

Germany: The Weimar Years

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'German Cinema' recalls the 1920s, Expressionism, Weimar culture, and a time when Berlin was the cultural centre of Europe. For film historians, this period is sandwiched between the pioneering work of American directors like D. W. Griffith, Ralph Ince, Cecil B. DeMille, and Maurice Tourneur in the 1910s, and the Soviet montage cinema of Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Vsevolod Pudovkin in the late 1920s. The names of Ernst Lubitsch, Robert Wiene, Paul Leni, Fritz Lang, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, and Georg Wilhelm Pabst stand, in this view, for one of the 'golden ages' of world cinema, helping-between 1918 and 1928-to make motion pictures an artistic and avantgarde medium.

Arguably, such a view of film history is no longer unchallenged, yet surprisingly many of the German films from this period are part of the canon: *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, Robert Wiene, 1919), *The Golem* (*Der Golem, wie er in die Welt karo*, Paul Wegener, 1920), *Destiny* (*Der müde Tod*, Fritz Lang, 1921), *Nosferatu* (F. W. Murnau , 1921), *Dr Mabuse* (Lang, 1922), *Waxworks* (*Das*

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Wachsfigurenkabinett, 1924), *The Last Laugh* (*Der letzte Mann*, Murnau, 1924), *Metropolis* (Lang, 1925), *Pandora's Box* (*Die Büchse der Pandora*, G. W. Pabst, 1928). Even more surprisingly, they have also entered popular movie mythology and now live on, parodied, pastiched, and recycled, in very different guises, from pulp movies to post-modern videoclips. In their time, the films were associated with German Expressionism, mainly because of their self-conscious stylization of décor, gesture, and lighting. Others regarded the same pre-eminence of stylization, fantasy, and nightmare visions as evidence of the inner torment and moral dilemmas in those for whom the films were made. Equivocation was not confined to the films: did the films reflect the political chaos of the Weimar Republic, or did the parade of tyrants, madmen, somnambulists, crazed scientists, and homunculi anticipate the horrors that were to follow between 1933 and 1945? But why not assume that the films, even in their own time, look back, cocking a snook at Romanticism and neo-Gothic? The standard works on the subject, Lotte Eisner's *The Haunted Screen* (1969) and Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947), resolutely do not consider this last possibility, but opt, as their somewhat lurid titles indicate, for seeing the films as symptoms of troubled souls.

Eisner's and Kracauer's powerful portraits left much else about the early German cinema in the shadows. In some respects, the spotlight they cast on the early and mid-1920s only deepened the darkness into which prejudice and physical destruction had already plunged the first two decades of German film history. One point to make when reassessing the earliest period is that Germany could boast, in the field of film technology, optics, and photographic instruments, of a fair share of inventors and 'pioneers': Simon Stampfer, Ottomar Anschütz, the Skladanowsky brothers, Oskar Messter, Guido Seeber, the Stollwerck and Agfa works connote innovators of international stature, but also a solid manufacturing and engineering basis. Yet Wilhelmine Germany was not a major film-producing nation. Cultural resistance as much as economic conservatism caused film production up to about 1912/13 to stagnate at a pre-industry stage. While the Skladanowsky brothers' first public presentation of their Bioskop projector in November 1895 at the Berlin Wintergarten narrowly precedes the Lumière brothers' first public demonstration of the Cinématographe, the lead in exhibition did not translate into production.

THE WILHELMINE YEARS

Of the companies that established themselves mainly in Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich, the firms of Messter, Greenbaum, Duskes, Continental-Kunstfilm, and Deutsche Mutoskop und Biograph stand out. They were often family businesses, manufacturing optical and photographic equipment, which entered into film production mainly as a way of selling cameras and projectors. Oskar Messter appears to have been interested in the scientific and military uses of the cinema as much as he was in its entertainment potential. By contrast, the strategy of Paul Davidson, the other important German producer of the 1910s, was entirely entertainment-oriented. Originally successful in the Frankfurt fashion business, Davidson built his Allgemeine Kine-matographen Gesellschaft Union Theater (later: PAGU) bottom-up, from the films to the sites and the hardware. In 1909 he opened a 1,200-seater cinema at the Berlin Alexanderplatz, and took up production, to complement his supply of films from foreign companies, notably Pathé in Paris and the Nordisk Film Kompagni

in Copenhagen. While Messter was still experimenting with his 'Tonbilder' (arias from Salome, Siegfried, Tannhäuser filmed in the studio and synchronized with sound cylinders for projection), Davidson, in 1911, took under contract one of the Nordisk's major assets, Asta Nielsen and her husband-director Urban Gad.

By the outbreak of the war, no more than 14 per cent of the total films shown in German cinemas were German-produced. The films that have survived from before 1913 reflect this haphazard growth quite accurately. For the first decade, actuality films (Berlin street scenes, military parades, naval launches, the Kaiser reviewing troops), vaudeville and trapeze acts (a boxing kangaroo, tumbling acrobats, cycle tricks), fashion shows, and erotic bathing scenes make up the bulk of the films, along with comic sketches in the Pathé manner, magic lantern or zoetrope slides transferred to film, trick films, and mother-in-law jokes.

From 1907 onwards, one begins to recognize a certain generic profile: dramas featuring children and domestic animals (Detected by her Dog, 1910; Carlchen und Carlo, 1912), social dramas centred on maid-servants, governesses, and shopgirls (*Heimgefunden*, 1912; *Madeleine*, 1912), mountain films (*Wildschützenrache* (A poacher's revenge'), 1909; *Der Alpenjäger* ('Alpine hunter'), 1910), love triangles at sea (*Der Schatten des Meeres* ('The shadow of the sea'), 1912), and marital dramas in time of war and peace (*The Two Suitors*, 1910, *Zweimal gelebt* ('Two lives'), 1911). On the whole, the titles are indicative of an ideologically conservative society, conventional in its morality, philistine in its tastes, but, above all, family-oriented. Yet the films themselves, while often ponderous and predictable, show that much care was taken over the visual mise-en-scène.

A number of films have the cinema itself as subject: *Der stellungslose Photograph* ('The unemployed photographer', 1912), *Die Filmprimadonna* ('The film star'), and *Zapata's Bande* ('Zapata's gang') (both with Asta Nielsen, 1913). They are almost the only suggestion that German pre-war films, too, could communicate some of the modernity, the zany energy, and raffish bohemianism to which the cinema



A scene from Leni's "Expressionist" *Waxworks* (*Das Wachsfigurenkabinett*, 1924)

owed its mass appeal and which was so typical of French, American, and especially Danish films of the period.

As to German film stars, there is no doubt that the first one was Kaiser Wilhelm II himself, always shown strutting with his generals and admirals. Asta Nielsen was soon rivalled by Henny Porten (a discovery of Messter) as Germany's major female star of the pre-war period, though she remained much less well known internationally. Messter, who had begun to make longer films by 1909, proved adept at taking actors from stage and vaudeville under contract, giving many later stars their *début*, among them Emil Jannings, Lil Dagover, and Conrad Veidt.

The year 1913 was a turning-point for the German cinema, as it was in other film-making countries. By then, the exhibition situation had stabilized around the three to five-reel feature film, premiered in luxury cinemas. German film production increased, developing a number of genres that were to become typical. Outstanding among them were suspense dramas and detective films, some of them (*Die Landstrasse* ('The highway'), *Hands of Justice*, *Der Mann im Keller* ('The man in the cellar')), showing a quantum increase in cinematic sophistication, with remarkable use of outdoor locations and period interiors. Lighting, camera movement, and editing began to be deployed as part of a recognizable stylistic system, which compares interestingly with the handling of space and narration in American or French films of the time.

Adapted from Danish and French serials, the crime films often featured a star detective with an Anglicized name, such as Stuart Webbs, Joe Deebs, or Harry Higgs. As private detective and master criminal try to out-wit each other, their cars and taxi-rides, railway pursuits and telephone calls convey the drive and energy of the new medium. The films cast a fascinated eye on modern technology and urban locations, on the mechanics of crime and detection, while the protagonists revel in disguise and transformation, motivating spectacular stunts, especially in the frequent chase scenes.

A distinct vitality and wit exudes from the cinema of Franz Hofer (*Die schwarze Kugel* ('The black ball')) and Joseph Delmont, whose feeling for the excitement of the metropolitan scene makes him depict Berlin, in *Das Recht auf Dasein* ('The right to live'), gripped by a construction and housing boom. Henny Porten and Asta Nielsen were no match in popularity for the first matinee idol superstar, Harry Piel, specializing in daring adventure and chase films. An exception to the rule that Germans have no film humour is the comedies of Franz Hofer (*Hurrah! Einquartierung* and *Das rosa Pantöffelchen*), which prove worthy antecedents of Ernst Lubitsch's farces from the mid-1910s, with their tomboyish, headstrong heroines.

These popular genres and stars have often been neglected in accounts of the period, because of the more commented-on aspect of 1913, namely, the emergence of the so-called *Autorenfilm* ('author's film'). Initiated under the impact of the French *film d'art*, the aim was to profit from the established reputation of published or performed authors, and to persuade the leading names of Berlin's theatres to lend cultural prestige to the screen.

Not only were popular but now forgotten writers such as Paul Lindau and Heinrich Lautensack signed on, but also Gerhard Hauptmann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Arthur Schnitzler. Because of an acrimonious union dispute in 1911, actors had been contractually forbidden to appear in films, but when in 1913 Albert Bassermann agreed to star in Max Mack's adaptation of the Lindau play *Der Andere* ('The other one', 1913), others followed suit. Davidson took under contract the star-maker *par excellence*, Max Reinhardt, who directed two films, *Eine venezianische Nacht* ('A Venetian night', 1913) and *Insel der Seligen* ('The island of the blessed', 1913), full of mythological and fairy-tale motifs which were liberally borrowed from Shakespeare's comedies and German *fin-de-siècle* plays.

The most militant advocate of the author's film was the cinema owner and novelist Hanns Heinz Ewers, who with Paul Wegener and Stellan Rye made *The Student of Prague* (*Der Student von Prag*, 1913), which, because of the motif of the double, has often been compared to *Der Andere*. The Danish influence is no accident, since Nordisk was one of the prime forces behind the *Autorenfilm*, producing two of the genre's most costly ventures, *Atlantis* (1913, based on a Hauptmann novel) and *Das fremde Mädchen* ('The foreign girl', a 'dream play' specially written by Hoffmannsthal). Another firm specializing in literary adaptations was Heinrich Bolten-Baeckers's BB-Literaria, founded as a joint venture with Pathé, in order to exploit Pathé literary rights in Germany. Such moves underscore the international character of the German cinema in 1913, with actors and directors from Denmark (Viggo Larsen, Valdemar Psilander) undoubtedly exercising the strongest influence on domestic production, while France, Britain, and America supplied the majority of non-German films shown in the cinemas.

GERMAN CINEMA AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

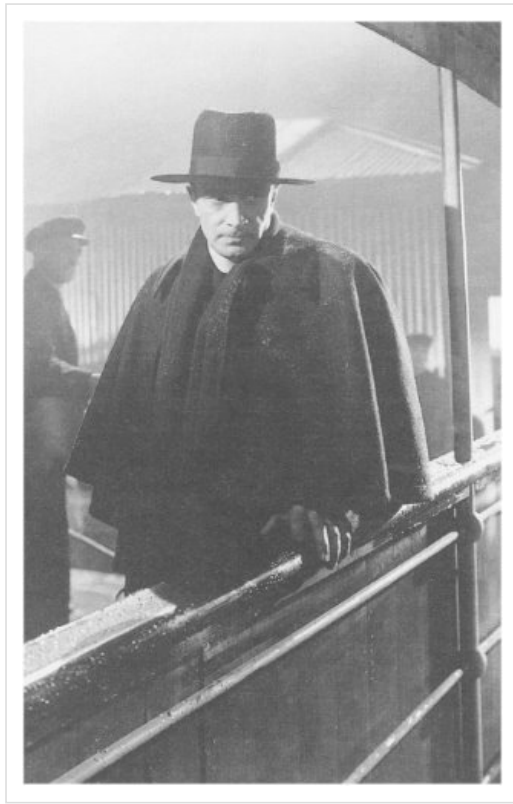
The upturn and consolidation of German film production was thus already well under way when war broke out, and the immediate effect of hostilities on the film business was mixed. With an import embargo in force, some firms, such as PAGU, suffered substantial losses before they were able to organize new sources of film supply. But there were also winners for whom the confiscation of property from the foreign firms operating in Germany, and the soaring demands for films, signalled a unique opportunity. A new generation of producers and producer-directors made their breakthrough, after the government had lifted the initial ban on cinema-going. Erich Pommer, a young sales representative for the French firms Gaumont and Éclair, seized his chance and formed Decla ('Deutsche Éclair'), which was to become the key producer of German quality cinema after the war. Among the new firms which flourished was that of producer-director Joe May, soon the market leader in detective serials and highly successful with his 'Mia May films', melodramas featuring his wife. In his case, too, it was the war years which laid the foundation of his post-war fame as Germany's chief producer of epics and spectacles. Similarly, the director-producer Richard Oswald, one of the most competent professional film-makers of the 1910s, was later epitomized as 'war profiteer', when after the abolition of censorship in 1918 he spotted a niche for his highly successful 'enlightenment films' (moralizing sex melodramas). To give an indication of the scale on which the German film industry expanded during the war: in 1914, 25 German firms competed with 47 foreign ones; by 1918, the relation was 130 to 10.

The quality of German films from the war years has rarely been assessed impartially. Some featuring the war, and often dismissed as patriotic propaganda films or 'fieldgrey kitsch', turn out to be major surprises. Thus, the films of Franz Hofer (e.g. *Weihnachtsglocken* ('Christmas bells'), 1914) are stylistically sophisticated, projecting a feel both distinctively German and free of jingoism, as they plead for self-sacrifice and peace between the social classes. An unusual blend of melodrama and lyricism can be found in *Wenn Völker streiten* ('When nations quarrel', 1914) as well as several other films which take the war as subject (such as Alfred Halm's *Ihr Unteroffizier* ('Their non-commissioned officer', 1915)). Among the melodramas, the most extraordinary is *Das Tagebuch des Dr. Hart* ('The diary of Dr Hart', 1916), directed by Paul Leni and funded by BUFA, the government-owned film propaganda unit. The story of two families with split political loyalties and crossed love interests, *Das Tagebuch* is an anti-tsarist propaganda film in the guise of championing Polish nationalism. But it also makes a strongly pacifist statement through the realistic battle scenes, the depiction of the wounded in field hospitals, and images of rural devastation.

However, films on war subjects were the exception. Serials featuring male stars made up the bulk of the production, with the then-famous actors Ernst Reicher, Alwin Neuss, and Harry Lambert-Paulsen enjoying a following that allowed them single-handedly to keep their respective companies in profit. Female serial queens like Fern Andra and Hanni Weisse were also prolific, while directors like Joe May, Richard Oswald, Max Mack, and Otto Rippert would make an average of six to eight films a year, moving effortlessly between popular films (*Sensationsfilme*) and art films (*Autorenfilme*). Rippert's six-part *Homunculus*, starring yet another Danish import, Olaf Fons, was the super-hit of 1916, and Oswald's *Hoffmanns Erzählungen* ('Hoffmann's tales'), an adaptation of three E. T. A. Hoffmann stories, used outdoor locations most spectacularly. Both films have been seen as forerunners of that prototypical art cinema genre, the fantastic or 'expressionist' film, but

Conrad Veidt (1893-1943)

Conrad Veidt started his career in 1913, at Max Reinhardt's acting school. After a short period of employment in the First World War as a member of different front theatre ensembles, he returned to the Deutsches Theater Berlin, and then, in 1916, began working in the movies. In 1919, in the first homosexual role on screen in *Anders als die Andern*, and above all as the somnambulist Cesare in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, he created an expressionist acting style that made him an international star. In the early 1920s he starred in several of Richard Oswald's *Sittenfilme* dealing with sexual enlightenment, and went on to work with many of the best-known directors of the time. Veidt moved to the USA in the second half of the decade, but returned to Germany on the introduction of sound, starring in some of the early Ufa sound successes and their English versions. In 1932 Veidt started work in Britain, shooting a pro-Semitic version of *Jew Suss* (1934) and the more equivocal *Wandering Jew* (1933), after which he became *persona non grata* in Nazi Germany. With his Jewish wife Lily Preger he remained in London, gaining British citizenship in 1939. He continued to work, incarnating Prussian officers for Victor Saville and Michael Powell. In 1940 he moved to Hollywood, where he was cast mainly as a Nazi - most famously, Major Strasser in *Casablanca* (1942). From figures reach beyond the scope of the familiar scoundrel cliché. His characters are burdened with the knowledge that they are doomed, and so have an introverted and stoic edge, accepting their fate and never compromising in order to save their own lives. They always remain true to their mission and often border on the fanatical in their sense of duty and singleness of vision. However, Veidt's characters are also enveloped in an aura of melancholy which is made distinguished by their good manners and cosmopolitan elegance. Veidt's face reveals much of the inner life of his characters. The play of muscles beneath the taut skin, the lips pressed together, a vein on his temple visibly protruding, nostrils flaring in concentration and self-discipline. These physical aspects characterize the artists, sovereigns, and strangers of the German silent films, as well as the Prussian officers of the British and Hollywood periods. The intensity of Veidt's facial expressions is supported by the modulation of his voice and his clear articulation. His tongue and his slightly irregular teeth become visible when he speaks, details which allow his words to flow carefully seasoned from his wide mouth - in contrast to the slang-like mutterings of Humphrey Bogart who played opposite him in two US productions of the 1940s. Veidt's German accent is a failing which he turns into a strength; it becomes the means of structuring the flow of speech. The voice, which can take on every nuance from



Conrad Veidt as the German Lieutenant Hart in Michael Powell's *The Spy in Black* (1939)

an ingratiating whisper to a barking command, is surprising in its abrupt changes in tone. Once heard, it is easy to imagine the voices of his silent film characters. Veidt's late film roles reflect back on the early silent ones, enriching them retrospectively with a sound-track. **DANIELA SANNWALDSELECT**

FILMOGRAPHY (with directors) *Der Weg des Todes* (Robert Reinert, 1916-17); *Anders als die Andern* (Richard Oswald, 1918-19); *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1919-20); *Das indische Grabmal* (Joe May, 1921); *Die Brüder Schellenberg* (Karl Grune, 1925); *Der Student von Prag* (Henrik Galeen, 1926); *The Man who Laughs* (USA, Paul Leni, 1927); *Die letzte Kompagnie* (Kurt Bernhardt, 1929); *Der Kongress tanzt* (Erik Charell, 1931); *Jew Süss* (Lothar Mendes, 1934); *The Spy in Black* (Michael Powell, 1939); *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942); *Above Suspicion* (Richard Thorpe, 1943) **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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they belong more properly to the multi-episode *Sensationsfilme*, not so different from Joe May's *Veritas vincit* (1916), which was Italian-inspired, and later parodied by Ernst Lubitsch, who himself acted in and directed about two dozen comedies, before he had his first international success with *Madame Dubarty* in 1919.

To find the origins of the fantastic film, one has to return to the *Autorenfilm*, whose outstanding figure was neither Hans Heinz Ewers nor Stellan Rye, but Paul Wegener. A celebrated Max Reinhardt actor before he came to make films, between 1913 and 1918 Wegener created the genre of the Gothic-Romantic fairy-tale film. After *The Student of Prague* he acted in and co-directed *The Golem* (1920), based on a Jewish legend and the prototype of all monster/Frankenstein/creature features. There followed Peter Schlemihl, Riibezahl's Wedding, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, and several other films exploiting the rich vein of German Romantic legend and fairy-tales.

Wegener's work in the 1910s is crucial for at least two reasons: he was attracted to fantastic subjects because they allowed him to explore different cinematic techniques, such as trick photography, superimposition, special effects in the manner of the French detective *Zigomar* series, but with a sinister rather than comic motivation. For this, he worked closely with one of the early German cinema's most creative cameramen, Guido Seeber, himself a somewhat underrated pioneer whose many publications about the art of cinematography, special effects, and lighting are a veritable source-book for understanding the German style of the 1920s. But Wegener's fairy-tale films also promoted the ingenious compromise which the *Autorenfilm* wanted to strike between countering the immense hostility shown towards the cinema by the educated middle class (manifested in the so-called 'Kino Debatte') and exploiting what was unique about the cinema, its popularity.

The prevalence of the fantastic in the German cinema may thus have a simpler explanation than that given by either Lotte Eisner or Siegfried Kracauer, who enlist it as proof of the nature of the German soul. Reviving gothic motifs and the romantic *Kunstmärchen*, the fantastic film achieved a double aim: it militated for the cinema's aesthetic legitimacy by borrowing from middlebrow *Wilhelmine* 'culture', but it also broke with the international tendency of early cinema, by offering nationally identifiable German films. Up until the *Autorenfilm*, film subjects and genres were quasi-universal and international, with very little fundamental difference from country to country: film-makers were either inspired by other popular entertainments, or they copied the successful film subjects of their foreign rivals and domestic competitors. With the *Autorenfilm*, the notion of 'national cinema' became construed in analogy to 'national literature', as well as a certain definition of the popular, in which the rural-*völkisch* and the national-romantic played an important role.

The Wegener tradition thus set a pattern which was to repeat itself throughout the 1920s: conservative, nostalgic, and national themes contrasting sharply with the experimental and avant-garde outlook film-makers had with regard to advancing the medium's technical possibilities. Seeking to define a national cinema by blending a high-culture concept of national literature with a popular pseudo-folk culture, the Wegener tradition tried to take the wind out of the establishment's critical sails. It is the combination of both these objectives in the fantastic film that makes it such a mainstay of the German cinema for at least a decade (from 1913 until about 1923), suggesting that the celebrated 'expressionist film' is the tail end of this truce between high-

brow culture and a lowbrow medium, rather than a new departure. What breathed new life into the vogue was, of course, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, mainly because of its extraordinary reception in France (and subsequently in the United States), which in turn made producers and directors self-consciously look for motifs that the export market would recognize as German.

The conjunction of a boom in demand and a war economy had, by the end of the war, led to an unsustainable number of small, undercapitalized production firms competing with each other, some of which had tried to gain an advantage via mergers or takeovers. The first such association of small producers was the Deutsche Lichtbild A.G. (Deulig), formed in 1916, backed by heavy industry interests in the Ruhr, and headed by Alfred Hugenberg, then a director of Krupp, and also owner of a newspaper and publishing empire. One of Hugenberg's chief lieutenants, Ludwig Klitzsch, saw the advantage of diversifying into a potentially profitable medium. He also had a veritable mission to use the cinema as a promotional tool for both commerce and lobby politics. Klitzsch occupied a leading function in the German Colonial League, one of the two nationally organized initiatives--the other being the German Navy League -- which had, from about 1907 onwards, relied heavily on the cinematograph in order to promote its aims. The Navy League especially provoked the anger of cinema exhibitors, since it provided unfair competition by getting free advertising for its shows in the local press, and captive audiences from school officials or local army commandants.

UFA, DECLA, AND THE WEIMAR CINEMA

The Deulig initiative led to a counter-offensive by a consortium of firms from the electrical and chemical industries, headed by the Deutsche Bank. They were able to persuade military circles to use the government-owned film propaganda unit, the Bild und Film Amt (BUFA), to front a large-scale merger operation. Under considerable

secrecy, the Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft (Ufa) was founded in December 1917, combining the Messter GmbH, PAGU, Nordisk, along with a handful of smaller firms. The Reich provided funds to buy out some of the owners, while others were offered shares in the new company, with Paul Davidson becoming the new firm's first head of production. The establishment of a horizontally and vertically integrated company of this size meant not only that Deulig was dwarfed, but that a great many other middle-size companies became increasingly dependent on Ufa as Germany's chief domestic exhibitor and export distributor.

Neither the strategy of such a merger, nor the use of a special interest group for the purposes of creating a film propaganda instrument, were the invention of Ufa's backers. Both obeyed a certain commercial logic, and both belonged to the political culture of Wilhelmine society, making Ufa an expression not so much of the war, as of a new way of thinking about public opinion and the media in general. By the time Ufa became operational, however, Germany had been defeated, and the new conglomerate's goal was to dominate the domestic as well as the European film market. Its chief assets were in real estate (extensive studio capacity, luxury cinemas all over Germany, laboratories and prime office space in Berlin), while owning Messter brought Ufa horizontal diversification into film



Louise Brooks with Kurt Gerron in G. W. Pabst's *Diary of a Lost Girl* (*Das Tagebuch einer Verlorenen*, 1929)

equipment, processing, and other cinema-related service industries, and the Nordisk stake both extended the exhibition basis already present from PAGU and gave Ufa access to a world-wide export network.

Production at first continued under the brand names of the merged firms: PAGU, Messter, Joe May Film, Gloria, BB-Film, some using the new purpose-built studios in Babelsberg, soon to become the heart of Ufa and the German film industry. The PAGU team around Davidson and Lubitsch rose to international fame

with a series of historical spectacles and costume dramas, often based on operettas (e.g. *Madame Dubarry*, 1919). Specializing in exotic *Großfilme* (*Das indische Grabmal* ('*The Indian Tomb*'), 1920), Joe May's multi-episode serials like *Die Herrin der Welt* ('The mistress of the world') proved particularly popular to Germany's war-exhausted spectators, not least because each episode featured a different continent, with the heroine travelling from China to Africa, from India to the United States.

Among the firms which initially did not form part of the Ufa conglomerate, the most important was Decla, headed by Erich Pommer. Decla's first major films after the war were *Die Spinnen* ('The spiders', 1919), an exotic detective serial written and directed by Fritz Lang, and *Die Pest in Florenz* ('The plague in Florence', 1919), a historical adventure directed by Rippert and scripted by Lang.

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Together with *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, directed by Robert Wiene and written by Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz, these three films made up a production programme which defined the course that the German cinema was to take in the early 1920s. Popular serials, with exotic locations and improbable adventures, historical spectaculars, and the 'stylized' (or 'expressionist') film were the backbone of a concept of product differentiation, carried by such directors as Lang and Wiene, Ludwig Berger and F. W. Murnau, Carl Mayer, Carl Froelich, and Arthur von Gerlach.

Given the decisive role of *Caligari* in typecasting the German cinema, it is remarkable how unrepresentative it is of the films made during the years of the Weimar Republic. Its explicitly 'expressionist' décor remained almost unique, and the few German films that were able to repeat its international commercial success were each very different: *Madame Dubarry*, *Variete* (1925), *The Last Laugh*, *Metropolis*. Yet in one respect *Caligari* does illustrate a common pattern for the period. For in so far as one production strand, strongly though not exclusively identified with Pommer and the Decla-Bioskop label, has an identity as an 'art cinema', its films have a remarkably similar narrative structure. The 'lack' which, according to narratologists, drives all stories, centres in the Weimar cinema almost invariably on incomplete families, jealousies, overpowering father figures, absent mothers, and often is not remedied by an attainable or desired object choice. If one takes a dozen or so of the films still remembered, one is struck by their explicitly Oedipal scenarios, by the recurring rivalry between fathers and sons, by jealousy between friends, brothers, or companions. Rebellion, as Kracauer has already pointed out, is followed by submission to the law of the fathers, but in such a way that the rebels are haunted by their shadow, their double, their phantom selves. This cluster of motifs can be found in Fritz Lang's *Destiny* and *Metropolis*, in Arthur Robison's *Schatten* ('Shadows', 1923) and *Manon Lescaut* (1926), in E. A. Dupont's *Das alte Gesetz* ('The old law', 1923) and *Variete* (1925), in Paul Leni's *Waxworks* (1924) and *Hintertreppe* ('Backstairs', 1921), Lupu Pick's *Scherben* ('Fragments', 1921) and *Sylvester* (1923), Murnau's *The Last Laugh* and *Phantom*, in Karl Grune's *Die Strasse* ('The road', 1923), and Robert Wiene's *Orlacs Hände* ('The hands of Orlac', 1925).

These obliquely symbolic conflicts correspond to indirect forms of narration via flashbacks, framing devices, and nested narratives, as in *Caligari*, *Destiny* (1921), *Variete*, *Nosferatu*, *Zur Chronik von Grieshuus* ('The chronicle of Grieshuus', 1925), and *Phantom*. This often makes the films' temporal structure difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct, changing by that very fact the viewer's understanding of character and motivation. At the same time, the editing often obscures rather than expresses continuity and causal links between segments or even between shots. Hence the impression of interiority, of the uncanny and the mysterious, since so much of the action and the protagonists' motivation has to be guessed, presumed, or otherwise inferred.

For many of the stories of Weimar cinema one can identify sources and intertexts from other media. Besides the folk-tales and legends already mentioned in connection with Wegener -- to which one could add Lang's *Destiny* and *The Nibelungen* (1923), Ludwig Berger's *Der verlorene Schuh* ('The lost shoe', 1923), and Leni Riefenstahl's *Das blaue Licht* ('The blue light', 1932) -- the sources are serialized novels from newspapers (*Dr Mabuse*, *Schloss Vogelöd*, *Phantom*), middlebrow entertainment literature (*Der Gang in die Nacht* ('The walk in the night'), *Variete*) and adaptations of authors identified with Germany's national literature

(Goethe, Gerhard Hauptmann, Theodor Storm). These cross-media influences are indicative of the vertical links already at that time existing between film production and the publishing industries, suggesting that choice was determined by economic factors, exploiting the popularity and notoriety of the material. Yet they also continue the middlebrow, consensus-fostering, canon-forming notion of a national cinema, borrowing from literature and a common stock of cultural references.

A particularly striking feature is that among the films most often cited as symptomatic for the inner state of Germany, a surprising number were written by just two script-writers: Carl Mayer and Thea von Harbou. With regard to genre and story material, it is almost entirely their films that define the 'identity' of Weimar cinema, in particular for the period up to 1925: Mayer's *Kammerspiel* films (*Genuine*, *Hintertreppe*, *Scherben*, *Sylvester*, *The Last Laugh*, *Tartüff*, *Vanina*), and Thea von Harbou's racy adaptations of classics, best-sellers, and national epics (all of Fritz Lang's and three Murnau films, as well as ten by other directors).

The inordinate influence of a few individuals indicates the existence of a fairly close-knit creative community, with the same names turning up repeatedly among the directors, the set designers, the producers, the cameramen, and script-writers. Barely two dozen people seem to have made up the core of the German film establishment of the early 1920s. Largely formed around Ufa and a few other Berlin-based production companies, the groups can be traced directly to the formation of producer-director units around Joe May, Richard Oswald, Fritz Lang, Friedrich W. Murnau, and the PAGU-Davidson group.

This focuses attention once more on Ufa, and Erich Pommer, who, after taking over as Head of Production, seemed unwilling to impose the kind of central-producer system practised by that time in Hollywood. Pommer's production concept had two salient features. With his background in distribution (Gaumont, Éclair) and export

(Decla), Pommer -- like Davidson -- conceived of production as driven by exhibition and export. He recognized the importance that export had for the domestic market itself, as shown in his efforts as deputy director of the Exportverband der deutschen Filmindustrie, founded in May 1920, to put pressure on 'the internal organisation of the market, if necessary by sidestepping the people who currently feel themselves to be in charge of the German film business' ([Jacobsen 1989](#)).

Madame Dubarry in the USA and Caligari in Europe were the two export successes which broke the international boycott of German films. On their basis, Pommer developed his concept of product differentiation, trying to service two markets: the international mass audiences, firmly in the hands of Hollywood, and the international art-cinema outlets, where what he called the 'stylized film' generated the prestige which became linked to the German cinema. Yet the initial export successes were greatly facilitated by hyperinflation, since depreciation automatically amortized a film's production cost: in 1921, for instance, the sale of a feature film to a single market like Switzerland earned enough hard currency to finance an entire new production. But with the stabilization of the Mark in 1923, this trading advantage disappeared for German production, and Pommer's twin strategy became increasingly precarious.

In response Pommer tried to establish a common European film market dominated by Germany and Ufa. He entered into a number of distribution and co-production agreements under the banner 'Film Europe', demonstrating his awareness that, despite its size and concentration, Ufa on its own was in no position to brave Hollywood even in Europe, not to mention penetrating the US market. Despite its ultimate failure, the Film Europe initiatives laid the groundwork for the very extensive contacts that were to exist throughout the late 1920s and lasting well into the 1940s, between the German and French and British film-making communities.

Until 1926, when he left for the United States, Pommer's original production system at Ufa remained the directorunit system, giving his teams, most of which dated from the Decla-Bioskop period, great creative freedom. The benefits of this policy are well known: they made up the grandeur of the so-called Ufa style, with scope for technical and stylistic experimentation and improvisation at almost every stage of a project. This led to heavy reliance on studio-work, which Ufa's admirers thought 'atmospheric', and others merely 'claustrophobic'.

There were drawbacks, too: often it seemed that, with perfectionism and the craft ethos permeating all departments, time and money were no object. Furthermore, the refusal to divide and control the labour processes of film production as was standard practice in Hollywood often came into conflict with a production policy geared towards exhibition schedules. Given the German film industry's chronic over-production, few of Ufa's more expensive films could be fully exploited, making Pommer's production concept deficit-prone, and, as illustrated by the loan and distribution agreement concluded with US majors (the Parufamet Agreement), ultimately fatal to Ufa's fortunes as a manufacturing company run on industrial lines with commercial imperatives. The aesthetic and stylistic results of Pommer's concept, on the other hand, were more lasting: revolutionary techniques in special effects (*Destiny*, *Faust*, *Metropolis*), new styles of lighting (*Phantom*, the

Kammerspiel films), camera movement and camera angles (*Variete* and *The Last Laugh*), and set design fully integrated into style and theme (as in *Die Nibelungen*). These achievements gave Ufa film technicians and directors their high professional reputation, making the German cinema of the 1920s, paradoxically, both a financial disaster and a film-makers' Mecca (Hitchcock's admiration for Murnau, Buñuel's for Lang, not to mention the influences on Joseph von Sternberg, Rouben Mamoulian, Orson Welles, and on Hollywood film noir of the 1940s).

Yet fending off American competition was not the only front on which the German cinema did battle in the 1920s, and, while it dominated exhibition, Ufa did not make up much more than 18 per cent of the national production. The smaller firms not distributing via Ufa, such as Emelka, Deulig, Südfilm, Terra, and Nero, tried to maintain their own exhibition network by entering into agreements with American and British firms, thus further splitting the German market, to the ultimate advantage of Hollywood.

As a capitalist conglomerate, Ufa was the target of critics on the left, foremost among them writers from the liberal and social-democratic press, whose cultural distrust of the cinema was hardly less pronounced than that of their conservative colleagues, but for whom Ufa was clearly a tool in the hands of the nationalist right. The *feuilleton* critics also showed a somewhat contradictory attitude to the popular: denouncing 'artistic' films as 'Kitsch', they despised popular or genre films as 'Schund', thus operating a concept of film art where in the mid-1920s only Chaplin and in the late 1920s only the Soviet cinema could pass muster.

The predominantly critical attitude of the intelligentsia towards both the nation's art cinema and commercial cinema led to another paradox: discussions about the cinema, its cultural function, and aesthetic specificity as an art form were conducted at a high level of intellectual and philosophical sophistication, giving rise to theoreticians and critics of distinction: among them Béla Balázs, Rudolf Arnheim, and Siegfried Kracauer. Even daily journalism produced outstanding essays by Willy Haas, Hans Siemsen, Herbert Jhering, Kurt Tucholsky, and Hans Feld.

Erich Pommer (1889-1966)

Erich Pommer was the most important person in the German and European film industries of the 1920s and 1930s. He worked in Berlin, Hollywood, Paris, and London - discovering talents, and forming technical and artistic teams which created some of the most important films of Weimar cinema. He also introduced Hollywood production systems to the European film industry, and was responsible for attempts to rebuild the West German film after the Second World War. Pommer entered the film industry in 1907. By 1913 he had become general representative of the French *Éclair* company for central Europe. When war broke out, *Éclair* was put under forced administration by the German government. To rescue his business interests Pommer founded Decla (derived from 'Deutsche Eclair'). While Pommer served in the Prussian army, the new company, managed in Berlin by his wife Gertrud and his brother Albert, successfully produced comedies and melodramas for the booming German movie business. After Pommer's return, the films became more artistically ambitious. At the end of 1919 a mixture of commercial thrift, artistic daring, simple décor, and clever advertising strategy resulted in the creation of a film legend: *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (1919). In March 1920 Decla merged with Deutsche-Bioscop. Pommer concentrated his activities on export - a crucial aspect of film production in a period of economic crisis and booming inflation. A year later the company was taken over by Ufa but continued to produce under the brand name 'Decla-Bioscop'. In 1923 he became head of Ufa's three production companies at the studios in Neubabelsberg. There he tried to realize his vision of creative production, combining art and business to create a total art form. Acting as executive producer, he initiated big prestige productions aimed at the international market. Directors F. W. Murnau, Fritz Lang, Ludwig Berger, Arthur Robison, and E. A. Dupont, writers Carl Mayer, Thea von Harbou, and Robert Liebmann, cinematographers Karl Freund, Carl Hoffmann, Fritz Arno Wagner, and Günther Rittau, art directors Robert Herlth and Walter Röhrig, Otto Hunte, and Erich Kettelhut formed the reservoir of manpower from which Pommer formed lasting artistic teams. They created film classics such as *Destiny (Der müde Tod, 1921)*, *Dr. Mabuse (1922)*, *Phantom (1922)*, *Die Nibelungen (1924)*, *Die Finanzen des Grossherzogs (1923)*, *The Last Laugh (Der letzte Mann, 1924)*, *Tartüff (1925)*, *Variete (1925)*, *Metropolis (1925)*, and *Manon Lescaut (1926)*. Employing foreign talent, such as Carl Theodor Dreyer, Robert Dinesen, Benjamin Christensen, and Holger-Madsen from Denmark, and Herbert Wilcox, Alfred Hitchcock, and Graham Cutts Great Britain, Pommer tried to strengthen international co-operation in what he called 'Film Europe' - a European force working against the American domination of the world film market. Pommer's way of allowing his production teams great creative freedom to perform their artistic and technical experiments led to over-extended budgets and contributed to Ufa's growing financial crisis. When Pommer left Ufa in January 1926, Lang's *Metropolis* was in its sixth month of production and would take another year to be ready for release. Pommer went to Hollywood, where he produced two films for Paramount with former Ufa star Pola Negri. But he had problems adapting to the Hollywood system, and argued with the studio bosses. In 1928 Ufa's new studio head Ludwig Klitzsch lured Pommer back to Babelsberg, where his production group was given top priority to produce sound films. Combining his European and American experience, he hired the Hollywood director Josef von Sternberg to direct Emil Jannings in *The Blue Angel (Der blaue Engel, 1930)*: an international film for the world market. Pommer employed new talents such as the brothers Robert and Kurt Siodmak, and Billie (later Billy) Wilder. He pioneered the genre of film operetta with films like Erik Charell's *The Congress Dances (Der Kongress tanzt, 1931)*. When the Nazis took power in 1933 and Ufa ousted most of its Jewish employees, Pommer emigrated to Paris, where he set up a European production facility for Fox, for which he produced two films - Max Ophüls's *On a volé un homme (1933)* and Fritz Lang's *Liliom (1934)*. After a brief period in Hollywood he moved to London to work with Korda. In 1937 he founded Mayflower Pictures with actor Charles Laughton, whom he directed in *Vessel of Wrath (1938)*. Hitchcock's *Jamaica Inn (1939)* was their last production before the Second World War broke out and

Pommer went to Hollywood for the third time. He produced Dorothy Arzner's *Dance, Girl, Dance* for RKO but his studio contract was cancelled following a heart attack. In 1946 Pommer (an American citizen since 1944) returned to Germany as Film Production Control Officer. His tasks were to organize the re-establishment of a German film industry and the rebuilding of destroyed studios, and to supervise the denazification of film-makers. But Pommer found his position difficult, caught between the interests of the American industry and his desire to reconstruct an independent German cinema. In 1949 his duties on behalf of the Allies ended. He stayed in Munich, working with old colleagues from Ufa such as Hans Albers, and new talents such as Hildegard Knef. He produced a few films until the failure of the anti-war picture *Kinder, Mütter und ein General* (1955) led to the collapse of his Intercontinental-Film. In 1956 Pommer, whose health was declining, retired to California, where he died in 1966.

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Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (1888-1931)

One of the most gifted visual artists of the silent cinema, F. W. Murnau made twenty-one films between 1919 and 1931, first in Berlin, later in Hollywood, and finally in the South Seas. He died prematurely in a car accident in California at the age of 42. Born Friedrich Wilhelm Plumpe in Bielefeld, Germany, Murnau grew up in a cultured environment. As a child, he immersed himself in literary classics and staged theatrical productions with his sister and brothers. At the University of Heidelberg, where he studied art history and literature, he was spotted by Max Reinhardt in a student play and offered free training at Reinhardt's school in Berlin. When the war began in 1914, he enlisted in the infantry and fought on the Eastern Front. In 1916 he transferred to the air force and was stationed near Verdun, where he was one of the few from his company to survive.

In *Nosferatu* (1921), Murnau creates some of the most vivid images in German expressionist cinema. *Nosferatu*'s shadow ascending the stairs towards the woman who awaits him evokes an entire era and genre of filmmaking. Based on Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Murnau's *Nosferatu* is a 'symphony of horror' in which the unnatural penetrates the ordinary world, as when *Nosferatu*'s ship glides into the harbour with its freight of coffins, rats, sailors' corpses, and plague. The location shooting used so effectively by Murnau was rarely seen in German films at this time. For Lotte Eisner (1969), Murnau was the greatest of the expressionist directors because he was able to evoke horror outside the studio. Special effects accompany *Nosferatu*, but because no effect is repeated exactly, each instance delivers a unique charge of the uncanny. The sequence that turns to negative after *Nosferatu*'s coach carries Jonathan across the bridge toward the vampire's castle is quoted by Cocteau in *Orphé* and Godard in *Alphaville*. Max Schreck as *Nosferatu* is a passive predator, the very icon of cinematic Expressionism.

The Last Laugh (*Der letzte Mann*, 1924), starring Emil Jannings, is the story of an old man who loses his job as doorman at a luxury hotel. Unable to face his demotion to a menial position, the man steals a uniform and continues to dress with his usual ceremony for his family and neighbours, who watch him come and go from their windows. When his theft is discovered, his story would end in tragedy were it not for an epilogue in which he is awakened, as if from a dream, to news that he has inherited a fortune from an unknown man he has befriended. Despite the happy ending required by the studio, this study of a man whose self-image has been taken away from him is the story of the German middle class during the ruinous inflation of the mid-1920s. Critics around the world marvelled at the 'unbound' (*entfesselte*), moving camera expressing his subjective point of view. Murnau used only one intertitle in the film, aspiring to a universal visual language.

For Eric Rohmer, *Faust* (1926) was Murnau's greatest artistic achievement because in it all other elements were subordinated to *mise-en-scène*. In *The Last Laugh* and *Tartüff* (1925), architectural form (scenic design) took precedence, *Faust* was the most pictorial (hence, cinematic) of Murnau's films because in it form (architecture) was subordinated to light (the essence of cinema). The combat between light and darkness was its very subject, as visualized in the spectacular 'Prologue in Heaven'. 'It is light that models form, that sculpts it. The film-maker allows us to witness the birth of a world as true and beautiful as painting, the art which has revealed the truth and beauty of the visible world to us through the ages' (Rohmer 1977). Murnau's homosexuality, which was not acknowledged publicly, must have played a role in a aestheticizing and eroticizing the body of the young Faust.

Based on the phenomenal success of *The Last Laugh*, Murnau was invited to Hollywood by William Fox. He was given complete authority on *Sunrise* (1927), which he shot with his technical team in his accustomed manner, with elaborate sets, complicated location shooting, and experiments with visual effects. *Sunrise: A Song of Two*



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Humans is about sin and redemption. A *femme fatale* from the city (dressed in black satin like the arch-tempter Mephisto in *Faust*) comes to the country, where she seduces a man and nearly succeeds in getting him to drown his wife before he recovers himself and tries to recreate the simplicity and trust of their lost happiness. Sunrise overwhelmed critics with its sheer beauty and poetry, but its costs far exceeded its earnings and it was to be the last film Murnau made within a production system which allowed him real control. His subsequent films for Fox, *Four Devils* and *City Girl*, were closely supervised by the studio. Murnau's decisions could be overridden by others, and in his eyes both films were severely damaged. None the less, *City Girl* should be appreciated on its own terms as a moral fable in which the landscape (fields of wheat) is endowed with exquisite pastoral beauty that turns dark and menacing, as in *Nosferatu*, *Faust*, and *Tabu*. In 1929 Murnau set sail with Robert Flaherty for the South Seas to make a film about western traders who ruin a simple island society. Wanting more dramatic structure than Flaherty, Murnau directed *Tabu* (1931) alone. It begins in 'Paradise', where young men and women play in lush, tropical pools of water. Reri and Matahi are in love. Nature and their community are in harmony. Soon after, Reri is dedicated to the gods and declared tabu. Anyone who looks at her with desire must be killed. Matahi escapes with her. 'Paradise Lost' chronicles the inevitability of their ruin, represented by the Elder, who hunts them, and by the white traders, who trap Matahi with debt, forcing him to transgress a second tabu in defying the shark guarding the black pearl that can buy escape from the island. In the end, Matahi wins against the shark but cannot reach the boat carrying Reri away. It moves across the water as decisively as *Nosferatu*'s ship, its sail resembling the shark's fin. Murnau died before *Tabu*'s première.

JANET BERGSTROM

FILMOGRAPHY Note: Starred titles are no longer extant. * *Der Knabe in Blau (Der Todessmarged)* (1919); * *Satanas* (1919); * *Sehnsucht* (1920); * *Der Bucklige und die Tänzerin* (1920); * *Der Januskopf* (1920); * *Abend-Nacht-Morgen* (1920); *Der Gang in die Nacht* (1920); * *Marizza, genannt die Schmugglermadonna* (1921); *Schloss Vogelöd* (1921); *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1921); *Der brennende Acker* (1922); *Phantom* (1922); * *Die Austreibung* (1923); *Die Finanzen des Großherzogs* (1923); *Der letzte Mann (The Last Laugh)* (1924); *Herr Tartüff / Tartüff* (1925); *Faust* (1926); *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927); * *Four Devils* (1928); *City Girl* (1930); *Tabu* (1931)

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Opposite: Faust (1926)

Another group to interest themselves ideologically in the cinema were professional pedagogues, lawyers, doctors, and the clergy of both Protestant and Catholic denominations. As early as 1907 they promoted debates about the dangers of the cinema for youth, work-discipline, morals, and public order, the so-called 'anti-dirtand-smut campaign'. The aim was not to ban the cinema, but to promote cultural' films, that is, educational and documentary cinema, as opposed to fictional film narratives.

POST-WAR FERMENT

After the war, the strict Wilhelmine censorship was abolished, but, given the climate of revolutionary ferment and sexual licence, the industry soon found itself under fire once more, and film-makers had few friends who defended their freedom of expression when parliament reimposed partial censorship in May 1920: even Bertolt Brecht thought that the 'capitalist smut-merchants' had to be taught a lesson. What caused more serious divisions inside the film industry was the local entertainment taxes levied on cinemas and depressing their economic viability. At the same time, legislation adopted to protect national producers from Hollywood competition was as ingenious as it was ultimately ineffectual: if import restrictions and quota regulations (the so-called *Kontingentsystem*) helped boost production of 'quota-quickies', they also not only hurt distributors wanting American films for their audiences, but aggravated the glut of films generally. In other respects, too, politicians wielded only a blunt instrument: although the government occasionally banned uncomfortable films on the grounds that their showing might threaten public order (as happened in Berlin in the case of *Battleship Potemkin*, 1925, and *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 1930), it could do little to foster a prosperous and united national film business, since import restrictions and the entertainment tax invariably played one section of film industry (the producers) off against another (the exhibitors).

There is, then, a Weimar intellectual legacy which, although hostile to German films, none the less helped to foster an informed, discriminating, and heavily politicized film culture, implied in the term 'Weimar cinema'. Although the film business was ideologically and economically embattled, it was also a political fact, not only because it appealed to the government for assistance, but because both the intellectual-liberal and the anti-democratic forces took the cinema seriously.

The organized radical left was, throughout most of the decade, almost uniformly hostile towards the cinema, lambasting Ufa for poisoning the minds of the masses with reactionary celebrations of Prussia's glory (e.g. *Die Tänzerin Barberina* ('The dancer Barberina') by Carl Boese,

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Robert Herlth (1893-1962)

Robert Herlth, the son of a brewer, studied painting in Berlin before the First World War. Drafted into the army in 1914, he was befriended by the painter and set designer Hermann Warm, who helped him spend the last two years of the war at the army theatre in Wilna and away from the front.

After the War, Warm became head of the art department at Erich Pommer's Decla-Bioscop, and in 1920 he invited Herlth to join his team. Together with Walter Reimann and Walter Röhrig, Warm had just created the 'expressionist' décors of *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (1919). When working on F. W. Murnau's *Schloss Vogelöd* (1921) and the Chinese episode of Fritz Lang's *Destiny* (*Der müde Tod*, 1921). Herlth was introduced to Röhrig, and the two were to form a team lasting nearly fifteen years, mainly at the Decla-Bioscop studios that were expanded by Ufa into the most important production centre in Europe.

This was the time when, under the guidance of producer Erich Pommer, teams of set designers and cinematographers laid the foundations on which the glory of Weimar cinema was based.

The oppressive, dark, medieval interiors for Pabst's *Der Schatz* (1922-3) were among the first collaborations of Herlth and Röhrig, who went on to design three films that form the peak of German film-making in the 1920s; Murnau's *The Last Laugh* (*Der letzte Mann*, 1924), *Tartüff* (1925), and *Faust* (1926). They were involved with the productions from the early planning stages with Murnau, 'Film-Dichter' Carl Mayer, and cinematographer Karl Freund. Together they created the concept of the camera unbound' (*entfesselte Kamera*) and cinematic mixture of actors, lighting, and décor that is typical of these films. Léon Barsacq (1976) writes: 'The sets are reduced to the essential, sometimes to a ceiling and a mirror. In his initial sketches Herlth, influenced by Murnau, began by roughing in characters as they were positioned in a particular scene; then the volume of the set seemed to create itself. Thus interiors became simpler and simpler, barer and barer. Despite the simplification, all the tricks of set design and camera movements were utilized, and some times invented, for this film [*The Last Laugh*]. Scale models on top of actual buildings made it possible to give a vertiginous height to the façade of the Grand Hotel.'

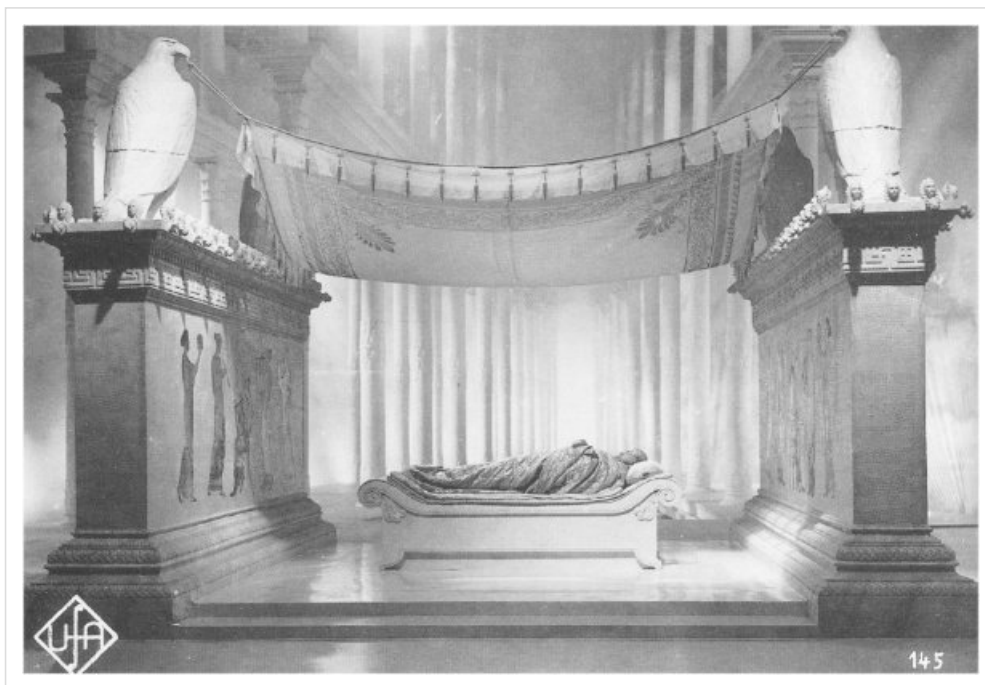
Towards the end of the silent period Herlth and Röhrig joined forces for one of Ufa's best films, Joe May's *Asphalt* (1928). They built a Berlin street crossing complete with shops, cars, and buses, using the former Zeppelin hangar-turned-film-studio at Staaken. After the introduction of sound they stayed with the Pommer team at Ufa, working with some of his young talents such as Robert Siodmak and Anatole Litvak and also creating the lavish period sets for the opulent and very successful

multilingual versions of operettas such as Erik Charell's *Der Kongress tanzt* (1931) and Ludwig Berger's *Walzerkreis* (1933). In 1929 they started a collaboration with the director Gustav Ucicky which afforded them a smooth transition into the Ufa of the Nazi period. Ucicky, a former cinematographer and reliable craftsman, specialized in entertainment with a nationalistic touch, and Herlth and Röhrig were able to avoid the hard propaganda films by working on popular entertainment. In 1935 they designed the Greek temples for Reinhold Schünzel's satirical comedy *Amphitryon* (1935), which mocked the pseudo-classical architecture of Albert Speer's Nazi buildings. Michael Esser describes their concept: 'Set design doesn't create copies of real buildings; it brings found details into a new context. Their relation to the originals is a distancing one, often even an ironic one.' In 1935 Herlth and Röhrig wrote, designed, and directed the fairy-tale *Hans im Glück*. Shortly afterwards the collaboration ended. After constructing the technical buildings for Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1938). Herlth (whose wife was Jewish) worked for Tobis, then Terra, designing mainly entertainment films. His first production in colour was Bolvary's operetta *Die Fledermaus*, which was shot in winter 1944-5 and released after the war by DEFA. After the war Herlth first worked as stage designer for theatres in Berlin. In 1947 he designed the ruins of a Grand Hotel for Harald Braun's *Zwischen gestern und morgen* (1947). Throughout the 1950s he was again mainly involved with entertainment films made by the better directors of the period such as Rolf Hansen and Kurt Hoffman. For one of his last big productions, Alfred Weidenmann's two-part adaptation of Thomas Mann's *Die Buddenbrooks* (1959) (designed in collaboration with his younger brother Kurt Herlth and Arno Richter) Robert Herlth was awarded a 'Deutscher Filmpreis'. HANS-MICHAEL BOCKSELECT FILMOGRAPHY *Der Schatz* (1923); *The Last Laugh (Der letzte Mann)* (1924); *Tartüff* (1925); *Faust* (1926); *Asphalt* (1928); *The Congress Dances (Der Kongress tanzt)* (1931); *Amphitryon* (1935); *Hans im glück* (1936); *Olympia* (1938); *Kleider machen Leute* (1940); *Die Fledermaus* (1945); *Die Buddenbrooks* (1959) BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Opposite: Set design by Robert Herlth for the Ufa production *Amphitryon* (1935), directed by Reinhold Schünzel

1921 and *Fredericus Rex* by Arzen von Czerepy, 1922), while chiding the masses for preferring such films to party meetings and street demonstrations. Only after the successful screening of the so-called 'Russenfilme' in 1925 did Willi Münzenberg, the left's most gifted propagandist, find support for his slogan 'Conquer the Cinemas', the title of a pamphlet in which he argued that films were 'one of the most effective means of political agitation, not to be left solely in the hands of the political enemy'. Münzenberg's International Workers' Aid set up a distribution company, Prometheus, to import Russian film and also finance its own productions. Apart from documentaries, Prometheus made features such as the comedy *Überflüssige Menschen* ('Superfluous men', 1926) by the Soviet director Alexander Razumny, and Piel Jutzi's proletarian melodrama *Mutter Krauses Fahrt ins Glück* ('Mother Krause's journey to fortune', 1929). Not to be outdone by the Communists, the Social Democrats also financed feature films, among them Werner Hochbaum's *Brüder* ('Brothers', 1929) and several documentaries dealing with housing problems, anti-abortion legislation, and urban crime. Earlier, the trade unions had sponsored *Die Schmiede* by Martin Berger ('The forge', 1924), who also made *Freies Volk* ('Free people'), in 1925 and *Kreuzzug des Weibes* ('Woman's crusade'), in 1926. However, Prometheus' best-known film was *Kuhle Wampe* (1932), directed by Slatan Dudow from a script by Bertolt Brecht, which opens with the suicide of an unemployed adolescent, and follows the fortunes of a young working-class couple as they try to find jobs and a home in order to found a family, finally realizing that only when marching with their fellow workers can they change the world, and thus improve their own fate.

Very rarely did films with a party-political affiliation succeed in providing what critics missed in almost all Ufa productions: 'realism', and a commitment to topics taken from everyday life. Such a demand, comprehensible from a critical establishment still under the impact of literary naturalism, was none the less not always compatible with the export objectives pursued by Pommer. Abroad, the reality of Germany was still too much associated with the World War for subjects with a contemporary setting to appeal to international audiences. While before 1918 the German cinema extensively utilized locations, realistic décor, and contemporary themes, after the war it was mainly productions intended for the domestic market (comedies, social dramas, or Harry Piel adventure films) which resorted to realist settings. Most of the prestige productions that later became associated with the realism known as 'Neue Sachlichkeit', whether those by G. W. Pabst (*Joyless Street* (*Die freudlose Gasse*), 1925; *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* ('The love of Jeanne Ney'), 1927; Pandora's Box) or Joe May (*Asphalt*), remained, until the coming of sound, wedded to the Ufa studio look, regardless of the period in which the action was set.

THE END OF WEIMAR CINEMA

In the United States, by contrast, the complaint against German films was the absence of strong plots, clear conflicts, but, above all, the absence of stars. The star system has always been fundamental for international filmmaking, partly because the qualities and connotations of a star transcend national boundaries in a way that setting and subject-matter often do not. One of the problems Ufa encountered in this respect was that, as soon as it developed stars, they tended to be wooed to Hollywood, following the example of Lubitsch's first international discovery, Pola Negri. The only truly international star in the 1920s who also worked in Germany was Emil Jannings, and he was indeed a commanding presence in a disproportionate number of Germany's American successes: *Madame Dubarry*, *Variete*, *The Last Laugh*, *The Blue Angel*. Attempts to launch international stars by importing American actresses in the latter part of the 1920s were only intermittently successful. Louise Brooks never became popular in the 1920s, Anna May Wong (directed by E. A. Dupont and Richard Eichberg) failed to catch the attention of American audiences, nor did Betty Amann -- Pommer's American 'discovery' for May's *Asphalt* -- develop her star potential. The cast of Murnau's *Faust* (1926, with Emil Jannings, Yvette Guilbert, Gösta Ekman) was deliberately international, but the fact that Camilla Horn was given the role of Gretchen, originally offered to Lillian Gish (to echo her success in Griffith's *Way down East*, 1920, and *Broken Blossoms*, 1919), did not help these transatlantic ambitions. It is even more remarkable that none of Fritz Lang's leading men or women (including Brigitte Helm) ever became an international star. When he and Pommer visited Hollywood, Lang was apparently irritated by Douglas Fairbanks insisting that what mattered in American picturemaking was the performer, not the set, nor the originality of the subject. Only with the coming of sound -- and when importing an American director like Josef von Sternberg -- did Ufa develop successful stars, such as Marlene Dietrich, Hans Albers, Lilian Harvey, Willy Fritsch, or Marika Röck, all of them closely modelled on American stars of the early 1930s.

By that time, the fortunes of the German cinema as a national and international cinema had become even more closely allied to the fate of Ufa. Following severe losses in 1926 and 1927, the company's major creditor, Deutsche Bank, was prepared to force Ufa into receivership, unless new outside capital could be found. Alfred Hugenberg, thwarted in his ambitions when Ufa was first set up in 1917, seized his chance and acquired majority holdings. His new director, Ludwig Klitzsch, set about restructuring the company, following the Hollywood studio system. He introduced American management principles, separating the finance department from production, reorganizing distribution, and hiving off some of the subsidiary companies. Klitzsch thus brought to Ufa the central producer system, overseen by Ernst Hugo Correll, who divided production up between different heads of production (Produktionsleiter such as Günther Stapenhorst, Bruno Duday, and Erich Pommer), thereby achieving both greater central control and greater division of labour. If the Hugenberg take-over sealed the fate of Ufa ideologically, as most commentators have argued, it is equally true that, from a business perspective, it was thanks to Klitzsch that for the first time Ufa was run along strictly commercial lines.

The Klitzsch regime allowed Ufa, with remarkable speed, to catch up with the major international developments, such as the introduction of sound, which the previous management had been very slow to take an interest in. Ufa converted to sound production within little more than a year, while the company was also able to avoid costly competition by agreeing terms with its major domestic rival, Tobis Klangfilm. From 1930-1 onwards, Ufa once more began to show profit, not least because it proved a successful exporter, aggressively marketing its foreignlanguage versions in France and Great Britain, in addition to exploiting its gramophone and sheet music interest. However, it was not with its star directors of the 1920s that Ufa achieved financial recovery: Murnau had left for Hollywood early in 1927, Lang and Pabst were working for Seymour Nebenzahl's Nero Film, while Dupont was working in Britain, as was Carl Mayer, who after following Murnau to Hollywood had settled in London in 1931. Efficient genre directors such as Karl Hartl, Gustav Ucicky, and above all Hanns Schwarz put Ufa back in the black, the latter with six films, among them some of the biggest box-office successes until then: *Bomben auf Monte Carlo* ('Bombs on Monte Carlo', 1931), *Einbrecher* ('Burglar', 1930), *Ungarische Rhapsodie* ('Hungarian rhapsody', 1928), and *Die wunderbare Lüge der Nina Petrowna* ('Nina Petrowna's wonderful lie', 1929).

Musicals and comedies became the mainstay of the internationally minded German cinema, with super-productions like *Der Kongress tanzt* ('The Congress Dances', 1931), star vehicles like *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* ('Three from the petrol station', 1930), screwball comedies like *Viktor und Viktoria* (1933), and domestic melodramas like *Abschied* ('Departure') conveying quite a different image of the German cinema from that of the 1920s. Even before the Nazi take-over in 1933 the transformations of the German film industry from a twintrack 'artistic film'/prestige production cinema to a mainstream entertainment cinema were well under way, forced by economic necessity and technological change even more than by political interference. While the migration of personnel to Hollywood, begun with Ernst Lubitsch in 1921 and followed by Murnau, Dupont, and

Leni, had also gathered pace by 1927-8, its motives were, at least until 1933, personal and professional as much as political.

The German cinema on the eve of Hitler's rise to power confronts one with a paradox: the narrative which attributes the rise of this cinema to the flourishing of talent in the creative ferment of the Weimar Republic must perforce see its cinema enter into decline, as the Republic disintegrates under the blows of the nationalist and Fascist right. The evidence, however, does not bear this out, since if decline there was, it was due to the drain of talent away to the richer pastures of Hollywood. If, on the other hand, one takes economic performance as an indicator of success, it was only during the political upheavals of the Republic's final years that the German film industry matured into a financially viable business. Elsewhere in Europe, too, the days of an innovative art cinema were strictly limited; what is remarkable about the German cinema is how long these days lasted right at the heart of a commercial enterprise, which by its very nature should not have been able to afford them at all.

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