

[Vimeo link for ALL of Bruce Jackson's and Diane Christian's film introductions and post-film discussions in the virtual BFS](#)

[Vimeo link for our introduction to PANDORA'S BOX](#)

[Zoom link for all FALL 2021 BFS Tuesday 7:00 PM post-screening discussions:](#)

Meeting ID: 925 6169 6846 Passcode: 76107

Louise Brooks ..Lulu
Fritz Kortner..Dr. Peter Schön
Francis Lederer....Alwa Schön
Carl Goetz....Schigolch
Krafft-Raschig....Rodrigo Quast
Alice Roberts....Countess Anna Geschwitz
Gustav Diessl....Jack the Ripper
Michael von Newlinsky....Marquis Casti-Piani

Directed by **Georg Wilhelm Pabst**
Written by **Joseph Fleisler, Georg Wilhelm Pabst, Ladislaus Vajda**,
based on **Frank Wedekind's** plays *Der Erdgeist* and *Die Büchse der Pandora*
Produced by **Seymour Nebenzal**
Cinematography by **Günther Krampf**

GEORG WILHELM PABST (27 August 1885,

Raudnitz, Austria —29 May 1967, Vienna) directed 39 films. The first was *Der Schatz* 1923 (*The Treasure*), the last *Durch die Wälder* 1956 (*Through the Forests and Through the Trees*). Some of the others were *Rosen für Bettina* 1956 (*Ballerina*), *Der Letzte Akt* 1955 (*Hitler: The Last Ten Days*), *La Conciencia acusa* 1952, (*Voice of Silence*), *Der Prozeß* 1948 (*The Trial*), *Paracelsus* 1943, *Jeunes filles en détresse* 1939, *Mademoiselle Docteur* 1936, (*Street of Shadows*), *White Hunter* 1936, *Don Quixote* 1933, *Kameradschaft* 1931 (*Comradeship*), *Die 3groschenoper* 1931 (*The Threepenny Opera*), *Die Weiße Hülle vom Piz Palü* 1929 (*White Hell of Piz Palu*), *Das Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* 1929 (*Diary of a Lost Girl*), *Abwege* 1928 (*Crisis/Desire/The Devious Path*), *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* 1927 (*The Loves of Jeanne Ney/Lusts of the Flesh*), *Die Freudlose Gasse* 1925 (*Joyless Street/The Street of Sorrow*).

LOUISE BROOKS (Mary Louise Brooks, 14 November 1906, Cherryvale, Kansas, USA—8 August 1985, Rochester, New York) is the subject of two documentary films, *Looking for Lulu* 1998, written by her biographer Barry Paris, and *Lulu in Berlin* 1984, a fascinating interview, mostly about her work with Pabst, by documentary filmmaker Richard Leacock. She seems to have enjoyed work on her early films made at the Famous Players-Lasky studio in Astoria, Queens, but she hated Hollywood and, after working with Pabst, pretty much let her career lapse rather than go back there. Her last film was a small part in *Overland Stage Raiders* 1938, which featured the still-unknown John Wayne (he would become a star the following year with *Stagecoach*). During the 30s she supported herself working as a clerk in a New York department store, turning occasional tricks, dancing, and taking a few small film roles. In her later years, she was supported by one of her former lovers. Some of the films on which her reputation rests are *Prix de beauté* 1930, *Das Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* (*Diary of a Lost Girl*, 1929), *The Canary Murder Case* 1929 (she was the canary and insisted that her costume have a removable tail so she could sit down between takes), *Beggars of Life* 1928, *A Girl in Every Port* 1928 and *It's the Old Army Game* 1926. The most frequent complaint about her in Hollywood was that she read books on the set instead of exchanging gossip with the other actors. She wrote a biography—"Naked on My Goat"—but tossed the manuscript into the incinerator because she didn't like it.



FRITZ KORTNER (Fritz Nathan Kohn, 12 May 1892, Vienna, Austria—22 July 1970, Munich, Germany), one of Germany's greatest actors, moved to London in the mid-30s after he became the subject of vicious attacks from the Nazis because he was Jewish. He then moved to

Hollywood in 1941. He returned to Germany in 1949 to star in *The Last Illusion*. The film was a major success and he resumed his career there as actor, director, and writer. He appeared in about 50 films, the last as Shylock in a German made-for-

tv film, *Der Kaufmann von Venedig* 1968; the first *Das andere Ich* 1918. Some of the others were: *Blaubart* 1951 (*Bluebeard*) 1951, *The Vicious Circle* 1948, *Berlin Express* 1948, *The Brasher Doubloon* 1947, *The Razor's Edge* 1946, *The Hitler Gang* 1944, *The Strange Death of Adolf Hitler* 1943, *Abdul the Damned* 1935, *Der Mörder Dimitri*

Karamasoff 1931 (*The Brothers Karamazov/The Murderer Dimitri Karamazov*), *Danton* 1931, *Dreyfus* 1930, *Somnambul* 1929 (*The Somnambulist*), *Orlacs Hände* 1924, *Die Brüder Karamasoff* 1918 (*The Brothers Karamazov*).

GUNTHER KRAMPF (8 February 1899, Vienna, Austria—4 August 1950, London) was one of Germany's most important silent-era cinematographers. His first film, *Nosferatu* 1922, is still shown regularly at film festivals and on cable tv. Some of his other films are *The Franchise Affair* 1950, *This Was a Woman* 1948, *Meet Me at Dawn* 1947, *The Night Has Eyes* 1942, *Convoy* 1940, *The Outsider* 1940, *The Ghoul* 1934, *Jew Sues* 1934 (*Power*; not to be confused with the 1940 Nazi propaganda film), *Rome Express* 1932, *The Outsider* 1931, *Orlacs Hände* 1924 (*Hands of Orlac*), and *Der Verlorene Schuh* 1923 (*Cinderella*).

FRANK WEDEKIND (Benjamin Franklin Wedekind, 24 July 1864, Hannover, Hanover [now Germany]—9 March 1918, Munich, Germany). Dramatist, journalist and publicist. He worked on the staff of *Simplicissimus*. A forerunner of the expressionists, he employed grotesque fantasy and unconventional characters in order to attack the bourgeois ideals and hypocrisy of his society. Wedekind was particularly concerned with sexual themes, stressing the primacy of man's instincts. His

plays include *Frühlings Erwachen* (1891, *The Awakening of Spring*), *Der Erdgeist* (1895, *Earth Spirit*), and *Die Büchse der Pandora* (1903, *Pandora's Box*). Alban Berg compiled the libretto for his opera *Lulu* (1934) from the latter two. (From Columbia Electronic Library)

The two best sources of information on Louise Brooks are Brooks' *Lulu in Hollywood* (Knopf, NY 1982), seven essays about her film world experiences and opinions that originally appeared in *Sight and Sound* and other film journals, and Barry Paris's *Louise Brooks; A Biography* (Knopf, NY 1989). Kevin Brownlow has a brief but informative interview with her in *The Parade's Gone By...* (U. California Press, Berkeley and LA, 1968). There's probably more about Brooks on the web than any other silent star. The best is the one maintained by the Louise Brooks Society, www.pandorasbox.com. The site is full of great material about Brooks and her films; it's got a good filmography and bibliography, scores of photos and production stills, all the right links and more.



**From *World Film Directors Vol. I (1890-1945)*.
Editor John Wakeman. The H. W. Wilson
Company, NY, 1987**

PABST, G(EORG) W(ILHELM) (August 27, 1885-May 29, 1967, Austrian director and scenarist, was born in Raudnitz, Bohemia then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, now in Czechoslovakia. His father, August, was a railroad official whose career

took the family to Vienna when Pabst was still a child. At his father's urging he first studied engineering. He soon abandoned this, toyed for a time with the idea of a military career, and finally—to his parents' distress—opted for the stage. In 1904 he entered the Vienna Academy of Decorative Arts, where he studied acting for two years.

In 1910, after varied experience at theatres in Switzerland and Germany, Pabst went to the United States to join the Deutsche Volkstheater in New York, appearing in plays by Hauptmann, Schnitzler and others. The theatre was controlled by labor unions and he met a number of prominent American socialists, including Upton Sinclair. It was at the Volkstheater that Pabst first tried his hand as a director, so on realizing that he had a much greater talent for this than as an actor. In 1914 he returned to Europe to recruit new performers but, with the outbreak of war, was detained in France as an enemy alien. Pabst spent nearly five years in a prison camp near Brest, where he organized a theatre company and presented French plays for the entertainment of prisoners and guards alike. In this way he acquired his lifelong admiration for French culture, but his imprisonment was nevertheless a painful experience which marked him deeply.

Released at the end of the war, Pabst directed a season of plays in Prague, including two controversial works by Franz Wedekind. His stage productions at the time are said to have been in the Expressionist style then dominant in Germany. In 1920 he became artistic director of a Vienna theatre, the Neuen Wiener Bühne, where he staged avant-garde plays by Sternheim and Georg Kaiser among others. It was the German cinematographer and film pioneer Carl Froelich who brought Pabst into the cinema. When Froelich formed his own production company, he gave Pabst an acting role in his first movie *Im Banne der Krallen* (1921), then took him on as assistant director and scenarist of *Der Taugenichts* (1922) and *Luise Millerin* (1922).

Pabst's first film as a director followed in 1923, *Der Schatz* (*The Treasure*).... *Der Schatz* did poorly at the box office and Pabst's next assignment, secured for him by Froelich, was a routine commercial vehicle for the popular actress Henny Porten, *Gräfin Donelli* (*Countess*

Donelli, 1924). It was made very quickly and cheaply, but enjoyed great popularity and commercial success. Its producers, Maxim Films, urged Pabst to make other similar entertainments, but he had no wish to settle into a rut as a commercial director, and was looking for a story that would allow him to express his developing social consciousness. He found it in *Die feudlose Gasse* (*The Joyless Street*), a controversial novel by the Viennese journalist Hugo Bettauer, and in due course also found backers for what developed into an extremely ambitious project.

Bettauer's novel, originally a serial, is a portrait of Viennese society in the postwar period of inflation, which brought an accelerating breakdown in economic, social and moral values. Pabst engaged Willi Haas to write the script and Guido Seeber as his photographer, signing Werner Krauss and Asta Nielsen as his stars. He also selected Valeska Gert, a popular cabaret entertainer, to play the madam of a brothel, and agreed to pay the then outrageous sum of \$4,000 for the services of an almost unknown young actress named Greta Garbo, whose promise he had recognized in Mauritz Stiller's *The Saga of Gösta Berling*....

For the most part, *The Joyless Street* eschews Expressionist symbolism and indeed it has been recognized as an important contribution to a very different movement—the so-called “Neue Sachlichkeit” (New Objectivity). The term had been coined in 1924 to define the glum realism that had emerged in painting as a reflection of a national mood of disillusionment.

Reacting against the Expressionists' romantic probing into the depths of the human psyche, the artists of the Neue Sachlichkeit limited themselves to a resigned scrutiny of what people did to each other in visible and material terms, refusing speculation about why. “What need is there for romantic treatment?” Pabst asked once. “Real life is already far too romantic, too disturbing.”...

But in 1925 the film's unblinking portrayal

of squalor and depravity was startling. In spite of the wholesale mutilations imposed by the censors of various countries, it was a major international success, establishing Pabst as a significant figure in world cinema, and in particular as a brilliant director of women....

In the course of his career Pabst became involved in an assortment of political and cultural movements, but his deepest concern as a filmmaker was always the revelation through visual images of human character. He was greatly interested in psychology and psychoanalysis....

Ever since he had staged Wedekind's play *Erdegeist* in Prague just after the war, he had wanted to film it and its companion piece, *Die Büchse der Pandora*. In 1928 he saw a couple of Paramount movies featuring a young starlet named Louise Brooks and recognized in her the combination of intelligence and intuition, innocence and eroticism, that he saw in Wedekind's Lulu. As it happened, she had just been refused a salary increase by Paramount and at once accepted Pabst's offer. “In Berlin,” she later recalled, “I stepped to the station platform to meet Mr. Pabst and became an actress.... It was just as if Mr. Pabst had sat in on my whole life and career and knew exactly where I needed assurance and protection.”



Discussing Pabst's directorial technique, she said, “it was the stimulus that concerned him. If he got that right, the actor's emotional reaction would be like life itself.... by some magic he would saturate me with one clear emotion and turn me loose.”

Die Büchse der Pandora (*Pandora's Box*, 1928) was drawn by

Ladilauš Vajda from Wedekind's two Lulu plays (which also inspired Alban Berg's great opera *Lulu*). In his *demimondaine* Lulu, Wedekind created a “personification of primitive sexuality” who uses up and destroys the men that love her until she meets an even more destructive sexual monster than herself, Jack the Ripper. Where Berg in his opera heightened the theatricality of the plays, Pabst and his scenarist subdued them to a more

subtle and cinematic naturalism. However, Pabst does not hesitate to use Expressionist devices when they suit his purpose—especially towards the end of the film, as in the extreme *chiaroscuro* of the floating casino, or the disturbing psychological details picked out by the camera as Jack is briefly distracted from his need to kill by Lulu's irresistible sexuality.

Other scenes seem closer to Impressionism, like the sequence in which Lulu takes part in a cabaret. Lotte Eisner wrote of this that "nobody has ever equaled Pabst's portrayal of the backstage fever on the opening night of a big show, the hurrying and scurrying between scene changes...the rivalry, complacency, and humour, the bewildering bustle of stage-hands and electricians—a stupendous whirl of artistic aspiration, colourful detail, and a facile eroticism ...Lulu appears like some pagan idol, tempting, glittering with spangles, feathers and frills, against a wavering, out-of-focus background."

Pandora was cruelly mutilated by the censors, but it was only partly for this reason that contemporary reviewers greeted it so coolly. Some were shocked, others regretted Pabst's apparent retreat from political engagement; many concluded that "Lulu is inconceivable without the words that Wedekind made her speak." More recently—with different preconceptions and with something like a complete print to study—critics have recognized "the miracle of Louie Brooks" and the dimensions of Pabst's achievement, marred though it is by a lack of stylistic unity. Lee Atwell wrote that "Pabst's film reincarnates Lulu as a modern myth, Pabst sees her as a dangerously free and alluring innocent,



without any notion of sin in the Christian sense...a liberated figure of pure untrammelled feminine desire." The movie has been compared with Carl Dreyer's *Passion of Joan of Arc* "for the intense, intimate way it uses the camera to watch the processes of thoughts and feelings through close shots of the face."

In 1929 Pabst co-directed with Arnold Fanck *Die Weisse Hölle vom Piz Palü* (*The White Hell of Piz Palü*). Starring the young Leni Riefenstahl, it proved one of the most successful of Fanck's exciting "mountain films." The same year Pabst returned to his own concerns in *Das Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* (*Diary of a Lost Girl*), based on a best seller by Margarethe Böhme. Undeterred by the reception given to *Pandora*, he starred Louise Brooks in another study of a sexually generous girl. She plays Thymiane, a pharmacist's daughter made pregnant by his wicked assistant (Fritz Rasp) and incarcerated for this sin in a reform school run by a voyeur and a sadist (Valeska Gert). Escaping in the midst of a rebellion, Thymiane winds up in a brothel. There are two conclusions to the story: one in which Thymiane, rejecting spurious respectability, herself becomes the madam of a brothel, and

another, substituted by Pabst to secure the film's release in Germany, in which she marries the old Count Osdorff but retains her courage and honesty.

Freddy Buache has described Thymiane's initial seduction in the brothel as "one of the purest, most iridescent, and the most ineffably magnificent in the cinema's collection of erotica." Even more directly than in *Pandora*, Pabst contrasts the basic innocence and honesty of his "lost girl" with the hypocrisy and decadence of bourgeois society, though Kracauer and others complained that he

does not take his social criticism far enough and instead “elaborated on the decadence itself.” There is little of the Expressionist virtuosity or atmospheric richness of *Pandora* in this film, which is characterized by an almost documentary restraint and a new concern for stylistic unity.

By this time, the movies were becoming talkies. Pabst said some years later that he remained “convinced that in the cinema, the text counts for little. What count is the image.” He nevertheless recognized that sound could not be ignored and in 1929 went to London to study the new production methods. He reached the conclusion that the early talkies he saw there merely exploited sound as a novelty instead of recognizing it as an addition to the filmmaker’s vocabulary.

Returning to Germany early in 1930, he began work on his own first sound film, *Westfront 1918*, adapted by Ladislaus Vajda and P. M. Lampel from Ernst Johanssen’s anti-war novel *Vier von der Infanterie*....

Though he had long been regarded as a realist director, it was in this grim and powerful film that Pabst achieved for the first time the goals of the “New Objectivity,” with none or few of the concessions to picturesqueness and sentimentality that marred other war films of the period (as well as many of his own earlier pictures). It was released in May 1930 at a time when Germany was already gearing itself for another great war, and Pabst’s insistence on the futility and dreary monotony of militarism was not welcomed by most German critics, though the movie was greatly admired in Britain and France.

...Like René Clair in his first sound films, Pabst reduces dialogue to a minimum, concentrating instead on gesture and image....

Returning to the style of *Westfront*, Pabst made one of his finest films in *Kameradeschaft* (*Comradeship*, 1931). Set in the immediate postwar period, it is based on an incident that actually occurred in 1906, when German miners crossed the border to help rescue French miners trapped underground in a disaster at Courrières. The theme lent itself to Pabst’s humanistic distaste for the growing nationalism of the 1930s, and the film was organized in a Franco-German coproduction, with French and German actors speaking their own

languages throughout....*Kameradeschaft* has been recognized as a masterpiece of fictional documentary and was an important influence on such British directors as Basil Wright and Humphrey Jennings. In France, it brought Pabst the Legion of Honor. In Germany, however, the film was condemned by the reactionary press as unpatriotic and it failed at the box office. Finally disillusioned, Pabst went to France.

None of Pabst’s later films equaled the major achievements of his first German period, but some are of considerable merit....

Pabst’s reputation has never recovered from the fact that he elected to spend the war years in Austria and Germany. According to his wife, he had in fact intended to emigrate to the United States, but at the last moment was trapped in Europe by a traveling accident. There is evidence to support this claim, but he was also the only great German *cinéaste* of the prewar period to make films under the Nazis, and this has been found harder to justify....

After the war, Pabst remained for a time in Austria. *Der Prozess* (*The Trial*, 1947) is set in nineteenth-century Hungary and centers on a lawyer famous for his defense of Jews persecuted during a wave of anti-Semitic hysteria. Like *Paracelsus*, it has been much praised for its cinematic qualities (which brought Pabst the award as best director at Venice in 1948), but rancorously attacked on ideological grounds. One French reviewer remarked that Pabst “defends the Jews...but ten years too late.” It should be said that he had been anxious to make a movie on this theme as early as 1933, but had been then unable to obtain French backing for the project....

Jean Renoir said in 1963 that Pabst “knows how to create a strange world, whose elements are borrowed from daily life. Beyond this precious gift, he knows better than anyone else, how to direct actors. His characters emerge like his own children, created from elements of his own heart and mind.”

...Louise Brooks described her mentor as “a short man, broad-shouldered and thick-chested, looking heavy and willful in repose. But in action his legs carried him on wings which matched the swiftness of his mind.” Alexandre Arnoux said that he

possessed “a Viennese charm that nobody I know can resist, an extraordinary power of seduction, the demon of intelligence in his look and a certain fullness and direct humanity that pierces the soul.”



New Yorker
editor William
Shawn in his
introduction to
Lulu in
Hollywood:

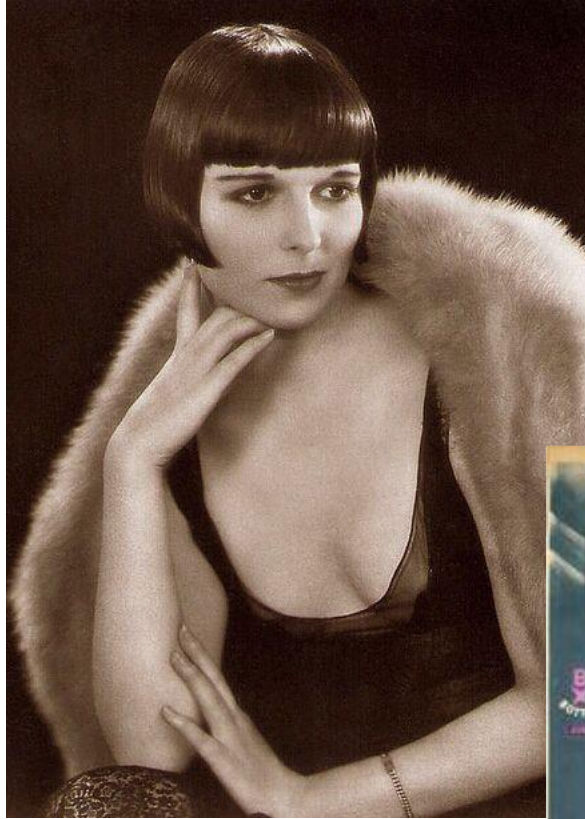
“Louise Brooks is not only an actress who writes; she is a writer who acts. Long ago, she also danced. People who saw her dance say that she was a captivating dancer, and I am confident she was. Whatever she does, she is, indivisibly, an

artist. In order to understand Louise Brooks, however, one first has to disentangle her from her most famous role: that of Lulu in G.W. Pabst’s 1929 silent film *Pandora’s Box*. There have been a host of Lulus, of course, since the German playwright Frank Wedekind created the character in his plays *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora’s Box*. A number of actresses have played the role on the stage. Since Alban Berg created his vocal, atonal Lulu in the opera of that name, a number of singers have sung the role. Yet it was Louise Brooks, in silence and out of her own person, who created the fundamental, the only Lulu. As the years have passed, the image of Louise Brooks as Lulu has persisted on the screen, and has haunted, and informed, all other performances.”

LB from Lulu in Hollywood: In May, when the studio wanted me in order to start production of *Beggars in Life*, under the direction of William Wellman, it had to track me from Hollywood to New

York and on to Miami, then to Havana, to Palm Beach, and finally, to Washington, where I was visiting George Marshall, the owner of the professional football team the Redskins. While waiting for the capture of a seemingly reluctant actress he had never met, Billy Wellman came to the unfortunate conclusion that since I did not follow the pattern of the actors who haunted the studio panting after film roles, I did not care about films at all. Because he didn’t know that sycophancy had no merit in the New York studio where I had begun my career, and because I was unaware that prudent Hollywood actors wooed producers, directors, and writers with flattering attention, a coldness was set up between us which neither of us could dispel. Nor did hard work on my part and a willingness to do dangerous stunts under his direction alter Billy’s conclusion. In 1932, at the bar of Tony’s Restaurant in New York, he asked, ‘Why did you always hate making pictures, Louise?’ Those were the last words I ever heard him speak. Before that, this intricate man had offered me a part in *The Public Enemy*, then passed it on to Jean Harlow when I turned it down in order to make a trip to New York. Bewitched by his own success in Hollywood, he could not imagine my hating the place”.... As a loner, I count as my two most precious rights those that allow me to choose the periods of my aloneness and allow me to choose the people with whom I will spend the periods of my not-aloneness. To a film star, on the other hand, to be let alone for an instant is terrifying. It is the first signpost on the road to oblivion. Obviously, an actor cannot choose the people who whom he will work, or when or how he will work with them. He goes to work at a time specified by the studio. He spends his working day under the control not only of his director but also of the scriptwriters, the cameraman, the wardrobe department, and the publicity office. Since publicity is the lifeblood of stardom, without which a star will die, it is equally obvious that he must keep it flowing through his private life, which feeds the envy and curiosity that bring many people into theaters.

For all actors know that truly natural acting is rejected by the audience. Although people are better equipped to judge acting than any other art, the hypocrisy of “sincerity” prevents them from admitting that they, too, are always acting some role of their own invention. To be a successful actor, then, it is necessary to add eccentricities and mystery to naturalness, so that the audience can admire and puzzle over something different from itself.



The tragedy of film history is that it is fabricated, falsified, by the very people who make film history. It is understandable that in the early years of film production, when nobody believed there was going to be any film history, most film magazines and books printed trash, aimed only at fulfilling the public's wish to share a fairy-tale existence with its movie idols. But since about 1950 film has been established as an art, and its history recognized as a serious matter. Yet film celebrities continue to cast themselves as stock types—nice or naughty girls, good or bad boys—whom their chroniclers spray with a shower of anecdotes.

Frank Wedekind's play *Pandora's Box* opens with a prologue. Out of a circus tent steps the Animal Tamer, carrying in his left hand a whip and in his right hand a loaded revolver. “Walk in,” he says to the audience. “Walk into my menagerie!” The finest job of casting that G.W. Pabst ever did was casting himself as the director, the Animal Tamer of his film adaptation of Wedekind's “tragedy of monsters.” Never a sentimental trick did this whip hand permit the actors assembled to play his beasts. The revolver he shot straight into the heart of the audience. At the time Wedekind produced *Pandora's Box*, in Berlin around the turn of the century, it was detested, condemned, and banned. It was declared to be “immoral and inartistic.” If in that period when the sacred pleasures of the ruling class were comparatively private, a play exposing them had called out the dogs of law, how much more savage

would be the attack upon a film faithful to Wedekind's text which was made in 1928 in Berlin, where the ruling class publicly flaunted its pleasures as a symbol of wealth and power.

And since nobody truly knows what a director is doing till he is done, nobody who was connected with the film dreamed that Pabst was risking commercial failure with the

story of an “immoral” prostitute who wasn't crazy about her work and was surrounded by the “inartistic” ugliness of raw bestiality. Only five years earlier the famous Danish actress Asta Nielsen had condensed Wedekind's play into the film *Loulou*. There was no lesbianism in it, no incest. *Loulou*, the man-eater devoured her sex victims—Dr. Goll, Schwarz, and Schön—and then dropped dead in an acute attack of indigestion. This kind of film, with Pabst improvements, was what audiences were prepared for. Set upon making their disillusionment inescapable, hoping to avoid even any duplication of the straight bob and bangs that Nielsen had worn as *Loulou*, Mr. Pabst tested me with my hair curled. But after seeing the test he gave up this point and left me with my shiny black helmet, except for one curled sequence on the gambling ship. How Pabst determined that I was his unaffected Lulu, with the



childish simpleness of vice, was part of a mysterious alliance that seemed to exist between us even before we met. He knew nothing more of me than an unimportant part he saw me play in the Howard Hawks film *A Girl in Every Port* (1928). I had never heard of him, and had no idea he had made unsuccessful negotiations to borrow me from Paramount until I was called to the front office on the option day of my contract. My salary wasn't going to be increased. B.P. Schulberg told me that I could stay on at my old salary or quit. It was the time of the switchover to talkies, and studios were taking ugly advantage of this fact to cut contract players' salaries. Refusing to take what amounted to a cut, I quit Paramount. Almost as an afterthought, Schulberg told me about the Pabst offer, which I was now free to accept. I said I would accept it, and he sent off a cable to Pabst. All this took about ten minutes, and I left Schulberg somewhat dazed by my composure and my quick decisions.

Not long ago, after seeing *Pandora's Box* at Eastman House, a priest said to me, "How did you feel, playing—*that girl*?"

"Feel? I felt fine? It all seemed perfectly normal to me."

Seeing him start with distaste and disbelief, and unwilling to be mistaken for one of those women who like to shock priests with sensational confessions, I went on to prove the truth of Lulu's world by telling him of my own experience in the 1925 *Ziegfeld Follies*, when my best friend was a lesbian and I knew two millionaire publishers who, much like Schön in the film, backed shows to keep themselves well supplied with Lulus. But the priest rejected my reality exactly as Berlin had rejected its reality when we made *Pandora's Box* and sex was the business of the town. At the Eden Hotel, where I lived in Berlin, the café bar was lined with the higher-priced trollops. The economy girls walked the street outside. On the corner stood the girls in boots, advertising flagellation. Actors' agents pimped for the ladies in luxury apartments in the Bavarian Quarter. Race-track touts at the Hippegarten arranged orgies for groups of sportsmen. The nightclub Eldorado displayed an enticing line of homosexuals dressed as women. At the Maly, there was a choice of feminine or collar-and-tie lesbians. Collective lust roared unashamed at the theatre. In the revue *Chocolate Kiddies*, when Josephine Baker appeared naked except for a girdle of bananas, it was precisely as Lulu's stage entrance was

described by Wedekind: "They rage there as in a menagerie when the meat appears at the cage."

Every actor has a natural animosity toward every other actor, present or absent, living or dead. Most Hollywood directors did not understand that, any more than they understood why an actor might be tempted to withhold the rapt devotion to the master which they considered essential to their position of command. When I went to Berlin to film *Pandora's Box*, what an exquisite release, what a revelation of the art of direction, was the Pabst spirit on the set! He actually encouraged actors' disposition to hate and back away from each other, and thus preserved their energy for the camera; and when the actors were not in use, his ego did not command them to sit up and bark at the sight of him. The behavior of Fritz Kortner was a perfect example of how Pabst used an actor's true feelings to add depth and breadth and power to his performance. Kortner hated me. After each scene with me, he would pound off the set and go to his dressing room. Pabst himself, wearing his most private smile, would go there to coax him back for the next scene. In the role of Dr. Schön, Kortner had feelings for me (or for the character Lulu) that combined sexual passion with an



equally passionate desire to destroy me. One sequence gave him an opportunity to shake me with such violence that he left ten black-and-blue fingerprints on my arms. Both he and Pabst were well pleased with that scene, because Pabst's feelings for me, like Kortner's were not unlike those of Schön for Lulu. I think that in the two films Pabst made with me—*Pandora's Box* and *Diary of a Lost*

Girl—he was conducting an investigation into his relations with women, with the object of conquering any passion that interfered with his passion for his work. He was not aroused by sexual love, which he dismissed as an enervating myth. It was sexual hate that engrossed his whole being with its flaming reality.

Unlike most directors, Pabst had no catalogue of characters, with stock emotional responses. D.W. Griffith required giggling fits from all sexually excited virgins. If Pabst had ever shot a scene showing a virgin giggling, it would have been because someone was tickling her. It was the stimulus that concerned him. If he got that right, the actor's emotional reaction would be like life itself—often strange and unsatisfactory to an audience that was used to settled acting conventions.

In an effort to be funny, old actors and directors have spread the false belief that any clownish thing coming to mind could be said in front of the camera in silent films. They forget that the title writer had to match his work to the actors' speech. I remember late one night wandering into the Beverly Wilshire suite of Ralph Spence, a title-writer, where he sat gloomily amidst cans of film, cartons of stale Chinese food, and empty whiskey bottles. He was trying to fix up an unfunny Beery and Hatton comedy, and no comic line he invented would fit the lip action. Silent-film fans were excellent lip-readers and often complained at the box office about the cowboy cussing furiously as he tried to mount his horse.

...a truly great director such as G.W. Pabst holds the camera on the actors' eyes in every vital scene. He said, "The audience must see it in the actors' eyes." In his 1926 film, *Secrets of a Soul*, he sent the actor playing a psychiatrist to take a course in psychoanalysis so he could see it in his eyes. Pabst's genius lay in getting to the heart of a person, banishing fear, and releasing the clean impact of personality which jolts an audience to life. With gross overconfidence in my rights and



power, I at first defied Pabst with arrogance. Pabst chose all my costumes with care, but in scenes motivated by sexual hate he chose them as much for their tactile as for their visual seductiveness. He wanted the actors working with me to feel my flesh under a dancing costume, a blouse and skirt, a nightgown. The morning of the sequence in which I was to go from my bath into a love scene with Franz Lederer, I came on the set wrapped in a gorgeous negligee of painted yellow silk. Carrying the peignoir I refused to wear, Josifine approached Mr. Pabst to receive the lash. Hers was the responsibility for seeing that I obeyed his orders, and he answered her excuses with a stern rebuke. Then he turned it to me.

"Loueess, you must wear the peignoir, and be naked under it."

"Why? I hate that bathrobe," I said. "Who will know that I am naked under that big, woolly white bathrobe?"

"Lederer," he said.

Stunned by such a reasonable argument, I retired, without another word, to the bathroom set with Josifine and changed into the peignoir.

Mr. Pabst's perfect costume sense symbolized Lulu's character and her destruction. There is not a single spot of blood on the pure-white bridal satin in which she kills her husband. Making love to her wearing the clean white peignoir, Alva asks, "Do you love me, Lulu?" "I? Never a soul!" It is in the worn and filthy garments of streetwalker that she feels passion for the

first time—comes to life so that she may die. When she picks up Jack the Ripper on the foggy London street and he tells her he had no money to pay her, she says, "Never mind. I like you." It is Christmas Eve, and she is about to receive the gift that had been her dream since childhood. Death by a sexual maniac.

In Hollywood, I was a pretty flibbertigibbet whose charm for the executive department decreased with every increase in her fan mail. In Berlin, I stepped onto the station

platform to meet Pabst and became an actress. ...To other people surrounding him, he would talk endlessly in that watchful way of his, smiling, intense; speaking quietly, with his wonderful, hissing precision. But to me he might speak never a word all morning, and then at lunch turn suddenly and say, "Louess, tomorrow morning you must be ready to do a big fight scene with Kortner," or "This afternoon, in the first scene, you are going to cry." That was how he directed me. With an intelligent actor, he would sit in exhaustive explanation; with an old ham, he would speak the language of the theatre. But in my case, by some magic, he would saturate me with one clear emotion and turn me loose. And it was the same with the plot. Pabst never strained my mind with anything not pertinent to the immediate action.

from LB's interview in Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By...*

You know what makes an actor great to work with? Timing. You don't have to feel anything. It's like dancing with a perfect dancing partner. Osgood Perkins would give you a line so that you would react perfectly. It was timing—because emotion means nothing.

Look at Adolphe Menjou. He never felt anything. He used to say, "Now I do Lubitsch number one," "Now I do Lubitsch number two." And that's exactly what he did. You felt nothing, working with him, and yet to see him on the screen—he was a great actor.

A director works fast who knows everything ahead of time. He sees the picture finished, whole, cut, titled. Pabst would take one shot, and—that was it. I remember I was going to do my famous Follies-girl walk across the stage in the theater scene of *Pandora's Box*. I'd planned it all out. I took four steps on stage and Pabst said "Cut." That was the end of it. I had given him all he wanted.

When I worked in night clubs, and in the theater, I knew all the real gangsters. Men like Capone. They were the most disgusting, idiotic boors. But, oddly enough,



they had one great talent. During Prohibition, they owned a lot of nightclubs and they would hire people for these clubs that nobody else would have. A girl like Helen Morgan, for instance; nobody wanted her. She had a delicate little voice, she had very long legs, she had a large bosom, which wasn't fashionable then; she wasn't very animated, and she sat on the piano and wouldn't use a microphone. The gangsters loved her. They put her in a night club called The Backstage, and all of a sudden Zigfield "discovered" her.

Wallace Beery used to scheme all day to figure out ways to get my back to camera in two-shots. Billy Wellman said to me, "Don't let him do that to you." I said, "I don't give a damn what he does. You're the director. If you don't want him to back me up, you tell him." The result was that he'd have to take close-ups of me to get my face in the pictures. So I'd be in a close-up while Wally would be in a two-shot!

Looking through an old dictionary with the flyleaves pasted with quotes from Goethe, I came upon this one: "The novel [film] is a subjective epic composition in which the author begs leave to treat the world according to his point of view. It is only a question, therefore, whether he has a point of view. The rest will take care of itself."

In a 1972 letter to her brother Theo: "How I have existed fills me with horror. For I failed in everything—spelling, arithmetic, riding, swimming, tennis, golf, dancing, singing acting; wife, mistress, whore, friend. Even cooking. And I do not excuse myself with the usual escape of 'not trying.' I tried with all my heart."

Louise to Leacock in 1974: "You are the first person to make me really laugh—

which I really adore—since I banned Jimmie Card in 1963."

LB: I have a gift for enraging people.

Howard Hawkes: I

wanted a new type. I hired Louise Brooks because she's so very sure of herself, she's very analytical, she's very feminine—but she's damn good and sure she's going to do what she wants to do. I could use her today [1967]. She was way ahead of her time. And she's a rebel. I like her, you know. I like rebels. I like people you can look at and remember who they are.

LB: I never try to feel sexy. . . .The people who try hardest to be sexy only fool other fools.

Marlene Dietrich: Imagine Pabst choosing Louise Brooks for Lulu when he could have had me!

Henri Langlois: There is no Garbo! There is no Dietrich! There is only Louise Brooks!

LB: I just didn't fit into the Hollywood scheme at all. I was neither a fluffy heroine, nor a wicked vamp, nor a woman of the world. I just didn't fit into any category. I just didn't interest them because I couldn't be typed.

LB: In writing the history of a life, I believe absolutely that the reader cannot understand the character and deeds of the subject unless he is given an understanding of that person's sexual loves and hates and conflicts. It is the only way the reader can make sense out of innumerable apparently senseless actions. . . .I too am unwilling to write the sexual truth that would make my life worth reading. I cannot unbuckle the Bible Belt. That is why I will never write my memoirs.

LB: If I ever bore you it'll be with a knife.

From *Seductive Cinema*. James Card. University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis, 1995.

Britain's most important contributor to filmmaking was unquestionably James Williamson, who stumbled on two of the most basic essentials of creative cinema: editing and the close-up. Williamson's twin discoveries happened in 1901 in the film he called *A Big Swallow*. In it he has a reluctant still-camera subject approaching nearer and nearer to the camera until he appears to swallow the camera and photographer, munching both as he retreats from the scene.

Williamson's trick was outstandingly popular but regarded by competing cameramen of the time as being too difficult technically for the imitation, which was the usual procedure that resulted in the appearance of a successful picture. Without the follow-focus devices of modern cameras, it was necessary to construct a bellows extension to achieve his famous close-up that becomes ever larger until the whole screen is filled only with the subject's mouth.



A Big Swallow consists of only three shots: the approaching, protesting man; the photographer and his portrait camera as both are seen toppling into blackness; and third, the swallower backing off. According to Williamson, who responded to requests for an account of how he managed to achieve the effect, the middle scene was made some time after the shots of the advancing and retreating subject. The second scene, which had been shot last, was only put in its place when the negatives were prepared for making positive prints. Thus Williamson, by 1901, had discovered the principle of film editing, had created filmic time and had brought to the medium its earliest full-frame close-ups.

A decade later, David Wark Griffith believed that he had invented the close-up. And film editing and the moving camera and even restrained acting. Griffith staked out his claim to the "invention" of all these basic elements of cinematic art by taking out an ad in the *New York Dramatic Mirror* of December 3, 1913. And such is the power of the printed word, and so rarely have pre-1913, non-Griffith films figured in preserved study collections, that too many historians have believed Griffith's preposterous claim.

In considering the effectiveness of the silent film both in the past and in present-day reexamination, one can think of some great films deficient or even totally lacking in good cutting, in photographic quality, in lighting, in story

construction; in short, lacking nearly every device known to cinema, save only one: the close-up.

Multiple exposures, dissolves, wipes, fades, crosscutting—all of these might never have come to the film, and without them but with the close-up alone, it is possible to think of the movies reaching the astonishing degree of emotional impact they did. For if the technological achievements of photography and the intermittent movements of cameras and projectors were able to give the illusion of life to the screen, it was the close-up that gave the medium its soul. A mysterious soul exemplified by the shimmering images of a Greta Garbo, Clara Bow, Asta Nielsen or Louise Brooks.

I will even go so far as to say that there has never been a great film without close-ups. In fact, a great film was never made *until* close-ups came into general use. All that the silent film contributed, apart from what it borrowed from the theatre (settings, movement and arrangement of the players), from the graphic arts (composition, spatial concepts, lighting) and from music (rhythmic cutting), is embodied in the close-up.

In the close-up the motion picture is in its own world. Only in the close-up can the cinema practice the utter concentration, employ the power of emphasis, the artistry of selection and the magic of revelation, strengths that are all unique to the medium.

It is in the close-up that the film player enters a realm of acting undreamed of in the whole tradition of theatre. The pitiless demands of the enormously magnified image shattered the hopes of many of the theatre's best people when they turned to film. In a large measure it was the overpowering intimacy of the close-up that turned film watchers into something approaching drug addicts as they flower, ninety million of them every week, to the movies of North America during the greatest years of the silent drama.

Not that all other factors of filmic construction were unimportant, but they had less to do with the effectiveness of the silent film than did the close-up. Cutting, continuity and lighting all modified the motion picture but the close-up characterized it.

Carl Dreyer, the famous Danish director, was fully aware of this unique power. He wrote: "Nothing in the world can be compared to the human face. It is a land one can never tire of exploring. There is no greater experience in a studio than to witness the expression of a sensitive face under the mysterious

power of inspiration. To see it animated from inside and turning into poetry."



The Myth According to Hesiod (from Wikipedia)

The titan Epimetheus ("hindsight") was responsible for giving a positive trait to each and every animal. However, when it was time to give man a positive trait, as Prometheus, his brother, had taken much longer to create man, there was nothing left. Prometheus ("foresight"), his brother, felt that because man was superior to all other animals, man should have a gift no other animal possessed. So Prometheus set forth to steal fire from Zeus and handed it over to man.

Zeus, enraged, decided to punish Prometheus. To punish Prometheus, Zeus chained him in unbreakable fetters and set an eagle over him to eat his liver each day, as the eagle is Zeus's sacred animal. Prometheus was an immortal, so the liver grew back every day, but he was still tormented daily from the pain, until he was freed by Heracles during The Twelve Labours. Another possible reason for Prometheus' torment was because he knew which of Zeus' lovers would bear a child who would eventually overthrow Zeus. Zeus commanded that Prometheus reveal the name of the mother, but Prometheus refused, instead choosing to suffer the punishment.

However, Zeus also had to punish mankind. The punishment was woman. More specifically, Pandora, her name meaning 'all gifts'. Pandora was given several traits from the different gods: Hephaestus molded her out of clay and gave her form; Athena clothed her and the Charites adorned her with necklaces made by Hephaestus; Aphrodite gave her beauty; Apollo gave her musical talent and a gift for healing; Demeter taught her to tend a garden; Poseidon gave her a pearl necklace and the ability to

never drown; Hera gave her curiosity; Hermes gave her cunning, boldness, and charm. Zeus gave her insatiable curiosity and mischievousness. Thus the name Pandora-"all gifts"-in Hesiod's version derives from the fact that she received gifts from all deities.

The most significant of these gifts, however, was a pithos or storage jar, given to Pandora either by Hermes or Zeus. Before he was chained to the rock, Prometheus had warned Epimetheus not to take any gifts from the gods. However, when Pandora arrived, he fell in love with her. Hermes told Epimetheus that Pandora was a gift to the titan from Zeus, and he warned Epimetheus not to open the jar, which was Pandora's dowry.

Until then, mankind lived life in a paradise without worry. Epimetheus told Pandora never to open the jar she had received from Zeus. However, Pandora's curiosity got the better of her and she

opened it, releasing all the misfortunes of mankind: "For ere this the tribes of men lived on earth remote and free from ills [kakoi] and hard toil [ponoi] and heavy sickness [nosoi argaleai] which bring the Keres [baleful spirits] upon men; for in misery men grow old quickly" (Hesiod, Works and Days). Once opened, she shut it in time to keep one thing in the jar: hope. The world remained extremely bleak for an unspecified interval, until Pandora "chanced" to revisit the box again, at which point Hope fluttered out. Thus, mankind always has hope in times of evil.

In another, more philosophical version of the myth, hope (Elpis) is considered the worst of the potential evils, because it is equated with terrifying foreknowledge. By preventing hope from escaping the jar, Pandora in a sense saves the world from the worst damage.

COMING UP IN THE FALL 2021 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS, SERIES 43:

- September 7 Jean Renoir THE GRAND ILLUSION (1937)
- September 14 Carol Reed ODD MAN OUT (1947)
- September 21 Kon Ichikawa THE BURMESE HARP (1956)
- September 28 Satyajit Ray THE MUSIC ROOM (1958)
- October 5 Andrei Tarkovsky ANDREI RUBLEV (1966)
- October 12 Stanley Kubrick BARRY LYNDON (1975)
- October 19 Roman Polanski CHINATOWN (1974)
- October 26 Roland Joffé THE MISSION (1986)
- November 2 Mike Nichols CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR (2007)
- November 9 Asghar Farhadi A SEPARATION (2011)
- November 16 Hsiao-Hsien Hou THE ASSASSIN (2015)
- November 23 Chloé Zhan NOMADLAND (2020)
- November 30 Rob Reiner THE PRINCESS BRIDE (1987)

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