

## 6 'Neid, Leid, Tränen – das ist der Krieg'

### Gender and war films

Although male characters such as soldiers or marines dominated war films in numbers, female characters also played a substantial role. One need only think of the respective spouses of czar Nicholas II, in 1914. *DIE LETZTEN TAGE VOR DEM WELTBRAND*, of Karl in *WESTFRONT 1918* and of troop captain Von Arndt in *TANNENBERG*. Captain Liers's mother in *MORGENROT*, and the many lovers featured in nearly all war films either in the foreground or the background should not be forgotten. These characters often played a decisive role in the story. They represented not only the home front but also the female stereotype, that is, the pacifying, cherishing and romantic elements. These aspects were expected to make war films attractive to a female audience as well, for all these love stories and other matters of the heart were believed to appeal to them especially.

A sociological study carried out in 1914 proved that the percentage of women in an average film audience was remarkably high.<sup>1</sup> As the American film historian Patrice Petro remarked, there is little reason to assume that this had decreased in the course of ten years.<sup>2</sup> In view of the growing popularity of the cinema in the twenties and the more emancipated status of women after gaining the right to vote in 1919, it is not improbable that the number of women in the audience had actually increased. It was therefore commercially viable to create space for women in a film genre mostly associated with men. However, besides the possible role played by financial factors, directors could not hide the fact that women had actually been part of the realities of war. Besides representing the home front, in some films they also played a role at the war front as a Red Cross nurse or a soldier's lover. This meant the space that women could occupy was not limited to hearth and home. Nevertheless, only a small percentage of the films gave any attention to these 'front women'.

War films in which women played striking parts explored the limits of the 'genre'. Under the influence of the female aspect, the genre-specific characteristics change. When the female aspect is given a narrative position, such films become more 'melodramatic', the emotional and sentimental are brought into prominence. At the same time, it builds up tensions between the traditional, stereotypical poles of men/aggression/war and women/gentleness/peace. The question is not only how such tensions were given form in different war films, but also which solutions the narrative offered for reconciling these poles

in order to present the audience with a satisfying, psychologically motivated and coherent story. In short, how was femininity represented in some German war films? What functions did women have in the story? Also, what was the effect of war on men and women within the diegesis of the film?

Films with prominent roles for women included *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ* (1926), *DEUTSCHE FRAUEN – DEUTSCHE TREUE* (1928)<sup>3</sup>, *VOLK IN NOT* (1925), *ICH HATT'EINEN KAMERADEN* (1926) and *HEIMKEHR* (1928). The titles of the first two films already indicate that they are 'women films', in which the mother role is central. This is also true for *VOLK IN NOT*. Only in *DEUTSCHE FRAUEN – DEUTSCHE TREUE* do women also have the function of front nurses. In the latter two films, the home front, i.e. lovers and/or spouses, plays an important role. This is also true for a male-dominated film such as *WESTFRONT 1918*, which contrasts the front experience with life at the home front.<sup>4</sup>

Of the four above mentioned 'women films', only the last two have been preserved. The descriptions of the contents of the other films have been based on the programme brochures.<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, the emphasis will be on the content of the films. Critical reviews will be considered only indirectly because they hardly contain any comments on the gender aspect, as they focus primarily on dramaturgical aspects.

## *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ* **and** *DEUTSCHE FRAUEN – DEUTSCHE TREUE*

Only two out of the more than thirty First World War films have a title that explicitly refers to roles played by women in the war: *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ* and *DEUTSCHE FRAUEN – DEUTSCHE TREUE* (hereafter referred to as DFDT). An advertisement introducing *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ* as a 'typischer Frauenfilm' already indicated the audience targeted by the film.<sup>6</sup> In the case of DFDT, this was mainly pointed out in the reviews. Besides the mother role, these films had several other elements in common, such as widowhood and the national connotations in the titles of the films.

*DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ* belonged to the first group of Weimar films about the war, and premiered on 27 July 1926 in Munich. Perhaps the date was not coincidental, because it marked the beginning of the war twelve years earlier, within a day or so. The film premiered in Berlin one day later, at the Alhambra on the Kurfürstendamm as well as at a smaller venue, Schauburg. The film was produced by Emelka and directed by Geza von Bolvary.<sup>7</sup> This Hungarian-born director began his film career in Berlin in the first half of the twenties, achieving success mostly as a director of comedies. For *DAS*



DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ, which marked a new departure for the director, he used his experience as an officer in the First World War.<sup>8</sup> Incidentally, the film also marked the debut of Heinz Rühmann, who was later to become one of Germany's most successful actors. In this film, he played the role of Oskar, a criminal.<sup>9</sup> The role of the mother was played by Margarethe Kupfer, who had, until then, only been known for her roles in comedies. The story of the film begins before the war and ends in 1917.<sup>10</sup>

Frau Erdmann (Margarethe Kupfer), the key figure in the story of *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ*, is a widow and mother of five sons. The boys grow up to be model sons, except for one of them, and when the war breaks out, they all go to the front. The two older sons answer to an official call for duty, and two other sons report as volunteers. However, Oskar (Heinz Rühmann) is on the run because of a theft he has committed and, much to his mother's disappointment, shirks the war as a conscientious objector. After some time, he returns home but leaves again after a conflict with his mother. Eager for money, he accepts an assignment from a saboteur to blow up an ammunition depot. His mother, however, discovers the plans and attempts to foil them on the spot, at the dump site. Her attempt ends in a scuffle between mother and son. They are spotted by guards, who open fire. Oskar is injured and his mother dies. Meanwhile, two of her sons have been killed at the front. Despite all this, Frau Erdmann dies with a smile on her lips while, outside, marching soldiers are singing 'Deutsche Frauen – Deutsche Treue', so the last lines of the text in the *Illustrierte Film-Kurier* read.

There is nothing on the front page of the illustrated programme brochure that suggests the tragic content of the film or the dramatic end that is in store for the protagonist. Margarethe Kupfer is shown as a buxom mother figure with a look of endearment in her eyes and a roguish face. This probably has to do with the kind of women characters that Kupfer was associated with because of her earlier roles in comedies. However, reviews of the film also suggested that the film was very sentimental, and that the audiences reacted accordingly: 'Tränenbäche im Parkett, gedämpfte Erregung während der Vorführung, Schluchzen und Weinen.'<sup>11</sup>

DFDT was not without sentiment either. According to the reviewer of the *Reichsfilmbblatt*, 'das Manuskript' oozed 'von Gemüt', while a reviewer of the *Film-Kurier* wrote about the women in the audience after a screening: 'Sie werden zu Tränen gerührt; kein Taschentuch, das nicht in Bewegung käme.'<sup>12</sup> Not surprisingly, the fate suffered by Regine Vollrath, the mother character in DFDT, is just as sad as that of Frau Erdmann.<sup>13</sup> Although she does not die, she has lost both her best friend and her only son at the end of the film. The sheer complexity of the story requires a slightly more extensive summary.

Regine Vollrath (Hermine Sterler) is a widow and mother of a son, Günther (C.W. Meyer), a young officer engaged to Gisela (Helga Thomas). Regine Vollrath has dedicated her life to the memory of her husband and the well-being of her only son. During an officers' ball, she meets colonel Wolfram (Eugen Neufeld), who develops a great liking for her and also becomes friends with her son. When Günther runs into financial difficulties through no fault of his own and almost kills himself in desperation, the colonel comes to the rescue.

Regine does not know anything about this, and Günther has asked her son not to tell her anything. Then the war breaks out. Wolfram and Günther join the army, and Regine and Gisela, who have both trained as nurses, report for duty with the Red Cross. About one year goes by. Günther sees action at the frontlines while his mother works in a front hospital on French territory, where she and Gisela take care of the displaced French women and children, defying looks of intense hatred. Here, they meet madame Viard (Adele Sandrock) and her granddaughter Marcelle (Solveig Hedengran). Since Marcelle's mother was killed by the Germans, madame Viard has turned bitter. Meanwhile, at the front, the situation is getting worse. At one point, Günther saves Wolfram's life during a French attack. Günther himself, however, is seriously wounded, loosing both legs. Regine and Gisela hide their emotions, even when the colonel is brought in a little later. Regine then already knows, through a letter she found in Günther's uniform, what he did for her son. She expresses her gratitude and Wolfram dies thinking Regine will never forget him. A little while later, the French, led by madame Viard's son-in-law, enter the village. Upon hearing that his wife has died, Madame Viard's son-in-law is filled with hatred and prepares to remove the Germans from the hospital. At that moment, however, he learns what Regine has done for his family and sees the state that she is in now – fearing for the life of her only son. He allows her and Gisela to stay at Günther's bed. Outside the Marseillaise rings out, while, inside, Günther summons all his strength in a last attempt to sing 'Lieb Vaterland...'. The next morning, he is dead. As Madame Viard prepares to bring flowers, she learns of Günther's death. Both mothers have now gone through the same experience. Madame Viard brings the story to an end by saying that one has to learn to love the German women. This remark gives Regine the strength to carry on.

DFDT premiered on 2 February 1928. Like *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ*, the film was shown in Berlin's Schauburg. It was directed by Wolfgang Neff, the favourite director of Liddy Hegewald of (Hegewald-Film GmbH), who produced and distributed the film.<sup>14</sup> The screenplay had been written by Marie Luise Droop.<sup>15</sup> These three people had teamed up earlier to create the Tannenberg film *VOLK IN NOT*, which also starred Hermine Sterler. However, it was the actress playing the supporting role of madame Viard, Adele Sandrock, who received lavish praise from the press. In view of the contribution of women to the film, one might indeed call it a 'woman's film'. However, for a reviewer like Ernst Jäger of the *Film-Kurier*, this predicate did not have so much to do with the involvement of women, rather than the 'Appel ans Herz' characterising the film.<sup>16</sup>

## Motherhood and fatherland

Comparing the descriptions of the contents of *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ* and *DFDT*, we can say that the character of Regine is much more complex than that of Frau Erdmann. The latter only had the role of mother, as is already indicated by the title, with no less than five children. The fact that Regine Vollrath has only one son leaves 'room' for other roles, such as that of friend (of the colonel) and nurse. The roles of these two women can also be taken as symbols, the more so since the titles of the films suggest that they represent German mothers and women in general. A striking similarity between the two women is the fact that they are both widows, as are the mother characters in *VOLK IN NOT*, *ICH HATT'EINEN KAMERADEN*, *MORGENROT*, *WESTFRONT 1918* and *SOMME*. This means that the women are free to devote themselves to their children, and indirectly, through them, to the fatherland. Although the women in all the films are basically free to start new relationships, none of them do. Widowhood seems primarily a 'function' to increase the characters' availability for family and fatherland. In a sense, they are married to the army, with which they share the responsibility for the children. The opposite is true for the men, who are supported by a woman (mother/wife/lover) in most cases. More about this, however, at a later stage.

Besides their status as widow, motherhood also appears to be an impediment to start new relationships for these women characters. This is certainly true of Frau Erdmann in *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ*, who is always referred to as 'die Mutter' in the programme text. But the same applies to Regine Vollrath, who is simply called by her first name. After all, being still relatively young, she is able to inspire the love of a man, the colonel. However, this relationship is not consummated. It remains an entirely platonic and one-sided affair. Nowhere does the text of the *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* suggest that she requites his love, as she does his friendship. This only stimulates the colonel's noble feelings, of course. As the very image of true-heartedness that endures beyond death, Regine represents the ideal German woman. The *Film-Kurier* agreed when it wrote about the actress Hermine Sterler (Regine): 'Man könnte mit ihr wirklich – eine deutsche Frau filmen.'<sup>17</sup> Several years earlier, *Lichtbildbühne* had written the same about her with reference to her role in *VOLK IN NOT* (1925).<sup>18</sup> *DFDT* was advertised with the following words: 'Ein Denkmal für unseren Frauen! (...) Der Film zeigt in ergreifender Darstellung den wahren OPFERMUT unserer Frauen!'<sup>19</sup>

The relative versatility of the female main character goes beyond the relationships she has with the male characters. There is also a certain bond between the women. This is not only indicated by the photograph on the front page of the *Illustrierter Film-Kurier*, but also by the story itself. Regine and

Gisela are not only in the same position because their respective son and fiancé have left to go and fight at the front, they also share the experience of women who work at the front: 'Auf ihren [Regine, BK] Gängen ist Gisela stets ihre treue Begleiterin.'<sup>20</sup> As front-line nurses, they have the legitimate opportunity to leave hearth and home to partake in the war experience. Also, the front nurse was able to acquire the status of heroine as 'Kameradin des Mannes'.<sup>21</sup> As we stated earlier, the fact that Regine has only one son and that Gisela has no children at all makes them suitable for the role of nurse, soldiers' mother, and mother of the fatherland. Motherhood was thus elevated to a higher, national, level, in a different way than was the case with Frau Erdmann, but with the same symbolic implications.

In his study of gender representations in Freikorps literature, Klaus Theweleit remarks that mothers, nurses and women from higher social classes have an unassailable status, especially when they are combined in only one character, as is the case with Regine Vollrath. According to the psycho-analytical framework Theweleit uses to analyse the representations, she is the one that does not castrate but protects.<sup>22</sup> In fact, she is 'sexless', which means that a love-relationship is out of the question. Although Regine is still young and has only one child, and even though a respectable marriage candidate is within reach, she remains faithful to her dead husband. These facts of life enable her to make an effort on behalf of the fatherland. By joining the Red Cross, she crosses national borders, for she also nurses French wounded. Not only is the Red Cross an international organisation, the apotheosis of the film story also shows us, on a more personal level, how Madame Viard and Regine Vollrath reach out to shake hands, reconciling across national borders. In addition, Viard's words give Regine the strength to carry on. The last lines of the programme text give us the following lesson:

Sie haben ja alle das gleiche Leid erlebt, ob es nun Franzosen oder Deutsche sind. 'Man muss euch lieben lernen ihr deutschen Frauen', sagt Frau Viard, und aus diesen Worten gewinnt Regine Kraft zum weiterleben.<sup>23</sup>

In this respect, the film betrays a certain ambivalence. While promotional texts for the film speak of a monument for German women, in the end the film itself transcends nationalist sentiments. This ambivalence was also noticed by a critic writing for the catholic *Germania*:

Frauen und ihre Treue spielen zwar eine Rolle, wieso aber deutsche Frauen und deutsche Treue? Im Mittelpunkt stehen zwei deutsche Krankenschwestern, die gut machen, was Männerhände zerstörten. An den anderen Fronten leisteten aber französische, englische Frauen dasselbe.<sup>24</sup>



The reasons for this ambivalence may have been both politically strategic and commercial. Politically strategic, because Germany, being involved in the Versailles negotiations, could hardly afford to offend the allies, even where cultural practice was concerned.<sup>25</sup> This is also one of the reasons why we rarely, if ever, find any negative stereotypes of the former enemy in German war films. It had to do with the commercial interests. Films that were antagonistic towards foreigners were unsuitable for export. This did not mean, however, that all German films were exported, but both sides kept a watchful eye on each other's 'activities', for example through foreign correspondents. This is shown by the reactions from German critics abroad who reported about Germany-unfriendly films shown there. Apparently, a compromise was chosen to satisfy a certain part of the German cinema audiences. The myth of German heroism is left intact without having to show the enemy in a bad light.

## **Suffering and love in other war films**

An extreme picture of reconciliation, this time between the Germans and the Russians, is painted in *VOLK IN NOT*, a film by the Neff-Droop-Hegewald trio. Nowhere is the aspect of reconciliation as prominent as in this film, a fact that is due to the female protagonist. The film premiered in December 1925, which makes it the earliest war film of the Weimar period with the exception of *NAMENLOSE HELDEN*. Incidentally, both films are lost. As indicated by the title, *VOLK IN NOT*, with the subtitle 'Das Heldenlied von Tannenberg', is focused on the battle for East Prussia and the ultimate German victory.

The central figure in the film is Frau Elisabeth (Hermine Sterler), widow and mother of Horst (Werner Pittschau), who is a lancer, a so-called Ulaan, in the German army. Together with Herta (Claire Rommer), who is living with them, mother and son manage an East Prussian estate. Herta and Horst are in love. They look forward to the coming war with great confidence in the German army. It goes without saying that Horst is drafted for active service, his mother and Herta refuse to flee, as they are determined to defend the estate. At first, the Russian army appears to be winning, and Horst also gets the worst of it when he gets seriously wounded. He is saved by a comrade, who brings him back to the estate. At the same moment, the Russian general, Samsonoff (Eduard von Winterstein), impounds the farm and prepares to settle in. Frau Elisabeth manages to keep her son hidden, persuading the humane Samsonoff to make his doctor (Carl Becker-Sachs) available to her son (she tells Samsonoff that it is her sick daughter). When the lie is discovered and she is confronted by one of Samsonoff's loyal officers, a Russian with one German parent (G.A.



Semmler), the woman threatens to shoot herself through the heart. The weapon is discharged in the ensuing scuffle and she is hit. The Russian officer generously declares he will not report the incident, if the son promises not to leave the estate. The fortunes of war then shift in favour of the Germans. Samsonoff's generous officer is brought to the estate, seriously wounded. When Frau Elisabeth bends over him to have a look at his wounds, he whispers: 'Du – deutsche Frau!' and dies. She cannot hold herself back from putting flowers at his grave. Here, she also meets Samsonoff, who is now dressed as a refugee. Several days later, his body is found. He has shot himself to avoid having to live through the defeat. A grave is dug for him, too, with a cross bearing the words: 'Hier ruht in Gott ein unbekannter russischer Soldat.'<sup>26</sup>

It is remarkable that, in contrast to other war films in which women played an important role, the fate of women seemed a little less tragic in this film. Even though Frau Elisabeth is worried about her son, comes to his rescue, and mourns the death of the Russian officer, she does not lose any relatives or her own life (she does, however, get wounded). The drama concentrates mainly on the personal relationships developing between the Russians and the Germans. According to the critics, the Russian officer's death scene was the dramatic climax of the film. Apart from that, the film does not appear to have been terribly sentimental. In connection with the death scene, a *Lichtbildbühne* critic writes about the part played by Hermine Sterler:

Sie war ganz die deutsche Frau, wie wir sie uns vorstellen, in jener Mischung von mütterlicher Liebe, Aufopferungskraft, Härte, Kühle und ihrer Fähigkeit, dennoch ganz tief im Herzen eine leidenschaftliche Liebe zu empfinden.<sup>27</sup>

Not surprisingly, Sterler was generally praised for her role, as was Claire Rommer.

Despite the somewhat milder treatment of the mother figure in *VOLK IN NOT*, and despite the connotations of pacifism, the German mother characters in German war films are characterized by one specific feature: suffering. It is a suffering that is not alleviated by anyone or anything, nor rewarded with medals. This was apparently the highest aim women could achieve in wartime, an aim for which they were admired very much.<sup>28</sup> As early as 1917, Marie Wehner wrote at the end of her *Kriegstagebuch einer Mutter*: 'Gegen aussen der Stolz auf die Heldensöhne, im Herzen die nie verlöschende Trauer um die Verlorenen.'<sup>29</sup> This was not only true for the Erdmann and Vollrath characters, but also for the mother figures in *ICH HATT' EINEN KAMERADEN*, *SOMME* and *MORGENROT*. For example, *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ* not only had the subtitle 'Die für die Heimat bluten',<sup>30</sup> but it was also given the following motto in an advertisement:

Nie war ein Herz der grössten Liebe werter  
 Als dies, das alle sieben Schwerter  
 Des Schmerzes trug...<sup>31</sup>

The suffering of these characters was shown emphatically in these films. Even the face of the powerful and generally respected Frau Liers in *MORGENROT* betrayed intense grief when she was talking about the sons whom she had lost earlier. It is no wonder that she is always dressed in mourning clothes. In short, tragedy was part and parcel of these films.

Though qualities such as the willingness to sacrifice oneself, care and courage were praised, critics generally failed to appreciate the grief or sentiment that was displayed in these films. Not surprisingly, *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ* and *DFDT* did not receive positive reviews only. A critic writing for the *Berliner Tageblatt* summarized the tendency in *DFDT* as follows: 'Neid, Leid Tränen – das ist der Krieg'. He also found that the film did not surpass the level of the *Gartenlaube*.<sup>32</sup> The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote: 'Die Tendenz schwankte zwischen pathetischer Vaterlandsliebe und weinerlichem Pazifismus.'<sup>33</sup> Though specialist publications did not show much enthusiasm either, the *Lichtbildbühne* made an effort to defend the film by pointing out that there was no happy end, which meant that the film had managed to retain its seriousness. Interestingly, the review posits that the film apparently satisfied a certain need with the audience.<sup>34</sup> The reviews indicate that *DFDT* went even further than *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ* where sentimentality was concerned.

In those days, a happy ending was one of the characteristics of the average Hollywood film from which the German film industry tried to distinguish itself. For example, promotional texts and features emphasised that German films were more realistic and less superficial. At the same time when *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ* and *DFDT* were playing in the cinemas, a number of American films went into circulation as well. Some of these had been released earlier. It need not surprise us, therefore, that a number of reviews of these 'women's films' refer to certain American films. Even though the hundreds of American films that flooded the market every year were not valued any higher than national productions, and although US productions were generally approached with some scepticism, a number of critics found that these American films made a much better impression than their German counterparts.<sup>35</sup> For example, *DAS DEUTSCHE MUTTERHERZ* was compared to *SOMEBODY'S MOTHER*, in which the lead role was played by the popular Mary Carr, as well as to *THE DARK ANGEL*.<sup>36</sup> The German film lost to the American movie. Similarly, *DFDT* was no match for *THE BIG PARADE* (1925), a film that was received very well when it had been released in the German cinemas one year earlier.<sup>37</sup> Incidentally, there was not much reason to compare this film with *DFDT*. *THE*

big PARADE was an American front film that contained quite a bit of humour and whose main characters were mostly men. While this film had a happy ending, it was considered less sentimental than DFDT.

It did not happen very often that there were no female characters at all in a war film. The only film to feature no women at all may possibly have been DOUAUMONT<sup>38</sup>, while DIE ANDERE SEITE had only a fleeting reference to a woman, Dennis's fiancée, Raleigh's sister, without her appearing on camera at all. Thus, male characters were rarely, if ever, without a wife, lover or mother. In those cases where a 'woman behind the man' was lacking, things usually ended badly for the character involved. We have already seen this with Fips and Petersen in MORGENROT, captain Barnow in DIE VERSUNKENE FLOTTE, the two German brothers in U9 WEDDIGEN, the young U-boat rescuer in DREI TAGE AUF LEBEN UND TOD and Karl in WESTFRONT 1918. In these cases, the absence of a woman could also mean that the man had been rejected as in (WESTFRONT 1918). Whatever the case may be, the absence of a woman often caused men to behave so recklessly, or, translated into the terms of war, courageously, that they lost their lives.

Rejection by a woman often meant that there was a third party involved. This third person more often than not was a good friend or acquaintance of the deceived man. The theme of rivalry often crops up in war films. Images of life at the front may reinforce the myth of comradeship, as soon as the home front comes into view, the men are mainly rivals. After all, there are hardly any women at the front, but plenty at home. This contrast between the comradeship of the 'Männerbund' at the front and rivalry points up a certain measure of betrayal. Paul Monaco remarked that the theme of betrayal is the main feature of German popular films in the nineteen twenties.<sup>39</sup> The explanation offered by Monaco is very interesting. Although his method of analysis is debatable – partly following Kracauer, he takes as his starting point that the films are dreamlike reflections of the national, collective mentality, and that one should therefore analyse them as one would analyse dreams<sup>40</sup> – it is interesting that he explains the theme of betrayal from Germany's traumatic defeat in 1918.<sup>41</sup> The question is not whether or not this interpretation is correct, but what this theme means for the female characters in the films concerned. They do not appear in a very favourable light, that much is clear. The choice of a woman for another man robs men of their traditional predisposition towards power and control. The strength of this feeling of powerlessness is indicated by the subsequent fatalism and destructiveness of the rejected man's behaviour. Based on Monaco's interpretation, these men, 'robbed' of their power, represent the once all-powerful German empire.

Nowhere is this fatalism and destruction given a more prominent expression than in the navy films mentioned earlier and in *WESTFRONT 1918*. Especially in the latter film, this aspect is given much attention and, on top of that, the destructive element is not limited to the male character himself. Karl considers the behaviour of his wife, who beds the butcher's boy in exchange for a piece of meat, unforgivable.<sup>42</sup> He expresses his anger and disappointment by enveloping himself in bitter silence, which drives his wife to despair. Although she explains how harsh life at the home front is, he perseveres with his aloofness. Most critics were horrified by this scene, though not so much because of Karl's unreasonable attitude. Their dismay appears to have been caused by the female element in the film, represented by the emotional, sentimental or melodramatic aspects which none of them were able to appreciate. Critics were wont to vent their disapproval if war films contained some sentiment or drama.

Reactions to the adultery scene varied. The *Reichsfilmblatt* was the only periodical to remark that adultery was a widely spread phenomenon in those days, and that Karl's attitude deserved some understanding. Surprisingly enough, considering the reviews in right-wing newspapers, this critic received support from an unexpected ally. The *Völkischer Beobachter* found the scene 'seelisch richtig', while it mainly stressed Karl's desire to return to the front.<sup>43</sup> The *Kreuz-Zeitung* opined:

Es wäre besser, wenn man schweigt über das, was dabei gezeigt wird. Männlich jedenfalls benimmt sich der Soldat in dieser Situation nicht, wenn er resigniert zu dem Schluss kommt, das seine Frau auch nur ein Opfer des Krieges sei.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, the critic writing for the catholic *Germania* believed that Karl at least punished his wife with 'feldgrauer Gefühlskälte'.<sup>45</sup> Finally, the conservative *Kinematograph* said it was a sequence which was 'nicht ein typisches Bild aus jenen Tagen'.<sup>46</sup> In short, the reactions in the press may be called somewhat ambivalent. One critic excuses Karl by referring to the effects which the war could have on people, while another considers Karl's attitude hard-hearted and the manly thing to do. Generally speaking, however, this sequence was not judged in terms of the actions taken by the characters, but in terms of the dramaturgy used to represent this episode of the film. It is not improbable that reviewers simply found the female element incompatible with the atmosphere of manliness that pervaded the film. The stage-like, domestic and emotional were no match for the 'Realistik' of the front scenes.

Yet Pabst does not exactly take up a position against the female character. This is not only indicated by the reconciliation scene at the end of the film – Karl admits that not just she but everyone involved bears some guilt for the situation – but also by the fact that Pabst has given a much milder interpretation

of the role played by women than Ernst Johannsen in the book that was the basis for the film. The book is soaking with misogyny. While the scenes in which the man (who is called Lornsen in the book) catches his wife are nearly identical in book and film, the continuation in the book is much more humiliating for the woman than it is in the film. In the book, Lornsen tells his comrades at the front what has happened during his leave:

'She did not know what to make of all this. She begged for forgiveness every day. As soon as she kept her mouth shut, I started talking again about indifferent things, as if she had said nothing at all.' 'Angry revenge', Müller remarked. Lornsen nodded. 'On the last day, she came up to me, crawling on her knees. I nearly forgot my role. I talked about my departure, as if she wasn't there before me on the floor. When I offered her my hand afterwards, she pretended to faint. Well, and after that, I wrote, and she wrote back, and there was the same thing in every one of her letters: "Please talk to me about it, forgive me, listen to my story". – I won't do it. And now it's your turn, isn't it?' <sup>47</sup>

One of the reactions to his account comes from the Student (who is much less sympathetic in the book than he is in the film):

'If we allow ourselves something, this does not mean that we allow the woman the same thing. (...) The wife and mother belongs in the home, not in parliament, not in the professor's chair. The prerogative of the woman is the vast province of the child, all other things will be left out of consideration.' (...) Lornsen: 'Whatever poets and writers have to say about this issue, in their novels and histories, men allow themselves to be deceived by women as if they were idiots, every silly goose who reads all this nonsense must think that she is worth quite a lot.'<sup>48</sup>

Compared to this text, Pabst's interpretation can only be called mild. The male protagonists in the book unequivocally settle the score with any female character that dares to transgress the boundaries of the domain she has been assigned to.

In connection with Johannsen's book, Michael Gollbach has made a legitimate remark about the antagonism between the war front (men) and the home front (women): 'Aufgrund der Gemeinsamkeit des soldatischen Schicksals verläuft für Johannsen die eigentliche Front nicht zwischen den feindlichen Armeen, sondern zwischen Front und Heimat.' Despite Pabst's milder interpretation, some of this could be found in the film as well. The lack of understanding between the front and the home front also appears when Karl returns from the front and arrives in his home town. The absence of any real knowledge about the front on the part of ordinary citizens is revealed when a stout man, the stereotypical German 'Spiessbürger', asks Karl: 'Wann seid ihr denn nun endlich in Paris?' This question implies a certain measure of impatience

and lack of insight in the real, stagnated situation at the front. After all, we are already in the last stage of the war. The same faulty communication can also be observed in *ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT*, which features a group of regulars discussing the best strategy to defeat the French.

After that, in *WESTFRONT 1918*, we see the effect of war in the form of food shortages. Long lines of women (among whom Karl's mother), children and old men – those who simply could not be sent to the front – queuing for a butcher's shop. Escorted by a police officer, the people are waiting for their turn, which may not be for hours. Once having made some advance in the queue, one does not relinquish one's place, even if a son (Karl) comes home after eighteen months. Besides, the people in the queue are giving no quarter, not even when a sobbing woman, who has just learnt that her son has fallen, tries to get hold of a place in front of the queue. Grief has become a general state of affairs, it is no longer any reason for privileges.

Just as the devastated landscape between the trenches belongs to the fixed idiom of images of films about the First World War, so does the representation of the home front usually involve images of people queuing for food. In nearly the same way can such a scene by Pabst be found in the earlier *WELTKRIEG* film. This scene also has people queuing, escorted by a police officer, and also features a woman trying to jump the queue. Incidentally, *DER WELTKRIEG* and *NIEMANDSLAND* were the only films presenting a realistic picture of the fate many women suffered during the war, namely, being integrated in the labour process. Both films have images of women working in a factory, their labour participation means working in the war and arms industry. The first part of *DER WELTKRIEG* also shows images of the famine at the home front. A *Germania* critic wrote about the emotions evoked by these images by contrasting the hungry women with the audience, who had apparently dressed up for a night out to the cinema:

Als das Leiden der deutschen Frau gezeigt wurde, als man die armen Weiber sah, wie sie Munition fabrizierten oder wie sie den letzten Happen Brot an ihre hungrigen Kinder verteilten, denn gerieten diese Hemdbrüste und Rücken-dekolletés in jubelnde Begeisterung. Das wirkt peinlich.<sup>49</sup>

## Companionship and betrayal: *ICH HATT' EINEN KAMERADEN*

One film in which a complex of male-female relationships is worked out, which features a variety of female roles, and in which motives, rivalry and comradeship play important roles, is *ICH HATT' EINEN KAMERADEN* (1926). The

film was shot entirely in the studio (with the exception of the closing image) and does not contain any archive footage.

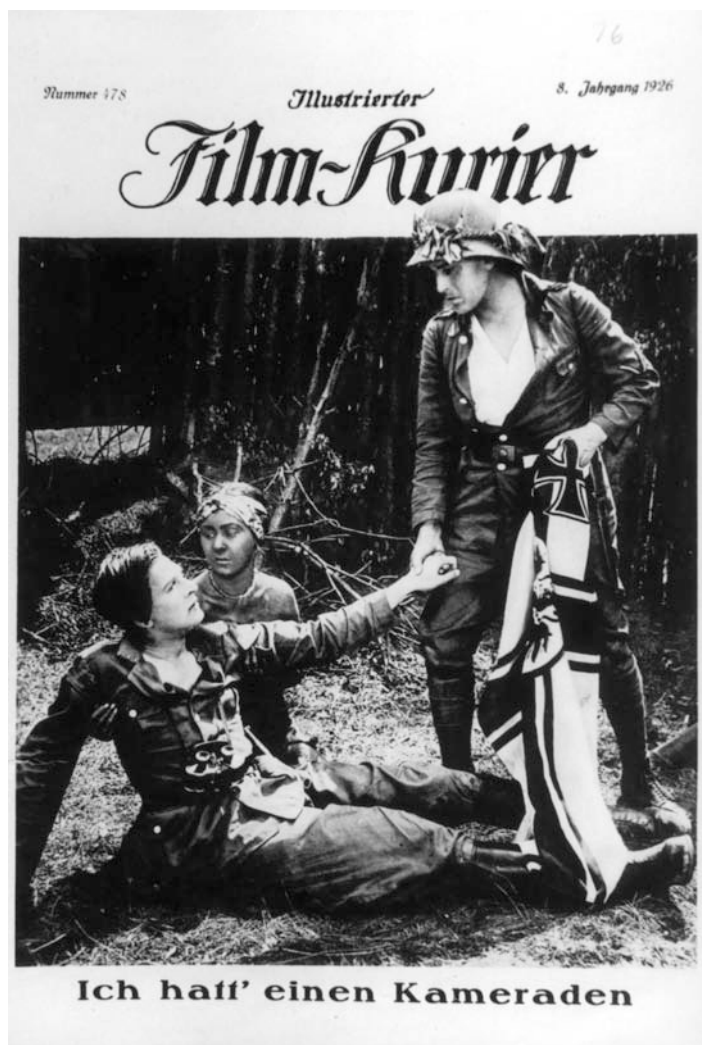
In *ICH HATT' EINEN KAMERADEN*, a variant of the theme of rivalry is the central dramatic issue, one that also occurs in films such as *FELDGRAU* (1926) and *HEIMKEHR* (1929). This time, the story does not involve two men 'fighting' for the same woman, but two friends, one of whom is in love with the lover or wife of the other. This makes the betrayal motif stronger than in those films discussed earlier.

Ich hatt einen Kameraden,  
einen bessern findst du nit.  
Die Trommel schlug zum Streite,  
er ging an meiner Seite in gleichem Schritt und Tritt,  
in gleichem Schritt und Tritt.  
Eine Kugel kam geflogen:  
Gilt sie mir gilt sie dir?  
Ihn hat es weggerissen,  
er liegt für meinen Füßen,  
als wärs ein Stück von mir.  
Will mir die Hand noch reichen,  
derweil ich eben lad'  
Kann dir die Hand nicht geben,  
bleib du im ew'gen Leben mein guter Kamerad!<sup>50</sup>

This old song by Ludwig Uhland, which can still be heard at funeral services in Germany, was the motto for the film with the same name. *ICH HATT' EINEN KAMERADEN*, directed by Konrad Wiene, premiered in Berlin on 20 January 1926.<sup>51</sup> To mark the colonial film locations, palms had been positioned near the entrance to the cinema, while the theatre itself had been decked out in all kinds of exotic ornaments. The screening was accompanied by nationalist marching music.<sup>52</sup> *ICH HATT' EINEN KAMERADEN* was the first motion picture about the war at the colonial front in Africa.

The story focuses on two young officers, who are also friends: Jürgen (Olaf Fjord) and Hellmuth (Carl de Vogt). The former is the very image of correctness: he is engaged, held in high esteem as an officer, and he still lives with his old, blind mother (Frida Richard), who is also a widow. The latter of the two men, however, has some obvious flaws: he apparently has no family and he has become addicted to playing card games, which forces him to retire from the army. Also, he falls in love with the wrong woman, Jürgen's fiancée, Maria (Grete Reinwald). She does not requite his love but because of an unfortunate misunderstanding Hellmuth is given hope, which he does not tell to his friend Jürgen. The misunderstanding involves a flower he receives when he leaves





for Africa. It was not sent by Maria, as he seems to think, but by her sister Hilde (Iwa Wanja) who is actually in love with him. However, he does not have any eyes for her yet. Hellmuth receives permission from the regimental commander to accompany Jürgen to Africa, where he will be given the chance to reinstate himself and earn back his military rank. Just before the men leave, Jürgen's loving mother adopts the 'black sheep' as a kind of foster son. The two sisters move in with the old woman to take care of her while Jürgen and Hellmuth are away.

After this first part of the film, in which the main characters and their relationships have been introduced, the scene moves to eastern Africa. Jürgen and

Hellmuth have been stationed in a small village, where they work with the indigenous people. Soon, the African girl Fatuma (Andja Zimowa) starts to feel attracted to Jürgen. He does not encourage her remaining friendly yet aloof. At that moment war breaks out and the two friends are ordered to secure a position in the jungle. On their way through the jungle, Fatuma saves Jürgen's life by warning Hellmuth that his friend is about to be killed by Mkalimoyo, a man who belongs to Fatuma's tribe yet refuses to bow to the white men. Mkalimoyo is then literally thrown before the crocodiles. Fatuma also proves a brave ally in war. When Jürgen is hit by a bullet, Hellmuth has to leave him to the care of Fatuma because he is the only one left to save the German flag. This also means that he honours Jürgen's (seeming) last wish. However, when Fatuma is sadly crouched over Jürgen's body she is shot. Meanwhile, peace has been restored, and after many trials and tribulations, Hellmuth finally reaches his Heimat, where he is welcomed by his foster family. He now discovers who gave him the rose and this finally awakens his love for Hilde. Maria and Hilde have, meanwhile, received notice of Jürgen's death but they have decided to keep this sad news from his ailing mother. However, Jürgen is not dead but turns out to be lying in hospital suffering from memory loss. When a nurse (Grete Pabst) reads to him from the bible, the name Maria triggers his memory. Meanwhile, as Hilde and Maria prepare to tell his mother that her son is dead, Jürgen suddenly comes home. Hellmuth then asks Hilde if she wants to join him to go to the colonies and the film ends with images of Hilde and Hellmuth on the deck of a ship taking them to Africa.

ICH HATT' EINEN KAMERADEN illustrates and confirms, often in a literal sense, a number of issues discussed earlier. As far as the fatalism is concerned, Hellmuth throws away his life and quite literally blames this to the fact that he does not have 'a woman behind him'. When he is making his advances towards Maria he tells her: 'Ich bin ein einsamer Mensch, haltlos, unnütz – aber ich könnte noch etwas Ganzes werden, wenn eine Frau mir haltgeben wollt.'<sup>53</sup> However, when he finds out that Jürgen and Maria are engaged, and after he has been thrown out of the army for gambling, his world seriously collapses. When Jürgen invites him to visit him at home, Hellmuth pours out his soul to his friend's mother: 'Wenn ich eine Mutter hätte, wäre es mit mir nicht so weit gekommen!'<sup>54</sup> He then kisses the old woman's hand, which is meant to suggest that she 'adopts' him. Before he leaves for Africa, he tells her: 'Gnädige Frau, ich durfte sie Mutter nennen, als ich vor dem Abgrund stand – das hat mich gerettet!'<sup>55</sup> From that moment on, things are looking up for Hellmuth, and he manages to find a new purpose in life. With a 'mother' as a form of basic security, he also manages to prevail gloriously in the 'tests of manhood' that are in store for him in the African jungle. Despite this, he remains without a lover,

which means he is a potential candidate for actions of self-sacrifice. Indeed, when Jürgen is ordered to defend an outpost in Africa, Hellmuth tells him: 'Du darfst Dich nicht opfern – du hast eine Mutter, eine Braut...!'<sup>56</sup> However, Jürgen has made up his mind, so Hellmuth can only offer to accompany him.

The motif of rivalry is present in the film, but it is hardly made manifest. Only once in Africa does Hellmuth take out the rose with a look of love in his eyes, but he guiltily puts it away when Jürgen approaches. However, once he has returned home, there is nothing to suggest that he wants to take Jürgen's place with Maria. The film does not provide an answer to the question how and when the change, from Maria to Hilde, has occurred in Hellmuth. This narrative route, which is necessary because Jürgen will return, enhances the honourable character of both Hellmuth and Maria. In this way, the film also does right by its title. The friends' first loyalty is to each other, both at the front and at home.<sup>57</sup>

The mother is a widow, as are most mothers in war films. In order to limit the home front to one location, the three women – mother, Hilde and Maria – have been put together. The two young women take care of the old lady motivated by her blindness, which means she would have been lost without her son. In contrast to the mother figures discussed earlier, this woman is not strong and independent like Frau Liers or Regine Vollrath. She is helpless, weak and naive, blinded after the death of her husband. This suggests that she would possibly be unable to survive the death of her son.<sup>58</sup> Her main function in the narrative appears to be to keep Hellmuth from behaving in a destructive way.

Together with the two other women, the mother represents the home front. This home front has been localised in one place, the house of Jürgen's mother, the living room, more particularly. The interior tells us that we are dealing with middle-class people who do not suffer from poverty. There is no lack of food, nor is there any need to go out working. Realistic footage of people queuing before half-empty shops are lacking in this film.<sup>59</sup> The women spend their time doing needlework, drinking tea and waiting for news from the front. In this film, heroism is restricted to the male characters – the women are mainly passive – except for one, the African girl, Fatuma.

The passivity of the women at home is contrasted by the active support Hellmuth and Jürgen receive from Fatuma. She is part of the black community in a part of eastern Africa that has been colonised by the Germans. The role played by Fatuma, who is not unimportant in the film, cannot be seen apart from its contemporary colonial context. Besides Fatuma, there is one other indigenous character in the film. He does not have a name in the film, but on the cast list in the *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* he is referred to as Mkalimoyo.<sup>60</sup> The two characters contrast strongly: Fatuma represents the 'good' native, Mkalimoyo

the 'bad'. This means that Fatuma devotes herself to the German cause, in keeping with her sex, for personal rather than for political reasons, and that Mkalimoyo offers resistance to the Germans, also in keeping with his sex, for political reasons. Fatuma obliges Jürgen in almost everything: 'Lass mich deine Dienerin sein!'<sup>61</sup> – and not only Jürgen. Without her, the two soldiers would not have survived. Mkalimoyo, on the other hand, represents anti-colonial resistance. He warns Fatuma, whom he considers to be collaborating with the German enemy: 'Hat Fatuma vergessen, dass sie die Tochter eines freien, stolzen Volkes ist?'<sup>62</sup> He seeks revenge: 'Es wird ein Tag kommen, da wird er den Kopf nicht mehr hoch tragen, der weisse Mann!'<sup>63</sup> While Hellmuth and Jürgen approach the indigenous people in a friendly manner, their predecessors have apparently been much less respectful. This is not clear from the film, of which a later version lacks the relevant passage, but from the text in the censorship report, which has an officer say: 'Das faule Gesindel will nicht arbeiten...'<sup>64</sup> With the exception of Georg Herzberg of the *Film-Kurier*, no other critic reacted to this assertion.

Mkalimoyo's attempt to kill Jürgen only places him in a worse light. His behaviour means that he is a traitor to the German people, and his death, which must be considered a form of punishment, must needs be cruel. Fatuma, on the other hand, dies a heroine on the battlefield.

It is remarkable how the description of the contents in the *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* makes the role of the German women more combative than was actually the case in the film itself. By taking care of Jürgen's mother, Maria and Hilde took 'eine neue heilige Pflicht auf sich'.<sup>65</sup> And when Hellmuth learns how much 'aufopferndem Heldentum' it takes for Maria to keep Jürgen's supposed death from his mother, he is full of admiration.<sup>66</sup> The text only pays little attention to the true heroine of the story, Fatuma: 'Ein junges Negermädchen, Fatuma, schliesst sich besonders an Jürgen an (...) Sie liebt ihn.'<sup>67</sup> If Jürgen would have returned Fatuma's love in the film, a taboo would have been broken. This was impossible, however, for a film that was aimed to be propagandistic, winning back the colonies.<sup>68</sup> Fatuma has to die. With her love for Jürgen, she crossed a boundary, and besides, the fight would have ended quite differently for both Jürgen and Hellmuth, if Fatuma had failed to act at the right time. Recognising and honouring this would be a disgrace for the male heroes, whose struggle and ultimate victory are in the end the subject of the film. An active African woman on the battlefield could not expect the praise that was received by the passive-supportive German women at the home front.

Jürgen's mother saves Hellmuth, Fatuma saves both the soldiers in Africa, and 'Maria' saves Jürgen. Maria has here been placed in inverted commas, because Jürgen was not saved by his lover, but by the name of the Virgin Mary ('Da kam ein Engel zur Jungfrau Maria').<sup>69</sup> After all, he regains his memory be-

cause he hears people telling stories about her. It is hardly surprising that the religious association carried by Jürgen's lover is with the Virgin Mary, not with Mother Mary. She has resisted the temptation put to her by Hellmuth, and this means she has proved herself a worthy future wife for the hero of the story.

### **Husbands coming back home: FELDGRAU and HEIMKEHR**

On 11 November 1918, the armistice was signed, ending the war in strictly military terms. People began to get to terms with the economic, political and social misery into which the country had been plunged. For many people and in an almost literal sense, the war had not yet ended. One of the major problems that many families, relatives, wives and parents experienced was the uncertainty about whether their loved ones were still alive. Jay Winter devotes an entire chapter in his *Sites of memory, sites of mourning* to this uncertainty, the quests and the burial of the dead. One thing he does not mention in his book, or only indirectly, is the story of soldiers presumed dead who returned home long after the war had ended, after a long period of absence, for example because they were prisoners of war. This theme is broached by the films FELDGRAU and HEIMKEHR. Although the theme of the unexpected return is already dramatic in itself, an extra development has been added in the films which even enhances the drama. In both films, the 'waiting' wives have remarried or now live together with another man, that is to say, a man who was a friend of the husband presumed dead. Rivalry has here become (unconscious) betrayal. Since both these film stories mostly take place after the war, the critics did not define them as war films. They do, however, fall within my definition, because the war is not only taken as the starting point but has also clearly influenced the lives of the characters. The relationships between the men and their women will be briefly discussed on the basis of the descriptions of the contents.

The time of programming suggests that films that dealt with a period immediately after the war were in fact strongly associated with that war. The release was planned around the national Volkstrauertag, a day on which 'Das deutsche Volk (...) sich bewusst für 24 Stunden dem Gedenken der Kriegsoffer weihen (will)', as the *Lichtbildbühne* wrote.<sup>70</sup> This memorial day, 28 February, had been proclaimed in 1925 by the 'Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge', which had been organising activities to commemorate the war casualties since 1919.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, the 28th of February was the anniversary of Friedrich Ebert's death. Friedrich Ebert, the first president of the Weimar Republic, had died one year earlier.<sup>72</sup> Indiscreet programming, which had apparently occurred in the past, according to the same report, would create too much consternation, and compromise the cinema.<sup>73</sup> FELDGRAU was the kind of

film that should not hurt any feelings and, according to the critics, it suited the atmosphere of the moment.<sup>74</sup> The film premiered in Berlin's Tauentzientheater on 27 February 1926. It had been directed by Manfred Noa, the same man who would have a lot of success at the end of that year with *DIE VERSUNKENE FLOTTE*. *FELDGRAU* was expected to be a success, if only because of the star-studded cast.

In *FELDGRAU*<sup>75</sup>, Paul Wegener plays the role of Martin Römer, who has great trouble following the attacking orders from his lieutenant, Tautenberg (Anton Pointner). He is afraid he will not see his lovely wife again. After a fierce battle, Römer is reported missing, and Tautenberg decides to tell his wife Maria (Olga Tschechowa). This decision has future consequences: they marry seven years later. In 1925, Römer suddenly surfaces again, but Maria does not want any reunion. After a failed suicide attempt, Römer accuses his rival of having inflicted the wounds. Tautenberg disappears behind bars, and Römer leaves for Brazil with Maria. He confesses his perjury in a letter, Tautenberg is released, follows them to Brazil and manages to win Maria back. Römer finally accepts his loss and kills himself.

It may seem strange that it is the lawful husband who gets the worst of it. However, this had been made plausible for the contemporary audience by the choice of Paul Wegener as the husband. The press in no uncertain words called the actor the 'bestialisierten Paul Wegener'<sup>76</sup>; 'Die Verkörperung des brutalen, urwelthaften Martin Römer'<sup>77</sup> and 'Der Triebmensch Wegener. In der Maske, im Ausdruck halbasiatisch; schreiendes Blut im brutalsten Machtsbewusstsein.'<sup>78</sup> Wegener was a star who had gained fame by participating in artistic, expressionistic film productions such as *DER STUDENT VON PRAG* (1914), *DER GOLEM* (1914/1920), *SUMURUN* (1921) and *VANINA* (1921). For this reason alone, he evoked associations with the mysterious and bizarre.<sup>79</sup> His lesser known antagonist Anton Pointner, on the other hand, was the paragon of civilisation in this film, although he had played some more shady characters in earlier films. Critics called him: 'Der Mensch des Herzens, der geraden, offenen, durch Kultur temperierten Linie.'<sup>80</sup> In short, the film worked out the dichotomy of Nature versus Culture. Naturally, the representative of Culture achieved the final victory. Judging from the description of the 'halbasiatische' which Wegener apparently radiated, the film also emphasises an opposition between the German and the Foreign. The fact that the character played by Wegener was the loser in the story was in line with the expectations created by the makers of the film. Römer also proved to be a bad soldier in the story, one who had been robbed of his manly strength by the fact that his wife had fallen in love with someone else.<sup>81</sup> This state of mind, which in times of war could easily be confused with cowardice, hardly deserved to be rewarded. According to the descriptions, the special qualities shown by the woman involved, Olga



Tschechowa, were beauty, strength, mildness and detachment.<sup>82</sup> *Lichtbildbühne* said about this later Hollywood star that, 'mit feiner Zurückhaltung und knappen Mitteln', she gave 'eine ausserordentlich sympatische und kultivierte' performance.<sup>83</sup> Given these qualities, this character was clearly more congruent with that played by Anton Pointner than that by Paul Wegener.

Both George Mosse and Jay Winter pay attention to the theme of soldiers returning from war. Winter extensively discusses the quests which relatives undertook to find their loved ones and lets them 'return' to a last resting-place in the Heimat. Metaphorically speaking, the dead soldiers returned to literature, art, films and monuments. There are reports of spiritistic séances in which people tried to bring back their loved ones.<sup>84</sup> Mosse emphasises the function of commemorating in bringing about the resurrection of 'Volk' and the fallen nation.

The official Republican guide to German war memorials stated that the fallen had risen from their graves and visited Germans in the dead of night to exhort them to resurrect the fatherland. Familiar ghost stories were infused with themes of Christian resurrections to explain away the finality of death on the battlefield and to give hope to a defeated country.<sup>85</sup>

In this case, they were fallen soldiers who gained the status of heroes by their deaths. In *FELDGRAU* and *HEIMKEHR*, the protagonists are not heroes, but men who were missing and presumed dead, and who appeared to have risen from the dead by returning home. The fact that both are 'punished' in the film stories may be connected with their longing for their wives, which is represented as bordering on the pathological.

According to the reviews, 'the return' was a popular theme. Its origin, however, was not the First World War but nineteenth-century English literature. Nearly all reviews of *FELDGRAU* referred to the so-called Enoch Arden theme, which was derived from the prose poem of the same name written by Lord Alfred Tennyson in 1861. Although the stories of the film and the poem differ in the way they have been elaborated, the theme is similar. Two men love the same woman, one man, Enoch Arden, leaves, while the other takes his place. The lawful husbands in both the poem and the film are presumed dead, and get the worst of it once they have returned. Another important similarity is that in both cases, the man who left and then returns has changed for the worse. Römer is presented as almost animal-like, and so is Tennyson's Enoch Arden. In both cases, the rival is a gentle and civilised man.<sup>86</sup>

*HEIMKEHR* also features two men who love the same woman, and in this film too, one of them takes the place of the other. The protagonists are two soldiers in Russian captivity, Richard and Karl. During the period they are to-



gether, Richard tells Karl all about his wife Anna, with whom he is still very much in love. 'Wir haben doch seit 729 Tagen immer das gleiche Gesprächsthema!; Deine Frau, Deine Wohnung, Dein Tisch, Dein Bett, den Stuhl mit dem wackligen Bein...', says Karl to Richard in one of the intervening texts.<sup>87</sup> Longing to see his wife again, Richard persuades Karl to flee with him. During the hard journey home from Siberia, Richard is caught again by the Russians. Karl continues on his own and, after two years, he finally arrives at Anna's home. The film represents the journey rather creatively by images of Karl's moving feet, with his shoes going from bad to worse to rags, shot by shot. Then the war is over, and Richard has been pardoned by the Russians. Karl, meanwhile, has moved in with Anna. They get closer and closer and finally fall in love. In the film they are not shown to do anything inappropriate, but their growing desire is visualised by a split screen which shows them spending a restless time on either side of a wall. At long last, Karl and Anna give up their belief that Richard will return. One day, however, Richard returns and threatens to kill Karl. Since Karl once saved his life, Richard is unable to pull the trigger. Instead, he decides to leave them, seeing that his wife is now clearly in love with Karl. Richard chooses to go to sea, and says goodbye to his friend in a spirit of comradeship: 'Lass gut sein, mein Junge, was soll ich mit einer Frau deren Herzen mir nicht mehr gehört!; Sei gut zu ihr!'<sup>88</sup>

It should not come as a surprise that critics also referred to the Enoch Arden theme in their reviews of *HEIMKEHR*.<sup>89</sup> In this film also, the returning Richard, with a stubby beard, looks a little bit rougher than Karl, although the contrast between the two men is much less extreme than in *FELDGRAU* or the original Enoch Arden story.<sup>90</sup> Several critics pointed out that the theme had been filmed many times before. As far as I have been able to establish, only these two films related to the war. This theme was so suitable for treatment in a war film because there were so many soldiers who came home changed men, sometimes literally changed into unrecognisable strangers. The representation of the Enoch Arden theme is a variant of the no less confronting homecoming scenes in *WESTFRONT 1918* and *ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT*. These films show that it was not only the soldiers who had experienced a profound change, but also the society of which they had once been part and which they now no longer understood.

In spite of the Enoch Arden theme mentioned above, neither of the films was actually based on Tennyson's poem, but on much more recent literature. *Feldgrau* was based on the novel *Der Mann aus dem Jenseits* by Fred Nelius, and *HEIMKEHR* was based on the novel *Karl und Anna* by Leonhard Frank.<sup>91</sup> Three years later, the pacifist Frank, who was known for his 1918 anti-war novel *Der Mensch ist gut*, would write the screenplay for Victor Trivas' anti-war film

NIEMANDSLAND. His novel *Karl und Anna* was very popular in 1926. It was not only filmed but also successfully adapted for the stage in 1929. The film version was produced in 1928 by Ufa producer Erich Pommer, who had returned from the US several months earlier.<sup>92</sup> He brought in Joe May as the director. May was known for monumental films such as *DIE HERRIN DER WELT* (1919) and *DAS INDISCHE GRABMAL* (1921)<sup>93</sup>, a co-operation with Fritz Lang. Just like in *FELDGRAU*, most actors were familiar to the audience. Lars Hanson, who played the role of Richard, was popular for his role in *GÖSTA BERLING*, and Gustav Fröhlich (Karl) was known for his portrayal of Freder in *METROPOLIS* (Fritz Lang 1927). For Dita Parlo as Anna, the film marked her debut. Ufa naturally presented her as a promising young actress.<sup>94</sup> Finally, Pommer himself was one of Germany's best-known producers. He produced three films that were directed by Fritz Lang, *DER MÜDE TOD* (1921), *DR. MABUSE* (1922) and *NIBELUNGEN* (1924), as well as Murnau's *DER LETZTE MANN* (1924). It is not surprising, therefore, that his name evoked associations with film as art. *HEIMKEHR* was meant to appeal to the broadest possible audience, both at home and abroad. As a 'Weltfilm', an export product, it was meant to meet international, that is American, standards. In the words of Ernst Jäger, this meant:

weg vom ungelösten experimentell-kamerakünstelnden Vorstoss-Film (...) es wird ein entschlossener, geschlossener Film auf die Leinwand geworfen, für Millionen, ungezählte, gleichbeseelte, die der Film umfassen will.<sup>95</sup>

In short, no striking camera movements, and actors and actresses who 'illusionistisch-reproduktiv-realistische spielen'.<sup>96</sup> The same was true for the theme, which was at least recognisable in all countries that had been involved in the war.

It goes without saying that Leonhard Frank's original story should also fall within this 'pattern'. Basically, it was Frank himself who had been asked to write the screenplay for the film. So he did, but Ufa turned down his manuscript. Subsequently, Joe May donned the pseudonym Fred Mayo and, together with Fritz Wendhausen, re-worked the novel into a film script. This time, it was accepted. The changes in comparison with the book were quite substantial. To name a few: in the book, Karl pretends to be Richard when he returns. Anna has her doubts but in the end she accepts him. Anna gets pregnant by Karl; and when he arrives home, Richard picks a fight with Karl, after which Anna and Karl go away, leaving Richard behind.<sup>97</sup> This is a sadder and much more negative end, and therefore commercially less attractive, than the end of the film. In a letter to Ufa, Frank reacts strongly to the maltreatment of his novel: 'Meine Herren, ich protestiere dagegen, dass diese total misslungene, unfreiwillige Verulkung meiner Novelle gedreht wird...'.<sup>98</sup> It was

clear that the novel's most controversial issues had been ironed out in the film. In short, we see the same kind of reduction of quality as with the film version of Ernst Johannsen's book, *WESTFRONT 1918*.

Criticism was divided. Especially the critics on the right, including the one writing for *Vorwärts*, gave a positive judgement. They found the film beautiful and moving, without seeing much reason to complain about too much sentiment.<sup>99</sup> On the left, however, as well as in moderate newspapers, reviews were much more critical. The story itself was received with much enthusiasm, but the way in which some of the roles were acted was the subject of serious criticism. Especially debutante Dita Parlo was put through the hoop. The *Berliner Morgenpost* had this to say about her so-called anachronistic appearance: 'Man erwartet eine Frau, blutwarm, lebendig, voll Saft und Kraft, eine Vollnatur. Statt dessen kommt eine ondulierte Debütantin, eine Kriegerfrau im Jahre 1918 mit Bubikopf und Jumper...'.<sup>100</sup> Ernst Jäger also recognised the phenomenon of the 'New Woman'<sup>101</sup> in Dita Parlo: 'Der deutlichste Bruch mit dem gestrigen Deutschen wird durch diese Frauenwahl angekündigt'.<sup>102</sup> It is clear from their reviews what the male critics thought about this new actress. Some of them compared her to an image of the ideal woman, and she clearly failed to make much of an impression. She was considered 'kein deutscher Typ'<sup>103</sup>; not beefy enough: 'Schade ist auch, das Anna mehr Weibchen als Weib ist'<sup>104</sup>; or she was thought to act in an unnatural way: 'ein natürlicher Zug war an ihr nicht zu entdecken'. In other words, she was said not to justify the male characters' desires. Ernst Jäger was one of the few critics to write about her positively, in words betraying his appreciation of what drove men to love this woman. In his eyes, Parlo was 'so flink und so blank'; 'ein Luluchen (...) unschuldig und lasterhaft (...) sehr nervös und wach. Gar nicht gebildet, ein Plattmädel, mit sauberem begehrliehen Fleisch'.<sup>105</sup>

Although the 'genre' of the war film was dominated mainly by male perspectives, the role played by female characters was not altogether insignificant. Several possible reasons can be mentioned for this. We may assume that the significance of female roles in war films was commercial, to increase the appeal of war films for the female part of the audience. Another reason was simply that women could not be ignored when it came to the representation of the home front. However, the main reason must be sought in the narration itself, and the possibilities created by adding some female characters. The films could be made more romantic, more sensitive and more exciting, sometimes even more realistic. Themes like betrayal, rivalry and the return from the front (including the Enoch Arden motif) could only be elaborated when a female character was featured in the film. Nevertheless, the way in which women were represented in these war films was usually far from positive. In some

cases, women seemed to operate mainly as an obstruction to the comradeship between men, and as references to the gap between the war front and the home front. Representations of women contributing to the war economy are hard to find. The starting point was positive, however, in the only two 'women's films' made about the war. In these films, female characters were part of the heroism usually reserved for the male characters on the battlefield. They completely devoted themselves to the fatherland. As was clear from earlier reviews of war films, the critics did not like overly emotional or sentimental sequences in war films.