

Barbara Deming

Barbara Deming (1917–1984) was a critic, novelist, and anti-war activist, perhaps best known as a theorist of nonviolence, whose book *Prison Notes* detailed her experience as a civil-rights marcher incarcerated in an Atlanta jail. Deming had earlier worked as a film analyst for the Library of Congress, from 1942 to 1944, where she saw one-quarter of the feature films produced during those years. At that time she began writing the narrative analyses, parts of which appeared in the magazine *City Lights* during the early 1950s, that would ultimately be collected in book form as *Running Away From Myself: A Dream Portrait of America Drawn from the Films of the 40's*. Though this fascinatingly obstinate book appeared in 1969, at the height of auteurism, it steered clear of any commentary on directorial style or nostalgia about the stars and their glamour. Deming's stated purpose was to reveal how most American films, by giving the public "what it wants" in the form of wish-fulfillment dreams, end up reflecting our anxieties rather than our inner strengths, including our capacity for social change. "Through them we can read with a peculiar accuracy the fears and confusions that assail us—we can read, in caricature, the Hell in which we are bound. But we cannot read the best hopes of the time."



The Reluctant War Hero

What is this pumpkin pie Americans are fighting for?" cries a youth just arrived in this country (in *They Live in Fear*, 1944). "Gosh," he is very soon writing to his mother, "people are quite willing to die for it, and I too!"

At a casual glance, our films about the Second World War would seem well summarized in this child's cry of delight. Listen to the voices which join themselves to his: "In other wars, men haven't always known why they were fighting; in this war we are all fighting for the same thing—our lives!" (*Cry Havoc*); "We all see eye to eye!" (*The Yanks Are Coming*); "This has been a happy home" (*Cross of Lorraine*); "When it's all over . . . just think . . . being able to settle down . . . raise your children . . . and never be in doubt about anything!" (*Thirty Seconds over Tokyo*). I could go on quoting from film after film.

My warning in the past chapter would seem a curious one. Where is the unhappy portrait of ourselves of which I spoke? Men die in these films, for this is war, but they fall on a battlefield bright with visions of the life they "almost

happily" die to secure; each with his family photograph, his letter from sweet-heart, wife or Mom, with news of the home town he is proud of, tucked in his pocket; or the page he has torn from a magazine—"Your Ideal Home." "We shall utterly defeat the enemy," the government film *A Prelude to War* quotes General Marshall. And at his words, a bright bright globe eclipses a dark.

A few songs in the musicals of those years announce that the soldiers look forward to "a world that is new." But the words only mean that, through this war, the rest of the world will come to know some of the happiness that we already know. After the war, "the people of the whole world will meet together at one big table" (*Three Russian Girls*), and there the whole world will come to know the taste of—"What did you call it?" the Russian girl asks the American aviator. "Pumpkin pie!" he tells her again. When an American in one of these films wants to explain American life to a stranger, pumpkin pie comes most readily to mind: we set it out for all who want to gather round, and everybody gets an equal share. "One big family—that is America," someone sums up (*They Live in Fear*).

On the field of battle, clear evidence of this happy family meets the eye wherever it turns. *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943): Here is Catholic side by side with Jew; here is Brooklyn cabbie next to philosophy teacher; here is—briefly—black man next to white. *The Purple Heart* (1944): Here are artist, laborer, lawyer, football player, arm in arm; one of Italian extraction, one Irish, one—again—Catholic, one a Jew. *Eve of St. Mark* (1944): Here on the one team are a boy from a small New England farm; a poor city boy, Irish Catholic, who is a Dodgers fan; a rich southerner from an aristocratic family, who likes to quote poetry. Again I could continue for pages. Slight tensions are sometimes dramatized, but they are always quickly resolved. In *A Wing and a Prayer* (1944), there is a little bit of tension between officers and men; but before long the men come to understand why the officer had to behave as he did. In *Cry Havoc* (1943), there is a little bit of tension between rich girl and poor; but their differences vanish. In *Destination Tokyo* (1943), there is a little tension between the doctor, who claims to be a materialist, and one of the men who is deeply religious; but events soon prove just how serious this difference is. After the usual operation at sea such films feature, the doctor, to the boys muttered prayer, mutters a fervent "Amen!" Fundamentally "we all see eye to eye." "This is America!" confident voices chorus.

The voices are always just a little too confident; the tableaux are too carefully composed, one-of-each-of-us placed too punctually in the happy group. There is another invariable that one can note, also. In film after film there erupts some really harrowing moment of violence. One could put it down to

realism and pass on. But this is not the mere documentation of reality. The jugular vein, pierced, spurts its blood directly at us, spurts, it almost seems, straight from the screen (*Cross of Lorraine*). As the "Jap" screams, the armored tank charges right over us, as if we were its victims (*Guadalcanal Diary*). The hand-to-hand fight between the "Yank" and the "Jap" is protracted endlessly. We suffer in close-up each killing blow (*Behind the Rising Sun*). The emergency operation will never end. The camera cannot take its fill of that face, where teeth bite lips, eyes suddenly roll in a swoon (for this, name at random almost any film). Here is no controlled rendering of the facts of war. The camera voluptuously involves us in the destructive moment, moves in too close and dwells overlong, inviting us to suffer the ecstasy of dissolution, the thrill of giving it all up.

This compulsion, betraying itself in film after film, belies the bright tableaux arranged, the bright words carefully mouthed, and hints at some very different sense of the actuality of things, repressed but secretly insistent. And a long look confirms just this. The figure of the clear-browed soldier with the dream in his eyes turns insubstantial, and another figure claims attention, member of no happy clan, a figure of bitter aspect, withdrawn upon himself, who cries, "*Don't you ever wonder if it's worth all this—I mean what you're fighting for?*"—who cries, "*I stick my neck out for nobody . . . I'm not fighting for anything any more, except myself! . . . All hail the happy days when faith was something all in one piece!*"

These particular words are taken verbatim from one of the most popular films of 1942—*Casablanca*. They might seem blunt enough to catch one's attention at once. One might ask why some official ear did not note them and have the film withdrawn. But the truth is that the film is one of the last a censor would notice. It is one of the last that would shake up self-questioning and doubt in an audience. The reverse is its very design: to relieve any such agitations. At the film's beginning, the hint is dropped that the hero may be speaking words he does not mean. He is presented as a cipher, a man behind a mask, and the film poses the question: if it should come to a trial, might he not be shown to possess a fighting faith more real than all the rest? Just such a trial is gradually framed, and the film delivers its answer in the affirmative. The very nature of the drama here—the very nature of the question which makes the wheels of the film turn—might still seem to give much away. And here on paper, I believe it does; but not on the screen itself. This is the film's real magic: not only does it bring to the question the right answer; it brings the right answer without letting the audience become fully aware of what the question

is; it drowns out the bitter cries without letting the audience become fully aware of what the cries have been all about. (I repeat that all this is likely to have been unconscious on the part of the producers.) But here is the film itself, in synopsis:

It is set abroad, and just before Pearl Harbor, the fight in question not yet our fight. (This, to begin with, makes the tale seem more innocent.) The hero, Rick (Humphrey Bogart), runs a café in Casablanca. Next to his café lies the airfield from which planes take off to Lisbon—and from there to America; so Casablanca is crowded with people trying to flee occupied Europe. Visas are pitifully hard to obtain, legally or illegally, and while they seek, and wait, “everybody goes to Rick’s.” Among all these displaced people, Rick himself is marked out for us, a homeless one among the homeless, exile in some special degree; and in this case alone the nature of the exile is not an apparent one. Our curiosity about Rick is provoked long before we are allowed to see him. The manner in which we are finally introduced to him carefully prolongs the suspense: a waiter has just informed an eager newcomer that Rick never drinks with customers; we see a check handed across a table; a hand puts an okay to it; the camera draws very slowly off to take Rick in—and we are left more curious than when we started; our introduction is to the very figuration of that question on which the film turns: Rick’s glooming deadpan. He sits alone, staring at a drink, “no expression in his eyes.”

As the drama unfolds, various facts about Rick’s background are provided for us by the characters who press upon him, each, for his own purposes, seeking to guess him right. But always the sense is conveyed that the key to the puzzle, that which would make all the other pieces fall into place, remains to be found. Almost everyone wants something from Rick, starting with poor little Yvonne, “fool to fall in love with a man like” him; but there are two characters who most particularly strain themselves to decipher him. They are Renault (Claude Rains), French prefect of police, and the Nazi Major Strasser, who is in Casablanca to prevent the escape to America of underground leader Victor Lazslo. Two German couriers have been murdered, and letters of transit have been taken from them. Strasser is concerned to see that these letters do not get into Lazslo’s hands. He and Renault both come to suspect that Rick knows where they are hidden. We know that he knows. We have seen the little “rat,” Ugarte, leave them in his keeping (“Just because you despise me, you’re the only one I trust”). And Rick may do what he wants with the letters, for Ugarte, who had his own plans—he helps those who are desperate, at a price—is promptly arrested for murder. We first see Renault trying to figure out how Rick will behave in relation to this arrest, for he plans to take Ugarte at Rick’s place. “I

stick my neck out for nobody," says Rick. And when the time comes and Ugarte goes scrambling to him, he *doesn't* move to help. This tells us nothing, for why should Rick risk anything for one like Ugarte? The episode—with several others in the film—is a teaser, keeps the guessing going. But Renault has also tried to sound out Rick about Victor Lazlo. In the process, he has provided us with our first tangible facts about Rick's background. A flicker of interest has crossed his face at Lazlo's name, and he has bet Renault ten thousand francs that Lazlo will manage a get-away; but what makes Renault think that he, Rick, might do anything to help? "I know your record," Renault brings out, watching him. "In 1935 you ran guns for Ethiopia, in 1936 you fought in Spain on the Loyalist side." "And got well paid for it on both occasions," Rick returns, deadpan.

Another note out of his past is sounded for us, but this more vague. Rick has run into the interview with Renault by wandering onto the terrace of the café. From here the airfield is visible. The sound of a plane warming up pulls Rick's eyes in that direction and he watches mesmerized as, caught in the glare of the floodlights, the plane speeds down the runway and turns to a speck. "You would like to be on it?" Renault probes. "I have often speculated on why you do not return to America. Did you abscond with the church funds? Did you run off with the President's wife? I should like to think you killed a man." "It was a combination of all three," Rick grunts, eyes still captive of the speck of plane.

Renault introduces Rick to Strasser, and Strasser in his turn tries to get some rise out of Rick with Lazlo's name. Rick lightly comments that his interest in Lazlo is a sporting one (he refers to his bet)—"Your business is politics, mine is running a saloon." But "You weren't always so carefully neutral," says Strasser. He has a dossier on him. "Cannot return to his country," he reads, watching him; "the reason is a little vague." His words fail to disturb the expressionless mask.

And then, suddenly, the film takes a turn. Suddenly we sit up, expectant. Enter Ingrid Bergman—(Mrs. Victor Lazlo). She walks into the café with her husband, and from their table she spots Sam, the Negro pianist, Rick's only intimate. Sam spots Ingrid too, and his glance is nervous. When Lazlo leaves the room for a moment, he crosses to her quickly. "Leave him alone!" he begs. "Leave him alone, Miss Ilse!" And we hold our breath.

We are at the point at last, we feel, of finding Rick out. When they come face to face, this feeling is confirmed. She has insisted on the music that brought him: "Play it once, for old time's sake. Play it, Sam. Play 'As Time Goes By.'" Sam, mumbling words of resistance, has played it, and Rick has come storming in: "I thought I told you never—" his face at last registering an emotion. In the

few tense sentences they now exchange, it is obvious that Rick's past confronts us right here, in Ilse's person. We cut to a later hour and Rick alone over his drink, the lights out, the customers all gone, everyone gone but Sam, who pleads, "Don't just sit and stare a hole in that drink, boss." But "Tonight I've got a date with the heebie jeebies," Rick announces. "You know what I want to hear. If she can stand it, I can. Play it!" So Sam, at the piano, fingers out the song. The veil is about to be torn. The music, we know, will softly rend it. "The fundamental things apply, as time goes by . . ." Sam murmurs out the words. "Woman needs man, and man must have his mate, that nobody can deny . . ." We move up on Rick, on the drink before him, and dissolve—into a day in 1940.

An idyl: Rick and Ilse in Paris, in love. They have met only recently, we gather, know nothing about each other's pasts. "Who are you really?" he asks, gazing, love-struck. But she: "We said no questions." Love-struck, he acquiesces. In the background, Sam plays their theme song; they drink the last champagne. For the Germans are advancing on Paris; they will have to flee; but they will flee together. They name the train at which they will meet; Ilse has one thing first to which she must attend. But then we cut to Rick waiting at the station, in the rain; and Ilse does not come. He waits; she does not come; the train is about to pull out—the last train out of Paris. Suddenly Sam arrives with a note: she cannot see him ever again, she writes—but believe believe that she loves him. The raindrops pour down upon the letter, smudging the writing; the train utters its baleful departing whistle, and we dissolve back to Rick over his drink. He looks up and there is Ilse standing in the door, come after all these months to explain. Rick doesn't give her a chance. He mimics her words back there in Paris: "Rick dear, I'll go with you any place. We'll get on a train together and we'll never stop. All my life, forevermore!" . . . How long was it we had, honey? . . . All hail the happy days," he lashes out, "when there were no questions asked, and faith was something all in one piece!" She gives up and leaves. Rick, giving it all up too, sags over the table; his drink tips, spilling over the cloth; the scene fades out.

So we know him now. The veil has been torn aside for us. He has had his "insides kicked out by a pair of French heels." This is his secret. And this, note, is the context in which he utters that cry: "All hail the happy days when faith was something all in one piece!" As uttered here, this is not the cry at all I seemed originally to report. It is a wounded lover's cry—nothing more.

Actually, a veil has been subtly drawn before our eyes—not parted for us. Look again and see the sleight of hand. Review the puzzle pieces which supposedly assemble for us into the portrait of a man betrayed in love. He never

drinks with the customers and is cold to poor little Yvonne—this will fit. The man who fought in Spain and ran guns for Ethiopia will now stick his neck out for nobody—claims to have done what he's done only because he got well paid for it. One who is embittered in love, of course, will often extend that bitterness to life in general. But note too: for reasons unknown he cannot return to his own country. Here is a piece that refuses to be fitted into the place assigned.

It refuses, that is, on paper; but not upon the screen. Rick's "date with the heebie jeebies" is worth going over again, this time in full detail. In this scene, all the variant notes I have just mentioned are introduced again—but in the instant are gathered up, and blur into the one note. As one *watches*, it is persuasive.

When we see Rick sitting there at his bitter drink, he is lit through the café window by a circling finger of light from the airfield—which dramatically enough recalls that trip to America he can never make, an exile quite distinct from the exile he suffers because of Ilse. And listen, now, to a more complete text of what passes between him and Sam. "Don't just stare a hole in that drink," Sam pleads, but Rick answers that this night he has a date with the heebie jeebies. Then he breaks out—"strangely," comments the script—"They grab Ugarte, then she walks in. That's the way it goes. One in and one out. Sam, if it's December 1941 in Casablanca, what time is it in New York? . . . I bet they're asleep in New York. I bet they're asleep all over America. Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine!" Then "Play it!" Look at all the notes that are casually woven in together here. "One in and one out" of Ugarte and Ilse. Ugarte is an opportunist who serves a good cause for a price—as Rick claims to have done, himself. Rick's cold familiarity with this sort of betrayal of a faith here blurs in one split second with his cynicism about love's promises. Note, next, the date, "December 1941"—making this just pre-Pearl Harbor. "I bet they're asleep," in the light of this date, takes on, automatically, political overtones—and Rick's cynicism about the state of his country too is blurred with the very special cynicism of the jilted lover. Finally, when at the fading of the flashback, Ilse appears at the door, it is the circling finger of light from the airfield that picks her out for us, materializes her; so even *that* variant note, with which we began, is gathered in—visually confounded, in a moment, with the other, the lover's bitter loss.

As Ilse stands there now, all bitterness can be said to have been focused on her person. From here on, Rick can come out with whatever cry he wants; it will be harmless. And note: if the film can somehow dispel that very particular disillusion of his, in this girl—by subtle acts of substitution, all other harsh notes that have been introduced and blurred into this note will be dispelled.

As the film proceeds, Rick does come forth with ever more cynical outcries. The way to listen to them, as I quote them, is to forget his characterization as the jilted lover, to abstract the cries from this context, and listen to them in themselves. The film proceeds:

After Ugarte's arrest, Lazslo is advised that Rick may have the letters of transit. But when he goes to Rick, Rick turns him aside coldly—"The problems of the world are not in my department. I'm a saloon keeper." When Lazslo retorts that once, he's been told, he was a man who fought for the underdog, Rick comments, "Yes, I found that a very expensive hobby." The characterization of sulking lover is quickly reanimated for us; we are quickly reminded that it is love Rick found to be expensive. He goes on to say that he may not ever use the visas himself, but he won't give them to Lazslo; and when Lazslo mutters, "There must be some reason . . ." replies, "There is. I suggest that you ask your wife."

Then Ilse herself goes to see Rick for her husband. "Richard!" she begs. "So I'm Richard again?" he mocks her. "We're back in Paris. I've recovered my lost identity." But in this interview too, one can, if one wants, listen to his words in terms of a lost identity not simply that of the happy lover. "Do I have to hear again what a great man your husband is and what an important Cause he's fighting for?" "It was your Cause too . . ." "Well, I'm not fighting for anything any more, except myself. I'm the only Cause I'm interested in now." In desperation Ilse pulls a gun. "You'll have to kill me to get them," he tells her. "If Lazslo, if the Cause means so much to you, go ahead!"—with this equation again safely reducing all to a wounded lover's terms.

She cannot shoot, of course; she breaks, she drops the pistol—and flings herself into his arms. "I tried to stay away . . . If you knew . . . how much I loved you . . . still love you!" And the film fades in on them a little later as she explains at last what happened on that fateful day. She had been married to Lazslo already when she met Rick, but she had heard that he had been murdered in a concentration camp. Then that day she had learned that he was alive, had escaped, was waiting for her. She had had to go. But now, she cries, she'll never have the strength to leave Rick again. "I can't fight it any more. I don't know what's right any longer. You'll have to think for both of us, for all of us."

"I've already made up our minds," Rick answers her. But he does not reveal his decision. The question of how he will act is stretched out to the very end. Rick continues inscrutable. The script notes with regularity, "His expression reveals nothing of his feelings." And he continues to utter the most cynical statements. Of course we more and more tend to suspect that such utterances mask his real intentions. We suspect this, even, with some anguish.

Lazslo ducks into Rick's to elude the police, who have broken up an underground meeting, and Rick, sending Ilse off by a back way, gives Lazslo a drink to settle his nerves. Here it is that Rick demands, "Don't you ever wonder if it's worth all this? I mean what you're fighting for?" Lazslo retorts that he sounds like a man "trying to convince himself of something that in his heart he doesn't believe." And we in the audience at this point would gladly be convinced, ourselves, if we could. There is only one level of meaning at which we would think of taking his words, and the price asked does seem a dreadful one.

As Lazslo and Rick stand there, Renault's men burst in and declare Lazslo under arrest on suspicion of having been at that meeting. Rick grimaces at Lazslo, a dark smile: "It seems destiny has taken a hand." And now he takes his most seemingly cynical step. He calls on Renault and suggests a deal. If he'll release Lazslo, Rick will give Renault a real charge against him. He, Rick, does have those visas. He'll pretend to give them to Lazslo, and this will give Renault the chance to walk in and arrest Lazslo for complicity in the murder of the couriers. Under cover of the excitement—if Renault will help—he, Rick, will make use of the visas himself, to leave for America with Ilse. Which should put Renault's mind to rest about his desire to help Lazslo escape. He's the last man he'd want to meet in America. "I'll miss you," Renault tells him. "Apparently you're the only one in Casablanca who has even fewer scruples than I." So Rick goes to Lazslo and offers him the visas for a hundred thousand francs. He tells him to come down to the café with Ilse, a few minutes before the Lisbon plane is to leave. When Lazslo tries to thank him, he cuts him short: "Skip it. This is strictly a matter of business." One cynical gesture is here wrapped within another.

This particular gesture is soon enough annulled, in a little sequence all to itself. When Lazslo does try to hand Rick the money, he refuses it gruffly: "Keep it; you'll need it." In this small instance, at any rate, his cynicism has been proved insubstantial. But we wait to see how he will act in the main matter. Ilse thinks that what he intends to do is send Lazslo off on the plane alone. But nobody at this point really knows how anybody else is going to act. Rick is not at all sure about Renault. The film has been building him up as a minor puzzle. "Rick, have you got those letters of transit?" Renault has asked. "Louis, are you pro Vichy or Free French?" Rick has retorted. "I have no convictions . . . I take what comes," Renault has declared; but on his face too the camera has dwelt teasingly, the smile there ambiguous.

Suddenly everything begins to happen fast—though in a manner, still, that keeps us guessing. Renault walks in and—Lazslo and Ilse stare—declares Lazslo under arrest again. "You are surprised about my friend Rick?" At which

Rick pulls a gun and informs Renault that there will be no arrests—"yet." And he orders him to check with the airport that there will be no trouble. Renault pulls a fast one and, pretending to call the airport, really calls Strasser, who races for the field.

At the field, at last, all our questions are answered. While Lazslo is off somewhere checking arrangements, Rick tells Renault to fill out the names on the visas. They are: Mr. and Mrs. Victor Lazslo. Ilse, dazed, protests, but Rick tells her: she knows and he knows that the Cause needs Lazslo, and Lazslo needs her—she is part of his work, "the thing that keeps him going." "What about us?" she cries, but he answers her, "We'll always have Paris. We didn't have it. We'd lost it . . . We got it back last night." And "I've got a job to do," he tells her. "Where I'm going, you can't follow." Lazslo returns—"Everything is in order." "All except one thing," Rick adds, and he tells him of Ilse's visit. She did it to try to get the visas, he tells him. To get them, she tried to convince him that she was still in love with him. And he let her pretend. "But that was long ago." "Welcome back to the fight," Lazslo salutes Rick. "Now I know our side will win!" And he and Ilse walk off toward the plane.

Strasser bursts in. Further decisions are called for. Renault cries out that Lazslo is on the plane. Rick has Strasser at gun point, but Strasser calls his bluff: he jumps to the phone and asks for the radio tower. Rick shoots Strasser. The French police burst in; and the next move is Renault's. There is an extensive pause as he and Rick exchange stares—faces, to the last, expressionless. Then: "Round up the usual suspects!" Renault barks, and the police dash off. The roar of the ascending plane is heard. The two men turn their eyes. The beacon light sweeps them. The plane roars up over their heads. It might be a good idea to leave Casablanca for a while, says Renault. There is a Free French garrison at Brazzaville. The ten thousand francs he owes Rick—"that should pay our expenses." "*Our* expenses, Louis?" says Rick. "I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." Arms linked, they walk off into the dark.

Look where the film has brought us out: the embittered one, who would stick his neck out for nobody, steps briskly into battle. Look what has been accomplished: the final note here is the very one documented at this chapter's beginning. Arm in arm with comrade, he steps forth, to music, the dream in his heart intact. "Everything is" indeed "in order," magically. The film has permitted a most disturbing figure to take shape, and there before our eyes has comfortably recruited him. Lazslo may well cry out, "Now I know our side will win!"

What is more, the dream has recruited this unlikely warrior without even leaving us with the sense that we have witnessed a remarkable translation. The love story has borne the brunt of the work: it is the guise of the jilted lover that

has allowed the figure to take shape at all and utter his bitter cries; and it is the scene in which he regains his lost faith in the beloved that enables us to cancel out those cries and believe in his entry into the fight. But note a further magic: the impression we are left with at the end of the film is that even if Ilse had never returned to explain her leaving him, if it had come right down to it, Rick, for all his gloominess, would of course have rallied to the Cause. This the dream accomplishes by having him continue his bitter gesturing to the end. When we are given proof of how insubstantial is the cynicism about "the problems of the world" that he professes after Ilse has returned to him, automatically we extend even to his original bitter aspect the same judgment; retroactively we dismiss it too. Thus, as the film ends, that glum mask, shaped there before our eyes, has been interpreted as no disturbing sign but sign, rather, of a faith deeper than other faiths. "Just because you despise me, you're the only one I trust," Ugarte has blurted to Rick. The film, in effect, manages the tour de force of defining Rick's relation to the Cause analogously. It leaves us with this half-conscious feeling: just because he wears the aspect of utter cynicism, one can be sure that he is the real man of faith. Precisely by this contradictory sign, one can spot the man who really cares, the man to be relied upon. And so, in the dark, the shadow of our dim disquiet is dispelled.

Some readers will perhaps protest at this point: why cannot the film be taken at face value? Here is a love story, and it is complicated by the fact that the bitterness the hero feels toward his beloved he transfers to life as a whole; but that, they may protest, covers the matter; to read any more into it is artificial. Even at a strictly literal level, however, the label of jilted lover cannot be made to adequately cover Rick's case. At the end of the film one thing remains altogether unexplained: why it was that he could never return to his country. For the purposes of the dream, this stray end is gathered up neatly enough with Ilse's final departure. As Rick's eyes turn this last time to follow the plane's flight, the one exile is fused forever with the other; an audience is unlikely to remember that they are actually separate matters. For our purposes, though, the distinction stands and—even to be altogether literal—does raise the whole question of a wider reference for the drama enacted than any love alone provides. In that last cry of Lazslo's—"Now I know our side will win!"—the producers of the film themselves unconsciously acknowledge the more crucial identity of the hero, the more general nature of the crisis of faith he suffers.

But it is in unison that films most clearly yield up their secrets. It is the joint evidence of other war films that above all exposes the drama of Rick as

something more than a drama of love in a war setting. I can name film after film about the war which raises dramatically the question of the hero's faith, then moves forward to confirm that faith and steps him briskly into battle. Among these films, the hero is by no means always a disillusioned lover—though this note too is repeated. He may be any one of a variety of figures. Of any of these figures, viewed individually, one could say, as of Rick: this is a very special case, or a case, at any rate, without any general application for the American public. The hero very often is not even a citizen of this country. But line them all up and the question one has to ask is: why do the American film makers so persistently seek out remote cases of just this sort with which to satisfy their public—unless the identification made is actually one that is not remote at all?