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ing, it would not justify the footage devoted to it, but as handled by Vidor, Haynes, and Fountaine, it is extraordinarily effective. In sharp contrast to this sequence is the note struck in the one which follows it, and with which the picture ends. The homecoming of Haynes, after serving a term in prison for the murder of Fountaine, is another fine bit of intelligent and human direction. It gives us again a shot which we saw earlier in the picture, a camera etching of superlative beauty in which Avil seems to have caught the whole spirit of the picture. *Hallelujah* should go into every motion picture theater in the world.

The Film Spectator, November 2, 1929

ARSENAL

ALEXANDER BAKSHY

They are still coming from Russia, those breathtaking revelations of genius that make cinematic history. You may doubt this statement if you see *Arsenal* only once. I was doubtful myself when I saw it for the first time. But I have no doubts now after my second visit to the theater. *Arsenal* is one of the most beautiful pictures that have ever been shown. In Russia today they judge works of art by their social significance; the artist, like any craftsman, must execute a "social order." Dovzhenko, the director of *Arsenal*, has fulfilled this requirement, I understand, to the complete satisfaction of his customer. But he has done more. He has produced a piece of palpitating reality that transcends its immediate political message and reaches into the ideal realm where rights are rights and wrongs are wrongs simply because the artist willed them to be so.

I am not sure, for instance, that communism as a religious cult is any less grotesque and funny than is the cult of nationalism. What does it matter? When I see *Arsenal*, communism is right with me and nationalism all wrong, and I laugh at the Ukranian patriots glorying in their embroidered shirts and cascades of patriotic oratory, or hate their cool executioners who shoot Bolsheviks like rats, while my heart goes out to the poor dying soldier who in his deathbed letter to his parents inquires if he may kill officers and bourgeois if he meets them in the street. There it is. The artist has made you accept his characters in the light in which he wants them to be seen, and you surrender yourself to the spell of his art because he has succeeded in creating an independent ideal world, entirely self-sustained and coherently compact, which has its own life and its own emotional logic.

It is strange that one should be so conscious of this inner unity, seeing that the first impression one gets from *Arsenal* is that of utter incoherence.

There is hardly any story in the picture. Groups of soldiers fight other groups of soldiers, incidental characters spring up from nowhere and disappear into nowhere, and you hardly know who is who or what it is all about. But once you have become familiar with the faces and grasped the general line of action, every character and every scene falls into its proper place as part of an emotional pattern. It is the great achievement of Dovzhenko that he has built this pattern and bound his picture together by means of a purely cinematic treatment of rhythm. Nothing so rich in contrasts, so subtle in nuances, has yet been done on the screen. The fury of the revolutionary struggle, its tragedies and humors, are all brought out by variations of rhythm that range from complete stillness with characters posing like statues, to breathless speed carrying all before it like so much litter in a gale. The episode of a runaway train, outwardly unconnected with the story, acquires symbolical significance as a rhythmic accent in a symphony of struggle that is the real story of *Arsenal*. There are two or three scenes in which symbolism appears to be somewhat forced, the characters, standing still in unnatural positions, doing symbolical duty in a picture of life that is essentially realistic; but if this is a blemish it is a minor one. The picture as a whole is an amazing performance, no less rich in its technical resourcefulness than in its dramatic sense of human character; and it is splendidly acted.

The Nation, November 27, 1929

MGM, Garbo's employers, were apprehensive about her accent and delayed her first sound picture. As late as 1929 she made her last silent film, *The Kiss*, which was also the last silent film for MGM.² Her next film was *Anna Christie*.

The following review celebrates what was in fact only one-third of Garbo's vocal debut. She also made German and Swedish versions of *Anna Christie*.³ The German version, which opened in New York on January 5, 1931, was directed by the Frenchman, Jacques Feyder, and had an entirely different supporting cast. The Marie Dressler role was played by Salka Viertel, who later was coauthor of five screenplays for Garbo, *Queen Christina*, *The Painted Veil*, *Anna Karenina*, *Conquest*, and *Two-faced Woman*.

Katharine Cornell was a theatrical star for three decades, beginning in the 1920s.

CRITICISM

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But, that communism as a religious cult is any more than the cult of nationalism. What does it mean? Communism is right with me and nationalism is wrong. Ukrainian patriots glorying in their embroidered shirts and oratory, or hate their cool executioners who while my heart goes out to the poor dying soldier, the letter to his parents inquires if he may kill them in the street. There it is. The artist has put the characters in the light in which he wants them to be. You are yourself to the spell of his art because he has created a dependent ideal world, entirely self-sustained and as its own life and its own emotional logic. You could be so conscious of this inner unity, seeing that what gets from *Arsenal* is that of utter incoherence.

There is hardly any story in the picture. Groups of soldiers fight other groups of soldiers, incidental characters spring up from nowhere and disappear into nowhere, and you hardly know who is who or what it is all about. But once you have become familiar with the faces and grasped the general line of action, every character and every scene falls into its proper place as part of an emotional pattern. It is the great achievement of Dovzhenko that he has built this pattern and bound his picture together by means of a purely cinematic treatment of rhythm. Nothing so rich in contrasts, so subtle in nuances, has yet been done on the screen. The fury of the revolutionary struggle, its tragedies and humors, are all brought out by variations of rhythm that range from complete stillness with characters posing like statues, to breathless speed carrying all before it like so much litter in a gale. The episode of a runaway train, outwardly unconnected with the story, acquires symbolical significance as a rhythmic accent in a symphony of struggle that is the real story of *Arsenal*. There are two or three scenes in which symbolism appears to be somewhat forced, the characters, standing still in unnatural positions, doing symbolical duty in a picture of life that is essentially realistic; but if this is a blemish it is a minor one. The picture as a whole is an amazing performance, no less rich in its technical resourcefulness than in its dramatic sense of human character; and it is splendidly acted.

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