**\* *Oscar at the Movies* \***

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***The Vision of Sarah Bernhardt***

 ***on the Silver Screen***

Sarah, I see you on a wall

 Burning, in such a fragile fire!

 Your flaring fury, your desire

And fear and grief, I watch them all

Flow through the quick staccato of

 The frames. You look a little strange.

 You may have undergone a change,

You whom I so admire and love.

But oh, how beautiful you are!

 A glow, a beacon beckoning me

 To join you in the Mystery

That burns inside us like a star.

You are Elizabeth the Queen, *A motion picture made in 1913.*

 Though you are dressed more like Pierrot *Oscar has this vision in C.3.3.—*Mr V

 In loose gown, billowing sleeves. Your flow

Of gestures must be felt, be *seen*,

The arms free to protest against

 Your fate. (The hands: two fluttering doves.)

 Who kills the man she loves, still loves.

You flicker jealously, incensed,

Then passionate, tender, tragic, old…

 Old? How could Sarah the Divine

 Be anything but young? Your fine

Intensity warms all that’s cold

Into rejuvenated passion.

 You would have been my Salomé—

 You always will be. Should the day

Arrive when there is no more Fashion,

And every light must dim and die,

*Bernhardt promised to help Oscar*

*financially on his release from Reading*

*Gaol. Despite repeated reassurances,*

*the money never materialised.—*[Mr V]

 In silver gown you will abide

 The ebbing of Time’s epic tide,

Still telling your immortal lie.



***On Seeing ‘The Wizard of Oz’***

 *Present at the Hollywood premiere,*  *Grauman’s Chinese Theatre, 15 Aug, 1939.*

1.

I’ve seen *Oz*, Dears. I’ll give you all

 A brief review, or commentary,

 Impressions, *aperçus…* This very

Strange film deserves a small roll-call.

******A touch of *Kitsch* and good homespun

 Fantasy landscapes. Winding road

 Of yellow brick. Green Witch, of toad

And cauldron, broom *et al*., quite fun!

O how the Evil are laid low!

 Gone is her beautiful wickedness.

 Who’ll melt in tears for the ogress

When she succumbs to H2O?



The Tin Man, a mechanical

 Old sentimentalist. In God

 He rusts when weep he must, this odd

Orphan of the Industrial.

The Emerald City! And that strip

 Of gold that curves through all the sets!

 That Lion Cowardly, who gets

Biting comeuppance and the lip

Of Dorothy. Nor should we pass

 Over that loose and floppy sack

 Of fodder who laments the lack

Of that which he already has,

The scarecrow, headpiece filled with straw:

 That is, a mind that does not know

 It is a mind. And finally: Lo!

THE WIZARD! He who gives the law

In Oz, gold-standard charlatan

 Who offers help at such a price

 And seems not in the least bit nice,

Proves a most kindly bumbling man

Without the curtains and the smoke:

 His promise fattens like the moon

 Into a helium balloon

And rescue comes when a knife-stroke

Severs the tether—but, Dears, *not*

 For Dorothy’s Toto, who *in toto*

***The Oscar***

 **Each year the actors celebrate**

 **Their own celebrity, and duly**

 **Award the best, whom else? yours truly!**

**your Only the great deserve the great.**

***\****

 Is left behind as back they go to

Kansas (but, *why?*) and all for naught

The rescue when her heart is left

 Behind there, with the little creature,

 For life is not a double-feature,

Ah, no. But as she cries, bereft,

A Happy Ending spell delivers

 Her from her dream’s tornado, little

 Toto and all, each jot and tittle

Observed of the obscure and divers



Fulfillment contract Wish makes with

 Itself. For one can readily see

 In this pure unreality

A most authentic human myth:

That winds may whirl us up, and roam

♫

 Into the Strange: away we go

 To learn the lesson that there’s no

Place like home… There’s no place like home…



*****Moving Pictures***

 *For Marcel Proust*

*The parlours where we do our loving*

 *Are rooms we rest in, yet these places*

 *Are speeding through successive spaces*

*In time, so they are very moving*

*Pictures indeed: We laugh and weep.*

 *And one atop the other these*

 *Assemble into memory’s*

*Fond scrap-book—but how long to keep?*

*Concatenate the snapshots in*

 *A sequence, till the intervals*

 *Between them blur, embrace the false*

*And glittering rhinestone and sequin,*

*Or the impress left by their reflections*

 *Upon a plate of silver thin*

 *As any dream, and enter in*

*To the Palladium. Our affections*

*Are bribed by sugar for the eye,*

 *And we, the children of our dreams,*

 *Trade that which is for that which seems,*

*And take the swindle gratefully.*

*When the spokes of a wagon wheel*

 *Move in reverse, against the grain*

 *Of physics, what of that? The brain*

*Ignores the slippage in the real,*

*Stunned by the fascinating shimmer*

 *Of a perverse, regressive motion.*

 *Who wants the moly for this potion?*

*Just turn the lights a little dimmer.*

*Ah, Mary Pickford, there you are!*

 *And smouldering Rudolph Valentino.*

 *Age shall not wither you, we’ll see no*

*Tarnish upon that silver star.*

*In quick succession things flash by us.*

 *We give the world its fiat looks*

 *And write about these in our books.*

*Dears, into these is built a bias*

*We would not, even if we could,*

* Be rid of. We are prejudiced*

 *Against our passing into mist,*

*We do not think our death a good,*

*Or dare not think it so. Our lot*

 *Is wept, our lot is coarsely cried—*

 *But Mary Pickford never died.*

*Though celluloid may singe or rot,*

*And black holes burn into the tissue,*

 *No, on the eye of God imprinted,*

* Our images stay freshly-minted*

*And thence new dreams for-ever issue:*

*They float upon the Milky Way*

 *Through cycle and through revolution*

 *As in a teardrop’s clear solution,*

*Film noir to glorious matinee,*

*Staggered kinetics of the Silence*

 *In which we Charlie-Chaplin walk*

 *Or learn, like toddlers, how to talk.*

*Gene Autrey six-shoots with mock-violence*

*Against a Western sky, and scars*

 *Of memory heal themselves alive*

 *Again, again, because they hive*

*In silver halides of the stars.*

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