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Absolute Relativity:  
Weimar Cinema and the Crisis of Historicism  
by  
Nicholas Walter Baer

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Film and Media  
and the Designated Emphasis  
in Critical Theory  
in the  
Graduate Division  
of the  
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:  
Professor Anton Kaes, Chair  
Professor Martin Jay  
Professor Linda Williams

Fall 2015

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Weimar Cinema and the Crisis of Historicism

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by

Nicholas Walter Baer

Abstract

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Weimar Cinema and the Crisis of Historicism

by

Nicholas Walter Baer

Doctor of Philosophy in Film and Media

Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Anton Kaes, Chair

This dissertation intervenes in the extensive literature within Cinema and Media Studies on the relationship between film and history. Challenging apparatus theory of the 1970s, which had presumed a basic uniformity and historical continuity in cinematic style and spectatorship, the ‘historical turn’ of recent decades has prompted greater attention to transformations in technology and modes of sensory perception and experience. In my view, while film scholarship has subsequently emphasized the *historicity* of moving images, from their conditions of production to their contexts of reception, it has all too often left the very *concept of history* underexamined and insufficiently historicized. In my project, I propose a more reflexive model of historiography—one that acknowledges shifts in conceptions of time and history—as well as an approach to studying film in conjunction with historical-philosophical concerns.

My project stages this intervention through a close examination of the ‘crisis of historicism,’ which was widely diagnosed by German-speaking intellectuals in the interwar period. I argue that many pioneering and influential films of the Weimar Republic registered and responded to contemporaneous metahistorical debates, offering aesthetic answers to ontological and epistemological questions of the philosophy of history. In my analysis, the films’ extraordinary innovations in aesthetic and narrative form can be associated not only with technological advances and sociopolitical ruptures, but also with concurrent efforts to theorize history in an age of ‘absolute relativity.’ Combining archival research, theory, and formal analysis, my work thus contributes to scholarship on German cinema, placing films of the Weimar era in constellation with developments in Central European intellectual history.

In loving memory of Alfred Baer (1917–2012)

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## Historical Turns

*The distinctive posture of the spirit in relation to the contents of the world is characterized by the fact that there is some sense in which every absolute is conceived relatively.*  
–Georg Simmel<sup>1</sup>

*Artworks become relative because they must assert themselves as absolute.*  
–Theodor W. Adorno<sup>2</sup>

The advent of New Film History a quarter-century ago was preceded by a far earlier “historical turn.” In contradistinction to natural law theory, with its appeal to the atemporal and universal aspects of human nature, nineteenth-century historicism had asserted the historicity and uniqueness of all sociocultural phenomena and values. Extending the legacy of Leopold von Ranke and the German Historical School, scholars in the field of Cinema and Media Studies have promoted a greater historical consciousness over the past three decades. Whereas apparatus theory of the 1970s presumed a basic uniformity and historical continuity in cinematic style and spectatorship,<sup>3</sup> more recent work has emphasized the *historicity* of moving images, from their conditions of production to their contexts of reception, and has examined large-scale transformations in technology and modes of sensory perception and experience.

Of course, an analogy between the “historical turn” in nineteenth-century German scholarship and that of Film Studies in the 1980s is an imperfect one. The very term “New Film History,” as used by Thomas Elsaesser in a 1986 article,<sup>4</sup> indeed recalled not only the rising New Historicism in literary studies, but also the “New History” championed in the early twentieth century by James Harvey Robinson, who had revolted against the narrowly political orientation and dry antiquarianism of prior historiographical work.<sup>5</sup> The phrase “The New History,” or “*la nouvelle histoire*,” emerged again in the 1960s and 70s with a generation of American and French historians who—extending the innovations of Robinson and Charles Beard in the U.S. and of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre in France—sought to expand the purview and methods of the historical sciences and to foreground economic and social forces.<sup>6</sup> Film-historical books such as Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery’s *Film History: Theory and Practice* (1985) arguably followed these trends in conceiving cinema as an open system shaped by technological developments, economic factors, and social contexts.<sup>7</sup>

If New Film History thus followed the New History movement and the *Annales* School in diverging from nineteenth-century German historiography, especially insofar as the latter had specialized in politics and had focused on pre-eminent individuals and events, film historians nevertheless upheld many central ideals of the Rankean tradition, including primary-source research, scientific exactitude, and objective, detached neutrality. Furthermore, in both cases, one witnessed a time lag between the formation of a new academic discipline and the crystallization of its problems. Thus, much as German intellectuals increasingly recognized the aporias of historicism, culminating in a crisis of historical thought in the early twentieth century,<sup>8</sup> recent years have witnessed heightened reflection on the “historical turn” in Cinema and Media Studies and on the histories of

film historiography and theory. This reflection has occurred against the backdrop of major changes in our media environment, which have radically expanded our resources for producing scholarship, but have also called into question the very centrality, autonomy, and stability of our object of study, threatening it with obsolescence.

In this dissertation, I attempt to rethink the tenets of New Film History by engaging with the “crisis of historicism” widely diagnosed by German-speaking intellectuals in the interwar period. My project focuses on pioneering and influential films of the Weimar Republic, which, I argue, registered and responded to contemporaneous metahistorical debates, offering aesthetic answers to ontological and epistemological questions of the philosophy of history. In my analysis, many of Weimar cinema’s defining formal and stylistic features (e.g., non-linear narratives, Expressionist *mise en scène*) can be interpreted as figurations of historical-philosophical issues, including the structure and directionality of history and the possibility of objective cognition. Furthermore, numerous films of the period developed strategies to diverge from historicist thinking altogether, whether in the non-referentiality of avant-garde abstraction or in the alternative temporal frameworks of nature, religion, and myth. In this way, films of the Weimar era issued a critique of nineteenth-century historical methodology, and are thus at odds with the objectivism and empiricism of much new film-historical scholarship. Placing Cinema and Media Studies in dialogue with Central European intellectual history, I will propose a more reflexive model of historiography—one that acknowledges shifts in conceptions of time and history—as well as an approach to studying film in conjunction with historical-philosophical concerns.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters, each of which examines the crisis of historicism through the lens of a particular film and set of historical-philosophical debates. In the first chapter, I pursue an analogy between Expressionist cinema’s reworking of “camera reality” and contemporaneous intellectual efforts to rethink the nature and epistemology of “historical reality.”<sup>9</sup> Analyzing Robert Wiene’s *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, 1920), I argue that the visual features and narrative structures of Expressionist cinema are interpretable not only within a meta-cinematic discourse (i.e., as reflections of/on the properties, possibilities, and cultural-industrial positionality of the filmic medium), but also as *meta-historical* considerations of the philosophical tenets of historicist thought. Moreover, I contend that Expressionist cinema’s oft-noted self-reflexivity aligns it with what Hayden White has called an “ironic” mode of historiography, or one aware of the relativity of all values and conscious of the problematics of narration.<sup>10</sup> *Caligari*’s legacy, in my analysis, consists not solely in introducing aspects of aesthetic modernism to the medium of film, but also in demonstrating the possibilities of an “intellectual” or “cerebral” cinema—one that engages with fundamental questions of the philosophy of history.

While Wiene’s *Caligari* suggests the invariable subjectivism of every historical account, Fritz Lang’s *Der müde Tod* (Destiny, 1921), the focus of the following chapter, contributes to philosophical debates by indicating that the very inevitability of death remains an eternal and ubiquitous truth—or, as Jean-Luc Nancy would later write, that “finitude alone is communitarian.”<sup>11</sup> In Lang’s film, the figure of Death offers a maiden the chance to reconvene with her lover by saving the life of someone in the Muslim Near East, Renaissance Venice, or Imperial China. Episodes in these three settings not only depict similar narratives of forbidden love and untimely loss, but also reveal equivalences

in length and casting of lead actors; in their organization around ritual ceremonies or celebrations; and in their use of particular geometrical shapes and within the *mise en scène*. Thus, in opposition to nineteenth-century historicism, which had treated every epoch as “immediate to God,”<sup>12</sup> in Ranke’s famous words, Lang’s film advances a negative philosophy of history, presenting each epoch instead as *immediate to death*.

If narrative filmmakers often looked to prior epochs to address contemporary historical-philosophical concerns, avant-gardistes sought to mark a radical, decisive break with the past. “History is what is happening today,” declared Hans Richter in a 1926 issue of his journal *G—Material zur elementaren Gestaltung*.<sup>13</sup> Taking this statement as its cue, my next chapter explores problems of time and history in Richter’s films and theoretical texts of the Weimar era. How can an avant-garde movement mark an historical break without referencing the past? How does film assert its non-referential autonomy except in the established idioms of older media? And how might historiography remain synchronous with contemporary creative forces? Analyzing *Rhythmus 21* (Rhythm 21), I argue that Richter paradoxically drew from various aesthetic and intellectual traditions in the very act of dismissing the past, articulating a presentist stance whose relationship to history was one of performative contradiction. Moreover, engaging with early-twentieth-century writings on the concept of non-contemporaneity, I problematize Richter’s presentism and also suggest a new approach to the “historical avant-garde.”

My final chapter revisits one of the genres most notoriously condemned by Siegfried Kracauer in *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (1947): the *Bergfilme* (mountain films) pioneered by Arnold Fanck in the 1920s. Whereas Kracauer interpreted these films as efforts to cope with the vicissitudes of postwar history by regressing into an anti-rationalist nature idolatry, I argue instead that they participated in rethinking the very dualism of nature and history during the Weimar era. Furthermore, in contrast to more recent scholarship, which has problematized Kracauer’s teleological argument by *historicizing* mountain films with regard to gender relations, mass tourism, the aftermath of war, dance and body culture, and other contemporaneous discourses, I highlight the genre’s own contribution to the *critique of historicism* in the early/mid-twentieth century. The object of my analysis is Fanck’s *Der heilige Berg* (The Holy Mountain, 1926)—a film, I contend, that reformulated the relationship between nature and history by tracing the destructive interaction of opposing, ultimately irreconcilable human figures and natural forces, thus suggesting a vision of what Theodor W. Adorno later called “negative dialectics.”

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<sup>1</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Relative and the Absolute in the Problem of the Sexes," in Simmel, *On Women, Sexuality, and Love*, trans. Guy Oakes (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1984), 127.

<sup>2</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 175.

<sup>3</sup> On this point, see, e.g., Tom Gunning, "'Now You See It, Now You Don't': The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions," in *Silent Film*, ed. Richard Abel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 71-84; and Linda Williams (ed.), *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History," *Sight and Sound* 55:4 (Autumn 1986): 246-251.

<sup>5</sup> James Harvey Robinson, *The New History: Essays Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook* (New York: Macmillan, 1912).

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Walter Laqueur and George Mosse (eds.), *The New History: Trends in Historical Research and Writing Since World War II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967); and Jacques Le Goff, Roger Chartier, and Jacques Revel (eds.), *La Nouvelle Histoire* (Paris: Retz, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: Knopf, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> See Ernst Troeltsch, "Die Krisis des Historismus," *Die neue Rundschau* 33 (1922): 572-590; Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1922); Friedrich Meinecke, "Ernst Troeltsch und das Problem des Historismus," *Zur Theorie und Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Eberhard Kessel (Stuttgart: K.F. Koehler Verlag, 1959), 367-378; Karl Mannheim, "Historismus," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 52.1 (1924): 1-60; Otto Hintze, "Troeltsch und die Probleme des Historismus: Kritische Studien," *Historische Zeitschrift*, 135.2 (1927), 188-239; and Karl Heussi, *Die Krisis des Historismus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1932).

<sup>9</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1995), 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 37-38.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. and trans. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 27.

<sup>12</sup> Leopold von Ranke, "On Progress in History," *The Theory and Practice of History*, ed. Georg G. Iggers, trans. Wilma A. Iggers (London: Routledge, 2011), 21.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Richter, "History is What is Happening Today," in Detlef Mertins and Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film, 1923-1926*, trans. Steven Lindberg with Margareta Ingrid Christian (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010), 228-229.

## Relativist Perspectivism

*We believed we could get hold of the absolute if we were to carry the relative ad absurdum.*  
–Wilhelm Worringer<sup>1</sup>

*In expressionism, the claim to the absolute has yielded merely the relative.*  
–Wilhelm Hausenstein<sup>2</sup>

### I.

Despite its antagonism towards the cognitive claims of metaphysics, the positivism popularized by Auguste Comte in the nineteenth century often expanded into a universalizing scientism, whereby natural-scientific methods were transposed to the examination of human history, culture, and society at large.<sup>3</sup> Given this imperialist tendency, it is both ironic and suitable that one of the major challenges posed to the Baconian epistemology adopted by positivism—namely, Albert Einstein’s Theory of Relativity—seemed to reverberate within all realms of academic study and creative endeavor in the following century. Published in 1905, Einstein’s “On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies” implied a relativist perspectivism decisively at odds with the empirical mode of observation widely practiced across diverse scholarly and artistic realms—from the natural sciences to the disciplines of history and sociology, and from the “experimental novels” of Naturalist authors to the *plein-air* paintings of the Impressionists.<sup>4</sup> Whereas practitioners in these realms had assumed the position of fixed, detached observers whose viewpoint was separated from the external world, Einstein’s theory suggested a more decentered, spatiotemporally dynamic, and non-absolute relationship between subject and object. Such a relativist form of interaction, as I hope to demonstrate in this chapter, found expression in both the modernist films and historical-philosophical debates of the Weimar era.

Emerging contemporaneously with Einstein’s theories, works of aesthetic modernism likewise rejected traditional, widely accepted standards of observation, evoking a new mode of relationality between human subjectivity and the objective world. While the Impressionists had already substituted an apprehensive space for that of ordered, Euclidean geometry, modernist artists abandoned the mimesis of perceived reality altogether, replacing a fragmentary consciousness for the fixed, detached observer and negating rather than faithfully imitating the exterior realm.<sup>5</sup> Most evident in the turn away from figurative painting, the “dehumanization of art” (Ortega y Gasset) in fact occurred across a broad range of media, finding its corollary in the retreat from the realistic, coherent plot in literature, as well as in the dismissal of harmonic tonality in music.<sup>6</sup> In a 1923 manifesto, Russian author Yevgeny Zamyatin rendered explicit the correspondence between scientific paradigms and artistic practices, characterizing bourgeois and socialist realist forms as “projections along the fixed, plane coordinates of Euclid’s world.”<sup>7</sup> Emphasizing the proven non-existence of such a “finite, fixed world,” Zamyatin called for a more complex form of literature—a literature with the pioneering, self-reflexive inquisitiveness of Einstein, who “managed to remember that he [...], observing motion with a watch in hand, was also moving,” and thereby succeeded in “looking at the motion of the earth from *outside*.”<sup>8</sup>

Among the modernist movements in art and literature that suggested a new worldview, as well as more mutable, impermanent order of spatial relations, is that of Expressionism. As Georg Marzynski wrote in a 1920 study, Expressionist painters shifted emphasis from external reality towards human subjectivity, constructing works from colors and forms untethered to the realm of sensory-experience. In this way, Marzynski argued, Expressionist artists sought to liberate European painting from the representational function it had performed since the Renaissance; whereas earlier art consisted of “subjectivized objects,” their works portrayed “objectifications of the subject.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Walter Sokel later contended that in the dramas of August Strindberg and the Expressionists, the protagonist’s physical environment is not “the source of experience,” but rather “a structure designed for the purpose of expressing emotions.”<sup>10</sup> In Sokel’s analysis, Expressionist dramatists rejected the postulate of a fixed, given external nature, envisioning the world instead as “a field of magnetic and gravitational forces radiating from the soul.”<sup>11</sup> The theatrical *mise en scène* of Expressionist dramas, according to Sokel, is thus dynamic, functioning as a projection of the protagonist’s ever-fluctuating interior states: “The scenery of the Expressionist stage changes with the psychic forces whirling about in it, just as in the universe of relativity space is modified by the matter it contains.”<sup>12</sup>

For many commentators, however, the medium most capable of representing the dynamics of the Einsteinian universe was the cinema.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps most famously, Sergei Eisenstein, Jean Epstein, and Dziga Vertov invoked the Principle of Relativity and the fourth dimension in their theoretical writings on the filmic medium’s aesthetic properties and possibilities.<sup>14</sup> As Annette Michelson has argued, the three filmmakers shared an interest in the power of montage techniques (e.g. freeze-framing, slow-, fast- or reverse motion) to reveal, suspend, or even reconfigure spatiotemporal and causal relations, thereby offering a new mode of experiencing and knowing the phenomenal world.<sup>15</sup> I would add that Einstein’s ideas also found cinematic articulation in the German context—not merely in Hanns Walter Kornblum’s 1922 educational film, *Die Grundlagen der Einsteinschen Relativitätstheorie*, but also in relation to works of Expressionism, distinct less for their montage techniques and trick sequences than for their distorted *mise en scène*. In a 1920 essay, Herman Scheffauer invoked Einstein while celebrating Expressionist cinema’s plastic and dynamic conceptualization of space, which, in his view, lent the medium a “fourth dimension.”<sup>16</sup> For Scheffauer, the first film to exemplify this new spatial sensibility was Robert Wiene’s *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1920), the sets of which seemed to apply and visualize “Einstein’s invasion of the law of gravity.”<sup>17</sup>

In this chapter, I will examine *Caligari* in terms of the relativist perspectivism that was widely invoked in the early twentieth century. More specifically, I will argue that Wiene’s film registered and responded to an acute crisis of historicism during the postwar years, when intellectuals widely recognized the untenability of the passive, empirical mode of observation fundamental to prior scholarly and aesthetic practice.<sup>18</sup> My interpretation of the film will thus diverge from that of Thomas Elsaesser, who has accounted for its unique formal and narrative features with reference to Weimar cinema’s “double ‘legitimation crisis’” vis-à-vis German cultural tradition and an increasingly hegemonic American film industry.<sup>19</sup> Whereas Elsaesser links the film’s reflexive qualities to a meta-cinematic discourse, I will position the work instead as a *meta-*

historical intervention into the period's philosophical debates. Furthermore, in contrast to Elsaesser, who notes *Caligari's* "radical skepticism as to evidentiary truth in the cinema,"<sup>20</sup> I will suggest that the film adopts an ironic stance regarding issues of historical ontology and epistemology more generally. *Caligari's* legacy, in my analysis, consists not solely in introducing aspects of aesthetic modernism to the medium of film, but also in demonstrating the possibilities of an "intellectual" or "cerebral" cinema—one that engages with fundamental questions of the philosophy of history.

As Einstein succeeded in generalizing and popularizing his Theory of Relativity, gaining recognition across disciplinary and national contexts, he provoked widespread debate about the roles of science and philosophy in conceptualizing time and history. Henri Bergson confronted the implications of relativity in a meeting with Einstein at the *Société française de philosophie* on April 6, 1922, as well as in a series of texts extending from *Durée et simultanéité: À propos de la théorie d'Einstein* (1922) to his final volume, *La Pensée et le mouvant* (1934). Whereas Einstein argued that an understanding of time is restricted to the domains of physics and psychology, Bergson insisted on the continued relevance of philosophical inquiry into the concept, and also resisted efforts to transform the Theory of Relativity into an expansive philosophy.<sup>21</sup> With a similar emphasis on the irreducibility of a humanistic approach to that of the natural sciences, Martin Heidegger took up the concept of time in his 1915 *Habilitationsvortrag*, analyzing the concept's structure in physics and in the discipline of history. In Heidegger's view, the Theory of Relativity is concerned with "measuring time" rather than with "time itself," and treats the latter as "homogeneous," "mathematical," and "quantitatively determinable."<sup>22</sup> The physicist's concept of time, Heidegger argued, is thus distinct from that of the historian, who confronts the "qualitative otherness" of different periods—or what Leopold von Ranke had famously characterized as every epoch's immediacy to God.<sup>23</sup>

While Heidegger, in his 1915 lecture, maintained a Diltheyan confidence in the possibility of bridging the "temporal gulf" between historian and object—a confidence that the past "cannot be something *incomparably* other"—, he and fellow thinkers would later diagnose and seek to remedy a foundational crisis in history and other fields of scientific inquiry.<sup>24</sup> In a 1925 lecture series, Heidegger argued that while Dilthey had recognized historical being as the fundamental character of human existence, he had failed to inquire into the category of historicity itself.<sup>25</sup> Though still wary of the general validity of Einstein's theory, Heidegger now acknowledged its significance in discovering the local quality of time, thus undermining its conceptualization within Kantian philosophy.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Heidegger identified a commonality between Einsteinian relativity and Husserlian phenomenology in their reflexive understanding of time as "the reality of our own selves"; for Heidegger, both approaches indicated that one need not conceive of time in a "metaphysical fashion" in order to pursue an "absolute knowledge of nature."<sup>27</sup> It bears noting that Husserl himself invoked Einstein in his final work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936). Citing Einstein's experiences in a common, prescientific *Lebenswelt* as the basis for theoretical verification, Husserl emphasized the futility of traditional distinctions between "subjective-relative" perceptions and "objective-scientific" veracities.<sup>28</sup>

The new, temporally dynamic mode of subject-object interaction implied by Einstein's theory also found its analogy in literature's shifting relationship to history. In

contrast to the epic, with its self-contained, static, and atemporal world, the novel had expressed the emerging historical consciousness of the nineteenth century, sharing with historiographical texts a narrative form, omniscient narrator, interest in synchronic development, and emphasis on the concrete particularities of empirical reality.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, whereas the epic hero had represented a broader, unified collectivity, the solitary protagonist of the novel symptomatized the irreconcilable split between subject and environment—or what Georg Lukács famously characterized in 1920 as man’s “transcendental homelessness” within modern society.<sup>30</sup> While traditional novelists had nonetheless upheld the Diltheyan promise of vicariously re-experiencing (*Nacherleben*) others’ pasts (albeit with imagined rather than real historical figures),<sup>31</sup> modernist works broke with the tenets of historicism, postulating alternatives to continuous, linear progression and focusing on individual subjectivity rather than on a confounding external reality. In 1930, Siegfried Kracauer invoked a “‘crisis’ of the novel,” which he attributed to the assault of scientific discoveries and sociopolitical phenomena on the bourgeois faith in objective meaning and sovereign power: “Just as, thanks to Einstein, our spatio-temporal system has become a limit concept, the self-satisfied subject has become a limit concept thanks to the object lesson of history.”<sup>32</sup>

Modernist texts indeed registered and even thematized contemporary developments in the philosophy of time. Although, as Lukács argued, the Bergsonian concept of *durée* was a constitutive principle of novels such as Gustave Flaubert’s *L’Éducation sentimentale* (1869),<sup>33</sup> the notion of a fluid, psychological time first found literary expression in Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927), as well as in the stream-of-consciousness technique of writers such as Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf.<sup>34</sup> It bears emphasis that Einsteinian relativity was also a salient point of reference for modernist writers, as evidenced most explicitly by Professor Jones’ ironic allusion to the “theorics of Winestain” in Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (1939).<sup>35</sup> As Jane Goldman has argued, Woolf’s writings can also be placed in constellation with Einsteinian physics, particularly if one links her reflections on eclipses in her diaries, essays, stories, and novels to the total solar eclipse on May 29, 1919, which allowed Arthur Eddington to confirm the General Theory of Relativity.<sup>36</sup> I would add that the fleeting vision of a “black lunar shadow” caused by the 1919 eclipse—a vision characterized as “terrifying” and “horribly menacing”<sup>37</sup> in contemporary accounts—is strikingly similar to the momentary appearance of a shadow during the screening of *Caligari* attended by Woolf, for whom it hinted at a new form of “fear” or “terror,” as well as the filmic medium’s potential for abstract, symbolic expressivity.<sup>38</sup>

Writing about a revival screening of *Caligari* in 1926, Woolf implied that the shadow that accidentally appeared onscreen was scarier than the film itself, which relied on more prosaic and non-cinematic forms of horror.<sup>39</sup> Woolf thereby joined a lineage of authors (including Blaise Cendrars and Ezra Pound) who had likewise criticized *Caligari*’s parasitic relationship to other media, as well as its opportunistic, even impertinent emulation of innovations within aesthetic modernism.<sup>40</sup> I would emphasize, however, that upon its initial German release in 1920, *Caligari* was noted by many commentators not for its derivativeness, but rather for its radical, even inconceivable novelty. As Anne Perlmann wrote in *Der Kinematograph* on May 16, 1920, “The *Caligari* film was for me – and indeed for many others, as well – like the Einsteinian Principle of Relativity at first: the more the newspapers wrote about it, the less my



conception of it became clear.”<sup>41</sup> Perlmann thus drew an analogy between Wiene’s film and Einstein’s theory, whose official confirmation on November 6, 1919, had similarly garnered sensational and widespread coverage for a curious and often-bewildered mass public. In the following sections, I wish to pursue this analogy further, interpreting *Caligari* itself as a meditation on the implications of relativity for the philosophy of time and history. This line of argumentation will first require an excursus into the crisis of historicism, Expressionist aesthetics, and cinematic realism in the early twentieth century.

Positivism made an enormous contribution to empirical sciences such as history and sociology in the nineteenth century, offering these emerging disciplines a model of primary-source research, scientific exactitude, and objective, detached neutrality.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the extension of naturalist postulates to the *Geisteswissenschaften* raised many vexing questions for intellectuals in Central and Western Europe: Might not human life and activity bear unique, vital, and dynamic qualities—qualities that are obscured when social existence and behavior are treated like objects of natural-scientific scrutiny?<sup>43</sup> Are there dimensions of man’s being, interiority, and lived experience that exceed the purview of a phenomenalist epistemology, which relies on sense perception and denies any distinction between appearances and essences?<sup>44</sup> Can one indeed yield genuine knowledge of spiritual-intellectual realms from a passive, disinterested mode of examination, abstaining from value judgments and proceeding strictly according to inductive generalization?<sup>45</sup> And, finally, is it possible to figure the subjectivity and historicity of the observer without thereby sacrificing a claim to universal validity? Such questions fueled a “crisis of science” addressed by Max Weber in his celebrated 1917 speech, “Wissenschaft als Beruf,” delivered at a time when many in the younger generation expressed radical skepticism about the ultimate purpose and meaning of specialized intellectual inquiry.<sup>46</sup>

The general rebellion against science at the end of the ‘long nineteenth century’ also entailed the rejection of a specific tradition of historical thinking. Though not a plain positivist, Leopold von Ranke had upheld a correspondence theory of truth, pursuing the ideal of faithfully and impartially re-creating empirical reality—or, in his well-known words, showing “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*” (how it actually was).<sup>47</sup> Ranke’s mode of historiography, involving the rigorous collection of individual facts, was criticized as early as 1874 by Friedrich Nietzsche, for whom it connoted a dry, ascetic antiquarianism, as well as the dissolution of all foundations into a ceaseless, Heraclitean flux.<sup>48</sup> Philosophers including Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert, and Wilhelm Dilthey later addressed epistemological and methodological issues related to the science of history, seeking to provide a firm basis for historical knowledge and understanding.<sup>49</sup> Their inability to wield off the relativist implications of historicism presaged a crisis of historical thought diagnosed by Ernst Troeltsch in the immediate postwar years, when a Rankean faith in the meaningfulness and directionality of the historical process seemed to be decisively shattered.<sup>50</sup> In *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (1922), Troeltsch invoked a “historical relativity of values”—one, in his view, with “a certain analogy to the physical Theory of Relativity, which, in its set of problems so strongly intensified by Einstein, concerns the whole world today.”<sup>51</sup>

Expressionist artists participated in the early-twentieth-century revolt against science, following a lineage of philosophical reactions to positivism. As Siegfried

Kracauer argued in 1918, visual and literary works of Expressionism betrayed a Nietzschean vitalism, countering an “Apollonian *Geistigkeit*” with elementary and instinctually driven being, “irrepressibly animated and suffused with Dionysian fervor.”<sup>52</sup> Kracauer attributed the movement’s interest in recovering an “*Ur-ego*” to the repressive, hegemonic power of science, which renders the world increasingly objective and converts the individual into “a purely impersonal intellect.”<sup>53</sup> Writing sixteen years later, Georg Lukács set Expressionism against the backdrop of the Kaiserreich’s ‘philosophy of life,’ which, in its attempts to mediate between neo-Kantianism and historicism, tended toward an “extreme relativism” and even “mystical irrationalism.”<sup>54</sup> For Lukács, one of the exemplary figures in this context was Hans Vaihinger, whose *The Philosophy of ‘As If’* (1911) theorized human fictions on the basis of a Kant- and Nietzsche-derived “idealist positivism.”<sup>55</sup> Vaihinger himself, I would add, hinted at a link between Expressionist aesthetics and the critique of positivism; in his analysis, logical pessimists discredit a naïve identity theory of truth, according to which the psyche “portray[s] the objective world truthfully and without alteration,” preferring to regard thought instead “as though it distorted reality like a pair of coloured spectacles or a concave mirror.”<sup>56</sup>

The Expressionists’ rejection of a positivist epistemology—their insistence, in Gottfried Benn’s words, that “there was no reality, only, at most, its distorted image”<sup>57</sup>—also implied a challenge to basic historicist tenets. Manifestos by Kasimir Edschmid and others proclaimed a radical break with the past—a break often articulated in terms of cultural iconoclasm, Oedipal rebellion, and revolutionary or eschatological politics.<sup>58</sup> Negating all traditions, norms, and stylistic conventions, the Expressionists strove towards a new reality, which they envisioned not through faithful mimesis of a given external world, but rather through the act of pure, unfettered creation.<sup>59</sup> The artificial universe formed by the Expressionists would be detached or even independent from concrete temporal and historical determinants, reflecting what Wilhelm Worringer identified in 1907 as an “urge to abstraction.”<sup>60</sup> In contrast to naturalism, which had presupposed a confident relationship between man and his environment, abstract art arose, in Worringer’s words, from “a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world”—that is, from a loss of faith in history as the site of logos and meaning.<sup>61</sup> Such a disillusioned view found explicit articulation in Georg Kaiser’s “*Historientreue*” (1923), in which the writer characterized history as a “succession of occurrences that are senseless and purposeless,” and described the task of the poet as that of transforming chaos and accident into order and lawful necessity.<sup>62</sup>

In their conception of surface reality as a creation of the intellect, as well as in their prioritization of non-mimetic art as a link to the eternal, the Expressionists drew from Arthur Schopenhauer’s *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1818).<sup>63</sup> The first prominent irrationalist among Western philosophers, Schopenhauer had presented a pessimistic vision of human life as lacking sense, direction, and meaning. Opposing Hegel’s philosophy, Schopenhauer described the material of history not as a source of general knowledge, but rather as “the particular in its particularity and contingency.”<sup>64</sup> Much as Schopenhauer had undermined an affirmative, theodicean view of history, likening its movement to “clouds in the wind [...], often entirely transformed by the most trifling accident,”<sup>65</sup> Expressionist theorists Worringer and Wassily Kandinsky dismissed a coherent or teleological *Geschichtsbild*, reflecting a sense, in the former’s words, that “man is now just as lost and helpless *vis-à-vis* the world picture as primitive man.”<sup>66</sup> It

bears noting that Bernhard Diebold also alluded to Schopenhauer's aesthetics in his prescient 1916 article, "Expressionismus und Kino,"<sup>67</sup> and that the screenwriters of *Caligari*, Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz, explicitly modeled their title character's appearance after the nineteenth-century philosopher.<sup>68</sup> Upon its release in February 1920, one critic even lauded *Caligari* for departing from a naturalist preoccupation with "objective facts," depicting instead "the world as will and idea of the madman."<sup>69</sup>

Like Worringer, who identified opposing aesthetic drives in the history of art—a mimetic empathy with the vital, organic world and an abstractionist retreat into a realm of tranquil, crystalline form—, Kracauer later observed dual forces at work in the evolution of photographic media. In *Theory of Film* (1960), Kracauer noted the contemporaneous popularization of photographic technology and positivist methodology in the nineteenth century, as well as their common promise of accurately and impersonally reproducing physical reality.<sup>70</sup> In Kracauer's account, while realists across scientific and aesthetic fields celebrated photography's ability to record and reveal nature, other commentators and practitioners—particularly those upholding Romantic ideals—emphasized the medium's artistic qualities, as derived from the selective rendering and creative shaping of raw visual material.<sup>71</sup> Kracauer discerned a comparable interplay between "realistic" and "formative" tendencies in the history of film, which was already split in its early years between the Lumière Brothers' *actualités* and the staged fantasies of Georges Méliès.<sup>72</sup> Echoing Erwin Panofsky, who had distinguished film from older representational media in its compositional process "from bottom to top"—a process, Panofsky argued, corresponding to a materialist rather than an Idealist worldview—,<sup>73</sup> Kracauer postulated a "basic aesthetic principle" of cinema, prioritizing visual engagement with the infinite, transitory, and fortuitous realm of physical existence.<sup>74</sup>

Given the frequent association of realist and Impressionist aesthetics with photographic representation,<sup>75</sup> the relationship between Expressionism and cinema was a contentious issue among film theorists, enmeshed in broader debates about the medium's specific properties and artistic potential.<sup>76</sup> As Rudolf Kurtz wrote in 1926, "Of all art forms, film seems to be the least art and the most nature. Already its most essential means, photography, is perceived as fundamentally inartistic."<sup>77</sup> Kurtz argued that while Expressionism in film necessarily entailed compromise, the movement had nonetheless enriched the medium's visual repertoire, conjuring up "effects that lie beyond the photographable."<sup>78</sup> In a 1934 essay, Rudolf Arnheim likewise credited Expressionism with film's artistic development. Though criticizing the blind transference of stylistic principles from graphic art and painting to three-dimensional, cinematic space, Arnheim acknowledged Expressionism's important influence on film, likening it to the movement's impact on other arts: namely, the prioritization and freer application of formal factors, thus ending "a period in which the object was overvalued."<sup>79</sup> Kracauer, whose aforementioned 1918 essay had recognized the movement for creating new artistic means,<sup>80</sup> similarly argued in 1939 that Expressionist films, while overly theatrical, had been fruitful in establishing the necessary distance from outer reality to approach it anew, released from the constraints of inhibition and convention.<sup>81</sup>

Widely identified as the first work of Expressionist cinema, *Caligari* held a central position in classical film-theoretical debates on the proper mode of engagement with physical reality. From its initial release onwards, Wiene's film was praised by some

for its attempt to redefine cinematic practice apart from naturalist representation—or, as one reviewer wrote in 1920, for lifting the medium “out of the realm of photography into the pure sphere of the artwork.”<sup>82</sup> Among *Caligari*’s numerous detractors, criticisms included the film’s disregard for the medium’s unique features and devices; impure combination of naturalistic and stylized elements; excessive, even enervating décor; and, finally, linkage of Expressionist aesthetics with the theme of insanity.<sup>83</sup> In his 1947 essay, Panofsky argued that insofar as *Caligari* presented an adulterated pro-filmic space, it avoided the problem of cinema: namely, “to manipulate and shoot unstylized reality in such a way that the result has style.”<sup>84</sup> Writing four years later, André Bazin similarly characterized *Caligari* as a failed attempt to depart from film’s inalienable spatial realism, replacing “the world of experience” with “a fabricated nature” strongly influenced by theater and painting.<sup>85</sup> Finally, in *Theory of Film*, Kracauer positioned *Caligari* as the earliest cinematic effort to abandon the medium’s recording function; for Kracauer, Wiene’s work prioritized free and autonomous creation above “camera-realism” in a misguided, even retrogressive quest to attain the legitimacy of the traditional arts.<sup>86</sup>

*Caligari* thus served as a negative example in numerous mid-twentieth-century theorizations of cinematic ontology and the violation of generic aesthetic boundaries. If, however, with a nod to Kracauer, one pursues an analogy between *Caligari*’s reworking of “camera reality” and contemporaneous intellectual efforts to rethink the nature and epistemology of “historical reality,”<sup>87</sup> one might also interpret the film in terms of historical-philosophical debates—and, more specifically, as a critique of nineteenth-century German historicism. Indeed, the Expressionist *mise en scène* of Wiene’s film not only rejects traditional realist aesthetics, but also abandons the historicist quest for unbiased and comprehensive representation. On the level of narrative, *Caligari*’s circular structure also thwarts the historicist postulation of a continuous and unilinear temporal flow; the film’s recursive form is congruent less with any sequential or developmental model than with a Spenglerian vision of historical periodicity.<sup>88</sup> Such a correspondence between Expressionist aesthetics and anti-historicism was suggested by Wiene himself in a 1922 text. Writing in the *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, Wiene positioned the Expressionism that emerged in the decade before World War I as a reaction against aesthetic realism, whether in its historicist or naturalist guises. For Wiene, Expressionism marked “an irrepressible counter-movement that turned against the last vestiges of historicism, in short, against all forms of realism,”<sup>89</sup> and had since become the goal of film and all other arts in the current era.

Expressionist cinema’s visual features and narrative structures, I would argue, are thus interpretable not only within a meta-cinematic discourse, i.e., as reflections of/on the properties, possibilities, and cultural-industrial positionality of the filmic medium, but also as *meta-historical* considerations of the philosophical tenets of historicist thought. Furthermore, I would contend that Expressionist film’s oft-noted self-reflexivity aligns it with what Hayden White has called an “ironic” mode of historiography, or one aware of the relativity of all values and conscious of the problematics of narration.<sup>90</sup> Such ironic self-reflexivity found astute and eloquent articulation in the culture of Weimar Germany—a culture that Helmut Lethen and Peter Sloterdijk have noted for its cool demeanor and disillusioned, cynical reason—,<sup>91</sup> and it is also evident, I would suggest, in later movements of film history, especially in the *films noirs* of the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>92</sup>

More broadly, by examining Weimar cinema's extraordinary innovations in aesthetic and narrative form with regard to developments in early-twentieth-century intellectual history, I hope to demonstrate the significant role of film in registering and responding to large-scale, seismic shifts in modern philosophy—in particular, the decentering and disintegration of the Cartesian subject, as well as the change from subject-object modes of thinking to a more complex, relativist perspectivism. In the following section, I will study these shifts through a closer analysis of Wiene's *Caligari*.

## II.

Among the major points of contention in scholarship on Wiene's film since *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947) has been the function of the frame narrative, the addition of which, in Kracauer's well-known assessment, transformed "a revolutionary film [...] into a conformist one."<sup>93</sup> Kracauer based his appraisal of the film on a 1941 manuscript by Hans Janowitz, who had attributed the narrative device to Wiene, disavowing its presence in the original script.<sup>94</sup> Numerous scholars have since diverged from Kracauer's critique, offering alternative readings of *Caligari*'s politics; most notably, Anton Kaes has characterized the film as "an aggressive diatribe against the murderous practices of war psychiatry," and has associated it with "Dada's nihilistic attacks on the establishment."<sup>95</sup> While I would agree with researchers who have instead emphasized that *Caligari*'s openness and indeterminacy frustrate all ascriptions of direct socio-historical referentiality and political coherence,<sup>96</sup> I also wish to shift focus to an as-yet unexplored area of inquiry: namely, the film's engagement with issues of historical ontology and epistemology. In my analysis, *Caligari* marks a challenge to basic historicist tenets, including the objectivity of historical accounts, the reliability and authority of narration, and the alignment of power and ethics. The film, I will argue, conveys a radical skepticism regarding the possibility of detached, disinterested observation, suggesting a more perspectivist sense of historical reality as the interplay of finite interpretations.

For Kracauer, *Caligari*'s framing device pathologizes the narrator, Francis, thereby delegitimizing and even reversing his story's implied challenge to state authority. Furthermore, Kracauer views the narrative device itself, with its ambivalent gesture of containment, as the symbol of a collective trend in Weimar Germany towards both solipsistic retreat and inner, "psychological revolution."<sup>97</sup> Apart from its factual errors, internal contradictions, and dubious methodological premises, Kracauer's argument confronts myriad hermeneutical obstacles, most obviously the extension of the film's Expressionist design into the framing scenes and their intertitles. Because the film's concluding episode does not, as Kracauer himself notes, restore "conventional reality," it problematizes the relationship between Expressionist stylization and narrational insanity assumed by many contemporary reviewers.<sup>98</sup> Whereas Kracauer nonetheless maintains that Francis' story is bracketed as a "madman's fantasy,"<sup>99</sup> I would emphasize that the film not only ultimately refuses to designate his (and the asylum director's) degree of sanity, but also interrogates the bases upon which the figures' credibility might be evaluated and ascertained. Moreover, in contrast to Kracauer, who associates the film's exclusive use of studio settings with a postwar German withdrawal from the exterior world, I would argue that *Caligari* calls into question the very existence and accessibility of a normative reality—one external to the subjective perspectives of discrete individuals.

In juxtaposing *Caligari*'s framing scenes against its inner story, Kracauer also discounts the blurring of formal boundaries and the exceeding of textual thresholds that characterize Wiene's film and the Expressionist movement more generally. Distinguishing Expressionist dramaturgy from earlier theatrical practice, Walter Sokel argues that "the physical stage [...] ceases to be a fixed frame of a scene or act," and that the protagonist's dreamlike vision is no longer placed within an "explanatory frame of reference."<sup>100</sup> Although, as aforementioned, *Caligari*'s Expressionist style is not consistently or unequivocally aligned with one character's psychological state, the film nonetheless disregards the barriers between inner self and external environment, as well as between enigmatic visions and elucidatory frameworks. In Wiene's film, aspects of characters' appearances, costumes, and props (e.g. the three lines in the director's hair and gloves; Cesare's slender, angular physique and knife) correspond to patterns in the surrounding décor, and characteristics of the *mise en scène* (e.g. irregular shapes, distorted angles) extend not only to the film's framing scenes, but also beyond the diegesis to include the font and design of the intertitles.<sup>101</sup> The film also obscures the borders between word and image, and between textual and "paratextual" elements; the injunction "Du musst Caligari werden," which appears before the asylum director in a famous scene, also featured prominently in the film's 1920 advertising campaign.<sup>102</sup>

The film's obfuscation of conventional borders also applies to its narrative and thematic registers. Drawing from the Romantic and Gothic literary works of Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*, 1818), E.T.A. Hoffmann (*Der Sandmann*, 1817), Edgar Allan Poe (*The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether*, 1845), and Robert Louis Stevenson (*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, 1886), *Caligari* features fantastic, uncanny figures or motifs (e.g. ghosts, somnambulists, doppelgängers) that frustrate basic ontological distinctions, such as those between life and death, sleeping and wakefulness, and self and other.<sup>103</sup> Cesare is first hailed for his omniscient and prophetic powers, which extend across temporal horizons ("Cesare knows the past and sees the future..."), and he is also revealed to transgress spatial boundaries, repeatedly exiting the fairground area and penetrating into others' private spheres. The central mystery of the story within the story—who is truly responsible for the series of murders in Holstenwall—not only bleeds into and even beyond the frame narrative, resisting unambiguous resolution or closure, but is also complicated by a further question opened up by the concluding episode: namely, whether the murders narrated by Francis in fact occurred, or if the entire inner story was merely his subjective delusion.<sup>104</sup> The film's inverse, mutually incompatible endings, alternately depicting the director and Francis in straitjackets in the insane asylum, pose an irresolvable challenge to viewers' capacity for decisive adjudication.

*Caligari* thus challenges the Kantian analytic of aesthetic judgment, confounding the delimitation of the work (*ergon*) from its addendum or frame (*parergon*), or the intrinsic from the extrinsic aspects of pictorial representation.<sup>105</sup> Emphasizing the non-absoluteness of the boundaries between the aesthetic object and its milieu—or, as Georg Simmel wrote in "Der Bildrahmen" (1902), between the work of art and elements of an unmediated nature—, *Caligari* deploys frames not towards the dual ends of external defense and internal integration, but rather towards those of "continuing exosmosis and endosmosis."<sup>106</sup> By reduplicating the inner story's themes of permeability and liminality across stylistic, narrational, and paratextual registers, the film eliminates the distance

from the spectator that Simmel, following the Idealist tradition, deemed as essential for an artwork's wholeness, coherence, and self-sufficiency. Countering Simmel's conceptualization of the work of art as an autonomous, self-enclosed unity, the film highlights the indefiniteness of all demarcations or "border regions,"<sup>107</sup> as well as the non-fixity of the relationship between object and observer. This new, more dynamic mode of relationality, as the following section will demonstrate, involved the dissolution of the perspectival system of space, which had not only contributed to the autonomy and formal order of the image, but had also allowed it to address a single beholder, whose monocular, immobile point of view was separated from the object of representation.<sup>108</sup>

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In his 1927 essay on the history of perspective, Erwin Panofsky modified the approach of Alois Riegl, who had examined the relationship between the artwork and its surrounding world through his concept of the unique *Kunstwollen* (artistic will) of every epoch.<sup>109</sup> Panofsky replaced Riegl's inchoate *Weltanschauungsphilosophie* with a neo-Kantian theory of the "symbolic form," or Ernst Cassirer's term for the spiritual energy through which human consciousness attributes meaning to sensual signs—a phenomenon, as Cassirer emphasized, that occurs across the various realms of cultural expression.<sup>110</sup> Observing correspondences between advances in Western philosophy and the evolution of spatial perception, Panofsky argued that much as the idea of an infinite empirical reality had superseded the circumscribed geocentrism of Aristotelian thought, the system of central perspective had envisaged endless extension to a vanishing point, and had established distance between human beings and an objectified world of experience.<sup>111</sup> Panofsky characterized perspective as an ambivalent and versatile method, and one that had served as the target of diametrically opposed critiques over the course of its history. Whereas ancient and medieval artists had largely eschewed perspective, associating it with subjectivism and contingency, the Expressionists had rejected it for preserving empirical, three-dimensional space, and thereby retaining an element of objectivity that constrained the "formative will" of the individual creator.<sup>112</sup>

The Expressionist movement advanced a broader trend in early-twentieth-century visual art towards dispelling perspectival geometry and envisioning new conceptions of space. Impressionist paintings of the 1860s and 1870s had already signaled an increasing dissatisfaction with perspectival conventions; instead of representing solid objects in three-dimensional space, works by Edgar Degas, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and others had depicted the fleeting, subjective impressions that these objects left on the artists' perceptual apparatuses.<sup>113</sup> However, whereas works of Impressionism had maintained a connection to physical reality, subsequent art movements (e.g. Post-Impressionism, Cubism) blatantly defied the aim of perspectival technique, as identified by Panofsky: "to construct pictorial space, in principle, out of the elements of, and according to the plan of, empirical visual space."<sup>114</sup> This rejection of art's function as a mimesis of external objects—and, with it, a dismissal of the pictorial surface's status as a window to the outer world—troubled the longstanding Cartesian split between the thinking subject (*res cogitans*) and the extended substance (*res extensa*).<sup>115</sup> Emphasizing the untenability of separating the world of objects from a fixed observer, modern artists abandoned what the art historian Carl Einstein, in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1926), called the "perspectival calculus of distance," and thus inaugurated what he deemed "an epoch of technical and formal freedom."<sup>116</sup>

Concurrent with art historians' responses to the innovations of aesthetic modernism, early film theorists recognized cinema for its potential to expand and reconfigure the field of human perception. In *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916), Hugo Münsterberg made a plea for film's aesthetic independence on account of unique methods such as the close-up, through which "an entirely new perspective was opened."<sup>117</sup> Defending film against negative comparisons to the realist theater, Münsterberg emphasized that art's purpose is "not to imitate life but to reset it in a way which is totally different from reality."<sup>118</sup> Eight years later, Béla Balázs' *Der sichtbare Mensch oder die Kultur des Films* distinguished film from legitimized arts such as painting and theater through its ability to offer spectators a dynamic point of view and a multiplicity of perspectives. Identifying uniquely cinematic scales and shot distances, Balázs celebrated film's ability to capture the ephemeral, often-invisible phenomena of everyday experience and to abstract them from their spatiotemporal coordinates.<sup>119</sup> Finally, in *Le Cinématographe vu de l'Etna* (1926), Jean Epstein argued that cinema contributes an additional element to three-dimensional spatial representation: "To the elements of perspective employed in drawing, the cinema adds a new perspective in time."<sup>120</sup> Epstein highlighted the versatility of this "temporal perspective," especially on account of cinematic techniques such as slow- and fast-motion.<sup>121</sup>

*Caligari* marked an early demonstration of cinema's potential to offset conventions of spatial representation. Emphasizing the medium's stylistic above its naturalist capacities—or, in Kracauer's words, its "formative" above its "realistic" tendencies—,<sup>122</sup> Wiene's film refuses to create the illusion of solid objects in three-dimensional space. The film thwarts viewers' sense of objects' physical properties and depth relationships through flat, painted studio sets with sharp, oblique angles; irregular, crooked shapes; and often-exaggerated sizes and proportions. Furthermore, whereas perspective unity had depended on a particular point of observation, Wiene's film creates a highly unstable spectatorial positionality, not least through instances of direct address to the camera, alternation between the first- and third-person voice in the intertitles,<sup>123</sup> and unresolved ambiguities regarding narratorial credibility. Writing in the *Berliner Abendpost* on February 29, 1920, Eugen Tannenbaum argued that Wiene's film does not depict "the perspective from the auditorium [*Zuschauerraum*]," but rather imposes the point of view of a madmen: "the viewer is forced to see everything through *his* eyes: bizarre, grotesque, distorted, full of dark secrets and inexplicable connections."<sup>124</sup> Other reviewers similarly noted the film for its "suspension of perspective,"<sup>125</sup> abandonment of "all laws of things in space,"<sup>126</sup> and representation of the world "from a different viewpoint than that common until now."<sup>127</sup>

Challenging the association of film with the faithful reproduction of three-dimensional space, *Caligari* thus destabilized a linear-perspectival scheme that had reigned from Renaissance art to Impressionist painting. Though not fully exploring the possibilities of camera movement and montage, *Caligari* nonetheless deployed stylistic and narrative devices to enact what Kracauer, in his *Theory of Film*, identified as the "dissolution of traditional perspectives"—a general process that Kracauer attributed to photographic media, with their capacity to record and reveal unusual aspects of physical reality.<sup>128</sup> While Kracauer categorized German Expressionist films as among those "which neglect the external world in freely composed dreams or visions,"<sup>129</sup> it may be more productive, following Friedrich Kittler, to place the films in a trajectory that



includes optical devices (e.g. camera obscura, magic lantern, stroboscope), romantic literature (Friedrich Schiller's *The Ghost-Seer* [1789], Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* [1802], E.T.A. Hoffmann's *The Devil's Elixirs* [1815]), and emerging sciences (psychiatry, hypnotism, psychoanalysis), all of which involve illusions, hallucinations, and blurred boundaries between dreams and palpable reality.<sup>130</sup> If, as Kittler argues, films such as *Caligari* mobilize the spectator's gaze and manipulate his or her "unconscious psychological states,"<sup>131</sup> they decenter the transcendental subject and suggest a more finite, relational regime of vision—or what Nietzsche had theorized as 'perspectivism.'

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In its four-century-long "scopic regime,"<sup>132</sup> the technique of linear perspective was metaphorically extended to connote processes of perception and cognition. Etymologically derived from the Latin verb *perspicio* (to look at/into, look/see through, examine, observe), the term 'perspective' came to designate a particular line of sight on an object, as well as a spatial or temporal distance necessary for proper valuation or judgment.<sup>133</sup> From the seventeenth century onwards, the metaphor was employed by thinkers including Francis Bacon, François de La Rochefoucauld, Blaise Pascal, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, the latter of whom first transposed the figure to the realm of metaphysics.<sup>134</sup> Whereas Leibniz assumed a divinely assured, "perfect harmony" among different epistemic points of view, later philosophers confronted the immanence and potential incommensurability of discrete, localized perspectives.<sup>135</sup> The attendant concept of perspectivism, as developed by Gustav Teichmüller in *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt* (1882),<sup>136</sup> was theorized most influentially by Nietzsche, and was also taken up by twentieth-century thinkers including José Ortega y Gasset, George Herbert Mead, Edmund Husserl, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.<sup>137</sup> The concept's emergence in modern philosophy thus coincided with the dissolution of perspective in the visual arts, reflecting what Claudio Guillén and Martin Jay have identified as an epochal shift in conceiving vision as a possible means of knowledge and understanding.<sup>138</sup>

Across his writings, Nietzsche shifted between semantic registers of perspectivism, moving from an "unbridled" to a more "circumspect" use of the metaphor, as James Conant has argued.<sup>139</sup> In *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinn* (1873), Nietzsche emphasized the impossibility of "correct perception" or "pure knowledge" of an external object, undistorted by the subject's cognitive perspective.<sup>140</sup> Nietzsche's early work nonetheless presupposed the possibility of *conceptualizing* "the essence of things," unmediated by forms of human subjectivity—a conceptualization, as he later acknowledged, that would itself be unavoidably perspectival in character.<sup>141</sup> Questioning a fatalistic sense of inescapable confinement within subjective consciousness, Nietzsche restricted the scope of the metaphor and argued for the untenability of the antithesis between the noumenon and phenomenon, or the thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*) and its perspectival appearance.<sup>142</sup> By *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887), Nietzsche called for rethinking the entire conceptual opposition between objectivity and subjectivity, emphasizing their necessary admixture and interaction in the quest for truth.<sup>143</sup> Rather than postulating the existence of an endless multitude of perspectives as an indication of humans' untranscendable epistemic constraints, Nietzsche now invoked the possibility of employing "a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge."<sup>144</sup>

Nietzsche's theorization of perspectivism raised critical issues for the discipline of history. The advent and metaphorization of Renaissance perspective had prompted increasing reflection on the particularity of the historian's viewpoint; already in the eighteenth century, Johann Martin Chladenius had recognized the historian's perspectival position as a determining factor in his or her understanding and interpretation of the past.<sup>145</sup> Whereas Hegel's *Philosophy of World History* (1821–31) had adopted an avowedly omniscient view—"the sum total of all possible perspectives"—,<sup>146</sup> Ranke had espoused the more modest, self-effacing ideal of impartial, objective representation, or showing the "naked truth without adornment."<sup>147</sup> Critiquing historicism in both guises, Nietzsche not only denied the existence of a transcendent, supra-individual point of view, but also questioned the assumption of a single, actual history that could be methodically reconstructed. Furthermore, dispelling Hegel's affirmative theodicy and Ranke's optimistic faith in the alliance of ethics and power,<sup>148</sup> Nietzsche instead presented historical reality as the interplay of fallible and value-laden interpretations. Thus, although perspectivism has often been conflated with historicism,<sup>149</sup> both of which seem to have subjectivist and relativist implications, it bears emphasis that Nietzsche's writings destabilized and even undermined the latter's basic tenets, anticipating the 'crisis of historicism' widely diagnosed following World War I.

Emerging contemporaneously with the acute crisis of historical thought, *Caligari* enacted the idea of perspectivism on the levels of narrative and aesthetic form. Wiene's film is intensely preoccupied with how historical accounts are mediated and distorted through subjective consciousness; the first scene alone focuses on an act of first-person narration and deploys multiple iris shots, which highlight the incompleteness of the perspective offered by the individual storyteller (and by the camera lens). The film's inner story likewise emphasizes forms of visual and cognitive limitation, with multiple secrets, inexplicable occurrences, and instances in which both the film's characters and its viewers are deceived or denied information—an epistemic instability reduplicated through the film's spatiotemporally indeterminate settings and disorienting, anti-perspectivalist set design.<sup>150</sup> The final sequence, which discloses the narrator's unreliability but maintains the Expressionist style, offers neither a detached, stable point of view on the action nor narrative clarification and resolution. Refusing insight into the 'actual' course of events, the film's concluding scenes instead suggest a proliferation of incommensurable accounts without an external standard of judgment.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, denying viewers a definite specification of the identities, ethical commitments, and degrees of sanity of both doctor and patient, the film intimates an interchangeability of roles and even an arbitrariness of institutional power structures.

Abandoning the ideal of unbiased, comprehensive representation, *Caligari* instead highlights the invariable partisanship and epistemic limitations of all historical reports. In its skepticism regarding the attainability of pure truth, as well as in its self-reflexive figuration of all human knowledge as bounded, imprecise, and relative, the film recalls Nicholas of Cusa's doctrine of "learned ignorance" (*docta ignorantia*).<sup>152</sup> However, whereas Nicholas postulated the essential incomprehensibility of an Absolute Being who alone "apprehends what He is,"<sup>153</sup> *Caligari* instead follows Nietzsche in confronting the philosophical dilemmas accompanying the proverbial death of God—a death, as Martin Jay emphasizes, that also eradicated the "God's-eye view."<sup>154</sup> *Caligari*, in my analysis, takes up Nietzsche's early invocation of a relativist, subjectivist, and even solipsistic

perspectivism, as envisaged in the film's final depiction of the insane asylum, where each patient is radically insular and discrete in assumed identity and worldview. Notably, the multiplicity and incommensurability of different perspectives extends beyond the *mise en scène* to interpellate the film's own viewers, faced with a bewildering array of possible interpretations of the text itself. Wiene's work, as I will demonstrate, thus foregrounds problems of hermeneutics following the detranscendalization and dissolution of Cartesian perspectivalism, whereby all cognizing subjects are implicated as finite, locally conditioned participants within the dynamic process of history.<sup>155</sup>

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Recognizing the threat of relativism faced by the historical sciences, Wilhelm Dilthey adapted the interpretive procedures developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher into a methodology for securing knowledge of the past. In "The Rise of Hermeneutics" (1900), Dilthey conceived a process of understanding (*Verstehen*) through an imaginative re-experiencing (*Nacherleben*) of others' psychic states; in this way, Dilthey wrote, the subjective operations of the observer could "be raised to objective validity."<sup>156</sup> Among the many problems with Dilthey's approach was an assumed homogeneity of exegete and author, i.e. subject and object of research.<sup>157</sup> Appealing to "the substratum of a general human nature" as the basis for interpretation,<sup>158</sup> Dilthey neglected historicism's crucial emphasis on the uniqueness of all sociocultural phenomena and values. Thus, although Dilthey sought to resist what he deemed "the inroads of [...] skeptical subjectivity,"<sup>159</sup> he failed to offer a satisfactory solution to the aporias of historicist thought, as later formulated by Hans-Georg Gadamer: "how objectivity is possible in relativity and how we are to conceive the relation of the finite to the absolute."<sup>160</sup> Taking up Dilthey's hermeneutic theory, Gadamer would emphasize the limited range of vision within the present, as well as the unfeasibility of self-transposition into the past. While postulating the inescapability of tradition and prejudice, Gadamer invoked the potential for historical understanding through an ongoing "fusion of horizons."<sup>161</sup>

For Dilthey, hermeneutics promised not only to avert historicism's relativist implications, but also to delineate humanistic inquiry from an imperialist positivism.<sup>162</sup> An innovator of *Lebensphilosophie* in the late nineteenth century, Dilthey distinguished the dynamic sphere of human activity from the inanimate objects of natural-scientific research, positing life itself as the foundation of the *Geisteswissenschaften*.<sup>163</sup> Countering the theory of phenomenalism, which denied the distinction between appearances and essences,<sup>164</sup> Dilthey described the object of the human sciences as "an inner reality, a coherence experienced from within," and he identified the goal of hermeneutics as that of surpassing an author's own self-understanding, as per the "doctrine of unconscious creation."<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, emphasizing the interpreter's immersion in his or her very sphere of investigation, Dilthey problematized the separation of facts from judgments, and also eliminated the distance between the observer and objective world; whereas the scientific method had facilitated the amassing of facts based on neutral, disinterested apprehension, Dilthey sought meaningful truth through a more holistic, projective act of interpretation.<sup>166</sup> Finally, in contrast to positivism, which lacked reflexivity regarding the observer's subjective consciousness, Dilthey characterized understanding and interpretation as "active in life itself," and he envisaged the process of historical reconstruction (*Nachbildung*) as a means of self-knowledge.<sup>167</sup>

*Caligari* followed Dilthey and other ‘philosophers of life’ in critiquing positivism, challenging the privileged relation that it had presumed between vision and knowledge. Wiene’s film perpetually reveals the epistemic insufficiency of external signs, featuring figures who deceive sensory perception, assume alternate names or identities, are driven by obsessive ideas, or are even unaware of their own actions. While highlighting modes of observation and surveillance involved in detective work, the film emphasizes the fallibility and manipulability of visual evidence, as well as its inadequacy for determining motives—as when a man is wrongfully accused of the murders in Holstenwall due to his possession of a particular-looking knife (with which he had hoped to divert suspicion for an attempted homicide), or when Francis unwittingly watches Cesare’s dummy for hours while the actual somnambulist abducts Jane. The film also confounds basic temporal and ontological boundaries between the researcher and the object of investigation; in a flashback within the inner story, the asylum director reads an eighteenth-century chronicle of Dr. Caligari and is compelled not only to reenact the doctor’s murderous experiments, but also to ‘become Caligari.’ Though Francis and the asylum’s doctors later unmask the director after scrutinizing his book and diary, the film’s concluding scenes disclose the dubiousness of Francis’ own story, thus undermining spectators’ assumptions based on the entire preceding action.

Insofar as *Caligari* thus unsettles attempts to ascertain knowledge on the basis of (auto-)biographical accounts, it also destabilizes central tenets of Dilthey’s hermeneutic theory.<sup>168</sup> Much as the narrative’s unsolvable mysteries thwart an optimism regarding the ultimate attainability of truth, the film’s own vicissitudinous history of distribution and exhibition disrupts a philological concentration on “fixed and relatively permanent expressions of life,”<sup>169</sup> revealing contingencies and discontinuities in the passage from a work’s creator(s) to its present-day exegete. The near-century since *Caligari*’s premiere has indeed witnessed the circulation of prints varying significantly in length, music, intertitles, and coloration, as well as the proliferation of spurious, often-contradictory claims regarding the film’s authorship, production process, and political meanings. Important discoveries (e.g. the screenplay, a tinted nitrate copy) over the past decades have dispelled numerous legends about the film and have also facilitated more precise, historically grounded readings. In my analysis, however, the unreflexive empiricism of much research on *Caligari* is at odds with the film’s own pointed critique of nineteenth-century historical methodology. If, as I have sought to demonstrate, *Caligari* rejects a naïve objectivism and abandons the historicist quest for comprehensive representation, the film renders one recent encyclopedic effort to document “the true story behind its creation” a rather ironic undertaking.<sup>170</sup>

*Caligari* emerged at a time when the German historicist tradition was entering a state of acute and widely diagnosed crisis, and the film, I have argued, engaged with contemporaneous metahistorical debates, offering aesthetic responses to ontological and epistemological questions of the philosophy of history. Dismissing the Rankean ideal of faithfully and impartially reconstructing the past, or showing “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*,” *Caligari* instead followed Nietzsche in envisioning historical reality as the interplay of finite, locally conditioned interpretations. This perspectivist view corresponded with the insights of Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, which superseded Newton’s ideas of absolute time and space, provoking an epochal shift, as George Herbert Mead later wrote, from assuming “an absolute world of reality of which perspectives are partial presentations” to

conceiving another possibility: that of “a universe consisting of perspectives.”<sup>171</sup> Einstein’s Theory implicated individuals as participants in their very realm of observation, suggesting a more interactive, spatiotemporally dynamic relationship between the cognizing subject and the object of cognition. Enacting this new mode of relationality through its unnerving, enigmatic narrative and Expressionist, post-perspectivalist style, Wiene’s *Caligari* helped herald an age of self-conscious uncertainty—an age, as Werner Heisenberg would write, aware of the impossibility of any “sharp separation between the world and the I.”<sup>172</sup>

## Metaphysics of Finitude

*But then what does it mean, 'the end of metaphysics'?*  
*It means the historical moment in which the essential possibilities of metaphysics are exhausted.*  
-Martin Heidegger<sup>173</sup>

*Death irremediably exceeds the resources of a metaphysics of the subject.*  
-Jean-Luc Nancy<sup>174</sup>

“Who we are and when we actually live, no one knows even today. Darker still is how and where we then go; the dying leave, as what?”<sup>175</sup> Ernst Bloch raised these questions on the ontology, historicity, and telos of human existence at the outset of “Das Tor-Motiv,” a text included in his 1930 collection *Spuren*. Because human beings’ ultimate destination is both unknown and inconceivable, Bloch wrote, their transition to the realm of death is often represented via doors or gateways. Bloch observed the peculiar effect of this motif as it appears in images and stories, and he recalled “the formidable [*ungeheuren*] impression that even a pure film could exert with the ‘Tormotiv.’”<sup>176</sup> The film, recognizable as Fritz Lang’s *Destiny* (*Der müde Tod*, or ‘The Weary Death’), received Bloch’s praise for its “deeper direction,” which moves beyond “the trivial feats of cinema” and brings “the lethal *Ur*-symbol of the *portal* to consciousness.”<sup>177</sup>

Bloch was not the first commentator to distinguish Lang’s film for its profound inner workings. In fact, less than a week after the film’s premiere at Berlin’s Mozartsaal and Union Theater Kurfürstendamm on October 6, 1921, a critic for *Vorwärts* wrote, “A great line of deepest seriousness and philosophical, even rather religious thinking runs through the film.”<sup>178</sup> This intellectual strand was similarly observed in France, where Lang’s film was released the following year under the title *Les Trois Lumières*. A reviewer for *Ciné-Journal* described the film as “a powerful work, deeply humane and of a truly stirring lyricism, in which philosophy felicitously unites with a world of romantic mysticism.”<sup>179</sup> In *Le Matin*, Lang’s film was noted for having attracted “keen attention” on account of “its exceptional execution and the curious philosophical thesis that emerges.”<sup>180</sup>

*Destiny* was thus celebrated in Bloch’s text and the initial appraisals for demonstrating film’s capacity to serve as a medium of philosophical thought. That this capacity was far from axiomatic is evidenced by other commentators’ categorical dismissals of Lang’s work,<sup>181</sup> as well as fellow filmmakers’ reflections on its influence and legacy. René Clair wrote in 1922 that *Destiny*, following Robert Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), heralded a “cerebral cinema” whose Expressionist *mise en scène* “forms a whole in the mastery of which the intellect takes delight” (prompting Siegfried Kracauer to criticize Clair in his *Theory of Film* [1960]).<sup>182</sup> And, in a 1937 article, Georges Franju characterized Lang as “constantly [...] dreaming of a higher kind of justice and balance,” and identified *Destiny* as a “philosophical work” in which the director “first posed the eternal problem represented by the scales.”<sup>183</sup>

If *Destiny* is positioned within Lang’s oeuvre as the earliest of the director’s fully realized works—or, in Tom Gunning’s words, “the first example of Lang’s completely developed system”<sup>184</sup>—its status as such cannot be attributed to the film’s narrative and aesthetic features alone. *Destiny* certainly synthesized thematic and dramaturgical

elements of Lang's initial efforts and continued his collaboration with screenwriter Thea von Harbou, producer Erich Pommer, actors Lil Dagover and Rudolf Klein-Rogge, as well as costume or set designers Walter Röhrig, Heinrich Umlauf, and Hermann Warm.<sup>185</sup> However, as the above quotes demonstrate, the film gained distinction not merely for displaying Lang's consummate craftsmanship and the artistic possibilities of cinema, but also for revealing a potential nexus between film and philosophy.

This chapter will attempt to illuminate *Destiny's* philosophical dimensions by viewing the film in light of contemporaneous intellectual developments. Proposing the postwar crisis of historical thought as a key context for Lang's pioneering and influential work, I will argue that the film sought to counteract the atomizing and relativizing implications of nineteenth-century historicism by positing what might be called a "metaphysics of finitude."<sup>186</sup> My chapter will thus supplement Tom Gunning's reading of *Destiny* as a meditation on the narrative and visual possibilities of the filmic medium.<sup>187</sup> The formal and stylistic features of Lang's film, I contend, are intelligible not merely within a meta-cinematic discourse, but also as figurations of *meta-historical* issues; the film's extraordinary innovations should be viewed alongside concurrent efforts within Weimar modernism to develop alternative conceptions of time and history.

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"Could the spiritual not be photographed? Could thoughts not be expressed in images?"<sup>188</sup> Raised by Carlo Mierendorff in his programmatic essay *Hätte ich das Kino!* (1920), these questions were increasingly considered in relation to cinema during the Weimar period. As I argued in the previous chapter, Wiene's *Caligari* not only introduced aspects of aesthetic modernism to the medium of film, but also demonstrated its capacity to take up fundamental questions of the philosophy of history. In *The Film Till Now: A Survey of the Cinema* (1930), Paul Rotha indeed distinguished Wiene's film for breaking with photographic realism and, more significantly, for engaging viewers psychologically: "What *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* did [...] was to attract to the cinema audience many people who had hitherto regarded a film as the low watermark of intelligence."<sup>189</sup> Appearing one year later, *Destiny* similarly explored the potential of film, in Lang's own words, "to photograph *thoughts*, that is, render them visually."<sup>190</sup>

While *Caligari* is commonly viewed as the *locus classicus* of Expressionist cinema, *Destiny's* relationship to the corpus has been more contested; in a polemical text from 1979, Barry Salt vehemently denied any connection between Lang's film and the "visual forms" or "nebulous 'spirit' of Expressionism."<sup>191</sup> *Destiny* certainly draws from a repertoire of sources that far exceeds the aesthetic movement, as I will demonstrate, but the film nonetheless exhibits many of its characteristic devices and themes. As with many Expressionist plays, the protagonists in Lang's film lack names and individual features, thereby lending the drama a general, allegorical quality.<sup>192</sup> Furthermore, following works such as Jakob Wassermann's *Das Gänsemännchen* (1915), the film traces a shift from anguished isolation to empathetic communitarianism, as the main character comes to understand her personal tragedy in terms of the universal experience of suffering.<sup>193</sup>

In addressing themes of suffering, finitude, and human community, Lang's film inserts itself into an extended intellectual-historical tradition. Half a century prior, in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872), Friedrich Nietzsche had identified the insights of Kant and Schopenhauer with the beginnings of a "tragic culture," wherein a Socratic optimism and idealization of knowledge are replaced with a wisdom that "seeks to embrace eternal

suffering with sympathetic feelings of love, acknowledging that suffering to be its own.”<sup>194</sup> Placing a similar emphasis on the limitations of science in understanding the course, experience, and parameters of human existence, Martin Heidegger developed the concept of being-towards-death in his 1927 *Sein und Zeit*, a text that I will later discuss at greater length. More recently, in *La Communauté désœuvrée* (1986), Jean-Luc Nancy argued that the community—defined in terms of relational being, or Heideggerian *Mitsein*—reveals itself through, and is calibrated on, the individual member’s death, which is otherwise threatened with insignificance in the modern world.<sup>195</sup>

Lang’s *Destiny* is similarly concerned with the status of the singular death in a period at “the end of metaphysics,”<sup>196</sup> in which faith in the meaningfulness and coherence of history had been irrevocably shattered. Whereas nineteenth-century historicism had treated every epoch as “immediate to God,”<sup>197</sup> in Leopold von Ranke’s famous words, *Destiny* advances a negative philosophy of history, presenting each epoch instead as *immediate to death*. Registering the collapse of historicism into relativism in the postwar years, the film intervened in concurrent philosophical debates by indicating that the very inevitability of death remains an eternal and ubiquitous truth—or, as Nancy would later write, that “finitude alone is communitarian.”<sup>198</sup> In this way, the film contributed to the theorization of finitude that characterized Weimar intellectual and cultural life more broadly, and also anticipated an argument made by Lang’s friend, Theodor W. Adorno: “That metaphysics is no longer possible becomes the ultimate metaphysics.”<sup>199</sup>

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“Is there a logic of history? Is there, beyond all the casual and incalculable elements of the separate events, something that we may call a metaphysical structure of historic humanity, something that is essentially independent of the outward forms—social, spiritual and political—which we see so clearly?”<sup>200</sup> Posed at the outset of Oswald Spengler’s two-volume *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918/1922), these historical-philosophical questions gained a particular urgency during a period of acute crisis and change. As German intellectuals witnessed a cataclysmic and bewildering succession of early-twentieth-century events, including world war, revolution, and the dissolution of empire, they reexamined the philosophical premises of traditional historiography and historical thought. Whereas German Idealism had upheld a basic optimism regarding the directionality and purposiveness of the historical process, Weimar intellectual currents betrayed disillusionment with the course of history, as well as skepticism of history’s status as the site of logos and meaning. However much Spengler’s work recalled philosophies of world history from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it sharply diverged from their teleological, rationalist, and Eurocentric biases. In place of a progressive and unified conception of the historical process, Spengler advanced a morphological theory of recurring, organic cycles of cultural development.<sup>201</sup>

Spengler’s work, which exerted a massive impact on Weimar thought and culture, was also criticized by an extended lineage of philosophers including Theodor W. Adorno, Martin Heidegger, Otto Neurath, and Karl Popper.<sup>202</sup> In his posthumously published *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (1969), Siegfried Kracauer argued that while Spengler improved upon nineteenth-century historical thought by dismissing the postulate of a single, unilinear temporal continuum, he failed to conceptualize an alternative medium of time in which diverse cultures might commonly develop and interact. Kracauer also faulted Spengler for perpetuating the deterministic equation of history with



a static, lawful nature, as well as for forming “irrelevant analogies” between the achievements of various cultures, here detached from their specific contexts.<sup>203</sup> Notably, whereas Spengler developed a Goethean method of analogy to “understand living forms” and to “lay bare the organic structure of history,”<sup>204</sup> Kracauer drew analogies with photographic media to comprehend a historical reality that he characterized as contingent, nearly endless, and indeterminate in meaning. Likening historians to photographers and filmmakers in their engagement with the “raw material” of a Husserlian *Lebenswelt*, Kracauer found a counterpart to historiographical narratives in “episodic films,” with each segment “emerging from, and again disappearing in, the flow of life.”<sup>205</sup>

Lang’s *Destiny*, in my analysis, joined Spengler in critiquing the historicist postulation of a continuous and unilinear temporal flow, and also followed the thinker in espousing alternative conceptions of cyclicity and recurrence. In Lang’s film, the figure of Death (Bernhard Goetzke) offers a maiden (Lil Dagover) the chance to reconvene with her lover (Walter Janssen) by saving the life of someone in the Muslim Near East, Renaissance Venice, or Imperial China. Episodes in these three settings not only depict similar narratives of forbidden love and untimely loss, but also reveal equivalences in length (one reel) and casting of lead actors (Dagover, Goetzke, Janssen); in their organization around ritual ceremonies or celebrations (Ramadan, Carnival, the Chinese Emperor’s birthday); and in their use of particular geometrical shapes and structures (pointed arches, bridges, walls, staircases) within the *mise en scène*.<sup>206</sup> Thus, in diametrical opposition to nineteenth-century historicism, which treated each state and epoch as individual and unique (“immediate to God”),<sup>207</sup> Lang’s film conveys a visual poetics of parallelism and analogy, emphasizing trans-historical affinities and commonalities rather than distinct inner principles. In its disregard for temporal distinction, the film recalls historical paintings such as Albrecht Altdorfer’s *Die Alexanderschlacht* (1528-29), which, as Reinhart Koselleck has argued, consciously deployed anachronism and encompassed past and present within a common plane.<sup>208</sup>

With its parallelist narrative form, Lang’s film also follows an aesthetic trajectory of *Episodenfilme* that includes Luigi Maggi’s *Satana* (1912), D.W. Griffith’s *Intolerance* (1916), Joe May’s *Veritas vincit* (1918), F.W. Murnau’s *Satanas* (1920), and Carl Theodor Dreyer’s *Blade af Satans bog* (1921). Partitioned into episodes that leap across world-historical space and time, these far-reaching spectacles not only take up early cinema’s “encyclopedic ambition,” as well the promise of cinema to serve as a universal language,<sup>209</sup> but also deploy stylistic motifs and formal devices to articulate broader philosophies of history. In *Destiny*, Death’s imposing and impenetrable graveyard wall is both a spatiotemporal and metaphysical boundary, and the portal that the maiden enters functions as a passageway into distant and even transcendental realms (recalling the “Himmelsleiter” in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s story, *Die Brautwahl* [1819]).<sup>210</sup> Like the Whitmanian tableau of the Woman Who Rocks the Cradle in *Intolerance*, the Grimmian Hall of Flames into which Death takes the maiden offers an intermediary space for meta-historical meditation, with each burning candle representing an individual life within world history. As with the crosscutting in Griffith’s film, the adjacency of the candles establishes the simultaneity of different periods, thereby postulating an historical ontology outside the framework of continuous, linear chronology.

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“Can one narrate time—time as such, in and of itself?”<sup>211</sup> Self-reflexively asked in Chapter Seven of Thomas Mann’s *Der Zauberberg* (1924), this question signaled a new awareness of time as an essential element of both narration and life within Weimar modernism. Advancing a shift away from the Idealist tradition, Heidegger and others posited historicity, finitude, and isolation as basic, inescapable conditions of human existence, exhibiting a mode of thought that Peter Eli Gordon has termed “philosophical expressionism.”<sup>212</sup> In Section Two, Chapter One of *Sein und Zeit*, in which Heidegger develops an existential concept of death (elaborating upon ideas from his 1925 lecture series, “Wilhelm Dilthey’s Research and the Struggle for a Historical Worldview”),<sup>213</sup> he writes that because one’s transition from existence (*Dasein*) to death (*Nichtmehrdasein*) is outside one’s realm of possible experience and understanding, the death of another is all the more striking. While another’s death lends one “objective” access to the “ending of existence [*Beendigung des Daseins*],” it nonetheless fails to provide the actual experience of having died (*Zuendegekommensein*). Not only is one thus unable to experience the dying of another in a genuine sense; one also cannot relieve another of his or her dying, as this self-sacrifice merely defers the other’s still-certain death. In this zero-sum game wherein no death is substitutable or avoidable, one confronts the ontological constitution of death through “mineness and existence [*Jemeinigkeit und Existenz*],” as well as the limits of comprehension and representability.<sup>214</sup>

As a non-bypassable boundary of one’s experience of being in the world, death serves as an organizing principle of both time and narrative. Paul Ricoeur emphasizes that in Heidegger’s analytic of time, the act of *Wiederholen* (repetition, recollection) returns historicity to an ordinary temporal structure, mediating between the finitude of life and the endlessness of natural and human history. Extending this concept of repetition to questions of narrativity, Ricoeur argues that odyssean tales, which often both begin and end at a point of origin, imbricate two qualities of time: “the circularity of the imaginary travel and the linearity of the quest as such.”<sup>215</sup> Writing within a more psychoanalytical framework, Laura Mulvey identifies the trope of death as a common and overdetermined means of bringing filmic narratives to a halt. Since film is a time-based medium that has its very basis in the reproduction and repetition of still images, narrative closure in death returns both the characters and the filmic form itself to a primary state of inanimacy. In Mulvey’s analysis, films that conclude with a “human end” conflate stillness with the loss of life, and thereby mark death as a point “beyond narratability.”<sup>216</sup>

Lang’s *Destiny* engages with the mortal limits of time through patterns of repetition. Alongside films ranging from *Intolerance* to *Lola rennt* (Tom Tykwer, 1998), *Destiny* dramatizes a woman’s effort to avert the severing of her lover’s “cord of life”—a suspenseful endeavor that is linked to the possibility of outpacing, ceasing, or even reversing the movement of time. To entertain this revolutionary possibility, Lang (like Griffith and Tykwer) breaks the ceaseless forward motion of cinematic time into successive episodes, thereby shaping a linear temporal continuum into cyclical patterns.<sup>217</sup> In *Destiny*, the maiden attempts to usurp the sovereignty of Death through a suicidal gesture that stops the clock—and, with it, the progression of narrative time—at 11 pm. The maiden receives three chances to rescue a single life before its flame is extinguished, as well as a final, “eleventh hour” to find someone willing to exchange his or her life for that of her lover.<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless, the three spatiotemporal settings to which she travels become the loci of repeated narratives of separation and loss, and the

townspeople whose lives she requests give a common response: “Not one day – Not one hour – Not one breath!!” Furthermore, the figure of Death perpetually appears in threefold repetition, finding triple allegorical-emblematic representation (alongside a skeleton and hourglass) in an early scene at “Zum Goldenen Einhorn,” and also materializing in each of the film’s central episodes. In contrast to Griffith’s and Tykwer’s films, then, *Destiny* eliminates the element of contingency from its parallel or alternate narrative scenarios, denying the possibility of repetition with a difference.

While deploying repetitive patterns to engage with the limits of mortal life, *Destiny* also thus emphasizes the abiding, inevitable quality of death. Lang’s fairy-tale-like film, which leaves its characters, time, and place unidentified (“irgendwo und irgendwann”), draws from a Brothers Grimm *Märchen* entitled “Der Gevatter Tod” (1812), wherein Death introduces itself to a destitute father: “I am Death, who renders everyone equal [*Ich bin der Tod, der alle gleich macht*].”<sup>219</sup> The film substantiates Death’s egalitarian epithet by stressing the common *Todesangst* among townspeople, including the elderly, poor, and infirm, as well as by visually quoting Gustav Spangenberg’s painting, *Der Zug des Todes* (1876), wherein a grieving widow observes a procession of spirits, with figures of varying age and social rank. In Lang’s film, the maiden’s quest places her experience of loss into perspective by replaying her story under conditions of rigid social barriers (gender, religion, caste) and unjust imperial rule—a perspective also signified by the film’s extreme contrasts of scale, as when the maiden is towered over by the graveyard wall. Similarly, through her encounters with a baby in the Hall of Flames and the village hospital at the film’s close, the maiden considers her fiancé’s premature death against an even graver prospect: the loss of one’s child. Lang’s film, which ultimately denies the possibility of recouping a deceased lover through substitution, upholds a Heideggerian economy of death, wherein mortality is an equalizing and inescapable force. Responding to the pervasive awareness of death in the postwar years, the film consolingly affirms its sovereignty in all historical periods and regimes.

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“In what, now, does the work which mourning [*Trauer*] performs consist?”<sup>220</sup> Taking up this question, Sigmund Freud offered his diagnosis of the psychic operations of mourning in a series of texts composed during and after the Great War. In “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), Freud differentiated mourning from a more unconscious and pathological mode of reacting to loss. According to Freud, the condition of mourning is commonly overcome after “a certain lapse of time,” at the end of which one’s ego succeeds in releasing the libido from a lost object and displacing it onto another.<sup>221</sup> By contrast, melancholia entails a withdrawal of the libido into the ego, as well as an identification of the ego with the lost object; cathectic attachment is thus replaced by identification, and “object-loss” transmutes into “ego-loss.”<sup>222</sup> In his later “The Ego and the Id” (1923), Freud wrote that the process of identification attributed to melancholia may in fact be the only condition under which the id is able to relinquish objects. Revising his earlier assessment of mourning as a discrete and temporary condition, Freud emphasized the frequency and formative influence of the identificatory process, and described the character of the ego as the “precipitate [*Niederschlag*]” of relinquished attachments—a repository of the “history [*Geschichte*]” of past object-choices.<sup>223</sup>

History also figured as a term of reappraisal in Walter Benjamin's 1925 study of the German *Trauerspiel*. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin criticized aestheticians' tendency to conflate the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *Trauerspiel* with classical tragedy—a tendency guided by the false assumption that tragedy is “not a historically limited form.”<sup>224</sup> Among the major distinguishing features of the *Trauerspiel*, according to Benjamin, is indeed its engagement with history; unlike Greek tragedy, the object of which is myth, the *Trauerspiel* finds its content in “historical life” (resonating with Ernst Cassirer's differentiation of historical and mythical time in Volume Two of *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, also from 1925).<sup>225</sup> Benjamin associated the baroque *Trauerspiel* with an allegorical form of expression, which he defined in contradistinction to the symbol: “Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in the allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial language.”<sup>226</sup> Thus, rather than espousing a theodicy of natural destruction, allegory fixates more unforgivingly on the power of death, conveying a saturnine, ruinous vision of history as the locus of eternal transience and inexorable decay. Benjamin observed aspects of baroque spiritual tumult in his own historical moment, and also noted analogies between the *Trauerspiel* and contemporary German Expressionist drama.<sup>227</sup>

Lang's *Destiny* shares with the baroque *Trauerspiel* morbid preoccupations, allegorical-emblematic forms of expression, and exotic and imperial themes. Depicting ‘Der müde Tod’ in a black cloak and top hat, as well as with a skeleton-adorned scepter, the film references the late-medieval allegory of death as the scythe-bearing Grim Reaper (*Sensenmann*, *Schnitter Tod*, or *Gevatter Tod*).<sup>228</sup> This anthropomorphic figure, anticipated in ancient mythology by Chronos (the Greek god of time) and Saturn (the Roman god of agriculture), came to connote the finite temporality of one's being in the world—or, in Benjamin's words, “the implacable progression of every life towards death.”<sup>229</sup> Literalizing the metaphor that ‘death is after you’ (*Der Tod folgt auf dem Fuß*), the figure of ‘The Weary Death’ in Lang's film halts the woman and her fiancé as they ride into the village, enters their carriage, and follows them into “Zum Goldenen Einhorn.” Positioned vis-à-vis the couple, Death becomes associated with the uncanny vision of an hourglass, an object famously represented in Albrecht Dürer's 1514 engraving *Melencolia I* (itself the subject of a 1923 monograph by Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl).<sup>230</sup> Emblematising the relentless movement and finitude of time, the trickling hourglass functions as a *memento mori*—a function likewise performed in *Destiny* by the ticking clock in the German village, the burning candles in the Hall of Flames, and the shriveling magic wand in China. As the film's protagonist travels to exotic locales, entering Shakespearean tales of tyrannical rule and courtly intrigue, she is perpetually reminded of the irrevocability of death and the transience of each human life.<sup>231</sup>

In depicting the maiden's confrontation with mortal finitude, Lang's film also reactivates a fifteenth-century motif that regained prominence in Romantic and Expressionist art: that of Death and the Maiden.<sup>232</sup> This erotically charged Renaissance motif, which emerged from the late-medieval allegory of the Dance of Death (*Totentanz*),<sup>233</sup> was also prefigured in Greek mythology by Hades' abduction of Persephone and by the conflict between Eros and Thanatos—figures whom Freud identified with the two classes of human instincts.<sup>234</sup> As the maiden in Lang's film takes sanctuary in the village apothecary, she encounters a verse from the *Song of Solomon* that

likens these two forces: “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, / As a seal upon thine arm, / For love is strong as death / Passion is cruel as the grave; / It blazes up like blazing fire, / Fiercer than any flame” (8:6). Addressed by a bride to her groom, this Biblical verse conveys love’s superlative strength through analogy with the personified figure of infernal Death.<sup>235</sup> In Lang’s film, the verse fuels the maiden’s belief in the triumphant power of Eros, and impels her quasi-suicidal attempt to reunite with her fiancé. Throughout her Orphean quest, however, she finds that her beloved’s life—like the procession of spirits and the flickering flames—is ephemeral, evanescent, and susceptible to Death’s extinguishing power. Only the blazing hospital fire at the film’s close becomes the occasion for reconciling Eros and Thanatos in the form of a *Liebestod*.<sup>236</sup>

“Has one of the new sects the prospect of becoming a new world religion? Will one of the new thinkers be able to put forward a new, broad-minded philosophy?”<sup>237</sup> Hermann Hesse posed these questions in a 1926 article expressing the longing of his age for a cohesive *Weltanschauung*. Like the German academic “mandarins” discussed by Fritz Ringer, including Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Weber, and Ernst Troeltsch, Hesse recognized a primary ramification of the nineteenth-century emphasis on the impermanent and unfixed aspects of life: the threat of relativism.<sup>238</sup> Evoking the social and spiritual upheaval that followed industrialization and modern technological war, Hesse lamented the undermining of cultural foundations that had once seemed enduring and indestructible. In Hesse’s analysis, civic and religious ideals had been replaced by fashionable ephemera, and mankind’s ongoing metaphysical needs were now exploited by “seers and founders; charlatans and quacks.”<sup>239</sup> Nevertheless, Hesse lauded the younger generation’s quest to locate new sources of meaning, which ranged from irrational spiritualism to genuine philosophy, from primitive mysticism to newly developing religions.<sup>240</sup> Providing an inventory of these sources, Hesse listed Reformed theology, Catholic revivalism, and neo-Hasidism; American Christian Science and English theosophy; anthroposophy and the School of Wisdom; Mazdaznan and neo-Sufism; and, finally, translations of Buddhist and Chinese texts.

Hesse’s own fascination with Eastern sources, which found expression in literary works such as *Märchen* (1919) and *Siddhartha* (1922), was shared by Béla Balázs, who published Chinese fairy tales in the collections *Hét mese* (1918) and *Der Mantel der Träume* (1922).<sup>241</sup> However, whereas Hesse celebrated the renewed vitality of spiritual forces in the postwar years, Balázs directed attention to an emergent social institution that rivaled or even surpassed religion in the extent of its public appeal. In *Der sichtbare Mensch oder die Kultur des Films* (1924), Balázs contended that cinema—“the popular art of our century”—now provided the source from which “the spirit of the people arises.”<sup>242</sup> Designating his text as an “essay on the *philosophy of the art of film*,” Balázs sought to theorize the powerful new medium’s unique aesthetic possibilities (in ways that often resonate with his fairy tales and other literary works, as Erica Carter has argued).<sup>243</sup> While characterizing film as a “surface art” comprised of images and gestural language, Balázs nonetheless praised cinematic efforts to achieve “literary ‘depth’” through a “third, intellectual dimension”—one that extends beyond the visible action.<sup>244</sup> As exemplars of such efforts, Balázs cited recent films with “parallel plots,” in which actors play the same roles across various historical periods or social strata; for Balázs, these

combinatory works revealed meaning “at the points of intersection between different destinies,” and thus demonstrated the possibility of creating “films with a world view.”<sup>245</sup>

Using a grief-stricken maiden as its envoy, Lang’s *Destiny* joined Hesse’s and Balázs’ postwar literary texts in exploring wide-ranging and distant loci of signification. In its opening reels, the film alludes to spiritualist, occultist, and religious discourses, as represented in the *mise en scène* by the procession of spirits, village apothecary, and Biblical verse, and it also prominently features the local cemetery and garden, or what Michel Foucault would later classify as “heterotopias” (along with the cinema itself, according to his spatial typology).<sup>246</sup> Outside of the village, exotic locations in the Near East, Italy, and China not only provide grounds for visual attractions, sensual indulgence, and fantastic or uncanny themes, but also offer alternative structures of temporality and narration. Indeed, much as the film leaves the spatiotemporal coordinates of the village unspecified, it refuses to contextualize the three historical settings, thereby frustrating Western frameworks of chronology and causality. Like Richard Oswald’s *Unheimliche Geschichten* (1919) and Paul Leni’s later *Das Wachsfigurenkabinett* (1924), Lang’s film adopts the nonlinear, episodic form of the *One Thousand and One Nights* (whose fairy tales Balázs envisaged in 1923 as “the most ideal subject matter for film”),<sup>247</sup> with a frame narrative that contains a succession of stories. As with the *Arabian Nights*, in which Scheherazade regales the Persian king with serialized tales, the repetitive and self-conscious act of storytelling serves as a means of engaging with tyrannical rule, as well as a strategy for deferring and resisting the curse of death.<sup>248</sup>

In addition to offering alternative temporal and narrative frameworks, *Destiny*’s disparate locations evince forces that extend across sociohistorical periods and regimes. The film’s broadly caricatured, pre-modern settings—both the “old German” village and the three foreign realms—are characterized by constancy and invariance, with longstanding rulers, fixed hierarchies, and habitual ceremonies or religious rituals (recalling the natural powers with which bourgeois revolutions had “settled scores,” as Kracauer wrote in “The Mass Ornament” [1927], attributing revolutions of the past 150 years to a rationality derived in part from “*Märchenvernunft* [the reason of fairy tales]”).<sup>249</sup> In *Destiny*, the static temporality of these powers is undermined through forces (romantic love, mortality) that transgress established social and metaphysical boundaries, as well as through modernist techniques that distort the shapes of narrative and cinematic time. Death’s initial arrival in the village is represented through a flashback that both precedes the narrative’s parameters and reverses its developmental flow, and the maiden’s quest to retrieve her lover punctures and dilates the narrative action, pausing the clock at 11 pm. While such moments mark breaks or even revolutionary ruptures in the narrative frame, the discontinuities themselves become integral to the film’s broader historical-philosophical claims. Appearing shortly after the cataclysms of war, revolution, and the dissolution of empire, Lang’s film sought to assimilate the anarchic, seemingly nonsensical phenomena of history into a cohesive global vision. The film’s spatiotemporal settings served as common sites of suffering and loss, revealing the figure of Death as a universal and enduring force of reckoning.

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“What does the world expect us Jews to do?”<sup>250</sup> Writing in 1929, Theodor Lessing addressed the irresolvable dilemmas of the Jewish people’s situation. Lessing alluded to pervasive and ongoing forms of persecution faced by the group, as well as its unremitting

sense of “insecurity and uncertainty.”<sup>251</sup> With reference to recent unrest between Arabs and Zionists in Mandate Palestine, Lessing bemoaned the fact that even a national solution to the perennial ‘Jewish question’ now seemed untenable. Extending the argument of his 1919 book, *Geschichte als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen* (which he had significantly revised on the occasion of its fourth printing in 1927, now with the Nietzschean subtitle *Oder die Geburt der Geschichte aus dem Mythos*),<sup>252</sup> Lessing posited anti-Semitism as an attempt to lend retrospective meaning to the senseless and unjustifiable occurrences of Jewish history, effectively attributing guilt or moral responsibility to Jews for their own “hopeless, irredeemable suffering.”<sup>253</sup> In Lessing’s view, Jews tended to condone and even encourage this mode of inculcation—a tendency he linked to their abiding belief in fate or providential intentionality as operative forces within an otherwise unbearable *Leidensgeschichte*. Lessing emphasized that the group’s pattern of interpreting wrongful injuries as self-incurred penalties was unhealthy and even pathological; popularizing a term from Anton Kuh’s *Juden und Deutsche* (1921), he famously diagnosed this phenomenon as “Jewish self-hatred.”<sup>254</sup>

Jewish people’s contested and even self-negating position within German culture was often negotiated via the topos of the Orient. Regarded as “Asiatic refugees” (Dohm),<sup>255</sup> Central European Jews actively embraced and perpetuated their Oriental associations in the nineteenth century, most notably in the philological-historical scholarship of Abraham Geiger, Heinrich Graetz, and Ignaz Goldziher, as well as in the Moorish architecture of Reform synagogues. In a dialectical turn, these associations became integral to the anti-Semitic discourses propagated by figures such as Heinrich von Treitschke and Werner Sombart, the latter of whom typified the group in 1911 as an “Oriental people among Northern races.”<sup>256</sup> While many Jews responded to increasing racism by deemphasizing or even disavowing their Semitic roots, a small minority represented their status as social pariahs through the proxy of Oriental themes. Distinct from the imperialist endeavors and *art nouveau* exoticism prevalent in Europe more broadly,<sup>257</sup> such ‘Jewish Orientalism’ served instead, in John Efron’s words, as “a profound expression of [Jews’] own cultural anxiety and insecurity.”<sup>258</sup> This strand of Orientalism figured directly in the cultural Zionist texts of Martin Buber (e.g. “The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism,” 1912), and can also be traced more obliquely in various works of aesthetic modernism. Commenting on the Chinese motifs in Gustav Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde* (1911), Theodor W. Adorno identified the Orient as “a cover for Mahler’s Jewish element,” his exoticism “a prelude to emigration.”<sup>259</sup>

Alongside contemporaneous modernist works, Lang’s *Destiny* encodes the fraught positionality of Jews within its broader thematization of alterity and non-belonging. The film focuses on a plethora of outsider characters, including the couple visiting the German village, the Frank in the Near East, and the figure of Death itself, whom the townspeople identify as “The Stranger” (*Der Fremde*)—an appellation that recalls the eponymous subject of Georg Simmel’s 1908 essay. Like the paradigmatic stranger of Simmel’s text—the European Jew—, Death is a lone traveler, unbound by “established ties of kinship, locality, or occupation,”<sup>260</sup> who initially enters the village through an economic transaction (a trope that reappears in other Weimar films, including *Caligari* and F.W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu* [1922], where similarly foreign, uncanny figures acquire property and cause deaths in pre-modern German towns).<sup>261</sup> Immediately purchasing a plot of land adjoining the village graveyard, Death follows the historical settling patterns

of Jews in provincial Germany, as described by Werner Cahnman: “Wherever Jews came, the first thing which they negotiated, after the terms of settlement had been fixed, was the acquisition of a burial ground.”<sup>262</sup> Characterized as weary from extensive traveling and subject to a higher power (“alpha and omega,” or Jesus Christ), the personage of Death in Lang’s film bears affinities with the mythical figure of Ahasverus, the Wandering Jew (*Der ewige Jude*), from medieval Christian folklore.<sup>263</sup> In a discussion of Ahasverus in *History: The Last Things Before the Last*, Kracauer suggested that only this immortal and unredeemed figure would bear reliable, first-hand knowledge of epochal developments and transitions, his grotesque and ever-transmogrifying face(s) belying the historicist postulate of cross-temporal homogeneity and coherence.<sup>264</sup>

As a means of emphasizing the enduring and uncanny foreignness of Death, as well as the figure’s unboundedness to any particular space or time, *Destiny* also synthesizes German folk tradition with Oriental motifs.<sup>265</sup> Subtitled “A German Folk Song in Six Verses,” Lang’s film adopts the repetitive patterns and strophic rhythm of a Romantic *Volklied* (as collected by Ludwig Erk and later Franz Magnus Böhme in their standard work, *Deutscher Liederhort* [1856/1893-94]),<sup>266</sup> with intertitles written in stanzaic form, idiomatic fonts, and a vernacular tone. In combining this folk element with exotic themes, Lang’s film resonates with the late work of Gustav Mahler, who—like Hanns Eisler, Arnold Schönberg, and Anton Webern in subsequent years—composed settings of ancient Far Eastern poems translated into German by Hans Bethge.<sup>267</sup> The film shares with Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde* (1911) a sextuple form, exotic stylistic principle, global scope, and preoccupation with themes of loss, isolation, and mortality; indeed, Mahler’s six-song cycle concludes with “Der Abschied,” in which a lone girl stands outside at dusk, waiting to bid a last farewell to her vanished lover. Much as the balladic intertitles in Lang’s film draw an analogy between the cyclical course of human life and the recurrent passage of the seasons,<sup>268</sup> the final words of Mahler’s “song-symphony” invoke an eternal nature’s omnipresent regeneration: “The beloved Earth everywhere / Blooms forth in Spring and becomes green anew! / Everywhere and endlessly / Blue shines the horizon! / Endless... endless...”<sup>269</sup>



“What fears and hopes swept Germany immediately after World War I?”<sup>270</sup> Kracauer posed this question in the Introduction to his 1947 book, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. In Chapter Seven, entitled “Destiny,” Kracauer argued that the postwar German imagination—exploring only the possibilities of tyranny and anarchy, both of which appeared “pregnant with doom”—made recourse to an “ancient concept of fate,” as witnessed in Lang’s films from the early 1920s.<sup>271</sup> For Kracauer, Lang’s *Destiny* aligned tyrannical actions with the workings of Providence; valorized the maiden’s religiously connoted self-renunciation; humanized the figure of Death; and suggested the inaccessibility, unavailability, and finality of Fate.<sup>272</sup> However much *From Caligari to Hitler* has been targeted for criticism in recent decades, the book continues to inform scholarship on Lang’s film. Following Kracauer in investigating how German cinema figured the nation’s psychic condition in the postwar years (though repudiating his teleological argumentation), Anton Kaes has described *Destiny*’s theme as “the fatefulness of sudden death of a loved one.”<sup>273</sup>

While often segregated from the *Caligari* book, Kracauer’s later works also condemned an *amor fati*, emphasizing instead the role of contingency in both film



aesthetics and the historical process. In *Theory of Film*, Kracauer argued that Lang's *Destiny* placed theatrical fantasy on par with a transitory physical reality, thereby violating the medium's "basic aesthetic principle."<sup>274</sup> Consulting the Marseille notebooks in which the book was first outlined, Miriam Hansen writes that for Kracauer, Lang's work typified a "closed dramaturgy of fate or destiny" antithetical to the theorist's modernist concept of chance—a concept, Hansen notes, that he developed in relation to American slapstick comedy.<sup>275</sup> (In this regard, I would add, Kracauer reveals affinities with Hans Blumenberg, whose 1963 essay, "Lebenswelt und Technisierung unter Aspekten der Phänomenologie," associated historicism with a deficit of contingency, and also made reference to Chaplin's *Modern Times* [1936].)<sup>276</sup> Kracauer's posthumous book on *History* would similarly take up Husserl's phenomenological idea of the *Lebenswelt* in describing historical reality (like camera-reality) as "full of intrinsic contingencies which obstruct its calculability, its subsumption under the deterministic principle."<sup>277</sup>

Following Kracauer's death in 1966, Theodor W. Adorno published an obituary discussing the theorist's defiant relation to aging, finitude, and closure. According to Adorno, Kracauer seemed to disavow the inevitability of death in his late years, finding his own imminent passing "unbelievable."<sup>278</sup> Adorno further noted that in their final conversation, Kracauer had expressed "how much he agreed with those passages from *The Jargon of Authenticity* in which I had criticized the attempt to distill precisely a metaphysics from death."<sup>279</sup> In that 1964 book, Adorno had polemicized against the existentialist philosophy of Heidegger, whose *Sein und Zeit*, Adorno argued, turned death into Dasein's essence and identity.<sup>280</sup> Adorno rebuked such an ontologization of death, emphasizing that "death destroys and truly negates Dasein,"<sup>281</sup> and in his obituary for Kracauer, he likewise invoked a metaphysics "to which death is absolutely opposed and which has its essence in resistance to it."<sup>282</sup>

Lang's *Destiny*, as I have suggested, might similarly be accused of attempting to derive a metaphysics from death, most explicitly in its denouement of self-sacrifice, reunion, and resurrection (with Death's final promise, "Who gives his life away shall gain it," quoting Matthew 10:39). Obedient to "alpha and omega," the figure of 'Der müde Tod' serves as a delegate of God in Lang's film, his winged cloak resembling that of both the Virgin of Mercy and the Angel of Death as he guides the transfigured couple into the beyond.<sup>283</sup> In this way, *Destiny* betrays the slippage between existential ontology and Christian theology that Adorno later discerned in the language of Heidegger and his followers.<sup>284</sup> While the film suggests the extension of the couple's lives beyond their immanent limits, it nonetheless acknowledges the a priori significance of death in both lending form to human life and affecting its contents—a significance, as Georg Simmel wrote in "Zur Metaphysik des Todes" (1910), that Christianity paradoxically removed in its effort "to place life, from the outset, under the aspect of its own eternity."<sup>285</sup>

*Destiny's* dual gesture of assenting to and sublating human finitude marks only one of the film's profounder contradictions. In Lang's film, the competing forces of love and death disregard or even revolt against social hierarchies and regimes, but are also naturalized as eternal elements of the human condition. Moreover, while the film interrupts the linear, progressive continuum of history and postulates alternative temporal conceptions (e.g. simultaneity, cyclical recurrence, episodic discontinuity), it also shows the futility of such activism, indicating the perpetual failure of the maiden's death-defying efforts. If *Destiny* thereby exhibits a tragic fatalism—resorting, as Kracauer

claimed, to an “ancient concept of Fate”<sup>286</sup>—it nonetheless reveals quintessentially modernist understandings of time and history. (And if, in Simmel’s analysis, the concept of fate entails a “retrospective teleology,”<sup>287</sup> the charge of fatalism could just as well be leveled against Kracauer’s *From Caligari to Hitler*.) Lang’s film, as I have argued, recognized the insufficiency of established historiographical models to account for the seemingly senseless and incoherent events of the modern age. The film responded to the postwar crisis of historicism by positing a “metaphysics of finitude,” demonstrating cinema’s ability to engage with crucial philosophical questions at a time of deep skepticism regarding the meaning, purposiveness, and unity of the historical process.

## Pure Presence

*History rules even those works that disavow it.*  
—Theodor W. Adorno<sup>288</sup>

*The idea of modernity would like there to be only one meaning and direction in history, whereas the temporality specific to the aesthetic regime of the arts is a co-presence of heterogeneous temporalities.*  
—Jacques Rancière<sup>289</sup>

### I.

Although the historicist principle of individuality can be traced back to antiquity, philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle had prioritized eternal forms as objects of rational knowledge, dismissing the particular, contingent, and fleeting phenomena of the historical world as non-scientific matters of inquiry.<sup>290</sup> While Leibniz restored dignity to the particular in his *Monadology*, it was in the nineteenth century that this classical opposition was rendered untenable: historical science lent the singularity of things an equal measure of significance as their universality, and literature focused on concrete, minute details, producing what Roland Barthes would famously call “the reality effect.”<sup>291</sup> The dividing line that Aristotle had drawn between history and poetry—or, in his words, between “things that have happened” and “things that might happen”<sup>292</sup>—was thus blurred, with the two fields becoming increasingly indistinguishable in both content and modes of description. Half a century before Hans Blumenberg, Siegfried Kracauer, and Hayden White would recognize the common aesthetic devices and rhetorical tropes upon which historiography and literature rely,<sup>293</sup> the postwar crisis of historicism thus exposed a dissolving distinction between empirical reality and fictional construction, the history and the story, and the true (*das Wahre*) and the verisimilar (*das Wahrscheinliche*).

In his recent writings, Jacques Rancière has associated this breakdown with what he calls the “aesthetic revolution,” which inaugurated an equalization of all arts, genres, and subject matter.<sup>294</sup> Rancière identifies the advent of the new aesthetic regime with literary realism, which, as he contends, preceded both the science of history and the photographic and filmic arts in its valorization of commonplace details and its focus on anonymous, ordinary lives.<sup>295</sup> Lending a political dimension to Barthes’ analysis of texts such as Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856) and *Un cœur simple* (1877), Rancière views the proliferation of superfluous description as the mark of a democratic mode of experience—a mode characterized by a newfound attention to seemingly insignificant events, objects, and feelings, as well as a belief in all individuals’ capacity for self-determination.<sup>296</sup> Furthermore, diverging from the conventional view of aesthetic modernism as a repudiation of mimetic modes and narrational excesses, Rancière perceives the avant-garde as continuous with nineteenth-century realist fiction in its challenge to representational hierarchies.<sup>297</sup> For Rancière, modernism established an equivalence of art and life, constructing what he calls “a sensorium of radical equality.”<sup>298</sup>

Among the problems with Rancière’s argument is its homogeneous, undifferentiated conception of realism and the avant-garde, here linked in a broad historical trajectory of democratization. Whereas Barthes emphasized the approximate

contemporaneity of literary realism, scholarly history, and photographic technology, all of which chronicled “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*” (how things actually were),<sup>299</sup> Rancière offers a diachronic, *longue durée* narrative curiously aligned with the structural approach of the Annales School. In presenting modernism as the final stage of aesthetic egalitarianism, Rancière also fails to address the frequent inaccessibility of avant-garde works to mass audiences, as well as the unabashed elitism, extremism, and political promiscuity of many early-twentieth-century artists.<sup>300</sup> Moreover, insofar as Rancière conceives both historical science and the avant-garde as continuous with literary realism, he leaves open the question of how to approach the crisis of historicism that emerged concurrently with aesthetic modernism—a question that I will address in this chapter through a focus on Hans Richter’s films and publications of the Weimar era.

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Scholarship has long defined aesthetic modernism in terms of its enormous hostility to historical styles, cultural traditions, and institutions of art—a hostility perhaps most plainly articulated in the 1909 Futurist Manifesto, in which F. T. Marinetti expressed the intention “to destroy museums, libraries, academies of every sort.”<sup>301</sup> Furthermore, modernist works are often noted for opposing linear modes of historical narration, whether in the circular poem-paintings of Guillaume Apollinaire, the simultaneism of Robert Delaunay’s Orphic art, the primitivism of Pablo Picasso’s paintings, or the atemporal myths and non-closure of James Joyce’s literature. Such anti-historicism, as Carl E. Schorske has argued, betrayed a loss of faith in the progressive Enlightenment of liberal democracy at the *fin de siècle*. During this period, artistic and intellectual innovators, in Schorske’s words, “broke, more or less deliberately, their ties to the historical outlook central to the nineteenth-century liberal culture in which they had been reared.”<sup>302</sup> In the works of Secessionist artists such as Gustav Klimt, Schorske discerns a conscious rebellion against both positivist referentiality and an optimistic belief in history as the site of directionality and meaning.

The avant-garde’s relationship to the past was not one of simple negation, however, but involved an interpenetration of history and the contemporary age. Nuancing Charles Baudelaire’s and Friedrich Nietzsche’s critiques of the prevailing antiquarianism of nineteenth-century European culture, Paul de Man has emphasized that modernism was not only a generative historical force or movement, but also itself a part of the historical process—one with various predecessors in its very gesture of rejecting the past and establishing a new point of origin.<sup>303</sup> With a similar interest in the temporal paradoxes of modernism’s insurrectionary rhetoric, Eric Hobsbawm has argued that members of the avant-garde were caught between marking an end to all prior art and legitimating their own artistic endeavors and social positions through an appeal to recognized, time-honored idioms: “They were constantly torn between the conviction that there could be no future to the art of the past—even yesterday’s past, or even to any kind of art in the old definition—and the conviction that what they were doing in the old social role of ‘artists’ and ‘geniuses’ was important, and rooted in the great tradition of the past.”<sup>304</sup>

Such conflictual dynamics symptomatize a broader dialectic in modernity between revolutionary impulses and new modes of engagement with the past. As Rancière has argued, the “aesthetic regime” gave rise to both artistic innovations and novel forms of preservation and interpretation, including archives, museums, and the emerging discipline

of art history.<sup>305</sup> Although modernism is often conceived in terms of aesthetic rupture, it nonetheless depends on an idea of art's past and a broader context of historical intelligibility; even the iconoclastic Futurist Manifesto tacitly relies on established institutions as a point of negative identification. In this regard, modernism's avowed break with the past was itself inextricably linked to the historicist paradigm that burgeoned in the nineteenth century.<sup>306</sup> If, as Peter Osborne has contended, historicism replaces tradition as a source of temporal continuity within modernity, serving as an antidote to the epoch's own forms of shock and disruption,<sup>307</sup> it belies Baudelaire's sole identification of the present age with "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent."<sup>308</sup>

Modernism is not only marked by its fraught relationship to history, but also beset by multiple, often-competing temporalities. Originally referring to the vanguard of an army, the term "avant-garde" was metaphorically transposed to the arts in mid-nineteenth-century France. As Hans Magnus Enzensberger argued in "Die Aporien der Avantgarde" (1962), while the temporalization of a spatial category implied a conception of the arts as part of a linear, ever-advancing historical process, it also suggested the coexistence of forerunners and latecomers, and thus the "non-simultaneity of the simultaneous" (*Ungleichzeitigkeit des Gleichzeitigen*).<sup>309</sup> Among the aporias of the avant-garde, in Enzensberger's analysis, is the question of who decides at any given time what is indeed *en avant*—a judgment that can first be ascertained *a posteriori*.<sup>310</sup> In his *Theorie der Avantgarde* (1974), Peter Bürger would likewise take up the concept of *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, associating modernist movements with a challenge to the view of art as a succession of styles and techniques across history. Drawing from Bürger, one might argue that insofar as avant-garde movements evoked "a simultaneity of the radically disparate,"<sup>311</sup> they negated their own central claim to being historically advanced.

The concept of non-contemporaneity also bears implications for examining the politics of the avant-garde, troubling the standard distinction between progressive and reactionary aesthetic practices.<sup>312</sup> With reference to Ernst Bloch's *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (1935) and Bürger's notion of a "full unfolding" of eclectic artistic possibilities under modernism,<sup>313</sup> Andrew Hewitt has argued that the avant-garde shared with fascism a conception of itself as both fulfilling and sublating historical sequentiality within what he calls a "metaphysics of presence."<sup>314</sup> Hewitt emphasizes that the idea of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* problematizes basic tenets of scholarship on modernism, including the assumption of an alignment of aesthetic and political radicalism, as well as a critical dismissal of all things anachronistic—a category, as he points out, that itself becomes "the most fundamental of anachronisms."<sup>315</sup> Similarly invoking "a co-presence of heterogeneous temporalities," Rancière has identified two discrete conceptions of the avant-garde, which he distinguishes as archi-political and meta-political, strategic and aesthetic.<sup>316</sup> While the former conception is that of an advanced, detached force or party that leads on the basis of its capacity for historical interpretation and innovation, the latter is a more Schillerian notion of anticipating and preparing for a future life within the realm of aesthetics.<sup>317</sup>

Notably absent from the aforementioned theories of the avant-garde is an engagement with the intellectual debates that occurred alongside the rise of aesthetic modernism. The concept of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* was indeed first widely theorized in the early twentieth century—not merely in Bloch's 1935 analysis of fascism, but also in the

art-historical and sociological writings of figures including Wilhelm Pinder, Karl Mannheim, Erwin Panofsky, and Henri Focillon. Ironically, then, the avant-garde emerged contemporaneously with an increasing focus on the notion of non-contemporaneity and on problems of historical time and periodization; these historical-philosophical issues, I will argue, need to inform our ways of both historicizing the avant-garde and theorizing its relationship to history. The present chapter will consider the interconnections between the interwar avant-garde and the crisis of historicism, both of which reacted against nineteenth-century practices and postulated alternative, non-linear conceptions of time and history. The object of my analysis will be Hans Richter's *Rhythmus 21*, which I will examine in dialogue with his theoretical texts from the 1920s.

## II.

“History is what is happening today,” declared Richter in the April 1926 volume of his avant-garde journal *G—Material zur elementaren Gestaltung*.<sup>318</sup> Calling for a mode of historiography that would serve present-day artistic practice, Richter's manifesto is notably at odds with his later, often autobiographical writings, including retrospective essays and books chronicling the Dada movement, early documentary and experimental film, and the cinematic avant-garde in Germany—writings that have significantly shaped and informed the scholarship on these topics over the past half-century.<sup>319</sup> Apart from its tensions with Richter's subsequent historiographical efforts, however, the 1926 text also raises vexing questions for any reflexive approach to modernism today: How might contemporary scholars best approach an avant-garde that is itself now historical? How can we historicize the work of artists who radically questioned the very bases and functions of art history, articulating what might be called a presentist anti-historicism? And, finally, how can we address the irony that modernist movements, characterized by an adversarial stance toward the past, have themselves become an integral part of our artistic institutions, cultural traditions, and conceptions of art and film history?

Although this process of canonization has brought with it a sustained interest in the interwar avant-garde, the voluminous scholarship within the field has largely ignored the aforementioned problematics. Much of the existing research on Richter is plainly historicist, interested in presenting an accurate, comprehensive account of his life and work; resituating his art within its cultural and political contexts; and establishing the *Entstehungsgeschichte* of the Weimar avant-garde, including which was the “first” abstract film—a question which interested Richter, for all the anti-historicism of his 1926 text.<sup>320</sup> In contrast, other scholarship has been ahistorical in methodology, especially insofar as it uncritically deploys Richter's mid-twentieth-century writings to interpret his work from decades prior.<sup>321</sup> And while recent research has moved beyond biographical and national paradigms to provide a more holistic sense of the networks, film cultures, and economic conditions of the European avant-garde (focusing in particular on its advertising and commissioned films), this research has been less invested in historical-philosophical debates.<sup>322</sup> Even a recent volume devoted to the discourses running through *Rhythmus 21* is notably devoid of reflections on the concept of history.<sup>323</sup>

In the following, I will be interested less in Richter's later historiographical efforts than in problems of time and history in his films and publications of the Weimar era—works, in my analysis, that are of interest precisely because of their ostensible efforts to deny the past and establish a temporality of pure presence. While placing Richter's work

within a broader intellectual-historical trajectory, I will nonetheless diverge from the set of thinkers and ideas that have repeatedly appeared in the literature on “absolute films,” ranging from Leibniz, Goethe, and Schelling to Bergson, Busoni, and Klages, and from concepts of *ars combinatoria*, the *Generalbaß der Malerei*, and polarity to movement, counterpoint, and rhythm. Analyzing *Rhythmus 21* in relation to the crisis of historicism, I will argue that Richter paradoxically drew from various aesthetic and intellectual traditions in the very act of dismissing the past, articulating a presentist stance whose relationship to history was one of performative contradiction.<sup>324</sup> Moreover, engaging with early-twentieth-century writings by myriad thinkers on the notion of non-contemporaneity, I will problematize Richter’s presentism and also suggest a more reflexive approach to the “historical avant-garde”—one that considers it in terms of contemporaneous debates in the philosophy of history.

Aesthetic modernism ensued from nineteenth-century critiques of German Idealism, historicism, and positivist referentiality. In turning to abstraction, modernist artists were anticipated by Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, especially in these philosophers’ pessimistic conception of the external world as directionless and meaningless, as well as in their rejection of the purpose of art as the imitation of reality. Opposing the Hegelian rationalism and historicism of the early nineteenth century, Schopenhauer had substituted art for history and religion as a locus of truth and redemption, associating the former with the suspension of the individual will, the dissolution of the self, and access to a deeper reality beneath surface phenomena. Much as Schopenhauer’s work prioritized music among the arts for its sublime, non-representational qualities, Nietzsche’s *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (1872) attributed to Wagner’s music-dramas the potential to serve the functions of the chorus in pre-Socratic tragedy: namely, loss of individuated selfhood, the return to an irrational will, ecstatic immersion into a broader unity, and the overcoming of the Cartesian split between mind and body fundamental to conceptual, Idealist thought.

Like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, modernist artists and theorists often celebrated music as a non-mimetic form of expression; whereas language bore elements of history and tradition, music facilitated the free play of signifiers detached from their external signifieds. In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), Wassily Kandinsky observed a general striving across the arts towards the abstract and non-material, for which music served as a primary model: “With few exceptions music has been for some centuries the art which has devoted itself not to the reproduction of natural phenomena, but rather to the expression of the artist’s soul.”<sup>325</sup> The following year, in “Das Verhältnis zum Text,” Arnold Schoenberg (tacitly following Eduard Hanslick’s 1854 work, *The Beautiful in Music*) dismissed the assumption that music must evoke images, citing Schopenhauer’s remark, in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1819), that the composer discloses the world’s innermost essence and conveys the deepest truth in a language beyond reason.<sup>326</sup> Heralding a diminishing concern with both text and subject matter, Schoenberg praised the non-figurative paintings of Kandinsky and Oskar Kokoschka, describing their “objective theme” as “hardly more than an excuse to improvise in colors and forms and to express themselves as only the musician expressed himself.”<sup>327</sup>

Schoenberg’s analogy to music in describing abstract visual art was common to postwar avant-garde filmmakers including Richter, Viking Eggeling, and Walter

Ruttman, whose films bore titles such as *Rhythmus 21*, *Diagonal-Symphonie*, and *Lichtspiel Opus 1*, respectively.<sup>328</sup> All three directors began as painters and endeavored to introduce elements of time and movement to their abstract works, thereby creating what Ruttman described as “an art for the eyes that differs from painting because it occurs in time (like music).”<sup>329</sup> In so doing, the filmmakers conceived of film as a medium that unites the spatial dimension of painting with the temporal aspect of music, thus transgressing Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s famous partition of the arts.<sup>330</sup> It was not merely music’s temporal development that attracted these filmmakers, however, but also its potential to transcend linguistic and national barriers—especially through what Hanslick had identified as *absolute Musik*, or non-illustrative, non-representational instrumental works. The filmmakers’ “absolute films,” which were screened at Berlin’s Ufa-Palast on May 3 and 10, 1925, shared with their musical counterparts an eschewal of narrative and figurative content, visualizing instead the rhythmic play of abstract forms and structures.<sup>331</sup>

### III.

If cinema promised to realize the dynamization of visual art, it is no coincidence that Richter’s *Rhythmus 21* begins with a tacit invocation of Kazimir Malevich’s *Black Square* (1915), which is immediately set into motion.<sup>332</sup> At the outset of Richter’s film, a predominantly black screen gradually turns white, and the reverse then occurs in double succession—a sequence that could be described as a horizontally contracting and dilating black square or two swelling and shrinking (or shifting and receding) white rectangles, depending on how one perceives the moving *Vexierbild*.<sup>333</sup> These opening five seconds establish many of the film’s basic elements: simple quadrangles that reduplicate the form of the screen and change in shape and size; a black-and-white palette in which the two colors are often substituted; ambiguous spatial dynamics, particularly with regard to depth relations and the identity of figure and background, solid and void, and interior and exterior areas; a play between fluid and discontinuous motion; and, finally, repetitions, variations, and inversions of action and direction of movement. The film’s subsequent three minutes add further components: vertical movement, grey tones, and diagonal figures; the multiplication, disappearance, and overlapping of geometrical forms, often of varying sizes, relative distances, and degrees of mobility and speed; and simultaneous motions that are alternately synchronous and disunified, unilinear and multidirectional.

Lacking narrative development and external referents, *Rythmus 21* challenges the bases of film analysis, including units and categories such as the shot, scene, and pro-filmic event, as well as the tools of semantic and iconological interpretation. If, as Ingo Zechner has suggested, Richter’s work thus directs attention to the most rudimentary of visual elements (e.g., relations and dynamics of form, space, light, color, rhythm), this should not necessarily delimit discussion of the film to a meta-cinematic discourse, wherein it appears as “a systematic inventory of filmic possibilities and their conditions [...] a zero point of cinema.”<sup>334</sup> Instead, I argue, the film can be viewed with regard to conceptions of time and history in early-twentieth-century aesthetic theory and practice. The historical-philosophical implications of abstraction were indeed addressed in Wilhelm Worringer’s foundational text on modernism, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (1908), where he conceived the “urge to abstraction” as the effort to find refuge from an external world of arbitrary, ephemeral, and relative phenomena within a realm of



absolute, eternal necessity.<sup>335</sup> Positing a recursive conception of mankind's spiritual evolution, Worringer argued that much as primitive art had conveyed an instinctive sense of spiritual dread and uncertainty within a bewildering universe, modern abstract art now expressed a Schopenhauerian recognition of the limits of reason and knowledge.

Extending the ideas of Worringer and Kandinsky, a trajectory of commentators have noted absolute films for their flight from the historicity and materiality of filmic representation. In "The Visible Symphony" (1924), Herman Scheffauer characterized Ruttmann's early experiments as an attempt "to detach the film from all reality and to infuse it with a new aesthetic, sensuous and spiritual content," thus elevating the medium "into the realm of purely abstract art."<sup>336</sup> Rudolf Kurtz's *Expressionismus und Film* (1926) similarly observed the absence of "history, narrative, event" and of all human figures in Richter's and Eggeling's absolute films; for Kurtz, the interrelation of elementary geometrical forms allowed for the unfolding of "spiritual dramas."<sup>337</sup> Over half a century later, in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983), Gilles Deleuze would associate Richter's *Rhythmus* films with a movement wherein the whole spiritual universe passes through a fire of chaos, "only to break its sensible attachments to the material, the organic, and the human, to detach itself from all the states of the past, and thus to discover the spiritual abstract Form of the future."<sup>338</sup> Most recently, in an essay on "Abstraction and Empathy in the Early German Avant-garde" (2000), Christine N. Brinckmann has remarked upon the lack of overall structural progression in Eggeling's *Diagonal-Symphonie*, characterizing the film in terms of "a time-consuming timelessness."<sup>339</sup>

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Through the rejection of visual and linguistic referentiality, absolute film sought not only to circumvent the historicity of the filmic medium, but also to avoid perceptual conventions and emotional associations on the part of viewers.<sup>340</sup> In "Die schlecht trainierte Seele" (1924), Richter argued for a more active and precise understanding of sensory processes than assumed in various realms of contemporary life, and especially in current cinema. Reproaching existing feature films for failing to demonstrate the possibilities of photography and movement, Richter redefined the medium in terms of optical rhythm, as represented through photo-technical means and corresponding to the functions of man's apperceptive apparatus. Furthermore, rather than relying on kitsch images, archetypal figures, and familiar, pathos-laden scenarios, his and Eggeling's absolute films presented sheer organized movement, refusing any "'stopping points' at which one could return into memories."<sup>341</sup> In this way, Richter wrote, the viewer is compelled into a mode of feeling detached from all content and from the powers of recollection. Seeking to cultivate greater awareness of the elementary laws of sensation, Richter dismissed what he called the "ready-made feelings from past or nonexistent centuries"<sup>342</sup>—feelings, he claimed, that both constitute our soul's nature and shape our image of the world (*Weltbild*).

Despite Richter's express wish to present abstract rhythms unbound to longstanding sensorial regimes and visualized through uniquely cinematic means, his absolute films in fact followed a history of media experimentation and theorization. Not only had similar attempts been made by brothers Bruno Corra and Arnaldo Ginna in Italy and by French painter Léopold Survage before World War One; they also joined an extended trajectory of aesthetic concepts including Friedrich Schlegel's *absoluter Roman*,

Eduard Hanslick's *absolute Musik*, Stéphane Mallarmé's *poésie pure*, and Rudolf Blümner's *absolute Dichtung*. Furthermore, though ostensibly demonstrations of cinema's specific capabilities, the absolute films paradoxically recalled various synaesthetic ideas (e.g., Adalbert Stifter's "Musik für das Auge"), artistic movements (Symbolism, Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Suprematism, Dada, Constructivism), and media aesthetics—not merely that of music and painting, but also the scroll, shadow play, color organ, kaleidoscope, light sculpture, and clavilux.<sup>343</sup> In these regards, the concept of "absolute film" was arguably a performative contradiction, making a claim for cinema's non-referential autonomy within the established idioms of older media.

These paradoxes were increasingly acknowledged in the late 1920s, as filmmakers and theorists voiced criticism of absolute films and also called for greater engagement with material-historical circumstances. Likely targeting the *Gesellschaft Neuer Film*, a society for alternative cinema co-founded by Richter,<sup>344</sup> Ruttmann's "Die 'absolute' Mode" (1928) questioned whether film is correctly understood "when one wishes upon it [...] the fate of absolute music."<sup>345</sup> For Ruttmann, who had famously turned away from abstract animation with the documentary *Berlin – Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (1927), the quest for pure, autonomous aesthetics reactivated the very ideology of *l'art pour l'art* "from which film had just released us."<sup>346</sup> Shortly thereafter, in a review of the *Gesellschaft's* screening of abstract films in Frankfurt, Siegfried Kracauer argued that the non-narrative, nonobjective works of Eggeling, Richter, and others—"seemingly born from the spirit of film itself"—helped envisage new possibilities in cinematic language, but remained empty and meaningless insofar as they lacked relation to reality.<sup>347</sup> At the *Congrès international du cinéma indépendant* the following year in La Sarraz, Béla Balázs emphasized the social role of independent cinema, while Richter defended films that remained abstract and incomprehensible.<sup>348</sup> In *Der Geist des Films* (1930), Balázs would further pursue his critique, characterizing abstract cinema as "an aesthetic escape from the obligations of reality," especially during a period of open class struggle.<sup>349</sup>

#### IV.

While *Rhythmus 21* and other absolute films challenged routinized modes of visual representation and sensorial engagement, Richter's theoretical writings of the Weimar era condemned prevailing art-historical methods. The aforementioned text by Richter, "Geschichte ist das, was heute geschieht," was occasioned by the publication of Rudolf Kurtz's *Expressionismus und Film*, the first book-length study of Expressionist cinema. A writer, dramatist, and editor in chief of *Lichtbild-Bühne*, Kurtz surveyed Expressionism across the arts before focusing on the movement's extension to cinema, discussing six feature films by Robert Wiene, Karlheinz Martin, and Paul Leni as well as the absolute works of Eggeling, Richter, Ruttmann, and others. In an excerpt from the book printed alongside Richter's text in the April 1926 issue of *G* and accompanied by frames from Eggeling's *Diagonal-Symphonie*, Kurtz proclaimed the new art as that which does not passively accept and reproduce everyday life, but rather willfully creates and releases "forms of reality" according to a particular *Weltbild*.<sup>350</sup> Issuing an implicit critique of the *Einfühlungstheorie* and psychologism associated with German philosophers such as Robert Vischer and Theodor Lipps, Kurtz rejected the privileged role of empathy as an artistic means and a basis for knowledge of the existing world, placing emphasis instead on the constructive, volitional elements of the human spirit.<sup>351</sup>

Having already praised *Expressionismus und Film* in the prior issue of *G*,<sup>352</sup> Richter now looked to the book as a basis for reflecting more generally on the uses and disadvantages of history for “living art.”<sup>353</sup> For Richter, Kurtz’s book marked film’s appropriation by art history—a discipline, in his view, that was responsible for the “crudest nonsense of our age.”<sup>354</sup> Much as Kandinsky’s *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* had disparaged aesthetic theory as “the lamp which sheds light on the petrified ideas of yesterday and of the more distant past,”<sup>355</sup> Richter’s text described art history as an effort to lend retrospective meaning to movements that are now fixed and defunct, serving as “the inscription on gravestones.”<sup>356</sup> Heralding Kurtz’s book as the first trace of a “creative art history,” Richter proclaimed that “*history is what is happening today*,” and he contended that the past would only become meaningful again through the “profound and affirmative apprehension of the present.”<sup>357</sup> Furthermore, identifying historical reality as a construct rather than a matter of scientific factuality, he enjoined art historians to assume a standpoint, campaign for contemporary art, and signal unexplored creative paths.

Richter’s polemic took aim not only at a dry, objectivist antiquarianism, but also at the atomizing and relativizing effects of historicism, with its emphasis on the uniqueness of all sociocultural phenomena and values. Recalling the “Aufruf zur elementaren Kunst” (1921), in which Raoul Hausmann, Hans Arp, Ivan Puni, and László Moholy-Nagy had called for a regenerated art that expresses “the forces of an epoch” through formal elements that transcend the individual creator,<sup>358</sup> Richter argued that art history should serve as the “the history of the moving forces of the epoch” and should establish new aesthetic standards, rather than simply amassing biographies and drawing facile comparisons between figures.<sup>359</sup> Moreover, taking up the concept of the *Weltbild* theorized in the early twentieth century by Wilhelm Dilthey, Karl Jaspers, Max Weber, Martin Heidegger, and others,<sup>360</sup> Richter re-envisioned art history as “the creation of a unified world-image on a large scale — so that ‘history’ may render a world, a world core, for which art is its will and expression.”<sup>361</sup> For Richter, Kurtz’s study of Expressionist cinema was exemplary both in revealing coherent forces across all realms of human expression and in concerning itself with a *Weltbild* emerging in dynamic relation to contemporary art—a world-image in which film would also find its nature.

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Examining Richter’s abstract works of the 1920s, Malcolm Turvey has argued that the filmmaker allied himself not with a Nietzschean nihilism, but rather with the ideal of harmony espoused by Friedrich Schiller in *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795)—an argument that relies on a reductionist view of Nietzsche’s philosophy and shows insufficient regard for developments in intellectual history since Weimar Classicism.<sup>362</sup> In my analysis, Richter’s 1926 manifesto in fact had its most significant antecedents in Nietzsche’s early writings from half a century prior. Richter’s assertion, “The reality of history is not read off from the ‘facts’ but is instead — constructed,”<sup>363</sup> indeed recalls Nietzsche’s aesthetic critique of disinterested positivism in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872) as well as his perspectivist notion of historical reality as the interplay of finite, value-laden interpretations in texts such as *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinn* (1873). Furthermore, Richter’s call for a mode of history-writing in the service of contemporary art follows the vitalist attack on ascetic, antiquarian historiography in “Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben”

(1874), where Nietzsche—like later philosophers such as Benedetto Croce—sought to extricate natural-scientific approaches from the realm of human activity and contended that all engagement with the past is inseparable from present needs and interests.<sup>364</sup>

In critiquing standard historiographical practices, Richter draws as well from the methodological insights of prominent Central European art historians. Although Alois Riegl upheld Leopold von Ranke's emphasis on the uniqueness of every epoch, he followed Nietzsche in condemning historicism for stifling human creativity and for neglecting man's active role in interpreting the world according to his standpoint and desires.<sup>365</sup> For Riegl, art historians had adopted empirical and materialist approaches all too zealously in their reaction against Hegelian conceptualism, leading to a "cult of individual facts."<sup>366</sup> Returning to ideas from Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (1835), Riegl presented art as concurrent with a period's broader worldview, arguing in the conclusion to *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (1901) that each age has a single, dynamic *Kunstwollen* (artistic will), which not only governs "all four types of plastic art in the same measure," but is also "identical with the other main forms of expression of the human will."<sup>367</sup> A quarter-century later, Richter evoked the concept of the *Kunstwollen* in praising Kurtz's book for demonstrating "the existence of coherent, driving energies in film as well as in all areas of expression," and he also echoed Riegl in urging for a shift of focus from specific works or styles to broader unifying elements of art history.<sup>368</sup>

With his insistence that art history is not "the amassing of individual artists' biographies,"<sup>369</sup> Richter also adopted ideas set forth a decade earlier in Heinrich Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1915). In the Preface to the book's first edition, Wölfflin envisioned a mode of historiography that not only chronicles particular artists, but also traces more general developments in style and in pictorial form and imagination—or what he famously deemed an "art history without names."<sup>370</sup> Moving beyond examining the "personal style" of artists to also consider "*the style of the school, the country, the race*" to which they belonged, Wölfflin conceived artistic styles as expressions of individual, national, and epochal temperament, and he sought to direct attention to the possibilities of representational form available during particular periods, as well as historical changes in modes of vision or "imaginative beholding."<sup>371</sup> Richter's plea for the creation of new art-historical standards recalls Wölfflin's interest in establishing "standards by which the historical transformations (and the national types) can be more exactly defined," and his dismissal of "*Geschmackskunstgeschichte*" (the art history of taste) resonates with Wölfflin's claim that national differences in apprehension exceed "a mere question of taste" to convey "the whole *Weltbild* of a people."<sup>372</sup>

## V.

In identifying history with present-day action, Richter's manifesto gestures toward broader temporal dialectics inherent in the concept of modernity. As Hans Blumenberg writes in *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* (1966), "The modern age was the first and only age that understood itself as an epoch and, in so doing, simultaneously created the other epochs."<sup>373</sup> For Blumenberg, the invention of historical periods and its implied temporal discontinuities raised a problem of legitimacy, especially with regard to the discrepancy between modernity's "claim to carry out a radical break with tradition" and "the reality of history, which can never begin entirely anew."<sup>374</sup> Drawing from Blumenberg's work and Reinhart Koselleck's semantic history of *Neuzeit*, Peter Osborne argues in *The Politics of*

*Time* (1995) that modernity was novel as a periodizing category and a form of historical self-consciousness, defining itself solely in terms of temporal determinants and a sense of its qualitative newness.<sup>375</sup> In Osborne’s analysis, while modernity designates “the presentness of an epoch to the time of its classification,” it registers this contemporaneity according to “a qualitatively new, self-transcending temporality” that constantly differentiates the present from even the recent past, *neueste Geschichte* from *neuere Geschichte*—both of which are associated with the modern age more generally.<sup>376</sup>

A historical understanding of the present serves as one of the major distinguishing features of modern thought. Already in his “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?” (1784), Immanuel Kant emphasized that we are living not in “an enlightened age,” but rather in “an age of enlightenment.”<sup>377</sup> Despite their oft-discussed differences of opinion regarding both the legacy of Kant’s essay and the Enlightenment concept of reason, Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault commonly distinguished the text for its focus on the present as a particular object of interrogation and critique—or what Habermas termed the “philosophical discourse of modernity.”<sup>378</sup> For Foucault, Kant’s analysis of the Enlightenment was notable in its reflection on “‘today’ as difference in history and as motive for a particular philosophical task.”<sup>379</sup> Characterizing the essay’s mode of relation to contemporary reality as “the attitude of modernity,” Foucault located in it a novel set of questions: “What is happening today? What is happening now? And what is this ‘now’ within which all of us find ourselves; and who defines the moment at which I am writing?”<sup>380</sup> Such a reflexive manner of inquiry would also inform Foucault’s diagnostic project of “writing a history of the present,” as inspired by the genealogical methodology proposed by Nietzsche in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887).<sup>381</sup>

Philosophical investigations of the present have been accompanied by reflections on the very possibility of locating the “now” under scrutiny. In the “Sense-Certainty” section of *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), G. W. F. Hegel enacted a basic problem of indexicality: “The Now is pointed to; this Now, Now; it has already ceased to be in the act of being pointed to; the Now that is, is another than the one pointed to, and we see that the Now is just this, to be no more just when it is.”<sup>382</sup> Hegel thus highlighted the discrepancy between the time of indication and the time actually indicated; since the “now” ceaselessly shifts, the act of pointing is always belated or *nachträglich*, losing the “now” at the moment of pointing to it. Over a century later, Sigmund Freud took up this temporal paradox at the outset of *Die Zukunft einer Illusion* (1927), writing: “in general people experience their present naively, as it were, without being able to form an estimate of its contents; they have first to put themselves at a distance from it—the present, that is to say, must have become the past—before it can yield points of vantage from which to judge the future.”<sup>383</sup> Such forms of historical and epistemological displacement also figure in Giorgio Agamben’s recent essay, “What is the Contemporary?” (2008)—a term he defines in terms of disjunction, anachronism, and a Nietzschean untimeliness.<sup>384</sup>

Issues of contemporaneity and historical distance have also been central to modern aesthetic theory. In his lectures on fine art, Hegel prescribed a relationship of immediate identity between the individual and the worldview of his period, as well as between the work of art and the *Volksgeist*: “just as every man is a child of his time in every activity, whether political, religious, or scientific, and just as he has the task of

bringing out the essential content and the therefore necessary form of that time, so it is the vocation of art to find for the spirit of a people the artistic expression corresponding to it.”<sup>385</sup> While, for Hegel, the frequent use of materials from past epochs allowed for a degree of generalization requisite for all art, it also raised the prospect of a lack of both intelligibility and “living and contemporary interest” for the public.<sup>386</sup> Mediating between a faithful, self-effacing antiquarianism and a subjectivist presentism—positions that he identified with Germany and France, respectively—Hegel advocated a third mode of artistic portrayal, wherein a direct connection is established between past and current circumstances: “History is only ours when it belongs to the nation to which we belong, or when we can look on the present in general as a consequence of a chain of events in which the characters or deeds represented form an essential link.”<sup>387</sup>

Hegel’s critique of historical representation would be radicalized in the subsequent decades, when works of art were increasingly defined by their novelty and ability to capture characteristic aspects of the current era.<sup>388</sup> In “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863), Baudelaire argued that the present serves as a source of pleasure not only for its potential beauty, but also for “its essential quality of being present.”<sup>389</sup> For Baudelaire, the feature of “modernity” was lacking from the works of many contemporary artists, who tended to cover their subjects in historical façades, thereby sacrificing the originality deriving from “the seal which Time imprints on our sensations.”<sup>390</sup> Although, as Paul de Man later noted, Baudelaire’s call for “the representation of the present”<sup>391</sup> was blatantly paradoxical, “opening perspectives of distance and difference within the apparently uniqueness of the instant,”<sup>392</sup> the demand for contemporaneity would nonetheless pervade modernist aesthetic discourse, whether in the motto of the Vienna Secession, “To every age its art, to every art its freedom” (*Der Zeit ihre Kunst. Der Kunst ihre Freiheit.*); Kandinsky’s claim that “each period of culture produces an art of its own”<sup>393</sup>; Walter Gropius’ proclamation that “the new age demands its own expression”<sup>394</sup>; or Moholy-Nagy’s insistence in *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (1925) that “we, the creators of our own time, should go to work with up-to-date means.”<sup>395</sup>

While the criterion of contemporaneity was thus applied across the arts, it was the medium of film that bore the greatest promise of temporal immediacy for many theorists. The 1916 Futurist cinema manifesto by F. T. Marinetti, Bruno Corra, Arnaldo Ginna, and others celebrated film for its capacities, inter alia, to “endow intelligence with a prodigious sense of simultaneity and omnipresence” as well as to “attain the *polyexpressiveness* toward which all the most modern artistic researches are moving.”<sup>396</sup> Much as the Futurists contended that cinema would thereby supplant print media, Béla Balázs argued in *Der sichtbare Mensch* (1924) that the filmic image—existing “only in the present”—allows for forms of simultaneous harmony and polyphony, whereas language remains invariably linear and sequential.<sup>397</sup> Four decades later, in “On the Impression of Reality in the Cinema” (1965), Christian Metz built on the media-theoretical writings of André Bazin and Roland Barthes, distinguishing motion pictures from still photography in that “the spectator always sees movement as being present (even if it duplicates a past movement).”<sup>398</sup> Although, as Mary Ann Doane notes in *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* (2002), film’s sense of instantaneity is nonetheless unstable on account of its historicity and ability to be archived,<sup>399</sup> early abstract works

such as *Rhythmus 21* arguably marked a limit-case in the modernist attempt to achieve a temporality of pure presence, ostensibly eliminating all indexical traces of the past.

## VI.

Insofar as Richter's film sought to lend expression to "the forces of modern and tangible present-day life, brought into their simplest form,"<sup>400</sup> as Rudolf Kurtz wrote in 1926, this mode of contemporaneity was ironically at odds with temporal concepts emerging concurrently in the discipline of art history. Published the same year as Kurtz's *Expressionismus und Film*, Wilhelm Pinder's *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas* invoked a "non-simultaneity of the simultaneous" (*Ungleichzeitigkeit des Gleichzeitigen*) arising from the co-presence of varying generations, each with its separate tasks and goals.<sup>401</sup> In a pointed critique of Heinrich Wölfflin's work,<sup>402</sup> Pinder argued that stylistic differences between coexisting generations could not be grasped according to an "art history without names"—a concept, he claimed, that relied on a one-dimensional view of time periods and a facile, uniserial mode of ordering works of art. Dismissing the common assumption of a "'homogeneous time' with its unitary 'progress,'" Pinder characterized historical reality instead as multilayered and polyphonic, contending that "there is no simple 'present' at all, since every historical 'moment' is experienced by people with their *own*, widely varying sense of historical duration and means something different for everyone—even a *different time!*"<sup>403</sup> In these regards, as Frederic J. Schwartz has observed, Pinder's book not only contributed to methodological debates within art history during the Weimar era, but also responded to the crisis of historicism diagnosed across the *Geisteswissenschaften* (human sciences), challenging the historicist postulate of a coherent and unilinear temporal flow.<sup>404</sup>

One year following the publication of Pinder's book, Erwin Panofsky would also question the tenability of chronological time as a means of dating artworks and of forging connections between stylistic and broader historical developments. In the appendix to his 1927 article, "Über die vier Meister von Reims," Panofsky departed from his more immediate concern with the order of architectural work on the Reims Cathedral to consider the limitations of marking stylistic changes in art through diachronic series: "One may ask whether it makes any sense at all to assimilate art historical observations into a temporal course of events, given the circumstances in which contemporary works are stylistically so disparate that they appear to have been created at different times."<sup>405</sup> Dismissively alluding to Pinder's book, Panofsky recast its subject in broader terms drawn from Georg Simmel's 1916 essay, "Das Problem der historischen Zeit,"<sup>406</sup> remarking, "the problem of generations is really just a specific instance of historical time, and not even the most important one at that."<sup>407</sup> Furthermore, adopting neo-Kantian categories from Ernst Cassirer's writings, Panofsky distinguished between cultural and natural time, and between historical and geographical space, arguing for the interdependence of these coordinates in constituting various frames of reference and, more generally, in lending artistic phenomena a continuous order and "unity of meaning."<sup>408</sup>

While the sociologist Karl Mannheim included a discussion of Pinder's book in his important 1928 essay on issues of generation,<sup>409</sup> it was Ernst Bloch who would most famously expand the concept of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* into a theory of modern culture with

*Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (1935). Diverging from Pinder, who had advanced a biologically determinist notion of entelechy and became an early supporter of the National Socialist regime, Bloch repurposed the idea of non-simultaneity within a historical-materialist analysis of the ascendance of fascist politics in Germany. In a central chapter entitled “Non-contemporaneity and Obligation to Its Dialectic” (dated May 1932), Bloch highlighted the persistence of an unresolved past, writing, “Not all people exist in the same Now. They do so only externally, through the fact that they can be seen today. But they are thereby not yet living at the same time with the others. They rather carry an earlier element with them; this interferes.”<sup>410</sup> For Bloch, such forms of non-synchronicity emerged along lines of location, class, and age, and resulted from the uneven rate of change in and across different societal realms—or what Karl Marx, in the introduction to *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (1859), had called the “unequal development of material production and, e.g., that of art.”<sup>411</sup> Nonetheless distinguishing Bloch’s theory of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* from historical dialectics in the Hegelian-Marxist tradition, Martin Jay has emphasized that the concept of myriad, often-contradictory temporalities eschews a single, progressive narrative as well as the promise of ultimate coherence.<sup>412</sup>



That the concept of non-simultaneity was also theorized outside the German-speaking world in the interwar period is indicated by French art historian Henri Focillon’s 1934 book, *The Life of Forms in Art*. In the chapter “Forms in the Realm of Time,” Focillon argued that the chronological organization of time not only lends a quasi-mystical power to units of measurement such as the century, but also ascribes a presumed harmony to single dates, thereby homogenizing a vast array of actions and places as well as obfuscating the reality of history as “a conflict among what is precocious, actual or merely delayed.”<sup>413</sup> Whereas Hippolyte Taine had postulated an inherent connection between various sociocultural spheres, famously invoking static, determinist ideas of “*race, milieu et moment*,”<sup>414</sup> Focillon differentiated between the evolution of artistic forms and phenomena in other domains of human endeavor: “From the fact that various modes of action are contemporaneous, [...] it does not follow that they all stand at an equal point in their development. At the same date, politics, economics and art do not occupy identical positions on their respective graphs, and the line joining them at any one given moment is more often than not a very irregular and sinuous one.”<sup>415</sup> Thus characterizing historical time as disjointed and asynchronous, Focillon dismissed the presupposition that the artist is necessarily a contemporary of his era, defining every new work of art less as a part of an unbroken continuum than as an event or “phenomenon of rupture.”<sup>416</sup>

With the migration of European intellectuals to the United States in the 1930s, the idea of non-simultaneity would enter into American academic discourse. Two years after taking a position at the University of Iowa, Czech literary scholar René Wellek delivered a lecture, “The Parallelism between Literature and the Arts” (1941), in which he refuted the existence of a *Zeitgeist* that permeates and unifies the various arts during any given period. Challenging the methodologies of Wölfflin, Oswald Spengler, and other early-twentieth-century thinkers, Wellek argued that the arts evolve individually—“with a different tempo and a different internal structure of elements”—and that similarities in their development “take the form of an intricate pattern of coincidences and divergences rather than parallel lines.”<sup>417</sup> Two decades later, the American art historian George



Kubler, a former student of Focillon's at Yale University, would similarly question the postulate of a general sensibility shared by writers and artists within a particular sociohistorical context. In *The Shape of Time* (1962), Kubler envisaged the cross-section of every moment as "a mosaic of pieces in different developmental states, and of different ages, rather than a radial design conferring its meaning upon all the pieces."<sup>418</sup> Taking up Focillon's argument that the life of forms necessarily implies "the idea of *succession*,"<sup>419</sup> Kubler further contended that every work of art joins a chain of solutions to a specific problem; these sequences, he wrote, exist simultaneously across different form-classes and represent "independent systems of expression that may occasionally converge."<sup>420</sup>

Having received an advance copy of *The Shape of Time*, Erwin Panofsky immediately recommended the book to fellow German exile Siegfried Kracauer, who was preparing a new project on "some problems of history" in 1962.<sup>421</sup> In an essay of the following year, Kracauer applied Kubler's critique of artistic chronology to historiographical practice more generally, arguing that the occurrences of history might likewise be ordered according to sequences of phenomena in diverse areas:

history consists of events whose chronology tells us but little about their relationships and meanings. Since simultaneous events are more often than not intrinsically asynchronous, it makes no sense indeed to conceive of the historical process as a homogeneous flow. The image of that flow only veils the divergent times in which substantial sequences of historical events materialize. In referring to history, one should speak of the march of time rather than the "March of Time." Far from marching, calendric time is an empty vessel.<sup>422</sup>

Kracauer similarly emphasized the purely formal character of linear, chronological time in his posthumously published book, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (1969). Intervening in myriad debates in the philosophy of history, he used the concept of non-simultaneity to problematize not only the concept of the *Zeitgeist*, but also the "present-interest" theory of Benedetto Croce and R. G. Collingwood, who had identified the historian's contemporary standpoint as a decisive influence on his or her rendering of the past.<sup>423</sup> Extending the "basic aesthetic principle" from his *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1960),<sup>424</sup> Kracauer also drew an analogy between photographic media and modern historiography, citing the works of "the *avant-garde* film artists of the 'twenties" alongside stylized historical chronicles (e.g. Johan Huizinga's *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, 1919) as examples of an excessive stress on formative tendencies to the neglect of the "raw material" of the external world.<sup>425</sup>

## VII.

As I have argued, Richter's claims to a temporality of pure presence in his abstract films and theoretical writings of the 1920s marked a performative contradiction, drawing from a plethora of artistic and intellectual traditions in the very act of rejecting the past. Furthermore, in defining historiography as a chronicle of "the moving forces of the epoch,"<sup>426</sup> Richter assumed a notion of temporal coherence that was itself becoming *passé* in the interwar era, as art historians and philosophers increasingly rejected periodizing *topoi* that appeared to lend undue homogeneity, dialectical unity, and meaning to the historical process. Ironically, then, Richter's vision of an art history aligned with contemporary creative forces—one demonstrating "the existence of

coherent, driving energies in film as well as in all areas of human expression”<sup>427</sup> — appeared at a time when representatives of the discipline were beginning to postulate uneven, asynchronous developments in various domains. Theorizing the co-presence of multiple, often-competing temporalities, Pinder, Panofsky, Focillon, and others conceived of each moment as a palimpsest that resists assimilation into any general, synthesizing narrative.

The idea of non-simultaneity was nonetheless implicit in the self-positioning of Richter and other members of the avant-garde, who assumed the status of leaders and privileged witnesses of their own era. In their quest to express the spirit of the age, these artists and theorists recalled the discourse of Hegel, who had characterized every individual as “a *child of his time*” and thereby deduced his definition of philosophy as “*its own time comprehended in thoughts*.”<sup>428</sup> However, whereas Hegel had argued that man is unable to surpass his own moment without shifting from the sphere of reason to one of fanciful opinion, avant-gardistes claimed a temporal advantage, conceiving of contemporaneity less as a mode of co-presence with their time than as the paradoxical capacity to view the present already from the perspective of the future. By this logic, truly contemporary art could only gain wider appreciation *ex post facto*, and a history of “what is happening today” would be at once proleptic and retroactive; the *Gegenwartsgeschichte* espoused by Richter would be written not in the pretense tense, but rather in the future perfect, claiming that *this will have been our era*.

The avant-garde’s paradoxical rhetoric arguably symptomatized and responded to the crisis of historicism widely diagnosed in the Weimar era, at a time of diminished faith in the coherence and meaningfulness of the historical process. If, in Hamlet’s famous words, time seemed “out of joint” amidst both the specters of the past and a contested new political regime, the National Socialist Party would later seek to rectify this sense of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* through a systematic *Gleichschaltung* of all realms of German society, forcing Jewish artists and theorists such as Richter into the extraterritoriality of exile—a condition, as Kracauer wrote, in which one’s “life history is disrupted.”<sup>429</sup> Among the residual historical-philosophical questions since the interwar period is how to conceive the incommensurable temporalities and disjunctures within and across disparate realms of human endeavor at any given moment. The untenability of both simultaneity and non-simultaneity as conceptual bases for historical knowledge is an indication that the crisis of historicism remains unresolved, persisting into our own disjointed present.

## Natural History

*History can be considered from two sides,  
divided into the history of nature and the history of mankind.  
Yet there is no separating the two sides; as long as men exist,  
natural and human history will qualify each other.*  
—Karl Marx<sup>430</sup>

*Philosophical nature has to be regarded as history, and history as nature.*  
—Theodor W. Adorno<sup>431</sup>

Disputed since the publication of *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947), Siegfried Kracauer's argument that Weimar cinema reveals proto-fascist psychological dispositions is further problematized when films of "pre-Hitler Germany" are analyzed in relation to the crisis of historicism.<sup>432</sup> The nexus between fascism and historicism is indeed vexed and ambiguous, not least on account of the incongruous, often-contradictory meanings that the latter term has acquired from twentieth-century scholars and critics. If, as Friedrich Meinecke wrote in *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (1936), historicism challenged the presuppositions of natural law theory, emphasizing instead the individuality and historical variability of human phenomena,<sup>433</sup> then National Socialism represented a decidedly anti-historicist movement, especially insofar as it posited biological absolutes and sought to sublimate the concrete, dynamic particularities of historical reality into a mythical "Thousand-Year Reich." In *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957), by contrast, Karl Popper defined historicism as an effort to predict the course of human history through the identification of underlying patterns of development. For Popper, the Third Reich espoused "historicist superstitions," victimizing millions of lives through its totalitarian belief in "Inexorable Laws of Historical Destiny."<sup>434</sup>

At issue in these conflicting definitions of historicism is the relationship between natural and historical processes. Extending back to the early modern philosophy of René Descartes and Giambattista Vico and reconceived by Idealist philosophers including G. W. F. Hegel and F. W. J. Schelling, the distinction between nature and history—and, with it, between the natural sciences and humanities—would become a crucial point of contention in the interwar debates over historicism.<sup>435</sup> Taking up Wilhelm Dilthey's efforts to avert the threat of subjectivist relativism, Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (1927) attempted to reconcile nature and history by absolutizing historicity as the basic ontological structure of human existence. While Heidegger's work assumed a leading position within German philosophy of the late Weimar period,<sup>436</sup> Theodor W. Adorno contended that its apparent solution to the crisis of historicism merely transfigured history into an ontology—one insufficient in addressing historical contingencies and in interpreting specific empirical phenomena—and also remained trapped in tautologies, owing to its tacit preservation of Idealist elements. In a 1932 lecture to the Frankfurt chapter of the Kantgesellschaft, Adorno sought to overcome the traditional antithesis of nature and history through a dialectical concept of "natural history" (*Naturgeschichte*), emphasizing the two terms' "concrete unity" and "insuperable interwovenness."<sup>437</sup>

In this final chapter, I will revisit one of the genres most notoriously condemned by Kracauer in his "psychological history" of German cinema: the *Bergfilme* (mountain

films) pioneered by director Arnold Fanck in the 1920s. Whereas Kracauer interpreted these films as efforts to cope with the vicissitudes of postwar history by regressing into an anti-rationalist nature idolatry—or, in Eric Rentschler’s words, as “endeavors [...] to take flight from the troubled streets of modernity, from anomie and inflation, to escape into a pristine world of snow-covered peaks and overpowering elements”<sup>438</sup>—I will argue instead that they participated in rethinking the very dualism of nature and history during the Weimar era.<sup>439</sup> Furthermore, in contrast to more recent scholarship, which has problematized Kracauer’s teleological argument by *historicizing* mountain films with regard to gender relations, mass tourism, the aftermath of war, dance and body culture, and further contemporaneous discourses,<sup>440</sup> I will highlight the genre’s own contribution to the *critique of historicism* in the early/mid-twentieth century. The object of my analysis will be Fanck’s *Der heilige Berg* (The Holy Mountain, 1926)—a film, I will contend, that reformulated the relationship between nature and history by tracing the destructive interaction of opposing, ultimately irreconcilable human figures and natural forces, thus suggesting a vision of what Adorno would later call “negative dialectics.”

• • •

Among the central issues in scholarship on the *Bergfilm* are the genre’s political allegiances and its ideological positions vis-à-vis aspects of the modern epoch. Insofar as mountain films signal a rejection of bourgeois society and convention, a restored sense of community and *Heimat*, as well as autochthonous rootedness in a vital, natural landscape, they appear to react against modern forms of disenchantment and alienation, evincing key tropes of the “conservative revolution”—a phrase popularized by Hugo von Hofmannsthal in his 1927 speech, “Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation,” and since used by scholars to describe a movement of right-wing, nationalist opposition to the Weimar Republic.<sup>441</sup> In an influential study of conservative-revolutionary German thinkers including Hans Freyer, Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, Werner Sombart, and Oswald Spengler, Jeffrey Herf observes that their repudiation of Enlightenment rationality was paradoxically coupled with an enthusiasm for modern technology. Describing this ideological current as “reactionary modernism,” Herf argues that it laid the foundation for the National Socialist regime’s efforts to forge a cultural synthesis of spiritual *Innerlichkeit* with advanced *Technik*, or what Thomas Mann characterized as “a highly technological romanticism.”<sup>442</sup> Moreover, critiquing Max Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1944) for its overgeneralized account of the Enlightenment and the rise of fascism, Herf stresses the specificity of the German context as the site of a weak liberal-democratic tradition and rapid industrial modernization.

Herf’s study has been subjected to extensive critique, especially with regard to the temporal problematics of the author’s central terms of analysis. For Andrew Hewitt, Herf’s opening claim—“There is no such thing as modernity in general. There are only national societies, each of which becomes modern in its own fashion”—is itself paradoxical, ridding “modernity” of its overall meaning while maintaining that the category is lent specific inflections.<sup>443</sup> Peter Osborne further contends that “reactionary modernism” should not be regarded as the conjunction of contradictory stances, as Herf suggests, but rather as an “*integral* form of modernism in its own right.”<sup>444</sup> Whereas Herf associates “modernism” with industrial technology and the aesthetic vanguard, Osborne argues that “reactionary” political forms such as fascism should also be identified with a revolutionary and fundamentally modernist temporality—one that pushes toward a

radically new state of affairs while imagining it as a form of mythical return, conservation, or recovery.<sup>445</sup> Finally, Anson Rabinbach faults Herf's study for obscuring National Socialism's distinct phases, eclectic cultural sources, and competing powers and ideological positions. In Rabinbach's view, while Herf seeks to offer a more differentiated account of German fascism than Horkheimer and Adorno, he nonetheless conveys a monolithic conception of the Nazi discourse on technology, focusing solely on a modernist lineage that was in fact quickly marginalized in the 1930s.<sup>446</sup>

Although excluded from consideration in Herf's study, the medium of film was a key locus of ambivalence regarding modern technology in early-twentieth-century intellectual debates. As Katharina Loew has demonstrated, theoretical writings on the artistic possibilities of cinema were underpinned by an effort to reconcile the technologically based medium with established aesthetic categories, especially from the domain of German Idealism.<sup>447</sup> The paradoxes of this "technoromantic" discourse are evident already in the opening title card of Fanck's *Der heilige Berg*:

The well-known sportspeople who participated in the film *The Holy Mountain* ask the audience not to mistake their achievements for photographic tricks, to which they would not stoop. All outdoor shots were really filmed in the mountains—and indeed in the most beautiful regions of the Alps—over one and a half years of work. German, Norwegian, and Austrian master skiers took part in the big ski race. The screenplay for this timeless and placeless narrative, which is set in the mountains, emerged from real experiences during a twenty-year existence in the highlands.<sup>448</sup>

Articulating what might be called a 'cinematic jargon of authenticity,' this prefatory text claims multiple forms of realism for the film, whether the established mountaineers and skiers, their genuine athletic feats, the location shooting, or the screenplay's basis in actual experience. In emphasizing the extended duration of the filming process and of prior residence in the Alps, the title card further suggests an artisanal, non-alienated mode of labor as well as close familiarity with the natural landscape—forms of production and existence that are arguably at odds with a quintessentially modern medium. Through the disavowal of "photographic tricks," the text also implicitly acknowledges the medium's capacities for visual deception through professional actors, special effects, and studio sets. Not only do cinema's aesthetic and technological possibilities thus challenge the very criterion of authenticity to which the title card appeals; they also threaten to exceed viewers' sensory faculty and power of cognitive judgment, such that film adopts the quality of the sublime from the realm of primary nature that it represents.

Fanck's repudiation of "photographic tricks" is notably belied by his film's prominent use of state-of-the-art techniques that both distort the natural flow of time and afford novel views of the human body and its organic environment. While, as recent commentators have emphasized, the *mise en scène* of Fanck's *Bergfilme* contains numerous "signifiers of social, technological, and economic modernization" (e.g. tourists, resort hotels, automobiles, sporting equipment and events),<sup>449</sup> the films' modernism should also be discerned on the level of aesthetic and narrative form. Beyond Fanck's well-known interest in new camera models, film stock, and lenses, as well as his innovations in filmmaking such as mounting cameras to downhill skiers, this modernism is perhaps most evident in *Der heilige Berg* with regard to montage. Fanck deploys a plethora of editing techniques (e.g., slow-motion shots of *Ausdruckstanz* and of gravity-

defying ski jumps; time-lapse photography of cloud formations), which offer manageable images of processes whose actual duration defies human capacities for acute observation. Moreover, his film compacts its main narrative arc into the events of a single day and often disregards sequential chronology—particularly through subjective flashbacks and visions, superimpositions, parallel and overlapping editing, jump cuts, a narratively unintegrated prelude, as well as many attractions (e.g., dance performances, a ski race) that arrest the story’s forward motion.<sup>450</sup> Rupturing and reconfiguring the natural unfolding of time, these cinematic devices and elements suggest modernist temporalities of acceleration, deceleration, disjuncture, repetition, reversal, and simultaneity.

Insofar as the film thus evokes both long-term, unbroken rootedness in the landscape and a proliferation of non-linear temporalities, it adopts a highly ambivalent relationship to the realm of human experience. Subtitled “A dramatic poem in images from nature,” the film signals this equivocal stance already in the opening title card, identifying the sites and length of production while also untethering the narrative from specific spatiotemporal coordinates (“ort- und zeitlos”). This internal schism would factor into the divided reception of the *Bergfilm* genre, with critics increasingly distinguishing between magnificent documentary images of nature and inane fictional storylines, between authentic, open-air locations and highly contrived, derivative scenarios.<sup>451</sup> Recalling debates among Romantic landscape painters as well as issues in early film theory on the role of narrative and the proper mode of engagement with the external world (e.g., Hermann Häfker’s prioritization of “grand images of nature,” Germaine Dulac’s concept of “*histoire naturelle*,” Béla Balázs’ call for the “stylization of nature”),<sup>452</sup> these dual tendencies would be famously characterized by Siegfried Kracauer as “realistic” and “formative” in his *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1960).<sup>453</sup> In Fanck’s own writings of the Weimar period, the director adopted both positions—claiming “to show nature just as it is [...] with the greatest possible degree of reality and vitality”<sup>454</sup> while also disavowing the task of cinema as that of reproducing the phenomena of the physical world without creative *Gestaltung* or artistic intervention.

Finally, although the opening title card abstracts the narrative from the sphere of historical reality into a realm of fairy tale or myth, the film draws generously from a broad range of aesthetic traditions and cultural sources, revealing a historicist eclecticism. Named after the figure in Plato’s *Symposium* and Friedrich Hölderlin’s *Hyperion*, the female protagonist, Diotima (played by Leni Riefenstahl), performs dances whose titles and gestural vocabulary evoke Friedrich Schiller’s *Hymne an die Freude* and Fidus’ paintings and illustrations (e.g., *Lichtgebet*).<sup>455</sup> By contrast, the leading male figure (Luis Trenker), a solitary mountain-dweller called “The Friend,” bears affinities with Friedrich Nietzsche’s Zarathustra and the figure of Parzifal from both Wolfram von Eschenbach’s epic poem and Richard Wagner’s opera.<sup>456</sup> The narrative spaces also display a vast array of visual and architectural styles: the Grand Hotel contains Grecian stone columns and modernist elements; images of the natural landscape recall the works of Romantic painters including Carl Gustav Carus, Caspar David Friedrich, Joseph Anton Koch, Ludwig Richter, and Philipp Otto Runge; a torch-lit rescue party resembles abstract films of the Weimar period; and, lastly, the vision of a Gothic “ice cathedral” suggests the Expressionist designs of German architects such as Wassili Luckhardt, Hans Poelzig, and Bruno Taut.<sup>457</sup> With its range of sources—classical, Teutonic, Christian, Romantic, modernist—the film thus complicates Herf’s argument about the conjunction of anti-

rational and technophilic positions in the Weimar and Nazi periods, revealing a more complex, profound heterogeneity at play in interwar German culture.<sup>458</sup>

Despite their claims to an eternal, unchanging landscape, Fanck's *Bergfilme* activated a dialectic between technology and the perception of nature, furthering a centuries-long reappraisal of the Alpine peaks. If, as Simon Schama has argued, mountains gradually shifted in signification during the early modern period from foreboding, accursed sites to exemplars of holy nature, giving rise to the tradition of *sacri monti* in northern Italy, these dual connotations would nonetheless extend into subsequent centuries.<sup>459</sup> While Albrecht von Haller ("Die Alpen," 1732) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*La Nouvelle Héloïse*, 1761) attributed to the Alps a state of liberty, virtue, and natural grace,<sup>460</sup> another intellectual lineage—inaugurated by John Dennis, Edmund Burke, and Immanuel Kant—presented a sublime vision of the high mountains, which provoked what Kant characterized as "horror," "awesome shudder," and an "astonishment bordering on terror."<sup>461</sup> Romantic artists and writers combined these two discursive strands in their reaction against Enlightenment rationality and the industrial revolution, conceiving Alpine travel as both a healthy, regenerative escape from urban civilization and an overwhelming, liminal experience. Whereas Roland Barthes would associate the "Alpine myth" with the nineteenth century, one could thus argue that the overdetermination of physical, moral, and spiritual elements—the "hybrid compound of the cult of nature and of puritanism"<sup>462</sup>—can be traced to the very advent of modernity.

Petrarch's ascent of Mont Ventoux in 1336 had already pointed forward to the modern epoch, as Hans Blumenberg contended in *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* (1966), especially insofar as the Italian poet and scholar was motivated by visual curiosity, i.e., "the desire to see the unusual altitude of this place."<sup>463</sup> Nevertheless, mankind's experience of the Alps would adopt novel features in the mid-/late nineteenth century, when sports offered the sensation not only of height, but also of movement and speed. Aside from mountain climbing, which was popularized through societies such as the Deutscher Alpenverein (founded in 1869), skiing was introduced from Scandinavia into Central Europe, precipitating competitive athletic events, year-round commercial activity, and expanded railway transport.<sup>464</sup> Promising both pristine nature and luxurious adventure, alpine travel marked a Romantic quest for an elemental, unsullied landscape while also contributing to the transformation and destruction of that very setting; it paradoxically served as a mode of refuge from the demands of bourgeois existence and a symbol of one's educational and class status. In this regard, alpinism exemplified the dialectics of tourism theorized by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, according to which relief from the conditions of industrial capitalism is produced in commodity form.<sup>465</sup>

Alpinism expanded into a mass phenomenon by the early twentieth century, when interest in the mountains reached new peaks. Apart from canonical works such as Richard Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie* (1915) and Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924), the Alps also figured prominently in popular culture through the *Heimat* literature of Friedrich Lienhard and Ludwig Ganghofer, as well as the mountain novels of Theodor Mayer, Karl Springenschmid, and Gustav Renker, whose *Heilige Berge: Ein Alpenroman* appeared in 1921. While representations of the Alps proliferated in illustrated magazines, travel brochures, exhibitions, and other visual media, films such as Fanck's two-part *Das Wunder des Schneeschuhs* (1920/22) distinguished themselves through their dynamism

and ability to bring viewers to spaces previously out of reach to cinematic technology.<sup>466</sup> Alongside mass tourism, visual representations increasingly threatened the Alps with vulgarization, especially insofar as the region had offered solitude (*Bergeinsamkeit*), detachment from society, and a privileged, elevated perspective (most notably in Nietzsche's writings).<sup>467</sup> Whereas Georg Simmel's "Alpenreisen" (1895) had identified railway transport with the democratization of travel—and, with it, the "wholesale opening up and enjoyment of nature"<sup>468</sup>—Ernst Bloch asked in 1930 whether the Alps had been irrevocably debased from the sublime to trivial, picture-postcard kitsch on account of their wide accessibility and overfamiliarity through photographic technology.<sup>469</sup>

In this regard, the Alps became a locus for contemplating the loss of "aura"—a term Walter Benjamin famously defined in relation to the mountain landscape in "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" (1936). Distinct from Nietzsche, who had conceived the nimbus around Sils Maria in terms of its place "6,000 feet above sea level and much higher above all human things,"<sup>470</sup> Benjamin characterized "aura" as the appearance of distance on a horizontal plane, as when one follows "with the eye—while resting on a summer afternoon—a mountain range on the horizon."<sup>471</sup> For Benjamin, this perceived distance was eliminated in the modern era through the demand for proximity and the relinquishment of uniqueness, as facilitated by technologically based, reproducible media such as film. Insofar as *Bergfilme* rendered the Alps accessible to the masses while also upholding Romantic conceptions of nature, they anticipated Benjamin's critique of fascism in his "Artwork" essay as well as earlier texts.<sup>472</sup> Writing on Ernst Jünger's *Krieg und Krieger* (1930), Benjamin argued that the cataclysm of World War One had indicated society's inability to integrate technology into existing relations. For Benjamin, the writings of Jünger and other nationalist, proto-fascist thinkers represented an anachronistic approach to technology, as symptomatized by their portrayal of the war-ridden landscape through the lens of Idealism, glorification and mystification of death, and invocations of the "heroic," "eternal," and "primeval."<sup>473</sup> While such traits can undoubtedly be found in Fanck's films, it bears emphasis that progressive critics of the Weimar era expressed enthusiasm for his work, focusing precisely on the dialectic of nature and technology.

Reviewing films for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* beginning in 1921, Kracauer initially celebrated Fanck's work for offering new perspectives of nature and for expanding and contracting the natural flow of time. In one of his earliest reviews, Kracauer praised Fanck's *Das Wunder des Schneeschuhs* (1920), writing: "In images of rare beauty, it reveals to the viewer the wonders of the wintery high mountains, which are only immediately accessible to the experienced alpinist and skier."<sup>474</sup> Four years later, Kracauer again waxed lyrical about the "glorious images of nature" in Fanck's *Der Berg des Schicksals* (1924), focusing in particular on the film's fast-motion shots of cloud formations: "Faster than in reality, they rush by and dissipate, cheated of their duration by the time lapse. [...] Their curious allure derives above all from the fact that processes requiring many hours to unfold in nature are here presented in a few minutes. The cloud events concentrate and the distortion of time produces an enchanting optical intoxication."<sup>475</sup> Although *Der heilige Berg* still drew the critic's praise for its nature cinematography, the work as a whole was dismissed as "a gigantic composition of body culture fantasies, imbecilic sun idolatry, and cosmic babble."<sup>476</sup> For Kracauer, Fanck's films now seemed to participate in a vague, sentimental nature worship rather than



showcasing the medium's capacities to unmask a reified social order—or, as he wrote in his famous “Photography” essay of 1927, “to stir up the elements of nature.”<sup>477</sup>

This shift in Kracauer's thinking should be attributed not only to the increasing prominence of narrative elements in Fanck's mountain films, but also, as Miriam Hansen argues, to the theorist's increasingly negative conception of nature, which he posited against reason and truth in texts such as “Das Ornament der Masse” (1927).<sup>478</sup> Whereas Kracauer viewed vernacular imagery of the Alps as retreating from contemporary crises into a seemingly unmediated, ahistorical nature, however, fellow film critic and theorist Béla Balázs (and later screenwriter of Riefenstahl's mountain film, *Das blaue Licht* [1932]) insisted on the importance of recovering a romantic “feeling for nature” for a progressive politics, especially at a time of fierce social struggle.<sup>479</sup> In his foreword to the illustrated book accompanying Fanck's *Stürme über dem Montblanc* (1930), Balázs defended Fanck's mountain films against common reproaches, especially the mixture of “grand images of his mountain world” and “stories of petty human destinies,” the latter of which appeared artificial, kitschy, and outlandish.<sup>480</sup> Problematizing the dichotomy upon which this critique was founded, Balázs adopted a more dialectical approach, arguing that natural forces could only gain grandeur in relation to individual figures, and mountains became “dramatic elements” or “living beings” when mediated through human experience.<sup>481</sup> In this regard, Balázs' defense of Fanck recalled his theorization of landscape in *Der sichtbare Mensch* (1924), where he had similarly suggested a dynamic interplay between natural environments and dramatic action onscreen.<sup>482</sup>

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Balázs' theorization of the dialectic between grand mountains and individual characters can also be viewed in relation to early-twentieth-century philosophical writings. In his 1911 essay, “Die Alpen,” Georg Simmel emphasized the salience of scale in aesthetic impressions, positing a spectrum extending from the Alps to the human form.<sup>483</sup> Whereas the human body's familiarity allows it to be represented in a wide variety of sizes within works of art, the aesthetic value of the Alps, Simmel suggested, is inextricably linked to their natural dimensions. Repurposing categories from Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (1907), Simmel wrote that the mountain landscape marks a form of abstraction from the ceaseless temporal flux of life, in contrast to the sea's mode of empathy and mediation. Much as Simmel had likened the sea to mankind's inner existence in his 1895 essay on the Alps—especially through the “purposeless *circulus vitiosus* of its movement”—he here defined water as a symbol of life in its eternal, restless motion.<sup>484</sup> With their chaotic, diffuse limitlessness, however, the Alps serve as a paradoxical exception to the use of juxtaposition to establish spatial relations; for Simmel, the mountains' true, sublime height only comes into view when unconditioned by life below, gesturing instead to a transcendent absolute.

That same year, Simmel also explored the concepts of the relative and the absolute in an essay on the problem of gender. Arguing that the meaning and value of all elements are only comprehensible in their relationships to one another, Simmel identified the basic form of relativity in human life as that of masculinity and femininity—a form wherein the male element had nonetheless become dominant, claiming the status of the absolute, objective, and universally human. While, in Simmel's analysis, man determines the cultural norms and claims an unmarked, generally valid position in society, his hegemony comes at the price of a split between reality and idea, practical limitation and

infinite striving, and recognition of autonomous existence and a will towards formation and interpenetration. In this regard, man is paradoxically more relativistic than woman, who—despite being relegated to the realm of specificity—remains unified and identical with the basis of life itself, bearing a “self-contained completeness.”<sup>485</sup> Perpetuating Otto Weininger’s notorious view of women as non-differentiated beings, Simmel associated them not with the current era, however, but rather with the transcendence of the modern fragmentation of subject and object, means and ends, and higher and lower.<sup>486</sup>

Taking up Simmel’s philosophical concerns, Fanck’s film is structured around the opposition between the mountains and sea, articulating this geological distinction in gendered terms. Opening with an image in which a snowy mountain range is superimposed onto an endless body of water (an image that reappears twice in the prelude as well as at the film’s conclusion), *Der heilige Berg* considers the possibility of uniting or ‘wedding’ the two natural elements, here also serving as metaphors for man and woman. Perched on a cliff like Lorelei of German folklore or the Sirens of Greek mythology,<sup>487</sup> Diotima—at home “where the rock descends steeply and defiantly into the surf”—gazes onto the sea, characterized as “her love, wild and boundless.” First depicted in low-angle silhouette against the clouds, the Friend stands atop a pointed spire and is identified as the object of Diotima’s longing (“him, whom she saw atop the highest mountain peak, as if in a dream”). This opposition of both gendered bodies and natural topoi pervades the film’s visual and narrative features, most explicitly as the mother figure (Frida Richard) prophetically asserts, “The sea and the stone will never wed.” Throughout, the film hints that water erodes and even destroys the banks, threatening the masculinized terrain with ruination.<sup>488</sup> Juxtaposing solid rock formations with a dynamic, fluid femininity, the film recalls postwar German “male fantasies,” which, as Klaus Theweleit observes, were “consistently organized around the sharp contrast between summit and valley, height and depth, towering and streaming.”<sup>489</sup>

While the film registers nineteenth-century modes of engagement with the Alps, as projected onto the two male protagonists—the solitary, romantic alpinist (the Friend) and the competitive skier (Vigo)—it also differentiates between mountain climbing and dancing as gendered forms of activity and modes of relation to nature.<sup>490</sup> Identified as “the expression of her stormy soul,” Diotima’s dance in the opening sequence is depicted through slow-motion shots of her body against the rippling water as well as a pattern of cross-cutting between her corporeal gestures and the waves, whose movement she seems to conduct with her arms. (Released earlier that year in Germany, Sergei Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* begins with similar imagery of the tide hitting the shore, also with an original score by Edmund Meisel.)<sup>491</sup> Recalling the choreography of Mary Wigman and Isadora Duncan, Diotima’s “Tanz an das Meer” belongs to a broad repertoire of interwar dances in which the sea and waves figured prominently, including Rudolf von Laban’s “Die Geblendeten” (1922), Edith von Schrenck’s “Wellen” (1922), and Loie Fuller’s “La Mer” (1925).<sup>492</sup> By contrast, the Friend represents the cult of mountains in Romantic and modernist work, descending—like Nietzsche’s Zarathustra—from the remote alpine heights to join human society at sea level. His search for a perfect peak for his engagement to Diotima, as well as his final vision of their wedding in an “ice cathedral,” also evokes themes from the Parzifal legend, following Bruno Taut’s utopian vision of mountain chains as “landscapes of Grail-shrines” in his book *Alpine Architektur* (1919).<sup>493</sup>

The film considers these modes of gendered expression in terms of the aesthetic experience of the beautiful and the sublime. At the outset of the film's prologue, Diotima is seen in a soft-focus close-up, which—following Balázs' *Der sichtbare Mensch*—abstracts and dislocates her from spatiotemporal coordinates, opening an affective realm of what Gilles Deleuze would call “any space whatsoever.”<sup>494</sup> While the prologue presents her fantasy image of the Friend, the subsequent sequence tracks him and Vigo (Ernst Petersen)—introduced as “two friends from the mountains”—as they enter the Grand Hotel, encountering Diotima in multiple posters and onstage. Exceeding all aesthetic frames within this reflexive sequence of exhibition and spectatorship, Diotima enraptures the Friend with her appearance and dance performances, compelling him to retreat into the high mountains “in order to master the overpowering impression” (anticipating a later scene where his view of her with another man will provoke a similar flight to the peaks). Whereas Diotima thus initially appears as a sublime vision, she later views the mountains through her window as a domesticated aesthetic phenomenon, and enters the landscape as an outsider with a tourist perspective or even an ethnographic gaze.<sup>495</sup> During their initial conversation, Diotima identifies the peaks with beauty, while the Friend espouses a Nietzschean vision of the mountains as a site of sublime power, introspection, and self-overcoming.<sup>496</sup> The film will both validate and radicalize the Friend's response, tracing a shifting perception of nature from a youthful site of wonder and heroic action to a power that is far more ferocious, dangerous, and even life-threatening.

Finally, the film encodes its distinction between summit and sea in metaphors of sexuality, maternity, and birth. In *Die Traumdeutung* (1900), Sigmund Freud linked dream-images involving water to “intra-uterine life, or existence in the womb and the act of birth.”<sup>497</sup> (Climbing, by contrast, represented sexual intercourse, with the rock and mountain serving as phallic symbols.)<sup>498</sup> At once an erotic *femme fatale*, a maternal figure, and a religious icon (likened alternately to a “saint” or “Madonna”), Diotima agrees to let the young Vigo rest his head in her lap following his victory in a ski race, leading to a tragic misunderstanding with the Friend.<sup>499</sup> Ultimately surviving the two men as an enduring presence, Diotima once again stands atop a cliff overlooking the water at the film's conclusion, thus recalling Goethe's conception of the “Ewig-Weibliche” in Part Two of *Faust* (1832), in which Thales also proclaims: “All things have their beginning in water!! / Water sustains all things that exist; / may you, Oceanus, rule us forever!”<sup>500</sup> (In *Land und Meer* [1942], Carl Schmitt would similarly posit water and the sea as “the mysterious and primordial source of all life.”)<sup>501</sup> Reproducing essentialist visions of femininity, the film figures Diotima as an ahistorical, natural force—less, however, as “an immovable prehistoric boulder in the landscape of modernity,”<sup>502</sup> in Klaus Lichtblau's gloss on Simmel, than as what the film itself characterizes as the “the eternal sea.”

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Even as the film invokes the “eternal feminine,” however, it suggests the historicity and finitude of the gendered landscape, thereby participating in interwar debates on the bases of historicism. Criticizing Heidegger's essentialization of historicity as the fundamental structure of *Dasein*, Adorno's 1932 lecture posited the idea of *Naturgeschichte* as a means of overcoming the longstanding, Idealist dualism between the dynamic realm of history and a lawful, immutable nature.<sup>503</sup> For Adorno, nature and

history could be viewed as dialectically interrelated, revealing aspects of each other precisely where they appeared in their most pronounced form:

If the question of the relation of nature and history is to be seriously posed, then it only offers any chance of solution if it is possible to comprehend historical being in its most extreme historical determinacy, where it is most historical, as natural being, or if it were possible to comprehend nature as an historical being where it seems to rest most deeply in itself as nature.<sup>504</sup>

In attempting to reformulate the traditional antithesis of nature and history, Adorno drew from the ideas of two contemporaries: the Hegelian-Marxist concept of “second nature,” as deployed by Georg Lukács in *Die Theorie des Romans* (1916) to connote the naturalization of historical phenomena via processes of conventionalization and reification; and, conversely, the transience of nature, which Benjamin discerned in the baroque allegorical mode in his *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (1928).<sup>505</sup>

For Adorno, Benjamin’s recovery of the transitory, singular, and contingent aspects of nature not only served as a corrective to Heidegger’s response to the crisis of historicism, but also challenged Idealist conceptions of history. Adorno would elaborate on his idea of *Naturgeschichte* in the decades to come, whether in his 1933 habilitation on Kierkegaard or in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1944), where he and Horkheimer famously posited a dialectic of myth and reason.<sup>506</sup> In a chapter of *Negative Dialektik* (1966) entitled “Weltgeist und Naturgeschichte,” Adorno provided his most extensive treatment of the idea of natural history, refuting in particular the theodicean promise of inner coherence, unity, and a totality of meaning in Hegel’s philosophy of history.<sup>507</sup> For Adorno, Hegel had mythologized the historical process and absolutized domination, lending chance occurrences a sense of inexorable, fateful necessity and thereby justifying the current social order—tendencies, as Adorno argued, that were perpetuated by Heidegger, who equated history with an invariable, inescapable nature. Invoking the “irresistible decay” that Benjamin had recognized in the German *Trauerspiel*, Adorno sought to develop a critical, non-Idealist theory of history sensitive to the concrete, corporeal suffering brought about by material conditions.<sup>508</sup>

Despite its appeal to a ‘cinematic jargon of authenticity,’ *Der heilige Berg* arguably challenges the metaphysical presuppositions of both Idealism and existential ontology. Recalling Lukács’ and Benjamin’s early aesthetic writings, the film suggests a lost harmony between man and nature, with classical balance and universal totality giving way to catastrophe and ruinous fragmentation. This is particularly evident in the aforementioned scene in which the Friend discovers Diotima with another man, as represented by three shots of his recoil through jump cuts and overlapping editing, followed by images of a mountain exploding— notable violations of “classical” continuity editing in this melodrama of jealousy (*Eifersuchtsmelodram*). The Friend’s experience of traumatic shock instigates his maniacal quest to conquer the north face of Monte Santo, where Vigo will hang from a rope in climactic scenes of literal suspense. While these scenes uphold the association of the mountain landscape with chaos, horror, and violent calamity, they nonetheless extend the negative, pessimistic moment of the sublime; far from allowing for a unity of subject and object by means of reason, as per Kant’s philosophy, the confrontation with overwhelming nature in the film leaves open an abyss into which the two men ultimately fall. Like Richard Strauss’ *Eine Alpensinfonie*, Fanck’s film thus diverges in part from Idealist and Romantic conceptions of the

mountains, aligning itself less with the metaphysical sublime than with Nietzsche's characterizations of the Alps in terms of an earthly, non-transcendental nature.<sup>509</sup>

Whereas the film opens with Diotima's vision of a unification of water and high mountains, its denouement features the Friend's own fantasy of their marriage ceremony in an "ice cathedral."<sup>510</sup> (Both sequences include a tracking shot of cloud formations, which Kracauer would proleptically link to the opening sequence of Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens* [1935].)<sup>511</sup> A mountain-like Gothic cathedral, the "Eisdome" not only represents a sanctification of the alpine landscape, as Nancy Nenno has argued,<sup>512</sup> but also a conflation of first and second nature, as well as a synthesis or middle point between the elements of sea and stone (recalling Caspar David Friedrich's painting, *Das Eismeer*, where a frozen shipwreck appears in the form of large ice floes). With towering halls and giant icicles in place of stone columns, the cathedral features a Grail-like glowing altar, which shatters as Diotima and the Friend join hands in union, much like the mountain in the Friend's prior subjective vision. Marking the ultimate irreconcilability of both the two lovers and the natural elements, the film thus suggests an Adornian dialectics, with the interaction of conflicting forces culminating in negation rather than consummate affirmation. In this regard, the film notably rejects Hölderlin's concept of a beauty that synthesizes opposites and unites lovers in divine, endless communion. While Diotima in *Hyperion* exerted a harmonizing influence, the female protagonist of Fanck's film instead leads the Friend to deadly extremes, radicalizing Hölderlin's emphasis on the fragility and potential destructibility of the bond between man and woman.<sup>513</sup>

Suggesting a fundamental imbalance in the gender economy and natural order, the film nonetheless seeks to transcend these irresolvable tensions through myriad ideological claims. Fanck attributes socio-religious meanings and even an ethical dignity to the activity of mountaineering, which Georg Simmel had likened to gambling in its reckless, egoistic pleasures.<sup>514</sup> Furthermore, like Wagnerian Romanticism and later fascist doctrine, *Der heilige Berg* mystifies human mortality and ennobles self-sacrifice, suggesting a Christian vision of death as a means of redemption and also obscuring the senselessness of two men's untimely deaths within a credo of friendship and loyalty—a credo re-inscribed through the film's own dedication to Fanck's late friend, the mountain climber Hans Rhode.<sup>515</sup> While the opening titles emphasize the authentic physical exertion and suffering of the cast, even differentiating the "sportspeople" from the lone "actress" (Frida Richard) involved in the production,<sup>516</sup> the film depicts a world detached from labor and material considerations, ultimately invoking an "eternal sea" that "rolls tranquilly in long waves over people's anguish and aspiration" (recalling the Hölderlinian ideal of finding peace in nature). Insofar as the film presents a vision of exploding mountains while also positing nature as a timeless, recursive force—conceiving water's erosion of the mountain landscape as part of an "eternal cycle"—it equivocates between what Leo Löwenthal later called "apparent disorder and happenstance" and "the endless reproduction of natural phenomena, the cyclic order of nature."<sup>517</sup>

In these regards, Fanck's film adopts a highly ambivalent relationship to German historicism, which had threatened to dissolve absolute, eternal truths into a subjectivist relativism, provoking debates on the relationship between temporality and ontology, history and nature, during the Weimar era. Whereas Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* rendered these terms identical, seeking a moment before the split between subject and object, Adorno's 1932 lecture to the Frankfurt Kantgesellschaft conceived the antithetical

concept-pairs as mutually constitutive and chiasmatically intertwined. Scholarship that has associated *Der heilige Berg* and other mountain films with a flight from the contingencies of contemporary sociopolitical history into a timeless, mythical nature assumes an insufficiently dialectical conception of these terms, which—far from separate and discrete—were being jointly renegotiated during the interwar period. Departing from Idealist metaphysics, Fanck’s film rethought the relation between natural and historical elements, appealing to eternal forces while also suggesting the historical mutability of the Alpine landscape. The film’s very use of the extended metaphors of sea and stone implies a non-identity of concept and matter, rejecting Descartes’ ideal of a philosophical language articulated purely in clear, well-defined concepts—an ideal, as Hans Blumenberg argued, that would have rendered historicity “null and void.”<sup>518</sup>



The association of *Der heilige Berg* and the broader early-twentieth-century cult of mountains with proto-fascist psychological dispositions is also belied by the significance that the Alps later held in the works of many émigrés. Composed in Palestinian exile, Arnold Zweig’s *Dialektik der Alpen* (1940) used the history of the Alps as a metonym for European history, from the continent’s very beginnings to the Nazi era.<sup>519</sup> Having co-authored a similarly ambitious, historically sweeping account of the rise of fascism, Adorno returned from the United States to Germany following World War Two, taking yearly summer vacations with his wife Gretel in the Swiss Alps. Their preferred destination was the village of Sils Maria, where Nietzsche had written parts of *Also sprach Zarathustra* during his regular visits in the 1880s.<sup>520</sup> In “Aus Sils Maria” (1966), Adorno recounted his and Herbert Marcuse’s conversation with an elderly local salesman who had known Nietzsche as a child.<sup>521</sup> Three years later, Adorno would die in the Swiss mountains, suffering a heart attack during a summer respite.

The year 1969 also saw the posthumous publication of *History: The Last Things Before the Last*, the final book by Adorno’s longtime friend and fellow émigré, Siegfried Kracauer.<sup>522</sup> In the first chapter of his study, Kracauer addressed the relationship between human affairs and the events of nature, questioning whether the two are “equally amenable to the establishment of natural, or quasi-natural, laws.”<sup>523</sup> While human history—“the realm of contingencies, of new beginnings”<sup>524</sup>—is devoid of immutable forces and fixed patterns, as Kracauer argued, the sphere of nature is mostly unchanging and marked by long-term regularities. In thus distinguishing the field of history from the natural sciences, Kracauer issued a critique of the scientific worldview that had gained predominance in the prior century, following the shift away from broad-scale theological speculations and from the universalizing philosophies of history (e.g., Kant, Hegel) that had assumed an “invisible hand” at work in the historical process.

The opening chapter of Kracauer’s book not only reacted against nineteenth-century positivism (in the manner of Dilthey), however, but also presciently addressed the advent of a computer-based society, which seemed to threaten the sphere of human freedom, much like mass electronic surveillance today. Nevertheless, his claim that “natural causes will continue to produce their predicted effects for an indeterminate time”<sup>525</sup> appears outdated amidst widespread recognition of the effects of global warming and of the historicity of the natural environment—concerns that in fact emerged in the early twentieth century, not least in alpine societies.<sup>526</sup> As human influence on the Earth’s ecosystems becomes increasingly undeniable in the age of the “anthropocene,” the

distinction between natural and human history is problematized, as Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued.<sup>527</sup> Climate change is rendering the mutability of nature painfully apparent, compelling another return to basic questions of the philosophy of history.

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## Chapter One

<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Worringer, *Künstlerische Zeitfragen* (Munich, 1921), p. 16; quoted from Georg Lukács, “Expressionism: its Significance and Decline,” in *Essays on Realism*, ed. Rodney Livingstone, trans. David Fernbach (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm Hausenstein, “Die Kunst in diesem Augenblick,” *Der neue Merkur* (1919–1920), pp. 119–127; reprinted as “Art at this Moment,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 479.

<sup>3</sup> Leszek Kolakowski, *The Alienation of Reason: A History of Positivist Thought*, trans. Norbert Guterman (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1968), pp. 9–10. See also H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Albert Einstein, “On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies,” in *The Principle of Relativity*, trans. George Barker Jeffery and Wilfrid Perrett (New York: Dover, 1952), pp. 35–65. On Einstein, see also Peter Galison, “Einstein’s Clocks: The Place of Time,” in *Critical Inquiry* 26:2 (Winter 2000), pp. 355–389. On correspondences between positivism, Naturalism, and Impressionism, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993), pp. 146–147, 155–156, 190–191.

<sup>5</sup> See Linda Dalyrimple Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); Anne Hoormann, *Lichtspiele. Zur Medienreflexion der Avantgarde in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2003); Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, pp. 158–159; Wylie Sypher, *Rococo to Cubism in Art and Literature* (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 177.

<sup>6</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, “The Dehumanization of Art,” in *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Writings on Art and Culture* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1956), pp. 1–50. See also Walter Laqueur, *Weimar: A Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012), p. 111, 114, 159–160; Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1981), pp. 279–366; Walter H. Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth-Century German Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. 1, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Yevgeny Zamyatin, “On Literature, Revolution, Entropy and Other Matters,” in *A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamyatin*, ed. Mirra Ginsberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 112.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111–112. See also W.J. Leatherbarrow, “Einstein and the Art of Yevgeny Zamyatin,” in *The Modern Language Review* 82:1 (January 1987), pp. 142–151.

<sup>9</sup> Georg Marzynski, *Die Methode des Expressionismus: Studien zu seiner Psychologie* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1920), p. 11, 34.

<sup>10</sup> Sokel, *Writer in Extremis*, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> On Einstein and the emergence of cinema, see Harro Segeberg, “‘Is Everything Relative?’: Cinema and the Revolution of Knowledge Around 1900,” in *Film 1900: Technology, Perception, Culture*, ed. Annemone Ligensa and Klaus Kreimeier (New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing, 2009), pp. 67–76.

<sup>14</sup> See Sergei Eisenstein, “The Fourth Dimension in Cinema,” in *Selected Works, Volume I: Writings, 1922–34*, ed. and trans. Richard Taylor (London: BFI, 1988), p. 185; Jean Epstein, *Jean Epstein: Critical Essays and New Translations*, eds. Sarah Keller and Jason N. Paul (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 294, 312–314, 319, 324, 348–349, 367, 400; Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O’Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 9, 41, 78, 131.

<sup>15</sup> Annette Michelson, “Reading Eisenstein Reading ‘Capital’,” *October* 2 (Summer 1976), p. 32; Annette Michelson, “The Wings of Hypothesis: On Montage and the Theory of the Interval,” in *Montage and Modern Life 1919–1942*, ed. Matthew Teitelbaum (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 65.

<sup>16</sup> Herman George Scheffauer, “The Vivifying of Space,” in *The New Vision in the German Arts* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1924), p. 46.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>18</sup> It bears noting that earlier thinkers including Johann Gustav Droysen and Wilhelm Dilthey had criticized a passive, external observation of facts.



- <sup>19</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 95.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103n54.
- <sup>21</sup> On the dispute between Einstein and Bergson, see Jimena Canales, "Einstein, Bergson, and the Experiment that Failed: Intellectual Cooperation at the League of Nations," *MLN* 120 (2005): 1168–1191. Canales notes that because of Bergson's challenge to the Theory of Relativity, the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921 was granted to Einstein for his other services and discoveries (p. 1177).
- <sup>22</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Concept of Time in the Science of History," in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond*, ed. John van Buren, trans. Harry S. Taylor, Hans W. Uffelmann, and John van Buren (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), p. 55.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57; Leopold von Ranke, "On Progress in History," in *The Theory and Practice of History*, ed. Georg G. Iggers, trans. Wilma A. Iggers (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 20-23.
- <sup>24</sup> Heidegger, "Concept of Time," p. 57; original emphases.
- <sup>25</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Wilhelm Dilthey's Research and the Struggle for a Historical Worldview," in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond*, ed. John van Buren, trans. Charles Bambach (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), p. 163, 173.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172; original emphases. See also Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1967), pp. 9-10, 227, 417-418.
- <sup>28</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 125-126; see also Husserl's criticisms of Einstein in his 1935 lecture, "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity," reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 295. On Husserl and Einstein, see David Carr, *Interpreting Husserl: Critical and Comparative Studies* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), p. 19. On Dilthey, Heidegger, and Husserl, see also Charles R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).
- <sup>29</sup> Martin Jay, "The Extraterritorial Life of Siegfried Kracauer," in *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 190; Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
- <sup>30</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 41.
- <sup>31</sup> Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 231-232.
- <sup>32</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, "The Biography as an Art Form of the New Bourgeoisie," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 102. See also Kracauer's 1921 review of Lukács' *Theory of the Novel*: "Georg von Lukács' Romantheorie," in *Aufsätze 1915–1926*, ed. Inka Mülder-Bach (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), pp. 117-123.
- <sup>33</sup> Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, p. 121, 124.
- <sup>34</sup> Shiv K. Kumar, *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* (New York: New York University Press, 1963). See also Jay, "Extraterritorial Life," p. 190.
- <sup>35</sup> James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 149. See also Kumar, *Bergson*, pp. 134-135; Andrzej Duszenko, "The Theory of Relativity in *Finnegans Wake*," <<http://duszenko.northern.edu/joyce/relativ.html>>.
- <sup>36</sup> Jane Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism and the Politics of the Visual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 26.
- <sup>37</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 28, 213n8.
- <sup>38</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The Movies and Reality," in *The New Republic* (August 4, 1926), pp. 308-310; reprinted in *Authors on Film*, ed. Harry M. Geduld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 89. On Woolf and *Caligari*, see also Leslie K. Hankins, "The Doctor and the Woolf: Reel Challenges—*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Mrs. Dalloway*," in *Virginia Woolf: Themes and Variations*, ed. Vara Neverow-Turk and Mark Hussey (New York: Pace University Press, 1993), pp. 40-51; Paul Tiessen, "The Shadow in 'Caligari': Virginia Woolf and the 'Materialists' Responses to Film," in *Film Criticism* 5:1 (Fall 1980), pp. 1-9.
- <sup>39</sup> Woolf, "Movies and Reality," p. 89.

- <sup>40</sup> Blaise Cendrars, "On *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*," in *French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907–1939*, ed. Richard Abel, trans. Stuart Liebman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 271; Ezra Pound, "Paris Letter," in *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts*, ed. Harriet Zinnes (New York: New Directions, 1980), pp. 175-177.
- <sup>41</sup> Anne Perlmann, "Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari – Declafilm. Pressevorführung in den Schadow-Lichtspielen," in *Der Kinematograph* 696 (May 16, 1920); reprinted in Olaf Brill, *Der Caligari-Komplex* (Munich: Belleville, 2012), p. 324.
- <sup>42</sup> Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*, p. 29.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-66.
- <sup>44</sup> Kolakowski, *Alienation of Reason*, pp. 3-5.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
- <sup>46</sup> Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 129-156. See also Siegfried Kracauer, "The Crisis of Science," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 213-223; Ernst Troeltsch, "Die Revolution in der Wissenschaft," in *Schmollers Jahrbuch* 45:4 (1921) p. 65-94; reprinted in *Weimarer Republik. Texte und Dokumente zur Deutschen Literatur 1918-1933*, ed. Anton Kaes (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler Verlag, 1983), p. 116.
- <sup>47</sup> Leopold von Ranke, "Preface to the First Edition of *Histories of the Latin and German Peoples*," in *The Theory and Practice of History*, ed. Georg G. Iggers, trans. Wilma A. Iggers (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 86.
- <sup>48</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 108.
- <sup>49</sup> See Bambach, *Crisis of Historicism*.
- <sup>50</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, "Die Krisis des Historismus," in *Die neue Rundschau* 33 (1922), pp. 572-590. See also Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*, pp. 183-248; Georg G. Iggers, "The Dissolution of German Historicism," in *Ideas in History: Essays Presented to Louis Gottschalk by His Former Students*, ed. Richard Herr and Harold T. Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965), pp. 288-329.
- <sup>51</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1922), p. 219.
- <sup>52</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, "Über den Expressionismus: Wesen und Sinn einer Zeitbewegung: Abhandlung," in *Frühe Schriften aus dem Nachlaß, Band 9.2*, ed. Ingrid Belke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), pp. 46-47.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49, 63.
- <sup>54</sup> Lukács, "Expressionism," p. 80.
- <sup>55</sup> Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of 'As if': A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*, trans. C.K. Ogden (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1935).
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.
- <sup>57</sup> Gottfried Benn, "Bekenntnis zum Expressionismus," in *Deutsche Zukunft* (November 5, 1933); quoted in Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, p. 18.
- <sup>58</sup> Kasimir Edschmid, *Über den Expressionismus in der Literatur und die neue Dichtung* (Berlin: Erich Reiß, 1919), p. 31.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-56. See also Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 102-118; Sokel, *Writer in Extremis*, p. 20, 30, 171.
- <sup>60</sup> Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), p. 4. See also Rudolf Kurtz, *Expressionismus und Film*, ed. Christian Kiening and Ulrich Johannes Beil (Zurich: Chronos, 2007), p. 11, 34.
- <sup>61</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction*, p. 15.
- <sup>62</sup> Georg Kaiser, "Historientreue. Am Beispiel der Flucht nach Venedig (August 1923)," in *Werke: Vierter Band*, ed. Walther Huder (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1971), p. 577.
- <sup>63</sup> Sokel, *Writer in Extremis*, pp. 23-24.
- <sup>64</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol. III, trans. R.B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1909), p. 224.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.
- <sup>66</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction*, p. 18; Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M.T.H. Sadler (New York: Dover, 1977).

- <sup>67</sup> Bernhard Diebold, "Expressionismus und Kino," in *Der absolute Film: Dokumente der Medienavantgarde (1912–1936)*, ed. Christian Kiening and Heinrich Adolf (Zurich: Chronos, 2012), p. 31. Jürgen Kasten identifies Diebold as the first to conceptualize the relation between Expressionism and film; see Jürgen Kasten, *Der expressionistische Film. Abgefilmtes Theater oder avantgardistisches Kino? Eine stil-, produktions- und rezeptionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Münster: MAKS, 1990), p. 28.
- <sup>68</sup> Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz, "Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari. Phantastischer Filmroman in 6 Akten," in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari. Drehbuch von Carl Mayer und Hans Janowitz zu Robert Wienes Film von 1919/20* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1995), pp. 52-53. See also Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, pp. 167-168; David Robinson, *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (London: BFI, 1997), p. 19.
- <sup>69</sup> Eugen Tannenbaum, "Expressionismus im Film," in *Berliner Abendpost* (February 29, 1920); reprinted in Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, p. 313.
- <sup>70</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 5.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-12.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-37.
- <sup>73</sup> Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (London: Oxford, 1974), p. 168. See also Thomas Y. Levin, "Iconology at the Movies: Panofsky's Film Theory," in *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 9:1 (1996), pp. 27-55.
- <sup>74</sup> Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, p. 38.
- <sup>75</sup> Karl Radek, "Die moderne Weltliteratur und die Aufgaben der proletarischen Kunst," p. 22; quoted in Hans-Jürgen Schmitt, "Einleitung," in *Die Expressionismusedebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismenkonzeption*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schmitt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 17; Dietrich Scheunemann, "The Double, the Décor, and the Framing Device: Once More on Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*," in *Expressionist Film: New Perspectives*, ed. Dietrich Schuenemann (Rochester: Camden House, 2003), p. 140; Sokel, *Writer in Extremis*, p. 51.
- <sup>76</sup> On Expressionism and cinema, see J. B., "Expressionismus im Film," in *Film-Kurier* 2:4 (January 6, 1920), p. 1; Béla Balázs, *Early Film Theory: Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, ed. Erica Carter, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp. 46-47; Gertrud David, "Der expressionistische Film," in *Der Kinematograph* 658 (August 13, 1919); Hausenstein, "Art at this Moment," p. 481; Herbert Jhering, "An Expressionist Film," in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 620; Robert Müller, "Die Zukunft des Films," in *Prager Presse*, no. 198 (1921), p. 7; Robert Wiene, "Expressionismus im Film," in *Berliner Börsen-Courier* (July 30, 1922); reprinted in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari. Drehbuch von Carl Mayer und Hans Janowitz zu Robert Wienes Film von 1919/20* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1995), pp. 149-152.
- <sup>77</sup> Kurtz, *Expressionismus und Film*, p. 51.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52, 84.
- <sup>79</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, "Expressionist Film," in *Film Essays and Criticism*, trans. Brenda Benthien (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. 85.
- <sup>80</sup> Kracauer, "Über den Expressionismus," p. 77.
- <sup>81</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, "Wiedersehen mit alten Filmen. Der expressionistische Film," in *Kleine Schriften zum Film. Band 6.3, 1932–1961*, ed. Inka Müller-Bach (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), p. 269.
- <sup>82</sup> Roland Schacht (a.k.a. Balthasar), "Caligari," in *Freie Deutsche Bühne* 29 (March 14, 1920), pp. 695-698; reprinted in Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, p. 320. See also Sergei Yutkevich and Sergei Eisenstein, "The Eighth Art," in Eisenstein, *Selected Works, Volume I: Writings, 1922-34*, ed. and trans. Richard Taylor (London: BFI, 1988), p. 31; Paul Rotha, *The Film Till Now* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930); quoted in Robinson, *Caligari*, p. 55.
- <sup>83</sup> See Rudolf Arnheim, "Dr. Caligari Redivivus," in *Film Essays and Criticism*, trans. Brenda Benthien (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. 111; Arnheim, "Expressionist Film," p. 85; Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, p. 58; Cendrars, "Caligari," p. 271; Sergei Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today," in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (San Diego: Harcourt, 1949), p. 203; Epstein, *Jean Epstein*, pp. 303-304; Jhering, "Expressionist Film," p. 620; Fritz Olimsky (a.k.a. Oly.), "Expressionismus im Film – Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari," in *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung* (February 29, 1920); reprinted in Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, p. 315; Robinson, *Caligari*, p. 53; Gustav Wangenheim,

- “Klassischer Expressionismus. Impressionen eines sozialistischen Realisten,” in *Die Expressionismusdebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismenkonzeption*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schmitt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 118.
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- <sup>85</sup> André Bazin, “Theater and Cinema,” in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 426-427; see also Daniel Morgan, “Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics,” in *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Spring 2006), p. 478.
- <sup>86</sup> Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, p. 37, 39, 61, 84-85.
- <sup>87</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995), pp. 3-4.
- <sup>88</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1962). See also Jay, “Extraterritorial Life,” p. 189.
- <sup>89</sup> Wiene, “Expressionismus im Film,” p. 150.
- <sup>90</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), pp. 37-38. See also Martin Jay, “Intention and Irony: The Missed Encounter between Hayden White and Quentin Skinner,” *History and Theory* 52 (February 2013): 32-48.
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- <sup>92</sup> On Expressionism and *film noir*, see also Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema*, p. 89, 420-444; Anton Kaes, “*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*: Expressionism and Cinema,” in *Masterpieces of Modernist Cinema*, ed. Ted Perry (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 56.
- <sup>93</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, ed. Leonardo Quaresima (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 67. See also Gay, *Weimar Culture*, pp. 103-104; Jay, “Extraterritorial Life,” p. 169; William Nestrick, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari: The Abduction of Jane* (Mount Vernon: Macmillan Films, 1976), pp. 7-9; Kristin Thompson, “Dr. Caligari at the Folies-Bergère, or, The Successes of an Early Avant-Garde Film,” in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari: Texts Contexts, Histories*, ed. Mike Budd (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 129-136.
- <sup>94</sup> Hans Janowitz, “*Caligari*—The Story of a Famous Story,” in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari: Texts Contexts, Histories*, ed. Mike Budd (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 221-239. See also Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, p. 9, 119, 173, 214, 223; Christian Kiening and Ulrich Johannes Beil, “Nachwort,” in *Expressionismus und Film* (Zurich: Chronos, 2007), p. 173; Uli Jung and Walter Schatzberg, “Ein Drehbuch gegen die Caligari-Legenden,” in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari. Drehbuch von Carl Mayer und Hans Janowitz zu Robert Wienes Film von 1919/20* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1995), p. 125; Scheunemann, “The Double,” p. 146; Robinson, *Caligari*, pp. 29-30.
- <sup>95</sup> Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 53.
- <sup>96</sup> Stefan Andriopoulos, “Suggestion, Hypnosis, and Crime: Robert Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920),” in *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*, ed. Noah Isenberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 24; Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema*, p. 63, 76, 79, 92, 95. See also Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, p. 223; Jung and Schatzberg, “Drehbuch,” p. 127-128; Walter Kaul, “Bestandsaufnahme 70: Nicht nur expressionistisch und caligareesk,” in *Caligari und Caligarismus* (Berlin: Deutsche Kinemathek, 1970), p. 9.
- <sup>97</sup> Kracauer, *Caligari to Hitler*, p. 67.
- <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- <sup>100</sup> Sokel, *Writer in Extremis*, p. 38, 45.
- <sup>101</sup> On intertitles and speech in *Caligari*, see also Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, p. 101; Kiening and Beil, “Nachwort,” p. 173; Robinson, *Caligari*, p. 17; Barry Salt, “From Caligari to Who?,” in *Sight and Sound* 48:2 (Spring 1979), p. 121; Scheunemann, “The Double,” pp. 142-144.
- <sup>102</sup> On paratextuality, see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). See also Alexander Böhnke, *Paratexte des Films: Über die Grenzen des filmischen Universums* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2007); and Klaus Kreimeier and Georg Stanitzek (eds.), *Paratexte in Literatur, Film, Fernsehen* (Berlin: Akademie, 2004).

- <sup>103</sup> See also Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, pp. 95-110; Lotte H. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 17-27; Keining and Beil, "Nachwort," p. 179; Scheunemann, "The Double," p. 135, 138, 149.
- <sup>104</sup> On the questions left open at the film's conclusion, see also Noel Carroll, "The Cabinet of Dr. Kracauer," in *Millennium Film Journal 2* (Spring/Summer 1978), p. 79; Ian Roberts, "Caligari Revisited: Circles, Cycles and Counter-Revolution in Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*," in *German Life and Letters 57:2* (April 2004), p. 179.
- <sup>105</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 110-111. See also Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 54-73.
- <sup>106</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Picture Frame: An Aesthetic Study," in *Theory, Culture & Society 11* (1994), p. 11.
- <sup>107</sup> Till Dembeck, *Texte rahmen: Grenzregionen literarischer Werke im 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), p. 1, 11. On cinematic frames, see Gerald Mast, "On Framing," in *Critical Inquiry 11:1* (September 1984), pp. 82-109.
- <sup>108</sup> Claudio Guillén, "On the Concept and Metaphor of Perspective," in *Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 291; Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 54.
- <sup>109</sup> Alois Riegl, "The Main Characteristics of the Late Roman *Kunstwollen*," in *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, ed. and trans. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 2003), pp. 87-103.
- <sup>110</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 41; see also Christopher S. Wood's "Introduction." On Panofsky and Cassirer, see Peter Eli Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 14.
- <sup>111</sup> Panofsky, *Perspective*, pp. 65-66.
- <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- <sup>113</sup> Guillén, "Perspective," p. 326; and Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, pp. 149-209.
- <sup>114</sup> Panofsky, *Perspective*, p. 71.
- <sup>115</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Abstract and Representational," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 3: Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 186-193; Clement Greenberg, "Collage," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), pp. 70-83; Guillén, "Perspective," pp. 292-293, 362.
- <sup>116</sup> Carl Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Tanja Frank (Leipzig: Reclam, 1988), p. 12, 17.
- <sup>117</sup> Hugo Münsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study* (Mineola: Dover, 1970), pp. 15-16.
- <sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- <sup>119</sup> Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, p. 41, 62, 63, 71.
- <sup>120</sup> Jean Epstein, *Le Cinématographe vu de l'Etna*, in *Jean Epstein: Critical Essays and New Translations*, ed. Sarah Keller and Jason N. Paul, trans. Tom Milne (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 294.
- <sup>121</sup> See Trond Lundemo, "A Temporal Perspective: Jean Epstein's Writings on Technology and Subjectivity," in *Jean Epstein: Critical Essays and New Translations*, ed. Sarah Keller and Jason N. Paul (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), pp. 207-225.
- <sup>122</sup> Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, pp. 33-36.
- <sup>123</sup> See Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, p. 101.
- <sup>124</sup> Tannenbaum, "Expressionismus"; reprinted in Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, p. 313 (original emphases).
- <sup>125</sup> Martin Proskauer, "Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari" – Ein Nachwort und eine Prophezeiung," in *Film-Kurier 51* (February 29, 1920), p. 2; reprinted in Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, p. 316.
- <sup>126</sup> Christian Flüggen, "Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari," *Deutsche Lichtspiel-Zeitung 12/13* (March 27, 1920), p. 2; reprinted in Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, p. 321.
- <sup>127</sup> J. P. M., "Ein Film von Eigenart," *Vorwärts 134* (March 13, 1920), p. 2; reprinted in Brill, *Caligari-Komplex*, p. 319.

- <sup>128</sup> Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, p. 9. See also *ibid.*, p. 9, 56, 235-236, 293-294, 300; Miriam Hansen, "Introduction," in *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. xi, xxi.
- <sup>129</sup> Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, p. 37.
- <sup>130</sup> Friedrich Kittler, *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures 1999*, trans. Anthony Enns (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), pp. 98-189. On dreams and reality in Kracauer's film theory, see *Theory of Film*, pp. 163-166.
- <sup>131</sup> Kittler, *Optical Media*, p. 175.
- <sup>132</sup> Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 187.
- <sup>133</sup> James Conant, "The Dialectic of Perspectivism, I," in *Sats – Nordic Journal of Philosophy* 6:2 (2005), p. 14; Guillén, "Perspective," pp. 284-285, 312-313, 310, 328, 336, 338. Guillén notes that the metaphor of perspective could also evoke visual illusion (p. 310).
- <sup>134</sup> Guillén, "Perspective," pp. 314-325.
- <sup>135</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy*, trans. by E.M. Huggard (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), section 357; quoted in Conant, "Perspectivism, I," p. 15. See also Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 188.
- <sup>136</sup> Herman Nohl, "Eine historische Quelle zu Nietzsches Perspektivismus: G. Teichmüller, die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt," in *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Philosophische Kritik* 149 (1903), pp. 106-115. See also Guillén, "Perspective," p. 325; Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 188.
- <sup>137</sup> Guillén, "Perspective," p. 332-345; Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 188.
- <sup>138</sup> Guillén, "Perspective," p. 326, 358; Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, pp. 188-189.
- <sup>139</sup> Conant, "Perspectivism, I," pg. 8.
- <sup>140</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense," in *Philosophy of Truth*, trans. Daniel Breazeale (Highlands: Humanities Press, 1979), p. 86; quoted in Conant, "Perspectivism, I," pp. 40-41.
- <sup>141</sup> Conant, "Perspectivism, I," p. 46; James Conant, "The Dialectic of Perspectivism, II," in *Sats – Nordic Journal of Philosophy* 7:1 (2006), p. 34.
- <sup>142</sup> Conant, "Perspectivism, II," p. 35, 38.
- <sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- <sup>144</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals & Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1969), III, 12; quoted in Conant, "Perspectivism, II," p. 44.
- <sup>145</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 133-134. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 183; Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 189.
- <sup>146</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 30.
- <sup>147</sup> Leopold von Ranke, *Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber* (Leipzig, 1824), p. 28; quoted in Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 131. It bears emphasis that Ranke also postulated an omniscient God: "I imagine the Deity—if I may allow myself to make this observation—as seeing the whole of historical humanity in its totality (since no time lies before the Deity), and finding it all equally valuable," (*Weltgeschichte* IX part 2, 5, 7; quoted in Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 207).
- <sup>148</sup> See Iggers, "German Historicism," p. 292.
- <sup>149</sup> See Guillén, "Perspective," p. 333.
- <sup>150</sup> See also Kasten, *Der expressionistische Film*, p. 46, 131; Keining and Beil, "Nachwort," p. 179; Robinson, *Caligari*, p. 28.
- <sup>151</sup> See also Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema*, p. 80; Kaes, *Shell Shock*, p. 77.
- <sup>152</sup> On link between perspectivism and Nicholas of Cusa, see also Guillén, "Perspective," p. 293, 370; Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 189.
- <sup>153</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance*, trans. Jasper Hopkins (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1981), p. 25 (I, 16: 44).
- <sup>154</sup> Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 190.
- <sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187; Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 129.
- <sup>156</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Rise of Hermeneutics," trans. Fredric Jameson, in *New Literary History* 3:2 (Winter 1972), p. 231.
- <sup>157</sup> See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 217, 226; Jay, *Songs of Experience*, p. 232; Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 129, 150.
- <sup>158</sup> Dilthey, "Hermeneutics," p. 243.

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- <sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 244.
- <sup>160</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 230.
- <sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 305.
- <sup>162</sup> Jay, *Songs of Experience*, p. 223.
- <sup>163</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 130, 221.
- <sup>164</sup> Kolakowski, *Alienation of Reason*, pp. 3-5.
- <sup>165</sup> Dilthey, "Hermeneutics," p. 231, 244. See also Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 191.
- <sup>166</sup> Kolakowski, *Alienation of Reason*, pp. 7-10; Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 149.
- <sup>167</sup> Dilthey, "Hermeneutics," p. 241, 231; see also Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 228.
- <sup>168</sup> See Jay, *Songs of Experience*, p. 228.
- <sup>169</sup> Dilthey, "Hermeneutics," p. 232. Dilthey claimed that only written documents could be the objects of generally valid interpretation (p. 233, 244). See also Jay, *Songs of Experience*, p. 231.
- <sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 7; see also Olaf Brill, "Traditionelle Filmgeschichtsschreibung versus New Film History," in *Dokumentation des 9. FFKs*, ed. Britta Neitzel (Weimar: Universitätsverlag, 1997), pp. 9-23. For an extended version of my critique, see Nicholas Baer, "Der Caligari-Komplex," in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 33:2 (2013): 309-311.
- <sup>171</sup> George Herbert Mead, *The Philosophy of the Act*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1938), pp. 118-119. See also Galison, "Einstein's Clocks," p. 355; and Guillén, "Perspective," p. 345.
- <sup>172</sup> Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1999), p. 81. See also Guillén, "Perspective," p. 371.

## Chapter Two

- <sup>173</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Vol. IV: Nihilism*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 148.
- <sup>174</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. and trans. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 14.
- <sup>175</sup> Ernst Bloch, "Das Tor-Motiv," *Spuren* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969), p. 152.
- <sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 152.
- <sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 154; emphasis in the original. In a 1934 text, Rudolf Arnheim also commented on the symbolism in *Destiny*: "Only in films about legends or fairy tales—that is, in films that show the 'miraculous'—can the purely symbolic plot simultaneously possess sufficient reality: the intellectual comparison is put into concrete terms of magic personified, as when Fritz Lang's *Der müde Tod* snuffs out the lights of life" ("Symbols," *Film Essays and Criticism*, trans. Brenda Benthien [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997], p. 83).
- <sup>178</sup> Anon., "Filmschau: Der müde Tod," *Vorwärts* (Morgen-Ausgabe), 38.481 (October, 12 1921): Insert.
- <sup>179</sup> G. D., "Der müde Tod," *Ciné-Journal* (June 17, 1922); reprinted in *Lichtbildbühne*, 15.30 (July 22, 1922): Advertisement.
- <sup>180</sup> Anon., "Les Trois Lumières," *Le Matin* 39.13967 (June 16, 1922), p. 5.
- <sup>181</sup> The reviewer for the *Berliner Börsen-Courier* crusaded against "mysticism" and "wonder" in film, and wrote that *Destiny*'s subject "cannot be depicted in film," but is rather "a topic for words" (G., "Der müde Tod," *Berliner Börsen-Courier* 54.473 [October 9, 1921], p. 6). Expressing similar views of medium ontology, Kurt Pinthus argued in *Das Tagebuch* that Lang's "intent to suggest metaphysical things" is "impossible in film," a medium in which one "cannot unroll and resolve religious and occult problems" (Kurt Pinthus, "Schenswerte Filme," *Das Tagebuch* 2.42 [October 22, 1921], p. 1288).
- <sup>182</sup> René Clair, *Cinema Yesterday and Today*, ed. R.C. Dale, trans. Stanley Appelbaum (New York: Dover, 1972), p. 42; and Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 85.
- <sup>183</sup> Georges Franju, "Franju on Lang," trans. Diane Matias, *Monthly Film Bulletin* 43.509 (June 1976), p. 140. In a 1962 interview, Alfred Hitchcock identified *Destiny* as having left a "special impression" (François Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, rev. and ed. Helen G. Scott [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983], p. 26). Furthermore, Luis Buñuel recounted in his 1982 autobiography, "Something about this film spoke to something deep in me; it clarified my life and my vision of the world" (Luis Buñuel, *My Last Sigh*, trans. Abigail Israel [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983], p. 88).

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<sup>184</sup> Tom Gunning, *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity* (London: BFI, 2000), p. 16.

<sup>185</sup> *Destiny* took up aspects of Lang's earlier screenplays and productions, including their exotic locales, global scope, and seriality (e.g. *Pest in Florenz* [1919], *Harakiri* [1919], *Die Spinnen* [1919–20]); morbid, fatalistic, and religious themes (e.g. *Hilde Warren und der Tod* [1917], *Totentanz* [1919], *Das wandernde Bild* [1920]); and, finally, interest in identity, masquerade, and romantic or criminal deception (e.g. *Halbblut* [1919], *Der Herr der Liebe* [1919], *Kämpfende Herzen* [1921]). On Lang's early films, see Hartmut Birett and Herbert Birett, "Fritz Lang im Gespräch zum Film *Der müde Tod*," *Filmblatt* 6.16 (Summer 2001), pp. 61-64; Peter Bogdanovich, *Who the Devil Made It* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1997); Dieter Dürrenmatt, *Fritz Lang: Leben und Werk* (Basel: Swiss Film Museum Basel, 1982); Patrick McGilligan, *Fritz Lang: The Nature of the Beast* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997); Enno Patalas, "Kommentierte Filmografie," *Fritz Lang*, ed. Peter W. Jansen and Wolfram Schütte (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1976); and Georges Sturm, "Beginn einer Karriere: Fritz Lang vor *Der müde Tod*," *Filmgeschichte* 15 (September 2001), pp. 12-15.

<sup>186</sup> The term is widely associated with Heidegger's engagement with Kant (*Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, 1929), though it only appears in secondary discussions thereof (e.g. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall [New York: Continuum, 2004], p. 272).

<sup>187</sup> Gunning, *Fritz Lang*, pp. 15-33.

<sup>188</sup> Carlo Mierendorff, "If I Only Had the Cinema!," *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907–1933*, ed. Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, Michael Cowan, trans. Jeffrey Timon (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

<sup>189</sup> Paul Rotha, *The Film Till Now: A Survey of World Cinema* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960), p. 99.

<sup>190</sup> Fritz Lang, "The Future of the Feature Film in Germany," *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 623.

<sup>191</sup> Barry Salt, "From Caligari to Who?," *Sight and Sound* 48:2 (Spring 1979), p. 12. Salt wrote in another article that Lang "repeatedly rejected the appellation of Expressionism for his films" ("From German Stage to German Screen," *Before Caligari: German Cinema, 1895–1920*, eds. Paolo Cherchi Usai and Lorenzo Codelli [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990], p. 420). In the text cited above, however, Lang invokes an "expressionism of the most subtle variety" (Lang, "Future of the Feature Film," p. 623). The film's German title also recalls Albert Ehrenstein's poem "Ich bin des Lebens und des Todes müde," published in Kurt Pinthus' *Menschheitsdämmerung. Symphonie jüngster Dichtung* (1920).

<sup>192</sup> See Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), p. 110.

<sup>193</sup> See Walter H. Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth-Century German Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 142-143; see also Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1981), p. xxix.

<sup>194</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, eds. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 87-88.

<sup>195</sup> Nancy, *Inoperative Community*, p. 1, 14-15.

<sup>196</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Vol. IV*, p. 148.

<sup>197</sup> Leopold von Ranke, "On Progress in History," *The Theory and Practice of History*, ed. Georg G. Iggers, trans. Wilma A. Iggers (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 21.

<sup>198</sup> Nancy, *Inoperative Community*, p. 27.

<sup>199</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 154. See Birett and Birett, "Fritz Lang im Gespräch," for an interview with Lang and Adorno on *Der müde Tod*.

<sup>200</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), p. 3.

<sup>201</sup> For a discussion of Spengler, see Charles Bambach, "Weimar Philosophy and the Crisis of Historical Thinking," *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, eds. Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 133-149. On the crisis of historicism more generally, see Charles R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); and Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), pp. 124-228.



- <sup>202</sup> See Theodor W. Adorno, "Spengler After the Decline," *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 51-72; Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Vol. I and II*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), p. 101; Otto Neurath, "Anti-Spengler," *Empiricism and Sociology*, eds. Marie Neurath and Robert S. Cohen, trans. Paul Foulkes and Marie Neurath (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1973), pp. 158-213; and Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 101.
- <sup>203</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1995), pp. 39-40, 140-141.
- <sup>204</sup> Spengler, *Decline*, pp. 4-5; trans. mod.
- <sup>205</sup> Kracauer, *History*, pp. 57-58, 181. On the episode film, see also Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, pp. 255-56.
- <sup>206</sup> On architectonic signs in Lang's film, see also Hildegard Lorenz, "Raumstruktur und Filmarchitektur in Fritz Langs *Der müde Tod* (1921)," *Der Stummfilm: Konstruktion und Rekonstruktion*, ed. Elfriede Ledig (Munich: Schaudig, Bauer, Ledig, 1988), p. 119, 127.
- <sup>207</sup> On Rankean historicism, see Georg G. Iggers, "Introduction," in Leopold von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History*, ed. Georg G. Iggers, trans. Wilma A. Iggers (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. xi-xlv.
- <sup>208</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, "Modernity and the Planes of Historicity," *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 9-25.
- <sup>209</sup> Tom Gunning, "Early Cinema as Global Cinema: The Encyclopedic Ambition," *Early Cinema and the "National"*, eds. Richard Abel, Giorgio Bertellini, Rob King (New Barnet: John Libbey, 2008), pp. 11-16; and Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). Hansen also reads Griffith's *Intolerance* as a philosophy of history (*ibid.*, pp. 163-172). See also Lang, "Future of the Feature Film," on the internationalism of film language.
- <sup>210</sup> E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Poetische Werke in sechs Bänden, Band 4* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1963), p. 112.
- <sup>211</sup> Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, trans. John E. Woods (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), p. 641.
- <sup>212</sup> Peter Eli Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 26. On the connections between Expressionism and existentialism, see also Sokel, *Writer in Extremis*, p. 53.
- <sup>213</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Wilhelm Dilthey's Research and the Struggle for a Historical Worldview," *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond*, ed. John van Buren, trans. Charles Bambach (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), pp. 165-166.
- <sup>214</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1967), pp. 237-240. See also Béla Balázs' existential-ontological reflections in *Visible Man or the Culture of Film* (1924): "The allure of the *Doppelgänger* motif [in film] derives from the possibility it presents of living the 'different life' of an other. The fact that one can live only one life at a time is a grave injustice" (*Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory. Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, ed. Erica Carter, trans. Rodney Livingstone [New York: Berghahn Books, 2010], p. 31).
- <sup>215</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Time," *On Narrative*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 181.
- <sup>216</sup> Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 79. On cinema, narrative, and death, see also Gertrud Koch, "Der unsterbliche Körper – Kino und Todesangst," *Den Körper im Blick*, eds. Beat Wyss and Markus Buschhaus (Munich: Fink, 2008), pp. 35-50.
- <sup>217</sup> On the idea of revolutionary time, see Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," *Selected Writings: Volume 4, 1938-1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Harry Zohn (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 395.
- <sup>218</sup> For analyses of the temporal structure of Lang's film, see also Lorenz, "Raumstruktur und Filmarchitektur," p. 123; and Ines Steiner, "'Schicksal' als Effekt der Filmarchitektur: Kracauers Lektüre von *Der müde Tod*," *Im Reich der Schatten: Siegfried Kracauers 'From Caligari to Hitler'*, ed. Ulrich Ott (Marbach am Neckar: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 2004), pp. 68-69.
- <sup>219</sup> Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, "Der Gevatter Tod," *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1901), p. 124. *Der Gevatter Tod* was also the title of a 1921 Austrian film directed by Heinz Hanus and produced by Astoria-Film (Vienna). Hans Christian Anderson's "The Story of a Mother" (1847) is also often invoked in commentaries on Lang's film.

- <sup>220</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916)*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1971), p. 244.
- <sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.
- <sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.
- <sup>223</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, ed. James Strachey, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1960), p. 24. For an analysis of Freud's texts on mourning, see also Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004).
- <sup>224</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), p. 39.
- <sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62; and Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume 2: Mythical Thought*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 106.
- <sup>226</sup> Benjamin, *German Tragic Drama*, p. 166.
- <sup>227</sup> On Benjamin's "refusal to mourn," see Martin Jay, "Against Consolation: Walter Benjamin and the Refusal to Mourn," *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 221-239.
- <sup>228</sup> The figure of Death also appears in Victor Sjöström's *The Phantom Carriage* (1921), Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus* (1950), and Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957).
- <sup>229</sup> Benjamin, *German Tragic Drama*, p. 151.
- <sup>230</sup> Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Dürers Melencolia I: Eine quellen- und typengeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1923).
- <sup>231</sup> On the influence of Max Reinhardt's Shakespeare stagings on Expressionist cinema, see Lotte H. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*, trans. Roger Greaves (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).
- <sup>232</sup> Perhaps most famous from Matthias Claudius' poem *Der Tod und das Mädchen* (1775), as well as Franz Schubert's 1817 *Lied* version and his *String Quartet No. 14* (1824), the motif is evident in Expressionist works such as Egon Schiele's *Tod und Mädchen* (1915), and also informs the relationship between Ellen and the vampire in F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922).
- <sup>233</sup> The *Totentanz* allegory was reactivated in early-twentieth-century works by figures including Gustav Mahler, Thomas Mann, Rainer Maria Rilke, Arnold Schönberg, and August Strindberg, and provided the title for films by Urban Gad (1912) and Otto Rippert (1919; written by Fritz Lang).
- <sup>234</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961).
- <sup>235</sup> Marvin H. Pope, *The Anchor Bible: Song of Songs* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1977), p. 668.
- <sup>236</sup> Tom Gunning notes resonances of this fire with the Buddhist parable of the Burning House (*Fritz Lang*, p. 29).
- <sup>237</sup> Hermann Hesse, "The Longing of Our Time for a Worldview," *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 367.
- <sup>238</sup> Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1990).
- <sup>239</sup> Hesse, "Longing of Our Time," p. 366.
- <sup>240</sup> On the irrationalist trends of the younger generation in the Weimar period, see also Siegfried Kracauer, "The Crisis of Science," *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 214-215, 219; Ernst Troeltsch, "Die Krisis des Historismus," *Die neue Rundschau* 33 (1922), pp. 571-572, 576, 586; and Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 135-137, 140-143.
- <sup>241</sup> Balázs' *Hét mese* was translated into German as *Sieben Märchen* (1921), and is also discussed in Ernst Bloch's "Das Tor-Motiv" (p. 154). For Balázs' views on the relationship between fairy tales and film, see his *Early Film Theory*, p. 4, 57-58; Erica Carter, "Introduction," *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory. Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, ed. Erica Carter, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp. xxviii-xxxii; and Hanno Loewy, *Béla Balázs – Märchen, Ritual und Film* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2003), p. 332. See also Jack Zipes' introduction to the recent English-language edition of Balázs' Chinese fairy tales: "Béla Balázs, the Homeless Wanderer, or, The Man Who Sought to Become One with the

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World,” in Béla Balázs, *The Cloak of Dreams: Chinese Fairy Tales*, trans. Jack Zipes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 1-57. On the fairy tale in Benjamin’s and Kracauer’s writings, see Miriam Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), p. 12, 16, 173, 287n30. Alfred Döblin’s *Die drei Sprünge des Weng-lun* (1916) should also be mentioned alongside Hesse’s and Balázs’ literary texts.

<sup>242</sup> Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, p. 4; original emphases.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3; original emphases; and Carter, “Introduction,” pp. xxx-xxx. See also Johannes von Moltke, “Theory of the Novel: The Literary Imagination of Classical Film Theory,” *October* 144 (Spring 2013), pp. 49-72.

<sup>244</sup> Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, pp. 19-20. On Balázs’ connection to literary modernism, see also Niklaus Largier, “A ‘Sense of Possibility’: Robert Musil, Meister Eckhart, and the ‘Culture of Film,’” *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, ed. Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 739-749.

<sup>245</sup> Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, p. 20. Thomas Elsaesser follows this line of argumentation when he writes, “*Destiny* and *Waxworks* both employ repetition, as a way of making – in this comparable to myths and folk tales – a deep structure apparent that might otherwise be missed” (*Weimar Cinema and After: Germany’s Historical Imaginary* [London: Routledge, 2000], p. 86).

<sup>246</sup> Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 350-356. Foucault also identifies the carpet as a heterotopia, as featured in *Destiny*’s third episode.

<sup>247</sup> Béla Balázs, “Arabische Nächte,” *Schriften zum Film, Band I*, eds. Helmut H. Diederichs, Wolfgang Gersch, and Magda Nagy (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1982), p. 181. See also *ibid.*, *Early Film Theory*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>248</sup> Ernst Lubitsch’s *Sumurun* (1920) also references the *Arabian Nights*. On the *One Thousand and One Nights* and early German cinema, see Donald Haase, “The *Arabian Nights*, Visual Culture, and Early German Cinema,” *Fabula* 45:3/4 (2004), pp. 261-274. Kurt Pinthus’ *Das Kino-Buch* (1914) also featured a contribution by Else Lasker-Schüler drawing from the *1001 Nights*.

<sup>249</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, “The Mass Ornament,” *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 80-81. In the essay, Kracauer also writes, “There is profound historical significance in the fact that the *Thousand and One Nights* turned up precisely in the France of the Enlightenment and that eighteenth-century reason recognized the reason of the fairy tales as its equal” (*ibid.*, p. 80). See also Kracauer’s comments on the fairy tale in his “Über den Expressionismus: Wesen und Sinn einer Zeitbewegung. Abhandlung,” in *Frühe Schriften aus dem Nachlaß, Band 9.2*, ed. Ingrid Belke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), p. 30.

<sup>250</sup> Theodor Lessing, “Jewish Self-Hatred,” *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 268.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>252</sup> On the differences between the two versions, see Section Eight of the Preface to Theodor Lessing, *Geschichte als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen oder Die Geburt der Geschichte aus dem Mythos* (Hamburg: Rütten & Loening, 1962), pp. 30-33; see also Friedrich von Petersdorff, “Die perspektivische Konstruktion von Geschichte in Lessings beiden Büchern ‘Geschichte als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen,’” “*Sinngebung des Sinnlosen*”: *Zum Leben und Werk des Kulturkritikers Theodor Lessing (1872–1933)*, ed. Elke-Vera Kotowski (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2006), pp. 201-214.

<sup>253</sup> Lessing, “Jewish Self-Hatred,” p. 270.

<sup>254</sup> On Kuh, Lessing, and Jewish self-hatred, see Paul Reitter, *On the Origins of Jewish Self-Hatred* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

<sup>255</sup> Christian Wilhelm Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (Berlin: Friedrich Nicolai, 1781), p. 8.

<sup>256</sup> Werner Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, trans. M. Epstein (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), p. 225.

<sup>257</sup> See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

<sup>258</sup> John M. Efron, “Orientalism and the Jewish Historical Gaze,” *Orientalism and the Jews*, eds. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar (Lebanon: Brandeis University Press, 2005), p. 80. For analyses of German Jews and Orientalism, see also Steven E. Aschheim, “The Modern Jewish Experience and the Entangled Web of Orientalism,” *At the Edges of Liberalism: Junctions of European, German, and Jewish History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 21-38; Ivan Kalmar, “Jewish Orientalism,” *Jewish*

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*Studies at the Turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, eds. Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Sáenz-Badillos (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 307-315; Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar, "Orientalism and the Jews: An Introduction," *Orientalism and the Jews*, eds. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar (Lebanon: Brandeis University Press, 2005), pp. xiii-xl; and Paul Mendes-Flohr, "The Berlin Jew as Cosmopolitan," *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890-1918*, ed. Emily D. Bilski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 15-31. On Orientalism in the German context more broadly, see Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); and Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>259</sup> Adorno, *Mahler*, pp. 148-149. For a reference to the Chinese motives in Mahler's late work, see also Bloch, "Das Tor-Motiv," p. 154.

<sup>260</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Stranger," *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 145.

<sup>261</sup> One should also mention the Jewish cemetery featured in Stellan Rye's *The Student of Prague* (1913). Apart from the First World War, the 1918 flu pandemic may also inform these films' preoccupation with mass death across social and national boundaries.

<sup>262</sup> Werner J. Cahnman, "Village and Small-Town Jews in Germany: A Typological Study," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 19 (1974), p. 117.

<sup>263</sup> Death is given a 99-year lease to the land adjoining the cemetery—a number that recalls the age of Abraham as God appears (Genesis 17:1), as well as the number of sheep in the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-7). The wall that Death builds around the cemetery is also an overdetermined emblem, recalling the gates of Jewish ghettos in medieval Europe, the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem, and the Great Wall of China (about which both Karl Kraus and Franz Kafka wrote in the 1910s). On the iconography of death and crosses in Lang's film, see Steiner, "'Schicksal' als Effekt," pp. 65-66.

<sup>264</sup> Kracauer, *History*, p. 157; see also Martin Jay, "The Extraterritorial Life of Siegfried Kracauer," *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 189.

<sup>265</sup> Herbert Ihering would later position *Destiny* "at the beginning of a specifically German film genre: that of the song and the ballad film" (*Von Reinhardt bis Brecht: 1909-1923* [Berlin: Aufbau, 1961], p. 457). It bears noting, however, that the film's presentation as a "German folk song" was initially a point of contention for many critics, who argued that the *Volkslied* has a "more national color"—i.e. without intervening episodes in exotic settings (P. Padehl, "Der müde Tod," *Der Film* 6.41 [October 9, 1921], p. 63). See also Steiner, "'Schicksal' als Effekt," pp. 99-100.

<sup>266</sup> Ludwig Erk and Franz Magnus Böhme, eds., *Deutscher Liederhort* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1893-94).

<sup>267</sup> Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* adapts poetry from Hans Bethge's collection, *Die chinesische Flöte* (1907); Schönberg began work on a version of Mahler's 'song-symphony' for chamber orchestra in Fall 1921. Eisler's "Gesang des Abgeschiedenen" (1918) was based on Japanese poems from Bethge's *Japanischer Frühling* (1911), as well as on Max Dauthendey's collection of Japanese love stories, *Die acht Gesichter am Biwasee* (1911). Anton Webern's *Vier Lieder für Gesang und Klavier* (op. 12, 1915-17), his *Vier Lieder für Gesang und Orchester* (op. 13, 1914-18), and Schönberg's *Vier Stücke für gemischten Chor* (op. 27, 1925) also include musical settings of poems from Bethge's *Die chinesische Flöte*. On aesthetic modernism's broader interest in the art and poetry of China and Japan, see Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis*, p. 43.

<sup>268</sup> The opening verse of Lang's film reads: "Es liegt ein Städtchen irgendwo / Im Tale traumversunken, / Drein zogen liebestrunknen / Zwei Menschen, jung und lebensfroh, / Doch von den Bäumen allen / Die goldenen Blätter fallen / Wie Tränen dicht im Abendrot - / Am Kreuzweg, wo schon viel geschah, / Steht, ihrer wartend, schweigend da; / Der Tod -" On *Volksprosa* and German fantastic films, see also Olaf Brill, *Der Caligari-Komplex* (Munich: Belleville, 2012), p. 99.

<sup>269</sup> "Die liebe Erde allüberall / Blüht auf im Lenz und grünt Aufs neu! / Allüberall und ewig / Blauen licht die Fernen! / Ewig... ewig...."

<sup>270</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, ed. Leonardo Quaresima (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 8.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88. In a 1939 article, Kracauer discerned a palpable fear in Expressionist films—a fear that he attributed to the "shock of the lost war" and "inflation"; see "Wiedersehen mit alten Filmen. Der

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expressionistische Film,” in *Kleine Schriften zum Film, Band 6.3, 1932–1961*, ed. Inka Mülder-Bach (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), p. 267.

<sup>272</sup> See also Lorenz, “Raumstruktur und Filmarchitektur,” p. 117, 124.

<sup>273</sup> Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 52. See also Kaes’ discussion of the film in *Geschichte des deutschen Films* (eds. Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes, and Hans Helmut Prinzler [Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993]), where he invokes “the sense of the inescapability of a predetermined fate” (p. 50).

<sup>274</sup> Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, p. 84.

<sup>275</sup> Miriam Hansen, “Introduction,” *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. xxii.

<sup>276</sup> Hans Blumenberg, “Lebenswelt und Technisierung unter Aspekten der Phänomenologie,” *Wirklichkeiten in denen wir leben: Aufsätze und eine Rede* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1981), pp. 11-12, 47. On the correspondence between Kracauer and Blumenberg between 1964-66, see Ingrid Belke, “Nachbemerkung und editorische Notiz,” *Siegfried Kracauer. Werke, Band 4*, ed. Ingrid Belke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), pp. 503-504.

<sup>277</sup> Kracauer, *History*, p. 45.

<sup>278</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “Nach Kracauers Tod,” *Siegfried Kracauer. Werke, Band 4*, ed. Ingrid Belke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), p. 431. See also the famous line from George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1874) on the moment “when the commonplace ‘We must all die’ transforms itself suddenly into the acute consciousness ‘I must die—and soon’”; Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 2000), p. 350.

<sup>279</sup> Adorno, “Nach Kracauers Tod,” p. 432.

<sup>280</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften, Band 6* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 504-505.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 505.

<sup>282</sup> Adorno, “Nach Kracauers Tod,” p. 432.

<sup>283</sup> See Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, p. 89; and Steiner, “‘Schicksal’ als Effekt,” pp. 97-98.

<sup>284</sup> Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, p. 416, 505.

<sup>285</sup> Georg Simmel, “The Metaphysics of Death,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 24:7-8 (2007), p. 74.

<sup>286</sup> Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, p. 88.

<sup>287</sup> Georg Simmel, “The Problem of Fate,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 24:7-8 (2007), p. 80.

### Chapter Three

<sup>288</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 26.

<sup>289</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, ed. and trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 26.

<sup>290</sup> See Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>291</sup> Roland Barthes, “The Reality Effect,” in Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 141-148.

<sup>292</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2006), 32. 1451b.

<sup>293</sup> Hans Blumenberg, “Wirklichkeitsbegriff und Möglichkeit des Romans,” in H. R. Jauß (ed.), *Nachahmung und Illusion* (Munich: Eidos, 1964), 9-27; Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1995), 164-190; and Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 1973).

<sup>294</sup> Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 23, 36.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33, 36. See also Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>296</sup> Jacques Rancière, “The Politics of Fiction,” 6.

<[www.ccs.unibe.ch/unibe/philhist/ccs/content/e6062/e6681/e169238/JacquesRanciereThePoliticsofFiction\\_ger.pdf](http://www.ccs.unibe.ch/unibe/philhist/ccs/content/e6062/e6681/e169238/JacquesRanciereThePoliticsofFiction_ger.pdf)>.

<sup>297</sup> Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 14, 24.

<sup>298</sup> Rancière, “Politics of Fiction,” 15. See also Jacques Rancière, “Die Geschichtlichkeit des Films,” in Eva Hohenberger and Judith Keilbach (eds.), *Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit: Dokumentarfilm, Fernsehen und Geschichte*, trans. Stefan Barmann (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2003), 230-246.

- <sup>299</sup> Barthes, "The Reality Effect," 146.
- <sup>300</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger writes, "Jede [Garde], auch die Avant-Garde, versteht sich als Elite"; see Enzensberger, "Die Aporien der Avantgarde," *Einzelheiten II: Poesie und Politik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964), 263. On the relationship between the avant-garde and liberal democracy, see also Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 29; and Eric Hobsbawm, *Behind the Times: The Decline and Fall of the Twentieth-Century Avant-Gardes* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 20.
- <sup>301</sup> F. T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (eds.), *Futurism: An Anthology*, trans. Lawrence Rainey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 51.
- <sup>302</sup> Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), xviii.
- <sup>303</sup> Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," *Daedalus* 99, no. 2 (Spring 1970): 384-404.
- <sup>304</sup> Hobsbawm, *Behind the Times*, 25. On this point, see also Malte Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back: The European Avant-Garde and the Invention of Film Culture 1919-1939* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 11-12, 37. For a critique of Hobsbawm's work, see Martin Jay, "Eric J. Hobsbawm," in *Artforum* vol. 51, no. 6 (February 2013).
- <sup>305</sup> Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 25-26.
- <sup>306</sup> On this point, see also Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism*, 102.
- <sup>307</sup> Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995), 116, 139-140.
- <sup>308</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), 13.
- <sup>309</sup> Enzensberger, "Die Aporien der Avantgarde," 257.
- <sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.
- <sup>311</sup> Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Snow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 63.
- <sup>312</sup> Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism*, 44, 79. As Peter Osborne notes, it also undermines the distinction between synchrony and diachrony; see Osborne, *The Politics of Time*, 27.
- <sup>313</sup> See Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 17.
- <sup>314</sup> Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism*, 7; see also 11, 47, 79, 109, 188. One might ask if this is really true of all avant-garde movements.
- <sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 80; see also 25, 163, 190.
- <sup>316</sup> Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 26.
- <sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.
- <sup>318</sup> Hans Richter, "History is What is Happening Today," in Detlef Mertins and Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film, 1923-1926*, trans. Steven Lindberg with Margareta Ingrid Christian (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010), 228-229. On the *G* journal, see also Karin Fest, Sabrina Rahman, and Marie-Noëlle Yazdanpanah (eds.), *Mies van der Rohe, Richter, Graeff & Co.: Alltag und Design in der Avantgardezeitschrift G* (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2014).
- <sup>319</sup> Richter, "The Avant-Garde Film Seen from Within," *Hollywood Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (Autumn 1949): 34-41; Hans Richter, "Dada XYZ..." in Robert Motherwell (ed.), *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (New York: Wittenborn & Schultz, 1951), 285-289; Richter, "Easel-Scroll-Film," *Magazine of Art* (February 1952): 78-86; Richter, "The Film as an Original Art Form," *Film Culture* 1, no. 1 (January 1955): 19-23; Richter, "Dada und Film," in Willy Verkauf (ed.), *Dada: Monographie einer Bewegung* (Teufen: Niggli, 1957), 57-66; Richter, "Hans Richter on the Function of Film History Writing," *Film Culture* (April 1958): 25-26; Richter, "Avant-Garde Film in Germany," in Roger Manvell (ed.), *Experiment in Film* (New York: Arno, 1970), 219-233; Hans Richter, "A History of the Avant-Garde," in Frank Stauffacher (ed.), *Art in Cinema* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 8-21; Richter, *Begegnungen von Dada bis heute: Briefe, Dokumente, Erinnerungen* (Cologne: DuMont-Schauberg, 1973); and Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, trans. David Britt (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997). On Richter's later historiographical efforts, see Ludger Derenthal, "Hans Richter – der Künstler als Kunsthistoriker," in Hilmar Hoffmann and Walter Schobert (eds.), *Hans Richter: Malerei und Film* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsches Filmmuseum, 1989), 146-154; and Yvonne Zimmermann, "Hans Richter and the Politics of Producing Film History," 7<sup>th</sup> European Network for Cinema and Media Studies (NECS) Conference, Prague, June 2013.
- <sup>320</sup> See, e.g., Stephen C. Foster (ed.), *Hans Richter: Activism, Modernism, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Jeanpaul Goergen, "Hans Richter, Filme bis 1933: Annotierte

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Filmografie,” in Goergen (ed.), *Hans Richter: Film ist Rhythmus* (Berlin: Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek e.V., 2003), 85-114; Marion von Hofacker, “Kunsthistoriker gegen Künstler,” in Hoffmann and Schobert (eds.), *Hans Richter*, 155-167; Walter Schobert, “‘Painting in Time’ and ‘Visual Music’: On German Avant-Garde Films of the 1920s,” in Dietrich Scheunemann (ed.), *Expressionist Film: New Perspectives* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), 237-249; and Holger Wilmesmeier, “Entstehungsgeschichte: Le Film 100 Titres,” in Christoph Bareither, Kurt Beals, Michael Cowan, et al. (eds.), *Hans Richter: Rhythmus 21* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012), 33-44.

<sup>321</sup> Malcolm Turvey, *The Filming of Modern Life: European Avant-Garde Film of the 1920s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

<sup>322</sup> Michael Cowan, “Advertising, Rhythm, and the Filmic Avant-Garde in Weimar: Guido Seeber and Julius Pinschewer’s *Kipho* Film,” *October* 131 (Winter 2010): 23-50; Cowan, *Walter Ruttmann and the Cinema of Multiplicity: Avant-Garde – Advertising – Modernity* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014); Edward Dimendberg, “Avantgarde im Auftrag des Kunden,” in *Hans Richter: Begegnungen*, ed. Timothy O. Benson (Munich: Prestel, 2014), 87-97; Tom Gunning, “Encounters in Darkened Rooms: Alternative Programming of the Dutch Filmliga, 1927-31,” in Malte Hagener (ed.), *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building, and the Fate of the Avant-garde in Europe, 1919-1945* (London: Berghahn, 2014), 72-117; Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back*; and Yvonne Zimmermann, “Ein fehlendes Kapitel: Die Schweizer Filme und Richters Arbeit als Dokumentarfilmer,” in Benson (ed.), *Begegnungen*, 109-119.

<sup>323</sup> Bareither, Beals, Cowan, et al. (eds.), *Hans Richter*.

<sup>324</sup> On the concept of “performative contradiction,” see Martin Jay, “The Debate over Performative Contradiction: Habermas versus the Poststructuralists,” in Axel Honneth, Thomas McCarthy, Claus Offe, and Albrecht Wellmer (eds.), *Philosophical Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 261-279.

<sup>325</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M.T.H. Sadler (New York: Dover, 1977), 19.

<sup>326</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, “The Relationship to the Text,” in Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, ed. and trans. Dika Newlin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 1. Arthur Schopenhauer had written, “der Komponist offenbart das innerste Wesen der Welt und spricht die tiefste Weisheit aus, in einer Sprache, die seine Vernunft nicht versteht”; see *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1819), 375.

<sup>327</sup> Schoenberg, “The Relationship to the Text,” 5.

<sup>328</sup> On the analogy between film and music, see also David Bordwell, “The Musical Analogy,” *Yale French Studies* no. 60 (1980): 141-156.

<sup>329</sup> Walter Ruttmann, “Painting with Time,” in Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan (eds.), *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907-1933*, trans. Michael Cowan (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), n.p.

<sup>330</sup> See Joel Westerdale, “The Musical Promise of Abstract Film,” in Christian Rogowski (ed.), *The Many Faces of Weimar Cinema: Rediscovering Germany’s Filmic Legacy* (Rochester: Camden House, 2010), 153-166.

<sup>331</sup> On the “absolute film” screening, see Anton Kaes, “The Absolute Film,” in Leah Dickerman (ed.), *Inventing Abstraction, 1910-1925: How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 346-349; Joel Westerdale, “3 May 1925: French and German Avant-Garde Converge at *Der absolute Film*,” in Jennifer M. Kapczynski and Michael D. Richardson (eds.), *A New History of German Cinema* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), 160-165; and Holger Wilmesmeier, *Deutsche Avantgarde und Film: Die Filmmatinee “Der absolute Film” (3. und 10. Mai 1925)* (Münster: Lit, 1994).

<sup>332</sup> On Richter and the dynamization of painting, see Rudolf Arnheim, “Painting and Film,” in Arnheim, *Film Essays and Criticism*, trans. Brenda Benthien (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 86-88; Anne Hoormann, *Lichtspiele: Zur Medienreflexion der Avantgarde in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2003), 84, 182; and Philippe-Alain Michaud, “Der Weg zur vierten Dimension: *Rhythmus 21* und die Genese filmischer Abstraktion,” in Benson (ed.), *Begegnungen*, 51-61. On Malevich and cinema, see also T. J. Clark, “Malevich Versus Cinema,” *The Threepenny Review* (Spring 2003). <[http://www.threepennyreview.com/samples/clark\\_sp03.html](http://www.threepennyreview.com/samples/clark_sp03.html)>.

<sup>333</sup> On this point, see Ingo Zechner, “Elementares Kino: Fünf Notizen zu Hans Richters *Rhythmus 21*,” in Bareither et al. (eds.), *Hans Richter*, 91-92, 96.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 99, 101.

- <sup>335</sup> Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 14.
- <sup>336</sup> Herman George Scheffauer, "The Visible Symphony," in Scheffauer, *The New Vision in the German Arts* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1924), 141-142.
- <sup>337</sup> Rudolf Kurtz, *Expressionismus und Film*, eds. Christian Kiening and Ulrich Johannes Beil (Zurich: Chronos, 2007), 92.
- <sup>338</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 54-55.
- <sup>339</sup> Christine N. Brinckmann, "Abstraction and Empathy in the Early German Avant-garde," in Brinckmann, *Color and Empathy: Essays on Two Aspects of Film* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 156.
- <sup>340</sup> On this point, see also Hans Richter, *Filmgegner von heute – Filmfreunde von morgen* (Berlin: Hermann Reckendorf, 1929), 79. In an analysis of "the 'absolute' poem," Herman Scheffauer had similarly noted the efforts of Rudolf Blümner and other expressionist writers to render poetry, in his words, a "vehicle for the expression of the immediate, direct, spontaneous language of the emotions, without the mediation of meaning or the background of association"; see "The 'Absolute' Poem," in Scheffauer, *The New Vision in the German Arts*, 110. On Richter and emotion, see also Michael Cowan, "The Heart Machine: 'Rhythm' and Body in Weimar Film and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*," *Modernism/Modernity* 14, no. 2 (2007): 226-227; R. Bruce Elder, "Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling: The Dream of Universal Language and the Birth of The Absolute Film," in Alexander Graf and Dietrich Scheunemann (eds.), *Avant-Garde Film* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 27; and R. Bruce Elder, *Harmony and Dissent: Film and Avant-garde Art Movements in the Early Twentieth Century* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 134, 139, 144, 146, 147.
- <sup>341</sup> Richter, "The Badly Trained Soul," in Mertins and Jennings (eds.), *G*, 147.
- <sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 148; translation modified.
- <sup>343</sup> On this history of media experimentation and theorization preceding absolute film, see Malcolm Cook, "Visual Music in Film, 1921-1924: Richter, Eggeling, Ruttman," in Charlotte de Mille (ed.), *Music and Modernism, c. 1849-1950* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 206-228; Elder, "Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling," 3-53; Elder, *Harmony and Dissent*; Christian Kiening and Heinrich Adolf, "Nachwort," in Kiening and Adolf (eds.), *Der absolute Film: Dokumente der Medienavantgarde (1912-1936)* (Zurich: Chronos, 2012), 419-500; and Pasi Väliäho, *Mapping the Moving Image: Gesture, Thought and Cinema circa 1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).
- <sup>344</sup> See Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back*, 55.
- <sup>345</sup> Walter Ruttmann, "The 'Absolute' Fashion: Film as an End in Itself; Beware of the *Art pour l'art* Position," in Kaes, Baer, Cowan (eds.), *Promise of Cinema*, trans. Nicholas Baer, n.p.
- <sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, n.p.
- <sup>347</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, "Abstract Film: On the Screening by the Gesellschaft Neuer Film," in Kaes, Baer, Cowan (eds.), *Promise of Cinema*, trans. Michael Cowan, n.p. For Kracauer's views on abstract and experimental film, see also Kracauer, "Zwei Filmbücher," in *Werke, Band 6.2: Kleine Schriften zum Film 1928-1931*, ed. Inka Mülder-Bach (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 287-288; Kracauer, "Einige Filme," in *Werke, Band 6.3: Kleine Schriften zum Film 1932-1961*, ed. Inka Mülder-Bach (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 37-38; Kracauer, "Kunst und Film: Zu Hans Richter: *Träume für Geld*," in *ibid.*, 382-387; Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, ed. Leonardo Quaresima (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 68n10; and Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 39, 175-192.
- <sup>348</sup> Christian Kiening and Ulrich Johannes Beil, "Nachwort," in Kurtz, *Expressionismus und Film*, 191.
- <sup>349</sup> Béla Balázs, *Early Film Theory: Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, ed. Erica Carter, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 227. On Balázs' views on the absolute film, see also *ibid.*, 130, 146n1, 160, 163-164, 164n14, 174-175, 174n37, 177; and Wolfgang Gersch, "Versuche auf breiter Front: Balázs in Berlin," in Béla Balázs, *Schriften zum Film, Band 2: 'Der Geist des Films,' Artikel und Aufsätze 1926-1931*, ed. Helmut H. Diederichs and Wolfgang Gersch (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1984), 43-44.
- <sup>350</sup> Rudolf Kurtz, "Posing the Problem," in Mertins and Jennings (eds.), *G*, 230. Kurtz draws here from art historian Alois Riegl, who had written: "Man is not only a passive, sensorily recipient being, but also a desiring, active being who wishes to interpret the world in such a way (varying from one people, region, or epoch to another) that it most clearly and obligingly meets his desires. The character of this will is



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contained in that which we call the worldview (again, in the broadest sense): in religion, philosophy, science, even statecraft and law; as a rule, one of those forms will predominate in any period"; see Alois Riegl, "The Main Characteristics of the Late Roman *Kunstwollen* (1901)," in Christopher S. Wood (ed.), *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 2003), 95.

<sup>351</sup> In his text, Richter also criticizes approaches based in "psychology" and "impressionistic feeling"; see "History is What is Happening Today," 229.

<sup>352</sup> Hans Richter, "*Expressionismus und Film* by Rudolf Kurtz," in Mertins and Jennings (eds.), *G*, 198.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 229. That Richter's presentist anti-historicism is more generally evident in *G* is indicated, for example, by Theo von Doesburg's "On Elemental Form-Creation" ("the artist of the present has broken entirely with the past"), in Mertins and Jennings (eds.), *G*, 102; and Mies van der Rohe, "Office Building" ("Not yesterday, not tomorrow, only today can be formed"), in *ibid.*, 103. On van der Rohe's anti-historicism and its links to Richter's manifesto, see also Fritz Neumeyer, *Mies van der Rohe – Das kunstlose Wort: Gedanken zur Baukunst* (Berlin: Siedler, 1986), 181.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>355</sup> Kandinsky, *Spiritual in Art*, 12.

<sup>356</sup> Richter, "History is What is Happening Today," 228.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 228. Richter's invocation of a "*backward- and forward-looking art history*" (*ibid.*, 228) also recalls T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), with its idea that "the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past"; see Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in Lawrence Rainey (ed.), *Modernism: An Anthology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 153.

<sup>358</sup> Raoul Hausmann, Hans Arp, Ivan Puni, and László Moholy-Nagy, "A Call for Elemental Art," trans. Michael W. Jennings, in Mertins and Jennings (eds.), *G*, 241.

<sup>359</sup> Richter, "History is What is Happening Today," 229.

<sup>360</sup> See, e.g., Wilhelm Dilthey, "Die Typen der Weltanschauung und ihre Ausbildung in den metaphysischen Systemen," in Max Frischeisen-Köhler (ed.), *Weltanschauung* (Berlin: Reichl, 1911), 3-51; Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin: Julius Springer, 1919); Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Abingdon: Routledge, 1951), 267-301; and Martin Heidegger, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, in Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe: Band 27*, eds. Otto Saame and Ina Saame-Speidel (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996). See also Detlef Mertins, "Architecture, Worldview, and World Image in *G*," in Mertins and Jennings (eds.), *G*, 85-89; and David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>361</sup> Richter, "History is What is Happening Today," 229.

<sup>362</sup> Malcolm Turvey, "Dada between Heaven and Hell: Abstraction and Universal Language in the Rhythm Films of Hans Richter," *October* 105 (Summer 2003): 22-23; and Turvey, *Filming of Modern Life*, 29.

<sup>363</sup> Richter, "History is What is Happening Today," 229.

<sup>364</sup> See Benedetto Croce, "History and Chronicle," in Hans Meyerhoff (ed.), *The Philosophy of History in Our Time* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), 44-57; and Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty*, trans. Sylvia Sprigge (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1941). Richter's invocation of "ressentiment" in the manifesto also evokes Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887).

<sup>365</sup> On Riegl's relationship to historicism, see Michael Gubser, *Time's Visible Surface: Alois Riegl and the Discourse on History and Temporality in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 7, 12; and Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna*, 234-235.

<sup>366</sup> Alois Riegl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. K. M. Swoboda (Augsburg: Filser, 1929), 63; quoted in Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 4.

<sup>367</sup> Riegl, "The Main Characteristics of the Late Roman *Kunstwollen* (1901)," 94-95. On the concept of *Kunstwollen*, see also Gubser, *Time's Visible Surface*, 4; Iversen, *Alois Riegl*, 6; and Matthew Rampley, "Subjectivity and Modernism: Riegl and the Rediscovery of the Baroque," in Richard Woodfield (ed.), *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 2000), 268.

<sup>368</sup> Richter, "History is What is Happening Today," 228.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>370</sup> Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst* (Munich: Hugo Bruckmann, 1917), vii.

- <sup>371</sup> Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, trans. M. D. Hottinger (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1950), 6, vii; original emphases.
- <sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, vii, 237; and Richter, “History is What is Happening Today,” 229.
- <sup>373</sup> Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 116.
- <sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.
- <sup>375</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, “*Neuzeit*: Remarks on the Semantics of Modern Concepts of Movement,” in Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 222-254; and Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 8.
- <sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 14. Both Koselleck and Osborne trace the notion of non-contemporaneity to colonialism and the Enlightenment doctrine of progress; see Koselleck, “*Neuzeit*,” 237-239, 246, and Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 16.
- <sup>377</sup> Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?” in James Schmidt (ed.), *What is Enlightenment?: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, trans. James Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 62; original emphases.
- <sup>378</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987). See also Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 21-23.
- <sup>379</sup> Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” in Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 38.
- <sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, 36; and Michel Foucault, “The Art of Telling the Truth,” in Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*, ed. Lawrence D. Krizman, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Routledge, 1988), 87.
- <sup>381</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1997), 29; see also Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139-164.
- <sup>382</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 63. In his *Aesthetics*, Hegel would make a similar point in relation to time-based arts such as music and poetry: “Things together in space can comfortably be seen at a glance; but in time one moment has gone already when the next is there, and in this disappearance and reappearance the moments of time go on into infinity”; Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, Volume 1*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 249.
- <sup>383</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961), 5. Ernst Bloch had advanced a similar argument in *The Spirit of Utopia*: “Only immediately afterward can I easily hold it, turn it before me, so to speak. So only my immediate past is present to me, agrees with what we experience as apparently existent”; Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, trans. Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 187-188. On the increasing importance of temporal distance as a basis for knowledge of the past within modern thought, see also Koselleck, “*Neuzeit*,” 243.
- <sup>384</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “What Is the Contemporary?” in Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 39-54.
- <sup>385</sup> Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 603.
- <sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 608.
- <sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.
- <sup>388</sup> On this point, see Hobsbawm, *Behind the Times*, 8.
- <sup>389</sup> Baudelaire, “Painter of Modern Life,” 1.
- <sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>392</sup> de Man, “Literary History and Literary Modernity,” 396.
- <sup>393</sup> Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1.
- <sup>394</sup> “Die neue Zeit fordert den eigenen Sinn.”; see Walter Gropius, “Die Entwicklung moderner Industriebaukunst,” in *Die Kunst in Industrie und Handel: Jahrbuch des Deutschen Werkbundes* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1913), 19.
- <sup>395</sup> László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film*, trans. Janet Seligman (London: Lund Humphries, 1967), 9.

- <sup>396</sup> F. T. Marinetti, Bruno Corra, Emilio Settimelli, Arnaldo Ginna, Giacomo Balla, Remo Chiti, "The Futurist Cinema," in Rainey, Poggi, Wittmann (eds.), *Futurism: An Anthology*, 230; original emphases.
- <sup>397</sup> Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, 48, 67; see also *ibid.*, 34, 68, 124.
- <sup>398</sup> Christian Metz, "On the Impression of Reality in the Cinema," in Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 8.
- <sup>399</sup> Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 103-104.
- <sup>400</sup> Kurtz, *Expressionismus und Film*, 100.
- <sup>401</sup> Wilhelm Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas* (Berlin: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1926), 22. See also Pinder's article from the same year, "Kunstgeschichte nach Generationen," in Willy Schuster (ed.), *Zwischen Philosophie und Kunst: Johannes Volkelt zum 100. Lehrsemester* (Leipzig, Eduard Pfeiffer, 1926), 1-16.
- <sup>402</sup> Pinder's critique of Wölfflin is not entirely fair, given the latter's acknowledgment of problems of periodization and forms of non-synchronicity in his *Principles of Art History*: "the development is not always synchronous in the different arts: a late style of architecture can continue to exist by the side of new original notions in plastic or painting, cf. the Venetian Quattrocento, until finally everything is reduced to the same visual denominator. And as the great cross-sections in time yield no quite unified picture, just because the basic visual attitude varies, of its very nature, in the different races, so we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that within the same people—ethnographically united or not—different types of imagination constantly appear side by side" (Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, viii); "historians are always uncertain where to make the chapter on modern art history begin. Strict claims for 'clear-cut' period divisions do not carry us very far. In the old form, the new is already contained just as, besides the withering leaves, the bud of the new already exists" (*ibid.*, 235). See also Béla Balázs' comment in *Der Geist des Films* (1930): "in the history of art there are no periods of decline that do not contain the seeds of future developments" (Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, 209).
- <sup>403</sup> Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation*, 13, 15; original emphases.
- <sup>404</sup> Frederic J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 109-110.
- <sup>405</sup> Erwin Panofsky, "Reflections on Historical Time," trans. Johanna Bauman, *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Summer 2004): 694.
- <sup>406</sup> Georg Simmel, *Das Problem der historischen Zeit* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1916).
- <sup>407</sup> Panofsky, "Reflections on Historical Time," 694.
- <sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, 695.
- <sup>409</sup> Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. and trans. Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), 276-322.
- <sup>410</sup> Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, trans. Neville and Stephen Plaice (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 97.
- <sup>411</sup> Karl Marx, "Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy," in Marx, *The German Ideology, Part One*, ed. C. J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1970), 149. See also Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, 106.
- <sup>412</sup> Martin Jay, "1990: Straddling a Watershed?" in Jay, *Essays from the Edge: Parerga & Paralipomena* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 180.
- <sup>413</sup> Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans. Charles Beecher Hogan and George Kubler (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 140.
- <sup>414</sup> See Hippolyte Taine, *History of English Literature, Volume 1*, trans. H. van Laun (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871), 10-14.
- <sup>415</sup> Focillon, *Life of Forms in Art*, 140.
- <sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 155; original emphases.
- <sup>417</sup> René Wellek, "The Parallelism between Literature and the Arts," in W. K. Wimsatt (ed.), *Literary Criticism—Idea and Act: The English Institute, 1939-1972: Selected Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 63-64.
- <sup>418</sup> George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 25.
- <sup>419</sup> Focillon, *Life of Forms in Art*, 137; original emphases.
- <sup>420</sup> Kubler, *Shape of Time*, 25.

<sup>421</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, “Kracauer an Panofsky: New York, 3. März 1962,” in Volker Breidecker (ed.) *Siegfried Kracauer – Erwin Panofsky Briefwechsel 1941–1966* (Berlin, Akademie, 1996), 65. Responding to Kracauer’s questions about issues of periodization, Panofsky wrote, “It may be characteristic of a period (such as, for example, the ‘Age of Beethoven’) that several forms of cultural endeavor do *not* seem to have many common denominators”; see “Panofsky an Kracauer: Princeton, 7. März 1962,” in *ibid.*, 67; original emphases. Later that month, after having read *The Shape of Time*, Kracauer wrote to Panofsky, “Incidentally, Kubler’s claims for history of art are partly practice in the history of ideas, especially of philosophy. It appears that relatively immanent sequences can be assumed to develop in those historical dimensions which are reserved for ideas and meanings”; see “Kracauer an Panofsky: New York, 31. März 1962,” in *ibid.*, 69. On the correspondence between Kracauer and Panofsky, see also Ingrid Belke, “Nachbemerkung und editorische Notiz,” in Siegfried Kracauer, *Werke, Band 4: Geschichte – Vor den letzten Dingen*, ed. Ingrid Belke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 563-564. On the broader reception of Kubler’s book in the 1960s and beyond, see Pamela M. Lee, “‘Ultramoderne’: Or, How George Kubler Stole the Time in Sixties Art,” *Grey Room* no. 2 (Winter 2001): 46-77; and David Summers, *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism* (London: Phaidon, 2003), 16.

<sup>422</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, “Time and History,” in *History and Theory* 6 (1966): 68. This essay was first published in Max Horkheimer (ed.), *Zeugnisse: Theodor W. Adorno zum 60. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1963), 50-64, and would also become chapter six (“Ahasuerus, or the Riddle of Time”) of Kracauer’s *History: The Last Things Before the Last*, 139-163. Kracauer sent his article to both Panofsky and Kubler upon its publication; see “Kracauer an Panofsky: New York, 11. März 1964,” in Breidecker (ed.), *Briefwechsel*, 73. In his response, Panofsky would also reference his earlier essay on the Reims Cathedral: “What you say appears most convincing to me, and I believe (though I may be wrong) that some of the recent discussion was anticipated by myself when I was young, in the Appendix to an article on the chronology of the four masters of Reims [...], where I tried to define the difference between ‘historical’ time and ‘chronological’ time and to point out that chronological relationships, particular including contemporaneity, can be established only where a *functional* relationship can be shown to exist between the objects to be arranged ‘in sequence’”; see “Panofsky an Kracauer: Princeton, 16. März 1964,” in *ibid.*, 73; original emphases.

<sup>423</sup> Kracauer, *History*, 62-79. Notably, Kracauer never mentions or cites Ernst Bloch’s *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, but only Marx; see *ibid.*, 148. On Kracauer’s fraught relationship to Bloch’s book, see also Schwartz, *Blind Spots*, 104. In a 1936 exposé, Kracauer had nonetheless reflected Bloch’s analysis of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* and the failure of socialism in Germany: “The precarious position of the middle class results from the fact that its members are proletarianized on the one hand, and are completely inhibited by bourgeois traditions on the other. Precisely because of these traditions, they acrimoniously resist communism, but at the same time have to negate their position in the capitalist production process. In the prevailing system, they are no longer readily situated”; see Kracauer, “Exposé: Masse und Propaganda (Eine Untersuchung über die fascistische Propaganda),” in Ingrid Belke and Irina Renz (eds.), *Marbacher Magazin: Siegfried Kracauer 1889-1966*, vol. 47 (1988): 86.

<sup>424</sup> Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 12-13.

<sup>425</sup> Kracauer, *History*, 53-55; original emphases.

<sup>426</sup> Richter, “History is What is Happening Today,” 229.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>428</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 21; original emphases.

<sup>429</sup> Kracauer, *History*, 83.

## Chapter Four

<sup>430</sup> Karl Marx, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, in *MEGA*, part 1, vol. 5 (Berlin: Dietz, 1932), 567; quoted in Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London/New York: Routledge, 1973), 358.

<sup>431</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 98-99.

<sup>432</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, ed. Leonardo Quaresima (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), li. On the initial reception history of Kracauer’s book, see Martin Jay, “The Extraterritorial Life of Siegfried Kracauer,” in *Permanent Exiles*:

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*Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 170.

<sup>433</sup> Friedrich Meinecke, *Historicism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook*, trans. J. E. Anderson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).

<sup>434</sup> Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), ix.

<sup>435</sup> See Karl Löwith, "Nature, History, and Existentialism," in *Social Research*, vol. 19, no. 1 (March 1952): 79-81.

<sup>436</sup> See, e.g., Helmuth Plessner's comments in *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch: Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), x.

<sup>437</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "The Idea of Natural History," trans. Bob Hullot-Kentor, in *telos*, no. 60 (Summer 1984): 116-117.

<sup>438</sup> Eric Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity: Relocating the Bergfilm," *New German Critique*, no. 51 (Autumn 1990): 139. Anton Kaes has followed Kracauer's line of argumentation, writing: "In dem Maße, wie der politisch-soziale Bereich der Weimarer Republik Identifikationsmöglichkeiten verweigerte, bot sich die Natur der Berge als eine der Kontingenz der Tagespolitik enthobene, höhere Sphäre an. Wie der Western als prototypischer amerikanischer Genrefilm gilt, so erschien der Bergfilm in der Sicht der zwanziger Jahre als charakteristisch deutsch, insofern er für die Unterwerfung des Subjekts unter die Gewalt der Elemente, für das tragische Lebensgefühl und die Verflüchtigung der Politik und der Geschichte angesichts der Größe der Natur und des Kosmos steht"; Kaes, "Film in der Weimarer Republik: Motor der Moderne," in *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, eds. Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes, and Hans Helmut Prinzler (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 2004), 74-75.

<sup>439</sup> Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 112. See also Susan Sontag's famous comments on Fanck: "Fanck's pop-Wagnerian vehicles for Riefenstahl were no doubt thought of as apolitical when they were made but they can also be seen in retrospect, as Siegfried Kracauer has argued, as an anthology of proto-Nazi sentiments. The mountain climbing in Fanck's pictures was a visually irresistible metaphor of unlimited aspiration toward the high mystic goal, both beautiful and terrifying, which was later to become concrete in Führerworship"; Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," in *New York Review of Books* (February 6, 1975), <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1975/02/06/fascinating-fascism/>>.

<sup>440</sup> See, e.g., Nancy P. Nenno, "'Postcards from the Edge': Education to Tourism in the German Mountain Film," in *Light Motives: German Popular Film in Perspective*, eds. Randall Halle and Margaret McCarthy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 61-84; and Wilfried Wilms, "'The Essence of the Alpine World is Struggle': Strategies of *Gesundung* in Arnold Fanck's Early Mountain Films," in *Heights of Reflection: Mountains in the German Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann (Rochester: Camden House, 2012), 267-284.

<sup>441</sup> Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation* (Munich: Bremer Presse, 1927). On the conservative revolution, see, e.g., Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 21; and Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London/New York: Verso, 1995), 162-3.

<sup>442</sup> Thomas Mann, "Deutschland und die Deutschen," in *Thomas Mann: Essays, Band 2, Politik*, ed. Herman Kunzke (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1977), 294; quoted in Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 2.

<sup>443</sup> Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 1; and Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 44.

<sup>444</sup> Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 163.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-167. On the trope of "revolution," see Martin Jay, "Mourning a Metaphor: The Revolution is Over," in *Essays from the Edge: Parerga & Paralipomena* (Charlottesville/London: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 36-39.

<sup>446</sup> Anson Rabinbach, "Nationalsozialismus und Moderne: Zur Technik-Interpretation im Dritten Reich," in *Der Technikdiskurs in der Hitler-Stalin-Ära*, eds. Wolfgang Emmerich and Carl Wege (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 1995), 111-112.

<sup>447</sup> Katharina Loew, "The Spirit of Technology: Early German Thinking about Film," *New German Critique* vol. 41, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 130-132.

<sup>448</sup> I am using the restored version of the film released as part of the "Masters of Cinema" DVD series in 2004. Here and below, I have often modified the English translations found on the DVD.

<sup>449</sup> Johannes von Moltke, *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 46. See also Christopher Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of*

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*Mountains: Music, Opera, Cinema* (Farnham, Surrey/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 90; and Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity," 145.

<sup>450</sup> On the relationship between sports and filmic narrative, see also Béla Balázs' comments in *Visible Man*: "The more important and interesting a sporting feat is on film, the more it detracts from the dramatic action. It ceases to be *expressive movement*, acquires an independent value and has an effect similar to that of a variety number interpolated into the drama"; Balázs, *Early Film Theory: Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, ed. Erica Carter, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 64.

<sup>451</sup> See, e.g., Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 110-111.

<sup>452</sup> Hermann Häfker, "Cinema and Geography: Introduction," in *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907–1933*, eds. Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan, trans. Nicholas Baer (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 51; Christian Kiening and Heinrich Adolf, "Nachwort," in *Der absolute Film: Dokumente der Medienavantgarde (1912–1936)*, eds. Kiening and Adolf (Zurich: Chronos, 2012), 465; and Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, 52. On the Romantic debates, see Thomas Brandlmeier, "Arnold Fanck," in *CineGraph: Lexikon zum deutschsprachigen Film*, ed. Hans-Michael Bock (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1984), E1, Lg. 4.

<sup>453</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 30-37.

<sup>454</sup> Arnold Fanck, "Die Zukunft des Naturfilms," in *Berge, Licht und Traum: Dr. Arnold Fanck und der deutsche Bergfilm*, eds. Jan-Christopher Horak and Gisela Pichler (Munich: Bruckmann, 1997), 143.

<sup>455</sup> Reviewing the film in *Die Weltbühne* on January 11, 1927, Axel Eggebrecht invoked the film's "faustdicke Fidus-Stimmung"; see *ibid.*, 208. See also Thomas Jacobs, "Visuelle Traditionen des Bergfilms: Von Fidus zu Friedrich oder Das Ende bürgerlicher Fluchtbewegungen im Faschismus," in *Film und Kritik*, no. 1 (June 1992): 30.

<sup>456</sup> On Fanck's views of Nietzsche, see Arnold Fanck, *Er führte Regie mit Gletschern, Stürmen und Lawinen: Ein Filmpionier erzählt* (Munich: Nymphenburger, 1973), 52. On the links to Parzival and the legend of the Holy Grail, see Hubert Mumelter, "Luis Trenker und der Heilige Berg," *Der Filmspiegel* 7, no. 12 (1926): 36-37.

<sup>457</sup> On the iconographic sources, see Brandlmeier, "Arnold Fanck," E1, Lg. 4; Thomas Brandlmeier, "Sinnezeichen und Gedankenbilder: Vier Abschnitte zu Arnold Fanck," in *Berge, Licht und Traum*, 76; Jacobs, "Visuelle Traditionen des Bergfilms," 31; Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*, 91; Nenno, "Postcards from the Edge," 66; and Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity," 147.

<sup>458</sup> Peter Viereck famously identified two sets of cultural repertoires in the German context: "classical, rational, legalist, and Christian traditions" and an alternative trajectory including Teutonic paganism and Romanticism; see Viereck, *Metapolitics: From Wagner and the German Romantics to Hitler* (Edison: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 5.

<sup>459</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 439.

<sup>460</sup> On the significant influence of Rousseau on perceptions of the Alps, see Robert Walser, "Die literarische Schweiz," in Walser, *Das Gesamtwerk, Band 9*, ed. Jochen Greeven (Geneva/Hamburg: Suhrkamp, 1968), 421.

<sup>461</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 152. On the shifting conceptions of the Alps in cultural and intellectual history, see also Roman Giesen, "Der Bergfilm der 20er und 30er Jahre," in *Medienobservationen* (2008): <[http://www.germanistenverzeichnis.phil.uni-erlangen.de/institutlisten/files/de/09500\\_de/9584\\_de.html](http://www.germanistenverzeichnis.phil.uni-erlangen.de/institutlisten/files/de/09500_de/9584_de.html)>; Sean Franzel, "Time and Narrative in the Mountain Sublime around 1800," in *Heights of Reflection*, 98-115; and Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*, 60-61.

<sup>462</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Blue Guide," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1972), 74.

<sup>463</sup> Quoted in Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 341. On Petrarch's ascent, see also Brandlmeier, "Sinnezeichen und Gedankenbilder," 73; Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 419; and Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, 53: "As is well known, Petrarch was the first man to conceive the idea that one might climb a high mountain as a 'tourist', without expecting to find anything there but beauty."

<sup>464</sup> See Andrew Denning, *Skiing into Modernity: A Cultural and Environmental History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015); and Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*, 12.

- <sup>465</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "A Theory of Tourism," trans. Gerd Gemünden and Kenn Johnson, *New German Critique* 68, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1996): 129.
- <sup>466</sup> On nature, visual technologies, and tourism in the *Bergfilm*, see also Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), 391-392; Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*; Nenzo, "'Postcards from the Edge'"; and Christian Rapp, *Höhenrausch: Der deutsche Bergfilm* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1997), 18. See also the sections "Bergreisen im Kinositz" and "Der Zauberberg" in Arnold Zweig, *Dialektik der Alpen: Fortschritt und Hemmnis* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1997), 187, 195-6.
- <sup>467</sup> See Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 35; and Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*, 13. Morris also identifies the trope of mountain solitude in the work of Martin Heidegger, Henrik Ibsen, and Anton Webern; see *ibid.*, 19, 22, 120.
- <sup>468</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Alpine Journey," in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, eds. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone, trans. Sam Whimster (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), 219.
- <sup>469</sup> Ernst Bloch, "Alpen ohne Photographie," in *Literarische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965), 488-498.
- <sup>470</sup> Quoted in Keith Ansell Pearson, "The Incorporation of Truth: Towards the Overhuman," in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson (Malden/Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 231.
- <sup>471</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version," in *Selected Writings, Volume 3, 1935-1938*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 105.
- <sup>472</sup> On the relation between humankind, nature, and technology, see also Benjamin's comments in "To the Planetarium," in *Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1913-1926*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 487.
- <sup>473</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Theories of German Fascism: On the Collection of Essays *War and Warrior*," edited by Ernst Jünger," in *Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 1, 1927-1930*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Jerolf Wikoff (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 314, 319.
- <sup>474</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, "Das Wunder des Schneeschuhs," in *Kleine Schriften zum Film, Band 6.1, 1921-1927*, ed. Inka Mülder-Bach (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 11.
- <sup>475</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, "Mountains, Clouds, People," trans. Nicholas Baer, in *The Promise of Cinema*, 97.
- <sup>476</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, "Der 'heilige' Berg," in *Kleine Schriften zum Film, Band 6.1*, 298.
- <sup>477</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 62.
- <sup>478</sup> See Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," in *The Mass Ornament*, 79-86; and Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 15-16, 71. On the concept of nature in the Frankfurt School, see also Steven Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).
- <sup>479</sup> Béla Balázs, "The Case of Dr. Fanck," trans. Alex H. Bush, in *The Promise of Cinema*, 70.
- <sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.
- <sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.
- <sup>482</sup> See Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, 53. See also his comments on the filmic relationship between human figures and cosmic forces in *ibid.*, 41.
- <sup>483</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Alps," trans. Margaret Cerullo, in *Qualitative Sociology* vol. 16, no. 2 (1993): 179-184.
- <sup>484</sup> Simmel, "The Alpine Journey," 221. See also Otto Weininger's comparison between Böcklin and Nietzsche: "one feels that mountains are dead and is mightily attracted only to the sea with its eternal motion (Böcklin), while another is unable to relate to that never-ending restlessness and returns under the sublime power of the mountains (Nietzsche)"; Weininger, *Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles*, eds. Daniel Steuer and Laura Marcus, trans. Ladislaus Löb (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 97.
- <sup>485</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Relative and the Absolute in the Problem of the Sexes," in Simmel, *On Women, Sexuality, and Love*, trans. Guy Oakes (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1984), 130.

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<sup>486</sup> See also Rita Felski's discussion of Simmel's text in *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 46-47.

<sup>487</sup> Notably, the sirens' song is here replaced by Diotima's "Tanz an das Meer," suggesting dance as the form of siren call best suited to silent film aesthetics. Balázs would also invoke the sirens' song in "The Case of Dr. Fanck" (p. 70) with reference to Homer's *Odyssey*, and Horkheimer and Adorno would famously discuss the tale in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

<sup>488</sup> Cf. Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "Where did the highest mountains come from? Thus I once asked. Then I learned that they come from the sea. This testimony is written into their stone and onto the walls of their peaks. From the deepest the highest must come into its height"; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, eds. Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 122.

<sup>489</sup> Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 249.

<sup>490</sup> On this point, see also Rapp, *Höhenrausch*, 108. On the history of women and Alpine sports, see Denning, *Skiing into Modernity*, 103; Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*, 15; and Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 495.

<sup>491</sup> On Meisel's score, see Anon., "Die Musik von Edmund Meisel zu dem Film 'Der heilige Berg,'" *Lichtbild-Bühne*, no. 13 (January 15, 1927); and Edmund Meisel, "Wie schreibt man Filmmusik?," in *Ufa-Magazin*, vol. 2, no. 14 (April 1-7, 1927). For an illuminating analysis of Meisel's score for *Der heilige Berg*, see Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*, 79-114.

<sup>492</sup> See also Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 166; and Michael Cowan and Barbara Hales, "Introduction," *seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*, vol. XLVI, no. 3 (September 2010), 199. I thank Kristina Köhler for the reference to Fuller. Toepfer also mentions Heinrich Vogeler's 1918 portrait of Marna Glahn featuring the sea and a waterfall; see *Empire of Ecstasy*, 360.

<sup>493</sup> Quoted in Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, 35.

<sup>494</sup> Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, 134; and Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 97.

<sup>495</sup> On this point, see also Nenno, "Postcards from the Edge," 70.

<sup>496</sup> See also Fanck, *Er führte Regie mit Gletschern, Stürmen und Lawinen*, 166; and Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*, 50. On the sublime in Fanck's mountain films, see Carsten Strathausen, "The Image as Abyss: The Mountain Film and the Cinematic Sublime," in *Peripheral Visions: The Hidden Stages of Weimar Cinema*, ed. Kenneth S. Calhoun (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 171-189.

<sup>497</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon, 1965), 435.

<sup>498</sup> See also Jutta Menschik-Bendele, "Psychoanalytisches zum Bergfilm: Heldinnen und Helden in den 30er Jahren," in *Der BergFilm 1920-1940*, ed. Friedbert Aspetsberger (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2002), 88.

<sup>499</sup> On the maternal dimensions of Riefenstahl's role in Fanck's films, see also Ben Gabel, "Der ewige Traum," in *Film und Kritik*, no. 1 (June 1992): 43-44.

<sup>500</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust I & II*, ed. and trans. Stuart Atkins (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 214.

<sup>501</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, trans. Simona Draghici (Washington, DC: Plutarch, 1997), 2.

<sup>502</sup> Klaus Lichtblau, "Eros and Culture: Gender Theory in Simmel, Tönnies and Weber," in *Georg Simmel: Critical Assessments*, ed. David Frisby (London/New York: Routledge, 1994), 35.

<sup>503</sup> In his later *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno would cite a passage from *Das Kapital* (vol. I, Berlin 1955, p. 7f) in which Marx had used the term "natural history"; see Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 354.

<sup>504</sup> Adorno, "Idea of Natural History," 117.

<sup>505</sup> See also Bob Hullot-Kentor, "Introduction to Adorno's 'Idea of Natural-History,'" *telos*, no. 60 (Summer 1984): 97-110. In his *Trauerspiel* book, Walter Benjamin quoted Friedrich Creuzer's thesis that symbol and allegory "stand in relation to each other as does the silent, great and mighty natural world of mountains and plants to the living progression of human history"; see Benjamin, *The Origins of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London/New York: Verso, 1998), 165.

<sup>506</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); and Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno,



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*Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

<sup>507</sup> Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 300-360.

<sup>508</sup> Benjamin, *Origins of German Tragic Drama*, 178. On the idea of natural history in Adorno's work, see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 43-62; Beatrice Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin's Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings, and Angels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 9-102; and Max Pensky, "Natural History: The Life and Afterlife of a Concept in Adorno," *Critical Horizons* 5:1 (2004): 227-258.

<sup>509</sup> For an insightful analysis of Strauss' symphony and its relation to Nietzsche's writings, see Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*, 11, 49-78. See also Peter Höyng, "Leaving the Summit Behind: Tracking Biographical and Philosophical Pathways in Richard Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie*," in *Heights of Reflection*, 231-247.

<sup>510</sup> On the ice cathedral, see Leopold Blonder, "Baue mit Eis: Zu den Eisbauten in dem Ufa-Film 'Der heilige Berg,'" *Ufa-Magazin*, no. 18 (December 17-23, 1926); and Fanck, *Er führte Regie mit Gletschern, Stürmen und Lawinen*, 155.

<sup>511</sup> Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 258.

<sup>512</sup> Nenno, "Postcards from the Edge," 70.

<sup>513</sup> See Gabriele von Bassermann-Jordan, *Schönes Leben! du lebst, wie die zarten Blüten im Winter: Die Figur der Diotima in Hölderlins Lyrik und im "Hyperion"-Projekt: Theorie und dichterische Praxis* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 153.

<sup>514</sup> Simmel, "The Alpine Journey," 221.

<sup>515</sup> Released two years prior, Fritz Lang's two-part *Die Nibelungen* had similarly invoked *Nibelungentreue*. On the broader legacy of Romanticism, see Rüdiger Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair*, trans. Robert E. Goodwin (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014).

<sup>516</sup> On this point, see also Gabel, "Der ewige Traum," 48.

<sup>517</sup> Leo Löwenthal, "Knut Hamsun, 1860-1952," in *Literature and the Image of Man* (New Brunswick/Oxford: Transaction Books, 1986), 194.

<sup>518</sup> Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. Robert Savage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>519</sup> Zweig, *Dialektik der Alpen*. One of Fanck's cameramen for *Der heilige Berg*, Helmar Lerski, also emigrated to Palestine.

<sup>520</sup> See also Detlev Claussen, *Theodor Adorno: One Last Genius*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1; and Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Adorno: A Biography*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge/Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 401.

<sup>521</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Aus Sils Maria," in *Ohne Leitbild: Parva Aesthetica* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), 48-51.

<sup>522</sup> Kracauer and Adorno worked on *History and Negative Dialectics* concurrently and engaged on often-tense conversations on the matters at hand; see, e.g., Siegfried Kracauer, "Talk with Teddie," in *Siegfried Kracauer's American Writings: Essays on Film and Popular Culture*, eds. Johannes von Moltke and Kristy Rawson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 127-132. For a comparison between their two books, see also Christina Gerhardt, "On Natural History: Concepts of History in Kracauer and Adorno," in *Culture in the Anteroom: The Legacies of Siegfried Kracauer*, eds. Gerd Gemünden and Johannes von Moltke (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 229-243.

<sup>523</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995), 20.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>526</sup> See Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*, 3-4.

<sup>527</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Winter 2009): 197-222. On the concept of the "anthropocene," see Paul J. Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," in *Nature* vol. 415 (January 3, 2002): 23.

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