst actresses becomes more complex and suggestive when considered in relation to concepts of naturalness and artifice, and of virginity and sexual experience current in the broad range of the representations of women in silent film. These terms were especially contentious ones for women in the 1910s and 1920s, when cultural anxieties about the changing position of women were at their height. In order to place H.D.'s designation of women's littleness and immaturity in relation to the dominant meanings operating in the cinema and society at large, it will be necessary to provide an indication of the range of representations of women in film, especially in Hollywood, during the period contemporary with H.D.'s articles for *Close Up*.

H.D.'s attack on the cinematic stereotypes of the virgin and the vamp.

I have suggested that youthfulness is the dominant term in H.D.'s discussions of women on the screen and indeed many studies of silent film, whether based on a feminist analysis or not, draw attention to the virginal or childlike figures which appear to have been a privileged representation of idealized womanhood at this time. Alexander Walker refers to the continuance in film of a 'persistent' and 'sinister' strain in 'Victorian popular sentiment,' namely, the 'idolising of prepubertal girlhood' (1966, 43). Mary Pickford and Lillian Gish were the most popular Hollywood actresses of the silent period and both specialized in child roles. One of the most successful directors of the silent period who worked with both actresses, D. W. Griffith, had a particular predilection for child-women, and Rosen writes that by 1912, Griffith had 'gathered a stable of girl-children as his leading ladies.' These included, 'Blanche Sweet (seventeen),

Mary Pickford (nineteen), Lillian and Dorothy Gish (sixteen and fourteen), and Mae Marsh (seventeen)' (1973, 44).

Among Griffith's commercial successes was *Broken Blossoms* (1919), a film in which Lillian Gish, then twenty-four, played Lucy, a fifteen year old waif (the part was originally supposed to be that of a twelve-year-old, but Gish protested that she was too tall to play it and the age was raised to fifteen).[27] *Broken Blossoms* tells the tragic tale of the attempt by a Chinese man (Chen Huang, played by Richard Barthelmess) to rescue Lucy from the appalling violence that she suffers at the hands of her brutish father, a boxer named Battling Burrows (played by Donald Crisp). It is the barely disguised erotic desire of the compassionate and gentle Chinese man for the child Lucy, that is the film's most remarkable feature. Huang's lust is made evident by the visual gestures of Barthelmess's performance and in titles which describe Lucy from his perspective. For instance, Huang expresses his sensual appreciation of her body in a robe he has given her to wear, by describing the robe on her as: 'blue and yellow silk caressing white skin.' The film is careful to point out that no impropriety actually takes place ('his [Huang's] love remains a pure and holy thing — even his worst foe says this') but in effect, the explicit denial of a sexual relationship serves only to further define and emphasize his desire, as Rosen points out (1973, 50). The enormous success of *Broken Blossoms* (which was the first sympathetic portrayal of a Chinese character on screen and sparked off a wave of imitations) raises interesting points about the normality of depicting childish girls as erotic objects.

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[27] See Brownlow *Behind the Mask*, 323-328 for background information about the making of the film.

In *Way Down East* (1920), another film directed by Griffith, Lillian Gish as the heroine Anna, is punished for her sexuality. She is the victim of deception (a mock marriage), suffers the death of her illegitimate child, is turned out of her home, and attempts suicide alone on the ice flows of a river during a snow storm (one of the most famous cinematic sequences in popular Hollywood film at the time, and still effective today). Anna's youthful trustfulness of a rich playboy (Lennox Sanderson) leaves her destitute and suffering the social disgrace of being an unmarried mother. The film's narrative, of the utter desolation and eventual rescue and redemption of an unfortunate but virtuous heroine, has its roots in Victorian melodrama, especially the somewhat overdone scene in which Anna's 'crime' is discovered (i.e. that she has had a baby out of wedlock) and in which the stern patriarch of the house points to the door and turns her out into the night (see figure 3).

There is a reference to this film in *Asphodel*. In the final pages of the novel, Hermione contemplates the birth of her child. She is estranged from her husband and another man is the father of her child. She cites *Way Down East* by name as a way of referring to the cultural stereotype of her fate as a single mother. Throughout the novel, there have been examples of the ways in which the new sexual freedoms of the war years have favoured men and not women, and the character of Hermione finds herself to her surprise in a comparable position to that of Anna, since by giving birth to a child and not being married to its father, she is liable to imprisonment if she registers the child as her husband's. Furthermore, the baby is tangible evidence of Hermione's infidelity and hence her husband Darrington argues, constitutes grounds for divorce whereas his own betrayals (more prolonged and various than her own) cannot be proven.

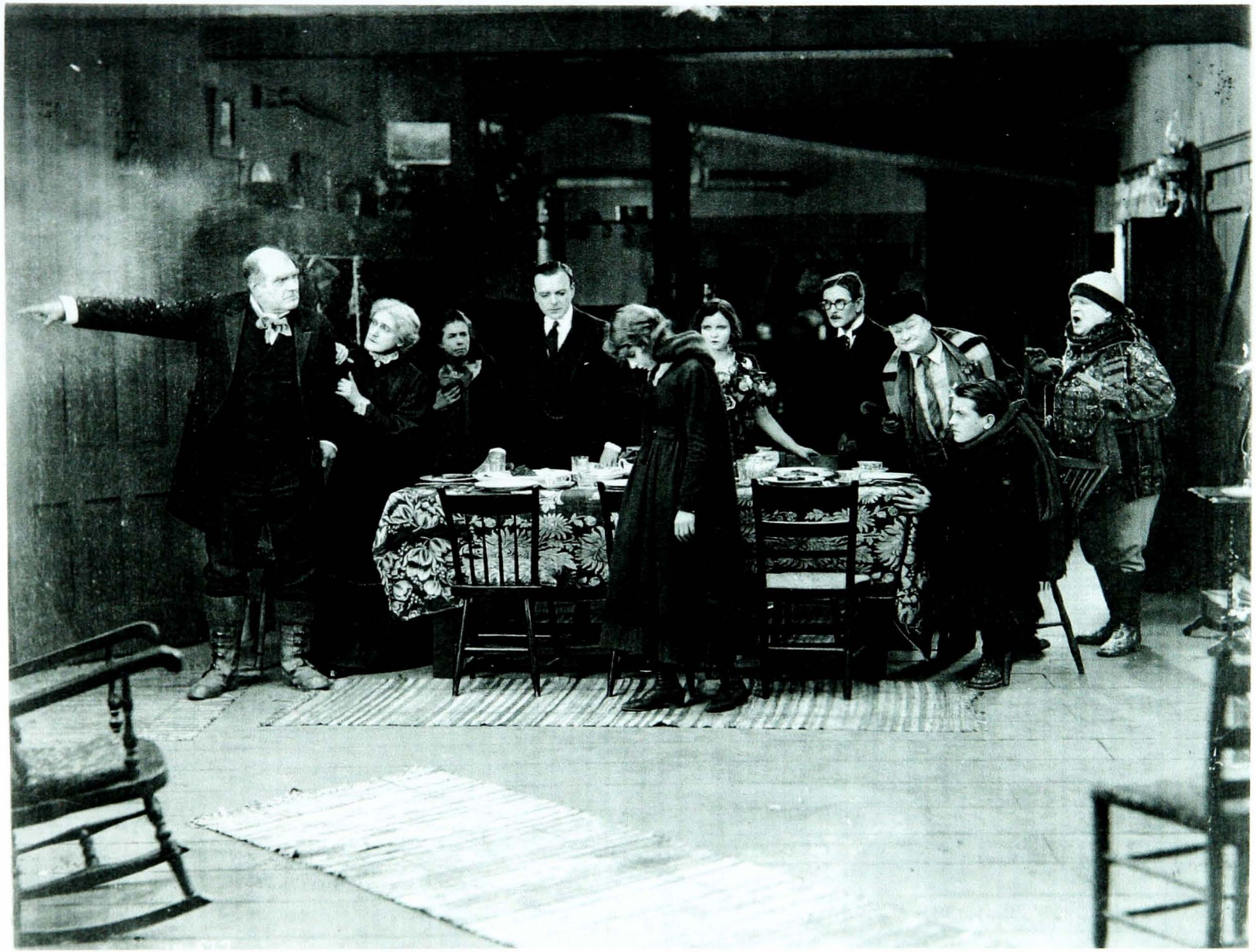

Figure 3 Lillian Gish in *Way Down East* (1920)

Sanderson, in *Way Down East* makes exactly the same point when trying to drive Anna out of her new home. Thus, although Hermione recognizes the film as 'the very worst imaginable melodrama,' she recognizes that, 'since the war, in the war' *Way Down East* was 'the only truth' (1992, 204).

In the same way as that described by H.D. in *Asphodel*, actresses such as Lillian Gish and, more famously, Mary Pickford became entangled in patriarchal prohibitions on female sexuality. Both found themselves imprisoned in virginal roles on screen and warned against taking on parts which would contradict their public images as innocent young girls. Even after Gish broke from Griffith's control, she remained 'rooted,' according to Rosen, 'in the chaste Victorian terrain [Griffith] had mapped out for her' (1973, 52). To an even greater extent Mary Pickford was, in Rosen's words, 'Everyman's notion of the eternal little girl' (37). Films in which she played little girls included *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, (1917) *Pollyanna* (1919) and *Little Annie Roonie* (1925).

In the first volume of her autobiography, *The Heart to Artemis* (1962) Bryher records impressions of her first visit to America in 1921 and describes how, whilst staying in California, she witnessed Mary Pickford being filmed. Bryher was unimpressed by the experience, and remarks that the event 'seemed remote, rather like a village fair' (1962, 202), although interestingly she does mention in passing that, at this time, H.D. was much more interested than herself in films and 'often went to the cinema' (203). Bryher's chance encounter is expanded and fictionalized in her novel *West* (1925), in a chapter entitled 'Whales and Movies.' In *West*, Mary Pickford is mercilessly satirized as Martha Heywood in a very amusing passage which sends up the hypocrisy of the Hollywood industry's depiction of women. The chapter recounts the crisis that has arisen in

the potentially disastrous escape of one of Martha Heywood's trained ducklings. A mechanic standing by asks (with supposedly unconscious irony): 'what would Miss Heywood's fans do if we showed a picture without her calling the poultry with her pretty hair hanging to her waist? And a close-up of Timmy feeding from her hands?' (1925, 80 – 81). The episode in the novel demonstrates that it is common knowledge among the devoted fans who have assembled to watch the star being filmed that Martha Heywood is divorced, even though, as one of her admirers point out, 'she never takes off her wedding ring. Not even in a scene like this where she is supposed to be fifteen' (1925, 87).

Mary Pickford went on playing young girls on screen well into her thirties and the American viewing public seemed to have been fixated upon her arrested development as a reassuring constant in times of change. In 1929, at the age of thirty-seven, in a gesture she hoped would liberate her from her confinement to roles as children, she cut off her long curly hair and in doing so effectively ended her movie career. Her public, writes Rosen, 'was outraged'(1973, 43), and she retired at the age of forty. H.D. makes an intriguing reference to the momentous event of Mary Pickford cutting her hair in 'Turksib', which appeared in 1929. As noted (see p. 37 above), the theme of the review is modernity, and the potential of modern artefacts, even industrial machinery such as a gleaming railway engine, to approach a classical ideal of form and beauty. In this scheme, Mary Pickford's curls represent what is old and rapidly becoming obsolete in the modernized world: 'we knew as well as anybody that eventually the Pickford must sheer her curls' (1929, 490) proclaims H.D.

Mary's long hair is curiously described in the review as 'the fabulous, romantic Pickford golden fleece' in a way that is certainly ironic in tone but

difficult to interpret. It seems most likely that H.D.'s comparison of Mary's curls to the golden fleece is a reference to the money-making potential of her visual image. Mary's long hair is then described by H.D. as something that 'did and had to do [...] for an older generation' (1929, 490). The suggestion that Mary's curls are discarded because they represent an outworn sexual stereotype, now being overtaken by more liberal and adult female images, and correspondingly wider possibilities for women, would be an encouraging reading of H.D.'s comments, but the reference is too brief and undeveloped for such a conclusion to be drawn with confidence.

Increasingly in the second half of the 1920s, there was an alternative and more liberal view of women's social role in Hollywood in the form of the working girls and flappers in films, starting with *Flaming Youth* (1923) starring Colleen Moore, and reaching a peak with *It* (1927) starring Clara Bow. A characteristic plot line of the flapper films was the social elevation (by marriage) of the girl with 'it' from her original lowly status as, for example an shop-girl or secretary. Rosen writes that in the 1920s, 'the screen abounded with working-girl themes, and every well-known actress offered her version of the stenographic Cinderella' (1973, 82).

Clara Bow's performance in *It* as Betty Lou remains fresh and modern in a way totally unlike that of Gish as the tragic child Lucy. As Gaylyn Studlar comments, working-class Betty Lou, 'aggressively demonstrates the right of erotic choice' (1996, 282). One of the film's many delightful scenes occurs when, at Christmas time, Betty Lou first catches sight of the new boss of the department store in which she works, and exclaims 'Sweet Santa Claus, give him to me.' She then proceeds to engineer a series of meetings and ultimately, marriage. The

flapper girl, although her priority was firmly fixed on securing the right husband, also set store by female friendships. In *It*, Betty Lou takes the risk of allowing herself to appear to be the mother of an illegitimate child to prevent her friend's baby being taken away. However, as Studlar emphasizes, 'film heroines rarely forfeited their virginity to flappermania' (1996, 281). Studlar explains that, as in the case of Betty Lou's room-mate, Molly, the sexual act (before marriage) was frequently 'displaced' onto a girl friend. Although radical in asserting women's rights to pleasure and to a wage of her own (limited always, however, to a menial, service industry job) flapper films did not alter the assumption that the American woman's ultimate aim and prize was a husband, and as Rosen concludes 'the Flapper Revolution [...] was essentially one of style and surface' (1973, 75).

H.D. does not seem to have considered the flapper a radical image for women either, and unfortunately resorts to classist attitudes in her assessment of the phenomenon. In a review which will later be examined in much greater detail ('The King of Kings Again'), H.D. detects the influence of Elinor Glyn in the portrayal of the Biblical figure of Mary Magdalene in Cecil B. De Mille's *The King of Kings* (1928) and betrays her snobbish disapproval of popular flapper films in her description of Mary as one of the succession of 'IT' girls:

> Mary Magdalene is chic...she is smart...she is a chorus girl who has it is most obvious, got on, she is the worst that can be said for Elinor Glyn and the best that can be said (by many) for the movies (1928b, 28).

As Egger remarks, the chief fault of this representation of Mary Magdalene for H.D. is her 'working class sexuality' (1995, 152).

H.D. seemed blind to the positive aspects of the assertive and independent flappers. In 'Boo,' as already mentioned, she focuses her discussion of the flapper phenomenon by harping on the theme of the 'little' or girlish woman. The

descriptions of the flapper character Francescia in 'Boo' consistently underline her 'child-like na veté and generosity' (1928a, 43). Without the benefit of hindsight, H.D. was unable to recognize what now seems clearly to be the dawning of a more modern conception of woman in the flappers of the 1920s. However, H.D. at least once captures some of the refreshing spirit of the cheery survivor figures of flapper girls such as Betty Lou in this passage describing Francescia:

> Chatter, chatter, chatter, talk, talk, talk. The talk of the little American flapper contains the germ of all America. She blows fresh West wind, she moves like the West Wind dancing. She has no consciousness of boredom, boredom is vaguely in her swift impersonal staccato, she will rush past it, brush it away, swirl it up like dried leaves, make it dance anyway (1928a, 42).

It might be argued that H.D. was simply falling in line with the modernist literary assessment of the 1920s flapper girls and their associates, for like F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway she depicts the jazz age habitués as vacuous and superficial.

H.D.'s casual disdain for the vulgar and acquisitive flappers pales by comparison with her thoroughgoing condemnation of another filmic type: the vamp or fatal seductress. The vamp stereotype was the inverse and related opposite of the virginal female ideal in silent film. To a certain extent, the exaggeration of the two, diametrically opposed images of women was necessitated by the conventions of silent film. In the absence of speech, costume had to instantly convey information about character and this led to a great emphasis upon and exaggeration of dress. Costumes were used to identify types. In 'Costume and Narrative: How Dress Tells the Woman's Story' Jane Gaines explains that, in silent film, 'while the body was used in acting to express

emotional complexities [...] costume was expected to simplify' (1990, 187). Costume detail, according to Gaines 'was "fixed" [...] it stood again and again for the same thing [...] it typified' (1990, 187). Hence, the 'vamp,' the 'virgin' and the 'woman of the world' were instantly recognizable. In cinematic, visual shorthand, the virgin was blond and homely whereas her opposite, the vamp, was dark and exotic. Thus, by the 1920s, the aspects of the visual presentation of the vamp as a predatory, sexually voracious amoral woman was rigidly codified in silent film. Even so, as Molly Haskell writes, the need for typing by visual means 'can hardly account for the outrageously broad malevolence of such comical carnivores' (1974/1987, 103).

In 'Mask and the Movietone,' (1927/1998d) H.D. recognizes the extreme exaggeration of gender difference in the silent film: 'our hero with sombrero, our heroine with exactly set coiffure' (1927/1998d, 114). She believes, however that the mask-like silent 'dolls' of the silent screen allow the viewer to add subtlety. The impetus for H.D.'s thoughts on this matter came from a demonstration of the new synchronous sound technology. H.D.'s argument is that the addition of sound will intervene between the suggestive 'dolls' and the viewers' imagination, which is engaged in a quasi-religious, visionary reverie when communing with the images on the screen. Thus, at the Movietone demonstration, H.D. found that:

> The screen image, a mask, a sort of doll 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 (1927/1998d, 115).

The encounter with sound film crystallized for H.D. her most cherished beliefs about the possibilities of cinema. The most valuable of these is the possibility of the rich, suggestive symbolism of cinematic performances that did not only leave

the contemporary world behind but gave intimations of divinity through highly ritualized figures: 'so conventionalized that they hold in some odd way possibility of divine animation' (1927/1998d, 119).

A distinction emerges, therefore, in H.D.'s film writing (with particular reference to images of women) between archetypes; those suggestive, timeless and almost non-human film performances, and stereotypes; the hidebound, class-bound and male-defined figures of the vamps and flappers, which could only be exacerbated by the introduction of sound and yet further fixed in a particularized, contemporary milieu. Aware of the dangers of objectification, H.D. nonetheless celebrated women's transcendence into symbol when she believed herself fortunate enough to witness it. The most memorable instance of this is in relation to Garbo in *The Joyless Street*, and also in the example of Khokhlova in *By the Law*. Of Khokhlova, H.D. writes that she had 'hardly any personal significance' (1928/1998g, 129). In summary, H.D.'s arguments imply that a symbol is infinitely varied and differently received by each viewer, whereas a stereotype (especially the vamp stereotype) has a closed-down meaning preventing imaginative input by the spectator.

H.D.'s most sustained comments on the stereotypical nature of the cultural image of the vamp occur in 'Beauty.' H.D.'s review protests that Garbo has been subjected to the imposition of a male-defined stereotype of female beauty by the make-up, wigs, false eyelashes and constricting costume of the vamp role. Garbo, transformed into a vamp in *The Torrent* is characterized as: 'an odd unbelievable parody of life, of beauty' (1927/1998c, 106). The changes in Garbo that are observed by H.D. are mostly in costume and make up. Garbo has 'sewed-in black lashes,' 'waist-lined, svelte, obvious contours,' 'gowns and gowns [...] trailing on

the floor,' 'black dyed wig' (1927/1998c, 107). Hollywood's outer transformation of Garbo was indeed extreme. Michaela Krutzen describes the process by which Garbo was made to 'conform to an ideal of beauty which she did not naturally fulfil,' as including the following:

> her hairline was evened out, her nose seems to be made narrower, and her lips were sloped differently. The studios worked with cosmetic surgeons and employed a dentist full time to correct the star's teeth. [...] Garbo was also dramatically changed by considerable weight loss (1992, 69).

H.D.'s diatribe against the ethos of Hollywood in 'Beauty' identifies the vamp stereotype as a way of restricting the potential of women. She writes, 'beauty brings a curse, a blessing, a responsibility. Is that why your Ogre, the Censor, is so intent on dishing it up as vamp charm, as stale, Nice-carnival beauty-as-we-get-it-in-a-beauty-contest?' (1927/1998c, 109). In passing, it is useful to note that beauty contests were in fact a relatively new innovation. Rosen gives the date of the first Miss America Pageant as 1921, (1973, 87) and describes the links between beauty contests and movies, not just in terms of the opportunities for women to be 'spotted' by talent scouts working for film companies, but also in terms of a general social change leading to a greater emphasis than ever before on judging women by appearance. Rosen analyses the rise of the beauty contest as a backlash against the new opportunities for women: 'women had, by virtue of certain dating and working freedoms, become predators; combative males responded by setting up standards with which to "appreciate" their appearances' (1973, 87). It is interesting to note that H.D. also links the vamp (woman as a sexual predator) with the imposition of a rigid criteria for women's beauty.

The vamp as a social type and as a term in common parlance was a product of the twentieth century, and of the movies in particular. Screen vamps were strictly delineated by a set of narrative as well as visual specifications, and began appearing around the mid-1910s, and the actress most closely associated with the figure of the vamp was Theda Bara. Terry Ramsaye, in his history of the cinema originally published in 1926, states that it was in fact Bara's screen image that introduced the term 'vamp' into common usage (*A Million and One Nights,* 704).[28] During her short but successful and intensively managed career, Bara made forty films playing in all of them the role of the fatally alluring woman whose sexual magnetism leads to the destruction of men. Theda Bara's image was deliberately constructed by the Fox studio publicity agents. Born Theodosia Goodman, she was renamed Theda Bara (an anagram of Arab death) and said to have been born in Egypt, the child of a sheikh and a princess, and raised on serpent's blood. She was credited with supernatural powers to enslave men. Bara posed with skulls and crystal balls and received the press in a darkened parlour draped in black and red. In many of her vamp roles, Bara's eyes are shadowed in a deep pool of black make-up, she wears minimal clothing often constructed of jewels or metal chains.

The figure of the screen vamp was derived from Decadent fine art. In his painting 'The Vampire,' exhibited in 1897, Phillip Burne-Jones (the son of Edward Burne-Jones) depicts a woman with streaming hair crouched threateningly over the supine body of a sleeping man. This painting inspired Kipling to write a poem of the same name, and it was Kipling's poem that (via a

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[28] The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the earliest use of the word 'vamp' (defined as 'a woman who intentionally attracts and exploits men') as dating from 1911, while the verb 'to vamp' ('to behave seductively') appeared slightly earlier, in 1904.

Broadway play) provided the source of the film in 1915 which launched Bara as a star, and set off the popular craze for screen vamps. The film was directed by Frank Powell and was entitled *A Fool There Was*. It depicts the degeneration and destruction of John Schuyler, a family man of high civic standing. John leaves his wife and child in America to take up a diplomatic position in England and the vamp follows him, seduces him and waylays him in Italy, introducing him to drink and depravity. John goes into a steady decline, his hair turns white and his body becomes frail and drained of vitality by the excessive sexuality of the vamp, and his drunken and idle lifestyle. The vamp, failing to achieve her aim of social climbing through her association with John, abandons him to his final demise and death, for, despite the pleas of his wife and daughter, John is unable to recover from his enslavement to the vamp. Thus, as the intertitle reads (quoting from Kipling's poem) 'the fool was stripped to his foolish hide.'

A later film that demonstrates in a particularly stark fashion the cinematic division of females into virgins or vamps is Murnau's *Sunrise* (1927). The 'Wife' (played by Janet Gaynor) is domestic, nurturing, girlish and pure, and is countered by a vamp figure (played by Margaret Livingston) who is referred to as the 'Woman from the City.' The sophisticated vamp lures the husband (played by George O'Brien) with the pleasures of the flesh and of the city and almost persuades him to murder his wife. Janet Gaynor and Margaret Livingston embody the diametrically opposed visual attributes of the 1920s virgin and vamp. Haskell writes, 'Gaynor, her hair pulled back in a severe bun, merges with the animals, the rustic simplicity of the home, of the country' (1987, 51) and Livingston is a copy-book screen siren with black, clinging clothes, black make-

up and black hair (all of the elements noted as defining the vamp stereotype by H.D. in 'Beauty').

In *Sunrise*, subtitled 'A Song of Two Humans,' none of the characters are named, instead they are labelled as 'The Man,' 'The Wife,' 'The Maid,' 'The Unobtrusive Gentleman,' and so on. An opening title reads: 'this song of the Man and his Wife is of no place and every place: you might hear it anywhere at any time.' As explained in chapter one, *Sunrise* was produced in Hollywood by Fox studios but was directed by the German émigré F.W. Murnau, which meant that there was a strong European influence at work in the film. In particular, there is a tendency toward an almost allegorical treatment of characters, which was derived from the Expressionist tradition. Abstraction was, according to Janet Bergstrom, 'accessible, acceptable, and familiar' in Weimar cinema precisely on account of the traditions of Expressionist theatre which had become mainstream by the 1920s (1985, 189). However, 'typing' in Weimar film was geared primarily to distinctions of social class rather than of gender. In contrast, in *Sunrise*, as Bergstrom points out, 'sexual identity is emphasized over class identity' (1985, 189).

In this division of women into two types, there was, as Haskell points out, a 'dialectic between the "new" and the "old-fashioned" woman [...] that was reflected in the corresponding opposition between the city and the country' (1987, 45). In a particularly stark fashion, *Sunrise* uses urban versus rural locations to distinguish between the nature of the two main female characters. For instance, when, trying to persuade the Man to murder his wife, the Woman from the City conjures up pictures of the excitement of fast-paced urban life, and scenes of jazz music and illuminated metropolitan buildings are visually superimposed over the

dank marshland where the Man lives as a farmer. Conversely, when, in the midst of the city, the man and his wife are finally reconciled, they walk across busy roads which dissolve into a wooded, flower-filled meadow. They stop to kiss, oblivious to their surroundings, and an entertaining scene ensues as the traffic grinds to a chaotic halt around them. Therefore, the dualism already prevalent in Hollywood images of women, overlaid by the traditions of Expressionist abstraction, achieves a particularly stark manifestation in the rural virgin and urban vamp of *Sunrise*.

Continuity and connections between figures of the feminine in *Close Up*, and in *Sea Garden* and *Trilogy*.

In 'Beauty,' the codes and conventions of the dichotomized representations of women in silent film are interlinked with pairs of poetic images. For, throughout the essay, H.D. uses images of natural and artificial flowers to symbolize Garbo's performances in the two very different films. H.D. sets up the opposition between Garbo as a growing, living flower in *The Joyless Street* and as a tissue–paper or painted flower in *The Torrent*. Thus H.D. writes that the difference between Garbo in *The Joyless Street* and *The Torrent* is between a 'living, wild camellia' and a 'crepe, tissue-paper orchid' (1927/1998c, 107). The fault lies with the film industry; the Ogre, that has despoiled or travestied the innate and natural beauty of Garbo: 'he [the Ogre] paints the lily, offers a Nice-Carnival, frilled, tissue-paper rose in place of a wild briar' (1927/1998c, 107). Following the culturally dominant scheme of *Sunrise* and many other films in which the privileged ideal of woman is that of the natural, unadorned and bucolic young girl, and the abjected image is that of the false, artificial, painted and urban woman, the presentation of Garbo in *The Torrent* is

described by H.D. in terms of the imposition of fake artificiality on top of genuine naturalness: 'something has been imposed, a blatant, tinsel and paper-flowers and paste jewel exterior' (1927/1998c, 109).

This comparison between the real and the artificial flowers in 'Beauty' recalls imagery found in H.D.'s early collection of poems, *Sea Garden* (1916). in which wild, seashore flowers are compared to inferior, cultivated flowers. However, in *Sea Garden*, a much more radical view of the naturalness of femininity can be detected and, by reading 'Beauty' intertextually with these poems, an encoded revision of the standard Hollywood designation of woman's purity emerges in H.D.'s review. For instance, in poems such as 'Sea Rose,' 'Sea Lily,' and 'Sea Iris,' flowers are assailed by water, sand and wind, and derive their beauty from their natural, exposed state. For example, the 'Sea Lily,' is exhorted thus:

> Reed
> Slashed and torn
> but doubly rich [...]
>
> sand cuts your petal,
> furrows it with hard edge,
> like flint
> on a bright stone.
>
> (1984b, 14)

This beauty is lacking in the hot-house, cultivated flowers of the poem in the volume entitled 'Sheltered Garden.' In the confined garden there is 'no scent of resin' and the beauty of the 'border on border of scented pinks' is feeble and cloying:

> For this beauty
> beauty without strength,
> chokes out life.
>
> (1984b, 19)

In 'Sea Violet,' the same terms of opposition are invoked, for the sea violet, which 'lies fronting all the wind' is superior to the blue violets which are cloistered safely on the hill.

> The greater blue violets
> flutter on the hill,
> but who would change for these
> who would change for these
> one root of the white sort?
>
> (1984b, 25)

The white sea violet has the greater expressive quality and transmutes the traumatic effects of exposure and hardship into beauty:

> you catch the light
> frost, a star edges with its fire
>
> (1984b, 26)

This preference, which is demonstrated in the form and style of the poems themselves, for hard, clear concision in contrast to lush, overblown wordiness, was read by fellow poets such as Ezra Pound at the time of the poems' publication in the context of the tenets of Imagism, and the description of H.D.'s lyrics as hard and 'crystalline' became for her, and her work, a confining label. However, the traditional cultural association of women with beautiful and decorative flowers supports an alternative reading of these poems beyond the enactment of Imagist aesthetics, namely as a critique of the social construction of femininity. Marianne De Koven has carried out exactly such a reading. She writes that the rose is the 'prime Western symbol of patriarchal appropriation of female sexuality' (1992, 201) and develops a convincing analysis of 'Sea Rose' as a 'rejection of the deadly conventions of female beauty within patriarchy' (1992, 202). In particular, De Koven draws attention to the second stanza in which the sea rose is addressed as follows:

more precious
than a wet rose
single on a stem—
you are caught in the drift.

(1984b, 5)

De Koven suggests that the wet rose represents female sexual availability since it is 'linked to (impaled on ?) the phallic stem' (1992, 202). In contrast, the sea rose is subject to many competing forces, including the tides of the sea and De Koven translates this as, among other things, the 'crowd of urban modernity' (1992, 202). The sea rose is described in the poem as 'harsh' and 'marred' while its domestic equivalent, the spice rose, which is for display and decoration only, is denigrated by comparison.

Can the spice-rose
drip such acrid fragrance
hardened in a leaf?

(1984b, 5)

Hence, the 'meagre' sea rose would seem to represent a different, more powerful and wilder femininity to the culturally approved definitions of femininity as soft, yielding and decorative. The terms used in the poem to characterize the sea rose indicate the culturally privileged definitions of femininity by implied opposition: the sea rose is 'stunted' 'sparse' and with 'stint of petals' invoking, without actually naming as such, the sweetness, abundance and generosity of the conventionally attractive feminine ideal.

These same terms of reference can be detected in H.D. descriptions of the two Garbo roles at issue in 'Beauty.' In *The Torrent* Garbo plays Leonora, who leaves behind a simple village life and her true love to become a successful opera diva known as of La Bruna. She enjoys the cosmopolitan lifestyle of an international star, and her role is that of a glamorous sexual object. On the other

hand, Garbo's role as Grete in *The Joyless Street*, is that of an active and resourceful woman, the breadwinner of the family. Grete continually battles with the difficulties of her situation using her wits, intelligence and moral sense. H.D. disparages the way in which Garbo as Leonora is restricted to a narrow arena in which she displays the 'obvious contours' of sexual attractiveness and is physically restricted by the wearing of gowns, 'all of them almost (by some anachronism) trailing on the floor' (1927/1998c, 107). Garbo's role as Grete in *The Joyless Street* is by contrast located in the dangerous environment of post-war Vienna through which she treads with 'frail, very young feet' (1927/1998c, 107). The role of Grete allows Garbo to explore questions of the moral choices that women are required to make by the threat of poverty, starvation and prostitution. Therefore, like the sea rose, which has been toughened and reduced to a lean, one might almost say, muscular strength and resilience, Garbo as Grete, contains the possibility of a more meaningful feminine beauty based on strength.

Indeed, H.D.'s writing on film expresses a preference for the display of raw suffering in women (with the important exception of Falconetti's portrayal of Joan of Arc). Images of exposure and torment are the keynote of H.D.'s description of Khokhlova as Edith in *Expiation*: 'all legs, hardly any flesh, a sort of Flemish saint, a worn-down, sea-wind battered statue that has been rubbed raw by weather' (1928/1998g, 129). In this context, Eileen Gregory's analysis of the metaphorical meanings encoded in the *Sea Garden* poems is particularly apt. Gregory writes that 'the relentless elements in action are annihilating [...] yet they exalt. [...] The beauty is in the mark of sea-torture' (1986, 539).

If Cassandra Laity's discussion of H.D.'s early poems is taken into account, an additional meaning arises through the intertextual reading of 'Beauty'

and *Sea Garden*. Laity argues that H.D.'s inheritance of the femme fatale of the Decadent tradition was specifically situated as a heterosexual image in a scheme which privileged homosexuality. Thus the hot-house flowers of the 'Sheltered Garden' and the artificial lilies and orchids of 'Beauty' can be aligned with the oppressive heterosexual Venusberg found in the poetry of Swinburne and other Decadent poets, while the white sea flowers of *Sea Garden* and the description in the review of Garbo as an 'ice-flower' occupy a lesbian space. H.D.'s condemnation of Garbo's re-packaging as an object of heterosexual desire is explicit in the review. It is questionable to what extent the Decadent coding of the superiority of homosexuality through the imagery of chilly whiteness is intentionally present in the review, but it cannot be ruled out (the reader is also referred to Diana Collecott's discussion of flower motifs, 1999, 212-218).

The idea that 'Beauty' encodes a lesbian preference through the flower imagery used is indeed plausible. It should be pointed out, however, that Laity defines the heterosexual Venusberg of the Decadent poets as a place of nature, whereas (she argues) the sea flowers are characterized by artificiality. I would question Laity's designation of the sea flowers in *Sea Garden* as non-natural, and instead maintain that a connection exists between the wild and stark sea-rose, sea-lily and sea–iris of *Sea Garden*, and the natural briar and camellia of 'Beauty': and correspondingly between the cultivated, 'scented pinks' of the early poems, and the paper-tissue flower of the review. Whether the flowers of *Sea Garden* and the natural flowers of 'Beauty' encode a specific Decadent sign of homosexuality, or more broadly the extreme transformational possibilities of a 'pure openness to life' (Gregory, 1986, 540) H.D.'s images are radically different

from (although capable of being read within) the discourse of the representations of women as virginal children in silent film.

H.D.'s identification of the unspoilt Garbo with nature is, however, far more sophisticated and complex than Hollywood's designation of the virginal, pure, child-woman with the countryside (versus the city). Seeming at first to confirm this virgin/vamp schema, H.D. uses the highly charged term 'deflowered' to describe Garbo's transformation by Hollywood. The word's primary meaning, given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'to deprive (a woman) of her virginity, to violate,' introduces a whole range of implied sexual references into H.D.'s discussion of Garbo's treatment by Hollywood. In counterpoint to Garbo's 'vast deflowering' by MGM, H.D. stresses Garbo's earlier 'purity' in *The Joyless Street*: 'this fine little Greta Garbo with her youth, her purity, her straight brows and her unqualified distinction' (1927/1998c, 108). Rehearsing the trials which beset the character of Grete, who struggles to the last to avoid sexual compromise, H.D. stresses her 'mermaid-like integrity' and implies that it is her exposure to these many dangers that gives rise to the authority and authenticity of her beauty rather than the technical preservation of her virginity.

Hence, H.D.'s desire for the innate beauty of Garbo to be preserved unalloyed does not partake of the sexual politics of the virgin stereotype, as embodied by the child-women of the silent cinema. H.D.'s use of the word 'deflowered' in the review for *Close Up* refers instead to the restriction of experience and mobility of women as a result of the imposition of male-defined ideals of female purity and not to women's literal loss of sexual innocence, as in the common usage of the term. Garbo's deflowering consisted, as far as H.D. was concerned, in her co-option into a moral scheme which labelled and represented

sexually free women as sinful vamps. I would argue that for H.D., Garbo's purity in *The Joyless Street* has nothing to do with virginity (even if the plot suggested this) and everything to do with the strength and resilience she depicted in the role; qualities that are figured forth in the sea flowers of *Sea Garden*. The vision of Garbo in *The Joyless Street* is celebrated by H.D. because, once in while 'beauty itself [...] rises triumphant and denounces the world for a season' (1927/1998c, 109). In other words, Garbo's appearance in Pabst's film offers the possibility of an entirely different set of terms by which to appreciate feminine goodness and beauty. H.D. recognized that subsequent to her performance in *The Joyless Street*, Garbo had fallen, and become subject to a male-definition of female beauty (namely the stereotypical screen vamp). Hence it is the reprehensible labelling of Garbo rather than the suggestion of sexual experience in the role of the opera diva in *The Torrent* to which H.D. alludes in her comments on the 'deflowering' of Greta Garbo.

In 'The King of Kings Again,' which appeared in *Close Up* six months after 'Beauty,' H.D. once more laments the ridiculous aspects of the vamp stereotype. In this instance, the film in question is Cecil B. De Mille's Biblical epic depicting the life of Christ, *The King of Kings* (1927). In the 1920s, Cecil B. De Mille achieved enormous box office success by using historical or Biblical subjects as a pretext for showing sensationalist scenes which voyeuristically depicted the sins and excesses which were at the same time being condemned in the storyline of the film. *The Ten Commandments* (1923) was the first of the great cinematic spectacles with which De Mille's name would thenceforth always be associated. In *The King of Kings* Jesus is played movingly and with great dignity and appeal by H.B. Warner and De Mille was careful to show the utmost respect

in his portrayal of the figure of Jesus, both in the finished product and on the film set (prayers were said and Warner was not permitted to travel outside the studio when in costume). But the figure of Mary Magdalene, as a repentant prostitute, afforded the perfect opportunity for scenes of debauchery and drunkenness guaranteed to draw the crowds. In order to liven up the interest of the New Testament story, De Mille and his screen writer, Jeanie Macpherson, devised a rivalry between Mary Magdalene and Jesus for Judas's loyalty. Mary is taunted by her admirers because one of their number, Judas, now evidently prefers the company of Jesus, a wandering carpenter.

Therefore, instead of the opening scene of a nativity which cinema-goers might have expected, De Mille's film of the life of Christ opens with a banquet scene depicting the lavish lifestyle of Mary Magdalene, a high class prostitute. In his autobiography, De Mille confesses that this opening scene was designed to jolt viewers out of their preconceptions of the Biblical tale (cited in Tatum, 48). Mary Magdalene is introduced in an intertitle as 'a beautiful courtesan [...] who laughed alike at God and man.' Mary is played by Jacqueline Logan and presented with all the stock features of the vamp type: the heavy, abundant jewellery, stylized and exaggerated make-up, and revealing, diaphanous costume. Her black hair is arranged into starkly prominent 'S' shapes across her forehead as if warning of her real nature as a poisonous serpent (see figure 4).

The second scene involving Mary Magdalene depicts her repentance and conversion. In quest of her errant lover, Judas, Mary has sought out her 'rival' namely Jesus the miracle worker. On entering the room, Mary is fixed by Jesus' stare. She withdraws and shields her face with her arms in a gesture of fear and shame. Jesus then casts out of her seven devils, the first incident in the film

Figure 4 Jacqueline Logan in *The King of Kings* (1927)

involving Mary to have a solid Biblical basis (Mark 16. 9). Mary's devils in De Mille's story are the seven deadly sins and each one appears as a duplicate of Mary herself by the use of double exposure. The sins torment and implore her before finally disappearing from the frame. Mary then pulls her cloak over her exposed arms and shoulders and also over her head and kneels to kiss the hem of Jesus' garment.

As one of the many followers of Jesus, little is seen of Mary Magdalene in the course of the film until the scene following Pilate's trial of Jesus. Pilate hands over the fate of Jesus to the mob gathered outside. In contrast to the other followers of Jesus who are silent or absent from the crowd, Mary is loudly vocal in her defence of Jesus. She cries out 'save him' but the crowd has been packed with men bribed by the Pharisees to shout instead for the release of Barabbas. Mary's former life has irrevocably tarnished her reputation and she is easily discredited: 'would ye listen to the harlot of Magdala against your own priests?' cries out a man in the crowd. In the closing scenes of the film, Mary Magdalene once again plays a central part. She is seen at the foot of the cross with her hair loosened in mourning and her part in the Resurrection follows the Gospel of John, in which she is the first to see the risen Christ.

De Mille's film stresses Mary Magdalene's assertiveness, initially seen as unfeminine when she was a courtesan, but later viewed as admirable in her devotion to Jesus. Mary's willingness to assert herself in an unmaidenly way when she shouts for Jesus' life in the crowd scene is ineffectual, for the defence of Jesus by a woman of dubious virtue does nothing to help his cause, but De Mille clearly draws the comparison between Mary's brave defence of Jesus in the crowd scene and the disciples who one by one refuse to admit to knowing Jesus once he

is under Roman guard; including the three denials by Peter before the crowing of the cock at dawn. Whilst many of the incidents in De Mille's film are taken from scripture, Mary's role in the trial and condemnation of Jesus (like her relationship with Judas) has no basis in the Bible.

Mary's role and character as created by De Mille and Jeanie Macpherson reflects the conflicting discourses about women current in the 1920s which find expression in various representations in film. Mary's sinful, sexual past as a prostitute is condemned by the moral scheme of the film and replaced by modest clothing and covered head. Mary Magdalene the sinner is transformed in the film into Mary the pure, signalled by her visual similarity to the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus (played by Dorothy Cummings) who wears a nun-like costume with a wimple. However, the film also shows the influence of the feisty heroines of D.W. Griffith's films such as Mae Marsh in *Intolerance* who is headstrong and undaunted. Hence De Mille's depiction of the cleansed and repentant Magdalene in *The King of Kings* is not passive or delicate. Instead, the film suggests that her erotic passion has been converted to a fierce loyalty towards Jesus, and Mary remains as unconcerned about her reputation as she was in her former life as a prostitute.

Overall, H.D.'s review is full of praise for De Mille's film (an important exception to her anti-Hollywood rule) and in particular for the performance of H.B. Warner as Jesus. She particularly enjoys the sublime humour in Warner's performance as Jesus, believing for example that he means to suggest that there is implicit humour in the statement by Jesus at his crucifixion that 'they know not what they do' (1928b, 26). H.D. heaps praise upon this happy combination of well-written scenario and excellent acting, describing the scenes with H.B.

Warner as 'lyric' and 'poetic' and awarding De Mille a high accolade by comparing his work to the classics: she calls the film a 'Hebraic Sophoclean drama' (1928b, 27). H.D. was particularly impressed by the attempts in the film to relate the figure and story of Christ to the present. For instance (as already mentioned), the final shot is a modern-day industrial urban landscape forming the backdrop to Jesus' words 'Lo, I am with you always' (Matthew 28:20). H.D. lamented the fact that this final tableau was deleted from the film when it was shown in London and in Germany(1928b, 24). She praises the film's achievement in depicting a Christ of charm, beauty and harmony instead of the ghastly martyr on the cross that has 'roused in so many defenceless children the phobias that in later life paralyse will and being' (1928b, 34). This Jesus is genuine, and more real than any 'Christ out of a gallery, Christ smelling of paint with red scars also smelling of paint' (1928b, 24). In this instance (and unlike Dreyer's Joan) the film maker has selected the 'correct' representation of a holy figure.

While H.D.'s review celebrates the credibility and uniqueness of De Mille's presentation of the figure of Christ, her comments on the depiction of Mary Magdalene are quite the opposite. For H.D., 'this Mary Magdalene is a blot on the whole production' (1928b, 27). She vehemently attacks 'the Magdalene incident' at the start of the film, which to her mind brings disrepute on the whole enterprise of the cinema 'no one could blame the [...] would-be open minded convert to film art from leaving the pictures with a nauseated determination never at any price to be lured back' (1928b, 27). In Jacqueline Logan's portrayal of Mary, H.D. detects a lazy recourse to stereotype and her basic objection is to the way in which a contemporary cultural construction (the screen vamp) has been imposed on the figure of Mary in an attempt to sell tickets. H.D. asks rhetorically

'must Beauty always dress itself in scarlet, drag sumptuous velours about apparently naked limbs, disclose apparent nakedness unchastely half-revealed through apparent black chiffon?' (1928b, 27). Once again, as in the reprehensible gilding of the lily in the case of Garbo, the real woman beneath (in both senses of the historical Mary and of the actress playing her) has been overlaid with the artificial and ridiculous trappings of the vamp, and confined within a rigid, patriarchal definition. H.D. resorts to satire: 'did Mary Magdalene, COULD she possibly ever have worn tights?' (1928b, 27).

As well as the screen vamp, the derivations cited by H.D. for this construction of Mary Magdalene include nineteenth-century melodrama with its origins in cheaply available serials. She writes, 'why must a supposedly fascinating woman (putting aside for the moment additional "religious" association) for example find it necessary to stress and re-stress all the vamp qualities of the most illiterate penny dreadful charmer?' (1928b, 27). H.D.'s weariness and frustration at the stereotyping of such an enigmatic and important female figure of the New Testament as Mary Magdalene reaches fever pitch in the review: 'we were not even spared the inevitable vamp tigress, panther, some leopard-like beast whom Magdalene strokes with chic abandon' (1928b, 28). Eventually, however, H.D. concedes that 'the Magdalene incident' is 'good for drawing the crowds' (who would then be granted the sublime experience of H.B. Warner's interpretation of the role of Jesus) and even admits the possibility that De Mille 'believed sincerely in it' (1928b, 31).

The figure of Mary Magdalene plays a central role in 'The Flowering of the Rod,' the third part of H.D.'s long poem *Trilogy*, which was written during the Blitz in London and published in 1946. Even though nearly twenty years

separates H.D.'s review of *The King of Kings* and 'The Flowering of the Rod,' I would contend nonetheless that H.D.'s response to De Mille's disastrous representation of Mary Magdalene is a factor in her portrayal of Mary in the later poem. Specifically, H.D.'s determination to rid the figure of Mary of all the accumulated patriarchal trappings that had become attached to her image might well have been inspired in part by De Mille's film, for De Mille's Magdalene is just one of many male-defined images normalized by the religious and cultural heritage of Christianity and rejected by H.D. in her revisionary poem.

In 'The Flowering of the Rod' H.D. tells the story of the woman of the New Testament who washes the feet of Jesus with her tears and anoints him with an expensive unguent. This woman has usually been identified as Mary Magdalene, although the Gospels do not give clear evidence for this (see Marina Warner, 1985, 226 - 229). H.D. follows the tradition instigated by Pope Gregory in the sixth century of combining into one figure Mary of Bethany (the sister of Lazarus), Mary Magdalene (the first witness of the Resurrection) and the 'sinner' who anointed the feet (or head) of Jesus. H.D.'s poem, however, adds much to the original Biblical narratives of the anointing of Jesus by depicting another scene in which Mary goes to purchase the alabaster jar of myrrh from an Arab merchant.[29] In 'The Flowering of the Rod' this merchant, named Kaspar, is granted a vision of the eternal in the course of his meeting with Mary Magdalene.

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[29] Friedman maintains that this episode is entirely of H.D.'s devising. I have found that similar scenes occur in the medieval mystery plays (see Karl Young 1933, Vol. 1, 401 – 407). It seems unlikely that medieval texts would have been a source for H.D., and it would be interesting to pursue the tale of the meeting between Mary and the Spice-seller in occult or Gnostic traditions. Another possible line of inquiry would be to look at the representations of Christ's life in the many films produced during the silent era in case such a sequence is included in one of them.

From the first, the Mary Magdalene that H.D. presents in her poem is described in terms of her refusal of women's allotted role and behaviour. H.D. explains that Mary was regarded as:

> an unbalanced, neurotic woman,
>
> who was naturally reviled for having left home
> and not caring for house-work
>
> (1984b, 586-7)

In sections 21 to 25 of 'The Flowering of the Rod,' H.D. dramatizes the anointing scene, in which Jesus eats at the house of Simon the Leper and Mary pours expensive myrrh from an alabaster box upon him. H.D.'s re-staging of the Biblical story dwells on the horrified reactions of the men present at the event, as indicated in the Gospels (Matthew 26. 6-13, Mark 14. 3-9, Luke 7. 36-50 and John 12. 1-8). Simon, the host, is incredulous that Jesus is allowing Mary to touch him, surely he cannot know 'what manner of woman this is' (1984b, 595, quoting Luke 7. 39) and Judas is outraged at the waste of money which might otherwise have been given to the poor (see Matthew 26. 9). In H.D.'s re-telling of the story, Simon is particularly sensitive to the unholy associations conjured up by the sight of Mary as she sits, 'like a child at a party [...] deftly un-weaving // the long, carefully braided tresses of her extraordinary hair' (1984b, 594). Mary reminds Simon of tabooed, 'heathen' images of dangerous feminine sorceresses: the siren on the rocks, the mermaid with her song of enchantment, which he has seen 'a carved stone-portal entrance / to a forbidden sea-temple' (1984b, 594). With his occult knowledge, Kaspar, the Magician, one of the Wise Men who attended the birth of Jesus, is finally able to interpret the visual meanings of Mary's body as a temple of pre-Christian goddesses. But Kaspar's visionary understanding is not achieved merely by his own efforts, it occurs as a result of

Mary's unconventional behaviour and her determination to assert herself and her wishes.

The scene at Kaspar's booth in the marketplace precedes the scene of the anointing of Jesus chronologically, but occurs after it in the poem, for much of *Trilogy* is presented in the logic of spiritual causation rather than temporal arrangement (for example, 'The Flowering of the Rod' ends with the nativity while previous parts of the poem have described the life and resurrection of Christ). In Kaspar's booth, Mary refuses to be fobbed off by Kaspar's gestures of dismissal (Kaspar regards the very presence of an unaccompanied woman as an affront, especially a woman 'unveiled, in the house of a stranger' 1984b, 590) In response to these subtle insults, Mary places her body as an unavoidable force that Kaspar must reckon with:

> she understood: this was his second rebuff
> but deliberately, she shut the door:
>
> she stood with her back against it:
> planted there, she flung out her arms,
>
> a further barrier
>
> (1984b).

Challenging Kaspar's scheme of values as a merchant (a commercial ethos comparable, perhaps, to the motivations of the Hollywood moguls as described in 'Beauty') and a patriarch holding to the view that 'no secret was safe with a woman' (1984b, 589), Mary asserts her own physicality and sexuality as an opposing force. Kaspar initially experiences the same reactions of recoil and shame which Mary caused in the men present at Simon's house, but as he stoops to retrieve the scarf that has fallen from her head and revealed her 'un-maidenly' hair, Kaspar has a vision of the seven 'devils' which have been cast out of Mary.

These devils are the heathen daemons and are the female goddesses denounced by Jewish and Christian theology: Eve, Lillith and other, unnamed ones.

This crucial revelatory moment in H.D.'s poem, in which the scarf slips from the head of Mary Magdalene to reveal her hair, is an exact reversal of the most significant gesture in the scene of Mary's repentance in De Mille's *The King of Kings*. As mentioned above, in the film, Mary draws her cloak over her head and body after Jesus has driven out her demons and in so doing indicates her restored state of grace by her adoption of feminine modesty. In contrast to De Mille and Jeanie Macpherson's representation, H.D.'s portrait of Mary Magdalene associates her spirituality with the specific rejection of feminine virtues such as modesty and conveys Mary's repeated and insistent flouting of conventions as proof of her thorough-going understanding of and belief in Christ's message.

H.D.'s portrait of the femme fatale looks back, not only to the Pre-Raphaelite women with their 'luxuriant overflowing hair' (Laity, 179), but also to the iconography of Theda Bara who was frequently pictured with her long wavy hair. Walker writes of Bara that: 'sometimes [her hair] is piled cumulously round her face like a Sphinx, sometimes she is holding skeins of it high above her head like a Fury' (1966, 22). For the long hair of women could, in the ever-shifting codes of the silent screen, designate sinful sexuality (in Bara) as well as girlish maidenhood (in Mary Pickford). Thus, undoubtedly, H.D.'s Mary Magdalene is a composite of the Pre-Raphaelite women with their long hair, dark eyes and pale faces, but also derives from the seductresses of the silent screen. For instance, H.D. refers to her as the 'woman from the city,' (1984b, 596) recalling the designation of the vamp in *Sunrise*. In conclusion, therefore, *Trilogy* deploys all of the signs of the vamp accumulated through human history from traditions of

nineteenth century visual art and literature, up to and including the conventions of the modern cinema, and traces their origin back to a time when the sexual freedom and the power of women was worshipped. Instead of the militant and closed rejection of the figure of the vamp as a male-defined stereotype in her film reviews of the 1920s, H.D. came to understand the vamp as an archetype, containing an ancient veneration of female sexuality.

Chapter Four: 'I was kicked': Gender and Gaze in Film and Narrative.

'Joan of Arc' and the male gaze.

In the previous chapter I looked at H.D.'s film writing in connection with the issue of male-defined representations of women in film. In the present chapter, the focus will be on the cinematic apparatus as a vehicle of power differentiation between genders, for *The Passion of Joan of Arc* demonstrated to H.D. that the camera (as distinguished from the whole institution of the cinema) may be used as an agent of female oppression. Indeed, her review describes Dreyer's film as equivalent to the re-enactment of the original abuse of Joan by the Inquisition. This chapter considers H.D.'s suggestion that the spectator of Dreyer's film is forced into a position of complicity by the filming methods used, and the way in which the review proposes that Joan's persecution is both visited upon, and vicariously carried out by the spectator. I shall then go on to argue that H.D.'s observations of the technical operations of the cinematic male gaze can also be detected in the deployment of equivalent narrative effects in her prose fiction, and I shall be discussing two texts of the 1930s, *Nights* (1986) and 'Kora and Ka' (1991) respectively, both of which are particularly notable in this respect.

H.D.'s review identifies a specific filming technique in particular as the medium through which Dreyer's own point of view is imposed upon the audience: namely the use of extreme camera angles. She notes that the judges are frequently filmed using low-angle shots from Joan's perspective, and thus 'as if seen by Jeanne herself from below' (1928/1998h, 131). Hence the film draws the spectator into the illusion of subjectivity, making the viewing experience a

personal one to an uncomfortable degree (especially for a viewer such as H.D. who had a close emotional identification with the historical figure of Joan, as I pointed out in chapter three). Indeed, some months after publishing 'Joan of Arc,' her reactions had further intensified. In 'An Appreciation,' she wrote, 'it positively bullied me as no film yet has done. [...] My affections and credulity were hammered. I was kicked. I was throttled. I was laid upon a torture rack' (1929/1998a,143).

H.D.'s view, then, is that in being forced to endure the subjective representation of Joan's imprisonment and persecution, the same brutality has in some sense been deliberately perpetrated upon her as a spectator. In 'Joan of Arc' she writes:

> 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 (1928/1998h, 132).

In her assumption of directorial intent, H.D. proved to be correct. In an interview which subsequently appeared in *Cahiers du Cinema* in 1968, Dreyer explained that the subjective experience of Joan's torments was indeed what he had hoped to create in the spectator. He says, 'the result of the close-ups was that the spectator was as shocked as Joan was, receiving the questions, tortured by them. And, in fact, it was my intention to get this result' (cited in Mark Nash, 1977, 53).

In addition to the enforced sharing of Joan's subjective position, H.D. notes that filming techniques are deployed at other points in the narrative to create spectator identification with Joan's tormentors themselves. Thus, the first sight of Joan in the film is from the perspective of the judges, who are seated higher than Joan herself as she is led in for questioning and Joan appears 'small as seen from

above' (1928/1998h, 130) (see figure 5). The repeated use of the camera to align the spectator with the judges' point of view enrages H.D. because as a spectator she is thereby forced into a position of complicity with Joan's accusers. H.D.'s anger erupts and she personally accuses Dreyer of coercing the spectator into identifying with Joan's torturers and deliberately involving the viewer as witness to the spectacle of Joan's protracted suffering. She calls him 'a very blue-beard, a Turk of an ogre for remorseless cruelty,' (1928/1998h, 132), and it is notable that (as in 'Beauty') her accusations of savagery are accompanied by a racist stereotype. The invocation of the legendary Bluebeard, the serial killer of a succession of wives, underlines the point that Joan is only one in a series of women (i.e. the spectators of the film, starting with H.D. herself) who must undergo this brutal torment. H.D. is careful to point out that she is not disturbed by violence on the screen as such but, as Rebecca Egger writes, the effect it has of 'diminishing her agency as a spectator' (1995, 147). H.D. declares:

> 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 (1928/1998h, 132).

The voyeuristic gaze shared between director, male characters and implied spectator that H.D describes, anticipates in many ways Laura Mulvey's theorization of the male gaze in her essay of 1975, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.' It is with hesitation that I introduce Mulvey's work into my discussion of H.D.'s writing on film because, like the overly simplistic approach of the 'images of women' criticism of the same period, Mulvey's notorious formulation of the male gaze in 1975 has been consistently attacked as partial and unsatisfactory (paradoxically gaining in currency by the continued repetition of the main points for the purposes of refutation). As Linda Williams writes,

Figure 5 Maria Falconetti in *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928)

Mulvey's 'totalising concept' of a 'sadistic-voyeuristic male gaze' provided 'something akin to a popular villain whose specter has haunted the field of visual representation ever since' (1995, 2). It is not my intention to propose any sort of re-habilitation of Mulvey's thesis (neither is it my primary aim to conduct my own critique of her essay here) but the striking similarities between H.D.'s feminist attack on Dreyer and Mulvey's upon Hitchcock, in particular, warrant investigation.

Noting the predominance of scenes in Hollywood film in which women are displayed, Mulvey argued that the cinema constructs the spectator as male by a convergence of looks. The look of the camera and the look of the male actor(s) are aligned with the look of the spectator, thus creating a male gaze. Hence in the case of Hitchcock's films, she argues that, 'Hitchcock's skilful use of identification processes and liberal use of subjective camera from the point-of-view of the male protagonist draw the spectators deeply into his position, making them share his uneasy gaze' (1992, 31). In the same way, as I have shown, H.D.'s review of *The Passion of Joan of Arc* repeatedly highlights Dreyer's attempts to achieve just such an identification between his own vision of Joan, the judges' perspective and the look of the spectator.

Mulvey's essay conceptualizes cinematic visual pleasure in psychoanalytic terms with reference to the male Oedipal trajectory, meaning that the spectator's enjoyment of the woman on screen as an erotic object is complicated by the anxiety of castration which she represents. Thus Mulvey argues that the male gaze involves the disavowal of female castration and that this is achieved either through a form of narrative sadism or through fetishising the female figure. The

first of these two 'avenues of escape' from castration anxiety is described in detail by Mulvey as follows:

> Preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object (1992, 29).

H.D.'s ascription to Dreyer of an overweening desire to re-enact Joan's humiliation and torture is akin to the form of escape from castration anxiety via voyeuristic sadism, as outlined by Mulvey. Repeatedly in her review, H.D. objects to the excessive and gratuitous display of Joan's suffering:

> 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 (1928/1998h, 132).

Therefore, returning to my earlier point about H.D.'s objection to Dreyer's portrayal of Joan on the grounds that it is simply incorrect (Joan, argues H.D., was not a 'country child' or a 'kicked little puppy' but instead a warrior woman commanding the love and loyalty of her comrades-in-arms), the devaluation of Joan remarked upon by H.D. fits equally well into the psychoanalytic scheme suggested by Mulvey. H.D., who was equally as well-versed in Freudian notions of woman as representing the threat of castration as Mulvey, might well have considered the possibility of an unconscious motivation behind Dreyer's symbolic reduction and punishment of Joan, the phallic woman, even if she stopped short of actually spelling it out in the pages of *Close Up*.

In addition to 'Joan of Arc,' there are two further instances in H.D.'s film writing which appear to anticipate Mulvey's formulation of a male gaze in the cinema. Firstly, a pair of poems by H.D. that appeared in *Close Up*: 'Projector' and 'Projector II (Chang)' rehearse the dynamics of a dominating male gaze and

passive spectator.[30] In both poems, the mechanical device used to project films (metonymized as 'light') is addressed as 'he' and described as a hypnotic, commanding force working upon a congregation of worshipful spectators. 'Projector,' begins with a hymn to light:

> light reasserts
> his power [...]
>
> he strides forth young and pitiful and strong,
> a king of blazing splendour and of gold [...]
>
> his arrows slay
> and still his footsteps
> dart
> gold
> in the market-place;
> vision returns
>
> (1984b, 349-352).

This poem appeared in the same issue as 'Beauty' and the essay's themes of a sacred vision made manifest in *The Joyless Street*, as well as the dire example of its betrayal in *The Torrent*, recur in the poem in a non-specific and abstract form. For instance, a line in the poem which condemns: 'this measuring of beauty with a rod,' (1984b, 350) could be compared to the essay's denunciation of the imposition of 'beauty-as-we-get-it-in-a-beauty-contest' upon Garbo (1927/1998c, 109).

The second poem, 'Projector II (Chang),' refers specifically to the 1927 drama documentary directed by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack for Paramount, and, as Charlotte Mandel writes (in one of the rare instances in which a published study of H.D.'s work relates her writing to a particular film text), 'one can trace [...] actual shots of landscapes and animals from the film *Chang*' (1987,

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[30] 'Projector' appeared in *Close Up* in 1927 (1.1, 46-51), as did 'Projector II (Chang)' (1.4, 35-44).

43). 'Projector II (Chang)' picks up the theme of spiritual salvation by light, and restates the first poem's assignment of the masculine gender to the agent of divine illumination:

> This is his gift;
> light,
> light that sears and breaks
> us
> from old doubts
> and fears
> and lassitudes
>
> (1984b, 353).

In her doctoral thesis, Anne Friedberg remarks that the 'striking factor in [H.D.'s] anthropomorphization of the projector is that she chooses a *male* pronoun' (1983b, 283). In a separate article (published in 1982) Friedberg identifies conflicting impulses on H.D.'s part, both to submit to the patriarchal machinery of film, and to usurp its power for herself. She designates the voice of the *Close Up* poems as H.D.'s and characterizes it as taking up the position of a 'willing and receptive recipient' of the patriarchal power of the god, but also quotes a statement by H.D. printed in *The Little Review* in May 1929 that her newly acquired skill of operating a home projector means she can make light 'do what I want.' Thus, Friedberg observes, H.D. moves at different times from a passive position to an empowered 'identification with the projector mechanism itself' (1982, 31). Indeed, a section of 'Projector II (Chang)' is cast in the voice of the god himself:

> neophyte
> your being is my grace
> (he says)
> your life, my life;
> I catch you in my net
> of light on over-light
>
> (1984b, 356).

Friedberg's analysis of the 'Projector' poems in the context of the statement in *The Little Review* identifies an ambivalence in H.D.'s attitude to the power of the cinematic apparatus and the situation of spectatorship, which is similar to that found in 'Joan of Arc.' Yet another discursive text that constructs gender positions in relation to the cinematic apparatus is the *Borderline* pamphlet. Once more, the film mechanism (in addition to creative authority and agency) is explicitly identified with masculinity, and in this instance with the literal, visual perspective of Macpherson himself, who was the director as well as cameraman of *Borderline*: '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' (1930/1998b, 226). As Rebecca Egger remarks, Macpherson is depicted as using the 'cinematic machine' as 'a kind of prosthesis' (1995, 112). This astonishing portrait of man as machine, glamorizes the machismo of technology in a way so uncharacteristic of H.D. (and entirely consistent with the contemporary avant-garde movement of Futurism) that it is difficult to accept that she was indeed the author of the pamphlet.[31] Throughout the pamphlet, Macpherson's domination of the creative process of making a film is described with ghastly fascination and at great length. Macpherson's imposition of his own defining and controlling gaze is even more complete than those directors who have a large number of technical staff at their disposal, for Macpherson directs 'THROUGH THE LENS' (1930/1998b, 227), literally substituting the artificial eye of the camera for his own.

The aggressive undertones of this act of creative mastery are compounded by military references. Macpherson wields the camera like 'a young gunner alone

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[31] See note 24, above.

with his machine gun' (1930/1998b, 225). Although it must be said that this simile is used in the context of the possibility of negative critical response to the finished film, and is therefore in some sense a defensive image, the linking together of the technology of the cinema with that of war has the effect of further defining film-making as an aggressive, masculine activity. It is interesting to note that the barbarity of Dreyer's staging of Joan's last hours is similarly compared by H.D. to a warlike assault, in which Joan is 'kicked into a corner by giant soldier iron-heeled great boots' (1928/1998h,131).[32]

Mulvey's discussion, in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) as a parody of the cinematic situation, is specifically relevant to the instances of the convergence between masculine figures and cinematic machinery identified by H.D. In *Rear Window*, according to Mulvey, the character of Jeffries (played by James Stewart) adopts a powerful voyeuristic position as he watches his girlfriend Lisa (Grace Kelly) through a telephoto lens in the apartment opposite in a way that is equivalent to the situation of the film spectator. Jeffries, a photo-journalist by profession, is confined temporarily to a wheelchair. This disability, Mulvey remarks, 'puts him squarely in the position of the cinema audience' by binding him to his seat (1992, 31). However Jeffries' ownership of the lens (he is, as Mulvey writes, a 'maker of stories and captor of images,' 1992, 31), also places him in the position of the filmmaker. Thus the camera lens makes up for the insufficiency of the wheelchair-bound spectator-equivalent by giving him the power of the controlling and investigating camera-eye.

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[32] The imagery of the heavy footfall of soldiers is also a recurrent motif of 'Murex,' the second part of *Palimpsest*,. pp. 95 - 172, in which the repetition of 'feet, feet, feet' indicates the massed deaths of the Great War.

Jeffries' position recalls the description of Macpherson in the *Borderline* pamphlet, in which Macpherson's use of the camera as a prosthetic eye enables him to achieve a masterful, aggressive sufficiency. Equally, in 'Joan of Arc' H.D. gives another instance of a male filmmaker augmented by the mechanical technology of the camera and it is interesting to note also that the combative terminology of the *Borderline* pamphlet is reiterated. She writes:

> This great Dane 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? (1928/1998h, 132).

The description of Macpherson as cybernetically welded to the camera, his bodily eye transformed into a weapon of war, and the portrayal of the slicing, slashing movements of the camera controlled by Dreyer cutting into the spectator, lay bare the mechanisms by which the masculine gaze is transformed into a powerful defining agent. H.D.'s depiction is therefore strikingly similar to Mulvey's analysis of the masculine exploitation of the techniques of filming and editing to produce 'an illusion cut to the measure of desire' (1992, 32-33).

Despite the very interesting crossovers between H.D.'s and Mulvey's approaches to the dominance of a male perspective in film (partially explicable by the fact that both proceed from a broadly Freudian framework), I do not mean to suggest that the similarities of H.D.'s critique to Mulvey's more contemporary analysis constitutes 'proof' of a universal truth about cinema. Mulvey's argument that women film-viewers have no other option than to occupy a male spectator position is certainly too generalized, and unless one concedes that masochism is a universal feminine trait, the supremacy of a sadistic-voyeuristic male gaze cannot account for the enduring pleasures found by women at the cinema. Thus,

feminists studying film in the 1980s (including Mulvey herself) were motivated to 'rescue women from total silence and victimhood,' in Jackie Stacey's words (1994, 20), and the attempt was made to theorize a female gaze drawing on, for example, concepts of the masquerade and a mobile spectator position.[33]

However, all of these approaches, which are based on psychoanalytic operations, attempt to theorize a way in which film texts construct a generic female spectator position, in other words to devise a theory of identification and affect which would be applicable to all female viewers. Partly as a result of my personal discomfort with universalising theories about women (and indeed men) and partly as a practical result of engaging on this study of one particular female viewer (namely H.D.) I find this approach unacceptable and partial, and I am in agreement with Jackie Stacey who argues that 'it is only by combining theories of the psychic dimensions of cinematic spectatorship with analyses that are socially located that the full complexity of the pleasures of the cinema can be understood' (1994, 33), indeed it is this methodology that has guided my project as a whole.

Having demonstrated the many similarities of H.D.'s critique of film to Mulvey's statement of 1975, and suggested some of the flaws in Mulvey's argument, I shall now consider the value of H.D.'s approach in feminist terms and determine whether her analysis of a male gaze in film shares the same faults as Mulvey's. Firstly, does H.D. universalize the dominance of a male gaze in film? The answer to this would have to be no, since many of H.D.'s assessments of the quality of the various films discussed in *Close Up* are carried out on the basis of the differing extents to which the director (always male) has imposed his vision upon the female actress (and hence the spectator). On the rare occasions when a

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[33] See Doane (1982) and Mulvey (1993).

director merely facilitates the bodying forth on the screen of the inner essence of the actress, H.D. emphasizes and celebrates the lack of an enforced and heavy-handed act of definition on the part of the director, thus allowing the spectator to make a clairvoyant connection to a spiritual, transcendent truth via the actress's performance (as in the case of Garbo in *The Joyless Street* and Khokhlova in *By the Law*).

Furthermore, in the case of 'Joan of Arc' I would argue that H.D. responded to the degree of Dreyer's emphasis on a male visual perspective as a relatively unfamiliar phenomenon in the cinema. She describes *The Passion of Joan of Arc* as 'the first film of the many that I have consistently followed that I have drawn away from [...] [Dreyer's] is one film among all films, to be judged differently, to be approached differently,' and later, in conclusion, she writes 'the Jeanne d'Arc of the incomparable artist Carl Dreyer is in a class by itself. And that's the trouble with it. It shouldn't be' (1928/1998h, 132, 133). Thus H.D.'s objection to Dreyer's tactics suggests that she considered this approach, in which the male perspective is imposed to such an extreme and conspicuous degree, to be an exception.

Clearly, therefore, the actual, historical moment of H.D.'s film viewing had an impact upon her construction of a theory of gendered spectatorship. Of particular interest in connection with this point is Miriam Hansen's study of the cinema in the silent era, entitled *Babel and Babylon* (1991), in which Mulvey's concept of a male gaze is integrated with an historicized account of spectatorship. Hansen observes that an 'indirect mode of address that granted the viewer access to the diegesis from a position of voyeuristic immunity' (1991, 121) (what Mulvey refers to as the position of the 'invisible guest' 1992, 33) was a

concomitant of the 'classical style' of Hollywood film, and thus a historically specific phenomenon rather than a condition of the cinematic situation. The various conventions of the classical style gradually came to replace a direct address to an 'empirical viewer as a member of a plural, social audience,' which had pertained during the early period (1991, 121). As Hansen explains, early cinema often featured theatrical devices such as a lecturer, and exhibition programmes that were much more likely to vary according to the class or ethnicity of a particular, local, audience.

Hansen contends that the establishing of continuity editing (amongst other things) in the transitional period created a spectator as 'a hypothetical term of the film's discourse' and that this hypothetical spectator was male-identified by the conventions of erotic display of women already normalized at this period of cinema history (1991, 121). She points out the paradox that this male gaze or 'patriarchal hierarchy of vision which constitutes the man as agent and the woman as prime object and challenge of the gaze' (1991, 121) was adopted at time when women's attendance at the cinema and also the marketing ploys aimed at women by film companies and associated merchandisers were increasing dramatically. Her explanation of this paradox is that the 'patriarchal choreography of vision' was a reaction to the threatening incursion of women into the public sphere, including the cinema auditorium, in the silent period.

As I have suggested, Mulvey's characterization of the male gaze as an inevitable result of psychoanalytic processes goes much further than H.D.'s film critique as a whole. H.D. recognized the operation of a male gaze in some films and not others, and this position accords with Hansen's findings that the conventions of filmmaking were in a state of transition at this time. In connection

with this, it is important to point out that Hansen's analysis, like that of Mulvey's is exclusively concerned with Hollywood film. By and large, H.D. found examples of the elements she most despised (commercialism, inaccuracy, stereotypical representations of women and triviality of theme) in Hollywood productions. It is somewhat incongruous, therefore, that the film singled out by H.D. as exploiting the cinematic tricks of illusionistic narrative usually associated with Hollywood for the oppression of women (namely *Joan of Arc*) is in the tradition of European art cinema.

I have argued that H.D.'s writing on film does not designate the male gaze as a totalizing concept to the same extent as Mulvey's essay. The second main charge laid against Mulvey's argument is the lack of a theory of female spectatorship, or that, in other words, her essay suggests that all viewers were obliged to occupy a spectator position constructed as male. Turning to H.D.'s critique, it might be said that the body of writing on the cinema by H.D., which is certainly from a feminine perspective, amounts to the enactment of a female spectator position but this would be to misunderstand the concept of film spectatorship as it has developed in feminist studies. In the theoretical terrain occupied by Mulvey's critique, the term spectator does not refer to any actual audience member. H.D. was of course a real-life viewer, but my argument is that this review considers the way in which the film itself creates a spectator position through the content (and in this case especially) the technical aspects of its narration in a way which is comparable to current post-Lacanian feminist film theory. Therefore, the question at issue is whether H.D.'s critique can properly be said to theorize a female spectator position in addition to simply constituting the record of a particular woman's account of viewing certain films.

H.D.'s remarks in 'Joan of Arc' are cast alternately in the first person, and on behalf of the audience as a group (whether conceptualized as people in general or the 'baker's boy' and 'maid' and so on that she has observed in the auditorium on the occasion of seeing the film). The audience is not divided by H.D. into male versus female and no difference of response is indicated between either genders or classes (indeed, as already mentioned, the review is notable for its insistence on a common response across social divisions). There is no sense in which H.D. claims to speak for women as a group or offers her own responses as typical of women in general, indeed in the first two chapters of this study I emphasized the way in which her allegiance was to the modernist avant-garde in opposition to a sense of solidarity with other women. Therefore, the most that can be claimed, as Friedberg so accurately and usefully points out, is that H.D. 'did not differentiate between the male and female spectator, but she did describe the cinematic experience along the lines of a sexual division of power' (1983b, 283).

In conclusion, I believe that it is correct to say that H.D.'s description in 1928 of a collusion of looks in Dreyer's *Joan of Arc*, constituted an early theorization of a male gaze, but that, with regard to a theory of female spectatorship, H.D.'s and Mulvey's analyses are similarly lacking. Expressed in Mulvey's terms, H.D. is aware that the presentation of Joan by Dreyer 'builds the way she is to be looked at into the spectacle itself' (32). In other words, the editing and cinematic techniques conspire to enforce a particular viewer position and leave no alternative to the spectator. H.D., however, is a resisting viewer, militant and self-aware in her refusal to share in the voyeuristic gaze of the camera, refusing also to identify with the objectified woman herself. Therefore, despite being a passionate advocate of the artistic potential of film and at the same

time as recognizing Dreyer's work as a masterpiece, H.D.'s review records her decision not to see the film again (and there are parallels here, too, with Mulvey's call for a desertion of the mainstream cinema by feminists in favour of alternative filmmaking). Having determined that there is no spectator position available to her other than an enforced collusion with the objectifying male gaze, H.D. adamantly refuses to watch Dreyer's film again, for, as she writes, 'I can NOT watch this thing impartially' (1928/1998h, 132).

Nights and the operations of gender and power in frame narratives.

H.D.'s identification of (in Hansen's words) a 'patriarchal hierarchy of vision,' in 'Joan of Arc' brought to her attention the ways in which the technical apparatus of film could be deployed to determine and control the spectator's viewpoint and assessment of a central figure. Going beyond the surface alterations of Garbo's re-casting as a male fantasy figure that she had analysed in 'Beauty,' the spectacle of Falconetti as a (mis)representation of Joan is characterized by H.D. as disempowering to an even greater extent. I shall suggest that H.D.'s novella of 1935, *Nights*, in which a frame narrative is set up and subsequently questioned, continues in a literary form the same debate about male-determined portraits of women as that embarked upon in 'Joan of Arc' and other essays by H.D.

H.D.'s text *Nights* consists of two parts: a 'Prologue,' supposedly written by one John Helforth and 'Nights,' an unfinished, posthumous novel by another fictitious writer named Natalia Saunderson. Helforth is an acquaintance of the writer of the novel on account of his friendship with her sister-in-law, Renne (who has brought Natalia's manuscript to Helforth hoping that he will arrange for its publication). The 'Prologue' records Helforth's responses to the novel and to the

news of Natalia's death when skating on thin ice. Helforth, who is an aficionado of the new theories of 'Dr Frank of Vienna' carries out an extended psychoanalysis of Natalia, identifying the unconscious impulses behind her writing, her 'erotic experiments' and her death, which he believes to have been suicide.

The 'Prologue,' therefore, provides a version of events exclusively from the point of view of John Helforth, and replicates the dominance of a male perspective found by H.D. in *Joan of Arc*. However, the second section, 'Nights,' which is Natalia's unfinished novel, gives a version of events focalized from Natalia's perspective. 'Nights' is a sexually explicit account of twelve nights during Natalia's affair with a young man named David which occurs while her estranged husband Neil is pursuing a homosexual liaison abroad. Natalia's narrative breaks off with the news of Neil's imminent return to the household.

In her feminist analysis of the framing narratives of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), Naomi Jacobs (1986) examines the ways in which the layering of narratives can involve issues of authority and power, and the points she makes are highly relevant to the structure of *Nights*. Jacobs argues that the use of the frame narrative is a means of depicting and negotiating censorship, since the structure 'exemplifies a process necessary for both writer and reader, of passing through or going behind the official version of reality in order to approach a truth that the culture prefers to deny' (1986, 204), and she uses the analogy of the 'picture painted over a devalued older canvas' (1986, 207) as a description of the operation of Lockwood's narrative enclosing the tale of patriarchal abuse in *Wuthering Heights*. The figure of the palimpsest, an overwritten document in

which a previous script can still be detected beneath the more recent writing, is also an important and recurrent motif in H.D.'s work, and in *Nights*, the figure of the overwritten parchment is performed in the bi-partite structure of the novella itself, for the 'Prologue' is the public overwriting of the hidden, private text of 'Nights.'

Helforth's 'Prologue' is thus much more than an inert frame around Natalia's narrative, for as Jacobs writes of the Brontës' framing narratives, 'we cannot see or experience the buried reality of the "framed" story without first experiencing the "framing" narrative. There is no other way in' (1986, 207). The unique structure of 'Nights' provides for the layers of the palimpsest to be separated in order that the operations of patriarchal naming can be observed, as it were, in action. Thus it allows H.D. to replay and critique the gender arrangements she analysed in her review of Dreyer's *Joan*. Like the claustrophobic and overwhelming domination of Dreyer's interpretation of Joan, the values and judgements of Helforth form the only possible lens through which the reader can view Natalia in the 'Prologue,' and Natalia's own narrative, which follows it, is inevitably read in terms of Helforth's assessment of it.

In 'Joan of Arc,' H.D. does not hesitate to roundly accuse Dreyer of both malevolence and materialistic literalism, and the opinion of the implied author of *Nights* regarding the fictional Helforth would seem to be very similar. There are numerous clues in the text about Helforth's pomposity and narrowness. His rigid reliance on rationality and normality mark him as unreliable in assessing Natalia's extraordinary situation and personality, and his attitude towards her is a mixture of envy and fascination. He makes much of the fact that he, unlike Natalia, has to work for his living as a travelling salesman, and he quite plainly resents her

moneyed leisure. Added to this, he enviously recognizes in her an emotional courage that he himself lacks. To Helforth, Natalia's extravagant prose style, her various sexual liaisons and her flamboyant suicide all represent a dangerous as well as compelling excess.

It is made clear that Helforth has purged himself of sexual problems through psychoanalysis, and considers Natalia's unwillingness to do the same a weakness. He writes 'Renne and I could look at each other, both with a secret, grim sort of satisfaction. We have "resolved" our problem, definitely and scientifically — for what it's worth' (1986, 9). Helforth's use of the word 'worth' is very telling. He describes the language of psychoanalysis as 'the lingo of our counting house' (1986, 15) as if the insights of psychoanalysis were economic units insuring against emotional insolvency. In short, his view of the purpose of psychoanalysis is the patient's adaptation to social norms. H.D. satirizes the reductive and simplistic use of psychoanalytic concepts in the portrait of Helforth, the lay analyst, and in Renne who breezily recommends 'a good stiff spot of psycho-analysis' (1986, 46). Germane to this, is Naomi Jacobs proposition that the adoption of the personae of pompous narrators in texts by the Brontës, 'silence the dominant culture by stealing its voice [...] and exorcize the demon of conventional consciousness and male power by holding it up to ridicule' (208), for H.D.'s ventriloquism of the voice of the amateur psychologist Helforth, accomplishes exactly this.

It should be pointed out that H.D. scholarship is by no means united in condemnation of the values represented by Helforth. Dianne Chisholm describes Helforth in *Nights* as 'an ideal reader of female psychology' (1992, 83). Chisholm elects to carry out an autobiographical reading of H.D.'s text, and casts

Helforth as a compensatory fantasy figure who, unlike Havelock Ellis, the friend and mentor who was unappreciative of the manuscript of H.D.'s *Notes on Thought and Vision* when it was presented to him, is 'daring enough to recognize the demonic element in [Natalia's] writing' (1992, 83).

Another approach to the figure of Helforth in *Nights* is to be found in Susan Friedman's study of H.D.'s prose, *Penelope's Web*. Friedman produces evidence to support the fact that John Helforth had a kind of whimsical imaginary existence for H.D. herself. She quotes certain passages in letters by H.D. to Bryher, in one of which H.D. writes that she 'screams with mirth' at her invention of John Helforth, whose function is to 'comment morally on the lapses of the late H.D. It makes me laugh so' (1990, 42). Despite the fascinating and rather alarming possibility that *Nights* might be merely a light-hearted work mocking the author's own failings, I feel sure that this does not preclude the possibility that the figure of Helforth has other much broader implications.

Significantly, the 'Prologue,' which appears first in the text, was in fact composed after Natalia's narrative and following H.D.'s own experience of being psychoanalysed by Freud, and the depiction of Helforth, as a disciple of pychoanalysis, would seem to encode those aspects of the new science that most irked H.D. The intervening period between the composition of the two parts of *Nights* (Natalia's narrative dates from 1931 and the 'Prologue' was written in 1934) also saw the publication of Freud's lecture 'Femininity,' his most extreme statement of the female castration complex. In 'Femininity' Freud suggested that a woman's desire to 'carry on an intellectual profession' might be recognized as a 'sublimated modification' of penis envy (1933/1960, 125). Similarly, Helforth characterizes Natalia's writing as merely a neurotic symptom caused by the denial

of her castrated condition as a woman. He dwells on the image of Natalia 'dallying with a pencil' as a penis substitute and asks 'if she had been "happy" [...] would she, I ask you, have rushed, after each visit of David Leavenworth to her room, or her visits to his room, to a pad and pencil, to jot down the experience?'(1986, 25).

If Helforth and his overly literal application of Freudian dogma is indeed the 'target' of the novella, it might be expected that Natalia's testimony would provide indications of the flaws in the rigid, patriarchal application of psychoanalysis. Surprisingly, however, female inferiority is also invoked in Natalia's narrative, and in some passages in 'Nights,' heterosexual intercourse is described by her in terms of a reiteration of castration. For instance, 'he [David] would break anew a wound, work into a cauterized wound, to renew and re-create' (1986, 65).

However, in 'Nights,' the memory of Neil's sensitivity and gentleness is sharply distinguished from David's oppressive masculinity, and therefore suggests that the lack that Natalia experiences has far more to do with grief at the loss of Neil himself than the deep seated biological inferiority (i.e. castration) which is identified by Helforth in the 'Prologue' as the source of her problems. Thus in *Nights*, the modernist technique of multiple narrators and perspectives, allied to the older convention of the frame narrative which was a staple of the Gothic, is employed to raise questions about the veracity of a male 'authority' on female sexuality.

H.D.'s struggle to resist the authority of Sigmund Freud and his work on the issue of female inferiority has been explored by various studies of H.D. and most fully by Susan Friedman in *Psyche Reborn* (1981). In the broadest sense,

Freud's daring investigations into dreams and the unconscious were greatly enabling for H.D. and it would be wrong to regard Helforth as a straightforward fictional counterpart to the subtle and sophisticated man H.D. described in her memoir *Tribute to Freud* (1985b). Suzanne Young makes the suggestion that H.D.'s satirical portrait of Helforth attacks not Freud himself so much as the popularizers of Freud's work in the 1920s and 1930s, and makes a convincing case by describing the growth of psychoanalysis as a commercial venture during this period.

Nonetheless there are many indications in *Tribute to Freud* that H.D. was disappointed with Freud's own denial of a spiritual dimension. For instance H.D.'s emphasis on Freud's conceptualization of his discoveries in psychoanalysis as striking oil (1985b, 18), insinuate that she suspects him to be limited by materialistic and even commercialist tendencies which could be compared to those of the fictitious Helforth. Indeed, returning to the terms of H.D.'s attack upon Dreyer, the disagreement on spiritual matters, the 'argument implicit in our very bones' between herself and Freud to which H.D. refers in *Tribute to Freud* (1985b, 13), could be compared to the same conflict between her own and Dreyer's conceptions of Joan of Arc, for H.D. sought to challenge the overly-materialistic world-views of both men.

One particular aspect of *Nights* more than any other encourages me to place it in the context of H.D.'s essay on *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, for the novella contains accounts of Natalia's visionary experiences of a female goddess. Natalia's religious quest for the revelation of her deity takes the form of the pursuit of sexual ecstasy through masturbation. In one account of meeting her 'high-powered deity' (1986, 51), Natalia receives a vision in an abalone shell of a

woman in a temple bearing carvings of 'no known hieroglyph' (1986, 55). The challenge set by Natalia's deity is to hold to the truth that '*the dream is greater than the reality*' (1986, 88).

Thus, both Natalia of 'Nights,' and H.D.'s conception of Joan of Arc, are mystics seeking a spiritual vision, and in both cases the woman 'saint' is countered by a rationalistic masculine authority figure. The characterization of Helforth's utilitarian approach to Natalia's visions can be compared, therefore, to H.D.'s discomfort with Dreyer's rational and secular representation of Joan of Arc, and a parallel can be drawn between H.D.'s struggle in *Close Up* to resist the authoritative portrait of Joan by Carl Dreyer (which she believes to be limited, reductive and demeaning) and the radical questioning of the system of values represented by Helforth in the text of *Nights*.

There are many resemblances between the two male-centred approaches to these ambiguous female figures. The 'Prologue' of *Nights* resembles Dreyer's film about Joan of Arc in taking the form of a trial deposition, in which legalistic terms are used. For example Helforth says 'I do not want to bring up Natalia, as a witness in this case' (1986, 6). Likewise, the majority of the scenes in *The Passion of Joan of Arc* are examinations of Joan by the judges, for, as Dreyer later confirmed the approach he took was to adopt 'the technique of the official report' (Nash, 1977, 53). Also, Helforth's obsessive return to the circumstances of Natalia's death, as he imagines it in every last detail, mirrors the sadistic concentration in Dreyer's film, noted by H.D., upon the pain and anguish of Joan's final hours to the exclusion of any references to her life story up to this point. Finally, the comical misapplication of psychoanalysis in *Nights* suggests that 'salesmen' like Helforth were using the insights of Freudian psychoanalysis

as a blunt instrument to impose normative behaviour upon women, as, in a similar way, Dreyer exploits the spectacle of the Inquisitors' trial and burning of Joan of Arc, in which the tenets of Christianity were applied in a perverted way, to humiliate an heroic woman.

Helforth also appears to be guilty of the same charges levelled by H.D. against Dreyer in a salacious approach to female physicality. Helforth's prurient fascination with Natalia involves the reader in a voyeuristic exercise, as he whets the reader's appetite by promising that the sex scenes of 'Nights' go even further than the explicitness of the genre of 'pig-sty erotic realism' (1986, 29). The suggestion that a pornographic treat awaits the reader is enhanced by the exhibitionism that Helforth ascribes to Natalia. He writes, 'it was as if she said, I know this is true, I know it is no good, but look at me, I am doing it. Why should she have wanted us to look at her?' Helforth's determination to treat Natalia as a spectacle, and share this perspective with other readers is analogous to the contract of looks described by Laura Mulvey in her writing on film. Helforth, like the male protagonists of the films Mulvey describes, is 'the bearer of the look of the spectator' and Natalia, the woman on display.

Why, then, should H.D. seek to replicate in her fiction the dominance of the views and position of authority of just such a materialistic and misogynistic judge of women, in the form of Helforth? The answer may be found in the fact that, as I have been emphasizing, although H.D. accords the 'Prologue' the pre-eminent position in the text as the frame narrative that conditions the reader's reception of the central narrative, she does not present Helforth as an unquestioned authority. In addition to the tone of Helforth's section, he is also an unreliable narrator in a modernist sense. Surprisingly, many critical views of the

novella appear to ignore the full implications of this. For instance, it is only on Helforth's authority that Natalia's death is presented to the reader as intentional suicide. Friedman is convinced that Natalia does indeed plan to kill herself on the evidence that the novel stops after an account of the twelfth night and that the thirteenth card of the Major Arcana of the Tarot, upon which Natalia has been meditating, is 'Death,' but Natalia's death is never directly recounted. All the reader has to go on is Helforth's interpretation of the events related to him by Renne (who was not present at the time of Natalia's death). Equally, it is Helforth who insists that Natalia's novel is autobiographical. Without falling into the error of imagining Natalia to have an independent existence outside of the text, it is nonetheless possible to suggest that Helforth's reading of Natalia's novel is misconceived in a way typical of the incorrect representations by male authors (and filmmakers) of women and that this was precisely H.D.'s point.

By the same token, the inclusion of Natalia's narrative raises the possibility of gaining access to Natalia's own version of events without the filtering, misogynist judgements of Helforth. As if in response to Dreyer's refusal to depict Joan's inner life and visions, H.D. depicts the spiritual researches of her 'saint' from an unvarying interior perspective and the second part of *Nights* purports to offer the reader access to Natalia's apparently uncensored thoughts, desires, sensations and feelings. Precisely such privileged access is also omitted in another film of the late twenties, *The Diary of a Lost Girl*, by G.W. Pabst, (the director of *The Joyless Street*). In *The Diary of a Lost Girl*, the central character is a young girl (played by Louise Brooks) who is seduced, abandoned, rejected by her family and forced to give up her baby. Her diary features as a plot device in the film but the contents of the diary, in other words the perspective of the woman

herself, is not disclosed in the film. It is possible to speculate that, by placing the autobiographical novel by Natalia at the centre of *Nights*, H.D.'s text could constitute a response to the gaps and silences of Pabst's film. In the manipulation of the narrative of *Nights*, H.D. presents both the hegemony of the male gaze and the possibility of evading its operations by presenting the diary of the 'lost girl' herself.

However, H.D.'s complex text does not suggest that access to women's buried and misrepresented experiences is easy or straightforward, and this is underlined by the fact that H.D. published *Nights* under a male pseudonym using the same name as that of the fictional character of the 'Prologue,' John Helforth. The adoption of a male pseudonym was itself unusual for H.D., although she regularly published her prose work under different female or androgynous names. H.D.'s choice of an explicitly male name for the author of *Nights* seems to me to underline even more strongly that H.D. was attempting in this work to examine and deconstruct the male gaze in the broadest sense of the term. In the same way that H.D. signalled the extreme bias at work in Dreyer's presentation of Joan, the reader of *Nights* is led to question and weigh up the extent to which women's experiences are commonly defined and presented by masculine viewpoints. Therefore, although, as I have been arguing, the inclusion of Natalia's novel might be seen as an attempt to usurp the authority of Helforth's 'Prologue,' H.D.'s choice of Helforth's name as the author of the whole work indicates that ultimately, women's experiences are habitually, in our culture and art, 'authored' by men.

In contrast to the line of thinking championed by the 'images of women' critics, H.D.'s text does not settle on the possibility of identifying a false and a

true representation of the female figure, Natalia. It is too simple to suggest that *Nights* presents an attempt to give the 'truth' ('Nights') and also to demonstrate its perversion by masculine bias (the 'Prologue'). Therefore, although I have indicated the possibility that Natalia's narrative might represent a kind of corrective to set beside Helforth's distorted explanation, the figure of Natalia recedes endlessly behind layers of fictionality and any truths that are present are limited by the narrative perspective and situation through which they are conveyed. As I shall be proposing more than once in this study, H.D.'s fictional work takes up an issue treated with relative simplicity in *Close Up* and develops it into a complex meditation on the inter-relation between gender, power and art.

The sexual politics of filmic narration in 'Kora and Ka.'

I have suggested that H.D.'s response to the dominance of the male gaze in *Joan of Arc* is matched by the use of a frame structure in *Nights*, for in the novella, Helforth's definitive account of Natalia is placed in counterpoint to another, woman-centred, narrative. H.D.'s comments on the gender differential in owner and object of the gaze in 'Joan of Arc' are also of relevance to the following discussion of 'Kora and Ka,' but in a different way. I based my comparison of *Nights* and 'Joan of Arc' on the wider and more generalized meaning of the term point of view, namely an emotional and philosophical standpoint. In 'Kora and Ka,' on the other hand, the debate about gender and point of view is conducted at the micro level of narrative focalization and therefore the more limited meaning of the term point of view, referring to visual perspective, will be the more apt. The crucial difference between the two texts is that while *Nights* enacts a critique of masculine authority in its bi-partite structure, 'Kora and Ka,' depicts the male gaze itself as unstable and fractured.

As in *Nights*, the main character in 'Kora and Ka' is called John Helforth, but there are no indications that this is the same figure as in the other (later) text. Helforth is experiencing a crisis of identity associated with his masculinity. The Great War, which has taken place ten years previously to the setting of the story, is named as the cause of his dysfunctional state. Helforth did not go to the war (being too young) but had to endure the death of his two brothers, sacrificed, as Helforth sees it, to his mother's lust for warfare. Helforth's neurosis is therefore a form of over-compensation, for, as Trudi Tate (1997) has noted, he suffers from the symptoms of war trauma or shell shock, even though he has not seen active service.

Helforth suffers from the delusion that he is inhabited by a disembodied spirit which is described as 'that sort of shadow they used to call a Ka, in Egypt' (1991, 185). In ancient Egyptian religion, the Ka (a concept separate from and in addition to the soul, Ba) is a double of the self which awaits the individual in the hereafter, and must be propitiated. E.A. Wallis Budge describes the Ka as follows:

> it was born with a man, it remained within him, usually inoperative, and survived him at death. It never left the body in the grave or tomb, and the offerings which were made in the halls of the tombs in all periods were intended to maintain its existence (1904, 163)

Helforth conceives of himself as harbouring or in fact being a Ka because, as Robert Spoo points out, he suffers from 'survivor's guilt.' Spoo writes of Helforth: 'he feels that he merely "ghosts" for his dead brothers. He is in a sense *their* ka, a shadow fed by his own sorrow and mother hatred' (1997, xi). In a further twist to the Egyptian concept, Helforth believes that he shares the Ka with the main female character, Kora Morrell, who appears to be his lover. Unable to

prove his masculinity in warfare, Helforth's status as a non-combatant places him in a 'feminine' position, and this is connected to his irrational belief that he is possessed by a feminine Ka.

Of particular interest in this text is the way in which Helforth's delusions are enacted in the narrative processes used. In the opening passages, objects and people are perceived by Helforth, but are narrated by the voice of the Ka. The Ka speaks in the first person, observing the body of Helforth from a seemingly exterior view:

> The hand of Helforth lies affectedly across the grey knee of the lounge suit. The clothed knee is a dummy knee in a window. The shod feet are brown leather lumps. They rest in the grass like amputated dead feet. [...] I, this Ka, cannot see the face of Helforth (1991, 185).

Because the Ka cannot see Helforth's face and receives visual data through Helforth's own eyes, the reader gradually realizes that the idea of the Ka as a separate being is a product of Helforth's neurotic imagination, but to the traumatized Helforth, the Ka has an independent existence and is aggressive and threatening towards him. It wishes to usurp his vision with its own particular way of seeing: an obsessive gaze focusing on detail of shape and colour. Under the influence of the Ka, objects loom large and inappropriately and spread across Helforth's visual field in the manner of a cinematic close up.

Eventually, at a later point in the narrative, the Ka recedes, and Helforth is at last both the speaker and the seer. This change occurs in a pivotal sentence in which the narrator, Ka (who, up to this point has referred to Helforth as 'he') is suddenly replaced by Helforth narrating in the first person as 'I': 'John Helforth, staring at sun-serpent on barn floor, stood up. I stood up. My legs were stiff' (1991, 191). Helforth is able to maintain a unified sense of identity for a large

part of the middle of the narrative, in which the psychic origins of his trauma are investigated by sharing with Kora the memories of his dead brothers, and his mother's attitude to war. However, the strain proves too great and the Ka again briefly takes control. Without warning, the narration reverts once more to referring to Helforth in the third person: 'colour has rotated in his mind.' Just as suddenly, this is followed in the very next paragraph by the same words repeated in the first person: 'colour has rotated in my mind,' indicating that Helforth's mental clarity has returned (1991, 202). The conclusion of the story involves another episode of possession by the Ka, but as a kind of resolution to Helforth's disorder, as I shall later examine more closely.

I want now to go on to suggest that the techniques used by H.D. to depict Helforth's troubled condition share the same mechanism and relate to similar psychic fears as do certain features of filmic narration. Specifically, I propose that 'Kora and Ka' replicates in prose technique the effects and inconsistencies of the cinematic point-of-view shot, and in doing so, the text elaborates on issues of spectatorship and subjectivity discussed in H.D.'s essay on *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. For, I would argue, Helforth's delusion of being taken over by the Ka is analogous to the subjective shot, which forces the viewer to inhabit another's visual position. Paul Coates states that, 'cinema fosters an ambiguous sexuality in its spectators — the putatively sadistic gaze of the male viewer rendered masochistic ("feminized") through subordination to another person's choice of angle and shot duration' (1991, 37). In other words, the male gaze involves the risk of a loss of control. Helforth's distressing condition partakes of this anxiety and his mental disease manifests in the precariousness of his mastery of the visual

field. Helforth's illness therefore takes a comparable form to that of the film spectator's submission to another's subjectivity.

The subjective shot is a technique especially associated with Weimar cinema in the early 1920s. As Thomas Elsaesser states, 'in German silent films the authority, origin and control of the act of narration was constantly foregrounded and in a manner that had no equivalent in contemporary silent cinema of other countries' (1984, 65). Gerald Mast explains the implications behind the innovatory adoption of the subjective shot by Weimar film-makers:

> the Germans realised that [...] the camera, rather than taking the stance of an impartial observer, could itself mirror the perceptions, thoughts and feelings of a character. [...] To use an analogy with the novel [...] the camera, like the pen, could narrate a story in the first person as well as the third (1996, 151).

The most famous early exploitation of the expressive (indeed Expressionist) potential of the subjective shot occurs in F. W. Murnau's *Der Letzte Mann*, known as *The Last Laugh* (1924), which, importantly, is also a text about a crisis of masculinity. *The Last Laugh* tells the story of an ageing hotel porter (played by Emil Jannings) who is forced because of infirmity to give up his job and the social prestige that goes with it. The film is shot in a fluid and virtuoso fashion by Karl Freund (with Robert Baberske) using a mobile or 'unchained' camera. Mast writes:

> Freund's camera tracks and swings and tilts and twirls. [...] The camera actually serves as the emotional mirror of the old man's soul: sometimes its lens becomes his own eyes [...] the camera photographs the way the world looks and feels to him, the way he responds to it (1996, 162).

Hence, when Jannings reads his letter of dismissal (he is in fact demoted to lavatory attendant) the letter is photographed as a blur, and this is a direct

representation of the way that the letter appears to him with tears clouding his vision.

The prominent shifts between external and internal focalization in 'Kora and Ka' create close equivalences to the technique of subjective point of view in the cinema. For, as Celestino Deleyto points out, a subjective shot must be intercut with external views of the same character, because there is a tendency for the film-viewer to ascribe an objective perspective unless continuously reminded otherwise. Deleyto explains, 'film, unlike the novel, needs the alternation or simultaneity of external and internal focalisation in order to express subjectivity effectively' (1996, 224). This alternated narration is precisely the effect achieved by the description of Helforth, first from the perspective of the Ka and then from a first person point of view.

A demonstration of the process of construction as well as the destabilising effects of the subjective shot occurs at the beginning of Pabst's *The Love of Jeanne Ney* (1927). In the opening shot the leg of a man is seen as if a lifeless object and, as the camera pans out, the man himself (the owner of the leg) comes into view. This is remarkably similar to the start of 'Kora and Ka.' As already described, the I/eye of the text registers objects first as neutral, disconnected items and then allows them to cohere into parts of the body belonging to the narrator. Thus the leg and hand translates into Helforth himself at the point at which the reader becomes aware of the 'subjective shot' being used. Although it is not my primary aim to put forward specific films as possible source texts for H.D.'s fictional work, the close correspondence between the opening scene of 'Kora and Ka' and the beginning of *The Love of Jeanne Ney* is exceptionally striking. Since H.D. refers to the film in 'An Appreciation,' it is certain that she knew it, and in

this instance it seems very likely that a particular film had a strong, formal, influence on H.D.'s fictional work.

As well as these very precise, technical continuities between 'Kora and Ka' and German silent film, there are thematic links that connect the texts. Notoriously, Siegfried Kracauer (1947) proposed that the narratives of Weimar film were a foreshadowing of the rise of fascism and Lotte Eisener's investigation of the Expressionist features of Weimar films (1969) was similarly convinced of a national malaise finding its expression in this art form. Patrice Petro's invaluable feminist study of Weimar cinema does not discount the idea of an Oedipal crisis underlying both Weimar films and the rise of fascism but questions both the lack of a feminine spectator perspective in Kracauer's thesis and his mistake of 'drawing a homology between fictional character and national audience' (1989, 12). Petro concurs with Kracauer, however, in asserting that 'Weimar films tend to focus on a destabilized male identity, rendering it passive or "feminine" ' (1989, 34). Furthermore, she notes in Weimar films of the fantastic genre, the same association between instability and fractured vision as I have been emphasizing in 'Kora and Ka:' 'the theme of the double or spilt self is commonly employed to explore the crisis of self in terms of a crisis of vision' (1989, 33).

One particular Weimar film about a supernatural double, *The Student of Prague* (1927), directed by Henrik Galeen, was reviewed by H.D. for *Close Up*. The film depicts the demise of Baldwin, a student who sells his mirror reflection to the devil, and is thereafter haunted and pursued by his own double. The film was a re-make of a version of 1913 and the screenplay was written by Galeen and Hanns Ewers, derived from Edgar Allan Poe's short story 'William Wilson.' Galeen's film was one among many tales about *doppelgangers* in the German

tradition, and this group of narratives was analysed at length by Otto Rank, an author well-known to H.D., in a study of 1925/1971 entitled *The Double*. Rank's study brings together tales from German folklore and literature, the 1913 film version of *The Student of Prague* and the Egyptian religious concept of the Ka (along with many other examples) in a psychoanalytic study of the theme, and the book's combination of the same strands that are present in 'Kora and Ka,' raises the possibility of a connection between Rank's and H.D.'s texts.

Rank emphasizes the element of pursuit by the double as a common feature throughout the narratives. The uncanny danger of capture and annihilation by a shadow other is examined by H.D. in her discussion of Galeen's film, as well as being a feature in 'Kora and Ka.' In the review, H.D. describes the dynamics of the film in terms which evoke Helforth's struggle with his shadow self, the Ka. She writes, 'the spectre grows in distinction, in power apparently. The man diminishes. [...] Baldwin his begetter, is hounded by this Frankenstein' (1927/1998f, 123). A struggle for dominance recalling the psychological contest between Helforth and his Ka also occurs in the film, in which, eventually, as H.D. records, 'it is the man now who is completely at the will of the shadow' (1927/1998f, 124).

H.D.'s admiration for the way in which Baldwin and his double were portrayed is likely to have had some bearing on her own version of the *doppelganger* theme. She points out that there are crucial differences between Galeen's film and Robert Louis Stevenson's tale of a *doppelganger* in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, to which the film had already been likened. While Doctor Jekyll 'shuddered in horror at the sodden parody of himself that Hyde presented,' H.D. writes that, 'this Jeykll and Hyde are alike elegant, alike poised, alike at home in

the world of fact and in the supernatural' (1927/1998f, 121). Similarly. Helforth's Ka, although predatory, is no exaggerated parody of the man, and, although H.D.'s story is unsettling to read, this is a result of the intellectual demands posed by the shifting narration and not because it is a tale of Gothic horror calculated to chill the spine. Thus H.D.'s treatment of the theme of the double owes more to the elegant and economical presentation in *The Student of Prague* than to the sensational literary tradition of which Stevenson was a part.

Even more interesting are the ways in which the presentation of Baldwin and his ghostly other self can be compared to characteristics of the narrative style of 'Kora and Ka.' For instance, H.D.'s review proves that she attended closely to the new cinematic tricks allowing Baldwin and his mirror self to meet 'face to face under a great tree' (1927/1998f, 122). The visual doubling of *The Student of Prague*, in which man and spectre confront each other on the screen, is an ocular equivalent of the way in which Helforth refers to himself in the third person in 'Kora and Ka.' In addition, at one point in Galeen's film, the perspective of the camera seems to be that of the spectre himself, and this correlates with the textual dramatisation of the Ka's eery gaze.

Parallels may also be found in the films mentioned with one of the dramatic scenes in 'Kora and Ka.' At a crucial point in *The Love of Jeanne Ney*, Brigitte Helm as Helen writhes on the floor in her grief after the murder of her father and this is very reminiscent of a sequence towards the end of 'Kora and Ka' in which Kora, crying, sinks to the ground. Equally, women are depicted in prostrate, horizontal states of despair and extremis in *The Student of Prague*. Lyduschka, the flower-seller, sinks to the floor after she is thrust away by Baldwin, and Margaret, the heiress whom he aspires to marry, (twice) falls to the

ground. However, despite the fact that direct correspondences of 'Kora and Ka' with specific films such as Galeen's and Pabst's are very interesting, I am principally concerned with broader issues of gender and narrative perspective, to which I now return.

To reiterate, Helforth's delusion involves the splitting of the self into narrating and perceptual selves: the Ka narrates what Helforth sees. Thus the distinction set out by Gérard Genette, in his book *Narrative Discourse* (1980), between a narrator who 'speaks' and a focalizer who 'sees' is particularly appropriate to use when describing the narrative strategies of 'Kora and Ka.' Genette insists that the focalizer can and should be distinguished from the narrator (although these might sometimes be the same, as in the usual form of first person narrative). For, as Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan explains, 'a person (and, by analogy, a narrating agent) is [...] capable of undertaking to tell what another person sees or has seen. Thus, speaking and seeing, narration and focalization, may, but need not be, attributed to the same agent' (1983, 72).

Using this distinction between narration and focalization, it can be stated that the central conflict of 'Kora and Ka' is a contest for the control of focalization between Helforth and the Ka, his dark feminine shadow. Thus, the shifting narrative point of view of 'Kora and Ka' amounts to a struggle between genders. It seems clear to me that the gender of the focalizer is a primary issue within the sexual politics of this text and it might be assumed that such a phenomenon had been investigated within narratological studies of prose. Surprisingly, however, the study of narratology has been, until very recently, a formalist exercise, concerned almost exclusively with taxonomy and rejecting contextual elements of narrative such as gender, race or sexuality. For example,

in one of the earliest attempts to re-draw the 'grid' of narratology to incorporate feminism, Susan Lanser declared that 'nowhere in modern narrative theory is there mention of the author's or narrator's gender as a significant variable'(1981, 46).

Since that time there have been a series of feminist narratological studies, and some of these have remarked upon the equivalences between cinematic and literary narrative strategies in a way that is especially productive for my work.[34] For instance, Robyn Warhol asserts that the gaze in film and focalization in prose texts are 'similar in their functions' and hence might also 'resemble each other in their potential for carrying connotations of gender' (1996, 25). Therefore, drawing on feminist narratology, it can be suggested that the instability of the focalization in 'Kora and Ka' enacts a critique of the social construction of masculinity, and that this is achieved by techniques that recall cinematic spectator positions.

Throughout the story, Helforth strives to resist colonisation by the Ka, which is a relentless pursuer in the mould of the literary and cinematic double. The Ka threatens to take over Helforth's focal position, boasting that 'the sun will sear Helforth's face away and let me come. His eyes will go blank, staring straight into the light and mine will see' (1991, 186). When Helforth's intermittent mental collapses allow the Ka to win possession of the position of focalizer, it is only by an assertion of masculine will that Helforth banishes the Ka and once more regains control over his visual sense. In addition, the Ka tries to prevent Helforth from narrating his own experience. The situation of being forced

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[34] In addition to Jacobs (1986) and Warhol (1991/1996), discussed below, see, for example, Lanser (1981), Newman (1997) and Mezei (1996).

to occupy an alien and resisted point of view is analogous to the experience of the female viewer co-opted by the male gaze and it is possible that here H.D. replays with a vengeance, (and with reversed genders) the scenario of her enforced collusion with Dreyer's gaze at the suffering, demeaned Joan of Arc.

As well as being a malevolent force intent on usurping Helforth's vision, the Ka threatens to undermine his gender identity, and thus the Ka could be viewed as a metaphor for gender instability. In the course of strenuously resisting the Ka on Kora's instructions, Helforth declares that he will suppress any connotations of a feminine aspect within him by adopting a stereotypical masculine identity: 'I will to be John Helforth, an Englishman and a normal brutal one,' (1991, 194). Although at some points in the narrative, Helforth accepts the interdependence of his masculine and feminine selves, once explaining, 'I am Kora, Kora is Helforth and the Ka is shared between us' (1991, 193), Helforth views the Ka as a threat to his masculinity. Instead of reading this as evidence of Helforth's instability in his masculine gender role, Susan Friedman interprets the mystical connection that binds Helforth to Kora and to the Ka, in a different way. She writes: 'Kora is both Helforth's protection against the Ka as a disease and the projection of the Ka as soul into a female body. Kora is the female side of Helforth's bisexuality' (1990, 268). However, rather than a modern and liberal conception of bisexuality, Helforth's view that his inner self (his soul) belongs in a female body accords more closely with the notions of the late nineteenth century sexologists, such as Havelock Ellis who characterized homosexuals as inverts: individuals born, tragically, into a body of the wrong sex.

Whether the Ka is interpreted as a metaphor for inversion, or (as I am arguing) the oppressive demands of conforming to the social construction of

masculinity, a reconciliation of Helforth's conflicting selves occurs at the conclusion of the story. In the final scene, Kora and Helforth share a meal. Although there is no suggestion that the characters have passed out of life, the scene calls to mind descriptions of the individual's union with the Ka after death found in Egyptian hieroglyphics. James Henry Breasted describes the expected course of events, 'the ka assists the deceased. [...] He forages for the deceased and brings him food that they both may eat together, and like two guests sit together at the same table' (1959, 53). In a final visitation by the spectre, Helforth feels the Ka across his forehead, but this time receives through it a healing revelation of Kora as Persephone and himself as the risen god Dionysus. The Ka is now integrated in a different, more complete way with Helforth and is no longer a threat to his masculine identity, but instead a healing power. Indeed, there have been clues throughout the story that the Ka is not destructive at all but can potentially save Helforth from the hell of his traumatized state.

In the early parts of the story, Helforth's neurosis had seemed terrifying to him precisely because it threatened to rob him of his ability to objectify; to make a firm distinction between himself and the objects and individuals around him, but in the last lines of the text, Helforth ceases to have a sense of his own separate or even living existence. He remembers an earlier encounter with Kora and having already reconceptualized his brother Larry's sacrifice in the war as that of Dionysus, he states, enigmatically: 'I was then Larry and those others had no place then in any living landscape. Now we are Kore and the slain god...risen' (1991, 209). This resolution is certainly mysterious, but appears to involve Helforth's admission of weakness and co-dependence. Instead of his rejection of the feminine, whether in the form of a war-mongering mother or the waif-like

spirit of the Ka, he allows himself a vision of the past which includes his own vulnerability.

Finally, returning for the last time in this chapter to the issue of the dominance of a male perspective of women in cultural texts, it is noticeable that in 'Kora and Ka,' as in *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, the presentation of a suffering, objectified woman is repeatedly focalized through the male gaze. Kora is described always from the point of view of Helforth, the male narrator. For instance, a scene in which Kora collapses in tears is narrated entirely from Helforth's perspective, who is bemused by Kora's tears: 'Kora has been married ten years, has twice been a mother. I cannot imagine what has hurt her' (1991, 205), he says. Kora has a husband and children, from whom she is parted, but her dilemmas are eclipsed in the novella by Helforth's war trauma and the degree to which the story investigates Kora's situation is limited throughout by the dominance of Helforth's point of view (in both senses of focalization and of his understanding of her).

Thus, as Susan Friedman notes in her discussion of 'Kora and Ka' in *Penelope's Web*, 'the triumph of the mysteries at the end is Helforth's rebirth, not Kora's. She is silent, never a narrator, not even the center of consciousness' (1990, 270). Friedman's reading of this absence of the feminine perspective is that this text (and the Dijon novellas as a group) dramatize a growing mental breakdown experienced by H.D. leading her to depict her creative self as masculine and her feminine identity as under threat of destruction, erasure and silence. As in the case of *Nights*, I believe that H.D.'s deployment of the narrative situations in 'Kora and Ka' is a broad comment upon the position of women (although this does not of course rule out the possibility that it is, as Friedman

maintains, a psychodrama of her own troubled identity). Working from the evidence of the texts alone, and in conjunction with the *Close Up* reviews, I favour an alternative reading of 'Kora and Ka,' namely that the placing of Kora as the object of the narrative, the focalized and not the focalizer, effects a feminist protest. Helforth's 'stereotypically masculine' point of view is brought to bear on a female object, Kora, who is never the focal character.

Thus 'Kora and Ka' ascribes the subject position to men and the object position to women, the dominant relation between genders even in early, silent film. Instead of locating the perspective of narration in a female character, as in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* in which everything is filtered through Miriam, (the technique adopted in *Asphodel* and *Her*) H.D. chose in 'Kora and Ka' to deconstruct the male gaze. For although 'Kora and Ka' repeats the object positioning of female (Kora) by male surveyor (Helforth) deplored by H.D. in film, it shows this status quo continually undercut and destabilized by the shifting focalization between Helforth and the female Ka. In other words, the visual inconsistencies of the point of view shot are repeated in 'Kora and Ka' as narrative techniques which reveal the instability of masculine gender identity. The observation of relations between gender and spectatorship in films of the European tradition recorded in H.D.'s essays, would seem later to have found expression in her fictional work. She realized that cinema was one instance of what Teresa de Lauretis has described as 'technologies of gender' (1987). H.D.'s critique of the male gaze emerged in the deconstructed masculine discourse of *Nights*, and in the subversive and innovatory, cinematic, narrative style of 'Kora and Ka.'

Chapter Five: Greta Garbo: H.D.'s Helen of Troy.

H.D., Garbo, and Helen of Troy.

In the final two chapters of this study I shall argue that Garbo, and Garbo's screen image, provided H.D. with a prototype on which to base increasingly complex ideas about women, narrative and identity. Firstly I shall describe the ways in which elements of the legend of Helen of Troy became entangled with the star image of Greta Garbo, both in H.D.'s writing and as a component of Garbo's significance for the viewing public. The approach taken will be to place H.D.'s remarks on Garbo in *Close Up* alongside details of Garbo's screen career, especially the narratives of the films in which she appeared. H.D.'s comments on the construction of Garbo's star image will be considered in the light of judgements of Garbo by more recent critics and within paradigms from the field of star studies. Following this, the final chapter focuses on two fictional texts by H.D. which have particular connections with Garbo. It is my contention that the meditations on a Garbo-like figure in *The Usual Star* (1934b) and the extraordinary reworking of the figure of Helen of Troy in *Helen in Egypt* (1961/1985a), imply that the impact of Garbo upon H.D. is both more prolonged and more profound than has hitherto been acknowledged.

This is by no means the first study to reflect on the links between Garbo and H.D. Notably, Charlotte Mandel (1980) and, more recently, Cassandra Laity (1996), have discussed H.D.'s response to Garbo. In her book, *H.D. and the Victorian Fin de Siècle*, Cassandra Laity states that 'H.D. became aesthetically reattuned to the persona of the siren (of literature and film) during her immersion in Violet Hunt's biography of Elizabeth Siddal, *Wife of Rosetti*, and during her

simultaneous involvement with director Kenneth Macpherson and avant-garde cinema in the early 1930s' (1996, xvii). Hunt's biography (written in 1932) is a highly sentimentalized portrait of Siddal, the model who was employed by the Pre-Raphaelite painters, and married, after a tortuously long engagement, to Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Laity argues that H.D. received the screen image of Garbo in the context of the Decadent femme fatale of the late nineteenth century, expressed in the literary tradition of Swinburne and the visual images produced by the Pre-Raphaelites (including portraits based on Siddal). Laity writes, 'H.D.'s Garbo, like Siddal, conjured images of legendary enchantresses—Venus, Helen of Troy, the mermaid/siren' (1996, 145). I have not found Laity's emphasis on the Decadent tradition productive, however, in terms of studying H.D. and cinema, for, despite the exceptional instance of *A Fool There Was*, which originated precisely in a painting by Burne-Jones (see p. 121 above), the Decadent femme fatale is largely distinct from filmic representations of the femme fatale as vamp.

Furthermore, Laity does not address the degraded, popular tradition of the vamp which (as I shall go on to show) was the origin and controlling trope of Garbo's screen identity. Instead Laity restricts her discussion of Garbo as a vamp to the context of the Decadent tradition, arguing that H.D. reinterpreted this figure through an erotic female gaze. Thus, in effect, Laity's approach disregards the cinema by eliding the cinematic vamp with the Decadent femme fatale, whereas the focus of this study is on H.D.'s reception of Garbo specifically in the context of film.

Various scholars of H.D. have suggested that she felt a personal connection to Garbo. Laity points out the visual similarities between H.D.'s

performance as Astrid in *Borderline* and Garbo's characteristic screen appearance: 'H.D. herself played a frozen siren, Astrid [...] complete with Garbo-like make up, dark intensity and passionate (sometimes bloody) scenes' (1996, 145). In a similar vein, Susan Friedman (1990) speculates on the extent to which H.D. experienced a form of stardom at first hand, and raises the possibility of H.D.'s empathic identification with Garbo:

> Swept up in the experience of being a (private) 'star' fixed by the camera gaze of the director who was her lover, H.D. identified deeply with widely known stars of the silver screen like Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich and Elizabeth Bergner. She jokingly signed some of her letters to friends during this period with a star under her name (1990, 13).

Charlotte Mandel's groundbreaking analysis of H.D.'s responses to Garbo is also conducted in terms of Garbo's impact on H.D.'s self-image. Mandel writes, 'in the mirror images and in the screen eidolon, she [H.D.] saw herself as symbol, a source of Beauty's own statement as she created her art' (1980, 134). Mandel's article 'Garbo/Helen: the self-projection of beauty by H.D.,' links together H.D.'s revelatory experience of seeing Garbo on the screen, as recorded in 'Beauty,' with other instances of beautiful women in H.D.'s work. Mandel discusses the figure of Helen in H.D.'s poem of 1923 (1984b, 154-155), the character Hipparchia in the novel *Palimpsest* from 1926 and Hedyle in the 1927 novel *Hedylus* as well as Helen in *Helen in Egypt* and notes the repeated instances of silver imagery, of reflections in water and in mirrors, and of lustrous olive leaves which connects the descriptions of these women. She believes that H.D. reclaimed the image of the beautiful woman (including her own personal beauty) to function as a muse, stating that for H.D., the beautiful woman was a sign: 'the goddess-woman-beauty hieroglyph is the poet's identifying emblem of sacred meaning' (1980, 134).

Mandel's work provides the starting point for this investigation of Garbo and H.D., specifically, my research on H.D. and Garbo was inspired by Mandel's assertion that 'the image of a woman on the motion picture screen acted as a hieroglyphic element which later blended into the forms, rhythms and transmutations of her Helen-figure in *Helen in Egypt*' (1980, 128), and the exploration of the figure of Helen of Troy builds upon Mandel's statement that for H.D. 'Beauty, Helen of Troy, and Greta Garbo have been fused into one symbol' (1980, 131). However, the impression given by Mandel of a sense of ease and harmony in H.D.'s connection between herself, Garbo and the figure of Helen, is very different to the findings of this investigation. While the idea of the beautiful woman certainly denoted something of primary value to H.D., I have found that this concept was deeply entangled with social issues, with commercial forces, with women as sexual beings, and with women as objectified other. In other words, H.D. certainly maintained in her essay of 1927 that images of beauty represented the potential of transcendent good, but clearly recognized at the same time that the transmission of this truth was subject to all kinds of socially mediated factors.

Therefore this study will propose that the significance of Garbo for H.D.'s work was wider than a personal identification (whilst at the same time drawing attention to the similarities in the situations of H.D. and of Garbo). Mandel and Laity both start with the premise that Garbo fitted into a pre-existing concept or figure with especial meaning for H.D, (the beautiful woman and the Decadent femme fatale respectively), whereas the contention here is that Garbo herself, and the way in which she revealed the operations of the film industry, caused H.D. to formulate ideas about femininity, naming, identity and role. Hence this study

extends the discussion of the significance of Garbo to H.D. beyond reference to H.D. herself, by centring on the issue of women's relationship to their own desirable, marketed images.

Helen of Troy is the archetypal desirable woman. In her attempt to understand woman's place within patriarchy, H.D. returned time and again throughout her long writing career to question the significance of the legend of Helen of Troy, and, from the short lyric of 1923, entitled 'Helen,' to the complex, epic-length poem of 1961, *Helen in Egypt*, Helen of Troy is a key figure in H.D.'s work. It is in her *Close Up* articles that the association between the screen image of Garbo and the myth of Helen of Troy is established, and it will be argued that H.D.'s developing understanding of the operations of the film industry (by her observations of Garbo's screen career) informed her radical revision of the Homeric figure.

Some five years prior to H.D.'s encounter with Garbo's screen image, H.D. published a poem entitled 'Helen.' From the start, H.D. provides a shocking re-reading of the myth of Helen of Troy. Instead of the winsome, romantic approach of, for example, Edgar Allan Poe in his poem of 1831, 'To Helen,' in which Helen is addressed as a figure of idealized beauty ('Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,' 1984, 62), H.D. baldly states in her poem that the real emotion inspired by Helen, the cause of countless deaths in the Trojan War which was fought over her, is hatred: 'All Greece hates/ the still eyes in the white face' (1984b, 154). H.D.'s poem argues that the resentment and disgust that Helen provokes on account of her deception ('past enchantments/ and past ills') means that the love and adulation expressed by writers and artists throughout history masks instead a desire to destroy Helen and neutralize her power, because she

represents a threat to the social order:

> Greece [...]
> could love indeed the maid,
> only if she were laid,
> white ash amid funereal cypresses.
>
> (1984b. 155)

It is instructive to set beside H.D.'s text, W.B. Yeats's poem, 'No Second Troy,' which was published in 1910. In this, the speaker of the poem compares his beloved to Helen: she is surpassingly beautiful, but her beauty, 'like a tightened bow' is dangerous, causing misery and violence. Yeats's poem states, ironically, that this 'Helen' is helpless to control the effects of her beauty on others and the hymn to her exceptional beauty is couched in terms of forgiveness: 'Why should I blame her that she filled my days/ with misery?' (1990, 140). In this way, the poem expresses the hostility that the figure of Helen inspires, carefully contained in a defence of her innocence and masked by irony. Yeats's poem demonstrates the same hidden emotions inspired by female beauty which are identified and critiqued in H.D.'s poem.

Even in the Homeric renditions of Helen's tale, the same dual responses can be found. Ostensibly, no guilt is imputed to Helen herself in the *Iliad*, since she is portrayed as having no part in the chain of events that led to her abduction and the ensuing war. Helen yearns for her old life with Menelaus, and is represented as a pathetic figure. However, a subtle, dual conception of the gods as independent beings and alternatively as the representation of inner motivations and desires of humans, characterizes both the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, and in Helen's case this duality is especially extreme, to the extent that her motivations can seem contradictory. The influence wielded over Helen by Aphrodite sometimes suggests Helen's blamelessness (namely that Helen is the helpless

pawn of the goddess of love) and at other times her culpability (in other words that Aphrodite actually represents Helen's own inner sexual desires).

For instance, during the single combat between Menelaus and Paris in Book 3 of the *Iliad*, Helen watches, influenced by Aphrodite into wishing Menelaus to win so that she might return with him to her home and her parents. Abruptly, Aphrodite rescues Paris from imminent defeat by hiding him in a cloud and persuades Helen to go to him. Helen at first resists but the goddess threatens her and she complies. The scene ends with Helen and Paris making love. One way of making sense of this is to suggest that the goddess of love is the moving force but that it is Helen's own personality and desires that account for the success of Aphrodite's plans, for, as Linda Lee Clader puts it, 'Helen is the plaything of the gods and the means through which they ensnare her is desire' (1976, 36).

In the *Odyssey*, Helen is a yet more puzzling figure. In Book 4, Helen relates the tale of how she acted as a spy for the Greeks whilst living in the Trojan camp. However in Menelaus' story, which follows, Helen is described instead as an ally of the Trojans, having placed her gift for mimicking voices in the service of the Trojans when she tried (according to Menelaus) to lure the Greeks into betraying their presence inside the Trojan Horse by imitating the voices of each of their wives. The contradictions in the figure of Helen, and her association with disguise, deception and magic, later developed into variant myths about Helen in which she is split into two (a good woman and a deceitful phantom), and these variant myths provided H.D. with the impetus for the composition of *Helen in Egypt* (as will be discussed in the final chapter).

In general, then, both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* condemn Helen, while at the same time continually stressing the irresistible nature of her beauty (as,

indeed, does Yeats's poem) and an attitude of censure towards the seductive, adulterous woman becomes the keynote in cultural references to Helen of Troy (in preference to the more muted aspects of her character in the Homeric texts as a victim of the gods). This mixture of desire and disgust in response to the figure of Helen is the central theme of H.D.'s poem of 1923,

> All Greece hates
> the still eyes in the white face,
> the lustre as of olives
> where she stands,
> and the white hands.
>
> (1984b, 154)

The intensity of the speaker's erotic captivation is matched in the poem by the animosity that arises simultaneously in the contemplation of Helen's 'past enchantments / and past ills' (1984b, 155).

The face in the poem has an arresting quality of stasis, giving the impression of a figure of great antiquity or even out of time entirely. Charlotte Mandel comments on this, describing the technique of H.D.'s poem as a 'held shot' (1980, 130) and remarking that 'the poem's colors evoke the silent, silver screen of the 1920s' (1980, 131). 'Helen' may indeed have been inspired by the appearance of the human face on the screen, since H.D. attended the cinema from at least 1921 onwards according to Bryher (1962, 203), but there is almost no possibility that Garbo was the original inspiration for the figure in the poem. 'Helen' was published in January 1923, and Garbo's first film, *Peter the Tramp*, 1922, was distributed only in Sweden, while her next, *The Atonement of Gösta Berling*, was not released until 1924. Any definite link between Garbo's screen image and the poem, therefore, can be ruled out. Nonetheless, there is an astonishing continuity between the staring, deathlike mask of Helen in H.D.'s

early poem and Garbo's characteristic static facial expression in close up (and the thick even surface of pale make up that she wore on screen). This feature of Garbo was remarked upon by Roland Barthes in 1957 in his well-known piece, 'The Face of Garbo:'

> The make-up has the snowy thickness of a mask: it is not a painted face, but one set in plaster, protected by the surface of the colour, not by its lineaments. Amid all this snow at once fragile and compact, the eyes alone, black like strange soft flesh, but not in the least expressive, are two faintly tremulous wounds (1972/1993, 56).

Pursuing the same theme in a later study, Michaela Krutzen writes that Garbo's 'unique acting style [...] shows up particularly well in the close-up. It is not richly varied facial expressions that she uses in the close-up; rather her trademark here is her stillness, her rigidity' (1992, 17). Krutzen concludes that Garbo's 'central means of expression was the unmoved face' (1992, 22). Indeed, perhaps the most famous iconic image of Garbo is the closing shot of *Queen Christina* (1933) in which Garbo wears a blank but suggestive expression comparable to the Helen of H.D.'s 1923 poem. In the concluding scenes of the film, Garbo, as Queen Christina, has abdicated the throne, but finds that the lover with whom she had planned to leave has been killed in a duel. The final shot of Garbo at the prow of her ship as she sails away, was created, according to Hollywood legend, by the director Rouben Mamoulian's instruction to Garbo to make her mind and face a blank. Hence the device allows the viewer to supply the emotion which they imagine Garbo to feel.

The replication of the blank mask-like face of H.D.'s poem and Garbo's trademark expression during her Hollywood career can be accounted for in terms of their common origin in the patriarchal fantasy of woman as an emptiness awaiting definition. Kenneth Tynan (notably using the masculine pronoun),

writes that Garbo 'gives to each onlooker what he needs' (1961, 347). Betsy Erkkila finds this attitude oppressive, and in her feminist reading of *Queen Christina* ('Sailing Out of the Frame'), attacks the general tendency to treat Garbo as a 'passive female vessel,' quoting, among others, the critic David Thomson who compares Garbo to a 'watermark in a blank sheet of paper' (1985, 596). Equally, H.D.'s early poem deconstructs such approaches to women by highlighting the way in which the object position is ascribed to Helen of Troy, and thereby suggests that her significance consists entirely as a repository for the desires and projections of others.

Clearly, for H.D., the enigma of Helen of Troy raised questions about the dominance of patriarchal definitions of women, and particularly women's sexuality, and, in a similar way, Garbo as a star came to represent for the public at large certain patriarchal ideas about women habitually associated with the myth of Helen of Troy. She attained a legendary status as the most beautiful woman in Hollywood, and the plots of many of her Hollywood films, position her as the fatal (sorrowful) beauty who brings disaster on those who succumb to her allure. Thus it is on the issue of female sexuality and the resulting hiatus in the social order that the myth of Helen of Troy and the screen persona of Garbo coincide.

Garbo's success as a screen idol has been attributed by several critics to the very particular way in which she seemed to resolve contemporary dilemmas around the representation of female sexuality in film. The stark division between the virginal figures played by, for example, Lillian Gish, and the outrageously predatory vamps embodied by Theda Bara was, by the late 1920s, too simplistic for cinema audiences. Garbo reconciled the explicit suggestion of active sexuality with a quality often referred to as spiritual or romantic. Molly Haskell writes 'the

appeal of Garbo, however provocatively she might array herself, was romantic rather than sexual. [...] Her spirit leaped first and her body, in total exquisite accord, leaped after' (1987, 20). Louise Brooks gives a perceptive and convincing account of the phenomenon of Garbo's rise to fame in 'Gish and Garbo' (1959/1987). Brooks argues that Garbo's appearance, the pathos and beauty of her face, allowed for the depiction of the suffering endured by a woman who follows her illicit desire for love outside of marriage. Brooks speculates that the promotion of Garbo by Louis B. Mayer of MGM studios was motivated by the possibility of utilising Garbo's screen presence to expand the cinema's range to encompass the sympathetic depiction of 'free love':

> Looking at Greta Garbo in the Swedish picture [*The Saga of*] *Gösta Berling* he knew [...] he had found a sexual symbol beyond his or anyone else's imagining. Here was a face as purely beautiful as Michelangelo's Mary of the *Pietà*, yet glowing with passion. The suffering of her soul was such that the American public would forgive her many affairs in *The Torrent*, Garbo's first American picture (1987, 88).

In a way comparable to the depiction of Helen in the Homeric texts, Hollywood exploited Garbo's dangerous desirability to the full, but also employed narrative means to control the power of her image.[35] Erkkila quotes a statement by MGM's J. Robert Rubin that 'Garbo was the only one we could kill off,' and argues that the tragic endings of many of Garbo's films demonstrate Hollywood's 'simultaneous fascination with and desire to contain or destroy the erotic power of the female' (1985, 598). Like the dual emotions directed at Helen in H.D.'s 1923 poem, the repeated destruction of Garbo's screen characters reveals patriarchy's ambivalent response to the beautiful, but fatal woman.

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[35] The portrayal of the erotic woman and her demise has been analysed at length by feminist film critics such as Janey Place (1980,54) in films noir of the 1940s and 1950s in ways which resonate with my study here.

'Like some modernized epic of Troy town': Garbo and 'Beauty.'

When, in 1927, H.D. recorded the extreme impact of Garbo's screen image upon her in 'Beauty,' it was in response to the first instance of Garbo being cast in the role of the fatal woman (in *The Torrent*). The revelation of Garbo as an incarnation of beauty in her former role in *The Joyless Street* invoked in H.D.'s mind the legendary Helen of Troy, and her review describes Garbo as a vision of Helen of Troy transposed to the twentieth century. She writes, 'Helen who ruined Troy seems to have taken shape' (1927/1998c, 107), and Pabst's film, set in contemporary Vienna, was, H.D. wrote, 'like some modernized epic of Troy town' (1927/1998c, 107). But H.D.'s comparison of Garbo in the role of Grete with Helen of Troy is not at all an apt analogy in terms of the narrative of the film because the prime action by Grete in the story of *The Joyless Street* is to preserve her chastity. Paradoxically, therefore, H.D.'s review connects Garbo in the role of a woman bravely defending her sexual honour with the figure universally associated with extra-marital sex: Helen of Troy.

The Joyless Street follows the different fortunes of two women in post-war Vienna, who never meet, although they are both in the same queue for meat, which has become scarce. The character of Maria Lechner, played by Asta Neilsen, is from a proletarian family. When the butcher, a true villain in the melodramatic style, closes his door to the hungry women who have waited all night, Maria goes with a friend to try to secure some food by other means. Maria's friend retires to a back room with the butcher and emerges with the meat but Maria cannot bear to offer herself in exchange for food, and leaves. The butcher throws the meat to his dogs. Maria is romantically pursuing Egon Stirner, secretary to a South American millionaire. Egon meanwhile is more interested in

a woman named Lia Leid, whom he meets at the Carlton Bar where the profiteers of the post-war economy gather to indulge themselves. Egon requires money to speculate on a legally suspect deal involving shares in a mine. Frau Leid and Egon meet the next evening in the Hotel Merkel, which is in fact a brothel, and Lia gives him some jewels. Maria is in the next room, unwillingly engaged in prostitution in order to raise the money for Egon, and, when she sees her lover with Frau Leid, murders her in jealous fury. Egon is then arrested on suspicion of the crime, and Maria eventually confesses her guilt.

Running concurrently with this tale is the story of Grete Rumfort (played by Garbo) whose background and priorities are quite different. Grete lives with her father, a retired councillor, and a younger sister. Grete, like Maria, has to queue all night outside the butcher's shop due to the scarcity of meat caused by inflation. The Rumforts believe that their troubles are over when Councillor Rumfort's super-annuation is paid. The family celebrates and Grete is sent out by her father to buy a new winter coat from Madame Greifer, the owner of Hotel Merkel. Unfortunately, Grete's father invests his pension in the same shares that are being manipulated by Egon's millionaire employer and they are soon worthless. Grete loses her job by refusing the sexual advances of her boss, but does not tell her father for fear of adding to his burden. The only option left for this 'respectable' family is to let rooms in their house to raise funds and in due course, two American men from the Red Cross (one called Davy who particularly notices Grete) rent their rooms. Still in desperate need of money to pay off her father's creditors, Grete goes reluctantly to Madame Greifer and a meeting is set up with a prospective client at the brothel (who turns out to be none other than the villainous butcher) but she cannot go through with it. At the last minute, as Grete

is about to appear on the stage at Hotel Merkel in a revealing gown, her father finds out, with the help of Davy, that his daughter is about to lose her reputation in order to save the family, and all is resolved. A waiter attests to Grete's 'innocence' and she is reunited with her father and romantically linked with Davy. Maria's story is not resolved but the final scenes of the film show the explosion of anger among the crowd of women towards the butcher, who is murdered by the mob.

From this synopsis, it will perhaps strike the reader as odd that H.D. described the film as 'the most astonishingly consistently lovely film I have ever seen' (1927/1998c, 107). As already mentioned in chapter one, *The Joyless Street* stands as one of the most effective of a genre of films referred to as 'Street' films, deploying *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) in the portrayal of grimy, urban realism and emotionally detached social critique. H.D.'s somewhat mixed account of the film reflects the way in which *The Joyless Street* contains elements of both realism and melodrama, as commentators on the film such as Siegried Kracauer (1947, 170) and Patrice Petro (1989, 200-219) have pointed out. While H.D. recognizes the film's attempt to face harsh realities, it might also be said that H.D.'s response to Pabst's Street film of 1925 diffuses the film's protest by using the terms of high romanticism.

Patrice Petro, in her pioneering study of Weimar film from the perspective of female spectatorship, reads this film as a powerful expression of women's anger. Petro suggests that a stark division can be made in the film between Maria's narrative which is broadly in the spirit of the New Objectivity and Grete's which owes more to Hollywood sentimentality. Petro writes, 'where Grete's story deals with innocence and the reward of virtue, Maria's story is fundamentally

about the processes of guilt, desire and repression' (1989, 209). Grete is unselfish and brave, willing to sacrifice herself if necessary in order to protect her father, and is saved at the last minute by the love of a good man; the traditional reward of the 'pure' woman in the Hollywood narrative. Maria, on the other hand, is brutalized by her father and betrayed by her lover, and although the murder she commits is to protect her lover, the film shows that Maria's underlying motives are self-serving.

The story of Grete in *The Joyless Street* does indeed bear a resemblance to the narratives of some of Hollywood's most sentimental silent films, and certain of H.D.'s comments on Garbo's performance might almost be applicable to, for instance, the heroines of D. W. Griffith's melodramas. Recalling the points in the film at which the net tightens around Grete, H.D. questions whether the same narrative codes governing the safety of the virtuous heroine of the Hollywood type will operate in this realist film. 'We know nothing can happen to her, yet do we? Things happen, we ourselves have known them to happen' (1927/1998c, 109). Phrases such as 'her purity shines like an enchanter's crown' (1927/1998c, 109) call to mind the 'virgin' roles played by Lillian Gish, Mae Marsh and others, which operated in counterpoint to those of the sinful 'vamps' in Hollywood melodramas. And statements such as 'La Petit Rue Sans Joie seems perilously close to swallowing our Beauty' (1927/1998c, 109) draw on the language and discourse of Victorian narratives of imperilled, virtuous heroines.

In the review, H.D. does not refer directly to the character of Maria at all except to mention the 'secret murder.' She does comment, however, on the more unpleasant details of Grete's story. The brothel is referred to coyly as 'a shop that rivals even the butcher's for gaiety and distraction', and the brothel's Madame,

Madame Greifer, as an 'entrepreneuse' (1927/1998c, 108). The reason for Grete leaving her job is related in a similarly oblique way:

> Madame [...] one day offers the little Mademoiselle [Grete] a fur coat to wear home, she needn't pay for it yet. [...] 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 (1927/1998c, 108 – 109).

Notwithstanding this roundabout treatment of the subject of prostitution, H.D. then goes on to condemn the narrow-minded audience in the cinema, who 'won't, dare not face reality' (1927/1998c, 109).

Underlining my previous comments in chapter one about H.D.'s blind spots with regard to class, her review of *The Joyless Street* ignores the fact that the difference between Grete and Maria lies less in their views on sexual chastity (Maria is equally as unwilling to prostitute herself as Grete) than in the class to which they belong. Even though the film was designed to shock middle class sensibilities by suggesting that any family, even one such as Grete's, might find they faced destitution, it is social background, rather than innate 'purity' that determines the freedom of the two women to exercise moral scruples. Tracy Myers (1993) analyses the film as a historically specific ideological message to women to promote the 'moral recovery' of Weimar Germany, and argues that it is significant that the woman in whom this hope resides in the film is not the proletarian Maria but the middle class Grete (1993, 58).

H.D.'s reading of the film, however, ignores the conservative ideological messages of the narrative and insists upon the primacy of her revelation of beauty imperilled. Crucially, Garbo's performance in *The Joyless Street* suggested to H.D. a reversal of the orthodox version of the Helen myth: 'this time it is Troy by some fantastic readjustment who is about to ruin Helen' (1927/1998c, 107).

Indeed Garbo's interpretation of the role of the vulnerable Greta became entangled in H.D.'s mind with the legendary Helen of Troy to such an extent that H.D. rejected the canonical view of Helen as sinful and flawed, and instead, in 'Beauty,' the Helen figure is conceived as blameless and unspoiled. This interpretation of Helen of Troy, therefore, is scarcely connected to the Homeric version, for instead of emphasizing her sexual weakness, she is characterized as an exemplary moral figure.

A possible explanation for the perverse invocation of the original femme fatale to describe Garbo in the role of a virginal heroine is that H.D. wished to nullify the misogynist distinctions governing women's 'purity,' as has already been suggested in the discussion in chapter three of the thematic connections between the description of Garbo's moral strength in 'Beauty' and the integrity of the sea flowers in *Sea Garden*, (see pp. 124-128 above). In other words, by the comparison of Grete and Helen of Troy, she wished to deny that women's purity was defined by a lack of sexual activity. Indeed, H.D.'s Helen of 1927 is a figure transcending moral codes: 'once in so often, beauty herself, Helen above Troy, rises triumphant and denounces the world for a season and then retires [...] to forget men and their stale formulas of existence' (1927/1998c, 109).

Ironically, it is in *Torrent* rather than *The Joyless Street* that the more heterodox version of the myth of the femme fatale (of which Helen was the original) is invoked. Ironically, because in H.D.'s review 'Beauty,' Garbo's performance in *The Torrent* is set up as the very antithesis of the visionary 'Helen' that H.D. glimpsed in Garbo's appearance in *The Joyless Street*. Alexander Walker describes *The Torrent* as 'titillating and sanctimonious by turns' (1980, 40). This film, now difficult to access, is remembered (along with

The Temptress, which was made in the same year) as merely the prelude to Garbo's mature work beginning with her first feature with John Gilbert, *Flesh and the Devil* (1927). At the time, however, *The Torrent* was greeted with enthusiasm in America. *Photoplay* described the film as 'a small masterpiece' ('The Shadow Stage,' 1926b, 50), and an MGM advertisement for the film used these impressionistic phrases:

> *Ibanez' Torrent*! Rushing flood of mighty emotion
> *Sweeping* us on — ever on — breathless…
> *Ricardo* Cortez — dashing — gallant — torrid…
> *Greta* Garbo — Perfection!
> *Discovered* by Metro Goldwyn Meyer in stark Sweden —
> *She* is setting the heart of America aflame!
>
> (1926a, 105).

In *The Torrent* Garbo, who was described at the time by *Photoplay* as the 'new Swedish importation' ('The Shadow Stage,' 50), plays Leonora Moreno. In the film, Leonora and Raphael Brull, played by Ricardo Cortez (who was supposed to be MGM's answer to Rudolf Valentino), are former childhood sweethearts from the same Spanish village, but Leonora is deemed too lowly to be the wife of the aristocratic Raphael by his family. Raphael's domineering mother, Doña Brull, calls in her debts, thus making the Moreno family destitute. Leonora's mother remains as a servant while Leonora and her father prepare to leave to try to live by Leonora's talent as a singer. Doña Brull prevents Raphael from intervening and rescuing the family by marrying Leonora, insinuating that Leonora does not love him but merely wants his money. Leonora goes to Paris and becomes a sophisticated and admired prima donna and courtesan, and Raphael courts the woman chosen for him by his mother. When Leonora returns to the village, the dam breaks under a torrent, and the crisis brings Raphael and Leonora together again, although Raphael is morally outraged by Leonora's way

of life. She accuses him of desertion, and blames him for leaving her with no option other than to become the mistress of a series of men. The two spend one night together, but in the morning Doña Brull shames Leonora's mother into turning Leonora out of the house and Raphael's marriage goes ahead. Many years later the two lovers meet again. Leonora is beautiful, famous and lonely and Raphael is greying and defeated. They contemplate the choices they have made which have caused their lives to diverge. Raphael returns to the confinement of his domestic life, which at least offers companionship, while Leonora is shown on stage receiving the adoration of the crowd, but finally alone as she leaves the opera house in a car, her face impassive.

Taking into account only the progress of the story, *The Torrent* presents a thoroughgoing condemnation of male cowardice. Raphael repeatedly allows his mother, and her legal adviser Don Andrés, to play on his fear of losing his family's standing in the local community and dissuade him from keeping his promises to Leonora. Leonora's sexual promiscuity is frankly outlined in the film (by Leonora herself) as a rebuke to Raphael. However, while the bare bones of the narrative of *The Torrent* position Leonora as the victim of the tale, Garbo's appearance and gestures as a prima donna emphasize her seductiveness and fatal appeal, thus placing the blame on her own desirous and immoral nature and aligning her, in cultural terms, with the figure of Helen. The final shot (to fade) of Garbo's still face is ambivalent in the extreme, due to this contradiction between narrative and visual coding. The film never adequately realizes Leonora's character. Garbo as Leonora is presented in many different and, as Alexander Walker points out, contradictory ways: 'she is in rough and ready succession, a maudlin sweetheart, a scornful vamp, a jealous inamoralia, a great singer [...] a

woman of the world cynically toting a cigarette holder [...] and finally a lonely, fatalistic beauty wedded to no man but only her vocation' (1980, 40). The final shots of Leonora performing in Bizet's *Carmen* and leaving the opera house are inter-cut with scenes of Raphael returning home to his 'Penelope,' his wife Remedios. Raphael glances up at the portrait of his mother on the wall, as if to accuse her of his disappointments and imprisonment within marriage and fatherhood. But the final tableau of Raphael and Remedios is a tender one, seeming to indicate that his is the better life.

In a review of *The Torrent* consisting of a series of imagistic phrases, written in 1926, Carl Sandburg describes the ending of the film using a conceit associated with the poet Sappho: 'the finish is neither sweet nor bitter but bittersweet' (2000, 305). Unlike H.D., Sandburg was of the opinion that '*The Torrent* is decidedly among recommended pictures' (1926/2000, 305). Writing in the 1970s, feminist film critic Sumiko Higashi reads Leonora's final destiny as abandonment and misery, and maintains that the crass assumption behind the film that Leonora 'could have been redeemed by love' but otherwise became 'a loose woman,' is 'absurd' (1978, 91). However, as Erkkila argues in the context of Garbo's later films, the extraordinary ambiguity that Garbo introduces into her roles as tragic, sinful women, contains the implicit suggestion of a destiny beyond the limited horizons of social conformity, and Garbo's blank expression at the end of *The Torrent*, like that at the end of *Queen Christina*, might equally suggest a liberation beyond the frame of the traditional domestic role (thus 'bittersweet,' indeed).

In her review, H.D. neglects to mention the narrative of *The Torrent*, being entirely taken up with the cosmetic alterations to Garbo's appearance. H.D. calls

the film 'a parody of life' and awards the film the epithet 'efficient' in the manner of an insult (1927/1998c, 106). H.D. is in no doubt that Garbo as Leonora is characterized in the film as an 'evil woman' (1927/1998c, 107) but does not enumerate her faults. For H.D., Garbo's greatest crime in relation to her appearance in *The Torrent* seems to consist in the imitativeness of the performance. Garbo as Leonora 'has been trained [...] to sway forward and backward in long skirts with pseudo-Lillian Gish affectation' (1927/1998c, 109). H.D.'s scathing remarks about Garbo, ('she simpers') are aimed at both the content of the stereotype that Garbo plays and at the ineptness of her acting.

The argument of 'Beauty' rests on an underlying and surprisingly simplistic belief on H.D.'s part that a screen role may either reveal or betray the 'true' self of a film performer. Garbo's performance as Grete convinced her that the truth of the inner essence of Garbo had been shown in the film, and that her subsequent role as a vamp in *The Torrent* amounted to the imposition of a falsehood. H.D. explains that she saw *The Joyless Street* in Montreux some two or three years previously to writing the review and that in the interim, while the film took its 'tottering frail way' across the cinemas of Europe, she had seen Greta Garbo, 'deflowered, deracinated, devitalized, more than that, actively and acutely distorted' in *The Torrent* (1927/1998c, 106).

This rather naïve attitude to the film actor, which suggests that certain roles (and not others) are a distortion of the real self, nevertheless appears to have had a productive result in H.D.'s continuing re-conceptualization of the figure of Helen of Troy. Subsequent to Garbo's appearance in *The Joyless Street*, H.D.'s conception of Helen of Troy developed from the blank, reviled statue-like figure of the 1923 poem into a symbol of tragic goodness. For, in the review, the evil

Hollywood system which has, according to H.D., ruined Garbo, is transposed to the legend of Helen who then, instead of being the cause of the Trojan war, is its victim (in other words the victim of patriarchal definitions of women's sexuality as evil, which are common to Hollywood and literary traditions alike).

Certain statements in *Close Up*, such as H.D.'s declaration that as Grete, Garbo had 'found a role to fit her' (1927/1998c, 108), reveal assumptions about the identity of film stars that were to develop into complex ideas about identity itself in H.D.'s later work. Arguably, the attempt by H.D. in *Close Up* to analyse Garbo's Hollywood star image anticipates the central puzzle of her late work, *Helen in Egypt*, in which Helen herself struggles (unsuccessfully) to ascertain a 'true' self beneath or amidst the legends told about her. It is instructive, therefore, to examine H.D.'s accounts of the construction of the film star in *Close Up* before moving on in the next chapter to consider H.D.'s depiction of female characters struggling with issues of the construction of identity.

'I knew I was too happy': The creation of Garbo's star image.

H.D.'s analysis of Garbo's star image is best approached within the context of the scholarly study of film stars, and placing H.D.'s views of Garbo alongside other, more recent, analyses of Garbo's career can produce illuminating comparisons, as will be seen. One of the most important issues in both star studies and in H.D.'s *Close Up* articles is the nature of the process behind the creation of the star. Richard Dyer tackles the question of the 'authorship' of the star image in his seminal, and still in many respects unsurpassed, study of stardom, *Stars* (1998). As Paul McDonald explains, Dyer's aim was to demystify stardom by developing a theory to counter the popular view that stars are 'the product of some unique "magical" quality inherent in the individual star' (1995,

81) (arguably this naïve view was exactly H.D.'s position in 'Beauty').

In his book, Dyer sets out various models of authorship in the cinema. He argues that authorship of a film can be attributed to an individual (usually the director, as in 'auteur theory'), to multiple authorial voices (for instance, the director, producer, star, camera-person and so on), to a collective of people working as a team or, finally, to corporate authorship in which an organisation or social structure can be said to have authored the film (this might be the Hollywood studio or, more subtly, capitalism or patriarchy). Dyer proposes that, in the same way, the authorship of a star image might be found to correspond to any of these four models. Dyer in fact bases his discussion of the complexities of the authorship of the star image on Alexander Walker's chapter about Garbo in *The Celluloid Sacrifice* and he observes that Walker's approach broadly corresponds to the model of multiple voices.

Walker begins by describing Garbo's features, her strong 'masculine' physique, and the 'feminine spirituality of her looks' (1966, 96) and he stresses her apparent tendency as an individual to depression and pessimism. The inclusion of this trait in the plot lines of her films (by screenwriters who deliberately picked up on it) impart an autobiographical significance into lines such as 'I knew I was too happy' (*Camille*). Walker describes at length Garbo's innate ability to draw on techniques associated with method acting in which she was able to transform herself into her film characters. In this, Walker credits Garbo with creating her own image as the suffering and abandoned woman, the victim of fate. According to Walker, the collaborators in the creation of Garbo the star included the director Mauritz Stiller, who moulded Greta Gustafson into an image which fed his own 'emotional needs' and fulfilled his personal fantasies.

Also cited is the lighting cameraperson, William Daniels, who worked on nearly all of Garbo's twenty-seven films. Walker credits Daniels with achieving some of the legendary emotional effects of Garbo's performances. But Walker also invokes the corporate authorship model in his discussion of MGM's part in fabricating Garbo's image. According to Walker, the MGM executives capitalized on the public's perception of Garbo as a recluse by scripting the line 'I want to be alone' in *Grand Hotel* (1933) and then attempted to change Garbo's image by presenting her in comedies such as *Ninotchka* (1939) and *Two-Faced Woman* (1941).

Perhaps most interesting of all is Walker's attempt to determine the extent to which current perceptions of acceptable feminine sexuality interacted with the promotion of Garbo as a star. Echoing Louise Brooks's view, Walker writes that 'Garbo projected sexuality in a vivid way [...] but with an underlying spirituality; the very combination that MGM and the rest of Hollywood had been seeking' (1966, 106). Dyer sums up Walker's suggestion in this way: 'at this level, the author of Garbo is ideology' (1998, 155). As already noted, there can be no doubt that Garbo's presentation of an arrestingly new, active, type of sexual woman contributed to her status as a star. Kevin Brownlow has described this aspect of Garbo's appeal extremely well as follows: 'Garbo had something in her eyes which was translated as an invitation to sex by the audience, and yet was uncensorable.' [36]

In contrast to Walker, Betsy Erkkila's much later work on Garbo, undertaken from a feminist perspective, describes a complex series of negotiations

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[36] Letter to the author, 11th December, 2000.

between Garbo and the MGM bosses in the creation of her screen persona, but ascribes a much more active role in the process to Garbo herself. Erkkila argues that the story of director Mauritz Stiller being responsible for naming Garbo (after a seventeenth century Hungarian King, Bethlen Gabor) is untrue and 'symptomatic of the larger tendency in film theory and criticism to mask the creative power of the actress by treating her as the blank sheet upon which the director inscribes his own signature' (1985, 595). Erkkila asserts that Garbo chose and registered her own name and ascribes to Garbo a much greater degree of control over her own career and star image.

Erkkila contends that Garbo was engaged, during the process of filming, in a re-reading of the ideological content of the films in which she appeared and that the result is a double-voiced text which inscribes both the director/studio's intentions and Garbo's own beliefs. Erkkila writes 'what stands out in Garbo's performance in film after film is not her passivity but her active presence as a tension, a resistance, an opposition within the film text' (1985, 597). An example of this subversion of the dominant meaning of the heterosexual plot offered by Erkkila is Garbo's habit of investing objects with erotic significance (for instance the communion cup which has just touched the lips of her lover in *Flesh and the Devil*, or the contents of the room in which she has spent a night with her lover in *Queen Christina*) which then, according to Erkkila, come to represent Garbo's dedication to her art as a film actor rather than to any prospective life-partner. Erkkila argues that the popular view of Garbo as solitary and unable to be contented with a conventional marriage relationship, fed into the roles she played, so that the tragic impossibility of the relationships in her films came to indicate the insufficiency of the roles open to women, especially what Erkkila terms 'the

marital script of the female life' (1985, 607).

Film scholar Andrea Weiss argues that, especially in *Queen Christina*, Garbo deliberately communicated statements about her lesbian sexuality through her performances to those members of film audiences who were attuned to receive them (1992, 30-50). In *Queen Christina*, Garbo plays the Swedish queen who was reputedly a lesbian and refused to marry. The film bows to convention by providing an unobtainable male lover as the romantic interest, but it is possible to argue that the film ascribes the abdication of the queen to her desire for a wider experience of life and a fundamental dissatisfaction with the values of monarchy and military conquest rather than merely as the result of a broken heart. The striking appearance of Garbo in male clothing, a brief scene in which she passionately kisses her lady-in-waiting, and Christina's reply to the suggestion that she will die 'an old maid' with the words, 'nonsense [...] I shall die a bachelor!' (a statement that was, according to Erkkila, taken from one of Garbo's private letters, 607) are examples of the process of embedding lesbian 'subcultural meanings' in Hollywood film, in Weiss's words (1992, 38).

The question of a contradiction between Garbo's 'real' sexuality, and the sexuality of her onscreen roles introduces yet another possible aspect in the conflicted process of the making of Garbo, the star. The intense and obsessive speculation in film magazines and other media on Garbo's single status and supposed romantic affairs meant that in Hollywood publicity material, for instance, the romance between Garbo and John Gilbert was promoted and almost certainly exaggerated in importance, and that Garbo's important relationships with women such as Mercedes de Acosta was excluded altogether (see Weiss 1992). As was earlier suggested (see pp. 128 - 129 above), the telling accentuation of

images of whiteness in H.D.'s metaphorical descriptions of Garbo in 'Beauty,' might encode references to lesbian sexuality, but the *Close Up* essays do not discuss this directly.

In a general sense, H.D. places Garbo apart from the oppressive heterosexist film makers and viewers, and her positioning of Garbo (in 'Beauty') as superior to the Hollywood milieu parallels Erkkila's reading which is underpinned by an awareness of the complexities surrounding Garbo's sexuality. Erkkila argues that the repeated on-screen 'deaths' of Garbo's film career are an expression on Garbo's part of the 'inadequacy of the system that seeks to contain her' (1985, 598). However, in complete contrast to H.D.'s view of Garbo as a passive mannequin in 'Beauty,' Erkkila maintains that even *The Torrent*, in which, she writes, Garbo 'transforms herself from amorous adolescent to diva, to vamp, to woman alone,' Garbo's capacity to 'shape the film in her own self-generated image' is revealed (1985, 597). Marjorie Rosen (1973) and Sumiko Higashi (1978) are among the many commentators on Garbo's career who share Erkkila's view that Garbo developed the stereotypical role of vamp into something entirely different, and far more sophisticated. 'With the arrival of Grete Garbo on the Hollywood screen,' writes Higashi, 'the vamp metamorphosed from a caricature into a truly desirable and believable woman' (1978, 75).

Setting up Garbo as the auteur of her own image, and of subtexts in her films, Erkkila describes Garbo's retirement as the result of her failure to prevail over the powerful moguls of Hollywood. Thus Betsy Erkkila's feminist defence of Garbo, which ascribes Garbo's star image to the exercise of self-will and determination of Garbo herself (although always in differing degrees of conflict with studio bosses), hence follows the model of individual as the author of the star

image. Richard Dyer concurs with Erkkila regarding Garbo as individual author by citing *Queen Christina* as one of the very few films in which authorship of the totality of a film may be attributed to the star (1998, 154). However, as already mentioned, after this high point when Garbo was temporarily in control of her own image, she was once again confined to the 'marriage script' whether as marker of its boundaries as the unacceptable sexual woman in *Camille* or as convert to 'normal' womanhood in the (nonetheless delightful) comedy *Ninotkcha*. The lasting caricature of Garbo as the woman who is supposed to have said 'I want to be alone,' recognizes her rejection of the conventional aspiration of women, but defuses the feminist implications of a refusal of the 'marital script' and recasts it as loneliness and failure.

How, then, did H.D. account for the creation of Garbo, the star (bearing in mind, of course, that H.D.'s comments were made prior to 1930, and hence at the beginning of her screen career)? As I have already emphasized, in 'Beauty' H.D. sets up a rival criterion to the inane, mass-produced packaged version of beauty by offering a classically defined transcendent quality of truth and beauty as goodness. Garbo's achievement in presenting this transcendent truth on the screen is attributed by H.D. to the happy coincidence of her innate qualities and the general excellence of Pabst's film. H.D. writes of, 'this fine little Greta Garbo with her youth, her purity, her straight brows and her unqualified distinction' (1927/1998c, 108). H.D., therefore, in attributing the uniqueness of Garbo's performance to qualities within the actress herself, offers an explanation based on the individual authorship model (which, by and large, has been the privileged version of artistic creation in the tradition of Western high culture) and in her approach to this film at least, concurs with Erkkila.

However, an alternative individual author of Garbo's screen image is offered by H.D. in her later writing for *Close Up*. In 'An Appreciation,' as already discussed (pp. 87-88 above), H.D. presents a model of female creativity on screen that is in large measure credited to the director, G.W. Pabst, and in this way echoes the view of Walker and others that Garbo was the creation of a magus figure. In fact it is Mauritz Stiller who occupies the role of 'magus' in many of the best-known versions of Garbo's early career in both scholarly and fan material. He is credited with 'discovering' the young Greta, who was working in advertising films in Stockholm, and casting her as an unknown in the major Swedish production, *The Atonement of Gösta Berling* in 1924. After Garbo had appeared in Pabst's *The Joyless Street* (Stiller had lost financial backing for his next production and could not give Garbo work at that time) Stiller took Garbo with him to Hollywood in 1925. Although his autocratic temperament made it impossible for him to work as her director at MGM, he continued to have an enormous influence over Garbo, tutoring her and advising her until his death in 1928. The dominant view of Stiller's part in Garbo's rise to fame is as a Svengali to Garbo's Trilby, and that Garbo was entirely dependent on Stiller at this early period.

It has already been noted that H.D.'s prose texts frequently depict female artist figures (such as Hermione in *Her)* seeking to escape the scripts and identities forced upon them by more experienced male mentors. Conversely, H.D. herself sometimes stressed the enabling role played by certain men in her life. Among these men was Sigmund Freud, and the complex, ambivalent portrait in H.D.'s memoir of him records his benign effect upon her creative abilities as well

as the profoundly unacceptable aspects of his philosophy (1985b).[37] The episode in *Helen in Egypt* in which Helen visits Theseus (1985a, 147-207) has often been read in terms of a fictional representation of H.D.'s experience as an analysand of Freud. Nina Auerbach reads the figure of Theseus in *Helen in Egypt* as unproblematically that of Freud, and also collapses H.D. and her fictional creation Helen into one. Furthermore, Auerbach understands Freud's influence as almost wholly beneficial, arguing that Helen/H.D. 'accepts possession by the magus as the crucible for her mighty self-apotheosis' (1981, 300). Despite these problems with Auerbach's approach, it is certainly the case that in both the fictional Theseus sequence of *Helen in Egypt* and the supposedly factual report of Freud's analysis of the writer herself in *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. gives accounts of the masculine support and validation.

The enabling role of the Freud figures in these texts, however, is of a different order entirely to the portrait of Pabst in 'An Appreciation.' H.D. suggests that virtually all the credit lies with Pabst for Garbo's performance in *The Joyless Street*. As evidence, H.D. points out that, when working with other, lesser directors, Garbo produced poor performances:

> Under preceding and succeeding directors she was either an overgrown 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* (1929/1998a, 144-145).

Hence H.D. accounts for what she believes is the total failure of Garbo to live up

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[37] See Friedman's definitive study of Freud and H.D., *Psyche Reborn*, for a complete analysis of the impact of Freud upon H.D.'s work and thought.

to the initial promise of *The Joyless Street* by the fact that this was the only film in which Garbo was directed by Pabst. H.D. appears to believe that it is an act of generosity to absolve Garbo of blame in her own demise (as H.D. sees it) when in fact H.D.'s elevation of the role of the director gives actresses in general very little credit for their success in any case.

Broadly speaking, the creation of Garbo's subsequent popular image as a femme fatale is laid wholly at the door of the Hollywood industry by H.D. and she denies absolutely the individual involvement of the actress in this later screen image and attendant star text. Unlike Erkkila, H.D. detects no subtext in Garbo's later performances and her account describes the total annihilation of Garbo's personality by the stereotypes she is required to play. H.D. had expressed her hope in 1927 that Garbo, with her 'mermaid enchantment,' would prevail over the Ogre of Hollywood, pitting her individual qualities and 'natural' unadorned beauty against the corporate power of the film industry, but, by the time H.D. wrote again about Garbo two years later in 'An Appreciation,' it was clear to her that Garbo had failed. She wearily accepts that in Garbo's case, the mechanisms of the film industry have made it impossible for individual creativity and expressiveness to function, and thereby absolves Garbo of blame. 'I know nothing of Greta Garbo personally,' writes H.D., 'and it would be out of place to suggest that the curious disintegration of her screen personality has anything to do with her personally'(1929/1998a, 144). H.D. refers to Garbo's appearance with John Gilbert in *Flesh and the Devil* (1927), which established her as a star at the box office, and accepts with regret that, 'the young actress may have had little say in the hands of those who make her the devil in films where Gilbert is the flesh' (1929/1998a, 145).

Nevertheless, it was the myth of the femme fatale that was to become the most prominent motif in Garbo's screen image. Garbo became increasingly identified with roles that aligned her with the dominant aspect of the Helen of Troy myth, in other words with the fatally beautiful woman, and the lure of sexual pleasure opposed to duty and domesticity. In *Flesh and the Devil*, Garbo plays Felicitas, an irresistibly seductive woman who sets two male friends against each other. Matching exactly the legend of Helen of Troy, Felicitas is temporarily left alone by Ulrich von Eltz (as Helen was by Menelaus) and succumbs to a passionate relationship with his friend, Leo von Harden, (as did Helen with Paris in the Homeric myth). As in the *Iliad*, a duel is fought between the two men competing for possession of the desirable woman. While the repercussions of Felicitas's betrayal are scarcely comparable with the magnitude of the Trojan war, Garbo's positioning (through playing this role and others) as the cause of strife and enmity between men, or the tempter of men from their duty or as an enticement to break the laws of society, meant that she came to symbolize those same dangers evoked by Helen of Troy. Significantly, the only remaining extant sequence of Garbo's next film, *The Divine Woman* (1928), shows Garbo as a seductive woman attempting to lure a soldier (played by Lars Hanson) into the dereliction of his duty.

There is evidence that Garbo lamented the fact that she was stereotyped as the woman defined by her attraction for men: 'always the vamp I am, always the woman of no heart,' she is supposed to have said to Louis B. Mayer (see Erkkila, 597). Betsy Erkkila maintains that Garbo tired of these roles and it was to escape her confinement within them that she set up her own production company to make *Queen Christina* in 1933. As observed, Garbo's success in extricating herself

from stereotyping was short-lived, however, and in 1936 she appeared once more in the role of the object of male desire, as Marguerite Gautier in *Camille*. Marguerite, a courtesan, gives up her lover Armand, and dies a martyr to love. Garbo as the woman undone by her own failings and desires takes us back again to Homer's Helen, a guilty woman who repents of her actions.

Thus, the concepts of misrepresentation and self-definition connect the legendary Helen of Troy with H.D.'s interpretation of Garbo in her film reviews. H.D.'s growing conviction that Helen of Troy is the exemplar of the wrongly maligned woman emerged from her view of Garbo as a victim of the Hollywood system. The fabrication of a star image (still a relatively new phenomenon in the 1920s) provided an object lesson in the way in which dominant, patriarchal definitions of women, although resisted, might engulf even the shining purity of a Garbo, or indeed, a Helen of Troy.

Chapter Six: 'The woman and the legend': Duality, identity and the traces of Garbo in H.D.'s work.

Greta Garbo and 'the Berling' in *The Usual Star.*

'Beauty' demonstrates that H.D. was beginning to have a sense of the fractured nature of identity by observing the workings of the star system. However, in her article for *Close Up*, she is still for the most part convinced that Garbo in *The Joyless Street* is the 'real' Garbo and that the Garbo of *The Torrent*, with her dyed hair and make-up and wooden gestures is an imposition; a false overlay. This dichotomy begins to break down in H.D.'s novella *The Usual Star*. This text, written in the following year, features a thinly disguised Garbo figure, and thus represents a continuation and refinement of H.D.'s response to the star image of Garbo in the *Close Up* reviews. The complex questions raised in the text on the nature of identity and truth make it possible to trace an increasing sophistication in H.D.'s conception of Garbo as a star, for observations on the Garbo figure in this novella are placed in the context of a meditation on the fractured and fictive nature of identity itself. Reading *The Usual Star*, it is clear that the legendary Garbo was highly significant to H.D.'s increasingly subtle understanding of the constructedness of identity in general, a topic which was to emerge as the dominant theme of *Helen in Egypt* (a text that will be considered at length later in this chapter) some thirty years later.

Very little critical attention has been paid to H.D.'s novella *The Usual Star*, which was written in 1928, published in a print run of 100 in 1934, and has never been reissued. Susan Friedman undertakes a brief reading of the text in her study of H.D.'s prose works, *Penelope's Web* (1990). She groups *The Usual Star*

with other prose fiction works of the late 1920s and reads them as testaments to H.D.'s mounting mental crisis, which is betrayed by tropes of alienation, splitting and twinning. Friedman also notes that, like 'Narthex' (1928c) and 'Mira Mare' (1934a), *The Usual Star* features characters with the same names as those found in the section entitled 'Murex' of H.D.'s three-part, historical novel of 1926, *Palimpsest*. Friedman argues that the 'Dijon' novellas (which include *Nights*, 'Kora and Ka,' 'Narthex,' 'Mira Mare' and *The Usual Star*) are repetitions of the same material obsessively and unhealthily reworked (1990, 217). Yet, as the examination in chapter four of the gendered gaze in *Nights* and 'Kora and Ka' demonstrated, the prose works of the late 1920s and early 1930s represent a significant step in H.D.'s consideration of gender, and I shall argue that the treatment of the theme of fractured identity in the context of cinema and femininity in *The Usual Star* is part of the same development.

The opening of *The Usual Star* is set in Hyde Park in London where Raymonde Ransome's thoughts and perceptions are interspersed with snatches of dialogue between herself and her companion; a character named Daniel. Both Raymonde and Daniel have seen a film the previous evening, featuring an actress they refer to as 'the Berling.' Raymonde and Daniel share the odd sensation that the atmosphere of the London park in the misty morning is overlaid by their remembered impressions of the Scandinavian atmosphere of the film of the night before. Raymonde muses that, 'the nowhere of this early November, wandering with Daniel in the almost empty garden, was superimposed, on the nowhere of yesterday's, of last night's cinema' (1934b, 18-19). Descriptions of the London scene and the superimposed recollections of the film are mysteriously combined. For instance: 'gulls rested on water, sliding between mounds of solid white snow.

Snow rested on the water, chunks of it, slid off the edge of a snowdrift. Snow had broken off (there was no snow in London) and rested' (1934b, 13). Fanciful notions such as: 'there is certainly a lagoon where Piccadilly once was' (1934b, 13), throw into question the basis of the whole opening sections in objective reality.

In the same way, the characters in the novella are partly real in an objective, verifiable sense (meaning that they are recognized by, and interact with, other characters in the narrative) and partly 'projected' from imaginative associations and memories within Raymonde's own mind. Raymonde strives to assess and understand the individuals in her circle by metaphorical identification with mythic and cultural figures. Marc de Brissaic, a French stage actor who never appears in person in the text, is continually defined and redefined by Raymonde, as well as by other characters in the text. Raymonde characterizes Marc as 'mercurial' but gradually comes to appreciate that Daniel, as the Greek equivalent of Mercury, namely Hermes, is the purer and most aesthetically (and erotically) compelling. Raymonde insists repeatedly on Daniel's similarity to Freda Berling, in terms of his beauty and charm, and in particular the shape of his fascinating eyes. Raymonde tells Daniel, ' "you're a sort of spirit brother" (she knew that he would know she meant the Berling) "a sort of brother to her" ' (1934b, 28). To Raymonde, Daniel shares the mysterious and compelling beauty and glamour of Freda Berling, and, in one sense, the major theme of *The Usual Star* is the notion of charisma.

Several aspects of the text support the view that Freda Berling, the 'famous Swedish film star' (1934b, 22) of *The Usual Star* is a portrait of Garbo, combining references to her appearances in *The Atonement of Gösta Berling*

(1924) and *The Torrent* (1926). The reference to *The Atonement of Gösta Berling* is particularly abstruse. Garbo appeared in this film as Countess Elizabeth Dohna. The eponymous character is the hero, Gösta Berling (played by Lars Hansson), an unfrocked priest who is eventually redeemed by, and united romantically with, Elizabeth. Therefore although the name Freda does not occur in the film, H.D.'s use of the name Berling for the Garbo figure of *The Usual Star* almost certainly refers to the eventual fate of Garbo's character as the wife of Gösta Berling.

The narrative of the film places Garbo as the unfortunate wife of a boorish and elderly husband, Henrik. Gösta Berling seduces two young women in the course of the film before being united with Garbo/Elizabeth at the conclusion. The first of these women is his student Ebbe, Elizabeth's sister-in-law, who finally commits suicide when the marriage to Gösta proves impossible on account of their difference in social rank. The second of Gösta's romantic entanglements is Marianne, who fades out of the narrative after the disfiguring effects of smallpox on her face lead her to deem herself unworthy of Gösta. Elizabeth's attraction to the compromising figure of Gösta is acknowledged only in the final stages of the film. The crucial scene includes a journey over a vast expanse of ice and snow, thus recalling the Hyde Park passages of *The Usual Star*. Elizabeth is finally persuaded to act on her desire for Gösta by the major female figure of the narrative, Margareta Samzelius (played by Gerda Lundequist), who has been exiled from her own home as a penalty for the recent discovery of a past adulterous relationship. Margareta's chief regret, however, is that she continued to live with her husband (fearing to bring shame on her own mother and family) and lacked the courage to leave her loveless marriage. When Elizabeth's marriage to Henrik Dohna is proved to be invalid, pressure is being brought to

bear on Elizabeth to enter into a legal marriage with Henrik by his domineering and ambitious mother, but Margareta instead urges Elizabeth to follow her heart.

As she would in *The Joyless Street* the following year, Garbo plays a 'virtuous' woman in *The Atonement of Gösta Berling*. Elizabeth is assailed by sexual desire whereas Grete is beset by economic crisis, but both maintain their 'honour' at significant personal cost, eventually to be rewarded by 'respectable' marriages for their compliance with socially accepted sexual codes for women. As already detailed, Garbo's association with the role of the sexually transgressive vamp was created subsequently to these films, and pathos is the keynote in her earlier performances. In *The Atonement of Gösta Berling*, Garbo is the tragic victim of an unhappy marriage and the descriptions of 'the Berling' in *The Usual Star* are shot through with the same sorrowful melancholy that is Garbo's characteristic pose in the film. This is particularly so in the final scene, in which Garbo's eyes are ringed with dark circles (see figure 6). The narrative resolution of the final scene enacts Gösta's rescue of Elizabeth, a rescue which has been prefigured in his rescue of a wounded bird in an earlier sequence. In *The Usual Star* Freda Berling is continually associated with imagery of injured swans: 'Freda Berling, on the screen, wing-wounded eyes of a swan' (1934b, 22). The symbol of the persecuted swan connects Garbo's tragic performance in *The Atonement of Gösta Berling* as the wounded Elizabeth (symbolized by the bird saved by Gösta), with Freda Berling and her 'wing-wounded eyes' in H.D.'s novella.

One particular remark of Raymonde's would have conclusively identified Freda Berling as Garbo to any well-informed fan of the movies in 1928. Raymonde points out that Daniel and Freda Berling share a distinctive way of walking: ' "it's the awkward way you both move [...] cutting the air like water" '

Figure 6 Greta Garbo and Gerda Lundequist in *The Atonement of Gosta Berling* (1924)

(1934b, 28). One of Garbo's trademarks was her halting, uneven walk. In the study cited earlier by Blumer on the effects of movies on the public, a fan of Garbo's confessed to imitating her idol's unusual style of walking but found people asking 'if my knees are weak' (quoted by Stokes, 1999, 53). Furthermore, Raymonde's comments about 'the Berling' are almost identical to some of H.D.'s remarks on Garbo contained in 'Beauty.' For instance, like Garbo, who was 'beauty herself' (1927/1998c, 109) to H.D., Freda Berling represents for Raymonde 'beauty that had condescended, chosen the despised screen for its shadow medium' (1934b, 23).

The Usual Star also encodes the views expressed by H.D. in 'Beauty' on Garbo's performance in *The Torrent*. Unlike *Bid Me to Live*, which indirectly adopts aspects of *The Torrent* (see pp. 80-82 above), the meditation on Freda Berling in *The Usual Star* contains comments that faithfully reiterate the scathing attack by H.D. in *Close Up* on Garbo's appearance as Leonora in *The Torrent*. In 'Beauty,' H.D. writes of Garbo's 'mermaid enchantment' which has been re-packaged as 'vamp charm,' meaning that, 'her wigs, her eye-lashes have all but eclipsed our mermaid's straight stare' (1927/1998c, 109). For, according to H.D., the Hollywood industry and its gullible audience believe that 'a beauty [...] must be a vamp, an evil woman' (1927/1998c, 107). In the same way, Raymonde complains that, 'she [Freda Berling] is a sort of mermaid, playing small-town whore parts. [...] She is a mermaid, come to land, playing at being evil. She isn't and she can't be. They want to make a scarlet woman of a mermaid' (1934b, 33).

In *Close Up*, H.D. questions Garbo's intellectual grasp of the process to which she is being subjected by the film industry. H.D. hopes that Garbo will take it into her 'stupid, magic head' (1927/1998c, 109) to defend herself from this

insulting typecasting as a vamp in *The Torrent*, but is as yet unsure whether this is within her capability. Equally, emphasis is placed in *The Usual Star* on Freda Berling's astonishing, 'blatant' beauty compared with her dull intellect: 'Freda Berling did so contrive to move her odd great eyes, odd stupid great eyes, the eyes of any mermaid' (1934b, 27). Throughout the *Close Up* articles, as already remarked, H.D. returns obsessively to the ruination of Garbo and regrets that Garbo has failed to disentangle herself from her manufactured image. H.D. ends 'Boo,' her critique in of the images of the modern woman as flapper in Noel Coward's play *Sirocco*, with an ironic comment on Hollywood's treatment of Garbo: 'if we cannot clip this thing to vie with gutter sparrows...kill it' (1928a, 50). *The Usual Star* also encodes the extinction, as H.D. saw it, of Garbo's personality and beauty at the hands of the film industry, and in strikingly similar terms: 'Freda Berling was a dead swan gilded with garish greasepaint. They had to grease-paint out the swan fluff and the young down of the swan just come to whiteness. Garish beauty must be done in' (1924b, 22-23).

Although *The Torrent* is not named in *The Usual Star*, the genre of popular literature from which such Hollywood films were often adapted is examined at length. Raymonde's friend Ermentrude Solomon is a popular romantic novelist who writes under the pen name of E. Arnot. Ermy's novels have titles such as 'Famished Lovers,' and 'Scarred Souls' and feature continental settings with romantic meetings between characters with names such as Puella, Ronald and Maurice. In her playful portrait of E. Arnot, H.D. satirizes romantic novels such as those written by Elinor Glyn, and the derivative nature of popular fiction is lampooned. In one passage which emphasizes H.D.'s disdainful awareness of the close links between romance novels and Hollywood films, it is

revealed that Ermy actually models her fiction on popular films: 'it's a little sort of court square, like they have in moving pictures' (1934b, 50).

Although the tone is humorous, that same defensive desire to distance herself from typical feminine discourses which I have previously identified in H.D.'s writing for *Close Up* is again found here. In particular, Ermy is obsessed with the details of the clothing of her female characters. During a long telephone conversation with Raymonde, Ermy agonizes over Puella's costuming for a particular romantic scene in the novel she is at present writing. Raymonde agrees that Puella might indeed wear a velvet jacket in this particular setting. Ermy goes on,

> 'Perhaps she *would* throw, after all, her fur coat on top of *that*, it gets so terribly cold after sunset, nothing colder after sunset than southern Italian' (though she had never been to Sicily)? 'winter places. Taormina yes, would be, was sure to be cold, he might even (what was his name? Maurice) wrap his overcoat about her when they slid down the sea steps towards the moon-lit cove that looks out across the bay toward Naples, where she last saw...Ronald' (1934b, 54-55).

The commercial success of books similar to Ermy's, which feature such inanely superficial conceptions of femininity, has a corollary in the polemic on the laughable and stereotyped vamps of popular films such as *The Torrent* in 'Beauty.' H.D.'s view of the mechanical nature of sexualized filmic representations of women (which is taken up again in relation to sound in 'The Mask and the Movietone') is reflected in Raymonde's denigration of Ermy's female characters: 'all her little marionettes turned and bowed and scraped the floor with neat high-heeled painted slippers or long folds of carnival gown in passing' (1934b, 55). Equally, Raymonde's disgust at the artificial presentation of Freda Berling is expressed by reference to her clothing. 'The Berling' has been

'done up in white chiffon with diamantè shoulder straps and those un-natural slippers' (1934b, 25).

H.D.'s light-hearted references to an obsessive interest in women's clothing in popular novels and films connect with the novella's serious theme of role-playing, for Raymonde also finds herself in a quandary about costume, femininity and role. She has been invited to attend a dinner by the wealthy mother of her female friend Gareth, but she is ambivalent about participating in the formal dinner and the plot of the novella (such as it is) centres upon the question of whether or not she will in fact attend. Raymonde has seen a blue jacket on a shop window mannequin in Oxford Street that she feels would be suitable to wear at the dinner but never purchases it and makes the excuse of lacking the correct clothing in order to avoid going to the dinner. 'I was going out to dinner but decided I hadn't the right clothes,' she explains to her friend, Katherine, adamantly declaring that having the right clothes matters, 'absolutely and entirely' (1934b, 81). Attendance at the dinner party would necessitate, from Raymonde's point of view, a dishonest performance, the putting on of a false act, and this she finds intolerable: 'you and Gareth have a special sort of technique,' Raymonde says to Daniel, 'you turn off, so to speak, the lights...I can't do it. My only self-protection is — escape' (1934b, 70).

A further possible dimension to Raymonde's refusal to put on a costume and play the part of Lady Meyer's dinner party guest is suggested by the broadly biographical approach taken by Susan Friedman, who has no hesitation in basing her interpretation of the Dijon texts on her belief that the characters of Daniel, Gareth and Katherine are fictional portraits of, respectively, Kenneth Macpherson, Bryher and Frances Gregg (all of whom were H.D.'s lovers at different times,

sometimes concurrently). In general I have elected not to privilege biographically informed readings of H.D.'s texts in this study, since much work has already been done in this area. However, the justification of Raymonde's rejection of Lady Meyer by Raymonde's repudiation of aristocratic privilege and dislike of Lady Meyer's facile personality, seems inadequate as the cause for the agonized nature of Raymonde's decision regarding the dinner party. If, as Friedman asserts, the novella encodes the sexual relationships between H.D. as Raymonde and Bryher (Gareth), and between H.D. and Daniel (Macpherson), as well as H.D. and Gregg (Katherine), a biographical reading could explain Raymonde's need to hide the genuine nature of her relationship with Lady Meyer's daughter Gareth and son-in-law Daniel, and provide a more credible explanation for her refusal to attend the dinner. In any case, the seemingly trivial refusal of Raymonde to don a costume that is at odds with what she perceives as her true identity, is implicitly compared in the text with Freda Berling's apparent willingness to submit to the falsification of her image and appear as a vamp.

The allusions to Garbo in *The Usual Star* are further supported by the fact that the view of the film star propounded in the novella is a spiritual one. For, as 'Beauty' attests, the starting point of H.D.'s fascination with Garbo, was her reception of Garbo's astonishing charisma as a spiritual vision. The use of the word 'star' to describe a charismatic film actor was, of course, originally derived from the comparison of the actors on the screen with the otherworldly, brilliant light of the stars in space. At one stage in the text, H.D. appears to be playing with this concept by describing Daniel as having 'some pale luminous sort of star-light on his forehead' (1934b, 36), but tied up in H.D.'s notion of charisma, is a more profound and spiritual notion than the common assumption that the film star

is simply more glamorous, sexually attractive and unique than an 'ordinary' person. H.D. proposes in *Close Up* that Garbo's screen image is an intimation of the divine nature of truth as beauty and similarly in *The Usual Star* she chooses to use the word 'medium' to describe Freda Berling, as well as Daniel and Raymonde.

H.D. employs a cinematic device to account for the way in which such mediums transmit aspects of another, higher reality: 'it seemed that they [Daniel and Raymonde] were one pin-point, one star-point, to let some sort of outer light into this cumbrous city consciousness' (1934b, 20). Here, H.D. adopts the metaphor of the camera obscura (which she would use again in *The Gift*, 1984c, written during the 1940s) to link the other dimension of the spiritual with the possibility of spiritual vision through the film star. *The Usual Star*, however, carries lightly such ideas about the star as a conduit of spiritual truth. Towards the end, Katherine asks Raymonde about Daniel, and Raymonde answers, ' "O he goes on [...] the usual star about the usual forehead." ' Katherine's response, which closes the novella, may be interpreted either as a straightforward expression of desire or a more spiritual truth: ' "he is the most beautiful thing," Katherine said, "in the whole world" ' (1934b, 89).

True and false selves in *The Usual Star* and *Helen in Egypt*.

In order to continue to explore the possibility that Garbo's screen career provided H.D. with a paradigm of the constructed nature of identity, I shall examine the ways in which identity is conceived as divided or doubled in *The Usual Star* and in *Helen in Egypt*. In *The Usual Star*, the disparity between the Berling's beauty and her degraded commercial image is placed in the context of Raymonde's own experiences of conflicting selves, and the contradictions of

stardom, embodied by 'the Berling,' come to stand for the performative and arbitrary nature of identity itself. Expressed in the terms of poststructuralism, the text suggests that there is an unstable connection between the signifier (in terms of a name or social role), and the signified (namely the inner self) by using the analogy of the film star. Indeed, recent analyses of the phenomenon of stardom (such as Richard De Cordova's study, *Picture Personalities*) have discussed stardom in the context of poststructuralist concepts of the non-unitary subject. For instance, the way in which Garbo's image was produced in part by the screen narratives in which she played (the creation of a 'picture personality' in De Cordova's words) can be expressed in terms of a subject which is constituted (or 'hailed') by and through language. Thus, *The Usual Star* anticipates both the concept of the construction of identity in poststructuralist theory, and its relevance to the phenomenon of stardom.

As one might expect in a small-circulation experimental prose work, the conception of identity in *The Usual Star* is much more sophisticated than that in *Close Up*, which was directed to a wider public and designed as an intervention into the new area of film studies. At important junctures in the novella's narrative, Raymonde meditates on a statement, inaccurately quoted from Jacques' speech in *As You Like It*, that '*each man in his life plays many parts*' (1934b. 37). When Raymonde consents to get into Lady Meyer's luxurious car she experiences the clash of her recently crystallized identity of 'a ghost walking in a garden' with Daniel, and her current self seated in the car: an insincere and artificial identity (1934b, 39 – 40). These selves are described, in one of the many cinematic metaphors in the novella, as 'steadily projected' so that 'self and self [...] become one self' (1934b, 39). The interdependent nature of the two selves (the two that

make the one self) nullifies the possibility that one might be a true and the other a false self. This is summed up in a statement that lies at the crux of the text: 'falsity of true self, truth of false self made one bright projector' (1934b, 40).

In this way, *The Usual Star* departs from the more simplistic notions expounded in 'Beauty,' of a 'true' Garbo (as she appeared in *The Joyless Street*), overlaid with a 'false' Garbo (the Hollywood construct of *The Torrent*). The question posed in 'Beauty' of why Garbo would accept such poor roles, is reframed as a proposition that all roles in life are performances and equally fictitious. So, instead of demanding (as H.D. does in 'Beauty') that representations on film reflect reality, H.D.'s character Raymonde re-conceptualizes identity itself as a fiction sustained by elements that have no origin in individual control. Raymonde moves from questioning why the filmmakers did not get someone else other than Freda Berling to play 'vamp parts' (H.D.'s own position in 'Beauty') to speculating on the bizarre possibility of someone else dressing up 'in tinsel' and being the Raymonde who goes to the dinner party, or of someone else other than Gareth being chosen to 'be' Lady Meyer's daughter. Finally, Raymonde asks, rhetorically, 'why hadn't they cast the whole show differently?' (1934b, 33 - 34), thus reducing life itself to nothing but a performance.

Similarly, in *The Usual Star*, H.D. inscribes an experience of the self as other in her depiction of Raymonde's detached relationship with her own *nom de plume*, Ray Bart: 'people called her Ray Bart, to distinguish the things she wrote from the things they found wanting in her' (1934b, 73). In the case of H.D.'s own writing career, the complexities attendant on the issues of naming have been thoroughly examined by Susan Friedman in *Penelope's Web*. Friedman claims

that the name 'H.D.' signified a specific identity, associated with poetry (and with Imagist poetry in particular) and that Hilda Doolittle herself had an ambivalent attitude towards it: it was the signature of her success, but a label which confined her to a particular manner of writing, which, as Friedman notes, led her to be extremely reluctant to associate her prose work with the name 'H.D.'

Thus, to some extent, as Friedman points out, H.D. collaborated in the mythologizing of her persona, citing Norman Holmes Pearson's claim that H.D. wrote to him: 'for me, it was so important, my own LEGEND' (1990, 67).[38] H.D.'s awareness of the existence of a 'legend' attached to her pseudonym evokes a performative self in a way reminiscent of the film star. Latterly, the almost universal tendency of scholars of H.D. to refer to her by what was, in fact, a pen name, can be paralleled with the ubiquitous use of the name Greta Garbo. [39] Hilda Doolittle did not officially register a change of name, as did Greta Gustafson, but it could be argued that like Garbo's star image, 'H.D.' was, as Friedman writes, 'a name she performed' (1990, 39).

Whether or not it was drawn from personal experience, H.D.'s epic poem about Helen of Troy is based on the inherent tensions between the construction of a legend and on the experience of the individual called upon to embody that legend. Helen's quest in *Helen in Egypt* is to understand her part in the legendary conflict of the battle of Troy, which she attempts to do by searching her own memories, questioning others and analysing the myths that have led to the belief that she herself is a goddess. Reminiscent of the way in which H.D. speculates in her film reviews upon Greta Gustafson's own relationship with her image as

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[38] Friedman gives the date of the letter as 17th June 1951. It is interesting to note that this was the year before H.D. started to write *Helen in Egypt*.
[39] Hirsch (1990) alone explicitly places quotation marks around the name of H.D.

'Garbo,' Helen in *Helen in Egypt* repeatedly interrogates her self-identity in relation to the myths and stories in circulation about her. In the process Helen's sense of self, as well as the very notion of selfhood, unravels, giving the poem its peculiar power to destabilize and disturb.

Helen in Egypt is a fragmented, three-hundred page exploration of the composite figure of Helen of Troy conducted by a narrator (in prose head-notes) and various voices (in verse) including Helen herself, Achilles, Paris and Theseus. The poem takes place in an indeterminate time and place after the events of the Trojan War. Susan Edmunds has rightly pointed out that 'any synopsis of this poem must also be an interpretation' since, as she explains, the 'ordinarily stable narrative elements of character, setting and event' are shrouded in confusion (1994, 101). I will not, therefore, attempt to summarize the poem, but seek the traces of H.D.'s reception of Garbo (her original 'Helen') in the phrases and images throughout the poem that evoke the instability of identity in the context of performance, persona and femininity.

For instance, statements by H.D.'s Helen such as: 'I became what his accusation made me,' (1985a, 23) describe identity as a process analogous to the manufacturing of the star, and comments such as Helen's 'I am not, nor mean to be / the Daemon they made of me' (1985a, 109) could equally well apply to the film star's confusion of self-identity with the ingredients of a star image. Therefore, despite the very different discourses of the Hollywood film industry and the classical world of H.D.'s poem, I shall argue that Garbo's star image, as it was created by the cinema and received by H.D., can illuminate the shadowy, symbolic construction of 'Helen' in *Helen in Egypt*, in a way which is comparable

to the classical texts which have been discussed by Eileen Gregory in her major study, *H.D. and Hellenism* (1997).

Primarily, the division between the star image and the film actor, recalls by analogy the story of Helen's double. This variant of the myth of Helen proposes that Helen herself did not go to Troy but instead a phantom double or eidolon was formed out of clouds and sent there by Zeus, and that the war, therefore, was fought for an illusion. The tradition originates in a fragment included by Plato in the *Phaedrus*. Plato gives an extract from a 'palinode' by the poet Stesichorus (to which H.D. refers explicitly in *Helen in Egypt*, 1) in which he addresses Helen, admitting, 'thou never didst sail in the well-decked ships / Nor come to the towers of Troy' (1961, 490).

Froma Zeitlin discusses the myth of Helen's double in the course of her investigation of gender role reversal and mimesis in a satirical play by Aristophanes (1981). The association of Helen of Troy with the ambiguities of art is, Zeitlin argues, perhaps the one constant in all the narratives about her, from the epics of Homer to Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*. In Zeitlin's sophisticated discussion of the myth of Helen's double, she notes that Stesichorus was 'not the first to associate Helen with questions of imitation,' citing the contradictory stories related in Book 4 of the *Odyssey* as tantamount to the suggestion that 'Helen and storytelling might be the same thing — the imitation of many voices in the service of seduction and enchantment' (1981, 322).

Euripides' play about the myth of the double, *Helen*, dates from 412 BC, and is also cited on the opening page of H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt*. In the Euripidean version, the real Helen has been waiting out the war in Egypt, captive of the King, Proteus, while a phantom Helen has ignited the war by her elopement with Paris.

Hence Euripides' play has been taken simply to enshrine a virtuous Helen. However, the issue of truth is implicitly questioned in the play because characters must decide what to believe solely on the evidence of their own eyes. Following the ending of the war, Menelaus has regained possession of the errant Helen and is on his way home. When he encounters another Helen, he is amazed because he has just left behind (in a cave) the woman he had believed to be Helen. The 'real' Helen appeals to Menelaus to believe that the other Helen (rescued from Troy and now waiting in the cave) is a phantom. She assures him, 'to Troy I went not: that a phantom was' (1912, 517).[40] Menelaus is loath to accept that what he sees before him really is Helen, but she argues: 'who shall teach thee better than thine eyes?' (1912, 515). The appearance of the phantom Helen was presumably just as convincing, and doubt is therefore thrown by implication on the truth of visual evidence. Menelaus is finally convinced when a messenger arrives, corroborating the story of the phantom Helen by describing the disappearance of the figure in the cave and relating her final words: 'Tyndarus' sad daughter [i.e. Helen] bears an ill name for nought, who is innocent' (1912, 519). The play proceeds on this premise, but the possible mismatch between truth and appearance, once raised, is never entirely dispelled.

H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt* draws upon the myth of a phantom Helen, dwelling at length upon the tragic aspects of Helen's misfounded culpability, for Zeus's creation of a double implicates her in a set of fictions in which she had no genuine part. Addressing the Greeks who perished at Troy, she says:

> Helen did not walk
> upon the ramparts,

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[40] The translation cited is by Arthur Way. According to Gregory (1997, 282) this was the edition H.D. was reading during the composition of *Helen in Egypt*.

> she whom you cursed
> was but the phantom and the shadow thrown
> of a reflection.
>
> (1985a, 5)

This emphasis upon the tragic innocence of the figure of Helen in the 1957 poem (although it is repeatedly put into doubt) recalls the description of Helen as a blameless victim in 'Beauty,' and, while the myth of Helen's double does not appear directly in 'Beauty,' H.D. ends the review with a possible reference to it: namely her hope that Garbo will 'rise and rend those who have so defamed her,' (1927/1998c, 109). These words appear to point to the story in Plato's *Phaedrus* that Stesichorus was blinded by Helen and regained his sight only when he composed the 'Palinode,' in which he told the story of the double and thus exonerated Helen of all blame.

In *Helen in Egypt*, H.D. takes up the suggestion in Euripides' play that identity is an illusion and develops it from the subjective point of view of Helen herself. Throughout the poem, Helen, as well as other speakers, repeatedly question her identity: was she the Helen who went with Paris to Troy, or has she remained in Egypt throughout? Is she in fact a goddess who was 'hanged' in Rhodes, where 'the cord turned to a rainbow' (1985a, 129)? Most outrageously, at one point in the poem, when the whole history of Troy is in question, it is suggested that Helen might even be 'another symbol,/ a star, a ship, or a temple' (1985a, 231) and in other words, not human at all.

In addition to the proliferation of truths offered by the speakers in the verse, the narrator of the prose introductions for each section are cast in the voice of an observer who has only partial knowledge of the events described. This narrator is, in some senses, an equivalent figure to the viewer of a film. The voice

of the narrator questions and speculates; trying to understand not just the meanings of the unfolding scenes, but basic facts such as their location and personae. For instance, one head-note reads: 'Paris says to Helen, "it is dark upon Leuké," so we imagine them together — we do not know where' (1985a, 125). This voice shares similarities with the style of H.D.'s writing about film which, as Laura Marcus writes, conveys a blow-by-blow account of watching a film rather than a detached overview. Marcus highlights especially the review of 'Expiation,' in which H.D. relates watching the film from middle to middle instead of beginning to end, having arrived late at the cinema (1998, 97). The process of figuring out the meaning of the images of a film is as important in H.D.'s articles as the total, retrospective impression that is the more usual format of a film review. Like the cinema viewer, the narrator of *Helen in Egypt* is in the process of making meaning, and this feature adds yet another layer of ambiguity to the poem since the truth and accuracy of Helen's memories, already partial and uncertain, are thrown into further doubt by the narrator's fragile grasp of them.

The pervasive uncertainty of *Helen in Egypt* is expressed in the often-repeated question, 'which was the dream?' In the quest to discover the truth of her identity, Helen and the other figures in the poem must determine which is the reality from a variety of contending narratives and scenarios. Chief amongst them is the opposition between the experiences of war on a grand public, historic scale, and love, the realm of intimacy and personal relationship. Thus, the mythic events of Troy, imaged in terms of warfare, are counterposed in the poem to the liaison between Helen and Achilles in a location which might be Egypt, the afterlife or an out-of-time dimension:

Helena, which was the dream?

> the rasp of a severed wheel,
> the fury of steel upon steel,
> the spark from a sword on a shield
>
> or the deathless spark
> of Helena's wakening…
> a touch in the dark?
>
> (1985a, 42)

Helen's memories, however, encompass both of these opposed narratives. Later in the poem, Achilles attempts to resolve the problem of Helen's status, asking:

> How are Helen in Egypt
> and Helen on the ramparts,
> together yet separate?
>
> (1985a, 63)

This is the central mystery of the poem, namely, is the Helen who was at Troy, or the Helen accompanying Achilles in Egypt in the present of the poem, the 'real' Helen? Achilles subsequently restates the question in different words, speculating on Aphrodite's part in the confusion: 'which was the dream, which was the veil of Cytherea?' (1985a, 63). His desperate attempt to distinguish the real Helen from the false double recalls Menelaus' dilemma in Euripides' *Helen*, but in H.D.'s text, the truth is endlessly provisional and even this question is ambiguous, as Eileen Gregory points out. Gregory writes, 'the very meaning of Achilles' question is in doubt, as is its answer [...] do the two questions represent an opposition or an identity: the dream *or* the veil; the dream *that is to say*, the veil?' (1997, 229).

Thus, as Elizabeth Hirsch states, the poem 'multiplies Helens' (1990, 441), for H.D. does not hold up the one true Helen as either the faithful or the faithless wife, the real woman or the phantom, as innocent or guilty, as historical or fictitious. In consequence, H.D.'s Helen, as Cynthia Hogue writes, 'is constituted

in division (both doubled and duplicitous) and cut off from knowledge about herself' (1995, 118). She is the repository of the projected desires and hatreds recorded in the stories about her; she is a mirror, or 'a blind reflection of the sighted male' as Hirsch puts it (1990, 440), and is no more than the sum of the stories told about her. In this way, H.D. examines how self-identity is contingent upon naming and positioning by others, and specifically explores the effects upon women of patriarchal myths of the feminine, through that of the 'Grecian harlot' for Helen of Troy.

Helen's oppression by the patriarchal myths of the seductive and adulterous woman who was the cause of the many deaths of the Trojan war can be compared to the pressures upon Garbo identified by H.D. in 'Beauty' to fulfil the Hollywood stereotype of the man-eating femme fatale. However, the discussion in 'Beauty' of Garbo as a radiant figure of classic beauty in *The Joyless Street* and then a hidebound vamp in *The Torrent*, is far less sophisticated than the meditation on the ambivalence and instability of the figure of Helen in *Helen in Egypt*. The subject position explored and dramatized in *Helen in Egypt* might be described as a post-Lacanian conception of identity.[41] Ultimately, the question of whether the voice of Helen in the poem is the same Helen who went to Troy, is never resolved, and her 'memories' of events on the city walls and of battle scenes, although vivid, might equally be the result of 'false memory syndrome' as much as genuine recollection. In other words, she is doubly fictitious; a fictional character with fictional 'memories.'

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[41] The reader is referred to Claire Buck's reading of *Helen in Egypt* which is conducted along precisely these lines (1991, 146-164).

It is impossible to know for sure which, if any, of Garbo's films H.D. saw after the *Close Up* years, but a close correspondence exists between Helen in *Helen in Egypt* and Garbo's role in *As You Desire Me* (1932). In this film Garbo plays Zara, an amnesiac. Zara has fallen into a new life as a cabaret singer who drinks all night and flirts with every man she meets. She has no memories of a prior identity, and one night she is told by a man who has watched her perform on stage that she is in fact Maria, a countess, who has been missing (presumed dead) for ten years. This identity is finally the one Zara accepts although there is never any conclusive proof that she is fact that woman. The implication of the conclusion of the film is that one's identity lies entirely in the convictions of others (in this case, it is the passionate belief of the countess's husband that compels Zara to accept her identity as Maria). *Helen in Egypt* is based throughout on Helen's lack of reliable memories on which to base her identity, and on a series of competing second-hand accounts of her own history. In the same way, the competing stories of Zara's lover and the husband of the lost Countess contend for the status of truth. Garbo as the amnesiac Zara, thus offers yet another filmic precursor of H.D.'s Helen to set beside the figure of Grete from 1925.

Finally, there is also a striking parallel between the endings of *Helen in Egypt* and of *Queen Christina*, in terms of both a visual image and a feminist statement. The resolution of *Helen in Egypt* is centred around Achilles' (and Helen's) mental pictures and memories of Thetis, the mother of Achilles. When young, Achilles fashioned a doll as a replacement for his absent mother; and, in later life, Achilles' desire for Thetis is stirred once again by a representation of her in wood as a ship's figurehead. It is revealed that Achilles' attraction to and murderous hatred of Helen are displacements of long-buried unconscious

impulses toward his mother. Instead of capitulating to the prerogative of the male Oedipus complex and its repeated embodiment in cultural myths (which include that of desirable but deadly Helen of Troy), the poem ends with the resolution of the painful confusion of identity and blame. Helen declares, cryptically, 'the Sphinx is seen, / the Beast is slain,' and that, in discovering the underlying reasons for her demonization as Helen of Troy, she now knows 'the best and the worst' (1985a, 303).

The final lines of the poem are spoken by the voice of the eidolon Thetis. She disowns Paris, who is unable to accept that his desire for Helen is Oedipal in origin, and describes the rhythms and motion of the sea. The description of the waves and the sand is from the perspective of Thetis as the figurehead on the prow of the ship:

> But what could Paris know of the sea,
> Its beat and long reverbaration,
> Its booming and delicate echo [...]
>
> what does Paris know of the hill and hollow
> of billows, the sea-road?
>
> (1985a, 304)

Following this imagery, which evokes both the 'consciousness' of a vessel ploughing through the deep sea and *in utero* sensations from the perspective of an unborn child, the concluding, enigmatic statement of the eidolon is as follows:

> Only Achilles could break his heart
> and the world for a token,
> a memory forgotten.
>
> (1985a, 304)

Similarly, the final image of Garbo as Queen Christina, places Garbo herself as the figurehead of a ship (see figure 7). The famously blank expression on Garbo's face, hinting at some mysterious consummation, parallels Thetis's hermetic

Figure 7 Greta Garbo in *Queen Christina* (1933)

pronouncement indicating wisdom gained but not fully articulated. Thetis withdraws, her knowledge impenetrable to any but the initiated, but representing a release from the wearisome questions about Helen's part in the 'holocaust of the Greeks' (1985a, 5). In like manner, Garbo/Christina sails, as Erkkila puts it 'out of the frame' representing the possibility of freedom from oppressive scripts.

'Was I ever there?': Alienation and otherness in H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt* and Garbo's picture personality.

In the final part of this chapter I will be proposing that Helen's sense of dislocation from herself by the imposition of an alien, public persona or double in *Helen in Egypt* can be illuminated by a popular biography of Garbo that H.D. is known to have been reading in 1955. My study, therefore, takes the already established connection between Garbo and *Helen in Egypt* a step further, by suggesting that *Helen in Egypt*, as well as being a feminist appropriation of ancient myths, constitutes a meditation on the experience of stardom from the perspective of the star. For, although most previous considerations of the impact of Garbo on H.D.'s work have focused exclusively on H.D.'s encounter with Garbo's visual image in 1927 (as outlined in chapter five), it is my contention that Garbo's later, reclusive, life, in the shadow of her former star status and fame, should be considered as yet another strand in the complex set of sources and influences at work in H.D.'s late, major poem, *Helen in Egypt*.

This possibility first arose from an observation that the dominant theme of *Helen in Egypt*, namely the relation between memory and truth, parallels the gulf between fiction and reality in Garbo's long years of retirement. In other words, Helen's dual identity as a mythic goddess and bewildered woman speaking in the poem, might be compared to the unreality of Garbo's image preserved on screen

and the reality of Garbo herself, living on after her retirement from the screen in 1941. In one sense, H.D.'s poem is about a woman trying to outlive a fiction, and it seems likely that, in the 1950s when she was composing the poem, H.D. would have been aware of Garbo's troubled retirement and her frustrated attempts to wrest a private life and identity from the intrusive stare of the media and public. Evidence of H.D.'s continuing interest in Garbo can be found in editorial notes accompanying the published letters between H.D. and her friend and publishing agent, Norman Holmes Pearson (*Between History and Poetry,* 1997). The editor of the letters, Donna Hollenberg, states that Pearson sent H.D. a biography of Garbo by John Bainbridge in the summer of 1955, when she was in the latter stages of the composition of *Helen in Egypt* (1997, 179).

My suspicion that Garbo's star image and retirement from the screen form a subtext in *Helen in Egypt* was confirmed when I consulted Bainbridge's biography. This biography of the star contains many references to Garbo's subjective experiences that closely match the presentation and emotional situation of Helen in H.D.'s poem, and these correspondences will be considered in detail here. In particular some of the anecdotes that Bainbridge relates resonate with aspects and scenarios in *Helen in Egypt*. For instance, Bainbridge describes Garbo's habit of watching her old films, and, as she watches them, of referring to herself in the third person (1955, 11). This radical dislocation of self from memory, and self from externalized image is precisely the basis of Helen's predicament in *Helen in Egypt*, for Helen experiences an uncanny uncertainty and detachment about her involvement in the critical moments of her life.

Equally, Bainbridge's own panegyric on Garbo uses many strikingly similar terms to the variety of metaphors and roles attached to Helen in H.D.'s

poem. Most significantly, Bainbridge's designation of Garbo as 'undeniably the classic symbol of womanly beauty in our time' and his pronouncement that 'she alone has been universally accepted as the latter-day Helen of Troy' (1955, 13), might well have revitalized H.D.'s early conception in *Close Up* of Garbo as Helen. While H.D. might not have shared his masculine perspective on Garbo's 'good looks,' Bainbridge's detailed examination of the uneasy relationship between Garbo and her star image offers a version of the Garbo legend as a contemporary embodiment of the Helen myth.

In speculating on the reasons for Garbo's retirement, Bainbridge sums up Garbo's fate in these words:

> Thus the legend was spun and Garbo became in the minds of the Imaginative millions the myth that had been fashioned by the few — a strange, hermetic goddess, a temple figure of beauty, secrecy and omniscience. It may all have been, in the end, a disservice, for the real Garbo was never able to live up to the myth (1955, 227).

The classical goddess described by Bainbridge, once worshipped by millions but now living in anguished solitude and nostalgia, haunted by her double, is strikingly similar to the Helen figure of *Helen in Egypt*:

> and Helen, half of earth,
> outlived the goddess Helen
> and Helen's epiphany in Egypt.
>
> (1985a, 111)

Helen's dilemma is that she is, somehow, simultaneously 'both phantom and reality' (1985a, 3). Bainbridge describes Garbo's star persona as an 'other self,' a 'fabled creature of mystery,' which Garbo regarded 'alternately with distaste and with quiet amusement' (1955, 154), and amongst the anecdotes that he includes in his book, many relate to the vexed relation of Garbo to her own star image. Bainbridge records an occasion in which Garbo was driving with her close

friend, Wilhelm Sörenson, in her second hand Buick, during which she comments on the absurdity of her situation: ' "Imagine," Garbo said to her companion, "I read last night that I was queen of the movies, and look at me now, riding in this old car. Gott, what a funny joke" ' (1955, 154). Garbo expresses the curious sense of an other self, alien to her and comically at odds with her own subjectivity. There is a resemblance here with the more tragic presentation of Helen's dual consciousness of the events at Troy and her location in Egypt:

> a bowman from the Walls
>
> let fly the dart;
> some said it was Apollo,
> but I, Helena, knew it was love's arrow:
>
> it was Love, it was Apollo, it was Paris:
> I knew and I did not know this,
> while I slept in Egypt.
>
> (1985a, 112-113)

Another vignette in Bainbridge's book, however, gives a darker version of Garbo's haunting by her larger-than-life double. In response to a concerned but flippant remark by a director (who is not named) to Garbo that she looked so tired she must be 'dead,' Garbo apparently replied, after a long pause, 'Dead? I have been dead many years' (1955, 162). The indication that Garbo as an individual felt herself subsumed beneath her star-identity, is seized upon and developed in the biography, and the radically destabilising experience of stardom for the star is interpreted by Bainbridge in terms of high drama as follows:

> The tragedy of Greta Garbo, it is now made clear, lies in the difference between what she really is and the aesthetic, romantic appeal she made and symbolized. These two entities, the woman and the legend, are at opposite poles, hopelessly irreconcilable. And yet, courageously, Garbo must live with both (1955, 224).

In a similar way in H.D.'s poem, the legends and stories in circulation about Helen become permanently entangled with her self-identity. Her attempts to find safety and seclusion with Achilles, Paris and Theseus are all dominated by her part in the Trojan conflict and although she tries to deny the blame, her identity is bound up with her role as Helen of Troy. Helen's attitude to this role varies from glorying in her power as the motivating force behind major historic events ('mine, all the ships,' 1985a, 25), to an uncomprehending sense of confusion ('do I love War?/ is this Helena?' 1985a, 177). In any case, Helen knows that her identity is in some sense inseparable from her part in the war ('what is Helen without the spears?' 1985a, 140) and that her identification with the role of the 'wanton' represents a threat: in other words, 'the script was a snare' (1985a, 220). Both Garbo and Helen embody a predicament familiar to women, who are called upon to play the part of femininity and become embroiled in its contradictory and burdensome meanings.

Bainbridge argues that elements of the narratives of Garbo's films became confused with her own identity in the mind of the public, (despite the simultaneous awareness of audiences that Garbo was playing a part). For instance her appearances as the woman doomed to hopeless love in *Flesh and the Devil* and *Camille*, the woman who has never before laughed in *Ninotchka*, or the woman who is continually depressive and alone, in *Grand Hotel*. Equally, Helen's role (whether or not it is based on truth) as the legendary Helen, the most beautiful and desirable woman in the world, has an impact on all of her relationships: Achilles, Paris and Theseus all regard her in the light of this fictional identity. When the poem opens, Helen meets Achilles on a beach.

Achilles, on recognizing her as 'Helena, cursed of Greece' (1985a, 16) tries to strangle her, but the attack ends in a kiss.

The encounter with Achilles sets up two rival realities: the violent public arena of war, and the private, intimate world of sexual relationship. But these two worlds are not discrete and Helen finds that her 'crimes' in Troy (whether committed by herself or a phantom in her image) leak through into the secluded personal world with Achilles in Egypt. In the same way, the private life of the star cannot be sealed off and the projections of the fantasies of others, created and sustained by the screen image, continually leak through.

The theme of a public role as a burden unites the figure of Helen in the poem and the popular view of Garbo, especially in her later years. Interestingly, the desire to escape fame and its onerous demands is the dominant motif of *Queen Christina*, the one film which has been described as 'authored' by Garbo. Without falling into the trap of regarding Garbo's performance as a personal expression of loneliness and the weight of her fame, the articulation of this predicament by the isolated ruler of *Queen Christina* leads the audience to interpret the statements as originating from and equally applicable to Garbo herself. For instance, with an unmistakable note of irony in her voice, Garbo (the famous recluse) as Christina, asks, 'must I smile for the masses?' To an even greater degree, the following speech made by Christina as she contemplates her abdication, resonates with the sorrows and frustrations that, taking into account the star image that had been created around her, could easily be mistaken as Garbo's own. Christina laments:

> All my life I have been a symbol. A symbol is eternal, changeless, like a statue. A human being is multiply changeable, with desires and dreams, hopes and despairs. I am tired of being a symbol. I long to be a human being. This longing I cannot suppress (cited in Erkkila, 611)

Encoded in this speech (in addition to its meaning within the film's narrative) is the suggestion of Garbo's own desire to be free of the burden of her stardom. In the same way, Helen in H.D.'s poem is seeking to move beyond her confinement to the role of Helen of Troy: 'I can not go on, on, on // telling the story / of the fall of Troy' she says (1985a, 153). Helen tries to separate herself from her designation as the most beautiful woman in history, a symbol of beauty for others, expressing the same emotion of an unbearable burden: 'I can not endure the weight of eternity' (1985a, 110). Parallels abound, therefore, between all of these disparate female figures: Garbo with her troubled relation to her own image, Queen Christina and her private anguish as a reluctant monarch, and the self-divided Helen of H.D.'s poem.

Finally, a radical disjunction between a past and present self is dramatized in Bainbridge's book in a way that resonates with many passages in *Helen in Egypt*. His description of Garbo watching her appearance in her own films and Helen's situation in H.D.'s poem seem to me strikingly alike. The alienating effect upon Garbo of looking at her own screen image as related by Bainbridge is worth quoting in full:

> Occasionally [...] she goes to the Museum of Modern Art, in New York, and in the company of a museum official [...] looks at a private showing of one of her pictures. As the film unfolds she comments to her companion on her actions on the screen always referring to herself in the third person. 'Watch her now,' she may remark, 'she's going to ask for money. Then she'll go outdoors and smoke a cigarette. Oh my, look at the way she's done her hair' (1955, 11).

In H.D.'s poem, Helen, like the Garbo according to Bainbridge's description, has flashes of memory which seem to be her own but do not have a feeling of reality. Helen experiences vivid scenes of battle and passionate encounters which have

the aura of dreams rather than personal memories, visual sequences played out as if scenes in a film. The memories are compellingly convincing, comprising the noise and sensation of lived experiences:

> Another shout from the wharves;
> I fight my way through the crowd,
> but the gates are barred [...]
>
> I would leap from the Walls,
> but a sentry snatches my sleeve,
> dragging me back
>
> (1985a, 234)

But these recollections are uncertain ('was it seven years, was it a day? / I can not remember' 1985a, 235), and the scenes at Troy are hazy and insubstantial when compared to her experiences in the poem's opening time and location: the beach in Egypt which is the scene of her encounter with Achilles:

> I only remember the shells,
> whiter than bone,
> on the ledge of a desolate beach
>
> (1985a, 235)

Helen's alienation from the memories of her past leads her to question their truth ('did I ever stand on the ramparts?' 1985a, 224) and the categories of dream and reality become fragmented ('I remember a dream that was real' 1985a, 110). Indeed of all the forms of uncertainty in *Helen in Egypt*, the chief one relates to time. The narrator and the voices of the characters repeatedly question what relation the events they describe and recollect have to time; are they 'in time' or 'out of time'? Helen declares that 'a sharp sword divides me from the past' (1985a, 116), and she strives to achieve a 'reconciliation with time' (1985a, 208).

The jarring difference between our past and present selves is explored in H.D.'s poem and contributes to the disorientating effect on the reader. In Garbo's case her past self is exceptionally vivid, being captured on film and shared by millions of viewers. The radically destabilising effect on Garbo, watching herself as if an other, encapsulates the common experience of the strangeness of one's past. Helen's question 'was I ever there?' (1985a, 221) expresses the uncanniness inherent in the meeting of Garbo's two selves (the screen image of the 20s and 30s, and the woman living in the 1950s) in front of the movie screen.

Whether or not Bainbridge's biography is a source for H.D.'s poem in the usual sense, there are a striking number of points of comparison between Garbo's image and career, and Helen in *Helen in Egypt*. Garbo's fame as a screen goddess, her legendary beauty, her alienation from her own constructed image, her reclusive life and aura of mystery, and her later years spent accompanied by the ghostly double of her former self, closely resemble the variants and versions of the myth of Helen of Troy which captured H.D.'s imagination and found expression in *Helen in Egypt*.

H.D. was shocked and upset in 1927 to find that in *The Torrent*, Garbo consented to play a part which seemed to betray her inner self, that essential self which H.D. believed she had witnessed on screen in *The Joyless Street*. Subsequently, however, H.D. meditated upon the parallels between the constructed nature of the star image and of identity as it is experienced, and in *The Usual Star*, presents a complex notion of the self as a site of competing and equally fictitious roles. The concept of identity in *Helen in Egypt* is likewise far removed from the straightforward division set out in 'Beauty.' Helen is not 'either' the vamp or the pure woman; the Helen who was at Troy or the Helen

who remained in Egypt. The complex, dreamlike narrative of *Helen in Egypt*, suggests that the truth of identity is shifting and unstable; inflected by memory, time and a patriarchal scheme of values relating to women's 'purity.' It would seem, then, that by the 1950s, the enigma of Greta Garbo had in H.D.'s mind merged with the myths of Helen's double, as a metaphorical expression of the fractured nature of human identity.

Conclusion

The major aim of this thesis has been to analyse H.D.'s film writing from a feminist perspective, and my investigation has involved three main strategies. Firstly, to gain insight into H.D.'s position as a film critic, secondly to compare her critique of women on screen with later feminist film theories, and finally to consider the relationship between H.D.'s viewing of film and aspects of her fictional works. In addition to reviewing the findings of my study in these three areas, in these final pages I shall reflect upon the broader questions raised by the nature of this project.

With regard to H.D.'s position as a film critic, I have argued that gender issues strongly influenced H.D.'s self-presentation in *Close Up*, and in particular that her adoption of an elitist position can be accounted for by the ascription of femininity to the (viewing) masses. I contend that, while the role of film critic offered H.D. a position of cultural authority (although only, of course, within the parameters of *Close Up*'s community), social discourses about women (such as the early sociological treatises, commentaries by her fellow modernists, and consumerist materials) meant that H.D. had to resist her own positioning within the passive and consuming feminine masses.

Instead of selecting the kinds of allusions more obviously appropriate to movie criticism, H.D. employs the metaphors and images characteristic of her own creative work, and although this might not have been her deliberate intention, identifies herself in the process as highly educated and culturally superior. She structures 'Beauty' after the manner of a Platonic dialogue, by first defining her terms, and appears to be modelling her attack on the Ogre of the film industry in this essay upon Plato's arraignment of the Sophists. Equally, her belief in the

cinema as a place of potential religious experience has the additional effect of elevating her interest in films above the common run. At every opportunity, therefore, H.D. removes herself from the degraded, feminized, category of movie fan and in 'Beauty' asserts *ad nauseum* that although others might be duped by the Hollywood machine, she is not susceptible.

Thus, H.D.'s rejection of Hollywood films is conditioned by many factors, and the inconsistencies in her approach to commercial films (over and above the variation in the quality of different Hollywood productions) attest to the complexities involved. For instance, given H.D.'s stance of superiority in 'Beauty,' in which she distinguishes herself from the misguided audience for Hollywood films, it is surprising to find a whole range of film actors' names and references scattered throughout the reviews which betray a broad familiarity with Hollywood cinema. Furthermore, H.D. lets slip that she reads fan magazines, and even plays with the pose of the 'screen-struck school-girl' in 'An Appreciation' (1929/1998a, 139).

Further evidence of the conflicting demands upon female writers in the modernist period is found in the discrepancies between the stance adopted in her film writing, and the themes and implied authorial positions in H.D.'s novels. The most telling instance of this was found in the contradictions between the glamorization of the male maestro in both 'An Appreciation' and the *Borderline* pamphlet, and the feminist critique of the exclusion of women from authorship and cultural authority in *Her*. The method of archival research used in this project also brought to light another instance in which the ruling codes of a different discourses appear to have had an impact. Namely, the finding that, instead of being a straightforwardly fictional representation of H.D.'s revelatory vision of

Garbo in *The Joyless Street* as it has always been assumed, the film described in *Bid Me to Live* actually corresponds in many ways to *The Torrent*, the film derided in the same review ('Beauty'). The implication here is that the rejection of Hollywood film by H.D. is not nearly so complete as the tone of her *Close Up* writing indicates and that the creative influence of such popular films was as great as that of the European art film tradition.

Although I have elected within this study to focus solely on H.D.'s writing about film, rather than her appearance on screen, some intriguing details about *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside* (1927), are appropriate to append here, because the film apparently took a satirical view of exactly the approach to cinema that H.D. was cultivating in her pieces for *Close Up*. As explained, the film is no longer extant, but a description, including eleven stills, can be found in an article in *The Architectural Review* signed by 'Mercurius,' which was the pen name of James Burford.[42] The film is described as 'a brilliant and amusing commentary on the technical devices of many well known producers of film' and the method used is 'a constant reduction to absurdity' (1930, 341). For instance, figure one in the article shows the back view of a woman sitting on a table, and is referred to as 'the epic posterior shot.' The still is explained as representing 'the well known technical device of isolating a part of a figure to give emphasis to a significant moment, to raise a mundane action to an epic plane' (1930, 341).

The likelihood of H.D.'s involvement in the playful deflation of the highest aims of cinematic art in *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside* provides a much needed corrective, in terms of humour and self-depreciation, to the

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[42] Dusinberre notes that James Burford was a friend of Blakeston's and that his brother, Robert Burford was associated with the *Close Up* group (1980, 47).

solemnity of tone in many of the *Close Up* essays, and again demonstrates the widely varying codes governing different discourses. My findings in relation to H.D.'s positioning as a writer on film have revealed a complex web of intersecting identities and conflicting factors, meaning that H.D.'s essays can be read only in the context of a wide variety of cultural discourses. Thus Egger's optimistic assertion that cinema spectatorship 'offers a newly centred and empowered subject position for the modernist woman' must clearly be qualified in H.D.'s case (1995, 3).

The achievement of my second objective, which is to assess H.D.'s critique of the representation of women in silent film was made more difficult by a significant gap in feminist scholarship on film. As a result of the emphasis on a theoretical spectator, there has been a corresponding neglect of feminist-oriented historical film research. To elaborate, as a by-product of the 'turn to theory,' (roughly occurring during the 1980s) feminists studying film ceased to concentrate on aspects of film history (in terms of women's appearance on screen and in the context of social history) and turned instead to a psychoanalytic approach with a trans-historical basis. Since the parametres of my project could not have extended to an attempt to map out a history of women in silent film, I have relied mainly upon historically-based feminist studies on the representation of women in film which date from the 1970s.

Referring to film histories written some thirty years ago need not necessarily be a problem, of course, especially when the period under investigation is so distant in time, but in this case the usefulness of texts such as Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape* (1987) and *Popcorn Venus* (1973) by Marjorie Rosen, is limited by their dependence on the presuppositions of so-called

'images of women' criticism, which (as I have already indicated) have been to some extent discredited by later feminist theorists. Specifically, 'images' criticism has been attacked for an overly simplistic view of the relationship between film and 'reality,' for instance, in the vociferous condemnation of female stereotypes on screen as incontrovertibly 'false' in relation to 'real' women. Current feminist thinking on cultural representations recognizes that the operations of media images are far more complex and have an active part in creating, as well as reflecting, social meanings with respect to gender. Therefore, although I have drawn on the work of writers like Haskell and Rosen for data on the types of representations contained in silent films, there are limitations in the epistemological bases of their research.

H.D.'s critique of women in film is also carried out on the premise of the falsity of stereotypical representations of women, and H.D.'s writing in *Close Up* therefore shares some of the same faults as 'images of women' criticism of the 1970s. Whilst avoiding at all costs erasing the differences between H.D. and feminist writers of the much later period in terms of their intellectual and historical contexts, the same criticisms that have been levelled at the work of Rosen and Haskell could be aimed at the critique of female representations in the *Close Up* essays. Susanna Walters argues that the 'images of women' approach emerges out of the mistaken assumption that 'there exists, somewhere in the world, a "real" woman who can be revealed to us through imagery, if only the false, negative, inaccurate, untrue imagery is stripped away' (1995, 40). For example, Rosen states that 'Cinema Woman is a Popcorn Venus, a delectable but insubstantial hybrid of cultural distortions' (1973, 13), and the same supposition lies behind H.D.'s attack on the imposition of an artificial femininity in 'Beauty.'

Although I have shown how, repeatedly, H.D.'s fictional texts (most notably *Nights* and *Helen in Egypt*) move away from this scheme of true versus false identity towards a much more complex position which approximates a poststructuralist conception of the subject, her film criticism is severely compromised by this overly simplistic view. This is not to detract, however, from the value and interest of a description on women and film from the 1920s which is patently feminist in impulse and in which the question of commercialism is closely considered in terms of the social construction of femininity.

In relation to the theorization of gendered spectatorship, H.D.'s film essays were found to be surprisingly advanced. Although H.D. does not differentiate between male and female spectatorship, and never indicates that her responses are to be taken as representatively female, the emphasis on the incidences of the imposition of an explicitly masculine point of view in 'Joan of Arc' in particular (and the reiteration of this gender positioning in other texts such as *Nights*), suggests that H.D. was fully aware of the operation of a male gaze in film. Furthermore, unlike Laura Mulvey's totalizing formulation of 1975, H.D. recognizes that this occurs in some films and not others, and her resistance to the way in which she is forced by the mechanisms of the cinematic apparatus to occupy a male voyeuristic position, anticipates the attempts by later feminists to locate a female gaze, although H.D. does not embark on the theorization of this possibility.[43]

The final area scrutinized is the intertextual connection between film and the fictional works of H.D. Throughout this study, many correspondences have

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[43] See Gamman and Marshment (1988).

been noted. These include striking parallels (such as Garbo's role in *The Atonement of Gosta Berling* and 'the Berling' in *The Usual Star*, and the opening sequences of *The Love of Jeanne Ney* and 'Kora and Ka'), and possible allusions (for instance the enigmatic female presence at the figurehead which concludes *Queen Christina* and *Helen in Egypt*). In addition, productive resemblances have been found in terms of narrative control and gender. The shifting focalization, for instance, that characterizes 'Kora and Ka' seems derived as much from the dynamics of the cinematic point-of-view shot as from a literary modernist nexus. Equally, the male-defined portrait of Natalia in *Nights* appears to owe as much to the gender politics formulated by H.D. in her attack upon Dreyer in 'Joan of Arc' as to its literary pedigree within the tradition of the frame narrative.

The results of my research suggest that searching for possible filmic echoes in other works by H.D. would yield similarly interesting material. For example, the historical novels *Palimpsest* and *Hedylus* might well have resonances with the historical films surveyed by H.D. in 'Restraint,' indeed, as it has already been observed, *Palimpsest* shares with Griffith's *Intolerance* a tri-partite structure of different historical periods. My study has therefore laid the groundwork for much further research. In particular, my conclusions about H.D.'s essays for *Close Up* might be compared with the writings of Germaine Dulac, a French film maker of the 1920s, whose work was known by the *Close Up* group. Also, a much more extended comparison of H.D. and Woolf might be made between both the content of their film criticism and the cinematic aspects of their prose writing.

Opportunities for further research also lie in H.D.'s relationship to other major figures and aspects of the cinema. For instance, H.D. writes, in her memoir

of Freud, about a dream she has had in which Marlene Dietrich appeared (1985b, 181) and the dream features cross-dressing (in fact, mixed dressing, since H.D. dreams she wears both male and female clothing at the same time) for which Dietrich was well known. H.D.'s reference to Dietrich suggests that a similar investigation to the one undertaken here in relation to Garbo would be productive. Also the subject of H.D and the filmic representation of lesbian sexuality, awaits a full exploration and this has project has been begun by Weiss (1992, 7-29) and Gallagher (2002).

Lastly, my investigation of H.D. and the cinema has raised issues about the most appropriate manner in which to conduct feminist inquiry into female spectators and these issues have implications beyond the contribution to H.D. scholarship that my thesis makes. The act of considering a detailed account of one woman's experience of the cinema has provided the opportunity of studying an 'actual' female spectator, and thus the chance to test the effectiveness and relevance of certain approaches within feminist theorizing about women and film.

The psychoanalytic approach to spectatorship assumes that women respond to the film text according to 'the universal workings of the female psyche' (Stacey, 1994, 35). This position, which is encapsulated in Mary Ann Doane's pronouncement that 'the female spectator is a concept, not a person' (1989, 142) has not been helpful in my attempt to analyse H.D.'s critique of film. For, instead of the 'textual' spectator which is at the centre of much feminist film theory, 'devoid,' as Stacey puts it, 'of sociality and historicity' (1994, 35). I have studied H.D., a 'real' female viewer of film or, to use the preferred term, an 'empirical' spectator (1994, 23). Furthermore, this particular spectator has left a written record of her impressions, and although it would be naïve indeed to

presume that H.D.'s essays on film offer direct access to her experience of film, or that her position, any more than her identity, is a pre-existing concept to its articulation in language, the contents of the *Close Up* essays constitutes in essence an ethnographic record. The psychoanalytic model of spectatorship which has been the privileged mode of feminist film studies for some time, in which the spectator is considered as an effect of the text, is inadequate as a framework within which to consider H.D. as a spectator. In short, therefore, whilst feminist film theory of the present time offers an intriguing parallel to H.D.'s own writing on film, it does not provide a methodological model appropriate for the study of H.D. as a spectator.

The lack of historically grounded theories of female spectatorship has been recognized by writers such as Miriam Hansen, Gaylyn Studlar and Janet Staiger, all of whom have attempted to address the problem. Hansen notes, in embarking on her study of spectatorship in American silent film, *Babel and Babylon*, that feminists such as herself are 'faced with a gap between film theory and film history, between the spectator as a term of cinematic discourse and the empirical moviegoer in his or her demographic contingency' (1991, 5). Thus Hansen's work (on which I have drawn for this study) represents a third stage of feminist film theorizing (the first and second being, broadly, 'images' criticism and spectatorship studies, respectively), in which writers on film retain an awareness of the importance of theoretical developments in gender and spectatorship but turn their attention to specific historical manifestations of gendered film address and audience response.

It is precisely the specificity of H.D.'s response to film that I have striven to analyse in this thesis. As well as extending the range of H.D. studies into the

realms of popular culture, and proposing that H.D. should be considered alongside other women spectators and commentators on film, the particular strategies adopted by this study give an indication of the issues that need to be addressed in the project to historicize the female spectatorship of film.

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