Screened Modernism

Three Modernist Authors and their Writings on Film

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“anyone is of one's period and this our period was undoubtedly the period of cinema”

– Gertrude Stein, “Portraits and Repetition”
Table of contents

INTRODUCTION 1-7

PART ONE. THE CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE: REALITY AND SPECTATORSHIP 9

CHAPTER 1 VIRGINIA WOOLF 16-22
1.1 DISTANCE AND ABSENCE IN THE CINEMA 16-18
1.2 THE COMMON SPECTATOR 18-19
1.3 “TIME PASSES” AND THE WAVES 20-22

CHAPTER 2 H.D. 23-28
2.1 REALITY AND THE “WORLD OF HALF LIGHT” 23-25
2.2 SPECTATORSHIP 25-27
2.3 CINEMATIC PROJECTION, CROSSING A BORDERLINE 27-28

CHAPTER 3 DOROTHY RICHARDSON 29-36
3.1 THE “PLUNGE INTO LIFE” 29-31
3.2 THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY 31-35
3.3 THE CONTEMPLATING SPECTATOR 35-36

PART TWO. FILM LANGUAGE AND CULTURE OF THE 1920s

CHAPTER 1 VIRGINIA WOOLF 45 - 52
1.1 THE PARASITIC FILM 45-46
1.2 A NEW LANGUAGE OF ABSTRACTION 46-49
1.3 THE NOVEL AND THE FILM 49-52
CHAPTER 2   H.D.  53-60
2.1 THE AVANT-GARDISM OF CLOSE UP  54-56
2.2 THE NEW CLASSISISTS  56-58
2.3 “SCREEN VISION” VS. LITERARY VISION 58-60

CHAPTER 3   DOROTHY RICHARDSON  61-65
3.1 THE POPULAR FILM 61-63
3.2 THE LANGUAGE OF THE MIRROR: MEMORY 63-64
3.3 CONTEMPLATION: THE NOVEL AND THE FILM  64-65

CONCLUSION  66-67

BIBLIOGRAPHY  68-74
INTRODUCTION

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by the birth of a new art. In 1895, the Lumière brothers presented their Cinématographe to the public and screened several short films for the first time. This event inaugurated the start of a medium that profoundly impacted on the twentieth century. Especially at the close of the First World War, a cinephilic and inter-artistic culture emerged in which the art of film was discussed. Notwithstanding the onset of a post-war recession and inflation due to the cost of the war, the cinematic landscape during the 1920s was extremely rich and inventive. Not only did film become an established industry but also film criticism and theory thrived. Filmmakers, as well as artists from other art disciplines, attempted to invigorate the medium of film and pondered which techniques and devices could lift film to a unique art. As a result, manifold avant-garde movements formed, that supplemented their film output with written theories (Turvey 1).

Film criticism also flourished in the form of opinion pieces. By the mid-1920s, film columns regularly appeared in British newspapers and magazines such as the Spectator, the Daily Mail and the Nation (co-edited by Virginia Woolf’s husband, Leonard). Furthermore, little magazines were founded, such as the Close Up journal, which will be explained later.

In 1925, the importance of film was not only expressed in print, but also through the founding of the London Film Society (1925-1939). This group screened a selection of films on Sunday afternoons to an audience that mainly consisted of intellectuals from other art disciplines (“Iris Barry” 492). By means of a combination of mainstream films with films that met with censorship in Britain, the London Film Society wanted to get the ordinary as well as the highbrow British public acquainted with the art of film (“Iris Barry” 493).

It was in this inter-artistic melting pot that we can find the three female modernist authors that will be examined in this dissertation: Virginia Woolf, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) and Dorothy Richardson. Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) hardly needs an introduction as she is one of the most prominent British modernist authors. Associated with the Bloomsbury Group, which consisted of several critics, artists and authors, Woolf unfurled herself in an intellectual and inter-artistic circle. Her literary modernism can be distinguished from her literary predecessors, the Edwardians or “materialists”, by her attention to the “spirit” or emotional

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1 For more details, see Marcus’ chapter “’The cinema mind’: Film Criticism and Film Culture in 1920s Britain” (234-318) and Rachel Low’s The History of the British Film: 1918-1929.
2 See Leslie Kathleen Hankins’ impressive article “Iris Barry, Writer and Cineaste, Forming Film Culture in London 1924-1926: the Adelphi, the Spectator, the Film Society, and the British Vogue.”
life of her characters (“Modern Fiction” 104). According to Woolf, the ebb and flow of the modern mind can no longer be represented through these old methods that are unnaturally driven by the need of a “plot” and only describe outward appearances (“Modern Fiction” 106). Alternatively, Woolf portrays the modern life by transcribing the inside of her characters’ minds on a seemingly ordinary day. In consequence, an entire novel can be the account of only a handful of days in the diegetic world.

Contrary to Woolf, H.D. (1886-1961) only had a brief period of critical acclaim as an Imagist poet but then sank into obscurity. Originally born in Pennsylvania, United States, H.D. met Ezra Pound, who was the spiritual father of the Imagism movement, before moving to London in 1911. Imagism opposes the romanticism and superfluity of words by past poets. Alternatively, the avant-garde movement promotes the “direct treatment of the ‘thing’”, the use of free verse, and the economy of words (qtd. in Pondrom 88). The Imagist poems that H.D. wrote in the 1910s were marked by a sense of restraint and her appreciation of the Hellenic culture and mythology. During and after the First World War, H.D. experienced a selective writer’s block and was unable to compose poems. Due to her traumatic experiences and identity struggles, H.D. explained that she had lost her “clarity” of vision and started writing novels instead as a way of “working through” in order to “see clear [sic.] again” (qtd. in Penelope’s Web 34). The novels and novellas written by H.D. between 1921 and 1930 were to a greater or lesser degree autobiographical and based on certain periods of her past. Similar to the literary style of Woolf and Richardson, H.D.’s focused on the psyche and personal experiences of the characters in her prose works and, thus, broke with narrative conventions. However, as Susan Friedman insightfully remarks, H.D.’s novels are “[l]ess a representation of subjectivity than a performance of it” (Penelope’s Web 94). In other words, it can be said that H.D. performs her (past) identities to make sense of them. This makes her prose work quite impenetrable at times. H.D., perhaps, was one of the most enigmatic and eclectic literary figures of the twentieth century. Her oeuvre also included memoirs on her psychoanalytic sessions with Sigmund Freud in 1933 and 1934, longer epic poems during the 1940s and 1950s, and, most importantly for my purposes, the contributions she made to the Close Up magazine between 1927 and 1929.

3 The Edwardian period lasted from 1901 to 1910. The “classic” authors mentioned by Woolf are H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy (“Modern Fiction” 103).
4 Especially the poetry collection Sea Garden (first published in 1916) is representative of her Imagist poetry.
5 The dating of H.D.’s work is a precarious business because the majority of her texts were only published decades later, manuscripts were destroyed, or one work was written and rewritten over several years. See Susan Stanford Friedman’s “Dating H.D.’s Writing” for more information.
Dorothy Richardson’s (1873-1957) literary life’s work was *Pilgrimage*, a series of thirteen novels which autobiographically recount her adolescent life up until 1912. With her first novel, *Pointed Roofs*, published in 1915, Richardson distinguished herself as a modern author by means of techniques and strategies that resemble Woolf’s but predate her by seven years. Both Woolf and Richardson discard traditional plot and replace it with the narrative of life as experienced by a consciousness. “Isn’t life the plot?”, Richardson wonders. Moreover, the stream-of-consciousness technique, which also is attributed to other modernist authors such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, is a term originally used by May Sinclair in 1918 to review Dorothy Richardson’s first three novels.

Notwithstanding the clear differences between these three authors, they resemble each other in their emphasis on rendering the personal and subjective lives of their characters. Moreover, in the late 1920s, the trio was both critically and intellectually engaged in the cinema. Woolf elucidated her thoughts on the new art in the essay, “The Cinema” (1926). This deviation from the field of literature might have been stimulated by her fellow Bloomsbury members Roger Fry and Clive Bell. Fry, an art critic and painter, and Bell, an art critic, both referred to film in a few articles. Moreover, Fry was involved in establishing the London Film Society, whose Sunday afternoon screenings were visited by Woolf (“Iris Barry” 492).

H.D. and Richardson were more prolific in their film writing and contributed eleven and twenty plus articles respectively to the *Close Up* magazine (CU 96; 150). *Close Up* was the British pioneer of the film magazines and promoted itself as “the only magazine devoted to films as an art” (CU 8). Published from 1927 to 1933, *Close Up* offered a perspective on film’s “critical age” by contributions made by female modernist authors (H.D., Richardson, Richardson, Richardson, Richardson).

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7 Quoted in Gevirtz (3). Originally from a letter to Edward West (Vita Sackville’s husband), November 23, 1938, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.
8 Richardson actually disliked the term “stream of consciousness” and replied: “Stream of consciousness is a muddle-headed phrase. It’s not a stream, it’s a pool, a sea, an ocean. It has depth and greater depth and when you think you have reached its bottom there is nothing there, and when you give yourself up to one current you are suddenly possessed by another.” (quoted in Rose 370).
9 Clive Bell’s articles “Art and the Cinema” (1922) and “Cinema Aesthetics: A Critic of the Arts Assesses the Movies” (1929), and Roger Fry’s “An Essay of Aesthetic” (1920). See Marcus (99).
10 David Trotter (167) insightfully remarks and Laura Marcus (109) seconds the high possibility that Woolf attended the screenings of 20 December 1925, 17 January 1926 and especially 14 March 1926 (this day’s programme included *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the film of which Woolf mentions that she saw “the other day” (TC 270)).
Gertrude Stein, Marianne Moore), emerging film critics (Robert Herring), psychoanalysts (Hanns Sachs, Barbara Low) and prominent film directors (Sergei Eisenstein) (CU 4-6). Similar to the London Film Society, Close Up wanted to enrich both the general and the intellectual British film spectator but mainly attracted the latter category.

Close Up was an enterprise conceived and published by the POOL group, which consisted of three people: chief editor and creator Kenneth Macpherson, novelist and main sponsor Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman), and H.D. During the late 1920s, H.D. had been living in an unorthodox household with Bryher, Macpherson, with whom H.D. was having an affair but married Bryher out of convenience, and her daughter Perdita, who was conceived in another relationship but adopted by Bryher and Macpherson (“Relay of Power” 55). As a result of their close connection, it is generally believed that H.D. played a vital role in the development of the magazine under its first years (Connor 19; CU 9; Marcus 16; McCabe 1). Moreover, the POOL group not only published Close Up but also engaged in film-making. In total, POOL produced four films: Wing Beat (1927), Foothills (1929), Monkey’s Moon (1929) and Borderline (1930). Borderline, their most memorable production, is a silent avant-garde film which dealt with matters of race and hysteria in an experimental way. H.D. (under her nom de plume, Helga Doorn) played the part of Astrid, a “borderline” who “is and is not outcast, […] a social alien, […] a normal human being” (Borderline pamphlet 221). Moreover, it is generally believed that she wrote the accompanying pamphlet to the film (CU 97). By virtue of POOL and Macpherson, H.D. was thus positioned towards cinema in many ways and was even involved in the editing of the filmstrips.

Notwithstanding the variation in length and intensity of Woolf’s, H.D.’s and Richardson’s interaction with this new art during the late 1920s and early 1930s, the interdisciplinary approach between literature and film promises to be a fruitful line of inquiry for all three authors. Not only are their articles relevant and insightful contributions to the film debates of the 1920s, a time during which film theory only had just begun to emerge, but also, these film writings can be read as essays on their literary methods and ideals from another vantage point. This dissertation will argue that on the one hand, Woolf, H.D. and Richardson helped to define the medium specificity of film by delineating its unique characteristics, techniques and mechanisms. On the other hand, it can be proposed that their preference of certain films, or their thoughts on the potential of the cinema, reveals similarities to their

11 Even Virginia Woolf was asked to write an article for the magazine but she declined because she was occupied with other projects (Marcus 322).
12 For more details on the different POOL films, see Close Up 212-220.
views on literature or their theory of art in general. This is a point of view I share with Jonathan Higbie Foltz and Leslie Kathleen Hankins.

In his dissertation “Modernism and the Narrative Cultures of Film”, Jonathan Higbie Foltz (4) approaches Virginia Woolf’s, H.D.’s and Henry Green’s film writings as “self-reflexive fictions about the cinema that doubled as commentaries on their own novelistic experiments.” Similarly, Leslie Kathleen Hankins suggests in her essay “‘Across the Screen of My Brain’: Virginia Woolf’s ‘The Cinema’ and Film Forums of the Twenties” that Woolf’s “The Cinema” can be read “as a prophecy about her own literary future” (174).

More generally, interdisciplinary research on literary modernism and cinema has received significant critical attention since the 1990s. Parallels between both arts, however, have been drawn from the moment that film came into existence. In 1918, for example, Woolf compared Compton Mackenzie’s novel The Early Life and Adventures of Sylvia Scarlett to “a book of cinema” because it resembles the cinema’s pace and, thus, moves too quickly without devoting sufficient attention to the minds of his characters (“The Movie Novel”, qtd. in Marcus 103). The cinema provided the literary critic with a new jargon of cinematic metaphors: the text moves from scene to scene like the panning of a camera, shows details in the manner of the close-up, creates rhythm through the principle of montage, or cutting, from one scene to the other. Nevertheless, these “argument[s] by analogy”, David Trotter (1-3) argues, often result in anachronisms because the cinematic techniques were not yet used or documented when the literary work in question was written. For example, studies that stress montage’s influence on T. S. Eliot’s fragmented poem “The Waste Land” (1922) are inaccurate as the montage theories associated with Sergei Eisenstein only reached Britain in the late 1920s (Trotter 3). Furthermore, this method of comparison neglects the concrete connection or relationship between the author and the cinema. Foltz (7) in this regard quotes Michael North, who proposed that film “was much more than a medium. It was the context, simultaneously technical, social and aesthetic, within which both writers and artists in the

13 Previous studies concerned with my three modernist authors and their relation to the cinema that to a greater or lesser extent construct their arguments on these formal resemblances are for example Charlotte Mandel’s “The Redirected Image: Cinematic Dynamics in the Style of H.D. (Hilda Doolittle)”, Susan Gevirtz’s Narrative Journey: The Fiction and Film Writing of Dorothy Richardson, and Rachel Connor’s H. D. and the image. To a certain extent also Susan McCabe’s Cinematic Modernism: Modernist Poetry and Film, although she creates a new metaphor (the use of fragmented bodies in avant-garde films) to compare to the works by four poets. Notwithstanding my difficulties with this approach, these scholars provide useful remarks and insights on other levels and contributed satisfying studies to this interdisciplinary field.
avant-garde worked out their ideas about representation” (North 16).14

Therefore, this dissertation will be occupied with the broader picture of literature and film by bringing to the fore both the relevance of Woolf’s, H.D.’s and Richardson’s articles to film theory and the interrelationship between their filmic discourse and their literature. My concerns echo those of recent studies by Hankins, Foltz, Trotter, and Laura Marcus.

Both Marcus and Trotter published their compelling and impressive studies in 2007. In Cinema and Modernism, David Trotter replaces the “model of parallelism” between literary and cinematic techniques, which he disdains, with the hypothesis that modernist writers were enthralled by the cinema because of its “neutrality […] as a medium” (Trotter 3; 5). The objective and impersonal qualities that are associated with film, Trotter (9) suggests, might have inspired modernists to emphasise similar characteristics in literature. This vantage point, I would like to argue, to a certain extent is justifiable for Woolf, as will be discussed later, but not as much for H.D. and Richardson.

Marcus’ key work The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period but also her editorial work for Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism deals with the transference between film, discourse on film and the literary experiments of modernist authors. As Marcus (1-2) explains, her Tenth Muse proposes that “issues central to an understanding of cinema (including questions of time, repetition, movement, emotion, vision, sound, and silence)” are present both in commentaries on film and in literary texts. Similar to Marcus, this dissertation will also draw on film theories and anthologies to provide my discussion a theoretical background.

This study will interact closely with the concepts and insights provided by Marcus, Trotter and others but, nevertheless, build on their arguments to find a new emphasis and re-observe the literary and filmic writings of Woolf, H.D. and Richardson. More precisely, my dissertation will interact between cinema and literature on two levels.

Part One will examine my three authors’ points of view on film’s relation to reality and the cinematic experience of the spectator. Early but also contemporary film theories have tried to define the basic but unique characteristics of film. Generally, I found that there is a dichotomy between a view of film as a medium that can objectively recreate the world and as a medium that should deviate from this objectivity and emphasise subjective realities. Similarly, the spectator can either experience this projected reality as an objective, almost

14 Also noteworthy is Andrew Shail’s The Cinema and the Origins of Literary Modernism. Shail (3) evades the problems with vague formal similarities by interpreting cinema not as a “stylistic toolkit” but as an “experience” which might have created “shifts […] in literary production”.
universal, outlook on the world or alternatively, as a subjective and personal experience. The first part will define Woolf’s, H.D.’s and Richardson’s position in these debates. Moreover, it will analyse how this can be compared and contrasted with their break with literary conventions and the works written around the time they were engaged with film.

Part Two will expand on the film culture of the 1920s and the various film languages and movements that were developed during this period. Defending the idea that their writings on film may be read as a comment on their literary art, this part will not only study their opinion on film productions of the 1920s but also delineate their ideal film language and point out the similarities to their literary experiments and ideals.

Each part consists of three chapters, of which the first is dedicated to Virginia Woolf, the second to H.D. and the final chapter to Dorothy Richardson. An introduction prior to the discussion on the authors will place everything in the 1920s film milieu and explain the context of the several notions and concepts that are essential to what subsequently will be discussed.
PART 1

THE CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE: REALITY AND SPECTATORSHIP
The ontology of the cinematic image and its reception by the spectator have been at the centre of debate by film theorists from the early twentieth century. Since its advent in 1895, film has been placed on an axis ranging from being the most accurate imitation of nature thus far to an artificially recreated dream-world.¹ Similarly, the spectator has been portrayed either negatively as a passive onlooker and a credulous being whose senses are stupefied by the constant movement of the images.² Or, positively, as an active participant who is aware of film’s artifice and consciously submerges in its likeness to reality or adds his or her own imagination to it.

During the critical age of the 1920s, both the concerns with film’s status as an art and the advent of sound in 1927 caused film criticism and theory to flourish.³ In order to reinforce the idea of film as an art form and to immortalize the silent film, theorists and critics attempted to indicate (silent) film’s unique characteristics and features. The concepts mentioned above, cinema’s relation to reality and the cinematic experience of the spectator, were of importance to the medium specificity of film.

Generally, film theorists can be categorized into three positions.⁴ On one side of the axis, proponents of the realist view rejoice in film’s unprecedented ability to copy reality in the manner of a “fingerprint” (Bazin 15). Mostly, this point of view can be associated with a more passive notion of spectatorship. An in-between position is occupied by a diverse group of film theorists who argue that film can but should not merely reproduce reality. Rather, the art of film should emphasise those qualities that distinguish it from the everyday perception of reality as well as from the other arts. These stances often require the attention of and even interaction with the spectator. On the other side of the axis, influenced by psychoanalytical theories, critics argue that notwithstanding the cinematic images’ resemblance to real life, they are in fact merely an “impression of reality” (Baudry 171). Similar to the world of

¹ According to the myth, the first film audience that witnessed the Lumière brother’s Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat was startled by the lifelike projected train that moved towards them at a considerable speed. Other testimonies reveal a point of view that is less overwhelmed by this new medium. The Russian author Maxim Gorki, for example, compared silent film to a “kingdom of the shadows” that could not fully embody life because it merely was “a world without sound, without colour” (qtd. in Marcus 72).
² In his essay “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator.” Tom Gunning vents his disagreement with the image of the early film spectator as a credulous spectator. In contrast, he proposes a point of view in which the audience is aware of the illusory qualities of film.
³ The advent of sound, or “talkies”, is generally attributed to The Jazz Singer (directed by Alan Crosland, 1927). This film promoted the Vitaphone sound-on-disc system in a musical setting.
dreams, these images appear to be real when they are not. It can be said that this point of view features a blurred sense of spectatorship. In the manner of a daydream, the film audience is simultaneously immersed and receptive. The following paragraphs will elaborate on these three angles and introduce several theorists and concepts that will reappear in the succeeding chapters.

The German film critic Siegfried Kracauer (1889-1966) and the French film theorist André Bazin (1918-1958) are considered as eminent advocates of the realist paradigm. Kracauer is a contemporary of Woolf, H.D. and Richardson who started writing essays on film in the 1920s but only published his paramount works in 1947 (From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film) and 1960 (Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality). In his personal anthology of film theory he proclaims that the cinema “is uniquely equipped to record and reveal physical reality” (Theory of Film 28). The camera, according to Kracauer, enables the artist to render an image of the physical world with unseen neutrality. In other words, it is this trait of objectivity which distinguished film from the other arts. Realists such as Kracauer and Bazin share the concern that film should be evaluated “not according to what it adds to reality but what it reveals of it” (Bazin 28).

In terms of spectatorship, Kracauer (Theory of Film 158-159) argues that because “film images affect primarily the spectator’s senses” his intellect or “power of reasoning” is less involved. Consequently, the spectator is lured into a state of “lowered consciousness”, during which he forgets his own identity and “dissolves into all things and beings” on the screen (Theory of Film 159). This point of view is linked to the principle of “distraction”, which was the predominant view of spectatorship during the 1920s and 1930s. Originally used by Siegfried Kracauer in the essay “Cult of Distraction” (printed as “Kult der Zersteuung” in the Frankfurter Zeitung, 1926), but modified by Walter Benjamin, the principle of distraction is opposed to the state of “contemplation” or association that the observer could reach in front of a painting for example. Cinema, in contrast, features a “shock effect” due to which the spectator’s state of concentration is “interrupted” by the images’ “constant, sudden change” (Benjamin 682). The cinema thus becomes a spectacle that “requires no attention” (Benjamin 683). This view of the spectator as distracted was

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5 I am grateful to Jenelle Troxell for these insightful remarks on Kracauer, Benjamin, distraction and contemplation in “Shock and ‘Perfect Contemplation’: Dorothy Richardson’s Mystical Cinematographic Consciousness” (52-53).
especially challenged by the *Close Up* members, as will be discussed in the second and third chapter (Troxell 53). Opposed to this realistic view, illustrated with Kracauer and Bazin, are early film theorists such as Rudolf Arnheim (1904-2007) and Béla Balázs (1884-1949) who do not deny that film is a mechanical reproduction of reality but argue that it should emphasise its idiosyncrasies. In *Film as Art* (first published in 1932 as *Film als Kunst*) the German art theorist Rudolf Arnheim (157) argues that if film were to be evaluated as an art the medium’s goal should be “not simply to copy [reality] but to originate, to interpret, to mold.” In other words, Arnheim proposes that filmmakers should improve the medium by developing new techniques and methods which can add to the cinema’s rendering of reality. The Hungarian born film critic and screenplay writer Béla Balázs, for instance, was very lyrical about the close-up technique because it changes the proportion of objects as we perceive them on a daily basis. The Soviet montage theorists of the 1920s and 1930s, on the other hand, were passionate about the principle of montage, or the combination of film shots. According to prominent Russian filmmakers and theorists such as Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein, this principle was unique to film and enabled it to be a legitimate art form (Braudy&Cohen 1). Notwithstanding their disagreement about montage as “linkage” (to create continuity) or as “collision” (to provide contrasts), these theorists agreed that the sequence of two shots produced an emotional response in the spectator (*Film Form* 37). “[F]rom the collision of two given factors,” Eisenstein states (*Film Form* 37), “arises a concept.” Moreover, an active spectator is required because this “idea” is created in the mind of what Eisenstein terms “the creating spectator”: “Within me, as a spectator, this image is born and grown. Not only the author has created, but I also—the creating spectator—have participated” (*Film Sense* 33). To Eisenstein as well as the other montage theorists, an active spectator is envisioned who interacts with the cinematic images. In this regard, Eisenstein and Pudovkin were hesitant about the advent of the talkies because “sound will destroy the meaning of mounting [= montage]” (*CU* 84). In “The Sound Film, A Statement from U.S.S.R.”, Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov predict that the addition of sound to visual images will cause “performances of a theatrical nature” to proliferate and the medium

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6 In a more recent study, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture* (2001), Jonathan Crary also challenges this idea of modern perception as fragmented and distracted. Rather, he foregrounds “the possibility of a fixation, of holding something in wonder or contemplation” (Crary 10).

7 For more information, see the chapter “Close Up” (100-111) in *Early Film Theory: Visible Man and The Spirit of Film* (originally written in 1930).

8 Thanks to Rachel Connor (quoted on page 47 of *H. D. and the image*).
specificity to diminish (CU 84). As a result, less attention will be devoted to the use of montage. Consequentially, film will be refrained from “producing an effect” and the associative process of the spectator will decline (CU 83). This debate on sound is an important facet of my discussion because the majority of the Close Up contributors scorned the introduction of synchronized speech as it threatened the “inner speech”, or participation, of the spectator as well as the “universality of silent cinema” since it became language and nation-specific (CU 79).

The final group of film theorists I would like to discuss do not interpret film as a perfect copy of reality, neither as an art form that should emphasise those traits specific to its medium. Rather, these recent theories, often along the tenets of psychoanalysis, propose that cinema only features an “impression of reality”, a “simulacrum” (Baudry 171). The cinema, here, is interpreted as a “more than real” experience” that can be linked to the realm of shadows and dreams (Baudry 171). In the manner of a dream, the spectator is confronted with a world that resembles reality but yet not fully embodies it. Moreover, watching the images pass by can lead to revelations of the unconscious. The French film theorist, Christian Metz (1931-1993), was preoccupied with this “dual character” of the cinematic image (Metz 696). In The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema (first published in 1977 as Le Signifiant Imaginaire: Psychanalyse et Cinéma), Metz (696) argues that the spectator sees something on the screen that is real and visible, but what is “perceived is not really the object, it is its shade, its phantom, its double, its replica” and thus “stamped with unreality”. The cinema, according to Metz (696) offers an impression of reality that “involves us in the imaginary” because the “absence” of the projected object is “the only signifier present.”

In a similar fashion, Stanley Cavell (1926), a contemporary American philosopher and film theorist, identifies this “simultaneity of presence and absence” in the cinema (Cavell 42). In The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film (first published in 1979), Cavell (40) observes that films can “reproduce the world magically” because it “permit[s] us to view it unseen.”

Although these theories by Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry and Stanley Cavell were only written in the 1970s, it is useful to include them in this analysis because they reveal striking parallels to the ideas of Woolf, H.D. and Richardson. Furthermore, it can be argues

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9 It should, however, be noted that Cavell is not a disciple of the psychoanalytic theory. On the contrary, Cavell interacts with the concepts provided by the realist André Bazin but draws conclusions about the ontology of the cinematic image that are similar to Metz’.
that these notions were already present in the 1920s but the fundamental works were only written a few decades later.  

The following chapters will approach the essays and articles written by Woolf, H.D. and Richardson from the theoretical viewpoints discussed above. More specifically, I will examine whether they underlined the cinema’s ability to objectively copy reality or rather emphasised how it deviates from life as we know it. Moreover, how do they, as spectators, react to this projected world—are they actively or passively involved, is it a universal or a personal world.

Film’s relation to reality and the cognitive processes of the spectator promise to be a fruitful line of inquiry for these authors who were consumed with the ebb and flow of daily life in their literary works. To a large extent it can be asserted that the literary modernism of these three authors resides in its psychological approach to the characters as well as its closeness to life. Contrary to their predecessors, Woolf, H.D. and Richardson dared to replace the plot with everyday life and were invested in the psychology of their characters. In this regard, it is interesting to analyse how this new medium, which essentially is quite perfect in its neutrality, relates to their subjective rendering of consciousness in their literary art. Furthermore, their description of the spectator’s cinematic experience and the degree of (un)consciousness with which he or she watches film provide a promising comparison to how they handle and express the consciousness in their works. The resulting contrasts or similarities might, in their turn, help or change our understanding of the literary works written during or close to their interaction with film.

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10 Hanns Sachs, for instance, was an early psychoanalyst and close friend of Sigmund Freud who contributed to the Close Up magazine.
CHAPTER 1  VIRGINIA WOOLF

Woolf only wrote one essay on film, “The Cinema” (1926), but it is extremely rich in relevant observations.11 After its first publication in the New York magazine Arts, June 1926, the essay was revised and subsequently published on 3 July 1926 in The Nation and Athenaeum, for which Leonard Woolf, Virginia Woolf’s husband, was the literary editor from 1922 until 1930. On August 4, this same essay appeared and was re-titled, without Woolf’s consent, as “The Movies and Reality” in the American magazine The New Republic.12 This selection of publications in an art magazine, a newspaper and a political-artistic journal respectively illustrates that film criticism both thrived and was inter-artistic during the 1920s (“Across the Screen of My Brain” 152).

In the essay, Woolf elucidates her critical observations on the medium of film. More precisely, she theorizes about the mechanism of film and how the spectator experiences it; she criticizes contemporary film; and she suggests improvements from which the art of film might benefit. The following paragraphs will engage with the first aspect. The two other sections will be discussed in the second part of this dissertation.

The discussion beneath will try to put Woolf’s remarks on the ontology of the cinematic image (1.1) and spectatorship (1.2) into the context of the ongoing debates, as introduced above. Moreover, since this is an interdisciplinary research her contribution to early film theory will be contrasted with her literary devices. It can be suggested that two works, which were written respectively during and near to her involvement with film, diverge from her usual literary method and reveal a universe that resembles her cinematic reality: “Time Passes”, the second section of To the Lighthouse (1927), and The Waves (1931).

1.1 DISTANCE AND ABSENCE IN THE CINEMA

Initially, Woolf describes film’s relation to reality in a manner that resembles the realist tradition promoted by Siegfried Kracauer and André Bazin.13 The first cinematic images

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12 See Laura Marcus (107) and Leslie Hankins’ “Across the Screen of My Brain” (151-152) for the information on the various publications.
13 This stance is supported by Laura Marcus (113), who also suggests that Woolf’s essay can be interpreted as “an early contribution to the development of a realist film theory”
transcribed by Woolf in “The Cinema” most likely are newsreels. Newsreels were short non-fictional news stories that were presented in a neutral fashion and then screened publically. “There is the king shaking hands with a football team,” Woolf notes, “there is Sir Thomas Lipton’s yacht; there is Jack Horner winning the Grand National” (TC 268). In other words, Woolf’s discussion on film begins with recordings of everyday reality. Similar to Kracauer, she identifies the cinematic apparatus’ capacity to capture the “exactitude of reality” as one of film’s key characteristics (TC 271).

Nevertheless, Woolf is aware that film largely derives its strength from its “power of suggestion” (TC 271). Notwithstanding the cinema’s close to perfect imitation of reality, it ultimately is an illusion that excels at suggesting that it is real. After a second examination, Woolf remarks that the cinematic images “have taken on a quality which does not belong to the simple photograph of real life” (TC 268). Rather, she continues,

They have become not more beautiful in the sense in which pictures are beautiful, but shall we call it (our vocabulary is miserably insufficient) more real, or real with a different reality from that which we perceive in daily life? We behold them as they are when we are not there. We see life as it is when we have no part in it. (TC 268)

In contrast to her initial interpretation of the newsreel fragments as mere recordings of “real life”, Woolf notes that these projections are “more real, or real with a different reality” (TC 268). Caused by the realization that, as a spectator, she is “not part” of those fragments of life, Woolf becomes fascinated with this world which she can marvel at but does not require her presence (TC 268). It can be said that Woolf pinpoints the contrast that is at work between the directness and distance of film. Due to film’s constant motion and feeling of “continuous present” or presence, the audience beholds the filmic images as they are happening—look, “[t]here is the king shaking hands with a football team” (TC 268). However, “we are not there” at all (TC 268). In other words, the audience is absent from the world on the screen.

In this sense, it is more fruitful to read Woolf’s remarks alongside the theories of Christian

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14 David Trotter (165) notes that these fragments are newsreel images without further questioning. From Leslie Hankins’ “A Splice of Reel Life in Virginia Woolf’s “Time Passes”” (107) it can be deduced that she as well interpreted them as newsreels.

15 The notion of “continuous present” is posited by Andrew Shail in relation to temporality in the cinema. Because the images continuously follow one after another, every image is perceived as presently happening at the moment. Especially see pages 95-100 of Shail’s The Cinema and the Origins of Literary Modernism.

16 David Trotter argues that cinema taught Woolf something about what he terms “constitutive absence” (169). According to Trotter, this principle enabled Woolf to grasp “the common life” (169), “existence a such” (4). Also Laura Marcus uses the word “absence” in context of Woolf’s essay. As will become clear in the following passage, I share Marcus’ and Trotter’s points of view to a great extent.
Metz and especially Stanley Cavell. In *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (1971), Cavell (25) postulates the notion that “movies allow the audience to be mechanically absent.” “[W]hat makes the physical medium of film unlike anything else on earth,” Cavell adds, “lies in [...] the nature of our absence from it; in its fate to reveal reality and fantasy (not by reality as such, but) by projections of reality, projections in which, as I had occasion to put it, reality is freed to exhibit itself” (166). As will be detailed in the subsequent section, it can be maintained that Woolf interprets the spectator’s absence from the reality on the screen as an opportunity to see life from a more general point of view. In this regard, I agree with Trotter’s premise that cinema might have taught Woolf something about “the common life” (Trotter 169).

Additionally, similar to Cavell, it can be argued that Woolf likens the life passing on the screen to a more than real experience. According to Cavell, “movies reproduce the world *magically* [...] by permitting us to view it unseen.” (Cavell 40, my emphasis). Differently put, because of his initial absence from the cinematic world, the spectator hovers above it and is able to see things that normally would remain invisible to him. It is as if these images arise out of magic, from the depths of the spirit-world. Woolf, both in her essay and in her diary entry on 30 October 1926, re-uses the same phrasing of a world “when we are not there” (TC 268; *DIII* 114). While thinking about a new novelistic experiment, she imagines that “[i]t is to be an endeavour at something mystic, spiritual; the thing that exists when we aren’t there” (*DIII* 114). Ultimately, this “book of ideas about life” might have taken form as *The Waves*, which will be further discussed later on in this chapter (*DIII* 114).

### 1.2 THE COMMON SPECTATOR

In the prefatory lines of her essay, Woolf appears to be quite condescending about the film audience. “People say that the savage no longer exists in us,” Woolf begins, but “[t]hey have never seen the savages of the twentieth century watching the pictures” (TC 268). This seemingly uncivilized audience is gazing at a magical concoction of shapes. However, similar

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18 Scholars David Trotter and Laura Marcus have also related this “interplay of presence and absence”, as Marcus (115) calls it, to Christian Metz’s concept of “the presence of an absence (Marcus 27, 115; Trotter 24). Personally, I believe that this discussion benefits more from the concepts provided by Cavell and opt not to focus on Metz’s theories.

to her reinterpretation of the realism of the cinematic image, the “savage” spectator turns out to be not as passive and naïve as initially assumed. At first, Woolf describes the cinematic images as being solely perceived by the eye, which was seen as the main organ of perception in the visual culture of modern society.  

“The eye licks it [the moving images] all up instantaneously, and the brain, agreeably titillated, settles down to watch things happening without bestirring itself to think,” Woolf states (TC 268). In agreement with Kracauer’s notion of spectatorship, the spectator’s brain or mind is in a state of “lowered consciousness” and consequentially wanders off to a mode of inattention (*Theory of Film* 179). But suddenly, Woolf observes, “[t]he eye is in difficulties” and rouses the brain from its slumber (TC 268). The cognitive process of film-watching thus changes because the moving images are not simply real but “more [than] real” (TC 269).

As a result, due to the absence of the spectator from the projected reality, he or she seems to be able to react differently than he or she would in daily life. Woolf explains that “we seem to be removed from the pettiness of actual existence” when we watch film (TC 269). Because our initial emotional reflexes are restrained, we do not have to fear that “[t]he horse will […] knock us down” and accordingly seek a passage through the fence, or pull up our trousers because “the wave [might] wet our feet” (TC 269). Alternatively, “we have time to feel pity and amusement, to generalize, to endow one man with the attributes of the race” (TC 269). This distance enables the audience to view the world more generally. It is not a life passing on the screen, but *life*—“existence as such” (Trotter 4). As Cavell remarks, “reality is freed to exhibit itself” (166). The audience can “generalize” and zoom out from the individual experience, which is an important remark for the discussion of “Time Passes” and *The Waves* in the following section (TC 269). It can be argued that in contrast to the reader’s access to the inside of the characters’ minds, the spectator is given a “universal consciousness” in the cinema which grants him or her a perspective on life as it is (Richter 144).  

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20 The modernist period has often been referred to as “the visual culture” because of the experiments concerning opticality and the invention of photography and cinematography amongst others. Jonathan Crary, however, argues in *Suspensions of Perception* that “perception” should not solely be defined in the “single-sense modality of sight”. Rather, he opts for “mixed modalities” that also take into account the other senses such as “hearing and touch” (Crary 3).

21 In *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage* Harvena Richter (144) defines this “collective mind” as being both personal and universal, enabling the reader to move from character to character whilst remaining within the confines of a unified whole. I will use this concept in a more cinematic way.
1.3 “TIME PASSES” AND THE WAVES

From the previous paragraphs it can be gathered that, according to Woolf, cinema’s relation to reality is marked by the absence of the spectator from the projected world. Consequentially, this affects the experience of the spectator, who is able to view life from a more universal perspective because he or she reacts differently to this distanced world than to real life.

These ontological and spectatorial features identified by Woolf in the medium of film are noticeably different from her literary method. In her novels the diegetic world is portrayed through the mediated perspective of the characters, whose personal thoughts and ideas are the most prominent feature of the work. However, there are two literary works written near to Woolf’s engagement with film, “Time Passes”, To the Lighthouse’s middle section (1927), and The Waves (1931), which can be related to her cinematic experience and can benefit from a reading alongside her filmic principles.

“Time Passes”, initially constructed as “a corridor” between two other sections in To the Lighthouse, encompasses the lapse of ten years in barely nineteen pages (Original Holograph Draft 44). This enigmatic “break of unity in [her] design” is described by Woolf as “this impersonal thing” in which she had to represent “the flight of time” (DIII 36). In contrast to her usual style and method of “trac[ing]” and transcribing the “myriad impressions” that “[t]he mind receives”, the reader is confronted with an (almost complete) absence of consciousness.

Scholarship in the inter-artistic field of cinema and literary modernism generally has linked this absence to Woolf’s cinematic fascination with a world “when we are not there” (TC 268). By providing us with a diegetic world from which the characters’ minds are absent, Woolf mimics the cinematic world from which she, as a spectator, is absent. In lieu of access to the characters’ thoughts, a voice is given to the uncontrollable forces of nature. As a result, the reader is “removed from the pettiness of actual existence” and offered a more universal perspective on the events that take place in the “Time Passes” section (TC 269). This is rather remarkable as this section informs us about the death of the main

22 All quotations from To the Lighthouse are taken from Woolf, Virginia. To the Lighthouse. 1927. London: Penguin Books, 1992. And will hereafter be referred to as TtL.
24 Although the main characters are absent from the main body of text, they reappear between brackets. Furthermore, Mrs. McNab, the housekeeper, is a minor character who is mentioned in the main text as she has the task of cleaning the derelict summer cottage. This absence of consciousness is also noted by Hankins (“A Splice of Reel Life” 107); Marcus (115); Shail (128); Trotter (170).
character, Mrs. Ramsay, as well as two of her children, Prue and Andrew. From the following excerpt it can be gathered that their deaths are stated impersonally between square brackets.

The nights now are full of wind and destruction; the trees plunge and bend and their leaves fly helter skelter until the lawn is plastered with them and they lie packed in gutters and choke rain pipes and scatter damp paths. […]

[Mr. Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning, but, Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, he stretches his arms out. They remained empty.] (Til 140)

Although we only learn about Mrs. Ramsay’s death at the end of the paragraph, we sense the impending death and destruction through the forces of nature. Nevertheless, by giving a voice to nature and not to a character, it can be argued that the reader initially is confronted with ‘death’ as such. Only later, in parentheses, the impersonal ‘death’ is given the face of Mrs. Ramsay. In relation to Woolf’s cinematic experience, this impersonality can be related to the “universal consciousness” of the spectator (Richter 144). Due to the spectator’s absence of the cinematic world, he or she can “generalize” or “endow one man with the attributes of the race” (TC 269). In “Time Passes”, Woolf offers the reader a generalized view of ‘death’ as such, which is subsequently specified. Cinema might have taught Woolf something about zooming out, or distancing herself from the single point of view. In this diegetic world, nature and time are “freed to exhibit itself” (Cavell 166). By means of this method, Woolf might have wanted to confront the reader with the transience of a human life rather than the individual mourning process of one particular person.

“Time Passes” can be seen as a preview of an outlook on life that Woolf further developed in The Waves. As previously stated, Woolf’s fascination with the world or “the thing that exists when we aren’t there” is echoed in her musing on a new “book of ideas about life” that most likely initiated The Waves (DIII 114).26 As this diary entry was written a few months after the publication of “The Cinema” it is highly probable that the same cinematic experience that might have informed “Time Passes” is also at work in The Waves. Moreover, similar to “Time Passes”, The Waves features “impersonal interludes” (Flint xii) and is written in an equally poetic and almost ethereal language.

The Waves diverges from the majority of Woolf’s novels not because it provides a feeling of universality by means of removing the characters from the diegetic world, as in “Time Passes”, but rather by merging six characters in one master consciousness (Flint xii).

26 Angela Hague (257) and Kate Flint (xvi) both argue that this diary entry refers to The Waves.
Bernard, the most dominant member of the collective, in this regard states that “it is not one life that I look back upon; I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am – Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs” (TW 212). This conglomeration of six souls can be related to Woolf’s idea of spectatorship and the concept of the “universal consciousness” (Richter 144). Harvena Richter (144) defines this “universal consciousness” as being both personal and universal, enabling the reader to move from character to character whilst remaining within the confines of a unified whole. The Waves, an “endeavour at something mystic, spiritual”, interconnects disparate elements in a mystical universe (DIII 114). In this regard, the six characters that Woolf features are not fully embodied but rather fluid and formless. They resemble spirits that traverse a universe, which is neither specified in time nor place. The Waves, as Laura Marcus remarks (11), “explores the origins of life”. Moreover, as Bernard remarked, there might not be “any words” to portray a “world seen without a self” but, Bernard continues, there are “phantom phrases” (TW 221).

As can be illustrated with “Time Passes” and The Waves, Woolf’s interaction with the cinema might have inspired Woolf to recreate a spiritual and mystic view of life in which she is able to look at life from a distance. Woolf, as she elucidates in the essay “The Narrow Bridge of Art”, envisioned a future novel that did “not question […] the individual thing, but the state and being of all human life”. This new, hybrid novel that she describes “will differ from the novel as we know it now chiefly in that it will stand further back from life” (TNBoA 224). In other words, it would reveal life as such. According to Woolf, the cinema is able to offer this perspective. “Time Passes” and The Waves, the literary texts which seem to echo her cinematic experience the most, therefore might be seen as an experiment in creating this hybrid work of art.

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CHAPTER 2 H.D.

H.D. wrote for the Close Up magazine from 1927 to 1929. Her contribution to the magazine comprises of eleven articles, one pamphlet on Borderline, a film made by the Close Up members, and two “Projector” poems. Her first three articles formed a series called “The Cinema and the Classics,” in which she attempted to formulate cinema’s essential characteristics. The remaining texts generally commented upon German and Russian films, which H.D. especially appreciated.

Her film writing, composed in a similar fashion to her poetry and prose, seems very opaque and eclectic at times. It is riddled with Hellenistic references, lofty words and deeply personal but enigmatic observations. Nevertheless she speaks very clearly of her appreciation of film: “A perfect medium has at last been granted us. Let us be worthy of it,” she exclaims (“Restraint” 112).

This chapter will try to elucidate what makes the medium of film so perfect in H.D.’s eyes. A first section will define film’s relationship to the physical world as envisioned by H.D., and contrast it to how she experiences it. The discussion will then further illuminate H.D.’s idea of spectatorship as both active and passive. Finally, her ideas on cinematic experience and spectatorship will be illustrated with her two “Projector” poems (published in the first and fourth Close Up issue respectively, July and October 1927).

2.1 REALITY AND THE “WORLD OF HALF LIGHT”28

“Life and the film must not be separated,” H.D. pleads in “Russian Films” (138). “[P]eople and things must pass across the screen naturally like shadows of trees on grass or passing reflections in a crowded city window” (“Russian Films” 138). H.D. does not refute but rather underlines cinema’s ability to represent physical reality and even construes it as a necessity. “We should be somewhere with our minds,” H.D. advocates (“Restraint” 111).

However, similar to Woolf, H.D. initially discusses the cinema by means of realistic images but ultimately interprets it as an “impression of reality”, a “simulacrum” that serves as a pathway to above-worldly or spiritual realities (Baudry 171). H.D.’s film concepts can be interpreted alongside Christian Metz’s notion of the “dual character” of cinema’s “signifier” (Metz 696). Metz (696) argues that the spectator sees something on the screen that is real and visible, but what is “perceived is not really the object, it is its shade, its phantom, its double, its replica” and thus “stamped with unreality”. H.D., interestingly, also refers to screen

images as a “ghost” or a “mask” which “originally presented life but so crudely” (“Mask&Movietone” 115-116). Therefore, the cinematic world becomes a “world of half light” (“Mask&Movietone” 120). Watching a film, H.D. observes, is like “watching symbols of things that matter, accepting yet knowing those symbols were divorced utterly from reality” (“Mask&Movietone” 116). H.D., however, does not perceive this as something negative, but rather as a part of silent film’s unique power. Because of silent film’s crude and unfinished representation of life, H.D. envisions the screen images as symbols that are able to reveal something of herself. The half-images are essential to her cinematic visionary experience. For H.D., film, as will be explained in the following section, has the power to reveal, to redeem or to cause epiphanies (Connor 13; Mandel “Magical lenses”; CU 97).

The importance of this ghost-like rudimentary nature of the screen images can be illustrated by the advent of sound on film. The advent of sound in 1927, and especially the element of synchronized speech, drastically changed the world of film. H.D., who comments upon the introduction of the Movietone, lamented that her “ghost-love [had] become so vibrantly incarnate” (Mask&Movietone 115). H.D. realizes how quintessential this “world of half light” is for her cinematic experience once it had become too real (“Mask&Movietone” 120). “I want to help to add imagination to a mask, a half finished image, not have everything done for me”, she proclaims “(Mask&Movietone” 116). This line of thought will be further explained in the subsequent section.

Furthermore, the introduction of sound seemed to underline the mechanical aspect of the cinema to H.D. As a consequence of the addition of a voice to a “mask”, the image became “mechanized and robbed of the thing behind the thing” (“Mask&Movietone” 115). Sound added to the impression of reality, or “the thing”, seems to have made the crude representation of life she described earlier too realistic. Consequentially, we are “robbed of” the hidden truth that these cinematic symbols might reveal. “This screen projection is not a mask, it is a person, a personality”, H.D. states (“Mask&Movietone” 116). Whilst we initially

29 Rachel Connor (13) interestingly relates H.D.’s “representation of the image as a portal to the spiritual or divine experience” to “[James] Joyce’s concept of the ‘epiphany’, or to Woolf’s ‘moments of being’”.

30 Sound on film was received with scepticism by directors and critics alike. A multitude of the Close Up contributors, Dorothy Richardson amongst others, initially opposed to its advent for the reason that threatened film’s universality (Marcus CU 79). Others, such as Eisenstein and H.D., reasoned that it would thwart the spectator’s collaboration and association. Ultimately, as advocated by the French director René Clair and transcribed by Kracauer (157), it can be said that “speech and sound added an element of reality to the cinema which prevents it from setting the spectator dreaming”.

31 The Movietone sound system was an invention that recorded sound and could synchronize speech and image.
“moved like moths in darkness”, lured by the light, we now “[l]ike a moth […] are paralysed before too much reality” (“Mask&Movietone” 116; 119). According to H.D., this “mechanical perfection” would only “threaten that world of half light” and deprive the spectator from interacting with the cinematic world (“Mask&Movietone” 120). This trail of thought and the specifics of H.D.’s idea of spectatorship will be further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

2.2 SPECTATORSHIP

If we take a look at H.D.’s spectatorial experience, it can be argued that H.D. mediates between losing and finding herself in a new world, between being asleep and awake, between being there and not there.32 Or in other words, between passive and active spectatorship.

According to H.D.’s statements in her film articles, the spectator is in a trance or state of hypnosis due to the mechanism of projection. Because we are “hypnotized by cross currents and interacting shades of light and darkness,” “[o]ur censors, [which are] intellectually off guard, permitted our minds to rest” (“Mask&Movietone” 116). With our intellect and minds not actively engaged, we are transported to a “blurred” “layer of self” (“Mask&Movietone” 116). In H.D.’s reasoning, the spectator resembles a blank screen that obliviously receives stimuli or “vibration[s]” as if it were the first “idea[s]” and “emotion[s]” to enter his consciousness (“Mask&Movietone” 116). The passive audience loses itself in the cinematic world and merges with the images on the screen. H.D. illustrates this process in her two “Projector” poems, as will be discussed in the following section.

H.D.’s thoughts can be read alongside Siegfried Kracauer’s notion of spectatorship. In Theory of Film Kracauer (158-159) argues that because “film images affect primarily the spectator’s senses” his intellect or “power of reasoning” is less involved. Consequentially, the spectator is lured into a dream-state of “lowered consciousness”, during which he forgets his own identity and “dissolves into all things and beings” on the screen (Kracauer 159). H.D. acknowledges film’s resemblance to dreams as she calls it “the art of dream portrayal” (Borderline pamphlet 232). Nevertheless, I suggest that H.D.’s view of the film is more complex than Kracauer’s. As noted before, H.D. arguably moves across the borderline of passive and active spectatorship.

32 My words are based, on the one hand, on H.D.’s comment after hearing a voice recording of herself reading a poem: “I seemed to lose myself, to be myself as hardly ever in my life before. […] I had found myself, I had found my alter-ego or my double.” (qtd. in Connor 83). On the other hand, I was inspired by two lines from her second “Projector” poem: “we sleep and are awake, / we dream and are not here” (ll. 26-27).
It can be argued that because the cinema generates images automatically, they seem, as Stanley Cavell believes (39), to “arise out of magic” and are uncontrolled or involuntary. This concept of automatism, therefore, can explain H.D.’s blending of an absent-minded and visionary spectator. In the previous section, I have indicated that H.D. realized that she “help[ed]” and “add[ed]” something to the “half finished” screen images once she was no longer able to do it due to the element of sound (“Mask&Movietone” 116). Without this contrast, H.D. might not have realized that she adds a personal layer to the images on the screen. The whole process is not a conscious one. Laura Marcus (CU 98) and Rachel Connor (1) accordingly suggest that the cinema evokes a “visionary consciousness” or “visionary experience” in H.D. H.D. herself sometimes realizes that she feels “recreated” and “redeemed” and relates it to a visionary experience (“Mask&Movietone” 116). This experience seems to emanate from outside herself. In her article on the Soviet director Lev Kuleshov’s Expiation (Sühne), H.D. remarks that something “intended” that her “mind should receive this series of uncanny and almost psychic sensations in order to transmute them elsewhere; in order to translate them” (“Expiation” 125). When in fact, it can be argued that she is the one projecting but does not realize it because of cinema’s automatic unwinding of images. These utterances indicate an active spectator and can be linked to Eisenstein’s notion of the “the creating spectator” (Film Sense 33). According to Eisenstein, the spectator ideally interacts with the cinematic images and responds emotionally or intellectually to the combination of shots.

Silent cinema, however, is not confronted with this problem and does not restrain the spectator from creating or interacting. There are instances in which H.D. is clearly aware of her position as a member of the audience, and therefore not in a trance. Rather than losing herself in the cinematic world, she alternatively meets herself and is offered a new perspective on herself and her past memories. In lieu of the apparatus projecting, she becomes the (active) projector.

As a result of this visionary tendency, both H.D. and Dorothy Richardson, as will be discussed later, ascribe a religious aura to the cinema. In “The Mask and the Movietone” she transforms the picture palace into a “temple”, which can be seen as a secular church.

Then we sank into light, into darkness, the cinema palace (we each have our favourite) became a sort of temple. We depended on light, on some sub-strata of warmth, some pulse or vibration […]. We sank into this pulse and warmth and were recreated. The cinema has become to us what the church was to our ancestors. We sang, so to speak, hymns, we were redeemed by light literally. (“Mask&Movietone” 116)
The spectator is “recreated” and “redeemed” by light (“Mask&Movietone” 116). He stands before the Light God’s “altar” as a “neophyte” who, recently converted to a new religion of light, seeks the “truth” that either lies hidden in his subconscious, or is a revelation of a higher sort (‘Expiation’ 125; ‘Projector II’ 112; 123). This idea can help us understand the “Projector” poems that H.D. wrote during her involvement with film. Furthermore, not only can film, as a religion, establish a sense of personal redemption or sublimation, but also each separate member or spectator can be tied together in a strong community. Rachel Connor explains H.D.’s emphasis on collectivity by relating it to her childhood. Growing up in a Moravian community, H.D. was surrounded by ideals and values of Christian unity, which Connor sees reproduced in her thoughts and writings (Connor 92).

2.3 CINEMATIC PROJECTION, CROSSING A BORDERLINE

If we take a look at H.D.’s film theory, the mechanism of projection, which can be considered as both automatic and personal, can be considered as her key concept. Moreover, it can be argued that the process of projection also is essential to her literary work. As suggested by Adalaide Morris in her study “The Concept of Projection: H.D.’s Visionary Powers,” (413), projection can be identified as H.D.’s “master metaphor”. Morris, furthermore, defines it as “the thrust that bridges two worlds […] the movement across a borderline.” This borderline can be seen as the gap between perceptual, “physical reality” and the “psychic and spiritual”, which for H.D. always coexist (“Concept of Projection” 413).

In relation to the cinema and H.D.’s “Projector” poems, which were published in the first and fourth Close Up issue, H.D. defines her new religion of light. In “Projector” and “Projector II (Chang),” H.D. invokes the Greek god of Light, Apollo, who H.D. saw re-animated by cinema’s projection of moving images through light.33 “Projector II (Chang)” can illustrate H.D.’s idea of the spectator who loses himself in the cinematic world and merges with the images on the screen. Apollo speaks:

your life, my life;
I catch you in my net
of light on over-light;
your are not any more,
being one with snake and bear,

33 Chang (1927) is a film directed by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack (who were to produce the renowned King Kong in 1933), set in the jungle of Thailand. H.D.’s portrayal of tropical scenery and an array of wild animals reappears in the poem.
with leopard
and with panther; (“Projector II (Chang)” ll. 127-133)

With the spectator hypnotized and the projector placed behind him, he is snared in a net of light, due to which he is no longer himself but a part of the images that are projected on the screen. The spectator seems to become a “double” himself.

Both in her “Projector” poems as in “Restraint,” the second article of H.D.’s ‘Cinema and the Classics’ series, light is described as “our god” (“Restraint” 112). Ultimately, Apollo can be interpreted as a substitution for the Christian divinity as he takes on the roles previously attributed to the Christian God. It is Apollo who acts the part of “reclaim[ing] the lost” (“P” ll. 25) souls and who speaks out to those “without hope” (“PII” ll. 119), a role previously granted to the Christian divinity. Furthermore, H.D. indicates that upon Apollo’s return—the advent of cinematography in 1895—one regained a place for worship, something which the people prior to 1895 were in absence of. This can be gathered from the following lines:

I have returned
though in an evil day
you crouched despairingly
who had no shrine;
we had no temple and no temple fire (“P” ll. 83-87)

As a result of the invention of cinema, evil and utter darkness have subsided. As will be further examined in Part Two, it can be argued that the cinema helped H.D. with her identity struggles through this process of projection and the involuntary confrontations with herself.
CHAPTER 3 DOROTHY RICHARDSON

Dorothy Richardson contributed to *Close Up* from its first issue in July 1927 until its last year of publication in 1933 with a column appropriately titled “Continuous Performance”. The element of continuity often returns in her film articles and can be interpreted as a key component of her appreciation of the medium. Not only the continuous movement of images across the screen struck her as fundamental for how life could be contemplated in the cinema, but also the continuity of the surroundings (musical accompaniment, conditions of light and darkness) proved to be essential for her cinematic experience. Similarly, Richardson’s literary life’s work, *Pilgrimage*, also be seen as a continuous writing performance. With the first novel, *Pointed Roofs*, first published in 1915, and the last, *March Moonlight*, published posthumously in 1967, *Pilgrimage* was a child Richardson nourished throughout her career. Noteworthy is the four-year gap between the publications of *Oberland* (1927) and *Dawn’s Left Hand* (1931), which forms a contrast to her previous eight publications that were released at a one or two-year interval. It is during this period that Richardson was highly involved with film and was writing for *Close Up*.

As Richardson’s film writing blends in with her progress and thoughts on *Pilgrimage*, her literary strategies and methods will be read continuously along with her column. First the discussion will turn to Richardson’s stance towards life in both the film and the novel. Subsequently, her cinematic experience, which resembles a spiritual journey, will be delineated. Finally, extra attention will be devoted to Richardson’s idea of the contemplating the spectator, which is especially relevant to the discussion between contemplation versus distraction that was predominant in the late 1920s and 1930s.

3.1 THE “PLUNGE INTO LIFE”

In her film articles, Richardson describes the first “Animated Picture” in which “a locomotive advancing full steam upon the audience” is represented (CP 208). For Richardson the Lumière Brothers’ *The arrival of a train* (*Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*) was “the first hint of the Film’s power of tackling aspects of reality that no other art can adequately handle” (CP 208). In other words, Richardson remarks that film is uniquely equipped to represent reality. “Like the snap-shot” these early, “innocen[t]” movies “recorded” reality (CP “Pictures and Films” 188). But even when cinema started to adopt a narrative with a plot, Richardson suggests that

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34 Susan Gevirtz (61) argues that Richardson saw film as an “extra-literary object” by means of which she commented upon the process of writing.
films can be “true to life” (CP IX 179). The “snap-shot records […] of landscape calm or wild, of crowds and all the moving panorama of life” continued to be perceivable in the narrative film (CP ‘Pictures and Films’ 188).

Contrary to literature, in the realm of cinema “any film can give” “the plunge into life” (CP 161). Richardson hardly distinguishes between Hollywood movies, which were regarded with disdain by the majority of the Close Up members because their use of happy endings and glamour hardly could be called a realistic rendering of life, and the highbrow films. Apart from the precondition of musical accompaniment, which will be explained in a few lines, any film could depict life according to Richardson.

Richardson’s literary strategy in Pilgrimage, however, diverges from the traditional representation of fictitious life by means of the plot. “Isn’t life the plot?”, she wonders. The traditional pre-modernist definition of the “plot”, in which a collection of events and actions lead to a certain outcome, is discarded for the narration of life as experienced by a consciousness. It can be argued that her own life is the plot of Pilgrimage, which by itself is a retelling of the ‘fictitious’ life of Miriam Henderson, Richardson’s alter-ego. Writing according to this stream-of-consciousness technique, which would also be attributed to other modernist authors such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, is a term for which the writer May Sinclair is generally credited. In fact, Sinclair originally used it in a review of Dorothy Richardson’s first three novels. In 1918 May Sinclair wrote:

In this series there is no drama, no situation, no set scene. Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on. It is Miriam Henderson’s stream of consciousness going on and on. And in neither is there any grossly discernible beginning or middle or end. In identifying herself with this life, which is Miriam’s stream of consciousness, Miss Richardson produces her effect of being the first, of getting closer to reality than any of our novelists who are trying so desperately to get close.

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35 Tom Gunning, an American film historicist, argues that a “narrativization” process took place in the cinema from around 1907 until 1914. Prior to 1907, filmmakers were predominantly interested in short non-narrative films, which he calls “the cinema of attractions”. However, during this transition period, narrative films increasingly outnumbered documentary, newsreel and experimental films. By 1915, cinema was under the hegemony of Hollywood. See Gunning’s “The Cinema of Attractions: Early film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde.”

36 Quoted in Gevirtz (3). Originally from a letter to Edward West (Vita Sackville’s husband), November 23, 1938, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

37 Richardson actually disliked the term “stream of consciousness” and replied: “Stream of consciousness is a muddle-headed phrase. It’s not a stream, it’s a pool, a sea, an ocean. It has depth and greater depth and when you think you have reached its bottom there is nothing there, and when you give yourself up to one current you are suddenly possessed by another.” (quoted in Rose 370).
It can be proposed that Richardson esteems both (her revised concept of the) novel and film for their recording and revealing of the continuous movements of life—of “life going on and on”. However, according to Richardson, any film can depict this continuous forward moving life. As long as there are a few realistic images of landscapes, or even an interior, “the imagination of the onlooker could get to work” according to Richardson (CP ‘Pictures and Films’ 188). Whereas in her novels, life is and must be the plot in order to achieve the same effect.

It should nevertheless be noted that Richardson advances a precondition for film to “plunge into life” (CP 161). If the pictures pass in complete silence, the mechanical qualities of the medium were emphasised for Richardson. Without any musical accompaniment the moving images are “lifeless and colourless” and the “hiss and creak of the apparatus” is accentuated (CP II 163). Unable to bring the images to life, Richardson remarked that this soundless cinema “seemed to justify the curses of the most ardent enemies of the cinema” (CP II 163). Consequently, she fathomed the critique that narrative film “makes no personal demand upon the onlooker” (CP II 163). It no longer was life that was passing on the screen but merely “a moving photograph” that was unable to actively involve the spectator’s imagination. Rather, the audience passively watched and heard an apparatus spitting out images that still resembled reality but lost their illusory power. Furthermore, not only did Richardson experience this lifelessness when the orchestra was absent, but also when the talkies were introduced. The advent of sound on film gave rise to what Richardson called “a dead silence” (CP ‘Dialogue in Dixie’ 194). Once the characters ceased talking or singing “the instantly flattened, colourless moving photograph, featured the subdued hissing of the projector” (CP “Dialogue in Dixie” 194).

3.2 THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Under the right circumstances, the musical accompaniment serves “as a cover for the sounds from the operator’s gallery and the talking of the audience” (CP II 163). Furthermore, it can also provide “help to the concentration that is essential to the collaboration between the onlooker and what he sees” (CP II 163). According to Richardson, film’s absolute power does not depend on how accurately it can imitate reality, but rather “upon the direct relationship, mystic, joyous, wonderful, between the observer [and?] a continuous miracle of form in movement, of light and shadow in movement, the continuous performance […] of the film itself.” (CP 209).
As previously discussed, it can be stated that Woolf and H.D. affirmed cinema’s close connection to reality but experienced it as something that transcends daily life. In the following paragraphs I will delineate Richardson’s cinematic experience, which can be said to be deeply personal, even spiritual. Subsequently, the discussion will move further to the underlying process of concentration, contemplation and collaboration, thereby pinpointing film’s essential characteristics of distance, projection and motion.

Contrary to H.D., who eclectically envisions the cinema as a dream-world, a realm of ghosts, a temple for spiritual and even visionary experiences, Richardson is less ambiguous. Ultimately Richardson eschews the term “dream-world” because it “bears no relation to reality” for her (CP “Pictures and Films” 189). Consequentially, in the same manner as the “dead silences” of the talkies and the silent film without musical accompaniment, the film “makes no demand upon the intelligence” of the spectator (CP ‘Pictures and Films’ 189). In this regard, it can be stated that Richardson contradicts Kracauer’s opinion that the film audience is in a state of “lowered consciousness” which sets them dreaming (Kracauer 159).

The atmosphere of the picture palace does, however, seem to remind Richardson of something that is spiritual and even religious. In the excerpt above, Richardson noted the “mystic” “relationship between the observer [and?] a continuous miracle of form in movement, of light and shadow in movement” (CP 209). Richardson’s use of the words “mystic” and “miracle” probably allude to fields of symbolism and religion. Furthermore, in the article ‘There’s No Place Like Home’, Richardson employs religious terminology to describe the cinema. The activity of movie-going is compared to “pilgrimages” (which can of course also be related to her literary work), the picture palace to a “church” with a “nave and two aisles”, and the film audience to a “congregation” (CP 168). It can be suggested that Richardson, similar to H.D., regarded the cinema as a place for both private contemplation and the gathering of a community. Whereas H.D.’s childhood was marked by Moravian values, Richardson was enduringly devoted to Quakerism and wrote two books on the subject matter, The Quakers Past and Present and Gleanings From the Work of George Fox (the Quakers’ founder), which were both published in 1914 (Gevirtz 96). The Quakers possibly offered Richardson a temporary seclusion from the world as well as a place for silent contemplation within the confines of a small community— elements that also lie at the heart of her appreciation of film (Troxell 53).

Like on a pilgrimage, the individual embarks on a spiritual journey in the cinema. “The film,” Richardson notes, “has an unrivalled opportunity of presenting the life of the spirit directly”, “though each will take a different journey” (CP III 165). In the Pilgrimage-series,
Richardson similarly recounts the journey, or “inward travel of [the] psyche” of her alter-ego Miriam Henderson (Gevirtz 2). Richardson thus describes the act of writing and the experience of watching a film in similar terms: through contemplation. In order to reach this state of contemplation, the audience needs to be concentrated, which “depend[s] in part upon the undisturbed continuity of surrounding conditions” (CP II 163). As indicated above, Richardson underlines the importance of musical accompaniment to drown out the mechanical noises of the apparatus. Nevertheless, the music should “blend[…]” with the screen images, otherwise “the audience is distracted by a half-conscious effort to unite them” (CP 161; CP II 163).

Once concentrated and attentive, the spectator can be “reduce[d] or raise[d] […] to a varying intensity of contemplation” according to the kind of film (CP “Narcissus” 202). In this state of contemplation, the spectator’s “collaborating creative consciousness” is roused (CP “A Tear for Lycidas” 197). In other words, Richardson imagines that the spectator adds something to the reality on the screen. In her film articles, Richardson never truly elucidates what she is contemplating, or what the spectator creates in his mind. Nevertheless, a possible explanation can be found in her literary work. In the concluding Pilgrimage novel, March Moonlight, Miriam Henderson comments upon the act of writing: “While I write, everything vanishes but what I contemplate. The whole of what is called ‘the past’ is with me, seen anew, vividly”.

It could therefore be said that in the cinema Richardson is exposed to her past, which she subsequently could re-interpret from the present moment. Moreover, if we take a look at the following excerpt from Clear Horizon, a novel Richardson wrote when she was engaged with film, it seems as if Miriam is seated in the picture palace.

As the scattered sounds began to fall away, something within her rose to repel this strange, cold trance […]. It […] was now asserting itself as central and permanent, and sternly suggesting that the whole of the past had been a long journey in a world of illusion. Supposing this were true, supposing this cold contemplation of reality stripped of its glamour were all that remained, there was still space in consciousness, far away behind this benumbed surface, where dwelt whatever it was that now came forward, not so much to give battle as to invite her to gather herself away from this immovable new condition and watch, from a distance, unattained, the behaviour of the newly discovered world. (Pilgrimage IV 296)

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38 This excerpt is quoted in Thomson (353), taken from p. 657 of the fourth collected volume of Pilgrimage in the 1967 edition.
Perhaps this excerpt can give us insight into this process of contemplation that Richardson undergoes in the cinema. Film, then, brings her in a trance during which she could contemplate her past up until that moment. This contemplation subsequently suggested that her past as she envisioned it was a mere illusion. Therefore, Richardson could see her past “anew” and could watch this “newly discovered world” from a distance. Because one of the “gifts” of cinema, according to Richardson, is “the gift of expansion, of moving, ever so little, into a new dimension of consciousness” (CP “This Spoon-fed Generation?” 205).

Moreover, it is noteworthy that both in this excerpt as in her film articles, Richardson emphasises the aspect of watching “from a distance” (Pilgrimage IV 296). The “distance” between the spectator and the filmic reality, according to Richardson, “exactly fit[s] the contemplative state” in the cinema (CP “Narcissus” 202). This utterance reminds us of Woolf, who also emphasised the dislocation between the spectator and the screened reality. Both Woolf and Richardson remark that this distance offers a different perspective on life. However, whereas it enabled Woolf to generalize life because she conceived herself as absent from the screened reality, Richardson presumably saw it as a cue to contemplate her own life from a distance. Therefore, Richardson refers to it as an “enchantment” and ascribes a certain spiritual aura to it as it can make the spectator re-envision his past (CP “Narcissus” 201).

Equally important is the mechanism of projection. The projector, similar to H.D., can be interpreted as the cinematic apparatus on the one hand, and as a metaphor for the spectator projecting his memories and past on the other hand. In this regard, Richardson compares film to a “skye apparition, white searchlight” (CP “Almost Persuaded” 192). Susan Gevirtz (60-61) remarks that this “white searchlight”, or projector, is a revealing mechanism of things that normally remain unseen. It exposes hidden truths thanks to “mystic” collaboration between the spectator and the cinematic apparatus (CP 209).

In Dawn’s Left Hand, the Pilgrimage chapter that appeared closest to her interaction with film, Richardson refers to film and projection in relation to memory.

The memories accumulated since she landed were like a transparent film through which clearly she saw all she had left behind; and felt the spirit of it waiting within her

Richardson’s notion of the aura of film already indicates the tension between her ideas and Walter Benjamin’s, which will be further discussed in the final subchapter. Benjamin (669) defines “aura” as “the unique appearance of a distance” (669) and sees film’s “mechanical reproduction” of reality as a “loss of the aura” because it is no longer “unique”. The distance between the audience and the work of art is annihilated. Richardson, in contrast, ascribes an aura to film specifically because it is a reproduction which offers the spectator a distanced perspective on life.
to project itself upon things just ahead, things waiting in this room as she came up the stairs. (*Dawn’s Left Hand* 141)

Miriam peers *through* her memories, which are grouped in a “transparent film” (*Dawn’s Left Hand* 141). In this specific setting Richardson herself is the projector. The “spirit of” her past, or the mystical side which normally remains unseen or unclear, is now ready “to project itself” on the objects in the room she is about to enter (*Dawn’s Left Hand* 141). Due to this process Richardson presumably indicates that she could reinterpret her past from a different angle.

In contrast to real life or literature, the “observer” in film is “elevat[ed] […] to the condition that is essential to perfect contemplation” (CP “Narcissus” 203). According to Richardson, film enables us to remain “the motionless, observing centre”, as she would also do during her writing process. But rather than creating a collection of fragments of life, life is “seen in full” in the cinema due to its motion (CP “Narcissus” 203). “In life, we contemplate a landscape from one point, or walking through it, break it into bits,” Richardson states (CP “Narcissus” 203). “The film, by setting the landscape in motion and keeping us still, allows it to walk through us” (CP “Narcissus” 203). In other words, the spectator’s own life and past is allowed to walk through him. In this regard, the cinematic spectator might be Richardson’s ideal contemplator. “The ideal human type,” she remarks, “is perhaps he in whom action and contemplation are perfectly blended.”40

3.3 THE CONTEMPLATING SPECTATOR

This last part of the discussion will be dedicated to Richardson’s thoughts on the active or passive nature of the spectator. Richardson’s view of the spectator is especially interesting because it contributes directly to the discussion of spectatorship in terms of distraction versus contemplation from the 1920s and 1930s.

As Jenelle Troxell (52) and Laura Marcus remark (356-357), the *Close Up* members were connected to the Weimar film milieu of German film critics such as Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin. Kracauer first posited the notion “distraction” in relation to cinema in his article “Cult of Distraction: On Berlin’s Picture Palaces” (1926). Initially he states that the new glamorous picture palaces form a distraction to the audience, but towards the end of his essay Kracauer placed the state of distraction also inside the medium. This distraction

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40 Quoted in Gevirtz (footnote 10 on p. 32). Originally quoted by Shirley Rose in “Dorothy Richardson’s Focus on Time.” Richardson’s statement can be read in “Comments by a Layman.” *Dental Record*, vol. XXXVIII (August 1918): 351.
“exposes disintegration,” or in other words, the fragmentary nature of the modern world, to the “stupefied” audience (“Cult of Distraction” 94). In this state of distraction, “[t]he stimulations of the sense succeed each other which such rapidity that there is no room left for even the slightest contemplation” (“Cult of Distraction” 94). This idea is picked up a decade later by Walter Benjamin. In his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), Benjamin (683) states that the spectator’s “[r]eception is in a state of distraction.” According to Benjamin (683), “[d]istraction and concentration form polar opposites.” The traditional state of contemplation or attention the onlooker has in front of a work of art is “interrupted” “the shock effect of the film” due to the images’ “constant, sudden change” (Benjamin 682).

Richardson, in contrast, saw cinema’s continuous movement as something that could induce a state of concentration or contemplation. From the previous paragraphs it can be concluded that Richardson essentially thought of spectatorship as active. Under the right conditions, the spectator is concentrated, attentive and collaborates or co-operates with the cinematic reality via contemplation. We are “not waiting for everything to be done for us,” Richardson argues, but “can manufacture our own reality” (CP III 165; CP II 163).

This, however, is Richardson’s personal view of spectatorship. She does not refute that others evaluate the film in terms of being a “stupefier” or “a drug” that “makes no personal demand upon the onlooker” but rather is “demoralising and devitalising” (CP IV 171; CP II 163; CP ‘Pictures and Films’ 189). But, Richardson concludes, “[s]uch people obviously know very little about the movies” (CP ‘Pictures and Films’ 189).

Paradoxically, Richardson, who emphasises the process of concentration and contemplation, nevertheless seems very distracted herself. In her film articles, Richardson never truly talks about specific films or what she specifically contemplated. On the contrary, her column is predominantly preoccupied with descriptions of the audience and the surroundings. The female spectator, for example, appears to be Richardson’s biggest distraction. “[S]o long as she is there,” Richardson confesses, “gone is the possibility […] of escape […] into the world of meditation or thought” (CP VIII 176). Nevertheless, Richardson does envision that “the onlooker is part of the spectacle” (CP VIII 176). So perhaps she cloaks her state of distraction by saying that the audience is an essential part of her contemplation.
PART 2

FILM LANGUAGE AND CULTURE OF THE 1920s
Not only is the film culture of the 1920s interesting because film criticism and theory prospered, but also because various new film movements and languages originated during this period. In addition to the fundamental questions concerning the ontology of film and the spectatorial processes, as examined in Part One, critical and theoretical writings on the cinema were engaged with its form, content and technique. Since the subsequent discussion will be engaged with Woolf’s, H.D.’s and Richardson’s preferred film language, this introduction will outline several film movements that were of interest to them. Ultimately, this second part will argue that these three authors’ opinion on film’s ideal language reveals an undertone of their favoured literary devices (“Across the Screen of My Brain” 174; CU 3; Foltz 1). As Anne Friedberg insightfully states, the Close Up contributors, but also Woolf, “advocated a cinema that mirrored the aesthetics and production of their own written discourse” (CU 3).

Throughout the discussion, the term “language” will be employed on two levels. On the one hand, it can denote a film’s visual language. This includes various aspects that can influence the meaning of a film. Some distinguishable aspects are the mise-en-scène (everything that takes place in front of the camera: acting codes, make-up, setting, lighting, etc.), camera movement (pan, zoom, tilt, etc.), type of shot (close-up, long shot, point of view shot, etc.) and editing or montage (the combination of shots into a sequence or a rhythm). On the other hand, “language” can refer to the language of silent cinema, which was regularly described as a “visual Esperanto” (Braudy&Cohen 1). Filmmakers, critics and theorists seemed to share the belief that silent film constituted a universal language. This characteristic of silent film was emphasised when the talkies were introduced in the late 1920s. In contrast to silent film’s predominant vocabulary of visual images, the addition of synchronised speech caused film to become nation-specific.¹ The final issues of the Close Up magazine featured this ongoing debate of the transition into sound.

By the mid to late 1910s, the cinema was under the hegemony of Hollywood. The First World War and the subsequent phase of decline and financial difficulties enabled the United States to tighten their grip even more. Due to its relatively late involvement in the War, the United States suffered minor losses in comparison to Europe. As a result, they were able to interfere in Europe’s financially weakened production houses whilst its national film industry thrived. Nevertheless, the 1920s were also marked by a reaction and emergence of the

¹ Silent film can be considered as universal with the exception of the intertitles or captions. These frames of text were used to convey essential pieces of dialogue or information that could not be expressed by means of images.
European film culture. Between the end of the First World War and the early 1920s, three “modernist” film nations gradually started to flourish: the French-based avant-garde movement (1918-1929), Germany’s golden age during the Weimar period (1920-1933) and the Soviet montage cinema (1925-1933). Notwithstanding their differences in methods and techniques, it can be argued that these European film movements responded to the dominant Hollywood film culture.

Hollywood, California had become home to the film studios by 1913 (Cook 37). During the 1920s, the filmmaking process and script writing was reduced to basic formulae in order to increase its productivity (Cook 169). Hollywood had become a well-oiled machine that spat out conventional plots in a minimum of time. Nevertheless, their film output was very popular amongst the masses. Seductive and glamorous stars, which were featured both on the screen and on the advertising billboards, lured potential spectators. This emphasis on outward appearance and saccharine plots especially offered an escapist retreat from the bloodshed of the Great War. Hollywood during the twenties, typically, featured luxurious looking sets and costumes, and promoted the “new morality”, which celebrated materialism, promiscuity and glamour. Numerous filmmakers and aficionados bemoaned this decadent focus on outward appearance. Especially the cinematic avant-garde, including the Close Up magazine, reacted heavily against this development of the art of film.

Enthralled with the potential of the medium, these avant-garde artists and critics proposed new film languages that were able to evolve cinema’s potential and portray its essential characteristics. Akin to the avant-garde tendencies in other art disciplines, their involvement with film was experimental, at times radical, and often based on intellectual debates and expressed in manifestos. This cinephic culture was originally founded in the French salons and very inter-artistic. Among the vanguard were painters (Hans Richter, Walter Ruttmann, Fernand Léger), musicians (Erik Satie, George Antheil), writers (René Clair), photographers (Man Ray), Dadaists (Marcel Duchamp), and Surrealists (Salvador Dalí). As a result of the personal agenda of each artist the cinematic avant-garde is comprised of various movements and conceptions of the essential properties of film. Movements such as Cinéma Pur and Absolute Film, for example, argued that the use of plot was something

\[^2\] In *European Film Theory and Cinema: A Critical Introduction* Ian Aitken (47) proposes that three modernist film movements emerged after the First World War. Contrary to Aitken, who focuses on the European mainstream cinema, I have changed what he called the “French impressionist movement” into the French-based avant-garde movement. There are two avant-garde movements that originated in France during the late 1910s and early 1920s. The first, mainstream, avant-garde movement, which is also called the “narrative” avant-garde, is not addressed by Woolf, H.D. or Richardson. Woolf’s “The Cinema”, on the other hand, reveals interesting parallels to the more radical, second avant-garde.
inessential to cinema as it merely “enslaved” the narrative arts (“The Cinema of Attraction” 56). Alternatively, these absolute and pure languages tended towards abstraction or created rhythmic patterns without a preliminary scenario. Others such as the renowned surrealist film \textit{Un Chien Andalou} (1929), however, did employ a narrative. Nevertheless, contrary to the unequivocal Hollywood plots, \textit{Un Chien Andalou} features ambiguous dream states and uncanny fantasies. This requires an attentive, associative spectator and can lead to myriad interpretations.

Less radical new languages were also created in Germany and the Soviet Union. During the First World War, Germany was prohibited from importing French and American films (Cook 89). Only the neutral countries Sweden and Denmark did not break ties with Germany (Cook 89). As a result, Germany remained self-sufficient until early 1926 and developed its unique methods of filmmaking.\footnote{This independence was lost in 1926 when the \textit{Parufamet} was founded. Due to financial shortcomings, Germany had to succumb to Hollywood at last. The American production houses Paramount and MGM (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) helped the German UFA (Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft) to pay its debts. As a result of this domination, Germany was drained of its creative talent as directors either were instructed to make films in the “American style” or moved to Hollywood where they mainly had unsuccessful careers. (See Cook 105-107 and 110-11.)}

Immediately after the War, an Expressionist film movement conquered the silver screen. Characteristically, German Expressionist films feature a fantastical or horror storyline. In contrast to the Hollywood productions, these films do not merely exploit narrative conventions and expensive looking sets and costumes, but focus on the psychology of the characters and make use of the objects and decors to reinforce the eerie mood (Cook 95). In this regard, a “non-narrative and poetic” atmosphere is created by means of painted shadows and contrasts on decors and sets (Parkinson 57). German Expressionism, thus, introduced the use of an “objective correlative” in the cinema (Cook 94).\footnote{The “objective correlative” is a literary term promoted by T.S. Eliot in the essay “Hamlet and His Problems”.} By making use of an object to render or emphasise the emotions and psychological states of the characters, the essentially objective medium of film is transformed (Cook 95). \textit{The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari} (directed by Robert Wiene, 1920), which is considered to be the epitome of the genre, is mentioned by Woolf in her essay and will be further discussed in the first chapter.

Around 1924, the horror and drama of the Expressionist film had reached its summit and a new movement named the \textit{Neue Zachlichkeit} (New Objectivity) flourished. The Austrian director Georg Wilhelm Pabst undoubtedly is the quintessential exponent of this genre. Typically, \textit{Neue Zachlichkeit} is concerned with the psychological states of its characters, but...
diverges from the Expressionist tendency in terms of its emphasis on realism rather than a highly stylized mise-en-scène. Films that are representative of this genre usually portray the social ills of post-war Germany in an everyday setting. Pabst’s *Joyless Street* (*Die Freudlose Gasse*, 1925), which was H.D.’s “never-to-be-forgotten premiere of the whole art of the screen”, for example, tells the story of a middle class lady, played by Greta Garbo, who has to resort to cabaret dancing in order to scrape a living (“An Appreciation” 144). Not shy to render an unmitigated perspective, *Joyless Street* met with censorship and even was banned in Britain (Cook 107). Nevertheless, Pabst was lauded by the *Close Up* magazine members. Not only were his films the subject of many articles in *Close Up*, but Macpherson, Bryher and H.D. also met him several times in person (*CU* 21). Moreover, Pabst was “impressed […] with the camerawork” of *Borderline*, the film directed by Macpherson, and called it “the only real avant-garde film” (*CU* 22).^5^

Also favoured by the *Close Up* trio were the Russian montage artists. This rather new film nation arguably was the most technical and theoretically substantiated of all the film industries. According to Russian directors such as Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin, the principle of montage, or combination of shots into a larger unit, was the element that transformed film into a unique art. Contrary to the majority of films’ use of montage to ensure the continuity of the story, the Soviet montage artists employ the principle of editing to obtain emotional and associative effects. As Eisenstein explains, “from the collision of two given factors arises a concept” (*Film Form* 37). Another innovation by these directors is to undermine the importance of the star system by casting a group of people, representative of the nation, in the leading role. The *Close Up* magazine published nine translations of Sergei Eisenstein’s film essays as well as a number of articles specially written for the journal (*CU* viii).

These four different film nations provide the necessary background to the following discussion. Throughout the subsequent three chapters, attention will be paid to Woolf’s, H.D.’s and Richardson’s evaluation of the various film languages during the 1920s. Moreover, it can be argued that the film language that they preferred or rejected can reveal something of their ultimate, ideal film language. To use the words of André Bazin (63), it could expose “a cinema that the novelist would produce if he were a filmmaker”.^6^

The delineation of these three authors’ future film promises to be an interesting line of inquiry because it arguably exposes something of their own literary methods and ideals. In

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^5^ As written in a letter from Bryher to Macpherson, 3 May 1931.

^6^ I am grateful to Jonathan Foltz (1) for quoting Bazin’s words in this context.
In this regard, I strongly support the reading of Leslie Hankins that Woolf’s “The Cinema” on a less prominent, but still detectable, level was an essay about her literary methods (“Across the Screen of My Brain” 174). Similarly, for the Close Up magazine, Anne Friedberg proposed that the type of film that these contributors preferred was similar to whole ethos of the magazine and “their own written discourse” (CU 3). Although Friedberg only points at the film discourse, I would like to broaden this view to their literary discourse as well. Similar to the avant-garde artists, I believe that these literary figures engage with another medium as an extension of their own literary experiments. As Jonathan Foltz (1) argues, “[t]o write about film is also to invent it.” In other words, reading Woolf’s, H.D.’s and Richardson’s film articles is like reading about their literary ideals from another point of view.

However, what is somewhat lacking in these previous, nevertheless excellent, studies is that that they focus either on film or on literature and never let them interact as closely as this discussion will try to do. By linking Woolf’s, H.D.’s and Richardson’s film discourse to the concrete film movements of the 1920s and this, in its turn, to their literary modernism, this part wants to make a relevant contribution both to field of film and of literature. In order to achieve this, the structure of the following chapters is divided into three sections. First, the discussion will be dedicated to the three authors’ point of view on which type of film transforms the medium into an art. Answers will be provided to the questions whether they were dissatisfied with certain film languages or particularly enthralled by others. A second section will articulate Woolf’s, H.D.’s and Richardson’s ideal film language. A language that they would develop if they were filmmakers. Finally, their ideal film language will be compared to their literary art. Ultimately, the second part of this dissertation proposes that the film languages promoted by Woolf, H.D. and Richardson reveal an aesthetics that is based on their literary art.
CHAPTER 1 VIRGINIA WOOLF

In “The Cinema”, Woolf scarcely mentions film titles. Nevertheless, the films she directly refers to, the German Expressionist film The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari and an adaptation of Anna Karenina, provide sufficient material to illustrate her opinion on the film culture of the 1920s. Woolf, as will be discussed in the first section, is highly critical of (Hollywood) adaptations of novels. This tendency to turn renowned novels and plays into films was initiated in 1908 by the French Film d’Art movement (Cook 46-48). In order to transform the popular medium of film into a highbrow culture, this movement reasoned that film could gain in stature by borrowing from the already established arts. This method was not only criticised by Woolf, but also by the majority of the cinematic avant-garde artists. This already indicates the parallels between Woolf’s envisioned cinema and the avant-garde ideals. The second section will, therefore, define Woolf’s ideal filmic language and observe the striking similarities to the avant-garde Absolute Film movement. Finally, the similarities and differences between her future cinema and the novel will be studied.

1.1 THE PARASITIC FILM

From her essay it can be gathered that Woolf did not refute film’s title as the seventh art. However, she believed that film subsisted on the help of the other arts. As noted in the introduction, the French Film d’Art movement initiated the tendency to borrow from theatre and literature in order to lend a distinguished aura to the cinema. In Woolf’s eyes, especially the adaptations of novels were an easy solution to increase film’s artistic value. “All the famous novels of the world, with their well-known characters and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed, to be put on the films,” Woolf states (TC 269). According to Woolf this “alliance” between film and literature was “unnatural” because it created a dichotomy between “eye and brain” (TC 269). In contrast to the novel, the visual nature of film thwarts the representation of the character’s thoughts and mental processes. Woolf illustrates her opinion by means of a recent Hollywood adaptation of Leo Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina, as can be gathered from the following excerpt.7

7 At the time that Woolf was writing her essay there had been several adaptations of Anna Karenina. Nevertheless, it is very likely, as Maggie Humm (223) suggests, that Woolf referred to the 1915 adaptation, directed by J. Gordon Edwards. This version was the first distributed Hollywood adaptation of Anna Karenina. The following, Love (1927), premiered when Woolf had already published her essay.
The eye says ‘Here is Anna Karenina.’ A voluptuous lady in black velvet wearing pearls comes before us. But the brain says, ‘That is no more Anna Karenina than it is Queen Victoria.’ For the brain knows Anna almost entirely by the inside of her mind—her charm, her passion, her despair. All the emphasis is laid by the cinema upon her teeth, her pearls, and her velvet. (TC 269-270)

As a spectator, Woolf willingly wants to partake in the illusion that this woman on the screen represents Anna Karenina. Her mind, however, is not fooled by this glamorous characterization. From the excerpt it can be gathered that Woolf was highly critical of Hollywood’s language. Not only was she displeased with Hollywood’s tendency to cloak everything in glitter and artifice, but also with its inadequacy to represent emotion. In contrast to the novel, the cinema is unable to recreate the richness of the characters’ inner life, something that, as will be discussed in the third section, lies at the heart of her literary method. The silent film could only make use of words and dialogue in the form of captions or intertitles, but these were used sparingly. Therefore, film had to rely on the visual to display thought and emotion. This element of over-acting and the inevitable loss of depth of character dissatisfied Woolf. The myriad emotions and thoughts expressed in Tolstoy’s novel are “spell[ed] out in words of one syllable” in the cinema: “A kiss is love. A broken cup is jealousy. A grin is happiness. Death is a hearse” (TC 270). Having turned one of “the most famous novels of the world” into bite-size clichés, Woolf begins to imagine a new filmic language that “ceased to be a parasite” (TC 270). Notwithstanding her initial critical remarks, Woolf nevertheless seems to argue that film potentially could develop into a great art if it learned to stand up straight by itself. The specifics of this improved cinema will be discussed in the subsequent section.

1.2 A NEW LANGUAGE OF ABSTRACTION

Based on an “accidental” experience during a screening of the German Expressionist film The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (directed by Robert Wiene, 1920), Woolf hints at the power of cinema (TC 270). If film no longer based its methods or narrative on the other arts, Woolf wonders, what are then its “own devices” that can turn film into a proper seventh art (TC 270). The motion picture in question, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, is a silent horror film that features the incongruous genius Dr. Caligari who resides to the help of his curiosity, a somnambulist, or sleepwalker, to murder people. Ultimately, the recounted crimes were never committed and appear to be only a fragment of the hero’s distorted mind. Woolf describes her experience as follows.
at a performance of Dr. Caligari the other day a shadow shaped like a tadpole suddenly appeared at one corner of the screen. It swelled to an immense size, quivered, bulged, and sank back again into nonentity. For a moment it seemed to embody some monstrous diseased imagination of the lunatic’s brain. For a moment it seemed as if thought could be conveyed by shape more effectively than by words. The monstrous quivering tadpole seemed to be fear itself, and not the statement ‘I am afraid’. In fact, the shadow was accidental and the effect unintentional. But if a shadow at a certain moment can suggest so much more than the actual gestures and words of men and women in a state of fear, it seems plain that the cinema has within its grasp innumerable symbols for emotions that have so far failed to find expression. (TC 270)

For Woolf the thought ‘fear’ was conveyed directly by this moving shape. Therefore, words, or the intertitle “I am afraid”, were superfluous (TC 270). The unintended appearance of the shadow emphasized for Woolf that thought and emotion could be expressed visually and therefore, lay within the grasp of cinema. Laura Marcus (123) and Michael Wood (219-220), however, question whether this epiphany was as accidental as Woolf led us to believe. The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, and German Expressionist film in general, typically are already symbolic by nature. By means of painted shadows and contrasts on décors and sets this genre of film creates an eerie, “non-narrative and poetic” atmosphere that heightens the feeling of horror and suspense in the spectator (Parkinson 57). Moreover, these angular and erratic shapes give expression to the characters’ disturbed state of mind. Along this line, Marcus (123) argues that in Dr. Caligari “inner, psychological states are externalized and visualized, and thought is indeed made visible.” Therefore, Woolf’s vision that thought and emotion could be conveyed by shapes and symbols perhaps was dependent on the symbolical nature of the film itself. As she herself stated, the “shadow shaped like a tadpole […] seemed to embody some monstrous diseased imagination of the lunatic’s brain” (TC 270).

Whether the experience was accidental or not, it lead Woolf to envision a new cinematic language in which the clichéd “words of one syllable” are replaced with symbols and abstractions. “Anger is not merely rant and rhetoric, red faces and clenched fists,” Woolf remarks, “[i]t is perhaps a black line wriggling upon a white sheet” (TC 270). With a vocabulary of shapes and lines in movement, Woolf imagines a “secret language which we feel and see, but never speak” (TC 271). Nevertheless, Woolf strongly claims that “the cinema must avoid” all those symbols for thought that can be expressed in words, such as the imagery and metaphors of a poet (TC 271). For film to be an art, it must be unique in its
representation of “visual emotion” and only use “words or music […] subserviently” (TC 271).

Woolf’s case for a new cinematic language that underlines film’s unique characteristics reveals striking similarities to the cinematic avant-garde movement of the 1920s. In general these avant-garde artists, like Woolf, felt that the story or plot was something “alien” and inessential to cinema and eschewed filmmaking that “enslaved” the other narrative arts (Kracauer 178; Gunning 56). Alternatively, they proposed new languages for film which were able to evolve cinema’s potential and portray its essential characteristics (Kracauer 178). Avoiding narratives or preliminary scenarios, some of these film movements created a rhythm by juxtaposing shots of objects or abstract shapes. They thereby emphasised film’s speed and movement and trusted in the spectator to make associations between the shots and sequences. Similarly, in her essay, Woolf indicates “movement,” “speed and slowness,” “directness” and the “power of suggestion” which enables the spectator to think and associate, as cinema’s devices (TC 271).

Woolf’s proposal for an abstract film language, I suggest, especially reveals parallels to the Absolute Film movement. Predominantly comprised of painters (Hans Richter, Walter Ruttmann, Oskar Fischinger and Viking Eggeling), Absolute Film reverted to complete abstraction and developed a language of forms and shapes. The epitome of the movement is Hans Richter’s Rhythmus 21 (1921). In his film, Richter attempted to create a universal language of geometrical shapes and composed what is labelled “visual music” (Turvey 17, Kracauer 183). Analogous to “sound rhythm” in music, Richter’s experimental films create a visual rhythm due to the shapes’ movement on the screen (qtd. in Turvey 17). Similarly, Woolf wanted to represent “visual emotion” by means of colliding and contrasting shots (TC 271). Woolf’s idea of “collision” which could produce “violent changes of emotion” in the mind of the spectator, reminded Maggie Humm (223) of Sergei Eisenstein’s theory of montage (TC 272). Although that the principle of montage was already described and debated from the late 1910s onwards, Eisenstein (Film Form 37) was the first to describe it in terms of “collision” or “conflict.” Previously, his colleague Vsevolod Pudovkin for example, saw the

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8 Laura Marcus (116) also notices a resemblance between Woolf and the cinematic avant-garde. “Her hostility to adaptations,” Marcus notes, “was in line with the anti-narrative ethos of avant-garde artists, writers, and film-makers.”

9 It is unclear whether Woolf might have seen any film made by the Absolute Film movement. It can, however, be assumed that the screening of The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari that Woolf saw “the other day” was hosted by the Film Society on 14 March 1926. This programme presumably also contained the avant-garde film Le Ballet Mécanique (Fernand Léger & Dudley Murphy, 1924) which introduced Woolf to the realm of avant-garde film. See Trotter (167) and Marcus (118).
combination of two shots or sequences as a “series” or “linkage” (*Film Form* 37). Eisenstein, who is considered the master of montage, destined more for the principle than just editing shots in order to create continuity in the narrative. To him, montage could lift a film from plainness to artfulness. “[F]rom the collision of two given factors,” Eisenstein states (*Film Form* 37), “arises a concept.” This “concept” is created in the mind of what Eisenstein terms “the creating spectator” (*Film Sense* 33). “Within me, as a spectator, this image is born and grown. Not only the author has created, but I also—the creating spectator—have participated” (*Film Sense* 33). Similarly, Woolf’s envisioned film language requires a co-operating spectator. Contrary to the state of distraction or stupefaction during the screening of *Anna Karenina*, Woolf’s new spectator plays an active role by forming associations between the colliding frames of lines and shapes. The director of Woolf’s future film might visualise the thought ‘fear’, but the spectator still needs to translate the emotion in his or her mind. Furthermore, in regard to the discussion in the previous part, this opportunity for the spectator to make correlations between the shots “can expose our unconscious memories and our unacknowledged emotions” (Humm 223). It can be suggested that as an active participator, the spectator not only translates the director’s intended emotions, but also unconsciously adds his or her own past and memories to the images. As a result, these abstractions possibly have a redeeming and revelatory quality as seen in H.D.’s and Richardson’s cinematic experience in the preceding chapters.

If “thought” in Woolf’s picture theatre is “conveyed by shape more effectively than by words,” what are the consequences for literature (TC 270)? Although that Woolf is talking about a non-existent cinematic language, it is fruitful to read her essay simultaneously with her thoughts on literature. The final section will deal with Woolf’s literary methods and texts in relation to film.

### 1.3 THE NOVEL AND THE FILM

By virtue of Woolf’s background as a novelist, the construction of her ideal cinema is bound to reveal similarities to her literary principles. Not only will this section articulate the parallels between Woolf’s conceived cinema and literary method, but also the turning points at which her future film excels at representing her concepts. Moreover, it can be argued that Woolf’s re-thinking of the art of film might have inspired her to re-imagine the novel. “The Narrow Bridge of Art” (1927), written one year after her essay on the cinema, explicates her musings on the future of the novel.
“In or about December, 1910,” Woolf states, “human character changed” (“Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” 320). Woolf is referring to the effects of modernity on the human being. Modernity, the cultural philosopher Marshall Berman (15) argues, created a “maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish.” This “maelstrom” was caused, among other things, by drastic changes in the field of science and psychology, which changed man’s view of the world and of himself; and the process of industrialization, which inaugurated speed and constant change (Berman 16). As a result, Woolf argues, the conventional novel no longer was a suitable mould for modern life. Similar to what she proposed for the film, she had previously argued that the novelist should not write according to convention and plot but should “base his work upon his own feeling” (MF 106). Her literary predecessors, whom she terms “materialists,” emphasised the outward appearance and the form of the novel (MF 104). In “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (332) Woolf states that “[t]hey have laid an enormous stress upon the fabric of things.” This manner of phrasing is strikingly reminiscent of Hollywood’s emphasis on Anna Karenina’s “black velvet”, as discussed before (TC 269). In consequence, they were unable to render “life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing” (MF 105). Alternatively, Woolf proposes, literature should convey the movements of “the modern mind,” thought and emotion, and reveal “the dark places of psychology” (TNBoA 226; MF 108). This “modern mind” is in constant flux and “receives a myriad impressions” (TNBoA 226; MF 106). Therefore, as Harvena Richter (ix) remarks, Woolf’s novels are “never static” since the modern experience of time and the self is in motion. Both her literary method and her ideal cinema, thus, reject the use of plot and repudiate the emphasis on outward appearance. Alternatively, they focus on making thought and emotion visible and expose the speed and flux of modern life.

Furthermore, another parallel can be drawn between the “creating spectator” and the cooperating reader (Film Sense 33). Since Woolf exposes memories and present moments by directly transcribing the thoughts and emotions of the character, the reader is dragged along with the current of this character’s mind. As readers of Woolf’s novels, we must willingly submerge in the flow of the perpetually changing spirit. It can be argued that Woolf envisions an active reader, who, as Harvena Richter (11) states, “must participate rather than playing the role of the disinterested spectator.” Especially because the reader is placed within the confines of the character’s consciousness, without the interruption of an omniscient narrator, he is personally confronted with the ebb and flow of the human mind. This establishes a personal connection between character and reader, who can be said to experience and respond to the novel subjectively as well (Richter 234). In contrast to the “materialists,” Woolf’s vision of
the novel “is not form which you see, but emotion which you feel” (“On Re-reading Novels”, qtd. by Richter xi). Similarly to the film, the reader actively engages with the stream of thoughts. Moreover, the emotions might reverberate within him and thus might reveal something of his own unconsciousness or repressed memories.

There are, however, instances at which Woolf’s future film, as noted in “The Cinema,” surpasses the novel. First of all, there is the element of speed. The pace at which the frames follow one another in the cinema is something that cannot be achieved by the novel. Therefore, Woolf states that “[t]he most fantastic contrasts could be flashed before us with a speed which the writer can only toil after in vain” (TC 272). The emotions and thoughts that Woolf wished to represent in her novels could reach the reader or spectator at the same pace as they “flashed” in the mind of the character. Furthermore, Woolf seems to suggest that her envisioned film language can circumvent the temporal, spatial and emotional dislocations that the novel can generate.

The past could be unrolled, distances annihilated, and the gulfs which dislocate novels (when, for instance, Tolstoy has to pass from Levin to Anna and in doing so jars his story and wrenches and arrests our sympathies) could by the sameness of the background, by the repetition of some scene, by smoothed away. (TC 272) Film’s continuous motion could solve the problems that Woolf was confronted with in the novel. Moreover, this reveals, as Hankins suggested, that Woolf’s essay not only muses on the future of film but also can be read as “a prophecy about her own literary future” (“Across the Screen of My Brain” 174). In this regard, it can be suggested that Woolf’s interaction with the cinema might have inspired her to adopt a “general shaping power” in her novels (TNBoA 219). In her essay “The Narrow Bridge of Art”, written a few months after “The Cinema”, Woolf expresses her concerns about the modernist literary method of “contrast and collision” and fragmentation (TNBoA 219). Although this method gives expression to the modern condition and the “monstrous, hybrid, unmanageable emotions” known to the modern man, Woolf fantasizes about a future novel which also can provide a universal and unified view on life (TNBoA 219). This ideal novel, Woolf states, “will be written standing back from life, because in that way a larger view is to be obtained of some important features of it” (TNBoA 228). This statement, I propose, is remarkably reminiscent of her remark on the generalization and the “smooth[ing] away” of dislocations that her future film can achieve (TC 272). In other words, the concerns expressed in her future film echo the concerns she had with the novels. It can be suggested that Woolf imagines a similar future for both art forms and that the aesthetics that are expressed in her future film are based on a future she destined for literature.
CHAPTER 2   H.D.

As a result of her close connection to Close Up’s founding fathers, virtuoso Kenneth Macpherson and novelist Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman), it is generally believed that H.D. played a vital role in the development of the magazine under its first years (Connor 19; CU 9; Marcus 16; McCabe 1). This relationship between the poet and novelist H.D. and film appeared to be symbiotic as the cinema arguably provided a new medium and new tools to help alleviate her identity struggle that had scourged her since the First World War.

H.D.’s position in the vanguard of Close Up partly resulted in an equation between the magazine’s founding principles and the concerns that are reflected in her film articles. Written by and for a select group of intellectuals, Close Up advertised itself as “[t]he first periodical to approach film from any angle but the commonplace” (qtd. in CU 9). Consequently, the dominant ideology of Close Up is one of scepticism of the commercial cinema provided by Hollywood. As an alternative, “art, experiment, and possibility” were encouraged. This avant-garde ethos is easily identifiable in H.D.’s contributions. As Laura Marcus suggests, H.D.’s film criticism can be seen as a combination of chief editor Macpherson’s manifest avant-gardism and the more political and social nature of Bryher’s concerns (CU 98). It is rather challenging at times to distinguish H.D.’s opinions from the vision that is advocated by Macpherson and Bryher. Nevertheless, H.D.’s idiosyncrasies and personal interests in, for example, Hellenism and mysticism are evident in her articles.

The following three sections will journey through H.D.’s film reviews in search of her stance on the conventions and potential of the cinema. Firstly, her evaluation of the commercial Hollywood productions and her affiliation with the avant-garde will be defined. Especially the cinematographic alternatives offered by the Austrian director G. W. Pabst and the Russian montage cineastes embody H.D.’s cinematic vision. To a large extent, her ideal film language can, therefore, be defined by means of her appreciation of Pabst, as will be accomplished in the second section. The third and final part of this chapter will trace the borderline between H.D.’s literary and cinematic values and quests. Notwithstanding her eclectic oeuvre, I propose that H.D.’s methods of writing, film-watching and envisioned filmmaking are motivated by similar aesthetic ideals and attempt to make sense of past and present identities.

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10 As proclaimed on the fourth number of the first volume of Close Up: “CLOSE UP, an English review, is the first to approach films from the angles of art, experiment, and possibility” (re-printed in CU 2).
2.1 THE AVANT-GARDISM OF CLOSE UP

Especially in her first film articles, the series “The Cinema and the Classics,” H.D. captures the avant-garde ethos that is proclaimed by the Close Up magazine. In an attempt to define the fundamentals of the cinema, she vents her concerns for the mechanisms and strategies of the “classicists of Hollywood” (“RestRAINT” 111). H.D. thus acknowledges the dominance and popularity of Hollywood’s film culture in European cinemas, but questions if its myriad of mediocre productions befit the title of “the classics” of the cinema.

H.D. expresses her dissatisfaction with the American film industry on different levels. First of all, she is concerned with its exploitation of successful formulae. During the 1920s, Hollywood developed into a well-oiled machine that systematised its filmmaking process and script-writing to increase its output (Cook 169). As a result, the United States produced a multitude of films that were similar in appearance and used the same narrative conventions. The average spectator, who H.D. calls “the lump”, was constantly confronted with this basic formula of “saccharine dramatic mediocrity” and therefore, in danger of equating it with cinema as such (“Beauty” 106). H.D. indicates that this is an alarming development because the film audience is refrained from getting acquainted with the real art of film.

Not only is this standardization process disastrous to the spectator, but also to the medium and the creative talent of the directors. According to H.D., directors who were denied the ability to experiment and develop their own methods of filmmaking were ultimately “deprived” of their “wit and inspiration” (“Beauty” 106). Moreover, if a European film director or “star” became increasingly popular, they were soon “claimed” by the United States (“Beauty” 106). In Hollywood, however, these directors could not profit from the same artistic freedom as in Europe and were ordered to produce films according to the American conventions (Cook 189). In addition, it can be argued that the imported European actresses were brought to a downfall as they were dragged along the current of Hollywood’s “new morality” that celebrated materialism, promiscuity and glamour. Upon seeing the Swedish actress Greta Garbo in her first Hollywood production, The Torrent (directed by Monta Bell, 1926), H.D. reacts with disdain. Garbo, to H.D., represented the iconic beauty of a “frail, little, appreciated flower” that, however, was “swiftly cut” by Hollywood and turned into “a vamp, an evil woman” (“Beauty” 105; 107). In contrast to G. W. Pabst, whose Joyless Street got H.D. acquainted with the grace and beauty of Garbo, the American “Ogre” ruined H.D.’s epitome of female beauty with its “hide-bound convention” (“Beauty” 107).

In search of a solution to these flaws, H.D., in the spirit of the Close Up journal, repeatedly calls out to the “intellectuals” to rescue the art of film by developing alternative
languages and by challenging the common film audience, or “lump”, intellectually. However, contrary to the more radical avant-gardism of Kenneth Macpherson, H.D. does not contend the idea that film can be a popular art. In fact, as will be discussed in the subsequent section, she dreams of a “universal language” that is accessible both for common people and for intellectuals and artists (“Conrad Veidt” 124). Nonetheless, H.D. problematizes the commercial approach of the United States because of its conventions and draining of creative talent, as noted above, but also because its “saccharine washed-out and sugared over productions” denied the grim post-war situation (“Russian Films” 138). In this regard, H.D. speaks very highly of G. W. Pabst, whose *Joyless Street* she called her “first real revelation of the real art of the cinema” (“Beauty” 106). Notwithstanding Pabst position in the commercial German film industry, his films were not shy to render an unmitigated perspective on the social ills of the post-war society. In consequence, *Joyless Street* met with censorship and even was banned in Britain (Cook 107). H.D. bemoaned this tendency of censorship because the general audience is deprived of the opportunity to watch films that were representative of the art of film.

In addition to Pabst, H.D. also comments upon the productions made by Russian directors.\(^{11}\) Primarily known for their montage theories, filmmakers such as Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin fruitfully combined filmmaking with critical thinking and theoretical writing. The *Close Up* magazine published nine translations of Sergei Eisenstein’s film essays as well as a number of articles specially written for the journal (*CU* viii). Nevertheless, as with Pabst, H.D. particularly esteems Russian films for their realism and the rawness of its beauty rather than its inventive camera work. In contrast to the American approach, Russian filmmakers demonstrated “the fallacy of the ‘star’” by giving common people a platform to act, and the victory of “naturalness” as opposed to Hollywood’s “elaborate and false studio interior” (“Russian Films” 138). As will be further explained in the subsequent section, H.D. appreciates those films that combine life and art and dare to show human despair. This explains why H.D. reveres both Pabst and the majority of the Russian directors. However, contrary to Pabst, who according to H.D. “takes the human mind, the human spirit […] as far as it can go,” H.D. remarks that “[t]he Russian takes the human spirit […] further than it can go” and is too “poignant” in its realism (“Expiation” 127).

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\(^{11}\) H.D. devoted an article, “Expiation”, to Lev Kuleshov’s *Sühne* (the German title which she falsely translated as *Expiation* and in fact was released as *By the Law* in 1926). She also mentions Sergei Eisenstein’s renowned *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *October: Ten Days that Shook the World* (1928) as well as Vsevolod Pudovkin’s eminent *Mother* (1926) and *The End of St. Petersburg* (1927) in the article on “Russian Films”.
The following paragraphs will look closer into H.D.’s ideal blending of art, life and religion, which focuses both on her personal requirements and on the collective and even universal concerns.

2.2 THE NEW CLASSISISTS

If we were to delineate H.D.’s ideal cinema, there are several aspects that are essential to the understanding of her relationship to the art of film from her literary perspective. Continuing with the theoretical backbone provided in the first part, the following discussion will try to illustrate the concepts of personal revelation and collectivity by means of H.D.’s ideal film language. More precisely, the proposal that the medium of film can help H.D. to make sense of her identity as well as restore the lost value of community can be explained through her film reviews. The cinematic language that most befitted H.D.’s concepts is embodied especially in the “psychological realism” promoted by G. W. Pabst in Joyless Street (CU 19).

Joyless Street was her “never-to-be-forgotten premiere of the whole art of the screen” and Pabst her “first recognised master of the art” for apparent reasons (“An Appreciation” 144). The following discussion first will elaborate on the facet of “realism” and subsequently on the “psychological” aspect. In the final paragraphs, H.D.’s yearning for a universal language will be defined.

From her film reviews it is evident that H.D.’s ideal film represents life realistically. “Life and the film must not be separated” and “should be indissesverable terms,” she argues (“Russian Films” 138; Borderline pamphlet 234). Contrary to the Hollywood productions, H.D. believes that film does not require “glory” or “pathos” or “glamour” (“Beauty” 108). It should just say “this is it” and represent life as it is (“Beauty” 108). Furthermore, H.D. attributes the aesthetics of film precisely to this aspect of realism, because “beauty, among other things, is reality” (“Beauty” 109). In opposition to Hollywood’s glamorous “rococo” style, H.D. underlines the importance of the Hellenic values of “beauty” and “restraint” (“Restraint 11). Ideally, film should be stripped bare of elements that are unnatural to the medium and to life. In this regard, H.D. values Joyless Street because it blends those aspects of life, beauty and restraint. Through its representation of the post-war situation, Joyless Street reveals the hardships of the middle class realistically. It recounts the story of a young woman, played by Greta Garbo, who (almost) ends up working as a cabaret dancer in an attempt to get some money. H.D. appreciates Garbo for her “classic” beauty, which unlike Hollywood’s array of barely-clad sirens, is sincere, pure and almost symbolic (“Beauty”
Furthermore, H.D. particularly esteems Pabst because he does not deny the atrocities of the war but rather turns the psychological effects of the war into the subject of his film. “The men swaying forward walked as soldiers not as ballet dancers,” H.D. remarks (“Restraint” 110).

The First World War can, thus, be seen in connection to psychological troubles, which Pabst, typically, reveals through his characters. H.D. especially was appreciative of films that combined an intense emotional effect with a realistic story. This is also something she notes in her pamphlet on Borderline (234), which she calls a “modern attempt to synchronize thought and action, the inner turmoil and the [...] acute psychic activity.” However, the psychological effect must not be too overwhelming because then H.D. feels that she cannot interact any longer with the images on the screen. In other words, it is fatal to her cinematic experience, as examined in Part One. Ideally, the projected images (unconsciously) interact with the spectator, which can lead to a personal revelation of some sort. Once more, Joyless Street embodies H.D.’s ideal as its “realism for all its devastating sincerity [...] maintains a sort of sanity, a meaning that applies to everybody” (“Expiation” 127). In contrast, films by the Russians, such as Lev Kuleshov’s Sühne (By the Law, 1926) or the Dane Carl Theodor Dreyer’s The Passion of Joan of Arc (1928) go “too far” (“Expiation” 127). H.D. describes Dreyer’s portrait of Joan of Arc as “scathing realism” because it shows the suffering of Joan too profoundly (“Joan of Arc” 131). In consequence, she feels that the image is complete by itself and, therefore, cannot add something to it. It is “a Jeanne that is going to rob us of our own Jeanne” (“Joan of Arc” 131). Paralysed by the overwhelming emotions, H.D. cannot project herself anymore onto the screen or create a new image in her mind.

Moreover, H.D.’s utterance that Pabst’s films provide “a meaning that applies to everybody” reveals something of her collective or universal ideals (“Expiation” 127). As Rachel Connor (8; 29) insightfully remarks, H.D. mediates between the notions of the “private” and the “collective”, which is essential to her “spiritual” cinematic experience. Every single spectator reacts individually to the images on the screen, yet, they affect everyone. Therefore, when H.D. expresses her wish for “a universal language, a universal art open alike to the pleb and the initiate,” she speaks of “[a] small voice, a wee voice that has something in common with all these voices yet differs intrinsically from all these voices” (“Conrad Veidt” 124). The emotional effect that good films induce “is something one feels,

13 Garbo is described by H.D. as a “symbol”, “Helen [of Troy]” reincarnated (“Beauty” 108). See also the article “Garbo/Helen: The self-projection of beauty by H.D.” by Charlotte Mandel in which she examines H.D.’s beauty ideal in both film (Garbo) and poetry (Helen).
that you feel, that the baker’s boy, that the tennis champion, that the army colonel, that the crocodile of English and Dutch and mixed German-Swiss (come here the learn French) feels” (“Joan of Arc”133). I agree with Connor that film, like a religion, both offers individual redemption and a collective sense of belonging; and, therefore, disagree with Foltz’ (14) interpretation that there is a division “between her idealization of film as a universal language and her frustration with films that negate the subjective structure of cinematic spectatorship” which he sees as a “spiritual antagonism”. I suggest that the combination of the personal and the universal is what H.D. intrigues to such an extent in the cinema and enables her to ascribe a religious aura to the cinema. It is a sense of clarity which, as will be examined beneath, she lost due to psychological problems but to which film could restore her.

2.3 “SCREEN VISION” VS. LITERARY VISION

A clear break can be perceived in H.D.’s oeuvre. Around 1919, she had moved away from the Imagist aesthetics, in which a concrete object is described in clear language. Increasingly, she began to write more autobiographically inspired novellas in which she tried to make sense of visions and experiences or relate memories under the mask of alter-egos. In a letter to her fellow Imagist poet John Cournos, H.D. comments upon this transition from poetry to prose.

I do not put my personal self into my poems. But my personal self has got between me and my real self, my real artist personality. And in order to clear the ground, I have tried to write things down – in order to think straight, I have endeavoured to write straight. […] You must remember that writing poetry require[s] a clarity, a clairvoyance almost. I have been too weak to dare to be clairvoyant. I have tried instead to be merely sensible. I mean in the common sense of that word. In the long run, the clairvoyance is the only real sanity for me. But in the novel I am working through a wood, a tangle of bushes and bracken out to a clearing, where I can see clear [sic.] again. (qtd. in Penelope’s Web 34)

This confessional letter reveals H.D.’s psychological problems and her attempt to restore herself to sanity by means of writing novels. Writing poetry, clearly, is H.D.’s ideal and “only real sanity” (qtd. in Penelope’s Web 34). Starting from a “clairvoyance”, H.D. is stable and composed, aware of herself and of her identity. The First World War, however, impacted H.D. to a large extent and she was traumatized by its events. It can be suggested that as an after-shock due to the war, H.D. had the need to rediscover herself through her writing. No

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longer able to write from this poetic clarity, she started writing novels that retold past events and memories in order to make sense of herself and restore her fragmented identity.

In line of the discussion above, it can be suggested that H.D.’s engagement with film can be seen as a similar process of “working through”. In her prose, H.D. tries to read herself by writing herself down. Similarly, when she watches a film she is in search of herself and psychological revelation and even redemptions. Be it with light or with words, “she herself is the writing”, as she suggested in her poem Helen in Egypt (22). Continually wanting to reveal inner truths and make sense of the past, it can be argued that as a writer of prose, H.D. projects herself onto the paper and as a spectator in the cinema, she projects herself onto the film.

In relation to the totality of H.D.’s literary oeuvre, Adalaide Morris (413) notes a transition from “Imagist to clairvoyant, to film theorist, analysand, and prophetic poet.” In other words, cinema might have guided her spiritually and psychologically during a tumultuous period of crises. In this regard, it is interesting that in 1933, the year that Close Up stopped publishing, H.D. started to undergo psychoanalytical treatment with Sigmund Freud. It can be suggested that the spiritual and psychological revelations that film offered H.D., were substituted by psychoanalysis. As Laura Marcus (CU 100) proposes, H.D. might have seen “the sessions with Freud as a way of continuing the work of film, finding in dream and symbolic interpretation an equivalent to, and extension of, the ‘language’ of the silent cinema.” The idea that psychoanalysis could be an “extension of” H.D.’s interaction with film, is especially interesting in the case of H.D.’s notorious “writing-on-the-wall” vision (Tribute to Freud 41).15 The event originally took place in 1920 in a hotel room with Bryher, fellow editor of Close Up and lesbian partner of H.D., but interpreted by Freud as a “dangerous ‘symptom’” (Tribute to Freud 41). During this visionary experience, H.D. witnesses images emanating from herself.

The series of shadow- or light-pictures I saw projected on the wall of a hotel bedroom in the Ionian island of Corfu, at the and of April 1920, belong in the sense of quality and intensity, of clarity and authenticity, to the same psychic category as the dream […]. For myself I consider this sort of dream or projected picture or vision as a sort of halfway state between ordinary dream and the vision of the who, for lack of a more definite term, we must call psychics or clairvoyants.” (Tribute to Freud 41)

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15 The experience extensively discussed by scholarship, also in relation to cinema. See Rachel Connor 13 / 93; Jean Gallagher 408; Marcus CU 100; Adalaide Morris’ “The Concept of Projection: H.D.’s Visionary Powers.”
The fact that these “pictures” were projected automatically (H.D. had no control over it) on a wall with light (a few pages later she corrects herself: “I thought they were shadows at first, but they are light, not shadow” (Tribute to Freud 47)) is very reminiscent of film.
CHAPTER 3  DOROTHY RICHARDSON

Notwithstanding the multiple articles that Richardson wrote for the Close Up magazine, hardly any were actual film reviews and only a handful named a film title or director. Alternatively, her contributions predominantly described the processes of spectatorship and the members of the film audience. Nevertheless, two films she discussed more extensively, The Student of Prague and the musical Hearts in Dixie, sufficiently illustrate her ideas about the film culture of the twenties.

As Marcus (CU 152) notes, Richardson’s column “Continuous Performance” was characterised by a “dissenting voice” with regard to the avant-garde ethos of the magazine. In contrast to the majority of the contributors’ disregard for the Hollywood productions, Richardson showed an unbiased and accepting attitude towards the conventions promoted by Hollywood. On the other hand, Richardson shared the aversion of her fellow-writers concerning the introduction of the talkies.

Identical to the previous chapters, the following analysis will first discuss Richardson’s remarks on the developments in the cinema during the 1920s. More precisely, her equal treatment of the highbrow and popular film and her opinion on the advent of sound will be examined. Secondly, her ultimate silent film as a “mirror” of life and “audience” will be defined (CP VIII 175). The discussion will end by proposing and developing the premise that Richardson’s ideal film language and spectatorial process echoes her literary methods and writing process of Pilgrimage.

3.1 THE POPULAR FILM

In the article “Pictures and Films”, published in the January 1929 issue, Richardson writes that she attended a screening of The Student of Prague (directed by Henrik Galeen, 1926). The film, a silent horror production, was well received by various other Close Up colleagues, including H.D., who reviewed it in the publication of September 1927. In the legacy of German Expressionism, The Student of Prague, tells the Faustian story of Balduin (played by Conrad Veidt) who sells his soul to the devil. Because it offered an alternative to the mainstream Hollywood productions by its emphasis on the subject’s identity crisis and expressive set design, The Student of Prague, Richardson notes, was “approved by the film intelligentsia, including psycho-analysts” (CP “Pictures and Films” 187). Similarly, Richardson acknowledged that it was one of “the few ‘good’ films” she had seen ” (CP “Pictures and Films” 187). Moreover, the film persuaded her “that film can be an ‘art form’”
Also its “musical accompaniment” was generally praised by Richardson (CP “Pictures and Films” 188). The musical accompaniment, as previously explained, is essential to Richardson’s film experience as it both brings the images to life and helps the spectator to remain attentive.

However, even though she supported The Student of Prague’s critical acclaim and thus agreed with her Close Up colleagues, she had “certain reservations” (CP “Pictures and Films” 188). Richardson subsequently emphasises that her appreciation “for the FILM does not by any means imply repudiation of the movies” (CP “Pictures and Films” 188). Throughout her articles, Richardson refers to highbrow art films as “film” and uses the word “movies” to denote the “popular film” (CP IX 178). In other words, contrary to H.D., for example, Richardson believes that Hollywood productions should not be neglected nor scorned. Rather, one of the advantages of the popular film is that they cannot be misunderstood. Experimental and artistic productions, on the other hand, risk being “pretentious” and unintelligible to a general audience (CP “Pictures and Films” 188). Richardson, therefore, deviates from the journal’s point of view that both the intellectuals and the general film audience should be educated by means of art films, but rather occupies a middle ground.

Nonetheless, her ardent resistance to the introduction of the talkies underlines the common ground she had with the group. From her commentary on the musical Hearts in Dixie (directed by Paul Sloane, 1929) it is clear that Richardson objects to this novelty for various reasons. First of all, Richardson deemed the addition of speech to the cinema superfluous because talkies say out loud what can already be understood through the images. Secondly, in contrast to the living and “speaking” silent pictures, the talkies caused a “dead silence” once the actor or actress had stopped talking (CP “Dialogue in Dixie” 194-195). As a result, the images became lifeless and “colourless” and, therefore, drained of its “plunge into life,” on which Richardson’s cinematic experience is based. In his anthology on narrative film, Cook (222), in this regard, remarks that “the movies ceased to move when they began to talk” because all the effort was put into the latter category. In addition, film also failed to move Richardson once the element of speech was added. To Richardson, synchronized speech destroyed the “swift voice within the mind” (CP “Dialogue in Dixie” 196). Scholarship has linked this utterance to Eisenstein’s concept of “inner speech” (Gevirtz, 79; Marcus 359). “Inner speech,” or “the flow and sequence of thinking,” is “distinct from the logic of uttered speech,” Eisenstein explains (Film Form 130). Because the film spoke for itself, the spectator was unable to contemplate or collaborate with the images. In other words, Richardson’s “inner” stream of thoughts was interrupted by the voices of the characters. It,
therefore, is no surprise that Richardson’s ideal film language is silent. The next section will elaborate on her ultimate film.

3.2 THE LANGUAGE OF THE MIRROR: MEMORY

Richardson’s ideal film language was silent but with the necessary musical accompaniment. Under these circumstances, the spectator would remain concentrated and could collaborate with the projected images and “manufacture [his] own reality” (CP II 163). In one of her last articles, Richardson explains that she envisions this type of cinema as “essentially feminine” (CP “The Film Gone Male” 206). Talkies, in contrast, were “masculine” because they focussed more on “planful becoming rather than […] purposeful being” (CP “The Film Gone Male” 206). Concerned with matters of “memory”, women, Richardson argues, are interested in their past selves contemplated from the present moment. Similarly, the “feminine” silent film triggers memories and enables contemplation. The addition of sound to this silent film, as noted above, refrained the spectator from thinking and, therefore, was bemoaned by Richardson. Contrary to the talking, male variant, the silent film results in “inner speech” (Film Form 130).

However, notwithstanding her emphasis on the necessity of contemplation, Richardson seems distracted herself during her visits to the picture theatre. As I have mentioned previously, the audience and not the screened films often is the subject of her film articles. Her ultimate film, therefore, is “a film that might be called A Mirror of Audiences, with many close-ups” (CP VIII 175). During the screening of such a film, Richardson could both observe the audience and reflect on life and her position in it without being distracted. Moreover, her future film would generally make use of the close-up technique, which, as exemplified in Borderline, enlarges not only the object but also the emotion of the character or the mood of the film. It can, therefore, be suggested that Richardson longed for film to develop into a medium that was not per se concerned with stories and plots, or with techniques and devices that could transform it into an art form. Rather, she desired to reinstate the “innocence” and neutrality of the cinema (CP “Pictures and Films” 188). “[N]ot very deeply concerned, either with idea or with characterisation,” these innocent films merely “recorded” “[l]ike the snapshot” (CP “Pictures and Films” 188). As a result, Richardson elucidates, “its results go straight to the imagination of the onlooker, the collaborator” (CP “Pictures and Films” 188). This ideal film that can stimulate Richardson’s desired spectatorial process with as little diversions as possible is strikingly reminiscent of Trotter’s premise that modernist authors were intrigued by film due to its “neutrality […] as a medium” (Trotter 5). Although Trotter’s
study *Cinema and Modernism* does not engage with Dorothy Richardson in great detail, his hypothesis would be tenable with regard to Richardson. Nevertheless, this objective medium leads to subjective, contemplated realities and not to a universal or impersonal attitude towards life. Richardson’s idea of film must be interpreted as a vehicle through which life and art can be contemplated. The true art of the film, in Richardson’s eyes, resides inside the spectator. This, I propose, echoes the literary strategies Richardson advanced in *Pilgrimage*, as will be studied in the following section.

### 3.3 CONTEMPLATION: THE NOVEL AND THE FILM

During an interview in 1931, Dorothy Richardson reveals and pinpoints how her literary method deviates from her predecessors.

> When I first began writing *Pilgrimage* I intended to take on in the usual way. Then in Cornwall, in solitude, when the world fell completely away, and when I was focusing intensely, I suddenly realized that I couldn't go on in the usual way, telling about Miriam, describing her. There she was as I first saw her, going upstairs. But who was there to describe her? It came to me suddenly. It was an extraordinary moment when I realized what could and what could not be done. Then it became more and more thrilling as I saw what was there. And hopeless of making it clear. (qtd. in Thomson 353)

Rather than making use of other characters or an omniscient narrator to describe Miriam, Richardson’s innovation rests in letting her protagonist describe herself. Through this “stream of consciousness”, as May Sinclair writes in 1918, Richardson not only “identifi[es] herself with this life” but also “produces her effect of being the first, of getting closer to reality than any of our novelists” (qtd. in Rose 370). Richardson discards the plot (“nothing happens”) and instead displays “life going on and on” (qtd. in Rose 370).

Similar to the hypothesis of the previous section, it can be argued that, according to Richardson, the true art of literature does not emanate from outside the character, but rather resides in how he or she contemplates life. In other words, Richardson reveals the beauty and value of the novel by *mirroring* the “inner speech” and by means of the constructed plot or elaborate techniques. Rather than describing films and describing Miriam, Richardson directly talks about her own, or lets Miriam talk about her own, experience of film and life respectively (Gevirtz, 57; Marcus 350; Thomson 353). In this regard, Susan Gevirtz (57) observes that Richardson’s “film viewing” and “fiction writing” are “[m]otivated by a similar approach”: trying “to discover and illuminate that which was interstitial.” Through watching...
films and writing novels, Richardson arguably comes to terms with her own past and memories.

From the excerpt quoted above, but also from the 1938 foreword to her twelve Pilgrimage chapters, it is clear that both her film-watching and novel-writing process depends on attention and contemplation. When writing Pilgrimage, Richardson “was focussing intensely” and then “suddenly realized” something (qtd. in Thomson 353). In a similar fashion, Miriam often sits down and muses on things. Moreover, in general, the series of novels recount Miriam’s pattern of contemplation. George Thomson (349), therefore, calls Richardson’s modernist novels “a new fiction of ‘contemplated reality.’” Interestingly, Thomson (350) additionally remarks that Richardson’s new approach to the novel might be labelled “feminine realism”. This is reminiscent of Richardson’s proposal in “The Film Gone Male” (206) that silent film was “essentially feminine” because it focused on “contemplation” which “provided a pathway to reality”. In his essay on Richardson’s foreword, Thomson (350) continues that Richardson’s “private and inwardly directed fiction” was in stark contrast to the “social and satirical realism” of her male literary colleagues such as “H. G. Wells”. Men, who Richardson generally associates with a “planful becoming” do not venture inward and direct their gaze towards the past, which is recollected through the present (CP “The Film Gone Male” 206). Alternatively, her, predominantly male, literary predecessors, look in the direction of the future and focus on society as such.

16 The thirteenth, March Moonlight, was published posthumously in 1967.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion of Part One, it can be stated that Woolf, H.D. and Richardson acknowledged film’s ability to copy reality, but differed in how perfect this copy was and how it is experienced by the spectator. Woolf initially emphasised that film as a medium could objectively recreate the world. However, different from real life, the cinematic world is marked by the absence of the spectator. It is a world “when we are not there” (TC 268). H.D., on the other hand, immediately interpreted the projected reality as a “world of half light” (CU 120). Ultimately, she esteems film because it offers the illusion of reality which she can help to make complete. Interested in “the thing behind the thing”, H.D. sees the cinematic images as symbols for her inner reality (Mask&Movietone” 115). Therefore, film has the ability to reveal things to H.D. that she cannot see clearly in real life. For Richardson “any film can give” “the plunge into life” (CP 161).

In terms of spectatorship, all three authors more or less describe the process as active. Nevertheless it is experienced in different ways. For Woolf film can offer her a universal, more emotionally distanced view of the world. It introduces a “universal consciousness” (Richter 144). Both H.D. and Richardson understand film as a subjective and personal experience. H.D.’s cinematic experience can be explained in terms of a “visionary consciousness”, leading to revelations (CU 98). Richardson, on the other hand, emphasises the “collaborating creative consciousness” of the spectator (CP “A Tear for Lycidas” 197). For both authors the cinema combined a personal experience with a reclaiming of a lost sense of collectivity.

In conclusion of Part Two, Woolf, H.D. and Richardson reacted differently to the film culture of the 1920s and pinpointed different things that were essential to film. With regard to the film languages of the 1920s, Woolf is the most avant-garde and radical because she ultimately opposes to film as a narrative medium. Her ideal language, therefore resorts to complete abstraction. Similar to her literary methods, she longs for a film which can represent the fluctuating emotions of the mind.

H.D., also, is quite radical in her approach, but nevertheless preserves a “sanity” (“Expiation” 127). The use of narrative in film is no problem for H.D., but she nevertheless underlines the need for a “psychological realism”.

Richardson is the least avant-garde minded of the three. Contrary to Woolf and H.D. she does not protest against the melodramatic and conventional Hollywood productions.
Alternatively, she longs for a contemplative realism. Similar to her literary life’s work, both her ideal cinema and her *Pilgrimage* series emphasise the need of representing the everyday life. Her focus is placed upon the character and audience itself instead of the plot.
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*MISCELLANEOUS*


April 2013.

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