For
The Oral History Library
of
The Fashion Institute of Technology

LOUISE BROOKS

Interviews by
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with
Matthew Daniels
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Q. I'm in Hollywood and I'm starting a series of oral biographies, interviewing people who knew the people who've passed on, digging into their letters, into their writings, into interviews, to try to create a total picture of their contribution.

The first person that I wanted to involve in this new form of oral history was the great star, Louise Brooks. Now, you have to understand, that in the '20s Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer paraded its proud slogan, "More stars than there are in heaven." That was the era of romance, chocolates, "frostilla," fragrant lotion, mesh bags, the mighty Dussenberg motor car. Well...Those were the nights on screen, of course. Clara Bow and Betty Bronson and Renee Adoree, and Constance Talmadge, and the Charleston enthusiast, Miss Joan Crawford. A very young Greta Garbo and Myrna Loy, Who, amusingly enough, because of her name, often got Chinese seductress parts, and who managed to endure this rather pluckily. And Bessie Love and Dolores del Rio, and the Empress of them all--Gloria Swanson.

Well, most of them have passed on, and one has to recognize that if you honestly evaluate the existing value of all of these stars, in many people's opinion, Louise Brooks was the greatest actress of them all. But more important to those of us who are interested in style and fashion, she was
an independent, irreverent, extraordinary woman of passionate
sense of personal style and integrity, and lived her life
that way.

Today I've gathered a group of people who've had
contact with her, directly and indirectly, and we're going
to try to get on tape as much as we can the essence of this
great star, Louise Brooks.

Now, she typified the smart girl of the '20s. In
many ways, far better than did the limited, essentially
limited to "It," Clara Bow. As an actress, as a peculiarly
dazzling, remarkable personality, she certainly equaled the
Divine Swede. This was Louise Brooks. It's interesting: She's
often referred to as "The lost star of the '20s." At one time
her fabulous face appeared on most fan magazine covers, here
and abroad. When you look at the book that she wrote (we'll
get into that later), "Lulu," the frontispiece, though it's
not accredited, was taken by the master photographer, Edward
Steichen, for the magazine, "Vanity Fair," in August, 1928.

She was...Oh, a celestial figure, from the beginning.
She was tossed opposite W.C. Fields, Wallace Beery, Dick Arlen,
William Powell, yet managed always to steal the show because
of her amazing beauty, her sincerity and (I think the real key)
her utter simplicity.

Louise Brooks, in her films, when viewed in the light
of later decades...Well, for now...Film museums and societies
and some big popular magazines slowly rediscover her. I checked
on the foreign magazine stand here in Hollywood, which is an extraordinary one, and I found that they were still doing pieces about her from Copenhagen, Paris, down to Rio. There have been all sorts of new awareness of this actress.

It's interesting that Henri Langlois, who was the great French critic, once in Paris jumped on stage and stopped a whole film showing, saying, "There is no Garbo, there is no Dietrich, there is only Louise Brooks."

I suppose, in a strange way, it was that she was the most modern actress of any of them in the sense that she created an image of total naturalness, which, of course, was unlike anything that was being done on the screen in the '20s and '30s, because everything was larger than life.

It's rather fascinating because her art has never aged, and I guess alone, of all the silent stars, save possibly Lillian Gish (and Gish claims--I talked with her--and she said she never met Louise Brooks), she's still capable of moving audiences, of disturbing them, of impressing even the most cynical. I suppose the interesting thing is that when you talk to people who have any memory of her, or any recollection, the thing that they remember most, and the thing that she's probably better known to the public today at all is because of her famous haircut: The bangs, which were her famous trademark, and which were copied by millions of Brooksites world over. Pola Negri, Colleen Moore had their bangs, and somehow the Brooks' bangs are unique. When she went to Paris to work
with Rene' Clair, nearly all the shops along the Champs Elysees had her photograph in the window. I remember a syndicated comic strip called "Dixie Dugan," and it was totally patterned after her image. You must remember that Brooks reigned only a few years. Actually short years, earning bouquets galore, excited admiration, Gershwin praised her, "Manret" painted her. Then suddenly she was snuffed out, though the bangs and Dixie Dugan have lingered on.

It happened...Oh...She was a victim of her own splendid intelligence, her integrity, her youth. She caused her own martyrdom. It's a Hollywood story.

She was born in Cherryvale, Kansas. At 15 she ran away to New York to join the dancing troupe of Ruth St. Denis, in company with some other youngsters named Hanya Holm and Martha Grahame. The "George White Scandals" soon followed, along with the Ziegfeld Follies, and at that point she was swooped up by Walter Wanger, who signed her to a Paramount contract. All this, before she was 19.

Now, my mother, whose stage name was Julia Ross, was in the Follies with Louise Brooks, and has told me many, many things about her. They were great buddies. She...Oh, she was quickly put into...I think the things...The only movies you can think of were display pieces for her. "The Show Off," "The American Venus," "Evening Clothes," "A Girl in Every Port," "Rolled Stockings," "Too Many Women," "Love'em and Leave Them," "A Social Celebrity," "Beggars of Life," "The
City Gone Wild," "The Canary Murder Case." Now, all this happened from 1926 to 1929, and to think about it, aren't the titles typical of that particular period?

No one at Paramount seemed to realize what they had signed up, although her films became popular and her face became a symbol. Except for William Wellman's "Beggars of Life," based on Jim Tully's hard hitting book, none of these were by any means great films. In "Beggars," she was a murderette, thrown between a conniving hobo king (Wallace Beery) and a jobless laborer (Richard Arlen). In dirty trousers and a cap two sizes too big, she stirred up the beggars and the audiences alike, merrily with her "Louiseness."

Very much like Garbo, who was to later on do things in films that Brooks accomplished earlier, she gave each film she appeared in a kind of tension, a private credibility, a pivotal focus. She was foiled to McLaglen, to Fields, to Menjou. The film automatically became her vehicle because of that peculiar magnetism of hers which escapes definition.

Louise Brooks was the complete American: She was erotic, she was undeniably feminine in a time when others thought it feminine to be boyish; she had brooding eyes, black as polished jet, as black as her hair, and she wore a fascinating, piquant eyebrow and a hat. She possessed athletic grace, glamor, she suggested swift intelligence, kind of like a shiny spring, uncoiling. She gave you the sense of a terrific restlessness.
Being a dancer, she talked with her body. Unlike Garbo, she was not aloof, unlike Gish she was not fragile, unlike Clara Bow she was not from the 5¢ and 10¢. She gazed, she flitted back and forth, she promised more than Garbo, the unattainable promised. She demanded you believe in her.

She was an independent spirit. She was a goddess made strangely real. Discontented and vital offscreen as well as on (there was a similar quality to her real life as well as her screen and theatre presence), she had the very qualities that the great German director, G.W. Pabst, required for his version, "After Lulu," which was, of course the title of the then very notorious Wedekind play. With his "Joyless Street" in 1925, Pabst unlocked in Greta Garbo, immortality. Somehow he recognized in Louise even greater secrets, even more malleable material. It's fascinating: She had just finished the "Canary Murder Case," she was 23. The credit titles for the celebrated mystery (she was the throttled thrush) include Jean Arthur and William Powell. Pabst wired, encouraging her to come to Europe to make "real films." The advent of sound had started, and Paramount bosses wanted her to remain for dubbing "The Silent Canary." They could obviously double their profits by releasing it as a talkie. Without a moment's hesitation, she thumbed her nose at her contract owners and Brooks took the next boat to Germany. Three years at Paramount had killed her almost as much as the poor canary. Hollywood had exploited her mask, her star was fixed over California. She was
very famous, hopelessly beautiful. She was eager to push on.

I am going to digress here, just for a moment, because I just found some notes that I made...Oh, so many years ago...Well, it was 1980, I think.

I had lunch with Anita Loos, and we went for a walk, and it's interesting that...Just out of the blue, a very polite young man...As a matter of fact, he was not old, he was young, stopped us--approached very carefully--and said, to Anita Loos, "I beg your pardon, but aren't you Louise Brooks?"

So I asked Anita, of course, if she'd ever known Louise Brooks when she worked in Hollywood. And Anita, of course, who authored the great "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," etc., said, "Well, here's the story."

Louise Brooks and Anita had met many years ago when they were working as novices at the old MGM studio in Culver City. At that time, both of them had several points in common that might have given that movie fan--the one that stopped us in the park--some basis for his confusion. But in Anita's mind, to be mistaken for Louise Brooks, at any age, was a double compliment. She was by far the prettiest girl in Hollywood--a fact which was only the beginning of her incredible career. For today it's true: Most film critics agree that Louise Brooks became the greatest actress in the history of motion pictures.

It's fascinating. During a span of about 20 years, Anita told me, most of which were spent in idleness, she made
only two movies of major importance, but they established a cult for Louise Brooks that is mounting steadily as time goes on. Now, it's 1987, and it's true. That cult is growing stronger and stronger. That's why I thought it's very important that we pursue this and get this all on tape for our own archives.

There is a resemblance between Louise Brooks and Anita Loos, and I guess it started with their measurements. They were both at a height of about 4'11" and they each weighed a meagre 92 pounds. And in a world where it was almost an obligation to be blonde, they never tampered with the blue-black color of their hair. They both wore it at shoulder length, and were the first of the trend setters to venture into bangs.

Now, of course, their jobs at the studio varied. Louise took the easy way and settled for playing extras, bit roles, and posing as "cheesecake" for the publicity department. And, of course, Anita earned her keep by concocting movie plots. But there was a magnet in the guise of snobbery that drew the two of them together. Among the mishmosh that made up the personnel at MGM, "We avoided the actors as bores," Anita told me, "who took themselves too seriously." She used to be put to all kinds of trouble by one superstar who was finicky about the closeups that Anita planned for him. He accused her of introducing embraces into his scenes with a leading lady who suffered from halitosis. He would drag
her from the set to complain, "Look here, young lady, if I've told you scribblers a dozen times: Keep that dame and me at arm's length." And it's interesting, because Anita tantalized this actor by promising to write him into a double exposure, against Louise Brooks. It was a feeble joke, but the very idea brought forth a grin that lit up almost all his teeth. "Well," said Clark Gable, "Now you're talking like Shakespeare."

There really was no question at that time that Louise was looked on by the younger directors as their own special property. They were as yet too inexperienced to be handling anything but slapstick comedy, so Louise's contribution had little to do with acting. But it provided endless excuses for "cheesecake." Of course, both of these girls considered it chic to rebel against custom, so they refused to dine at the studio commissary. At lunchtime the big boss, Louis B. Mayer, used to make the rounds, stopping at every table, to describe the merits of his chicken soup, the recipe of which had been handed down through generations of Yiddish grandmothers. As an escape from such boredom, the younger producers organized a dining club where the elite gathered in lunch hour. It was restricted to movie intellectuals, such as Walter Wanger, A. Edward Sutherland, and Willis Goldbeck, all of whom boasted college backgrounds.

There were always a few men about town from Los Angeles and the polo teams joined it from Santa Barbara.
"Le Club," as it was called, occupied a tacky bungalow in Culver City, complete with bootlegger and a black "fry" book who provided comedy relief. The club garden was so cramped that a neighborhood apartment dweller once complained: "Every time I go to my window for a breath of air, your cook grabs his skillet and bastes my bald head!"

"We laughed off such repartee," says Anita. We drank our martinis out of tea cups, looked down our noses at such earnest drips as Greta Garbo and Kate Hepburn, who still paid homage to Daddy Mayer's chicken soup, a single helping of which would have made a potful of the brew they served us at 'Le Club.'"

Both Louise and Anita earned plenty of money at that time, most of which they spent on hats and frequently borrowed them from each other. It's interesting: In the middle of this Anita was describing to me a favorite straw sailor with a single flower, sprouting on a long wire stem. And it moved, as the girls moved, and its gyrations increased their sense of their own impertinence, as they lolled around the club bar, of course.

Actually, Anita was very hooked on a career and she occupied herself essentially writing movie plots. And Louise became a sort of magnificent floater; took no notice of where she was headed. Ultimately, she grew her more or less uncompleted affairs at "Le Club," and became a girl-about-town under the protection of a young director, Eddie Sutherland,
who, you have to understand, was the Beau Brummel of that particular time.

Louise's connection with Hollywood was finally broken by a gentleman from the East on a business trip to California. He had invented a process of washing dirty linen "en gross," and then turning it over to housewives to do their own ironing. George Marshall made millions by such simple means as smoothing wrinkles out of unpressed laundry. As a reward for Marshall's devotion to Louise, she peacefully gave him the nickname of "Wetwash," with which George Marshall was forced to live thereafter. But, by his purchase of the Washington Redskins football team, he providing himself with the glamor of a sporting career.

I suppose...I don't really know, but I suppose that George Marshall might well be called the love of Louise's life, and she never found a single love sufficient.

George burned with the desire to show the entire world the treasure he had acquired. He spent fortunes trying to further her career in the movies. Which Louise didn't want. It interfered with her social life: Queen of the Washington football team! In addition to being lazy, she refused to cooperate in the business contracts George arranged. She liked money well enough, but didn't want to be bothered with it.

Now, Anita stayed at MGM. As a matter of fact, she stayed there for 18 years. But she did manage to keep track
of Louise through the movie grapevine. It appeared that during her extensive pleasure trips--some of them abroad--Louise's spectacular beauty caught the interest of studios wherever she went. But her favorite form of exercise was walking off a movie set, which she did with the insouciance of a little girl playing hopscotch, thus upsetting George's ambition to be a Pygmalion. It's so interesting if you parallel this with William Randolph Hearst's desire to make Marion Davies a great movie star.

During her years of misbehavior, Louise's movie offers dwindled to a paltry few. When she found herself at odds with Marshall, there were numberless others waiting to take his place. Louise became a full term "kept lady." But sometimes--it's interesting--when George pressured her, whatever his motivations might have been--to show her off, to reassure his own masculinity, to just satisfy real desire or possibly even real love--he'd pressure her and she'd go back to him for a while. Then, of course, there was the fateful day when a Berlin movie producer (and here we come into, of course, the name that runs constantly through the cult world of Louise Brooks, because it's his films that everybody responds to), G.W. Pabst, who was a friend of George Marshall's, was preparing to make a film of two of Wedekind's sleazy, pornographic plays called "Pandora's Box." And as he described the project to George, he explained a major difficulty; that the leading lady must be "the most beautiful girl in the world."
George Marshall felt his destiny as Pygmalion had arrived, and he said, "You listen to me Pabst. That girl has got to be Louise Brooks."

When she was approached to consider yet another unwelcome job, Louise's first question, apparently, was "What time would I have to report on the set?" But it's fascinating: Remember, Louise was very bright, very intelligent. So when she read the Wedekind plays, Louise's attitude began to change. As an ardent lover of life, she found little life in those film scripts that came her way. Activity perhaps, but that was not enough. Her exceptional beauty had brought Louise offers of such innocuous roles as Goethe's Marguerite, or even the more pallid Charlotte in "The Sorrows of Werther." English movie companies had tried to tempt Louise with such lollipops as "Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall," or "Sweet Nell of Old Drury." But, as Lulu in Wedekind's "Pandora's Box," Louise found a heroine she could get her teeth into.

Lulu was a creature of flesh and blood, especially blood. A sequence in Wedekind's play that particularly fascinated Louise was one in which its heroine confesses that her most cherished daydream was to be ravished and murdered by an insane rapist.

Louise accepted the role of that gore-soaked victim with an eagerness very foreign to her supine, fun-loving nature. Her performance as Lulu turned out to be a show stopper, even to the dissolute Berliners. Louise's boyish "patent leather hair," which had caused her to look like a healthy young
Lochinar out of the West, turned her into a creature of Oriental decadence. There are not many actresses who will allow an audience to know what they're thinking. And anyway, most of those thoughts are too self-centered to have any relation to life outside of an actress's looking glass. But Louise was no dissembler. She had faced her own life with a gaze of peerless clarity. She was too honest to play it coy, to delve in self-pity, to hide behind the mask of her fabulous face. Or, to smear the ugly scars of human nature with "cover mark."

As she played Lulu, the venal thoughts of that prostitute reach out and grip the audience as in a vice. And after the vice is released, it leaves a scar on one's mind that just won't disappear. I can close my eyes right now and see that film frame by frame. It's an extraordinary experience. Movie critics have tried to explain what it is that turned Louise Brooks's erotic ecstasy into a masterpiece. One is tempted to quote a few international film writers on the subject. For instance: "Louise Brooks is much more than a myth, she is a magical presence." Another quote: "Louise Brooks, merely by walking across the stage, creates a work of art." And from Henri Langlois, the late director of the Cinematheque Francais: "The camera seems to have caught her by surprise, almost without her knowledge. Her art is so pure that it becomes invisible." And the most hardboiled of British critics, the late Kenneth Tynan, had to resort to poetry to express his feelings about
Louise: "For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright, who art as black as hell, and dark as night."

Now, with the release of "Pandora's Box," not even Louise realized what she had done with Wedekind's monstrous study of an adulteress.

That "Pandora's Box" was more than an accident was proved when Louise was enticed into one more film, "Cri de Baute'," which turned out to be as great a work of art as "Pandora." A few years later, because, I suppose, she got bored, Louise quit acting forever, and never made another picture.

She had given a full account of all the lessons her own life had taught her, she had asked all those questions to which humanity will never find an answer—the smile of the Mona Lisa with its wit, guile and cruelty. Anita Loos (and we were just passing the Central Park "key" concession; you know, that luncheon concession near the seals)... We sat down to have a pot of tea, and she'd told me that Louise Brooks had told her that she didn't think that she'd ever loved anyone, although she'd been married for a short two years to Eddie Sutherland. But when in need of funds, she intermittently went back to George Marshall, actually until the day he died. She confessed to Anita to having lived with three men of wealth at one time without any of them being aware of the deceit. I mean, talk about a Moliere plot! But finally, crippled by arthritis, she had found a new diversion.
She enjoyed talking. "I was curious about what all that meant, and so I called," Anita told me, "a friend of mine. Tom Curtiss, the drama editor on the International Herald Tribune, and he gave me a report on Louise." This was, oh, late '70s, I guess. Louise gave a series of addresses that she made to Parisien film afficionados, but they were so full of German technicalities that the French couldn't understand them.

"You'd never recognize the Louise of today if you saw her," Tom Curtiss wrote to Anita. "Her hair is almost white, she looks and even talks like a New England school marm. And for the first time in her life, she's become bitter."

Like a homing pigeon who never had a home, Louise fluttered to a nest at the Rochester Academy of Motion Picture Arts, of which she was its brightest and most revered adjunct. Everybody who loves the movies has got to adore Louise Brooks because of what she has put into our lives through them. In order to see these miracles, one is forced to...You have to get to the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, where only seven films of Louise exist. You'd best be warned, that "Pandora's Box" may sear your eyesight.

I sat down with my mother who, as Julia Ross in the Follies was very close to Louise Brooks, and asked her if she could give me any sort of information I didn't already have. And she went through some papers of her own, and she found for me a Philadelphia paper of March 31, 1926. It
practically fell apart in my hands, so some of it I can't quite make out. But, essentially it's sort of... I'll tell you what it all said, because it is fascinating. And it was also... And I asked my mother why she saved it and she said it was such a strong statement and so typical of Louise that she would take a stand that nobody else seemed to dare to, and that often she took that role. She did things that other people would have liked to have done, but didn't dare to. And what it amounted to was that people who were reading the newspaper at that time had a shock when they read how "Miss Louise Brooks, a rising young movie actress, was demanding that John de Mirjian, photographer, stop selling or circulating in any other way certain photographs of her which he had made when she was a chorus girl on Broadway." This was certainly a very unusual stand for an actress and former chorus girl to take. Ordinarily, such young women are delighted to have their portraits circulated just as widely as possible, and their usual complaint is that they're not getting all the photographic publicity to which they're entitled. But Louise Brooks made it plain (and she was in this respect a most exceptional young woman of the stage).....

When she realized that the photographer was selling pictures of her that were called "draped" photographs (most of us would have thought that they would be more accurately called undraped; because in these pictures the subject wears only a single piece of drapery that is flung carelessly about
and what Louise Brooks had said was that she felt she had very good reasons for her attitude. Some of them are based on self-interest, and others are based on high moral principles which she feels should apply to every woman. And though what she said: "My first reason for seeking to stop the circulation of my photographs," she explained, "is a purely selfish one. I'm no longer an actress. I have embarked on a serious career as a motion picture star, and I fear it will injure my chances of succeeding in my new profession to have these draped photographs scattered about the country. In my new profession, upon which I am pre-eminently suited, I am not a girl of modesty and respect. I have acting roles which I am pre-eminently suited. It would be too much of a shock, I fear, for movie goers who have admired me to come across a photograph of me as I posed for Mr. de Mirjian. The contrast would destroy or weaken some of the illusions and unsophistication that my acting has created. So, I feel it's my plain duty to myself to stop the circulation of these photographs.

"I do not think there is anything essential or immodest in the photographs of me, or in the photographs of other young women which photo
the cheekbones like a sort of... The image I get is a pair of enameled parentheses— at 15 she left high school and went to New York with her dance teacher. There she successfully auditioned for the Denishawn Dancers, which had been founded in 1915 by Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, and was by far the most adventurous dance company in America.

She started out as a student, but soon graduated to full membership in the troupe, with which she toured the country from 1922 to 1924. One of her fellow dancers, Martha Grahame, became a lifelong friend. Brooks said at one point: "I learned to act while watching Martha Grahame dance." This was in an interview with Kevin Brownlow, "And I learned to move in film watching Chaplin."

But, you know, she was, oh, a spirit, and there were sudden senses in her life of... Discipline was disturbing to her, and suddenly the kind of discipline that's required by working in a troupe such as the Denishawn troupe became totally oppressive, and she was fired. She was fired for lacking a sense of vocation. And the summer of 1924 found her back in New York dancing in the chorus of "George White's Scandals," and after three months of this, a whim seized her and she took off without warning for London where she performed the Charleston at the Cafe du Paris near Piccadilly Circus. By New York standards, she thought Britain's bright young things were a moribund bunch. And when Evelyn Waugh wrote "Vile Bodies" about them, she said that only a genius could make a masterpiece out of such glum material.
they just churned out, she looks better in those than she does in the great German masterpieces done by Pabst, both "Pandora's Box," and...What's the name of the second one? The name of the second movie, which followed "Pandora's Box," and was equally successful...As a matter of fact, I rather prefer it, "The Diary of a Lost Girl."

Now. Let's see. Where are we?

The...Obviously Kobal talked a great deal on the phone, back and forth, back and forth, he never knew just what he was going to find when he did call; how she was going to respond. But, let's see, he tracked her down...Something to do with Travis Banton...Let's see...Let's see...I'm looking at Kobal's notes. Hmmmmn....Well....

Anyway...It happened that she had kept a little red satin bolero jacket, which the great Paramount designer Travis Banton had done for her as a favor back in the '30s, when she couldn't get a job in the movies and had gone back to earning her living as half of a dance team, and she needed some new clothes.

Now, I knew Travis. I met Travis when I was...He was Madame France's assistant, who was a designer in New York and who designed for all of the "kept" ladies as well as those expensive ladies of the Follies, and my mother was one of those. And she used to take me by the hand to go for her fittings. And Travis was a witty, amusing, chunky sort of guy with a dimple and twinkle in his eye, and he was enormously talented.
If you doubt that, just look at Dietrich's clothes in all those great films.

But he was a drunk, and he was a genius but he was a drunk. And that's, of course, what ruined him in Hollywood. But he was a sweet, warm man, and apparently Kobal got Louise to lend him the jacket for a show that he was doing, or producing at the Victoria and Albert. Was it Kobal that was doing that?

And, that's how this relationship all started.

Anyway, let's get to some of the questions that were asked by Kobal. Now, I've asked Matthew Daniels, who assisted in all of this, to essentially play John's role. That's what it amounts to. And, obviously, Matthew, add anything that hits your mind, or anything you want to say about this.

A. Well, what did come to my mind was something that I remembered from "Pandora's Box." A line about Lulu, in which she says, "I'll dance for the whole world, but not in front of that woman." And that sort of hot-headed egotism, self-centeredness, is exactly what came across in the tapes that John did with Louise. I would say that we went through 35 separate individuals on tape, and hers were the most alive because you got not only a person speaking but a mind speaking, and it made me think of that line from Lulu, made me think of her autobiography, "Naked on my Goat," which she wrote 400 pages of and then tossed down the incinerator when she was done.
At one point I remember on the tape she was talking about all the different people who had written. She mentioned Marcel Prouse and Dickens and George Bernard Shaw, writing about his terrible passion for that "silly broad," Ellen Terry. But she said, "So damn few people have been able to write, why should I write all that and just put it in a drawer. I don't have to purge myself, I have purged myself. I wrote that book once, and then I threw it down the incinerator." And that was Louise.

John did concentrate on her, on that difficult period in her career, between the movies and her being kept, really. Successfully being kept when she was down and out, and, in fact, she worked as a clerk at Saks Fifth Avenue. She said that it was quite an up and down period for her. Because there she was clerking for other wealthy women, and clearly hating it, and yet having an astonishing literary life. But I think even there she got a disdain for people. It just fed into her disdain, because she knew most people were fakes about books. As she said, people will read the New York Times book review and they know they're all faking it with each other, but she preferred books like "War and Peace."

She recalled a quote from her childhood that she had...that her mother had read to her when she was very small, and I remember her saying, "There was a man from our town and he was wondrous wise. He jumped into a bramble bush and scratched out both his eyes. And when he found his eyes were out, with
all his might and main, he jumped into another bush and scratched them in again."

Q. That's marvelous.  
A. Very marvelous. Particularly when you have this 65-70 year old woman with emphysema, bed-ridden, reciting quotes that she remembered her mother telling her in Kansas.  

Q. The thing one has to remember is, of course, the reason for the collapse of that career was, you know, partially this independence. When she did "The Canary Murder Case," and talkies, of course, came in and they decided, the studio decided it would be smart to release it in both forms, she was asked to come back to the set and to record her lines in sound. Well, she didn't want to. You know. She was a party girl, and went off...She was a great hedonist, and went off for her own pleasure. But also, it was her way of thumbing her nose at Hollywood.

Now, at that point, you were dealing with a group of giants who would operate on the basis of autocratic power. And they all knew one another. You know. You had Adolph Zukor and Louise B. Mayer and, in this case, B.P. Schulberg, who was the producer of that particular film. And Schulberg, who had been rejected by Brooks, because he was a propositioner of the first order (you talk about casting couch, he practically invented it), and the answer was that she just didn't return. And the boys--the big boys--decided that that was unforgivable; it was unprofessional (and, of course, it really was). I mean,
any true professional would have recognized the import of doing that. But her attitude was you don't care about me, I'm not gonna care about you. So, off she went, to Europe. And when she came back from Europe she really did discover the power of that group--that cabal--that was established; that it was impossible to get a job. She couldn't, and thus, eventually ended up in Saks and, of course as we know, later, impoverished.

A. Well, I do remember she talked about the movie sets and how much she hated them. And, funnily enough, it did have to do with talking, because she said, "All they do is talk. That was one of my chief objections to the movies. You go and sit on the set and you listen to these actors and they talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, while they're putting up the lights. They're doing this, they're doing that, and you listen to these actors talking about themselves, and you think 'If I hear that story one more time I'm going to die.' So then you get through with that day and you go home and you take a bath and you get dressed and you go to your dinner parties, and you meet the same actors and they're telling you about the same stories, through all the same dinner parties, and you go to a party and they run the movies....." You know, you clearly got an image of that.

But I remember, in going through and hearing her talk and then seeing her on screen, what really struck me about Louise Brooks (and it may be a reason why she's a cult
figure today), is that even in the '20s, here was an actress who, in front of the camera, was acting for herself. And it was very internalized, what was going on inside Louise that came across. Not what she projected for the camera, which is what Garbo did. Garbo, you know, used to talk about thinking about the closeup, how it's going to look from the 100th row in Radio City. Louise did mention Garbo, as a matter of fact...

Kobal asked if she knew Garbo, if she had met her, and Louise said, "Oh, yes. She made a pass at me." That was at Barney Glazer's. He was a writer at Paramount. They were out playing tennis--she and John Gilbert, whom Garbo was later intended to marry but apparently it was Louise she had her eyes on that day.

Q. She's, to me, totally fascinating, because, like many people, she led her own kind of secret life. The secret life, in its own way, kept the other one going--through lovers, through films, through dancing, through starving. Reading. She was an omnivorous reader, and everything else to her was surface, and surface things sort of rocked her life. And at one point Kobal asked her if she was going to write a piece about John Wayne and said, "Did you ever do it?" And I think her answer is quite interesting: "No, I wouldn't write anything about him," she said. "My God, what the hell could I say about John Wayne. No. I was going to write a piece about Clara Bow. When you come right down to it, not many people are worth writing about."
Now, it's interesting. Brooks was described and has always been described by critics as the first natural actress. She denies that. She says... Not that she denies that she was a natural actress, but that she was the first. "No, no you're wrong," she always says. "The first natural actress was Clara Bow." And she said, "There are only three people I ever wanted to write about. One was George Gershwin, the other was Martha Grahame, and I would have liked to have done a long piece on Charlie Chaplin. Those three people, they were all geniuses. But ordinary people, like Clara Bow-- for God's sake, she was a half witted little girl; her father was a busboy, her mother was in a nut house and she wasn't very bright." And when asked, "You knew her at Paramount?" John asked her, she said, "Yeah, I liked her a lot." And Kobal recognized that, of course, we all know the history of Clara Bow. She really became a terrible drunk and a drug addict and a destroyed human being. She was very bruised by her treatment in Hollywood, and it's fascinating, because it was Clara Bow who made Paramount pictures. They needed a star desperately when they got her, and then, of course, as Brooks points out, Schulberg threw her out because he got entangled with the love of his life, Sylvia Sidney. And he'd had an affair with Clara, when she worked for him at FBO, and then he brought her to Paramount, and that's how he got the job at Paramount, because he was able to deliver Clara Bow.

Clara once said in an interview, that was very moving,
"I know I look like I'm having a lot a lot of fun to people, I know that's how I come across. And I suppose I am, sometimes. But I live like each day is gonna be the last. If you grow up the way I did, when you didn't know what was gonna happen tomorrow--I'm not tryin to blame anybody--but you took your happiness as you found it, day by day."

She was so moving. She didn't punctuate her sentences, that was actually the way she talked. No punctuation. She just went on. And if you look at those early pictures--particularly "it,"--she was a great star.

Brooks, of course, wrote her autobiography to practice writing. She felt that she learned to write by writing "Naked on my Goat." And I was curious about the title. I don't know whether you are or not, or anybody is. But it's a wonderful title. It's from Goethe, "Out of the witch's sabbath, Faust;" and she said, "What better way than an autobiography. At least I know that information." She wrote about 400 pages and then, as she pointed out, she just tossed it away.

Her feeling about Hollywood was that nobody in Hollywood read books. And she described something that probably still exists, in terms of interior decorators; people saying "I've got 10 bookshelves and I need 7 1/2 yards of books," you know, to fill up the bookshelves.

I do think, of course, that that kind of cynicism was probably something that probably pervaded her life as
she got older and became more bitter. Because it is not true about Hollywood. I mean, I'm here, and I deal with all kinds of people, and there are many literate people, and people who are very seriously involved in that. But, of course, we are talking about her period, which was in the '20s, and it is to be remembered that the stars, other than the few great stage stars that appeared, were essentially people who were discovered running elevators or clerking in stores, or hitchhiking on the highway, or hopping from somebody's bed onto the camera. The screen. And she's right. They weren't geniuses. A. Well, too, I think that fits in with her whole scenario of not being a vocal person, and she was a silent movie actress who...I remember she said that the happiest time she had ever made was when she was in Paris making movies, and she didn't speak French. I mean, is that a statement about somebody who doesn't want to be vocal? Which is ironic, because it was in the later years, as she became a cult figure, it was based on her voice—that remarkable Midwestern, atonal voice—that appeared on Kevin Brownlaw's series, "Hollywood," and that certainly helped her resurgence as well as her book "Lulu" in Hollywood.

But, the period that she spoke about in France, she said that she was extremely happy because she didn't have to explain anything. She would get up in the morning, she would go to the studio, and she didn't have a translator, she didn't have an interpreter. Well, actually, she had had a translator
but he was, she said, a little devil, and he had an affair with her hairdresser's assistant and ran off with her. So, there was nobody there to interpret. And what she would do, the director would just point where he wanted her to stand and she would go and do it, and she was blissfully happy.

In fact, I remember, she said it brought to mind an experience that Billy Wilder had with Marilyn Monroe. John, in describing this, when Louise was telling this, said the tears were streaming down her face when she was telling this, she was laughing so hard. But Billy Wilder said to Marilyn, "I want two tears, right now," and Marilyn got very confused and said, "How am I supposed to have two tears, right now?"

And he said, "I want two tears, right now," and Marilyn said, "It will take me five hours to get you two tears right now."

Q. But you know, it's also fascinating that some of the very reasons that we are interested in Louise Brooks, because she is, in my sense, the epitome of a woman of style. Because style is a very personal statement, as opposed to fashion, as we know. And that style, of course, is what feeds fashion, feeds the culture. Because without those breakthroughs and that avant garde movement, we'd all become dinosaurs in terms of our manners, our etiquette, our behavior, or the way we dress. And because obsolescence is so vitally important to the fashion world--it's the artery of the fashion world--you need Louise Brooks to come and defy everything. But also, that explains partially the difficulty that she had in Hollywood,
because, you have to understand that it's so typical of the studios. They didn't know what to do with her. Because, you see, she didn't fit into the Hollywood scheme in the classical sense: She was never, never a fluffy heroine, nor was she the wicked vamp. Nor a woman of the world. She really didn't fit into any category, and became popular despite the studio. They didn't give a damn about her as far as she was concerned. They put her into any bit part they could find. She was desirable cheesecake--she was gorgeous, her legs were lyric--and when you think of the kind of people who ran the studios, their mental processes were such that they preferred the familiar. Therefore, they preferred the type that they could categorize. This is the "such and such" type, and therefore I know what to do with her. Because it didn't require any bold moves on their part, or taking any chances.

Now, I have news for you: That still operates in the studios today. And, you know, she said herself, Louise said, "I wasn't Clara Bow, I wasn't Mary Pickford, I wasn't Lillian Gish. And I really wasn't anybody. And since they really didn't care to analyze what it was that I was communicating to the public..." Because they didn't have anybody, you see. Dietrich had a Sternberg, and Brooks, obviously, in her mind, had to have, eventually, Pabst, to establish a personality once and for all. And by the time she made the picture with Pabst--"Lulu"--she was just as unpopular in Germany as she was in Hollywood. When she arrived there they
expected a femme fatale, a siren, a slinky woman with lascivious looks and a leer. They expected a man eater, a sex dynamo with a voracious appetite for men. And, of course, a lot of people who see the film...I mean, I went to a screening of it in New York when they re-released it, and it was fascinating. They interpreted in such strange ways. You learn more about the people who are watching the film than you do about the characters in the film. And they still...People see it as this extraordinary man eating woman, and actually, Lulu doesn't do anything, if you examine the film carefully. She just dances through the film. She's a young girl. She leads a life she's always liked. She was a whore when she was 12, and she dies a whore when she's about 18. Now, how can an audience expect a girl of that age to reflect and to suffer?

A. I seem to be going back to her voice over and over, but I think it's because I did work with the tapes, and I heard her voice over and over. She at one point was talking about Kenneth Tynan, who was, before Kobal, one of the people who found her--refound her--and, of course, in her later life, she was quite, quite riddled with emphysema and at times could not speak. But he scolded her about that, because he said to her one time...I think this one stands out, this incident, stands out in my mind because in listening to the tape, she is a very fluid speaker. Her thoughts come point to point; she's never at a loss for words. There's never an um or a speech impediment. She goes point to point. And yet, when she
eat up a lot of money. I would go out to a nightclub in New York every night and show off my clothes. I had my literary friends, and that was life in those days. There was nothing to do in Hollywood. After you'd finish work you'd go to dinner, and then they'd run more movies!"

I have news for you: They still do it.

When asked whether she ever became part of the Hollywood establishment, she said that (it was interesting) when she was married to Eddie Sutherland, they gave marvelous parties. Really marvelous. He was a wonderful host. He gave that famous, famous party. It was written up everywhere; it was Louise's idea. All books. All the place cards at dinner were books. "In front of Irving Thalberg's place I put Dreiser's 'Genius.' That's just before he married Norma Shearer. So, in front of Norma's place I put, 'Serena Blan- dish, The Difficulty of Getting Married.' She'd been trying and trying and trying and Irving's mother wanted him to marry a nice Jewish girl. It was so funny, because Irving walked right in and saw 'Genius' and sat right down. But Norma kept on walking around. She wouldn't sit in front of 'The Difficulty of Getting Married.' Not at all. And there was that writer at MGM who had lost a leg in the war, and I gave him 'The Devil on Two Sticks.'"

A. We have to realize though that she...We keep talking about these successes she had. She was box office poison. I mean, for a long period there. For a long period, she was
dead. She left Hollywood, they really didn't want her. As she pointed out, they'd stick her in any part, and she didn't want them and they didn't want her. But, John, I remember, asked her how she felt about the resurgence in her popularity around the late '50s or early '60s, and she admitted that she got an enormous kick out of it, because she had been, as she said, when "Pandora's Box" failed, and from that time on she had just given up hope. She really didn't care. She admitted that she had lived for years and years with a terrible sense of failure, and then, well, to suddenly be reclaimed from the dead, as she put it, was marvelously exciting.

She said that... Wait a minute, the quote's here: "If you lived for years thinking you were a perfect failure, and then suddenly you have lived long enough, most people die before things like that happen. To find that you are, to a certain extent, admired—it's a wonderful blessing. But I was always perfectly willing to face that I had made my own particular hell. I never tried to push the blame on anybody else but myself. I knew I had done it all myself.

Q. The obvious question would have to be asked of her, as to whether or not, indeed, she knew Marlene Dietrich. And she did say that she had met her once, but she did remember that Pabst said an interesting thing: "The trouble with German actresses [this was when he was looking for someone to play Lulu, in "Lulu"], the trouble is that there aren't
any good looking girls in pictures in Germany." That was true, there weren't. Except maybe Dietrich, and she was too old and too knowing. He wanted a girl who was innocent looking, and she was too whorish, let's say. "But I did think she was absolutely marvelous in 'The Blue Angel.'"

When asked if she'd ever met Sternberg, she said, "Uh huh. I was just put in one lousy picture after another." And when asked if there was a pecking order at Paramount--as there is in any corporation, let's be realistic about it--she said, "I didn't pay any attention to anybody. I didn't care. I didn't even know who was the head what or who was responsible for what." And she described that there were actors such as Richard Arlen who were always on the set, ass-licking and fraternizing and charming and flattering, which is the way to get ahead. And, of course, that still operates, with people doing that. She didn't even realize that Walter Wanger wasn't the head of the studio. She thought that Budd Schulberg...When Budd Schulberg finally said to her that, well, if she stayed on at Paramount and did "The Canary Murder Case" dubbing, then she'd get $750 a week, or she could leave. So she went to Berlin, and Paramount put out that her voice didn't record. Which, of course, is ridiculous. She had a wonderful voice. She said, "I just moved by instinct all my life. It's really true. The only picture I wanted to make, and I wasn't the type for, was 'Alice in Wonderland.'"

A. I just remembered something she had said about Dietrich.
You brought up Dietrich and Sternberg. Along with her story about Duse and acting--what one is thinking about when one is acting, she said that Dietrich always used to mystify her because she couldn't figure out what she was thinking about; what those long stares on screen were. And then she asked Sternberg and he told her he used to say to Dietrich, "Count six and look at that lamp post as if you couldn't live without it." But she was quite up front about Dietrich. She said that...She said it really had been Sternberg who had created her; that if you looked at Dietrich in the pre-Sternberg films, she was just a "galloping cow, dynamic, and so full of energy and awkward, and just dreadful." And she said it was he who saw those long stares and that bored look on her face and knew how to put it on screen, with striking poses next to a lamp-post.

Q. Kobal, with his usual brilliant insights, himself, says, in a sort of summation about Louise Brooks and the interviews that he did: "I could see that Louise never wanted much. She was a soloist who, all her life, had to spend time dealing not with what she wanted, but what other people wanted. What they gave her, what they expected from her, and with what people thought of her not showing gratitude for things she'd never asked for. She was a woman people learned to resent for not being spoiled by the things that would have spoiled them. When she was young--that attitude, that discipline, that fastidiousness, wherever she was, on the set or in the middle of a party--must have seemed like an implied criticism
of the values around her.

"Louise never was the type to go to bed with someone to get something. Love wasn't a game for her, sex was a biological function. She placed no price on it. It wasn't a reward or a surrender. She could observe it, she would talk about it, like the amusing game it was. But she didn't judge people by it. Her inviolateness must have driven many a person to frenzy, a mad desire to strangle her, to remove her. Why should this Louise be better than anyone else? And now, today, pain... It was like all these people. It wanted a sign from her--an admission, a surrender--and all it got was a grumble."

But, you have to realize, when Kobal did his final interviews with her, she was really very ill and very old, and it's... You know, when... After the collapse of her finances, even working at Saks, she couldn't support herself. And she was just lucky there were some loyal friends, and they got together and they pulled some money together and did a little sort of endowment fund so there was some income that would come to her. And I suppose she got social security, and welfare and that kind of thing. She was kept, really, by her past and the wonder of her past.

But she was a great addition to Eastman Kodak, in the sense they should have been terribly grateful to have her. You know. She certainly was the most important thing they constantly used. But it was also good for her that they
would have done it, she quit. And that's the key to the whole thing. It's interesting that Schulberg himself was the person who revealed that when she was getting up to leave he mentioned to her that he had very recently received from D.W. Pabst a bombardment of cable requests for her services in a movie called "Pandora's Box." All of which Schulberg had turned down.

Now, it's interesting. Pabst at this time was 43 years old. And he had shown an extraordinary flair for picking and molding actresses whose careers were upward bound. There was "Asta Nilsen," "Brigette Helm" and Greta Garbo, which was the first film she did outside of Sweden, headed a remarkable list, known to Schulberg. Brooks had already heard about the Pabst offer and the weekly salary of $1,000 that went with it from her lover, George Marshall, whose source was a gossipy director at MGM. She coolly told Schulberg to tell Pabst that she would soon be available. At that very hour, in Berlin, Marlene Dietrich was waiting in Pabst's office (now this is the real inside story; this was two years before "The Blue Angel" made Dietrich a star). What she crucially lacked, Pabst felt, was the innocence he wanted for Lulu. In his own words, Dietrich was too old, too obvious, too fat. Because, the truth...When you see "Pandora's Box" you realize that the thing that makes it work is that this girl is innocent. Because...If you were to give one of the Dietrich looks, one of the sexy looks, the whole thing becomes
a burlesque, and never would have achieved the status that it did. So, Pabst, of course, in his own brilliance, understood completely.

Well, the day the shooting ended on "The Canary Murder Case," Brooks raced out of Hollywood and flew to Berlin. There, obviously to start a new career, with the man who was one of the four or five leading European directors, but of whom, a few weeks earlier, she had never heard. Now, this is also typical; this, "Oh, what the hell. What have I got to lose?" And off she went, not knowing very much about him. And that's how she came to do "Pandora's Box." Of course, that's the thing that has made her the great star in the cult mind of people. Because it certainly would not have lasted, based upon the earlier Hollywood films. As beautiful as she was and as much presence as she had demonstrated, that she was an extraordinary actress. And I think that what really happened was that she was Lulu.

In doing this particular treatment of an oral biography, drawing on all sorts of sources, I find it best that I run with things that pop into my mind. And I suddenly remembered something that my mother once said to me about Brooks. She described her...They knew each other quite well...And when the Dixie Dugan cartoon was produced and it was quite obvious to everyone at that time that Julia Ross, who was the famous cover girl and Ziegfeld star, who was my mother, was the companion girl in the series, to Dixie, who was, of course,
totally based upon Louise Brooks. So, the two ladies, of course, got together.

Incidentally, I should tell you, they never got a penny on the fact that they were used in that particular way. But my mother was sort of amused by it and said... I asked her, "What was Brooks really like? What was that all about?" And she said, "Well, she was an extraordinary woman. But she was also a person..." She said, "She was very much like somebody who was a wonderful trapeze artist, but never bothered to check the equipment." And I thought of that when we were talking about her leaving for Pabst, without knowing him at all. I mean, you know, she only heard about him two weeks before. But she was willing to chuck everything in Hollywood and go off and place herself in the hands of a man she didn't know. There is an edge of self-destruction, but by the same token, you have to realize, when you think about her total life, she's a survivor. I mean, most people would have been totally defeated by the rejection of Hollywood, by the economic terror of finally becoming a sales clerk. Do you realize that when she was a sales clerk at Saks they made $42 a week?

A. It just occurred to me, when you mentioned about going off to Berlin, I thought of Ingrid Bergman running off to film "Open City" or "Stromboli?" With Rossellini. "Stromboli." Chucking it all behind, going off to film in a foreign language that she didn't know, with a director she barely knew. And yet Bergman did it for love--chucked everything for
independent substitutes for it, where survival becomes the important thing. You learn how to get through every situation within your own limitations. And that certainly is true of Brooks. She is an enormous survivor in this sense. But I think the inability to love comes from the fact that she was never loved, and thus afraid of it. Because if you offer the parent love and are pushed away, or if the role model that you identify with is one of belief that that's the best way to get along in the world—-not to expose yourself to the vulnerability of love, and opening yourself to the point where you can be punished or you can be destroyed—then you have this facade. I mean, the fact she could live, for instance, and be kept by three separate men at the same time, is a form of unbelievable deceit. And it's also the ability to perform, to act. Because no one keeps anybody unless they sense that they get something special from them. And three at one time? Quel juggler!

A. One of the people that we were able to uncover in doing research about Louise was...You were an assistant to...? Her hairdresser. An assistant to Louise's hairdresser. And, of course, who better to talk to with that famous shellaced, banged, helmet that Louise wore. Ann Browning, whom we found at the Motion Picture Country Home.

Miss Browning, one thing that struck me...I know, when Louise was asked once what her favorite movie was...Actually, what her favorite three movies were, she said they
love. Louise never would have done that for love. She did it for a lark, and because she had practically been dared, and she did it. Bergman suffered the same out that Louise did with the American audience, but that was because of a moral issue. And she came back, riding on the crest of emotional waves, into even higher heights of stardom. Whereas Brooks was box office poison. She was killed not by the American public, but by the American producer. And there she sat until she rode back into a much more esoteric cult than Bergman did. But, I'm trying to figure out the point, and you were mentioning her mother, and I'm wondering if perhaps that's not where the thrust lies.

Q. I think if you go back to the family, and recognize ...See, the mother, was one of...From an enormous number of children. Like, you know, I don't know--7-8-9-10--something like that. And obviously had to take care of all the little children. And when she got married she said to her husband, "I'm not going to do this. If you think you're marrying me and then I'm going to have children and then be placed in that position again, you're out of your mind. If we have any kids, they're on their own." And that literally was the mother's independent point of view at the time. And you realize that this is a very strong position to take about marriage and about responsibility as a wife and mother, as a woman in the society at that time. But I think if you are in a position where you are not loved in the usual sense of the word, and
were, "An American in Paris," and "Pygmalion," and her third was "The Wizard of Oz." And that really amuses me, because Louise herself was a little girl from Kansas who went off to Oz—the Oz of New York. Do you remember anything that she might have said about her life in Kansas, or coming... How she got from that backward Midwestern into the cosmopolitan city of the Ruth St. Denis dance company?

A. Well, actually, she was talking once and saying that she had a great deal of trouble learning to lose her Kansas accent and to learn proper etiquette and table manners, because she, of course, couldn't go to a school and learn it. She went and took out a book from the library, which was characteristic for her since she read so much. And it was not very helpful, to say the least. So she finally decided just to dispense with all pretense, and the next time she was in a French restaurant, asked the waiter to help her with her etiquette. So she went through this hilarious story. She was talking to us about it, and she just went down the menu. And they had a "how to bone a brook trout" night and they had a "how to fork snails night," and "how to dismember artichokes night" until they got to the bottom of the menu. And when they got to the bottom of the menu, her waiter said, "Now, you know, what is it you've found you like the best to eat?" And she said, "Well, actually, I'd just as soon as cream chipped beef." And so they sent out for creamed chipped beef and made her what she called the best chipped beef she'd ever had, in
this exclusive French restaurant.

A. Miss Browning, I love that story. She...When she got to New York, obviously she was quite young. Did she ever talk to you about her experiences in getting on. I'm not even aware...Did she stay with family, did she have family there, or was she on her own?

A. She had a friend named Barbara, and I'm not sure who this would have been, but she was apparently some society girl, a few years older than she was. And the woman actually told her that she must come and stay with her at the Algonquin Hotel, because that was where she would meet all the people and not be stuck as a seamstress or whatever for the rest of her life, in the shadows of the studio.

So, she was staying there. And, in fact, was tossed out of there because of the way she dressed. She had no sense of fashion, and she kept on trying to model her dress on this friend of hers--this socialite--and came up with these absolutely fatal outfits for her short, stocky dancer's figure. She's modeling on this tall, slender woman. And she told us about this particular pink dress that she was wearing one day, and the owner of the Algonquin, a Mr....Oh, what was his name? Case, or Casey. Something like that.

Q. Frank Case.

A. Oh, Frank Case. Thank you. Apparently he saw her come down in the elevator one day in this pink dress and asked her how old she was, and she was 17 or 18 at the time. And he said, "Well, you look 14 to me, and I'm sorry, but you're really
ruining your reputation by the hours you're keeping and the way you're dressing in my hotel, and I think that you should move out." And so she was thrown out of this hotel because of her inability to pick appropriate clothing when she first got to New York.

A. You, of course, being the hairdresser's assistant later on, do you recall how the scalloped, shellaced, helmet look came about? Did she ever mention to you who it was that devised that?

A. Well, actually, her friend Barbara apparently took her in hand after she had all these catastrophes with clothing and her look and wanted to get a little more sophisticated look, and took her to Sevelli, and he himself styled her hair. He cut the bangs short and shaped the sides in the points and shingled it in the back. And Barbara felt like that would really help her look and make her look a little bit older and more sophisticated.

A. What did she say Barbara said to her?

A. Well, Barbara used to call her "pie face," I don't know where that came from, but she told her she was beginning to look almost human, which, I guess, was a compliment from a society girl.

Q. The Barbara that Miss Browning refers to is Barbara Bennett, one of the famous Bennett sisters. There was Constance Bennett (known as Connie to movie lovers) and Joan Bennett, and Barbara. And Barbara, of course, ended up by marrying Morton
Marion was not so generous when it came to Hearst paying attention to other women. So, Louise told me that on several occasions she had to sort of run away from him while she was staying there. He would come upon her at the pool, washing her hair or reading or something, and make advances and she would make excuses and take off quickly, hoping that Marion had not noticed.

A. We talked about George Marshall and glanced upon his relationship with Miss Brooks. I'm going to overstep my bounds perhaps here, and see if I can't ask you some...If those times when you were in the dressing salon with Miss Brooks, she might have talked perhaps a little bit intimately about her relationship with Mr. Marshall. Clearly, just tell me if it's not my business. But I would love to know anything she might have said.

A. Well, the thing that stood out the most was I think she really admired him, probably more than loving him. She really was taken with his mind. She was, as I said before, an avid reader, and he was very direct, as she was, and so they liked that about one another. And he really understood her passion for books, which, she commented once, made her the best read idiot in the world. I don't know what she was referring to there, but...I don't think she had a real high concept of herself, in spite of her love for books.

She said that George had told her that it was her truthfulness that made him fond of her, because he felt that truthfulness was a form of courage, and that he felt like he
was obsessed with his own cowardice. Which never evidenced to me, but she may have understood what he meant. So he really admired her for her courage. And I really think the basis of their relationship was the similarity of their minds more than anything else.

Q. It's of course very fascinating to realize that she kept on going back to Marshall. In other words, there were many men in ehr life. And she married...You know, she married again and again. And the thing to recognize that all of her period of really missing employment was part of the Depression, and the Depression...In 1933, there were millions of people in this country who had long periods of unemployment, and so did she.

Now, her relationship to Marshall was a discordant one. In other words, they would get together and then they would break up. I have a feeling it goes back to something she said earlier, when she said that the people she found most attractive and the most interesting were those she found were not the greatest lovers. And yet, when you think that she found him most interesting--according to Miss Browning--because of his mind, it's conceivable she wasn't thrilled with her relationship to the sack with Mr. Marshall.

But, he was a would be Svengali. You know, people of power (and he was a man of enormous power) like to control and create things. And if they can control and create a person, that becomes extraordinary. Particularly if it's a person other people desire or copy.
Now, you have to realize that Louise Brooks was one of the most copied human beings that the 20th Century has produced. There were thousands of "Brookites," who were doing the same look and moving in the same way.

By 1933, she was determined to break off her relationship with George Marshall, and to establish that, she married "Deering Davis." Now, you're talking about that great fortune of Deering farm equipment, and so forth and so on. And he was a very rich young man, from Chicago. But that marriage lasted only six months. She walked out on that with, how do you say? A waning enthusiasm in the relationship. And she joined up with a Hungarian partner, a guy named Dario Borzani. She spent a year dancing in nightclubs, including the Persian Room at the Plaza. But again, the monotony of cabaret work dismayed her. She was a person who fought boredom constantly, like many very bright people. There's that terrible business of being unable to not see through the superficiality of so many of the people that you're exposed to, and so much of the world that you're exposed to. And the result is that it's hard to repeat it. After a while you become bored and disinterested. That communicates to other people, and you become unwanted.

A. Miss Browning, with regard to Mr. Marshall, and what Mr. Greene was just saying, about how she had married and she had been with many men, did she ever talk about marriage? I mean, did you ever ask her, "Miss Brooks, why aren't you married?" You know...Was she ever...
A. But a lot of it for her, it was her identity, wasn't it? All that screwed up, mixed up message of Louise Brooks vs. the man she would have to be married to. Isn't that it?

A. Oh, yes. She hated being called Mrs. Sutherland or Mrs. Davies. She was Louise Brooks and she wanted people to know that. And I suppose it was an ego thing for her; she just didn't want to be called anything but Mary Louise Brooks. And, you know, she talked about marriage. She said, well, when she gets done with her career, she'll do what every girl in the movies does: She'll find somebody rich and settle down. But it just didn't work out for her because she hated being anybody but Mary Louise Brooks.

Q. Just to go back to the way the career did its number, it's sad in a way, at the same time, it fulfills its own prophecy, if you follow her own behavior. When we left her last she was dancing with a Hungarian named Dario Brezani in nightclubs and she got bored with that and quit the act in August of 1935. And that fall, Pabst suddenly arrived in New York, and he invited her to play Helen of Troy in the film version of Goethe's "Faust," with Greta Garbo playing Gretchen. Now, that would have been an interesting thing. Her hopes, at that moment, were rather giddily soared I suspect. But the project fell through! Garbo dashed that; she just dropped out of the whole experience. And, again, she went out to Hollywood, looking for work, and Republic pictures wanted to test her for a dancing role in a musical called "Dancing Feet." She was
rejected in favor of a blonde who couldn't dance. Later, she wrote that that about did it for her as far as Hollywood was concerned. From then on it was straight downhill. And not any money to keep the wolves away from the door.

In 1936, Universal cast her as the ingenue (get the name) "Boots Boon," in "Empty Saddles," a Buck Jones western which was the last Brooks movie, and is available in the Eastman collection. She looks, in this movie, perplexed, discouraged, lacking in verve, and her coiffure was destroyed. They swept her hair back. When you think about it, the relationship of women to Westerns at that time...I mean, the star didn't kidss the woman, he kissed the horse. So, you certainly couldn't have this black helmeted lady. So they destroyed all that, of course and pulled her hair back.

It's interesting that when you look at that, with the hair back, you see very, almost disquieting lines of worry in her face. It all begins to show at that time. She had no money. And each one of these things she took was because she was totally broke. It was a year later that she got a bit part at Paramount in something called "The King of Gamblers." And then Harry Cohn, never forgetting (he certainly was "hell hath no fury like a producer scorned"), and he absolutely gave her a ticket to hell.

He promised her a screen test, and then he said he would give it to her if she would submit to the humiliation of appearing in the corps de ballet of a Grace Moore musical
entitled "When You're in Love." Now, much to Cohn's surprise, Brooks accepted the offer. The truth of the matter was, she was too broke to spurn it. She had no money, she needed money. And, of course, Cohn made sure that the demotion of an erstwhile star was publicized as widely as possible.

I tracked down one of the newspaper stories about that, and it's a shocking treatment of a fine actress and an interesting human being as trash. He gave her a perfunctory screen test, and perfunctory was the word—it was over in about two and a half minutes—and they made no effort to light her properly or do anything else. And he just simply summed it all up by saying it stunk.

Now, of course, in the world of Hollywood, that's about as close to the kiss of death as you can get, when a major producer does that. She got one more shot, which was in 1938 (this is three years later, there were bits and pieces of work that she's gotten). Republic hired her to appear with John Wayne. Now, that sounds divine except that you must remember that he started (and was a minor figure) in something called "Overland Stage Raiders." And after this low-budget Western, she made no more pictures.

A. Miss Browning, we were talking a little bit later, and I realized that you weren't working with her hairdresser at this point, but you did mention, in talking about some of her past films, she had talked about an early experience with the director William Wellman. And Miss Brooks was working with
about. But, a little careful interviewing here...She gets along very well...with Mr. Daniels...I think it's interesting...Mr. Daniels is in...When I mentioned this, he said, "I am 30."

As you know, I am 70. My feeling is that Miss Browning rather likes to talk to Mr. Daniels rather than to me. I think she feels that I'm too old for her.

I would suggest that you ask Miss Browning if Miss Brooks--as we learn more and more about her--had these terrible experiences with Schulberg and Harry Cohen, etc., but certainly there must have been good experiences. And it would be interesting to know...She must have had some awareness that there were nice people in Hollywood. Ask Miss Browning that.

A. Miss Browning, the movies...Since we're talking on the subject of Humphrey Bogart...I think his earliest picture that people relate to would be "The Petrified Forest." Now, he had done that with Leslie Howard on Broadway, and then he came out to do it in Hollywood. Is...Do you remember anything that she might have said about how he was brought out, in the studio system?

A. Well, Louise went to a dinner party with Leslie Howard once. She went with George Marshall, actually, but Leslie Howard and his wife were there. And apparently Leslie Howard was the one who made Jack Warner give Humphrey Bogart the part that he played in "The Petrified Forest." Leslie had a great admiration for Mr. Bogart's fighting his weaknesses as an actor, and trying to better himself, and I think that was his motivation
decision. My best punches fanned the air because Pabst had always slipped into some other position about the character," and she arrived in Berlin on Sunday and started the picture on the following Wednesday. And obviously Pabst had selected the first costume, leaving her nothing to do but to stand there for a final fitting.

Now, at first her reaction was to let that pass as expedient, never suspecting that it would be the same with everything else that she took off or put on, from an ermine coat to a girdle. Not only at that point was it unheard of to allow an actress no part in choosing her clothes, but, "I had also been spoiled by my directors at Paramount," she says. "I'd played a manicurist in $500 beaded evening dresses, a sales girl in $300 black satin afternoon dresses, and a school girl in $250 tailored suits."

Again, may I remind you: These sums, when you think that you're talking about the height of her career, in the late '20s, are enormous sums in terms of the cost of clothes. You could buy an outfit at Bergdorf Goodman's for $22.50.

Well, her first reaction to the attitude of Pabst and the German film makers toward costuming was that she had great, almost gross overconfidence in her rights and her own power. And she defied Pabst, with a certain amount of arrogance.

Now, Pabst chose all the costumes with a great deal of care. But in scenes that were motivated by sexual hate, he chose them as much for their tactile as for their visual
seductiveness. He wanted the actors working with Louise to feel her flesh under a dancing costume—a blouse, the skirt, a nightgown. She tells about the morning of the sequence in which, "I was to go from my bath into a love scene with Franz Lederer. I came on the set wrapped in a gorgeous negligee of painted yellow silk. Carrying the peignoir I refused to wear." Josephine, her dresser, approached Mr. Pabst to receive the lash. "Hers was the responsibility for seeing that I obeyed his orders, and he answered her excuses with a very stern rebuke. Then he turned to me. 'Louise, you must wear the peignoir, and be naked under it.'"

"Why? I hate that bathrobe," she said. "Who will know whether I'm naked under that big, woolly white bathrobe? He paused a moment and said the definitive line: "Lederer will know." And there's a very important lesson to be learned here about costuming. Because it is true: it is a language, costume, whether it's on the stage... The first thing that you see is the set, when the curtain goes up. The next thing that you see is the character, and before you hear the words, you see what they're wearing. And if that isn't correctly done, if that doesn't send a message as to who that character is—not in a totally obvious way but subliminally as well—you're in trouble.

The principle did operate... For example, Adrian, the great MGM designer, spent fortunes on real Allenccon lace for the undergarments of his stars. Because his sense was that if you are a star, and you are playing a great lady, you would wear
that kind of lace. And as soon as you put on that kind of thing, you feel the difference. We are, in our normal everyday lives, influenced by what we wear. You put almost any man into a dinner jacket, a tuxedo, and his manners suddenly appear. Things that he never uses any other time. It's quite extraordinary. He will suddenly hold the chair for the lady, open the door for the lady that he's with, say thank you and please. Clothes do have that influence. And, of course, it was, of course so fascinating that Brooks's reaction to that logical explanation—that Lederer would know that she was naked underneath the peignoir, in the scene—she was almost stunned by that. It was such a reasonable argument. And, so, that she obviously just went into the bathroom and changed into the peignoir and did exactly what Pabst wanted.

But, she didn't want to be trapped by this. She didn't want to be trapped by this position again and again, and she next objected to the train of her wedding dress being tied on like an apron. And Pabst explained that it had to be easily discarded because she could not play a long, frantic sequence tripping over her train.

Louise answered, "I don't give a damn." She tore off the train and went into an elaborate tantrum. The worst audience she ever had was Pabst. All he did was instruct the dress designer to have the pieces sewn together again and left the fitting room. It was her final defeat, as far as costuming was concerned. She actually cried; she cried real tears, which came at the end
of the picture, when he went through the trunks to select a
dress to be "aged," for Lulu's murder as a streetwalker in
the arms of Jack the Ripper, with his instinctive understand-
ing of her taste, he decided on the blouse and skirt of her
very favorite suit. She was anguished. "Why can't you buy some
cheap little dress and let me ruin that? Why does it have to
be MY dress?" To those questions, she got no answer until the
next morning when the "once lovely clothes were returned to me
in the studio dressing room. They were torn and foul with the
grease stains. Not some indifferent rags from the wardrobe
department," but her very own suit, which only last Sunday she
had worn to lunch at Avalon Hotel, the chicest hotel in Berlin.
Her skirt was hooked up, she slipped the blouse over her head,
and she went on the set feeling as hopelessly defiled as her
clothes. Here's the cue: Working in that outfit, she didn't care
what happened to her.

A. Louise Brooks, in her own writing, would talk about
her sexuality, which played an important part in her persona;
how people perceived her. Mr. Greene has spoken of the "man-
eater," which is the incorrect perception, because she was the
innocent. And yet other sexual stereotypes came out of "Pan-
dora's Box," and out of Louise's life. She wrote:

"We flatter ourselves when we assume that we have
restored the sexual integrity that was expurgated by the
Victorians. It is true that many exposes are written to shock,
to excite, to make money. But in serious books, characters
remain as baffling, as unknowable as ever. I too am unwilling to write the sexual truth that would make my life worth reading. I cannot unbuckle the Bible belt."

Q. Just as the research that's done on lesbianism has produced the fact that some of the great courtesans were lesbians, some of the great whores were lesbians, some of the great beauties that exposed their bodies in some of the great shows--the Scandals, the Vanities and, of course, the Ziegfeld Follies--were lesbians. Not that one wants to imply that the dressing room was crawling with dykes. There were ladies, however, who were great beauties and who, in turn, would have to make a decision at some point, when passes were made at them, just as they made decisions about the passes made at them by men. My mother had talked with me about the fact that in the dressing room, when she was in the Follies, there were two ladies who probably seduced more Follies girls than Mr. Ziegfeld did. I asked my mother, very directly, one day whether she had ever been seduced by a woman, and there was a great, wonderful pause, and she said, "Seduced, no." That's all she said. But... Louise Brooks, looking at a photo album, in going through it, finds a picture of Fritzi Laverne...I mean, it's so wonderful to realize that...Ziegfeld did an interesting thing. He would create names for these ladies. My mother's name was not Julia Ross, but he thought of her, in terms of her particular beauty, that she, when he saw her first, she was the ideal Juliet. She was what everybody would fantasize that Juliet would look like.
She was this extraordinarily beautiful woman. And he changed her name. Her name was Eva Cohen. And he decided that wasn't great for the marquee, and...but he changed it to Juliet. Juliet was the first name and then he thought that was pushing it, so he made it Julia, that she was...And where he got Ross from, I don't think even my mother remembers. I don't know. It was also interesting to me that he had a nickname for my mother, which was Venus. And she was called Venus by lots of people, because she was, you know, a great beauty.

But, one of the ladies was, of course, Fritzi Laverne. He chose names like that because they had...He selected the name to communicate the kind of beauty he felt they were projecting. And if you go through the history of the Ziegfeld girls, they were wonderful ladies, like Ina Claire, who unmistakably were ladies. And then there were people like my mother who had great, overwhelming beauty, which could be wonderfully sexual where the men responded to her beauty, according to Ziegfeld, when I talked with him about my mother, as though they were voyeurs. In other words, they were seeing her when they shouldn't be looking at her. Whereas, with Fritzi Laverne, who was a lesbian...I mean, it was all hanging out there and she was Miss Seductress, and they could all identify with her. Men could identify with her as somebody that they wanted. Well, of course, they didn't realize that Fritzi was a lesbian, who...And it's fascinating that Louise Brooks roomed with Fritzi Laverne. And defiantly. They did not have a lesbian relationship.
But it was a defiance on the part of Louise. She knew that everybody would assume she was a dyke if she was rooming with this totally known quantity—Miss Laverne—who was somebody who certainly fitted the picture of somebody who seduced more Follies girls than Mr. Ziegfeld ever dreamed of or fantasized about.

Interestingly enough, in talking, just as a side note, about Ziegfeld, my mother said that he played Daddy. That, for instance, he was always the loving Daddy, and that it was not... She never had to go to bed with him to get her part, he just thought she was one of his daughters.

A. Sit on his lap.

Q. Sit on his lap... He liked to be asked for advice, and he liked to arrange... He arranged her marriage to my father. That's a whole other story. We'll do the Ziegfeld story some other time.

Anyway, Louise Brooks did get the reputation of being a lesbian. I heard that long before I'd seen any of the pictures. But it's fascinating that she had... She said, "Well, I had nothing against it in principle, but I just happened to like men." And she wasn't a lesbian, but she thought it was fun to encourage the idea, you see. It was again this business of thrusting the unexpected, the unacceptable, the defiant, the irreverent, to everybody that she met. So, she supported it. She used to run around wearing men's clothes—slacks and jackets and shirts and ties. Men's hats. She loved putting on a man's hat.
And she used to hold hands with Fritzi in public, you know. And, of course, the result of that all, you would expect, was that, you know, she moved out to what she calls Yahoo City, in California, which probably is the Hollywood Hills. And she could never stop by any lesbian household, you know, and as you know there were many, without being asked to strip and join the happy group baring their operation scars in the sun. But she said, "I only loved men's bodies. What maddens me is that, because of the lesbian scenes with Alice Roberts in 'Pandora,' I shall probably go down in film history as one of the gloomy dykes."

A friend of hers once said to her, "Louise, you're not a lesbian, you're a pansy." Well. She got tired of her name at one point and she wanted to change it because there were five people called Brooks in last week's variety, and she wanted to change her name to June Caprice. Or possibly Louise Lovely.

One of my buddies in New York was Tallulah Bankhead. We used to play bridge together, that was our relationship. She loved to play bridge and she loved to play bridge with me as a partner, because I never disturbed her from talking. The way she would go on talking, talking, talking, and I never said things like, "Tallulah, it's your bid." Because I was always fascinated with what she talked about, and because most people were not aware that she was a very bright lady, and also an omnivorous reader. She read everything. But the thing that was interesting about her was that I was terribly curious to find
what Tallulah's relationship to Brooks was. And their relationship to each other was ... Because with all the talk about Tallulah's bad activities and so on and so forth, I personally found her much more business like than I found anything else. She was a person who... A good example of that is if she had a date with some fabulous guy who conceivably could put up the money for a production, she might forget the emerald ring that he gave her. She might forget to wear it that particular night. But she would not forget to bring the script of the play that she wanted him to produce. That would be, in other words... There was less of the sexual being about her than the business like person. She was in many ways very much a logical, progressed person from her uncle, who was speaker of the house, and her father, who was a great politician. I mean, she really had a very organized mind in that sense. She would organize her... My biggest objection to her was that she smoked endlessly; drove me crazy. And you couldn't stop her from doing it; it was all part of the persona. But she became her own parody, as well, of course, which was unfortunate.

I want to include, oh, a series of notes that I've made, that add to the power and the force and the position of Louise Brooks as an influence. To complete an understanding of the impact that she had, as well as the brilliance of her own mind and who she was. Let me just fiddle through my notes here and just add these things to this permanent record.

For instance, there was a book published in 1977
in Paris called "Louise Brooks: The Portrait of an Anti-Star," and it contained a full pictorial survey of her career, together with essays and critiques and poems to both her beauty and her talent. And it's interesting. She gave a copy of this to my mother, and she inscribed it to her, and she copied out, beneath her signature, the epitaph (I suppose that's the only thing to call it) that she composed for herself: "I never gave away anything without wishing I'd kept it, nor kept anything without wishing I'd given it away." And it ends. The book ends with a paragraph from her original English text. Which I think is really quite meaningful and quite perceptive.

"Over the years I suffered poverty and rejection. I came to believe that my mother had borne me for a freedom that was unattainable, a delusion. Then, I was confined to this small apartment, in this alien city of Rochester. Looking about, I saw millions of old people in my situation, wailing like lost puppies because they were alone and had no one to talk to. But they had become enslaved by habits which bound their lives, to warm bodies that talked. I was free. Although my mother had ceased to be a warm body in 1944, she had not forsaken me. She comforts me with every book I read. Once again, I am five, leaning on her shoulder, learning the words as she reads aloud. 'Alice in Wonderland.'"

I had one session, one visit only with Louise Brooks, and that was in Rochester, and it was...Oh, it was quite extraordinary. She lived in two rooms, very modest, spotless, and
austerely furnished. In the lounge area, I remember the venetian blinds, green sofa, a TV set, a formica topped table, a tiny, very tiny kitchenette alcove and flesh pink walls that were sparsely hung with paintings that were redolent of the 1920s. The other room was too small to hold more than a bed, a single bed. A built in cupboard, bursting with press clippings and other souvenirs. A chest of drawers, surmounted by a crucifix and a statue of the Virgin, and a stool piled high with books. Looking at the titles of the books, I remember that there were books and works by Prouse, Schopenauer, Ortega y Gassett, Ruskin, Edmund Wilson, Samuel Johnson. They were almost all really serious writers.

Some of the information that came out of that visit was...I asked her about what happened to her after the John Wayne movie in 1938, because she just never made a film after that. And she explained that she had sort of just hung around the coast for a couple of years after that, and was kept busy by people wanting to see her, but she discovered that the only men who really wanted to see her were men who wanted to sleep with her. And Walter Wanger warned her that if she stuck around and pursued that path she would eventually end up as a call girl. That scared her, and she left and she went to Wichita, Kansas, which is where her family had moved in about 1919. But that didn't work. The people of Wichita...Well, she felt they either resented her for having been a success, or despised her for having been a failure. And, of course, the truth of the matter was she didn't know what to do so she opened a
dance studio for young people. And they, of course, adored her because, you know, she was very dramatic and made everything come alive with her own sense of theatre. But it didn't make any money and so she, by 1943, she drifted back to New York, and she worked for about six months in radio soap operas.

The years '44 and '45 she took jobs in publicity agencies, sort of collecting items for Walter Winchell's column. And she got fired from both of the jobs. She was never designed for that kind of office routine. And she didn't have any money, so she had to move from where she was living, which was kind of a decent little hotel, to a very grubby hole in the wall at First Avenue and 59th Street. And she began to have little fantasies about ending it all with pills.

In July of 1946, she really was down to no money at all, and she took a job as a sales clerk at Saks Fifth Avenue, and they paid her $40 a week, and she was consumed at that point of having sort of a need to prove herself "an honest woman," and all that did, strangely enough, was sort of discuss her more sophisticated, amusing friends who thought she'd become a groan and a bore.

She stayed with Saks about two years and then she left, and she sat down and, as I've mentioned before, she wrote her autobiography called "Naked on my Goat," which is a quote from Goethe's "Faust." In between, I guess it was '48, and '53, I suppose the best way to describe her would be to say she was a kept woman. She had rather decent men, all of whom were quite
rich, who looked after her. All three men who were keeping her eventually got around to asking her to marry them, and she was really disturbed by this because she didn't love them and she certainly wasn't going to make that commitment. And in a strange twist of fate, she decided the only way to protect herself was to join the Catholic church; therefore, she could establish that, in the eyes of God, she was still married to Eddie Sutherland, her first husband. And so, in September of 1953, she was baptized a Catholic. By 1954 she was in really a rough state, but she was too proud to be a call girl, and there was no point in throwing herself into the East River, she said, because she could swim. And she really couldn't afford the alternative, which was sleeping pills.

But it's strange how life works. In 1955, because Henri Langlois, the exuberant ruler of the Cinemathique Francais organized in Paris a huge exhibition entitled... What was it entitled? It was called... "Sixty Years of Cinema," and dominating the entrance hall of the Musee D'Arc Moderne in Paris were two gigantic blowups, one of the French actor, Falconetti, in Carl Dreyer's 1928 classic, "Le Passione de Jean D'Arc," and the other of Louise Brooks in "Pandora's Box." That was the same year--1955--that a group of her friends from the '20s, they all got together to provide a small annuity that would keep her from outright destitution, and she was visited in her little tiny hole in the wall in Manhattan Place by James Card, who was then the curator of film at Eastman House in
Rochester. He persuaded her to come to Rochester, where so much of her best work was preserved. As a result of this suggestion, she settled there in 1956. Her recollection was that it was cheaper than New York, and "I didn't run the risk of meeting people from my past."

In 1956 she began to write articles, starting first with a sort of an extraordinarily, almost total recall on her part, an article about Pabst, for "Image," and this led to other small magazines involved with film, inviting her to offer her opinion on all sorts of subjects. All in all, she did about 20-25 really quite good articles.

Langlois came over to America to meet her and, of course, was enchanted by her. Then a year later, he did this enormous "Hommage to Louise Brooks," a festival of her movies that filled the Cinematheque in Paris, and they flew Louise to Paris, all expenses paid, and she was greeted with wild acclaim at a reception after the Cinematheque showing of "Pandora's Box." And I first saw her, as a matter of fact, in January of 1960, when she came to New York to attend a screening of the "Prix de Beaute" in the Kaufman concert hall of the YMHA at 92nd Street. And she made a hilarious speech that delighted the entire audience. The place was packed. And it's interesting, because the next day she returned to Rochester and she's never emerged from there since.

During the '60s, arthritis started to get its grip and by 1972 she had to buy a medical cane in order to move
around. And then by '77, oh, it was terrible. She really became seriously arthritic and took a terrible fall, and it was awful.

Just a few more fragments on Brooksiana: When asked whether she thought there were countries that produced particularly good lovers, Brooks said, "Englishmen are the best, and priest-ridden Irishmen are the worst."

When you sum it all up you realize that, despite all the men that were part of her life, she essentially pursued her own course and she really just flew alone. She flew solo. In a way, it's the price to be paid for such individual autonomy. And the price is, inevitably, loneliness. And her loneliness is, I think, prefigured in one of the most penetrating comments she's ever committed to print: "The great art of films does not consist in descriptive movement of face and body, but in the movements of thought and soul transmitted in the kind of intense isolation."

It seems appropriate to conclude with one point in "Lulu," her book, where she writes of her life, "And so I have remained in cool pursuit of truth and excellence, an inhumane executioner of the bogus, an abomination to all but those few people who have overcome their aversion to truth in order to free whatever is good in them."
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