

Weimar Film

Genres and Styles

Ufa's Multiple Imperatives

- serve the state
- expand film art
- uplift a defeated people
- enhance Germany's image abroad
- challenge the limits of "good taste"
- represent the darker sides of social life
- explore the extremes of character psychology

Weimar Thematics

- Weimar cinema begins and ends in a lunatic asylum
 - *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene 1919) to *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (Lang 1933)
- Emphasis on tyrants and “slaves”: *Metropolis* (Lang 1927)
- Sons rebel against fathers: *Asphalt* (May 1929)
- the “New Woman”: *Pandora’s Box* (Pabst 1929)
- Emphasis on diegetic audiences

Lure of the Exotic

- Except for “street films” adventure films dominated
- Intensified experience
- Escapism and fantasy
- Resentment of Germany’s geographical isolation
- Loss of empire
- Vicarious experience of international expansion

Three genres of Weimar film

- spectacular myths and historical romances
 - e.g., Lubitsch's *Madame Dubarry*, *Anna Boleyn*; Lang's *Siegfried*
- fairytales and horror films
 - Lang's *Destiny*, *Metropolis*
 - Wiene's *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*
 - Murnau's *Nosferatu*
- the “street film”
 - Pabst's *Joyless Street*
 - May's *Asphalt*

The Dark Side of the Street

- gritty urban dramas
- focus on crime and explicit sexuality
- cautionary tales: the risks of excitement; the seductive appeal of the underworld
- social critique: focus on poverty and unemployment; crime as the only way out

Weimar Gothic

- gloomy
- bizarre
- irrational
- fantastic
- extreme psychological states (objective correlatives)
- link between crime and insanity
- appeal of terror and the “night side” of life (decadence)
- anti-realist; dreamlike quality

The New Objectivity/ Die Neue Sachlichkeit

- painting focusing on daily life
- focus on the ugly, not the beautiful
- critical of the wealthy and powerful
- Cynical, unsentimental, bitter, disillusioned
- Representation of decadent behavior and settings

Striking style in all genres

- myths and historical romances: casts of thousands, elaborate production design
- fairytale/horror films: exotic settings, distorted Gothic style (fantasy, escape, nostalgia for lost empire)
- Visual extravagance
- Non-realistic cinematic techniques (Expressionism)
- street films: the New Objectivity

Common Cinematic Techniques in Weimar Films

- highly mobile camera
- subjective camera shots; motivated POVs
- unmotivated, extreme, and obtrusive camera angles
- discontinuity editing; montage
- chiaroscuro lighting
- deep focus
- symbolic, even distorted mise en scène

Common Cinematic Techniques in Weimar Film

- montage / moving camera → energy of the city
- CUs
- POV shots for each main character
- mirror shots
- glamour lighting
- direct address
- cross-cutting (parallel editing)