



CONTINUITY
AND CRISIS
IN GERMAN
CINEMA
1928-1936

Edited by Barbara Hales,
Mihaela Petrescu,
and Valerie Weinstein

Continuity and Crisis in German Cinema, 1928–1936

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Contents

List of Illustrations	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	1
<i>Barbara Hales, Mihaela Petrescu, and Valerie Weinstein</i>	

Part I. Politics

1: “Timid Heresies”: Werner Hochbaum’s <i>Razzia in St. Pauli</i> (1932)	31
<i>Christian Rogowski</i>	
2: Film as Pedagogy in Late Weimar and Early Nazi Cinema: The Role of the Street in Mobilizing the Spectator	51
<i>Bastian Heinsohn</i>	

Part II. The Economy

3: “A Fairy Tale for Grown-ups”: Financial and Cinematic Crises in <i>Die Koffer des Herrn O.F.</i> (1931)	73
<i>Paul Flaig</i>	
4: “Denn Gold ist Glück und Fluch dieser Welt”: Examining the Trope of “Gold” in <i>Gold</i> (1934) and <i>Der Kaiser von Kalifornien</i> (1936)	92
<i>Owen Lyons</i>	

Part III. Concepts of Race and Ethnicity

5: Degenerate Disease and the Doctors of Death: Racial Hygiene Film as Propaganda in Weimar and Early Nazi Germany	113
<i>Barbara Hales</i>	
6: “White Jews” and Dark Continents: Capitalist Critique and Its Racial Undercurrents in Detlef Sierck’s <i>April! April!</i> (1935)	132
<i>Valerie Weinstein</i>	

Part IV. Genre Cinema

- 7: The *Zigeunerdrama* Reloaded: Leni Riefenstahl's Fantasy Gypsies and Sacrificial Others 151
Anjeana Hans
- 8: Regaining Mobility: The Aviator in Weimar Mountain Films 167
Wilfried Wilms

Part V. Making Cinema Stars

- 9: Brigitte Helm and Germany's Star System in the 1920s and 1930s 189
Mihaela Petrescu
- 10: Foreign Attractions: Czech Stars and Ethnic Masquerade 210
Kevin B. Johnson

Part VI. Film Technologies

- 11: Objects in Motion: Hans Richter's *Vormittagsspuk* (1928) and the Crisis of Avant-Garde Film 233
Brook Henkel
- 12: Seeing Crisis in Harry Piel's *Ein Unsichtbarer geht durch die Stadt* (1933) 251
Kalani Mitchell

Part VII. German-International Film Relations

- 13: Playing the European Market: Marcel L'Herbier's *L'Argent* (1928), Ufa, and German-French Film Relations 273
Margrit Frölich
- 14: A Serious Man? Ernst Lubitsch's Antiwar Film *The Man I Killed* (aka *Broken Lullaby*, USA 1932) 291
Richard W. McCormick
- Selected Bibliography 307
- Notes on the Contributors 317
- Index 323

Illustrations

Fig. 1.1.	Promotional material for <i>Razzia in St. Pauli</i> (1932)	36
Fig. 4.1.	Illustration from the January 1931 edition of <i>UHU</i> magazine	99
Fig. 5.1.	Doctor lecturing medical students in <i>Feind im Blut</i> (1931)	119
Fig. 6.1.	Werner Finck and Charlott Daudert in <i>April! April!</i> (1935)	137
Fig. 6.2.	First view of the prince (Albrecht Schönhals) in <i>April! April!</i> (1935)	145
Fig. 8.1.	Ernst Udet in <i>Stürme über dem Mont Blanc</i> (1930)	173
Fig. 8.2.	“Die Kriegsflugzeuge sämtlicher Staaten der Welt” from Ernst Jünger’s <i>Luftfahrt ist Not!</i> (378)	179
Fig. 9.1.	Brigitte Helm in <i>Gold</i> (1934)	195
Fig. 9.2.	Brigitte Helm in <i>Gold</i> (1934)	195
Fig. 9.3.	Brigitte Helm and Sybille Schmitz in <i>Ein idealer Gatte</i> (1935)	199
Fig. 10.1.	Anny Ondra in <i>Der junge Graf</i> (1935)	216
Fig. 10.2.	Lída Baarová in <i>Einer zuviel an Bord</i> (1935)	221
Fig. 11.1.	<i>Vormittagsspuk</i> (1928)	237
Fig. 11.2.	Page from Hans Richter’s book <i>Filmgegner von heute—Filmfreunde von morgen</i> (1929)	246
Fig. 12.1.	<i>Ein Unsichtbarer geht durch die Stadt</i> (1933)	255
Fig. 12.2.	<i>Ein Unsichtbarer geht durch die Stadt</i> (1933)	262
Fig. 13.1.	Pierre Alcover and Brigitte Helm in <i>L’Argent</i> (1928)	281
Fig. 14.1.	Tom Douglas in <i>L’homme que j’ai tué</i> (1932)	293
Fig. 14.2.	Nancy Carroll and Phillips Holmes in <i>L’homme que j’ai tué</i> (1932)	299

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Introduction

Barbara Hales, Mihaela Petrescu, and Valerie Weinstein

THE FOLLOWING COLLECTION OF ESSAYS investigates the continuities and discontinuities in German cinema before and after 1933, namely, during the transitional period of 1928 to 1936. Much of the scholarship on German cinema approaches the subject by assuming discrete historical periods defined by political regimes. Weimar and Third Reich film are thus often examined apart from one another, in spite of the continuities in both style and substance found in films made before and after 1933.¹ Not only does this standard approach impede investigation of significant continuities, but it also obscures longer discursive genealogies and their social, political, and cinematic significance. The current volume serves as a corrective to this tendency by foregrounding comparisons of German cinematic works across the Weimar and Nazi periods.

Several scholars have challenged using the ascendancy of the National Socialists to power in 1933 as the basis for periodization of German cinema. Focusing on genre cinema, Klaus Kreimeier argues that the continuities and discontinuities in German film and film genres before and after 1933 pose serious problems for discrete periodization. For example, genre cinema does not exhibit a clear stylistic break between the Weimar and Nazi regimes, but rather more subtle differences.² Focusing on modernist films, Thomas Elsaesser similarly challenges the 1933 break between Weimar and Nazi cinema, alternatively conceptualizing the period from 1930 to 1936 as a single filmic epoch in Germany, unified by the introduction of sound as well as common economic, technological, and geopolitical concerns.³ Building on Elsaesser's approach to the scholarship, the editors of this volume propose an earlier date of 1928, a year in which these various changes began to manifest.

Although differences in institutional circumstances before and after 1933 are obvious, the relationships among films made between 1928 and 1936 are complex and manifold. Within such rich complexity, we find particularly meaningful linkages in cinema's relationships to the political, economic, and social crises of these years. Although the construct of "crisis" posits a decisive break, as elaborated in the discussion that follows, such fantasies of rupture, disruption, and renewal persist throughout the period in question, accompanying and sometimes masking an array of stylistic, ideological, and institutional associations. To address

the complexities of this transitional era in German cinema, this volume traces how film reflects aspects of continuity and crisis in different, frequently overlapping realms: politics, the economy, discourses of race and ethnicity, genre cinema, the making of cinema stars, film technologies, particularly the coming of sound, and German-international film relationships. Treating the years 1928 to 1936 as a transitional period in German cinema, the essays in this volume offer new interpretations of some of the period's best-known films as well as some lesser-known works.

Treating Weimar and Nazi Germany in isolation from each other and, by extension, Weimar and Nazi cinema, perpetuates misconceptions of Nazism as representing a complete rupture in European values. A more productive and subtle approach recognizes that no historical epoch arises *sui generis* and that there are always important continuities with previous time periods. This volume constitutes an intervention in German film historiography by questioning views that focus on Nazi cinema as a complete rupture with the past through a detailed analysis of film as an instantiation of culture, bridging the Weimar and early Nazi periods 1928 to 1936 with a careful eye to note cultural rifts that appear as well as continuities across the time period.

Crisis, Continuity, and Transition in German Culture, 1928–1936

Germany experienced dramatic cultural changes between 1928 and 1936 brought on by a series of actual and perceived “crises” in all spheres of life. Reinhart Koselleck and Michaela Richter have examined the changing meaning of the concept of “crisis” both diachronically and synchronically in a transnational setting, though their investigation does not consider these changes in the context of the First and Second World Wars. Their detailed examination illuminates the term’s etymology in classical Greek, which includes the meaning of making a “decision” in the sense of “reaching a verdict or judgment, what today is meant by criticism.”⁴ According to Koselleck and Richter, in Germany, “crisis” (in German *Krise*) started out as a medical term in the sixteenth century (362), and its political usage preceded its extension into economic language around 1850 (366). With Friedrich Schiller, the term “crisis” became a historical idea (371), whereas Johann Gottfried Herder used it in the philosophy of history (377), and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels employed it primarily as an economic concept (393). By 1845, “crisis” had entered the quotidian jargon, as attested by its inclusion that year in the prominent German-language encyclopedia Brockhaus (366).

According to Koselleck and Richter, today, crisis has become a “central catchword,” so much so that “in our century, there is virtually no area of life that has not been examined and interpreted through this

concept with its inherent demand for decisions and choices” (358). On the one hand, this is due to the concept’s “metaphorical flexibility” and its “multi-layered and ambiguous” meanings (358). On the other hand, this elusiveness is also caused by the media’s undifferentiated use of the term: “‘Crisis’ is often used interchangeably with ‘unrest,’ ‘conflict,’ ‘revolution,’ and to describe vaguely disturbing moods and situations” (399). As Koselleck and Richter point out, a crucial challenge for today’s scholars derives from the fact that, over time, the meaning of the term has changed: “The concept of crisis, which once had the power to pose unavoidable, harsh and non-negotiable alternatives, has been transformed to fit the uncertainties of whatever might be favored at a given moment” (399). They suggest that this pervasive ambiguity may be a “symptom of a historical crisis that cannot as yet be fully gauged” (399). Renate Bebermeyer underscores this vagueness as something “often welcome, since it makes it possible to keep open what it [crisis] may mean in the future.”⁵

Keeping in mind the various uses of the term “crisis”—or in Koselleck and Richter’s words, its “metaphorical flexibility”—the concept of “crisis” was employed in a variety of ways during the time span under consideration. The term’s ambivalence in its modern form could call forth the notion of “hopelessness,” but also one of dramatic change for the better. In his assessment of suicide in Weimar Germany, for instance, Moritz Föllmer points out that during that period crisis expressed the need for radical change: “Right-wing authors emphasized the need for decision in an existential, all-or-nothing situation; Communists predicted the imminent downfall of capitalism as the prerequisite for a proletarian revolution; Social Democrats and liberals used the notion of crisis to opt for reform in a spirit of democratic humanism.”⁶ In Föllmer’s examples, the present conditions demanded radical change in which a better future would follow. In this transitional state, there was hope that the body politic could adopt meaningful change resulting in the restoration of civic order or a metaphorical state of health. It was this fight for health—or what the various actors saw as health—that would define crisis in late Weimar and early Nazi Germany.

Several notable factors are responsible for Weimar’s unstable political environment: significant casualties suffered in the First World War, the restrictive Versailles treaty, the inflation of 1923, and the unemployment of the Great Depression starting in 1929. The general instability of the Weimar Republic created an environment in which every political issue was perceived as a crisis.⁷ The political and economic crises found in Weimar are also bound up with several cultural crises. The beginning phase of the Republic, the years 1918 to 1924, was marked by revolution, inflation, and, in the arts, by experimentation with Expressionism.⁸ In an intermediary period from 1924 to 1929, the Republic experienced both political stability and economic prosperity, which resonated in the artistic realm as a “matter-of-fact” style known as *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New

Objectivity).⁹ The final phase of the Weimar Republic was again fraught with economic and political turmoil, with the avant-garde mirroring the doom and gloom of an alienated public. In 1931, the painter George Grosz noted that Weimar was in a crisis period in which all ideas had become volatile and liberalism was on the decline, and where many left-wing artists were isolated amidst the imminent threat of dictatorship.¹⁰ Conservative, conventional, and reactionary voices all demonized Weimar's avant-garde artists as well as other groups, such as gays, lesbians, and "New Women," that were challenging traditional boundaries of sexuality and gender behavior.¹¹ Writing in a 1931 article, the conservative cultural critic Arnolt Bronnen decried the crisis in theater, whose overly liberal tendencies he deemed antinational. Conservative critics went so far as to call for theater to be outlawed on account of its subversive potential.¹² In his seminal work *From Caligari to Hitler*, written in exile and published in 1947, the cultural analyst Siegfried Kracauer noted the national desire for authoritarian control, stemming from a petite bourgeoisie that could not accept political, economic, and social change.¹³

The various instabilities within Weimar set the stage for the Nazis' rise to power. Political struggles between the Communists and National Socialists raged as more than thirty political parties vied for power. National Socialists hoped to solidify their gains by addressing the anticapitalist sentiments unleashed by the Great Depression, known in German as the *Weltwirtschaftskrise* (world economic crisis). While on the one hand the National Socialists deployed anticapitalist rhetoric, on the other hand Hitler forged relationships with industrialists, allying with Alfred Hugenberg's German National People's Party and assuring economic elites that he was holding back the Communists.¹⁴ Building on this appeal to both the masses and industry, the Nazis promised to replace the "Jewish" capitalism associated with the Weimar Republic with a "utopian state" based on democratic individualism and a unified *Volk* (people).¹⁵

The Nazi attempt to engineer a *Volksgemeinschaft* (racial-national community) by flattening out the perception of class and forming new alliances was key to a functioning dictatorship. Central to the creation of this *Volksgemeinschaft* was the exclusion of those construed as threatening the racial health of the German people and as belonging to other races: the disabled, the mentally ill, and Jews, and also other groups, including but not limited to the Sinti and Roma, and the Slavs.

A major part of the National Socialists' program involved unifying the German *Volk* and improving the health of the *Volkskörper* (racial-national body) through a variety of means, including eugenic medical practices. In the 1920s, "racial hygiene" or eugenics was "far more heterogeneous in its politics and ideology than is generally assumed."¹⁶ In Nazi Germany, it turned decisively toward "negative eugenics"—namely, toward the sterilization and elimination of racially "undesirable" elements. Yet the

Weimar Republic is where Nazi eugenics had its origin. According to Paul Weindling, “Virtually every aspect of eugenic thought and practice—from ‘euthanasia’ of the unfit and compulsory sterilization to positive welfare—was developed during the turmoil of the crucial years between 1918 and 1924,”¹⁷ and it was during the development of the welfare state in the Weimar Republic that “eugenics changed from being the creed of an introverted nationalist grouping to becoming an integral part of social medicine and welfare.”¹⁸

Anti-Semitism in Germany intensified during the political and economic crises of the late 1920s and early 1930s, and the regime transition in 1933 gave it catastrophic institutional power. In order to create the pure Aryan nation envisioned by Hitler and the Nazis, Jews were designated as germ carriers who were lethal to the health of the Aryan people. Jews were considered dark agents of capitalism, Bolshevik agitators, and impure parasites on the German body politic. Their presence was treated, correspondingly, as a “crisis” in the medical and political sense: decisive action was needed to restore the *Volk* body to health. Although this was not an entirely new phenomenon—anti-Semitism had been a common phenomenon in Weimar Germany—the early period of the Third Reich saw a flurry of anti-Jewish legislation, including the Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre (Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, September 15, 1935),¹⁹ which prohibited marriage between Jews and Germans. The Gesetz zum Schutze der Erbgesundheit des deutschen Volkes (Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German Volk, October 18, 1935)²⁰ mandated the prohibition of marriage between Jews and non-Jews on hereditary grounds and was linked to the previous edict in its close temporal and conceptual proximity. Such laws insinuated that Jewishness as “race” was a hereditary disease that needed to be eradicated. The Nazis also persecuted the Sinti and Roma. In 1927, so-called German gypsies were required to be fingerprinted, a fact that marked them as threatening other.²¹ Furthermore, they were subjected, among other horrors, to sterilization, medical experimentation, and deportation and murder in concentration and death camps.

Adolf Hitler’s rise to power and the victory of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers Party) in 1933 raised new crises as propaganda called for a “reevaluation of all German values.”²² Nazi Germany was dominated by a cult mentality “complete with xenophobic myth and paranoid messiah.”²³ Hitler emphasized “subjective self, feeling, [and] experience,” privileging the spiritual over the objective world.²⁴ In a 1934 speech entitled “The Oath to Adolf Hitler,” Rudolf Hess, Stellvertreter des Führers (Deputy of the Führer) between 1933 and 1941, poignantly articulated Nazi views about Hitler as “above the influence of earthly powers” and sent to the

world by “higher powers.”²⁵ The historian Ian Kershaw notes the discontinuity exhibited by Hitler’s form of leadership, which was evident in the replacement of a “legal-rational [government] by a charismatic form.”²⁶ The Third Reich was bereft of a central governmental structure and was left with individual departments that attempted to carry out legislation according to Hitler’s intentions.²⁷ Hitler attempted to redefine Germany’s victim status that followed from its defeat in the First World War through his political doctrines. According to Hitler, Germans in 1933 were no longer a people of infamy and disgrace, but a people of strength and tenacity.²⁸ He thus came to represent a new identity for Germany’s political power, one of social unity and stability.²⁹ Of course, this supposed unification of the German people came at the cost of mass genocide and entrance into a world war that would ultimately lead to the dissolution of the Reich in 1945 with Germany’s defeat.

Although Kershaw describes Germany under Hitler’s rule as a country in crisis, he also observes continuity under the Third Reich. Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933 promised elements of change, but also elements of sameness, as is evident in Hitler’s tribute to Reich President Hindenburg.³⁰ In portraying the early Third Reich as both radically different and, at the same time, very traditional, Kershaw points to a conception of continuity as a means of preserving identity: “‘Continuity’ is, in fact, the historian’s abbreviation for the persistence, survival, or retention of the dominant strains and features of a social and political system. Clearly, this allows for the existence of differing continuities, and also for the possibility of ‘discontinuities.’”³¹ With respect to continuity and the Third Reich’s embrace of the past, Kershaw cites a Nazi predilection for the mobilization of the lower middle classes, which was also pronounced in the Wilhelmine era, as well as the support for German expansion abroad and the antidemocratic neoconservative movements found in both Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany.³² Additionally, the elite leaders in the army, industry, civil service, and the landed gentry, significant in helping the Nazis consolidate and “seize” power, were also influential in hindering Weimar Germany from becoming a true liberal democratic society.³³

The continuities and crises present in the years from 1928 to 1936 in Germany are intricately and complexly interconnected with the notion of “transition.” A similar conceptualization is articulated by Koselleck and Richter, who—although only in side notes—describe the relationship between crisis and transition as a mutually constitutive one, and remark that since the late eighteenth century the term “crisis” has been used increasingly to define, evoke, and indicate a historically immanent transitional phase.³⁴ Yet the radical breaks suggested by the rhetoric of crisis should not necessarily structure the study of transitions. Bhupinder Brar cautions against the simplifications that come with a focus on “‘ages,’ ‘eras’ and ‘epochs,’” even as they provide a useful framework of “‘ideal

types” that help frame knowledge and understanding.³⁵ Despite the allure of such tidy scholarly approaches, “transitions, on the other hand, are messy by their very nature. Long shadows of the past and the future criss-cross them, but they have no fixed substance, shape or contours of their own.”³⁶ As a consequence, Brar advocates an alternative approach to transitional periods in which scholars seek complexity and richness and “devise categories which are tentative, flexible and open-ended, offering clues rather than conclusions.”³⁷ Thus in this volume we treat the 1928 to 1936 period as a transitional one, a complex weave of interconnected ideas, events, and potentials. We present an array of essays that showcase the crises, contradictions, complexities, continuities, and breaks in German film in transition. Although we find the years 1928 to 1936 to be the most compelling boundaries for our current study, we nevertheless acknowledge the chronological boundaries of the intensive transition in German film history explored in this volume to be “tentative, flexible and open-ended,” insofar as connections and continuities can always be found with that which came before and after.

Crisis, Continuity, and Transition in the German Film Industry 1928–1936

As the essays in this volume explore in depth, the years 1928 to 1936 constituted a transitional period for German film marked by both crisis and continuity. On the one hand, Germany’s concurrent economic, political, and cultural crises, which culminated in Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, intertwined with real challenges to and perceptions of crisis within the film industry. On the other hand, in terms of both structure and output, the German film industry was marked by continuity or “a high degree of identity with what went before.”³⁸

In terms of crisis, 1928 was a pivotal year, as Weimar Germany’s principal film company, the Universum Film AG (Ufa), was on the verge of bankruptcy: between 1925 and 1927, poor financial and marketing strategies, among them the astronomical production costs of Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927), substantially weakened the studio.³⁹ In addition, the Parufamet contract that Ufa had signed in 1925 with the American companies Paramount Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in hopes of reenergizing itself did not have the expected positive effects.⁴⁰ Both the business and creative side of filmmaking in Germany underwent dramatic changes that concentrated more power in the hands of studios and producers, making Ufa more akin to the Hollywood studios with which it hoped to compete. Moreover, unbeknownst to and unintended by anyone at the time, the concentration of power that occurred as Ufa emulated the US studio system also anticipated the industry’s further consolidation and

its top-down power structure under the Third Reich. The nationalistic media proprietor Alfred Hugenberg took over Ufa in March 1927, saving the studio from bankruptcy.⁴¹ The director general Ludwig Klitzsch and Ernst Hugo Correll, who became Ufa's new head of production in 1928, introduced several significant modifications. Some changes had an impact at the production level, since Klitzsch secured a relaxation of the aforementioned Parufamet contract⁴² and introduced "shooting scripts, fixed production plans and strict budgets."⁴³ Furthermore, Klitzsch's reforms had ripple effects on the creative freedom of Ufa's directors, since—similar to Hollywood—they now had to answer to producers. This measure curtailed the artistic freedom film directors had enjoyed prior to the takeover, which resulted in a more standardized style of Ufa's films.⁴⁴ In light of the studio's new market orientation, changes were also introduced in its star system because, as Joseph Garncarz has shown, the private lives of actors and actresses were no longer off limits for the press as they had been before 1927, a fact that brought Weimar's star system closer to that of Hollywood.⁴⁵

The changing organization and culture of the German film industry brought on by Hugenberg's takeover left Ufa ill prepared for the coming of synchronized sound. Even though the sound-on-film system had been developed in Germany in the early 1920s as the Tri-Ergon system,⁴⁶ the unsuccessful first public screening of it in Berlin in 1922 caused Ufa to sell Tri-Ergon's patent to Switzerland.⁴⁷ One of the first changes undertaken by Ufa's new leadership in 1927 was "the shelving of all 'talking film' experiments, which the company had pursued for several years."⁴⁸ Ufa was thus taken off guard by the cinematic revolution initiated by Warner Brothers' *The Jazz Singer* (USA 1927)—the world's first feature-length film with synchronized singing and speech sequences. In 1928, Warner Brothers produced several other highly profitable sound films, leading other Hollywood studios to follow its model. The European premiere of the sound version of *The Jazz Singer* in London in 1928 constituted "a turning point" for both British and continental European film industries.⁴⁹ In Germany, the reverberations resulted in an important merger that created Tobis (Tonbild-Syndikat AG) on August 30, 1928, the first major German film studio devoted to the production of sound film. Tobis both aspired to bring together European forces, technologies, and stakeholders to compete with Hollywood sound film and marketed its sound-film system to other European studios such as Ufa.⁵⁰ In October 1928, Klangfilm arose to compete with Tobis, a competition resolved by a merger in March 1929 to form Tobis-Klangfilm, which became the dominant sound-film system in Germany.⁵¹ In late 1928, the first German feature film using Tobis synchronized sound technology went into production, *Ich küsse Ihre Hand, Madame* (I Kiss Your Hand, Madame), a silent film with one sound scene, which premiered in January 1929. In

March 1929, the documentary *Melodie der Welt* (Melody of the World) followed, which made extensive use of sound. In December 1929, Ufa released its first sound feature film, *Melodie des Herzens* (Melody of the Heart). As Anton Kaes notes, although it was initially slow in adopting sound technology, after 1930 Ufa moved quickly to use it in its productions: whereas Germany produced 175 silent films and 8 talkies in 1929, in 1930 there were 101 sound films to 45 silent movies, only 2 silent films in 1931, and none in the following year.⁵² Ultimately, as Todd Herzog argues, films of the early 1930s such as Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) embraced the coming of sound technologically, thematically, and aesthetically, and stipulated the prevalence of aural elements over visual details.⁵³

Although eventually sound came to be accepted as a *modus operandi* in the late Weimar years, the coming of sound initially was perceived as a crisis not only for commercial films but also for avant-garde cinema. Traditionally, scholarship has viewed the abrupt end of the latter at the end of the 1920s as caused by the arrival of sound and the rise of fascism. However, as Malte Hagener argues, the period 1928 to 1932 should be understood less as the breaking point or the demise of the European cinematic avant-garde and more as a time of its reorientation, marked by numerous international cooperations and intense efforts to maximize viewers' exposure to avant-garde films.⁵⁴

During the Great Depression, the cost of new sound technology and the loss of banks as revenue sources for film companies, coupled with a declining audience, left the German film industry in disarray.⁵⁵ Between 1928 and 1932, film production in Germany dropped precipitously, reflecting a "structural crisis" that decimated the smaller studios.⁵⁶ The numerous collapses, mergers, and bank takeovers of film companies throughout the late 1920s meant that by 1929, only three major German studios were intact: Ufa, Tobis, and Terra. The Great Depression, deflation, the poverty of their target audiences, and the significant expense involved in converting to sound film left even these larger studios on unsure footing.

The economic and financial challenges were obvious problems that preoccupied industry leaders, but contemporaries also talked about German film as experiencing other types of crisis. Rudolf Arnheim saw the primary crisis of German film as an aesthetic one. As articulated in his essay "Beitrag zur Krise der Montage" (Contribution Regarding the Crisis of Editing, 1930) the introduction of sound film challenged both conceptual montage and viewers' spatial perception.⁵⁷ Arnheim wondered about the status of the sound film: Would it be equivalent to a theater piece that has been photographed, was it a mere jewel-like addition to silent film, or could sound film represent a new art form with its own artistic merits?⁵⁸ According to him, the path sound film must take would include the asynchronous montage effect where sound was organically

bound to the image without shackling the two realms in strict synchronicity.⁵⁹ Arnheim concluded that by not forcing sound to dictate camera work and by not yoking sound to “reality,” the sound film could create its own rules of art particular to the modern age.⁶⁰

With the Nazi takeover of the film industry, a metaphysical crisis joined the aesthetic crisis described by Arnheim. In his speech at the Kaiserhof hotel in Berlin on March 28, 1933, explaining the National Socialist agenda for the film industry, Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels insisted that the industry was not facing a material crisis, but rather “a spiritual crisis.”⁶¹ He linked this spiritual crisis to what he construed as the artistic failings of late Weimar films and their low-life themes and distance from the social reality of the audience. The crisis Goebbels defined was caused, he claimed, by Jewish directors, commercialism, and “intellectual liberalism,” and furthermore was “also a personal [crisis],” insofar as members of the film industry ignored the broader “crisis in Germany.”⁶² By shifting the rhetoric and perception of crisis, Goebbels thus construed Nazis as fighting for German film’s artistic, moral, and racial health, a position we see elaborated in other National Socialist texts.⁶³

Such Nazi understandings of filmmaking, of its aesthetic and spiritual crisis, and of the medium’s power, show continuities with Weimar thought. During the late Weimar years, there were certainly differences between the approaches to film held by the time’s most prominent film critics: Arnheim, Siegfried Kracauer, and Béla Balázs. However, as scholars have argued, Arnheim’s formalism, Kracauer’s realism, and Balázs’s understanding of cinema as a new folk art entailed important commonalities, namely, that they shared a belief in the power of cultural critique and viewed film as a form of art.⁶⁴ This understanding of film persisted into the Third Reich, though it was increasingly infused with racist, anti-Semitic, and nationalistic concepts that turned cinema into a propaganda tool. An example that illustrates the strong connection between nationalistic writings on film before and after 1933 is the work of Oskar Kalbus, who transitioned seamlessly between the two periods on account of his conviction about the propagandistic use of film, an idea that he developed further during the Third Reich.

In 1933, the Nazis began a process of *Gleichschaltung* (coordination with the Nazi regime), which sought to purge Jews from the film industry, align filmmaking ideologically, and stabilize the industry financially. Nazi-era regulations and restructuring, purportedly to heal a film industry in critical condition, generated more crises: Jewish actors, directors, technicians, and other film personnel had to flee the country or were banned from working; numerous production companies—once the strength of Weimar cinema—went bankrupt; and German film exports dropped dramatically. However, these crises also harbored opportunities for some, since a new set of film professionals emerged during the Nazi years, many

climbing up from the lower rungs of the film industry ladder in order to fill the gaps caused by the departure of Jewish employees active in the film industry. The Nazis reduced licensing fees, cut star salaries, and reduced ticket prices, reorganizing the financing, production, and distribution of German films.⁶⁵ Under the auspices of the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (The Reich Ministry for Enlightenment and Propaganda, henceforth RMVP), the film industry was directly beholden to the government's agenda, unlike in Weimar Germany. In order to work, film personnel needed to belong to the Reichsfilmkammer (Reich Film Chamber), a state-controlled professional organization to which membership could be denied arbitrarily, usually on political, ideological, or racial grounds.

In addition to the racial and ideological purge of the film industry and the rise of new talent to fill the gaps left behind, both incentives and penalties were used to encourage ideological and aesthetic conformity. The structures and methods employed by the RMVP were built largely on continuities with Weimar, such as the cinema censorship law of the 1920s and the Spio-Plan. In the late 1920s to early 1930s, Ufa developed the so-called Spio-Plan, the Spitzenorganisation der deutschen Filmwirtschaft (Main Organization of the German Film Industry), a program that centralized the German film industry and pushed for economic reforms through state control, favored the replacement of internal democracy with a strong leadership, and suggested the formation of a film ministry.⁶⁶ Formed in May 1933, the state-run loan agency Filmkreditbank (Film Credit Bank) was the first undertaking of the RMVP to reform the German cinema industry, and it embraced many of the principles upheld by the Spio-Plan. According to Jana Bruns, “the new institution’s primary purpose was . . . to promote good relations between the regime and big business and to align their interests.”⁶⁷ The Filmkreditbank’s support for films was deeply political: its advisory board reviewed casts, screenplays, and budget submissions and recommended only productions that matched its views, whereas it rejected projects with politically and “racially” challenging content and casts. Moreover, as Bruns points out, by “favoring big companies over small producers, eliminating uncomfortable political views, and streamlining production, it effectively moved cinema one step closer to a centralized and state-controlled industry.”⁶⁸

There was also cohesion between the censorship practices of the Third Reich and those of the Weimar Republic, a cohesion that was tied up in the partly similar, partly different ways film as a medium was understood during the two regimes. Nazi views about the necessity of stopping film’s “dangerous influence” on audiences as well as of bringing about a “regeneration of public taste and gradually improve it”—cornerstone statements of the first speech Goebbels delivered at the Kaiserhof—are an extension of early Weimar perspectives on the role of film and the

need to control its negative impact on the public.⁶⁹ In this context, it is important to remember that the Reichsfilmgesetz (Reich Cinema Law) of 1934 was, as scholars have noted, an updated version of Weimar's 1920 cinema censorship law.⁷⁰ Promulgated on May 12, 1920, and effective on June 16 of that year, Weimar's cinema censorship law stipulated that "all films had to be submitted prior to release to a national board, which could censor them for damaging public order or security, offending religious sensibilities, demeaning the German image or generally being coarse and demoralizing."⁷¹ However, compared with Weimar's censorship, the Reichsfilmgesetz interfered in more pervasive ways in the production of films. It asked that film companies "seek approval for every step of production, from manuscript to editing."⁷² It created the position of Reichsfilmdramaturg (Reich Film Dramaturge), promoting one individual who could revise or discard screenplays, ask that changes be done throughout the film's production, and whose approval was necessary in order to secure financing from the Filmkreditbank.⁷³ Upon its completion a film had to be submitted to the Filmprüfstelle (Film Censorship Board), which could ban any production that worked against Nazi ideology. In addition to the censorship work of the Reichsfilmdramaturg, Filmkreditbank, and Filmprüfstelle, the Reichsfilmgesetz introduced a ratings system that lauded both "artistic and political excellence," and whereby financial incentives accrued to the producers that made and to the cinemas that screened highly rated films.⁷⁴ The film press and film criticism were brought further and further under the RMVP's umbrella, until Goebbels abolished film criticism entirely and replaced it with descriptive, politically motivated film reporting in November 1936.⁷⁵ RMVP directives thereby superseded individual or local preference in motivating movie theaters' offerings.⁷⁶

The year 1936 marks the end of the transitional period in German film and 1937 the beginning of "the nationalized film industry."⁷⁷ The most dramatic aspects of *Gleichschaltung* were complete. As per the Reichsfilmgesetz and other legislation and restructuring, Jews and political dissenters had been forced out, and film production, exhibition, censorship, criticism, and financing all fell under direct or indirect RMVP control. In 1936, the Filmkreditbank financed "over 73 percent of all German feature films," reinforcing ideological compliance in concert with the Reichsfilmkammer and the Reichsfilmdramaturg.⁷⁸ The final steps in the nationalization of the German film industry took place between December 1936 and early 1938.⁷⁹ Kautio Treuhand GmbH, a trustee of the RMVP and the Finance Ministry, became a majority shareholder in Tobis at the end of 1936. In 1937 it took over Tobis, Ufa, and Terra completely, thus making them officially "*staatsmittelbar* (indirectly state controlled)."⁸⁰ The remaining smaller film studios Bavaria Filmkunst, Wien Film, and Prag Film became *staatsmittelbar* in 1938.⁸¹

As the transition to a nationalized film industry neared completion, the industry achieved a new, if problematic, stability. The crisis in personnel caused by the political takeover had reached resolution: “By January of 1936, much of the cream of the pre-Nazi film industry had gone into exile, including many non-Jewish members of the community.”⁸² Those who remained behind rose to fill the ranks, and “by 1936 the film colony of the Third Reich was virtually formed, a stock company which was to continue almost unchanged until 1945.”⁸³ The slump in film attendance between 1928 and 1936 had also ended and film spectatorship numbers recovered. With 362 million spectators in 1936, German movie theaters finally exceeded the attendance of 353 million reached in 1928.⁸⁴ As a large, bold footer in *Lichtbildbühne*, one of the major film trade papers, proclaimed: “Vor 1933 Krise in allen Filmberufsgruppen! 1936: stabile Verhältnisse, gesunde Wirtschaft, künstlerische Leistungen im ganzen deutschen Film! (Before 1933, Crisis in all Groups of Film Professionals! 1936: Stable Circumstances, Healthy Economy, Artistic Accomplishments in All of German Film!).”⁸⁵ As public rhetoric would have it, the years of crisis were over and transition to a new era in German film was complete.

Despite ongoing perceptions and the rhetoric of crisis, the transitional period and its productions can be characterized not only by the above-mentioned continuities in institutions, financing practices, and views about censorship, but also by cohesions in terms of film genres and themes, casting strategies, personnel, and with regard to the German film industry’s complex relationship to Hollywood. In terms of film genre, it is important to recall that comedy dominated the cinematic market in the early 1930s.⁸⁶ As Ulrich von Thüna points out, comedies formed 40 percent of the overall production of German films in 1930, increasing to 63 percent in 1931 and more than 64 percent in 1932.⁸⁷ This preference for comedy endured into the Third Reich, when 48 percent of the films shown between 1933 and 1945 can be categorized in this genre.⁸⁸ Similar to the Weimar years, melodramas were also in high demand, and according to Laura Heins, reached 30 percent of production during the Nazi years.⁸⁹ Overall, the themes and genres that had dominated Weimar films, such as love stories, comedies, and crime thrillers, persisted into the Nazi period.⁹⁰ The continuance of these predilections for specific film genres suggests that the Nazi takeover did not result in a radical and sudden transformation of the German film industry, but rather in a long period of transition, an aspect underscored by Karsten Witte.⁹¹ Consequently, although cinema attendance grew fourfold between 1933 and 1942, from 250 million to 1 billion viewers, with 1,100 films produced between 1933 and 1945, only one-fifth of the film output had clear political and propagandistic content.⁹²

Not only did people like to see the same kinds of films before and after 1933, they also continued to admire some of the same actors. As indicated

in the June 1933 article “Eine neue interessante Umfrage. Das Publikum liebt nach wie vor die Stars . . .” (A New Interesting Survey, the Public Still Loves the Stars), Weimar stars such as Hans Albers and Brigitte Helm continued to rank high in popularity polls.⁹³ In fact, several prominent and lesser-known Weimar actors continued their careers after 1933 in films supporting Nazi ideology. Some examples include the post-1933 films of Brigitte Helm, Lilian Harvey, Käthe von Nagy, Hans Albers, Emil Jannings, Gustav Fröhlich, and Heinrich George, among many others. Ufa’s star-making strategies continued to be just as problematic in the Nazi period as they had been during the Weimar years, as discussed in this volume through an analysis of the career of Brigitte Helm.⁹⁴

Personnel whose careers spanned both Weimar and Nazi Germany were responsible for some of cinema’s thematic and stylistic continuities across the transitional period. For example, Carl Froelich, who began his career in filmmaking at the beginning of the twentieth century as a cameraman working with Oscar Messter, eventually became one of the Third Reich’s most decorated directors and president of the Reichsfilmkammer from 1939 to 1945. Froelich’s *Ich für Dich—Du für Mich* (I For You, You For Me, 1934) reprised *Mädchen in Uniform* (Girls in Uniform, 1931), a film made under his artistic supervision, adapting character, narrative, and stylistic features to support the Frauenarbeitsdienst (women’s labor service).⁹⁵ Furthermore, his *Traumulus* (1935) was paradigmatic of a Nazi aesthetic ideal that Erica Carter calls the *völkisch* sublime, an aesthetic that rejected Weimar modernism and drew on pictorial traditions established in Wilhelmine cinema.⁹⁶ At the same time, however, *Traumulus* built on the Weimar past. “Recognizable as a remake” of *Der blaue Engel* (1930), *Traumulus*, like the well-known earlier film, centered on the seduction and fall of a strict schoolmaster played by Emil Jannings, another artistic force whose career spanned the transitional period and beyond.⁹⁷ In *Traumulus*, Hilde Weissner replaced the absent Marlene Dietrich, and Froelich lit and shot her Hollywood style “as markers of her otherness and irredeemable difference.”⁹⁸ Yet, as Katie Trumpener notes, “the cinema of the Third Reich inherited its entire domestic audience from the Weimar Republic” and transitional films “remind[ed] audiences of their own viewing histories and habits” even as they adjusted to new aesthetics and ideals.⁹⁹ Thus, even as Nazi cinema condemned femmes fatales, continuities in audience preferences and narrative traditions required a glamorous ersatz for Dietrich, a role eventually filled by Zarah Leander.¹⁰⁰ Heinz Rühmann’s many Third Reich comedies likewise built on his Weimar successes, turning his “little man” persona into the essential German comedian.¹⁰¹ According to Stephen Lowry, Rühmann’s “role as a German ‘everyman’ led him to be seen explicitly as an icon of the national self-image,” whom he reads as a figure of “continuity,” “conformity,” and “integration” throughout the German twentieth century.¹⁰² It

was not only prominent actors and directors but also behind-the-scenes production personnel who perpetuated and modified German film traditions across political eras. Witte highlights the example of the cameraman Friedl Behn-Grund, who made dozens of significant films, both apolitical and political, in the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, the German Democratic Republic, and the Federal Republic of Germany.¹⁰³ Film artists and technicians who began their careers in Weimar, or earlier, and who stayed in Nazi Germany, brought their experience, training, and preferences with them and used them to satisfy both audience tastes and political imperatives.

The tension between spectators' preferences and the regime's was compounded by German cinema's contentious relationship with Hollywood throughout the 1928 to 1936 period. As Markus Spieker and Thomas Saunders have shown, from the early 1920s onward, Ufa looked up to Hollywood for its technical brilliance, while simultaneously it also condemned its superficiality and low artistic ambitions.¹⁰⁴ This dualistic view of Hollywood on Ufa's part also characterized the early years of the Third Reich.¹⁰⁵ Thus in his Kaiserhof speech Goebbels revealed his admiration for international films such as the American portrayal of Anna Karenina in *Love* (1927) and for the Soviet production *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). To his mind these films were both entertaining and artful, and Nazi cinema ought to heed their aesthetic values. As Carter indicates, Goebbels's speech also implies that a film's artistic value depends on the stars that play in it and on the quality of their performance, something Goebbels implied was missing from Germany at that time, since he used Garbo as his model of stardom.¹⁰⁶ Carter also points out that throughout the 1930s "Hollywood remained . . . not only Germany's chief rival on the domestic market, but also the most coherent example of a cinema whose success Germany wished to duplicate."¹⁰⁷ In this sense, it is important to recall that in 1933 Hollywood films represented more than two-thirds of Germany's foreign film imports, and that even in 1936 the number persisted at around 50 percent, despite the fact that restrictions had by then reduced total imports to approximately seventy films of the two hundred productions needed on an annual basis in order to fill cinema programs.¹⁰⁸

Third Reich films had both to compete with Hollywood productions, as did Weimar cinema, and also conform to RMVP dictates. Witte describes the stylistic effects of this tension on film comedy:

Geboten war 1936 Eindeutschung. Gefragt blieb der Amerikanismus. Die camouflierte Form, die dem Sinnzwang (Gesetze, Zensur) entsprach, ohne das Bedürfnis (die Anklänge an das andere, schnellere Leben: die Bewegung im physischen Sinn) zu verdrängen, waren jene Produkte der Filmindustrie, die für "eingedeutschten

Amerikanismus” entstehen, das heißt die Ambivalenzen des Originals mitübersetzen.¹⁰⁹

In 1936 Germanization was imperative. Americanism was still in demand. The camouflaged form that corresponded to the drive for meaning (laws, censorship) without repressing cravings (the appeals to the other, quicker life; movement in a physical sense), were the products of the film industry that represent “Germanized Americanism,” that is, those that also translated the ambivalences of the originals.

The best known example of the “Germanized Americanism” discussed by Witte is *Glückskinder* (Lucky Kids, 1936), inspired by Frank Capra’s *It Happened One Night* (1934). *Glückskinder*’s American setting, tempo, snappy banter, innuendo, and humorous tension between the protagonists all echo the Hollywood screwball comedy.¹¹⁰ At the same time, Witte argues, *Glückskinder* is marked by a sexual repression and dissolution of the individual more characteristic of Third Reich film.¹¹¹ Thus the film competed with its Hollywood rival, sustained an illusion of American-style freedom and consumption, and nevertheless was in synch with RMVP ideals. As Eric Rentschler shows, *Glückskinder* was a copy that “nonetheless passed for a German original, a cutout with its own shape. It relied on foreign patterns of recognition yet still proudly bore the appellation ‘made in Germany.’”¹¹²

The “Americanism” that needed to be “Germanized” in the Third Reich developed in German film well before the transitional period. Anton Kaes describes Americanism in Weimar Germany as consisting of two distinct but related components: “scientific management of labor and industrial mass production (known as Taylorism and Fordism, respectively) on the one hand, and commercial mass culture on the other.”¹¹³ Many Weimar films both sought to compete with Hollywood and reflected “American” mass production and mass culture aesthetically. Two well-known examples are Ernst Lubitsch’s *Die Austernprinzessin* (The Oyster Princess, 1919) and Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927). A comedy and a dystopian science fiction film, respectively, both these films treat the blurring of identities and the mechanization of bodies. They visualize Americanism through glamour and excess, mass ornaments, and modernist montage. The structural, thematic, and stylistic influence of these films reverberated in the transitional period in films like *April! April!* (April Fools!, 1935) and *Gold* (1934), both discussed at length in this volume.

The Essays

The essays in this volume investigate how a range of films reveals both continuities and ruptures in German culture, politics, and the economy

during the transitional period from 1928 to 1936. The various essays explore shifting conceptions of racial and ethnic identity, as well as the production side of the film industry, through an investigation of the star system, genre study, the relation of Germany to international film, and through various filmmaking technologies, most notably the introduction of sound. It is evident that the film industry could at the same time draw on the political rhetoric of crisis to express various disjunctures in German culture, as well as fall back on more traditional notions drawn from a previous era.

The first section of the volume consists of essays that focus on cinematic representations of Germany's political crisis. Christian Rogowski demonstrates how Werner Hochbaum's film *Razzia in St. Pauli* (Police Raid in St. Pauli, 1932) represents the conflicted political allegiances of its director as well as the social instability of the period. Rogowski argues that Hochbaum's film conveys a politically ambivalent message that fails to expose the real causes of mass unemployment; the film evinces a sense of somber resignation in the face of the sociopolitical crisis of the late Weimar years, a sense enhanced by the film's ambivalent end and its contrastive use of visual and aural elements. Bastian Heinsohn's essay emphasizes that political films of the early 1930s that were influenced by Communist and Nazi ideology conveyed an optimistic outlook in which collective action could result in a better future. Heinsohn asserts that emblematic films such as *M* (1931), *Kuhle Wampe oder Wem gehört die Welt?* (1932, released in English as *Kuhle Wampe or Who Owns the World?*), and *Hitlerjunge Quex* (Hitler Youth Quex, 1933), all adopt a similar approach to crisis by employing the same formulaic structure: initially all three films focus on a fractured society that is subsequently unified. Heinsohn contends that this structural trajectory allowed for a smooth transition from late Weimar to Nazi cinema, despite the Nazis' claim of having made a complete break from Weimar's culture and art.

The second section of the volume is dedicated to essays focusing on economic crisis. Paul Flaig argues that *Die Koffer des Herrn O.F.* (The Trunks of Mr. O.F., 1931) should be understood as linking the specific investments of late Weimar cinema to the way the economic crisis and the crisis of cinema were understood both in their origins and in their potential solutions. Flaig contends that the film's mixture of fairy-tale elements and satire mocks German economic fears and hopes for economic recovery. Owen Lyons's essay analyzing *Gold* (1934) and *Der Kaiser von Kalifornien* (The Emperor of California, 1936) explores the thematic and cultural interrelationships between these early Nazi-era works and several films of the Weimar Republic including *Die Austerprinzeßin*, *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler* (Dr. Mabuse the Gambler, 1922), and *Frau im Mond* (Woman in the Moon, 1929), which present similar views regarding the economic role and the aesthetic value that gold played during

the 1920s and 1930s. Lyons considers the anxieties surrounding gold as both the source as well as the answer to the economic crisis. In addition to reflecting pressing economic concerns, Lyons asserts that these films also establish cultural associations that indicate how the concept of gold as a foundation of monetary value was closely connected to the crisis of authenticity that marked the Weimar Republic, which several Third Reich films sought to resolve.

The third section of the volume focuses on the crises and continuities in conceptions of race and ethnicity as manifest in films from the transitional period. Barbara Hales demonstrates in her essay about racial hygiene films from the late Weimar and the early Nazi period, including *Feind im Blut* (Enemy in the Blood, 1931) and *Opfer der Vergangenheit* (Victim of the Past, 1936–37), how these works were used as propaganda to indoctrinate physicians and the general public about the inferiority of those deemed mentally ill and carrying “incurable” diseases, and to portray methods for maintaining Germany’s racial purity. Hales investigates the role of heredity and racial health in the transitional era and shows how these films established the authority of the figure of the physician as a genetics doctor and a “hereditary policeman” responsible for controlling reproductive transgression and thus promoting the health of the *Volkskörper*. Valerie Weinstein analyzes the implicit anti-Semitic subtext in Detlef Sierck’s Depression-era comedy of mistaken identity *April! April!* (April Fools!, 1935), an anti-Semitism that, as she reveals, is strongly connected to Nazi anticapitalistic views. Weinstein shows that Sierck’s film mocks, contains, and disciplines the figure of the “white Jew”—a nineteenth-century anti-Semitic coinage, current in Weimar and Nazi Germany, that refers to non-Jews corrupted by purportedly “Jewish” attributes such as greed, social climbing, and extravagance. Complicating and layering its racial and economic implications, *April! April!* not only responds to the crisis of capitalism by ridiculing avaricious entrepreneurs coded as “Jewish,” but also rekindles Germany’s colonial aspirations in Africa as part of a new imperial future that brings together colonialism, modernity, old-stock nobility, and the *Volk*.

The fourth section of the volume focuses on comparison of various genres during the transitional period. Anjeana Hans investigates in her essay the *Zigeunerdrama*, a popular genre from the 1910s and 1920s that culminated in Leni Riefenstahl’s *Tiefland* (Lowlands, 1940–44/1954). Produced primarily during the Third Reich, though not completed and released until 1954, Riefenstahl’s film is relevant for the period under discussion owing to the conceptual continuities of the “gypsy” in both Weimar and Nazi cinema. Hans’s analysis of *Tiefland*’s cinematic roots reveals its origins both in the fantasies of desire and exclusion that the *Zigeunerdrama* staged earlier in the century and in the nationalist and racist constructions that were at the heart of Nazi ideology and of the *Porrajmos*

(the devouring), the Nazi genocide against the Sinti and Roma. Wilfried Wilms examines how, in response to the crisis of military immobility generated by the Versailles Treaty, a crisis perceived with particular acuteness in German aviation, Arnold Fanck's mountain films *Die Weisse Hölle vom Piz Palü* (*The White Hell of Piz Palü*, codirected with G. W. Pabst, 1929), *Stürme über dem Mont Blanc* (in English as *Avalanche*, 1930), and *S.O.S. Eisberg* (*S.O.S. Iceberg*, 1933) were used to promote aviation and German militarization. Wilms also shows that the aviator portrayed by the real-life pilot Ernst Udet in Fanck's 1929–33 films redefined the notion of masculinity rooted in self-reliance, steely nerves, and disregard for danger that were represented by the figures of the climber and the explorer in Fanck's earlier mountain films.

The fifth section of the volume focuses on Ufa's star-making system. Mihaela Petrescu shows in her analysis of Weimar's famed actress Brigitte Helm that early Nazi strategies of constructing and advertising star images were not always cohesive. Contrary to the current scholarly opinion that considers Helm incompatible with Nazi views about femininity, Petrescu argues that Ufa's thematic reshaping of Helm's roles from 1933 until 1935—in the films *Die schönen Tage in Aranjuez* (*The Beautiful Days in Aranjuez*, 1933), *Inge und die Millionen* (*Inge and the Millions*, 1933), *Gold* (1934), *Die Insel* (*The Island*, 1934), and *Ein idealer Gatte* (*An Ideal Husband*, 1935)—into a figure that protects the community and her male partners foreshadows the chic and self-sacrificial persona created for Zarah Leander. Simultaneously, Petrescu points out that Ufa did not reinvent Helm's star image but in fact continued the same perplexing and idiosyncratic casting and advertising strategies it had employed for the star during her Weimar career. As Petrescu suggests, this led to a continuously tense relationship between the actress and the studio that resulted in her retirement in 1935. Kevin Johnson's essay examines the challenges of German identity through the careers of two female stars of non-German origin, the Czechs Anny Ondra and Lída Baarová. Johnson asserts that Ondra, especially in *Die Kaviarprinzessin* (*The Caviar Princess*, 1930), *Baby* (1932), *Die vertauschte Braut* (*The Switched Bride*, 1934), *Der junge Graf* (*The Young Count*, 1935), and *Großreinemachen* (*The Big Cleanup*, 1935), passed as German owing to her comic performances, her impeccable language skills, and her universal performability, that is, the ability to adopt other national identities convincingly. In contrast, Baarová's Slavic physical appearance and accented German in *Barcarole* (1934), *Einer zuviel an Bord* (*One Too Many on Board*, 1935), *Ein Teufelskerl* (a.k.a. *Leutnant Bobby, der Teufelskerl*, *A Devil of a Fellow*, 1935), and *Verräter* (*Traitors*, 1936) led to her typecasting as exotic and “other,” or as a German figure perpetually tinged by foreignness, a typecasting that exposes strains and contradictions in the Third Reich's cinematic portrayal of racial otherness.

The sixth section of the volume focuses on the introduction of sound technology in film. In contrast to traditional scholarship that connects the end of the European avant-garde to the coming of sound and the rise of fascism, Brook Henkel points to key continuities regarding the personnel, aesthetics, and organizational activities of the avant-garde as they manifested themselves in Hans Richter's theoretical writings and his film *Vormittagsspuk* (released in English as *Ghosts before Breakfast*, 1928), a work often considered exemplary yet also marginalized in histories and analysis of avant-garde film. Henkel highlights Richter's efforts to popularize and promote experimental film in the late 1920s while he was also shedding light on the innovative techniques of past international avant-garde films and integrating their formal accomplishments as part of the multifold cinematic possibilities he was purposefully illustrating in *Vormittagsspuk*. Kalani Michell's contribution on Harry Piel's *Ein Unsichtbarer geht durch die Stadt* (An Invisible Man Goes through the City, 1933) argues that the film offers possible resolutions to the filmic crisis of seeing presented by sound, and which is illustrated in the spectacular chase of an invisible character. Michell proposes that resolution comes in the form of aural cues as well as new viewing practices such as a broadened vision that relies on patiently scanning space from afar instead of zooming in on a specific setting and paying attention to visual discrepancies such as objects moving on their own.

The seventh section focuses on analyses of crucial developments in Germany's international film relations. The two essays in this section investigate Ufa's transnational connections via the examples of German-French cooperations and the famed German-Jewish émigré Ernst Lubitsch's only serious Hollywood antiwar film, which also thematized the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany during the political and economic crises of the early 1930s. While the coming of sound threw Germany's major film studios into a crisis, as Margrit Frölich points out in her contribution, it also translated into some profitable business opportunities. Using Marcel L'Herbier's film *L'Argent* (Money, 1928) as a case study, Frölich explains the importance of international collaborations for Ufa's business strategies in the late 1920s. She reminds us that thanks to its state-of-the-art Tonkreuz studio in Babelsberg, Ufa started to produce multiple-language versions of its films for the French and British markets, and also made its sound studios available for some foreign coproductions such as L'Herbier's *La femme d'une nuit* (Woman for One Night, 1930). As Frölich asserts, the strategies employed by Ufa prepared the studio for the impact of the upcoming economic crisis and the shock of the introduction of synchronized sound. She also shows how *L'Argent* unveiled problems with 1920s capitalism, problems that would lead to the Wall Street crash and the Great Depression, in an uncannily prescient way. Richard W. McCormick's essay reminds readers that German film

émigrés to Hollywood maintained tight bonds to both Germany and America even before the wave of exiles that left Nazi Germany relocated to California. McCormick focuses on Ernst Lubitsch's work as a specific instance of such transnational connections. He shows how Lubitsch's 1932 antiwar film *The Man I Killed*, though produced in the United States, reflected Germany's cultural, political, and economic crises and, in particular, how it addressed the problems of nationalism, militarism, and resurgent anti-Semitism. As McCormick argues, this multivalent orientation toward Germany and its many crises may have contributed to the film's lackluster US reception. Viewing Lubitsch's film through the prism of Ofer Ashkenazi's concept of "double encoding,"¹¹⁴ McCormick argues that *The Man I Killed* is marked by a sense of crisis and danger for Jews in Germany, a sense that stems from the film's intriguing ending, which critiques the assimilationist view that one should be "a man in the street and a Jew at home."¹¹⁵

This volume proposes a thorough reevaluation of German cinema in the transitional years between 1928 and 1936, and thereby hopes to refocus current scholarly views about late Weimar and early Nazi film history. As the essays here indicate, the cinematic relationship between the two periods is much more fluid than previously acknowledged; it contains significant threads of continuity that include, for example, the conceptualization of film censorship, the role of the producer, a complex relationship of economic admiration for and aesthetic distancing from Hollywood as well as specific film genres. It also includes pivotal moments of crisis, particularly linked to the ever-increasing control of the Nazi regime over the film industry and its employees, its film policies and financial practices. Approaching the years 1928 to 1936 as a transitional period affords new insights into the complex matrix of continuities and crises that operated in German cinema during that time, highlighting complexities that so far have escaped the scholarly radar.

Notes

¹ Scholars that point to such continuities include: Antje Ascheid, *Hitler's Heroines: Stardom and Womanhood in Nazi Cinema* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 98–154; Jana Bruns, *Nazi Cinema's New Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 19, 29; Erica Carter, *Dietrich's Ghosts: The Sublime and the Beautiful in Third Reich Film* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 4; Thomas Elsaesser, "Moderne und Modernisierung," *Montage/av* 3, no. 2 (1994): 24; Sabine Hake, *Popular Cinema of the Third Reich* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), viii, x, xi, xiv, 9–12, 25–26; Laura Heins, *Nazi Film Melodrama* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 53; Lutz Koepnick, *The Dark Mirror: German Cinema between Hitler and Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 3; Klaus Kreimeier, *The Ufa-Story: A History of Germany's Greatest Film Company, 1928–1945* (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1999), 193–94; Klaus Kreimeier, “Von Henny Porten zu Zarah Leander: Filmgenres und Genrefilm in der Weimarer Republik und im Nationalsozialismus,” *Montage/av* 3, no. 2 (1994): 43, 46; Felix Moeller, *Der Filmminister: Goebbels und der Film im dritten Reich* (Berlin: Henschel, 1998), 153; Rüdiger Lautmann and Michael Schetsche, *Das pornographierte Begehren* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1990), 142; Eric Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 9; Jürgen Spiker, *Film und Kapital* (Berlin: Verlag Volker Spiess, 1975), 73; James D. Steakley, “Cinema and Censorship in the Weimar Republic: The Case of *Anders als die Andern*,” *Film History* 11 (1999): 181–203; Karsten Witte, *Lachende Erben, Toller Tag: Filmkomödie im Dritten Reich* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 1995), 46, 70; and Karsten Witte, “Film im Nationalsozialismus: Blendung und Überblendung,” in *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, 2nd ed., ed. Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes, and Hans Helmut Prinzler (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), 118.

² Kreimeier, “Von Henny Porten zu Zarah Leander,” 43.

³ Elsaesser, “Moderne und Modernisierung,” 23.

⁴ Reinhart Koselleck and Michaela Richter, “Crisis,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 2 (April 2006): 359. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

⁵ Renate Bebermeyer, “‘Krise’-Komposita—verbale Leitfossilien unserer Tage, Muttersprache,” *Zeitschrift zur Pflege und Erforschung der deutschen Sprache* 90 (1980): 189.

⁶ Moritz Föllmer, “Suicide and Crisis in Weimar Berlin,” *Central European History* 42 (2009): 196–97.

⁷ Weston LaBarre, “Materials for a History of Studies of Crisis Cults: A Bibliographic Essay,” *Current Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (1971): 11.

⁸ Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 120.

⁹ Gay, *Weimar Culture*, 120.

¹⁰ George Grosz, “Among Other Things, a Word for German Tradition,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 499–501.

¹¹ Föllmer, “Suicide and Crisis in Weimar Berlin,” 220–21.

¹² Arnolt Bronnen, “German Nationalism, German Theater,” in Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg, *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 346.

¹³ Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), 9–11.

¹⁴ John W. Connor, “Ghost Dance to Death Camps: Nazi Germany as a Crisis Cult,” *Ethos* 17, no. 3 (1989): 282–83.

¹⁵ Connor, “Ghost Dance,” 281.

¹⁶ Sheila Faith Weiss, “The Race Hygiene Movement in Germany, 1904–1945,” in *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia*, ed. Mark B. Adams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 9.

- ¹⁷ Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 307.
- ¹⁸ Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, 411.
- ¹⁹ “Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor,” in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, ed. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 209.
- ²⁰ “Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German Volk,” in Rabinbach and Gilman, *Third Reich Sourcebook*, 329–30.
- ²¹ Daniel Strauss, “Anti-Gypsyism in German Society and Literature,” in *Sinti and Roma: Gypsies in German-Speaking Society and Literature*, ed. Susan Tebbutt (Oxford: Berghahn, 1998), 86.
- ²² Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 326.
- ²³ LaBarre, “Materials for a History of Studies of Crisis Cults,” 14.
- ²⁴ Eksteins, “Rites of Spring,” 311.
- ²⁵ Rudolf Hess, “The Oath to Adolf Hitler,” in Rabinbach and Gilman, *Third Reich Sourcebook*, 76.
- ²⁶ Ian Kershaw, “1933: Continuity or Break in German History,” *History Today* 33, no. 1 (January 1983): 18.
- ²⁷ Kershaw, “1933,” 18.
- ²⁸ Adolf Hitler, “Speech to Commemorate National Labor Day,” in Rabinbach and Gilman, *Third Reich Sourcebook*, 55.
- ²⁹ Eksteins, “Rites of Spring,” 324.
- ³⁰ Kershaw, “1933,” 17.
- ³¹ Kershaw, “1933,” 13–14.
- ³² Kershaw, “1933,” 15.
- ³³ Kershaw, “1933,” 14–15.
- ³⁴ Koselleck and Richter, “Crisis,” 371, 372, and 379.
- ³⁵ Bhupinder Brar, “Theorizing Transitions: Postcoloniality, Postsocialism and the Coming Age of Globalization,” *International Studies* 39, no. 4 (2002): 323.
- ³⁶ Brar, “Theorizing Transitions,” 323.
- ³⁷ Brar, “Theorizing Transitions,” 324.
- ³⁸ Kershaw, “1933,” 13.
- ³⁹ On the catastrophic financial repercussions *Metropolis* had for Ufa, see Joseph Garnarcz, “Art and Industry: German Cinema of the 1920s,” in *The Silent Cinema Reader*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer (London: Routledge, 2004), 395–96; Tom Gunning, *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 53; and Thomas Elsaesser, *Metropolis* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 22.
- ⁴⁰ On the Parufamet contract and how it failed to help Ufa, see Anton Kaes, “Film der Weimarer Republik: Motor der Moderne,” in Jacobsen, Kaes, and

Prinzler, *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, 70; Garncarz, "Art and Industry," 397; Elsaesser, *Metropolis*, 11–12; and Hans-Michael Bock and Michael Töteberg, "A History of Ufa," in *The German Cinema Book*, ed. Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter, and Deniz Göktürk (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 133.

⁴¹ Attempting to play Hitler for his own goals of attaining power, Hugenberg part willingly, part unwittingly, helped him come to power and served as Minister of Economy in the Third Reich's first cabinet.

⁴² Bock and Töteberg, "A History of Ufa," 133.

⁴³ Garncarz, "Art and Industry," 397.

⁴⁴ Garncarz, "Art and Industry," 397.

⁴⁵ Garncarz, "The Star System in Weimar Germany," in *The Many Faces of Weimar Cinema: Rediscovering Germany's Filmic Legacy*, ed. Christian Rogowski (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 116–33.

⁴⁶ See Kaes, "Film der Weimarer Republik," 84; and Chris Wahl, "Babel's Business—On Ufa's Multiple Language Versions, 1929–1933," in Rogowski, *Many Faces of Weimar Cinema*, 236–37.

⁴⁷ Kaes, "Film in der Weimarer Republik," 84.

⁴⁸ Bock and Töteberg, "A History of Ufa," 134.

⁴⁹ Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film, 1918–1929*, vol. 4 of *The History of British Film* (New York: Routledge, Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 203.

⁵⁰ Klaus Kreimeier, *Die UFA-Story: Geschichte eines Filmkonzerns* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2002), 212.

⁵¹ Kreimeier, *Die UFA-Story*, 212.

⁵² Kaes, "Film in der Weimarer Republik," 84.

⁵³ Todd Herzog, *Crime Stories: Criminalistic Fantasy and the Culture of Crisis in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2009).

⁵⁴ Malte Hagener, *Moving Forward, Looking Back: The European Avant-Garde and the Invention of Film Culture, 1919–1939* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

⁵⁵ Patrice Petro, "From Lukács to Kracauer and Beyond: Social Film Histories and the German Cinema," *Cinema Journal*, 22, no. 3 (1983): 61.

⁵⁶ Kreimeier, *Die Ufa Story*, 227–28.

⁵⁷ Rudolf Arnheim, "Beitrag zur Krise der Montage," in *Rudolf Arnheim: Die Seele in der Silberschicht: Medientheoretische Texte Photographie—Film—Rundfunk*, ed. Helmut H. Diederichs (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 76–80.

⁵⁸ Arnheim, "Beitrag zur Krise der Montage," 76.

⁵⁹ Arnheim, "Beitrag zur Krise der Montage," 77–78.

⁶⁰ Arnheim, "Beitrag zur Krise der Montage," 76, 80.

⁶¹ Joseph Goebbels, "Speech at the Kaiserhof," in Rabinbach and Gilman, *Third Reich Sourcebook*, 560.

⁶² Goebbels, "Speech at the Kaiserhof," 561.