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## **Resounding Eyes, Educating Minds. The Eye as a Musical Object in Wien-Film's 'Medical Features'<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Summary**

Against the background of the scientific and cultural-social interest in the *Third Reich* for the eyes and their characteristics, this paper conducts an audiovisual examination of *Augen* (D 1943), a *Kulturfilm* produced by the Wien-Film production conglomerate. This analysis is preceded by a review of two legacies principal to the paper's investigation of *Augen*: the *Kulturfilm* genre and its ideological instrumentalisation on the one hand and the infamous "research" conducted by Dr. Josef Mengele on the other. Although unlikely that these positions influenced each other at the time, the interpretation of the organ made the inspiration and ultimately the realization of the state-sponsored research and film production, exemplified by "Eye Studies" and selected films respectively, possible. The audiovisual motif of the eyes is therefore (re)presented in an educational context but shrouded in an ideologised means of mediation.

Vor dem Hintergrund des wissenschaftlichen und kultursozialen Interesses im Dritten Reich am Auge und dessen Eigenschaften führt dieser Beitrag eine audiovisuelle Untersuchung von *Augen* (D 1943), einem Kulturfilm des Filmproduktionskonglomerats Wien-Film, durch. Dieser Analyse geht ein Rückblick auf zwei für die Untersuchung von *Augen* wesentliche Vermächtnisse voraus: Einerseits die berüchtigten „Forschungsunternehmen“ von Dr. Josef Mengele und andererseits das Genre Kulturfilm und seine ideologische Instrumentalisierung. Die gegenseitige Beeinflussung bzw. Wechselwirkung dieser Elemente zu dieser Zeit erwies sich im Rahmen der Untersuchung als unwahrscheinlich. Jedoch ermöglichte die Interpretation des Sehorgans die Inspiration und letztlich die Realisierung der staatlich geförderten Forschung und Filmproduktion, exemplarisch dargestellt anhand der „Augenstudien“ bzw. ausgewählter Filme. Das audiovisuelle Motiv der Augen wird so in einem Bildungskontext (re-)präsentiert, verschleiert durch das Prisma der ideologisierten Vermittlung.

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1 This paper is based on the research project *Wien im Kulturfilm: Aspekte der audiovisuellen Inszenierung der Stadt 1938–1958*, funded by the City of Vienna (MA 07) and conducted at the Austrian Academy of Sciences – Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities and Cultural Heritage (ACDH-CH) in cooperation with the Filmarchiv Austria. The text was drafted and submitted during the author's fellowship at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna.

## Keywords

*Augen (Eyes)*, *Third Reich*, Wien-Film, audiovisuality, *Kulturfilm*, 1938–1945, Vienna

## Introduction

Blond hair, blue eyes: a mental image that almost immediately materializes in one's perception. It is ostensibly *the* image representing the *Master race*,<sup>2</sup> postulated by the National-Socialist ideology, and continued over the decades after its defeat. Concentrating on the film medium, the representations of this "ideal" are identifiable in the (rare) colour motion pictures of the time produced under the aegis of the regime in the *Third Reich*.<sup>3</sup> This depiction will continue to appear in numerous movies from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Most of these movies will be produced outside of the German-speaking regions, in which blue or lightly coloured eyes have been gazing at the spectator, perpetuating the "ideal image" of beauty.<sup>4</sup> The exploration of this phenomenon – specifically the eyes – is further underlined in the collective memory of the *Third Reich* through the undertakings in the field of medicine and some of the most heinous chapters of its history. The "Eye Studies" mostly took place after the production of the motion pictures on the topic in question and it is unlikely that the two influenced each other. However, the general understanding at the time, laden with the pseudo-scientific interpretation, not only connect, but most likely fueled the inspiration and ultimately the realization of the state-sponsored research and (re)presentation of the eye. Going beyond the eye's medical history, the artistic, scholarly, and popular fascination with the organ and its transcendental significance, as well as mystical qualities that are attributed to the eyes are surpassed in their representation perhaps only by the heart. The question how the eyes were perceived and repre-

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- 2 An English translation of the German terms *Herrenvolk* and *Herrenrasse*, the notion of *Master race* is often used within the concept of National-Socialist racial theories. The terms and concepts instrumentalized and utilized during this era appear in this paper in italics, translated in English (e.g. *Third Reich*), as well as in the original form in German (e.g. *Propagandaminister*). Highly controversial and relevant to the current discourse of propagating National-Socialism, these terms and concepts must be interpreted against the background of the ideological context. Lastly, italics are used to differentiate this terminology as quotes and terms distinguished in a distancing manner by the author.
  - 3 Naturally, the film itself was not the only medium in communicating this "ideal" to the cinema audiences, as numerous film posters, as well as set or publicity images in colour prove. Due to high production costs however, only around a dozen feature films, mostly 'prestige'-projects, were produced as colour motion pictures in the National-Socialist film industry. Here, protagonists of these colour movies – most of them female – carry the characteristics that would later be epitomized as those of an archetypical National-Socialist ideal of women, for instance Swedish-born Kristina Söderbaum (appearing in *Die goldene Stadt* [D 1942], *Immensee* [D 1943], *Opfergang* [D 1944] and *Kolberg* [D 1945]). For the instrumentation of this actress cf.: Jo FOX, *Filming Women in the Third Reich* (Oxford 2000), 162, and Cinzia ROMANI, *Tainted Goddesses: Female Film Stars of the Third Reich* (Boston, MA 1992), on (Ufa) colour motion pictures cf.: Friedemann BEYER / Gert KOSHOFFER / Michael KRÜGER, *UFA in Farbe. Technik, Politik und Starkult zwischen 1936 und 1945* (Munich 2010).
  - 4 These are often depicted in context of a militarized character in a uniform, most often male and almost always as an antagonist: From Oliver Collignon's appearance (as an uncredited extra) in *Cabaret* (USA 1972), over Ralph Fiennes' role as Amon Goeth in *Schindler's List* (USA 1993) to Christoph Waltz's embodiment of the *SS-Standartenführer* Hans Landa in *Inglorious Basterds* (USA 2009). The latter two examples showcase the ambiguity of this "ideal", as the blueness of Ralph Fiennes' eyes is obscured due to the fact that *Schindler's List* is primarily shot in black and white and Christoph Waltz's eyes are in fact green, but often (mistakenly) credited as blue.

sented in one of the most effective means of ideological mediation in the *Third Reich*, namely film, and its music, remains mostly unanswered. This is precisely the main objective of this paper, which aims to investigate the sensory organ as an (audio)visual subject, as well as an object of film productions made by the Wien-Film. With a thorough analysis of the *Kulturfilm Augen*, directed by Bruno Wozak and with music by Karl Eisele on the one hand and with scene analyses of two further Wien-Film features on the other, this contribution aims to close the gap in the cultural and filmic perception of the eye in the *Third Reich*.

## Two Legacies

In order to contextualize the anticipated audiovisual analysis, two aspects on the motif of the eye beyond the musicological investigation need to be taken into consideration: the modern reception of the studies on the eye conducted in the medical field in the *Third Reich* seen through the prism of Josef Mengele's career and the framework of the *Kulturfilm*, in which the scientific findings were presented to the broader cinema audiences. Whereas the former mirrors the highly controversial medicinal experiments on humans and offers the backdrop on what one might expect to experience from the temporal and contextual setting, the latter strives to illuminate the concept in which the knowledge – in this case on the eyes – was presented and disseminated through a mass medium.

Through embedding these two legacies, the paper aims to provide a better insight into the conception of the *Kulturfilm Augen* and its audiovisual aspects. Whether and to which extent these contributed to the (ideological) background and the production of the motion pictures in question remains ultimately the matter of their respective receptions. At the time of writing this paper, recent contributions by authors publishing both for scholarship and for a broader readership on arguably the most notorious medical individual in the *Third Reich*, Josef Mengele, and his involvement in the experiments on the eyes have been identified.<sup>5</sup> The ongoing scientific and popular interest for this topic exists not only against the background of the heinousness of the “research” and experiments, which “represent one of the most horrific crimes among the many that Josef Mengele committed in the Auschwitz camp”,<sup>6</sup> but also for the propagated (mis)conception that the experiments were conducted in order to help create a world in which “[National-Socialists] ... wanted to produce children with lustrous blond hair and blue eyes.”<sup>7</sup> The quoted assumption of “Aryanization of the subjects”, although deeply troubling and ultimately false,<sup>8</sup> strikes a nerve in the understanding of the strivings and endeavors by medical professionals and researchers in the *Third Reich*, which would – following the usual streams of dissemination – reach the wider audiences. One of Mengele's most notable collaborators in these “studies” was Karin Magnussen at Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology in Berlin,

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5 For the former cf. Bruno HALIOUA / Michael F. MARMOR, The Eyes of the Angel of Death. Ophthalmic Experiments of Josef Mengele, in: *Survey of Ophthalmology* 65/6 (2020), 744–748; Richard H. C. ZEGERS. The Eye Color Experiment. From Berlin to Auschwitz and Back, in: *The Israel Medical Association Journal (IMAJ)* 22/4 (2020), 219–223; for the latter David G. MARWELL, Mengele. Unmasking the “Angel of Death” (New York 2020).

6 HALIOUA / MARMOR, Eyes, 747.

7 Lucette LAGNADO / Sheila Cohn DEKEL, *Children of the Flames. Dr. Josef Mengele and the Untold Story of the Twins of Auschwitz* (New York 1991).

8 MARWELL, Unmasking, 181–182.

herself working under Otmar von Verschuer,<sup>9</sup> the director of the same institute and one of the persons behind Mengele's employment as a camp physician in Auschwitz.<sup>10</sup> Von Verschuer received orders to carry out ophthalmological research on eye colour from 1943,<sup>11</sup> and the trio – all members of the National-Socialist party – formed the core research team, with Mengele performing “field studies and supplying materials”,<sup>12</sup> Magnussen evaluating the specimens and von Verschuer as the project coordinator. After the war, Mengele infamously escaped justice and died in leisurely circumstances<sup>13</sup>, while Magnussen unsuccessfully tried to publish her findings from their collaboration,<sup>14</sup> and von Verschuer denied playing a role in Mengele's experiments.<sup>15</sup> This can be seen against the background of the initiation of this specific medicinal endeavour being – in addition to be morally wrong and inhumane – scientifically faulty from its outset, as most publications explicitly state: Marwell thus concludes his section on “Eye Studies” with a statement that Mengele's experiments on Magnussen's behalf “were not designed to change the race of a single individual, they had a ‘higher’ goal to [...] strengthen and defend the Aryan race”.<sup>16</sup> Further authors underline the fact that Mengele's “experimentation had questionable scientific basis, such as the search for a ‘cure’ for heterochromia [...]”<sup>17</sup> and that the perpetrators submitted “innocent and defenseless people to malicious and meaningless medical experimentation, eventually murdering them for the purpose of additional research”.<sup>18</sup>

The “Eye Studies” – or any other studies conducted by Mengele and his colleagues – do not seem to have influenced productions such as the motion pictures in question. As it was shown, what was described as “meaningless medical experimentation”<sup>19</sup> was difficult to disseminate at the time and the interest for it only rose with the infamy of its perpetrators. Therefore, the same regime that supported and funded this kind of program found it difficult to utilize it for purposes beyond “questionable scientific basis”,<sup>20</sup> as quoted above. This frightening legacy should be perceived in the context of the interest for and fascination with the eyes in the *Third Reich* but also a twisted perception on the preferred appearance of the human eye, as both the creation of the *Kulturfilm* in question, as well as the directives on conducting the experiments either stem from or are regulated through the state-controlled organs of the National-Socialist

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- 9 Wolter lists a total of seven projects headed by von Verschuer and delegated to Mengele, cf.: Markus WOLTER, *Der SS-Arzt Josef Mengele zwischen Freiburg und Auschwitz. Ein örtlicher Beitrag zum Banalen und Bösen*, in: „Schau-ins-Land“. Zeitschrift des Breisgau-Geschichtvereins 133 (2014), 149–189, here 167.
- 10 HALIOUA / MARMOR, *Eyes*, 745.
- 11 Hans HESSE, *Augen aus Auschwitz. Ein Lehrstück über nationalsozialistischen Rassenwahn und medizinische Forschung – der Fall Dr. Karin Magnussen (Essen 2001)*, quoted after ZEGERS, *Eye*, 219.
- 12 For instance, Mengele's special interest were members of the Roma Mechlau family with a high number of heterochromia cases within the clan, prompting him to extensively describe their physical attributes, as well as to produce a genogram for Magnussen, cf. MARWELL, *Unmasking*, 175. This chart, as well as other documents by Magnussen, is preserved at Ernst Klee's estate in Hadamar Memorial Museum and can be seen in ZEGERS, *Eye*, 221.
- 13 Alan LEVY, *Nazi Hunter. The Wiesenthal File* (London 2006), 294–295.
- 14 On the genesis and issues arising in this manuscript, cf. ZEGERS, *Eye*, 220–221.
- 15 HALIOUA / MARMOR, *Eyes*, 747. The authors claim Magnussen's research, presumably from the manuscript above, was initially refused by an unspecified journal and its editor Alfred Kühn, but was published elsewhere, cf. *Ibid.* However, no source was cited for this publication and no article by Magnussen with this content could be identified.
- 16 MARWELL, *Unmasking*, 182.
- 17 HALIOUA / MARMOR, *Eyes*, 746.
- 18 ZEGERS, *Eye*, 222.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 HALIOUA / MARMOR, *Eyes*, 746.

regime. Hence, it will be of no surprise to recognize the *Kulturfilm*'s existence as an integral component of official and state propaganda. This subgenre is positioned in the German-speaking filmmaking of non-fiction and – more specifically – documentary films and its conception can be traced to educational and instructional films.<sup>21</sup>

With the establishment of a *Kulturfilm*-department at Ufa, only a year after the studio's own founding in 1917, the genre was launched into the forefront of non-fiction film.<sup>22</sup> *Kulturfilm* would soon become an all-encompassing definition for documentary features in the German-speaking cinema and mirror the heterogeneity of its classification and utilization, although the term itself remained ambiguous at its best, highly confusing at its worst.<sup>23</sup> This genre however, as well as documentary film in general, has started to be the subject of comprehensive research only recently. The editors of one such publication – a three-volume anthology on documentary film in Germany – observe in the foreword to the first volume that the lack of incentive for such undertaking exists not only against the background of *Kulturfilm*'s instrumentalization in the context of the *Third Reich*, but also due to the lack of accessibility to the (film) material.<sup>24</sup> The peculiar development and positioning of the genre in the National-Socialist film industry has thus far garnered the most attention and will see its decline following the downfall of the regime.<sup>25</sup> This might have been preceded by a “lack of interest” – as Felix Moeller questions in the opening of the chapter on documentary film in the *Third Reich* from the point of view of *Propagandaminister* Goebbels – from the very apex of the cultural policy making in the *Third Reich*,<sup>26</sup> however the diversity and the quantity of the *Kulturfilme* produced during this era present a different picture.<sup>27</sup> One of the following ordinances would require that from September 1934 a cinema programme consists of 1. *Wochenschau*, 2. a recognized *Kulturbeifilm* and 3. up to 900 meters (approximately 33 minutes showtime) of supporting programme

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- 21 For this ‘precursor’ in German-speaking cinema cf. Uli JUNG, Lehr- und Unterrichtsfilme für Schulen und Hochschulen, in: Uli Jung / Martin Loiperdinger, eds., *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland*. Bd. 1: Kaiserreich (1895–1918) (Stuttgart 2005), 349–356. Furthermore, confusion on the terminology on and between *Lehrfilm* and *Kulturfilm* existed ever since the establishment of the department, cf. Ulrich DÖGE, *Kulturfilm als Aufgabe*. Hans Cürlis (1889–1982) (Berlin 2005), 13.
- 22 For the contextualization of this process cf. Uli JUNG / Wolfgang MÜHL-BENNINGHAUS, Die Kulturfilmdiskussion von 1914 bis 1920. Die politische und ideologische Dynamik der Ufa-Gründung, in: Uli Jung / Martin Loiperdinger, eds., *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland*, Bd. 1: Kaiserreich (1895–1918) (Stuttgart 2005), 480–486.
- 23 Peter ZIMMERMANN / Kay HOFFMANN, Die Kulturfilm-Debatte zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus und die Rechtfertigungsliteratur nach 1945, in: Peter Zimmermann / Kay Hoffmann, eds., *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland*, Bd. 3: “Drittes Reich” (1933–1945) (Stuttgart 2005), 26–32, here 26. According to the authors, it is evident already in the heterogeneity of the term “Kulturfilm” used in the 1920s, and, besides its instrumentalisation within the National-Socialist propaganda, one of the primary reasons why *Kulturfilm* as a term is used in italics throughout this paper. On “What is Kulturfilm”, cf. DÖGE, *Kulturfilm*, 13–15.
- 24 Cf. [Uli Jung / Martin Loiperdinger], Vorwort, in: Uli Jung / Martin Loiperdinger, eds., *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland*, Bd. 1: Kaiserreich (1895–1918) (Stuttgart 2005), 11–15, here 12–13.
- 25 For instance, cf. anthology: Ramón REICHERT, ed., *Kulturfilm im „Dritten Reich“* (Vienna 2006).
- 26 Felix MOELLER, *Der Filmminister. Goebbels und der Film im Dritten Reich* (Berlin 1998), 347–350.
- 27 This is also evident in the regulations regarding the genre, as per ordinance from *Reichsfilmkammer* a year after its founding as *vorläufige Filmkammer* in 1933, requiring the cinemas to project *Kulturfilme* with the minimum length of 250 meters (approximately nine minutes showtime) and labelled with one of the predicates (“*künstlerisch*“, “*kulturell*“, “*volksbildend*“ and/or “*staatspolitisch wertvoll*“), cf. Heinz TACKMANN (*Reichsfilmkammer*), ed., *Filmhandbuch* (Berlin 1938), Blatt VI D 2i. As with most *Reichsfilmkammer* ordinances, it was made known at the time in papers like *Film-Kurier*, cf. *Film-Kurier* (21 July 1934), 3.

before the main picture.<sup>28</sup> Goebbels, a self-proclaimed “expert” on documentary film,<sup>29</sup> sees the genre in general as a placative tool for propaganda, however, his writing mirrors the same issues of the time in distinguishing the *Kulturfilm* from other forms of non-fiction (mediation).<sup>30</sup> In line with the *Propagandaminister*’s line of thinking and following the amendments from the previous year, the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda would introduce measures in the spring of 1935 – among them a position within the Ministry – in order to “elevate the quality of the *Kulturfilm*”.<sup>31</sup> As the duration of an average *Kulturfilm* was significantly shorter than that of a feature film, the genre enjoyed a certain production ‘privilege’ regarding the quality of the produced material, for instance as an experimental medium for the colour motion picture.<sup>32</sup> A marvel (and a challenge) of the film production in the *Third Reich* at the time, 22 titles in colour produced in four years represent only a fraction of the total number of *Kulturfilme*.<sup>33</sup> However, they became an important technical testing ground and a political tool in the ideological mediation.<sup>34</sup> These kinds of “testing ground” against the production and ideological background mirror those undertaken by Mengele and his team in the field of medicine, as both would not be possible were it not for the keen interest by their respective organs of the National-Socialist state apparatus. These technical benefits, and arguably both the artistic and general quality of the *Kulturfilm* will face issues with the progress of the Second World War: Statements like “Although the genre serves as an instrumental tool of Public Enlightenment [...], it would be advisable to adapt the content to more contemporary topics due to the war”<sup>35</sup> complete the now absolute instrumentalization of the genre, and the ordinances regarding the *Kulturfilme* limit the latter to “propaganda and politically essential films”.<sup>36</sup> The decline – or, better yet, prolonged dying out – of *Kulturfilm*, did not occur as a part of Germany’s Zero Hour (*Stunde Null*), an inexistent ‘occurrence’ in the German post-war filmmaking, and the overwhelming majority of its filmmaking personnel continued working unaffectedly.<sup>37</sup> This mirrors much of the (Wien-Film) personnel – directors, authors and, naturally, film music composers – who would continue working for the genre independent of its internal or external classification.

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28 Ibid., Blatt VI D 21.

29 “I explain to him [Hans Bertram] the basic concepts of the documentary film” („Ich erkläre ihm die Grundbegriffe des Dokumentarfilms“), Goebbels’ journal entry from 19 April 1940, quoted here after: MOELLER, Filmminister, 348.

30 Ibid., 349.

31 N.N., Hebung des Kulturfilms. Kostenlose Beratung durch die Reichsvereinigung, in: *Der Film* (2 March 1935), 9.

32 Kay HOFFMANN, *Unbekannte Bilderwelten. Technische Innovation und ästhetische Gestaltung*, in: Peter Zimmermann / Kay Hoffmann, eds., *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland*, Bd. 3: “Drittes Reich” (1933–1945) (Stuttgart 2005), 176–197, here 180. Furthermore, Hoffmann elaborates on other film techniques that were utilised in *Kulturfilm*, some of which are also evident in *Augen*.

33 Ralf FORSTER, *Farbenfrohe Welt in Agfacolor (1940–44). Erschloss die Farbe neue Kulturfilm-Möglichkeiten*, in: Ramón Reichert, ed., *Kulturfilm im „Dritten Reich“* (Vienna 2006), 67–84, here 72.

34 Ibid., 79.

35 Heinrich Roellenberg’s contribution at the Reichswoche für den Deutschen Kulturfilm 1943, quoted after Jean-paul GOERGEN, *Der giftige, giftige Apfel. Kulturfilm im Nationalsozialismus*, in: Ramón Reichert, ed., *Kulturfilm im „Dritten Reich“* (Vienna 2006), 29–46, here 40.

36 Wolfgang BECKER, *Film und Herrschaft. Organisationsprinzipien und Organisationsstrukturen der nationalsozialistischen Filmpropaganda* (Berlin 1973), 222–223.

37 Peter ZIMMERMANN, *Kontinuitäten und Wandlungen im Zeichen von „Entnazifizierung“ und „Reeducation“*, in: Peter Zimmermann / Kay Hoffmann, eds., *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland*, Bd. 3: „Drittes Reich“ (1933–1945) (Stuttgart 2005), 691–709, here 691.

Whereas some might perceive the genre as a transition from *Kulturfilm* into documentary film,<sup>38</sup> its legacy remains – at least in its most productive and closing chapters – tied to the *Third Reich*.

## Two Omissions

Positioning *Augen* and its audiovisual aspects in the vast and manifold world of *Kulturfilm* exemplifies two desiderata in the existing research regarding the genre: the *Kulturfilm*-production at the Wien-Film studio under the aegis of the National-Socialist regime and – even more striking – the music and its agency in *Kulturfilm*. Closing these two gaps in scholarship requires a critical mass of both individual case studies as well as a comprehensive analysis of the genre as a whole, preferably in the aforementioned order. Following the *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938, the National-Socialist perception of the *Third Reich*'s now southernmost addition was ambivalent. This is mirrored in the creation and mission of the Wien-Film conglomerate,<sup>39</sup> which occurred through a forced unification of nearly all existing Austrian film production companies.<sup>40</sup> Even before the political annexation of Austria, the local film production companies – yielding only a fraction of their total earnings domestically<sup>41</sup> – depended particularly on the audiences in other German-speaking countries, which eased their ‘amalgamation’ into the National-Socialist film and propaganda industry.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the films were predetermined and geared towards the topics applicable to the audiences in ‘Greater Germany’ and Wien-Film worked on both establishing itself as an individual brand (seen – for instance – in the rhomboid logo resembling Ufa but specifying music as a part of its literal trademark) and in creating filmic works in line with the contemporary tendencies in National-Socialist Germany. These tendencies are understandably reflected in the filmic projects prepared, approved, and ultimately produced by the studio in general and the *Kulturfilm*-department under the direction by Josef Lebzelter in particular:

“Utilising film [meant is *Kulturfilm*] to bring the domains returned to the Reich closer to the people of the Reich [...] however, this [*Ostmärkische* formation] has always been a German formation, German history”.<sup>43</sup>

38 Cf. subchapter „Vom Kulturfilm zum Dokumentarfilm“ in: Thomas BRÄUTIGAM, *Klassiker des deutschsprachigen Dokumentarfilms* (Marburg 2019), 11–14.

39 Officially founded on 16 December 1938 (entry in the commercial register 27 December), cf. Wolfgang GUHA, *Die Geschichte eines österreichischen Filmunternehmens. Von der Sascha-Film-Fabrik in Pftaumberg in Böhmen zur Wien-Film* (Vienna 1976), 55.

40 The ‘exceptions’ were contractor-studios like Emo-Film, Forst-Film, Mondial-Film and Styria-Film, dependent on Wien-Film engagements, cf. Christoph BRECHT / Armin LOACKER / Ines STEINER, *Professionalist und Propagandist. Der Kameramann und Regisseur Gustav Ucicky* (Vienna 2014), 279. Even smaller *Kulturfilm*-specific production companies like those from directors Herbert Dreyer or Adi Mayer operated in a similar fashion, the latter’s responsible for the production of *Augen*.

41 Wolfgang BECKER, *Film und Herrschaft. Organisationsprinzipien und Organisationsstrukturen der nationalsozialistischen Filmpropaganda* (Berlin 1973), 166–167.

42 For a comprehensive study of this period leading up to Wien-Film, cf. Armin LOACKER, *Anschluss im 3/4-Takt. Filmproduktion und Filmpolitik in Österreich 1930–1938* (=Filmgeschichte International 5, Trier 1999).

43 „Die zum Reich zurückgekehrten Gebiete durch den Film den Menschen des Reiches nahezubringen, [...] die



The previous quote stems from an introduction to the commented filmography of Wien-Film *Kulturfilme*, listing more than fifty productions contracted as supplementing programme for corresponding feature films produced by the studio. Most of the entries in this filmography feature certain individuals relevant to the films' production, as well as *Kulturfilm*'s predicate(s), and sometimes its corresponding feature film.<sup>44</sup> The professional background and career of the film music composer in *Augen*, Karl Eisele (1902–1967), is equally an exemplification of a mostly untold audiovisual history of *Kulturfilm* as well as a biographical quagmire of most film music composers writing for the genre. The most comprehensive publication on documentary film in Germany during the *Third Reich* contains one contribution dealing explicitly with music in *Kulturfilm*, albeit through case studies by some of the most prominent film music composers of the time – among them Herbert Windt and Wolfgang Zeller – known for their work on feature films.<sup>45</sup> Thus far, only one comprehensive study of this specific genre and its music moved its focus away from the 'big names' in the writing for the screen in the National-Socialist *Kulturfilm* and concentrated on Wien-Film productions, scrutinizing the compositional and contextual patterns against the background of the film music as the tool of state propaganda.<sup>46</sup> The work and art of a composer is unsurprisingly weighed against the background of their work in film productions and a person behind the music in *Kulturfilm* was hardly comparable in status and financial recompense to that of a feature film composer. Although investments in (Wien-Film) *Kulturfilm* were evident – with a minimal budget of 20,000 Reichsmark (RM) per *Kulturfilm*<sup>47</sup> – the fixed salary for a Wien-Film composer writing music for the genre usually varied between 400 and 800 Reichsmark per production.<sup>48</sup> However, a different kind of 'privilege' for the film composers writing for *Kulturfilm* was the relative freedom from direct state censorship: the mere amount of produced content was hardly possible to be scrutinized by Goebbels,<sup>49</sup> and did not require external specialists for a viewing session by *Reichsfilmkammer* censors.<sup>50</sup> Internal means of quality control, both in the film companies, as well as in their

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aber immer eine deutsche Entwicklung war, deutsche Geschichte war bis heute, bis zur Einmündung ins Großdeutsche Reich“, quoted after Günter KRENN, *Die Kulturfilme der Wien-Film 1938–1945* (Vienna 1992), 4.

- 44 In case of *Augen*, those are Karl Leiter and Adi Mayer (producers), Bruno Wozak (director), Karl Eisele (music), Hans Gassl and Sepp Ziegler (cameramen) and Edith Matzalik (animator). The film was given one predicate – “*volksbildend*”, cf. KRENN, *Kulturfilme*, 14. This is corroborated by an overview of feature films and *Kulturfilme* produced by the Wien-Film in production years 1940/41 and 1941/42, cf. Filmarchiv Austria (=FAA), Wien-Film Estate (=WIFI), Übersicht Produktionsjahr 1940/41 und 1941/42, Einteilung von Kulturfilmen zu Spielfilmen (WIFI-DO-1-3714), 6.
- 45 Ulrich RÜGNER, Nicht nur Symphonik und Chorgesang. Musik im Kulturfilm, in: Peter Zimmermann / Kay Hoffmann, eds., *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland*, Bd. 3: “Drittes Reich” (1933–1945) (Stuttgart 2005), 198–210.
- 46 Gottfried KINSKY-WEINFURTER, *Filmmusik als Instrument staatlicher Propaganda. Der Kultur- und Industriefilm im Dritten Reich und nach 1945* (Munich 1993), 52–61. In this monograph – a true exception to the general trend in the scholarship described above –, the author concentrates on three (Wien-Film) composers: Viktor Hruby, Erich Markaritzter and Paul Kont.
- 47 KRENN, *Kulturfilme*, 3.
- 48 FAA, WIFI, *Verträge Stab Berufsgruppe Komponisten* (WIFI-DO-1-2970), 3–6.
- 49 MOELLER, *Filmminister*, 350.
- 50 “All movies without a plot, that is *Kulturfilme*, documentary or advertising films, will be reviewed by the *Kammer*-(chair)members without employing any [external] auditors.” („Alle Filme ohne Spielhandlung, also Kulturfilme, dokumentarische Filme und Werbefilme, werden von Kammervorsitzenden ohne Zuziehung irgendwelcher Beisitzer geprüft.“ Hans Reich SCHRADE, *Pressemeldung*, in: *Presse-Dienst der Reichsfilmkammer* (12 January 1937) quoted here after: Joseph WULF, *Theater und Film im Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt am Main–Berlin 1983), 303.

production units, did exist, yielding generally in line with the cultural policies in the *Third Reich*, however, with the film composers allowing themselves more artistic freedom. Interpreting Eisele's education and career prior to his engagements as a film composer – first as a *Wunderkind* on the organ, later as a world touring musician and subsequently as a performer in the Viennese Busch-Cinema in Prater and Apollo-Cinema<sup>51</sup> – as well as his work exemplified in *Augen*, the composer clearly enjoyed the artistic freedom of a gig-based *Kulturfilm*-composer. However, from the estimated 150 works of music for the genre,<sup>52</sup> only a fraction can be identified through the sheet music as the majority of music material by the composer was not preserved. Eisele is remembered primarily for his work as a composer of light music as well as Wienerlied and most of his published works stem from this aspect of his career.<sup>53</sup> However, only one Eisele – Karl's elder brother Paul, an NSDAP-member and also a musician – was noted in Prieberg as active during the *Third Reich*.<sup>54</sup> Going back at his work as a film composer during this time, some of Karl Eisele's contracts with Wien-Film (the contract for *Augen* was not preserved) as well as listings of his work corroborate his engagement by the studio.<sup>55</sup> From these contracts and the surviving music and film material it can be deduced that Karl Eisele wrote music in *Kulturfilme* with Austrian (at the time *ostmärkischen*) and Viennese flair.<sup>56</sup> This task was not unique to him, but a part of “[...] an intended creation of the Wien-Film *Kulturfilm*-department following the Anschluss of the Danube and Alpine districts to the Reich”.<sup>57</sup> In the same year *Augen* was produced, Eisele was elected to the position of bandmaster of *Reichssender Wien*'s orchestra, quite possible the ensemble that performed his music for this and other *Kulturfilme*.<sup>58</sup> One of the rare insights in a Wien-Film *Kulturfilm*-composer's array of work and responsibilities in a production, read in a column about Eisele's colleague Karl Pauspertl [von Drachental],<sup>59</sup> can equally be applied to Eisele: “The background music in *Kulturfilme* is bestowed with a special role, perhaps more important than that [of music] in a

51 Emmerich ARLETH, *In einer blauen Mondnacht am Glacis* (Vienna 1967).

52 Ibid.

53 Cf. entries on the respective genres on Karl Eisele in: Siegfried LANG, *Almanach der Unterhaltungskomponisten des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna 1974) and Hans HAUENSTEIN, *Chronik des Wienerliedes* (Klosterneuburg 1976), 249.

54 Fred K. PRIEBERG, *Handbuch deutsche Musiker 1933–1945* (Kiel 2004), 1386.

55 For some of the contracts, cf. FAA, WIFI, Vertrag Nr. 13 Frühlingsbräuche in der deutschen Ostmark Karl Eisele (WIFI-DO-1-2377); Vertrag Nr. 14 Kulturfilm Carnuntum Karl Eisele (WIFI-DO-1-2459); Vertrag Nr. 17 Kulturfilm Komm zu uns Karl Eisele (WIFI-DO-1-2602); Vertrag Nr. 25 Kulturfilm Der Landtierarzt Karl Eisele (WIFI-DO-1-2610); Vertrag Nr. 27 Ein Tag in Schönbrunn Karl Eisele (WIFI-DO-1-2392).

56 Cf. the listing of *Kulturfilme* in: FAA, WIFI, Namensverzeichnis Eisele (WIFI-DO-1-4183).

57 “Nach dem Anschluss der Donau- und Alpengaue an das Reich wurde unter der zielbewusstesten Initiative [...] auch eine eigenen Kulturfilmproduktion in die Wege geleitet.“ FAA, WIFI, *Die Arbeit der Kulturfilmproduktion und die Spielfilmproduktion* (WIFI-DO-1-3713), 1–2. This was most likely a Wien-Film internal copy of a press-release, the second page mentions Karl Eisele as one of the composers of the “personnel from most successful *Kulturfilme*”.

58 N. N., Kapellmeister Karl Eisele, in: Radio Wien (11 January 1941), 5. From this point on, the bandleader/composer and his orchestra will be often featured in the *Reichssender Wien* radio programme, see for instance entries in: Radio Wien (22 February 1941), 9; Radio Wien (10 May 1941), 10.

59 Although quite different in their compositional language and approach, one can identify several parallels between Eisele and Pauspertl in their path to and engagements for the Wien-Film: Born a couple of years from each other, both composers followed the same course of education in Vienna, granting them “Prof.”-titles, as seen in the documents in Wien-Film estate. Furthermore, they focused primarily on *Kulturfilm*, establishing themselves as most prolific composers in this department (cf. the footnote above).

feature film.”<sup>60</sup> This statement applies especially well to *Augen*, as the entirety of the 14-minute *Kulturfilm* features music, from the Wien-Film fanfare music, composed by Willy Schmidt-Gentner for the studio, to the end titles. Indeed, and in line with the role and the intention of film music in *Kulturfilm*, the auditive layer in *Augen* presents an array of both unambiguous and ideologically supporting, but also diverging and perhaps even subversive sounds enclosed in an “educational” motion picture.

## Hearing *Augen* – Eyes as an Audiovisual Subject

Due to its relatively small core team and the fact that the production of *Augen* was embedded in the prolific Wien-Film studio, it is challenging that more data on this *Kulturfilm* were not identifiable beyond the sources listed above. One essential piece of information would have been the premiere of the movie and its pairing with the feature film *Wien 1910* (D 1943).<sup>61</sup> In a cinematic context, *Kulturfilme* were seldomly presented independently but were usually shown before a feature film and *Augen*, although produced in 1941, was first shown prior to E.W. Emo’s 1943 propagandistic biopic.<sup>62</sup> Featuring Rudolf Forster in the main role as the controversial Viennese mayor and protagonist of the movie Karl Lueger, *Wien 1910* was one of the rare overtly propagandistic features produced by Wien-Film.<sup>63</sup> This film project experienced multiple production difficulties and its postponement might have influenced the premiere of *Augen* as well.<sup>64</sup> Against this background one can only speculate on the reasons for pairing *Augen* with *Wien 1910*. A timeline and contextual correlation to the movies influencing these two motion picture features is evident and serves as a connection between this and the following part. One worthy exception in a general source desideratum is a convolute with the script – referenced extensively in the following analysis – as well as descriptions on film stills and the film itself for media purposes, with the latter part of the convolute used as a supplement for film distribution.<sup>65</sup> The plot changes between a medical and natural scientific narrative intended for educational purposes and employs comparatist and technical terminology and explanations in order to converge the inner workings of the eye.<sup>66</sup> While the film was aimed at the cinema

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60 „Der musikalischen Untermalung von Kulturfilmen fällt eine ganz besondere, ja, vielleicht noch wichtigere Aufgabe, als der des Spielfilms zu.“ FAA, WIFI, Vom Schaffen des Kulturfilmkomponisten (WIFI-DO-1-2821), 1. Similar to the archival record above, this also was most likely a Wien-Film internal copy of a press-release.

61 KRENN, *Kulturfilme*, 14.

62 Under a working title “Lueger”, the production of *Wien 1910* was announced already in 1940, cf. Boguslaw DREWNIAK, *Der deutsche Film 1938–1945. Ein Gesamtüberblick* (Düsseldorf 1987), 302.

63 For a comprehensive contextual and production history of the feature cf.: Gernot HEISS, „Wien 1910“ – Ein NS-Film zu Lueger und Schönerer, in: Heinrich Berger et al., eds., *Politische Gewalt und Machtausübung im 20. Jahrhundert. Zeitgeschichte, Zeitgeschehen und Kontroversen* (Vienna–Cologne–Weimar 2011), 153–166.

64 KRENN, *Kulturfilme*, 14. The author states 7 February 1943 as the performance date for *Augen* “as supporting program” to *Wien 1910*, however the latter premiered (in Berlin) on 26 August 1943. The Viennese premiere of the feature film has been subject to a debate and the date presented in this context (16 April 1943) has been contested, cf. HEISS, „Wien 1910“, 161.

65 FAA, WIFI, *Inhaltsangabe und Texte zum Kulturfilm Augen* (WIFI-DO-1-2885).

66 *Ibid.*, 1

audiences in an entertainment context of a leisurely night at the cinema, it can also be interpreted as having employed strategies in directing and film music that can be seen not just in an educational, but also a propagandistic manner. Lastly, even though this *Kulturfilm* states and clearly aims to present the topic in an educative, natural historical and even medical context, it nonetheless includes allegories and statements related to the – arguably fantastical – perceptions and comparisons of the eyes, such as those of animals and humans.<sup>67</sup>

Following the credits, one can easily notice the intended thought-provoking, but also ideologically laden introduction of this *Kulturfilm*. With the frame mimicking the blurriness of human vision and the opening of an eye, the audience is given the point of view of a newborn gazing at their mother. To this inventive technical camerawork, the narration and the film music invoke the dreamy primordial senses and urges of human beings: “To sense the light in the darkness – that is the beginning of seeing. Our gaze into the world is answered with that of our mother.”<sup>68</sup> The dreaminess is underlined by a solo violin and arpeggios in harp and high woodwinds, captivating both the eye and the ear of the beholder and from the very beginning, *Augen* brings up both the themes as well as audiovisual-stylistic means in line with other Wien-Film productions, for instance Gustav Ucicky’s *Mutterliebe* (D 1939).<sup>69</sup>

Image 1: *Augen* (D 1943), “Opening of the Eyes” from Cue I. Source: FAA, WIFI, transcribed from *Augen* source music material (WIFI-MM-1-0025), transcription by the author.

The investigative nature of the genre is underlined through various techniques experimented with in *Kulturfilm*, among them the utilization of animation being especially tantalizing both to the producers and the viewers alike.<sup>70</sup> *Augen* features two such sequences in order to depict the medical and technical attributes of the sensory organ. They were created by Bruno Wozak and Edith Matzalik, the latter working as a graphic designer and an architect before and after

67 Seen also in the literature, cf.: KINSKY-WEINFURTER, *Filmmusik*, 40–43. In this short (and purely visual) review of *Augen*, the author brings forth a comparison between the different species of animals and ‘contextually’ similar humans in their gaze, specifically “a soldier and a beast of prey” (43). However, between these two frames one can notice a caesura in music, as well as a mediation of both ‘serious’ and ‘light-hearted’ moods.

68 „In der Finsternis das Licht zu ahnen – das ist der Anfang des Sehens. Unserem Blick in die Welt antwortet der Blick der Mutter.“ FAA, WIFI, *Inhaltsangabe*, 2.

69 Exemplified in the scene “Restoring of Paul’s Eyesight”, cf. next part.

70 On this specific technique cf.: HOFFMANN, *Bilderwelten*, 190–194.

the Second World War.<sup>71</sup> The music in this sequence is divided between a jovial staccato melody in a solo clarinet supported by other woodwinds and a contrasting, but similarly breezy countertheme in the strings. Both instrument groups acoustically mimic the depicted plot of the narrative, a common compositional strategy at the time.



Image 2: *Augen* (D 1943) “Animation I, Countertheme” from Cue I. Source: FAA, WIFI, transcribed from *Augen* source music material (WIFI-MM-1-0025), transcription by the author.

The correlations on the audiovisual level indeed become abundant, and the more technical and serious the conveyed message becomes, the more ‘relaxed’ and diverged is the music from the actual plot. As with the previous examples, the music is intertwined with the narrative, however in this sequence it depicts the inner workings of an eye comparing it to a camera, specifically to one used in photography. For this auditive illustration, a recurring waltz melody in strings is heard on several occasions, often being paired to the visual theme of a lens, presented by an enticing introduction in the narration: “Why do we see? Let us take for example the modest replica of the eye, the camera.”<sup>72</sup> Later in the film, this relaxed approach can be interpreted as a tongue-in-cheek referencing and perhaps an attempt of irony, as the nocturnal animals, among them cats and owls, are accompanied by a foxtrot.



Image 3: *Augen* (D 1943) “Waltz-theme” from Cue II. Source: FAA, WIFI, transcribed from *Augen* source music material (WIFI-MM-1-0025), transcription by the author.

71 Although little information on her multifaceted careers exist, Matzalik was noted to have been working in the field already in the late 1920s, cf.: Markus KRAJEWSKI, Paper Parasite. F.M. Feldhaus and the Historiography of Technology, in: W. Boyd Rayward, ed., *European Modernism and the Information Society. Informing the Present, Understanding the Past* (London 2008), 295–306, here 301. Another of Matzalik’s contribution as an animator for the Wien-Film was noted in *Dein besseres Ich* (D 1942), a *Kulturfilm* also planned by Adi Mayer, however, its completion is contested, cf. KRENN, *Kulturfilme*, 24–25. Edith Matzalik’s record of activities for film exists in: Bundesarchiv Sammlung Berlin (=BArch) R 9361-V Sammlung Berlin Document Center (=BDC), Personenbezogene Unterlagen der Reichskulturkammer (R 9361 V), 111450.

72 „Wieso sehen wir? Nehmen wir einmal jene bescheidene Nachbildung des Auges, den Fotoapparat her!“ FAA, WIFI, Inhaltsangabe, 2.

Reflecting the directorial strategies, the film music in *Augen* attempts to reuse and combine some of the employed music elements introduced previously. In a sequence analysing the visual perception of a common fly, the audiovisuality is accompanied not only by a mini-plot – an attempted swatting of said fly, presented highly dramatically with the camera work – but also supplemented with a short-animated sequence of the fly’s vision. The inferiority of a human eye to that of an animal, even an insect is underlined: “The most perfect sensory organ, the human eye, is nonetheless imperfect; in some respects the animal eye is superior.”<sup>73</sup> Here, a chromatic movement that was already recognizable in the previous example (see Image 1), this time inverted, is added to the woodwinds for their respective solo-sections and accompanied by the now common tremolos in the strings.



Image 4: *Augen* (D 1943) “The Fly Sequence” from Cue IV. Source: FAA, WIFI, transcribed from *Augen* source music material (WIFI-MM-1-0025), transcription by the author.

From biological and technical explanations of the human eye, the narrative therefore segues into the animal world, exemplifying not just different species and their eyes, but also the manifold adaptations and significance of the sensory organ. For this part of the *Kulturfilm*, the film music is even more characteristically descriptive and uses primarily the auditive allusion as its medium of mediation, extending into the score’s instrumentalisation, for instance in the utilization of French horns for the depiction of a “free and brave” eagle’s gaze.<sup>74</sup> This alludes to the common audiovisual theme of a bird’s-eye-shot, one of the most common identifiers of the National-Socialist film production featured in a sequence prior to the description of an eagle and its gaze. Also, it introduces the emphasis of a veiled ideological narration of importance and the significance of said gaze.

73 „Das vollkommenste Sinnesorgan, das Menschaenge, ist eben auch noch unvollkommen; in mancher Hinsicht ist ihm das Tierauge ueberlegen.“ Ibid., 3.

74 „Frei und kuen ist der Blick des Adlers.“ Ibid.



Image 5: *Augen* (D 1943) “The Eagle Sequence” from Cue V. Source: FAA, WIFI, transcribed from *Augen* source music material (WIFI-MM-1-0025), transcription by the author.

This sequence in *Augen* and the subject matter of gaze significance might have been referencing to an earlier *Kulturfilm Augen und Augenausdruck der Tiere* (D 1933), however, due to inaccessibility of the filmic material, this parallel – and a general comparison of these motion pictures – remain subject of speculation.<sup>75</sup> Even when presented in a natural scientific framework, this kind of characterization is deemed problematic, however, when applied to humans – as the movie does in its closing sequence –, it opens an array of mediation in the historical and ideological context. On the audiovisual layer the music material is a recapitulation of the motifs and themes elaborated previously, leaving even more space for bringing the message across. The intended scientific and medical educational quality of *Augen* is therefore pushed into the background and the audiovisual narrative shifts away from the explanation of the perception to the perception of the perception. The *Kulturfilm* closes the sequence as well as the motion picture itself with perhaps the most melodramatic phrase in the movie: “All the wonders of the creation we see through our eye, itself the biggest marvel of the creation”.<sup>76</sup>

With an educational, but not overtly demanding narration, innovative camerawork, animated sequences and even with mini-plots imbued into the narrative, *Augen* exemplifies a *Kulturfilm* that catches the figurative and the literal eye. This quality would not have been possible without its music, which in this case, true to the statement from a column about music in the genre,<sup>77</sup> serves its purpose exactly as intended. From a historical perspective however, the year in which *Augen* was featured saw a contextual and a production shift, as seen in motion pictures produced around the time the *Kulturfilm* saw its premiere. Wien-Film’s *Kulturfilme* with a medical undertone – *Kinderkrankheiten* (D 1944), *Ehrenbürger der Nation* (D 1944) and *Der Wille zum Leben* (D 1944) – remain educational on the surface but tend to depict the more ‘acute’ topics compared to a more general and veiled ideologization of the topic in the production of *Augen*. Reflecting the described general trend to instrumentalize the genre for an even

75 The person behind this *Kulturfilm*, German director and producer Lola Kreutzberg, is mentioned as someone who was fusing the subject matters featuring wildlife and expeditions in exotic regions in her work already in the 1920s, cf. Kerstin STUTTERHEIM, Natur- und Tierfilme, in: Peter Zimmermann / Kay Hoffmann, eds., *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland*, Bd. 3: “Drittes Reich” (1933–1945) (Stuttgart 2005), 152–165, here 155.

76 “Alle Wunder der Schöpfung sehen wir durch unser Auge, das selber das größte Wunderwerk der Schöpfung ist“, *Ibid.*, 4.

77 Cf. footnotes 54 and 56.

stronger propagandistic purpose,<sup>78</sup> these *Kulturfilme* are largely more explicit in their mediation: For instance, *Ehrenbürger der Nation* (D 1944) and *Der Wille zum Leben* (D 1944), deal with (war) invalids and their life, with a strong focus on their recovery. Against this background, *Augen* signifies perhaps the only Wien-Film *Kulturfilm* (maybe even the only motion picture, as it will be shown in the next part) with a medical background that remains somewhat neutral in its mediation. However, even here the ideological veiling is evident. The context of its creation during Wien-Film's arguably most prolific and successful period brings *Augen* closer to feature films not only with medical, but also with propagandistic undertones and overtones.

### **Motherly Love and the Thousand-Year-Reich – Eyes as a Melodramatic Vehicle**

Although the visual motif of the eye is far from uncommon in National-Socialist cinema, or for that matter, cinema in general, a peculiar utilization of this object is evident from the very inception of the Wien-Film melodrama aesthetic. The latter genre is nearly synonymous to Gustav Ucicky and his filmmaking in this period, and the director's creative zenith coincides with the success of the studio.<sup>79</sup> Two out of four movies by the 'star-director' of Wien-Film in the years until 1941 feature the motif of the eyes. His first movie for Wien-Film, *Mutterliebe* (D 1939) employs elements of a medical melodrama, making the feature film a prototype of a niche subgenre in the German-speaking cinema. The fascination with the advancement of medicine, but also with the world of illnesses and addictions form the backdrop of a plot or the plot itself in these features. Movies like Ucicky's own Wien-Film motion picture *Der gebieterische Ruf* (D 1944) as well as in *Das letzte Rezept* (BRD 1951) and *Dr. Höll* (BRD 1951), melodramas directed by Rolf Hansen reflect this interest.<sup>80</sup> At the climax of *Mutterliebe*, one of the sons of the protagonist learns that his mother, played by Käthe Dorsch, has performed the ultimate sacrifice and has undergone a highly risky operation to give her son the cornea of her eye. Although the audiovisual production values of a prestige feature like *Mutterliebe* and a low-budget *Kulturfilm* are beyond comparison, it is obvious that the motifs of the eye and seeing are approached in a similar manner by the film music. Willy Schmidt-Gentner, the person behind the music in *Mutterliebe* and Ucicky's long-term collaborator, not only instrumentalizes and reinforces the already present visual representation of (heavenly) light in the hospital setting, but also utilizes the dramatic breaks in the music. As the character of Paul Pirlinger, played by Hans Holt, regains his vision, both the camera and the music shift to the point of view of the audiospectator in a manner similar to the blurriness depicted in *Augen* and its musical underpinning. Moreover, this is a moment in the score where Schmidt-Gentner introduces a choir in the sequence, reinforcing the ephemeral and transcendental nature of the scene. The allusion of a dream-like sequence and perceiving not only light, but a beloved mother in it, is underlined

78 Cf. footnote 30.

79 For a comprehensive analysis of his career in these years, cf.: BRECHT / LOACKER / STEINER, *Professionalist*, 281–385.

80 Further motion pictures with similar topics from the 1950s feature Wolfgang Glück's *Worüber man nicht spricht* (BRD 1958), Werner Klinger's *Arzt aus Leidenschaft* (BRD 1959), the latter a film adaptation of a homonymous book and thus a 'remake' of Hans H. Zerlett's motion picture (D 1936). Feature films like Konrad Wolf's *Genesung* (DDR 1956) and Frank Beyer's *Zwei Mütter* (DDR 1957) indicate the interest for the subject matter in East Germany as well.



with tremolos and arpeggios in the strings and complex intertwining of the brass winds and the choir. Ultimately, as the mother's and son's gazes meet, the main theme of the movie – the mother's musical motif – reemerges in the violins. The motif of vision, in this case, in a more figurative sense of seeing the unseen, will appear in another one of Ucicky's feature films, the infamous propaganda feature *Heimkehr* (D 1941). This feature film is an exception to all other motion pictures analyzed in this paper, as it does not contain any medical undertones but does employ the significant motif of the eye. The protagonist's blind father, the character of Dr. Thomas, lost his eyesight as a consequence of an attack by Polish youths, symbolizing one of many plights the German-speaking minority experienced in 1930s Poland.<sup>81</sup> Following their "*Last Minute's rescue*"<sup>82</sup> from near-certain death in the movie and the oppression in general through the invasion of Poland in 1939, the last two scenes are underlined through Dr. Thomas' narration of him 'seeing' the (enlarged) German Reich, their new and everlasting home. On the purely auditive plane, the scene resembles the previous example from *Mutterliebe* as the music accompanying Dr. Thomas' and Maria Thomas' narration swells to epic proportion and pauses only momentarily before the final scene of the movie, a triumphant homecoming.

## Conclusion

Both feature films (the production years for *Mutterliebe* and *Heimkehr* are 1939 and 1941 respectively) predate *Augen* (1943) in their production.<sup>83</sup> Although a contextual correlation can be established from a historical point of view, neither Wien-Film's internal documents nor the production teams working in these projects establish a connection between the motion pictures. Whether Ucicky's utilization of the eye-motif as a plot device turned the sensory organ into a subject matter in *Kulturfilm* is almost impossible to be determined. The director's impact on Wien-Film and its filmic projects – exuded indirectly through the critical acclaim of the feature films analysed<sup>84</sup> – might have been another reason for pairing *Augen* with the "politically important" *Wien 1910*.<sup>85</sup> Given the colouring of a 'purely educational' feature such as *Augen* or 'realistic', but nonetheless melodramatic portrayals of emotions and trepidations in Ucicky's feature films, the motif of the eyes has to be observed as transfigured from a plot device into a component of ideological mediation. Due to their diverging timelines as well as study (the "Eye Studies") and production (the motion pictures) contexts, a research-based connection between these two instances is possible to be established against the background of their reception. Analogous to the production parallels between the motion pictures, it is equally impossible to

81 Gerald TRIMMEL, *Heimkehr. Strategien eines nationalsozialistischen Films* (Vienna 1998), 127. Trimmel describes this character as someone whose insights stem from „[...] rational considerations. But not even he is spared from moments of doubt and requires the ideological affirmation of his daughter [Maria].“

82 BRECHT / LOACKER / STEINER, *Professionalist*, 356. Italics stem from the authors.

83 Ulrich J. KLAUS, *Deutsche Tonfilme – Jahrgang 1939*, Bd. 10 (Berlin 1999), 137 for *Mutterliebe* and *Deutsche Tonfilme – Jahrgang 1940/41*, Bd. 11 (Berlin 2000), 203 for *Heimkehr*.

84 Ibid. Both *Mutterliebe* („staatspolitisch und künstlerisch besonders wertvoll“) and *Heimkehr* („staatspolitisch und künstlerisch besonders wertvoll“, „jugendwert“) and the highest recognition for a film in the *Third Reich* – „*Film der Nation*“) were awarded high predicates.

85 KLAUS, *Deutsche Tonfilme – Jahrgang 1940/11*, 240.

conclude whether the elusive government authority ordering the “Eye Studies” or their perpetrators were ever aware of these movies. Their interest in the “scientific advancement”, resulting in some of the most gruesome acts in modern history of medicine, is presented as the pursuit of a “higher goal” and an investigation of the eye and its characteristics, existing as a stereotype even in the modern age. However, every act – scientific, social, or artistic – performed as a part of political service to a totalitarian state represents a reflection of the ideologically steered society and its interest. A seemingly objective medical matter like that of the eyes should therefore be perceived through the lens of the ideological mediation and the afterlife of these productions and studies follow us to this day.

### **Information on the author**

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