

# Reconsideration of the ending scene in *Der letzte Mann* (1924) by F. W. Murnau - Thinking of the carriage scene

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## Introduction

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's perspective is understood through Lotte Eisner's first monograph, published in 1964. Eisner described Murnau's various cinematographic journeys, which were known only fragmentarily, in connection with his perspective. In other words, we came to discover the surprising masterpiece, *Phantom* (1922), which we had seen only in short and incomplete form, as well as acclaimed films from history, including *Sunrise* (1927). Furthermore, detailed analyses of the individual films also became available, including, in 1977, a detailed analysis by Eric Rohmer of the filmic text of "the organization of the space" in *Faust* (1925).

In this article, we focus on *Der letzte Mann* (1924) by Murnau in his UFA (Universum Film A. G.) period and investigate the ending scene in this film. We reconsider the implications and the production process of the ending scene. In Chapter I, we highlight the breakthrough significance that this film had in film history. In Chapter II, we see an attitude change in this film - attention to the inconspicuous people. In Chapter III, we see the production process of the ending scene with a full understanding of the stance of the production company UFA, the producer Erich Pommer, the director Murnau, and the playwright Carl Mayer et al. and re-grasp the carriage scene from an idea of this film; in turn, we think of the outstanding carriage scenes of Murnau's own prior film *Phantom* and the upcoming film *City Girl* (1930).

## I -1. *Der letzte Mann* (1924) in Murnau

In December 1924, *Der letzte Mann* by Murnau was released.<sup>1</sup> In 1922, *Nosferatu*, which is well known in film history, was produced, and at that time Murnau had already gained fame through several films. In 1920, *Januskopf* was the filmization of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, in 1921 the "crime movie" *Schloss Vogelöd* showed an obvious influence of Sweden, and in 1922 the "realistic rural drama" *Der brennende Acker* furthered "the action through sustained close shots of facial expressions."<sup>2</sup> And in 1924, Murnau directed *Der letzte Mann*. The screenplay was by Carl Mayer, the camera operator was Karl Freund, the music was by Giuseppe Becce, and the leading actor was Emil Jannings. According to Siegfried Kracauer in *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947), which analyzed the German cinema of the Weimar period, this film emphasized "the surge of disorderly lusts and impulse in a chaotic world" and formed the concluding film

of the series (Kracauer, 1947: 98; 1979: 105). The somewhat longer scene quoted near the <last> of *Allemagne année 90 neuf zéro* (1991) by Jean-Luc Godard is one scene from *Der letzte Mann*.

## **I -2. The story of *Der letzte Mann***

First, we want to see the story of this film simply. The hotel porter whom Emil Jannings plays is a hero. He has served the luxury hotel Atlantic as a hotel porter for many years. Although he lives in a cheap apartment, he is satisfied with the social status of hotel porter and the dignity of his uniform. Also, he is dear to the people who live in his tenement, and they also represent a tribute to him. However, a turning point visits him. One day he cannot transport heavy luggage because of old age and the general manager sees this. The unfortunate hotel porter is ordered to transfer from hotel porter wearing a uniform that is full of dignity to the person in charge of the toilets wearing simple white clothes. When residents who have paid tribute to the uniform with dignity learn this, they show an attitude of contempt for the former porter. The former porter who was ordered to transfer to the person in charge of the toilets passes away quietly in his own workplace while being watched by the night watchman....<sup>3</sup>

## **I -3. The relation between *Der letzte Mann* and earlier films - Aspect of succession and disconnection (contrast of two areas of society)**

### **I -3-1. Aspect of disconnection**

Into what kind of historical background was the film *Der letzte Mann* released? This film did not appear without any relation; it appeared sociologically for the following reasons (Kracauer, 1947: 97ff.; 1979: 106ff.). In Germany after World War I, two kinds of film were in vogue. One was sexual films and the other was the "screen pageant." In an article published at that time, the advertising significance of the feature film that provided excellent entertainment was emphasized.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the heads of UFA followed with an ultra-spectacle film of Italy. At the request of Paul Davidson, the screen pageant starring Pola Negri was produced. The director who received the request was Ernst Lubitsch. Films such as *Die Augen der Mumie Ma* (1918) and *Carmen* were produced. Furthermore, four additional films of this type were produced. First was *Madame Dubarry* (1919). In addition, in 1920, *Anna Boleyn* was produced and *Sumurun* followed in the same year. Last was *Das Weib des Pharao* (1921).<sup>5</sup> At that time, in Germany, screen pageants were abundant. However, spectators were tired of them. Then, the "chamber play" (Kammerspiel) that shows "the depth of the human soul" appeared in *Der letzte Mann* by Murnau. This film emerged in such a historical background. This shows the aspect of disconnection.

### I -3-2. Aspects of succession



fig. 1

However, *Der letzte Mann* has aspects of successive acceptance, too. In other words, this film picks up the basic motif of the pioneer film. The motif is a representation of "social chaos by two social spheres separated by an abysmal gulf."<sup>6</sup> More specifically, two buildings are contrasted. One is (a) the "gloomy tenement house crowded with lower middle class people" (fig. 1, 8:13) and the other is (b) the "palace hotel for the rich, which keeps the revolving door and the elevators"

(fig. 2<sup>7</sup>). Such a contrast is also seen in other scenes. For example, one is (a') the dim washroom in the basement of the hotel where the hotel porter whom Emil Jannings plays hangs his head. The other is (b') the restaurant of the hotel where wealthy men and women are eating their meal and chatting. These shots are contrasted with cross-cutting.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the switching is done with exquisite speed. Furthermore, another example is the intersection between (b"), the shot of a joyful chat in the ballroom of the hotel, and (a"), the full shot of the old limp porter who droops on the chair in the washroom.



fig. 2

Also, Deleuze in *Cinema* pays attention to this kind of contrast. In *Der letzte Mann*, "degradation" of the hotel porter passes through "a ceremonial and a phonatory (even though silent<sup>9</sup>) scene in the manager's office." In other words, "it can include visual rhymes, between the revolving-doors to the lavatories where the man ends up; the film's splendour consists of a physics of social degradation, where an individual goes down through the places and functions in a structure in the big hotel, which has a 'natural' or constitutive role" (Deleuze, 1985: 297; 1989: 229).

However, in the film *Der letzte Mann*, two social strata that are divided are also linked by a "strong tie." The strong tie is the uniform that the hotel porter wears. As for the power of the uniform in a society, though this film *Der letzte Mann* (1924) was produced in the 1920s and very old, it can't be old-fashioned and can't have nothing to do with the modern. The power can also be seen in other films more than half a century after *Der letzte Mann* was released. For example, in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (1972) by Luis Buñuel, the following scene is portrayed. A priest wearing gardener clothes visits the bourgeois. However, he isn't believed to be a priest and is treated with hard-heartedness. So, he dresses in black church clothes and appears in front of the bourgeois again. This time, he is believed to be a priest (28: 10). Like this, Buñuel makes fun of the bourgeois.

## II. The chamber play - "finding the subject of modern tragedy in the everyday life"

As mentioned above, a chamber drama (Kammerspiel) originated in the small stage that Max Reinhardt opened next to the Deutsches Theater to stage a play unsuitable for a large theater (Sadoul, 1999: 341ff.). This faction seemed to mark the "return to realism." Carl Mayer, in charge of the screenplay in *Der letzte Mann*, forsook such ghosts and tyrants that were characteristic of the screen pageant and picked up persons of low position such as railroaders, retail merchants, and servants (the hotel porter also belongs to this lineage). Also, Mayer found the "modern tragedy" in everyday life and tried to draw the place where the "fate of society" ends up, in a chamber play. Mayer was tied to "literary naturalism" in a manner different from expressionism. However, is this really the return to realism?

In 1921, *Scherben* was released (director Rupu Pick, playwright Carl Mayer). The director Rupu Pick was conscious of this in this film. For Pick, living is the very "great reservoir." "I'm a realist," he said. Therefore, he didn't touch the "confusion of expressionism" to get the idea of "daily feelings of life." Indeed, the technique of expressionism as the decoration catches the interest only to a certain extent. However, Pick was interested in the "drama of sober people." For example, in *Das Cabinet des Doktor Caligari* by Robert Wiene (1920, screenplay Carl Mayer = Hans Janowitz), the character is the sleepwalker, and the creepy director of a mental hospital. Those who are seen here are far from the "plain people" whom Pick aims and are "special people." Also, stage equipment provides an effect of fantasy of "special people" as madmen far from "sober people."<sup>10</sup>

However, in Pick's thought, art should be devoted primarily to evoking the "silence of every day." There, the "inconsequential gesture of every day imposed only by habit" is expanded. Therefore, for Pick, as described above, stage devices, intertitles and words are not needed. Also, there are no intertitles in the film *Der letzte Mann*. However, for example, the letter is seen in the place of intertitles. Well, inconspicuous people, or "sober people," may already be present. By directing the camera to the side, they are filmed. However, changing from remarkable people to inconspicuous people, or "plain people," is a selection and attitude change. In other words, inconspicuous people, or "sober people," are depicted only by being found, or being created. In other words, the order is creation  $\Rightarrow$  depiction (realism). So, an anti-realism attitude is premised on the assumption of realism. Therefore, Pick's posture is not just a "return to realism."

In addition, Pick accepts a single time to simplify the story. In some cases, he accepts also a single location and the provision of various elements which chance puts in one's way.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the film becomes more and more minimal. The plot by Carl Mayer may be something like

city news since he finds the subject of "modern tragedy" in everyday life. The deployment of the plot is concentrated according to the type of classical tragedy that follows the three single principles. Single of time is not always limited to 24 hours. If linear single structures the story, the film is possible without intertitles. Single of place becomes fascinating by that same detail and properties emerge fascinatingly. This latter feature of the chamber play was influenced by Swedish films, but the playwright Mayer prefers a stage device with social meaning to natural elements that dominate the film by the director Victor Sjöström of Sweden. Indeed, stage equipment in this film *Der letzte Mann* includes a city hotel and a cheap apartment. Mayer created them in the studio of UFA. The large hotel Atlantic comes under a stage device with social meaning in *Der letzte Mann*: "the explosive intensity of the story is doubled by this compression into a closed location following endlessly." However, on the other hand, "paranoia to closed doors" also allows something like "loophole and attic window that is open to outside world." The street comes under it in *Der letzte Mann*. Here, the features are simplicity of the drama and social environment.<sup>12</sup>

According to director Murnau in *Cinéa-Ciné*, on April 1, 1927, setting planners who produced *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* thought nothing about the importance of the results to come while they produced this film. However, they found some surprises.<sup>13</sup> That is, as mentioned above, "simplicity." According to Murnau, through simplicity, maximum simplicity, the characteristic of film to come will be. Our every effort should be directed to removing anything that is not in the true area of film. Wasteful and trashy elements originating from other sources - tricks, gags, and artifices - and all elements that came from a stage or book and were heterogeneous to the film should be wiped out. When some films reach this level of great art, this vision is realized. What we must attempt to achieve more and more is simplicity, devotion to the technology, and a purely cinegraphic subject. This is what Murnau tried to do in *Der letzte Mann*.<sup>14</sup>

Also, this compelled the playwright Mayer to select "simplicity of the actor's performance" and to deny "the sensational things, effects and exaggerations." Indeed, "simplicity" of actors in chamber drama may have a disadvantage in sticking obstinately to the demanded "simplicity." However, certainly, the "ponderous foot due to the description" and the "rhythm with too dramatic progress" are sometimes tiring as well whims of expressionism. This "planned and appointed art" is led more by the "stylization that is done to the people and things" than by "realism to stay in the look." For Mayer, the "hero of city news" is an "allegorical person," and some properties become solemn symbols with meaning; in *Der letzte Mann*, it is a revolving door to feed the people in the hotel. "Severity of fate" is dominant in the chamber play as well as expressionism movies. Also, barbarism takes on a violent personality.<sup>15</sup>

### III. Addition of happy ending?

In the previous scene of the artificial happy ending of *Der letzte Mann*, the "impressive gesture" can be seen. The shot in which the former porter played by Jannings crouches in the dim washroom in the hotel is shown. A night watchman wraps him gently in a warm blanket. This is "a moving gesture of solidarity between two human wrecks" (Kracauer, 1947: 100; 1979: 110). However, it is also the "gesture that does not alter anything." However, this film does not end here. One of the intertitles, which are used only twice in this film, is inserted, and the last scene starts. In the last scene, a certain US millionaire donates his own property to the man who happens to be the last person he sees, and "the last man"= "der letzte Mann" happens to be the keeper of the washroom of the hotel = the former porter. The former porter who inherits the property hands out money and goes away with the former night watchman in the carriage.

Here, I would like to discuss the shots using the mobile camera in this scene (however, we omit shots by the camera that moves on rails laid on the ground).

#### III-1. The last scene: The former porter who inherits from a certain millionaire is wildly merrymaking and leaves the hotel in the carriage.

1. From people eating a meal at a table, the camera moves as the image of each table is captured in full shot. On the way, while the camera moves with the movement of the pushcart of the server (full shot; on the way, the pushcart deviates from the frame<sup>16</sup>), the camera gets to the table where a sumptuous meal is placed and the porter waits and then moves to the shot of the former porter (waist shot).
2. The former porter who finishes the meal sends the employees off (waist shot). The camera moves with the porter, from knee shot to full shot.
3. Employees line up outside the revolving door of the hotel to receive a chip from the porter. He hands the chip to them. The shot is of the hands of the former porter. A waist shot or full shot of the employees who line up from the left side of the screen to the right of the screen is shown. The camera moves with the former porter handing the chip to them.
4. The carriage which the porter and his party enter leaves from the front of Hotel Atlantic with the background of the main entrance. The camera is loaded on the carriage as it goes away from the background of the front entrance of the hotel while capturing the former porter in the carriage from the front (fig. 3, 1:29:10).

We want to see how this last scene is introduced in detail. In the restored version, instead of the shot of the text that



fig. 3

describes the epoch of the filmic technique of this film, the shot of the text of the following story content in cursive German is inserted. <sup>17</sup>"Hier, an der Stätte seiner Schmach, würde der Alte den Rest seines Lebens elend verkümmern und es wäre die Geschichte hier eigentlich aus. Aber er nimmt sich des von allen Verlassen – der Autor an, indem er ihm ein Nachspiel schenkt, worin es ungefähr so zugeht, wie es im Leben – leider – nicht zuzugehen pflegt. (Here, at the scene of his disgrace, the old man would waste away the rest of his life miserably and this story would end here actually. But the author takes the abandoned by giving him an epilogue in which it happens about as it in life - unfortunately - not usually reach out.)"<sup>18</sup> After this caption was inserted, the film returns to the lobby of the Hotel Atlantic and to the article in the German newspaper which the wealthy are chatting about and reading on the sofa. According to this article, "Eine sensationelle Erbschaft. Wie noch erinnerlich, verschied kürzlich im Waschraum des Atlantic Hotel der berühmte Amerikanische Multimillionar Mr. A. G. Money, als er sich die Hände wusch. Fegt ist nun unter den Papieren dieses Sonderlings ein denjenigen zum Universalerben seines unermesslichen Vermögens einsegt, in dessen Armen er sterben würde. Demnach scheint sich jene biblische Verheißung, daß die Letzten die Ersten werden sollen, diesmal schon auf Erden zu erfüllen, denn der Glückliche ist. (Among the papers of this eccentric person, the testament was discovered that the person, in whose arms he would die is the sole heir of his immense fortune. Accordingly, this time, biblical promise that the last shall be first, seems to meet on earth. The happy man...)." <sup>19</sup>

The problem of who is "the author (Autor)" in the subtitle can be raised here. However, we will refer to this later. How do we interpret such an afterthought? We are at a loss. Incidentally, from film history, we also know that some sorts of surprising endings are characteristic of some kinds of American movies. In this film (director Murnau, screenplay Mayer), the last afterthought, at first glance, follows such kind of American movie. However, though at first glance it appears to be a happy ending, in fact this is not the case and, reversely, the following interpretation was also made. That is, it jeers at "the happy ending" of such an American movie feature (Kracauer, 1947: 101). In other words, the afterthought is a funny "farce." We will touch on this later.

Though the happy ending form might not have been discovered in the United States (Sklar, 1995: 135f.), Hollywood movies had already begun to have an effect on German film by 1924 (Kracauer, 1947: 101). Hollywood movies were the center of the international movie market, so they had a decisive influence on the movies of most other countries (Bordwell, 1999). Since 1917, the dominant filmmaking form overseas had been strongly influenced by the role model of storytelling which US movie studios depicted. For example, the happy ending form exactly illustrates this storytelling model. In more than 60 of 100 Hollywood movies that were extracted at random, men and women were joined finally, sometimes in stereotypical happy

ending with a fierce hug, and many more movies ended in happiness.

### III-2. The situation of the times, by which a German big movie production company UFA was forced to produce films

First, we must think under what kind of release condition was the film *Der letzte Mann* produced. This film was produced by the German big movie production company UFA, but it was not produced only for the German domestic market. Though we will see a detailed discussion of the film production situation in Germany in the 1920s elsewhere, the re-start of the domestic film industry could not have begun without the introduction of American movie capital shortly after Germany's defeat in World War I. *Sunrise* (1927), which was directed by Murnau three years after *Der letzte Mann*, was produced not in Germany but in Hollywood, California, United States, and the production company was the US big movie production company Fox. A foothold of the great director Murnau from a German big movie production company to a big production company of Hollywood was already in place from this film *Der letzte Mann*. Naturally, the production of *Der letzte Mann* was already incorporated into the release in the United States. The press screening of *Der letzte Mann* was in New York on December 5, 1924, before it was first released in the UFA Palast am Zoo in Berlin, Germany, on December 23, 1924. This time, the director Murnau also witnessed the screening.<sup>20</sup>

#### III-3-1. The letter addressed from the director Murnau to the producer Pommer

The letter dated January 21, 1925, which was addressed from the director Murnau to the Erich Pommer, who was a producer for UFA, is preserved (fig. 4<sup>21</sup>, and three days after this, on January 24, Murnau signed the contract with the film production company Fox that had advanced the contract negotiations). In this letter, we can see the conversation between the director Murnau and the supervision executive Felix Kallmann in the UFA bureau in New York at the end of November 1924. Aiming to expand the sales channels of German cinema in the United States, and also in relation to the premiere of *Die Nibelungen* (1924) by Fritz Lang in New York, UFA leaders sent the executive Kallmann with the director Lang and producer Erich Pommer to the United States. This time the conversation took place in New York.

The Parufamet agreement was concluded in December 1925.<sup>22</sup> It is apparent that the filmmakers at UFA were already aware of the American market. First, in 1923 Germany received the Dawes Plan, which was an indemnity payment mitigation of Germany from the United States, before the Parufamet agreement in 1925. Though Germany's prices and

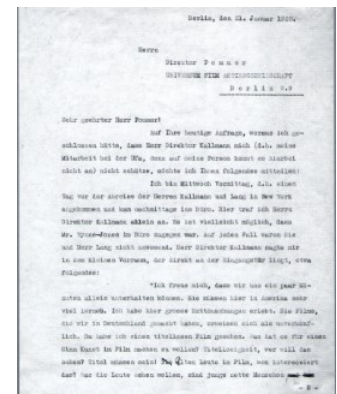


fig. 4



currency were stable, US capital entered the German market, including the film industry. To begin with, it was self-evident that the United States with a much larger market had the advantage in the competition. Even though Germany didn't match in competition with the United States, UFA was forced to try to compete with the US to target box office successes in the United States as well as Germany.<sup>23</sup>

In a letter written by the director Murnau, with regard to Carl Mayer, who was responsible for the screenplay of *Der letzte Mann*, the executive Kallmann's complaints, such as "First, how we are able to produce the film by Mayer?" is seen.<sup>24</sup> In addition, as for "no subtitles" that is one of the qualities that made *Der letzte Mann* a high historical masterpiece in world film history, the executive Kallmann saw this film and said, "No subtitles! Who will try to see such a film! Is it catching anyone's interest?" In this way, he criticized the effort thoroughly. Since there was so much lack of understanding even about the nature of the "no subtitles," the release of *Der letzte Mann* without the happy ending was not considered, at least in the United States.

### III-3-2. The playwright Carl Mayer

As for the procedure among the playwright Mayer, director Murnau, and producer Pommer, playwright Mayer had not kept making the end of this film a happy ending in mind. Playwright Carl Mayer (fig. 5<sup>25</sup>) had Jewish parents who had been born in Vienna and he had been born in Graz, Austria, in 1894. His father was a wealthy merchant, but then went bankrupt after failure in stock speculation. Rolf Hempel wrote a note on the testimony of Mayer: "In my



fig. 5

impression, he was thoroughly disobedient, and did not even hug a modicum of good feeling for the authority. (...). His words to the teachers, poets, writers and school friends were always insulting, destructive and cynical. He had a nasty humor. To school friends whom he was superior to in knowledge and intelligence, he kept them away, but nobody who could say bad things about him was."<sup>26</sup> His father had gone bankrupt, and he dreamed of working as a painter, a writer, or a journalist. Mayer held a variety of jobs. He worked at a theater in Innsbruck. He worked as an actor and as a visiting designer. Then World War I began. Mayer became a soldier in the Austrian army. He was seen by a psychiatrist because of his quirky personality. Hans Janowitz said the following, "During the long night, Carl Mayer told us how he survived in his years of World War I. During this period, he had to carry out the desperate fight with the military psychiatrist. Because he was powerless and had no ability for soldiering and did not want to be forced to be a soldier, he pretended to be a psychotic. He

fought well the merciless duel of the spirit with the senior officer psychiatrist who tried to prove that Mayer pretended to be mad. This time, he was the playwright of a theater, and supported his mother, brother, sister-in-law who became a widow, and her child. Since Mayer had forecast the course of things, he did not want to learn of a murder in the name of the homeland that had been crazy because of abuse of power."<sup>27</sup> Such a person can't naively believe a happy ending, including categories such as opportunity and good luck.

### **III-3-3. The mediation by producer Pommer**

Playwright Mayer talked about the concept of the film he wanted to make to director Murnau. Murnau agreed to Mayer's proposal, but was confused. Then, producer Pommer determined to produce the film in the direction of the original proposal. However, we can't know whether producer Pommer was going to make a film of playwright Mayer's proposal or not at this point, and to ask about it might not make much sense. While Pommer thought that it was impossible to produce a film on Mayer's proposal itself, his proposal was probably the contents of the concept for the screenplay reminiscent of the truly talented Mayer. The talented producer, Pommer, would have thought that he modified Mayer's screenplay after finishing the screenplay. In fact, Mayer wrote the screenplay. It is thought to have been about half a year before the film was released. As described above, if we think about the social and historical world film situation surrounding the film production company UFA, it is possible for UFA to have proposed the condition to put a happy ending to this film. At the time, producer Pommer had to have the opportunity of discussion as many as 10 times to persuade playwright Mayer to consent to add a happy ending.<sup>28</sup> Of course, the UFA production unit expected the film to look like real life and be a commercial failure without adding a happy ending.

### **III-3-4. The request for the modification by Emil Jannings**

In addition, Emil Jannings, who played the hotel porter and main character, was also negative to Mayer's draft at first. Jannings wrote as follows in his autobiography: "I demanded that the scenario should be changed. In spite of worry of the writer, I insisted on it." However, his words deny that he hoped this film would end up with a happy ending. He said as follows, "The outcome of the genre of fairy tale that a man becomes a millionaire in a day at the end of humiliation, was added there deliberately. I had not requested such a modification, dreaming <a happy ending>. My film proved its opposite rather. The reason for my request was purely artistic order. The figure of the old porter did not have a tragic feeling that could raise again the people who were fallen. The old porter played the faded glory without having any more extensive perspective, but what I needed was just such a perspective. For I needed

to believe in this world!"<sup>29</sup>

When the film *Der letzte Mann*, which had such a production process, was premiered in New York on January 25, 1925, the theater was full; the film was screened for many weeks and won commercial success.

### **III-3-5. What is <last>?**

In the last scene of this film, a certain American millionaire donates his property to the last bystander of his death, and "the last person" is by chance the keeper of the washroom = the original porter. Therefore, the film title of *Der letzte Mann* is thought to be taken from this. However, at the beginning, it was not so. In other words, the title came from the fact that the final job of the hotel employee, that is, "the last person," was the keeper of the washroom who sat in the basement, handed out towels when the guests came, and received a chip from them. First, playwright Mayer didn't have such a happy ending in mind (Riess, 1985: 144). This film title came from Mayer's proposal. As known, taking into consideration that an association did not reach Mayer's proposal, the title of this film released in English-speaking areas, including the United States, was *The Last Laugh*. Under this title, the film was released in the English-speaking areas on March 19, 1925.

### **III-3-6. The discontent inside UFA, a variety of lines of force**

After the screenplay was completed, the topic of the film planning for production came up inside UFA. As a negative aspect, it was characteristic of this film to also be called "no subtitles" here. Such an experimental cinema wouldn't be able to obtain assent of the majority of the audience and wouldn't be able to make a profit. Another negative aspect related to the content essence of this film. That is, they were dissatisfied that the washroom took center stage in this film. However, when such a negative opinion was expressed, producer Pommer had an idea; in other words, he would add a happy ending to the last scene. Then a gorgeous hotel rather than a gloomy washroom took center stage (Riess, 1985: 145).

However, as the hotel porter ends in faded glory as the keeper of the washroom, this represented faded glory in the German cultural sphere, but this was not so in the US cultural sphere. That is, the porter didn't earn more than the keeper of the washroom in the US. Therefore, spectators in the US cultural sphere didn't understand why the porter despaired because of being relocated to the washroom. Therefore, executive Carl Laemmle recognized that screening of *Der letzte Mann* in the United States would be restricted.<sup>30</sup>

### **III-4. The criticism of the added happy ending, the introduction of the "farce" - the distance to Hollywood at the same era**

Of course, the negative opinion on such an unnatural ending was already seen from film reviews.<sup>31</sup> It was also seen in later years. In other words, “one feels most strongly the platitude of the banal happy ending, the modern commercial fairy tale, where Murnau becomes as gross as his German audiences. This is the authentic tasteless glossiness of the Ufa style” (Eisner, 1973: 158).

Therefore, several devices were used in every interpretation of the last part of *Der letzte Mann*. For example, first, the last scene of the film has exactly a “farcical character” rather than something serious. In reverse, the ending with a farcical character also proves the meaning of the prelude subtitle of the last scene of the film. The content of the subtitle is as follows, “Here the story should really end for, in real life, the forlorn old man would have little to look forward to but death. The author took pity on him, however, and has provided a quite improbable epilogue.”<sup>32</sup> The “farcical character” in the last scene expresses “the author’s disbelief in a happy ending involving such categories as chance and good luck.”<sup>33</sup> This can be interpreted as strategic resistance to Hollywood movies on the side of the story content of this film (we argue the strategic resistance to the Hollywood movies on the side of the technique of this film in another part).

To begin with, in *Der letzte Mann*, ideally the subtitle should be ejected and the images should be stacked. That is, nothing can be better than no subtitles attached at the beginning and the closure. Only the main body would be ideal for this film without the subtitle at the beginning, the subtitle seen when the main body finishes, and the last happy ending.

## Conclusion - Thinking of the carriage scene

While we see this last happy ending scene in *Der letzte Mann*, perhaps we should think fondly about Murnau’s other films. In the scene that extends to about 15 minutes and that makes us feel sick, while we close our eyes or remain with our eyes opened, we come to think fondly about other films by Murnau such as *Phantom* (1922) and *City Girl* (1930).<sup>34</sup> That is, we think of more fascinating scenes than the last happy ending scene in *Der letzte Mann* from the viewpoint of filmic text.<sup>35</sup> For Murnau, the shots where those who ride in the carriage are captured in this way are not seen for the first time in *Der letzte Mann*. In *Phantom*, produced in 1922, two years before the production of *Der letzte Mann*, such a shot can already be seen. It is the shot in which Alfred Abel goes shopping and dining with Lya de Putti in the carriage after he dances with her. They are captured from the front. The outside landscape can be also seen (fig. 6, 1:32:42). While we see this scene of *Der letzte Mann*, we are also reminded of the similar impressive scene in *Phantom*. After



fig. 6

this, the main character Alfred Abel is fallen, the reverse of the old porter of *Der letzte Mann*.<sup>36</sup> In addition, also in *City Girl* produced by Fox in Hollywood in 1930 six years after the production of *Der letzte Mann*, the shooting by the moving camera attached to the carriage can be seen. It is in the last impressive scene.<sup>37</sup> Mary Duncan has left the ranch, and Charles Farrell comes by in the carriage to persuade her to come back; accordingly, she returns to the ranch with him. The shot where they ride in the carriage is next. In the shot, he is to the right of the screen, and she is to the left (fig. 7). The setting of the situation is the same as in



fig. 7

*Sunrise* (1927) produced by Fox three years before the production of *City Girl*. The man appeases and the woman looks down. Needless to say, several shots by the fixed camera are arranged before and after these moving shots, and the hard screen configuration worthy of Murnau is not disturbed.

## Notes

- 1 As for the monograph about Murnau's films including *Der letzte Mann*, refer to Eisner, 1973. In addition, as for what teaches us concisely, refer to *Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau* (Reihe Film 43), 1990; *Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau*, 2003.
- 2 Today, the following eight Murnau films are considered to have been lost: *Der Knabe in Blau* (1920), *Satanas* (1919), *Sehnsucht* (1919/20), *Der Bucklige und Taenzerin* (1920), *Der Januskopf* (1920), *Abend-Nacht-Morgen* (1920), *Graef in Marizza* (1920/21), and *Die Austreibung* (1923). However, *Phantom* (1922) is reported to have been discovered in the Mos Film Archive (Eisner, 1964), and we can see it now. Furthermore, after parts of *Der brennende Acker* were also found, its complete version was found. Very short fragments of *Satanas* (1919) were also discovered recently (Sadoul, 1999).
- 3 Cf. Kracauer, 1947: 100; 1979: 109f.
- 4 Pabst, 1920. cf. Kracauer, 1947: 47; 1979: 53.
- 5 In *Passion*, rowdy Parisians walk through the streets after being released from bondage. The scene of the French Revolution is portrayed vividly. In *Deception*, Henry VIII's sex life is depicted and is reflected in the glamorous background that incorporates the conspiracy of the court, the Tower of London, two thousand extra people, and some other historical episodes. In *Sumurun*, the roles of King Amenès and Henry VIII are given to the old chieftain who retreated from the region of the history into the world of fairy tales of the Orient and sought sexual adventure. In *Das Weib des Pharao*, the war that occurred by the chance that the tyrant Pharao Amenès was addicted to a Greek slave Theonis is drawn. Kracauer, 1947: 47ff.; 1979: 49ff.
- 6 Kracauer, 1947: 98f.; 1979: 107f.
- 7 This is preserved in Filmmuseum Berlin, Deutsche Kinemathek. *Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau*, 2003: 32.
- 8 Of course, such crossing of contrasting shots is not seen only in the film by Murnau. In the same era, high-speed cross-cutting is also seen in Soviet Russian cinema, above all, in Sergei Eisenstein's films.
- 9 Because the accompaniment music was attached in the silent film for each screening, that is not to say that there was no sound.
- 10 In 1920 in the same year as *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* was released, *Der Golem* by Paul Wegener was released (first edition was released in 1915). The set by Hans Poelzig in *Golem* is as unique and heterogeneous to simplicity as in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*. In *Golem*, Rochus Gliese, who was later in charge of the set in *Sunrise*, was in charge of the costume. In addition, interestingly, the expressionism

- painter Walter Roerig, who was in charge of the set of *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, participated with Roberto Herlth in the set of *Der Letzte Mann*, which is heterogeneous to *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*.
- 11 Paoella, 1956. cf. Sadoul, 1999: 343.
  - 12 As for the chamber play in the series of Murnau's film, *Der Gang in die Nacht* (1920) can be given. The characteristic of this film enables shots with depth, using the diagonal of the room. This is a kind of a barrage of diagonal compositions. Here, diagonal composition is always used to give depth. In relation to composition with depth, the composition with depth through deep focus by Orson Welles and Jean Renoir has been referenced. The composition with depth seen in this film by Murnau becomes a really hard feeling with the space by a fixed camera.
  - 13 Three expressionist painters, including Hermann Warm, were in charge of the set.
  - 14 Murnau, 1927. cf. Sadoul, 1999: 343. For example, according to Thomas Elsaesser, the newly restored print reveals the involvement of Murnau in expressionism. However, the work of Murnau has considerable distance from typically "decorative" examples such as *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* by Robert Wiene. Elsaesser, 2000: 227. The "simplicity" as mentioned here shows the uniqueness in the space configuration in the film by Murnau.
  - 15 Kracauer described the distance from "realism" in this film (Kracauer, 1947: 101f.; 1979: 110f.). Perhaps there is room for discussion.
  - 16 The meaning of deviation of the subject out of the frame was discussed in another article. In this scene, the camera deviates the subject from the frame, but the impact of the deviation from the frame as seen in a different scene of the film doesn't exist here.
  - 17 This film has different versions. The English caption version is the version released in the English-speaking areas, including the US. In the English version, the caption about the filmic technique is seen in the beginning. However, in the German version, differently, the caption is the following, referring to the story content. "Heute bist Du der Erste, geachtet vor Allen, ein Minister, ein General, vielleicht sogar ein Fürst – Weisst Du, was Du morgen bist?!"
  - 18 In the English version, it is as follows: "Here the story should really end for, in real life, the forlorn old man would have little to look forward to but death. The author took pity on him, however, and has provided a quite improbable epilogue."
  - 19 In the English version, German newspaper was changed to English newspaper, and the content was changed to the following: "A. G. MONNEY'S WILL Sensational Inheritance Our readers will recall the recent death of Mr. A. G. Monney, the eccentric American multi-millionaire, who passed away suddenly in the washroom of the Hotel Atlantic. Among the millionaire's papers, his will has now been found – an amazing will, in which his entire fortune is left to the person in whose arms he should happen to die."
  - 20 *Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau*, 1990: 226.
  - 21 This is preserved in Filmmuseum Berlin, Deutsche Kinemathek. *Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau*, 2003: 251.
  - 22 This was the partnership agreement that US Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn made a loan on credit to German UFA. The movies produced by UFA were incorporated into the distribution program of theaters in the US, but conditional on those movies living up to the taste of the American audience.
  - 23 As for the word "expressionism" referred to earlier in this paper, the producer of UFA, Erich Pommer, recognized the potential which the name "expressionism" had. It was used as a brand name that enclosed Germany. After *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* succeeded in Paris, Pommer said the following: "The German film industry made 'stylised films' to make money. [...] Germany was defeated: how could she make films that would compete with the others? It would have been impossible to try and so we tried something new; Expressionist or stylised films." Erich Pommer, quoted in Huaco, 1965: 35. in Elsaesser, 2000: 26. In other words, as mentioned later, UFA requested to produce a "stylish" film at that time.
  - 24 The letter dated January 21, 1925, which was addressed from the director Murnau to the Erich Pommer.
  - 25 *Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau* (Reihe Film 43), 1990: 23.
  - 26 Hempel, 1968. cf. Sadoul, 1999: 298ff.
  - 27 *ibid.*
  - 28 Hempel, 1968.
  - 29 Cf. Sadoul, 1999: 386. Sadoul and Eisner are negative about Jannings. According to Sadoul, Jannings bears the responsibility for the "fortunate outcome" of *Der letzte Mann*. According to Eisner, Jannings' exaggerated conceit is consistent with his character. Curt Riess reproduces Jannings' words by free

indirect discourse: "People don't go to see the movie to be disheartened.... It begins with some prospects, and ends with some kind of hope.... In any event, people can't go dispirited out of the movie theater. If it becomes so, the movie was wrong somewhere. Mayer, if audience sees your movie, they will go out in despair!" Riess, 1985: 146.

30 Cf. Sadoul, 1999: 388.

31 According to Jhering, the happy ending as a common last-ditch measure has an unusual effect. The epilogue is full of wit, and because it begins in a timely manner and very accurately, viewers no longer are embarrassed by this rapid change. Jhering, 1924. According to Pinthus, this film is brilliant in its use of film grammar. Pinthus in Haette ich das kino!

32 There is room for discussion also with respect to the inserted subtitles. First, playwright Mayer and Murnau were negative toward adding the last happy ending scene. However, Mayer thought reluctantly. "Our old doorman became a millionaire suddenly. He really got a heritage. That is, the US millionaire was dead – he had a stroke in the men's toilet of the hotel. According to his testament, the last person to whom he speaks inherits the huge property." Riess, 1985: 148.

33 Kracauer, 1947: 101, 1979: 110. In addition, though film noir is a Hollywood movie, it has distance from the happy ending in Hollywood movies.

34 In the German version, the running time of the last happy ending scene is about 15 minutes from 1: 14:30 to 1:29: 21. In the English version, it is about 12 minutes from 1: 01: 42 to 1: 13:48. Between them, the running time of the carriage scene is about 45 seconds (about 33 seconds of the stationary part and 12 seconds of moving parts) in both versions.

35 For more information about the rough and humorous shooting in the last happy ending scene of *Der letzte Mann*, see Riess, 1985: 148.

36 In addition, *Der brennende Acker* (1922) has scenes of people who ride in a carriage or on horse. Scene 3 contains the shot where a man and a woman ride on horse. This is a moving camera shot. Each man and woman rides on a horse. The camera is directed toward him and her who are coming, and while the camera is moving rearward, it continues to capture them. In scene 5, the shot captures the coachman riding in the carriage. This shot is also a moving camera shot with the moving carriage. The figure of the coachman is captured diagonally by the moving camera in a waist shot. In addition, the last scene 6 contains the shot where the people riding on the sled move to the right of the screen. The camera captures them while it also moves in response to them.

37 One is the shot from the carriage which a large number of people who came to the farm ride in. In the wheat field, the carriage carrying the some people goes on the road. The running time of this scene is long. In addition, when the wheat harvest is completed, the carriage carrying a little girl and Marie Duncan can be seen. Here, the moving camera shot from the carriage is seen, too. Moreover, in the scene where Charles Farrell fights with another farmer over the Marie Duncan, the shooting was done on the moving carriage. However, this shooting was not done on the actual carriage, but using a studio set.

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