The Review

Film review

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talking; as they lift the being who was the source of them onto the examining couch.

'Has he lost any weight?'

'Yeah, loads'.

As I examine him, even my non-surgical hands detect a large right-sided abdominal mass. His deep jaundice has worked its way through even his dark skin.

'He's going to have to go in,' I explain to one of his sons. And I speak with the on call team.

His sons look as though they know. It's just that look in their eyes; that vague space between wanting and avoiding eye contact. They look as though they know.

Mr Farooq leaves the room, supported by his sons, and sadly, I turn from the view of the empty waiting room, back toward my desk, as I watch them leave the building.

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I move slowly towards the wash basin, to clean my hands before attending to my home visits, as I do catching a glimpse of my self in the mirror.

It's not what you look at that matters, say the wise people, *it's what you see*.

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A DANGEROUS METHOD

Directed by David Cronenberg, Produced by Jeremy Thomas. On UK general release

David Cronenberg's *A Dangerous Method* takes for its subject the relationship between Freud and Jung in the years leading up to the First World War. Christopher Hampton's script places at the centre of its narrative the astonishing figure of Sabina Spielrein, a Russian Jew, who is the first patient on whom Jung tries the dangerous method of the talking cure. This cure is so successful (Spielrein will become both a doctor and a psychoanalyst) that the publication of the case history leads Jung to go to Vienna to meet with Freud.

At first Freud welcomes the young acolyte. Psychoanalysis desperately needed medical respectability, and Jung is impeccably qualified with a position in Bleuler's hospital. More important, for Freud, he is an Aryan in a movement that is exclusively composed of Jews. The film then juxtaposes the theoretical disagreements between Freud and Jung with the beginning and end of an affair between Spielrein and Jung. Jung becomes more and more intolerant of Freud's refusal to brook disagreement. Freud more and more horrified at the abandonment of the scientific investigation of the sexual aetiology of the neuroses for a belief in a whole range of parapsychical phenomena that lead towards the occult. The background to these theoretical discussions is the conflict between Jung's desire for sexual abandon with Spielrein and his Swiss burgher desire to enjoy the comforts provided by his rich wife. In a set of truly stellar performances (both Keira

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Knightley and Michael Fassbender produce the best performances of their careers), Viggo Mortensen's Freud stands out as completely unforgettable.

Cronenberg's direction takes us deep into the world of the first decade of the 20th century. Costume and sets combine to summon to the screen the world of European civilisation which is about to embark on the collective psychosis of what Keynes dubbed the European Civil War, the two installments of which will leave Europe in ruins and the majority of European Jewry exterminated. This future haunts this film and Freud and Jung's disagreement becomes a symptom itself of Europe's inability to prevent itself from walking like sheep to the slaughter. Oscar winning producer Jeremy Thomas adds an extraordinarily economical, but in no way simplistic, account of psychoanalysis to his brilliant account of the intellectual development of his theory of evolution in the film *Creation*. Much of British filmmaking is both parochial and limited. Thomas shows that his British cinema is still full of unlimited ambition, willing to take on the most dangerous and difficult of subjects.

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Carl Jung (Michael Fassbender) & Sigmund Freud (Viggo Mortensen) in *A Dangerous Method*.