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swept-back hair, a face burned into white by high-key lighting so that the strong, almost masculine bone structure was forced out. Daniels, eventually to become Garbo's cameraman as Brown was her director, lit *Anna Christie* with an intensity that partially betrayed the gloomy nature of Eugene O'Neill's intramural tragedy, but his work makes it a distinctive film and one of the most striking of the decade's first years.

Despite an accent thicker than even modern filmgoers are used to, Garbo is memorable as the unlucky ex-prostitute whose past catches up with her just as she is about to marry. The climax where, her temper lost at last with her drunken, weeping father (George Marion) and blustering Irish lover (Charles Bickford), she reveals the degradation of her life on the farm to which the former has sent her, her rape by one of the farmer's sons, and descent to a midwestern brothel, is a *tour de force*. Ranting, shouting, muttering in almost broken English, she holds one's attention totally. A notable *mise en scène* — dockside water like black oil, rotting piles and foggy lanes, the echo of a tinny piano — culminates in a remarkable sequence; as the drama is finally resolved, Marion goes to the door and, looking out, muses on the complexities of life. "The fog . . . for a while you can't see where you're going. Then it lifts . . .". The final shot is a brief one of the sea, terrifyingly grey and wind-whipped under a low sky, an image of Melvillian drama and the powerful end to a mixed, occasionally brilliant film.

Anna Christie is not Brown's greatest film of the early Thirties, though it is the best of the half-dozen Garbo vehicles he directed. He seemed better able to work without the tyranny of Garbo's talent and the restrained style her stiff, intense acting imposed on him, which may account for the effectiveness of the Garbo-less *A Free Soul* (1931). The story, a paltry melodrama about a drunken but brilliant attorney (Lionel Barrymore) and his sensitive independent daughter (Norma Shearer), earned the year's Oscar for Barrymore, though one doubts that any performance in the film could have been worthy of an award had not Brown scraped through the surface of the script to find genuine drama of Adela Rogers St. John's original story, based on

her own early life and that of her father, the Los Angeles lawyer Earl Rogers.

Barrymore seems mannered today — like Wallace Beery, another top Metro star, he had only one portrait in him, a crude caricature of himself — but Shearer, by contrast, is superb. Striking rather than beautiful, her ferocious squint neatly camouflaged by Brown, she wears Adrian's gowns with the erotic flair that a lack of underwear could inspire. Only Jean Harlow was able more effectively to suggest nudity beneath the draped silk. Shearer's casual *déshabillé* in the film's early shots, where she dresses in her father's apartment after a night on the town, prepares us for her romance with Ace Wilfong (Clark Gable), a racketeer whom Barrymore saves from a murder charge and who immediately involves Shearer in a torrid affair.

Her first visit to Gable's apartment is meticulously directed. She wanders around, stretching, lounging, unable to resist, even if she had wanted to, his crudely broadcast desire. He kisses her, and though she says coolly, "That will be all, thank you," it is obvious that she is hooked. "A new kind of man," she murmurs a little later, "a new kind of world." Later scenes exhibit her frank sexual hunger. Arriving at his apartment, she throws herself down on the couch, and putting her arms out to Gable, says, "Cummon, put 'em around me." Though the film degenerates later, with Shearer's ex-fiancée (Leslie Howard) murdering Gable, then being saved by a drunken Barrymore, who drops dead at the end of his speech to the jury, nothing can detract from the intensity of its early scenes, nor from Shearer's magnificent picture of arrogant female sensuality. //

The middle Thirties saw Brown occupied with more Garbo vehicles, including such well-known productions as *Anna Karenina* (1935) and the wordy *Conquest* (*Marie Walewska*) (1937), the latter notable mainly for Karl Freund's soft lighting which gave Garbo a new femininity not popular with her devotees. He also achieved in *Ah, Wilderness!* (1935) a far more effective adaptation of Eugene O'Neill than in *Anna Christie*. This was his first excursion into the field of Americana which was later to inspire his best films. Despite the qualities of *Ah, Wilderness!*, how-

HOLLYWOOD IN THE 18 30S - JOHN BAXTER