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**A New Narrative Frame:
Sound Design and Conceptual Storytelling in
German Film 1930-1933.**

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In Memoriam Dr Sofi Qvarnström

Much valued academic and member of the EMHis network.

Abstract

During the final years of the Weimar Republic, precisely at a time when the democratic principles of German government came under increasing pressure from national as well as global political and economic forces, sound film became rapidly established as an innovative element in German cinema. With the arrival of technology enabling the production of synchronous sound for cinema film, the era of live sound accompaniment in cinemas drew to a close. This thesis discusses the period of Germany's transition into the sound film era within a wider historical context of the late Weimar Republic and identifies the emergence of a new cinematic aesthetic in early sound films made in Germany.

The term "sound film" or "sound cinema" in the context of this thesis refers to film with a continuous, synchronous soundtrack. Sound film featured dialogue as well as other sound elements, such as sound effects, atmospheres or music. This new film-making process arrived in Germany right at the end of the 1920s and introduced film-makers to the technology to record dialogue (and other synchronous sound elements) alongside the image at the time of filming, on location or on a specially-built studio set. This research project examines German films from the late Weimar Republic in terms of a newly emerging relationship between image and synchronous soundtrack.

The central research question addressed by this thesis is:

- Against the backdrop of a medium in transition, how does the relationship between sound and image manifest itself in early German sound film?

My original contribution to knowledge is the combination of academic research with practice-based knowledge of sound design determinants, resulting in a new methodology for the understanding of an emerging sound aesthetic in narrative films produced in Germany during the transition into synchronous sound. At the centre of this thesis are four films, selected from a longer list of titles under consideration; in-depth engagement uncovers the presence of greater complexity in these films' use of sound than has been recognised to date. These case studies are assessed in terms of their creative approach to sound. This process reveals that the relationship between image and sound became an important component for the development of greater

narrative complexity, as well as introducing new potential in the use of sound and image from an editing perspective. Furthermore, these early German sound films demonstrate that integration of music was more conceptually ambitious than has been previously acknowledged. The films selected for closer analysis for this project were made between 1930 and 1933 and belong to the narrative fiction or drama genre (as opposed to factual or documentary film).

The findings of the thesis are summarised as follows:

- It challenges existing assumptions that early sound films were unable to develop a degree of complexity within their soundtracks;
- It reveals how the relationship between image and sound enhanced the intricacy of narrative and emotive story elements;
- It demonstrates that high cost of converting to sound film drove most small independent film studios out of the industry, leaving sound film production to big companies such as Ufa;
- It revises the concept that eminent theorists of the Weimar period rejected sound film, in preference over silent film;
- It refutes an assumption that the arrival of sound represented a retrograde step for editing and cinematography, or that early German sound films were inferior in creative ambition compared to the films of the silent era;
- Furthermore, this project establishes that the arrival of technological innovation (inventions which facilitated the use of sound) was just the beginning of a more complex conceptual process during which film-makers developed a new film language to integrate the sonic domain.

This thesis concludes that the transition from silent to sound film was of considerable public interest, and that the potential promise of sound for film was a topic of wide-ranging debate before, during and after the transition took place in Germany. The arrival of film sound technology was a revolution; harnessing the creative potential of this technology in order to enhance cinema's narrative potential was a process of evolution.

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Accompanying Material

In a thesis that develops a detailed analysis of early sound cinema, it may be helpful to the reader to have the option of accessing key scenes from the films under discussion. For this reason, a DVD accompanies this thesis.

In order to maintain the narrative flow of each chapter of the film analyses (Part II), the text incorporates still images – DVD Screen Grabs - to illustrate the discussion. The reader may prefer to follow the discussion developed in the thesis continuously, without switching from reading to viewing DVD clips: the film analysis chapters contain all the information necessary to follow the argument. The additional DVD clips are provided in case any reader would like to view the material.

Acknowledgement

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Speaking of wonderful colleagues, I have been fortunate enough to belong to a very supportive network of academics, both from my University, as well as from Sweden and from Germany. Thanks must go to the Swedish government for providing the STINT¹ resources that funded the EMHis² project. Lead by a team of academics from the University of Lund, the STINT bid facilitated a collaborative research network between Lunds Universitet in conjunction with academics from Bournemouth University's Centre for Media History and the Hans-Bredow-Institut at Universität Hamburg. In this context, I would particularly like to thank Professor Hugh Chignell and Kristin Skoog for leading the BU side of this European academic collaboration. Thank you also to the staff at the archives which I was able to visit while researching this PhD project: Filmuniversität Babelsberg and Deutsche Kinemathek (Berlin), the Hans-Bredow-Institut and Cinegraph (Hamburg).

The EMHis structure provided a highly effective base from which diverse strands of research enquiries have emerged - the considerable number of PhD theses that the EMHis project is associated with speaks volumes in terms of the value of academic collaborative networks within the European context. I would also like to thank Hugh Chignell for allowing me to invade the tranquillity of his office with my books and papers over two consecutive summers – a space that provided useful seclusion when I was writing up my research. Further thanks to my Head of Department, Dr Christa van Raalte, for trying to lighten the load of my summer teaching burden, in order to help advance the thesis. I have come to realize that writing a thesis is a bit like raising a child – it takes a whole village. Speaking of family matters: BIG thank you to my family: my parents Inge und Werner, who were born during the Weimar Republic and had to weather its aftermath, my sister Dr Sabine Helmers, and particularly to my husband Paul and our boys Henry and Lawrence, for support and patience while this project has been evolving.

¹ The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education.

² Entangled Media Histories. A research and teaching network for the study of entangled media histories funded by the Swedish government from 2013-2017.

Author's Declaration

In the years leading up to the submission of this thesis, I have had the opportunity of speaking at several conferences about my research. I have also been invited to submit several journal articles. These publications were staging posts for this research project, and therefore share commonalities with the discussion that is at the centre of this submission. Unless otherwise referenced, I am the sole author of this material.

Journal Articles:

Fritz Lang's Three Versions of Doctor Mabuse, 2011.

The New Soundtrack, 1 (2);

Emil und die Detektive: Early German sound cinema aesthetic, 2014.

The New Soundtrack, 4 (1).

Conference Presentations:

Sounds Left and Right: On the relationship between Political Agenda and Sound Aesthetics of early German Sound Film.

On, Archives! University of Wisconsin: Madison;

Emil und die Detektive: When Film Sound Concepts were uncharted Territory.

School of Sound, London;

Sound Reaches the Parts... Ethical Dimensions of Film Sound.

Entangled Media History Conference. Bournemouth University;

Sound Transformation: German Film Sound in the early 1930s.

GMaC Symposium. Hans-Bredow-Institut, Universität Hamburg;

Early German Film Sound: The Case of Westfront 1918

Silent Cinema and the Transition to Sound. University of Stirling.

Full references in the Bibliography.

Definitions

Please see Appendix II for definitions of terminology.

Archive Material

Please note: Film-Kurier illustrations and articles from the **Cinegraph** microfiche archive are credited as *Cinegraph Archive*. Cinegraph is a German centre for film research and is based in Hamburg.

Material from the **Filmuniversität Babelsberg** (based in Potsdam, near Berlin) is credited as *FUB Archive*.

The photograph scans from the **Deutsche Kinemathek** (Berlin) have their generic archive ID integrated into the scan. Archive staff at the Deutsche Kinemathek expressed a preference to have its materials referenced in that manner.

German source material cited in this research project is included in the original language, with my translation into English in italics underneath.

Introduction

Reality of Sound Film¹

The ten-year anniversary of Film-Kurier falls during the greatest transformation in film history (...) I am referring to the transformation caused by the implementation of sound film.

(Pabst [1929] 2016, p.563)

This research project reveals that German film changed profoundly with the arrival of sound, evolving and developing relatively unhindered during the late 1920s until the establishment of National Socialist state-control in 1933. Before developing the main theme and research questions further, a clarification of nomenclature opens this section. For the purpose of this study, the terms *German cinema* and *German film* are used throughout this thesis to refer to films produced by film-companies based in Germany, made by German-speaking film directors for German speaking audiences, and distributed in German cinemas. This definition is in accordance with Ulrich Klaus's *Deutsche Tonfilme* (1989 Vol.1, p.7), the most comprehensive reference books to date on German sound films 1929 - 1945. The German genre *Spielfilm* as used by Klaus (ibid.) is best translated as *narrative film* or *film drama* (*drama* for short) – the definition distinguishes drama from *factual* or *documentary* film (the German terms *Kultur-* or *Dokumentationsfilm*), which are outside the focus of this thesis.

The use of the term *silent film* refers to films produced prior to the arrival of synchronous, amplified sound. Recent scholarship (for instance Altman 2005) illustrated the complexity of researching the aural dimension during the pre-synchronous-sound era. Generally, sonic accompaniment consisted of music, but could also in some cases incorporate live commentary or sound effects generated by a cinema technician from behind the screen. Recent research into the period prior to the arrival of synchronous sound suggests that “silent cinema” is strictly speaking an unsatisfactory term, given that cinema during the - so-called - silent era was in practice not silent, as films were shown with live accompaniment. Notwithstanding

¹ Published on 1st June 1929, as part of a special edition to mark its tenth anniversary of the daily Film-Kurier, translated by Alex H. Bush

the complexity of cinematic sonification during the pre-synchronous-sound era, which is fully acknowledged by existing research as well as by this thesis, the terms *silent cinema* and *silent film* are used throughout this thesis to refer to the era before synchronous sound, and specifically to the period of transition from the perspective of German cinema.

Using a combined approach that fuses an understanding of practice and theory, this study is able to demonstrate that the introduction of synchronous sound technology opened up new narrative and emotive possibilities for film-makers, and that cinematic story-telling became manipulated through the aural domain in a complex manner. The arrival of sound did not produce a homogenous change in film-making methods - there was no instantaneous, uniform change in practice as a result of the introduction of new technology. This holds true for both the technological and the narrative perspectives of film making. Instead the arrival of sound needs to be understood as a shift in film-making: a transitional period during which a new sound aesthetic gradually emerged alongside an adaptation of technological capability. According to Kevin McDonald (2016, p.19), the notion of a film aesthetic became established during the early part of the 20th century within the context of the emerging discipline of Film Theory. The terminology of a film aesthetic was used chiefly to identify the artistic merits of film in comparison to other cultural genres, such as for instance theatre, opera or literature. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/aesthetic>, 2018), the term *aesthetic* refers to a style or set of principles underlying a particular artist or artistic movement. In the context of this research project, the concept of a sound aesthetic is used to connote the aural style or (put more simply) the utilisation of sound in film. Key formal characteristics of film - cinematography, performance style, visual design, montage – contributed to the concept of a filmic aesthetic during the silent era. If one accepts that film was uniquely different compared to other forms of cultural expressions during the silent period, then it is reasonable to accept that the integration of sound within cinema required the incorporation of the sonic component within the film aesthetic.

Research Questions

This research project is about a medium in transition, within the context of a society in transition. In historical terms, the years 1929 and 1933 are associated with two significant events contributing to the end of the democratic structures of the Weimar Republic: the stock market crash of October 1929 and the appointment of Adolf Hitler as *Reichs* Chancellor in January 1933. But these years also correlate to significant events in the development of German cinema: 1929 was the year when full length sound film production began in earnest in Germany and 1933 was the year in which control of Germany's feature film production was centralised by the National Socialists. These two years delineate the time period on which this research project focuses, framing a particularly complex national period of cinematic and political history. In terms of early sound films of the late Weimar Republic, three overarching research questions were formulated at the outset of this research project:

1. Against the backdrop of a medium in transition, how does the emerging relationship between sound and image manifest itself in early German sound film?
2. How did particular film-makers, theorists, critics and audiences in Germany respond to the new narrative potential offered by synchronous sound?
3. With regard to sound and image being presented as a new, homogenous unit of cinema, what cultural, economic and social factors can also be observed during the period of transition from the German perspective?

I decided to concentrate on question one as the central focus of the project, while questions two and three would inform wider contextual considerations. My plan was to engage with the complex decision-making processes that films would have to reflect as a consequence of the arrival of synchronous sound. This research project focuses on aesthetic consequences of the arrival of sound technology in German cinema during the late Weimar Republic. At its centre lies the analysis of emerging styles engaging with film sound in different films; this diversity of styles implies a range of aesthetic and creative responses to the arrival of sound technology German film-makers. This in turn leads to the realisation that there was no uniform method for creating sound film narrative, but rather a range of approaches pertaining to

particular aspects of story and genre. In conjunction with the overall *mise-en-scène* of each film, the concept of a sound stylistic analysis relates to the complexity of a film soundtrack in relation to key constituent sonic elements, such as:

- dialogue / speech;
- sound effects;
- atmospheres;
- music.

The above list is a headline breakdown – individual elements may be broken down further into sub-elements: for instance, “dialogue” might be distinguished as being sync or post sync; “music” differentiated between diegetic and non-diegetic forms - conversely sound effects might be considered in terms of their relationship to visual elements (in vision / out of vision). To answer the three questions articulated above, subsidiary research questions were derived.

Subsidiary Research Questions

I decided to explore the central question (Question 1 above) by selecting a number of film examples, with the aim of an overview of different practices in sound film during the transitional period in German cinema. Returning to the constituent sonic elements sketched out above (dialogues/sound effects/atmospheres/music) and placing that framework within the context of this research of early German sound film, factors that articulate a better understanding of sound in films are:

- **How complex are soundtrack elements?** This point relates to a consideration of any layering or mixing of sound elements;
- **What is the relationship between image and sound from the perspective of how the narrative has been edited?** For instance, the use of split editing techniques for sound and image: sound leading the image or hanging over picture cuts into the next shot or scene;
- **In terms of speech and dialogue, how does the potential offered by film sound shape vocal elements?** This also relates to dialogue level and intonation, as well as the linguistic or referential significance of accent or dialect. Furthermore, there is the

consideration of crowd effects and other vocal elements captured on location during the filming process or added later in post-production;

- **To what degree are out-of-vision sound effects used to construct a narrative world beyond the immediate confines of the visual cinematic frame?** Conversely, are non-synchronous sound elements used in counterpoint to the image;
- **How are atmospheric or ambient sound elements represented?** How "busy" are these atmospheric elements? How critical are these out-of-vision elements to the story?
- **Is there a role for silence in early sound film? How is silence used?** Was the emotional potential of silence explored in early German sound film?
- **What functions do composed scores or other musical elements fulfil?** Conversely, are musical elements diegetic or non-diegetic, and how do they relate to dialogue elements?

In order to assess whether particular sound elements have been included in a film as an intended element of sound design, it is essential to consider which sound elements have been captured at the time of filming, and which elements are more likely to have been placed within the soundtrack as an additional sonic element via a post-production process. Whilst sound post-production was limited by technological constraints, there are examples of sound elements having been added at a later stage during the production, and which will be discussed. The presence of such additional sound elements points to an intentional ambition with regard to creating a sonic aesthetic: this intentional approach to sonic elements would nowadays be defined as sound design. There are further distinctions in terms of sound elements captured during the time of filming on location (there are some examples where out of vision music is integrated into the soundtrack on location, as part of the scene's story world) that are included in the discussion. In addition to musical elements, another aspect for consideration is whether a film uses out of vision elements to create the ambience of a particular setting. If an atmospheric element of the story space is not part of the filming process (for instance in if a particular section of the film or individual scene was shot in a studio, rather than on a real or natural location) then

the presence of a natural ambience can again be understood as a signifier of an intended sound design: sounds suggesting the ambient story space were placed there to enhance or otherwise augment the visual *mise-en-scène*. A practice-based understanding of how soundtracks are created is helpful in establishing this kind of methodology for sound film analysis. I have been developing and teaching this practice-based method of sound design analysis since 1997 and have incorporated this approach to film sound analysis within this research project of historical film. My contribution to new knowledge is the hypothesis that early German sound films were far more complex than widely acknowledged. This complexity relates to the use of sonic elements for the creation of a multi-layered aural dimension, but also includes the use of editing techniques to shape pace and narrative. My research has also re-evaluated established assumptions regarding the critical reaction to the arrival of sound within the German context. What becomes clear is that though sound technology offered new opportunities for film-makers, individual determinants – such as budgets, script considerations and creative aural ambition of the film-makers involved – makes the landscape of early sound cinema a varied one. It is problematic to draw wholesale conclusions by looking at a limited part of that landscape. And yet, many assumptions about the period – that early German sound films were simplistic in terms of their creative ambition (see Toeplitz 1992b, p.45), that the camera was immobile, that editing was severely limited by the arrival of sound – simply don't reflect the fact that many of the early sound films made during the final years of the Weimar Republic were very ambitious in regard to sound. The dual pressures of rising production costs at the filming stadium and the financial implications of converting cinemas to sound at the distribution stage pushed up cinema admission prices. Against a backdrop of a worsening economic situation, larger studios and cinema groups appeared to be better resourced to face these challenges (Spiker 1975, p.56)².

This research project observes that the arrival of synchronous sound for film

² The financial dimension of the transition to sound within the context of Germany's economic situation is further discussed pp.114-116, as well as in the discussion of the changing fortunes of the Ufa studios, p.118-120.

produced a fundamental change in narrative; by focusing on four central case studies this thesis is able to demonstrate that the period of transition into the sound era produced some very imaginative approaches as regards the use of sound in German cinema. Film-makers had to explore in conceptual terms how to integrate sound within the cinematic framework, whilst simultaneously working within the limitations of an emerging and evolving technological framework. This new sound film aesthetic was one which had to be articulated gradually, one which had to reveal itself through progressive changes in film-making practice. When looking at early German sound films more closely, it becomes clear that films from the transitional period display a readiness to overcome technological constraints. Sound becomes established as an out of vision element to augment and extend the narrative frame. These observations have been informed by using an approach to film analysis that is able to combine the results of academic research with the additional perspective of practice-based expertise, gained from direct personal involvement in filmmaking processes, both as an editor and a sound designer. Having trained as an Assistant Film Editor with the British Broadcasting Corporation during the 1980s, I subsequently worked in the BBC's film cutting rooms as a Dubbing Editor and Acting Film Editor. I participated in the making of a broad variety of the BBC's production output as part of the corporation's various in-house Drama and Documentary Departments. Not only did this practical experience enable me to learn about the production and post-production processes of film and broadcasting industries, it was during that time that I came to comprehend and appreciate the enormous narrative potential of sound design in film and television.

Within the context of this thesis, this combination of theory and practice invites the application of a research methodology informed by a practice-based understanding of film making processes in particular regard to editing, sound and sound design. The concept of practice-based research is explored further as part of the Methodology section, but a key aspect to signal here is Outi Turpeinen's hypothesis (2006) that knowledge and theory as exemplified by the act of research can converge with experiential knowledge of creative practice in order to synthesise new knowledge.

An important distinction to emphasise at this stage is that practice-led research is not

the same as practice-based research: the former engages with the creation of an artefact as a focal point for reflective research practice, whilst the latter is a research methodology that integrates a practice-based understanding of processes relevant to the creation of an artefact. A practice-based understanding in terms of sound design enables the researcher to analyse the composite of the soundtrack from the perspective of creation. For instance, if a sound element is heard, then knowledge of production and post-production processes enables the researcher to consider whether this sound element was likely to have been part of the location recording process, or whether this was added at a later stage. A practice-based understanding of editing processes similarly enables a researcher to consider the overall relationship between image and sound in a film. The identification of sound designed elements as well as of editing techniques that exploit the relationship between image and sound for narrative purposes inform a new understanding of the degree of complexity of any sound film under consideration. This practice-based understanding of the emotive and narrative potential of sound design has continued to shape my approach to lecturing under-graduate and post-graduate students about film editing and sound design since I left the BBC for the Higher Education sector. In addition to my practice-based understanding of the use of sound within moving-image narrative and in particular regard to academic research of German film history, I believe that as a native German speaker I am able to offer additional insights to contribute further to existing research and publications on German film within the English-speaking research context.

Challenging Established Assumptions

There are some further thoughts in regard to the second and third points from my initial consideration (listed earlier) that I would like to discuss briefly as part of this introductory section. Researching the historical development of film sound in German archives has provided the opportunity of contributing new perspectives towards a German film sound historiography. It is noteworthy that archives consulted during the research for this thesis present a remarkable wealth of discussion about the very concept of sound for film in the first place – much of this from the early years following World War One. An over-arching concern expressed at the time was that film's move towards sound should not lower cinema's artistic

standards. Archive material suggests curiosity over how sound film story lines would be presented – there appeared to be little appetite for the new format if sound film amounted to little more than a cinematic recreation of the theatre stage. The arrival of the first American-made sound films in German cinemas by the late 1920s generated wide-spread interest in the new medium of sound film, lending the quest for German-made sound films new impetus. Archival material speaks to the fact that early sound films were greeted with great curiosity: how would German-made films compare to foreign imports? Critical voices in the press consistently demanded that German sound films should display creative ambition – there were high expectations in terms of story lines and the filmic aesthetic.

For the purpose of this research, a closer analysis of selected early German sound films has been undertaken which reveals that in spite of technical challenges, many film-makers managed to invent creative solutions to overcome limitations of nascent sound technology. This project also re-examines the prevailing assumption that early sound films did not use music unless its presence was to be understood by the audience as being a direct element or part of the in-vision action, in other words of the filmic diegesis. At this stage, it is useful to pause for a moment to remind ourselves of the established definitions of diegetic and non-diegetic³ sound and music: the former is part of the in-vision action (therefore in narrative terms conceptually audible by a film's on-screen characters), whilst non-diegetic sound or music is only audible to the cinema audience. For instance, two characters have a conversation in a room, one character goes next door, continuing the conversation even though s/he is now out-of-vision. The out-of-vision partner in the conversation – or more specifically their dialogue - is still part of the diegetic space, even if they are outside of the visual frame. According to Spadoni (2014), the diegetic nature of a sound is irrespective of whether it was recorded by the microphone on location as part of the synchronous sound recording process, or whether sound or music was added in post-production.

Diegetic sound can relate in different ways to what we see in the

³ See Appendix II Definitions, and also: Altman (1992), Belton & Weis (1985), Chion (1994)

frame. It can be onscreen sound. This means viewers understand a sound to be emanating from a source visible on the screen (...) Bugs Bunny chomps a carrot and says, “What’s up, Doc?” The rabbit, we know, is not making the chomping noises or doing the talking, but because we understand Bugs to be making these sounds, they are onscreen sounds. It’s how viewers construe a sound that matters for our definition and not any fact of a film’s production. (Spadoni 2014, p.152)

Similarly, music being played in an adjacent space, such as an instrument being practiced next door may be at once out-of-vision *and* part of the diegetic story space. Some films play with the diegetic nature of sound or music, letting it transcend from a diegetic representation to a non-diegetic representation (and / or vice versa); this is a technique particularly popular with some film-makers’ approach to music. A scene might commence with a piece of music coming from a radio which is part of the diegetic *mise-en-scène*. Subsequently, the music may transcend the diegetic space - generally this transformation is communicated to the audience via a change in the stereo profile or equalisation of the piece of music within the overall sound mix. A diegetic off-screen sound effect or music is out of vision, but it still emanates from the story space; Spadoni (ibid.) goes on to explain that there is no point in distinguishing non-diegetic sound into on-screen or off screen, arguing that “nondiegetic sound exists in a different realm from the story world altogether. It is neither onscreen nor offscreen.” Even more confusing is the fact that in UK film and television production practice (where the terminology of diegetic and non-diegetic is not in frequent use), music is occasionally referred to as out-of-vision, meaning *either* music that is not part of the story space (= non-diegetic) *or* music which is part of the story space but literally outside of the visual frame (= diegetic).

Some academics appear dissatisfied with the concept of diegetic and non-diegetic sound and suggest that this requires a re-evaluation - but in the absence of an alternative model this terminology is still helpful to classify the nature of a sound element. In order to avoid confusion over in-vision and out-of-vision concepts particularly in regard to sound and music, the terminological distinction between *diegetic* and *non-diegetic* is extant, has become widely used in film theory textbooks and is used in this way throughout this thesis. Several of the film examples considered as part of this research refute the notion that early sound film used music

exclusively as a component of the diegetic space; this will be discussed in more detail as part of the four case studies.

Another established assumption is that the arrival of sound had a uniformly negative effect on the mobility of the camera. Camera noise caused some concern on sound film locations, and it was occasionally necessary to either place the camera inside a soundproof box or swaddle it in fabric to muffle the sound. Nonetheless, not all early sound films were confined to static use of the camera, as the case studies confirm – some examples simply added sound effects and atmospheres in post-production. Whilst a change in visual aesthetic can be observed when comparing silent to early sound film, it could be argued that this change is fundamentally attributable to a shift in narrative technique alongside the adoption of a different acting style brought about by the arrival of sound. Comparing the visual aesthetic of silent film with that of sound film in a pejorative way neglects to recognise that these are essentially two fundamentally different film forms. Film sound is not just acoustic wall-paper, merely added to the visual artefact. Sound required film-makers to reconsider how films were to be made in terms of new technological processes, as well as to explore how stories could be further developed in terms of complexity through the inclusion of a synchronous aural component. This question of “how” was not just a matter of technology, but more importantly provided the impetus for the aesthetic re-evaluation of how film might affect an audience. Regarded in this light, the period of transition emerges to be far more complex than often assumed. Instead, when looking at many of the early German sound films for closer analysis in terms of their use of sound, a number of emerging methods of engaging with film image and sound by film-makers are uncovered. As a result of my closer analysis of many early German sound films, using an approach which is informed by a practice-based understanding of film-making processes, I propose that there is just cause to re-assess what has become the canon of early sound film history within the perspective of German cinema.

The Impact of Synchronous Sound on Film Narrative

As this research shows, synchronous film sound invited new techniques of narrative

and style, as well as re-defining cinema's established relationship with musical elements. Sound extended the film's narrative potential beyond the visual boundaries of the camera frame: it introduced the concept of out-of-vision storytelling by offering the aural domain as additional story space. Film-makers such as Georg Wilhelm Pabst (part of whose proclamation on the significance of sound in film is cited at the beginning of this introductory chapter) and Fritz Lang were quick to comprehend how sound could be employed to create a story-world that expanded narrative elements beyond the confines of the image. Selections from their films produced during the transitional period, as well the work of Gerhard Lamprecht and Slatan Dudow, will be discussed in detail as part of this project⁴. Selected as one of the case-studies which are at the centre of this research project, G.W.Pabst's first sound film *Westfront 1918* (1930) uses out of vision sound to characterise the story world. Lang contributed two notable early sound film examples: after the success of *M* (1931), he made *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse [The Last Will of Dr Mabuse]* (1933), which will be discussed in terms of the film-maker's development of the use of sound in the space of two intervening years. Given their standing in global film historical terms, Pabst and Lang require less by way of introduction, than perhaps Lamprecht and Dudow in the Anglophone context. By way of the briefest of introductions it is worth noting that Lamprecht was a filmmaker with a keen personal interest in cinema's technological innovations as well as the creative side of film-making. One of his early sound films - *Emil und die Detektive [Emil and the Detectives]* (1931) – is unacknowledged in terms of its creative use of sound. Equally Slatan's Dudow's *Kuhle Wampe, oder: Wem Gehört die Welt? [Kuhle Wampe – Or Who owns the World?]* (1932), which the Bulgarian Dudow made in close collaboration with the playwright Bertolt Brecht and the composer Hanns Eisler, has not been sufficiently discussed from the perspective of an innovative sound aesthetic. These film-makers - whose early sound films have been selected for closer analysis as part of this study - were amongst those practitioners who realised the significance of the evolving relationship between image and sound. They readily embraced new narrative techniques, exploring new story telling opportunities that

⁴ The rationale for selecting these particular films is discussed further as part of the Methodology section.

emerged through the arrival of synchronous sound. No sooner had the technology arrived to marry the two elements of image and film sound together, that the potential for severing this synchronous relationship for creative purposes could be explored. In terms of editing technique, sound could now be employed to *lead* the audience from one scene to the next. Conversely, selecting a different cut-point on the soundtrack compared with the image afforded the potential to leave a sonic element *overhanging* the picture cut over a subsequent image or scene, thereby suggesting new referential connections between characters, locations or story elements. As well as aiding a new sense of fluidity to the story, this new editing style had considerable potential in shaping story-telling processes. Fundamentally, in addition to carrying meaning through dialogue, sound could be employed as emotive as well as narrative glue – and could also be used in counterpoint to the image. This potential created a new understanding of storytelling, both from the perspective of film-makers, but also in terms of how audiences would read film. The four examples selected for closer analysis for this research project have been chosen as exemplars of this new creative relationship between image and sound, and their discussion is at the heart of this thesis.

The transition from the silent to the sound era had explicit and obvious consequences affecting the audience - through sound, audiences could be presented with a new form of an immersive cinematic experience. Although sound technology itself was still under development, with a number of needle-tone and optical-sound systems vying for supremacy, the concept of exhibiting film with a synchronous soundtrack stretched the established cinematic norm into new directions. In contrast to the silent era, film-makers now had the tools to influence which sound or music elements would be audible at any particular section of the film. In addition to potential new ways to connect cinema and audience, film prints could now be released in a homogenous format in terms of image and sound: each release print an identical reproduction of its visual and aural artefact. In a move away from the diverse methods of exhibition practices prior to the emergence of synchronised sound, a film would be produced complete with its own sound track and released in this form for distribution. Consequently, cinema audiences across the land were more likely to experience a film's narrative in a more unified manner. Irrespective of various sound

patents in circulation during the early the sound era, the content of a film-soundtrack was now within the directorial control of film-makers and production studios. This is a very important consideration to hold in mind in conjunction with the political, economic and social tensions developing outside the cinema doors during the late Weimar Republic. A central tenet of this thesis is the examination of the sound film style extant in the films of the late Weimar Republic. It will be relevant to touch upon the cinematic style of the pre-sound period in order to gauge the impact of the transition into sound. As a result of this research project, potential directions for future research projects have emerged. For instance, an examination of the relationship between sound film style of the late Weimar Republic compared to sound film examples from the period of the Third Reich.

An attempt to establish a contextual overview from historical and technological perspectives forms part of this research project, but central to its focus is the emerging sonic style of German cinema during the last years of the Weimar Republic. This was a period in time when through the arrival of new sound technology, film practice and audience engagement with the silver screen was altered profoundly. This project explores further the implications of the transition from the film medium of the pre-sound era into the era of synchronous sound film; its focus rests with the potential aesthetic consequence on film making with the establishment of synchronous sound, in terms of its emotive and narrative contribution in film. For the purpose of this research I have examined sonic styles in evidence in a selection of film dramas made during the period of the late Weimar Republic. To clarify essential terminology used in this work, unless specified otherwise, whenever “film” is referred to, the term will apply to exemplars from the drama genre, in other words the term “film” within this project relates to script-based narrative that is either completely fictitious or is in essence an embellished interpretation of historical figures or events for the purpose of creating a dramatic narrative predominantly for popular entertainment. Any original source material in German not available in English at the time of writing this thesis has been presented in its original language; a translation into English by myself is provided in italic font underneath the original quotation. All foreign language film titles are given in their original language where cited for the first time, followed by a translation of the title in square brackets into

English. The appendix contains material to supplement the overall body of research, such as summaries of the four main films discussed in the Film Analysis chapters, as well as further definitions and additional source materials. Media clips of key film scenes have also been included in case a reader would be interested to see and hear some of the early sound film examples discussed.

Primary Source Material

In addition to the selected films, historical photographs of film sets, newspaper articles and hand-written documents held in the archives of the Deutsche Kinemathek in Berlin contributed valuable primary source material to the research. An archive visit to the Cinegraph institute in Hamburg facilitated a comprehensive overview of the scope and response by the press to the arrival of sound film. Access to the electronic print archives held there allowed the addition of over 100 newspaper scans to primary source material consulted for this research project. Of particular interest during the period of transition from the silent to the sound era is the degree to which newspaper media at the time debated the pros and cons of sound film, lending further authenticity to the understanding that the arrival of sound film was a momentous development at the time. The evaluation of this press material yielded surprising insight into how early the discussion about sound in film commenced in Germany, right from the beginning of the 1920s. In terms of its relevance to this research project, this material reveals that the press did not just react to the arrival of sound by reporting on it, but that it contributed an active dialogue that speculated and hypothesised about potential opportunities of sound. Interesting also the fact that many of these newspaper contributions were written by individuals nowadays regarded primarily as theorists, rather than journalists: for instance, Rudolf Arnheim, Béla Balázs, Guido Bagier and Siegfried Kracauer. Arnheim was a film critic and journalist at the time, but increasingly moved into academic circles and is nowadays identified as one of the key theorists of the period. Balázs had made an early contribution to the emerging concept of film theory in 1924 with *Der Sichtbare Mensch* [*The visible Human*], though his main area of activity in the 1920s was in journalism. Kracauer originally qualified as an architect, but after the First World War moved into sociology as well as working as a film critic. Bagier was an author and composer, who became involved in film-making processes during the 1920s. He

became particularly interested in developing sound film technology, a topic he frequently discussed via newspaper articles. In 1943, Bagier was to publish a semi-autobiographical novel – *Das Tönende Licht [The Resounding Light]* – as an account of the technical development of sound film in Germany. Another important element that contributed primary source material to this research project came from a visit to the comprehensive library and archive collections held at the Film Universität in Potsdam⁵, which holds a wealth of material from the Weimar Republic that had been preserved via the archives of the German Democratic Republic. Further insights were made possible through a visit to the Ufa Studios in Neubabelsberg, which are in close proximity to Potsdam’s Film Universität. The Studio site still incorporates the original “Tonfilmkreuz”: the giant Ufa soundstages purpose-built by the most influential German film studio. It was world-leading at the time in terms of incorporating the latest sound technologies in 1930 to go into sound film production on an industrial scale.

In approaching this research project, I have watched a considerable range of early German sound films. Whilst many of these had interesting aspects with regard to their use of sound, making them potential candidates for closer analysis, the parameters of a PhD project require closer focus on a smaller number of films; nonetheless a wider body of film titles informed the contextual framework to this research project. The Methodology and Literature Review chapter that follows this introduction will provide an overview of the films that have been reviewed, particularly in the context of the methodology discussion.

Films and Film Companies

This part of the introduction revisits briefly the third element of my initial considerations and considers some key drivers behind the films and film companies

⁵ These research visits were made possible thanks to the Centre for Media History (a research group within the Faculty of Media and Communication at Bournemouth University), in conjunction with the Media History Department at Lund University in Sweden, and with the Hans Bredow Institut at Universität Hamburg. Through close collaboration, these academic teams were successful in securing research funding from the Swedish government, awarded to support European research collaborations focused on Europe’s Entangled Media History.

of the late Weimar Republic (this contextual discussion will be addressed further below). In addition to the sound films discussed as part of this research project, wider political and social considerations have also been explored. The polarisation of the political extremes of communist left and national-socialist right affected the ever more delicate balance of power that characterised the late Weimar Republic, leading to President Paul Hindenburg appointing Adolf Hitler as Chancellor in January 1933 in an effort to appease the political right. Having been underestimated by the more established political parties of the Reichstag, Hitler was quickly able to implement dramatic changes to governmental institutions, which produced a remarkably swift end to any concept of the artistic freedom and diverse cultural output that the relatively permissive Weimar Republic had tolerated. This was a period of political, as well as cultural, transition. The sound films completed between late 1929 and the beginning of 1933, immediately prior to the rise of the NSDAP's state-controlled propaganda machine, invite more detailed discussion and analysis, primarily in terms of their emerging relationship between image and sound, but also as cultural products of a society in transition.

This wider historical context invites the opportunity to examine how adaptive a range of production companies were towards sound film. There were a considerable number of film studios (large and small) active during the period of this study. Korte's *Der Spielfilm und das Ende der Weimarer Republik*⁶ [*Feature Film and the End of the Weimar Republic*] lists around 200 production companies of variable size and output in existence at the time of the late 1920s (Korte 1998, pp.448). Given the demanding economic pressures of sound film, not many of the smaller production companies survived. This research has primarily focused on the sound film output of the following three production companies that did attempt a transition into sound, serving as exemplars across the political spectrum:

- **Ufa** - the most prolific and well-known German production company of the period. Of particular interest is the financial

⁶ Focusing on the effect of film as reflection of political ideology as well as social perception, Korte's book provides a thorough survey of the landscape of German film making in terms finance, production, distribution and reception of the films of the late Weimar Republic.

connection between the film studio and conservative elements within the political establishment;

- **Nero** - a creative, liberal and more independent representative of the political middle ground;
- **Prometheus** - as a participant on the left of the political spectrum, seeking to represent proletarian perspectives through cinema.

Influential individuals such as Alfred Hugenberg and Ludwig Klitzsch steered the financial and ideological course of Ufa's film output and successfully turned around its ailing fortunes in the face of some big-budget flops at the end of the 1920s.

Hugenberg⁷ was an industrialist who built his fortune during the Wilhelmine era in the heavy metal and arms industries. Later on, his business portfolio branched out into building a media empire. As a founding member of the *Deutsch Nationale Volks Partei*⁸ [*German National People's Party*], Hugenberg had considerable political ambition. Klitzsch⁹ was an influential publicist and senior figure in Germany's film industry. Having acquired Ufa in 1927, Hugenberg put Klitzsch in control of reforming the output of the struggling film company. Under Hugenberg's ownership, Ufa became increasingly focused on creating popular films with mass appeal. The arrival of sound film saw Ufa capitalise on new film genres and box office successes consisted frequently of the *Tonfilmoperette*, musical offerings such as *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* [*Three from the Filling Station*] (1930) und *Der Kongreß Tanzt* [*Congress at Dance*] (1931). These films proved enormously popular escapist entertainment: the *Tonfilmoperette* quickly established its narrative style, characterised by a romantic storyline which saw its characters break into highly polished song and dance routines at regular intervals. Some *Tonfilmoperetten* were extremely accomplished in terms of pushing the boundaries of sound film making processes – for instance, the famous long tracking shot accompanying Lillian Harvey's musical journey in *Der Kongreß Tanzt* is a case in point. However, these musical elements are less complex in terms of their use of sound design elements – dialogues, atmospheres and sound effect – in relation to this research project. But

⁷ Alfred Ernst Christian Alexander Hugenberg (1865 – 1951)

⁸ Founded in 1918 the DNVP sought to abolish the democratic structures of the Weimar Republic and to re-instate the German monarchy.

⁹ Ludwig Klitzsch (1881 – 1954)

the Ufa studios did not exclusively produce musicals and the Ufa film *Emil und die Detektive* [*Emil and the Detectives*] (1931) has been a neglected example in film studies to date, which this thesis seeks to redress. Nero's Seymour Nebenzahl and Richard Oswald were instrumental in producing a range of film's notable for their creative use of sound - exemplified by *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* [*M – A City Searches for a Murderer*] (1931) and *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* [*The Last Will of Dr Mabuse*] (1933), both by Fritz Lang. *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* will be discussed in more detail, particularly as it charts Lang's own advancement in sound film techniques between 1931 and 1933. Nero produced *Westfront 1918* [*Westfront 1918*] (1930) and *Kameradschaft* [*Comradeship*] (1931), both by G.W.Pabst, and both interesting examples of early sound film - of the two, *Westfront 1918* is discussed in greater detail. Coming late to the transition into sound and therefore consigned to the final stages of the Weimar Republic in terms of sound film production, the communist left exhibited its own unique sound style as evidenced in the Brecht-influenced *Kuhle Wampe – oder: Wem gehört die Welt?* [*Kuhle Wampe – or: Who Owns the World?*]¹⁰ (1931), which was directed by Slatan Dudow and initially produced by Prometheus. In exploring the social, political and economic context within which these films were made, further aspects inform the contextual understanding of the period:

- What political and financial factors influenced the output of these production companies and their operations?
- To what degree did Ufa, Nero and Prometheus shape, utilise or even exploit the potential offered by sync sound in terms of creative vision and / or ideological agenda?

These three film companies who produced the films selected for closer analysis in subsequent chapters, were not the only production studios making sound films during the late Weimar Republic. However, these three are key to providing a useful selection indicative of the sort of companies that weathered the transition into sound into the early years of the 1930s. Prometheus, Nero and Ufa can also be understood as representative of diverse political directions that attempted to fund film making

¹⁰ Released in the United States under the title: *Whither Germany?*

during the transitional sound film era.

The Arrival of Sound and its Consequence for Cinema Audiences

In order to understand better the role of sound in conjunction with politics and a society in transition, a consideration of what sort of films were being financed by particular film companies informs one of the strands of this study. In the previous section, the relationship between the Weimar Republic's political and economic climate has been introduced. The arrival of sound in cinema had a normative influence on how films were shown, seen and heard by contemporaneous audiences. Although technological systems that made synchronous sound possible were still being developed, film-makers now had creative control over the content of a film's soundtrack – irrespective of the format of the sound carrier (for instance optical sound compared to sound on disc – although German-made films largely favoured the optical format). Prior to the arrival of synchronous sound, visual components shaping a film - such as cinematography, editing, make-up, set design or costume – were already under a film-maker's control. In contrast, how these silent films were sonically accompanied once projected in a cinema had not yet been resolved - ultimately sonic accompaniment was still governed by a range of local determinants and resources.

Neither natural nor universal, neither homogenous nor borrowed lock-stock-and-barrel from some previous practice, silent film sound varies according to differences in date, location, film type, exhibition venue, and many other variables, and thus cannot possibly be reduced to a single practice or even a single line of development.
(Altman 2004, p.12).

Rick Altman (2004) has demonstrated that “silent film sound's variety and complexity” (ibid.) influenced how the same film would be experienced by audiences in different venues.

Emerging technological developments would help establish a congruence in the cinematic experience for audiences, as a result of the synchronized presentation of image and sound. The diverse range of sound practices affecting film exhibition during the silent era converged towards such congruence through the introduction (and further refinement as technology continued to evolve) of film sound innovations.

Although there were a number of technological solutions to achieve synchronous sound (several needle-tone sound systems were in existence¹¹, in addition to a number of optical sound systems), film-makers had a reasonable expectation that key components of sound and image would be experienced by the audience in a similar way irrespective of the venue. The combined optical sound system that would gain pre-eminence over other sync sound methods in the cinema market facilitated for the first time a more integrated form of film projection in terms of image and sound. The soundtrack of a film is of significant consequence in its emotive effect on the audience. Consequently, the ability to determine sound and image presentation in every cinema in the land that was wired for sound had considerable social, cultural and economic potential.

Synchronized sound streamlined these variable relations of production, exhibition, and consumption. Whereas meanings, as well as profits, in early silent cinema had been highly contingent on local exhibition contexts, sound film – in the eyes of the industry – promised new possibilities to shape a unified mass-cultural audience.
(Koepnick 2002, p. 29)

Against the backdrop of the introduction of sound film, the political developments of the period of the Weimar Republic also need to be taken into consideration. Whilst other studies have already explored wider implications of the film medium in conjunction with political ideology¹², this study concentrated on the sonic styles of key film examples in Germany during the final years of the Weimar Republic. Its primary aim is to widen the analysis of examples of early sound films in the context of an emerging sound design aesthetic in practice in German films from 1930 to 1933. A further aim is to contribute to a better understanding and analysis of how sound could have an ideological function even during the early period of sound in the cinema. As discussed above, a key element of this research project has been through the assessment of primary source material. This material was accessed via German archive collections of film material and primary press source material dating from the transitional period from silent film into the sound era. This material revealed the

¹¹ Such as the needle tone system which was marketed by Vitaphone in competition to optical sound systems.

¹² In addition to Eisner (1965) & Kracauer (1947), see also more recent texts by Koebner (2003), Koepnick (2002) & Murray (1990)

considerable impact that sound film had on debates and critical discussions during the Weimar Republic. This project provided an opportunity to revisit widely held film-historical assumptions on critical reception wider attitudes towards sound cinema during the late 1920s and into the early 1930s. Part of this project incorporated an evaluation of the response to and reception of sound film through the eyes of film reviewers. In addition to film reviews that appeared in daily newspapers, a selection of articles from specialist publications of the period has been collected and will be examined as a barometer of the sense of anticipation and reception of sound film. Apart from *Lichtbild-Bühne* and *Der Kinematograph*, of particular interest is the *Film-Kurier*, a daily specialist publication which was aimed at cinema owners, film enthusiasts and critics. The *Film-Kurier* provided a frequent overview and commentary on the changing fortunes of silent film as a medium in transition, and how the film industry was affected by the arrival of sound. As evidence of a real debate over the advantages and drawbacks of sound film, of a discussion on both technology and aesthetics that was taking place in the public sphere, the evaluation of newspaper and magazine publications as primary resource material formed an invaluable contextual building block of this research. In terms of primary source material, a valuable recent addition was the translation and publication of materials relating to early German Cinema Theory, published by Kaes et al. in 2016.

Returning to Pabst's epiphany about sound film that preceded this chapter:

I was in London, where I saw sound films - by which I mean films that completely reproduce human speech along with all other sound - that have not yet come to Germany. I am talking about absolute accuracy, and in fact I believe that the silent film is already done for and the theater (sic) has ten years left.
(Pabst [1929] 2016, p.563)

Whilst Pabst's euphoric response to the arrival of sound film went as far as speculating about the end of live theatre, the sense of the director's enthusiasm over the impact and promise embodied by the advent of synchronous sound in film is palpable. This research project speaks to the fact that film does not exist in a political or cultural vacuum – new opportunities arose for political and ideological concepts to be emotionally re-enforced via the cinema with the emergence of sound film. Film-makers like Pabst recognised that they would need to adapt to this new mode of cinema, embracing the challenge to venture forward into the uncharted

territory of film sound. The invention of sync sound offered a standardised format of cinema exhibition and the corresponding capacity to exercise greater control of what audiences experienced with eyes *and ears*. This presented new artistic perspectives to film-makers which have been evaluated as part of this project; some of the political undercurrents that tugged at the foundations of this creative potential have also been considered as part of this research. This study explores the period of explicit technological change that produced the arrival of synchronous sound in film in terms of aesthetic consequences on German cinema during the early 1930s. This research project focuses on the concept of a medium in transition (German film) against the backdrop of dramatic cultural and political shifts. This project culminates in the closer analysis of an emerging film sound aesthetic within the context of the final years of the Weimar Republic.

Thesis Structure

The project starts with a combined Methodology discussion and Literature Review in Chapter 1; the reason for combining these sections is that existing literature often speaks to methodological concerns, and vice versa: the discussion of Methodology refers to existing literature on different approaches. The Methodology and Literature Review chapter combines the discussion of the selected films in conjunction with methodologies for textual analysis of film in the context of existing literature relevant to this topic. The chapter will clarify the rationale why particular films have been selected for closer analysis in terms of their use of sound. The Methodology and Literature section is followed by a section that sketches the historical period in Chapter 2. The History chapter is subdivided into different elements of the historical context and will provide an overview of a very complex historical period. It will stretch from the Wilhelmine period of the First World War and the birth of the Weimar Republic, and culminate with the advent of sound film and the rise of Adolf Hitler's National-Socialist Party in the early 1930s. The chapter will also incorporate the artistic and cultural developments, including the arrival of film and film sound in Germany. This history section is not meant to be exhaustive, as other authors have discussed these topics in far more detail than would be possible within the context on a research project focused on the aesthetic consequences of the arrival of film sound during the final years of the Weimar Republic. However, a historical

context within which to the subject specific discussion is hopefully helpful for the reader.

Chapter 3 will focus on the topic of the arrival of film sound in terms of the critical reception these technical advances were met with. What is particularly interesting is the fact that both technological dimensions as well as the aesthetic implications of sound for cinema were being debated in the public sphere – and that this was the case before, during and after sound for film had become a reality in German cinema. The chapter will then move on to the concept of an emerging film sound style. Chapter 4 will commence with a general overview of the films that have been selected for closer analysis. Subsequent chapters discuss selected film examples in terms of an emerging engagement with sound. The analysis examines particular stylistic elements of sound film of that period: how did these early synchronous sound films utilise the aural domain in terms of narrative potential? The first chapter will discuss Gerhard Lamprecht's 1931 film *Emil und die Detektive* in terms of its imaginative use of sound to support story telling elements, followed by an analysis of Fritz Lang's 1933 film *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*. Although these two films were intended for entirely different audiences - *Emil* is a children's film with appeal to family audiences, whilst Lang's offering is a dark continuation of his earlier silent *Dr Mabuse* films - they share features in regard to editing and sound.

The chapter following *Des Testament des Dr Mabuse* will focus particularly on the aspect of out of vision story-telling as evident in Georg Wilhelm Pabst's 1931 film *Westfront 1918*; sound permeates many sections of the film with an aural representation of armed conflict. Even when there is no visual indicator to suggest warfare within the camera frame, the audience is reminded of the proximity of war, death and the sound of fighting in relation to the film's central characters. Pabst also uses sound to demonstrate the isolation of various participants, for instance an unseen wounded soldier crying out in no-mans-land, or in the tormented screams of the wounded in the field hospital¹³. Pabst's sound film work is also an early

¹³ Pabst's dramaturgy relied on out of vision sounds again in his subsequent film *Kameradschaft*

exponent of the use of dynamic range, when silence and sound are juxtaposed with one another. The final film analysis chapter focuses on director Slatan Dudow's close collaboration with Hanns Eisler and Bertolt Brecht on *Kuhle Wampe. Oder: Wem gehört die Welt?* Their film was made in late 1931 and early 1932 under challenging production circumstances. The political left believed that a fundamental function of art was to instigate social change, and *Kuhle Wampe* is the only example of a revolutionary film made during the sound film era of the Weimar Republic. The thesis discusses the final two films in detail in consecutive chapters, as they share similarities in the realism to which both aspire. Both films also reflect particular performance techniques that are facilitated through editing and soundtrack elements; this performance style characterises the emotional isolation of characters who deliver their dialogue lines in a halting or stilted manner. Given its unique position as the only sound film of the political left of the late Weimar Republic, coupled with the collaborative approach aspired to by the film's makers, *Kuhle Wampe* deserves further examination in the context of this research project.

PART I

Chapter 1 Methodology and Literature Review

Methodology

Everything in cinema that belongs to the province of art has meaning - carries some sort of information. The strength of cinema's effect lies in the variety of constructed, complexly organized and maximally concentrated information.
(Lotman [1976] 1981, p.41)

Cinema is an amalgam of signs and signals that contribute to the construction of a meaningful discourse between screen and audience. If we understand everything on the screen as part of a collection of signs, then sound needs to be incorporated within this understanding. Exploring an evolving sound aesthetic or the concept of the emerging film sound form or film sound aesthetic of the cinema of the late Weimar Republic in the context of this PhD requires a methodology that develops an approach for the analysis of film artefacts in particular regard to the relationship between image and sound. This chapter discusses related methodological approaches to film analysis, as well as discussing available literature in terms of methodology and film sound history.

Lotman's ([1976]1981, p. 47) discourse on the role of *montage* in film-making could be interpreted to encompass the aural domain of a film beyond its dialogue, namely to understand sound and image as combined elements of filmic montage:

The juxtaposing of heterogeneous elements is widely practiced in the arts. Montage, a special case of this device, can be defined as the juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements of cinematic language. Some artistic styles are oriented towards sharp conflict of colliding elements (giving birth to metaphorical styles in prose narratives or strong contrast of characters on the plot level). But whichever style we select - one which strikes us with its contrasts or one which gives the impression of the most profound harmony - we can find at the basis of its mechanics the conjoining and opposing of elements, that internal unexpectedness of construction without which the text would lack artistic information.
(Lotman [1976]1981, p. 56/57)

Lotman's discussion of montage can be extended to apply to the analysis of sound in film as an essential montage component. The audience of a sound film does not separate the meaning of sound from image or vice versa. The audience experiences

and interprets the combined impact of sound and image, the film's overall montage elements. Lotman (*ibid*, p.95) discusses the complexity of film as a multi-textural, polyphonic accomplishment, that has to be understood as a homogenic whole, as well as being semantically decodable within its discrete layers. Lotman's approach was to view film and other cultural artefacts as examples of a text with further meaning encoded within it - a sub-text within the text¹. The sub-text had the potential to fulfil multiple functions, serving either the wider social or political determinants to uphold a particular status quo, and / or fulfilling an emotional or cognitive component and / or serving the ideological interests of a counter-cultural and / or oppositional, political dimension (Lotman 1981, p.34). The incorporation of sound as sub-text within the overall film therefore becomes of fundamental importance in the discussion of early sound film examples of the late Weimar Republic.

In order to decode film text better, it helps to understand the production determinants affecting the making of a film, which in turn can be better attempted from a practice-based approach. Notwithstanding the fact that practice-based research has a relatively long tradition in technology, engineering, social sciences and economics, Lind (2013, p.53) writes about a practice-led approach in film research as a relatively new approach. The main driver of this work is neither a quantitative nor a statistical approach. Instead, the focus lies with the textual analysis of a selection of films in terms of their integration of sound and image. The new element of sound is the main driver of this analysis because its introduction brought about new ways of experiencing film and understanding its content. Whilst some data evaluation informs its context (for instance, with regard to the speed of change with which sound film became established), this research instead will focus on a qualitative analysis of film sound from a perspective informed by practice-based understanding of film. In combination with my own practice-based understanding of film sound design, the approach to film sound analysis is furthermore informed by key texts on sound in film such as Elizabeth Weis and John Belton (1985), Michel Chion (1994;

¹ Novikova and Chumakova (2015, p.80) posit the view that Lotman focused on the medium of cinema for many of his publications on semiology in order to evade the gaze of the Soviet censors.

2009), Rick Altman (1992; 2005) and William Whittington (2007). Many of these authors have expressed dissatisfaction with the concept of established sound theory:

One of the key problems in traditional sound theory has been that it often examines film sound as a single composite object of capture or copying that can be reproduced in an exacting one-to-one correspondence with the original sound when it is exhibited in the motion picture theater.
(Whittington 2007, p.96).

According to Whittington (p.70), it is an inherent problem in much sound theory to regard a film soundtrack as a single creative unit – this is an oversimplification that fails to recognise the degree of sonic composition and aural construction achieved by the film’s makers.

Of course, the audience is not meant to be aware of the artifice that has gone into the creation of a sound designed film; instead the audience is meant to be experiencing the overall effect of all sonic elements combined into an aural and visual whole, a filmic *Gesamtkunstwerk*.² This concept is in fact analogous to the relationship between a concert audience with a piece of orchestral music: the concert audience is not meant to perceive a piece of composed music in terms of its constituent parts or as a collection of solo melodies emanating from different instruments.

However, for the purpose of developing music theory or exploring compositional style or analysing musical technique, a comprehensive understanding of orchestration and instrumentation is vital. In the same way, and from the perspective of film sound analysis, a similarly comprehensive approach to film sound in terms of its constituent elements is essential to inform a thorough understanding of sound style. In other words, film sound analysis needs to move beyond “observation” of a film soundtrack and needs to develop an approach capable of analysing soundtrack in

² According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, a Gesamtkunstwerk is the culmination of different artistic strands in a homogenous complete form. The term is latterly more associated with Richard Wagner (1813-1883), but originally was coined within the writings of the German philosopher Karl Friedrich Eusebius Trahndorff (1782-1863) under the title *Aesthetik, oder, Lehre von der Weltanschauung und Kunst* in 1827.

terms of different production elements. This is a premise which could be teased into a number of different theoretical directions, for instance in regard to cinematic realism versus empirical realism.

The immense majority of present day photographic, cinematic, and television images are thought to bear witness to the world.... we have spontaneous confidence in their realism. We are wrong.
(Baudrillard 1987, p.14, cited by Coulter 2010, p.11).

The social theorist, philosopher and keen cineaste Jean Baudrillard wrote (amongst other topics) on the relationship between realistic and cinematic constructs, though – according to Gerry Coulter (2010) - he remained ultimately very sceptical of technological advancement in terms of its relationship to narrative in film. In the context of this research project it would be futile to get drawn too far into the highly theorized realm of a Baudrillard - nonetheless, the concepts of realism and cinematic realism are pertinent ingredients in the discussion of film sound and occasionally resonate in the discourse on film sound design. Whittington summarised the approach of some theorists “to deconstruct the film sound track aggressively and avoid the notion of ‘realism’ altogether” but goes on to refine this approach by inviting an approach that should aim to:

...qualify the term ‘realism’ as ‘cinematic realism’, which is governed not by our expectations and perceptions of the ‘real world’ but rather by our expectations and perceptions of cinematic worlds.
(Whittington 2007, p.96).

In the context of this research, such distinction between “realism” and “cinematic realism” gives rise to the development of a sound analysis methodology founded on an examination of all different ingredients of a soundtrack in terms of its constituent elements.³ This methodology is shaped by an understanding of how films are constructed:

- a) with regard to sound elements overall, in the first instance, this could be a distinction between in-vision compared to out-of-vision

³ Writing as a film critic, Erich Kästner (the author of the original novel *Emil und die Detektive*) was already exploring the distinction between realism and cinematic realism in 1930. Cf. Film Analysis section.

sounds⁴ (however, sounds that are still part of the film's narrative world - in other words are still diegetic sounds);

- b) in terms of *sync* (short for *synchronous*; meaning sound recorded on location contemporaneous to image acquisition) compared with post-sync elements (*post-sync* connotes soundtrack components recorded at a separate time and separate place; not recorded at the same time as the image was captured) or wild-track recordings (as in soundtrack components recorded on location, but at a separate time compared to when the image was captured). However, an exact distinction between studio post-sync and location wild-track recordings may be difficult in some instances;
- c) with reference to the use of spot effects and atmospheres as additional sound elements to extend the cinematic narrative;
- d) with regard to music in terms of its connection within the story space (diegetic) or outside of the story space (non-diegetic)⁵ as well as in terms of referential musical elements.

Through applying this methodology to a discussion of early German film soundtracks, it will be possible to mark out sonic components as elements of a narrative composite, presented by film-makers to construct the story world. This sound analysis methodology will demonstrate how these different sound elements converge into a sonic whole that reveal an equivalent complexity of aural *mise-en-scène* as hitherto associated with the analysis of visual components in contemporary film.

The ambition to develop a sound design aesthetic is not a new undertaking, as there have been notable attempts to develop a theoretical model that would define a sound film aesthetic. Many such approaches have taken as a reference compass point

⁴ In addition to Spadoni (2015), see Chion (1994, p.74) for more on the concept of Off-screen Space.

⁵ In addition to Spadoni (2015), see Weis and Belton (1985, pp.191) for more on the concept of diegetic/non-diegetic sound.

Sergei Eisenstein concept of sound as counterpoint (Eisensteinian concept of sound and counterpoint will be discussed in more detail in the Sound and Critical Reception chapter). Siegfried Kracauer ([1960] 1997, p.111-114) developed this further by dividing sound within narrative into four subsections. This method distinguished between synchronism, asynchronism, parallelism and counterpoint under the heading *The Four Types of Synchronisation*:

	SYNCHRONISM	ASYNCHRONISM
PARALLELISM	<div>Actual sound</div> <div>I</div>	<div>Actual sound</div> <div>IIIa</div> <div>Commentative sound</div> <div>IIIb</div>
	<div>II</div>	<div>Actual sound</div> <div>IVa</div> <div>Commentative sound</div> <div>IVb</div>
COUNTERPOINT		

Illustration 1 Four Types of Synchronisation. (Kracauer [1960] 1997, p.114)

Kracauer's taxonomy in turn drew its terminology of *commentative* and *actual sound* from Karel Reisz's *The Technique of Film Editing* ([1953] 1995). *Actual sound* would be elements of sound which are part of the story world, irrespective of whether they were part of the original location sound, or whether these were sounds added on later via post production processes. *Commentative sound* would be non-diegetic sounds which provide further insight or affect audience understanding of the film - such as a narration or other commentary. What is not explicitly specified in the Kracauer model is the function of music. Like other sound elements, music can be commentative (in that it helps the audience to "read" the emotional dimension of a narrative). Music can also be referential, and create connections to elements not part of the narrative within the audience's mind; the changing role of music in sound film was topic of discussion during the transition into sound film (for instance by composer Walter Gronostay, cf. Kaes et al 2016, p. 566). Further considerations

relate to whether music can be part of the story world or used as a non-diegetic element. In this regard, the Kracauer model cannot really be seen as complete. In contrast to Kracauer's taxonomy, Spottiswoode ([1950] 1969, p.173) considered a way to classify the entity of a film soundtrack, subdividing the conceptual understanding of *sound* into speech, natural sound and music. Although Spottiswoode dealt with sound in each of the categories separately, he returned to anchoring any discussion of sound within a wider, holistic consideration of film analysis.

Whittingdon's (2007) work is of interest in the context of this research project because of his emphasis on sound design in film as an amalgam of constituent elements. Although his text focuses on sound film analysis in the science fiction genre, his contention that many film theorists are unable or unwilling to engage with the soundtrack of a film as a purposefully designed composite, can be extended beyond science fiction examples to most film genres, and is valid for contemporary as well as historic film examples. Williams's methodology focuses on the distinction between sound recording as representation as opposed to reproduction. Film *is not reproduction* in terms of the story world; Film *is representation* of a story world, of a protagonist's perception. Film sound is an interpretation which, along with other components of the *mise-en-scène*, creates the story world to steer the viewer through the plot.

Critics and theoreticians who speak of film as a language or as being "like" a language invariably refer solely to image recording and its permutations when they claim that "film" is somehow language-like. The communicative aspects of sound use in film, for most writers on the subject, are limited to the languages relayed or reproduced by the recording process (principally speech and tonal music). (Williams 1980, p.51)

Williams goes on to criticise that this lack of understanding of the complexity of film soundtracks results in a failure to comprehend the recording of sound as "*a signifying practice with effects, ideological and otherwise, comparable to those of camera and projector*". Conversely, Belton reflects the notion of reproduction versus representation:

The sound track does not duplicate the world set before it; it realises an imaginary world, endowing the space and objects within the story

space another dimension that complements their temporal and spatial existence as *representations*⁶. What the sound track seeks to duplicate is the sound of an image, not that of the world.
(Belton 1992, p.326)

It could be argued that it is one of the primary functions of a film to render the audience unaware of the composite nature of the artefact: the pleasure of seeing a film results in becoming emotionally engaged and absorbed in the artefact. Although one may get lost in a piece of music or in a film, generally one is able to “zoom back out” and bring to one’s awareness any particular features of the environment, whether this is the auditorium of the cinema or a concert hall venue. It does not follow that all aspects of a film are meant to be “invisible”. Lutz Koepnick (2002, p.38) claims that Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno had argued in 1944 that the most effective film music is the score that is entirely unnoticed by the audience. But looking at the Eisler and Adorno’s text, it is clear that they actually took issue with this supposed concept of invisible (in another word: unnoticeable) music. Whilst acknowledging the primacy of the spoken dialogue at certain times in a film, the authors caution against reducing the score to invisible banality: if it’s not meant to be noticed, then what purpose is being served by having any music at that point in the film? Instead, the authors favoured an intentional, noticeable presence of music in film as a fundamental constituent of the narrative (Adorno, Eisler, [1944] 2006, p.16/17).

Practice-Based Research

Since the beginning of the new millennium, Maarit Mäkelä and Sara Routarinne (2006, p.12) have identified the emergence of a methodology that brings research and practice closer together within arts and humanities. They have defined a distinction between practice-based and practice-led research (ibid, p. 14), though they also acknowledge that the boundaries remain blurred, particularly from a transnational perspective. A simplified distinction might be to see (as the terminology suggests) *practice-led* research as an approach that includes the production of an artefact (a film, a score, an art installation etc.) that is further

⁶ My emphasis.

contextualised within an academic research discussion; the artefact may be the starting point or may be the outcome of a hypothesis. *Practice-based* research does not necessarily have an artefact as an output, and aims to combine knowledge and experience. As a methodology underpinning this particular PhD, *practice-based* means the amalgamation of production experience gained through personal practice in a particular field (editing and sound design) within an academic research discourse. This combination of theory and practice offers new insights into understanding the complex layers of the aural dimension in very early German sound films made at the beginning of the 1930s.

Arguing that film sound analysis must be approached from the perspective of a fundamental comprehension of the film soundtrack as a complex composite that has been shaped by a number of determinants, Whittington (2007, p.97) states:

The layers of sound construction then can occur at the most fundamental level of the recording process, so it must be noted that even the most ordinary or 'realistic' sound tracks must be considered constructions rather than simple capture (because of the layers of mediations created from 'proper' recording techniques, as well as from the recording technology like the microphone).

By refining research methodologies in contemporary sound design (as exemplified in Whittington's work on sound design in science fiction and building on the writings of Belton and Williams) this research project develops and extends a more complex approach to the analysis of historic film sound using a practice-based approach. Outi Turpeinen (2006, p.121) posits the view that theory and knowledge gained from research combines with experience (for instance from an involvement in the creative processes of "making") to contribute to new research knowledge. Turpeinen describes research "*as a holistic process, where everything interplays with everything and where interpretation happens in a context*" and distinguishes experiential knowledge from other forms of knowledge acquisition:

Experiential knowledge is one of the key issues in practice-led research, as is the way in which this knowledge relates to the research question. (...) In my view, the aim in practice-led research is to achieve interpretative knowledge of the researched subject matter, which can then provide new insight and discussion to it. Interpretative knowledge lays importance upon subjective view points and is thus

experiential in its nature.
(Turpeinen 2006, p.116)

Turpeinen concludes that knowledge is "not only embodied in artefacts, but also gained in the process of making them and reflected upon in the verbal format." (p. 122). The interdependency of the creation of and reflection on artefacts is again picked up by Mäkelä and Routarinne (2006, p.18), who assert that the output of any artistic practice is the creation of artefacts. These artefacts can be in the shape of words, music, movement, film, painting, sculpture, sound installations and so on. Conversely, academic research is built on a tradition of the creation of knowledge. Equally bound up in the creation of artefacts is the creation of knowledge. Practice-based and practice-led research approaches seek to identify and consolidate links between research theory and practice. Mäkelä and Routarinne (2006, p.13) offer the analogy with engineers, who are combining engineering practice and engineering knowledge within research projects. The authors distinguish between practice-led and practice-based research but conclude that the aim is to integrate knowledge shaped through practice and experience within academic research projects within the arts and humanities.

One of the relevant questions is what kind of different connections can be built between various art and research practices. What happens when research is brought into art and design practice? What is an artist or a designer looking for when stepping into an academic research context?
(Mäkelä and Routarinne 2006, p.15)

As technological advances enable far more complex sound design in contemporary film, research into historic film production reveals an analogous ambition to utilise sound as a creative component in support of filmic narrative. Ole Lützow-Holm (2013, p.65-67) sets out the contribution of practice-led and practice-based research in conjunction with the traditional role of theory as research methodology. At this point it is important to acknowledge that it is not a question of pitting theory against practice-based research; the aim of using the practice-based approach for this PhD research is to provide an additional insight into the analysis of sound film examples. One challenge facing any researcher when developing a discourse on methodology, film analysis and wider film theory is that the field is in danger of turning into a hall of mirrors as a myriad of different approaches are held up by their proponents as the

primary method for film analysis. Noël Carroll (1996) observed in his essay *Prospects for Film Theory* that there is a tendency to rush into (and then stubbornly adhere to) a particular dialectic to help develop film theory or methodology concepts, arguing that:

...in the normal course of events in film theory, the dialectical moment is hasty. Nowadays this tendency is particularly pronounced in discussions of cognitivism, which view is swiftly dismissed by castigating buzz-words like “formalism” or maybe “idealism” uttered just before the author goes on to repeat at length, yet again, the received wisdom of Theory. (...) Theory building builds on previous histories of theorizing as well as upon data (which may be theory-laden). Present theories are formulated in the context of past theories. Apprised of the shortcomings in past theories through processes of continued scrutiny and criticism, present theories try to find more satisfactory answers to the questions that drive theoretical activity. (Carroll 1996, p.57)

At this point it is worth re-stating that the present work is about the emerging practice of film sound design as evident in German cinema of the period. This is why the practice-based approach represents a valid complement to the more widely established forms of film criticism, not only with regard to underpinning core theories. According to Eagle (2006, p.246) the broader schools of thought in film-criticism have become sub-divided into smaller factions. Using the example of psychoanalytical or Marxist theories in conjunction with film, these fragmented into "sub theories" that seek to define the relationship between two semiotic systems. Eagle (ibid.) distinguishes between a subject specific system and a referential system. This echoes to some extent Georg Klaus (1965, p.71) who put forward a similar duality within semiotics, relating to an artefact and the understanding of that artefact as *Sprache* und *Metasprache* [language and meta-language].

Returning to Eagle (2006, p.246), there is a broad understanding that Lotman's theories were built on the observation that interpretation and meaning of a text were dependent on contemporary methodology and codes used for such interpretation, and that the understanding of an artefact's meaning is determined by contextual and contemporaneous determinants. In other words, the interpretation of an artefact is not an absolute science, but an attempt to align artefact with current thinking and cultural interpretation. Reflecting on the relative and temporal currency of a cultural

dialectic strengthens the argument of shifting focus to the actual artefacts and analysing these from one particular vantage point. In the context of this research project this vantage point means focusing on sonic elements in early German sound film and identifying an emerging sound aesthetic during the transitional period from the silent into the sound era, based on a practice-based approach. This approach informs the appraisal of a film's soundtrack in terms of sync and post-sync sound elements and builds on professional experience (gained as a sound designer and editor for a number of years within the British film and television industry), in conjunction with academic research (built over a number of years of lecturing on sound design and editing within the Higher Education sector). The presence of post-sync elements speaks to the determination of film-makers to incorporate sound elements into the narrative even during the early sound period in German cinema, in order to drive forward cognitive or emotive components of a film through montage of sound and image. A practice-based understanding of this particular subject matter also informs the research in terms of access to and interpretation of primary source material, including critical reception of sound film, as an indicator of how the new medium of sound film achieved a cognitive and emotional connection with its audience.

List of Films Considered for Analysis

A significant number of films from the period have been reviewed in terms of their use of sound; from that initial group of films, examples were then selected as representative of a wider referential framework in terms of an aurality of early German Sound Film. All of the films listed below have been reviewed and examined in terms of their use of sound:

Abschied, 1930.

Directed by Siodmak, R.

Berlin Alexanderplatz, 1931.

Directed by Jutzi, P.

Der Blaue Engel, 1930.

Directed by von Sternberg, J.

Bomben auf Monte Carlo, 1931.

Directed by Schwarz, H.

Das Testament des Doktor Mabuse, 1933.

Directed by Lang, F.

Der Mann Der Seinen Mörder Sucht, 1931.

Directed by Siodmak, R.

Die Drei von der Tankstelle, 1930.

Directed by Thiele, W.

Die Dreigroschenoper, 1930.

Directed by Pabst, G.W.

FP1 antwortet nicht, 1932.

Directed by Hartl, K.

Emil und die Detektive, 1931.

Directed by Lamprecht, G.

Kameradschaft, 1931.

Directed by Pabst, G. W.

Der Kongreß Tanzt, 1931.

Directed by Charrell, E.

Kuhle Wampe oder Wem gehört die Welt? 1931/1932.

Directed by Brecht, B., Dudow, S.

M - Eine Stadt such einen Mörder, 1931.

Directed by Lang, F.

Mädchen in Uniform, 1931.

Directed by Sagan, L.

Melodie des Herzens, 1929.

Directed by Schwarz, H.

Melodie der Welt, 1929.

Directed by Ruttmann, W.

Der Schuß im Tonfilmatelier, 1930.

Directed by Zeisler, A.

Der Sohn der Weissen Berge, 1930.

Directed by Bonnard, M., and Trenker, L.

Vampyr, 1932.

Directed by Dreyer, C. T.

Westfront 1918, 1930.

Directed by Pabst, G. W.

From that initial broader list of titles, several films were selected for closer analysis.

The selected films demonstrated an engagement with the medium of sound film in an exploratory, creative or innovative manner. The motivation for deciding which films were deemed as interesting in terms of their use of sound was shaped by a number of considerations; a key aspect that determined whether further sound analysis of a film

should take place was in terms of its use of different sound layers in order to develop aural narrative within the overall *mise-en-scène*. This could include the way in which a particular film uses off-screen sound in order to support either cognitive or emotive aspects of the story. A narrower selection of these key examples has been subjected to a more detailed analysis in dedicated chapters as part of this study. This PhD thesis has also focused on particular films that have so far been overlooked in terms of their use of sound. One such film is *Emil und die Detektive* (1931), which has been almost completely ignored by film sound historians. This film provides a very imaginative example of early sound film, and succeeded in delighting its audiences precisely at the period of transition into sound. In further chapters, examples selected for discussion are films in which sound is used to represent storytelling elements beyond the visual frame, rather than using sound to merely duplicate what is already represented visually. A chapter focusing on that aspect will be the analysis of Georg Wilhelm Pabst's early sound films. In *Westfront 1918* (1930) aural elements are employed as an omnipresent representation of warfare: even when there is no battle represented within the visual frame, the audience is frequently reminded of the proximity of armed conflict. In *Westfront 1918*, battle sounds are as pervasive for the protagonists as mud and misery of the trenches. Pabst integrates sound to particularly harrowing effect in the use of screams⁷, making the visceral effect of warfare audible (and tangible) in the cinematic realm. Pabst's sound film work is also an early exponent of the use of dynamic range in the way that silence and sound are juxtaposed with one another. The wider discussion further highlights contrasting approaches to sound design in evidence in the early 1930s, for instance in considering the use of sound elements to deliver glossily sugar-coated, escapist fantasies, such as *Der Kongress Tanzt* (1931) or *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* (1930). The use of aural elements to mollify audiences stands in contrast to film examples using sound to discombobulate the audience through a more dissonant or disconcerting use of aural elements, as is arguably the case in the Brecht-Eisler-Dudow collaboration *Kuhle Wampe* (1932).

⁷ In his second sound film, *Kameradschaft* (1931), Pabst uses sound to demonstrate the location and isolation of various characters trapped underground following an accident in a coal mine. From the cries and knocks of miners trapped underground to the distant sounds of rescue parties searching (sometimes in vain) for survivors - human presence is heard but not seen.

A practice-based approach has informed the research methodology for this project which is focused primarily on the explication and interpretation of sound elements in terms of particular aspects of selected films. These examples of early German sound cinema are examined in terms of an emerging sound design aesthetic; exposition of the use of out-of-vision sound elements will produce a better understanding of intentional sound design during the transitional period from the silent to the sound era. This practice-based, direct interpretation of the artefact itself aligns the methodology of the project more within a hermeneutic approach to film analysis. According to the Dictionary of Visual Discourse: A Dialectical Lexicon of Terms (2009, p.323), the definition of *hermeneutics* incorporates the general concept

(...) of the interpretation of meaning through the explication and analysis of texts and text-like sign systems (acts, social action, discourses, literary texts, art forms, and so on).

This definition allows for the interpretation of cinema (and by extensions sound film) as examples of art forms. A practice-based method and understanding of the composite nature of a film soundtrack forms the foundation for this analysis of the emerging film sound aesthetic as exemplified by a number of early German sound films produced during the late Weimar Republic. In terms of rounding up the methodological approach, central to this research is a practice-based consideration of sonic style (the concept of an emerging understanding of a sound design aesthetic) in German fiction films that were produced during the final years of the Weimar Republic, which is offered as a new contribution to academic enquiry into the subject area of early sound film research.

Literature Review

Sound film, whose technological and constructive challenges have now been solved, is beginning its artistic development. (...) It must be clear from the outset that [sound film's] laws have almost nothing to do with those of soundless film. A completely new situation is evolving here. Moving-image photography is being coupled with photographed sound. The whole artistic secret of sound film consists in the coupling of these two photographed elements in such a way as to create something new (...) The battle between image

and sound, their play with each other, their temporary fusion, which dissolves again to enable further oppositional relations - these are the possibilities. In conclusion, let it be said: the sound film problem can never imply an enhancement or degradation of silent film, nor can't solve the problems of silent film or replace it.
Ruttman ([1928] 2016, p.556)

The above quotation by Walter Ruttmann acknowledges that whilst the technological challenges of sound film were being solved, the aesthetic challenges of sounding out an entirely new cinematic medium were only just beginning. Ruttmann also emphasises that any comparison between silent film and sound film is as pointless as comparing silver with gold – the two were entirely different formats of expression. This position also reflects the view of film-makers such as Fritz Lang, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.⁸ As set out in the introduction to this thesis, there is a need to situate a discussion of aesthetic components in early sound film examples within the context of existing research on sound film history and technological developments of the 1920s. However, this research project is articulating aspects of creative sound practice as evident in a selection of early sound film examples. This Literature Review explores key strands in existing texts relevant to the thesis and articulates an engagement with these texts via thematic sections.

Film Sound History and Technological Perspectives

The following section seeks to identify existing research into key aspects of technology in terms of the period of transition from silent into sound cinema. This chapter does not seek to construct a comprehensive history of technology from the perspective of German cinema (as this has been established already), but instead attempts to sketch a background history that incorporates technological potential with other historical determinants extant during the period of transition from silent film into sound through an evaluation of relevant literature.

Although this transitional period (as well as the period of the Weimar Republic itself) has been the subject of discussion by film theorists and historians (Thomas Elsaesser 1996; 2000; Bernadette Kester 1998; Eric Weitz 2007; Anton Kaes 2009;

⁸ Please see case study focused on Lang's *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*.

Christian Rogowski 2010), there is still a gap between film theorists' interpretation of film sound compared with textual analysis from a practice-based understanding. This thesis discusses the integration of film sound practice in conjunction with historical and cultural determinants of the late Weimar Republic. At the heart of this discussion lies the hypothesis that sound for full-length feature films did not arrive in German cinema over-night in 1929 and conversely that film production in practice did not undergo a homogenous, immediate and uniform change. In engaging more closely with film sound design from the period of the transition, it is too simplistic to consider this historical period in terms of a "*before*" and "*after*" the point when sync sound became commercially and technically viable.

The period of the transition to sound film offers a splendid example of historical overdetermination. Separating out the various cultural, economic, and technological determinants involved is a complicated and delicate task.
(Williams 1992, p.126).

In spite of Alan Williams's warning, there is a tendency in existing film theory to oversimplify the transitional period. Research perspectives that condense a transitional process into a specific moment of *before* and *after*, or those that conceptualise this period in technological parameters as a mechanistic "switching over" into sound, are problematic. Focusing on the shifting aesthetic of an emerging sound design, in conjunction with a practice-based perspective incorporating sound components, offers new perspectives. This becomes apparent when looking in detail at selected early German sound film examples, which demonstrate an ambition to complement, develop and extend the visual domain of the storytelling *in ways that had been impossible during the silent era*. This research focuses on the discussion of particular film examples in terms of their inclusion of sonic elements as a new dimension within cinematic narrative. At this point it is imperative to acknowledge that there are some very detailed accounts of film historical aspects and descriptions of the technological dimension during the transitional period in Germany. Technology undoubtedly had an impact on creative decision-making processes, and consequently will have had a bearing on a particular film's sound aesthetic style. There are some excellent texts available which provide detailed accounts of technological developments, which will be referred to in the following section, and which may be useful to anyone who is interested in pursuing the technological

component further. However embryonic such technological developments may have been, film-makers found creative responses to develop sound as a narrative element in spite of these limitations. On first glance, there appears to be a well-established canon of texts on aesthetic and ideological aspects of German cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, but on closer inspection it will become apparent that many of these texts neglect deeper engagement with the sound perspective in their discussion, and none have approached the discussion of sonic style in early German sound film in combination with a practice-based understanding of film making processes. This literature review section aims to provide an overview of key texts and research in relation to film sound history and technological developments of the transitional period from silent cinema to sound film in Germany during the 1920s.

As part of a wider context, the technological perspective is not being ignored by this research project; but instead of placing technological change and innovation at the centre of the study, the main function here is to construct an analysis of a range of approaches to the use of sound as presented by key examples of early German sound film. Within a relatively specialist field such as early German sound film, a key factor influencing most of the existing research appears the pre-eminent emphasis on establishing a technological perspective. This approach is frequently linked to a history of patent development, of commercial considerations and of competitive innovation. Some research on German sound film published in German has already contributed significantly to the establishment of a technological historiography: Corinna Müller's comprehensive book *Vom Stummfilm zum Tonfilm [From Silent to Sound Film]* (2003) - which will be discussed in more detail later on - attempts to present the period of transition from the perspective of German film history most thoroughly. Müller combines key texts as well as direct analysis of early examples of sound film in German cinema; although her analysis is detailed and thorough, it would have been strengthened by a practice-based understanding of film making processes. Further key texts, which informed Müller's book, were also consulted for this research project: Harald Jossé's *Die Entstehung des Tonfilms [The Arrival of Sound Film]* (1984) which was intended as a contribution to evidence-based media history research. Jossé's book spans the period from the late 19th century to about 1930 and surveys technological developments within a wider context of

experimentation and emerging technologies. Wolfgang Mühl-Benninghaus contributed *Das Ringen um den Tonfilm [The Wrangling over Sound Film]* (1999) as an analysis into the economic strategies of the electronics industry and German film production during the 1920s and 30s. Similar to Altman's (2003) approach to return to first-hand accounts as much as possible, historical sources have been consulted – such as Umbehr and Wollenberg (1930) – to construct an account of the transitional period. As a further valuable first-hand-account to complement the narrative on innovation and technology, the voice of one of the key innovators in the field of optical sound has also been included: a founding member of the trio of German engineers that drove the development of optical sound from the early 1920s, Hans Vogt (1954) published his own retrospective account of that period under the title *Die Erfindung des Tonfilms - Ein Rückblick auf die Arbeiten der Erfindergemeinschaft Engl-Massolle-Vogt [The Invention of Sound Film – A Review of the Work of the Inventors' Cooperative Engl-Massolle-Vogt]*. When considering sound in conjunction with German film history, the work of Jo Engl, Joseph Massolle and Hans Vogt is considered as pivotal. The three engineers formed a close collaboration in order to develop their ideas for a method of recording sound through optical technology, in order to be replayed alongside the projected image; initially, their optical sound system worked with a separate optical track, but evolved to incorporate the optical strip alongside the image on the same carrier. The three inventors, who banded together after the First World War, established the *Triergon*⁹ company. As an autobiographical account of the developments of optical sound invention in Germany that had occurred three decades earlier, Vogt (1954) presents a highly personal perspective based on his own direct experience of the period. In contrast, Jossé (1984) positions his analysis of the transitional phase into sound as a more objective account. Jossé draws on a wider selection of sources to compile his research and there is an underlying scepticism in Jossé's work with regard to Vogt's more subjective contribution. Jossé's text is of particular interest as he was driven by a desire to only rely on first hand source material, describing his work as a *“Faktenorientierten Mediengeschichtsschreibung” [“fact-based media history account”]* (Jossé 1984). The research material that informed his book was obtained

⁹ Triergon: Greek for 'work of the three'.

directly from archival sources in Germany. Jossé's interpretation of German film sound history occasionally disagrees with Vogt's account, but this could be attributable to Vogt's highly personal, individual perspective. Vogt offered his autobiography as a privately funded publication in the 1950s in order to preserve a first-hand perspective for posterity; subjective or not, ultimately the value of his contribution cannot be dismissed. Both are relevant resources - Jossé for his attempt at presenting a comprehensive technological perspective in an objective and balanced account, and Vogt for the unique resonance of his historical experience.

In terms of contemporary accounts and the international perspective, a fascinating insight into the debate around the evolving technological standards is offered by the Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers (SMPE). Looking at just two SMPE Journal issues from 1931, there is clear evidence of the complex considerations with which sound production was already concerned. Carl Dreher's papers on *Recording and Editing of Sound* (p. 756, Journal of SMPE Vol 16 1931) and *Microphone Concentrators in Picture Production* (p.23, *ibid.*) discuss a range of sound determinants from both location and post-production perspectives.

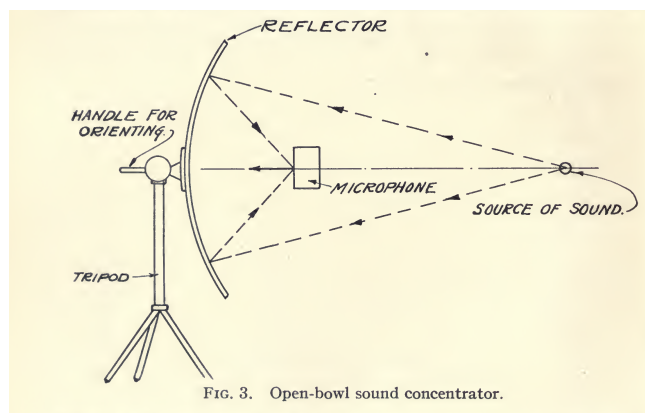


Illustration 2 Microphone Concentrators in Theory (SMPE Journal 1931, p.26)



Illustration 3 Microphone Concentrators in Picture Production (SMPE Journal 1931, p.27)

Published in the same issue is an article by George Levin entitled *Dubbing and Its Relation to Sound Picture Production* (p.38, *ibid.*) As regards the technological perspective, it becomes clear that two themes emerge: namely *process* (technological developments) and *people* (the individuals or groups that drove these processes). Though the SMPE Journal published new insights from the North-American side of the Atlantic, the publication included developments in European film-making practice. Conversely, the European continent took notice of debates, considerations and developments across the Atlantic within the public sphere.

When considering German as well as international literature on the emergence of sound film, a predominant feature in discussions from the technological perspective is that this invariably establishes a taxonomy shaped by chronology – that is to say a discourse that aims to plot technological changes in a chronologically linear fashion. Problematically, this approach suggests that in tandem with technological innovation, there is a linear, analogous response in film-making culture. In other words: an assumption that as new inventions appear, there is wide correlation in film practice in response to that innovation. Conversely in film analysis, there is a tendency to appraise film (and particularly historic film) in a linear fashion: an examination of a film text as starting point, whose analysis then radiates outward from source to society. In order to illustrate a limitation of that approach, Altman's (1992) text-centred universe of traditional film studies is helpful:

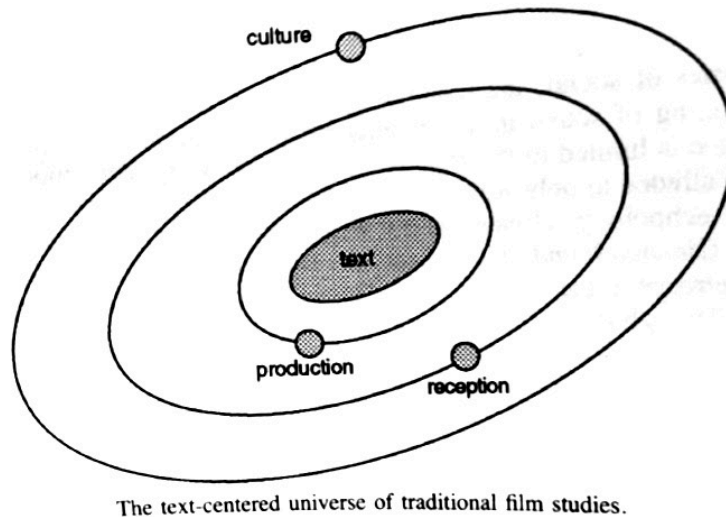


Illustration 4 Illustration from Altman: Concentric Textual Engagement. (1992, p.2)

Altman (1992, p.2) was sceptical of this linear approach to film studies:

For decades, film has been regularly defined as text, an autonomous aesthetic entity most closely related to other autonomous aesthetic entities. During this period, film theory stressed relationships internal to individual films or characteristic of cinema as a whole. Film history typically sorted films according to textual similarity and assessed the evolution of the resultant generic or thematic categories.

As an alternative response to a linear concept, Altman (1992, p.3) offered the following model of a “three-dimensional Moebius strip world, the textual center is no longer the focal point of a series of concentric rings”:

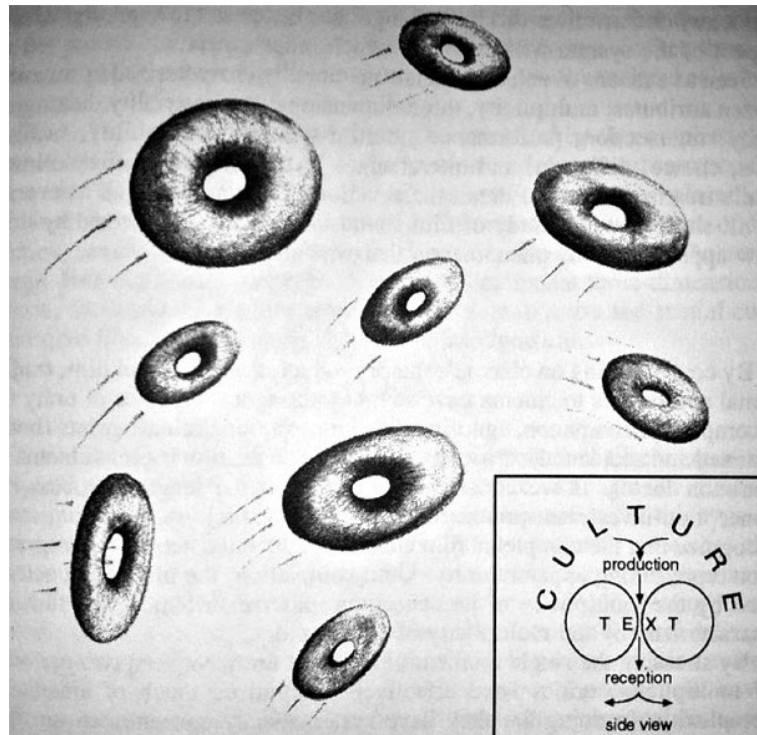


Illustration 5 Illustration from Altman: Film as Text Metaphor (1992, p.3)

Doughnut shaped film analysis as a concept in itself aside, the idea that culture informs production which in turn shapes the text, which is then received by an audience and in turn reflected in a wider culture which once again informs film making processes is a valid, perpetual model; particularly so when looking at film as a medium in transition. Another useful aspect of this analogy is the non-linear nature: text in context in “gravity-free space” – this space is, at least as we might conventionally call it, the public sphere. Stretching Altman’s analogy of the doughnut as a representation of film-as-text further, thorough textual analysis should incorporate an understanding of the film in terms of its components. In order to inform an understanding of how the artefact was made (and if it were a doughnut) then one would need to know what sort of constituent elements its ingredients are. Conversely, with regard to the construction of a soundtrack in film, textual analysis would benefit significantly from an awareness of how sound layers combine together to make up the overall sound. In relation to historic film, there is a particular absence in textual analysis from this perspective. From the early days of cinema, Germany had been one of the world leaders in silent film production, but it was in danger of losing its cinematic supremacy with the advent of sound. In comparison to developments in the United States, German film production appeared reluctant to continue investing in sound technology, which was a consequence of the faltering

early advances into film sound technology at the beginning of the 1920s. As an additional facet to the historical contextual discussion, this project considers the reasons behind the fact that Germany trailed its competitors in the United States in the exploitation of commercial sound film by a few years.

The Arrival of Sound in German Cinema

In addition to Vogt (1954), Jossé (1984), Mühl-Benninghaus (1999) and Müller (2003), Barbara Flückiger's contribution to the establishment of an academic discourse on sound design as a subject area incorporates a comprehensive account of technological developments. In *Sound Design: Die virtuelle Klangwelt des Films*. [*Sound Design: The Virtual Sonic World of Film*] Flückiger also acknowledges Triergon's pioneering work when they produced their first short sound film right at the beginning of the 1920s (2007, p30). In February 1921 Triergon tried to secure further investments in their optical sound technology, showcasing their film in which Friedel Hintze, a prominent actress of the period, could be *seen and heard* reciting the classic poem *Sah ein Knab ein Röslein stehn*¹⁰ by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The film was shown to a number of financial backers and film industry representatives from Germany and the United States (including Samuel Goldwyn), who were interested in the technology behind the project. In 1922, the inventors contributed their expertise to another film, this time with a dramatic narrative, which was promoted as the world's first optical sound film. The inventor Hans Vogt (1954, p.97) wrote the English epilogue to his autobiography and recounted the following:

At the same time, actual sound films of several kinds were made.
After many test films, the first night performance took place in Berlin
on 17 September 1922 and other talkies, of which *Village Life* has
been kept, followed thereafter.

According to Jossé (1984, p160), this event attracted sufficient attention from Ufa to

¹⁰ Goethe's poem is about a young boy gazing at a rose, and was a popular staple in the school curriculum. Many German school children in the early part of the 20th century had to learn this piece by heart. Choosing a familiar text was perhaps a shrewd decision, as it would have been recognisable irrespective of the recording quality.

embark on a feature film using emerging optical technology with *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* [*The Little Matchstick Girl*] (1925), which was directed by Dr Guido Bagier and based on the fairy tale by Hans-Christian Andersen. However, the project was apparently rushed through and there were still considerable technical challenges that remained unresolved in the haste to bring the novelty of a speaking film to the cinema. Bagier incorporated his own experience of these events in his novel *Das Tönende Licht* [*Resounding Light*], which was published in 1943. A dramatized account of the early experimental stages of optical sound, Bagier's novel provides a very valuable contribution, given Bagier's personal perspective, but on account of its format as a novel, a source which has had peripheral input into the material assessed for this project. Returning to the evaluation of these early sound film experiments, audiences and critics alike were dissatisfied with the film *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* both as a film, and as a show case for sound film technology. In terms of its production values, technological problems with the soundtrack could not have helped matters. According to Bagier's fictionalized account, the batteries had not been sufficiently charged for the loudspeakers in the auditorium. Whatever the causes were, technical problems were reported in the press at the time of this event and represented a set-back of significant consequences in the establishment of sound film in Germany; the ensuing financial difficulties eventually gave US studios the opportunity to acquire the Triergon patents. Vogt (ibid.) summarised the developments during the 1920s in his own words:

Unlucky circumstances prevented the exploitation of the invention in Germany. The patent rights went to Switzerland and partly to the USA. They regained importance in 1928 when the public chances of the talkie became obvious in the United States.

The unhappy fate of Triergon's role in the invention of optical sound on film is condensed into those three short sentences by Vogt but the repercussions of their contribution in terms of the advancement of sound on film within the German film industry should also be acknowledged in the context of global film history. Having made considerable initial progress in the development of optical sound during the early 1920s, sound film then did not become established in mainstream German cinema until the very end of the decade. As Vogt and other sources confirm, Triergon sold its patents to a Swiss company, which in turn sold these on to

interested parties in the United States. In consequence, further refinement of optical sound technology occurred on the American side of the Atlantic during the 1920s. However, as soon as sound film became viable and found financial support within the German film industry, film-makers embraced the new format and produced a considerable number of sound films that display an interesting range of stylistic components.

This project considers the contextual frame within which a selection of German sound films was produced at the beginning of the sound era and will discuss these examples from the perspective of their sound stylistic elements. To that end, a range of academic literature already exists which seeks to list every German sound film made during that period. An inventory of German sound film produced from 1928 onwards has been compiled via other sources before now¹¹. As early as 1936, Oskar Kalbus offered a two-volume historiography of both silent and sound film in Germany under the title *Vom Werden deutscher Filmkunst*¹². However, the Kalbus text is distorted by national-socialist perspectives and ignores the considerable contribution of Jewish film-makers to the establishment of German cinema. Nonetheless, some visual material from Kalbus, such as this photograph of the Tonfilmkreuz in Babelsberg, is usable.

¹¹ See for instance Klaus (1989)

¹² *How Germany's Film Art Evolved*



Illustration 6 Tonfilmkreuz Babelsberg/Berlin; Cigarette Card (Kalbus 1935, p.17)

Equally, *Vom Werden deutscher Filmkunst* incorporated didactic material that illustrates optical film sound processes for the lay readership that was Kalbus's target audience. Optical sound capturing and reproduction processes were explained via handy diagrams incorporated into the text.

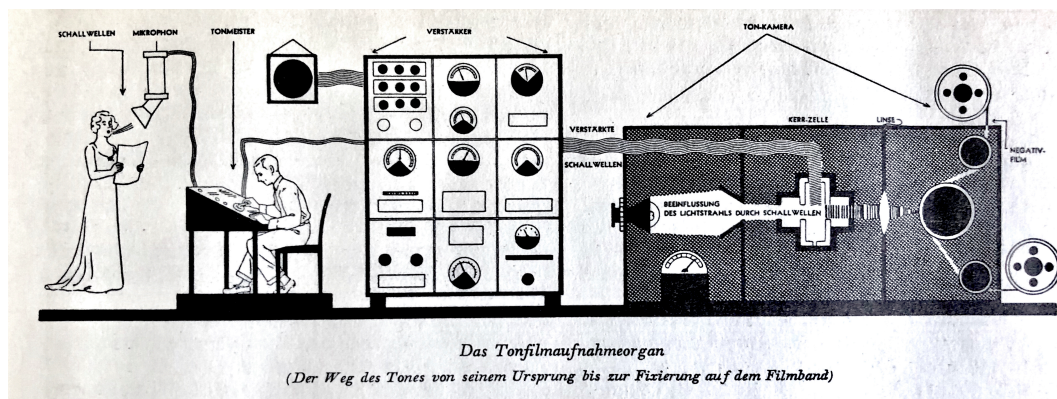


Illustration 7 Optical sound process (Kalbus 1935, p.23)

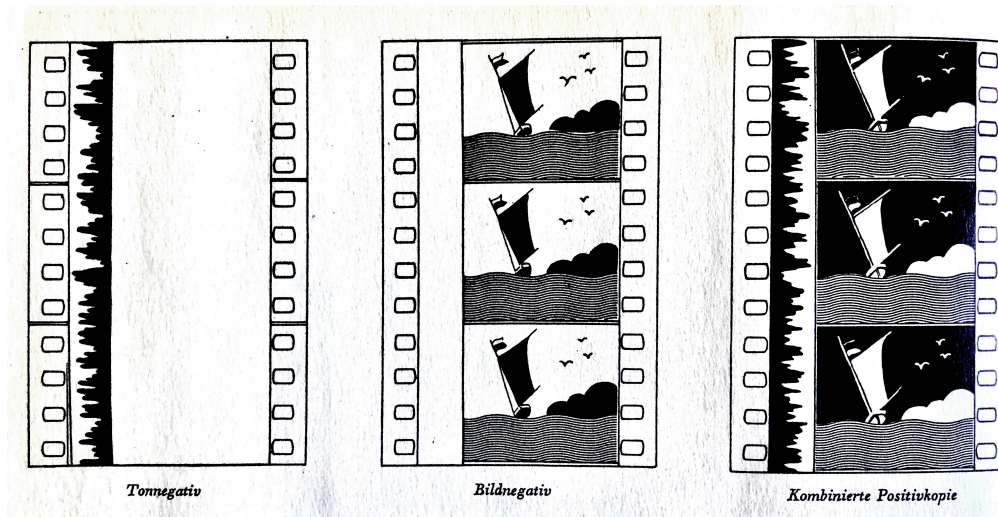


Illustration 8 Optical soundtrack and image combined (Kalbus 1935, p.20)



Illustration 9 Sound Film Location: Camera in blanket; Cigarette Card (Kalbus 1935, p.18)

Important to note in this context that Oskar Kalbus's two-volume edition on film history was published by the *Cigaretten-Bilderdienst*, an organization with close links to cigarette manufacturers and the wider tobacco industry. These types of books were full of textual material and complemented with the addition of cigarette pictures. The album itself was inexpensive to buy, and the textual material provided a very stimulating platform through which to engage the readership with a particular subject area. Readers could acquire the pictures that illustrated each one of these volumes without extra cost via tobacco purchases, or by ordering additional prints directly from the publisher against payment. Under the guise of being factually

informative and educational, such cigarette albums were an extremely effective way of distributing popular textual material that had been ideologically aligned to national-socialist ideology that characterised the *Third Reich*. The influential effect of these albums, which preserved the legacy of carefully selected cultural material, is particularly noteworthy during an era when films could only be experienced in cinemas by the wider population. The actual legacy of films or film makers that were out of favour with the regime were destined to fade away.



Illustration 10 Ufa's mobile location sound truck; Cigarette Card (Kalbus 1935)

The Ulrich Klaus series, *Der Deutsche Tonfilm* [German Sound Film] (1989) aimed to catalogue every German sound film made between 1929 and 1945, striving to provide additional information as much as possible within the scope of the series. As well as a comprehensive list of sound feature film productions, this lexicon provides a brief plot synopsis of each film, compiling key facts such as cast & crew credits, production details (shot on location cf. studio material), film classification and “censorship” information, running length, as well as dates in relation to a film’s premiere and wider distribution. As reference material to provide key facts and chronological detail of German sound films made during the period of this doctoral research, the Klaus series in particular proved to be a very useful resource, albeit one that does not in any way provide an evaluation of sound film from the perspective of an aural aesthetic.

In contrast to the approach taken by Klaus (1989), this project aims to establish a context that explores aesthetic and / or artistic factors that may have been involved in shaping early ‘soundscapes’ in a selection of films. Furthermore, this research does not seek to include every single German sound film made during the period, as such a broadly focused survey would be outside the scope of this research project. One aspect which will naturally limit textual analysis of every German sound film made during the period of the late Weimar Republic would be determined by availability; not least as a number of the films from the period in question are difficult to access or entirely lost. Rather than provide an inventory of German sound film as such, the focus in this work lies within a detailed analysis of film sound style in a selection of films. The initial selection process was shaped by the identification of a range of different approaches that could be observed in regard to sound. Some examples are included in the selection because they represent a particularly prominent genre from the sound perspective. Another example might be selected because of its particular use of out-of-vision sound to augment narrative aspects.

Theorists and the Arrival of Sound Film

In relation to wider considerations, a historical context should include an overview of the response of contemporary theorists to the arrival of sound (these are discussed in more detail as part of the Sound and Critical Reception chapter). Any project that deals with cinema during the period of the Weimar Republic will have to engage at some stage with Siegfried Kracauer ([1947] 2004) as the author of the seminal book *From Caligari to Hitler*, which has already been mentioned in the Methodology section. In the preface to the 2004 edition, the Italian film scholar Leonardo Quaresima reflected on Kracauer’s 1927 essay *The Mass Ornament* as follows:

‘The position that an epoch occupies in the historical process can be determined more strikingly from an analysis of its inconspicuous surface level- expressions than from the epoch’s judgments about itself’ (p.75). This premise is the basis for Kracauer’s critical theory concerning the products of industrial culture – from cinema to photography
(Quaresima 2004, p. xxiv).

Quaresima uses the 1927 essay to contextualize Kracauer’s seminal 1947 text. At the same time, Kracauer’s ([1947] 2004) *From Caligari to Hitler* has to be seen from

the perspective of an account marked its author's own personal status as an émigré. Kracauer was an important European intellectual writing in the US during the 1940s, as an exile from Germany. The psychological linkage between the rise of fascism and German cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, which Kracauer ([1947] 2004) sought to establish as a key concept in his book, was a retrospective engagement with films from the period in the context of politics. Hugely influential in its time, it has more recently been revisited and newly appraised by a number of scholars, notably Bruce Murray (1990) in *From Caligari to Kuhle Wampe*. The influential nature of the media - and specifically of film - on society has been the subject of numerous debates in a number of academic disciplines. In the introduction to his updated 1957 edition of *Film as Art*, Rudolf Arnheim discussed the effect of film and other media:

This social and economic fusion cannot but homogenize the properties of form and content by which each medium exerts its purest power over the human mind.
(Arnheim 1957, author's preface)

Elsewhere, the author expanded on his theory on *form and content* as an influence over style, a concept that had been expressed in his German writings during the 1920s and had been defined by him using the German word "*Materialtheorie*" [*theory of material*]. By this, he was referring to a wider meaning of the *theory of medium* (actually relating to the material form or materiality of the medium). Arnheim still held on to this concept fifty years later and revisited this again in the 1957 updated edition:

Materialtheorie [...] was a theory meant to show that artistic and scientific descriptions of reality are cast in molds that derive not so much from the subject matter as from the properties of the medium – or Material – employed.
(Arnheim 1957, p.2)

What Arnheim establishes in this text is that the material form of a piece of art (such as a film in the context of this research) by its very format itself a significant element of the artistic interpretation of reality through the artist, and by extension the film-maker. Bearing in mind that the introduction of sound to the visual aesthetic of film required an entirely new style of film-making, it follows that sound film must be subjected to an analysis of its aesthetic form in terms of the combination of image and sound. Whilst a number of books have been published on German film during

the Weimar Republic from the visual perspective, scant (if any) regard has been paid to the role of sound. As Whittington (2007, p.11) points out, a significant proportion of film sound theory does not reflect the degree of complexity of aural design and construction invested in the soundtrack of a film – the sound which comes out of the speakers in the auditorium is not simply a homogenous entity; it is not an automatic by-product of cinematography¹³. According to Walter Murch (cited by Polzer 2002, p.301) “*by means of some mysterious perceptual alchemy*” film sound continues to be in a less prominent position in terms of how films are read. And yet, film soundtracks, even the very early sound film examples discussed in detail by this project, are a media composite; a complex product reflecting creative and narrative concepts.

On further engagement with the subject matter, it becomes clear that sound film was at once reacting to, as well as shaping, Weimar society. By extension, Arnheim’s (1957) concept of “*Materialtheorie*” may have found further development via Marshall McLuhan’s book *The Medium is the Message* ([1964] 2008); not wanting to digress, Arnheim’s *Materialtheorie* confirms the hypothesis of this research project: sound film required a new creative engagement with cinematic storytelling, and sound films need to be subjected to more detailed analysis to explore the extent of sound cinema’s narrative ambition. The motivation for this research is to compile an analysis of stylistic aural traits in a selection of early German sound films, and to relate their analysis to the wider contextual framework of film practice, theory, audience and wider cinema production.

Film Historians and Classic Weimar Cinema

German Sound Film became established at around the same time as the democratic fabric of the Weimar Republic began to deteriorate. Broadly speaking, in terms of the arrival of the first - commercially truly successful - sound films in Germany, this relates to the period from 1929 onwards. The Weimar Republic came to an end in

¹³ The eminent Sound Designer and Film Editor Walter Murch explained in an article for the *New York Times* that the soundtrack is not a shadow cast by the image itself, even if it is perceived in that way by the audience cf.: Stretching Sound to Help the Mind See (in Polzer, 2002, p301)

early 1933 with the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor and the ascent to power of the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei* [*National-Socialist German Workers Party*]. The NSDAP inaugurated a regime that brought with it an almost immediate introduction of state control and censorship of public and private spheres. This explicit and implicit level of control dictated by totalitarian ideology resulted in a marked change of filmic output from 1933 onwards; alongside new censorship guidelines that would shape narrative subjects (and ultimately filmic style) came an exodus of film-makers who took their leave from Germany for other European destinations or headed for Hollywood. Most émigrés left because of ethnic pressures brought about by the rise of explicit, state-driven anti-Semitism; many departed for political, personal or artistic reasons - or any combination of all four.

In the context of the cinema of the Weimar Republic, the expressionist style pioneered by individuals such as Max Reinhardt for his theatrical productions, made the transition into film via directors such as Robert Wiene, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau and Fritz Lang. Their notable stylistic influence emerged during the earlier part of the Weimar Republic through silent films such as *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (1920), *Nosferatu* (1922) or *Metropolis* (1927). Expressionist film examples have been the subject of wide ranging analysis in terms of visual aesthetic and *mise-en-scène*; at the forefront was Lotte Eisner's seminal text originally published in French in 1952, subsequently (1965) translated into English as *The Haunted Screen*, in which she writes:

The leaning towards violent contrast - which in Expressionist literature can be seen in the use of staccato sentences - and the inborn German liking for chiaroscuro and shadow, obviously found an ideal artistic outlet in the cinema. Visions nourished by moods of vague and troubled yearning could have found no more apt mode of expression, at once concrete and unreal.
(Eisner 2008, p.17).

Leaving aside the notion of an “*inborn German liking*” of the heavy contrast exemplified by the Expressionist style¹⁴, Eisner identifies the emotional essence of

¹⁴ Instead of an innate preference, perhaps the concept of a pioneering style that became popular in

the Expressionist style from a visual perspective. Yearning, ambiguous, unreal - imbued with a sense of portent and foreboding; art as reflection of a society in a state of flux.

Particularly from the international perspective Eisner and Kracauer (2004) remain influential as leading early voices in the development of a discourse on the visual aesthetic and narrative style of German cinema during the Weimar Republic. However, since the publication of their seminal contributions a considerable range of new texts have been added, attempting to continue and define cinematic determinants of the period – but largely with insufficient discussion of the aural elements that became part and parcel of film making towards the end of the period. As an exception, Thomas Koebner's *Diesseits der "Dämonischen Leinwand" [Beyond the "Haunted Screen"]* (2003) published contributions from a number of academics in an attempt to contribute new perspectives on the cinema of the late Weimar republic; it included the chapter *Tonfilm: Neuer Realismus? [Sound Film: New Realism?]* (2003) by Corinna Müller on sound film in relation to cinematic realism. Her chapter touches upon the concept of auto-reflexivity in some early German sound films and uses the "film within a film" storyline of Ludwig Berger's *Ich bei Tag und Du bei Nacht* (1932)¹⁵. Koebner's book contains another chapter that takes the sound film discussion further into the realm of auto-reflexivity; however, Jörg Schweinitz's contribution "*Wie im Kino!*" [*"Just like in the movies!"*] (2003) acknowledges that auto-reflexive story elements were not unique to the sound film period – citing Murnau's *Tartüff* (1926) as the most notable exponent of a silent film within a film. Although some texts (such as these two chapters) do discuss sound film, the overarching approach is more aligned within a traditional film theory discourse, which all too often eschews the aural for the visual and seeks to focus on sociological components - rather than on an analysis of actual film sound design in historical film. *Hollywood in Berlin* by

Thomas J Saunders (1994) includes a chapter entitled *The Coming of Sound* but

Germany and was equally admired beyond German borders might be less contentious.

¹⁵ *I by Day, You by Night* - The film was also the subject of a detailed discussion by Sabine Hake (Provocations of the Disembodied Voice: Song and the Transition to Sound in Berger's Day and Night) in Calhoon (2001, p.55)

again approaches the period from a socio-economic, as well as an ideological perspective, without a discussion of emerging sound style German film. Saunders places strong emphasis on patent disputes and economic supremacy against a backdrop of distribution markets that were being fragmented and redefined by the arrival of the talkie. Noah Isenberg edited *Weimar Cinema* (2008) which contains several contributions that focus on examples from early German sound film, including *Der Blaue Engel* (1930), *Mädchen in Uniform* (1931), *M* (1931) and *Kuhle Wampe* (1932), without developing an extensive discussion of the sonic style of these film examples. That being said, Todd Herzog's (2008) chapter in Isenberg's book focuses on Fritz Lang's 1931 film *M*, and Herzog does include some engagement with the function of sound elements within the narrative. Patrice Petro's (2008) chapter in the same volume discusses the transitional period into sound in terms of the production of multi-language versions destined for the export market. Petro's particular focus is on von Sternberg's *Der Blaue Engel*, an early exemplar of the multi-language version approach adopted by the German film industry during the transitional period, which will be discussed further in a moment. According to the title of Isenberg's book, it was intended "an essential guide to classic films of the era", covering a broad range of films from the period of the Weimar Republic from silent to sound era. However, as an anthology it focused on broad themes and did not particularly engage with German cinema's fundamental shift in filmic narrative with the arrival of sound. It is the combination of the historical perspective in conjunction with the homogenisation of the cinematic experience which becomes particularly pertinent with the transition to sound. Koepnick (2002) recognised the ideological potential afforded by sound film within the context of the era:

Whereas the economic crash of 1929 resulted in an unprecedented convulsion of global spaces and temporal coordinates, sound film seemed to offer an ordered and recognizable space where it became possible to articulate or even counteract feelings of displacement, to restructure memory and readjust fantasy. The rhythms and streamlined temporalities of the talkie actualized structures of experience that differed from the chaotic flexing of time during the late Weimar Republic.
(Koepnick 2002, p. 29).

A key thread running through Isenberg's book is a predominant approach from established patterns of film theory, focusing on national identity, sexuality, art film

and censorship. Given Koepnick's recognition of sound cinema's impact in terms of unifying and ordering focus, the broad themes of Isenberg's book could have been explored further by incorporating the role of sound – particularly in terms of national identity.

To date, very little literature published in English relates specifically to the aesthetic consequences of Germany's transition from the silent to the sound era. Instead, the notion that theorists rejected sound in film has become widely accepted. In terms of a discussion of critical responses during the transition to sound, Marina Burke's (2009, p.58) contribution to *Sound and Music in Film and Visual Media* urges a re-evaluation of widely held assumptions of a unilateral scepticism towards the adaptation of sound by film theorists. With reference to eminent figures such as Béla Balázs or Rudolf Arnheim, Burke sees the established historiography of the transition into sound film as a muddying of historical components and ultimately as apocryphal historiography. Malte Hagener and Jan Hans (1999, p.7) assert in *Als die Filme singen lernten [When Movies Learned to Sing]*, it was simply wrong for a cultural vanguard to look down on the concept of sound film in its earliest stages as an inferior medium. Hagener and Hans characterise this group of critics as quasi self-appointed high-priests assuming to become the arbiters of a contemporaneous 1920s film aesthetic. In most cases critical voices cautioned against the arrival of sound in film from a hypothetical position - long before sound film production was to become a reality. With particular reference to Arnheim and Kracauer, Hagener and Hans contest the notion convincingly that silent film had effectively reached cultural perfection, and dispel the hypothesis that silent film's highly artistic pinnacle was being usurped by the creatively inferior medium of sound film. The authors are critical of an understanding of silent film as having been created outside the pressures of commercial determinants or that every single film made during the silent era can be seen as an exponent of the highest artistic and creative ambition. Whilst it is true that the higher production costs of sound film limited the willingness of studios to take on risky subject matters, the same can be said about big budget films such as *Metropolis* (1926) during the silent era. Lang's propensity for *Monumentalfilme*, films of increasingly high ambition in terms of production values, had proved to be costly ventures for Ufa during the silent era, and *Metropolis*

plunged the studio into disastrous financial difficulties.

The arrival of sound film facilitated the production of a rising number of musical films, but not all sound films were populist or shallow mass entertainment. The arrival of sound gave rise to an entirely new, highly popular, genre, the *Tonfilm Operette*, musical spectacle which was almost exclusively made to provide diverting entertainment to its audience. But the production of these musical extravaganzas kept booming, ultimately because the sentiments of the genre chimed with an audience that sought to find solace from the economic hardship of daily life. There was a divergence of attitudes between popular opinion and critical reception of these musical films. Hagener and Hans acknowledge that wrangling over economic control became more explicit, but also clarify that the constraints of commercialism and economic competition did not suddenly commence with the arrival of sound in film.

Whereas some voices expressed a sentimental yearning for the bygone silent era, others realized that sound film opened new opportunities that had simply not existed during the silent era. Although it is true that the prospect of sound film was not uniformly, immediately supported by all critics - the established status of German silent film as an existing visual art form was held in high esteem at the time – yet the assumption of complete rejection of sound film among theorists and writers is misguided. The chapter on Sound and Critical Reception will discuss the complexity of the critical reaction to sound further. In concluding this section of the Literature Review, it should be said that reservations over the arrival of sound film related mostly to a fear of sound film potentially reducing the art of cinema to a wordy entertainment spectacle, of dialogue-heavy theatre devoid of deeper artistic ambition. Once such misgivings were addressed - with early sound films such as *M, Westfront* 1918, *Kameradschaft* and others, the creative potential of early sound film became recognised by critics and theorists during the early 1930s. The positive contemporary response in Germany to these early German sound films in particular has become evident during the evaluation of primary source material for this research project, and will become clear in the discussion of the four case studies.

Given that the advent of sound film occurred within a broader context of change and

unrest in the Weimar Republic at economic, social, philosophical, political and cultural levels, the increasing production expenses in making the transition to sound a reality is of particular significance. And whilst the coming of sound offered the potential to exercise much greater control over the content over the soundtrack of a film, technological patents and formats were hotly debated, both within Germany, as well as internationally. Linked to the thematic strands film sound and emerging technology in the foreground, there are further economic interests to be recognised as commercial drivers in the background; these various factors acted at times as catalysts or obstacles in the development of sound film. In addition to Mühl-Benninghaus (1999), this is extensively discussed via Jan Distelmeyer's *Tonfilmfrieden / Tonfilmkrieg [Sound Film Peace / Sound Film War]* (2003), in particular in regard to the patent battles and wrangling over the instigation of standardised sound recording and replaying apparatus. The developing negotiations between various factions vying to determine patent rights were being reported the cinema press on an almost daily level during the early 1930s. Certain aspects of the *process* (that is to say the mechanics of how sound was to be captured and replayed in sync with the image) become inevitably linked to the biographical accounts of particular individual figures. For instance, the Americans Thomas Edison and Lee DeForest are two widely recognised names bound up with the period when early moving pictures began to talk, along with Eugene Lauste from the European perspective. However, in examining the development of scientific discovery or technological invention, it becomes clear that many of the associated processes do not occur in a vacuum; Newton's famously self-effacing quote of 'standing on the shoulders of giants' is a dictum that still applied to the inventions leading up to synchronous sound technology. Whereas Edison and DeForest – to a lesser degree Lauste – are internationally recognised pioneers of sound film technology, from the perspective of German cinema's journey into sound the inventor trio Triergon played a significant role.

Similarly, transnational opportunities of silent film production came under commercial pressure with the transition to sound, as films could no longer be made ready for international markets by translating the intertitles. This shift represented a serious economic threat to the income of the German film industry. That being said,

even silent film narratives were not universally transposable within the international context, as some scripts had a very specific national appeal that did not extend beyond their home cultural framework. Nonetheless, the arrival of sound represented additional challenges to the export business, given that some silent films had generated considerable export profits. Jan-Christopher Horak (1992b, p78) demonstrates this economic dimension, citing the example of Ernst Lubitsch's silent film *Madame Dubarry*. Starring Emil Jannings and Pola Negri, the film reached the United States in December 1920. Even prior to its American premiere, the inaugural meeting of the US National Board of Review had decided that this would be one of the most significant films of the period. Once *Madame Dubarry* was distributed to US cinemas under the title *Passion*, it generated \$10,000 a day at the box office. According to Horak the *New York Times* estimated the US rights to *Passion's* cinema distribution at about half a million dollars - after just a fortnight of a sell-out run. This example speaks to the fact that during the silent period, the German film industry proved to be serious competition to the infrastructure of emerging US film production.

Internationally, there had been considerable interest in German films, film-makers and actors during the 1920s. German-made silent films had been very successful, and attractive offers lured many, amongst them Jannings and Lubitsch, across the Atlantic. It is also worth remembering at this stage that Emil Jannings was the first ever recipient of an Academy Award as Best Actor. Whereas silent films such as the Jannings star vehicles *Madame Dubarry* [*Passion*] or *Der Letzte Mann* [*US title The Last Laugh*] (1924, directed by Murnau) had generated lucrative Dollar dividends as well as international status for the German film industry, sound film was in danger of marginalising cinematic distribution focus within domestic markets. In this context, Germany's film industry responded to the arrival of synchronous sound by experimenting with the production of multi-language versions of their films, a practice that is explored in detail in Chris Wahl's book *Sprachversionsfilme aus Babelsberg: Die internationale Strategie der Ufa 1929 – 1939* [*Language Version Films made in Babelsberg: Ufa's International Strategy 1929-1930*] (2009). Film companies tried to combat the impact that sound had on Germany's film export business by producing translated versions of their film stories. Studios repackaged

films for export by re-using the same sets and occasionally even employing the same actors to perform in these different language versions, provided these stars had the ability to play their part in more than one language version. Lillian Harvey was such a star - acting, singing and dancing her way through the German as well as English and French language versions of the Ufa hit *Der Kongress Tanzt* [*The Congress at Dance*] (1931). Although this method increased production costs (and extended the shooting schedules), production companies saw the multi-language version approach as a possible foil against losing out on international distribution revenue. Alongside multi-language versions, the practice of dubbing films into different languages was also established very early on in Germany - both in terms of dubbing film imports into German, as well as exploring the export potential for German-made sound films. Gerd Naumann's book *Filmsynchronisation in Deutschland bis 1955* [*Film Dubbing in Germany until 1955*] (2016) discusses the practice of dubbing in Germany in thorough detail, but he also describes the use of subtitled film versions in order to maintain access to international markets (Naumann, p. 132). In this context the *Film-Kurier* as well as other voices in the press reported on various experimental sound film enterprises in the early 1930s. Whilst there was widespread scepticism to the concept of supplanting one actor's voice with that of another by dubbing a film, there were occasional success stories to report; Naumann (p. 145) cites the Polish version of *Liebling der Götter* [*Darling of the Gods*] (1930, directed by Schwarz) as one such instance where the press uniformly approved of the dubbed version. Naumann's research gives insight into the various practices and technological solutions to address the language barriers presented by the transition of silent to sound cinema. His book also discusses the fact that Hollywood sound imports struggled to consolidate lasting box office success in German cinemas (p.243) - beyond the initial novelty of the earlier Al Jolson / Vitaphone vehicles that had rekindled German interest in sound films in the late 1920s. Whilst Naumann's work is specifically focused on the history of film dubbing in Germany, Wahl's research captures the multi-language versions of the transitional era. Neither author (and this is not meant in as criticism, but an observation of the scope of their work) sought to produce an analysis of early German sound film in terms of their sound style. The immense value of Naumann's and Wahl's respective contributions rests in their detailed discussion of the German film industry's initial solutions to the language

conundrum, which became a pressing issue with the arrival of sound in film.

Sweeping assumptions about the transition from silent to sound cinema have become established - for instance that the main challenge of adapting to sound was faced by silent film actors having to come to terms with the microphone, fail to do justice to the complexity of a whole industry undergoing a process of evolution. Returning to the theme of film history's underestimation of the complexity of the period of transition, Williams (1992) observed:

One takes the transition to sound so much for granted: things happened the way they did, therefore they must, it seems, have happened the way they did. There is no ready way of conceptualizing the role of historical contingency in the process, nor of thinking precisely about the extent to which it may indeed be true that recorded sound came to the commercial cinema because it was, in fact, inevitable
(Williams 1992, p.126).

Leading on from Williams's remarks, a key aspect which has been less well explored to date is the concept of how these early sound films actually developed sound elements in terms of narrative and *mise-en-scène*. Yet a closer examination of exactly these aspects can reveal important insights into early creative responses to the potential of sound in film. In 1929, the German cinema industry was taking its first steps into mainstream, feature length sound film production. A significant early sound film example made in Germany that resulted in international success was Josef von Sternberg's *Der Blaue Engel* (1930), which was also produced as an English-language version as *The Blue Angel* (1930). But while internationally successful German sound film exports were the exception rather than the norm, there were many early sound films which gained great popularity inside Germany and which are the subject of this research project. Recalling Georg Wilhelm Pabst's¹⁶ 1929 proclamation on the importance of sound for the future of the cinema - which

¹⁶ (UZH -Seminar für Filmwissenschaft - Viktor Sidler: Kino der Dreissiger- und Vierzigerjahre 2017) This Pabst quote from 1929 was used by the Swiss film historian Viktor Sidler as part of a lecture series in the Winter Semester of 1982/83. All of Sidler's lectures are available via: <http://www.film.uzh.ch/de/bibliothek/sidler/lectures/FG2/V4.html>

predated the premiere of Sternberg's film *Der Blaue Engel* only by a few months - the sense of excitement, anticipation, of optimism and curiosity about the opportunities afforded by sound for film remains palpable. Many were speculating about the future of film, auguring how sound would affect the established forms and conventions of the silent screen. Looking at publications from the 1920s it becomes clear that sound was anticipated with a sense of curiosity rather than one of apprehension. Sound appeared like a yet undiscovered country on the horizons of the film industry, and film-makers were soon eager to explore its emerging possibilities. The eagerness encapsulated by Pabst and others in their sense of anticipation speaks of the enthusiasm with which sound for film became regarded in German cinema. Not surprisingly filmmakers like Pabst, Lamprecht and Lang consolidated this enthusiasm via their approach to the early sound films they went on to direct: Pabst's films *Westfront 1918* (1930), *Kameradschaft* (1931), Lamprecht's *Emil und die Detektive* (1931), and Lang's *M - Eine Stadt sucht Einen Mörder* (1931) and *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (1933). This was a time when film-makers, who could see the narrative and emotive potential that sound created for the cinema, would explore a newly evolving film aesthetic.

The Sonification of Silent Cinema and its Transition into Sound

As discussed elsewhere in this research project, a fundamental characteristic of the so-called silent era was the diverse range of sound accompaniments to film screenings. Sound film enabled film-makers to shape emotive and narrative elements of cinema in a more congruent manner, at a time when the dissemination of ideological concepts became increasingly subjected to the undertow of powerful political currents. Moving from the visual aspect of *mise-en-scène* in the cinema of the 1920s, a number of key texts on the relationship between audience, screen and sonic elements in the pre-sync sound era have been published. Written largely from the perspective of the American cinema, Altman (2005) provides a comprehensive survey of diverse approaches to sound practice during the silent era in *Silent Film Sound*. Smaller cinemas had to make do with a more condensed arrangement provided by whatever number of musicians in their employ – from small ensembles to the stereotypical lone pianist accompanying events on screen, to the Wurlitzer – these musical sonification's often drew on an improvisational repertoire. According

to a Motion Picture News survey conducted in the early 1920s, almost half of the respondents relied on a theatre organ for musical accompaniment, while there is an equal split between a solo piano or some form of orchestral accompaniment. Altman (2005) also describes how some cinemas preferred to employ sound effects technicians who, concealed behind the screen, would follow the action with live sound effects generated by a range of props and even specially-built devices: in essence sound-effects generating machines. The role of providing spot effects live and in sync, at least in terms of intention, would frequently be fulfilled by percussionists from the theatre orchestra. Cinemas in large urban centres had the pick of suitably skilled musicians or even the financial resources for an entire orchestra to perform a film's specially composed score (if such a score existed), or which could provide accompaniment on a relatively grand acoustic scale from other available musical sources. In this context, Richard Abel's *Encyclopaedia of Early Cinema* (2005, p. 463) discusses the range of stock music resources offered by Ernő Rapée and Sam Fox's *Motion Picture Music* catalogue as available mood music for¹⁷ silent film; similarly, Abel and Altman's 2001 book *The Sound of Early Cinema* discusses the range of library and stock music as stand-by material during the silent era. An important factor to emphasise at this point again that these musical additions were frequently at the discretion of the individual musician(s), or at the instigation of the musical director employed by a particular cinema, as few silent films were accompanied by a specially composed score. The resulting diversity of approach in film exhibition during the silent era meant that studios had little control over the sonic representation of their narrative; the aural domain was entirely at the mercy of the relevant exhibitor's local infrastructure and budgetary priorities. Film-makers had no expectation that a particular sonic accompaniment to their films would be replicated across different venues; even if a specially composed musical score existed, it would be played differently at prestige venues with large orchestras, compared to non-metropolitan cinemas. This is why Koepnick's (2002, p.29) appraisal of the homogenising effect of sound film within an increasingly chaotic political structure remains apposite, in particular in terms of the resulting "unified

¹⁷ The role of music in early German sound film will be discussed as part of this thesis chiefly from the perspective of diegesis and as an editing component in creating contrast or tying story components together.

mass-cultural audience” (ibid.).

Where Altman (2005) and Abel et al. (2001) compiled a survey of sound practice during the silent era as well as of early sound in film in the North American continent, Scott Eyman’s *The Speed of Sound* (1999) and Leah Brodbeck Stenzel Burt and Walter Welch’s *From Tinfoil to Stereo* (2006) further provided detailed studies of the transitional period in the early days of Hollywood film. Incorporating a European perspective, Charles O’Brien’s *Cinema’s Conversion to Sound* (2004) explores the American evolution from silent to sound film in relation to French cinema. From the perspective of German cinema, Müller (2003) also incorporated the silent period in her study *Vom Stummfilm zum Tonfilm [From Silent to Sound Film]*. Although Müller’s book appears on the surface as perhaps the most thorough and relevant historiography in relation to this research project, on closer inspection the book’s focus on economic and technological factors as drivers for the development of optical sound lend it a different emphasis. Her text is weighted toward establishing a chronological narrative around film exhibition during the silent era and into the sound era. Verena Boy’s (2009) *Exemplarische Analysen zur Tondramaturgie bei Fritz Lang [Analysis of Sound Film Examples by Fritz Lang]* which attempts to construct an analytical approach to three of Lang’s sound films. Two of the films Boy (2009) selected - *M* (1931) and *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (1933) - were made during the period that is the focus of this research project. Though both Müller’s and Boy’s books include an examination of the sound aesthetic of early sound film examples, this research project is able to develop the analysis of film sound further by incorporating a practice-based perspective that established the complexity of soundtracks in historical film, defining these as a composite of sonic elements. In accordance to what has already been set out as part of the Methodology discussion, this practice-based approach aims to establish a better understanding of early German sound productions by examining film examples in terms of constituent aural elements - in terms of how these elements were featured and how these elements combined into a whole filmic experience that capitalised on sound as an extension of the narrative plane.

Film Sound Design

Turning for a moment to literature relating to the broader umbrella topic of *film sound design*, it is right to acknowledge that there is an evolving discourse around sound and sound design in film in general. However, the main focus of the existing literature lies with the discussion of sound design in the cinema of the 1970s onwards. Looking at the subject area of sound design and the moving image in contemporary film theory, the field has developed considerably in recent years. Whereas Weis and Belton (1985), Altman (1992), and Chion (1994) remained virtually the only key texts of note on the topic of sound design until the end of the 1990s, the canon of books on sound and the moving image has increased notably in recent years. This expanding discourse mirrors a growing awareness of sound as a significant constituent of moving image production, at last sound is being acknowledged to be as important as editing, cinematography or production design. And yet from a film historical perspective, academic research has remained slow to move much beyond the technological dimension, frequently constructing a discourse of sound around the primary perspective of *innovation*. In short, whereas a complex approach to sound design is becoming established in the analysis of contemporary film, the equivalent level of nuanced analysis in regard to the sound design style of historical film requires further development – which is the rationale for this research project. Conversely, compared to the considerable body of research which is already in existence on the visual aesthetic of German cinema during the Weimar Republic, far less work has been done specifically aimed at the aural aesthetic of these early sound films. This research project examines the sonic styles evident in early German sound film made during the final stages of the Weimar Republic and considers these in terms of an evolving sound aesthetic. Not only was this a conceptual shift in relation to the inclusion of the spoken word in film but touched upon fundamental aspects of how a film reached out to its audience. Gianluca Sergi's *The Dolby Era: Film Sound in Contemporary Hollywood* (2004, p.3) succinctly declared that "*Sound matters*", arguing that the inclusion of sound has repercussions on all aspects of cinema: from inception to a film's production, through the post-production stages and last but not least to the way the audience experiences the story via *image and sound*. Given this recognition of the overarching role of sound in film making, where is the complexity of the sonic dimension reflected in literature on Germany's early sound films? Invisible yet omnipresent in most films, sound reaches the parts that others fail to

touch. Hake (2001, p.55) described the transitional period from the silent into the sound era as “*one of the least researched periods of in the history of German cinema*”. Given the importance of sound as an element of immense narrative and emotive potential, as an aural component that went beyond the spoken dialogue of film, it remains surprising that the years of early German sound film is still under-researched.

Political and Economic Contexts

A discussion of cinematic developments needs to consider the political determinants that shaped Weimar Republic's society, and by extension its artists and film-makers. A key text that explores this particular aspect is Bruce Murray's (1990) work *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic - From Caligari to Kuhle Wampe*. The author establishes ideological motivations at play in a range of factions involved in film production and writes:

As the Weimar era drew to a close, success of National Socialism depended to a large extent on its ability to use a nostalgic nationalism and xenophobic racism to attract and unite dissatisfied middle-class Germans. Mainstream cinema played an increasingly important role in the process. [...] and at the same time, the Communists, who implied that middle-class Germans should abandon their national and class identity in favour of a more egalitarian society, posed an even greater threat.
(Murray 1990, p.148).

Murray makes the connection between political ideologies influencing a range of film companies in Germany during the Weimar Republic, which is why this study included a selection of different film companies, ranging from the conservative Ufa under Alfred Hugenberg, to the communist Prometheus studio under Wilhelm Műnzenberg; by considering a range of sound films across the political spectrum, this study has considered the emotive aspect of sound in film. Analogous insights into the same period in terms of the role of politics in relation to broadcast and radio have been discussed by Kate Lacey (1996) in her seminal book *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio and the Public Sphere, 1923-45*. Lacey (p. 129) argues that Goebbels was keen to adopt a subtle approach of embedding propaganda messages within radio broadcasts. Goebbels preferred a strategy of

disguising party-political ideology within humorous programming, seeking to establish the radio as a friend and comrade to a hard-pressed population at times of need. In terms of cinema, Goebbels similarly disliked films that wore their party-political credentials too obviously. Even during the period of the late Weimar Republic, before the National Socialist propaganda machine was in full flow, there were ideological under currents that increasingly exerted their influence over the media. During the late 1920s, as political parties were pulling the nation towards the polar opposites of the political spectrum, sound film production offered new opportunities to present wholesome, traditional values, and musicals became perfect carriers of subtly conservative values. Lacey's text explores aspects of a politicized media sector in her comprehensive study of radio broadcasts as subliminal propaganda vehicles. Media as a politicising voice would further enforce national socialist values during the 1930s within the average German home via the *Volksempfänger*, the inexpensive radio sets which the National Socialists enabled millions of average German households to acquire. Influencing audiences via politicized media began long before the events of 1933. The ideological potential of sound film becomes clear when considering how two different films dealt with the subject matter of bankruptcy and eviction – this is evident when looking at Dudow's *Kuhle Wampe* in relation to Thiele's *Die Drei von der Tankstelle*. Whilst Dudow's film is undoubtedly an overtly political vehicle, produced by the left-wing Prometheus, the subject of financial ruin is trivialized in the musical that Thiele made for the conservative Ufa.

This transitional period represented a time for new creative beginnings via the medium of sound film, and this occurred at a time when the political coherence of the Weimar Republic was beginning to disintegrate. When considering the late Weimar Republic, there are fundamental artistic as well as political implications influencing the transition from silent to sound film, that resonate beyond a consideration of technological factors. That being said, the implications of sound film beyond 1933 also potentially points the way to future research directions.

The key consequence of cinema's conversion to synchronous sound - which cannot be overstated - was that audiences could become subjected to an increasingly

standardised sonic experience, irrespective of particular local infrastructure or timing of a film's screening. In spite of the fact that early sound cinema is often referred to as "the talkies", this research project emphasises that the aural potential of sound film reached beyond the screening of images and synchronous vocal elements. Understanding of the sonic dimension of cinema cannot focus on the dialogue component of film alone. An important determinant relevant to the stylistic analysis of early film sound practice invites an examination of the relationship between cultural and political factors, as perspectives of public sphere and film industry in Weimar Germany. Whilst this research project does incorporate this wider perspective, it needs to maintain its focus on the analysis of selected film examples. Existing literature on early German sound film still falls short of a holistic approach that incorporates a practice-based dimension within the analysis of a sound film aesthetic.

Weitz summarized the complexities of the Weimar Republic in its various artistic forms as follows:

Weimar culture and Weimar politics spawned so much creativity precisely because its artists, writers, and political organizers sought to unravel the meaning of modernity and to push it in new directions, some emancipatory and joyous, others frightfully authoritarian, murderous, and racist.
(Weitz 2007, p.4)

Drawing the diverse strands of this section together, the purpose of this chapter is to compile a contextual overview of the period in terms of existing literature on film sound history, methodologies for film textual analysis and film sound technology. Film history that fails to acknowledge sufficiently well the impact of the arrival of sound in creative and aesthetic terms renders an incomplete historiography. A survey of technological potential or developments alone similarly does not present a holistic view of sonic film style during the transitional period. In spite of the interdependency of technology and creativity, this thesis is able to demonstrate that there was room for film-makers to explore the creative potential of making complex sound films during the transitional period. Presenting an academic discussion of its topic in combination with a practice-based understanding of film making processes, this thesis concentrates its focus on the sound style of selected examples of early German sound films.

Chapter 2

Weimar Republic: Historical Period and Context

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a broader overview of the historical period of the Weimar Republic itself. In discussing the historical context of this research project, two elements are important to articulate at the outset: firstly, to define the historical period specifically selected for this research project (1930-1933); and secondly, to describe the historical framework that informed the background of the years leading up to the establishment of a German sound film industry. To understand developments within the film industry, it is important to consider the historical context of the Weimar Republic. There is already a wealth of material published on the period of the Weimar Republic - this chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive history lesson, but one that seeks to sketch a backdrop within which the research project itself is situated.

Although the development of both film and film sound have been touched upon in the Literature Review, what follows here is the historical background to some of these key developments. Within the context of the development of sound film, one cannot exclude the technological dimension entirely; an overview of technological determinants is necessary to inform aspects of this contextual discussion. As mentioned in the main introduction, this research project seeks to shift focus from technology as the main, over-arching research perspective towards the establishment of an analysis of an early sound film style (or range of styles) as evident in selected film examples from the period. Whilst technology has also been discussed in the Literature Review, the focus here is to construct a more historical perspective of key technological developments. In recognizing the importance of building this wider context, the historical period in conjunction with the advent of film in Germany is explored in the first section of this chapter. The next section will move to the beginnings of the Weimar Republic and discuss the atmosphere of experimentation and innovation. These were strands that thrived in the republic's wider cultural climate; the spirit of modernity was a key factor in the rapid establishment of the film industry and in the new film styles which emerged in Germany during the 1920s. The final section looks at the period of transition into sound film and the changing

political climate within which this occurred. These circumstances were key factors in the development of German cinema and the emerging sound film aesthetic towards the end of the Weimar Republic.

The End of World War I and the Birth of German Film

As Julian Petley argued (1979, p.1), when exploring the cultural output of a historical period it is essential to set the scene by considering the economic, political and ideological determinants. In order to illustrate some of the cultural developments of the Weimar Republic more effectively, it is helpful to provide an overview the political developments during the final months of World War One from the German perspective, as some of this had a bearing on the emerging film industry following that war. Having initially appeared as a dominant force during the fighting, Germany's military success appeared to wane in the latter stages of the war. Keeping Kaiser Wilhelm II as well as the entire nation only partially informed of the emerging spectre of a defeat, Germany's most senior military commanders Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and General Erich Ludendorff had played down the increasingly desperate situation on the front. However, they were forced to reveal the prospect of potential defeat once it became apparent that America's involvement in the war effort was tipping the advantage decisively in favour of the Entente against dwindling German military resources (Weitz, 2007, p.15). US president Wilson had previously pleaded for a magnanimous attitude towards a defeated nation when he addressed Congress on 11th February 1918 with the following appeal:

There shall be no annexations, no contributions, no punitive damages.... National aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. "Self-determination" is ... an imperative principle of action, which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril.

(Wilson, Woodrow in *War and Peace: Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers (1917-1924)* Baker, R.S & Dodd, W.E (eds). 1927. New York: Harper & Bros. Cited in Weitz (2007, p.15).

Ludendorff and Hindenburg felt it was politically shrewd to create an impression of distance between Kaiser and military on one side and German parliament on the other. This manoeuvre was an act of self-preservation with regard to the reputation and standing of monarchic and military authority, should German troops be defeated.

In the long-term, this would also contribute to Hindenburg's considerable political longevity and revered status as the elder statesman in Weimar Republic's post-war governments.

In their hour of desperation, the two arch-authoritarians [Ludendorff and Hindenburg], the generals who had spent two years directing a military dictatorship over Germany, initiated a process of democratization.
(Weitz 2007, p. 15)

This process of democratisation started hurriedly in October 1918, when the Kaiser appointed the liberal Prince Max von Baden as Chancellor. The new government was formed from members of the majority parties and included for the first time two members of the Social Democrat Party. Weitz cites this "*as a profound sign of change*" (ibid.) within the authoritarian echelons of power. Within a short period, legislative reforms brought a shift towards a constitutional monarchy, with the government increasingly being held to account by the Reichstag.

In sketching the scene in terms of the end of the First World War, we still need to understand how this relates to the establishment of the German film industry, which – although affected by import and export restrictions during the war – continued to develop. Crucially, government officials had realised the ideological potential offered by film in re-enforcing national objectives in regard to the war:

By the middle of the First World War the cinema was establishing itself as a reasonably profitable branch of German industry. Furthermore, powerful interest in both industry and government were coming to recognize the cinema's potential as an instrument of propaganda and hegemony in the service of German chauvinism and imperialism.
(Petley 1979, p.29)

Having at first been conceived as an additional component of national propaganda strategy during World War I, German film production developed into a creative industry on a large scale in the post-war era. Political and industrial factions began to appreciate the enormous potential of film as a propaganda tool; Kracauer summarised originally in 1947:

The birth of the German film proper resulted in part from

organizational measures taken by the German authorities. These measures must be traced to two observations all informed Germans were in a position to make during World War I. First, they became increasingly aware of the influence of anti-German films exerted everywhere abroad - a fact which startled them all the more as they themselves had not yet realised the immense suggestive power inherent in this medium. Second, they recognized the insufficiency of the domestic output.
(Kracauer [1947] 2004, p.35).

In regard to the First World War, Germany's emerging film industry needs to be understood in terms of its connection to political and economic power. In this context, one particular individual, Alfred Hugenberg, was to cast a long shadow over politics as well as the German cinema, from its beginnings into the 1930s. According to Klaus Kreimeier (2002, p.33) the precursor to German film production on a larger scale grew out of the legacy of the BuFa, the *Bild - und Filmamt* (Photography- and Film Office). The imperial propaganda department merged with the *Deutsche Lichtbild Gesellschaft* (DLG)¹ at the behest of General Ludendorff, who held one of the key positions in the Wilhelmine military establishment as Quartermaster General.² DLG was a private company, and Hugenberg was a member of its board of directors. Alfred Hugenberg was an influential German industrialist with far-reaching public and political ambitions. Over the subsequent decade, Hugenberg would become increasingly powerful, both in economic and political terms. In 1916, Hugenberg's media strategy had lead him to take over the *Scherl* publishing concern, which in turn had established the *Eiko -Wochenschau*, a weekly newsreel (Mühl-Benninghaus 1999, p.3), and Hugenberg continued to exert his influence in the emerging media landscape by manoeuvring fellow industrialists into leading DLG positions. Hugenberg was first and foremost a businessman, who sensed an opportunity to make profits in the film industry, but he also had political aspirations. As he acquired considerable assets in the emerging media landscape, his political leanings ensured that a conservative, nationalist ethos was perpetuated in the public sphere via the publications which he controlled. Ten years on, Hugenberg

¹ There appear to be two abbreviations in used in scholarly texts: for instance, Kreimeier (2002) uses the three-letter version *DLG*, whereas elsewhere (see Toeplitz, 1992, Vol. I, p. 139) states that *Deutsche Lichtbild-Gesellschaft e.V.* was known as *Deulig*.

² "Erster Generalquartiermeister beim Chef des Generalstabs des Feldheeres"

was to take over the leadership of Germany's most important film production studio: Universum-Film-AG, better known as Ufa. Writing in a Sunday newspaper in 1929, the journalist Erich Schairer expressed concern over Hugenberg's growing media influence:

To select, formulate, and comment on the news - that means to conduct news politics. And to conduct news politics at the level Hugenberg does it - that means to rule over people. Are foreigners correct when they call Hugenberg the *roi sans couronne*, the uncrowned king? They are correct. They are correct ten times over, since Hugenberg is also trying to gain control over film and cinema. (Kaes et al 1994, p.74)

Having been involved with the early development of the film industry, Hugenberg continued to play a part in its establishment in the background. It would be some time before he stepped into the limelight during the takeover of the Ufa company. Under his ownership, the company would invest heavily in the infrastructure needed to facilitate cinema's conversion to sound in Germany. Given Hugenberg's political ambitions, this proved to be a shrewd move that allowed him to exert even greater control over the public sphere – reflecting the warning expressed by Schairer in 1929. Silent film, after its humble beginnings of being a novelty feature (Weitz 2007, p226) and largely associated with the working-class entertainment which formed part of the vaudeville circuit during the Wilhemine era, was beginning to move from the fringes of popular culture into the economic might of mainstream society (Hans-Michael Bock & Michael Töteberg 1992, p. 24).

Establishment of the Weimar Republic and German Film 1918-1929

Following the abdication of Emperor Wilhelm II in November 1918, a number of political movements fought bitterly over which ideological course Germany should navigate. After months of turmoil and internal unrest, the social democrat Friedrich Ebert was chosen to preside over the burgeoning republic³. The democratic government structure that followed Germany's capitulation was to sustain itself

³ A great number of texts on the history of the Weimar Republic are currently available, but particularly poignant reading material is reflected in the primary material made available by Kaes et al (1994).

through challenging economic and political times and lasted 14 years. The new constitution described a semi-presidential system in which power was divided between the President of the Republic (*Reichspräsident*), the cabinet and parliament. The president's term of office lasted for seven years and was elected by direct vote (the Weimar Republic had introduced universal suffrage in 1919). The president held considerable power in being able to appoint the cabinet, as well as to govern with increased powers under the constitution's provision for emergency measures⁴.

The fledgling republic was named after the small town of Weimar, approximately 170 miles southwest of Berlin, where the first assembly of the newly formed house of parliamentary representatives met to formulate and agree its new constitution. Helmut Heiber (1993, p.23) emphasizes that the “fact that it met in Weimar had symbolic significance: the cradle of German humanism was to serve at the birth of the new state.” Although Weimar was nothing more than a small provincial town, setting up the new government there was a prudent move. It removed the nascent structures of democratic government from the volatile environs of revolutionary Berlin. There, Spartacists under Liebknecht and Luxemburg were trying to proclaim the establishment of a new Germany, inspired by the recent communist revolution in the Soviet republic. Not only was Weimar seen as a safer location, it was also associated with revered literary figures: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, as well as other thinkers and philosophers who had shaped Germany's 18th century enlightenment culture.

Notwithstanding this potent cultural connection through its very name, the era that became defined by the term *Weimar Republic* remains associated from today's perspective with unprecedented artistic activity in literature, painting, graphic art, sculpture, film production, architecture and music. As Anton Gill argued in *A Dance Between Flames*, the city of Berlin soon established its vibrant urban reputation as the capital of the Weimar Republic.

⁴ The *Notverordnungen* or emergency measures were increasingly called upon during the second half of the Weimar Republic, when parliament diverse political factions struggled to enact legislation.

Everything was happening in Berlin. The revolution, though it had started in provinces, was centred there; White Russians and Jews fleeing the Communist revolution in Russia brought a new cosmopolitanism to the capital; above all, the Weimar Republic ushered in a far more permissive age. That, the uncertainty of the times, and an aching need for enjoyment after long years of war, opened the floodgates. As Berlin slipped into the Twenties, theatres, dance-halls, bars and restaurants blossomed everywhere, as did newspapers and magazines of all kinds. Cinema was still in its infancy, but quickly caught up. Radio and television were only a few years away. And then there was cabaret.
(Gill, 1993, p.45)

1920s Berlin was seen by many as the centre of a creative hedonism in a European continent that was still reeling from the trauma of the First World War⁵. Political systems throughout Europe were in various states of flux, be it as a consequence of international factors such as the outcome of the Great War that brought about the abdication of the Kaiser and the waning influence of the German aristocracy; or where cataclysmic internal conflict brought an end to the imperial / feudal system of mighty Russia in favour of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’. The 1920s were a period of underlying conflict of old orders versus new ideas.

All of Weimar’s protagonists, whatever their political and cultural proclivities, grappled with this tension-bound world of modernity. There was no escape. [...] Others actively embraced modernity by advocating mass politics and industrial society or by developing new forms of expression – abstract art, dissonant music, architecture of clean lines and industrial materials – that they believed captured the tensions, conflicts, and excitements of the age.
(Weitz 2007, p. 4).

Although some artistic movements associated with the period of the Weimar Republic can trace their roots back to the Wilhelmine period, the experience of World War I resonated through much of the 1920s. Notwithstanding Peter Gay’s (1974) assertion that the republic’s claim to artistic innovation is in danger of being exaggerated, the author nonetheless makes reference to the importance of the reaction to the war in some artistic circles:

⁵ See Kaes (2009) *Shell Shock Cinema*.

The Novembergruppe⁶, founded in December 1918, as well as the provocatively called Arbeitsrat für Kunst⁷, both dedicated to disseminating art appropriate to the new age, enlisted Expressionists from all parts of the political spectrum [...] All artists, or nearly all, were seized with the quasi-religious fervour to make all things new: Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, Alban Berg and Paul Hindemith, all joined the Novembergruppe.
(Gay 1974, p.110)

Whilst technology and innovation heralded the arrival of new cultural practices, not all sections of society were necessarily comfortable with this. Certainly, for the more conservative - societal or political - elements, much of this flux of modernity was viewed with suspicion and scepticism. Nonetheless, against a backdrop of political and economic instability, but also fuelled by technological advances, the artistic movements of Europe invented new ways of interpreting their changing worlds. In addition to a new liberal permissiveness that empowered and broadened more traditional forms of artistic productivity, film began to emerge as the dominant art form of the day. But for all its apparent innovative zest, the foundations of the Weimar Republic bore the cracks and fissures of political and societal tension, which were in no small part shaped by the German defeat during the First World War

Following the end of World War One, film production experienced a rise, and film distribution increased in response to growing demand at the cinema box office. According to Hake (2006, p. 46) the number of German cinemas expanded by more than 50% in the two years between 1918 and 1920.⁸ Saunders (1992, p.46) summarises that “as the republic emerged from war and defeat, German cinema assumed an increasingly self-conscious stance on the major economic, artistic, and social challenges of film development”. In response, German cinema audiences were drawn to the newly built film theatres in increasing numbers.

Even in smaller towns movie theaters acquired a dramatic architecture and attracted crowds on a daily basis. In large cities like Berlin, movie halls became palaces. The Gloria-Filmpalast in Berlin, built

⁶ November Group

⁷ Workers' Council for Art

⁸ From 2,300 to 3,700 cinemas (Haake 2002, p.46)

like a baroque theater in a conscious attempt to win legitimacy for this new form of popular entertainment, seated sixteen hundred people. The Capitol-Filmpalast had space for fifteen hundred.
(Weitz 2007, p. 227)

In line with the rising demand to see films in comfortable, purpose-built venues, aspirations for new creative directions emerged. Weimar's early cinema aesthetic developed a unique visual style, particularly associated with the work of Paul Wegener, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, Fritz Lang and Robert Wiene, whose films have been the subject of a number of scholarly studies over the decades. Similarly, Ernst Lubitsch has been heralded as one of the leading film-makers produced by Germany's emerging cinema culture and who created a number of lavish historical films before emigrating to Hollywood in the early 1920s. As the film industry blossomed, the public demanded more and more substantial subjects – alongside popular comedies (including many notable films made by Lubitsch) there was also an interest in a darker subject matter:

The real strength of the German cinema industry lay in films of an altogether darker nature – films which dealt with the supernatural, with zombies, master criminals, mad inventors, and pacts with the Devil. The great period for these was the first half of the Twenties – the three or four years when the country was still on the edge of revolution, when Hitler began to build up his power, when demands for reparations were made which were impossible to meet, and inflation spiralled.
(Gill 1993, p.50)

During the 1920s art and film emerged as potential agents of change, and in the context of mass-culture these artefacts carried a political and moral responsibility in the eyes of those who were critical of the German establishment. As proponents of a new visual art, George Grosz, Otto Dix, Hannah Höch, Käthe Kollwitz, Heinrich Zille are frequently acknowledged as the vanguard of new artistic movements which blossomed during the Weimar Republic. Similarly, the literary contributions made by Bertolt Brecht, Hans Fallada, Hermann Hesse, Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann, Erich Kästner, Irmgard Keun, Erich-Maria Remarque, Alfred Döblin were a key feature of cultural developments during the 1920s. It could be argued that many of the creative foundations for these agents of cultural modernity were actually laid during the Wilhelmine period in the years prior to the First World War. With reference to Peter Gay's position (1974), Stephen Lee (1998, p.117) states that "*the*

Republic created little; it liberated what was already there". Whilst it is right to surmise that the artists who thrived during the Weimar Republic would have been shaped by formative experiences prior to World War I, it also stands to reason that the experience of the war itself resonated through many elements of artistic expression during the 1920s.



Illustration 11 Dix: Wounded Veteran⁹, 1922



Illustration 12 Grosz: The Gray Day¹⁰, 1921



Illustration 13 Kollwitz: The Survivors¹¹, 1923

Lee (1998, p.117) goes on to clarify this point:

⁹ (Private Collection)

¹⁰ (Staatliche Kunsthalle, Mannheim)

¹¹ (Käthe-Kollwitz-Museum, Berlin)

It is true that cultural experimentation did exist before the First World War, especially in the form of expressionism. Nevertheless, the authoritarian Second Reich [of imperial Germany] was fundamentally unsympathetic to such developments and it was the more liberal atmosphere provided by the Weimar Republic which really enabled the arts to flourish.

Radical changes in architectural designs were already a feature of pre-war developments, with architects such as Hermann Muthesius turning increasingly to new building materials. Elements such as glass and steel enabled designers to turn their back on “*the more ponderous conventions*” of architectural traditions that had been the hallmarks of designs that “*affected Britain and Germany in equal proportions*” (ibid, p.118). Lee points to the development of modernist architecture as a key indicator for the Weimar Republic’s social framework - how industrialisation, mechanisation and the availability of new materials became facilitators of an aesthetic modernity. The innovative approach to design and education as embodied for instance by the Bauhaus movement seems to have resonated precisely with that fundamentally modernist instinct brought about by the emergence of Weimar’s political and social structures. In bringing together these different considerations and in conclusion to this section, we can see that whilst some modernist tendencies were already emerging at the beginning of the 20th century, the societal and political stage was still rooted in a deep conservatism that provided limited opportunities for development. The fundamental political and social changes extant in the Weimar Republic, coupled with advent of innovative technologies (such as printing, broadcasting, film), accelerated a modernist aesthetic. Whether a new artistic style – a *Zeitgeist* - is made as explicit as in the paintings of Otto Dix or George Grosz (illustrations above), or ethical concepts as presented in the depiction of social hardship, exemplified by the work of Käthe Kollwitz (illustration above), or new ways of engaging with the everyday, as embodied in the photography of László Moholy-Nagy and other proponents of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* – the consequences of the Great War are evidently traceable in the various artistic movements of the Weimar Republic. At the same time, it is important to recognise that tensions between modernism and conservatism continued to plague the Weimar Republic, feeding into the polarisation of its society. The diverging political ideologies of Germany’s political landscape were being mirrored amongst artistic movements, whose unity disintegrated and – as Peter Gay (1974, p.110) summarised - “*fantasies*

of brotherly cooperation faded”.

Returning to the medium of film during the Weimar era, cinema’s foremost proponent of modernist creation is associated with the expressionist films of the 1920s. Given the legacy of Eisner’s (2008) contribution to film history, *The Haunted Screen* was seen as the key work in this context. However, more recent texts such as Dietrich Scheunemann’s (2003) *Expressionist Film - New Perspectives* have re-visited the established discourse, further granulating the broad concept of expressionism into several different hypotheses. Elsaesser (2003, p.43) argues that expressionism was an attempt to convince the middle class of the artistic merits of the cinema; an expression of creative aspiration that could appeal to a growing audience demographic. Furthermore, Elsaesser points to the linkage between expressionist cinema and fantastical cultural traditions of the Romantic era.

The revival of the gothic novel in the nineteenth century, as indeed much else in the Romantic arsenal, was a Europe-wide phenomenon, usually attributed to a reaction against Enlightenment rationality. But it is also a more explicitly political response to the French Revolution (Britain) and the Napoleonic Wars (Germany). However, there is little question that the rapid industrialization following the Vienna Congress¹² provoked another major site of dislocation, where the contrast between city and country was central and the relocation to nature became profoundly refigured, often with the result of making nature itself seem uncanny, haunting.
(Elsaesser 2003, p.44)

The contrasting themes of urban and rural settings remained an underlying feature in many films made during the Weimar Republic. A fissure of diverging political undercurrents can be observed when comparing popular costume dramas with dramatic narratives set within the contemporaneous era of the period. Taking account of Elsaesser’s observations on the connection between Expressionism, Romanticism and Economics sheds an interesting light on the mythologised natural setting as embodied in the films of Leni Riefenstahl - for instance in *Das Blaue Licht* (1932) or Arnold Fanck’s *Der Heilige Berg* (1926). These examples stand in clear

¹² The Vienna Congress took place from September 1814 – June 1815 to discuss the future of European states and borders in consequence of the defeat of Napoleon’s armies

contrast to the urban settings employed by the film-makers of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

During the second part of the 1920s, Walter Ruttmann, Georg Wilhelm Pabst and Gerhard Lamprecht were among many directors committed to developing narrative with social content, at the forefront of which are proponents of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (new realism or objectivity). Whilst this new objectivity can be viewed as a form of social critique (manifest in art, literature and film of the 1920s), it is worth considering that the political left was not uniformly supportive of the genre. According to Linda Schulte-Sasse (1992a, p.49) communist film criticism was particularly scathing of many examples of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Left-leaning ideology condemned the portrayal of poverty and destitution as voyeurism if these conditions were presented as individual tragedies rather than the fault of an inequitable capitalist system. Examples of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* were rejected by the discourse on the left of the political spectrum unless films included the – either implied or overt - invitation to overturn unjust societal structures. In this context, Dudow's *Kuhle Wampe* clearly fulfils that criterion as an example of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and as an expression of revolutionary film.

The expressionist cinema owes its characteristic style to striking visual components of film making, and it is reasonable to assume that the development of its aesthetic was possible precisely because of the greater openness to creative experimentation extant in the 1920s. Some academic debates call into question particular exemplars previously categorized as proponents of the Expressionist style. The very concept of what constitutes Expressionism in Film was picked up by Barry Salt in a 1979 *Sight & Sound* article, in which he scorned the elasticity with which the term “expressionism” was bandied about. Scheunemann (2003) and several contributors to *Expressionist Film: New Perspectives* further deconstruct the definition of expressionism. Scheunemann (2003, p.1) surmised that much of the difficulty around the term expressionism may in fact stem from Eisner's *The Haunted Screen* (2008) becoming marketed as “Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt”. Eisner's (2008) choice of terminology may have steered film theorists towards a less orthodox understanding of the *expressionist* concept. According to Scheuneman (2003) et al this appears to have predicated all too many German films made during the 1920s for interpretation through the trope of

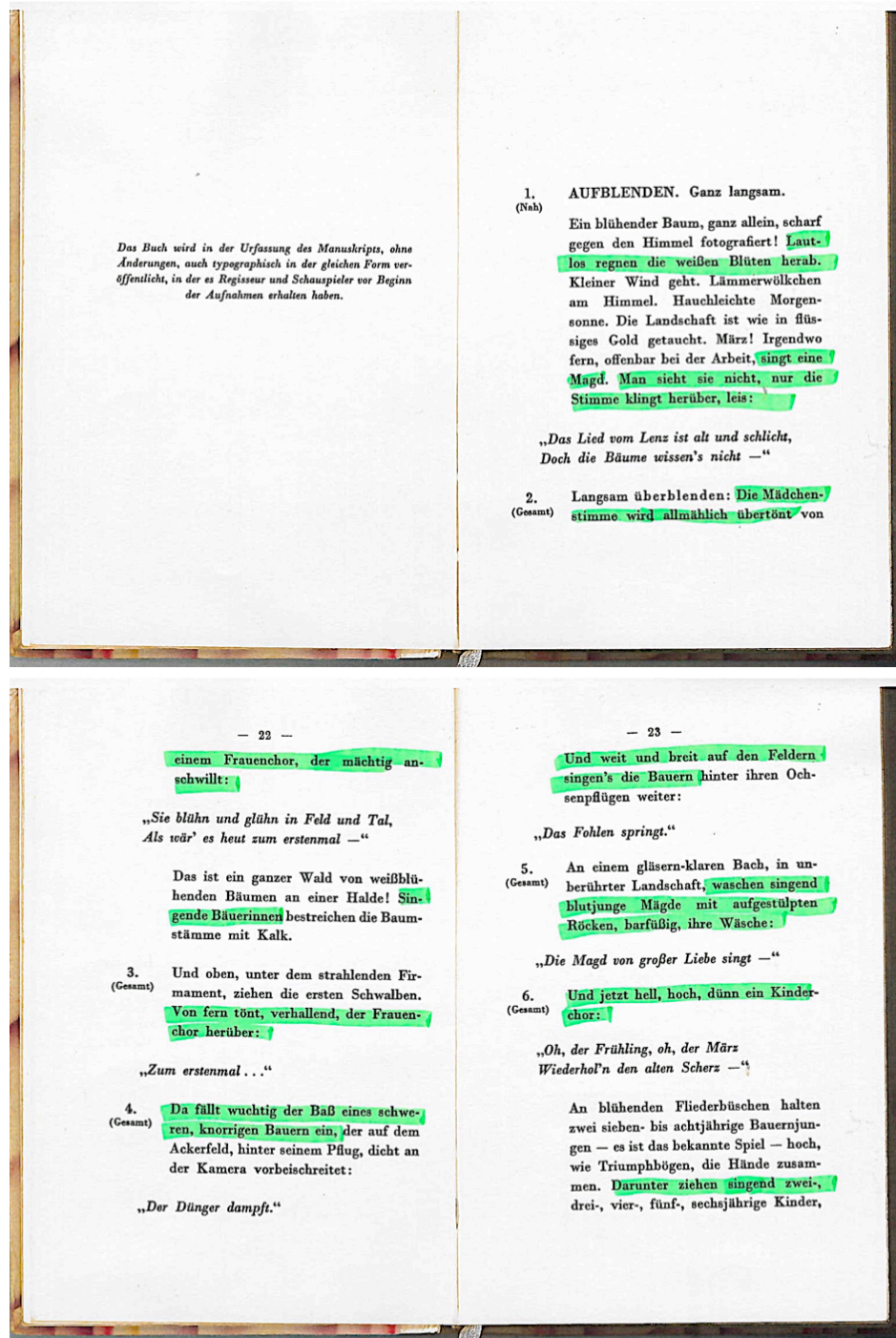
an expressionist style. Although a well-established subject in film theory discourse in one sense, it becomes clear that some disagreement around the less clearly demarcated qualifying features of Expressionism persists to date.

The spirit of innovation that became part of cultural development during the 1920s had repercussions in many areas of film making: from the visual fluidity of Murnau's *Der Letzte Mann* [*The Last Laugh*] (1924) to Lang's mythological *Nibelungen* (1924) to the edginess of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in Pabst's *Die Büchse der Pandora* [*Pandora's Box*] (1929). In that regard - and notwithstanding Salt's reservations that only a relatively small number of films made during the 1920s are true examples of Expressionism - the spirit of filmic innovation borne out of the Expressionist movement resonated beyond the genre, and even into the sound era. Cinema functioned both as a barometer of a society in the grip of modernity, as well as acting as a catalyst for further change, both in technological and social terms (Kaes et al, 2016, p.4).

Within the first quarter of the twentieth century, cinema had evolved from the margins of the fairground to mainstream influential art form. During the 1920s, silent film production in Germany had become established as popular entertainment on a large scale in terms of box office sales and had also revealed itself as a considerable financial resource generating export dividends. A number of conceptual and technological experiments to combine synchronous sound with the moving image pre-dated the actual establishment of sound film as established norm in Germany. In most discussions of silent film exhibition during the 1920s, the assumption of musical accompaniment to the screen is a widely held concept, and the understanding that silent film was never truly silent is by now a generally accepted premise amongst film historians.⁸ Through the establishment of technological innovations, the synchronous soundtrack evolved giving rise to new narrative opportunities.

Towards the end of the 1920s sound film took hold with German-made productions, introducing early feature-length sound film examples such as Schwarz's *Melodie des Herzens* (1929). Looking at the film script for this film, it is striking how much

detail is lavished on the exploitation of the aural domain. In the opening scenes, the presence of sound is emphasised continually for the *mise-en-scène* (see highlighted sections in text copies below)



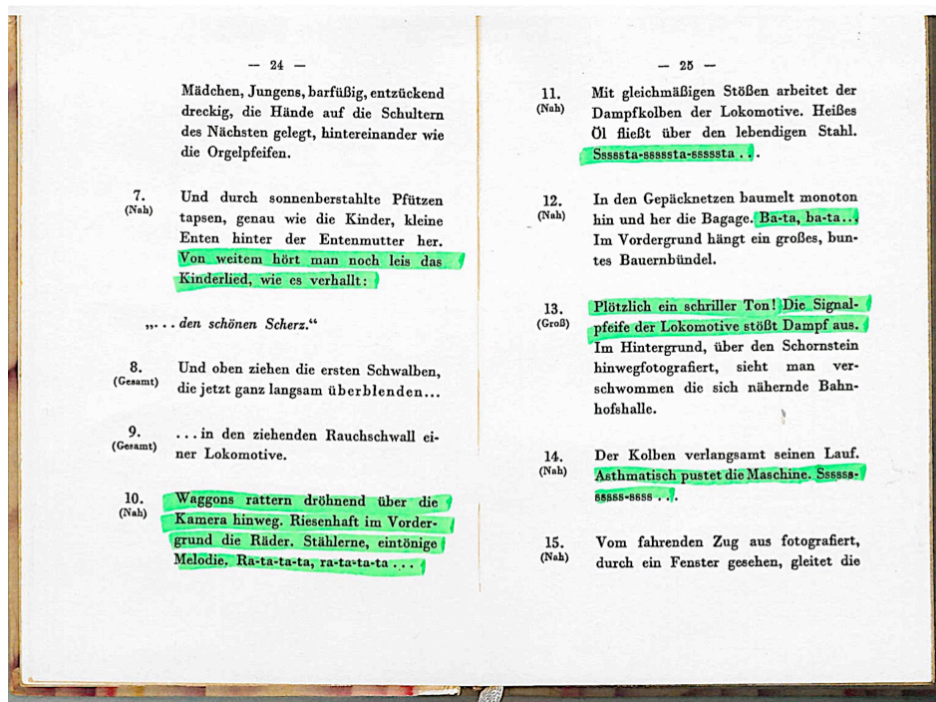


Illustration 14 Commemorative edition of the original script

The script devised every possible opportunity to showcase the use of sound in *Melodie des Herzens*. The novelty aspect of the film proved very popular with cinema audiences, in spite of the fact that many critics gave the film a mixed reception. Some reviewers focused their appraisal on the film's occasionally deficient sound quality, which was further exacerbated by its actors' stilted dialogue delivery. These criticisms could not detract from a broader air of excitement in the public sphere as the new era dawned; audiences ignored the critics and turned the page on a chapter in Germany's cinema history.

Germany's Transition to Sound Film 1930-1933

Although there were still technological challenges to overcome, the transition into sound from late 1929 to 1933 occurred with relative speed. According to Jossé (1984, p.240), at the end of the year 1929, 8 sound films had been produced in Germany compared to 175 silent films. Just three years later, by the end of 1932, the number of German sound films had risen from 8 to 132. The number of silent films at the end of that year had fallen to zero (see illustration below).

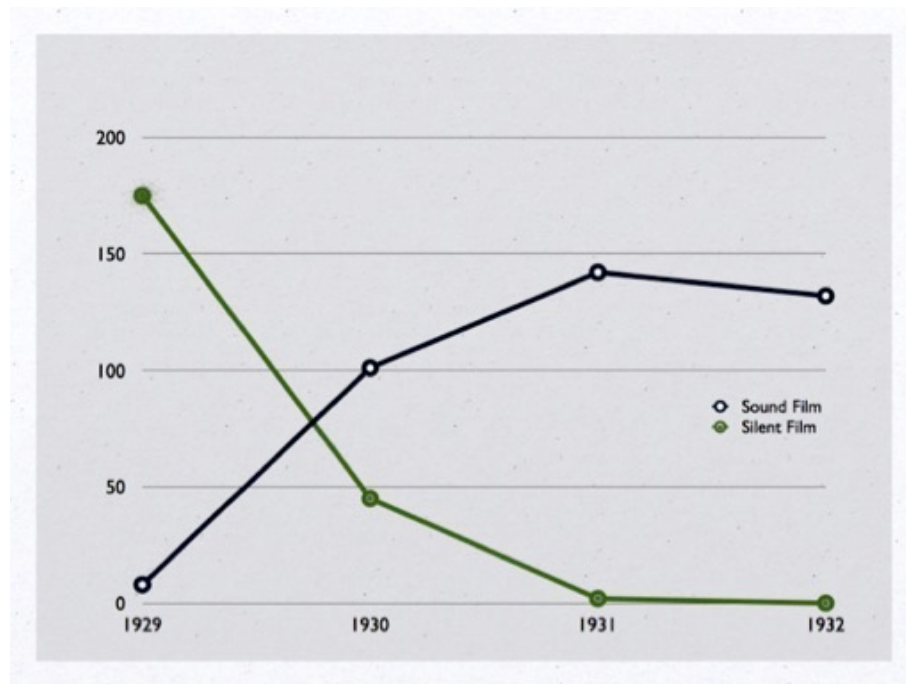


Illustration 15 Silent Film and Sound Film Production between 1929 and 1932.

However, the initial capital outlay of converting cinemas for sound was enormous and the sound era propelled many independent cinemas - along with smaller film production companies - into bankruptcy.

The Financial Implications of Sound

According to Spiker (1975, p. 47) production costs rose by 50%, ruling out participation in the dawn of the sound film era for most small production companies. Spiker (1975, p.55) also notes a 7% drop in audience numbers during the transitional year of 1929. This would not have been in response to the quality of cinema programming, but a reflection of the increasing economic pressures on the population. The arrival of sound film revived interest in the cinema, but with rising production and conversion costs, cinemas were also under pressure to increase admission prices. Plotting the profit margins of ticket pricing structures, Spiker (ibid, p.56) reveals the fluctuations from 1928 to 1932 and a drop in film-industry profits with the introduction of sound. Spiker concluded that investment structures underpinning the film industry were further strained and vulnerable to effects of the global economic crisis, as film companies appeared too short-term in their business model and had insufficient reserves to weather challenging periods. Individual instances of box office successes could not provide long-term growth in the film

business. Spiker also raised the problem of high pay awards for film stars as the topic of hot debate within the film industry. Competition between different studios fostered the inflation of star salaries, at a time when the film industry was struggling to survive the financial crisis. The film industry courted the idea of greater regulation from the side of the state – a concept which faltered, and the introduction of tariff structures for all aspects of film production (in front of and behind the camera) did not come to pass. It would be fair to assume that the incumbent government had to contend with serious political pressures at the time of the late Weimar Republic. Unable to gain state support for the film industry, admission prices came under renewed pressure:

Da der Widerspruch zwischen Produktionsaufwand (Profiterwartungen) und Mindererträgen auf der Herstellerebene nicht zu beseitigen war, suchten die Produktions- und Verleihsparte ihn ab 1930 immer energischer zu Lasten des Theatersektors zu beheben, der am unmittelbarsten genötigt war, sich der verringerten Nachfrage anzupassen.
(Spiker 1975, p.56)

The dichotomy of costly production values (ambitious expectations of profits) and diminished project returns remained unresolved, and from 1930 onwards both the production and distribution sectors looked to box office sales in the hope of resolving the deficit – at a time when cinemas were most directly affected by the decline in audience numbers.

In summary, the circumstances of increased production and exhibition costs meant that a mixed landscape incorporating many small production houses and independent cinemas alongside bigger studios the film industry transformed itself into the monoculture of large-scale studio operations. A significant factor that exacerbated the economic pressures on independent cinemas and small production companies was the global financial crisis which coincided with the transition into sound (ibid, p. 52).¹³ The Wall Street crash of October 1929 meant that considerable sums of foreign investments were pulled out of Germany precisely at the time when smaller production companies would have relied on credit to finance sound film ventures.

¹³ Spiker (1975) incorporates a thorough, detailed analysis of the wider economic determinants and financial consequences on production, distribution & exhibition p. 47-64 during the late 1920s in Germany.

Ufa, having been taken over with the financial backing from the Deutsche Bank and Hugenberg's powerful publishing empire in 1927, entered the financial crisis of 1929 from a stronger starting position, having been taken over by the Hugenberg publishing empire in 1927 and was able to emerge as the key production factory of the German sound film era.

Through technological advances of the 1920s, the cinema space on both sides of the Atlantic evolved from a place of silent film exhibition to the introduction of the "talkie". In most discussions of silent film exhibition during the 1920s, the assumption of musical accompaniment to the screen is a widely held concept, and the understanding that silent film was never truly silent is by now a generally accepted premise amongst film historians.¹⁴ In the space of just a few years the German film industry underwent a ground breaking technological transition that marked the end of the silent era through the establishment of sound film as the cinematic norm. Alongside the technological changes, the advent of sound resulted in a seismic shift of the cinematic aesthetic that would have a profound effect on the audience experience. The implication of sound and image combining into a new homogenous cinematic form was taken up with enthusiasm by the German film industry and (as elsewhere in the world) welcomed by the cinema going public. New genre formats were facilitated through sound, as evident by the numerous musicals that quickly gained in popularity, both in Europe and in America. More importantly though, fundamental concepts of how the audience was immersed in the screen's narrative had the potential to be re-invented by film-makers. Different directors explored a range of ideas and approaches to incorporate sound into their movies (see Film analysis Chapter). Rather than assuming that all cinematic practice suddenly changed with the arrival of synchronous sound, these observations point to a shift in cinematic concepts within an evolving film-making landscape.

(...) Glanzvoll der Rahmen – die Festvorstellung –, den die Ufa dem anspruchsvollsten Werk ihrer tönenden Produktion gab, dem Werk, mit dem die Höchstleistung der jungen deutschen Tonfilmkunst unter Beweis gestellt werden sollte. Ungewöhnlich das Interesse einer

¹⁴ See Altman (2005) and O'Brien (2004)

Öffentlichkeit, die auf das wesentlichste künstlerische Ereignis dieser Berliner Saison abgestellt war.

Mit Recht! Die materiellen und geistigen Mittel, die unser deutscher Großkonzern Hand in Hand mit der Klangfilm mobil gemacht hatte, deuteten bereits den entscheidenden Vorstoß deutscher Tonfilm-Produktion in das Gelände wirklicher Kunst an. (...)

(Hans Wollenberg on the premiere of *Der Blaue Engel* Lichtbild-Bühne 2nd April 1930;

<http://www.filmportal.de/node/38305/material/617153>)

A splendid setting, the gala premiere, created by Ufa to mark its most ambitious sound production, a project that demonstrates the ambitious achievements of Germany's emerging sound film art. Notable the public interest, in anticipation of this key artistic event of the Berlin season.

And Rightly so! The material and conceptual means, which Germany's giant studio mobilised in conjunction with the Klangfilm [German sound film distributor] point to a decisive advance of German sound film production into the realm of true art. (...)

The above extract from a longer article provides a sense of the excitement and keen interest with which early sound film was covered in the press. German sound film production began to take off in 1929, as silent film was becoming rapidly eclipsed by sound production as the primary cinematic norm. The transition into sound began with the production of a relatively small number of films, but rapidly accelerated in the early 1930s. Several of the German sound films produced in 1929 had the hallmarks of the transitional cusp of silent film production. Similar to early sound films in the United States and Great Britain, some of the earliest talkies only a handful of dialogue sequences¹⁵. As in other countries adapting to sound, some early German films were shot in two different versions: one for the silent screen and one version for sound cinemas¹⁶. Film studios addressed some of the transitional challenges by adopting a dual format approach: on one level, distributors were hedging their bets in case these films failed to draw in audiences, whilst also catering

¹⁵ This was an approach used in Crosland's *The Jazz Singer* (1928): a predominantly silent film made famous by a few dialogue scenes, yet widely hailed as the world's first talkie. German productions such as *Der Unsterbliche Lump* (1929/30) were released with musical components (including songs) dubbed on.

¹⁶ For instance: *Die Letzte Kompagnie* (1929/30) was released in 2 different versions: one for silent distribution, and one version for sound cinemas. This dual format approach at the cusp of the transitional period was not confined to Germany– Hitchcock's *Blackmail* (1929) was filmed as a silent and as a sound version, although the sound version is now much better known.

for a delay to the technological refurbishments still required in cinemas around the country, in order to become equipped for sound film projection. The first German sound films made during 1928 and 1929 were still made under challenging production conditions: the developing technology required a whole new range of skill sets from film crews, and many shooting locations proved unsuitable for the requirements of location sound recording. Nonetheless, some very early sound cinema such as von Sternberg's *Der Blaue Engel*, which was filmed in late 1929 and released in early 1930, already display some flashes of an emerging sound imagination. Wollenberg's rapturous article (cited in extracts above, and below) illustrates that 1930 was a watershed year in German sound film history. Significantly, von Sternberg's film managed to integrate the diegetic space of the theatre auditorium as an aural backdrop to its protagonists' main encounters, which take place backstage. Recognising the potential of using out of vision sounds to augment cognitive and emotive elements of the narrative, von Sternberg's film uses the sound of the setting (a music hall theatre) as a prop to lend the backstage scenes (which are central to the narrative) more realism in terms of the authenticity of the location. But crucially, the nature of the raucous out of vision theatre noises becomes an emotive counterpoint that accentuates Emil Jannings's performance of the increasingly marginalised protagonist. Sound also provided Marlene Dietrich with the opportunity to imbue her character's spoken and sung performance with complexity: her delivery - at times laconic, other times full of passion – contrasts sharply with the love-struck Professor, who falls for her charms. Critics were impressed by the creative concepts with which the *mise-en-scene* delivered the film's narrative. Hans Wollenberg wrote in the *Licht-Bild-Bühne* on 2nd April 1930:

(...)

Was an Josef v. Sternbergs meisterhafter Inszenierung als grundsätzlicher und bleibender Wert vermerkt werden muß, ist die gänzliche Freiheit von der Sprechbühne. Dieser Film wird durchaus von der Bild-Dynamik getragen und alle Möglichkeiten rein bildmäßiger Ausdruckskunst sind vollendet ausgeschöpft. Die Sprache, die hinzu kommt, wird nicht Selbstzweck, wird nicht alles ausfüllender und zudeckender Dialog, sondern ein den Bildwirkungen mit größter Stilsicherheit hinzugefügtes Verstärkungs- und Charakterisierungsmittel. Wir glauben hier zum erstenmal einer neuartigen und originären Gesetzen unterworfenen Verwendung von Sprache und Laut in einem Kunstwerk begegnet zu sein. Das ist richtunggebend! (...)

(<http://www.filmportal.de/node/38305/material/617153>)

Josef von Sternberg's masterly direction makes its mark by liberating [film making] from the theatrical stage. This film is carried by the dynamics of its imagery, and all possibilities of visual creativity are realised to perfection. This [visual aesthetic] is complemented by the dialogue, which is not used merely for the sake of it, does not become a dominant and pervasive feature, but augments the visuals with self-assured refinement, an element in support of the characterisation of the protagonists. We believe this represent an innovative and original approach of using speech and sound in a piece of art. This is ground-breaking! (...)

Der Blaue Engel was a showcase for sound cinema as a forum for artistic expression, instead of surrendering to an over-reliance on the spoken word. Ufa's great filming hall had already been adapted to sound film projects, including *Der Blaue Engel*. In order to create a filming environment more suitable to the demands of recording synchronous sound, Ufa made the decision to invest heavily in an enormous purpose-built sound stage, which was completed in the summer of 1930.

1. Beiblatt zur
Sondernummer des Film-Kurier

Das europäische Atelier

Sonntag, den 15. August

Die Produktionsstätten Europas.

Deutschland.

Die Ateliers der Ufa.

In der Bekanntschaft von 4 Monaten stellte sich die Ufa 1930 mit ihrem gesamten Film- und Tonstudio aus und übernahm die Produktion des europäischen Filmstudios in Deutschland. Die Ufa hat sich in der Lage gesehen, die Produktion des europäischen Filmstudios in Deutschland zu übernehmen. Die Ufa hat sich in der Lage gesehen, die Produktion des europäischen Filmstudios in Deutschland zu übernehmen.

Ufa-Neubabelsberg.
Ufa-Neubabelsberg, Babelsberg, 1930. Ufa-Neubabelsberg, Babelsberg, 1930. Ufa-Neubabelsberg, Babelsberg, 1930.

Die Tonfilmstudios der Ufa in Neubabelsberg.

Große Aufnahmehalle

Die Aufnahmehalle wurde durch Zerstörung der alten Halle und durch die Ufa-Neubabelsberg, Babelsberg, 1930. Ufa-Neubabelsberg, Babelsberg, 1930. Ufa-Neubabelsberg, Babelsberg, 1930.

Links: Grundriß des Vierfach-Tonfilm-Ateliers in Kreuzturm.

Illustration 16 Film-Kurier 15 August 1930 (supplement). (Cinegraph Archive Hamburg)

This considerable investment – at a time of deep economic crisis in Germany – speaks to an increasing awareness of the rise in sound film production and of rising expectations in terms of the quality of sound film stories. This in turn influenced the wider film-making landscape in Germany and produced increasingly accomplished films from a sound perspective. Consequently, the period yielding most examples relevant to this research begins in 1930. The rationale for taking 1933 as the end point for this thesis will be expanded further in the final section of this chapter.

The NSDAP and the Film Industry

For the purposes of proposing a rationale for the end point of the time period selected for this thesis, the rise to power by the Socialists in January 1933 provides a clear historical cut-off point. It is perhaps sufficient to bring to mind the National Socialist government's influence over cultural and creative activity, as the new regime sought to seek control over all aspects of German society. New administrative structures were created almost as soon as they came to power,

providing an ideological as well as an actual framework of surveillance that quickly affected all aspects of life, and included film-making activities. Reflecting on the legacy of the films made after The Great War and before The Third Reich, Noel Burch (1991, p.84) describes the period from 1919-1932 as “*the first great creative period in European films.*” From January 1933 onwards, Hitler’s new government assumed tight control over content and form of new films, and draconian race laws began to put increasing pressure on ‘non-Aryan’ film-makers to leave their professions (and their country). Sabine Hake (2006, p.59) states:

In coming to power in 1933, the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) under its leader Adolf Hitler promised a spiritual revolution that would bring dramatic changes to all areas of German culture and society. His political rhetoric combined conservative, nationalist, racist, anti-communist, and, above all, anti-Semitic views with an extremist *völkisch*¹⁷ ideology that culminated in the glorification of the Aryan race, the celebration of *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community), the myth of *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) and the rejection of liberal democracy for the hierarchical structures associated with the leadership principle.

As the NSDAP’s influence over German society took hold, it marked a contextual shift particularly palpable in creative activities; this is perhaps even more obvious when examining cultural outputs from today’s perspective, than it might have been immediately apparent to many cinema goers in the spring of 1933. However, the Nazis were very quick to instigate new parameters within the film industry - from 1933 onwards, anyone working in the arts had to belong to a newly established professional body, the *Reichskulturkammer* [*Reich Chamber of Culture*]. Composers, musicians, film-makers, journalists, authors and actors alike could simply no longer work, unless they had been accepted by their specific *Kammer*. In recognising the importance to control the film industry, the National Socialists set up a provisional *Reichsfilmkammer* [*Reich Film Chamber*]. From July 1933 onwards, no-one was permitted to work in any area of the film industry, from production to distribution and exhibition, unless they were members of the *Kammer*. Non-Aryans were

¹⁷ *Völkisch* - literally: of the people, but often also translated as *populist*. The National Socialist Party was at great pains to keep emphasizing its core focus as speaking for and on behalf of the German people, and in particular, the German working classes, in a blatant attempt to popularize its ideology

automatically excluded from membership. (Taylor 1998, p.145)

Only Germans, defined in terms of citizenship and racial origin, were eligible for membership in the Reich Film Chamber. This rule allowed the Propaganda Ministry to exclude all non-Aryans and politically unreliable persons from working in the industry and, in so doing, to purge German cinema of ‘alien’ influences (...) Most Jews working in the industry left Germany in 1933 and 1934 for other European countries, often with hopes of a speedy return. The forced integration of the industry had a devastating effect on individual lives; but it also destroyed a lively cinema culture that had emerged in the 1920s with significant contributions by Jewish actors, directors, and producers.

(Hake 2006, pp.61)

Reichspropagandaminister Joseph Goebbels ensured that new media, such as radio and sound film, would be used to enforce nationalistic values, be it through outspoken propaganda broadcasts or more subtly via popular entertainment imbued with inherent state-approved ideology (an approach which Goebbels personally saw as more effective in many instances, than overt propaganda films). The new government capitalised on media potential to portray a cultural and social identity that could be aligned with the establishment of a fascist mythology as envisaged by the NSDAP. Cinema as experimentation was discouraged, film as social critique or as an expression of individual uncertainty or even psychological conflict was ‘out’ (unless it suited the ideologically motivated portrayal of a particular minority as inherently weak-minded); film was now put in harness to serve the ‘greater good’ of the National Socialist state.

Anything considered critical of National Socialism, from aesthetic styles to moral sensibilities, could be prohibited, banned, and confiscated. A more far-reaching pre-censorship based on submitted scripts replaced the standard post-production censorship; now the Reichsfilm dramaturg (Reich Film Dramaturge) was in charge of the approval process. The close involvement of the Ministry [of Propaganda] in the pre-production phase limited the economic risks for the studios while extending ministerial control to all stages of production. Not surprisingly, the total number of censored films remained insignificant.

(Hake 2006, p.62)

The close control exerted by the National Socialist government over the film making process had a tangible effect on Germany’s film output from 1933 onward. Far

reaching personnel change in all aspects of production caused by the exodus of a significant proportion of film-makers presents a further challenge to continuity of film sound style beyond 1933. Interestingly, Schulte-Sasse (1992b, p.143) expressed a reasonable degree of caution when summarising the cultural output of the *Third Reich*:

1933 cannot be treated as a magic year in which all earlier art forms were aborted, and much can be learned by exploring Nazism's indebtedness to generic traditions, both literary and filmic (...).

However, the combination of a state exercising tight control over the subject matter of film productions, as well as having caused considerable numbers of production staff to leave their professions, amount to an indisputable change to the production framework in which sound films were made from 1933 onwards. Whilst this fact should not be understood as an argument against the close analysis of film sound from 1933 onwards¹⁸, the scope of a research project such as this make it necessary to set boundaries. Bookending the closer focus on sound films selected for this thesis in terms of an emerging sound aesthetic are the technological circumstances that produced commercially viable sound films on one side from 1930 onwards, and the fundamental change of political order (with its cultural consequences) from early 1933 onwards on the other side.

¹⁸ On the contrary: throughout the National Socialist era the continuing development of sound in film, including the arrival of magnetic recording stock, would make a highly interesting research topic

Chapter 3 Sound Film and its Critical Reception

Wir sind in einer äusserst wichtigen Periode der künstlerischen Kreativität durch den Film angelangt. Der Tonfilm ist die Realität von heute. Morgen werden ihm vielleicht die Farben und die Dimensionen hinzugefügt. Glauben Sie mir, der film wird keine seiner Werte, keine seiner Qualitäten verlieren. Es wird vielleicht etwas anderes sein. Wir werden Geräusche entdecken, welche das menschliche Ohr nicht wahrzunehmen vermochte, so, wie der Stummfilm uns mit visuellen Begebenheiten bekannt machte, die unser Auge nie zu sehen gewohnt war.
(Pabst 1929, p.92)¹

Through film, we have reached an extremely important period in artistic creativity. Sound film is a reality today. Tomorrow, perhaps, it may be joined by colour and [spatial] dimension. Believe me, film will not be diminished [by sound] in terms of its values or qualities. But it will perhaps be different. We will discover sounds, hitherto not experienced by the human ear – just as silent film introduced us to visual components that the eye had previously not encountered.

The central focus of this project lies with the analysis of the creative use of sound in German films made during the early period after the arrival of synchronous sound. In this regard, it is useful to understand the wider debate around sound from a conceptual perspective. Whilst literary and scholarly critique will be discussed in this section, it is equally important to consider the transition from the silent to the sound film era from the journalistic perspective. There is a compelling argument that film reviews published in the press “reflect and influence public attitudes, and artists in turn affirm or protest those attitudes in their works” (Schulte-Sasse 1992a, p.47). There were a number of theorists (some of whom also worked as film critics) who lent their voices to the discussion of a sound aesthetic during the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. As Altman (1980) observed, many of these contributions have been adopted as the established early yardstick of sound theory:

That the basic vocabulary for film sound should derive from a line of

¹ (UZH -Seminar für Filmwissenschaft - Viktor Sidler: Kino der Dreissiger- und Vierzigerjahre 2017)
This Pabst quote from 1929 was used by the Swiss film historian Viktor Sidler as part of a lecture series in the Winter Semester of 1982/83. All of Sidler’s lectures are available via:
<http://www.film.uzh.ch/de/bibliothek/sidler/lectures/FG2/V4.html>

critics profoundly suspicious of sound and that this terminology should take the image as its point of departure are matters of concern which have been too infrequently addressed in the history of criticism and the sound track.
(Altman 1980, p.12)

An ongoing perception is that many of these theories were expressed from a position of dissent - given that many of these key sources appeared to mourn the death of the silent screen. Did these iconic theorists (Arnheim, Balázs, Clair, Eisenstein - to name but a few) uniformly reject sound on principle, or does a contextual approach cast their pronouncements in a different light? Can a shift in attitudes, or at least a divergence of opinions, be detected? Most importantly, were these isolated voices representative of a wider positive response to sound? Or were the views of these emerging theorists simply sought out by film historians and therefore preserved for posterity through generations of textbooks – particularly in comparison to more anonymous journalistic contributions? Ultimately, it is the films that should speak for themselves; this research project demonstrates the diverse creativity with which film-makers in Germany engaged with sound.

Germany's early sound films were shaped by social, political and cultural factors which influenced their production. Consequently, the perspective of how sound film was received and reflected within the public sphere should be considered. This may provide further insights through which to review the contextual scene that produced the more well-known (and oft-cited) opinions in response to sound film from eminent thinkers of the era. To create a contextual framework for this discussion, it is necessary to sketch some of the main theoretical concepts which have become established as early sound theory, but to revisit this within the context of the debate on sound as extant in the public sphere in Germany at that time. On reviewing archival material from the period, what is immediately struck by is the frequency and persistence with which the topic of sound in film was taken up - long before sound film became a reality in Germany. The press was keeping the public informed about international developments, in particular with a close eye on Hollywood, Germany's main competitor on the global cinema stage. The primary focus lay in the discussion of the developmental steps that sound film technology was undergoing. The breadth of the debate, as publicised in various newspapers, is surprising, and speaks to the

fact that the reporting on sound technology provided public impetus into the developments of sound film, which must have created a considerable level of anticipation within the public sphere.

The main focus for this part of the research rests within an appraisal of historical primary source material that engaged with the concept of an aural component in cinema. These sources take into account the views of film-makers and critics in regard to the arrival of sound in film. Carroll (1985, p.265) sketches the discourse emanating from opposing views around the arrival of sound, citing Roman Jakobson's 1933 riposte to those who were rejecting sound outright. Jakobson's article argued that those who were opposing sound had simply not grasped the creative possibilities of the new medium, which could incorporate sound as a new dimension to filmic storytelling. A range of critical reflections selected for this chapter will provide an additional component for balancing the more widely cited, established theorists whose writing was contemporaneous to the period. Analysis of primary sources from German archives (for example drawn from publications such as the daily *Film Kurier*) plays a key part in this section, alongside published collections and anthologies (Kaes and Dimendberg 1994; Gandert 1993) alongside extracts from key theory texts. The purpose of this chapter is to balance a widely cited canon of theorists (such as Arnheim or Balázs) with direct source material in order to offer new insights into the critical reception of sound in film, both in terms of its earliest inception some time before the arrival of film sound as well as in terms of yielding a flavour of the general mood with regard to sound film. Using selected texts from primary source material can shed new light on what film historians have come to regard as the established historiography of early sound film in German cinema.

Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov

There is a widely held assumption that some eminent theorists (Rudolf Arnheim is often cited in this context) were highly reticent about the prospect of silent cinema being displaced by the arrival of sound in film. Russian theorists such as Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov were initially in favour of sound film, on the proviso of adopting a highly dogmatic approach to sound. These Soviet theorists held on to a concept that sound in film should be used in counterpoint to the image in order to

create a perceptual dissonance. They published a much-quoted statement on film sound (which Eisenstein included in his 1949 tract on *Film Form*, p. 257), in which they also acknowledged sound as a new element in film montage, which offered the concept of counterpoint. It is worth reflecting once again on the fact that this manifesto, published originally in 1928 by Eisenstein et al, has become an established cornerstone of a film historic narrative of the critical attitudes towards the arrival of sound. It is correct to state that the Soviet manifesto on the use of sound in film was reported in the European press. According to Müller (2003, p.268 note 839) Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov's manifesto was translated into German in 1928 and published in the *Vossische Zeitung* as well as in *Lichtbild-Bühne*. Pudovkin's views on the arrival of sound film were reported in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1928:

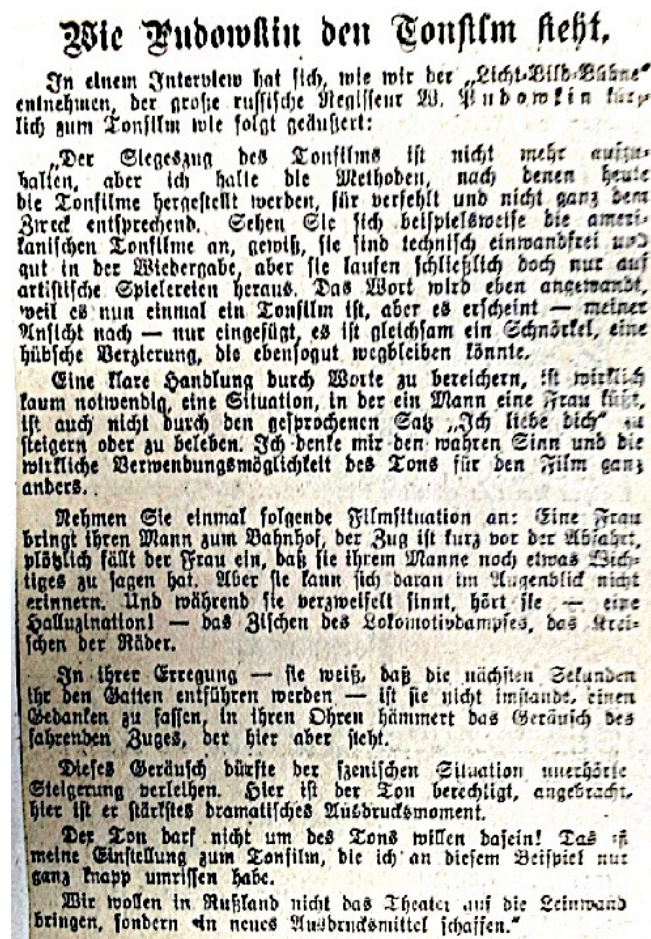


Illustration 17 Frankfurter Zeitung, 1928 (FUB Archive)

Apart from echoing the critical attitude towards what was largely seen as the unimaginative approach exhibited by many American talkies, Pudovkin also attempted to formulate the artistic potential of good sound design and how this might

be achieved. To illustrate his sonic vision, Pudovkin conjured up a hypothetical scenario: a train station, a husband and wife bidding one another farewell - the woman tries to tell her husband something very important but is somehow unable to achieve this. Pudovkin speculated as to whether background sound effects emanating from the environment of the train station could be summoned to illustrate the anguish and frustration felt by the wife at her inability to articulate what is on her mind. However, as for instance Thompson (1980, p. 116) cautioned, what this article demonstrates again is that the Soviet theorists' perspective was expressed from a hypothetical position: sound film did not become established in Soviet cinema for several years into the 1930s. The very first experimental steps which Russian film undertook were reported on by the *Berliner Zeitung* in November 1929:



Illustration 18 Berliner Zeitung, 1929 (FUB Archive)

The report summarises a screening of a selection of image material that is reminiscent of the experimental screenings which took place in Berlin during the early 1920s. This would support the view that Russian cinema lagged several years behind other European countries in its adaption to sound cinema. At any rate, Eisenstein left the Soviet Union to work abroad for an extended period in the early 1930s, so was absent during the period when Soviet film had the potential to begin evolving its own sound practice. Subsequently Eisenstein distanced himself from some film projects he was credited as having been involved with during his stint away from the Soviet union. In addition to being invited to give lectures on film,

Eisenstein also pursued a long-term film project in Mexico, that was shot almost entirely without sync sound on location. This was reported on by the *Film Kurier* in a front-page article *Eisenstein ohne Tonfilm* [*Eisenstein without sound film*] on 28th April 1932.

**Eisenstein
ohne Tonfilm**

Seine „amerikanische Tragödie“

Er drehte in Mexiko fast nur stumm

Rückkehr nach Moskau

Berlin, 28. April.

S. M. Eisenstein, der Schöpfer des Potemkin-Films und der „Generallinie“ ist für ein paar Tage in Berlin. Am Montag wird er wahrscheinlich bereits wieder nach Moskau zurückfahren — 2½ Jahre ist er von Rußland fort gewesen.

65 000 Meter Film bringt er aus Mexiko mit — er zeigt Photos aus jenem Lande der Typenfülle, großmächtige Indogebirge, phantastische Kaktuspflanzen, jahrtausendalte Pyramiden. Ein Ton- und Geräuschfilm soll es werden; denn die Sprache des Indos kann den anderen Ländern nichts geben, erklärt Eisenstein. Ihm ist der Ton Verstärker nur des Bildeindrucks; in Mexiko hat er die Tonaufnahmeapparatur nicht überall mitnehmen können, man hat eine Reihe Aufnahmen auf Platten fixiert und wird in Rußland an die Synchronisation gehen.

18 Monate hat Eisenstein an seinem Film gearbeitet; Upton Sinclair verhalf ihm dazu; in jenem Lande der Präsidentenunruhen hat er einen Stoff gewählt „Viva Mexiko“, dem eine Revolution gegen einen Präsidenten zugrunde liegt. Aber die Hauptsache ist ihm bei diesem Film, die Stimmung eines Volkes wiederzugeben, bei dem es gärt und ein Land

...produktion-unmöglich, ...len.

Dieser Krise des Films: ...setzung der Steuerlasten ...Reorganisation der ...auf einem Plan ...der Kompetenzen.

* ...ag von Miß Hurst, Eng- ...oralischen Einfluß des ...ische Volk, legte Alfred ...Theaterverhältnisse dar. ...en Ueberblick über die ...tion seines Landes und ...uf die für das Ausland ...Organisation der Volks- ...ngensenschaft ein. Auf ...leinhardts und Piscators ...terte ausführlich Regie- ...Hoffmanns Erzählungen“ ...rgang“ dargeboten haben.

Silvio d'Amico, Italien, ...die Theater in Italien“, ...agements kennt außer ...t einzelnen Schauspielers ...ber „Die Oper in Italien“ ...ete Mule, Italien, ein

Illustration 19 Film-Kurier 28 April 1932 (Cinegraph Archive Hamburg)

The *Film Kurier* article cites Eisenstein's position as seeing sound only as an element to augment the visual impression of a film. The focus on sound as augmenting the visual domain suggests that Eisenstein himself was beginning to diverge from the pure dogma of sonic counterpoint. Returning to Thomson (1980, p.117), an orthodox adherence to the counterpoint dictum is problematic in conceptual terms. Thomson concludes (ibid.) that a dogmatic application of sound used only in counterpoint to the image is not borne out in practice. Very few of the

early Soviet sound films used counterpoint as a consistent aesthetic feature, such as *Alone* (1931, directed by Kozintsev and Trauberg) and *Deserter* (1933, directed by Pudovkin). Margolit (2014) posits the view that early Soviet sound film style in fiction film was influenced by factual sound film examples:

The peculiar stylistic features of the early Soviet soundtrack can be traced back to the fact that sound arrived by way of the nonfiction film in the Soviet film industry, in contrast to its Western European or American counterparts: hence the peculiarly “laconic” dialogue of Soviet sound films of the early 1930s and their preference for industrial noise over natural sounds.
(Margolit 2014, p.121)

Notwithstanding the fact that Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov’s statement on sound has evolved into a quasi-shorthand for the attitude of eminent film theorists to the arrival of sound, their manifesto has to be interpreted within the context of Soviet cinema’s actual transition into sound film, which occurred later than in the US or Germany. The transition into sound was subject to each nation’s particular social, economic and cultural contextual framework. Film-makers of the Soviet Union produced ground-breaking work during the silent era; and yet this not automatically enable them to become equally influential in their transition into sound film – at least not immediately. According to Pozner (2014, p.66-69), from the Soviet perspective the transition into sound was primarily affected by technological and economic challenges specific post-revolutionary structures. In particular, the budgetary constraints of an economic model that relied on a five-year-plan for the country’s development was an obstacle to the resourcing of sound film innovation, making it harder to respond within a rapidly changing landscape of evolving technology.

Arnheim

In 1933 Rudolf Arnheim wrote his essay *The Complete Film*, which was subsequently published in 1957 as part of *Film as Art*. The central tenet of this essay lies in the aesthetic changes film was undergoing at the time and Arnheim explores the arrival of colour film in comparison to black and white as analogous to the arrival of sound film to replace silent cinema. On first reading it appears that even in 1933 Arnheim had remained sceptical about the issue of sound in the cinema, which he viewed as “the imposition of a technical novelty that did not lie on the path the best

film artists were pursuing” (Arnheim, [1957] 1997, p.154). Nonetheless, the following concession made by him qualifies his apparent rejection of sound film:

By sheer good luck, sound film is not only destructive but also offers artistic potentialities of its own. Owing to this accident alone the majority of art-lovers still do not realize the pitfalls in the road pursued by the movie producers. They do not see that the film is on its way to the victory of wax museum ideals over creative art. (Ibid., p.154)

Spottiswoode (1969, p.28) presented a critical appraisal of Arnheim’s body of writing as displaying a faulty causal assumption, namely that Arnheim accepted “the fallacy *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*: by merely seeing films instead of making them, he is led to read into them the fruit of his theories.” Arnheim’s reservations in response to sound film are on closer inspection not a rejection of sound film *per se* but in fact a critique of a film industry making films with dumbed-down mass appeal and populist film production. Arnheim’s main concern therefore lay with a lack of creative ambition in film projects, and as such his attitude needs to be understood as a critique of the economic framework into which film production had evolved. Sound technology meant that studios had to invest more resources (both in terms of financial and time resources) into film production. That is true even without taking into account the cost of converting cinemas to sound, which in turn had an effect on cinema owners and by extensions box office takings. This fundamentally changed the landscape of film production, as increasing film production costs drove smaller independent studios and cinemas out of business. These growing economic pressures (coupled with limited export dividends as ongoing undercurrent) meant that sound film production had to have a certain mass appeal in order to recoup production costs. Spiker (1975, pp.54/55) illustrates the growing cost of film production with the arrival of sound against a backdrop of falling cinema attendance. In other words, Arnheim was right that the financial pressures involved in sound film production potentially could have a detrimental effect on some creative aspirations within cinema, but it does not hold true that Arnheim was against sound film on principle. Furthermore, as this research project asserts, not all early sound films were dumbed down, sugar-coated offerings supplying escapist entertainment to the masses. Arnheim, like Eisenstein, was rightly wary of what would be referred to as filmed theatre - in other words, Arnheim criticised aesthetic implications where

cinema was limiting the use of sound to the reproduction of filmed dialogue scenes. Arnheim had been also very critical of silent film ventures, for instance some of Fritz Lang's artistically visually ambitious projects came under severe fire (Bock and Töteberg 1992, p.221). It might be more accurate to characterise Arnheim's critique of film as follows: on condition Arnheim liked the script, and provided productions were well made, as well as having some creative ambition, Arnheim would not reject the fundamental concept of sound in film.

Benjamin, Mann

The aesthetic discussion of sound film, particularly in regard to music (which the discussion will move on to later) stimulated debate from diverse sections of the public sphere, including philosophers and authors. Sound film kindled wider engagement in the discussion of the material form of an artefact. Such deliberations were reflected within the wider cultural sphere, as Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* ([1936] 2001) indicates:

(...) technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.

(Benjamin [1936] 2001, p.50)

In addition to this spatial shift of interacting with an artefact, there were further temporal implications that occupied the thinkers of the age. Positing the view that one can broadly define a sonic event as an artefact, Benjamin's reflections on mechanical reproduction resonate within the dawn of sound film. The distinction between the space within which a performance occurred as being separated from the space within which that original performance is subsequently experienced by an audience reflects the advent of radio broadcasts as well as the arrival of sound film. A new understanding of live performance in relation to spatial and temporal separation emerged. The German author Thomas Mann's reflections on the concept of sound film are preserved via a fragment of cinema created in January 1929, an artefact which was located in 2014 in the *Bundesarchiv*. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine*

*Zeitung*² described the discovery of this piece of film archive as Germany's audio-visual big bang. In this short film Mann reflects on this fundamental shift in the relationship between the source, in his case the author as in-vision speaker, addressing an unseen audience. Mann discusses his feelings about the concept that he was now not only separated in space from his audience (which he had already experienced through his involvement in radio broadcast during the 1920s), but also that he was addressing an audience separated in time - what Mann referred to as the author *addressing his future audience*.

Deliberations on the consequences of sound film became a recurring theme in the public debate and critical discussions during the latter years of the Weimar Republic. Many critics and theorists had framed their objections within aesthetic arguments and cultural concerns. These individuals could eventually change their mind without feeling personally threatened by cinema's conversion to sound. This distinguishes their aesthetic concerns from the motivation driving stauncher resistance to sound film in other quarters: thousands of musicians who had established successful professional careers supplying accompaniment for silent film screenings now faced destitution.

Musicians and Sound Film

The transitional period had a considerable effect on the working lives of thousands of musicians, whose services of providing aural accompaniment to the silent cinema screen came under acute threat with the advent of sound film. Faced with the prospect of losing their livelihoods, musicians rallied and railed against the evils of sound film; their objections were discussed in the press:

² FAZ, published 20/09/2014: Thomas Mann im Tonfilm: Der audiovisuelle Urknall unserer Literatur. <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/themen/thomas-mann-erster-tonfilm-eines-deutschen-autors-13146283.html> [Accessed 03 March 2015]

The *Film-Kurier* published the above lead article in April 1930 summarising the musicians' argument against sound film: it was a threat not just to the livelihoods³ of countless musicians, but an attack on musical cultural values. Sound Film, the musicians argued, could never replace the cultural experience of witnessing a film score played by an accomplished live audience. Reporting from the emergency meeting of the *Deutscher Musikerverband* [*German Musicians' Union*], the *Film-Kurier* reported that the Union declared any mechanical reproduction of music – whether via the sound-on-film or the sound-on-disk system – was simply *Betrug* [*fraud*]. The article goes on to unpick this argument, clarifying that whilst some cinema orchestras were indeed of superb standard, this was not necessarily the general norm everywhere; in contrast a good score, performed by accomplished professional musicians and recorded onto film could be reproduced in sound film cinemas across the country, making a superior cinematic experience available to audiences on a wider scale. Whilst the *Film-Kurier* was presenting the pros and cons of the objections raised by the musicians, the existential threat to individual players continued to fuel an impassioned debate. Film sound changed the aesthetic of cinema, providing impetus to a developing discourse around the emerging

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opportunities presented by the new technology. This was exciting new territory for authors, scriptwriters and film-makers. Meanwhile, many musicians faced destitution - for them, the aesthetic considerations were of secondary concern compared to the very real danger that threatened to destroy their livelihoods. But in addressing the public, it was the aesthetic quality of live music which was placed at the forefront of the musicians' counter argument. The pamphlet below is appealing directly to the audience and headed by the messages *Gegen den Tonfilm!* [*Against Sound Film!*] and *Für lebende Künstler!* [*For living artists!*]:



Illustration 21 Pamphlet 1 against Sound Film (FUB Archive)

The pamphlet warns of the "dangers of sound film", arguing that many cinemas will have to close down because of a lack of variety in their programming. This statement could be interpreted as a reflection of the music hall tradition which connected the screening of films with other live performance elements. Then the aesthetic argument is made: "Sound film is Kitsch", declared the pamphlet - anyone

who loves art and artists should reject the “dead” sound film form. The flier contains direct criticism of the poor sound quality of many films - an argument that glosses over the situation that not all silent film musicians were artistically accomplished performers, and completely ignores the fact that some composers believed that the skill of certain conductors and orchestras were not always equal to the task (Kaes et al. 2016, pp.553-554). The pamphlet calls for the rejection of sound film in favour of live entertainment, as represented by cinema orchestras, or integrated within variety performances that incorporated silent film screenings with accompaniment by live music. The following flier went a step further:

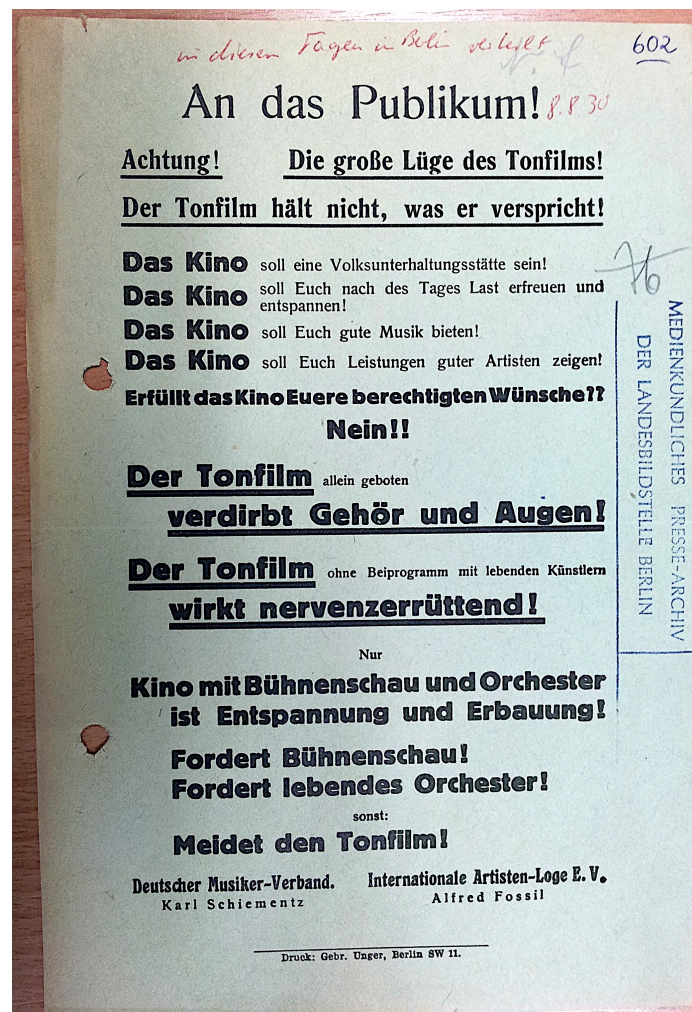


Illustration 22 Pamphlet 2 (FUB Archive)

The text of the flier urgently warns the public of the dangers of sound film as damaging to eyes and ears. Sound film is “nervenzerrüttend!” [*nerve-wrecking!*]; the authors of the pamphlet urged audiences to demand only live-entertainment and to boycott sound film. Both the above fliers, which are held in the archive of the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen in Potsdam, contain a hand-written and dated

note at the top: “*In diesen Tagen in Berlin verteilt*” (Currently handed out in Berlin) and the date 8th August 1930. This date places the material at a critical point during the transitional period, as Germany witnessed a drop in silent film production by over 70%, whereas sound film production increased by over 1100% (Jossé 1984, p.240). Merely a year earlier, the number of German-made sound films had been tiny, compared with on-going silent film production. However, 1930 was the year when silent film production was dramatically eclipsed by sound film, and therefore it is no wonder that musicians suddenly saw the need to mount resistance to this trend. Distributing their leaflets outside cinemas, the musicians’ counter-attack borders on the vitriolic: the pamphlets decry sound film as a deceit, which denies audiences the sensory pleasure of live music. The self-interest of the pamphlets’ authors is quite clear, as each of their appeals against sound film is qualified by the smaller print statements calling for the inclusion of live music by actual artists in sound film screenings. Musicians could perhaps see the writing on the wall for silent film, given the enormous audience appeal of emerging sound films, yet they clung on to the hope of a future approach that would see the combination of sound film screenings with live orchestral entertainment as part of cinema programming.

A year on, the *Film-Kurier* reported on the plight of unemployed musicians in an article published on 2nd July 1931. Interestingly, the article mentions that many audiences at that time apparently did miss the presence of an orchestra as part of the entertainment, and some members of the public had even ceased to visit the cinema because of the lack of live music. This speaks to the fact that the musicians’ argument in favour of live concerts as part of cinema entertainment actually did reflect the taste of some sections of the public. Faced with dwindling professional opportunities, some musicians aspired to form new orchestras in an effort to explore new concert (and income) potential.



Illustration 23 Film-Kurier 02 July 1931(Cinegraph Archive Hamburg)

But the above *Film-Kurier* article warned against a rival movement against sound film, that would attempt to attract crowds to silent film screenings complete with live musical accompaniments. Such infighting within the film business was not of benefit to the industry as a whole; instead, the *Film-Kurier* suggests integrating orchestras into sound film cinemas, thereby aiming to provide additional entertainment value to the audience, perhaps before or after a film screening. Although musicians' unions continued to emphasise the special quality afforded via live accompaniment and real instruments, ultimately the die was cast and countless musicians joined the growing throng of the unemployed during the economic crisis of the early 1930s.

Composers

The aesthetic objections to recorded music, characterised as a soulless fake, reflects wider engagement in the discussion of the material form of an artefact – as discussed previously in the section on Benjamin. It is obvious why musicians felt compelled to reject the existential threat that they faced with the arrival of sound film. Composers were less hostile, in fact some felt that their work could be represented via sound film more faithfully as originally per composers' original intention - the composer Giuseppe Becce had been frustrated by having his music "re-interpreted" by conductors and orchestras who performed musical scores that deviated considerably in pace or instrumentation from the composer's original intention. Becce resolved to provide clearer guidance over the interpretation of musical scores via two didactic guide books which he published in 1927 together with Hans Erdmann (Bock 1984,

Volume 1 Cinegraph Lg.10 Guiseppa Becce B2). Becce had also published an article⁴ on compositional aspects of writing for the silent screen in 1928. Becce wanted to elevate musical score from mere accompaniment to a narrative element that was intrinsically linked to the dramaturgy of a film.

Writing in 1940, Eisler (1976) reflected on a decade of sound film and in particular on the role of music within the new form of cinema. He held on to the Eisensteinian concept of counterpoint, stating that the relationship between sound and image should not be content with the music merely imitating what is already made clear by the visual component (ibid, p. 168). Eisler appeared quite critical of any form of non-diegetic underscore during dialogue scenes, but appeared very excited at the musical opportunities that sound effects could potentially add to a film:

Soundeffekt und Musik. Die Mischung zwischen zwei Elementen ergibt neuartige Effekte. Sound übertrifft und ersetzt alle Effekte der Perkussionsinstrumente. Zu beweisen. Begleitung des Bildes durch Soundeffekt.
(Eisler 1976, p.168)

Sound effect and music. The blending of two components renders innovative effects. Sound surpasses and supplants all effects of percussion instruments. To be proved. Accompaniment of the image via sound effect.

Apart from entertaining the idea that sound effects could combine into a musical score, Eisler was also open-minded about the possibilities of synthesised musical score. The composer referred to the work of a Bavarian academic - Professor Pfielzinger - who had researched the graphic properties of recordings made via optical system in 1935. Although to some degree a highly speculative undertaking at the time of Eisler's writing (the composer hypothesised about various *technological* hurdles having yet to be overcome), it illustrates at the same time that some composers saw further creative opportunities via technological developments of the cinema.

Like Becce, another composer writing during the 1920s about the changing role of

⁴ Melos: Zeitschrift für Musik 7, no.4 (April 1928) 170-72
Translation by Alex H Bush, reprinted in Kaes et al. 2016, pp.515-517.

music in film was Walter Gronostay. A student of Arnold Schönberg, who – along with Herbert Windt - was to compose the score for Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1938), Gronostay published an article in a music journal⁵ in 1929, in which he sought to clarify music's relationship with other arts. Interestingly, he believed that the purpose of music during the silent era had been to focus the audience's attention on the screen as well as to cover distracting noises from within the auditorium. Gronostay cited members of the audience whispering or moving about as extraneous noises that would

(...) confront the well-formed images sequence with a distracting factor that awkwardly disrupts its potential to make an impression
(Kaes et al 2016, p.566)

In addition to the benefit of covering these unwelcome noises, music during the silent era illustrated essential narrative plot components, and the composer believed that this feature should be carried into the sound area, even if the noise suppressant qualities of the score were no longer required in the sound era. These narrative components are contradicted by a further point Gronostay made: at the time of writing his article, he envisages diegetic music as the only justification for music within film.

We hear music only when a singer or orchestra is visible. The other acoustic portions of such a film would likely be made up mostly of speaking scenes and, above all, organized sounds.
(Kaes et al 2016, pp.566/7)

According to Kaes et al (p.561), an upcoming issue of the same journal promised to devote itself to the development of sound effects in film. Once again, Gronostay's assertion about music being restricted to only diegetic representations was written from a hypothetical position and proved not to hold true when considering early sound film examples. In addition to film narrative warranting the presence of music, Gronostay believed that music could motivate a new kind of film genre from the earliest conceptual stages, speculating about "promising" future projects developed to marry animation with a pre-composed music score. The musicologist Heinrich

⁵ Melos: Zeitschrift für Musik 8, no.7 (July 1929) 317-18
Translation by Alex H Bush, reprinted in Kaes et al. 2016, pp.566-567.

Strobel (a keen supporter of modernist composers such as Paul Hindemith) had discussed combining music with non-narrative moving image footage as part of the Baden-Baden music festival in 1928⁶. The project in question had the appearance of *found footage*, a result of montage rather than deliberately filmed visual material. Hindemith had apparently submitted a score to *Felix the Cat* in 1927, pointing to an interest in combining modernist music with the emerging animation format in cinema. Strobel described how cinema shared a musical affinity with opera:

First, people made do with an improvised piano accompaniment.
Later, when cinemas grew into large theatres and the intensity and
tone of piano sound were no longer adequate, they turned to orchestras.
Around this time, the practice of dramatic music was in full bloom in
the opera, which they understandably could take as the most obvious
model.
(Kaes et al 2016, pp.553)

Strobel's insights provide an interesting explanation for early cinematic scores as having evolved from the European romantic tradition: Strobel went on to acknowledge that, whilst not every film budget could afford a specially composed score, "original music must be written for particularly valuable works of film" (ibid.). In the same section, he expressed concern that many composers did not understand how to write music for film skilfully, and instead frequently fell into a trap of providing score as bland background illustration. Against this, he cites Sergei Eisenstein's Броненосец «Потёмкин» [*Battleship Potemkin*] (1925)⁷ and Charlie Chaplin's *The Circus* (1928)⁸ as truly modern exemplars of a successful relationship between silent film and score. Having scored several notable silent films (including *Battleship Potemkin*), Edmund Meisel went on to write an article⁹ in 1930, reflecting on his own transition into composing for sound film. Meisel begins the article with the affirmation of the enormous importance of the arrival of sound for film, citing

⁶ Melos: Zeitschrift für Musik 7, no.7 (July 1928) 343-47

Translation by Tara Hottman, reprinted in Kaes et al. 2016, pp.552-555.

⁷ Edmund Meisel was commissioned to write the score for *Battleship Potemkin*'s premiere in Germany; Meisel also wrote the music for Walter Ruttmann's silent film *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* [*Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis*] (1927).

⁸ Score for the 1928 version of *The Circus* was by Arthur Kay; Hanns Eisler attempted to create a new score in the 1940s, but did not complete his work for the entire film.

⁹ Melos: Zeitschrift für Musik 9, no.7 (July 1930) 312-13 Translation by Christopher M. Geissler, reprinted in Kaes et al. 2016, pp.572-574.

emphasising its transformative influence on other performance genres:

No one today can seriously question the tremendous change that sound film has meant for the arts as a whole. Its impact can be felt in everything from film to theatre of all types to concerts. The technical possibilities are prodigious, and these have been exploited thus far to only the most limited extent.
(Kaes et al. 2016, p.573)

What Meisel's article also suggests is that whilst the technology was able to offer new possibilities, film-makers needed to adapt their creative practices further to exploit the potential afforded by this new technology. Again, this observation supports the hypothesis that practitioners had to adapt narrative concepts and to learn by experimenting with the new form. Meisel had worked on *Deutscher Rundfunk* [*German Radio*](1928), an early sound film project with Walter Ruttmann, intended to advertise Germany's advancements in radio broadcasting. Following that experience (which according to the composer had been limited in scope by financial constraints), Meisel went to work in England in November 1928 in order to learn more about sound film techniques in relation to recording music and to explore the new creative possibilities of composing for sound. Reflecting on the experience he gained while working in Britain, Meisel focuses mostly on the effect of different microphone positions in relations to orchestra players, but he also discusses how sound editing could add further complexity to the orchestration of a piece:

Sound editing synchronized with the image. Splicing together picture and the sound of various individual instruments with the help of instructive direction from the grips, more instruments, more and more until the entire orchestra is tutti! Wordless human voices invoked to accompany the visual depictions of mood, epitomizing states of mind, and so on. For what it's worth, listeners found the laughter of a corpulent man accompanied by bassoon staccato especially amusing.
(Kaes et al 2016, p.573)

What Meisel is describing diverges from what sound film composition was to become: the composer's approach was to augment or even substitute any synchronous sound with a music score mimicking the soundtrack. This approach would have offered only very limited narrative scope, and perhaps tells us all we need to know about Meisel's own adaptation to the sound screen. But this might be unfair, as Meisel's journey into sound film was tragically cut short by his untimely

death in November 1930, aged just 36. But the above article which Meisel had written just a few months before he died puts his score for Walter Ruttmann's *Deutscher Rundfunk* into critical context, a project which indicated that as a composer Meisel had yet to take the "spiritual leap"¹⁰ for achieving the transition into a new aural aesthetic. This notion is supported by the fact that Siegfried Kracauer had been highly critical of Meisel's score for Ruttmann's radio film, which confirms that composing music for a sound film was a very different undertaking compared with writing music for the silent screen. This critique in turn reflects Strobel's reservations cited above, who had taken the view that most composers were ill equipped to make the transition into sound. Ironically, in the summer of 1928 Strobel had praised Meisel's silent film music for Eisenstein's film, the autumn project of the same year reviewed by Kracauer did not suggest that Meisel was going to fulfil Strobel's expectations of composing for sound film. Appearing in the newspaper in October 1928, Kracauer's review expressed considerable dissatisfaction with Meisel's omnipresent score, stating that the music:

(...) reminds one of a conveyor belt and seems to have been manufactured by the kilometre. Its addition to the film is annoying above all because it is absolutely superfluous in a sound-image film; when, for instance, a waterfall appears on the screen, no one wants to hear music other than that of the rushing falls.
(Kaes et al. 2016, p.557)

Looking at the diverse strands of discussion just in terms of composing music for the moving image, it is clear that there were as many diverging views as there were parties to the debate. The complexity of opinions speaks again to the fact that it is inherently problematic to condense complex creative developments in the transitional phase into broad generalisations, let alone to produce the conclusion of an overriding theory or a uniform *modus operandi*. Renewed engagement with historic sources as exemplified for instance by Kaes et al. 2016 invites a complete re-appraisal of the transitional phase in terms of its complexity. Furthermore, the evaluation of research material gathered in several German archives as part of this

¹⁰ Cf. Appendix: Osterbotschaft [*Easter Message*] in which the film industry reflected on the first complete sound film season 1930/1931, discussing the spiritual transition into sound film, Film-Kurier 4th April 1931.

research project provides evidence that there was widespread curiosity around the possibility of sound in the cinema, and that this interest in sound film was being reported on from a variety of sources within the public sphere – including long before sound film became a commercial reality in Germany.

Technology in the Public Eye

On closer inspection of the archive material held in a number of places, it becomes clear that interest in the talking film predated the technological developments that brought about the transition into sound in the late 1920s by more than a decade.

Writing in the educational publication *Volksbildung* in May 1919, Trebesius set out the aspirations of sound film:



Illustration 24 Volksbildung: Der sprechende Film (FUB Archive)

so werden sich in Zukunft an hundert Orten zugleich viele Tausend unbemittelter Volksgenossen an Moissis bezauberndem Don Carlos oder Jadlowers Lohengrin erfreuen und begeistern.

Freilich, noch ist dies alles nur ein Spiel der Einbildungskraft, noch arbeiten Erfinder und Wissenschaftler an der schwierigen Aufgabe, die ihrer Lösung gewaltige Schwierigkeiten entgegensteht. Der erste Teil der Aufgabe, die Aufnahme der Sprache auf einen Film, gelang bereits vor etwa 20 Jahren. Man erreichte dies mit Hilfe einer Kapsel in Gestalt einer runden, flachen Blechbüchse, deren einer Boden von einem Plättchen mit Sprechtrichter gebildet wird. Wird der Kapsel, die oben einen Spitzbrenner trägt, durch einen Schlauch Gas zugeführt, und spricht man gegen das Plättchen, so wird es durch die Schallwellen in Schwingungen versetzt; diese pflanzen sich auf das Gas fort, und die sonst etwa 1,5 cm hohe Spitzflamme wird entsprechend dem wechselnden Gasdruck der Kapsel in Schwingungen versetzt, die genau den Schallwellen entsprechen. Die Schallwellen werden auf diese verhältnismäßig einfache Weise in Lichtwellen umgesetzt. Der Gedanke lag nahe, die Lichtschwankungen der kleinen Flamme im Lichtbild festzuhalten. So gelangte man zur lichtbildmäßigen Darstellung der Sprache. Wäre es nun möglich, die im Lichtbild aufgenommenen Lichtschwankungen wieder in Schallwellen umzusetzen, dann hätten wir ein Mittel, Veränderungen in Lichtbildschwankungen und diese dann wieder in Schallwellen umzuwandeln. Mit anderen Worten: dann wären alle Vorbedingungen zur Herstellung eines sprechenden Films erfüllt.

Nach dieses Mittel steht uns zur Verfügung in Gestalt der kleinen, wunderwirkenden Selenzelle. Das Selen ist ein bereits vor 100 Jahren entdecktes chemisches Element, das bei der Schwefelsäureherstellung als Nebenprodukt aus dem Bleikammerschwamm gewonnen wird. Durch Schmelzen und weitere Behandlung geht das gewonnene rote Pulver in einen festen Zustand über und ist dann im Besitze jener geheimnis-

vollen Eigenschaften, deren geschickte Ausnutzung unter anderem auch die Möglichkeit zur Herstellung des sprechenden Films ergeben soll. Das Selen, in kleinen runden oder rechteckigen Zellen in den Handel gebracht, hat die merkwürdige Eigenschaft, dem Durchgang eines elektrischen Stromes in belichtetem Zustand weit weniger Widerstand entgegenzusetzen als im Dunkeln. Kaum hatten die Forscher vor etwa vier Jahrzehnten dieses sonderbare Verhalten entdeckt, als sie auch schon alle nur erdenklichen Versuche mit dem Selen vornahmen. Und willig gingen die kleinen Zellen auf jede Anregung ein, zeigten ihre Empfindlichkeit auf jede noch so geringfügige Belichtungsänderung in weniger denn $\frac{1}{1000}$ Sekunde. Immer neue Versuche wurden unternommen, und immer wieder bewährte sich das Selen als ein treuer Helfer und Bundesgenosse.

Verbindet man eine solche Selenzelle mit einer Stromquelle und einem Fernsprecher und bestrahlt die Zelle mit Licht von wechselnder Stärke, so rufen die Lichtschwankungen in der Selenzelle Leitfähigkeitsveränderungen hervor, und im Stromkreis treten Stromschwankungen auf, die im Fernsprecher zu hören sind. Die Lichtstrahlen werden also auf diese Weise in Schallwellen umgesetzt.

Jetzt ist man nun am Werke, die beiden eben angeführten Ergebnisse zu einem Ganzen zu vereinen; die beim Sprechen entstehenden Schallwellen sollen zunächst in Lichtschwankungen (Aufnahme des Films) und die im Lichtbild festgehaltenen Lichtschwankungen dann wieder in Töne (Wiedergabe des Films) umgewandelt werden. Eine besondere Schwierigkeit bedeutet es hierbei, daß die Sprache und die Musik auf den gleichen Film aufgenommen werden müssen, auf dem die gespielten Vorgänge festgehalten werden, damit volle Gleichzeitigkeit zwischen den Tönen und Bewegungen herrscht. Gelingt dies, dann haben wir den sprechenden Film. Dann kommt die Zeit, wo auch die Nachwelt dem Darsteller noch Kränze sticht.

Illustration 25 Volksbildung (public education publication; article continued) (FUB Archive)

Trebesius's article captures a conceptual understanding of sound film still very much rooted within the aesthetic of the 1910s and he associates the potential of sound film with the earlier *Tonbilder*, which have already been discussed as part of the history chapter. Trebesius cites a number of inventions (either already extant in 1919 or at least under development at that time) that would enable the screening of film with synchronous sound. Trebesius did not (yet) explore the concept of narrative sound film as a genre to take the place of silent film; instead (and entirely in keeping with the tradition of the *Tonbild* performance style), the author focuses on the opportunities of screening opera and music films with sound and image presented as a synchronous, homogenous entity. This speaks to the fact that even when the technology of sound in film became a more realistic possibility, it was not a foregone conclusion in which genre or format this new technology would be employed. Nonetheless, Trebesius welcomes the potential of relocating prestigious opera performances into the experiential horizons of a less privileged audience, for whom a visit to the opera would otherwise remain an unfulfilled ambition. Other early outlets for sound film technology were explored via poetry recitals, delivered by famous stage actors. There was clearly a professional interest in the reporting of the

latest developments of the talking film within technical quarters; accordingly, the professional association of German engineers *VDI - Verein Deutscher Ingenieure* - appraised its readership on the work of Triergon's engineers in September 1922 in an extensive report:



Illustration 26 Verein Deutscher Ingenieure (FUB Archive)

Under the headline *Der sprechende Film* [*The Talking Film*], the front-page article of the *VDI* states that the quest to combine sound and moving image has existed since the beginnings of cinema. It also states that a number of experimental approaches had already been developed, with varying degrees of promise of success. The reason for the *VDI* dedicating the entire front page of its news publication to sound film is that it expects great things from the most recent advances made by the

inventor collective Trierigon. According to the article, a screening of a range of sound film material took place on 17th September 1922 at the Alhambra theatre in Berlin. The screening incorporated a range of offerings, ranging from song and dance numbers to orchestral performances as well as a final section of spoken dialogue. The newspaper report describes the acoustic quality of the musical instruments as well as of the vocal elements as excellent in every way. The illustrations show a single frame of film with optical track in the sprocket area as well as a device which the article describes to its readers as an “electric ear for voice recording” – this forerunner to the microphone is referred to as a “Kathodophone”.

A year later, the following newspaper clipping dated 27th September 1923 (from an unattributed newspaper publication held in the archive of the Filmuniversität Babelsberg) reports on a further project by the Trierigon team. According to the article, the inventors were investigating using their sound film technology to capture a performance of *Spiegelmensch* by Franz Werfel in collaboration with some of Germany’s best-known stage actors.

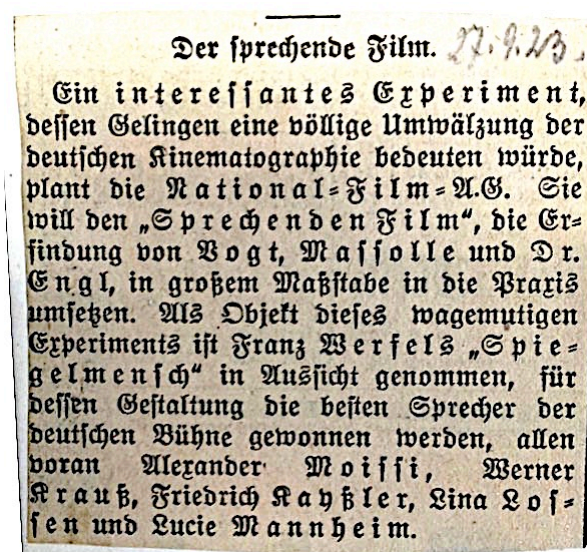


Illustration 27 Der sprechende Film: Trierigon (FUB Archive)

The article hails the project - if successful - as a historic milestone that would revolutionise German cinema. The experimental phase which the above newspaper clipping had reported on in 1923 appears to have born some fruit, resulting screenings of further Trierigon material in various parts of Germany - the poster below is an advertisement from June 1924 promising a “complete, interesting and

entertaining programme” of Triergon’s sound films at the Kammer-Lichtspiele, a cinema in Munich’s city centre. The advertisement is keen to distinguish sound film from other media, emphasising that the performance will not involve radio, nor sound from separate gramophone discs, but that it will be the film itself from which the sound emanates – in other words the sonic component will be an integral part of talking film’s “latest invention”. The poster also stresses the national importance of this technology, as well as emphasising the resulting international glory that the advertisement believes will undoubtedly follow.



Illustration 28 München, June 1924: Triergon Poster (FUB Archive)

Apart from reporting on the experimental development of sound film in Germany, newspapers also reported on how the international competition was developing in terms of advancements in sound technology. An unattributed newspaper clipping in the archive of the Filmuniversität Babelsberg dated 9th December 1924 reports on a sound film screening at the Royal Society of Arts in London, which was apparently met with critical approval. The newspaper describes improvements that Lee

DeForest had had succeeded in making to his *Phonofilm* optical sound system. The article reports on plans to screen a number of lectures, concerts and speeches using the Phonofilm system in January 1925. More complex productions would require the construction of a specially built sound stage, though the article hints that this may be in the planning stages. The final section of the article claims that any ordinary projector could be adapted to the Phonofilm technology.

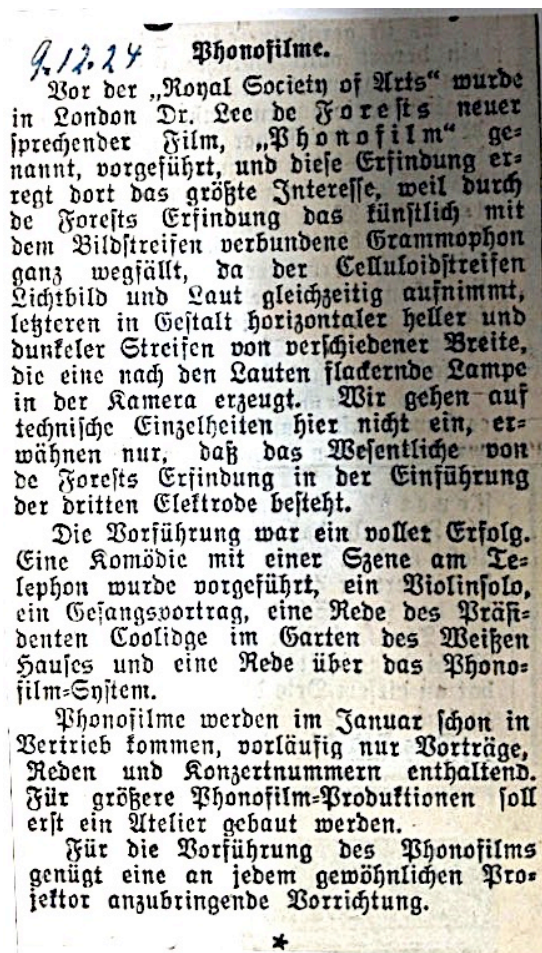


Illustration 29 Report on Royal Society of Arts event (FUB Archive)

As sound film production was increasing, the limitations of existing technology became apparent and spurred on the efforts of engineers and technicians. Umbehr and Wollenberg (1930) published a comprehensive survey of the history of sound for film up to that point, featuring the latest technical advances in German sound film practice. In their effort to update the technological perspective, a further revised edition was published the following year, and again in 1932. The book comprised of photographs of modern equipment (see below), as well as technical drawings of recording processes and acoustic properties of assorted environments, as well as a considerable amount of background information on the physics of sound recording.



Abb. 29. Aufnahmeverstärker der Tobis, fahrbar.

Neben „Tri-Ergon“ umfaßt heute die Tobis die „Deutsche Tonfilm - Aktiengesellschaft“, die nach einem Lichttonverfahren der beiden Dänen Axel Petersen und Arnold Poulsen arbeitete. Die Versuche der beiden Dänen be-

69

Illustration 30 Tobis Mobile Amplifier (Umbehr and Wollenberg 1930, p.69)

The development of sound technology for film continued to occupy technicians and engineers, as new developments were frequently discussed in the trade-press, but also via publications that addressed public and professional readers alike (such as Umbehr and Wollenberg, see above).



Illustration 31 *Illustrierte Film Zeitung* des Berliner Tageblatts, 17 March 1922 (close up detail of article entitled *Der Sprechende Film Marschiert* [*The March of the Talking Film*] includes an explanatory illustration of a piece of optical film. (FUB Archive)

The fascination with new technology continued to be presented to the wider public as a topic of great interest, through specialist newspapers such as the *Film-Kurier*, as well as ordinary daily newspapers (see above and below) that explored a variety of angles on the topic of sound in film, frequently including special ‘cut out and keep’ supplements to update their readers on the latest news



Illustration 32 Wie werde ich Tonfilmstar? [How do I become a sound film star?] Kölnische Volkszeitung 24 October 1930 (FUB Archive)

In the beginning of the 1930s, the adaptation of sound was a challenge that filmmakers had to grapple with in the US as well as in Europe.¹¹ Whereas technological approaches - blimping¹² to reduce camera noise, microphone positions, sound shields to address wind noise - could be judged relatively promptly in regard to their efficacy, successful creative approaches with regard to storytelling and *mise-en-scène* from the sound perspective were to reveal themselves more gradually. During the spring of 1931 the daily film and cinema newspaper *Film-Kurier* published a retrospective critique, reflecting on the first complete sound film season of 1930. A notable

¹¹ For an account that explores this transition from both the American and French perspectives, see O'Brien (2004)

¹² blimping involved muffling the noisy mechanical aspects of a film camera by cladding the camera in thick protective padding. For a contemporaneous appraisal of the practice, see Journal of Society of Motion Picture Engineers, Vol. 16, p23 – 30th Jan. 1931

feature of the *Film-Kurier*'s Easter edition was its lead article: under the heading "Geistig auf Tonfilm umstellen" [*The conceptual transition into sound film*] the *Film-Kurier* article urged the reader to make the psychological transition into sound film - the following is a brief extract:

Die erste "hundertprozentige" Tonfilmsaison liegt zum guten Teil hinter uns. Die Industrie hat Erfahrungen gesammelt – aber sie hat sie teuer bezahlen müssen, in allen ihren Sparten. Sie hat diese teuren Erfahrungen machen müssen inmitten schärfster Wirtschaftskrise, seufzend unter gewaltigem Steuerdruck.

Die Industrie wird die Erfahrungen überschlagen und zu dem Ergebnis kommen: Das Filmgeschäft war schon immer nicht leicht, aber das Tonfilmgeschäft bedeutet eine Verdreifachung des Risikos, der Mühen, der Enttäuschungen und Fehlschläge. Produzenten, Verleiher, Theaterbesitzer, Filmschaffende: Für alle bedeutet Tonfilm eine Häufung von Arbeit. Der Tonfilm stellt an alle erhöhte Anforderungen, keiner kann mehr nach gewohnten Stummfilmprinzipien Filme herstellen, Filme verleihen, zeigen oder künstlerisch schaffen.

Die technische Umstellung - das Aufhängen des Mikrophons im Atelier, das Aufstellen der 'Lautsprecher im Kino - war ja erst der Anfang. Viele glaubten, es sei schon alles. Die geistige Umstellung auf Tonfilm ist viel schwieriger, sie kann Jahre dauern, ihr muß sich jeder unterwerfen: wer es nicht vermag, wird aus der Bahn geschleudert.

(Film-Kurier, Nr. 79, 04.04.1931)

The first complete sound film season is nearly accomplished. The industry has gained some experience – but at a price in every aspect. Costly lessons had to be learned against a backdrop of severe economic crisis and punitive tax pressures.

The industry will reflect on this experience and reach the conclusion: the film business has never been easy, but sound film business represents a trebling of risk, of effort, of disappointment and setback. Producers, distributors, cinema owners, film-makers: all of them are facing a greater challenge.

Sound film sets the bar high and established silent film methods can no longer be applied to the making of film, to distribution or screening, or to creative concepts. The technological transition – the position of the microphone in the studio, the installation of the loudspeakers in the cinema – was only the first step. Some thought that this was all there was to it.

But the psychological transition into sound film is far more difficult and may take years; everyone will have to accept this – whoever is not up to the challenge, will not stay the course.

This extract from the *Film-Kurier* illustrates wider understanding of the fact that the

arrival of sound made unprecedented demands on those involved in the film industry in technological and financial terms - but crucially also in conceptual and creative aspects.

While new developments in sound film and its associated technology continued to be covered in the press, the subject also occupied many creative minds during the mid 1920s. Interesting in this context that the well-known composer Guiseppe Becce was also becoming involved with Triergon around that time, chiefly to work with an orchestra during early sound film experiments. In an interview with Gerhard Lamprecht¹³ from 1958 (Orbanz 2013, p.126), Becce recalled how - in about 1926 - he had been summoned by Ferdinand Bausback (a leading board member at Ufa) to provide an opinion as to whether Ufa should subsidise the Triergon experiments; at that time, Triergon were applying for a grant from Ufa of about 200,000 Marks. Becce recommended to Bausback that Ufa should invest more money, in the region of half a million, as the composer felt that Triergon were on the brink of a major and important breakthrough. According to Becce's account, Bausback was apparently unable to see the true significance of Triergon's progress and Triergon's funds were not approved, forcing the company to sell its patents abroad (ibid.). However, it may have been not just down to a lack of creative vision on behalf of Ufa that saw the funding plans for Triergon's sound system sh. Although the main production studio in Germany at the time, Ufa was going through a difficult financial phase. This was partly because of expensive film ventures that failed to recoup their investment, a case in point being Lang's *Nibelungen* and *Metropolis*, which proved to be deeply disappointing failure at the box office (Töteberg 1992, p.222). Further financial pressures for Ufa were cited in the press, for instance by the *Berliner Zeitung* which summarised tax legislation (the *Lustbarkeitssteuer*) as well as rising distribution and exhibition costs as the main pressures on Ufa in an article of 13th April 1927. Consequently, Ferdinand Bausback may be forgiven for being reluctant about

¹³ At this stage in his career, Lamprecht had turned his back on directing, and focused his efforts on researching film history. He used his personal contacts from decades of film-making to compile interviews with a range of individuals who had had direct involvement in film-making: producers, cinematographers, film laboratory technicians, negative cutters, set designers, electricians and lighting technicians.

embarking on new technological ventures at a time of financial strain for the production company. While Ufa was continuing to struggle it seemed forced to rely increasingly on US film imports to provide material for its cinema screens. Throughout the year, newspaper articles speculated about the future of Ufa, until it received new financial resources when the company was taken over by the well-known conservative industrialist Alfred Hugenberg in 1927. In 1929 Ufa began to embark on sound film production, and by 1930 it was reporting positive trends. A year later an article in *Münchener Zeitung* reported good news about Ufa on 18th September 1931, under the headline *Deutsche Erfolge im Tonfilm* [German success in sound film] the paper wrote that Ufa was sufficiently well recovered to start paying dividends to its shareholders again. As demonstrated by the example of Ufa's changing fortunes and subsequent renewed financial acumen to back sound film, it was concern over international competition that proved to be the greatest driver for sound film. As critics praised sound films made in the United States, which also proved popular at the box office, Germany's film industry took notice. Ufa's transition into sound only took place once the company could no longer ignore the threat of competition posed by American sound film productions.

Clair

Returning to the lively debates in the public sphere on the aesthetic dimension of sound film, the director Rene Clair made some important contributions; his article entitled *Der Weg des Tonfilms* [The path of sound film] was published in many German newspapers, including the *Königsberger Hartungsche Zeitung* on 26th July 1931. The great French director reflects on the success of *Sous les Toits de Paris* [Under the Roofs of Paris] (1930), Clair's first sound film in German cinemas. In his article, Clair observed that it was unusual for films to generate such attention in his native France (whether or not he was buttering up the German readership of the newspaper remains to be debated), and that he felt that the lively discourse in the public sphere in Germany was creating the sort of feedback that would prove most instructive to film-makers when trying to explore the new medium of sound film. What works, what does not work - these are the experimental and experiential steps which film-makers had to gain insights from, and in Clair's opinion the general interest from the sides of both public and press was of critical importance. Both *Sous*

les Toits de Paris and his upcoming *Le Million* [The Million] (1931) were of course French language films, and the director explained his decision to include occasional intertitles to reveal more complex story twists for the “wider audience”.

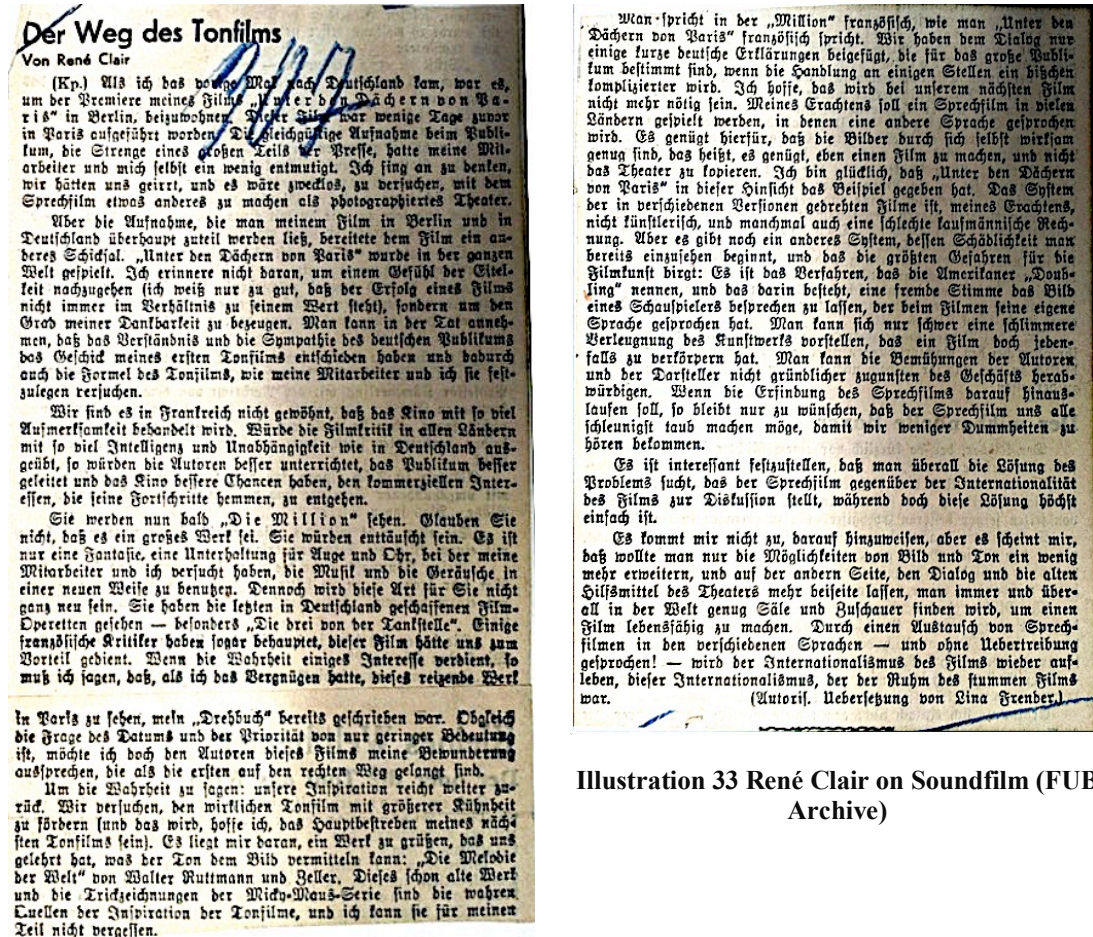


Illustration 33 René Clair on Soundfilm (FUB Archive)

According to Clair, good films should be able to convey their stories through montage and visual imagery, rather than through linguistic components; this appears to be a little contradictory, given Clair’s need to resort to occasional inter titles. Clair is highly critical of the concept of dubbing films into different languages, stating that it was hard to imagine a more dire falsification of the artefact: “*Man kann sich kaum eine schlimmere Verleugnung des Kunstwerks vorstellen*”. Clair concludes the article with a call to promote a spirit of internationalism in spite of (or even because of) the linguistic variations between different countries - Clair views the potential distribution of foreign language films (with the proviso that they must not be dialogue heavy) as a means towards the creation of a more understanding world, one which is able to accept and tolerate its differences. Given Clair’s reluctance to expand dialogue content in sound film, he reiterated views already

formulated two years earlier: in May 1929 the director had declared that he was in favour of using sound effects and music in film instead of the spoken word (Clair 1952, p.94). Clair also noted the efforts of American films to create lavishly authentic set design, whilst being particularly insensitive to the relationship between language and authenticity (Clair cites the examples of US made war film set in Europe, in which all protagonists speak American English (ibid, p.97). Most importantly, the director acknowledged that silent film was a relic of the past by 1930; consequently, Clair warned against relying on examples from literature or stage to guide film makers and called instead for an entirely new film aesthetic (ibid, p.109). The contribution of René Clair to the discussion towards a development of a sound film aesthetic is particularly interesting, given that he approached these concepts from the practice-based perspective of a film-maker, who believed in learning about a developing film sound style from the public response to his films.

Balázs

In developing a sound film aesthetic Bela Balázs devoted an extensive part of his writing efforts to the role of sound in film, which were collated and published in 1952. Like Eisenstein, he viewed sound as a montage element and therefore saw it as subservient to the rules and principles of editing. His approach was governed by thoughts on rhythm, sound and editing (Balázs 1952, p. 132) and remained critical of sound in film as having supplanted the art of silent film (ibid, p.194). However, recalling his own writing from the early 1930s, there is a clear indication that Balázs also understood the emotive potential of sound film in his chapter entitled *Asynchronous Sound*:

In a close-up in which the surroundings are not visible, a sound that seeps into the shot sometimes impresses us as mysterious, simply because we cannot see its source. It produces the tension arising from curiosity and expectation. Sometimes the audience does not know what the sound is they hear, but the character in the film can hear it, turn his face towards the sound and see its source before the audience does. This handling of picture and sound provides rich opportunities. (Balázs 1952, p. 209)

Balázs clarifies what he means by asynchronous sound: when “there is a discrepancy between the things heard and the things seen in the film” (ibid, p. 209). Apart from

being able to extend a narrative beyond the visual frame, he also saw potential in the spatial component of sound - either as close-up or distant sound elements.

Interestingly, Balázs also took issue with the critical voices rejecting sound film, using an analogy that conjures up the early silent film experiments of the Lumière brothers.

How silly the resistance to the talking film was can be gauged if we imagine what would have happened if the Lumières had constructed a sound camera at the same time as the silent camera - a supposition which is not impossible in principle. Had they done so, no one would have conceived the crazy idea of presenting dramatic scenes in dumb-show [meaning: as a silent film]. Everyone would have condemned such an idea as inartistic, un-natural and ridiculous. To show people talking without sound, mouthing the words without saying them! And then they disappear and we read what they were supposed to say, in the form of a caption! Then we see the same man again talking soundlessly! Absurd!

(Balázs 1952, pp. 221/222)

So, in spite of having been critical of sound film himself, Balázs acknowledges that the rejection of sound film was unjust. What this statement indicates is that eventually some theorists who had initially been critical of film had cause to revisit their opinion. Some - such as Arnheim ([1957] 1997, Preface)- continued to hold on to the hypothesis that film was first and foremost a visual medium - by implication relegating sound to an inferior, secondary position. In regard to film theory, Altman provides an apt summary of the frustration felt by many sound film researchers, caused by the on-going emphasis which is placed on visual analysis at the expense of the aural domain. He posits the view that this bias towards the visual was shaped by film critics (in addition to Eisenstein, he takes issue with Bazin, Lacan, Baudry and Metz and many more) who developed their vocabulary of film criticism out of an image-biased approach:

The justification for this approach is said to lie in the Western world's privileging of vision over all other senses; the cinema, it is claimed, is no more than a child of Renaissance perspective. According to this approach the spectator is placed, within the film as well as within the world at large, primarily by visual markers; even within the limits of this method of handling spectator placement, however, it is surprising that more emphasis has not been placed on the sound track's role in splitting and complicating the spectator, in contesting as well as reinforcing the lessons of the image track.

(Altman 1985, p.45)

Whilst there remains a pre-eminence towards the visual domain in many film research circles, research during this project has resulted in a clear picture: namely that there was a palpable interest in the concept of sound film in Germany throughout the 1920s. This interest is demonstrable when examining press cuttings and other archive material from that era and is further borne out by the rapid speed with which sound film became established within a relatively short timeframe. What is striking is that many theorists expressed contradictory opinions about sound - few were in manifest opposition to sound, even fewer remained hostile to the concept of sound once the medium of film had established its evolution into the aural domain. Theorists, critics and film-makers alike shaped the discussion about film - as well as cinema itself - via the perspective of their particular, individual cultural tropes (Frey 2010, p. 324). Subject matters were not as readily transferrable or as internationally appealing as might be assumed, but this also held true to some degree during the silent era. Whilst there is a tendency in academia to distil the legacy of essential theorists into handy ideological concept-boxes, many theorists themselves were not necessarily wedded to an orthodox position, particular not when viewed in the context of an individual writer's overall body of work. Analysing the position of Balázs more closely, Frey (2010) observes:

What we read of Balázs determines how we read him. For instance, limiting our examination to *Theory of the Film* would explain those anglophone interpreters who seek to yoke Balázs with Rudolf Arnheim under the sign of the 'silent-film paradigm'. If one reads only *Theory of the Film*, Balázs seems explicit about the missed opportunity for silent film to create a universal language beyond national barriers. [...] However, in [*Der Geist des Films*] Balázs proclaims the technical innovation of sound film to be a creative 'muse': 'Technical innovation is the most effective inspiration'. (Frey 2010, p. 338/339)

Conversely, the simple assumption that silent film is representative of an art form with universal appeal, one which encapsulates a creative medium that transcended national borders, is flawed. Employing a more holistic methodology in examining historical writers' attitudes to film sound, Frey (ibid.) concludes that the legacy of theorists such as Balázs frequently defies a standardised, simplistic characterisation which casts particular individuals as orthodox opponents of sound film. By remaining curiously selective in their approach, film historians have distilled

divergent contributions from particular individuals into a film history canon that is unrepresentative and overly simplistic. Balázs took the view that sound film would generate a new understanding of the acoustic properties of the world, in the same way as cinematography had enabled silent film to uncover new ways of portraying the physical manifestations of the world – for instance through montage techniques, visual perspective and camera moves.

Balázs follows his argument from *Der Sichtbare Mensch* so closely that he pleads for a ‘sound closeup’. It should be remembered, moreover, that Balázs wrote treatments, doctored scripts and composed screenplays for scores of sound films from 1930 until his death.
(Frey 2010, p. 339)

Frey’s analysis of Balázs’s position results in a more complex picture and this position is reflected through other theorists of the era, as well as via the debate on sound in other arenas of the public sphere during the 1920s. The archival visits undertaken in the context of this project have yielded sufficient material that could evolve into future research projects. However, as the purpose of this project lies with the analysis of the creative use of sound in German films made during the early period of the transition into synchronous sound, deeper engagement with this additional research material would go beyond the parameters of this thesis.

In arriving at the end of this chapter, it is useful to highlight a few key thoughts. What becomes clear from engaging with primary source material is that there was a real interest in the concept of bringing sound and image together, and in combining the two elements within one format. Crucially, there is evidence that journalists writing about sound were able to draw a distinction between *film sound* and *sound film*. The former speaks to the fact that technology had already evolved sufficiently well to enable the screening of visual and aural components in synchronous relationship to each other. The latter term speaks to an aesthetic expectation with regard to sound. What is also worth remembering is that by the 1920s the goal was not just the synchronous play back of sound and moving image. Screening moving images with a simultaneous sound representation (other than provided by live music)

had after all been possible since the turn of the 1900s¹⁴. There is also ample evidence that the aesthetic demands of sound in film were being discussed. This interest is reflected in the many articles and commentaries in the public sphere, which have informed the background research that represents a crucial part of this project.

Having journeyed through this chapter to discuss the arrival of film sound as addressed via classical film theory, as well as having reflected the perspective of the immediate, contemporaneous reaction to sound film through 1920s newspapers, a complex and fascinating picture emerges. Theorists were not as hard line in a rejection of film sound than is popularly claimed. The public was kept informed about the latest technological developments. The technology to create sound on film existed much earlier in Germany than the historical fact of the medium's actual transition at the end of the 1920s might suggest. What is ultimately most striking when looking at primary source material from the era of the Weimar Republic is the consistent curiosity within the public sphere about the concept of sound for film - both during the period of transition itself, *but also long before sound film's actual establishment*.

¹⁴ Though at that very early stage, the technology was still limited in terms of the amplification of sound, nonetheless the concept of combining sound and image from pre-existing source material had already been established.

PART II

Introduction to Film Analysis Section

Having discussed the wider historical, theoretical and technological developments as well as the critical reaction to sound in previous chapters, we have seen that the arrival of sound confronted film-makers with a need to engage with fundamentally new concepts in regard to cinematic narrative. The introduction of film sound called for an ability to imagine aural potential in film and needed to incorporate narrative techniques that could accommodate creativity despite the limitations of nascent technology. As we have seen, despite occurring at a time when cinema attendance was under pressure within the context of social and economic conditions, the leading players in Germany's film industry committed to sound film production with astonishing speed

When looking at early German sound film, it becomes clear that sound elements found their way into the film narrative by design, rather than accident. Returning to the notion of the soundtrack as a composite, it is beyond question that the sort of sound work which has given rise to the creation of the term *Sound Designer* in the 1970s is associated with complex processes which attempt to recreate - or represent - a film's sonic manifestation of the two-dimensional cinema screen within a three-dimensional cinema auditorium. The greater a film's ambition with regard to the three-dimensional aural representation, the more readily the idea of sound design is accepted. Even where there are few technical options to shape sonic elements, intentional aural creativity can exist in spite of technological limitations. Can the concept of sound design only be applied to films that have been made since that term was coined in the 1970s? Coupled with the comprehension of film sound track as a composite, comprising discrete elements (Whittington 2007, p.12), this thesis posits the view that additional sound effects or the use of sound as an element within editing montage, of placing image and sound within a narrative as well as contextual understanding, invites the term sound design to be used with a degree of flexibility - and is also applicable to historical film.

In approaching the analysis of the features of selected early sound films, the

following key elements in terms of a film's overall soundtrack have been set up as part of the introduction to the thesis:

- dialogue / speech;
- sound effects;
- atmospheres;
- music¹ .

Four film examples have undergone closer analysis in the following chapters; these were drawn from a more comprehensive list of films from the period of the late Weimar Republic that were evaluated as part of this research project. The following four films are noteworthy because they demonstrate creative approaches to the new medium of sound film:

Westfront 1918, 1930.

Directed by G. W. Pabst.

Germany: Nero-Film.

Emil und die Detektive, 1931.

Directed by G. Lamprecht.

Germany: Ufa.

Kuhle Wampe oder Wem gehört die Welt?, 1932.

Directed by S. Dudow.

Germany: Prometheus.

Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse, 1933.

Directed by F. Lang

Germany: Nero-Film.

All four films have been examined in terms of their sonic components and with particular focus on the key elements of the soundtrack listed above. It is important to emphasise that of the four films, particularly *Emil und die Detektive* (1931) has not been recognised in existing film textbooks at all, in spite of its ambitious aural complexity. *Kuhle Wampe* (1932) has attracted a certain degree of attention in scholarly circles because of the names involved in the making of the film, chiefly Eisler as composer and Brecht as writer. With this in mind, existing analysis of this

¹ cf. Introduction chapter. For further discussion regarding the debate about adapting music to the sound film genre, please see the Sound and Critical Reception chapter.

film has been focused on aspects of musical score and dramaturgy, but not on *Kuhle Wampe*'s engagement with sound design concepts to support narrative elements. *Westfront 1918* (1930) has recently attracted more interest; this thesis provides a detailed discussion of the use of out of vision sound in *Westfront 1918* and illustrates the enormous impact the film's sound elements had on its audience. Within the concept of an emerging sound design aesthetic, there has been some discussion of *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, (1933), chiefly by Boy (2009), though less accessible to non-German speaking readers. None of the four films have been subjected to an analysis from a practice-based understanding of film making techniques.

Returning to the four elements of key components of a soundtrack (as per above list), the following aspects inform the analysis of the selected films.

- In terms of spoken components, is there only direct in vision dialogue or are vocal elements also used out of vision to suggest the presence of people?
- Are these additional vocal elements the result of location recording or of subsequent processes?
- In terms of sound effects, are these part of the original location recording, or have these been added for additional narrative or emotive purposes?
- For instance, is a car horn which is audible on the sound track likely to have been recorded as part of the overall sync atmosphere on location, or has this sound effect been added?
- Do particular sound elements fulfil a narrative function?
- A similar approach can be used in regard to atmospheres - are audible atmospheres present because they are a by-product of location recording processes, or have they been added as narrative or emotive features?

This approach with regard to atmospheres is observable in *Westfront 1918* (1930) but is also an element of *Emil und die Detektive* (1931).

- A further consideration is the use of music in film - is music non-diegetic or diegetic?
- How is music used in terms of scene transitions, and what is the result of editing processes on the representation of music?

A reasonable working knowledge of film-making processes, both from the location and the post-production perspectives, provide the foundation for the comprehensive evaluation of sound elements. Through my professional and academic experience, I have spent many years listening to cutting copy soundtracks, comparing these to final mix tracks. An understanding of film-making processes opens up a methodology to incorporate a careful evaluation of the *aural quality* of the overall soundtrack.

In order to illustrate what is meant by the *aural quality* of an overall soundtrack, it may be useful briefly to focus on a few examples and to articulate the relationship of these examples to the selected films. Additional sound elements, which were not part of the location sound recording processes, are likely to have different aural characteristics - for instance background levels or tonal quality of additional sound elements will differ in comparison to the sound elements recorded on location. The inclusion of such sound effects is observable in *Westfront 1918* (1930), but also in *Emil und die Detektive* (1931).

Crittenden (1995, p.123) stresses that non-simultaneous editing of image and sound is a highly effective tool to emphasise story development: by affecting the relationship between image and sound through non-parallel editing points, that is to say cutting the image and the sound where one precedes or follows the other, connections are made which can either create a smoother edit or by making new story line connections in the mind of the viewer. There are several points in *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* (1933) as well as in *Westfront 1918* (1930) where the editing of image and sound does not occur in parallel. Film sound provided the technology for film to be shown in conjunction with sonic elements. But crucially, the arrival of this new technology also enabled editors to detach the sonic component from the visual element.

- In simple dialogue editing terms: does the editor show the

character listening to the person speaking, or does the editor feature the speaking person?

- At which point does the editor cut from one perspective to another, while still keeping the spoken element of the previous shot going?

The timing of audio cuts in comparison to visual cuts can also be observed as an indicator of sound as being used to link together different story elements. If image and sound cuts occur at the same time, then this is defined as parallel sound and image cuts. If the film contains sections where sound and image cuts do not occur simultaneously, then this raises the question as to what effect is being achieved by this editing style. This technique is demonstrated in *Emil und die Detektive*, but also in *Kuhle Wampe* and *The Testament of Dr Mabuse*. This editing technique is unlikely to have been accidental: the editing of image and sound as independent building blocks lend the story telling an additional layer of emotional or cognitive complexity.

The film analysis chapters reveal a range of different approaches to sound design in evidence in the early 1930s. This diversity of style gives rise to the hypothesis that the transitional phase offered experimental opportunities, during which film-makers attempted to explore ways in using sound as a feature that shaped dramaturgy and *mise-en-scène* in their projects. It also illustrates creative approaches to employing sound suitable to a particular narrative, adapting to technological limitations that still existed. It is worth considering that films made today similarly have to develop a specific sound design aesthetic for a particular project, a style that is suitable to the tone and genre of the story material. What the closer analysis of these early sound films reveals is that there was a clear attempt to employ sound in creative ways to enhance literal as well as emotive elements of the narrative. It further demonstrates that the arrival of sound cannot be seen as a uniform, wholesale shift in film making practice, and instead strengthens the observation that film-makers responded with great creativity in order to capitalise on the storytelling potential via the sonic dimension.

Chapter 4 Emil und die Detektive

(For plot summary and cast list, please see Appendix I)

This chapter discusses Gerhard Lamprecht's 1931 film *Emil und die Detektive* in terms of its imaginative use of sound to support story telling elements. This chapter is followed by an analysis of Fritz Lang's 1933 film *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*. These two films are on the surface very different from each other, yet on closer inspection share some narrative similarities. Although *Emil* is primarily a children's story (more accurately, it was deliberately marketed by Ufa as a film for adults and children alike), and *Dr Mabuse* dealt with a more adult subject matter - both films share commonalities and are essentially crime stories. In Lang's *Dr Mabuse*, the criminal acts committed are on a large scale and the law is ultimately upheld by its established state-run mechanisms (public order enforced by the police force). The misdeed at the centre of Lamprecht's film is the theft of a relatively minor sum of money (compared with the millions with which *Dr Mabuse*'s protagonists enrich themselves) - both films are morally charged tales within societal norms. They do not seek to question the established social or political framework and their moral compass is aligned to conventional norms. Ultimately, both films share a clear narrative code of "right" and "wrong" with little room for moral ambiguity: the "baddies" are bad. Any moral deficiency lies within particular individuals, and not within the wider social or political context. In contrast to the role of the police in Lang's *Dr Mabuse*, *Emil und die Detektive* sees the children taking on the mantle of both protectors and executors of justice¹. Both *Emil* and *Dr Mabuse* incorporate drama, mystery and chase scenes²; both films integrate the trappings of 1920s modern technology and the stories' respective endings depict unquestionably the re-establishment of law and order. Both films were made by influential directors who recognised the new story-telling potential via cinematic opportunities arising from the evolution of new film making techniques.

¹ It could be argued that the children's vigilantism also has parallels to Lang's *M* (1931), in which the criminal underworld takes on the pursuit of the child killer.

² Interestingly, there are also similar aspects in terms of sound that connect the opening scenes of these films, which is discussed further as part of the *Dr Mabuse* chapter.



Illustration 34 Premiere Poster *Emil und die Detektive*. (filmportal.de)

Adaptation From Novel to Sound Film

The process of adapting Erich Kästner's successful novel *Emil und die Detektive* commenced in 1930, which was still the early period of sound becoming established in German cinema. In film textbooks focusing on the period, Lamprecht's film is notable by its absence. Has it been overlooked on account of being perceived as a children's picture? Yet, on closer inspection, the film reveals itself to be an absolute gem of an early sound film. Lamprecht's 1931 film adaptation of *Emil und die Detektive* contributes many interesting aspects to the research into early sound film and illustrates how the transition from silent film to sound gifted film-makers new opportunities of weaving sound into their narrative. Throughout the 1930s, this film proved to be extremely popular at the box office and there was ample praise for the script adaptation of Kästner's novel. The adaptation process had to reflect the novel's innovative narrative style, whilst transposing the plot into an evolving

medium that offered visual as well as aural potential. Shot at the UFA studios in Neubabelsberg as well as on location in Berlin, the film premiered on 2 December 1931 to great critical and popular acclaim. Newspaper reviews and articles film-journals provide a sense of the enthusiastic reception that met the popular book's transition to the screen:

Eine glückliche Idee war es, Erich Kästners prächtigen Jungens-Roman als Stoff heranzuziehen
(Lichtbild-Bühne, Nr. 289, 3.12.1931).

What great insight, to select Erich Kästner's glorious youth novel as the basis to this film.

Not only did Erich Kästner's novel have to evolve successfully from page to screen, it also had to be developed within the context of film's contemporaneous transition from silence to sound. Erich Kästner initially worked with Emmerich Pressburger on a script for the film version, but the novelist became unhappy with Pressburger's treatment of his material. In particular Erich Kästner's diaries (cited in Belach et al 1998, p.160) document how the writer had to intervene during the transformation of his characters from page to screen. Kästner's dismay is palpable, condemning an early version of the script as "ghastly" (ibid.). He was particularly exasperated at attempts to distort Emil's character into a more mischievous person than the boy from his original story:

Das Manuskript ist ekelhaft. Emil klaut in Neustadt einen Blumentopf für die Großmutter. In Berlin, auf der Straßenbahn, klaut er einem Herrn den Fahrschein (...) Der 'Stier von Alaska' wird er genannt. Pony 'die Rose von Texas' (...) Die ganze Atmosphäre des Buchs ist beim Teufel. Und ich werde Anfang der Woche saugrob werden, wenn ich mit Stapenhorst rede. Heute hoff ich mit Preßburger zu sprechen.
(Belach et al 1998, p. 160)

The manuscript is ghastly. Back in Neustadt, Emil nicks a flowerpot as a gift for his grandmother. In Berlin, he steals a tram passenger's ticket (...) He is called the 'Alaskan Bull', Pony as 'the Texan Rose' (...) The whole feel of the book is going to the dogs. I am going to get brutal next week when I speak to Stapenhorst³.

³ Günther Stapenhorst was the Ufa producer in charge of *Emil und die Detektive*.

Hoping to speak to Preßburger today.

Ufa then decided to introduce another writer to the script's development process, and Billie⁴ Wilder joined the writing team. However, Kästner remained anxious over the book's adaptation, as Pressburger and Wilder continued to introduce new dimensions to his original concept. Kästner was disparaging of the film script's misguided characterisation, which tried to beef up Emil's character up into a manlier figure with the nickname 'the Alaskan Bull'. Kästner was equally averse to seeing the book's more pragmatic and sage characterisation of Pony Hütchen prettified into the 'Texan Rose' (ibid.). Kästner was clearly agitated over the direction in which the script was shifting, and how the *dramatis personae* were to make the transition onto the cinema screen. Fortunately for the well-established and universally respected Erich Kästner, and after some heated arguments and re-drafts, Kästner was pleased with the eventual outcome. In the end, it was the film's imaginative style and perceived authenticity in its portrayal of the children's world that impressed audiences and critics in 1931. Following the film's premiere in early December 1931, the *Kinematograph* praised Wilder's adaptation of Kästner's original text, singling out the "fascinating pace" of the film's narrative and praising the narrative killer punch of the moment when the "common thief transpires to be a wanted bank-robber":

Das Manuskript schrieb Billy Wilder. Ein junger Autor, über dessen Qualitäten viel gestritten wurde und der sich bisher, immer tastend nach neuen und originellen Formen, vielleicht hier und da noch etwas unsicher bewegte.

Er verzeichnet jetzt einen Treffer ins Schwarze. Zeigt eine geradezu überragende Begabung für bestimmte Stoffe und rückt mit einem Schlag mit diesem Werk in die Reihe der ganz Großen.

Er schafft seinem Film ein geradezu faszinierendes Tempo, führt seine Handlung mit logischer Konsequenz auf der Linie des Sensationsdramas von Anfang an bis zu dem Augenblick, wo sich der gewöhnliche Dieb zum Bankräuber entpuppt.

Es ist ein Manuskript, das in vieler Beziehung Schulbeispiel sein könnte und das deutlich zeigt, daß es letzten Endes nur an der packenden Konzeption liegt, um den Erfolg zu sichern (...)
(Kinematograph, Nr. 280, 3.12.1931)

Billy Wilder wrote the script. A young author, whose qualities have

⁴ Wilder was being referred to as both *Billie* or *Billy* at that time.

been critically debated, but one who has continually endeavoured to experiment with creative concepts. This time he has hit the bull's eye. He is demonstrating an extraordinary talent for this kind of material and has become a house-hold name in an instant. He achieves a fascinating pace, developing the narrative in a logical format of an action story which culminates in the revelation that the petty thief is a notorious bank robber. This is an exemplary script, which demonstrates that ultimately any successful film has to offer come up with an engaging concept (...)

Unaware of Kästner's close involvement in the script adaptation, the reviewer went on to posit the view that it was the overall achievement of Wilder's script and the sensitive handling of the material by the film's director Lamprecht. The result was a successful transformation of the story from page to screen, which would be 'inducing millions to applaud.' (*Kinematograph*, Nr. 280, 3.12.1931). The critic of the *Lichtbild-Bühne* was similarly excited about the script adaptation of the book, singling out the cleverly dramatized opening sequence for praise. Having proclaimed it a "fortuitous idea" to adapt Kästner's marvellous novel, the review declared that Wilder's script had managed to deliver the story's "cinematic potential" before praising the work of key production staff and composer:

Diese Geschichte von den entschlossenen Bengels, die es auf eigene Faust unternehmen, einen ausgekochten Betrüger zur Strecke zu bringen, ist frisch-originell, bietet vor allen Dingen filmische Möglichkeiten. Die auch der Manuskriptverfasser Billy Wilder zu nutzen verstand. Sicher aufbereitet, geschickt durchkonstruiert bot das Drehbuch offenbar eine Unterlage, mit der es sich schon arbeiten ließ.(...)

Die Männer an der Bild- (Werner Brandes) wie an der Ton-Kamera (Hermann Fritzsching) brillierten ebenfalls mit vorzüglichen Leistungen.

Wesentlich zum Erfolg trug die einfallsreiche musikalische Illustration Allan Greys [sic.] bei, die streckenweise geradezu zum wesentlichen Träger der Handlung wird.

H. H., *Lichtbild-Bühne*, Nr. 289, 3.12.1931

<http://www.filmportal.de/node/13777/material/667492> (accessed 06/10/2013)

This story about determined lads resolved on taking on a hardened fraudster is freshly original and particularly redolent with cinematic potential. Which was expertly realised by its scriptwriter Billy Wilder. An assured adaptation, the cleverly structured script provided useful material. (...)

The camera operators for image (Werner Brandes) and sound

(Hermann Fritzsching) achieve brilliance. An equally crucial contribution to the film's success were Allan Grey's [sic.] creative musical illustrations, at time a pivotal driver for the film's action.

The fact that the review went as far as singling out the work of the film's cinematographer Werner Brandes and sound recordist Hermann Fritzsching by name, before going on to compliment the film composer's Allan Gray for his imaginative score, speaks to the considerable impact which the film had made. The review for the *Film-Kurier* vindicates the strenuous efforts made by Kästner in steering Wilder through the script adaptation:

Wilders Arbeit ist um so mehr anzuerkennen, als sie nicht ohne Gefahren war. Der Autor hätte nämlich entweder den Stoff rettungslos verkündlichen können, so daß ein einigermaßen aufgeweckter Tertianer ihn verächtlich als Quatsch bezeichnen würde. Oder er hätte den Stoff fern allem kindlichen Verständnis entwickeln und dadurch den Kontakt zur Jugend verlieren können.

Billy Wilder und der Regisseur Gerhard Lamprecht haben die goldene Mittellinie gefunden, auf der allein der Stoff gestaltet werden konnte. Sie haben sich hineingelebt in die Seele der heutigen Jugend, die auch noch ihre romantischen Ideale hat, das Indianerspielen und die Freude am Cliqueswesen, aber deren Vertreter heute auch mit jungen Jahren schon einen ausgesprochen praktischen Sinn hat. Diese Jugend weiß, daß ein Telefon ein sehr nützliches und schnelles Verständigungsmittel ist, daß man sich ein Taxi mieten kann, aber auch bezahlen muß.

(Film-Kurier, Nr. 283, 3.12.1931)

Wilder's work is a remarkable achievement, avoiding potential pitfalls. The author resisted any temptation to infantilise the material which would have rendered it unappealing to any reasonably savvy youth audience. At the same time, the author also avoided the risk of alienating its younger audiences. Billy Wilder and the director Gerhard Lamprecht managed to strike a perfect balance in their realisation of the original material. They have conjured up a faithful portrayal of the youth of today; a generation at once at home with acting out romantic Wild West ideals, while also celebrating the togetherness that their group of friends offers - but this a generation which in spite of its youthfulness is also adaptable and pragmatic. These youngsters understand how to take advantage of telephone communication as well as having the maturity of comprehending that in addition to hailing a Taxi, its hire will have to be budgeted for.

Unacknowledged in the press, Kästner's close involvement in the script adaptation is documented in his diaries, as discussed earlier. In this context, it is important to note

that Kästner had already formed very clear views on cinema as an experienced film critic for the newspaper press, and there is further evidence that the writer had previously developed conceptual ideas on the aesthetic style of sound film.

Conceptual Differences: Realism

A year before Lamprecht's film adaptation of *Emil* made, Kästner published a review of *Der Schuss im Tonfilmatelier* (directed by Zeisler, 1930) in the *Neue Leipziger Zeitung*, a newspaper for whom he had been working as a regular contributor. *Der Schuss im Tonfilmatelier* - essentially a detective story - conveniently incorporated a narrative twist that hinged entirely on sound technology. In this regard, Béla Balázs ([1929] 2016, p.561) would have approved of this literal conceptualisation of sound within a film plot; Balázs believed that sound film was best served if the storyline could somehow pin narrative elements to the story's soundtrack, citing *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* as a potential candidate for adaptation as a sound film (ibid.). Kästner's article about *Der Schuss im Tonfilmatelier* by implication agrees with Balázs's position of integrating sound into film scripts. The story of Zeisler's whodunnit takes place on a sound film stage, where one actor inadvertently shoots their co-star dead, when a real pistol is mistakenly used in place of a prop. Investigating the crime scene, the police inspector⁵ who arrives on the film set is then inducted into the processes of sound film making: an obvious ploy for Ufa to showcase their sizeable investments in the latest sound film technology to the film's cinema audience. The film's narrative conceit is illustrated by the photographs that were produced by Ufa to promote the film, but also as a vehicle to showcase some of the technology involved in sound film production:

⁵ The crime is solved when the inspector pieces together a number of sound film clues, resulting in the murderer being caught.



DER SCHUSS IM TONFILMATELIER - Deutschland 1930
Regie: Alfred Zeisler
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

Illustration 35 Ufa Promotional Photograph: The Sound Film set as part of the *mise-en-scène*



DER SCHUSS IM TONFILMATELIER - Deutschland 1930 Regie: Alfred Zeisler Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

Illustration 36 Ufa Promotional Photograph: Film Set with Camera inside Soundproof Box



DER SCHUSS IM TONFILMATELIER - Deutschland 1930
Regie: Alfred Zeisler Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

Illustration 37 Ufa Promotional Photograph: Sound Engineer in Control Room

Kästner approved of Zeisler's film in terms of its innovative use of sound in relation to the plot's particular narrative twist. More importantly in the context of this chapter, Erich Kästner's piece includes interesting evidence of an emerging sound aesthetic and provides insights into the evolving understanding of the difference between *actual* and *filmic* realism. In his review, the writer refers to a conversation with an unnamed director, with whose opinion on sound film the novelist Kästner emphatically agrees:

Ich bin gegen den akustischen Realismus. Meine Kollegen nehmen alles auf, was zu hören ist, und ihnen ist es gleich, ob die Bildsituation dazu berechtigt ist. Stellen Sie sich vor, daß ein verzanktes Liebespaar im Straßenlärm steht. Glauben Sie, daß die beiden die Autos und Straßenbahnen und Gesprächsfetzen überhaupt hören oder doch entfernt so wie wer, der den Lärm betrachtet? Aber die Regisseure beachten das nicht.

(Kästner [1930] 1992, p.270)

I am against this aural realism. Colleagues are forever confusing sound film with theatre; they seem to forego all creative opportunities afforded by film.'(...) *'...colleagues are keen to record everything that is audible, irrespective of the narrative's requirement. Imagine a couple quarrelling in the middle of a busy street. Do you think those two would be paying much attention to the cars, the trams, the passing chatter of other pedestrians? But many directors are unaware of this.*

Kästner concluded his review by railing against what he described as a misguided pre-occupation with realism within the film industry when it came to sound (Kästner [1930] 1992, p.270). Instead of recreating reality faithfully, Kästner favoured a more imaginative use of sound in film. In view of Kästner's close involvement in the adaptation of the script for *Emil und die Detektive* at that time, there is a distinct possibility that the director who is referred to in the article was Gerhard Lamprecht. Kästner's (and potentially Lamprecht's) ideas about cinema's changing relationship to realism reflect a very clearly formulated expectation of priorities in sound film. Realism in terms of reproducing *real life* was not at the forefront of a sound film aesthetic – instead Kästner favoured an approach that would allow the audience to empathise with the perception of particular characters on the screen. In other words, even in the very early days of sound film, Kästner and others recognised that sound needed to be used in a very specific and selective way to support a story. Rather than defining the role of sound in film as a replication of the real world, sound, in becoming part of a film's *mise-en-scène*, had to undergo a selective transformation. Using sound selectively to shine an acoustic spotlight onto a particular aspect of the story guided the audience to important plot developments, as well as enhancing emotive elements of the narrative. A selective aural approach should enable the audience to focus on the perceptions of characters within the story world. This notion of a constructed, carefully crafted version of reality in line with a film's narrative is essentially what would nowadays be referred to as sound design.

The original success of Kästner's book had in part been based on its innovative and informal narrative style, in which the author directly addresses the reader. The words on the page flow in an easy, almost conversational form, rendering the author's voice palpable in the text. Part of the narrative technique involved explaining to the reader how the author had originally come up with the idea for the book; the inclusion of the voice of the author was employed to set the scene of the story early on in the book. Although the author brings himself into the narrative, his writing technique never permits the book to seem artificial or contrived; his realistic and eloquent style draws the reader forward into the pages, blurring the lines between fiction (Emil) and reality (the author). Kästner's conversational story-telling device had the effect of inviting the reader to feel as if being directly

addressed by the author. Until 1929 when Kästner's book was published, literature for German children consisted of conservative reading material and fairy tales. *Emil und die Detektive* publication in October 1929 reflects the spirit of modernity of the Weimar Republic and was an instant success. It prompted a stage adaptation within a year, which in turn aroused the attention of Ufa, who saw the financial potential in turning Kästner's story into a cinema success, acquired the film rights. It would be vitally important to Kästner that the sense of authenticity and freshness manifest in the book would be mirrored by the screen version. At the same time, *Emil und die Detektive*'s re-incarnation as a sound film for a young audience had to find a way of introducing the narrative to a younger audience. Noteworthy in the first instance is the fact that the film appears to ease its audience gently into its story, and into the world of sound film generally. Instead of overemphasising the dialogue dimension, like some *Talkies* who had naturally been eager to show off the novelty credentials of sound film with words, *Emil und die Detektive* begins in a curiously anachronistic style.

Anachronism: The Opening Section

The opening scene lasts about four minutes and depicts three masked youngsters acting out a schoolboy prank. They roll dice to decide who should carry out a dare; the challenge is duly assigned to young Emil, while the remaining boys observe the action from a safe distance. The friends keep a look-out as the masked boy (who would later transpire to be the novel's eponymous hero) clambers up a public monument - a statue - which he is tasked to re-design. By adding a notebook, a cap and a stick-on moustache, the monument is made to resemble the local policeman, who happens to stroll into the scene just as the masked boys commit their 'misdeed'. What is noticeable about this opening scene is that until the action cuts to the next set-up (a dialogue scene that has Emil listening in to a conversation between his mother and another woman), the film displays the dramatic aesthetic of a silent movie aesthetic. The narrative is played out primarily in visual terms, supported by Gray's synchronous music score, which incorporates musical gestures to illustrate particular visual elements. In spite of its apparent silent film aesthetic, it is precisely because of this closely synchronised relationship between image and music, which situates the opening sequence firmly in the sound era and is not a retrograde step to

the silent film era. This is a synchronous score that is a part of the film; the score is integrated into the optical soundtrack in the same manner in which subsequent dialogue scenes are inextricably linked to the image.

In terms of the opening scene's use of music, Allan Gray's score illustrates every nuance and action of the visual drama, from the rolling of the dice through to the boys being chased by the local policeman, in the manner of silent film music. The style of the music is contemporaneous to the urban cabaret style of the Weimar period in instrumentation and tone: modern rather than archaic, without any suggestion of sentimental whimsy or a bucolic musical vernacular. As Emil and the other boys attempt to decide who will undertake the daring stunt with Neustadt's public monument, the orchestral score mimics the rolling of the dice and the subsequent stalking out of events around the monument. The only sound gesture that is non-musical during the opening sequence is a loud whistling sound. This would have been a post-sync addition, likely recorded at the same time as the orchestral score. This whistle is apparently generated by one of the boys on screen, in order to alert Emil of the local policeman's imminent arrival. In considering the style of the opening scene, it is valuable to get a sense of the reaction to the film at the time of its release. Did contemporary film audiences feel disappointed at the silent film aesthetic of its opening sequence? There is no real indication to prove a disappointed reaction. One film review makes reference to "a certain awkwardness" of the film's beginning, but it is unclear whether this is a reference to the opening scene, or the entire opening section that constructs the backstory, prior to Emil's train journey to Berlin:

Lamprecht führt dezent und penibel Regie. Leidet der Anfang an einer gewissen Umständlichkeit, so wird die Verfolgung und Ergreifung des Diebes durch die Jungens zu einem Meisterstück der deutschen Tonfilmregie.

(Hanz Tasiemka, Das 12 Uhr Blatt, Nr 283, 3.12.1931)

*Lamprecht's direction is both subtle and thorough.
Notwithstanding a beginning which displays a certain awkwardness,
the pursuit and capture of the thief by the lads is a masterpiece of
German sound film direction*

Writing for the *Film-Kurier*, Georg Herzberg argues that the enthusiastic scenes in

response to the film's screening was confirmation of the film's universal appeal: one would have to be a particularly "ossified or stuck-up adult" not to succumb to the film's charm "within the first few hundred feet of the screen action". This is confirmation that the opening of the film was effective in winning over the audience. Herzberg wrote that the story should cause most grown-ups to forget 'the last ten, thirty or fifty years' of adult existence, inducing a childlike enthusiasm for the ups and downs of the plot (*Film-Kurier*, Nr. 283, 3.12.1931). Where the opening scene is directly discussed, it is done so with praise, as demonstrated in this review by the *Lichtbild-Bühne*:

Dieser Film hat Atmosphäre. Von ihm geht eine Frische aus, eine Jungenhaftigkeit, die mitreißt. Das ist eine Welt, erfaßt mit der Phantasie und Illusionskraft des Kindes. Eine Welt, wie man sie selbst als Junge gesehen: Der Hauptreiz des Films, dessen Zauber man verfallen muß. Gerhard Lamprecht, dem Regisseur, gebührt hierfür allererste Anerkennung. Das geht ohne Stocken vom (raffiniert stummen) Anfang bis zum bravourösen Schluß.
H. H., *Lichtbild-Bühne*, Nr. 289, 3.12.1931
<http://www.filmportal.de/node/13777/material/667492> (accessed 06/10/2013)

A highly atmospheric film, exuding an engaging freshness and boyishness. This is a world which expresses the imaginative fantasy of a child. A world which transports you back to being a child. This is the main attraction of the film's seductive charm. Director Gerhard Lamprecht deserves the highest praise. With astonishing fluidity from the (ingeniously silent) beginning to the bravura finale.

Returning from playing with his friends, the score that had accompanied the entire opening scene comes to an end. Now Emil is eavesdropping on the initially unseen dialogue between the two women of the subsequent scene, with the camera then panning from Emil outside the open window in the act of *listening in* to the two women in conversation. The camera stays on the women – one of whom is Emil's mother Frau Tischbein - until Emil feels the need to interject, as he protests vehemently against being referred to as a little child. Through the use of sound and dialogue, the two narrative planes of the exterior and the interior world converge, and so the grown-ups' concerns are brought within Emil's hitherto playful horizons.

The story continues with Emil making preparations for his train journey to the big

city, as the youngster is asked to deliver a sum of money to his grandmother in Berlin. As Frau Tischbein helps her son to get ready, she entreats him to look after the money (clearly a significant sum by their moderate standards) as well as the good suit donned for the journey. Thus, the audience is alerted to an important story element: a sum of money in the care of young Emil. As mother and son step onto the pavement outside their house, they are accosted by the same policeman, who had almost discovered Emil and his prank with the monument in the opening scene. At this moment, Lamprecht's film ingeniously plays with sound concepts, using the idea of multiple points of audition to deliver a narrative twist. Emil shrinks back in fear at the appearance of the policeman who in turn takes Emil's mother to one side to have "a quiet word". Just at that time, a horse and cart pass noisily in the road rendering Emil unable to hear what is really being said by the adults. Meanwhile, the actual conversation between his mother and the policeman is being revealed to the audience: a discussion about by-laws and opening hours (Frau Tischbein runs a modest hairdressing operation from her home). As Emil remained a little way away, he is frustrated by being out of earshot and unable to listen in. Unaware of the actual topic of conversation between the adults, Emil is convinced that his prank has been uncovered. As he steps forward to join the adults, he voluntarily presents his wrists to the policeman, signalling his readiness to be handcuffed. The policeman in turn fails to understand the boy's gesture and instead grabs hold of the Emil's hand to wish him a good journey. Here the film delivers its visual gag with the help of Emil's obscured point of audition, whilst the audience has a holistic understanding of the plot through its privileged point of audition. Confusing as the adult world must seem to Emil at that moment, he is quick-witted enough to regain his composure, as both mother and son declare in unison the destination of the journey as "Berlin" in reply to the policeman's enquiry. Their enthusiastic voices are used by the film to complement the film's next visual transition: the word "Berlin" bridges the picture cut to the platform indicator depicting that very destination. Lamprecht's film shows a similarly adroit approach to Fritz Lang's films from the same period, utilising sound bridges and dialogue lines as stepping stones to shift from one location to the next and to advance the plot.

Music and Dialogue

At this stage, it was still difficult for sound film to integrate music with dialogue, but

Emil und die Detektive shows that it was not impossible to achieve in the next scene. As the film continues, Allan Gray's musical score remains a key element, and the soundtrack also integrates other sound effects, including some dialogue elements⁶, alongside the music. Having said good-bye to his mother and departed from Neustadt on the train, Emil finds himself alone in the train compartment with a dubious looking character. This man later transpires to be a thief by the name of *Herr Grundeis*. The man wears a black hat and displays a strange demeanour; although Emil is wary of the man, he feels pressurised into accepting a sweet laced with a powerful sedative. As Emil falls unconscious, he dreams of a strangely distorted world in which he attempts to get away from Grundeis's clutches. Throughout the dream sequence, the film's score is the main element on the soundtrack, using a range of changes in its instrumentation to denote different stages of the dream. In the scene immediately before the dream, when Emil was being offered a sweet laced with a sedative, the score has musical pauses to allow for dialogue elements to be heard simultaneously and the score appears to actually fade in and out as Grundeis and Emil speak. Once the sedative begins to work on Emil, dialogue elements cease and the music takes over. At times, the score still retains traces of the silent film aesthetic of the opening sequence - occasionally still mimicking sound effects, such as the steam train's arrival at Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse – but gradually, the film's use of score becomes more conventional. As the film continues the music becomes an underscore to the action, without trying to replace other components of the soundtrack (which had been the case in the opening scene as well as the dream sequence). Subsequent scenes integrate score as well as voice elements and sound effects.

As Emil disembarks from the train, he traces Grundeis and pursues him onto a tram, although he has no money to buy a ticket. The conductor goes around the carriage, checking to see the passengers' tickets; again, the music score continues under the spoken elements. Initially, the voice of the conductor is out of vision, as the actor's back is turned to the camera, and it is entirely possible that this is a post-sync voice element that was recorded at the same time as the music was being recorded. The

⁶ For instance, during the encounter between Grundeis and Emil aboard the train to Berlin.

conductor goes on to call out the name of the tram's next stop as "Kurfürstendamm" in vision with good lip sync. Again, this is most likely a post sync recording on account of its acoustic perspective which does not quite fit the environment of the tram carriage and also lacks other back ground effects (such as the tram effects). In contrast, the earlier dialogue elements integrated into the score between Grundeis and Emil in their train compartment seem to be sync rather than post-sync, with the music score fitting around the spoken elements⁷. It is entirely feasible that the music score in the railway carriage scene was created as a clean recording to the cut picture and then physically cut into the train sequence. This suggests two different processes employed in achieving the same overall effect of combining spoken voice elements with a music underscore: post sync recording of the music element with vocal elements recorded simultaneously alongside the music, or the separate recording of a music score which was then fitted around the sync dialogue recording. Sound films began to experiment with using music in combination with other sound effects and as underscore with dialogue – *Emil und die Detektive* is an example of such an attempt.

Sound and Narrative Continuity

Lamprecht's film attempts to give the visual elements as realistic a setting as possible by including a range of location elements (including all of the tram sequences, filmed aboard a genuine Berlin tram) as well as using material filmed at various Berlin station. In this way, the film seeks to create as much of an authentic urban backdrop for its story as is feasible within the confines of a tight filming itinerary. While Emil is travelling on the Berlin tram in pursuit of Grundeis, the picture cuts back to the steam train (now *sans* Emil) as it arrives at the *Friedrichstrasse Bahnhof*, the Berlin station where his cousin and Grandmother had arranged to meet up with Emil. At this point the musical score echoes steam train elements of the same train's earlier arrival at *Bahnhof Zoologischer Garten* (where Emil had been forced to leave the train prematurely in pursuit of Grundeis). At *Friedrichstrasse*, train and score come to a gradual halt. The action cuts to Pony Hütchen (the nickname of Emil's cousin) and grandmother waiting patiently in the

⁷ The chapter on *Westfront 1918* will return to the discussion of how sound elements were physically edited into the soundtrack in between dialogue sections.

ticket hall, as the passengers file past the ticket barrier – this ‘ticket hall’ is clearly a studio set rather than part of an actual train station. The footsteps of the extras as they emerge from the studio platform and as they cross to the barrier betray the artificial setting. The picture then cuts from the studio set to a genuine location - a train platform showing passengers who are disembarking from a real train - before cutting back to the ‘ticket hall’ created in the studio set. Several other cutaways of a station environment are also integrated in the scene; it is possible that these images stem from the same train station material, that had been filmed to illustrate Emil’s earlier disembarkation scene at the Zoologischer Garten. Interestingly, the soundtrack does not cut away from the studio ticket hall atmosphere when the real station elements are shown, suggesting an attempt at creating aural continuity between several different settings, and using the background track of the studio ‘ticket hall’ to cover the genuine station platform footage. The ‘ticket hall’ is also supplemented with a number of out of vision sound effects to lend the setting more credibility and to provide aural continuity across visual cut points. Although the studio set is a little unconvincing in terms of its acoustic properties, this approach does show a certain awareness of how to create sonic continuity within a particular spatial and temporal frame, by not cutting away from the soundtrack of the ‘ticket hall’. In addition to the - albeit wooden – footstep sounds of passengers descending the stairs, there is also the suggestion of miscellaneous voices present in the scene. These occasional vocal elements, attempts to summon a porter’s assistance, as well as general crowd hubbub of milling around in a slightly reverberant acoustic can be heard in the background. In spite of the acoustic limitations of the studio set, this scene incorporates an attempt at widening the narrative space. In suggesting an environment that stretches beyond the visual frame, the film’s soundtrack seeks to create a sense of spatial depth.

Emil und die Detektive’s approach suggests an emerging awareness of sound continuity, and admittedly does stand in contrast to some other films of the period. For instance, Robert Siodmak’s *Der Mann der seinen Mörder sucht* - also made in 1931 - is marred by sound dis-continuity at various edit points, with the effect of undermining the narrative flow. In Siodmak’s film, there are several instances when the action cuts between two different locations, for example from an interior

dialogue scene to a ‘meanwhile-across-the road’ shot. Siodmak’s film appears unsure as to how to respond to this scenario on the soundtrack, jumping back and forth between the respective sync elements; the sound cuts are hard and simultaneous with the visual cuts, giving the story a disjointed appearance at this point.

Filmmakers clearly had to learn how to use sound to their advantage to advance smooth narrative flow – at least they had to form an understanding of how to avoid sound undermining story continuity. Comparing Lamprecht’s *Emil* to Siodmak’s *Der Mann der seinen Mörder sucht*, it would appear that some productions acquired such awareness sooner compared to others.

Having got off the tram in pursuit of Grundeis, Emil positions himself across the road from a café where the man has decided to have something to eat. While on his observation point, Emil is accosted by a local boy, Gustav, who carries in his pocket a small horn which he uses for a multitude of purposes - for instance, the sound of the horn is used to attract the attention of other members of his gang of local children. Furthermore, Gustav’s horn is used to lend further emphasis to expressions of approval or disapproval. These sound elements were already part of Kästner’s novel and were ideal for adaptation into a sound film. The film characterises Gustav not just by simply referring to him with his name but emphasises Gustav’s acoustic prop by naming him *Gustav-mit-der-Hupe*⁸. The sound effects support Gustav’s characterisation, adding further dimension by also letting Gustav indicate his cognitive processes through the use of the horn: while deep in thought, Gustav squeezes the bulb of the horn intermittently as if to supply an acoustic metaphor of his brain being hard at work.

Multiple Soundtrack Elements

Music maintains a presence during subsequent pursuit scenes as Emil and the boys from Gustav’s gang take it in turns to follow Grundeis. The boys trace Grundeis to a hotel, where Emil – disguised as a bell-boy – searches through the thief’s pockets in search for Frau Tischbein’s missing money. Having failed to locate the money, the

⁸ ‘Gustav-mit-der-Hupe’ = ‘Gustav with the motor horn’.

boys resolve to simply follow Grundeis in every increasing numbers. Troubled by the crowd of youngsters in his wake, Grundeis enters a bank in the hope of shaking the children off. Emil follows him inside and persuades the bank employee that the money which Grundeis tries to pass off as his own are the very notes that had been stolen from him. As Grundeis protests his innocence, a scuffle breaks out and the bank cashier presses operates an alarm buzzer which attracts the attention of some passing policemen. As Grundeis attempts to get away from the bank, an enthusiastic crowd of youngsters overpower Grundeis with the help of the police. The presence of two separate elements on the soundtrack (music score and alarm buzzer) is augmented by a third element: children cheering. This combination of three separate sound elements to construct a comparatively ambitious soundtrack in narrative terms is again used in the film's final scene.

Once the thief has been captured, the film culminates in a grand set-piece of a finale, depicting Emil's triumphant return to his mum in his home town of Neustadt. But this time, Emil does not take the train to travel back from Berlin. Having received a sizable reward for the capture of the thief (Grundeis turned out to be a career criminal rather than a mere opportunist), the film depicts Emil and his friends, as well Grandmother and Pony Hütchen arriving by airplane in the midst a big celebration held by the good people of Neustadt. Here the film deviates considerably from the more moderate closing chapter of Kästner's book: a cosy coffee and cake afternoon in the home of Emil's aunt and uncle in Berlin. In adapting the novel for the screen, Kästner, Lamprecht and Wilder saw an opportunity to create a more extravagant setting for the film's finale than an interior scene with the action situated at a table in a Berlin apartment. It achieves this through an impressive set piece: a large expectant crowd, a sync brass band and the appearance of the airplane. This creates a more cinematic setting compared to the novel, where Emil sends word to his mother to travel by train to Berlin, in order to be re-united with her beloved son over a plate of cake, and to meet key figures from Emil's new gang of city friends. In the film version, Emil and the group are airlifted to Neustadt, a small provincial town where an open field has to stand in for a runway. In this field, a large expectant crowd has gathered, awaiting their local hero's arrival in a plane. The diegetic music comes from a brass band (not immediately visible in the foreground for the first part

of this sequence), which is playing to keep the waiting masses entertained; both of these dramatic elements (crowd and brass band) are represented on the soundtrack. One shot has lip sync: the village policeman spots the plane and announces its arrival to Emil's mum, who had been peering into the air in a different direction. Before the film cuts to a shot of the plane, we can hear a sound which represents the plane – a sound effect symbolising the plane soundtrack effectively telegraphs the proximity of the aircraft. Until the plane has landed, there are only two shots of the moving plane in total, this part of the sequence is about one minute long. Yet the plane's presence, a key element of this section, is simulated for the cinema audience in two ways: firstly, via the sound effect which represents the aircraft; and secondly via the numerous shots of different groupings within the expectant crowd pointing and peering at the sky. The concept of the plane is enforced for the cinema audience via the point of view of the film crowd looking and pointing at the sky *in conjunction with* the sound effect that symbolises the plane. Just like a member of the crowd who catches occasional glimpses of the plane, the audience's experience of this section mirrors that of actually *being there*. Real life, but just like in the movies.

Visual and Aural Reference Points

In shooting this scene, it was critical to direct the crowd with some precision to achieve the effect of collective plane spotting from the hundreds of extras. The film needed to suggest that the crowd's observation of a plane in the sky appeared synchronised and credible. Lamprecht had to choreograph the crowds pointing and waving; given the many different camera set-ups in this scene, this had to be done with some fluidity and continuity, but without an actual plane providing focus for the expectant crowd. A production photo, taken during a temporary break from filming while the main film camera was being reloaded, shows Lamprecht standing on a ladder close to the position of the camera. This photograph, found in the archives of the Deutsche Kinemathek during research for this project, shows how Lamprecht appeared to use a visual prop in order to direct the crowd. The extras are assembled in a position in the background that matches several images edited into the homecoming scene.



EMIL UND DIE DETEKTIVE - Deutschland 1931
Regie: Gerhard Lamprecht Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

Illustration 38 Lamprecht's Visual Prop.

The photo suggests that the director was orchestrating the rehearsal of the crowd tracking the movement of the plane with a simple visual aid. In the finished film, when the various shots of a real plane are intercut with the crowd's gaze tracking an imaginary out of vision plane, the sound of an airplane effect completes the illusion that the extras were focusing on a real plane's arrival. The photograph of the director on the ladder provides the link between the filming process and the finished scene, complete with several simultaneous sound elements.

Lamprecht was able to direct the gaze of the crowd by providing them with a focal point: a triangular flag on the end of a pole. Interesting to note that in another still from the location, Lamprecht is seen sitting on the wing of the parked aircraft, speaking to Rolf Wenkhaus (Emil) and some of the other actors. This is clearly a publicity still⁹, rather than a snapshot of filming in progress - but interesting to note that the flag which Lamprecht was holding aloft from the ladder can be seen connected to the plane: the pole and the contrasting triangle of the flag are visible on

⁹ Comparing the picture quality of the respective images, as well as Lamprecht wearing his suit jacket in the second image, support this notion.

the fuselage¹⁰.



EMIL UND DIE DETEKTIVE - Deutschland 1931 Regie: Gerhard Lamprecht
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

Illustration 39 Lamprecht, Plane and Visual Prop.

The initial 60 seconds of this homecoming sequence consists of about 20 picture edits (a montage incorporating a considerable number of camera set ups) and which in audio terms runs three separate sound strands. Whilst it cannot be satisfactory from the perspective of an analysis of sound and image aesthetics to reduce this sequence to frame counts and shot lengths, what this quick tally demonstrates is that this is a very finely crafted section of the film, where a complex story concept had to be told with relatively limited filmic means. In narrative terms, the emerging and then continuous presence of a plane until it has landed becomes credible in the context of the film through the editing process, which combines images of the expectant crowd with a sound that symbolises the airborne plane. The editing of this sequence works successfully because of its incorporation of three separate sound strands: crowd, plane and music. The music acts as glue in spatial and temporal terms, as well as providing the emotional components of the scene's celebratory character. The plane sound enforces the presence of the aircraft, even in the face of

¹⁰ In the two shots of the airborne plane, a vertical pole can be seen attached to the cabin. This little flag may have had some significance in aviation processes at the time - but that is less important here. The key point is that Lamprecht improvised with an object from the plane in order to choreograph the movement of the craft.

only a few cutaways of the airborne craft. The sound of the plane also provides the audience with story information ahead of visual content. The sound of the plane leads the image of the plane, telegraphing its presence via sound to crowd and cinema audience alike, enforcing the narrative's sense of curiosity and expectation. Conversely, the sound which symbolises the plane coming in to land is heard before the visual cut to the plane coming to a halt; the sound effect employed simulates the stopping of a motor, complete with pitch shift, rather than a fading out of a continuous motor effect. In terms of the overall sequence, the crowd's sonic presence contains different sonic characteristics: in addition to occasional cognitive information from close up dialogue, the crowd noise is mostly an orchestration of expectation, with the occasional swell of cheering voices. These surges give an emotional dynamic to this scene, as well as providing convenient places behind which potential music edits can be concealed. It is not until the action cuts to the brass band on their podium, one and a half minutes into the homecoming scene, that the source of the diegetic music is shown in close up; the musicians' playing of their instruments is recorded synchronously with the visual action.

Once the plane has come to a halt and Emil and his friends clamber out, there is some post-sync dialogue as Emil attracts his mother's attention. More cheering from the crowd conceals the music edit in the background as the action cuts to the brass band. The moment when the picture cuts to the band, particularly as the players individually get up and exit from their podium, is a sonic treat. Each instrument, as its player files past the camera (and the microphone in the vicinity of the camera), can be heard as a solo element, complete with an 'up and past' acoustic dynamic.

This last scene, in particular, shows a truly accomplished approach in constructing a soundtrack in a more complex manner, which becomes an integral part of the storytelling. All three sound strands of the homecoming sequence can be heard simultaneously; the soundtrack appears constructed, consisting of some specific post-sync dialogue as well as more generic crowd elements, alongside the diegetic music score (initially the musicians remain mostly out of vision, until the unity of the brass band is seen to disintegrate in the individual musician's eagerness to rush forward to greet the landing plane). In addition to the above, the approaching 'plane sound' can also be heard as it is coming in to land. There can be little doubt that it is an

artificially created sound effect that is standing in for a real plane. In terms of the quality of this sound effect, it seems a little unconvincing and does lack a certain oomph that a real plane would have provided. But in story-telling terms, the sound effect for the plane serves a narrative purpose, fixing the attention of the scene on the arriving plane. The other sound elements of voices and music are all represented as part of the diegesis but consist of post-sync as well as sync elements. In looking closely at the homecoming sequence, there is clear evidence of a multi-layered soundtrack that relates to various story elements, while they are in and out of vision.

However, also present in that final scene is a moment when the film fails to strike the right balance between visual and aural story-telling elements. After Emil and his friends have disembarked from the plane, the townsfolk want to present Emil with a wreath to honour their local hero's homecoming. During the short presentation speech, Emil appears to have reservations about being singled out for praise. In filmic terms Emil's thoughts and misgivings are expressed by a succession of three brief cutaways taken from an earlier scene that shows Grundeis being overpowered by all the children together. However, these flashback cutaways occur very rapidly and - crucially in this context - are presented without any sound accompaniment to lend these brief shots more emphasis. Instead, these shots are covered by the continuous sound of the homecoming ambience, largely driven by crowd noises. Without the help of extra sound elements to mark out these shots as flashback moments, this narrative segue remains lost on the audience. Here, either a more determined visual narrative device (a dissolve or other optical effect) or least a longer duration for the flashback cutaways, as well as further accent of this moment through an aural gesture (music or a sound effect) could have helped to make the thought processes in Emil's head clearer. This is a moment in which the cinematic adaption, brilliantly executed for much of the duration of the film, falls short. But the makers of *Emil und die Detektive* knew very well how to present a convincing flashback element in the story: in an earlier scene, as Emil is searching through the pockets of Grundeis sleeping in his hotel bed, the boy discovers a paper bag containing the sweets, with which the thief had drugged Emil on the train. The flashback is emphasised through a shift in the non-diegetic music that accompanies this scene, as well as through a visual effects device that clarifies this moment as a

flashback. In contrast, the flashback moment during Emil's homecoming scene is less effective and may have been an afterthought - one which required further emphasis. The biggest hurdle to comprehension in this second flashback section in the film is that Emil's interior thoughts are represented by three crowd shots which suffer from being too short and visually too similar to the crowd of the homecoming scene. Even more problematic is the fact that the soundtrack continues to play the same atmosphere (the homecoming crowd) during the flashbacks, effectively gluing the shots together and preventing the identification of these three cutaways as representing Emil's interior thought processes.

In the novel, it was not Emil who comes to recognise the value of the collective effort as the root of the children's success; this stemmed from the thought process of another character in the story. In Kästner's book, it was Emil's grandmother who concluded that the real hero of the story is "Der Kleine Dienstag", the boy who had to stay by the telephone in order to coordinate the group's investigative efforts, instead of joining his friends in the excitingly glamorous task of hunting down the thief¹¹. In contrast to the novel, the film projects this cognitive insight as Emil's thought processes; these flashback cutaways could have worked in principle, but the manner in which they are presented short-circuit the narrative impact of this section. The sequence does resolve logically, as Emil and the other youngsters in turn pass the wreath from child to child, each one in tribute to the role that others had played in bringing Grundeis to justice. The character of the grandmother in the novel also turns the whole premise of the story upside down, advising that the only way to send cash from one person to another was via a postal order. This irreverent interjection from one of the protagonists of the novel is not included in the film.

International Reception

Following its release in 1931, the film *Emil und die Detektive*, in its original German

¹¹ Of course, the film script deviates from the novel in other sections - it is a film adaptation of a novel after all and by virtue of the fact that the story is being told via a different medium, the action needs to be adjusted accordingly. The problem here does not lie in the adaptation or deviation from the original, but in the manner in which it is realised.

language version, played successfully abroad in the United States, France and Britain. The film was deemed to have universal appeal and even rated by *Sight & Sound* as ‘the best children’s picture ever made.’ (Belach and Bock 1998, p.) Irrespective of linguistic barriers, the film appealed to audiences beyond Germany’s borders. So much so that a British remake was being planned: Milton Rosmer’s *Emil and The Detectives* was shot in 1935, the musical score was again the work of Allan Gray, who had emigrated to Britain after the National Socialists objected to the Jewish composer.

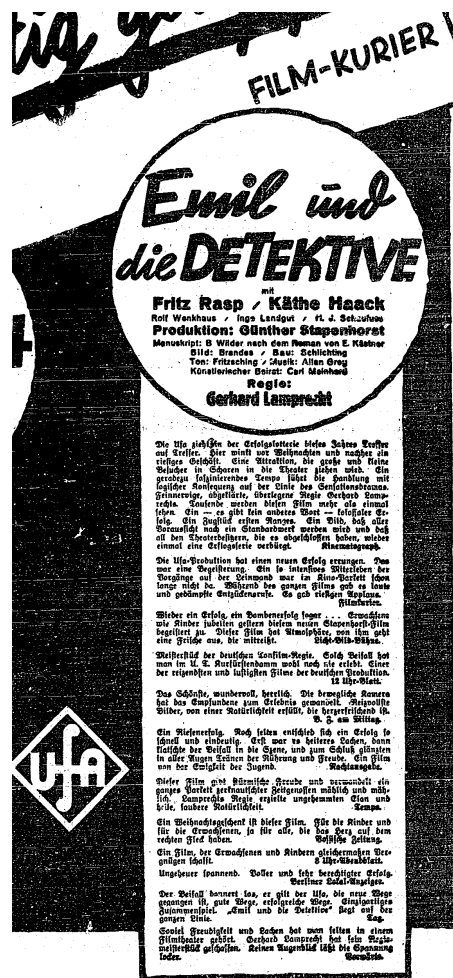


Illustration 40 Ufa Advertisement summarising Film Reviews from the Press.

Popular Audience Appeal

Ufa aimed to recoup the expenses of its sound film production, and consistently advertised the film. The above advertisement (taking up nearly half a page in the publication) appeared in the *Film-Kurier* on 7th December 1931 and summarised the positive reviews that the film had earned since its premiere 4 days earlier. Ufa producer Günther Stapenhorst, who took on the film project, was keen to expand the

appeal of the project not just as a children's story, but one that would also draw in older viewers. The film's publicity material attests to the broad age demographic, including the tag line that the film for all children between the age of 6 and 70 (Belach and Bock 1998, p.157). While Kästner's novel had been enjoyed in the main by young readers, the film continued to be deliberately marketed by Ufa to have broad audience appeal, as the production company aimed to expand box office potential. Seeking to exploit as many commercial avenues as possible, Ufa even brought out a board game of the film that was clearly aimed at children in the first place (though parents could of course play the game with their families) – Ufa's cinemas were given clear instructions how to position advertisements for the toy in the cinema foyer in an effort to maximise profits.



Illustration 41 Ufa Board Game with Film Cast. (filmportal.de)

The original novel appealed to a young readership on account of its subject matter, and the screen version needed to preserve the youthful freshness of the book without depicting children that were too precocious. With this in mind, Stapenhorst took a shrewd decision in involving the young Billie Wilder. Wilder's script for *Menschen am Sonntag* (1930) presented cinema in a realistic new guise, as Siodmak's film appeared to observe seemingly ordinary people going about their lives over one summer weekend in Berlin¹². The film's success made Billie Wilder an astute choice to work on a story such as *Emil und die Detektive* - given the goal of safe-guarding Kästner's natural and uncomplicated style. In this context, the adaptation from page to screen of *Emil und die Detektive* sits comfortably within the framework of an urban setting and the naturalistic style that is a feature of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* – but

¹² Using lay performers with their real-life names, rather than professional actors, *Menschen am Sonntag* appears to illustrate real life in a dramatised set up - pre-dating scripted reality programmes by many years.

it is ultimately a children's story. With the exception of *Emil und die Detektive*, Kästner's books and poems were amongst those incinerated on Nazi bonfires, lit from May 1933 onwards to 'cleanse' German libraries of unwanted material. The film version of the story continued to be shown in cinemas up and down the country for many years, and even after Josef Goebbels assumed his tight control over German art and culture. Eventually the prints were withdrawn from circulation as Kästner's name was increasingly airbrushed out of the public sphere as a *persona non-grata*. In spite of repeated arrests and interrogations by the authorities, Kästner managed to weather the upheaval of war and fascism without emigrating. The author wanted to stay in Germany to bear witness to the era; he even continued to contribute to the literary scene under a range of pseudonyms, thus circumventing the Nazi's desire to prevent his writings from entering the public sphere.

Lamprecht's Legacy

Gerhard Lamprecht deserves greater recognition for his lifetime's work, not only as a director, but also as an important film historian. At least in his native Germany, there seems to be more acknowledgement of Gerhard Lamprecht's body of work in recent years; most notably a German book trilogy which covers diverse aspects of his achievements and contributions to the film industry (Aurich 2013). As discussed earlier, when it comes to Lamprecht's film version of *Emil und die Detektive*, there appears to be surprisingly little critical discussion in the majority of film text books, and hardly any engagement with the film from an international perspective. In Germany, the only real noteworthy exception occurred when "edition text & kritik" published the original film script to *Emil und die Detektive* along with an insightful selection of supporting documents and essays in 1998. *Emil und die Detektive*, director Lamprecht's third sound film¹³, was shot over a period of 6 weeks during the summer of 1931 with a cast of professional adult actors in conjunction with a sizeable number of youngsters, most of whom had little or no previous acting or film experience.

¹³ *Zweierlei Moral* [Moral Duality] (1930); *Zwischen Nacht und Morgen* [Between Night and Dawn] (1931)

In spite of the largely inexperienced cast, Lamprecht was able to create a relaxed atmosphere on the set, both in front of and behind the camera. The film's realism and authenticity were praised as outstanding qualities by many of film's reviews; only one review singles out the precocious performance style of Inge Landgut's portrayal of Pony Hütchen (of the film's young cast, Landgut was the actor with previous movie experience, most notably as Elsie Beckmann in Fritz Lang's 1931 film *'M'*). In addition to praise for the musical score, camera work and sound, critics continually singled out Wilder's script (though the reviews did not reflect Kästner's role in the adaptation from page to screen) and Lamprecht's skilfully sensitive direction of the film's youthful cast. One of the film's young cast members, Hans Richter, later recalled (cited by Stefan Wiehler, *Der Tagesspiegel* 10.03.2004, HFF archive Potsdam) how much of the film's natural performance style came through playful improvisation with the director Gerhard Lamprecht. Photographs taken on location as the film was being made confirm the relaxed atmosphere, which Lamprecht was able to create for his young cast despite the tight filming schedule (all the filming had to be accommodated over the summer, during the school holidays).



EMIL UND DIE DETEKTIVE - Deutschland 1931
Regie: Gerhard Lamprecht Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

Illustration 42 Lamprecht and Cast Members on Set.

Prior to the film's release, Lamprecht himself wrote in the *Film-Kurier*:

It was not intended to be a film only for children. It was meant to appeal to the larger cinema public. And I feel it will manage to do so, if only because it places them, without any sentimentality or cuteness, in a world they experience themselves every day.
(Kardish 2010, p.173).

Gerhard Lamprecht's career as a director spanned forty years, from 1918 until 1958, during which time he directed more than fifty films. In addition to being a prolific director, Lamprecht had also been a great film enthusiast from his early childhood. Through his father's work he had the opportunity to sit in on countless film screenings in the early part of the 20th century. From this time onwards Lamprecht became a keen observer of film technology as well as a collector of films and film memorabilia. There is evidence of his enthusiasm and competence for film technology. In 1912, as a mere fifteen-year-old youngster, Lamprecht had designed a switching mechanism for projectors and submitted this for consideration by the Düsseldorf manufacturer *Liesegang*¹⁴. Lamprecht's invention was regarded with

¹⁴ *Liesegang* manufactured projectors and had been developing photographic equipment since the 1850s

positive interest, although another mechanism (the Maltese cross) proved to be more effective (, p.192). In 1929, he had patented ‘*a device for the automatic adjustment of a cinematic recording device*’; further evidence of his desire to advance both film making art and film making processes in terms of the associated technology. During the early part of his career, Lamprecht was torn between the theatre and film (ibid, p.9); he parted with several early collections of films and memorabilia - but his interest in the cinema eventually won. His apprenticeship in film making was comprehensive as well as eclectic: he was commissioned to write a number of film scripts, became a dramaturge, and subsequently a film editor, until directing his first film (*Es bleibt in der Familie* [*Let’s keep it in the Family*]) in 1920 (Bock 1984 Volume 4 Cinegraph Lg.39 Gerhard Lamprecht B1/B2) . During the 1950s and 60s Lamprecht researched and published *Deutsche Stummfilme*, a comprehensive catalogue of German silent film. Eventually, Lamprecht’s private collection would provide the founding stock for *Die Deutsche Kinemathek* in Berlin 1963. (Aurich 2013, p.198).

Lamprecht’s enthusiasm for different elements of the entire film-making gives the impression of a director eager to be at the forefront of utilising new film technology within his work. The film *Emil und die Detektive* illustrates a creative, at times complex, engagement with the conceptually new territory of utilising sound in the cinema. When looking at the films of the transitional period more carefully, a range of different approaches of engaging with sound can be observed. What is interesting about Gerhard Lamprecht’s film version of *Emil und die Detektive* in particular is that even one single film could comprise of a range of different aesthetic approaches to sound in order to serve the film’s narrative purpose. In spite of (or perhaps precisely because of) the silent film aesthetic of its opening, *Emil und die Detektive* is a noteworthy exponent of early German sound film.

This chapter has sought to redress the balance, shining a spot light onto Lamprecht’s *Emil und die Detektive* (1931) as a remarkable sound achievement, which can be seen as microcosm of cinema’s transition from the silent to the sound era: the opening scene is devoid of dialogue and all the action is visually presented while accompanied by a musical score that incorporates melodic elements to illustrate the

action. As elsewhere in the film, post-sync spot effects are incorporated into the music recording, in sync with the picture. The opening section acts as an overture to give character definition, a narrative practice not restricted to early sound film, but still in use today. The absence of dialogues can be easily defended by the dramaturgy of the scene (the boys are undertaking a secret mission after all) - though the absence of atmospheres and notable sync effects (such as the rolling of the dice) does mark this scene as an exemplar of the early sound era, when mixing atmospheres with music was problematic from a technological perspective. In narrative terms, the music plays a central part, but it is important to emphasise that the pre-eminent focus on music does not turn this section into a silent film. It shares similarities with the silent era, but it benefits from the music track being part of the film stock: the opening scene was experienced by every member of the audience who saw the film in a cinema converted to sound – there were no regional or local or other variations to the film's score during the screening, as there would have been during the silent era (even if a film benefited from a specially composed score). One could argue that the opening with its music-based overture served as a device to get the audience (with its significant proportion of children) to settle down and become drawn into the story by degree. In making the transition from page to screen, film adaptations of popular books always have to withstand particular scrutiny. The spectator invariably judges the film's *mise-en-scène* in relation to their imagination, comparing the screen version to the pre-existing story world created from having read the book. Very effective then the film's approach to gradually un-mask the book's main character, revealing in stages what Emil looks and sounds like.

Functioning as a device to move the audience's engagement with the story forward, the music of the opening scene finishes by forming a bridge to the next sequence, which commences with a wide shot of Emil's street. As Emil returns home, the film cuts to a close up of Emil listening to out of vision dialogue as Emil's mother expresses concern over the boy's whereabouts. Into this dialogue exchange, Emil is shown as the listening party, who is then able to interject in process that he had returned punctually. Dialogue and visual elements are cut in a way to feature speaker and listener in turns, displaying the fluidity with which early sound film was able to edit its story elements. Except for the final sequence, non-diegetic music

continued to be a key driver of story throughout *Emil und die Detektive*, occasionally the score resorts to incorporating referential elements. As the children pursue Grundeis, Gray's score contains referential elements to a popular children's song commanding a fox that stole a goose to return the bird: *Fuchs, Du hast die Gans gestohlen, Gib sie wieder her!*¹⁵ With the exception of the problematic use of the flashback cutaways during the homecoming scene, the finale of the film is a triumph of sound film story telling. The three key audio track elements of music, crowd and plane converge into a highly effective *mise-en-scène*. All three sound strands of the homecoming sequence can be heard simultaneously; the soundtrack appears constructed, consisting of some specific post-sync dialogue as well as more generic crowd elements, alongside the diegetic music score. In addition to the above, the approaching 'plane sound' can also be heard as it is coming in to land. There can be little doubt that this is an artificially created sound effect standing in for a real plane. In terms of the quality of this sound effect, it seems a little unconvincing and does lack a certain oomph that a real plane would have provided. Nonetheless, this scene demonstrates the incorporation of a multi-layered soundtrack in relation to key story elements, which are either in or out of vision.

Lamprecht's film is an important contribution to the development of an emerging sound aesthetic but has remained unacknowledged in terms of the complexity of its aesthetic ambition as a sound film until now. Its intentional use of sonic elements to deliver the film's plot is sound design in evidence, in an early film of the sound period. *Emil und die Detektive* displays many important hallmarks of an emerging sound aesthetic but is mostly literal in its use of sound in comparison later films of the period, such as *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*, which will be discussed next. As suggested in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, Lamprecht's film shares – perhaps unexpected - commonalities with Lang's *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* (1933) but there are also distinct differences in terms of narrative technique. By looking at *Emil* and *Dr Mabuse* in succession, the development of an emerging sound aesthetic during a key period of German cinema becomes even clearer, illustrating how sound was used in more and more complex narrative terms.

¹⁵ Words and Music: Ernst Anschütz

Chapter 5 Das Testament des Dr Mabuse

(For plot summary and cast list, please see Appendix I)

Whilst *Emil und die Detektive* is very much a film of the early sound period which utilised sound to enhance story and plot elements in a literal manner¹, *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* (1933) was one of the last sound films of note made during the Weimar Republic. Lang's film exhibits a readiness to experiment with the new format further, even to the point of using sound to obscure plot elements deliberately. The preceding chapter has demonstrated how *Emil* exhibits considerable ambition in terms of visual effects and sound design, and these features can also be observed in *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* – although the latter's visual components are employed with more sinister undertones. Both films share an enthusiastic portrayal of the technological trappings of modernity, from the motorcar to the telephone. In this regard both films express the *Zeitgeist* of innovation that is to some degree also woven through the introduction of sound film itself. This linkage between sound film and the wider innovative spirit of the age has been expanded by Joe McElhaney (2006, p.31). As we have seen in the previous chapter, Lamprecht himself had been interested in film technology from an early age, even contributing his own innovations to improve cinematic equipment. Lang was a film-maker keen to exert control over all aspects of his films, from the script page to the visual design and cinematography. Both directors were of sufficient reputation to influence creative aspects of their films and were better equipped to assert their ideas in the face of studio demands to save money than were more junior directors. Like Lamprecht, Lang had been fascinated by film from an early age, and both proved adroit at exploring new directions.

¹ The soundtrack of *Emil und die Detektive* sonified the film's story.



Illustration 43 Original Film Poster for *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*. (filmportal.de)

The Influence of Fritz Lang as a Film-maker of the Weimar Republic

The name Fritz Lang is most readily associated with his silent 1927 epic *Metropolis*, a film that has long been considered as one of the definitive silent movies made in Germany during the Weimar Republic.² For a director who had made his reputation during the silent era, the transition into sound was a considerable conceptual step: Lang was asked in an interview with Michèle Manceaux (Manceaux 1964, p.39) how film had changed since the beginning of his long career. The director responded that in his view, it was the arrival of sound that been the most fundamental – indeed the only - real change. Prior to the arrival of sound, Lang argued, film-makers were forced to convey story through visual action, which according to Lang limited the potential for story complexity. Sound enabled film-makers to experiment with more ambitious concepts, particularly in terms of creating the characterisation of protagonists (ibid.). Lang's first sound film *M* (1931) has been widely recognised in

² Reflecting its well-established status in film history, his silent classic *Metropolis* still generates a great deal of interest when hitherto missing film material emerges from archives around the world. A newly restored version of *Metropolis* was celebrated with special screenings at the Berlin Film festival in 2010.

terms of its imaginative use of sound. Interestingly, during a previous conversation, his interview partner was Gero Gandert, the great German film historian. Gandert (1963, p.35) suggested that the “treatment of sound as a dramaturgical medium” was extremely well understood and realised during the early days of sound. In response to this, Lang describes how he had become aware of the potential of sound in film as a tool to shine a spotlight on particular story elements in a film.

Naturally, I attempted to come to terms with this new medium: sound. I found, for example, that when I was sitting alone in a sidewalk cafe, of course I heard the noises from the street, but that when I was immersed in an interesting conversation with a companion, or when I was reading a newspaper that totally captured my interest, my organs of hearing no longer registered these noises. Hence: the justification to represent on film such a conversation without laying down the aforementioned street noises as background to the dialogue. At that time, I also came to the realization that not only could one use sound as a dramaturgical element, but in fact absolutely had to. (Gandert, 1963, p.35)

The above extract³ from the director’s interview with Gandert makes clear how Lang as a film-maker was swift to recognise that cinema was to be profoundly transformed with the arrival of sound. Extremely important in this context is the role of sound in terms of its effect on the relationship between cinema, reality and realism (which will be touched upon again in the concluding remarks to this chapter). But the interview also illustrates how film-makers such as Lang understood that even if sound could make film appear more realistic, this did not mean that the soundtrack of a movie had to replicate reality in every aspect - quite the opposite. A well-designed film soundtrack gives credence to the concept of reality within of the story world, merely conjuring up a sufficiently adjusted prism of reality to render the *mise-en-scène* believable. In his interview with Gandert (ibid), Lang goes on to expand on the many ways in which he first came to realise the potential of sound during the making of *M* in 1931. From using dialogue to connect different scenes to exploring the dynamic range of a soundtrack, as Lang sought to punctuate screen silence with a

³ The part of Gandert’s interview with Lang, in which the director describes in some more detail how he explored a sound aesthetic in *M* (1931) is very instructive with regard to Lang’s insights into sound and recommended reading for anyone keen to pursue further research into *M*. It is included in the Appendix.

sharp sound: the director's interview explains his discovery of the joy of sound.

Less well known, but just as interesting as *M* (1931), Lang's second sound film was *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* (1933). Produced by Seymour Nebenzahl for Nero Film, it was made by Lang during late 1932 and early 1933 and was completed just as the NSDAP's⁴ influence took hold. The party's *Reichspropaganda* Minister Goebbels had considerable objections to the story line of *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* (which will be discussed below): the film was not permitted to be shown in Germany at all - neither publicly, nor in private⁵ - for the duration of the Third Reich. Both *M* and *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* transposed some of the hallmarks of great films from the silent period into the dawn of sound: Lang's early sound films "extended expressionist principles into the era of sound cinema" (Kaes et al 2016, p. 576). Amongst his filmography, Lang's *Dr Mabuse* cycle represent a further milestone of cinematic history - one which also marked the transition of his narrative techniques from the silent cinema into the sound era's emerging aesthetic. Lang's work during the period of the Weimar Republic is furthermore noteworthy in terms of the close collaboration between director and script writer. Lang stated in an interview with Paul Mayersburg for the BBC Home Service in 1962 (On Films, BBC Radio 4 Extra) that he would not contemplate working on film projects unless he was able to have considerable input into the script. The script for *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* was by Thea von Harbou; married to Lang, she became his constant collaborator during the 1920s. It is clear that Lang's ambition with regard to using sound in film would be integrated into his early sound film projects right from the conceptual stages of the script's development. This influence of the director as *auteur*, maintaining his tight grip over all dramaturgical aspects, expressed itself via Lang's notebooks, which combined thoughts, ideas and snippets for his projects. According to McGilligan (2013, p.81) Lang had taken to reading newspapers and journal articles with a pair of scissors in hand, ready to clip out any information that might be useful in augmenting the story developments of his projects. Lang

⁴ NSDAP = National Socialist German Workers Party

⁵ This point was emphasised by Lang in an interview with Berg (1965, p.55) "Goebbels of course banned the film on the 29th March 1933, and above all, private screenings."

apparently kept an array of notebooks and folders, consisting of such printed *objets trouvés*, which McGilligan (ibid.) describes as “*a mania in his career - a proof of fact, a validation of his approach*”.

The 1933 film was a return to the ubiquitous character of Dr Mabuse, the notorious anti-hero of the 1920s. Ten years earlier, *Dr Mabuse - Der Spieler* (1922) had helped to cement Lang's position as a major film-maker of the German silent film era⁶. Lang had presented his first Mabuse story in two parts - Part 1 carried the subtitle *Ein Bild der Zeit* [*A picture of the Time*], while Part 2 became *Ein Spiel von Menschen unserer Zeit* [*A play about People of our Time*]. The two parts were premiered approximately one month apart in Berlin, during the spring of 1922. Both subtitles illustrate Lang's desire to link the subject matter of his dramatic narrative to the socio-economic conditions of Germany at that time. The country's currency was in a downward vortex of worsening inflation. This was an economic climate from which ruthless stock-market players sought to profiteer - at the expense of the working classes who were racked by plummeting living standards, as wages could not keep up with spiralling costs of rent and food.

Lang's silent *Dr Mabuse* diptych was a great success, as it appeared to touch a nerve with audiences of the time. Its storyline of a criminal mastermind, who employs ruthless methods to achieve financial gain, portrayed stock-market speculators in a suitably unfavourable light that fed popular prejudices. The plot line confirmed generally held perceptions of an unfair and inequitable society, which appeared to reward handsomely the practice of short-term gambling on stocks and shares, whilst the hard-pressed working class starved, and the middle class saw whatever moderate savings they had put by destroyed by inflation. Visually ambitious, its *mise-en-scène* clearly rooted in the expressionism that influenced several notable German films of the period, *Dr Mabuse - Der Spieler* has rightfully earned a cinematic reputation equal to Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (Wiene, 1920) or *Nosferatu - Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (Murnau, 1922). In literary terms, crime novels (such as

⁶ His projects were increasingly large-scale films (Ufa's so-called *Monumentalfilme*), made with the aid of considerable production budgets.

Edgar Wallace or Jacques's *Dr Mabuse*) provided extremely popular reading material in the early 1920s and "were being devoured by everybody at that time, Brecht included" (Eisner [1969] 2008, p.240). Conversely, the film industry embraced the Crime Genre and *Dr Mabuse* was one of its most magnificently grandiose exponents adapted for the screen. In an interview Lang claimed that the plot line of a powerful criminal mastermind seemed particularly appealing to German audiences at that time (*On Films*, BBC Radio 4 Extra). Similar to the name "Blofeld" during the James-Bond-era, the name "*Dr Mabuse*" became synonymous with large scale criminality, corruption (both moral and financial) and white-collar fraud during the 1920's. Nero's Seymour Nebenzahl persuaded Lang to consider making a sequel to *Dr Mabuse*, a decade after the silent film's success. Lang had initially no real desire to return to the subject matter (Walker 1967): after all, the previous Mabuse film had culminated in the main protagonist's descent into madness. According to Toeplitz (1985, p.216) Lang came around to the idea of revisiting the Mabuse story on the basis that a sound film of the story line could appeal to a new generation of cinema.

Lang's Transition into Sound Film

With the introduction of sync sound in the late 1920s, Lang could see the new creative potential as film making processes evolved. The first full length German sound film was Ufa's *Melodie des Herzens* (*Melody of the Heart*) and was directed by Hanns Schwarz in 1929 and produced by producer Erich Pommer⁷. As the invention of sync sound enabled producers such as Pommer to exercise greater control of what audiences experienced with eyes *and ears*, the concept of synchronous sound for film presented promising creative appeal for a director of Fritz Lang's ambitions. Having left Ufa just before sound established itself, Lang made his own first sound films then for Ufa's smaller competitor Nero⁸. Together with Nebenzahl as producer, Lang made *M* in 1931 and two years later *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*. Nero was able to benefit financially from the success of Lang's first sound film but could not reap many rewards from the director's follow-

⁷ Pommer also produced Ufa's first internationally successful sound film *Der Blaue Engel* (1930).

⁸ Nero was an amalgam of its owners' names Seymour Nebenzahl and Richard Oswald.

up, when the film was denied a German premiere.

Sharing sonic similarities with *M*, Lang was again keen to explore the creative potential of a synchronous soundtrack, particularly via the technique of splitting sound and picture from another during editing processes. This technique could be used to juxtapose or connect plot lines, characters or locations. Throughout *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*, Lang uses this editing technique to develop linkages via the interplay of sound and image; these connections allow the audience to understand narrative threads within the storyline, frequently before being comprehended by the protagonists on the screen. Danzyger (2006, p.47) explains how Lang frequently used sound as being the primary motivator to the editing rhythm, relegating the visual cut point as secondary: sound elements shape meaning, and the picture follows suit. Lang had first experimented with this approach in *M* - for instance in the opening scenes when Elsie Beckmann's mother calls in vain for her missing daughter - and continued to apply this technique in *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*:

Notable is how Lang used the design of sound to overcome space and time issues. Through his use of dialogue over visuals, time collapses and the audience moves all about the city with greater ease than if he had straight-cut the visuals.
(Dancyger 2006, p.47)

The concepts of sound film conventions were only just being established in the early 1930s, yet Lang was already showing an interest in playing with the ambiguity of sound. No sooner had the invention of synchronous sound enabled the simultaneous screening of sound and image, that the director was keen to use sound to throw the occasional curved ball to the audience, taking the film into unexpected plot turns. The *Film-Kurier* discussed Lang's transition into sound entitled *Problems in Sound Film Design: Moving Away from Naturalism* [Probleme der Tonfilmgestaltung: Los vom Naturalismus] (Kaes et al 2016, p.576). The 1931 article describes how Lang became struck by the realisation how a particular sound could be ambiguous and misinterpreted. Apparently, Lang had been on a walk when thought he could clearly hear the intermittent sound of a garden sprinkler. However, he was surprised to discover that the sound which he had presumed to be a water sprinkler turned out to be a bonfire. Lang utilised this serendipitous observation in his sound design ideas

for the film script of *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*. For instance, at the end of one scene Inspector Lohmann looks at his watch, trying to ascertain whether it is still functioning correctly - however, the ticking that can then be heard over the shot of Lohmann holding the timepiece to his ear turns out not to emanate from the watch itself, but from a bomb, which becomes apparent in the next scene in an entirely different location, unconnected to Lohmann's watch, when the scene cuts to a room in which Kent and Lilli are trapped alongside a ticking bomb.



Illustration 44 Screen Grabs: Lohmann checks his watch, cut to room with ticking bomb.

Sound knits together different story telling planes, adding complexity to the narrative. Editing techniques (in terms of the relationship between image and sound) play a key part in revealing the true nature of a sound as heard by the audience: a sound is heard over a particular shot, then a shot change reveals that the sound is attributed to a different object or situation. What Lang recognised in terms of storytelling was that sound introduced the potential of connecting and disconnecting the visual and the aural domains. While the audience watches police investigator Lohmann attempting to solve a criminal puzzle of intricate complexity (incidentally, the same protagonist also conducted the investigations in *M*), the audience is given story clues through the

film's editing technique and sound design. Lang exploits ambiguous aspects of sound effects in order to play with the audience's interpretation of the plot via sound: reflecting his own experience - that sound objects can trigger diverse associations - Lang's film integrates sound effects which have the potential to shift in terms of their meaning or in their relationship to the image. This form of association and meaning is analogous to the Kuleshov Effect established in visual editing theory texts (Crittenden 1995, p.5; Dancyger 2006, p.15): according to a montage theory⁹ publicised by the Russian film theorist Lev Kuleshov during the 1920s, audiences read a particular shot through the contextual knowledge of the images with which this particular shot was intercut. Similarly, Lang believed that a sound object can be interpreted in different ways depending on contextual understanding; Lang readily integrated this into his film concept which is demonstrated in the scene of Lohmann checking the ticking of his watch.

In addition to experimenting with the shifting semiotics of sound in films, Lang was keen to expand narrative potential which sync sound offered to cinema, incorporating into *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* ideas that had come to him from real-life experiences. According to Boy (2009, p.136), Lang encountered a device that allowed a gramophone to become connected to an alarm clock, thus programming a sound recording to be played at a particular time. The director used a variation of this idea to conjure up a fake alibi in *Testament*: the voice of one of the characters is heard at certain times during the film *out of vision* (suggesting this particular character's physical presence in the vicinity of the sound of his voice) when in fact he was present at a different location.

⁹ In Kuleshov's classic example, a close up of a man's face is intercut in turns with a bowl of soup (leading the audience to read the expression on the man's face as hunger), a dead child (rendering the expression on his face as one of grief), and of an alluring image of a woman (leading the viewer to interpret the expression of the man as one of passionate longing).



Illustration 45 Gramophone Trick from Lang's Notebook (filmportal.de)¹⁰

He made sketches (see illustration above) in his personal notebook on how to integrate sound elements into the narrative - for instance the gramophone device which was to play a recording of a person speaking from behind a closed door, creating the impression of a presence (and thereby providing an alibi).



¹⁰

http://www.filmportal.de/sites/default/files/imagecache/material_image/99CE832758BA4DD5A2ADC3AD7F1636F6_947.jpg [Accessed 30 August 2017]

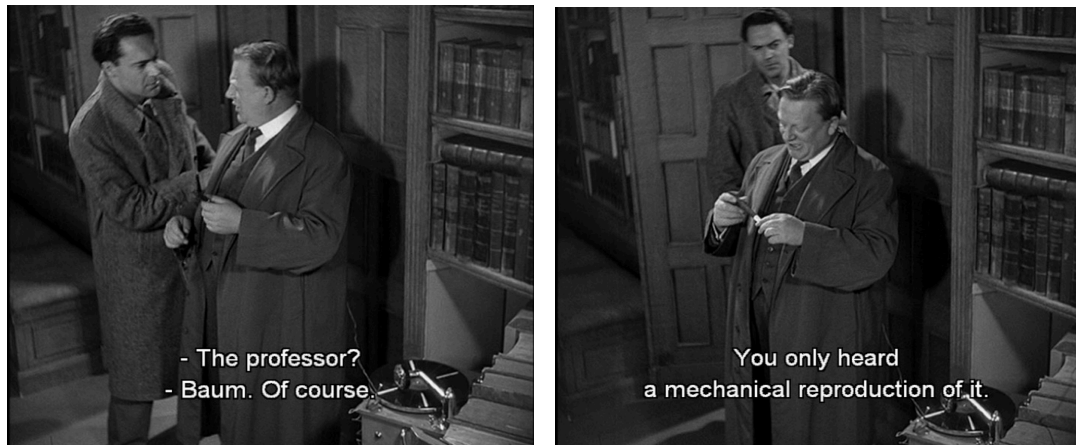


Illustration 46 Screen Grabs: Lohmann and Kent uncover the Fake Alibi.

Chion (1999, p.133) discussed the role of the disembodied voice, which became a recurring theme in *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*. The use of the gramophone to simulate the presence of another person behind a screen or door reflected the cunning genius of the story's criminal characters, as well as resonating with the spirit technological innovation the permeated through the period of the late Weimar Republic.

Elsewhere, Lang plays with the novelty of sync dialogue in his depiction of a conversation between two gangsters - a cosy kitchen scene of criminal domesticity. One gangster is assessing the loot from a spectacular diamond heist at the kitchen table, while his accomplice noisily struggles with cooking utensils and reticent food items in the background. The two crooks are discussing the motivation of the criminal mastermind in whose employment the two men are. This scene is suddenly interpolated by another dialogue exchange in a different location, between two other gangsters, before cutting back to the original kitchen pair.





Illustration 47 Screen Grabs: Editing Technique that links Dialogues and Story Elements across different Scenes.

These transitions appear out of step at first, like a *non-sequitur*, but the content of the two separate conversations is linked, complimenting one another and making sense when viewed by the audience as part of the whole film. Furthermore, the final statement of the gangster in the kitchen overhangs the cut to Kent, who is also having misgivings about his ongoing involvement in the criminal gang. Through this editing technique, Lang uses dialogue to create an understanding of the scenario,

where the sum of knowledge gained by the audience is greater than the knowledge held by individual protagonists in the film's constituent parts. The technique of constructing meaning out of editing individual jigsaw pieces together for the benefit of the audience's understanding of the wider plot provides the viewer with privileged insights into the narrative, whilst the film's various characters continue to struggle in making sense of on-screen events. As we leave the gangsters in the kitchen, one of the men advises the other that it is safer to limit their knowledge of the criminal master plan, and not to ask too many questions, let alone contemplating a break out of their criminal existence. This assertion is immediately juxtaposed by the cut to next scene, in which another character (Kent) *is* grappling with his conscience, contemplating leaving this same criminal circle with which he has become embroiled. This editing style provides another moment of counterpoint and contrast, repeated consistently in the film's editing technique of weaving together images and sounds as complex narrative threads, whilst still maintaining pace and momentum of the *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*.



Illustration 48 Screen Grabs: Editing Technique using Dialogue as Sound Bridge to next Scene.

Lang's also demonstrates an imaginative approach to using sound effects and the human voice. In one scene, Lohmann comes face to face with a man (Hofmeister, who turns out to be a former colleague of the Inspector) who is now holed up in a mental asylum. Although the man is now unable to communicate coherently, Lohmann believes that the patient may be able to contribute some information vital to the police investigation. As the Inspector tries to glean more information from the patient, the man is able only to respond with a dissonant rendition of a popular ditty, though (as the Inspector turns away to leave) this becomes interspersed with more coherent, but seemingly out of context, fragments from a remembered telephone conversation. As the man resumes his tuneless song in an eerily feeble voice, Inspector Lohmann decides to try out an experiment, using a sound effect to prompt associations: using the chiming effect from his pocket watch to simulate the sound effect of a telephone ringing, Lohmann causes the patient to retrieve further information from his memory in contribution to the investigation.



Illustration 49 Screen Grabs: Lohmann simulates a Ringing Sound from his Watch Chime

The Role of Music in *Dr Mabuse*

References to hypnosis, the sub-conscious and psychological control were recurring themes in the *Mabuse* stories as well as other popular films of the period (in addition to *Mabuse*, prominent examples include Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (1920) and Pabst's 1926 film *Geheimnisse einer Seele*), reflecting a contemporaneous interest in the emerging fields of Psychology and Psychoanalysis. The notion of mental instability is hinted at through the opening music of the film, where the score combines discordant elements into a theme that suggests both insanity and menace, before adopting a repetitive rhythm which then merges into the ambient machine noises of the opening sequence (which will be discussed in more detail below). Mental instability going hand in hand with criminal genius is the quintessential character-trait of *Mabuse*, and certainly with the eponymous character's descent into madness for the finale of Lang's 1922 silent film instalment. The scenario of the 1933 version is imbued with a populist interpretation of psychiatry: Professor Dr Baum, the eminent clinician who heads the institution that houses Mabuse an in-patient, himself becomes insane by the end of *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*.

The score for *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* was created by Dr Hans Erdmann, who had previously composed the music for Murnau's (silent) *Nosferatu*. Having set the tone for the opening of the film, music as far as non-diegetic score is concerned then retreats into the shadows for a considerable part of the story. For most of the first part of the film, non-diegetic music is used sparingly, reserved in the main to accentuate for apparitions of the evil spirit of Dr Mabuse - for instance during a scene in the mental institution, just as Professor Baum checks the pulse of the apparently withdrawn Dr Mabuse, a shadow rushes across the scene. Startled, the Professor looks around and sees an apparition of a ghostly figure resembling Dr Mabuse in a corner of the cell.

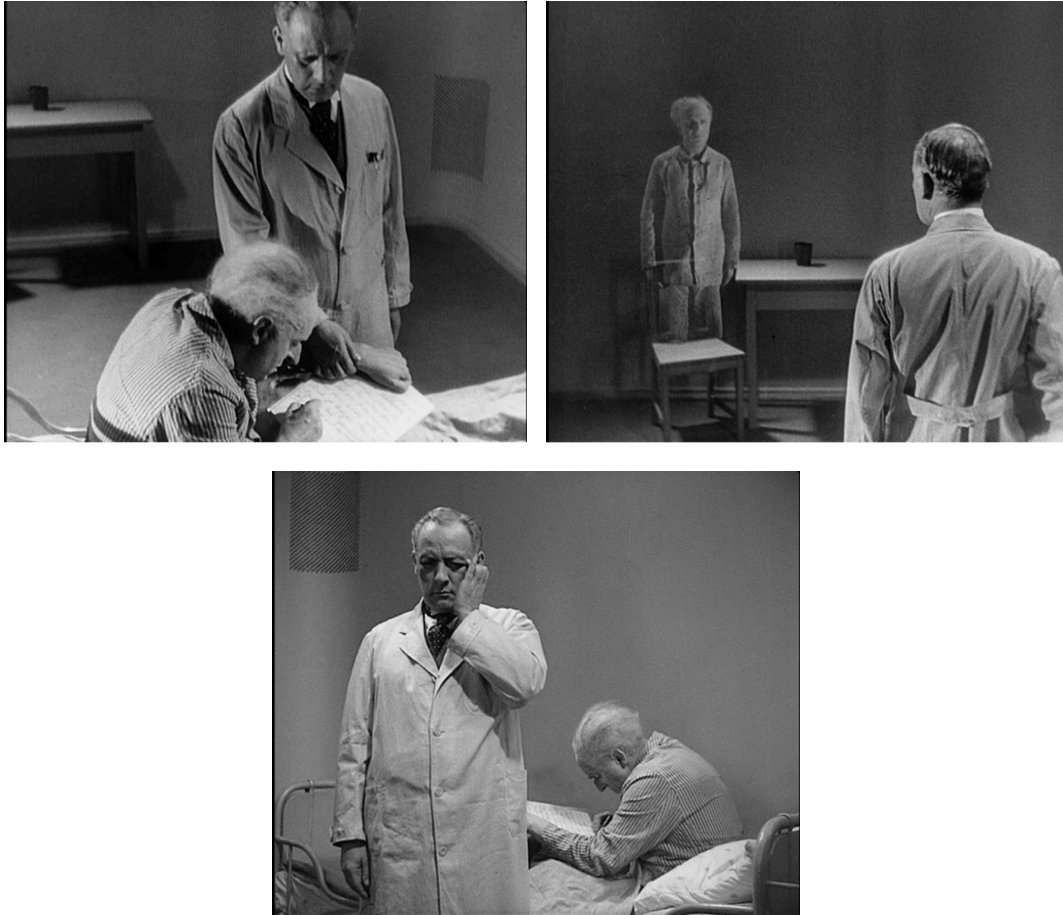


Illustration 50 Screen Grabs: Music Cue precedes Visual Apparition in the Room.

The moment is accentuated by a sudden music sting, just as the shadow swipes across the picture – the music lends acute emphasis to the shadow, and sets the audience on edge, in readiness for the next moment of surprise, as the ghostly figure appears. Following the scene in Mabuse's cell, the action cuts to a young woman, Lilli, who is entering a café accompanied by her boyfriend Kent, a character whose conversion from crook to crime fighter forms a sub-plot of the film. In marked contrast to the clinical setting of the previous scene, romantic music can be heard playing continuously in the background, suggesting the music as a component of the diegetic space.



Illustration 51 Screen Grabs: Music in the Café contrasts with the Flashback.

The function of this section as a romantic segue in the overall context of the film's narrative is enforced by the nature of this music. The emotive character of the scene is in turn intersected when the conversation between Lilli and Kent incorporates a flashback to their first meeting, which took place a year earlier at the employment exchange. The background sound of the café cuts sharply with the flashback to an atmosphere of chatter, telephones and typewriters, and creates a sudden aural contrast to the romantic undertone of the café. Towards the end of the flashback, as Kent was being consoled by Lilli, his blossoming attraction to Lilli is suggested by a violin cue, which fades out with the fade to black as the flashback scene ends.



Illustration 52 Screen Grabs: Music cue at the end of the Flashback preceded the return to the Café.

Resuming the story in the café within the present day of the narrative, the ambient music apparently continues to play in the background – this suggests an uninterrupted temporal flow of the café scene as well as being used to frame the flashback section effectively. What is noteworthy about this scene is the manner in which the music is used – the fact that the music begins and ends as the action cuts to the and then away from the café gives this a more diegetic characteristic.

In a studio environment, it was possible to use multiple microphones on a set, and a supervising sound engineer would mix live between the different inputs, which would all be combined onto a single mono recording via the optical sound camera in the studio. This process was discussed in technical literature from 1932 (cited for instance by Müller 2003, pp.235/236) and reveals that a *Tonmeister* [*supervising audio engineer*] present on set in the studio potentially had control over up to 9 separate microphone channels in the purpose-built studio environment. Given this potential for mixing multiple audio inputs live, the orchestra could have been in a

separate part of the studio and covered by separate microphone setup, controlled in volume by the *Tonmeister*. The film *Der Schuss im Tonfilmatelier* [*Gunshot on the Sound Stage*] (1930) discussed earlier¹¹ includes a demonstration of sound film processes in German film production at the time.



Illustration 53 Screen grab (*Der Schuss im Tonfilmatelier*) Tonmeister operating Mixing Console

The above image of a *Tonmeister* at his mixing desk illustrates the number of separate audio channels controlled from the elevated position of the mixing booth. The sound engineer had various communication links to different crew members on the studio set. This included a direct telephone line to the director, as well as to the laboratory where sound was captured onto optical camera. Any sound element, for instance music, that came down the microphone line would then have been combined via a mixing desk *as live*, in other words: simultaneously with the filmed action. In terms of film making technology available at the time, the combination of music (irrespective of whether this music was meant to be interpreted as diegetic or non-diegetic music) and dialogue, which are part of this *Dr Mabuse* scene in the café, could have been shot in two different ways. For instance, the music could have been

¹¹ cf. chapters on *Emil und die Detektive* and *Westfront 1918*

recorded on set, out of vision and alongside the action. This is a technique which may have been used in *Westfront 1918*¹², and which could have been employed here¹³. But the café scene is constructed of a series of close ups and wide shots of Lilli and Kent's conversation, which would have resulted in audio breaks and discontinuity on the background music track, had this been recorded simultaneously. The only other way of capturing dialogue and music simultaneously on location would have been to place the orchestra out of vision, and in an acoustically sealed environment on location, which would have enabled the dialogue between Kent and Lilli to be recorded without any background music captured as part of the spoken elements. But the multiple shot angles of this scene make this unlikely.

A less cumbersome possibility for filming this dialogue scene with musical underscore would have been to create a separate recording of the music and then to combine this with the dialogue track after the scene had been edited, by superimposing the optical recording tracks, one onto the other, in a separate laboratory process. This approach is one which is still being used in film-making processes today and has certainly been made much easier by the advances of technology since 1932. There is a clue in the sound quality of the background, which may suggest that the latter method may have been the more likely approach taken in the filming for this scene. The optical hiss that accompanies the shots of the café sequence (on either side of the flashback illustrating Lilli and Kent's first meeting) is noticeably higher in density compared with other scenes in the film. This could be the result of a duplication of optical hiss as the film laboratory overprinted one layer of audio track over the other. By using a separate recording of music in conjunction with the final cut version of the dialogue scene in the café, the story was able to achieve an edited synchronous sound section with a continuous recording of a separate music track. What this discussion illustrates once again is that although there were technical difficulties in the integration of audio elements to augment the

¹² cf. *Westfront 1918* chapter, night time in Karl's apartment, as he and his wife turn in for the night

¹³ But as this scene does not consist of a single shot, but several angles, there are further implications for this hypothesis: there would have been a number of cameras set up simultaneously to provide the different angles of visual material to allow editing this sequence together. However, the absence of audio joins at the cut points speaks against this.

narrative, film-makers found methods of overcoming such obstacles, depending on the *mise-en-scène* of a particular set-up. Furthermore, this scene suggests the combination of fairly complex aural elements in order to enhance the emotive aspect of the scene.

As discussed earlier, non-diegetic music is reserved mostly for the purpose of emphasising Dr Mabuse's special, hypnotic powers. In one scene, as Professor Baum studies the criminal schemes scribbled down by Mabuse in his hospital bed and reads out the various ideas noted down by the Doctor. A dissonant background score starts up, underlining the disturbing nature of the late Doctor's warped ideologies as well as signalling that supernatural events are about to take place.

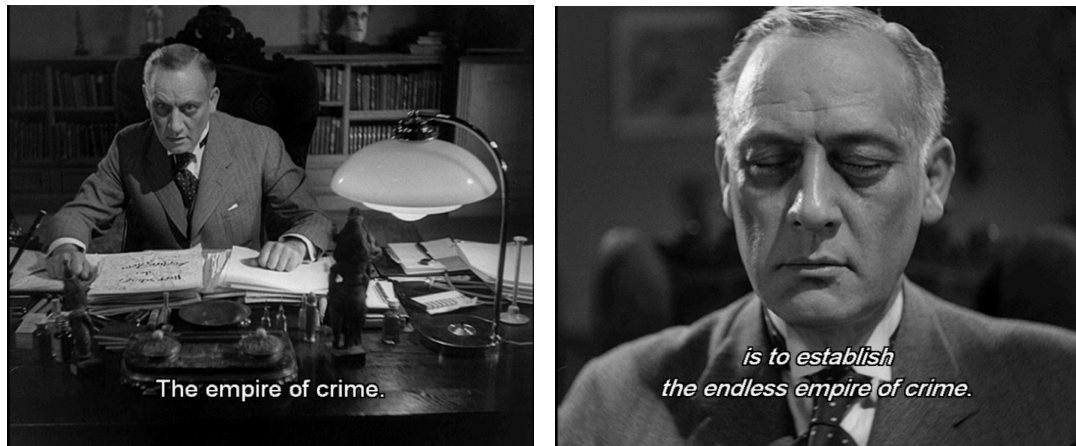


Illustration 54 Screen Grabs: Professor Baum hears the Voice of Dr Mabuse's in his Head.

As Baum continues to read, the spirit of Mabuse descends unto the scene, initially just as an audio presence who takes over from the Professor reading these notes. Then, as the voice of Mabuse appears to become more established in whispering the details of these criminal plans, the Professor also begins to see Mabuse's spirit seated opposite him.

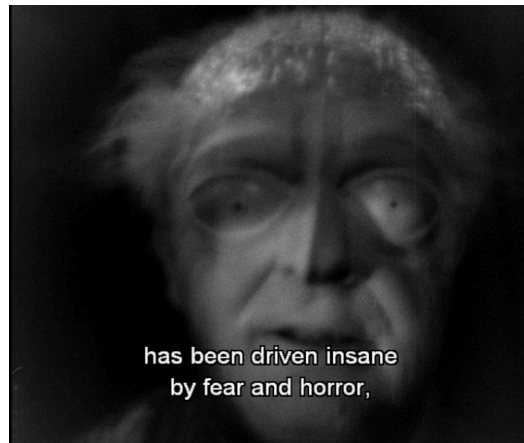


Illustration 55 Screen Grabs: The Voice inside Professor Baums's head materialises as the Apparition of Dr Mabuse's spirit.





Illustration 56 Screen Grabs: Visual Components complete the Representation of the Professor being controlled by the late Dr Mabuse.

The scene ends with the apparition crossing over to the Professor's side of the desk and entering Baum's body, completing the impression that the Professor has now internalised the late Mabuse's evil schemes.

The Film's Finale

For most of the film, sound effects replace the need for score, and this approach becomes particularly notable near the end of the film. During the climactic destruction of the gas works and the subsequent car chase scene, which (as with other visual effects in the film) displayed a technical brilliance and ground-breaking innovation for its day, there is no music until the point when the ghost of Dr Mabuse makes an appearance.

At the end of the film, the sound swells into a broad orchestration blending with the movements and lighting effects. To the crackling of the flames coming from the burning gasworks are added the wailing of sirens, the clanging of fire engines, the rumbling of falling

chimneys, the puffing of a locomotive, and the backfiring of motorcycles. Amidst all this din spotlights scanning the bushes track down the villain, and headlights light up the vast thicket pierced by police whistles. A motorcar roars off. And the frantic chase begins. (Eisner [1969]2008, p.324)

What Eisner is describing is in fact a cacophony of multiple sound elements, all reflecting magnitude of the disaster at the burning chemical factory. Back at the psychiatric hospital, Lohmann discovers the handwritten notes in Baum's office (Lohmann is yet to realise that these notes stem from Dr Mabuse's criminal plans). The Inspector realises that these plans describe an impending act to sabotage the chemical factory, and the image dissolves through to the fire breaking out.

*diese Weise angelegten
Brand im Lager einer
chemischen Fabrik ist
die Feuerwehr machtlos.
Die unter der Hitze
explodierenden Tanks
werden ungeheure Mengen
Giftgas freisetzen, die in
kürzester Zeit die naheliegen-
den Stadtteile völlig vergasen.
Die Flucht der Schutzlosen*



Illustration 57 Screen Grabs: Visual Narrative connects Criminal Plan to the Fire.

A number of different visual elements, each complete with synchronous sound effects, are combined into a montage of mayhem: shots of exploding barrels, collapsing chimneys, fire engines rallying to the scene of the disaster, more explosions.





Illustration 58 Screen Grabs: The different shots of fire are punctuated with Sound Elements.

All the synchronous elements of the action here are held together not by a musical score, but by the continuous sound of an emergency siren in the background. This element further adds to the sense of chaos caused by the factory fire. Inspector Lohmann and Kent (who has now switched sides and is helping the police investigation) spot Professor Baum making his get-away in a car and the two men decide to take up the pursuit. It is not until the car chase is well under way, that a non-diegetic musical element is added to the soundtrack. As in the earlier section,

when Professor Baum experienced an apparition of Dr Mabuse's spirit, music is used to emphasise the supernatural aspects of Mabuse's powers. As Baum is speeding away from the burning wreckage of the chemical factory, he is haunted by the ghost of the late Dr Mabuse.



Illustration 59 Screen Grabs: Music cue suggests the increasingly deranged mind of the Professor and precedes Visual Apparition of the Spirit of Dr Mabuse.

As Professor Baum looks increasingly deranged, the musical score becomes more and more interwoven with aural elements symbolising the presence of Mabuse - whispering his evil criminal schemes and giggling demonically. The different

elements of car effects, whispering and deranged giggling combine with the non-diegetic music into a very densely layered soundtrack. These sound elements increase in intensity, until the car arrives back at the Psychiatric hospital, where Baum is already being expected by yet another manifestation of Dr Mabuse's spirit.



Illustration 60 Screen Grabs: The Professor arrives back at the Hospital.

Baum rushes to his office in order to collect the handwritten notes and is guided by Mabuse's apparition to the psychiatric ward. The spirit of Mabuse opens one of the doors, motioning to Baum to take himself to one of the hospital cells – the very room which accommodates Hofmeister.



Illustration 61 Screen Grabs: The Professor enters Hofmeister's cell, the same Hospital Ward where Dr Mabuse had spent his Final Years.

As Professor Baum enters Hofmeister's cell, he introduces himself politely as Dr Mabuse. Hofmeister's scream alerts the attendants, who bring Hofmeister out from the cell just as Lohmann and Kent arrive.



Illustration 62 Hofmeister recognises Lohmann.

Hofmeister appears to be emerging from his trauma and recognises the Inspector. As the two men look at each other, the image cuts back to the interior of the hospital room. All that can be heard over the final shot is the sound of paper being ripped, as

Professor Baum sits on the hospital bed destroying Mabuse's notes. The final frame signalling "The End" is accompanied with the sound effects of the hospital door being locked and bolted: Professor Baum himself has now become an in-patient of the psychiatric hospital of which he was once in charge.

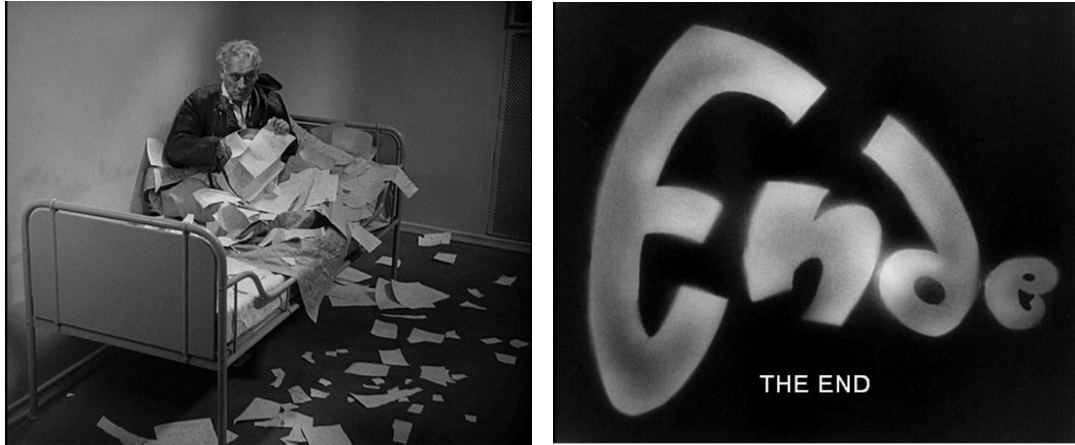


Illustration 63 Screen Grabs: Papers shredded, Doors bolted: The Sound of Professor Baum's Confinement.

A Different Opening: Tracing Lang's Sonic Journey from *M* to *Dr Mabuse*

Lang and von Harbou collaborated on a number of film projects for Ufa and subsequently for Nero Film, including *M* and *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*. There are stylistic similarities between the two films in terms of Lang's emerging enthusiasm to experiment with the new story telling techniques of sound film. Consequently, *Mabuse* shares common traits in harmony with its predecessor *M* in terms of its visual style or its approach to dialogue editing, but there is also a striking interesting contrast between the two films' use of sound during their respective opening scenes. The soundtrack of *M* called the audience immediately to attention with the sound of a singular gong:

A thundering gong rings out and reverberates over a dark screen for a full ten seconds. Lang, the consummate modernist, begins his film with the medium's bare essentials: a black canvas and a single, resonating sound. This sparseness of means introduces a highly controlled, richly self-reflexive and fully artificial universe in which nothing is left to chance (...)
(Kaes, 1999, p.9)

Having secured the audience's attention through the use of the gong, a single girl's voice is then heard over the black of the screen, reciting a counting rhyme, which transpires to be of a macabre nature: *'Warte, Warte, nur ein Weilchen - dann kommt der schwarze Mann zu dir...'*¹⁴. This counting rhyme is a variation of a well-known German song of the era: based on the real-life crimes committed by a serial killer¹⁵, events which were contemporaneous with the period of the film, the song recounts the misdeeds of the notorious murderer with a degree of gruesome glee. The referential aspect of the children's counting rhyme to the real-life serial killer would most certainly have struck a familiar chord with *M*'s audience. The image then fades up from black to a courtyard scene depicting a group of children at play. The counting game carries on and establishes its rhythmic pattern, but suddenly discontinued when a female voice abruptly interjects in counterpoint, instructing the children to stop singing 'that wretched song' at once. This opening dialogue invites dual interpretations from the perspective of the viewer: to the children embroiled in their playtime, the rhyme is an innocent (albeit slightly ghoulish) device to count out individual members of their game. To the passing woman climbing the stairs of the tenement block, the rhyme is a source of considerable irritation, expressing at once annoyance and anxiety. The adult's different interpretation of the counting rhyme is based on contextual knowledge (a real murderer is at large) which would also have resonated with the cinema audience, as the Haarmann murders (on which the counting rhyme is based) had been a subject of national interest during the 1920s. Haarmann had committed his crimes a few years prior to the making of *M*, making the referential element of the counting rhyme credible as a deliberate decision by the film-maker. However, the film's appearance in the cinema's in 1931 also coincided with the emergence of another serial killer¹⁶, a fact which may have further contributed to the considerable impact of the film. Lang is on record as both claiming the film's script to have been based on real events (Berg 1965, p.72; Gandert 1963, p.33), as well as playing down (Berg 1965, p.55; Gandert 1963, p.36) the connection between the later murders carried out by Kürten. Whether or not

¹⁴ [wait - wait, just a little while, until the bogey man comes for you]

¹⁵ Haarmann, F. (1879-1925), convicted by a court in Hanover of the murder of over twenty boys and young men.

¹⁶ Kürten, P. (1883-1931), convicted of a series of brutal murders on children and young women by a court in Düsseldorf.

Lang's recall of the degree to which the Kürten murder series could have had a bearing on the making of *M* is factual, it is fair to say that there was widespread news coverage of several notorious serial killers in the years prior to the film's release which may have served as inspiration for Lang and von Harbou. Lang himself stated that

“...so many serial killers were performing their dastardly deeds -
Haarmann, Grossmann¹⁷, Kürten, Denke¹⁸...”
(Gandert 1963, p.33).

Certainly, the reference to Haarmann via the children's counting rhyme is further manifestation of how the boundaries between reality and cinema became blurred. In this opening scene, the use of sound elements by characters within the story immediately speaks to the ambiguity with which a narrative could now be subject to different interpretations. Crucial is the contextual understanding of the implications of the text of the counting rhyme: from the perspective of the female protagonist, who wishes to forbid the children to sing the song, as well as the audience's referential recognition of a filmic element connecting the story world of *M* to real life events outside of the cinema, whether intended by Lang or coincidental. The woman in the film is worried, aware that a serial killer, preying in particular on young children, has been terrorising the population of the city. The fact that the children recite the counting rhyme unaware of the gravity of the situation, and the potential danger that they themselves might be in, loads this scene with additional tension. The woman who is alarmed by the song is not necessarily worried about these particular children in the courtyard, but apparently in a nervous state of mind on account of a perceived, as yet unseen, threat. A second female character tries to re-assure her with the words that ‘as long as we can hear them singing, we at least still know that they are safe’. That second woman transpires to be Frau Beckmann, who at this stage in the film does not realise that her own daughter is to be the

¹⁷ Grossmann, C. (1863-1922), who committed suicide just before a Berlin court pronounced the judgement that he had been responsible for killing at least 3 girls, but was further suspected of the murder of a much greater number of female victims who had gone missing, possibly up to 100.

¹⁸ Denke, K. (1860-1924), whose case did not proceed to trial as Denke committed suicide while under arrest; a subsequent search of his premises yielded the bodily remains of numerous victims. As this case was contemporaneous to the Haarmann story, the popular “Haarmann” ditty was also adapted to incorporate Denke's name.

mysterious killer's next victim.

Subsequently, we see the increasingly anxious mother waiting in vain for her little daughter's return from school. The parent's desperate calling for 'Elsie', the absent girl's name, becomes detached from the corporeal presence of the mother and is laid over shots of potential playgrounds of the child: an empty laundry attic, the unoccupied chair of the girl at the neatly laid table, and finally Elsie's abandoned toys: a ball rolling from some shrubbery, her balloon trapped miserably in the telegraph wires; the balloon becomes a visual harbinger of doom, as the image combines with the out of vision voice of a newspaper vendor, announcing another murder in the city.

Without wanting to digress too much from this discussion of *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*, it is worth pondering the richly layered detail in terms of meaning and referentialism, of the use of in vision and out of vision sound elements which earn Lang such credit for his creative integration of aural elements in his first sound film. Lang continued to develop these sound techniques in his next film, adding further innovative devices, but also rendering the beginning of *Mabuse* very different in sonic style in comparison with its predecessor. In the opening of *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*, Lang abandons the meticulously controlled sound constituents of *M* opening and instead elects to overload the screen with a cacophony of machine sounds. The opening credits, set to Erdmann's portentous score, transports the viewer into an industrial environment (which transpires to be a printing press) and depicting a man in hiding, attempting to escape the notice of two other protagonists. Potential dialogue content in this scene is obliterated by the din of the setting, and the two men, having spotted the intruder's hide-out, communicate through gestures and grimaces to decide on their next course of action. As the pair exit from the room, the ineffectively concealed man emerges from his hiding place, visibly agitated and trying to conjure up a solution to his predicament.

Siegfried Kracauer, although fairly dismissive of *Testament* as more or less sensationalist trash inferior to Lang's previous film *M*, nonetheless acknowledged

‘several brilliant episodes which testify to Lang’s talent’ - through which the film critic and theorist perceived Lang’s use of sound as a metaphor for oppression:

The first is the opening sequence. It shows a man cautiously moving about in an abandoned workshop that seems to be shaken by a perpetual, roaring drone. His apparent fear and this nerve-racking noise are bound to torment an audience [...] Life under a terror regime could not be rendered more impressively, for throughout the sequence the imminence of doom is sensed and no one knows when and where the axe will fall.

(Kracauer, [1947] 2004, p.249)

Notwithstanding the fact that Kracauer, in referring to the existential and ideological threat of living under a dictatorship, was writing via his particular prism of psychological interpretation, the opening scene certainly does have an oppressive and threatening feel in situating the story within an ambience that consists entirely of a deafening noise. It remains a curious fact that the actual machines from which the din originates remain unseen. Unlike film extras, which tend to be seen but rarely heard, the machinery behind the din exists only on a sonic level. But what the incessant machine noise achieves is that Lang throws a blanket of sound over the action, which obliterates the soundtrack and which renders the man hiding from his pursuers unable to hear their proximity.



Illustration 64 Screen Grabs: Hofmeister hiding near the Printing Press.

In acting terms, the two gangsters who are stalking the man in hiding have visual contact with one another and are able to communicate via head movements and gestures; a curious return to silent film making in this opening scene which reflects in some way the opening of Lamprecht’s *Emil und die Detektive*. In this scene, the gangsters are able to conceal their actions and movements behind a veil of ambient,

diegetic noise. This use of aural components in Lang's second sound film represents a highly effective acoustic spanner in the works: neither the audience, nor the man in hiding, can hear what the gangsters are plotting to do next. The audience has the omniscient point of view of being able to observe the action, witnessing the gestures of the two men as they signal to one another. In contrast, the man in hiding remains insulated from the dramatic developments by a barrier of acoustic interference. The man in hiding is doubly handicapped in sensory terms: in addition to not being able to read the visual communication clues of the scene, he is also unable to see what is going on.

Deliberate Removal of Sensory Information

Gunning (2000, p.143) comments on the removal of the visual domain in a subsequent scene when Inspector Lohmann speaks on the telephone with a former colleague by the name of Hofmeister. This character transpires to be the man from the opening scene, who had been hiding from the gangsters in the printing press - the story now reveals that he is a former policeman and known to Lohmann. Though Gunning (ibid.) discusses the scene primarily in visual terms; he does conclude that Lang was "brilliantly aware of the interaction between the visual and the aural in film" (2000, p.143). What Gunning does not expand on is the sound perspective in terms of point of audition, which shifts during this sequence as the action develops. Using parallel¹⁹ image and sound edits, the telephone conversation initially cuts from Hofmeister to Lohmann and back, revealing that Hofmeister has vital information for the Inspector regarding the pursuit of a major criminal.

¹⁹ Parallel cutting: the edit points for action and sound are identical and occur simultaneously.



Illustration 65 Screen Grabs: Hofmeister speaks to Lohmann.

However, before Hofmeister can explain further details, the lights are extinguished and shots are fired - presumably Hofmeister's assailants have turned the lights off. Even though the action has not cut away from Hofmeister's setting, the audience is now unable to understand any better what is going on than Inspector Lohmann, who is still hanging on the telephone. After the shots have been fired, the narrative cuts back to Lohmann listening to the telephone. Having presumably just heard the shots (although the audience would have to infer this as we have not been *shown* Lohmann *hearing* the shots), the Inspector reacts with alarm; even if he cannot see what is going on at Hofmeister's end of the telephone line, the gun shots are a clear signal of danger. Lohmann also appears frustrated at being unable to assist Hofmeister; this sense of frustration mirrors the audience (literally) having been left in the dark earlier, as the story plunged Hofmeister's setting into darkness just as the shots were fired. As the shots are fired in the dark, it remains unclear who is firing and whether anyone has been hit. Lohmann instructs his underling to trace the origin of Hofmeister's call. Meanwhile, Lohmann keeps shouting his former colleague's name down the phone line "Hofmeister! Hofmeister!". In the background, the Inspector's subordinate is talking on another telephone, trying to take down details as Hofmeister's phone line is being traced; both Lohmann and his assistant's dialogue is agitated and their lines frequently overlap, resulting in a vocal *mêlée* of anxiety. The action cuts back to the office from which Hofmeister had instigated his telephone call - the lights are back on, in order to show the audience that the telephone receiver is now lying abandoned on the desk.



Illustration 66 Screen grab: Hofmeister Telephone abandoned.

In contrast to the noisy dialogue scene from whence the action has just cut, the ambience is silent, as the voices of Lohmann and his assistant are not audible down the telephone line via the receiver on the desk. This technique could have enforced the relative position of the two different locations in terms of time and space. Instead, Lang opts for silence, which accentuates the contrast to the frenzied speaking of Lohmann's office. Furthermore, this silence creates an acoustic vacuum; this silence is broken when an unidentifiable sound is heard. Whether this is the sound of a body collapsing onto the floor, or of an object being dropped or someone being hit is unclear. Lang does not resolve the tension of this ambiguity, leaving Lohmann - as well as the audience - increasingly concerned about Hofmeister's fate²⁰. The action cuts back to Lohmann's office, with the Inspector still frantically shouting Hofmeister's name down the telephone line, while the assistant is finishing off his telephone tracing conversation (which has successfully identified the address from where Hofmeister's call had been placed). Slowly, a third voice begins to blend in with the ongoing cacophony of voices. Apparently coming down the telephone line and using a somewhat deranged delivery, the voice can be heard singing a song about pretty girls. Lohmann, pressing the receiver against his ear, looks alarmed at

²⁰ Michael Walker (2011, p.2) posits the view that Hofmeister may have been subjected to a serious sexual assault, basing his hypothesis on a subsequent scene between Hofmeister and Lohmann, when the former is confined in a mental hospital. Walker speculates that Hofmeister's recurring attestations of heterosexual attraction (he sings a song in praise of the beautiful girls of Batavia), in conjunction with his body language (recoiling from Lohmann's concerned approaches), suggest that Hofmeister may have been raped.

what he hears; the assistant - although in the same room - is initially unaware of Hofmeister's singing, but on seeing Lohmann's reaction, he puts on a pair of headphones in order to find out what is coming down the telephone line. With the help of the headphones the assistant understands Lohmann's shock, as both men are seen apparently listening to the sound of Hofmeister's singing coming down the telephone line. Lohmann concludes that Hofmeister must have lost his mind. In terms of filming processes, in order to simulate that this singing was coming down the telephone line during this scene, it is most likely that the out of vision voice was being played through loudspeaker in the location which represents Lohmann's office. This enabled both characters in Lohmann's office to interact with the singing voice from their respective points of audition as the scene develops. The assistant's understanding in terms what is happening is portrayed through the manner of the actor's performance, rather than a changed point of audition. The audio concentrates its narrative focus on Inspector Lohmann - as the assistant is a minor figure in the cast, it is less necessary for the audience to *hear* the scene through his perception - therefore Lohmann's point of audition takes precedence. In this way, Lang uses a relatively complex scenario in terms of various points of audition and perception: the audience is kept in the dark (though able to *see* that Hofmeister's scene has been plunged into darkness). Lohmann cannot *see* the darkness down the telephone line, but the Inspector can *hear* down the telephone line Hofmeister exclaiming that the lights have gone off and can also *hear* the shots being fired. The next time the action cuts back to Hofmeister's set, the light is back on to reveal the receiver abandoned on the desk. Given that both Lohmann and his assistant are creating a great deal of noise, there could be an expectation to hear this commotion down the telephone line (following the logic that the telephone line is still live, as moments later, the Inspector can hear Hofmeister's voice down the same line). Yet, the shot of the receiver is presented without any audio from Lohmann's side of the telephone line. In these early scenes, Lang demonstrates how he manipulates the audience by removing sensory elements that they would expect to be part of a sound film: in turn, audio and vision are turned on an off to enhance suspense - Lang is turning the sensory taps of sound and image on and off, manipulating the audience's ability to decipher the action. Initially, parallel cuts are used, favouring in turn each one of the participants in the telephone conversation *as they are speaking*.

Sound Effects as an Acoustic Barrier

Using sound elements as a deliberate barrier to isolate protagonists within the story was a very effective narrative device. During a subsequent scene, an assassination is carried out within the context of a bustling city scene. Lang uses sound effects to enable a murder to take place in plain sight, yet the gun being fired remains unheard within the story space. The scene is set in the midst of busy motorcar traffic at a city junction.



Illustration 67 Screen Grabs: As Professor Baum's colleague drives off, the Gang is instructed to follow and kill Dr Kramm.



Illustration 68 Screen Grabs: Gangsters catch up as Dr Kramm is stuck in Traffic.



Illustration 69 Screen Grabs: The Sound of Car Horns masks the Sound of the Pistol firing.



Illustration 70 Screen Grabs: The Murder Victim is discovered.

Acting on the orders of an unseen gang master, some assassins have manoeuvred their vehicle close to that of their intended victim. As the cars momentarily come to a halt in the city's slow-moving traffic, the motorists appear to wait patiently for the busy crossroad ahead to become passable. While the cars have temporarily ground to a halt, the gangsters seize their moment, instigating a great deal of noise by continuously sounding their car horn, as if to vent frustration at the traffic situation. The other motorists (including the unsuspecting victim) are seen to join in enthusiastically: the noise of the car horns grows in intensity, until the din created by the motorists obliterates all other city noise. Against the backdrop of the loud car horns, the noise of the gangster's pistol remains unheard. As in the opening scene, a blanket of sound is thrown over the action, rendering foreground sounds inaudible. When the fatal shots are fired at the unsuspecting victim, the pistol shots are masked by the bigger noise of the car horns.

Incidentally, a car horn had been employed to great effect in the opening scenes of *M* when Lang used a claxon to draw attention to Elsie Beckmann as she comes out of her school and steps into the road. In *M*, the sound of a car horn at once throws an audio spot-light onto the little girl; the vehicle which comes to a halt abruptly to avoid running over the girl at once symbolises her vulnerability as well as hinting at the impending dangers ahead. When considering the opening scenes of *M* and *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*, what is really striking is how they both capitalise on the creative potential of sounds, and yet do so in entirely different styles: whilst *M* plays with aural ambiguity and contextual understanding in terms of the counting rhyme scene, *Mabuse* deliberately prevents a protagonist, even the audience, from deriving meaning via the soundtrack at particular times. Coming back to the very opening scene of *Mabuse*, the noise of the printing press which obliterates the soundtrack furthermore enables the audience to empathise with the man in hiding: what the man does not hear, the audience cannot hear either.

Fritz Lang's Interest in Sound

Lang had first recognised the potential of sound in film as a child when he attended a screening of Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). Lang decided to enhance the screening of the silent film with additional Foley effects which he was providing from his seat in the auditorium. As the audience was appreciative of his efforts (even joining in), he realised immediately how sound and image could be connected in terms of reading a film, thus enriching the cinematic experience (*On Films*, BBC Radio 4 Extra). This reference to Lang's formative years is reflected in Lang's keen interest in integrating sonic elements in his early sound films. Fritz Lang's career witnessed some spectacular highs as well as lows, which is reflected by the reception of the three Lang interpretations that drew on Jacques's original source material. After decades working as a director in Hollywood, Lang returned to Germany to revisit the Mabuse concept again. His 1960 offering *Die 1000 Augen des Dr Mabuse* was a box office failure and is regarded as a less eminent exemplar of the narrative. This stood in total contrast to the original reaction generated by *Dr Mabuse - Der Spieler* in 1922. Lang stated in several interviews (Walker 1967; Grant 2003; *On Films*, BBC Radio 4 Extra 2016) that it was "theatre owners" who were pushing for a revival of the Mabuse character across the decades. As regards his 1933 version,

Lang himself was also tempted to draw on the earlier success of the silent version and interested in how sound could be used to enhance the story. When Lang developed the material further as *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* - a decade after the silent Mabuse had first intrigued audiences - he collaborated with Norbert Jacques, who was similarly motivated to reprise the material in a new book version. However, the political scene in Germany had changed to such a drastic degree in the interim, that the film could not be shown in Germany in 1933, as the censors withdrew the film at the behest of government instructions. One potential reason for its withdrawal from distribution was apparently that the authorities viewed the subject matter with suspicion, particularly the concept that one deviant individual could influence the minds of others, luring them to committing violent acts.

As a grand old doyen of film making, Lang was frequently interviewed on his relationship with politics during the turbulent pre-1933 era. Although Lang left Germany in 1933, Thea von Harbou was to remain in Berlin and continued her work as a high-profile writer and director. She became firmly embedded in the cultural establishment of the Third Reich, advancing to become president of the Association of German Sound Film Authors, as well as becoming a member of the NSDAP. But although Lang and von Harbou went their separate ways for personal, rather than ideological reasons, a degree of curiosity regarding Lang's own political views accompanied him during his career. Lang certainly did become involved in anti-fascist circles when the director became established in Hollywood in the late 1930s. In later years, Lang apparently revelled in expanding the anti-fascist message with which he sought to imbue *Das Testament des Doctor Mabuse*, though this notion may be open to debate and has been called into question in some academic texts. However, in one scene Inspector Lohmann disputes the genius of Dr Mabuse during a conversation with Professor Baum in the hospital morgue. In the presence of the mortal remains of the late Dr Mabuse, Professor Baum, the director of the mental institution (who had devoted years to studying the mind of the late criminal genius), comes eerily close to resembling Adolf Hitler in a monologue accompanied by gestures and grimaces reminiscent of the *Führer*. Interesting in this context that the actor who played Professor Baum was Oskar Beregi, who – like Adolf Hitler - had a noticeable Austrian accent.

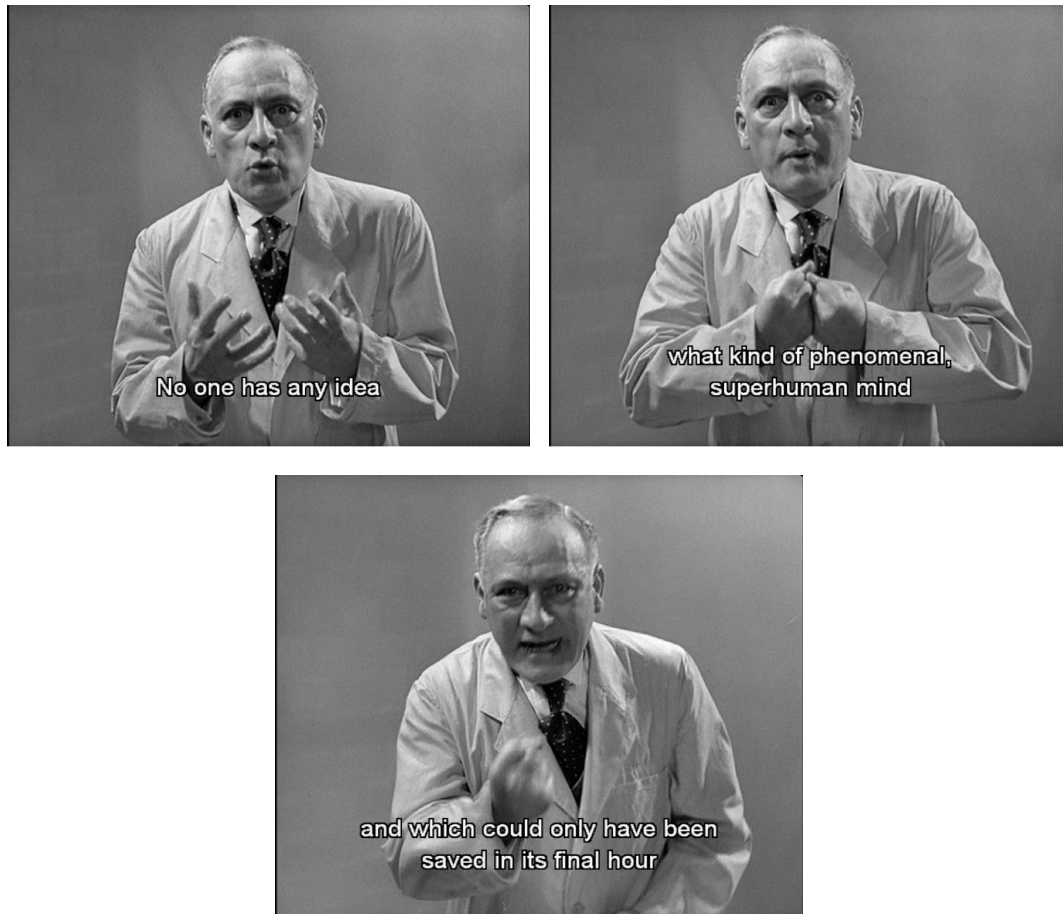


Illustration 71 Screen Grabs: Professor Baum's Body Language and Speech.

Although this similarity between Baum and Hitler is perhaps coincidental, Lang stated in several interviews (for instance 1962 and 1967 with the BBC) that he had the idea of letting one of the characters in *Mabuse* use dialogue that was strongly referential to Nazi rhetoric at the time. Lang explained that his political conscience was being awakened during the early 1930s and that he wanted to add a political spin to *Das Testament of Dr Mabuse*:

I have to admit that up to two or three years before the Nazi [sic.] came, I was very apolitical [sic.]; I was not very much interested. And then I became very much interested. (...) I used *The Last Will of Dr Mabuse* as a political weapon against the Nazis. For example, I put into the mouth of a criminal Nazi slogans.
(Walker 1962)

In view of the conflicting statements which Lang made in interviews (for instance in regard to the role of the Kürten story as an influence on the script of *M*), it may be fair to surmise that Lang, particularly later on in his life, may have had a tendency to re-visit and embellish events from his earlier career. He certainly was a consummate

storyteller, and interviewers kept returning to the chapter of his career that took place during the Weimar Republic; he may have exaggerated some of his memories a little. However, the film-maker has left fairly credible accounts of his meeting with Reichspropaganda Minister Goebbels to discuss *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*. Lang consistently describes his meeting with Goebbels as an uncomfortable occasion, even though (or rather because) he was being offered a very prestigious position in the film industry by the Nazi party's most senior office holders. Verena Boy (2009, p. 96) goes as far as calling into question whether this meeting between Goebbels and Lang ever took place. Boy (ibid.) cites Aurich (2003, p. 215-217) cite inconsistencies between Lang's version of events and other historical records. Most of these inconsistencies focus on the timing of his departure - missing passport stamps along with other evidence lead some historians to suggest that neither the fateful encounter, nor Lang's immediate departure from Germany after leaving the Reichspropaganda Minister's office occurred in the manner in which Lang had related these events in subsequent interviews. In Boy's opinion, the director blended actual events (censorship & withdrawal of the film) with an embellished account of this meeting with Goebbels (Boy 2009, p. 97). In several interviews, Lang states that he made up his mind to leave Germany immediately after the meeting with Goebbels. Notwithstanding the fact that some historians argue that he did not leave immediately, this maybe splitting hairs: one could argue that Lang made the decision to leave Berlin in the aftermath of the meeting and prepared for his departure in subsequent weeks. This interpretation would account for the inconsistencies in passport stamps, and still give credence to Lang's immediate desire to emigrate. If one believes Lang's attestation that he wanted to imbue his film *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* with a political message which was critical of Hitler's rise to power, then the interpretation of Baum's performance in the morgue may be credible as being intentional, rather than coincidental.

That aspect aside, it would be fair to surmise that Goebbels recognised Lang as a film-maker of great talent who could make potentially useful contributions to the filmic output of fascist Germany. Goebbels's main objection to *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* was that he saw it in a similar light to *M*, as somewhat ideologically misguided - however, Lang did not wait to be ideologically retuned to reflect

Goebbels's perspectives, as the director decided to vote with his feet, swiftly departing from Germany in 1933. Lang's exit from Berlin in the spring of 1933, after he had completed *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*, serves as a clear marker - even a full stop - in terms of the discussion of early German sound film in the context of this research project. The rapidly established state control over all areas of cultural and social activity in Germany had such profound consequences: on one level, there was an exodus of directors, scriptwriters, technicians and other artistic talent. The effect of this draining away of talent was exacerbated by the tight control the National Socialist party quickly exerted over film making processes: scripts were carefully vetted before being given the sign of approval to go into production; this vetting process resulted in very few films actually falling foul of the censors after they had been made. But as soon as the National Socialists had established themselves, their tight editorial control over the commissioning process fundamentally altered the film industry's output.

A director such as Fritz Lang, who had considerable creative ambition in terms of controlling his films (from the script development to the final frame), was able to harness sound to support his story telling elements. What is apparent from charting Fritz Lang's creative sound film journey between 1931's *M* to 1933's *Dr Mabuse* is the degree to which sound was being used in increasingly complex narrative ways. What a closer analysis of his 1933 reveals is further illustration of how film-makers overcame technological limitations in order to explore the new narrative plane offered up by sound in film. Whilst *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* has used sonic elements in particular to accelerate narrative flow through the editing processes, non-diegetic music has been used to symbolise the supernatural dimension of Dr Mabuse's powers. A further element that Lang loved to play with was the ambiguous nature of sound, and several sections that use sound in this manner have been discussed. Lang uses non-diegetic sound effects in one scene that appear to be one thing (a clock tick) but transpire to be something else, when they manifest themselves as a diegetic sound in a subsequent scene (a bomb ticking). Playing with the diegetic nature of sound in this manner allowed Lang to attach and detach semantic meaning to sound events. Lang also used one sound element of the diegetic space to deliberately obliterate another sound element – the opening scene in the

print room or the assassination in the car hooting scene are such instances. The one scene which used an important diegetic sound component that emanated from an unseen source was the out of vision threat of the ticking of the bomb when Kent and Lilli were trapped. In story telling terms, the narrative perils in the Mabuse film have emanated from in vision sources (fires, explosions, gangsters) or from unseen threats (the voice behind the curtain, the hypnotic powers of Dr Mabuse, the assault on Hofmeister in the black out, the ticking bomb). In this way, Lang explores the relationship between actual threat and perception of threat. Frequently, the audience does not receive all its information from the visual component but has to piece together an understanding of the overall plot via a combination of aural and visual sources. The next chapter will turn the film-making clock back by three years to 1930. Whilst *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* has demonstrated a multi-faceted relationship between diegetic environment and sound components, we are now going to turn to a film that is much less playful in terms of its diegesis. Whilst *Dr Mabuse* had the freedom of playing with fantastical story elements, a film that – by dint of its subject matter - needed to employ a less flamboyant style was the film adaptation of a well-known literary source, based on soldiers' experiences during the First World War. In depicting life in the trenches, G.W.Pabst's *Westfront 1918* relied heavily on the use of sound to augment the literal *mise-en-scène* of its story. Whereas Lang's *Dr Mabuse* film was fictional, therefore able to take greater artistic licence with its literary source material, Pabst's film sought to anchor its narrative within a sense of realism. The ambition towards a filmic realism becomes very relevant in the discussion of sound in film in the next chapter. The use of out of vision literal sound elements within the diegetic space became a significant component of re-creating the experience of warfare.

Chapter 6 Westfront 1918

(For plot summary and cast list, please see Appendix I)

Westfront 1918 (1930) and *Kameradschaft* (1931) were G.W.Pabst's earliest sound films, in which he already developed the use of sound effects for narrative purposes. In his first sound film, Pabst uses the whistling sounds of shellfire and the screams of wounded soldiers to haunting effect. The film achieves a visceral quality in the depiction of human suffering, made tangible through the aural domain. In *Kameradschaft*, sound evolved from a sensory element to a literal narrative device. Pabst integrates sound elements into the story to illustrate the desperate plight of coal miners buried alive below ground. The film shows the trapped mine workers using sound to try and attract the attention of the rescue teams, as well as depicting how the search parties strenuously listen out for the calls of missing men. Pabst's second sound film was based on the real-life event of a coal mining accident which had occurred a quarter of a century earlier below the border between France and Germany. During the interwar years, Pabst was interested in developing internationalist themes and the film focuses on rescue workers from both nations joining the search for survivors. The use of different languages features in both *Kameradschaft* and *Westfront 1918* while language differentiates between the respective nations, Pabst shows that in spite of these superficial differences, the protagonists' share a universal bond through their humanity, which transcends individual nationality. This theme of a common bond had been explored by the director in *Westfront 1918* through the courtship of the German soldier and the young French woman, and also in the final hospital scene, which depicts the suffering of French and German soldiers. Using voice and language to signify human presence, in *Kameradschaft* as a device to attract attention, in *Westfront 1918* as the embodiment of pain and suffering, Pabst seized on the use of sound in filmic narrative as a dramaturgical device. *Westfront 1918* is particularly interesting, as it places so much emphasis on the emotive potential of sound.

Through the Lens of the Press: The Impact of *Westfront 1918*

Westfront 1918 premiered in Berlin on 23rd May 1930 and immediately gained public recognition for the director's creative and highly effective use of sound. The daily newspaper *Berlin am Morgen* reviewed Pabst's sound film with clear admiration, acknowledging his already established standing as a great director during the silent era:

G.W.Pabst hat sich als Meister bildlicher Wirkungen schon einen Namen gemacht. Er zeigt hier, dass er auch mit dem Tonfilm zu arbeiten weiss.
(*Berlin am Morgen* 25.5.30)

G.W.Pabst has already established himself as a master of the visual domain. Here he demonstrates that he knows how to work with sound film equally well

*Westfront 1918*¹ was the first German sound film to deal with the subject matter of the "Great War", yet Pabst's film is less well known internationally compared to Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930). More recently the significance of *Westfront 1918* as an early sound film example is being recognised, for instance by Jaimey Fisher (2010, p.273) who acutely reflects the observations published in *Berlin am Morgen* eighty years earlier. Pabst's decision to make his first sound film about war seems particularly appropriate; perhaps more than any silent film had hitherto been able to, sound offered Pabst the potential to fundamentally transform the *mise-en-scène* of the action. According to Korte (1998, p.193), the film was being shown in Berlin's *Capitol* cinema for forty-seven days, and almost equalled the box office success of von Sternberg's *Der Blaue Engel* (1930). As far as Berlin's cinema audience was concerned, *Westfront 1918* was the fifth most successful sound film of 1930 (Müller 2003, p.184). With reference to figures published in the *Lichtbild-Bühne* on 12th July 1930, nearly 62,000 people had seen Pabst's film in the *Capitol* cinema since its premiere (Korte 1998, p.219). It is surprising therefore that *Westfront 1918* has faded from film history in the

¹ An indication of how overlooked Pabst's film has been for years is the fact that a DVD version of *Westfront 1918* with English subtitles has only recently come into existence, making this important film at long last more accessible to a wider international audience.

intervening years¹. Some isolated voices have occasionally acknowledged the film's significance beyond the microcosm of academia. For instance, the film critic James Hoberman (2005) described *Westfront 1918* as superior to *All Quiet on the Western Front* and observed that "the always protean Pabst made a brilliant adjustment to sound" (ibid.). Hoberman (ibid.) went on to declare *Westfront 1918* to be of equal importance from the sound perspective as the much-lauded *M* (1931) by Fritz Lang. The film - so Hoberman - demonstrates its importance as an important early sound film in its "brilliantly extended, existential battle sequences, thudding sense of the material world, and close-to-overlapping dialogue". Yet in most textbooks on important films of the late Weimar Republic, *Westfront 1918* rarely receives more than a cursory discussion.²

This chapter seeks to address this void, which is particularly apposite as *Westfront 1918* had such considerable impact on its contemporary audiences precisely because of its use of sound. Writing in the days after the film's premiere, Kracauer's review of the film extolled the sonic virtues of *Westfront 1918* in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*:

Vor allem aber wird der Ton mit Erfolg als Mittel der Versinnlichung ausgenutzt. Wenn man einen Verwundeten, der nicht gerettet werden kann, stöhnen hört, ohne ihn je zu sehen, so geht das unter die Haut, und der Bewertachter bleibt nicht länger mehr Betrachter. Und nicht minder sprengen die Seufzer und Schreie aus dem Lazarett den Bildrahmen und dringen unmittelbar in die Wirklichkeit.
(Frankfurter Zeitung 27.5.30)

Above all sound is utilised successfully as a sensory device. If one is able to hear the moans of an injured soldier who is beyond salvation, without ever being able to see him, then this gets under one's skin to the point where the observer cannot fail to be moved. Similarly, the moans and cries from the field hospital, that expand the visual frame and emanate into reality.

Kracauer (ibid.) admired the aesthetic risks that Pabst took in his first sound film but concludes that the film had succeeded in transcending the limitations posed by the visual boundaries of film. He goes on to surmise:

² Notable exceptions are Geisler (1990), Korte (1998), Müller (2003), Fisher (2010)

Die Frage ist, ob er zu Recht ins Dreidimensionale überspringt. Ich neige dazu, sie in diesem einen Falle zu bejahen, in dem es gilt, die Erinnerung an den Krieg um jeden Preis festzuhalten. Schon ist eine Generation ins Alter der Reife gerückt, die jene Jahre nicht mehr aus eigenere Erfahrung kennt. Sie muss sehen, immer wieder sehen, was sie nicht selber gesehen hat.

(Frankfurter Zeitung 27.5.30)

The question is whether this film rightly crosses over into a third dimension. In this particular case, I would tend to say "yes", especially as the memory of this war needs to be preserved at all costs. A new generation is coming of age, that does not have first-hand experience of those years. It must be able to see, time and time again, what it has not seen itself.

Kracauer's piece in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* was an extensive critical engagement with all aspects of the film, from its production, its cast to its impact on the audience.

He describes how - during a screening of the film in the Capitol cinema - audiences expressed dismay at the horrific depiction of warfare, which Kracauer reflected on in his article with the wish that such cinematic horror might engender resistance to the potential threat of actual war in future. It was not only the broadsheets which reviewed the film favourably; the lunchtime edition of the *Berliner Zeitung* included praise for the performances, the overall flow of the film and in the use of sound.

...zum Bild gesellt sich hier der Ton als montagemässiges Element. Die Wortkargheit der Gruppe im Graben ist ein förderndes Moment, und glücklicherweise hat Pabst darauf verzichtet, etwas von den philosophisch spitzfindigen Reden mitzunehmen. Fritz Kampers ist der stärkste Mann unter den Vieren von der Infanterie, bauernschlau, witzig, ein Draufänger im Schauspielerischen.
(Berliner Zeitung am Mittag 24.5.1930)

...the image is joined here by sound as a montage element. The taciturn nature of the group works well as a dramaturgical element, as Pabst propitiously refrained from including any protracted speeches. Fritz Kampers is the strongest man of the four from the Infantry - cunning, funny; a passionate performance.

Germany's oldest film periodical *Lichtbild-Bühne*, published since 1908, was particularly struck by the use of sound in *Westfront 1918*, exclaiming that dialogue, music and sound elements were all reproduced perfectly:

Wort, Musik und Getöse ist in der Vollendung reproduziert. Die Tobis zeigt, was sie leistet. Dr Bagier leitet die Vertonung, Joseph

Massolle selbst, der Erfinder, arbeitet mit, Brodmerkel
photographierte den Ton, Wolfgang Loe-Bagier montierte ihn.
(Lichtbild-Bühne 25.5.1930)

*Word, music and noise are reproduced perfectly. The Tobis
demonstrates its achievement. Dr Bagier supervises the sound, the
inventor Joseph Massolle is personally involved, Brodmerkel
photographed the sound, Wolfgang Loe-Bagier created its montage.*

The fact that the Lichtbild-Bühne names the different individuals involved in sound acquisition and montage on *Westfront 1918* speaks volumes. Equally, the reverential tone with which Joseph Massolle (a key member of the Trierigon team of sound pioneer) and Guido Bagier are named attest to the enormous impact that the soundtrack had on the reviewer. The *Berliner Tageblatt* also praised the acoustic components of the battle scenes, stating that *Westfront 1918* offered up a stronger argument against war than countless books, pamphlets or articles would ever be able to achieve. (*Berliner Tageblatt*, 26.5.1930). Similarly, the financial newspaper *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* wrote on 25.5.1930 praising the cast as well as the sound team (also with particular mention of Bagier and Massolle), who had made every effort to recreate the battle scenes successfully. *Der Film* (24.5.1930) called for all German cinemas to screen this important film. More explicitly focusing on sound film's emotional impact, *Der Abend* wrote:

Der Gesamtcharakter wird durch die Tonfilmwiedergabe der
Schlachtenmusik getroffen. Wenn der junge Student im Schlamm des
Trichters von dem Schwarzen erstickt wird oder wenn der wahnsinnig
gewordene Leutnant immer wieder sein "hurrah" anstimmt, dann
packt einen tieftser Schauer.
(*Der Abend*, 24.5.1930)

*The overall impression is achieved via the sound film's recreation
of the battle scenes. When the young student is suffocated in the
mud of a bomb crater by the black [soldier] or when the Lieutenant,
descended into madness, continually exclaims "hoorah", then one is
gripped by the deepest horror.*

To substantiate further the impact that contemporary reviews ascribed in particular to the sound of the film, one only needs to turn again to the *Film-Kurier* and its coverage of *Westfront 1918* in the wake of its premiere. On the day after the film opened, this influential daily publication ran a front-page article on Nero's first sound film about the Great War (and continued the discussion of Pabst's new film in

further detail elsewhere in the same issue):

12. Jahrgang — Nr. 123

Film-Kurier

Theater · Kunst · Variété · Funk
Bild-Bellagen · Kinotechnische Rundschau · Film-Musik

T A G E S Z E I T U N G

Offizielles Organ des Reichsverbandes Deutscher Lichtspieltheaterbesitzer E. V. und der ihm angeschlossenen Landes- und Provinzial-Verbände

Berlin, Sonnabend, 24. Mai 1930

Einzelpreis 15 Pfg.

Redaktion: Berlin W. 9, Köpenicker Str. 77, Fernspr.: Sammlungen 3.2.
Jahres-Preis: 1.800 Mark, halbjährlich 900 Mark, vierteljährlich 450 Mark.
Abbestellungstermin: 1. April. — Postfach 10000, Berlin W. 9.
Telefon: 10000. — Postfach 10000, Berlin W. 9.
Verkaufspreis: 15 Pfg. — Für Auslandsvertrieb: 20 Pfg. — Für Auslandsvertrieb: 20 Pfg. — Für Auslandsvertrieb: 20 Pfg.

Das Kinogewerbe in Brüssel.
Wichtige Fragen zu beraten!

Ton-Abgaben sind untragbar!
Scharfe R.-V. Erklärung.

Treffpunkt Brüssel.
(Von unserem Brüsseler Korrespondenten)

Brüssel, 20. Mai.
Die folgende Liste der Teilnehmer an dem Internationalen Theaterbesitzer-Kongress in Brüssel, der heute bekanntgegeben wird, ist eine sehr interessante Aufzählung der Teilnehmer an diesem Kongress.

Westfront 1918" läuft an.
"Westfront 1918" läuft an, der erste deutsche Kriegsfilm. Ein Thema wird damit zur Debatte gestellt, das seit Jahren von der Vielzahl von Teil-Problemen der großen Frage.

Illustration 72 Pabst's Film on the Film-Kurier Front Page. (Cinegraph Archive)

The Film Kurier was heralding the premiere of Westfront 1918 as the first German

sound film dealing with the subject matter; the front-page article's primary focus lay with the film's objective portrayal of soldiers at war, as well as praising the realistic quality of Peter Martin Lampel's dialogues as spoken by the film's protagonists.

Kagelmann and Keiner (2014, p.92) state that Lampel had been tasked specifically with the writing of the dialogues for the film; the script itself was adapted for the screen by Ladislaus Vajda, who had worked on the scripts of every Pabst film script from 1927-1932. Kagelmann and Keiner (2014, p. 91) also note that the format of a film script was still undergoing a metamorphosis from the silent era, and that a standardisation in script layouts was as yet to be articulated. Peculiar to *Westfront 1918* for instance the fact that the script was printed in landscape format, using separate columns for sound notes, as well as camera positions and dialogues.

Indicative that this layout was a transitional state of film scripts' evolutionary journey into sound the fact that the script for Pabst's next film *Kameradschaft* (1931) had abandoned this layout; instead, sound notes had been integrated into the dialogue text column (Kagelmann and Keiner, p. 112, n. 56). Returning to the *Film Kurier*, its front-page article commends Nero's *Westfront 1918* as a film of exceptional quality, which should invite wider critical engagement with the subject matter within the public sphere.

In this context, it should be noted that Eisner's ([1969] 2008, p.314) influential voice was critical of Pabst's use of sound, claiming that the director was too interested in the visual component of *Westfront 1918* at the expense of the sound. Eisner (ibid.) complained that the "frequently very fine camera-work [was] marred by extremely banal dialogue". Eisner's critique stands in direct contrast to the praise lavished upon the realistic dialogues at the time of the film's release - illustrated by the *Film Kurier* piece cited above, as well as by other voices. Without getting drawn into a discussion over the quality - or alleged shortcoming - of the dialogue, what is far more relevant within the context of this research project is that Eisner³ fundamentally failed to recognise the film's many complex scenarios in terms of the aural domain, which were regarded as nothing short of innovative and outstanding amongst the film's contemporaries. Pabst's intentional use of out-of-vision sonic elements was

³ For an insightful appraisal of Eisner's work, see Lenssen (1997)

deployed to create a 360-degree impression of the misery of warfare; although the director was still to some degree restrained by limitations of nascent audio technology, Pabst found creative solutions for such restrictions and created a film which contains a remarkable degree of visual and aural dexterity.

This chapter examines selected scenes from the film, which clearly highlight *Westfront 1918*'s achievements as an early sound film. Through developing off screen story components, Pabst demonstrates a method for extending the aural soundscape as a storytelling device; the director illustrates the stretching of narrative boundaries beyond the confines of the image's visual framing. This approach in itself was very innovative manifestation of the evolving cinematic aesthetic to adopt; both for cinema in general, as well as for Pabst as a director in his first sound film - Eisner's critique is therefore out of place. Unlike in silent film, a film-maker no longer needed to show visual elements of war and conflict to set the scene. Even when not seen within the camera frame, the sound of war had the potential to become a presence in the story: *Westfront 1918* succeeded in creating an acoustic representation of trauma and warfare. Kaes (2009, p.212) notes that a "new interest in realistic accounts of the front lines coincided with the historic shift from silent to sound film". *Westfront 1918* did not merely provide opportunities for spoken dialogue but demonstrated how war elements could be woven into the sonic fabric of the film "with unprecedented faithfulness" (ibid.), resonating through the 1930 cinema auditorium and intensifying the impact of *Westfront 1918*'s realism in the perception of the audience.

When examining the press coverage, the singling out of particular individuals involved in the film making processes from the sound production perspective is remarkable. In the context of devoting an extensive chapter to this film as part of this thesis, the amount of praise lavished on the aural impact of the film permeates all reviews. The recurring commendation from contemporary critics for the realism of the film is also a striking feature. Although more recent film historians such as André Kagelmann and Reinhold Keiner (2014, p. 83) are cautious about ascribing the concept of realism towards the retelling of history via a fictional genre, the response with which the film was met by writers and critics who were publishing

within living memory of the First World War - many of whom had first-hand experience of the war - should not be too readily discounted. Returning to the issue of *Film Kurier*, which appeared in the wake of the film's opening, in addition to its front-page article noting the premiere of Pabst's war film, the inside pages devoted further attention to the film. Here the *Film Kurier* singles out several aspects of the soundtrack - both from the technical as well as the creative perspective - as a key component in creating the film's convincingly realistic soundtrack.

Die ungeheure Wirkung, die schon von technisch gut gemachten stummen Kriegsfilmern ausging, ist vervielfacht worden. Der Ton gibt dem Kriegsgeschehen erst die lähmende, niederschmetternde Wucht. Geschoßhagel, Minenpfeifen, Maschinengewehr-Tacken, Verwundetenschreie, Todesstöhnen bohren sich in uns hinein. (Film Kurier 24.05.1930, 12. Jahrgang, Nr.123, p.2)

The tremendous effect, already achieved by some technically well-made silent war films, has been escalated. Sound imbues warfare with a paralysing, crushing force. Hailing bullets, whistling mines, the staccato of machine guns, the screams of the wounded, the moans of the dying permeate deep into us.

The article also acknowledges Guido Bagier and Joseph Massolle, two pioneers of German sound film development, as instrumental in the film's success. Again, the article focuses on the realism achieved by the portrayal of warfare in *Westfront 1918*. It sees the actors' more restrained performances as well balanced in comparison to the dramatic heat of the battle scenes. The characters are, in the view of the *Film Kurier*, rightly depicted as battle-worn soldiers who are not driven by any overall ideology or a desire to become victorious, but instead provide convincing performances that embody a resigned fatalism.

Film-Kritik:

Der Kriegsfilm der Nero.

Westfront 1918.

(Vier von der Infanterie.)

Capitol.

Bei schon abklingender Saison noch ein großer, schwerer, ernster Film. Ein Kriegsfilm, in dem nicht der Weltbrand des Rahmens bildet für Menschenschicksal, sondern in dem der Krieg Star ist und alles andere nebensächlich.

Ernst Johannsens Roman schildert zuerst den Krieg, das furchtbare Leiden, das gigantische Ringen im stetigen Trommelfeuer, die Not der zusammenbrechenden Heimat. Es kommen und gehen Menschen in diesem Roman, die Ereignisse konzentrieren sich zuweilen um vier Soldaten, die alle bei einem furchtbaren Sturmangriff ums Leben kommen — aber im Vordergrund steht doch immer der Krieg.

Wir sehen diesen Krieg zum erstenmal im deutschen Tonfilm. Und es ist festzustellen: Die ungeheure Wirkung, die schon von technisch gut gemachten stummen Kriegsfilmen ausging, ist vervielfacht worden. Der Ton gibt dem Kriegsgeschehen erst die lähmende, niederschmetternde Wucht. Geschosshagel, Minenpfiffe, Maschinengewehr-Tacken, Verwundenschreie, Todesstöhnen bohren sich in uns hinein. Kein Wunder, daß es Besucher gab, die wie benommen in den

dentelt und beschönigt nicht. Bitte sehr, so war der Krieg. So wurden Menschen zerlegt und erstickt und auseinandergerissen und in Schlammflüchern ersäuft, so wurden Beine und Arme am laufenden Band amputiert, so zerfleischte Mensch den Menschen: Pabst und sein Autor sind vorsichtig in der Behandlung des Themas, warum dieser Krieg kam und warum überhaupt Kriege kommen. Aber er ist radikal beim Darstellen, daß der Krieg kein Fest für Helden ist, wie es heute wieder frontferne Bierredner der neuen Generation erzählen.

Darstellerisch ist der Film auf Schlichtheit gestellt, große Gesten passen nicht zu der Uebergroße der Ereignisse. Fritz Kampers spielt den fatalistisch sich mit dem Schicksal abfindenden Bayern, Claus Clausen, den Leutnant, der sein Inneres mit dem Glauben an den Befehl zugeschlüpft hat, Hans Joachim Moebis den blutjungen Studenten, der eben erst Mann wurde bei einem großläufigen Frauenmord und so gern noch leben möchte, Gustav Diehl den Landwehrmann, dessen Welt zusammenbricht, als er beim Heimaturlaub seine Frau in den Armen eines Schlächtergesellen findet.

Ueber alle vier ist zu sagen, daß man ihnen glaubt, daß sie da Jahre im Schützengraben gelegen haben, nicht mehr siegesbewußt, nicht mehr ideenbeschwung, sondern zermürbt und sich fugend in ein unabwendbar scheinendes Schicksal.

Die anderen: Jackie Monnier, die Französin, die auf ihr biftchen Jugendglück auch in der großen Zeit nicht verzichten will, Hanna Hoefrich, die Frau, die, wie es so viele alles tat, weil der Hunger schmerzte. Sonst noch Gustav Püttjer, Else Heller, Wladimir Sokoloff, Carl Ballhaus.

Des Regisseurs technische Helfer sind: F. A. Wagner und Ch. Métain an der Kamera, Karl Brodmerkel an der Tonkamera, Ernst Metzner, der Architekt. Ihre Arbeit und die eines riesigen Stabes der Hilfsarbeiter, von denen Paul Falkenberg, Wolfgang Loß Bagier und Walter Zeiske genannt und viel ungenannt sind, ist nur als Ganzes zu werten. Dieses Ganze ist eine große Leistung. Leo Meyer kann zufrieden sein, seine Leute haben gezeigt, daß sie filmen können.

Und nun die große Frage: Wird man diesen Film sehen wollen? Die objektive Ansicht des Rezensenten muß da ausgeschaltet werden. Es ist nur festzustellen: Als der erste Kriegsfilm kam, sagten die Fachleute: Das wird bestimmt ein Reinfall. Die Menschen haben so genug von den vier Jahren Krieg, daß sie nicht noch einmal im Kino daran erinnert werden wollen. Diese Ansicht der Fachleute war, wie so oft, falsch. Bisher war so gut wie jeder gut gemachte Kriegsfilm, ob aus- oder inländischen Ursprungs, ein großer Erfolg. Bei der Abstimmung des „Film-Kuriers“ über die vergangene Saison steht der Front-Bericht „Verdun“ an dritter Stelle.

Als vor ein paar Wochen der „Sommer“-Film herauskam, hat einer unserer Setzer, nationalistischer Beweggründe bestimmt unverdächtig, ob man ihm nicht da eine Karte besorgen könne. Unsere Frage: „Aber warum gerade zu dem Film, sie waren doch vier Jahre draußen, sie müßten doch genug haben.“ Und er: „Ja sehen Sie, zuerst einmal freut es einen doch, daß man da heil rausgekommen ist, das Nocheinfachere Leben der Gefahr hat seinen Reiz. Na und dann, dann will ich meiner Frau zeigen, wie es uns da gegangen ist.“

Ein stummer Film, der größte Klasse.
Ein Film der Masse und der Klasse.
Der nicht wie'n schlechter Tonfilm heißt:

„... den schickt er in die weite Welt“
Vertrieb: Filmvertrieb Dr. Boyl, Berlin-Steglitz.

Sommerabend des lärmenden Kurfürstendamms hinausgingen.

Ladislav Vajda übertrug die Handlung ins Filmische. Es ist schwer, seine Arbeit von der des Regisseurs G. W. Pabst zu trennen, da die wichtigsten Stellen des Films von der Technik entschieden werden. Vajdas Drehbuch enthält eine Reihe zündender Dialoge, es leidet aber zum Schluß an mangelnden Steigerungsvermögen, der Film scheint einige Male zuende zu sein und abzuklingen und beginnt dann immer wieder von neuem. Es ist für den Zuschauer schwer, diesen Willenbewegungen zu folgen.

Der Film ist sowohl bild- wie tontechnisch eine große Leistung. Das Wüten der Granaten ist von kaum zu überbietender Realistik, Ton und Bild ergänzen sich zu einer Symphonie des Grauens. Guido Bagier und Joseph Massolle, beide Pioniere des deutschen Tonfilms, haben an diesem Ergebnis mitgearbeitet.

Die politische Grundeinstellung des Films ist vorsichtiger Pazifismus. Bei den ungeheuren Kosten ist eine radikale Einstellung undenkbar. Es ist besser, daß Millionen ein Dutzend Dialoge hören, die zum Nachdenken Anlaß geben, als daß ein paar Tausende eine glühende Anklage gegen das Kriegsverbrechen erleben.

G. W. Pabst zeigt den Krieg in allen Phasen, er kennt kein Pardon für die Nerven des Publikums. Er fälscht und dreht und

Reinhold Weiz

Shakespeare-Musik und Schiller-Pathos.

Illustration 73 Detail: Film-Kurier 24 May 1930 (Cinegraph Archive)

Censorship Issues and Sound

The film's ability in creating a visceral component effect via the use of sound is effectively demonstrated in a scene where the out of vision screams of a dying

French soldier are heard from the perspective of the German trench by Karl and the Bavarian. While the Bavarian tries to reason that it is the duty of French soldiers on the other side to rescue their comrade from no-man's-land, Karl is tortured by the pleading screams of the dying man and wants to leave the relative safety of the German trench to attend to the enemy soldier. Kester (2003, p. 131) notes that censors had cut a similar scene depicting a soldier writhing in agony in no-man's-land from the silent film *Namenlose Helden* [*Nameless Heroes*] (directed by K. Bernhardt and K. Szekely, 1925) and acknowledges this aural representation of a similar scenario in *Westfront 1918* as more affecting "than the actual image itself". Taking Kester's reference to *Namenlose Helden* one step further, one may surmise that during the early days of film sound, censors were perhaps less attuned to the potential impact of the dramatic sonification of war. In support of such a hypothesis, there is evidence of a hint of controversy between official government guidance and individual censorship decision-making in terms of appraising dialogue in sound film: the *Film-Kurier* reported in its lead article on 23rd May 1930 (coincidentally the same day that *Westfront 1918* was being premiered) that sound was outside of censorship legislation. Under its headline *Der Ton is zensurfrei!* [*Sound is beyond censorship!*] the article justified this proclamation in direct reference to the opinion of Dr Wirth, the then home secretary of the Weimar Republic. Crucially, Wirth had publicly declared that only the visual component of cinema, but not film dialogue or music, was subject to censorship.

practices, which this *Film Kurier* article highlighted, speaks to the fact that policies and methodology of the censorship office had to be reviewed and revised in response to the arrival of sound film. Certainly, as regards *Westfront 1918*, the fact that censors did - in 1930 - not take exception to its soundtrack allowed the film to include a harrowing dimension in its representation of human suffering.

However, following the establishment of tighter control over Germany's cultural output by the National Socialist government in 1933, many films previously passed by the central board of film censors were re-examined and withdrawn, including *Westfront 1918*. Interesting in the context of a discussion of the film industry's transition into a sound era and its evolving censorship standards, sound elements of *Westfront 1918* that had previously passed scrutiny in 1930 were now giving censors distinct cause for concern, including the scene discussed above when Karl argues with the Bavarian over the injured French soldier calling for help from no-man's-land. Having been re-submitted to the board of film censors in the spring of 1933, the cries of the wounded (on both sides), the Lieutenant's screaming nervous breakdown and other aural elements of human suffering now met with the particular disapproval of the censors (*Film Oberprüfstelle* document/reference: Nr 6490 dated 27/04/1933 [censorship report], p.3, available from <http://www.filmportal.de/node/8133/material/1239493> accessed 30/10/2015). Revoking the film's distribution certificate in April 1933, the censors judged these sound elements (along with the depiction of German war dead, battle defeat and civilian misery on the home front) as wholly incompatible with the new government's goal of nurturing a fighting spirit in the German population.



Illustration 75 Screen grab from *Westfront 1918* The Lieutenant's Descent into Madness.

The screams of the *Leutnant* which so offended the ideologically re-tuned censors in 1933 had contributed to the visceral effect ascribed to the sound of *Westfront 1918* on its release three years earlier. The sequence is situated near the end of the film, following an extended final battle scene during which Karl and the *Bavarian* are seriously wounded. The recreation of the battle action of World War I had been at a large site near Frankfurt / Oder.⁴ The Lieutenant had been portrayed as an experienced soldier throughout the film, fully focused on his duties as an officer, obeying all orders that the higher army leadership was issuing to his military rank. In one scene, early on in the film, the *Leutnant* stands to attention as he is addressing his superior officer via the field telephone. This kind of attitude of complete military devotion unravels towards the end of the film, following a battle that produced heavy losses on all sides. Depicted among a pile of dead soldiers, the *Leutnant* is shown jumping again to attention; his devoted militarism reduced to hysterical screaming in the face of heavy casualties. As he is lead away for treatment, the image fades to black, fading back up in the field hospital. Although the *Leutnant's* screams don't mix together in a smooth aural transition from the exterior to the interior setting, there appears to be a clear intention to create a sound bridge via the screaming. This hypothesis is supported by annotations in the original script (Kagelmann und Keiner 2014, p.89), which make reference to a *Tonüberblendung* - an audio dissolve - or mix as it would be referred to in contemporary film parlance.



Illustration 76 Screen Grabs from Westfront 1918: The Lieutenant's Scream reaches across Time and Space.

⁴ Filming took place from February to April 1930; archive photographs taken during the shooting show the cast and crew include captions that attest to the fact that many of the actors and extras were war veterans themselves.

Westfront 1918's aural elements to define the ambient setting of warfare as the overarching *mise-en-scène*, Pabst also used sound and music to create thematic as well as temporal connections between various characters in different scenes, which will be subject to further analysis in several sections in this chapter. Pabst used sound to aid characterisation and to create emotional connections as well as narrative contrasts. For instance, after their first (and last) romantic encounter, the "Student" had to bid farewell to his sweetheart Yvette (this scene will be discussed again below). Surrounded by other German soldiers billeted in her farm, Yvette busies herself making coffee but cries inconsolably after the Student's departure. The soldiers around her continue to go about their work of repairing equipment but - clearly in response to Yvette's emotional state - start humming, whistling and eventually singing a sentimental song about bidding farewell to pretty girls (the song itself a well-known *Volkslied* - a popular tune at the time). The picture cuts to an extreme wide shot of an abandoned battlefield across which two German soldiers are walking in opposite directions towards each other. The song that had been intoned by the billeted group of German soldiers around Yvette can now be heard whistled by a single person walking across the churned-up ground of the abandoned battlefield. The whistling stops as the *Student* recognises Karl from afar, and the two men shout a greeting to each other across the battlefield, before they sit down at the edge of a bomb crater for a brief chat (this scene will also be discussed again below). Pabst resorts to these sonic bridges, using diegetic musical elements to link together different characters and different locations throughout *Westfront 1918*. Several further examples of thematic musical connections which link together narrative concepts can be observed.

Karl on Leave: The Emotive Potential of Diegetic Music

In assorted sections during a key chapter of the film, as Karl returns on home leave from the front, the film uses referential diegetic musical elements. For instance, as Karl is mounting the stairs to his apartment to greet his wife, he whistles the tune *In der Heimat, da gibt's ein Wiedersehen*⁵ which is on one level a thematic reference to

⁵ Lyrics by Friedrich Silcher, using the Melody of Hugo Zschneid's *Die Vöglein im Walde*

the music of the immediately preceding scene, but also an emotional reference to Karl's anticipation at being reunited with his wife. The reason why Karl's visit on home leave is of key importance in *Westfront 1918* is that the events of this section have a devastating emotional effect on Karl and represent a turning point at which the tone of the film undergoes a marked change. It brings about a transition during which Karl, the only named character of the film's central four protagonists, transforms into a man who is resigned to die; an emotional metamorphosis which will culminate in Karl volunteering to take part in a military operation later on in the film, tantamount to a suicide mission. Given its enormous emotional importance, this scene in Karl's hometown - although not set within the eponymous landscape of the western front - is therefore of central importance and will yield further detailed analysis of the relationship between image and sound in the following section.

Relocating the action of the film away from the trenches (the last scene which included Karl was the conversation between himself and the Student at the edge of the bomb crater), this chapter of the story begins in an urban, exterior setting as Karl witnesses a cohort of newly recruited young soldiers being paraded through the streets of his hometown. Cheered on by bystanders alongside the road, the young conscripts march along to the accompaniment of a military band. Another onlooker in civilian clothes enquires how things are progressing at the front, asking Karl when they are going to take Paris at last. Reluctant to engage in conversation, Karl walks on and the action cuts to a large queue of people waiting outside the butcher's shop. Though the marching band is continuing with a similar theme compared to the music which accompanies the previous scene of the bystander speaking to Karl, there is nonetheless a cut in the background music at this point (the very different lighting conditions would strongly suggest that these two sections were shot at different times). What this jump in the background music confirms is that the marching band was recorded simultaneously with the dialogues on location. The assumption is also supported by the overall acoustic quality of the music, as well as the fact that particular instruments comprise a natural fade up and down in the overall mix as individual musicians pass by the microphone. It could be argued that the jump cut in the background music could be deliberate, for instance in order to signal a time cut, however it seems more likely that this kind of jump cut was a by-product of filming

methods at the time, when music could not very easily be mixed into the action and dialogue as part of subsequent post production processes. An experienced filmmaker at the time, it would have been clear to a director such as Pabst that the inclusion of music recorded on location would create continuity problems during the editing. The fact that Pabst still decided to feature diegetic background music in this section supports the notion that the music played a significant dramatic role in the staging of these scenes: the music contributes important referential components in terms of its martial characteristic as well as providing the wider emotive connotations imbued in the lyrics.

As mentioned above, the end of the scene where Karl walks away from the conversation with the bystander cuts to a large group of waiting people, chatting in a food queue. The music continues during subsequent dialogue exchanges amongst the queueing crowd, initially all filmed in one take with the camera moving along the actors, until the point when a weeping woman tries join in the group at the top of the queue, attempting to cut into the line.



Illustration 77 Screen grab from *Westfront 1918*: Weeping woman attempts to jump queue, angle 1.



Illustration 78 Screen grab from *Westfront 1918*: Weeping woman attempts to jump queue, angle 2

The camera angle now changes to feature the ensuing dialogue (visually pitting the weeping woman against the rest of the crowd) and with this cut, there is a slight change in the background music (this new music piece then continues underneath the developing dialogue section). The cut in the diegetic music suggests again that this scene was filmed with the music of the marching band playing on location and recorded simultaneously in the background, out of vision from the foreground action. Whilst this points once more to the limitations of shooting action and music simultaneously on location (in today's film making practice the music would simply be laid onto the soundtrack later and mixed in, without interfering with the dialogue editing), the setting of the scene with diegetic music must have been of significant enough importance to persuade an accomplished film-maker such as Pabst to accept the sonic discontinuity. As the weeping woman is reprimanded for trying to jump the queue, she is sent to the back of the line, with the camera tracking alongside her, until she exits the shot – at this point Karl appears back in the frame and asks for permission to pass through the line of queuing people in order to reach his front door; noteworthy at this point the fact that the soundtrack has run continuously in the background since the episode of the woman cutting into line. The generously sized food parcels dangling from Karl's backpack draw comments from the women standing hungrily in line, as the story cuts to a closer shot of two women at the front of the queue.



Illustration 79 Screen grab from *Westfront 1918*: Karl with Food Parcels dangling from his Backpack.



Illustration 80 Screen grab from *Westfront 1918*: An older Woman points Karl out to his Mother, who is waiting in the Food Queue.

The background music track cuts from drumming to singing, which develops into the chorus of a well-known tune: *In der Heimat, da gibt's ein Wiedersehen* at the point where the story cuts from the back of the queue to the front of the line and focuses on two women dressed in black. The older of these two women recognises the soldier with the food parcels as the other woman's son Karl. Karl in turn had not spotted his mother at the top of the queue, while he was chatting at the other end of the line of waiting citizens. But as the older woman draws attention to the fact that it is Karl

returning from the front, the mother appears distraught. Karl's mother explains unhappily that she had been waiting in line to pick up provisions since the morning, rendering her unable to leave her position in the queue. At this point the action develops a sad irony when considered in conjunction with the background music; the film sets a sharp emotional contrast, foregrounding the desperate situation of civilian misery in as an emotive counterpoint to the cheerful tune extolling the joys of being in the idealised *Heimat* in the background. Even though in terms of storytelling, the episode at the back of the queue (Karl crossing through the line of people queuing past his front door) and the conversation between the older woman and Karl's mother at the top of the queue happen at around the same time (we can deduce this as an image of Karl entering his apartment block is intercut with shots of the dialogue exchange between the two women), the background music track is of an entirely different nature as the camera angle cuts to the two women.



Illustration 81 Screen grab from *Westfront 1918*: Karl entering the Apartment Block.

To clarify, the music changed from the more martial, percussive piece heard during the confrontations in the queue (and the waiting women's envious admiration of Karl's food rations), to the sentimental song of being reunited again in the *Heimat*, the homeland. The dis-continuity in the background music was a by-product of shooting processes at the time (as explored above). In storytelling terms, there appears to be again a compromise which needs to tolerate a break in the aural continuity of the background music during the shot changes, in favour of the visually emotional component (the anxious glances and dialogue of the older women at the

top of the queue as they recognise Karl but feel unable to go over to greet him).

Heimat

In spite of its temporal discontinuity, it is significant that the background music comprises an important emotive and referentially paradox element, as the music encapsulates in its lyrics a sentimental component of the joys of re-visiting the *Heimat*. The idealised notion of *Heimat* was a very potent and emotionally charged symbol in German culture and continued in significance during the time of the Weimar Republic. According to Erlin (2009) the very notion of *Heimat* was at once “overdetermined and deeply resonant in the social and political context of Weimar Germany” (ibid, p. 158). In part, this was a response to the uncertainty of the era, not least via the establishment of a different form of government structure, as Germany had evolved from imperial monarchy to parliamentary democracy. *Heimat* had the capacity to represent a beacon of continuity at a time of technological and social change. However, the cultural concept of *Heimat* had already been shaped during the romantic era of the preceding century; in this context Strathausen (2001, p.171) points to the importance of the landscape painting during the 19th century. Equally poetry and prose of the 19th century were permeated with the romanticising idyll of *Heimat* and German state. The concept of *Heimat* became ever more mythologised from 1933 onwards and was subsequently exploited ruthlessly by National Socialist propaganda. The increasingly distorted aspect of *Heimat* as a component of National Socialist ideology is discussed by Hake (2006, p.76). Furthermore, its author also discusses the phoenix-like quality of *Heimat*, as the subject matter re-emerged in the German film industry at various stages since World War II (ibid, p.171). In summary, German cultural reflection of the term has at times taken diverse cinematic approaches of engaging with the concept of “*Heimat*”, pointing to a spasmodic impulse to re-visit fundamental concepts of nationhood and homeland. According to Ashkenazi (2010, p.262) the word *Heimat* carries implicit connotations of a bucolic idyll, which positions the urban and the rural spheres in marked contrast to one another; this dichotomy is a theme that weaves itself with increasing tension through the history of the Weimar Republic and would play its part in polarising the political forces on the left and right of the social spectrum. The term *Heimat* then is emotive in itself, as well as carrying a peculiar resonance within

the context of 20th century German history; it at once represents a concept beyond politics, but at the same time one which is potentially liable to be exploited and become highly politicised. In *Westfront 1918*, Pabst explores the notion of *Heimat* at this point in the film through the background music, creating a bitterly ironic juxtaposition with the foreground action. The glorified *Heimat* idyll suggested through the music creates a narrative tension via the film's depiction of sustained hardship amongst the military as well as the civilian population of the *Heimat*. Returning to the moment as Karl is spotted by his mother in the street during the diegetic music track of *In der Heimat, da gibt's ein Wiedersehen*: although the break in background music undermines the notion of the temporal synchronicity of the respective story events at the front and back of the queue⁶, the emotional development and contrapuntal significance of the use of that particular piece of music within the overall narrative gives primacy to the aural paradox, positioning the sentimental, yearning nature of the incoming diegetic music cue within the wider *mise-en-scène*.

The next scene cuts from the exterior conversation between the older woman and Karl's mother to an interior studio set showing a tenement block staircase with Karl arriving at his home: as the high-angle shot shows him mounting the stairs to his apartment to greet his wife, the music which had been playing in the background during the outside conversation between the two women continues. Noteworthy at this point is the fact that the music does not alter from an exterior to an interior acoustic perspective, a technique which would become standard film practice to establish spatial relationships within a given location – but the technology at the time did not yet enable the degree of equalisation and mixing processes necessary to make such a shift from exterior to interior point of view with ease. With the last audible line of the exterior music's chorus complete (at this point the sound is cutting to the sync recording of the interior set with the high angle shot of Karl mounting the stairs), Karl picks up the same musical phrase and whistles the motif of *In der Heimat, da gibt's ein Wiedersehen* as he ascends the final steps to his apartment.

⁶ The dialogue between Karl's mother and the other woman clearly sets these events up as happening simultaneously to Karl talking with others people waiting at the end of the queue.

Karl's whistling is on one level a referential echo of the music sounding from the outside (the conscripts and the marching band) and therefore enforcing the almost simultaneous nature of the dialogue between Karl's mother and the other woman in the queue outside, but simultaneously it is also setting up a sense of anticipation – in this case Karl's emotional state of looking forward to being re-united with his wife.

Silence and Speechlessness

He continues to whistle the tune as he proceeds to unlock the door, but the whistling stops as he turns the door handle and other sync effects take over as he enters the apartment. Now the absence of musical elements focuses attention on the acute stillness of this moment: Karl, apparently intent on making a surprise appearance to his unsuspecting wife, is moving soundlessly, taking off his heavy rucksack and propping his rifle against the wall. As Karl prepares to surprise his wife, a woman's laughter is suddenly heard out of frame, apparently in the adjacent room. Karl smiles in anticipation of seeing his wife again – the point of view now cuts to the interior of the adjacent room, with Karl's expectant face emerging as he peers around the corner of the door. As his gaze moves around the room, his expression changes from happy anticipation to perplexed surprise as his eyes settle within the scenario. The point of view cuts to what Karl is looking at: his wife in bed, motionless and startled with the bed covers pulled up to her chin, the camera pans to a young man, a mere youth, frozen in the moment as he was gathering up his clothes ready to leave. Having reflected a sense of sentimental optimism through the whistling of the earlier melody about joyful re-unifications, Karl's mood - and the mood of the film - is abruptly changed when he is confronted by his wife's infidelity, discovering her in the marital bed *in flagranti* with the butcher's apprentice. What is striking about the development of this scene is Karl's immediate reaction, as the exchange that would inevitably ensue from this moment is notably quiet in nature. Karl's initial response to discovering his wife in bed with another man is curiously devoid of angry dialogue, let alone fighting (this weary soldier has apparently not much inclination to fight left in him) – the medium of sound film gives Pabst the opportunity of depicting Karl's reaction as one of speechless resignation, uttering a few lines which sound more tired than angry. In what seems to be a return to silent film acting, there are a series of looks, of incredulous glances, a series of visual compositions that

appear as vignettes which are almost frozen in time. All Karl manages to say in his first response to the situation is a resigned “*Ach so - na, küßt euch nur ruhig weiter*” [*I see - well, just carry on kissing*].

The camera angle for this line from Karl is showing a wide shot of him standing at the edge of the open door, staring into the room where his wife and the young man are at that moment in a state of suspended animation. As Karl slowly turns on his heels, the camera tracks up to the draw level with the open door and maintains its point of view of Karl, now with his back to the camera, as he shuffles into the adjacent room (the kitchen). This tracking shot is one of many dynamic camera moves embedded within action and dialogue sequences in *Westfront 1918*, which puts pay to the widely held belief that the arrival of sound film represented a retrograde step for cinematography, as cameras became of secondary importance to the microphone.

Whilst it is true that camera noise represented a new problem for film-makers to contend with (resulting in some situations where cameras and their operators were enclosed in a relatively sound proof compartment, filming the action through a glass pane from a stationary position), the practice of blimping⁷ meant that a dynamic cinematography incorporating camera moves and tracks on which the camera could move along the action did not entirely grind to halt with the arrival of sync sound. Whilst Müller (2003, p.351) is sceptical that blimped cameras were being used at all during the making of *Westfront 1918* (arguing instead that all scenes which include moving cameras must have been made using post-sync sound), this scene includes original dialogue as well as a moving camera shot, suggesting that a blimp was being used. Geisler (1990, p.93) also confirms the use of a blimped camera during the filming of *Westfront 1918*.

The next cut is of a close up, as Karl, still shod in his heavy army boots, accidentally

⁷ Enclosing the camera only in layers of soundproof wadding – cf. illustration in the chapter on *Emil und die Detektive*

trips against his army rifle. Earlier on, when he had been moving soundlessly around the kitchen on his arrival in the apartment, Karl had quietly propped up his heavy rifle against a stool. The clattering of the gun as it falls onto the floor brings about a change in Karl, as his emotional state turns from resignation to anger. A cut away shows this change in emotion as Karl stares wide-eyed at the rifle; he decides to pick up the weapon and returns back to the room with his wife and the butcher's apprentice. Holding the rifle in his arms he proceeds to question why the pair are not yet kissing each other - the mocking quality in his voice suggests Karl is entering a temporarily deranged state of mind. His subsequent lines instruct - with an initially restrained, but increasing, sense of menace - his wife to lower the covers on the bed in order to expose herself. His wife is reluctant to follow Karl's increasingly commanding instructions, until the butcher's apprentice intervenes, apparently moving his body in between the wife's and Karl's loaded rifle; not all of the movements of the actors at this stage occur in vision, and there are no sound effects or out of vision dialogue lines to provide the audience with a clearer sense of what is happening (which might be the case in today's sound post production technique). Nonetheless, what is worth noting once again is the potential for sound film to work with atmospheres (for instance the clock tick, the significance of which is discussed in further detail in the next paragraph), sound effects as well as intonation and quality of performance of dialogue lines as emotive components to the overall narrative development. Notwithstanding reservations expressed during the 1920s (prior to the actual arrival of sound film) over a potential shift in film-making towards dialogue-laden sound films, Balassa (1972, p.219) observed that it was in fact the strategic absence of dialogue and relative silence that represented the most fundamental innovation proffered by sound film. The resultant dynamic range of the scene is demonstrated by the soundtrack's approach of juxtaposing quiet movements and speechlessness with sharp movement sounds - for instance as Karl trips against the rifle or as he loads and raises the gun. As Karl is shown wordlessly losing his grip on the previous apparent display of self-composure demonstrates how the contrast of quieter sound elements and louder elements could be exploited to great dramatic effect. This illustrates how early sound films were able to exercise control over sonic components even in the early days of sonification, and to a much greater degree than has often been recognised. The technique of monitoring and mixing separate audio elements, which were being recorded via several separate microphone

channels live within the studio setting was already described by Umbehr and Wollenberg (1930, p.333). *Westfront 1918* creates a dynamic range that incorporates quieter elements, a technique which enables the film to engage the audience, to set it up to be more affected by the presence of louder sound elements elsewhere in the narrative; a film soundtrack that is uniformly loud dulls the audience's acoustic senses, making them less receptive to subtler sonic elements after a while.

Analogous to the skill of a cinematographer in creating visually contrasting components of light and shade, the aural equivalent in regard to the *mise-en-scène* are the contrasts between loud sounds and quieter sounds deliberately employed by the sound designer. It is akin to the creation of an interesting sonic landscape, which is made up of peaks and troughs, of sonic contours that draw the audience into the film more closely, experiencing quieter sections more acutely, but leaving sonically dramatic gestures to sections in the narrative where they have more impact. One of the great innovations of sound film is that it could use silence in conjunction with sound. Furthermore, the scene should be taken as clear illustration of how sound film did not only change cinema in terms of the presence of spoken words, but crucially also how the intonation of lines of dialogue could shape the emotional trajectory of a scene, and (most importantly) how the silent spaces in between lines of dialogue can say as much as the dialogue lines themselves (silence as an expression of non-verbal communication). Through the medium of synchronous sound, the creation of dialogue rhythms opened up additional dramatic avenues for the craft of editing. This sense of timing in dialogue becomes particularly apparent in the scene when Karl bids farewell to his wife.

Prior to the discovery of his wife's infidelity, Karl had of course been looking forward to returning to her on home leave: during an incongruously set dialogue scene which featured the Student and Karl⁸ engaged in an exchange of views on life and love while sitting on the edge of an artillery shell crater. This exchange develops following a chance meeting between the two comrades as they were making their

⁸ As an expansion on the symbolism of time in the context of sound epistemology, see Branigan (1997) p. 112.

respective journeys in opposite directions through no-man's-land; the student returning to the trenches from a romantic encounter with his French sweetheart, while Karl's journey was taking him closer to his wife back home; Karl's joy and optimism at the imminent prospect of being close to his wife again become abundantly clear during this scene. For Karl, at least at that moment in the film, a period of respite was about to replace the time for fighting and warfare. Once on home leave, this wider concept of time itself emerges as a sound effect woven into the background of the apartment and time becomes embodied in several sections of these domestic scenes explicitly through the tic-toc sound of the cuckoo clock on the wall. As Karl's precious time on home-leave turns to disappointment, as time audibly ebbs away during the final dialogue exchanges between the now estranged couple, the passing of time is an integral sonic element of the *mise-en-scène*, made real via the ticking of the cuckoo clock on the wall of the apartment, which can be heard at certain intervals.

Including a background sound effect such as this ticking clock represents some challenges to the film-maker: in today's film making practice, every effort will be made to avoid recording any ticking clock as part of the location setting. Instead, the sound of the clock will be dubbed on in post-production, so that decisions about the prominence and quality of the clock tick can be made during the editing processes or later on at the mixing stages of the post production period. However, that degree of complexity with regard to the audio mix and the post-production of sound elements was not yet sufficiently developed in the early 1930s (see Pabst's 1955 interview extract below). Nonetheless, film-makers found work-arounds to such limitations in order to record different sound elements on location (see Müller 2003, p.221). A complex sound script set up, involving the live mixing of several sound elements, was described in by Umbehr and Wollenberg in *Der Tonfilm* (1930, p.309-321). Although the set up in this scene from *Westfront 1918* does not involve sonic elements such as multiple dialogue conversations or a separate music track (such as described by Umbehr and Wollenberg, *ibid.*), the clock tick in the scene was almost certainly recorded at the time on location. Similarly, therefore, the sound of the clock needed to be recorded at the same time as the action was being filmed. These scenes on the home front were shot in a studio set, and at that time it was customary

to position several microphones, suspended above the set, while a supervising recording engineer would fade up or down the recording processes of individual microphones, creating a live mix (similar to the role of a vision mixer in a studio multi camera shoot in today's practice). This role of the supervising recording engineer was for instance dramatised and illustrated by the part of the *Leiter der Tonaufnahme*, a role which featured prominently in *Der Schuss im Tonfilmatelier*⁹ (1931, directed by Zeisler). However, if the sound of the clock is captured at the time of filming, then the rhythm of the tic-toc can potentially be heard during crucial dialogue exchanges and therefore interfere with the rhythm of shot changes that the editor may wish to create, as the dialogue exchange is being shaped by its pace. If the sound of the clock is part of the sync rushes, then the editor will have to be very careful to find the right balance between pacing the shot changes within a scene from the perspective of the dynamic energy of the editing. The film editor Walter Murch discusses the role of continuity, rhythm and screen space in relation to narrative and emotional energy (Murch, 2001, p. 19) and establishes a taxonomy which has become known in editing theory as *Murch's Rule of Six*. Notwithstanding Murch's assurance that emotional story considerations can trump rhythm and continuity in the hierarchy of editing decision making, the editor nonetheless considers the importance of establishing a screen space, in which sound and editing fulfil their respective roles in presenting a credible *mise-en-scene*. In relation to this particular scene, creating a credible scene means avoiding editing decisions that might undo the temporal, rhythmic continuity established by the tic-toc intervals.

The clock tick is heard at particular times during the scene: an audible by-product of

⁹ *Der Schuss im Tonfilmatelier* [*Gunshot on the Soundstage*] was a crime story in which an actress is killed on set by a gunshot that was meant to come from a prop-gun. In investigating the crime, the inspector leading the police team which had been called to the set, learns about the various processes of making a sound film and eventually solves the crime as he listens to various off-camera sound takes. The identity of the murderer is revealed to the Inspector via one of the sound channels which recorded various events on the set in the run-up to the killing. The death of the actress is attributed to the fact that another actor, out of jealousy, swapped the prop gun for a real weapon, thus using another unsuspecting member of the cast to carry out the killing. The inspector, and ultimately modern sound technology are the real stars of the story: *Der Schuss im Tonfilmatelier* was an opportunity for Ufa to show off its newest soundstage and serve as an introduction to the film's contemporary audience to the near-miraculous complexity of Ufa's sound film capability. For illustrations from this film, please see chapter discussing *Emil und die Detektive*.

a scene's relative silence, it is not heard at other times, so as to not interfere with the editing of the scene. It could be argued that the function of the ticking clock is a dialectic sound effect; this in turn would speak to the fact that the concept of time itself plays an important part in this section of *Westfront 1918*: time at home on leave from the front must have been a precious commodity, and ultimately, how much time does a front soldier such as Karl have left to live? The ticking of the clock had first been featured at the time of Karl's arrival at the marital home. Having previously carried the exterior diegetic music theme of the marching band's rendition of *In der Heimat...* to the interior setting via Karl's whistling of that theme, heard as he is climbing up the stairs to his apartment, Karl switches to a silent mode and stops whistling as he tries to unlock and open the door to his apartment. Still clad in his heavy boots and weighed down by his hefty backpack, now Karl's movements are deliberately portrayed as an attempt to suppress any sound of movement, suggesting Karl's intention of wanting to surprise his wife, who clearly has no idea that her husband is about to return on home leave. The point of view cuts to the interior of the apartment: as the door from the staircase opens into the kitchen of his home, and on the wall an (as yet) unseen cuckoo clock is ticking away regularly. The fact that the clock can be heard but not seen could be taken as a signifier of the importance of this sound as an out of vision sound effect. It would suggest and highlight the cessation of other sounds in this scene: the outside world does not reach into the apartment and the sole focus lies within the moments of drama that are being built up here through the very restrained use of sound elements. Only when our environment becomes more silent, are we likely to hear less prominent sounds such as a distant bell tolling or such as this clock ticking in the background. This is a technique still used today in post-production sound design: in order to symbolise silence (and often this becomes significant in conjunction with a build-up of narrative tension) "small" audio components (such as clock ticks, or a fire crackling in the hearth) or distant sounds (such as a faraway dog bark, or a distant train passing) take on a new significance. In film-making terms, these are the sounds of silence.

Having completed his noiseless ingress into the apartment, the silent tension is punctuated by the sound of off-screen laughter. The change in Karl's expression

suggests that he recognises the laughter, presumably as belonging to his wife, a sound which is encouraging him and beckoning him on. At this point, because the audience has not seen the scene that is taking place in the room next door from which laughter emanates, there is no suggestion of anything untoward going on. Had the editing shown a glimpse of the room beyond the door which Karl is about to open, then this laughter would have been a signifier for potential conflict ahead. As it is, the sequence keeps both the audience and Karl in the dark. From the film-making perspective, it is essential to emphasize that the sound effect of the laughter is placed on the soundtrack deliberately. Moreover, it is interesting to note that it is not cut into the soundtrack at the expense of the cuckoo clock, as the ticking of the clock can still be heard under the laughter. The necessity of cutting into the primary sound track in order to feature a particular sound element was a technique used elsewhere in the film (for instance in regard to the many explosions and other warfare effects elsewhere in the film), and was described in a special G.W. Pabst edition of the magazine *Filmkunst* published in 1955:

Als dieser Film gedreht wurde, kannte man in Deutschland weder die Tonmischung noch das Synchronisieren. Die beiden Tonspuren des Dialogs und der Explosionseffekte wurden übereinanderkopiert und aus der Effektspur jeweils an den Dialogstellen Teile herausgeschnitten.

When this film was being made, neither sound mixing nor dubbing had been established in Germany. The two soundtracks of dialogue and explosion effects were superimposed onto each other, with the sound effects track having to be cut out and removed at relevant dialogue sections.

(From *Filmkunst*. Nr. 18/1955, Sonderheft G.W.Pabst, Potsdam HFF archive, no page number)

What the brief extract above - taken from a special edition on G.W.Pabst - confirms that post-production sound mixing was somewhat cumbersome and at any rate not commonly practiced. According to Geisler (1990, p.93), Paul Falkenberg and Jean (Hans) Oser had worked as editors on *Westfront 1918*; their descriptions of cutting sound effects into the dialogue track during the post-production stage of film making matches the method described in *Filmkunst*. However, production sound mixing *at the time of filming* was possible in a studio or sound stage, provided the facility was suitably equipped with multiple microphone channels and under the supervision of

an audio engineer who would fade up (or down) relevant sound elements as they occurred during the shoot in accordance with the script. The battle scenes, involving tanks and explosions, were filmed in an exterior location, which would have resulted in the approach that *Filmkunst* described above (and which is supported by the accounts of Falkenberg and Oser) of super-imposing and cutting into a primary audio track. The interior scenes within the apartment are shot in a sound stage, enabling multiple audio elements to become captured and mixed simultaneously. But at this section, the sound effect of the laughter is heard at the same time as the cuckoo clock; whilst the laughter is of a more significant dramatic importance, the clock tick is still present. The sound effect of the laughter ends rather abruptly (it cuts out, rather than being faded out, as it would be in today's post production processes). It also lacks a spatial quality that would enforce the notion that this sound is coming from the room next door (again, this kind of spatial processing is something that would usually be achieved in today's post production processes). But in spite of its relative crudeness with regard to the spatial representation as an out of vision sound effect emanating through a closed door, the laughter is nonetheless a deliberate element of sound design. As a sound effect, it is positioned there precisely and intentionally; its presence creates a sound signal ("she is there, I am here, I can hear her laughter from next door") - the kind of dialectic, encoded sound effect defined by Murch as linguistic (1999, p.18). The sound effect of the out of vision laughter becomes an acoustic incentive for Karl to move forward in his quest to surprise his wife. During silent film, it would have been necessary to include a shot of the wife in the room next door to establish her presence in the vicinity. Pabst uses a sound element to create the narrative trajectory to move the action forward to the next step: the opening of the door. All through this scene, the clock tick is creating a temporary presence that suggests the "real time" passing during these moments, as well as (with hindsight) attesting to a sense of calm before the storm.

The ticking of the cuckoo clock again becomes a prominent feature during the final farewell between Karl and his wife. In this scene, the clock is actually included in vision as a cut away, and direct reference to the passage of time is made in the dialogue, as Karl is counting down the minutes when he is able to leave the now unhappy environment of his marital home. While he is now apparently wishing time

to move faster to propel him away from his wife and back to his comrades at the front, his wife seems more intent on trying to make the most of the waning timeframe, as she desperately implores her husband to at least discuss the events of the previous hours. The editing of the dialogue lines, as well as the quality of their delivery, invite further analysis. For the first part, there is the emotional difference in temperature between the two actors: the wife is downbeat and resigned in the delivery of her lines (as well as in her body language), as she repeatedly implores Karl to engage in a dialogue about what has happened. At the same time, Karl almost talks over his wife, as if in some parallel emotional universe. While he is getting ready, buttoning up his uniform with an apparent eager sense of anticipation at his imminent departure, he talks about the sense of camaraderie amongst his infantry friends. Karl looks at the cuckoo clock at intervals and announces the number of remaining minutes until he leaves for the front. While Karl's counting down the minutes to the moment that he will return to the front appears to be a source of joy to him (Karl continuously talking about seeing his comrades again) his wife is becoming increasingly distressed. The emotional disconnect between husband and wife at this moment, the sense of talking "past" the other person is reminiscent of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*. Plantinga (1997, p.373) discusses the duality between form and content of narrative in terms of emotional components. According to Plantinga (p.374) the *Verfremdungseffekt* sought to elicit a critical audience response, in which a narrative should lead the audience to recognise and comprehend the wider historical and social determinants within which the immediate action of a story is set. Perhaps even more helpful is Eddershaw (2002, p.16) who criticises that common translations of the German word *Verfremdungseffekt* such as "estrangement" or "distancing effect" or even "alienation" conjure up negative connotations. Instead, the term *Verfremdungseffekt* should be understood as a performance or directorial technique that allows the audience to experience different emotions to the actors within a story:

Sympathy is acceptable in Brecht's theatre but not empathy. The former is legitimate because it stops short of total identification. When the spectators' feelings turn into empathy, the character as object is lost, so the argument goes, and the audience is disempowered from analysing clearly the social and political forces at work in the fictional world of that character.
(Eddershaw *ibid.*)

It is worth revisiting once more the earlier discussion on the conceptual significance of *Heimat*. Earlier on in the film, as Karl was looking forward to being on home leave, *Heimat* conjured up a romantic - and conventional - family idyll, which was reflected in Karl's anticipation of being reunited with his wife. This was re-enforced by the conversation between Karl and the Student at the edge of the bomb crater, an abstract, somewhat even existentialist, setting of their final meeting. By this stage in the film, during the last minutes of Karl's home leave and as far as the emotive pull of any notion of *Heimat* is concerned, the marital home as both symbol and space of *Heimat* has ceased to exist in Karl's mind, and instead becomes eclipsed by Karl's desire to be re-united with his comrades on the western front. At this point, *Heimat* as a concept of *home* has evolved further through Karl's longing for the frontline trenches, for his friends and comrades.

Another noteworthy aspect of this section of the film, which is set away from the front lines and focuses on Karl's experience of returning to the marital home, is that it comprises music from an unseen source. It is a widely held understanding of early sound film (Chion 1994, p.148) that music was only used when it could justifiably be presented as a direct part of the action - it was diegetic, and generally tied in with on screen-action (characters singing or dancing or marching to music situated within the visual frame). The scene immediately preceding Karl on home leave does indeed match up with the established understanding of the function of musical performance in early sound film (Claus 1999, p.115). However, the music which is heard during a scene between Karl and his wife has no obvious connection to any element of the diegetic setting of the scene. In all other sections of *Westfront 1918* where music is used it is done so in a diegetic function and is presented as part of the *mise-en-scène*: singing soldiers in various settings at the front, the marching band accompanying the newly recruited troops, the musical theatre of the front cabaret: throughout *Westfront 1918*, any music used is anchored in the action and story of the diegesis.

Nonetheless, as Karl and his wife are turning in for the night a mournful musical accompaniment can be heard in the background. In the waning light of the couple's room, Karl's wife is sobbing, clearly heartbroken and shamed by Karl's discovery of her infidelity, whilst her husband - already lying in bed with the bedding tucked in tightly around him - is resigned to staring resolutely at the ceiling and refusing to

engage with any of his wife's pleas of contrition. The acoustic qualities of the background music suggest that this was played on the set and recorded at the same time as the dialogue. The fact that the scene does not show any actively playing instrumentalists as musical source (a small ensemble, a solo musician) as part of the diegesis suggests that the function of the music being used here is equivalent that of a non-diegetic underscore; an unseen musical bed in which the strained relationship of the married couple becomes narratively situated. According to Chion (1994, p. 146) during the early period of sound film, cinema “called on music only if the action justified it as diegetic”. This statement is supportable in terms of the use of music for *many* of the films made during the early sound period and indeed also holds true for much of *Westfront 1918* – however, this scene between Karl and his wife at night in their home calls into question a cast iron assumption that cinema *only* used music if it was firmly situated within the corresponding *mise-en-scène*.¹⁰

The reasons for the apparent absence of non-diegetic music in early sound film has been subject to extensive discussion – a primary argument which has been put forward the necessity for early sound film to distinguish itself from its silent precursor, a film form which had been characterised as being accompanied by live music played within the cinema space. This notion is seen as a convincing argument by many film theorists; Sannwald (1999, p. 29) makes reference to a wider preoccupation emerging during the late 1920s concerning the use of asynchronous sound components - Sannwald cites Rudolf Arnheim as having expressed such doubts - and in conjunction with any notion of asynchronous sounds, that the use of non-diegetic music was therefore perceived as a potentially confusing element, for instance where an unseen orchestra accompanied sound film action. Non-diegetic music, or so a chorus of film historians claim, was associated with the silent era scores that emanated from the orchestra pit *in front* of the cinema screen. According to Chion (1994, p.146), this meant that any music had been physically situated within the same space as the audience and as a result was conceptually not part of the physical screen space. To be clear, while Chion and many other writers are right to

¹⁰ More discussion on the role of non-diegetic music cf. the chapter on *Emil und die Detektive* (1931, directed by Lamprecht).

surmise that music was frequently used in a diegetic context, this scene in *Westfront 1918* is an example which demonstrates that music was also, even during the early days of sync sound, beginning to appear as non-diegetic underscore. Allan Gray's score to *Emil und die Detektive* (1931, directed by Lamprecht) similarly supports a counter-hypothesis that music was being used as non-diegetic underscore in sound films of the era earlier than hitherto accepted in many established film history texts.

Front Theatre and Totentanz

Although the subtitle of *Westfront 1918* was *Vier von der Infanterie* (literally: four from the infantry), it is the Student and Karl who are at the forefront of the film. An extended musical section (which does not feature any of the main protagonists) about a third into the story divides the film into two narrative sections. Kester (2003) notes that most of the film prior to this musical section focuses on the Student, whereas the section after the musical interlude of the front theatre shifts the film's focus more explicitly to Karl:

Both parts have a nearly equal number of scenes / sequences, but in terms of duration, the emphasis is on the second part, which is one and a half times the length of the first part.
Kester (2003, p. 129)

The fact that neither Karl, the student, the Bavarian nor the Lieutenant feature in the musical interlude of the front theatre renders this scene strangely disconnected from the central characters of the film. Are the soldiers in the cabaret audience symbolic of all soldiers in the war, and as such reflect symbolically also the eponymous "four from the infantry"? Does the distinct absence of any identifiable individual suggest an archetypal dimension, symbolising the condition of the universal soldier for whom being in uniform has become the "new normal" of everyday life? Does the lighter mood of some of the participating soldiers depicted in this scene merely serve to illustrate the front soldiers' need to take time out from the grim business of fighting and dying? Or is this a scene that allows viewer to step back from the sombre subject matter of war, the film providing relief to the on-screen characters, as well as to the cinema audience? When looked at in this way, the contrast of laughter, music and death take on a macabre dimension. Perhaps this scene resonates with an arcane European concept, a theme anchored within deeper roots of medieval scenes

depicting a *Totentanz* or *Dance Macabre*: the dance of the dead.

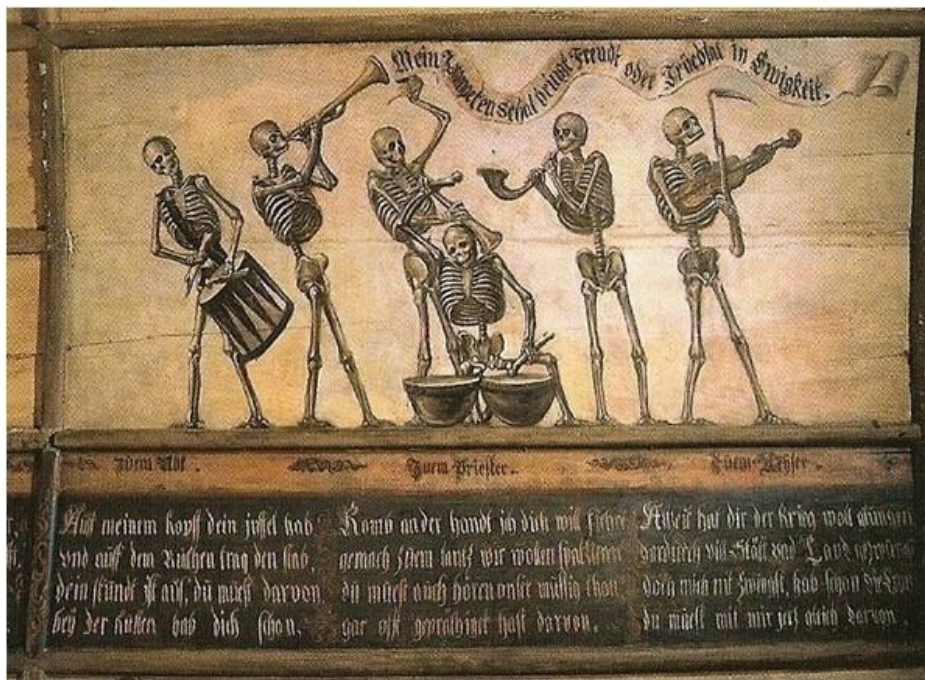


Illustration 82 Bleibacher Kirche (Germany) - Wall Mural.

Illustrations depicting the all too immediate proximity of life to death, of merriment in the face of mortality, were a variation of the wider *memento mori* concept found in much European art since the Middle Ages, throughout the Renaissance and beyond. But beyond the objective *memento mori*, the *Totentanz* [dance of the dead] is striking in its macabre jollity, the counterpoint of the silence of death with the noisy joy of being alive. They re-emerge in the aftermath of World War one, with artists reflecting on the experience of death in the battlefields, as seen below in examples from Ernst Barlach and Otto Dix



Illustration 83 Ernst Barlach: Totentanz¹¹ (1924)



Illustration 84 Otto Dix: Illusionsakt¹² (1922)

¹¹ (Museum of Modern Art, New York)

¹² (Rhode Island School of Design Museum)

Picking up Kester's (2003) reflection on the structure of *Westfront 1918*, it is worth recalling that the scene immediately prior to the musical interlude has Karl and the Student perched on the edge of a shell crater, discussing the topic of love and longing for their respective sweethearts. The Student encapsulates a sense of newly found optimism as he declares himself in love with his French girlfriend, while Karl in turn is declaring his yearning for his wife, whom he is looking forward to visiting on home leave. This scene with Karl and the Student ends in both of them laughing – an odd setting: the edge of a shell crater, a symbol of combat and mortal danger, with the two infantry men laughing and slapping each other on the back. The sense of light-hearted laughter strikes a humorous note which in terms of sound is immediately extended into the next scene, as the front cabaret scene fades up from black, and also opens with laughter mixed with the murmur of the expectant voices of the cabaret's audience of German front soldiers. Most of this front theatre section consists of a variety of musical performances: a prettily dressed young maid sings about love and longing (most certainly a component that is referential to the dialogue scene between Karl and the Student on the same subject immediately prior to the cabaret), a pair of clowns with some musical comedy, and finally a hearty *oompah* band belting out martial favourites to the receptive audience. Right in the middle of the cabaret section is the contrast between young inexperienced soldiers, vivaciously puffing on cigarettes and noisily professing their enjoyment of the entertainment laid on for the benefit of the soldiers; their spirited behaviour is offset by the sedate reactions of the more experienced soldiers around them. The section concludes with one veteran's advice to his youthful counterpart that this kind of happy interlude is bound to be very short-lived; still oblivious of what fate awaits them, the new recruits ignore these interventions. These are the symbolic clashing tones of foreground merriment framed by the theatre of war; perhaps this setting can be seen as another allusion to the *Totentanz* concept. The front theatre section is about eight minutes long and concludes with the brass band playing a popular march that induces the whole auditorium to link arms in time with the tune. Good humoured movement and music - a stark contrast to the world outside the front theatre; a temporary reprieve afforded to the soldiers.

The role of music as controlling the actions of men is picked up again immediately in

the next scene: the military brass band of the front theatre is followed by the sound of the marching band playing "*Der gute Kamerad*", as it accompanies the newly recruited soldiers parading past the civilians in Karl's home town. The first scene after the musical interlude depicts the reality of the hardship endured by the civilian population, and contrasts sharply with the jolly interlude of the front cabaret, the musical reference again a pointed reference to friendship, loss and death.¹³

Emphasising the Sound of *Westfront 1918*'s in the Press

As an early sound film *Westfront 1918* reflects the prominent role of sound components as expressed by the author Ernst Johannsen¹⁴ in his 1928 novel *Vier von der Infanterie*, from which the script for *Westfront 1918* was developed. When Pabst's film opened in German cinemas in the spring of 1930 it was presented under the title *Westfront 1918 - Vier von der Infanterie*, thus establishing a clear reference to Johannsen's literary source material from which the script was developed. Johannsen's book was evidently shaped by his own experiences of the First World War and the book had been widely read. It was perhaps not published in the same volume and nor with the international recognition as earned by Johannsen's contemporary Erich Maria Remarque, but it clearly must have chimed with a considerable readership during the late 1920s. Therefore, similarly to *Im Westen nichts Neues* the adaptation of *Westfront 1918* from a popular literary text into a sound film was a topical undertaking by the respective films' creators. At the time of its premiere, this film poster advertised *Westfront 1918* as a "*Nero Tonfilm*", referencing in the main the literary source of Johannsen's novel through the film's subtitle *Vier von der Infanterie*:

¹³ "*Der gute Kamerad*" was a poem by Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862), which tells of the loss of a good comrade fighting along the first-person narrator of the poem. The piece was set to music by Friedrich Silcher (1789-1860), and is (under its colloquially known title "*Ich hatte einen Kameraden*") a standard piece of music played military funerals.

¹⁴ The sonic component within Johannsen's prose will be illustrated in more detail, later on in this chapter.



Illustration 85 *Westfront 1918* Film Première Poster (Design: F. Weber, from: filmportal.de)

The artwork presents the four protagonists as archetypes, rather than advertising individually identifiable actors; instead, these profiles depict an “everyman” manifest in uniform. Gustav Dießl and Fritz Kampers, who play two of the main protagonists, were well known - and eminently bankable -actors, but instead of using an image of Dießl or Kampers in uniform, this advertisement seems to suggest an anonymous identity, however, one which would have resonated with many ordinary German ex-service men at that time. The theme of the official film poster was extended and augmented with more information in this double page advertisement for *Westfront 1918*, which appeared at the time of its premiere:



Illustration 86 Film-Kurier Advertisement (Cinegraph Archive)

The advertisement now also prominently features Pabst's director's credit, as well as the cast list (below the names of the main film crew, with the sound credits emphasised in bold font). This design is already advertising the film's sound credentials, alongside its reference to Nero's established reputation as an important production company. However, a week into its run, a new approach was being taken with the promotion of film, most certainly in response to the plaudits that the sonic component of *Westfront 1918* had already garnered. The new advertisement is presented in the style of a triptych, with the steel helmeted four infantry soldiers' sharp parallel profiles positioned in the central panel.



WESTFRONT 1918
VIER VON DER INFANTERIE
 EIN NERO-TONFILM REGIE: G. W. PABST

DER BISHER GRÖSSTE DEUTSCHE SPRECHFILM

LEITER DER VERTONUNG:
Dr. GUIDO BAGIER

SO URTEILT

TON-technisch zeigt dieser
 bisher größte deutsche
 Sprechfilm höchste Voll-
 endung . . .
 Berliner Montagepost

UNTER PERSÖNLICHER MITWIRKUNG
 VON **JOSEPH MASSOLLE**

DIE PRESSE:

Wort, Musik und Geräusche ist
 in der Vollendung repro-
 diziert. Es dürfte nicht
 Besseres, vielleicht nicht
 gleich Vollkommenes, in
 der Welt geben! . . .
 Lichtbildbühne

... Der Film ist sowohl
 bild- wie tontechnisch eine
 große Leistung . . . Der
 Ton verstärkt das Erlebnis.
 Filmkurier

Wiedergabe auf Tobis. Klar,
 deutlich, plastisch, fast ohne
 Nebengeräusch. Die Illusion
 stark und eindrucksvoll . . .
 Kinematograph

... tonlich außerordentlich
 gelungen . . . Der Film
 . . . Die letzte Bestätigung
 der Echtheit brachte der Ton
 der Materialschlacht . . .
 Tempo

... eine der besten und ein-
 druckvollsten Bild- und Ton-
 schöpfungen der letzten
 Jahre . . .
 Berliner Volkszeitung

... Es quillt aus dem Laut-
 sprecher wie bitterste Wirk-
 lichkeit. Man erlebt tief
 und echt bei dieser Apparatur.
 Der Montag

TONHERSTELLUNG WIEDER

VERLEIH:


TOBIS

HERSTELLER:


Illustration 87 Film-Kurier 31 May 1930 (Cinegraph Archive)

Looking at the top of the advertisement, what is strikingly noticeable in the two outer frames of the triptych is the prominence given to the visual representation of recording equipment. Though the drawings of microphones in the centre foreground of each frame are less than sophisticated, their inclusion carries a highly significant symbolism. Their presence in the promotional material of the film appears to suggest the immediacy of sound recording in capturing war action for film. The microphones are a visual signifier of the originality of this film, setting it apart from previous war films of the silent period. Audiences will be able to hear the sounds of

war because microphones similar to the ones depicted in the picture were placed in such locations to capture the acoustic component of a story set in the *Great War*. Normally in film making every effort is made to preserve the “make believe” of the filmic world. This generally requires that whatever equipment is involved in the making of a film is kept strictly out of shot; any intrusion of a microphone into the frame is a mistake, one that undermines the audience’s belief in the story world of the film. But here, as an advertising tool, the normally invisible microphone is placed centre stage in the foreground. The image is proudly emphasizing the sonic credentials of *Westfront 1918*. “Look at this,” the image appears to suggest, “These are the microphones that were used to capture these action sequences”. Turning again to the film's extensive discussion as published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Kracauer wrote*:

Das Elend wird durch die Vertonung, für die sich Guido Bagier und Joseph Masolle [sic.] verantwortlich zeichnen, in eine so grausame Nähe gerückt, dass der Abstand, den sonst künstliche Werke zwischen dem Publikum und dem ungeformten Geschehen setzen, stellenweise aufgehoben ist. Die Reproduktion des Geschusspektakels ist gelungen. Geglückt sind auch mehrerer Versuche der Tonmontage: etwa die mit Hilfe lautlicher Entwicklung bewerkstelligten Übergänge zwischen zwei Bildeinheiten.
(Frankfurter Zeitung 27.5.30)

The suffering becomes unbearably palpable via its sonification, for which Guido Bagier and Joseph Masolle [sic.] deserve credit, with the result that any disconnect with the audience, which might otherwise result from such artificially created events, becomes eradicated. The successful reproduction of spectacular gun battles has been achieved. Various elements of sound montage have also been accomplished: for instance, in the sonic transition between different visual components.

Joining the canon of contemporaneous praise for *Westfront 1918* at the time of its release, Kracauer singles out again and again the film's use of sound as a fundamental determinant over how intensely the film affected its audiences. In his first sound film, Pabst employed sound as a catalyst to fire the imagination. According to Hembus and Bandmann (1980, p.21) Pabst did not see himself as a realist, but as someone who approached realism as a jumping off point from which the film-maker would create and realise his artistic vision. In 1937, Pabst wrote an essay entitled *Le rôle intellectuel du cinéma* [*The intellectual role of cinema*] (cited

in Kieninger and Krenn, 1998, p.32) in which he surmised that cinema remained in essence a visual medium. However, the importance of this visual aspect, which Pabst demonstrated via his silent work as well as in his sound films, was now complemented and expanded via the aural domain. It goes without saying that the significance of Fritz Arno Wagner's cinematography, with its dramatic lighting as well as his use of dynamic tracking shots along trenches full of battling soldiers, remains of great importance in the overall realisation of Pabst's creative ambition. Kracauer (ibid.) also paid tribute to this, comparing for instance the harrowing images of the field hospital to a mediaeval tableau depicting a biblical martyrdom. But equally *Westfront 1918* demonstrates convincingly how the aural domain became an innovative component in film-making; sound's creative potential extending far beyond the function of including spoken dialogue. Pabst saw himself as an auteur, who was ultimately in charge of shaping the film, complete with script, performance and the entire *mise-en-scène*. Pabst knew that approaching a film version of a book required particular expertise and summarised his views on literary adaptations in a letter to Arthur Schnitzler in 1931 as follows:

Geht man an eine 'Verfilmung', so müssen naturgemäss Änderungen der Form and vielfach auch des Handlungsablaufs vorgenommen werden, damit den notwendigerweise anderen Gesetzen des Films genüge getan wird. Verfilmen heisst also ändern. Ändern heisst, Vorhandenes fortlassen und Neues dazu bringen.
(G.W.Pabst an Arthur Schnitzler, in: Pabst - Ausstellungskatalog der Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin 1997)

In approaching a film adaptation, changes will have to be made not only to the form, but also to the development of narrative events. This is necessary to satisfy the discrete rules of film. Therefore, a film adaptation requires changes. Change means leaving out certain elements, and introducing others.

Pabst's film *Westfront 1918* was not a recreation of Johannsen's novel *Vier von der Infanterie* for the screen. Reflecting Pabst's comments to Schnitzler, the film adaptation omitted some scenes, whilst adding new scenarios to facilitate the novels transition to the screen effectively. Although the battle depicted in the outer panels of the triptych shown above incorporates aircraft action, there are in fact no scenes in the film *Westfront 1918* that involve planes, let alone any aircraft engaged in aerial combat, in spite of the illustrations' allusion. However, anyone who saw this advert

and who had read the novel would very likely recall horrific scenes described by Johannsen in the original text: the story's main characters witness dogfights in the skies above, watch aircrafts crashing down in flames and encounter incinerated remains of aviators who had become trapped in their cockpits. In this way the advertisement capitalised on the literary text's narrative legacy, while incorporating the trappings of modern technology and sound film production into promoting the Pabst's cinema version.

Sound in the Literary Source Material

At this point it would be useful to turn to the literary text, particularly in regard to Johannsen's skill in giving a sense of the aural dimension as a component of warfare, which is strikingly reflected in Johannsen's use of sound elements incorporated within his writing style. In the opening chapter of *Vier von der Infanterie*, the author sets the scene of a German army unit in an occupied French village whose only remaining inhabitants are women, children and old men. Johannsen uses various techniques to portray sound as a visceral, oppressive presence of war; both distant battlefield din as well as foreground artillery elements are being used by the author as narrative colours to paint the martial setting. Johannsen frequently resorts to onomatopoeic components to embolden the acoustic dimensions in his writing as he describes a scene:

Der Abschuss eines schweren französischen Geschützes tönt, trotz des entfernten, leise rumorenden Geschützdonners der Front, schräg vom trüben Himmel herab, als stände es dort in den schweren Regenwolken. Einige Sekunden lang ist es still. Mit feinem "Jiii", welches zum heulenden "Juuu" übergeht und mit fürchterlich drohendem "Romm" endet, saust die Granate heran, gleichsam in satanischer Freude aufschreiend. Da steigt schon drüben im Dorf majestätisch ein riesenhafter Springbrunnen aus Erde, Qualm, Steinen, Staub und Splittern. Ein betäubendes Krachen, die erste Granate ist eingeschlagen. Über die Dächer schwebt eine Qualmwolke. Flüchtende, auf die eigenen Geschütze schimpfende Bewohner, eilen in tiefe Keller. Eine schreiende Frau bricht for der zerrissenen Leiche ihres Kindes zusammen. Vor Minuten noch spielte es dort, wo jetzt ein riesiges Loch gähnt. Im Lazarett horchen die Kranken und Verwundeten auf.
(Johannsen [1929] 2014, p10)

The firing of a heavy French weapon emanates, in spite of the

distant rumbling of ordnance thunder on the front, from the murky sky, as if suspended high above within the heavy rainclouds. For a few seconds, there is silence. The projectile whizzes closer: delicate “weee” evolves into howling “wooo” and culminates in a terrifying “woooooom”, as if crying out in a satanic joy. Over there, in the village a giant fountain: earth, smoke, rubble, dust and splinters rise majestically into the air. A deafening explosion; the first shell has detonated. A plume of smoke hangs in the air above the roofline. Fleeing villagers, cursing their countrymen’s weapons, rush to deep cellars for protection. A woman breaks down, screaming over the butchered body of her child who, moments earlier, had been at play where a giant hole now gapes in the ground. The injured and wounded in the field hospital prick up their ears¹⁵.

The preservation of the sonic quality palpable in Johannsen’s writing style was an important element in adapting a film script from this textual source, and one which Pabst’s film would reflect through the use of sound in film. From the opening chapter of the film, when apparently anodyne scenes depicting soldiers at rest and play away from direct frontline action, the film employs sonic components which unexpectedly change the mood of the film: suddenly the sound effect of an artillery shell exploding - unseen - bursts into the narrative, taking protagonists and audience alike by surprise. Right from the beginning of *Westfront 1918* Pabst uses sound to cultivate innovative ways of storytelling, continually stimulating the audience's imagination.

Pabst’s own Journey to Sound

As a final point on the achievement which *Westfront 1918* clearly represents as an exemplar of early German sound film practice, it is worth reflecting on the fact that Pabst himself had been highly sceptical of the very concept of sound film, even just a few years prior to his own sound debut. This chapter has explored in some detail how Pabst’s war film *Westfront 1918* embraced the creative opportunities afforded by synchronous sound, even during a period when limited sound technology still presented film-makers with some restrictions. One needs to only think back to the

¹⁵ The closing line about the injured and wounded reacting to the sound of battle conveys a literary reference to acoustic memory – the sound of war is presented as affecting the sensibilities of the injured in particular.

decision to include diegetic music in the exterior dialogue scenes of Karl's return on home leave: the jump cut in the back-ground music track under the foreground dialogue represented an unavoidable compromise. Yet the music was of significant enough symbolism, aiding narrative and dramaturgy, to justify its inclusion - even if the simultaneous recording of dialogue and music created continuity problems in the cutting room. While using the diegetic music of the marching band as an atmospheric element of the *mise-en-scène*, Pabst was able to combine foreground dialogues, and created a setting for Karl's home-coming scene redolent with emotive (and at times deliberately conflicting) connotations. In addition to the use of music to connect or contrast story elements, Pabst used sound elements to create striking scene transitions. Pabst also understood how to link narrative elements across scene transitions: for instance in the portrayal of the *Leutnant's* descent into madness, which incorporated the location change from battle field to hospital. Pabst's first sound film comprises elements of astonishing narrative complexity.

Two years earlier, Pabst had been highly critical of the very concept of synchronous sound in film, stating in 1928 via the *Vossische Zeitung*¹⁶ that sound film might only benefit educational films or political propaganda pieces, while maintaining the firmly held opinion that sound film would effectively do damage to the art of silent film making (cited in Mühl-Benninghaus 1999, p. 91). Pabst had already established a reputation as a successful director during the pre-sound era, and – writing in 1928 – he was either unable or unwilling to consider the artistic potential of sound, prior to its arrival in German film production (ibid.). Writing a year later in the *Film-Kurier* (1 June 1929, cited Jacobsen 1997, p.127), Pabst felt compelled to acknowledge that he had perhaps been too hasty to dismiss the intrinsic value of sound. What had swayed him to revise his opinion was the fact that in the intervening months he had seized the opportunity to travel to Twickenham Studios to learn more about sound film. Having been an opponent of sound, Pabst's spell in England convinced the director of the creative opportunities represented by film sound and on his return from London, the director began making plans for a sound film. By 1930 Pabst proved that he was able to utilise sound creatively, having shaped imaginative story-

¹⁶ Asta Nielsen: *Tod der Filmkunst*, in: *Vossische Zeitung* 26.8.1928.No.403; (FUB Archive).

telling concepts that went beyond the ability to record synchronous dialogue via his first sound film. *Westfront 1918* substantiates Pabst's achievements: in the way sonic gestures link together different scenes, in the editing technique of overlapping dialogues, through the film's use of music and in the manner in which sound provides an emotive contrast within the narrative. Pabst used sound as a synchronous element, but also as a sonic element that could run in counterpoint to the screen. Through *Westfront 1918*, German cinema could demonstrate how referential connections to concepts beyond the narrative could be created through sound. The aural dimension, German cinema's new narrative ingredient, became an emotive component that could at times overwhelm the audience in its collage of noisy battles or haunting sounds of madness. Equally the film demonstrated how to draw the audience in closer to the narrative by employing quieter sonic elements, or even through its use of silence. *Westfront 1918* can be seen as indicative of one director's journey from the medium of silent film into sound. Pabst's change of mind reflects the transition of other critical voices who were initially sceptical to the concept of sound. In most instances such objections were expressed from the standpoint of theory and principle rather than from the perspective of reflecting the actual role of sound in films, and many of these reservations were expressed in response to the position cinema had carved out for itself in the wider cultural sphere during the silent era. Once film-makers began to recognise the innovative prospects offered by sound, the creative dimension of the aural component in film-making would flourish, and critical voices faded away.

Legacy of *Westfront 1918*

In 1955, the film publication *Filmkunst* dedicated a special edition to the lifetime's achievement of G.W. Pabst, which included interviews with actors involved in his films as well as with the Austrian director himself. As regards *Westfront 1918*, several of the film's cast were interviewed for this edition; some themselves veterans of the first World War, they compared the representation of warfare and life in the trenches to their own first-hand experiences. Fritz Kampers, who played the *Bavarian* in the film adaptation, was quoted (ibid.) as essentially playing himself as an infantry man of the Great War. The film's classification as a "valuable artistic contribution" to German cinema had equally been acknowledged by the board of

film censors in 1930 (Klaus 1988, p. 181), as well as by the journal *Filmkunst* (ibid.) in 1955. *Filmkunst* wrote that the realism of *Westfront 1918* had been unprecedented in the cinema at the time of the film's release, stating that some sequences had to be cut from the film to avoid being too shocking to its audiences:

Das wurde so realistisch gezeigt, wie nie zuvor. Es mussten einige Szenenfolgen entfernt werden, um eine zu krasse Wirkung auf das Publikum zu vermeiden. Trotzdem erschütterte der Film. Der Film erhielt in Deutschland das Prädikat: 'künstlerisch'.
(*Filmkunst* Nr. 18/1955, Sonderheft G.W.Pabst, Potsdam HFF archive, no page number)

[The war] was shown with unprecedented realism. Some sequences had to be removed for fear of being too shocking for the audience. Nonetheless, the film had a devastating effect. The film was awarded a special classification, attesting its artistic merit.

The appraisal of the film's impact as published in *Filmkunst* twenty-five years after Pabst's war film had opened (but crucially, at a time when the director as well as key cast members were still living, and giving interviews), reflect the impact the film had made received in 1930. Press articles and comments about *Westfront 1918* written at the time of its release attest to the enormous effect that *Westfront 1918* had on contemporary audiences and critics.

This chapter has illustrated how Pabst integrates the aural domain hauntingly in the use of screams, making the visceral effect of human suffering tangible. Pabst used this technique again in his second sound film *Kameradschaft* (1931), a drama based on the real-life event of a coal mining accident that had taken place at the beginning of the 20th century – although the film script relocates the action to immediately after World War One. As with *Westfront 1918*, Pabst used sound effects to add tension to the desperate situation of mine workers trapped below ground, while rescue teams from different nationalities are shown setting off in search for survivors. As a narrative component, the use of different languages features strongly in both of Pabst's early sound films: while language differentiates between the different nations, Pabst shows that the characters' share a common bond in their humanity, and via the universal capacity for suffering and love. This was a concept Pabst had first emphasised in *Westfront 1918*, particularly in the courtship between the German

soldier and the young French woman. Using voice and language to signify human presence, either as an out of vision embodiment of pain and suffering, or as a way to attract attention, Pabst first established this sonic dramaturgy for the use of the human voice in filmic narrative in *Westfront 1918*. This chapter has demonstrated how dialogue intonation and timing of speech affect emotive elements of the narrative. Timing is affected by performance style as well as editing technique. Particularly in the section of Karl's disappointing home-leave, the dialogue elements highlight the desperate isolation of the characters. This is more a consequence of the manner in which the protagonists speak to one another, rather than in the content of their dialogue lines. This is also a feature in the next film: Dudow's *Kuhle Wampe* (1932). In Dudow's film, it is easy to make a convincing argument to interpret this style of dialogue performance as a manifestation of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*¹⁷. The performance technique makes characters appear disconnected from one another, as if they are not speaking *with* each other but *past* each other, is also observable in Pabst's film – it is entirely feasible that these dialogue scenes in *Westfront 1918* (1930) were deliberately employing performance technique inspired by Brecht's theatrical practice. After all, Pabst had a background in avant-garde theatre (where he worked before he embarked on his film career), and Pabst and Brecht knew each other during the 1920s (and both were to work on the Threepenny Opera film project, even if Brecht later disassociated himself from the film).

¹⁷*Verfremdungseffekt* - literally *alienation effect*. Brecht used this as a technique to deliberately break the narrative flow of a performance, with the intention of preventing the audience from getting too emotionally engaged with a protagonist. This technique will be discussed in more detail in the *Kuhle Wampe* chapter.

Chapter 7 Kuhle Wampe Oder: Wem gehört die Welt?

(For plot summary and cast list, please see Appendix I)



Illustration 88 Illustrierter Film-Kurier. (FUB Archive)

Kuhle Wampe Oder: Wem gehört die Welt? [*Kuhle Wampe. Or to Whom belongs the World*] is the only sound film made by the German left during the late Weimar Republic, and as such invites further discussion in terms of its sound aesthetic in the context of early German sound film. *Kuhle Wampe* was also Bertolt Brecht's first opportunity to work with the new medium of sound in the cinema,¹ especially as this project satisfied his ambition as a writer who would manage to retain significant

¹ Given that Brecht had retreated from any involvement in Pabst's *Die Dreigroschenoper*

control over his material. The film deserves closer attention because of its unique approach to integrating sound into a film project that has all the hallmarks of the modernist spirit that permeated much of the Weimar Republic. Germany's political left was influenced by the broad modernist themes that have become associated with the technological advances of the 1920s, and by extension were reflecting the spirit of political modernisation as idealised in post-revolutionary Russia. This chapter explores the specific style of *Kuhle Wampe* by examining a number of key scenes that illustrate a complex sound aesthetic. Whilst *Kuhle Wampe* has long been recognised as an important film in terms of the wider political context of the Weimar Republic (for instance see Gersch 1969, Brewster et al 1974, Korte 1998, Murray 1990, Rügner 2000, Geiselberger 2008), there has been little engagement with the sonic style of the film to date. *Kuhle Wampe* deserves greater recognition in particular with regard to its engagement with new sound opportunities, in spite of limited technological and financial resources available to the film's makers. Furthermore, this chapter builds a contextual discussion of wider aesthetic determinants, in particular with regard to some of the key individuals who collaborated in the making of the film.

As the film's writer, Brecht was able to experiment how to transfer key mannerism of his stage performance style (such as the *Verfremdungseffekt*²) to the sound film format. *Kuhle Wampe*'s subject matter of unemployment and eviction were themes that resonated through a number of different films made during the Weimar Republic, although on closer inspection these films appear to proffer a diverse range of approaches to their political subtexts. Prometheus's silent film *Mutter Krausen's Fahrt ins Glück* [*Mutter Krausen's Journey to Happiness*], which had been directed by Piel Jutzi, 1929, is one such storyline that resonated strongly with its contemporary audiences when it was released during the silent era. Jutzi's film attempted to reflect real life in an objective manner, but in a highly dramatic format. This new approach to "real life" in film became associated with the "*Neue*

² The concept of *Verfremdungseffekt* has already been introduced briefly as part of the Westfront 1918 chapter, but will be discussed in further detail in this chapter

Sachlichkeit”³ movement. According to Plumb (2006, p.151) it is problematic to generalise *Neue Sachlichkeit* too readily as a rigid aesthetic form, given that many different artists, film-makers and writers produced a diverse range of works that can be broadly categorised as belonging to this umbrella term. Nonetheless, there are common themes, as many examples of this artistic response to social and political conditions of the era contain elements of social criticism. Film was hailed by many artists, including George Grosz (*ibid* p.47), as the most modern of art forms: dynamic, contemporary - even futuristic. At the same time, it is important to stress that *Neue Sachlichkeit* (with its reference to objectivity) did not equal a realistic aesthetic, but a new expression of creative engagement with aspects of reality (Brecht’s application of the *Verfremdungseffekt* to some of the dialogue scenes in *Kuhle Wampe* is an exemplar of this approach). Given the modernising ambitions on the left of the political spectrum, a case study examining an emerging approach to sound in cinema generates an important contribution to the discussion of a medium undergoing fundamental transformation.

In terms of films that dealt with contemporary social issues, there is also a subtle distinction to be drawn between the “*Strassenfilm*”⁴ [*Street Film*] and the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. The genre of the *Strassenfilm* focused on the plight of individual characters struggling in the economic tensions of the 1920s (Pabst’s *Die Büchse der Pandora* is a notable example), without going into the wider socio-economic context to a deeper degree. Films of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* had a clearer political mission, shifting the focus from the plight of the individual to the wider social context. Other film companies had given the subject matter of economic hardship an altogether more cheerful veneer, such as Ufa’s musical *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* [*Three from the Filling Station*] (directed by Wilhelm Thiele, 1930) as well as the less successful film with a similar title *Die Drei von der Stempelstelle* [*Three from the Job Centre*] (directed by Wilhelm’s brother Eugen Thiele, 1931/32). But whereas Wilhelm Thiele’s *immensely popular* musical comedy portrays its main protagonists

³ [New objectivity/new realism]

⁴ Sometimes also referred to as “*Gassenfilm*” which carries the same meaning. Also: “*Asphaltfilm*”, creating the same connotation, the word a reference to a 1929 silent film of that title (directed by Joe May, 1929)

pulling themselves out of their bankruptcy thanks to their plucky resolve and inventiveness, *Kuhle Wampe* delivers a stark and doubtlessly more realistic sound film portrayal of unemployment. It utilises sound elements to set up uncomfortable contrasts in some of the situations the protagonists encounter, and also uses silence to emphasise the helplessness of various characters in the story. This is demonstrated for instance in the sequence when the Bönike's pragmatic daughter Anni is trying to look for help and financial support from various government departments to prevent their family becoming evicted from their apartment (this sequence will be discussed in more details regarding its use of silence). Whereas Thiele's *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* uses music and sound to create a cheerful piece of escapism, *Kuhle Wampe* uses sound and music in a different style in order to express the difficulties faced by the film's protagonists. This is not just a matter of music written in a different style, but moreover a result of the film's sharp use of contrasting sound elements and uncomfortable pauses in dialogue scenes.

A comprehensive protocol encompassing materials and documents about *Kuhle Wampe* compiled by Gersch and Hecht (1971) quotes the 1930s film critic and journalist Heinz Luedecke's reaction to the film:

„Kuhle Wampe“ ist erstens eine Zeltstadt am Müggelsee (die hochdeutsche Übersetzung wäre: Kalter Bauch!), zweitens ein Tonfilm und drittens ein „Fall“. Für uns ist er neben seiner unterhaltenden Qualität als Spielfilm außerdem ein interessantes Dokument – der erste proletarische Tonfilm, und dann – welche Musik! – eine packende Darstellung der Lage der Arbeiterklasse in der Weimarer Republik – und ein mitreißender Aufruf zur Solidarität. (Gersch and Hecht, 1971, p.95)

First of all, “Kuhle Wampe” is a tent colony by the Müggelsee lake (high German the translation [of Kuhle Wampe] would be: cold stomach); secondly it is a sound film; and thirdly it is a “case”. Apart from its entertaining qualities as a feature film, it is also an interesting document - the first proletarian sound film, and also - what amazing music! - a gripping portrayal of Weimar Republic's working class - and a passionate appeal for solidarity.

The fact the Luedecke categorised *Kuhle Wampe* as “a case” suggests a reference to the protracted deliberations by government agencies over the certification of the

film; this background aspect which will be discussed below. According to Kracauer (2004 [1947], p.243), *Kuhle Wampe* was the only German film that explicitly incorporated communist ideology. It reflected revolutionary concepts of workers' solidarity, including taking collective action against the judicial authority. As such *Kuhle Wampe* was an outspoken portrayal of resistance in the face of social pressures on the proletarian classes within an industrial society. In his seminal work *From Caligari to Hitler* (2004 [1947]) Kracauer cites Bryher's appraisal of the *Zeitgeist* Berlin at the time; Bryher was a journalist who was sending her reports to a British newspaper when *Kuhle Wampe* was being released, and Kracauer believed that this account was an apposite reflection of the era:

Berlin is too unsettled, too fearful of the coming winter, to care much for cinema. (...) After two or three days, the visitor wonders why revolution does not happen, not that there is any specific thing to provoke it apparent to the eyes, but the outbreak against this odd insecure heaviness is to be preferred than waiting for a storm that has sometime got to burst. (...) The film that interests Berlin most at this moment is *Kuhle Wampe*.

(Bryher 1932, p. 132; cited in Kracauer 2004 [1947], p.243)

Bryher's piece reflects the political tension in Berlin during the early 1930s, as well as giving an insight into the keen interest and public reaction to *Kuhle Wampe*. The fact that Kracauer makes reference to Bryher's report speaks to the international themes raised by the film *Kuhle Wampe* at the time of its release. Unemployment was on the rise in many countries. In Germany, burdened with reparation payments as a result of the country's war debt, the global economic crisis resulted in the withdrawal of financial credits, causing the collapse of countless businesses - including those independent players in the film industry struggling to weather the costly transition into sound. Against this backdrop, audiences were faced with either escapist fantasies provided by murder mysteries, romantic comedies, as well as the musical operetta style that established itself at the time of early sound film in Germany.⁵ In contrast, *Kuhle Wampe* was a film that offered a more edgy reflection of its contemporaneous period, encouraging its audiences to engage more critically with the wider context of Germany's social injustice.

⁵ *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* and *Der Kongreß Tanzt* were highly successful examples of this genre

***Kuhle Wampe*'s Wider Cultural and Economic Context**

Before moving on to a more specific analysis of *Kuhle Wampe*'s sound style in narrative terms, in regard to the relationship between image and sound, it is worth establishing some of the production circumstances of *Kuhle Wampe*. In this context, the overall effect of sound film on the modernist movements of Europe has been discussed by Malte Hagener (2007, pp.19-40), who concludes that it was not the aesthetic consequence of sound in film, but the economic dimension which made the transition into sound film more challenging for proponents of the avant-garde. Hagener includes *Kuhle Wampe* in a list of avant-garde films which tried to engage with sound in film in a new way:

In aesthetic terms, sound film proved to be a welcome addition to the avant-garde as many early sound films were made in a context that was clearly influenced by the avant-garde. (...) many of the central figures of the avant-garde had interesting ideas on the employment of sound and did not reject the new technology outright. (...) Sound film did in fact act as an engine and catalyst that restructured cinema culture in total.
(Hagener 2007, pp.35-36)

The increasing cost associated with making sound film resulted in greater financial pressures to succeed at the box office and proved a significant obstacle to independent film-makers. In order to recoup the capital outlay of the production, film companies were increasingly aiming for story lines with a common denominator to maximise audience interest. As discussed earlier in this research project, the financial pressure of sound film production disadvantaged smaller film studios. Film productions increasingly favoured story lines with common denominators for popular appeal, resulting in limited subject matters. Love stories, comedies, musicals as well as subjects from military glory days in history (in particular Prussian kings and Austro-Hungarian Imperial majesties) generated a more homogenised subject focus; high production values drove film production increasingly into the domain of larger film studios. As a consequence of this development, studio hierarchies removed control of film content and focus increasingly away from the actual film-makers. Brecht himself had already experienced a frustrating erosion of his voice as author when his successful stage version of *Die Dreigroschen Oper* was adapted for the cinema by Nero film in 1931

under the direction of G.W. Pabst. The relatively liberal Nero film company had higher altruistic ambitions in comparison to Ufa's lightweight entertainment focus, and Nero had already produced stories that explored internationalist themes - such as Pabst's *Westfront 1918* (1930) and *Kameradschaft* (1931). Nonetheless, Brecht fell out with Nero over the adaptation of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, his gritty stage *Singspiel* [a play incorporating songs] about the exploits of Soho's criminal underworld and its malevolent protagonist *Mack the Knife*. Seeking to negotiate a contract for the adaptation of the stage play, Nero had approached Brecht and Kurt Weill in 1930. The suggestion was to grant writer and composer full artistic freedom to tailor the story in its transition from stage to screen, making changes as they saw fit. According to Heinrich Geiselberger (2008, p.9), Brecht was primarily concerned with preserving the biting edge of the stage version. In accordance with his political vision as well as in compliance with the conditions of his contract Brecht decided to adapt the stage version under a new title and submitted the film script *Die Beule* [*The Dent* or *The Lump*] to Nero. The film production company rejected the script and both parties subsequently accused each other of breaking their contractual agreement. The outcome was that Weill resigned himself to receiving compensation, whilst Brecht turned his back on Nero's film adaptation of the stage play. The effect of the *Dreigroschenoper* experience is critical to understanding Brecht's commitment to the protection of his authority as writer in subsequent film projects, and *Kuhle Wampe* was to provide him such a truly collaborative opportunity.

According to Geiselberger (2008, p.24), Dudow developed the initial idea for *Kuhle Wampe* after reading a newspaper report about an unemployed worker who (after having carefully removed his wristwatch) committed suicide by jumping from a window. Given a steep decline in industrial production at the beginning of the 1930s, similar suicides were not isolated incidents at the time of the film's inception. According to Eisenschitz (1974) the "the statistics for January 1931 record the suicide of eight unemployed workers in a single day" (p.65) and were a reflection of worsening living standards in the face of spiralling economic instability. While Brecht was still recovering from the humiliating alienation from "his" *Dreigroschenoper* film, he began to collaborate with Dudow on the film project and a year later the film's creators published the following statement about their

experience:

Unter dem frischen Eindruck der Erfahrungen aus dem Dreigroschenprozeß setzten wir, erstmalig in der Geschichte des Films, wie man uns sagte, einen Vertrag durch, der uns, die Hersteller, zu den Urhebern im rechtlichen Sinn machte. (...) Unsere kleine Gesellschaft bestand aus zwei Filmschreibern, einem Regisseur, einem Musiker, einem Produktionsleiter und last not least einem Rechtsanwalt. (Brecht/Dudow/Höllering/Kaspar/Ottwalt/Scharfenberg⁶ ca.1932) [Reproduced in Heinrich Geiselberger 2008, p.44: Materialien zum Film]

Fresh from the experience of the Threepenny court case, we got approval for a contract (apparently a first in the history of film) which would guarantee us as film-makers full rights as authors. Our small film company consisted of two film authors, one director, one musician, a production manager and - last but not least - a lawyer.

The largest German film studio Ufa was bankrolled and run by the industrialist Alfred Hugenberg, who had distinct strategic commitments to conservative ideologies. Given this background, Ufa was rather unlikely to support socialist - let alone communist films that might animate cinema audiences to question the capitalist status quo of Weimar's industrial fabric. In a clear political counterpoint to this, the forces of the left were more interested in a debate on placing the means of production in the hands of the proletariat, which is essentially the conclusion arrived at by the end of *Kuhle Wampe oder Wem gehört die Welt?* The concept of proletarian identity and the working-class movement had been well-established in Germany and traced its roots back to the years prior to the First World War. In the turmoil following German capitulation, the post war era was shaped by socialist and communist movements, resulting in revolutionary historical incidents such as the Spartacist uprising and the establishment the *Räte Republik* (an attempt to set up local governmental control through workers' councils in cities such as Berlin, Munich, Hamburg and Bremen, as well in some cities in the industrial centre of the *Ruhrgebiet*) and other contemporaneous social-democratic political movements.

⁶ Bertolt Brecht; Slatan Dudow; Georg Höllering; Kaspar; Ernst Ottwalt; Robert Scharfenberg.

According to Pettifer (1974), these grass-roots working class movements chimed with “sections of the bourgeois intelligentsia, sickened by the imperialist war and the deficiencies of life in the Weimar Republic” (p.53) and provided the impetus to developing a revolutionary, Marxist art movement as a counterfoil to the dominant capitalist system.

The chimera of a specifically proletarian art was pursued, to be developed within German capitalism; this art was to be constructed without the justification in the Soviet Union of the existence of a socialist government in the country. It may seem that this is a too sweeping condemnation of what may be regarded as a healthy dismissal of bourgeois art and culture. But it should be borne in mind that Marx and Engels did not leave any guidance in their theoretical writings on how a socialist art and literature should be developed within a capitalist society.
(Pettifer 1974, p.54)

***Kuhle Wampe* Analysis of Sound and Editing**

In spite of the limited financial means with which it was made, *Kuhle Wampe* represents an imaginative engagement with the medium of sound film. So far in existing literature (for instance Munson 1982; Rügner 2000; Eisler 1947; KORTE 1998) appraisals of sonic elements of the film have been focused on musical composition, leaving the aesthetic sound style of the film under-explored. This chapter seeks to compile insights into the sonic style of *Kuhle Wampe* by selecting several of key scenes and placing the film’s sound aesthetic into a wider context of the ideological aims of Brecht’s non-Aristotelian⁷ film experiment (Geiselberger 2008, p.17). Closer analysis of the sound components in these selections illustrates that although its production resources were limited, the makers of *Kuhle Wampe* deliberately attempted to use sonic elements in order to enhance the film in narrative and emotive ways. Other than the credits of the film, which cite three names as having worked in some capacity on the sound, very little is known at this stage about how exactly the sound on *Kuhle Wampe* was put together. According to Klaus (1992,

⁷ Brecht had developed the *Episches Theatre* [Epic Theatre], which deliberately breaks narrative flow in order to force the audience to engage with the material more critically, rather than be seduced by story element. Non-Aristotelian drama is a theatrical form which deliberately fractures its own form. (Fisher and Juris, 2016)

p.125) the credits for *Ton* (sound) are Carl Erich Kroschke and Fritz Michelis. Gersch and Hecht (1969, p.119) list the credits exactly as they appear in the film: Kroschke and Michelis (without their first names) under the credit *Tonmeister*, as well as the credit of *Tonschnitt* with the name Peter Meyrowitz. These sources also list the company *Tobis Melofilm* as responsible for the *Tonaufnahmen* (sound acquisition) and the equipment as being the *Tobis-Klangfilm* as the system used for the recordings. Whilst many credits of the period would clearly list the sound system employed during the production (this was important for licensing reasons, as different cartels controlled particular aspects of sound film processes), film credits for individual participants often varied, resulting in this case in separate sound roles. In the German film tradition, a *Tonmeister* is a professional who is responsible for both the recording and mixing of sound elements, which may consist of music, but also other sound elements and effects. This suggests that Kroschke and Michelis were responsible for the recording of *Kuhle Wampe*'s sound, though their credit does not provide conclusive evidence whether these recordings were in the location or post-production context. Although the German word "*mitschneiden*" means recording sound as it occurs, the credit of *Tonschnitt* (*Schnitt* is the noun, *schneiden* the verb) in this context, and in conjunction with the credit for Kroschke and Michelis, suggests that Meyrowitz was responsible for editing the different sound elements. The credits make no reference to a picture editor (*Bildschnitt*), but *Kuhle Wampe*'s producer Georg Höllering's states in his interview (Brewster and MacCabe, 1974b, p.75) that Dudow proved very competent at undertaking the edit of the film. Although Dudow had never edited a film before, Höllering had faith in his ability to take this on from the detailed conversations the two men had about the structure of different scenes, and Höllering provided Dudow with the support of an experienced joiner to assist in the mechanical processes of editing *Kuhle Wampe*. The process of editing film at that time required a considerable degree of dexterity and finesse because picture joins had to be made using a special film cement.

Opening Section and Eisler's score:

The opening sequence, depicting countless unemployed workers chasing after a limited number of jobs on their bicycles, is presented with music composed by Hanns Eisler. The score could be interpreted as an overture, which sets the scene of

the upcoming narrative: the urban setting, the plight of the unemployed, the hardship endured by the workers are all reflected in a composition which sounds uncomfortable and spiky, rather than immersive or exciting. Although the music occasionally has some elements of synchrony in its relationship to the images, it is not really focused on creating a musical commentary that directly reflects the different actions of the sequence; it is therefore unlike a specially composed silent film score. Eisler recorded his own reflections on the role of film music in the 1930s, when he stated that there was very little theory about the application of music in sound film and very few good examples in practice which demonstrated effective use of music in a sound film. Apart from its use in comedy or animations, Eisler was very critical of music as a direct sonic illustration of the visual:

Ein Filmkomponist galt als geschickt und brauchbar, wenn er alle Vorgänge im Film musikalisch “illustrieren” konnte. Sah man eine Maschine auf der Leinwand, so hatte die Musik zu stampfen, ging ein Mann durch die Straße, so mußte die Musik gehen usw.
(Eisler, 1976 p.129)

A film composer was seen as accomplished and employable, provided he was able to illustrate musically all actions of the film. If a machine was depicted on the screen, then the music had to be punchy, if a man was walking in a street, then the music had to walk etc.

Eisler was highly critical of film’s use to amplify emotions felt by the characters - he was disparaging of “sad” music underscoring “sad” emotions of the protagonists. Whilst he acknowledged the rational purpose of an illustrative role of music during the silent film era, Eisler declared that this approach became redundant with the inception of sound film. The composer was particularly disparaging of sound film’s tendency to use music as emotional underscore to accompany dramatic dialogue scenes (Eisler 1976, p.130). Building on his own early attempts at sound film music during the late 1920s, Eisler refined his approach through his compositional work on *Niemandland [No-Mans-Land]* (1931)⁸ and *So ist das Leben [Such is Life]* (1931)⁹. Instead of writing film scores which directly synchronised in emotional and in narrative terms to the screen, Eisler sought to use musical elements to introduce an

⁸ Directed by Victor Trivas

⁹ Directed by Carl Junghans

emotional counterpoint to the story elements.

In dem Film *Kuhle Wampe* (Regie: Dudow) wurden Wohnungen armer Leute gezeigt. Ein konventioneller Filmkomponist hätte dazu eine traurige und sicher auch sehr arme Filmmusik dazu geschrieben. Ich setzt gegen diese sehr ruhigen Bilder eine äußerst energische, frische Musik, die dem Zuhörer nicht nur das Mitleid mit der Armut ermöglicht, sondern auch seinen Protest gegen einen solchen Zustand hervorzurufen versucht.
(Eisler, 1976 p.131)

Kuhle Wampe (directed by Dudow) depicted the living conditions of poor people. A conventional film composer would have written a very sad and certainly a poor film score. I contrasted these subdued images with a new and energetic music, which would not just invite the audience to feel empathy at such poverty, but also to engender a sense of protest against these conditions.

Eisler believed that this concept would result in the creation of a particular emotional tension between screen and audience. Furthermore, Eisler describes the idea of sonic counterpoint as opening up further narrative potential through using music as referring to elements outside of the screen - for instance this is illustrated through Eisler's use of ballads, which include textual elements to commentate or offset the visual narrative. In this way Eisler's views on music are a direct reflection of Brecht's ambition of creating a non-Aristotelian film in *Kuhle Wampe*. This was a new form of cinema which used the *Verfremdungseffekt* to work against any cinema audience potentially becoming too swept along with the screen narrative. Sympathy with the protagonists was the aim, for instance through the concept of solidarity, but Brecht was not at all in favour of empathy and specifically not the creation of an emphatic emotional response by the audience (Eddershaw 2002, p.16). The iconoclast philosophy of constantly questioning According to Heath (1974)

Brecht's own oft-repeated principle of conduct needs to be remembered: the question can never be one of merely producing for a medium (theatre, radio, cinema or whatever); it is always fully one of changing that medium. It is the process of this transformation (which takes up dialectically medium and work), and this process alone, that is truly revolutionary.
(Heath 1974, p.125)

Just as Brecht believed in the intellectual and moral duty of artists to re-invent cultural norms, Eisler recognised that the arrival of sound film questioned existing

compositional approaches for music for film. Eisler went further, arguing that film composers should be involved from the earliest conceptual stages. Instead of music becoming an after-thought in film, responding to existing narrative, musical concepts should take on a dramaturgical function at the inception of a script (Eisler 1976, p.132), and the composer was of the view that the arrival of sound film changed hitherto established parameters of music score, and that in light of this fundamental change in the sonic landscape of film making the function of a film composer had to be considered very thoroughly (ibid, p.130).

Eine neue Anwendung der vokalen und instrumentalen Musik im Film bestünde vor allem darin, die Musik gegen die Vorgänge im Bilde zu setzen. Das bedeutet, daß die Musik das Bild nicht untermalt, sondern erklärt, kommentiert. Das klingt etwas abstrakt, aber in meiner Praxis hat sich gezeigt daß man mit dieser Methode grosse Partien der Filme viel wirkungsvoller machen kann, und zwar wirkungsvoll in einem populären Sinn. Diese Methode wird auch notwendig sein, um die neue Form einer musikalischen Filmkomödie und einer Filmoper zu finden. Die materiellen Voraussetzungen für einen guten Film sind: daß der Komponist bei der Drehbucharbeit als Musikdramaturg zugezogen wird, damit die Musik schon bei der Konstruktion der Handlung und Ausarbeitung der Szenen den richtigen Platz und die richtige Funktion bekommt. (Wieviel unnützes Beiwerk könnte die Musik einsparen!) (Eisler 1976, p.132)

A new approach of vocal and instrumental musical elements in film would be to use music in counterpoint to visual developments. This means that music should not act as an underscore the image, but instead that it is used to clarify and commentate. This may sound a little abstract but from my own experience, taking this approach has been very effective in significant sections of a film, and specifically effective from the perspective of the public. This method will also become imperative for musical film comedies and film operas. The absolute prerequisite for any good film is that the composer ought to be involved at the script stage as a music dramaturge. In this manner music can be taken into consideration while the narrative is still under construction, which will ensure that music is correctly employed in terms of placement and function. (Music could preclude unnecessary narrative!)

Eisler's fundamental manifesto regarding the potential of music in shaping sound film narrative (rather than responding to it) invites the conclusion that this ambition must have been realised by his involvement in the *Kuhle Wampe* project. Given the collaborative approach taken by Brecht et al, the film can be seen as close to an

auteur film as was possible at the time. Eisler's ideal of involving musical ideas in the development of a film's dramaturgical and narrative concepts can be demonstrated by what is known about the creative goals of its makers. Financial resources were constrained, which must have generated some barriers to creative goals, but the un-conventional and non-commercial resource base also enabled the film's makers to maintain closer control over form and content of *Kuhle Wampe*. This would have certainly been the case until the censorship debate cast new obstacles into the path of the film's creative ambitions. Turning back then to the Eisler score in *Kuhle Wampe*, the film's opening scene could be understood as the film-makers' reaction against the way in which conventional film and film music was functioning at the time. The opening sequence is devoid of sync sound and depicts countless unemployed workers in their pursuit of work. The music is both an expression of a compositional modernism of the era in terms of its instrumentation and arrangement, but also contains deliberately repetitive phrases to signal the recurring nature of the fruitless hunt for work.

Rügner (2000, p.173) argues that Eisler's music for the opening section is best understood as a prelude, and explains that it re-used an earlier piece (*Das Lob der Wlassowas*) [*Wlasslova's Praise*] which Eisler had composed for Brecht's stage play *Die Mutter*. Given the fact that the music was not originally conceived for this scene, but adapted to the montage sequence, Rügner (p. 174) discusses Eisler and Adorno's assertion that the nature of *Kuhle Wampe's* music is to be understood as setting a *dramaturgical counterpoint* that seeks to contrast *movement with rest*. Under the title *From My Practical Work: On the Use of Music in Sound Film*, Eisler himself wrote about *Kuhle Wampe*:

Dwellings of poor people were shown. These very calm pictures were counterpointed with extremely energetic and stimulating music, which suggested not only pity for the poor, but at the same time provoked protest against their condition.
(Eisler 1976, p.123)

Rügner suggests that the notion of counterpoint is achieved in the first musical montage (the hunt for work), though Rügner argues that this concept is more contentious elsewhere in the film, in subsequent montage sequences set to music.

Eisler's score comes to an end as young Bönike returns home, and he stops to listen to a pair of street musicians who play a jolly tune on a harmonium and a *Singende Säge* [singing saw] in the courtyard of the Bönike family's tenement building. Both in terms of instrumentation and character, its upbeat melody contrasts sharply in emotional terms with the score that accompanied the countless men pursuing employment; its presence can be interpreted as being in emotional counterpoint to the narrative at this section. The nature of this diegetic music is a clear stylistic break from the Eisler score of the previous sequence. Similarly, the derelict setting of the grimy backyard strikes a visual contrast with the jolly melody of the music, whilst the plaintive tone of the *Singende Säge* incorporates a further contrasting layer in comparison to the melody. A further function of the diegetic music at this point is that it ties together time and place of the location, as the story moves from the courtyard to the interior of the Bönike apartment, where the table is being prepared for a modest family meal. As the image cuts from the courtyard to the interior, the diegetic score continues to play, but with a different perspective in terms of *point of audition*. The music creates an aural shift from the exterior to the interior, as well as moving the story forward into the new setting. The music then comes to a quick natural end, as if the musicians below in the courtyard have decided to stop playing and to move on with their instruments. The subsequent absence of music then lends greater emphasis to the silences in between dialogue lines in the following exchange between the family members. This scene also introduces the audience to the central characters of the film, as well as incorporating a first dramatic turning point in the film when Anni's brother takes his own life, an event curiously devoid of composed score.

Use of Sound in the Characterisation of Anni and Her Family's Situation

Eisler had begun experimenting with film music during the late 1920s¹⁰ and was introduced to Brecht through the singer and actor Ernst Busch, who was to play Anni's boyfriend Fritz in *Kuhle Wampe*. Anni and Fritz's relationship is a central thread of the plot, which symbolises the perspective of the younger generation. The generational conflicts between the Bönike children and their parents can be seen as representational of a society trying to reconcile aspirations of modernity and social reform with the extant value system of a more conservative previous era. After an argument at the dinner table, the family is busy tidying up and pursues various chores, whilst the young man remains seated at the table, numb after his father's stinging remarks over his inability to procure work. Anni's brother is not able to withstand the ongoing criticism and negativity from his father in the face of social hardship and commits suicide by jumping from the apartment's window into the courtyard below. From the perspective of conventional film narrative, the suicide scene is noteworthy in terms of its absence of a specially composed score. Instead of using music to lend the despair of the Bönike's son further emotional emphasis, the suicide scene is played out in painful silence. Previously, during the argument at the dinner table, Anni had spoken in defence of her brother, addressing the wider economic situation of the family as well as referring to wider political factors that contribute to the family's misery. The dialogue between Anni and her parents is delivered in contrasting style by the protagonists. Whilst father and mother speak their lines in a curiously unanimated style, Anni's contributions are spoken with greater emphasis. This stylistic contrast has the effect of making the parents appear unaware of wider social determinants. The mother is played as a passively resigned victim of circumstance, played with downcast eyes by Lilli Schoenborn. Her status as a social martyr is expressed in the sampler that hangs above the worktop of the kitchen wall: "*Beklage nicht den Morgen der Müh und Arbeit gibt; Es ist so schön zu sorgen - Für Menschen die man liebt*" [*Do not complain of the Morning's strife and*

¹⁰ Eisler had become involved in the Baden-Baden festivals, which featured modernizing influences and during which several composers – Paul Hindemith for instance - started to experiment with writing music for the moving image.

toil; it is wonderful to look after loved ones].



Illustration 89 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: Kitchen Sampler

Adorned with flowers, the statement is a silent depiction of stoic, long-suffering service in fulfilment of her maternal duties. In contrast, the father is fuming in his frustrations, directing his anger at the son and blaming the individual (the son) for their collective misery. When he runs out of responses to Anni's pithy observations, he retreats to the pub. In comparison to her parents, Anni's interjections are livelier, aiming her criticism at wider political factors and articulating a more systemic critique of the situation. This section is didactic in nature and designed to articulate the complexity of the working class's protracted dilemma. A corresponding scene of generational conflict is delivered at the end of *Kuhle Wampe*. A group of youngsters finds itself confronted with the reactionary views of a more conservative older group of citizens, both groups are passengers on a train which is conveying its travellers back to the city after a day out in the country. The setting of the scene can be interpreted as metaphorical: societal differences represented by the respective passenger groups, aboard a moving train analogous to the shifting times within which *Kuhle Wampe* was made. As different opinions collide, no one can escape the debate, as all are forced to stay aboard the train – the different generations have to engage in a dialogue. The contrasting political views as expressed aboard the train culminate in the rhetorical question posed by one of the older travellers: who should change the world – to which Anni's friend Gerda responds that the world will be changed by those who are displeased with the status quo.

Returning to the suicide of Anni's brother, the scene is accompanied by a quiet interior atmosphere track that appears to correspond to movements (such as a noise

that coincides with the hinge movement as the son is opening the window). It is the same track that accompanied the previous shots of Anni's mother in the kitchen. The track is non-synchronous and overall serves as an aural representation of the interior's ambient space. The audio track does not contain other Foley elements, such as the flowerpots being moved from the windowsill, or the watch being taken off and placed on a table. A subsequent shot returns to the young man's watch in close up, and the ticking of the timepiece is the only significant sound symbol of this sequence. In the silence following the suicide, a series of cutaways visually refer to the earlier bicycle scene in search for work, the immobile bike now suspended from the ceiling of the apartment.



Illustration 90 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: Flashback to the search for work.

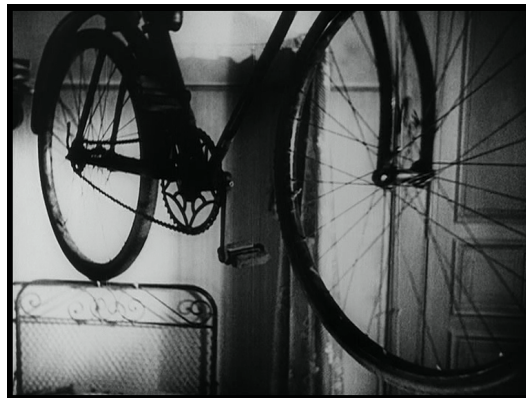


Illustration 91 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: Suspended bicycle.

In the aftermath of the suicide, as the tenement building's neighbours discuss the tragedy, someone comments how thoughtful of the young man to have taken the watch off prior to jumping from the fourth floor. With the exception of a piercing scream heard just after the young man has hurled himself from the window, the watch's ticking noise is the main sonic feature of this sequence. It is unclear whether the scream comes from the young Bönike as he jumps or from a by-stander in the courtyard who may have witnessed the young man's death.



Illustration 92 Screen grabs from *Kuhle Wampe*: Suicide Sequence.

Unaware of her brother's death, Anni returns to the courtyard with her boyfriend Fritz. Stopping at the tarpaulin that covers the body, they do not realize that it shrouds Anni's brother. Instead, on seeing the tarpaulin, Fritz wonders whether the police in attendance might be responsible for a fatality.



Illustration 93 Screen grabs from *Kuhle Wampe: After the Suicide*.

In a series of sad vignettes, the neighbourhood continues to reflect on the tragedy, while children argue about which window the man had jumped from.



Illustration 94 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe: After the Suicide: Children*



Illustration 95 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe: After the Suicide: Police*

In the absence of a suicide note, during the briefest of dialogue exchanges the police declare that the cause for the suicide remains “unknown” – in spite of being surrounded by the very circumstances which evidently drove the young man to take his own life, symbolized by the looks of the unemployed men gathered around the two police officers.



Illustration 96 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe: After the Suicide: Neighbours*

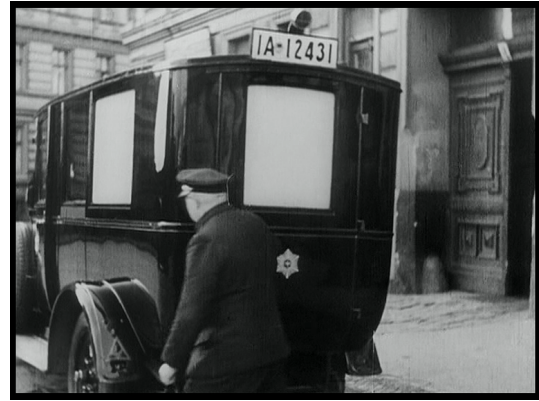


Illustration 97 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe: After the Suicide: Last Journey*

As a final coda to the sequence, an old lady laments the suicide of a young man who should have had the best years of his life ahead of him – the last words of her statement laid over the image of the Berlin ambulance driver closing the doors of the vehicle that takes the young man’s body away. This is followed by an intertitle repeating the words of the old lady. At this point the film shows a series of landscape impressions, accompanied by Eisler’s music: here, the film offers a deliberate break in narrative flow to give the audience a moment for reflection.

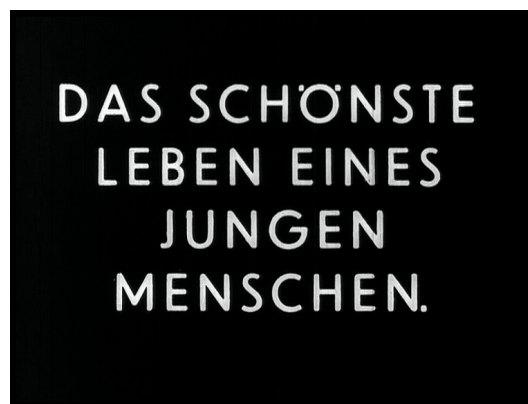


Illustration 98 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe: After the Suicide: Irony*

In its dramatisation of the challenges encountered by a young person during a period of economic depression, Anni is portrayed as a pragmatic character, who tries to find solutions to the various dilemmas encountered by her. In addition to the family tragedy, the suicide of her brother brings further financial hardship, as the Bönikes now have to get by without their son’s meagre unemployment benefit. Following the suicide, the family is unable to pay the rent and a court order declares that the landlord is legally entitled to evict the family. The judgement read out in the court is delivered without empathy or feeling for the plight of the family and relayed in a

monotone style as if someone is reading hurriedly from an instruction manual. Again, the film uses sound in a particular style to lend considerably complex dramatization to the spoken word. The absence of emphasis or drama in the delivery of the judgement makes the event routine fare, as if the courts are pronouncing eviction notices in a manner of a conveyor belt manufacturing social misery.



Illustration 99 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: The Eviction Order.

Faced with the prospect of being thrown out of their home, the mother is making preparations to leave whilst Anni embarks on a series of attempts to stave off the impending eviction. A succession of encounters between Anni and various authorities are portrayed without dialogue: after trying to lodge an appeal against the court decision, she petitions the social security office, bailiff and landlord for assistance – none are able to help. These meetings are intercut by shots of Anni walking through the streets of Berlin from one encounter to the next.



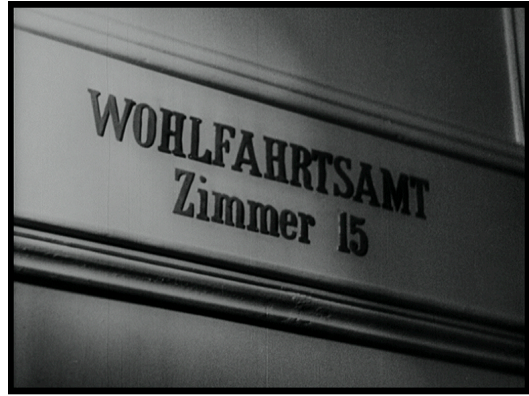




Illustration 100 Screen grabs from *Kuhle Wampe*: Eviction Sequence.



Illustration 101 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: Eviction Sequence: Anni gets Help.

Anni's petitioning to these agencies is wordless, showing her ringing on door bells or silently appealing to officials. Equally wordless are the responses with which her entreaties are met: resigned looks, shrugging shoulders, sideways glances, closing doors. The absence of speech in this crucial section of the film forces the audience to stand back and bear witness to the tragic fate of the Bönike family. The silent despair of the sequence is heart-breaking, the absence of dialogue makes the encounters between individual and authority all the more disturbing. Words are superfluous in the depiction of this social injustice, the sequence's impotent silence by implication is infuriating. As in the suicide scene, there is no musical score that accompanies the family's misery, and no spoken entreaties for clemency are heard. Eisler withholds a score, as society stands by and shrugs collective shoulders at the fate of the unemployed. The emotional impact of this scene stands in total contrast to the eviction scene from Thiele's *Die Drei von der Tankstelle*, which depicts singing furniture removal men and a comical bailiff – none of whom succeed in getting the indomitable three main protagonists down. In Ufa's highly successful musical, there is always a nifty solution at hand and a jolly song to be found, no matter how dire the situation. *Kuhle Wampe*, by contrast, reflects an uncomfortably

hopeless situation: there is nothing to be done, and the authorities have nothing to offer in solution to this social problem. The deliberate absence of a score withholds any musical gloss with which this bitter pill of a story could be coated. Following her fruitless search for help, Anni telephones Fritz, who suggests that the family should move their belongings to a tent camp outside of Berlin: the *Kuhle Wampe* after which the film is named. The Fritz borrows a car and the Bönike's possessions are loaded up for transport out to *Kuhle Wampe*, where a new chapter commences for the family. This brings Anni and Fritz closer together, with further consequences for the couple when Anni discovers that she is unexpectedly pregnant. Unsure where this leaves the couple in their relationship, they succumb to increasing pressure to get engaged. One scene combines a visually complex montage sequence which overlays close-ups of a group of passing children with baby related images: the door sign of a gynaecologist, a shop window displaying baby goods, a sign advertising the opening hours pregnancy advisory centre or the services of a midwife. The sequence is underscored with dissonant music, which also incorporates elements of a children's nursery song *Ein Männlein steht im Walde*¹¹ [*A little Man stands in the Woods*]; the cheerful tone of the children's song contributes to further tension in the score.



¹¹ Lyrics by Hoffmann von Fallersleben, composer unknown



Illustration 102 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: Baby Montage.

This tension is reflected in the increasingly dark tone of the images which are part of the montage sequence, as pictures of bouncing babies are intercut with an undertaker's window, culminating in a number of images that refer back to the suicide of Anni's brother (her brother's body lying in the courtyard, covered with a tarpaulin; the ambulance driving the body away). The next scene shows Fritz and Kurt outside a cinema and uses diegetic music for referential effect. As the two men look at the performance times of a film, diegetic music can be heard – either this is meant to be emanating from the auditorium, or (more likely) this is meant to be interpreted as being played outside the cinema in order to advertise the film being shown. Either way, the music itself is a popular song from a film, entitled *Nie Wieder Liebe* [Never again Love] (1931, Directed by A. Litvak), and provides one of the sonic background elements in this scene.



Illustration 103 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: *Nie Wieder Liebe*!

Kurt asks Fritz what he is going to do about the fact that Anni is expecting his child – Fritz replies that he does not want to ruin his life by getting married too early. As Kurt and Fritz look at the film posters and decide to go in to see the film, the diegetic music, as well as a traffic background track and the men's dialogue are audible.

There are no in vision traffic elements that would necessitate the presence of the traffic atmosphere – this is being provided purely to suggest a 360-degree impression of the acoustic space within which the scene is set. The dialogue is post sync but given that the men have their backs to the camera, the lack of synchrony in terms of their lip movements is less noticeable. Again, the film displays a considerable degree of complexity in terms of the sound track, combining three separate audio elements (traffic, music and dialogue) into a cohesive whole. In spite of his reservations about getting married, the next scene shows Fritz in a conversation with Anni's father, with Fritz appearing resigned to the fact that he will have to marry Anni.

Sound in Time and Space: Conflicting Emotions During the Engagement Party

Underneath an improvised celebratory banner, the Bönikes assemble their friends and relatives to mark the engagement of Anni to Fritz. The event starts out with coffee and cake, moves on to beer and sauerkraut and gradually deteriorates into a very drunken affair. Against this backdrop, Anni is mostly seen helping her mother look after the hungry guests, while Fritz is outside, continually lugging crates of beers back and forth to supply the guests with drink. The irony of the two central characters, whose engagement provided the impetus for the party, now being unable to enjoy the celebrations themselves generates an uncomfortable undertone, increasingly hinting at a rift at the heart of what is outwardly portrayed as an increasingly lively celebration. Throughout the engagement party, the sound changes at key stages in order to enforce narrative and emotional undertone of the scene. The raucous sounding environment also generates a counterpoint to the increasing strain between the couple. The more explicit the tension between Anni and Fritz becomes, the higher the volume of celebratory spirit expressed by the party guests. Turning back to the beginning of the party, there is a general background murmur of the assembled guests, and in the absence of discernible conversation Anni appears to be feeling rather self-conscious against the background babble of voices - are they talking about her? The looks directed at Anni are making her feel uncomfortable.



Illustration 104 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: Engagement Party: Anni feels self-conscious. Anni decides to ignore these looks and joins her friends Kurt and Gerda, who appear pleased to be able to join in the celebrations. Anni gets on with helping her mother handing supplies from the improvised kitchen at the *Kuhle Wampe* encampment.

The initial background soundtrack with its vocal babble and non-specific background atmosphere is non-sync (either the result of a location wild track or a post-production sync scene), but changes to sync atmosphere and effects as Mother Bönike is shown handing crockery and a large, perfect looking *Gugelhupf* cake through the kitchen hatch to Anni. The subsequent wide shot of Anni passing plates around the assembled guest is also accompanied by sync sound. Subsequent images of the slices of cake being quickly taken from the serving plate by the guests are non-sync,

and the wide shot sound appears to be providing the atmosphere at this stage.



Illustration 105 Screen grabs from *Kuhle Wampe*: Engagement Party: Hungry Guests.

The recurring theme of Anni's mother handing out refreshments is underpinned by the locked off camera position - the framing of Mother Bönike is static and repetitive, and provides an ironic, visually constant anchor-point to the increasingly raucous celebrations around her. At one point, the film uses an optical wipe¹²: as Mother Bönike is shown handing a large jug out to Anni just prior to the visual wipe, whilst handing out bottles of beer immediately after the optical wipe. This visual wipe as a story telling device underpins the notion of montage and the compression of time. At the same time, the background sound that underscores this visual device cuts to a marked contrast in the background sound exactly at the point of the transition, thus drawing attention to the visual effect. The sound is now sync, and the clanking together of the beer bottles jars with the previous background chatter, which was more indistinguishable and lacked sound spikes or aural contrasts. Using a wipe in conjunction with a sudden change in the soundtrack emphasizes that this visual effect

¹² A Wipe is an optical effect that includes a transition from one image to another with a visual wipe, in this case from left to right.

represents a longer period of time being compressed into a brief filmic moment. In this manner, the suddenly contrasting elements of image and sound clash effectively to provide a dichotomy between image and sound: the dual elements of continuity (in the visual wipe) and discontinuity (in the contrasting sound elements at the point of the visual junction) are set against each other.



Illustration 106 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe: Engagement Party: Optical Effect (Wipe)*. Meanwhile, as Anni is handing out the beers, the point of view shifts to the exterior where Fritz is still lugging beer crates for the assembled guests. The guests can be heard from within the tent and are shown at the edge of the frame as celebrations continue inside. The sound of the beer crates clattering around as Fritz exchanges

empty crates for full ones is punctuating these exterior sections of the engagement party scene. The sound of the party atmosphere here appears to be non-sync, and there is a possibility that the party ambience was recreated in post-production in a studio, with Foley effects for the beer crate handling being generated and mixed in simultaneously with the party atmosphere. What becomes evident at this stage is that the film-makers had a clear ambition with regard to the use of sound, particularly in terms of establishing the contrasting aural environments of the exterior and interior tent. These interior and exterior perspectives are important in narrative terms, as Fritz's self-imposed isolation is being illustrated, and emphasized by the contrasting ambient spaces. In terms of the overall sequence of the engagement party, the interior scenes appear to have been filmed in a combination of non-synchronous sound atmospheres at some points and synchronous sound at other times. The need for using synchronous was dictated by the fact whether a section included direct speech or singing elements in vision, or whether the party guests were seen talking indistinctly as part of the wider hub-bub of the setting. It would have been easier from the film making perspective to use non-synchronous sound for the less specific sections of the party, as this meant that the shots could be edited together without any alteration in the background hub-bub at the cut points, therefore enforcing the sense of a smooth and continues action sequence. As the camera cuts back and forth between exterior and interior, the background soundscape changes in overall perspective to enforce the sense of exterior and interior, and particularly the party sounds in terms of Fritz's point of audition from the exterior. The sound here accentuates the growing distance between Anni and Fritz, as Anni is helping her mother look after the guests on the inside, whilst Fritz appears reluctant to come in and join the party. Inside the tent, Anni is shown winding up a gramophone, which then plays a march *Einzug der Gladiatoren*¹³ [*Entrance of the Gladiators*] (Gersch und Hecht, 1969, p. 151) as musical background entertainment for the party.

In addition to its referential commentary, the music was also used to comic effect at a similar juncture, when a visual wipe condenses the timeframe in which one of the party guests becomes increasingly inebriated: at the point of the wipe, indicating the temporal leap forward, the sound of the gramophone track playing the *Entrance of*

¹³ Composed by Julius Fučík

the Gladiators tune is suddenly slowed down to a standstill – the distorted sound of the music reflects the advanced state of drunkenness of the party guest.



Illustration 107 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: Engagement Party: Optical and Sound Effect (Wipe in conjunction with Gramophone Music slowing down).

While the gramophone record is playing, the picture cuts back to the exterior, where Fritz is still lugging beer crates about. The march music can be heard playing from the inside of the tent, while on the exterior shot the sound effects for Fritz carrying his beer crates can also be heard. Just as the choice of music at this moment is likely to have been a highly referential, ironic commentary on the proceedings of the party (*Entrance of the Gladiators* plays as the guests are valiantly battling to consume as much food and drink as possible), the next use of a gramophone record is also imbued with referential comment. The disc which Anni puts on the record player is *Schöner Gigolo, Armer Gigolo* ¹⁴ [*Beautiful Gigolo - Poor Gigolo*], a popular song from the late 1920s which laments the waning fortunes of a man who has become a professional dancer and lover. Just before putting on this record, Anni had been

¹⁴ The English version of the song was called *Just a Gigolo*, popularized by a 1931 US film of the same title. The melody was composed by Leonelli Casucci.

outside to try and persuade Fritz to come inside to join the party; Fritz is increasingly hostile towards Anni, leaving her in no doubt that he feels resentful about the engagement.



Illustration 108 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: Engagement Party: Anni and Fritz quarrel.

It is worth noting that the close-up shots of Anni still have a background presence of crowd in tent talking, whilst the shots of Fritz are without a background crowd. Had Fritz's close up shots been under-laid with a background crowd, then the matching of the background hub-bub level could have been problematic. As the technology did not really exist to permit post-production fades between the different shot angles, the cut points between Fritz and Anni would have been more noticeable with the inevitable audio contrasts. But at any rate, this absence of background chatter is hardly noticeable, as the music in the background had stopped previously (over the visual wipe of the eating and drinking man) and the shots of Anni have only relatively minor background hub-bub activity. Having been rebuffed by Fritz, Anni returns inside and puts the *Gigolo* record on – the guests are already in good voice, and happily pick up the tune now played by the gramophone. The *Gigolo* role was one carried out by attractive young men in dance cafés, where wealthy women could amuse themselves dancing in the arms of a young, attractive partner. The

sentimental notion of the *Gigolo* song harks back to a bygone era, as the lyrics mourn the demise in status of its protagonist from dashing soldier to professional dancer and lover. On one level, the irony here is that none of the party guests would have belonged to the social class able to frequent such dance establishment, and certainly not able to afford to keep a young lover in the lap of luxury.



Illustration 109 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: Engagement Party: *Schöner Gigolo*

On another level, the choice of music also delivers a stinging barb directed at Fritz: feeling sorry for himself, Fritz perceives himself the victim of a stitch-up into becoming trapped into an unwanted engagement with Anni. Clearly, Fritz's interpretation of the situation in which the couple find themselves takes little account of the fact that it is Anni who has been landed in the more complex and difficult situation. For her the option of walking away from the dilemma is non-existent, and any termination of the pregnancy would be fraught with costs and dangers, both in terms of health and legal persecution¹⁵. The *Poor, Beautiful Gigolo* track is being played in sync from the gramophone disc for this scene, as various actors are singing

¹⁵ As abortion was illegal under the notorious paragraph 218 of the constitution of the Weimar Republic.

along to the tune. When the action cuts to the outside, Fritz's friend Kurt, who had just told the assembled party guests in no uncertain terms that he thought they were all out of their minds, leaves the tent and joins Fritz outside, who is still skulking amongst the crates of beer.

The music and singing continues from the interior to the exterior, with a shift in perspective. Given that there was no technology available at the time to affect a shift in perspective through post production sound mixing or equalization methods, any shift in perspective could not be simulated, but had to be an actual shift in the spatial relationship between microphone and sound source. In order to achieve the shift from interior to exterior perspective, these recordings actually had to be two different microphone perspectives. The moment of transition at the point when Kurt leaves the tent does not appear to have been achieved with a cut: the shift in perspective is not instant, but gradual (albeit quick). This invites the supposition that this scene was filmed with a multiple microphone set up that would allow taking the action from the interior to the exterior. These different recording perspectives would have been monitored and mixed by a sound engineer on set¹⁶. There is the additional consideration that this scene was shot with more than one camera: one inside the tent, and a second one outside the tent. In this way, the action can cut from the interior to the exterior, whilst maintaining smooth continuity on the audio track.

If a multi-microphone set up was being used, then the shift in perspective could be achieved without disruption to the continuous music in the background. The trigger for the sound engineer to fade across from the interior to the exterior microphone would have been Kurt's angry rebuke of the party guests, which signals Kurt's imminent exit from the tent. There are two further moments when the perspective shifts between exterior and interior, and these subsequent sections may not have been achieved with an audio fade, but with a cut on the audio track¹⁷. While the

¹⁶ The potential for multi-track recording within a live set-up will be returned to in the closing discussion of this chapter.

¹⁷ At this stage in the research process, the precise method used to achieve these recordings is not yet known. However, this sequence alone confirms the fact that complex techniques were applied in order to achieve narrative goals. In order to gain further insights in recording techniques used for exactly this scene, future research may shed further light on the processes employed in the making of *Kuhle Wampe* – perhaps such information exists somewhere out there, in public or private archive

conversation between the two young men takes place, the gramophone record inside the tent can still be heard from the outside and comes to the end of the song naturally. As the drunken singing ceases with the end of the gramophone disc, Kurt criticises Fritz's behaviour of ignoring his guests and cold-shouldering Anni. The absence of background music now leaves the two men outside enduring awkward pauses in their conversation, for dramatic effect. The lack of background chatter also allows a narrative strand of secondary action in the frame - a woman remonstrating with her drunk husband outside the tent - to sit uncomfortably with Fritz's simmering rage in the foreground. Meanwhile, Anni has decided to leave the tent colony and gets the family belongings together onto a little wooden cart.



Illustration 110 Screen grab from *Kuhle Wampe*: Engagement Party: Anni leaves Fritz.

Anni fails to persuade her parents to join her in moving away from the camp; instead the parents return with their belongings to Fritz, expressing shame at Anni's exit and declaring their loyalty to him. Fritz looks decidedly displeased with this turn of events: he has lost Anni but has gained her parents' devotion.



Screen Grab From *Kuhle Wampe*: Engagement Party - Fritz and the Bönikes

Anni and Fritz are reunited in a later scene, when the two meet again at a workers' sporting event organized by the communist youth movement. The original version of the film made clear the fact that Anni had undergone an abortion in the meantime, but these elements, removed at the insistence of the censors, have never been reinstated and are believed lost. The sporting events which provide the backdrop for the couple's reconciliation form the final chapter of the film and include politically didactic material to persuade the audience present at the sport festival (and by extension, the audience of the film) to take up resistance to the reactionary and inequitable direction in which society was moving. Like the engagement scene, the sport festival sequence consists of sections that use synchronous sound, and other sections that use non-sync sound in order to construct the wider ambience of various sporting and choral events. It is arguably the engagement scene which is of considerable interest to the research of this project - given its underlying emotional tension and its use of a clear aural delineation of interior and exterior space for narrative purposes. For this reason, the engagement scene was selected for detailed discussion, as its narrative ambition best illustrates the fact that *Kuhle Wampe* is a film of considerable aural complexity.

Kuhle Wampe: Avant-Garde Approach to the Medium of Sound Film

Bertolt Brecht had already established himself as a member of the cultural avant-garde in the world of theatre. The desire for cultural modernisation was a feature of the early 20th century which permeated many aspects of European society. Similarly, Hanns Eisler, who had studied for several years under Schönberg's direction in Berlin, was an enthusiastic supporter of cultural innovation in the music scene of the 1920s. The composer Arnold Schönberg had himself been associated with the sort of experimental modernism in music which emerged during the early part of the 20th century as part of a renaissance of the Viennese School;¹⁸ for many he represents an embodiment of “the principal father figure of musical modernism” (MacDonald 2008, p.x). On the other hand, Schönberg is held as a divisive figure whose compositions “bore the heaviest responsibility for the gulf in communication and comprehension between modern composers and the [...] public” (ibid.). Schönberg is still particularly associated with the kind of atonal music which demands a considerable degree of commitment and devotion from its audiences. Widely admired as a key figure in the compositional establishment of the 1920s, becoming a pupil of Schönberg's carried considerable kudos - yet, Eisler¹⁹ left this potentially prestigious situation and devoted himself to exploring alternative fora - away from the classical concert hall - for his own compositions, which soon branched out into stage and film. Eisler's siblings were actively engaged in the leadership of the KPD, the German communist party, and Eisler decided to quit his involvement with Schönberg in order to become more actively engaged in political work. Eisler began to collaborate with *Das Rote Sprachrohr*,²⁰ the troupe of musical theatre activists that were also to appear in *Kuhle Wampe* (Deeg 2012, p. 24).

¹⁸ “Webern and Berg were the first, and perhaps the most important, of the many notable composers Schönberg was to teach in coming years, and together with him they were to form the central trinity of what has been called the ‘Second Viennese School’. However, others who would make their mark in different ways also came to him in these early years, such as Heinrich Jalowetz, Erwin Stein, and Egon Wellesz.” (MacDonald 2008, p.47)

¹⁹ According to MacDonald (2008, p.338) Schönberg considered Eisler as one of the most talented students he had encountered, but the two men clashed frequently over Eisler's communist politics.

²⁰ Red Megaphone or Red Mouthpiece

The Bulgarian Slatan Dudow had entered the film industry as a production assistant on Lang's *Metropolis* (1926) but was disappointed by the film on ideological grounds (Herlinghaus 1960, p.7). Instead Dudow sought cinematic inspiration elsewhere and turned in particular to Soviet film for inspiration as exemplified by Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). He became increasingly drawn to social-realist themes and began directing proletarian films such as his silent short documentary depicting the life of Berlin workers *Wie der Berliner Arbeiter wohnt* [*Living Conditions of Berlin's Working Classes*] (1930). As set out at the beginning of this chapter, *Kuhle Wampe* became Brecht's first complete film project that incorporated synchronous sound. In addition to being a milestone of Brecht's involvement in the cinema, the film also represents an innovative engagement with the creative potential of film sound within the context of the limited resources available to *Kuhle Wampe*'s makers. For the first time, Brecht experimented with the transposing of key characteristics of his theatrical methodology (such as the *Verfremdungseffekt*) to the sound film format. Margaret Eddershaw (2002) provides an insightful explanation of Brechtian dramaturgy, elements of which are recognisable in *Kuhle Wampe*:

We know, of course, that Brecht intended his spectators to remain largely objective during a performance, but, as with his precepts for the actor, his intentions and methods are often misunderstood. Unhelpful in Britain at least has been the frequent mistranslation of *Verfremdungseffekt* as 'alienation', which has the unfortunate additional meaning in English of 'turning against' (which, indeed, is what many British critics of Brecht did). Even translating the term as 'distancing effect' promotes the notion that Brecht meant the audience to be detached from their feelings during a performance. However, the real point which he strives to make clear is not that an audience should not feel, but that he intends them to feel different emotions from those being experienced by the characters on stage. If, for example, a character expresses sadness, the audience might experience anger at the social causes of that sadness. Perhaps it is, in the end, largely a matter of degree.
(Eddershaw 2002, p.16)

It can be argued that Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* is not only present in the dialogue elements of *Kuhle Wampe*, but that other aspects of the sound design also reflect this method of detaching the viewer from the cinematic experience. Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* was an extension of the aims and objectives of the culture group

that identified itself as the agents of social change: the avant-garde movement. In this context, the connection between the avant-garde and Brecht's ambition to use theatre and film as transformative experiences to engender social change should be remembered. As Hagener notes:

The avant-garde aimed at the *Aufhebung* (sublation) of life and art in a Hegelian sense – the ultimate task was to break down the barriers between art and life in order to achieve a different world in which art would occupy a different (social/economic/cultural) position.
(Hagener 2007, p.36)

In addition to the stylised manner of dialogue and speech, *Kuhle Wampe* also employed silence and the absence of dialogue as narrative elements. Both the use of deliberately stilted dialogues and the use of silence have the effect of deliberately breaking the flow of this sound film. The overall ideological ambition of *Kuhle Wampe* in conjunction with its stylistic idiosyncrasies made the film an unlikely project for conventional film producers. In order to facilitate this experimental approach to film making, Brecht needed to work within a framework that permitted him to take artistic risks. The production company which provided Brecht and his collaborators with the initial impetus to realise their creative sound film ambition was Prometheus Film.

Production Background

At its inception stage, *Kuhle Wampe* had been developed with the backing of Prometheus Film, a production company which had already established itself through several successful films during the silent era which focused on the cinematic portrayal of stories set in the working-class milieu of the late 1920s. Among the most notable films made by Prometheus had been *Der lebende Leichnam* [*The Living Corpse*] (1929), which was a Prometheus co-production with its Soviet counterpart Meshrabpom (directed by Fjodor Ozep) and Piel Jutzi's *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* [*Mother Krausen's Journey to Happiness*](1929). Prometheus was funded by the socialist publisher Willy Münzenberg, with further backing from the Soviet state via its sister film production company Meshrabpom (Eisenschitz 1974, p.67). According to Loomis Perry (1982, p.44) the world economic crisis presented a serious challenge to the film industry as a whole, but it was particularly devastating

for small film groups on the political left. Although it was not a minor participant in the film industry, Prometheus-Film was not strong enough to withstand the financial crisis of the early 1930s and went bankrupt while *Kuhle Wampe* was in production. Kuhle Wampe's producer George Höllering (1974, p.74) recalled that "there was still about ten per cent of the shooting to be done, mostly inexpensive scenes out of doors" when Prometheus went into financial difficulties. Several articles in the trade press raised concern over whether *Kuhle Wampe* would actually be completed (Klaus 1989, p.126). Höllering (1974, p.74) managed to the support of an independent Swiss financier - Lazar Wechsler, a wealthy individual who was the man behind the *Praesens* production company. Höllering showed him extracts from the film, and Wechsler agreed to provide the necessary resources to finish work on *Kuhle Wampe*: access to a film processing laboratory, a production office, editing facilities and just enough funds to shoot the missing location material. The interview with Höllering also addresses a persistent myth in film history, and *Kuhle Wampe*'s producer emphatically rejects the notion that none of the film-makers received payment from Praesens:

Mr Wechsler (...) gave us every penny we wanted and was absolutely marvellous (...) That is how we were able to finish the film.
(Höllering 1974, p.74)

Prior to the financial difficulties that were to dog the making of *Kuhle Wampe*, there was considerable interest in the press about Brecht's film project. During the summer months of 1931 the *Film Kurier* reported on several occasions that the playwright "Bert Brecht" was working on the development of a sound film project. In its 8th July issue (illustration below), the *Film Kurier* announces that Brecht was planning to make a film about a sporting movement for young workers. The article also mentions that the film will be directed by the then little-known Slatan Dudow, which whom Brecht would be collaborating closely. The article implies that the film will present its subject matter in a new realistic style without artificial embellishment or fake posing, aiming to portray workers enjoying the fresh air and exercise of a weekend sports meeting. The writer of the article ("h.f.") welcomes the concept that the proposed project might give Brecht an opportunity to create a film that would silence his critics. This comment could be a reference to the unhappy cinematic excursion that Brecht had made recently when his involvement with Nero's version

of *Die Dreigroschenoper* culminated in a great deal of negative publicity.

Ein Bert-Brecht-Film soll gedreht werden.

Berlin, 8. Juli. — Ein paar Leute sitzen im Mozartsaal und sehen sich den eben aus Rußland herübergekommenen ersten hundertprozentigen Sprechfilm an. Der junge Egg hat ihn gemacht, ein Schüler der Moskauer Filmschule.

Ein Thema der jüngsten Vergangenheit wird in Bild und Ton abgehandelt: „Der Weg ins Leben.“ Liquidierung eines erheblichen Teils zaristischer Konkursmassen: Ueberführung der elternlosen, verwahrlosten Kinder — der Besprisonni — in die Gemeinschaft.

Das Werk verdient einen eigenen, sich historisch einfühlenden Standpunkt. Die Tradition von Bildschnitt und Gruppenanordnung wird mit dem Ton-Experiment kontrastiert.

✱

Während man also da saß, die Leinwand des Mozartsaals sich weitete, zu einem Blick in die Filmwelt Rußlands und ihre Umstellung auf die neue Ära der Filmwirkung —, in diesem Augenblick also hörte man von dem Projekt eines Wodienendfilms.

Das soll ein Werk werden, das unverschminkt und unverschmückt die kurze Freizeit-Spanne des arbeitenden Stadtmenschen zeigt. Keine isolierte Tändelei von Ausgewählten; kein Getue mit idyllischen Aspekten. Sondern: das Ausspannen, eingefast in den Rahmen des Alltags, dessen Licht-Moment es bedeutet.

Ein Experiment. Nicht nur durch die Anordnung des Stoffs; auch der Regisseur, der das Thema in Bilder fassen soll, muß das ihm mit der Uebertragung der Inszenierungsaufgabe bewiesene Vertrauen durch die Tat rechtfertigen: Es ist der junge Bulgare Dudoff.

Mitarbeiter beim Manuskript soll Bert Brecht werden, den der Stoff und die filmische Ausgestaltung bereits seit langem interessieren.

Es ist gut, daß man ihm die längst fällige Möglichkeit gibt, seinen Blick für Optisches, seine dramatische Begabung, seinen Willen zur Arbeit in der Praxis zu erweisen.

Er selbst wird am besten wissen, daß die fertige Arbeit und ihr Resultat die definitive Zerstörung der Anti-Brecht-Legende bedeuten. Und der deutsche Film hätte in ihm einen Mitstreiter von Format gewonnen. h. f.

Illustration 111 Film-Kurier 08 July 1931 – Brecht Film Plans.

The newspapers had provided ample coverage of the protracted court battles around the Pabst project, as Brecht had become increasingly disenchanted with the filmic adaptation of his opera, believing his own voice as author to have become diluted by the sound film adaption. Brecht ended up distancing himself from the film version of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, fuelling the perception that he was not going to embark on a sound film project again in a hurry. Yet here he was, just a year after the much-publicised Nero court case, about to commence a new film project which was backed by the Prometheus-Film company. Barely six weeks later, the *Film Kurier* was able to report that Brecht had completed his first draft of the script, entitled “*Weekend Kuhle Wampe*”:

tauscht.

schlagen. „Da habe ich eine Szene, die mir bei Brecht's Verfilmung vorkommt.“

Das Feuilleton des Autors Bert Brecht hat ein Drehbuch beendet „Weekend Kuhle Wampe“.

Man wird den Namen Bert Brecht zusammen mit Slatan Dudow und Ernst Ottwald nunmehr tatsächlich als Autor eines Drehbuches aussprechen dürfen, das für die Prometheus geschrieben wurde, denn es liegt jetzt beendet vor – soweit in ihrer heutigen längst überholten Drehbuchform eine Autorenarbeit als beendet, abgeschlossen und eindeutig bezeichnet werden kann.

Auch Bert Brecht benutzt (hier also noch nicht weit genug in der Reformkenntnis der Autorenarbeit für den Film vorgedrungen), zur Fixierung seines dramaturgischen Willens die alte Aufzeichnungsform des Dutzenddrehbuchs; doch wird man mit innerer Spannung an seiner Arbeit feststellen wollen, wie Bert Brecht ein von ihm gedecktes und vertretenes Drehbuch, selbst wenn es nur ein Rohabzug seines Willens sein sollte, ausgestaltet, welchen Sinn er heute für die Massen des Kinos verständlich machen will und welche Mittel er vorschlägt.

Es wäre mehr als indiskret, die für uns bequeme Möglichkeit vor anderen auszunutzen, ein Drehbuch, das frisch vom Dichter kommt, zu analysieren, zu bekritteln oder anzupreisen.

Wir glauben, bei dem Grobismus und der Eitelkeit, mit der die Berliner Presse gerade Autorenleistungen entweder als Sensation groß macht oder neidisch toschweigt, für heute nichts mehr tun zu sollen, als eben auf die neue Arbeit von Brecht und Genossen hinzuweisen.

Sie heißt bekanntlich „Weekend Kuhle Wampe“ – und ist alles andere als ein Weekendfilm, weit mehr als etwa ein Moritz Seelersonntagsausflug.

Was an der neuen Film-Vorarbeit Brechts so bestechend ins Bewußtsein tritt, wenn man sie nicht auf Regieanweisungen und Inszenierungsvorschriften, sondern auf den geistigen Verlauf nachprüft, ist die Einsenkung der „Handlung“ in die große Handlung Gegenwart.

Selten wurde in Deutschland – nein, es wird wohl hier überhaupt zum erstenmal – ein Drehbuch vorgelegt, in der nicht Theatermenschen oder sozial angemaßte Figuren ihr „Schicksal“ erleben, sondern in dem der Filmablauf gleichzeitig ein Zeitablauf, ein Querschnitt durch den heutigen Lebenstag, das Dasein eines Sonntags selbst wird, der sich von der Leinwand, aus der Tonmaschine formen soll.

Es gibt hier ein einleitendes „Dramolett“, – „Ein Arbeitsloser weniger“ – ein optisch und tonlich unvergleichlich entworfenen „Lebensbild“, es baut sich hierüber die Tagesgeschichte einer ganzen Klasse auf, die unter dem Schutz von Verfassung und Menschenwürde ihre Existenz der heutigen Zwischenepoche fristet, duldet, durchvegetiert.

In dieser Vegetation, am Sonntag verlaufend in den Zeltlagern der „Kuhle-Wampe-Kolonie“, an den Flußufern, in den Wäldern, setzt sich der Gedanke der „Solidarität“ dieser durch gemeinsamen Dasein aufeinander angewiesenen Klasse durch, sichtbar, hörbar geworden, durch den Chorus der Sportlersolidarität, die diesem „Weekend“-Film Fülle und Mark geben soll.

NEUE SONGS.

Das Drehbuch, das nun in Bildfluß und Ton umgesetzt werden soll, sieht wiederum Songs von Bert Brecht (mit der Musik von Hanns Eisler) an entscheidenden Stellen des Film vor. Zu welcher tragisch-aufrüttelnden Höhe die Arbeit geführt werden kann, sei durch den Hinweis angedeutet, daß als Illustration lebenserfüllte Vorgänge des Films der Song von Brecht auf die in Verse gesetzte Reichsverfassung ertönt.

Der Film ist in seiner jetzigen Fassung im populärsten Darstellungsstil gehalten. Er meidet das Artistische, wenn er auch Situationen zu filmischer Rhythmen-Montage zeigt. Er hat den geraden parodistischen Witz in Szenen des reichen Sonntagsauflers, er hat die bittere Heiterkeit bei den Armenfeiern einer Verlobung. Trotzdem geht der Film an jeder Kinokonvention vorbei, er endet in einer Stadtbahnstation am Sonntagabend, die so schlagend in ihrer Entstehung so spontan aufgebaut durch die Gespräche der Heimkehrenden, so ungewollt tendenzvoll, so ein scharfes Abzugsbild der Zeit, daß man ihr die unveränderte Wiedergabe im Atelier wünschte.

Der Song Brechts, „Die Ballade vom Tropfen auf dem heißen Stein“, schließt das Werk in dieser ersten Fassung.

– wir haben uns nach der ersten Lektüre des Drehbuchs der drei Brecht-Genossen sehr vorsichtig ausgedrückt, habent sua fata libelli; wir wiederholen: Drehbücher sind heute noch Kompromißformulierungen auch bei radikalen Schriftstellern, sie sind nicht streng genug in ihrer Formung des Autorenwillens, sie inszenieren zu viel. (Siehe Artikel „Die große Lüge“.)

Wir befürchten auch, daß die unangenehme Realität der Atelierwelt nicht auf einen Tag und nicht durch ein Werk verändert und solide gemacht werden kann, namentlich für Filmfirmen, denen nicht die Organisation eines Konzerns die technische Garantie gibt wie in Deutschland allein bei der Ufa.

Wir halten es also darum auch für möglich, daß mit oder ohne Willen des Autors, auch dieser Film ein anderes Gesicht annimmt als man es nach dem ersten Drehbuch schließen könnte.

Trotzdem: auf eine geistige Leistung, auf den Willen, ernste Zeiterfassung durch den Film von heute zu vermitteln, wie es Brecht wieder (und gewiß nicht zum letztenmal) hier unternimmt, inlassen sich die Mitarbeiter und Leser des „Donnerstag“-Feuilletons einstellen.

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Illustration 112 Film-Kurier Brecht finishes Script.

By mid-August 1931, the Film Kurier was keen to update its readers, reporting that Brecht had finished his sound film script for his latest project. Although the article is clearly a reflection of an early version of the script, there are recognisable components of the film discussed in the report, suggesting that many of these elements which were part of the project's development from the beginning survived into the finished film. The engagement party is described, as is the final debate in the S-Bahn as members of the weekend party return back to the city. The dramatic tension of the film's final scene as reported by the article suggests that the scene already existed in a fairly evolved state in this early script version; the article's description of the scene chimes closely with the version presented in the finished film. However, there are some notable differences when comparing this early script appraisal to the finished version - for instance Brecht's intention to set part of the constitution of the Weimar Republic to music and use this as score in the film were later abandoned. (reference) The FK appears to admire ambitious goal, but there is also a trace of disbelief in the article. However, Brecht's collaboration with Hanns Eisler in this sound film project is reported with a clear sense of anticipation.

Brecht and Eisler joined Dudow as the driving force behind the project. Brecht's description of the financial difficulties surrounding the production gives a sense of the commitment of the production team to get the project finished, especially one Prometheus had gone bankrupt:

Most of the visual material had to be shot at the utmost speed, a quarter of the whole film in two days, for example. The only assistance we obtained came from the Communist sports leagues, which on certain days organised 4,000 worker-athletes for us. Because of the continuing difficulties of obtaining financial means, the making of the film took more than a year, and meanwhile conditions in Germany (fascistisation, increasing acuteness of unemployment, etc) developed at a rapid rate. When the film was ready it was immediately banned by the censors.
(Brecht 1974 [1932], p. 45)

According to Eisenschitz (1974, p.65) Slatan Dudow's inspiration for *Kuhle Wampe* as a film about the plight of the working classes during the economic depression of the late 1920s in response to a newspaper report about an unemployed young man whose desperate situation had driven him to commit suicide. It is entirely possible that a newspaper report may have contributed a narrative thread about young Bönike taking his own life, even if this character is not very developed within the film. Dudow's idea essentially appealed to the production company Prometheus as they had been searching for a platform for a proletarian story line for different reasons. *Kuhle Wampe's* producer Georg Höllering recounted in an interview in the 1970s that Prometheus were already in financial difficulties at the beginning of the 1930s and wanted to make a film about a subject matter with broad popular appeal. Prometheus believed that a film that incorporated a narrative strand about the growing youth movement of the era could generate strong interest at the box office. Prometheus tasked Robert Scharfenberg with developing a project with youth appeal; Scharfenberg had previously worked for Prometheus as art director on Piel Jutzi's silent film *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* (1929) [Mutter Krausens Journey to Happiness].

[Scharfenberg] interested Dudow, Dudow interested Brecht, and eventually they turned this 'positive' film on the youth movement into *Kuhle Wampe*. (...) Prometheus wanted to make some money and save the company with the youth film idea. Dudow's idea was very different, and he got away with it. He was the first one to talk about *Kuhle Wampe*, who had been to the place, and in that sense most of

the ideas came from him.
(Brewster and MacCabe, 1974b, p.71)

In spite of the financial limitations surrounding the production, *Kuhle Wampe* is an important example of revolutionary film making during the interwar years in Germany. Brewster and MacCabe (1974a, p.4) identified the film as an important example of “the application of Brecht’s theatrical techniques to the very different conditions of the cinema”. Brecht himself generated a number of comments on the film which provide additional insight into the connection between political ideas and narrative aesthetic.

During the 1930s Bertolt Brecht described his recollections about the subject matter of *Kuhle Wampe*:

Dargestellt wurde das Schicksal eines jungen Arbeitslosen, der den Anschluss an die kämpfende Arbeiterschaft nicht findet und den der Abbau der Arbeitslosenunterstützung für Jugendliche, den die Brüning’schen Notverordnungen vornehmen, in den Tod treibt. Das Innenministerium erklärte: dies sei ein Angriff auf den Reichspräsidenten, der die Betreffende Notverordnung unterzeichnet habe und dem hier ein Mangel an Fürsorge für die notleidende Arbeiterschaft vorgeworfen wurde.
Dargestellt wurde die Tätigkeit der großen kommunistischen Arbeitersportverbände, die in Deutschland etwa 200000 Arbeiter erfassen und die den Arbeitersport in den Dienst des Klassenkampfes stellen. (...)
(Gersch and Hecht, p.95)

*[The film] illustrated the fate of a young unemployed man, unable to align himself within the wider fight for workers’ rights, and who became suicidal as a result of [President] Brüning’s emergency measures which eroded youth unemployment benefit. The ministry of the interior declared: this [film] is an attack on the Reichspräsident, who had ratified these emergency measures, thus alleging a lack of care for the suffering of the working classes.
[The film] illustrated the activities of the great communist workers’ sports associations, who have around 200,000 members and who integrate workers’ sports within the wider class war. (...)*

Brecht recollections above reflect the film’s ambition of creating a realistic portrayal of the plight of young workers, as well as emphasising the causal link between social conditions and political determinants, such as President Brüning’s *Notverordnungen* [Emergency Decrees]. Brecht also praises the work of the communist youth organisations, which the film presents as influential in raising political awareness.

Kuhle Wampe portrays the younger generation as the locus for bringing about social change, which is particularly explicit in the final scene on the suburban train, which juxtaposes established capitalist opinions on social and economic issues with the fundamental concepts of moral and social justice. *Kuhle Wampe* is best understood as a symbiotic project: Prometheus needed a box office success for survival. Dudow was looking for a way to develop his interest in the subject matter of growing unemployment and its impact on individual workers' lives (having previously made a documentary on this subject). Brecht wanted to explore the artistic potential of shifting stage methodology and his theatrical aesthetic to the sound film screen, as well as preserving his political convictions within a cinematic narrative. George Höllering (Brewster and MacCabe, 1974b, p.72) confirmed that *Kuhle Wampe* was largely a labour of love, as none of the film's key creators stood to make any significant amounts of money - if they did receive any money, then this was very little and very infrequently. Prometheus went bankrupt, calling into question whether the film could actually be completed: with an implied reference to the film's subtitle *Wem gehört die Welt?*, the trade press posed the question *Wer dreht Kuhle Wampe fertig?* [*Who will complete Kuhle Wampe?*] (Klaus 1989, p.126). It fell to the Praesens company to support the project through to a conclusion. The film received positive reception amongst the critics - Arnheim wrote in *Die Weltbühne*:

Der Regisseur Dudow hat mit guten Rohstoffen gearbeitet: viele Freilichtaufnahmen, die übrigens in der unbefangenen Verwendung des natürlichen Außentons manche abergläubische Vorurteile der Tontechniker beheben könnten; Verwendung von Nichtschauspielern, denen allerdings mangels geeigneter Dialogregie die Natürlichkeit des Sprechens abhanden gekommen ist.
(*Die Weltbühne* 29.03.1932)

Director Dudow is making good use of his ingredients: many exterior location elements, which incidentally use natural exterior sound with an alacrity that should put pay to many a sound technician's biased superstitions; the involvement of amateur actors - although occasionally unnatural in their delivery and hamstrung by a lack of suitable dialogue direction.

While Arnheim acknowledges the location sound elements of the film, he is less comfortable with the delivery style of the dialogues, although he singles out for praise the film's use of non-professional actors. According to Benjamin ([1936] 2001, p.26)

Arnheim reflected on an emergence of new casting criteria, suggesting the eminence of actors as archetypes in 1932. According to Arnheim, this the new approach of “treating the actor as a stage prop, chosen for its characteristics” (ibid.) may have been a direct response to Brecht et al. deciding to use non-actors in *Kuhle Wampe*. Whilst Arnheim in his *Weltbühne* critique from March 1932 does not criticise the actors directly, there is a clear reprimand directed at the makers of the film. The use of lay actors represented a fundamental component of Brecht’s adaptation of the Marxist notion that art and culture need to be utilised as agents for social and political transformation. Linda Schulte-Sasse (1992a, p.49) summarises Marxist theory in relation to cultural artefacts (in this case the example is drawn from literary context) into three components:

- art may reflect society, and/or
- it may criticize society, and/or
- it can present a critical view of society whilst simultaneously offering up an alternative solution.

It is this third path which was being explored by film-makers on the left of the political spectrum. In this manner, they can be distinguished from other films of the social realist genre, which depict social hardship as individual rather than systemic problems. Films of the left such as *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* and *Kuhle Wampe* reflect this Marxist ideal of providing a critical view of society in conjunction with a finale that encourages the resistance to the current social system. Bearing this in mind, and returning to the concept of employing lay-actors rather than professional performers, Brecht’s own perspective of the ideological potential as embodied by the creative process should also be considered:

These productions were put on less for the spectators than for the participants; it was less an art for consumers than one for the producers.
(Brecht cited by Eisenschitz 1974, p.71).

In other words, involving large numbers of lay contributors in the sports festival scenes was just as important from an ideological perspective to the makers of *Kuhle Wampe* as the subsequent distribution of the film. The film’s acting style was criticised by some reviewers (one journalist [see below: Sinnsheimer] referred to

Busch as a *washed-out gland* rather than a screen presence), other voices in the press were more supportive:

Auch bei der Auswahl der Darsteller für die führenden Personen hatte er [Dudow] eine glückliche Hand: Hertha Thiele und Ernst Busch sind ein paar echte junge Leute der Arbeiterwelt, und auch sonst gibt es sehr gute Typen.
(„D.“ in Filmwoche Berlin 31.05.1932)

[Dudow] proved to have been successful in casting the lead characters: Hertha Thiele and Ernst Busch are genuine members of the proletariat; other actors also represent good examples.

Political credentials of the publications in which the *Kuhle Wampe*'s reviews were published played a fundamental role in shaping critical opinion. Conservative voices in the press were highly critical of Brecht's film, and some journalists (Sinnsheimer, 1932, newspaper clipping in the HFF archive) attempted to dismiss the film as more of "whimper" rather than a rallying cry. In contrast (and unsurprisingly so), *Die Rote Fahne* [*The Red Flag*]- a communist publication - was full of praise for the film. In spite of some negative press coverage (and possibly that criticism was a biased response in conservative media in reaction to the overtly political tone of the film), thousands of Berliners saw the film during its opening week at the *Atrium*, and soon the film played in 15 cinemas across the city, as well as in industrial centres elsewhere in Germany (Korte 1998, p. 247). In his piece on the *Kuhle Wampe* premiere, film critic Herbert Jhering cited the challenges under which the film had been made, and traced these circumstances as reflected in the uneven style of the film: "Man merkt dem Film die stockende, mit täglichen Schwierigkeiten kämpfende Herstellung an." [The film's daily struggle to overcome adversity are palpable] (*Film* [pamphlet] in the HFF archive, 1932).

The Significance of *Kuhle Wampe* as an Early Sound Film

Whilst *Kuhle Wampe* has been recognized in the past in terms of its political voice in conjunction with the personalities involved in the making of the film (notably Brecht and Eisler), it has never been acknowledged in regard to its aural ambition. What this chapter demonstrates is that *Kuhle Wampe* incorporates a deliberate engagement with sound and sound design. In focusing on a few key sections of the film

(particularly the suicide scene and the engagement party), it becomes clear how the film-makers employed sound elements to enforce narrative and emotional elements of the story. Like few other sound films of the period, *Kuhle Wampe* could be defined as what is nowadays described as an *auteur* film. Its makers deliberately eschewed involving larger production companies, in spite of the financial consequences. The reason why particularly Bertolt Brecht was cautious about embarking on a film project supported by a larger production company have been explored above, are traceable in the discussion of the controversy resulting from the *Dreigroschenoper* litigation. Notwithstanding the difficult circumstances of *Kuhle Wampe*'s production and censorship battles - which have also been explored as part of this chapter – what is beyond doubt is that this is a film that displays considerable creative ambition, and one which uses emotive sound elements for story telling purposes. The engagement party, in spite of its comical elements, manages to create a complex scene within which various emotional strands are incorporated and *emphasized* via the aural domain. When recognizing the various ways in which its sonic *mise-en-scène* may have been executed, the amount of planning that must have gone into achieving such sonic complexity is palpable. The transitions between exterior and interior space play a subtle, but integral narrative role and it was important to achieve the shifting perspectives with some degree of realism in order to avoid any disruption of the narrative flow. It is notable just how smoothly these transitions from interior to exterior and vice versa occur in terms of the shift in perspective, and particularly at story points where aural continuity had to be maintained in terms of a background element - such as a music track. This is an important realization in terms of any diegetic music that was shot simultaneously with the visual action (such as the *Schöner Gigolo, Armer Gigolo* song). Unlike the other gramophone track used during the engagement party section - *Einzug der Gladiatoren*, which was most likely recorded in a post-sync session along with general wedding guest background chatter - the *Gigolo* song incorporated the actors singing in vision along with the music. The music and singing also had to accommodate several aural perspective changes as the point of view (and point of audition) transferred from the interior to the exterior of the tent. As suggested earlier, this may point to the use of multiple microphones, placed on the interior and exterior of the tent. By using a multi-microphone set up, the transition in the background gramophone track could be achieved with a live fade via a movable mixing console.

These mixing consoles were in existence at the time and were housed in mobile sound trucks; such vehicles could be hired by film production companies. Whilst large production companies such as Ufa soon invested in their own mobile recording units, companies such as *Klangfilm* offered such equipment on hire for location use. These location recording vehicles were capable of recording sounds within a 250 m range of the recording truck (Müller 2003, p. 234). However, these consoles were generally more limited in the number of separate microphone channels that could be accommodated within a location context.

A multiple microphone sound set-up would have provided the possibility of including perspective changes between the interior and the exterior. These perspective changes were not needed to create realism for the sake of being realistic but were of dramaturgical importance to illustrate the emotional distance between Fritz and Anni. Elsewhere, the engagement party uses sound deliberately to emphasise visual elements: for instance, in conjunction with the optical wipes which compress time, and which were already discussed above in the scene with the locked-off camera and the mother handing out continuous supplies of food and drink. In terms of the editing of the interior tent scenes, there is an overarching focus to achieve an assembly of images that tell the story visually, but without incurring unwanted audio artefacts - such as different sound levels when the action cuts from one shot to another within the inside of the tent. This is why many of these interior tent sections were shot non-sync: using this approach, a continuous audio background could glue the different shot angles and diverse visual story components together. The narrative impact that stems from the deliberate use of sound to create aural continuity at some sections (where the narrative flow should not be disrupted) is further complemented by using sound at other points to deliberately break the flow of the scene (either to highlight a time shift or for a comic accent on the visual component).

It is not within the scope of this project to determine exactly which technique was used with absolute certainty. The exact “how” of these processes may be explored in forensic detail by future research projects. The overriding objective of this research project was to demonstrate that sound was used in a very creative and ambitious

manner - even during the early period of the transition into sound. The aim of these film analysis chapters was to identify particular sections in selected early sound films that display an ambitious approach to the integration of aural components within the overall *mise-en-scène*. The engagement party in *Kuhle Wampe* is clearly such a scene, and we have seen how a number of narrative elements were being conveyed via the soundtrack.

Public Reception to *Kuhle Wampe* and Objections by the Censors

According to Klaus (1989, p.125) most of the film was shot in less than a fortnight during the autumn of 1931, with additional filming in late February and early March 1932. After prolonged intervention, the censors restricted the film to an adult audience, and the film premiered at the *Atrium* cinema on 30th May 1932 (Korte 1998, p.247). According to press reports (cited by Korte, *ibid.*), over 14,000 people saw the film in its first week at the Atrium. *Kuhle Wampe* was the product of the close collaboration on equal terms between its writer Brecht, its director Dudow and its composer Eisler. None of whom appear to have vied for primacy within the informal structure of its production team, nor is there any evidence of individuals asserting particular authority in a hierarchical manner over the project. Brewster explains that although Brecht frequently worked with others (who acted generally in a more subordinate role to him), the collaboration on *Kuhle Wampe* between Brecht and his co-creators was carried out on an equitable basis, and exactly what Brecht had been angered by on his previous collaboration on *Die Dreigroschenoper*:

Kuhle Wampe was Brecht's model of cinematic work, it was what he'd hoped to get out of the Threepenny Opera film and thought he had secured by very specific clauses in his contract, precisely the clauses that the courts²¹ eventually threw out.
(Brewster 1974, p.30)

In this way *Kuhle Wampe* can be understood as a true example of collective film making between the playwright Bertolt Brecht, the composer Hanns Eisler and the director Slatan Dudow, who developed the form and content of the film on an

²¹ This is a reference to the legal wrangling which ensued when Brecht became increasingly dissatisfied with the *Dreigroschenoper* film.

equitable basis. , *Kuhle Wampe* is also the only sound film of the political left made in Germany prior to the establishment of the national socialist government in 1933 and it is this fact, coupled with the collaborative team that saw the project through from inception to completion, which mark this film out for further analysis. It is not a perfect film - the financial circumstances of its production and the very limited resources with which *Kuhle Wampe* was made result in an uneven film. But it could be argued that Brecht would have wanted his film to be a little bit uneven, uncomfortably rough at the edges to ensure that the audience was ruffled, rather than anesthetised. The intervention by the censors and the resulting cuts to the film may have contributed further to an end result that appeared a little out of kilter. Even in the uncensored version, the episodic style made the film appear uneven - or to be more accurate: it made *Kuhle Wampe* unlike other, more conventionally-made films. The prominent film critic and writer Herber Jhering noted on 1st April 1932 that the pre-censorship version of the film presented some abrupt transitions, declaring that: “*Rhythmic balance is frequently lacking*” (Jhering [1932] 2016, p.374). However, the film critic went on to explain that it was exactly these structural features that bestowed *Kuhle Wampe* with its unique value.

Jhering’s comments were made in response to the initial, absolute ban of the film, leaving him to conclude that the film could be passed by the censors with some minor cuts that would not materially affect the overall story or style of the film (ibid, p.375). Cuts were made to appease the censorship board, and it has to date not been possible to re-instate all the sections which have been excised; some of the material removed at the insistence of the censors is believed lost. According to Klaus (1989, p.125) the version of the film initially submitted to the board of censors ran at 2186 metres in length, the version eventually permitted for distribution was 2000 metres. 186m difference at 24 fps is approximately 5 minutes of material. Nonetheless, Brecht’s influence remains traceable in terms of the film’s overall aesthetic, establishing at times an interesting dialectic tension between image and sound which will be discussed as part of this chapter.



Illustration 113 Brecht, Eisler and Dudow during their work on *Kuhle Wampe* in 1931.
(Geiselberger 2008, p.23)

Klaus (1989, p.126/127) provides a comprehensive summary of the censorship debate surrounding *Kuhle Wampe*, which reveals that sound added a specific layer of tension within the discussions. At the end of March 1932, the board of censors spent many hours deliberating over the film and issued a ban of the film on 31st March based on the argument that *Kuhle Wampe* represented an attack on the democratic values of the Weimar Republic, and that it incorporated revolutionary tendencies. The specific objection of the censors against the film lay with references to an illegal operation (the abortion which Anni is driven to in the original version of the film) which contravened aspects of the Republic's laws on the termination of a pregnancy. In addition to the implied disregard for the rule of law, censors were unhappy with aspects of the Bönike suicide tragedy and the family's subsequent eviction from their apartment. Further offence was taken with scenes set in the proletarian sports camp in the second half of the film, including a sequence depicting a group of naked sportsmen and women delving into a river. From descriptions and references in the censorship protocols, the bathing scene included the outline of a village in the distance on the other riverbank, with the silhouette of a church spire rising up from the landscape. What caused the censors particular sense of unease was the fact that - as the bathers were delving into the water - the church bells could be heard ringing in the background. This was perceived as a deliberate snub by the film-makers to the moral decency of the (re)public; the simultaneous, naked bathing of both genders

together was strictly forbidden at that time, and some censors were of the belief that this dichotomy of the illegal bathing activities was creating a moral counterpoint to the ringing of the bells, and as such represented a degradation to the institution of the church. In this context it is important to emphasise that it was the sound of the church bells that provided notable cause for concern, and this may be one of the first examples of a sound effect being cited as an aggravating factor within a censorship context. Whereas during the early days of sound film in Germany, the trade press had noted that sound elements were not (or perhaps *not yet*) subject to censorship (Film Kurier 23.05.1930, 12. Jahrgang, Nr.122, front page lead article²²), it is clear that two years later the censorship office had increased its awareness and vigilance in respect of sonic elements.

According to Klaus (1989, p.127) the decision to ban the film had not been reached unanimously by the board in March, and the divisions within the group of censors became apparent when two board members lodged an appeal against the *Kuhle Wampe* ban on 9th April. Their argument was that the censorship office was acting outside its powers if it forbade the film on political grounds in reference to the film's communist ideology. The Weimar Republic did not prohibit any particular political party and being a communist was not against the law, therefore communist ideology could not be seen as a driver for a ban. The subsequent appeal discussion focused on the approach that any illegal components of the film (such as the abortion or the naked bathing of mixed gender groups) could potentially be removed from the film, which could then avert a total ban of *Kuhle Wampe*. The appeal was thrown out on 11th April, arguing that the overall tone of the film was undoubtedly "volksgefährdend": a danger to the German people. There was considerable resistance against this decision, for instance the *Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte*²³ staged a protest demonstration against film censorship, using the *Kuhle Wampe* decision as a linchpin for its objections. Prominent speakers addressed the crowds during the protest, amongst them Rudolf Arnheim (Geiselberger 2008, p.35). Publishing his scathing assessment of the *Kuhle Wampe* censorship debate in the

²² Cf. chapter on *Westfront 1918*

²³ German League for Human Rights

Berliner Börsen-Courier, Jhering was deeply concerned over national long-term consequences as well as the global implications of banning the film:

It's no exaggeration: this ban, if it stands, if it is confirmed by the Central Censorship Board, will be the greatest blow yet dealt to German film. Not on account of this single film, but on account of the consequences. (...) [Film criticism] can no longer demand truthful representations from film if the will to truthfulness must risk not only failure but also interdiction. Who will keep investing money in such an uncertain venture? German film - confined by crisis, limited by the misled public, restricted by censorship - is losing its international standing.

Jhering ([1932] 2016, p.375)

The film was re-submitted to the censors for further deliberations, who prescribed a specific list of cuts: the removal of dialogue content about pitiful levels of unemployment benefits; any visual and aural references to contraception; references to Anni's abortion and the complete removal of the bathing scene. Following these amendments, the film was passed for distribution on 21st April 1932. Meanwhile, Brecht and Dudow had arranged a premiere in Moscow in mid-May; the German premiere took place on 30th May. In the wake of political events of 1933, which spelled an end of the Weimar Republic, the film was withdrawn completely almost exactly one year after the censors' deliberations over *Kuhle Wampe*.

The fact the Brecht had such a close association with the film may have been a contributing factor to the prolonged discussion. On one level a thorn in the side of the establishment, on another level a prolific playwright and author, Brecht was a notable cultural figure during the Weimar Republic. At the end of the 1930s, Brecht recorded his own recollections of interactions with the censor; decades later, these were translated²⁴ and published in a special *Screen* edition (1974, 15/2) which devoted to *Kuhle Wampe*. According to Brecht, the censor turned out to be a very astute assessor of the underlying political ideologies of *Kuhle Wampe*:

We had a hard time getting our film passed. Going out of the [censor's meeting], we did not hide our esteem for the acute censor. He had penetrated far deeper into the substance of our artistic aims

²⁴ Translated by Ben Brewster and Keith Tribe

than our most well-wishing critics. He had read us a little lecture on realism. From the standpoint of the police.
(Brecht 1974 [1930s, exact date unknown], p. 47)

Ironically, the day that Brecht's collaborative project *Kuhle Wampe* premiered at long last for its German audience in the Atrium cinema on 30th May 1932, was the same day that many historians view as critically important in terms of the end of Weimar Republic's increasingly fragile democracy²⁵ for a different reason: it was the day Chancellor Brüning's cabinet resigned. Heinrich Brüning's successor was Franz von Papen; according to historians' interpretation of the period, at best von Papen was a strawman, at worst he was a puppet of the reactionary right (Heiber 1993, p.197). At any rate, Franz von Papen was to become the final chancellor of the Weimar Republic.

²⁵ Another key date cited by historians such as Heiber was the death of Gustav Stresemann on 3rd October 1929)

Conclusion

The Complexity of Early Sound Film

This section recapitulates wider considerations of this project, summarises its findings in terms of the film analysis, reviews the benefits of the methodology used and points to future research development beyond the doctoral thesis.

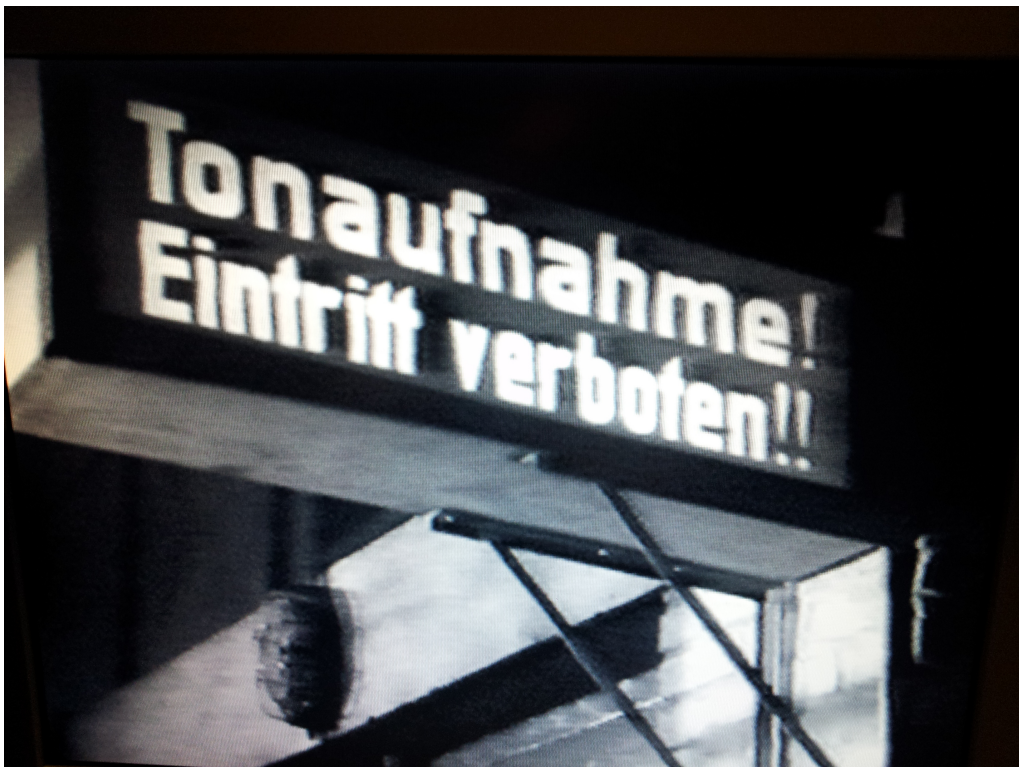


Illustration 114 Screen Grab from *Der Schuß im Tonfilmatelier* (1930): illuminated Sign at the entrance to the Film Studio. Sound film recording! Entrance Prohibited!!

History and the Medium in Transition

As explored during the Introduction and Literature Review sections, much of the existing research into early film sound history focuses on the establishment of a chronological narrative via the discussion of key technological developments. This research contends that it is problematic to condense the transitional period into a timeline that tries to compress what is essentially a period of evolution onto a singular focal point. Trying to characterise this era in terms of a “before” and “after” the arrival of sound fails to recognise that the consequences of the arrival of sound

technology reached far beyond the option of including dialogue in film. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the significance of the fact that a film making style emerged gradually, through film-making practice and audience response. This research project argues that an approach that is solely focused on a timeline of specific inventions in terms of *when* these changes appeared, but without sufficient evaluation of *how* these technological shifts can be traced to changes in film aesthetic and narrative concepts, remains incomplete. Conversely, what this research project demonstrates is that many early sound films of the period were far more complex than has been recognised to date. This has been a gap in established knowledge and understanding of the period that is being addressed by this research project.

That being said, in order to understand better some of the influences shaping the development and particularly the timing of technological shifts in Germany's film industry, a contextual overview of the historical period has been provided, and the development of sound film technology of the Weimar Republic has been established. One rationale for discussing this contextual backdrop has been to clarify why, given its technological early inception in the Weimar Republic, it took several years for sound film to establish itself in German cinema. This project has shown that technological advances to facilitate the recording and playing back of optical sound film were progressing well during the early 1920s. The work of the engineers who formed the *Triergon* team was of significant importance in illustrating how optical sound technology was being pioneered in Germany. The reasons that caused the team to run out of funds in the mid-1920s have been established. This confirms that financial resources have to be available to facilitate research and innovation processes. Sponsoring the development of technology that could facilitate new forms of cinematic creativity was not yet a consideration to warrant investments from the financial establishment. Existing within the constraints of a faltering economy, the financial considerations of Germany's had to prioritise profits over creative vision; this was particularly so in the Weimar Republic of the early 1920s, when increasing inflationary pressures further hampered the progress of the work of the engineers. In this context, the autobiographical material compiled by Hans Vogt, a founding member of the *Triergon* team, has contributed further valuable insights in

support of this research project.

The historical background to this discussion established how financial backers in Germany failed to subsidise further advancement of the optical film sound system, whilst a needle tone system (*Vitaphone*) was being developed by Warner Brothers in the United States. This different format for the synchronization of film with sound brought the director Alan Crosland breakthrough movie successes with *Don Juan* (1926) and *The Jazz Singer* (1927). As a vehicle for the popular singer Al Jolson, *The Jazz Singer* triggered a string of part talkie / part silent films that were unique to the early part of the transitional period. Made in a similar style, Jolson's subsequent film *The Singing Fool* (Bacon, 1928) sent ripples across the Atlantic, and attracted large audiences back in Europe at a time when cinema profits were under pressure. The American success story rekindled German interest: having retracted from investing too heavily in earlier pioneering advances into optical film sound - such as the *Triergon* system - the German film industry now recognised the innovative appeal of sound film and sensed an opportunity to revive waning box office figures. Irrespective of US advances in needle tone technology, the German film business increasingly favoured optical sound systems, particularly those being continually improved and marketed for the film industry by Tobis Klangfilm. The resulting wrangling over copyrights and patents in conjunction with emerging technologies - nationally and internationally - has informed the broader contextual discussion. However, as has been emphasised throughout this project, economic and technological perspectives have already been explored in greater detail in existing literature; it is more relevant for the focus of this project to concentrate on the aesthetic impact of sound on the films made during the late Weimar Republic in Germany.

Sound Film in Focus: Film-Makers, Critics and Audience

One of the key questions posed at the beginning of this study was how theorists, critics and the wider public sphere engaged with the arrival of sound in film. The evaluation of primary source material undertaken during this research project, from newspapers to technical publications, has revealed that soon after the First World

Was a surprising degree of anticipation regarding sound for film emerged across many sections of society, and that this interest remained a feature of public debate throughout the 1920s. This research project has demonstrated that in addition to the curiosity regarding technological developments, there was an animated discourse debating the impact of sound in the cinema within a framework of wider aesthetic considerations. Analogous to the technology discussion, this dialogue thrived both long before and also during the establishment of sound film in cinema and involved film-makers as well as theorists.

Film-Makers

This thesis has examined the use of film sound as exemplified by a selection of films from the transitional period and has identified a group of film-makers who seized on the creative potential that the advent of sound presented. This project has illustrated the level of anticipation expressed by a number of individuals prior to the arrival of sound. These expectations are lent further significance through the assorted statements by film-makers such as Pabst and Lang, which have been considered in this context. What has also become clear is that the eagerness to embrace sound is evident in the work of innovative individuals such as Gerhard Lamprecht. Although almost unknown outside of Germany, his personal curiosity about innovation is demonstrated via the patents that he contributed to the improvement of cinematic processes. His eagerness to experiment is further demonstrated in his approach to working with inexperienced actors on a sound film set, evident when he made *Emil und die Detektive*. As an appraisal of the critical response to Lamprecht's film confirmed, the overarching praise lavished on the film was for its innovative and naturalistic style, particularly in terms of its portrayal of the younger generation of the period. Lamprecht's film eased its cast, as well as its young audience, gently into the story, and relied on music in the opening scene to set up the film's main protagonist. The absence of dialogue in the opening section has left the film consistently underestimated by film theorists. However, the analysis of the film makes clear: this film was not *like a silent film*. This was *a sound film* that used techniques from the silent era to establish its narrative. This distinction is a very important one, especially in terms of a cinema-going public experiencing the transition into the sound. In regard to music, most of the film uses Allen Gray's

score as the main driver for the chase scenes. Occasionally, the score still takes on the role of mimicking sound effects, for instance when depicting the arrival of Emil's train in Berlin. Lamprecht's film treats its subject matter (and its audience) sensitively and still manages to incorporate a considerable aural ambition without overwhelming its story material. This has been made particularly clear with the discussion of the final scene of the film, which managed to integrate several separate sound layers that were of narrative importance. The discussion has highlighted that Lamprecht's film incorporates dialogue with non-diegetic music, in spite of technical challenges that governed such practice. Similar sequences have been identified in some of the other films discussed in this project. These observations call into question various assumptions established in film history texts that state that music could not be integrated with dialogue in early sound film. By extension, the detailed appraisal of these films challenges the notion that early sound films avoided non-diegetic music altogether. All of the four main films selected for discussion illustrate that this is not the case. With regard the early sound era, statements that underestimate the complexity of the transitional period need to be re-evaluated. Such generalisations have led to erroneous assumptions about early sound films in the past; assumptions which are not reflected by the factual evidence presented as part of this thesis.

Film-Theorists, Critics and the Public Sphere

Replicated in countless film history texts, the widely held notion that influential theorists such as Rudolf Arnheim, Béla Balázs and others rejected the very notion of sound for the cinema has been examined to test its accuracy. Notable in the first instance the fact that many such views had been expressed *before* sound film had become a reality in film-making practice. The thesis has shown that some who appeared initially against sound film subsequently refined or further qualified their position; most moved away from a stance of outright rejection. The study clarified that many individuals who have been widely portrayed as recalcitrant opponents of sound film, in fact had expressed their negative initial stance from a purely hypothetical perspective. Some feared that sound cinema would amount to little more than filmed theatre but revised their opinion as sound film became more established as the cinematic norm. Others who were initially hesitant about the

concept of sound for films did so for a variety of reasons that have been considered as part of this project. Yes, there were critical voices that expressed concern about an apparently limited creative ambition as exemplified by some early sound films. But similar critical concerns existed about unimaginative films that had been made during the silent era. By selectively quoting from certain theorists' early writings, film historians have inadvertently distorted the actual response to sound film during the Weimar Republic. This circumstance has resulted in the acceptance of some erroneous generalizations, which this research project has been able to challenge.

The evaluation of a diverse range of primary source material clarifies that many objectors subsequently revisited their position. What has also become clear is that these much-cited theorists, along with many other agents in the wider public sphere, took a keen interest in the development and establishment of sound film in the Weimar Republic, and that a comprehensive engagement with their respective opinions yields a more rounded result. Whilst a small number of the very first sound film examples were pilloried on technological grounds in some sections of the public sphere, audiences loved seeing these early German sound films just for their innovative value. However, both the public and the film industry quickly developed more sophisticated expectations - and what has become very clear in undertaking this research project is that the films of the early sound era rapidly adapted to delivering sound films that could incorporate astonishing sonic complexity.

Methodological Approach and Film Analysis Findings

From a wider group of films made during the transitional period, four key films were subjected to closer analysis. The analysis approached each film with particular focus on the use of dialogue elements, sound effects, atmospheres and music. Drawing on a practice-based understanding of film-making processes has revealed the degree of versatility with which film-makers operated within the confines of the technological challenges of the transitional period. Most importantly, a methodology informed by practice-based understanding of film-making processes has demonstrated that aurally complex elements were integrated with the soundtrack of early films, in spite of technological challenges.

Sound as an Extension to the Visual Frame

As early as 1930, as sound film was just beginning to establish itself in Germany, Pabst experimented with this new dimension in *Westfront 1918*, creating a poignant aural representation of warfare. Even when there is no opportunity to depict warfare within the visual frame, the audience is frequently reminded of the proximity of conflict in relation to the various protagonists through the use of sound effects. Throughout the film, Pabst uses sound elements to create linkages between protagonists or locations. Making the traumatising effect of warfare tangible for its audience, *Westfront 1918* integrates sound to particularly harrowing effect in the use of screams. Pabst's sound film work is also an early exponent of the use of dynamic range in the way that silence and sound are juxtaposed with one another. The evaluation of the critical response to the soundtrack in particular reveals just how significant its impact was at the time. In terms of the early 1930s, the memory of the First World War was still palpable for many. Equally, those who had lived through the horror of the trenches were keen to see this memory preserved and acknowledged in Weimar Republic's art, literature and film – and *Westfront 1918* played its part in this.

Emotive Potential of Sound, Dialogue and Editing

How particular film-makers explored sound film's narrative potential was one of the key research questions posed at the beginning of the project. This analysis process has demonstrated that individual film-makers were able to incorporate highly complex narrative concepts through sound in film. Sound imbued cinema with the ability to incorporate an emotive dimension; the thesis has illustrated how specific sound elements as well as particular editing methods were used in order to express emotional aspects of the narrative. Sound enabled actors to work with emphasis, pacing and intonation. But sound also provided editors with the opportunity to affect the pace of the film; new editing techniques enabled the creation of linkages or deliberated contrasts.

The use of sound effects to bridge story elements has been exposed. The parallel use of multiple sound elements (sound effects and / or atmospheres and / or music) has been identified in all four key films. The analysis of *Kuhle Wampe*, the project stemming from the collaborative efforts of Bertolt Brecht, Hanns Eisler and Slatan Dudow, reveals how - close to the end of the Weimar Republic - Germany's political left transposed its expectations of cinema as a didactic agent for social change, in adapting to the new medium of sound film. *Kuhle Wampe* has been identified as a film of extremely complex sonic ambition, and one which deliberately uses sound to induce the audience to reflect critically on its subject matter. In this regard, the use of the *Verfremdungseffekt* has been discussed as an emotive component of sonic story telling.

The Role of Music

The role of music has been considered from the perspective of the diegetic space, as well as the non-diegetic dimension. The discussion has identified the use of music as an integration of a referential component within the narrative. The discussion has illustrated how music was used to create emotional contrast as well as provide cognitive storytelling elements - for instance in the framing of the flashback scene in *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse*. The discussion has also highlighted how score was used to highlight a particular event or plot twist within the narrative. As with *Kuhle Wampe* and *Emil und die Detektive*, detailed discussions of *Westfront 1918* and *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* have revealed the considerable degree of planning and pragmatic imagination required to integrate music with dialogue. This part of the discussion has demonstrated that early sound films of the Weimar Republic adopted a more complex approach towards the integration of music in the film than has hitherto been acknowledged.

Blurred Boundaries: Filmic Realism vs. Reality

Finally, it is worth reflecting again on the notion of sound film as a catalyst that affected the concept of filmic realism in narrative cinema. Both *Emil und die Detektive* and *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* are fantastical stories. Unlike *Westfront 1918*, which situates its narrative in real events of the past, or *Kuhle Wampe*, which

sets its story in the present-day lives of ordinary working-class characters, both *Emil* and *Mabuse* are extraordinary stories of fictitious characters. Both films integrate elements of fantasy, or dreaming or hypnosis, into their respective narratives. From the idyllic portrayal of childhood in Lamprecht's film with its heroic home-coming scene, to the characterisation of a criminal genius hell-bent on manipulating others, there is little chance that the audience would mistake fiction for fact. Yet, both films profit greatly from the veneer of realism with which sound tints the cinema screen. Just as Gustav's dialogue line from *Emil und die Detektive* (1931) expressed: "*Mensch, det is ja wie im Kino!*" [Boy, this is just like in the movies!], the boundaries between reality and story world became less clearly defined with the arrival of sound. Film as a narrative concept moved from being evidently *very different* from the real world - on account of silent film's unreal *mise-en-scène* - to a style that audiences could trace to the real world outside the cinema doors. Sound connected the story world of the screen to the auditorium and by extension to the world beyond, blurring the boundaries between "real-life" experience and "projected experience". The cinema orchestra, which had been a clearly visible component of the exhibition space, provided the emotive glue between screen and audience, but ceased to exist with the arrival of sound technology. The orchestra's music evolved into an invisible element integrated somewhere in the screen world, or beyond. Unseen, yet an integral part of the story, music expanded in complexity in terms of how an audience could "read" the presence of music in terms of its diegetic status. With the arrival of sound, this emotional glue was no longer restricted to music, but could also be provided by other sonic elements. Particular sound components can be recognised (for instance a music cue or a sound effect), in the same manner as a concert audience can be aware of a solo instrument during a performance - yet that same instrument can also become part of the overall aural blend. And precisely that story-world, no matter how fantastical or improbable its subject matter, suddenly had the potential to resemble the real world outside the cinema doors in terms of how characters spoke and how they interacted with their screen environment. The grand gestures projected by silent screen stars, necessary to convey story and emotion, now morphed into human interactions that audiences could transfer into the *mise-en-scène* of the real world. This newfound potential of sound cinema to create connective tissue between screen and audience made fantasy stories more exciting because this could relate to the real world, but also added new credence to story lines set within a more

recognisable habitat.

In examining the films of the transitional period more closely, we can observe that the cinematic landscape was one of sonic light and shade. Whilst not all films made during the transitional period managed to integrate sound into their story telling in a particularly creative manner (and indeed, not all story lines may have provided the material conducive to an ambitious use sound), some films offer such a wealth of creative engagement with sound that they warranted a more detailed discussion – this has been achieved by the study presented here. In-depth engagement with selected film examples from the early sound period reveals an ambition to integrate the aural domain into the *mise-en-scène*. What has also become clear is that sound enabled editing techniques to add greater fluidity and complexity to film plots. Overall, it has become clear that many established prejudices, which have characterised the early sound period as one of limited cinematic creativity, will need to be revised. The sophism that dismisses film of the early sound period as inferior in comparison to the high points of cinema production during the silent era can no longer be readily accepted.

Direction of Future Research

What this project has established is that in the space of just a few years the German film industry underwent ground-breaking technological transition that marked the end of the silent era through the establishment of sound film as the cinematic norm. Alongside the technological changes, the advent of sound resulted in a seismic shift of the cinematic aesthetic that would have a profound effect on the audience experience. The cost of converting to sound was significant, resulting in countless small film studios and independent cinemas going bankrupt, leaving only a few large studios to survive the transition. This financial dimension was exacerbated by the effect of the global economic crisis exerting particular pressure on the German economy. The implication of sound and image combining into a new homogenous cinematic form was taken up with enthusiasm by the remaining big players within the German film industry, as well as by the cinema going public. New genre formats were facilitated through sound, as evident by the numerous musicals that quickly

gained in popularity, both in Europe and in America. More importantly, fundamental concepts of how audiences became immersed in the screen's narrative had the potential to be re-invented by film-makers. Different directors explored a range of ideas and approaches to incorporate sound into their movies - this has been discussed in detail via a number of key examples. Each one of these films could have been discussed in even greater detail, but this would have gone beyond the parameters of this research. The aim of this undertaking was to illustrate that a range of emerging sound ideas can be traced by looking at selected examples from the period.

This study is opening up future research directions; the wealth of material reflecting the public discourse about the potential and actual arrival of sound has been sketched out. Future research could engage in more detail with this primary source material. The thesis has established that early German sound film was astonishingly complex in narrative ambition. The methods as to how such complexity could be achieved have been suggested, and this points towards future lines of enquiry - for instance through further archival research. Another direction for future research would be to trace the impact of popular films from the sound cinema of the late Weimar Republic on the films of the *Third Reich*. Notable for instance in Leni Riefenstahl's 1935 *Triumph des Willens* [*Triumph of the Will*] in regard to the use of sound and music, how musical elements incorporate referential material similar to elements from an earlier era; this is notable in terms of the orchestration of music as well as referential melodic features. In addition, elements of Adolf Hitler's arrival during the opening sequence of *Triumph des Willens* are eerily reminiscent of Emil's triumphant homecoming at the end of *Emil und die Detektive*: the plane, the expectant crowd pointing skywards, the excitement with which the arrival of the hero figure is greeted construct a scenario that provides food for thought when exploring the wider dimension of the political potential of sound film. Without question, the sound era brought further opportunity to control the cinematic experience of audiences across Germany. When considered in the context of the country's drift towards fascism, this fact alone suggests a viable direction for future research projects.

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APPENDIX I

Westfront 1918 (1930)

Nero-Film A.G., Berlin

PRODUCTION CREDITS:

Director: Georg Wilhelm Pabst

Script: Ladislaus Vajda

Producer: Seymour Nebenzahl

Camera: Charles Metain, Fritz Arno Wagner

Music: Alexander Laszlo

Set Design: Ernö Metzner

Sound: Karl Brodmerkel

Sound Montage and Film Editing: Wolfgang Loë-Bagier

Sound Supervisors: Joseph Massolle; Guido Bagier

Original Novel: Ernst Johannsen

CAST:

Karl	Gustav Dießl
Der Student	Hans Moebis
Der Bayer	Fritz Kampers
Der Leutnant	Claus Clausen
Karl's Wife	Hanna Hoeßrich
Karl's Mother	Else Heller
Yvette/ "Jacqueline"	Jackie Monnier

Sound system: Tobis

Filmed 07.02.- 18.05.1930¹

¹ (Production Information from Klaus 1998, Vol. 1, p.181)

Summary

Westfront 1918 tells the story of four German infantry soldiers: the "Lieutenant", the "Bavarian", the "Student" and "Karl". The plot is set during the last months of World War One, and is mostly set in the trenches and wider geographic area around the Westfront. It shows the four central protagonists in different front situations, but also interacting with German and French civilians.

The "Lieutenant" leading the group is a soldier through and through, obeying his orders with unquestioning devotion. By the end of the film, it is this character's descent into madness (or what could be referred to more accurately as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) that provides one of the most shocking narrative vignettes of the film: amongst the corpses of dead soldiers, the "Lieutenant" stands wide-eyed and shouts "Hurrah!" at the top of his voice, over and over again. He continues to scream "Hurrah!" as he is carried away, and (seen in a subsequent scene) taken to a field hospital by medics; all the while, the Lieutenant insanely shouts the same word "Hurrah!" , to the point of his voice is breaking. The jubilant meaning of the word stands in an incongruous dichotomy in the manner of its increasingly mournful intonation and represents an irreconcilable juxtaposition to the horror of the battlefield and the field hospital, in which the injured continue to suffer and frequently to die

Another of the group of four, the burly "Bavarian", is fatalistically resigned to doing his duty as a soldier, but his gallows-style humour also provides at once relief for the protagonists as well as expressing and illustrating the grim reality of the soldiers' fateful prospects. He provides an emotional counter-point to the youthful enthusiasm of the "Student" but is also a loyal friend who is on hand to support his friend "Karl" as he undergoes his own emotional transition from motivated to des-illusioned soldier. The "Bavarian" is battle-worn and experienced in war-fare; he has survived the war thus far and is level-headed in his advice to his fellow soldiers on the best course of action in different situations.

The youngest of the four protagonists, referred to throughout the film as the

“Student”, is portrayed as an almost naïvely innocent character, who falls in love with a young French woman in a village where the soldiers are billeted. The “Student” fantasises about marrying his new sweetheart, but the brutal reality of warfare puts an end to this dream, as the “Student” is drowned in a water filled bomb crater during hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. Through the image of the “Student’s” hand emerging out of the soil of the bomb crater where he had been drowned, Pabst conjures up an allegory of warfare’s brutalisation of innocence. The only character of the four known by name in the film is “Karl”; like many of the other soldiers he follows his orders in the trenches dutifully while inwardly looking forward to seeing his family back in Berlin on his next home-leave. As Karl returns temporarily from the front, the story briefly relocates its narrative away from the suffering in the trenches and gives an insight into the hardship and misery that the civilian population had to endure. The scarcity of food and other key supplies sees the population enduring endless queues outside shops, in the hope of an opportunity to acquire essential groceries. One of the key moments during this home-front section is when Karl’s mother, who had been standing patiently in line outside a shop, feels unable to leave her place in the queue to go across the street to greet her homecoming son Karl, who remains unaware of his mother waiting in line nearby. The anguish on the mother’s face, accompanied by her resigned exclamation to others in the queue that she cannot abandon her place after having waited for hours in the cold, expresses at once the cruel irony as well as the emasculated hopelessness of the situation. A clear moment of indignity sees Karl’s mother finally arriving at the front of the grocery queue, just as the shop-keeper announces that they are all sold out and closes the shutters, while a police man turns away Karl’s mother and the remainder of the frustrated crowd. Meanwhile, Karl has returned to his marital home only to find his wife in the arms of the young butcher's apprentice – Karl’s glance wanders in disbelief between a slab of beef on the kitchen table peeking out of its paper wrapper, as his wife hastily pulls the covers over herself in bed and Karl’s rival hastily pulls on his clothes. The reciprocal, potentially indentured, nature of the arrangement between his wife and the young butcher is lost on Karl, who is locked in the jealous shock of his disappointment. Neither Karl nor his wife are able to reconcile the pressures of war and its effect on their personal situation. Karl returns to the front disillusioned and volunteers for a suicide mission, which out of camaraderie the “Bavarian” feels obliged to accompany Karl on. Both men are seen

dying in the field hospital during the final scenes of *Westfront 1918*, as the screams of the “Lieutenant” still echo around the makeshift beds of the injured. In his final moments, Karl's looks at the face of a nurse in attendance and imagines that she is his wife, speaking to him to ask for his forgiveness. Karl mumbles "we are all guilty" and passes away. A French soldier on the stretcher next to him reaches out to grasp Karl's dead hand, declaring that they are not enemies but comrades.

Emil und die Detektive (1931)

Universum-Film A.G. (Ufa) film

PRODUCTION CREDITS:

Director: Gerhard Lamprecht

Producer: Günther Stapenhorst

Music: Allan Gray

Camera: Werner Brandes

Sound: Hermann Fritzsching

Screenplay: Billie Wilder

Original novel: Erich Kästner

CAST:

Emil Tischbein Rolf Wenkhaus

Frau Tischbein Käthe Haack

Jeschke (the policeman) Rudolf Biebrach

Grundeis Fritz Rasp

Emil's grandmother Olga Engl

Pony Hütchen Inge Landgut

Gustav (the boy with the motor-horn) Hans Joachim Schaufuß

The Professor Hubert Schmitz

The Flying Deer Hans Richter

Little Tuesday Hans Löhr

Sound system: Klangfilm

Filming took place over six weeks from 06.07.1931 ².

² (Production Information from Klaus 1998, Vol. 2, p.65)

Summary

Emil Tischbein lives in a small town with his mother who is struggling to make ends meet as a hairdresser. Whilst Emil is not averse to the occasional schoolboy-prank, he appears a dependable lad, whom his mother entrusts with the delivery of a considerable amount of money to the boy's grandmother in Berlin; the sum is in repayment of a loan the cash-strapped mother had been given by Emil's grandmother.

As Emil boards the train to visit his grandmother and his cousin in the big city, his mother entreats him one more time to look after the money very carefully. In this manner, the boy's mission becomes known to Herr Grundeis, a dubious character who happens to be travelling in the same compartment. As other passengers alight from the train at the next stop, Emil finds himself left alone in the carriage with only the odious Grundeis for company. Though Emil tries to maintain a cautious distance, the man in turn seeks to ingratiate himself with the boy through a series of fantastical stories. Though Emil manages to keep his guard up, he finds it difficult to turn down a proffered bag of sweets. Unbeknownst to the boy, these treats appear to have been laced with a sedative, and Emil is soon overcome with tiredness. Tormented by strange visions and perceptions of Grundeis and himself, Emil dreams of a bizarre fantasy journey, in which the boy is ultimately transported to Berlin, just as the real train judders to a halt at one of the city's stations. Thus, Emil is jolted back into reality and on re-gaining consciousness he discovers to his horror that the money, which he had secured to his inside pocket with a pin, has been stolen.

Emil exits hastily from the train without meeting up with his grandmother or his cousin Pony-Hütchen and sets off in a desperate pursuit of the thieving Grundeis. He manages to catch up with the villain, observing him eating a simple meal in a restaurant. Emil continues to keep an eye on Grundeis but is unsure how he as a boy in a strange city should apprehend the thief.

Just at this impasse, a street-wise boy who calls himself Gustav-mit-der-Hupe (roughly translated as Claxon-Gustav) appears. The small claxon he produces from his pocket is used by Gustav to summon other boys from surrounding areas, who

congregate in large numbers at the stake out. Thus Gustav introduces Emil to other key-members of his circle of friends: amongst them, a studious looking boy appropriately called ‘the Professor’, also “Der fliegende Hirsch” (aka Flying Deer), thus named as the boy is fascinated by the native American characters that were the stuff of popular fiction of the period (and who whizzes around the city at break-neck speed on his wooden scooter) and “Der kleine Dienstag” (Little Tuesday, or Tuesday Minor) – perhaps a name given to him to differentiate from another boy of a similar surname (an older sibling?). But Kästner does not waste any time with illuminating his audience with lengthy explanations as to the respective backgrounds or identity of this diverse band of children, as the story continues to unfold at break-neck pace.

Once the gang of children have been briefed on the nature of Emil’s dilemma, the new friends promise to help Emil to recover the stolen money. The boys take it in turn to spy on Grundeis, organising a whip-round amongst the children, the Professor becomes the custodian of a war-chest to finance the operation,. Thus, the boys are able to hire a taxi to continue in their pursuit of Grundeis, who has decided to book himself into a small hotel for the night. In spite of having his every move observed by ever-changing groups of children, Grundeis remains oblivious to being watched.

Meanwhile, Emil has swapped clothes with the bellboy of the hotel and attempts to sneak into the thief’s room in disguise in order to re-capture the money. To Emil’s disappointment, he is not able to locate the hiding place of the banknotes but does manage to find out at least the name of the thief (up to this point, Grundeis was referred to by the boys as “the man with the hat”).

As Grundeis leaves the hotel the next morning, the boys decide to follow the thief en-masse, pursuing him to a bank, where the man tries to obtain change for the large notes he had stolen on the train. Here, surrounded by other boys, Emil accosts Grundeis directly and accuses him openly of having stolen the bank notes. The bank manager intervenes and questions how this could be proved. Emil remembers the needle marks left in the paper bills as a result of having been pinned to his inside pocket. The bank manager does find the marks as predicted by Emil, and as

Grundeis is clearly put on the spot at this point, the thief begins to lose his composure. This triggers the arrival of some policemen, who decide to interview all parties involved at the local police station.

Once at the police station, Grundeis, who is found to be carrying a range of fake identity papers, is swiftly identified as a wanted man and a dangerous bank robber - furthermore, a sizeable reward is offered to anyone contributing to the capture of the villain. Thus, Emil's money is recovered and the loan finally repaid to his grandmother - the boy returns to his home town to a celebratory welcome. Arriving back in Neustadt to a large celebration, Emil and his Berlin friends arrive by aeroplane and are celebrated as heroes. In turn, the children pay tribute to each other in terms of the different roles each one of them fulfilled in contributing to the happy outcome of the story.

Kuhle Wampe (1932)

Prometheus-Film GmbH

Praesens-Film GmbH

PRODUCTION CREDITS:

Director: Slatan Dudow

Director of Dialogue: Bertolt Brecht

Producer: Georg Höllering; Robert Scharfenberg; Michael Hellquist; Lazar Wechsler.

Music: Hans Eisler

Camera: Günther Krampf

Sound: Karl Erich Kroschke; Fritz Michaelis.

Montage: Slatan Dudow.

Set Design: Robert Scharfenberg

Screenplay: Bertolt Brecht; Ernst Ottwald; Slatan Dudow.

Original novel: Erich Kästner

CAST:

Young Bönike	Alfred Schäfer
Anni Bönike	Hertha Thiele
Father Bönike	Max Sablotzki
Mother Bönike	Lilli Schoenborn
Onkel Otto	Willi Schur
Fritz	Ernst Busch
Gerda	Martha Wolter
Kurt	Adolf Fischer

Also credited:

4,000 members of the Workers Sports Club Fichte

Workers' Drama Group "Das rote Sprachrohr"

Uthmann-Choir

Singers' Collective Norden

Greater Berlin Workers' Singers
Choir of the Berlin State Opera

Filmed 29.09.-11.10.1931 (studio)

15.02.- early March 1932 (additional filming)³

Sound system: Tobis-Klangfilm

Summary

Kuhle Wampe oder *Wem gehört die Welt?* (*Kuhle Wampe* for short)⁴ depicts the living conditions of working class citizens of Berlin⁵. The film's central focus is with the Bönikes; their family unit typical of the urban proletariat affected by the kind of economic depression and widespread unemployment that became a theme of the latter years of the Weimar Republic. *Kuhle Wampe*'s main protagonist is Anni Bönike, whom the film portrays as a hard-working factory worker - the sole breadwinner of the four-strong Bönike family, as both father and son Bönike are unemployed. The changing fortune of Anni's relationship with her boyfriend Fritz provides a further narrative thread. Following the Bönike's eviction through their landlord, Fritz is instrumental in getting the family re-settled at *Kuhle Wampe*. Fritz and Anni's story also incorporates a more personal dimension, as the young couple have to deal with an unplanned pregnancy as an additional complication to their situation.

In structural terms, the film is divided into four separate chapters, each one identified by an inter-title:

Chapter 1: the introductory section of the film is initially music-driven and depicts

³ (Production Information from Klaus 1998, Vol. 3, p.125)

⁴ The title of the film refers to a real-life encampment of workers outside Berlin on the shores of a lake, the *Müggelsee*. The tent colony had sprung up during the economic crisis of the late 1920s as a refuge for homeless working-class families. The camp's name *Kuhle Wampe* is an amalgam of two etymologically contradictory nouns: "Wampe" is a slang word for a fat belly, "Kuhle" is colloquial for a dip or indentation. Putting these contrasting nouns together creates an oxymoron which suggests hardship via the absence of a fat belly.

⁵ The lifestyle of this socio-economic group is far removed from the prevailing stereotype of a German metropolis enjoying the hedonistic trappings of the swinging twenties. Unemployment, financial hardship and homelessness are the main themes of *Kuhle Wampe*.

the unemployed workers on their daily hunt for work. Eagerly awaiting the publication of the job pages in the newspaper, they set off en masse on their bicycles, a great throng of cyclists pedalling furiously across Berlin from opportunity to opportunity - however, demand for work far outstrips supply and most of them return unsuccessfully. Various shots give a sense of the great number of unemployed men on their bicycles racing around town in search of jobs; there are no sound elements to reflect the story space or foreground action. The absence of diegetic sound from this sequence acts as an overture that sets the visual action to music yet maintaining a sense of detachment from any inkling of the sound world of the story and to its proponents: a large group of unemployed men in search of work. One such unemployed person turns out to be the son of the Bönike family, as he arrives back home to join his family for a simple lunch. The father, also unemployed, criticises the son for his lack of manners as he apparently forgot to greet the landlord in the stairwell the other day. "Unemployed and impolite is a bad combination", admonishes the father. Anni, who has just returned from her shift at the factory to join the lunch party interjects that the unemployment situation cannot be resolved with politeness alone. The conversation around the table remains tense, but it is mainly Anni who puts up a defence for her brother. The brother in turn appears increasingly downcast and withdrawn. After the lunch table has been cleared, Anni heads out for a date with her boyfriend Fritz, while Father Bönike is off to the pub and the mother is going out to shop for groceries. The son, who had been left sitting at the table by the other Bönikes, gets up and opens the window. As he prepares to climb onto the windowsill, he pauses to take off his watch which he carefully places on the table before jumping to his death. When Mother Bönike returns from the shops, she does not realise what the commotion in the courtyard is about; Anni and Fritz likewise see the crowd surrounding a spot where a body appears to lie covered by a blanket, as yet unaware of the personal dimension of this particular suicide. Neighbours lament the tragedy of a young life cut short.

Chapter 2: a judge is seen ordering the eviction of the Bönikes as they had been behind with their rental payments. Against this backdrop, the camera follows Anni, as she attempts to get support for the family and to prevent the eviction - she is seen visiting various welfare departments, the bailiff's office as well as trying to appeal to the landlord directly. In the end, as her efforts remained unsuccessful, she

telephones Fritz for advice. Fritz, who works as a car mechanic, suggests that the family should move out to join him at Kuhle Wampe, a squatters' camp by a lake outside Berlin. Fritz is able to borrow a car and transports the Bönike's modest belongings to the camp, where the family set up home in makeshift accommodation. As Fritz and Anni's relationship continues to develop, the young couple are forced to become engaged when it transpires that Anni is pregnant. As the Bönikes throw an engagement party, the strain on the young couple begins to show, and Fritz expresses his frustration at having been "caught out" like this by Anni. Furious about his attitude, Anni leaves Fritz and Kuhle Wampe, moving in with her factory colleague Gerda.

Chapter 3: Having gone their separate ways, Anni and Fritz come back into contact during a large sport festival, organised by a workers' association. Swimming competitions, rowing regattas, races, games and a motorcycle rally take place with the participation of thousands of workers. There is also a political dimension to the gathering, as a revolutionary theatre group puts on a performance that deals with homelessness and eviction. The performance piece culminates in the bailiff's removal men sabotaging the eviction by refusing to move the tenants' furniture in an act of solidarity. Against this backdrop, Anni and Fritz appear to become reconciled.⁶ The couple face an uncertain future, but they resolve to face their future together. The sport festival ends with a rendition by the assemble participants of the Solidaritätslied, Eisler's specially composed anthem urging workers to stand together to bring about a better future.

Chapter 4: the workers disperse and go their separate ways to return to their respective homes in readiness for the new week. Presumably, many will be returning to their jobs, but many others will be returning to the prospect of looking for work. All seem to have benefited from the weekend's respite and their shared experience of the festival. A great number are seen walking to the railway station, and the story

⁶ The original version of the film – prior to any intervention from the censors – included scenes that referred to Anni considering an abortion as a solution to her and Fritz's unplanned situation. Dialogue sections clarifying that Anni's friends had collected the money to help Anni undergo a termination were removed by the censor's office.

continues inside an urban S-Bahn train. The workers from the sports festival mingle with other travellers, resulting in a diverse social group crammed into the same compartment. A discussion of global commodities and price-fixing ensues when a passenger comments on a newspaper report that thousands of tons of coffee have deliberately been destroyed in Brazil, apparently in a bid to keep global coffee prices inflated. The strategy of safeguarding profit margins at the expense of the common man and woman by an artificially created commodity shortfall is met with indignation. Various passengers offer a diverse range of responses, from lamenting the terrible waste of good coffee, to wider condemnation of global capitalist interests. The debate reveals the social and political divisions between the passengers, pitting the petit bourgeoisie against the proletariat. A well turned out man in an immaculate suit points out in a self-satisfied manner that changing the world is not easy - who will take this on? Gerda, also travelling on the train, has the last word: those that don't like the prevailing status quo will change the world. The image fades to black and Eisler's Solidaritätslied is heard once again.

Das Testament des Dr Mabuse (1933)

Nero-Film-A.-G., Berlin

PRODUCTION CREDITS:

Director: Fritz Lang

Producer: Seymour Nebenzahl

Music: Hans Erdmann

Camera: Fritz Arno Wagner

Sound: Adolf Jansen

Editing: Conrad von Molo

Screenplay: Thea von Harbou

Based on an original character by: Norbert Jacques

CAST:

Professor Baum Oskar Beregi

Kriminalkomissar Lohmann Otto Wernicke

Thomas Kent Gustav Dießl

Lilli Wera Liessem

Dr Mabuse Rudolf Klein-Rogge

Dr Kramm Theodor Loos

Hofmeister, ex policeman Karl Meixner

Müller, his assistant Klaus Pohl

Filmed 02.10 – 22.10.1932 (Factory Fire and other exterior scenes filmed near Berlin)

26.10.1932 -. January 1933 (DLS Ateliers, Staaken; studio)⁷

Sound system: Tobis-Klangfilm

⁷ (Production Information from Klaus 1998, Vol. 4, p.184)

Summary

A man is crouching behind a large trunk in a noisy factory, unseen machines chuntering away in the background. The man is hiding from two grim looking men, who are searching for him. The man manages to make a getaway, pursued by several men, who try to stop his escape by setting some barrels on fire. As the barrels explode, the action cuts a police station, where chief inspector Lohmann is preparing to leave for the evening to go to the opera. The phone rings – the call is from the man who had been pursued by gangsters in the previous scene. The man calling the police station is called Hofmeister and transpires to be a former colleague of Lohmann's. Hofmeister had been discharged from the police on suspicion of corruption and is keen to clear his name of these allegations. Since leaving the police, Hofmeister has been conducting his own investigation into a criminal gang but had to run for his life when his cover as a spy was blown. In fear of his life, Hofmeister calls the Inspector in order to give him important information with regard to the criminal gang. Just as Hofmeister is about to reveal the identity of the criminal mastermind behind the gang of serious criminals, shots are fired. Helplessly, the Inspector listens to the incident on the telephone. In the aftermath of the shooting, incoherent singing can be heard down the phone line. The Inspector concludes that Hofmeister must have lost his mind. Lohmann's assistant Müller traces the call, but when the police get to the location from which Hofmeister had placed the call, there is no sign of the man. Lohmann's men gather forensic evidence from the crime scene to help the investigation. The action then moves to a university lecture theatre where Professor Baum, an eminent Psychiatrist, is delivering a lecture about the curious case of the famous Doctor Mabuse, an inmate of the psychiatric hospital which the Professor runs. The students learn about the peculiar state in which Mabuse appears to be: without ever speaking, the patient only communicates in writing, scribbling pages and pages of detailed notes. These notes later transpire to be criminal schemes – plans to rob jewellery, blow up factories and to create an “empire of crime” (a recurring theme in Mabuse's notes). A colleague of Professor Baum, Dr Kramm, notices the similarity between the crimes described in Mabuse's notes and some real incidents that had been reported in the newspapers. Kramm tells Baum about his concerns and decides to make a report but is shot dead in his car on the way to the police station. The gang continues to commit an assortment of crimes,

though one of the gang, a man by the name of Thomas Kent, is having misgivings and contemplates leaving the gang, particular when he is ordered to carry out a murder. Tom Kent is in love with Lilli, a young woman whom he had met at the unemployment exchange a year earlier.

Kent is ordered to a meeting with the mysterious leader of the gang (who remains unseen, speaking from behind a curtain to the gang members), but Kent is unhappy about carrying out the instructions to murder someone. A little while later, as Kent and Lilli are walking in the street, the pair are taken away at gunpoint by the gang members. The couple are taken back to the place where the meeting with the leader of the gang had taken place. The voice behind the curtain informs the young couple that they will be put to death, because of Kent's desire to leave the gang and his refusal to carry out the instructions of the criminal mastermind. Kent pleads for Lilli to be let go, but the gang leader refuses, announcing that they are both going to die. Incensed, Kent fires a pistol at the curtain, but then discovers that they have been tricked: instead of the body of the gang leader, they discover that they had been listening to a loudspeaker positioned behind the curtain. Kent and Lilli hear the voice of the gang leader again: they have three hours left to live – a ticking sound in the background makes the couple realise that they are trapped in the room with a bomb. Meanwhile Inspector Lohmann's investigation has traced the missing Hofmeister, who is now a patient in the psychiatric Hospital run by Professor Baum. Lohmann goes to see Hofmeister, who appears to have had some sort of breakdown. Lohmann thinks believes that Hofmeister is still trying to share some information with the inspector but is somehow unable to communicate properly what he has witnessed. Lohmann speaks with Professor Baum about Hofmeister, and about the assassination of Dr Kramm; Lohmann believes that the two cases are connected. Baum appears increasingly obsessed with the criminal plans left behind by Dr Mabuse, who had recently passed away at the hospital (and in whose room Hofmeister is now being monitored). Reading Mabuse's notes out loud to himself, Baum's voice is gradually being replaced by the voice of the late Dr Mabuse, who continues to recite criminal plans. Baum is taken over by the spirit of Mabuse, initially just via the voice, but eventually becomes completely inhabited by apparition of the late doctor. Mabuse's schemes return to the theme of "building an empire of crime", which will commence with general acts of sabotage. Meanwhile,

Lohmann's investigations have progressed and the inspector has been able to arrest several members of the gang. Kent and Lilli have managed to break free from the room with the bomb and are now helping the police. Lohmann and Kent visit Professor Baum, and discover that the Professor's voice, which can be heard through the closed office door, is coming from a gramophone recording. The gramophone is rigged up to the door handle: when someone tries to enter the office, the action of the door handle activates the gramophone voice, issuing the instruction not to disturb Baum. Tom Kent recognizes the voice as being the same as the one that he heard via the loudspeaker in the room where he had been imprisoned with Lilli. Searching through the Professor's papers, Lohmann discovers Mabuse's plans to blow up a chemical factory that same evening. As the two men hurry to the chemical plant, the emergency services are already in attendance, struggling to contain the fire. Kent spots Baum watching the blaze, who then flees from the scene. Lohmann and Kent pick up his pursuit but lose track of the Professor. Meanwhile, the spirit of the late Dr Mabuse joins Baum in the car and takes control of the Professor. Together, they arrive back at the psychiatric hospital and Baum is guided to Hofmeister's cell by the spirit of Dr Mabuse (which prior to his own death, had been Mabuse's cell). Baum introduces himself politely to Hofmeister as Dr Mabuse and takes up residence in the room. Hofmeister is suddenly able to communicate again, and is greeted by Lohmann and Kent, who have just arrived at the hospital in pursuit of Professor Baum. The Professor now sits in the bed once occupied by Dr Mabuse and tears up the plans into tiny shreds and descends further into madness.

Fritz Lang Interview about the sound of M- (extract)

Gero Gandert:

The treatment of sound as a dramaturgical medium in M is often praised. One almost gets the impression that we were further along in this area in the early days of sound films than today.

Fritz Lang:

M was my first film with sound. At that time, you could count the number of sound films available for viewing on the fingers of one hand. Naturally I attempted to

come to terms with this new medium: *sound*. I found, for example, that when I was sitting alone in a sidewalk cafe, of course I heard the noises from the street, but that when I was immersed in an interesting conversation with a companion, or when I was reading a newspaper that totally captured my interest, my organs of hearing no longer registered these noises. Hence: the justification to represent on film such a conversation without laying down the aforementioned street noises as background to the dialogue.

At that time, I also came to the realisation that not only could one use sound as a dramaturgical element, but in fact absolutely had to. In *M*, for example, when the silence of the streets (I deliberately omitted the optional street noises) is sliced in shreds by the shrill police whistles, or the un-melodic, constantly recurring whistling of the child murderer, that gives mute expression to his compulsive urges.

I also believe that in *M* was the first time I had sound overlap sound, one sentence from the end of one scene overlapping the beginning of the next, which not only accelerated the tempo of the film, but also strengthened the dramaturgically necessary association in thought of the two juxtaposed scenes.

For the first time, as well, the dialogue of two contrapuntal scenes (the questioning of the gang members with the aim of finding the child murderer, and the questioning of the detectives assembled in the police station for the very same purpose) was handled in such a way that the entire dialogue forms, to a certain extent, a whole. That is to say, for example, one of the criminals starts a sentence, and one of the detectives is shown finishing a sentence, and both parts make sense. And vice-versa. Both techniques were later used generally.

When, on the other hand, the blind street vendor hears the dissonant melody of a barrel organ, stops up his ears so as not to hear it anymore and suddenly the sound of the barrel organ is cut, although the audience would actually have to be able to hear it, then that is an attempt that certainly has a justification. Which does not mean that such an attempt establishes a rule.

I certainly do not believe that a film is bound by any rules. It is always new and a principle that is right for one shot can already be all wrong for the next.

(Gandert 1963, p.35-36)

APPENDIX II

Definitions

Acousmètre:

(From: Film Theory – The Basics)

A figure within the story world who is heard but not seen. This position retains a special power within most narratives but can be rendered vulnerable when voice and body are realigned.

(McDonald, Kevin. Film Theory: The Basics, Taylor and Francis, 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bournemouth-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4406505>.)

Aesthetic:

(OED Online)

a style or set of principles underlying a particular artist or artistic movement

Available from: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/aesthetic> [Accessed 12 April 201]

(Collins Dictionary)

adj also: *aesthetical* or sometimes *US esthetical*

1 connected with aesthetics or its principles

2 a relating to pure beauty rather than to other considerations *b* artistic or relating to good taste: *an aesthetic consideration* ▷ *n*

3 a principle of taste or style adopted by a particular person, group, or culture: *the Bauhaus aesthetic of functional modernity*

(aesthetic or sometimes US esthetic. (2014). In Collins Dictionaries (Ed.), *Collins English Dictionary*. (12th ed.). [Online]. London: Collins. Available from: http://search.credoreference.com.libezproxy.bournemouth.ac.uk/content/entry/hcengdict/aesthetic_or_sometimes_us_esthetic/0?institutionId=444 [Accessed 6 November 2017].)

Aesthetics:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

A way of creating and analyzing art and art forms for their beauty.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Audio Mix:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

The process of blending together the many different audio tracks used in an edited program such that their levels (volumes) work appropriately together. Spoken dialogue, voice-over narration, music, sound effects, etc. are all blended so they sound good with one another under the picture track.

Cf: Sound Track (below) – the constituent elements of an overall audio mix. The result of an overall audio mix is the soundtrack, in line with the definition from Deutsch (2007).

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Chiaroscuro

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

Italian for light/dark, this term is used in the visual arts to talk about the high contrast ratio between light and dark areas of a frame. Filmmakers, as well as painters, use this technique to show or hide certain visual elements within their frames.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Composite:

(Collins Dictionary)

adj

I composed of separate parts; compound

(...)

5 something composed of separate parts; compound

(Composite. (2014). In Collins Dictionaries (Ed.), Collins English Dictionary. (12th ed.). [Online].

London: Collins. Available from:

<http://search.credoreference.com.libezproxy.bournemouth.ac.uk/content/entry/hcengdict/composite/0?institutionId=444> [Accessed 6 November 2017].)

Cutaway (noun)

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

Any shot recorded that allows a break from the main action within a scene. The editor may place a cutaway into an edited scene of shots when a visual break is necessary or when two other shots from the primary coverage will not edit together smoothly.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Dialectical Materialism:

(From: Film Theory – The Basics)

A Marxist concept that suggests material economic conditions form the basis of class struggle and the drive to fundamentally transform society; Soviet filmmakers applied to cinema, treating individual shots as film's material basis and montage as a means of putting them into conflict.

(McDonald, Kevin. Film Theory: The Basics, Taylor and Francis, 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central,

[https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bournemouth-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4406505.](https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bournemouth-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4406505))

Didactic:

(Collins Dictionary)

adj

1 intended to instruct, esp excessively

2 morally instructive; improving

3 (of works of art or literature) containing a political or moral message to which aesthetic considerations are subordinated

[C17: from Greek *didaktikos* skilled in teaching, from *didaskein* to teach]

› di'dactically adv

› di'dacticism n

(Didactic or didactical. (2014). In Collins Dictionaries (Ed.), Collins English Dictionary. (12th ed.).

[Online]. London: Collins. Available from:

http://search.credoreference.com.libezproxy.bournemouth.ac.uk/content/entry/hcengdict/didactic_or_didactical/0?institutionId=444 [Accessed 6 November 2017].)

Diegetic:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

Diegetic – Generated by something within the film world, usually associated with sound elements in a fictional motion picture. Example: a song playing on a jukebox in a diner.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Expressionism:

(From: 100 Ideas that Changed Film)

Employing exterior or objective representation to convey interior or subjective states,

the silent *Schauerfilme* (horror films), *Kammerspielfilme* (chamber dramas), and *Strassenfilme* (street films) produced in Weimar Germany between 1919 and 1929 continue to have a major influence on world cinema.

Expressionist films had their roots in the artist groups of Der Blaue Reiter and Die Brücke, the poetry, prose, and plays of writers such as Georg Kaiser and August Stramm, and the theatrical stagings of Karlheinz Martin and Max Reinhardt. Easily the most significant of the resulting radical departures from cinematic bourgeois realism was Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), which explored the themes of revolt, self-realization, insanity, and primeval sexuality that reflected the mindset of a defeated nation beset by war reparations, political uncertainty, and moral ambiguity. Moreover, it brought a fresh psychological and poetic complexity to what was essentially a narrative medium.

Determined to prove that high art could revive German cinema's commercial fortunes, *Caligari* producer Erich Pommer turned limited resources and an unreliable electricity supply to his creative advantage by having designers use canted angles, forced perspectives, and painted backdrops to reinforce the mood of dislocation suggested by the stylized performances of Werner Krauss and Conrad Veidt. Yet, while it exhibited classical Expressionism, *Caligari* also drew inspiration from the atmospheric dramas of Swedes Mauritz Stiller and Victor Sjöström and Danes Benjamin Christensen and Carl Theodor Dreyer, as well as the sensationalist urban crime thrillers produced by Nordisk in the 1910s and gothic horrors such as Stellan Rye's *The Student of Prague* (1913) and Henrik Galeen's *Der Golem* (1915). Indeed, these non-American cinematic influences also manifested themselves in Fritz Lang's *Destiny* (1921) and F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), which were hailed as Expressionist masterpieces (if not always box-office successes) long before Ernst Lubitsch's costume films, Murnau's invisibly edited chamber dramas, and the realist street films of G.W. Pabst were added to the canon.

Ultimately, the high-key lighting (see [Artificial Lighting](#)), distorted two-dimensionality, subjective camera movements, and macabre topics became part of an émigré cinema, as actors, directors, cinematographers, and composers were lured to Hollywood or fled the Third Reich. Purists now insist that Expressionism cannot be used to define the films they produced outside Germany. But a term is required to validate the connection between the original works and such beneficiaries of their

distinctive stylistic qualities and tone of angst and paranoia as the Universal horror series, film noir, and the modern comic-book blockbuster, not to mention key works by acclaimed filmmakers such as Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles, Carol Reed, Werner Herzog, Tim Burton, Terry Gilliam, and Guy Maddin. Perhaps Caligarism, chiaroscuroism, or pseudo-Expressionism could serve instead.

(Expressionism. (2012). In D. Parkinson, 100 ideas that changed film. [Online]. London: Laurence King. Available from:
<http://search.credoreference.com.libezproxy.bournemouth.ac.uk/content/entry/lkingygvr/expressionism/0?institutionId=444> [Accessed 6 November 2017].)

Film Theory:

(From: Dictionary of Visual Discourse: A Dialectical Lexicon of Terms)

Contemporary film theory and film studies inevitably raise important questions about the commodification of visual imagery, filmic 'subjectivity' and 'desire', the role of aesthetics (and aesthetic judgement) in society, and broader questions about the interaction and interpenetration of verbal, auditory and visual semiotics. It has become a commonplace to claim that films - like any other 'texts' - need to be 'decoded' and 'read' in terms of their multiple meanings, gendered conventions, narrative strategies and framing devices (cf. Godard and Ishaghpour, 2005; Izod, 1984; Metz, 1982; Mulvey, 1989; Turner, 1988, and Lapsley and Westlake, 1988). However, somewhat surprisingly, little has been written of the impact of modern 'filmic' consciousness upon the traditional problematics and practice of social thought and philosophy (the work of Jean-Luc Godard and Stanley Cavell being notable exceptions). Recent film studies have been decisively transformed by adopting and adapting many of the concerns of contemporary semiotics, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and feminist theory - drawing upon the poststructuralist writings of Freud, Lacan, Derrida and Kristeva (for example, the work of Laura Mulvey, Anne Kuhn, Terry Lovell, Teresa De Lauretis, Tania Modleski, and others).

(Film theory. (2011). In B. Sandywell, Dictionary of visual discourse: a dialectical lexicon of terms. [Online]. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing. Available from:
http://search.credoreference.com.libezproxy.bournemouth.ac.uk/content/entry/ashgtvd/film_theory/0?institutionId=444 [Accessed 6 November 2017].)

Flashback:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

A device in film construction that jumps the narrative from the present time of the story to an earlier time. Usually used to explain how the current circumstances came about.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Foley:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

A sound-recording practice where “artists” make noises in a studio while they watch the edited motion picture. The sounds that they record will replace or augment the sound effects of the film, such as footsteps, leather creaks, door knob jiggles, etc.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Genre:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

A French term meaning a category within some larger group. In film, the term applies to types of movies such as comedy, drama, action, musical, etc.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Hermeneutics:

(From: Harvard Dictionary of Music)

The study of musical meaning beyond verifiable facts. The practice of hermeneutics stems initially from biblical exegesis, but musical hermeneutics has come to signify a manner of interpretation that goes beyond grammar and mechanics. Its practice was established in the 19th century with the attempts by E. T. A. Hoffmann and others to

hear narratives in instrumental music. Although derided by many as strictly extramusical, hermeneutics often seeks to explain otherwise inexplicable musical events and the way listeners might hear them. In recent years hermeneutic interpretations of music have blended into broader readings emphasizing philosophy, aesthetics, gender, nationalism, and other interdisciplinary approaches to interpretation.

(Hermeneutics. (2003). In D.M. Randel (Ed.), *The harvard dictionary of music*. (4th ed.). [Online]. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Available from: <http://search.credoreference.com.libezproxy.bournemouth.ac.uk/content/entry/harvdictmusic/hermeneutics/0?institutionId=444> [Accessed 6 November 2017].)

Mise-en-scène

Although this term was originally coined for the staging of theatrical plays, it has transposed itself into common usage in the cinema. It is used in this thesis as a term to suggest the overall combination of all elements of the story as realized on the screen: from cinematography, through to costume design and sound design.

Montage

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

(1) The French word for editing; (2) a series of edits that show an event or events that happen over time but are condensed into a brief episode of screen time and usually edited to music; (3) a sequence of edited film clips that generates a new meaning for the viewer based on the juxtaposition of the individual shots' contents.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Non-Diegetic Sounds:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

Non-Diegetic Sounds Also called “non-literal” or “commentary” sounds, non-diegetic sounds are sounds placed in your sequence’s audio tracks that cannot be attributed to any source found as an element within the film’s “reality.” In other

words, nothing in the film space is causing these sounds to occur, and no one in the film space can hear them. Non-diegetic sounds are typically used for dramatic purposes and are designed to emotionally and psychologically manipulate the audience. Musical score/orchestration, soundtrack music (not emanating from a source in the film world), certain ambience and tonal tracks, and certain “non-realistic” sound effects may fall into the non-diegetic category. Voice-over narration is also sometimes placed within this grouping depending on whose thoughts are being voiced and what narrative technique is being used. (p49)

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, *Grammar of the Edit*, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Optical Sound:

(From: *Repeated Takes*)

The development of sound-on-film, whereby signals from a microphone were used to modulate a light beam which could be photographed (...) and reproduced through a photoelectric cell.

(Chanan, M., 1995. *Repeated Takes*. London: Verso)

Point of View (POV):

(From: *Grammar of the Edit*)

In filmmaking terms, any shot that takes on a subjective vantage point. The camera records exactly what one of the characters is seeing. The camera sits in place of the talent, and what it shows to the viewing audience is supposed to represent what the character is actually seeing in the story. It can help the audience to relate to that character because they are placed in that character’s position.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, *Grammar of the Edit*, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Point of Audition (POA):

(From: *Film, A Sound Art*)

A character through whose ears it is suggested that we are hearing a sound. For example, if she is speaking on the telephone and we hear her interlocution distinctly just as she supposedly hears the person. This is the subjective meaning of point of audition. (pp487/488)

(Chion, M., 2009. *Film: A Sound Art*. Columbia & Princeton: University Presses of California.)

Post-Production:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

The period of work on a motion picture project that occurs after all of the action is recorded with a camera (also known as production). Post-production can include picture and sound editing, title and graphics creation, motion effects rendering, color correction, musical scoring and mixing, etc.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, *Grammar of the Edit*, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Reference / Referentiality:

(From: Dictionary of Visual Discourse: A Dialectical Lexicon of Terms)

The univocity, intentionality and semantic security of word-world correlates. The diverse work of reference ‘ties’ our propositions to the ‘really real’ (reference, in this sense, is one of the most important themes for any possible ontology). Such a referential ontology typically presupposes a stable, transparently identifiable world of objects (‘referents’, ‘objective facts’, ‘objects’) for discourse and language. In other words, *referentiality* as one of the fundamental presuppositions of every world-disclosing perspective. The everyday miracle of reference is that, from a tissue of indeterminacies, we can say something determinant about the world.

(Reference/Referentiality. (2011). In B. Sandywell, *Dictionary of visual discourse: a dialectical lexicon of terms*. [Online]. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing. Available from: http://search.credoreference.com.libezproxy.bournemouth.ac.uk/content/entry/ashgtvd/reference_referentiality/0?institutionId=444 [Accessed 6 November 2017].)

Room Tone:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

The sound of “silence” that is the underlying tone present in every room or environment where filming takes place. Most sound recordists will capture at least 30 seconds of room tone at every location where filming has occurred. Editors use this tone to fill in gaps of empty space on the audio tracks so it has a continuous level or tone throughout.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Sequence:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

A number of shots joined together that depict a particular action or event in a longer program. Sometimes likened to a scene, but a longer scene may have several key sequences play out within it.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Shot:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

One action or event that is recorded by one camera at one time. A shot is the smallest building block used to construct a motion picture.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Semiotics:

(From: Aesthetics A-Z)

Derived from the Greek word for 'sign' (*semeion*), semiotics is the standard term for

the theory and analysis of signs as commonly applied to a broad range of cultural phenomena, from works of high [literature](#), visual art and [films](#) to the most mundane artifacts and practices of popular [culture](#), which are all regarded as various modes of [communication](#). Contemporary semiotics was founded on [Saussure's](#) structural linguistics as well as the general theory of signs propounded by American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1913), who famously suggested differentiating between three types of reference: (1) 'iconic' for cases which solely depend on resemblance (for example, when a picture looks like its object); (2) 'indexical' for cases in which one thing points at, or implies the existence of another thing (for example, when smoke implies fire); (3) 'symbolic' for cases which solely depend on convention (for example, a flag of a nation). These categories are not mutually exclusive. For instance, a picture of smoke is both iconic (it resembles smoke) and indexical (it implies the existence of fire). The term 'semiotics' is often used interchangeably with the term 'semiology', which has been originally suggested by Saussure, although the latter is best reserved for applications which strictly follow Saussure's brand of scientific linguistics. In the aftermath of [poststructuralism](#), semiotics now boasts a much broader and lax spectrum of goals and methodologies. It may seek to contextualize signs, thereby fleshing out, often by means of undercutting the contested primacy of authorship, hidden [narratives](#), which ultimately shape or reconstruct the ideational reception of its audience. Alternatively, embracing radical relativism, semiotics stresses the open-endedness of any [interpretation](#) and the indeterminacy of [meaning](#). In any case, semiotics, although highly instructive as an approach to the history of art and to literary criticism, is nonetheless at odds with aesthetics, insofar as it tends to collapse [aesthetic judgment](#) into mere rhetoric. This can be seen most clearly in *deconstructionist* approaches to *texts*.

(semiotics. (2010). In E. Guter, *Aesthetics A-Z*. [Online]. Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press. Available from:
<http://search.credoreference.com.libezproxy.bournemouth.ac.uk/content/entry/eupaes/semiotics/0?institutionId=444> [Accessed 6 November 2017].)

Sound as Emotional Manipulation:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

Picture and sound tracks work together to create a multi-sensory, motion media

experience for the audience. Neglecting either could cause a disconnect. Sound, because it can be felt as well as heard, is a fantastic tool for manipulating the emotions of the viewer and can add to the visceral “reality” of very unreal cinematic content (p.51)

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Sound Bridge:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

An audio treatment given to a cut point where either the sound of the outgoing shot continues underneath the new image of the incoming picture track or the new audio of the incoming shot begins to play before the picture of the outgoing shot leaves the screen.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Sound Camera:

(From: Film Style and Technology)

Special camera that records sound photographically down the edge of the sound negative.

Any camera used for filming the picture in synchronism with a sound recording.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Sound Design:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

The process of building audio tracks that act to augment and enhance the physical actions seen on the screen and the sounds from the environments in which the story's

action takes place. These sounds may be actual sounds or fabricated to generate a hyper-reality of the audio elements in a program.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Soundtrack:

(From: The Soundtrack)

The term “soundtrack” is used throughout this project – the concept of an overall understanding of all aural films of film is widely understood, and was discussed and defined in the journal The Soundtrack as follows:

The soundtrack can now be perceived by an audience as a unity; that dialogue, effects, atmospheres, and music are intended to be heard as interdependent layers in the sonification of the film. It is here that all aural elements speak to the audience congruently, with the primary aim of creating a coherent multi-layered audio-visual experience for the viewer.

(Deutsch, S., 2007.. Editorial. The Soundtrack, 1(1). Intellect Ltd. Doi: 10.1386./st.1.1.3/2. 3-13.)

Sound Track:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

Sound Track – An audio track. A place in the motion media sequence where audio clips are edited.

The process of building audio tracks that act to augment and enhance the physical actions seen on the screen and the sounds from the environments in which the story’s action takes place. These sounds may be actual sounds or fabricated to generate a hyper-reality of the audio elements in a program.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Sound Recordist/Sound Mixer:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

The person on a film crew responsible for recording spoken dialogue, ambience, and room tone.

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

Split Edit:

(From: Grammar of the Edit)

A transition between clips where the video tracks and audio tracks are offset and not cut at the same frame in time. Either the video tracks will last longer and play over the new incoming audio tracks or the new video tracks appear first and play over the continuing audio tracks from the outgoing shot. See also J-Cut, L-Cut, Lapping, Sound Bridge..

(Bowen, CJ, & Thompson, R 2017, Grammar of the Edit, Taylor and Francis, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 November 2017].)

THE END

