

INTRODUCTION

Jan-Christopher Horak and Andreas-Benjamin Seyfert

The Exile

Of all the writers, directors, producers, actors, and technical professionals that were forced to emigrate from Nazi Germany because they were considered Jewish, Wilhelm—William—Thiele was neither hugely successful nor was he an abject failure. Unlike fellow émigrés Billy Wilder, William Dieterle, Robert Siodmak, Henry Koster, Otto Preminger, Fritz Lang, Douglas Sirk, and Fred Zinnemann, he did not become a household name in US cinema, yet he sustained a filmmaking career after his exile for more than twenty-five years, with interruptions. His fall from the heights of stardom as a film director on Berlin's Kurfürstendamm did not parallel the failed career trajectories in Hollywood of Richard Oswald, Erik Charell, Hanns Schwarz, Victor Trivas, Max Ophüls, and Max Reinhardt. Rather, William Thiele seems typical for the career of many exiled German film directors who managed to work relatively steadily in film, and later television, often remaining at the level of B-film production, like John Brahm, László Benedek, E. A. Dupont, Paul Henreid, Gerd Oswald, Steve Sekely, André De Toth, Ivan Tors, and Frank Wisbar. Though largely forgotten by history, Thiele's groundbreaking international work in filmmaking has helped shape the art form as we know it today.

With the coming of sound, he captured the essence of cinema as a popular mass medium. As the director of three of the most financially successful films of the early sound period in Weimar Germany—*Liebeswalzer* (*Waltz of Love*, no. 2 in the box office in the 1929–30 season), *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* (*Three Good Friends*, no. 1 in the 1930–31 season), and *Die Privatsekretärin* (*The Private Secretary*, 1930–31, a smash hit)—as well as a string of other more modest hits that made him at least a co-inventor of the European musical comedy-operetta, Thiele belonged to the A-list of film directors in Berlin and Paris. Prior to this, Thiele had

made a name for himself as a comedy specialist in the late 1920s, producing light comedies with major stars for the Universum Film A.G. (UFA), films that, though they were mostly medium-budget films (*Mittelfilme*), established Thiele as a reliable director of commercial fare. Thiele had come from Austria to UFA as a dramaturg and scriptwriter under the patronage of Paul Davidson, the pioneering co-founder of the studio, and an independent producer following Erich Pommer's ascendancy. Under long-term contract at UFA, while also working for other producers, Thiele never had to worry about employment in Germany, at least not until Joseph Goebbels and the Nazis blacklisted him as a Jew. How different was his situation in Hollywood, where he arrived in 1934 with no contacts, contract, or a reputation? While some of his German successes had been screened and discussed in the US press, film reviews in *The New York Times* and *Variety* neglected to even mention the director.¹

His first US film turned sadly into a monumental failure. Co-written by Hanns Schwarz, Franz Schulz, and Billy Wilder, all three literally just off the boat from Berlin, as was Thiele, *Lottery Lover* was nothing if not an *Exilfilm*, an US-produced film, yet completely of European conception.² Much like Joe May's *Music in the Air* (1934) and Erik Charell's *Caravan* (1934), previously shot on the Fox lot in Los Angeles, *Lottery Lover* failed miserably at the box office because its transplanted Berlin makers had created old and new world hybrids.³ Thiele bounced back with the mega-hit *The Jungle Princess* (1936), which made Dorothy Lamour and her sarong a star, but was in a genre completely foreign to him. Thiele had learned his lesson. He became a director who worked in numerous genres from gentle comedies to film-noirs, jungle pictures to historical films, westerns to industrials. Thiele only experienced two periods of complete financial security: during the late 1930s when he was under contract to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) and in the years between 1947 and 1958 when he was under contract to Jack Chertok's Apex Film Company. After his emigration, therefore, Thiele likely saw himself less as a film artist and more of a film professional supporting his family.

The reasons for William Thiele's middling career in Hollywood are difficult to identify exactly and are therefore only subject to speculation. Thiele himself blamed some of his struggles on his lack of professional connections, usually established through socializing with the Hollywood elite and getting invited to the right parties. As an "outspoken family man," Thiele did not go to parties and did not host them either.⁴ The Thieles also seemingly kept a certain distance from the rest of

the German émigré community, a network that may have helped him procure work. He maintained few contacts with other German-Jewish refugees and is almost never mentioned in autobiographical literature. But Thiele may have also damaged his own prospects by sometimes being a bit too eager to take on any kind of work, feeling he had to earn money at all costs to support his extended family, regardless of what the implications of such a move may have been on his career. As his granddaughter-in-law Linda Thiele remembers, “I have to believe he was working so hard to take care of not only his immediate family but supporting other members of his extended family as well.”⁵

Thiele regretted making *Lottery Lover*, jumping in at the last moment after Hanns Schwarz had to drop out due to illness, because he was anxious about being unemployed for months after his arrival in Los Angeles. According to Thiele, his agent (Stanley Bergerman) also strenuously objected to him accepting the job of directing a short film, *Carnival in Paris* (1937), after the huge success of *The Jungle Princess*, because it was a hard and fast rule in Hollywood that one never made a downward career move from features to shorts. That move was ultimately justified by the fact that Thiele won a long-term contract at MGM, making B-film comedies, and it first put him in contact with Jack Chertok, who would later employ him for ten years at Apex. But even before that, it made little sense that Thiele had accepted a job as “associate director” for Joseph von Sternberg on *The King Steps Out* (1936) at Columbia, although Thiele had spent another five months “at liberty” between the two films. Thiele was likely brought in to direct Grace Moore’s musical numbers, since the Viennese operetta *Sissy*, by Hubert and Ernst Marschka with music by Fritz Kreisler was right up Thiele’s alley. Thiele may have also hoped for more assignments, since the film was a huge box office success for 1936, but von Sternberg got all the credit.

Thiele’s lack of a critical reputation in film historical sources, given his centrality to the development of the German film operetta with hits such as *Die Drei von der Tankstelle*, is even more puzzling. Certainly, the long-standing and only recently mitigated bias of German-speaking critics against any kind of popular genre films, whether comedies or musicals, played a historical role. Lotte Eisner called *Tankstelle* “extremely heavy” and the “torrent of operettas” a disaster, matched only by the even great disaster of *Musikerfilme*, film biographies of musicians and composers.⁶ And while Siegfried Kracauer admitted that *Tankstelle* “was a new type of operetta,” which “failed to convince the New York public, but was a hit in most European countries,” he also paid Thiele a back-handed compliment as a master of “attractive concoctions.”⁷ The

critical neglect suffered by Thiele at the hands of Anglo-American film academics, on the other hand, is probably due to his lack of *auteurist* credentials, his subterranean career among the B-film producers, and his seeming lack of a consistent style and thematic concern, as he bounced from one studio to the next. However, with the rise of feminist film criticism in the last decades, some of Thiele's work has been recognized.⁸

As this anthology demonstrates, Thiele's romantic comedy-musicals addressed and spoke to a female audience, whether in Germany or in the United States, both in terms of their sentimentality and their family values. Furthermore, far from being a macho filmmaker privileging strong-willed masculine protagonists, Thiele's films more often present weak feminized males, captured by activist and independent female protagonists. This long line of young women who take control of the narrative begins with Lillian Harvey in *Adieu Mascotte* (*The Model from Montparnasse*, 1928) and subsequent films, to Renate Müller in *Die Privatsekretärin* (1931) and *Mädchen zum Heiraten* (*Girls to Marry*, 1932) to Dorothy Lamour in *The Jungle Princess* (1936), Virginia Weidler in *Bad Little Angel* (1939), Sally Brophy and Mary Anderson in episodes of *Cavalcade of America*, to Christine Kaufmann and Sabine Sinjen in *Der letzte Fußgänger* (*The Last Pedestrian*, 1960) and *Sabine und die hundert Männer* (*Sabina*, 1960), respectively. Even if marriage is the goal, these women set agendas, follow through on their ambitions, cajole and provoke the male objects of their desire into action.

However, Thiele's invisibility may also be connected to the fact that his particular style of light entertainment, music, and sentimentality had fallen out of fashion, with critics looking for fissures in a reigning Hollywood aesthetic. Never one for either low or risqué comedy, nor having a jaundiced and cynical point of view, like Billy Wilder, Thiele favored "musicals with charm and feeling," and sentimental comedies that were populated almost exclusively with nice people. Thiele's charming comedies at MGM were consistently, if modestly successful as little B-films, yet why was Thiele's contract not renewed after seven years? The answer may lie in the fact that World War II had broken out in Europe, leading to a loss of European markets, and that such sentimentality was beginning to fall out of fashion, as were the kind of operettas that Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy had specialized in. Film-noirs and Broadway-style musicals ruled the day, while romantic sentimentality seemed out of place in the midst of war.

However, there is also a larger issue at work, at least in the critical literature. As a cultural phenomenon, sentiment is often assumed to be a feminine trait—not that men cannot be sentimental in their own

way—and remained largely ignored in film scholarship until film criticism began to valorize it.⁹ Feminine subject matter, or so-called women's pictures, whether melodramas or romantic comedies, were not considered to be serious subject matter. Interestingly, Thiele's men are almost always "feminized." Whether the slightly androgynous Willy Fritsch or Lew Ayres, whether the asexual Frank Morgan or Heinz Erhardt, Thiele's leading men are almost never macho men or even activist male characters, typical of Hollywood classical narrative. His male characters in both his German and US films are invariably push-overs, Casper-milquetoasts, passive in the face of women actively pursuing them, oftentimes infantile, traveling in groups where they do not have to confront mature sexualized women, while it is the women who move narratives forward, even if they are only ten-year-old girls or budding young women. Thiele's films are also often improbable Hollywood fairytales, which again usually engendered derision rather than praise from male critics. However, Charles Affron has suggested an alternative point of view when dealing with Thiele's kind of Hollywood sentiment:

Many sentimental narratives tend to generate improbabilities in proportion to the strength of the feelings they express. In such narratives the very activity of fiction filmmaking becomes so expressive that it reflects a measure of incompatibility between feeling and necessity, between emotion and logic . . . But we succumb to these idealizations, the glamorous close-ups, the molding of faces and bodies in images whose artifices are compounded by plot, light, and the "magic" of cinema . . . Feeling is located in this ambiguous field of probable improbability where real yet absent performers play out situations that both happen and do not happen.¹⁰

"Enchanted with cinema," Thiele feared neither sentimentality nor musical comedies that reveled in their own artifice, allowing audiences to partake in the fantasy of an untroubled world, while never letting them forget that this was a film, experienced in a darkened theater, before returning to the daylight of everyday life outside the cinema.

Finally, Thiele's often demonstrated ability to discover young talent and help make them stars, as well his extreme skill at directing actors, even in low-budget films, should be acknowledged. He helped make Lilian Harvey and Renate Müller stars, discovered Danielle Darrieux and Dorothy Lamour, successfully coached Virginia Weidler in her first starring role, and directed Francis Lederer in one of his best screen performances. No matter how low-budget the production of his film or later television and industrial film work, Thiele invariably coaxed cred-

ible screen performances from his actors, even in the smallest roles, for example, in *The Du Pont Story* (1950), where no less than twenty-six professional actors have walk-on scenes. Thiele believed that his own experience as an actor had helped him be sympathetic to actors, but his success as a director of actors went beyond his coaching work. Even on television productions that could not afford more than minimal sets, Thiele always found the right place to put the camera to highlight the performances, when dialogue rather than action prevailed. However, with some exceptions, Thiele's expertise at *mise-en-scène* has also been underappreciated.

Biography

Born on 10 May 1890 in Vienna's rapidly urbanizing Twelfth District as Wilhelm Iersohn, the son of Johanna and Samuel Iersohn, in an Austrian-Jewish middle-class family. His father was a minor government official, and possibly owned a brick factory, and his parents wanted him to study chemistry, but he instead enrolled in the Vienna Academy of Music and Performing Arts, then completed an internship at the Burgtheater in 1908, having apparently moved out of the parental home to Vienna's Second District; he maintained a residency there throughout his years of *Wanderschaft* and war.¹¹ In 1909, an agent offered him a choice of two openings at two provincial theaters: playing minor roles at the Hoftheater in Karlsruhe or major roles at a theater in Karlsbad. He opted for Karlsbad (Czech Republic), before moving on to Ústínad Labem (Czech Republic), Hermannstadt (Romania) and Stuttgart. He had a repertoire of several classical roles and, almost from the beginning of his professional career as an actor, then still in his twenties, he specialized in character parts: *Faust*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, Shylock, and others. He was drafted into the Austrian Army's Vienna Deutschmeisters Regiment No. 4 at the beginning of World War I, where he helped organize variety shows for the troops. Demobilized after the Armistice in 1918, Thiele traveled first to Šluknov (now Czech Republic) and then to Munich's Volkstheater, now officially calling himself a *Spielleiter* and *Schauspieler* (director and actor).

The move to Šluknov may have been motivated by his marriage in 1918 to a Czech woman, Vladimira Ruzička (aka Valeria Dohlen, aka Vally Glauko), certainly a Catholic, with whom he had two sons, Friedrich Wilhelm (Frederick William), born in 1918, and Johann (John) Christian, born in 1923. Documents list both Thiele and his wife as non-

religious. At the same time, he changed his name to Thiele. In 1928, Vally died of cancer. About two years later, Thiele married Barbara Ann Arlt (born 1907, died 1994) who was a German Lutheran. They had a daughter, Doris (born 1930). The whole extended family celebrated Christmas with a tree, dinner, and gifts. After Thiele's exile, the extended family included Thiele's widowed mother, Johanna Iersohn; his sister Ida (1892–1966) and brother-in-law Leopold Grunfeld; and his brother Berthold Iersohn. All of them had come to America while he continued to support his brother, Eugen Thiele (1897–1938), in a Swiss sanatorium—until he died of pulmonary hemorrhage due to a ruptured artery six months after the so-called Anschluss in Baden near Vienna.¹²

In Munich in 1920, Thiele directed his first two films for local producers, including *Lya's beste Rolle* (*Lya's Best Performance*, 1921), which included Oscar Karlweis, later to star in *Die Drei von der Tankstelle*, in the cast. He is seen as an actor in two other Munich film productions, and writes his first script for a third, while continuing to act at the Volkstheater under the directorship of Ernst Bach. Thiele returns to Vienna in 1922, where he films two musical biographies with live musical stage shows, celebrating the Viennese composer/singer, Carl Michael Ziehrer. *Carl Michael Ziehrer, der letzte Walzerkönig* (*The Last Waltz King*) actually starred Ziehrer with Thiele in a supporting role and premiered his last song, "Mein Herz lass' ich in Wien zurück," but the composer died a month after the opening.

Thiele moved to Berlin in 1924, where three months of interviews and meetings yielded no assignment. Then, Paul Davidson, an independent producer at UFA, agreed to see him and, impressed with his fifteen years of theater experience, gave him an assignment. At UFA, Germany's largest film studio, which would remain his home base for more than nine years, he starts in the screenplay department, working as a dramaturg, authoring a number of scripts for Davidson, directed by Paul Ludwig Stein, Hanns Schwarz, and others. In 1926, he co-directs his first UFA film with Adolf Edgar Licho, *Seine selige Exzellenz* (*His Late Excellency*, 1927), featuring Willy Fritsch and Olga Chekhova, which also begins a long collaboration with composer Werner R. Heymann in the sound era. There follow *Orientexpress* (*Orient Express*, 1927) with Lil Dagover and Heinrich George, *Die Dame mit der Maske* (1928), and *Adieu Mascotte* (1929), starring Lilian Harvey and Willy Fritsch, among others. *Adieu Mascotte*, his last silent film, began a string of fruitful collaborations with the British-German star Lilian Harvey.

With the advent of sound, Thiele joins the production team of UFA production head Erich Pommer who assigns him to direct a lavish

sound film operetta, *Liebeswalzer*, to be shot simultaneously in German and in English with certain non-bilingual cast members replaced depending on the version. He reunited Germany's favorite star pairing from *Liebeswalzer*, Lilian Harvey and Willy Fritsch, in *Die Drei von der Tankstelle*, which was hailed by critics as a new kind of musical. With his notoriety spreading across country borders, in 1931, William went to France to direct films in German and French versions, making *Le bal* (*The Ball*, 1931) with a teenage Danielle Darrieux in her first part and *L'amoureuse aventure* (*Madame hat Ausgang*,¹³ 1932). He returned to Germany for two films featuring the stars of his previous successes, *Zwei Herzen und ein Schlag* (*Two Hearts Beat as One*, 1932) with Lilian Harvey and *Mädchen zum Heiraten* with Renate Müller. An invitation to remake the latter in English brought William to London, staying to direct *Waltz Time* (1933), based on the famous Johann Strauss operetta *Die Fledermaus*. The films invariably center on active young women, doggedly pursuing their love interests. And while these films were frothy entertainments, Thiele also addressed specific social issues, for example, unemployment in *Tankstelle* and the position of white-collar women workers in *Die Privatsekretärin*.



Figure 0.3. Thiele (middle) with the cast and crew of *Le chemin du paradis* (1930). Courtesy of the Thiele Family Private Collection.

Thiele was blacklisted by Joseph Goebbels and the Nazi Propaganda Ministry because he was identified as Jewish. In documents for his first marriage, Thiele had given his religion as *konfessionslos* (without religion) for both himself and his wife. As confirmed by the *Israelitische Kulturgemeinde* (IKG) in Vienna, Thiele left the Jewish community around 1919, though it is unclear why.¹⁴ As David Thiele notes in an email: “However, in middle age in California (my aunt Doris told me), he attended a synagogue and took her with him. A photo in the dining room of my grandparents’ house shows a Menorah. . . He was given a Jewish religious funeral with a rabbi officiating.”¹⁵

After the Nazis seized power in Germany, Thiele returned to Austria, collaborating with Franz Lehár on *Großfürstin Alexandra* (*Grand Duchess Alexandra*, 1933), starring the noted opera singer Maria Jeritza in her first and only role on the big screen. Shortly after the new year in 1934, Thiele traveled to the United States with Gabriel Pascal, later himself an émigré in Hollywood, telling Thiele he had the rights to a George Nathan novel, which turned out to be false; Pascal was, in fact, broke and borrowed money from Thiele.¹⁶ Off the boat in New York, and stranded, Thiele was signed by agent Harry Weber, along with Maria Jeritza, Jack Benny, Pola Negri, and Fred MacMurray.¹⁷ He apparently then ran into Maria Jeritza, who was preparing to star in the Rudolf Friml light opera *Annina* and convinced the Schuberts to let Thiele direct. The operetta opened on 5 March 1934 at the Schubert Theater in Boston; it was set in contemporary Venice with some fantastical as well as realist elements.¹⁸ The road show traveled on to Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Pittsburgh, and Chicago over the next five weeks. *Variety* praised Thiele as “an imaginative craftsman” who brought this “frothy but entertainingly presented [story to life], with the right Cinderella touches (a Thiele specialty).”¹⁹ Despite the good review, Thiele and Jeritza were separated from the production before it opened under a different title on Broadway in December 1934.

Thiele traveled to Hollywood, where he sat around for at least six months waiting for work before he received an assignment to direct *Lottery Lover* (1935) at Fox, studio publicity announcing him as a French director.²⁰ It was the first of many periods of unemployment. Thiele’s first Hollywood film was supposed to reunite him with his longtime collaborator, scriptwriter Franz Schulz, paired this time with Billy Wilder to produce a screenplay for a musical set in Paris.²¹ Originally meant to star Lilian Harvey and Lew Ayres, who had appeared together in *My Weakness* (1933), the critically most successful of Harvey’s films at Fox, but Harvey returned to Germany before *Lottery Lover* went into produc-

tion. The film may have failed, not only because of its gaggle of sailors in a European homage to the Keystone Kops, but also because Lew Ayres's weak male hero was not assertive enough for US audiences.

Thiele next signed a contract with Carl Laemmle's Universal, where he was supposed to direct his own script, "Tomorrow Is a Better Day," with Paul Kohner producing but was taken off the project, as was Kohner, "due to reentrenchment" at the company.²² Instead, Thiele went to Columbia, as Joseph von Sternberg's associate producer on his "Sissy" project with opera star Grace Moore, the film released as *The King Steps Out* (1936).

With his next film, *Jungle Princess*, shot for Paramount Pictures, Thiele launched the career of another major star, Dorothy Lamour, performing in her trademark sarong next to Ray Milland,²³ who as the supposedly intelligent leading man, is turned into an infantile mass of oral infatuation with naked and native female flesh, if only in blackface, while betraying his highly intelligent fiancé, a professional and far from unattractive woman. One wonders whether Thiele understood that he had captured the infantilism of the American male perfectly, just as Frank Tashlin's psychoanalytic inflected comedies were to do two decades later. Hanns Leo Reich, who visited Thiele on set, reported metaphorically in *Mein Film*: "William Thiele, the Viennese director is genuinely pleased to meet a compatriot in the jungles of Hollywood. He tells me how good it is to work with the local natives . . . And then we talked about Vienna and mutual acquaintances. I promised to visit Bill's mother when I returned."²⁴ The film was shot in the summer months of 1936 at a place called Crater's Camp, near Thousand Oaks, in the area that is now Westlake. It was then considered a "distant" location and a tent city was set up to house the cast and crew Monday through Saturday. Since school was out, William's son John recalls spending the summer out there with his father soaking up movie-making magic. How different from Berlin where *Die Dschungel-Prinzessin's* premiered, omitting Thiele's name, replacing it with the producer's since works made by Jews were effectively banned after April 1933.

Thiele must have been desperate for work because he accepted a job directing a musical short against the advice of his agent, because it was a step down from features. Thiele nevertheless went to MGM for *Carnival in Paris*, after which Thiele landed a studio contract. It was also the first time he worked for then head of the MGM Shorts Department Jack Chertok, a connection that would save his life a decade later. The fast-paced and thoroughly charming musical, situated in an archaeology

museum, was the only film he would direct in the United States in his preferred genre of musical operetta. Thiele's first feature at MGM was *London by Night* (1937), a crime comedy with expressionist elements, while *Beg, Borrow, or Steal* (1937), produced by fellow German-speaker Frederick Stephani, with Frank Morgan was a sentimental B-film comedy with a virtually incomprehensible plot. Between the two assignments, Thiele shot second unit at Cal Tech in Pasadena for another MGM film.²⁵

Thiele spent all of 1938 without a project or in doomed projects. He was taken off MGM's *Listen, Darling* (1938) after five days working with star Judy Garland and replaced with Edwin L. Marin. Producer Jack Cummings put him on "His Excellency's Tobacco Shop," which Thiele adapted from a Bus-Fekete story, but remained unproduced, possibly because the studio had completed *The Baroness and the Butler* (1938), based on Bus-Fekete's play, *Jean*. He did not begin production on *Bridal Suite* (1939) for producer Edgar Selwyn until February 1939, the film reuniting him with Felix Bressart, while *Bad Little Angel* (1940) with Virginia Weidler sought to invade the cute and smart little girl market, dominated by Judy Garland, Deanna Durbin, and Shirley Temple. All were cheaply made with studio contract players in the Hollywood fashion. His final film for MGM, *The Ghost Comes Home* (1940), was a remake of a Thiele late silent, *Hurra, ich lebe!* (1928), again starring Frank Morgan. His last two films were produced by Albert E. Levoy.

Next, Thiele was slated to direct an adaptation of Sinclair Lewis's *The Willow Walk* with Joseph L. Mankiewicz producing, but the project never came to fruition.²⁶ Thiele remained under contract through the end of the 1940–41 season but then was let go, before his contract ended. Why? Thiele had five different producers for the six films he directed at MGM. It is possible that Thiele just could not find a producer who would take him under his wing.

Thiele had adapted quickly to Hollywood's expectations and his films, while not all stand-out masterpieces of craftsmanship, like his earlier German work, or as lastingly popular as *Jungle Princess*, proved to be routinely successful with US audiences. Now, he was back to writing scripts to peddle on the open market, writing an unproduced script for Sol C. Siegel at Paramount.²⁷ It was more than a year before Thiele directed his next film, *Tarzan Triumphs* (1943), producer Sol Lesser's first *Tarzan* film with Johnny Weissmuller. The film had an overt anti-Nazi film plot but was also the first *Tarzan* to dispense with visualizing any native black Africans. Released in December 1943, Thiele's second

Tarzan film for Sol Lesser, *Tarzan's Desert Mystery* (1943), likewise, involved Arabs rather than Africans. True to Thiele's admiration of the chimpanzee's intelligence, Cheetah got the most screen time, while the bad guys were killed by a lion and spider, respectively. *The New York Times* reviewer noted that the scenes with the monster spider munching on baddie Hendrix "should have the children screaming in their sleep for months . . . or are the little wretches really so bloodthirsty?"²⁸ But Lesser was unhappy with the film and hired Kurt Neumann to shoot a whole new ending, adding stock footage from Hal Roach's *One Million B.C.* (1940), maybe to make the kiddies scream. Both Tarzan films were rereleased in 1949 with Thiele's name removed from the advertising.

Shot between September and October 1945, *The Madonna's Secret* was based on a script by Thiele and Bradbury Foote and was Thiele's last directed feature film in Hollywood. Despite receiving a long-term contract at Republic and very good reviews, the film remained a one-off. *Madonna's* oedipally motivated final plot twist and one of Francis Lederer's finest performances certainly offered audiences much more than they would have normally expected from a B-film.

Thiele had managed to sell a few scripts between the *Tarzan* films and *Madonna*, but it was not until producer Jack Chertok, who had produced short films for years at MGM, hired him in 1946 to produce shorts, industrials, and advertising films that Thiele worked again steadily. He remained with the company for at least ten years as an employee. During this time, Thiele did direct a feature film, *The Du Pont Story*, a color docudrama on the history of the DuPont Company, financed by the company for its 85,000 employees. But most of his films were shorts for commercial clients, like National Association of Manufacturers, E.I. Du Pont de Nemours Company, Southern California Dental Association, National Tuberculosis Association, American Bar Association, and the American Legion. Thiele also transitioned to television sometime after Chertok's Apex Film Company entered the television production market in 1949 with *The Lone Ranger*, followed by *Sky King*, *Cavalcade of America*, and *Private Secretary*. *The Lone Ranger* was sponsored by General Mills and *Cavalcade of America* by E. I. Du Pont de la Nemours, both of whom were also clients for industrials.

For *Cavalcade of America* (1952–57), based on the radio show of the same name, Thiele directed no less than thirty-five half-hour episodes, including shows about John Peter Zenger, William Penn, Benedict Arnold, Ben Franklin, John Marshall, Wyatt Earp, Horace Greely, and many lesser or unknown figures, including women Dr. Alice Walker

and Elisabeth Blackwell. For *The Lone Ranger*, Thiele, began work in its fourth season in September 1954, completing twenty-five episodes until September 1955 when the season ended.

Except for a couple of isolated television show episodes, a documentary on the American Legion, *We Who Serve* (1958), and a fiction short, *The Engagement Party*, Thiele remained unemployed for much of 1956–58. Thiele did form a partnership with former Warner Brothers TV producer, Carroll Case—hot off the hit western series *Sugarfoot*—to form an independent production unit, but the deal apparently never got off the ground.²⁹ Thiele thus accepted a return to Germany after almost thirty years in exile for a three-picture contract with Deutsche Film Hansa but eventually only completed two films, both comedies. In *Der letzte Fußgänger* (1960), Heinz Erhardt, an extremely popular comedian in 1950s Germany, played a timid archivist wandering through the Black Forest, while *Sabine und die hundert Männer* (1960) featured Yehudi Menuhin and Sabine Sinjen in a remake of Henry Koster's 1938 film *100 Men and a Girl*. Although Thiele had signed a contract for a third film, which he was to direct in March 1961 for the UFA-Hansa, the film never came to pass because the UFA-Film-Hansa was financially in difficulties. Returning to Los Angeles in 1961, Thiele retired at age seventy. In 1974, the German government honored him with a "Film Band in Gold" for his contributions to German cinema. He died on 7 September 1975 in Woodland Hills, CA. Stacy Keach gave the eulogy at Thiele's funeral, noting: "Bill Thiele was a creative human being who loved intensely, his family, his friends and his work. This was a man with great warmth and charm, of nobility and absolute dedication to his art."³⁰

William Thiele's lasting legacy will remain his contribution to the invention of the European film operetta, while his US career may remain a footnote in the history of German-Jewish émigrés in Hollywood, forced out of Germany as a result of the antisemitic policies of the Nazi Party. At the same time, a closer look at Thiele's total oeuvre, reveals a tendency to privilege strong female characters who actively help create their own fate and often weak or ineffective male characters, thus countering traditional gender markings in both German and US cinema. As Thiele noted in an interview, he had no regrets about coming to the United States and remained grateful that the country had saved his life and family, giving them a new home, even if he repeatedly had to suffer longer periods of unemployment. His one regret, as he stated in an interview with Cornelius Schnauber was: "I invented music as an

integral part of a film's plot and directed the precursors to the movie musical, nevertheless, I never had the chance to direct a real film musical in Hollywood."³¹

Enchanted by Cinema

A strong storyteller with a knack for directing actors, Thiele was a star maker and pioneer. Forced to emigrate from Germany to the United States during the Nazi era, he worked in many genres from gentle comedies to film-noirs, jungle pictures to historical films, westerns to industrials. A driving force for the thriving cinematic culture in the Weimar Republic, perfectly adapting to the brief cross-cultural European film exchange of the early sound interwar period, and establishing himself in Hollywood as a reliable contract director, he achieved aesthetics that aimed to resonate with the general motion picture audience. His aesthetic film style was marked by a strong sense of music and an awareness of human emotion, a careful selection of camera angles and his instinct of rhythmic editing. Wherever his artistic career took him, Thiele contributed significantly to the development of the craft, the effects of which are still felt in cinema today.

Despite his important role in introducing and developing the European sound film operetta, William Thiele has been neglected in German and US film history sources. Several edited volumes have examined the significance of New Objectivity and Expressionism in the development of a German national cinema between the two world wars, but few have examined this period specifically for lighter genres that were most popular with audiences in their time. By bringing together scholars from a variety of backgrounds, the present volume fills a gap in scholarship and sheds light on Thiele's position within current European and American film studies discussions. Despite not being exhaustive, the thirteen chapters that make up this book offer diverse perspectives on an extensive filmography spanning over forty years.

The first chapter of the book emphasizes the significance of William Thiele's early work as a precursor to his most famous films at Germany's largest studio, UFA. Philipp Stiasny argues in his essay "Towards Thiele" that Wilhelm Thiele's early sound hits can be traced back to his work as a screenwriter for UFA and in the emerging film industry in Vienna and Austria. Specifically, he examines *Die Kleine vom Varieté* (*The Little Variety Star*, 1926), a comedy characterized by situational humor and an innovative, freely constructed narrative. Stiasny also examines Thiele's directorial debut, *Die selige Exzellenz*. He outlines its satirical

plot mocking outdated and pompous officials and analyzes a variety of visual features that illustrate Thiele's creativity as a filmmaker.

Next, a direct comparison to his later film oeuvre. One of his early successes, *Hurra, ich lebe!* (1928), was converted into a talkie for MGM, entitled *The Ghost Comes Home* (1940). While both adaptations were based on the same play by Georg Kaiser and involve characters crossing borders and hiding out, a comparative analysis reveals differing ideologies underlying the portrayal of those characters classified as either "foreign" or "domestic." Andréas-Benjamin Seyfert's chapter, "Across Studio Borders," discusses the extent to which film adaptations can be considered cultural translations, arguing that the studio system, the filmmaker's perspective, and the geopolitical location informed each film's specificities, imprinting a distinctive perspective and political resonance onto the adapted material.

In the final chapter addressing Thiele's silent career, Heike Klapdor discusses Wilhelm Thiele's *Adieu Mascotte* (1929), in which Lilian Harvey portrays a self-assured female character. Adopting a feminist perspective, Klapdor asks, does Wilhelm Thiele's silent comedy *Adieu Mascotte* (1929) represent prototypical and conformist entertainment or an ironic parody of urban working women? Her chapter "Modeling Female Agency" argues that the central theme of Wilhelm Thiele's film *Adieu Mascotte* is the act of creative transformation. While the protagonist conquers both urban spaces and her sexual liberation, the cloning of Mascotte from classical antiquity's aesthetics of victimhood gives the protagonist an ambivalent and complex dimension. This film was also the first in a series of motion pictures where Thiele directed Lilian Harvey, probably one of the stars most remembered in connection with his work. Klapdor's chapter also focuses our attention on the strong females that became a hallmark of Thiele's film work.

Michael Wedel analyzes Thiele's transition to sound. In 1930 at UFA, under producer Erich Pommer, with composer Werner R. Heymann, he mastered his first two sound films and introduced a new genre aesthetic: the sound film operetta. Both starring Lilian Harvey and Willy Fritsch, *Liebeswalzer* and *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* were immediately recognized for their novelty and emphatically welcomed by the public. Both films presented modern technology, a sophisticated lifestyle, and love affairs against a backdrop of economic crises. Wedel argues that, while *Liebeswalzer* leans noticeably on a three-act operetta structure with carefully timed singing numbers programmed into the narrative, *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* is based on a double storyline with musical motifs assigned to individual plot strands. Thiele himself described his

central task in *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* as a balancing act between the musical plot and the visual events. The film integrates singing scenes into the narrative process but also blurs the lines of linear causality and undermines the coherence of diegetic fiction. Both films, Wedel argues, provide the blueprint for the European film operetta, and became firmly engrained as a genre in German national cinema, surviving even Thiele's own involvement in the industry.

Thiele's first post-UFA film, *Die Privatsekretärin* (1931), featured Renate Müller in her first leading role, and was popular enough to be remade twice within months of its release, in the UK and in Italy. *Die Privatsekretärin* uses music to great effect, starting with an attention-grabbing gong, moving into an upbeat orchestral version of the film's main hit song, and ending with a triumphant chordal cadence. The musical comedies of the early sound period sought creative ways to deal with the suspension of disbelief involved when characters break into song and dance, but Thiele's early sound film comedies took a different approach, making no effort to motivate the shift to singing. Renate Müller and Hermann Thimig play a bank director and a secretary, respectively, in the film. Analyzing Thiele's French language-version of the film entitled *Dactylo* (1931), Christian Rogowski argues that the chemistry between the leading couples is very different, and the musical dramaturgy is reduced by the transfer of the storyline from a German to a French setting. He concludes that Wilhelm Thiele's 1931 film *Die Privatsekretärin* presents a fantasy of female self-fulfillment, accomplished with the help of a selfless male helper. However, it can also be read as a celebration of female solidarity.

The English-language version of *Die Privatsekretärin*, though not directed by Thiele, was such a success that it led to stardom for its leading actress Renate Müller in the UK. When Thiele directed Renate Müller in a second operetta vehicle, *Mädchen zum Heiraten* (1932), he was invited to London to make a slightly more elaborate English version of it and direct a film adaptation of Johann Strauss's famous operetta *Die Fledermaus* as *Waltz Time* (1933). Delving into Thiele's time in England, Geoff Brown notes that both films received mixed reviews and had low box-office receipts, thwarting Thiele's plans for continuing his work in London. Brown argues that, despite mixed fortunes in Britain, Gaumont-British and Gainsborough always remained the likeliest London studios where Thiele could have flourished. More musical projects were planned. *Marry Me*, with British actors crowded around its Teutonic star, had a continental flavor, but the artificial atmosphere of most multilingual ventures, drifting between their constituent countries and

nationalities. Brown also analyzes incomplete surviving reels of *Waltz Time*, concluding that it must have been the better film, yet it failed to resonate with British audiences.

With Hitler's ascension to power in Germany, Thiele made one last German-language film before embarking for the United States. He returned to his native Austria to direct Maria Jeritza, a Czech-born opera diva, in her film debut. The prestige film *Großfürstin Alexandra* had a big budget and a well-known cast to surround its star. Franz Lehár even composed original music for the film. *Großfürstin Alexandra* had a successful press preview and was immediately popular with the public. Critics praised the movie for its artistry and patriotism, but condemned it for its sympathy for the deposed Russian aristocracy. In 1933, Thiele framed his return to Austria as a happy accident, noting that he had made movies in Berlin, Paris, London, but was now back in Vienna filming Jeritza. In her chapter, concluding Thiele's prewar European career, Anjeana K. Hans notes that *Großfürstin Alexandra* may have started out as a way to push the genre of the musical film to new heights, but its aim may have become more complicated, especially given its subject matter. Hans analyzes this film about forced emigration, the dynamics of its love story, and its strangely unsatisfying happy ending.

Valerie Weinstein tackles Thiele's very first Hollywood success, the adventure romance *Jungle Princess* (1936), with Ray Milland and Dorothy Lamour. According to Weinstein, the film's portrayal of in-between characters resonates with Thiele's experience as an émigré Jewish director in Hollywood. In spite of the fact that Ulah is not a civilized woman, the film discourages viewers from identifying her as a primitive. Rather, Ulah's "natural charm" attracts both her male romantic interest in the film and the millions of moviegoers who discover her in theaters. Some non-white characters in the film are portrayed as neither civilized nor primitive, and the film suggests that civilization will be able to absorb them as they can contribute to society in gendered ways. If we are to understand Hollywood's German-speaking émigré Jews and their claims to whiteness, Weinstein concludes, it is helpful to consider Los Angeles a diaspora space in the 1930s. In Hollywood, Thiele, like other exiles forced out of Nazi Germany, had to contend with a complex racialized discourse that classified Jews as either white or off-white.

Imme Klages unpacks Thiele's tenure as a contract director at MGM, arguing that, while the films he directed at the studio left him little room to maneuver with crew members expertly trained by their respective department to achieve technical perfection, he aptly managed to meet viewer's wishes in ways that still resonate today. From his musi-

cal short *Carnival in Paris* (1937) to *Bad Little Angel* (1939), a family film with a lot of heart, Klages delves into Thiele's career within the US studio system at its height, exploring his position within it.

Marianna Torgovnick takes a look at Thiele's two Tarzan films for RKO studios, both starring the best-known actor in the part, Johnny Weissmuller. Torgovnick argues that the films reveal Thiele's artistic sensibility and his skills in directing actors. She contextualizes her analysis of *Tarzan Triumphs* (1943) and *Tarzan's Desert Mystery* (1943) with the book series by Edgar Rice Burroughs that inspired them. In so doing, she reveals both racist undertones and Thiele's personal imprint on the series, particularly with *Tarzan Triumphs*. Torgovnick clearly identifies *Desert Mystery* as a more routine and overall inferior film without neglecting the ways it engages in camp.

Christian Cargnelli looks at two of Thiele's crime pictures, *London by Night* (1937) and particularly *The Madonna's Secret* (1945), a film-noir he directed for the poverty row studio Republic starring Francis Lederer. Cargnelli notes how the film introduces cinematographer John Alton's famous noir period, including a haunting nightmare sequence featuring mirror images, chiaroscuro lighting and superimpositions. A similar sequence of shadowy collages of terror could already be seen in *London by Night*, linking the two films to an expressionist tradition that Thiele had never really been a part of in Germany. Cargnelli notes that *The Madonna's Secret* was met with favorable reviews in the contemporary press, viewed as innovative at the time.

In the following chapter, Jan-Christopher Horak unravels Thiele's career reinvention after his career seemed to have come to a definite halt. Working more or less steadily for Jack Chertok and his company Apex Film Corporation, Thiele directed documentaries and educational films, as well as episodes of popular television series. Horak close-reads *The Price of Freedom* (1949), *The Du Pont Story* (1950), several episodes of *Cavalcade of America* (1952–57), and *We Who Serve* (1958) for their political resonance. Thiele's work during this period dives into American self-conception as a nation. As an exiled director in the United States, Thiele was in an interesting position looking at his adopted homeland.

During this period, Thiele also took a stab at directing one of the most successful and decade-defining TV shows of the time, *The Lone Ranger*. He directed the show during its popular peak, during its fourth season, which aired from 1954 to 1955. A. Dana Weber unpacks how the series featuring a cowboy and his indigenous sidekick Tonto took US culture by storm, first through radio then through television. We-

ber analyzes what Thiele joining the program meant, both in terms of the United States' past and the director's European background. She identifies a fundamental paradox at the core of *The Lone Ranger* with its conceptions of the rebel and the conformist, the savage and the civilized, an outlaw exterior and a substance as a law bringer. She also contrasts this US vision of a particular hero with that of Karl May's fantasies, which may have inspired *The Lone Ranger*, given the series' striking resemblance to the popular Winnetou books, something that Thiele surely would have noticed.

In the final act of his career, as if to close the circle, Thiele returned to the country of his greatest successes, Germany. He returned after twenty-eight years to direct two films combining light entertainment with music, *Der letzte Fußgänger* (1960) and *Sabine und die 100 Männer* (1960). The first film has achieved lasting success with German audiences and still counts among the director's most popular films featuring Heinz Erhardt as a nature-loving archivist taking a walk through the Black Forest. The second is a tongue-in-cheek remake of a Henry Koster musical comedy set around the exuberant youth of its female lead Sabine Sinjen and the calmness and musical genius of Thiele's friend, violinist Yehudi Menuhin. In the final chapter of this book, Jan-Christopher Horak analyzes how these films are distinctly hybrid works, which combine a Hollywood style with a thoroughly German sensibility, mixing comedy, Heimat, and Schlager genres with a touch of irony.

The coda section features an interview conducted by Jan-Christopher Horak with Thiele and his wife Barbara in the mid-1970s, a detailed filmography by Hans-Michael Bock, as well as an essay by Armin Loacker illuminating the life and career of William's brother Eugen.

Jan-Christopher Horak is former Director of UCLA Film & Television Archive. He received his PhD from the University of Münster, Germany. Previously he was Director of the Munich Filmmuseum and Curator at the George Eastman Museum. He held professorships in Rochester, Munich, Salzburg, UCLA, Miami, and now teaches at Chapman and UCLA. An Academy Scholar in 2006, he received the Katherine Singer Kovacs Essay Award (2007), the Reinhold Schünzel Prize (2018), and the Honorary Prize of the German Cinematheque Association (2021). Book publications include: *Film and Photo in the 1920s* (1979), *Helmar Lerski* (1983), *Anti-Nazi-Films by Jewish Refugees in Hollywood* (1985), *The*

Dream Merchants (1989), *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde* (1995), *Saul Bass: Anatomy of Film Design* (2014), *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema* (2015), and *Hollywood Goes Latin: Spanish-Language Filmmaking in Los Angeles* (2017). He has published more than three hundred articles and reviews in English, German, French, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Hungarian, Czech, Polish, Swedish, Japanese, and Hebrew publications.

Andréas-Benjamin Seyfert is Lecturer at the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He received his PhD from the Department of European Languages and Transcultural Studies at UCLA. Seyfert holds a Graduate Certificate in Digital Humanities and a Gender Studies Concentration. His publications include a contribution to the journal *Filmblatt*, as well as chapters in *Goethe als Literatur-Figur* (Wallstein Verlag, 2016), *Rethinking Jewishness in Weimar Cinema* (Berghahn Books, 2020), *Achtung! Musik . . . : Zwischen Filmkomödie und Musical* (edition text + kritik, 2024), and *Modernist Aesthetics in Transition: Visual Culture in the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Notes

1. See Harry T. Smith, "Liebeswalzer," *New York Times*, 4 May 1931; Harry T. Smith, "Die Privatsekretärin," *New York Times*, 12 June 1931, *Variety*, 23 June 1931.
2. See Horak, "German Exile Cinema, 1933–1950."
3. Horak, "Die Ufa Entlassungen vom 29. März 1933."
4. "Interview with W. and B. Thiele," see this volume.
5. Linda Thiele email to Ben Seyfert and David Thiele, 15 August 2022; David Thiele email to Ben Seyfert, 27 October 2021.
6. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen*, 326.
7. Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 207, 213. Kracauer painting *Tankstelle's* reception in New York as unsuccessful is not actually based in fact. Rather, it was a way to compliment Americans on a more discerning taste, while criticizing the film for feeding into a capitalist fairy tale narrative at odds with Kracauer's ideological convictions.
8. Führich, "Woman and the Typewriter."
9. Discussing the intersection between musicals and feminist issues is Fischer, "Shall We Dance?"
10. Affron, *Cinema and Sentiment*, 24; Fischer, "Shall We Dance?"
11. *Meldezettel* (Registration), Vienna Second District, 15 August 1908. It documents his move from the Twelfth District. See also *Meldezettel*, Vienna Second District, 14 May 1912, 4 August 1922, 8 August 1919 (Fifteenth District).
12. David Thiele email to Ben Seyfert, 27 October 2021.
13. See von Keitz, "Ein Stündchen Selikgkeitunter den Dächern von Paris."

14. David Thiele email to Benjamin Seyfert, 27 October 2021.
15. Ibid. Thiele also noted: William would later attend synagogue again in the United States, then married to his second German Lutheran wife Barbara after Vally's death. A photo in the dining room of William and Barbara's Hilgard Ave house shows a menorah. However, the whole extended family celebrated Christmas with a Christmas tree, a festive meal, and gifts. They lived in this house from sometime around 1940 to the mid-1950s. Later in life, his synagogue attendance ended. However, the things he said, and particularly his initiation of a prayer before a meal while visiting family in the early 1970s, showed his continued belief in the God of Abraham. He gave to Jewish charities. He was also given a Jewish religious funeral with a rabbi officiating. He also gladly donated his labor to a project that promoted the peaceful cooperation of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism.
16. John Thiele, William J. Thiele, typed biographical manuscript, Linda Thiele Collection.
17. See Anonymous, "Weber Brings Back the Bacon from Broadway."
18. "First Operetta a Role for Jeritza in U.S.," *New York Times*, 12 March 1934. The notice does not mention that from Boston the operetta proceeded to the Forest in Philadelphia (19 March 1934), the National in Washington, DC (26 March 1934), the Nixon in Pittsburgh (2 April 1934), and the Grand Opera House in Chicago (9 April 1934). After the road show closed, Schubert's reopened in December 1934 on Broadway, however with a new title, *Music Hath Charms*, and without Jeritza or Thiele attached. See "Conventional Operetta 'Music Hath Charms' with Score by Rudolf Friml," *New York Times*, 31 December 1931. See also Matthew X. Kiernan, "Annina." *Flickr*, uploaded 19 April 2015. Retrieved 28 August 2022 from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mateox/17017474600/in/photostream/>.
19. Libbey, "Annina."
20. In a deal brokered by John Zanft, a Fox Theater chain executive and budding producer, Thiele signed his contract with Fox on 30 August 1934 and went to work on the lot a day later and was to begin the "much-delayed production within two weeks." See *The Hollywood Reporter* 22, no. 47 (31 August 1934): 7.
21. No less than thirteen scriptwriters had their hand in *Lottery Lover*, including Thiele and Hans Kräly, which may have also contributed to its failure.
22. See *Daily Variety* 8, no. 73 (30 August 1935): 3; *Daily Variety* 9, no. 34 (15 October 1935): 1. William Nigh directed the film that was retitled *Don't Get Personal* (1936).
23. Dorothy Lamour and her sarong are discussed in de Seife, "What's Sarong with this Picture?"
24. Reich, "Im wilden Westen im dichtesten Dschungel." Interestingly enough, the reporter already names Thiele by his adopted American name William, rather than by the first name Wilhelm he is known by in German-speaking countries.
25. *Daily Variety* 16, no. 35 (17 July 1937): 4. The working title was "Black Lighting."
26. See Anonymous, "Directs 'Willow Walk,'" *Hollywood Boxoffice*, 8 July 1939.
27. *Daily Variety*, 27 October 1941, 6.
28. "Tarzan's Desert Mystery," *New York Times*, 27 December 1943, 23.
29. *Daily Variety* 100, no. 11 (20 June 1958): 6. One the slate were three projects: "Yesterday was Nothing but a Dream," Joseph Anthony's "Fear," and Hanna F. Kirschner's "Day of Violence."
30. Stacy Keach, Sr., "Eulogy," typed manuscript, Linda Thiele Collection.
31. Schnauber, "Willhelm Thiele, störrisch und zufrieden."

Bibliography

- Affron, Charles. *Cinema and Sentiment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Anonymous. "Weber Brings Back the Bacon from Broadway." *The Hollywood Reporter* 19, no. 11 (24 January 1934): 2.
- de Seife, Ethan. "What's Sarong with This Picture? The Development of the Star Image of Dorothy Lamour." *Senses of Cinema*, October 2002. Retrieved 20 August 2022 from <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2002/female-glamour-and-star-power/lamour/>.
- Eisner, Lotte. *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- Fischer, Lucy. "Shall We Dance?: Feminist Cinema and Remakes the Musical." *Film Criticism* 13, no. 2 (1989): 7–17.
- Führich, Angelika. "Woman and the Typewriter: Gender, Technology, and Work in Late Weimar Film." *Woman in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture* 16 (2000): 151–66.
- Horak, Jan-Christopher. "Die Ufa Entlassungen vom 29. März 1933 und der Weg ins Exil für Robert Liebmann und Erik Charell" [The UFA dismissals on 29 March 1933 and the path into exile for Robert Liebmann and Erik Charell]. In *UFA International: Ein deutscher Konzern mit globalen Ambitionen* [UFA International: A German group with global ambitions], 321–36. Munich: edition text + kritik, 2021.
- . "German Exile Cinema, 1933–1950." *Film History* 8, no. 4 (1996): 337–89.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological of the German Film*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947.
- Libbey. "Annina." *Variety* 113, no. 13 (13 March 1934): 56.
- Reich, Hans Leo. "Im wilden Westen im dichtesten Dschungel (und alles bei Paramount . . .)" [In the Wild West in the densest jungle]. *Mein Film* 564 (October 1936): 15–16.
- Schnauber, Cornelius. "Willhelm Thiele, störrisch und zufrieden" [Wilhelm Thiele, stubborn and content]. *Neue Züricher Zeitung* no. 85 (15 April 1982): 37.
- von Keitz, Ursula. "Ein Stündchen Seligkeitunter den Dächern von Paris: Wilhelm Thiele's musikalische Komödie Mädchen zum heiraten" [An hour of happiness under the roofs of Paris: Wilhelm Thiele's musical comedy *Girls to Marry*]. *Filmblatt* 20, no. 58/59 (2015–16): 22–31.